

Chapter 1

Nate bounced his leg impatiently. It was quite one thing to be promised a night of sexy debauchery, and quite another to have to wait for it.

They were still docked at Sapenza, even though Natalia had rejoined them and was getting dolled up in their bedroom. They were waiting for news from Sofia — they couldn't move on without knowing if she could be healed without Nate's seed.

Nothing to do and nowhere to go. Nate sighed, rolling around the chrome baton on the kitchen counter. Cora, bless her, had the presence of mind he hadn't, to collect the mysterious batons that Mayko's thugs had used to dissipate their plasma blasts.

Which *should* have been impossible. The baton had no markings, no product code, no etching, no clue as to where it came from.

Mayko's Acropolis was many things, held many things, from smuggling dens to drug rings, but he didn't think it held a top notch research and development group.

Which meant this had come from somewhere else.

Like Mayko's thugs had come from somewhere else.

Or rather, someone else.

Whoever she was working with, who wanted Nate's head, was willing to concoct elaborate plans purely for the opportunity to film his slow death.

He couldn't imagine someone he'd angered that much.

Jarek *would*, but he was deader than dead.

"Get out of your head, Nate." Ana chided as she stepped in the kitchen. She was wearing a tiny little white negligee, one that barely covered her chest or the top of her thighs.

Nate drank her in hungrily.

"Easy, tiger." She smirked. "Your meal is still being prepared."

He groaned, restless. "I don't know what's wrong with me."

"I do. You've been spoiled." She kissed him gently.

"Sorry."

"Don't be. It's exactly what we're trying to do." She admitted. She sank to her knees, tossed her hair behind her back, and pulled his pants down.

"Ana—"

"Just to help you pass the time." His Princess teased. Her tongue circled his cock slowly. "Remember the first time, way back on Tallaris?" She asked from between his knees, doe-like blue eyes looking up at him in adoration.

"Like it was yesterday. You said my cock was too large."

Ana ran her tongue down his cock veins and back up. “I was wrong. It’s perfect. I sucked you off so much in that jungle.”

“Morning, lunch and dinner. You used to make the funniest excuses—”

“I couldn’t get enough.” Ana blushed. “I still can’t.” Her lips stretched around his head, lapping sensuously, slowly.

“You learned quickly.” He groaned, holding her head. “I remember thinking I was the luckiest guy in the galaxy, to have the Lunari princess sucking me off day and night.”

“And now?” She winked at him, her voice muffled around his shaft.

“Now I’m *sure* there’s never been anyone luckier, in the history of time.”

She pulled off him with a deep breath, her pouty lips glistening with saliva. She took a delicate lick of his precum. “I’ve always known I’m the lucky one.” Ana smiled. “But I didn’t know then that I’d be putting together a group of other lucky girls.”

“You miss those days?” Nate stroked her hair. “When it was just you and me?”

She shook her head. “I feel better now you’re safer. And it’s easier to make you happy, with some help. I can see how much happier you are, to be a part of big family.”

“And you—”

She rolled her eyes, nuzzling his hand as she throated his cock deeper. *Yes, I’m deliriously happy, silly.* Ana said in his head.

She bobbed on his cock, taking him all the way in, just to show she could.

It was Isabelle that interrupted them — today, she was projected in a battleball uniform, oddly. She liked to mix it up. “Natalia’s ready. Enjoy her, Nate.”

“Thank you, Izzy.”

Ana popped off his cock and cleaned it of his precum. She shivered. “I’m so excited for Talia. I remember my big day.”

“I feel like I’m gonna blow the moment I see her.” He chuckled.

“You won’t.” Ana tugged him to his feet and stripped him of all his clothes. She kissed him as he held her. “You always make it so special for us.” She patted his chest affectionately. “Go and make her dreams come true.”

“Right you are, number one.”

Nate took a deep breath and headed to his bedroom.

There, he could only stop and stare.

