



Title: The Space Traveler's Lover
Author: Omara Williams
Treatment By: Louis T. Sheridan

Mission Statement:

The Space Traveler's Lover is a compelling sci-fi romance. The book is well-matched to modern storytelling styles, and as such, this treatment's goal is to adapt it with as few tweaks as possible.

This revised treatment takes the author's notes into account, and aims to keep the events of the story in line with the book as much as possible. Of course, since the originating text is 284 pages long, and most treatments run around 5-15 pages, this document generally focuses on the broader strokes of the story, so as to fit within the expected length.

All in all, this treatment aims to present Erin's world, loved ones, and adventures in a cinematic fashion.

Logline:

In a future Earth on the brink of ecological collapse, a young bright student encounters an alien soldier, who might rebuild the world or destroy it.

Treatment:

We open in the blurred POV of a young woman, running down a long, dark corridor. The light at the end of the corridor expands, blinding her, then fades away to reveal the shore of a multicolored alien ocean. Up ahead, overlooking the ocean, is a tall, shining tower. The young woman runs toward the tower, but trips. When she looks up, she sees the silhouette of a striking young man in a golden soldier's uniform, later to be known as ROTHWEN. Try as she might, she can't focus on his face. The soldier looks down on her in an aloof manner, then reaches down and offers his hand. He says something, but a sudden rush of water drowns out his words. The woman reaches for his hand, but misses it, and sinks beneath the waves, drowning in the darkness.

At that moment, ERIN LOBART, 16 as of that morning, wakes up in her futuristic bedroom. A bright and active young lady, she has distinctive eyes, big and blue with a



hint of purple. Her adoptive mother, PAT LOBART, scolds her from the doorway for sleeping in. With that, Mrs. Lobart closes the door and heads downstairs, leaving Erin to rub the lingering dream images out of her eyes. "Again," she groans.

Twenty minutes later, Erin comes downstairs, dressed and showered. She grabs a piece of bread and takes a sip from her black coffee mug before running out the back door. BLAZER, her smooth fox terrier, runs joyfully towards her, jumping on her chest with his two front paws. She strokes his soft, white and tan coat while sharing the rest of her bread with the overexcited dog. She takes a deep breath, looking towards the winding country road that will take her to the tuna farm. The weather is good today, with no bulging clouds or dense mist covering the otherwise perfectly blue sky. She can even see the flocks of seagulls circling over the steel suspension bridge joining the island to the tuna farm's control tower.

The wind brings the smell of the salty sea and the shrieking calls of the agitated birds. Erin looks at her watch. She still has a few minutes to spare before her shift starts. Looking at the stables, she ponders aloud whether to go running or take her horse.

"Erin." Mrs. Lobart's stern call makes her jolt. Erin jumps over the fence and onto the footpath. "Ah, Erin. Happy birthday! Come back early today, will you?" Mrs. Lobart's voice fades away as her daughter runs toward the coast.

The pounding surf reminds Erin of the dream. The silhouette of the mysterious man FLASHES through her head. Nervous and excited even at the memory of the dream, she draws a deep breath and keeps running.

As Erin runs, we see that she lives on an island — or, as pop-up text informs us, "TINIAN ISLAND, PACIFIC OCEAN, 2102." A great sea wall looms over the western side of the island, holding back the ever-rising ocean. As Erin approaches the tower complex, above the main gate we see the logo for the ARA — Aid and Recovery Alliance — with the motto, "REPLANT, REGROW, REBUILD." Erin enters a large tuna farm, where her adoptive father, ALBERT LOBART, greets her with a scowl. A short, stocky man known to his friends as the "Mad Bulldog," Albert mainly speaks in orders and gives Erin quite an earful of them, telling her to make sure the tuna fishing crew is making their quotas and to follow up on the medical shipment from Los Angeles. She nods and tells him, "Yes, sir." He grumbles, "You can call me 'Dad.'"

In the tuna farm's control room, Erin checks a series of monitors, which show each staff member's position by name. She focuses on one particular dot on the map, labeled "SHEPPARD, SAM."; that dot's red, while all the others are green. Erin mutters, "Come on, Sam..." At that moment, SAM SHEPPARD, 16, checks in over the intercom. She gently admonishes him for being "just in time." He tells her he was getting something



ready for her birthday, and that he can show her after work. “After work,” Erin agrees, then says they’re both on the clock, and they should act like it. Erin daydreams about Sam, FLASHING BACK to a date they had the previous summer.

In the flashback, Erin and Sam ride their horses along the cliffs of the island’s northern peninsula. The rocky, waterlogged crevices below them form a huge, natural maze, leading from the shoreline to a wide cave mouth at the maze’s end. As the pair rein in their horses and admire the sunset, Erin spots something in the cave’s entrance: a luminous, orange, metallic sphere, emerging from beneath the water, growing larger as it rises. It gives off a low booming sound, frightening the two horses. As Erin and Sam watch, both spellbound, the sphere shines more and more brightly, until they have to look away. When they look back, it’s gone, and the sound has faded. Sam is flabbergasted, but Erin looks merely curious, and Sam asks why. Erin says she’s seen the object before, and she almost wonders if it’s following her.

