

[See Chapter 1/title page for disclaimers and rating](#)

Grace pulled her into the bathroom. She was shaking, scared beyond belief. Her hands were gentle as she pushed T'Lin to the toilet seat. A steady mantra of "It will be okay," floating around her.

T'Lin barely heard her. She had won. Somehow she had won. Her fingers felt stiff. She glanced down, noticing first the knife, which she had somehow retained, and then the caking of blood. Shock reverberated through her as she realized what she had done. Eyes widening in horror, she jolted in place, dropping the knife suddenly. She held out her hands, waving them wildly, as if they were something vile she could shake off. A low keened rent the air. "No, no, no, no, no, no, no...." panted out of her until it was a ragged sob. Blood drenched hands curled into claws, clenching the opposite arm, in a wild self hug. T'Lin rocked slowly on the toilet seat.

Grace had spun at the first clatter of the knife. She had known reality would set in but hadn't been certain of the result. Within moments the dazed girl before her had transformed into a shattered child, one intent on hurting herself. As T'Lin rocked, her nails dug into the soft flesh of her upper arms. Thin trickles of blood leaked from the gouges, but the girl didn't seem to notice. Gentle hands curled over the claws, and she shook her. "Stop it. Stop hurting yourself. He's not worth it. Just stop." She shook her a little harder, not stopping until the girl's wounded eyes met her own. "We need you to pull it together Pixie. The Satorians will not accept the death of their captain easily, especially not at the hands of a female. They will come for you, and Vek may not be able to stop them." Even as she spoke, they could hear the mutter of the raging arguments in the main chamber.

Tears clouded her eyes. "I killed him. I killed him."

"Don't you cry for him T'Lin Archer. Don't you dare cry for him. Yes, you killed him. It was a foolish move to make, that challenge, but I understand why you did it. Do you?"

The girl blinked. "Zack.... I did it because he was hurting Zack Henry." Her eyes slid past Grace to the boys hovering in the doorway. Her hands fell away from her arms as she caught sight of her brother. "I had to protect you. It's what I'm supposed to do. You're mine Sprite, don't you see? Ever since you were born you've been in my head. You're my baby brother and he would have killed you."

The little boy nodded solemnly. It was on the tip of his tongue to tell her that he could take care of himself; that Sorka wouldn't have hurt him, but he understood her. The need and love that had made her stand up for him, was the same as

that which drove him to protect her. He came to her and climbed up into her lap, his arms wrapping tightly around her. "I know Pix. I know. I love you too."

Grace stroked a hand over Zack's head. She started slightly as Aidan burrowed against her, needing comfort as well. One arm curled around her son, holding him close. "We need to get you cleaned up. Then we have to make some plans."

For the first time since she had entered this place, T'Lin felt a strange peace wash over her. "I'm ready." She helped Zack up and retrieved the knife from the floor. It felt heavier than it had earlier. Pushing the dark thoughts from her head, she rinsed both the knife and her hands. Afterward she studied them. Though they were clean, she could still see the blood, smell it. She knew it would be with her a very long time.

As Grace and the boys left the room, she stripped down to her underwear and washed quickly. Once that was done, she quickly drew her under slip back on. Made up of two pieces, the material was thick and could easily be an outfit in itself, though the Vulcan's would be scandalized if she used it as such. The waist length top was sleeveless. Vulcan practicality enforced the plainness of the garment. Four simple white ribbons were supposed to tie it closed. One remained, the very top one, though it was looking rather ragged. Grace had stitched the top together for her in an attempt at modesty, but her recent fight with Sorka had torn it so it gapped over her mid-drift. The lower part was like a skirt, a sort of half-slip that fell to just above her knees. Were she in full robe, there would be a longer over slip, also sleeveless. The over slip was heavy as well, falling like a straight, simple tunic. The rounded neckline and ankle length weight of it made the under slip an unnecessary addition, even with the knee high slits in the sides that allowed for extended leg room. The Vulcans, however, were staunch in propriety, and she had been expected to wear all the layers. The outfit was supposed to be covered by a more ornate outer robe, reminiscent of a kimono, including sashes and belts, followed by a flowing jacket of sorts. Children were rarely given decorative robes, as they were generally symbols of rank or ceremony. If T'Lin had her way, she would take her jumpers and dresses any day. The heat of the kitchens had forced her to shed her jacket and outer robe, both of which Grace encouraged her to wear around the Satorians. As she had not planned to leave the kitchens, and the Satorians rarely entered them, she had felt relatively safe removing the heavier garments. It wasn't as if she had been running around naked. Though, how she had fought successfully in the over slip remained a mystery to her. With efficient movements, she scrubbed the blood from the over slip as best she could. Once finished, she hung it from a nail in the door.

