



INTRODUCTION

Far, far away from Earth's solar system, beyond space and matter as we know them, lies the planet of Solarzi.

Because of its nearness to two suns—a sizeable sun known as Kly, and a smaller sun named Fult, people of human form do not inhabit the planet Solarzi. Earth life forms could never exist there. Solarzi is unbearably hot. The surface and atmosphere is as the temperature of fire.

The planet Solarzi is inhabited by a race of beings known as the *Kintakh*, which in their language means “sun beings.”

The Kintakh are beings comprised entirely of light, and they are dependent on the rays of their suns—Kly and Fult. Like Earth, Solarzi spins around, but it does not orbit the suns, and the suns do

not orbit Solarzi. All three celestial bodies remain spinning in their place.

Solarzi completes its rotation each forty-six hours. For twenty-three hours while Kly shines bright upon them, the Kintakh work hard and long. Then, because Fult has a much softer light, when it is high in the sky, the Kintakh sleep in glass solar domes. These domes are covered with solar mirrors that reflect Fult's rays and multiply the solar energy they receive from it, so that the Kintakh do not get chilled or lose their light during the time that is known as “darker day.”

Each solar dome houses a hundred Kintakh, and has enough solar energy to last each Kintakh the full twenty-three hours they rest or relax in the solar dome.

It is necessary also for the Kintakh



Recommended age: 9 years and up. (May be read by younger children at parents' discretion.)

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Inside illustrations by Evey

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to have a full twenty-three hours of regeneration in their solar domes during each forty-six hour day.

The surface of Solarzi is very rugged, but its ruggedness has a beauty of its own. There is vegetation and shrubbery on Solarzi; however, although similar in shape and form to the vegetation of Earth, the main purpose of the fruit and plants the Kintakh eat is to absorb extra light. When the Kintakh eat the fruit that they have toiled to grow, they merely are imbibing the rays of their suns, and being energized by it.

All life on Solarzi is completely dependent on the rays of their solar light. Without it they would fade into oblivion, disappearing forever. It is the suns that they reflect. They are nothing by themselves—but with the suns, they are more beautiful than sparkling gems.

The Kintakh do not walk the way that we earthlings do. They get around by floating, which they accomplish with utmost ease and with the gracefulness of leaves swaying in the wind.

Though the Kintakh would at first glance seem to have similar features to humans—such as two eyes, a nose and a mouth—closer inspection would reveal several major differences. One major difference is that these beings do

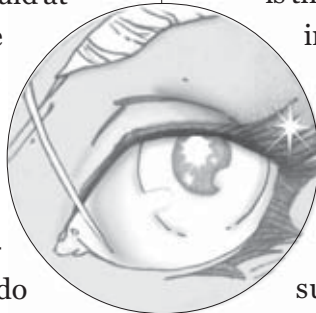
not speak with their mouths. They have mouths, but they are used only for eating.

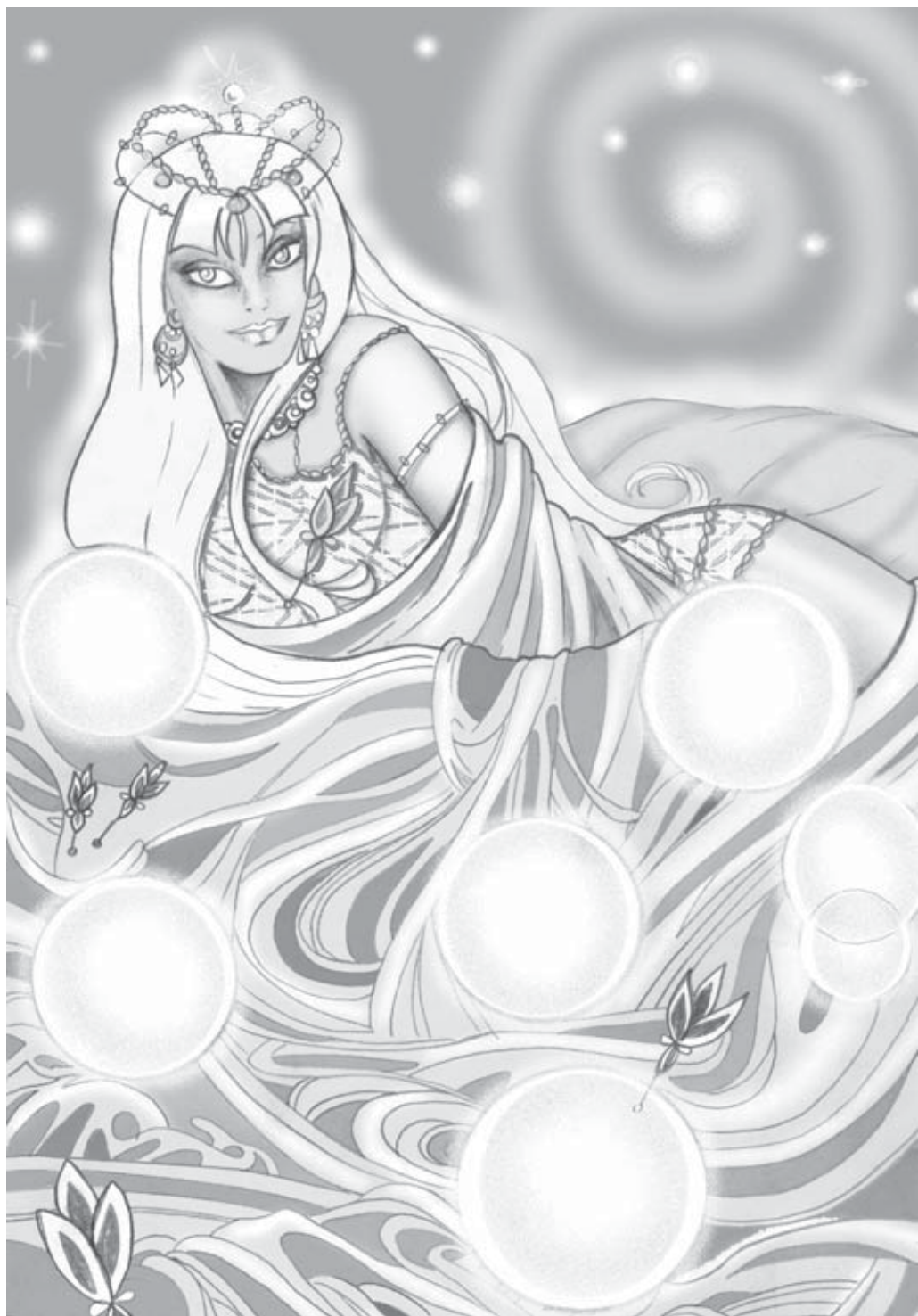
When face-to-face, they communicate with the expressions of their eyes, which are a fair bit larger than ours are. When their eyes are not in plain view, their thoughts can be projected into the mind of the person they wish to communicate with.

A Kintakh's eyes are their most outstanding and beautiful feature. They do not have a standard color of eyes, as we do. Each Kintakh's eye color crosses a greater spectrum of colors than we could recognize. The colors their eyes appear at any given time communicate their feelings. Their eyes would appear to us as the colors of a flame. The brighter and the lighter their eyes appear at any given time, indicates happiness. The darker they appear, indicates sadness, sorrow, and sin to varying degrees.

One Kintakh can pass through another—this act being a pleasurable one also. When they unite their bodies, this is the way they reproduce, ensuring that their race will go on.

To kiss, they touch their hands together. When their hands are united, a swirl of light surrounds them both and they receive more pleasure from this act than we





would from a kiss.

Though love is abundant and the most common emotion to the Kintakh, they do not marry. There are strong bonds and great friendships developed between many men and women. When these friendships develop, many children are born to the Kintakh. There are no marriages; there are families, though.

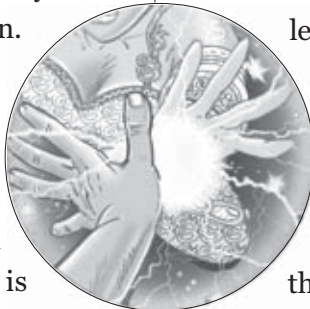
Fathers and mothers are responsible to care for each child they bear; however, they can have children with whomever they love. In fact, it is a beautiful thing to have a varied family and it is a sign of honor. Children are considered a blessing, and a fortune better than the most precious wealth and resources on Solarzi. Children are the hope of the Kintakhs' future.

The Kintakh are also very advanced in their technology.

CHAPTER ONE

She was shining brilliantly under the rising Kly sun.

Shinoni—the most beautiful and radiant woman on Solarzi, and also the Kintakhs' monarch—lay on a *cushcou*. This item resembles a mattress, but is



made of a substance that appears as a light mist. One never falls through a *cushcou*, unless one wants to. The *cushcou* is neither solid nor liquid. It has the ability to expand indefinitely and to fit many others on it as well.

This particular morning, Shinoni wanted to be alone and to soak up as much of Kly's rays and become as energized as she possibly could. Soon the Klyjins (the beings from Kly) would visit her, and impart the knowledge that gave her insight into intricate workings of space—information that reaffirmed the Kintakh's place among the great races of the universe. The Klyjins also told her each day the will of E'zuz—the king of Kly—also the king of Solarzi, whom she had frequent contact with as well.

The beings from Kly appeared on schedule today. Seldom did the Klyjins make themselves manifest to a Kintakh, but the Kintakh knew the Klyjins existed, for their history books made mention of them several times.

The Kintakh also had several legends about Shinoni and her origins, but no one knew anything for certain. According to their annals, Shinoni had been there since the very first Solarzi colonizers. All they really knew was that she

was a very wise woman, and that she had direct and frequent contact with the Klyjins, and even with E'zuz.

Some believed that she was almost more a part of Kly than of Solarzi. It was speculated that she was even part Klyjin. Shinoni looked like a Kintakh, except that she had an extra glow about her that came from within. The added inner glow in her made it seem as if the suns were a part of her being.



Somewhere on the other side of the planet, Kly was setting, and Fult rising. Dsad sat despondently on the Balijos Cliffs that overlooked the city of Balijos. His heart ached terribly. From a distance he watched the private ships pulling into the solar dome's large docking bays.

Dsad was a spirited youth, but today his heart was grieved. His older brother and best friend, Genyak, had recently left the planet—most likely for good, especially if Genyak couldn't find a new source of light to keep him alive. Dsad missed his brother terribly.

Today Dsad had kissed Zo-Meri-Jes, his girlfriend, for the first time and he wanted so badly to confide this to his brother. Now he felt like he had no one to tell. He really was too young to be thinking about a relation-

ship, but still, he was in love and he wanted to talk about it.

I can't believe he left without even saying goodbye to me, Dsad thought. *I don't understand how he could do that. He was my best friend! I wish I could see him once more. There's so much I wish I could tell him. Things would have worked out perfectly for him if he'd just stayed a little longer.*

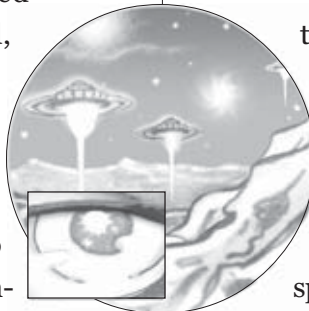
Dsad's eyes flashed a deep, dark purple. Tears were unknown on Solarzi, but if he could have cried, the tears would have flowed abundantly.

Like his father and brother, Dsad was well built and handsome. His strong arms now held his knees close to his shaking body, and he felt the nearly uncontrollable urge to scream. *Why, oh why did you leave Solarzi, Genyak? It's sure death out there. Don't tell me you were stupid. I know you aren't,* Dsad thought angrily.

"Son, your mother and I are worried about you. Where are you?" Dsad sensed his father Qualititrius calling him.

"I'm at the Balijos Cliffs, Father," Dsad communicated back to his father.

Feeling sheepish and unmanly, Dsad ceased his musings. By the time he turned around, his family's spaceship was just landing. The



door opened and his father walked towards him.

Dsad kept his eyes focused on the rocks beneath him so that his father would not see his eyes and know how unhappy he was. He felt angry, disappointed and miserable.

Qualititrius sat down next to his son, putting his arm around his shoulders. Looking at Dsad's skin that was losing its luster, he became slightly alarmed.

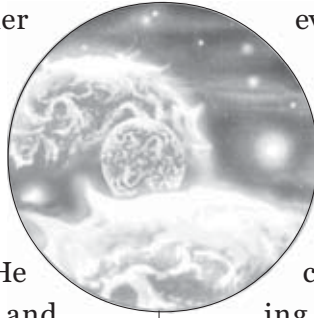
"I don't suppose I need to remind you that Kly is sinking," his father said, "and Fult is rising swiftly. It is not bright enough to stay out any longer. Look at your hands, Son. Their brightness is fading. Come! We're going to the solar dome to get some rest."

Qualititrius gently grasped his son's hand, but Dsad pulled away.

"I'll be there soon, Father," Dsad said. His eyes were getting lighter already and now he didn't mind looking into his father's eyes to talk. It was sweet relief to see his family when he felt this sad.

"All of you go on ahead," Dsad said. "I mean, there're so many of us kids that I hardly fit in there anymore. Maybe it's time I build my own ship."

"We can discuss that when we get to the solar dome. It's getting late, and



every moment we wait, we lose more of our heat and glow."

"I'll be all right, Father.

Really. I need some time away. There are a few things

I need to think over, especially with the Fly Race coming

up soon. I hope to beat

Goom's record in that race. And besides, Father, I can make it home before I run out of glow."

"Dsad! Please. Just come with us. You'll wear yourself out."

