

Eden – Part II

by Angela Reese

Lorien had been working on the planethopper *Nightwitch*, preparing it for the evacuation, when the generator went out again. When the power was back on, she heard a ship taking off, and stepped out in time to see the *Normandy* disappearing. Frowning, puzzled, she turned back toward the ship, then stiffened as she noticed a body lying near the hanger entrance.

Rushing over, she yanked the scarf out of her hair and stuffed it into the hole in his chest, then paused briefly, as something about his face caught at a memory. Shaking her head, she hastily checked the man's pulse. Satisfied that he was still alive, she hurried to the intercom to report the incident and call for medical help.

Deva stood in the middle of the control room, directing the evacuation procedure, and wishing heartily that Blake were there to help. And Ann, and Jenna, and Avon and Vila.

Dayna was hurrying by, and he caught her arm. "Dayna, I'd like you to go to sickbay and help move the patients to *Renegade* and *Nightwitch*."

Dayna nodded, then grinned. "Okay, and I'll be sure to let you know which one Soolin's on."

Deva blushed and chased her out.

As *Normandy* and *Defiant* headed toward Eden, Vila and Avon eventually managed to get the ship-to-ship visual communications working again, and they proceeded to catch up on events with Blake and Jenna.

Ann set *Normandy* on autopilot and sat down next to Vila. "So," she said grimly, "what other damage did Servalan manage to do while escaping?"

"For starters," Avon said, when Blake hesitated, "she may have killed Soolin."

"What?!?" Vila cried, stiffening. "How did that happen?"

"I had put her in charge of guarding Servalan," Avon replied bitterly, "and whoever let her out shot Soolin."

Blake put a hand on Avon's shoulder. "It's not your fault, Avon." Avon just glared at him. "Servalan always leaves a trail of death," Blake continued. "Soolin was just in the wrong place at the wrong time, like Tarrant."

"Tarrant, too?" Vila exclaimed.

"Tarrant, at least, was alive when we left," Avon pointed out dryly.

"And may still be," Blake assured the others, "since the technician on *Nightwitch* found him so quickly."

Ann and Jenna gasped and stared at each other, then at Blake. "Who found him?" they asked in unison.

Lorien glanced out the port window to see Gauda Prime dwindling away – hopefully the last time she would see it. Unstrapping herself, she went back to check that the equipment hadn't been damaged or shifted on liftoff.

After making sure the cargo was secure, Lorien went to the medical unit to be sure they hadn't had any problems with the life-support equipment. *Nightwitch* was carrying the two patients in critical condition, and they couldn't afford any problems.

While she was checking with the doctor's aide, the copilot came in looking for Dr. Flagg. The doctor came over. "Yes?"

"A message has come in from *Renegade*; they want to know how one of your patients is doing."

"Which one?"

"Del Tarrant."

Lorien whipped her head around. "What?!" she exclaimed. "Who did you say?"

"Del Tarrant. The chest wound," Dr. Flagg replied. "Aren't you the one who found him?"

"Yes, yes," she said, a bit dazed. "I didn't know that was his name, though."

The doctor gave her a worried look. "Are you all right?"

"Hmmm? Oh, yes, I'll be fine," Lorien assured her. "How is...Del doing? Can I see him?"

"Certainly. He's over here," she said, ushering the copilot over as well. "He's still unconscious and critical, but I think he's got a good chance."

Lorien stared down at the familiar face, finally realizing who he had reminded her of.

Blake thought for a moment. "Tech Velar was the name they said, I think; isn't she *Nightwitch*'s engineer?"

Jenna grinned and looked back at Ann, who looked astonished. "Do you think she realized who he is?"

Vila looked from one to the other in confusion. "What are you talking about?"

"Tarrant and Technician Lorien Velar, apparently," Avon replied dryly.

"What about them?" Vila asked impatiently.

"Tarrant had a brother named Deeta," Jenna began.

"Yes, we know," Avon said. "And?"

"Lorien is Deeta's widow."

All three men stared at Jenna in shock. "Lorien is what?!" Vila exclaimed.

Lorien's reminiscing was interrupted when a jolt nearly threw her to the floor. Relieved that the patients' restraints had been fastened, she rushed to the bridge.

"What happened?" she started to ask, then saw the Federation pursuit ship on the viewscreen. "Where did that come from?"

"He was hiding behind the planet we just passed," the pilot replied. "It must be a regular patrol post. Can we outrun him?"

