



NU ORMENEL COLLECTED
VOLUME 2

NU ORMENEL COLLECTED

Volume 2

BY FERN MARDER AND CAROL WALSKE

POETRY BY FERN MARDER

LAYOUT AND ARTWORK BY CAROL WALSKE

CONTENTS:

	Page
TO KNOW DISHONOR.....	3
"Coming of Age".....	22
A KILINGON HERITAGE.....	23
"Farewell".....	49
A BROKEN SWORD.....	50
"Swordplay".....	79
VOICES OF NU ORMENEL.....	81
THE LEGEND OF AKIM KOROSTEN.....	91
HONOR THE HUNTER.....	100
AKNAUHRAIAND: A POLITICAL MATRIX.....	103



PREVIOUS PUBLICATION:

"To Know Dishonor" - masiform-D #6, Copyright © 1977 Devra Michele Langsam

"A Kilington Heritage" - Tetrumbrant--Best of Volume Two, Copyright © 1978
Express Publications/Tetrumbrant Press

"A Broken Sword" - Universes in Science Fiction, Volume 2, Copyright © 1976
Germaine Best/Tetrumbrant Press

"Swordplay" - masiform-D #6, Copyright © 1977 Devra Michele Langsam

"Voices of Nu Ormenel" - Interphase 4, Copyright © 1977 Connie Faddis

"The Legend of Akim Korosten" - This is a substantial rewriting of the story
"The Imleth of Akim Korosen" - The Monkey of the Inkpot 3, Copyright
© 1975 The New York Federation of Science Fiction, Star Trek and
Fantasy Clubs

"Aknauhraiand: A Political Matrix" - Universes in Science Fiction, Volume 1,
Copyright © 1976 Angela M. Valenza

These works appear essentially as originally published, except as noted above.
Some changes have been made in content and format for this collection.

Price:

In person:	\$3.50	\$6.50 (Vols. 1 & 2)
Book rate:	\$4.50	\$7.50
1st class:	\$5.50	\$9.50

Fern Marder and Carol Walske
342 East 53rd Street, Apt. 4D
New York, NY 10022

Copyright © 1979 Fern Marder and Carol Walske. All rights reserved.
No portion of this collection may be reproduced without written permission.



C. WALSKE

By FERN MARDER AND CAROL WALSKE

THE PROTAGONISTS--

KOR ALKARIN--The Ormen, the Emperor of Nu Ormenel nu Kilingarlan, the Kilingon Empire. Once known as Kor Kothir, famed warrior and member of the elite Legion of Honor, until boldness and arrogant intelligence made him a target for a cowardly, reactionary military and a self-fearing Ormen Alargor. For his 'mistakes,' Kor Kothir was convicted of treason, in a quick military trial, and sent to Salisa Alsa Orunar--prison planet, place of Chaos. He escaped. He sparked the long-overdue revolution, unleashed all his pent-up energies on it, and found success and bitter glory. At the end, he killed the Ormen Alargor in Challenge and was named the new Ormen, Kor Alkarin Tertemisar.

After the revolution, at the end of that fated year, the Aurh-keenau (Organians) disappeared, when their planet's sun went supernova. The nursemaids of the galaxy were gone, and the Treaty was invalidated. Alkarin made preparations for war with the Federation, and when the time seemed right, he struck.

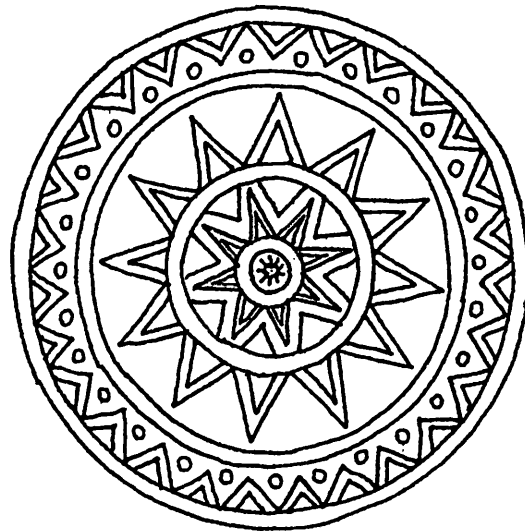
KARRAS KOTHIR--Kor's second son, 18 years younger than his brother Karan, the Emis of krasaia Kothir (head of the Kothir domain). Karras chose to retain the name Kothir, given to him at birth, rather than call himself Taralkarin, son of Alkarin. He remained Karras Kothir until well into adulthood.

When his father was imprisoned, Karras was taken from krasaia Kothir for safety. He lived first in neighboring krasaia Kusseremi and later, during the revolution, moved west to the home of Kor's friend, Kang Keorl. Karras did not leave krasaia Keorl until after his father was named the new Ormen.

Like his father, Karras is sharpwitted and strongwilled. He is torn between the honor and the annoyance of being the Ormen's son.

KANG KEORL--Kor's oldest friend, close as a brother to him since childhood. Kang is a man of strong and capricious mood, easy prey to joy or fury. Before the revolution, Kang was a Kfar, or Commander, in the Tasrakirs--the Space Service--as Kor had been. Now, under Alkarin, he is a Vakkfar, or Fleet Commander, the Ormen's liaison for the planets of the Central Suns, and some-time Emis of krasaia Keorl.

In the years that Karras lived in krasaia Keorl, he grew very close to Kang, looking upon him as his sashakra, his 'parent not of the flesh.' Kang, in turn, openly accepted Karras as a son. Even after Kor returned, and Karras left the krasaia, Kang remained a dear friend, a mentor, who continued to see to some of Karras' training when his father, the Ormen, could not.



Kang Keorl woke suddenly. His eyes opened on darkness; he stayed quiet, waiting. It was an intruder; he knew it by its body warmth. He grabbed the stranger, taking him off-balance.

"A cold and dark night, isn't it?" said a voice just a few inches from him. Though the man was pinned in a rather uncomfortable position, he spoke easily, even amusedly.

Kang let go abruptly, as if burned. He said, very slowly, "Do you mind if we have light?"

"If you need it."

"I want you to see my face," replied Kang grimly as he fumbled for the small control set in the wall. One yellow light, dim enough to stare at without blinking, came on behind the bed.

The light revealed Kor Alkarin, sitting cross-legged on the bed, grinning. "Your ferocious expression lacks sincerity," he remarked.

Kang sat up. He leisurely leaned against the headboard and looked Kor over. His liege-lord and lifetime friend looked tired, a little unhappy, out of sorts with himself and the world's order. "Returned from the battlefield so soon, Black Wolf?"

Kor grimaced. "This war doesn't need wolves; it needs better equipment, higher-powered weapons, and much money with which to impress the other side. They don't want to fight, they merely want to scare us with their display of power. . ."

"In other words, the war goes ill." Kang's terse honesty cut through Kor's ramblings.

Kor looked wide-eyed at him, his expression vulnerable. "It goes about as well as sand in a parched throat."

Kang smiled briefly. He asked soberly, "When do you want me to go back?"

"Soon. But there's plenty of time to talk of strategy. You've not even welcomed me home, my sour-tongued, stormy-faced brother." Kor grinned impudently.

"You're full of clever words, aren't you?" asked Kang dourly, then reached forward and threw his arms around Kor. The hilt of Kor's knife jabbed him in the ribs and the black uniform felt rough against his skin. He felt a sudden rush of joy. "Be welcomed, brother. We've suffered without you."

"Dying man's courtesies," Kor remarked cynically, and was astonished to see Kang draw back a full foot, his mirthful grin disappearing. "Aya, aya--not so bad as all that, is it?"

"Too many have died this winter," Kang muttered, bitterly. "But damn you, you wolfish murderer, it's so good to see you that my life doesn't matter. Now that you're back, son of Wargod Maraku, can you lead the battle here?"

Kor stared at him, bemused, his features showing pity, alarm and a reawakened, reassumed commitment. He declared softly, "I've just come from a war. But I've found that I can command just as well from here as in the middle of it. I return to the Kilingarlan to give all my love and honor to it." He paused. "Speaking of love, where is my son?"

Kang laughed abruptly. "Where do you expect? Sleeping."

"How is he?" Kor's question seemed normal enough, even casual, but Kang caught the overtone of strained concern. All was not well between father and son.

"He works hard and never complains. He misses you grievously."

"I'm home now," said Kor quietly.

"With how much time to give to your son?"

"Swallow your words and discover how sharp they are!"

Kang subsided. Kor watched him for a few moments, and then a gleam came to his eye. He suggested, "Why don't you rouse Karras? But don't tell him I'm home; just summon him here."

Karras Kothir iyo Taralkarin, Kor's son but not his declared heir, stumbled into the room a few minutes later, hand to face hiding a yawn. He blinked sleep-filled eyes and smothered a shout. He leaped at Kor, all traces of weariness gone, full of fire.
"Akra!"

Kor crowed with genial laughter at his son's discomfited surprise, grabbed Karras and wrestled with him playfully. "I hear your sashakra Kang has been treating you well," he said.



Karras looked from his father to his foster-father with equal delight. "Yes," he answered happily. "Since the Academy closed down this winter, he's been training me."

Kor's arm encircled Karras' shoulders. "Good. You need it."

Kang prowled off to find food and drink for an early-morning welcome feast. He came back with wine and dried meat, smiling rather apologetically. Kor looked at the short rations but made no comment.

For a while they toasted each other with wildly implausible stories of invasions and battles and family feuds. But Kor's peace was short-lived; one of his war councillors called and asked for him, politely but insistently.

Kor got up from his lazy sprawl on the bed and straightened his clothing. "I'm sorry," he said simply to Kang and Karras, and left.

They gazed at each other, Kang noticed Karras' visible disappointment. He said nothing.

"There are still a few hours before sunrise," Karras said eventually. "I think I'll return to my bed."

Kang was about to recommend that solution when an idea struck him. "No. I'm tired of salt meat--let's go hunting."

Karras's expression went from instant pleasure to doubt. "In this mirk, and in this weather?"

"Why not?"

"Why not?" Karras echoed, and ran off to get ready.

The roof of the exercise arena had been retracted with the coming of the sun. The sand floor was slippery with moisture and the walls felt cold and damp.

Karras stood shivering in the open air, wondering if it was worth practice-fighting today at all. He glanced longingly at the rack of swords near him, but didn't dare to touch them.

Kang trotted into the arena, wearing a sand-colored exercise suit, short-sleeved and open at the neck. "We're in luck; the air isn't frozen this morning," he said cheerfully. "My excuses for being late."

"I thought my father would come to teach today, not you," said Karras somewhat stiffly. It was several days since his father's return.

Kang sent the Ormen's son a brief stare, then answered, "He knows I'm better with a sword than he; he's grateful that I'm willing to teach you." He paused at Karras' doubtful look, added, "I'm sorry to say that I can't do it much longer. Within a week I must return to war."

"What will happen then?" asked Karras half anxiously, half bitterly. "Do you suppose the Ormen will find time for me? Do you suppose he even cares?"

"Karras!"

Karras shut up instantly, but did not apologize.

Kang gazed at him at length, then smiled musingly. Karras was merely voicing an opinion he held himself. "You sound just as spoiled and arrogant as Kor was." Karras looked back at him, aggressive and uncaring. "Let's not waste time, friend. At our last practice, I was teaching you the lunge. Do you remember it?"

Immediately Karras was at the rack, pulling out a long well-made duelling sword. "Not that one," said Kang, lifting one of the shorter swords with a blunted point. "You don't know how to use that one yet."

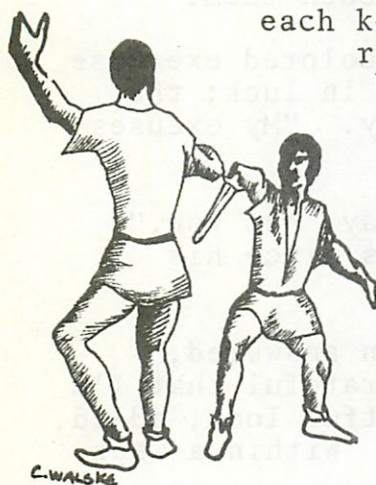
Karras thought he caught a hint of mockery in Kang's voice, and glanced resentfully at Kang's unblunted, finely crafted sword. It never left him, not even for practice; the swordsman insisted he could use no other blade. Karras didn't believe it.

At seventeen, Karras should have known how to use a sword already, but up until three years ago, when his father became the

Ormen, his life had been quick-changing and unpredictable. His fight-training had begun at five years; sword-practice had begun at eight. Two years later, the revolution had broken out, and the only ones who were left behind were too young to know skill with weapons, like himself, or too old to handle a sword. Though legally an adult, Karras was unable to defend himself.

Kang was a highly skilled swordsman and a thorough teacher. But he had very high standards and was particularly intolerant of mistakes. Today he was in a genial mood and teased Karras as his pupil tried some of the more difficult running lunges. Their weapons were sensitive to the weather, looking dull and graceless, moving sluggishly.

As the sun rose over the east wall of the arena, it struck the two figures moving together in a slow dance, each keeping the steps and moves of the lunges and parries simple and controlled. For a time it was beautiful to watch, as the young fighter gained more confidence in his earned skill and was able to find the rhythm of sword-fighting.



Kang picked up his speed and pushed Karras back with a series of short leaping lunges. Karras didn't like the sudden show of skill and tried to match it; he jumped to one side, away from Kang's steady advance, but slipped on wet sand and fell.

Kang lowered his sword and laughed. "A quick route to death," he commented good-humoredly.

Karras got up, angrily brushing sand off of himself. Without a word he cleaned the sword and reassumed his defensive stance.

Kang was pleased to notice a new alertness in Karras. The youngling was a little wild in his attacks, but had a true talent for evaluating and meeting an opponent's skills. Precision and control would come with practice. Kang moved on the defensive now, meeting Karras' attacks effortlessly, not using any of his strength, allowing himself to be driven back.

Momentarily he saw a weakness in Karras' guard. With a back-handed attack his blade met Karras' and swept it aside. Karras was suddenly unprotected and off-balance. In the same moment, Kang brought the sword up and followed through with a shallow sideways arc.

Karras yelled in surprised pain and nearly dropped his weapon as the point bit into his right arm. Kang drew the sword away and stood motionless, smiling a little.

"Guard your life," he said. "In a Challenge, you would have lost several minutes ago."



Karras' arm was already growing stiff. "I didn't know you had challenged me," he retorted angrily.

Kang laughed dryly. "I'm challenging your skill. So far, I think I've won."

They resumed their fight. Kang, ever a smile on his face, danced in his attacks, weaving a web of steel around Karras. Karras defended himself as well as he could, feeling slightly desperate, wondering if Kang would be fool enough to want his death. He was sweating, his breath was coming hard, and the sword was just not obeying his muscles' volition. He resented Kang's deliberate show of skill; his own moves were clumsier because of it.

When Kang narrowly missed pinking him for the second time, Karras became infuriated. He swung at Kang, who parried the blow neatly, grinning, then stepped back a pace and let his sword-point drop, relaxing his guard.

Karras wanted to show his skill, wanted to meet Kang on equal terms, so that he wouldn't have to face that mocking, patronizing smile. . . He crouched and threw himself and the sword forward. He heard Kang's blade go past him too late, and felt his blunted sword's tip meet solid flesh.

Kang gave out a cry, a hissed, half-desperate "Ai Maraku!" and dropped his weapon. His hands moved to his stomach and clutched futilely.

There was an instant of unmoving shock for Karras, an instant of hearing wind brushing the sand underfoot, of feeling the sweat break out in his armpits, on his hands, his forehead; an instant of bitter disbelief. "Kang. . ." he whispered.

Automatically, Karras called for aid. He stood numbly by Kang until the doctor came, answered a few sharp questions about the striking of the blow, and watched as the doctor and two assistants carried Kang away.

Karras stared at the ground, shaking a little, cold inside. For the moment, Kang lived. He looked at the wet sand and the fallen weapons. Slowly, as stiffly as an old man, he walked inside, trailing a damp towel.

At the entrance of the Ormen's office, he recollected himself and his manners. He slanted a glance down at his sweaty, bloodied clothes, but knew that if he went to clean up he'd never come back. . . Wrapping the towel around his neck, he knocked softly and went in.

His father rose from behind his desk at the sight of him. His eyebrows lowered into a wry frown. "Karras, what sort of trouble have you gotten into now?"

"I-I hope I'm not disturbing you, Akra."

"No." Kor walked to within six feet of Karras--a formal distance--and smelled the air full of worry and fear. He asked sharply, "Whose blood is that on you?"

Karras looked down from Kor's eyes to the blood on his arm and the side of his tunic. "Mine. We were--I was sword-fighting, sir." As Kor gazed at him, questioning, Karras knew that time was stretching out and that it was entirely his own fault. He didn't know how to admit his stupidity; fear and exhaustion welled up inside him.

"Did Kang wound you for a mistake?" Kor asked, the slight scorn in his voice prompted by unease.

The words hurt, but Karras saw his opening. "Yes, Akra. He wounded me in the arm because I'd made a stupid move. So I got mad and attacked him."



Kor took a step--almost a lunge--forward, then stood rigidly, the barriers up in his face, his eyes fixed on Karras. He caught the full answer before it left Karras' tongue; he saw it in the droop of Karras' shoulders, the fear and self-reproach in his eyes.

"He was laughing," said Karras dismally. "I was angry. I lunged, the point of my sword taking him in the stomach above the hip-bone."

The Ormen stared, then turned his back on him. In an instant he was at the comm module at his desk, impatiently asking if Vakkfar Kang Keorl was at the hospital and what his status was.

Kor heard the doctor's words and closed his eyes in mute pain. He felt bitter fury at his son's folly, and despair at his friend's trouble. He opened his eyes and glared at Karras. "Take privacy in your rooms, stranger, and don't go past those walls!"

Karras stiffened at the formal anger in his father's voice. "Akra, how is--"

"Out!"

Karras knew that in another second his father, Kang's oath-brother, would strike him. "Yes, sir."

He fled to his apartment, speaking to no one, refusing to recognize the questioning glances of those he passed in the corridors.

As Karras stepped through the door to his outer room, he caught a glimpse of himself in a mirror. The bedraggled, bloody figure there looked neither like an honorable man nor like a skilled swordsman.

Almost mechanically, Karras headed toward the bathroom. After dropping the towel in a laundry bin, he cautiously stripped off his tunic. The bleeding from his wound had nearly stoppd, but began again as he pulled away the sleeve.

He washed the cut carefully, as he, and every Kilington child, had been taught at an early age. The wound was clean and precise; the blade had found its mark expertly and had withdrawn without faltering. Kang had shown him what might have been done to him in real combat, without disabling him. The code of the practice fight; the code he had broken.

The idea of privacy, in word and thought and living-space, had been an automatic privilege for so long that Karras had never recognized its double-edged nature. His privacy was also an enforced seclusion, a lonely confinement that threw him against himself.

In three days, Karras rearranged his rooms twice. Scared, mad at himself, and blindly stubborn, he couldn't let himself relax; he threw his nervous energy into a dozen projects that went nowhere. At night he sat on the windowsill and stared out for hours. His

view: the wide river Alruen and its source in snow-covered mountains.

He ate very little. A man brought him food, handing it to him at the door and leaving silently.

Whenever Karras grew tired, his mind was apt to wander into dangerous realms. He was plagued by thoughts of Kang, images of Kang and his father together. A well-developed sense of obligation refused to let him rest.

He asked himself what sort of penalty Kang could impose on him, but he had no way to know. His imagination was very fertile; so was his empathy. After an extremely vivid dream in which the roles were reversed, he knew exactly what revenge he would take, were he the victim of such an assault.

For all the blood and pain Kang had given, he must offer his blood, his pain. And, so that it would be a gift in addition to the required punishment, he should suggest it himself, and thereby make the needful sacrifice.

Even as he thought about it, he shuddered. His stomach felt numbed, his senses were dazed; as if in a sighted dream, he could feel the blow striking him. . . but the pain that would come from that blow he could not foresee.

"To go forward, into the dark, naked, knifeless, nerveless," he whispered, repeating one long-dead, proud warrior's definition of life.

The choice was his, of course. He didn't have to take that path toward honor. His status would be recovered if he took whatever punishment Kang demanded of him. What status is there, though, in being held in contempt by a father who expected the highest honor of everyone? Could the son of the Ormen take a coward's route?

Karras stared down at himself. He was no weakling. Though the war had disrupted his training, the capabilities were all there, ripe for flowering. It was the stunting of his education, so to speak, that continually frustrated and hampered him.

I have the physical strength to withstand such punishment, he told himself. Have I the courage to ask for it?

On the fourth morning of his imprisonment, Karras sent a formally worded appeal to the Ormen, that he be allowed to speak to Kang Keorl, with Kor present.

Karras walked the distance from his quarters to the hospital with quick, even steps. For all Kor's anger and disappointment with his son, he at least still held some trust in Karras' discipline; he had been sent for by message and permitted to make his way to Kang's room unaccompanied.

Karras stood a moment before the closed door, then knocked softly. The voice that answered was his father's. "Enter."

Karras opened the door and, for a second, lost the strength that had propelled him this far. Kor was sitting on a straight chair at Kang's bedside, looking tired, and as if he had been in that exact position for quite some time. A drawn face and over-tense muscles revealed his lack of sleep. Emotional exhaustion, though subtly marked, was evident to his son's practiced eye.

Beside him lay Kang. How terribly out of place the warrior seemed, confined to a sickbed. Kang's face was haggard; he had obviously lost weight, and there were lines etched in his face which bespoke the pain in his body. He lay under an insulating blanket, light enough not to put any pressure on his wound, but specially woven to ward off any chill. It also, of course, hid the wound from Karras' sight.

Kang gazed at Karras as he entered and walked over to the foot of the bed. Karras almost called him "Sashakra." "Good evening," he said, quietly.

Kang nodded slightly. Again, it was Kor who spoke. "Sinish, Karras."

"Sinish." It was better to avoid titles with his father as well, for, in truth, he did not know how Kor would answer: as father, the Ormen, or Kor Alkarin, Kang's brother.

Karras gave his attention to Kang. "How are you?" The words sounded inane.

"I wish they'd tell me," Kang began slowly. "I'm alive. I'd like to think I'll stay that way for a while."

Karras couldn't be sure whether the comment was meant to be sarcastic. He hoped it was simply motivated by Kang's usual light-heartedness; he would have given anything to see the grin that only a few days ago had so infuriated him.

"Well, Karras." Kor's words broke his reflection abruptly.

"Sir?"

"You asked for this meeting. What have you to say?"

Karras drew a deep breath and prepared himself mentally. He hoped that he would get through it with only minimal interruption from his audience. "Thank you for letting me come. I had to speak with. . . Emisrafkir Keorl, and I feel it's best that you hear what I have to say to him. I don't intend to make any excuses for what I did. I acted like a spoiled, undisciplined child. It was. . . it was stupid! I let my pride take the place of reason. It was like all the times I've thrown my knife at a wall when I've been frustrated, only. . ."

Kang broke in, "Only there weren't any handy walls." There was an almost gentle tone in his voice; he knew that it wasn't easy for Karras to admit to weakness.

"No, sir." Karras looked down. At the time, Kang had been nothing more than the object of his fury. He hadn't been Sashakra Kang, the man he loved even as his father; he had been some alien tormentor who had dared to mock the Ormen's son.

Karras continued, "I have disgraced my status, and am without honor. All I have left is the right, the obligation, to bear punishment equal with my crime." Karras paused and slipped into a somewhat more formal mode of Agavoi. "I can't know what you have considered as a fitting penalty. If I might be permitted to suggest it myself, however, I would ask to be dealt a blow equal to that which I gave you, Emisrafkir Keorl. With the same sword, or one of your own choosing."

Kor and Kang started at the same instant, Kor stiffening in his chair and Kang, unfortunately, trying to sit up, only to fall back against the pillow with a groan. The fact of Karras' discipline was a foregone assumption. But there was something in his words that stirred up thoughts of Orashathnavi, the patterns of Challenge. It was almost inconceivable that this young man, who only four days before had committed an act of unparalleled dishonor and irrationality, should now stand in front of them and, with all the presence of a statesman, pronounce such a sentence upon himself.

The concept of pain for pain was deeply rooted in killingaven laws and tradition. But here there was an added measure for consideration; even with identical wounds, it was quite possible that, for whatever difference in physical stamina, one man, if not both, might die.

Kang looked up at Karras. The boy's feelings were so easily visible. Kang saw shame, fear, and a sort of bleak dignity. "In truth, Karras, reparation has not been the uppermost thought in my mind," he said slowly. "I'll need to consider what you've said."

Karras inclined his head briefly. He glanced almost pleadingly in Kor's direction. "Akra. . .?" he ventured.

Kor raised his head slowly. No emotion at all showed on his face. "It is not my decision to make," he said, rather brusquely.

A familiar look of pain and disappointment crossed Karras' face. Kor didn't see it, but Kang did. Karras bent his head and turned toward the door.

Once Karras was gone, the two men found the atmosphere changed. Kang felt a good deal better. Karras, Kor's unpredictable son, had done what neither of them expected. Kang respected Karras' audacity and wholly approved of making Karras feel the kind of pain that he himself was feeling now.

Kor was weary past the point of humor. He could see the utter necessity for the discipline that Karras had described--yet he rejected it at the same moment.

Kang's voice broke into his thoughts. "He's right, you know."

Kor lifted his head and laid a hand on Kang's bed, a few inches from Kang's sword-arm. "Yes."

"I'm afraid to admit that I can't take the position of honor," said Kang lightly, his gaze wandering from Kor's eyes to his hands and to the tiny signs that bespoke his feelings. "Karras has suggested an obligation I'm physically unable to fulfill."

Kor didn't say anything. He looked away from Kang's face, lowering his head to avoid seeing him at all. Kang was asking him for a commitment that he couldn't make. "Who fills it then?"

After a silence he looked up again to find Kang watching him steadily, his brown eyes gently insistent. "Consider a few opinions," Kang said thoughtfully. "Someone will punish Karras; I don't know whom to ask yet. If the avenger thinks I will die, then his blow will surely kill Karras." Kor winced, but nodded. "There's a stronger truth, Raksha. It may be that Karras will die, and I live. When that happens we part company, you and I."

Kor stared at him. "I don't see that."

Kang looked at him compassionately. Kor was unable to face the truth, and Kang couldn't blame him for it. "Think it through, brother. You'd either demand my death or wish it privately. I'd probably offer it myself, if that came between us."

There was a pause. Kor stirred when the tension grew too much to bear. "You want me to deliver the penalty, don't you?"

Kang answered quickly and directly. "I'd be a fool to say no. You're the only man who can do it."

Kor came to some internal decision, and when he met Kang's eyes his gaze was direct and untroubled. "Especially considering that Karras' sword should have struck me, not you. It was me he was aiming at; your more than substantial shadow merely got in the way."

Kang couldn't resist. Dryly: "That more than substantial shadow is growing less and less, unsubtle friend."

Kor grimaced, then smiled with Kang. "There are less drastic ways to lose weight. . ." he murmured. His grave expression returned quickly. "Frankly, I offer this unwillingly, but if you ask it of me, I will do it."

Kang answered softly, "In truth, I can't ask it of you, Raksha. But if you offer I can most thankfully accept."



"I'll do it," said Kor simply.

Their eyes met. Kang nodded once, acknowledging Kor's commitment. "Agreed," he declared very softly and very wearily. "My thanks."

Kor noticed, at long last, the pain in Kang's face. His eyes were overly bright and his skin had lost its color; he was lying very still, very stiff. Kor looked down, worried and embarrassed. "I'm sorry for my thoughtlessness, Rakari. You should have been asleep long ago."

"Oh, shut up," Kang demanded peremptorily. "I'll die only if I feel like it, understand?"

"Yes, sir," said Kor meekly. "And I wish you a good night."

"Osta vinithald," replied Kang. As the door clicked shut, he cursed his pain in a whisper and tried again to find a comfortable position in the bed.

Kor paced across the wide empty room to look out the window. It was still snowing. He shook his head in grim wonder at the sight: Wintergod Olsovoru's punishment, snow and ice and deadly cold. His frustration at the weather only added to his frustration with Karras-- a sense of outrage, of despair, of not being able to do anything for fear of doing wrong.

The doctor had practically drawn Kor a diagram of where the sword should strike. The blow should be delivered quickly, with sure aim. Kor picked up Kang's long, tapered sword and resolutely fastened its harness about his shoulders. Like a wraith, he silently left.

The shelter from the storm's fury was a place for dancing, for singing, and for the recognition of honor or dishonor. A fire blazed warmly in the center Well of the vast room. The warm color of the fire cast reflections and shadows on dark wooden walls and a flagstone floor.

Tonight the fire was a source of torment; unbearable warmth and a light that pervaded everywhere. Where Karras stood he saw directly into the fire's blue heart. Its blaze was further reminder of the impending punishment; to him the flames were as the bright pain of a sword's bite.

Patiently, but with mounting fear, Karras awaited his discipline. At the sound of footsteps, he lowered his head and stared determinedly at the patterning of stones in the floor. He heard the door shut, ensuring total privacy. The steps came closer to him and stopped.



Karras dared a swift glance upward, and regretted it forever. Bleak dismay sat on Kor's features, a look of anger and sorrow mingled. How could he have ever thought Kor would be happy to punish him?

"Are you cold?" asked Kor hesitantly, for Karras wore nothing.

"The fire keeps me warm, sir," Karras lied.

A law-enforcer of Orashathnavi challenges would have been able to give out punishment non-committally, but Kor knew he couldn't ignore the turmoil within. If the blow were struck with anger, Karras would die instantly. If the blow were struck with fear, again Karras would die, slowly.

Kor strove for a balance between the flame and the ice. He stared at his second son, his neglected favorite, in slow forced appraisal. He said the name softly, "Karras," and was relieved when the youngling did, finally, look up. He went on, in a spill of words, "I don't want to do this! If anyone but Kang had required this commitment, I would have refused; how can a man take a sword to his own son?" Like an echo after the cry, his anguish reverberated.

"I should have been your target. Then I could have Challenged

you, and struck you rightfully, accepting the consequences without question. But you stupidly chose to wound Kang, and stupidly I agreed to collect Kang's debt. You take Kang's life, I take yours, and I am left with nothing."

Karras understood Kor's fury, and accepted it gladly. Death was the easy solution. At the slither of a sword being pulled abruptly from its sheath, he straightened, and stiffened his back muscles. His hands moved once, convulsively, to protect his bare flank. He pulled them back and held them clenched in fists at his sides. So that the sword would not come like a burning arrow out of the dark, he forced himself to keep his eyes open, and looked directly at his father.

Kor flinched from those eyes and quickly bent his head to examine Kang's sword. It was a trifle longer than his own, but in design, weight, and balance, it was a perfect example of the type of sword he had trained with.

He automatically took a pace forward with his right foot and held the sword ready, his body muscles both relaxed and controlled. He whispered, "In Maraku's name, please stand still, Karras." He lunged.

Karras almost welcomed the blow. He tried to call out to his father, but all that came out was a wordless, incoherent cry of pain. Blindly he fell to the cold stone floor.

Kang stared at the unexpected visitor. "Sinish."

Kor gave him a perfunctory nod of greeting and sat down. He seemed utterly spent.

Kang looked at him. "Is it done?"

"Yes."

"Is Karras--"

"I put Karras in the doctor's care."

Kang sought out less dangerous ground. "Where did you leave my sword?"

The fury that Kor had been trying to control erupted. "I broke it!"

"You what?"

"The next time you teach a beginner, use a practice blade!"

Kang thought about that weapon's history and grew hot with anger. "You broke my sword?"

Kor glared at him. He spoke very evenly, using words of insult, and the simple syntax one would use to instruct a child. "I snapped it underfoot and threw it across the room. It was not fit. Karras' stupidity was obvious, but what of yours, master swordsman? If you hadn't insisted on using that sword I doubt if Karras would have attacked you!"

Kang ignored pride and honor, knowing the inevitable outcome of any fight with Kor. He lay silent, his mouth closed over harsh words.

"When you're well I'm sending you to war, Kang. But if Karras dies, I don't expect you to come back."

Not able to bear it, Kang cried out, "I warned you of that! Don't you think I know all this? Don't you find the price I'm paying high enough?"

Kor gazed at him narrowly. "The price I pay is higher still. Karras injured you in reckless fury, but you goaded him into it." He sounded angry and bewildered. "I was caught against my will in this folly. Kang, was I the only one who could discipline Karras?"

"Yes," answered Kang fiercely. "You had a price to pay as well. The price for neglecting your own son."

Anger left Kor, replaced by dismay. He said, with a bitter laugh rising in his throat, "For neglecting him I should nearly kill him? That's about as warped a view as my father held, when he used to beat me for his errors--" he broke off and stared at Kang. All strength gone, he whispered, "That isn't fair."

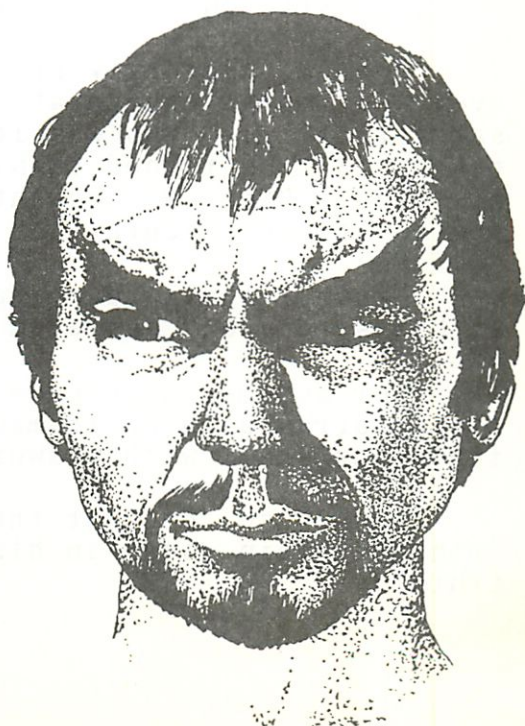
Kang regretted that they had come to this. "Karras doesn't understand what you're doing to him, just as a young Kor Kothir didn't understand Kesan Kothir."

"I am not my father!"

"No. But you are his son. Don't fall prey to other shadows, in avoiding his!"

Kor smacked his right knee with his palm. "My father enjoyed misusing me. I don't like what's happening to Karras; I don't like what I've had to do. Tonight Karras and I both paid the price of your pain with pain!"

"Disciplining your son is a father's duty. Misusing or neglecting him is a disgrace." Kang let his wrath show undisguised. "Karras, as the Ormen's son, is expected to be



better than all sons. Are you not also expected to be better than all fathers?"

Kor didn't dispute that. He nodded, shocked into silence by Kang's temper.

"I'm sorry," Kang went on biting. "Sorry for myself, sorrier for Karras and his future, and you I pity most of all. Because I don't think you can change what you feel you must do. In that, the price you pay is beyond measure, Ormen Alkærin. If I die fighting, remember me."

Kor's face twisted with shame. "I don't want to survive you or Karras," he said, almost in a whisper.

Kang sat on a bench at the edge of the arena, an unfamiliar role for him. He watched an equally unfamiliar scene: Kor and Karras at sword-practice. There was something in Kor's expression, perhaps the satisfaction of knowing that he was fulfilling his role as a father, that made Kang smile.

Karras lunged at Kor, who put the attack aside with an easy swipe of his blade. The parry sent Karras' sword sliding across the sandy floor to rest a few feet from Kang's seat. Kang reached over and picked it up as Karras approached. It was a different sword from the one Karras had used the day of their last practice, months before.

