

Starfire
Chapter Three: Crash and Burn
by Havoc

“If you are out of trouble, watch for danger.”

- Sophocles

“I could really use some help up here, Control!” M'raava shouted into the radio, frantically wrestling with the controls of her mech. Her front viewport was nothing but a view of the entrance to hangar seventy-two, growing ever larger as she grew closer to the surface of Eris. No matter what she did with the controls, nothing changed her trajectory, and she was running out of time. If nothing changed in the next thirty seconds, she was going to slam into the hangar floor just inside the open bay doors. Even with the highly upgraded armor on the Mark 3-X mech she was piloting, she doubted that she would come out of it unharmed.

“Copy that, Four-Eight-Nine,” the person in Control said, referring to M'raava by an abbreviation of her mech's callsign. “We've got a tractor beam locked onto your mech, and we've reversed the beam to repulse instead of pull. That should give you at least thirty extra seconds, but it's not powerful enough to stop you completely. We're working on another solution.”

“Yeah, great,” M'raava grumbled. The S'hestir female watched her sensor readouts, seeing her velocity reduce slightly. The reduction wasn't enough to make her situation safe, but it was something, at least. Now she had more time to work something out. “Alright, let's see here...” Pulling her arms out of the armored sheaths in the cockpit, she pried her slender fingers under the faceplates of her control panels, removing them and exposing some of the circuitry underneath. While M'raava wasn't an expert in mech repairs, she did have some experience with the field.

However, though the controls for the older-style mech were similar to more modern models, the circuitry was very, very different. If M'raava had more time, she could probably have figured it out without too much trouble, but right now she was under pressure and didn't have the luxury of complex thought. She started rerouting wiring, cutting down on the circuit pathways and fiddling with the throttle and brakes to see if anything changed, but nothing happened. In fact, her velocity increased slightly from where the tractor beam had slowed her down.

“Shit!” she cursed, smacking a fist against one of the control panels. “If I could only change my path, I'd be able to relax a little, but my maneuvering controls are dead!” With an eye on the distance readout, she noted that she was just twenty seconds away from impact. “Fuck, I'm so screwed...”

“Control to Four-Eight-Nine, respond!” a new voice said over the radio. This voice was different from the one she had been talking to before. It was female, high-pitched, but still sounding

calm and collected.

“Go ahead, Control,” M'raava replied impatiently. There was a time and place for strict radio procedure, and she felt like this definitely was *not* it. “I'm listening to you!”

“Colonel, I think I have an idea. We need to change your trajectory and your controls are inop. You've still got weapons, right?”

Blinking, M'raava looked out her viewport blankly for half a second, then she quickly thrust her hands back into the arm sheaths and grasped her controls again. “Yeah, I think so.” Selecting the proper settings, she tested the weapons controls. According to the readouts on her heads-up display, everything was functioning as normal. “Yes, my weapons are still all green. So?”

“Listen carefully. You need to follow my directions *exactly*, understand?” The female voice continued, talking faster now as the time started to run out. “Arm one of your missile pods and set three missiles on a three-quarters second timed fuse relay. As soon as you've done that, light them off directly towards the hangar bay. The detonations should be close enough to your mech to knock you off course and if my calculations are right the course correction should be enough to direct you towards high orbit.”

“But what will-,” M'raava started to say, and then she closed her mouth, suddenly understanding. “I copy, Control, I'm doing it now!” Halfway through her objection, she had realized what the voice was trying to get her to do. The missiles that this mech carried were high-yield penetrating projectiles with warheads made of depleted reactor fuel rods. They'd make a hefty explosion and knock her mech onto a different course. At her current thrust level, she'd have enough power to ascend to high orbit but not enough to escape the gravity field of Eris. As long as she was stuck in orbit, all she would have to do was wait until the fuel supply of the mech ran out, and then a rescue craft could retrieve her and bring her back to base.

