

# REV'S ODYSSEY



R. R. Kaufman

Title Page

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Dedication

For Julie, a true survivor.

# Chapter 1

Rev ran with all her might. The junkyard ahead was poorly lit. She tried to shake off the droke that was chasing her and found a hiding spot between some large scraps of metal. The droke stopped within reaching distance of Rev.

It started shining its light around the yard and gradually moved away from Rev. She peeked out through a sliver of space between the metal scraps. The droke's head revolved in a complete circle, flashing its light from revolving eyes.

Rev had never seen a droke this close. It had thin tubes of steel for arms and legs that joined in the middle of its body to a small triangular plate. The droke could grow taller by extending its legs and longer by extending its arms. Its steel hands and feet were extremely large compared to the droke's overall size.

The droke started back towards her. Rev ducked down just in time as the droke shone its light through the narrow peephole. Then Rev saw her reflection in a shiny piece of metal to the right of her.

She had been found.

Without a second thought Rev darted from her hiding place and ran through the large metal tunnels in the yard. The droke lifted the heavy metal beams and scraps with its huge gripping hands and tossed them aside as it chased after her. It was gaining ground. Rev was within its grasp.

She stumbled across a huge piece of machinery with a long metal arm and massive claw attached to it. Just as she was about to climb up to the control room she felt the droke's hand grab her shirt collar. Rev knew if the droke got hold of her that she would be crushed. She twisted back and forth violently. She felt her clothes tear loose and was free as her sweaty palms grabbed hold of a handle and she lifted herself up to the control cabin.

She swung open the door, slammed the door shut and locked it. She nervously tried to make sense of the claw's working mechanisms. Rev noticed a red button that read START under it. She slammed her fist down on it.

The huge crane like machine roared to life.

Rev sat down on the seat and noticed a lever on each side of the seat. Without hesitating she moved the left lever forward and the big engine below her lurched the machine forward. Suddenly the front window shattered and the droke's giant hand just missed her head.

Rev instinctively grabbed the right lever and the long crane arm swung around violently. She moved the lever back and forth and in a circular motion. The

action managed to move the droke farther down the crane but it was still clinging by one hand to the metal railings of the crane.

Rev took hold of the left handle and propelled the big machine forward towards a big metal pile. At the same time she clung to the right lever and swung the crane furiously to the left crashing the droke into huge iron posts.

The droke lost its grip and crashed to the ground.

Rev quickly pushed the button on top of the right lever. The big claw came crashing down and just missed the droke. Rev pushed the button again and the claw retreated higher up as the droke got to its feet and started to run towards Rev.

Rev kept attacking the droke with the claw but missed it each time. Rev was no quitter and kept her calm. This time she took a bit more time and focused her aim. She had been studying the droke's movements and quickly dropped the claw just to the right of the droke.

It worked. The droke had moved to the right and the claw grabbed hold of the droke's head as Rev hit the button again and it clinched around the droke's neck. She slammed the right lever back hard and the crane swung real high in the air. Then she thrust the lever forward and caused a whiplash effect on the claw.

The droke's tubular body fell to the ground with just its head in the clutches of the claw, high up in the sky. Rev pushed the button and the claw opened up. The head crashed to the ground and split in half. Rev breathed a quick sigh of relief and jumped down from the machine.

She rushed over to the shattered pieces. She knew that she didn't have much time. Shadows grew larger at the entrance to the junkyard as more drokes were rapidly approaching. Rev crouched down and studied the smashed head. A shiny yellow object caught her attention among the grey metal parts. A small thin square piece. She tried to loosen it from the middle of the head but couldn't budge it. The shadows grew longer and larger as two drokes started flashing their lights through the scrapheap in the wrecking yard.

Rev's hands started to shake. She knew this was an important part of the droke's workings. She was not going to leave it behind. She found a metal shard and pried it loose just as the drokes' lights shone on her. She put it in her pocket and zipped it up.

Rev ran for her life.

With long strides Rev ran for the edge of the high cliff. The drokes were gaining on her. Just a few more strides, Rev thought. One of the drokes extended its legs and jumped in front of Rev, then twirled around and faced Rev.

Her heart sank but she took a deep breath and dove between the droke's long tubular legs with a somersault tumble. With a few quick steps she dove from the

top of the cliff into the darkness.

## Chapter 2

Rev plunged into the cold seawater. She unzipped her pocket and brought out her breather. She placed the jelly like device over her mouth and nose with goggles that were attached for her eyes. A clever underwater breathing device invented by her father, Kosni. She pressed a suction device that made the breather cling to her face.

The fight with the drokes had zapped her of energy and she was glad to be heading home to Genus. She started to relax and maintain a steady flow of oxygen from the breather. A dark massive object appeared to be heading towards her. Its cold lifeless eyes became more visible as it quickly approached. Rev recognized it immediately. A large grey shark. It took a sharp turn and came up from behind her. It slowly touched Rev's body. She smiled and held onto the large dorsal fin of the shark.

She was happy to accept a free ride down to Genus with her underwater friend. She could see the lights of her home in the distance. A safe feeling swept over her. It was a stark contrast to Brix, the world that she had just escaped from. But she knew that she must return to Brix very soon. Her father would be anxiously awaiting her return, hoping for good news about the disappearance of her mother. Rev would have to disappoint him.

A sense of peace fell over Rev as she approached Genus. The towering glass structures lit up the shelf on the sea floor. All different sizes and shapes made up her underwater world. Long glass tunnels connected each structure. Genus had always been here, her father told her years ago when they moved here from Brix. But it had fallen in disrepair. Her father was a brilliant engineer and restored the city with a lot of teamwork. But now the future looked bleak. Drastic action was needed.

The citizens of Genus were peace-loving people and could not defend themselves against the foreboding menace at their doorstep. Once a month Rev and her mother would always visit Brix and their friends. But the past three and a half years all contact was forbidden by their father. The reason was because of Razor, a threatening woman who came out of nowhere and controlled the city with her drokes. She changed everything. The people were empowered by her to work harder for her interests. In doing so they suffered the loss of their businesses and quality of life. Her army of drokes brought fear and hopelessness to the people. Now the dark toxic water from all her factories was poisoning the sea and



presenting an ominous threat to Genus.

Rev could see the chute entrance that would transport her into Genus. She released her grip on the shark and thanked it for the ride. She swam over to the entrance chamber and turned the metal wheel to the left. The entrance door slowly swung open. Once inside Rev pulled on a large lever and the door shut and started to drain the water out of the chamber. When it was empty Rev took her breather off and opened the door on the other side. A large chute spiraled downward with a steady stream of water.

Rev slid down the enclosed glass chute feet first and wound around several curves before she landed in a shallow pool inside Genus. Several friends greeted her warmly. Rev knew her father would want to see her immediately. Rev cleaned up in her room and put on fresh clothes. A few minutes later she stood outside her father's door. She took a deep breath and knocked softly.

## Chapter 3

As Rev entered her father's office she noticed her father gazing out the massive thick glass window that showcased the underwater sea world. He was a man in his late thirties with a short salt and pepper beard. The urgency on his face turned to joy as his daughter approached him. Kosni was the chief engineer for Genus and Rev knew he had a lot on his mind. He moved as fast as he could with his injured leg and they both hugged each other for some time.

Kosni

*Oh Rev, I'm so happy to see you. It was a long night. What news from Brix? Here, sit down over by the window. I'll fix you a drink.*

Kosni directed Rev towards a low table near the window. Rev pulled up a chair across from her father's seat. As she waited for her father to return, she peered deep into the sea outside, slowly moving and endlessly changing. It was so serene compared to the chaos in Brix. The thick glass magnified large and small fish, all different colors and shapes, as they swam in and out of the coral. Rev felt guilty. She was sure she would have found her mother safe, and that both of them could have returned to Genus. No such luck.

Kosni returned with Rev's drink.

Rev

*Mother is still missing. Stike told me that she and professor Mars are both gone.*

Kosni

*Where? Brix isn't that big. Does it have anything to do with Razor?*

Rev

*I'm not sure, father. Nobody has seen them in two days. They've looked everywhere. If Razor captured them she's not saying. Everybody's worried.*

Kosni

*I know Stike must be frantic too. His father wouldn't leave without saying something about where he was going. Razor must be after them and they're in hiding together.*

Rev

*I hope they're safe. A lot has changed in Brix over the last three and a half years. Razor has complete control over the community with her drokes. She has built big factories that pour out black smoke. Stike said it's contaminating the rivers and our seawater. They don't know how to get rid of Razor. But their problem is now our problem. We have to work together to defeat her.*

Kosni

*Rev, I don't want you to go back there. This Razor is toxic. I'd never forgive myself if something happened to you.*

Rev

*I understand, father but I wouldn't go near her. Stike and his friends know everything about her and I would just stay in the background. He's my cousin and I trust him. He'll protect me and help us find mom.*

Kosni just stared down at the floor. How could he convince his daughter not to return to Brix. Any father would worry about his fifteen year old daughter in a dangerous world. He had always been able to solve any problem that came up in Genus and his family. Genus had no army. It didn't need one. They had always been at peace with Brix. No one could have thought this was going to happen. He was hopeful his wife, Cyna, was safe with his brother, professor Mars. He knew he had to work with Mars, who he hadn't spoken to in fourteen years since their fallout. He was running out of options.

Rev

*I killed one of the drokes.*

Kosni

*What?*

Rev pulled the yellow piece of metal from her pocket and placed it in her father's palm. Kosni stared in disbelief.

Rev explained how Stike was supposed to guide her back to the dive cliff but didn't return on time. She panicked and decided to return to Genus on her own. She encountered the droke and defeated it.

Kosni carefully studied the object. It was thin and about the size of his middle fingernail. Long and short thin lines ending in dots formed some kind of pattern. They flowed parallel to each other, without touching one another. Kosni turned

the object over to the other side. He noticed it was different. There were multiple lines but this time they joined each other and formed pathways. He slowly looked up at Rev.

Kosni  
*It's gold!*

Rev  
*What's that?*

Kosni  
*Gold has never been found on our planet, Radium. According to the old books that we discovered in Genus, when we settled here twelve years ago, gold is extremely rare and has amazing powers. I have no idea what purpose this object serves. But one thing is certain. I know if you destroyed the droke and took this gold piece, Razor will be furious. She will hunt you down. She might kill you. I can't let you go back to Brix.*

Rev remained silent and stared out the huge glass window at the peaceful underwater world. She always loved Genus ever since she was a little girl. She couldn't imagine her life without it. She turned around and looked at her father.

Rev  
*I guess we can always live in Brix.*

Kosni  
*No. We can never return to Brix.*

Rev  
*Why? Has it something to do with your brother? You and mother said you would tell me about the family secrets when I was older. I think now would be a good time.*

Kosni  
*Your mother is not here. We all must be together first, before I speak.*

Rev  
*Please father.*

Kosni  
*Very well, Rev. When Mars and I were young we did a stupid thing that*

*changed everything.*

Rev

*What stupid thing?*

There was a knock at the door. One of Kosni's advisors entered the room. He explained that the pollution was getting worse and moving closer to Genus.

Kosni

*Please Rev, I have to attend to this. I'll talk to you later.*

Rev nodded her head and left the room.

## Chapter 4

Rev woke up the next morning feeling refreshed. She ventured outside Genus and wanted to see the toxins that were getting closer to her home. She hitched a ride on top of a speckled whale and glided over the sea floor for about ten minutes. As the whale moved upward she approached the black water above her.

She was stunned by what she saw. The black contaminants were thicker and closer to Genus than when she examined their effect two weeks earlier. At that time, the black water was more transparent, but now, no light shone through it. It was larger in size and was drifting down nearer the sea floor.

Downcast, Rev returned to Genus.

She needed to get her mind off the looming danger. She entered the indoor climbing gym. On one side of the high glass room, there were embedded in the glass wall different sizes and shapes of rocks, most of them small. Rev looked up at the rock-climbing wall. She had never reached the top shelf of the monster high wall. The overhang at the top had always eluded her. Each time she approached the uppermost ridge she had to bail.

Rev put an ultimatum to herself. If she could climb to the top, then she could convince her father to return to Brix. And if she didn't succeed? Well, that wasn't going to be an alternative, Rev thought. It was do or die.

Rev fastened her climbing belt around her waist. She pulled down on the hanging rope attached to the auto belay at the very top, and fastened the rope securely to a metal ring on her belt. The auto belay was a safety device her father had invented. If Rev lost her grip on the wall and fell, the rope attached to the top belay mechanism would increase the tension on the rope, preventing a climber from falling fast. Rev rubbed a chalk ball on her palms and fingers. She did a slow stretch of her body, focused and started to climb.

Her climbing instructor had taught her to use her leg muscles to climb instead of her arms. Push with your legs, Rev, instead of pulling with your arms, she could hear him say. Rev had learned, by doing this, she could conserve more energy.

She studied the wall and planned her climbing route. She secured her footholds carefully, flexing her leg muscles and stretching her arms out straight to get a good finger hold on each rock. She saved her arm muscles for the overhang at the top where she would need them most. By putting lots of pressure on her big toes she was able to pivot her body around and kept her balance and

center of gravity close to the wall.

She used her time and energy wisely and was halfway up before she took a breather. She looked through the glass and saw a group of stingrays floating effortlessly towards her before veering off in another direction, and slowly disappearing.

Now came the hard part. Rev approached the overhang. It jutted out at a sharper inward angle to the main wall. She would have to use her arms and fingers to exert more energy. She took a finger hold on a small rock and swung the upper part of her foot on to another rock to secure a toe hook. This helped her pull her body inwards, towards the wall. She moved her other foot forward with the same movement. She let go of one hand and grabbed another rock higher up with her other hand. She swung her right foot higher on the hangover but missed her foothold. Her other hand slipped from the rock and she was hanging on by her left hand only.

This was the farthest Rev had ever been able to climb. This was the point of no return. She had to hold on.

The fingers on her left hand began to cramp up. She made a desperate swing with both feet and one foot managed to grab hold of a rock with the heel of her shoe. She took a finger hold with her right hand and took a deep breath. She was only one foot to the top of the overhang. She kept her body as straight as possible to maintain her balance and center of gravity.

She maneuvered both of her feet on to each big toe. Pressing hard on the rocks with each toe she let go of her finger grips and jumped over the edge of the overhang and grabbed hold of the rocks on the vertical wall above the overhang. She swung her right foot over the overhang and pressed down on a rock. Her fingers grabbed hold of higher holds and she used both legs to push her to the top.

Rev grabbed hold of the victory ring at the top. She rested a few moments and then fell backwards. The auto belay released her slowly as she descended to the cushioned floor mat.

## Chapter 5

Rev downed a large glass of water. She gazed out into the sea world full of life. She despised this, Razor, whoever she was. Nobody had the right to destroy her world. She was deep in thought when she felt a light touch on her shoulder. Rev quickly turned around.

Rev

*Raká, I didn't hear you enter.*

Raká

*You weren't supposed to. I see you conquered the wall.*

Rev

*Yes, but now I have a bigger problem to overcome.*

Raká

*It's everybody's problem, Rev. Don't put this burden only on your shoulders. Together all of Genus will come to a solution.*

Rev

*I know but I feel my brain exploding. Mother and professor Mars have gone missing and Stike didn't return. I can't remain static and just do nothing. Our time in Genus is running out.*

Raká was Rev's trusted friend and one of her father's most important advisors. A number of years older than her father, he had always been there for her family. She had always cherished his advice.

But now, something stirred inside Rev. As an obedient and disciplined child, she was admired by everyone in Genus. Citizens of Genus believed that Rev would follow in her father's role as director of Genus. But after turning fifteen years old and witnessing the future destruction of Brix and Genus, Rev was confused. She was restless and wanted to take action. After defeating the droke she was certain she could help.

Raká

*What plan do you have in mind?*



Rev

*First, I need to find my mother and uncle Mars. Stike will help me. Together we can find support and pressure Razor to get out of Brix. That will end the pollution and eventually restore both our worlds. Without that there is no hope. Why can't father understand that?*

Raká

*He does.*

Rev

*Then why won't he let me return to Brix?*

Raká

*Because he doesn't want to see you die.*

Raká walked over to a cabinet and brought back protective clothing and two wooden stick poles about the height of Rev. They put on the headgear and black protective clothing. Positioning themselves in the middle of the large mat, they cross-struck each other's sticks to start the match.

Rev struck the first blow. A hard contact against Raká's stick. He slid his stick out from Rev's pole and aimed it directly at Rev. She quickly countered his attack by swinging with an upright motion to misdirect his blow just in time. Raká whipped his stick in a sideways strike at Rev's head. She ducked and swung her stick in a sweeping motion at Raká's legs. He jumped, thrusting the end of his stick towards Rev's torso. She countered by moving sideways, crouched down and swung her stick upwards towards Raká's exposed elbow. He maneuvered his stick on a downward angle to block her strike.

Rev backed up slightly as her opponent twirled his stick between both hands in a whirlwind technique. Rev waited in a defensive position. Finally, Raká thrust forward with an offensive move. Rev blocked underneath with an upward slash. Raká forced her stick to the floor mat and quickly went for her head. Rev crouched just in time. Rev lunged forward trying to spear Raká but lost her balance. He was too quick. He caught her wrist, twisted it gently, and disarmed her.

Raká showed her some maneuvers to improve her skills. After a few more matches they called it quits. Rev always enjoyed the stick fighting matches with Raká, continuously learning from this sixty-year-old master.

Raká

*I am pleased with your performance. This is the longest you have lasted before*

*accepting defeat.*

Rev

*Thank you, Raká. Please excuse me but I must get ready to see my father.*

She bowed slightly, smiled and went back to her room to freshen up.

## Chapter 6

Rev knocked and entered her father's room.

Magnified by the thick glass wall, an approaching shark appeared so huge it looked like it was about to swallow Kosni whole as he stood a short distance from it. He turned to face Rev.

Kosni

*Do you remember Prook?*

Rev

*Of course. Why?*

Kosni

*I want you to visit her.*

Rev was taken aback. She wasn't sure if she heard her father correctly.

Rev

*Are you saying I can return to Brix?*

Kosni

*Only for a day. Prook has been a life long friend. If anybody knows where your mother is, she will. She knows everything that goes on in Brix. Make sure you go with Stike and don't ever go near Razor. As soon as you can, return to Genus with what you've found out.*

Kosni reached in his pocket and took out the gold chip.

Kosni

*Keep it safe. I'm sure if you find Mars he can tell you about its importance. Now rest up for a few hours. I'll prepare the launch thruster and send out a signal to Brix that you are coming. You leave at dusk. Be extremely careful, Rev. I'll see you within twenty-four hours.*

Rev hugged her father goodbye and went back to her room for a rest. A few hours later she put on her swimming gear and went to the launch site.

A technician was there to help her inside the vertical chute. She put on her breather as the water filled up in the long tube. The technician in the control

room gave her the countdown.

A few seconds later Rev was shot out of the thruster in a cascade of bubbles. She could barely contain her excitement. She had to control her rapid breathing. She surfaced. It was almost dark. The shoreline was visible and she hoped Stike was there to greet her.

## Chapter 7

High up in her iron fortress Razor looked down at the lights of Brix. How could a little girl be such a threat, she thought. Everything was going as planned. She had complete control of Brix. Hopefully she'll be able to find this rebel teenager who destroyed her droke and stole the chip and set an example to everyone in Brix that you don't mess with Razor.

Where was Vice? He was supposed to be back an hour ago. He better have good news. Just then she heard the door bang shut and turned around to face Vice. The room's low light cast a long shadow from Razor's tall lean figure, as she crossed the room to talk to her son.

Razor

*What have you found out?*

Vice

*Nothing.*

Razor

*What do you mean, nothing?*

Vice

*She was invisible. Nobody saw anything. Besides, they don't trust me even if they did see her.*

Razor

*The only video we have of her is in the junkyard. Nowhere else. She must have stayed in the shadows before she entered it. Somebody must have helped her.*

Razor and Vice watched the video the droke took of the girl in the junkyard. It showed every scene from when the girl was spotted by the droke to when she destroyed it. Razor became furious as the final clip showed nothing but a giant claw clutching the droke's head.

Vice

*Whoever she is, she's smart and resourceful.*

Razor

*Well I'm smarter and more resourceful. Nobody beats me. Especially some waif from this inferior world.*

Vice

*I don't see what the big deal is. You can always replace the droke and the gold chip.*

Razor

*You are missing the whole point of this disastrous event. It shows I'm vulnerable. People of Brix could follow her as some kind of fearless leader. Empires have fallen because of one small crisis that grows into a full-scale rebellion. I'm not going to let that happen to me. Besides she's a thief. I hate thieves. Who is she? Where did she come from? What does she want? And another thing, if that gold chip gets in the wrong hands it could destroy all my hard work.*

Oh no, thought Vice. It was going to be one of those evenings. More ranting and raving. As a sixteen-year-old boy Vice was happy to just play his video games. How could he slip away unnoticed. He just wanted a bite to eat and tune out everything and everybody by going to his room and playing his games. But he had to tread lightly with his mother.

He had learned through the years a technique of detaching himself from her madness. When she went into a delirious rage he imagined he was standing away from himself watching from afar. It helped calm him.

But avoiding her altogether had cost him dearly as a child. Razor demanded attention from anybody that she was talking to, and when Vice was about eight years old he started mocking her when she was yapping to him. Razor picked up an apple and whipped it at him. Vice didn't duck in time. She hit him in his left eye. She let Vice scream for several hours before seeking medical help. Too late. Vice lost his eye.

Now Vice wore an eye patch. He never got used to a glass eye. Whenever his mother looked at his patch, he hoped it made her feel guilty. But she just told him that he should have ducked. He had a collection of about two-dozen different eye patches. Why not make the best of a bad situation.

Vice decided to divert his mother's attention away from this girl. He pointed to the gold bracelets and gold rings his mother was wearing.

Vice

*At least you have lots of gold to make another chip.*

Razor

*Are you talking about my jewelry? These are ancient Egyptian bracelets and rings that are over thirty-five hundred years old worn by kings and people of power. Are you nuts? Study your history and you might learn something other than how to blow people away in your video games.*

Vice

*I wish I could study my history. I wish I was back on Earth and be with my friends instead of this dumb place.*

Razor

*Oh shut up, Vice. You complain too much. When I find this teenage monster that stole my chip, then we'll go through the Lux back to our planet. Now help me out. The sooner we catch her, the sooner we go back for a visit.*

Vice

*Okay, mom.*

Razor

*So you'll keep an eye out for her?*

Vice

*Ha, ha. You're really sick mom. Oh, I meant to ask you. Who do you play against in this week's droke tournament?*

Razor

*Someone called Stike.*

## Chapter 8

When Rev reached the shore it was dark. She looked around for Stike. A minute passed before she heard someone whisper her name.

Rev

*Stike?*

A tall lean boy stepped out of the shadows.

Stike

*Rev, I'm so glad you made it back. I'm sorry I didn't see you off the other day. The drokes set up a blockade and I was so worried when I couldn't get back to you in time.*

Rev

*Things worked out okay.*

Stike

*Yeah, they sure did. That was an amazing feat. I hear Razor is furious. We have to watch our backs and move carefully.*

Stike handed her a dark blue boiler suit with a hoodie. The same coveralls everyone wore in Brix, thanks to Razor. Rev put it on over her swimming gear. They climbed up the steep path of the cliff to the top. Rev could see the faint lights of Brix ahead. The cliff was some distance down the beach from the junkyard where she had jumped off previously.

As they walked towards Brix, Rev looked up at the sky and was overwhelmed. The brisk night made the stars shine brighter and the two moons orbiting each other lit their way.

Rev hadn't seen much when she visited Brix two days earlier. She had reunited with Stike after over three years. Stike had told her about her mother's and his father's disappearance. Now she needed more details about what was really happening in Brix.

They moved quickly among the trees that grew on the outer limits of the town. As Rev got closer to the town she was shocked to see huge factories pouring out black smoke.



Rev

*What do they make there?*

Stike

*Razor has all the town men and older teenagers building steel parts for her ship at Bluster Harbor. They work long hours. Their businesses and farms have been neglected and she pretty much owns most of them.*

Rev

*How did she get away with it? How could one person control everybody?*

Stike

*Because she has an army of drokes and can do anything she wants.*

Rev

*So what causes all that black soot?*

Stike

*She has the men work the hills to extract some kind of iron material and black rocks. Then it's melted in huge furnaces. It's what makes the steel. The rest blows out the big smoke stacks.*

They continued towards Brix. The two moons cast a soft light on the small cottages that encircled the town's main business center. Here the buildings were made of red bricks. Rev breathed a sigh of relief. This was the place she fondly remembered. But the streets were empty. A strict curfew was in effect.

Stike guided Rev through the shadows of the town buildings. Three drokes were gathered at various positions. Flashing lights from their heads, crisscrossed across the streets.

Stike and Rev turned a corner of a building. A huge bright light emitting from a high distant ridge blinded Rev.

She reached for Stike but stumbled.

Suddenly one of the drokes flashed its light on Rev. She froze. Stike grabbed her and the chase was on. The other two drokes were alerted. Communicating to each other the drokes tried to cut them off.

Stike told Rev to be very still and crouch down in the shadow of an alleyway. He whispered for her to stay there until he returned.

Without a second thought Stike ran across the street into the opposite alley and reached for the metal ladder at the side of the building. The drokes closed in on him. One leaped wildly at Stike as he climbed the ladder. It clutched his shoe

and ripped it off. Stike desperately scrambled up the remaining rungs.

The droke was just as fast and was right behind him when Stike reached the roof. The other two drokes were still on the ladder. He didn't know if drokes could sense fear or hear his heart pounding but he was about to find out if drokes could slide down a drainpipe.

Stike raced across the roof to the other side. He swung himself down to the drainpipe and started to slide down. The droke hesitated on the roof and then maneuvered itself holding on to the pipe. Stike reached the ground and hung on to the drainpipe firmly with both hands. He leaned back with all his weight, planted his feet against the wall and pulled hard. The droke was less than halfway down when the pipe snapped. Stike leaped out of the way as the droke crashed to the ground. A leg and an arm lay lifeless on the ground, detached from the droke's body. It got up on one leg and fell over. The other drokes on the roof ran back to the ladder on the other side.

Stike ran across the road as he noticed other lights approaching. He took hold of Rev's hand as they kept in the shadows of the buildings and scurried two blocks in the opposite direction. Stike hung a quick right turn, took a key from his pocket and unlocked a door. They entered his father's repair shop.

He pulled a hidden latch on a bookcase. A door slid open and both of them entered. The door closed as they went down a staircase to a large underground room. They sat down at a table and stared at each other as they caught their breath.

Stike

*It's too dangerous. Maybe you should go back.*

Rev

*I need to find my mother.*

Stike

*I'll find my father. Aunt Cyna must be with him. When I do I'll send word to Genus immediately.*

Rev

*I'm staying. I must talk to Prook first.*

## Chapter 9

The next morning Rev was up early. Stike was still asleep. She wandered through professor Mars' workshop. Tools were scattered across the lengthy bench. Big heavy machinery took up a lot of floor space. She marveled at all the strange gadgets consisting of odd metal shapes, wheels and coiled wires. Detailed diagrams of various inventions and ideas hung on the walls. Books piled up high and numerous glass flasks crowded other workbenches. A lengthy telescope stood out in a corner.

Stike

*Amazing isn't it?*

Rev

*You startled me. I didn't see you there. What's this?*

Rev pointed to a device with a small steel ball going up and down and around a metal track continuously. The whole mechanism was enclosed in a curved glass vessel.

Stike

*A perpetual motion device. It's sealed in a vacuum. Something to do with magnets.*

Rev

*My dad said that's not possible.*

Stike

*That's what my dad thought too until he invented it. After all isn't the whole universe a perpetual motion machine?*

Rev smiled at Stike. She enjoyed the company of her cousin and felt safe in his presence. She studied different projects the professor was working on. She picked up a shiny metal tube that partially extended from both ends of her hand.

Rev

*What's this do?*

Stike took it in his hand, pressed a small switch and long metal tubes shot out

of both ends.

Rev

*Whoa! It's the same as my wooden pole that I use in stick fighting only it's metal.*

Stike

*It's called a flexion. Want to try it out?*

Rev

*You bet.*

Stike handed it back to Rev and reached over to a shelf and grabbed an identical one for himself. He motioned Rev into another room. There he gave her a protective mask as he donned one himself. They struck each other's metal poles back and forth for a few minutes just like she did with Raká. Only this time it was more playful and not so intense. Rev countered Stike's attack with a downward blow but to her surprise it went straight through Stike's stick and struck the floor. Stike immediately jabbed her lightly on her body with his stick.

Stike

*I win.*

Rev

*What just happened? How did you do that?*

Stike

*Remember how I pressed the release switch on the handle's bottom to extend the flexion?*

Rev

*Yeah?*

Stike

*Well it works both ways. When you press the switch, when the metal pole is extended, it recedes just as fast. I timed your downward move and retracted my flexion.*

Rev

*You're a stinker. You tricked me.*

Stike

*Well to make it up to you, keep the flexion. My father would love for you to have it.*

They both had a good laugh and sat down at the table and ate a sandwich. Stike went to a cold box and brought out a cake. He cut a piece for each of them.

Rev

*What's the occasion?*

Stike

*It's my sixteenth birthday. I wish my dad were here.*

Rev

*Well happy birthday cousin. Oh, I almost forgot.*

Rev reached into her pocket and took out the gold chip.

Rev

*My father said it's made of gold.*

Stike examined it carefully.

Stike

*This was in the droke's head?*

Rev

*I had to pry it out. What do you think it is?*

Stike

*Something extremely powerful. I've never seen gold before. It's beautiful. This must be a key component of the droke's mechanism. My father would love to see this. He loves inventions just like your father. Keep this safe, Rev. If we could unlock its mystery it might help us against Razor.*

Stike handed the chip back to Rev. He went on to explain how professor Mars had discovered how to utilize electricity for multiple applications such as lights and other devices he invented like this cold storage box. When Razor shut down the university, and the professor lost his teaching job, he opened up a repair shop for electrical appliances. His underground laboratory was unknown to Razor. She didn't like any competition or people smarter than her. If she knew of its existence she would destroy it.

They prepared for their journey to see Prook.

## Chapter 10

Stike closed up the professor's shop. The wind was picking up. They both pulled up their hoodies on their overalls. It was a good reason to hide their faces from the drokes. Other people were out in Brix doing their regular business. As they walked casually Stike pointed out to Rev how the drokes not only used their eyes as lights but also as cameras. They could record moving pictures of everybody in Brix. This was somehow communicated to Razor.

Professor Mars and Kosni years ago as students in Brix worked together to make the first working camera. But that was the last project the two of them had worked on. If it wasn't for their falling out they might have advanced their invention to moving pictures.

Rev and Stike moved through the town undisturbed by any of the drokes making their patrols within Brix.

A loud whistle surprised Rev. A big metal monster, snorting out black smoke from its head roared overhead as Rev and Stike looked up at the bridge.

Rev

*What was that?*

Stike

*Razor's train. One of the first toxic things she had the Brix men manufacture and assemble for her personal use.*

Rev

*Where does it go?*

Stike

*To Bluster Harbor. It's where she's building her big ship. That's how she transports all the materials the men make in the dirty factories. Hopefully she finishes it and leaves Brix forever.*

Rev

*How long will that be?*

Stike

*Nobody knows. She won't let anyone get near the place. It's top secret.*

They reached the edge of town. Stike took out his spyglass and gave it to Rev. She focused it on a shining light on a high island mesa in the middle of a river east of Brix. There were two plateaus. Razor's fortress stood on the lower plateau. Four lofty iron pillars merged at the top that supported a metal dome structure with windows encircling it. A bridge stretched from the top of Razor's dwelling to the higher plateau. Close to the bridge, on the other side, stood a massive tower with a small metal structure at its base. On top of high tower was a golden light as bright as the planet's sun.

Rev

*I can't look at it. That light is so intense. Was that what we saw last night?*

Stike

*Exactly. My father reasoned it was some kind of power source. If we could understand how it works maybe there was a way to sabotage it and disrupt Razor. He also wanted to learn about Razor's past. Who she was? Where did she come from? Maybe some clue about her could reveal a weakness that Brix could exploit and defeat her. I believe my father and your mother are searching somewhere for those answers.*

Suddenly they felt the ground shake beneath them. It felt stronger each second.

Stike

*It's Brixwrecker. Razor has unleashed it. Someone is in serious trouble.*

Rev and Stike retreated back towards Brix to get a better view.



## Chapter 11

They crouched down on a small hill overlooking the cottages surrounding the town center.

A massive droke was pounding its feet in a slow deliberate technique towards one of the cottages. It was one of a kind. Extremely lethal. With its long thick legs it must have stood twice as high as a regular cottage. Its long arms swung rhythmically as it turned up one of the lanes and continued to advance. The droke's body was large but with only a small head. What were most impressive were the gigantic feet that could crush anything. Brixwrecker continued to lift its legs high and pound the ground hard as he approached one of the cottages.

Rev and Stike watched from a distance. There was nothing anybody could do. Rev could tell this colossal droke was Razor's most beloved weapon of choice. She was sending a grim message. Don't mess with her.

People fled their homes. Suddenly Brixwrecker stopped at one of the cottages. It raised its right foot and stomped on the ground three times. Rev and Stike could feel the vibrations on top of the hill in their hiding place.

It was a final warning for the occupants of the cottage to get out. Nobody was there. Next Brixwrecker raised its leg as high as it could and with one swift blow it pulverized the little cottage. With another blow it flattened it completely. It turned back down the road. The thumping noise got less and less as it retreated back to its resting place.

Rev

*Why did Razor do that?*

Stike

*One of the factory workers lived there. He must have missed work for a day. I've seen it several times before.*

Rev

*Has Razor ever killed anyone?*

Stike

*Some people have disappeared. They never returned.*

## Chapter 12

They didn't talk until they entered the forest. Rev broke the silence.

Rev

*You know I noticed something strange back there when Brixwrecker was thumping around.*

Stike

*What was it?*

Rev

*All the other drokes just stood there and didn't move when Brixwrecker was moving through the village.*

Stike

*Maybe they were ordered to.*

Rev

*Something like that. As if they were purposely frozen.*

Stike

*Yeah, now that I think of it, they never budged. I wish we could find our parents. They might know what's happening.*

They continued down a narrow path in the woods towards Prook's home. Rev took a deep breath. The wind blowing the leaves and the scent of the forest was something she hadn't experienced in years. The sunlight filtering through the trees and the birds singing took her away from all the angst she had been feeling the past few days.

Rev heard the rush of water ahead as they neared the river. She always remembered her father saying that rivers are the roads of the forest.

She turned to Stike.

Rev

*I'll race you to the bridge.*

As kids, Rev and Stike always raced each other to the bridge. They loved to swim in the river and see who could catch the biggest fish.

But Rev didn't see the downward look on Stike's face as she sprinted ahead down the forest path. When Stike caught up to Rev she was standing frozen on the bridge staring down at the black toxic water flowing beneath her. She covered her face with her sleeve.

Stike put his arm around her shoulder but Rev flinched it off and ran to the other side of the bridge and up the path until she could no longer see the river. When Stike caught up to her she was sitting on a tree stump with her head down.

It all made sense to Rev now. This was the river that flowed past Razor's factories. This was the river that emptied into the sea. This was the river that was destroying Genus.

## Chapter 13

Rev and Stike climbed the path, out of the woods to the top of a cliff, overlooking the sea. They walked a short distance. Ahead they spotted a point that jutted out to the sea. Perched on it was a distinct structure. As soon as Rev spotted Prook's house in the distance her spirits lifted. She raced towards the big seashell cottage as Prook stood in the doorway.

Her home was in the shape of a giant nautilus seashell resting on its side. It was sculpted of smooth clay painted white. The familiar brown stripes were painted in a wavy pattern, curving from top to bottom. On the left side of the nautilus stood a tall brown and white marbled cone shell. Attached to the right of the nautilus was a large urchin shell painted light green with all its ridges and nodes. A row of big white riveted scallops, on each side of a path, formed the entrance walkway. Everything was detailed in structure and color, replicated to appear like giant, natural seashells.

Prook smiled as Rev leapt into her arms. Prook took hold of Stike's hand and led them into her home. The huge nautilus doorway opened into a vast winding hallway leading off to various rooms. Underwater painted scenes of fish and coral enriched the walls. Hundreds of different natural seashells were on display throughout her home.

Prook guided them up a staircase into a room with a huge window overlooking the sea. They all sat down on comfortable chairs. Prook fixed them a refreshing drink.

Rev

*I always love coming to your home, Prook. It reminds me of Genus.*

Prook

*It reminds me of you. I missed you so much, Rev. How is Kosni holding up?*

Rev

*He's worried like all of us. But he hides it well.*

Prook

*And you, Stike. Is there any news of professor Mars?*

Stike

*He and aunt Cyna seemed to have just vanished. Do you have any idea what*

*happened to them?*

Prook

*Not exactly but I have my suspicions.*

Stike

*Is Razor involved?*

Prook

*I don't think she is holding them captive or I would have heard something. I know they went looking for information about Razor's past history. They just haven't returned yet.*

Rev

*Where did they go looking? Where is Razor from?*

Prook got up from her chair, walked over to the window and stared at the sea. She was an older woman with beautiful long silver hair. A gentle soul who enjoyed her solitude. Someone who had been raised in Brix and knew its history. She had worked at the university library for many years and had been good friends with Rev's parents and Stike's father long before Stike and Rev were born. Now she felt it was time to tell them what must be told.

Prook

*I'm afraid your parents have gone through the Lux.*

Rev and Stike looked stunned.

Rev

*What?*

Prook

*Legends say that the Lux is a gateway to another planet called Earth. This is where Razor came from. My sources told me that your parents were last seen at Lux Crag. The Lux is on top of this cliff, the highest in the entire canyon. It's impossible to climb or cross over but somehow I believe Mars and Cyna made it across to this cliff island and through the Lux.*

Stike

*Why? What's on this planet, Earth?*

Prook

*That's where Razor grew up. We don't know anything about her. Mars thought if they could find something about her past it could help him stop her from destroying Brix. He had been spying on her for years. He's kept detailed records of Razor's movements and all things pointed to Lux Crag. He told me one day he followed her there and saw some kind of bridge that appeared and disappeared over the canyon to Lux Crag. She didn't return to Brix until a week later.*

Rev remained frozen in her seat. She was overwhelmed by the last day's events and tried to put everything in order. She wished it would all just go away. Maybe she would wake up tomorrow and none of this ever happened. But she needed to find out about her family history, now that she was here. She finally looked up at Prook.

Prook

*There is someone that can possibly help you and Stike with more information with the Lux. He arrived in Brix the same time Razor and her son Vice did. He must have come through the Lux at the same time.*

Rev

*Who is he?*

Prook

*Wolfie.*

Rev

*Can we trust him?*

Prook

*He doesn't appear to have contact with Razor or Vice. He keeps to himself in the hills surrounded by a pack of wolves. A strange fellow but he is kind and sincere. He donates his honey to the village people. He's even opened a theatre in town and puts on plays there for free. Nobody knows much about him or what relationship he has with Razor. But the town folks feel he has a disdain for her. He might know something about the disappearance of your parents.*

Rev looked eagerly at Stike.

