

With nothing to do, Rush found her thoughts turning inward—and then, not liking what she saw, upward.

“I’m afraid. So far the Drail have treated me well, but I’m still a prisoner aboard an enemy ship.

“God, what if I’m interrogated? I’m just a cadet; I don’t know any military secrets.”

“You’re not ‘just’ anything, Rush.”

Startled, she reached for her sidearm—which, of course, wasn’t there.

“Sorry! I should know better by now.”

Rush took a deep breath, then patted the bed beside her.

“Thanks. I’ve been at work all morning and my back is killing me.” Jay smiled ruefully. “It would seem you have as much on your mind as I do on my back, so let’s talk.”

Without being asked, Rush started to massage her friend’s broad shoulders.

“You’re full of surprises,” Jay grunted approvingly. “Which reinforces my point: you’re not ‘just’ a cadet, or anything else.”

“I guess so.”

## 0.1 Nightmares

The heart monitor infiltrated Rush’s dreams. She relived the boarding action, its utter chaos out of sync with that monotonous rhythm.