

Lacuna Blue

By Mantrid Brizon

Chapter Twenty-Four: Smash-Hit

Sitting on the edge of her bed, Erica waits in her temporary quarters within the bowels of the ship. Staring at the floor, she's lost in her thoughts. A knock on the door, jars her from her trance.

"Yes?"

"It's captain Crippen. I just wanted to check on you and make sure that you're alright." A deep voice speaks from the other side of the door.

"I'm fine. Thank you." Erica replies.

"Alright. If you need anything, don't hesitate to call."

Spinning around, Harvey's slender, black feline tail swishes through the air. He takes a few steps before pausing to glance back over his shoulder at the door. His vivid orange eyes narrow as he brushes the bangs of his dyed red hair from his brow. The newest captain of the Slaver's Union, captain Crippen commands his personal ship, the Ourang Medan. She was on her maiden voyage for

the Union, an impromptu mission after James fled with the sky dust. After collecting a cargo hold of olive drab crates from their Tongyan base, he was suddenly diverged by George Woods himself.

Under orders by the founder of their faction, he flew a ship with a full cargo hold of slaves right over a police station in Sijia, to collect the young, human woman. Harvey was warned that she was not to be touched or mistreated in any way, though he wonders why. Continuing on, he reaches the bridge of his ship, which is a VK-95 'Aplomb' class transport. It's identical in form to George's Bannockburn, though the Bannockburn is more powerful than the Ourang Medan, with a modified power core, weapons and shields.

To differentiate the two craft, all four of the Ourang Medan's engine hull panels have been painted red, similar in shade to his own dyed hair, which is also his favorite color. Taking his seat at the captain's chair, Harvey relaxes his muscles and sighs. This moment is every bit as invigorating as he thought it would be.

"Are we ready to engage the hyper drive?" He asks.

"Yes, captain! It's charged and ready!" A crewmember chirps.

Harvey Crippen clasps his hands together before his short snout, his black claws of his index fingers resting upon his black nose. The crew look back at him, awaiting his orders. Sitting on her bed, Erica can hear the hum of the

engines as the hyper drive prepares to engage. The subtle vertigo hits her as the Ourang Medan enters the warp bubble. It won't be long before she's safe and sound in Lagos Depot, but her heart weighs heavy. Erica's grown so fond of her lover, James.

Eager to please her and so easy for her to manipulate, he's everything that she's ever wanted in a man. Wealthy, powerful, attractive, often quite intelligent, and also a human, her preferred race. She trembles at the prospect of losing him and her eyes well.

"I hope George can do something." She thinks aloud with trembling breath. "I need you, James."

Pacing back and forth in his cell, James ponders his situation. Considering his chosen profession, he can't help but chuckle at the fact that he's yet to spend any real amount of time in a cell such as this. As a high security risk, the Sijian prison that is temporarily holding him is state of the art. A newer class of energy field, reacting like a solid wall when touched but allowing sound to pass through, glows a faded orange-yellow. Standing in the center of his eight-foot by ten-foot rectangular room, he has only a stainless-steel toilet with built-in sink, and a horribly uncomfortable bunk as furnishings.

"Enjoying the accommodations, you piece of shit?" A Sijian guard cackles.

"I've seen much nicer prisons." James quips, his sinister smile unfading.

"It's better than you deserve... I hope it hurts like hell when they execute you." The guard growls, angered by James' insolence.

Silently chuckling, James shakes his head.

"What's so funny?!" The guard demands.

"You... Now that you have me in this cell, you're acting a lot like some of my people when they wake up their cargo." James explains.

"We're nothing alike, and people *aren't* cargo. Every crate in your hold is a life destroyed; every dose of sky dust is another robbery, rape or murder at the hands of a drug fiend. I'm justified in my hatred. What's your excuse?"

With a tinge in his conscience, James is left with nothing to say. After a short pause, the guard turns and walks away, continuing his patrol. He takes a seat on the bed that is his primary furniture. As the most secured area of the prison, which is exceptionally new, James is one of only a handful of other inmates. His cell at the end of the hall has a line of six empty cells separating him from his neighbor. He looks at his wrist that would have held his V.I. bracelet, if it hadn't been confiscated.

