

Chapter 8

August 4, 2137

Seeing the ship in person was a startling experience for Maddison. Spending months pouring over plans and schematics could not prepare her for the sheer mass of such a vessel. How this behemoth could take off and land was a staggering thought.

Walking the interior of the ship was another eye-opening experience. The cabins and even the halls were far more expansive than she'd hoped. But it was hard and cold not in the conventional sense. Of course, metal is hard, but this was different, more of an unforgiving hardness, and an emotionless cold. It was clean and safe, all the essentials for existence were provided. Just not the essence of life.

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Cape Kennedy and Merritt Island have become the temporary home for those headed to see Adelphi. Since Bog owns property all over the island, he has made everything available to the travelers. Living in such close proximity to so many that speak to Gaia has taken its toll on Maddy. Being new to this and having the weight of the mission on her shoulders is pulling and tugging her mind in very different directions. This has not gone unnoticed by those close to her.

Tam and Jimmi have taken it upon themselves to act as gatekeepers, handling the smaller issues and only allowing the urgencies through. This is no easy task as everyone has come to feel comforted in their interactions with Maddison. She has become proficient in seeing the true needs of the individual. More often than not the question asked is rarely the genuine need of the questioner.

The most pressing problem at hand is the need of a carer for the llamas. Perri and Royal Gibbs have made the difficult decision to stay and be with their family. The search is ongoing for someone to take care of any health or handling issues with the beasts.

Jimmi insists on asking Tam to explain again. "So tell me one more time how come we're bringing llamas."

"I've told you before, it's for Adelphi. She is intrigued by the beasts. They are contrary it seems, herd animals that are independent. They are docile and trainable yet deadly in defending themselves. They will be welcome and will add to this new world. For us they are a bit of home, and offer companionship, very useful and yet self-reliant. The butterflies and wild rice were requested by her as well.

She wishes us to feel at home and safe when we arrive but to accept her as she is, not bring so much with us that we are unable to become a part of this new world. It will be a challenge for some, I'm sure. The less we bring the less the temptation to hide in familiar routines. We are going to a new world; we will be a new people."

"So do we have any more leads on someone that can take care of them?"

"The last one had a horrible time with them. They didn't like her at all. I don't know what to tell Maddy."

"We have to tell her something. That high-strung little lieutenant has been unrelenting in her verbal assaults. I'm shocked Maddy hasn't decked her. I would've."

Tam smiled, "Jimmi, my love, no one ever doubted that. She's even pushed me to the edge."

The screen in their room lit up. It was Sophia. "Hi guys, how are things with you travelers?"

Tam was surprised but Sophia's call was welcome, she enjoyed hearing the Welsh lilt in her voice, "Aloha, tensions here are rising. How are things going with Zyhna and plans to stay?"

"Tensions here, too, are on the rise. I think I can ease one of your issues and you can ease one of mine. I know you're having trouble finding someone to care for your llamas. I'm having trouble convincing Joha to go. He would be great to fill your requirement, and I think if he feels needed, he'll agree to go."

"Have you approached him about this?"

"I wanted to talk to you first. If you're on board, I'll pick up Jedda and go see him."

“Jedda?”

“She has an affinity with animals and somehow she and Joha together have the healing gift for critters. I don’t quite understand it, but I watched them help Bram with sick cattle. Plus, Greer has some kind of a hold over Joha. I’m throwing everything I can at him to get him to go. So Jedda, Greer and llamas are my treatment plan.”

Tam was hoping Sophia would come on the ship. “Are you and Daniel still happy to stay? We could use both of the skill sets you bring to the table.”

“We’ve discussed that our skills will be useful here. It’s a hard choice but you’re fully booked now anyway, Joha is the last, isn’t he?”

“We can always make room for two more. Please consider it.”

“I’ll discuss it with Zyhna and of course Daniel, kind of you to ask. I’ll let you know how it goes with Joha.”

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Faxon shouted over the two women. “Enough, I’ve had enough of this arguing. The two of you are going to have to find a way to work together. I’m not going to play referee for the entire trip. That’s why I’ve asked Andrea Knight to intercede. From now on when the two of you escalate, she’s going to arbitrate.”

Tempest flew out of the room, leaving Maddy to crumple into a chair. “That just seems like a mean thing to do to Andrea.”

“She can handle herself.”