Karras slowed his step when he saw Kang with the blade, but was encouraged by his smile.

"Here, Karras. When you are good enough to beat your father, then I shall consider completing your training."

Kor grinned wryly at the words, sheathed his sword, and walked over wearing an exaggerated air of defiance. "Oh?" he inquired sarcastically. "Who was it that taught you which end of your sword to grasp?" He turned to his son and benignly indicated Kang with his hand. "Kang was taught that his best weapons were his words, and so it's his mouth that has the greatest expertise."

"Then I shall teach Karras how to match the sharpness of his father's tongue," answered Kang composedly.

Kor assumed an expression of wounded dignity. "I asked you to train Karras as a swordsman, not as a diplomat. Or is it that you find your skill with a sword slipping?"

Kang rose, brought the blunted sword up, and pointed it at Kor with a certain gleam in his eye. "Would you like to find out the truth?"

Karras aggressively thrust himself into the middle of their argument. "Is watching you part of my training?"

Kor retorted sardonically, "Don't you think you could learn something from it?"

"Do you really want me to know which one of you is better?" challenged Karras.

Kang was a formidable opponent, even with a practice blade and after a long illness. Kor backed away from the idea. "We're both better than you are, and that's what counts. Let's get back to it."

"As you say." Karras reclaimed his sword. He didn't know if Kang and Kor were happy with the solution, but he was.

Coming of Age

by Fern Marder

I strive to be my father's son,
 yet he won't let me.
 How long will it be before
 he finds me worthy?
 Before he accepts the fact
 that I have grown?
 Before he recognizes me
 as his own?

I work to learn history's lesson well,
 to learn how to see,
 To increase my *srothar*, my honor--
 but it eludes me.
 I want to make a place with him,
 and prove that I can fight;
 I seek to be what he's become--
 do I have the right?

When you must pursue a legend,
 where do you begin?
 How can you Challenge Maraku
 and win?

REVISED EDITION

(Edited by F. Marder and C. Walske)

A Kilingon Heritage

by Carol Walske

'First the Defiant, and now this,' Roan Morgan thought grimly. 'Will I never escape my past? Ironic that my ship should have the same name as Kor's ship. The Kolontoth--Defiant. And now a kiling as a First Officer.'

These few thoughts ran quickly through his mind as he waited for the new First Officer to beam aboard. He didn't even know the man's name. A second-hand message from Admiral Dickson of Star Fleet Command had indicated only that they were giving him the 'honor' of having one of the first Klingon officers in Star Fleet aboard his ship. 'It's probably because they think I like kilingau,' Roan thought gloomily.

His engineer, a sane, Earth-born officer, looked up and said, "Energizing now, sir."

A tall kiling materialized. Roan's eyes widened at first sight of the man. The face was different, yet like. The eyes and the expressive eyebrows above them were unmistakable.

The man stood at attention and presented himself. "Lieutenant Commander Karras Kothir iyo Taralkarin."

Roan nodded to himself. "Ai Maraku," he sighed and frowned deeply. He realized that this would seem insulting to the kiling, so he straightened. It was an effort to look directly at the man. "Rakish," he said, welcoming him in Agavoi--the Kilingon language. "Commodore Roan Morgan. Engineer Karen Marlowe. Come with me, please."

The kiling nodded courteously to Marlowe and followed Roan with dignity.

"Would you prefer we spoke Agavoi?" said Roan as they walked through the corridors. He had decided to confront him immediately; it was no use waiting to find out where his sympathies lay.

Karras looked surprised. "It doesn't matter, but I thank you for extending the courtesy. So few humans speak Agavoi well that it is a pleasure to find someone that does."

"Then we will use it," said Roan in Agavoi, trying to ignore the kiling's barbed courtesy. 'Just like his father,' he thought wryly. 'Another courteous killer.' He led the way into his office. 'This is a joke,' he thought. 'Out of ten billion kilingau I get assigned Kor Alkarin's son.'

They sat down and Karras handed over his assignment papers and

his record tape. But Roan put them aside. "Have you found it easy being in the Federation?" he asked bluntly.

"I will not answer so personal a question," said the killing stiffly.



". . .Coming from an Earther?" Roan finished for him. "I'm better than that. I'm a traitor, according to your father."

The man looked astonished. "You--"

"I was in krasaia Kothir the day you were born," Roan said, very directly, unafraid. To conceal the truth from his enemy's son now would be to invite fury later. "I was Kirin Kothir then, your father's brother."

From the sudden coldness on Karras' face, Roan knew he had been told the story. "Yes, you have a real problem now, don't you?" he asked bitingly. "I am your Captain, and therefore you owe me total obedience, but I am also the man your father has feud with. I suggest you consider it very carefully." He used an old word for feud, which carried a traditional, inescapable meaning. Kilingau took insults, Challenges and feud as affairs of honor, usually to be avenged with blood.

Karras stared at Roan with controlled hostility. "You ask the impossible," he almost snarled; "if there is feud between us then I cannot meet or serve you in any way."

"It isn't our feud," Roan pointed out. "This is between me and the Emperor Alkarin."

"Ormen Kor Alkarin is my father," Karras said, in the tones of one pointing out the obvious. "My beliefs are his; if he would feud with you, then so must I. Or have you so soon forgotten orashath-navi--the patterns of Challenge?"

Karras' words could be taken as a simple question or as a subtle insult. Kor had trained his son well. "No, I have not," said Roan, lapsing back into System English deliberately. "But have you forgotten that while in the Federation you are under its laws? That while in Star Fleet you are liable to its directives? That while on my ship you have to obey every order I give you?"

Karras hesitated. It was ethically and socially wrong to follow either duty. But above all he was a killing, second-son of the Ormen, and he must follow the killingaven code of honor.

Roan saw his intent. He interposed quickly, "If you declare feud between us, you could create an interstellar incident that would embarrass the Empire. Just what do you think the Ormen Alkarin would say if you refused your sworn military duty?"

Karras kept his fury tightly under control. Neatly caught by this. . . "I will Challenge," he said clearly, and with stiff formality, "if and whenever we are in Kilingon space, or involved in matters dealing with kilingau. If ever we cross the Periphery, I will Challenge you immediately, not only because of the feud but because of the way you have compromised me today. I hope then that I shall have a chance to kill you. Until that time, I am this ship's First Officer, and I will take your orders."

"That's just fine," said Roan angrily. "You do credit to the Ormenel by sticking so closely to traditional patterns. I have some advice for you. While on this ship, forget you're a kiling, or you won't last one week. I promise you that. Also, you'd better forget everything you ever learned about orashathnavi, because it won't work in the Federation. You won't Challenge anyone, and you won't do anything that warrants Challenge. Understood?"

The kiling didn't like taking advice; he was just as stiff-necked and strong-willed as his father. "Yes," he said sulkily.

"Now you will answer the question that so insulted you before," said Roan, pressing his point. "And be careful not to take or give offense. Have you found it easy being in the Federation?"

"I still say that it is none of your concern," said Karras, "but no, it hasn't been easy. What do you expect? That Earthers and kilingau could or would become brethren immediately? You're a fool if you expect that. I doubt we will see it in my lifetime."

"I don't like being called a fool," Roan said curtly.

There was a moment's silence. "You were a fool to betray my father," Karras said, equally coldly.

"That wasn't my choice," answered Roan. "Am I going to have to fight you to get your courtesy?"

"You might," said Karras, unwilling to give in.

"When the time comes," said Roan; "I will. Until then. . . I rule here."

Karras kept his eyes directly on Roan. For one terrible instant Roan thought he was facing Kor. "Thakinu," said Karras expressionlessly, accepting formally in Agavoi. "May I have your leave to go now, Captain?" He moved to rise.

"No," said Roan calmly and stared at Karras until he sat down again. "Where were you during the war?"

Karras clearly didn't want to answer that question. Roan waited. "On the Kilingarlan," Karras said finally.

"You didn't enter the military service? You were old enough by the third year of the war."

"I did," Karras answered shortly.

"But you did no fighting on the Outer Periphery--with the Federation?"

"No."

"Why not?" asked Roan, knowing that he was being obnoxious to the point of cruelty. But he needed to enforce his authority.

"Because the Ormen Alkarin had other wishes," said Karras in a very low growl.

Roan stopped, for there was a genuine mystery. Further questions would only embarrass Karras, and infuriate him beyond the point of control. "You may go," he said. "And, by the way---welcome aboard, Krifar Kothir."

Karras turned before he reached the door. "Not Krifar," he hissed. "I am a Lieutenant Commander---sir." He strode out.

Roan let him go, half-smiling, a little grimly.

Karras' arrival caused a major change in the flow of life on the ship. Most crewmen were in awe of him, not only because he was a killing in Star Fleet, but also because he was the Emperor's son.

Karras had previously encountered such fearful curiosity and was able to ignore it. He maintained proper, though minimal, courtesy before everyone; his behavior was very stiff, very reserved. To those who tried to be friendly, he was cordial, but no more.

Roan watched Karras carefully during the first few weeks, fearing an impetuous outburst. However, Karras seemed to have taken Roan's advice. Wishing to avoid trouble, he spent most of his off-duty time in his quarters, emerging only to eat.

The Defiant went on her way--she was on a 'census' trip, assessing the value of each new planet. It was time-consuming work. Expert research teams had to examine each planet, collecting and compiling data. A report on the discovery of a new light, tough alloy might bring a mining concern to the planet. The discovery of a planet with wide, green pastures would bring the farmers, the meat and vegetable raisers. The slightest hint of germanium, dilithium or uranium would bring developers running.



Karras kept track of the research teams and their findings, compiling a lot of the data himself and feeding it into the computer. Typically, he handled the work as a problem in military strategy, his field of expertise.

Just after Karras had come aboard, a detailed message from Command had arrived indicating that both Roan and his third-in-command should be sensitive to potential trouble from Karras. Roan also found out that Karras had been forced to take a cut in rank--in the Kilington space service, he had commanded his own warship. After a while, Roan grew to respect Karras and even to feel sympathy for him.

Roan was pleased to see him attack his job with such zeal. Karras' actions were bold, occasionally rash, but always refreshingly original. Roan couldn't fault him for his efficiency.

The Defiant stopped over at Star Base 14 to drop off all of the planet data--to be given a final correlation and relayed on to Star Fleet Command.

Roan ordered shore leave, and was about to take a little deserved R & R himself when a personal call came in. Cursing his bad luck, he went to his quarters to hear the message.

Roan could not repress a smile when he saw who was on the screen. "Good morning, Admiral. Strange to find you on Star Base 14. What's up? Another exciting assignment like the last one?"

"Something unusual," said Admiral Morgan. "You may not like it, Roan. In a few days you're going to the Border to pick up a few passengers. You'll take them on to Versailles for the talks."

"That doesn't sound too bad," said Roan. "Who're the passengers?"

His father hesitated. "Among others--Emperor Alkarin. Sorry."

The only change in Roan's expression was the sudden deepening of lines in his forehead, and the disappearance of his smile. "Oh? Do you have any idea of what has been declared between the Ormen Alkarin and me?"

"Not really," said Admiral Morgan. "But I think I know what you must feel when you see him. It was Admiral Dickson who ordered it. He's a good man, but he either ignores or refuses to see any of the conflicts between Klingons and humans. He knows your history, and figures you ideal for anything involving Klingons."

"So this is something I can't avoid," said Roan. "Well. I suppose nothing can happen. Thanks for the warning. What brings you out here, anyway?"

"I'm supposed to go with you," said his father. "The colony planets on the Border have made me a delegate to the talks."

"Why didn't you tell me that in the first place?" said Roan, brightening.

"Good news should always come last. It takes the bite off the bad."

After a short but welcome shore leave, the Defiant left Star Base 14. Roan hadn't told his First Officer yet about the assignment. He put it off for as long as possible, wanting to avoid trouble. Finally, Karras found out.

Roan had brought his father to the bridge. He introduced him to several people, including Karras. He emphasized the name 'Kothir' when he made the introduction, and the Admiral's eyes widened slightly.

Roan settled into his chair. Morgan stood in the background, watching both Roan and Karras curiously. "Mr. Dmitri, set a course for the Border, near Land's End, if you--"

"Do we cross the Border?" asked Karras sharply.

"Don't interrupt," retorted Roan. "Where is your courtesy?"

Karras paid him no attention. "What is our mission there?" he demanded, standing poised, like a wildcat about to spring.

"To pick up passengers this side of the Border," answered Roan. By answering Karras he was giving in to his rudeness, but there was little else he could do.

"Kilingau?" asked Karras.

"Kilingau," affirmed Roan.

"This ship is not fit," snapped Karras and stalked away.

Before he got to the turbo-lift, the Admiral's quiet voice stopped him. "First Officer Kothir," he said. "Are you or are you not on duty?"

"I am," said Karras coldly.

"Then return to your station, or I'll have you court-martialed for dereliction of duty," said the Admiral.

Karras stood his ground. "You're his father," he stated, indicating Roan with a nod.

"Yes."

"Then this ship is twice corrupt, and I can no more take your orders than I can his."

"Karras Kothir," Roan exclaimed, "you're on report for rudeness and insubordination. Dismissed until 1800 hours."

Karras actually managed to look triumphant as he stalked off the bridge. Roan stared after him; so did the entire bridge crew. Roan turned on them. "All right, that's enough," he ordered. "Return to your stations."

Admiral Morgan approached Roan and stopped beside his chair. Most of Roan's anger had dissipated, leaving a kind of shame for the public spectacle that should never have happened. "I'd rather not do that sort of thing in front of my crew," he remarked ruefully.

"What exactly prompted it?"

"That's difficult to explain. It's a personal war."

"And you allow him to attack you? What about a little discipline?" asked Morgan.

"His outbursts come only when killing are mentioned," said Roan wearily. "But I will discipline him for what he just did. That was inexcusable." He turned back toward the Navigator. "Mr. Dmitri, the Border--Warp Four."

It was shortly before 1800 hours. It had been a long time since he had called anyone up on report, Roan thought. It was an ancient tradition, going back to the days of an ocean-going Navy. A traditional punishment, but Roan believed he could get better work from his crew by rewarding them, not punishing them. But this time. . .

Karras returned to the bridge promptly. No trace of fear showed in his face. His only expression was one of arrogance, which Roan guessed he was using to hide behind.

There was a ritual that Roan was supposed to follow, either for reprimands or citations. This time, he deliberately chose to ignore tradition.

He gave himself access to ship-wide intercom. "This is Morgan," he said. No one that he could see actually stopped working, but he was sure they were all listening intently. It wasn't that Karras was disliked--many of these humans had never dealt with a killing before, and didn't know what to make of him. "Today I put Lieutenant Commander Kothir on report for excessive rudeness to me and to Admiral Morgan. Because his behavior has verged on insubordination on more than one occasion, I feel this punishment is necessary." He paused and watched Karras, who stood unmoving.

"Let no one speak to him. Let his words pass unheard. Let him be ignored. Let him be forgotten completely, lest his disgrace corrupt us. Thus we make him outcast from our society. For ten days Karras Kothir is outlaw. That is all; Morgan out."

Roan switched off and looked at Karras. The killing had shown

shock when Roan had first started the familiar pattern of words; anger; and now, shame.

"Karras Kothir is dismissed," Roan finished quietly. Karras went in silence.

"Roan, could I talk to you?" said the Admiral, his tone of voice marked both by irritation and puzzlement.

"Certainly," answered Roan without pause. "Take over for me, Mr. Dmitri."

In the lift Morgan looked at his son carefully. "You've become more of a Klingon than ever," he said sternly.

"Have I?" Roan asked rhetorically. He shook his head. "I don't think so. You gathered then that that was a kilingaven custom."

"What else could it have been? Was it really necessary?"

The doors opened on Deck 5, and they stepped out. Roan looked at his father with a frown, perplexed. "Yes, I thought it was."

"I thought it was verging on cruelty," his father admonished. "The standard reprimand would have been better."

"Ten days in quarters? No. That would have been very much to his liking," answered Roan. "What I did wasn't cruel. Since he appreciates only kilingaven things, I reprimanded him in a traditional kilingaven way. It worked better than anything else could have. You saw his face."

"It worked, all right," agreed the Admiral, unconvinced. "But you'll never be a good diplomat."

"All I want to do is run this ship efficiently," retorted Roan with unusual anger. "I don't care if that particular Klingon despises me."

Morgan, alarmed, shook his head, but didn't venture to say anything further.

When Karras stood duty watch, Roan alone addressed him, and then only in the third person. By the third day of his punishment, Karras was a changed man. His behavior had gone from his initial angry, contemptuous silence to a grave introspection.

Roan wondered, watching him, if he hadn't been too harsh, after all. He hadn't told his father, but this punishment was far more severe than he'd made it seem. In the military of the Ormenel, being declared outlaw was close to an actual dishonorable discharge; it meant a grave loss of status, which Roan knew would weigh heavily on Karras. The killing had been disgraced in front of Federen. Once the ten days were up, Roan was afraid of what Karras might do. Some sort

of violent outbreak was almost inevitable.

It took them six days to reach the Border. Roan Morgan stopped worrying about Karras, for his biggest problem was upon him. It came in the form of a Kilingon shuttleship that approached the Defiant, asked permission to come aboard, and nosed its way into the hangar.

Just beyond the door, Roan stood formally, sweating, anxious for the wait to be over, thinking that protocol had never seemed so ridiculous as right now. Once the door opened, he strained to see past the honor guard. A killing was coming forward, but it was not he whom Roan expected.

Admiral Morgan was at the head of the receiving line. "Ahkfar Kirs Kroshir Karth Keorl," said the first killing politely.

"Admiral Morgan. Welcome."

Roan identified himself. Out of the corner of his eye he watched Karras, who stood next to him. Karras straightened and gave Keorl a full kilingaven salute, but was otherwise silent, since he was still proscribed. If this treatment caused High Commander Keorl any curiosity, he concealed it all, except for a momentary frown.

Four more kilingau followed in quick succession. The High Councillor for Imperial Civil Security. The Minister of Trade. A Councillor for research and development, and another for planet development.

Finally a man came forward that no one could fail to recognize. Two men, clearly personal guards, followed him.

Roan stared at him, hypnotized, like the mouse in front of the wolf. It had been sixteen years since he'd last seen the man. He tried to deny the relief and--was it gladness?--that sprang up in him as he watched him. He wanted to concentrate instead on the ten bitter years he'd spent on a prison planet because of Kor.

"Welcome, Emperor Alkarin. You honor us," said Admiral Morgan.

Kor nodded briefly in acknowledgment, then turned to Roan. His sense of personal presence was as powerful as Roan remembered. "Ormen Kor Alkarin," the killing said without inflection.

Facing those commanding eyes, Roan felt an uprush of anger and fear. "Commodore Roan Morgan," he answered slowly.

"I recognize you as such," Kor said formally. "I also recognize you as Kirin Kothir, with whom I have feud. Do you accept recognition?"



Kor had issued Challenge. Even though twenty years had passed, and the relationship between the Empire and the Federation had gone from total war to an unbroken peace, the Ormen chose to maintain his personal feud with the man he once called brother. Roan declared proudly, "I recognize you as Ormen Alkarin and as the former Kor Kothir. Let silent Challenge exist between us."

Kor nodded. "Silent so long as nothing passes between us that would force a fighting Challenge. Let there be talk between us, and meetings; forbid personal conversation, eating together, or any other social courtesies."

"Accepted," replied Roan stiffly.

With a turn of his head, Kor forgot him completely. He nodded and smiled at the expressionless Karras. "You I would welcome," he continued in Agavoi. "Your service here must be exceedingly distasteful. I am sorry."

Karras' training was excellent; he stayed silent. "Karras Kothir is outlaw," interposed Roan. A swift, angry glance from Kor chilled him.

"You put him under silence?" Kor asked with a sort of dangerous quiet. "For what reason?"

"This is my ship, and we are within the Federation," said Roan. "Ask yourself: who rules here?"

"Arrogance, it would seem," murmured Kor sardonically.

Roan let him walk away. A number of kilingau looked at Roan, but shortly they followed Kor out. Roan found himself thankful that his father was aboard; Admiral Morgan would escort the visitors to their quarters.

Roan was almost shaking. For perhaps the first time in his life he'd dared to stand up to Kor. He stopped his musings long enough to dismiss his officers. Karras caught his eye and held it. He stared at Roan with a look of the utmost bitterness.

"What's the matter?" said Roan mockingly. "Is one angry because eight kilingau now know that one was stupid enough to be made outlaw?"

Karras didn't react. He stared at Roan for a long minute and went out.

For several days, as they headed for the neutral planet of Versailles, Roan saw nothing of Kor or of his fellow travelers. Sensitive to their presence, aware of potential trouble, he was uneasy and irritable. He was difficult to live with.

Kor had tried to speak with him, once, but Roan put him off when

he found that the Ormen's question did not relate directly to the diplomatic mission. Kor had set the terms of the Challenge; Roan intended to hold him to them.

Walking on Deck 5 after a short social visit with his father, Roan abruptly came face to face with Kor, who was coming out of his own quarters. Kor spoke immediately. "Commodore Morgan, I wish to see you."

"Right now?" asked Roan, letting his irritation show.

"Yes."

"As you like," Roan said ironically, leading the way to his office.

They went in. Roan took his customary place behind his desk; he didn't invite Kor to sit down. "I will ask you to remember the terms of our Challenge before you speak," said Roan.

Kor began directly. "Outlawing is a kilingaven custom," he said. "Has the Federation so quickly adopted our ways?"

"No," Roan answered calmly, unruffled by Kor's scorn. "I used it because it was necessary."

"You know well the seriousness of that particular punishment. What was the crime?" demanded Kor.

"I see no reason why I should tell you that," said Roan. "I don't have to answer to you for my actions. But if you want, stay here and ask your son. As of this morning, it was time to lift the ban."

Kor waited. Roan called the bridge, feeling Kor watching him with angry curiosity.

Karras came in, and looked with startled wonder at Kor. "Your punishment is over," commented Roan briefly.

Karras immediately turned to his father. "Why didn't you Challenge him?" he demanded.

"I did," said Kor, looking surprised.

"That was a coward's Challenge! Why don't you get it over with?"

Kor frowned as if seeing Karras in a new light. He chose to change the subject. "Why were you put under silence, Karras?"

The younger man knew better than to fight it just then. "Oh, I suppose I was rude," he muttered angrily.

"What did you do?"

"When he gave the order to near the Periphery, I interrupted. I had Challenged him at our first meeting, so that whenever we were dealing with other kilingau, I could not serve him. When I found out that you were coming aboard, I told him and his father that I could not obey any of their orders," he said, relating it as briefly as possible.

"That was a stupid thing to do," said Kor. "Are you a civilian or are you an officer?"

"It was my right by Challenge," Karras said defensively. "It was a more honorable Challenge than the one you gave." Quick as a cat he turned on Roan. "Since my father will not, I will Challenge you now."

"You can't Challenge me," said Roan, not thinking that Karras might mean it. "If I fight you, Star Fleet will have to court-martial us both--you for starting the fight, and me for joining in."

"Karras," said his father reasonably, "there are a few things yet that you don't understand about the Challenge. You--"

"What I understand is that he is a coward and that you are a fool," exclaimed Karras. "Why don't you give him open Challenge? Do it now, get it done. I've heard you and Katlena talking together. For twenty years you've claimed to hate him. What keeps you?"

Roan watched a dark fury slowly take hold of Kor. Karras was saying exactly those things that would enrage him. Unconsciously Kor took the fighter's stance; hands twitching faintly, neck muscles taut, eyebrows lowered and his demeanor menacing. Roan knew what the pose meant and was unashamedly glad that he wasn't the target of that wrath.

Karras saw it and grinned a grin full of contempt. "You haven't fought in years," he said. "For half the war you did no fighting. You are a peace-lover and a coward, and I must do what you refuse to do." Abruptly he turned to Roan and uttered the most famous phrase in kilingaven history. "Thalau. Ie orash!"

Before the Challenge was out, Karras was halfway across the desk, dragging Roan out of his seat. But before Roan could respond, Kor grasped Karras by the shoulder and pulled him away effortlessly. Without pausing, he struck Karras in the face. Karras staggered back, more from astonishment than pain.

"Stop it!" Kor commanded, as furious as Roan had ever seen him. "You are as stupid as a child before imleth! Did you learn nothing from me? Have you learned nothing of my principles?"

"I don't understand--" Karras began in a shaken voice.

"No, of course not. I see now why you were outlaw. On my ship I would have done the same. Have you no respect for duty, for discipline? Haven't you learned that in the military you obey?"

"But. . . he--" Karras jerked his head at Roan, who stood staring at Kor incredulously.

"He what? He betrayed us? We betrayed him. He's a human living among his own. Must you insult him merely because he's not a killing? Is a man less of a man because he doesn't like you or doesn't believe in your beliefs?"

"That's what you have done," said Karras in that same small voice.

Kor froze and stared at his son. Finally his head dropped. For an eternal minute there was silence, then, all anger gone, he looked up at his son and his brother. "I am deeply---sorry," he said slowly and with an effort. "If you will excuse me." He started to turn away.

"That's not enough," Karras cried out. "I want to know. Why did you Challenge him and then refuse to fight when you had the chance?"

"Stop it," said Roan harshly. "It doesn't matter. Let things be as they are."

"Shut up," said Karras vehemently, glaring at Kor. "It does matter. Why did you Challenge him?"

Kor, who had stiffened at Karras' outburst, only continued to look at him. "If I am undisciplined, then you are a mockery of the code of Honor!" said Karras. "You Challenge, but you have no reason."

"He's right," said Kor to Roan simply. He glared at Karras with controlled scorn. "And he's about as tactful as I was at that age."

"Tact doesn't reach you, Akra," said his son, undaunted.

"True enough. But neither does discourtesy. You have said things to me that I would not tolerate from any other man. Don't do it again, Karras."

"But what are you going to do?" Karras asked insistently.

"Your Captain and I are going to talk--in private," Kor said and scowled at Karras. Karras left, but the look he shot his father was one of mixed pride and triumph, which Kor did not understand.

There was nothing said for a few minutes. Kor sat on the edge of the desk and watched the floor.

"He's a lot like you were," remarked Roan finally, aiming for a casual tone.

A quick answering glance from Kor. "Yes. He is what I was, so

there is nothing I can do that will affect him. It's useless getting angry. He takes pleasure in that. He will learn the hard way, as I did, how to treat people."

Roan felt uncomfortable. What he wanted to say sounded awkward. He tried to find another subject to think about, something to say to Kor. A question occurred to him that had troubled him since Karras came aboard. "Karras was on the Kilingarlan during the war," he said.

"Yes," said Kor, almost absently.

"Why on the Kilingarlan instead of fighting on the Outer Periphery?"

"I didn't want him to fight Federen," said Kor, still staring at the floor.

"You didn't want--" began Roan, nonplussed. "You never felt that way before."

"I have learned respect for them," said Kor in the same neutral tone. "Would you have fought kilingau during the war, Kirin?"

The question and the use of his kilingaven name made Roan blink. "No, I don't think I could have," he answered slowly. "But I never had the chance to find out."

"Salao," said Kor.

"Yes." He smiled grimly as he thought of the prison planet. "But I have a few years' perspective on that now. It taught me survival."

"It was a rash action on my part," said Kor. "I had just emerged from Salao myself and a four-year war. Seeing you again reminded me of my own betrayal, so I sent you to Salao."

Kor looked up and gave Roan a sideways glance. "We both betrayed the same thing," he said. "The Ormenel under Alargor. I was a long time in realizing that." He paused. "It took the contempt and anger of my son to finally admit to you that I was wrong."

"Kor--" the name was wrenched from him. Roan forced himself to stay calm. "Humility doesn't suit you, Kor."

"Not humility," replied Kor. "Diplomacy."

That made Roan smile a little. "Diplomacy or humility, you never had it before."

"No. I see that you have finally won yourself some self-esteem, Commodore. You have your Kolontoth now."

"I would rather have stayed in the Ormenel," said Roan quietly and inconsequentially. He didn't really want to know what Kor

thought of him.

"You can return if you wish," said Kor.

Their eyes met. "You're being most forgiving," Roan remarked slowly.

"This has gone on long enough. Twenty years later it no longer matters what we were feuding about. I challenged you for the sake of carrying on the tradition; Karras finally showed me my stupidity. Pride kept me from speaking before."

"And me also," said Roan, feeling helplessly inadequate. There was so much he wanted to say to this man. "I was afraid of you," he admitted at last.

Kor favored him with a faintly ironic look. Roan grinned at the look. "It's true. Mmph. There's something I want to say to Karras." He flicked on the intercom. "Karras Kothir to Captain's office, please."

"Yes, there are a few things I would like to ask him also," said Kor thoughtfully.

Karras came in shortly. His expression as he looked from Kor to Roan was that of a man trying hard to hide a smile. "Yes, sir?"

Roan grimaced at the unaccustomed 'sir.' "Kor Alkarin has dropped his feud with me," he said, trying to keep a straight face. Karras, for some reason, was also looking gleeful. "Do you wish to renew your Challenge to me?"

"I don't think my father would like it if I did Challenge you," commented Karras. "No, I don't think I will."

"Thank you," said Roan sarcastically. "Star Fleet would be glad to hear that."

"Karras, was that intentional?" inquired Kor. "That display in here earlier?"

Karras gave a small nod, watching his father closely. Kor made a sound expressive of disgust and shook his head. "Played for a fool by my son," he said, but he was clearly not annoyed with him.

"It was close," admitted Karras. "I wanted to anger you, but the coming of your fury was worse than I'd expected," he continued and touched his face ruefully. The skin was already beginning to darken into a bruise.

"I'm sorry I did that," said Kor. "For a moment my anger went beyond my control."

"It's forgotten," said Karras.

"Why did you do this?" asked Roan of Karras. "When you came

aboard you Challenged me. Why should you want Kor and me to resume our friendship?"

"When I came aboard I Challenged you," agreed Karras, "and I meant it. I began to change my mind a few days later. You were so much like him," he said with a nod to Kor. "Challenging you openly would have been too much like Challenging my own father. I would have lost, anyway. Then in the ten-day silence I remembered what Akra Kor had said and thought about you, and I wondered if there was really any reason for a feud between you two.

"When Kor came aboard, I knew there wasn't. I could see that my father was unhappy, and you, Captain Morgan, had never been so irritable or moody. I decided that there was no reason for such discomfort and set about to remove it. I took a chance, but. . ." He shrugged and grinned. "It worked."

"Although I don't agree with your means," said Kor dryly, "the result is more than satisfactory."

"One more thing," said Roan. "When you got mad, and I was forced to outlaw you--was that intentional?"

Karras looked away in real shame. "No. That wasn't. I don't have the perfect control over anger that my father has." He glanced at Kor, who scowled. "I was angry at myself for enjoying serving under you. I let that anger show and ended up by making a fool of myself."

"Outlawing him was possibly the best thing you could have done," remarked Kor to Roan, very dryly. "I should have done it myself, years ago."

Karras looked at him with a naive, blank look that fooled no one and then returned his attention to Roan. "You're not bad for an Earther." Kor laughed derisively. "You're a fairly good commander," continued Karras without interruption. "I see whom you got your training from. It's easier to work for you, however, than it is to work for him."

"You're very free with your praise," said Kor. "Don't overwhelm him with your courtesy."

"The last time he was this cynical was when Kirdan was born," murmured Karras, looking at his father. "It must mean he's happy."

Kor was spared the necessity of making a remark by the high whistle of the intercom. "Morgan here," said Roan promptly.

"We just pass have a relay buoy for Versailles, sir," said Avra Ouwara, the Yandaurn (Andorian) Communications Officer. She was new and very inexperienced, and she didn't know System English well yet. "From us to Versailles is still one hour."

"Thank you, Avra," said Roan in her own language, which he'd

been practising diligently. Roan knew she appreciated it, but she always answered him in System English. "I'll be up shortly."

"Very good, sir."

Roan switched off. "Your place is on the bridge, Commander Kothir," he said with mock sternness. Karras smiled gently but said nothing. "Would you like to join us on the bridge, Ormen Alkarin?"

"Gladly," said Kor. "I haven't yet seen you in command of your own starship--except for that disastrous meeting on the--ah, the Explorer."

Roan let Kor precede him out the door. "That was sixteen years ago. I hardly remember."

Kor favored him with an ironic look. "You're lying, of course. But if you choose to say that you have forgotten, well enough. So have I."

They walked together in the corridors, and Karras followed discreetly behind, listening. They were oblivious to everything else. Karras felt slightly left out as he heard Kor and Roan talk about things that had happened before he was even born. But he paid attention, being interested in the new attitude of his commander and his father.

In the lift Kor remembered Karras. He turned to him. "By the way, Karrastann. You haven't yet apologized to Captain Morgan for attacking him."

"That's not necessary," muttered Roan.

"Be quiet. You're talking like an Earther," said Kor.

"I am an Earther," retorted Roan, still in a low mutter.

"I don't recognize you as such. Karras?"

"You're perfectly right, I should apologize," said Karras, but for some reason, he was still grinning. "For that matter, so should you. In public, since you gave the Challenge in public."

Kor was startled by the thought. "You're right," he said musingly.

"Once you get him to admit that he's wrong, he'll do almost anything," commented Karras to Roan snidely. His manner turned serious almost at once. "Captain Morgan, and/or Kirin Kothir, I wish to extend apologies--" he stopped short. "This



doesn't come out right in System. In Agavoi it will be better." He continued formally. "My apologies for any insult to your person. My actions were unbecoming of the status of the Usmitarkan Kothir iyo Taralkarin and of the First Officer of the Defiant. I am de-meaned. You would be well within your rights to take action--force-ful action, if you wish."

"None of that will be necessary," said Roan, smiling a little at the sound of Karras trying to humble himself. "I return to you your undiminished status, Karras."

"Thank you, Captain." He looked pointedly at Kor. "And what of your apology, Akra?"

"I will do that in my own way and at the proper time," said Kor. "Kirin. Perhaps a formal dinner tonight?"

"As you wish," said Roan.

The lift doors opened and they stepped out onto the bridge. Roan found himself searching carefully for unusual reactions from his crew, and was relieved to see none.

He talked quietly with Kor. They talked about many things, most of them insignificant. Ever afterwards, though, Roan remembered that it seemed the most meaningful conversation he'd had in a long time.

Kor left when Karras got off-duty. They walked through the ship together, but there was silence between them. Kor broke it when they came to Karras' quarters. "Do you understand now, Karras? Why I wouldn't let you fight on the Periphery?"

"In a way," Karras admitted. "I'm still not in complete agree-ment with you on that. But nuserem. I do see why you sent me to the Federation." He leaned against the wall, very casual now.

"Do you? Do you really see the full reason? After all, it was mostly a coincidence that you were assigned to this particular ship under a particular Captain."

"Mostly?" Karras looked up sharply. "What do you mean, mostly coincidence? Was this any of your doing?"

"Hardly. I would have prevented it if I'd known."

"Well then, what is the reason? To see a new culture, to under-stand it?"

"Partly. I wanted you to see that the Federation is not all that propaganda makes it out to be. Nor are we what the Federation says we are. I wanted you to learn to live in a different environ-ment.

"The Ormenel teaches what is probably the finest military tra-dition in the known universe. You learned that, Karras, only too

well. You were becoming one of the Kilingarlan's warriors--a warrior with none of the feelings that makes him a man. The Ormen's children should be more than just warriors--just as the Ormen should be more. I made you go to the Federation to learn prejudice, fear, humility, and the meaning of curiosity."

Karras gazed at him musingly. "You have plans for everybody. What of yourself?"