For a moment she stood and stared about her. Tasks completed, she wasn't quite certain what she was supposed to do. She felt different somehow, tainted, both old and new at once. She supposed she would have to get used to it. Her eyes lit on the knife in the basin of the sink. Grabbing it, she used it to slice into her over slip, tearing the hem away in strips. These she used to tie the knife to

her thigh. She studied her leg where the weapon was anchored, twisting this way and that. It didn't appear to be obvious under the loose garment, and she could only hope her captors had forgotten she had it.

As she entered the outer room, she knew she had to come up with a plan. No longer could she count on her father to come for her. She had killed a Satorian and she would be punished for it. Her eyes slid briefly over Grace, Aidan and Zack. Silence permeated the room as the arguments in the main hall stopped. Squaring her shoulders with a purpose, she moved across the room and began gathering the little bit of stuff she had. There wasn't much, shoes and her pocket knife. As she replaced the brick it was hiding under, she skimmed her fingers along the lines she used for marking time. *Thirteen, strange, it feels like forever.*

Finished with her gathering, T'Lin sat on the edge of the bed and motioned the boys to her. Grace sat next to her. "I think morning is the best time for us to move. The camp will be in chaos, they may even be doing something with Sorka's body which may buy us a little time. The guards will unlock the doors for us to go to the kitchen. The boys have about a half hour before they are expected to join Vek in the common area. It is not unusual for all of us to be moving around at that time. I think we can slip through the kitchen and out the back door. There is a hole in the fencing by the rear shed that we should be able to get through with a little work."

Grace glanced around the room as if it had ears. "All four of us out there might raise suspicions. Perhaps I should remain here?"

Three glares answered her. T'Lin took her hand. "We can't leave you, Grace. Nor could I leave the boys. You would all be punished for my actions. Do you honestly think they will let you live if we escape? Do you think any of us would be able to survive out there if we were constantly worrying about what was happening to you here? My Daddy will come for us, all of us."

The look Zack gave her was skeptical. "Will he Pix?"

"He will come for us!" Her voice was adamant in her certainty and he fell silent.

Grace stood and paced. "But I don't know how to survive out there. What will we eat? Where will we hide? How will we know when your father comes?"

"I don't know what we will do, but we have to. They will punish me for what I have done. I have to go, and I can't leave you behind. We will watch the birds and see what they eat, and we will watch to see what eats other creatures. We don't have a choice."

Grace closed her eyes and nodded. "Alright then, it's decided. First thing in the morning we move out. I can steal some food from the kitchen. That ought to help us a little. Let's get some rest so we are fresh for tomorrow."

As the others crawled up onto the bed, T'Lin gathered her over-slip and bundled the still damp material around her shoes. Sleep was a long time in coming.

The sound of the door slamming against the wall was their first sign of trouble. Four bodies rolled to the floor in defensive positions. T'Lin was the first up and her eyes widened in surprise at Sorka standing in the doorway. The man hissed as he located her. "Trata..." His steps were sluggish as he moved toward her. His chest was bare and a white swath of bandage wrapped around his stomach, disappearing into the waistband of his trousers. His eyes narrowed on her and T'Lin could feel the anger emanating from him. She edged slowly away from the bed and the others, hoping to keep his focus from them. She had made it half-way around the room before he spoke again.

"Trata, disrespectful little Trata. You are not worthy of the life granted you. You are mine now, to do with as I please."

T'Lin stiffened her spine. "I am not yours Sorka. I will never be yours. I beat you in fair combat. I have earned my right to exist."

His roar blasted the room. "You are Trata! You have no rights. Only a man may challenge a Satorian for the rights of combat."

She blinked as two other Satorians entered the room, followed by an Andorian. "You accepted the challenge Sorka, therefore you gave me my rights."

"You are nothing little Trata. You cannot give rights to something that has no existence."