Natalia. She was beautiful. She was holding herself, one arm draped around her front, standing a little awkwardly, even with her hip cocked to one side, even though she’d dressed herself up to be fucked.

Smoky black eyeliner, long thick eyelashes, deep red lipstick. A lacy black bra pushing up her breasts, little black panties that wouldn’t last long. The contrast of black lace on her pale skin — he was rock hard.

“I’ve been waiting to reward my hero.” Talia breathed in.

“I’ve been thinking about you since the moment you left.” Nate admitted.

“I feel so free now. The chains have lifted.” Talia stalked over to him. She took his hands and placed them firmly on her pert asscheeks, her panties covering only half of each cheek. She breathed him in, ran her hands down his chest, her eyes lidded in desire.

Her tongue ran over his collarbone. “Are you mad at me for lying to you?”

“No, sweetheart. I understand why you did it.” Nate said.

“I felt terrible, the whole time, like there was acid in my throat.” She said softly. “But now you’ve saved me and I need to show my...gratitude.”

“We were there too, you know!” Cora called from the bed behind them. The girls were lying languidly on the sheets, naked and together, their fingers working on each other gently. Ana in the middle, with Cora and Lunar at her side.

Talia giggled.

“You can pay us back by giving Nate a night to remember.” Ana said, one of her hands dancing across her hard nipples.

“What would you like tonight, Nate?” Talia looked up at him with her sultry eyes, batting her eyelashes. “Do you want to fuck the tight virgin meka girl from the holonet?”

Nate groaned. Ana was feeding her lines from his head, his every fantasy uncovered.

Talia caressed his hard shaft between them. “Do you want to ruin her pussy, to deflower her and turn her into your own private whore?”

“Fuck,” Nate murmured.

The meka pilot bit her lip as she slowly stroked his cock, pumping it against her panties. “Do you want me to choke on your cock again? Want to make my makeup run down my face? Want to fuck my face and leave me coated in your cum?”

“I want it all, Natalia.” He said.

“Tonight, you get it.” She promised. “No rules, no innocence. Just one desperate to please girl, ready to bend any way you like.”

“I like the sound of that.”

“It’s going to get nasty. I’ve had a long time to fantasize about you.” She hesitated for a moment. “You won’t judge me?”

“I won’t. I want you to do everything you’ve been thinking about.”

Natalia smiled. Then she sank to her knees and buried her face under his heavy balls.

“Yes, sister.” Lunar commented. “Debase yourself.”

Slowly, Talia rubbed herself against his weighty testicles, feeling the hot load he was going to give her rest on her forehead, her nose, her cheeks. She took his cock in both hands and held it up, so she could trail her tongue across his ball-sack from the base and all the way around.

“All this cum is going to fill my tummy, right?” She had a wicked little smile.

“Every drop.” Nate stroked her hair.

It was like he’d flipped a switch in her — she attacked his balls with her mouth, sucking and slurping his balls like she could churn his seed with just her tongue. Talia took one ball in her mouth so she could gurgle with it, lapped at where his sack met his skin, cleaned the very sweat from his skin. Her hands jerked his cock, from base to head, before she switched her mouth to his shaft.

“Nice and wet.” Ana advised. And Talia took it to heart, drooling saliva onto his cock, making it glisten as she stroked it. She spat again and again until his cock was making slick sounds in her strokes, until his cock was raining precum down on her.

“I want to be the best blowjob girl on the ship.” Talia declared, glancing off to the bed, her chin raised. “I’m used to competing with other girls.”

Cora scoffed. Ana giggled. Lunar just smiled.

“Show me what you have.” Nate ordered.

Talia enveloped him, her lips stretched around his shaft. She forced him down her tight throat, stroking him fast to generate precum, tongue working away. She gagged while she bobbed, choking herself as she pushed him down her throat. Finally, she broke off with a gasp, a string of saliva connecting to her lips.

“Long way to go.” Cora jibed.

“Doing well, sweetie.” Nate encouraged.

