

# Lacuna Blue

By Mantrid Brizon

## Chapter Twenty-Five: The Prodigal Brother

Sitting on a bench in one of the many domed cities of the moon, James wears a gray hooded jacket, the hood pulled up and over his head. Freshly stolen from the perverse family, whom he jettisoned from the airlock and into the void of space, he wears clean blue jeans and oversized red shoes, taken from his victim's wardrobe. After flying to a domed city, he swiftly contacted his brother to acknowledge that he escaped. Unable to use the ZL Transport to fly directly to Mars, as the craft does not contain a warp drive powerful enough, he sits and waits.

Thankfully, George had planned ahead and James isn't waiting long. Entering the airlock, the Ourang Medan arrives, her silver hull panels and red painted engines causing the vessel to stand out amongst all of the others. Having waited for James' escape at their Tongyan base, captain Crippen is eager to collect the escaped Slaver so that he might finally finish his maiden voyage. Walking through the star port with an entourage of guards, their weapons carefully

hidden within their plain clothes, they look for James in the park where he sits.

Without a V.I. bracelet to track him, they simply examine a hologram of him and walk the park, keeping their eyes peeled. Luckily, George anticipated this as well and sent dossier's to James so he'd know who to watch out for. After ending their communication, James memorized Harvey Crippen's image as best as he could and destroyed the data, as well as the ship's computers. Taking a drink of his last Cola, he sits on a bench and looks around, trying to keep his head low, the bottle sitting precariously between two fingers.

Upon seeing the black furred feline Voeldahn with dyed red hair, he feels his heart race. Rising from the bench, he throws the bottle into the nearby trash bin and approaches. A Slaver in plain clothes sees his approach and pats Harvey on the shoulder before pointing toward the nervous human. Taking off his hood to confirm his identity, Harvey and his minions quickly surround him. Leading him away from the park and back to the Orang Medan without speaking a single word, they escort the escapee aboard their ship.

"Well, now that you're aboard we can finally get this over wi-HEY!" Harvey barks as James runs off. "Where are you going?!"

"I need to find Erica! Where is she?!" James asks, his breathing heavy.

Standing near the hallway door, Harvey eyes the human for a moment. He looks so anxious and fearful, much like the cargo they carry when they first reopen the crates. Crossing his arms, Harvey cocks his head toward the bowels of the ship.

“You know the way. We’ll be leaving for Mars right away.” He answers.

“Thanks!”

Darting off, James races down the hall and rounds a corner. He looks for Erica aboard the Ourang Medan, thankful that captain Crippen’s ship is similar in interior design to his brother’s. Looking at the closed doors as he stumbles down the hall, he calls out to his companion. Rising from her bunk, Erica can hear a familiar voice calling her name. He sounds distant and distressed. Bolting up from the bed, she opens the door and jumps out into the hall, watching James walking down the hall in a fevered search.

“James?!” She calls out.

“Erica!” He exclaims, spinning around.

Racing up to her, he appears to be instantly rejuvenated. Wrapping both arms around her torso, he squeezes tightly and nuzzles her cheek with his nose. James smells her hair and kisses her face, so thankful to be back in her presence. A calm washes over him; Erica has become his rock, the one person who can quell the darkness in his

heart and mind. Kiss after passionate kiss, they release the overdue tension. Stumbling backward, she pulls him into her temporary quarters, quickly shutting and locking the door.

Sitting in his chair, captain Crippen gives the command and engages the hyper drive. Compressed into a singularity, the ship sits safely within the warp bubble, heading for Lagos Depot. As they had attempted before with Oberon Starport, Lagos Depot is intended to be a waystation for the Slaver's and their cargo. The Ourang Medan's maiden voyage, after James had stolen the sky dust he was supposed to deliver, had always been to transport new slaves to Lagos.

Once there, their tanks would be replenished and they'd be tallied and sold, as the others before them have. Sitting back and looking over his crew, captain Crippen is struck by a thought that both pleases and troubles him; had he been the one to transport the sky dust, he would most certainly be dead or imprisoned right now, and George most likely wouldn't have broken him out the way he did his brother. He chuckles at the thought of thanking James for his folly.

"Sir?" Kristen turns to him.

"Yes?"

She waits rather expectantly.