Rev

*What do you think, Stike? Should we go talk to this Wolfie?*

Stike

*For sure. But after the tournament.*

Rev

*Tournament?*

Stike

*Once every two weeks anyone in Brix can challenge Razor's droke in a competition.*

Prook

*So you're the chosen one this week?*

Stike

*You bet. I need to practice a bit before the match. We should be going soon if you don't mind. I'll explain the whole thing to you, Rev, on the way back.*

Rev

*Okay but just one thing before we go. I need to ask Prook something.*

Prook

*Anything, dear.*

Rev

*What happened between my father and uncle Mars?*

Prook fixed her gaze at the distance sea for a few seconds and then looked back at Rev with a pleasant smile on her face.

Prook

*All I know is that Kosni and Mars competed for Cyna's love in some kind of competition. That's all I can tell you, Rev. In all fairness only your mother should be allowed to tell you the whole story.*

Rev

*I understand.*

Prook walked with them towards the big nautilus door. On the way Rev noticed Prook's sewing room.

Rev

*I forgot about how much you loved sewing.*

Prook

*Yes. I make the costumes for the actors in Wolfie's plays. Be careful, Rev and say hello to your father. I love you both.*

They all hugged and said their goodbyes. Rev and Stike walked a ways and Rev looked back and waved to Prook as she stood at the doorway. Prook waved back and blew a kiss. Rev wondered how long it would be before she would see her again. And how long before she would see her mother Cyna again, if ever.



## Chapter 14

Rev was overwhelmed by the last day's events and tried to put everything in order. She wished it would all just go away. Maybe she would wake up tomorrow and none of this ever happened. But she was committed . She had to talk to this man called Wolfie. But first Stike's tournament against Razor, then the meeting with Wolfie. After that and her return to Genus. Her father would be excited to hear her progress.

They decided to take the long way back to Brix. Rev didn't care to cross over the dirty river again. If they headed upriver through the forest and past the factories, the river would be clean and clear to cross over. From there they would make a complete circle and end up back in professor Mars' shop just in time for Stike to practice for the big match.

Rev

*So tell me about the droke tournament.*

Stike

*Okay. After work, once every two weeks the whole town fills the stadium. A yellow droke and a red droke face off. Since I'm the player for Brix I get to choose which droke is on my side. I also choose which control room I want in order to command my droke. The first player who scores three goals first through a small hole at the opponent's end wins.*

Rev

*Is it difficult to beat Razor?*

Stike

*She's never lost.*

Rev

*So if you win what do get?*

Stike

*Her pride.*

Stike went on to explain how the whole town comes together to enjoy the entertainment. Razor realizes the importance of recreation for her workers. But

more important to show her supremacy. And even though the people of Brix knew somehow it's rigged in Razor's favor it's a chance to show support for the local hero. And of course there's always hope that Razor might go down, even if it is a slim chance.

Stike

*I'll show you what the professor built to practice on back in his shop. We both studied every match and know all of Razor's moves.*

They kept following the river upstream along a path in the woods. The wind blew the soot from the factories in their direction and as they drew closer to them they could see the black sludge draining into the river from these big industrial plants.

Upriver the water was clear and pristine. As they crossed a bridge Rev stopped in the middle and took a deep breath. She noticed a large cottage further up the river. A woman with long hair down to her waist was tending her garden. Various colorful flowers surrounded her cottage.

Rev

*I never noticed that place before.*

Stike

*Somebody else that arrived in Brix the same time as Razor, Vice and Wolfie. The only visitor she has is Razor's son, Vice. She helps out in Wolfie's town theatre. She's an actress. Everybody in Brix likes her but nobody knows the connection between these four strangers. They don't discuss their personal lives.*

Rev

*What's her name?*

Stike

*Faze.*

It wasn't long before they were back in the professor's shop.

## Chapter 15

Stike sat down in his chair. On each side of the chair's arms was a handle that revolved around its metal base.

A short distance in front of him stood a knee high metal structure made of thin steel slabs with copper wires and tiny motors attached to the moving metal parts.

They all fit together resembling a miniature droke.

It stood there lifeless.

Stike rotated each of the handles and the machine came to life. It jumped and pivoted in all directions. It even did backflips and twirled around rapidly. All with no wires attached to Stike's control system.

Rev was ecstatic. She moved closer to the mechanical droke-like machine, bent down and studied it. She looked back at Stike.

Rev

*How did you do that?*

Stike

*See these handles. There are batteries connected to them. They transmit an electrical signal to the machine, which activates their motors. When I rotate these handles around on my control the mechanical toy obeys the commands and mimics its movements.*

Rev

*Is this how Razor controls her drokes?*

Stike

*In the stadium, yes. But not her army of drokes throughout Brix. Father said it would require an unlimited power source that remains unknown to us. But your gold chip may hold the secret.*

Rev made a sandwich for both of them and watched Stike practice. An hour later a loud siren pierced the air.

The tournament was about to begin.

## Chapter 16

A knock at the door startled Rev. Stike opened the door. His friend, Slane, entered the room and Stike closed the door.

Stike

*Good to see you Slane. This is Rev. You'll be escorting her to the game.*

Slane and Rev greeted each other.

Slane

*Razor is on some kind of relentless hunt. She found the shoe somebody lost when they were chased by the drokes the other night. Everybody's being interrogated. The drokes are even searching people's homes for the matching shoe.*

Stike and Rev remained quiet. Stike knew he could trust Slane. But he didn't want to involve him for Slane's own safety. He realized he had to get rid of the matching shoe right away but the droke's tournament was about to start. It was hidden downstairs in a safe place for now. He would deal with it later. He gently took Rev by her hands and looked keenly in her eyes and spoke softly.

Stike

*It's not too late to leave now Rev and return to Genus. Razor and her drokes will be keeping a close watch on everybody in the audience. It's not safe for you.*

Rev

*I'll stay well hidden. I feel safe with Slane. After the match we'll go see Wolfie. Then I'll return to Genus for sure. I need to keep my father's hopes up. I must find out more of the whereabouts of my mother. Also I want to see who this Razor really is.*

Stike

*Okay, but just don't eyeball her or the drokes on patrol. Keep your face down and covered.*

They left together on their short walk to the stadium about an hour before dusk. The wind had died down. They blended into the crowd as they lined up at

the entrance. Once inside Stike left Slane and Rev to take his position for the tournament.

Slane and Rev found a seat on one of the long benches high up in the middle of the stadium. Soon the arena filled up to its capacity. Everybody was wearing the same dark blue coveralls, some with their hoodies up and others down. Rev and Slane kept their heads covered.

Some kind of doomsday music was blaring over the loudspeaker. They spotted Vice across from them, high up in a booth. He was seated playing an instrument.

Rev

*What is that horrible noise?*

Slane

*Just Vice playing his gloomy music trying to jinx the competition. He's a joke. Everybody ignores him.*

Rev fixed her attention on the playing area of the arena. It was in the shape of a concrete bowl. The sides curved up surrounded entirely by a metal fence. In the middle of the bowl were high and low levels. At each end of the playing field was a hole placed in the middle of the curved wall.

A yellow droke stood at one end and a red droke at the opposite end. They both held onto a thin metal board with four wheels. On the painted circle in the midpoint of the arena, a steel ball sat motionless.

Rev

*So what's about to happen?*

Slane

*Okay, see the steel ball in the middle? The first one who sinks it into the opponent's hole three times wins the tournament. They use the metal board to skate on. One of their legs is locked on the skateboard and the other pushes and stops the board. Anything goes.*

Rev

*Anything goes?*

Slane

*You bet. It's all out combat. These drokes are built a lot bulkier and more solid than the other drokes. Their heads are shaped different. They can't extend themselves like the regular drokes but can take a real beating. Like some kind of*

*warrior. You'll see.*

And then the moment arrived. The main lights dimmed and only the playing area was illuminated.

Razor came out of one end and the crowd erupted in boos.

Stike approached from the other end and the crowd rose to their feet shouting, Stike, Stike, Stike.

Rev felt the electricity in the air.

Razor and Stike met at the center, each standing on the other side of the steel ball. They just stared at each other. No words were spoken. The crowd went silent.

Rev sneaked a quick peek at Razor. Her gold jewelry stood out against her black outfit. From the overhead lamps Razor's tall lean figure cast a long shadow over Stike.

Why couldn't the crowd overpower her right now, Rev thought? Yes, she has a small army of drokes mingling around but this audience is huge. Don't be impulsive her father would say. A thought like that could get people killed. Rev dismissed her irrational reasoning. There would be another time, another place.

This was the time to choose. To be fair, or maybe just to appear fair, Razor always let her opponent make a choice between drokes and control rooms. Stike chose the red droke and the white control booth. That left Razor with the yellow droke and black control booth.

They retreated to take their positions in the control rooms above the seating in the end zones.

A loud buzzer set the match in motion.

## Chapter 17

Seated in his room, high above the arena, Stike maneuvered the control sticks and brought the red droke to life. He positioned the droke's left foot on the skateboard and locked it in place, preventing it from slipping off. The right foot pushed hard on the pavement and shot the board forward towards the steel ball in the middle.

On the other side Razor's yellow droke swirled around the curved side embankment in a circular course ready to scoop up the steel ball.

Stike had studied all of Razor's strategies. Now that he was playing for real he just had to time her moves and out maneuver her.

He accelerated hard in a straight path towards the ball. He lifted his right foot on to the skateboard and ducked down, as he was about to scoop the ball up in his droke's hand.

But Razor's yellow droke was a fraction of a second quicker and lifted its skateboard high up, crashing head on into Stike's red droke.

The red droke stumbled and rolled over on the pavement several times while Razor's droke swept up the ball and scooted towards the end zone.

Stike got his droke up fast and quickly gained ground on Razor's droke. He used the elevated pavement in the middle to launch his droke through the air. He smashed it into Razor's droke hard. Her droke crashed into the end zone wall. Its arm twisted around but managed to hurl the ball through the small hole.

The buzzer sounded loudly and the crowd reacted instantly with a round of boos.

Stike felt flushed. He disciplined himself and kept his cool.

A plain droke came out to place the steel ball in the middle. The opposing drokes positioned themselves in the end zones. The buzzer echoed throughout the stadium.

The race for the ball was on again. This time Stike let Razor's droke get to the ball first. He got some air on his droke, twisted it around in mid air and with a downward blow smacked her droke on the wrist. The steel ball dropped to the floor. With another hand he punched Razor's droke in the head several times and felled it to the ground.

He clutched the ball and raced to the end zone and scored his first goal.

The crowd erupted in cheers.

A huge sigh of relief filled Stike. That victorious goal was what he needed to

regain his confidence. He looked up at the scoreboard mounted high up in the middle of the arena. Razor one. Stike one.

Not many of Razor's opponents got on the scoreboard.

The third drop of the ball brought a long fistfight between the drokes. They swirled their metal boards around each other and hammered each other's droke in a vicious tirade of punches, kicks and headbutts while the ball remained motionless on the floor. Razor got the upper hand and landed a punch that sent Stike's red droke sailing through the air. Without a pause she took advantage of the situation and scored.

The crowd was on edge. One more goal for Razor and her gloating grin would sink everyone's hearts to their feet.

Stike would not let defeat enter his mind. It was do or die. The next goal must be his. A different tactic was needed. As soon as the buzzer sounded his droke started to gain speed. Instead of racing for the ball he navigated his droke at a lightning velocity around the bowl's edge, faster and faster.

Razor's droke snatched the ball and raced to the end zone.

The crowd was totally silent.

Stike took a gamble. As Razor's droke was within arm's length of scoring, Stike's droke flew along the upper part of the bowl edge and came down on Razor's droke heavy and unyielding. He clobbered her so hard that it cracked the concrete in his end zone. Razor's droke collapsed to the floor showing a huge dent in its head.

Stike's droke grabbed the ball, raced to the other end and slammed home his second goal.

Everyone jumped to their feet, hands held high drowning out the buzzer.

With the game tied up Razor called a time out. The next goal would win the match. Stike was elated but was happy for a break. He didn't want to get reckless and over confident at this point in the game.

He looked way down the stadium at Razor in her control room. She was talking to Vice and pointing to someone in the audience. The stadium lights went on full blast. She yelled at her patrol unit of drokes.

Stike stood up and stared at where she was pointing. His heart sunk. It was Rev.



## Chapter 18

Instinctively Rev bolted out of her seat and turned around. The crowd cleared a path for her as she leaped up the benches to the top of the arena. An open window caught Rev's attention. She flipped it open wider and slid through. She held on to the top ledge with her hands as she tried to secure a foot holding below. There was a small brick edging about below her that she could almost reach with her toes. She let go with her hands and tried to land on the overhang below.

Her feet slipped off and she plummeted downwards.

Rev desperately grabbed the narrow overhang with her hands and managed to break her fall for a few seconds. Her fingers gave out on her grip.

She plunged rapidly down before a branch from a small tree broke her fall.

Rev clung to the branch and weighted it down as she fell to the ground. Paying no attention to her pain from falling, Rev sprinted in the direction of the town square. She didn't have to look behind her. She knew the drokes were on her heels.

Breathing hard, Rev reached the edge of town. Most of the drokes that usually patrol the town were stationed at the arena and would be here soon, thought Rev. She couldn't go to the professor's shop. That would give Stike away.

Where to hide? Where to go? The cliff dive off point for her return to Genus was quite the distance and risky. Wolfie's place was closer. She had to make her way to his home on the rocky terrain above the forest. But how to get there?

The drokes searching lights pierced the darkness crossing each other's beams in the sky. Rev quietly slinked along the shadows of the buildings. The two moons illuminated the tall smokestacks of the factories high on the surrounding hill. This was her destination.

Suddenly a bright light revealed Rev's hiding place. Nasty droke. She wished that they could all be plowed into the sea. She escaped down a narrow alley before the others showed up.

She grabbed hold of the rung of a steel ladder and climbed as fast as she could. The droke nipped her heels as she climbed. Rev clung to the top rung and was about to hoist herself on to the roof when a droke standing above her tried to crush her hand.

Her adrenaline kicked in and she lifted her hand just in time and grabbed the thin tubular leg of the droke and fell backwards. She had to gamble. As Rev

clutched both her hands around the droke's one leg and used gravity as leverage, she fell downwards taking the droke with her.

Knowing her fall would be broken by the droke on the ladder below her, she just hoped for the best. As she collided with the lower droke she released her grip on the top droke and grabbed hold of the lower droke.

She twirled it around and smashed the second droke into the brick wall to the right of the ladder. Rev fell a distance and landed on a doorway awning and tumbled deftly to the ground. Within a second both drokes slammed to the dirt, narrowly missing her. She enjoyed the sound of metal clanging and smashing against each other.

One of the drokes tried to grab her but both of its legs were mangled. The other lay lifeless with its head partially buried.

Rev wanted to pry open its head and retrieve another gold chip but there was no time. More menacing drokes were approaching rapidly. She bounced up and headed towards the hill. A narrow path led under the train's bridge towards the factories. She continued to climb. No drokes were in sight.

Feeling exhausted Rev reached the train cars. She needed a break to catch her breath and also plan her next direction. A ladder on the side of the train car took her to the top. She lay flat on the roof and looked up at the stars. Her mind drifted. She wanted to just lie there and go to sleep and wake up hoping it was just a bad nightmare.

Out of nowhere she heard a crunching of stones below her. She didn't know how many drokes were below her. She had positioned herself in the middle of the railway car's roof.

Suddenly a glaring beam of light from below narrowly missed her. Then on the other side another beam flashed by above her. The two rays intersected above her forming a letter x.

Rev anticipated her next move if the drokes climbed up. But there were several more train cars and they slowly moved along down the tracks swinging the lights on their head back and forth.

Then she heard the roar of the crowd from the stadium. It was for Stike. He must have beat Razor. A surge of energy flowed throughout Rev. She wanted to jump up and dance right on top of the rail car. There would be time for that later. She remained frozen.

After a long wait Rev ventured down and carefully made her way towards the factories. A disgusting odor filled the air. Soon she was on top of the hill. She looked down towards the town and noticed flickering lights everywhere. She knew there was no time to waste.

She looked up at the massive factory. Solid brick and lofty. The tall

smokestacks on top spitting out black soot dwarfed everything in its presence. She walked between the two factories. She planned to keep hiking towards the river and cross upstream. Then go through the woods in the direction of the caves that Stike had told her where Wolfie lived. It was dark but the two moons helped guide her.

She was almost at the end of the factory when she took a deep breath and started to cough uncontrollable. A sudden movement to the right raised the hairs on Rev's neck. She swiftly ran to some stairs that descended to a door on the factory building. The door was locked as she quietly pushed down on the handle. She hid in the dark stairwell several steps below the pathway.

She saw a droke slowly approaching her hiding spot. Its head beam shone straight down at the door just missing her. It moved on. Rev breathed a sigh of relief. But that urge to cough again swelled up in her lungs and throat. She muffled it with her hands. No use. It erupted in a full blast of noise. She was paralyzed. Did the droke hear her? Nothing happened. Good.

Suddenly three lights came out of nowhere and blinded Rev. She stumbled against the door. Fear infiltrated Rev's veins. She tried to chase it away with anger and adrenaline. But the situation felt dire.

## Chapter 19

Razor sat quietly in the dark control room. The arena had spilled out the entire crowd. The only light came from the red exit signs. One flickered across from her under the room that Stike had just used to defeat her. Every few seconds it highlighted her face in red.

Razor could still hear the crowd celebrating in the distance.

She was not about to admit defeat. Razor never loses. Nobody can beat her at anything. She was all-powerful. Somebody or something was to blame for her loss. But not her. She never loses.

Three knocks on the door interrupted Razor's thoughts. Her assistant and bodyguard, Klutch, entered.

Klutch

*I've locked up the place. Anything else ma'am?*

Razor

*Yes, set Brixwrecker loose. I want three cottages flattened. These Brix people will learn not to cheat me out of my victory. I despise cheaters and liars! This game was fixed! Rigged! Somebody gained entrance to my control room before the game and messed with the control sticks. Probably that professor Mars wherever he is. He knew beforehand which control room Stike would pick. So he fixed mine to underperform. Clever evil people. They're disgusting. You play fair with them and this is how they repay me. I want a complete investigation. Post notices throughout the town. Everyone must know that I won the match.*

Klutch

*As you wish ma'am. There's also the matter about the shoe, ma'am. The test results have come back.*

Razor

*Give me some good news, Klutch.*

Klutch

*The DNA from the shoe matches perfectly with the DNA from the control sticks that Stike used.*

Razor

*Excellent work. Stike is responsible for wrecking my drokes the other night. He's also to blame for rigging the match. Tear his father's shop apart and find the matching shoe. These village idiots don't understand what DNA is all about. I need that shoe to prove that he is a traitor and stop his insurrection. Have the drokes tag him. I want to know everyone he's involved with. After that, arrest him.*

**Klutch**

*As you wish ma'am.*

As Klutch exited the room Vice entered.

**Vice**

*I'm sorry about you losing the match, mom.*

**Razor**

*Don't be so stupid. I never lost. I just got done explaining to Klutch that it was rigged. Stike and his father tampered with my control sticks. Somehow they slowed the power and timing transmitting to my droke. I've got an important job for you and don't mess it up. I want you to get all the video of the drokes who chased this girl called Rev. Where was she last seen? After that I want you to find her and get my chip back. If you can hold her until the drokes arrive so much the better. I told you before. One person who defies authority and gets away with it can spread to everybody. This is how revolutions start.*

**Vice**

*Can't Klutch do it?*

**Razor**

*No, Klutch can't do it! He's busy! Now get your butt in gear and do as I say. It's a team effort.*

**Vice**

*Gotcha mom.*

Vice left the room as Razor shook her head.

## Chapter 20

Rev fell backwards. The door opened. A strong hand grabbed her arm and pulled her inside. The door slammed shut on a droke's head. A small overhanging light showed a short stocky man with a beard. Rev took a quick glance around to capture her surroundings. She was inside the basement of one of the factories.

Bearded Man  
*Who are you?*

Rev  
*My name is Rev.*

Bearded Man  
*You sure are causing a commotion. There's an army of drokes out there. I'm surprised you got this far. Are you hurt?*

Rev  
*No. Thanks for saving my life. What's your name?*

Bearded Man  
*No names here please. The less Razor finds out the better for both of us. So you're Rev. I'm quite impressed. I've heard a lot about you.*

Rev  
*I've only been here a day.*

Bearded Man  
*Brix is a tight community. Everyone knows who you are. You are Cyna's daughter. And you've created quite a lot of trouble for Razor. We in Brix like that.*

Rev  
*You know my mother?*

Bearded Man  
*Yes, many years ago. She put a cast on my broken arm. I remember she also saved your father's leg from being amputated. As a young doctor she knew her*

*business. We better get moving. It won't be long before the drokes start searching the whole place.*

Rev

*Where can I hide?*

Bearded Man

*We're going to get you out of here. Follow me. This factory used to be a warehouse before Razor showed up. She doesn't know about a secret underground tunnel that leads under the river and into the forest.*

Rev

*Please point me in the direction of Wolfie's place. He might know where my mother is.*

Bearded Man

*I'll show you the way.*

He pulled out a flashlight and they made their way along a narrow passageway that sloped slightly downward. They kept a fast pace. As they came close to the hidden exit door to the forest they climbed some stairs.

Rev took in all the odors of the forest and river as she started to climb. She was grateful for the people of Brix. They had supported her in her quest to find her mother. Determined to defeat Razor united these good people. But what part Rev could play was unknown to her. Yet somehow she believed that it was up to her to do something, anything to free this once beautiful town from Razor's fierce grip. Stike's victory gave her hope.

At the top of the stairs a huge boulder blocked their way. The bearded man gave Rev the flashlight. He pulled a lever at the side of the tunnel. The big boulder swung effortlessly outwards to reveal the night sky.

Bearded Man

*Keep going up this gravel hill. At the tree line head to your right. Farther up you'll see a pointed rock rising as high as a tree. Pull the bushes back from beside the rock. You'll see a small path that will lead you up some steps to a cave. I hear you have an affinity you share with animals. Is that true?*

Rev

*Yes. Why?*

Bearded Man

*Because you will need it. Wild wolves surround his place. Good luck Rev. Safe journey.*

Rev

*Thanks ever so much.*

With that Rev climbed the loose gravel rocks towards the hilltop trees. She turned around to look back. All she could see was the big boulder decorated with vines and moss. Like it had been there forever.



## Chapter 21

Rev wished Stike was here with her. Perhaps if she returned to Brix . But no. That would implicate him. Anyone in Brix she contacted would be in trouble.

A rush of wind blew her hair over her face. She brushed it aside as she spotted the large pointed rock that led to Wolfie's cave. On one side of the rock a large bush spread out over a large area. It was dense as Rev tried to separate the foliage and create a path through it. Finally she pushed her way to the other side.

She stood still and studied the landscape before her. A stretch of small bushes, rocks and tall trees ended at the base of a steep rock formation. Rev could see steps etched out of the cliff that wound up to the entrance of a cave. The two moons appeared to sit on top of the cliff.

But there were other lights spread out on the steps and the landscape ahead of her. Fiery glowing lights pierced the darkness. Rev knew what they were. She had been warned. The wolves let out a series of howls that passed from one wolf to another.

Rev remained calm and slowly proceeded up a narrow rugged path towards the steps. The wolves seemed to recognize Rev and slowly gave her the right of way.

She reached the bottom steps and in quiet easy manner started to climb. A few wolves positioned on a flat surface beside some of the steps let out a low growly howl. Rev didn't react and continued her ascent to the cave entrance. Each step she took the wolf closest to her would back off enough for her to get by.

Finally at the cave entrance she noticed a small fire. Flat rock slabs surrounded a fire pit. Rev entered the cave. Suddenly out of the darkness a tall shadowy figure with a cape emerged. His booming voice bounced off the walls. He stood near the fire. Rev could not make out his face.

Wolfie

*Who are you? What do you want?*

Rev

*Are you Wolfie?*

Wolfie

*I asked you first.*

Rev

*I'm Rev. Prook sent me.*

Wolfie

*How did you get past my wolves?*

Rev

*I just walked past them.*

And then without warning Wolfie's cape caught fire.

Rev

*Look out! You're on fire.*

Wolfie turned around to look but Rev reacted quickly and tore the cape off Wolfie, threw it on the ground and stamped the fire out. Wolfie felt subdued and spoke quietly.

Wolfie

*Thank you Rev. My theatrics backfired. I was afraid Razor sent you. I was trying to scare you away.*

Rev

*It was very entertaining. Prook said you could help me. So how do you know Razor?*

Wolfie

*That's a long story I wished I never played a role in. Let's go upstairs. It's more comfortable there. I need a drink.*

## Chapter 22

Wolfie led Rev up a staircase. When he opened the door at the top Rev was amazed. Inside was a cottage made of huge logs and decorated with wood furniture. It contained many electronic machines that Rev had never seen before. It was bright and cheerful. A feeling of comfort embraced her.

Wolfie was an older man, tall with flowing grey hair. He motioned Rev to a cushiony chair near the fireplace as he brought back some cold water for her and another drink for himself.

Rev

*I love your home.*

Wolfie

*Thanks. It's peaceful. Something I never had much in my earlier life.*

Rev

*I'm really messed up. My mother and uncle have disappeared. Prook said they might have gone through some kind of Lux. Razor is trying to kill me. Who are you people? Please tell me what's going on.*

Wolfie took a long pull on his drink. He went to the kitchen and returned with another one. He sat down opposite Rev. He looked down at the floor trying to find the words.

Wolfie

*Razor was the biggest mistake of my life. Or in movie terms the worst production of my career.*

Rev

*What are movie terms?*

Wolfie

*Back on our planet, Earth, I was a director and writer of movies. Let me show you.*

Wolfie turned on a visual screen and showed Rev a clip of some moving pictures. Rev was amazed and was glued to the screen. She had seen still

pictures before but nothing like these. She watched a woman move and talk. After a few minutes Wolfie turned it off.

Rev

*Wow! I recognize that woman. Her name is Faze. She lives down by the river. How did you do that?*

Wolfie

*With a special camera. Years ago I made this film with my wife, Faze. She was one of the greatest actresses of her time. This movie was seen by millions of people all over the world.*

Rev

*Get out of here. You were married to her?*

Wolfie

*Yes, but only after I divorced Razor.*

Rev

*What? You were married to Razor too?*

Wolfie laughed as he got himself another drink.

Wolfie

*You seem surprised, Rev. On our planet it happens a lot. But hold on to your chair. Razor and Faze are sisters.*

Rev's eyes got wide as she leaned back in her cushioned chair.

Rev

*Wow! You really get around. So is Vice your son?*

Wolfie

*No. No. That was Razor's later boyfriend.*

Rev

*Where did you say you people come from again?*

Wolfie

*Earth. Or what's left of it.*

Wolfie went quiet for a few minutes with tears in his eyes. Rev realized she

was asking too many questions but was so fascinated by Wolfie she couldn't contain herself. Finally he regained his composure and looked at Rev and smiled.

Rev

*What happened on your planet?*

Wolfie

*It was flooded, mostly inhabitable. The remaining people blamed Razor for all the pollution she created that led to violent change in the weather patterns. It just kept raining. Razor lost her wealth and power. People were after her. She still has a small base and support on Tailbone Island but nothing compared to what she had before.*

Rev

*This is exactly what she is doing on our planet.*

Wolfie

*Yes but Razor claimed it wasn't her fault. That it was the people's fault for using the polluting energy that killed the planet. She just provided the people with the destructive energy. She never forced them to use it.*

Rev

*So who was right?*

Wolfie

*They're still arguing about it.*

Rev

*Well nobody wants her ugly mess that's destroying Brix and Genus.*

Wolfie

*I wish I could help. But her army of drokes and sophisticated technology that she possesses is unbeatable. She took over the financial structure of Brix and now everyone is indebted to her. I don't want anything to do with her. Faze and I are comfortable here without her. But Razor drugged us and brought us through the Lux three and a half years ago against our will. I suppose she wanted our company close to her. She had nobody else to punish.*

Rev

*What is this Lux and how does it work?*

Wolfie

*Only Razor knows the secret and power of the Lux. How she unraveled it nobody knows. I don't recall any of our journey within the Lux because of the drugs she forced on Faze and me.*

Rev

*So there's a Lux on your planet too.*

Wolfie

*Yes. We entered ours and came out on top of Lux Crag here where your Lux is.*

Rev

*But it's impossible to get to the top of Lux Crag. The ravine is impossible to traverse. There must be some kind of bridge you crossed over to the mainland after you came through the Lux?*

Wolfie

*I don't remember. But Faze might know. She was more conscious than I was from the medication Razor injected into us.*

Rev

*Do you think she would mind if I dropped in?*

Wolfie

*Just tell her Wolfie sent you. She'd love to see you. She seldom talks to her sister. You can trust her.*

Rev remained quiet for a while. Watching the logs burn in the fireplace made her a little sleepy. It was the first time all day she felt this relaxed.

Wolfie

*I heard about how you obtained a special chip from one of the drokes.*

Rev

*Oh! Yes! The gold chip. Maybe you can tell me what it does.*

Rev unzipped her pocket and pulled out the chip. Wolfie took out a magnifying glass and scrutinized both sides intensely. He shook his head back and forth.

Wolfie

*The one side is Razor's invention. She uses this to send instructions to her drokes. It's how they move their body parts and react to conditions all around them. It's called technology on our planet. It's made up of extremely small electrical circuits. She's a highly specialized genius in this field. On the other side of this chip I have no idea what it does.*

Rev was about to wrap it up again and put it back in her pocket.

Wolfie

*I've have something safer for you to keep that in, Rev.*

He went over to a drawer, placed something in his hand and closed the drawer. He opened his hand and showed Rev. The locket was a little bigger than the gold chip. Engraved on the shiny silver encasing was the head of a tiger.

Rev

*It's beautiful.*

Wolfie

*I want you to have it. My gift to you. The previous owner didn't appreciate it and returned it in a most unpleasant manner.*

Rev

*Who wouldn't want such an amazing work of art?*

Wolfie

*Razor.*

Rev

*What!*

Wolfie

*If you don't want it knowing she once wore it I'll understand. I designed it when I was much younger. It was a hobby I took up. You see my father was a watchmaker and I acquired his skill for meticulous attention to detail and craftsmanship.*

Rev

*I'm impressed. Thank you very much. One more possession of Razor's feels like another victory.*

Wolfie

*Maybe the locket rejected her and has now found the rightful owner. I hope it protects you, Rev. Let me show you how it works.*

He pressed down on the front locket four times in various spots and it sprung open. Wolfie showed Rev the nine pressure points on the tiger's face that matched the numbers from one to nine. He instructed her to put a four number passcode in by pressing four of the nine pressure points. Each time the locket opened a new password could be set or if left alone and closed the same passcode would remain in effect.

Rev pressed her four numbers on four different positions on the tiger's face and then closed it. She pressed the same four numbers again and it opened.

Rev

*Amazing. I'll keep it forever.*

Wolfie

*Make sure you always remember your four numbers otherwise this locket is bulletproof. It's almost impossible to physically open.*

Rev took a deep breath and nodded off when Wolfie said something to her. To Rev it sounded like a low voice echoing in the background making no sense to her. Wolfie repeated his words and Rev bounced awake. Wolfie pointed to a guest room and she stumbled to the bed and fell face forward on to the soft pillow.



## Chapter 23

The fresh air blowing through the bedroom curtains woke Rev to a new day. She wandered into the kitchen where she saw Wolfie preparing breakfast. After breakfast Wolfie and Rev stepped out into his backyard and sat down on a bench overlooking his garden and orchard.

Rev took a deep breath. The scent was rejuvenating. Cherry and peach trees were in full bloom. Wolfie's vineyard and his garden of greenery were beginning to crop up. The red, yellow and purple flowers highlighted the stone path that wound around the giant trees. A large fountain shot water out to a lofty distance.

Rev

*I feel like I'm in another world. I didn't know this place existed. You can't see it from below.*

Wolfie

*Yes. The top peaks of the cliff hide it.*

Rev felt the tiger locket on her chest that Wolfie had given her. Her coveralls concealed the necklace and locket. The gold chip definitely held some secret and importance. She didn't want to lose it. She felt it was much safer now.

Rev

*Why did you choose a tiger for the locket?*

Wolfie

*It's a tribute to Stango. He's a tiger I rescued when I was younger while I was making a movie in a distant land on my planet. He was a baby tiger that was injured. The local people wanted to put him down but I had the means to give him a good home. I took him back to my country and gave him a huge place to roam. He recovered and we bonded. I knew he could never be released into the wild and I gave him the best care. I was married to Razor at that time and when we divorced she wanted Stango. We argued, but she was tenacious and possessive. When Razor gets her claws on something it automatically becomes hers. The only way I figured was to let Stango decide who he wanted to live with. So Razor and I stood a fair distance from each other outside and Stango was brought out to the middle area between us. We both called Stango and eventually he stood in front of Razor. I hated her. I can still see that malicious grin on her*

*face as she hugged Stango. After our divorce I found out she stuck a fat piece of meat under her jacket. It was too late. Once she has something she never lets go. Someday I hope to recover Stango. That's why I built this beautiful sanctuary for him.*

Wolfie waved to his grounds. Rev could see his eyes getting misty and remained silent. Finally she spoke.

Rev

*Where is Stango now?*

Wolfie

*Razor has her confined on Tailbone Island back on Earth. She has a base their with a number of supporters. She mines for gold there.*

Rev

*You mean like the stuff her chip is made of?*

Wolfie

*Yes. She's obsessed with getting her hands on as much as she can. She uses it in her drokes. I'm sorry to say it doesn't look good for Brix whatever her future plans are.*

Rev

*Stike said she's building some kind of ship in the harbor at Bluster Harbor.*

Wolfie

*I believe it's a submarine.*

Rev

*What is that?*

Wolfie

*It's like a ship but it can travel underwater.*

Rev

*No way! But that means she might be leaving Brix for good.*

Wolfie

*Possibly, but when will that be? It might be another year. By then she will have devastated this part of your planet. And besides she will probably leave her drokes here to maintain control of Brix in case she returns.*

Rev and Wolfie took a stroll down the garden path. It helped focus Rev's thoughts. She needed direction. What was her next plan? She must consult with Stike on what she had learned from Wolfie. And what about her father? She felt anxious about how he must be worried crazy over her. And Faze. She might know where the bridge is that crosses over to Lux Crag. There were more questions that needed answers.

They passed the fountain and a slight shower sprayed over Rev. They continued to walk past the vineyards and into a forest. Perched in the center of a grassy area a thick tree trunk stood out. A few bulky branches spread out on both sides.

Wolfie looked up. In the distant clouds a large white bird slowly descended. It was the largest bird Rev had ever seen. As it approached she could feel the wind from its massive wings blow her hair. Every sound in the forest grew silent. Gracefully it grabbed hold of the branch and regrouped its feathers.

Rev was speechless. She slowly walked closer to this giant bird. Wolfie came up from behind her and placed some food in her hand.

Rev

*You're home is sure full of wonder and surprises.*

Wolfie

*Hold your hand out and feed her.*

Rev moved under the branch. She felt at one with the bird. Gently it reached down and took the food from her hand. Rev bounced with joy and laughed. She smiled at Wolfie.

Rev

*You and your animal friends. I so envy you. What's its name?*

Wolfie

*Her name is Kleng.*

Rev

*Where did it come from? I've never seen it before in Brix. At least not before Razor appeared. Do you think it came through the Lux?*

Wolfie

*No. I think it originated on this planet. Maybe from a distant community. She comes for a visit every day for some love and food.*

Rev marveled at the big white bird. It seemed so serene and gentle but she loved nature for all its hidden qualities. And this bird had strength and power beneath its feathers. Suddenly Kleng propelled from the tree and shook the ground below it as it swooshed upwards towards the high cliffs. Within seconds a puffy white cloud swallowed it up.

## Chapter 24

Wolfie and Rev returned to the cabin for a sandwich and tea. They went out again. This time they took a small path in the other direction towards an extensive stretch of cliffs overlooking a steep canyon. On the other side stood Lux Crag. The escarpment on Wolfie's side ran closely parallel to Lux Crag for a short distance. Wolfie and Rev sat on a fallen log taking in the immense and majestic landscape before them.

Wolfie pointed to the narrow distance between Lux Crag and a lower cliff to the right of them.

Wolfie

*It's possible that a bridge could traverse somewhere along there. But I've searched and couldn't find any trace. I did see professor Mars exploring along there several times. I asked him once what he was looking for. He didn't say. Maybe he didn't trust me or was too wrapped up in his hunt. Obviously Razor knows the way over. She's returned to Earth a number of times since she's been here.*

Rev noticed a telescope mounted on a wooden structure pointed directly at Lux Crag.

Rev

*May I look?*

Wolfie

*Yes, indeed.*

Rev squinted her left eye shut and focused the lens with her right eye. Lux Crag looked so close that she could reach out and grab it. Then she moved the telescope up a little higher and that's when she noticed a massive glowing light coming from the top of the island pinnacle.

Rev

*What is that giant ball of light?*

Wolfie

*That's the Lux.*

Rev

*Wow! That's amazing. So is it possible that my mother and my uncle Mars found the bridge and crossed over to Lux Crag?*

Wolfie

*I believe so. But I don't like where this is leading, Rev. It's way too dangerous for you or Stike to go through the Lux. I'm sure your parents will return within the next day or two. Please be patient.*

Rev took a deep breath. They returned to Wolfie's cabin. He asked Rev to say hello to Faze from him. They hugged and said their farewells.

At the bottom of the cliff stairs Rev turned around.

Rev

*Thank you so much for everything Wolfie.*

At the top, Wolfie smiled and waved goodbye.

## Chapter 25

The sun was high as Rev made her way down to the river path. It wouldn't take her long to reach Faze's cottage. The river rushed by her. It was clean and clear. The factories were downstream. The combination of land and water invigorated Rev. Over three years confined to Genus had taken its toll on her.

She felt relaxed and let her mind wander. Maybe she was overreacting, she thought. Her mother and uncle would most certainly return and they would find a means to chase Razor out of Brix. She would talk with Faze, find Stike and then return to Genus. The adults will find the solution to this crisis. She must put her trust in them.

A rustling in the bushes above the path brought her back to the present moment. She picked up her pace and remained on high alert. The wind died down and so did the sounds of the surrounding forest.

Without warning Rev caught a flash of a moving object out of the corner of her eye. Somebody was about to collide with her. Automatically she rotated her body back and around, pivoting on her heels. She reached for her flexion and extended it.

The assailant rammed Rev, narrowly missing her as she twisted her weapon between his legs. He continued his forward movement and tumbled down the steep embankment. As he reached the river's edge, he tried to grasp a thin overhanging tree, lost his grip and went under the churning water.

