

GELITECH

SEASON 2 - EPISODE 11
REVELATION

BY SHETIRA ANWAE

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REVELATION

“So... succulent,” a strange, grating voice pierced the unending blackness. “I could feed upon your energies for an eternity and never tire of the truly exquisite flavor. Such a shame that you won’t last nearly so long.”

Chyka had no idea where the voice was coming from. Nor did she have the slightest clue as to whom it belonged. To make matters even more confounding, she didn’t know where she was. She didn’t even know *what* she was. Was she alive? Was she dead? Did she even exist?

So far as the little snow leopardess could discern, there was nothing to her existence by an infinitely black void. She wasn’t a bare consciousness, however. She still had a body of sorts. A vaguely humanoid shape that seemed to

be held in place by countless slender threads that connected her to... something. Shadows of shadows of people who may or may not have ever existed. Artifacts that may or may not have been constructed. Sources of energy that may or may not have been real.

Chyka wondered if she'd been glistened. Despite her experience during the dalliance at the Arena, she didn't actually know how getting glistened for real felt. Another possibility was that, in her haste to turn off all of Shi's parameters, she'd managed to turn off her own as well. Was she thus frozen in some middle domain, trapped between reality and eternity, somehow outside the reach of her own vast transdimensional powers?

A sudden, undulating shudder coursed through her non-shape. Energy that she should have been able to control welled up from within. It spread outward to her surface. And then...

“So tasty!” the voice giggled.

Chyka felt like she'd become some sort of transdimensional energy popsicle. Something was, in an incomprehensibly metaphysical fashion, licking her. It's unseen, unfelt tongue was dragging over her body. It was pulling energy through all of those thread-like transdimensional connections like nectar. And that nectar was being licked off by... someone. Something. Something her captive mind couldn't even begin to comprehend.

There was nothing Chyka could do to stop the unseen entity from using her to feed. She had no control over her body. No control over its energies. No control over anything.

“You want me to send you backwards again, don't you?” the voice laughed. “You want to try and do something different, so you won't end your existence as a tasty treat to satisfy my unending hunger, don't you? Hmm? Don't be shy! Tell me!”

Chyka tried to utter an irate reply. Her non-form didn't have the capacity to speak the words. Nor, it seemed, did her mind. She had lost her capability for language, even in thought.

The voice again laughed. "No. No. You won't be going back again. You've soaked up all the flavor that you possibly can, and what a flavor it is! Mmm. I haven't tasted a thing since the key'vin'ta let me bathe in their precious slime!"

Again, Chyka shuddered as the unknown entity sucked upon her shape, drawing forth a larger burst of energy than before.

"Mmm!" the voice purred. "Ten thousand souls and more. From the temple. From the blackness. And from that creature called Shi. All of them mixed together in you. In one, incomparably sweet, candy coated lump! Who could have known that this place would produce such a wonder with such little effort on my part?"

Yet again, Chyka shuddered as more energy was drawn out of her. But... this time it felt different. Almost strained, as if something, somewhere, was trying to impede the flow.

“Ah! What is that?” the voice grunted with displeasure. “That... that was not...”

“Not fair?” Omega replied.

“You! Monster! I thought I’d...” the voice responded.

“You thought you’d what?” Omega asked.

The voice offered no reply.

“Did you really think you were going to make yourself the master of me?” Omega inquired.

Again, the voice offered no reply.

“Did you really think that I was blind to your manipulations?” Omega questioned.

Yet again, the voice was silent.

“No. I wasn’t,” Omega stated. “Every move you made. Every expression of your ancient powers. I was watching. Sensing. Studying. Learning their secrets.”

There was still no response.

“Time has as little meaning to me as it does to you now,” Omega observed. “I would have thought you’d have noticed, but you didn’t, did you? You were too caught up in your grand scheme to anchor as many transdimensional threads into that one small part of my body that you were blind to what your actions had taught me.”