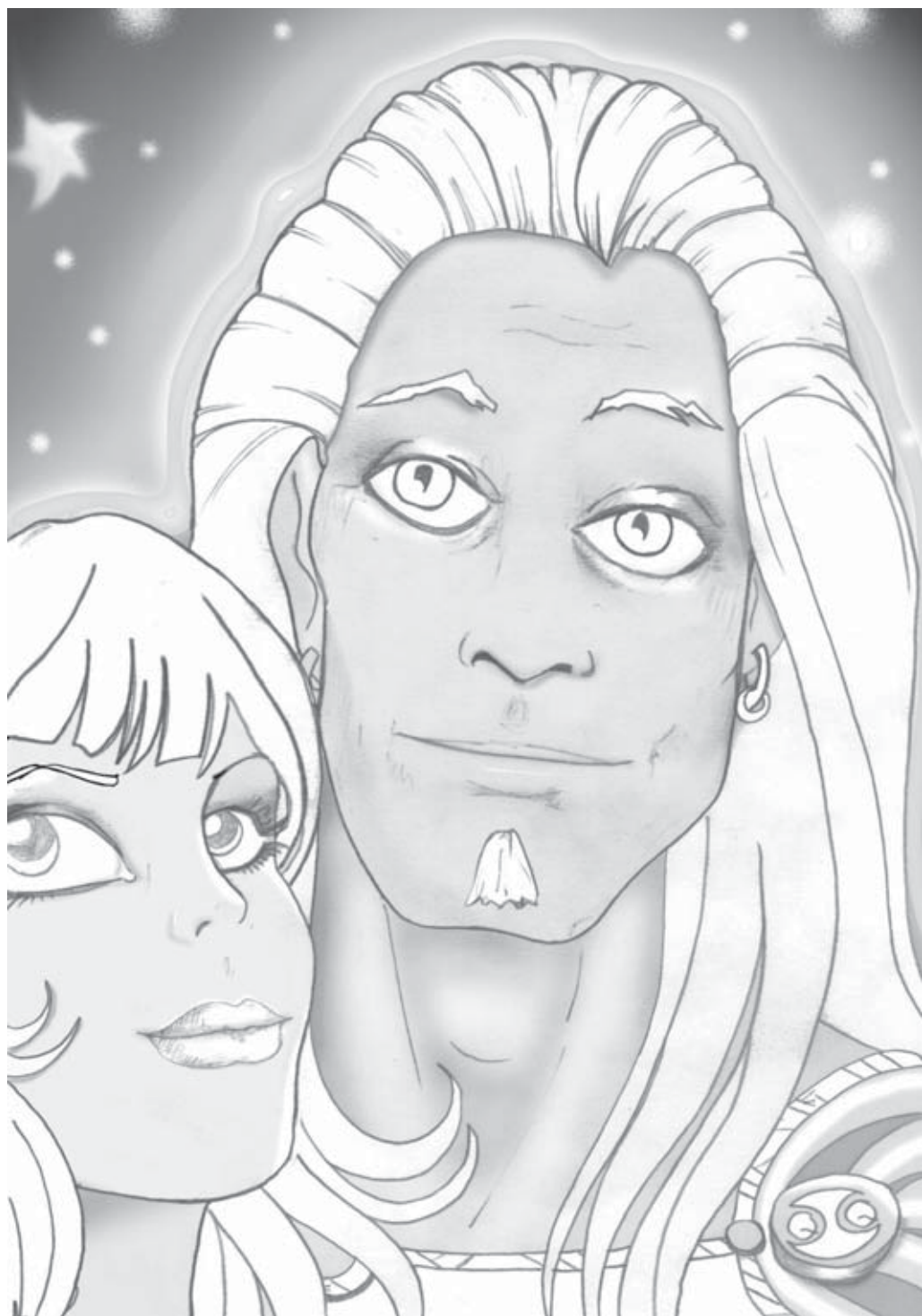
"Father, I'll be fine! I'll be there soon. I was just thinking about Genyak, you know. I'd be happy for just a few more minutes to ruminate*."

"Alright, Dsad, seeing as you are getting older—and wiser—I will trust that you know what you're doing. You do, don't you?" Qualititrius said, patting his son on the shoulders and then rising to go.

Dsad nodded a few times, agreeing that he was indeed a mature and responsible son.

"I'll have Mother freshen your pad. Just flip on the switch when you get there and get into your bunk as soon as you can. You'll be exhausted by the time you get to the dome."

****ruminate:*** to think carefully and at length about something



Dsad watched his father return to the ship. He saw his mother, Irazerri. Her eyes darkened when Qualititrius returned without their son.

Dsad knew his mother was upset. He waved, hoping to pacify her somehow.

CHAPTER TWO

By the time Dsad got to the solar dome he was truly exhausted. He hadn't flown such a distance that fast ever before. *I should have recorded the flight somehow*, he thought proudly, his chest puffing out a bit more than usual. He was sure his Fly Race coach would have been pleased with him today.

Gracefully, his feet set down at the entrance of the beautiful, scintillating solar dome. *Ah, home at last!* he thought.

Dsad glided up the stairs to his family's quarters, looked into the retina scanner, and the large door emblazoned with their family's emblem opened up.

"Warning!" the computer sounded. "Warning! Dsad, please enter your bunk immediately. You are losing your glow. Warning!"

After processing the information from his retina scan, the computer recognized

him as the last person to enter the building, and once it had registered this, immediately the dome's reflective mirror-like bubble went up and would stay up for the next twenty-three hours.

Walking into his room, Dsad noticed his baby sister Lyt was snuggled up on his *cushcou*. *Less energy, more love*, he thought.

Lyt was his favorite sister. He loved all his brothers and sisters. But there were so many of them, so he tended to spend more time with the ones he particularly enjoyed being with.

Now that Genyak was gone, Dsad was responsible to help care for his brothers and sisters in whatever way he could.

What's past is past, I suppose. Dsad mused. *Genyak is gone. I can only hope for the best for him. I have all my siblings looking to me now.*

Dsad got into his pad and sealed himself inside. He stroked Lyt's forehead gently so as not to wake her. He was feeling more refreshed already. The extra light was revitalizing.

Ah, this feels great. I love this feeling of being so refreshed. When I am in perfect light I can think so clearly, he thought, as he relaxed in his seat. Dsad reached over to the table where



his mother had left some food for him. He grabbed a *chococap*, his favorite of the planet's delicious fruit.



Before drifting off to sleep that darker day, he remembered that on his way home, he had had a premonition that something big was about to happen. No premonition had ever come to him before, and he wondered why he felt this way now.

Throughout that darker day, or what we would call “night,” Dsad dreamed...



“I have never seen anything like you. Where are you from?” Dsad asked the ball of light that floated into his outstretched hand. To earthlings it might have looked something like a will-o'-the-wisp.

“I am from Kly,” the ball of light answered him, in a soft, female voice. “I am a Klyjin. There are many others like me here.”

“Then why haven't I seen any of you before?” Dsad questioned further.

“We, who are on Solarzi, are here with a mission, not for our own purpose. We care for you in numerous ways. Though we watch over the Kintakh, we rarely let them see us. We use a cloaking device to go about undetected. There are about as many of us on Solarzi as

there are Kintakh. I, Hwings, am your personal Klyjin guardian, Dsad. And this darker day I have a message to relay to you from E'zuz, the most superior monarch of the Klyjin and of the Kintakh.”

“From our creator—the eternal king?” Dsad asked, bewildered.

“Yes, the one and only,” she responded.

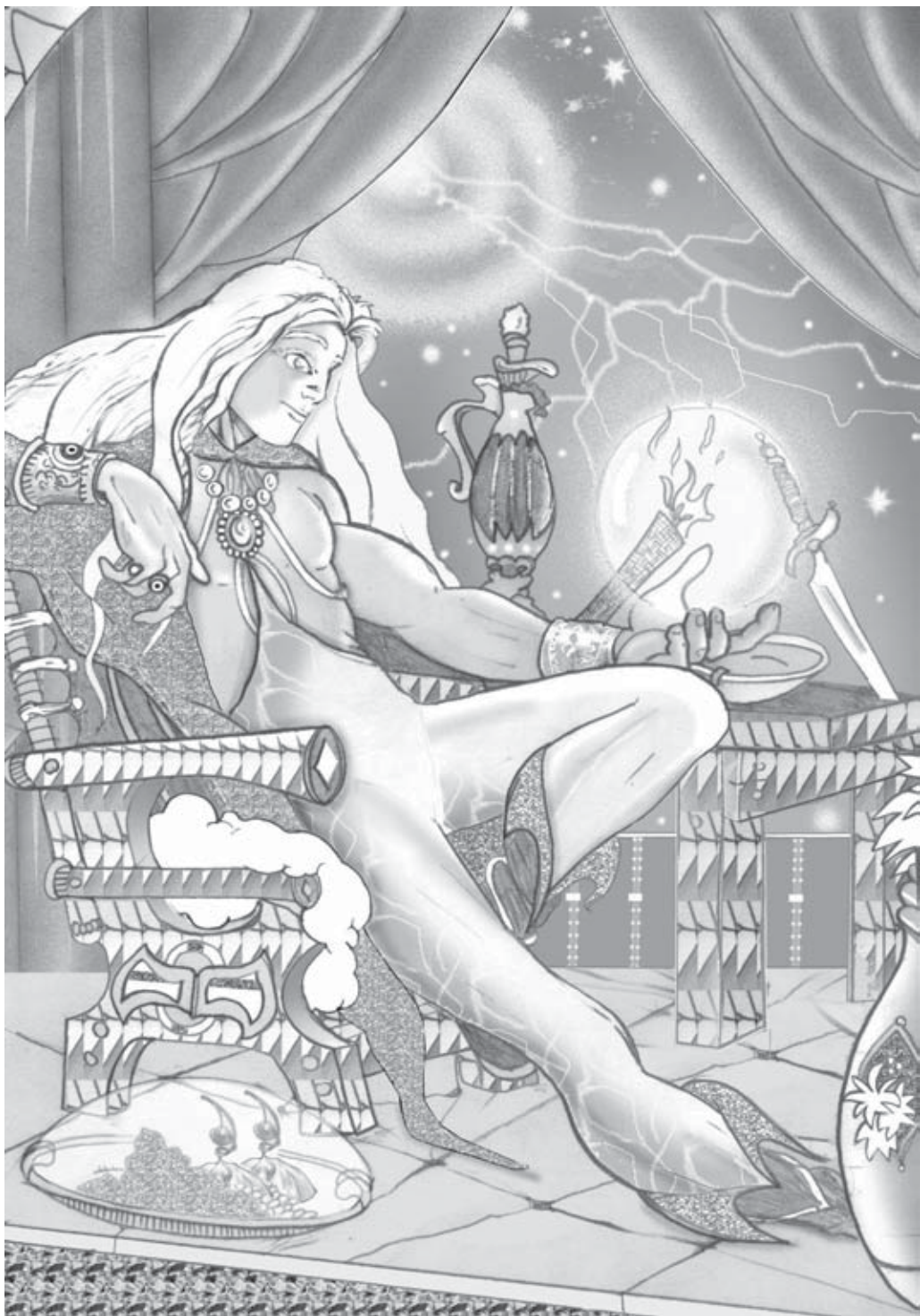
Dsad inquired: “I hate to be so inquisitive, but I can't help it. You're the first Klyjin I've ever seen. May I ask you a few more questions?”

“Ask,” Hwings replied.

“Can you tell me why you don't appear to us? Why do you want to remain undetected? Where do you live among us? Why don't you live on Kly? How do you survive here, in an atmosphere not native to you?”

“I will answer one question at a time,” Hwings responded. “First of all, you ask why the Klyjins don't appear to the Kintakh. It is because E'zuz has laid down certain restrictions and limitations on what Klyjins can do for the Kintakh

“Under normal circumstances, a veil or gulf exists between Kly and Solarzi. However, E'zuz, on occasion lifts this veil in order to reveal things or to allow special assistance to be given to the Kintakh.



“E’zuz wants you to believe in things unseen and to have faith in him and his power through faith and not by sight. If you could see all that is truly around you, it would be too easy to believe in E’zuz.

“Normally we are not allowed to appear. Those are the rules, only altered in certain circumstances, laid down by none other than E’zuz himself. We are restricted from appearing or speaking to you or touching you or making any kind of physical manifestation unless it is an extreme emergency.

“But it is only for your time on Solarzi that these will be the rules. When your time to exist on Solarzi is over, you become a being of Kly. Not necessarily a Klyjin, but a being that will live there forevermore, and you will see us then.

“We Klyjins who dwell on Solarzi are here because it is our work and our pleasure to guard the Kintakh from the black, cool asteroids that pass Solarzi. You never detect most of these terrible asteroids, because as they pass, we fly in front of them. You think that you never miss a ray of the suns’ light, but in reality, from time to time, you are seeing us in large chains passing in front of what would be damaging to you.”



Dsad looked around suspiciously. “Am I dreaming?” he asked.

“Yes. You are dreaming,” Hwings replied, beginning to glow more now than she had before. “But through this dream I have an important message to deliver to you, which E’zuz asks that you deliver to your people.”

“Me? Why? Who would ever listen?”

“To start off, in order to gain the attention of all the Kintakh on the face of Solarzi, you will need to win the Fly Race next week. You have grown slack in your training, though; you will need to remain more focused. I can help train you, but it will be rigid. What I will tell you and what you must tell the Kintakh is of utmost importance; you *must* win the Fly Race. When you win the race, you will come to the attention of Shinoni, who will know that you are the one who will deliver a significant message, the forewarning of a soon approaching calamity.

“Shinoni knows that there is one coming to deliver this message. She will know when she sees you, that you are the one with the special commission of delivering the awaited message the Klyjins have told her of. Now listen and remember.”

TO BE CONTINUED



A Parallel World

Part Two

(Continued from HL 107—the story so far: On the distant planet of Solarzi, given warmth and light by its two suns—Kly and Fult—lives Dsad. He is a young athlete preparing for the upcoming Fly Race, which all Kintakh, the inhabitants of Solarzi, will attend.

