

# ***Destination Azahar***

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CONTENT: exhib mf+ ScFi

UNIVERSE: The Swarm Cycle

## ***Chapter 26 - Priorities***

Thirteen-year-old Sara Crews was thrilled to be out of the confines of the ship she had been imprisoned in for two months. She had a nice room and was able to spend some time with Jake, but he still refused to give her a ride on his shaft. It was even becoming a challenge to talk him into a little 69 action. She wanted to make him jealous, but that was so juvenile and she was about to turn fourteen. Besides, with all of the casual sex going on in their double pod — as well as all over the ship — no one was likely to even notice her flirting with someone else.

She shouted from the foyer, "Saika and I are going for a walk, Mom."

"Don't get lost!" came from somewhere around the study. The reply only caused her to consider getting lost just to get some attention. She would be starting school tomorrow with the kids from the ships as well as some who had been on the planet for months. She had heard that some of the school kids were over fourteen and were a mix of sponsors and concubines.

Sara had asked the AI where the kids her age hung out. The two girls were headed for the first destination on the list, the original Barcino playground. Basketball courts had been added above the tennis courts and pool. There was a replicator and several picnic tables between the new basketball courts. Some of the tables were screened by bamboo to give the kids a sense of privacy and seclusion. The replicator allowed them to recharge their sugar and fluid levels without leaving the area.

The two girls had no trouble finding the hangout and were a bit disappointed that they had not interrupted anything salacious when they stepped off the lift disc. Sheila and Kim were breathing hard, but they were just taking a little break from some one-on-one basketball.

All eyes turned to the newcomers. Bobby was instantly on alert. The slender Japanese girl had to be over fourteen. He was certainly keeping his dick wet enough, but unrestricted sex was a new adventure to the eager fourteen-year-old, and he had not yet learned to control his reflex responses to sexual stimuli.

Kim laughed and gave Bobby a playful punch, "Down, boy. They *have to* be spoken for."

"Hi," Sara said in her most innocent voice. "I'm Sara and my friend here is Saika. May we join you, or is this a private party?"

Kim stood up and greeted the newcomers before introducing Bobby, Roni, Sheila, and Shelly. "Sheila is thirteen and the rest of us are fourteen. How about you guys?"

"I'll be fourteen in a couple of weeks," Sara said proudly. "Saika just turned sixteen. We'll both be heading to high school tomorrow. How about you guys?"

Bobby was back in control. "Yeah, we'll be there. I'm about tired of school, though."

Kim smacked him again, "Hey, dude, it's the schooling we've gotten from Donna that helped you get a passing CAP score." She clamped her hand over her mouth, "I'm sorry. That didn't sound right as I was saying it. Are you a sponsor, Saika?"

The older girl shook her head, "No. I'm not a sponsor, and I'm proud to belong to Jake Caulfield."

*Who is he?* Bobby thought. *He's a lucky dog, whoever he is.*

"You'll have to excuse my lover, here," Kim announced as she pointed to Bobby with a nod of her head. "He just recently discovered vaginal sex and it seems that Roni, Shelly, and I can't give him enough to keep him satisfied." She sighed and shook her head. "We've had to enlist the aid of my dad's concubines to keep his testosterone down to an acceptable level."

"That's not true!" Bobby shouted in his own defense. "I get plenty from you three!"

All six girls laughed at the offended young man.

"Tell me you're not hard from just watching Saika walk toward you," Kim countered. "Whip it out, big-talking man!"

Saika blushed and tried to hide behind Sara, but she was way too tall.

"We'll show you ours if you'll show us yours," Sara said playfully.

Saika punched the shorter girl, "Sara!"

That got everyone laughing, although Saika's was delayed a few seconds before she realized that Sara was kidding. Well, she was mostly kidding.

"You guys must have come in with the governor. I haven't seen either of you around," Bobby remarked and flinched thinking that Kim was going to hit him again.

"It would be hard to overlook Saika. I'll give you that one, lover." Kim smiled as she mussed up Bobby's hair. "Do you guys know the governor?"

"I only saw her a few times before we left Earth," Sara admitted, "but she and my mom are good friends, and Governor Grayson would do just about anything for Jake, don't you think, Saika?"

Saika nodded and added, "And Jake would do just about anything for her or Admiral Grayson."