The voice of ALBERT LOBART interrupts Erin’s flashback. He tells her he overheard her talking to Sam, that he and Pat don’t approve of her spending time with him outside of work. If she does it again again, Albert will fire him. The stern patriarch then awkwardly adds “Happy birthday” and leaves the room. Erin, unintimidated, shakes her head, grumbling, “Nothing will destroy my friendship with Sam. Not even the Lobarts.”

A few hours later, Erin clocks out. Just then, Sam’s obnoxious sister, STELLA SHEPPARD, strolls into the room, takes Erin’s seat, gives her a sarcastic “Happy birthday,” and promises to take care of anything Erin hasn’t bothered with that day. Erin shrugs off the girl’s animosity, grabs her things, and turns her back. As she goes, Stella calls out, “You sure you want to go out with my brother? There’s a storm coming.” When Erin doesn’t answer, Stella continues, “Okay. Hope his surprise doesn’t kill you.”

Cut to Sam driving Erin on his speedboat through the waterlogged canyons. With her hair down in the wind, Erin cheers with excitement. The boat takes Sam and Erin through a maze of streams, archways, and tunnels. With a storm gathering overhead, the water starts getting choppy, and Erin stops cheering long enough to ask if they ought to turn back. Sam laughs that off, saying they haven’t even gotten to the surprise yet. He points ahead to the mouth of the cave. An astonished Erin asks, “You’re taking me to El Diablo?” In response, Sam revs the boat’s engine and slips through the narrow entrance, clearing both sides by millimeters.

Sam turns on the boat’s headlights and keeps steering, navigating first to a wide underground lake, then through a tunnel to a second, smaller body of water. There, Sam slows down, turns the key, and gives the engine a rest. As the quiet sinks in, he takes a deep breath. Gathering his nerve, he tells Erin that when she left for college, he wasn’t sure he’d see her again, and it made him realize something. They’ve been friends for a



long time, he says, but for him, the friendship has changed. Erin, who still feels only friendship with Sam, doesn't respond. After a moment of silence, Sam leans in to try to kiss her, but at that moment, a sudden current seizes the boat, knocking them both down.

Sam struggles to get up and reach the controls, but before he can, the current pulls the boat toward a huge underground waterfall. Just as they reach the waterfall's edge, the boat freezes in midair, with the current still raging beneath it. Sam and Erin look at each other, wondering what's happening. That's when they see the orange light emerging out of the darkness ahead. The light dims a bit, revealing itself to be an alien spaceship, about three times the size of the boat. As the two teens watch in amazement, the ship's cockpit opens. Inside is an intense young man in a golden uniform — Rothwen, from Erin's dream — who stands and looks straight at her. A vibrating force emanates from his body, causing both Sam and Erin to slip into unconsciousness. Rothwen then floats out of the cockpit, approaches Erin, and sweeps her into his arms, stroking her hair and calling her "Shaillah." Casting a quick glance back at Sam, the alien soldier telekinetically lifts the boat and the boy up out of the water, sliding them through the air to the safety of the lake's far shore. He then carries Erin back into the cockpit with him, closes it, and descends back into the waterfall, leaving Sam behind.

Erin experiences a surreal vision, which begins with her floating in an icy bubble, wearing a tight white bodysuit, surrounded by blinding light. The light then fades a bit, as does the bubble, allowing her to stand up and see that she's in a strange room, with a 3-D projection of herself at the room's far end. Floating images around the projection represent her vital signs. Three men — Rothwen, the boisterous COMMANDER KUZHMA-OR, and the calm, analytical scientist ATHGUER — stand watching her. She calms down a bit when she sees Rothwen, then looks back to her image to see that her hair is turning silver, and her irises are turning completely purple. Her vital signs fluctuate, then steady themselves.

Rothwen opens his arms and invites her to come closer. Fascinated with him, she walks, then runs to him, feeling up and down his back and whispering, "You're real." Rothwen holds up a finger, then pulls out a palm-sized, pyramid-shaped object, covered in glowing alien symbols. The pyramid hovers up above his hand, spinning slowly, and as Erin looks on, the symbols shift into English. Rothwen introduces himself by name, again calling her "Shaillah," and says he's been waiting a long time for her. Erin says she's been waiting for him too, and that she couldn't wait to dream every night so she could see him again. It was hard, Rothwen continues; the others wanted him to conquer Earth years ago, but he does things on his own schedule, and he had to wait until she was ready.

Erin's smile slips, and she starts peppering him with questions. With Kuzhma-Or and Athguer periodically chiming in, Rothwen explains that they are all Rom-Ghenshar, from a faraway world, and that she is becoming one of them. Erin bristles at that, saying they



hijacked her body without her consent, but Rothwen tells her it was all decided long before she was born. Kuzhma-Or tells Rothwen to bring her to them — then, along with Athguer, he seems to disintegrate before Erin’s eyes. Rothwen explains that the two of them were just body copies, created to communicate over long distance, but says that’s not important. What’s important now, he says, is that her and Erin are together, as they should be. Despite Erin’s worries, she can’t help but find Rothwen’s presence calming – and exciting at the same time. She does, however, have one more question: “What about Sam?”