Dsad has a dream in which he is visited by a Klyjin, an inhabitant of the sun, Kly. Hwings, the radiant ball of light, Dsad's personal Klyjin, warns him of a soon-coming disaster and the role he must play in preventing it. He must win the upcoming Fly Race, and meet Shinoni, the queen of Solarzi.)

CHAPTER THREE

Dsad awoke, still snuggled up next to his little sister Lyt. The warm glow of the *cushcou* that had enveloped them both while they slept now slowly dimmed. Dsad's mother, Irazerri, stood beside him.

"Kly dawns, Fult sets." Her deep, penetrating eyes declared the words in the Kintakh manner once she knew she had caught her son's gaze. It was the standard Kintakh greeting at the dawning of the "brighter day," and Dsad had grown fond of it. This motherly morning greeting not only heralded the new day, but also imparted the great love Irazerri felt for her children.

Dsad was glad that the air about her was happier than it had been at the end of brighter yesterday, when her eyes flashed a darker color after Dsad had insisted on flying home instead of joining his family in their starship.

That must be why I'm still so tired,

Dsad thought as he struggled to rouse himself.

Lyt was already sitting up, playfully stroking Dsad's face.

Irazerri reached down to pick her up.

"You had a long fly home last night," Irazerri said to Dsad. "Rest a little longer, then come join us in the light spa. We'll be waiting for you."

"Yes, Mother," Dsad answered before closing his eyes again. He could feel his limbs and body aching from the run last night.—A run, of course, meant a very fast float over a given distance, or what was also called flying. *It will feel good to get into the light spa this dawning,* Dsad thought dreamily, as he allowed himself a few more moments of rest.



Fifteen minutes later Dsad entered the large, open room at the top of the dome, where a series of lenses, mirrors, and shaped glass channeled the weak rays of the rising Kly sun into a large pool of

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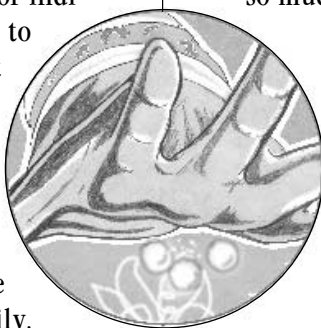
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water in the center of the room. This was the light spa, where every dome's Kintakhs spent the dawning of their brighter day, immersing themselves in the pool for a boost of energy before they began their day going about their normal business. The spa's water and light combined to enact the process of regeneration for the Kintakh, to give them the energy and strength that they needed for their day.

But the morning ritual of gathering in the spa was more than just a daily energy boost. It was also a special time for each dome family to be together, and the more Kintakh from the dome that joined in the pool, the more glow each one would come away with.

When enough Kintakh came together, each one's glow would bounce and rub off on another, providing an even greater surge of light and power—a glow that carried a character of its own based on the many unique personalities that shared in its making, which would settle over each one partaking of it. This way, even after the Kintakh left their dome for the day, they could always recognize another Kintakh from the same dome, even from a distance.

This was not unusual, because there would often be small groups or individuals who would choose to become part of a different dome. A dome could comfortably house close to a hundred Kintakh, though there were rarely that many residing in one at any given time. All members of a dome considered themselves family.



That was just the way it was with the Kintakh.

Looking around, Dsad felt Irazerri calling him to the place in the pool where the rest of his family was gathered. Hovering over others already deeply submerged in and under the waters, Dsad came to his personal family group, and settled down in the water next to them.

Blissfully, he rested against the back of the bench that ran in circular and swirling patterns throughout the entire pool. Beside him on one side sat Irazerri; on the other side, his brother Dazotrax. In the middle of the small circle, a platter hovered just above the surface of the water. It was piled high with all sorts of fruits and foods. There were *chococaps*, Dsad's favorites, but also *dagowers*, *plenimones*, *sinjerries*, *edelfins*, and *csaps*. Each fruit had its own peculiar shape and nutritional qualities, formed of and filled with various forms of light and energy that infused the Kintakh with strength.

Dsad felt especially hungry this morning, and without thinking grabbed a handful of fruits. In a few bites, he had finished them.

Irazerri looked up, surprised. "Why, Dsad, I don't think I've ever seen you eat so much so quickly before."

Dsad looked at his mother. "Huh? Oh ... must have been my run last night. I'm so hungry!" Dsad reached back for the platter and grabbed a few more fruits, eating them a little more slowly this time.

Irazerri smiled, pleased



with her son's sudden increase in appetite. The way he normally only ate the *chococaps* often worried her. *He will need all the nutrition he can get to keep up in the Fly race. Perhaps he's starting to feel that himself now.*

When Dsad had eaten his fill of the fruits, he closed his eyes and allowed himself to sink completely beneath the waters. Since the Kintakh do not need to breathe as we do, but absorb their energy and life force from the light around them, they could move about in the deep light-filled water of the pool as easily as they could through the air. Dsad felt his body soaking up the energy coming from the spa, and as the light swirls surrounded and penetrated him, some of his old skin began to shed, and the daily rejuvenation process began.

O sweet Kly, I'm glad to be a Kintakh, Dsad thought happily.

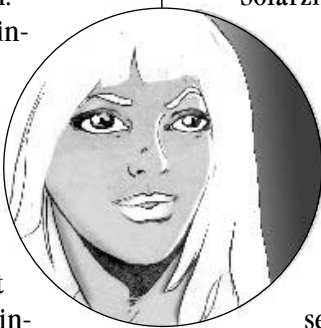
He thought of their king, the eternal light-being of Kly—E'zuz—who had introduced this technology to the first Kintakh settlers when they came to the planet of Solarzi. Dsad had heard the story of the first settlers many times, and had even been to the spot where they had first landed. He had seen the rock that they had all carved their names in.

As it was told, the first Kintakh starships to land on this planet had come from a distant planetary system that had begun growing darker and darker because of a fading sun. Special light houses had been built that offered extra energy to the Kin-

takh, but each new generation born under a dimmer sun grew weaker and weaker, until a few had the idea of setting out in search of a new world, a new planetary system, a new sun.

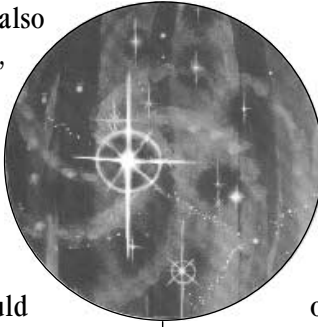
So large starships were built to travel the galaxy, but not everyone chose to go. Some had already adapted to life in the weaker state, and chose rather to remain as they were, instead of risking a journey that no one was sure would lead anywhere. And at first it seemed that those who had chosen to stay behind were right. The ships scouted long and far in search of a better place, never finding one. In time, their ships began running out of energy, and the light pods inside began to grow dim.

The star-questing Kintakh grew weaker and weaker, and soon their ships drifted almost powerless through space. It was then that they first encountered the Klyjins—mysterious beings of light swirling through space all around them, and finally coming through the hulls of their ships, until it seemed they were everywhere, reviving the dying Kintakh with their glow. These mysterious beings repaired the ships' failing systems, and guided the dying settlers to the planet Solarzi.



When they had landed, they were greeted by a great being of light, who looked and spoke like a Kintakh, but who was much larger and brighter than any Kintakh they had ever seen before. This being introduced himself as E'zuz, king of the entire

universe. This meant he was also king of Solarzi, and of its suns, Kly and Fult, and of the Klyjins who dwelt in these suns. The planet Solarzi, he said, would belong to the Kintakh and their children. It had been especially prepared for them, and he would personally see to it that this planet would give the Kintakh all that they could ever need.



The Klyjins! My dream! Dsad suddenly remembered. *There was something I had to do. What was it?* Though Dsad remembered the Klyjin who had appeared to him, he remembered very little of what the being had said—only that it had been very important.

His thoughts were interrupted by the sounding of the morning chimes—the signal that Kly was now bright enough for the Kintakh to leave the safety of their dome. It was time to begin the day.

All at the same time the large mass of Kintakh began floating up and out of the pool, bidding farewell to those they would part ways with until the start of the next darker day. Dsad likewise rose and embraced random ones in his family group, and also some friends who were nearby. These embraces further enhanced and added to the glow and charge that each one would leave with. There was so much love and friendship here, and Dsad realized how blessed he truly was.

“Dsad, why don’t you drop by at the observatory this afternoon after practice?” It was Qualititrius, Dsad’s father.

“Sure, Fa. I’ll be there.”

“Good. I have some things for you to fly to some people for me, and there’s also something there I want to show you that I think you’ll like.”

Dsad smiled, hugged his father, and floated towards one of the exits where some other friends had already gathered to go to the *feeld* for practice together that morning.



Once they left the dome, Dsad and his friends raced through the streets of Balijos, which led to the city of Kintari. Dsad was easily the fastest of his friends, and floated calmly onto the practice *feeld* a good ten minutes before the others began arriving. The half-hour trip served as a warm-up for the training exercises they would be doing for the next few hours.

A strange feeling swept over Dsad as he glided down to the surface and looked around at the wide oval track that surrounded the *feeld*, and the empty *benics*—hovering but motionless bleachers—that ringed it. Another part of his dream was coming back to him. *There was something about training*, he remembered distinctly. *That Klyjin was going to help me with my training—so that I would win the race!*

Dsad suddenly became worried. While he was the fastest flyer of his whole group of friends—and probably of the whole of his dome, there were plenty of other flyers from other domes who were as fast or faster than him. Just the day before, on the last practice run of the



day, Ksom had pulled far ahead of all the other flyers on the final lap, and he won—much to everyone’s surprise. Ksom had never been the fastest. He had never even been faster than Dsad, and had always been more of a quiet lad. He didn’t even look very athletic. In fact, Dsad’s brother Genyak and others had often made fun of Ksom for joining the Kintari Flyers. “The only reason he floats is because he’s so skinny,” Genyak had often said. But yesterday Ksom had proven to everyone that he had what it took, and then some.

Ksom’s unexpected victory, and thoughts of Genyak’s departure a few weeks earlier, had occupied Dsad’s mind for most of the day after that, until his father had found him yesterday and called him to return to the dome for darker day. But now his mind was filled with questions about the meaning of his dream.

“A gem for your thoughts, my boy.”

The intrusion into his thoughts startled Dsad, and he turned to find himself looking into the eyes of Parilax, his coach—and also the father of his girlfriend, Zo-Meri-Jes.

“Thinking about the race again?” Parilax’s eyes asked.

“Actually, I was thinking about a strange dream I had last night,” Dsad answered. A Kintakh’s eyes could never hide his or her true thoughts. That’s how Parilax had found out about Dsad’s affections for Zo-Meri-Jes. But the Kintakh were by

nature a very open and straightforward people, with little to hide. Though Dsad had never spoken much with Parilax about Zo-Meri-Jes, he still knew that Parilax knew, and he also knew that Parilax was pleased with Dsad’s affections for his daughter.

“What sort of dream?” Parilax asked.

“A message dream. In it, a Klyjin came to me and told me things about the race.”

“Things?”

“That I was supposed to win this race, and that she would help me in my training.”

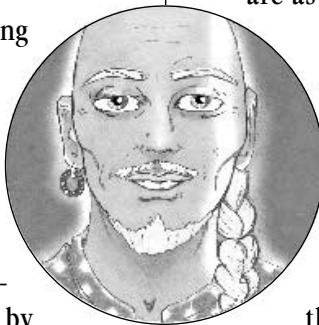
“She?” Parilax asked, an amused smile on his face.

“It sounded like a she ... and her name was Hwings,” Dsad answered as the Klyjin’s name just at that moment popped back into his memory.

“Well, you’ll have to start putting a little more into your training if you’re serious about winning. Though of course you could always end up surprising us all like Ksom did yesterday. You are a good flyer, Dsad, and you’ve set some excellent records for yourself over these past few months. But I have to be honest—there are plenty of other flyers whose times are as good or better than yours.”

“I know,” Dsad answered, his eyes turning a few shades darker.

“Now, now, don’t be disheartened by it. In fact, I have a surprise in store for you today—for all the flyers who will be participating in the Great Fly Race.”



“A surprise?” Dsad asked, his eyes lighting up instantly. “What sort of surprise?”

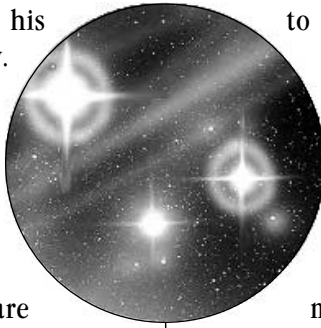
“Why don’t you wait until the others all get here? I’ll tell you all at the same time.”



“As you all know, there are less than six days left before the great Fly Race that all of Solarzi will be watching. For the past few months I have been training you, the Kintari Flyers, to compete in this race. With the final site of the race still a mystery, nobody knows what sort of course we are going to be running. Chances are it will consist of many different portions, each with its own unique challenges. There will be long, straight stretches that will be a challenge of speed and stamina to get across, and there will be portions filled with unexpected twists, obstacles, and traps, that will require every ounce of your concentration and maneuvering skill to make it through.

“One thing is sure—this race will be unlike any race we will have ever participated in. From what I have learned it will be longer, harder, and more intense than anything we’ve seen from the race organizers thus far. But this is exactly what you have been training and preparing for, and I feel confident that when the time comes, you will be ready.

“And now I have the pleasure of announcing that, with the blessing of our gracious Queen Shinoni, we have been given permission for all runners of this race, as many as will choose to accept it,



to be fitted with a new device that our scientists have been developing for years, and have recently perfected—the fully integrated light suit.”

The listeners’ attention was suddenly drawn to a man who came floating down behind Parilax.

“Where did he come from all of a sudden?” Elwyx whispered to Dsad.

“I don’t know,” Dsad answered. “He must have been hovering high above us all this time.”

“But that’s impossible. Nobody could hover that high for that long!”

“Maybe with that suit he can,” Dsad answered.

