

# Against A Rock Bonus Content

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## Viotro - short prelude

- Thursday, February 11, 2010

<http://kalinbooks.com/rock-eve-novel/viotro/>

VIOTRO

A short story prelude to Against A Rock

By Kalin Ringkvist (Allihence)

The characters twisted and blurred on the datapad as Simiul fought against the wrenching to focus on the address. Was he getting closer?

Left was up, he reminded himself... but he wanted to go down. He staggered past the doors, peering painfully to read the numbers above them.

A couple walked past and simiul straightened, avoiding eye contact, straining to put one foot in front of the other and appear natural. The sweat on his brow, redness of his face and trembling in his step betrayed his true state. The couple stared, but walked past.

His stomach threatened to lurch as he came to what he hoped would be the final block, and he stopped to hold himself. But his state didn't improve.

He pushed onward, finally finding his destination. He rang the bell.

Please, Lord, let someone be here... let this be the right place.

He rested one hand on the door latch and the other on his head. He buzzed again.

A second later the door swung open.

An Amarrian.

"What's up?" asked the man. "You don't look so good, Buddy."

"You Viotro?"

A nod.

"I need Vitoc."

Empty shrug. "Can't help you... but come in. I'll call DED and they can get you a synthetic." He took Simiul by the shoulder and pulled him inside.

"I can't take police issued synthetic. It only kills the serious symptoms. I can't lead a normal life." He staggered inside and Viotro caught him and helped him to the couch.

"I don't know what to tell you..." Viotro said. But he did not head for a comm panel and instead went to another room and returned with a personal weapons scanner and an automated syringe.

Simiul gazed at the syringe as Viotro slowly ran the scanner across Simiul's body. He felt his muscles relaxing in anticipation.

Sweet Vitoc, once again. The pure kind... straight from Amarria... it had to be.

Viotro confirmed his scan. "No bugs. You check out there."

Simiul turned his head, exposing his neck as though pleading for the injection.

Viotro leaned forward and placed the syringe to his neck. "I need to run a blood test..." And the syringe snapped...

But Simiul felt no relief.

"No..."

"I'm sorry, I've never seen you before. I need to be sure you're not with the authorities." And Viotro turned away and walked toward the other room.

Simiul screamed as he watched the Amarrian's back, but his voice cut off as his stomach lurched. He leaned forward and wretched, and what miniscule fluid was left in his system was forced upward in painful spasms.

"Let me get the test started," Viotro said. "Then I'll get you a bucket."

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"Helllllooooo, Viotro, Baby..." A woman's voice... from the distance.

Simiul looked up at his Amarrian caretaker as he dabbed a cold cloth on his forehead.

"You home?" came the voice.

"Yeah, I'm here!" Viotro shouted. Simiul cringed and pressed his head into the cushions as though it could block out the piercing sound. His stomach tightened, as it would on a steady rhythm. He curled and leaned forward and Viotro held out the bucket for him as they had many times before.

"More water." An order rather than a question. Viotro handed him a glass and Simiul drank.

"You won't believe the day I had today..." The woman's voice again from the other room. "I think I found something... I talked to my professor and he wouldn't take me seriously, but I still think it's something... a security hole, Baby... I think I found a security hole in the system..."

Viotro's head popped up momentarily, as though forgetting Simiul in her announcement. Then he rolled his eyes and turned back to his patient.

"You probably think I'm crazy..." her voice was in the room now, from the other side of the sofa.

"You found a security breach in what... in capsule integration?"

"I think so... maybe... in the connection with the capsule to the human... it uses a randomized ID, but sometimes that ID needs to change for various reasons, but if you can catch it at the moment the ID changes and insert--" Her head popped over the top of the sofa. A lovely Amarrian girl. "Oh... Hi," she said, her dark hair hanging above him as he watched her face suddenly change to a look of fear and concern. "You didn't tell me you had a guest..."

"Yeah, you might wanna check who's here before you start yelling about security loopholes..." Viotro took the empty glass from Simiul.

"You're not looking so great there Buddy," the woman said. "Vitoc?"

Simiul forced himself to nod.

She looked up. "Are you out right now, Honey?"

"Out of what?" Viotro asked. He cocked his head dramatically.

"Vitoc."

He sighed and rolled his eyes. "Please don't talk about that in front of people we don't know..."

"Oh, sorry... I didn't realize..."

"Fortunately I'm pretty certain this guy's legit."

She walked slowly around the couch. "I'm sorry, Babe. I'm still getting used to this life of crime." She walked toward him and held out her arms.

Viotro chuckled and shook his head as he dropped the glass on the floor. "Dear... your lips are going to get me in a lot of trouble some day..."

She knelt to bring her face to his level, wrapped her arm around his shoulder and kissed him. "Love you, Baby," she said.

Viotro grinned and shook his head as he put his arms around her. "I love you too, Floreina."

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Simiul gazed at the syringe in Viotro's hand. "I'm sorry I made you go through all that, Buddy... but your tests checked out..." He knelt in front of the couch. "So how do you intend to pay for this?"

And reality mutated into an ugly mess as Simiul thought about payment... not that he couldn't pay... but in his current condition, just the thought of trying to remember access codes and monetary transfer procedures made him want to sink into a pit of nothingness. "Please..." was all he could say.

Viotro grinned. "I'm just kidding." He leaned forward and Simiul had just enough time to turn his head and expose his neck before the syringe plunged into his skin, the prick barely noticeable against the backdrop of agony.

And almost immediately the world began to clear. Simiul sank backwards into the couch and breathed deeply as the weights seemed to detach from his stomach, allowing him to be human again. The pain ebbed slowly and Simiul followed the sensations and watched the pain disappear, as though the agony had been a part of his soul, an evil that could only be cleansed with the purity of home-grown Amarrian Vitoc. And for a moment he imagined that it were all true... what his master had told him... that evil resides in the souls of Minmatar and should be cleansed... that it *must* be cleansed...

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"Alright, Pal," Viotro started. "Who are you? Where'd you come from? Who told you about me?"

Simiul sat up and took a deep breath, feeling the air traveling pain-free through his lungs as though it were not an oxygen-nitrogen mix but the embodiment of his desires. Normal people always felt like this... to take a breath and feel just the air rather than a burning intensity that up until a few minutes ago had felt like his entire life.

Now he could think again.

"I want to thank you, Viotro," Simiul started. "...for saving my life."

Viotro shrugged. "It's just business... what I'm really curious about is where you came from and what your story is... I normally don't take on new customers without solid references... Are slave traders on the lookout for you? Were you released or did you escape?"

"I escaped..."

And from across the room Viotro's girlfriend caught his attention as she cocked her head and a quick glare seemed to pass through her eyes, as though passing judgment. Then it was gone, replaced with a warm smile.

Viotro nodded. "Well, congratulations on your new freedom... however, escapees present an added risk for myself... because someone might come looking for you."

"I can do whatever you need..." Simiul replied. "Whatever precautions you want..."

"I need information about your previous owner, his organization, and an account of how you escaped, as well as the names of the people you used to find me."

"You need all that just to sell me some Vitoc?"

"I don't just trust random people off the street. It's hard being an emancipation supporter in the heart of Amarr territory. By selling you Vitoc, I'm an accomplice to your escape... that involves serious penalties in this part of space..."

"Okay, if you get me a computer interface I can show you my owner's information portal... and I still have access to the code and plans I used for my escape."

"Code?" Floreina asked, moving forward in her seat. "You a hacker?"

He nodded. "I spent three years learning to program my master's systems just so I could be here today."

"Well, we've all got something in common then..." A wicked smile crossed Floreina's lips. "I'd love to pick your brain."

Viotro was already getting up to fetch a datapad. "Something else you should know, Simiul... that Vitoc I gave you... it wasn't actually mine."

"You stole it?" asked Simiul.

"It was already promised to another customer. Now his supply's a little short... he'll understand... I couldn't send you to DED... but his was going to be my last sale for a while. All my regular customers are stocked up and I was planning to take a hiatus for a few months... and focus on school."

Simiul's heart sank... at least as much as was possible in the midst of his Vitoc euphoria. "Does that mean there's nothing you can do for me after this dose... I'm back to square one?"

Viotro leaned against the corner at the end of the hall. "I might be able to figure something out."

"Are we still going out dancing, Babe?" Floreina asked. "Or do you have business you need to deal with?"

"We're still going... it looks like this guy's all fixed up for now..."

Floreina looked at Simiul with a sudden gleam in her eye and pointed a finger. "You wanna come along? Drinks? Dancing?"

Simiul smiled. These two Amarrians were different than the Amarrians he had known... as though they hadn't noticed he was Minmatar. But still, he shook his head. "I'd love to, but I need to lay low right now, before I can make my way out of Amarrian space. I need to figure out a backstory before I can go out like that."

"Bah!" Floreina replied with a shrug. "Your owner released you because you and your family served many faithful years. That's your backstory."

"People will believe that?"

"Of course. It happens all the time. Just pretend like you're faithful to the Amarrian Lord and nobody will question it,

especially if you're with us."

Simiul looked up at Viotro, who was not frowning as Simiul expected, but instead simply shrugged his approval.

"Okay, if you don't think we're in danger..."

Floreina smiled widely and met Simiul's eyes. "No, no. Everything's going to be fine."

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Floreina's cackling laughter flooded the hallway as the service drone let Simiul through Viotro's front door. "This guy thinks he's gonna get away with that?"

"Yeah, he'll probably get away with it... he'll get caught eventually." Viotro's voice.

"Where do you find these people?"

"They're everywhere, Babe," Viotro replied with a chuckle. "Every station, every planet, every culture and every organization. You've just gotta remember what comm networks they like."

"And all it takes is the standardized code breakers to find them?"

Simiul entered the living room to see Floreina lying across Viotro's lap with a datapad in her hands. She looked up and smiled. "Viotro's showing me how to hack the underground channels. Who knew there were so many criminals everywhere?"

"You got access to the station's communication relays?" Simiul asked.

"It's surprisingly easy with some of the equipment we get from school."

"Impressive. What are you in school for?"

"Weapons and military technology," Viotro replied.

But Floreina looked up with another of her sly grins. "Capsuleer training." And she winked. "But if you tell anyone, I'll sell you back to your old owner."

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"Amarrian religion lets wrongdoers believe they can simply atone by praying harder; our concept of hell sets a precedent that suffering is normal and acceptable; we establish irrelevant things as moral issues, distracting people from real right and wrong; we tell people our religion will 'draw them toward goodness' so they think they don't have to work at being a good person... or the fantasy of an eternal afterlife that makes human lives in the real world seem irrelevant... I could go on and on... It's all just flawed on a fundamental level."

Simiul stared at Viotro for a long moment as though his speech had just distorted New Eden's entire social dynamic.

"Does that shock you that I'd say all that?"

Simiul nodded. "Even after being a slave to the Amarrian religion, I can't go that far... I still need something to believe in..."

"Not me," said Viotro. "Religion is a disease."

"You don't feel like you're betraying your people by saying that?"

Viotro shook his head. "I'm just trying to believe in what I know is right..."

"Well," Simiul said. "That makes me feel better... even if I won't go nearly that far with my own thoughts."

"Are you nervous about making this Vitoc run to low-sec with me, just because I'm Amarrian?"

"A little..." Simiul replied. "Three weeks seems like a long time."

"Well, you'll learn that people aren't just stereotypes. Some Amarrians really do have the best interest of society in mind."

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Simiul leaned against the door to watch Viotro pulling clothes from his closet to pack his suitcase. Floreina lay on the bed, a datapad on her belly, turned away so that Simiul could not see the screen. "Have you ever been to the zoo?" Floreina asked.

"I've only seen a dozen or so animals in my life," Simiul replied. "Grew up on a mining rig. That's all the company ever let us know. They'd let us watch videos for good behavior... sometimes we'd watch nature shows."

"Ah, that's terrible!" she said. "Well, as soon as you get back, Viotro and I will take you. Our treat. I know a beautiful zoo in the system. It's just a quick shuttle ride away. How about a choir bar? Ever been to one of those?"

Simiul shook his head and shrugged.

"Pubs where everyone participates in the song. There's a fully automated one here on station where the lyrics scroll across the walls and the floors flash signals so you know exactly what to sing and when. It makes some truly interesting music... with the clapping and stomping... interesting, not necessarily good, but interesting... but after a couple drinks and a bit of practice, it's loads of fun."

"No, I've never heard of anything like that. Everything is new to me out here. Just browsing the local open networks keeps me entertained."

"Well, we've got to take you out to experience these things... I'm free the day after you guys get back. Viotro, are you free that day? Can we take Simiul to the zoo and the choir bar and maybe a play or public holoreel? He needs to experience these things... new found freedom and all..."

Viotro did not immediately answer. "What are you doing Floreina?" he finally asked.

Floreina cocked her head and sat up. "I'm inviting him to go out with us and have some fun... is that a problem?"

Viotro looked up at her for a long moment. "No, it's fine. Make whatever plans you want, Honey."

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"Are you okay, Viotro?" Simiul asked as he watched the Amarrian hovering over the holographic game board. "I hate to tell you, but you're leaving your command station wide open for attack by my third infantry."

Viotro's head popped up. "So I am... my head's not in the game."

"Is this trip too boring for you? Waiting three days in the middle of nowhere for a transport can get old..."

"I've done this trip before," Viotro replied. "But I've got a lot on my mind."

"Floreina?"

"Sort of... I was thinking of changing my major... moving my focus from military tech to business... but I was worried about how that would affect me and Floreina because if I changed schools we wouldn't be able to see each other much." Viotro tapped the table absently and finally made his moves with a shrug, as though he knew he was marching into a trap but just

didn't care. "Then Floreina contacted me yesterday and told me..." He stared at the floor. "That she's been kicked out of capsuleer training... now I can't even think about my own choices... this was her dream, and she's more upset than I've ever seen her... she's sleeping at her dad's house until I get back... and I'm out here in low-sec when I should be with her..."

"Do you mind if I ask why they dismissed her?"

