

59

bride of frankenstein

LCTN: ELECTRA-4 (Pleiades cluster)
CORD: SAO-76131.07 (134pc from SOL)
DATE: 2318ce-OCTOBER-10-WEDNESDAY
TIME: 04:40zulu (local 01:22mst)

It's a light rain on Sapphire with small gusts of wind to toss it around, and peeking through a huge gap in the clouds is the moon, Kirin, looking like the left butt-cheek of a Grévy's zebra hanging over the horizon of a choppy sea.

Cricket can at last enjoy the moment.

Bill stopped snoring an hour ago, after about a dozen pokes in his ribs with her elbow, and with the double doors of her bedroom wide open to this view—the breeze and mists that hit her face are just now starting to take its toll. Her eyes are getting heavy, and as she slips in and out of a dozing trance, with actual sleep right at her fingertips, a cottony warmth sweeps over her like a wave and settles on her thighs.

Cricket's eyes snap open and she draws a breath in a panic. Looking around she takes stock to make sure that everything is okay, but as she feels around she realizes it's that time.

"Really, now?" Cricket pushes hard on Bills shoulder, and as he rolls back like a weeble she goes, "My water broke."

Bill's eyes flutter open and, half asleep, he makes an attempt to respond somewhat coherently, "I'll fix it in the morning."

As his eyes snap shut, Cricket's shoulders sag, and while shaking her head she swings her legs around and pushes him out of the bed, "Get up, you slant-eyed bastard!"

Hitting the floor with a crumpled thud, he pops back up and, while hanging on the edge, she says, "I'm having a baby."

Trying to shake the cobwebs he goes, "Well, d'ur!"

She just looks at him and growls, "I'm having it now!"

"Oh, okay!" Bill stands and collects himself, "We can do this."

As Bill pulls the bag he prepared for her, and starts taking inventory, She asks, "Hand me my robe?"

Cricket slithers out of bed, slips her feet into sandals and while standing up the robe she asked for comes to her airborne and settles on top of her head, so she laughs to herself, "Really?"

Cricket dons the robe and as she waddles towards the door, Bill intercepts her, with bag in hand, and urges, "Let's go, hon!"

Bill is yanking on Cricket's hand but she doesn't budge so he frantically asks, "Wha-wha-what?"

"Hey, slope-tard!"

"What!"

Cricket points to the bag—then over to his side of the bed, "Lose the bag, and...go get some clothes on."

Bill blinks, his head processing this, and agrees, "Oh, okay!"

As he tosses the bag on the bed and scrambles to get dressed, Cricket is almost laughing at him, "I don't mind seeing your chicken-ass running around naked, but nobody else does."

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Hospitals are for people to heal, not get well. Pretty much everyone in the hospital is there because of an injury, an elective something or rather, or when having a baby like Cricket.

Hospital rooms nowadays are like hotel rooms. At the very worst they are nice, and the upscale rooms for VIPs, again like Cricket, are lavishly appointed and tech-decked out. Reason being, patients do so much better when they don't mind being in the hospital.

Like most parents, Cricket and Bill wanted to have their child naturally, with no medical intervention but, as is the standing practice, they're having it here in the hospital because nobody believes in that 'mother earth' having it at home naturally thing is a good thing. Not that there's a law against it, it's just that nowadays people will look at you as if you were stupid. Natural birth is A-Okay, it's just that the responsible parent will CYA at a fully staffed maternity ward.

That said, the doctors tried to warn Cricket but she wouldn't listen. As tall and statuesque as she is she's just too petite in actual structural framework to go at this naturally. Their concerns fell on deaf ears until the child got caught in the birth canal with nowhere to go. Screeching in pain with each harrowing contraction, Cricket could

easily handle that, what she couldn't cope with was watching the fetal monitor drop to zero beats from late-deceleration at the peak of each contraction, and this is when she finally caved in.

So, the choice was presented yet again, go straight for either the C-section, or an episiotomy and extraction with an 80% chance of them having to do the C-section anyway.

Cricket chose the later.

With the child passing through there was an eerily audible and sharp double-crack as Cricket's hips are dislocated.

So, now facing the long and drawn out process of physical therapy to put her back to right, Cricket sends Bill out for food, specifically six tacos, three pairs of steak, chicken and pork, two flan and a strawberry shake, and it's when he gets back that he finds out that the physical therapy they were discussing at length is now over with before it even got scheduled.

