

## *The Finer Things*

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*Doctor Arcadia Miskinn Warda Argent  
In appreciation for all the Fine Work Performed  
By the "Medwatch" Crew during her Confinement  
Cordially invites the Grandmasters  
To the Argent's Nest  
For an Afternoon of Food and Camaraderie  
In Celebration of the New Year*

"Are we ready for the invasion?" Arcadia Argent asked Ravyn MacRae who'd dropped over early to assist Arcadia in preparing the Argent Quarters for the party this afternoon. Arcadia momentarily paused to reflect on how much she appreciated their assistance during her recent convalescence. When she wanted a way of expressing her appreciation, it was her husband who suggested that she give a party. And since the party would occur at the beginning of the year, she thought it a perfect idea.

"I believe so, Madame." Ravyn stopped and looked around the room. "We have plenty of food and drink. The Captain kindly lent us some holodvids we've not seen before and Captain Blair donated a few of his own. Between the food and the vids, I think that most of the pilots and tactical officers will be in seventh heaven."

"Do we have enough food though?"

"I think so, Madame."

"Excellent. Now, what else needs to be done?"

Ravyn thought for a moment. "Nothing that I can think of, Madame."

"In that case, Ravyn why don't I fix you a cup of tea as you are one of the few tea drinkers around here. The men won't be back for at least a half hour, so we'll have some peace and quiet until then."

"Sounds great, Madame," Ravyn replied.

While Arcadia prepared tea, Ravyn took the opportunity to admire the various bouquets of Regent's Blue Roses that were scattered about as decoration. Arcadia looked up and noticed Ravyn admiring the flowers again.

"They are lovely, aren't they?" Arcadia offered as she poured the tea.

"Yes they are, Madame. And quite rare I take it," Ravyn replied as she caressed the bright blue rose.

"So I've understood. Kyle brought a bouquet from Galena for our anniversary and I fell instantly in love with them. I guess someone told the Regent about my love for roses..." Arcadia mused. "Though," she considered aloud, "this Regent seems to know *everything* so it's possible that Kyle didn't actually tell him."

Ravyn looked up at Arcadia and smiled. "Anything is possible."

"That is quite true!" Arcadia smiled as she went over and sat down on the couch.

Ravyn turned her head towards the flowers again as she too sat down. "I heard that the new nightclub is going to be done up in blue."

Arcadia nodded. "Yes, I was talking to Boffin about it the other day. It will be in the style of the one of those very old supper clubs from the black and white holovids that play occasionally on the grid. Art deco, I think it's called."

"Really! Wow...." Ravyn shook her head. "Doesn't sound like I'm going to be able to afford this place."

"Knowing Boffin as well as I do, I'm sure you'll be able to...."

"Any word as to when it will be open?" Ravyn asked between sips of tea.

"In a few short months. Boffin looked so frazzled last time I saw him, I'm sure he wishes it was in a few years," Arcadia laughed.

"I don't doubt it," Ravyn replied but before she could continue, the men finally arrived.

Both women hopped up from the couch and rushed over to assist them with the packages.

"Good to see everyone," Arcadia warmly greeted them.

"Captain Argent, Captain Blair, Commander Lysander, and Lieutenant Ivanan," formerly greeted Ravyn as she assisted them with the packages.

"Did you get everything Kyle?" Arcadia asked.

"Yep," replied Ike.

"Trust us, Arcadia," Terrence began, "we forgot nothing."

Arcadia smiled at the men. "We'll know soon enough. May I get you lot anything before the invasion?"

With Ravyn's able assistance, Arcadia was able to quickly fulfill their requests. They all sat down to chat but before they knew it, the guests started to arrive.

"It is a pleasure to see you again, Madame," began the "Cardinal" De Cesaris as he walked in with other 18th Squadron Pilots and Tactical Officers.

"Are these all of the Silver Knights that are able to come, HighLight?" Arcadia wondered as she greeted their Squadron Commander, Lt Philemon "HighLight" Daywalt.

"The rest of them, Madame," HighLight began, "will saunter in when their duty shift is over and--."

"We decided," interrupted "Avalanche" Courage, "that each of the squadrons would have at least one person here with the rest of them joining us as the shifts allow."

"Wise decision, Avalanche. So tell me," began Arcadia as she escorted the wing commander into her living room, "how are the rest of your Bishops doing?"

The Wing Commander of the 206 beamed at the chance to brag about her Wing. "Thank you for asking! We're all doing very well, Madame. And we have high hopes that one of the Bishop Squadrons will be picked for the Rigel Cup this year."

"I'm sure that the other two wing commanders are hoping the same," Arcadia told her as she handed Avalanche a glass of punch.

"Yes, it would an honor for any of our Grandmaster squadrons to be chosen, though I must admit, I do hope it's a Bishop squadron." *And not one of the Rooks. I'll be damned if they gets one of their squadrons to the Rigel Cup this year and not one of mine.*

"I understand completely, in fact..." Arcadia was about to continue when she noticed Ravyn frantically waving to her. "If you'll excuse me, I see that I'm needed."