Viotro shrugged. "She didn't want to talk about it. I tried to remind her that only a few make it through capsuleer training, that she's got far more career options now, but she wouldn't have it... It's all she's talked about since I've known her... even though only a handful of people even know she was doing it... and now I think she's about to make a life-changing decision before I get back... she's not the type to waste time with anything... she said her dad could get her a gunnery position with the ship he works for... if that happens, I'll never see her again."

Simiul made his moves with a few quick swipes of his fingers to bring his troops around the back of Viotro's nearest command center to capture ten percent more territory. Viotro simply stared. "Well..." Simiul started. "You strike me as a guy in love."

"I was going to ask her to marry me," Viotro replied. "I think I'm realizing that was a pipe-dream."

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"I'm concerned, Viotro..."

"We'll get there in time."

"I'm already starting to feel the withdrawals..."

"I know, Buddy... I'm sorry... but you've got another week before it starts doing damage... I'll get you a case of Vitoc in half that time... I promise... you'll never have to worry about Vitoc again."

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Simiul carefully navigated the cracker to his lips and forced himself to bite into the dry substance. He chewed and chewed and finally forced it down with a gulp of water. "Did you get the stuff?" he asked as he saw Viotro come back into their quarters.

Viotro closed the door and set his pack on the bed. And Simiul's heart jumped as he saw Viotro's smile, registering success. "I'll need payment before I hand it over," Viotro said.

"Of course," Simiul replied and began crawling across the bed toward his data interface, feeling the sweat beading from his forehead as his heart increased its rhythm in anticipation of the injection.

Viotro pulled out a small case and opened it to show a series of identical vials. For a moment, Simiul wondered why they weren't in a single container, since it was all for one person... but it didn't matter. He set the datapad on the bed and it took only a few seconds to transfer one hundred and twenty credits, the majority of Simiul's post-slavery savings, into Viotro's account.

Viotro confirmed the transaction then passed Simiul a syringe.

Simiul wasted no time putting the syringe to his neck and firing the injection. He fell backwards to splay out on the bed and let the sensations and release overcome him.

From the corner of his eye, he saw Viotro snap the Vitoc case shut. He stood and placed it on the desk on the far side of the room. He sat down in a chair and an odd look suddenly crossed his face. "I have something I need you to do," he said.

"What's that?" Simiul asked.

"I need you to put these on." And Viotro reached into his coat pocket and removed a twisted metal object. As he tossed it through the air, two sections of the object separated, and Simiul saw they were connected with a thin cable.

Restraints.

They landed on the bed next to him, and Simiul stared for a long moment.

"I'm returning you to Amarrian custody, Simiul... I'm sorry... I know this life meant a lot to you... but I can't in good conscious allow you to throw away your soul."

"You're joking..." Simiul's head swam, reality twisting into a melting pot of pain, relief, ecstasy and terror.

"No. I'm not." Viotro removed a laser pistol from his jacket pocket and rested it casually in his lap. "I need you to put those on. Behind your back."

"How could you... after everything you said... those were all lies?"

"I memorized certain heathen propaganda," Viotro replied. "I know this is painful for you, and I'm sorry... but I had to do what I know is right. This is your path to salvation, Simiul. You can't find God by running away from your responsibilities."

Simiul stared at the restraints and tried to think of options through the Vitoc haze. Viotro would not have been stupid. He would not have brought him all this way just to put him in a situation that gave him a chance of escape.

Viotro clutched his weapon and began raising it. "I need you to put those on, Buddy."

And Simiul, with a gripping pain rapidly returning to his heart, obeyed. "I thought you were my friend..."

"I'm still your friend..."

"No..." Simiul shook his head. "Friends don't do this."

"I can't let my friend sacrifice his soul. I know this is hard to take right now, but I promise, you will thank me in the long run... I didn't sell you back to your old owner. I think I found someone who will be a better fit for you. You didn't hurt anyone in your escape, so I was still able to find you a good home. And Simiul, you will find God... this is your path, Buddy... and yes, I am still your friend."

Simiul shook his head again. "That heathen propaganda speech you gave me... I think I believe it more and more these days."

"And that is exactly why you need to go back," Viotro replied. He put his gun back in his pocket and leaned forward in his seat. "Do you want me to hang out so we can talk?"

Simiul didn't reply. Despite the misery he knew was on the way, it all felt like a cosmic joke. Just random, disjointed, garbage. No organized, all-powerful being could have set this up. It was all just Godless randomness... a joke.

"No," Simiul replied. "I don't want to see you right now."

Viotro stood. "Okay, that's fair. Your new owner will be here in half an hour to pick you up." He walked toward the door. "I did want to apologize to you though, about Floreina... about what she said to you... that was cruel and I didn't tell her to do that."

Simiul shrugged.

"About the zoo and stuff..."

Simiul shrugged again and shook his head in amazement. "I don't care about that... what hurts is how your whole culture can do this to people... like you don't care... like you don't even recognize us as humans."

"That's the part you need to understand," Viotro said as he stepped into the hall and the door began to slide shut. "We *do* care."

That's why we do this."

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## Against A Rock - The Sequels

- Friday, November 08, 2013

<http://kalinbooks.com/rock-eve-novel/against-a-rock-the-sequels/>

This is a 15,000 word outline of my plans that I had for the sequels to Against A Rock. I wrote this back around 2009, but finally decided I don't actually want to work on it as it's so complex and drawn out and I don't want to dedicate myself to a trilogy unless I'm certain it's going to be phenomenal. But if you were a fan of Against A Rock, this may be interesting as it's a complete story, complete with sort-of happy ending and a lot of action and violence and a few insights into the human condition. For the most part, though, I don't think it would work as a story without a lot more editing.

One note I can remember is that any references to Empress Jamyl I was going to change to be some other random high-ranking person in Amarrian government or military.

Sequel outline 02

Sequel plans

Series themes:

Violence and why humans love it and the fact that deep down we don't want it to end

The idea that life is a game and we do everything, even the horrible things, to enjoy the game.

Floreina's dilemma between her desire to be a mother and desire to be a warrior

Mahran's dilemma between wanting to be free and wanting to be "good".

Religious justifications for wrongdoing.

Law/rule enforcement justifications for wrongdoing

the concept and importance of transparency

Selfish love or loving someone without caring about them

# Sequel 1

## 1. Mahran

The last few paragraphs of the first book from Mahran's perspective. He accepts Floreina's proposal to become an officer and an Amarrian. He deals with the realization that Floreina is not as all powerful as he thought and is hurt that she thought he would really betray her. I might have him see a child in her somehow in the first paragraph to round the story out with the child theme.

Mahran mentions that Viotro may have been compromised.

By the end of the second page the abolitionists are attempting to blast their way into the central pod chamber and a rush begins to get Floreina into the pod before they reach her. Mahran and the doctors take up weapons against the attackers.

## **2. Floreina**

Floreina begins her transition into the pod and she trips out, seeing herself as a terrified child and/or mother/father figure to a terrified child. Something about telling the child it's going to be okay when it's actually anybody's guess, or wanting to tell that lie. Something to round out the transparency theme as well as the child/mother theme. She worries a couple times about Viotro.

A few physical details about pod filling and leaving her body, but mostly mental details about transitioning into the ship's computer.

Gunshots outside the pod. She must take a minute to consider options, finally decides to attempt to ally herself with the Amarrian crew, which proves difficult as they are mostly aware of her betrayal, and are very hateful. They reluctantly agree to a temporary alliance and she begins allowing certain officers back into the computer system. But they are still locked down by all the ewar outside.

## **3. Mahran**

Mahran is sent out to pose as a common slave. He had taken a few precautions to hide his image from the abolitionists, but still many of the abolitionists know who he is, and perhaps some of the other slaves know of his involvement so he has to sneak and hide and find just the right group to join, knowledge of ship schematics coming in handy. He must recruit other slaves to help his takeover. They take over a single ship, but manage to use the surprise to target another and destroy it. Not sure if all the abolitionists should be capsuleer ship's or not, which may confuse things. Mahran finds it easier to kill minmatar abolitionists than he did the amarrians earlier.

Mahran escapes on the ship, or perhaps almost escapes but instead makes a last second escape from the explosion in a space suit to sail out toward The Angel and cling to the outer hull searching for a way back in.

## **4. Floreina**

Floreina shoots at abolitionists with help of her "crew", must get Mahran back in safely. They blow up a few abolitionists, but a few survive and escape. Floreina escapes with the Abaddon. Searching Allihence's connections as well as her own, she finds a safe (pirate?) slave trading station to capture and sell the abolitionists still onboard. She is still posing as Allihence, but her true identity is revealed as her former crew begin their own mutiny of some sort, perhaps setting explosives and fleeing. Floreina escapes either in a shuttle or frigate that Mahran can ride along in, or Mahran again slips in with the crowd and heads through the station and Floreina escapes in her pod.

## **5. Viotro**

Viotro is standing by the window at his mansion in early morning. A slave (VS) comes up with breakfast and treats Viotro very affectionately. He mentions his girlfriend (Juseilla) is on her way over.

Viotro watches as a vehicle crashes through his hedges and calmly comments on the crazy/drunk drivers, but recognizes the attack as soon as he spots the second vehicle. Breakfast drops to the floor as he and the other amarrians sprint to the panic room. He orders his slaves to form a specifically named defense posture after taking a short assessment of the attackers. VS tries to get into the panic room with him but he orders her to join the other slaves and take up arms against the attackers.

## **6. Juseilla**

The six/seven year old Akahna is being driven by his babysitter, Juseilla who is not paying much attention to the road in her automated vehicle. They drive into Viotro's home only to be dragged out of the vehicle at gunpoint and hauled inside by the

abolitionist attackers. Local Amarrian police arrive moments later.

Juseilla claims that Akahna is her son, hoping to throw off the abolitionists. She learns a bit more about her boyfriend from listening to the abolitionists negotiate with him. They talk about how he betrayed them, about how he had talked so much of the value of freedom and talked trash about his own religion in order to fool them. They demand Floreina's location. Viotro informs them that Floreina would not be stupid enough to give him her location.

We must also be shown soon after meeting Juseilla that she believes in religious cleansing. Perhaps that's the first thing she thinks of when she sees they are Minmatar who are taking them captive.

## **7. VS (Viotro watching VS?)**

VS must quickly learn to shoot a gun and takes up arms against the abolitionists, but are caught in a standoff and the abolitionists are able to contact them, begin feeding them propaganda. VS shouts back angrily but the others do not. A couple consider going with the abolitionists. She sees at some point, a small bag being tightly guarded by someone but pays it only a passing glance.

We then enter a short standoff between the slaves with guns, the abolitionists, the two hostages, the police, and Viotro and his Amarrian friends in the panic room.

## **8. Floreina**

Floreina is trying to juggle Allihence's assets and get them into secret accounts. She pays off the doctors first as well as a couple other related debts to her other technical advisors, but is too slow at securing her own emergency funds, and after a few transactions find's Allihence's assets frozen.

She then hears a notice that there has been a bounty placed on her head by CONCORD. It jumps up several times, but strangely for Concord, the reward is far greater if she is brought in alive, indicating they are willing to do whatever is necessary to find out how she was able to take over the capsuleer ship so they can seal the security hole.

Also noticed the fact that Allihence's clones are disabled by order of Concord, meaning Floreina is still mortal.

The public is not being told why she is wanted.

Then a man contacts her over a secure Amarrian channel, claiming to be a representative of the Amarrian navy. He says that they know what she did and would like Floreina to have a word with Empress Jamyl. "Don't worry," he says. "You're not in any trouble... well... let me rephrase that. You're not in any trouble with the Amarrian empire."

## **9. Mahran**

Mahran walks the station, looking at stuff and imagining how he could steal it, with help from his new implant. He can't help concocting plans to destroy the station or release toxic fumes into the air vents, and begins feeling drunk with power, even though he doesn't actually do anything.

Floreina contacts him in a panic saying she's gotten word about Viotro's standoff. Mahran does not want to go with her, and finally convinces her that he would not be of any use.

A few times we cut back to Mahran when we need a break from the other stories. He visits his brother that Floreina released in the first book and we explore his idea of being a thief, of playing a game of cat and mouse and how law enforcement has no idea what they're doing in comparison to the Amarrian slave owners.

Also he is torn between his devotion to Floreina and his desire to just run away from it all... very similar internal debate as VS.

Also he is pissed that Floreina wants to remove the implant that she gave him.

**10. Juseilla**

Watches the slaves one by one giving up and betraying Viotro. The abolitionists remove them with some kind of vertical takeoff vehicle.

**11. Viotro**

Viotro is acting very upset about his slaves abandoning him, but we must reveal to the reader that there is something more to it. He reluctantly tells the police not to shoot down the vehicle, saying that he hopes some of the slaves will realize their wrongs and return. He organizes with the police, puts on armor and shows his friends how to use their weapons and finally coordinates an escape while the police attack from the outside. We now get to see Viotro's military training at work.

**12. Akahna**

Juseilla is trying to protect Akahna, while the abolitionists are trying to maintain some semblance of control, and they finally escape and make it out to the lawn as the last of the abolitionists are being rounded up. Akahna sees an abolitionist being tackled on the pavement and the officer forces the man's hands in front of him as they're going down so as to trap his arms beneath him. The officer kneels on his back, grabs his hair and slams his face into the pavement, ordering him to put his hands behind his back. The abolitionist pleads with the officer, but each time he says that he can't move his arms, the officer slams the guy's face into the pavement until he's no longer moving. Akahna watches, fascinated. VS is right next to him, but not paying real close attention, more on the lookout for other threats. Akahna notices her not caring about the man being beaten and realizes that this is perfectly normal. One of those things adults don't tell kids cuz they think we won't understand. He realizes this is why police are so effective. Prisons can mean three free meals a day so there needs to be something more, and feels thankful police are protecting him... or perhaps its more that he feels fascinated by the process. Juseilla finally pulls him away.

