

Lacuna Blue

By Mantrid Brizon

Chapter Twenty-One: Gin And Tonic

“I can’t wait to try out that new bar!” Kira happily exclaims, walking down a hall on Lagos Depot.

“It’s been open for over a week.” Ein remarks in surprise, walking beside her.

“I know, but I was holding off.” She retorts.

“Until when?” He raises a brow.

“Hey!” May suddenly greets the two.

Glancing back, they see George and May standing several meters behind them, having emerged from another hallway.

“Hi!” Kira gleefully replies, her tail wagging.

“Where are you two going?” George asks.

“I was going to check some cartographic data for Jonathan. He’s making a long-haul for sky dust.” Ein answers.

“I was just tagging along.” Kira interjects.

“We’re headed to the bar.” May remarks.

“Can I come?!” Kira asks in a disturbingly high-pitched squeal.

“Sure.” George shrugs.

Darting off, she says goodbye to Ein before following George and May down the hall and in the opposite direction as the server room. Walking just behind and between them, her head shifts slightly from side to side as she looks back and forth between George’s buttocks and May’s.

“Should’ve known.” Ein says with a sigh.

Walking down the halls in silence, Kira glances back in Ein’s direction. Though now a few hallways away, and unable to see him, she finds herself feeling somewhat ashamed for leaving him so quickly. It only grows worse when it dawns on her that Ein, unlike Donovan Craig or Prat Kahb, never received the option to take a slave girl for himself. He must be quite lonely.

“Hey George?” Kira begins.

“Yeah?”

“How come you never let Ein have one of those adorable little slaves for himself?” She asks.

“I did.” He chuckles.

“What?!”

“I offered him a chance to pick from the lot when we boarded the Bannockburn. He refused. I think his mind was focused elsewhere. I told him it’s an open offer.” George explains.

“Really? He seems so lonely all of the time.” Kira remarks.

“Maybe he’s distracted by a certain female co-worker?” May says, glancing back at Kira.

“Ooohh! Who?”

“You probably know her. Really energetic, all white fur, big boobs, kind of irritating.” George teases.

“What?! N-no, I... I doubt that.” Kira replies. “Besides...” She turns her eyes down. “Ein’s not my type, anyway.”

“Apparently... My eyes are up here...” May grumbles.

“Sorry...” Kira feels herself flush. “Are my boobs really big?!” She grins, resting her hands over them and looking down at her chest.

May and George glance back at her, then towards each other; they silently and subtly shake their heads. Walking toward the bar, Kira watches George. Though originally staring lustfully at her captain, one of the only men she would bed, she notices something that bothers her. Though his eyes are level and he doesn’t trip, he seems a thousand miles away. His lips, contorted into a faint but perpetual frown, the human looks melancholy. Something appears to weigh heavy on his mind, and whatever it is, it isn’t pleasing.

May notices the same thing, reaching out and attempting to hold his hand.

It takes a moment of bumping him before she has to act herself. She takes a firm grasp of the appendage, snapping him out of his daze. George turns his head to look toward his girlfriend.

“Are you alright?” May asks softly.

George merely nods. Reaching their bar, a place where Slaver’s can enjoy an allowance of complimentary drinks and dinner, they walk through the sliding double doors. Unlike other bars at other criminal bases, where people look to them with fear, everyone inside is a Slaver; upon seeing George and May, they are shown reverence. The trio sit at empty stools near the front of the bar where a tall, muscular, black furred Voeldahn with the appearance of a jackal wipes a crystal mug.

“Well, if it isn’t the Master and his Lady... And also some girl!” The bartender jovially proclaims. “What’ll it be today?”

“I’m Kira...”

“Whatever. Drinks?” The bartender asks.

“Blood Mary, Scott.” May answers.

“Should’ve known.” He says with a chuckle.

“Aqua Velva.” Kira says.

“Alright, and what about you, Mr. Woods?” Scott turns to him.

George sits silently, staring down and lost in his own thoughts. After an awkward pause, Scott clears his throat.

“Ahem... Boss-man?”

“Hm?” George glances up.

“What’ll it be.” He asks again.

A pensive George sits, staring at the wood veneer of the metal counter. A short pause to collect his thoughts precedes a shallow breath.

