

Chapter 14

January 19, 2138

Perri Gibbs sat down on the log next to Emory. “You have to eat something, it’s been days.”

“How can I, knowing what’s happening to her?”

“You have to focus on what we need to do. She went with them willingly knowing exactly what was going to occur.”

“Why would she do that? We’re so close to the one thing she has spent her whole life preparing for.”

“Did you ever think that this was part of her journey all along? That she’s been preparing you to finish the passage for her?”

“Maybe I don’t want to go alone.”

“But you’re not. You’re never alone and neither is she. We face this together. We’re joined through Gaia. Your Grandmother has Gaia as her constant partner in everything. We are with her as she is with you. Now eat, we’re almost there, our travels are near an end.”

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As Maddy made her way back to her cabin, the ship looked different. The halls no longer felt safe or welcoming. The doors she passed became ominous. Her senses were on ultimate alert. When Faxon came up behind her, she swung around fist first. Fortunately he was able to pull just out of range of the punishing right hook.

Maddy realized what she’d just done. “Oh, god, I’m so sorry. I didn’t mean to.”

Faxon still took another step back. “Whoa, I’m lucky you didn’t connect. That is one mean punch you have there.”

“Sorry, my mind was elsewhere. You just surprised me.”

“That wasn’t my intention. I stopped by to see if you would like to join me for dinner.”

Maddy was surprised again, this time at her own reaction to spending time with someone in a military uniform. She was unable to separate the image of those hurting her friend and this man standing in front of her. She knew him to be kind and considerate, but was that true or a lie?

She realized she was just staring at him. "Sorry, sorry, you caught me off guard. I haven't gotten much sleep these past couple of days."

"Why don't you lay down for a couple hours? I'll come by and pick you up later."

Maddy knew she needed to maintain normal behavior. "Good idea, I'll see you then."

Faxon sensed there was something wrong but was willing to accept sleeplessness as an explanation. "Sleep well, I'll see you soon."

o o o o

Entering the mess hall with Faxon, Maddy overcame the urge to gasp at the site of so many military personnel. Every one of them felt like a threat to the safety of her people. It was taking all her energy to relax her fists and try to take slow deep breaths. She felt like she had been saved when she spotted Tam and Jimmi.

Maddy bolted over to their table. "Hey, I'm so glad you guys are here. Tam, how are you doing?"

Faxon finally caught up to Maddy. "Good evening, ladies. Wow, Tam, what happened?"

"Good evening, major, I had a nasty fall in the shower."

"Nasty is right. Happily, it looks like Captain De Palo has you on the road to recovery."

"I'm definitely on the road but, Sophia is our doctor."

"I'm glad you're on the mend. Maddison, why don't I grab a table and some food --- join me when you're done here."

"Thanks, Zon." Maddy waited till he was out of ear shot. "I'm ready to jump out of my skin every time he touches me."

Tam spoke softly. "You don't think he's with Miller, do you?"

"No, I don't think, well maybe, I don't know. But Andrea and I have a plan to find out. We're going to push Miller to push Faxon and see how he reacts. I may do some gentle shoving during dinner as well. Wish me luck."

Faxon selected a table in a secluded corner of the room. Seeing Maddy's approach he got up and pulled out her chair. She made a show of accepting his gallantry.

"I'm happy you were willing to join me tonight. I've hardly seen you these last few days."

“Like I said, I’ve been busy and not feeling well.”

Faxon took a deep breath and pulled his chair closer to Maddy. “Look, I think I know what’s going on here. I’ve seen it before, maybe I can help.”

“What exactly do you think is going on here?”

“It’s your friends over there. I’ve seen bruises like that before. They’re not from a fall. They’re from a fist.”

“And you people know all about that, don’t you?”

“Wait, what?”

“Military people, you know all about beatings.”

“Whoa, I was just trying to help. Where is this coming from?”