Within seconds Rev slid down the slope and jumped into the river. The current swept her downstream. Ahead of her she spotted her attacker's head. He was clinging to a rock in the middle of the river. Rev caught up to him. He was barely holding on as she clasped her arms around the back of his upper arms and grabbed him from behind. She released one of her arms and backstroked her way to shore.

She dragged him to a safe spot on land and pinned him down. She brushed his wet hair back from his face. He was about her age with a patch over his one eye. Rev recognized Vice.

Rev

*Nice try.*

Vice

*You stole my mother's gold chip. She wants it back.*

Rev

*It's mine. I earned it. Next time order your drokes to be friendlier.*

Vice

*Get off me.*

Rev

*You're welcome for saving your life. You owe me.*

Vice

*You just signed your death wish.*

Vice got up and slicked his wet hair back. He ran up the embankment and vanished.

Rev took a breather and sat down on a large boulder. She reached for her locket. It was still there.



## Chapter 26

Stike had been feeling pumped up since he beat Razor. Everybody in town congratulating him even though the town posters put up by the drokes declared Razor the winner. The excitement and attention he received did not change him. He felt more confident and hopeful but deep down he knew Razor was out for revenge.

Then the news came about her finding proof that it was his shoe that the drokes ripped off him in their conflict. But Stike knew that he had burned the shoe destroying all evidence. The drokes had trashed the professor's shop looking for it but found nothing and didn't discover the hidden rooms below.

That ominous feeling wouldn't leave Stike as he went about the town doing his regular errands. He finished his last errand when multiple drokes formed a tight circle around him holding long shields in front of themselves. They moved forward rapidly casting long shadows over Stike. There was no way out for him. A sense of defeat and futility rattled him to his bones.

The metal shields enclosed him completely. They joined together and were locked in place. They slid under his feet and formed a complete prison. Small holes in the shields allowed Stike to see out. Moments later a heavy machine shook the ground and he felt himself being lifted high in the air. It swung him around viciously and chugged out of town to an unknown hiding site.

## Chapter 27

After her rest Rev continued her trek to see Faze. She could see Faze's cottage in the distance. But she was surprised to see Vice open the cottage door and say goodbye to Faze. Rev ducked behind some bushes and watched as Vice came towards her on the path. He crossed the bridge and headed towards Brix.

Rev came out of hiding and continued the short distance to the cottage. But fearful thoughts raced across Rev's mind. What was Vice doing at Faze's place? Was she walking into a trap? Could she trust Faze after what happened between Vice and herself earlier in the day? She just met Wolfie and Vice. She never met Faze before. She barely knew these strangers from another planet.

Rev pressed on. Her curiosity kept her moving forward. There was no turning back now. She spotted Faze in her backyard watering her yellow roses. Faze's long silver hair glowed in the sunlight. Her bright gentle eyes and beautiful smile removed Rev's fears.

Rev sensed good vibes coming from Faze. She smiled back. They sat outside at a garden table.

Faze

*Welcome dear. You must be Rev.*

Rev

*You look so radiant.*

Faze

*Thank you Rev. That's really kind of you. An aging movie star has to keep her looks.*

Rev

*I guess. I saw you in a movie Wolfie showed me. It was amazing. Well anyways, Wolfie said it would be okay to drop by. Oh and Wolfie sends his greetings.*

Faze

*Of course. How is Wolfie?*

Rev eagerly recounted her meeting with Wolfie. She talked about how he had entertained her and amazed her with stories about Kleng, Stango and his past.

Faze laughed and was captivated by Rev's encounter with Wolfie.

Faze came across so passionate and spirited that Rev believed that she was sitting in an audience watching Faze perform on stage. She left Rev spellbound. The same reaction she had with Wolfie.

Faze

*We really loved each other when we were together and still do. Now we are great friends and enjoy each other's company working together again in the town theatre.*

Rev

*I can't believe you are Razor's sister. You are so different.*

Faze

*Everybody says that. If people said we are the same, then I'd be seriously upset. She destroyed my acting career and marriage when she lost Wolfie to me. I'll never forgive her. I don't know what degree of evil she possesses. It's just that she doesn't want to be part of humanity.*

Rev

*I'm sorry I mentioned her name but I need your help. What do you remember about going through the Lux?*

Faze

*Wolfie and I were drugged and blindfolded when her henchmen carried us into the Lux on Earth. It's all fuzzy. But I still remember being carried through several passages and doorways. That's about it. I'm sorry I can't help you more.*

Rev

*Don't be sorry. Anything you can tell me is helpful.*

Faze

*However the journey through the Lux on this planet may be vastly different.*

Rev

*What about a bridge joining Lux Crag to the mainland?*

Faze

*I do remember something extended out of the rock and carried us over the canyon. It must be there. We certainly didn't fly over it.*

They both had a good laugh.

Faze

*Professor Mars even asked me where it was but I told him I honestly didn't know. Wherever it is, it's well hidden.*

Rev

*I had a bit of trouble with Vice before I got here. He tried to retrieve the gold chip.*

Faze

*There's a lot of information on that chip. Razor doesn't want anybody to have it. It took a mighty slice of courage to take that from her. I'm proud of you but also fearful. Stay far away from Razor.*

Rev

*I noticed Vice visited you before I arrived. He must have been disappointed that he didn't get the gold chip back. I'll bet Razor will chew him out.*

Faze became quiet. She looked down at her freshly cut yellow roses in her hand.

Faze

*I don't know how to tell you, Rev.*

Rev

*What? What is it? Please.*

Faze

*I stay in touch with Vice. I feel bad for him. He brought me good news for Razor but bad news for you and Stike. Your mother and uncle have been taken prisoners by Razor's men on planet Earth. I'm truly sorry.*

Rev was visibly shaken. Her worst fears had become real. Her head kept spinning around and around. A tangled storm of rage, fear, hate and helplessness rushed throughout her whole body.

Faze brought her a glass of cold water. Rev took her time drinking it. She took a deep breath.

Rev

*I can't return to Genus. I must find that bridge. Stike and I have no choice but*

*to rescue our parents. I won't abandon them on a strange planet. I just will not.*

Faze hesitated for a while before speaking.

Faze

*There is another way besides the bridge to cross over to Lux Crag. Wolfie can help you. Just mention the words "Crazy Crossover" and he will know exactly what to do. It was the name of a movie we worked on together. I played the role of a brave girl in that movie. I believe you can fulfill that part for real.*

Rev

*I'm not sure what you mean but I'll try anything. First I have to find Stike, and then return to Wolfie.*

Faze

*When you pass over to our planet you will land somewhere close to our Lux near Tailbone Island. There are two safe places on that island. One is called Eagle Bluff. The other is Crystal Falls. Both places have good people who will help you. The third point of landing is called Okay Bay. But it's not okay. Do not go there. This is Razor's base. She still has many people who support her there. There is danger ahead but always believe in yourself, Rev. Never give up. You are an intelligent girl. Stay in control of your emotions. You will always be in my thoughts and my heart. Safe journey, dearest.*

They hugged and said goodbye. It was dusk as Rev ran back to Brix. The tears on her face felt cold with the light breeze blowing against it.

## Chapter 28

Rev hid in the shadows of Brix. Two drokes passed by patrolling the street across from her. Were these drokes watching the professor's shop? Should she take a risk by trying to find Stike there?

Rev jumped as someone whispered her name. Slane stepped out of the darkness.

Rev

*Slane. Where's Stike?*

Slane

*He's been captured. Follow me.*

They snaked their way along the building's shadows. Soon they stopped at the entrance of the train yard and large storage area for big machinery. Slane cut a small hole in the fence with his wire cutters. A small overhead light exposed a large maintenance and storage warehouse. Scattered throughout the yard were train cars, axles, and abandoned parts.

Rev

*Is this where Stike is?*

Slane

*Look for a crane with a big magnet on top.*

They crept slowly around the vast yard scanning every high machine. Then Slane pointed towards something.

Slane

*There he is.*

Rev and Slane ran towards a tall crane. At the end of its long arm, a large magnet clung to an enclosed container beneath it.

Rev

*Stike! Stike!*

The high metal enclosure rocked back and forth and Rev could see an eye peer

out of a small hole.

Stike

*Watch out! Behind you!*

In an instant they turned around. Terror struck them. A short distance away, stood Brixwrecker. They froze.

Brixwrecker wasn't moving. Standing in front of the warehouse doors, its colossal body remained motionless.

Rev slowly approached it. So this was Brixwrecker. She touched the cold steel hands of the giant droke. Lifeless, but so deadly.

Slane

*Rev, stay back.*

She looked way up. Its eyes were blank, staring out into infinity.

Rev

*It's shut down.*

Slane

*It could come alive at any second. Let's help Stike.*

They looked up at Stike. Before anyone spoke Rev was climbing up the long arm of the monster machinery to where he was hanging. She positioned herself so that she could look directly at Stike through the holes.

Rev

*This is a fine mess you've gotten yourself into.*

Stike laughed.

Stike

*So good to see you, cousin. I think I'm toast. I don't see myself getting out of here.*

Rev

*I do. I just need some leverage. Hold on.*

Rev climbed down the elevated arm.

Slane

*What are you looking for?*

Rev

*A long steel bar. Something to pry the shield open with.*

Slane found a metal pry bar and handed it to Rev.

Rev

*Keep an eye out for any drokes.*

Rev climbed the steel rungs of the lengthy arm of the crane. She was almost to the top when her foot slipped on a crossbar. She let out a large groan, as she slammed down hard on the metal and slid over the edge as she held on by one hand.

The pry bar clanked down the cross bars of the machine's arm before it thumped to the ground.

Everyone kept quiet.

Slane looked towards the entrance for drokes while Stike peered out the holes from above.

Stike

*What happened Rev? Are you okay?*

Rev swung her feet up on the rungs and pulled her body to a resting position on the crane. Slane retrieved the pry bar and climbed up part way to hand it to Rev.

Suddenly the long arm made a loud creaking noise and fell rapidly towards the ground. Before they could all catch their breath it stopped falling. The distance to the ground from Stike's prison was reduced by about half but it was still lofty.

Rev cautiously slid down and grabbed the bar from Slane.

Slane made it back safely on the ground as Rev climbed to the top of the crane. Three chains that came together on a huge ring that hooked to the crane held up the mighty magnet and its prisoner. Rev wiggled her way down so she was standing on the round thick magnet. She balanced herself as the magnet and Stike's enclosure swayed back and forth.

Rev

*Just hold on, Stike. Rev to the rescue.*

Stike



*Get down. There's a droke coming.*

Rev flattened herself just as a droke shone its headlight over the rail yard. It stood outside the gated entrance for a little longer and then strolled back towards Brix. Slane came out from behind a train car and stared up at Rev from below.

Rev continued to balance herself above Stike. She wedged her pry bar between two adjoining shields near the top of the locked cage. She leaned back for maximum leverage. A screechy squeal pierced the silence as the metal locks weakened.

Rev

*It's coming loose. A few more tugs and you'll be free. I just need to separate one of these shields.*

Stike

*Be careful you don't fall when you're leaning back.*

Slane took cover as Rev gave a stronger tug on the pry bar. One of the shields went sailing to the ground. In an instant Rev lost her grip on the pry bar and fell back on the chains.

The cage swung perilously high up in one direction.

Stike fell on his rear and slid out the opening. Grabbing hold of one of the remaining shields with one hand he reached out his other hand for Rev.

Rev swung down to the top of the crane and caught his hand just in time.

Stike released his other hand and Rev tried to swing him towards the crane.

A sinking feeling surged throughout Rev's body as her grip slowly let go of Stike's hand.

Stike bounced off the crane below and collapsed to the ground.

Rev

*Noooooo!*

She scrambled down the crane and comforted Stike. Slane was quick to respond and both of them helped Stike to his feet.

Rev

*I'm so sorry. How bad is it?*

Rev could tell that Stike was in considerable pain.

Stike

*I'll live. But I can't put any weight on my right foot.*

Slane

*I'll take your shoe off before it swells up. We have to get out of here.*

Slane took Stike's shoe off. Rev and Slane each lifted Stike by an arm. They crawled through the fence hole and skulked back to the professor's shop. They snuck in through a back window in the alleyway to escape the drokes.

## Chapter 29

They reached the hidden downstairs' rooms. Stike writhed in pain as they placed him on his bed. Rev examined his leg and ankle.

Rev

*Nothing is broken.*

Stike

*It sure doesn't feel that way.*

Slane came back with some ice in a towel and wrapped it around his ankle. Rev prepared a herbal tea to ease the inflammation. A couple of pillows elevated Stike's leg as he drank the tea. When Slane was done applying the ice pack Rev wrapped Stike's ankle with a firm supportive bandage. Stike dozed off.

Slane

*He needs to rest but we can't stay here long. Eventually the drokes will find us.*

Rev

*There's nowhere else to go.*

Slane

*There are secret tunnels that run underneath the town. At the center of town an underground safe house will protect him. Food, water, and supplies are stored there for emergencies. We can send for a doctor once we reach it. I'll show you the hidden passageway.*

Slane and Rev went to the end of the professor's workshop. Slane reached under a tall bookcase and soon it slid sideways. Behind it, on a paneled wall, he pressed another hidden mechanism. A small door swung open to reveal a dark tunnel.

Slane

*Once Stike wakes up we must leave.*

Rev prepared a makeshift crutch for Stike. Slane handed her some fresh clothes. Rev was happy to get out of the dirty blue coveralls. The clean pants, shirt and jacket felt comfortable.

Once Stike woke up they turned out the lights and left the downstairs hideout to go into the secret tunnel. Slane pulled on a lever by the tunnel door. The bookcase and door returned to their previous location inside the professor's workshop.

Rev led the way with a flashlight. Stike used his crutch and Slane for support. They reached the underground safe house ten minutes later.

Stike became comfortable. They all relaxed while Rev told her story. Everybody she met. Everything that happened to her since she ran from the stadium.

Rev

*I forgot to congratulate you on your victory over Razor.*

Stike

*Thanks, Rev. I'm just happy that you made it back. Not to mention rescuing me. Thanks so much. There is hope for Brix.*

Rev

*Yes, by defeating her you've exposed a crack in her armor.*

The three of them shared some food. They continued talking about their adventures that happened over the past couple of days. They all took a rest. When everyone opened their eyes, Rev was the first to speak. For a few seconds she tried to form her words in her thoughts before speaking.

Rev

*There is something I left out of my story. I'm sorry to say this but Razor's men on Earth are holding our parents captive.*

On hearing this Stike seemed to be in more pain than from his fall.

Stike

*We have to rescue them.*

Rev

*You're not going anywhere. I wish you were coming with me but I have to do this alone. Time is running out. Faze said that Wolfie has a plan to get me across the canyon to Lux Crag. There is no way that I'm going to sit around and do nothing.*

Stike

*I really messed things up.*

Rev

*How? By beating Razor. You did your part. Now it's my turn.*

Stike

*Just don't go near her.*

Rev

*That's what everyone keeps telling me. I won't come close to her. She'll be in Brix. Hopefully I'll be on another planet rescuing our parents. I need to return to Wolfie as soon as possible.*

Stike

*Slane will show you the way out. The passage will come out near the river. Be careful. If anything bad happens...*

Rev

*Put that thought out of your mind, cousin. I already have.*

With that they smiled and hugged. No more words were needed. They both knew what the other felt.

Slane led Rev towards the underground exit. When they reached it he slowly opened the trap door and peered around cautiously. He said goodbye to Rev and wished her a good outcome as he closed the secret exit behind him.

## Chapter 30

Razor

*I would just love to destroy this whole rotten town. These Brix simpletons need a crash course in obedience.*

Vice

*I like the people here.*

Razor

*Don't interrupt me when I'm on a tirade. This Rev is one lucky little girl. I'll give her that. Everything was going to plan before she showed up and disrupted everything. You've failed me again, Vice. You're driving me to drink.*

Vice

*She's smart.*

Razor

*Just because she's smarter than you doesn't make her smart. No she will trip up and that will be the end of her. I have to be patient. Something I have to work on. Patience. I need to get grounded. I'm returning to Earth for a short time. You and Klutch can take care of things here.*

Vice

*I want to go too.*

Razor

*Want. Want. You always want. Besides you can stay here with your fellow simpletons. After all you said you liked them.*

Vice

*Please mom. I'll be good this time.*

Razor

*This time keep your mouth shut with your friends. Okay? I don't want anyone knowing what my plans are when we get back there. Top secret. Understand? Now get ready. I can't wait to see our two prisoners there.*

## Chapter 31

Wolfie bolted up from his fireplace chair. Awakened by a knock at his door he cautiously approached it. How could anyone get past his wolves? And all the way up to his sanctuary?

He looked through the peephole. He let out a sigh of relief as he saw Rev shining a light on her face.

Wolfie opened the door and laughed.

Wolfie

*Isn't it past your bedtime?*

Rev

*Sorry Wolfie. I lost track of time.*

Wolfie

*It's okay. I like staying up late. Come in and warm yourself by the fireplace.*

Rev settled into a chair and warmed herself. She needed someone to talk to and Wolfie was her captive audience. She told him everything that happened after she left him earlier in the day. Talking faster and faster she started to lose her breath and soon found it hard to breathe. Wolfie realized she was hyperventilating probably due to emotional stress.

Wolfie

*Purse your lips and just breath slowly. Try to hold it for ten to fifteen seconds. Release it slowly and repeat. Put your thoughts in a calming scene.*

Rev reached a space of serenity. She remained silent. Wolfie talked her into getting some sleep.

## Chapter 32

After breakfast Wolfie and Rev drank some juice around a garden table. Rev finished telling her story about what Faze said.

Wolfie

*So you are determined to go through with this?*

Rev

*Absolutely.*

Wolfie

*Nothing I can say will stop you.*

Rev

*Nope.*

Wolfie

*A fifteen-year-old girl journeying to a new world on a strange planet. Are you sure?*

Rev

*You did it. And if I find my mother and uncle I won't be alone. Besides Faze told me to believe in myself.*

Wolfie

*And what shall I tell your father when he asks me why I didn't stop you.*

Rev

*Tell him you tried just like he did.*

Wolfie laughed and shook his head.

Rev

*So what does this movie called Crazy Crossover mean?*

Wolfie

*Faze played a part in that movie where savages are chasing her and a giant bird whisks her away to safety.*



Rev

*I think I see where this is going.*

Wolfie

*Are you ready to take a leap of faith?*

Rev

*Ahh, I think so. Does this have something to do with Kleng.*

Wolfie

*You're not backing out are you?*

Rev

*Never. But I think I'm too big to ride Kleng.*

Wolfie

*I agree. You won't be riding on Kleng. Instead she will be holding on to you.*

Rev

*Okay. I hope Kleng knows what she's doing. Otherwise I'm all in.*

As they walked towards the high cliff overlooking Lux Crag, they talked some more about the preparations necessary for her journey.

Rev

*Faze told me about Tailbone Island. Crystal Falls and Eagle Bluff are safe havens. Okay bay is not okay*

Wolfie

*Exactly. If you land on Eagle Bluff find someone called Erik. At Crystal Falls there is a woman by the name of Monique. At either place you will find shelter. And do me one small favor if all goes well.*

Rev

*Of course. Anything.*

Wolfie

*If you see Stango give him a big hug from me.*

Rev

*How will I know I've got the right tiger? I mean I don't want to be some tiger's*

*lunch.*

Wolfie

*Good point. I believe there is only one tiger on Tailbone Island. But just in case, Stango has a white mark on his nose in the shape of a diamond. One other thing, which you should know. Razor has given the locals the idea that Stango is a man-eater. She has trained him to act ferocious but he is quite harmless.*

Rev

*I'd love to meet Stango. I'll definitely give him a big hug from you. And please send a message to my father about where I'm going.*

They remained silent as they approached the take off point overlooking the canyon. When they reached the edge of the cliff Wolfie strapped Rev's hands to a thick round stick. There was enough room at each end for Kleng to grasp with its claws.

Wolfie

*Hold your arms and hands up high.*

Then he whistled loudly. Kleng appeared out of nowhere and nosedived full speed towards Rev. She could hardly keep her hands from shaking as she stretched out her arms towards the sky.

Wolfie

*No goodbyes this time, Rev. Only hellos when you return.*

Before Rev could reply she was thrust off her feet and lifted high in the sky.

## Chapter 33

Rev's heart beat rapidly. She never felt this excited in her life. The wind rushed against her whole body. Kleng's huge wings moved gracefully up and down. Sailing high above the canyon Rev experienced a higher perception of everything she saw. Her whole being enjoyed a wondrous feeling of heightened awareness. All her senses became magnified. She was more alive than she had ever been. She never wanted it to end.

Kleng turned slightly, positioning its right wing higher and lowering its left wing. It started to descend gradually. Rev could see everything that was small below her getting bigger.

She held on firmly to the wooden pole as Kleng spotted an open field and drifted in close to the ground. It held its wings back and released its grip on the pole.

Rev was barely off the ground and timed Kleng's release just as she came in contact with the ground and began running. Out of breath, she collapsed and lay stretched out on her back looking up at the sky.

She shielded her eyes from the sun as Kleng disappeared into the blue.

Rev jumped to her feet and slid her hands to the ends of the pole to free herself from the ropes. She looked over to Wolfie's spot on his cliff. She caught the bright reflection of his telescope and waved to him. She knew he was watching out for her from afar.

Rev set about her climb to the top of Lux Crag. She moved through the long grassy field until she came across a plane of flat rocks. She scaled up the rocks placing her feet carefully. She noticed a thin path in the distance. Continuing on the path led her to the base of the high tower. The path wound around the tall pillar of stone.

Out of breath Rev reached the top of the crag. At the center of a massive plateau she was overcome by the enormous golden orb. Rapidly spinning it was suspended in the air, high above Rev. Multiple revolving bands of light oscillated around it constantly.

It reminded Rev of the gyroscope in professor Mars' workshop only this was solid light and soared higher than any tree.

Rev stared and wondered how to enter the Lux? She tried to move forward but an opposing energy field stopped her.

Then a large stone ball suddenly appeared below the floating orb.

Rev hesitated and then slowly approached it. Rev stretched her hand out and touched the perfectly round stone. It was smooth as glass and pitch black. Like a giant marble at least five times higher than her, she could see her reflection in it.

As she moved around it Rev was surprised to see some indentations on the giant black stone. What are these doing here? They looked like a pair of handprints. She stretched her hands out and placed them in the impressions of the giant black marble.

Instantly a square slab of stone slid out of the black sphere towards Rev. On it were three rows, each with three holes equally spaced out. On its ledge lay nine stones. Each stone had a separate number from one to nine chiseled on it.

The words below the rock slab read: < Place the stones in the correct holes. All diagonal, vertical and horizontal rows must always add up to the sum of fifteen. You have one hundred and twenty seconds. You have no second chance.  
>

A round timer cut out of the stone started the countdown.

Rev wasn't prepared for this but at least she understood the instructions.

She remained calm and resigned not to be beat by this obstacle. She must solve it and enter the Lux.

Okay, nine holes and nine numbers, one to nine. She immediately placed the middle number, five, into the exact center of the puzzle.

Her father always emphasized that Rev must attain balance in her life. This seemed like a logical choice for the puzzle. On the top row, she then placed the number four above the number five. Then on the bottom row she placed the number six under the number five. They all added up to fifteen. But when she placed the other numbers around it, nothing added up to fifteen.

Becoming frustrated, Rev screamed at the big rock. Don't panic. Just think, Rev told herself. You can do this. You've come this far.

She kept moving and changing the numbered stones around but nothing worked. Forty five seconds remained on the timer.

Sweat rolled down her forehead and blocked her vision. She wiped it off with her sleeve.

Rev tried a new approach. She put the four, five and six in a diagonal formation on the square. She moved the number eight around to different positions. Finally she put it in one of the corners and then placed the number two in the opposite diagonal corner. It worked. They added up to fifteen.

Then a flash shot through her head. The even numbers go on the corners and the odd numbers in between. She quickly juggled the odd numbers around the vacant holes. She stared at the puzzle and added up each row. It worked. It must be right.

4 3 8

9 5 1

2 7 6

The timer stopped at twelve seconds and the puzzle stone slab retreated backwards. A large door appeared.

Rev didn't hesitate. She stepped forward into the darkness.

## Chapter 34

Rev entered the huge black marble. The door behind her closed seamlessly. Complete darkness engulfed her. From the uppermost dome of the interior a laser light pierced the darkness. It created a circular motion on the floor below. An arrow on the floor illuminated and pointed towards the direction of the circular spinning light in the center of the floor.

Rev proceeded warily. As she came closer to the spinning light it changed to a variety of colors. A roaring sound echoed off the round walls. It sounded like a windstorm over the sea. She stood just outside the circle of light, took a deep breath and took the final step.

Covered in a golden light, Rev floated up midway between the ceiling and the floor of the golden orb above the stone rock. Total tranquility gently moved like a wave through her whole being. No fear or anxiety was able to penetrate her existence. She felt safe and protected as if in a womb. Rev was flipped upside down and lifted to the top of the dome. Barely touching the wall with her feet, she travelled along the spherical interior walls as if she were a ball on a string of light being tossed around perpetually.

Faster and faster she orbited the interior of the Lux until she reached that surreal state between being awake and asleep. And then ... nothing.

In a dream state, Rev kept falling in slow motion. She couldn't stop. Nothing to grasp or hold onto. Where was she? Helpless, her old enemies of fear and panic returned to her body. Then her body smacked into something. Cold water. Deeper and deeper she fell in the cold darkness. She flung her arms wildly.

Rev coughed up water and gasped for air as she reached the surface. Huge waves propelled her to shore. She crawled on her hands and knees and came to rest in a safe area. Her vision was blurred as she noticed some older girls approaching her. One of them stuck her face up close to Rev. She reached for Rev's tiger amulet but when she took hold of it the strange girl was hurled backwards as if she received an electric shock.

Somehow it energized Rev back to life as she sat up.

Rev

*What are you doing?*

One of the three island girls, named Allie, with thick wavy hair on top but cut

short at the back, replied.

Allie

*Never mind who we are. Who are you and how did you get here? And why did you try to electrocute me with that locket of yours?*

Rev

*I can't remember how I got here. As far as the locket, I have no idea why it doesn't like you.*

The other two island girls laughed. They introduced each other. The one called Chloe, had colorful drawings all over her arms and neck. Her hair was done up at the top. She had a nice smile and wore big sunglasses. The last one called herself Zhen. She acted calm and reserved. She was probably the leader, thought Rev. She also figured they were about twenty years of age, about five years older than her. Rev introduced herself.

Chloe

*Don't mind Allie. Let's get you more comfortable Rev.*

Zhen reached out her hand and helped Rev to her feet. Chloe led the way back to their camp. It didn't take long to reach their sheltered cove. Some huge rocks protected their tents on three sides of the base camp. The other side overlooked the ocean that blew Rev to shore.

Chloe started a campfire. Zhen fetched some refreshments and Allie sat down quietly keeping an eye on Rev. Once they were all seated around the campfire, Allie became anxious to speak.

Allie

*So, Rev. As a guest on our island its customary to explain to your hosts, just what brought you here. And how did you get here? Did you swim from Tailbone Island?*

Allie had a good laugh. Rev felt uncomfortable around her. But when she heard her mention Tailbone Island she felt hope. She had made it through the Lux and landed on Earth. She must be close to her destination. Zhen and Chloe remained silent. Rev was hesitant about trusting these three. And she knew they didn't trust her. What if these girls were Razor's supporters? Or maybe spies?

Rev

*I don't know how I got here. It felt like I fell from the sky.*

Allie

*Or maybe you tracked us here. Possibly one of Razor's agents?*

Rev remained silent as she stared into the fire. Allie leaned into Rev's face.

Allie

*Well girls, it looks like we have a traitor among us.*

Zhen

*Sit back Allie. This is no way to treat a guest.*

Allie

*Okay, but I bet Razor's men are closing in. That tiger locket is probably a tracking device.*

Chloe

*Good. Then we can get off this island.*

Allie

*I'm just protecting our mission. One mistake could cost us our life.*

Zhen

*I understand your concern Allie. But I don't think Razor employs someone this young.*

Allie

*She could be one of Vice's friends.*

Chloe

*I don't think Vice has any friends. Especially not an attractive girl like Rev.*

Could this be all a ploy to trap her, Rev thought. Should she tell them who she really was? How did she end up on this island and not Tailbone Island? Time was being wasted. She had to take a chance.

Rev

*I'm from Brix on planet Radium. I came through the Lux.*

Allie

*I told you. She's on Razor's side.*



Rev

*I am not. I hate Razor. She's destroying our town with her pollution.*

Chloe

*Well, if that doesn't sound familiar.*

Zhen

*Okay, Rev. Give us your reason for coming through the Lux.*

Rev

*My mother and uncle crossed over to this planet a few days ago. Razor's men have taken them captive. Razor has taken over our town, Brix, with her drokes. She's poisoning our air and water. I need to get to Tailbone Island. Please help me.*

Allie

*I'm afraid you're stuck here like us.*

Rev

*Where is this place and why are you here?*

Allie

*Ask Chloe and Zhen. They decided to take the short way home to Tailbone Island. They wouldn't listen to me. I told them there was a storm coming. But no. They were in a hurry to get back.*

Chloe

*Oh, just button it tight.*

Zhen

*As you can see, Rev, we are growing a little bit irritable. We've been shipwrecked on this island for over a month. We're running low on supplies and manners. Desperation and hopelessness is setting in.*

Rev

*Were you on some kind of mission?*

Allie

*What makes you say that?*

Rev

*You mentioned it. And because I noticed you were all wearing the same style*

*of boots. Are you in a special unit or something like that?*

Allie

*Yeah. Something like that.*

Zhen

*We are returning to Tailbone Island with some special cargo that will help, let's say, eradicate Razor for good.*

Rev

*Then I can catch a ride with you to Tailbone Island when you get rescued?*

Allie

*Does it look like we're being rescued? Nobody is coming for us. It's too stormy and there are dozens of small islands like this to search. This island is our graveyard.*

Chloe

*Don't be so upbeat, Allie. Just be honest with her.*

Allie

*I'm going to fetch some more wood for the fire.*

Allie climbed the path between the boulders to the top of the hill and disappeared.

Zhen

*Whenever anyone travels through the Lux, the sky lights up in a fiery blaze. Less than a week ago it lit up twice at the same time. We thought it was Razor and Vice returning. But your explanation about your mother and uncle makes sense now. It was them that passed through. And moments before you were washed ashore today the sky was lit up by a ball of fire. Why did your mother and uncle travel to Earth?*

Rev

*They wanted to find information on Razor in her homeland. Something that could be used against her. Anything that could help us defeat her. We don't have much time before there is permanent destruction in my hometown.*

Chloe

*Take a look around here. What do you see? Nothing but water. Most of the*

*land on this planet is covered in water. See those islands way over there? At one time we used to be able to walk over to them. Forests and valleys are now covered in water. Razor was a big influence on the state of this planet.*

Allie returned with more wood. She carefully placed it on the fire. It crackled as flames shot higher. It was dusk and the stars became visible. Eventually darkness engulfed the cove and the fire highlighted the group's faces and bodies. Everyone remained silent as if hypnotized by the fire.

Rev looked at Chloe.

Rev

*I'm curious. I'm sorry, but what are all those pictures all over your arms?*

Chloe

*No harm in asking, Rev. They're called tattoos. You see, it's my life story. All the people and events that happened to me, I express on my personal canvas. My skin. All the good, the bad, hate, and love. Whatever. It's totally personal. I have nothing to be ashamed about. It's all here for anyone to see.*

Rev

*It's beautiful. All the vivid colors and it seems to be all meshed together. From the past few day's experiences I could tattoo my whole arm.*

Chloe

*I have an excellent tattoo artist to work with. Maybe he can do it for you.*

Zhen

*Let's not get ahead of ourselves, Chloe. She just landed here.*

The group was ready to pack it in for the evening when two fiery balls torched the night sky.

Allie

*Razor and Vice have returned. How deplorable.*

Rev

*There has to be a way to get off this island.*

## Chapter 35

Rev awoke to shouting. She crawled out of her tent and looked up. She heard the island girls talking loudly on the hill above the camp. She climbed the hill to join them. They were taking turns looking out to the north of the island. A large telescope was mounted at the highest point.

Chloe

*It's huge. The biggest one yet.*

Allie

*It looks well positioned.*

Zhen

*It's drifting slowly. It does have potential.*

Rev

*What is it?*

They seemed a bit startled to hear Rev's voice as the island girls turned around to face her.

Chloe

*Perhaps some hope.*

Rev took her turn and looked through the scope at the distant object floating out at sea.

She couldn't make out exactly what it was.

Rev

*I don't understand.*

Allie

*It's a pile of floating garbage but it could mean our freedom.*

Zhen

*All the litter that people have thrown into the ocean over the past century has come together to form these mountains of trash. As if the ocean itself spit out everything that it detests. Mostly anything made of plastic. Billions of cans, cups,*

*nets and fishing lines. Like a giant trap. It just keeps collecting more and more garbage. Basically anything that floats.*

Allie

*Ever vomit, Rev? Well this is the ocean's way of saying it's sick. Fed up with stupid people.*

Chloe

*Okay, Allie. We all agree with you but let's focus on the positive here. I'm getting hungry and I'm not in the mood for one of your all day rants.*

Rev

*Oh I get it. We can climb on board this trash and get off the island.*

Zhen

*It's not that simple. See that bay over to the right. If it floats off the coast there, then we can swim out to it and ease it into shore. But if the winds and currents take it down the west side of the island we can't board it.*

Zhen moved the telescope to the left of her and let Rev take a look.

Zhen

*See the channel between our island and the other island west of us?*

Rev

*Yes. The channel in between is flowing extremely fast.*

Allie

*Good. She's catching on.*

Rev

*So what do we do?*

Chloe

*Just wait.*

Rev

*Is this the first one like this that you've spotted?*

Allie

*Nope. We've seen three others, and they all blew by us down the chute.*

Rev

*How long before we know which direction it will take?*

Zhen

*At least half a day.*

The group went back to the campsite for breakfast. After they ate, Rev wandered over to the west side of the island. As she edged closer to the high cliff, the north wind swayed her. She grabbed hold of a tree as she peered down to the turbulent water below.

Rev sat there for an hour, just thinking. She strolled along towards the south side of the island where she had been swept to shore. It was calm here as she noticed the mast of a sunken sailboat barely sticking out of the water. This was their boat, she realized. The one that stranded them on this island.

Then an idea flashed through her mind.

She made it back to the group. They were taking turns looking through the telescope.

Rev

*I have a plan to get us off this island.*

Allie

*You've been here less than a day and you know how to rescue us?*

Rev

*That's right.*

Allie

*We've been here over a month. What makes you so smart?*

Chloe

*Just let her talk, Allie.*

Rev

*I need to board your sunken vessel. I want to see if I can find any useful supplies that can do the job.*

Allie

*Like what? We salvaged anything of use on the Gracilis.*

Rev

*What about rope? And the anchor?*

Zhen

*We dropped the anchor to try and slow us down as we came down the chute. We lost it.*

Rev

*Please, can I dive down and take a look?*

Allie

*Sure but don't blame us if you drown.*

Rev

*I won't drown. I have a special breathing device.*

Rev reached into her pants pocket and brought out her breather. She attached it to her face. Everything fit snug, including the goggles.

Chloe

*Whoa! You're telling me you can breathe underwater with that? For how long?*

Rev

*Indefinitely. My father invented it.*

Allie

*I want to try it out.*

The group scurried down to the sunken boat. Rev showed Allie how to correctly put the breathing device on her face. Allie tested it out in the shallow water. After a minute she surfaced and Rev showed her how to release the breather.

Allie

*It's unbelievable. Whoever invented this is a genius. I'm diving with you, Rev. Can we switch the breather back and forth?*

Rev

*Yes, but I'll need a knife.*

Chloe handed Rev her pocketknife. Allie and Rev picked a safe spot and dove down to the wreck of the Gracilis.

Rev felt at home in the water. The water was murky as small fish darted around them. Rev could hold her breath longer than Allie so she had let Allie be the first to use the breather. The sunken sailboat was resting on a declining shelf. As they approached Rev could see a large hole in the hull of the boat. The sails, resting on the sloped ledge, gently flapped up and down as if they were trying to breath life into the wooden corpse of the sailboat. It was beyond repair but still had something to offer.

Allie swam towards the cabin as she returned the breather to Rev. Long ropes danced in the water as Rev started to cut them loose. She tested it to see if they would float. They did. She watched them drift upwards to the surface.

Rev could hear a muffled thumping sound. It was coming from the cabin. The door was closed.

Allie!

Rev swam as fast as she could. She pulled on the cabin door. It didn't budge. She slammed both her feet against the handle. Nothing. She swam to the top of the cabin and lunged at the skylight.

Suddenly the entire boat started to slide down the shelf. The pitch black water at the edge of the shelf advanced rapidly.

The skylight broke loose. Rev ripped the breather from her face and thrust it over Allie's mouth. A few seconds later, Allie handed Rev a spear gun and they both escaped the sailboat's grip on them. As they raced to the surface, they both looked back. The Gracilis had disappeared over the edge as if it had never been there.



## Chapter 36

Allie

*I've never been so scared in all my life. Thanks for saving me.*

Allie gave Rev a big hug as she caught her breath between sobs of joy and relief. Chloe and Zhen smiled at each other.

Rev

*Anytime Allie. You found an unexpected treasure. It's more than I hoped for.*

Rev took hold of the spear gun and carefully examined it. This could work. They climbed back up to the cliff overlooking the rapid flow of the channel. Rev leaned on the big tree that stood close to the edge. It stood midway on the jugged cliff point. Below, to the left of the tree was the calm inlet. To the right of the tree was the speeding channel.

Rev

*This is our one chance if the plastic float comes down the channel. Just in case it does we have to be prepared. By the flow of the current, I would say it would pass right beneath us. We can modify the spear gun to attach the boat's rope to it. This is where I will shoot the spear gun into the plastic float. We'll prepare enough slack so that we can wrap the rope around this thick tree. We can then slowly loosen the rope from around the tree and guide the garbage float over to the quiet bay.*

Chloe

*That's what we tried with our boat when we dropped the anchor. We tried to swing it into the southern bay. It worked but we capsized our vessel.*

Allie

*But this time it's plastic. It will stay afloat.*

Zhen

*I like your plan, Rev. We have nothing to lose.*

The island girls got busy and laid the rope out. Allie worked on changing the spear gun to adapt to the sailboat's rope. Rev practiced shooting the spear gun

and making adjustments to it. They calculated the distance from the top of the cliff to the water. They left enough slack in case of error. They continued to wrap the rope around the tree a number of times. Then they laid out a long stretch of rope inland from the tree. With Rev shooting the gun the other three would hold on to the rope as an anchor, some distance inland from the tree.

Minutes later they were back at the telescope checking the location of the floating garbage. Still not showing which direction it would take, the group headed back to camp for supper. Hardly anyone spoke as they sat around the campfire after eating. They passed out in their tents early. Tomorrow was do or die.