**“Oh! Nothing. Just an amusing thought.”**

**Standing in the hangar of Lagos Depot just two days later, George, May and much of his crew wait to greet James and their new captain, a man who George has yet to meet in the flesh. Having passed through the outer airlock doors, the craft moves slowly through the tunnel and deeper into the station. The tension is palpable, only growing worse as they hear the next set of doors. Soon, the innermost doors open and they stare are the massive ship hovering beyond it. Floating slowly into the huge hangar, the craft slowly touches down, her engines winding down and deactivating.**

**After waiting for what seems like an eternity, the keel side doors swing open and the cargo lift begins to lower. Covered in neatly stacked, olive drab crates and with his crew surrounding him, captain Harvey Crippen stands near the front lip of the lift. Among the group stands James and Erica, hand in hand.**

**“James!” George exclaims, stepping forward.**

**James glances to George, but doesn’t respond. His silence and visible indifference as he steps off of the platform with his lover by his side cuts deeply into his brother’s heart. James brushes by George, who turns and watches him. A pained look in his eyes, George races to catch up to James, grabbing him by the arm.**

**“Hey! Are you alright, bro? You can’t even say hi?”**

**“What do you want from me?!” James growls, yanking his arm away. “Do you want me to say you were right? That I shouldn’t have taken that load? Do you want me to apologize?”**

**“No. I just want to know that you’re okay.” George murmurs.**

**James has a hard time believing his brother, though he wants too. For the last two days, he’s brooded over his imprisonment. His anger has been reinforced by Erica, who blames their problems on George. For some reason, James is inclined to believe her. Starring at George, who stands silently before him, James narrows his eyes.**

**“... I’m fine.” He grumbles before storming off.**

**May steps up to her lover, resting a hand on his shoulder. Squeezing him, she gains his attention.**

**“Are you okay?” She asks softly.**

**“I don’t know.”**

**George takes a moment to greet the new captain, shaking Harvey Crippen’s hand before walking away from the hangar entirely. Michael enters to oversee the unloading of the Ourang Medan’s cargo, glancing toward George and May as they exit the hangar. Entering their apartment,**

James stares at his king-sized bed. Erica quickly flops down on the massive mattress, laying on her back and rubbing the space beside her. Her red painted fingernails rake at the golden silk sheets.

Though enticed by his beautiful lover, James begins to crumble. Realizing that something is wrong, she sits upright, a look of worry upon her face.

“James? What’s wrong?!”

“We need to talk.” James says with a quivering voice.

Entering their own apartment, George and May make themselves comfortable. May steps into their kitchenette and collects several soft drinks, choosing her lover’s favorite.

“I think we should speed up our exit strategy.” May says to George as she enters their living room.

“Are we ready for that?”

“I think so.” She nods, handing him a bottle.

“Thanks, cupcake.” He leans in and kisses her lips.

“Of course, little bear. So, I’ve been keeping tabs on our earnings lately.”

George slips an arm around May's waist and slowly sits down, pulling her down atop his lap as he relaxes in a comfortable chair.

"And how well are we doing?" He asks.

"Well, if we only claim ten percent of our net worth, that leaves us with approximately 200,000,000 credits. That's only what I don't think they'll even notice right away." She answers.

"200,000,000?!" He gasps.

"Mhm."

"No wonder this faction is so big... I had no idea we were making that much." George remarks with astonishment.

"That's only ten percent, little bear. We'll be set for life, even if we take the whole crew and pay them a fair share." She explains.

"Alright. So, we're ready to go... When do you want to leave?" He asks her.

Her lips curl into a pleased grin. She's never been able to adapt to this lifestyle; she's done an excellent job of faking it for the sake of her relationship. May cannot wait to leave this all behind and find peace for herself and her future husband.

"Why do you want to leave?!" A shocked Erica asks James.

**“Because I don’t think I can do this anymore.” He whimpers.**

**“Do what?” She raises a brow.**

**“This! Our fucked up life. I can’t do it anymore. This is horrible. You should know better than anyone.” He answers.**

**“Yes, I do, but this empire that you and George built. Isn’t that worth anything to you?!” She asks.**

**“Nothing when compared to you. I just want you, Erica. I don’t need any of this.”**

**Erica doesn’t know what to say. While she’s touched by his intense fondness for her, she’s also horrified; she likes the wealth and power, even though she hasn’t seen much of it yet. The prospect of being the woman of a powerful Slaver is subtly appealing; many women would love to take her place and experience the power and luxury that will eventually follow. However, Erica herself also has feelings for her lover. Genuinely caring and compassionate for her, as well as talented in their bed, she is content with him. Is there some way she can still have both? She thinks fast.**

**“James...” She coos, rising from the bed and stepping up to him. “I love you so much. You’re all I need too, but we’re in too deep. How will we live after we leave?” She asks.**