"What's the governor like?" Roni finally insinuated herself into the conversation.

"She's, like, the coolest grandmother you'll ever meet," Sara said. "Only, she doesn't look much like a grandmother anymore because she's seriously pregnant! She was postmenopausal, but my mom set her up with some doctors on some island off the coast of Florida where she had a transplant of some kind and ended up prego."

"Holy shit!" Kim exclaimed. "Who the heck is your mom that she could do that?"

Sara explained, "She pretty much started the ball rolling that got all of us picked up. It all started in our kitchen back in Georgia when Jake came over for the first time. She seduced him, then got him to round up some cheerleaders, football players, and most of the chess club.

"Not the kind of groups you'd expect to get along with each other. I got a baby brother out of that deal and almost got laid myself, but Jake's such a prude for someone who fucks ten or twelve women a week. Do you have a good count of the women in his rotation, Saika?"

"Not really," she answered truthfully and blushed deeply when she added, "But I wish my turn was more frequent."

"If you're not getting enough, I know someone who's pretty good with his toy," Kim said with dancing eyes as she poked Bobby.

Sara leaned close and whispered to Saika, "I know Jake has told you that you can have sex with anyone you like until it's time for you to get pregnant."

"He's just being nice," Saika whispered back. "I think it would hurt him if I had sex with anyone outside of the family."

Sara laughed, "You're too tiny to have sex with Sven and that just leaves your dad. How do you feel about having sex with your father?"

Saika blushed, "That would be... *No!* I couldn't possibly allow him to..."

Everyone but Bobby giggled or laughed outright. Kim leaned toward Sara and in a stage whisper announced, "Methinks the lady doth protest too much." It would have been conspiratorial if not for the volume setting.

"Where have you guys been going to school?" Sara asked as much to redirect attention away from Saika as to find out what to expect the next day.

"In Ensign Clark's pod," Kim answered. "It's where Donna lives with her sponsor, Jason, who's also in the class. He's only fifteen, but he looks about twenty-two."

"So, there are sponsors as well as concubines in the class. Is it broken down by age or by subject?" Saika asked now that she had recovered some of her dignity. "Is Donna a good teacher?"

"It's only been the seven of us in high school until now. Not really enough to divide us into any kind of grouping. Donna is good at teaching a lot of things." Sheila inserted herself into the conversation now that it didn't look as though anyone was going to jump Bobby's boner.

Sara's raised eyebrows at her remark about Donna's versatility causing Sheila to blush. She covered her embarrassment by asking, "How many of you guys from the ships will show up tomorrow?"

Saika and Sara looked at each other and shrugged. Sara addressed the question for the two of them, "I don't really know, but I'm sure it will be a *lot* more than seven. I think I heard Mom say that we need to be at the old community center next to the transporter station at eight o'clock tomorrow morning."

Bobby had been very quiet during this exchange. Kim gave him a puzzled look and didn't get his attention. He was staring at Sara's lap. Kim leaned over and laughed as she backhanded Bobby's nearest biceps, "You leech! Just because Sara is uncouth enough to give you a beautiful beaver shot doesn't mean it's okay to stare. Didn't your mom ever tell you that staring is rude?"

Sara was unrepentant and laughed as she leaned back and opened her thighs even more. Even when dry the sheer material of her bikini briefs left nothing to the imagination. The wet spot centered over her pouting vulva rendered the narrow strip of material all but invisible. She opened and closed her thighs several times causing her pussy to wink and Bobby to groan. He simply couldn't take his eyes off of the lewd display no matter how hard Kim hit his arm.

Kim gave up her corporal attack and pulled her dress off over her head. She encouraged her companion, "Come on Roni! We've got to save Bobby from the jailbait!"

Kim, Shelly and Roni were naked in a flash and had Bobby's hard cock waving in the sunlight a heartbeat later. Sheila gasped. She clearly wanted in on the fun, but managed

to back away and find the lift before Kim impaled herself on Bobby's throbbing shaft as Roni held it steady from her perch on his tongue. Shelly contented herself with toying with Kim's nipples and Bobby's balls.

Sara would have joined the trio ganging up on Bobby, but Saika pulled her along bodily, and followed the thirteen-year-old Sheila down to the pool. Saika threw Sara into the cool water and jumped in behind her. Sheila took a moment to strip before joining her new friends in the refreshing water.