The suit the man wore made him an even more impressive sight than he already was. His muscular and well-developed form made it obvious that he was an accomplished athlete, and very likely a winner of several Solarzi medals. But with the strange suit he had on, the man radiated a field of energy much greater than his own personal glow. A chorus of gasps, and oohs and aahs of wonder echoed through the crowd of young athletes watching.

The suit was skintight, covering most of the man’s body from his neck down to his feet. There were tendrils running the length of the suit in a variety of directions. Three of these tendrils were attached to the man’s head, one straight along the top, and two others curving around just above his ears. On parts of the suit, such as the wrist and the chest,



were touch pads adorned with various symbols.

“Please welcome our guest for today, Mezzendar. He will be briefing you all on what this new suit can do, and most importantly, what it could mean to you for the upcoming race.”

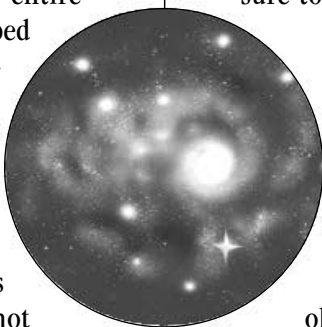
At this, Mezzendar, the man with the strange suit, floated forward, and addressed the crowd of wide-eyed flyers.

“This suit I am wearing—that, in fact, has in many ways become a part of my body—represents the next step in Kintakh technology. In the future, no Kintakh will think of going anywhere without their light suit. For the moment, there are not yet enough suits for everyone, but Shinoni has decreed that the first batch of suits be made available to those who will fly in this year’s great Fly Race, so that the whole planet can see these light suits in action.

“Now I’m not going to bore you by going into technical details about everything this suit can do, but I will tell you about a few functions that might come in handy for the race. First of all, this light suit comes equipped with an auto-generating full-body shield.”

With this, the man tapped a spot on the chest pad, and his entire body was suddenly enveloped in a faint but distinctly visible aura of light.

“This shield will keep bugs, dust, and pollen out of your face while flying, as well as cushion any impact from bigger collisions, such as when you fly into a wall—not



that any of you would do something like that, but it’s always nice to know you’ll have that protection for that one moment when you may happen to be distracted from where you’re going, especially at high speeds. Which brings me to another function this suit provides—thought-activated speed boosters.”

Having said this, the man suddenly launched high into the air and—as every eye followed his moves—performed several high-speed loops, somersaults, and twists before landing back on the ground only seconds later.

“How did you do that?” someone near the front of the crowd asked in astonishment.

“Without any effort of my own,” Mezzendar answered. “I merely let the boosters control my movements while I controlled the boosters. They allow you to do things you could normally do, but with much greater speeds, at much higher altitudes, and with much less effort and a lot more accuracy once you get accustomed to using them. Rather than focusing on your own strength or exertion, you can focus on the path ahead of you, and concentrate on keeping up with the twists and turns the new course will be sure to take.”

“But there are only six days before the race. We’ll never get used to using a suit like that in time!”

Dsad raised himself up a little to see who had asked the question. It was Nodaskin, one of Genyak’s old friends.

"It's not that difficult to learn," Mezzendar answered. "It will take a bit of practice and getting used to, but I think once you try it, you'll find you can get the hang of it quite quickly if you're willing to learn. At the same time, there isn't a lot of time left before the race, so you don't have to equip yourself if you don't want to. But I guarantee that those who choose to learn the ways of handling this suit will find they have a lot more advantages than disadvantages when it comes to the race."

◆◆◆

"Hi, Dsad. I saw you practicing on the course."

Dsad looked up from the bench where he was resting to see Zo-Meri-Jes standing beside him.

"Oh, hi, Zo-Meri-Jes. I didn't know anyone was watching."

"My father told me some of you would be trying out a new body suit today, so I had to come to see it for myself. How does it feel?"

Dsad nervously fingered one of the tendrils that ran the length of his arm.

"I'm not quite used to it yet. It actually slowed me down more than it helped. It's tricky to get used to. I have to focus all my thoughts on controlling its movements, and if my thoughts wander for even a split second, I find myself looping and tumbling all over the place. Then I have to come to a full stop before I can regain any control over my movements in this suit."



I'm starting to wonder if it was really worth it to get the suit fitted on this close to the race. Quite a few others chose not to take it. They're sticking to what they already know and have been training for all this time. Perhaps they're right."

Even Ksom almost came in last today with his suit, after his big victory at practice the other day."

"I know. Still, it's a cool suit. It looks good on you."

"Thanks."

"And I'm sure if anyone can learn how to use it in time for the race, it's you," Zo added.

"You think so?" Dsad asked.

"Of course I do," Zo answered, her eyes beaming brightly. "You've always been able to learn things very quickly—like when you saw me sky dancing."

"I remember," Dsad answered. "You were so beautiful, so graceful, twirling through the air with that flowing gown. I didn't even realize that you knew I was watching you."

"I felt you approaching, and I knew you liked what you were seeing."

Dsad blushed slightly as he remembered how Zo-Meri-Jes had finally danced right up to the rock he had been watching from and hiding behind, and stood boldly in front of him. It was the first time they found themselves gazing into each other's eyes, and through them, discovering the emotions that neither of them was able to hide. From that moment on, Dsad knew that he loved her.

“You taught me my first sky dance,” Dsad said.

“And you learned it very quickly,” Zo answered. “Just like I know you’ll learn this too. And imagine how glorious it will be when you win the race, having mastered this magnificent suit in such a short time!”

“What makes you think I even have a chance of winning? You saw me out there today.”

“Because I know that you’ll try, and I know that once you’ve set your mind to something there’s no stopping you. This suit could just be the key to victory that you need.”

“Well, I’ll give it one more try on the *feeld* tomorrow. But if it doesn’t improve, I’ll have to go back to practicing the good, old-fashioned way.”

“I’m sure you’ll get the hang of it,” Zo answered, brushing her hand along Dsad’s cheek in a way that sent tingles through his entire body.

“I’ll see you at practice again tomorrow,” Zo said, then turned, and floated off.

◆◆◆

“Dsad, there you are! How was *feeld* practice today?” Qualititrius asked when Dsad came to the office his father worked in.

“Hi, Fa!” Dsad answered. “It was good, I suppose. They’ve fitted me with one of these new light suits for the Fly race.”

“Oh, yes. I’ve heard of those, and all the things they’re supposed to be able to do. It certainly looks magnificent on you.”

Dsad blushed. “I tried flying

with it today, but I wasn’t very good at it. It’ll take quite a bit of practice, and I don’t know if I can get used to it in time for the big race.”

“Well, don’t give up too soon. Come here. There’s something I think you’ll like to see.”

Dsad hovered closer to the large flat screen and controls his father was standing in front of.

With a few button pushes, the screen flickered to life and showed a picture of a small fleet of sleek-looking orbiters, hovering high above Fult’s surface.

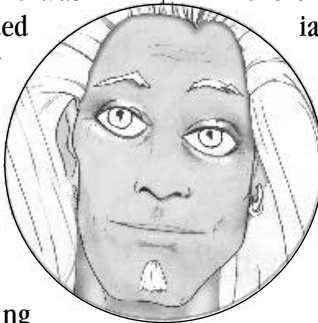
“Our orbiters have gathered interesting new data about the seasonal fluctuations of Fult’s glow.”

“To find signs of the beginning of the next great darker day?”

“Exactly,” Qualititrius answered, pressing a few more buttons on the console* in front of him.

A close-up image of Fult lit up the screen, its surface a seething ocean of rippling light, interrupted every so often by a large flame-like flare. Swirls and bands could clearly be seen, their slow movements almost indiscernible to the naked Kintakh eye. But though this was the first time Dsad has seen Fult this close, there was something strangely familiar about the picture he was looking at.

Qualititrius continued with his explanation. “The great darker day has been a part of Kintakh history from the time we first set



*console: control panel

foot on this planet. The earliest settlers recorded times when the light of Fult dimmed, and time seemed to move slower, so that Kly did not rise again for the space of almost three full days. But they never knew what caused it, or why it came, or when it would come again.”

“But now our technology has allowed us to study and understand the patterns and fluctuations of our orbit, and of Fult’s phases, so that we can now monitor both, and thereby predict with greater accuracy when another great darker day may again occur,” Dsad quoted, as if from a textbook.

“Precisely,” Qualititrius answered. “And our new fleet of orbiters allow us to observe these things from a much closer range than we could before. They have measured interesting fluctuations, not only in patterns of Fult’s glow, but also in its atmospheric pressure and makeup. It looks like our next great darker day may come a little later than we had at first anticipated, but there is now no doubt that it will come, and that it will likely be longer and darker than any great darker day so far.”

Dsad continued looking at the screen, and his eyes dimmed a little with perplexity.

Why does this screen look so familiar to me?

Then it suddenly hit him.

My dream! Dsad realized, letting out a small gasp at the same time.

“A dream?” Qualititrius asked.

“Huh?” Dsad answered, not realizing his father had read the exclamation in his eyes.

“You were saying something about a dream ... or were you thinking to yourself?”

“Oh ... it’s just that ... I remember seeing this picture before—these very ships orbiting Fult.”

“Well, you certainly did not see it here. These orbiters only reached the atmospheric field of Fult’s gravity a few hours ago.”

“I know ... but I saw them as clearly as I’m seeing them on your screen now, orbiting Fult. Only it was a dream.”

“Tell me about it.”

“I just remember bits and pieces. First, there was this Klyjin telling me things about the race and some sort of message I had to deliver—to Shinoni.”

Qualititrius raised his eyebrows, but said nothing.

Dsad continued. “Then I was transported to a place where I saw these ships orbiting Fult. I remember having a strange feeling inside like something was about to happen, but I didn’t know what.”

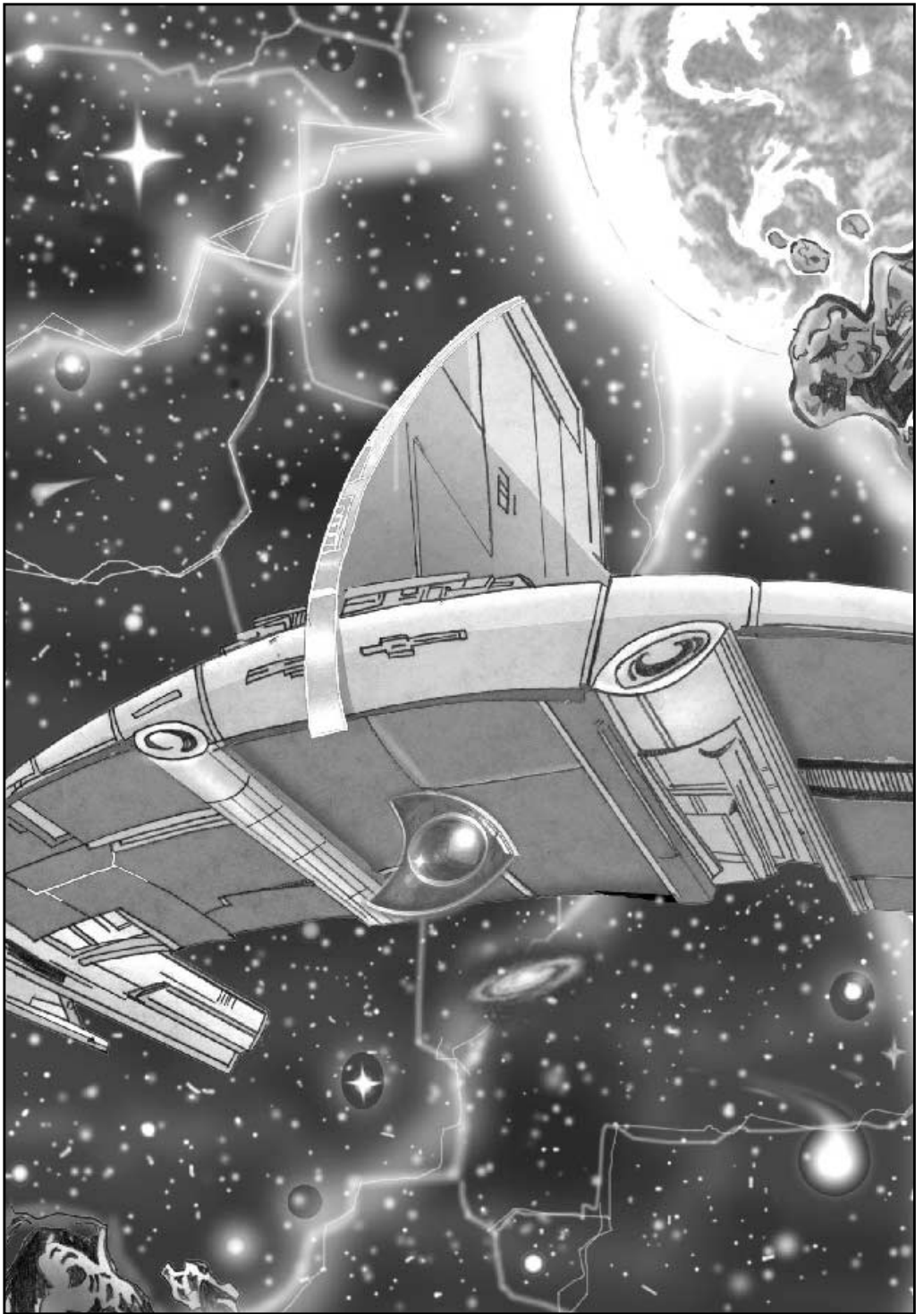
“Something bad?”

“I think so,” Dsad answered.

“And this is what you were supposed to warn Shinoni about?”

“Yes—it was something big that we had to prepare for.”

“Maybe you were just dreaming about the great darker day,” Qualititrius answered. “You know Shinoni already knows about that, and we’re doing many things to prepare for the next one—the light suits are just part of that preparation. Here—let me show you one of the other preparations we’re working on. But you’ll have to keep it to yourself. Only a few know about this project, as it’s still in



a very experimental stage.”