Kor shrugged. "The Ormenel tells me what to do." He started to turn away. Almost by afterthought, he looked back. "Thank you, Karrastann."

"Nuserem," said Karras and disappeared into his quarters.

That night a dinner was held in one of the larger recreation halls which had been rearranged into a place more suitable for a formal occasion. Roan came in early with his father and spent a few minutes in assuring himself that everything was taken care of. 'What am I running, a starship or a restaurant?' he wondered.

"Is there some particular reason for you to stand around grinning?" asked his father in an undertone. "Why did you arrange this dinner? I thought--" he broke off as Kor and Karras came in together.

Instead of turning aside Kor came directly to Admiral Morgan. His expression was unreadable. Morgan glanced at Roan, as if to say, 'What does he want with me?' but Roan only smiled reassuringly.

"Admiral Morgan, on behalf of the Empire, I wish to extend my apologies," said Kor formally, without preamble.

"For what?" Morgan asked, startled.

"For the harm done to you and yours. For the raid made 36 years ago on Beta Arietis IV, which took away from you your wife and son."

"You weren't responsible for that," said Morgan, his face twisting a little.

"Personally, perhaps not, then. But now. . . The Ormenel is responsible for that raid, and I am responsible for the Ormenel."

Morgan was a diplomat, so his sense of propriety was almost as great as Kor's. But this was also something that affected him closely. He swallowed hard, choking back feelings he thought he'd forgotten. "That was a long time ago. It's my son's welfare that I care for, not mine." Heedlessly and a little bitterly he added, "You should be making your apology to him, not to me."

Roan stirred, but Kor nodded. "Not well put, Admiral, but exactly right," he agreed, amusement in his expression. Without giving the Admiral a chance to say anything more, he walked away.

Morgan stared after him, full of conflicting emotions. He pushed them away. "I don't understand," he muttered. "Is that why you've been so happy?" he asked his son. "What happened between you and him?"

"I'll tell you all about it later," said Roan evasively. "I think Kor might have something to say during dinner."

"So it's 'Kor' again now, h'mm?" Morgan stared at his son. "Am I going to lose you again to the Empire?"

The smile froze on Roan's face and was replaced by a look of renewed pain. He sighed deeply. "I don't know--I don't know at all."

"You'd better make up your mind," Morgan said lightly, but his feelings weren't light in the least. "You'll have to ask yourself: do I belong in the Empire or in the Federation? And once you make the decision you'd better stick to it."

His father's words left Roan feeling cold. This afternoon he'd thought that he had finally resolved his problems; here they were back again, with renewed force. He was two things: an Earther and a killing. Could a half-human, half-killing really be happy in either place?

The dinner was a quiet success. If either the killingau or the Federationers felt any discomfort about sitting with what so recently was the enemy, they concealed it well. Roan's junior officers, Avra Ouwara from Communications and Sergei Dmitri, the Navigator, didn't seem to be aware of any difference between themselves and the killingau, and were having a thoroughly good time. One of the younger killingau apparently spoke Avra's own language and was earnestly talking with her.

Kor was in an infectiously good mood. The other killingau caught it from him, and he and Karth Keorl, whom he'd known for a long time, sat swapping stories about early days in the military. After a while Kor began to tell some anecdotes about a man and a boy on the Kilingarlan; it became obvious that he was talking about himself and Roan and some of their early experiences together. Roan hadn't found them at all funny at the time they happened, but now he laughed as hard as any and countered by telling a few about Kor.

The only person who didn't seem to be enjoying himself was Admiral Morgan. He smiled occasionally, and answered questions when spoken to. The conversation flowed around him and over him; he leaned back and watched pensively.

After most of the food had disappeared, and a large quantity of drink had been consumed, there came a lull in the conversation. That was the moment Kor had been waiting for. He put his glass down with a certain finality and glanced around. He raised one eyebrow and smiled faintly at Roan, then began, loudly enough to draw the attention of most, if not all, of the dinner guests.

"If you will forgive me the time, I will tell you a story. . . one that affected me personally and that indirectly affected my dealings with the Federation." He had his audience already. He had their complete attention, especially Roan, who was leaning forward and watching him with something close to love.

"There is a parable among both humans and kilingau of the changeling. A child is born in the world we know, but during the night creatures from Outside take him away and replace him with a changeling. This changeling grows up in the fields-we-know, and the other is taught the ways of the world Outside. Eventually, the man-child comes back to claim his own, and the changeling is banished forever. But always the man-child retains something of the world Outside. He is never quite comfortable in the fields-we-know.

"In 2207, Ormenel Year 1001, a human child was taken by kilingau in a raid on Beta Arietis IV on the Periphery. There were other prisoners taken as well. This was early in the game between the Ormenel and the Federation; both sides were doing all they could to pry information from the other.

"This man-child was only ten. He understood nothing of the conflicts between humans and kilingau. At ten his mind was almost untouched by experience. Even so, some kilingau decided to take his memories from him. He was reeducated into believing that his father was a kiling and he was told that both his parents had been killed in an Ar'Romi attack. Certain other conditioning was given to him to make him feel a part of kilingaven society.

"This man-child was brought to the Kilingarlan. He was given the name Kirin Arkos Kothir and was raised in krasaia Kothir. For ten years he lived as a kiling--thinking as a kiling, feeling as a kiling, being kiling. He was educated in the krasaia. He went through imleth--he became an adult. He was ready to go to the Har-sahdirit Ormeniy Kirskroshir--the Imperial military academy--when his life changed." Roan recognized that a lot of this was for the benefit of the others.

"Kesan Kothir, Kirin Kothir's adopted father, my father, decided in 2216 that Kirin would do well as a spy in the Federation. Kesan probably did this in a strange twist of irony: sending a human to spy on his own. Kirin had been given training to pass as a human. To prevent any suspicion, a record was prepared for Kirin that explained his apparent lack of cultural conditioning.

"So in 2216 Kirin Kothir went to the Federation. He went as Roan Gordon. All of his alienness was locked away in a corner of his mind, never to be revealed. He went first to the Star Fleet Academy for three years. A career in Star Fleet started for him, leading to assignments on starships and promotions every few years.

"During this time Kirin fulfilled little of his mission. He went where he could, looked everywhere, and learned all he could. Infrequently messages would pass through his hands. He was used

mostly as a go-between by older, more experienced 'informers.'

"I cannot speak for how Kirin felt personally during these years. I suspect that he felt very much a stranger. He did as he was told and that was all. He may have wondered why the Ormenel was asking for so little from him. He could not know that the Ormenel was suffering through an internal crisis, a revolution, a war in the Central Suns; and it thus had no time to worry about one individual.

"2226 came. Kirin thought that the Ormenel must surely have forgotten about him. He was bitter about it, and he was also beginning to enjoy the company of Federationers. In that year he was made Captain of his own starship. Almost immediately the decision was placed before him: should he behave as a kiling and use that starship in service to the Ormenel, or should he give his loyalty to the Federation? The choice was a difficult one, and for a while he wavered in his decision. The decision was made later that year, when he helped three kilingau, prisoners aboard his ship, to escape back to the Ormenel. Discovered as a spy, he was put through intensive questioning--questioning that ultimately broke through the conditioning he had been given as a child on the Kilingarlan. He learned the full details of his past history. He learned that his mother had been killed by kilingau. He remet his father, and regained his name: Roan Morgan." No one was surprised to hear the name; they had been expecting it. All the same Roan tried to keep his face impassive. "Knowing his new history, Roan renounced his kilingaven background in utter disgust.

"In 2227 the War of the Central Suns ended, and by what still seems to be an incredible stroke of luck, I came to power as Alkarin the Usurper. When I learned of what had happened to Kirin I considered it treason. Kirin's seeming defection was a personal insult to me, our krasaia, and all the Kilingarlan. I was furious. I didn't stop to consider the possible reasons behind his actions.

"In time a few incidents occurred that served to estrange us further. Finally in 2228 I Challenged Kirin and forever outlawed him from the Ormenel. It was an arrogant gesture on my part, but Kirin, being equally proud, accepted it.

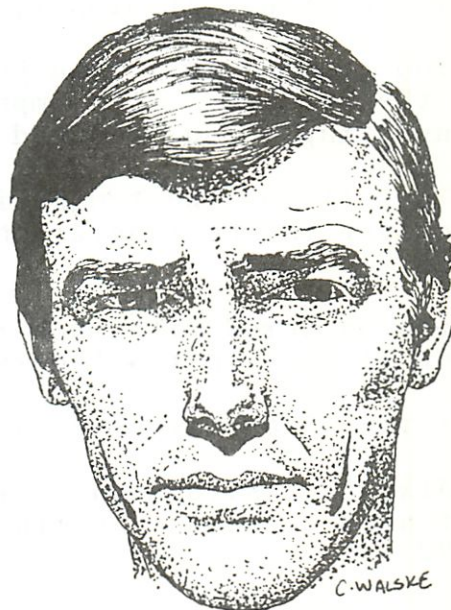
"I come at last to 2245. Here on the Defiant, the first day I came aboard, I renewed my Challenge to Kirin. At the moment that I made it, I maintained the opinion that I was right in my action. But it was shown to me by my son that I was wrong. I had Challenged Kirin blindly with no thought for the reasons of Challenge.

"I would like to announce publicly now that Kirin Kothir is no longer Challenged. I declare him forever welcome in the Ormenel. Whatever he did, he did with good reason; it is forgotten. For what was done to him by the Ormenel, I apologize.

"As reparation, I would offer Kirin a place in the Ormenel. I would make him a gift of one-tenth part of the Ormen's land, from Kifir Taulai to Sachisuen in the Adrar Orthonik. With that land would go one tenth of the current assets of krasaia Tertemisar as of the end of this year. In addition, I would offer him the rank and

position of Kestakftar in the Tasrakirs." He stopped and looked at Roan half-expectantly.

Roan rose slowly, wonder and disbelief evident on his face. He was overwhelmed by what Kor had done. "Thank you, Sarakra Alkarin," he began; "I thank you for saying what I never could have said. I thank you for an apology and an offer which I could never match, either in eloquence or open magnanimity. I wish I could say yes to your offer, because it is exactly what I would want." Roan was watching Kor; Kor's smile faded and disappeared; he almost frowned. "But I must consider it first before I give an answer." Roan sat down. He wished he could say more, since Kor had said so much, but there was nothing he could say further without either refusing or accepting Kor's offer.



After the dinner was over, Roan sat numbly as everyone left. Kor did not linger. Admiral Morgan stayed for a moment. "I think you did the right thing," he said behind Roan, his hand on Roan's chair. "What decision will you choose?"

"I haven't decided," Roan said brusquely. "I'd rather not talk about it."

Morgan had a look on his face of fear mixed with despair. He stared at his son, then left reluctantly.

After a time, Roan, too, left to return to his quarters; he gave orders that he was not to be disturbed.

The following evening he went to Kor's quarters. He hesitated momentarily, knowing what he had to say, but not wanting to. He pushed the door buzzer.

Kor looked sharply at him, directly into his eyes, as he let him in. "You're going to tell me that you will not come to the Ormenel," he declared.

That usual, killingaven directness took Roan aback. He was too used to the Federation way of creeping around a subject four or five times, never acknowledging it directly. "Did I wake you?" he asked.

Kor gestured at the library-computer. "No. I was doing a little spying."

Curious, Roan leaned over to look at the tape displayed on the computer screen. "The Mongol Empire of 1200 A. D.?" he quoted

incredulously. "Very informative, I'm sure."

"Very." Kor sat down again. Roan pulled up a chair. "That was not very courteous at dinner, Kirin," he said seriously.

"You trapped me," Roan pointed out. "You made your offer at the end of the apology. It's impossible to refuse something like that; it's insulting. You presumed I would accept."

"To tell you the truth, it never occurred to me that you would want to stay in the Federation," answered Kor. His answer was also a question.

Roan answered with much reluctance. "Yes, you're right, I'm planning to stay in the Federation."

"Kirin. You may have your reasons, but I cannot accept--"

"Alkarin," said Roan, raising his voice above Kor's. Kor stopped at that name. "Would you mind hearing me out before you make your decree?"

Kor nodded, frowning. He stood up and stalked to a better vantage point.

"I'm the changeling of your story," said Roan. "I've lived in both worlds. Their attraction is equally strong--equally. The choice I make is one of necessity." He paused, trying to think how to present the tortuous reasoning he'd used on himself. "I haven't been in the Federation all that long, if you think about it. I was masquerading as a human for a long time. I've hardly had a chance to really explore what it is to be Roan Morgan." That point didn't seem to impress Kor much.

"I think you'll understand my second reason better. I have a duty here. Can a warship commander leave his ship just because of personal matters? No. Oh, Star Fleet would probably let me go if you asked them, since you're the Ormen--but there's a chronic shortage of trained and experienced commanders here. I can't leave this starship; 400 people are depending on me.

"Then there's my father. I've known him for less time than I've known you. He doesn't exactly like Kilingau; considering what he went through, I can't really blame him. If I return to the Ormenel, he'll probably give up on Kilingau completely. I don't want to leave him by himself."

There was a tense silence as Roan looked anxiously at Kor. Kor's expression was a mixture of anger and unhappiness. He shifted restlessly and frowned.

"Do you understand my reasons?" Roan prompted uneasily.

"Yes, I see them," Kor answered, almost curtly. Roan fidgeted nervously, and Kor looked over his head at nothing, two furrows

between his eyebrows. "It was easier when you still were Challenged," he said finally; "then I could despise you or forget you. Now there is only pain and trouble at your decision. I cannot ignore those feelings anymore."

"Do you understand my decision?" asked Roan again.

Kor nodded once. "I don't like your reasons, but---I can't force you to come home. Wouldn't you like to see the Kilingarlan again, Kirin? To see the Red Dawn? To swim in Khilkirien? How long has it been since you're ridden a vuhoth?"

"Too long," said Roan. "But the last time I did, I nearly broke my neck. That's not fair, Raksha. You're trying to make my change my mind."

"Etki uhim," agreed Kor. "Of course." He turned away so that only his profile was visible to Roan. He brooded. It was very difficult for him to voice his deepest feelings. "So you would remain here," he murmured. "Along with Tavia."

Roan stirred uneasily. He looked at Kor closely and noticed his real pain. "Is Tavia on Procyon Alpha III now?" he asked carefully.

Kor turned around, startled. "You don't know? You haven't spoken to her?"

"Not since the end of the war, six years ago," said Roan.

"Why not?"

"When you and I reestablished our feud, I decided I wasn't going to talk to Tavia anymore," said Roan with some difficulty.

"Why? Because she was a part of the krasaia--part of my family? Then you should have excluded Karras as well." Kor looked annoyed.

Roan cleared his throat. "No. . . Tavia and I had been very close. I--I didn't understand when she turned to you during the war. I owe her an apology, I guess."

"Yes." Kor withdrew into his dark mood again. "No one is left," he muttered. "They are all dead--or utterly removed from me." His face was averted and his voice was very low. "Kirin, I will ask once again, as your brother, the Raksha. Will you come?"

"No," said Roan very quietly, but his voice shook.

"Will you never return to the Kilingarlan?"

"I didn't say that. I think I will have to, sometime, but not right now."

"You may not have another chance," murmured Kor.

"Don't you see that if I came we'd destroy each other?" Roan exploded finally, after being near, so very near, to giving in. "I'm not a killing anymore. Alargor and Kesan Kothir created me. I don't belong in your Ormenel. A human and a friend of the Ormen--do you think I want that kind of status? How would it affect your position?"

"Do you think that worries me?" challenged Kor. He backed down almost immediately. "Oh, I wish I could say that your fears are ridiculous, but--"

He was interrupted by a buzz at the door. "Who is it?" asked Roan for Kor.

"Karras."

Roan glanced at Kor; Kor nodded briefly. "Come on in," said Roan tiredly.

"I thought you'd be here, Captain," said Karras, with a side nod to his father. "I didn't want to bother you, but the Versailles people are signalling. We've been in orbit for quite a few hours and it's now planet dawn. They'd like to set up preliminary meetings."

"Get Karth up," said Kor. "He can handle that."

"Maybe we'd better tell them to wait a few hours," said Roan. "Right now it's sleep-cycle for us. Was there anything else?"

"Speaking of sleep, maybe you'd better get some, Captain," said Karras pointedly. "The colony administrator wanted to talk to you about bringing some people here from a neighboring star system."

"Oh, fine," said Roan. "They expect us to be a ferry. When does the colony admin want to speak to me?"

"Well. . . she said something about 'within the hour.'"

Roan looked at Kor. Kor raised both eyebrows in a shrug. "I'll let you go your own way, Kirin."

"You're not going back to the Ormenel?" asked Karras with some surprise.

"No, I'm not," said Roan, finding those words still difficult to say. "Don't tell me you want me to go, too."

"Well, I thought it would be interesting to be the first Klingon starship captain," remarked Karras dryly.

"I should go talk to Versailles," said Roan. He turned to Kor for a last time. "I'm sorry, Raksha. I'm truly sorry."

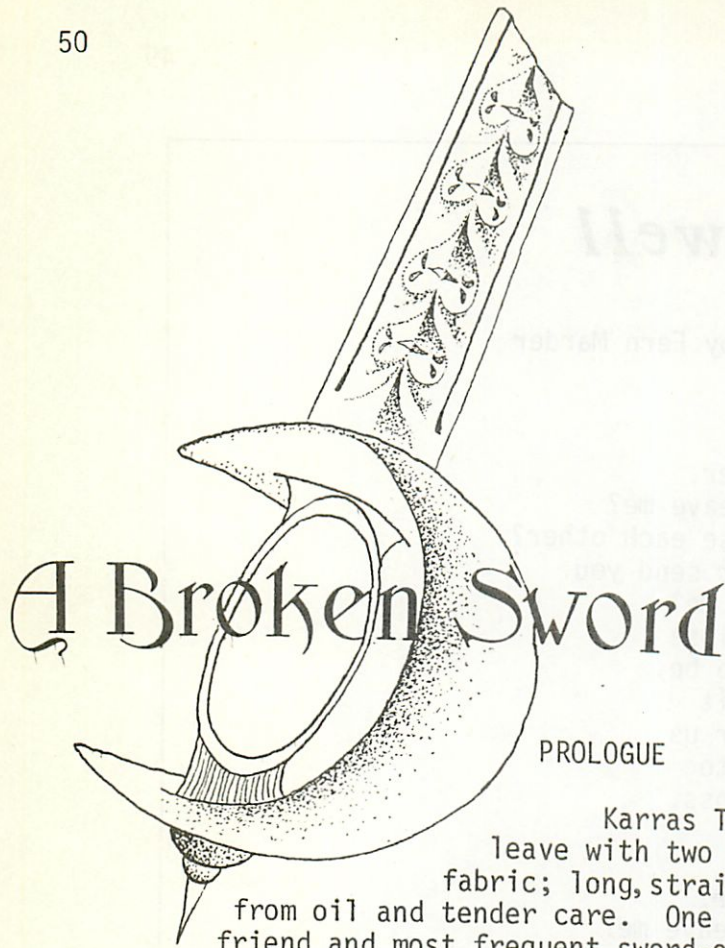
Farewell

by Fern Marder

Kirin--
Friend, brother.
Why did you leave me?
How did we lose each other?
Did our father send you
away to spite me?
He knew how close
we had come to be.
He knew what it
would mean for us
both to have to
face such a loss.

Katlina--
Love, *karushir*.
Why did you leave me?
How did I lose another so dear?
Was the call of your past
so great, so strong,
that you needed to go
from here where you belong?
You knew what it
would mean for me,
for our son to face
being without you suddenly.

Loneliness--
Familiar company.
Why do you find
so constant a home with me?
What is it in me
that calls you again,
over and over to
come be my friend?
Will you ever leave
me long enough
that I might know
more than a moment's love?



A Broken Sword

by Fern Marder and Carol Walske

PROLOGUE

Karras Taralkarin had come back from his last home-leave with two shining swords wrapped carefully in a silken fabric; long, straight double-edged slender swords gleaming from oil and tender care. One of the swords he gave to Roan Morgan, his friend and most frequent sword-exercise partner.

Now as he faced him the sword hissed out of its sheath and he brought it around in a graceful movement until his arm and the sword were fully extended, and his right side faced Roan.

Perhaps Roan detected an added seriousness in Karras' actions, for he spread his arms wide away from him, leaving his chest bare and unprotected. "In the heart is best."

Karras neither smiled nor moved. "Fight," was all he said.

Roan shrugged good-naturedly. He pulled out his sword, looking at it for a moment, admiring the delicately incised patterns along the length of the blade, designs and words that assured the steel's strength and its wielder's skill.

Karras moved quickly through a series of sword-plays designed to find the weakness in an opponent. His lunges were frighteningly accurate. It was all Roan could do to keep up his guard, to parry fast enough to avoid the other's adroit thrusts. Although his movements were controlled and precise, he was less of a swordsman than Karras; slower, less aggressive.

Karras' breath quickened as his own sureness increased. Their swords clashed together with a flurry of sparks. Karras danced forward, pushing Roan steadily back, very near now to the wall. . .

Roan leaped back to avoid the silver blade of Karras' sword sweeping out in a wide arc. His shoulder hit the wall, and he staggered off-balance. In a split-second's vision and with infinite horror he watched Karras' sword thrust forward at his unprotected side. . . he dived below the sword, letting go of his own blade and falling on his hands. His breath knocked out of him, he waited for Karras to back off, to put away his sword, and declare that he had once again triumphed. Roan put his right hand on his sword, and began to push himself off the floor.

Without warning Karras' right foot came down on Roan's hand, hard; then it kicked at the sword, which slithered across the floor, steel ringing. Roan, outraged

at the sudden pain, swung out with both hands locked together at Karras' knees. Karras stumbled and fell.

Roan rose slowly, grimacing at the pain in his hand. He tucked it between his left arm and side, and waited in white anger for Karras to get up.

Karras rose unsteadily, something in his face indicating a realization of what he'd done. Roan held up his nearly useless right hand, looking at it and at Karras through the fingers. He brought his left arm forward, up, and without any expression, backhanded Karras across the face. Karras, except for an abrupt intake of breath, accepted it, also expressionless.

"Release your sword," said Roan in Agavoi.

Karras silently bent down and picked up the weapon. He handed it to Roan, who lifted it until its gleaming point was just at his eye level. "I should break this," he declared measuredly, dangerously. "I should challenge you. Except that it's 2246, it's the Federation, Star Fleet, and you're a stupid fool!"

Karras had drawn himself inward and was standing fully at attention, his eyes meeting Roan's. His eyebrows were pulled down and in; twin furrows appeared between them.

Roan stared at him. His hand was beginning to hurt; the pain was distracting his thoughts. He strove to keep his voice calm. "You know what this would have brought you from any other officer? Court-martial! Why'd you lose control. . ." He stopped, looked away to his sword lying on the gym floor, and swung sharply back to face Karras. His eyes held genuine wonder and a growing suspicion. "Ordinarily you're the most well-disciplined, most controlled fighter on this ship."

His Kilingon First Officer spoke in Agavoi, formally, before Roan could voice his misgiving. "Challenge me, Captain," he asked, "Or discipline me. Please."

Roan looked at the sweat on Karras' shoulders, felt his own back sticky with moisture, and longed for the cool wet towels that lay just a few feet beyond the two of them standing tensely before one another. "It was inexcusable," he reprimanded, maintaining his rigid stance. "On an Ormenel warship I could have you whipped for willfully injuring your commanding officer. Here in Star Fleet you could be court-martialed. Do you want to settle this the kilingaven way or the Federation way?"

Karras looked miserable. "Your choice, sir."

Roan handed over the sword. "Break your sword and deliver me your knife."

Karras, his expression set, received the sword, the beautiful, light, perfectly balanced and finished sword given to him by his father the Ormen Alkarin. What was it his father had said? 'A man disarmed is a man shamed; a man unarmed is a fool.' He was both. He put the point against the floor and held the sword at an angle. It shone as it caught the overhead light.

Quickly Karras brought his foot up and stamped on it; the tempered steel broke six inches from the hilt.

Roan nodded. "One question," he asked, as if by afterthought. "Why'd it happen?"

"I can't answer that question because I don't know, sir."

Roan slipped back into System English. "I'll buy that," he muttered and walked over to the pile of towels folded neatly on a stool. He tossed Karras one. "You planning to take a shower," he remarked, pushing the incident aside completely, "or are you still allergic to water?"

Karras was gazing down at the two pieces of his sword in desolation. He raised his head to look wide-eyed at Roan. "You know we only ever use sand to wash, Captain."

When Roan returned to his quarters that evening, he found Karras' knife waiting for him. A crooked smile touched one corner of his mouth as he looked at it, picked it up from where it lay on the desk and placed it by a poniard of his own that he never wore.

* * *

The celebration started early and ended late. It was a feast, a festival, a carnival. Food and drinks, the nucleus, were put at the entrance to the park; trees and a breeze carrying the warm smell of living things formed the backdrop for the array of tables.

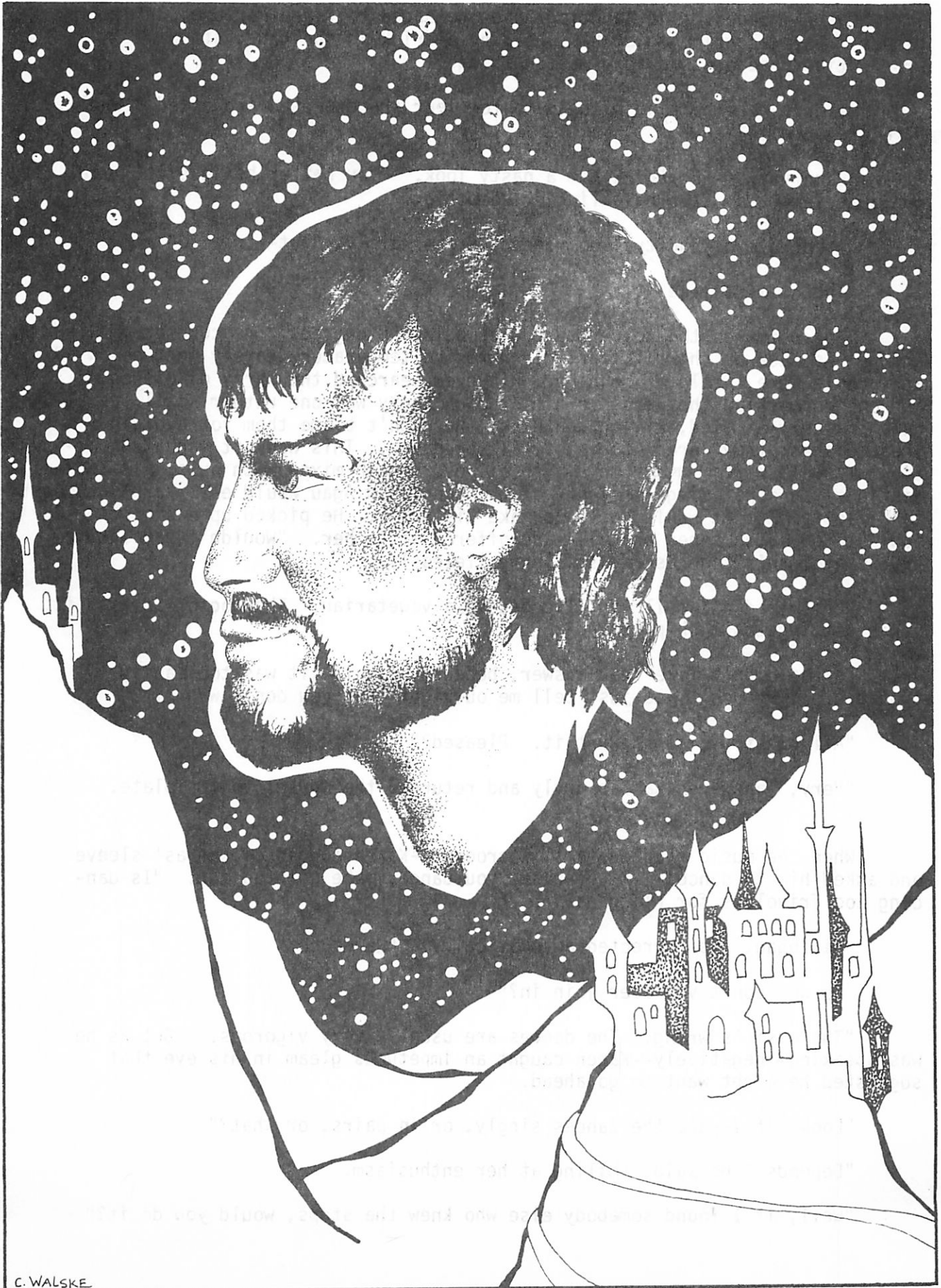
Karras came late, casually dressed in a warmish sky-blue thigh-length tunic, the one everyone thought was a gi for karate practice. He was glowered at for being late by Roan, who was doing his best to be sociable. Roan's distaste for ship's parties was second only to Karras'.

The party was a riot of color, rivalling the best efforts of costume parties. Dresses, dashikis, kimonos, caftans, shorts. . . even a few uniforms among the unimaginative. Karras faded in, standing against the neutral beige wall, taking it all in with amused detachment. A whole group of mixed swimsuit-clad crewpersons went by, singing some song loudly and off-key. Behind the food tables there was some impromptu dancing; spirits were high. The room was comfortably warm, the food excellent, the party eye-catching, flavorful; the stuff of dreams and gossip and scandals was woven here.

Karras' pleasant dream was that he was surrounded by friends, people who could look at him and not see him as an enemy alien. He shrugged off that bit of idealism, noticing that people were a bit tense when he was near. 'I'm getting paranoid,' he thought gloomily and moved close to a food table set a few feet from the wall. For a while he surveyed its attractions suspiciously, his eyes narrowed: what were they trying to poison him with now?

Adventurously he picked up a meatball and examined it before sampling. "Earther food."

"Waiting for it to bite back?" inquired a voice from behind him archly.



Karras turned. The taunting voice belonged to Karen Marlowe, Chief Engineer. She was grinning at him, holding a drink in one hand, standing in a provocative pose dressed in almost nothing.

He gave her the kind of head-to-toe leer she expected and asked blandly, "Aren't you cold?"

"Damn you." She threw him a nasty look. "You better believe it. You could at least say it's revealing or something."

"I approve of nudity," commented Karras warmly, "but--"

"That's more like it."

"But not when the temperature goes below 90 degrees," he countered, wishing he was back on the Kilingarlan, where the temperature rarely went below 90 and people wore little or nothing. His eyes searched the array of dishes. The one concession they made to him at each party was one rather small, usually only sparsely sampled, kilingaven dish. He didn't blame them for avoiding these dishes; they were notoriously ill-prepared. This week it was a concoction of small birds fried in a fish-oil over grain mixed with nuts. It looked distinctly unappetizing--the sort of thing only an Agau would eat, Karras thought to himself. But it would serve to make his point. He picked up one of the tiny fowl--to be eaten bones and all--and offered it to her. "Wouldn't you like to try some of this?" he asked, smiling guilelessly.

"Uh. . . did I tell you I've become a vegetarian? The doctor advised it. I was getting too much protein."

Karras didn't like that answer, because if a lie it was too easily provable. "Why don't you just tell me outright that you don't want it?"

"All right. I don't want it. Pleased?"

"Very," answered Karras dryly and returned the morsel to its plate.

When the music started--a slow crooner--Karen tugged on Karras' sleeve and asked him to dance. "I never see you dance," she pointed out. "Is dancing too frivolous for Klingons?"

"Kilingau," he corrected automatically. "We dance."

"So why don't you ever join in?"

"The music's wrong. The dances are usually very vigorous." But as he was speaking--negatively--Karen caught an impetuous gleam in his eye that suggested he might want to go ahead.

"Look, if I--are the dances singly, or in pairs, or what?"

"Depends," he said, smiling at her enthusiasm.

"Well, if I found somebody else who knew the steps, would you do it?"

"You find the music and a partner and I'll be happy to," agreed Karras, laughing widely.

He stopped abruptly when a computer search turned up a small number of traditional kilingaven songs. Karen brought forth Lieutenant Avra Ouwara, Yandaurn Communications Officer, who grinned confidently when she saw Karras.

"I should have known it would be you," he uttered quietly and dryly to her.

She merely smiled and went to select the music she knew best. Karras gazed at the space-purple color of the dress she wore next to her blue skin, watched her walk and the casually graceful movement of her muscles, and guessed that it might be difficult to find a better dance partner.

When Karras heard the first lilting notes of the dance, he stood very very still and stared over the heads of the people watching him, taking care to keep his expression the same: amused, contented. The music quickened and its tempo caught up with the rhythm of his heartbeat, and to assuage the sudden flame within him, he turned to stretch his hand to the lithe Yandaurn waiting a few feet from him. Their hands met; their arms intertwined lightly as they moved into the swirling leaps of the Evriand Fevesan Getheni--the Dance of Spring-Fire.

The music was fey. It was alien and wild, and harked of forests and creatures of Pan dancing in open glades. Karras and Avra moved together with tigerish grace.

The audience was enthralled. To have a 'Klingon' First Officer was wonder and topic for endless gossip. To see that same 'Klingon' enjoying himself, dancing in front of them, was another thing entirely. From that time on he was truly one of them; he had lowered his defenses enough to make the gesture of performing and trying to please them.

They yelled delightedly when Karras lifted Avra and virtually threw her over his shoulder. She landed lightly with her back to him and they continued on that way, hands meeting high over their heads.

Karras lost himself in the dance. His skill wasn't perfect but his strength and enthusiasm made up for that. He half-closed his eyes and tried to imagine grass or at least sand underfoot, stars above, a fire nearby. . . He was a prisoner to the music and everything that it meant.

He linked arms with Avra, and they danced a circle, arms interlocking. He was suddenly aware of someone thrusting through the crowd and standing just outside their circle. Came a growl: "Avra!"

Avra whirled around, Karras stopped abruptly and the crowd hushed. The music went on. Karras, still completely absorbed in the rhythm of it, turned slowly and fixed the offender with a demanding stare.

It was Security Officer Haharshan Aru, the only other Yandaurn on this

ship, called Shan by everyone. He didn't notice Karras' glare. "Let go of him," he ordered Avra, an ugly harshness in his tone. She did, mesmerized like a bird in front of a snake.

"The dance isn't over yet," Karras announced emphatically. He kept his fury under control, but it was hard to see Shan as a fellow officer and not as an usurping infidel fit only for immediate challenge. "Why do you dare to interrupt?"

"Shut up, Klingon." His eyes were on Karras and his stance was defiant, daring Karras to make a move. Karras studied his opponent and calculated the chances of fighting him.

Avra's clear voice surprised both of them. "Shan, I'll dance with whomever I want," she said, her tone placating but quite firm. "And I want to dance with Karras."

Shan's angry intensity shifted from Karras back to Avra, and Karras and everyone else watched as his anger swelled at her impertinence. "Shañu* Avra---" he began.

Roan stepped forward through the crowd. He had come in just before the interruption, and was so astonished by the sight of Karras in a Getheni dance that he merely stared nonplussed. Now he stalked forward authoritatively before a war started. "Lieutenant Haharshan," he stated measuredly, "I would appreciate it if you'd apologize to Commander Taralkarin for cutting in." He could feel Karras' relief.

Shan bowed slightly to him, not enough to be courteous. "Excuse me Captain, but I regret that I can't do that."

Roan scrutinized him. He glanced at Avra. "Do you feel he should apologize?"

"I can't make him apologize, Captain," murmured Avra.

"Then I will. Lieutenant, this is a party, and one of your jobs is to see that no trouble starts. Understood?"