Sara gasped for air, "Whoa, shit! This water is cold!"

"It's not all that cold," Saika countered. "It's just that you're so hot! I expected to see steam boiling off your crotch when you hit the water."

"I'm sure I heard a hissing sound when you threw her in, Saika," Sheila managed to say through her laughter.

"Nineteen days, Sara," Saika advised through her own giggles. "If you can just wait another nineteen days there'll be a line of hard dicks at your door waiting for their turn."

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Judith was catching her breath as she lay between Constance and Leroy after a nooner. Out of the blue she said, "You know, there are about a dozen *K'treel* ships out there looking for worlds to colonize. I wonder how many they've found that haven't yet been colonized."

"What?" A confused and amused Constance asked, "Where did that stray thought come from? Did Leroy and I put you that far out into space?"

Judith swatted at Constance, "Be nice. It just occurred to me that we were on *Copernicus* for three months before finding Azahar, and *Copernicus* was not really configured for locating planetary systems. If the *K'treels* do as well as we did, then there should be several dozen planetary systems on the roster just waiting for a ship to drop people and equipment that the *K'treel*-class ships simply cannot carry."

"That seems logical," Constance agreed. "But there would have to be ships bringing in replicators and people to set up a colony. Surely there's a plan to get a colony developed to the point of building enough habitat pods to supply transports that would begin bringing immigrants in from Earth."

"Would there be?" Judith questioned. "And would they be able to get production rolling in those systems as fast as we got them running here at Azahar?"

Constance roused the two from the bed and ushered everyone into the bathroom for a quick shower.

After an equally quick lunch of turkey sandwiches Constance asked Margret, Celeste, and David Stoner to join her and Tuan in the planning room to discuss the best way to establish a new colony. McKinsey looked around the assembled group and complained, "I wish Major Bronson was still here. I'd like to run this idea by someone who could tell us if we'd be overloading a ship."

"Lieutenant Williams is still here looking for a ride home," Stoner advised the group.

McKinsey cocked her head and smiled at Stoner before speaking to the ceiling, "AI, will you please ask *Commander* Williams to join us in the CIC planning room?"

It was about a minute later with the AI responded, "Commander Williams can join you in twenty minutes."

"Thank you," McKinsey replied.

"While we're waiting, let's get a list of minimum equipment that's needed to get a colony producing a thousand pods in six weeks," Nguyen suggested. "We know it can be done with a factory-class replicator. We also know that the major components for a factory replicator can be loaded into an assault ship and deployed in about a month."

"Two dozen industrial-class replicators can do the same thing, and each one can be squeezed into a standard pod and deployed in no more than a week," Celeste noted.

The brainstorming had yielded a list of ten pods to establish a settlement and space station plus five pods of armaments for colonies that needed immediate defensive capability.

When Commander Williams arrived she glanced at the list of equipment and the mass of each pod and dismissed it with, "Too much weight for any transport we have in inventory."

Celeste voiced her opinion without masking her mirth, "Somebody needs to get laid. How would you like to break in some virgin fourteen-year-old boys?"

Williams glared briefly at Celeste before swinging her optical daggers onto McKinsey who kibitzed with, "I'm sure we can locate some more experienced talent if that idea doesn't appeal. Would you prefer male, female... or both?"

"I didn't come here to be abused," Williams huffed. "You may be right about me needing an attitude adjustment, but I'm still right about this being too much weight to be safely distributed on any existing freighter. A *Kilo*-class can certainly handle the gross weight, but not these overweight pods. Except for the factories, even an *Aurora*-class could carry this list with some empty pod mounts, but the weight distribution would concentrate too

much torsion on the spine and the pod mounts would be ripped loose even with heavy-duty inertial dampeners if the ship had to do evasive maneuvers."

"*Sir Galahad* is able to accommodate the overweight pods," Nguyen pointed out. "However, it was modified specifically to carry up to twelve of the triple-weight industrial replicator pods."

Williams nodded her agreement. "*Sir Galahad's* forward pod mounts have heavier stanchions than those of a typical pod mount. I could design a variant of an *Aurora*-class freighter that could carry all of this, perhaps even enough for two colonies."

