

RIPPLES

Written by

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INT. SPACESHIP - LOWER DECK

XAVIER EROJAR, human male, mid 30's, lying on the floor, wearing a ravaged jumpsuit, tosses and turns. His face is contorted as he tries to pull himself out of a nightmare.

He jerks awake and swears. Using his right arm to block the light glaring in his face, he struggles to sit up, favoring his left shoulder and right ankle.

What little can be seen of his face through the dirt, grime, week's worth of beard, and shaggy brown hair is scratched and bruised.

NAELI KENAN, Phlogian female, late 20's- early 30's, watches from the shadows.

NAELI (O.S.)  
Mother River did not appreciate  
being disturbed by your ship.

XAVIER  
Mind shining that light somewhere  
else?

The light moves away from his face.

XAVIER (CONT'D)  
Thank you.

Xavier shifts, reclining against the wall. He sighs as the metal cools his heated flesh.

XAVIER (CONT'D)  
Where am I? Who are you?

NAELI (O.S.)  
That is of no concern to you. Why  
are you here, Xavier Erojar?

XAVIER  
How can I answer that question if I  
don't know where here is?

NAELI (O.S.)  
You are on Phlogy.

Xavier swears inaudibly under his breath.

NAELI (CONT'D)  
Not where you wanted to be?

A scowl mars his face.

XAVIER

The last place any escaped convict  
wants to crash is on one of the  
richest planets in the galaxy.

NAELI (O.S.)

Where were you headed?

The scowl turns to a sneer. \*

XAVIER

I may have crashed but my brains  
aren't scrambled. I'm not telling  
you anything. \*

NAELI (O.S.)

Fine. \*

Naeli shrugs. Her tail wraps around the leg of her black  
camo-pants, the ebony-haired tip brushes against the top of  
her hiking boots. \*

NAELI (CONT'D)

I'll just call the Patravans and  
tell them where to find you.

Xavier squints into the darkness trying to discern the  
movement he thinks he sees. \*

XAVIER

How do I know you haven't already  
done that?

NAELI (O.S.)

You'll just have to trust me. \*

Xavier scoffs.

XAVIER

I don't trust anyone, especially a  
coward who hides in the shadows  
afraid to reveal himself. \*

Naeli emerges from the shadows.

NAELI

The one thing I am not is a coward. \*

Straightening as much as his injuries will allow, Xavier  
studies the woman as her scaled skin changes from blue-black  
to iridescent. The triangle ears on the top of her head  
twitch slightly. A long black braid hangs over her shoulder  
brushing the top of one breast. \*

XAVIER  
(suspicious)  
Who are you?

\*

NAELI  
My name is Naeli Kenan.

\*

She moves closer, yet still far enough away that he cannot reach her.

\*

XAVIER  
The artist?

\*

NAELI  
And private investigator.

\*

Xavier scowls again.

XAVIER  
Did someone hire you to look into my case? Who? When?

\*

NAELI  
It doesn't matter.

\*

XAVIER  
The hell it doesn't. I want to know.

\*

NAELI  
We don't always get what we want in this life. You of all people should know that.

XAVIER  
I know you failed.

With only a growl of warning, she pounces on him. Straddling him, her face inches from his, heterochromatic green-gold cat eyes burn into chocolate brown ones.

\*

NAELI  
My partner died seeking your innocence. I believe the person who framed you killed him.

\*

Showing no fear, Xavier meets her anger with his own.

XAVIER  
Count your blessings, you're not dead too.

\*

They glare at each other. Their breaths fogging in the cool air of the ship.

\*

NAELI  
(teeth clenched)  
Surviving isn't a blessing.

\*  
\*

Punching the wall, she jumps off him. Never turning her back on him, she takes three steps back, breathing deeply with each step.

\*

NAELI (CONT'D)  
Especially since you just crashed into my life.

\*

XAVIER  
That wasn't my intention.

\*

He lets his head drop momentarily.

\*

XAVIER (CONT'D)  
If you help me to sick bay, I'll treat myself and get out of your life.

He holds his right arm half way up, showing weakness, the need for assistance.

\*  
\*

Naeli leans against a bulkhead, crosses her arms, and shakes her head.

NAELI  
No deal, Erojar. First of all, your ship's damaged and out of power.

\*

She holds up fingers as she lists off problems.

NAELI (CONT'D)  
Secondly, you're in worse shape than you think. News reports have the Patravans searching asteroid debris for the past thirty hours.

\*  
\*

XAVIER  
Has it been that long?

NAELI  
I don't know what's normal for your species, but I don't think you're supposed to be that red and perspiring while shivering.

Despite the shiver that racks his body, Xavier half shrugs with his good shoulder and waves off her concern.

\*

XAVIER  
I'll be fine.

Naeli drops her hands, pushes off the bulkhead.

NAELI  
Do you know what's in Mother River?

XAVIER  
Besides water?

NAELI  
Numerous parasites that are deadly  
to aliens. Exactly how long were  
you in her?

XAVIER  
Long enough. Are you going to take  
me to sick bay or not?

NAELI  
Not. I have another proposal.

She crouches.

NAELI (CONT'D)  
Agree to work with me to find the  
person who framed you. In return,  
I'll get you the help you need, and  
hide you from the Patravans and the  
Galactic Guard.

NAELI (CONT'D)  
With our combined knowledge, we may  
be able to get justice not only for  
you and Annald, but for my partner  
as well.

Xavier studies her face, looking for deception, while  
calculating an escape. Finally, he nods.

XAVIER  
Fine. We'll work together.

Xavier holds out his hand. Naeli's hand clasps his.

FADE OUT:

XAVIER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
For now.

THE END