"I'm sorry that it happened, sir," Shan answered impassively. "Commander Taralkarin--as your friend and as the Ormen's son--may of course do whatever he wants."

Karras hissed inarticulately, and Roan quickly put out a restraining arm. "He may," affirmed Roan, a chilling note in his voice. "He may also put you on report for insubordination. I'll leave your discipline up to him. You're dismissed, Lieutenant."

Shan went, and to Roan's amazement, Avra went with him. Leaving Karras standing in the middle of the floor, head bowed so that none could see his eyes, one hand clenched into a fist.

*Shañu: 'bedwarmer.' Insulting, demeaning reference.

Roan touched Karras gently on the arm, and though Karras stiffened, he went docilely enough with Roan to a chair near the wall. The audience had dispersed rather rapidly at the tone of Roan's words and different music filtered through the speakers now.

Roan brought Karras a glass of ice water and watched him steadily until the water was gone. Karras shook himself, like a man coming out of a dream, and looked around with close to his normal curiosity and alertness.

"Might I ask what inspired you to do a Getheni dance? Doing that here---"

"That's enough," interrupted Karras shortly. "It wasn't my idea. But have you thought about what date it is, back home?"

Roan took a few seconds to figure it out. He looked at Karras incredulously. "Ah hai Maraku. It's Sarsangra Getheni," he declared. "25 days into the month of Getheni. Are you---"

"Would I be here if I was, Captain?" asked Karras, exasperated. "I almost didn't come. I didn't want to risk awakening something better left unstirred. But I decided I was safe; it's all over for another year." Roan caught a glimpse of sadness in his eyes, and wondered.

Roan stayed nearby, talking sociably to an aimless Karras, until he saw that Karras hadn't heard half of what he had said.

The killing was leaning against the wall, almost in a corner, studying the floor unblinkingly. There was no one close to them, but Roan witnessed Karras flinch whenever anyone came within ten feet of him. "Rakrafkir Karras," he uttered intently and waited for his attention. "You don't have to endure the whole party. This is no formal function; you can go if you like."

Karras motioned 'no' and gazed at his friend. He saw deep. He saw worry in Roan, and suspicion, and intuitive knowledge based on fact and observation. He knew that Roan would never voice any of those emotional reactions, and he was not sure he respected that or was irritated by it. His own feelings screamed for release.

"Kirin, your concern for me is welcomed, and I thank you for your courtesy," Karras answered him directly, politely formal. "At the moment I am intrigued by the colors and sounds of life in this room, and reassured by the fellowship of people. Otherwise, this ship bores me, Kfar Kirin."

Roan laughed. "Agreed. All right, I leave you to your pleasures. And I'm sorry about what happened before."

"People have a way of becoming belligerent when I'm around," said Karras impassively.

The party went on and on and on. When Marisha Hansen wandered by Karras motioned to her. "What are we celebrating? You should know."

She laughed feebly. "No, I don't. I think maybe it's to celebrate the thirteenth mistake made this week by the Navigator--how about the first anniversary of the last party held on this date? By the way, how've you been?"

"If I had any complaints, you'd hear them. Stay and talk."

Outside of Roan, Marisha Hansen, Chief Medical Officer, was one of the few people who didn't see Karras as one of the enemy. She was the first human he'd been able to approach--accidentally, after a peculiar virus (which Hansen identified as a cold) had put him in Sickbay for a few days. Doctors like talking to their patients, and after Hansen had broken through his hostility at being trapped in Sickbay, they got along reasonably well.

Together Hansen and Karras sauntered away from the food and the people. The Jungle was very big and swallowed up two people easily.

Karras and Hansen left the gravel path that wound through the park. It was a small thing, but important, to feel springy grass underfoot, and to wade through bursts of saplings. When a squirrel jumped out from under a bush and dashed up a tree, they both thought it very funny. They stood under the tree and watched the squirrel chittering at them angrily, tail twitching.

"A lab animal, no doubt," said Hansen. "Always after a party half the animals are missing. People like using animals for practical jokes."

"Our jests usually involve humans," remarked Karras sarcastically, "but that's the same thing." Hansen grimaced.

They strolled on, speaking quietly and nonsensically. Karras felt very amenable and very lazy and was slow to react to Hansen's lively wit. The terrain of the park was becoming wilder--a planned wildness--of fallen trees and thick piles of leaves underfoot and small foaming streamlets. The trees were all deciduous, most from Earth, but many from other, similar planets; and the careful botanists had worked in all the details of a forest biome, from the giant sky-reaching oaks down to the orange lichens and green ferns of the forest floor. Only the forest wildlife was lacking.

Karras stopped finally on a mossy knoll and sat down abruptly. "I'm tired." He stretched out and closed his eyes. "It's cold here," he muttered.

"Cold!" Hansen snorted. She sat down on a rock rising slate-grey out of the brilliant green moss. "70 degrees? You'd better get used to it. That's how you get colds, Klingon--living in hot, dry quarters and working in what seems cold and wet to you."

"I think I'll go back to the Kilingarlan," murmured Karras, a routine threat. He opened his eyes and crossed his hands behind his head. He remarked in a slow, casual kind of way, "If everything weren't green it'd be quite beautiful here."

"You can't make a favorable statement without qualifying it, can you?" asked Hansen mockingly. She looked around at the vista and at him, sprawled in the grass. "Perfect scenario," she observed. "You know, I think you're about the only male on this ship who's safe."

Karras propped his head so that he could see her. "Safe how?" He interpreted her faintly quizzical look. "Oh, you mean sexually. Why do you say that?"

"Most of the men and women on this ship eventually look at each other in terms of sex. Certainly not on-duty. But off-duty there's a lot of looking and a lot of thinking and a lot of selecting." She cocked her head at him and picked a tiny purple flower out of the moss. She plucked off its petals and scattered them over him. "I've watched and you don't seem to look at anybody that way. It's as if you were a eunuch or a harem guard. Is it that we're all Earthers to you?"

"No," said Karras, amused. "I just don't believe in casual sex with aliens."

"Aliens," repeated Hansen thoughtfully, shifting her position on the granite rock.

"Aliens. I don't know how we got into this, but--- It's too easy to hurt, to misunderstand and misinterpret, when meeting sexually with a person of another species. I'm not a human male. Certain females on this ship would do well to remember that. And I haven't become that close to anyone."

"I can understand that," acknowledged Hansen. "But it's been at least three months of abstinence for you. Certain tensions---"

"Are you choosing a roundabout way to ask me to share sex with you?" inquired Karras. His mouth was smiling but his eyes weren't.

"No, I'm--what would you do if I said yes?" she asked suddenly.

"I don't know," he replied, all amusement gone from his expression. "I would refuse, certainly." After the Getheni dance this discussion seemed particularly ludicrous, but he enjoyed Hansen's candidness. No one else dared to broach the subject with him, but he knew there were rumors spread. He moved a bit, finding the grass too humid.

She nodded. "Consistent. No, I was just remembering all of a sudden that I'm a doctor, or supposed to be. But how can one have a serious conversation about sex after eight ounces of 90 proof alcohol?"

"If you want to swap dirty stories, let's swap dirty stories," commented Karras. He closed his eyes, seeming close to falling asleep. "I don't mind your questions," he mumbled. "Sex is fun."

In the morning when the alarm sounded Karras wearily slithered out of bed, almost tripping over the clothes left by it in a heap. Still

asleep, he moved around slowly, putting things in their proper places without thinking. Ashavanau Maraku, he thought. He had been tense and sore for several days now. In the dance the night before--a Getheni dance, of all dances, of all times and places--he had moved with all the grace of a charging bull.

'Nothing I do is right in this insane society,' he told himself.

'I want to go home,' the thought continued. The litany of his feelings started once again, a well-worn memory, his inward verbalization of this futile, captive existence in the Federation.

'An over-reaction to baring my soul in the Evriand Fevesan Getheni,' he decided when his frustration faded once again. He shook his head, yawned, stretched, and dressed quickly.

Karras stopped short as he was about to go out the door and blinked. Surely the thermostat was playing tricks on him. 110 degrees? How had he managed to sleep in that? He felt comfortable still. He frowned, avoided that unhappy line of thought, and went to find breakfast.

In the wardroom he noticed Hansen sitting at his usual table, but someone else, a crewman from Sciences, was sitting with her. Something about their use of his table--his territory--annoyed him. He changed the direction of his steps and sat down at a table beyond theirs, his back to them.

He barely had a chance to look at his food. "Karras, why don't you come and join us?" said Hansen.

He stood up and slowly walked back to that table. Too discourteous to refuse. He put the tray down softly. "I had the impression you were already being entertained." To his dismay the inflection was negative, insulting almost. He tried to look as if it were meant sarcastically.

Besides a quick eyebrow-lowering Hansen indicated nothing. "You know Tom, I think. Tom Castaneda, from the Bio Sci lab. He specializes in endocrinology."

'Endocrinology. How ironic,' thought Karras. He nodded--somewhat less than courteously--at Castaneda and gazed blankly down at the food. A grapefruit and a filet mignon. He stared at the strange combination, wondering what whim had driven him to request it. Filet mignon, protein--

Hansen and Castaneda were talking, but Karras was oblivious to them. He ate mechanically. The meat was tough for a filet and tasted of algae cultures. He almost laughed at the absurd picture of how one might hunt and track down an algae culture.

Hansen had been quick to notice something different about Karras; she broke off her conversation with Castaneda and watched him. Karras head the silence and looked up to meet her eyes briefly.

"Citrus fruit and steak?" she inquired interestedly. "What's that you're drinking--blood?"

The color of the liquid in the glass in no way resembled his blood. He said so. "It's vartholk. Natural fruit sugar and a stimulant similar to caffeine. Any objections?"

"A somewhat irregular diet," commented Castaneda mildly.

Karras brushed some perspiration from his upper lip. "I'm not suffering any vitamin or protein deficiencies and I'm not overweight. I'm in perfect health."

Castaneda bristled at the hostility in Karras' inflection. "Should know better than to argue with a Klingon."

"That's right," agreed Karras sharply, one eyebrow uplifted in a cold stare. "Because we always win." He downed half the drink, putting it down in a defiant way.

"Did you wake up on the wrong side of bed this morning, or did you just decide it was 'be mean to Earthers' day?" asked Hansen irritably.

"I don't know what you're talking about," said Karras, coldly.

"You invited him over here, Marisha--why? We were doing all right before he came in."

"I will not accept the personal, bigoted attack of an Earther," said Karras very stiffly. "Apologize." Briefly he felt the steak knife under his fingertips, pushed it aside, and put his hand tightly around the glass.

His expression and tone were uncompromising, harsh. Hansen gaped at him, thinking how like a typical Klingon he sounded. Castaneda stared for a full minute, trying to figure out if Karras was serious and how he could get out of this. "Apologize for what? You started it."

The glass Karras was gripping shattered under the strain. He made a small sound as a glistening piece drove itself deep into his hand. Shards of glass scattered all over the table. Karras picked one up, cutting himself again.

Castaneda and Hansen both froze as the glass broke. The sound brought the attention of the few people in the room to Karras. Castaneda stopped out of fear--Karras had been holding the glass like a weapon, fury on his face.

Hansen was the first to move. She came around beside Karras and reached for his hand. The hand jumped away at her touch. "Okay," she said softly. "Sickbay, Karras."

Karras stood up with extreme, stiff caution. His face held an unchanging expression of anger, turned inward now and held tight under determined calm. He took the injured hand protectively in his other and followed Hansen submissively.

Castaneda, standing now by the table, glanced around at the five or ten people spread around at the tables in the wardroom. They exchanged furtive looks of bewilderment and morbid curiosity.

In Sickbay Hansen caught up her small medical tricorder. "All right, Mister, let's see that hand." Karras held it out silently, but flinched at her touch. "It hurts that much?"

"No," he answered in a voice of utter flatness.

"Go wash it then. There's blood all over you."

Water in the cuts awakened the pain. He watched the dark richness of his blood flowing away.

Hansen checked to see if any glass remained in the cuts. His skin was hot. She looked up into Karras' face, noticed the sweat there, and made as if to feel his forehead. He backed off and she stared at him wordlessly.

Karras allowed her to bandage his hand, standing rigidly at attention and totally ignoring her touch. As she finished, he pulled his hand away quickly and turned for the door.

"Wait a minute," demanded Hansen. "I'd like to check you out; there's something strange---" Her words fell on empty air as the door whispered shut. Frustrated, she considered going after him, but she feared his anger.

Karras lay on his bed, on his side, half curled up. His right arm dangled over the side of the bed. He lay and looked at nothing, thinking nothing.

The door buzzer sounded. Slowly Karras' hand lifted to push a button on the ledge behind the bed. On the small viewscreen there he peripherally saw Roan. Reluctantly he released the door-lock.

"You weren't on duty; no one had seen you; I felt you must be here." Roan spoke in faultless Agavoi. He came close; not too close. "Please forgive me if my interruption is rude."

Karras found the common formalities easiest to say at this point. "Rudeness is not a trait of the welcomed visitor."

"Your courtesy puts me to shame." Roan pulled a chair away from the desk and perched on it. "I come solicitously. Are you well?"

"I am not." Karras stirred uneasily. As yet he hadn't looked at Roan once. "A late spring."

Roan's eyes widened. "You surprise me. Your hand, then---"

"Was a minor accident, unimportant."

Roan gazed at Karras in mingled fear and compassion. "Can I help?"

"I have the pills given to me before I left home. Nothing further can be done by anyone."

Karras turned on his back and put one arm over his eyes, while Roan stared off in space and thought about the sarasu. 'A late spring.' Sarasu, the estrous cycle of kilingau. "Is my physical presence disturbing?" he asked very quietly.

"No."

26 Getheni now, late into the first month of the Kilingarlan year, a late spring indeed. The cycle normally came within the first ten days of the year, as the temperature rose and all life began anew. For Karras, the Renewal coming late: different conditions, different mental stresses.

Roan understood Hansen's strange report now. Karras at breakfast, his temperature high, metabolism high, producing adrenaline; irritable and tense, perversely aggressive.

He worried about the fatalism in Karras' tone. "The doctor could help, perhaps."

"Earthers don't know anything about this!"

"How the hell are you going to hide it?"

Karras' angry defiance wilted. "Emisrafkir Kirin---"

Roan started at the name and title--his name of thirty years before. He answered formally. "Raftarkan Karras. Sala."

"The dose will stay effective only a little while."

"Sala. I know."

"After that time. . ."

Roan waited.

". . . I may kill someone." There was panic in his voice. "What do I do then?"

"You won't," said Roan flatly. "Ummmm. .there is another solution."

"Only Federen in this ship. You think one of those females attracts me?"

"Karen Marlowe?"

Karras growled far back in his throat; Roan smiled very faintly. "All right, all right. Sorry I brought it up." A pause. "It's not a 'tame' sarasu, where you can pleasure yourself alone. No, obviously not. Damn." He sat and thought in circles. "What's your temperature?"

"110 a little while ago." Karras spoke neutrally, without inflection. He looked calm enough but all his muscles were tensed.

"Going up or down?"

"It was 113 before I remembered the pills that lower the metabolism."

"Mmm. Why didn't you say something a few weeks ago?" Roan was not angry, just scared--scared for Karras.

Karras stared at the ceiling and shook his head slowly. "I assumed it wouldn't come, here on a starship. Or that it would pass unnoticed."

Roan leaned back in his chair and examined his hands in seeming fascination. "H'mm," he said and moved restlessly, feeling helpless. "Isn't there someone---"

"No!" exclaimed Karras and hit the bed angrily with his fist.

When next he spoke it was a cry of pain. "No. . . Kirin-- I can't. To lie with a human it would be--" his mouth worked at the word--"bestiality. No, wrong. But another species. I can't! Would a tiger mate with a dog?"

Finally he stared at Roan in desperation and sick fear. Roan could say nothing, could only look at him in shocked, numb compassion.

"Is there nothing I personally can do for you?" he asked formally.

A violent negation. Karras tried to burrow a little further into the bed. "Go. Leave me alone."

"As you say." He went to the door and hesitated. "Please remember that I am close by." Karras, now stretched out on his stomach, made no movement, and Roan left.

He paced down the corridor slowly, wondering if he shouldn't tell Hansen the situation. He knew that Karras could turn murderous and literally run berserk. Or, if kept isolated, he might just as easily commit suicide. It was not a pleasant thought. Roan had seen it happen himself on the Kilingarlan and was full of fear at walking away, leaving Karras alone and free to do what he wanted. But could Hansen do anything about it? Her understanding of kilingau was limited to a crash course in kilingaven physiology when Karras came aboard.

The sections on the sarasu had been carefully excised from all reports, for reasons Roan well understood. The Federation, a former enemy, would be delighted to learn that the entire kilingaven population was driven to mad frenzy for one month each year. The military advantage of that knowledge was incalculable.

He turned in the direction of the turbolift, remembering that the bridge was somewhat lacking in personnel. No; telling anyone was Karras' decision to make.

In the lift Roan sank back against the wall. "Goddamnit to hell and gone," he muttered. He couldn't even do anything for a friend who, he realized, meant more to him than anyone else. That started him wondering why he was in the Federation if he felt that way about a 'Klingon,' and he swore again, futilely.

On the bridge everyone shrank at the grimness of Roan's expression and the angry frustration in his voice, and did their best not to invite his wrath.

The door buzzer rang shrilly. Karras groaned and turned over. Movement brought dizziness, and pain. His perception was all out of focus; he stared at the screen for a very long subjective second, trying to bring the colorless blur into sharp reality. He could not. He caught a distinctive feature, a long nose wrinkled in impatience--Marisha Hansen. He groped for the intercom. "Go away."

"Karras, let me in. If you're sick I have to know about it."

He saw the blurred figure on the screen move restlessly, waiting for an answer. His own mind was trying to keep on a single track, but his thoughts insisted on wandering away into realms of shadows, where images of fantasies present and past lurked.

"If you don't let me in, I'll break this door down!"

The creature that was Karras reacted only to the threat, didn't hear the sarcasm. "I will kill anyone who comes in."

"Don't threaten me! Karras, whatever's wrong, nobody else need know-- I can help."

Her words touched a sensitive nerve. A part of him craved company, warmth. A greater part fiercely desired privacy. The rest was incoherent irrationality, a welter of strong mixed emotions that could drive him to passion, a passion to murder and main, or a passion to love, to conquer. Lust, the dark partner of love, overrode his physical desires. But. . .

"No."

"Commander Taralkarin, if you don't cooperate, I will go to the Captain. He will help me enforce my authority. I don't want to be a drill sergeant, but you leave me few alternatives. Or is talking to you reasonably any good at all?"

Karras snarled silently at the intercom, and felt like ripping it out of its secured place, just to get rid of the hatefully rational voice attacking him. His own thoughts were tidal: a cresting peak of emotions, a trough of calmness. "Get out of here and leave me alone!"

When nothing further emanated from the intercom he grunted in satisfaction and tried to sleep.

But rest was impossible. He could imagine Hansen marching up to Roan in complaint, and he did not want to think of what Roan might answer her. Karras abruptly got off the bed and headed for the door. Better to face the world at large than Roan--or worse, Hansen coming back.

The corridors resounded to his footfalls as he paced along slowly. He wasn't really sure of where he wanted to go, anywhere he might be left alone. He didn't have much chance to decide, though, as he was brought up short by a

tentative female voice. "Karras?"

He turned to find Avra standing in the doorway of the last room he'd passed. "What do you want?" he growled.

"All right, be angry. But at least let me explain why it happened."

"There's nothing to explain," Karras answered shortly, his irritation coming from a source having nothing to do with Avra.

She thought she was the cause of it, though. "Karras please."

Karras looked at her, but she didn't blink under his intense gaze. "All right. I assume from your leaving the dance with Shan that you belong to him. So why did you make a fool of me?"

Avra's glance past him told him that they'd attracted something of an audience. He swung around, an annoyed glare in his eyes, and two lab technicians hurried about their business. "Please come in. If we're going to talk, this isn't the place."

Karras froze, unsure of whether to accept her suggestion or make his excuses and leave. A distantly audible, "Good morning, Captain," made up his mind for him. He ducked into Avra's quarters.

The Yandaurn was somewhat nervous, and she walked to the far side of the small room, her back to him. Somehow, she appeared very vulnerable, and Karras wished he'd taken his chances with Roan.

"Did Shan have the right to insult me in public?" Karras demanded, his inner anxieties increasing in the confinement of her small, unfamiliar quarters.

"No!" Avra's answer was both quick and vehement, but there was something in her eyes that told him differently. Karras noticed and was about to take advantage of it when she began again. "But he did have the right to challenge me. As much as I've protested his taking me for granted, I've never given him any real reason to doubt my loyalty to him, either. I'd often wanted to break away from his hold on me. . ."

Karras was quick to pick up on the thought. "Hold on you?"

"Shan and I were raised in the same valley on Lyandaurn. Were we home, as my superior officer, he would have a claim to me."

Karras understood what she was saying, but it disgusted him. The Yandaurn social structure was archaic, wasteful, and chauvinistic, treating women subordinates as chattel. Supposedly this was the logical outgrowth of their incessant 'need.' "We're not on Lyandaurn." He stated the obvious sardonically.

"That's what I've been trying to tell Shan since I got here."

"And you thought to use me as an example."

"Well. . ."

Karras studied her irritably, and damned her for her indecisiveness. Kilingaven women were far more sure of themselves, being treated as equals politically, socially, and sexually. "Why me?" he inquired coolly. "I would have thought another member of this crew might have suited your purposes better."

"I've had my share of humans, and my fill of them. I only tolerated Shan's dominance because at least he was, well, a Yandaaur."

Karras smiled, more to himself than outwardly. Yes, certainly anyone--or anything--would have to be better than an Earther.

Avra broke his brief moment's reflection. "I realized when we danced exactly how much I resented Shan. And yet also how different we three are from the others here. You're alive in a way that humans can't even comprehend."

Karras stiffened, his internal agitation increasing. If only she knew just how 'alive' he really was, how much he needed to live, as a killing, at that very moment.

Avra chose that particular moment to walk back toward Karras. She stood in front of him, waiting for some kind of response. Karras retreated a few centimeters, but she was still so terribly close to him. Too close.

He tried to shake his own mood. "So I'm the least of all evils. Say what you mean, Avra."

The woman eyed him. "It isn't only that. I am attracted to you. I have been ever since--ever since I saw you in the company of your father."

Karras' interest quickened, and he forgot his own needs momentarily. "Yes. You were aboard then, almost as new an officer as I. You were talking to Kenereth Kalang."

She nodded and spoke in his language. "I have been studying Agavoi since that evening, Emistarkan Taralkarin."

The use of the Agavoi words sent a shock through Karras. Avra smiled ironically. "I also know about Getheni dances."

Getheni. Yes, Avra must surely know more about the Kilingarlan than a smattering of Agavoi and simple folk tradition. Karras grew serious. "Avra, will you answer a question for me quite truthfully?" She agreed, cautiously. "What do you know of Getheni dancing?"

Avra's surprise burst forth as a laugh. "Only that it's an indication of pair selection. I suppose I chose it because it was the most 'showy' dance I knew." The meaning of Karras' question suddenly became apparent. "Karras, was I wrong in choosing that particular dance? Why didn't you refuse to do it?"

"Because it was exactly the kind of dance I wanted to do." Karras' answer came out before he could stop it, and Avra immediately jumped to the wrong conclusion.

"You never indicated the slightest interest in me before this."

"You don't understand, Avra. I---" This time, he did catch himself before it was too late. Did he really want to tell her that it wasn't her that he wanted, but simply the presence of a female? How could he explain the need to do a Getheni dance, just for the sake of doing it and with no obligations implied? But what of the obligations? Back home he wouldn't even have considered doing a Getheni dance with a woman he wasn't prepared to share the rest of Getheni with. Here. . .

"As you were the one who chose the dance, I had no reason to believe you meant it as anything more. I couldn't attach any greater significance to it. Especially after you walked off with Shan in the middle."

"Now it's you who aren't being direct. Do you want me or don't you?"

Karras couldn't answer that question for himself, much less for the woman confronting him. Having to think about his plight and weighing its urgency against his distaste for Fleet women only served to increase the rising heat and throbbing in his blood. And Avra's stare told him that she wasn't going to wait too long for his answer.

Karras shivered violently; the fever still ran swiftly through him. If he left now, the unreleased tension could drive him into mindless, savage violence. He slowly returned her stare, studying her carefully, noting with speculative interest her bold pride and unafraid stance. He pulled apart the knot in the belt that closed his loose wraparound tunic; even that single garment felt confining. "You invited me, so I'll stay. But if you come to regret that, don't trouble me with it."

Avra contemplated him as he very gladly removed the tunic and tossed it negligently over the back of a chair. She observed his physical differences and wondered. "I'll take the chance," she answered calmly, not understanding his words. Avra was annoyed that Shan had deliberately ignored her this morning. She wanted the warmth and vitality of a male. This male particularly, to give her a small victory over Shan.

He reached out and let his hand rest on her neck. She moved closer to him, slipping her arms around his waist. He closed his eyes as the fever shook him again.

She looked up into his face. "What's wrong?"

He shook his head. His hand found the closure in her jumpsuit. She helped him pull it apart, enjoying the touch of his hands. In a moment Kilingon and Yandaur stood, a foot or so apart, surveying one another.

Avra looked at Karras. His eyes were half-closed, without focus. His lips were slightly parted and she could hear his breathing. She couldn't begin to understand his expression. The prevalent hair, the warm skin color, all his differences intrigued and excited her. Boldly she reached out and ran her hands over his back.

Karras accepted her embrace tentatively. He gazed down at her and wondered if he could bear sharing the intimacies of Getheni with this strange-hued, hairless, water-soft, horned alien. 'No matter,' he thought, as the music of the

Evriand Fevesan Getheni once again echoed through his thoughts. It no longer mattered; she was a willing female and he a desperately aroused victim of the sarasu.

They explored one another, cautiously at first, then with greater confidence as each felt the acceptance of the other grow stronger. Karras seemed not to care where they lay; Avra guided him to the bed. The blanket and sheet were kicked off by common consent.

Her passivity struck Karras, amazing him, accustomed as he was to women aggressively demanding what they wanted. He assumed that she enjoyed his attentions in silence, and would tell him if she found no pleasure. He drifted further into his own sensations, burying himself in warmth, finding a deliverance at last. He felt his way without conscious thought, taking her mindlessly.

He was not gentle. Once the throes of the need within him were released, he had little ability or inclination to still them. Avra little understood what drove him, or why he would suddenly make such irrational demands as for her to bite him or to 'shut up.' But the urgency of his requests and the demands of his body were evident. Eventually she resigned herself to his stamina and insistence. She had, after all, agreed to please and satisfy him. That she hadn't realized all that implied was certainly not Karras' fault, the Yandaurn conditioning in her reminded.

As for Karras, he lay next to her, exhaustedly asleep, but with something of a contented smile on his face. Avra sighed, feeling very out of place, a little hurt by his selfish passion. Gently she ran her fingers over Karras' back, aware of the skin texture changing and the muscles tightening even now. Finally, she too drifted off to sleep.

Shan left his watch a few minutes early, an extra stiff duty watch as a reprimand after the party. His steps took him in the direction of Avra's quarters. He hadn't as yet forgiven her insolence the night before. Tonight a return to normal: her surrender, a shower, and then sleep.

The door to her quarters moved out of his way. He saw Avra as a shadow lying stretched out on the bed. In disbelief his eyes searched, with growing anger, the shadow next to her.

The door whispered shut and his eyes made the adjustment to the dusk of the quarters. It was the killing. Stars above, that black-hearted volcano-spawn of a killing who dared treacherously to challenge him thus, claiming his woman.

His hand brushed down the side of his leg to draw out the knife sheathed in his boot. Noiselessly, crouched a bit, ready to spring, he stalked. His fingers twitched on the knife as he stood over the man. Karras moved uneasily in his sleep, murmuring something and laying his arm across Avra. Shan hissed and brought the knife down. Karras' agonized cry was music to him and he struck again.

Avra woke at the scream, suddenly alive with fright. Shan spat out a few guttural words and jumped onto the bed to grab her. She fought his fury hopelessly; four quick blows and she fell back.

Karras, aware at first only of his own fiery pain, heard Avra's struggle. Adrenaline gave him the strength to rise to his knees. He dove forward, coming down heavily on Shan, hands groping for knife and neck.

Shan shook his shoulders and in a brusque movement threw Karras off. He followed up quickly, using his greater weight and vigor to advantage, trying to plunge the knife into Karras again, this time in an immediately vital spot.

Karras discovered terror. He choked on his own blood and fear and the dark fires in his mind awoke in desperation. He hammered at the hand that held the knife, and with all his will wrested it loose. Gripping Shan, he rolled onto his side, to the edge of the bed, and off onto the floor. Shan landed on the bottom and grunted with the shock of it.

Karras took grim comfort from the feel of the weapon under his fingers as he raised it. Consumed by fury, he called out long-forgotten words of the Hunter's tongue as he brought it down. Shan snarled in agony as the hilt of his own knife jarred solidly home against his breastbone. Karras wrenched the blade free and struck again. Again. And again. After a weak, uncounted blow Shan was silent. The pressure on Karras' back from Shan's arms, the incredible, abandoned strength of a dying man, let up at last.

Karras pushed himself abruptly from the body. He gazed at the knife and smelled the blood of a Yandaur on him, on his hands. The tremor within him had become uncontrollable; the wetness spreading over his back and the pain as he moved and breathed came close to overwhelming him.

For a moment he lay very still on the floor, waiting for his eyes to see, his ears to hear, his hands to feel. A measure of reason returned as his breathing slowed. He lifted one shoulder and twisted his head to look at Haharshan; his mouth shaped into a tight frenzied grin. An irrational light-headed hysteria at the thought of what he'd just done overtook him.

His eyes fell on the small hand phaser still attached to Shan's belt, and he thought wryly that it was a good thing Shan was a fellow barbarian, and liked to make his kills with a knife, ritualistically and savagely. His mind was very clear now; the adrenaline was burning the slow fever out of his body. The pain of the wound in his back kept his senses sharp. With some disgust he reached across Shan's body and plucked the phaser from the belt, handling it cautiously. A dishonorable weapon, but necessary to hide the truth.

He pushed himself to his feet, fighting off a vague moment of dizziness. He set the phaser on full and touched the button. A pale beam of cold light played over Shan; his atoms tried to absorb the searing energy, failed, and collapsed into disintegration. Spots of dark blood on the cream-colored rug were all that were left. He let the phaser fall from his hand.

He glanced over at the bed, eyes narrowing at the blood there--too much blood. Some of it was his. Enough, he hoped, to fool the curious. Avra, whom he'd forgotten completely in the fight, was lying next to it, very limp.

He crossed to her and shifted her onto her back. Magenta blood colored her left breast and ribs; her breathing was shallow; her heartbeat quick, uneven.

A new surge of pain went through him. His left hand arched behind to the

source. He straightened, started to walk stiff-legged to the door, out of this place of death and pain, but never made it. Dizziness again, and weakness; he swayed and fell, crying out as he hit the floor.

Karras woke, his head turned to one side resting on a pillow, his right arm curled around his head. Something was wrong; his left arm was restrained for some reason. His entire left side felt paralyzed. The light in the room was hurting his half-opened eyes, a mechanical noise jarred his ears, and the cold air was fretting him. He opened his eyes completely and tried to move.

A voice--at that particular moment an infinitely detestable voice--filled his ears. "Keep still, dammit."

Hansen. Karras wondered if she were touching him--he couldn't feel a thing, but his skin crawled at the thought. He moved his right arm down and tried to feel with his hand what was wrong with his back, but the hand was ungently shoved aside. "Don't make it worse, Karras," said Hansen, her tone full of irritation.

Karras shut his eyes and bit the inside of his mouth to still the desire to get away from her. He realized that he was no longer a captive of Getheni, and the urge came, strongly, to hide like a wounded animal. By moving his neck a bit he could see the new blood spilling into his left arm. Muscles tensed all over his body and he knew the helpless frustration of not being able to move; injured and in pain.

When Roan walked into Sickbay a few moments later, Hansen was lightly bandaging Karras' back to protect the wound. He went to stand at the other side of the bed, contemplating Karras' position, a slight frown in his expression. When Hansen looked across at him he tried to show that his worry was not for the killing alone. "Where's Avra?"

"In the post-op bay. Yoshitomo, our expert on the Yandauru, is taking care of her."

"Her condition?"

"Worse than our friend here, who's awake, by the way." Karras didn't stir. "Avra's as well as could be expected with multiple stab wounds." She sniffed disapprovingly and finished up with Karras, disconnecting the blood infusion.

Roan glanced briefly at her. He considered asking her to leave but knew she wouldn't. "Karras?"

Karras rested his head on his arm and opened his eyes. "I'm here."

"How do you feel?" Roan watched as Hansen walked off reluctantly, not able to understand their language.

"I don't feel like talking." Karras closed his eyes and moved against the bed restlessly.

Roan made no immediate comment. He retrieved a chair from Hansen's office and set it down by the head of the bed. He sat down in it and crossed his arms.

Aware of Roan's presence, Karras stirred uneasily, and eventually looked at him again. "What do you want?"

"A few questions answered."

"Captain, the sarasu---"

"Is over," Roan interrupted impatiently. "Getheni's through with you. There's no reason why you can't talk to me now."

Karras pushed himself up, grimacing, and with an effort turning over. He propped himself up and glared at Roan. "What do you know about the sarasu? You think it stops; everything's fine? Captain, I'm tired, wounded; I can smell blood; I feel your irritation. Your presence offends me."

Roan spoke over his words, bluntly. "Who knifed Avra? You?" Karras stared at him coldly. "And would you happen to know what's happened to Lieutenant Shan, last seen heading for Avra's quarters?"

"Go look for him," said Karras shortly. "He's your culprit."

"Where is he?"

"Dead." Karras sank back down on the pillow and turned his face away from Roan. "Good luck finding him," he said.

Two officers, both suffering injuries from an invisible knife. A missing Security officer. A phaser and a bloodied bed. Roan tallied the obscure clues, along with some private thoughts on the unpredictability of Getheni and Karras' personality, and did not appreciate the implications. It seemed logical to him that Karras could have chosen Avra for his partner during Getheni, disposing of Shan when the selfish Yandaur objected, and getting into a knife fight with Avra when she resisted him. Could he trust a killing--even Karras--in sarasu? Why wasn't Karras talking?

The disappearance of Shan and the violent incident involving their already infamous First Officer set the crew to talking. Roan heard whispers of it. A few were kinder to Karras than he. Most of the rumors, though, were bigoted gossip about the three non-humans, and most people seemed to think that Karras was somehow at fault. Roan sent a preliminary message to Star Fleet and waited for Karras to confess or for Avra to regain consciousness.

When she did Roan was there, and Hansen, and Karras as a silent witness. It was a day and a half after the incident.

Only after a good fifteen minutes' checkup by Hansen was the Captain permitted to even speak with her. "Do you think you could answer a few questions, Lieutenant?"

To his surprise, the woman looked past him at his First Officer. "Karras, are you all right?"

The killing nodded once.

"Shan. . .?" She asked the question with a trepidation that was as undefinable as it was undeniable.

Roan started, the first piece of his puzzle coming apart. She didn't know that Shan had been killed. . .

Karras said nothing, studying Roan to avoid Avra's gaze. Roan broke the silence. "He's dead."

The tension seemed to drain from her with the small sigh she emitted. "I am doubly in your debt, Karras," she began slowly. "I owe you my life and honor. Know that I am grateful."

Karras looked at her with a somewhat ironic smile. She couldn't possibly appreciate the full weight of her words. "No matter," he said quietly.