Moving quickly, M'raava selected her missiles and fiddled with the settings. By setting the missiles to fire off in a three-quarters relay, three missiles would be launched within a quarter of a second of each other. The staggered explosions would change her course gradually, and the short timing between launch and detonation would ensure that the missiles would not be able to reach the hangar and cause damage to the base itself. As soon as M'raava had the missiles programmed correctly, she hit the trigger. The mech shuddered slightly as the missiles began firing off.

They exploded perfectly in sequence. The first blast rocked her craft, pushing her up and giving her a small sliver of blackness at the top of her viewport. At the second blast, the blackness of space took up half of the viewport, and the third blast pushed her completely up, sending her rocketing towards space and away from the surface of Eris. The Lieutenant Colonel let out a small sigh of relief,

leaning back slightly.

A few minutes later, M'raava keyed up her radio again. "Control, this is Four-Eight-Nine. I'm in high orbit." She checked her speed gauge. "I'm at one hundred percent full thrust, but I think my orbit should remain stable. My fuel ought to last another thirty minutes or so."

"Understood, Colonel." The voice of Control was back to the original male. "Hate to be the bearer of bad news, but General Liam wants you in his office when you get back. Rescue ship is standing by. Control out."

Oh, great, M'raava thought to herself, switching off her radio. She settled in to wait for her engines to die out, closing her eyes and rubbing her temples. *This is just going to be a wonderful rest of the morning...*

When lunchtime rolled around, M'raava wandered her way into the officer's mess near the quarters that she shared with her fiancé. The mess wasn't the only one on base, since numerous officers were stationed there, and this one catered mostly to the mech squadron personnel and the support staff for those same squadrons. As she looked around the dining area, she noted that everyone else in the room was human, which was not very surprising. Though their role in fighting the war years ago had been very important, S'hestir like herself were still a rare sight in the military. Rare enough that M'raava was garnering a few stares from around the mess.

Brushing a hand back through her silky blonde hair, she ignored the stares and went to the lunch line. The menu was typical military fare: not repulsive but not overly appetizing either. Still, she was hungry, so she filled a tray with food and began looking for a place to sit. As was to be expected, the seated officers were segregated by squadron, as evidenced by the patches on their flight uniforms. Being new on base, M'raava wasn't quite ready to impose herself in the group, so she found an empty table set off from the majority of the people and sat alone.

As she began to eat, she took advantage of the solitude to reflect on the day since her little crisis in the mech. After spending thirty minutes bored out of her mind in orbit around Eris, the engines had finally run out of fuel and a rescue ship had been able to approach and transfer her from the disabled Mark 3-X heavy mech. Taking the mech in tow via tractor beam, they'd returned to the ground through hangar seventy-two. There, a security detail had been waiting to escort M'raava to General Liam's office, where she had been subjected to a chewing-out the likes of which she hadn't had since basic training. Some of the finer points of the conversation had included "you ought to know better than to fly a mech that hasn't been cleared by technicians" and "missiles are not inexpensive". What it had all boiled down to was that she had fucked up on her first day of duty and she was very lucky to still have

a job, which resulted in her feeling like absolute crap. The only saving grace was that she had managed to save the mech in the process.

“Had a bad morning, did you?”

Looking up, M'raava saw Arpad, her fiancé, standing at the other side of the table with a tray in his hands. The human was dressed in his new duty uniform, the olive drab green that the security detail on Eris normally wore. Though Colonel Reims, the security chief that Arpad would be replacing, was still in his post for a few more days, Arpad was on duty as his assistant until then while he learned the routine. Setting his tray on the table, he sat down opposite M'raava.

“You might say that,” M'raava muttered, swatting the floor behind her with her tail in dejection. “I didn't make a very good impression on the base commander. I guess you heard everything?”

Arpad nodded. “I did.” His face took on an expression of concern, his brow furrowing as he stared at M'raava. “You are lucky to be alive. The situation could have ended very badly.”

“Y'don't think I know that?” the S'hestir growled. She couldn't be too mad at Arpad, since the whole thing had been her fault and he was just being worried about her, but she didn't need him telling her how dangerous the whole affair had been. She had lived it, after all. Frowning, she stabbed her fork into a slab of unidentifiable meat, detaching a piece and bringing it up to her mouth. At least it tasted good, no matter what it looked like. “If Control hadn't suggested that maneuver with the missiles, it would have been a bad crash. I've never had a mech go so completely haywire like that on me before. That set of malfunctions shouldn't have even been possible.”

