

Conflicts and Aftermath

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I am off school for the summer and I needed a project to keep me busy. I may not be the best writer, but I try. The title of the story may change. I haven't decided yet. Critiszm is welcome, but be nice don't flame me to bad. ^_^

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0 - Persuasion

Disclaimer: I don't own any of the Characters. Thus far they are all property of RARE and Nintendo. Any Characters that I create will be posted at the beginning of the chapter if deemed important enough.

Conflicts and Aftermath

Prologue

The old, Cornerian warehouse groaned in protest at the ferocity of the night storm. Lightening flashed ominously illuminating the rusty, white, sheet metal exterior of the dilapidated, old, structure. Through the high rain battered windows a dim light could be seen filtering splotchally through the thick coat of black dust that begrimed the inside of the glass.

The interior of the structure was just as rundown as the exterior. The Leaky roof was supported by towering steel beams that had turned a grimy brown and green through years of water damage and mildew. The whole room echoed with the sound of the thundering rain drops beating on the flimsy tin roof.

Large falls of water cascaded through holes and cracks in the roof crashing to the floor to form gigantic pools of muddy brown water amid the piles of accumulated junk. The whole room was lit by the eery glow of maybe twenty bare incandescent bulbs, a technology that hadn't been used in nearly two centuries, In the dim glow from the inadequate lighting the piles of rubbish cast looming shadows throwing the floor into a thick darkness.

Amid this seeming chaos of disorder a clearing in the center of the clutter had been cleared and the monstrous bulk of a Cruiser class Starship could be seen. The Quad winged, multi leveled ship was only partially complete. Various part and components hung from hoists surrounding the ship. From somewhere under the belly of this monstrous feat of engineering the sound of Rock music could be heard over the noise of the storm outside.

A shower of sparks cascaded down from an access panel on the ships underbelly. After a moment the sparks stopped and a young male vulpine poked his head out from the bowels of the ship and rummaged through a tool box situated under the access panel. Clearly not finding what he was he was looking for he let out a frustrated growl and from his upside down position drooped to the ground with an acrobatic grace. Bobbing his head to the music he preceded to rummage around on a tool bench close by. His tail swooshed absently as he looked for whatever it was he was looking for. As he turned an insignia of a winged fox on his worn white vest caught the light. The young vulpine let out a unconscious grunt of satisfaction as he flipped a laser regulator in his paws apparently what he had been looking for. With a nibble jump he disappeared back into the access port and continued working on the ship.

Across the darkened room a heavy metal door grated open and a figure emerged . The figure turned and closed the door with a loud clang. Turning as if to get its bearings it scanned the room and spotted the place where the cruiser sat amidst the piles of junk. With a stealthy grace the figure began to pick its way across the room towards the ship in the center. As the figure got closer to the ship it slowed

and shook its head in annoyance at the loud music. As a particularly loud guitar solo began the vulpine that had been working on the ship swung his head out of the access panel with his eyes closed pretending to be playing the solo on an air guitar. The figure stared at the young fox in Surprise and tried unsuccessfully to stifle a laugh. The Vulpine opened his eyes in surprise at the noise. Looking around the young fox started at the sight of the figure and fell to the ground with a mild thud. The figure burst out in unexpressed laughter as the young vulpine struggled to his feet.

"That's not funny Krystal," the fox yelled untangling himself from a knot of wiring, "You almost gave me a heart attack." Krystal, the attractive, corilian blue vixen, wiped tears of laughter from her eyes and gasped between her unsuccessfully controlled giggles.

"I'm S--sorry Fox. I didn't mean to...to scare you. You jus--just looked so ridiculous hanging upside down like that." And at this she dissolved into laughter again. Fox could feel his face grow warm and was silently thankful that his fur would hide his embarrassment.

"What are you doing down here anyway. It has to be well past midnight." Fox grumbled rubbing the back of his head. "You know I hate it when you wander this neighborhood at night."

"What am I doing here?" Krystal said finally in control again. "I was looking for you. As you pointed out, its past midnight. You should have been home hours ago."

Fox shifted. "Well... I just got to working on the ship and lost track of time. I just want to get this thing finished. I am getting bored here. Planet life just doesn't suit me. I want to get back in the air as soon as I can."

Krystal put a sympathetic hand on his shoulder.

"I know You hate being Planet bound, but try to make the best of it. Take some time off and rest awhile. What we did two months ago was no small feat. We deserve a little bit of a vacation."

Fox snorted, "I don't need a vacation. The Aparoid Invasion was just a warm up. I need more action. I can't just sit around and do nothing, I'd go crazy."

Krystal let out an exasperated sigh. "You don't have to sit around and do nothing. Go do something fun. Everybody else on the team is why can't you."

"Yeah. Sure. What is there to do on a planet that's been half-blown up? The Aperoids took out all the fun stuff, the blaster course, the simulators and the Training facilities." This place is boring as Hell." Huffed Fox.

Krystal let out another exasperated sigh. "Is that all you every think about is training." Krystal walked over to the ship and leaned against a bulkhead shaking her head in mock annoyance. "That was not quite what I had in mind when I said fun.! Do something that doesn't have to do with work. Look at Falco. He took a transport to Creamus Prime to snow board, why can't you do something like that?"

Fox looked at Krystal incredulously, turned and walked over to the workbench and started to fiddle with a power converter. Over his shoulder he said in an annoyed tone. "Me on one of those sardine cans they call a transport. I don't think so! Besides I hate the cold. Why would I want to strap a board to my

feet and slide down a hill of something I hate. NO THANK YOU!"

"You Just Love making things difficult don't you?" Krystal growled at Fox's back. "Come on can't you think of something that would get you out of here for a while?"

"Hey, The only thing I want to do is get back up in the air. Until Command retracts its orders that all fighter ships are grounded; I am going to sit here until this ship is complete enough to get me off this rock."

Krystal cocked her eyebrow and said in a measured tone "Your Hopeless you know that Fox? If you don't get out and do something un-work related. I will dismantle this ship piece by piece."

"Ha. I would like to see you try." laughed Fox.