“Gin and tonic.” George murmurs.

“Uh... Yes, sir!” A surprised Scott chirps.

May looks to her lover with shock; he’s never been one to drink, nor has she ever seen him use even the mildest of drugs. His only vice, if it could even be called that, is his consistent desire for her affection, something she is more than willing to give him.

“You don’t drink hard liquor.” She remarks.

“I’ve been meaning to start.”

“What’s wrong, little bear?” She asks, leaning in close and whispering into his ear. “Can we talk it over?”

George turns to his partner, her vibrant eyes soft and warm and her lips curled around her snout in the most pleasant of smiles; she is the light in his darkened life, but even now it seems faded. He takes a breath to speak, but halts when the bartender approaches. Setting the drinks on the bar, Scott soon returns to his other duties. Turning his eyes back to his girlfriend, George reaches out a hand and strokes her face, softly and lovingly.

“I’ve just been doing a lot of soul searching, babe. When we get home, to our apartment, I want to have a long and serious talk.”

“Okay, little bear. Anything you want.” She coos.

Grinning, George leans in and plants a kiss upon his lover’s lips, Kira watching with some jealousy. May’s tail sways as she leans into him, absorbing his affection like a dry sponge. It’s his intention to reveal to her their exit strategy; George doesn’t want this life anymore. If he can get himself, May, Kira, and his brother out without undue suffering, he’ll gladly leave the business to Michael and enjoy the remainder of his life in quiet retirement, beside May, who he desires to make his wife.

Lying in bed beside Erica, a sweaty James gasps for breath. Staring at the ceiling, the beautiful human of Asian descent lay atop him. Her large, D-cup breasts press

against his chest as his hands rest upon her glistening back, her thin nose nuzzling his neck. They have lived together in his apartment, as a couple, since they've returned to Lagos Depot ten days ago; they have known each other for only twelve. Desiring to both cement her position in James' heart and mind, Erica advanced their relationship on the fifth day.

To her pleasant surprise, James is exceptionally talented. Combining this with his personality and affection for her, he grows more appealing by the day. As insane as it seems when she dwells on it, James is exactly the man she's always wanted, and now that she has him, she doesn't want to give him up; Erica genuinely enjoys his comfort, but also the power she has as James' lover. Erica wouldn't allow herself to be freed from him even if he offered it at this very moment.

Straightening her back, she straddles his pelvis and rocks her own. With a groan of pleasure, James holds her slender waist, gazing upon her spectacular form; Kelly was never this beautiful. Sitting upright, they share several passionate kisses, their arms wrapped around one another. As they prepare for a second session, James' V.I. bracelet chimes. With Lagos Depot's comm-link established and a hacking program to allow them access to satellite links, calls from outside the station can now be made.

Sighing in frustration from the unwanted interruption, James apologizes to his lover. Whining cutely, Erica pulls herself from her lover, lying on her side atop the silken

sheets of their king-sized bed. Rolling over, James takes his V.I. bracelet from the charging stand, answering the call by the fourth ring.

“Hello?”

“Mr. Woods?” A squeaky, male voice responds.

“Speaking.”

“It’s Eugene.” The voice replies.

James eyes grow wide and he brings the bracelet closer to his face, now eager to speak to the caller. Eugene is a Lane Jacker, expert techies who use state of the art hardware and software to commit their crimes. Eugene captain’s a gunboat with a total crew of only three. James had slipped them a half-dozen beautiful, young slave girls, two per Lane Jacker, and a crate of blasters, all with George’s permission. This special cargo was used to buy a favor; they’ve been keeping tabs on his wife and her legal dealings for weeks.

Kelly made a plea to take full custody of their children, which the court swiftly granted. This was not unexpected and was nothing that angered James; he would one day see his children regardless of the court’s ruling. However, Kelly and Jayne petitioned the court to allow Jayne the right to adopt James’ children. The petition is less than six hours old. James becomes enraged. Ending the call with Eugene, who has served his purpose, he begins to panic.

“How the fuck can she do that?! MY kids! Raised by that motherfucker?! The bastard who stole her from me?! Oh, no, bitch... You made a serious fucking mistake. Those are my kids, you god damn whore!” James rambles on.