Picking up a cup of coffee from his tray, Arpad gave a small shrug. “They are experimental models, correct? Perhaps there are still some bugs to work out.” Taking a sip of the coffee, he pursed his lips. “Not strong enough...”

“I guess that's possible,” M'raava allowed. “They were still waiting on final checks from the support staff. I just...” She chewed on her mouthful thoughtfully, swallowing before she continued. “I just couldn't wait. It's been so long since I flew in a combat mech, I needed to flex those muscles again! And it felt great! While the mech was still working, at least.” She sighed, putting her fork down. “I just hope they work the damn kinks out before the day after tomorrow. That's when I'm supposed to start training the first group of pilots.”

“I am sure that will not be a problem.”

“Wish I had your optimism,” M'raava said. “Anyway, how's your new assignment going?”

Arpad nodded. “Not bad at all. The security team on base is very good, from what I have seen. I am going to be pretty busy tonight. Colonel Reims is putting me in charge of the night watch.” He started eating his own food with much more enthusiasm than M'raava. After spending so much time in

the special forces, living on MREs, it had to be a very disgusting meal indeed for him to consider the food bad. “The soldiers are not up to commando standards, of course, but I plan to change that. As soon as Colonel Reims leaves, I am going to increase weapons and tactics training from once per week to three times per week. I want all of my men and women shooting ninety-five percent or better within the first three months of my taking command.”

M'raava twitched one pointed ear forward. “Ambitious,” she pronounced. “You think you can do it that fast?”

“I think I can get most of them there, at the very least,” the human said with confidence. He lowered his gaze to his tray, concentrating on his meal. “Besides, you know how diligent I can be.”

Quirking a slight smile, M'raava leaned forward. “Oh, I do, I do. You're very attentive to detail, Colonel. One might say your attentiveness is your best quality.”

Later that day, in the early evening, M'raava went back to the mech hangar to have a more cautious look around. This time the duty sergeant didn't try to stop her from walking around, although he did eye her with an expression of worry, as though he thought that she might try to destroy another one of the expensive war machines. M'raava paid him no mind, instead crossing the flight deck to the Mark 3-X mech she had been piloting that morning, EMF-489.

Considering the ordeal that it had been through, her mech (she had already begun to think of the craft as hers) didn't look much worse for the wear. On the outside, the most damage that was visible was some cosmetic paint damage and minor blackening to the legs, caused by the blasts from the missiles she had fired off. Everything else seemed to be intact. Placing a hand on one of the mech's legs, she rubbed the cold metallic surface of the ten-ton attack ship.

“Sorry for this morning,” she said to it in a quiet voice, giving the leg a little pat with one hand. “Hopefully our next flight will be smoother.” M'raava wagged her tail a bit, already looking forward to the next time she could take a spin in the mech.

A moment later, she nearly jumped out of her fur when she heard a loud, rattling clang. Looking up, she was just in time to dart to the side and avoid the falling wrench which was bouncing from surface to surface on the mech. The tool landed on the floor with a sound the reverberated around the expansive hangar, drawing the attention of numerous crewers walking about. M'raava stared at it, feeling her heart hammering at how close she'd come to having her head knocked in, and then she looked back up again. For the first time she noticed that the cockpit of EMF-489 was open. From inside, she heard a muffled curse.

“Goddammit!” a familiar voice said. “Stupid piece of shit wrench!” A few more assorted curses

followed, and then there was a smacking sound like someone punching metal with their fist. “Anyone down there? Little help, please.”

Reaching down, M'raava picked up the wrench and hefted it in her hand. “Looking for this? Catch.” Pulling her arm back, she tossed the tool up towards the top of the mech. As she watched the arc of the tumbling wrench, a gloved hand connected to a green-sleeved arm came up over the lip of the open cockpit and caught it perfectly.