"Try me!" Krystal said her face set in an un amused set.

"You wouldn't dare." Fox said a hint of uncertainty in his voice.

"Piece by Piece." Krystal repeated with an unwavering stare of finality.

Fox stared unblinkingly back his jaw set. As he stared he felt a familiar probing in the back of his mind.

"Your not going to win this one" he thought "I'm not going to change my mind about this. I am not going to leave this warehouse."

"Oh really" said Krystal's teasing voice in his mind. "We'll just see about that, I can be quite persuasive when I want to be." she teased.

"Not this time," Fox thought but he could already feel his resolve slipping. He growled at Krystal whose expression had changed to one of mild amusement. Fox battled with her will for a few more moments and with a frustrated growl he finally gave in.

"Fine, I'll go do something other than work on the ship tomorrow, Are you happy now?" Krystal laughed.

"Oh Fox. When are you going to learn you can't argue with a woman and expect to win." she teased wagging a finger at him in a mock scolding manner.

"Yeah, well it wasn't fair," Growled Fox in annoyance tossing down the power converter still clutched in his paw, "You no I can't stand it when you do that."

"Why Fox, whatever do you mean?" Krystal chided with a grin pushing herself away from the bulkhead and resting her head sweetly on Fox's Shoulder. "I would never dream of doing anything to sway the all-mighty Star Fox."

"Yeah, Yeah, very funny, Fox said trying to maintain a stern face, but failing. He couldn't bring himself to be mad at her. After all she was only concerned for his well being. "So, what is there to do on this God forsaken rock; most of the entertainment district was destroyed, and hanging around in a slum area bar isn't really appealing to me."

"Well like I said we can get off world if we take a trans...." Fox interrupted her before she could finish.

"Yeah, I know. A transport. I ain't getting on one of those things. Like I said they're nothing but sardine cans with wings."

"Oh come on fox they're not that bad." Krystal said with a laugh looking up into his face. "If I didn't know better I'd say you were afraid of them."

"What! No! I'm not afraid of them...I just don't like them that's all." Fox said flustered. Krystal smiled as she distinctly heard him mutter under his breath something about there not being enough air with all those people.

"Fox! Don't tell me the famous Star Fox is claustrophobic!"

"I just don't like tight places. Ok?"

"Fine we don't have to go off world. I'm sure there is plenty to do. I hear the bar down the street has excellent food if you can muscle your way past your gag reflex. Besides. I know how much you love the bombed out scenery." Krystal finished with a wry smile. She could feel Fox cringe at the very idea.

"On second thought...I guess I might be able to...ah...persuade myself to get on one of those Sardine cans as long as it's not to far."

"Well then, We had better get home. It looks like tomorrow we're going on vacation." With that she straightened and headed towards the door splashing through the puddles in a carefree manner. Fox stared after her his mouth slightly open.

"I have no idea how she does that." with that he started after her deliberately dodging the puddles as he reached the door he turned and looked at the half finished ship and sighed.

"Well, I guess I'll see you in a few days." Fox turned and flicked off the dim lights and followed Krystal out into the torrential rain where she was twirling around catching raindrops on her tongue.

1 - Vacation Destination

Once again I don't own Star Fox or any of its characters. The only character I own is Col. Matthew Daldrich. All others are owned by Nintendo and Rare.

Conflicts and Aftermath

Chapter one

BEEEEEP! BEEEEEP! BEEEEEP! BEEEEEP! The annoying noise filled the semi-dark room and Fox Mc Cloud gave a start as he awoke.

"Aww," groaned Fox shaking his head groggily and looking around. He stared at the clock in dismay. "What the hell, six thirty! I didn't set the alarm." Fox slapped the alarm clock in annoyance and flopped back into bed with a longing sigh.

"Ah, ah, ah Fox!" said a voice in his head. "I set the alarm and you **are** getting up. Now get down here and help me with breakfast."

Fox growled in annoyance and pulled the pillow up around his head. "Krystal that's not fair I'm supposed to be on vacation remember.

"Up Fox!" Krystal said in his mind with a note of amusement in her voice. "Don't make me come up there."

Fox growled again but grudgingly slid out of bed. Swaying unsteadily he made his way to the bedroom's bathroom.

Krystal was smiling to herself as she worked in the kitchen. The rain from the night before had subsided and feeble, milky sunlight filtered in warming the apartments small kitchen. Krystal opened the window and let in the cool spring air wash over her. Behind her Slippy sat at the large round table eating a bowl of cereal and reading the comics in the paper.

Krystal turned at the sound of shuffling footsteps and stifled a laugh. A very unkempt and groggy looking Fox was shuffling down the hallway into the kitchen. "Fox. What in the world are you doing. I though you were getting dressed."

Fox grunted and rubbed his eyes with the back of his hands. "Coffee, black. **Now.**"

Krystal turned to the counter shaking her head and smiling. It was definitely obvious Fox was not a morning person. The team had lived together for quite a while now, but this was the first time she had attempted to get Fox up before he wanted to be up. He usually wasn't seen up and around until much later in the morning. Krystal made a mental note to wake him up early more often just to see his comical appearance.

Fox wandered over to the Counter behind Krystal yawning and trying to get the sleep out of his eyes. Ignoring the mug Krystal held out to him Fox seized the coffee pot and shuffled to the table. Krystal stared at Fox in surprise and then laughed. She took a sip of the coffee she had intended for Fox and turned to finish the breakfast. "A little tired are we Fox?" she mused as she flipped a pan of bacon. Fox grunted incoherently and took a giant gulp from the coffee pot.

Slippy looked up as Fox plopped down in a seat across from him and rested his head on the table with a tired groan. "Fox!? What the hell happened to you. Since when are you up this early?"

Fox groaned and without raising his head, pointed a finger at Krystal. "Ask her." he mumbled.

Slippy turned to Krystal with a look of amusement. "How did you get him up this early. He usually isn't up til at least eleven."

Krystal smiled as she tipped a large helping of eggs onto a plate. "Oh, you just have to know how to persuade him. Besides we are supposed to be planning for our vacation today."