“Are you daring to challenge me?” the voice finally responded. “Don’t you know that I can put

things back to where they were? Is that what you want? To be a... slimy... rubber... zombie?”

“Put things back the way they were?” Omega laughed. “Go ahead and try. In fact, I dare you to try. But... I really don’t think you’ll like the results.”

Chyka opened her eyes, not to a room or a place, but to a myriad of possibilities whirling around, mixing and morphing into a multiverse of potential futures. The kaleidoscope of possible existences seemed to have no beginning. No end. No limit to the wonders and horrors that she might be compelled to live.

There was a sharp flash of light. A thunderclap of sound. A sizzling, electric scent. A sharp, acrid taste. A cold, fluid feeling. And then...

bzzt *bzzt* *bzzt* *bzzt*

Chyka again opened her eyes. She threw off the silky blue covers and rubbed her tired eyes. A light rain pattered on the window of her South City apartment. It was already dark out.

“Goddess,” the little snow leopardess groaned as she got up and prepared to head to work. “That... that was the strangest dream I’ve ever had!”

Chyka settled down for a long night at the Mashiva Mariners' University Library Information Desk. The small office space was located in an open alcove at the east end of the building's third floor. It was nestled in between a pair of lavatories, outward of which were a pair of elevators. These offered access to all six of the building's above ground levels, and four basement levels beneath.

The lowest two basement levels housed the secure library archives. Above these were four levels of offices, museum space, the student hall, and two cafeterias for staff and students alike. Three more levels housed the library's public collection, while the topmost level housed the offices of a number of academics, archivists, and senior librarians.

Chyka wasn't nearly senior enough to have an office of her own. She wasn't even part of the library's academic staff. She was just a lowly, entry level librarian working the night shift.

Nothing interesting ever happened on the night shift. On the other hand, nothing interesting ever happened on the night shift. The place was quiet. Security was always roaming about. The only people coming to ask her questions were bleary-eyed students who'd left important papers to the very last minute, and they were few and far between.

“Oh! There you are!” an oddly familiar looking jaguaress called out, poking her head around one of the ornate wooden bookshelves that gave the library an air of old-world splendor that it definitely didn't deserve. “Can I ask you a strange question?”

“Uh... sure,” Chyka replied, looking up from the latest issue of XenoExotic Magazine. “That's what I'm here for, right?”

The little snow leopardess didn't usually find anything in those kinds of magazines particularly

arousing. Tonight, however, she was finding an article on rowa workers rather arousing, in more ways than one, and she couldn't fathom why. Perhaps she was just bored with everything else. At least she hoped that was why. The last thing she wanted to get herself into was a bug kink. Because that almost always ended up with getting a very permanent bug bod.

“Awesome!” the jaguaress bubbled as she stepped out from behind the bookcase and approached the information desk.

Not entirely to Chyka's surprise, the bouncy jaguaress was clad from neck to toe in a perfectly polished coating of obsidian black biogel. It was all the rage among a certain segment of the university's student population these days. Biogel powered starships were the big new thing, and if you wanted the chance to serve aboard one, you had to embrace the kinky biogel lifestyle, lock, stock, and barrel.

But... there was something about this particular glossy black jaguaress that seemed... odd. Chyka could have sworn she'd never met her before. But the closer the jaguaress got, the more she could have sworn that she actually had. She couldn't quite place her, however. Perhaps they'd only encountered one another someplace in passing.

"I've got a bit of a, shall we say, pseudo-scientific, moderately metaphysical, positively philosophical puzzle of sorts," the jaguaress said as she leaned on the raised counter and crossed her arms with a series of soft rubbery squitches and squeaks. "I figured you might be able to help a bit. You know, offer an opinion and all that."

"I... guess?" Chyka replied. She definitely wasn't a fan of puzzles. Nor was she a fan of pseudoscience. Or metaphysics, for that matter.

"So," the jaguaress began. "Say... you have two higher life forms. And say they can both

manipulate time. Or send people through time. Backwards, in particular.”