Dsad nodded solemnly. *Maybe it was just my imagination*, he thought with some disappointment.

Qualititrius pressed a few more buttons, and a new picture appeared on screen. This time, four smaller cruisers could be seen hovering high above Solarzi’s surface. Between them, at the center of the picture, was a strange-looking satellite device that looked like it had six giant stacks of folded plates squished against its sides.

“What is it?” Dsad asked.

“It’s a deflector array. One has been completed, and this is one of four others that are still in the works.”

“What are they for?”

Qualititrius slid his hand over a panel, and with a bit of static on the screen, the image switched to an earlier one.

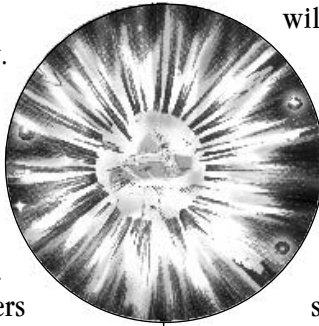
“Watch ... this is one of the tests they ran earlier today,” Qualititrius said as he leaned back in a comfortable chair behind the screen.

Dsad continued to stand, watching the screen intently.

The satellite began twisting itself, and the stacks of plates began unfolding and expanding, slowly forming themselves into large flat panels that joined together in a wide circle.

A chill suddenly ran through Dsad’s body. He had seen *this* picture before too—only...

“The large circular panel will hover high above Solarzi’s surface,” Qualititrius explained, interrupting Dsad’s thoughts. “It



will be high enough to catch the rays of Kly on the bright side of the planet, and reflect them back onto the most populated areas of the dark side of the planet, so that with the domes and with their light suits, people should be able to walk around as if everything was normal.”

But Dsad missed most of the explanation. He remembered his dream very clearly now—this deflector array had been hit by something, and exploded into thousands of pieces, leaving the surface of the planet in great darkness and confusion.

He looked at his father, but then looked back at the screen. He did not want to tell Qualititrius—at least not yet; not until he was a little more sure.

Qualititrius interrupted his son’s silent musings with a message of his own.

“I tell you what, if we do pick up anything unusual on our scans, I’ll let you know right away. Now, if you want a bit more flying practice, I have some packages you could deliver.”

“Sure, Fa,” Dsad answered, heading over to the table where the bundles were stacked and ready.

“I’ll see you before darker day, then, back at the dome,” Qualititrius said.

“I’ll be there, Fa,” Dsad answered.

With the bundles in his hand, Dsad turned and floated through the protective energy field that formed the door and entrance to his father’s office, and left the building.

— TO BE CONTINUED —



(The story so far: Having chosen to use the newly developed light suit for the annual Fly Race, designed to aid the wearer during the race, Dsad concentrated his efforts on how to best utilize the benefits of the suit, as he prepared himself for the race—a race he must win if he intends to meet Shinoni and pass on the warning message he heard from Hwings.)

CHAPTER FOUR

Dsad's eyes were focused determinedly ahead. He took a deep breath and let it out slowly to lessen his anxiety. As he braced himself for takeoff, he fixed his eyes on the first part of the course—the only part in view from the starting point. His mind raced, contemplating the fastest and safest way to get through his first encounters, and make it to the next stage of the race.

The Fly Race was not only a test of physical speed and endurance, but also a test of mental aptitude* and determination.—And for those who wore the light suit, a demonstration to the Kintakh in the stadium of the benefits of these newly developed outfits.

With their eyes focused at

zoomed-in mode, the Kintakh in the stadium observed the Kintari flyers, who were firmly seizing the light bar on either side of them. They would use these bars to push themselves off once the race began.

The excitement was almost tangible*. Hearts raced in eager anticipation, waiting for the beginning of the race.

Some of the flyers had chosen to not wear the new light suit, but to wear their own personally altered suits that they were accustomed to and had been training with. Initially, Dsad and the others who had chosen to use the light suit had had a dif-

****aptitude:** quickness and ease in learning*

****tangible:** able to be touched*

Recommended age: 7 years and up. (May be read by younger children at the parents' discretion.)

Illustrations by Eveye

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difficult time mastering its use in the few days of practice before the race, but it wasn't long before they felt at ease in their new apparatus, which enhanced their skill and speed considerably.

This was to be the first Fly Race with such intense course features. Previous courses were less rigorous, with fewer obstacles and extremes. However, after hard training and a briefing on what to expect, light suit or no, each flyer felt prepared. All were remarkably alert as they waited for what seemed like an eternity for the chime to signal the beginning of the race.

It sounded. The race began.

The Kintakh cheered loudly as the Kintari flyers pushed off from the starting line. Supportive chants from the fans filled and echoed in the enclosed stadium dome.

The racecourse had three levels—each complex and difficult in its own way and extremely challenging. The first level of the course was named “the Problematical.” The Problematical comprised of twists and turns, ups and downs, large boulders to get past, and high walls to scale. This level of the race required the most physical coordination and strength.

“The Hunt” was the second level, a new addition to the Fly Race. The

Fly Race used to solely feature flying, but over the years the course had been altered, adding more mentally challenging parts, rather than only physically challenging parts. The Hunt was the mentally challenging part of this Fly Race, requiring each competitor to find his or her way from the Problematical to the Gripping, the final level, which was a great mauve* lake, its substance jelly-like, strange and unsteady, known as *disset-el*. The Gripping was the hardest of the three levels.

Disset-el had a way of slowing the flyers, making them want to wade through it instead of fly through it. It also had an effect on perception, making it seem easier to get through the *disset-el* the deeper you went, when in reality the deeper you went, the more it surrounded you in its silky darkness, causing the life-giving rays of Kly to fade. If the flyers were not careful, they could find themselves suffocating in the murky depths of *disset-el* for lack of light.

What made the *disset-el* even more hazardous was that it transmitted numbing sensations to any being that entered it. These were sensations of apathy*, contentedness, and

***mauve:** pale purplish color

***apathy:** lack of energy and enthusiasm

a happy, drowsy sort of dreaminess that induced any inside the *disset-el* to cease struggling and to let themselves sink into its depths.

The challenge of The Gripping would be to resist those sensations, and the temptation to sink into the depths of *disset-el*. The competitors were required to go to different levels, known as flaps, in the *disset-el*, but it was imperative that they did not go below them, otherwise they would lose strength in its depths and sink to the bottom.

Teams of skilled divers were on hand to rescue any flyer before he or she sank too deeply and began growing drowsy. If a flyer had to be rescued, he or she would forfeit their place in the race. Only the most determined would make it through the Gripping.

The first Kintari flyer to exit the Gripping would be the winner of the Fly Race.

* * *

Flying as fast as he could, Dsad approached the Metok boulder—the first large obstacle in the Problematical. Above Metok was an enormous slab of rock preventing the racers from attempting to jump over the rock rather than following the course in passing through the narrow gaps in Metok.

The first of the racers to reach Metok began squeezing through the gaps. The squeeze was tight and took skill.

This light suit is bulky, Dsad thought. It'll take me ages to squeeze through here, and I'll be even more behind than I already am. I thought this suit was supposed to help!

Then another thought struck him. *Of course! My light suit has a Molecular Phase Shifter somewhere on it. That should do the trick for me. Hmmm, now to remember how to modulate it to the precise density of this rock!*

Dsad slid his right hand over the MPS sensor on his left wrist. He rested his left hand on the rock, and positioned his right index finger over an illuminated slide-bar that had appeared along his arm just over the sensor button. He slid his finger along the bar until the right frequency was hit. A strange sensation swept through his stomach, as he felt himself being pulled straight through the rock. Within seconds he was standing on the other side of Metok.

He could see several others still struggling through the tight gaps, when suddenly another flash of light swept out of the rock and stood beside him. It was Ksom. He wore

the same bewildered expression as Dsad. They looked at each other momentarily, then burst out laughing.

“We’d better get going!” Ksom said. “There’s more of this race to complete!” Then he took off with a dash, followed closely by Dsad.

As he continued down the course, Dsad became aware that he felt much stronger than before. In fact, the suit had phased him back together in the peak of shape and strength, as it was designed to do. The core of the Metok boulder was also a fund of light, storing energy from Kly’s rays. As Dsad had passed through it, the stored light added to his strength.

Seven racers were still ahead of Dsad as he neared the Oratrak. He hoped this would be his chance to gain on the others.

The Oratrak, the conclusion of the first level, was Dsad’s favorite part of the race. It was a large oval racetrack. First and foremost, Dsad was a flyer. He found it exhilarating!

When he reached the Oratrak, he could see the group of front racers ahead of him. Dsad slowed for a moment, then shot along the course with all the speed he could manage.

He soon overtook several racers

with little effort. Goom, last year’s Fly Race winner, was in the lead by a few seconds and Ksom was in second place by even less. The others followed closely, separated only by milliseconds. Dsad still found himself in fifth place, but he was determined to put forth whatever effort it would take to take the lead. He just had to remain focused on the goal and his reason for wanting to win this race.

The light suit enabled Dsad to make it through, around, above and over all obstacles, blockades, barriers and walls of the Problematical with considerable ease. It gave him capabilities that he didn’t have naturally—additional agility and increased strength.

Dsad and several others arrived at Etowall, the beginning of the Hunt, the second level. Etowall’s Pinnacle was the highest point of Zor-Et, the city where the Fly Race was being held. Etowall’s Pinnacle was adjacent to the enormous stadium, the only feature of the race that was outside of the stadium. The spectators followed the race on huge screens in the stadium.

From the elevation of the pinnacle, the flyers would then dive into the final level of the race—the Gripping—that was situated inside

the stadium next to Etowall's Pinnacle The dive was long, but it was also what the Kintari flyers considered to be one of the best features of this year's course. The sheer drop was absolutely thrilling!

To get through the Hunt, each racer had to find his or her way from the base of Etowall to the pinnacle. There was a specific door at the base of Etowall for each individual racer, that led to a private room. There were hundreds of doors with the flyers' names inscribed on them. In order to utilize their time, it was necessary for the racers to concentrate, sending on their glow to find their names on the door that would lead to an enclosed room. When the glow of the name mixed with the glow sent forth, it became brilliantly illuminated and would guide the flyer to their door.

The spectators watched intently on the large screens. They were split so that each competitor could be seen as they entered their door and went in search of the next portion of the race.

Dsad found his name and passed through the door and glided upward as fast as he could.

When he got inside he searched for a clue to get to the next floor. There was no exit in the room that

he could see, only the entrance that he had entered by. There was a small window in this room, but it only gave enough light to search the bare room with.

This has to be a mistake! Dsad thought with a slight panic. *There isn't anything anywhere.*

Remember Lyt, a voice communicated to his thoughts.

Hwings? Dsad thought. He recognized the voice from his dream. He hadn't heard it since then, though he had often felt a presence with him as he had been practicing. *So you have been here all this time!*

The thought gave him courage. Here was the help he would need to win the race.

Remember Lyt, the voice repeated.

Dsad wondered how thinking of his young sister would be of any help at this point. A picture of her crawling along the floor came to his mind, and he suddenly realized he had been given a clue. He got down on his hands and knees and began searching the floorboards.

One of the floorboards was loose. Removing it, he found a scintillating key beneath. As soon as Dsad had picked it up, a perfectly straight beam of light shot from it, pointing to a tiny keyhole in the roof.



A satisfied smile spread across his face. Dsad glided to the roof, and placed the key in the hole. Like elevator doors, the roof opened for him in the shape of a circle. Dsad quickly made his way to the third floor.

* * *

This room was dark, lit only by the thin beam of light that now reached up to the ceiling of the room. The room was circular, and the ceiling was domed shaped. There was a ledge running all around the room, in the middle of which was the opening Dsad had just floated up through.

What next? Dsad thought, hovering over the opening for a moment while waiting for his eyes to adjust to the dimness of the room. He decided to touch down on the ledge just in front of him. As he did, he noticed that the light from his suit lit up a large section of the wall, and made it easy to decipher the inscriptions that were written in a large circle of text that ran around the entire room.

Wow! I bet this would have been much more difficult to see without this suit!

He read the inscriptions out loud. "The key for one is the clue for another. ... Face the light with gracefulness. ... Partake of all the strength you can. ... The greatest test is yet to

come. ... The greatest glory is yet to be won."

"The key for one is the clue for another," Dsad repeated, realizing he still held the key from the last floor in his hand. He studied it carefully, and noticed that the handle of the key consisted of several gems cut into peculiar shapes, fitting together tightly and precisely, and held together by the metal band that stretched around them.

I see nothing in these shapes, Dsad thought despondently.

Face the light with gracefulness, Hwings' voice sounded in his mind.

Dsad suddenly remembered the beam of light that was still shining from the center of the opening of the room. He looked at the circle of gems and noticed it looked exactly the same width as the beam of light. He hovered back over the opening, and slid the end of the key into the beam of light.

The gems suddenly began glowing, refracting a variety of colored symbols on the dome. There were also other patterns illuminated on the dome as well. He held the key in different positions until the moving patterns of refracted color matched the pattern at the top of the dome. The key suddenly became hot. Impul-

sively, Dsad let go of it. Instead of falling, the key remained hovering in place.

His eyes remained transfixed on the key. The opening beneath him closed, and a new one opened above him. It formed a small tube of light running from the top of the dome to the floor above. Dsad flew upwards into the next room.

The room he entered next was pentagon shaped. It was dimly lit with soft glow lamps, one in each of its five corners.

“Partake of all the strength you can,” Dsad repeated to himself with a chuckle, as he looked around. “I suppose I know what that means.”

In the center of this room was a large table laden with fruit slices and little bottles of the fiery juice of *nevine*—an intoxicating fruit. This was a juice he’d only ever heard of, for it was quite costly. It was the most delicious drink he’d ever tasted! It was the strongest drink he’d ever had, too. It was only after downing his fourth bottle of it, and going on to the fifth that he noticed the juice was full of glow and shimmering colors. In the future he’d be more willing to pay the price to drink *nevine* juice again. It was strong and invigorating, and he felt strengthened by drinking it.