“Thanks,” the high-pitched, female voice called down. “Damn thing got away from me. There's a lot of bolts in here, and some of them are tight as hell.”

“No problem,” M'raava said, a bit amused by the other person's tone of voice. “I owe you one. You're the voice I heard on the Control channel this morning, right? You really saved my ass.”

“Oh, that? That was nothing. Basic shit, and I'm good with explosives and stuff like that. Not quite as good as a mechanic, but I get by.” There were a few sharp grunts, and then a heavy sigh. “There. That oughta do it, for that panel at least. You really did a goddamn number on the controls in this thing when you tried to fix it on the fly...” Two hands gripped the edge of the cockpit, and then the person inside pulled herself up and came into view.

To M'raava's surprise, she found herself looking up at the face of another S'hestir. The feline up in the cockpit was much younger than her, gray-furred with amber eyes and jet black hair pulled back into a ponytail. She looked pretty, although it was a little hard to tell what with the oil-spattered uniform and grease-streaked fur. As she watched, the younger soldier swung her legs out of the cockpit and began climbing down to the hangar floor. When she got there, she pulled a towel out of the back pocket of her uniform, using it to wipe grease off of her gloves and face. M'raava noticed that she was wearing an Army uniform, instead of the expected Naval uniform. She had a badge over her left breast that indicated an artillery discipline, not someone that would be expected to be working on combat mechs.

Clearing her throat, M'raava extended a hand towards the other female. “I'm Lieutenant Colonel Shigeshti,” she said. “M'raava Shigeshti. I'm commanding this new batch of mechs. Thanks for helping me save one of them.”

Pulling her gloves off and tucking them into her back pockets with the towel, the younger S'hestir took M'raava's offered hand. “First Lieutenant F'earri,” she said. She had a very tight grip, despite her petite stature. Now that she was on the ground, M'raava could see that the lieutenant was a few inches shorter than her, maybe only four feet ten. “My first name is Neekeri, but everyone just calls me Keri. I like it better, anyway.”

“Keri, then,” M'raava said, agreeably. She let her hand drop, clasping it with her other hand

behind her back. "I can't help but notice you're wearing an Army uniform. I thought the only Army people on base were security. We have Marines for infantry. What brings you to Eris?"

"Orders," Keri said, rolling her eyes. Her tail twitched irritably. "What else? I'm *supposed* to be assigned to a field artillery unit, but I guess my scores in the academy were too high for my own good. The base commander here got wind and snapped me up on special assignment." She looked back up at the mech she had been working on. "Believe it or not, these old-style mechs have a lot of similarities to self-propelled artillery, what with the heavy weapons and all. Heavy weapons are my specialty, so I'm now assigned to head up the upkeep and outfitting of these units. I'm a glorified mechanic, Colonel."

M'raava chuckled. "Get used to it, Lieutenant," she said ruefully. "Your early career is going to be absorbed by assignments you don't much want. It sucks, but you can't do shit about it." She wagged her tail with a grin. "But judging by your quick thinking this morning, I think I lucked out getting you assigned to my unit." She looked up at EMF-489. "So, how badly did I screw her up?"

"Oh, not all *that* bad," Keri admitted, looking up as well. "I've mostly gotten the wiring fixed in the cockpit, and the engines and maneuvering controls seem to be back to normal. All that's left is to touch up the paint on the legs." The younger S'hestir rubbed a hand on the back of her neck. "I gotta admit, though, I'm not sure what went wrong. These mechs are factory-new, and for damn sure they don't leave the factory without being tested like crazy. A catastrophic malfunction like that shouldn't have been possible. I'm gonna have the night shift techs look into it, but she should be flight-ready again by tomorrow, at least."

Pleased by the news, M'raava wasn't as troubled by the lack of answers. "Glad to hear that she's fixed, anyway," the lieutenant colonel said. She looked up at the towering Mark 3-X with a small swell of pride in her chest. Her species' adopted homeworld could really turn out some sturdy machinery. "Well, listen, I feel like I need to thank you a little better than just words." M'raava checked her watch. "You're probably off duty soon, right? I hear there's an O-Club near the fourth wing fitness facility. You familiar with it?"

