

HAWK'S FIGHT WITH BUCK – AN ALTERNATE VERSION

Chapter One

Hawk held Koori's lifeless body in his arms for what seemed to be forever. All their hopes and dreams of living the rest of their lives together, raising healthy children and even being grandparents gone in a matter of minutes. Hawk kept his head against Koori's neck, hoping futilely that somehow she would come back from the dead.

After a long while, it became cruelly real to Hawk that Koori was indeed dead. Her body was already becoming icy cold to the touch. He would soon be forced to take Koori's body back for burial in the Valley of Eagles to lie beside her parents and the rest of their flock. Gently gathering up her body, Hawk made his way out of the old mystic's cave.

Before Hawk left, the Llamajuna placed a hand on Hawk's arm. "I am sorry for your loss. You must understand that the spark of Koori's existence was about to leave her body just as she entered my cave. The flesh of her body was already beyond my power to help and I was cradling her spirit as it strained to leave this existence. Koori was living in spirit and realized that her continued existence would only be an illusion. She knew that she would never be as she once was. To be able to run with you, Hawk, fly with you, hold you in her arms or bear your children."

With tears in his eyes, Hawk placed his head against Koori's and said to the Llamajuna. "Living in spirit, she and I would be together, but also apart. Koori would not have wanted me to suffer through the rest of my life with that fate. I understand that now."

"You are right in that both of you would have suffered," said the Llamajuna sadly.

"You took away her pain in her last moments." With a tear stained face, Hawk said to the Llamajuna at the cave's entrance. "Thank you for trying to save her, Elder."

The old man could only bow his head as he could see Hawk's intense grief in his face. Standing to one side, the mystic let Hawk pass and watched the last of the bird people of Throm leave his cave with his mate's body wrapped in her cloak.

Buck had been sitting on a rock, waiting, praying and hoping that they had gotten Koori help in time. He had gone back inside just in time to hear Koori speak her last words to Hawk before going limp in his arms and saw the birdman put his head against her chest and watched only a minute as Hawk began sobbing heartbrokenly. Leaving Hawk to be alone with his grief, Buck quietly turned around and left.

Glancing up from where he was sitting, Buck saw Hawk coming down the path to the mystic's cave with Koori in his arms. The limp way her head lay against Hawk's shoulder told Buck that all their combined efforts had been in vain. He had hoped Koori would survive her wound, but it was not to be. She had lost too much blood to live. Buck realized right then and there that he had seen Koori die in Hawk's arms.

‘Hawk ... ,’ began Buck.

‘She died in my arms, human , if that satisfies you!’ Hawk snarled at Buck as he went past, not seeing the look of pain in Buck’s face as the human quietly offered up a prayer to whoever was listening that Koori’s soul would be allowed to rest in peace.

Buck wisely kept his mouth shut. It was clear that any offer of consolation from him would not be welcomed by Hawk, and could very easily result in him getting either a punch in the face or worse. The look on Hawk’s face clearly showed that he and Koori had shared a deep and profound love and the loss of that was heartbreaking to see.

As he watched Hawk gently carried his beloved mate away from him, Buck felt a hand on his shoulder and turned to see the Llamajuna standing beside him. The old man followed Hawk with his eyes as the birdman walked away from the cave and then turned his attention back to Buck.

‘You must go after him. You and him have unfinished business,’ said the elder quietly.

‘I know, Llamajuna. I just wish that we could have gotten Koori medical attention in time. I am partly to blame for what happened to her,’ replied Buck.

‘You had no foreknowledge that the talons of Hawk’s ship would pierce the hull of your ship and that Koori would be injured as a result. You must not blame yourself for the events that you could not know would happen,’ softly said the Llamajuna as Buck turned to him in surprise.

‘How did you ...?’ asked a stunned Buck.

‘I have many ways of knowing things,’ explained the Llamajuna. ‘You must understand that Koori’s body was already beyond my power to help. I was cradling her spirit as it strained to leave this existence just long enough for her to make the decision whether to continue as she was or leave this world behind. Koori chose to leave Hawk rather than continue an existence that would not allow her to be as she once was. For her to continue to be in this world, she would exist in a state of illusion that would have only brought sorrow for both of them.’