“Okay,” Chyka replied with a shrug.

“Now lets say that these two higher lifeforms don’t get along,” the jaguaress went on. “One just wants to exist, but the other wants to use their power to manipulate mortals into doing its bidding, for some end result.”

“Okay,” Chyka responded.

“Now, lets say that the former is a kind of gestalt being with lots of souls, and the latter is singular,” the jaguaress continued. “The singular entity decides to use one bit of the former as a way to gain power, or sustenance, or maybe just as part of a game. This involves some time related shenanigans, and eventually results in the gestalt sending the manipulated part of itself back in time to a point before the whole problem began.”

“Wouldn’t that lead to that bit of the gestalt winding up in some kind of time ?” Chyka asked with a sigh.

“Exactly!” the jaguaress exclaimed.

“That sounds like a dream I had last night,” Chyka replied.

“What an odd coincidence!” the jaguaress noted with a mischievous smirk. “So tell me. How do you think you can break the loop?”

“Well, if were me, in my dream, I’d use what I think I remember to derail it before it starts,” Chyka answered. “That would seem to be the best way to do things.

“Perfect,” the jaguaress responded. “But... what if some things you really liked happened along the way in your dream? Would you just go and do it all again in hopes of finding some other way to derail it, or would you risk sacrificing all

of it just to be sure that the singular entity is stopped?”

“Well, that depends,” Chyka replied. “In my dream, some pretty awful things happened along the way. Things that maybe... maybe most of the people involved would have been better off having to face. So... I’d probably... I don’t know... I guess I’d give it up to save them the grief?”

“Interesting,” the jaguaress replied.

“So, what are you doing, writing a novel or something?” Chyka asked.

“No,” the jaguaress responded as she turned to leave. “Just... bouncing ideas around. Nothing wrong with that, right?”

“I guess not,” Chyka said as the jaguaress pranced off in all her shiny black glory. “Wow. What a weirdo.”

Chyka turned back to the magazine and began to flip through the pages, looking for something other than those bizarrely enticing bug-butts to pique her interest. An advertisement caught her eye. It was for a zexta ‘jeweler’ up in Northwestie. There were before and after pictures of a pretty cougaress model, being snapped into solid sapphire magnificence by a machine called a digital gorgon.

The little snow leopardess had never found petrification interesting in any way, shape, or form. If she was going to go xeno, it was the last thing she’d ever consider trying. But down at the bottom of the advertisement was a listing for temporary petrification experiences. She’d heard that jewelng could be reversed if it was done soon enough. Maybe it might be worth giving a try. Just for a short little bit. Just to see what it was actually like.

Chyka flipped the page to find an advertisement for Xinta Temple tours. That was one thing that didn't interest her one bit, even now. But she did have to wonder about the people who'd built it. What did they look like? What did they actually do in such a place? So many questions left unanswered by the ravages of time...

“Well?” an unpleasantly familiar voice snapped as a pile of folders slammed down on the counter. “Have you withdrawn Taboray’s Transdimensional Mesh And Knot Mechanics from the archives for me yet, or do I have to make another complaint to the head librarian?”

“No such book exists at the MMU library,” Chyka replied, yet again checking the inventory listings. She looked up from the screen and glared at the irate physicist with a barely repressed look of utter disdain. “Nor does Astari’s The Key’Vin’Ta Astrology Guide, nor does K’no’k’s Transdimensional Gateway To The Hells.”

This wasn't the first time that the grouchy physicist had come looking for the three long out of print titles. And by long, that meant millennia long. There were no copies of any of the oddball pseudoscience text on the planet, let alone at the MMU library. He kept coming back in the middle of the night, insisting on their presence as if she could somehow magically pull them out of her little fuzzy ass.

“You're not even checking the reference!” the physicist snarled.

Chyka looked at the screen again. She'd made the queries for all three books, just like she'd done the last five time's the idiot had come demanding them. Except... she hadn't touched the computer. Or had she? She couldn't remember. Surely, she must have.