"Yeah, I know it," Keri said, turning back to her. An O-Club, short for Officer's Club, was very simply a bar that was usually open only to officers of captain's rank and above. "What of it?"

"How about meeting me there, say in an hour or so? Drinks are on me, of course." M'raava offered a smile. "Just tell them you're with me, and they should let you in."

"Free drinks, huh?" Thinking about it for a moment, Keri glanced up and down M'raava. The older S'hestir got the distinct feeling that she was being sized up. "Alright, what the hell? I don't mind getting in good with the CO. Give me...yeah, an hour to get freshened up, and I'll be there." The lieutenant tossed a haphazard salute, then turned and walked towards the hangar exit, a swagger to her

hips and a confident swish in her tail.

About an hour later, M'raava was sitting at the bar in the O-Club, cupping a glass of Bourbon whiskey on ice in one hand. She had changed out of her flight uniform into her Navy blues, not as formal as her dress uniform but not as casual as a flight suit. Looking around the club, she noticed that she seemed to be the highest-ranking officer there tonight. Plenty of captains and majors, and even a few lieutenants who were their guests. And, just like in the officer's mess, she was as yet the only S'hestir in attendance. The atmosphere in the club was quiet tonight, with some soft background music playing and the lights turned down to a mellow level. The place couldn't hold a candle to the faculty club at the Academy, but it wasn't bad, either.

I guess Eris isn't all bad, M'raava thought, sipping at the Bourbon. She normally drank softer stuff, since alcohol tended to hit S'hestir harder than it did humans, but so long as she took things slow she ought to be alright.

Glancing to the front of the club, she saw another female S'hestir walk in sporting Army greens, and recognized First Lieutenant F'earri. The younger woman had her hair tied up in a bun now, and she looked like she'd cleaned up considerably. Raising a hand, she waved Keri over, and the younger woman made her way across the room. When the gray-furred feline arrived in front of M'raava, she leaned against the bar. "Nice place," Keri said. "The bars for the rest of us aren't nearly this nice."

"Benefits of rank," M'raava said with a smile. She gestured for the bartender, a young enlisted man. "So, what do you drink?"

"Well, since you're buying, Lieutenant Colonel, I'm tempted to say the expensive stuff," Keri said, grinning mischievously. "But I can't stand any of that fancy crap. I'll have rum, straight, no ice." She paused momentarily. "Hell, make it a double. I don't have duty until late tomorrow."

M'raava's ear twitched in surprise as the bartender poured a glass of rum. "Hefty drink for one of us," she said. "I'm either impressed or worried, depending on how you handle it." She got up from her bar stool. "How 'bout we grab a table?"

"Whatever you say," Keri agreed, taking her drink as it was slid across the bar to her. The two felines walked to an empty booth set against the wall, a little ways away from the other patrons of the O-Club. They sat down opposite each other, with Keri shedding her jacket first, tossing it unceremoniously into the seat beside her. M'raava was amused by her casual disregard for military propriety. Even so, the lieutenant seemed to take pride in her appearance. She had groomed herself immaculately since M'raava had last seen her in the hangar bay, and her uniform was well-fitted to her body. Of course, she couldn't have been more than a year out of the Academy, so her appearance was

likely partly due to residual habits from training.

As they worked their way through their first drinks, M'raava took control of the conversation, telling Keri about her life and her career in the military. For the moment, she left out any details about her love life, including Arpad. Though S'hestir were considerably more open about sexuality than humans, she felt like it would be a little inappropriate to discuss such things with a subordinate officer. In any case, Keri seemed interested enough in what M'raava had to say. She seemed especially interested in her descriptions of what Naval Academy life had been like when M'raava had gone through. Though the academies for the Combined Military were all located on the moon, the facilities for the Navy and the Army were separate, and each branch had its own different and long-lasting traditions for students.

Their second round of drinks arrived just as M'raava was finishing up. She stuck with Bourbon whiskey for her next drink, but Keri switched to a tall, dark German beer. The alcohol was relaxing both of them, and M'raava felt a warmth in her cheeks.