## Chapter 37

Rev woke up at dawn. She climbed up to the top to look through the telescope. The other girls were already there. They looked glum as Rev came closer. What could be wrong?

Rev took a look through the scope. The plastic garbage float was closer but much bigger than Rev had thought. It was almost an island in itself. The spear gun and rope would never hold it.

Rev

*How long before it gets here?*

Zhen

*About half an hour to the beginning of the channel and another five to ten minutes to the big tree.*

Chloe

*Sorry, Rev. It's too big for us to change its course. Maybe the next one.*

Rev

*There is no next one. I don't have time. This is it. Right here. Right now.*

Rev walked briskly over to the cliff. She broke a small branch from the tree and threw it upstream into the rushing water. She timed the distance it took for the branch to float past her. She repeated this course of action several times. The other girls caught up to her.

Rev

*We can jump on it from here.*

Chloe

*We don't know how close to the cliff it will rush by.*

Zhen

*And from this height we could fall right through the garbage and land at the bottom of the channel.*

Allie

*Or we could do nothing and rot.*

Rev felt relieved that one person was on her side. Allie, who was against her from the start, now backed her.

Chloe

*It's a dangerous leap of faith.*

Allie

*We've come through worst. We took an oath to protect Tailbone Island from all enemies. Razor has returned. Rev is right. Time has run out. This is where our training comes into play. It's all about timing. If we get a good run from back there we can leap a good distance and land safely.*

Zhen

*She's right. We are the protectors.*

Chloe

*Okay. We're all in.*

The group returned to the camp. After a quick snack they took the necessary supplies and strapped it to themselves. Zhen checked the position of the big trash float with the scope.

Allie

*How close?*

Zhen

*It's about to enter the channel. Five to six minutes at most before it gets here.*

Suddenly a bolt of lightning flashed to the west of them. A strong gust of wind pushed against them from the direction of the channel.

Chloe

*We are going to lose distance jumping into that wind.*

Rev

*Yes, but it will also push the plastic junk closer to the cliff.*

They ran the short distance to the cliff.

Zhen

*We have to adjust our jumping calculations. The water is picking up speed and*

*the wind will slow us down a bit.*

Rev threw a stick upstream and timed the distance travelled. Zhen marked a starting position, as a running distance from herself and the cliff. She ran as fast as she could towards Rev, Chloe and Allie. Rev timed her as Chloe and Allie stopped Zhen and held on to her.

After a precious minute, Rev calculated the exact spot the float would be in the water upstream as to when the girls would have to start running from their marked position.

The group huddled near their marked position. Rev stood on a high rock close to them. From here she could keep a keen eye on the rapidly advancing garbage heap.

The three other girls breathed deeply and lined up behind the mark on the ground. An arm's length behind each other they remained on high alert, ready for Rev's signal.

And then it came.

Rev

*Go!*

Allie was first off. Then three seconds later, Chloe bolted towards the cliff right behind her. Another three seconds and Zhen sprinted behind them. By now Rev had joined them in a mad dash towards the edge of the cliff.

## Chapter 38

One after another they leaped off the cliff and landed on the mountain of ocean trash. They all grabbed hold of each other and sat there cautiously. They caught their breath as they sat frozen, staring at each other.

Finally they all broke out screaming with joy, releasing all their tension.

Allie

*We did it. Rev you are amazing!*

All shapes of plastic containers, fishnets, buoys, cans and inflatable objects that were held together by some invisible glue kept them afloat.

Eventually, Chloe looked for a safer spot higher up. She got to her feet and gingerly climbed to the middle of the heap. Suddenly she all but disappeared as she plunged deep in the trash with just her head and one arm sticking out. Rev sprang into action and grabbed her hand. With the help of Allie they pulled her out.

Rev found a plastic chair. Checking to see if it was firmly on solid trash, she motioned to Chloe to sit down on it.

Rev

*There you go. All you need is a steering wheel and you can be the captain of this trash heap.*

Chloe

*I've haven't had so much excitement in a long time. Welcome aboard, Rev. You can dine at the captain's table anytime.*

They all broke out in laughter and tears at the same time.

Rev

*I'm sure this adventure would make another great tattoo for you.*

Allie

*I never had so much fun since I was a kid at an amusement park.*

Zhen

*Which ride?*

Allie

*Roller coaster.*

They all breathed a huge sigh of relief and adjusted to their new surroundings. As they passed the island that held them prisoner for more than a month they waved and bid it farewell. It had held them captive but it had also saved their lives. Now they must focus on their journey back to Tailbone Island.

Using the endless supplies from the ocean's collectables they devised a rudder with ropes to turn it. Zhen took out her compass. She told them it would take a day or two to get home.

A loud clap of thunder surprised them. A strong burst of wind shook the float and a river of rain fell from the sky.

They huddled together under a shelter made from plastic tarps and tubes.

## Chapter 39

A small boat carried Razor out to her massive freighter anchored off Okay Bay. She was proud of the *Vulgaris*. It had served her well travelling to distant ports, trading precious cargo. With most of the planet covered in water, anyone left on Earth with a ship possessed a rare advantage.

The boat docked at the ship and Razor mounted the high staircase on the hull to the deck. High up, she walked along the huge deck and felt the gentle breeze in her face. Razor felt energized. She needed this, she thought. After all the trauma that little girl dumped on her, she was delighted to return to her ship. This was her sanctuary. Her fortress.

The deck held some cargo containers but otherwise it was bare. She couldn't trade with anyone. The last remaining political powers restricted any people or remaining countries to have any dealings with her. Razor's only concern was extracting gold from her mine in the mountains of Tailbone Island. Once completed, she could return to planet Radium and further her conquests.

However, reflecting over the last several days, she realized that she did have one special cargo. Rev's mother and uncle.

Razor issued an order to a crew member to bring them topside.

Their hands bound behind them, Cyna and Mars were escorted to the deck and stood a short distance from Razor.

Cyna, a woman in her late thirties, was younger than Razor. Plain looking but elegant. Her lean, fit body stood unrelenting in front of Razor. Although not as tall as Razor, when she tilted her head back, she appeared to be just as tall, when looking into Razor's callous eyes.

Razor

*You will never see your daughter again.*

Cyna

*Where is she, you monster? What have you done with her?*

Razor

*Watch your tone with me. You should be asking what Rev has done to me. She has created quite an uproar.*

Mars stood beside Cyna. He carried himself with an air of confidence,



compassion and maturity.

Mars

*Why can't you just leave Brix and maybe we can recover from all your destruction.*

Razor

*I'll tell you what's going to happen. Rev is coming to find you. And when she does I will hold her prisoner separate from the two of you. Then, I'll return to Brix, destroy what's left of it and move on. The three of you will be trapped on this dying planet forever. You'll never figure out how to get through this planet's Lux. It's almost impossible. Many people have tried and died. Only I know how.*

Cyna

*Your day will come. Sooner than you think.*

Razor

*That special day comes for us all. But I know the sun will set on all three of you long before it does on me.*

Razor looked back at the crewman.

Razor

*Get them out of here.*

## Chapter 40

Rev heard a familiar sound. She looked around. The other girls had dozed off under their protective shelter. To keep a steady course, Zhen had secured the rudder's rope around her waist. Rev stood up and went closer to the sound she heard. The rain was still coming down hard and visibility was poor. A series of clicks and whistles emitted from a corner of the float. Several dolphins swam in a frenzied manner, splashing and diving wildly, making the loud sounds.

Rev noticed that a dolphin was caught in some netting on the float. Poor thing, thought Rev. Hold on, I'll set you free. Rev crouched down at the corner's edge and started to untangle the dolphin. Just as she finished and the other dolphins thanked Rev for rescuing their friend, she felt a strange movement under her. A gust of wind blew her overboard.

Rev fought hard to swim back to the big garbage float. She was losing the battle. The island of garbage was being swept away by the whirlwind current at a faster speed than her ability to swim. A few seconds later, she lost site of it completely.

Suddenly her body seemed to float above the surface effortlessly. She was propelled through the water towards the garbage float. She looked down and saw a flash of dolphins whizzing her to safety. Rev felt ecstatic. Oh you wonderful dolphins!

Rev grabbed hold of the corner piece of plastic on the float. The dolphins returned her thank you in a series of chirps and whistles and disappeared. Rev scrambled onboard the big float and carefully stood up.

Big waves rocked the float violently. She was knocked off her feet and laid flat on the plastic debris. Rev kept herself low as she crouched forward. Ahead of her, out of reach, she watched helplessly as the plastic stretched along an invisible seam and in a flash separated from the big float. She was swept away on a small piece of debris.

Her heart sank, her throat constricted and Rev had to force herself to breathe. Her small plastic raft was tossed up and down savagely by monster waves. She lay flat on her back.

Rev stretched her arms out to each side. Her hands touched the water on both sides. The float was slightly larger than her body. With the rain falling hard on her face and no sight of the island girls Rev grabbed hold of the debris and hung on for her life.



## Chapter 41

The storm lifted as fast as it blew in. Rev covered her eyes with her hand to shield them from the blazing sun. The ocean was completely tranquil. Seagulls could be heard from a distance. Rev squinted her eyes and caught sight of a speck of land. With netting, she attached a piece of plastic in the shape of a shovel to her flexion and started paddling.

Rev was a short distance from shore when her raft began spiraling around in a swirling undercurrent. A whirlpool opened up and she was swallowed up inside a vicious vortex of churning water.

Gripping her raft strenuously, Rev spun around underwater unwillingly. Before she could reach for her breather she shot to the surface. Disoriented and shook up, she coughed up some water and discovered she was now rushing down a river.

Rev reacted immediately. Still holding her flexion paddle, she gripped it with both hands and maneuvered the white water rapids, narrowly missing jagged rocks. The river turned into a narrow fast moving chute with huge boulders on each side. She ricocheted off the boulder walls as the current rushed faster and steeper down the canyon enclosure.

Suddenly a dark hole appeared before her. Total darkness surrounded her as she swished through the cave like tunnel. The roar of the rapid flowing water echoed and boomed in the narrow opening. A small light in the distance gave her hope.

There was no getting off this raging river. Rev didn't have time to think, and if she did she had no choice but to continue on this wild ride.

The light ahead of her grew bigger. Within seconds she reached the light. But the river turned into a falling cascade of water. Rev was airborne as she plunged down the waterfall. Seconds later she smacked down hard in a small pool and continued her downward run, somehow keeping her raft afloat.

What seemed like an endless journey filled with maximum adrenaline, the current subsided and Rev found herself floating in a wide calm pool of water. She looked around. The shoreline was even and high trees overhung on the river's banks. Her plastic raft had been reduced in size but still a lifesaver. Rev looked down at her leg. It was bleeding. She must have scraped it on the rocks. She ripped off a piece of her shirt and rapped it around her bloody leg.

Rev breathed in and out as she relaxed on her back. What a ride. She had

survived but had no idea where she was.

Suddenly a flash caught Rev's eye. A woman onshore was running along the bank and yelling at her. Rev's ears were still plugged up from the roar of the rapids. She couldn't understand what the woman was saying. With one hand the woman was waving for Rev to come ashore while her other hand was pointing downstream.

Rev looked to where she was pointing. A heavy mist drifted upwards. Her float began to gain momentum. Rev didn't hesitate. She knew what lay ahead. She retracted the flexion and dove off her float and swam to shore.

Rev knew she was a good swimmer, but for every stroke she took to tread water she seemed to be pulled back into the middle of the wide river. She was rapidly moving towards the roaring waterfall.

Suddenly she noticed the woman on shore grab hold of one of the leaning tree branches and pull it down on top of the water. This action shortened the distance for Rev to reach.

Once more she swam as strong and brisk as she could. Closer and closer she advanced to the hanging limb. She grabbed the end of it with one hand and sank below the surface. She hung on underwater and then soared to the surface and then snatched the tree limb with her other hand.

The woman slowly let go of the big branch and in doing so raised Rev up from the water. She reached her hand out to Rev and pulled her on shore.

Monique

*I'm Monique. We must get inside right away. It's dangerous to be this far out in the woods.*

Rev tried to walk but her bloody and bruised leg collapsed. Monique took hold of her and held her up as they shuffled back to her place. Huge doors opened as they went inside. Other people helped Monique carry Rev to a bed. Rev faded into a drowsy state and tried to speak.

Rev

*Protectors...island...girls...rescue.*

She passed out.

## Chapter 42

A light electric train advanced towards Crystal Falls. In one of the compartments Razor sat comfortably across from Cyna and professor Mars.

Razor

*Today is a special day for you Cyna. I've changed my mind. You are about to see Rev.*

Cyna

*You've captured her?*

Razor

*Not exactly.*

Cyna

*She better be safe.*

Razor

*Or what? Somebody is always threatening me. But nothing ever happens when they do.*

Mars noticed a wry smile form on Razor's face.

Mars

*We don't trust you. Where are you taking us? What sadistic game are you playing with us?*

Razor

*You're very quick, aren't you professor? Yes, I've cooked up something that will give me considerable pleasure for some time. Of course things have to go according to my plan. I'm sure it will work out.*

Cyna

*People like you push too hard and far. You're luck will end. It has to.*

Razor

*You're confusing luck with intelligence. My legacy will live forever.*

Mars

*You're legacy is destroying Brix.*

Razor had a good laugh.

Razor

*Well, that's all part of my legacy. Now, shut up, sit back and enjoy the trip.*

The electric train sped quietly towards Crystal Falls.

## Chapter 43

Rev couldn't breathe. Someone was suffocating her with a pillow. She pushed back hard with her hands but her assailant was stronger than her. Then, a hand grabbed her from under her bed and set her free. Rev opened her door and ran down the hall. She opened a door and her father stood there and told her to go back. Rev found some winding stairs and ran down quickly. But the big hairy beast with the pillow was running up the stairs towards her. She fell back and fell out a window into a dark pit.

Three loud knocks woke Rev up.

She jumped out of bed but no one was there.

Rev looked around. She was surrounded by large glass windows with water streaming down them. It reminded her of Genus. Was she home?

A door swished open and an older woman entered her room. She moved gracefully with an aura of maturity. Her gentle face displayed a sweet smile and kind eyes. She spoke with a soft, assured voice. Rev felt immediate peace and safety in this woman's presence.

Monique  
*Remember me?*

Rev  
*I think so. You helped me ashore. You saved me. You're Monique. I feel so confused. Where am I?*

Monique  
*You're in Crystal Falls. You're safe.*

Rev  
*Yes. I remember. I came down a really fast river of some kind.*

Monique  
*Maybe this will help.*

Monique went to the door. It flowed open sideways and Monique led Rev to a large room. The sun shone through the glass structure exposing an unusual but pleasing furnished room. Dressed in light brown uniforms three smiling girls rushed over to Rev and gave her a group hug.



Rev went wild with happiness as tears rolled down her cheeks.

Rev

*I didn't recognize you at first. Everyone looks different. You're all so snazzy with fresh new clothes. What happened to you and how did you get here?*

Allie

*You mean what happened to you and how did you get here? Rev, when we heard you were safe, we just about hit the ceiling.*

Chloe

*We thought you drowned. That we'd never see you again.*

Zhen

*When we woke up you were gone. We panicked. The storm blew us to the other side of the island. We hiked inland to get back to Crystal Falls.*

Rev told them everything that happened to her since falling off the plastic float.

Allie

*We love you Rev. You saved our lives. Without you we'd still be on that island.*

Chloe

*I can't believe we are all together safe and sound in Crystal Falls.*

Monique

*Thank you girls. But we have lots of work ahead of us. You should get back to the big plan. We'll talk later.*

Rev's friends smiled, gave Rev another hug and exited the room. Rev looked back at Monique.

Rev

*What are these plans? Can I help?*

Monique

*I'm sorry, Rev. It's best you don't know. Besides it's too dangerous and you've been through enough. Let's get you freshened up and I'll get you some clean clothes. How's your leg feel?*

Rev

*Much better.*

Monique

*Good, because I'm about to take you on a tour.*

## Chapter 44

Half an hour later Rev and Monique were whisked up a tall glass structure in an elevator. At the top floor, Rev and Monique overlooked Crystal Falls. Rev was speechless. It was the same as Genus only above ground. Magnificent glass domes towered sky-high in the distance. All different shape and sizes seemed to stretch for a great distance. Some in the shape of high round tube like glass towers and others in a bowl formation. There were huge glass balls and various sizes of glass pyramids.

Rev

*Do people live in all these?*

Monique

*Some of them, but most of them are used to grow vegetables, fruits and grains. After the Earth flooded, people were forced to move inland and higher up. With less land we had no choice but to vastly change our method of growing food. I'll show you.*

Monique opened a door that led to an enclosed sky bridge. Rev hadn't felt this free and relaxed for a long time as she crossed the bridge. The sun lit up the whole city like a shimmering gem. It took about a minute to reach the next glass building across the bridge.

After leaving the bridge they entered a room where they put on special suits and headgear that covered their regular clothes and footwear. Another door opened and Rev stepped inside.

Rev marveled at all the green plants being grown. Long standing tubes housed thousands of lettuce plants that were grown with water flowing through their root system. Monique broke a leaf off one of the plants and handed it to Rev.

Monique

*Try this.*

Rev crunched down on the lettuce.

Rev

*This tastes great. It's so fresh. How did you do this?*

Monique

*It's called aquagrowth. Everything is grown with recycled water, sunlight and natural mineral nutrients. With the Earth's flooding we had to adapt since most of the land was gone. We used our technology to build this new system of farming. No harmful pesticides or fertilizers are used. No insects or severe weather can infiltrate this safe environment. Everything is fresh and safe to eat. We can grow most vegetables, fruits, herbs and grains. They grow much faster and larger than in soil outside.*

They continued down a staircase that encircled the inside of the tall glass building. Each floor contained a different product. On the middle floor was a giant fish tank. Monique explained that the excrement from the fish is an excellent source of nutrients for plant growth.

A few more floors down Monique stopped and plucked a fresh strawberry from a plant and place it in Rev's palm.

Monique

*Try this.*

Rev bit into it and juice flowed down her chin.

Rev

*It's delicious. Can I have another one?*

Monique laughed and found a bowl. The two of them quickly filled it. They returned to the living quarters, ate some snacks and finished the strawberries.

Monique

*With all this abundance of food we still have a very serious problem.*

Rev

*What is that?*

Monique

*Razor. She's set up a blockade. Our trade with Eagle Bluff has been cut off. Not only did Razor steal our electric train, but also she has taken control of Okay Bay. That port was crucial to our trading with the other islands. People depend on our produce and we need their products to continue operating Crystal Falls. We can still use small boats but the waters we have to navigate are treacherous.*

*We have to get rid of her. Permanently.*

Rev

*She'll just return to Brix and keep polluting our town along with her stupid drokes. I despise that woman.*

Monique

*Yes the protectors of Crystal Falls are working on that.*

Rev

*You mean Chloe, Allie and Zhen?*

Monique

*Yes.*

Rev

*I think I better show you something.*

Rev took off her locket, unlocked it, and showed Monique the gold chip.

Monique

*I need to bring in my girls. They will definitely want to see this.*

## Chapter 45

As the girls gathered round and examined the gold chip, Rev told them about how she crushed Razor's droke and pulled it out. She explained about her world of Genus and the impending disaster befalling it and Brix. All a result of Razor's reckless actions.

Zhen

*The one side of the chip looks like Razor's invention. I don't see anything unusual about it. It's a typical method of sending electronic signals to her drokes in order to control their movements. But this other side of the chip is a mystery.*

Chloe

*Look at all the different lines. It looks like a combination of a maze and a labyrinth. I have no idea what its purpose is.*

Allie

*Razor's smart. I'll give her that. You can be sure she's tapped into some powerful new technology. The one person who could help you is Erik. Most of the tech people in this area of the planet have formed a headquarters at Eagle Bluff. He is quite knowledgeable and experienced in Razor's technology.*

Monique

*They're our friends at Eagle Bluff. It's at the top point at the other end of the island. But Razor and her men control the central land on Tailbone Island. We can't get through her territory.*

Rev

*If we disrupt her gold mine we could put a dent in her plans.*

Monique

*You're right but it's well guarded. It's best that you stay in Crystal Falls for a while. Things are about to change and you need to remain safe. Razor has a bounty on your head.*

Rev

*I need to find my mother and uncle. I need to help them.*

Monique

*We don't know exactly where Razor is keeping them prisoners. Our spies are out gathering information and should return shortly. Problems are best resolved if we remain calm and patient.*

Allie

*Rev, show Monique that amazing breather your father invented.*

Rev reached in her pockets and pulled out her breather, the flexion, a small flashlight and a pocketknife. She looked sheepishly over at Chloe.

Rev

*Oops. I forgot to return your pocketknife.*

Chloe

*That's okay. Keep it. I want you to have it as a keepsake of our island adventure.*

Rev

*Thanks, Chloe. I'll treasure it forever.*

Monique handled the breather and flexion. She pressed the release switch on the flexion and it extended rapidly.

Monique

*This is extraordinary. Did your father invent this too?*

Rev

*No, my uncle Mars did. My father and Mars are brothers and engineers.*

Monique

*Hmm, I can see where you acquired your skills. May I keep these for a short time? I'd like to show them to my technicians. They would be interested in analyzing them.*

Rev

*Absolutely.*

Rev handed Monique the unlocked locket with the gold chip, the breather and flexion. She pocketed the small flashlight and pocketknife.

Monique

*Chloe, why don't you show Rev the beautiful gardens. Allie and Zhen, please come with me. I want to go over those plans again.*



## Chapter 46

Chloe opened the big doors on the high walls surrounding Crystal Falls. They walked out into the breathtaking gardens. Large manicured sculptured shrubs stood high over the gardens. Stone pathways edged with brightly colored flowers spread throughout the immaculate green lawns. A small stream trickled and wound its way through the grounds.

Rev and Chloe sat down on a stone bench in front of a fishpond, not far from the big doors.

They turned around and noticed Allie was yelling to Chloe to return for something. Chloe told Rev to stay by the pond and she'd return in a few seconds.

Rev sat alone in the serene setting and momentarily forgot all her problems. Then, a white flash captured her attention. A white rabbit streaked by Rev just across the pond. Rev had seen different colored rabbits before, but never a white one. Thinking it must be special to this planet, she started to follow it.

Don't run so fast, she thought, as the rabbit kept eluding her reach. Rev kept chasing the rabbit down a big hill away from the garden grounds towards a dense forest.

She didn't see the sign that read KEEP OUT in big letters. The white rabbit darted around the forest trees leading Rev deeper into the woods. Suddenly she noticed the rabbit run down a steep valley that opened up into a hole. It disappeared into the dark hole as Rev lost her balance and slid on the loose gravel towards the hole.

Rev desperately grabbed hold of a tree root as she swung around in midair at the entrance of the dark pit. She heard a snap and fell a distance and continued to slide down the pit still clutching the short remaining root in her hand. Then she went sailing through the air and landed on her bottom on the dirt floor.

She shook the dirt out of her hair and brought out her small flashlight. It didn't go on. She rattled and smacked it a few times. A small flickering light leaked out.

She felt something under her. She stood up and shone the light down on her feet. Face down the rabbit was buried in the dirt, lying motionless.

Oh no, she had killed the poor thing.

She gently reached down and picked it up. Something felt weird. Rev could feel its hard bones. She turned it over. There were metal parts inside. Like one of Razor's drokes.

Razor's drokes. The words echoed through her head. What had she done? She wasn't supposed to be here. Razor had tricked her. She had to get out immediately.

She shone the weak light straight up. There was no way she could climb back up. No footholds. Nothing to hold on to.

She shone the light around the belly of the pit. One small cavity showed the only way out. Rev crouched down and started to weave her way through. After a short time it opened into a huge cavern with multiple shaft openings.

Rev breathed a little easier but the stuffy musty air made her cough.

And then out of the eerie silence a loud growl echoed within the cavern's chambers just as her light went out.

You stupid girl, Rev scolded herself. How did you get yourself into such a mess? At least the anger replaced the panic she had previously felt.

She remained still, in the pitch black of the cavern, as she heard the sound get closer. A strong odor penetrated Rev's nostrils. The fowl breath of the beast ruffled her hair.

Rev's flashlight suddenly flickered on.

All she could see were large sharp teeth, and a big tongue to match, almost touching her face. Then it closed its mouth and quickly opened it with another deep growl.

Rev's eyes almost popped out as she jolted backwards. She realized that her animal affinity on this planet was powerless. Her flashlight became more intense and that's when she looked closer at the beast's nose. It had a white shape of a diamond on it.

Rev

*Stango. I'm Wolfie's friend.*

And then the tiger rolled on the ground and nuzzled up to Rev's feet. She crouched down and petted Stango's mammoth underside. Rev never felt so alive in all her life. What a magnificent animal.

Rev

*You really scared me. Can you show me the way out?*

Stango bounced to his feet and slowly sauntered towards a passageway. Rev followed right behind. Eventually it led to a sharp incline and Rev could see light ahead. They were out of the darkness of the cave. Stango seemed to know where he was heading down a forest path. Rev kept pace beside him.

Through the trees ahead, she noticed the sun reflecting off a large metal

object.

Stango continued beside her. Rev could hear the sound of thundering water to the right of her. They exited the forest and entered a flat plain. Rev and Stango stood there as Rev glanced to the left and saw a sleek streamlined train.

And then she heard a voice call Stango.

And then it all made sense.

Razor and Vice stepped out from a small cave enclosure behind a waterfall.

Stango walked over and stood beside Razor.

The tall lean figure stood within an arm's length of Rev and stared right through her.

It was the loneliest feeling that Rev ever felt in her whole life.

## Chapter 47

Razor

*I like to bring Stango here. He enjoys his romp in the forest and underground passages. He likes to chase that white rabbit I made for him. But I see that you caught the rabbit before Stango could. Ha, ha, ha. You fool. Vice, put Stango on the train.*

Vice

*Don't you need me here to watch over Rev?*

Razor

*For what? I think I can handle this little girl. You're useless, anyways.*

Vice slinked away with Stango. Although Rev disliked what Vice did to her by trying to steal the gold chip, she couldn't help but feel sorry for him. She remained quiet.

Razor brought out a small wand like device. She waved it around the edge of Rev's body. She put the wand away.

Razor

*No gold. Where is it?*

Rev

*I lost it.*

Razor

*I wish you had lost it. But I know you're lying.*

Rev

*I'm sure you can make another one. Why do you want it so bad?*

Razor

*Because it's mine! You stole it. Don't you remember little girl?*

Rev

*I'm not little. I'm tall for my age.*

Razor

*You make me laugh. You're so sensitive. I wasn't talking about your height. I was referring to your inexperience. Yet here you are. I must give you credit for that. Even admiration. Ever since you arrived in Brix I've been cursed. I despise you. But in a heartbeat I'd swap Vice for you any day. You've got guts and smarts. I need you on my side. Together we could achieve anything and defeat anyone.*

Rev

*That's not going to happen.*

Razor

*Well if I can't have you then I'll destroy you. Come let's sit down over here and have a serious talk.*

Razor motioned to Rev and they walked over to a cave like formation that was behind a cascade of water. A table and two chairs were positioned across from each other. They seated themselves.

Razor

*I had a strange dream the other night. You were in it. You came to visit me.*

Rev

*In prison, I hope.*

They both laughed out loud together.

Razor

*That's what I like about you, Rev. We both have a sense of humor. You're like me in a lot of ways. Anyways, in the dream you were begging me for help. You wanted me to join you, to defeat a monster that was destroying your kingdom.*

Rev

*But that would be you. You are destroying my world.*

Razor

*Stop interrupting me. So we join forces and defeat this monster and we become the best of friends. The whole world adores us and we are unstoppable.*

Rev

*That's not a dream. It's a nightmare. You've got to be making this up. Next thing you'll tell me that Vice and I got married and all your grandchildren ruled*

*the universe.*

Razor

*Oh Rev, I love you. See, it's all going to work out for us both.*

Rev couldn't help but laugh at this pathetic woman. She noticed a tattoo of Stango on Razor's middle finger. Her other fingers on both hands were adorned in gold rings and alternating finger tattoos. But the Stango tattoo impressed her. Maybe she could appease Razor and hopefully escape her clutches.

Rev

*I really like that tattoo of Stango. It's a striking resemblance.*

Razor

*Yes tattoos are a very personal expression. I love Stango. He's very dear to me.*

Rev

*I'd like a tattoo of Stango.*

Razor lost her smile and raised her voice.

Razor

*You can't. Stango doesn't belong to you. I told you that tattoos are personal. I own Stango. Not you.*

Well, so much for appeasing her. Rev could feel the air fill with hostility. She wasn't going to submit to this woman but at the same time she was in no position to push her buttons. People always fascinated Rev. She had a keen perception of how anyone could switch personalities within a split second. Rev took a deep breath as she inhaled the fresh air from the waterfall.

Rev

*I see your point. But what do those other finger tattoos mean?*

Razor

*Each one represents a symbol of power. They're ancient hieroglyphics from the Egyptian civilization.*

Rev

*What is that?*

Razor

*I don't have time to give you a history lesson about this planet. You'll have plenty of time to learn, since you will never leave Earth.*

Rev

*I see. But what's your fixation with all those gold rings and bracelets?*

Razor

*I love gold. It's everything. Gold is one of the greatest mysteries in the universe. The more I own, the more power I have. Now, enough of your questions. How did you know that Stango wouldn't hurt you?*

Rev

*I didn't.*

Razor

*What do you mean, you didn't?*

Rev

*At first I was scared. But then I saw the white diamond shape on his nose.*

Razor

*Who told you about Stango?*

Rev

*Wolfie.*

Razor's jaws clenched as she raised her voice and focused her eyes on Rev.

Razor

*What else did Wolfie say?*

Rev

*That Stango really belonged to him. That you deceived him.*

Razor lashed out.

Razor

*He's a liar. Wolfie is the most disgusting human I ever met. I hate him. It's people like him that give me a bad reputation. What else did he say?*

Rev

*About Stango?*

Razor  
*No. About me?*

Rev  
*That he really loved you.*

Razor  
*Shut up. Don't get stupid with me, little girl. What other venom spewed from his mouth?*

Rev's emotions were about to surface. She had enough of this abusive woman. There was only she and Razor here. Vice had disappeared and if there was anybody else around they were on the train, some distance away.

She couldn't jump over the falls. She had looked. Too many rocks at the bottom. It would be deadly. If push came to shove, Rev believed she could give Razor a good tussle and then run.

This woman was the reason Rev stuck her neck out this far. She never wanted to meet Razor, but here she was. The decision she would make next would decide the fate of Brix, herself, her mother and uncle.

One quick blow to Razor's knee and another to her throat would disorient Razor enough to get hold of her arm, and with the proper leverage, catapult her over the waterfalls. But then her father's voice overpowered all her emotions as she remembered his last words to her. Be extremely careful, Rev. Stay away from Razor.

Rev found a calm space within herself and continued.

Rev  
*He talked about how your planet was flooded by constant rain. How people blamed you for the planet's demise because of the polluting energy that you owned and sold to the people.*

Razor  
*Did he personally blame me?*

Rev  
*I don't know. I didn't understand how such a catastrophe could happen.*

Razor  
*Exactly. That's why I'm going to give it to you straight. Because I believe you are a bright girl and you will understand the stupidity of the people on this*



*planet. Years ago I invented a clean energy that would not harm Earth's air nor disrupt the natural flow of all life cycles on this planet. This clean electric energy could be used in all industries and transportation. Are you following me so far?*

Rev

*I'm listening.*

Razor

*Good. Because here's the really interesting part. Nobody wanted my clean energy invention. Can you believe it? They didn't want to change. The governments throughout the world didn't want to put any money into supporting it. Nobody cared. It's as if they were too lazy to flush their own toilets.*

Rev

*So what happened?*

Razor

*The forces of evil, the dirty energy polluters all got together and had me shut down my ingenious invention. They loved money more than fresh air. Or maybe these controllers didn't want to give up their power to me.*

Rev

*So you're the good guy in all of this?*

Razor

*I hope you're not being sarcastic, but yes, I am the good guy. I wanted to prove how wrong they were. Since I'm a genius when it comes to almost everything and especially technology I came up with a plan to give the people what they wanted and make myself tons of money. Over time, I manipulated the market of all the dirty energy producers and took control of their companies. So I gave the people what they wanted. Cheap filthy energy.*

Rev

*But how does that explain all the flooding?*

Razor

*Because the crap from burning the dirty energy went up in the atmosphere surrounding the planet and changed its natural climate patterns. Nobody could stop the rain. I gave them what they wanted but they all sought to blame anybody except themselves. They turned me into the bad guy. The idiots.*

Rev

*It doesn't make sense to me. Why didn't everybody get together and stop this insanity?*

Razor

*Because ordinary people think individually while the controllers at the top think as a group. Group thinking always wins out.*

Rev

*But you were the one at the top. You could have stopped all this pollution.*

Razor

*I did try! Aren't you listening? I wanted to give them a stable energy that was clean. But no, they didn't want it. So I gave them what they wanted.*

Rev

*Okay, whatever. But that doesn't explain why you are polluting Brix and Genus.*

Razor

*Your people let me. All of you just went along with it. You're all weak and way too trusting. It was necessary. Brix is a small detail in my bigger plan. I learned a valuable lesson on my planet. I'd rather be hated and feared, than loved and stepped on.*

Rev was so full of rage. She felt that if she exhaled, that smoke would exit her nostrils. Razor was spiteful and Rev didn't believe anything she said. It would be a big mistake to trust her. Rev wasn't one to back down to people she had no respect for. And Razor didn't deserve any respect or submission. Stike proved that Razor could be beaten and Rev was running out of options.

Rev

*I'll find my mother and uncle and we will return to Brix and destroy your army of drokes. Without them, you will fall. We'll kick your butt out of Brix for good.*

Razor smiled and moved faster than a black mamba snake. She tossed the table between them aside and slapped Rev hard across the face. Stunned, Rev fell backwards just as Razor grabbed her by the throat. Continuing to clutch Rev's throat, Razor perilously balanced her over the waterfalls with both legs on the cliff and her head under the falls. Rev shivered and gasped for air as the

water drenched her body.

Stango roared.

Razor

*Shut up Stango!*

Razor's face contorted in a weird expression and her eyes stared coldly through Rev.

Razor

*Now listen to me very carefully.*

*You will never leave this planet.*

*You will never make it through the Lux.*

*You will never defeat me.*

*Take a look down. All I have to do is let go and you're dead.*

*Tell me one good reason to let you live.*

Rev continued to cough and gasp for air as Razor held her precariously by her throat. Finally Rev spoke in a faint voice.

Rev

*If you kill me, you'll never know if your dream will come true.*

Razor laughed. At the same time that she released her stranglehold on Rev's throat, she grabbed Rev's wrists. In doing so, Razor forced Rev to lean further back.

Razor could feel Rev's pulse beat wildly out of control.

Razor

*It's exhilarating. Have you ever felt so alive? Balancing between life and death. Not knowing what your fate is. Few people get this chance, Rev.*

Rev floated in and out of consciousness. She tilted her head way back and looked down as the water splashed on the rocks far below her. She couldn't feel the pain in her throat anymore. Instead her heart was caught up in the back of her throat and she felt a compulsive urge to spew it out.

Razor started to sing a tune as she rocked Rev back and forth.

Razor

*Should I let her live? Should I let her die? Will she give or will she cry? Just think, Rev, if I let you fall, you'll never know if you could have saved Brix and*

*Genus. All your troubles will be over.*

With one quick heave Razor pulled Rev back into the safety of the cave behind the falls. Soaking wet Rev shook violently, coughed and choked. Still in shock, she convulsed uncontrollably.

Rev felt her arm almost being wrenched out of her socket as Razor grabbed it and hoisted her out in the sunlight. Razor pushed her snarling face up to Rev.

Razor

*You're a lot like me but you are no match. Make sure our paths don't ever cross again or I will kill you. You hear me?*

Rev was on her hands and knees. Her ears were full of water and she could barely hear Razor's words.

Razor gave Rev a swift kick in her rear and flattened Rev to the ground.

Razor

*I'll take that as a yes. I'll give you another warning. Watch out for the rain.*

Rev rolled over on her back and looked up at the sky. It was bright blue. She moved in to a sitting position as Razor advanced towards the back of the train.

Dizzy and confused, everything looked blurry to Rev. She saw Razor enter the last train car and then reappear. She was holding onto someone. Razor shouted.

Razor

*Take one last look at your mother. You'll never see her again.*

Cyna

*Rev! Rev!*

Rev tried to stand up and run over but she collapsed.

Razor pushed Rev's mother inside.

Rev finally was able to stand and respond to her mother.

Rev

*Mom! Mom!*

But the train had already left the station. No one could hear her. The sky opened up and a torrent of rain washed Rev's tears away as she fell to the ground in a pool of muddy water. She held herself together in a fetal position.

## Chapter 48

Razor's train streaked towards Okay Bay. Cyna and Mars rested in the second last compartment of the train with their hands tied. Razor and Vice dined in the train car in front of them and one of Razor's henchmen remained in the end compartment. Stango was up front.

Cyna was still in shock and could hardly speak.

Cyna

*Rev is alive. I have to think positively. We can't let this monster take us down a black hole of despair. Rev will survive. We will see her again.*

Mars

*My hands are starting to loosen up. We have to make a break for it. There's a big curve ahead. The train has to slow down. I'm almost free.*

Mars continued to unravel the ropes around his wrists.

Cyna

*Where will we go? Razor's men are all over the island. We're stuck in the middle.*

Mars

*Before we were captured I heard one of her men mention Eagle Bluff. It's at the top of the island. Apparently they are enemies of Razor. If we could make it there, they might help us. I'm free.*

Mars took hold of Cyna's ropes and tried to untie them. He loosened them a bit but a sinking feeling swept over him. He looked up at Razor's car. Through the door he could see her mouth opening wide. Her shriek confirmed his apprehension.

Cyna

*Go Mars. Get off the train. Now. Get help. I'll survive.*

Razor was already in the corridor connection between cars. Her henchman was approaching from the end compartment.

Mars was caught in the middle. He made a quick decision and bounded to the

end of his compartment to the corridor connection between their train car and the henchman's. He kicked the folding door that led outside and pried it open with hands. The henchman and Razor both reached out to grab him. They caught hold of his jacket collar and pulled Mars back but not before he raised his arms and slipped out of it. As the train slowed down to climb a steep mountain pass, Mars jumped, just as the train disappeared into a tunnel.

## Chapter 49

Rev couldn't remember Monique and Allie lifting her up gently and carrying her back to Crystal Falls. She couldn't remember how they put her in a warm bath and watched her all night as she trembled in her bed.

Rev woke the next morning to the sun reflecting in her room's mirror. Her eyes were swollen and bloodshot. She moved to sit up and cringed as she felt the pain from where Razor had kicked her.

Rev bolted up when she heard a knock at the door. It was Chloe.

