

# ***Destination Azahar***

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CONTENT: noseX ScFi

UNIVERSE: The Swarm Cycle

## ***Chapter 15 - Actions and Consequences***

The morning before he could move back into his own pod Naveen asked the AI, "Please connect me with Josh Rawlins."

An exasperated voice appeared in Naveen's implant, "What do you want now, Naveen?"

Naveen recoiled mentally, but persevered, "I am in the meeting room near the greenhouses that Captain Collins allows us to use for our research. May I know when to expect you?"

Josh was still upset with the reprimand Naveen had given him the day before for not completing a research assignment and snapped, "I don't have time for you right now, Naveen. Sissy miscarried, and I had to take her to medical before she bled to death."

Having consoled Meghrani after three miscarriages, Naveen was very sympathetic, "Please convey my condolences to the young lady."

"Condolences? I beat the thoughtless cunt when we got back from med-bay for not taking better care of my seed," Josh replied.

A shocked and outraged Naveen mentally shouted "*Disconnect!*" to the AI and sat dumbfounded. When he regained some control of his emotions he went to the ship's medical facility and inquired of the technician, "There was a young lady brought in last night after a miscarriage. May I know what caused it?"

The tech checked the log, "Looks like there was a blow to the abdomen that ruptured the amniotic sac. The other injuries caused by a beating were far more serious than the miscarriage. She had cracked ribs, internal bleeding from several sources, a broken wrist, and severe contusions and lacerations on her arms, back and legs."

Naveen appealed to the AI and the captain on behalf of Josh's concubines. He tried in vain to take some kind of action. Not even Meghrani's attempts at comforting him mitigated his anger and frustration. She finally suggested, "If you cannot enter through the door, then try a window, my love."

Naveen gave her a puzzled look; then a wry smile took its place before he kissed her soundly. "Thank you, my smart and lovely companion."

Josh's performance had dropped below "that of an oversexed undergraduate student" as Naveen had phrased it on several occasions. He formally asked the captain that Rawlins be removed from his team and given another assignment. Naveen cited documented incidents of poor performance and negligence of duties by Rawlins as justification for his request. "I do not know what motivates him and have neither the time nor the patience to find out," Naveen pled his case with the captain. "Perhaps if he's given training as a combat marine he can better serve the Confederacy. Undoubtedly someone like Sergeant Budzinski can do a much better job of motivating him."

Rawlins was retested as part of the assessment process and scored a 4.7, which remanded him to the concubine pool. Rawlins attacked Naveen when the two encountered each other in a companionway as Rawlins was being escorted from the hearing to confinement. The Marine escort shot Rawlins with their stingers even though Naveen had quickly subdued the man with a solid blow to the solar plexus. With no Civil Service presence on Azahar and the AI's projection of a poor outlook for rehabilitation, Captain Collins ordered him recycled and his concubines transferred to Professor Avalareddy.

The AI objected to the transfer, but Collins threatened, "Don't make me pull a *Hurst Castle* on you."

Rather than risk being disconnected from the ship's systems and possibly being spaced for mutiny, the AI replied, "Transfer noted." The drastic lengths that Captain Murphy of *Hurst Castle* seemed prepared to employ to prevent the recycling of concubines belonging to casualties aboard his ship was clearly being shared among the AI population.

Naveen asked the Marines who delivered the pair of battered women to his pod, "What am I supposed to do with them?"

The smiles on the Marines' faces spoke volumes, but Naveen knew he was doomed when Meghrani entered the foyer and took charge of the bruised, burned, and bloodied girls. "These children require medical attention! Why did you brutes not take them to the medical facility before bringing them here? Oh, never mind. I will take them myself. A great deal of comforting will be needed before they are again subjected to a male's attentions. Step out of our way, ruffians! I should think that at least one of you would have been taught manners by your mother!"

Naveen flinched, expecting Meghrani to be shot where she stood. He was very relieved when one the chuckling Marines stepped out of her way, smacked the other in the arm and bowed gallantly. "She must be talking about you, Richards," he told his equally amused buddy. "I still say 'yes, ma'am' to *my* mom."

Naveen was interrupted by the AI about twenty minutes after Meghrani had headed out with the two pitiful looking concubines. "The concubine Meghrani is requesting authorization for cosmetic changes as well as medical treatment for your new acquisitions."

While he was curious about what Meghrani wanted, and why, he didn't have the energy to enquire. "Whatever she thinks is best for them is fine with me."

"Acknowledged," was the only reply from the AI.

Meghrani returned in about an hour, "It will be this time tomorrow before Sissy and Carrie will be allowed to come home. They had some serious internal injuries."

"What cosmetic changes did you order?" Naveen asked.

"Just undoing some things that a truly evil man did to them," Meghrani replied.