In the caves up above, a drone explores the waterways and tunnels, searching for the missing teens. In the ARA building’s central tower, both Lobarts, as well as Sam’s sister Stella and his father BILL, crowd around a central console, where rescue worker JOHN SANDERS operates the drone. As everyone looks on in concern, the drone comes across Sam’s boat, still beached against the wall of the cave. The group sighs with relief, but for the Lobarts, that relief doesn’t last long; the drone’s camera sees an unconscious Sam in the boat, but no sign of Erin. “He must know where she is,” Albert says. Nodding, Sanders stands up, telling the others to watch the drone while he goes to rescue Sam. Before he leaves, he assures Mr. Lobart that he’ll find Erin too.

Rothwen leads Erin down a glass, underwater tunnel, through which she sees the surrounding ocean. Her breathing becomes labored, as she struggles to adjust to the Rom-Ghenshar atmosphere, but she manages to make that adjustment. Congratulating her on passing the first gate, Rothwen then opens a downward passage, which drops them both rapidly into the cockpit of a Rom-Ghenshar scout ship. In the near-pitch darkness, all Erin can see is Rothwen’s silhouette, so she holds onto him. Rothwen telekinetically pilots the ship deeper into the sea, toward the depths of the Marianas Trench. Gradually, Erin’s eyes adjust, more so than any human’s could, and she starts making out the shapes of artificial structures in the deep. Rothwen says she’s now able to see into the infrared band, as all Rom-Ghenshar can. He then warns her that she’s about to go through the third and most dangerous transition.

Erin starts hearing psychic noise all around her, and she shudders as it floods her brain. She cringes and clenches, feeling as if her head is about to explode. Rothwen looks on in concern, but doesn’t interfere. Finally, the noise calms and levels out. Smiling, and without moving his lips, Rothwen sends her a telepathic message, congratulating her on passing all the “gates.” She is now, he says, a full Rom-Ghenshar, and her transformation into Shaillah is complete. She repeats the name Shaillah aloud, trying it on her tongue.

Looking ahead, Shaillah sees a huge undersea dome, which the scout ship eases through. The dome’s interior includes both water and air, with a shimmering pink ocean rolling toward a beach, beyond which stand great Rom-Ghenshar towers. Above the towers are a pair of artificial binary suns. The scout ship surfaces on the ocean and lands on the shore.



Rothwen says the place is a taste of the Rom-Ghenshar world, somewhere they come when they want to feel closer to home. As the cockpit door opens, Shaillah looks around and marvels, “A sea within a sea within a sea.” Overwhelmed by the beauty of the scene, she leans into Rothwen’s embrace, and the two of them share a long, passionate kiss.

Cut to Sam in a police interrogation room, where a detective and defense lawyer named JACK WRAY grill him about Erin. Sam, not for the first time, insists that she was abducted by aliens. The detective notes that he’s sticking with that story, then lays out the prosecution’s theory: everyone knew Sam had a long-standing crush on Erin, and that Erin never showed any romantic interest in him. Multiple people saw him invite Erin out on the boat, and only he came back. Sam protests that he didn't "come back," he was thrown against the wall and had to be rescued. The detective says most people have concluded that he and Erin had a fight, that Erin fell (or was pushed) overboard, and that the boat crashed in the confusion. With all that said, the detective tells Sam, “Tomorrow, you must prove to the entire court and the world what you said to me. Write your final plea as a proclamation of love, and let’s hope that Judge Abiko, so profoundly touched by your testimony, shows some leniency.”

On the beach beneath the dome, Rothwen and Shaillah lie in the sand. While she sleeps peacefully in his arms, he has a telepathic conversation with a stately Rom-Ghenshar woman, ZULA-OR. Bemused, she congratulates him on his “conquest.” He says he needed something to shake up his demons, something to keep him from fighting against himself. She says he always gets what he wants, and this is no different. No, he tells her, looking at Shaillah’s angelic face: this is different.

Shaillah stirs, opens her eyes, and remarks, “You’re still here.” He nods, then says he has something to show her: her new utility belt. He helps her put it on, demonstrating its various functions, including an energy shield and anti-gravity field. She has other powers as well, he continues, and he’ll help her learn to use them. He then offers his hand, leading her toward the alien towers.

As they approach those towers, he introduces her to their fast-travel system, a network of mirror-like portals. Bringing her to one in particular, he asks her to step through it, saying there’s someone else who wants to meet her there. He promises to rejoin her shortly, and with his reassurance, she steps through. One blurry moment later, she finds herself in a beautiful garden — not of plants, but of colorful, fast-growing gems. In that garden, Zula-Or stands waiting with a smile. Around her neck is a distinctive necklace with a pink diamond in the center. The woman greets Shaillah, then asks if she misses her old home. Shaillah says she does, but seems to doubt it as soon as she says so. Zula-Or says she misses her old home too, then tells the story of how the Rom-Ghenshar first came to Earth many thousands of years ago, living among the early humans and teaching them how to mine precious minerals and metals, and build great cities with them. When the



humans grew greedy and power-hungry, Zula-Or continues, they turned against the Rom-Ghenshar. In a catastrophic war, the humans drove them from the planet, though not before the Rom-Ghenshar used their powers over nature to tear down everything they'd helped the humans build. Since then, she says, the Rom-Ghenshar have grown much stronger, building a vast empire, ever expanding across the galaxy. They'd have conquered Earth already, she continues, but Rothwen, their finest warrior, insisted they wait — for Shaillah.