Chloe

*How are you feeling?*

Rev

*Like I've been in a train wreck.*

Chloe

*I bet. Razor sliced and diced you pretty bad. We're all happy to see you survived. You need to eat. Are you up for some breakfast?*

Rev

*Yes. I'll join you soon.*

Chloe left and Rev drank a glass of water. Her throat was still sore. She dressed slowly. She had lied to Chloe. Rev had no desire to eat or see anyone. She wanted to crawl back in bed for a long time. She kept seeing Razor's face flash in and out of her thoughts. Razor kept slapping her, over and over. She had trouble focusing on anything. Her chest tightened up and she had trouble breathing. Perspiration soaked her clothes. She collapsed on the bed.

## Chapter 50

Two days later Rev and Monique were seated in the garden soaking up the sunshine and fresh air.

Monique

*You've been through a lot Rev. I want you to stay In Crystal Falls as long as you want. You need time to recover.*

Rev

*Thanks, Monique. You and the girls have been most kind.*

Allie joined them.

Allie

*Good news. There's word from Eagle Bluff that your uncle has escaped from the train. They have sent a search party out to help him before Razor's men find him.*

Rev jumped to her feet and gave Allie a hug.

Rev

*What about my mother? Any word?*

Allie

*Nothing yet, but we're hoping for the best. If your uncle Mars is rescued by the good people of Eagle Bluff, we'll know more.*

Rev felt rejuvenated. She didn't want to just sit back and do nothing. Still traumatized by Razor's actions, she needed to keep busy and focused. That was the only way to find her way back to feeling normal. She was determined to regain her direction and control of her life.

Rev

*If Eagle Bluff rescues Mars can I go there?*

Monique

*It's risky. Very risky. I do know of a skilled guide that knows a discreet but difficult passage through Razor's territory, but I can't make any promises.*



Rev

*Thanks, Monique. I just need some kind of hope.*

Rev was grateful but restless. She desperately wanted to put the past episode with Razor behind her. It was a setback but not defeat.

Zhen came up to the group and whispered something into Monique's ear.

Monique

*We'll meet back in the workshop. This definitely changes things.*

With that, Allie and Zhen left.

Monique put her hand on Rev's hand.

Monique

*Your mother is aboard the Vulgaris.*

Rev

*What's the Vulgaris?*

Monique

*It's Razor's freighter, anchored off Okay Bay. We have a spy, named Hiro, aboard.*

Rev

*Is my mother in danger?*

Monique hesitated, looked away from Rev, took a deep breath, looked back at Rev and quietly spoke.

Monique

*Tomorrow, Razor has plans to journey to a far away island and abandon Cyna there.*

Rev

*What? No! We've got to save her! We must!*

Monique

*There is a plan in the works to damage Razor's ship, but having Cyna on board is a game changer. We have to adjust our plans significantly and we don't have much time. Let's go down into the workshop and discuss this with the other girls.*

Monique and Rev entered a well-lit basement room. It was a large workshop and Zhen and Allie were busy at one end of the room while Chloe was positioning a large metal object at the other end. There was a glass-partitioned room where Allie and Zhen stood.

Allie

*Everybody in the protective booth.*

The group entered the glass protected booth and put on safety glasses and hearing protection. Chloe initiated a countdown and pulled a switch. A loud bang emitted from the other end as the group watched as a thick piece of metal was blown apart leaving a big jagged hole. As the smoke cleared, the group left the booth and examined the metal piece.

Monique led the girls back to a table with a ships drawing and various numbers sketched out on a large piece of paper. As Monique turned to Rev, her expression looked grave.

Monique

*Tonight, the Vulgaris goes down.*

## Chapter 51

Rev was speechless. Zhen approached her.

Zhen

*We were on a mission to obtain these explosives. On our return we were shipwrecked. We salvaged the explosives and that was why we ended up on that island. You saved us Rev and now we are going to help you save your mother.*

Allie

*Unfortunately, we have no choice but to do it tonight. Our plans were delayed because of the shipwreck. This was supposed to happen weeks ago. Now Razor intends to pull up anchor and leave with your mother.*

Monique

*I'm sorry, Rev. It puts you and your mother in danger but with careful planning we've come up with a detailed course of action. It's all about timing.*

The group went over to the table with all the plans. Monique returned to Rev, her gold chip, locket, flexion and breather.

Monique

*My technicians were able to duplicate your father's invention. I hope he doesn't mind. We definitely need them tonight.*

Chloe tried on her breather.

Chloe

*It fits perfect. What a great invention.*

Allie

*I can't believe it. We don't have to carry those cumbersome oxygen tanks. And what's that other thing called?*

Rev

*A flexion.*

Rev took hold of it and extended the metal tubes.

Allie

*Wow. That's some weapon. I never noticed that before when we were on the island.*

Rev

*You're lucky. I was about to spank you with it when you started to get mouthy.*

Allie and the other girls had a good laugh.

Allie

*I don't blame you. I was just messing with you, Rev.*

Monique

*Okay girls, let's go over the plans.*

Just then, a loud buzzer sounded and a red light flashed. Chloe went over to the phone. After listening to the message she returned to the group.

Chloe

*Hiro has sent us a coded message from the Vulgaris. The citizens of Eagle Bluff have rescued professor Mars. Hiro will take Cyna and Rev to Gianthead Landing, just outside Eagle Bluff. Mars and his team will meet you there.*

Rev breathed a sigh of relief and everybody erupted with a shout of joy.

Monique

*Okay, Rev, if things go as planned, Hiro will guide you and your mother to Gianthead Landing.*

*But first, the Vulgaris. Everyone listen up.*

Monique bent over the table and the group remained quiet as she methodically disclosed the plans to sink the Vulgaris.

After going over the plans for some time, they ate and rested. Nobody spoke as they gathered equipment and donned their swim gear. They did a group huddle. Then, Monique took Rev aside.

Monique

*I've never met such a brave girl as you, Rev, but at the same time I wish I could talk you out of this. I honestly don't know what else to say. I know in my heart we will meet again.*

Rev

*Thank you so much for your kindness.*

They hugged and Rev joined the others. After a few steps, she turned around and saw Monique smile and wave goodbye. Crystal Falls shimmered in the background against a magnificent sunset.

## Chapter 52

It was dusk as the group made their way through the woods towards Okay Bay. They reached the high cliffs and crouched down as they reached the final ridge overlooking the Vulgaris. Rev had never seen a metal ship this long and high before. When the moon shone through a gap in the clouds she noticed some high stacks of metal boxes on the flat deck. Large patterns of rust showed the ship's deteriorating condition.

They went over the plans again. Rev would swim out to where the anchor was dropped. The other three would keep watch on shore. Every thirty minutes, a patrol boat with searchlights circled the large freighter. When Rev reached the anchor, Zhen would signal Hiro on the top deck. Rev would climb the big anchor chain and go through the hawse pipe to the deck.

Once Rev was topside, everyone would set his or her watch for an hour. They only had an hour before the tide went out which would reduce their chances of success. So, timing was everything.

With the help of Hiro, Rev should have enough time to rescue her mother. All three of them should make it back to shore before Chloe, Zhen and Allie detonate the three explosives. Hiro, Rev, and Cyna would make a quick getaway to Eagle Bluff and the other girls would return hastily to Crystal Falls to await the fallout.

They reached the shoreline. Rev attached her breather. There was no time for goodbyes. They wished Rev good luck and everyone raised two fingers in a V shape for victory.

The wind picked up and the waves crashed to shore. Within seconds Rev vanished below the surface. Her small flashlight penetrated the dark water for a short distance. But that was all she needed. No sense in giving away her actions to the patrol boat.

Water always calmed Rev's fears. She focused on only the present, and that was to reach the big anchor chain without being seen by Razor's men. If she thought of all the things that could go wrong, it would be too overwhelming and zap her energy. One step at a time. Any problem she must face, she would deal with it at that time and place. Anxiety and worry were her enemies. Focus at the task at hand, she told herself, and be prepared for anything.

Rev reached the massive anchor chain and slowly surfaced. She peeked her head around and noticed the signal flicker from shore. The chain was big enough

that Rev could get a good toehold on the chain link. Half way up she heard the distant whine of a boat's motor. She froze as a bright light swept by just missing her feet. Moving behind the big chain she stretched out to conceal as much of herself as possible. The boat chugged around the ship's bow.

She continued to climb the anchor chain and went through the hawse pipe to the deck. It was dark and she didn't want to risk using her flashlight. Someone whispered her name and stepped out of the shadows.

Hiro

*Rev? It's Hiro.*

Rev stepped forward and breathed a sigh of relief. Hiro looked about the same age as her friends from Crystal Falls. They flashed a quick light in the direction of the shore and set their watches.

Rev

*Where is my mother?*

Hiro

*She's down below in the storage room. Keep in the shadows.*

They crept silently towards the stairs leading to the hold below. Hiro led the way. As he was about to take his first step down, he heard the clank of footsteps ascending the steep stairs. He froze. In the bright light below he saw Razor staring right at him.

## Chapter 53

Rev darted behind a metal structure in the shadows as Hiro climbed backwards up to the deck.

Razor

*There you are. What are you doing on deck, cadet Hiro?*

Hiro

*I'm sorry ma'am. I was getting some fresh air. I was just returning to my station.*

Razor gave him a long hard stare.

Razor

*Nobody is allowed topside in the dark. You know better. Let this be a warning. You're lucky I'm in a good mood tonight. Get back down to the engine room. Make sure everything is running smoothly. We lift anchor first thing in the morning.*

Rev held her breath. She was within spitting distance of Razor.

Hiro

*Thank you ma'am.*

To avoid suspicion Hiro continued to descend the stairs. Rev watched Razor make her way towards the bridge, snaking around some stacked shipping containers. She waited a good minute before she quietly joined Hiro below deck.

They entered the engine room. A maze of pipes of all sizes wormed their way around the massive compartment. Huge metal machinery with heavyset bolts and wheels made for an obstacle course to maneuver around. The hum and rhythmic clank of the engines drowned out any conversation. The floor and guardrails vibrated to the beat of the machinery.

Hiro

*Your mother is locked in the storeroom.*

Rev hurried over to the door and tried the handle. Locked. She put her face



close to the door and yelled.

Rev

*Mom! Mom! It's Rev. Hold on, we'll get you out.*

Hiro

*We can bust the handle off. Let's check the engine workshop.*

The workshop was unlocked. They looked around and Hiro found a long solid metal pipe and screwdriver.

They returned to the storeroom door. They leveraged the pipe behind the handle, and with the long end they both leaned heavily on it. The handle made a loud snapping sound and clanked to the floor.

Rev used the screwdriver to move the exposed workings of the door lock. She slid the bolt to one side and the door opened. Anxiously she searched everywhere, moving big boxes aside and shining her flashlight into small spaces. Her mother was gone. Disappointed she looked at Hiro.

Rev

*Are there any other rooms down here?*

Hiro

*Let's check the food storage room.*

They went down the passageway and opened the door. Nothing.

Rev

*Where else on this ship could she be?*

Hiro

*There are a number of rooms on the bridge but that's where Razor and her men are.*

Rev

*Let's investigate.*

Hiro

*My sleeping quarters are there. I know how to get around.*

They climbed the steep stairs to the top deck and found a hiding space behind the cargo containers close to the mooring bow. They peeked around the corner of them and studied the bridge at the stern of the ship. It was about five stories high

with outside staircases running to the top. Only a few lights were on. Between the bridge and their hiding place behind the containers was a large empty space. Two large hatches were closed and empty of any cargo containers. It was partially lit and could easily expose them to any surveillance from the bridge.

Rev

*How many men does Razor have on board?*

Hiro

*Two onboard and two on the security boat.*

Rev

*Do you...*

A faint sound interrupted Rev.

Rev

*Did you hear that?*

A distinct tapping came from above them.

Rev

*There it is again.*

Hiro

*It's coming from one of the containers.*

Rev grabbed hold of the long vertical bars on the end of the bottom container and secured her feet in the horizontal indentations that stretched across it. She kept climbing up until she honed in on the sound. She reached the third container stacked high.

She tapped on it. Three knocks came back.

Rev

*Mom? Mom?*

She heard a faint voice call her name. She quickly took out Chloe's pocketknife and stuck the small blade in the heavy-duty lock.

It flicked open. She swung the door open and her mother's eyes penetrated the darkness.

Rev crawled inside and hugged her mother.

Rev

*We don't have much time, mother.*

Rev led the way down as she helped her mother reach the deck.

Rev

*I can't explain right now, mother, but this ship is going down. This is Hiro. He's here to help. We need to get off immediately.*

Hiro

*I'll get some rope. The hawse pipe is too small for your mother to fit through.*

Hiro grabbed some rope from the mooring bow close by. He returned and began to secure the rope on the railing. He pointed ashore to a distant cliff.

Hiro

*See that cliff in the distance. That's our destination. A small opening leads to some hidden steps that will take us to the top where I hid some supplies. From there we head to Crows Nest Crossing, follow the river to Gianthead Landing and rendezvous with professor Mars at Eagle Bluff.*

Hiro dropped the rope to the water. When he reached for Cyna's hand to help her down the rope he felt an aching pain in the back of his neck.

Someone tossed him to the ground.

Bright lights lit up the entire deck.

Rev and Cyna turned around to witness Razor standing over Hiro with her foot on his neck. One of her bodyguards stood next to her. Another stood beside Rev and her mother.

Razor

*Take this traitor back to his quarters and lock him in. I'll deal with him later. And tie both of these up.*

One of her bodyguards led Hiro away while the other brought up the dangling rope over the railing and separately bound Cyna and Rev. She led them back to the bridge. The bodyguard operated a nearby loading crane and attached a round metal fastener to Rev's ropes on her ankles. He hooked a steel cable to the fastener, raised Rev high in the air and swung the crane over the water. Rev hung upside down. The rope bound her upper body and her hands were tied behind her.

Then he dragged Cyna by her ropes and tied her to the railing so she could see

Rev suspended high up over the water. With one foot resting on the railing's bar, Razor stood beside Cyna. Smiling and feeling empowered Razor shouted to Rev.

Razor

*I told you little girl, the next time we meet that I would kill you. Well here we are. Don't say I didn't warn you.*

Rev

*If you do, you'll never get the gold chip back.*

Razor

*When you're dead at the bottom of the ocean I won't need it.*

Cyna

*Please, I beg of you, let my daughter live. We promise to leave this planet and never return.*

Razor

*Well if it's any comfort, I'm the one leaving this planet. You and the professor will be staying on Earth forever and Rev will be dead. You people should have never messed with me.*

Rev

*Liar! You are the one who messed with us. Why do you think we are here?*

Razor

*Yet here you are again balancing high up over water, between life and death. Of course, there is one option that can save your life. I'll leave that up to your mother. We'll see how much she really loves you, Rev.*

Rev was more angry than scared. Whatever diabolical idea Razor had in mind, Rev knew she was going down into the deep water. The longer she could stall Razor, the more she could loosen her hands.

She had learned a trick by reading a book. The character in the novel inhaled extremely hard when the criminal wrapped her upper body with rope. Later when she exhaled, the rope was looser and eventually she wiggled out of her bondage.

It wasn't much but Rev prepared herself for the inevitable. But the downside of stalling Razor was that she and her mother were running out of time. Monique's crew was already in the process of attaching the three bombs to the hull on the other side of the ship. The last time Rev looked at her watch was

when Hiro threw the rope overboard. At that time it read thirty-four minutes to detonation of the explosives. Now it was even less.

Razor

*Here's the deal, Cyna. I'll let your daughter live if you swear on her life that you promise me something.*

Cyna

*Anything.*

Razor

*That I take possession of Rev. In other words I become her legal guardian.*

Cyna remained stunned and speechless.

Rev kept loosening her hands from the rope. She believed she needed another two to three minutes to completely free her hands. She could hold her breath for almost two minutes. But the other clock was ticking. The bombs set to go off. She called Razor's bluff.

Rev

*Don't listen to Razor. She's going to kill me no matter what you say, mom. Go ahead and drop me, Razor. I dare you.*

That was too much for Razor. Nobody dares her. She motioned to her bodyguard. Rev heard the click of the fastener being released above her. She took a deep breath as she plunged headfirst into the deep.

## Chapter 54

Rev shattered the moon's tranquil reflection on the water as she accelerated like a torpedo to the bottom of the ocean. She arched her back and paddled with her bound feet to direct herself in an upright position, coming to a gradual floating state.

She slowly exhaled and in doing so slightly loosened the ropes around her arms and body. Now it was a race to get her hands free while holding her breath. When Razor's henchman had tied her hands behind her back, Rev had put her knuckles together and her elbows bent outwards as much as she could. This created a space between her wrists that provided some slack to wiggle her hands and wrists back and forth.

Rev exhaled a bit more and kept twisting and pulling her wrists apart as hard as she could.

She needed her breather. The longest she had ever held her breath was two minutes and that time was closing in on her. That desperate compulsive desire to take a breath started to overwhelm her.

Two minutes had passed. A sharp pain in her diaphragm warned her to breathe now.

One last strand of rope still bound her wrists.

Feeling a little lightheaded Rev imagined her father standing over her as a child instructing her to hold on just a little longer.

Suddenly her hands were free.

She thrashed her arms back and forth and shook loose the body ropes. At the same time as she flung them over her head she reached for her breather and took a breath.

She cut the ankle ropes with her pocketknife. Feeling exhausted Rev could barely swim back to the *Vulgaris*. Out of the darkness two dolphins circled around her and offered Rev a ride back. She clung on to them as they took her back to the anchor chain.

Still underwater, in the distance, Rev noticed a faint trail of bubbles. She just made out the slowly moving figures of Chloe, Allie and Zhen, swimming to shore. The explosives were set.

Rev frantically checked her watch. No. Only four minutes left until the ship blows.

She swiftly climbed the chain, went through the hawse pipe and crouched

down behind the chain winch on the deck. She took a quick peek and saw her mother still tied up to the deck about halfway down the ship. Her head was drooped. She seemed motionless.

She reached her mother and gently touched her.

Cyna

*Oh Rev! I thought you were dead. I feel so weak.*

Rev cut her ropes.

Rev

*Mom, we've got to jump overboard. Now!*

Rev helped her mother to her feet. Someone was yelling across the other side by the deck railing. Razor's back was facing them.

She must have spotted the girls coming ashore, Rev thought.

Without warning, Razor turned around and started screaming.

Three loud bangs from the hull drowned her out.

Razor started to race across the hatch towards them.

But the *Vulgaris* started to tilt towards Razor. Cyna lost her grip on the railing and slid across the hatch towards her.

Razor grabbed Cyna. She stared up at Rev, who was still clinging to the railing.

Razor

*You witch. What kind of demon are you? You're supposed to be dead. If I can't kill you, then I'll kill your mother instead.*

A loud creaking sound tilted the ship further and sent Rev flying towards her mother and Razor. She bounced off Razor and grabbed hold of her mother at the same time, as they continued to slide towards the railing. They stood up just as Razor got airborne and smashed into both of them. All three sailed through the air, plummeting into the water.

## Chapter 55

Rev reached for her breather and put it on. She panicked, not for herself but for her mother. Rev knew her mother was not a good swimmer, certainly not underwater.

She looked around in the dark water. Nothing. She turned on her flashlight and flicked it off and on. She twirled around just in time to see Razor thrusting towards her with an outstretched knife.

Rev wasn't fast enough and felt the knife slash her lower arm. A stream of blood drifted through the water towards the surface.

Out of the corner of her eye Rev saw her mother floating lifeless near the surface. She propelled her body upwards but Razor grabbed her legs and pulled her down.

The water was enough to slow the force of the knife that was coming straight at Rev's throat. Rev lifted her arm in defense and took another slash. More blood leaked out and dispersed in the water. She pulled out her flexion and lunged towards Razor. She extended the flexion's tubes just as she rammed it into Razor's solar plexus.

As Razor's mouth opened Rev finished by stabbing her in the eye. That was enough for Razor as she struggled to the surface.

Rev hurried to help her mom. She grabbed hold of her and brought her to the surface. Cyna coughed up water.

The *Vulgaris* continued to teeter. Cargo containers were cascading overboard and narrowly missing them. The water surrounding the ship became turbulent and a giant whirlpool formed close to them. Rev knew they could be pulled into the turbulence. She held her mother under her arms and swam ashore.

The wind picked up and a heavy rain fell hard, pelleting and stinging their faces. Rev looked back at the *Vulgaris* as it continued to sink. Everything was a blur. No sight of Razor. She hoped that Hiro was safe.

The waves were too high to fight on the surface. Rev attached the breather to her mother's face. They dove underwater. The salt water stung Rev's cuts in her arm as they dove deeper to find quieter waters. But the tide had started to go out and gave them more resistance as the current pulled them back.

Finally, Rev and her mother felt the bottom as they leaned forward, surfaced and walked ashore.

They were close to the inlet that Hiro had mentioned. The sand was wet and



muddy as they made their way to the small entrance to the hidden steps. The rain became more intense. They were relieved to reach the inside of the cliff and find shelter and safety.

They climbed the winding steps to a small cave opening near the top of the cliff. It overlooked the bay. In the distance the Vulgaris gave it's last gasp, as it capsized and vanished.

Inside the cave, Cyna noticed a wooden box in the shadows. She opened it and took out the contents.

Cyna

*Look Rev, fresh clothes, food, water and other supplies. What is this?*

Rev

*I think it's called a backpack. You can put lots of things in them and strap it to your back.*

Cyna

*And look here, a medical kit.*

Rev

*Hiro thought of everything. I'm worried about him.*

Cyna

*Me too. We'll wait until he shows up. Now let me attend to your cuts. You're lucky you have a doctor in the house.*

Rev and her mother laughed and then cried and hugged each other. Cyna mended and bandaged her wounds. Then, they changed into dry clothes from the box, ate some of the food and relaxed looking out at Okay Bay. Shipping containers were drifting to shore, the rain had stopped and a heavy fog was moving inland.

They dare not light a fire, as that might disclose their whereabouts.

Rev told her mother everything that happened to her since she left Genus. Her mother looked worried and then smiled at her daughter.

Cyna

*We are together now, Rev, that's all that counts. Even if it is on a strange planet.*

They shared a blanket and drifted off to sleep. They had to leave before dawn. It would be a long and dangerous journey to Eagle Bluff.



## Chapter 56

Razor reached shore looking like a drowned rat. Vice came down from the main house to greet her.

Vice

*What happened?*

Razor

*Take a wild guess.*

Vice

*Not Rev? I thought we were done with her.*

Razor

*You thought wrong and so did I. Why doesn't she just join me if she's going to be this destructive? I care about her, not like her parents, who let her roam around on a strange planet all by herself.*

Vice

*She's relentless, I'll give her that.*

Razor

*Shut up with your stupid comments before I drown you. Now round up my men. I want her squashed. No more blunders. This girl is possessed by some evil force. She's heading to Eagle Bluff where all those tech geeks hangout. Before long they'll figure out the chip's importance. Once they learn the secrets of the gold chip, thousands will come through the Lux and ruin my conquest of planet Radium. They want a war with me so I'll give them a war. One they will never forget.*

Vice came closer to his mother and noticed her swollen eye.

Vice

*What happened to your eye? Do you need a patch? I've got plenty.*

Razor pulled some seaweed out of her hair and splattered Vice's face with it.

Razor

*Now fix me my usual drink.*

Vice

*I can't. All your special bottles were on board the Vulgaris.*

Razor's face contorted into multiple expressions of disbelief and rage. Her mouth tried to form the perfect formation, until at last it stretched out as far as possible, providing the perfect outlet to release a long, vile, ear-piercing scream that could scare away an invading swarm of rattlesnakes.

In the distance, Stango replied with a loud roar.

## Chapter 57

Rev and Cyna woke up at the same time.

Cyna

*What was that?*

Rev

*Sounded like a scream for help. Maybe someone's in trouble. Anyways, we better prepare to leave.*

Just then Rev jumped up as she heard Stango roar.

Rev

*Stango. He's close by. I have to see him before we leave.*

Cyna

*Rev, that's not a smart decision.*

Rev

*I know, mother. Emotional decisions usually aren't. But I have to let him know that Wolfie still cares for him. I'm sorry. I need to see Stango one more time.*

Cyna

*What about Hiro?*

Rev

*If he makes it back, he'll see that we were here and set out to follow us. Otherwise I ... I don't know, mother. I just hope he survived.*

They gathered everything they would need for the trip in their backpacks. Climbing the remaining winding steps, they squeezed through the opening at the top of the cliff and stepped outside. The fog would provide cover for their escape.

Rev walked silently towards where she had heard Stango. In the distance, she could see a small light flicker below the cliff. The rocks were slippery as they scaled down the cliff. Crouching down behind some foliage, Rev studied the surroundings. A soft light lit up a fenced in confinement. Through the fog, Rev could barely see Stango. Nobody was guarding Stango. The metal wire

enclosure at the top prevented Stango from ever escaping.

Cyna and Rev approached the wire fence.

Cyna

*I can't see him. Is he ...*

Cyna fell flat on her bottom when the wire fence bent out towards her, and a thundering roar blasted her eardrums.

As Rev stuck her hand through the narrow fence opening, she softly stroked Stango's nose and whispered in his ear.

Rev

*I love you Stango. Wolfie loves you very much.*

Cyna

*We have to get out of here.*

Rev

*Not before I let Stango loose.*

Cyna

*What! I know you're bold, but this is crazy. Come on Rev, I can hear some men talking over by the house.*

Rev

*Exactly why I want to free Stango. Razor's men believe Stango is a man-eater even though he would rather lick your face off. It's the perfect cover. While everybody is running indoors we can get a clean getaway. Besides I want to give Stango a big hug.*

Cyna

*Rev! Rev! Rev!*

Rev

*I need to find the door to this cage. Keep a lookout, mom.*

Rev moved stealthy around the perimeter of the enclosure. Cyna followed behind, keeping a close watch. They moved closer to Razor's house. A light came on in the back entrance. They held their breath. A few seconds later the light went out as they reached the entrance gate.

Rev pulled out her pocketknife and jiggled the lock. Nothing happened.

Stango was looking up at Rev waiting impatiently for the door to swing open.

Rev became just as impatient and frustrated. Voices coming from the house grew louder.

Cyna noticed some wire cuttings on the ground by the gate. She picked a long piece of wire up and motioned to Rev.

Cyna

*Let me try.*

She inserted the wire into the lock and it snapped open with that pleasing sound of a click that they were hoping to hear.

Rev

*You're amazing, mom.*

Cyna

*Never fear when Cyna is here.*

They both chuckled as the gate swung open and Stango pounced out. Cyna was still scared but Rev gave Stango a big hug and kissed him on his furry head. She whispered something in his ear. Cyna stroked him gently. Within seconds Stango bolted to his freedom as he let out a low, rumbling roar of appreciation.

It wasn't long before they could hear distant screams as they climbed back up the cliff and headed towards Eagle Bluff.

## Chapter 58

It was still dark when the fog lifted. They had a good two hours of darkness before sunrise. They left the open space of the mountain terrain behind as they entered a vast forest. Thick green groundcover blanketed the forest. Only a few rays of sunshine infiltrated the large canopy of leaves.

The woods were alive with the singing of birds. As Rev and Cyna breathed in the assortment of fresh odors from the recent rainfall, they felt like they had come through a doorway into a peaceful world of wonder.

Stepping over small streams, a pool of water appeared before them. The morning mist evaporated from a small calm lake. The sound of fish jumping and bullfrogs croaking on lily pads couldn't be more surreal from their previous chaos.

They stood by the shore enjoying the moment. For a brief sustained second they forgot who they were or why they were here.

Continuing on through the forest Rev broke the silence.

Rev

*I'd love to see the look on Razor's face when she found out Stango was gone.*

Cyna

*You almost gave me a heart attack.*

Rev let out a hearty laugh.

Rev

*Hey, mom. How many people get to pet a tiger?*

Cyna

*Are you kidding?*

*I've never even seen one until last night. Next time it's my turn to scare the ...*

Before Cyna could finish speaking she was shockingly swept off her feet, hanging by one foot tied to a tree limb and staring upside-down at Rev, some distance below her.

Rev

*I know this sounds crazy, mom, but don't move.*



Cyna could barely speak.

Cyna

*What just happened?*

Rev

*You triggered a snare. I'm coming to get you out. It seems like I'm always rescuing you. You've got to stop getting yourself into these jams.*

They both laughed as Rev climbed the big tree. She figured there was no way she could lift her mother up without injuring her leg. She only had a few minutes before muscle and joint damage would set in.

She climbed to a branch that was slightly higher than the tree limb supporting Cyna.

Balancing on her mother's branch and the one above, she lifted her feet and swung down heavily on the upper branch. It bent down enough for Cyna to grab hold of it.

Rev

*Okay, mom, keep a firm grip on it. I'm going to ease this branch higher and it will lift you up to the branch that you're tied to.*

Cyna followed her daughter's instructions and grasped the branch and climbed on top.

Rev

*Now I'm going to shimmy out and cut the rope mom and give you a hand getting back to safety. Okay?*

Cyna

*I'm not going anywhere Rev.*

Rev cautiously held on to the upper branch and slid her feet on the bottom branch towards her mother. She bent down and cut her mother's rope and helped her to her feet.

Rev and Cyna stopped breathing. Three of Razor's men could be heard yelling and joking as they came sauntering down the path and stood directly below them.

Rev thought why do things always seem to get worse when you're in enough trouble as it is?

That's when the branch made a loud slow cracking sound. The men looked up and Rev and Cyna rode the big branch down smashing all three men in the head. It was enough to break their fall as the three men folded like an accordion while Rev and Cyna rolled to the ground.

## Chapter 59

Rev tried to catch her breath as she stood up. She helped her mother to her feet. Stunned, all three men lay on the ground, buried under the large branch. They were about to run when one of Razor's men grabbed Rev by her ankles, twisted it, and brought her to the ground.

Rev grabbed her flexion and thrust it down hard on the man's shoulder.

He picked up a stick and slashed it hard at Rev's legs as she got up.

Rev replied with a quick blow to his throat. He fell back on his knees and collapsed.

Rev

*Quick mom, let's go.*

Both limping slightly, they ran through the thick foliage and disappeared deep into the forest. Some time later they stopped for a breather.

Cyna

*Where do we go from here?*

Rev

*Let's climb to the top of that hill.*

When they reached the top of the hill, Rev removed a telescope from her backpack. She looked to the end of Tailbone Island. The snow covered mountain of Eagle Bluff stood out as the highest point on the island. She moved the spyglass lower and focused in on Gianthead Landing, a big rock formation in the shape of a head. The top was completely flat. Close to Eagle Bluff, that was the place she and her mother would meet up with Mars. But the first destination that Hiro mentioned was Crows Nest Crossing and then follow the river to Gianthead Landing.

It looked straightforward, but Rev had discovered nothing on this planet was simple or easy.

They kept walking. The temperature rose. They rested a bit, wiped the sweat from their brows and drank some water. Every minute seemed to get hotter. The sun was high up and the landscape had changed from lush green to a harsh world of rock and sand.

Rev

*What is this place?*

Cyna

*I believe they call it a desert.*

From up top they could see small streams snaking through the narrow canyons. Giant red escarpments stretched far in the distance. Other peaks of red rock stood isolated as if abandoned by their bigger counterparts.

Rev and Cyna descended to the desert valley. They followed a dried up riverbed overshadowed on each side by monumental rock escarpments that were curved and grooved out as if Mother Nature had a giant chisel.

Having no horizon to follow, they continued down the dry river path. A light wind turned into a strong wind. Ahead of them a monstrous cloud of sand rocketed down the canyon towards them. The wind howled like a train as the sandstorm engulfed them in darkness. They both put their arms up to cover their eyes but it felt like someone throwing sand in their faces. Within seconds they were lost. They stuck close together as Rev put her arm out in front of her and touched the canyon wall. They moved along it with their backs to the wind when Cyna spotted a large crevice in the curved rock wall. Not very wide, they squeezed through the opening into a larger protected space.

They spit the gritty sand from their mouth and brushed each other off from their hair down to their boots. Cyna gave Rev some water from her backpack and then drank some herself. They splashed it on their faces and wiped the sand away.

Finally, they focused on their surroundings. Before them, swirling and twisting rock patterns flowed like giant ocean waves up to the sky.

Rev

*Look at these different shades of red, orange and yellow. Did someone paint these?*

Cyna

*Mother Nature is just as beautiful on this planet.*

Moving along the twisted rock formation, a beam of light drew them into a large enclosure. A natural formation of rocks provided stepping stones to climb to the top. Without hesitating, Rev ascended towards the sky hole, jumping and climbing each rock to the top. When she reached the top, she guided her mother to join her.

They surfaced into the sunlight, looked up and stared in disbelief.

## Chapter 60

Spread out before them was a display of human made structures. It was like some strange city neither Rev or Cyna had seen before. It covered a massive area on the flat surface of the plateau.

On one side a large area was worn down in the shape of a circle with old wooden benches surrounding the big ring. In the middle and outside circuit, rusted metal objects were scattered about. Further down at the other end, worn metal skeletons reached towards the sky. A big crooked sign read AMUSEMENT PARK at its entrance. Beside this, a large faded board seemed to demand an audience of its own. It all looked like someone flipped a massive switch and everything shut down forever.

Cyna

*I wonder who lives here?*

Rev

*Nobody. Look how neglected this place looks. Let's check it out.*

Curious, they walked about the mysterious, abandoned site. A sizable wooden building caught their attention. As they went up the steps, the outdoor sign displayed the words ARNIES ROADHOUSE. The door creaked as they slowly entered.

Rev

*Anybody home?*

A small lizard scurried across the floor. On one side, chairs and tables were piled on top of each other. A large empty floor led up to a long dusty bar. Cyna and Rev looked at their burnt and dirty faces in the mirror behind the bar.

Cyna

*I think this whole place was some kind of entertainment spot.*

Rev

*Right on, mom. Some kind of social gathering. That circuit outside reminds me of the Brix racetrack for our bicycle racing. But I'm not sure what they're racing. And that amusement park, I've never seen anything like it.*

Without warning, a tall muscular man jumped up from behind the bar with a sawed-off shotgun pointed straight at them. His voice boomed.

Arnie

*What are you doing in my place?*

Rev felt a burning feeling rise from the pit of her stomach and almost heaved into the two barrels pointed at her face. She knew what a gun looked like and the harm it could do. And the fact that they were intruding on this man's dwelling didn't look good.

Rev

*We're really sorry, mister. Honestly, we'll just get out of here. Nice meeting you.*

Arnie

*And go where? Razor is looking everywhere for you. Leave here and you're as good as dead.*

Cyna

*Okay, you caught us. Please don't hurt us.*

Arnie put the gun down and smiled.

Arnie

*My name is Arnie and I'm not here to hurt you or turn you in. I'm honored to meet you. You must be Rev and Cyna.*

Rev and her mother looked at each other with an expression of caution and disbelief.

Arnie

*Would you like some cold water? Then, follow me.*

Arnie led them out the back door and before long all three were seated at a table in his cabin. He reached in his fridge and brought out ice cubes and cold water. Then, he offered them some cookies to snack on.

Arnie

*I'm surprised you got this far, with Razor's men all over. I celebrated last night when I heard you sunk the Vulgaris. I'm impressed.*

Rev was about to tell him that the protectors from Crystal Falls engineered the sinking of the ship but she wasn't sure if she could trust Arnie. She kept her mouth shut. Cyna read Rev's mind and did the same.

Arnie

*And to be able to climb up The Devil's Tongue is no small feat either.*

Cyna

*The Devil's Tongue?*

Arnie

*Yes, the entrance you came through to Arnie's world.*

Rev

*Well, Arnie's world is quite impressive. What happened to it?*

Arnie

*Razor is what happened to it. This used to be a thriving spot. People would come from all the other islands and party and have fun until Razor took control of Tailbone Island. She stole the train that would transport people from the harbor to here. Now she uses it to take her gold from her mine near Crows Nest Crossing to Okay Bay. She's a nasty piece of work.*

Cyna

*Did you ever meet her?*

Arnie

*I used to work for her. At one time I hunted for gold. I'm a geologist. She hired me for my expertise. I know where to search for gold. But she's too bossy for me. Never listens and then likes to blame me for her failures.*

Rev

*Why do Razor's workers back her up?*

Arnie

*Because she pays them well with gold. The only currency on this planet.*

Rev

*What happened to this planet?*

Arnie took a long swallow of water and wiped his brow.



Arnie

*About twelve years ago the fires came first. Then the rain never stopped. I used to fish in the lakes and rivers that were once between our island chains. People moved further up the mountains and had to adapt like Crystal Falls did. The whole planet is mostly covered in water.*

Cyna

*Is Razor responsible for all of this?*

Arnie

*As much as I dislike Razor I can't say that she is solely responsible for Earth's demise. You always need a great deal of people to follow an egocentric, destructive leader.*

Arnie kept talking about his tales of being a gold miner. He was an older man, weathered with grey hair. Rev watched her mother and couldn't help but notice that she seemed captivated by Arnie's stories. His pleasant and cheerful personality lifted Rev and Cyna's spirits. Arnie reminded Rev of Wolfie and Faze. Is everyone from this planet so entertaining? She felt at ease.

Rev reflected on the past day's events. Somehow, she had managed to find her mother and rescue her. After all the ordeals they went through, Rev realized that here she was with her mother, enjoying this special moment.

Never in her wildest dreams did she ever imagine that she would find the adventure of a lifetime, on a strange planet, and become so close to her mother, as she had when she was a child. Growing up fast in Genus, with her daily routines and socializing with friends, she now discovered a simple truth. That she had taken her parents for granted.

Anything, especially people, can be taken from you. Always cherish and be grateful for the people in your life. She glanced at her mother and smiled. She reached over and touched her hand. Her mother gave her a warm hug.

Arnie

*You girls look beat. Take a nap. After, I have a special treat for you.*

## Chapter 61

They walked over to the racetrack. Rev and Cyna stared at some kind of twisted metal machine that Arnie was proud to show them. Steel swirling tubes like a spider web sat on top of four big tires. Two seats were visible.

Rev

*What is that?*

Arnie

*It's my racing buggy. Who wants to go for a ride?*

Arnie managed to squeeze his big physique through a small opening in the buggy, put on a helmet and strapped himself in. Smiling in his seat behind a steering wheel, he looked at Cyna.

Arnie

*Would you like to go first?*

Cyna

*You bet.*

Cyna hopped in the other side, put her helmet on and strapped herself in. A loud rumbling sound vibrated underneath them as Arnie started it. He drew Cyna's attention to his feet.

Arnie

*This pedal makes it go. This pedal makes it stop. And this wheel steers it. Got it?*

With that the loud rumbling noise got deafening as they shot off down the racetrack. Rev barely heard her mother scream with laughter as they flew around the circuit. Dust flew up everywhere as Rev sat in the bleachers. After a few minutes Arnie and Cyna switched places.

Jerking the buggy from fast to slow repeatedly, Cyna eventually smoothed her driving out and started to speed up. With one lap under her belt she gained confidence and put the pedal to the floor. As they rounded a curve at a fast speed, the wheels turned too sharp.