Slippy looked over at Fox and grinned. "Fox on vacation? Now that is a interesting concept." Slippy folded his paper and stared at fox who was now downing the pot of coffee. "I would wait awhile before you planned anything with him. He doesn't look like he would even remembers his own name right now."

Fox growled across the table and threw a salt shaker at him. Slippy ducked as the shaker flew past. "Whoa, Not very friendly in the morning is he." Slippy teased.

Krystal strolled over to the table carrying a couple of plates and set one in front of Fox and sat down with the other. "Fox, just because its early doesn't mean you can be rude." she said as she picked the salt shaker off the floor and salted her eggs.

"Remind me again. why do I have to get up this early? I just went to bed five hours ago. As far as I'm concerned six thirty only exists once per day and this ain't it" Fox snapped.

Slippy couldn't resist. "Wow. He can still add this early in the morning. You are doing great Fox."

Fox turned to Slippy with a threatening stare. "Watch it frog boy! It may be early but I can still hurt you."

Krystal cocked a brow at Fox. "Fox, that's not very nice. He just finds it amusing how bad you look. Have you looked in a mirror yet. You look like you got stuck in a dryer."

Fox scowled, "Thanks a lot!"

"No problem." Smiled Krystal as she took a gulp of her coffee.

Fox scowled down at his eggs and for a moment and then began to shovel them down. In between bites he mumbled. "So, you got me up now what?"

"Well. Now we get to decide where we are going for your vacation."

"You woke me up for that. Couldn't we have done that later...when I'm awake." Fox grumbled taking another long gulp of coffee from the pot.

"Why do it later when we can do it now and catch a transport this afternoon."

Slippy about slipped off his chair. "Your actually getting Fox on a public transport!? Wow Krystal you really are persuasive."

Krystal smiled at him. "Like I said I have my ways." Slippy stared at her in awe. Krystal turned back to Fox. "So, any ideas as to where you want to go?"

Fox drained the coffee pot. "Absolutely no idea." Fox said shaking the empty coffee pot upside down as if hoping it wasn't really empty. He stood and walked over to the counter and started to make another pot. "I really don't care where we go, as long as it ain't cold."

Krystal sighed in mock exasperation and put her interlocked fingers up to her face. "You really do like to make things difficult don't you."

"Yeah, but only for those that wake me up early." Chided Fox with a mischievous grin. "Besides it was your idea to go on a vacation. Why don't you decide" Fox taking a more civil approach this time poured the coffee into a mug and leaned against the counter sipping it.

"Fine. You want me to choose. I'll choose, but I don't want to hear any complaints about my ideas." Krystal said coolly over her shoulder.

"Hey, fine by me. Less I have to decide on." Fox said back just as coolly

Krystal stirred her coffee absently as she thought. "Well, You've already said no place cold. So.....Where can we go."

"Well, if I'm going to go anywhere, I want it to be somewhere I haven't been before." Fox walked over to the sink and rinsed out his mug. "I hate repeats."

Krystal turned and scowled at fox. "Well that eliminates half the planets in the Lylat System and outer rim."

"Hey, there are still a few places I haven't been to." Fox knew he was being difficult, and he was enjoying every minuet of it. She deserved it for waking him up so early.

"All right since you know which planets you've already been to. It is back to you to choose." Krystal said smugly. She watched as Fox realized that his stubbornness had dumped the responsibility back to him.

Fox's face darkened as he thought. Well, I can think of a few planets that I haven't been to. All be it that most of them are uninhabited and freezing."

Slippy who had been watching the two with mild interest spoke up. "Hey Fox, How about Despin, Doesn't that Colonel friend of yours live there. You've never been there."

Both Krystal and Fox jumped having forgot that the toad was present. "What are you on about now?" Krystal asked a hint of curiosity in his voice."

"He's talking about Col. Matthew Daldrich, I was in the academy with him." Fox walked back to the table and sat down again. "I helped him through flight class. Man was that guy a lousy pilot. He nearly flew an arwing through General Peppers office window in our third year, couldn't figure out how to turn off the auto pilot." Fox chuckled as he reminisced. "I haven't seen that guy since we left academy. I wouldn't mind seeing him again. Plus he still owes me a few favors." Fox turned to Slippy who was watching him happily. "Thanks Slip. I think you just solved our problem." Turning to Krystal with a grin Fox said, "Krystal, I guess we're going to Despin."

Fox sprang to his feet nearly knocking over his chair. "I'm going to go get ready to go. This vacation thing is actually kind of exciting."

Krystal just smiled and shook her head, "Fox you are one in a million you know that," but Fox was already down the hall and didn't hear her.

Slippy who was looking pleased with himself looked over at Krystal. "I haven't seen Fox this excited since the last blaster upgrade came out."

Krystal studied the toad for a minuet. "He really needs to get out more. By the way Slippy, thanks. I was getting really frustrated playing his games."

Slippy's smile broadened, "No problem. I hope you guys have a great time. You need some time alone with each other." Slippy said slyly.

Krystal nearly choked on the mouthful of coffee she had been drinking. "Slippy...What is that supposed to mean!" Krystal felt herself blush she knew exactly what the toad was implicating.

"Oh, Nothing. Never mind. You two just have a good time." Slippy said with a wink.

"Aren't you coming with us?" Krystal asked

"Aww. No. I have other plans for this week. I got a.....Friend I am supposed to be meeting...She and I are....Going out"

Krystal raised an eyebrow in interest. "Oh really. Got yourself a girlfriend have you Slip?" Krystal asked in a teasing voice. This time it was the toads turn to blush.

"We really haven't....Well she...Amanda is." Slippy spluttered and fumbling over his words.

Krystal laughed. "Easy Slippy, I was only teasing you. I hope you and...Amanda was it...have a great time this week." Krystal laid a hand on the toads shoulder.

Slippy looked at her a moment. "Thanks Krystal. Do me a favor though. Don't tell Fox or Falco about this. I would never hear the end of it."