**13. Floreina - CUT CUT CUT – not using this section**

Floreina hangs in a safespot in Viotro's home system, debating what to do. She has sketchy info of his situation (police are reluctant to release details) and debates going in to help, but finally gets word that the crisis is over, and becomes more focused on securing her own secrecy from the abolitionists and concord. She also has a meeting with the Empress (or perhaps just the Empress' advisors) in a couple hours, for which she is extremely nervous and must get cleaned up.

But she hears a secure signal from Viotro's slaves aboard a nearby cruiser. They claim to have Viotro, but he's injured and unconscious. They claim the police were paid off by the abolitionists and are releasing false information about the incident. The communication is all text, supposedly to keep it secret, and does not explain where the ship came from. Floreina smells a trap, but goes in to check it out, keeping a safe distance from the cruiser.

She debates with herself and finally decides to risk making a communication toward Viotro, at which point the abolitionists uncloak dozens of ships, releasing small drones and swarm the area, sensing Floreina nearby and manage to de-cloak her.

This doesn't sound too realistic as they would have no real way of knowing she was sitting so close to the cruiser. I might just have her fall for the trick, or realize it's a trap too late... but if she doesn't realize it right away, why would she realize it at all?

Anyway, Floreina and Mahran get captured by the same ship that has Viotro's slaves.

**13. VS**

VS is confronted by an abolitionist, who tries to get her to join them, gives her some alternative viewpoints. She says she's glad to be free now, but that her owners treated her kindly and wouldn't want to betray them. However, from a political standpoint, she's starting to see the abolitionist side, as she has heard a few horror stories of other slaves. We see, however, that she's keeping a secret from them.

**14. Viotro**

Viotro is confronted by the police who are confused by how he came to have so much money and how he came to have such powerful enemies. They are also curious about this Floreina/Allihence person who hit the news mere minutes before the abolitionists began their attack. Perhaps he receives a call from Floreina during this time which is abruptly cut off.

### **15. Akahna**

A police man drives Akahna and Juseilla to Akahna's house, but is apprehensive because Akahna's parents have not responded to any communications. The house is empty and the officer eventually leaves or is attacked and killed as the abolitionists were waiting for them, wanting to get to anyone involved in hopes of getting back to Viotro and Floreina, and still think Juseilla is Akahna's mother. Juseilla and Akahna narrowly escape, discovering Akahna's parents murdered. Akahna yells at his mother, thinking if he could just yell loud enough, like when parents sometimes yell at their kids when they want to do something and just keep repeating themselves, then she will get up. He takes justice on her for not getting up by screaming horrible things at her. Perhaps we can have the cops come back and make it just in time so that we can draw this part out and have Akahna trying to destroy the house to discipline his parents for not getting up.

### **16. Floreina - CUT CUT CUT - Change of plans, floreina never gets captured by abolitionists, instead we see this from VS POV**

floreina is worn out, and in a way simply accepts the fact that she's a prisoner again, and she just allows herself to be controlled and finds relief in being told what to do. The slaves are celebrating their new freedom and Floreina detects no falseness in their celebrations. She see's them through a monitor in the brig. Perhaps a friendly guard talks to her for a while. They are drinking beverages, each with a seed at the bottom. They all swallow the seed, which represents the seed of freedom that takes root in all of us... when we follow the one true God. And with that statement the abolitionists look up nervously and the slaves announce that the seeds are explosives. There should prolly be some more action, I suppose, perhaps some of the few who did not swallow a seed are fighting back, some people's belly's explode, etc etc. Floreina and Mahran are released. Slaves explain that Viotro has promised them freedom in this sort of event, so they really were celebrating their freedom.

Floreina, Mahran and Viotro's slaves now go pick up Viotro, Juseilla, VS (who wants to stay with her master) and Akahna, mentioning the selling off of the abolitionists as slaves, and the release of Viotro's slaves.

They fly off to search for a place to live.

Floreina convinces them all to stick together with her, knowing that if they split off, the abolitionists or Concord will find them and interrogate them aggressively, knowing they'll give away all her information.

They find a place to live

### **16. VS**

We do the seed/explosive thing. The abolitionists fall for it.

### **17. Viotro**

Viotro picks up his slaves, releases them, then sells the abolitionists to a contact who was able to make an emergency stop to pick up new subjects. Viotro meets up with Floreina.

Floreina convinces them all to stick together with her, knowing that if they split off, the abolitionists or Concord will find them and interrogate them aggressively, knowing they'll give away all her information.

They fly off to search for a place to live.

### **19. VS**

Is exploring her new freedom in a station. She's lost, confused, and is torn between her lifelong plans. Earlier this morning she'd never thought she'd be free. Now half of her wants to run as far from Amarrian space as possible and be with her own

kind, and another part wants to stay behind in support of God and remain a part of Amarrian life.

Suddenly someone grabs her and pulls her into an alley. He reveals himself and she sees one of the abolitionists on the cruiser. He tells her that they're not stupid enough to fall for the seed trick, and asks her if she would like to make New Eden a better place and make a whole lot of money in the process.

## **20. Floreina**

Floreina has her remote meeting with the Empress. The empress wants the secret to the mutiny, but doesn't trust the security of the channels. Since there is so much concord propaganda about the danger of letting capsuleer's run unchecked, she believes it's possible someone on her communication relay would report the information to Concord. They agree to meet in three months (hopefully long enough for public interest to die down) through an agent of the Empress. Floreina pledges her allegiance and promises to provide her the plans, even if it means her death.

## **21. Viotro**

VS returns to him, saying she cannot handle it out on her own and wants to remain his forever.

## **22. Akahna**

Akahna reluctantly resigns himself to being a member of this new family, even though he wishes for his old one.

## **23. Floreina**

They find a place to live.

## **24. Juseilla**

Juseilla decides to envelope herself in her political studies. The fear of everything that's been happening is driving her. She can't even know why they're being chased. Floreina and even Viotro are hiding details from her, and she recognizes that they're doing that for her own protection. She studies hard on the subject of religious cleansing and the psychology and politics surrounding it. We also must throw a little romance and show how much she loves Viotro, even if he doesn't seem to be completely supportive of the whole religious cleansing thing. (the reader should already have been made aware when we first meet her that Juseilla supports religious cleansing and also need to know her political science background)

## **25. Mahran**

Floreina forces Mahran to have his implant removed and go back to being a non-cybernetic human, insisting that he is not responsible enough to have one, that she would be liable for it, even if he is free now, a master is always responsible for their slave even years after they've been released or escaped. This, of course, must be developed in small bits early in the story, and perhaps even mentioned in the first book. We must know from the beginning that she intends to do this. Mahran fights and says nasty things to her about it, which seems to make her more adamant that he can't handle himself with an implant. She finally drags him to a surgeon and he is fully sedated for the surgery. Akahna tags along to the doctor.

Afterward Floreina takes him on a hike to the woods, to a cliff, or something else dangerous, possibly the same one with Viotro in the first book, and Mahran realizes that he hates her and after running it back and forth through his mind, finally decides to kill Floreina and begins waiting for the perfect moment.

Obviously mahran's relationship with his new implant must be developed at every opportunity so that we know how much it means to him, so we understand why he hates Floreina so much after taking it away from him. Floreina also is still missing her right arm, meaning it was more important to her to take away something that meant so much to him than it was for her to spend that time replacing her right arm.

They finally sit down and Floreina tells him she's got a surprise for him, and remotely switches on his newly upgraded implant. She explains that she had to keep it a secret from everyone, and that she expects him to hide his possession of the

implant. It's a special undercover ops style implant, designed to be virtually undetectable and is running lots of software to help the individual keep their cybernetic enhancements secret. She says he's the only person she can trust and needs him to be capable of helping her when needed. She reserves the right to remotely shut it down at any time, but his heart detonator has been removed.

Mahran is overcome with the new implant boot-up process, but at the same time, becomes overcome with guilt at how he was thinking of Floreina. And I think it's okay to have him cry cuz the only other tears shed through this book should be from Akahna.

He realizes that Floreina really is his protector, that she always had his best interests in mind and is essentially always right, if not always perfect. He realizes his hateful thoughts were the result of his Minmatar blood and that some people just aren't capable of making their own decisions and surviving without outside protection.

At some point either immediately before or after chap 17, Floreina sees a police report posted saying that they found the implant surgeon Floreina had just used, said he was being uncooperative, and they believe that Floreina had a copy of her mutiny strategy implanted in Akahna's brain. Or perhaps this happens at very beginning of Sequel 2.

## Sequel 2

**remember to show Floreina's new perspective on the pseudo-family they have in the early chapters and how she misses it in the later chapters**

**remember to show Floreina's connection with Akahna and how she feels it's kind of twisted that she feel that way about the kid whose parents died because of her, but also her longing to see Akahna feel the connection and become a son.**

**reiterate when possible how Akahna is bitter toward Floreina over everything**

**Don't forget to constantly reiterate how Floreina's ultimate goal in all of this is to become a capsuleer for real**

**Remember that VS has to be present and somehow notable as a person, and we must look for ways to slip in clues to her true motivation - or actually, I'll probably have short sections from her pov to show clearly that she is spying on them for the Minmatar militia, and show her own internal conflict over doing that to her master, and how the Minmatar must convince her each time that she's doing the right thing.**

### 1. Akahna

Floreina takes Akahna's tiny hand and wraps his fingers around her sidearm then guides him to put the weapon to her temple and tells him to pull the trigger. She speaks of the responsibility involved in taking another's life and how important it is to feel depth of the emotion in the act and how it's a spiritual act that sometimes is right in God's eyes and sometimes not and the best

way to know is just to feel it in that moment and if you ever get to the point where taking someone's life doesn't thrill you, that's when you've become a monster.

Akahna suspects that the gun won't fire, but still is terrified of what might happen and hesitates a long time before finally pulling the trigger. She had the safety on, of course. She wants him to be emotionally ready for when it's necessary in the real world.

Akahna remembers hearing a conversation between Floreina, Viotro and Juseilla about what to do with Akahna. They don't know that he can hear them through the walls of their house when he's supposed to be asleep. They can't send him to his relatives because they're afraid the authorities or abolitionists will kidnap/arrest him to get to Floreina. Floreina says that they shouldn't think about killing him, regardless of how advantageous it might be, and Viotro and Juseilla are a little disgusted because they weren't even thinking of the idea.

Akahna is 7 years old now and is developing a fear of Floreina. His parents raised him to be peaceful and while Floreina respects their wishes, she decides she needs to teach him the way of the mercenary because she's put him in a situation where he now may need to fight for his life, whether he wants to or not.

But the more Akahna finds out about Floreina, the less he likes her, as she is the center of everything that's happened. But at the same time, he's fascinated by her and does not want anyone to know about his discomfort. Akahna doesn't talk much, but Juseilla says he used to be a chatterbox before all this happened. He's holding back because he's scared of saying something to get himself killed. He doesn't like any of the people he's with, but he doesn't seriously consider running away because he thinks they're telling the truth about the danger he'd be in.

They find a mud pit and they talk about jumping in and having a mud fight, but Akahna's afraid of it being quicksand or a monster lurking underneath. Floreina suggests that he test it out on another person first... let someone else suffer the consequences of the experiment. She stands between him and the mud pit and talks about how sometimes you've gotta push someone else in if it's too dangerous to do it yourself. Finally he takes the hint and pushes her into the mud.

Floreina sinks below the surface of the mud with a scream and Akahna panics, picking up Floreina's sidearm, not knowing what he's going to do with it and runs around the pit, clueless, until Floreina leaps out with a laughing growl and pulls him in. Akahna is upset and not having fun and Floreina has to work to convince him to actually play in the mud pit. Perhaps this is the time for Floreina to tell Akahna that there's no such thing as an adult; we're all just as confused as children and all you can do is enjoy it. Finally he starts enjoying himself but deeper down, something feels empty and meaningless, or even evil, like he's dancing with the devil in disguise.

## **2. Juseilla (2 & 3 likely to get cut)**

Juseilla hears shouts from outside and runs out with a gun, sees Akahna and Floreina covered in mud and shouting for Juseilla to get the hose. She hoses them off, and Floreina suddenly strips naked and runs inside, claiming dibs on the bathroom.

## **3. Floreina**

Floreina is confronted by Juseilla about how wrong it was to take off her clothes in front of the child and we see the contrast between Juseilla's more rigid sense of clear, absolute right and wrong, and Floreina's sense of "whatever feels right" or "whatever God speaks to you of". It's also an example of someone trying to pick out things to create character conflict because they have been reasonably safe from attackers for the last few months and Juseilla needs that sense of drama.

## **4. Juseilla**

Juseilla must take some time early in the story to remind everyone how she supports religious cleansing because she can't stand the thought of so many people burning in hell and something must be done to prevent such human suffering in the afterlife, even if it means doing something that feels purely awful. She focuses much more on compassion than she did when she talked about it with the abolitionists in Sequel 1 when she was kidnapped in Viotro's house. The idea of cleansing by killing entire planets of people is very painful and horrifying for her, but she is convinced that she must push through those feelings to do what is right, that those feelings are a test of her faith.

### **5. Floreina (very short section)**

She's playing with Akahna on the floor, building a building and then she pretends to blow it up, perhaps at Akahna's prompt and Akahna asks about the people inside and she takes the little figures and mimicks them running around in panic and a couple die, and Akahna says, "Just like my mom and dad." Floreina freezes and for a split second questions the morality of her entire career.

### **6. Akahna**

Floreina stands over him with a knife while he's in bed. She sits down beside him and smiling, starts to stab him. Bright rainbows come from the wounds instead of blood, and Akahna thinks he's in a dream, but doesn't think you should be able to feel pain in a dream. As she stabs him, Floreina explains that this is the kind of thing that adults do for fun. We play games and have fun too... it's just that we play games with real human lives.

Akahna wakes up screaming and Floreina runs in with Juseilla behind, and Akahna squirms away from Floreina to Juseilla.

### **7. Floreina or Viotro**

Floreina and Viotro have been invited to meet with the empress' top advisors, and Juseilla begs to come along. They refuse because they won't make special requests on the empress. She's very mad and wishes bad things upon them, maybe half-jokingly... or maybe they finally agree to bring her along. They leave VS, and Mahran to look after Akahna. We are informed that they have waited this long because the empress is trying to do things under the radar of Concord, not wanting the public to know that she is interested in working with criminals like Floreina. The Amarrian navy wants to know Floreina's secret to capsuleer mutiny. VS asks where they are meeting and they tell her.