"No chance," Lorien replied. "We may be able to disable him, though, if we're lucky."

"Try it. Can you jam their transmissions?"

"Too late," her copilot replied. "They've already contacted another patrol."

"We have to get out of this area before the reinforcements arrive," Adina declared.

"Darius, disable or destroy them, but do it now!"

Darius took careful aim, and was rewarded with a glorious explosion. Unfortunately, the Federation ship had gotten off a shot that caught *Nightwitch* in one engine. The ship lurched nearly 90 degrees, and the pilot and crew struggled to level her. "We've lost the main engine," Adina yelled. "Can we make it to Eden?"

"We'll be lucky to make it to the nearest planet!" Lorien replied.

“We’ll have to try landing,” Adina decided. “Darius, alert the med unit. Lorien, send off a signal to *Renegade*, then see if you can hold the engines together till we land.” As Lorien rushed back to the engine room, she prayed that she wouldn’t lose her newfound brother so soon after finding him.

“We’re getting an emergency signal from the *Nightwitch*,” Alyssa reported to Dayna.

“Any details?”

“No, and they’re not responding now.”

“Orac, are you picking up anything?”

I am monitoring several transmissions of potential interest. You will need to be more specific.

“About *Nightwitch*, Orac,” Dayna replied patiently, rolling her eyes.

*A Federation pursuit ship has sent an alert to another patrol, reporting a possible rebel ship. The Federation ship subsequently ceased transmitting, while reporting damage to the rebels. Their last location matches that of *Nightwitch*.*

“Where, Orac?”

Close to the planet Telleran.

Dayna stood up. “Stay on course for now. I’ll inform Deva.”

“...and *Nightwitch* says he has a good chance,” Deva was saying as Dayna entered.

“I’m afraid their situation may have changed drastically,” she interrupted.

Deva turned, hastily withdrawing his hand from Soolin’s. “What do you mean?” Dayna explained quickly.

“We’ll have to help them,” Soolin said determinedly.

Deva frowned. “I don’t know if we can risk it without knowing the situation.”

Soolin glared up at him. “They don’t stand a chance alone. If you think I’m going to lay here and let you...”

“The situation is bad,” Dayna said. “What else do we need to know?”

Deva wisely gave up. “Do we have their last position?”

“That, and a planet they may have headed for,” Dayna replied, leading the way back to the bridge. “If they manage to land, we’ll have to get them off before the patrol arrives.”

Soolin listened to their voices fade down the hall, trying not to think of Tarrant’s chances of surviving another crash landing.

Deeta was shaking her. Lorien wearily batted his hand away. “I’m awake, hon, I’m awake,” she mumbled.

“Lorien, come on! We have to get out before she blows!”

It didn’t sound like Deeta. Lorien opened her eyes to see Adina’s anxious face, and the *Nightwitch*’s wrecked engine room. She shook her head, then remembered what had happened and sat up. “The crash! The med unit...?”

“Darius and Merrick are checking on them. We have to get the emergency supplies off the ship, fast. Come on!”

The next half-hour was spent relocating as many supplies as possible to a cave just out of reach of any explosion. As for the patients, Corbin had been killed in the crash, and Tarrant was not expected to last the night.

When everything that could be unloaded was safely stowed away, Lorien sat with Tarrant. Careful not to disturb the life-support equipment, she anxiously watched his pale face for any sign of life.

She passed the time talking quietly to Del's unconscious form, starting with the life she had had with Deeta, and telling Del everything his brother had been doing before he died.

She paused when she got to the war in which Deeta had died. She didn't want to relive that moment at a time like this.

"I still remember the first time we met," she said dreamily. "I was interviewing him after one of his early challenges. I was terribly nervous. I remember, when I went into the room he had his eyes closed, resting." She sighed. "He was so incredibly sexy. The door closed, he opened his beautiful blue eyes, smiled this incredible smile, and said..."

"I've died and gone to heaven," a weak voice interrupted.

Lorien jumped and stared at Tarrant. "You're awake!"

"That explains all this pain I've been having," he replied. "I thought it was a vivid dream. Who are you? And where am I?"

"Dr. Flagg! He's awake!" Lorien called, then turned back to Del. "You're going to be all right. We're on the planet Telleran. Do you remember your name?"

"Tarrant. Del Tarrant." He gave her a brilliant, if weak, smile. "Do I get a prize?"

Lorien was about to reply when the doctor bustled her out of the way. "I see you've decided to rejoin us," she said, smiling. "Lorien, Adina wants to see you about something. I'll take care of our patient here."