“Zon, I’m sorry. You’re right, there is something going on. I’m just not ready to talk about it. Let’s just eat. Why don’t you tell me about all the complaints Gen has filed against my people?”

“Okay but that means we may be here till they serve breakfast.”

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Andrea was sitting at her desk when Maddy arrived. “Where have you been?”

“Faxon took me to dinner.”

“That had to be hard.”

“I really want to trust him, just blurt out everything. I don’t know why.”

“He’s gorgeous, has puppy dog eyes and he’s sweet on you, that’s why.”

“That may have something to do with it.”

“We just need proof, so let’s get Miller to do that for us. I got everything ready. Sean’s out playing poker. It seems some of the military personnel have a secret game going every night.”

“Let me get out of sight and you can call him up.”

After a few minutes the screen opened on Miller. “Colonel, I have some information for you. It may be nothing, but I thought you would want to make that decision.”

“Fine, Ms. Knight, what is it?”

“Bear’s Heart has been telling her people that the Hopi woman is with Tucker Bog.”

Miller hesitated a few seconds. “That seems implausible. What would they have to do with each other?”

“I thought so, too. From what I gleaned from the conversations, they’re saying she’s there against her will and being questioned.”

“Do you think they are aware you’re listening to them and feeding you false information?”

“Sir, I’m exceptionally good at what I do. If you recall, it’s one of the reasons you hired me.”

“Very well. I’ll have my people look into this. Keep me posted.”

“Yes, sir.”

Maddy waited till the screen went dark. “Well done, Andrea. How long do you think?”

“I give it an hour on the outside. We better get back to your place. But first we’re going to need wine, a lot of wine.”

o o o o

The knock on Maddy’s door even sounded ominous. She got up to answer it, wine glass still in hand. She knew who she wanted to be on the other side of that door. But she was prepared for anything.

Opening it, there stood Major Faxon Navarro strangely not in his uniform. “Why, Major Navarro, what brings you to my door at this late hour?”

“I need an explanation.”

“I don’t know what you mean.”

“Explain why my commanding officer wants me to search you and your quarters. If you resist in any way, I am to arrest you and any or all of your people for treason.”

“Are you here to arrest me?”

“You know I’m not.”

“Then you better come in.”

As Faxon entered the room, Maddy handed him a glass of wine. He saw the room was already well occupied. Tam, Jimmi and Andrea had made themselves comfortable in the room as well as the wine.

“Good evening ladies, good to see you again, and you as well, Andrea. What have I walked into here?”

Jimmi tapped a spot on the couch for Faxon to sit down. “That’s the question. It could be an awakening to a whole new world or spiraling into a big pit of crazy. It’s pretty much up to you.”

Faxon paused for a long moment looking at all the faces around the room. “I am going to need something stronger than wine.”

Jimmi pinched his cheek. “That’s my boy. I’ll go and get some of the good stuff. You all carry on.”

Andrea got things going. “You need to know that your commanding officer is a very bad man. He has his minions trying to beat information out of a 76-year-old woman.”

“How do you know this?”

Andrea smiled and looked at Maddy. “I’m afraid that’s where the big pit of crazy is.”

Maddy sat down and faced Faxon. “This is going to be hard to believe. Before we begin, I have to ask, do you trust me?”

“Yes.”

“Wow, no hesitation.”

“Maddy, I trust you. Tell me what you have to tell me.”

“We know he was doing it because Tam was there. She saw it, more than that she felt it.”

“Okay I see the big pit of crazy. Maybe we should take this a little at a time.”

“Zon, have you heard the name Gaia?”

“Isn’t that what people call the earth’s persona?”

“Not the persona. The earth is a sentient being and her name is Gaia. She’s real, she’s alive, she feels, she thinks, she cares and she speaks. In fact, she speaks to many of the people on

this ship. There's a bond not only with her but among each other. Tam has a bond to Zyhna, the woman Miller is torturing. Our healer Sophia was able to enhance that bond, allowing Tam to see and hear what was happening back on earth. It was so strong she not only felt the beating, she suffered the actual wounds. So you were right when you said those bruises were caused by fists, just not the ones you thought.