She could feel a cold sweat beading down her spine. Her death was imminent. She knew it as clearly as she had known the fight was a defining point in her existence. She wanted it over. *The boys and Grace have a better chance of surviving without me.* Her next words came out as a taunt, inflaming Sorka, as she knew they would. "This Trata is T'Lin Archer and I did quite a bit of damage to you for nothing. Your lack of honor and courage is displayed for all because you accepted a challenge from me and lost."

A low growl of rage echoed through the room. Sorka's arm raised. T'Lin recognized the weapon in his hand as some kind of pistol. Relief flooded through her, with just a hint of regret. *He will kill me now.* Her eyes closed, and she took a step forward as if in welcome. *It is done now.*

The sound of the shot was muted by a desperate cry of "No!" T'Lin heard the thud of the bullet making contact, the soft gasp of pain as it connected. Her eyes flew open in time to see Grace propelled backward from the force of the weapon. As the woman collided with her, they fell to the ground, T'Lin's body cushioning Grace's. She barely registered the men arguing with Sorka as she shimmied out

from under her friend. T'Lin's hands flew automatically to the wound on Grace's chest, desperate to stop the flow of vital fluid from her body.

Blood poured from the wound. No matter how much she pushed against it or tried to stop it, blood continued to flow. It was everywhere, coating her hands and face, and the woman losing it. She glanced around, searching for help. The boys were frozen in place, watching helplessly. "Aidan, give me your shirt. Now!"

The boy blinked, then whipped the garment over his head, handing it to her. T'Lin shifted her hands one at a time, bunching the material over the wound, hoping it would help stem the flow. Again she searched the room. "Zack, get Vek."

"But.."

"Go! Aidan help me hold this!" She forced Aidan's hands on the bunched cloth. "Don't let up the pressure."

"Pixie..." The whispered voice was filled with pain, but T'Lin heard it. Her eyes sought out Grace's and she could see the awareness there. The light was fading from those beautifully expressive eyes and there was nothing she could do about it.

Moving closer to Grace's head, T'Lin leaned down and kissed her brow. "Shhh now, everything will be fine. Just be still."

"No. Listen to me Pixie, please." The girl nodded and leaned closer, one hand curling around Grace's. "This wound is mortal. I'm not going to get out of here..."

"Grace..."

"No. Promise me Pixie... promise me you will take care of Aidan... that you will see him free and safe... Please..." A shudder shimmered through the woman and her eyes closed.

T'Lin squeezed her hand. Time seemed to slow once more, moving in fragmented images. She could hear Grace's wheezing breaths, and Aidan's sobs. She could feel the menacing evil that was Sorka hovering over them. The door slammed open and Vek's curses filled the room. Boots rang out against the flooring as he hurried into the room. She felt Zack slide into place beside her and noticed his hands joining Aidan's on the blood soaked pad. Another shudder shimmered through Grace and T'Lin's eyes met hers once more. What she saw there frightened her. Leaning down once more, T'Lin pressed a kiss to Grace's cheek. "I promise Grace. I will care for Aidan. I will protect him with my life. I promise to see both my brothers safe and free."

A ghost of a smile slid across Grace's face and the shadows in her eyes seemed to disappear. "I give him to you then." Her eyes shifted to her son and she raised a weakened hand to touch his hair. The boy dropped to the ground beside her and buried his face in her neck. "I love you my sweet boy."

The boy was barely able to mutter a reply before he was being pulled from his mother's side. The other children were pulled away as well. Vek ordered his men to move Grace so they could better treat her. As the men did as they were bid, one spoke up. "Sir, it's too late. She's gone."

The children huddled together in stunned shock. Rage rolled through T'Lin. Her friend and protector was gone. Killed by Sorka's greedy hand. A growl of fury erupted from her throat and she was running at him, her stolen knife in her hand. She didn't remember pulling it free, only acknowledged the weight of it in her fist. There was no tactical advantage to her move, and she knew it the instant Sorka grinned. It didn't stop her though, nor did she dodge his coming fist. She wanted to try, to accept the defeat of it, and even feel the physical pain of the blow that numbed her arm, caused her to drop her knife, and sent her tumbling to the floor. Every bone in her body throbbed from the blow and the fall, but she didn't care. The pain helped to cover the grief, and her actions caused the result she hoped for.