Erica watches as a nude James paces back and forth. After a few minutes, he rambles almost incoherently to himself, waving his hands in the air stomping about. With the mood thoroughly slain and James now too distracted to dote on her the way that she so enjoys, Erica makes a sudden and desperate suggestion.

“James.”

“What?” He turns to her.

“You have a ship, baby. Why don’t we just go and get them?” Erica suggests.

“A ship... Yeah... Yeah! Zebrina!” James exclaims excitedly.

“Mars isn’t far. We can have them back here before dinner.” Erica adds.

“That’s a great idea! You’re so damn smart. Wait... What about Kelly and Jayne, or her sister, Marsha?” James asks, rubbing his nose.

“Kill them?” She shrugs with an innocent smile.

Rushing up to her, a grinning James embraces and kisses his lover over and over again. Giggling, Erica pulls him down atop her. Before they can resume their previous activities, they collectively decide to carry out the mission to

gather James' children; they can always continue their fun once Kelly and Jayne have been murdered and his son and daughter are collected. Quickly dressing themselves, James acquires several weapons from his personal cache. With two blasters in hand, he holsters one, his black and gold Anelace XR-20.

Turning to Erica, he extends a hand to her. Looking down, her eyes grow wide at the sight of a nickel-plated and ivory gripped XR-20 blaster, decorated with ornate golden flowers.

"I-I had this made for you." James sheepishly states.

Looking at the weapon, she feels her heart race. Erica takes hold of the blaster, her sense of power increasing; James is practically entwined around her fingers. Handing her a custom made and very expensive, brown leather holster with spare magazine pouches, she attaches her new weapon to her hip. Joining her lover, the pair race toward the docks while James uses his V.I. bracelet to summon his crew to the Zebrina. Reaching the docks first, they are forced to wait for several minutes while the others gradually congregate around the ship.

A jealous Kristen, who had the pleasure of experiencing James once before, glares at Erica. She has never liked nor trusted her, and Erica knows it. However, close to his crew, Erica dares not make unnecessary waves, at least not yet.

“What’s up, captain?” Bradley asks.

“We’re going to Mars on a personal errand.” James chirps.

Their eyes wide with surprise, they turn their heads and are perplexed that the cargo lift is completely barren. Disregarding their questions, James brings his crew aboard and they soon prep for launch. With the access codes of a captain, the second highest level attainable as a Slaver, the Zebrina and her crew may come and go as they please. With the inner doors opening, the ship carefully floats inside. After suffering through the slow departure, James feels his pulse quicken when his pilot, Billy, pushes the ship to full power and follows the set course to the planet.

With their destination so close, they arrive in under an hour. Flying low, they land away from the rural town that Kelly and her lover call their home. The house, owned by Kelly’s sister, Marsha, is a rather expensive dwelling in the town where they reside, but it’s still nothing by comparison to what she was used too when she lived with James. With the Zebrina and her crew landed several miles away, James and Erica use a hovercar, left within the cargo hold, to make their way toward the village.

James zips through thin paths cut into the forest with blistering speed, never more than a foot from crashing into a thick tree. He seems possessed by the prospect of collecting his children, ignoring every obstacle that

narrowly ends their flight. Erica sits beside him, nervous and worried, but trusting that he would not end their lives so foolishly. James has a desire for closure and revenge; he cannot achieve that if he's dead. Her faith is well placed, as they soon emerge from the forest and fly through the hovercar lanes as if they belonged there.

Following their guidance system to an address James has all but memorized, they close the distance. He grumbles almost incoherently to himself as they draw near the house. Why would Kelly choose to live in such a small town, or in such a modest house? Is she so afraid to be found? If that were the case, she would have been smarter than to live with her own sister. Is she running out of funds? James cannot be sure, but if that were the case, why petition the court for adoption papers for Jayne?

The thoughts whir in his head, swirling like the blades of a meat grinder. Perhaps she has security and funds and she just wanted a quiet place to continue fucking her horse man? Every thought of the Voeldahn touching his wife, violating her with his endowment makes James' blood boil. Is it possible that they are staying with Marsha because Kelly confided, and now Jayne is enjoying two women who live to get him off? Passing the expensive home, modest by James' standards, they park around the corner, facing the wrong direction.