"Building a specialized ship just to establish a township on a potential colony world seems like a waste," McKinsey opined. "What could it be used for once there are enough colonies?"

Williams quipped, "How many is 'enough'? Besides, the heavy-duty mounts can always accommodate standard-duty pods. The passages for standard pods in the quadrants that carry a factory replicator in sections can be retractable and configured with five mounts across instead of the typical four. That will give us four three-by-five surfaces for large loads, like half of a collapsed factory-class replicator kit, and four surfaces with three by four standard dimension mounts that have been beefed up to handle 100-ton pods."

Nguyen stated the obvious when he remarked, "The new ship can carry components for two factory-class replicators plus 48 pods. Using fifteen for the basic colony infrastructure there will be 33 positions available, gross weight permitting, for colonists or additional equipment."

Looking thoughtful he added, "It shouldn't try to carry enough equipment for two colonies. It'll need to remain at the newly-founded colony to serve as a safety net until the colony has both a viable space station and a ground installation. Without both the colony could be wiped out by a single catastrophic event."

Margret had been quietly working on a terminal in the background. She inserted herself into the conversation by reading some information from the screen. "There are currently 23 planetary systems within a month of Earth, including fourteen within two months of Azahar, that have planets or moons that are viable colonization candidates and have not yet been colonized. Only eleven of the 23 systems have even been scheduled for colonization, including five of the fourteen within two months of us. The bottleneck appears to be transports that can deliver a factory-class replicator."

"There's a prototype of a massive factory-class replicator that has its own sub-light and FTL engines," Stoner told the group. "It's currently being developed for forward fleet support, not colony deployment. I think we have a niche that can greatly accelerate the diaspora."

"Celeste, would you please help Commander Williams with the design of the new transport while I round up a selection of candidates who might be able to address her personal problem," McKinsey added with a wink.

When Williams' head snapped toward McKinsey she added, "We can't have a frustrated engineer putting a damper on everyone else in the room, can we?"

Williams quietly fumed as the others chuckled.

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Colonel Bryant found it curious that no one was in Admiral Grayson's reception area when he arrived for his appointment. He was about to take a seat and wait when Grayson appeared through the side door that led to his office.

"Good morning, Colonel. It's nice to see you again," Grayson greeted his visitor with an outstretched hand. Neither was covered, so a handshake was exchanged between the two officers.

"Please, come in and make yourself comfortable. I'm still getting myself and my teams organized in our new surroundings. It's quite a change from what was available aboard *Zephyrus*.

"Forgive me for being confused about why you wished to see me. What connection do I have with the command posts, combat information centers, and Camp Timmons?"

"Sorry?" Bryant was puzzled by the admiral's confusion.

"I'm here to create innovative weapons that can be used to send the Sa'arm back to the hell world they came from. I haven't been an active-duty officer in a very long time. I'm a research scientist and college professor."

Bryant took a moment to collect his thoughts. "Forgive me for being impertinent, Admiral, but the three stars on your flag make you the ranking officer in the entire Azaharat system. As such you *are* in command."

"But, I have no orders to that effect. I thought that my commission was *pro forma* and without any real significance." Grayson's brow clouded in thought as he tried to recall the details of the assignment he had accepted.

"Excuse me for a moment, Colonel. AI, please show me my commission assignment and complete orders."

Bryant waited patiently while Grayson reviewed his paperwork. He looked up when Grayson sighed.



"It would seem that the Confederacy Defense Force is no better at giving clear instructions than any military organization on our home planet, Colonel. Looking at these orders from your perspective I would have to say that I've been remiss in my duty. I have a commission from the Confederacy Navy and orders to create and take command of weapons development, production and training facility at the Azaharat.

"My assumption that my assignment is limited to academic research and development is in error. I now understand why you have been sending me staffing and status reports."

Grayson made a sweeping motion with his arm. "As you can see I have not seen the need to staff my offices. May I impose on you to participate or recommend a suitable candidate to coordinate activities between our offices, once I establish one?"

"Of course, Admiral. And the planetary defense command structure?"

"I see no reason to change what you have in place. However, it does need to be expanded to include off-planet platforms and warships in the vicinity. Who can you recommend as your counterpart for fleet defenses?"

"I know of no qualified, command-grade naval officers on the Azahar, sir."