Talia hummed in thought. Her hand caressed his balls while her tongue traced the head of his cock gently. Then she bobbed her head on the top of his cock, her tongue teasing down his shaft. Slowly descending until her throat was milking his cock just like her hands milked his balls.

And when he was good and going and enjoying the sensations, she popped away, switching back to suck on his balls.

“I love how hot and heavy they are.” Natalia murmured. “All that cum ready to go.”

She swallowed his cock again, bobbing contentedly on his cock, nursing it with both hands, slurping and sucking, content not to try and depththroat him too far.

When he felt himself nearing completion, she withdrew completely, cleaning the cum-strings and saliva from his cock. Talia took a deep breath and pushed him against the wall.

Nate’s head almost banged into the mirror.

“Talia, what?”

She simply giggled and jumped him, forcing him to catch her around the waist as she climbed easily, arms around his neck. She caught his huge cock between her thighs and clamped them tight, letting him admire her flexibility.

“Fuck me, Nate.”

“Like this?”

“I want to bounce.” Talia admitted. “I feel so wild with you and I’ve got so much energy, I want to run it off.”

“Whatever the lady likes.” Nate wasn’t going to complain. He gripped the sides of her panties and dragged them down to her thighs, which left her soaking pussy dangling teasingly above his cock.

Talia kissed him, her hands at the nape of his neck.

Nate smirked. “You’re dripping on me.”

“I’m so wet. Ready to be ruined, just like the girls say.” Natalia moaned.

“Nate’s giant cock will reshape you so you fit him, forever.” Cora whimpered as Ana buried her fingers in her slick cunt.

“Another sister for our Kyrios.” Lunar arched her body.

“More, more, more.” Ana trembled as her juices flooded Lunar’s burrowing fingers.

Nate lined himself up, his forehead pressed against Talia’s, staring into her eyes. “Do

it, then.”

Talia lowered herself onto his head, her mouth opening in shock and pleasure as she sank slowly onto his member. “Ooooooh!” She cried as she descended. Nate resisted the urge to buck up into her, holding her tight as she slowly ensconced his cock into her wet heat, her pussy gripping him like a glove as inch by inch, she lowered.

“You’re so fucking tight.” Nate groaned.

“You’re so fucking *big*.” She gasped out. “I feel so full!”

“Half way there.” Ana called from the bed and Talia whimpered.

She was soaking his shaft, body trembling, pussy quivering, until she finally reached his base. She let out a sensuous moan and just held herself there for a long moment, letting herself get used to having his monstrous cock inside her.

Then she started giggling.

“What’s funny?” Nate’s lips twitched at her contagious laughter.

“I’m worried if I open my mouth your cock will come out of my throat.” Talia shook on his shaft. “Don’t make me laugh, don’t make me laugh.” She whimpered. “It’s going in even more.”

“I don’t think that is possible.” Lunar observed.

Talia looked down between them, clutching his shoulders. “You feel so good.” She groaned.

“And you haven’t even started.” Nate squeezed her ass encouragingly, making her shake again.

She bit her lip and used her grip on his shoulders to start rising on his dick. Her pussy-lips tried to grip him, the skin reluctant to let go, and as she rose, she left more and more evidence of her soaking, dripping pussy. But she was confident, happy now that she could take him fully, and slowly she began bouncing in his arms, using his shoulders to bounce herself.

Lithe and limber, she rode him in mid-air, kissing him hard while her tight cunt worked him over, milking him with every down-fall and up-rise. Talia was a giggling horny mess, gasping as she squirted her juices, then giggling at the slapping noises, the squelches of her sodden pussy, the vacuum of air before it was filled again by Nate’s cock.

Her hair stuck to her face, her sweaty black locks covering coral-colored eyes, her bra unhooked to reveal her bouncing breasts. Nate had to close his eyes to stop himself from cumming too early, but when the red mist of lust took over, he stopped holding her smooth back and instead held her bubbly ass.