“There's no excuse for you to refuse to withdraw the works form the archive for me,” the physicist snapped. “No excuse at all!”

“For the sixth time, we don’t have copies of those works here,” Chyka replied, “and so far as I can tell, there aren’t library held copies anywhere on the planet that we can borrow for you. If you really can’t do with the digital versions, then I don’t know what to tell you. Maybe try an occult antique shop or something.”

“Stop lying to me! I know they’re all here!” the physicist growled, pulling several papers out of the top folder and waving them at the annoyed librarian. “I have the listings!”

Chyka looked at the printouts. They were library listings for MMU. Or at least that’s what they seemed to be at first glance. The archive numbers didn’t make any sense, though. And the MMU logo wasn’t in the right place. She’d seen fake listings like that before. They were usually part of pranks that graduate students would play on each other in the guise of helping their fellows

locate source material for papers. Had one of them decided to play the same prank on their professor?

The little snow leopardess was about to spill the beans when something made her hesitate. One part of her wanted to tell the idiot that he'd been pranked. Whether or not that was going to involve a healthy dose of the sailor's invective that she'd picked up during her time at the university was open for debate. Given how obstinate he was about not actually checking the library listings himself, he probably deserved it.

Given his increasingly aggressive behavior, another part of Chyka wanted to just make it all university security's problem. But the last, littlest part of her began to wonder if the jaguaress' odd inquiry and the physicist's detachment from reality were somehow related.

The little snow leopardess began to think about her long, twisting dream. Had this irrational

scientist played a part in the story? Yes... yes he had. And it had been a quite a doozy.

It all came back to Chyka in a rush. Dr. Lae. The traitor physicist who'd helped Shi escape her imprisonment in the old subterranean shipyard. Who'd no doubt been one of the primary catalysts behind the whole mess that had taken place.

You can break the cycle, a smooth, silky, and unfamiliar voice called out to Chyka. *Don't be afraid. Everything will work out just fine.*

“Well? Are you just going to stare at me, or are you going to get me my books?” the physicist snapped.

“No, Dr. Lae,” Chyka replied with a harsh glare. “You can fantasize that we have your books here all you want, but that's all it is. A fantasy. Now if you don't have any *real* business here, I suggest you find someone else to annoy while I

file a report of your highly unprofessional behavior here with my boss.”

“Bitch,” Dr. Lae hissed as he stormed off.

Chyka bit her lip. She looked down at the comm that was sitting on next to her magazine on the desk. She knew exactly what she had to do.

The little snow leopardess dialed the number. For an agonizing five minutes it just rang and rang and rang. Then, finally, the ringing was replaced by a comforting voice.

“It’s awfully late, Chyka,” her grandmother said with a long yawn. “What’s the matter? Is there something wrong?”

“Yes,” Chyka replied. “But... you’re not going to believe me. But you’ve got to listen. You’ve got to trust me. Please. Something really bad is happening here... and you’re the only one I know who can stop it!”

The blinding light of half a dozen cutting torches lit up the massive reinforced concrete alcove in flashes and bursts while their pulses of sizzling energy echoed through the vast space of the abandoned subterranean shipyard. A haze hung in the dark air. Some of it came from the work of the torches, but most was concrete dust that had been kicked up by the engineers and the full marine company that were providing escort. They were not alone, however. Not far away from the work, another small group stood, watching, and waiting to see what the engineers were about to find.

“They were all open the last time I was here,” Chyka murmured to no one in particular. “Open and empty.”

“You have a considerable amount of explaining to do, Miss Riyalli,” Admiral Sarva said as his icy blue eyes glared at the work being done to unseal the casks into which Nuva Exi Shi’s biogel core had been separated and sealed. “Everything here is

held under the highest levels of secrecy. That a simple librarian should have found out...”