Sighing, he begins to feel something else. Fear creeps into his heart and his hand faintly tremors. Could that

merely be another physical symptom of his very brief sky dust use? He places his other hand over it, hoping to stop the shake.

“Psst. Hey, you in there...” A voice whispers.

James jumps to his feet. Spinning around, he doesn't see anyone else. With his headache returning, he places his palms on his temples, gritting his teeth and wincing from the pain.

“Hey, asshole. Over here.” The voice whispers with an underlying tinge of frustration.

Pinpointing the source, James approaches the force field that holds him inside. Resting his palms on the glowing wall, he leans over to see the panel that controls his individual cell. A blue light oscillates as the voice continues to speak, tapping in through the panel's own communication system.

“I'm going to help you get out of there.” The voice says.

“... How?” James raises a brow.

“Most of these cells are empty. In a few hours there's a shift change scheduled. When they swap the guards, I can let you out and guide you.” The voice explains.

“Why can't you let me out right now?”

“I’m a Lane Jacker, not God. It took a while just to get this far. No one has ever broken into a security system this advanced before; I’m the first.” The voice answers.

“George hired you?”

“Of course! He struck quite a deal. I have to go. I’ve looped the footage so they wouldn’t see or hear this conversation but I can’t do that for long or they’ll notice. I’ll contact you when it’s time. *Be ready...*” The voice sternly demands.

Now exhilarated, James sits upon his bunk, waiting for the time to strike. The hours tick by. Time seems to slow down, as if to taunt him. Lying on his bunk nearly five hours later, the lights flicker in his cell and the hallway. He sits upright, watching as the force field oscillates. Darkening then brightening again, the force field quakes from an unseen force. Suddenly, it falls to the floor like a falling curtain, disappearing entirely.

“Hey, buddy. It’s your friend, the disembodied voice.”

“Uh, hey...” James apprehensively replies, stepping out of his cell.

“Get moving. I’ve sealed in all but a few guards who were dragging their feet, and I unlocked every door that leads to the main yard. Just follow the green lights. From there, you’re on your own.” The Lane Jacker says.

“How can I thank you?” James asks.

“By not blowing my end of the deal! Run!”

James nods and dashes down the hall. He glances over at the other cells, all still secured with their force fields and only a few with gawking prisoners watching him. They yell and scream for his aid, but James ignores them. Looking up, he can see several lights above doors, signifying whether or not the armored bulkheads are locked or not. Taking only the door with green lights above them, he races throughout the complex. He stops when he finds a helmeted prison guard examining a locked door.

“The fuck? What’s going on here?!” The guard growls.

“Let us out!” Other guards plead from inside.

“I can’t! The door won’t accept my keycard!”

James rushes the guard, who hears his footfalls. Turning, he scrambles for his sidearm, but James is too quick. In the time it takes him to draw and attempt to aim, James has cleared the fifteen or so feet and pounces upon the guard. Slamming his back onto the floor, he knocks the wind from the man, as well as the blaster. Pushing his helmet hard to one side, James exposes the Voeldahn’s fur covered throat and slams the blade of his hand hard against his Adam’s apple.

Coughing and struggling to breathe, the defenseless man rolls over and attempts to crawl away. James takes his Anelace XR-20 blaster from the ground and aims at his head, but seeing the pitiful man who may die anyway from his injured esophagus, he doesn’t fire. Instead, he races off and through the prison. Thankfully, he doesn’t encounter

any more guards. All that he sees are already locked in other rooms, unable to escape. After a mad dash and following the green lights, he emerges from the building.

Shielding his eyes, he quickly stows his weapon in the front waistband of his pants. Having taken an emergency exit, he now stands in a pathway between two fences and runs for a door that faces the parking lot. Guards who normally watch from towers are helpless to act as they sit locked within the bullet resistant glass boxes, the doors not accepting their keycodes and their computers not recognizing any of their commands. Knowing that he can't steal a modern hovercar, James instead runs down a street as fast as he can.

In a verdant land that's void of any life besides his own, he sprints down the road until his side aches. Sweat beads on his forehead and runs down his brow and over his nose, his prison uniform darkening from his sweat. He must change out of his clothes while he is still free. As usual, the prison was built away from most populated areas; he's in a rural setting with nothing but fields for miles. Hopefully, the Lane Jacker keeps the prison distracted long enough for him to act, as stealing a hovercar without the access key is all but impossible.