### **8. Viotro or Floreina**

They meet an operative for the Amarrian navy in a bar or something and he takes them to a ship. On the way to the ship, they are attacked in the middle of a transport pod filled with people, like shoulder-to-shoulder so we have some very close-range and very confusing combat. The Amarrian operative gets shot but not killed, Floreina takes his weapon, since he is the only one with a firearm since they're on a restricted station. She fires into the face of an attacker, but behind him is standing an innocent Gallente, and Floreina's lazer grazes across his face, torching a horrifying but not deadly wound. Floreina feels guilty about all the collateral damage but only has time to save his name and info into her memory before they flee to the ship. They are on the ship with just this one guy in an Anathema. They jump from system to system, back and forth, our Amarrian Operative (AO) telling them that they have other scouts in every system in half the region who have realized that they have people following them.

Basically the abolitionists are tailing them and turn out to have a much larger than expected militia backing. Perhaps they go to low-sec because it's safer and go to a carrier where some of the Empress' staff are waiting for her. But they're attacked, and Floreina and Viotro have to survive. Floreina has to take over piloting the frigate while Viotro mans the guns and they learn by

the skin of their teeth about the ins and outs of PvP Speed tanking, and transversal and stuff before managing to board a carrier with a sliver of hull left.

But the carrier starts going down, presumably because the enemy saw them board it. They demand that she give herself up, saying they will spare the carrier and the rest of their fleet if they give up Floreina and Viotro. They consider giving up to the abolitionists, they consider trying to escape in another frigate. It's a confusing situation because they never would have guessed that the abolitionists could find them where Concord could not. Concord had been their primary concern, leaving them vulnerable to the Minmatar militia.

Floreina finally gets an idea and decides to simultaneously contact Concord and the pirates (blood raiders?) that we hopefully introduced in sequel 1. She threatens to give her secret mutiny technique to the pirates if the abolitionists don't cease and desist. She's got a program set to automatically distribute the plans to questionable characters upon her death or in a day if she doesn't enter the cancel code. Or perhaps she does not contact Concord, but Concord somehow gets wind through the pirates as she threatens the minmatar with this act.

This is a chance to mention the other fun aspects of war, the politics and motivations of the different nations. War isn't just about who has the biggest guns or the strongest fighters. It's about who knows how to best manipulate human emotions and politics to their advantage.

So they get Concord to come in and save the day and in the chaos, Floreina escapes, but Viotro and Juseilla (if she's there) does not. They are captured by Concord.

## **9. Floreina**

Maybe a scene where Viotro is injured and Floreina recognizes that he's going to get captured and she has to fight with her implant and debates killing him, perhaps even raises her weapon so that he knows and he screams at her and implies that she's not even human any more. She, of course, finally is forced to let him get captured and she escapes and cloaks somewhere.

## **10. Akahna**

Akahna's in daycare and someone in a suit comes looking for him, but of course, he's under a fake name so he hides and has to convince some of the other kids to keep his cover for him.

## **11. Mahran**

Mahran and Juseilla pick up Akahna at the daycare and he tells them about the man looking for him. Mahran's implant tells him to stay in the day care where they won't shoot, or maybe he tries to sneak out the back and enters a high-speed chase. Perhaps they go through the woods and we have a scene where they're being chased with concussion grenades designed to knock them out rather than kill them, and they keep getting disoriented when they get too close. Also, perhaps a moment where Akahna breaks free from them out of fear, and runs across the street. They learn that it's actually the Minmatar militia that's after them. They get cornered. Perhaps a scene where they are flying a shuttle, crash land and have to hide... probably not. That might drag the section on too far. But they finally get cornered and must call Concord to avoid being taken by the Minmatar, and as a result, are taken by Concord.

## **12. Various summary of a few chapters**

VS, Juseilla and Akahna (Viotro too?) are captured by Concord and separated on a ship somewhere. Maybe there's a section

where they show them pictures of their friends being tortured, fingers cut off and whatnot, then we switch back to those people and see that they're okay, and getting fed the same line about the others. Maybe. or perhaps they're all put back together in the same cell again, but they realize that they're being watched in hopes they will talk to each other about Floreina. None of them budge because they have been coached by Floreina.

### **13. Juseilla**

Juseilla is being interrogated by concord, but Juseilla starts asking questions and the officer tells her that they're all going to be terminated under some terrorism clause. They were aiding Floreina, who is considered a terrorist by Concord and of course considered highly dangerous because of her knowledge of the glitch/security hole that allowed her to commit mutiny on a capsuleer. VS, Juseilla, and Viotro are probably going to be held on terrorism charges for years but Akahna they are going to need to terminate immediately because of legal technicalities a child can't be held in such a way and they fear that Floreina may have encoded information about her mutiny technique into his brain. Perhaps she brought Akahna with her to the surgeon when she had Mahran's implant "removed" and they stayed much longer than would have been necessary (cuz of the installation of Mahran's new implant) but Concord thinks she may have been implanting information in Akahna's brain.

So Juseilla asks him how he can sleep at night after killing a child and doesn't he think it's wrong to have one organization controlling the whole capsuleer industry instead of allowing free access, and the officer gives a speech like the one an officer once gave me, "Let me explain something to you. Law enforcement doesn't care about right and wrong. How could we? We wouldn't be able to do our jobs if we did. Even rapists and murderers have children who cry 'boo hoo, why are you taking my daddy?' and the only way you can deal with it is to just shut off all human compassion while you're on the job. And you should be thankful we can do that because without us, everyone would be running around killing and eating each other. Right and wrong are just made-up concepts... if you think you can make me feel guilty you're sadly mistaken... this is how society has decided things should be run.... just doin my job."

### **14. Mahran**

Juseilla and Mahran debate about whether or not to tell Akahna about his upcoming execution. Juseilla is horrified, but Mahran has been trained to be open and honest and wants to apply that to this situation citing the pain he experienced when he found out about everything near the end of Against A Rock, and he's still kind of tortured by it, avoiding looking more deeply into the 'not slave appropriate' things because he's afraid of what he might find. but he was trained to be open and honest, even when that honesty is humiliating, painful, or downright terrifying. Juseilla puts her foot down saying that she is the true Amarrian and her decision stands.

Mahran, for one of the first times in his life, deliberately disobeys an Amarrian.

### **15. Akahna**

Does Akahna already have a basic implant? Perhaps a secret one like Mahran. But somehow mahran tells him that they're going to kill him. He tells him to think of it as a game, and he can fight back if he wants, maybe explains that there's some people on board who wouldn't approve of killing a child and see if he can't find someone like that to help him escape. mahran is honest that it's a one in a million shot.

### **16. Floreina**

We gotta catch up with Floreina and show her trying to think of a way to help her friends.

**17. Akahna**

Akahna sits on an exam table and a doctor tells him he's going to get an injection, saying it'll help him go to sleep. Akahna stops to think that this injection might be their attempt to kill him, so when the doctor goes to give him the injection he cries and argues, but doesn't reveal his suspicion, finally saying that he wants to do it himself. The doc eventually agrees and gives him the automated syringe. Akahna remembers when Floreina got him to push her in the mud, as a test, so he pretends that he doesn't understand the syringe and gets the doctor to come over to show him. He then turns the syringe toward the doctor and injects him in the hand or arm. The doc screams and punches Akahna, who goes unconscious.

**18. Juseilla**

Juseilla receives a message from VS, or perhaps shows up at her cell door with other masked individuals. Somehow she has developed an escape plan, seemingly with the help of other mysterious individuals.

**19. Akahna**

Akahna wakes up and there's another doctor who does not seem to understand that Akahna was being terminated and is confused by the situation. A security officer comes in to take Akahna away and seems to be more aware of the situation, but does not realize that Akahna understands what's going on. Akahna continues to play dumb, and grabs the officer's weapon and shoots both of them.

He runs off to hide somewhere.

**20. Floreina**

Floreina decides that Akahna is probably already dead. Her friends are lost, she decides, and she is just about to leave when akahna contacts her from inside the ship and she decides to go back for him. Perhaps Akahna calls her 'mom', then corrects himself a moment later, and Floreina's implant tells her that Akahna is trying to manipulate her, that he made the slip on purpose to make her feel an obligation to come back for him. She shoves the thought away.

**21. Mahran**

VS shows up at Mahran's cell door with some Concord agents. Why the agents are helping them escape, he can't figure out. They try to contact Floreina, but cannot. Hiding, sneaking, and gunshots ensue.

**22. Floreina**

floreina infiltrates the Concord vessel in the midst of the chaos. Perhaps some capsuleers start shooting at each other, which distracts Concord... or someone comes in with a smartbomb. Floreina boards the concord vessel, perhaps via a spacesuit and a grapple drone. More guns, explosions, hiding and sneaking. She finds Akahna and they make their way to the airlock and put on spacesuits.

**23. Akahna**

But Floreina's covops ship is a little too far away from the concord battleship now for them to use the grapple drone, so Floreina tells Akahna that she needs to throw him toward the ship, and he'll have to use his suit's propulsion, as well as a grapple drone to make it to the covops, then pilot it back just a couple kilometers to get in range of Floreina's grapple. Akahna is upset at the thought of being thrown through space, repeats that he's only 8 and shouldn't even be allowed to pilot a ship at all. She puts her faceplate against his and talks about fear and how it helps us and how you must embrace it and learn to love it. Then she throws him.

And once he's in flight, suddenly he knows exactly what to do, as he's been trained in all of these things. He maneuvers toward and grapples the Anathema covops, gets in, takes control, and even though he's only flown shuttles before, is able to pilot it

back within Floreina's range. And as he's doing all this, he thinks about his real mom and dad, and he realizes that they never would have come back for him. They would have cried, written letters, talked to the news about the injustice, but they would not have come back for him, and would have let him die. They simply had too much faith in the police state.

#### **24. Floreina**

Akahna and Floreina get to a safe distance and are able to remain cloaked. They sit down on the floor, and Akahna sits across the room from Floreina. He tells her he doesn't want to do this anymore. He tells her that he misses everyone, and Floreina starts talking about her guilt, and tells him that the guilt centers around Akahna, even though she's hurt so many people, she can lock them out and ignore them, but every time she looks at Akahna, she is torn between her desire to be a capsuleer and her desire to just get out and lead a normal life... to be a mom.

Finally Akahna crawls across the room and into her arms.

## **Sequel 3**

#### **1. Floreina**

Akahna and Floreina can't leave the system because of concord patrols and must remain cloaked. Akahna is fast asleep in her arms.

#### **2. VS**

Viotro, Mahran, VS, Juseilla and her helpers fight their way to an airlock. VS is hoping to get to Floreina so they can trap her.

#### **3. Floreina**

Floreina receives a distress signal from Mahran. She and Akahna sneak back in to rescue them. They are almost immediately attacked by Minmatar Militia. The mercenaries helping them escape will engage Floreina somehow, or perhaps Mahran will figure out what they are doing (with aid from his secret tactical implant) and execute them all once they've served their purpose.

#### **4. VS**

A little of VS's conflict as the militia is shooting at her and her family. Perhaps a few rounds hit the Anathema's shields. They manage to cloak up and lose them.

#### **5. Viotro (possibly Juseilla)**

They all get to meet Empress Jamyl and Juseilla steps forward and starts giving a speech to the empress and tells her that she should change the overall tone of their public image to be one of policing and law enforcement, to downplay any stereotypes that they are racist, and act as though they are enforcing God's law and that the warriors are simply doing their job. She also suggests providing everyone in New Eden a way to petition her with grievances, and she should at least pretend to listen to them, so that people feel as though they are a part of the process and will be less likely to fight back against Amarrians. Amarrians should provide police assistance to other groups in New Eden, even enemies, so that we can become known as the good guys who enforce justice. Juseilla says, "If someone comes to your house in body armor, pointing weapons and says 'I'm a warrior fighting for my empire and I'm here to destroy you', people are going to feel okay about fighting back. But if you send in people wearing the same body armor, toting the same weapons, but have them say, 'I'm a police-officer doing my job, enforcing the law,' Our enemies will see the agent of their destruction as being innocent. And even if people disagree with what our police are doing, they will still turn against anyone who fights us because they believe they're fighting against law and order in general. We can redirect all their fighting spirit into pointless letter writing.

Viotro, as he's listening to this, is sure that the Empress is going to have Juseilla's head for speaking so forcefully and out of turn. Juseilla hints that she's aware of this risk, and that it's okay if she can just spark an idea in the empress. Floreina recognizes Viotro's fear and takes his hand.

But after a tense moment, the empress finally asks her to write up a more specific proposal and sit down with some of her advisors.

Juseilla notices Floreina and Viotro clutching hands but doesn't seem to be bothered as they leave the royal chambers.

#### **6. Floreina**

Floreina goes to research the guy that she accidentally shot in the transport. She finds out that he's been having trouble lately,

mostly because of his facial deformity. He can't afford reconstructive surgery. Floreina researches him and feels horrible, and decides to give him an anonymous sum, like a couple hundred thousand isk, which to her is not a huge deal, but would change his life. She's just about to pay him when she notices some things that he's written and posted and finds out that he doesn't believe in God and has written a number of posts and articles about how religion is a detriment to society. We give a few samples of his atheist propoganda and Floreina is disgusted and puts away her wallet, deciding he got what he deserved.

### **7. Viotro or floreina**

Viotro and Floreina come home to find Mahran beating up on VS. She's all bloody and bruised and restrained. Viotro attacks Mahran, as VS is screaming rape, but Mahran insists that VS has betrayed them all, that she's the reason why the minmatar found them. Yelling and screaming and pleading of innocence ensues. Mahran must find a way to prove it. All he has to go on is that she told him. She'd been feeling guilty and finally let it slip to him, saying that she'd broken off communication with the Minmatar. He would have the recording of her saying it, because of his implant, but he could only play it for Floreina because she's the only one who is supposed to know about it. VS might make a run for it and have to get captured, and perhaps she'll eventually admit it all.