Before Sorka could move toward her, Vek burst to life once more. His doubled up fist crashed into the Satorian's face as he ranted. "Damn you! She was mine, you had no right. You stupid, stupid fool! Your desire for that useless Krenath has cost me my slave..." Vek's rant was joined by equally aggressive words from Sorka, but T'Lin tuned them out as she moved closer to the boys. Several of Vek's men as well as many of Sorka's were watching the confrontation with avid interest, eager to see if more blood would be shed.

Moving slowly, she edged toward the open door. She urged the boys toward it as well, with her eyes and slow movements of her hands. With the camp distracted, the children had their chance and were eager to take it. As they edged out the door and into the shadows of the compound, T'Lin grabbed the small bundle she had placed by the door. As silently and stealthily as possible, the three young people put their grief on hold and crept out of the compound and into the woods, right through the front door.

The cool dampness of the woods surrounded them. The air was filled with the scent of rotting vegetation, but the children didn't care. Nor did they mind the rain that surrounded them. Both would help cover their escape. The wooded area was filled with streams and ponds. They were still close enough to the camp when the cry was raised. T'Lin motioned the boys into one of the streams, encouraging them to follow it downstream. This they waded through for about 50 feet before they came to a giant tree. Its branches were high, and difficult to reach, especially where they overlapped the water, but the children were not

deterred. T'Lin boosted the boys up into the three, and then opened her bundle of clothes. She quickly pulled out her over-slip and knotted the material in several places. Once finished, she tossed the makeshift rope to the boys. Knotting the laces on her shoes, she draped them around her neck and dropped her pocket knife into one of them. With the boys using each other as counterweight, she used the over-slip to climb the tree. Words didn't seem necessary as she urged them higher and higher into the tree. She nearly smiled as they came to a Y in the branches where some animal had dug out a hollow in the tree. It was barely big enough for the three of them, and smelled of decay and urine, but she didn't care. Urging the boys into it, she reached up and broke off a couple of manageable leafy branches. Then settling in with the boys, she arranged the branches so they were hidden and waited.

The waiting was the easy part. T'Lin knew the men would be looking for them. She hoped the rain and the water would help them hide. They had entered the stream making it look like they were going upstream, but she wasn't sure if the enemy would continue to underestimate them. The silence however, was dreadful. The silence allowed thought and thought allowed grief and grief threatened to overwhelm them all. She wanted to sing to the boys, comfort and rock them, but knew she couldn't. All she could do was hold them close and pray. Her arms curled tightly around them and they held onto each other.

The waiting in and of itself was longer than they expected, but not all that long. The rustling of movement through the vegetation came first, followed by the sound of voices raging curses. Every few feet, the Satorians would growl at the others for stealth or quiet, but it didn't seem to matter. The men from the camp were searching for three children in the dark and rain, and didn't care who knew about it. The children froze as their hiding tree was approached. They prayed that the enemy could no more see them in the branches of the old tree than the children could see those on the ground. Voices reached up to them, filled with frustration and disgust. Vek's was the most recognizable. "We have found no trace of them since they entered the stream. We have teams ranging up and downstream, as well as across the stream. This darkness and rain are not helping matters. If they've gone to ground we will never find them."

Sorka's response was gruff and furious. "If you had just given me the Trata when I requested her, none of this would have happened."

"Well YOU can explain to Arven why the children are gone. We will let him take it out of your pay. You owe me for the female as well."

"Bah! Arven is too caught up in his dreams of glory and vengeance to care about the young ones. He needs only to draw Archer into his trap. If the bait we left has done its part, then the children are no longer important. They are mine when I find them. The Trata's death is certain, but the boys can still be trained."

A sigh of disgust echoed through the air. “It is useless to talk to you. All you Satorians think of is war and death and slavery. Does nothing hold value for you? I am calling back the men and heading to camp. We will resume our search at daybreak. We can make use of some of the sensors on the ship to track them... if this life-forsaking rain stops long enough.”

“Perhaps you are right.” The children nearly jumped as his voice rose. “I will find you Trata, and when I do, I will drink your blood!”

Vek grunted in response. “Do what you want with the Krenath, but give Grace’s son to me. I would keep him.”

Sorka chuckled. “Done.” The sound of a hand clapping against someone’s back rose up to them. “Come, I will help you build a funeral pyre for your woman and perhaps I will find something to replace her with.” The voices faded as the men moved off. The children wondered if they had truly been granted a reprieve or if it was just a trick to try and draw them out. With those thoughts in mind, the waiting and the silence both became bearable.