Arcadia scurried over to where Ravyn was standing. The rest of the food had just arrived and she wasn't sure where Arcadia wanted it settled. Once that was taken care of, Arcadia spent the rest of the afternoon, greeting and talking to her old "medwatch crew" -- the pilots and tactical officers who sat with her during her convalesce. Before she knew it, the first wave of pilots and tactical officers departed and the second wave arrived.

"How's the food holding up, Ravyn?" Arcadia asked.

"Unless *everyone* comes back for fourths, we'll be fine, Madame."

"Excellent. And thank you again, Ravyn for giving up your day off to assist. I greatly appreciate it."

"No, Madame, it is you who I should thank. After all, this gives me the opportunity to talk to the rest of the Grandmasters in neutral territory. Perhaps one of the men will actually notice I'm alive," she sighed.

"Anyone in particular?"

Ravyn hesitated. "Brett Dallenbach..." she replied sheepishly.

"Thirteenth Squadron tactical officer...." It suddenly dawned on Arcadia. "Your tac officer?"

"RoughRider. That's him, Madame," Ravyn all but blushed in confirmation.

Arcadia smiled. "Ravyn, it has been my experience that sometimes one has to use more direct methods. I prefer a wooden club myself."

Ravyn chuckled then looked in Kyle's direction. "Was that how you snared the Captain?"

"No, he asked me to marry him. However, during the wedding preparation, there was a time that I did consider employing an extra large stick."

Ravyn's grin melted into a sigh. "You'd think Brett would notice me considering all the time we spend together."

"Some men," Arcadia began with mock somberness, "require more urging than others. Besides, he might feel a bit awkward with you as his pilot...." Arcadia stopped and considered. "I believe, Ravyn that in this case, your only recourse is a *very* large club."

Both ladies' laughed then departed to go back to attend to the guests. Before they knew it, the second shift left and the third shift joined them.

"Welcome RamRod," Arcadia greeted the 503rd Wing Commander.

"Thank you Madame. We're glad we could make it, though I'm going to have to leave earlier than I expected," he replied.

"I'm happy to have you for as long as you can be here," Arcadia told him as she led him to the food.

Once Arcadia had RamRod settled, she turned to look for Ravyn but found her busily talking to Brett. *No need to disturb her when she finally got his attention. Wonder how large the club was?* Arcadia chuckled as she headed back over to the food to ensure that there was enough for everyone.

Kyle disengaged himself from the knot of tactical officers and pilots he was talking to -- rather he was talking and the junior officers were listening in *rapt* attention -- and walked over to Arcadia fussing over the refreshments.

"Nice party, Milady. Do remember to invite me to the next one?" he told her as he nuzzled her neck.

"And here I thought you lived here?" she mocked in a tone that resulted in a laugh from her husband.

"Sorry to disturb you, Captain," a young pilot cautiously interrupted, "but Captain Blair requests your presence to settle an argument."

"I'll be right over," Kyle replied, then turned to Arcadia. "Duty calls, Milady."

"I know," she mocked, "a Station Commander's work is just never done."

Kyle gave her one last kiss before he walked over towards Terrence leaving Arcadia to turn her attention back to her guests.

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"I do believe that I can declare this party a grand success," Arcadia announced as she and Ravyn began stowing away what little food remained.

"I expected no less from you, Darce," Ike told her as he, Kyle, and Lars rearranged the furniture in the living room while the pilots and tactical officers finished cleaning up the odds and ends that were strewn about the place.

Arcadia waited until the living room had been put back in order before she declared one of the sofas as her own and stretched out on it.

"I don't know about the rest of you, but I'm tuckered out."

"Me too," Ravyn announced as she too sat down on the other end of the couch with Arcadia.

"Since the ladies have decided that they won't play with us anymore," Kyle began, "how about a game of gin?" Kyle noted that both Ike and Lars were immediately interested.

"If you don't mind, Captain," began Flyer, "me and RoughRider here would like to finish watching this vid."

"No problem," Kyle told him as he grabbed the deck of cards for the card game.

All remaining members of the party contently went about their business: Arcadia and Ravyn relaxed on the couch and chatted; Flyer and RoughRider continued watching the holodvids while Ike, Terrence, Kyle and Lars played gin. During a break in the gin action, Ike Ivanan noticed that Arcadia had left the room. Ike who knew Arcadia many, many years ago when she was a junior surgeon decided that he would entertain everyone by recounting their days on the Medical Ship *Sarah April*.

"Kyle," Ike began with a wicked grin as he stretched out on the unoccupied couch, "did Arcadia ever talk about the Lunatic Asylum?"

Kyle leaned back and considered for a moment. "Lunatic Asylum? Can't say that she has, Ike."