Once they've figured out that she's guilty they have to figure out what to do with her, and Viotro agrees that he must kill her.

### **8. VS**

She's in the bedroom waiting for her fate, trying to think of ways to escape, and Viotro comes in and tells her that he has to kill her and tells her to walk out of the bedroom and into the bathroom and stand in the bathtub. Akahna is in the living room playing with Floreina and Juseilla and as she steps into the hall Viotro instructs her not to look at them... that they won't help her and we don't want to traumatize the child.

And in her last moments, she falls back into her ingrained submissiveness and devotion to God, stands in the shower and bows her head so that he can crush her skull with a hatchet.

### **9. Akahna**

Akahna is watching things from the back of his mind as he's pretending to be focused on their games, and recognizes what's going on.

### **10. Juseilla**

Viotro asks Floreina to clean up the mess, or perhaps she volunteers because Viotro is so upset. Viotro leaves, saying he wants to be alone, and Juseilla follows him. She catches him out in the woods somewhere and she says that they should pray for her and Viotro doesn't think so because she so blatantly betrayed them and Juseilla insists that no one deserves eternal damnation, and that regardless of what she did, we still have an obligation to her soul. And her belief in cleansing comes up and is our best chance to really show that Juseilla supports genocide because she has such a deep love for the human soul and doesn't want anyone to burn in hell.

### **11. Mahran**

Mahran decides that he should leave and visit the Minmatar homeland. He voices disapproval of Juseilla's cleansing everyone is concerned.

### **12. Viotro**

Juseilla is busy typing up proposals and PR about how it's necessary to cleanse a certain planet by dropping a virus that would wipe out the whole population. It's a Gallente planet where the Amarrian religion is not really accepted and most people are not religious at all. It has a reasonably low percentage of Minmatar, which she intends to use as evidence that they are not racist. As a result of this work, she does not have time to pay attention to Viotro or even listen to his concerns about it.

### **13. Floreina**

Floreina and Viotro go for a walk somewhere and talk about Juseilla's drive to commit genocide. They are both somewhat torn about it and try to come up with explanations as to how it does not conform to the wishes of the God in the scriptures and can't come up with anything. Juseilla's logic makes sense to them in the context of the scriptures. We must be willing to fight for God and to do things that are very difficult and emotional in his name. But despite this, they come to the conclusion that they don't agree with it. They can't put their finger on why, but they just don't like the idea.

And Floreina talks about the man with the torched face. This is the first she's spoken of it to anyone. Viotro doesn't even remember because everything was so chaotic and quick.

Viotro talks a bit about VS.

Floreina starts hinting that she just wants out... the idea that her whole life goal of a military career was a mistake... that maybe she should have taken Viotro's marriage proposal when she had the chance and just settled down and not gotten involved in any of this.

Viotro asks her to marry him yet again, and Floreina says no.

#### **14. Viotro or Juseilla**

Viotro confronts Juseilla about his moral disagreement with what she's doing and she is shocked and at first accuses him of not being truly supportive of the Amarrian religion. They realize, or finally admit that they have fundamental political disagreements, and they thought they could get past that because they love each other, but not in this situation. They agree that they still love each other and Viotro is just about to leave and Juseilla points out that they will essentially be political enemies. They agree to spend one last night together as though none of this had happened.

#### **15. Floreina or Juseilla or Akahna**

They have a bit of a custody battle, but Akahna decides that he wants to go with Floreina and some things are implied that Viotro is going with Floreina and Juseilla feels kinda betrayed.

#### **16. Floreina**

The face man appears to Floreina in a dream or more likely she just imagines it, and he shows her his family and goes through a quick Uncle Tom's Cabin type mini-lecture about how everyone has feelings and to each individual their feelings are just as important to them as they are to you. If you get to know someone who is totally different than you politically you can see that we are all just trying to do what we feel is right, so there is never any reason for hatred or assuming others are possessed by evil, and always a reason for communication.

But she's trying not to listen and he's yelling these things forcefully and shoving his grotesque face into hers.

There may also be a scene on the beach, where she is watching Akahna play with a sandcastle and imagines a meteor coming out of the sky and squashing him instantly, and thinks about how atheists view life, and how if that happened Akahna would just be gone forever, as opposed to how she always saw death as not such a big deal, and how the soul was most important, and suddenly recognizes how an atheist must see life as precious because nothing comes afterward.

#### **17. Juseilla**

Being left behind by Viotro and Akahna only makes Juseilla more determined. We reveal that she is becoming one of jaml's top advisors, and logically recognizes that it's best that everyone left her so that she can work on God's plan to redeem humanity.

#### **18. floreina**

Floreina's concept of God is changing... becoming more vague... Juseilla's sense of absolute helped her to realize that you can't pin things down like that... she's beginning to accept people's right to disagree, to accept that human emotions are as important as our perceptions of God. She goes to a station by herself and anonymously transfers several hundred thousand ISK to the man she shot in the face.

She feels cleansed, somehow. Before doing it, she worried that she'd regret putting that much money toward someone who would most likely use the money to help attack her religion. But now she doesn't regret it and she feels cleansed, and feels as though it doesn't matter... that there is a beauty in other mindsets and cultures. She collapses on the floor in the transport pod on her way back to the ship, thinking she's all alone. At this point we come back to a thought she had in the first section of *Against A Rock* about the people she's killed while in command of the turrets and they were just points on a scoreboard, but now because of the simple fact that her fighting has become more face-to-face, she is realizing that they are all people.

But someone starts talking to her. He says he has a message for her from Concord. They want to offer her a deal. They want her to perform her mutiny strategy on the Empress' carrier in exchange for immunity and capsuleer status.

She recognizes the coincidence that this car was totally empty and that they are going to attack her and surround her when she gets off if she does not agree to their deal. She decides to run and escapes out a hatch in the transport car.

She races down the tracks, dodging the trains running at hundreds of kilometers per hour, with the aid of her implant's connection with the local transportation network. But she can't get to safety and finds herself trapped against a wall, with transports whizzing by her and she needs to keep her back to this wall and her implant notifies her whenever another transport comes by so she can squeeze up against the wall as these things come just inches from her. She notices that rush hour is coming and the transport schedule is filling up. She's not going to be able to move for another three or four hours. Concord

contacts her through her remote mental connection and a high ranking concord exec talks to her about what they are trying to do. They mention the man she shot and press her on it, trying to convince her that it is possible for the Empress to be wrong and that what she's doing is not what God wants and that Floreina is morally justified in trying to stop the annihilation of a planet.

Floreina is torn between devotion to her perception of God and the Empire and her ethics. She also is suspicious that Concord will double-cross her. But they are also offering her free immunity and capsuleer status.

The Concord director says that they will make a public deal, entered into official records. He admits that concord regularly lies to people, but does not do so publicly. He also offers to give her his daughter who can be held until Floreina returns from the takeover. Floreina is disgusted, and the director is himself, a little disgusted by his own willingness to risk his family but insists that he's only willing to do it because the Empress is talking about wiping out an entire planet.

They insist that she doesn't need to kill anyone and that she doesn't need to betray her religion or her God. All she needs to do is capture the ship and show some peace-propaganda through the mental connections, try to convince the Empress to back down on her plans, and to steal the plans themselves. She's seriously considering it after a while.

But in another part of her mind/implant she is hacking into a communication system to contact Mahran.

### **19. Mahran**

Mahran gets a call from Floreina and quickly decides to come running to her aid. He gets passage on board a Minmatar capsuleer's frigate. (His capsuleer friend he meets in previous chapters -- gotta write those in). Floreina agrees to Concord's demands and they stop traffic to come and pick her up. But Mahran gets in a car and they manage to time things so that when traffic stops, Mahran pulls her into another car that wasn't on the schedules, and has a disguise all ready for her. They sneak off.

Then they sit down and discuss these things. Mahran's Minmatar capsuleer friend takes off, clearly uncomfortable with Floreina and Mahran's relationship. They meet up with Viotro and they all seem reluctant to encourage Floreina to take Concord's deal. They work on ways to ensure that they won't double-cross her, like doing lots of research about Concord policies and if they've betrayed people in public agreements, and about the director and his daughter. Someone points out the fact that if not for their friendship with Juseilla, they would be horrified by what the Empire is planning to do. They ask if she's the only reason they're even considering it.

### **20. Floreina**

Floreina finally agrees to Concord's deal. Floreina, Mahran and Viotro meet up with the concord director, and he gives them his daughter (DD). Then Floreina and the director sit down to talk about the plan. We hint a little at the director's nervousness at giving up his daughter. And Floreina watches and analyzes him closely to be sure he's not pulling one over on her.

### **21. Mahran or Viotro**

They take DD. The little girl is about Akahna's age. I'm not sure if she's going to know what's happening. If so, she's going to be very nervous but reluctantly accepting. They must go quickly to avoid anyone who might be watching them. They fly to a secure place... somewhere.

### **22. Floreina**

Floreina, satisfied that Concord is not trying to pull one over on her, she contacts Mahran and asks him to return DD to her mother. She tells the director that it was merely a tactical decision because she doesn't want him distracted during the operation.

### **23. Mahran, Viotro or Akahna**

They stay the night at the Concord Directors house by invitation of his wife (CW) and daughter (DD). However, Mahran's capsuleer friend does not stick around. He drops them off on a station and heads out. There is a CTA by the Minmatar Militia, so he must leave. Perhaps this section would be good from Akahna's perspective so that we can show his confusion at the capsuleer being an enemy of Amarria, but also being a nice person. also he can notice the capsuleer being distracted by something.

### **24. Floreina... possibly Juseilla for the first part**

Floreina comes on board the Empress' carrier (or perhaps the empress is escorted in a Pilgrim or perhaps a black ops. A pilgrim or black ops might make more sense because the Empress' main defense against assassination is staying under the radar.)

Floreina shows up under some kind of front, like wanting to talk to Juseilla about Viotro or something. Perhaps she confronts Juseilla, but of course, at this point the plan is in progress to the point where Juseilla doesn't have a lot of say any more since it's

past the planning stages and into military and PR stages.

Floreina gets to the pod chamber and the transition goes fairly smoothly. She's a capsuleer for real now. However, she's flying the Empress around, and if something happens and the Empress doesn't survive, Floreina will not allow herself to survive. She looks through official Empress documents and finds the attack plans for the virus. The target appears to be variable; something that will be decided days or even hours before the hit, based on current political events. The time also turns out to be a variable. The plan is to wait until something horrible happens that can be blamed on a particular group or planet, or if there is a major attack on Amarria, then they drop the virus in the midst of the panic and play huge political games to justify it. But one of the things listed as potentially prompting the virus drop, is an attack on the Empress, and indicates that her death would likely cause her attackers homeworld to be hit.

And there is a list of potential targets where high proportions of the populations are opposed to religion (not necessarily just opposed to Amarrian religion). Surprisingly few of the targets are Minmatar. Most are actually Gallente, because they are the least likely to have strong religious societies. And there are nearly as many Caldari targets as Minmatar. But one of the targets happens to be the planet where the concord director lives... where Mahran and Viotro returned DD.

Floreina relays the data to her Concord allies and they don't like what they see.

Floreina then starts talking to the Empress through the speakers in her quarters and attempts to convince her not to go through with her virus plans. The Empress has similar viewpoints as Juseilla, and isn't willing to listen to the idea that she's wrong. But before they have a chance to really talk, they're attacked by the minmatar militia.

Now Floreina must pilot the ship to escape the attack and we finally have a real fleet battle where we refer to various game mechanics and fleet operations. But the Amarrians are a bit overwhelmed by the attacking force.

But the ship starts going down. The militia knows just where the empress is.

Floreina convinces the Empress that she must climb into her capsule with her before the ship is destroyed. If she ejects in a standard escape pod, the Minmatar will pop her instantly, but Floreina's pod is much more likely to survive cuz in a big fleet fight people usually don't waste time killing pods.

## **25. Juseilla**

Juseilla is losing confidence as she hears that the ship is going down. Instead of running for an escape pod, she prays for confirmation that she was the good guy, that she hadn't done anything wrong. But God doesn't seem to be talking to her. So she lays down and curls up in her blankets and closes her eyes, telling herself over and over that she was the good guy in this story.

## **26. Mahran, Viotro or Akahna**

They get word that the planet is being evacuated. They run for the spaceport and find massive crowds. CW has multiple short panic attacks. Akahna distracts DD while her mother freaks out.

## **27. Floreina**

The Concord director is quite upset that his home planet is being attacked. However, only a single canister was dropped, so it was going to take a few hours for the virus to multiply in the atmosphere and infect everyone. It turns out the virus was dropped several thousand kilometers away from Mahran, Viotro, Akahna and the director's family, so they still have time to get out alive.

The director suggests, half-seriously, that Floreina go there to rescue their friends and simultaneously give the Empress a taste of her own medicine. Floreina feels guilty over even more collateral damage, and thinks that the Empress might have connections that could help them get off the planet. She is also losing faith rapidly, not in the core concept of God, but in the concept of religion and moral authority. She rapidly comes to view the Empress as just another human.

Floreina flies to the planet, but the pod's probably not capable of dropping directly to the planet surface (will need to check backstory for that one). So Floreina stops at a station in orbit and gets a drop capsule, but the Empress sees their location and realizes what Floreina is doing and fights back. We can have a little action before Floreina forces her onto the drop capsule and they drop through the atmosphere. The station has a no-firearms policy and Floreina has no way to get around it, so all she has is a knife to keep the empress hostage.

And as they are dropping and fighting, they are talking.

They land in the middle of the ocean and continue fighting and arguing, but at the same time have to work together to get the life boat set up. Finally Floreina convinces her that she can't win and must follow along with Floreina. The Empress knows she doesn't stand a chance of survival on this planet by herself.

## **28. Mahran**

Mahran contacts his capsuleer friend and asks him if he betrayed them to the Minmatar militia. He reluctantly admits it. But Mahran asks him for help anyway, and the capsuleer agrees to pick up a shuttle and come down to rescue them.

