Arcia Cortel, captain of the *Nighthawk,* awoke in her cabin to the dim ripple of blue iridescence from her fish tank. Her green cybernetic eyes, shining dimly, blinked open in darkness, casting elegant cheekbones and arched brows in a feeble glow. The shimmering orbs flicked left then right, glancing around the obscured room.

The Obelisk’s body was tense were it lay, her chest rising in rapid, shallow breaths, skin sweat-slick. Yet her gaze was not panicked, but calm and extremely tired as it searched every visible corner, scanning for danger she swore her senses had alerted her to. But they found none.

“It’s nothing,” the woman muttered. “Dreams.” Kicking off her blankets and rolling over, she closed her eyes again--

Her senses screamed a heartbeat before pain swallowed her body. Numbness. Whiteness. Then cold, *cold, cold.*

Atyiru’s familiar voice squealed, “*Run!* Go, go, *gogogo!”* and then a whole cadre of footsteps went scrambling out of her quarters, down the hall.

Arcia leapt up, snarling, dripping wet. She grabbed her saber and went tearing through the ship after the perpetrators.

“I WILL HAVE EVERY SINGLE ONE OF YOU CHILDREN COURT MARTIALED AND THROWN OUT THE AIRLOCK!”

“You’ll never take us alive, old hag!” Teroch whooped.

“Ha! And you said I’d never see that pretty pair, Arcia! Now Skar’s not the only one!”

“You still can’t see ‘em, blindy! But they *are* nice!”

“Details, man! Ice water, thin shift, happy Atty!”

“OUT THE AIRLOCK!”

“It was for charity!” someone screamed. “Charity!”

*“AIRLOCK!”*