After running for several miles, he's nearly spent. Thankfully, he finds a fueling station where hovercars may stop to recharge or swap their hydrogen fuel cells. As a rural station on the outskirts of a town, there are only a few cars parked out front, near the robotic arms which can

recharge or change the cells. He creeps around the building, taking the prison shirt off. Safety yellow and with the prison's name plastered all over it, he hopes that they won't recognize the matching pants right away.

Leaving the top shirt behind, he covers his stolen blaster with his sweat drenched undershirt. Stepping around the corner and entering the fueling station, a woman screams almost immediately. She panics at the sight of the exhausted looking human with the damp white t-shirt, vivid yellow pants and slip-on shoes. Realizing that his cover is all but gone, he draws his blaster and aims at the shrieking human woman.

"All right, everyone! You know what the fuck this is! No one move! Give me what I want and you'll all go home today!" He growls.

Grabbing the frightened woman by the back of her throat, he aims his blaster at a female Voeldahn cashier and another male customer, also a Voeldahn. With their hands held high and eyes wide, they move into a back room, as per his order. James steals their credit chits, just in case, and demands the man strip down. Though roughly his size, the wolf-like man's pants aren't suitable; the hole for his tail while attract too much attention when worn on a human. Frustrated and still dressed like a convict, James settles for robbing them blind.

Taking their credit chits and filling a bag with snacks and drinks, he then steals an access key for one of the hovercars outside. Standing shirtless, the male Voeldahn glares at James as he hands over the keys to a sporty red coupe.

“You’ll get it back, and in one piece. I just need to borrow it for a few.” James assures him.

“A few what?” The man asks.

“Exactly! You take care now!” James says, quickly locking them in the back room.

He knows that it won’t hold them for long, but as he drops their V.I. bracelets into a metal waste basket, filling it with paper and lighter fluid before setting it on fire, he hopes that he’s bought himself some time. Racing outside, he jumps into the hovercar and pops open a refreshing Cola. He cannot help but take a sip before he lifts off, the warning light and buzzer for his seatbelt blaring as he heads for a nearby airfield. He learned of this airfield when interrogating his three captives, eager to learn where he was taken by the police.

Reaching the airfield, only a few space worthy craft sit there, and none are capable of the long-distance flight he’s prepared for; he even stole the same Cola and beef jerky he and George used to eat as children, just for nostalgia. Parking the hovercar, James quickly exits the craft and approaches a ship class he knows all too well. A silver vessel with a ribbed hull shaped like a conventional sailing

ship, a large pilothouse in the rear, the ZL Transport is often nicknamed the 'Edge World Transport'. It's earned this name as it's an affordable craft only used for transporting people or cargo as far as the moon and back.

Roughly one hundred feet long and thirty feet wide, this particular model is missing the visible reinforcement for cargo; this model is a yacht. With the landing gear down and no keel-side cargo bay door, James is left with one option. He stows his blaster and slings his bag of food and drinks like a purse before climbing the bow landing gear. Knowing of the small shaft used for emergency access, he uses what simple tools he has stolen from the fuel station to break into the hatch. Scrambling aboard, he closes and locks the hatch behind him.

With his blaster drawn, he enters the main hall of the ship from a secret bulkhead, a trait that only owners or former pilots of a ZL Transport would know about. Looking carefully from left to right, he sees absolutely nothing. Perhaps this ship isn't even manned? That would make this far simpler. Heading for the pilothouse to hack into the ship's computer, James stops when he hears strange noises. He begins walking closer.

"Nng! You like that?! Nnf, nnf." A man growls.

"Ahh! Yes, Master! Please! More! Nng!" A woman begs.

James struggles to hide his grin as he creeps closer. A couple enjoy each other as he sees shadows moving,

escaping through an opened doorway. Peeking carefully around, his eyes grow wide. Inside are five individuals! Three females, all Voeldahn, and two males, one Voeldahn and one human. A naked rabbit man with a chastity belt on mans a camera as the human has sex with a bunny Voeldahn woman atop the bed. Beside them is an already used fox Voeldahn, the aftermath of her intercourse with the human plain to see, as her buttocks and loins face toward the opened door.