"Why me?" Shaillah asks. Smiling again, Zula-Or explains that she herself, with Athguer's help, created Shaillah sixteen years ago, sending her down as a fertilized egg, as the Rom-Ghenshar often do to keep tabs on other worlds. In Shaillah's case, however, she added Rom-Ghenshar supercells into the genetic mix. To prove it, Zula-Or takes a sharp gem from her headpiece and, to Shaillah's alarm, draws blood from the side of her neck. When Zula-Or then pulls the gem back, Shaillah feels the cut, only to realize that it's already healing. Zula-Or says that the Rom-Ghenshar have learned the secrets of immortality and invincibility, and that Shaillah, like all Rom-Ghenshar, is now perfect. To celebrate their reunion, Zula-Or gives Shaillah her necklace, the Quark-Star, saying it'll give her energy when she needs it. Shaillah asks, "What about Rothwen?" With a chuckle, Zula-Or says that the conquest of Earth will be just another chapter in his long campaign. Taking the implication, Shaillah says she might be just another chapter too. Zula-Or says he's unpredictable, and that it's hard to say; her best advice to Shaillah is to be herself.

In the dome's command center, Rothwen speaks with Kuzhma-Or, who stands at the railing, looking out at the sea. Athguer works on a computer in the background, while a dozen ROBOTS, tall, thin, and expressionless, attend to stations and machines all around them. Rothwen and Kuzhma-Or have a long military history together, and their relationship is professional, but sometimes tense. Kuzhma-Or grumbles about how Rothwen's infatuation with Shaillah delayed their campaign, and how they're parked on Earth when they should have conquered Omega Centauri by now. Rothwen says it's been a minor delay, it won't change anything, and besides, he does what he wants and deals with the consequences later. Kuzhma-Or implies that Shaillah is just another of Rothwen's little diversions, and that he'll drop her once he loses interest. Athguer, trying to defuse the situation, sympathizes with Rothwen, saying they all want what he wants: to reinvigorate their souls from the coldness they all feel. Rothwen brushes off his sympathy and heads for the door. Before he leaves, Kuzhma-Or tells Rothwen to bring Shaillah to the throne room for evaluation. Rothwen says he will, and that Kuzhma-Or had best treat her with respect. Kuzhma-Or answers that she'll have to earn it.

In a lavish suite, Shaillah finishes putting on a beautiful dress. Rothwen knocks, and she lets him in. He lets himself bask in her loveliness for a moment, while she loses herself in his eyes. He then advises her that Commander Kuzhma-Or wants to meet her, and that



she'll need to show her Rom-Ghenshar spirit to convince him of her worthiness. Rothwen tells her not to worry; he'll be with her.

Rothwen and Shaillah, under escort from several guardian robots, enter Kuzhma-Or's throne room, where he sits on an imposing gold throne, wearing his black military helmet. Athguer stands off to the side, quietly observing. Noticing the Quark-Star around Shaillah's neck, Kuzhma-Or observes that she's already met with Zula-Or, and it would seem the lady counselor approves of her. Shaillah says it was an honor to meet the wise woman. The commander continues that Rothwen seems to approve as well. Saying no more about that, he beckons Shaillah forward. As she approaches his throne, the room around her fades to black, replaced by a view, from deep space, of the Sol system. Kuzhma-Or, hovering in front of her, proclaims that they ignored Earth for millennia while they expanded their conquests elsewhere, but the time has come to reclaim it. He watches her reaction – which is to stand proudly and declare, “Suan enjie Rom-Ghenshar,” subtitled as “The Rom-Ghenshar are always victorious.”

The starfield around her fades, and the throne room reappears. With his face unreadable, Kuzhma-Or asks Athguer's opinion of Shaillah. He says she's physically perfect, but he worries there might be a sliver of hesitation inside her. Defiant, Shaillah says she'll prove him wrong. Nodding, the commander says he has a mission for her. Telling Rothwen to stay behind, he walks her out of the room.

Shaillah and the commander cross a walkway, beneath which an army of robots stands by. The commander explains that the robots are there to rebuild and revitalize the planet Earth, and will not harm the humans unless the humans interfere with their work. If they do, he warns, they'll regret it immediately; each of the robots carries an energy-reflecting shield, which will repel any force used against it and turn that force back tenfold. Shaillah points out that humanity won't react well to an army of robots marching up from the sea. That, Kuzhma-Or says, is where Shaillah comes in. The humans believe she's one of them, he continues; in fact, with the media surrounding her trial, she's become something of a celebrity. Her mission is to go back among the humans and encourage them to submit. Shaillah asks what happens if they say no. The commander glances down at the robot army and suggests, "Let's not let it come to that."

In his cell, a miserable Sam tears at his sheets, makes a rope, and tries to strangle himself. At that moment, the cell door opens – for Shaillah. She makes a slight gesture, causing the rope to disintegrate. Sam stumbles forward, gasping as he looks up at her, then blurts out a flurry of questions. Smiling down as she would at a puppy, Shaillah invites him to take a walk.