**“I have a ship. I can take transport jobs to get by.” He answers.**

**The prospect of an ordinary life is repulsive to her.**

**“That wouldn’t be enough. We’d need to collect from the Slaver’s Union funds that we keep building before we leave.” She begins.**

**“We would?”**

**“Yes. Remember, you’re a fugitive, my love. You were a fugitive before you were arrested in Sijia and escaped. On Mars you’re probably a wanted man, suspected in your ex-wife’s murder. We can’t just live a normal life; we need credits, and a lot of them.”**

**Her soft voice and logical words entwine around his brain. James can feel her voice swaying his thoughts, his weakened mind bending to her will.**

**“After we take what we need to live on, how do we know that George won’t hunt us down for stealing, or escaping?”**

**“Escaping? ... We’re not prisoners.” James retorts.**

**“No, but you are his errand boy, and it’s technically all his money.”**

**“... N-no. George would never do anything to hurt us.” James replies.**

**“Are you so sure?” She asks sweetly.**

**Resting her hands upon his chest, she leans in and kisses his cheek, then his neck. James tremors at her exquisite touch; she knows exactly what she’s doing. As a**

man, he wasn't that hard to figure out. His arms wrap around her slender frame, one hand on the small of her back and the other resting over her buttocks, giving a cheek a firm squeeze.

"What do you think we should do?" He asks her.

"Mmm... Wait, my love. Let's save up our credits, then when we have enough to live comfortably, we can go." She answers, nuzzling his neck.

"Okay, sweetheart. We'll do it your way."

"Good. Now there's something else I want you to do for me..." She coos.

Giggling cutely, she pulls him back as she draws him toward their bed. She's as eager for the pleasure he brings her, as he is to experience her. Walking down the hall after an overly long unload, Garin passes by James' and Erica's apartment. He can hear the couple faintly moaning and groaning from inside their dwelling. It sounds as if they're feverishly working to reproduce. Passing by, Garin turns a corner, and then another. Deeper and deeper into the station he walks, until he comes to a little used and unlabeled door.

Looking around cautiously, he makes sure that no one is watching him before he opens the door and enters the room. Closing the door behind him, he finds Michael, who had left early in the unload process with a pallet of crates. Sitting neatly in a corner, the crates wait to be opened.

Taking off his bloody medical gloves, Michael steps up to Garin.

“I’ve done it, my friend.” Michael boasts.

“Another breakthrough, sir?” Garin asks.

“Not another... *The* breakthrough. Utterly flawless mind-control, with the aid of a few dated techniques and using sky dust as a catalyst.”

“Fascinating!”

“It is! I got the idea from seeing how easily confused some people became after using it, like James. Before he used the drug, he was far more tactful and intelligent; it somehow made his mind more gelatinous and pliable. I’ve noticed how that woman of his bends his will. Of course, he’s not perfectly susceptible! She’ll eventually try something he doesn’t like and he will act on his own, but with additional treatments and my new indoctrination technique, he could be one of many.” Michael explains.

“That’s amazing!”

“I’ve already made several obedient slaves. Say hello to Garin, number four.”

“Hello, Garin.” A woman says in a dry monotone.

Garin glances toward the voice, his eyes widening as he sees a nude Voeldahn. Short and voluptuous, the slender canine female’s body bears ample, DD-cup breasts and wide hips. Covered in white fur that’s dotted with brown spots, her flowing brown hair has not been cut. Garin feels a stirring below his belt as he looks her body over and over

again. Glancing at her pretty face, he finally realizes that she has no scars.

“But... She’s not cut.” Garin turns to Michael.

“No, she’s not. My new techniques allow for surgery-free indoctrination. A few vials of sky dust and modified brain waves, and I can zombify almost anyone in about a day. I just finished vivisecting number one to prove it.” Michael explains.

“No surgery? Where’s the fun in that?” Garin snickers.

“... Entertain our guest, number four. He wants your body, so give it to him.”

“Yes, master.” She replies.

Garin is surprised when she steps up to him, reaches out and grabs him. Planting a kiss on him, she grabs his groin through his pants.

“There’s the fun.” Michael remarks.

“I see!” Garin chirps.

Michael begins to walk away, heading for the door.

“Wait? What’s the next step, sir?!” Garin asks with anticipation.

Michael pauses, glancing back at Garin. The mind-controlled slave kisses his neck and undoes his pants, pushing them to the floor with considerable force. She has the appearance of a woman desperate for a man's physical attention; her programming is more powerful than Michael had anticipated.

"I'll tell you when you're finished." He smirks, promptly leaving them alone in his lab.