Krystal laughed again. "You have my word Slip. Not a word." With this she turned and walked out of the kitchen. She made her way upstairs towards Fox's room. She generally tried to avoid this room if at all possible. It was usually a mess as Fox was a lousy house keeper. As she entered the room she found Fox scrounging around in a pile of clothes on the floor. "What are you doing Fox?" she asked watching as Fox pulled out a crumpled shirt and examined it.

"What does it look like I'm doing." Fox asked looking at her as though she had asked the stupidest question in the world. "I'm packing. In case I've forgotten that is generally what you do when you are planning on going on a trip isn't it."

Krystal looked appalled. "Your not actually going to pack and ware that are you?"

Fox looked at the shirt puzzled. "Why not? Is there something wrong with it?"

Krystal looked at Fox with a stunned look on her face. "Wrong with it. It's been on the floor for only God knows how long. It's probably filthy!" She said wrinkling up her nose in disgust.

Fox looked down at the shirt and then at the pile he had pulled it from. "No, its not dirty this is the clean pile. Anyway, why don't you let me pack. You can get the transport reservations in order." With this he once again started rummaging around in the "Clean" pile.

Krystal shook her head and turned to leave. As she left she muttered to herself. "Men, they're such slobs. Honestly!"

Fox looked up after Krystal. He thought he heard her say something as she left. "Ah, oh well." thought Fox as he continued to pack. "I really hope Matthew still remembers me, otherwise this is going to be one awkward reunion." Fox lay down on his stomach and began to search under his bed for things he might need. "Man, If I hadn't left the academy when my dad went missing I would probably be a Colonial by now too. Now there's a scary thought." Fox grinned to himself at the idea of himself a lap dog to the military. "No, this life suits me just fine no ties that I didn't make and I can't break." Fox stood and began to fumble around in the nightstand by his bed. He opened the top drawer out of habit and looked down to see his blaster lying there. He looked at it for a moment and reached for it and then withdrew his hand. "Ahh....You promised nothing to do with work Fox." He scolded himself. "You don't need to bring it along. You are going to a planet safely under Lylatin Control. " his hand hovered over the drawer for a moment and with difficulty he forced himself to close it.

A few minuets later Fox struggled into the Kitchen Where Krystal was just hanging up the phone. "So, are we all set?" Fox asked dropping his suitcases onto the kitchen table. Causing Slippy who had returned to his paper to jump and look around. "Sorry, Slip." Fox appologised to the toad. "So, what going on are we ready to go?"

Krystal turned to face Fox. "Yep! Two first class tickets to Despin. All the better is the fact that I made a call to General Pepper and He has agreed to front all the costs on the trip. He agrees that we

need a vacation."

"Wow!" croaked Slippy. "The General is actually going to pay for your trip that's cool. I wish he would pay for all mine."

Fox groaned ignoring the toad, "You told the General. Great now he has something to hold over my head next time he wants something." Fox sighed, "Well at least we won't go broke on this trip."

Krystal chose to ignore the two and continue on as if she hadn't been interrupted. "Our Transport leaves in two hours from the old Main Station. Upon our arrival on Despin we will be met by an escort that will take us to the Colonels palace."

"Whoa, Whoa, whoa, Say again. Palace? Wow I new he was well off, but I didn't now that well off."

"Well it seems he has really made an impression on the inhabitants of the planet. He has been made the unofficial ruler of that planet." Krystal grinned at the stunned look on Fox's face.

"When you pick friends Fox, you really pick 'em don't you." Interjected the toad in awe

Fox mouthed wordlessly for a moment, and with a shake of his head said. "Wow, Yeah, I guess I do. So, Matthew knows we're coming then?"

"Yes, the General called him up and made the arrangements. General Pepper say the Colonial was thrilled that his old friend would be coming for a visit. Now if you don't mind I am going to go pack now."

Fox still looking as if in a daze said, "Alright then, I'll see you in about an hour."

Krystal laughed, "Unlike you I don't have to hunt down everything I own to pack it. I'll be ready in fifteen minuets. Why don't you call a cab that way it's here when I get done." With a swish of her tail she ran off upstairs to pack.

Slippy Turned back to Fox and laughed. "She's got you wraped around her finger Fox!"

Fox still in his daze turned to the phone and dialed the cab company. "Hello, yeah, I need a cab to the Main Station."

2 - Sorrow and pain

Conflicts and Aftermath

Chapter 2

"We're a couple block out from the Station." The old, Otter cab driver said over his shoulder as he pulled the cab up to the curb. "This is as close as I can get you with the roads in the shape their in. Your lucky to get this close as this is the only way off this miserable rock."

Fox scowled out the window and muttered under his breath, "Damn Aperoids!" Krystal cast a sideways look at him before turning to the cab driver.

"Thank you. This will be fine. I'm sure you got us as close as you could." The old cab driver nodded his head and popped the trunk so they could get their luggage. Krystal stepped out of the cab then stuck her head back in when she realized Fox hadn't moved. "Are you coming or do you intend to pay this gentleman to sit here longer?"

Fox looked up. "What, Oh, Sorry." Fox got out of the cab and began to unload the trunk.

"Heh Hem!" The cab driver cleared his throat and held a paw out the window.

Fox looked around trying to find the source of the sound. Seeing the Cab driver's paw "I'm sorry. How much do we owe you?"

"That'll be thirty-six credits. No change given." Fox dug in his pocket and fished out forty credits and handed it to the driver.

"Keep the change." Fox said absently. The driver looked at him for a moment and then shook his head and drove away. Fox hoisted the luggage onto his shoulders absently and continued to scowl out at the damaged scenery.

"Hey, what's wrong Fox? You've been pre-occupied ever since left the apartment." Krystal asked a note of concern in her voice.

Fox looked at her and said nothing for a few minuets. "It's nothing. I just still haven't gotten over how much damage was done during the attack. With the General out of commission they haven't been able to start reconstruction." Fox moodily kicked a chunk of concrete lying on the sidewalk. "This used to be a beautiful part of the city. It'll never be the same, even if they do re-build."

"Fox. I now you hate what they did, but you can't change that now. You'll learn to get used to it." Krystal laid a hand on his shoulder. "Things change. I know how you feel. My home was destroyed too remember. Only mine is gone forever. Your's can be rebuilt. Change is difficult, but you'll learn to adapt."

