

"But..."

Levant frowned. Kurria did not need sleep and did not understand other's need for it. Until her questions were answered, he would get no rest. "But what, Kurria?"

"If she is alive, what will you do when you find her?"

"I'm not sure."

"Is she aware of what she is?"

"No, I don't think so."

"Will you tell her the truth then?"

"The truth?" he asked, falling back on the bed with a groan. "And what is the truth? Tell me a truth Kurria, any truth. I long to hear one simple truth."

"You know what I mean: the truth of her birth. The truth that she is a horror."

*Yes, that is a truth,* he thought, *but what a sad, terrible truth.* "I don't know yet what I will tell her. Perhaps she's better off not knowing. Did knowing the truth of your birth help you accept who you are?"

"I have always known. How could I not?"

"Well I have not, and discovering what I am has not offered me any advantages that I can see."

Kurria did not answer immediately. "Perhaps the advantage then was only to me," she said finally, "for when you discovered the truth about yourself, you went in search of others. Had you not done so you would not have found me, and I would still be at Corrolis base."

"Yes, creating new weapons for the Union, instead of working for me. Who will they find to invent the next MAAD I wonder? But is it so much better here Kurria, stuck on a ship with only me for company?"

"Yes. I am happy here. I do not wish for the company of others. I want neither their revulsion nor their pity."

"Good. I am glad you like it here." He yawned and closed his eyes.

She stared at him silently until the heat finally became too much to bear. Slowly she walked back to her bio-cell, trying to keep her large fanned feet from making noise as they slapped against the floor. It would take hours for her body temperature to return to normal, and as always when he slept, she would pass the time in the darkness alone.

"Kurria," Levant said sleepily, "Farin said to tell you the shielding device works perfectly. You truly are a genius."

She did not answer, but stood under the cold mists, silent and unmoving, her eyes longingly fixed on the figure of the sleeping man.