It is a tactic to make the hovercar seem less like the vehicle of a person targeting the home. Clandestinely checking their weapons, they ready for conflict. Using

expensive and long leather coats to conceal their very visible holsters, the lovers look to each other once more.

“Thanks for doing this with me, Erica. It means a lot.” James says, smiling warmly at her.

“Anything for you, sweetheart.” She coos.

They lean closer and share several passionate kisses before opening the gullwing doors and slipping out of the hovercar. Glancing around, James notes that there is little to no real security, and the nearby residential crossroads has no cameras. Everything is just as his privately hired agent, and Eugene and his crew have stated. Walking up to the house, they approach casually, without arousing suspicion. Knowing that they will not recognize Erica, James ducks down, just out of sight of the front door.

Knocking, Erica waits as someone approaches. A woman opens the old-fashioned, swinging door. After Erica became sexually available to James, he showed her the video. Heartbroken for him, Erica could feel her own blood boil as she watched the woman that was James’ wife enjoying the horse Voeldahn man with childlike glee; this woman standing before her is *not* the woman in the video.

“I’m sorry to bother you ma’am. My hovercar’s levitation module was going out and my V.I. bracelet’s battery died.” Erica begins.

“Would you like to place a call?” The woman asks.

“Please.” Erica nods.

Turning her back to the doorway as Erica steps inside, James rushes her, grabbing his sister-in-law.

“Surprise, bitch.” James growls, placing his hand over her mouth. “I bet you didn’t see this coming. Get the door, baby.”

Erica closes and locks the front door, drawing her own blaster. They move through the house, quietly looking for James’ children. Upon James’ instruction, Erica checks a room. As she steps inside, she finds it dark. Speaking softly does not activate the lights, so reaching around the archway, she finds an old-fashioned light switch.

“How quaint.” She remarks, flipping it up.

Turning, her eyes grow wide as a large and powerful looking Voeldahn male rushes her. Backing out of the room and swinging around the archway, she dodges the man as he flies out of the kitchen. Startled, James loses his grip of Marsha, who elbows him in the side. James is quickly tackled by Jayne, dropping his blaster. Marsha reaches for the weapon, but Erica raises her hands and fires, a bolt nicking Marsha’s left arm and cutting her deeply. Terrified and unable to fight without a weapon, Marsha bolts into another room.

“KELLY!!! JAMES IS HERE!!!” Marsha screams at the top of her lungs.

Erica chases after the woman, who races from room to room before finding a staircase tucked away near the rear of the house. Wrestling with Jayne, the skilled street fighter busts Jaynes flat, horse-like nose with a headbutt. Reeling from pain, James punches him in the throat and shoves him back. A shot flies past his head, missing him by centimeters. Turning, Kelly holds his blaster at him. Showing no fear, James hooks their coffee table with his left foot, curling the back of his toes around a wooden leg.

“I will blow your damn head off you fucking monster... Get out!” Kelly screams.

“Shh... Shoot him...” Jayne struggles to speak.

James raises his arms, holding them out and away from him as he dares her to fire. Jayne shifts on the ground, his large bulk thudding. Turning her eyes to her lover, James makes his move. With a violent kick, he overturns the small table, slams the top into her shins and terrifies his wife who screams and falls backward. Dropping the blaster, she struggles to collect it. Straddling his wife, James throttles the life from her body, his hands wrapped around her neck.

“This is all your fault you god damn whore.” He growls.

Kelly urinates on herself in terror. As her vision darkens and she loses consciousness, arms wrap around James' trunk. With all of the strength he has left, Jayne pulls the human from his lover and falls backward. Reaching a hand around, James jams a thumb into his eye, nearly gouging it out. Taking his arms from his assailant, Jayne screams in pain. Straddling his chest, James beats the Voeldahn to a bloody pulp as his wife lay unconscious on the ground.

"This is what you get, you home wrecking, son of a bitch." James chants.

Chasing Marsha up the stairs, her target gains distance, reaching a room and slamming the door closed. Erica bangs on the door as she hears the woman speaking to two crying children, a boy and a girl. Stepping back, Erica looks over the antique style door. Unlike sliding doors with no weaknesses besides their circuitry, she sees a knob near one side and midway up. With a few swift kicks, she breaks the wooden frame near the latch and the door flies open. A blaster round slams into the wall beside her.