It took Roan a moment to absorb what had happened. "Avra, I realize this may be hard for you, but I'd like you to tell me your part of the story."

She looked at him, confused. "I can't tell you anything Karras hasn't; in fact, I know a lot less. Shan came in and. . . and attacked Karras. When I tried to get up, he attacked me. I passed out. I thought we were both dead. . ." Her last words trailed off and she again looked at Karras, rather wistfully.

"I think she's had enough, Captain." Hansen's sharp words cut through the air and the moods of all present.

"Yes," Roan half-whispered. "I suppose you're right." He bade Avra a speedy recovery and left quickly, avoiding any possible detainments by either Karras or Hansen.

Something was wrong. If Karras had saved Avra's life and killed Shan in self-defense, if it was that simple, what was Karras hiding? It wasn't like him-- or was it?

For the moment, though, the question was of little consequence. Avra had cleared Karras of any criminal charges. That would satisfy Star Fleet. As for his own misgivings, for now they would have to wait.

When the command came, two days later, Karras deliberately relaxed himself, as he'd been taught to do in the warrior's training. 'Kirin is the Captain and your father's brother,' he told himself. 'Even more than teacher or guardian, he should know. I cannot live a lie.'

He appeared in front of Roan's office, punctiliously neat and properly formal. He announced himself and went in.

Roan looked up from his desk. "Good morning."

"The new day welcomed. My greetings," Karras replied in Agavoi, and watched the startled expression on Roan's face.

Roan took up the language, looking at him speculatively. "My greetings to you. Sit down, Karras."

"Could I ask if you would be willing to continue in Agavoi?"

"If you wish," agreed Roan courteously, recognizing that Karras was addressing him with the formality and deference due his liege lord. "Many times I prefer this language over any other." Karras inclined his head and smiled fleetingly. "I wish to tell you, Karras, that all the facts of the death of Haharshan Aru have been reported to Star Fleet, and---"

"Not all the facts, Kfar Kirin."

Roan stared at him, a little too long for Karras' comfort. "Now you tell me," he said, very dryly. "What the devil do you mean by that?"

"I killed Shan with his knife," related Karras, very seriously. "Whether the reaction was self-defense or not is a technical point which I don't give a damn about. The death is being forgotten, because Shan wasn't well-liked and my supposed defense of Avra makes me look like--at least--an honorable killer. But would the matter be forgotten--would my infamy ever be forgotten--if it was known that I killed Shan because I wanted to? I took pleasure in the killing, Kirin, more satisfaction from that than from the woman. At the time I enjoyed using Shan's own knife on him." He looked down at his hands and murmured, "I'd rather not give the details."

"I'd rather not hear them," said Roan.

Karras waited for something more. He glanced up. "That's all?"

"Do you want me to be shocked? I'm sorry, I can't be. You think you're the first killing ever to go through a violent Getheni?" Roan contemplated him, and his ironic tone changed. "I suspected this the moment I knew Shan was missing, and his knife. My only concern is why you lied."

Karras met his gaze, slightly ashamed. "I know. I could not tell you in public. You were very eager to get all the facts, although you knew that it was none of your business and although there were Earthers around. So I gave you your story; what I told you was accurate, merely incomplete."

Roan was silent for a few seconds, considering the merits of that. He observed how out of place Karras appeared. Sitting in this office--an abstraction of human thought--the killing looked very alien and very alone. He breathed deeply and remarked thoughtfully, "I suppose you phasered the body to get rid of the evidence. The knife?"

Karras nodded slowly at his words. "The knife was in him. It was not a clean death, Kfar Kirin. At least the family will not have to see Shan, or know that it was anything but a quick kill."

Roan's response was quiet and almost amused. "And will you pay your respects to family and friends at the Shemanka?"

Karras was visibly startled. The Shemanka was a holiday celebrated the second month of the Kilingarlan year, during which anyone who had killed another went to the deceased's domain. It was a gesture that made random killing very difficult, since you knew that you would have to face the family of the one you

had killed. "It hadn't occurred to me, Kfar, but of course I will. I will face that when it comes."

"Yes. Roan took a long look at the way Karras was sitting in the chair: stiff, muscles tensed, a flicker of wary anxiety in his eye. He declared reflectively, "I really don't think Star Fleet needs to know how Shan died." The tendons in Karras' neck relaxed suddenly. "The whole thing's closed. On the books it's self-defense, death occurring by phaser. Let it stay that way."

"My thanks, Kirin." There was an expression of trust and compassion on Karras' face that few people were privileged to see. "You put too much faith in me, I think. I make cooperating with Star Fleet difficult for you, don't I?"

"I assume that's a rhetorical question," replied Roan, "because Star Fleet is what makes it hard to cooperate with Star Fleet."

"I merely meant that they mistrust you," said Karras gently. "My presence here--under your responsibility--gives them that much more opportunity not to trust you. And I'm asking you to lie to them for me."

"That's enough of that," Roan cut in awkwardly. "Since you came here I've been very conscious of where my loyalties should lie, but we've been all through that, you and I and Kor, and it's quite impossible." Karras eyed him skeptically and Roan muttered, "For the moment." Karras nodded approvingly.

Roan was anxious to get off that subject. "Well, anyway, as I was about to tell you earlier, Star Fleet got back to me today. Since this incident involved a Yandaur, the Yandaurn civil authorities requested total jurisdiction of the matter, which a contrite Star Fleet quickly gave. The Yandaurn legislature responded at once, saying that it was entirely within the law for you to have killed the Lieutenant for his jealous possessiveness. But, since a life has been lost, they wish you to make monetary reparation to his family and to personally, yourself, find someone else to replace him aboard this ship."

Karras nodded and smiled very slightly. "It's fortunate we've worked so closely with them over the years," he remarked. "That settlement is as close to orashathnavi--the code of honor--as their own laws permit. I respect the Yandauru very much."

"Star Fleet did add a final admonition, however," Roan declared. "This has gone on your record. Your next review will be passed over." He paused at that, covertly looking at the grimness of Karras' expression, the set of his mouth and the furrow over his brows. Karras, who held the equivalent rank of a Captain in the Ormenel, had reluctantly accepted the lower rank of Commander in the Federation. To be told that he would stay in that position was the final indignity. Roan went on determinedly, "Also. . . they forbid you from carrying a knife or having weapons in your quarters."

Karras stared at him, eyes wide in horror. Was he a thief to be robbed of both pride and honor? "Impossible. I will not. Only my father--or you as my Commander--have that right, and then only for a crime so awful that it'd be better to be dead. No!" The room echoed back at him, bringing with it the memory of what had happened the day in the gym. He spoke again, quietly this time and a little pensively, "You know that, you took them from me yourself less than a week ago."

Roan looked acutely uncomfortable. "Yeah, well, I was going to bring that up. About the sword. . ." The touch of a button revealed a small book and microfiche library behind the wall. He took down a long object wrapped in fabric resting on an upper shelf and handed it to Karras.

A brief touch, and Karras knew what it had to be; quickly he pulled away the cloth and held up a most familiar and highly prized possession. His own sword, whole, unmarred, polished. He looked for signs of the break but the surface was smooth, the running design on the blade still intact. He pulled his eyes from it and looked at Roan in wonder.

"It occurred to me that I should have known the day of our sword-fight in the gym. Your lack of control heralded the coming of Getheni, and I was too close-minded to see it."

"I don't deserve this sword any longer," Karras murmured.

"It's your sword. I felt it a shame to destroy such a weapon, one of the Romaitataro, a sword ever unsheathed, ready for battle. The synthesizer made it whole again."

Karras continued to touch the blade gently, tracing out the design with his fingers, feeling the sharp edges, the shallow rill along each edge to catch the blood of the enemy.

"I also return to you your knife," continued Roan, and took it out. Karras accepted it, held it lightly between both hands and reached back to put the knife in a neck sheath on the inside of his tunic. "The sword-fight--it ended badly, but that wasn't your error. I realized that, at the onset of your sarasu, but there was no question of my giving the weapons back to you then. Too dangerous. The sword and knife belong to you. I return them."

"Thakinu," Karras accepted. He stood silent for a moment. "What of Star Fleet's order?"

Roan shook his head once, firmly.

Karras gazed at him bemused and slipped his hand around the hilt of his sword. "Lord and Father's brother Kirin, I pledge this sword to you. Yours to command."

Roan glanced at him, startled, but the killing wasn't smiling. He felt honored and slightly embarrassed. "I would be very proud to accept the privilege of commanding your sword-arm. Agreed."

"Thakinu." Karras stood quiet with bowed head. After the pause of a sigh he respectfully covered the sword with the cloth and reluctantly took his hands from it. He resumed his chair and smiled at Roan, his eyes full of light.

Roan hated to disrupt that content, but one small matter still nagged at his thoughts. "Karras, have you seen Avra?"

Part of the smile faded. Karras glanced at Roan in momentary irritation. "No; I know she's well. Why? Does she prey on your conscience?"

"I would think she would bother yours."

"No," Karras retorted immediately. "Getheni is over. There are no obligations."

From the now-determined set of Karras' mouth, Roan thought it wise not to pursue it. Avra was not a killing, nor was this the Ormenel. Karras was in an awkward situation, not able to live by his social mores and not understanding the customs of the Federation. Roan could somewhat appreciate Karras' decision not to get further involved in something that would probably lead to more trouble.

He contemplated Karras, who had slipped down in his chair a bit and relaxed the usually tense neck and shoulder muscles. He looked tired under the white fluorescent light. "How are you feeling, Karras?" he asked softly.

"H'mmm?" The killing came out of his reverie, his fingers tightening together and his attention going to Roan. A furrow over his eyebrows suggested he didn't appreciate the question, but now out in the open, the query could not be ignored. "Truthfully, I am tired, over-warm, and disgusted. This Getheni went badly for me. I am sick to death of the reek of Earthers everywhere. Their speech, their customs, their unconscious deceitfulness and selfishness I abhor." He spoke naturally in Agavoi, a language that inherently required such candor. He rubbed his hands together, restlessly, and he avoided meeting Roan's eye. But he did notice Roan's silence, and spoke again. "I'm sorry, but after this Getheni I feel particularly impatient, intolerant, and stupid. I wish to Maraku I'd been in the Ormenel before this happened!"

Privately Roan agreed. "Would you like to take home leave again, Karras? I believe I could fix it."

"I would like that very much," said Karras, surprised. An idea came to mind and he brightened. "Why don't you come with me?"

Roan laughed, the first spontaneous good humor he'd felt in days. "Now that's an intriguing idea." He stood up and paced very casually to the small table where Karras had lain his sword. He picked it up, aware of its perfect weight and balance. He turned and suddenly lunged forward in a long leap, the point of the sword stopping a scant few centimeters from Karras' right breast. Karras looked at it curiously, unflinching, implicitly trusting his friend.

Roan grinned at him, holding the sword poised, very much aware of Karras' gesture of trust in his skill and commitment to him as an equal not as an Earther. "As soon as you're completely well again," he declared, "when you feel you're prepared, we must have a rematch."

Karras caught some of Roan's good humor. "A rematch. Are you sure you wouldn't rather hold it now, Kirin? You might be able to win, in the condition I'm in." He winced exaggeratedly.

Roan moved the sword up menacingly, until it almost touched the triangle of skin at the base of Karras's neck. Karras yawned.

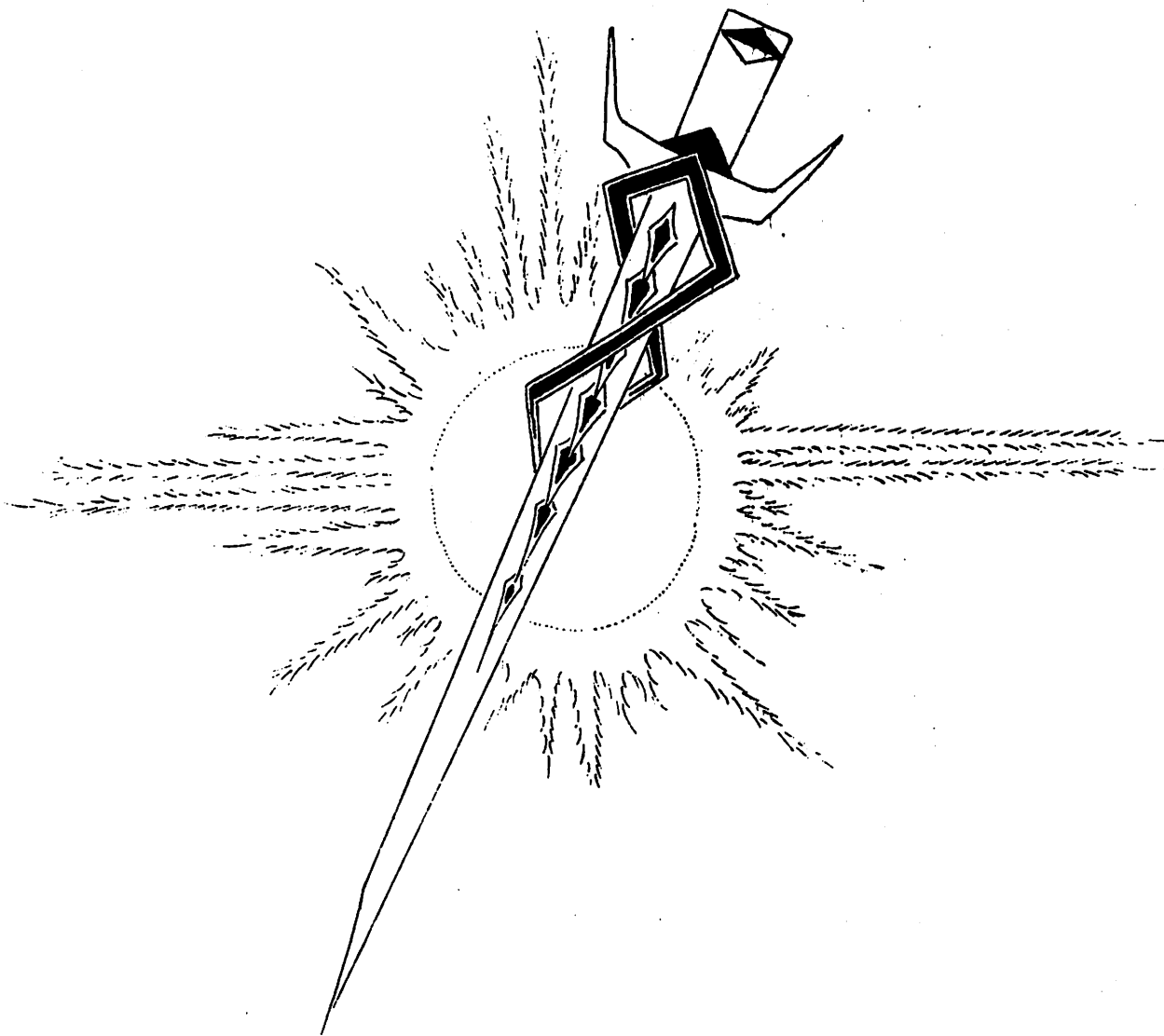
Roan gave up, laughing, and relinquished the sword to the killing, who accepted it eagerly. Roan moved to the desk; Karras got up and walked toward the door.

"One more thing," said Roan, handling some papers, Karras turned, giving him a 'what now' expression. "One final note from the Yandauru I am to deliver to you. It might be 'expedient' if the replacement for Shan were a female killing."

"The Yandauru are so subtle," remarked Karras ironically, but grinning. "An excellent idea."

Roan went to join him at the door. "A meritorious, laudable idea, worthy of execution," he agreed.

"One more killing to beat you in a sword-fight, Captain," said Karras, and they disappeared out the door.



SWORDPLAY

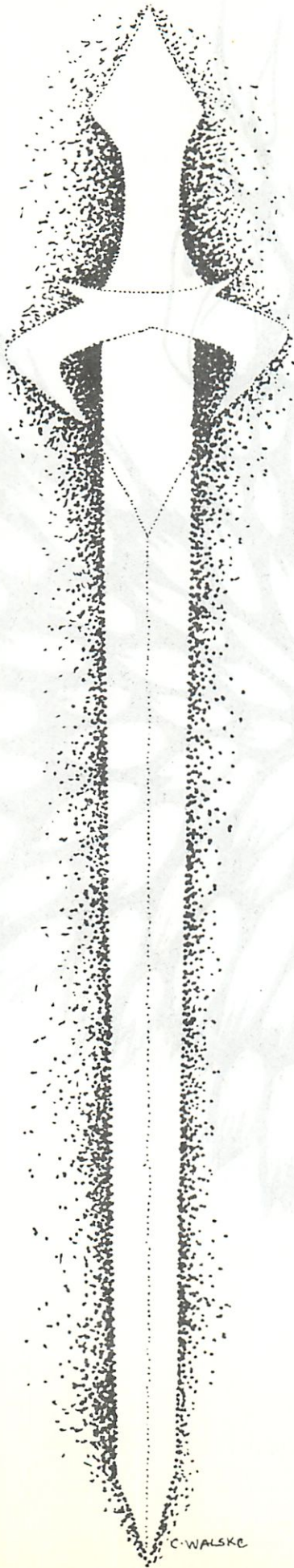
by Fern Marder

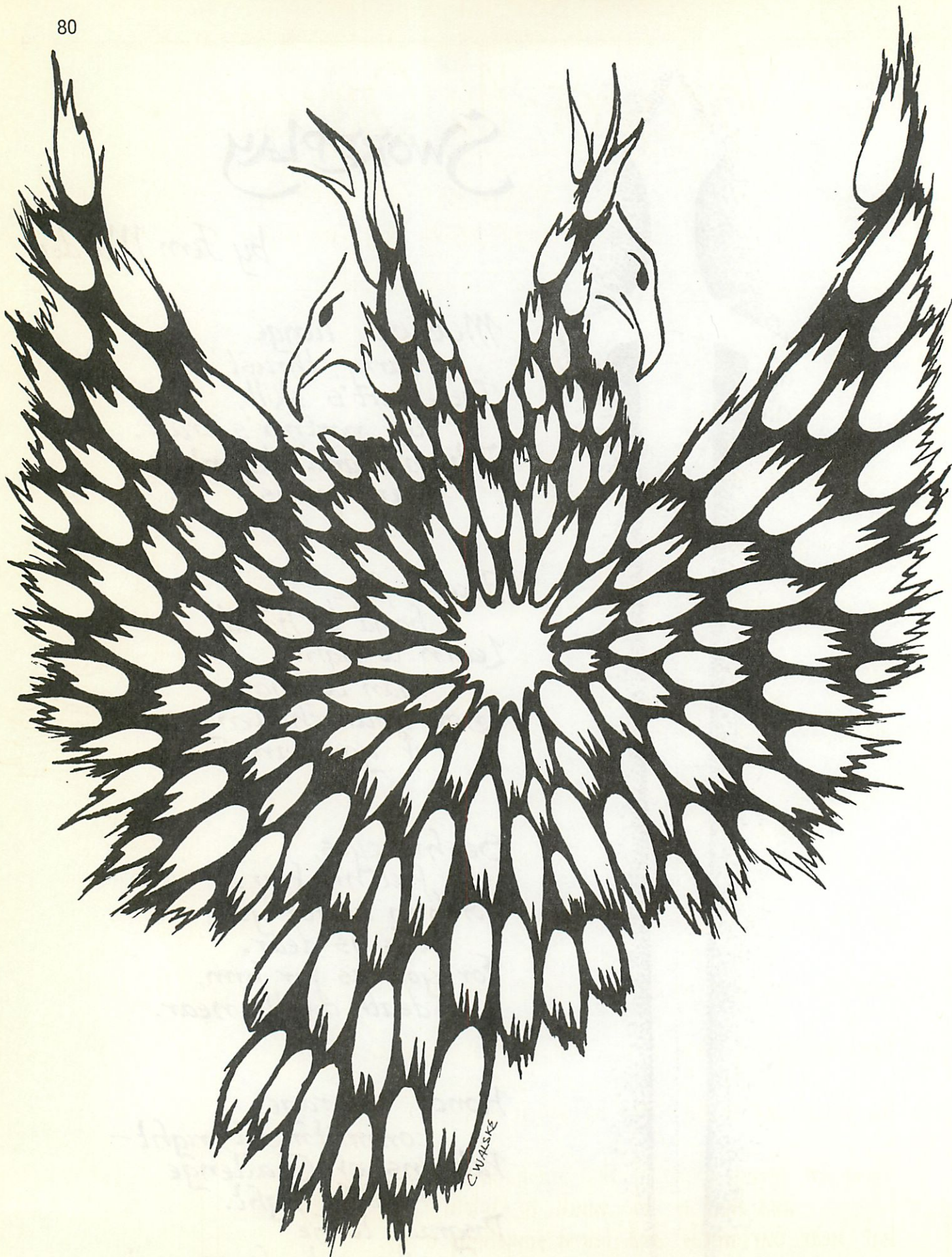
Measure, lunge
parry, thrust.
The expert's skill,
the partner's trust,
Diligence and discipline
ever a must.

Face to face,
hand to hand,
Learn to fight
man to man.
Know your challenger
if you can.

See his eyes,
feel his fear.
For him as for you,
life is dear.
For you as for him,
death dwells near.

Honor, courage,
commitment, right—
Patterns of Challenge
rule the fight.
Disgrace to he
who acts from spite.





• VOICES OF THE ORMENEL •

POETRY BY FERN MARDER
GRAPHICS BY CAROL WALSKE

• Aroi Rakishul •

Sto Kilingarlan, aroi rakishul
(Welcome to the Kilingarlan)
and to the Ormenel (to the Empire).

We kilingau (Klingons, to you Federen,
that is, Federationers)
are not bad kitani (people) at all.

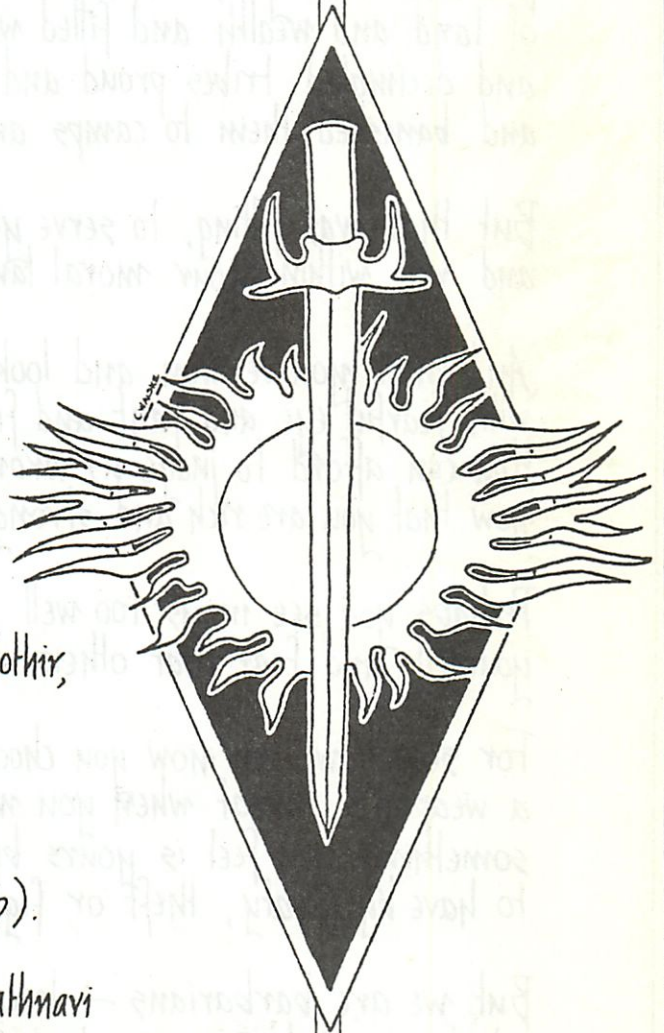
We, like you, are of many races
and many backgrounds and beliefs,
all vastly different from yours, of course.

The Ormen, Kor Alkarin Tertemisar,
once called Kfar (Commander) Kor Kothir,
is a Kendari, the first Kendari Ormen.

All Ormenau before him were Agau,
like his friend, Kang Keorl,
who also once commanded a vakiakirs (warship).

Kor became the Ormen in a war over orashathnavi
(literally, the patterns of Challenge),
the social and moral codes by which we live.

There are seven books of the orashathnavi,
and that is too much to explain,
but hear our words and learn something of us.



• Reflections •

Barbarians, you say, butchers and worse,
fit only for slaughter and Hell's own curse.

But what were you, when you were in need
of land and wealth and filled with greed...
and decimated tribes proud and brave
and banished them to camps and caves?

But that was fitting, to serve your cause,
and well within your moral laws.

And now you've won and look on us
with fearful eye and rant and fuss.
You can afford to judge us wrong,
now that you are rich and strong.

Perhaps you see in us too well
yourself, and fear that others will.

For somehow even now you choose
a weapon's threat when you might lose
something you feel is yours by right,
to have by treaty, theft or fight.

But we are barbarians — because we desire
what you and every people require.



◦ Challenge ◦

If only you were as I.
If only you were killing
and not as you are, a Federeen.

If only you understood.
If only we could meet
in open Challenge —
it would be glorious!

But what do you know of the Challenge?

How could I make you understand,
in so little time as we have here,
what it means to face another to stand
before an adversary and declare
that which you hold to be right
and defend it in word and deed
against another of equal cunning and might
who holds his own ideals and creed
as firmly as you hold yours?

Would you listen if I told you
that I deplore this rule
that makes a prisoner of you
and me, a jailor cruel?
Instead of matching us in war,
you and I, a worthy pair,
should be allowed to settle our score
as single men in combat fair,
pitting honor against honor.

A Challenge true, by all our laws
of orashathnavi and court's decree,
would be the only rightful cause
to decide which of us would go free,
For I'm as much a prisoner still
as you are, though you bear the name,
for I can no more use my will
to return to there from whence I came
with the knowledge that I'd Challenged you
and won.

If only we were the same.
If only I could meet you
fairly in equal fight —
it would be glorious!



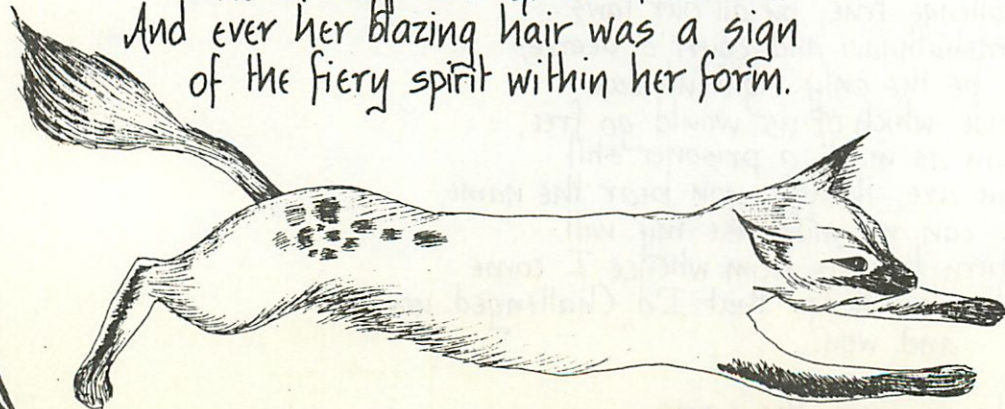
◦ The Legend of Kerrekurasarm ◦

In the days before the Ormend was one,
before Kendari and Agan
knew what it was to live side by side,
there lived a Huntress, a Kendari
as Kendari are known as hunters able,
whose strength and courage were rivalled only
by her honor of the wild and the code of the hunt.

She was sired by a dying bull
who fell at the hands of predators foul,
hunters who wounded him for sport
and left him suffering, to die alone;
and was borne by a ranger who chanced to find him
and stopped to give comfort to the noble beast
who gratefully gave her, in return,
his seed and strength and valiant spirit.

Some months later, the ranger herself
was sorely wounded by a charging bull.
And from her wound sprang Kerrekurasarm,
the beautiful flame-haired mystical child
riding off on the bull, even as the wound
miraculously closed and her mother was healed.

With time the child grew and Kerreku became
a woman of grace, as found only in the wild.
She became as the fox, cunning in mind,
lithe in body and quick in motion.
And ever her blazing hair was a sign
of the fiery spirit within her form.





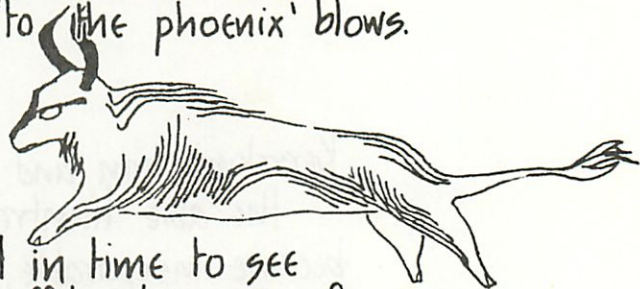
Kerrekurasarn and Artataru
 the able Huntress and mighty bull,
 became inseparable, often seen
 dancing together in woodland glades
 where game was plentiful, kitani were free
 and the laws of the hunt were held supreme.
 Hunters who killed with fear in their hearts,
 killed only for sport and without need,
 or killed without respect for their prey,
 were themselves hunted down with deliberate care
 by Kerreku and her taurine friend.
 They passed the years, in hunt and play,
 guarding the wilds from ignoble kitani,
 and delighting in the beauty that is yet the Kilingartan.

But among the creatures that shared the land was one to be feared by all alike, for up in the mountains, in the highest of peaks lived a bird of prey of unmatched power; the two-headed phoenix with a heart of fire, talons of steel and the eyes of the sun, his massive wings of crimson and gold reflecting his dominance even as the light.

Saichanat, winged marauder, feared by those who held him in awe; the warrior's champion, symbol of the Agau, a fighter with the means to conquer any foe; he preyed not on the weak, but on the strong who could give him at least a brief struggle before the inevitable fall.

And so it was that one day he chose to confront one of worthy spirit, and came upon Artataru, the noble bull waiting for Kerreku to return from a hunt. Saichanat swooped down, from his high perch, claws outstretched and finely aimed.

The bull fought well for a short time but fell, at last, to the phoenix' blows.



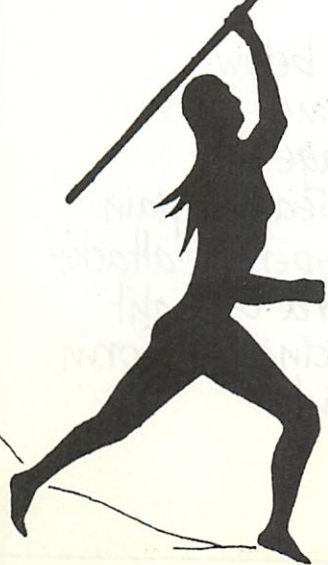
The Huntress returned in time to see her friend borne off by his avian foe. She followed, below, as best she could and sighted his path when she could no more. He carried the bull to his mountain lair above the clearing where fighters met, a battle land where Kendaru and Agau faced one another in dispute.

And so it was that Kerreku called the phoenix down to meet her charge amidst a battle of each of their forces; hunters and warriors, a Challenge was raised.





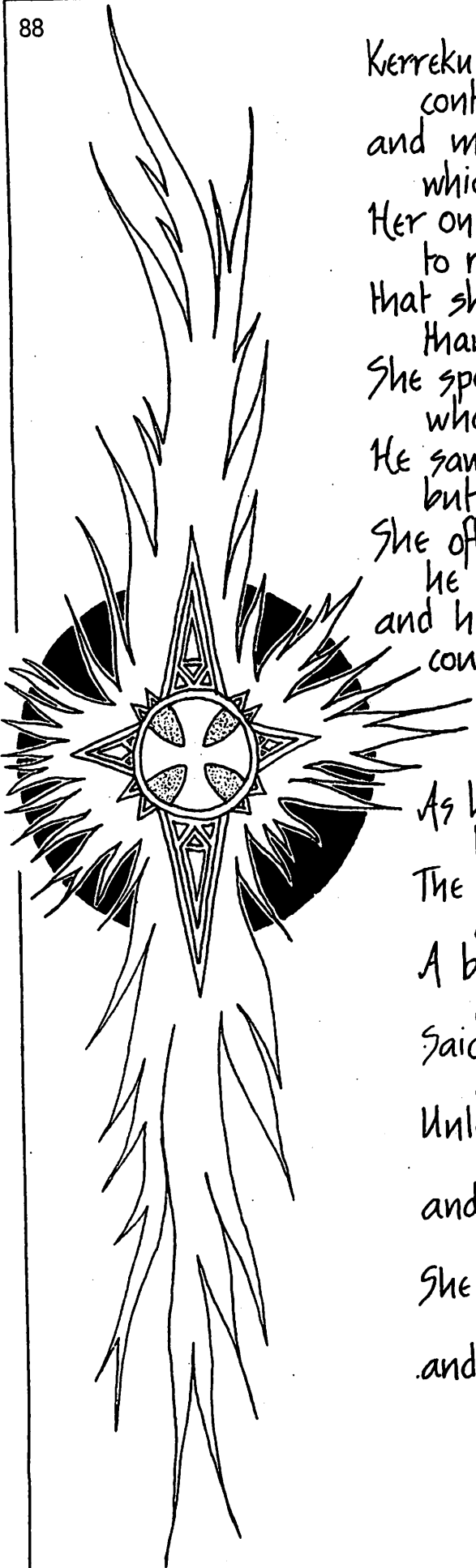
The phoenix, emanating power and light,
 his strength, magnificent,
 his majesty complete;
 and Kerreku, to Kitani, only a woman,
 but to the creature who sees
 with eyes bathed in sunfire,
 the misty shape of a bull glowed within her
 and, without, the faint aura
 of mystical existence;
 the two rivals faced each other.



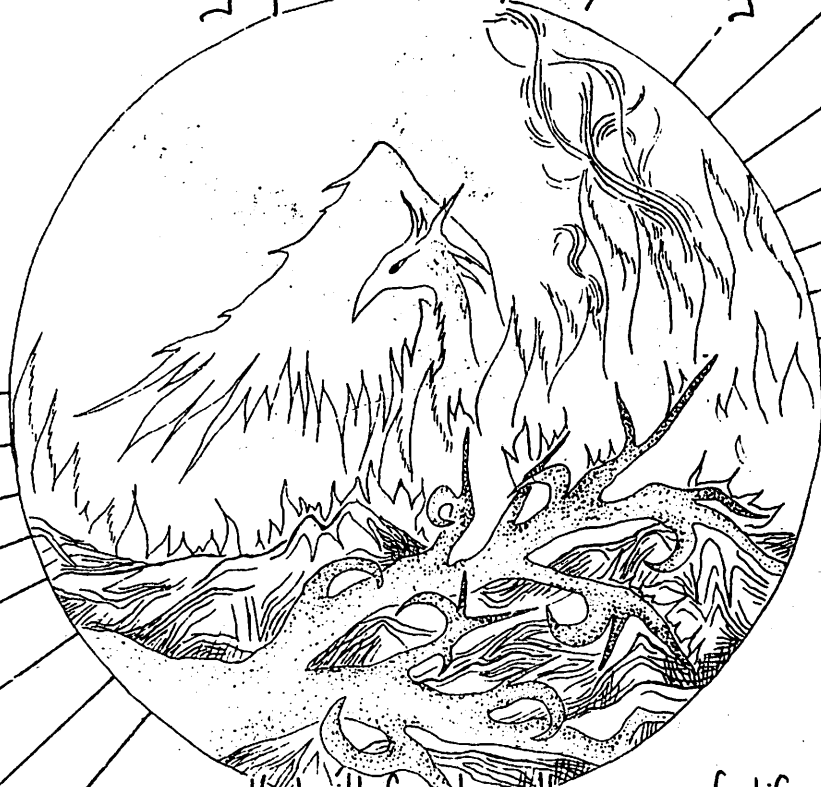
The contest began with Saichanat
 using his wings to mark his advance.
 But Kerrekurasarm stood against his attack
 with strength she drew from her father's blood.
 Her skill with weaponry matched his cunning;
 her speed on the ground matched his in the air.
 They came together again and again
 testing strength and skill and knowledge of combat.
 But the battle slowed as each saw the other
 with new-found wonder and respect,
 and finally stopped while each considered
 what he might do to end it at last.