‘Llamajuna, if we had gotten medical attention for Koori a day sooner, would she have lived?’ Buck asked softly.

‘That is a question that only the universe itself can answer. All that I know is that when it is one’s time to leave this existence, there is nothing that can be done to prevent one’s passing. Be comforted in that it was an honorable thing for you to do you to at least tried to save her,’ replied the Llamajuna.

‘I understand now. Thank you, Llamajuna,’ Buck sadly replied.

Chapter Two

‘Now you must go. Hawk needs you. You have experienced a loss similar to what he has undergone and you alone can help him deal with that loss,’ quietly said the Llamajuna as he walked with Buck to the edge of the path leading from his cave.

Realizing that the Llamajuna had his own ways of finding things out about people, Buck did not ask any further questions and hurriedly ran off and hoped that he would be able to catch up to Hawk. It did not take him long to find Hawk. The birdman was carrying his precious mate and was not able to travel fast. Buck kept a fair sized distance between him and Hawk. As much as it was his duty to bring Hawk in, Buck felt that it was only right to let Hawk to have time to grieve the loss of his mate, Koori.

Hawk gently carried Koori away from where she had died. All he could feel was an intense numbing pain in his chest that took his breath away. The one searing thought that kept swirling around in his head was that the humans had won. They had the entire planet of Throm to themselves now that there were no more bird people.

His vow to make humans suffer for the death of his flock had resulted in the indirect death of his mate. Koori had forgiven him for what had happened to her. She told Hawk it was not his fault, but hers that she had been injured. Koori had not been in her seat when she tried to stop Buck from flying his ship. As a result, she had gotten badly injured by one of Warhawk’s talons when it pierced the hull of Buck’s ship.

Even though Koori’s death was an accident, it no longer mattered what happened to him, and Hawk longed for death. To be with Koori again so they could fly together as winged spirits. Nothing else mattered. His vow to kill all humans in revenge for his flock’s deaths was a vow he no longer wanted to keep.

Buck followed Hawk back down the mountain at a distance. His duty to bring Hawk in for his attacks on humans was a bitter pill to swallow. Buck could not blame Hawk for his actions as he had felt the same when he found out that others had been responsible for the holocaust that ravaged Earth so long ago. What had happened to the bird people was only one in a series of tragedies that befell any visible minority, that looking different was a crime punishable by death in the minds of a few, very narrow minded individuals.

Now that there was no critical need to hurry, Hawk was able to go at a slower pace. The beauty of Throm’s forests and mountains was lost on him. They might as well been barren, wind-swept rocks of a dying planet. Hawk kept going on and on, hardly stopping to rest, except to drink from a flowing stream now and then. The only thing that mattered was going home to the Valley of Eagles. Home that was now a place of death.

The setting of the sun forced Hawk to stop. He was more afraid of losing Koori’s body in a fall than getting hurt himself. Looking around, the birdman found a place where he could make a nest for the both of them. Gently laying Koori’s body down, Hawk carefully and tenderly made sure her cloak covered her up.

Even though he knew there was no need to create a nest for themselves, Hawk made one out of soft ferns and gently placed Koori inside. Lying down beside Koori, Hawk tried to fall asleep, but the last moments of Koori's life kept flashing before him. He relived over and over how cold her hand felt in his and Koori's last words to him as the last breath of life left her forever. Unable to take it any more, Hawk pulled Koori's body into his arms and wept, calling Koori's name over and over, until sleep finally claimed him in the early morning hours.

Buck had managed to keep up to Hawk's pace. When Hawk had finally stopped, Buck could see just how hard Hawk had been pushing himself. A sad thought entered his mind that Hawk would not be alive very long. That the Galactic Court would not have to hold a trial for Hawk and pass sentence, Hawk would do it for them. Buck found a spot just out of sight where he could make a small fire to keep warm and yet, at the same time, keep watch on Hawk's activities. Buck had just gotten the fire going when he heard Hawk's pain filled voice. The anguish tore at Buck's heart and he knew that he would have felt the same if it had been his girlfriend, Jennifer, or even Wilma, his close friend, dying in his arms.