Once he’d had his fill, what looked like the twirling blade of a helicopter came up from the bare table. It cut through the roof of the room as if it was thin paper, revealing an open space all the way up to Etowall’s pinnacle.

“The greatest test is yet to come,” Dsad whispered, looking up at the steep climb.

There were several rungs in the rock by which the racers would be able to climb to the top. Several climbers were hovering from one rung up to the next in the long way to the top of this pinnacle, having exited their rooms.

Dsad looked at one of the sensors on his light suit. He remembered how Mezzendar had been able to shoot up higher than he’d ever seen a Kintakh go. Dsad had only attempted super-height once in practice. And while he might not reach Etowall’s Pinnacle, he figured he should at least be able to skip several rungs with one jump, and save himself time. He switched the directional booster sensors to full capacity. There was no turning back now.

With a few leaps, he found himself hovering over the highest point of the city. He let himself relish the thrill for only a moment. The hardest

part of the race was still ahead of him. With a few of the frontmost racers already having dove in, Dsad followed suit and bravely took the plunge following them into the mauve depths of *disset-el* below.

The Gripping was chillier than he imagined it would be. For a moment or two Dsad lost his bearings. He'd never felt as cold as this. It was then that the *nevine* juice kicked in and warmed him. His bearings and objective were regained.

Move! Move! Move! The words echoed in Dsad's mind. Parilax had used them repeatedly in training for the Gripping. Persistently moving forward was the only way a Kintari flyer would make it through the Gripping. Dsad pressed forward with all the might that he could muster.

It's not easy to fly through this stuff.—Not easy in the least! Dsad thought. The substance moved at subsonic* speed and burned his cheeks with a numbing cold.

Being able to properly function in the Gripping would have been difficult for the strongest and most prepared Kintakh.

There is no other route to success but through great difficulty, Dsad

told himself over and over as the chill began numbing more places on his body, and his eyes began to get sleepier with every passing moment.

Within the Gripping, the Kintari flyers first destination was Flap One. Dsad made it there in only ten seconds. But by this time, he felt that most of his strength was used up. At the flap he paused a moment, quickly realizing it was a mistake to slow down. The cold, jelly liquid began solidifying around him, making it nearly impossible to move.

Hwings' voice once again spoke to Dsad's mind. *Don't give up! Don't let go! When you feel your strength is gone and that you cannot push on, that is the time to push on harder than before. Activate the power of your light suit and let it work for you.*

Activate the power of the suit? Dsad thought. He hadn't thought specifically of how the light suit might help him in this situation. He had focused all his energy and attention on continually moving, and realized that he had not even tried to use the directional boosters the suit was equipped with.

Fortunately the suit was largely thought controlled, as Dsad's hands could hardly move themselves to adjust any settings on the suit's var-

***subsonic:** slower than the speed of sound

ious sensors. He let his body relax a little, and focused his concentration on the mental link that gave him control over the suit. Then the light suit took over. The body shield activated itself and Dsad found himself beginning to move forward, cutting through the jellified substance of *disset-el* and getting a charge from the energy the suit was emanating at the same time.

Dsad made it through to the next flap, which was located deeper down in the *disset-el*. The lower he went, the darker and colder it became. The body shield feature of the light suit proved indispensable now.

Thinking about all the times he couldn't have proceeded in this race without the light suit, he was relieved he'd chosen to wear it. It was all that kept him going now. The light suit was his strength, and its warmth his reassurance. It helped him stay focused as well, and aided him in many ways he'd never realized he'd need help in.

At last the final flap was in sight. There was a glowing beacon of light hovering just under the surface of the *disset-el*. Dsad poised himself to fly to it with all his might, knowing that as soon as he touched it, he would be transported into the finish zone.

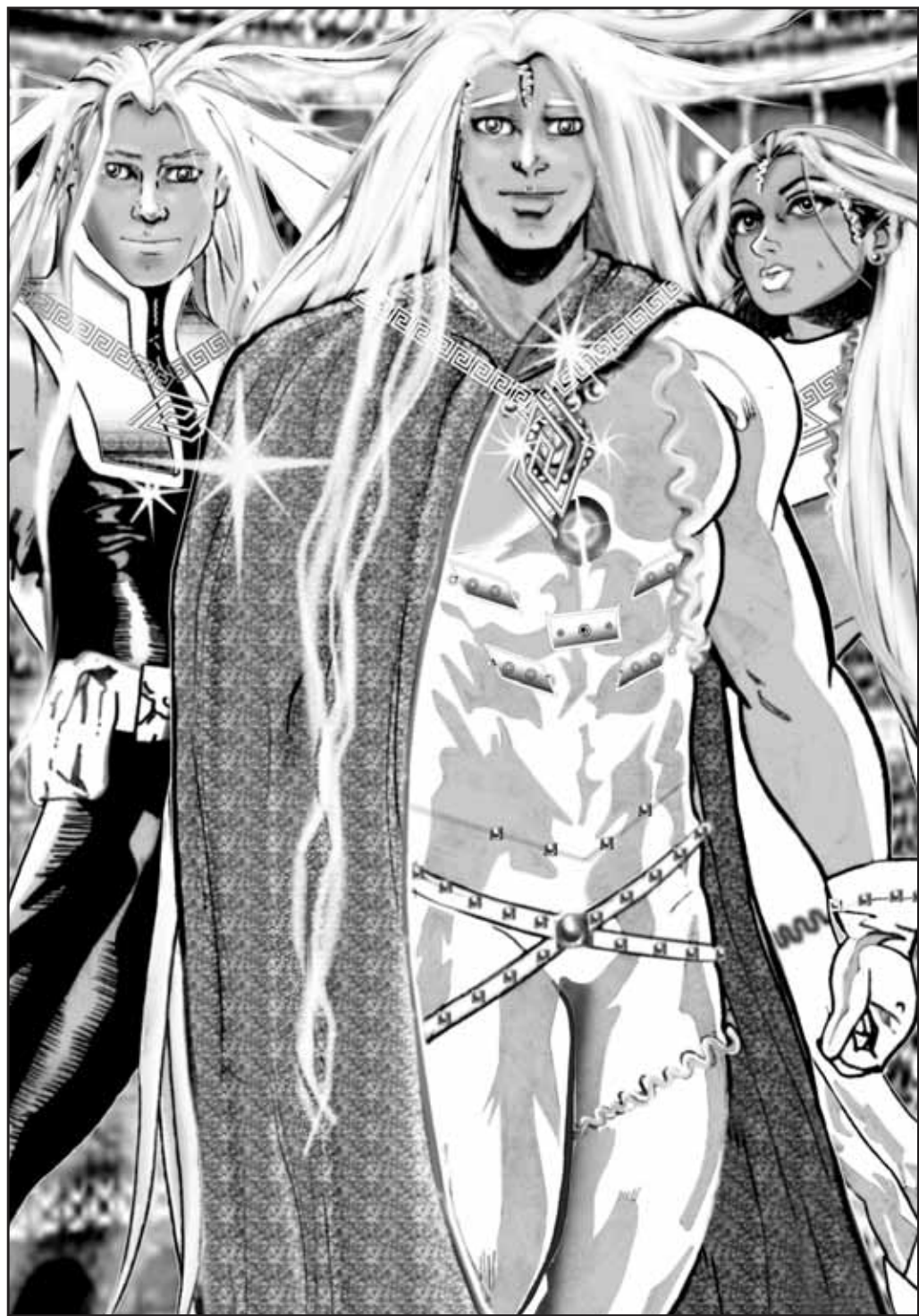
He could not see any other racers around him, but the murkiness of the *disset-el* was to blame for that. There might have been others ahead of him, or there might not have been. There was no way to tell. Dsad reached his hand towards the light, closed his eyes, and focused all his attention on touching that beacon—hopefully before any others would. Within seconds, he felt a warm glow envelop his body, and he knew the race was over.

———— CHAPTER FIVE ————

A great burst of light suddenly lit up the enclosed stadium dome. This was the sign that a winner had touched the light beacon, marking the end of the race, and would soon appear on the grand podium that hovered above the surface of the Gripping. All awaited this moment with bated breath.

Finally, a Kintari flyer zoomed up from the floor of the stadium. No one could tell who it was, for he flew faster than they'd ever seen someone fly before, shooting high in the sky before slowly descending back down.

He was followed closely by two other flyers, each rising above, and settling back to the podium in a



similar manner, where they stood, silent, looking around in surprised awe as cheering and applause echoed up to the podium on which they were standing. They were the three finalists of the great Kintari Fly Race.

Flowing capes of light were placed upon them. Drums beat, flutes played, and scantily-clad Solarzi maidens danced all around, throwing ribbons, flowers, and light balls around, lifting Kintakh spirits higher and higher. Acrobats leapt and somersaulted through the air, and children in the stadium set free *dandan* birds. All Kintakh were eager for the winners' names to be announced, and to find out what the winner's royal request would be.

Cheering broke out again when the names were announced: Ta'atar, third place; Poetra, second place, wearing a light suit; Dsad, first place, wearing a light suit. Dsad had also set a new record for the fastest ever completion of the Oratrak.

As the winners were being led to the stand where they would receive their fiery medallions, Dsad let out a sigh of relief.

"It was a close race," Dsad said, congratulating the other two winners. They agreed. There was no comparing between them. They were just happy to have finished the race.

It had been more challenging than any of them had expected.

The medallions, which were on light chains, were placed around their necks, beginning with Ta'atar. Then Poetra was given her medal. Finally, the largest and most rare of the flaming medals were given to Dsad, the Fly Race champion.

Then came the moment all Solarzi runners dreamed of. Shinoni's royal transport would approach the podium, where she would then proceed to grant the winner any request he or she would ask.

Dsad waited with bated breath, as all those on the podium around him looked on silently.

After the royal transport slowly hovered down to where the victors stood, Shinoni rose from her seat, and walked towards them. She congratulated each one for being heroes to the Kintakh and told them of the responsibility that being a hero or a heroine entailed. She then asked Dsad what he wanted for his prize.

"If it please you, my Monarch, I ask for an audience with you," Dsad replied.

"Granted," she responded.

Dsad's heart leapt for joy with her acceptance. He noticed a vague look of recognition in Shinoni's eyes.

Bowing low, he humbly thanked her.

As the Solarzi orchestra played a song of victory, the delicious smell of the fruit *berriwell* wafted through the air from the hall within the stadium, where a feast was to be held for all who'd been at the Fly Race.

After the feast, where Dsad received a multitude of congratulations from those he encountered—particularly from his personal family, as well as Parilax, and Zo-Meri-Jes who never left his side for a moment during the feast—Dsad was whisked away to join Shinoni and her entourage who were returning to the palace, where he'd been told he could rest and recuperate for a day or two.

* * *

"I recognize you," Shinoni told Dsad. They were standing on the beautiful enclosed porch of her private chambers, watching Kly go down in its glory and Fult rising.

"Really?" questioned Dsad.

"Yes. You're the young man E'zuz told me I would meet at the race. You have a message for me. Please tell me what it is."

It was a great honor to have a private audience with the beautiful monarch, and Dsad was delighted to be in Shinoni's presence. She was magnificent, kind, and sincere. He

was nervous though. His eyes became dry, just as our throat becomes dry when we are nervous but must speak. And he clenched his hands so they would not shake.

Sensing his nervousness, Shinoni moved closer to him. She lifted her delicate arms and her hands rested firmly on Dsad's shoulders. Looking deep into his eyes, she sent swirls of glittery twinkles into him to relax him. "I will believe you," she communicated to him.

The magic twinkles relaxed Dsad.

Putting on the manliest look he could muster for this beautiful monarch, Dsad began:

"This is the message that was given to me, and I'm not sure what it all means or why, but," Dsad paused.

"Please go on," Shinoni said.

"Even as we stand here, I have been told that the Erkili battle cruisers are on their way to invade, plunder, and destroy Solarzi and the Kintakh."

"Erkili battle cruisers? But their system is far away from this planet. Why would they come here? What could they want?"

"I'm not sure. I was just told that they're coming."

"What else do you know?"



“They plan to attack us during the time of the great darker day, when most of the domes will be sealed. I believe they may know of the construction of our great reflector arrays, and that they plan to attack these and shut down as many domes as they can.”

“Leaving us with few options for resistance, and them with easy targets,” Shinoni concluded.

“Exactly,” Dsad agreed.

The great darker day occurred every two years, when the rays of Fult dimmed, lasting for the extent of the Solarzi day. To the Kintakh it was a natural seasonal happening, and compensated for the increased darkness by storing additional light energy in each dome. This would maintain them while they stayed in their domes for the full extent of that day, even when Kly was in the sky.

Dsad began again: “I was told that we are to prepare for this attack by strengthening the domes and fortifying our defenses around the reflector arrays. We will need to have armed ships ready and waiting for the Erkili when they come. Their biggest threat is the fact that they cannot be seen until it is too late. But now we know

that they will be coming, when they will be coming, and where they will be coming from.”

“Where is that?” Shinoni asked.

“They will group behind Fult. They plan to attack as soon as most of the domes have fallen into the shadows of Fult’s darkness, destroying first the reflector satellites, and then attacking the domes themselves,” replied Dsad.

“So we must work to strengthen the outer shields of our domes, and have ships ready to defend the reflector arrays when the Erkili attack. I believe that can be done. And what is your part in all this to be?”

“I ... I’m not sure, except that I was meant to be the messenger,” Dsad answered. “Though, I am not clear on why the Klyjins chose to tell me and not you, unless I am to have a part in it somehow. They helped me to win the race so that I could deliver this message to you. But they only helped me one step at a time, telling me the secrets for each stage of the race as it came. Perhaps there are other stages still to come.”

“It sounds as though there will be, and they will undoubtedly be even more important for you than winning the Fly Race.”