As Rothwen telepathically watches from his personal base under the waterfall, Shaillah walks Sam out of the jailhouse, using her Rom-Ghenshar powers to stroll past every



guard unnoticed. Rothwen smiles and nods with pride. Outside the jailhouse, Shaillah and Sam climb a grassy hill, then sit down. Shaillah explains everything that's happened since the cave, using her powers to create images in the air and illustrate her story. Not knowing what else to say, Sam observes that it all happened right after he tried to kiss her. Shaillah lets him down as easily as she can, saying she's not the same person she was, and that her heart belongs to Rothwen now. But no matter what happens, she'll always be Sam's friend. With that, she says he'll have to stay in his cell one more night; she'll make her public debut the next day, she continues, and that's when everything will change. Reluctantly, Sam takes her hand and follows her back down the hill.

In a courtroom, with a full MEDIA CIRCUS covering the trial, the PROSECUTING ATTORNEY questions an astronomer, PROFESSOR KHAN. For argument's sake, he asks the professor about the supposed sightings of orange lights around the island. The professor concedes that, if real and not simply rumors, those lights might qualify as UFOs, but he stresses that the U stands for *unidentified*, and that one shouldn't jump to conclude that they're aliens. Citing his credentials, the professor describes the various high-tech tools he and his fellows have used to search for extraterrestrial life, and says that all they have to show for it is the presence of stable, life-essential amino acids in distant molecular clouds. In conclusion, the professor says, there is no known solid evidence of sentient alien life.

With the professor's testimony concluded, the defense calls Sam to the stand. He looks out at the courtroom, where his MOTHER and his sister Stella sit in attendance, and says he can clear up the whole case with the introduction of a special witness. On cue, Shaillah walks through the doors, astonishing everyone. Albert Lobart, also in attendance with his wife Pat, approaches Shaillah, but her personal force field knocks him to the ground. Pat tries to approach her next, but gets knocked down the same way. Ignoring them both, Shaillah tells the court, "My name was Erin Lobart, and I am not dead."

In a short speech, Shaillah says her people once lived among humans peacefully, and that they're ready to do so again, if humanity will unite with them. But first, she continues, it's time to set Sam Sheppard free. The stunned JUDGE ABIKO lets Sam follow Shaillah as she turns and walks out of the courtroom.

Outside, Shaillah's ship hovers above the parking lot. She levitates into the cockpit, taking Sam with her, as a crowd gathers in amazement. Sam scarcely has time to ask any questions before Shaillah sends the ship zooming toward the Lobart farm. Pat and Albert hurry into their car and follow, as do several police cars.

Shaillah's ship reaches the farm first. Disembarking from the ship, and leaving a bewildered Sam in the driveway, Shaillah walks inside. In her old bedroom, she looks around, trying to sort out her feelings. She picks up a brush, comparing the loose hairs in



it to her new silver tresses. Blazer, her dog, runs up and starts nuzzling her leg. She picks him up and starts petting him, and for a moment, she forgets about everything else. Then she sees Sam in the mirror, and sighs as she crashes back down to reality. She hands Blazer to Sam, asking Sam to look after him. Sam takes the dog, but before he can say anything, SIRENS blare from outside.

A fleet of GOVERNMENT VEHICLES, including helicopters, surrounds the house. FEDERAL AGENTS pour out with guns drawn. Professor Khan pulls up and joins them, showing his ARA badge. Over a loudspeaker, their HEAD AGENT demands that Shaillah come out peacefully. Shaillah ignores them, telling Sam they can't get in. As if to prove that point, the Lobarts' truck arrives on the scene and attempts to pull into the driveway, only to rub up against an invisible shield. Albert Lobart tells Pat to get out of the truck, then backs up and tries to ram his way through. His truck slams hard against the barrier, leaving him unconscious at the wheel. MEDICS haul him off in a stretcher.

Paying no heed to the ruckus, Shaillah finishes making her rounds, walking out the back door and setting her horses free. She then hears a thunderclap, and looks up to see a rapidly oncoming storm. The voice of Kuzhma-Or echoes in her head: "They must know our power." Taking her cue, she turns around and heads for the front of the house. Sam interrupts her, confessing his love for her in a hasty, last-ditch effort to make her stay. Shaking her head, Shaillah says he loved Erin; she's not Erin, she tells him.

With that, she emerges from the front door, just as the storm cloud surges overhead. The ground shakes. Small tornadoes swirl down from above, driving everyone back. Shaillah announces that her people have come to rebuild the human world, but that the humans must obey them. She'll say more, she continues, tomorrow at dawn, at the ARA headquarters in Los Angeles. With that, she leaves Sam behind, ascends into her spaceship, and leaves. Professor Khan starts organizing a response, saying he'll go to the meeting at the ARA headquarters. Sam insists on coming along, saying he knows Erin and can talk to her. Khan reluctantly agrees.

In his personal base, Rothwen stands up and turns toward the entrance as Shaillah walks in. He greets her with open arms, congratulations, and a flurry of kisses. He tells Shaillah that she's certainly gotten the humans' attention, and now that the Rom-Ghenshar have proven their power, she should have no trouble convincing the humans to submit worldwide. Erin asks what happens after they submit. Rothwen says the Rom-Ghenshar conquer the earth, the robots rebuild it as Rothwen sees fit, and then the Rom-Ghenshar campaign of conquest will continue across the galaxy.