Ike sat up and smiled. "The Lunatic Asylum. That's what they called the medical night shift. We were always in deep shit with someone or the other but our delight was in tweaking the Commanding Officer, Dudley Nottingham who seemed to especially have it in for Arcadia."

"Why so?" RoughRider piped up as he and Flyer had walked over to join the group.

"Oh, well..." Ike began with glee in his voice, "it was like this--" He was interrupted by Arcadia walking back into the room.

It was obvious that Arcadia had overheard the conversation because she stopped in front of him and wagged her finger in his direction. "Ike love, you'll ruin my reputation with these kit if you talk about me and the old days. Besides,

Kyle may divorce me!" she protested as she sat back down on the opposite couch.

Her complaint immediately piqued Kyle's interest. "Oh?"

Ike winked in Kyle's direction. "She was quite a wild woman in those days, Kyle."

This comment resulted an arched eyebrow from Kyle and a decision to join Ike on the couch across from Arcadia and Ravyn.

"Madame Argent? Really?" Ravyn asked in surprised voice as she looked at the very mature and serene woman sitting next to her on the couch.

"Don't let her fool you, flyboys and flygirls," Ike retorted.

"Ike... please..." Arcadia began until she noticed the broad smile on his determined face. "You're not... *you can't...!*"

"Oh, yes I can!" he replied.

"Not *that* story..." she pleaded.

Ike's response was to simply smile benignly in Arcadia's direction before he continued his anecdote. "As I was saying before I was so *rudely* interrupted, the Lunatic Asylum on the *Hospital Ship Sarah April*." Ike looked over at Arcadia and grinned, pointedly ignoring Arcadia's scowl.

"Let me respectfully point out that *you* were a charter member, Ike..." Arcadia tossed back.

"I admit to being there, Arcadia..." he smiled. "The night shift on the *April's* Delta Sickbay was... unique. It was myself, Arcadia, Arcadia Denby and--."

"Another Arcadia?" Ravyn interrupted.

"Indeed, believe it or not," Arcadia began, thankful for the interruption to the story, "Denny and I went through med school together and ended up on two subsequent assignments together. That's why my *former*," Arcadia emphasized her point by narrowing her eyes in Ike's direction, "friend Ike over there calls me Darce after my maiden name of D'Arcy. Arcadia Denby was known as Denny." Arcadia folded her arms and looked to Ike. "Pray continue Ike since you're so bound and determined to routine my reputation."

"My pleasure, Darce. Let's just say that the Lunatic Asylum was *the* place to be -- we threw the best parties, had the best people...." Ike flashed a smile in Arcadia's direction.

"And we received the worst assignments..." Arcadia muttered.

"True, but we had a good time," Ike admitted. "The best 'worst' assignment was when the Adonis Squadron unexpectedly came calling."

"The what?" Ravyn asked, instantly becoming intrigued with the notion.

Kyle noticed that Arcadia's normally brown complexion now displayed a distinct reddish glow.

"Nick name for the Squadron of Perfectly Built Male Specimens," Arcadia answered wistfully. "There was always a bit of speculation around the proverbial watering hole as to whether or not their physique matched their... err..." she allowed her voice to trail off as buried her head in her hands in embarrassment.

"When the Adonis Squadron would come for their annual flight checks, the ladies..." Ike continued.

"And some men, Ike...." Arcadia quickly countered.

"And some men...." Ike added with a wistful smile, "would line the corridors just to watch them saunter around. Most of the time, medical personnel didn't find routine physicals all that interesting. But when this circus came to town, they all lined up. Regular patient care tended to suffer when they were around."

"That's quite true," Arcadia considered.

"As I recall," Ike continued with a smirk on his face, "the Adonis Squadron was in town because there were complaints about the flight suits."

"Flight suits?" Kyle suddenly sat up. "When was this?" he asked as leaned back to search his memory.

"Oh, around 2319 or so... Darce?" Ike looked to Arcadia for confirmation.

"Thereabouts... a year before perhaps since this occurred when Desmond and I were married," she responded.

Kyle nodded. "Thought so... Terrence, you remember those flight suits, don't you?" he sighed as he unconsciously adjusted his pants.



Terrence stared at Kyle with a puzzled look on his face. "Which suits were those, Kyle?" Terrence asked between sips of beer.

Kyle glared at his friend. "*Those* suits, Terrence," he responded through clenched teeth.

"Flight suits...? Oh... those... yeah, I remember..." he grimaced as he too unconsciously tugged at his pants' leg.

"What about the suits?" RoughRider asked.

Both Kyle and Terrence looked to each other, then to the tactical officers sitting on the floor. "They were *tight*," both men replied in unison through clenched teeth.

Flyer shrugged his shoulders. "So? Suits are supposed to be tight, ain't they?" he pondered aloud.

"Not *there*, they aren't!" Kyle barked as he winced in phantom pain.