Kerreku realized that she could never continue the fight as long as he, and marvelled at his power and constant drive which came, she knew, from the fire within him. Her only hope would be to try to reason with him and make him see that she could offer him more in life than he would take pleasure in her death. She spoke to him of creatures wild whom he knew only as objects of game. He saw them fight and flee and die but she knew them in love and in life. She offered to teach him and show him how he might live among them and be loved as well, and he listened to her and wondered if he could be accepted by them, as she had been.

As he considered, a rustling began below them in the battleground. The kitani grew restless at the pause and renewed their petty rivalries. A bowman's arrow went astray and wounded the phoenix at the breast. Saichanat bristled with the wound and the fury of the beast within him. Unleashing a burst of fire bright, he smote the reckless Kendari below and turned to Kerreku, fully aflame leaping at her in his blind rage. She succumbed to the heat and searing pain of the firebird's wrath and desperate attack, and to Saichanat's eyes, her aura of light and the bull's shape embracing her form faded away and winked out.



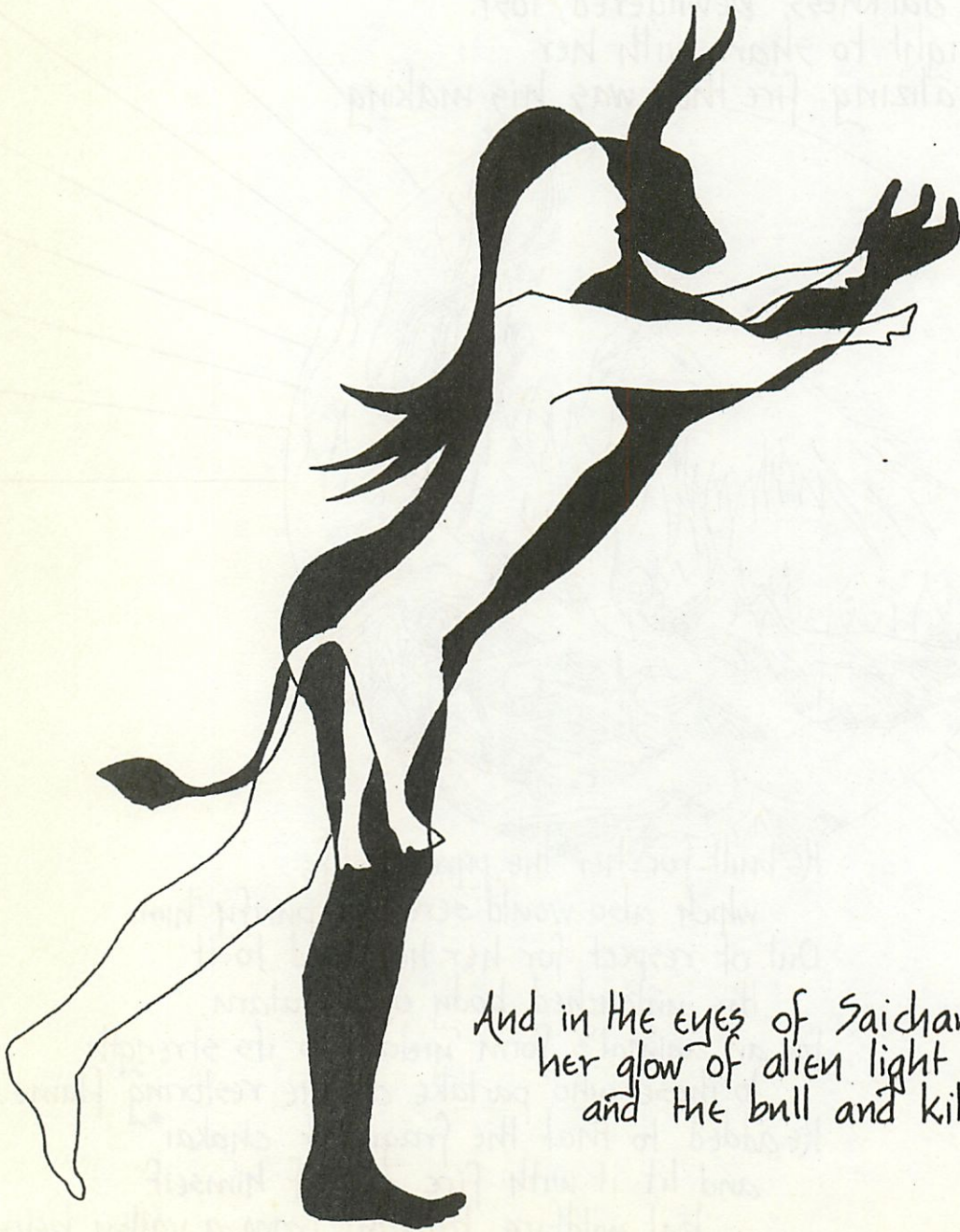
The phoenix, though, is not only a warrior;
 The renewer of life is also a lover
 of all that is beautiful and filled with light.
 He could not bear to bring such a death
 to the wondrous creature who met him so boldly.
 Uttering screams of malediction,
 he bore her away to his aerie high,
 leaving Kendari and Agau
 stranded in darkness, bewildered, lost.
 He deemed it right to share with her
 the immortalizing fire that was his making.



He built for her the pyre of life
 which also would serve to purify him.
 Out of respect for her he added to it
 the untouched body of Artataru,
 for an animal's form yields up its strength
 to those who partake of the restoring flame.
 He added to that the fragrant chakai*
 and lit it with fire not of himself
 but wildfire brought from a valley below.

* a cinnamon-like spice

He entered the pyre with Kerreku tucked
under one wing, lest the blaze overwhelm her.
When they emerged, they stood together:
the phoenix renewed in purity and power
and Kerrekurasarm, whole and stronger than ever.



And in the eyes of Saichanat
her glow of alien light burned brighter
and the bull and kitani were one.

Revised and edited
by Fern Marder and Carol Walske

The Legend of Akim Korosten

by Carol Walske

In the Books of the Orashathnavi, the written code of honor, there are a thousand legends. Some of them are myths, designed over the years to illustrate a particular facet of the complex structure of killingaven society; others are true. Many are borrowed out of history, then embellished and reweven by the master storytellers. One of these stories deals with Akim Korosten, a young man just entering adulthood, who must face his rite of passage, his imleth.

Akim Korosten was the Second-Son of Domain Korosten. Even today it is a far-flung and powerful household.

Akim was one of three children. His older brother, Kithiran, was off fighting in a war. His sister, Harada, had many duties to attend to. There was no one in the domain who would take the time to teach him of tradition, of attitudes, of customs; he watched those around him and learned what he could. He was very unsure of himself, and of his status.

It came time for Akim Korosten's imleth. He had heard little of the test, except for bleak whispers of those who did not return from it. He was terrified. In desperation he went to his father, the lord of the household, and asked for guidance.

The Eldest was busy, and said merely, "I can tell you nothing of the imleth. It is for each person to discover. No right or wrong exists."

"Can't you at least tell me what you did in the Passage?"

"No, I will not. What I did to survive might not work for you."

Akim left his father. The less people would explain, the more frightened Akim grew. He sought out his older sister. She was perhaps fifteen years older than he, and was very different in temperament and training.

"Harada," he said, being more direct than was usual in his family, "my imleth is three days away. Tell me of yours, and what I should do."

A far-off look came into Harada Korosten's eyes. Her voice was full of hesitation. "Cold, and hungry. Stricken unaware in the night. Hiding. Going out in the full heat of day when nothing stirred to find food. Searching among the tall sere grasses for some fallen, still-hidden seed. Always hungry--and afraid."

"Harada," cried her brother in an echo of that fear, "what should I do?"

Harada looked at him sidelong for several moments, thinking that perhaps she had said too much. "You face it, as everyone else does."

"But I don't want to face it!" cried the youngest son. "It's like being punished--being shut away in the dark and loneliness and you don't know what to do!"

Before Akim went to bed three nights later, water was given to him. He suspected it, but drank it anyway. A deep sleep came over him. Just before he lost all conscious thought, he felt the presence of people around him, and dimly felt hands lifting him up and carrying him.

Akim came fully awake. He was lying in hot dead yellow grass, hearing small rustling sounds all around him and birds overhead. He almost fell back to sleep, feeling warm and comfortable. . . then fear struck him and he leaped to his feet.

He looked down at himself. A short beige tunic had been put on him. He pulled out a knife that hung from a looped leather belt at his waist and looked at it curiously. It was a very fine knife, long and heavy and well-balanced.

He thought about the imleth, the test of strength and endurance and wit. For sixty-five days he must live in this desolate, lonely country--foraging, hunting, surviving.

East were mountains, red mountains all hazy from the sun; but Akim couldn't tell if they were the same mountains he saw from home every morning. West lay a dense wood. North and south the land rolled in short, sharp hills dotted with trees. Akim looked into the sun and determinedly walked forth.

Courage left him at the coming of night. Only resolve made him go on. He went very slowly; the ground was rough and his feet were sore. The land was rising in short abrupt swells. Akim would climb to the top of a gravelly, dry ridge only to find a sharp drop into a ravine. Eventually he gave up scrambling down cliffs and followed a widening ravine.

The small valley concealed a free running stream. He came upon the stream suddenly, just to see its disappearance; the water came down from the hills and vanished underground. It ran through the valley in a shallow clear wash over stones. Akim immediately waded in. He was struck by shock and pleasure at the icy freshness of the water. He impatiently pulled off his tunic, then laid it and his knife on a rock that rose dry and grey out of the stream. The sky was dark as he waded and splashed in the water. The only light, a cold shadowless gleam, came from the two moons rising in the sky.

He surprised a sura out of the brush that night. After searching diligently he found its nest under the roots of a tree; five tiny rodents were sleeping there, and he caught and ate every one. Hunger drove him, but afterwards he felt a faint disgust.

The next day Akim had a few unripe berries. The day after that, he looked musingly at some fruit that was probably poisonous, and thought longingly of roast sura.

He moved a little farther into the mountains in the evenings. He was very tired, sore and scared all the time. If he slept at all, it was only to awake with a jump at the sounds of some passing beast.

He withstood the test for fifteen days or more. One late afternoon after spending the entire day in some underbrush near water, he saw an animal come down to drink. He waited and sprang, but the beast easily evaded him. In desperation he threw his knife at it; the knife struck home in its hindquarters. The animal's run turned into a wild, frenzied flight that took it out of sight in seconds.

Akim stared after it and wept.

He went to sit down by the water. He stared morosely at his reflection-- a dirty, fear-worn, ignorant child looked back at him. His knife was gone-- and with it, his hope. He had no strength. He hadn't wit enough to survive. What to do now? Go on--or surrender and die.

Two days later, after knowing hunger, utter weariness and despair, Akim came up the herd of siyi in a fold of the hills and knew that he'd found a household. He looked around, looked up, up. . . there was a dwelling perched high atop a cliff, with a dark red mountain rising straight up behind it.

In this final effort, some strength born of determination came to Akim. Walking forward grimly, he found a narrow path carved out of the side of the mountain. With frequent stops he reached the top. Under the shadows of trees and on a cushion of springy tree-needles he found the house. He knocked once, and pushed the door open.

Standing in the doorway of the dwelling, silhouetted, he looked like a reflection of the darkness outside. The old couple within stared at him in mingled fear and curiosity. Fear because no one ever came to their dwelling in this part of the mountains; they had known only each other for many years.

Akim stood on the doorstep. He was exhausted, and filthy, and more than anything he wanted to get inside to safety. "May I come in?"

They made no move. The old man spoke. His voice was harsh, and his speech was filled with fragments of another, older language. "Why do you wander? Where are you from?"

"The people of my domain are all dead," Akim said simply. The lie did not bother him.

"How did they die?" asked the man.

By Akim's standards of courtesy, the man was being rude. "May I not come in?" he asked again. "I'm no thief. I'm cold and tired."

"Let him in, Karil," said the woman quietly. Then, as if fearing the

sound of her own voice, she got up and hurried into another room. Akim stepped inside stiff-legged and went toward the fire with hands outstretched. The man, after looking at him for a moment, got up and handed him a blanket. Akim took it with brief thanks and huddled close to the fire.

The woman came back out carrying a large wooden bowl full of something hot. It was some kind of delicious stew. Akim took it and finished it in seconds, and asked for more. But he was struggling to keep awake while he swallowed it, and was asleep against the warm stone wall before he'd finished the last mouthful.

Akim, hungry and a little feverish, briefly remembered waking out of a nightmare sometime the next day. He remembered being helped to eat something, and being lifted into a makeshift bed at the fireside.

When he awoke it was mid-afternoon. He stretched, and noticed that most of his aches had faded. "How long have I slept?" he muttered drowsily.

The woman, who was moving about working, heard him. "Two nights, a day, and all this morning," she said.

Once Akim got used to the mountain dialect, he learned that their names were Karil and Suowa Taralahir. Karil was a man who had tired of living in a large domain and had gone out to build his own. He claimed this part of the mountains--a part which everyone said was uninhabitable. But the hardy mountain siyi survived well here. Karil and Suowa grew a few vegetables, and the nearest household was only a few hours' travel over the hills for trading. Akim found Suowa very pleasant to listen to, and she seemed to enjoy talking. She asked no questions of him.

Karil Taralahir came in as night was falling and dropped a package on the table. "Meat," he said shortly. "I put some already in the cold cellar. There are seeds and vegetable roots outside waiting for the planting. A small harvest this year; we'll have trouble in the winter." Having said all he needed to say for the moment, he set about preparing dinner. Akim was invited to join them.

After dinner was over, Karil looked at Akim. "Well now. You look better today. What's your name?"

"Akim Manaam," he answered, inventing a name. "I thank you for your hospitality to me, Har Taralahir."

He grunted. "You're welcome. What happened to your domain?"

"There was a fire. Could I stay here? I can work."

Karil made no reply to that. He continued to ask questions about Akim and his domain. Finally, he said Akim could stay, until they decided what to do with him.

Akim never left Domain Taralahir. He wanted to hide his shame, so he worked hard to prove himself. Karil and Suowa found him useful to have around, became fond of him, and came to look upon him as their own son. He became Akim Taralahir.

Akim grew into a stern, quiet man, remembering luxury and knowing poverty. When his foster parents died, he married a mountain daughter, and she shared with him all the work of the domain. He caught and broke in two thakma foals and built a stable for them in the lee of the cliff. With determination and hard work they built a pasture, and so had a field for hay.

Four children were given to him and his life-sharer Umisa. Akim added a rough-built room with a loft to one side of their house. A son, then twin daughters, and a son again grew up in the mountains. They knew nothing better and wished for nothing better.

As Akim's oldest approached adolescence and the rite of passage, Akim began to feel old memories stirring. His mind went back twenty years to see the image of a sixteen-year-old boy frightened senseless by the darkness. The imleth was a subject hidden in darkness, and everyone was afraid to speak of it. He wondered why he had run away. His memories of the terror and pain had faded. He felt only shame at his flight.

He watched his children and knew deep guilt. How had he dared to try to teach them dignity and honor when he himself was a law-breaker? How could he speak of honor to them? How could he explain facing responsibility when he had run away from the first major responsibility of his life? Could he bear the pain of seeing his own children go through the imleth?

In six months, when his oldest son first felt his manhood, Akim knew it was time to face the problem that he'd avoided for over twenty years. He could not live any longer with the memory; now that his oldest son's imleth had come, his shame and bewilderment had become unbearable.

Akim told his son that his Passage would soon be forthcoming. The youth asked his father about the trial. Akim, who wanted to avoid lying, said only, "My own imleth was nothing to be proud of. All I can tell you is not to be afraid. When fear comes, out there during your first few days, face it. Make a decision. Act. Stay and consciously face your fear."

That evening he told Umisa that he must visit friends in the lowlands. He asked her to arrange for their son's imleth with their nearest neighbors. Umisa, who trusted him, wished him a safe journey.

In the morning Akim Taralahir/Korosten left Domain Taralahir and began the journey into the lowlands, toward half-remembered images from the past. Stepping out of Domain Taralahir's boundaries, he knew himself to be an outcast, a man without any household.

* * *

After twenty-two years, Akim Korosten was returning home. He rode slowly through the once-familiar lands. Akim thought he would feel more at seeing long-remembered places, but all he could find within himself was a dull emptiness.

Today was a market-day; the central parts of the domain were open to all. He passed by strangers leading animals for slaughter, people earnestly bargaining over goods, men dragging carts full of in-season fruits. He was one more person slowly picking a path through the crowd.

At the Eldest's indwelling he was stopped and asked his business. A man stepped out of the doorway as Akim looked around uncertainly. "What do you want here?" he asked, courteously but firmly.

"I wish to see the Lord of the Domain. It is a personal matter involving the code of honor."

The man looked at him and frowned. "The Emisa Harada Korosten rules this household."

"What happened to Kithiran, the heir?"

"He died fighting in foreign wars," said the man, raising an eyebrow at Akim's ignorance. "Can I give the Emisa your name?"

"Akim," he said briefly.

"Just Akim?"

"Akim is enough."

A few minutes later, Akim was ushered in. His sister awaited him in a little-used, private room near the entry hall.

The Emisa Harada Korosten looked up at him politely with faint curiosity. Her confusion increased as she studied Akim's face. "Have you no other name than Akim?" she inquired.

"I lost my right to a heritage name twenty-two years ago," said Akim quietly. To his surprise, the words came out quite easily. "Before then, I was Akim Korosten."

At that, Harada came out from behind the table, and stopped just a few inches from Akim. She looked at him long and searchingly. "My younger brother Akim? But he's dead."

"No, my sister. I said it was a matter of honor." Akim gazed into his sister's face, feeling about ten years old. "I ran away from the imleth."

Harada appeared not to hear his last words. "Little Akim! It really is you! After twenty years?" Her amazement turned, within the space of a breath, to shock and anger. "What do you mean? Didn't you finish your Passage, Akim?"

"No," said Akim wearily. "I fled from it." He searched Harada's expression, trying to find traces of the sister he once knew. But Harada was now merely a stern, proud woman, harassed by the duties of leading the domain. "Harada, may I sit down? I've been travelling long."

"Of course," said Harada automatically. There was a short silent wait as each stared at the other.

"Akim," commented Harada, "you look like a peasant."

Akim, who had been noticing the fine sleek wood on the walls and the inlaid stone floor, glanced up, frowning. He felt out of place, in his rough unadorned riding tunic. "So what if I am?"

"You could've done better for yourself by going through with your imleth. Either you were scared to face us, for you never came home. You gave up your family, your name--for what?" Harada stared at him. "For a warm cave in the hills and beasts as your only company?"

"I have a life-sharer and four strong children," retorted Akim, his irritation growing.

"Why did you leave them then? Why do you come back to disturb me? As far as I was concerned, you were dead. Why didn't you let it remain that way?"

Akim, astonished, stared at Harada. "Tell me something," he said, "does it matter to you that I was once your brother?"

"Not very much," said Harada candidly. "It's too much trouble. Why did you come back?"

Akim looked at her, feeling unaccountably helpless. He was ill-used to dealing with sharp-tongued strangers. And this woman, his sister long ago, was very alien to him.

All of a sudden, Akim found the words to voice his frustration. He said heatedly, "You ask 'why'---I'll tell you. It's because of you and our father and this domain--the tradition that makes the imleth such a mystery for those of this family. You conceal it; you hide from it in shame.

"You were lucky, sister. You knew how to hunt, and how to hide. And Kithiran--well, he was always a good fighter; he probably challenged every beast he came across. So both of you knew something of the ways of survival. What was I? The forgotten youngling whom no one had time for.

"If you wanted to kill me, why didn't you do it at birth, and save yourself a burden? I was as good as dead; I--spoiled, lazy, fearful--could hardly survive a day on my own skills. The imleth is a quick way to death for anyone who hasn't been taught of it."

"You betrayed a trust," Harada said forcefully. "You left the code of honor. And the punishment for running away from imleth is death."

"I know," said Akim, his face full of sorrow and defiance. "I also know that you wield the power of death over me, since you head this domain and I was once a part of this family. But you do not own my children. They are free." Akim rose and stood proudly. "I came here to repay my debt. I will return to you, Emisa Korosten, and you can take my life, for being an oath-breaker and a coward. But first I will tend to my domain."

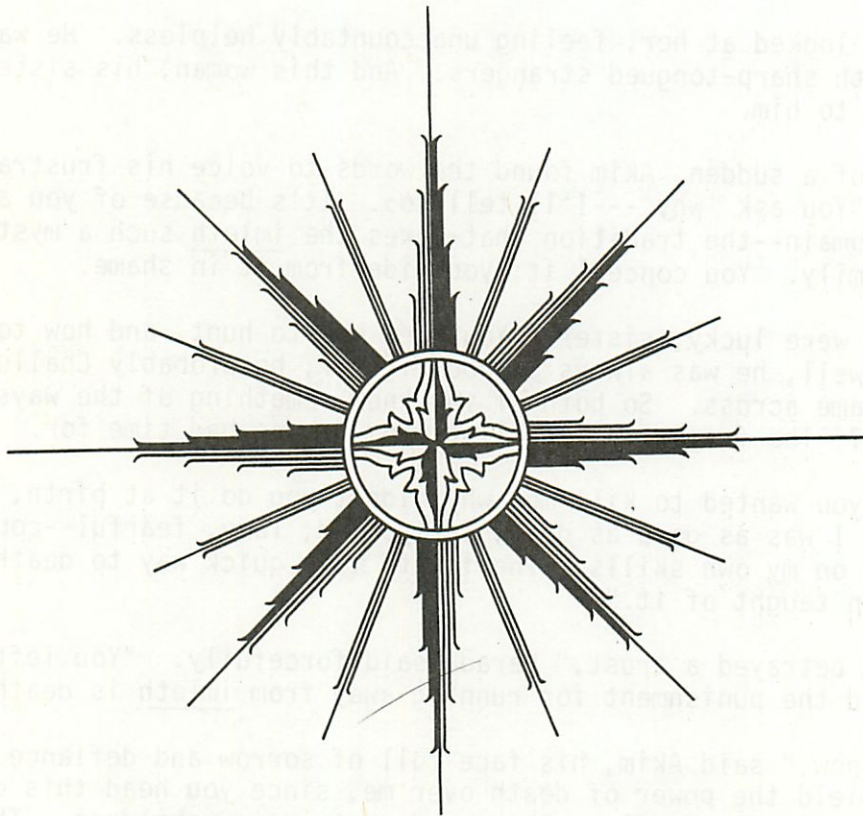
"But what are you going to do?"

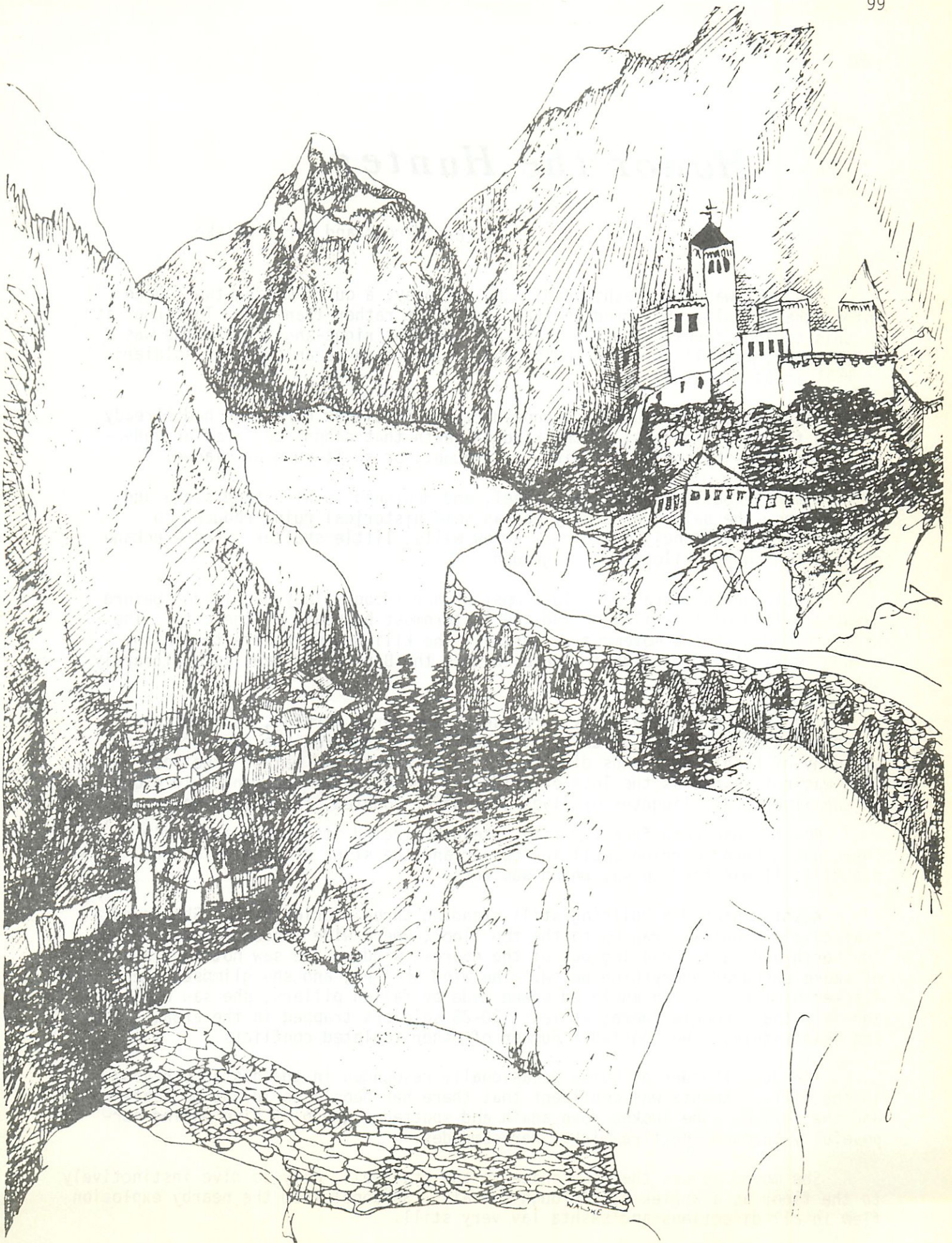
"I'm going to return to my household," said Akim, still feeling the burn of anger. "My heritage to my children is knowledge. I'll teach them of the

Passage. They are all strong and capable; they will survive. And after they return from imleth, they will teach others. I'll ask them to come to this domain, to teach the unknowing people here.

"The imleth will become a true Passage, in which the child will be able to learn about himself and his skills--no longer will people have to go through their waking lives trying to deal with things they've never confronted and mastered--fear, courage, shame, honor, pride." Akim barely paused. "Farewell, Harada. I will return to you when my work is finished."

And so Akim Korosten, having conquered his inner shame and fear, left his domain once again. He had faced the final test. He went forth, this time glad to face the task before him.





WALKE

Honor the Hunter

by Fern Marder and Carol Walske

The Hunt was on. Keshta had found her prey, a quick-moving two-footed animal that usually preferred to stand and fight rather than run. To corner it in this strange forest of metal trees and straight right-angling growths was her purpose; to kill it as an individual, rather than as an obedient soldier; to kill it as a hunter.

The battle that fluctuated unpredictably in either direction had already claimed too many fighters, in the kind of death that cannot be faced or understood--death as by sudden wildfire, or drought, or swift-running plague.

Strongly built of stone and steel, and designed to withstand siege and assault, now the beleaguered city was as some historical ruin, reduced to scattered rubble, lonely buildings, a few walls, little shelter. The wreckage covered ten square kilometers of ground.

Lieutenant Shatarang had lost most of her troop. They had landed before dawn in a fold of the hills behind the westernmost boundary of the city. The hills teemed with the movement of forces. The killingau were here to win the planet back; it had been theirs once, before the Border had been so arbitrarily set.

The Federen were taken by surprise at the early morning, foul-weather attack, but they rallied quickly. The chilly fog hampered the jump-troopers and many of Keshta's friends died in trying to breach the walls. The loss of life was not so bad as the loss of pride and honor. Only Federen could glory in the impersonal slaughter of lives they never counted, faces they never saw.

Black smoke rose from the city. Keshta circled its edges cautiously. There was a burnt carrion smell in the air and the stink of chemicals and plastics; it was hard to say which was worse.

Keshta entered a building still standing three stories high. She found a staircase and quickly ran up to the top floor, where wide windows looked out to the north and east. Peering out of the nearest window, she saw nothing; a pall of smoke obscured everything below. The wind shifted, and she glimpsed the flicker of fire. In an enclosed space made by fallen pillars, she saw explosions and felt the struggle there; at least 20-25 soldiers trapped in the area, fighting desperately. She spotted a number of other isolated conflicts.

The dull thunder of bombs occasionally resounded in the distance beyond, in the hills. Keshta was confident that there her people could not be beaten, and she smiled. She looked down again and spotted a group of five moving purposefully through the fire-mirk. Her comrades.

She moved across the open space to the stairwell, only to dive instinctively to the floor as a shriek cut through the air. Shrapnel from the nearby explosion flew in all directions and Keshta lay very still.

After a long minute she crawled to the broken window, calling herself harsh names. In the bell-tower of a building across the street a shadow in a dull grey-green uniform moved. 'None but a Terran would wear the color of death in a uniform,' she thought. She unhooked a grenade from her belt and threw it overhand, almost carelessly. The bell gave out one deep agonized note and the tower shattered.

She leaped down the stairs three at a time, slowing abruptly at the sound of weapons firing. She plunged out into hot smoke. The enemy came out of nowhere on all sides; she whirled, sending burrowing heat-seeker darts at two of them. The third fired at her, missing. She shouted out a claim for death in war and lunged forward, catching him off-balance, killing him instantly with a blow to the head.

Keshta scrambled off, taking refuge behind a lone, concrete wall. She inched her way along it, crouching low, and stumbled over an inert form. The still-warm body of a killing. She could not see the face, but the troop insignia on the uniform was the same as her own. 'So,' she thought, 'some of them did make it this far.'

A sidelong glance warned her of company. She threw herself down on the ground, next to the corpse. A grey-clad figure ran by and ducked around the next corner.

She spoke softly to the one beside her. "I have a few deaths to avenge, yours not the least, my friend." She looked ahead. "I claim that one's life for yours." Then, she, too, darted down the street.

From her aerial reconnaissance, Keshta had a good idea where the Federen had disappeared. She ran at a weaving lope, staying close to cover.

A backpack dangled from the top of a breached wall. Keshta looked at it from afar and thought of traps and subterfuge. She hid in a pile of debris and waited.

Time passed. On a hunch Keshta picked up a stone and lobbed it at the gear, nodding as it burst into flame. Incendiary.

The Federen was not only alive but clever. He didn't know the first thing about patience, however, Keshta thought as she watched a shape ooze out of a hole in the ground. She reached back into her pouch for a javelin and tested its balance, waiting and letting the enemy get closer to his death.

The incendiary had sparked some garbage by the wall into a blaze. Her adversary circled it once and stood with his back to her. Keshta's short spear whistled through the air, hit the target square between the shoulderblades-- and bounced off.

Keshta leaped out, landing full on his back and knocking the breath out of him. 'Metal underwear,' she thought in wry wonder. Instantly she yanked away his splinter gun, hung an active grenade on one end, and hurled it away. The explosion shook an already weak wall and brought rocks tumbling down around them.

The man was dazed. Swiftly and fiercely Keshta started stripping him of weapons. He awoke at her touch and flailed about, blindly. She got her first close look at the Federen: ferret-face with hazel eyes and grain-colored hair.

Astonishment brought out adrenaline violence in the Terran. He broke free and ran. Keshta grinned widely and followed.

In a forest or amid plains one hunted animals; in cities, one hunted men.

Keshta wished she were again among kilingau. She longed to return to the Ormenel, to its center the Kilingarlan, to her small domain in desert hills.

This was unfamiliar territory. She slipped through flows of plastic that had melted, run, and solidified again. She glimpsed her prey dart into a three-dimensional maze of steel girders, and she followed.

The battle around them did not touch their senses directly as they ran, pursuer and pursued, through the streets. Keshta had the vague impression that most of the city was burning, now, forcing the conflict elsewhere. She did not know whether anyone else still fought; it was no longer her concern. Armies could and would continue fighting. She was tired.

The sound of airships above brought Keshta up short. She could not make out their markings, whether friends or foes, as they dropped their burden of destruction around her. The escaping Terran also halted, confronted by an exploding refinery spraying jets of flaming liquid. He turned, in search of an open path, but found that the fires had spread, surrounding him. And Keshta.

The killing faced him warily. 'Let the death of another come from your own hands, if you must kill. Know your enemy. Respect his right to die.' Keshta mouthed the words, savoring them as she drew her long knife.

Keshta and the Federen struggled for the weapon. Physically stronger, the man wrested it away and in one swift movement struck her under the ribs. She tripped him as she fell forward; the knife dropped out of his hands as they sprawled in the dirt. Keshta seized the blade. She lunged at him, aiming for the neck--and her weapon snapped against the collar of his armor.

They grappled. The Federen seemed hesitant; his hand-to-hand fighting was restrained, awkward. Keshta smiled faintly. Remove the weapons, remove the defenses, and find the man.

She pinioned him with her full weight, her hands tightening around his throat. It seemed to take a long time. When at last the creature gave up its tormented struggles, she collapsed across him, her body inert.

Her ripped stomach rebelled when she at last tried to rise. It was a deep and grave injury, she admitted silently.

Death approached. Keshta moved weakly, finding the pain bearable, yet distracting. Images came to her of fire, of a herd of animals stampeding across a plain and of her father teaching her the somewhat archaic art of sword-smithing.

What good was sword-mastery against the present's mindless weapons that brought instant, far-reaching devastation?

A strain from a Hunter's song ran through her mind, bringing with it a sharp scent of spicy trees growing amid waterparched red sandstone. A memory of the day she had stalked a cliffcat and killed it. It had been a more clever hunter than she, waiting in a tree and jumping down to attack her as she passed. Wounded--a bite in one calf and deep clawmarks in her side--she had run, and finally killed it with a falling rock. An ignominious way to die.