Renegade hugged Telleran's outer moon, and Deva tapped his fingers impatiently as he stared at the Federation patrol ships searching the system. "So close," he muttered. "They must be on the planet."

Dayna peered at the viewscreen. "There're only three," she pointed out. "If this were *Liberator*, Tarrant would blow them out of the sky before they could blink."

"Yes, well, this isn't *Liberator*, and Tarrant may be dead by now, so can we think realistically now?" Deva snapped, then sighed and rubbed his eyes. "Sorry."

"It's all right," Dayna replied, putting a hand on his shoulder. "We'll think of something. They have to give up sometime."

"If only we had some help." Deva said thoughtfully.

Dayna thought for a moment, then started to smile. "I think I know how to get some help," she said, crossing the bridge. "Orac," she began, in her best Avon tone, "we need to get rid of that Federation patrol out there. What do you suggest we do?"

I am not a tactical computer. I am a superior brain, and I have important work to finish, so kindly stop interrupting me.

To Deva's surprise, Dayna just grinned, then gave the computer a disgusted look. "Just as I thought. You can't even come up with a way to get rid of three measly ships. I always knew you were useless."

Orac whirred, almost angrily. *Of course I can get rid of them if I want to.*

Dayna leaned against the wall and crossed her arms. "I don't believe you."

I suppose I shall have to prove it.

"That would be very nice, Orac," Dayna replied, giving Deva a triumphant grin.

Once they were certain *Nightwitch* wouldn't explode, Lorien and the others stripped it of everything they could possibly use. The engines had been completely destroyed in the crash – *Nightwitch* would never leave Telleran.

After everything had been removed, Lorien gave her engines one last, sad look. She patted the wall gently as she left, hoping that the crew would not be stranded here as permanently as their ship.

Dr. Flagg was waiting for her when she returned to the cave. “Lorien,” she began, sounding worried, “was any more of the medical equipment salvageable?”

“No, nothing,” she replied, startled. “Why? What’s wrong? Del’s awake; he’ll be fine now, right?”

The doctor shook her head. “He was only awake for a moment, then slipped back into a coma. With the equipment that survived, I can’t even tell what new injuries he may have received from the crash, let alone treat them. If a rescue ship doesn’t arrive soon...” the doctor’s voice trailed off meaningfully.

Lorien was pale as the doctor left her. Del couldn’t die. Not now; not before he knew about her, and about her twins – the nieces he didn’t know he had. The daughters she herself had barely seen, before she had given them up. Lorien’s sister Iliana was raising them as her own, for their protection, and Lorien hadn’t seen them since she had joined Blake to destroy those responsible for Deeta’s murder.

“...and when the rebel group on Teal heard that Servalan was behind the war,” Ann was saying, “and it was rumored that she had caused Deeta’s death – however indirectly – Lorien left to join the group most likely to have a direct shot at killing Servalan – us.”

Vila grinned. “So, Tarrant is actually Uncle Del and never knew it. Wonder how he’ll react.”

“If he ever finds out,” Avon said grimly. “When we left, they didn’t know yet whether he’d survive.”

The sudden silence was interrupted by an incoming message. Jenna hurried over to the communications board and put the message on the screen. “It’s in code, but I don’t recognize it,” she said. “Avon?”

He was already there, programming the screen to decode. “It’s from Orac.” The screen filled with odd characters, then cleared, and the message came up again decoded. “The *Nightwitch* has vanished, and presumably crash-landed on Telleran. *Renegade* want us to come and get rid of a Federation patrol so they can go in and pick up any survivors.”

Jenna stared at him. “*Defiant*’s a good ship, but she’s no *Liberator*. How are we supposed to ‘get rid’ of some Federation pursuit ships?”

“We may not be able to outgun them,” Blake said, “but the five of us ought to be able to outthink them.”

Jenna looked thoughtful, then leaned over to type a message to Orac. “Telleran has several moons,” she commented, waiting for the reply. “I have an idea, but it’ll only work if...ah!”

Avon read off the new message. “Orac said that the innermost moon won’t have been searched yet when we arrive.” He frowned, then looked at Jenna. “How will that help?”

In reply, Jenna put a diagram of Telleran’s system on the secondary viewscreen. “Here’s *Renegade*...and here’s the moon Orac mentioned,” she said, plotting the course she had in mind on the screen. The others began to smile as they realized her plan.