Flyer's eyes bounced between the two senior officers in an attempt to discover what they were talking about. Exasperated, he cried out, "*There?... Where is there?*" he finally looked at RoughRider who pointedly stared at one particular spot on Flyer's anatomy wherein Flyer *finally* understood.

Ike had been watching the little scene played out in front of him simply snorted before he continued. "Fighter Corps headquarters received a lot of complaints. They decided do random checks. As you might imagine, there was *no* shortage of volunteers to do the exams."

"Unfortunately, I walked in on the briefing at the wrong moment and the CMO chose *me*," Arcadia sighed but then smirked. "And I chose Ike to be my corpsman."

"Lucky me!" Ike grinned in return.

"If you don't mind my asking, what did you have to do?" Ravyn finally asked the one question that was on everyone's mind but she was the only brave.... or foolish enough to ask.

Arcadia paused and looked at Ike who threw up his hands indicating to her that he flatly refused to answer that question.

"Coward," she tossed in Ike's direction. "Ravyn, without getting into details that would quickly turn this conversation into one suitable for those who indulge in

vicarious thrills, we were requested to manually check the area on the body where the suits were causing the problem."

Arcadia watched while Ravyn's eyes grew larger and larger while the men in the room simply cast their eyes downward and began to fidget.

"You didn't?" Ravyn finally whispered.

"We did. I performed the exam and Ike was there to keep the records. Everything went according to plan... as much as it can under those circumstances until I walked into the cubical to give the last exam."

Arcadia noticed Ike smiling at her. "I take it Ike you don't want to continue?" she asked.

"Far be it for me to refuse such a lovely lady," he began with a wicked smile. "Darce's final exam was that of the head Adonis himself. He was obviously nervous about being there. I must admit that he was a trooper when she began. His nervousness combined with his long wait and the site of a lovely young lass such as Arcadia was just too much for him."

Kyle laughed out loud. "I can only imagine...."

"It was no picnic for me either, Kyle!" she grouched. "It was bad enough I had to do... *that*... but to have such a sudden reaction was quite unexpected."

Ike could barely contain his mirth. "She was so surprised that she popped a talon and almost emasculated him."

"No!" a male voice cried out.

Arcadia looked over to where the cry emanated and couldn't pick out a suspect since all the men looked equally appalled.

Ike continued. "He looked at her and screamed: 'You are just too god damned dangerous to be messing with Hanky!' He took one last look at her and stormed out of the examination room..."

"Hanky?!?" more than one male voice chorused.

Arcadia shrugged. "That's what he said. And promptly left without as much as covering himself..." she added with a smile. "At least those medical personnel who wanted the assignment did get to see something that day." Her grin quickly turned into a frown.

"It was the talk of the ship for quite a while with everyone snickering whenever Arcadia entered the room," Ike added. "The men especially tended to avoid her."

The men in the room snickered while Arcadia felt herself grow more uncomfortable by the moment. "It was worse than that, Ike," Arcadia picked up the story as she shook her head and crossed her arms. "That bloody Squadron Commander filed an official protest with both the *April's* Commanding Officer, Chief Medical Officer, *and* Security. Apparently, he felt that I was a bloody menace." Arcadia paused and looked at Kyle. "I shall give you two guesses *who* in Security took the initial complaint."

"Don't tell me it was Desmond," Kyle chuckled.

"Naturally." Arcadia turned to the tactical officers sitting on the floor near her. "Desmond was my late husband. There's a holograph of us in my study if you're interested in seeing what he looked like. He was a security officer on the *April* and he was working the desk that evening when the Squadron Commander trotted in and lodged a complaint against me."

"Oh, that must have been really interesting," Kyle whispered to Ike.

"Wish I'd been a fly on the wall," Ike whispered back with a grin.

"Wonder if he was walking bow-legged?" Terrence whispered to the both of them.

Arcadia shook her head in shame. "After having heard in great detail about my lack of professionalism from the CO who had called myself *and* CMO into his office. The Dud yelled at the CMO and suggested that the he de-claw me. I believe I spent the rest of my shift in hiding under a stack of paperwork. After my duty cycle was over, I went to the Security Office to pick up Desmond for a meal. Let's just say I received an interesting greeting."

"Oh yeah?" Flyer asked.

"I walked over to Desmond who simply stared at me. I attempted to smile back but it wasn't getting me anywhere. Finally, he said to me: 'I understand you had an interesting duty shift, Arcadia love'. I replied to him: 'You could say that, Desmond; it was definitely different'."

Ike laughed out loud. "*Different?* That's not a word I'd use to describe it!"

"Luckily, Ike," she began as the laughter died down, "*you* weren't there!" Arcadia angrily tossed back.

Arcadia gave a gentile cough and continued. "Desmond kept to his typical British reserve and pressed on regardless. 'The Squadron Commander was here to see us and he lodged a formal complaint against you. He went into great detail as to how you almost took away his manhood'."