“Well, that's about everything there is to know about me,” M'raava said. She brushed a strand of her blonde hair out of her eyes, tucking it back behind her ears. “What about you? What's your story?”

“Not a lot to tell,” Keri said. She took a big gulp of her beer, flicking her tongue out to swipe the foam from her lips. “I graduated from the Academy last year. I was supposed to go to an artillery unit, and I actually started field training, but like I said before I got pulled for a joint assignment out here.”

M'raava raised her glass, swirling the drink and clinking the ice. “You grow up on Earth?”

“Ah, no...,” Keri said slowly. “I grew up on Io. On the colony there. I was an orphan; I never knew my parents. I was told they were killed in a tunnel collapse when I was very young. I got bounced around from home to home until I turned eighteen, and then I entered the Academy. The Army seemed like a good opportunity for someone like me.”

“Sorry to hear that, about your family, I mean,” M'raava said, feeling a pang of sympathy. She was very close to her own family, and couldn't imagine what she would do if something happened to them. “The Academy must have been a nice change, though.”

“It definitely was,” the lieutenant agreed. “I learned a lot there, and I worked hard. I graduated top of my class, which was my mistake, I guess. General Liam got hold of my record, and so now I'm on this icy chunk of rock in the middle of fucking nowhere.” Keri grinned, chuckling a little. “A bit far from the artillery range in the Negev that I was hoping to wind up at.”

M'raava gave her a cheeky expression. “Look at it this way, Keri,” she said, restraining a laugh. “At least you get to spend your time around the Navy, so you can see what *real* soldiers are like.”

“Oh, big talk, Colonel,” Keri said, bristling a little, though still in good humor. “I will say that you Navy people do have more in the way of luxuries than us Army folks. I guess you need all that padding to keep you from getting hurt. Now, us in the Army are used to a little rough stuff.”

M'raava's left eyebrow raised. “Good. I'd be disappointed if someone so fresh out of the Academy couldn't handle it when things got a little rough.”

Keri grinned wider, lifting her beer glass and draining it. Then she leaned forward, both elbows on the table and propping her chin up in her hands. “Enough of the boring shit about my life, I'm interested in hearing more about yours. You got a boyfriend?”

The alcohol was loosening M'raava's tongue, so she was now feeling a little more ready to get into this subject of conversation. “Engaged, actually,” she said, raising her left hand and displaying the ring on her finger.

“That is disappointing,” Keri said, pouting. “Someone pretty like you ought to still be playing the field. Is he at least a good guy?”

“Oh, he's a good guy,” M'raava said, nodding. She'd had another flash of warmth at Keri's apparent dismay at finding that M'raava was spoken for. If this had been a few years earlier, she would have been sorely tempted to make this evening of drinks something a little more. As it was, the younger lieutenant seemed incredibly desirable, and M'raava couldn't blame all of the attraction on the alcohol. She'd had her share of dalliances with other females, some of them since she had first started her relationship with Arpad. “He's stationed here on Eris with me. Colonel Apaffy, the soon-to-be head of base security.”

Keri nodded. “I've heard the name. He's human, right?” A nod from M'raava. “Lucky you, then. You don't have to be separated from your man.”

“What about you?” M'raava asked. “Anybody special in your life?”

“Not right now,” the younger S'hestir said, shaking her head. “I had a few girlfriends in the Academy, but nobody since then.” She leaned closer to M'raava, winking. “I'm definitely not inexperienced, if you're worried 'bout that.”

Feeling a flutter pass through her body, M'raava felt her tail give a few waves behind her. “If I didn't know any better, Keri, I'd think that was a proposition.”

“Is that a 'no?’”