"How are you doing? Are you staying with me?"

"I think so. What did you tell Miller to get him to contact me?"

"Andrea's been reporting on my conversations. Tonight, she told Miller that I know Bog has Zyhna, making him think we have some kind of undetectable high-end communications device. He and Bog want it. It's about money and power with those two, nothing more. But you already know that."

"I just want to fly. Up to now it's been easy for me to turn a blind eye to the dirty secrets so I could do what I love. But it just isn't worth it anymore. I can't say I understand all of what you're telling me, but I know there's more to you all than meets the eye. I felt that the first time I met you, Maddison Bear's Heart. Where do we go from here?"

"Well, major, I think first we should wait for Jimmi and have a drink. Then we'll have to decide when you want to arrest me."

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Andrea made sure she was seen as she made her way to Faxon's cabin, who then feigned surprise at seeing her. Once inside they were able to clarify the plans for Maddy's arrest.

Faxon was back in his uniform looking uneasy. "Are you sure this will be safe?"

"Absolutely not. This is a huge risk for everyone."

"Well, that makes me feel better."

"This is much bigger than us, you have no idea."

"What is that supposed to mean? They told me everything last night."

"What they told you is just the tip of the iceberg. They told you what you needed to know."

"Are you trying to freak me out?"

"No, just saying they trust you, and that is a big deal."

“What if things get out of hand? You know how Gen is.”

“Major Navarro, just play your part, you’re a military man. You’re in charge. There is possibly a treasonous individual on your ship. You need to do your duty. You’ve got this.”

Faxon’s reticence was obvious. He turned away from Andrea, interlocked his fingers on his head and stared up in the air.

Andrea grinned. “She cares about you, too, you know,”

Faxon swung around. “Really?”

“The two of you, it’s like being back in middle school again. Now pull it together and be the best order following military man you can be.”

o o o o

Gen pounded on Maddy’s door. “Open up Bear’s Heart, get out here!”

Maddy appeared at the door still half asleep. “What’s going on?”

“Maddison Bear’s Heart, you’ve been accused of treason. Surrender yourself.”

“Treason? What the hell? Faxon, what’s going on here?”

Gen grabbed Maddy’s arm. “Corporal Thompson, take her into custody.”

Maddy pulled out of the grasp of the corporal, causing him to step in, snag her wrist and force her face first into the wall. He pulled her wrist up hard behind her back nearly up to her shoulder. Maddy cried out. The corporal increased his force and drove her face into the wall. “Shut up and hold still.”

The pleasure Gen felt was written on her face. She held open the door to Maddy’s cabin. “All right men, pack up everything.”

The hall was filling with onlookers both military and non. They were contained far enough away that they couldn’t see what was happening. As the corporal kept Maddy immobile, her belongings were unceremoniously removed from her quarters while Tempest Brown and Faxon Navarro looked on.

One of the men emerged with a black box. Upon seeing that, Maddy struggled to free herself. “That’s mine, don’t you touch that.”

Gen’s eyes were almost gleeful. “Corporal, keep her quiet.”

Thompson threw his full weight into Maddy's back. She gasped for air as the pressure crumpled her lungs.

Gen went after the box. "Soldier bring that here, let's see what struck a nerve in the prisoner."

Faxon broke his silence. "Lieutenant, bring that to me. I want to see it."

He made a great show of setting it on a table and gingerly lifting off the cover. "My, my, my, what do we have here?"

Gen leaned over to get a look. "What is it, sir?"

"Something you would never see unless you were involved in the black market and had way more money than any do-gooder attorney should have. This is what I believe is an *actual* abalone shell and this a *real* eagle feather."

Maddy again attempted to push free. "Those are mine, passed down in my family, don't touch them."