Everyone collectively snickered around Arcadia as she sat on the couch in shame.

"By this time," she grumbled, "I was getting tired of the whole business and told him: 'I was there to do a job, Desmond!' He looked at me and gave me a wry smile: 'I'm sure you were, Arcadia love'."

Arcadia paused to sip tea and regain her composure. "I was confident that I had been able to calm any fears that he might have in that regard when as we were going out the door, I overheard someone loudly whisper: 'Desmond is a brave soul'."

Kyle waited until the laughter died down. "Why didn't you ever tell me about this?"

"And what was I supposed to say, Kyle? That I checked out male bits for over two hours?" Arcadia all but shouted to him.

"That long?" he mumbled.

Arcadia didn't answer him; instead, she crossed her arms in defiance, glaring in his direction, then finally burst out laughing. "I remember all the ladies coming up to me the next day and asking me all kinds of questions on whether it was true or not."

"What did you say?" Terrence finally asked her.

"Not much..." she laughed.

"That was probably wise," Kyle added.

"Perhaps, Kyle..." she began but added with a wicked grin in Ravyn's direction as she was the only other woman in the room. "After all, it's not as if I remembered their faces."

Arcadia paused to savour the moment as the men issued an uncomfortable chuckle while the ladies laughter filled the room. "Please excuse the timing, but would anyone care for more dessert?"

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Ravyn and Arcadia continued to chat as Arcadia watched Kyle, Terrence, Ike and Lars play gin while Ravyn carefully snuck a few peaks at Brett watching vids. After an hour, Arcadia stood from the couch and stretched. She carefully considered how she would get back at Ike for his story and then it suddenly hit her. She felt a definitely evil grin spread on her face as she casually sauntered over to gin players. She stood behind Ike and whispered loudly enough so everyone else in the room could hear the one word she uttered.

"Romeo..."

Ike dropped his cards and looked up to her smiling face as he felt a warm flush quickly rise from his chest to his face. The other men at the table looked at Ike's red face and smirked.

"Romeo?" Kyle repeated as he alternated between watching Arcadia walking back to the couch to sit down and Ike's beet-red face.

"Turn about is fair play, Ike," Arcadia casually tossed out. "Since you regaled everyone with my misadventures with the Adonis Squadron earlier, it only seemed fair that I return the favour."

"I want to hear this." Terrence placed his cards down and turned around to face Arcadia perched on the couch.

The tac officers in the corner turned around at the sudden silence only to notice Ike's red face. They stared at Ike and then looked to Arcadia benignly sitting on the couch smiling at Ike. RoughRider poked Flyer in the ribs. "This ought to be interesting." They turned to each other then silently decided to get up and walk over to where Arcadia was sitting.

"Romeo..." Arcadia repeated much to Ike's discomfort. Noting that Ike wasn't going to protest, Arcadia began her story.

"As Ike told everyone, the doctors on the night shift on the *April* were known as the Lunatic Asylum. One day, much to our annoyance, we found ourselves in the company of the unwashed and uncouth, better known as the Maintenance Lads when a friendly discussion came forth using terms such as "hack and dice" experts versus the "grease and stink" brigade. It culminated with a not so friendly wager issued as to which one of us could make the best.... err.... Hooch."

"Booze!" Flyer exclaimed.

"You made liquor?" RoughRider asked clearly becoming interested in the story.

Arcadia nodded her head. "Indeed. I volunteered on the production end because I had a recipe from my grandmother. I even procured laboratory space by filing a request with the CMO--"

"You told him what you were going to do?" Terrence interrupted.

"Of course not Terrence. Manufacturing a controlled substance on a Federation installation is quite illegal. We merely told him that we were running experiments on the fermentation of vegetable matter."

"And he bought it?" Flyer interjected.

She shrugged. "Apparently he didn't read the request very closely. It was then a matter of building a.... err... distillation device. Mister Ivanan was quite helpful in that regard."

Arcadia smiled at Ike but noted that he still opted to remain silent.

"Judgement day finally arrived. Fellow surgeon Arcadia Denby and myself went down to our still to check on the final product. Unfortunately for us, we decided to sample our results and, well.... our sampling took its toll."

"You got drunk..." Kyle concluded.

"Very. When we weren't back within an hour, Ike went looking for us. He found Denny staring off into space mumbling about rabbits and I was slumped in a chair starting to recover when I spotted Ike coming in the door."

Arcadia paused to look at Ike who still decided to keep his mouth shut, however, much to his horror, Arcadia decided to add a dramatic element to the story. She stood and slowly sidled over to Ike who responded by burying his head in his hands. She stood behind him and repeated in a slightly drunken voice.

"Hello handsome, have you ever done it with a Vaegan? I'll even show you my... claws."

Ike's reply was to snap his head up and stare at her in abject mortification as the room exploded around him in laughter. Arcadia walked back to the couch and continued.