With Diego attending to the now fitfully dozing Cricket, in the conference room across the hall Bill is telling Maria, Bob, Scott and Jessica what happened, "With the epidural she didn't feel shit, but when Jade's shoulders passed it sounded like bones cracking and we thought the baby broke it's clavicle's, but it was Cricket."

Maria shakes her head, "Both hips, jeez! I feel kinda bad 'cause with Diego, I sneezed and the lil' fucker comes out like she was shot from a cannon!"

Bill laughs, "Ya, well, Jade didn't wanna come out!"

Jessica nods, "My mom said I didn't want to come out."

It was Bob who asked, "So what happened?"

"Ya'll gonna love this one." Bill smiles big, "While I was out chasing after her strawberry shake, Crick asked for help to take a piss so the charge nurse, this big Georgia-momma named, Sunnie, instead of lookin' at the chart and handin' her a pan or sum'tin, Sunnie reaches up under the sheets and whips her legs around sayin' like 'Honey child, ya'll got'sta get up on your feet is what's ya got'sta do!' and there was a loud snap-snap! Sunnie freaks out thinking she broke Crick, goin' off like 'oh my Lawd' and shit!"

Jessica snorts, "Sunnie reset her hips for her!"

Scott observes, "She saved Cricket a lot of grief."

Bill agrees, "Oh, hell ya! It was hard convincing her, though." Bill then points towards Bob, "Like trying to convince you about what Crick is doin' in the FIS."

Bob nods, "I wasn't gonna bring anything up tonight."

"Bob, it can't wait. The twenty-third is a-comin' and you're gonna haft'a talk to 'er."

"Okay, then, if I can ask, what about the short list to replace Wilkinson, if it comes to that?"

Bill didn't want to say it, "She has her own, shorter list."

Maria pipes up, "She conferred with me and I'm behind her on this one. Paris is the logical choice."

Bob's jaw drops, "Don'cha think this is a little early for the Xhemal? Not to mention that the Co-op replacement representatives wouldn't vote for her. Not a chance!" Bob shifts his body and asks, "And while we're on it, when is she going to reject all those applications? None of them meet the residency requirement, right?"

Maria points out, "First, you are overprotective of the Xhemal. Second, yes, the residency documentation was all falsified. We know this up front because Cricket received a file with dossiers for thousands of people from the Hyades in the conquered territories and everyone who has applied to be new FIS mission reps are in that mix."

"Where did that come from?"

"Nobody is sure, but it's all checking out." Maria puts her hands out to assure him, "We would have found all this out eventually, but the mystery-date files sped up the process."

"If that's the case, why isn't our office rejecting them, hu? They're supposed to take their oath next week and if they do they'll push 44-Tau's residency amendment out of committee and onto the floor for a vote in December! Last I recall we don't want that?"

Scott adds, "Yes, we know if the amendment goes through then that effectively destroys the FIS as we know it."

Maria says, "The registry office has not given the applications to your office yet." Again, she then puts her hands out, "I can tell you it's cool, but you'll have to talk to her. I can't say anything because I'm not supposed to know and this is her thing."

Bob asks, "How do you know what she's up to?"

"We work together, Bob, but I'm not supposed to know."

Bob gives her a long look, and, "That gives me no comfort."

Scott chuckles, "Hell, I get no comfort from this!"

Bob asks, "So...do we know who sent the dossiers?"

Maria shrugs, "I'm not for certain, but I think I know."

He looks to Jessica who shrugs with, "I can't say."

Bob's eyes burrow into Jessica with, "But you know."

With Jessica smiling, tight-lipped, Maria nods, "I get that a lot from her." She leans in towards Jessica, "And it's kind of gettin' old!"

Bob asks Jessica, "Is there anything you can tell me?"

Jessica looks at him and shakes her head, *no*, but paths into his head privately with, "<Vasily cannot undo what he set in motion.">

As Bob nods privately with understanding, Diego's head pokes in and she goes, "Guys, she hears you talkin' about 'er, so she'd rather Bob come over at bitch at her directly before you piss her the fuck off."

Bill quivers, "Oooh, my little Bride of Frankenstein calls!"

Scott and Maria both chuckle at that, and with them following Bill across the hall to see Cricket, Bob looks to Jessica and quietly asks, "You know what's going to happen?"

"Since the beginning." Fighting back tears, Jessica hugs Bob and whispers in his ear, "We have an unexpected ally. Cricket knows what she's doing and...I'll come talk to you after the twenty-third." She gives him a little kiss, "Stick to your guns, *mi tito*."