“Nate, what?” Talia gaped, before he held her in mid-air easily and began driving up into her. “Oh, fuck, fuck, fuck!” She moaned as he pounded her, hammering her wet pussy, making her drip all over him and the floor.

“Use her slutty holes, Master.” Ana encouraged.

The feeling of Natalia cumming on his dick was too much, the vibrations, the trembling, the soft crooning in his ear, the heat and the wetness. All too much for him. He came inside her, slamming himself into her and spurting thick dense cum ropes deep

inside her pussy. She'd gone floppy, limp, eyes dazed and wide, legs spread, a low whimper that never ended as she dribbled from her mouth.

Nate growled, continuing to work her limp body up and down his cock, working her whole body as his cocksleeve as he unloaded pint after pint. Before he was even done, he tossed her onto the bed in a mess of arms and legs.

To their credit, the girls worked quickly to prop her up, even as Nate's throbbing cock doused Talia in creamy spouts. Ana pushed her head into the bed. Cora pushed her stomach up so her ass would rise. Lunar parted her legs.

All so Nate could sink back into Talia's messy gaping cunt at a better angle, could clap himself a few more times against her soft peachy ass, use her tightness and her flesh to work the last of his huge load out. Lunar kneaded his balls as Nate gasped his last dregs out, while Talia moaned mindlessly beneath him.

"Did that feel good, Master?" Ana parted her own wet lips with her fingers, showing her glistening pink pussy from her own parted legs, further up the bed. "To take ownership of another obedient slut?"

Nate just groaned, collapsing forward onto Talia's poor abused body. His hips ground in circles while Lunar gently caressed his balls. Cora wiped the hair from his forehead lovingly.

Isabelle gulped from where she sat in the corner chair, where Talia had once watched Nate take Ana's virgin ass. "Sorry to interrupt, but Sofia Rivero is waiting to board the ship."

"Guh," Nate said.

"I'll deal with it." Ana rolled from the bed and grabbed her bathrobe. She pressed a kiss to Nate's cheek. "I love you, Master. Thank you for giving us a new sister."

###

"Hi, Sofia." Ana said from the top of the ramp, cinching her robe tightly.

The Voor woman climbed up the ramp, her smile a little thin. She was dressed in a fresh black Voor robe, down to her thighs. "Sorry, Ana, I know it's late."

Ana peered up at the night sky, taking in the glowing stars. "It's okay, we were all still up. How did it go? You're walking by yourself!"

Sofia grimaced. "The diagnosis hasn't changed, even if I'm better. Extremely dangerous levels of radiation in my major organs. They're amazed I'm still alive, as it is. But with this amount of radiation, they think I'll be dead in six months."

"I'm sorry." Ana said genuinely. "I was hoping they'd have a better solution, but—"

"But I need Nate." Sofia admitted, tossing her white hair behind her.

"Not for long, maybe? You'll be good to go before you know it."

Sofia sighed. "It does...grate to need him for survival, even if I'm grateful."

"Just for a few more days, if you're lucky." The ramp closed shut behind them.

"Nate's cum works fast." Ana grinned. "Have you eaten anything?"

"They fed me. Speaking of uh, feeding—"

Ana looked at her knowingly. “Unfortunately, Nate’s just unloaded and because it’s his first time with Talia, I think she should absorb his whole load.”

Sofia stared at her with wide eyes. “Right, yeah—”

Ana giggled. “Don’t worry, though. Nate’s full of it. I’m sure we can convince him to get you nice and healthy again.”

“It looks like I’m going to be staying with you a while.” Sofia said wryly. “I’m probably going to need to get used to...this.”

As if on cue, they heard Nate’s growl from the bedroom. “Clean my cock, Cora.”

“Yes, *Captain*.” Cora simpered.

Ana couldn’t quite hide her amused smile, even as Sofia looked uncomfortable. “We’ll try to be better hosts. Tea or coffee?”

“Not coffee, I need to sleep.” Sofia collapsed onto the sofa as soon as Ana led her into the kitchen. “I’m guessing it went well with Talia and her parents, then.”