The next day, in a high-tech future version of Los Angeles, the ARA LEADERS gather for a meeting in their headquarters building. Professor Khan and Sam are both with them. Shaillah walks into the meeting room, which shows monitors from across the world on



every wall. She advises the leaders, including the militant GENERAL STEWART and GENERAL MING, that the Rom-Ghenshar construction robots will emerge from the sea shortly, and that any resistance would be futile. As she speaks, a monitor shows the first wave of construction robots marching onto the shore, toward a line of waiting soldiers and tanks. Ignoring her advice, the generals allow the soldiers to open fire, but the robots walk straight ahead undeterred, sweeping the tanks aside like toys, along with any men unlucky enough to be near them. Shaillah reminds everyone that those are only the *construction* robots; the *soldier* robots, if attacked, will retaliate much harder. With that, she walks out, ignoring Sam's unhappy gaze.

Over a MONTAGE, the construction machines march to their work worldwide, including on Tinian Island. Everywhere they go, they tear down existing buildings, including the ARA tuna farm, to make way for their new ones, which they assemble with rapid precision. The people of Tinian Island retreat in terror, all of them hearing Rothwen's repeated commands in their heads; he tells them to take shelter in the caves, where supplies will be delivered until the robots' work is complete.

In the ARA headquarters room, the two generals scramble to plan a response. A RADAR TECHNICIAN alerts them to a new cluster of signals, emerging from a deep trench off the coast of Long Beach. Stewart declares that they can send submarines to destroy the group coming from the trench, cut off the robots' reinforcements, and then sweep away the remaining robots on land. Sam, still in the room, objects, but no one listens.

In Rothwen's base, he and Shaillah observe the ARA headquarters via hologram. Rothwen says the ARA's plan is going to go very badly. Shaillah suggests she can talk them out of it. They review the Rom-Ghenshar technique of creating a body copy, which Shaillah uses to project a double of herself back into the ARA meeting room. Again, she warns the generals not to attack the soldiers, but they refuse to back down, and the lead submarine fires its first torpedo.

On a monitor, the generals watch as the torpedo rockets toward the robot swarm, then explodes in a lightning FLASH, after which the video feed cuts out. Stewart radios the submarine, asking for confirmation of the kill, but there's no response. A moment later, the room starts shaking. Concerned, the general hits a button on the console, bringing up one of the building's exterior cameras. The camera shows a huge mushroom cloud erupting from the sea, with a tsunami, taller than the sea wall, radiating outward from it. Frantic now, the general hits an intercom button and calls for everyone to evacuate the base. The camera stays on the mushroom cloud, with a strange sound coming over the audio feed, like hail or heavy rain. Then the general sees what's causing the sound: debris, tons and tons of it, hurled up from the ocean floor in all directions. Huge undersea rocks pelt the city like meteors.



Shaillah creates an energy field around Sam, shielding him as the base collapses, then calls for one of her ships. In the next moment, the ship arrives overhead, and she telekinetically lifts Sam into it, joining him in the cockpit. They fly over the smoldering ruins of Los Angeles, through which the robots continue their work undeterred.

Shaillah then flies Sam back to Tinian Island. As her ship approaches, she sees that the construction robots have already disassembled both her old home and the tuna farm, and have started building new structures on the old sites. She has a moment of doubt, then looks away.

Shaillah drops Sam off at the entrance to a cave. Several of the island's residents, including John Sanders and Sam's sister Stella, emerge from the cave and approach her. Shaillah sees that Stella is holding Blazer, and calls out to him, but the dog only growls in response. Stella says Blazer knows Shaillah is a monster now. Sam gets between the two girls, asking Shaillah not to hurt his sister. Shaillah just shakes her head and leaves, suppressing her flashes of doubt.

In Kuzhma-Or's command room, he and Rothwen monitor Shaillah on a holographic projection. Kuzhma-Or cautions Rothwen that the girl still has feelings for the humans, and that Rothwen's feelings for her are clouding his judgment. Rothwen denies that, but Kuzhma-Or presses the issue, telling Rothwen, "She's weak, and she's weakening you." Angered, Rothwen starts a fight with his commander, flinging energy bolts from his mind. Kuzhma-Or easily dodges them, and retaliates with bolts of his own, which Rothwen dodges in turn. As they fight, they continue to argue. Rothwen asserts that he's just as strong as ever, and that if Shaillah ever does come between him and the mission, he'll simply forget her and move on. Easing up on the fighting, Kuzhma-Or wonders aloud what Rothwen will do if he fails to forget her. Rothwen warns Kuzhma-Or that if that happens, Rothwen will do anything to keep her by his side. The soldier then announces he's going to gather the fleet and that he'll be away for a while. He tells Kuzhma-Or to keep Shaillah comfortable while he's gone. Rothwen then leaves the room, calls for one of his craft, and flies away. Unconvinced of the soldier's resolve, Kuzhma-Or tells Athguer to recall Shaillah to base, and to suppress her powers until further notice.

Six months later, in Shaillah's suite, she sits alone, surrounded by beautiful trinkets she's long since lost interest in. Athguer comes in to check on her. She asks when Rothwen's coming back, and he reminds her that Rothwen does everything on his own schedule. The scientist congratulates Shaillah for having changed Rothwen, something none of them have ever managed to do in all the centuries they've worked together. Before, Athguer continues, Rothwen would have kicked off the Rom-Ghenshar conquest by sending down destroyer crafts and wiping all sentient life from the planet. He's held off on that for



Shaillah, Athguer says, and that's remarkable. Despite her predicament, Shaillah can't help but smile at that.