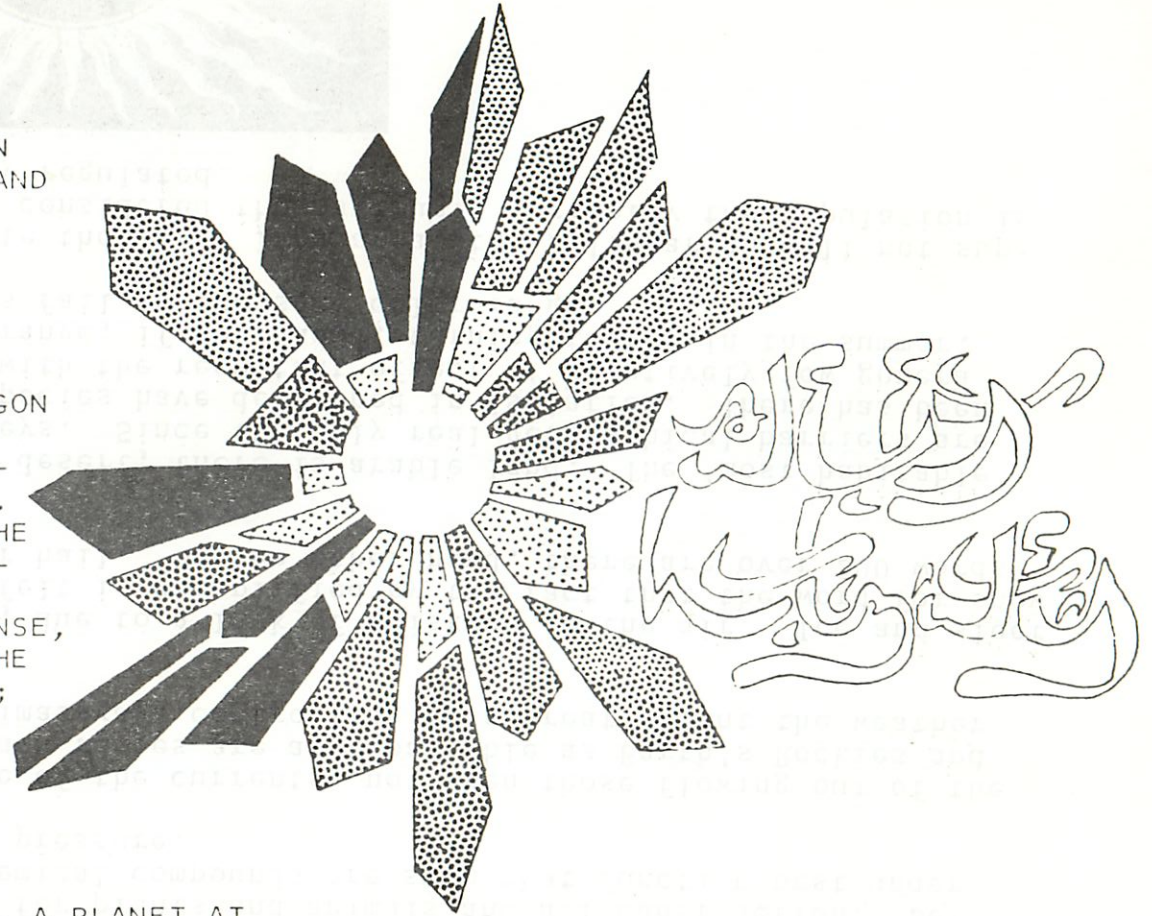
Keshta would be more fortunate. Death would come with honor. She had faced her opponent on her terms, confronting him in personal combat with the weapons of her choice. The enemy had fallen before her--the approaching fire would not rob her of her moment's victory.



AKNAUHRAIAND IS A WORD, A THOUGHT, AN IDEAL. AKNAUHRAIAND IS EACH PLANET AND STAR IN ITS PLACE MOVING IN PERFECT CIRCLES; AKNAUHRAIAND IS THE DANCE WHERE NO ONE EVER MISSES A STEP.

NU ORMENEL NU KILINGARLAN--THE KILINGON EMPIRE--IS ONE KIND OF AKNAUHRAIAND. THE ORMENEL IS A NET, A WEB OF INTERWOVEN IDEAS AND POLICIES AND ACTIONS. THE AKNAUHRAIAND OF THE ORMENEL IS THE SYSTEM THAT TIES THE PLANETS AND SPECIES OF THE ORMENEL TOGETHER; PHYSICALLY IT COMPRISES THE LINES OF DEFENSE, COMMUNICATION, AND TRADE THAT LINK THE GREAT SPACES OF THE ORMENEL TOGETHER; IDEOLOGICALLY IT IS AN EXPRESSION OF ENLIGHTENMENT, COMPETITION, AND SURVIVAL.

KILINGAU, NATIVES OF THE KILINGARLAN, A PLANET AT THE CENTRAL NODE OF THE NET, HAVE MUCH TO DO WITH THE AKNAUHRAIAND: THEIR THOUGHTS INITIATED IT, SHAPED IT, AND NOW MAINTAIN IT. IT IS TO THEM THAT ONE MUST LOOK FOR ANSWERS TO THE PUZZLE OF THE SECRETIVE ORMENEL. IT IS IN THEIR CULTURE AND HISTORY THAT ONE FINDS A FEW OF THE UNDERLYING PRECEPTS; STUDYING THEM, ONE BEGINS TO UNDERSTAND THE SYSTEM, THE SHAPE OF AN EMPIRE.



NU KILINGARLAN

The Kilingarlan, second planet out from a blazing young sun, is called 'Flameworld' by its own natives.

The land area is very vast, and of that land area, near to 50% of it is arid or semi-arid in climate and conditions. Temperatures range from a high of 199° F in the Bahradsamar of Samarsa to a low of -84° F on the south polar cap. Throughout most 'habitable' areas, it is common to have temperatures of 90-120° F in the summer, with lows of 20-40° F in the winter.

The slightly higher mass of the Kilingarlan indicates a richer atmosphere and the higher surface gravity requires stronger internal structure for plants and animals and all construction. Because of the heat and gravity, alloys and chemical compounds are such that function best under the harshest conditions of heat, dryness and pressure.

Oceans are small and exceedingly briny. None of the currents, not even those flowing out of the polar regions, are particularly cold. Mountain ranges are as impassable as Earth's Rockies and often higher than the highest peaks of the Himalayas, controlling to a great extent the weather patterns of both hemispheres.

Snow is almost unheard of on the Kilingarlan, due to a lack of moisture in the air. Ice and sleet are known. How rarely these conditions are felt is exemplified by the fact that the word for snow in Agavoi is the same word for ice, sleet, or hail. On the other hand, there are over 200 words for various kinds of heat and dryness.

Between mountain and desert, between sea and desert, there is arable land. The 'most habitable' areas are the thickly forested mountain valleys. Since the only real geographical barriers are the mountains, none of the plant or animal species have developed in isolation. There has been much mixing of species throughout the past, with the resultant effect of relatively few genera and few species. Vegetation is yellow and orange; if deciduous, turning to red in the summer, magenta-purple in the fall. Animals' pelages fall in the same color range.

Because of the unfavorable conditions, despite the large land area, the Kilingarlan will not support a very high population. Two billion is considered the maximum. Currently the population is about one and a half billion and is carefully regulated.



Diameter 12,905km
Distance from primary 1.59 X 10⁸km

Revolution period (in Earth terms) 400d 0h 1m 27s

Actual Revolution period 389d 24h 8m 27s

Inclination of axis 19°

Rotation period 24h 36m 55s

Satellites
KIRTH

Diam. 2351km
Dist. 150,480km
App. diam. .895°
Lunar month 32d

ORITH
Diam. 449km
Dist. 49,020km
App. diam. .525°
Lunar month 13.8d

Mass 1.1
⊕ = 1

Surface Gravity 1.07
⊕ = 1

Escape Velocity 13.6km/sec

Age 5.3Bill yrs

Geological Activity reasonably stable

Atmosphere O₂ O₃ CO₂ N₂

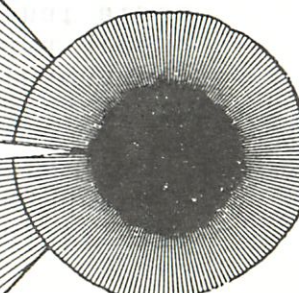
% Land area 66%

% Water 34%

Planet Class M

Year months
GETHENI NAUR
GIRITHRON ARHAD
ORODNATHON STRETH
THERN ODSORDNI
SARN ORALD

KILINGARLAN



Kilingau (singular, kiling: /ke-ling/) are the tool-making/using humanoids (kitani anlar) species that have become the 'dominant' species of the Kilingarlan.

In physiognomy they are similar to humans. Nervous systems and organs are functionally the same. (The theory exists here too that some highly meddlesome race 'seeded' likely planets with hominids many millions of years ago.) Differences lie in metabolism, in the form and effect of hormones, in the small specialized functions that represent a species' evolution with respect to its environment.

On a mainly hot, dry, sandy/windy planet, kilingau show the following specializations/adaptations:

- o no vestigial tail or gills
- o skin adapted to get rid of heat instead of absorbing it
- o capillaries very close to surface of the skin
- o sweat and oil glands that secrete a product that evaporates extremely quickly for rapid cooling, yet at the same time protects the skin from damage from wind and sand
- o special pigments concentrated in melanophores over most of the surface area of the body which react very quickly to solar radiation; one race of kilingau (Hausamar) is known to change color just in the interval of walking from cool, shaded area into strong sunlight. (Some vary in the depth of the color change, so that areas hit by direct sunlight will be far darker than areas only obliquely hit by solar radiation)
- o fine but prevalent body hair which acts as an efficient water trap, being coated with a somewhat salty secretion that bonds the water to itself
- o in times of great heat, almost all the blood goes to the surface capillaries, and a hormone reduces body functions, particularly metabolism, to nearly nothing.

Internal temperature is high (106.3° F) which allows a kiling to withstand higher external temperatures (a creature can tolerate external temperatures lower than its internal temperature longer and more easily than external temperatures higher than its own). Heart rates range from 80 to 95. Metabolic rates are very high, requiring frequent high-energy intake.



Kendari

Skin color various shades of light red-brown.

Hair red-brown to black. Prevalent 'two-tone' effect--red hairs mixed with black hairs, etc.

Eyes Hazel
Grey
Brown
Black

Agau

Skin color shades of brown.

Hair usually black, some brown, dark brown. Tends to be straight.

Hair on head tends to grow down the nape of the neck to between the shoulders.

Eyes Black
Shades of brown

Komethe

Skin color lighter, faintly more orange than other races. Shows a strong response to sunlight.

Hair black or blue-black. Tends to be 'furry,' thick over ribs, extends around to lower back.

Eyes Green
Blue-grey
Blue-black
Black

Hausamar

Skin color strongly reddish. Colors range from russet to copper. In sunlight skin becomes dappled a deep red-brown on face, shoulders and front of arms down to elbow, pectoral region, all of the back, outside of the thigh.

Hair ranges in color through white-blonde, blonde, red-blonde, red, auburn

Eyes Blue
Green
Hazel
Grey

Serbirling

Skin color very, very dark--chocolate to blue-black.

Hair is black, black mixed with grey, or grey-blue.

Hairless except for head hair, eyebrows, light scattering of hair over abdomen and groin.

Tendency for small toe to be separated from toespread, allowing for better grip.

Eyes Black
Dark grey
Dark brown

RACIAL DISTINCTIONS BEYOND HAIR COLOR, SKIN COLOR, ETC. ARE SO SUBTLE AS TO ESCAPE CLASSIFICATION

Land areas: found in Kemnoth, northern Anorth, and northern Samarsa.

Land areas: found in Avraun, Kor-khost, and southwestern Soth Hur.

Land areas: found in Soth Hur, western Elem Torshi, Anorth, and S'marha.

Land areas: found in Isilya and Samarsa.

Land areas: found in southern Kor-khost and eastern Elem Torshi.



Five racial groups of the Kilingarlan

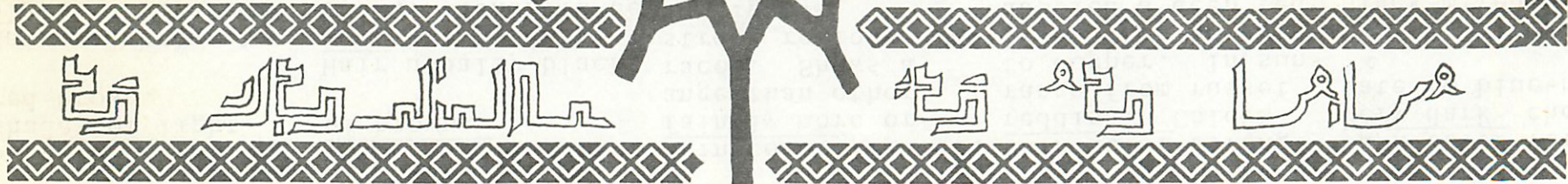
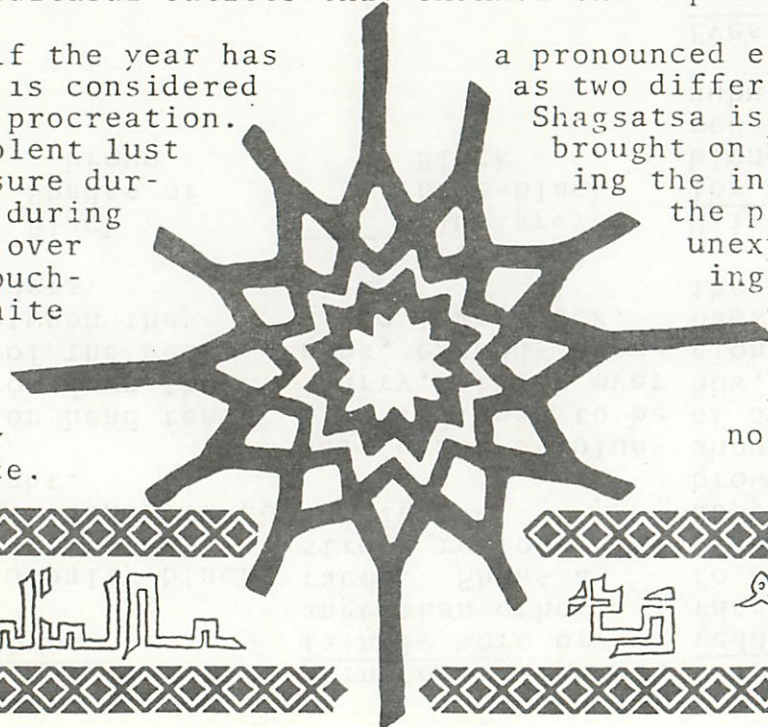


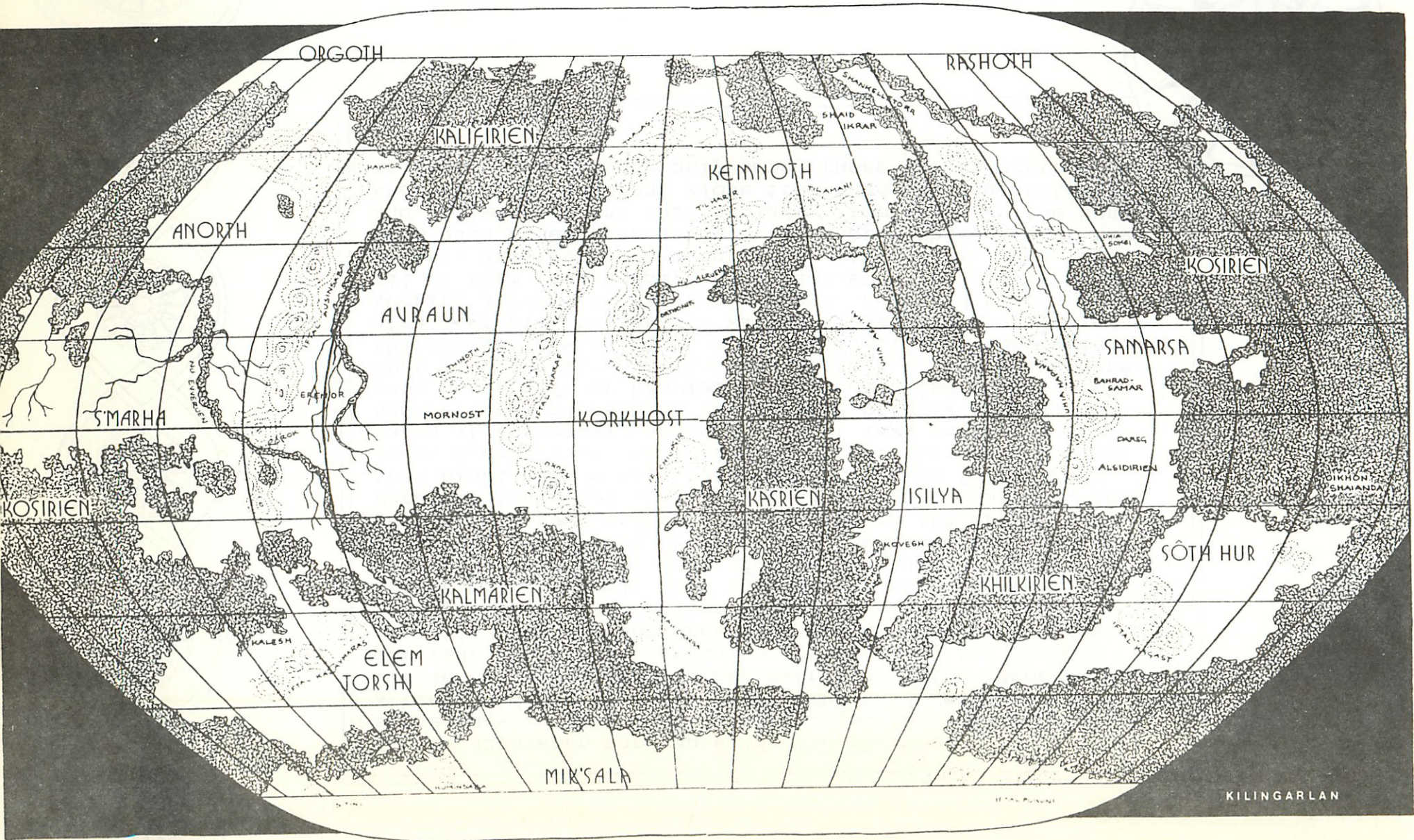
The effect of hormones is particularly noticeable during the estrous cycle. Kilingau can be considered as being basically neuters; for six months of the year males and females are infertile and fairly inactive. At the beginning of each year, with the rapid rise in temperature and absorbed solar radiation, the production of certain hormones is keyed: these hormones regulate sexual function. Females cycle once a month for the first four months and males are fertile throughout the first four months, all within a narrow external and internal temperature range.

The first 'cycle,' or reaction, in the first month (Getheni) is unusually powerful in both its physical and physiological effects. The sudden release of hormones, opening new pathways in the brain, has drastic results: turning bravery into foolhardiness, annoyance into fury, ingenuousness into reckless irrationality. Out of the sarasu comes untempered aggressiveness; and kilingau, while commonly more belligerent than most species, do know when to avoid violence. Kilingau do not fight wars during sarasu, knowing that no one could possibly survive. Kilingau know to be especially cautious in the social interactions during this time, for the urge to kill over a slight difference of opinion is very strong. Thus orashathnavi, and krassanaiath and srothar, and the other cultural outlets that channel the unpredictability of sarasu.

Being infertile over half the year has mores of kilingau. Sex is considered and shagsatsa, play and procreation. the mindless, rather violent lust any form of shared pleasure during is virtually impossible during there are never worries over becomes as natural as touch-liked. There is a definite sure a learnable skill, logously, a tennis if both parties are ex- is most often definitely takes on added importance.

a pronounced effect on the sexual as two different concepts: kirjata Shagsatsa is sex for reproduction, brought on by sarasu; kirjata is ing the inactive six months. Rape the period of infertility; unexpected children; and sex ing the hand of someone emphasis on making plea- for kirjata--and, ana- match--is more exciting pert. Since shagsatsa not a pleasure, kirjata



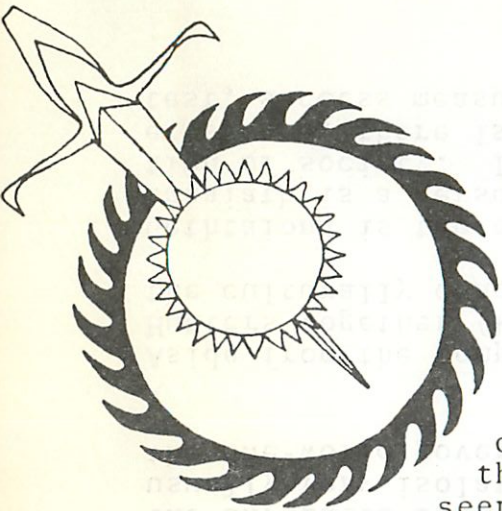


In the days when men ran wild with the wolves there arose a creature in the night capable of killing whole packs at a blow, and its name was Fear. The Wild Council met, a Circle of grey wolves, amber bears and lithe copper men, but fear had already begun to spread among the members of the Wild Council, and green and black eyes gleamed restlessly. The oldest killer there rose, saying that Fear struck most strongly when the numbers were greatest, and that one person alone must face the menace oneself, and either be overcome by Fear or else overcome it. The suggestion was new, and caused stirring in the group, for were all tasks not shared by all? The man insisted, and that night made vigil by one small well of fire. Fear came, fierce red-tinged blackness, but the one who kills faced it staunchly, and was able at last to master it. And Fear was pleased by the courage of this animal, and gave him a gift of knowledge, that each individual alone must find the strength to conquer fear. With proud hope the Hunter prowled back to the Council. But they were afraid of him, because he walked alone, and they yowled keening screams to drive him away. Fear had bitten into all of them very deeply, because they would not face themselves, and they became infected with madness, and fled from each other mindlessly. The Hunter chased after them, and killed each one that ran away from him. So the Hunter knew that he must hunt alone from then on, and must look to find brief company only among those who understood fear.



The Hunter's Mythos: Cycle 6





Cultural Prototype: The Hunter

Interactions between kilingau are consistently on the terms of aggressor-defender. Dominance and competition are a constant part of all individual reactions--one either fights or one does not. Put very simply, interactions among kilingau can be split into two types: physical aggression and verbal aggression.

Interactions and their level of belligerence range from debate (simple conversation) to open combat. A kiling considers the word of no one sacred, considers everything open to question and attack. A statement of opinion or fact may become the subject of a killing-feud, just on the basis that neither will accept the other's arguments and contentions. Debate--seen as a formalized, verbal method of aggression--is the mode for thought, the method by which decisions can be made and enforced. It is the expression of peaceful competition, as opposed to the often drastic means of physical competition.

The broad choice, to debate or to fight, is the *raison d'etre* of orashathnavi. Orashathnavi is the legal code that attempts to govern choice, to make the subjective decisions of 'right' and 'non-right' (legal/non-legal) in interactions of a violent nature. Orashathnavi is the regulation of violence; it reduces situations of fear, tension, and aggression to levels of reasoned choice. In a society where life is definitely not held sacred, the existence of a 'code' such as orashathnavi is important. It seeks to be the law that governs anarchy. On the simplest level, it reflects the ancient reasoning "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" and the quick retribution/dissolution of harm done to a person's honor or pride.

In a culture where, in nine cases out of ten, a murder is not judged a 'wrong,' there is little need of a force for 'law enforcement'--a police force that supposedly prevents and counteracts crime. The only concept that could be called crime 'prevention' is the education that one receives in Orashathnavi, the ethical standards that one is expected to live up to; the counteraction of crime by a 'force' which knows nothing of that crime is considered silly. Action of a punitive sort is taken by a friend or relative of the person harmed--or the question may be taken by someone involved to the Akairas Eshineth.

There is a legal body in this structure, which has some capacity to act as an enforcement body also. The Akairas Eshineth, a phrase that roughly translates as "Judge of the State," state being both the recognized, formal political body or the prevailing social conditions of the time--the status quo, the moods and cultural concepts of the day. The Akairas Eshineth's function is to maintain the political and social state by regulating the interactions of people, by controlling the violence so apt to change the structure and smooth continuity of the status quo. The Akairas Eshineth is the intermediary, neutral body that will decide if a deed is 'wrong'--

that is, going against the social mores and attitudes of the day--as formally expressed in the written Orashathnavi.

The Akairas Eshineth does not have the right, however, to step into a situation unasked: as a neutral, it must be approached for any decision. It can only react. Its enforcement half, the Sukoshnirsin, are a 'police force' only to the extent that they are empowered to carry out punitive measures decided by the court. If they attempt to take action on their own volition, they are dealt with on the same basis as any other individual who has infringed upon the wishes of others. The right is reserved to krasai'in and the military to act--to make judgments involving the wishes of large numbers of people.

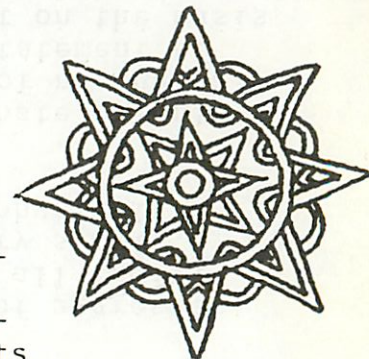
Anarchy, or the high ideal in Kilingarlan culture of the Hunter, an individual self-sufficient self-complete, is only possible with very small groups of people who haven't the inclination of the need to act as a group. When a number of people come together and decide to act as a group--to set up any endeavor requiring more than one person's efforts--then a structure appears, must appear.

On one level, this structure is the krasaia. The krasaia is nothing so much as an instrument for communication, trade growth. The krasaia at its smallest is the family-unit, banded together for protection and higher production; expanded, the krasaia takes care of children, provides resources and skills for those not self-sufficient, and makes the decisions that govern the krasaia and its people as a whole.

As a political body, the krasaia is the expression of a group's territoriality; it is a governing state, an association of tribal clans led by one powerful clan, on an area of land, having its own laws and existing somewhat independently of the major government. It is organized usually as a 'military family'--a chain of command system beginning with the Emis (first/father) of the krasaia and devolving down through near-kin to half-relations to the last basic unit, the unrelated free-farmers or free-hunters. Each krasaia is highly vocal, opinionated, and usually very isolationist, creating the effect of 3000 small governments or cultures within the one-world government.

Aside from the complex honor code of orashathnavi, another force that links the Hunters together (kiling means hunter in an older form of Agavoi: /ki-liny/ is the culturally conditioned erhic of krassanaiath and gethtaiond.

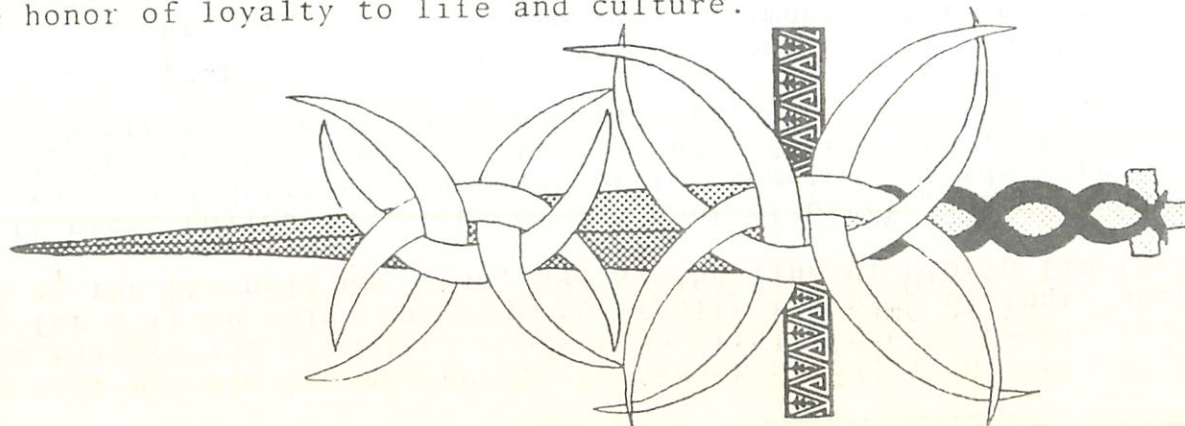
Gethtaiond is the expression of a person's relationship to him/herself. Krasanaiath is a person's interactions with other individuals and with the abstraction of society. In gethtaiond, the person has ultimate existence, solipsistic existence; there is competition with the uncaring universe, survival of the fittest, success measured by strength and skill and intelligence. If carried to its



logical extreme, gethtaiond would demand of an individual the death of every other individual and the final culmination of suicide, but before then the orderliness of krassanaiath steps in and regulates an individual's interactions with the persons around him/her. Srothar is added to krassanaiath, srothar which means honor and dignity and pride---face. Under the ethics of krassanaiath, one can lose face or gain it; the more ethical, the higher one's self-esteem and face before others. Krassanaiath reflects the idea that each individual, however intrinsically important, is subordinate to what that individual adds to the culture. Krassanaiath is order, duty, loyalty; strongly counteracting the utter selfishness of gethtaiond. Together these elements make a citizen complete.

As a corollary to this, the idea of freedom must be forever a non sequitur. Gethtaiond is freedom, but total exploitation of gethtaiond is destructive, anarchistic Chaos. A free man, to a killing, is a man who knows no rules. Kilingau understand that an individual must submit to a certain set of rules or a code in order to interact with other individuals; no person can ever be free, except the few unprincipled outcasts who worship freedom, murder in the name of freedom, and try to pervert others to the lawlessness of freedom.

The story of the dissonant harmony of gethtaiond and krassanaiath is sometimes told this way: A hunter who walks alone sees a ranger, and in the carelessness of his thoughts there comes a desire to destroy the unaware ranger, because the supposed offender is standing in his way, or drinking from his stream, or has a nose a centimeter too long. The hunter says to the offender: "Destroy oneself; one is disturbing my dignity and equanimity." A fight follows. The ranger summons a strength born of indignant wrath, and fells the hunter. The ranger stands over the subdued hunter staring down at him. The hunter asks, "Kill me." "Gladly," responds the ranger, and chokes the life out of him, because the hunter dared to impose upon him with overweening selfishness and in defiance of the respect due another, and in irrational defiance of the honor of loyalty to life and culture.



Agavoi, the most prevalent language of the Aknauhraiand, is a language of many parts. It originated on the Kilingarlan in Avraun among a powerful group of people called the Agau. (Agau, once a name for a tribe only, has come to signify the name of that racial grouping.) Olorin, first Ormen of the Ormenel, was Agau, and as the line of Olorin flourished Agavoi prospered.

Agavoi, as it grew, pulled in pieces of a number of other Agaven languages; Kemnen, language of the Kendari race; and Ustirish, language of the Komethe. Words were changed to fit the sound patterns of Agavoi and the proper affixes added. Agavoi still is a highly accretive language and has given birth to several thousand dialects.

The most important feature of Agavoi is orientation: who is speaking, and what the speaker considers most important. What the speaker sees as important is put in final position; the structure of sentences is very loose, allowing groupings such as: 'Killed with sword him she.' This kind of freedom, along with the numerous speech 'attitudes' and the specificity of emotion, makes Agavoi a very flexible language, varying widely from speaker to speaker.

Agavoi seems to function best as a spoken language between groups wanting to make their positions absolutely clear. It excels at dealing with people--attitude, will, and belief are implicit in most words; it strives to define exactly all opinions, personal characteristics and idiosyncrasies between speakers to maintain relationships on carefully delineated levels. In English it's extremely difficult to say, 'I dislike you, but we can still work together'--not only because of existing cultural dishonesty but also hypocrisy within the language itself--'but' instead of 'and we can work together.' Direct, often untactful opinions are required in Agavoi; candidness--even though unpleasant or incorrect--is inherent in the function of the language.

This language is a spoken rather than written language. This is not only because the words are so dependent on the particular personality of the speaker but also due to the fact that the written script is usually lacking in vowel indicators and somewhat difficult to read.

Agavoi, sahakeling kirsehirsin
Agavoi, the warrior's tongue

Aroien kais iklanav enu kirsai srothav
Peace is merely an honorable war
first line of Nu Kishai'in, The Book of War



Attitudes of Agavoi



Since for kilingau orientation and tone are all-important, Agavoi incorporates certain ritualized attitudes for the precise delineation of emotion. Where speakers of English might use inflection, derogatory expressions, or 'fighting words' to communicate anger, kilingau revert to an insult mode of Agavoi in which they can offend or infuriate another as specifically and calmly or as scathingly as they please.

Example: 'I believe that as an Earther you cannot understand the culture of kilingau.'

ULTRAFORMAL

Krea'idermoi ke'el esseret, krea'chonlemek nusebil aroi otor u keteng nu kai'krasling kai'kilingau.
formal prefix believing I which understand not able being you as Earther the culture

FORMAL

Krea'idermoi e'el esseret, krea'chonlemek nusebil tor u keteng nu krasling kai'kilingau.
believing I which understand not able you as Earther the culture

INSULTING

Prea'iderm e'el esseret, prea'nusebil tor u prai'keteng sto prea'chonlemek nu krasling kilingau.
believe I which not able you as Earther to understand the culture

COURTEOUS

Rea'idermenel esseret, saiat rea'chonlemek tiu ebil nus u enu Arithar nu rai'krasling rai'kilingau.
believing I which that understand you able not as an Earther the culture

NORM

Idermenel saiat nusebil chonlemek tiu u keteng aur kilingau inu anavi.
believe I that not able understand you as Earther of the patterns

Example: 'I don't think you should do that.'