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In Cricket's room, with everyone fawning over Jade, who is in Bill's arms, Cricket's laughs, "You know what Bill tells Jade when he first held her? First thing he says is that he promises that he's gonna buy 'er-her first Jack and Coke. What kind of father does that?"

Bill says to the newborn, "Best kinda father, I guarantee!"

Scott pats Bill on the back, "Totally agree!"

Maria is in awe, "Guys, she is gorgeous!"

Bob nods, "That she is."

Jessica observes, "Black babies are so beautiful!"

Bill couldn't resist, "And ya'll add just a little gookie monster spunk and this is what you get!"

With everybody laughing Maria shakes her head, "Cricket, he is such a pig! How do you put up with his shit?"

Cricket shrugs, "He's an endearing pig."

"She is gorgeous." Jessica laughs, "I was an ugly newborn!"

Diego shakes her head, "Jessie, I saw those pics! Holy shit, with your little scrunched up face they didn't beat you with the ugly stick! Oh, hell no, they hit you with the whole damned tree!"

Jessica gives Diego the look, "Okay, sis, you were cuter than pig shit when you were born, but when you hit larval stage—"

Diego throws her hands up, "Okay, you're right, I was a squirrely bag of shit when I was little but, you have to admit, Angie did beat me in the psycho toddler department."

Jessica laughs, "Yea, I'll give ya that."

Maria kisses Diego, "You were a hideous little creature and that's why, you understand, the quinceanera is your penance!"

Cricket asks, "That's coming up?"

Diego sighs, "The fitting is two-weeks out."

With a few seconds of silence, Cricket asks, "Bob, I know you got a lot on your mind, and you and Michal had your thing goin' on and I've been handling it all, not a problem, but tonight I'll give you a freebee. What's on your mind?"

Bob thinks about it, "A freebee implies one question."

"Yup, that's what you get."

Bob clears his throat, "Okay, the vote, what are you doing? You are going to reject those applicants, right?"

Cricket smirks, "I want them to schedule the vote." Bob gets this confused look on his face so Cricket elaborates, "Can you say, April Fools, Bob, or are you having a senior moment?"

Bob looks confused then he notices Maria and Bill both nodding at him with a wide-eyed look so he says, "Okay, I'm not getting it? Explain it to me as if I were an idiot."

Cricket shakes her head, "You're not an idiot, but what you're really not is a back-stabbing cunt like myself or Maria."

Bob is confused, "But the vote!"

"I want that vote to be scheduled!" She shakes her head and, "Look, Bob, the vote requires a two-thirds supermajority. They all have to show up for the debate in the morning to be eligible for the vote in the afternoon. Standard SOP, and I'm providing lunch!"

Maria adds, "To get the supermajority, they all have to show."

Bob protests, "By then they would have been sworn in!"

Cricket laughs, "Exactly! If I reject them now they just go shuffle off back where they came from. Bring them in for the vote, after having submitted falsified documents under oath, and..."

Cricket gestures to Maria who goes, "That's ten years for perjury. Taking the oath they are subject to Sapphire statutes."

Cricket then points to Bill and asks, "And mission status?"

Bill nods, "For knowingly submitting ineligible representatives those systems lose mission standing for two assembly cycles."

"That's four years so, you see, Bob, I want the vote to be scheduled. If things go south for you at Thirty-Two Tau, I'll be sitting in *pro tempore*. With the abbreviated quorum count the amendment will get squished and my short list candidate will be a shoe in. That vote will be in February and, by then...nobody is gonna defy me."

Bob is surprised, "Instead of sending them home—"

Cricket does a bad Russian accent, "I send 'em to gulag!"

Maria adds, "We'll cut their time, but they will get convicted."

Bob, with open-mouth astonishment, looks at Cricket, Maria, and back at Cricket and then gives a little round of applause while saying, "As Boxter would say...touché!"

Cricket says, "Don't applaud us, it was Bill's idea."

Bill is handing Jade to Cricket and, "I suggested the recipe, but these two cooked up the whole thing all on their own!"

Cricket looks at Jade and glances up at Bill, "Look at this, I can't believe we did this!" She then huffs a small laugh, "Ya know, everyone on this floor is acting like the heavens split open and, to a chorus of angels, their babies drifted down on rose pedals and shit like that but, for me, I get all ya'll talkin' 'bout gook spunk, Jack Daniels, back stabbin' political intrigue on top of other crazy shit! You know, when you look at it, it just...it ain't normal by a long shot."

Everyone acts a little embarrassed with Bob saying, "Sorry."

"Oh no, dawgs, you misunderstand!" Cricket cracks a smile, "I wouldn't change a God damned thing!"

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