Now M'raava had a serious quandary to consider. On the one hand, Keri was a very attractive young woman. The temptation to invite her to a more private setting was definitely there, and the senior officer could just imagine what it might be like. M'raava hadn't been with one of her own species for quite some time, but she knew just how rambunctious a female S'hestir could be. Two of them

together was something special, indeed. On the other hand, the separation between their ranks was a little bit long to be considered within the bounds of military propriety, even if it wasn't strictly against regulations. As well, she had been faithful only to Arpad for some time, now, though this wasn't something he had insisted on. In fact, he hadn't minded the occasional rendezvous on her part before they became engaged.

“Well...,” M'raava said slowly, taking another swallow of her drink. “My fiancé is on the night watch tonight, so I'm all alone this evening. I could use some company. How about we go back to my quarters and chat some more?”

Keri gave her own wag of the tail. “Sounds like a damn good idea to me, Lieutenant Colonel.”

“Oh, please,” the older female said, shaking her head once. She tossed off the rest of her whiskey, setting the empty glass down with a sultry look across the table. “Call me M'raava.”

Before M'raava and Keri could even get inside the door of M'raava's quarters, they were all over each other. They were lucky that the hallway was deserted at this hour. When they arrived at the door, Keri surprised her with her strength by shoving her up against the wall and pressing her into an intense kiss. At the same time, the younger female's hands slipped inside her jacket, finding the buttons of her blouse and starting to work them open. A half second later, M'raava's own hands seemed to move of their own accord, sliding around Keri's body as she got a hold on the lieutenant's tight, firm rear. She pulled the gray-furred S'hestir against her, leaning into the kiss with a loud purr.

When her shirt was open down to the waistband of her uniform pants, M'raava suddenly remembered that they were still out in the open. Blindly, she swatted back with one hand for the door controls, finding them on the third slap and opening the door. Tugging at Keri, she maneuvered the pair of them inside the room, closing the door behind them. Breaking their kiss with a gasp for air, M'raava looked into the girl's amber eyes with wonder. She hadn't experienced this level of passion in quite a while. Keri was looking back at her with a lustful, eager gaze.

“Big bed,” Keri purred, glancing over M'raava's shoulder. Her hands went down to the superior officer's waistband, starting to get to work on her belt. The two women began to make their way towards the bed, steadily shedding clothing as they went along. By the time they arrived, their bodies were completely bare.

“You're a wild one,” M'raava said throatily, her head spinning slightly from a combination of fierce arousal and the lingering effects of the alcohol. “I can tell you're going to be a handful...” She sank back onto the bed, pulling Keri down on top of her. Their breasts pressed together, a shiver passing through both of their bodies as their nipples rubbed against each other.

Keri leaned her head down, nipping the side of M'raava's neck as she whispered in one of her ears. "You have no idea. I'm gonna make you forget about your fiance for a while, M'raava." She wedged a hand in between them, splaying her fingers out on the older woman's stomach and stroking the fur there. M'raava hissed between her teeth as Keri's hand went lower, dipping between her legs. The other S'hestir wasted no time in teasing her fingers into the folds of her pussy. M'raava was absolutely drenched, and the heat radiating from her nether lips could have melted steel.

"Ooh, I dunno about that," M'raava cautioned her, grabbing Keri's ass and holding on tight. She arched her back as Keri slipped a finger inside of her, letting out a low moan of pleasure. "He's...He's pretty *special*!" The last word came out shrilly as Keri latched onto one of her nipples with her mouth, sucking hard on the sensitive nub.

"Then I'll just have to put forth my best effort, Colonel," she murmured, laughing lightly. "The Army taught me to do my best, no matter what I'm doing." Raising herself up on one arm, Keri looked down at M'raava, licking her lips as she continued to finger her, alternating between sliding a finger deep into her and bringing it out to swirl over her clit. M'raava privately thought that the lieutenant might have been playing things down when she told her of "a few girlfriends". She was a bit more practiced than that humble statement might have suggested.

"Funny, the Navy taught me something about the same," M'raava managed to say. She brought her hands around, cupping Keri's breasts, which were a bit smaller than her own but no less firm and sexy. She was gratified to see a shudder of pleasure pass through the younger girl as she squeezed them, caressing the furred orbs in her palms. Rising, M'raava kissed Keri again, taking the momentary loss in her concentration to roll her over, reversing their position so that the older was atop the younger. Looking down at Keri, M'raava couldn't stop her tail from swishing back and forth through the air behind her. Her eyes roamed up and down the girl's body, taking everything in. She was very attractive. "I may be a little outta practice with this. Don't hold it against me."