Faxon put down the items and closed the box. "I want this taken to my office and, corporal, please take the prisoner to the med bay."

"What are you going to do to me?"

Faxon responded, "Not that you deserve an explanation, but you'll have a full body scan to see what else you are hiding."

Gen was still grinning ear to ear. "Unless you want me to do a cavity search. I would be happy to."

"That's enough lieutenant, this will be done by the book following orders to the letter. Now get on with it."

The corporal handcuffed Maddison and led her down the hall so everyone could finally see what was happening. They did not take it well. Idal was the most vocal and unfortunately for him a bit physical. Private Long was hoping for an altercation. He was loaded and just needed a reason to go off.

Idal tried to force his way to Maddy but Long cut him off, shoving him back against the wall. Idal was not one to give in easily; he brought his knee up sharp, dropping Long to the floor. Gen didn't hesitate in bringing her weapon to bear on Idal. "Enough, on the ground now."

Idal quickly put his hands up and kneeled down, a defenseless position that allowed the irate Long to strike him hard across the face.

“Private, stand down. Idal, get up, you're under arrest. Put your hands behind your back.”

Long cuffed Idal and roughly guided him down the hall. The remaining onlookers were dispersed and told to go back to their quarters. Faxon stood arms folded, emotionless, and detached, almost indifferent as he watched Maddy's possessions boxed and removed. Anyone observing would believe he had no feelings about this woman at all.

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As Thompson led Maddy away she tried to engage him. “How could you people think I would commit treason? I don't have anything to do with the earth anymore, much less the country.”

“Shut up, you're a prisoner. You have no rights.”

“I haven't done anything wrong.”

“Didn't you?”

“What does that mean?”

“Long said you would lie.”

Maddison was confused. “About what?”

“Sabotaging the fire system.”

“What are you talking about?”

Thompson was adamant. “Trying to destroy this ship. You disabled the fire alarm and suppression system. Two days ago, there was a fire in the kitchen.”

“I didn't hear anything about that.”

“Well, you wouldn't. The alarms didn't go off because the system wasn't connected. If there hadn't been someone walking by, who knows what would have happened? You people have no morals, you don't care who you hurt.”

Maddy tried to convince the young man. “Corporal Thompson, why do you think I would ever put this many lives at risk, families, children? How could you believe that?”

“Don't try to trick me. I know about all your lies, how you tricked the military to get you this ship. Just shut up.”

"I'm sorry you think that."

"We're here. This is the med bay, get in."

Dr. De Palo appeared to be waiting for them to arrive. "Please come in. I have the scan ready. You're going to have to remove the cuffs."

"No sir, she's a threat to this ship."

"Well, that's going to be a problem, corporal, because the scan won't work with them on."

"I won't do it."

"Then give me the keys."

"Sir?"

"You can't remove them, but I can."

"You can't do that, doctor."

"Right, but I'm also a captain. And I can do it as a captain. So hand over the keys, son."

"Sir, yes, sir."

"Now be on your way."

"Sir, I'm to escort the prisoner back to the major."

"I'll handle that. And this is an order. Go."

Maddison felt more than a little uneasy with the doctor. "Aren't you concerned I'll try to escape?"

"Seriously? This is a ship, where are you going to go? Here let me get those cuffs off."

Maddy winced and inhaled quickly as he grabbed her wrist.

"Oh my, looks like a pretty bad sprain. How did that happen?"

"I think I may have resisted being arrested and having my possessions confiscated."

"Let me wrap this and we can get on with the scan. Can you tell me what they think you may be hiding?"

“I have no idea. But I fear they may find it even if I don’t have it.”

“That sounds sinister.”

“Colonel Miller *is* sinister.”

“Let’s just get to the scan.”

o o o o

Faxon called Tempest into his office. “Lieutenant, I want you to get one of the other passengers in for questioning.”

“Sir?”