"The look on Ike's face today was no where near the one he presented that day and it is one I shall never forget. I was continuing to come out of my drunken

stupor but," she sighed, "not enough to avoid making a total fool out of myself."

"Oh?" interjected Kyle who was clearly becoming more interested.

Arcadia narrowed her eyes at Kyle. "Because, Kyle, after I made a pass at Ike, I decided to enhance my attempted seduction on by ripping my top off and tossing him my bra."

Kyle looked wide-eyed at Arcadia and then back to Ike, all the while shaking his head while laughing. "Sorry I missed this...."

Arcadia couldn't contain herself and laughed. "At the time, I was somewhat unaware that Mister Ivanan was unappreciative of such charms. He stared at me with a dumbfounded look on his face and told me: 'Dammit, Arcadia.... I'm gay!' And me still being somewhat out of it, simply reply in a slurred voice: 'That's grand, Ike! I'm really, *really* happy too!'"

"Way to go, Ike!" Kyle chimed in.

"Smooth move, Ike!" Terrence added.

"Ike and I couldn't continue this enlightening discussion because he heard the security guards coming. He bundled up Denny and myself and hurriedly tossed us in a closet. He had closed the door on us just as my late husband Desmond and his security partner had come into the lab."

Arcadia noted the look of defeat on Ike's face and was therefore willing to pick up the rest of the story.

"I might as well continue since I'm obviously not going to get out of this," Ike reluctantly told everyone in the room. "Desmond walked in and asked me if I'd seen Arcadia. He told me that they were going to spend their break together. Mind you, I'm still holding Arcadia's bra in my hand. As I was telling Desmond that I hadn't seen her, a muffled noise came from the closet."

"Which certainly wasn't the first thing that came out of the closet that night," Kyle snickered while Terrence almost choked on his beer.

"It wasn't a secret Kyle. I can't help it if your wife was dense."

"I resent that remark, Mister Ivanan!" Arcadia retorted.

"I guess the honeymoon is over between you two," Kyle mocked.

"Trust me Kyle love, our 'honeymoon' never even had a chance to get off the ground as things were just about to get a wee bit more complicated," Arcadia laughed.

"Oh, yeah. Trust me it gets worse..." Ike paused draining the last of his beer. "Desmond's partner hears the muffled noise and sees the bra in my hand. He slapped me on the shoulder and told me: 'Nice going, Romeo -- we'll let you go about your business in peace'. Desmond snorted and then asked me to tell Arcadia that he was looking for her."

"I remember," Arcadia wickedly added, "that Desmond mentioned to me when I saw him later that he had found Ike in the laboratory 'sampling' from the away team. I didn't know what he was on about until a week later when Ike finally talked to me again and set the record straight concerning the night in question."

"After that incident, I couldn't look anyone in the eyes for a long time," Ike shook his head in shame. "The story made the rounds and I couldn't get a date for weeks. Everyone had thought I'd defected. My friends started sending me cans of tuna. One of them even sent me a 'come back home -- all is forgiven' holocard. It was embarrassing."

"But that was not all," Arcadia continued over the snickers. "While Denny and I were fiddling with the mixture as we were sampling it and we found out later that we'd gotten the mixture up to 250 ultra-proof but it somehow all disappeared."

"*Disappeared?*" cried Flyer.

"Couldn't you guys make more?" RoughRider asked.

Arcadia stared at the young officer and shook her head. "I'm afraid not, we have no idea what we did to get it as thick and as potent as it was. It's possible that it was used as a substitute for a solvent. One never knows...."

"That's quite alright," Kyle interjected sternly. "If *anyone* ever even thought of making hooch on *my* station, I would personally see that they get tossed out an airlock. Is that clear?"

Given the stern sweep around the room Kyle gave everyone with his last words, the muffled "Yessirs" and hushed "No problem, sir" seemed inevitable. Pleased with the reaction he received; Kyle sat back and relinquished the forum to his wife once more with a nod in her direction.



Arcadia just rolled her eyes at her husband. "Any...way... the results of our home brew showed up on the security rosters in the form of a number of crewmembers becoming extremely inebriated."

"How drunk?" Terrence asked.

"*Very* drunk, Terrence. It came to a climax when some green ensign laid down a couple of feet of spew on which the ship's XO promptly slipped and slid straight into the nearest disposal chute. A number of the witnesses to this fortunate... err... unfortunate event told us that she was screaming bloody murder all the way down. It would certainly explain the somewhat bitter messages I subsequently received from various parties. Denny and I were invited by the Dud to a command performance to explain this unusual ship's phenomena."

"Who?" someone cried out.

"Captain Dudley Nottingham, ship's CO," Ike reminded them.

"He was quite upset with us over this incident.... though he couldn't exactly prove anything," Arcadia pointed out.

"How did he know it was you?" Kyle asked.