Fox's expression softened. "Sorry Krystal. I had forgotten about your lose. I know I'll get used to it. I just don't want to forget it as it was. This is my home and it pains me to see it this way." Fox shook his head. "I'll be ok though."

"I know you will." Krystal said softly pulling him into a side, armed hug. "We need to get going though. We only have forty minuets till our transport leaves." She turned and started off down the street.

Fox followed her sadly taking in the damaged surroundings as he went. Mangled and overturned cars clogged the streets making them impassible to vehicle traffic. Many of the building's windows were blown out and the interiors blackened from fires that had wreaked havoc and gutted them. Several of the older buildings of the district had collapsed under the stress. Fox walked behind Krystal barely conscious of where they were going. Krystal seemed to understand and remained silent as they made their way towards the half functioning Station.

As they neared the Station Krystal stopped abruptly and Fox still oblivious ran into the back of her.

"What are you stopping for?" Fox asked looking up at her, and readjusting his grip on their luggage. "We still got...." The words died on his lips as he saw over her shoulder the hundreds of makeshift tents and lean-tos that stretched over the square on which the station sat. Hundreds of people milled around looking lost and misplaced. Many people begged at the people that where making their way into the station; pleading for word on family members that had disappeared in the attack or trying to get money to afford transport off the planet.

Fox's mouth hung open and his expression darkened as he shook his head but said nothing. Krystal stared at all the people. She could feel their desperation and sorrow. This had been what had caused her to stop. Her eyes stung with tears as she fought to control the emotions that were flooding into her mind threatening to overwhelm her. Taking a deep breath she calmed her mind and blocked it from their miserable feelings. She looked around at Fox who said nothing but merely nodded towards the station indicating he was ready. Krystal turned and taking another deep breath began to pick her way through the maze of tents towards the station entrance.

As they made their way through the clogged path in between the numerous tents people began to paw at them crying and begging for help. It was all Krystal could do to keep walking forward. Fox followed behind her an expression of numbed pain in his eyes. As they reached the Station a Cornerian Husky guard stopped them at the door.

"Do you have a ticket? No access to the Station without a ticket." The guard said roughly. Krystal unable to find her voice merely held the tickets up. The guards face softened a bit. "I see..." The husky sighed as he watched a silent tear slide down Krystal's face "Its horrible isn't it. So many people are still suffering, and all we can do to control it is keep them from what they want. Freedom to leave and forget." The guard shook his head speaking more to himself than anyone. After a moment he seemed to realize they were still standing in front of him. "I'm sorry you may pass. Your terminal is the third on the right." With this he stepped aside and allowed them to enter the crowded Station. As they entered the station Krystal turned and took a last glimpse out at the hundreds of miserable people. As she turned back towards the terminal she noticed Fox staring at her.

"It hurt you to walk through there didn't it?" He asked a pang of sorrow in his voice. "You could feel

their pain couldn't you?"

Krystal nodded, another tear slipping down her cheek. "I could." She said simply. She turned her back to Fox before she continued not wanting him to see in her eyes the pain it had caused her. "Their pain is unimaginable,..unbearable. I...couldn't block it out it was so strong."

Fox put a comforting hand on her shoulder. Krystal reached up and placed her hand over his. After a few moments she looked over her shoulder and smiled weakly at him. "I ok..." She said a slight quiver still in her voice. Fox nodded a crooked smile on his face.

"Kind of makes you feel guilty about going on vacation doesn't it" He said a note of irony in his voice. Krystal let out a watery laugh. Wiping the last of the tears from her eyes.

"Fox you really are a moron you know that." She laughed pushed him good naturedly. She shook her head and started to walk away. "Come on, the guard said our terminal was this way."

3 - Detainment with a Purpose

"This is ridiculous !" Grumbled Fox as he struggled through the crowded station; trying hard to keep their luggage on his shoulder. "How much further is this terminal. It feels like we've been walking for ages. Are you sure we didn't miss it?"

"Quit being a baby!" chided Krystal as she ducked under someone's outstretched arm. "The terminal is right over there." Fox craned his neck to see where she was pointing..

"Finally! I hate crowds." Fox said moodily. Krystal just shook her head in exasperation.

"It looks like we have to register at the gate to get through." Noted Krystal as she stood on tip toes to see the terminal. "I hope they hurry. Otherwise we'll miss our transport." Krystal distinctly heard Fox mutter under his breath.

"That would be fine with me. I don't want to get on one of those things anyway." Krystal suppressed a smile as they slowly pushed their way through towards the gate.

As they reached the desk next to the terminal gate a lovely young Siamese Cat greeted them. "Good afternoon. Could I get your name and ticket number please?"

Krystal smiled at the young feline and turned to Fox. "Fox I...." She stopped in mid sentence as Fox was staring at the young feline with his mouth slightly open. Krystal growled , annoyed and punched Fox hard in the arm.

"Ouch! What was that for?!" fox mumbled as he looked away from the Cat.

"Once you've put your eyes back in your head I need the tickets I handed to you back at the entrance!" snapped Krystal . Fox stared at her with a stunned quizzical look on his face as he handed the tickets over to her.

"You really are hopeless Fox." Krystal sighed stifling a laugh at the look of innocent confusion on Fox's face. Krystal turned back to the Siamese and smiled pleasantly. "Here you go. They are under the name McCloud." The Siamese turned an amused look on her face as she began to punch keys on the council in front of her. After a few minutes she turned back to Krystal the smile gone and a serious look on her

"Are you Fox and Krystal?" She asked seriously looking between the two.

"Well...yes, yes we are. Is there something wrong?" Krystal asked a hint of nervousness and curiosity in her voice. "What does it matter if we are." The Siamese ignored this and asked in the same serious tone.

"Is your destination the planet Despin?"

"Yes, but what has that got to..." Krystal started but was cut off.

"We have been instructed by the authorities to detain you here until further notice." The Siamese said in a crisp official voice cutting across Krystal's sputtered protests. Fox dropped the luggage and protested angrily.

"What's going on? Why are you holding us. What grounds do you have?"