A horse Voeldahn stands be another camera, visibly pregnant and watching with considerable glee as the human and bunny mate atop the bed. Now perplexed, James cannot help himself. He simply walks into the room.

“The fuck is going on in here?!” He demands.

The mare shrieks, as does the little bunny on the bed. The human who kneels betwixt her legs growls and rises from her, rushing him. James doesn't hesitate and shoots him in the shoulder and leg, dropping him to the ground.

“That wasn't an answer.” He quips to the groaning human on the floor.

Without giving them time to act, James orders them to shut down their cameras and walk into the pilothouse. The only other male helps the human to his feet, along with the pregnant mare Voeldahn. Marching them down the hall,

James learns all he could have wanted and more. Apparently, all three women were in a strange harem of sorts, living and sleeping with the sole human. The rabbit man with the chastity belt is the bunny girl's husband, who was the human's first lover.

The women look to the wounded human for help. Even the thoroughly emasculated Voeldahn man treats this strange human like some sort of demi-god. James, however, is having none of it. When the human demands answers from James, he simply pistol-whips him. The threat of shooting his females is all that was needed to induce cooperation.

"You are some piece of work." James remarks to the human, taking the captain's keys from him. "Even I wouldn't fuck some guy's wife in front of him like that, and I've murdered people!"

"He likes it." The man retorts.

"Somehow, I doubt that. There's got to be a tiny piece of him that wants to ring your little neck. Now shut up and get into the airlock." James demands.

"You're letting us go?" The fox asks.

"... Sure." James shrugs his shoulders.

With all five crammed into the airlock, James preps the ship. Rather than open the outer door, he simply launches the ship, setting a course for the moon. The ZL Transport only needs a crew of one, and James has used these models of ships before, when he worked for his old mining company.

Cracking open another Cola and taking out a bag of jerky, he listens as the angry human bangs on the door. James wonders what he'll do with them, if anything; all he wanted was to borrow their ship.

"Just out fucking luck." The human grumbles from inside the airlock.

"We'll get out of here baby." The bunny says.

"I was almost done too. I was ready to breed you." The human adds.

"Ooh, please. When we get out of this, I want you to breed me." The bunny coos.

"Me too!" The fox chirps.

James stops, listening to them.

"Yeah? I think I already got you, baby." The human says, a smacking sound heard soon after.

"Ooh! Master, you're so forceful! I love it!" The fox exclaims.

"Now it's my little bunny's turn. You like that, bitch? You want to watch me breed your wife?" The human asks, his tone soft but mocking.

"Y-yes, sir." The male Voeldahn meekly replies.

James can feel his eyes welling. He turns in his chair to watch the airlock door.

“I want him to watch you breed me with that big thing of yours.” The bunny girl coos.

“Oh, he’ll watch alright. Won’t you, bitch?”

“... If you say so...” The husband sighs.

Gritting his teeth in anger, James is overcome with rage. He remembers his own humiliation and pities the husband. In blind anger, he turns around in his chair and swiftly activates the emergency override, opening the outer airlock doors from inside the ship.

“What the?! AAAAHHHHH!!!”

The screams swiftly fade as all five are sucked into the icy void of space. James sits, his body shaking as he imagines their icy corpses slowly being pulled back down to Earth, only to burn up from the friction as they reenter the atmosphere. As he begins to calm down, James suddenly has a realization. Jumping up from his chair, he races toward the airlock, resting his hands on the door.

“Oh no... I’m sorry.” He says to the door.

He had forgotten that the husband was locked in with the human and his three whores; all five are now dead. Spinning around, James sits down on the floor, his back against the door. Perhaps George was right? His mind is

often clouded and he acts with little or no thought. He didn't want to kill the husband, or even the pregnant woman. The human, and the fox and bunny Voeldahn were his targets. He rests his face in his palms, his fingers running through his hair.

"What's happening to me?" James softly cries.

Flopping over, he lies on the floor in the fetal position and sobs. He can't do this anymore. Nothing is the way it should be, and he just wants it to stop.

"When I get back home, Erica and I need to get out of here. This is no life..." He thinks aloud.