Ana nodded as she retrieved a few cups. Nate would be thirsty too. “Sort of. Even knowing we were walking into a trap didn’t stop it from closing around us. They’d built this whole fake living room just to hide this electrified cage that closed in on us.”

“All that for Nate?” Sofia frowned.

“Somebody really wants Nate dead.” Ana agreed. “But all we found was an old *friend*, Madam Mayko, who runs the Dead Space den Acropolis, and some high-class thugs.”

“She got away?”

“She got away.”

“Doesn’t sound like this is bug work.” Sofia speculated. “But they could be making deals and funding the operation, like they did with Jarek.”

Ana poured the hot water. “It just seems too personal, more than anything. It was a months long plan purely to get Nate in that room. And there was this drone just to film us die...somebody was really getting off on it.”

“Who is getting off on what?” Nate asked as he stepped in, clad in a tee and shorts, a towel on his shoulder. He was red-faced and sweating, a just-had-great-sex smile on his face. “Hi, Sofia. Feeling better?”

“A little but not a lot. That’s why I’m here.” She sighed from the sofa, unable to even sit up.

“That’s okay.” Nate dried his face with the towel, still breathing heavily. “We’ll fix you up and try to make you comfortable here.”

“I was just telling her about our day.” Ana explained. “Show her what Cora brought.”

“Oh, yeah.” Nate disappeared and then reappeared with the electric batons that Cora had taken from the fallen thugs of the Sapenza villa. He demonstrated it, the blue hiss and fizzle of the baton loud in the quiet kitchen.

“We took these from Mayko’s thugs. This thing took a whole plasma blast — caught them in midair and dissipated the energy.”

“Can I?” Sofia inspected the baton curiously. “That’s some serious tech.”

“Right?” Nate considered the gleaming chrome stick. “It looks industrial. Human

made, right?”

“No markings, no engravings.” She pushed her ivory hair from her glowing eyes. “If Phalanx or Tritan or Firebird made this, they’d be crowing about it and have it patented before a competitor stole it.”

“So...”

“So it’s R and D. Federation, probably.” She surmised.

“Stolen?”

“Maybe.”

“I’ll talk to General Kanu. Maybe it will give us a clue as to who is after me, and why.”

“The fun never stops with you, Nate.” Rivero smirked as she lay on the sofa, her head propped on the pillow.

“You don’t know the half of it.” Cora yawned as she strode into the kitchen, wearing just a tanktop and skimpy white panties. She settled down on Nate’s lap in the armchair, stealing his cup of tea just as Ana set it down. “We’ve been zooming around the galaxy, dodging death left, right and center, trying to find allies.”

“Allies?” Sofia asked. “For what?”

Nate wrapped his arm around Cora’s waist as she wriggled back into him. “Hitting the bugs. That’s why I was looking for you in the first place. I...I didn’t want to tell you until you were better, so you could make a free choice.”

Sofia wrenched herself higher on the sofa, sitting up. “Talk to me. Anything that makes the bugs hurt, I’m interested in. Is why you were talking to my people?”

“Council wants the whole galaxy together for this one.” Nate confirmed. “I’ve got the Feds, I’ve got the Reverts. The Voor are a maybe. We’re doing a left feint with a right jab. Every attack force we can muster on the left, while I — and you, maybe — sneak in on the right.”

“We’re going to poison their water well, their breeding station for their new generation of stronger bugs.” Ana added, with no small note of pride.

“You’ll get blown out of the sky.” Sofia said skeptically.

“Not if they think we’re bugs.” Nate grinned. “This ship’s got a bug skin we can drop over it, makes us look like them.”

“But as soon as they scan—”

“That’s why I wanted you.” Nate told her. “If we — you — bled a live bug with your fangs, fed it back into our veins, we’d show up as bugs on their sensors.”

Sofia stared at him for a long moment. “Maybe. Probably. I don’t know.” She paused. “That’s a big maybe, Nate.”