The young feline stood her ground and replied coolly. "We have official orders to detain you. That is all you need to know. Now if you please the guards will escort you to where you are being detained." She turned and motioned to two burly Husky guards standing on either side of the gate.

"THIS ISN'T RIGHT! YOU CAN'T DO THIS!" Fox yelled back over his shoulder to the feline as the guards guided them out of the terminal line and back into the crowded hallway.

Fox turned to Krystal and asked in a bewildered voice. "What the hell is going on here?" Krystal shook her head still in shock.

"I have no idea." she muttered looking back at the people now moving through the line with no problems. "I don't understand.? Are we supposed to have done something wrong.?" Fox shrugged his shoulders and merely looked bewildered.

Krystal and Fox trudged along between the guards. Still trying to figure out what was going on. Finally the guards stopped in front of two giant skillfully carved doors. One of the guards stepped forward and produced a key ring from inside his jacket pocket and after a few moments of fumbling, unlocked the door. Fox leaned over the guards shoulder in curiosity and out of the corner of his eye he caught a glimpse of a small gold plaque on the side of the door that read Gold Club Members Only. Fox shook his head and stared at the plaque again thinking he must have read it wrong. Standing up straight he turned to Krystal. "Where the hell are they taking us? This is the VIP lounge." Krystal just stared at him and shook her head.

"This doesn't make any sense." She mused, "Why detain us in the VIP lounge?"

They followed the guards as he led them inside and down a richly carpeted hallway. The guard stopped at another door and turned to Fox and Krystal. "I think you be very comfortable during your detainment. Sorry for the inconvenience." Fox stuck his head in the door as the guard opened it and then pulled it out again.

"Is this some type of joke?" he asked the guard confusion still registering on his face..

"No joke sir. We were instructed to detain you here until further notice by the authorities. I trust every thing is in order. Help yourself to anything you find. It is all complimentary." And with that he turned and began to walk away followed by the other guard.

Krystal looked curiously at Fox who hadn't moved and was still staring at the backs of the retreating guards. Fox closed his mouth and pointed over his shoulder. "Check that out." he said simply. Krystal

cocked her head at him and stepped into the room.

Inside was what looked like a dimly lit study. It had a huge fireplace, shelves of books, couches and armchairs and a bar over in the corner. Krystal turned and looked at Fox. "What's going on? I don't understand."

"I believe that I can answer those questions for you." said a curt high classed voice from behind them. Fox and Krystal both started and spun around in the direction the voice had come from, surprise registering on their faces. They stared around the room searching for the source of the voice. As they looked a large executives chair set behind an ornately carved claw foot desk by the fire swiveled around to face them. In the half light of the fire they could make out the features of a rather shrewd looking panther sitting with his paws steepled in front of his face and one leg resting casually on his other knee. "We have been expecting you." he said curtly a flicker of amusement crossing his smooth features at Fox and Krystal's looks of surprise.

"Who the hell are you?!" Fox snarled taking a defensive stance as if expecting to be attacked. Krystal turned and put a cautioning arm on his shoulder and gave him a warning glance. Krystal turned back to face the panther who was surveying Fox with cool amusement seeming to be completely unruffled by Fox's sudden out burst and asked in a polite but commanding voice.

"May I ask who you are and what you want from us?"

The panther continued to study Fox for a moment then unsteeping his paws and resting them comfortably on the arm rests turned and looked at Krystal and in his cool voice began.

"Forgive me. I have always been one for the dramatic and theatrical entrances. Allow me to introduce myself." He paused and casually reached for a bottle of amber liquid on the desk. "My name is Anthony Cordice." he said while pouring a healthy measure of the liquid into a glass. "Do sit down and join me in a drink. Not the best year, but it will have to do."

"Err.. No thank you." Krystal replied slightly unnerved by the panthers cool demeanor. "We just want to know what's going on."

"No drinks? Well. Suit yourselves." The panther replied airily. "I suppose you would like to know what's going on wouldn't you." He sat back in his seat watching them lazily absently swirling his drink with a claw.

"Yeah! That would be nice!" spat Fox hostilely. "You haven't answered our question. Why the hell are you keeping us here?"

"Temper, temper!" the panther replied coolly still unruffled by Fox who looked extremely annoyed that his threatening manner was not having the desired effects. "Hostility will get you nowhere. Try keeping a civil tongue and I will tell you what you want. I do not intend to try and keep you in the dark, and if you give me the chance to speak I will divulge all the information I have for you. Now Please have a seat and we shall begin." he motioned to the chairs in front of the desk.

Krystal seeing no other alternative than doing what he asked hesitantly stepped forward and

perched cautiously on the edge of one of the over-stuffed arm chairs in front of the desk. Fox remained where he was scowling at the panther and muttering defiantly under his breath. The panther watched Fox with a bemused expression.

"You know it is impolite to remain standing when offered to sit. Now I implore you please have a seat. I shan't begin until you join us as a civilized being." With this he turned back to his nursing his drink and ignored Fox's sputtered curses of indignation.

Fox continued to scowl and stand defiantly where he was. Krystal a look of murderous aggravation on her face hissed at Fox. "Quit acting like a baby and sit down. I want to know what this is all about and your making things difficult."

Fox growled darkly but flopped into the chair next to hers and stared resolutely at the ceiling. The panther as soon as Fox had settled into his chair to a final sip of his drink and turned back to face them. "Now. That wasn't so hard now was it?" he said. Fox ignored him and continued to stare at the ceiling. "Now are we all comfortable?...Good! Now/ Shall we begin?" he asked pouring himself another glass from the bottle.

"About time!" muttered Fox.

The panther ignored this and leaning back began. "As I have already stated I am Anthony Cordice and before I was so rudely interrupted I was going to say that I represent General Daldrich. Which incidentally if proper manners had be observed and myself not interrupted; would have saved us these last few awkward moments we have just had. He said these last sentences with a smug note in his voice.

At this point Fox interrupted. "How do I know what you really represent the General. What can you do to prove it?" he growled and Krystal put a paw over her face in aggravated exasperation.