In the command room, Kuzhma-Or and Rothwen monitor the Oort cloud, the band of floating, icy rocks at the edge of the Sol system. A fleet of Rom-Ghenshar warships appears in the midst of the cloud, led by their flagship, the *Prestige*. Rothwen then projects an image of himself into the command room, greeting his commander with military professionalism. Kuzhma-Or gives the order to deploy the fleet's destroyer craft, which swiftly overrun every human structure outside of Earth; every satellite, space station, and outpost on the system's other planets and moons. Kuzhma-Or rejoices, saying it's all finally coming together, after a long, unnecessary delay. He gives Rothwen a look, while Rothwen stays poised, his face unreadable.

Shortly thereafter, Rothwen knocks on Shaillah's door. Angry with him for having been gone so long, Shaillah tells him to go away. Eventually, she opens the door, revealing that her room is a mess; even her clothes are tattered and torn. She and Rothwen argue over their true feelings; she asks if he loves her, he says he doesn't know, and she says she can tell by the way he looks at her. She offers to save him from his inner demons, and the two of them make passionate love.

In London, which has been rebuilt as a cluster of Rom-Ghenshar pyramids, the humans gather for a rally to welcome their alien saviors. As a news anchor reports, humanity hasn't had a natural disaster in months, food and medical supplies are now plentiful, and everyone knows to let the robots do their work. Shaillah steps onto an outdoor stage, introducing a huge, cheering crowd to Kuzhma-Or. He greets them, congratulating them on their new place in the Rom-Ghenshar empire. One of the ARA generals, ALI SHEIK, shakes hands with the commander, thanks him for healing the earth, and asks him a question on behalf of the crowd: "What's the meaning of life?" Kuzhma-Or answers that the meaning of life is to persevere against all odds, to grow, adapt, and conquer one's surroundings. With that, the commander glances upward – cueing Rothwen, who's controlling the orbital fleet from the command room. The soldier directs the fleet of destroyer craft, swarms of which now orbit the earth, to fire into the atmosphere. The ships' beams spread out in the sky, producing a harmless, colorful light show. The crowd goes wild. Off to the side, Ali Sheik converses with another general, who says they still can't reach their off-world contacts. Both men frown in concern.

Later, in her now-clean suite, Shaillah stands with Rothwen on the balcony, saying she's going to miss the Earth once they leave. Rothwen says once she sees the wonders of space, she won't miss it at all. She agrees that she'll be okay, as long as she knows the humans are safe. Rothwen doesn't quite answer that, but before he can hesitate more than a moment, she adds that she should say goodbye to Sam. Rothwen gives her a terse word



of agreement, then says he has to go and leaves the room. She watches him leave, uneasy at his change in tone.

On Tinian Island, which has also been rebuilt in the Rom-Ghenshar style, Sam sits on a cliff's edge, staring down at the entrance to the El Diablo cave. Stella, standing behind him, tells him to get over Erin and come back with her. At that moment, Shaillah's spaceship rises from the water, hovering in front of the two siblings. Shaillah steps out and greets Sam, while Stella walks off in a huff. Sam, not knowing what else to say, tells Shaillah she looked great at that London rally. He says he's still worried, though; he doesn't know the aliens' intentions, and all those ships in the sky are making a lot of people nervous. Shaillah, trying to sound more certain than she is, assures him the Rom-Ghenshar are there to help, and advises him not to overthink it. She then tells him what she's there for: to say goodbye to him. He asks her to stay, but she shakes her head; she can't live in his world, she says, and he can't live in hers. With that, she thanks him for all his years of friendship, then drops her force field, allowing Sam to get close enough for one last hug. As he tearfully puts his arms around her, Stella comes sneaking up with a jagged rock in hand, ready to stab Shaillah in the back. Reacting from instinct, Shaillah uses her powers to fling Stella off the cliff and into the water. Astonished, Sam pulls away from Shaillah, who swiftly recovers and declares that Stella attacked her. Turning his back on her, Sam scrambles down the cliff and pulls his sister onto the shore. Shaillah looks down, long enough to see Stella cough up water and open her eyes. Then Shaillah into her ship and leaves.

A short while later, Shaillah visits Zula-Or in her garden, sharing her worries about the Rom-Ghenshar's plans for humanity. Reasoning that Shaillah is ready to know the truth, Zula-Or tells her that they plan to exterminate humanity as soon as they leave. It'll be painless and humane, Zula-Or assures her; they'll psychically sever humanity's neural net, causing all human beings to shut down at once. The robots will then finish converting the planet into a base, which the Rom-Ghenshar might make use of if they ever end up back on this side of the galaxy. Stunned, Shaillah asks why, and Zula-Or says it's what they always do; they survive by removing any potential threat before it can become one — and humanity, in particular, has already shown them once how threatening it can be. Shaillah asks if the reconstruction, the assurances, the London ceremony and so forth were all lies. Zula-Or says that was all for Shaillah's benefit; they could have torn through humanity in fire and terror, but instead, they'll all pass away peacefully, secure and happy until the end. Rothwen requested all that, Zula-Or says, and Kuzhma-Or agreed to it, but only on the condition that the humans would indeed die.