Within a flash of a second the buggy was airborne, flipped over and came crashing to the ground, rolling over a few times and coming to a halt upright.

Rev raced over to them.

Rev

*Mom! Mom! Are you all right?*

Cyna

*Rev, you have to try it. You'll love it. What a thrill.*

Cyna couldn't stop laughing as Arnie thumped the overhead steel bars.

Arnie

*Lots of protection. These bars are very strong. Now it's your turn, Rev.*

Rev was quick to catch on and like her mother she loved to go fast. However she didn't wipe out like Cyna but spun around a number of times on the curves. She didn't want to stop, but Arnie was getting a little stiff and needed to loosen up. She brought the buggy to rest and when she got out she went over to her mother and jumped up and down like a kid.

Rev

*Can you imagine if father and professor Mars rode this. Together they could make these for everyone in Brix.*

Cyna

*What makes this machine work, Arnie?*

Arnie

*You mean what powers it? That would be Razor's battery. She still had some in storage after all these years. I borrowed a few from her, when she wasn't looking.*

Rev

*You mean the battery that was going to save your planet.*

Arnie

*We'll never know. But I like it. She's a genius no doubt. But rejection can be like a dagger to the heart. She felt betrayed and scorned. Her face still shows it. I didn't know her back then, but if I did, I would have told her to be patient and ride the bumps that life throws at you.*

Rev and Cyna brushed the dust off themselves. It was dusk as Arnie guided them over to the amusement park.

Arnie

*I have something else I want you to try out.*

Rev and Cyna looked up with wonder at the gigantic metal structures in the park. Something they had never seen on their planet. Arnie pointed to each one, giving them names such as rollercoaster, the big wheel and the twister.

Arnie

*Watch this.*

Arnie pulled a huge lever and the sky lit up with thousands of lights. Against the backdrop of the night sky, the brilliant colored lights blinded Rev and Cyna. Silent and in awe they felt as if they had entered a magical kingdom.

Arnie

*I wish I could take you for a ride on these. There is only one that is working safely.*

Arnie led them to the middle of the park. They hopped aboard a large circular platform where beautifully carved and glossy animal sculptures were affixed. A cascade of shimmering lights showered down on them from an elaborate crown like roof covering.

Rev

*I want to ride the tiger.*

Her mom chose a proud stallion.

Arnie

*Everyone hold on. It's time to be a little kid again.*

Arnie flicked a switch and climbed on to the elephant as the carousel started to move. Round and round they went. With her tiger galloping up and down, and the merry music filling the night, Rev glanced back at her mother and Arnie. Her eyes sparkled and her smile was wide. This was the happiest she had been in some time.

## Chapter 62

The next morning Rev stood looking out the window towards the big white board next to the amusement park. She pointed it out to Arnie as he prepared breakfast and Cyna organized her backpack.

Rev

*What is that?*

Arnie

*That used to be a drive-in theatre. We showed movies there.*

Rev

*You mean like the ones Wolfie and Faze were in?*

Arnie laughed.

Arnie

*How do you know them? Oh, that's right. They are on your planet now. Razor took them with her.*

Rev had been careful. She never mentioned anything about where they came from.

Rev

*How did you know we came through the Lux?*

Arnie

*Everybody knows that you, your mother and Mars came from Brix. Vice has a big mouth and news travels fast. But getting back to your question, yes, I think I have some old movie reels of Wolfie and Faze. Next time you drop by I will show them to you. Right now we have to get you prepared for your journey.*

After breakfast Arnie brought out a map. Cyna and Rev joined him as he unfolded it on the table. He pointed to Crows Nest Crossing.

Arnie

*This is your next stop. But you don't go all the way to Crows Nest Crossing. See this small trail off the main road? You have to go down a steep hill to the*

*river but the buggy can handle it.*

Cyna

*You mean we're taking your buggy.*

Arnie

*Yes. That's why I taught you besides having some fun. From a distance you'll see a tall barren tree that marks where this small trail begins. Keep an eye out for Razor's men but they should all be at the mining camp. You'll know you're getting close when you hear loud bangs. Those are the explosives she's using to blow the mountain up.*

Cyna

*How far down the river do we go?*

Arnie

*A few minutes, where you can cross an old wooden bridge by foot. You'll have to abandon the buggy there. Keep following the river downstream until it meets up with another river. Follow that river upstream to Gianthead Landing.*

In the distance Arnie could make out the faint sound of a buggy approaching.

Arnie

*Quick, you need to hide.*

Arnie lifted a rug in the living area and opened a trap door.

Arnie

*Hurry. Don't say a word until I knock three times on the floor.*

Rev and Cyna hurried down the steps to the hiding spot. Arnie quietly closed the trap door and placed the rug over it. He gathered any evidence of his guests and placed them in a wood box. Then he lit a cigar and seated himself on his porch with his shotgun, just as a buggy rumbled up to his cabin. Two men crawled out. One short and the other tall.

Short man

*Razor wants to see you.*

Arnie

*I told her. I'm finished. She doesn't listen.*

Short man

*Razor wants to blow the hill past Crows Nest Crossing and wants your help.*

Arnie

*That's going to get people killed. I warned her about that before.*

Short man

*We're just the messengers, Arnie. If you don't come you're going to have more company. A lot more company.*

Tall man

*Have you seen any signs of the girl and her mother?*

Arnie blew out a puff of smoke from his cigar, stood up and walked down the porch steps, his gun at his side.

Arnie

*I heard they were dangerous so I locked myself inside all night.*

The two men had a good laugh.

Tall man

*Razor noticed you had all the lights on in the amusement park last night.*

Arnie

*Yes a few kids and their parents came up from the town last night and wanted to ride the carousel.*

Tall man

*Razor was amused. She was tempted to come up for a ride.*

Arnie

*The children were looking for some fun, not a horror show. Tell her I'll be down shortly.*

The two men chuckled as they got into their buggy and drove off. Arnie stood there for a few minutes to make sure they weren't coming back.

He entered his cabin and knocked on the floor three times. He lifted the door on the floor and helped his two guests out from their hiding spot.

Arnie

*I'll bring the buggy up. Get your stuff ready. For your own wellbeing you must*

*leave soon.*

Arnie pulled up to the cabin with the buggy just as they came out with their backpacks. They crawled in with Rev in the driver's seat.

Arnie

*Remember, keep a good distance off the main road as you follow it to the small trail.*

Arnie looked up at the dark sky.

Arnie

*It's going to rain.*

Rev

*We can't thank you enough, Arnie.*

Arnie

*Stay safe. Come back anytime.*

Arnie waved to them as they disappeared in a cloud of dust.



## Chapter 63

Rev and Cyna zoomed out of Arnie's place and headed off road through the desert. A clap of thunder, followed by a streak of lightning made them jittery. Within seconds the rain drenched them, a welcome relief from the previous sandstorm.

They continued moving around the desert brush high up over the valley. As they drew closer to the small trail they heard distant blasts from Razor's mine. Small cliffs and narrow passage openings concealed them from the main road.

Rev stopped the buggy and took out the small telescope. She focused in on a tall tree in the distance.

Rev

*There's our marker. We'll reach the trail in a few minutes.*

She handed the scope to her mother.

Cyna

*It looks like all the branches are moving. I thought Arnie said it was a dead tree.*

Rev

*It's the rain. Let's get out of here.*

Rev slammed hard on the accelerator and the buggy roared to life. Out of the pouring rain, ahead of them, Rev could barely make out something heading straight for them.

It was another buggy.

Cyna

*Rev, behind us. A buggy.*

Rev reacted before even thinking. Surrounded by opposing forces she turned the wheel sharply. The buggy behind her was just as quick to respond and kept following her close. Rev turned the wheel sharply again and the big tires hurled mud at her relentless aggressor.

In the wide open space she kept spinning around constantly splattering the other buggy trailing behind her. Suddenly, the first buggy appeared again

crossing Rev's path.

Rev gunned Arnie's buggy and t-boned the assailant's buggy with such force it rolled endlessly. It came to rest with two wheels resting over the edge of a steep cliff. Rev hesitated and looked at her mother.

Cyna

*Do it.*

Rev stomped on the pedal. Driving at full speed, Rev sideswiped his buggy seconds after the driver jumped free, sending it to its final resting space far below.

The second buggy thundered down on them. As Rev flicked the mud from her eyes, she jerked the wheel back and forth, narrowly out maneuvering him. He was quick to slam into their buggy's passenger side and grab hold of Cyna's clothing.

Rev

*Hold on mom.*

Rev pulled hard on the steering wheel and smacked his buggy hard against a jagged rock slope. Small rocks flew through the air and bounced off the steel roof bars of their buggy. He released his grip on Cyna as he reduced speed and continued racing behind them.

Rev tried to shake him loose and sailed over a small hill only to land in a giant puddle. She spun the tires sinking deeper in the muddy water.

Rev and Cyna froze in their seats, as their buggy remained motionless.

The man jumped out of his buggy and approached them carrying a heavy pipe.

Before they could move, a black cloud descended from the sky diving straight at them.

Rev frantically tried to free the buggy from the muddy bog. They were stuck. They both looked back as the man came closer showing a wide grin on his face.

Above them the dark cloud dive-bombed the grinning man.

Cyna

*What is it?*

Rev

*Crows!*

Hundreds of crows swarmed the man pecking him ferociously. He batted them

with his pipe as he bolted for safety, running in the opposite direction. Relentless, the crows chased him out of sight.

Rev

*Quick mom! Grab your stuff!*

Rev jumped out and ran towards the man's buggy. She started it as Cyna crawled in with their belongings. Rev floored it just as a heavy weight thumped down on the roof bars. It was the man from the first buggy. He rammed his hand through the top openings and grabbed Rev's hair pulling her upwards.

Rev

*Mom, get the flexion in my pocket!*

Rev felt like her scalp was being ripped off her head as her mother extended the flexion and jabbed it into the man's chin. He released his grip just as Rev slammed on the brakes and sent him sailing through the air bouncing on the ground in front of them. Rev veered around him and floored it. Still pouring so hard it felt like they could drown in the torrent of rain, they reached the small trail and raced downhill towards the river. Cyna spotted the barren tree as distant explosives shook the ground.

Cyna

*So that's what I saw in the tree when I looked through the scope. It was full of crows.*

Rev nodded. She was still too choked to speak. They had escaped Razor's men. She realized this wasn't the first time Mother Nature had come to her rescue. She was very grateful.

They reached the river and cruised along the shore's path. The river was high and raging from the downpour. Within a few minutes they came to the wooden bridge. They put on their backpacks and left the buggy. Walking halfway across, a rushing cracking sound caught their attention. They looked upstream.

A mountain of mud barreled down on them.

## Chapter 64

It came out of nowhere. At that precise moment the only thought that flashed through Rev's mind was that she was about to die. This was the end of her journey. She never imagined that her life would end on a strange planet.

Like a slow motion wreck, the mud and water ripped the bridge loose, and tossed it like a twig, carrying it high on the crest of the huge muddy wave.

Rocks and trees were swept downstream, moving at the same speed and direction as if it all was some giant ship growing in size and destroying everything in its path.

Rev's heart was pounding out of her chest as she clung to the small wood scrap that used to be the bridge.

In a split second it flipped over and Rev fell head first into the roaring muddy water below.

She barely had a chance to take a breath before she plunged into the dark, dirty water. Her breather wouldn't work in this dense sludge. All her muscles ached as she struggled to the surface but the force of the water and the thickness of the mud exhausted all her efforts. She felt a fiery pain in her lungs.

She refused to let any negative thoughts infiltrate her psyche. She pushed them aside.

No, Rev, you are not going to panic. You are not going to give up.

She brushed against something underwater. She couldn't see what it was. She grabbed hold of it. Relieved, she realized that it was a tree branch. She reached further and felt its thick trunk. She climbed it to the surface and gasped for air.

Where was her mother? Rev desperately looked around. No sight of her. She spit and coughed out some murky water as she yelled as loud as she could.

Rev

*Mom! Mom!*

She crawled up the floating tree and stood up to get a better view. She stared in disbelief at all the destruction. Huge trees that had been uprooted floated by her. In a matter of minutes the whole landscape had changed.

Her mother had vanished.

She continued to drift downstream as she examined everything along her way. That sense of doom tried to creep its way inside her. Rev refused to let it get hold of her. She would never give up hope.



## Chapter 65

The river moved slower as Rev came to the intersecting rivers. The river flowing downstream from Gianthead Landing was crystal clear as it merged into the muddy river from Crows Nest Crossing. Rev waded ashore and climbed a big overhanging rock ledge that overlooked the union of the rivers. She looked up and down the muddy river for several minutes.

And then, something caught her eye resting on the shore. It was her mother's backpack. Excited, Rev shouted in every direction.

Rev

*Mom! Mom!*

No reply. She kept calling her name. Then listened. A faint voice responded.

Rev splashed through the mud in the direction of the voice. Her mother was trapped under a large branch.

Cyna

*I'm okay. Just a little shaken.*

Rev shoveled the mud out from under Cyna and eased her mother gently from under the large branch. She grabbed hold of her mother and lifted her to her feet. They made their way over to the rock ledge and rested. The rain stopped and the sun came out. They hugged each other as they sat on the ledge for a long time to rest.

The river from Crows Nest Crossing had calmed down and the mud was thinning out as Rev and Cyna stood up. They could hear the pleasant sound of a waterfall behind them. They walked up the rugged terrain of the Gianthead River and to their surprise and delight a waterfall flowed down a cliff cascading in a large pool in the clean river.

They both stared at each other's muddy appearance and broke out in laughter.

Cyna

*Do I look as dirty as you?*

Rev

*Worse.*

With that they raced one another to the fresh water and dove in under the waterfall. Laughing and splashing like children playing they forgot all their troubles.

They washed their spare clothes from Cyna's backpack. After drying them on a tree branch, they switched them from the clothes they swam in and dried those as well.

Cyna

*We might as well make camp here tonight. This is such a beautiful spot and I'm still feeling achy.*

Rev

*No problem, mom. You know how sympathetic I am to old people.*

Cyna laughed while Rev kept her sheepish grin.

Cyna

*Wait to you have children and we'll see what kind of shape you're in then, young lady.*

Rev

*Sure, sure, mom. Hey, look up there.*

Rev pointed to a large opening in the cliff beside the waterfall.

Cyna

*It could be a cave. Let's take a look.*

They climbed up to the opening. The sun provided enough light for them to check it out.

Rev

*There's plenty of room for us to sleep and make a campfire. I noticed some fish when we were swimming. I'll catch a few. Can you muster up some firewood and start a fire or are you too old and achy? Ha ha.*

Cyna

*We'll see who's achy after I give you a good spanking.*

Rev howled with laughter all the way down to the river.

She quietly submerged her hands in the water and waited patiently. It wasn't long before she had two fish on shore. She quickly cleaned them with her

pocketknife. She put a stick through them and brought them up to her mother who had a fire burning.

After they ate, they quietly relaxed around the fire watching the sun go down and the moon come up. Rev broke the silence.

Rev

*Please tell me what happened between father and his brother Mars.*

Cyna bent her head down, raised it, glanced at her daughter, and looked away.

Cyna

*I think we need to discuss this with your father, as a family.*

Rev

*No. That's what father said when he wiggled his way out of answering the same question. I'm fifteen. I can take it.*

Cyna

*Nice play, Rev. I guess I can't run away from this one here. I'm not sure how to begin. I knew Kosni and Mars since school days. They were always competing. Both brothers were very smart and everyone liked them. I liked them both.*

Rev

*Just say it mom. You had a crush on both of them.*

Cyna

*Thanks for that clarification, Rev. So, over the years the three of us hung out a lot. I couldn't help it. I fell in love with both of them.*

Rev

*What? You mean ... that you ... how should I put it ...*

Cyna

*We remained friends. Is that what you want to know?*

Rev

*Okay, just checking. Go on.*

Cyna

*Thanks. But I realized, as we got older I needed to commit to one of them. By that time we were all in university and our friendships were getting awkward. I needed to make a decision and fairly soon. The outcome would make one of them*



*happy and the other feeling rejected and disappointed.*

Rev

*So, both brothers were in love with you too?*

Cyna

*I believe so. It felt like it.*

Rev

*So, how did you choose?*

Cyna

*I'm getting to that, Rev. Everyone in Brix knew about how the three of us, and how we felt about each other. It became the town gossip. Even the town was divided about whom I was going to choose to spend the rest of my life with.*

Cyna hesitated as she took a drink of water. Her eyes became misty. She stared out the cave entrance at the distant stars. Perhaps one of those far away glowing lights was their planet, Radium. She just wanted everything to be right and back to normal. She missed Kosni and Mars and knew they were worrying about Rev and her. And now this flashback in time to when she was young and in love and foolish. More pain, but it was time Rev knew.

Cyna

*An opportunity arose that I thought might lift this heavy weight from my shoulders. You see, there was a contest at the university. It was a science and engineering competition. Whoever invented the most ingenious invention would win a prize of money. Since Kosni and Mars were exceptional engineers, I decided that if one of them won, well, they could have my hand in marriage.*

Rev

*Wow! That's unbelievable.*

Cyna

*Stupid is the word. I don't know what I was thinking. I felt so important and special. The whole town showed up. Everybody had a say in judging the winner. I became the grand prize and not the money.*

Rev

*What were their inventions?*

Cyna

*Mars was a selfbotic. He could make his machine do anything without touching it. He could send an electronic signal to it and it danced around.*

Rev

*That sounds exactly like Razor's drokes. What was father's invention?*

Cyna

*He invented a small steam engine.*

Rev

*So how did father win?*

Cyna

*Your father went first and everyone applauded. When Mars demonstrated his invention everyone was amazed and before he could finish they were standing on their feet cheering. He was a sure winner but then his selfbotic caught fire and fell over. He was disqualified. Mars was devastated and humiliated. He went into isolation for years. He never perfected his invention. He abandoned it. It might have revolutionized Brix.*

Rev

*What about father's invention? Wasn't it practical?*

Cyna

*Your father felt guilty. He loved his brother. Not only did Mars lose my hand but he also lost faith in himself. Your father couldn't look at his winning invention ever again.*

Rev

*How did we end up in Genus?*

Cyna

*Some of the town's people started to believe in a lie that spread like a virus. They thought that Kosni had sabotaged his brother's invention. It divided Brix. People wouldn't talk to each other and arguments broke out. After you were born he dreamed of restoring Genus and living there. So when you were young, we moved to our underwater world and anyone who wanted could live there too.*

Rev

*Well then what happened to Mar's wife?*

Cyna

*Professor Mars never married. He adopted Stike.*

Rev was taken aback.

Rev

*Mom, I just want to get back to our planet. With Kosni and Mars working together we will find a way to defeat Razor and her drokes.*

Cyna stared at the fire and stoked it with a stick. Rev felt her mother's remorse and hugged her. She brought out a small blanket from the backpack. Some spare clothes formed a long pillow for them. They snuggled up to each other and fell asleep as the embers from the fire cast flickering shadows on the walls.

## Chapter 66

The sun edged its way deeper in the cave as Rev and her mother awoke and sat up.

Cyna

*I had a dream that all the people of Brix were sitting around a big campfire and ...*

Cyna's eyes opened wide as Rev turned around to see what she was staring at. A massive bear standing on its hind legs let out short huffing and blowing snorts. It shook the whole cave as it jumped over the dead campfire and sauntered down the hill towards the river.

Rev

*If that doesn't get you moving in the morning, nothing will.*

Cyna

*Let's get our behinds out of here while we still have them.*

They packed quickly and checked their surroundings. In the distance they could hear voices.

Rev

*It's coming from above the cliff.*

Climbing cautiously up the cliff towards the sound, they slowly peeked over some rocks at the top. Without warning a ball raced towards their hiding spot. They ducked down. The voices became louder as one of them retrieved the ball.

Rev peeked out between the rocks and bushes.

Rev

*It's Vice.*

Cyna

*What?*

Rev took another look. Vice and his friend were kicking a ball back and forth. Rev crawled along to get a better view. Her foot slipped and loosened some

gravel that tumbled down the slope. Vice and his friend approached.

Rev and Cyna crouched under a large overhanging slab of rock as Vice and his friend stood above them. Eager to get back to their game they returned to a flat playing area, unfazed by the sound.

Cyna decided to survey the situation. After a few moments she ducked down and whispered to Rev.

Cyna

*It's razor's train, or at least the one she stole.*

Rev

*No way. Did you see Razor?*

Cyna took another look.

Cyna

*No sight of Razor. She must still be at her mine. The train is on the other side of the river. There is a small bridge crossing over to where Vice and his friend are playing.*

Rev

*We'll never get past them.*

Cyna

*Unless we go back down the cliff, cross the river and climb back up. Then we can borrow her train.*

Rev

*Oh mom, I love your devious mind. Let's hurry.*

Twenty minutes later they reached the top on the other side of the river.

Rev

*It's still here. Where's Vice and his friend?*

Cyna

*I don't know. Let's keep close to those trees by the shore.*

As they crept closer to the last train car, they noticed the engine was pointed towards Eagle Bluff. Attached to it were four compartment cars. Rev caught a glimpse of Vice in the last car. Sitting at a table with his friend playing some kind of game, they were shouting and laughing at each other.

Sticking close to the trees, Rev and Cyna sneaked past them along the other compartments until they came to the engine compartment.

Rev

*What's the plan?*

Cyna

*I had planned to borrow the whole train but with Vice and his friend aboard that changes everything. We'll have to decouple the engine from the rest of the train.*

Rev

*Do you know how to do that?*

Cyna

*Professor Mars took a serious interest in this train the last time we travelled on it. Just like your father they like to analyze and understand how everything works. Let's see if I remember what he told me.*

Cyna crouched down and examined the components that joined the engine room car to the train car behind it.

Rev

*What's that noise?*

They both gaped across the river as they saw Razor speeding fast in a racing buggy about to cross the bridge.

Rev

*I don't want to tell you to hurry, mom, but please hurry up.*

Cyna kept her cool and focused on the job at hand. She pulled a big lever down. As the coupling came loose she pulled the pin on the chain joining the knuckles. Next she yanked off the adjoining electrical and hose leads.

Cyna

*Let's go.*

The words were barely out of her mouth when Razor's buggy came roaring behind the end of the train and straight at them.

Cyna and Rev jumped aboard the engine room and started to push buttons. The engine came to life. Cyna pulled the main lever towards her just as Razor

came hollering up beside them.

Sitting in the passenger seat she crawled up to the top of the buggy and was about to jump aboard the train when the engine kicked in at high speed. Rev and Cyna glanced back to see Razor hanging on to the roof bars screaming and shaking her fist.

Rev

*I wouldn't want to be in Vice's shoes right now.*

They sat back and enjoyed the ride.

## Chapter 67

The snowy mountain of Eagle Bluff stood out at the far end of Tailbone Island. The electric train engine glided smoothly and quietly beside the river as it effortlessly climbed the gentle slope to Eagle Bluff. Rev stuck her head out of a window and inhaled the fresh scents of the forest.

Rev

*Monique told me that this train used to travel between Crystal Falls and Eagle bluff.*

Cyna

*It should take us to the base of Gianthead Landing, long before the sun goes down. Keep your eyes peeled for anything. Razor has one mission now and that is to kill us. She'll make that her main priority. She hates losing.*

They crossed over a bridge that stretched high over the river before entering a mountain tunnel. After exiting the tunnel the rail tracks split into two separate tracks. Cyna stopped the train. They jumped out to inspect the situation.

Rev

*The tracks leading up to Eagle Bluff are all torn up. What gives?*

Cyna looked through the telescope in both directions.

Cyna

*Looks like Razor tore them up and put them down on this new route, which leads down to the harbor. We'll have to abandon the train but not before we put it out of action.*

Rev

*What nasty piece of work do you have in mind, mother?*

Cyna

*See if you can find any tools.*

Rev rummaged around and found some tools including a crowbar.

Cyna



*Good find. Now see this metal floor piece. Let's try to pry it up.*

With a fair bit of leverage they pried the metal plate loose and lifted it out of its spot. A meshwork of wires and connecting boxes were jammed in the small space below the floor.

Cyna

*Grab hold of everything and pull it out.*

Together, they ripped out all the wires and boxes. After gathering their belongings they left the train's engine car and followed the vacant rail route towards Gianthead Landing at the base of Eagle Bluff. Crossing a rail bridge they tossed the electrical wires and boxes into the river below.

After an hour, Rev looked through the telescope.

Rev

*Take a look, mom. That's Gianthead Landing ahead of us. I see a trail leading to the top. We just have to go through these woods. Professor Mars sent the message to Crystal Falls that he would meet us at the top.*

Cyna took a look. Satisfied she handed the spyglass back to Rev. She understood why they called it Gianthead Landing. There was no mistaking the features of a nose, mouth and chin silhouetted against the sky. Quietly they walked through the forest towards the high plateau.

Suddenly, Rev's ears perked up.

Rev

*Did you hear that?*

Cyna

*It sounded like it was coming from that direction.*

They walked a minute in the direction that Cyna had pointed out. A lot closer now, they heard a muffled cry for help.

A few more steps and they spotted a boy tied to a tree with his mouth taped shut.

Cyna

*Be careful. It could be a trap.*

The boy kept trying to speak and rolled his eyes from side to side. Rev noticed

an insignia stitched to his shirt as she started to tear off the mouth tape.

Rev

*Look on his shirt. It says Eagle Bluff.*

She removed the tape.

Rev

*Who are you? What are doing here?*

Bryce

*I'm Bryce. Professor Mars sent me to guide you the rest of the way. Razor's men caught me and tied me up about twenty minutes ago. We have to move fast but keep a keen eye out for any of them. I'll show you the way.*

Cyna untied his hands from behind the tree. They continued towards the towering cliff that stunted everything in its presence. They stopped as they stared down a deep ravine. A long suspension bridge made of rope and wood provided them a means to cross over to Gianthead Landing. On the other side of the bridge they could make out steps on the cliff that led to the plateau at the top.

Cyna went first. She carefully placed her feet on the wooden boards and hung on to the railing's ropes. It swayed a little back and forth. After a couple of minutes, she smiled and waved to Rev and Bryce as she reached the other side safely.

Cyna

*Just don't look down, Rev.*

Rev

*But mom, you know how much I love the scenery.*

Rev grabbed hold of the ropes and stepped doggedly on each wooden plank. About halfway she smiled and looked up at her mother.

Cyna's face looked like she had seen the face of death.

Rev turned around quickly, her heart pounding rapidly as she saw Bryce taking a hatchet to the ropes on his side of the bridge.

Without a chance to even shout at Bryce, Rev was knocked off her feet as one side of the suspension bridge twisted and swayed upright.

Rev just barely grabbed hold of the rope as she dangled helplessly over the bottomless ravine.

One false move and she would plummet to her death.

And then the final deathblow shook her violently.

Bryce completed his ultimate hack at the ropes. The bridge swung loose from his side.

Still clinging to the rope and wood plank, Rev and the bridge sailed swiftly towards the big rock cliff in front of her.

In a flash, Rev spotted a large inward cave opening in the cliff.

She had seconds to react.

Instinctively, she secured a foothold on the ladder bridge and crawled down enough to avoid being splattered against the rock face.

She swung deep in the cave and remained fixed to the broken bridge. When the swaying ceased, she began to climb to the top placing her foot on each wooden plank.

Cyna

*Look out Rev!*

Rev twisted her head around. A flash of metal was flying straight at her. She ducked just in time as Bryce's hatchet ricocheted off a rock narrowly missing her. She took a deep breath and wiped the sweat from her hands as she continued her climb, shaking off Bryce's last attempt to kill her.

## Chapter 68

Rev grabbed her mother's outstretched hand.

Cyna

*How was the scenery?*

Rev

*Breathtaking.*

Rev laughed as they gave each other a warm hug. They sat down on one of the cliff's steps. Bryce had vanished on the other side of the ravine. They rested for a minute.

Rev

*We better get out of here. Uncle Mars should be waiting for us at the top.*

Rev and Cyna climbed the stone stairway to the top. Winded, they caught their breath as they moved slowly to the middle of the large flat plateau, marveling at the spectacular scenery at this height. Below them, the forests, rivers and ravines stretched out as far as Crystal Falls. Above them, the giant white covered mountain of Eagle Bluff completed Mother Nature's masterpiece.

Rev

*Where is professor Mars?*

Cyna

*I'm sure he won't disappoint us.*

Cyna caught sight of colored floating objects far up in the sky and pointed them out to Rev.

And then something moved near the cliff's edge. What looked like four men carrying long sticks stepped out from behind the rocks and gradually surrounded them.

Rev

*So you want a stick fight?*

Rev withdrew her flexion and kept her mother close to her. The first man

came at Rev with no fear. Rev twirled aside from his momentum, smacked down on his hand and dislodged his weapon from his hands. She kicked it over to her mother at the same time.

Cyna picked it up immediately and caught another attacker off guard by stabbing him in the solar plexus. He fell backward in agony.

Rev exchanged stick rattling back and forth and managed to strike a blow to the third man's jaw. Surprised, he stepped back and spit out two teeth from his bloody lips.

The fourth man whacked Rev on her back. She let out a horrible groan before stumbling to the ground. He was about to bring his stick down hard on her face when Cyna intercepted him with her stick to his groin. He fell back immobilized.

The first attacker, who had lost his stick, leaped on Cyna and held a knife to her throat. Turning around, Rev froze as the man motioned for her to drop her weapon.

Cyna  
*Rev, drop it.*

Before she could react another attacker grabbed Rev from behind and swung her to the ground.

Rev lay there feeling hopeless and defeated. Her attacker grimaced as he stood over her.

When he moved away Rev thought she saw clouds falling from the sky. By the time the four assailants looked up about a dozen men had landed from above.

The four assailants backed off and raced to the edge of the cliff. They quickly descended on hanging ropes.

The other men unzipped their flying suits and rushed towards Rev and Cyna. Rev instantly recognized one of them and jumped to her feet and grabbed hold of him.

Rev  
*Uncle Mars. Uncle Mars.*

Cyna felt such shock and disbelief. She couldn't stop the tears streaming down her cheeks.

Cyna  
*I almost gave up all hope.*

Mars

*You're both safe now. The people of Eagle Bluff have been most kind and helpful.*

Some of the men who landed were quick to inspect the surroundings and secure it. The remaining men stayed close to Mars, Cyna and Rev.

Eventually the men escorted the group of three to the natural arch that formed a bridge between Gianthead Landing and the base of Eagle Bluff. The guards on the bridge let them pass and the three hopped on board a cable car.

From near death, to flying men, to being lifted high in the sky in a small enclosure by a cable, created a high intensity of excitement in Rev.

Rev couldn't contain her wonderment.

Rev

*What is going on?*

Professor Mars laughed while Cyna beamed with joy as she wrapped her arm around his arm. The women told Mars everything that happened to them as the lift carried them slowly up the mountain.

Rev felt at home and whole, sitting across from her mother and uncle. This amazing feeling of being elevated high above the beauty below renewed her spirit and clarified her goal. Rev knew, together as a team, was the only chance they had to free Brix and Genus from Razor and the destructive pollution she had brought about.

## Chapter 69

As the cable car approached the top of Eagle Bluff, Rev was impressed by the vast amount of white powder.

Rev

*What is that white stuff?*

Mars

*It's snow. Very slippery and cold. You'll need some warmer clothing.*

Rev

*And that large sheet of glass over there?*

Mars

*Ice. It's a lake that's always frozen.*

Cyna

*I can feel the cold from in here.*

Mars

*Wait until you step outside.*

After clearing the bluff, the residence of Eagle Bluff slowly came into view. A massive pyramid of shipping containers were piled on top of each other extending high in the sky. Doors led to outside passageways and staircases joined the various containers on each level. Each one had a distinct color.

Rev

*I've seen those before. Weren't those the same type of steel boxes that Razor had on her ship?*

Mars

*Yes, they are quite common on this planet. The people here told me that if the island completely floods, the containers are positioned on floatation devices so they'll be able to float.*

Cyna

*I know all about them. I felt so scared and lonely when I was imprisoned in*

*one of those dark boxes.*

Mars

*The people of Eagle Bluff have furnished and heated them in a most pleasant way. You'll feel quite comfortable here, Cyna.*

The large cable mechanism that carried them to the top slowly grinded to a halt. They stepped out of the cable car and were greeted by two assistants of Eagle Bluff.

Mars

*Be careful. Both of you wrap your arms around me. This snow is slippery and dangerous.*

They slowly trudged through the heavy snow towards the main entrance. Towering high above them, massive fan like structures made a loud noise as they spun rapidly in the wind. Feeling small in their presence, and inquisitive as usual, Rev asked the professor about them.

Rev

*What does all this machinery do?*

Mars

*They power the cable cars and Eagle Bluff.*

The assistants led Rev, Cyna and Mars inside the pyramid of containers. To their amazement it was very warm and cheerful inside. What a stark difference between the outside and the interior, Rev thought, as they made their way through the maze of rooms and levels.

Finally the assistants showed them each their adjoining resting rooms. Another helper brought them some food and drinks.

Rev

*I love this place. It's snug and cozy. I wouldn't mind crashing here for some time after crossing Razor's territory.*

Cyna looked anxiously at Mars.

Cyna

*Did you hear anything about Hiro?*

Mars



*The word came from Crystal Falls that Hiro is safe and well.*

Cyna

*So good to hear.*

Rev turned and smiled at her uncle.

Rev

*That was an amazing stunt you pulled off, flying on to Gianthead Landing. How did you do it?*

Mars

*These people are amazing. I learned so much about their technology and history on this planet. The flying suit that you saw doesn't really fly but it can lift you through the air from a higher elevation to a lower one. I want to take one back to our planet.*

The group suddenly went quiet. They all knew that was the big question. Would they ever get back to their world? Would they ever see their friends and family again? They continued eating the food. Tomorrow they would meet with one of Eagle Bluff's top tech guys and hopefully discover the hidden secrets of the gold chip.

After the delicious meal, it didn't take them long to doze off for the night.

## Chapter 70

The next morning after breakfast Cyna, Rev and Mars visited the tech guy called Erik. He was a polite man, about twenty- five years of age with a big smile.

As soon as Rev entered his dwelling she noticed a piano by the door.

Rev

*Wow. I haven't seen one of these for years. Remember, mom, when I used to play the music box at the school in Brix? It was a lot smaller than this one. Why didn't anybody repair it?*

Cyna

*Nobody knew how. It washed ashore many years before you were born. We never saw one until then.*

Erik flashed a big smile and started to play.

Rev

*That sounds beautiful.*

Erik

*Please sit down. You can play a few bass notes while I play the melody.*

Rev

*I don't know how.*

Erik

*It's easy. I'll show you how.*

Rev sat down on the bench to his left and Erik showed her three keys on the piano and how to play them. At the same time his fingers danced around the piano keys at his end. Together they played a tune for about thirty seconds.

Rev's eyes lit up and her face beamed with joy. Everyone applauded her.

Cyna

*That's wonderful, Rev, but we need to talk.*

A combination of cargo containers positioned in vertical and horizontal

locations made Erik's dwelling spacious and appealing. At one end were a multitude of books in a study room, while a sofa and chairs were arranged in an open concept main room. In the center was a long desk with a computer. Erik placed seats around the computer desk for everyone.

Erik

*First, I must congratulate all of you on your escape from Razor. And your conquest of that gold chip, Rev. That took guts. Razor not only has destroyed our planet but also disrupted trading on Tailbone Island with all the other islands. Now I'm anxious to see the gold chip.*

Rev opened her locket and gave the gold chip to Erik. He scrutinized every detail on it with a big magnifying eyeglass. He then took pictures of both sides and transferred them to his computer screen. Cyna, Mars and Rev were amazed at his skills and the machines that they had invented on this planet. Erik looked up at them attentively.

Erik

*This is some piece of work. The one side has the programming for her drokes. It's a simplified version of her other chips but it looks like it serves her purpose. The other side has definite patterns that resemble a labyrinth inside a maze.*

Rev

*That's what Chloe said.*

Erik

*Yes, I know Chloe, one of the protectors of Crystal Falls. The protectors have done an invaluable job. Tell me more about the drokes in Brix.*

Mars told Erik everything he had studied about the drokes over the past three years. He drew a sketch of them and Erik transferred it to his computer. He also mentioned Brixwrecker, the giant droke.

Erik

*These drokes are very slender. What I can't figure out is where she puts the batteries in her design of these drokes.*

Mars

*I don't believe she uses any batteries.*

Erik

*What? I don't get that. She must be charging these things somewhere for sometime.*

*Mars*

*I've had a team of assistants and we watch and record all their movements. They are always active. There is no charging station.*

Erik stared at Mars in disbelief.

*Erik*

*Then the mystery side of this chip must be her battery or power source for each droke. That's why she uses gold. It has many mysterious powers and the most valued material in the universe. Copper and silver are better conductors of electricity but gold never oxidizes. It's pure. Also it's more dense, so about half of the size of silver or copper is needed. In electronics size is everything. The smaller and more reliable, the better.*

*Rev*

*Razor sure loves gold. She wears a lot of gold jewelry.*

*Erik*

*All stolen from a famous museum just before it was submerged. But I believe Razor has found a special power that gold possesses.*

*Rev*

*One other fact that might be of some help. I noticed when Brixwrecker was turned on all the other drokes froze. They didn't or couldn't move.*

Erik looked puzzled and pensive.

*Erik*

*So she only has so much power. She has to switch the energy back and forth between them. I need to examine your gold chip further, If I may, Rev. I have a team in the lab that can offer us a second opinion. They have special instruments that can dissect this mystery chip.*

*Cyna*

*Why don't we take a break, get some fresh air and something to eat?*

Rev let Erik keep the chip. She closed her locket and placed it back around her neck. The three of them thanked Erik and agreed to meet later.



## Chapter 71

The wind picked up as the group moved along the outside passages of the container pyramid. An eagle soaring high overhead caught Rev's attention as Cyna and Mars lost in their own conversation strolled ahead and disappeared around a corner. The wind turned into a blizzard and Rev slipped and glided on the snow as she tried to catch up to her mother and uncle.

She turned the corner and without warning she was knocked down on the ground. A hand grabbed her necklace, pulled it over her head and escaped with her locket.

More furious than hurt, Rev chased after the thief.

The thief leaped down the exterior staircases at lightning speed. Rev was right behind her mugger. She reached the bottom of the structure. She could barely see anything ahead of her with the blinding snow blowing straight at her. She looked down and could see big footprints in the snow.

She continued to follow them when she slipped and fell hard on her bottom. Out of breath she jumped to her feet and continued, only to slip again and slide down a steep hill. The snow was getting deeper as she reached a flat open space.

With the snow pelting at her face she continued chasing the thief. She was getting closer to him and just about to grab his dangling scarf when she heard a large cracking sound.

She looked down. She was standing on ice. But not for long. In an instant she vanished from the surface.

Without time to even take a breath to hold she plunged into the freezing water.

Rev had never experienced this cold pain before.

Someone was sticking knives through her whole body.

She knew she was in shock. Control your breathing, Rev thought.

Don't panic, don't panic. But how could anyone not panic.