"Fox you moron just sit down and..." she began but was cut off by a hand wave from the panther.

"No! No! He asks a legit question. How indeed do you know I am telling you the truth. After all I would be highly suspicious too if I were in his situation. The situation after all is rather an odd one."

"Your damn right they are. Now answer my question how can you prove it?" Fox demanded hotly.

The panther turned from Krystal and fixed Fox with a stern stare. "You are trying my patients with your rudeness but I will answer you question never the less. I know that you are Fox McCloud and Krystal Vixen and you were scheduled to leave on a transport to Despin ten minuets ago under authorization of General Cornelius Pepper."

"That doesn't prove anything." Fox interrupted angrily, "Anyone could find that out by asking the Receptionist at the station's front desk."

"You really have a knack for rudeness don't you?" the panther asked a slight clip to his voice now and a flash of irritation in his eyes.

"Only when I'm being detained for no reason by a pompous flea bag !" Fox spat watching for a flicker of anything that might show that he had struck a nerve. Krystal leaned back in her chair a paw over her face in embarrassment.

"Good Lord! General Daldrich said you were suspicious and untrusting , but this is ridiculous." the panther sighed and seemed to think for a moment rubbing his brow as if he had been hit with a headache. "Alright! You want more substantial proof? Shall we delve into more personal information to convince you?"

Fox merely snorted. "Yeah, I highly doubt you have any information on me that proves that you know and work for the general."

"Oh really? Is that so? ... Well then let's see. Where to begin? What to start with? Oh yes. This will do nicely." the panther said a smug smile on his face now. "The general has given me several things which only he knows about you. The first and one of my personal favorites is the fact that you. The great Star fox are Claustrophobic." Fox's scowl faltered momentarily.

"That's not proof. Lots of people are claustrophobic." Fox clipped defensively. "Your going to have to do better than that. "

"Very well. I can go further if you wish." the panther said with a smile rather enjoying the now nervous look behind Fox's posturing. "Let's see now. I do believe you had a hand in the Nova bomb that leveled the mess hall during your years at the Academy. I believe it was you that...uhh...helped the General pass his flight class by cracking the school's computer and downloading the answers for him."

"The mess hall was the Generals fault. It was his idea to level the place because of it's lousy food, and the test. I have no idea what you are talking about." Fox said defiantly although his voice wavered slightly.

"Very well, shall I continue? The General told me that you used to sleep with a...." The panther started but was cut across by a slightly panicked sounding Fox.

"Okay! Okay! So, you know the General!" Fox shouted drowning out the rest of the panther's sentence. Casting a side ways glance at Krystal who was now looking at him curiously he looked back at the panther and in a much politer voice. "You don't have to go any further. I believe you. Now could you please tell us why you are keeping us here. Why did you make us miss our Transport?"

The panther chuckled. "Feeling a little more polite now are we? Afraid I might slip and let out more of your personal secrets?" He drawled lazily sipping his drink again, a triumphant smile on his face. "Although your politeness is fear based, it is a marked improvement. As for your question, Detainment was merely the means by which we chose to get you here. The General remembered how much you hated public transport and decided he would not suffer an old friend to do something he hated so much so, he has arranged a more suitable form of transportation for you."

Krystal sat up in her chair and asked curiously, "Why didn't you just tell us that to begin with? It would have saved us allot of worrying and you allot of trouble."

"Ahh! You are a clever one. The reason the general didn't want it to be disclosed to you immediately is because he didn't want everyone to become aware of his new little toy. You see it would have caused a bit of an uproar if it were to have been found out." The panther said coolly. Apparently wanting to reveal very little. "The General will fill you in on the details as you have a meeting with him in oh...about ten minuets." he said looking down at his watch.

"Pardon my asking, but how the hell are we supposed to get to Despin in less than ten minuets?" Fox asked in a polite voice that still registered dislike in every syllable. Krystal nodded her agreement with Fox's statment and stared at the panther puzzled.

"Well, shall we be going?" The panther asked ignoring their question and standing to his feet. And striding to the door without a backward glance. Krystal and Fox looked at each other and hurried after him.

4 - General's toy and Welcome to Despin

Once again. I don't own Fox or Krystal. I do however own Anthony. Any other mentions of names or places is purely coincidental.

Chapter 4

General's Toy and Welcome to Despin

"Where the hell is he going? The terminals are in the other direction!" Fox asked irritably as he and Krystal hurried to keep up with the panther as he made his way through the crowded station towards the cargo handling department.

"Keep up please we are on rather a tight schedule." Anthony Called over his shoulder as he pushed through a door marked freight carts only. "The General is expecting us, and he doesn't smile upon tardiness."

"Uh, Excuse me, but where are we going?" Krystal asked trying to sound as polite as possible as she and Fox caught up with the panther . "Are you sure you know where you are going, there isn't anything back here but cargo shuttles. We're not taking one of those are we?" She asked a hint of distaste in her voice.

Anthony laughed catching her concerned distaste at the idea, "You really are a delightful girl! No, of course we aren't taking one of those disgusting cargo shuttles my dear. I wouldn't be caught dead on one of those in this suit. It would be ruined for sure!" Anthony said smiling slightly and giving her a wink which made Fox scowl. "No, We will be traveling in a bit more style. If you can in fact call it travel at all."

"Oh! Okay?" Krystal said a bit of relief in her voice although no less confused than she had been before about where they were going. She turned to Fox how merely shrugged and continued to scowl at Anthony. Anthony was watching them as he hurried them along with a smug expression of amusement on his face; clearly enjoying leaving them to puzzle on his words.

They walked along in silence for a few minuets. Anthony guiding them through the labyrinth of corridors under the station. "Ah, here we are!" Anthony said suddenly stopping in front of a set of steel doors marked Authorized Personnel Only! "And with five minuets to spare!"

Fox looked at the door apprehensively. "Where does this lead to? Surely there can't be a transport down here? We're underground." He asked sounding skeptical. Distrust etched on his face.

"Who said anything about a transport my dear boy?" Anthony said the same smug expression on his face. "I only said we would be leaving for Despin. I said nothing about a transport now did I?" this last statement was said with a air that Fox was sure was to make him feel foolish. but he didn't care.