Distraught, Shaillah goes to Rothwen, asking him to call off the extermination. When he asks why he should, she asks him to do it for her. He denies he has feelings for her, says their relationship has caused too many problems, and declares that he'll have Athguer sedate her and wipe away the remainder of her human nature. Shaking her head, Shaillah



says she'll leave to go home, and that he can do to her what he plans on doing to everyone else. He says what he'll do to them won't kill her, and that she'll be the only sentient being on the planet, struggling to survive. She says she'd rather that than stay with him. She then summons her craft, and starts flying away. Summoning his own craft, Rothwen chases after her, uses his powers to seize control of her craft, and floats across the gap between them, straight into her cockpit. He apologizes to her, wraps his arms around her, and chokes her into unconsciousness.

Kuzhma-Or and Athguer wait on the flight deck of their departure craft, watching as Rothwen comes walking up with an unconscious Shaillah in his arms. Telling them that she'll be asleep until they arrive on the *Prestige*, he says he'll need a moment, then walks past them. Inside the ship, he places Shaillah in a sleep chamber removing her utility belt as he does so. For a long moment, he looks down at her angelic face. Flush with internal conflict, he straightens his posture, turns, and marches to the ship's bridge. Reporting for duty, he takes his post and launches the ship. The departure craft emerges from the ocean, then ascends into space, heading for the *Prestige* (which has now taken position near Earth's moon).

As Kuzhma-Or looks out from the bridge, folding his hands in anticipation, Rothwen leaves to check on Shaillah. She awakens in her sleep chamber as he walks in, scowling as she remembers him chasing her down and choking her out. He says he couldn't leave her on Earth. She tells him she'll leave him for good at the first opportunity. He says she can if she wants to — as soon as they finish with Earth, she can take a departure-craft to Rom-Enjie, their homeworld — but before that, she needs to take her seat in a protective hyper-shield for their upcoming jump through space. As he says so, an automated intercom voice starts counting down toward that jump.

On the bridge, Kuzhma-Or has a private conversation with Zula-Or. The commander again grumbles about Rothwen's feelings getting in the way. Zula-Or gently reminds the commander of his own, but he claims those feelings have never interfered with his duty. Rothwen marches in, with Shaillah in tow, just as the ship prepares to dock with the *Prestige*. Through a side viewport, Shaillah looks out at the now-pristine Earth.

Reciting the plan, Kuzhma-Or declares that in Stage One, the *Prestige* will fire plasma rays at the planet, creating fast-flowing currents through the planet's magnetic field and shutting down the humans' brains. The destroyer craft, he continues, are already programmed to follow that up by descending to the surface and disintegrating the humans' remains. In Stage Two, the *Prestige* will jump into a hyperspace tunnel, which will take them to Omega Centauri and their next conquest.

As the intercom voice continues to count down, Rothwen guides Shaillah to her seat, next to his, and sends her a telepathic message: *All is well*. Kuzhma-Or and the others take



their seats in turn, and the seats' hyper-shields activate, securing them all in place. Along the *Prestige's* exterior, rows of gunports open wide for a battery of plasma cannons. Through the holographic monitors installed on his seat, Kuzhma-Or sees the destroyer craft descending through Earth's atmosphere, extending their weapons. He smiles in victory. Shaillah takes a last, mournful look at her planet.

Just before the timer reaches zero, Rothwen projects his thoughts into the ship's central computer, rewriting its programming. Kuzhma-Or's monitors show the destroyer craft changing their flight paths and retracting their weapons. The *Prestige's* plasma cannons retract as well, their gun ports sliding shut. Before Kuzhma-Or can begin to admonish Rothwen, Zula-Or sends him a telepathic message, reminding him that Rothwen is a one-of-a-kind master navigator, and they won't be winning any wars without him. With that, the *Prestige* jumps into hyperspace, leaving Earth unharmed.

Once the ship completes its transition into hyperspace, the seats' hyper-shields fade away. Rothwen and Kuzhma-Or both jump up, facing each other. Kuzhma-Or calls Rothwen a traitor, saying Shaillah has corrupted his reasoning. Shaillah speaks up, saying the human spirit deserves to live on, and that the Rom-Ghenshar have much to learn from them. Kuzhma-Or scoffs at that, but Rothwen backs her up, adding that Kuzhma-Or is welcome to try conquering Omega Centauri himself if he disagrees. Since they're at an impasse, Rothwen continues, they should table the discussion until after the next campaign. Kuzhma-Or cautions Rothwen not to think he's out of trouble, then stands down for the moment. Zula-Or gives everyone a smile and nod.

With the crisis averted, Rothwen walks Shaillah to another deck of the ship. Through a wide viewport, she beholds the majesty of the mighty Rom-Ghenshar fleet. Reminded of the destroyer-craft back on Earth, she asks what'll happen with them. Rothwen explains that he rewrote their programming to protect the Sol system, and the humans in it — even from his own people, should it come to that. He says it took him a long time, but when she tried to leave, he realized he was fighting for her. When he looks into her eyes, he says, he sees himself in the two brightest stars of the universe. He struggles to get the next words out, but with Shaillah's encouragement, he manages to say it: "I love you." She asks if he wants to visit Earth after the Omega Centauri campaign, and he pledges, "*Ensheren*" — "Definitely." With that, they kiss, as the brightness of the galaxy spreads out before them.