In a panic, Erica aims at Marsha and fires. Round after round, she pulls the trigger as fast as she can, emptying her fifteen-shot blaster in her direction. To her credit, six rounds slam into her torso, with a seventh striking her forehead. Marsha slumps back, falling dead in front of the children who scream loudly at the horrific scene. Racing up to the corpse, Erica collects the blaster Marsha held, looking over the older, Anelace XR-9. Her eyes turn to the children, who cower beside the bathroom door of their shared bedroom.

“I’m done playing with you.” James says, after giving Jayne a final, hard punch to the face. “You’re finished.”

Jayne spits out several teeth, blood pooling onto the floor beneath his head. Taking his blaster from beside Kelly’s unconscious body, he steps on Jayne’s chest, forcing him to look at him one last time. After mockingly blowing his victim a kiss, James opens fire, shooting six rounds into Jayne’s face and skull. He is unrecognizable when he’s finished. Turning around, Kelly groans on the floor. Stepping up to her, she lifts her head, immediately looking for her lover. Seeing him dead at her feet, she silently cries.

“Consider this a divorce.” James calmly states, holding out his blaster.

Round after round, he fires away. Emptying his weapon into his wife’s chest and head, she too is left unrecognizable. Remembering Marsha and Erica, he begins to panic all over again. Did Marsha escape, or worse, did she hurt or kill Erica? Racing throughout the house and calling her name, Erica calls back. Her voice shakes as she weeps. Finding the staircase, James races up to find Erica sitting in the hallway.

“Erica! Sweetheart! Are you alright?!” He asks, kneeling down beside her.

“Sh-she... The children...” Erica turns her tear-filled eyes to her lover. “I’m sorry, James.”

With wide eyes, he leaves her side, dropping his blaster to the floor. Darting into the room, he finds Marsha lying dead, slumped against the wall with her head leaning forward and facing the door, her body nearly flat on her back. Blood pools around her and soaks an Anelace XR-9 blaster. It is only then that James remembers that Marsha had owned a blaster inherited by their father; it was unregistered, and therefore the agent and Eugene couldn’t find a record of it. The faint sound of water sloshing catches his attention.

Turning, he slowly steps into the bathroom to a horrific scene. Lying inside of the tub, face down, floats the corpse of his son, Kyle. Kneeling against the tub, a heartbroken James pulls the boy’s body from the crimson bathwater, unwilling to turn him over after seeing the exit wounds on the back of his head. James can’t bear to look at the mangled face of his son, merely setting him down on the floor. Looking around the room, he doesn’t see his daughter, Brandy, anywhere.

Turning back toward the door, he can see the legs of a small child, five or six years old, jutting out from behind the bathroom door. With a nearly two-foot space between the door and the wall, she was perfectly hidden upon entry. Closing the door, James bursts into tears at the mangled remains of his young daughter. Shot through the face multiple times with the powerful blaster, James can’t even

recognize her. Falling upon the floor, James weeps like his children did only moments earlier.

Stepping inside the bathroom, a crying Erica kneels beside her lover. She strokes his head and sniffles, trying to collect herself.

“Wah-why... Why would sh-she d-do that?!” James stammers.

“I think... To keep you from them.” Erica begins.

“What?” James turns his head to her.

“I chased her up the stairs, but she was too fast. She locked herself in. When I tried to kick in the door, I heard her talking to the children. She said a bad man was going to hurt them and to trust her. I heard the shots...”

“She said that?” He asks with wide, puppy dog eyes.

“Yes.” Erica nods. “I finally broke the door open and she shot at me too. I emptied my blaster and killed her, but I was too late. I... James, I’m so sorry.”

“You did everything you could.” A crying James sniffles.

Sitting upright, he takes her into his arms and holds her tightly. At Erica’s urging, they flee the house. Though James wants to take the children’s bodies with them, Erica swiftly talks him out of it. Following her lead, they race from the home, stealing a few personal belongings and a couple credit chits on the way out to stage a robbery scene. Closing the front door, James swiftly kicks it open, before

pulling it closed again; he is careful to leave as much false evidence as possible. Erica orchestrates the entire ploy.