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Meghrani met Naveen at the entry of their pod the next evening with a martini and a serious expression when he returned from his daily routine of examining plants and researching their potential. It was the first time in two weeks that they had been in their original spacious accommodations. He had missed the pod even though it had only been his residence for six weeks. He had expected Meghrani to be pleased, not pensive.

"What troubles you, my love?" Naveen asked as he accepted the delicate glass.

"That evil beast filled our new girls with terrible lies about you. They blame you for the way they were treated." Meghrani was clearly distraught as she spoke.

Naveen calmed himself with a sip of the potent mixture in his hand before asking, "What can be done?"

Meghrani was all but wringing her hands with anxiety. "I am not knowing with certainty. Perhaps time in a loving household can reverse some of the evil done to those poor creatures. I have given them a room to share upstairs and asked Madeline to move in next to them. Perhaps she can succeed where I have failed in convincing them that you are a fine and honorable man who abhorred the way they were being treated enough to take action on their behalf. Have I done the right thing, husband?"

Naveen smiled as Meghrani slipped into her old mode of address. He didn't call her on it because she was clearly distressed enough as it was. "I can think of no better way to help them recover." He put his drink down and gathered Meghrani into his arms. "Do you think it would help or hurt for them to hear your cries of joy as I bring you to climax?"

Meghrani pulled back, "You can think of sex at a time like this!" When she saw the thinly veiled smile that always accompanied his teasing her, she relaxed into his comforting arms. "Perhaps *I* am wrong, and *they* are right. There just might be an evil man lurking behind your smiling lips and sparkling eyes."

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The newest Avalareddy concubines weren't the only concubines in medical. Marvin sent Sasha for a checkup a few days after they had move back into their own quarters. Marvin kept her close for a few days afterward teasing her about spoiling her fun by getting her pregnant.

"The truth is," Sasha admitted while examining the deck between her feet. "I'm envious of Julie Ann. She glows with joy at being pregnant with your child." Sasha forced herself to look at Marvin. "I'd be more than happy to give up my fun if you let me get pregnant."

"Who do you want as the father?" Marvin asked intending to tease her. "I could get..."

Sasha interrupted him with, "You! I want you to be my baby's father, if that's okay. But I'll lie with anyone you say, whenever you say. Would you rather someone else...?"

"No," Marvin interrupted her gently. "Let's go make a baby."

Sasha's entire face lit up as she attached herself to Marvin as though she were a drowning person. Marvin kissed her gently and swept her up in his strong arm for the short trip to the bed where they took their time undressing each other.

Sasha was usually in a hurry and liked it rough and fast. Marvin was uncharacteristically gentle with Sasha as he parted her legs and slowly pressed his length into the emotionally charged girl. She was still in tears thirty minutes later after the gentlest sex she had ever experienced.

"Making love isn't nearly as boring as I thought it would be," Sasha remarked as she snuggled up against Marvin and fell asleep.

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Tuan was beginning to worry that something had gone wrong with the supraluminal drone he had sent to Haru ten days ago. He usually got a response in six to eight days. He was about to upload everything into another drone's memory module when the AI announced the original drone's return to Azahar.

Among the logistics traffic was a message to Constance and Tuan advising them to expect *Sir Galahad* in about three weeks. The message went on to list the equipment and specialists arriving with the ship. They were ordered to incorporate the equipment being

brought into the orbital facility at Azahar and make it operational. They were then to render their full cooperation and assistance to Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Collins for any modifications that he authorized for *Sir Galahad*.

It had taken Constance a few days to get back on the horse following her near breakdown, but she returned to the role of a schedule-driven manager a few days after her family allowed her to resume her duties. She did a quick calculation one afternoon and realized that with Azahar's distant location, an *Aurora*-class colony ship could only make a round trip to Earth every three months. A single industrial replicator would only need a little help to stay ahead of such a colony ship and they now had 24 in operation on their orbiting station. They could already accommodate a *Kilo*-class colony ship!

The modifications to *Sir Galahad* would require a lot of minerals that they were only getting in small quantities from the pumping station. Constance asked Tuan to see what could be done to increase the volume of water being processed.

Unknown to Constance or Tuan, Nancy had been taking the shuttle out every chance she got. Celeste insisted that she take someone with her and stick to a flight plan. Leroy volunteered to ride along hoping to expand his sleep learning with some practical experience. He had always fancied himself a bit of an adventurer. He was becoming very comfortable with the environment of Azahar and the technology available to him for his everyday use. He quickly mastered the oxygen boosting air pack and handheld GPS unit, but wasn't quite ready to tackle the sophisticated *Galileo* controls.

Nancy and Leroy had located a number of copper, tin, zinc and titanium deposits along the rocky cliffs of the western coast. She became very excited when she found a beautiful marble deposit in the upthrust of the northern mountain chain and a limestone layer below an eroded sandstone formation on the eastern coast.