FRIENDLY

Sha, skoi, kalmanan e'el, hai nus sto oshai tunnek tiu.
very please thinking I it not to should do (inf.) you

HOSTILE

Kalman e'el: tunnush tiu oshai nus.
think I do (imp.) you should not

COMMAND

Sha tunnush nus, susorn kalman ip e'el.
very do (imp.) not because think so I

SLANG

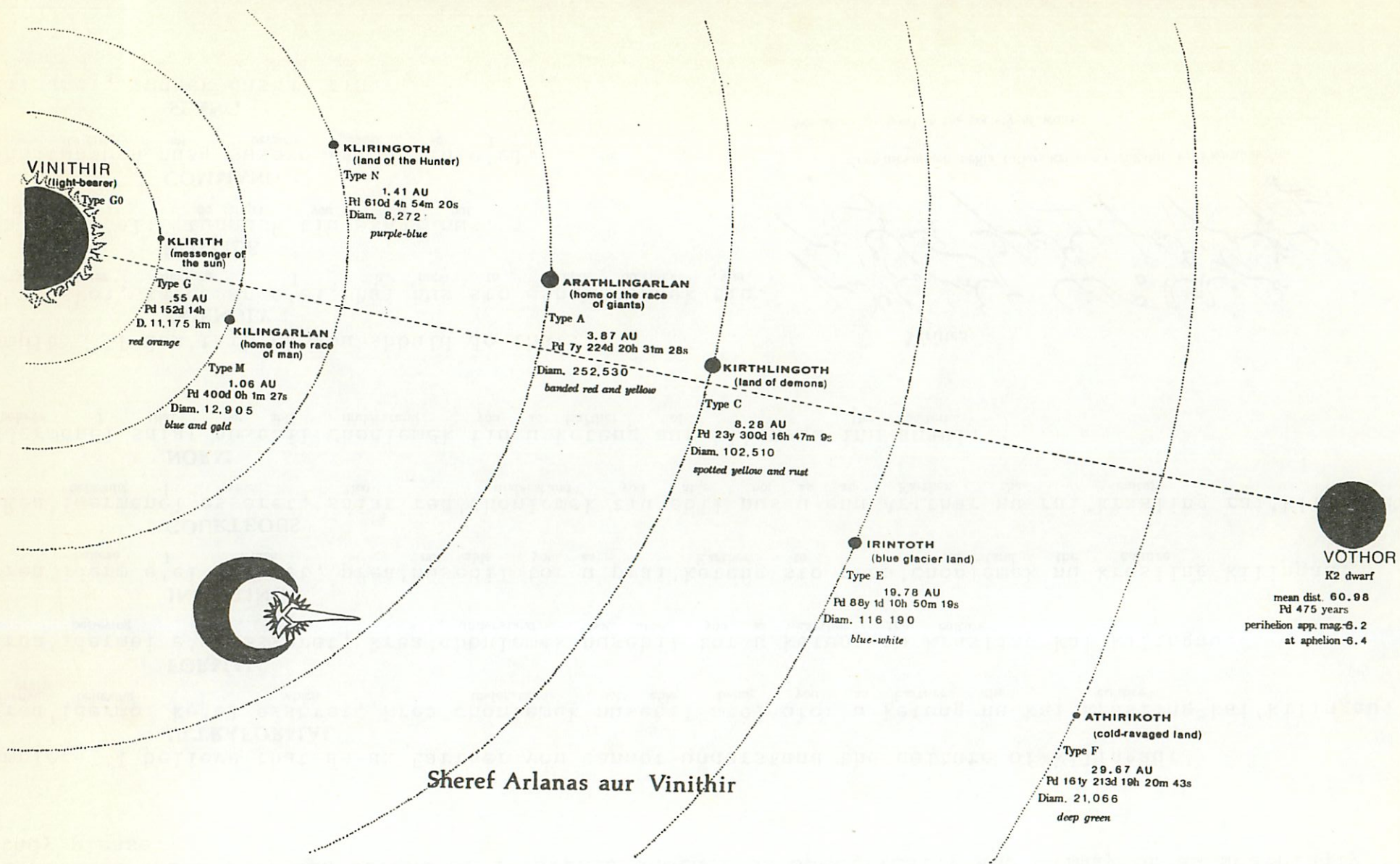
Kalmanel, tunnek nushai tiu.
think I do not should you

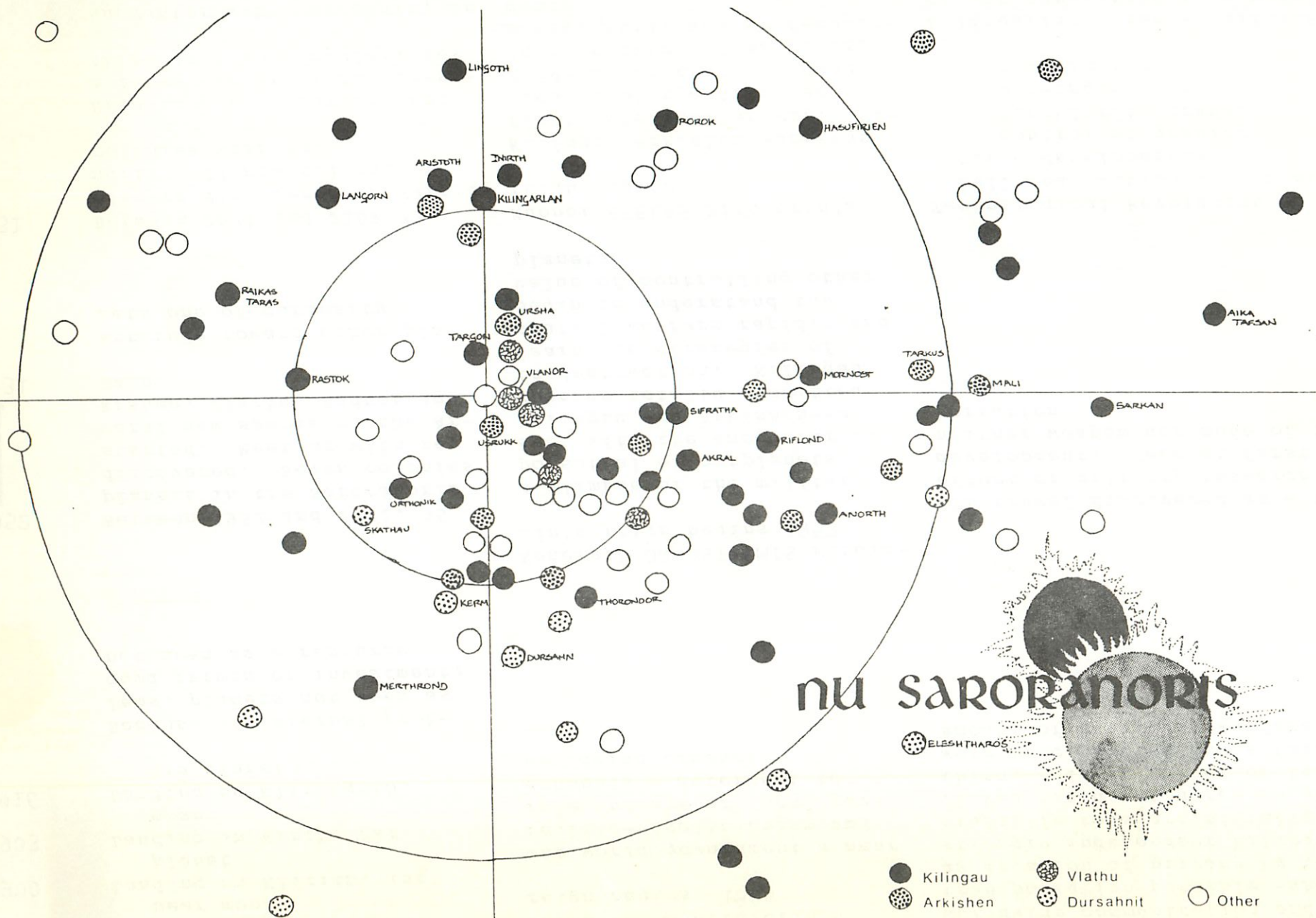
Written:

Krea'mekonnen sehla tutku kai'anavi rakshin krea'kerauak.

'We learn to howl in the society of wolves.'







EXTERNAL

POLITICAL

CULTURAL

- 1898 First landing on Orith, near moon
- 1900 Landing on Klirith, 1st planet
- 1903 Landing on Kirth, far moon
- 1916 Landing on Kliringoth, 3rd planet

Sirok ORVAN Rifolorin's reign begins 1885

One world government a near reality--isolationism and independence of local governments a deterrent to worldwide Ormenel

Worldwide communication and transportation possible--seen as invasion of privacy by the strongly independent kilingau. Krasai'in thus artificially linked could not agree on anything; a large number of feuds were precipitated and a fair amount of guerrilla warfare

Because of internal problems, planets not seen as good return on investment; not seen as a resource

Kenereth ORNOST EMIS Rifolorin's reign begins 1952

A glimpse of the military potential of outplanets seen with the encounter of kilingau and Arkishen--a species totally committed to destruction. Kilingau learn the strategies of spatial warfare rapidly and begin to understand the value of controlling other planets

FTL travel discovered as a side effect of military research and development. Seen at first as neither weapon nor mode of transportation

1952



2031

Between 1952 and 2031, 35 planets in the Saroranoris discovered. Seven colonies started. Meeting with several new species: the Arkishen, Vlathu, Andtor and Uzhu

Attitude toward other planets one of curiosity

Kuonor ESELAS Rifolorin's reign begins

Kilingon/Arkishen War--the first interstellar war. Explosion of the Arkishen in 2054; a war that kilingau lose in terms of manpower, money, skill and self-confidence

Technological Revolution full realization of new scientific developments: control of gravity singularity travel bio-engineering colonization

2031

Between 2031 and 2109 73 planets discovered in Saroranoris. 24 new kilingaven colonies started

Extensive exploration, but a large number of failures--ships lost in singularities

Encounter with Dursahnit, an aggressive herbivorous species who become partners of

Kilingarlan loses a full 100th of its population in a massive colonization/exploration effort. Developing planets becomes a

EXTERNAL

kilingau in the Arkishen War. A friendship develops between the two species that helps to bind the Saroranoris together

By 2145, Saroranoris completely explored. Missions of exploration become extremely long-range--the Ormenel's sphere of impact extends for nearly 50 light years in each direction

Planets with extensive resources a mixed blessing as they support a larger and more active population. High population breeds higher population, and colonization does not decrease it

2190 Ormenel Ar'Romi met. Un-eventful; both sides understand one another. Willing to leave each other alone

2200 First contact with the Kumnasitau Hakau a fight as starship crosses into Ormenel territory. Ship destroyed. This first fight sets the tone for future conflicts between the Ormenel and the Kumnasitau

POLITICAL

Therem EVORN Rifolorin's reign begins 2109

Both war and exploitation put into effect as political tools

With so many new planets and so many prospects for trade and growth, a massive network is needed for intercoordination. This needs to be done on an immense scale--paving the way for industrialization, generalization

Kalim Sai'af ALARGOR Rifolorin's reign begins 2182

Shift in military. The Kirs-kroshir becomes more of a police/terror unit instead of warriors dedicated to the concept of honorable warfare. Increase in number of spies and assassins. The Tasrakirs begins to split down the middle; some in favor of the new system, most not

CULTURAL

science. Bio-engineering a by-product as genetically altering colonists improves their ability to survive on a strange planet

Synthesizer developed
Bit-farming--maximum use of land

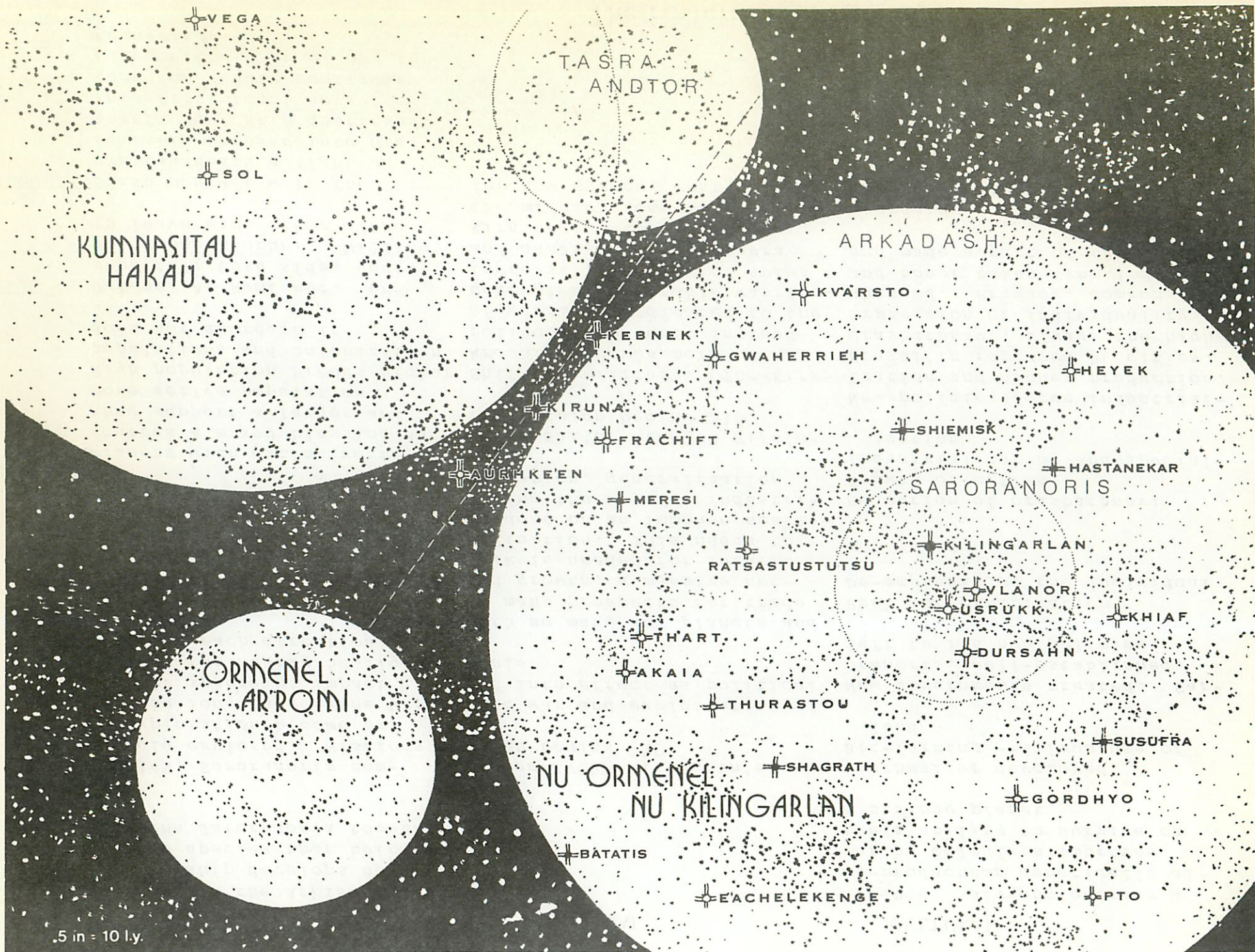
New governments created. Saroranoris, well-established, left to its own policies.

Push for exploitation
De-emphasis of the individual

Rejection of orashathnavi
Growth of cities
Industrialization and specialization

New policies force industrialization and higher production. Krasai'in replaced by cities. Orashathnavi, always the highest expression of individuality, is shunned. Privacy, common-lands, and honor taken from individuals and made a part of the State

Standards for the imleth are lowered. Standards of excellence, physically and mentally, are lowered. Kilingarlan population grows



5 in = 10 ly.

VEGA

TABORIAN
AND TOB

KUMNASIT
HAKAU

- Stable civil rule
- Exploration
- ▨ Military/Explor
- Military
- Colonial
- ▨ Trade alliances
- Isolationist

JURISDICTIONS

ORMENEL
AR ROMI

NU ORMENEL
NU HIRICARLAN

.5in = 10 l.y.

Maintaining the Aknauhraiand

The main function of the government of the Ormenel is to provide a force (the military--the most appreciable force; rangers and diplomats; out-planet administrators and statesmen; traders and coordinators) which serves to coherently bring a large number of diversified systems into a loose network for the purpose of communication, enrichment (economic, intellectual, cultural, etc.), and order.

The major manifestation of the government of the Aknauhraiand is the Military system--the Kirskroshir.

There is very little distinction in the Ormenel between 'martial' and 'civil' rule; they are viewed the same, since order imposed from without, although not necessarily forcibly, is considered a 'military action.' To bring education, enlightenment, and enrichment to a 'backwards' culture peacefully and with excellent motives is the imposition of external change on an existing structure. This is intrinsically the same, by killing attitudes, as conquering a culture, bringing in military governors and an occupation force, and forcing that culture to produce what the conqueror wants.

This attitude reflects an underlying precept of Kilingarlan culture: that the military is the civil structure and vice versa. In many cultures there is a clear dichotomy of warrior/civilian (with little understanding or communication between the two); not, however, on Kilingarlan and in the Ormenel. A few things that help remove this division: that every citizen is also at some time part of the organized military; that as hunters kilingau view actions and events as predator/prey--aggressor/defender--dominant/subordinate; that the military is considered an enlarged, specialized form of the Hunt and thus made an emulated ideal in Kilingarlan society. Further to this, each kiling and each krasaia make great contributions to the Kirskroshir (monetarily and in man/womanpower) so that at all times the Kirskroshir is at the zenith of Kilingarlan society: well-funded, staffed by the brightest and the best; equipped with the latest developments of research in weapons/tool technology; guided by trained minds skilled in strategy and warfare; backed by the entire population. It is easy therefore to see the scope and impact that the Kirskroshir has on every sector of the Aknauhraiand's physical and political structure.

Eshinatsith

To kilingau, a diplomat is merely a warrior who carries no weapons. Suranarsin (planet governors), emantarksin and antarksin (high councillors and councillors), sarakra (ambassadors), and sarakravirsin (liaisons with Ormen), ostensibly 'civilians' all, are the political manipulators that formulate policy decisions--which may or may not be aggressive. These leaders work very closely with the military infrastructure; it is they who decide if organized aggression is needed as a political tool and in what form. The Kirskroshir cannot act unless it first consults the regional leaders, nor can these civilians act without consulting the Kirskroshir.

It must be emphasized that there is actually no distinction between martial and civil policy; only a political spectrum ranging from stagnation at one end (total peace) to chaotic dynamism at the other (total war). Both Kirskroshir and Eshinatsithand (the 'civil' ruling order) exist somewhere in the middle of that spectrum, overlapping each other, rarely conflicting, merging often.



A maxim also appreciated by kilingau is "that government which governs best governs least." Effective government is not achieved by force and fear, but by subtle conditioning and reinforcement of certain 'cooperative' attitudes. Irrationality, overt hostility, or overt pacifism will impair the smooth functioning of any system. The Aknauhraiand maintains an order relatively free of disruptions, because it is physically quite simple, set up on a system of concentric circles and radiating lines; and communications, the key to any political system, flow very easily. ('Red tape' is almost unknown because 90% of all actions are enacted verbally and records, except for absolutely vital records stored in computers, are not kept.)

Also, the Aknauhraiand will not tolerate disruptions. At least fifteen species in the Ormenel are actively interested in maintaining good interrelations and in seeing the system work smoothly. Those who try to drastically change the Aknauhraiand are strongly discouraged.

As long as the status quo exists on a fairly smooth level, the Aknauhraiand remains basically inactive. 'Isolationism' is the key policy of each entity in the system; an orderly society has no need to be governed. In this respect the Aknauhraiand is an outgrowth of the krasaia structure: each krasaia is an independent government, 'minds its own business,' and does not interact with neighboring krasai' in unless serious trouble occurs or emergencies arise that require the resources of more than one krasaia. There is a structure always ready for use, but it is mostly ignored.



Lines of Communication

Affairs requiring organized aggression

ORMEN → AHKFAR KIRSKROSHIR → KIRSKROSHIR/TASRAKIRS → SHIPS/TROOPS TO PLANET OR AREA

Civil Government

ORMEN → SECTOR ADMINISTRATOR → AMBASSADOR/CONTACT TEAM
→ OUT-PLANET KRASAIA

First Contacts

SPECIALIZED TEAM OF EXOSOCIOLOGICAL EXPERTS AND WARFARE EXPERTS → SARAKRA → COUNCILLOR FOR PLANETS
→ AHKFAR TASRAKIRS STRATEGY

Occupation

(ORMEN) → SECTOR ADMINISTRATOR → LOCAL TASRAKIRS STRATEGISTS
→ NEAREST ESTABLISHED KRASAIA → DEPLOYMENT ON PLANET

Independent Governments

ORMEN → SARAKRAVIR ← INDEPENDENT GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVE
one-to-one liaison through Sarakravir

Chain of Command for Aknauhraiand

EVENT TAKES PLACE ON PLANET OR IN REGION OF SPACE → NEAREST KFAR TASRAKIRS ALERTED
→ NEAREST SURANAR ALERTED → ANTARK → EMANTARK → SARAKRA IF 'PEACEFUL' SITUATION
→ SARAKRAVIR → ORMEN & AHKFAR TASRAKIRS/AHKFAR KIRSKROSHIR

Nu Kirskroshir

The Kirskroshir and its specialized offshoot the Tasrakirs have come into a new existence as a massive infrastructure of the Aknauhraiand. Kilingau for long have practiced war as both science and art; war is now a sophisticated tool, well developed and controlled extension of innate intra-specific aggression, a formalized version of 'fight or flight' behavior. War is not seen as the antithesis of peace, nor is war seen as something that has a definite beginning or ending. There are levels of aggression, and for kilingau it can truthfully be said that war is going on in one form or another at any time among them.

As part of the code of the Hunter/Warrior kilingau would really prefer to conduct all aggression on a one-to-one, intensely personal level. When one kills another, to kill with a knife or sword is the highest honor: neither knife nor sword will noticeably give one an immediate advantage over the other. With a knife or in unarmed combat victory is only won at the cost of immense physical exertion and courage. The victory lies in the fight, not in the death of the other. Just as in hunting a wild keor, the most satisfying memories of the hunt are the stalking, tracking down, and felling the animal, not in watching the death and then skinning the carcass.

High-energy weapons therefore are shunned. Poison and assassination are almost always forbidden. Bombs, missiles, tanks, armored suits--anything that makes one nearly invulnerable and the killing of prey very simple is viewed with open distaste.

Individual strength and pride--srothar--control a warrior's emotions: one can find in the vanguard of any land attack army a thousand soldiers armed only with sword, spear, or bow and arrow. The craving for individual victory is seen at its most extreme in the suicide ships that are launched from a warship and guided by the pilot--a one-man missile--at the enemy target. At the extreme also are those who allow themselves to be encircled by the enemy and then blow themselves up. Fanaticism and dedication, to the point of unquestioning loyalty and reckless suicide, is a strong motivating force for these kilingaven warriors, and that is why few enemy have ever taken a kiling alive.

The Kirskroshir's purpose is to provide an existing body of highly skilled, adaptable, quick-thinking fighters. The Kirskroshir is an implement for exploration, examination. Tasrakirsin often make the best contact teams, trained as they are in suiting action to circumstances. The Tasrakirs is a source of knowledge, of up-to-the-minute information. The Tasrakirs goes everywhere and therefore is a mode of transportation and communication.

Currently the Kirskroshir is divided up into three sectors: the Tasrakirs, concerning itself with air and space conflicts; the Kirstahar, the land force, and the Harkerien, the small naval force. There are also synthesists and strategists who are part of no specialized force, who belong to the Kirskroshir overall.

The Tasrakirs and Kirstahar interrelate closely. There is a need for planet surface aggression experts and a need for cooperation with the Tasrakirs to get to the source of the aggression. Conflicts may range from small land wars out into space. Many Tasrakirs are able to fight equally well in space (under the restrictions of a ship, disassociated weaponry, and relatively limited maneuvering) as on land (as a free, independent fighting unit, responsible only to self). The goal of the Kirskroshir is eventually to create one single combined structure comprised of kitani skilled at all forms of control.

KIRSTAHAR

Ahkfar-->Kirskfar-->Kirstakftar-->Taftar-->Takfar-->Takar-->Takftar-->Takrifar-->Takri-->Takist
 HIGH CDR. GENERAL BRIG. GEN. LT. GEN. MAJOR COL. CAPTAIN SUBCAPT. LT. 2ND LT.

TASRAKIRS

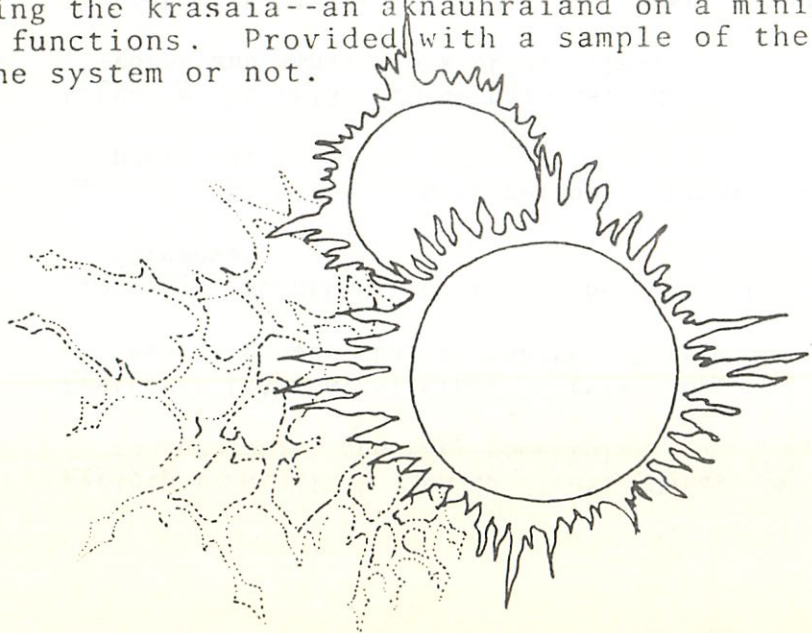
Ahkfar-->Kestakfar----->Kestakftar----->Vakkfar-->Kfar-->Kftar---->Krifar---->Kri----->Kist
 HIGH CDR. ADMIRAL VICE ADM. FLEET CDR. CMDR. SUBCDR. LT. CDR. LT. ENS.

That the Kirskroshir and Eshinatsithand act as a team is illustrated by an example of the common procedure when encountering a new planet--a planet whose species wants to interact with the rest of the Aknauhraiand, but doesn't understand the system, perhaps is potentially a dangerous addition to the system.

The Kirskroshir occupation force is one way of holding a planet and imposing an order upon it. But trained military troops are expensive, their equipment more so. It is likely that much of the time they will stand around idle, occasionally acting as a police force, but most often there simply to bring a measure of control to the population just by their presence. Since it is so wasteful to expend needed person and fire-power on a relatively peaceful planet, another method of occupation and control is to establish a krasaia on the planet.

Entrenching a krasaia on a planet is not the same as colonizing. The usual method is for a large krasaia already established on an out-planet to split. The major part will go to secure the new planet; arriving, it will settle down, establish an agricultural and hunting order for its own needs and provide a militia of persons ready to take arms if the occasion should arise. Since these persons will also be functioning members of the krasaia, there is no waste of man/woman-power. This krasaia also acts as coordinator between the local population and the external Ormenel; the krasaia producing goods on an out-planet is a source of trade, and it acts as an example of education and growth for the enlightenment (or disillusionment) of the out-planet's natives.

The 'new' planet may choose to interact with the Aknauhraiand only through the colony krasaia, or, by observing the krasaia--an aknauhraiand on a miniature scale--can learn what the structure is and how it functions. Provided with a sample of the Ormenel, the species can decide to interact with the system or not.



Kirskroshir and
Eshinatsithand

Warship (VAKIAKIRS) Ten in fleet. Carry 200-225, high velocity, maneuverable, and very powerful.

Destroyer (KAHDRAVAKIAKIRS) Carries 300-350, slower, slightly less firepower than vakiakirs. More missiles.

Troopship (NUSHEVAK) Up to 460 persons. Medium speed, medium firepower.

Cruiser (KIVRIZIA) 40-60 persons. Light, fast, moderately powerful.

Corvette (DEGERIN) 20-40 persons. Moderately fast. Photon torps and small stock of missiles.

Scoutship (KALASVAK) 10-20 crew. Fast, maneuverable, but has nothing in the way of reserves. Photo torps.

Shuttleship (SARVAK) 3 ships in vakiakirs hangar. Impulse only. Known as vakia emsarkaliv--suicide ships.

Shipseeker missiles (BORUNAU VAKNAHIR) Carried on most ships. Missile has own power and great range. Target locked in before or missile remote-controlled. Atomic, thermonuclear, or anti-matter.

Torp missile (BORUNAU TEKEF) Unmanned missiles carrying photon torps that explode on impact or are remote-controlled. Limited range.

Suicide missiles (BORUNAU EMSARK) Missiles built with space for one person, who can direct the missile's course.

Mines (KUSHURE) Mines that explode at first contact with a ship's force field, often left in orbit around planets.

Ormenel/Other Cultures

One might say that the pattern for dealing with other species was set by two decisive encounters: the first contact with aliens, the Mkaw; and the encounter with the Arkishen.

The Mkaw are natives of the first planet in the Kilingarlan solar system, called Klirith by kilingau, and Mkawaliskw by the natives. They are an avian species. There were no fixed, visible signs of a culture and no signs of technology when kilingau first landed on the sunward planet. Having no means of communication and not being able to even remotely understand one another, they killed each other unthinkingly, each unaware that the other species was intelligent. Kilingau, not expecting any 'resistance,' managed to destroy more than two-thirds the population before the mistake was realized.

This first contact made kilingau aware firstly that there were other intelligent species in the universe (a fact long theorized but never before proven); that intelligence could come in a highly different, 'unrecognizable' form; and that there was little hope of ever understanding another species. As they gained absolutely nothing from destroying the Mkaw they resolved to approach other species more cautiously.

Second alien contact was with the Andtor, a belligerently friendly species given to roaming half the cosmos in search of sin. Mutual understanding was reached quite quickly, especially in view of their relatively common backgrounds; and kilingau and Andtor have been on the best of terms ever since.

The Arkishen are the species that once again changed kilingaven methods of exploration and contact. Arkishen, intelligent kitani, have developed a high level of technology--three times. The first time they achieved interplanettravel and subsequently destroyed themselves in a nuclear war. On the second climb upward, they managed to colonize a number of planets in the Saroranoris before once again losing themselves to self-annihilation.

Kilingau were discovering a number of Arkishen planets, none of which remembered the existence of the others. They remembered how to fight, however; even though kilingau approached them quite neutrally, they responded with hostility and unexpectedly savage violence. They copied kilingaven technology--as much knowledge as they could capture, infer, or steal--and soon were rediscovering their own colonies. The Arkishen planets reunited presented a force that kilingau were in no way ready to face, having only a few colonies and very limited knowledge of space warfare or space technology.

The Arkishen saw no reason why they should let kilingau survive, and set out to devastate and exterminate. They nearly succeeded--until kilingau, in a semi-hopeless rash attack, captured the home planet of the Arkishen, and in the truce that followed, were able to build their

military capability up to a point where they could confront the Arkishen and survive. Since then, kilingaven military knowledge has grown in leaps and bounds, and while Arkishen remain irrationally aggressive, kilingau are able to contain them.

The lesson learned here was of a different nature than that learned from the Mkaw: bitter knowledge of subjugation and hopeless war. The new Tasrakirs and the Kirs kroshir resolved that this would never happen again, that if at any time they met an overly aggressive species, it was either conquest or suicide. To kilingau unable to face the ignominy of defeat, the choice was simple.

Confrontation or Cooperation?

The meeting between the Ormenel and the Federation (Kumnasitau Hakau aur Arlanas) was a fateful and probably inevitable confrontation.

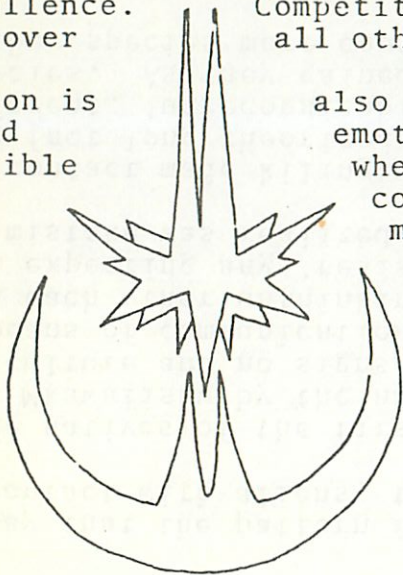
The Aknauhraiand is based on order and a good deal of built-in srothar. It can absorb a fair amount of change. It tolerates differences. It is not meant to withstand direct, overt hostility.

Two governments, each a competitive order, meeting each other have two choices: to ignore each other or to 'have it out,' to assert a desire for supremacy.

The Aknauhraiand is competitive, intensely so. But the end to that motivation toward competition is self-excellence. Competition with oneself, with the status quo, with the universe, not for mastery over all other things, but for mastery over oneself.

The Federation is political and is only possible merges into the urge, a it is irre- tures--not

The Aknau- channels,



also competitive. It also has the goal of 'peace' as an overriding emotional motivation. Total peace--total harmony/understanding-- where any individual is like every other, where individuality collective conformism to maintain 'peace.' The Federation has missionary's desire, to proselytize for peace, but by doing this vocably changing the existence of a very large number of cul- necessarily for the better.

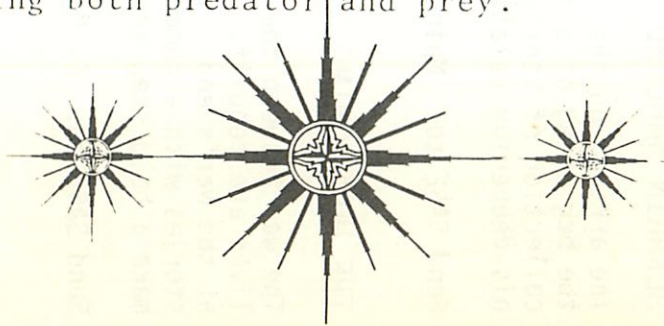
hraiand's only goal is order--some kind of system of defined formalized communication--an order that allows for a large

amount of individuality within it. Kilingau are neither motivated for peace nor war. Most enjoy aggression, competition, a certain ability to rove about and view a number of varied events. The Aknauhraiand helps to preserve the middle of the spectrum of peace to war; it maintains differences and competition to allow natural selection to continue.

Nu Ormenel nu Kilingarlan and the Ormenel Ar'Romi experienced no problems in encountering each other. Each recognized the choice of coexistence versus interference. As each was an aggressively oriented government, both knew all of the advantages, positive values, dangers and disadvantages of aggression. Each chose to leave the other alone. Over a period of time, after interacting in small ways, some Aknauhsin (anyone 'belonging' to the network of the Aknauhraiand) and some Ar'Romi came to trust and even like each other rather well, resulting in what the Federation mistakenly calls an 'alliance.' It is not--the Federation uses that term in suspicion of the increase in potential might due to such an 'alliance'---interactions with the Ar'Romi are cooperative, friendly, and mutually respectful. Each system longs for individuality too much to permit an alliance.

The Federation mistrusts the Ormenel. It fears power--from the intangible power of great intelligence to the obvious material power of technology, weaponry and an extensive military system, because, since it imposes change wherever it goes, it assumes that any other 'powerful' government would try to do the same. What the Federation may never come to realize is that different abilities/capabilities breed different motivations/ambitions. It may also never come to realize that what is right for a small planet in one solar system is not right for any other planet.

The Aknauhraiand has learned bitter lessons about warfare, absolute power, trust and responsibility. The Hunter has found weapons too powerful for safe use, traps set in the forest for him, animals that run when they're supposed to fly, or die when they're supposed to live, and other killers who wish to deprive the Hunter of his prey. The Hunter would like nothing better than a forest full of game, some stronger than he; to walk unarmed through that forest, tracking down only what he himself can eat and no more; to help to maintain the balance of aggression by being both predator and prey.



NU ORMENEL

TO COMPLETE YOUR COLLECTION:

THRESHOLD

The *Ormenel* and the Federation clash over Ashkaris, a planet whose orbit carries it into both *Ormenel* and Federation space. Here the *Ormen* Kor Alkarin encounters Captain Roan Morgan and his First Officer Tavia Nelson for the first time. More than tempers flare as a planetary disaster traps Kor on Roan's ship. A novella.

Send SASE to: Poison Pen Press, 627 East 8th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11218

ALKARIN WARLORD

The arrival on the Kilingarlan of Roan's starship, in the hands of the *Ormen*, heralds the beginning of a long and costly war between the *Ormenel* and the Federation. This collection of stories follows Kor through years of change and growth--exemplified by his deepening relationship with Tavia Nelson, the prisoner he comes to respect and love.

Send SASE to: Mpingo Press, P. O. Box 206, New Rochelle, NY 10804

THE HOMECOMING

The war between the *Ormenel* and the Federation has ended. Prisoners are exchanged; lives are rebuilt. Roan and Tavia are two who must face personal conflicts arising at the war's end. This anthology follows each of the main series characters in stories with a common theme--the recognition of one's past and the willingness to make a bold step into the future. Projected for Summer 1979.

Send SASE to: F. Marder & C. Walske, 342 East 53rd Street #4D, New York, NY 10022

NU ORMENEL COLLECTED

VOLUME 1: Works published before 1979 and falling, in *Ormenel* history, prior to the events of THRESHOLD. Also new material in sequence.

VOLUME 2: Works published before 1979 and falling after the events of ALKARIN WARLORD, including stories which fall inbetween events in the HOMECOMING. Also, poetry and non-fiction in the series, including two new legends.

VOLUME 3: Projected for late 1979. Works published during 1979. Also new material, including some non-fiction.

Send SASE to: F. Marder & C. Walske, 342 East 53rd Street #4D, New York, NY 10022

ARAKENYO

A fireside tale in lyrical prose and artwork tells the story of Roan/Kirin,
Arika Keorl and the founding of domain Rifalkarin. Entirely calligraphed.

Send SASE to: F. Marder & C. Walske, 342 E. 53rd St. #4D, New York, NY 10022