“If she’s really been stuck in some kind of causal loop caused by the interaction of various transdimensional forces,” Dr. Kidan observed, “then it’s entirely possible that you yourself authorized her to know. Well... a future version of you that would have come to exist if we weren’t in the process of breaking the loop.”

“Do you seriously think I believe that story?” Admiral Sarva replied with a sharp glare at the scientist.

“It’s absurdly implausible,” General Riyalli replied in reluctant agreement. “But...”

“But what, General?” Admiral Sarva questioned with a scowl.

“Admiral!” one of the engineers interrupted as the cutting torches stopped one by one. “We just

moved to the top cover of the sixth cask and... well... I think you need to have a look at this.”

Admiral Sarva looked from General Riyalli to Chyka and back again, but said not a word before waking to meet with the engineer.

“I wish you’d tell me the truth,” General Riyalli murmured to her granddaughter. “Did Dr. Lae try to recruit you and tell you too much? Did you overhear someone else talking about it? Really. I need to know. We need to know. This is bad. Very bad. You have no idea how many people could be hurt if you don’t...”

“I know exactly how many people are going to get hurt by this if it isn’t stopped,” Chyka replied. “You... you have no idea. I saw it all. Every moment of it.”

“I’m curious,” Dr. Kidan inquired with a raised eyebrow. “How did it all end?”

“It ended with me all connected to all these transdimensional threads,” Chyka replied. “Everything was black. It was just me... and something. Someone. It was... sucking on me like a popsicle. Pulling all that energy through me and telling me how good it tasted. Like... like the whole thing was to get me like that so it could feed on me. Take my energy and do goddess knows what with it.”

“And that’s when you woke up?” Dr. Kidan questioned.

“No,” Chyka answered, shaking her head as she watched the engineer pointing several very specific things out to Admiral Sarva. “I woke up after Omega showed up and challenged the other... someone. She dared the thing to send me back again. That’s when I woke up.”

“And you woke up just before you had to go to work?” Dr. Kidan asked, his voice now sounding rather agitated. “Could it be? No. It can’t. Can it?”

Can you tell me exactly what time that was that you woke up?"

"Oh... I have to be at the library for twenty-two, so I set my alarm for twenty," Chyka replied.

"That's it! That explains it!" Dr. Kidan nearly shouted, looking for all the world like he was about to start running around in circles. "That explains everything!"

For a few excruciatingly long moments, there was absolute silence.

"That explains *what*, Doctor?" Admiral Sarva demanded as he returned to glare at the scientist.

"There was a major trans-D disturbance at exactly twenty-zero-zero, yesterday night" Dr. Kidan declared. "It was picked up planet-wide. Events like that aren't without precedent. Geological activity in areas with purple gobzite are the usual cause. But this one was... different."

“How so?” the Admiral questioned.

“For starters, it was centered here in Mashiva,” Dr. Kidan replied. “In the South City area. Everyone was assuming it had something to do with Xinta Temple. Maybe a collapse in the old gobzite mines beneath it. But the waveform just... it just wasn’t right for a minor event like that.”

“If she knew about Shi, then surely she could have obtained information about that event to help make her story more convincing, couldn’t she, Doctor?” Admiral Sarva hissed. “But that’s not my primary concern right now. My primary concern is that someone has clearly been testing methods to enter the casks and that needs to be dealt with immediately.”

“If I’m right about the source of the disturbance, than we’ve got much bigger problems than Shi,” Dr. Kidan responded with a deep frown. “We can rule out two suspects, Omega and

key'vin'ta related sources. That leaves only one obvious one that comes to mind, though it's power is honestly rather hypothetical, since it's been very careful to act like any normal visitor from beyond core civilized space."

"And that is?" Admiral Sarva asked, rolling his eyes.

"Ek'ni'pon," a low, grating voice growled from the darkness beyond one of the massive mobile platforms that had once been used to move hulls down the assembly line. "How wonderfully perceptive, Doctor. Such a shame that I didn't make a more intimate acquaintance of you when I had the chance."