“Now then,” Blake said, grinning at Vila and Ann, “all we need is a decoy...”

Space Commander Keld sat impatiently on the bridge, waiting for his mutoids to find the rebel scum who were hiding in the system. The pursuit ship that spotted them had reported a hit on the rebels, when their transmission was broken off. As there was no trail leaving the system, they must be in the area. It was only a matter of time.

A few moments later, one of the mutoids signaled for his attention. “Sir, we’re picking up a ship. It seems to be drifting.”

“Where? Put it on screen.”

The screen showed the large, innermost moon, with a ship drifting out from behind it. It was definitely not Federation.

“They must’ve hoped to make repairs and escape before we found them,” Keld mused. “They must be very badly damaged.”

“Space Commander, the rebel ship is drifting toward the planet’s atmosphere. It will most likely be destroyed if it is drawn in.”

“How long?”

The mutoid checked her screen. “Fifteen minutes, thirty-five seconds from...now.”

Keld frowned. “They destroyed one of my ships – I want them alive. I want the other two ships in position and prepared for boarding.” Mutoids scurried around following orders. Keld stared at the image of the ship. “You’re not going to die so easily.”

On *Normandy*, Vila watched anxiously as the patrol approached. “Well? Aren’t they close enough yet?”

“Relax, Vila,” Ann said reassuringly. “They won’t attack – they’ll want to board us to take prisoners.”

“They look close enough to board,” Vila grumped. Ann smiled.

“Almost time,” she said.

Keld was concentrating so hard on the forward view and his prey that the new ship didn’t register until the ship to his left exploded. The blast threw him out of his chair. “What the...who was that?”

“Another ship, sir,” a mutoid replied, trying to find a target to return fire. “It was hiding behind the moon.”

“Well, blast it!” he yelled as the second ship went up. “Or else shoot the first one; it’s just sitting...” Keld’s voice broke off as he saw the shots approaching from the ‘drifting’ rebel ship. He sat down heavily and watched his death approach.

“Damn!”

“That’s our cue,” said Dayna when the first ship exploded. “Shall we?” she asked Deva.

“Let’s go. Orac’s located some wreckage that may be the *Nightwitch* – we’ll try there first. If any of the patients survived, they wouldn’t be able to travel far.”

“We did it!” Ann yelled, hugging Vila excitedly.

“Now we just have to wait for *Renegade* to collect the survivors, and disappear before any more patrols show up,” Jenna’s voice stated over the intercom. “And Vila, try not to distract my partner too much, okay?”

“I’m the one being distracted!” Vila protested.

“You know, Vila,” Ann said, winking at him, “I think the communications need a bit more work. We’ll call you if we spot any pursuit ships, Jenna. *Normandy* out.”

“Hey, wait a...” Jenna was cut off as Ann hit a lever, and the redhead turned toward Vila.

“Now, then, just how am I distracting you?”

He grinned. “Come over here, and I’ll show you.”

Sitting outside the cave, Lorien’s attention was caught by a bright flash in the sky, rapidly followed by two more.

“Explosions,” she murmured. “But who...”

She alerted Adina, and they moved everyone out of sight. Lorien found a spot just inside the cave where she couldn’t be easily seen. Several others edged forward as they heard the unmistakable sounds of a ship entering the atmosphere to land.

The first time the ship flashed overhead, Lorien was sure she was mistaken; until it came in to land by *Nightwitch*.

“It’s Deva and *Renegade!*” she yelled into the cave, then shoved the camouflaging bushes aside and ran to the ship.

A week later, on Eden, Lorien met Jenna and Ann in the commissary.

“So how’s Del?” Ann asked as Lorien sat down.

“Well, he’s been conscious for twelve hours now, so Dr. Flagg is very optimistic. She did warn me not to tell him about me and Deeta for a while yet. She doesn’t feel he’s ready for any surprises yet.”

Ann and Jenna looked guiltily at each other. “Er, about you and Deeta...” Jenna began.

“Yes?” Lorien prompted curiously.

“Well...we sort of told Avon and Blake and Vila about it,” Jenna admitted.

“And about the twins,” Ann added.

Lorien grinned. “Yes, I know.”

“You know?” Ann exclaimed, glancing at Jenna. “How?”

“Oh, Blake took me aside when we got back and asked if I’d like to invite my sister’s family and the twins to relocate here. They should be arriving in about two months.”

Ann gasped. “That reminds me; I’d better have a chat with Vila before he goes to visit ‘Uncle Del.’”

The End