— TO BE CONTINUED... —



A Parallel World

Part Four (The Conclusion)

(The story so far: Dsad has won the Fly Race, and for his prize he requested an audience with Shinoni. She accepted and Dsad proceeded to explain the message given to him by Hwings, about an upcoming attack on Solarzi by the Erkili. The time and whereabouts of the Erkili attack was told to Dsad by Hwings, and with this warning the Kintakh have begun to take measures to protect their domes and their planet.)

CHAPTER SIX

The distant light of a drifting spacecraft caught the attention of the Erkili, a sinister race of shadows. After scanning the migrant ship and getting information as to the species and origin of the ship, the Erkili captain gave orders to hail the spacecraft.

The passing ship was identified as Kintakh, from the planet of Solarzi. The Erkili knew the Kintakh were entirely dependant on light—the exact opposite of the Erkili, who despised brilliant light.

The Erkili were utterly indifferent to the sanctity* of life. They disregarded the laws of the cosmos* for their own gains. These masters of trickery and deceit wrongfully used the art of molecular reconfiguration. The ability to alter the shapes of not

only the molecules of their appearance but also the surface of their vessels in order to mask their true, shadowy identities, was one of the main assets to their expansion and advancement.

They could appear as pleasant beings, or as a weaker and feebler alien race, seemingly ready to be taken advantage of. Their disguises enabled them to dominate and conquer unsuspecting victims through the element of surprise.

As the Kintakh spacecraft came nearer, these shadowy creatures added the finishing touches to their disguise—a manufactured dim,

***sanctity:** to reserve or respect something

***cosmos:** whole universe

Recommended age: 7 years and up. (May be read by younger children at the parents' discretion.)

Illustrations by Eveye

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greenish light that encased them and their vessel, which they had transformed earlier to appear as a trading vessel.

This time, the one-eyed shadows in the Erkili battle cruiser *Et-hut* took on a bizarre bodily exterior—hideous and warty in form.

* * *

Running out of glow and shine, with no new light source in view, Genyak knew he was slowly dying with each hour that passed. For weeks Genyak had flown *Conception*, his spacecraft, to distant systems in a quest to find a new source of light to replace the one he'd willingly given up. Though he regretted leaving the best things he had ever known behind, his pride kept him from returning to Solarzi. He didn't want to admit that he'd been wrong.

Genyak was ecstatic to discover a ship in his screen's view. The ship hailed him.

The trading vessel Genyak saw did not glow with the kind of light he was used to, nor one that he particularly craved. Yet at this point, he was grateful for any light at all. He hoped the aliens would be kind enough to allow him to purchase a portion of light.

Maybe they have a source of light they'd be willing to trade for

something that I have that'd be useful to them, he thought. *Perhaps I could reconfigure it so that it's purer and less murky*. With this thought he prepared for the trading negotiations.

Their race seems friendly enough, Genyak reasoned, once he'd talked with the captain onscreen. *They're merely traders who are interested in some of the more useless valuables on board. Maybe they'll know the way to a light system I can settle in. Perhaps I'll find some of the other Kintakh there who left Solarzi not too long ago. That'd be great!*

Genyak disarmed the weapon shield around his vessel, and several of the trader-disguised Erkili came aboard.

Although he suspected nothing of their true origins, a couple things about the newcomers struck Genyak as strange. For one thing, they all wore paraphernalia* designed to filter out all light.

Genyak's normally lustrous, glowing Kintakh skin was now a pale, almost sickly yellowish color, instead of brilliant as it had been not long ago. Genyak emitted no glowing aura now. He'd been away from the light

***paraphernalia:** assorted objects that are a bit strange

of Kly and Fult for far too long. Oddly enough though, his light still seemed dangerous in some way to these creatures.

Causing him additional unease was the detail that no Erkili's eye ever looked into his. Unlike the Kintakh, the Erkili used their mouths to talk. So he never felt totally sure that they were trustworthy, because he couldn't tell if the words they said had some hidden meaning. But in all his suspicions, not once did he think them capable of doing any damage to him or the systems on board. They seemed like such a feeble-minded race, and all he wanted from them was the light they seemed to be more than willing to give him. It was almost like they were trying to get rid of it.

While Vilinus, the captain of the Erkili vessel, *Et-Hut*, focused his time aboard negotiating with Genyak, the other two Erkili seemed to be scanning *Conceptian* and her systems. Genyak thought it odd, but did not give it much thought.

Suddenly a high-pitched squeal caught Genyak and Vilinus' attention.

Vilinus smiled; he seemed pleased.

Turning to Genyak again, he spoke by means of his inter-species translator, "It seems you have the

kind of fuel we've been looking for. Where did you come across it? It's the best in the galaxy."

"The planet where I come from, Solarzi. There is a wealth of it there," he said proudly. But then remembering that by revealing Solarzi's resources to an alien race, he was in essence a traitor to his homeland, Genyak hung his head in shame.

"We've heard of Solarzi. But we never knew you had this kind of wealth on your planet. Would you trade us some of your fuel for this device?" Vilinis asked, offering a core of light to Genyak.

Genyak's eyes lit up at the sight of the light core. "For sure!" he exclaimed. "I'd be happy to give you some of my fuel in exchange for it. I have more fuel than I'll ever need."

After the trade had been made, Genyak inquired, "I'm hoping to settle on a planet with a substantial sun. Do you know of any in a nearby galaxy?" Vilinis gave some instructions of how to get to the planet of Clarifica. Genyak thanked him kindly.

With their business completed, the Erkili left *Conceptian*. However, their vessel made away with curious sluggishness.

That went well, Genyak thought. Though, something from that experience is a bit disturbing.

He could sense something wasn't right, but he put the thought out of his mind, figuring he was just paranoid because the Erkili's eyes had somewhat scared him, as had that dark device offered to him.

Genyak decided to study the light the Erkili had left him with, hoping to bask in it. To his horrid dismay, he found that it was fool's light; it was not the kind of light he needed, and it would fade shortly. He was disheartened. There was no way this would do him any good. In fact, he could almost feel it crawling over him like insects. This was something else. Not light. He'd been deceived and taken advantage of.

He remembered when he'd felt ashamed minutes earlier, but also how proud he had felt of being a Kintakh from Solarzi. Never had he realized, until that moment, what exactly it was that he had lost—everything he'd ever want and need.

Great, sparkling Kly, Genyak thought. What I'd give for a day under your rays again—or even a darker day in the Balijos dome ... and some fruit. I'd give anything for some nevine—even berriwell or a chococap. Anything! He seemed to be gaining strength from the mere thought of returning. *Yes, yes, that's*

what I'll do, he thought resolutely. I'll return to Solarzi. I'll never be satisfied anywhere else. They're my race, my family, my friends. Yes, my friends!

Jubilant, he got up from the floor where he'd been checking out the bogus light.

Just then, his ship was rocked by the blast of a damaging dark ray.

Conception's alarms went off. The noise pounded in Genyak's head, which he had hit against the wall in the blast.

He struggled toward the command center, hoping to regain control of his craft. He'd been so engrossed in his attempt to figure out the dim light source that he'd failed to put up the protective shields of his vessel. All he knew now was that he was under attack by a powerful enemy.

Who is my foe? he wondered. *It's surely not those pitiful, friendly creatures I just saw. There's no way they could have the kind of artillery to do that kind of damage to a light ship.*

He was mistaken.

Hurled to the wall again, and then knocked to the ship's floor by the strength of the blast, Genyak was too weak to get up and activate his defensive shield.

Another blast hit *Conceptionian*. This time some of the ceiling fell and crashed on top of Genyak. He lay on his back, dazed.

Before he knew what was happening, his ship was being boarded. Everything was hazy now and he could do no more but watch his ship be taken over by the Erkili.

Genyak realized they were indeed the same one-eyed “traders” he had let onto his ship earlier; only they looked entirely different now and their behavior was animalistic and fierce.

Having all the information they needed to render Genyak helpless, as his light was too faded by now to hurt them much, they’d cast off their exoskeletons, revealing their true, shadowy state that was hideous beyond description.

“Put him in the *chillibrator* and seal it!” the Erkili captain gruffly commanded.

The shadowy creatures dragged Genyak to their spaceship, his arms flailing and feet kicking all the way. The touch of the Erkili was so cold that it hurt him. His legs and arms were spread and he was strapped onto the dreaded *chillibrator*. The shadowy encasing glass was sealed shut.

Genyak felt his already weakened

body racked by the pain of the darkness that was injected into him by this machine. He’d needed light before this, *But* he thought, *unless some kind of miracle happens, this will be the death of me. I am vulnerable to the shadows. And I don’t have much light in here left to keep my glow alive.*

Genyak drifted in and out of consciousness. Once he overheard the captain sending a message to his superiors, most likely informing them of his conquest of a light ship and of the precious fuel it transported; of the light being captured, and of where to come by more of the prized fuel in abundance.

He then overheard a gruff conversation, which he believed to be instructions from their headquarters, but because he wore no translator, Genyak could not understand the details. But the low pitch of the grunts implied that it couldn’t be good news for him or for Solarzi.

In fact, *Et-hut* was calling for reinforcements to join their new mission.

The evil darkness made Genyak feel lonely and homesick. Now that he was no longer a flaming light but merely a haze, almost indiscernible, a tear—the first he’d ever shed—fell from his eye.



I'm sorry. I'm so sorry, he thought to himself, over and over, wishing he could give this apology to those he loved—those whom he would never see again.

CHAPTER SEVEN

With great anticipation, the Kintakh made preparations to protect and ready themselves against the forewarned day of attack.

After Shinoni had received the warning message from Dsad, she wasted no time in gathering together the Counsel of Generals (the body of Kintakh responsible for planetary security) and the regional Keepers of the Domes. They counseled and decided on the course of action they would take in the time leading up to the predicted Erkili attack.

The regional Keepers of the Domes then called urgent meetings with all the supervising Kintakhs of the domes. In this meeting they passed on much information, and many more good ideas were generated.

Tactical design teams began working on a planetary defense, consisting of manned and armored orbiters, outfitted with upgraded and newly developed defense equipment. They worked in long shifts, creating

all that might be useful to these crafts. The goal was for these once ordinary orbiters to double as battle cruisers.

Each member on the fleet of orbiters was to be adequately outfitted, which included wearing a light suit.

Guarding squads were required for each dome. Each member of the squad was also to be offered a light suit, which could give them the energy to stay awake for longer shifts during the great darker day.

Volunteers of the fittest men and women were trained to take shifts guarding the domes from the outside. This was to be a novel and exhilarating duty, as until this time no one had ever been outside the domes during a darker day. But with the invention of the light suits, this was now possible.

The guards would be rotated as soon as their shift was completed. It would take a good hour to go around a smaller-sized dome, even at flying speed. By that time, they'd need to recharge their light suit. The darker day would take a lot out of them, and use up more energy than if they'd been wearing the light suit inside the dome.

Others volunteered to take short shifts in the control room, monitor-

ing all operations in the domes. It was possible to fire weapons from this control room.

The shielding devices of the domes and of their stellar orbiters were top of the line, for those who specialized in creation of defense tactics were given the special privilege of sessions with the Klyjins, who were under orders by E'zuz himself to teach the Kintakh all that they would need to know.

Intense work was dedicated to fortifying the shields around the domes. They even invented a new layer to absorb the shock of any weapons that might fire on them. This flaming layer glowed gracefully against the backdrop of open space. When all work on fortification had been completed, the domes were a strange, yet lovely sight, unlike any other structure on the planet.

After the impressive demonstration at the Fly Race of the light suit's power, learning how to use one became extremely popular, so much so that almost everyone did—not to copy others who had done so, but because the light suits were the most concentrated form of power they'd ever received access to.

The light suits were made entirely from raw materials found on Kly alone. These were gifts to the Kin-

takh from their Sovereign—E'zuz, who considered the Kintakh his progenies*.

“Use the light suits that I offer you, and I will see to it that you are victorious,” E'zuz had promised Shinoni, who repeated this to the Kintakh in the days following the Fly Race. “It is my intent that your name is spread abroad as never before. The name of the Kintakh will be proclaimed across space and the stars, past the galaxies as you know them.” This had cheered Shinoni and the Kintakh, for as it was written in their annals, E'zuz never broke a promise.

Once a light suit was donned, and its power activated, the very power and light of Kly was able to run through a Kintakh's veins. In this way they were able to live life to the full, the way E'zuz had planned for them all along. By practicing with the suits, the Kintakh entered an era of achievement and action touching all corners of their lives. The things a Kintakh would have before required long training to learn, they could now learn just by doing them, with the help of the light suits.

When most everyone's suits had been activated, a stimulating buzz swept through the atmosphere. It

***progenies:** *offspring*

was a wind of light. Whatever this light touched came to life in fuller measure.

When the magic of the wind of light touched the rugged, beautiful earth of Solarzi, certain gigantic plants that the Kintakh had once thought extinct awoke from their slumber. These plants all added their reflected light to the ever-increasing supply of light being gathered and stored by the light reapers. All this light would be divided between the domes and become useful during the great darker day and even afterward, for one purpose or another. All pure light was useful to Solarzi.

Shinoni was a ruler after E'zuz's own heart. He entrusted her and the Kintakh with the light suits, for he trusted Shinoni to lead the Kintakh wisely and well in the use of them. And indeed, the Kintakh race was diligent with their suits. They knew that by them, unlimited power was theirs. Faith in the suits was the key to all the secrets of the universe and the power thereof.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Three roars of black light ripped away from Fult, cracking like a black leather whip in Solarzi's sky. Like three fingers they clawed

through Solarzi with terrible speed, twisting and turning like hurricanes, leaving paths of destruction in their wake. Mercifully, it was the high cliffs and craters they spanned, leaving all Solarzi's cities unscathed.

Kintakh scientists who for years had monitored Fult's action knew these rays would come. According to all logic, they should have hit at least the outskirts of REXX—the capital city, also Shinoni's residence and the city that accommodated the principal defense generation systems and weapons in Solarzi.