“It’s the only thing we’ve got.” Nate pressed. “Imagine how much time we could buy ourselves.”

The white-haired woman blushed a little, her eyes flashing an even deeper red. “We don’t usually regurgitate the blood via our fangs into our partners unless its during sex. It’s an...act of intimacy, to drink the blood and give it back. A sign of trust.”

Nate hesitated. “I understand. But—”

“But yes, of course.” Sofia rolled her eyes. “You never need to convince me to attack the bugs. You’re really going to have enough of a force to draw the bug frontline across?”

Nate nodded. “Every ship the galaxy can muster. That’s what we’re doing. We’ll be heading to the Lops, now, and then the Lunari.”

“Lops?” Sofia pursed her lips. “Are they worth talking to?”

“We’re going to need every ship we can.”

She cocked her head. “They have ships that do more than just migrate their people to other planets?”

Nate exhaled to push away the strands of Cora’s pink hair that tickled his nose. “The galaxy’s largest transport ships — could be useful for transporting infantry for boarding actions. Plus, their shield tech.”

“Their shield tech?” Cora wiggled her bottom in his lap.

“They’ve got the quickest recharge in the galaxy. That’s how they transport without getting wrecked by pirates or traffickers. They just keep moving — they have this crazy siphon system where, when they take plasma hits, some of that energy gets dissipated into the shield, which actually regenerates the shield to an extent.” Nate paused for a long moment, parsing his own words. “Which sounds a lot like these batons, now I say it out loud.”

“I’ve never heard of that tech or the Lops having any sort of tech at all.” Sofia admitted.

“Yeah, I used to, uh, have some Lops friends.” Nate hesitated.

Ana snorted from the kitchen island, where she was preparing a meal for the following day. “Nate used to frequent some Lops prostitutes.”

“I wouldn’t say frequent—”

“Nate!” Cora gasped, her face delighted. “You’re such a dark horse. Is that where they taught you to fuck?”

Nate scratched his head. “I’m not, like, proud of it—”

“We’ll have to thank them.” Ana interjected. “He does like their ears and their cute little bunny tails, though. He took a Lops girl at a club in Acropolis, once.”

“You never told me this story.” Cora said.

“I was too afraid to take him.” Ana admitted, blushing. “Didn’t think it would fit.”

Cora slapped her knee. “So you got him a prostitute to see if he’d rip the poor girl up?”

“I wouldn’t put it quite like that.” Ana cleared her throat. “But when I saw how much she loved it, then well, yeah, I knew I had to have Nate. I was *meant* to keep my virginity for my Lunari wedding night.”

“Nate took *all* of your virginities.” Cora teased.

“Cora!” Ana flushed.

“Ignore them.” Nate advised Sofia.

“I’ll try.” She said, amused. “I’d like to see my clan again, when we can, if we can. To give them the Mulvaken bone and...see some old friends.”

Nate paused in thought. “We will, as soon as we can. Isabelle?”

Her disembodied voice chimed from the intercom. “The Voor convoy has moved, I’m afraid. They’re heading towards the Lunari.”

“We’ll catch up with them after the Lops.” Nate promised. “We’ll be going that way.”

“I’m dreading it already.” Ana muttered.

“You don’t want to see your people?” Sofia asked.

“It’s not my people. It’s my mother.” Ana bemoaned. “And Nate wants me to ask for the use of the Mormagil.”

Sofia’s eyes were wide. “But the Lunari never use that weapon. It would leave them defenseless.”

“But without it, we might not be able to blow a hole in the line large enough for the bugs to abandon their breeding planet.” Nate tapped his fingers on Cora’s bare thigh. “So we have to ask, even if it’s difficult.”

“And I will.” Ana promised.

Nate could feel Cora’s mischievous smile, even if he couldn’t see it. “Luckily, Ana has lots of experience begging for big weapons.”

They all groaned.

Cora pouted. “That’s funny, come on!”