Placing her hands on both of Keri's knees, she pushed her legs apart, exposing the lieutenant's youthful pussy to her hungry eyes. Her pink folds were glistening with moisture, the light scent of an aroused S'hestir teasing her senses. M'raava's mouth began to water like she hadn't eaten in weeks. She had to have a taste of her, and there was no time like the present. Lowering herself onto her belly, M'raava dipped her head between Keri's legs. She kissed her pussy lightly, feeling the heat on her lips as Keri shuddered again.

Experimentally, M'raava flicked her tongue out, dragging it up slowly from the bottom all the way up to her clit. Both of Keri's hands came to the back of her head, her fingers tangling with M'raava's blonde hair. Drawing her tongue back in, the lieutenant colonel took a moment to savor her

younger lover's flavor. Her pussy tasted exquisite, spicy with a hint of sweetness, bringing back all sorts of wonderful memories from M'raava's early days of adulthood. She'd been much wilder then, if that was possible. Back then, she might not have even waited to get Keri out of the bar before going down on her. She was definitely going to enjoy this.

With no more time wasted, M'raava began lapping at Keri's pussy feverishly. The other female shrieked with pleasure, wrapping her feet around her shoulders as the pressure on the back of M'raava's head increased. Her muzzle was buried in the other female's sex, her tongue slipping deep inside of her as she tried to taste everything she could. Keri's pussy contracted around the invading organ, rippling with little spasms of bliss as the rough feline tongue played around her inner walls. M'raava was loving every second of it. Keri's sex was flowing freely, flooding her mouth with a steady supply of her nectar, more intoxicating than any liquor could be.

Just as M'raava was certain that Keri was about to cum, the younger officer wriggled her way out from under her, panting for breath. "God, M'raava, get up here..." Putting her hands underneath M'raava's armpits, she sat them both up, sliding close to her. The two females embraced, splaying their legs apart until they were straddling each other.

Their pussies came together, pressing hard against each other. They began grinding together, and both women held on to the other, squishing their breasts together as they kissed intensely. Pleasure began rising up in them as they fucked each other, and they twined their tails. Caught up in the passion of the moment, they both mewled and purred loudly, not caring if anyone in adjoining quarters might hear them. Keri grabbed M'raava's ass, clutching her firmly to her, rocking back and forth more and more frantically. Finally, they both tensed up, nearly freezing in place as they began to cum together. Breathing hard and moaning in concert, they keeled over onto the bed, still clasped in each others' arms as their orgasms washed over them.

When they both finally were able to catch their breath, they each gradually relaxed their grip on the other. The two S'hestir females stayed close, gently rubbing their furred bodies against one another and kissing tenderly. The emotion in the room was still very much one of passionate attraction, dulled only slightly by their shared release. M'raava stroked a hand through Keri's jet black hair, which had come loose from its bun during their lovemaking.

"That was incredible...", M'raava managed to say. Her head was still feeling loopy, though her mind was starting to clear a bit. She didn't regret her decision to accept Keri's offer one bit; it had been a wonderful experience, and a feeling that she hadn't realized just how much she missed.

"Mmm," Keri agreed, her eyes half-closed. The young feline leaned in and kissed M'raava deeply, rubbing a hand up and down along her side. "You're not bad, for being out of practice. I

wouldn't mind doing this again sometime." She opened her eyes a bit wider, an impish glint in them. "Maybe...your fiance could join, next time?"

M'raava's heart raced at that prospect, and she closed her eyes. "That's an idea," she purred, her mind already forming images of sharing Keri with Arpad. She was sure he would be a willing participant, given the right amount of warm-up. "Perhaps we'll do that." She opened her eyes again, smiling at Keri. "Spend the night?"

Keri grinned back, her tail wagging at the unspoken promise of more to come. "Love to."