"Okay, I'll bite if we aren't taking a transport how are we getting there?"

Anthony merely shrugged and said "You will see. Now, please inside." Fox scowled at him but started for the door. As he opened the door and began to step through Anthony called up to him. "You do lack in the manners department don't you? Have you never heard of ladies first?" As he said this he walked by Fox and grabbed the door. "After you my dear." He said sinking into a half bow motioning for a slightly pink Krystal to go ahead through the door. Krystal stepped through the door with an embarrassed mutter of "Thanks!" Fox glowered at Anthony as he followed her through the door.

"Oh, so he wants to play me as an @\$@ does he?" Fox muttered to himself angrily. "Well! Let's just see about that ." With that he followed the other two through the door slamming it behind him.

The room they had stepped into looked like it had once been a storage room. Now it was crammed with hundreds of computers and scientists in white lab coats. In the center of the confusion of wires and computers stood a long, low, rectangular shed like structure. Anthony ignored the flurry of activity around them and strode purposefully across the room towards the low structure in the center; Fox and Krystal followed staring around in open wonder at the amount of activity going on.

One of the scientist looked up as they neared the structure in the center of the room and scurried towards them through the tangle of wires that blanketed the floor. "Ah! Sir. Perfect timing. Everything is ready. You may depart whenever you are ready." The husky scientist said beaming at them and straightening his glasses as he fell into stride with Anthony who had not stopped. "The General has confirmed that the gate is open on the other end."

Anthony Nodded. "Very Good, we will leave momentarily. Although we are running behind a bit. Would you please be so kind as to set it back for five minutes earlier?" Anthony stopped and turned to the Scientist with a smile. "I do hate being late."

The scientist returned the smile. "No problem Sir. Give me a few moments to make the adjustments and you can be on your way." and with that he turned and hurried away towards a conceal a little ways away.

"Move what back five minuets earlier?" asked Fox who had been listening intently to the conversation hoping to glean some idea as to what was going on. "What's going on? What is that thing?" Fox asked motioning to structure. He found himself curious despite his hatred of the panther.

"That you shall see momentarily!" Anthony answered a hint of excitement in his voice and a gleam in his eyes.

"Does this have anything to do with the General's 'toy'?" Krystal asked staring at the structure.

"Clever girl!" Anthony praised stepping up behind her and placing his hands on her shoulders and looking up at the machine. "Yes, This is the generals new 'toy'. It is one of the most important 'toys' of our time!" Anthony said this last part looking down at Krystal with a smile.

"You don't mean this is a.." Krystal breathed in amazement looking up at Anthony as she put two and two together.

"Yes, It is!" Anthony said simply although his voice quivered slightly as he returned his gaze to structure.

"It's a What?" asked Fox icily not liking the feel of being the only one not knowing what was going on and annoyed at how close Anthony was to Krystal.

Krystal started at the sound of Fox's voice. "Oh!, oh! Fox this is a..." She began her voice quivering with awe but was cut off by Anthony.

"Don't spoil the surprise my dear. He will see momentarily." he said softly still staring at the structure with a quiet excitement.

"Sir!" The scientist had returned. "The changes have been made. I set it to five minutes before you gave the order. You all ready to go. If you would like to make your way into the chamber we can begin." the scientist said nearly as excited looking as Krystal had been.

"Thank you. Yes. Lets us begin." Anthony said turning to face the scientist.
"Fox. My dear, are you ready?" he asked Fox and Krystal. Fox grunted still annoyed at being left out of what was going on but curious all the same.

Krystal merely breathed. "Yes!"

"Very well then shall we?" Anthony motioned them towards a door on the short side of the structure.

Fox saw his opportunity and rushed forward towards the door a smug expression on his face. He'd show that he had just as many manners as the Panther did. As he ran towards the door he tripped on a bundle of cables and was sent sprawling to the floor. As he sat untangling himself from the mass of wires Krystal and Anthony passed completely oblivious to Fox sitting on the ground as they were staring up at the structure.

As they reached the door in the structure Anthony opened the door for Krystal with his half bow and then turned and looked around for Fox. He spotted him and with a smile that said all to well he knew what had happened he called. "What in the world are you doing down there? We need to get moving. We're on a tight schedule. Come along." as he turned and walked through the door after Krystal.

"Damn!" muttered Fox shaking his head as he got to his feet and hurried after Anthony and Krystal.

When he caught up with them they had entered door in the side of the structure into what looked like an empty hallway with another door at the other end. As Fox closed the door behind himself the scientist's voice echoed around the small hallway. "Search program running. Location found and locked. You can go ahead and head to the far end now sir."

"Shall we?" Anthony asked with a slight smile.

Fox hurried forward and was pleased to reach the door first. Standing to the side of it, He flung the door wide and imitate Anthony's half bow. As he swept downwards his eyes caught what was on the other side of the door and he froze in mid bow. Forgetting all about ladies first he staggered through the

door in disbelief. Instead of the sterile white room with all the computers he had just left. he was now standing in a very large sun lit garden in front of a massive stone palace. Fox turned and stared back the way he had come. Through a massive stone archway he looked back down the cramped steel hallway in which Anthony and Krystal were still walking down.

"I take it you now know what the General's 'toy' is do you?" Anthony said with an amused smirk at the look of shock and amazement on Fox's face.

"This is incredible!" Fox stammered temporarily forgetting his hatred for the Panther. "This has got to be the biggest...."

"Discovery of the century." Finished Krystal in awe as Fox's words failed him."How did you manage this? This is...huh...This is amazing." She asked her voice full of wonder as she looked at the hallway they had just left.

"Yes, it is." Anthony said with a mild chuckle. "Although you will have to wait for the answer as to how it was managed until you meet the creator. I merely have the privilege of using the machine. Only he can tell you how it works." As he said this he turned and closed the archway doors and after a few seconds opened them back up. No trace of the hallway could be seen. In its place was a breath taking view of a beautiful valley with a large city nestled into the very center of it. "My friends! Welcome to Despin"