“I want to talk to that woman with the bruises. I have a feeling she may be a weak link. Perhaps the injuries were necessary to keep her in line.”

“Sir, I never would have thought of that.”

“It’s important to remember that once you lie and cheat, it becomes easier and easier. In the end, no behaviors are off the table. People like this will even turn on each other.”

“Sir, I have to say I thought you were taken in by the Bear’s Heart woman.”

“I’m a pilot. The only thing that matters to me is flying. The rest is really just noise. Now please get me that woman.”

“Sir, yes, sir.”

o o o o

Jimmi answered the knock on the door. Finding Gen on the other side she attempted to slam it shut again. But Gen pushed her way in. “Not a smart move. You’re in enough trouble as it is. Now you will both be brought in for questioning. First I want Tamara Akana.”

Jimmi appeared flustered. “She has nothing to say to you.”

“That’ll be up to her to tell us. Ms. Akana, come with me now.”

Tam sheepishly walked past the visibly upset Jimmi. “I will come with you.”

Gen attempted to put Tam at ease. "Are you all right? Do you want to have our doctor take a look at your injuries?"

"I don't want anything from you. I'm not going to talk to you."

They arrived at their destination. Faxon was waiting at the door. Gen reached out to guide Tam into the room. She pulled away and shrunk back like a dog that has been beaten. The behavior did not go unnoticed. Gen backed away and gave Tam plenty of room.

Faxon motioned Gen into the hall. "Did you see that? I think there's a good chance she'll give us the information Miller wants. But we have to do this right. Since it is obviously women keeping her in line, I think I should do the interrogation. You can watch on the screen from out here."

"Understood, sir."

Faxon entered the room keeping his distance from Tam, who kept her eyes glued to the table in front of her. He slid slowly into a chair at the opposite end of the room. "Ms. Akana, I want to thank you for coming in. I have a few questions. I want you to know you are safe here. No one can hurt you."

"Why are you saying that?"

"I'm worried that you've been hurt by someone aboard ship."

Tam's eyes flashed fear. "I never said that, don't say I said that! I didn't tell."

"No, no, no, don't worry, no one will tell. Ms. Akana I absolutely promise you I won't let them hurt you again."

"You can't promise that."

"I can, you're safe with me. But I need your help. These people are planning something back on earth, something bad, and I want to stop it. Can you help me?"

"I really don't know anything. I just overheard them talking and they got so mad."

"What did you overhear?"

"Just random words really."

"Anything you can remember will help."

"Something about getting to power places. Keep out of sight. That's all I heard."

“Well done. I am going to get you to our doctor. You’ll be safe in med bay.”

o o o o

The screen displayed a smiling Colonel Miller. Faxon had never seen that before. Perhaps no one had. “Excellent! You’re sure, Major Navarro, sure she said power places?”

“Positive, sir. She also said something about keeping out of sight. Does that help you?”

“I know exactly what they’re up to. Did you find the communication device?”

“No, sir, we’re still going through her things. But I wanted to give you what I had.”

“Well done, major, keep up the good work.”

The screen flashed off. Zon sat back in his chair and looked up at Andrea. “He bought it, let’s see what he does with it.”

“Zyhna will understand and use it against him.”

“Will this help her?”

“That’s a tricky question. It’ll help her do what she set out to do. It won’t save her.”

o o o o

Miller smashed open the cell door. Zyhna pulled herself up and leaned back into the corner to keep her upright. “Owen, how nice to see you.”

“Power places.”

Zyhna looked devastated. “What did you say?”

“Power places.”

“Maddy would never have told you.”

“It looks like you don’t know your people like you think you do. It’s over. You’ve lost.”

Leaving the cell Miller flung open the interrogation room door and started barking orders. “I want the movements of all of these groups analyzed. Extrapolate from their track what component of the power grid they are heading for. Look at everything --- nuclear, wind, solar, electric. They are planning on shutting down everything. Go! Move, move, move!”