DD's mother is relieved, her panic subsiding a little. But Mahran tells Viotro that he's going to be surprised if his friend actually shows up. Here we can say a couple things about capsuleer's normally not having a clear understanding of what human life really means. Also we address DD's mother's panic. She cries when she hears Mahran say that he doesn't think his friend will show. And somehow we address her moral involvement in all of this. Viotro or Mahran asks her why she thought she would be safe from retaliation when she's married to a professional killer. When you cook for and sleep with a killer, and are that close to that much death, why would you think it could never touch your life? Why wouldn't you have thought ahead enough to prepare herself mentally for these kinds of situations? The two children seem to be handling it better than CW, DD certainly having a harder time than Akahna.

Viotro and Mahran must come up with another plan.

And Mahran then points out that they are standing out in public, just trying to figure out the best way off the planet, just like everyone else... as though the virus in the atmosphere is the only threat to their lives. With Viotro and Mahran being so close to the people responsible for this, the virus might not be their biggest concern.

### **29. Floreina**

Floreina contacts Mahran and tells him what's going on. She is watching the news about the panic and the first symptoms of the virus a few thousand kilometers away, she loses the last of her faith in the Empress and the church. She demands that she order her fleets to divert resources in a rescue attempt. When the empress refuses, Floreina takes the motor and turns the boat around, heading back out to sea, toward the oncoming virus.

They head out for a while, watching a map of the weather patterns. But soon another boat contacts them and Floreina refuses to talk to them because she must deal with the Empress.

And they continue out, neither backing down, Floreina resigning herself to dying on this planet.

But the other boat shows up with a guy and his girlfriend. They pull up and frantically scream their warnings, and tell them to climb aboard, that they're going the wrong way.

And Jamyl pleads for help, explains that Floreina is holding her hostage, without revealing her own identity. Floreina holds up her hands, leaving the knife in her pocket and jokes about it, as though the empress was just joking. Jamyl takes her chance and attacks Floreina. Her knife drops into the ocean and at the same time, Floreina hears the guy on the boat telling his girlfriend to get his gun. Jamyl boards their boat, but they won't let Floreina on until they find out what's going on.

Jamyl disappears behind the deck and all we see is the guy. A moment later, we hear a gunshot, and the man suddenly loses interest in Floreina and runs toward the cabin.

Floreina takes her chance to leap to the other boat and scramble aboard, just in time to see the Empress walk out of the cabin with the gun and shoot the boat owner in the head. She shoots at Floreina, and Floreina is forced to dive into the water. Jamyl comes to the edge of the boat, fires a couple shots and forces Floreina to dive underwater.

She swims directly under the boat and as she crosses underneath, forcing herself as fast as possible to get to the other side so she can get a breath, she gets a communication through her mental connection from Akahna. He is alone and frantic. The adults have abandoned him and he doesn't know what to do.

### **30. Mahran**

Floreina contacts him and tells him that she's on a lifeboat and that she has a prisoner who was partly responsible for what happened. She needs their help and wants them to come to the beach and meet her with a vehicle, restraints and a weapon or two. We make it clear that we're flashing back and that this chapter and chapter 28 runs parallel with chapter 26. Perhaps have some identical wordage or something.

Mahran and Viotro quickly discuss their options and decide to leave Akahna with CW and DD, assuming that anything Floreina is involved in with a prisoner is not going to be safe, and that CW has a better chance of getting Akahna to a rescue shuttle.

Mahran takes Akahna aside, and Akahna explains that he does not trust CW, and Mahran tells him to try to keep her calm, that he needed to remind her that she needs to be the adult.

Mahran and Viotro then break into a security supply station to steal weapons. Mahran must probably reveal his implant to Viotro as he hacks access to the local security systems in order to do it. They steal a couple motor cycles and speed off toward the beach.

### **31. Akahna**

Akahna is stuck with CW, who is rapidly becoming overwhelmed with panic. DD is not panicking but is pretty much zoned out. They hear of a women and children only escape vehicle that is not yet full, and they race through the crowds, but DD doesn't want to walk, and CW has to finally force her once she gets worn out from carrying her. The crowds get thicker and thicker as they head toward the terminal until an announcement of another shuttle ready for boarding and the crowd suddenly

shoves forward. DD is separated from them and CW takes just a few seconds to notice, then is nearly trampled as she tries to turn around. Akahna dodges and climbs over the crowd to escape his own trampling. It's obvious there were far more people clamboring for the shuttle than could have fit.

CW gets up and clamps a hand onto Akahna and won't let him go as they search for her daughter. She asks a security officer who tells her where to go. They have an office set up for this sort of thing with a large quantity of lost children. They find DD, and while it only took fifteen minutes to find her, they had missed the flight, don't see any more, and both DD and CW are very shaken up.

They head outside because CW needs air. Akahna keeps asking her details about ship schedules, as he can't really understand them himself. She is becoming more and more frustrated with him. DD just blindly trusts her mother and stays almost entirely silent, burying her face in her shoulder most of the time.

They hear an announcement of another women and children flight, and CW checks the details on her datapad, but then puts it away, saying that it was a mistake.

Akahna doesn't understand how they could be making mistakes in such important situations. He wants CW to explain the details, but she refuses in frustration. Akahna stands over her for several moments, expecting her to do something but when she simply sits there, holding DD, Akahna decides to run away.

He runs through the crowd, begging random people for help, who mostly ignore him, until he runs back out onto the grass outside and sees a guy sitting calmly by himself on the hill. He runs to the guy (HG) and asks for help.

HG says he's not planning on fighting the crowds for a spot. He has a datapad and looks up the recent announcements and they figure out the one that CW had hid from him. It was a children only flight. It's not full yet and he still has time to get there. It takes Akahna a long time to understand that CW had hid this from him and her daughter on purpose.

He runs back to CW and DD, knowing that he must be polite and sensitive to CW, but when he gets there he is so angry that he can't think of the words and just tries to drag DD away from her and just tells her that he can get her out but her mom can't come. CW refuses to let her go and DD refuses to fight back.

Akahna finally leaves them and runs to the flight. He gets there after several minutes of hard running and comes close to fainting. He asks for information and finds out that the ship needs another ten minutes to fuel and there's still room for him.

The adults try to get him on the ship, and as he realizes he's finally on his way to safety, his mind clears, only to become overcome with guilt over DD. He remembers Floreina's promise to DD's father that she would keep her safe and decides to call Floreina.

Floreina is furious and immediately contacts CW and just screams at her and calls her selfish, and calms down just enough to say "You can't love someone if you don't care about them."

But CW cuts off the communication and refuses all further comms.

### **32. Floreina**

Floreina has been hiding with her lips just barely out of the water, clutching the back of the boat, near the motor. She screams through her mental connection at CW and as CW cuts off her comm, Floreina nearly forgets about the Empress with the gun in the boat above her and the motor spinning right near her head. Akahna tells Floreina that he has time to go back for DD, but Floreina emphatically orders Akahna to get on the shuttle and get safe, and as her fingers start to slip, she tells him she has to go.

She scrambles up and is able to climb aboard, and does not see the Empress, assuming she's in the cabin. She hides and is able to catch Jamyl unaware. They fight and hit against a refrigerator which opens, spilling bottles of alcohol. Jamyl comments that they are heathens and Floreina reminds her that they had put their survival on hold to come help them. The bottles break and they try to cut each other, rolling around in broken glass and alcohol.

Floreina finally overcomes her and gets the gun. She gets up and finds a communication still open with Amarrian high command using the boats computer. She puts the gun to Jamyl's head and demands that they divert all local military resources to a rescue effort. They all refuse and Floreina becomes frustrated and fires the gun into the floor, threatening to sink the boat, but having no effect on the buoyancy.

They tell Floreina that they have shuttles on their way to their location, but Floreina calls their bluff, pointing out that with the rescue-ships-only rule combined with the fact that Amarr had just dropped a virus on them, the local defenses would not take kindly to unidentified amarrian vessels entering their atmosphere.

Finally, Floreina grabs the empress' wrist and shoots her through the palm of her hand. After a little more arguing and floreina calming a little to plead with her, the Empress finally orders her fleet to divert resources to a rescue attempt.

They calm down a little and Floreina bandages the Empress' hand and they discuss a strategy for getting off, but are interrupted by the information that local law enforcement are diverting small watercraft toward their location. They intercepted the Empress' communications from the boat's unsecured civilian connection. Only rescue vessels are allowed flight currently so they only have boats chasing them.

The Amarrian fleet provides intel with their surveillance and they map out a location for them on the beach (using Floreina's mental connection now). Floreina won't reveal the identity of anyone coming to meet them but contacts Mahran privately to tell him to meet them there.

### **33. Mahran**

Mahran gets a call from Floreina as he is speeding through a park on a fancy automated motorcycle, followed closely by Viotro. Floreina tells them where to meet. He tries to contact his capsuleer buddy but gets no response and Mahran writes him off. They are avoiding main roads, which are either closed to allow rescue craft to land or are packed with vehicles. They race through park trails and people's yards.

Finally the capsuleer contacts them, saying he is in orbit. He's having trouble getting clearance to enter the atmosphere, due to the lack of a specific landing site and lack of evidence that he is a rescue vessel. He tells Mahran that he will need to fill his cargo with evacuee's if he is to get clearance.

### **34. Floreina**

They get closer to the coast and the police engage them, but Floreina leads them through a series of rocks and small islands. The police eventually open fire, but she's able to pilot into a collision course into one of the pursuing vessels. Janyl and Floreina jump out the back of the boat and are swept through the waves and as Floreina slams against a rock, she gets a message from Akahna, although it's garbled and unintelligible. She clings to the rock for several moments as she attempts to establish a connection with the datapad he was using. But then it's lost.

### **35. Akahna**

Akahna is listening to Floreina yell at CW, he suggests that he could go back for DD and Floreina demands that he get on the flight. She says she has to go.

Akahna gives the datapad back to however he borrowed it from. He talks to someone who is helping to manage the loading procedures about CW and her refusal to let her daughter leave. The person explains that that's very common, and they've had to deal with that issue many times, which is why the flight is not full. He suggests Akahna simply get on the flight and not try to contact his parents.

He decides to go back for DD and must escape the grasp of a couple adults who are trying to get him onto the flight. On his way back he crosses under the same fence and crosses the same runway that he did to get here, but this time he is nearly hit by a landing shuttle and is thrown into the air from the wind.

But as he runs, he feels like an adult. He feels he has total control and focus and knows exactly what to do, the way adults appear to him, and realizes that his focus is because he is thinking of someone else instead of himself. And he is able to run through his exhaustion and put it out of his mind.

He gets up and runs back to CW/DD, trying to think of what to say. He knows he needs to be more sensitive to CW, but can't think of the words. He also is worried that they will have moved on, and envisions them getting on another flight while he misses his.

But they're still sitting in the same place and Akahna is disgusted by her ability to give up. He gets to them and speaks more carefully, repeating some of the things Floreina has said about fear and stumbles over attempts to say other things. Near the beginning he says that kids aren't Minmatar that you own, though he stops himself because he knows she's offended by slavery, but at the end he tells her "We're not just teddy bears for you to hug; we're people and when we want something, we want it just like you do... and things mean something to us just like they do for you."

She agrees to let DD go and they get up and start running. Akahna grabs DD's hand and they run. CW runs after them, but she is so out of shape that she can't keep up.

They reach the hole in the fence and an attendant is there, sealing it, and tells them they have to go around. He'd like to let him go but an accident on the runway could delay enough traffic to kill tens of thousands.

So they must run around the end of the runway, and Akahna starts getting winded. His side's hurting and he finally collapses. DD can still run however, and tries to drag him up, but he's in too much pain. Fearing that CW will take this as a sign that they shouldn't be leaving, he yells at DD to go and when she continues trying to drag him along, he throws a handful of dirt in her face, convincing her to run to the flight without him.

He drags himself along, vomits a little, and finally CW catches up and tries to carry him but she can't move very quickly.

However, she is able to wave to someone at the launch site. Someone from the launch site shows up in a cart and takes Akahna and races back toward the flight. The shuttle is taxiing out to the runway and the guy pulls up beside it and throws Akana onto the wing. An emergency exit opens and he's dragged inside by a dozen kids hands.

Everyone's standing, shoulder to shoulder. Akahna shouts for DD, but gets no response, as the screaming and crying of the other kids and the roar of the engines is overwhelming all other sounds. He fears he doomed her by throwing the dirt at her,

that she had gotten lost... that he had taken for granted that she was as smart as he and could figure out how to get on the flight, but was wrong.

He agonizes over this as the shuttle rises through the atmosphere, shuddering and revving under the weight. Finally he finds someone with a datapad and tries to figure out how to access the flight listings, but is baffled. The other kids don't know either, and so he calls Floreina for help but the connection is garbled and he can't understand anything she says, then he's cut off.

### **36. Floreina**

Floreina clings to the rock as she tries to get a connection with Akahna, but it's lost and she's swept up to the beach. The police are shooting at her, and she simultaneously needs to watch the Empress to make sure she doesn't try to lose her. But Jamyl at this point realizes that Floreina is her best chance for survival. They run up the beach, dodging bullets and make it to the road. Viotro and Mahran show up on their motorcycles and Floreina and Jamy each hop on the back.

They race down the highway, mapping out their escape as more police are trying to head them off. Mahran's Capsuleer friend is ready to meet them, however, and they pick a field on a farm to meet. Floreina and Viotro wipe out on their motorcycle but the shielding is able to protect them. They get on the shuttle and strap in. Floreina sits down as co-pilot. Now they need to find a location with enough people to put in their hold, while avoiding the police and staying just above the tree tops to avoid any sentry guns that may shoot them down for his unauthorized landing.

They land in a small town and are able to take a full load of evacuees, despite their honesty about the fact that the police may try to shoot them down.