"He didn't but he just *knew* that the Lunatic Asylum had something to do with it and as a reward, he gave us *that* assignment."

"Which assignment is this?" Terrence asked as he finished his beer.

Arcadia rolled her eyes, "The Piggies.... However, I shall leave that sad tale for another day..."

"Ah, shucks!" interjected Flyer.

"Dang... I wanted to hear all about those guys," cried RoughRider.

"You kit are glutton for punishment, aren't you?" Arcadia exclaimed.

"Not really, Madame," Ravyn interjected. "They just enjoy as I do hearing a good story presented by such able storytellers."

"Or complete lunatics," Ike snorted.

"True," Arcadia replied as she mulled over which story to tell, however, Terrence unexpectedly beat her to the punch.

"Those damned numbskulls. Unfortunately for me, I attended the annual UFP Review as the representative of the Fighter Corps because, luckily for Cordell, he broke his arm and told me he wasn't up to traveling. I still think he broke it on purpose though Amanda assured me that wasn't the case."

"Just who are these guys?" Ravyn asked.

"The 4711 Carrier Air Wing better known as the Flying Pig Pen Squadron is legendary through out Starfleet for all the right and wrong reasons. They still hold the best kill record for any squadron or wing in the Fighter Corps and they are also known as the worst piece of humanity that has ever flown a fighter," Terrence told them. He paused to take a swig of beer, presumably to wipe the bitter taste out of his mouth.

"I don't understand something," Ravyn asked. "I didn't know there was a wing with a four digit number."

Terrence sat back and frowned. "When the Fighter Corps went to a three digit numbering scheme, Ravyn..." began Terrence Blair, one of the former administrators for Cordell Naismith, Chief of Staff of the Fighter Corps, "they kept their four digit scheme and wouldn't talk to you if you addressed them any other way... I brought this to Cordell's attention and he told me to leave it be as the less said about them, the better."

"Having met the... err.... gentlemen in question, I concur," Arcadia added.

"Cordell told me," Terrance continued, "that his first encounter was on their flagship where the ship's dog sniffed his leg and promptly relieved himself on it. As Cordell put it to me, things went quickly downhill from there."

"And I thought I had it bad..." Arcadia mumbled.

"Considering all the stories I'd heard about the Piggies, I can't say that I was bowled over by the prospect of having to actually meet and be their nominal superior for the review," Terrence grimaced.

"Dare I ask what happened Terrence?" Ike asked.

"Oh, where should I begin? Though I can say that this was the *last* official function those knuckleheads were ever invited to. They rearranged all the furniture in their suites. One of them even decided to clear out the entire suite of furniture and light over sixty sticks of incense. He was considerate enough to disable the fire alarm but did manage to frighten the bejesus out of a maintenance worker who was investigating the source of the smell other guests were complaining about."

Kyle laughed out loud wherein Terrence shot Kyle a dirty look before he continued his sad tale. "Then they commandeered the hotel pool, tossing all the other swimmers out so they could skinny dip in private."

"You have to admit, Terrence, that was probably a good idea. I think the sight of the Piggies in anything other than a bathing suit would likely cause the ladies to weep and strong men to faint," Arcadia suggested.

"If only that was all, Arcadia," he sighed. "They conspired with the Marines to raid the various bars all over the facilities for all the alcohol they could carry despite increasing security precautions."

"Marines and Zoomies together -- what's next, the apocalypse?" declared Ike.

Terrence grimaced but otherwise tried to ignore Ike's sarcastic remark. "Fortunately, their attempt at bringing in two dozen Orion slave girls was thwarted by the authorities. Their response was to promptly to burn out half the holosuites; the other half had all morality inhibitors removed. The programs they uploaded in their place defy description. Suffice it to say that Sodom One through Twenty-Six and Gomorrah Four through Thirty-Seven have since taken on a legendary cult status in the black market holoprogramming industry."

"I'll be damned, so that's where that came from!" exclaimed Ike.

"You actually used one?" Terrence asked incredulously.

"Hey! Sodom Twenty-Two wasn't too shabby," Ike replied.

"Gomorrah Thirteen has a certain charm to it, if I dare say so," Kyle interjected. "If you like that kind of stuff that is," he quickly added after noting Arcadia's obvious surprise. "Which of course I do not... Not at all..."

"But of course you do, Kyle my boy," Ike wickedly replied. "Can I have my copy back, by the way? Terrence might want to borrow--"

"Kyle Descoyne Argent! You deceived me," Arcadia sniffed. "In fact, you just aren't the man I originally married..."

Kyle swallowed hard while Ike snorted in the background.

"Uh...you can keep it, Kyle. After all, I still have the memory of that weekend to keep me warm at night," Terrence retorted sarcastically. "The only bright spot in this whole weekend in hell was that they were fairly well behaved when it counted the most. They even showered. However, every silver lining has a

cloud: there was the one idiot who started the contest of 'who can fart the loudest' during the president's speech."