###

“You should not threaten me. You don’t know me if you think that’ll work.” Madam Mayko spat as she paced up and down her ship, fist clenched in fury at the voice on other end of the call.

The other voice was calm, relaxed. “I only know that I paid you for services that were not rendered.”

“I had him in the cage like you asked. The plan *worked*, even if you had to over-complicate it.” Mayko seethed. “If you just wanted me to put a bullet in his brain, then I could have done it months ago—”

“Death is too easy for that man. I need you to return and make things right.”

Mayko pinched the bridge of her nose, feeling as if her eyes were going to bulge out of her head. *Fucking rich bitches*. “You paid to get him there, you paid me for the setup—”

“I paid to see his eyes pop as his skull was squeezed. I paid to see him cry and beg.” Anger now in the robotic voice.

“He’s not going to fall for it again—”

“Your bitch tipped him off. He turned up with a whole squad. A Mediator.”

“She got him there. The hostages worked.”

“Do it again. He wants a damsel, give him one.”

“He’s not going to fall for it again, like I said.”

“That,” The robotic voice somehow had a touch of acidity to it. “Is your problem, not mine. Your Acropolis is only independent so long as it remains under the radar, so long

as it's not worth the Federation's time or risk to take down. That *can* change.”

Madam Mayko took a deep cleansing breath. “You don't have that power.”

“Are you sure?” Mayko could hear the smirk in the voice. “And do you really want to gamble on it?”

The call cut off.

Mayko screamed.

It was a job she never should taken, regardless of the money. But when revenge and credits mixed, she could never say no.

She huffed, pacing up and down. What to do...double down or retreat? Neither option seemed good.

Her armguard chimed. A report from her street watchers. A Voor woman had walked on to the Judge's ship.

She paused for a moment.

A Mediator, a Lunari and a Voor on the same ship — and the Judge had only just been seen in Revert space, assisting in the Revert's battles.

He was making the rounds, she realized. A visit to each of the species. Council business, no doubt.

And if a Council Judge was visiting each member of the galaxy, that could only be for one reason, because there was only one threat large enough to bring them all together.

They were finally going to fight back against the bugs, on a united scale. A mission of some kind, something large enough to need them all together.

Mayko smiled slowly.

Where there was trouble, there was opportunity. And there was nothing she loved more than opportunity.

What's more, she could make a pretty good bet about where Clancy would be heading next.

This time, she wouldn't make the mistake of leaving before she saw the life drain from his eyes.

“Number one.” Mayko said slowly. Her right hand woman appeared from the shadows — a tiny, diminutive girl, a frail young thing. But she'd been with her for a long time. Broken well, until all she had was the Madam and her approval, to be granted and revoked as she liked.

“Yes, Madam? Are we heading back home?”

“Not yet.” Mayko sat down in the Captain's chair. “Bring up my black list. I want to see who's available.”

“Madam?”

“We need some monsters, number one. The trap didn't work, so instead of waiting, let's set some hunters loose.”

“Ah. The ratcatchers, perhaps?”

The Madam stroked her chin, watching the stars in front of her dazzle. “Not going after girls this time, little one. No, we need some more firepower.” Mayko snapped her fingers and her obedient right-hand woman knelt in front of her, a perfectly sized stool

for her feet. “We’re going to hunt a big monster. And what do you need to hunt a monster, little one?”

“A big gun?” The girl said, her voice strained.

“No,” Mayko took a cigar from the sliding compartment of her armrest, inhaling the scent of it. She deserved it now, but perhaps once the Judge was dead. “You need another monster to kill a monster.”

“And where do you find a monster, Madam?”

Mayko tittered. “Oh, that’s the beautiful thing. That’s what we make. Every military, every arms factory, every dealer in the galaxy. They make ‘em, every second of every day.” She sighed in satisfaction. “And all I gotta do is pay ‘em what they want. That’ll be what kills Clancy. Good ol’ fucking capitalism.”

She put her cigar away, watching the stars come closer. “Isn’t it a beautiful thing?”