But they did not.

The Kintakh were greatly encouraged, for they had been able to witness with their own eyes the combined power that the suits had. The light lasers their suits had shot out simultaneously had been able to redirect the black light, and in time, quicker than by natural courses, they removed it.

Several lesser rays of black light had come and gone and more were predicted to come, but it was this initial lot of black rays that had set off the alarms. Scans by the Counsel of Generals had detected alien intruders in one of the dark rays. The Erkili had made their entrance; the battle was soon to begin.

The Erkili battle cruisers had grouped behind Fult once it grew

darker. By modulating their spacecraft's frequency, they were able to ride on a dark ray from Fult into Solarzi. It would be a difficult existence for the Erkili in brightly lit Solarzi, no matter how brief their stay. But because the Erkili now possessed Solarzi technology, they had been able to make adjustments to their crafts and suits to enable them to last there until they could gather their loot.

The Kintakh were sure that the Erkili had come across Kintakh technology somehow. They just didn't know how, or through whom.

Another black ray struck from Fult into the Solarzi atmosphere. In flew a Kintakh vessel, *Conceptian*, escorted by two dark alien vessels.

The Kintakh knew that the Erkili had counted on destroying their reflector satellites, communications satellites, and then attacking the domes themselves. But all these had been well fortified since the Erkili had first made their plans based on former Kintakh technology and information. The Erkili certainly did not have the element of surprise on their side that they had hoped for.

The Kintakh's task was not an easy one either. Their enemy was well trained, well equipped and battle

hardened, with a sharp nose for weakness. The Erkili were known to fight savagely.

However, Solarzi was prepared for this attack and had made adequate defensive preparations, inasmuch that the enemy fire merely rippled away to nothingness because of the newly devised shields.

Though the Erkili resolve was great, and the battle raged hot, the Kintakh's resolve was unrelenting—as was their devotion to duty, to their planet, and their families.

A Kintakh warrior accepted nothing less than full victory, and that is what he fought for. Not only that, but he had the blessing of E'zuz on his side for this great and noble undertaking.

The Kintakh quickly counterattacked, leaving the enemy no time to formulate new strategies. Their old strategies were not proving effective, as the Kintakh had taken measures to ensure the least amount of destruction beforehand.

Though the enemy had enough sensor information to determine where the most sensitive strategic points were, the power of the blasts of light from the light suits and from the other new weapons the Kintakh had were able to redirect the enemy's



blasts. Instead, the blasts boomeranged, hitting the ships they originated from.

* * *

All was going well for the Kintakh. With the light suits on, their aim was perfect and caused most of the ships they fired upon to fall to the ground. The remaining Erkili ship, *Et-Hut*, retreated to a safe distance.

The captured Erkili were held as prisoners of war in a dark, chilly cell, so that they would not die. The Kintakh were under orders to allow E'zuz to deal with those they managed to capture, so all but a few blasters, phasers, light suits and other weaponry were set to merely stun the Erkili in battle.

The power and strength of Kly that they'd seen in the days of preparation leading up to this darker day was nothing by comparison to the gigantic fireballs of power that the suits produced in the heat of the battle.

CHAPTER NINE

Stepping onto the podium of her illuminated command station, Shinoni accepted Vilinis' hail. She and the others present, including Dsad and his family, and some high-

ranking generals stared at the crisp, computer-enhanced image of Genyak on a panoramic view screen circling the entire room.

Though Genyak looked as if he were about to die, he'd in fact been out of the *chillibrator* for about 15 minutes, so as to have enough energy to speak.

Seeing the faded Kintakh—to each a brother, a son or a friend—their hearts felt broken. Irazerri buried her face in Qualititrius' chest. All were aware of the mere minutes left for Genyak and wondered if he could be rescued somehow.

"I'm sorry," Genyak said. "I'm so sorry. Please, please forgive me."

The view on the screen changed and they all saw the shadowy Vilinis.

"We accept that you have defeated us," Vilnius said, his voice cold, dispassionate, and conniving. "But I have my orders as well. And the military code of the Erkili calls for the death of all prisoners.—There are no exceptions. We will set the *chillibrator* to freeze if you do not give me back all my men you've taken as prisoners, and grant us a safe return to Erkil. If you do, perhaps I'll release this one here."

Vilinis appeared determined, but Shinoni and the Kintakh were a step ahead of him already. "We do

not negotiate with the Erkili,” she said, then terminated the communication.

“I have no doubts as to where Genyak’s loyalties belong,” Shinoni addressed Genyak’s saddened family. “He is sorry and is, after all, one of us. I wish our rescue team all success.”

Qualititrius and Irazerri thanked Shinoni profusely for her help.

* * *

Prior to being beamed up to the exterior of *Et-hut*, from where they burrowed their way inside the enemy ship with the lasers from the light suits, the rescue squad—Dsad, Poetra, and Dazotrax—were given extra capsules of light to store in their suits in order to keep them aglow onboard the chilly enemy ship they’d explore in search of Genyak. They’d also been given an extraordinary light capsule that would help to revive Genyak.

Shinoni ordered the channel of the view screen changed so that those in the control room could see the progress of the stealth rescue mission.

Their plan was working well. *Solarzi 1*, an elite spacecraft, fired away at *Et-hut* incessantly, jolting the ship backwards and forwards, and sending its systems into disarray.

This was a deliberate attack, intended as a distraction to those aboard *Et-hut*, to make the rescue team less detectable as they burrowed their way into the shadow cruiser.

Making it from one tube to the door of another, which they were about to open and pass through, they heard Erkilish grunts. They hadn’t realized how close they were to the command center, and they paused to listen on their translators.

“Kemark!” Vilinis said, halting his lieutenant commander. “We have acquired enough of a fuel supply in this battle to make us rich back home, even if the Kintakh may have been too strong for us.”

“I do hope we make it safely away from this fiery planet, sir,” said Kemark.

“Well,” responded Vilinis, “we will die trying to hurt this planet even if we do not make it home.”

“Correct,” Kemark replied.

“Now go finish off Genyak!” Vilinis ordered.

“Yes, sir!”

If the rescue squad hadn’t worn the light suits, they might have faltered at this point, thinking it was too late to rescue someone whose whereabouts they had no knowledge of. But they knew that by the power

of the suits, they stood a good chance of getting to Genyak before it was too late—perhaps even before Kemark.

They waited for another light blast to hit the ship so that they could make it past the Erkili undetected. When another blast rocked the ship, the light suits ejected the three out of the tube, and into the corridor where they were to continue their search.

They raced as swiftly as they could, following the light of their suits that led them to wherever Genyak was being held.

Genyak could see the rescue team far in the distance. Their glow was so bright that he couldn't miss them.

Genyak was surprised that the three Kintakh hadn't been detected aboard yet. *The ship's systems must have been terribly damaged by that last blast*, he thought. *They're so obvious*. If he wasn't in so much pain and the situation so dire, he might have laughed.

Within a few moments, Poetra—the girlfriend Genyak had left behind on Solarzi—discovered the dark icy capsule in which Genyak was trapped. She could hardly contain her jubilant emotion and joy. “Genyak, we've come for you! We've found you!” she said in excitement.

From her pocket, she took out the capsule of potent liquid light

that Shinoni had given to them for Genyak. Genyak made his best attempt at a smile.

Dsad's eyes darkened in concern when he saw Poetra's face getting closer to the gloomy glass enshrouding Genyak.

“No!” Dsad called. “Poetra! Wait!” But it was too late. She had let her flaming face touch the chilly glass. Dark rays like ivy shot out at her, fastening her face to the glass *chillibrator*. Poetra's light began to fade and she dropped the capsule.

Dsad made a dash for the falling capsule as only he could have done. He rescued it, not a moment too soon.

“Help me, Dazotrax,” Dsad instructed. His little brother knew exactly what he meant.

Leveling their phasers, Dsad called out, “On my mark ... GO!”

The brothers fired at a spot on the glass just above Poetra's face, causing the ice glass to wobble and melt enough so that the icicles retracted. Poetra, who was momentarily unconscious, fell to the floor. Although her glow had been lessened considerably, they knew she'd be fine in a moment. They turned to give Genyak their absolute attention.

After unlocking the ice glass with another sizzling laser blast, and then



disabling the *chillibrator*, the brothers desperately scrambled to lift the lid. But their first blast had sounded the alarms so that just as the lid was being lifted and the cuffs strapping Genyak's wrists and ankles to the *chillibrator* removed, a squad of Erkili led by Kemark entered the holding room. They held darkness shooters in hand that they'd intended to kill Genyak with, but those could now destroy his rescuers as well.

None on the rescue squad had anticipated the enemy being in full gear on their own vessel—the full gear including shields against light. Just being shining creatures was not enough to destroy these shadows right now. Something more had to be done to rid themselves of these aliens. In their fright and disappointment, they forgot the power of their suits that they could have activated.

“Don't move, or we'll kill you,” an Erkili barked.

I'll distract them, Dsad communicated to his little brother telepathically. *You administer the light in the capsule to Genyak*. Secretly Dsad passed the capsule and the tiny light sprayer to Dazotrax.

Accomplished at twisting and turning and performing all sorts of amazing feats, Dsad took off around the room—flying, walking on the roof,

and distracting the guards, who tried to capture him but couldn't. Meanwhile, Dazotrax hastily injected the capsule of light into the sprayer and administered it to Genyak.

Much to Dazotrax's relief, every part of Genyak that the spray touched began to revive. Soon his glow began to return, but he was still weak.

“You've made a foolish mistake,” a shadow said, mocking Dsad who had been consumed with his distraction techniques. “I told you not to move. I told you all! Now this little one here will pay.”

Dsad's heart skipped a beat when he saw his little brother held tightly against an Erkili. A dark weapon was trained at his temple.

“I don't think so,” said Poetra, who had awakened unnoticed and now had her light phaser trained on the shadows. “It's *you* who've made the mistake,” she said to the Erkili minions. This is set to kill. One move and it will scatter you into a thousand pieces.”

The shadows knew Poetra was right and that the light of her phaser could override their darkness. They dropped their weapons. After releasing Dazotrax, the Erkili fell to the floor, pleading for their lives to be spared.

“E'zuz will deal with you all in his

own good time. We've just come for my brother," Dsad said, pulling his oldest brother from the *chillibrator*. Dazotrax rushed over to help Dsad sling Genyak over his shoulder, while Poetra kept her weapon trained on the Erkili. She set her light phaser to stun and rendered them helpless on the floor.

Dsad gave the command: "Four to beam home."

Shinoni, who had followed all of the events on the view screen, ordered a light beam sent to carry them home.

* * *

Safe once again in the command center, the rescue team was rushed to the medic center, where they were able to fully recover from their experience. Genyak was looking better by the minute.

Knowing that the Erkili had come to Solarzi to plunder the raw energy sources that their space ships used, they'd done some research on this fuel source, finding a way to destabilize it and even to neutralize it should it be stolen.

After the safe return of Genyak and his rescuers, Shinoni and Genyak's family offered up worship and praise to their sovereign.

Then Vilinis hailed Shinoni one last time.

"On screen," said Shinoni.

"Be advised," the evil captain gruffly said, "I have called for additional ships."

Shinoni couldn't help smiling a little at the pointlessness of the threat.

"Oh, but this laugh is for you," she said, and then broke out into laughter. "This time there won't even be a point of entry for your puny fleets of dimness."

"There always will be," Vilinis retorted.

"I think not," Shinoni replied. Adding afterwards, "Computer, end transmission."

CHAPTER TEN

The enemy ships, defeated and already beginning to burn up in the flaming atmosphere, attempted escape—foolishly trying to use the fuel they'd stolen from Solarzi, which in fact, they'd been allowed to steal. In that fuel, the Kintakh had placed pulses able to be activated at will.

When what was left of the Erkili cruiser attempted escape, Shinoni ordered the pulse activation button to be pressed. It completely destabilized the enemy ship's engines and systems. Their power, weapons sys-



tems, and all other systems suddenly went dead, and the ship floated dead in space, a humiliating disgrace.

All watching were then granted the show of a lifetime, when *Et-hut* and all the other Erkili battle cruisers rocked beneath a fiery detonation from Kly.

In one moment, the entire enemy fleet was swept up into the belly of the fiery entity, which then spit them out as a horizontal cylinder of fire that swelled outwardly until it finally circled the entire planet of Solarzi. As if it contained some kind of magnet, all prisoners of war were sucked from Solarzi into this fireball as well, leaving no trace of the Erkili on the planet of Solarzi.

The plasma cloud of specks of Erkili matter and debris that were spewed out mingled with the glittering and sparkling light that the Kintakh men, women and children simultaneously sprayed at them, discharged by the light suits.

The sky grew brighter than they'd ever seen it during a darker day. For hours it was so bright that the Kintakh on the side of Fult's darker day were able to enjoy celebrations even outside of their domes, if they wished.

Colorful hues of light filled the sky for days to come.

And so in the end, evil was turned to good that darker day, for the enemy's attack only served to unite and to strengthen the Kintakh, who knew that once the report of their victory was spread throughout the universe, the Erkili would never make good on their threat of returning.

Beautiful flares like fireworks and translucent peace-crafts were shot off from the different domes. While peace-crafts from Kly landed on Solarzi, filled with gifts for the Kintakh—gifts of light and currents of power.

Everywhere on Solarzi songs of gratitude and praise joyously wafted through the heavens, making their way all the way to Kly and resting with their almighty sovereign. The songs were sung with all that was in the Kintakh, knowing full victory was theirs because E'zuz, in his love and care, had promised it to them.

And now must end the tale of Solarzi and the Kintakh, for words would fail to express the marvels of their existence after this time.

Content yourself in knowing that they went on joyously living in the best kind of continuation, by the purest light in the universe, their influence reaching far and wide in the cosmos.

————— THE END —————