Several hours later the rain stopped. The boys were sleeping against her but she couldn’t join them in dreamland. She couldn’t imagine ever sleeping again, even though she was so tired she could barely move. Glancing through the tree top, she could see the sky. The clouds were clearing and she could see a hint of stars sparkling above. It was strange that her first night of freedom would show her beloved stars. *A sign? I hope...* She chose to take it as such and felt the first bloom of something familiar in her chest. It was hope, and with it came a sense of relief so strong she nearly cried.

Slowly T’Lin eased herself away from the boys. She wanted to look around, both to make sure they weren’t still being tracked, and to get a feel for their surroundings. Food and water were also a priority. At her movements, the boys came instantly awake. It hurt her heart to see them anxious and uneasy, but she knew it was essential for their survival. For her purposes, it was just as well they were awake. Her voice was a low whisper when she spoke. “I’m going to look around. You two stay in the trees. Don’t come out of them unless they find you. As long as you stay still and silent, you should be fine.”

Zack blinked at her. “But Pix, I have to pee.”

T’Lin glanced around briefly. “Edge carefully to the other side of the tree and use the trunk. The smell may help distract predators, and the rain will help eliminate the rest. If you have to do anything else, try to stay in the trees. There are all kinds of hollows in these branches. If you can’t, stay near the water. Bury any waste, and cover yours tracks. I’m going to try to lay a false trail, so I don’t know how long I’ll be gone. Wait for me.”

She used the trees, moving slowly from branch to branch and tree to tree. When she could, she stayed over the water. When she couldn't, she moved higher in the branches. It took her longer than she would have liked to backtrack to where they had entered the stream, and longer still to move further upstream. The sky was growing lighter as dawn approached. Concern for the boys flitted through her head. For the first time since she had been here, she prayed for rain, hoping it would delay the return of the search parties. The smell of smoke filled her nostrils, and she shimmied further up her tree to see if she could find the source. Her location gave her a limited view of the compound. Flames danced wildly in the center courtyard. Hope and fear warred within her. If they were burning the base camp, then they would be leaving. *But if they leave, what will become of us?* It didn't occur to her to think it might be an accident and it only took a moment for her to realize they weren't burning the camp, but rather a member of it. Sorka had mentioned a funeral pyre for Grace, and T'Lin was pretty sure that was what she was seeing. With a soft sigh, she continued on her way.

It was dusk before she found her way back to the boys. Rain had begun to fall shortly after dawn. It had started as a light mist and increased to heavy, soaking sheets. The branches had become slick as she traveled over them, and the water below had flowed faster. She had followed the stream bed for several hours, finally finding a rocky location where she could drop down and not leave prints. From there she had made her way out of the stream and along the bank, this time deliberately leaving footprints. Finding a usable branch, she had made a half-hearted effort to conceal them again. The trail she made, led deeper into the forest, to a rocky incline. It was here she had noticed some trees that held a banana like fruit they had eaten at the compound. There were nests in the trees, and fallen fruit on the ground. T'Lin gathered a couple of bunches, tucking them in the waistband of her under-slip. Climbing the rocky ledge back into the trees, she headed back to her boys.

Zack was furious when he saw her. He wanted to lash out at her, yell and scream and pout, but he wasn't sure how safe they were. He settled for glaring. "We were getting worried Pix."

T'Lin nodded as she handed the boys her find. "I know. I'm sorry. I had to travel really far upstream to leave a false trail. I had to find a place where I didn't see any of their tracks. I figure they'll be back this way looking for us again. We should probably move further downstream, find a new hiding place. Did you guys see anyone while I was gone."

"No, nothing but frogs and crickets once the rain started back up." Aidan mumbled between bites.

"Good." T'Lin reached out a hand, stroking his cheek. "I think they had a funeral for Grace today. I saw a fire and Sorka had said something about it. I think it and the rain bought us some time." She gathered him close as tears filled his

eyes. He was quiet in his tears, but his grief transmitted itself. Zack curled into both of them as T'Lin began to hum softly.

Aidan was sleeping when T'Lin moved again. Zack was lying beside him, watching her. She shifted so she could pull off her shoes, staring hopelessly at the soaked material. "We need to protect our feet, but we are going to have problems with them if we wear wet shoes all the time. At the compound we could dry out, but here..." She shook her head. "I just don't know."

Zack sat up slowly. "Aidan and I don't have any. We left them at the compound."