They take off and head out to sea at low altitude to find an airspace that is safe for them to make their ascent. As they start hitting the first of the air lanes, the sentry guns begin tracking them, and Floreina sends out a message pleading to let them go. Floreina talks about collateral damage and how much damage she's done in her career because she felt she had the moral authority to do so, but when you commit violence in the name of moral authority, the collateral damage is often as bad as the crime you are trying to punish. And she shows them the cargo hold full of evacuees.

The turrets continue tracking them, but do not shoot. When they get into upper orbit, several local law enforcement frigates engage, but they are able to hit warp before the webs and scrams lock them down.

If we need more action, we can have a fight where some of the passengers find out who she is and attack Jamyl, but I think we've got enough action already.

They all get out and must transfer quickly to Floreina's Anathema, handing over the shuttle to the evacuees.

Now they must drop off Jamyl, so they must fly near the Amarrian fleet and drop her off in an escape pod. They don't want to drop her just anywhere because there are so many people in this area who want her dead. So they must fly close enough to where they know she'll be picked up by her own people.

They eject Jamyl and are locked down by a pursuing frigate from Jamyl's fleet. But they are able to outrun it, cloak and warp off.

### **37. Floreina**

Floreina is waiting with the Concord director at an exit from a decontamination station. She's hoping Akahna is here. They were processing people so rapidly that they didn't have time to even collect names. Floreina wonders why the director is here with her... is it just guilt over the fact that he ordered Akahna's death that he hopes the kid survived... or is it the exact opposite... will he arrest both Akahna and Floreina as soon as he sees him?

There's a lot of children coming out of the decon and they're both watching for him. They are all dressed in identical hospital gowns, their clothes having all been discarded in the decontamination process.

Then she sees Akahna and he's holding the hand of someone, who, after a moment, she recognizes as DD. And it occurs to her that the director had been listening to all her communications, including her refusal to allow Akahna to go back for his daughter. He had been waiting there beside her, praying that he had disobeyed. And she notices the irony, that this man had spent his career enforcing rules, and now his daughter is alive because someone broke one.

Floreina picks up Akahna and is anxious to leave, because she is still afraid of people coming for her. She takes off and we skip most of the sappy scene with the director and his daughter and Floreina simply glances over her shoulder at them as she's leaving.

Akahna asks if she's upset that he disobeyed her and she says no, it's better to think than to obey.

### **38. mahran**

Mahran says his goodbye's and to himself, declares his independence from Floreina, not knowing exactly what he's going to do other than learn about the Minmatar culture and about New Eden in General.

### **39. Floreina**

Floreina, Viotro and Akahna are heading out, resting in the cockpit of Floreina's covops. Viotro gets on a datapad and absently buys the freedom of Simiul, the guy from the short story. He mentions something about choice, that he's realized one person can't know what's best for another.

Akahna asks about himself. What's going to happen to him? Floreina asks if he'd like to come with her and Viotro to find a safe home out of the way somewhere, and Akahna says yes, he'd rather come live with her than go back to his aunt and uncle. She tells him that she'll figure out a way to make that happen. But then Akahna stops himself and asks if she's a capsuleer now, and she says yes, complete with clones and "immortality". And Akahna asks if she's going to want to go out and do Capsuleer things.

Floreina says no. "War and killing will always be there and I can join up again any time I want... but for now, there's more enjoyable things in life."

The End

## Karleen's Office

- Thursday, February 11, 2010

<http://kalinbooks.com/rock-eve-novel/karleens-office/>

Deleted Scene: Karleen's Office

Takes place immediately after the first section. This was actually one of my favorite scenes when I first started *Against A Rock*, and I still like it, but I felt it didn't move the story along quickly enough and also has the problem of being an event rather than a scene. Floreina does not have a clear goal. Karleen and the slave kind of have goals, but those goals aren't related to the story as a whole. It did, however, add some nice characterization to Karleen and the ship's disciplinary process.

Karleen's office was bright and inviting as Floreina stepped through the open door. She glanced around at the bright landscape paintings and photos of kittens and puppies. Along her top shelf sat a long line of stuffed animals, and family photos along her desk. Thick, pink, wall-to-wall carpeting gave Floreina a subtle desire to take her boots off, being the only carpeted office on the ship. Not an office one would expect of a slave master, though that was most likely the point.

Engraved along the front edge of her desk read a Pax quote: *Slaves, obey your corporeal masters with deep respect and fear. Serve them as you would serve New Eden Herself.*

Moments after Floreina entered, so did another. Filmar, Milkeinos' partner. His face was red and focused on Karleen so intently that he did not seem to notice Floreina sitting down in a seat along the wall.

"Master," said the slave, "You wanted to see me?"

Karleen did not immediately answer, staring at her computer screen for several long moments. "Filmar," she said without looking up, "are you going to say hello to the gunnery commander?"

The slave looked around quickly. "Hello Master Floreina," he bowed, and saluted. "I am so sorry about what happened—"

Floreina nodded a silent response.

"Sit," Karleen told the slave.

He immediately sat down in the chair before her desk, a simple, white steel seat, bolted to the floor in the center of the room, just out of reach of the desk. Rings attached to several points across the legs and back allowed for restraint connections. The seat seemed to be the only object in the office that betrayed the true nature of Karleen's work.

Filmar's knees bounced nervously, and Floreina couldn't help breaking a sly grin as she watched.

Karleen rolled her chair from behind her desk and cocked her neck before looking at her slave. "Filmar," she said. "Do you have anything to tell me?"

"About what?" he asked. "...about Milkeinos?"

Karleen nodded. "Yes, of course."

"That was tragic..." said Filmar.

"Yes." Karleen nodded. "I watched the recordings of your actions, Filmar... and I feel as though you are partially to blame."

His knees fell motionless and his feet locked to the floor. He stared back silently, a blink of the eyes being his only movement.

“You turned and ran—“ Karleen started.

“I was under orders to retreat—“

“You were not under orders to seal your partner inside the damaged area.”

“I know,” he said, his voice suddenly raising pitch. “I thought he was already gone... I didn’t realize the coolant didn’t totally hit him.”

“You didn’t call in for confirmation,” Karleen replied. “You didn’t even stop to look.”

“I know...” he said. “But it was only a few seconds and I never disobeyed an order. As soon as Master Floreina said that he was okay—“

“No,” Karleen waved her hand to cut him off. “I don’t want excuses. I understand the situation. Your mistake lasted just under eight seconds before you turned back to correct it. That’s not a long time, and in tight situations, I understand that a Minmatar can make a mistake as a result of fear and shock... but your mistake may have made the difference in your partner’s death.”

He nodded and put his face in his hands. “I promise, Master, that this will not happen again.”

“I expect you to report to the slave department for a class four disciplinary measure,” Karleen ordered.

He looked up, his face turning an even brighter shade of red and slowly tightened. “No, please...” Floreina turned to gain a better view of his eyes. “I was just scared, Master... I was so scared...”

“I know you were afraid, and that’s fine,” she said. “But all you have to fear is your own death. You’re a part of something much larger than yourself... and your punishment will be a reminder that there are greater things to fear than death. And next time you’re in a threatening situation, remember your punishment today to remind you that you don’t want to experience that for all eternity.”

“Yes, Ma’am,” he nodded, his fingers trembling as he held his head. He paused, then suddenly blurted, “Please, Master Karleen... I’ve never had a class four... I’ve heard horror stories... I already know I made a mistake, Master.”

Floreina held back a laugh.

“Stop,” Karleen replied, raising her voice minutely. “Don’t cry to me about this. Not after I just watched the look on Milkeinos’ face when you slammed the hatch on him.”

“You can lose your mind from a class four, Master!” he blurted.

“If you can’t handle a class four, then we don’t want you on our staff,” she replied. “I experienced a class four in training. It’s something you never forget, and it changes you inside... but I’m still sitting here, and I’m better off for having experienced it.”

Filmar swallowed and took a deep breath, but straightened himself and seemed to collect his composure.

Karleen stood, and Floreina cocked her head to watch the overseer at work. She opened her arms as Filmar stood, and she stepped forward to take him in a warm embrace. “You’re an asset to this ship, Filmar. You made a terrible mistake, but you’re not a terrible slave. Your masters and your Lord still love you. You simply made a mistake and now you need to pay the consequences.”

“Yes, Ma’am,” he replied, his chin resting on her shoulder.

“There’s one more thing I need to tell you,” Karleen continued. She patted him on the back and pulled away. “If this happens again, Filmar... If I catch you turning your back on a teammate, even if only for two or three seconds, then I will have no choice but to terminate you.” She put a hand on his head and gently stroked his hair. “Do you understand that? I need to make that

abundantly clear. If it happens again there will be no exceptions, no visit to my office, no funeral, no hugs; just a simple termination. Is that understood?"

"Yes, Ma'am." He shuddered, took a deep breath and blinked rapidly.

"This is your one chance for a learning experience."

"Thank you, Master."

She patted him on the back. "Okay, get going," she ordered. "Down to slave services for class four discipline, immediately." Karleen paused. "Unless you would like to pray first..."

"Yes, Ma'am," the slave choked. "I would like to pray for Milkeinos." He turned toward the exit.

Karleen nodded. "Okay, I'm going to check the logs in a while and make sure you're either in the chapel or the disciplinary chambers, okay?"

"Yes, Master." Filmar nodded. "Thank you, Ma'am."

Floreina and Karleen watched the man leave her office, head hung and feet dragging. He would later experience as much pain as Milkeinos... but this was much different... this was out of love, and desire for improvement. It was rare that Floreina felt a slave deserved a class four, but when she did it was satisfying to see the look in their eyes and hear the whimper in their voice.

Karleen's face remained cold and straight until the slave rounded the corner and moved out of site. She slumped into her chair and sighed, looking at Floreina. "Some days..." Karleen sighed. "...this job takes a lot out of me."

"You ready to hit the station for some rest and relaxation?" Floreina asked.

"Yes," Karleen replied.

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## Kill a Slave

- Thursday, February 11, 2010

<http://kalinbooks.com/rock-eve-novel/kill-slave/>

Kill a Slave

Against a Rock Deleted Scene: sometime after Floreina's father dies

Takes place shortly after Floreina's father is killed. I deleted this because I felt it made Floreina out to be too violent and cruel, and I felt that it wasn't realistic in the sense that Captain Allihence was ordering something that the crew and the average Amarrian just wouldn't be accepting of. I felt it brought the injustice on the ship too out in the open. Instead, I wanted Allihence to pretend to the crew that she's not that cruel. Also there was the problem that it wasn't a real scene, and was more of an event, because Floreina didn't have any clear goals.

Captain Allihence's personal command center was much darker, less active, and strangely, not much larger than Floreina's own turret command room. She looked around, seeing controls much different than she was used to, but recognized everything from her various training sessions. From here one could access and control input and output from the pod that contained their captain. All communications with the captain came through the systems in this room.

Adjacent to this center was the captains pod itself. A room behind a heavily sealed hatchway hidden along the far wall of the command center contained the machinery and controls for maintaining Allihence's life, forever encased in her command pod, her brain permanently linked to the computer systems, able to control any detail on the ship, to constantly touch and be one with the minds of thousands of crew members, and to communicate with anyone, anywhere in the universe with little more than a thought.

It was a solitary life in a physical sense, yet a life that allowed for deeper understanding and closer human contact than normal people could comprehend.

Floreina stared at the hatchway to the pod for a short time before continuing to look around the command center.

Only a single slave sat at a console, looking bored as he scanned a readout for fluctuations in Allihence's nervous system. During battle this center would be bustling with Amarrian commanders keeping track of systems and maintaining the flow of communication, but now it seemed all but deserted.

Floreina read the Scriptures quote, etched into a giant plaque built into the wall of the ship, as was so common across Amarrian vessels:

"Go up, my warriors, against the land of Caldari and against the people of Gallente. Yes, march against Minmatar, the land of rebels, a land that I will judge! Pursue, kill, and completely destroy them, as I have commanded you," says the Lord. "Let the battle cry be heard in the land, a shout of great destruction".

For a battleship command center it was an excellent quote that communications commanders would see out of the corner of their eye in the midst of battle to remind everyone just why we are doing this.

Floreina heard the captain's voice interrupting her thoughts through her mental implant.

*Hello, Commander, said the Captain. Why don't you take a seat and plug yourself in so that we can communicate more intimately.*

Floreina paused for a second. The direct link would reveal much more of her emotional state than the primarily verbal communications that could be conveyed through her standard remote implant. Floreina was still angry... but not just angry... She also had a flood of other emotions surrounding the events of the last week; emotions she did not quite understand and did not

want the captain to misinterpret.

But she could not refuse her request.

*Yes, Ma'am*, replied the commander, sitting down in a command seat to plug a system connection into the socket at the top of her neck.

This one was faster than many of the others she had tried. The sensations were crisp and bright; the emotions of the captain and other commanders currently plugged into the system were clear and unadulterated. The connections in her regular turret command center were only necessary for controlling mostly physical things like tracking, bandwidth, beam density, and things of that nature, while this center was responsible for much more subtle things such as the morale of the crew, the captain's personal relationships, and the other various emotional issues of the crew, as well as all of the normal physical things needed to run a battle starship.

*You are understandably angry about what happened*, the captain comforted. *I would be concerned about you if you weren't.*

They touched minds for a time, the captain attempting to make Floreina understand her decisions a little better, by presenting her emotional connection with the vessel as a whole and her desire to know every nuance of the ship's systems and exactly what they are capable of. The arguments were no different than before, but now were attached to much heavier feelings that could not be communicated with words or pictures or even through the mind links available in Floreina's normal command seat.

That sense that you have become the ship; capsuleers do not feel as though they are the captain of a ship, they feel as though they are the ship, that they were born, not as human beings but as giant, intricate, metallic machines. A body infinitely more complex than a human body, at least in terms of everything the mind could control.

But there was more than just the oneness of the ship, and her desire to understand it. Also, was Allihence's desire for that same adrenaline, the same rush of excitement that is felt by any human being, whether they are permanently linked with a starship, their true human form being closed off from all eyes inside an armored shell of finely tuned electronics and nutrient solution, or if they're a normal person whose never had a brain implant living on some planet's surface.