Returning to their hovercar, they escape from the residential neighborhood as sirens grow ever closer. Turning onto a main lane, they fly away, passing a half dozen police hovercars. No one notices them, and they are back at the Zebrina within minutes, and without incident. Walking through the ship as they prepare for takeoff, James is like a zombie. He can barely give orders as the image of his children flash through his mind; Erica takes over for him, and the crew obey, as per James' instructions.

Flying through space and back toward Lagos Depot, it is Erica who reveals the details of her story to the crew. She placates their curiosity as they watch their captain break down before them, crying and mumbling incoherently. Upon reaching the sordid details of the children's murder, Kristen narrows her eyes. She finds it difficult to believe that an aunt would so quickly slay her niece and nephew if they had a chance to live, even in the care of Slaver's; Kristen is certain that Marsha knew James would never abuse his own flesh and blood.

Erica's story doesn't hold water, but with James coiled around her finger like string, she holds her tongue. Returning to Lagos Depot, Erica issues all of the commands to the crew. Upon successfully docking, they sit in stunned silence. Glancing back, they watch James for a moment. Erica takes him in her arms, pulling him from the chair and

leading him like a child from the bridge. Waiting until she is out of earshot, Kristen turns to the others.

“Something about her story doesn’t make sense. I’m going to tell George.”

“Is that such a good idea?” Kaley asks.

“Will he even listen?” Brooke interjects.

“I don’t know, but I have to do something.” Kristen replies.

Walking out of the pilothouse and down the steps, Kristen’s heart sinks when she sees that Erica stands half-way down the hall. James is not with her. With narrowed eyes, Erica glares at the feline Voeldahn. Walking further down the hall and toward the cargo hold, Erica retrieves James, who sits on the floor in a doorway, waiting for her a distance away. Exiting the ship as a group, they casually go their separate ways. While the others return to their small apartments at the ship crew’s section of the station, Kristen does not.

Racing through the halls, she looks desperately for George. She stops Michael as he speaks with Garin, both of them falling silent at her very presence. They reveal George’s location and wave her away, waiting for a moment before they continue speaking. Entering Lagos Depot’s armory, a large and well-organized room, she finds George and May looking over the new additions to their cache. Her appearance surprises the couple, and the guards who stand nearby. Dressed in their black armor, with royal purple EVA

suits underneath, a virtually trademarked Slaver uniform, the aim their rifles as she approaches without permission.

Unlike captains, who are the equivalent to lieutenants, a crewmember of a Slaver ship is no higher than another guard. Approaching the leader of their entire faction in such a bold manner is highly frowned upon.

“Wait!” George exclaims. “Lower those weapons!”

The Slavers obey without question. Approaching him, Kristen gasps for breath, eager to share her story with the man in charge of the entire faction. Sitting her down and helping her calm her frazzled nerves, she is soon able to share all of the horrific details of James’ and Erica’s story. George and May can hardly believe their ears. If the guards weren’t wearing blacked-out, full-face masks and helmets, their expressions would probably show similar horror at her tale. May feels herself nauseas as she describes Erica’s behavior, both during and after sharing the sordid details.

George and May are both immediately suspicious. Knowing Kelly and Marsha the way he did, he knows that there is virtually no chance that the children died in the manner that Erica claims. Somehow, James, in his grief or blossoming psychosis, is unable to see it. Fearing for her life, Kristen begins to cry. Gently embracing the trembling Voeldahn woman, George assures her that she will not come to harm. He turns to his guards, bringing them closer.

Whispering a series of orders, they immediately nod and obey, darting off to make the necessary arrangements.

Leading Kristen from the armory, the couple escort the woman to her apartment. George assures her that she will be safe; he will pull her and the other crewmembers from the Zebrina and find them a new ship to work on. Until this is done, they will remain under guard for their own peace of mind. A thankful Kristen embraces George, giving him a tender kiss on the cheek. Understanding of Kristen's emotional state, May lets that offense slide.

"So..." May turns to George. "What are we going to do about James and Erica?"

Sighing, George runs a hand over his head, his fingers weaving through his long, brown hair. He turns his eyes to his girlfriend, who waits expectantly. Taking a breath, George pauses as if the words are caught in his throat. Without a real answer for her at the moment, he glances back down at the floor.

"I need a drink." George mutters.

"Alright..." May softly replies.