"Show yourself!" General Riyalli shouted as her marines raised their weapons and advanced to form a protective ring round the officers.

The strange humanoid creature stepped forward. To Chyka, it looked somewhat similar to

the slime demon in her dreams. Except that her face was more like an elf-eared ashiri. She had massive claws, large wings, and iridescent brown scales. Unlike the demon, she lacked lumps and spikes of purple gobzite. Also unlike the demon, the very space around the creature seemed to warp and ripple.

“I knew it,” Dr. Kidan sighed.

“Who is this... creature?” Admiral Sarva demanded.

“I have no idea,” Dr. Kidan replied. “But I do know that its species is called ‘dragille’. And they supposedly have considerable capabilities with respects to transdimensional mischief, perhaps even exceeding that of the key’vin’ta themselves. Indeed, it’s said that they were the ones who taught transdimensional based ‘magic’ to many core species in times long past. This one arrived in Mashiva a few years ago, and has been lingering around the locality ever since. I imagine it was

attracted to the radiated effects of our work, but it never seemed like a concern until now.”

“That voice,” Chyka murmured, taking a step back. “That’s the voice of...”

“Aw,” the dragille chuckled. “You remember?”

“It’s true then, isn’t it?” Dr. Kidan asked.

“Of course it is,” the dragille laughed. “And now you’ve gone and spoiled my game. There’s a price to be paid, you know!”

“Not a chance in all the Hells,” Admiral Sarva snapped. “In the name of the Empress, I order you to surrender!”

“You’re in no position to be making demands,” the dragille demanded, pointing at Chyka. “Now give me my pretty little toy. And... I’ll go play elsewhere, where the locals aren’t so obstinately recalcitrant.”

“And if we don’t give in to your ridiculous demand?” General Riyalli questioned with a sneer.

“Well then,” the dragille replied with a smirk. “We’ll write a new story together. A new story making use of the more interesting bits of the old one. And we’ll start...”

There was loud crack as the reinforced concrete covering the casks began to split into pieces. The engineer team retreated as the pieces began to crumble into dust. The cask lids began to lift up, and creeping black liquid biogel began to ooze out.

“You’ll make such fine biogel zombies, as Shi liked to call them,” the dragille cooed. “You’ll do a wonderful job spreading her amusingly creative contagion throughout Mashiva... and beyond!”

“Open fire dammit! Fire!” General Riyalli ordered.

Every one of the seventy marines who could take a clear shot did. Every one of the bright yellow streaks of plasma found their mark. None, however, actually struck the laughing dragille. They all just entered the warped space, lensing around her body to blast dozens of little holes in the concrete wall behind her.

Chyka looked back at the glistening blackness that was now creeping across the floor toward the group. She looked at her grandmother. She looked at Admiral Sarva. She looked around at the marines. No one seemed to know what to do.

A glance at Dr. Kidan brought back another memory from the 'dream'. He had one of those biogel pellet projector pistols that they used in the Biogel Games. In the time loop, the pellets had been able to stop the zombies. Perhaps his could stop the zombifying liquid biogel...

“Oh, don’t be such a foolish little girl,” the dragille laughed. “That won’t work on my special variation. Now... it’s your choice. Surrender to me. Or watch all your friends be reduced to dripping rubber beasts. And then... well, then you’ll just have to join them, won’t you?”

For a moment, time seemed to stand still.

Don’t you remember what I said to her? the smooth, silky voice slithered into Chyka’s mind. It sounded a bit more familiar this time. She’d definitely heard it before. *Time may have no meaning to her. But it doesn’t have any meaning to me, either. The timeline may have changed. But I haven’t. You haven’t. We’re one and the same, after all. Now go ahead. Show her the gravity of her mistake.*

Chyka looked back at the advancing blackness. Was it really possible that she was still part of Omega, just like she’d been in the ‘dream’? She started to clench her right hand. She tried to

imagine the staff held tightly in her grasp. There was a low sizzle. A flash of purple light. And then...