“Zon, my to do list is pages long, I need to be able to get some of these things checked off, and your lieutenant is blocking my way. Adding a mediator to the mix isn’t going to make things go faster. Can’t you just take a look at some of the more critical issues and give me a yes or no?”

“So you want to put a target on my back? I have no desire to be accosted by Gen. She’s like a wolverine.”

Maddy couldn’t hold in the laugh, “She would never say anything against the great and lovely Zon --- she’s infatuated with you. How can you not see that? Men really are blind.”

Zon took a step back, “She’s what?”

“Never mind I shouldn’t have said anything, please just help me get confirmation on some of the items so I can move on to my next set of problems.”

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The Brazilian duo Idal Machado and his partner Zico Antunes walked the halls of the hotel looking for room 410. Locating it, they knocked. The door opened producing Nikau Walker, a fisherman by trade, a surfer in his soul. His long dark curly hair was accented by sun bleached streaks, and it fell past his shoulders. He was shirtless, revealing a highly tattooed and well-muscled torso, his Maori heritage evident in his bright eyes and easy-going smile.

Idal admired the beautiful young man. “Are you Nikau? Maddy asked us to check on you and make sure everything’s okay. She’s been trying to get in touch, but you haven’t responded.”

“Sorry, I’ve been getting all the time on the water I can, no screens out there. Didn’t mean to cause any problems. Do I need to get in touch with her or what?”

“No, we can take care of that. Do you want to take a look around the ship? Zico and I have been approved to look at our quarters. We could try to find yours, too, if you want?”

“Thanks, bro, that’d be cool.”

When the boys made their way to the ship, they were unfortunately greeted by the still fuming Tempest Brown. “Great, more ‘lookie lous’. This is a military facility, not a cruise ship. My people have work to do, they’re not here to give tours.”

Idal was familiar with Gen so he handled the situation. "Ma'am, we have permission, and we know where we're going. We will not interfere with your people or their jobs. I want to thank you for all the work you've done on our behalf."

Tempest was taken aback, "You're welcome. You know your fearless leader could learn something from you. She's just down the hall. You might want to have a talk with her."

Idal flashed his most winsome smile, "Anything I can do to help."

Zico literally hid behind Idal during all Gen encounters. "A lot of rage in a small package that one. Have you met her before Nikau?"

"Luckily no, that girl could use some time on the water, she needs to relax."

Idal redirected them. "If Maddy's here we should just check in so she knows we located Nikau."

The trio found the conference room housing Maddison and Faxon. Idal entered first, "Sorry to interrupt. We ran into Gen, and she said you were here. Just wanted to let you know we found Nikau. We're here to see our quarters and thought we might try to find his too."

Maddy picked up a tablet and scrolled through. She located the information and slid it across the table to Nikau. He showed it to Idal, "You know how to get there?"

Idal scrolled back looking for more information. "Yes, yes I can find that. You're not far from the mess hall. We'll take you there."

"Can I ask, is it close to Jedda?"

Zico saw an opportunity to poke at the boy. "Oh no, men and women are housed on opposite sides of the ship. Only partners, couples and families are housed together."

Nikau's smile faded and the upbeat attitude was dampened. "Sure, that seems right."

Maddy couldn't let the teasing go on, "Nikau we know you and Jedda are together. Or at least Gaia knows and spread the word. So the quarters are for the both of you. Have you heard from her?"

"She's off with Joha and Sophia, something about llamas?"

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Killian Hart skulked around the perimeter of the room as Tucker Bog commanded his minions on the large screen. Lowering tides have caused beach front hotels to struggle. He was taking advantage and buying out anyone he could bully into selling cheap. The contracts from the military have given him access to thousands of acres of once public land. The water and mineral rights alone are worth trillions.

"Who's handling Hawaii? I want to own as many of those islands as possible. Why do I not have any contracts from Oahu, Maui or Kauai? You need to move, now before anyone else sees what's going on. Get out there and get those contracts or I'll find someone that will."

Hart stepped to the desk as the screen went dark, "I have your lunch ready may I bring it in?"

"First get me Maddison. I need to touch base with her and make sure this thing goes off on schedule."

"Actually, sir, I did that already. I spoke to her and that Major Navarro. They're ironing out the details as we speak. As of now there's no issue to keep them from launching. I told her you were negotiating to save more public land from being sold."

"Hart, you may be a corporate man after all."