It was so cold she felt her skin burning.

She looked up and caught a glimpse of the hole that she had fallen through.

She tried to swim up but no use.

She thrashed around and discarded her coat and kicked off her boots.

Soon her energy would be zapped.

She made one last desperate attempt to reach the hole.

Almost there. But no. She just couldn't reach it.

And then a hand and arm plunged through the open space.

Rev managed to grab hold of it. She felt herself being lifted out of the water and dragged over the ice.

She looked up at the hooded man that had saved her.

Her eyes were almost frozen shut. She opened them enough to see his face.

It was Vice.

Vice

*Now we're even.*

## Chapter 72

Cyna

*We need to get her inside right away.*

The men lifted Rev on a stretcher and took her inside. Cyna removed her daughter's wet clothes and wrapped her in blankets on a bed. She wrapped towels around hot water bottles and gently applied them to her body. Still conscious Rev was able to sip some sweet warm tea.

Cyna lay down beside Rev and hugged her gently. After a few hours Cyna checked her pulse. Fortunately it was back to normal and Rev spoke without any difficulty.

Rev

*I'm lucky to have a doctor for a mother.*

Cyna

*You're lucky to be alive, young lady. What were you thinking chasing after that thief?*

Rev

*He stole my locket.*

Cyna

*Yes, I know, but the gold chip wasn't inside. You gave it to Erik.*

Rev

*It was a gift from Wolfie. I loved that locket. It was Vice that stole it. It was Vice who saved me.*

Cyna

*I know you're weak. I don't want any argument. Doctor's orders. Rest for the remainder of the day. Tomorrow we will meet with Erik.*



## Chapter 73

The next morning Rev, Cyna and Mars were seated with Erik in his dwelling.

Erik

*I heard about your near death experience, Rev.*

Rev

*I've had nothing but near death experiences since I met Razor.*

Everyone had a good laugh.

Erik

*I can definitely relate to that. I'm so grateful you survived. Now about the gold chip. My team and I have come to the conclusion that the droke's chip receives energy transmitted to it from Razor's power source. The strange design on the one side of the chip is the key that unlocks it. But we don't know what Razor's power source is. Also nowhere on this planet has anyone ever succeeded in transmitting energy wireless from one object to another over a great distance. We can transmit lots of various signals wirelessly, but not energy.*

Mars

*While I was staying here I read in a book about an inventor named Tesla that did succeed in transmitting energy on your planet.*

Erik

*He did. But only over a short distance. Unfortunately he lost his financing to be able to continue his experiments on this. It might have changed our world for the better. We might never have been in this mess.*

Rev

*What about Razor's tower?*

Mars

*You're right. She has this bright orb mounted on a high tower on top of a cliff.*

Erik's eyes lit up as if someone plugged him into a socket. A wide smile covered his whole face. He walked briskly over to the piano and brought out two identical tuning forks.

He gave one of them to Rev to hold. The other one he struck against the desk. It vibrated making a high pitch. Then he grabbed hold of the prongs. His tuning fork stopped vibrating and the one Rev was holding was vibrating in the exact pitch. Erik reached out and stopped Rev's tuning fork from vibrating as his tuning fork started vibrating again.

Rev

*That's amazing. Is that some sort of trick?*

Erik

*One of nature's secrets. If some object vibrates it will transfer that energy to another identical object. It's called resonance. Our Lux on this planet is in resonance with your Lux on your planet.*

Rev

*But what has that have to do with Razor's chip?*

Erik

*Because Razor is transmitting the energy from your Lux to her tower to the gold chip in her drokes. Just like the tuning forks. Both can transmit and receive energy.*

Erik pointed to the strange design on the chip that resembled a maze and labyrinth.

Erik

*The pattern on this chip and Razor's tower orb are resonating with the same frequency as the Lux's vibration. Therefore the energy is being transferred all the way down to the droke's chip giving them power.*

Rev

*But I don't see the chip vibrating.*

Mars interrupted with a burst of excitement.

Mars

*So something inside the Lux and on Razor's tower have the same pattern as this gold chip?*

Erik

*Exactly.*

Rev

*But why doesn't this chip have energy now?*

Erik

*It does. It just needs to be hooked up to some mechanism with the correct programming. Just like Razor does with a droke. I imagine her tower orb, which not only receives and transmits energy also acts as a resistor, so she can control the output of the energy from the Lux. Otherwise too much energy would zap the drokes. You've opened up a whole new world for us, Rev, by capturing this chip. We are indebted to you forever.*

Cyna

*It's free energy.*

Rev

*Wow! Of course. I didn't realize that.*

Mars

*Yes it is. But it can be dangerous in the wrong hands. Look at what Razor has done with it.*

Cyna

*But where is the Lux getting its power?*

Erik

*It's unknown. Another great mystery of the universe. I'm certain that Razor doesn't know either. But she has discovered how to tap into that energy. And in doing so, it gives her incredible control and power over people.*

Rev

*Can you magnify the power side of the chip again and put it on your computer screen?*

Erik agreed and everyone looked carefully as he enlarged the design of the chip revealing some sort of maze and labyrinth. He methodically moved the camera over every section of the chip.

Rev

*Wait. Go back, please.*

Erik obliged and Rev scrutinized it.

Rev

*Can you move it on a different angle? There. That's it. I recognize it from the Lux on Radium. When I was been spun around inside I saw this same pattern on the circular walls. At least a small piece of it. It went by so fast. But I believe it's identical.*

Erik

*That would explain the resonance between the two Luxes.*

Rev

*It's what Faze told me about her journey through Earth's Lux that sticks out in my mind. She said that Razor drugged her and Wolfie but she did remember one thing. She was carried through several passages and up and down stairs.*

Mars

*Is it possible the design on the one side of the chip is not just a power source but also the way through the Lux?*

Everyone stared at each other.

Erik

*It would make sense. It explains why Razor wanted the chip back. She knew if anyone figured out the chip's secret, then she could be in danger and all her work would be threatened. Many people have died trying to get through the Lux. Only Razor and her crew have succeeded. I'm going to make a big printout of this passageway on the chip and all of us will study it further.*

Rev

*But even if we make it back through the Lux how can we stop Razor from continuously destroying our planet?*

Erik

*That's a tough one. Something people on our planet have been wondering for years.*

Mars

*Should we try to capture Razor and then destroy her drokes, or destroy the drokes first and then deal with Razor?*

Erik smiled reluctantly.

Erik

*Another excellent question. Over thousands of years people on Earth have asked the same question when confronted with war. Take down the leader, or defeat the army. I would say in your case, defeat her drokes. I have an idea. It requires altering the programming side of the chip. May I have your permission to do that, Rev?*

Rev

*On one condition. You teach me some more notes on the piano.*

Erik erupted in laughter. They all agreed to meet later in the day to follow up the morning's events.

## Chapter 74

Razor stared out the big window towards Okay Bay. It looked empty where the Vulgaris once dropped anchor. It was pouring rain and dark. She could barely see anything. Vice entered the room.

Razor  
*Did you get it?*

Vice  
*No problem. I scooped it from her before she knew what happened.*

Razor  
*Okay then, let's have it.*

Razor looked at Vice with some doubt. She was not sure if Vice was hiding something but hoped he had redeemed himself.

Vice put Rev's tiger amulet in Razor's outstretched hand. She recognized it as Wolfie's amulet. The exact same one he had made for her years ago when he declared his love for her. It didn't take long before Razor had returned it to Wolfie, just missing his head, when she threw it at him.

Razor  
*Funny how things come back to you in life.*

Vice  
*That's Wolfie's. You'll never open it by force. It's indestructible. I have an idea. Why don't you try the same four-digit code that you used when you owned it?*

Razor  
*You're such a genius Vice...not. I'll use my special program on the computer to analyze the compression of each digit. If I can find three or four digits that have been used more than the others I'll have a good chance of opening it.*

Razor pulled up her large camera attached to a metal arm beside her computer. She took a two-minute visual of all the angles of the locket. She let the computer do the work. Within seconds it showed the four numbers that were used more than the others.

Razor

*I've got it. Think you're so clever do you little Rev. There are now only twenty - four combos left. Give me a minute Vice.*

Razor was quick to figure the final steps. After fourteen different tries the locked amulet clicked open. Razor stared silently for a few moments and then threw the locket at the window.

She grabbed Vice and slapped him hard across his face. Vice let out a long whimper like a wounded dog. He stumbled backwards.

Vice

*What did you do that for?*

Razor

*It's empty! I'm sick of being beaten by this little girl.*

Vice

*She's big for her age.*

Razor

*Shut up!*

Vice

*I don't get it mom. Rev will never figure out the importance of the chip.*

Razor

*She's gotten this far hasn't she? She destroyed the Vulgaris with the help of her friends. She wrecked the train. She managed to slip out of our fingers several times. She's resourceful and a nasty piece of work. I want you to tell me everything that happened, step by step. Now hurry up and get me a drink and start talking. I want to know where my stolen chip is.*

Vice could feel the negative vibes bounce off the walls. He knew he was in for a barrage of criticism from his mother. He'd been here plenty of times before. He tried his best. He recovered the amulet. The gold chip was supposed to be locked inside. What more did his mother expect? No more. He had enough verbal and physical abuse for one night.

He fixed his mother her usual drink. When he had his back to her, Vice slipped in about three of his anxiety pills. He handed the glass to his mother. He excused himself for a few minutes. Ten minutes later he came back and saw his mother slumped over the sofa, passed out. He placed a pillow behind her head and

covered her with a blanket.

He washed out her glass and put it back on the table beside the sofa.

He slowly slumped to his room.



## Chapter 75

It was a beautiful sunny day when Rev, Cyna and Mars met Erik on a large balcony high up in the cargo container's pyramid. They had finished eating and were enjoying some hot drinks. Rev was feeling much better from her ordeal. Everyone welcomed the fresh air and the tranquil scenery from their lofty viewpoint.

Erik handed the chip back to Rev. She put it into a small metal case as she placed it in her pocket and zipped it closed.

Erik

*I programmed a self-destruct command on your chip. I didn't change the Lux pattern on the other side. Razor's master control computer contains the program chip that instructs her drokes. You must find a way to replace her chip with the one I altered. If you are successful, her drokes will be deactivated and destroyed.*

Mars

*Razor's fortress is impenetrable. She has some kind of electrical coil around the steel pillars that support her upper dwelling. It's on an island cliff and the metal box house is on an upper plateau that only she can access.*

Erik

*The metal box house sounds like where she would secure her computer control room with her command chip.*

Mars

*I believe it is.*

Rev

*We've come this far, uncle Mars. With my father and the people of Brix, we will find a way. It's our only chance.*

Erik

*Good. Eagle Bluff and Crystal Falls will give you all the guidance and support that you need. Now concerning getting through the Lux my team has mapped out your route.*

Erik unfolded a large piece of paper. It was a much larger copy of the gold

chip. He placed it on a big square table. Everyone gathered around. In the middle of the diagram was a circle with circular pathways. This was the labyrinth. Surrounding it were right-angled pathways that formed a square maze. A red marking indicated the correct route through the maze to reach the middle of the labyrinth.

Erik

*The middle circle on the chip is a labyrinth. The pathways surrounding the labyrinth is a maze.*

Rev

*What do they do?*

Erik

*It looks confusing, doesn't it? It's a puzzle. You have to find your way to the middle of the circle. That is your goal. According to the directions engraved on the outside of the Lux, the person attempting to gain entrance to the Lux has only eight minutes to reach the middle of the large circle.*

Cyna

*Or what?*

Erik

*You die.*

Mars

*So if we follow the red marking we'll make it?*

Erik

*Yes. But you must study this route, memorize it and practice. I'll give you a smaller copy to take with you. Without these directions it would be impossible to solve the puzzle before the eight minutes are up. That's why so many have died trying to access the Lux.*

Rev

*So is this labyrinth and maze inside the Lux?*

Erik

*I've been over there several times to study it. The Lux is a magnificent giant orb that is suspended above an equally large square stone enclosure. It has two entrances. Now that I have seen Rev's gold chip I know the entrance on the right*

*is a false passageway. Take the left doorway as I have outlined on the map.*

Mars

*Our Lux is similar. A giant golden orb that floats over a large black stone with a doorway.*

They sat for a while, each studying the detailed map of the threshold into the Lux. Nobody spoke.

This was it, thought Rev. Everything depended on their next plan of action. Focus on passing through the Lux. Defeating Razor was the ultimate goal but returning to Brix was the most important task at hand.

Erik was right. They had to memorize and practice the route through the maze and labyrinth until they could do it backwards. Once they entered the doorway there was no returning to the outside. It was all or nothing.

## Chapter 76

An hour later they stood on an immense rock ledge below the snow line of Eagle Bluff. Hours before, Erik's team had duplicated the chip's maze and labyrinth design with white paint on the flat slab of rock. It was a life size model of what they could expect in the rock enclosure below the orb.

Red paint simulated the route they must take in and out of the passageways. Although it was two dimensional with no walls it was an accurate replica.

From a distance, high up, they clearly saw the red line make its course clockwise around the maze to the entrance of the labyrinth and finishing in the dead center. As the group stood at the starting point, at ground level, their perspective changed. It appeared totally different.

Rev led the way through the twisting passages, following the red line. Cyna and Mars kept close behind her. They repeated the course a dozen times, took a rest and then did it all over again for the remainder of the afternoon until it became second nature.

Erik watched over them and timed each practice run. They could do it in five minutes and twenty seconds. He called it a day and they returned to Eagle Bluff.

Famished, the group devoured a hearty meal and crashed for the evening.

Tomorrow would be one of the most crucial days of their lives.

## Chapter 77

The next morning they did a few more practice runs through the makeshift course. Returning to the top Erik greeted them warmly.

Erik

*I think you are as ready as you'll ever be. Our spies say that Razor has repaired our stolen train and is ready to journey to Brix. Hopefully you'll return before she does. I have a few necessary items to give you.*

He handed each of them flashlights candles, matches and watches.

Erik

*You can't be prepared enough for your journey. We don't know if there is a strong magnetic field that could make your batteries useless. That's why I gave you the candles. And for you professor, I have something special.*

Erik took a small book from his pocket and handed it to Mars. It contained numerous drawings of inventions and engineering. Mars was speechless. Finally he spoke.

Mars

*I'll treasure this forever. Thank you and your people for everything.*

Erik

*Hopefully we will meet again. Safe journey my friends.*

Rev

*I'll come back another time. You promised me a piano lesson.*

Rev and Cyna hugged him.

They all looked back and waved to Erik as the cable car moved slowly down the mountain.

## Chapter 78

Along with their guide, Rev, Cyna and Mars reached the harbor of Lux Crossway within an hour after stepping out of the cable car.

The guide helped them board a small sailboat. A distance away, they could make out the tall cliffs surrounding the island mountain of the Lux.

Rev felt refreshed as the waves splashed against the dinghy and sprayed her face. She was born to be near water. How she longed to be back in Genus.

She glanced over to her mother. Mars had his arm around Cyna and both were lost in thought as they stared out to sea.

They approached the narrow strait between the soaring cliffs. Their guide carefully maneuvered the sailboat through the jagged rocks stretching out from shore.

A few minutes later he moored the boat in a quiet cove. He motioned to an outside wooden lift. They waved goodbye as they boarded the elevator that slowly climbed the high island pillar.

Nobody spoke.

Fear was in the air. It invaded Rev's body like venom from a poisonous snake.

She didn't want to look at her mother or uncle. She knew they felt it too.

No matter how much they had prepared for this moment, anything could happen.

The great unknown.

And lives were in the balance.

Too much thinking wasn't helpful. Neither were too many emotions.

Only reaction, instinct and adrenaline counted now.

Shake this negative feeling off, Rev told herself.

What seemed like an endless ride was over in two minutes as it finally docked at the top of the pillar.

They exited the lift and were shocked to see the enormous size of the Lux.

Cyna

*This must be the mother of all Luxes. Our Lux is a child compared to this one.*

Similar to Radium's Lux, this one had rotating and oscillating bands of light constantly encircling a colossal golden orb that floated above a rock enclosure beneath it.

Rev

*Just like Erik described it only a little more mind blowing.*

They continued up a trail to the base of the Lux. Hundreds of markers surrounded the Lux's landscape.

Rev

*What are they?*

Mars

*Graves.*

Cyna tried to comfort everyone.

Cyna

*Stay focused. I feel bad for these people but hopefully we are better prepared.*

Rev

*Why don't they bury the people at sea like we do in Genus and Brix?*

Just then a door opened in the stone enclosure below the Lux. Rev screamed in terror as human bones were blown out in front of the door. The door shut instantly.

Everyone froze.

Rev wondered what they would write on her marker.

Mars

*Look at this.*

Mars pointed to a long black marble slab not far from the door. Hundreds of names were engraved on it. All the names had a line drawn through them except some recent engraved ones.

Rev

*There are only six names that aren't stroked out. Razor, Vice, Wolfie, Faze, Klutch and Bruno.*

Cyna read a large etching at the very top of the black slab.

Cyna

*Whoever enters the Lux engrave your name.*

Mars opened a marble box on the top ledge. Inside he took out a thick metal pen. He pressed a button and a laser light pierced the air.

Mars, Cyna and Rev engraved their names on the black marble slab. When they were finished another door to the left of the bones opened instantly.



## Chapter 79

They set their watches for the eight minute countdown and switched on their flashlights as they entered the darkness. The door slammed shut behind them.

Rev led the way followed by her mother and uncle Mars.

To their surprise the walls were covered in ivy. A dense fog crept in. Their flashlights danced across the ivy walls as Rev searched for the first open space to pass through.

Rev

*Something's wrong. We should have found that first doorway.*

Mars

*Stay there. Don't move. I'm going back to check.*

Mars retraced his steps as he placed his hand on the ivy wall. Suddenly he felt a gap in the wall.

Mars

*Here! The ivy was covering it.*

Cyna and Rev hurried back. They passed through the open space spreading the vines back. As they continued to the next passageway entrance they kept sliding their hands along the ivy wall. They felt the next opening and went through the doorway.

Rev checked her watch. Seven minutes left.

The next opening was on the right side of a long passage ahead. Rev let out a yelp as a vine grabbed her leg and pulled her down. The ground was covered in a heavy growth of tangled tree roots. She lost her flashlight as she tried to scramble to her feet.

Cyna

*Keep moving, Rev. Here take my flashlight.*

Rev grabbed her mother's flashlight and jumped over the snarled growth. The fog became denser and the ivy reached out from the walls and wrapped around the group. They fought it off at the same time groping the wall for the opening to the next passageway.

Rev

*I've found it.*

They squeezed through the narrow opening of ivy and landed on a stone floor in the next passageway.

They looked up. A long passageway of stairs going up and down and across the massive passage hallway bedazzled them. Multiple levels of staircases seemed to go on forever.

Regret was taking hold of Rev's thoughts. She should have never entered the Lux. She looked down at her watch. Five minutes and fifty-five seconds remaining.

She looked at Mars for direction.

Mars

*Search the right side for any kind of opening.*

But all the overlapping stairs hindered their ability to see any opening. With only two flashlights they scanned the walls moving forward slowly so as not to pass it. Shadows from the stairways obstructed their view.

Cyna

*Up there! See that opening at the very end of those stairs?*

Rev and Mars followed her pointed finger and zeroed in on her location.

Rev

*I see it. Let's move.*

They climbed the steps rapidly up and down and across, finally reaching the small open space that ushered them in to the next passage.

Mars

*What a relief. No more stairs. It looks like some sort of a tunnel in a cave.*

Rev

*Smells musty.*

The passageway was smooth and rounded. They made good time, walking rapidly down the long passage, as they searched for the next doorway in the maze. But a roaring sound from behind distracted them.

The noise was unmistakable to Rev. A river of water rushed down on them.

Before they could speak all three were submerged. They tossed and turned under the water trying to get their bearings.

In a flash Cyna spotted an opening. Rev turned around and motioned to Mars and Cyna, furiously shaking her head back and forth.

Not this one she tried to warn them. The next one, as she pointed ahead.

Rev tried to reach for her breather but couldn't even unzip her pocket. Frantically they swam towards the opening. After what seemed like an eternity they reached the opening and swam through it.

The raging water carried them swiftly through the narrow tunnel. Just as they were out of breath they were projected out of an opening and down a waterfall to a pool of water below.

They surfaced gasping for air. Cyna looked around.

Cyna

*Where's Mars?*

Rev wasted no time as she dove deep into the pool. She couldn't make out what her uncle was doing clinging to the rocky bottom. He must be stuck.

She brought out her breather and handed it to him. He took a needed breath.

Then he pointed to a crevice in the rock floor. He kept desperately reaching for something in the narrow opening with his hand.

Rev pointed to him frantically to return to the surface.

The professor shook his head with a firm indication of no.

Frustrated, Rev reached her hand down the narrow opening. She felt a hard edge and clung to it as she gingerly rescued it from its hiding spot.

Mars smiled and they quickly resurfaced.

Rev

*What were you thinking uncle?*

Mars

*Sorry...I just couldn't let it go.*

Rev knew this was no time to argue. Mars safely tucked Erik's book of knowledge in his pocket.

Rev checked her watch.

Rev

*Eighty-eight seconds left.*

Mars

*Everything is lost. Our flashlights are gone. The matches are soaked. Our maps are all blurred.*

Cyna

*Look over there. Some lights.*

The group stared ahead at two openings spaced far apart on separate walls. Bright lights shone through both of them. Soaked, shaken and disoriented, Rev could hear the loud ticking of a clock in her head.

Rev

*One of these is the entrance to the labyrinth. But I can't remember which one we should take. Mom ... uncle Mars ... which one?*

They swam over and peered through both openings. The one on the right sloped downwards. The one on the left sloped upwards.

Rev realized they were about to gamble their lives on a guess.

Rev

*Wait. Isn't the Lux orb floating on top of the labyrinth's circle? Then it only makes sense that we go up. Hopefully?*

They didn't hesitate. They entered the left passageway and started to climb the gradual incline.

Rev

*It's coming back to me. Just keep following this passageway.*

Cyna

*That's right. It just keeps looping around until we reach the final circle in the center.*

They picked up their pace with every breath they had. But without warning they could hardly move.

They looked down.

Sand.

Rev

*What's happening?*

Sand was rising upward at a faster pace than they were moving. It covered

their feet and soon would be at their knees.

Rev jumped up over the sand as she grabbed her mother. The group raced uphill through the curved passageways narrowly escaping the rising sand chasing after them.

The beam of light shone stronger as they climbed higher. Finally they reached the inner most circle. A large opening revealed the golden orb pulsating above them.

Rev

*Eleven seconds to spare. I hope this is it.*

Nothing happened. They stared at each other as the sand reached their waists. Rev, Cyna and Mars stood in the middle of the circle continuing to hold their breaths.

The sand continued to climb up their bodies to their shoulders.

There was nothing they could do.

They had arrived at their destination.

They had followed the directions on the Lux chip.

Drowning in sand wasn't supposed to happen.

Then a vortex of light beamed down on them. It lifted the group into the giant Lux.

Holding hands they spiraled around, then slowly floated to the center, remaining suspended within the soft pulsating lights.

There was no fear. Nothing could be more peaceful. Everything was perfect.

## Chapter 80

Before they could blink, Cyna, Mars, and Rev were standing outside of their own planet's Lux. The sun almost blinded them. Rev jumped up and down.

Rev

*I can't believe it. We made it home.*

Taking a deep breath, they stood quietly and stared at the landscape. Brix was just over the horizon. Their family and friends would be there to greet them. Rev broke the silence.

Rev

*There was a time in the Lux that I thought we'd never make it.*

Cyna

*I'm not even sure we could do it again.*

Mars

*We must go. I etched some markers on the trees. The bridge isn't far.*

Several trails flowed out from the Lux. Mars led the way on the least traveled path.

Rev

*You never told me how you found the bridge.*

Mars

*I traced Razor's movements for years in Brix. But whenever she went through the Lux she had an escort of drokes with her. I couldn't get close to see how she crossed over to Lux Crag. Then one day I was scouting an area across from the crag when I saw her coming close to me. I hid behind some trees and discovered her secret hideaway bridge. She lifted a bush to reveal a small hole that she could fit through. Within a few seconds a narrow bridge came out from both sides of the cliffs and joined in the middle of the canyon. For months I planned to cross over to examine the Lux. When Cyna showed up and Razor had planned to capture her, we decided to take the leap.*

The professor examined a tree on the path and put his hand over his marking.

Mars

*This way.*

They picked up their pace and a few minutes later they veered off the main trail and climbed to the top of a stone slab. Standing at the top Rev peered over the long overhanging tongue of the cliff. She threw a loose stone over the edge. About twenty seconds later she heard it smacking against some boulders in the canyon below.

Mars found his bearings and crouched closer to a grassy spot beside the large rock slab. He lifted a round piece of tall grass and dirt that clung together. Metal bars of a ladder led to a dimly lit cave below. Rev and Cyna followed him down. Daylight from the hole above helped guide them around a large metal structure inside the underground cavity.

Mars went to the far side and made an opening between some thick vines that covered the outside opening. Rev and Cyna followed him to the large outside ledge. Above them the massive overhanging rock that Rev had just stood on cast a shadow over them.

Cyna

*Be careful you don't trip over those vines.*

Cyna pointed to some thick crawling vines covering the ledge. An old leaning tree from above was claiming its territory.

Mars found what he was looking for. He pulled down on a lever hidden behind a small bush beside the opening.

Loud clanking and rattling could be heard from inside the cave. Huge metal bars slowly extended their arms through the cave opening.

Mars pulled the lever up to the middle position and the metal bridge came to rest. A metal floor with railings was attached to the outer arms of the bridge.

Rev

*Look over there. Another bridge.*

Rev pointed across the deep divide between the two cliffs to the opposite side. Another bridge protruded out from an opening, ready to join their bridge.

But then, something captivated their attention. Like a bolt from the blue, two brilliant lights shot out from the top of the Lux.

Rev

*No way! How did Razor and Vice get through the Lux so fast?*

Mars

*Quick Rev. Get aboard. It only holds one person at a time. Razor will be here any minute.*

Rev

*Mom you go!*

Mars

*Somebody! ... Please!*

Cyna ran forward and stepped on the small metal floor of the bridge. Mars pulled down on the lever. Once more the bridge moved its giant arms forward extending high over the canyon. It glided quickly to meet its other half midpoint over the canyon. When she was safely aboard the other bridge Mars slammed the lever to its highest position and the bridge returned to the ledge. At the same time the bridge that Cyna was on retreated towards the ledge on the other side. She was safe.

Mars

*Not it's your turn Rev.*

Rev was ready and jumped on the metal platform. She hung onto the railings as the bridge moved across the high canyon. She could see her mother anxiously awaiting her arrival. From her mother's side the other bridge was rapidly approaching hers.

Almost there, Rev thought.

But suddenly both bridges reversed courses and Rev was heading back to Lux Crag. High up Rev immediately turned around and saw Razor approaching Mars from behind.

Rev tried to yell.

She tried to warn Mars but nothing came out of her mouth.

A sense of terror filled her body. She couldn't speak.

She was paralyzed. Helpless.

Then she witnessed a terrible sight.

Razor whacked Mars over the head with a dead branch. He fell to the ground unconscious.

And without any effort the scream that was frozen in Rev's voice box finally erupted.



It echoed throughout the whole canyon. Even the birds went silent.

Rev

*You witch.*

Razor

*Well little girl we meet again. Come back and get your reward of punishment.*

Cyna was screaming something from across the canyon that nobody could hear.

The professor was lying on the ground motionless.

And Rev was heading back to face her worst enemy.

## Chapter 81

Vice moved slowly towards the lever. He watched his mother closely. Her back was turned to him. He put his hand on the lever. He was about to pull down on the lever and send Rev to safety on the other side.

Razor sensed something. She turned around. Freaking out she lashed out at Vice before he could pull down on the lever.

Vice tripped over the vines and grabbed his mother. In a split second they rolled towards the edge of the cliff and toppled over.

Terrified Vice continued to hold on to his mother's coat as Razor grabbed hold of a dangling vine.

Sliding down a ways Razor let out a screech of pain as the vine scorched her hands. She secured a foothold on a small jutting rock as Vice hung on.

Razor looked down at Vice and shouted.

Razor

*Grab hold of something. Take hold of that other vine and rest your feet on a solid foothold.*

Vice

*I can't mother. The gold bars are weighing me down. I'm about to lose my grip. I have to toss the gold bars.*

Razor

*If you do you'll be diving after them.*

Mars slowly staggered to his feet. He rubbed the back of his head as Rev jumped off the bridge and raced over to him.

She helped him to the bridge platform and waved to her mother to show her that Mars was okay. She pulled down on the lever, sending him across to the other side.

When Razor looked up she saw Rev smiling down at her. Rev took out her knife and held it across Razor's vine.

Rev

*Just one question. How did you get through the Lux so fast?*

Razor

*I took the easy way. You see, Rev, if you join my side you would learn all the secrets of the Lux. Power and world domination would be in your hands.*

Rev

*It is now. I'm the one in control while you are hanging on for your life.*

Rev's knife started to slash Razor's vine.

Vice

*Don't mess this up, mom! Please don't mess this up.*

Razor

*Shut up Vice. I heard you the first time. You always complained that we never hang out.*

Razor looked up at Rev.

Razor

*You cut that vine and you not only kill me but Vice as well. Do you want that on your conscience?*

Rev

*It might be a comforting thought knowing that Vice won't be breeding.*

Razor couldn't control her laughter. She looked down at Vice.

Razor

*Did you hear that Vice. Letting you die means no little Vices running around.*

Vice

*Thanks Rev. I tried to save you.*

Rev

*I'm just joking. Listen up Vice. Grab hold of that long vine to your right. Stretch and wrap your leg around it. Then get a good foothold.*

Rev glanced up for a second and watched as Mars reached the other bridge's platform. He pressed a button on his bridge and both bridges returned to their entry point.

When Vice did as instructed Rev's eyes narrowed and her mouth scowled as she stared down at Razor.

Rev

*Now listen to me very carefully, Razor. You're right. I don't have what it takes to kill you. Some people on Tailbone Island and here in Brix might scold me for not finishing you off. But instead I promise you that I will destroy your army of drokes. Without them you are nothing. You will be imprisoned for the rest of your life.*

Razor

*I love you Rev.*

Rev shook her head in disgust. She picked up some pebbles with dirt and threw it down at Razor. She pulled the lever down and quickly returned to the bridge platform.

Turning around she saw Razor climbing back over the ledge just as she reached the adjoining bridge. She pushed the button and returned into the arms of her mother and the professor.

## Chapter 82

Rev, Cyna and Mars stood on a hill overlooking Brix. They spotted a figure in the distance coming towards them. Mars ran down the trail towards the person. Mars reached him in no time and lifted him in the air.

It was Stike.

Rev broke into a sprint and grabbed Stike's arm and twirled him around.

Stike couldn't hide his joy as tears ran down his face.

Rev

*Are those tears I see in your eyes?*

Stike

*It's from the pain I still feel in my ankle from the fall.*

Rev

*You big phony. Well at least we have a doctor present. I'll have mom examine it to see if you're faking it.*

Stike laughed as Cyna caught up with them and hugged Stike.

Mars

*We can't waste any time. Razor and Vice are right behind us. We must find a safe place to hide. Things are about to erupt in Brix once she returns.*

They headed for the underground passage that would lead them to Mars secret workshop. The sun set as they entered the passage leading to the professor's hidden laboratory. They moved quietly about as they entered his downstairs

Stike peeked through a peephole to the upstairs to see if any drokes were waiting. It was safe. Upstairs, his friend Slane hid in the shadows ready to give them a signal if danger loomed.

They had a bite to eat and crashed for the night. Tomorrow they would meet with the others and discuss plans to bring Razor and her drokes down.

## Chapter 83

Rev woke early the next morning. Everything depended on the four of them not being seen. The drokes would scan and recognize them instantly. Rev had no idea how long they must remain hidden.

The meeting this morning may well determine their fate. Every idea would be on the table. Any feasible plan to defeat Razor will be considered. Rev believed that as a group working in unison that anything was possible.

It felt good to be home. Safe and protected. But it still wasn't their world. An evil force occupied them. Prisoners. The ultimate victory for their freedom required a well thought out plan. Putting their lives at risk was the only option.

The others woke up. They ate and made their way to the safe room for the big meeting.

Upon entering Rev spotted Wolfie and ran over to greet him.

Rev

*I met Stango. He's beautiful. I sent him your love and whispered in his ear that we would come back for him.*

Wolfie

*Thank you so much. I'm so grateful but happier to see you made it back alive.*

Faze came over to join them. She stretched out both arms to Rev and gently twirled her around.

Then the door opened. A large figure was silhouetted in the entrance. He moved slowly with a slight limp.

Rev just about knocked him down as she leapt into his arms. Cyna joined them. They talked quietly among themselves for a few minutes.

Mars recognized his brother, Kosni, and walked over to greet him.

Rev and Cyna left them to speak privately.

This was the moment Rev had waited to see all her life. The warmth and comforting feeling that overwhelmed her was something she hadn't felt in a long time. The two brothers were friends again. With their union and leadership Brix stood a chance to regain its freedom.

Rev, Cyna and Mars each took their turn telling the events on Earth. Kosni, Stike, Wolfie and Faze listened intently as they sat at a round table.

Finally Rev stood up, took out her gold chip and placed it in the center of the

table.

Rev

*This is a self-destruct chip that will destroy the drokes. Just one problem. We have to find a way to replace Razor's chip in her master computer with this one.*

Each one in the group examined it. Finally Mars spoke.

Mars

*The metal box across from Razor's fortress is probably her master control room. First we have to gain access to her island. Then get past her drokes and climb up to the base of her fortress. If we succeed there's the electrical field surrounding her four steel pillars that support her dwelling. If we were to get past all that we have to cross the bridge to this metal building and penetrate the locked door. And then try to escape.*

Everyone remained silent. Kosni looked at Mars.

Kosni

*Is there any way we can intercept or disable the electric fields around her structure?*

Mars

*I believe that energy is coming from the Lux. Maybe over a month we could devise some way of redirecting that energy but we don't have time.*

Kosni

*How many men does Razor have in Brix?*

Wolfie

*Just Klutch and Vice. Also Bruno on her submarine.*

Stike

*Is it possible to sabotage this sub of hers?*

Kosni

*Perhaps, but that would just keep her here longer. What about the elevator that travels between the steel pillars to her main dwelling?*

Mars

*She has cameras and drokes positioned everywhere.*

Faze

*There must be another way.*

Rev rose to her feet.

Rev

*There is.*



## Chapter 84

Later that morning Slane and another friend travelled to see Prook. The day before they had dropped off some diagrams and instructions from Mars. Now they returned with a special package and gave it to the professor.

After their return Rev, Mars and Stike took a long hike up the highest mountain cliff surrounding Brix and sat down on the lush green terrain.

From Brix Ridge they could see for a great distance. The town far below looked like a miniature building set. A haze of smoke blocked out pieces of the toy set.

The river flowing from the opposite mountain range was noticeably blue before reaching the town but flowed a dirty brown from the town to the ocean. It angered Rev to see its nasty sludge spewing into Genus.

Mars focused his telescope down below on the mountain island in the middle of the valley.

Razor's compound appeared much closer with the telescope.

Mars followed the bridge from the top of Razor's dwelling that extended to the higher plateau. He scanned the spiral-coiled light swirling its way up the tall coned shape tower.

At its base rested the small metal building that housed her master control room.

From their vantage point, the luminous golden orb at the top shone so bright that even the sun was envious.

Rev and Stike both studied the whole area with the scope.

Rev

*Take a look way over there. It's the Lux.*

Stike

*Did you check out Prook's house overlooking the bay?*

After awhile Rev closed the scope and focused her attention on the professor.

Rev

*Professor Mars? Is it possible?*

Mars

*Brix and Genus depend on that possibility. Let's go over to the other side.*

They walked over to the opposite edge of the cliff out of Razor's view.

Mars

*Please open your tote bags.*

All three reached into their carrying bags and brought out their fly suits. Prook had done an amazing job of sewing the fly suits according to the professor's diagrams. Rev and Stike followed Mars instructions as they donned and zipped up their outfits.

Rev stretched out her arms. Strong material was stitched between her arms and body simulating the wings of a bird. Material was also stitched between both legs that functioned just like a bird's tail. Separate stitching throughout the wings made air pockets called cells that give stability and lift. At the back of the suit a small pouch held the parachute.

For the next hour Mars showed the movements for turning directions, gaining lift, slowing down and landing.

Mars

*Just as you follow a mountain path on the ground you must visualize the flight path through the air. Remember one of the most important lessons. Be sure to make small body movements. When flying, every movement you make results in a magnified outcome in the air. A large movement could take you into a spin or dive. You don't want that.*

They stood on the long ledge of the cliff. Below them nothing but forests and grasslands filled the valley. No buildings, no people and no drokes. This was a top secret mission. If Razor discovered their plan everything would be lost.

Mars

*This is a short flight. About a minute in the air. See that area to the left. That's our landing spot. Match my body movements. Open your parachute just as we clear those big trees.*

Stike smiled nervously at Rev.

Stike

*I hope you don't attract a flock of birds.*

Rev laughed and took a deep breath as she fastened her helmet.

Rev

*Just try to keep up.*

Mars positioned himself at the very tip of the ledge and dove off. Rev followed with Stike behind her.

## Chapter 85

As Rev took the leap of faith after diving from the high cliff, she realized that it was the craziest thing she had ever done.

But within seconds the fright turned into pure joy as she glided effortlessly down the steep mountainside. In that moment nothing clouded her mind. As she swooshed by the trees underneath her an amazing sense of freedom and zeal seized her whole body.

Feeling a sense of weightlessness she sailed effortlessly high above the rocky terrain and forests. Any small body movement could change her course. She discovered that by pointing her toes and keeping the tension in her suit from head to toe increased her speed.

Rev kept her eye on the professor, watching and matching all his movements. It was time to land.

Rev raised her head and looked forward as she pulled on the parachute cord.

Seconds later she descended to the flat grassy area near Mars.

In less than a minute the thrill of a lifetime had ended.

Rev and Mars looked up as Stike flew overhead at a faster pace than he should have. Rev motioned to him with a downward movement of her elbow to pull the parachute cord. She yelled at him.

Rev

*Pull the cord! Pull the cord!*

Finally Stike's parachute opened and he floated down to the ground close to the edge of the next cliff drop off point.

Rev and Mars raced over to him.

Stike

*Whoa! Talk about feeling a rush. I never felt so alive.*

Rev

*Yeah well you would have felt a bigger rush if you went over this cliff. You scared the ...*

Mars

*You both were amazing. Now I'll teach you how to properly repack your parachute. We'll take a break and then complete the rest of the course to finish*

*the day.*

Stike and Rev stood on the cliff overlooking their next exit point. The flight path looked twice as long as the last one.

They both grinned at each other.

## Chapter 86

It was just about closing time for the magic shop. Vice stood outside the window display. He always liked magic and would come here often to purchase small tricks to practice on.