“All of you get down!” Chyka shouted as she whipped the staff around toward the advancing slime. “GET DOWN!”

With a single sweeping motion, Chyka energized the a portion of the biogel and snared a blob of it in a spiral of energy emanating from the tip of the staff. She whipped it over the heads of the diving officers and marines, and sent it straight at the surprised dragille.

The little snow leopardess groaned as she focused the spiral energy into a tunnel through the dragille’s shield of warped space. The creature resisted with all her might, but the fury of Omega’s fully unleashed power was just enough to get the potent blob of biogel through. It splattered all over the dragille’s belly and chest,

though to Chyka's considerable consternation, it didn't seem to have any effect.

"You're so stupidly naive," the dragille laughed. "Do you really think this can affect me?"

"Yes," Chyka replied as she redoubled her effort. The swirl of energy spread out around the dragille, spreading the biogel along with it. In moments the creature was covered from head to toe, wings included. "With a little help, it can."

With one final mental effort, the little snow leopardess forced the biogel to merge with the dragille's body. Once it had, there was nothing the creature could do to stop it from transforming her.

The dragille shrieked as the glistening black goo began to eat into her body. Scale and flesh were reduced to a bare skeleton covered with gobs of dripping black goo. She gurgled and sputtered in useless desperation. In an instant it was done. She'd become a virtually mindless biogel zombie.

The dragon-winged biogel zombie wavered for a few moments before lurching toward the marines. They quickly got back up onto their knees and began to plaster the creature with plasma fire. Each hit caused a small amount of biogel to flash into a puff of smoke, but the glistening goo simply regrew itself.

Chyka grabbed the biogel pellet pistol from Dr. Kidan's belt. She'd never held a gun before, let alone actually fired one. All the same, she took the best aim that she could and pulled the trigger.

Thankfully for the fate of all present, the pellet guns used in the security role at Gelitech weren't iron-sighted. They had an auto-aiming function that could change the trajectory up to five degrees around center in an effort to ensure a hit against the intended target. As a result, the very first pellet sailed out to strike the zombie on the shoulder. The beast recoiled. It shuddered. It's oozing biogel goo solidified.

The glistened biogel zombie dragille collapsed to the floor with a resounding cacophony of snaps, squicks, and squeaks. Chyka turned back to the liquid biogel that was still creeping along the floor. She fired another pellet into the glistening sheen, and it too solidified, saving the marines from zombification, and doing double duty in imprisoning Shi in the now permanently inert mass.

Chyka gasped, dropping to her knees and dropping the staff on the floor in front of her. In her heart, she felt strangely free. The ordeal was done. It was over.

“I suppose I owe you an apology, Miss Riyalli,” Admiral Sarva said as he stared at what was left of the dragille. “But this is neither the time, nor the place. You mentioned that the Key’vin’ta Society was a front for Shi’s ‘resurrection’ and Dr. Lae’s participation. That needs to be seen to. And quickly.”

“I’ll deal with that,” General Riyalli replied. “Personally. In fact, very personally.”

“Be careful,” Chyka said, looking up at her grandmother. “They’re willing to kill. Trust me. They tried more than once.”

“Don’t you worry about a thing, dear,” General Riyalli replied. “We know how to handle ourselves.”

“Let’s go back to Gelitech before the fireworks start,” Dr. Kidan said, taking Chyka by the arm. “It’ll be safer there.”

“Indeed,” Admiral Sarva noted. “General. Do what you need to do.”

“Yes sir,” General Riyalli replied with a brief salute. “Alright troops. I want A platoon to cover the tunnel leading beneath Xinta. B and C platoons are to guard the subway tunnel east and

west of there. I'm going to send B and C companies to cover topside. We'll call in the specialists once everything is ready. Now get a move on! There's no time to waste!"

TO BE CONTINUED IN THE SEASON FINALE..