Floreina sensed that desire for excitement behind all of the intricate emotions surrounding her connection to her ship.

*Yes*, The captain communicated, *That is the other aspect of this.*

*We went through all of those dangerous overclocking procedures just because you wanted a little bit of excitement?*

*Not 'just' because I wanted some excitement. You must remember that all of you are here to serve me; my feelings encompass this ship. I apologize for your father—that was not part of the plan, I assure you; I understand that it would be difficult for you in that situation, and I apologize for ordering your termination. I should have realized that it was merely the situation that caused you to overreact, and since then I have come to realize that you are more of an asset to this crew than I had previously thought, judging by the reactions from your team, and the fact that you somehow escaped termination with a broken leg and a nasty blow to the head.*

*Thank you, captain*, Floreina replied.

*You must remember, however, that everyone on this ship, besides myself, is expendable. You included. This is a violent profession, Floreina. You understood that when you signed up, and if you have a problem with that you can sign off at any time and we'll find a replacement. I just ask that you give a proper two weeks notice...*

*No, no*, Floreina replied quickly.

*But your job here is to kill people*, continued the captain, *and your job is to follow my orders. You kill far more people on other ships than I do on this one. I've touched your mind before when you're calculating the spot on an enemy ship with the highest concentration of people so you can take out as many lives as possible with each shot. I know you enjoy it as much as I do.*

Floreina had no choice but to give her mental concession to that. She did love her job.

*Will you do me a favor?* Asked the captain.

*What would you like?*

*That slave over there: I would like you to take out your sidearm and end his life.*

*Hmm...* replied Floreina. *Is there a reason for this?*

*Does there need to be a reason for everything?*

*Has he done something wrong?*

*Nope. Why is everyone always looking for an excuse to do these things?*

*The slaves on this ship respect me and if I do something like this—*

*They will never know. I have seen to that.* The captain paused, and Floreina felt her scanning the commander's emotions. *I want to determine if you really understand what we are doing here, that you are capable of doing the same at close range that you enjoy doing at the turret's optimal range when you can't hear them scream.*

*It just doesn't seem practical—*Floreina started.

*If you wanted practical, you'd go make a peace treaty.*

*Taking another life is a spiritual experience and not to be taken lightly.*

*I agree; and I'm not asking you to take it lightly, I'm just asking you to do it.*

And Floreina nodded internally, realizing this was not something the captain was going to let up on, and put her hands carefully on the plug on the back of her head to remove it, rising slightly from her chair.

*Oh, no,* The captain stopped her. *Stay connected. I want to feel what you feel; to share the experience with you.*

Floreina reluctantly removed her hand from the connection and relaxed back into the seat. But after reaching for her pistol and removing it from its holster, her hesitation was over. In one rapid motion she brought the weapon up, aimed and carefully fired a single shot to blow a clean chunk off the top of the slave's head.

The Minmatar did not make a sound or a movement for several long moments and for a second, Floreina thought he might actually turn around and protest to the mistreatment.

He finally slumped to the floor, his limbs beginning to spasm and move in a post mortem release of energy. She stared for a time, feeling strangely blank.

But the captain felt empowered, and Floreina allowed herself to float into those feelings, and to become one with her captain. To feel that superiority over those... people... this is something that the Amarrians can do... our gift from God... to have this power.

And together they focused on the body, lying, shaking on the floor, and felt its life force escaping into the unknown. They imagined his friends and possible family on board, what they would think when he did not return from his duties. Allihence and Floreina had made the decision, and right or wrong, practical or counterproductive, it was their decision to make. And for a long moment they sat, without literal verbal communication, and simply explored their emotions together, as two and as one.

*And that is why we do this. You and I—we all feed on tragedy,* The captain finally communicated. *That's all I needed from*

*you. I think I can say we're on the same page about this, and I think I can trust that you can handle the deeper emotional implications of the things that occur in our line of work.*

Floreina sat, still directly connected to her captain and to the network as a whole, able to comprehend the mental state of Allihence much more clearly than before, and for a long moment, explored the new pathways, feeling the myriad connections and controls throughout the ship and what it must feel like to have power over each and every one of them, to have that overwhelming complexity, yet a constant and seemingly magical understanding of everything.

She hung for another moment, bringing her mind back to the body on the floor, feeling a sudden sadness. Only the second time she had ever killed a slave, and regrettably, also the second time she had done it for no discernible reason.

*The drones will take care of the body, Floreina,*

*Have a good day, Captain,* Floreina mentally saluted. *It's been a pleasure.* She pulled the plug from her head, feeling a rush of energy as her soul pulled itself back into the chamber of her body from the spiritual and emotional expanses of the ship's computer systems and the variety of people connected to it.

She sat up and as she walked away from the scene and exited the captain's central command chamber, she felt a sense of pointlessness. Why am I here? What am I doing? Do I have an ultimate goal in all of this, or am I just wandering around this life, experiencing one strange and interesting situation after another?

But other thoughts came to the surface as well. The plans she had begun developing... to begin the next leg of her career. Now that she was not directly connected to the captain, she could think of them more freely, and the feelings of pointlessness only made her want to give her plans a shot, and the captain's expressions about violence could only serve to justify them.

There had to be a point to this. Floreina could not accept the idea of killing simply for the enjoyment of the adrenaline and the power over others lives. The taking of another's life had a time and a place and a holy and practical purpose. Killing was meant as a tool to help establish the Amarrian people as God's children throughout the universe, to bring peace and order to the lesser races through the rule of Holy law. Abuse of such power was shameful.

Floreina nodded to herself. *Yes,* she thought privately and smiled. *We are all expendable on this ship, captain, and so are you.*

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## The Coffin

- Thursday, February 11, 2010

<http://kalinbooks.com/rock-eve-novel/coffin/>

Deleted Scene : The Coffin

Takes place after Floreina comes back from the station with her stolen boosters. I deleted this because Floreina's goals in this section were not directly relevant to her long-term goals and didn't move any directly relevant plot points.

"Charmann," she said, standing behind Mahran's brother as he cleaned the corrosion from a capacitor fuel cell.

"I need you to come with me."

He stood up and she handed him a pair of wrist restraints. "Put these on."

Charmann took a long look at the cuffs before finally taking them.

"Don't worry. Just trust me."

The slave put the restraints on, securing his hands behind his back, his lip curled back in fear.

Floreina guided him down the hall, away from his work station. "Don't worry; I have someone taking over your job for you."

"Where are we going?"

"To the disciplinary center," she replied.

"No! What have I done?"

"Nothing," she assured him. "You haven't done a thing."

She ignored him as he asked more worried questions. They arrived at the disciplinary center within a few minutes.

"What can I do for you, Commander?" asked the attendant at the entrance.

"I need to terminate this slave," she replied.

Charmann yelped suddenly and backed away, and Floreina had to snatch a hold on the back of his shirt. She pulled it tight to hold him in place.

Two more attendants came from an adjoining room to help. "Take him into a chamber," ordered the first attendant behind the front desk. "Get him strapped down."

"But don't do anything to him," Floreina reminded them. "I want to do this myself."

Charmann pulled away from Floreina's grip, but the two guards dashed forward to grab him by the arms and pull him back.

"No, please no!" he screamed. "I haven't done anything! Please!" His feet kicked frantically, and fell out from under him, and the two guards dragged him into an adjoining room.

“And what are the reasons for the termination?” asked the first attendant.

“Personal,” Floreina replied.

He cocked his head. “You, Commander? I don’t think I’ve ever even seen you down here before... much less for a termination...”

“Yeah.” She shrugged.

“You have already transferred the purchase price for the slave, since this is for personal reasons?”

She nodded. “Yes, of course.”

“Mind if I ask what he did?”

“Yeah; it’s just between us. He knows what he did.”

He shrugged and motioned toward the door.

By the time she arrived in the adjoining room the guards had left Charmann to himself, strapped down to the chair in the center of the room.

The door shut with a metallic echo resounding through the nearly empty room. Charmann twisted toward her, pulling at his restraints, his face reddened, lips tightened back to reveal his teeth. “What did I do?” he squeaked.

She turned toward the injection device on the counter, putting her back to the one way window along the far wall, and replaced the cartridge in the syringe with her own, popping the old one into her pocket.

“Please, Ma’am,” he pleaded. “I don’t understand what’s going on... what did I do?” He babbled on, rapidly, his arms twitching as he pulled against the cuffs, and the skin upon his face stretched, seeming to pull away from his muscles.

“Just shut up,” Floreina ordered, turning around to face the slave, holding the automatic syringe at shoulder’s height, as if on display for him.

“No, no no,” he shook his head frantically, his neck straining against the choke strap that kept his head against the back of the seat.

Floreina walked forward slowly, carefully placing her feet before her, as if performing for the other crew members who were likely watching such an occurrence as this.

Charmann just whimpered slowly as he looked up into Floreina’s eyes, glancing back and forth to the syringe.

“This will be quick,” she said. “I’m sorry it had to be like this.”

But Floreina paused. She knew she needed to put on a little bit of an act for anyone who might watch the tapes, but it wasn’t necessary to put on a full show. She just needed to get in and out and do the job without revealing her real reasons for being here.

Instead, she found herself pausing to look into Charmann’s eyes, and take in the moment. She put her hand to his forehead and wiped the hair from his eyes, and found herself sitting on his knee, not knowing exactly why.

“I didn’t do anything,” he whimpered.

“Shhh,” she put an arm around his shoulders and brought the syringe up. He cringed away, but the neck strap held him securely in place.

The syringe snapped and echoed, and Charmann jolted as she pulled the trigger to force the injection into the slave’s neck.

He cried out and his eyes rolled up to look at her and she stared back, feeling his trembling against her forehead. He whimpered, his eyes fluttered, and he grimaced.

A moment later he was under; in a light hibernative state. She watched his face for several more moments, then turned away and headed to a communication panel near the door.

“Can I get a cardboard coffin in here, please?”

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Floreina sat on the bed of yet another hotel room, under her real name for once. She flipped a knife around in her hand as she looked down upon Charmann’s coffin sitting at her feet, thinking back to the little act she had put on for his termination, wondering exactly what had caused her to overplay so much and get so close to the slave, as though she had a perversion for his sense of fear and helplessness.

She slowly sliced open the coffin, careful not to push the knife too deep through the cardboard and risk cutting the human inside. It took several minutes to slice a full cut around the length of the box to fold the top back.

Another injection to his neck would bring him back from his deep sleep. She administered the shot, then sat back on the bed to watch him awaken, pulling her laser pistol from the holster on her thigh and resting it in her lap, just in case Charmann was not himself when he awoke.

Several minutes passed and Charmann began to stir. He slowly forced his eyes open, blinking rapidly, then sat up with a sudden start.

“Ahoy,” Floreina greeted, placing a hand on her sidearm. “I can assume that you are confused... you’re in a hotel room on the station. The termination was merely a ruse so that my superiors would not track you coming off the ship.”

Charmann simply stared back, eyes widening.

“I apologize for having to scare you like that. It was necessary to get you off the ship.”

“I don’t understand...” he croaked.

“I am releasing you to the general populace, and revoking your slave status. I have purchased you and will be releasing you from your obligations to your masters within a couple of hours, assuming you can behave properly until then.”

His face seemed to change color and his eyes somehow brightened. He nodded quickly in response.

“There are some rules, of course, for your release, and we will be taking the next couple hours to make sure you understand most of the vital issues surrounding the release of a slave.”

He nodded again, his lips rising to a subtle but nervous smile. “May I ask why this is happening?”

“Your brother loves you,” she replied.

“Mahran?”

She nodded. “We had a deal, and I agreed to pay for your release as well as a lifetime supply of vitoc upon his completion of the tasks, and he completed his tasks nearly flawlessly.”

Charmann barely moved, still sitting up in his cardboard coffin, his tongue resting upon his bottom lip.

“I am going to set you up with a friend of mine, who will be providing your Vitoc supply for you, and who will introduce you to a counselor who deals with released and escaped slaves such as yourself...” she paused to look at Charmann. “Are you

okay?”

He nodded. “Yes, Ma’am; I’m good... stunned.”

“You will be allowed to contact your family back on the ship, although only through the counselor that we are going to set you up with, and all your communications will be routed through me to check. There will be a number of things that you will not be allowed to discuss with your family and friends, and all your communications will be checked by the computer system and by me, and if anything comes through on the unauthorized communications list, then we still have a heart detonator that I can trigger. I copied your frequency into my own implant.” She tapped her head.

“What sort of unauthorized communications?” he asked.

“Information about the war between the Minmatar and Amarrians; information about the anti slavery movement; things of that sort. You’ll find that certain things are not quite as we said they were out here. The counselor will give you a comprehensive list.” Floreina paused a long moment, not seeing any rush to get through the lecture. The ‘counselor’ she had hired was quite experienced in making sure released slaves stayed somewhat loyal to their former masters and to the Amarrian Empire.

“Other rules, of course, apply as well, like never conversing with anti slavery groups, nor the police nor any group that attempts to enforce anti slavery laws. You must understand that most of those groups will exploit you any way they can to get to us. You must understand that busting slave owners is big business, and the people who do it are interested in profit, not in helping your people. They don’t care if all the slaves die in the process, nor do they care if you are taken care of afterwards. Some may even claim that they can block the signal to your heart explosives...”

He nodded.

“But you know your place in this universe don’t you?” she asked. “You’ve just been given a wonderful and dangerous gift. You’ve lost many—though not all—of your responsibilities to your masters, but you have gained a much greater responsibility to all the trillions of people of New Eden. In many ways that can be a much greater burden, and why we shelter the Minmatar from it. You must remain true to the Lord, and do what is right under His constant eye.”

He nodded again at her pause. “Yes, Ma’am... thank you.”

“Okay,” she slapped her hands down on the bed and stood up. Reaching a hand out to the man in the box, she said, “Let’s get you cleaned up so you don’t look like you just spent half a day in a coffin and go hit the shuttle.”

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**Kalin Ringkvist lives in seattle, posting free online science fiction, anarchism and atheism related books, novels and stories.**

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