He entered the shop and to his surprise he saw Faze standing by the cashier.

Vice

*I didn't know you liked magic stuff.*

Fazed smile warmly as Vice came over to her.

Faze

*Yes ever since I starred in that movie about magic. I was hooked ever since.*

Vice

*I remember that movie. I loved it.*

Faze

*Well, why don't you come over for a visit, Vice? We could share our magic tricks. It'd be fun. You need a break from your mother. I'll send word to her that you'll be staying with me for a few days.*

Vice

*What? Now?*

Faze

*Why not? I've made your favorite stew.*

Vice

*Mom always gets jealous when I visit you but she is acting crazy these days and I could use some time off from her.*

Faze

*Then it's settled. A delicious stew, some magic and I'll play my favorite movie. With me in it of course.*

Vice

*It's a deal. I'll instruct the drokes where I'm going.*

Faze

*Forget the drokes. You're a big boy now. You don't need them. Let's go out the back door and down the alley to the bridge. They'll figure it out. It's more fun.*

Vice

*Okay. Sounds good.*

## Chapter 87

Rev, Stike and Mars made it back to the professor's laboratory just before dark. Slane left them a message that Cyna and Kosni were visiting Wolfie. They ate and gathered around for a discussion about tomorrow's plans.

Mars

*Tomorrow a meeting with Razor has been arranged. Kosni and Cyna will be present. Along with Faze, Wolfie and myself. We will plead with Razor to leave Brix with her drokes. It's a distraction. There is no way she'll even consider it. We all know that. The real purpose of the meeting is to get her away from her fortress so you can access her compound without being seen.*

Rev

*Where will the meeting take place?*

Mars

*The same place I've met her before. She'll stand on a flat rock on the narrow part of the river near her entrance. On the other side we'll face her.*

Stike

*What about Klutch?*

Mars

*The last few times he came with her and stood by the elevator entrance. I'm sure he will be present considering the latest circumstances. Her drokes will be there too. She's not taking any chances.*

Rev

*When should Stike and I start our flight?*

Mars

*As soon as you see the elevator light up. I figure it's about a two-minute glide to the top of her island. I don't know how long we can stall Razor, so timing and planning is vital.*

Stike

*So we replace Erik's destructive chip with Razor's main control chip? But how*



*do we get inside her metal building?*

Mars

*With this. Follow me.*

Mars led them into a special room in his workshop. He showed them a narrow syringe about half the size of his hand. He instructed them to stand back as he put his thumb down on the tube like device. A small amount of clear liquid flowed out on a piece of metal. A few seconds later a hole appeared in the metal piece. Some smoke evaporated in the air.

Rev

*Wow. What is it?*

Mars

*It's a special acid. When I looked through the telescope I noticed the door on the metal building had a key locking mechanism. If enough of this acid is squirted into the lock's opening it should melt all the lock's inner workings.*

Rev and Stike examined it carefully.

Stike

*Did you make this, dad?*

Mars

*Erik designed the syringe for me. The acid I made from the formula that was outlined in the book he gave me.*

Rev

*So if the acid melts steel than why doesn't it dissolve this outside stuff on the syringe?*

Mars

*I asked Erik the same question. He called it plastic. It's made from plant oil. The acid mixture that I used won't puncture the plastic.*

Mars placed the syringe in another plastic container and sealed it up. He then placed it in a leather pouch with straps around it. He demonstrated to Rev how it was safe as he momentarily attached it to her ankle.

They went to sleep.

It had been a long day. Tomorrow would be longer.



## Chapter 88

They rose early the next morning. They ate well and climbed to Brix Ridge overlooking Razor's island mountain. The professor went over the flight path that Rev and Stike must follow to land safely on Razor's island compound.

He pointed out key landmarks in the steep valley terrain below at the same time moving his various body parts.

Mars

*If there is a wind it will be coming from the ocean side. I've compensated for that outcome with my flight path. I'm estimating that it is a bit longer than two minutes.*

Rev

*When should we activate the parachute?*

Mars

*See that small ridge with three large trees perched on top? It's a short distance from Razor's big cliff.*

Rev and Stike nodded.

Mars

*Put your suits on well ahead of time and check and recheck if everything is functioning. When you see the five of us marching from the town square to the river, start to position yourself. With the telescope, keep an eye on Razor's elevator. As soon as she enters it, jump.*

They practiced the moves for a while longer. Then Mars put his arms around both of them and said a tearful goodbye.

## Chapter 89

Mars and Kosni walked a few strides ahead of Cyna, Wolfie and Faze.

It was a quiet methodical walk as they made their way towards their meeting spot at the river with Razor. Everything had been discussed amongst the group for some time before.

They were prepared as much as they could be. But there could be no preparation for the unknown.

Their plan was to just stall Razor. But it had to look believable. If Razor sensed something off, anything, she'll bolt and Rev and Stike would be in danger.

\* \* \*

Studying the valley below, Rev took a deep breath. They had put their fly suits on and checked each other's equipment several times.

Rev would lead the way. She was perched on the outcropping ledge waiting to hear the word from Stike who was looking through the scope directly at Razor's top elevator.

Waiting was always grueling. And then it came.

Stike

*Go!*

Rev dove off the cliff with Stike behind her. She kept her head down to gain maximum speed. She focused intently on Razor's island cliff.

This wasn't a joy ride or a training mission. This was for real. The stakes were high. Not only for her and Stike but the people of Brix and Genus.

But how to remain serious without fear was the goal of any warrior or athletic champion. She visualized the professor's moves and path that he had shown her only a while ago. She carried them out exactly.

She found the balance of calm and courage within herself to carry on. She had to. Stike was following her exact moves and if she got it wrong then he would be in jeopardy also.

The ride went so fast that within a few seconds she realized that she must eject her parachute. She did and as she floated to the ground, she looked back at Stike.

He was there. They landed close to each other and quickly folded their

parachutes and helped each other return them to their back pouch.

They both looked at each other with a sigh of relief.

As risky as it was Rev knew that this was the easy part. All downhill. The task at hand would be an uphill battle. She had to take her game to the next level.

They didn't waste any time as they ran over to the solid metal building.

\* \* \*

Razor's tall lean figure strutted confidently as she exited the elevator and approached the elevated rock ledge. Klutch, an impressive opposing force that displayed strength and grit, stood at the elevator's entrance. Several drokes gathered close to Razor as she approached the group of five standing across the river from her.

She stared and sized up her opponents. She smiled and spoke.

Razor

*I don't see my little girl.*

Cyna

*If you are talking about my daughter, she's not feeling well.*

Razor held her gaze on Kosni.

Razor

*I don't think we've met.*

Kosni

*I'm Rev's father.*

Razor

*Quite the spitfire she is.*

Kosni held his anger back. He needed to appease her longer. Rev and Stike needed as much time as they could give them.

Razor

*Wolfie ... I see you're getting a little greyer. And Faze. I've never seen you look so old.*

Razor laughed with despicable pleasure.

Razor

*So why are you disturbing me? My time is precious. What do you want?*

Mars

*Just one thing. Please leave Brix.*

Razor

*Or what? There's nothing you can do to stop me. Nothing. Zilch. Zero.*

Kosni spoke in a calm voice and as slow as he could.

Kosni

*We are asking you for some compassion. Some respect from you to us. We've cooperated with you for over three years but our worlds are being destroyed with your pollution. You must understand how distraught we feel.*

Razor

*Distraught? I'll tell you all about distraught. Your little girl pulverized one of my drokes, stole my gold chip, sank my ship and wrecked my train. She should be locked up. All of you should be punished because of her wickedness for generations to come.*

Kosni

*What can we do to bring peace between Brix and you?*

Razor

*Nothing. Anything else? You're wasting my time.*

Faze

*We have Vice. If you leave peacefully we'll return him to you.*

Razor

*What! Now my own sister has kidnapped my son. What's next?*

Just then a loud beeping noise came from inside Razor's pocket. She looked up at the tower.

Razor

*No! No! No! You lied to me. All of you. Your little monster is running loose on my turf.*

Razor turned and was about to dash for the elevator when Faze yelled at her.

Faze

*What about Vice?*

Razor

*Keep him. He's all yours.*

Razor reached in her pocket and brought out a sizable stone and threw it at her sister, striking her in the forehead. Faze collapsed.

She shouted at Klutch as she entered the elevator.

Razor

*Bring the train around! Now!*

## Chapter 90

Rev and Stike heard the loud siren down below in Brix. That was the signal if anything went wrong to get out. Razor was on her way back. They heard the elevator rising.

She returned the acid syringe to her leather pouch strapped to her ankle. It had worked. Just as Mars had said. They were inside the metal building.

Only a large table occupied the room. Rev and Stike stared down at the thick glass tabletop.

Rev

*There it is.*

Rev pointed to the tiny gold chip that was sunk deep in the smooth glass tabletop.

Stike

*Now what? My dad never mentioned this. How do we get it out?*

Rev tried to move the table but it wouldn't budge.

Stike

*We can't smash it. The professor said not to damage the chip's housing.*

Rev

*I know. I know. I thought I could use the acid to free it but then there wouldn't be anything left to put our chip in.*

Stike

*We've got about thirty seconds before Razor reaches the bridge.*

Rev

*Stand by the door with your flexion. Every second counts that we can stall her.*

Stike did as Rev suggested.

She tried to slide the glass top off the table. Didn't work.

There were no wires to cut. No switches or buttons to press. Nothing.

Rev wanted to scream. Nothing could have prepared her for this.



Stike

*The elevator is almost at the top.*

Panic rushed through Rev's veins. Frustration was close behind followed by rage. Rev slammed her fist down hard on the glass top above the gold chip.

To her surprise the glass top over the chip rose up in the shape of a small cylinder. A small drawer in the cylinder containing the chip slid out.

Stike

*Razor's on the bridge.*

Rev was quick to react. She replaced Razor's chip with her destruct chip. She pushed gently on the top of the cylinder. It glided back down. A few lights flashed on the table screen beside the chip. Letters and symbols travelled fast and endlessly across the screen. Rev had no idea what they meant.

Rev yelled at Stike who was still guarding the door.

Rev

*We did it! Let's go!*

But Razor was quicker than they realized. She shot across the bridge at lightning speed and grabbed hold of Stike, with one arm around his throat.

Razor

*This time I kill both of you.*

## Chapter 91

An army of drokes surrounded Cyna, Kosni, Mars, Wolfie and Faze as they returned to town after their meeting with Razor.

Razor had acted quickly. According to her, winning followed by punishment were her most admirable qualities.

The group of five froze. They knew the consequences. They had crossed the line. Time to pay. Rev and Stike didn't succeed. How was Razor going to punish the young children, the group thought?

The drokes closed the circle tighter as they moved in.

But suddenly they stopped. They grabbed their own heads and started yanking them off. Within seconds they tumbled to the ground. Their detached heads rolled in all directions.

A pile of scrap metal littered the streets.

The whole town erupted in cheers. Every droke in the town was down and out.

The group looked up at Razor's mountain.

Rev and Stike did make it happen. But where were they? Did they escape to safety?

## Chapter 92

Stike was choking violently as Rev withdrew her flexion and attacked Razor. But Razor rotated around using Vice as a shield. Rev couldn't get close to her as Stike continued to gasp for air.

Rev tried a desperate move as she slammed herself to the ground, at the same time lashing out at Razor's ankle with the flexion.

The pain was too much as Razor released her stranglehold on Stike.

Rev grabbed Stike away from Razor. Furious, she attempted a final blow to Razor. But Razor was quicker. She not only stopped the blow but also knocked Rev to the ground, lunged at her and dragged her by the hair back to the bridge.

Stunned, Rev tried to get to her feet but Razor overpowered her and threw her over the bridge.

Stike caught his breath and came after Razor on the bridge. He gave her a high kick to her stomach and released a blow to the back of her head as she buckled. Without wasting a second he leaped over the bridge and stretched out his arms keeping a steady glide following Rev's path through the air.

Missing her helmet Rev's hair flapped through the air as she controlled her fly suit in a stable position barely missing the steel pillars on Razor's fortress. She hoped and trusted that Stike was following her path. Any turn of her head would take her off course.

Rev spotted a large green patch of land in the distance. She assessed her speed, raised her head and released her parachute. With a great deal of relief Rev drifted to the ground.

She immediately looked up. From a distance Stike was coming at her fast. She waved her hands back and forth. His parachute opened and within a minute he landed close to her.

\* \* \*

Razor had no time to waste. She knew the town's folk would be coming after her with pitchforks and torches. It wouldn't be the first time. Another planet, another riot.

She rushed into the computer room. She took out the destruct chip and flattened it with her foot. She replaced it with another chip. A chip that would be her last attempt to wreak havoc on Brix.

She gathered a few personal items, pushed the down button on the elevator and planned her escape aboard the train where Klutch would be waiting.

Far below Razor's compound a huge metal monster opened its glowing eyes. Brixwrecker came to life and stomped its feet.

## Chapter 93

The wind picked up as Rev and Stike stood on a high bluff and sized up the situation below. Looking down on the valley they spotted a large cloud of black smoke followed by a loud train whistle.

Razor's train had left the station and was heading to Bluster Harbor.

Stike took out his telescope. He stared intently at the chaos coming from Brix.

Stike

*It worked. The drokes have self-destructed. But Brixwrecker is on the loose. It's on a rampage flattening homes.*

Rev

*What?*

Rev looked through the scope.

Rev

*We have to lure him away from town.*

Stike

*It's too risky, Rev. The wind is really picking up.*

Rev

*Risky has become the new normal. Let's dive bomb Brixwrecker and then land on Razor's train and hopefully lead him out of town.*

Stike stood on the edge, staring at Rev and remaining speechless.

Rev

*We have to put the final nail in Razor's coffin. We can't let her keep any threat alive in Brix. Time is running out, Stike.*

Rev picked up stones in both hands and closed her fists over them. Stike did the same.

Rev pushed off the bluff with Stike behind her. The wind was at their back as they flew effortlessly down the valley watching the trees underneath rush by them in a blur.

In a flash they dove over Brixwrecker's head and whipped the rocks at it.

It raised its giant hand in protest.

Rev and Stike followed the tracks racing towards the train. When they were hovering over the last train car they opened their chutes.

Rev landed on the caboose's roof, pulled in her chute quickly and reached out her hand towards Stike as he tried to find a footing on the train.

Rev grabbed at his legs and just about had them when a gust of wind pushed Stike off course. A nearby tree grabbed hold of Stike's parachute and pulled him into its branches.

Rev freaked out.

Rev

*Stike! Stike!*

Stike dangled from the tree close to the ground. He waved back at Rev letting her know that he was okay. Then he saw Brixwrecker coming down the tracks. He unzipped his suit and wriggled out in time to run deep into the woods.

Rev abandoned her fly suit as well and knelt down on the roof of the train's compartment as Brixwrecker pounced down on the tracks advancing closer and closer to Rev.

What was this machine going to do, Rev thought.

Was it going to wreck the train?

Does Razor know what's happening?

A bolt of lightning lit up the sky as they approached the power station. Her parachute still clinging to the train flapped ferociously in the wind.

Just as Brixwrecker was about to step on the end of the caboose Rev unhooked her parachute from the train. It blew straight into Brixwrecker and wrapped itself around it. It fumbled and stumbled down on the tracks. Ripping the tangled parachute off itself the stomping machine continued its pursuit of Rev.

Within seconds the sky turned dark. Rev took a firm hold of the roof ruts as the wind rocked the caboose. The train sped briskly down the tracks but the wind blew faster.

Again Brixwrecker was within reaching distance of the train's foothold. It stepped on it and launched itself to the roof.

Rev clung to the ridges centered on the roof. She slithered towards the next car but the wind blew her off balance. Sliding to the edge of the train's caboose, she grabbed hold of a dangling rope and leveraged herself with her feet against a glass window on the side of the car.

But it was no use. Brixwrecker stood over her and seemed to smile down at her. This sick monster. Is it even capable of smiling or was she imagining it?

It lifted its foot, ready to stomp her. Rev was about to let go and hope for the best when another bolt of lightning found its next victim.

Rev shielded her eyes as the lightning lit up Brixwrecker. Shooting sparks and streams of intense white light zapped and swirled around the giant piece of metal. The harsh fumes from the smoldering iron body stung her nostrils.

It fell backwards on the train tracks bouncing on its head and finally resting in a steaming pile of molten metal.

The sky cleared up and the wind subsided as Rev climbed back onto the roof. The train kept speeding towards Bluster Harbor oblivious to everything.

## Chapter 94

It wasn't a long train. But it was wide and high with an engine that spewed black smoke. Four freight cars and a caboose trailed behind it. Not at all like the streamlined electric train on Tailbone Island.

Undecided, Rev didn't know whether to follow Razor to Bluster Harbor or attempt to jump off a fast moving train.

Was Razor really going to flee Brix?

Or was she going to use her sub as a base to build another army of drokes?

Rev decided to follow her to the harbor, remain hidden while observing her actions.

But just as she escaped one monster another one showed up.

Rev turned around in time to see Klutch jump from the last freight car to the top of the caboose. She was no match for him. Klutch was heavy set, strong and his hands could crush her.

Rev had agility and speed on her side. Klutch was powerful but slow. She remembered what Raká had taught her. Patience, timing and balance. And most important remain calm and in control.

Yeah, remain calm. That wasn't going to be easy. Klutch was a wrecking train. One false move and it was all over. All she could do was avoid him.

And then as Rev climbed down the ladder at the back of the caboose, hope surfaced.

Klutch followed her down the ladder that hung at the far right of the caboose. A safe guard railing enclosed the outside rear caboose. Rev jumped on the bar at the exact time that Klutch reached the bottom of the ladder.

She grabbed hold of the attached bar that ran up to the roof and leapt to the top of the caboose.

Frustrated, Klutch started to climb back up the ladder. As his head peeked over the rooftop Rev started to run from the midpoint of the roof towards him. Flying through the air with her feet outstretched, she kicked him so hard he fell down the ladder smacking his head on the ladder's metal bar.

Still holding on to the second last bar, Klutch dangled precariously over the edge of the caboose, narrowly missing the fast moving ground beneath him.

Hanging on to the overhanging top bar, Rev leaped down, withdrew her flexion and brought it down hard on Klutch's fingers.

Rev breathed a deep sigh of relief as she watched him tumble over the tracks



and disappear down an embankment.  
She thought he bounced quite nicely.

## Chapter 95

The train slowed down as it chugged up a steep grade. Rev leaned over the railing, catching her breath and enjoying the beautiful scenery. She had enough excitement for a day, even a year.

She wondered how everyone that she loved was doing in Brix. Were they busy shoveling up all the dead drokes? Perhaps they were worried about her? Razor was on the run. That was the main thought that crossed Rev's mind.

Then instead of the landscape moving farther away from her it was suddenly getting closer.

The caboose was moving backwards!

Rev turned around and looked through the caboose's doors.

Someone was waving to her and smiling.

It was Razor standing on the freight car's connecting mechanism.

She had unhitched the caboose.

Rev froze for a few seconds as the landscape whipped by her in a blur.

She rushed inside the caboose and used some rope to secure her to a bolted down bunk. The caboose reached a curve, jumped the tracks and sailed down a hill.

The horrific sound of crashing and banging against rocks and brush raised Rev's senses to high alert. Her adrenaline peaked as the train car rolled over several times as she held on to handle bars in the caboose. Windows smashed as dust and dirt infiltrated her caboose. And then silence as Rev caught a glimpse out the window.

The caboose was falling. A loud snapping cracking sound followed and then the caboose halted with a final thud that jarred Rev out of her seat and slid her out the door.

Shaken and in shock Rev managed to stand up. Surrounded by tree branches the caboose had wedged itself between two massive tree trunks. As she separated some small branches Rev looked down. She became faint and dizzy as she realized that the trees that held the train car in its grip were on the edge of a cliff high over a raging river.

She wiped some blood and dirt from her face as she cautiously peered over the edge. A loud creaking crunching sound beneath her echoed throughout the canyon as the caboose settled lower on the trees. A gust of wind swayed the train car to one side.

Rev knew she had to get out of there fast. But speed wasn't an option for her. She had to move cautiously, calculating each move with precision. Battered and bruised, Rev stepped on a thick branch and carefully swung down to a lower one as she retreated down the massive tree. Reaching the ground she climbed up the loose gravel a little ways before collapsing on the ground and passing out.

## Chapter 96

Something in the sky awakened Rev a few minutes later. She had a hard time focusing with the dirt in her eyes. There were no clouds in the sky but a large object blocked the sun for only an instant.

Rev covered her eyes from the sun. There it was again.

It was Kleng. The massive white bird glided slowly towards Rev.

Rev stood up.

Rev

*Kleng! Kleng!*

Rev tried to run in the direction of Kleng but her battered body slowed her down. She needed to find a high clearing for Kleng to lift her up. She spotted a clearing a short distance away but needed to journey through a dense forest and then climb a hill.

The trees blocked out the sun as she made her way through the forest. Ivy spread out on the floor of the woods. The odd ray of sunshine filtered through the trees.

A sense of peace filled her presence. She realized that she didn't have to follow Razor. She could return to Brix and feel the company of her family and friends.

She thought about turning around and give up on Razor when she caught a glimpse of Kleng overhead. She would let Kleng decide her fate.

Suddenly Rev heard a thumping and thrashing getting louder from behind her. She turned around.

Klutch. Unreal. He was coming fast but with a heavy limp.

Rev picked up her pace but was still achy from the crash.

There were plenty of places to hide but she knew Kleng might not stick around forever.

She had to make it to the clearing.

She looked up again to see Kleng and didn't see the long tree root stretching along the forest floor. It caught her foot and she stumbled down a shallow ravine. But that was enough time for Klutch to gain ground on her. Rev bounced back to her feet but Klutch was faster and managed to grab her and send her flying.

Rev lay still face down on the ground.

Klutch kicked her with his good leg.

Rev didn't respond.

He bent down and rolled her over.

Before he knew what hit him, Rev stabbed him in his eye with her flexion.

Klutch bolted upright holding his eye and screeched an ear piercing scream that cleared the forest of all its birds.

Not hesitating for one second Rev reached a small creek at the end of the forest and skipped across it. Climbing the hill, she looked back. Klutch was close behind her.

What? Is he another droke? Rev felt her ankle start to go limp as she reached the top of the hill. Why did she have to fall? She was in enough pain, she thought.

Kleng. Kleng. Where are you?

Rev had no choice but to keep running through the clearing. Suddenly a moving shadow appeared on the ground in front of her. She raised her hands high in the air and kept running.

She didn't dare look back. She could almost feel Klutch's breath on her neck. And then a lofty breeze almost blew her over.

Kleng gently locked his claws around her wrists and swept her off her feet.

Rev looked down to see Klutch flogging a clenched fist at her as he got smaller and smaller.

## Chapter 97

Soaring high and feeling free, Rev was flying again. The wind soothed her sore body as Kleng lifted her to a bird's eye view of the valley. In the distance Rev could see a trail of smoke spewing from Razor's train.

In no time they were high above her train as it snaked through the valley. Kleng kept flying ahead of the train and in the distance Bluster Harbor came into her view.

Kleng adjusted her wings and feathers as she drifted effortlessly, descending smoothly towards a landing spot overlooking the harbor. She hovered over a safe spot and delicately released her claws, dropping Rev a short distance to the ground.

Rev said thank you to Kleng by touching her heart with the palm of her hand and raising it in the air as Kleng made a quick turn, swooped down over Rev and then made a steep ascent as she disappeared in the direction of Brix.

The sun began to set over the harbor waterfront. Rev crouched down on a hill overlooking it. At least a dozen drokes lay lifeless on the long pier, their heads scattered about.

Rev couldn't believe the massive steel ship floating in the harbor below. It looked like a streamlined whale with a big fin on its top.

So this long tube-shaped boat was Razor's submarine. How did she ever build such a massive wonder?

Rev realized that this was the reason the men in Brix toiled day and night. The factories that created the pollution in Brix were used to supply all the steel parts. Her train shipped them here and the drokes assembled it.

Rev had to make a quick decision. She knew Razor would be here soon. But her curiosity overwhelmed her reasoning ability.

Just a quick peek, she thought.

She was immediately drawn to the large fin like structure on top of the sub. This had to be the entrance. Keeping an eye out for anyone, Rev reached the docked sub. She leapt on top of the sub keeping her balance on the curved structure. As she climbed to the giant fin Razor's train entered the harbor.

A strong gust of wind almost blew her into the water. On the top of the fin, Rev turned a wheel and swung it open. She crawled inside and closed the hatch. It reminded Rev of the entrance and departure compartments in Genus. She descended a steep ladder to a door below.

She slowly opened it.

Stacked high on the interior walls were hundreds of droke body parts.

Rev realized that Razor could easily assemble another army with all these spare parts. Ready to go any time.

She moved through another doorway. A kitchen area. Sinks, tables, and freezers. Rev gradually moved through a storage room and a living area decorated with nice furniture and plush carpets.

She looked through the window of a door at the end of the living quarters.

Rev's heart leapt. Ice ran through her veins.

Coming down some stairs was a short stocky man.

Before she could duck she felt something hard connect with the back of her head.

Blackness followed. Rev never felt herself crashing to the floor.

## Chapter 98

Rev opened her eyes. Everything was blurry. Voices remained in the distance. Then she felt stiffness in her arms and confinement of her wrists. Someone leaned into her face and Rev recognized her tiger locket hanging from Razor's neck.

Razor

*Welcome aboard the Incision, my personal submarine. Isn't it amazing?*

Rev

*What's amazing is your ability to sneak up on me.*

Razor

*I'm curious. What happened to Klutch?*

Rev

*He might need one of Vice's eye patches.*

Razor and Bruno chuckled.

Still groggy, Rev checked out her surroundings. She was in some sort of control room. She spotted multiple computer screens, a large telescopic device and a long table that contained her breather and flexion. The short, stocky man was seated at the computer station.

Rev sat in a chair with her hands bound behind her by steel bracelets. Her head cleared as she began to focus her eyes.

Razor

*You're a lucky girl. I'm about to take the Incision on her maiden voyage. And guess what? You're invited.*

Rev

*I'll settle for a refund.*

Razor

*Now what kind of attitude is that? I bet you've never been on a sub before. You'll feel right at home under the sea. Together we'll conquer other worlds. We will be invincible. I have so much to teach you, Rev.*



Razor strutted around the control room in a fit of delirium and laughter.  
Rev lifted her head and spoke.

Rev

*Why? What makes you this way?*

Razor was quick to reply.

Razor

*I used to care about people. But they never appreciated my superior talents and intelligence. So I decided to only care about myself and that attitude helped me soar to great heights. Remember this little girl. At one point in everyone's life they will want to do evil. Your turn will come.*

Rev

*I'll never be like you.*

Razor showed no surprise or remorse.

Razor

*That's why you'll always be small. So, I'm going to do you a huge favor and make you big. People will idolize you wherever you go. You'll be rich, famous and feared. But for now you leave me no choice. If I kill you, a ray of hope will die within me.*

Razor turned to Bruno.

Razor

*Lock her up.*

Bruno pulled Rev out of her chair and led her down some stairs and a long passageway to a holding cell. He kept her hands bound and guided her to a bunk.

Rev jumped and trembled as Bruno slammed the heavy metal door behind him. She remained completely still as she sat on the bunk still handcuffed from behind.

She bent over and stared down at her feet going over the past day's events. She realized it was a dumb decision to have followed Razor. But if she had to do it all over again, she would.

Only a few weeks ago she was living her simple life in Genus with her parents and friends, as any fifteen year old should. Bouncy. No worries.

Now all those joyful emotions had been zapped from her making her feel like

an abandoned hand me down doll. She was Razor's puppet now, lifeless with no spine left.

A paralyzing feeling of total hopelessness filled her whole being. The thought of being held prisoner by Razor overwhelmed her.

Snap out of it, she told herself. But nothing lifted her spirits. She tried to get comfortable and stretched her legs and neck.

Rev crossed her ankles and that's when a surge of electricity shot through her.

She felt the syringe of acid still strapped to her ankle. Razor must have missed it when she searched her.

Like a drink of cold water on a hot day, Rev felt rejuvenated. Energy flowed back in her body. She fell forward on her stomach with her arms stretched straight out behind her. She bent her legs as hard as she could towards her body and moved her handcuffed wrists around her ankles.

She let out a loud groan as she stretched her arms and bent her legs into her body as far as she could. One more loud groan and she slipped her arms around her legs and brought them in front of her.

She carefully brought out the acid pump. She breathed a sigh of relief.

Just then a loud sound jolted her.

*AHOOOGAAA ... AHOOOGAAA*

The annoying penetrating sound kept repeating.

Then she felt the sub move. It was diving below the surface.

With her right hand, Rev carefully pumped out a few drops of acid on the metal handcuffs.

A trail of smoke evaporated in the air as she pulled the cuffs apart.

The cuffs remained on her wrists but the acid had eaten through the adjoining chain.

Her hands were free.

Rev dashed over to the locked metal door and inserted the acid syringe into the keyhole.

She turned around and covered her mouth from the fumes.

When she turned back, the door had swung open.

## Chapter 99

Rev cautiously peered around the half open door. Nobody in sight. She crept silently down the long passageway full of a tangled web of pipes and wires. She came to the steep stairway leading to the control room.

Was her air breather and flexion still there? Another voice in her head told her to just get off the sub. But Rev needed the breather if she was to reach the surface.

She climbed the stairs like a cat.

Holding her breath Rev eyeballed the control room. Unoccupied. Good, thought Rev as she scrambled to retrieve her breather and flexion. Now to make her way unnoticed to the exit.

She took a few steps down the stairway when she saw a shadow approaching from below.

Bruno stepped on the bottom stair as Rev whipped back to the top and hid to the left of the top opening. She opened her flexion and positioned it high above her head and across her shoulder ready to strike a blow.

She waited patiently as each step he took quickened Rev's heartbeat.

When Bruno reached the top step he felt a vicious blow to his nose and mouth.

All Rev could hear was a loud crunch as she pulled back her flexion.

Stunned, he stood frozen at the control room entrance as blood spurted out from his nose.

Rev jumped out in front of him just as he spit out his gold tooth. With a leap in the air Rev landed a hard blow to his chest with her feet and sent Bruno sailing down the staircase.

Rev hurried back inside the control room and tried to do as much damage to the sub as she could. Within a few seconds she had flipped every switch and button within her reach.

The submarine lurched vigorously to the left shaking Rev off her feet.

She grabbed hold of the stair railing and jumped over Bruno at the bottom step, as he lay immobilized on his back groaning in pain.

The only exit that Rev knew was the way she entered the sub. She headed towards the escape hatch and hoped there were no more Brunos aboard.

But Razor was somewhere onboard and Rev did not want to deal with her. She kept a constant lookout for Razor and planned to hide if she saw her beforehand.

If Razor could pass by her unnoticed then Rev's escape plan had a chance of

success.

Without any warning the sub reeled sideways hurling Rev forward and tossing her against a wall. She regained her balance and learned to grab hold of parts on the sub as she walked towards the exit.

Where was Razor? Rev was almost at the drokes' parts department. From there it was a few steps to the exit hatch.

And then the sub switched course in its underwater descent, loosening Rev's grip on a pipe, rolling her to the drokes' storage room floor. She looked up fearing the drokes might come alive at any moment.

Nothing but silence. Get a grip on your imagination, she told herself. You're almost free of this death ship.

Then, out of the shadows a tall lean figure loomed over her.

## Chapter 100

A faint ray of light exposed Razor's grotesque, cruel smile. Rev tried to get up but a sharp object almost pierced her throat.

Razor stood above her holding a cane. Extending out of its end was a sharp stiletto knife.

Razor

*You've ruined my plans for the last time. Now I'm going to enjoy killing you.*

And in that moment Rev knew she had run out of options.

A sense of despair reined down on her.

She couldn't move without getting her throat slit.

Razor wasn't taking her away anymore.

Instead Razor was going to kill her.

Rev was even afraid to breathe.

No words were about to save her.

She just kept staring up at Razor's black eyes as the cold long dagger stuck to her throat.

But in that flash of a moment Razor was propelled backwards by the force of the sub. The thrust of the sub spinning off course had given Rev a chance at life again.

Rev slid along the floor towards Razor. Her cane stiletto had vanished and Rev was quick to take action. Despair had changed to rage as she kicked Razor in her ribs. When Rev raised her foot again for a second kick Razor grabbed her leg and brought her to the floor, level with her.

Razor grabbed hold of Rev by her throat and Rev returned with a punch to Razor's face. They rolled each over several times until Razor returned to her feet, grabbed Rev and tossed her hard against a rack.

Rev clenched a metal arm from the drokes' storage bin. She slashed at Razor's face but Razor snatched it from Rev's hands so quick that Rev felt a blow to her shoulder before she knew what happened.

And then Razor found her stiletto.

Rev toppled back and felt a piercing pain in her calf. Looking down, her torn pants became soaked in blood.

The stiletto cane had shaved a piece of skin from her left calf.

Rev tried to recover the knife, but before she could Razor's arm clenched her

neck with an unstoppable stranglehold.

Razor's knee dug into Rev's back and lifted her off the floor.

Rev choked and gasped for air. She shook violently and punched behind her but started to lose consciousness. Rev didn't have enough strength to unlock Razor's chokehold.

And then with the last of her strength Rev reached towards her ankle and seized the acid syringe.

Before Razor realized it, Rev had emptied the syringe on Razor's elbow.

Rev's eardrum almost ruptured from the piercing shriek coming from Razor.

As Razor released her grip, Rev turned around to see Razor's arm dangling from the elbow. Blood spurted everywhere. Once concealed, now bones and veins were revealed. Just some loose skin was keeping it from falling off. Razor's face contorted and sobbed like the expression of a child who lost their favorite toy.

Rev took hold of her tiger locket around Razor's neck and ripped it free.

Rev

*You won't need this anymore.*

Razor foamed at the mouth as she spewed her last assaults on Rev.

Razor

*You can't do this to me!*

Rev

*I just did. Good riddance. You and your precious Incision are going down.*

Razor

*I'll find you and I'll beat you little girl.*

Rev

*Okay. I'll let the people on Earth know that you lost to a little girl. Oh, I have one last question. Why do your boats always sink?*

Razor

*Come closer you little monster. I'll bite your face off.*

Rev quickly left the room, leaving Razor spewing her venom out to nobody but herself.

## Chapter 101

Less than a minute later Rev reached the hatch. Rev climbed through the inner door and sealed it behind her. Just like in Genus, the water pressure in the escape compartment must equal the pressure of the sea. When that happens the hatch will automatically open.

Rev was surprised when she swam out of the hatch. After putting on her breather she was stunned to encounter a turbulent underwater storm. Looking back down at the Incision, it churned perilously spinning and twisting in a circular motion in its descent to the bottom.

The distance to the surface wasn't far but it became a struggle for Rev. The murky water swirled brutally in a large circular motion taking her for an uncontrollable ride preventing her from rising to the top.

And then, Rev's breather ripped from her mouth and vanished.

Rev knew the sea had always been her friend. She respected it but never believed that it could be this hostile.

She swam steadily towards the center of the churning vortex. A giant manta ray approached from below and scooped Rev up with its large fins that looked like wings.

Rev stretched out on its back as they floated effortlessly to the surface. She touched the manta ray to say thank you as it dived below.

She took a deep breath but almost swallowed a mouthful of water as the storm on the surface blew stronger than she thought. A bolt of lightning lit up the night sky and the wind lifted the waves up high, smashing over the pier.

Rev rode the towering, rolling waves to shore.

She climbed a fanlike rock and lay on her back.

Eventually, she managed to sit up. The cut on her leg had stopped bleeding.

So exhausted and beat up she barely felt the torrent of rain descending on her.

Within seconds giant funnel clouds hovered over the bay.

A series of lightning bolts flashed above it. And suddenly the funnel of clouds carved a giant whirlpool on the surface of the bay spiraling around at a ferocious speed, lifting the water up in the shape of a gigantic volcano.

Minutes later a perfect stillness took over. The storm had passed.

Rev gazed over the bay. Dead calm. It was over. No sub. No Razor.

She remembered the locket and unzipped her pocket to bring it out.

Did Razor change the passcode?

Rev tried her old passcode.

It flipped open.

Rev stared at the contents inside the locket.

She took out a picture from the locket that Razor had placed in there.

It was a picture of Rev smiling.

For some twisted reason the woman that Rev hated had loved her.

Rev turned around. She heard something travelling on the rail tracks. Her mother and Stike were operating a hand levered railcar.

She raced to them.

She never felt so alive.

She was safe now.

Her journey was over.

She had come full circle.

Home at last.



## Chapter 102

A gentle breeze blew over Rev and her father as they stood on a green hill overlooking Brix Valley. Her mother's healing hands had helped Rev recover from her battle with Razor.

Her father placed his arm across her shoulders in a loving embrace. The air was clean and they could see for miles. No more pollution from the factories. No more sludge and toxins contaminating the rivers and ocean.

Rev

*When will all the water be clean again, father?*

Kosni

*Professor Mars and I analyzed the water and it will take at least a few months before the rivers restore themselves. With proper care the ocean will do the same.*

Rev

*It was close. We could have lost it all.*

Kosni

*Thanks to you we didn't.*

Rev smiled back at him as they turned around and walked towards the townsfolk gathered at the fair.

Kosni

*So Rev, what have you learned from your journey?*

Rev

*Don't mess with Mother Nature.*

Kosni

*True. Anything else?*

Rev

*That gold is precious.*

Kosni

*And?*

Rev

*But the most precious of all is family and friends.*

They continued walking towards the fairgrounds. Seeing the young children laughing and playing their games made Rev feel like joining them in their joyful antics.

She realized that she had grown up fast in the last few weeks. She had gained some wisdom and experience but her innocence was gone. Everything seemed different. She was no longer the little girl that Razor had called her.

Rev loved to breathe in the aroma of cooking coming from the food wagons. The fair grounds decorated with large colorful flags and lights came alive with the activity of jugglers and stilt walkers. Prizes were awarded in archery contests and crowds of people outfitted in costumes danced around.

A crowd of party folks came rushing towards Rev and her father, momentarily separating them.

Rev looked over at her father.

He was shouting something and pointing ahead.

Rev just smiled and shook her head indicating she couldn't hear Kosni.

And then she looked in front of her.

She stared at a huge ball higher than herself ready to roll over her. On top of that ball a juggler was looking up at the fire sticks he was tossing in the air.

For that one split second that seemed to last forever she hesitated.

And then she felt a strong arm pull her sideways and out of harm's way.

Kosni

*That would be some twist of fate after all you've been through to die at your own celebration.*

Rev exhaled a huge sigh of relief and laughed.

They continued walking towards a large group who was seated in rows around a large bonfire.

When they saw Rev, everyone jumped to their feet cheering and applauding.

Rev and Kosni made their way to the front row where Cyna, Prook, Mars, Stike, Slane, Wolfie, Faze and Vice were seated.

A huge pile of dismembered drokes was stacked up.

Rev grabbed a droke's head and tossed it into the fire.

The End