She had also located bauxite and chromium on islands off the east coast of Triton. She discovered that the jagged ridges of the northern mountains were exposed outcroppings of quartzite, a very hard and erosion-resistant metamorphic rock. Nancy and Leroy had donned air packs and collected numerous samples that they carefully packaged and labeled with the date collected and the GPS coordinates.

Of course, since she wasn't a geologist she didn't know she had found all these mineral treasures until she and Leroy asked for help identifying the strange and pretty rocks they had found over the last few weeks. They really didn't want to pester Tuan or Constance by showing them their collection of rocks. It would make them feel a bit like toddlers at the beach wanting to show everyone all the colorful shells they had found.

She and Leroy had some basic geology added to their sleep training and the AI assisted with the analysis and identification of the various ores and minerals. Leroy was an insatiable sponge for knowledge. He became excited when he learned that limestone typically comes from the shells of crustaceans indicating life had once existed on Azahar.

The ornate marble looked like small eggs surrounded by colorful bedding. The origin appeared to be oolite limestone, which is created from carbonate mud. The chunk of limestone they had broken off was very porous and heavily contaminated with both sand and mud. The AI helped them identify it as tufa limestone, which is associated with hot springs along the shore of a lake that precipitates calcium carbonate from the water and, like the marble sample, was not necessarily of biological origin.

Constance asked to see the maps they had made when Leroy spoke of his adventures with the girl who was becoming quite the daredevil pilot. After a quick conference with Tuan, she re-tasked a dozen replicators from producing pods to producing industrial and mining replicators and their associated support and transporter equipment. The new units began harvesting and refining the rich mineral deposits Nancy and Leroy had discovered. The copper, titanium, aluminum and manganese sources were especially useful for both ships and weapons. When the high-tech materials began arriving at the staging area she began tasking the new replicators to begin building weapons and other components used on ships.

Close to a month after Constance had been reunited with her family, she had Tuan and his family over for dinner. Beatrice asked Kim to take her kids back to their pod and get them ready for bed. Roni, Phaninath and Leroy did the same with Aswani's youngsters. As the kids were being gathered and it looked as though Tuan was going to leave with them, Constance stalled him with trivia until the kids were gone, "Please don't rush off. I want to speak with you about what you told me a month ago. I've been using your mirror technique to start my morning ritual every day. The only thing I do first is pee. Come upstairs and let me show you what I've done with my bathroom."

Tuan was a bit startled that she revealed what she did first, but was curious enough to follow her up the sweeping stairs. He was focused on the tight skirt she was wearing and thinking that a man who was getting laid daily by various combinations of four lovely women shouldn't be so easily distracted by a skirt, not even one that revealed every ripple that crossed the small gap between the two soft globes as they alternately tightened and relaxed as they negotiated the steps. He had gotten all the way to the top of the stairs before enough situational awareness returned for him to notice that Judith and Aswani were on the stairs behind him, but his own four ladies were just standing in the foyer smiling up at him.

He was feeling a bit like the fly visiting the spider when the three women escorted him through the sitting and dressing rooms and into the elegantly appointed bath. The large garden tub was surrounded by scores of scented candles and the tub was obscured by a thick blanket of bubbles.

Constance turned and began undressing. "We have permission from your ladies to express our gratitude for your support and kindness." The two concubines blocking his retreat shed their shifts in seconds and began divesting Tuan of his own clothes.

Constance stood and stepped out of her panties after sliding them down her long, muscled legs and extended a hand in an invitation to join her as Tuan's attendants slid the last of his own clothing down his legs. He used the offered hand to steady himself as he stepped out of his briefs. Constance looked much as she had a month ago except her face and hair were now perfect, and the bush adorning her lower abdomen had been trimmed to look like a lush brown bikini with invisible strings. Glancing at the naked women standing just behind his shoulders did nothing to staunch the flow of blood to his groin as his hostess backed into the knee-deep water and exposed the plump labia that had been hidden while her legs were pressed together.

Tuan's cock was at full mast when he followed Constance into the warm water just ahead of his escorts. The slight bulge of Aswani's tummy did nothing to detract from her raw sex appeal. She looked much as she had so long ago when she given him a raging woody just by escorting him to her mistress' study.

The sharp margin of bikini tan lines on Judith's trim body and the pile of loose brown curls framing her delicate facial features made her look like a coed on spring break. The crinkled skin of her areolae and her labia were the only surface areas that weren't tight and smooth.

"Aswani is going to demonstrate what I should do; then coach me as I attempt to duplicate her effort. Judith is going to give me courage and distract you while Aswani gives me a verbal briefing at the beginning of each lesson. You need to pace yourself. It's going to be a long night," Constance advised him.

"I haven't been with a man in almost twenty years," Constance asserted. "You come highly recommended by women I've come to trust. I don't want you to feel pressured or anything, but if you bungle things tonight I'll have to write off your gender as a lost cause, and it'll be all... your... fault!"