"Proving the adage that cabbage and gas go well together," Ike ventured.

"And he proved it quite sufficiently that day," Terrence replied with a grimace.

"And what happened to him?" Ravyn asked between chuckles.

"Officially, he was wiped off our records. It was agreed that he was never ever part of the Fighter Corps or Starfleet. Unofficially, I last heard that he was headlining in a cabaret act on Nu'borscht Seven."

"And I thought I had a difficult time with my encounter with the Piggies," Arcadia considered aloud. "You realize," she continued as her eyes swept over those assembled, "that other than our more junior members here, Kyle's the only one here who hasn't actually encountered the Piggies."

Ike eyed Kyle. "Is that true?"

"Yes, I've never met them. Perhaps one day I shall make their acquaintance," Kyle replied.

"Be careful what you wish for, Kyle," Terrence sighed while shaking his head in remorse.

Kyle smiled and stretched while he stood up. "I hate to break up this little party but I don't know about you but I'm tired."

"And when the Station Commander is fatigued," Arcadia told everyone as she also stood up, "*everyone* is tired."

"Yep," Ike tossed back, "it never changes. We work ourselves to the bone and the Station Commander tells us when we're exhausted."

Kyle didn't immediately answer him but simply rolled his eyes as he pointedly walked to the door and opened it. "*Out!*"

"I already am! Quit picking on me!" Ike interjected, his indignation dripping with sarcasm.

"Is that a hint?" Terrence asked as he gathered up his belongings.

"*O-U-T!*"

"Is this an order Kyle?" Ike innocently questioned as he too readied himself to go.

The junior officers didn't question their Station Commander -- they just packed up to leave.

Noting that the senior officers were taking their own sweet time, Kyle ground his teeth for good measure.

"I'd say that was an order, wouldn't you, Dwight?" Terrence stated flatly.

"I'd say that that was indeed an order, Terrence," Ike deadpanned in return.

"You two," Arcadia pointed to the two senior officers in question, "out." While she delivered her message with a smile, she hoped it properly conveyed their impending doom if they chose to do otherwise.

"And here we were just leaving. Fancy that!" Ike beamed and quickly went towards the door with his partner in crime in tow. They promptly bumped into each other for good measure as they tried to squeeze through the door at the same time.

Ike turned to his cohort with a decidedly pained look on his face. "Oh, I am so sorry. After you, Mister Blair."

"Oh!" exclaimed Terrence in a flourish. "It was I who bumped into you, Mister Ivanan! Please accept my sincerest apologies and by all means -- after you!"

"But no! I couldn't possibly take advantage of you in this matter, Mister Blair. Please, after you!"

Kyle narrowed his eyes as the exchange threatened to continue. "That's it. I'm getting my sword. Heads will roll. People *will* die."

"The medical branch stands ready to assist you, oh fearless leader," Arcadia added as an expression of solidarity with her husband.

Knowing when it was time to truly leave, both Ike and Terrence had already made good their escape. With a nod of victory aimed her husband's way, Arcadia turned her attention back to the few who remained.

"Thank you again, Ravyn for the assist. I don't know if I could have done it without you," Arcadia announced, then added *sotto voce* to Ravyn, "but then, judging from your success tonight, you didn't do too badly?"

"No Madame," Ravyn began as RoughRider walked over to join her, "the pleasure was mine."

"Good night everyone," Arcadia called out as the guests had all *finally* left their quarters.

"I had a nice time, Arcadia," Kyle began as they walked towards their bedroom.

"So did I. They're a great bunch of kits and I was glad to do something for them," she replied then suddenly stopped. "Kyle?"

"Yes?" he replied as he walked in and wearily plopped himself on the bed.

"Tell me, are you so tired that you wouldn't like an aperitif before we go to sleep?" she purred.

"Why yes, excellent idea! I'll have the computer prepare HoloSuite thirty-four with program Gomorrah Thirteen," Kyle smugly retorted prompting a snort from his wife.

She rolled over and stared at him. "So... where is that sword of yours anyway? Looks like I might just need it tonight."

Kyle stared at his wife benignly smiling at him across the bed. "Let's make love, not war."

Arcadia considered his comment for a few moments until she thought she had the perfect rejoinder. "Twenty-three skidoo!"

He stared at her with a very confused look on his face until it dawned on him. "Wrong decade, dear."

"Oh?" Arcadia considered a moment and offered a substitute. "What about Hi Ho Silver, Away?"

Kyle took a few moments and thought about it. "Close enough for me. Time to saddle up and ride into the sunset, buckaroo."

Arcadia was quick on the uptake and simply whinnied in response.

"Giddyup!" he exclaimed.

Not knowing that particular phrase, Arcadia applied her first best guess and with great satisfaction, noted that not only was it up but giddy as well.

*Space Station Nexus Years: Year 2, 2339*

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Next: *Manhunt!*

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