T'Lin's eyes widened as she took in both boys bare feet. A tendril of guilt ran through her. She had grabbed her stuff, but the boys hadn't. They only had the clothes on their backs. Closing her eyes, she took a deep breath. "I didn't think..." She hadn't had time to put her shoes on last night, and her feet were scratched and bruised because of it. The boys appeared to be in similar condition. She studied her shoes again. They hadn't been made for the wear she was putting on them and she wondered how long they would last anyway. Her fingers slide over the stiff, wet material. They were half boots, coming to just above her ankle. *If I cut them right...*

Busily she went to work. Her little pocket knife hadn't been designed for the work she was using it for, but it held up admirably. She sawed at the leather-like material until it lay before her in ragged strips. Then she repeated the process on the hem of her over-slip. A soft giggle slipped out as she worked the strips.

Zack gaped at her. "What's so funny?"

"I was just thinking how scandalized the Vulcans would be if they could see us now. So much for proper dress." She waved the strips of cloth from her over-slip in emphasis. When she was done, they had three ragged pairs of sandals. "They won't last long, but hopefully by the time they wear out our feet will be tougher, that or we will be home."

Zack watched as she wound the strips of cloth around his foot, securing the heavier material to the bottom. "We will have to check the cloth to make sure we don't leave bits of it behind while we walk."

She nodded. "If we could find something else to bind them with, I could cut holes through them, but they still won't last long."

"There's other stuff if we need it. Tree bark, heavier leaves. These trees are covered in vines. The smaller ones we can use for carrying and tying, the larger ones we can use like ropes for climbing and stuff." He paused as she gently repeated the shoeing on Aidan, waking the boy in the process. "Pixie, we need to think about camouflage and stuff like that. Mine and Aidan's clothes are dark,

so we blend in okay there. You are wearing white though. It stands out.”

She nodded again. “I’ll take care of it in a few minutes. I was thinking we should probably get rid of our bloodstained stuff. It’s likely to attract predators, and we really don’t need that. We also have to worry about them tracking us. The rain will help most of the time, but not always. We should stay in the water or the trees. We will be less likely to leave a trail that way. I don’t think we should stay in any one place more than a couple of days. The less time we stay in one place, the less likely we are to leave a trace ourselves. We should probably use mud to help us hide too.”

Zack chewed on his lower lip. “Mud will be cold... might help us hide from their sensors.”

“Might help with the bugs too.” Aidan chimed in.

“Sounds like a plan then. Let’s get moving for now and find a new place to hide. We will deal with the rest later.” Tying her over-slip around her waist and gathering the banana skins, T’Lin dropped carefully into the water. She eased her way to the bank, and dug a deep hole. Burying the remains of their meal, she carefully disguised her tracks and headed downstream. The boys followed her. When another convenient tree was found, they used it, climbing into the safety of its branches and venturing away from the stream.

Abundant bodies of water made their plans a little easier, and after several hours of trek, the threesome found another hiding place. They had located a small pond at the base of a rock face. Water spilled lazily down the wall of rock in a misty cascade, as if it were an afterthought rather than an actual waterfall. A brief survey of the area found more wild fruit trees and a deep, but narrow cave. From the water lines in the cave, it was apparent it flooded. There was a section that seemed to stay above the flood line, and it would work for the three exhausted children. They had found it quite by accident, and the urge to burrow down was strong, but they knew they dared not stay long. If they could find it by accident, so could the Satorians.

Once the boys were settled and sleeping, T’Lin slipped out of the cave. The rain had slowed once more, and the stars winked at her through the clouds. She took a deep breath, and followed a meandering trail of water that used the pond as its collection pool. As before, she dug a deep hole. The mud oozed between her fingers, coating them, weighing them down. It felt as Grace’s blood had as it cooled and she could see it then, as clear as if a light were shining on her. She stumbled into the stream and washed them off, scrubbing as if she would take the skin as well. The smell of blood overwhelmed her senses and she dropped to her knees. Grief overwhelmed her, and she curled into a small ball and rocked as the tears poured silently down her cheeks. When grief eased somewhat, she

stripped out of her tarnished under-slip, and buried it with the rest of their trash. Her over-slip fell to just below her knees now, cold, wet, and caked with mud. With another quick check to make sure all signs of her presence were disguised, T'Lin headed back to the boys, and what little sleep she could get.