"Mm, too bad... Thank you for bringing this to my attention, Colonel. You can expect immediate action on my part."

"Sir," Bryant responded as he rose.

As Grayson escorted him out they exchanged personal and family information. Grayson assured Bryant that he would make himself available for periodic inspections of the CIC and Camp Timmons.

"Damn!" Grayson said when he was alone. He turned and retreated to his desk where he began reviewing the records of everyone in or near Azaharat. He needed to put together a command staff in record time.

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Tanaka was wearing a big smile when he entered the governor's new office in Demopolis three days after they made planet-fall. "Good afternoon, Martha. Our intrepid pair of engineers ran some simulations regarding the delegation of some replicators to building habitat pod components and another one doing final assembly. They're currently dedicating 27 new replicators to the production of Mark II habitat pods. By adding three additional industrial replicators to the task they expect to increase the output from 24 pods a day to 33 pods a day."

"Really?" Grayson exclaimed, "That's quite an increase!"

"In all fairness," Tanaka added, "some of the increase is due to turning out incomplete pods. Instead of the pods being produced with the standard internal configuration, they'll have two open bay floors. The pod's built-in AI, replicators, and power cell will be tasked with configuring each pod with the standard floor plan over a two-day period while in storage. I believe 27 replicators could produce pods at a rate of 29 and change per day. The assembly line technique only yielded about a twelve percent increase in productivity."

"Any increase is just that many free pods," Grayson commented. "It was clever of them to take advantage of the manufacturing capacity of the pod itself."

"True," Tanaka agreed, "but a bargain isn't a bargain if it's for something you don't need. Can we expect to have three *Kilo*-class colony transports dedicated to bring extractees all the way out here?"

Grayson was thoughtful for a moment. "Captain Cooper will leave for Earth with our first *Kilo*-class transport, *Othello*, less than two months from now. She's expected to spend some time at Demeter to correct anything that crops up after her first long jump. She'll probably get to Earth in the next twelve to fifteen weeks. Why can't we expect *Othello* to return here since we built her after all? It won't be depriving any other colony the benefit of a *Kilo*-class. How many colonies can accommodate a *Kilo*, anyway?"

Grayson and Tanaka were a bit startled when the AI broke the protracted silence to answer the question. "There are currently eleven colonies that can turn around multiple *Kilo*-class colony transports, but only nine *Kilo*-class ships are operational."

"Well, I guess that tells us what class of transport we need to mass produce," Grayson remarked somewhat rhetorically.

Tanaka nodded agreement. "I have a request here from our manufacturing mavens." Tanaka chuckled as he somewhat changed the subject. "Actually, it may be more of a notification of intent. In any case, they're proposing a new class of transport that's a variant of a *Will-o-Wisp*-class and an *Aurora*-class that can deliver the people and infrastructure hardware needed to establish an industrial colony that will have two factory replicators in operation within six weeks."

Grayson asked, "Isn't the Confederacy already sending transports to new worlds with this kind of equipment?"

"Not really," Tanaka answered. "At least, not at the rate that's needed. This ship will deliver a half-dozen or more compacted industrial-class replicators, the key parts for two factory-class replicators, and two AI and power plant combination pods: one for a colony core and another for a space station, along with mining equipment, shuttles, and lighters. It can even bring along sensor probes and five pods of defensive armament. The colony could theoretically accommodate a *Kilo* transport in a couple of months."

Grayson fired off two quick questions: "Is there any reason to veto the idea? Will it interfere with getting a *Kilo*-class production line operational?"

Tanaka shook his head, "No and no, Governor. These people are professionals and have already starting looking at configuring replicators for the mass production of various classes of ships, but they don't anticipate building more than two or three of these colonization ships."

Grayson nodded her assent, "I see no reason not to turn them loose with their plan for a colonization ship if they can simultaneously establish a line that can turn out a dozen or so *Kilo*-class ships a year."

"I'll let them know," Tanaka said as he stood to leave. At the door he had an afterthought and turned to face the governor. "Did you ever determine why there isn't a massive terraforming machine on the planet?"

"Not really," Grayson replied. "A young lady named Nancy is going to take me on a tour of the greenhouse facility before dinner. I think she's giving Misty her first flying lesson in a shuttle at the moment. They plan to meet me here in about an hour to take me to meet Professor Avalareddy."