The light of the morning sun woke Hawk. For a moment, he lay still, hoping that when he turned to look at Koori, the past few days would have just been a bad dream. The light of the new day shone delicately upon Koori as it gave the feathers on her head a soft radiance, which framed her beautiful face. She appeared to be in a deep sleep. Hawk hesitated to touch her face, fearing that to touch her would break the illusion of sleep. But once he placed his hand to one side of her sweet face, the harsh reality of what happened could not be denied. She was indeed dead and nothing could change that.

Hawk pulled his hand away gently from her face and sat up. A silent sob ran through him as he forced himself to pick up Koori's body to continue their journey. There was no denying now what he had to do next. Hawk would have to dig Koori's grave. The pain of his loss had not diminished during the night. Hawk felt a coldness within himself that would have been frightening if Koori was still alive. Now, he welcomed the cold as it must be a sign that his death would be coming soon.

Buck stiffly got to his feet. The long night had been cool and sleep had been fitful. Buck's own thoughts had been of what ifs from - what if communications of either ship had been working, would Koori still be alive to - what if Koori hadn't been so badly hurt, would she still be alive. Looking around, it didn't take him long to find Hawk. Hawk was still going in the same direction as yesterday. Buck noticed that Hawk's face had a look of death on it as though all the life had slowly drained away during the night. Following along, again at a distance, Buck wondered what could be done to help Hawk. If anything be done at all.

Hawk continued walking towards what had been home a few months ago. The sun was nearly set by the time Hawk reached the Valley of Eagles. The wind that blew around what was left of his village seemed to moan a lamenting cry that another of the bird people had died too soon. It seemed that even the wind was crying in grief and pain.

Chapter Three

Hawk was exhausted, and though he knew he would have to start digging Koori's grave, he also knew it was almost nightfall and he feared not giving Koori a proper burial. Instead, he carried Koori's body to where the statue of Make-Make stood and laid her down beside it. Hawk made another nest in front of the statue and also made sure Koori's cloak was wrapped firmly around her before laying her in it.

Kneeling in front of his people's god, Hawk looked up at Make-Make and hoped his god would hear his plea. 'Make-Make, I had vowed to kill humans in retribution for my people's deaths. I have done so. Now ..now, I ask for one thing ...in return. I ask ... for death. My mate is gone. I ...I can't ...live without her. Please ...let me die.'

Hawk bowed his head. He could only hope that Make-Make would answer his plea in his dreams. There was nothing else Hawk could do except lay down beside Koori and rest. Hawk laid down and gently cuddled Koori's body to his. It would be another long night for him, a long, lonely night.

Buck had watched Hawk from a distance. From where he was, he could see what had been a thriving community. Buck could only guess at the way of life that Hawk and his people had led before humans had come in and destroyed everything and everyone.

The level of destruction looked more and more like a group of vandals had come in and destroyed everything just for the sake of destroying and for cruel fun. That innocents had been here made it all the more horrifying. He had found a mass burial site and guessed that it had to be Hawk's people buried there. The varying lengths of the graves could only give a suggestion of the varying ages of each individual inside. Whoever had been responsible for the deaths of Hawk's people, they had spared no one, neither young nor old. Only Hawk and Koori had been left alive.

Buck had made another camp close enough to keep an eye on Hawk, but again far enough away to avoid a confrontation. The next day, he knew that the both of them would have to meet again. Buck feared that if he did not bring Hawk in soon, the Galactic Court would send someone else to get Hawk, and that person would not understand the reason behind Hawk's actions.

It became clear to Buck why Hawk felt and acted the way he did. As far as Hawk was concerned, humans cared for no one and nothing else but themselves, and the mass grave was proof of that.

The sun had not yet risen when Hawk woke up. The cold light of dawn matched the coldness Hawk was feeling in his heart. The time to say goodbye to Koori had come, but Hawk could not force himself to get up. There had been no dreams last night. His god, Make-Make, had not yet answered his prayer. Hawk stayed where he was beside Koori, hoping that he would fall back to sleep and the answer to his prayer would come to him.

The first rays of the morning sun shone over the cliffs and fell on the statue of Make-Make and the two bird people. Hawk looked at the rising sun and realized that there was no denying his duty to his dead beloved. A shuddering sob shook Hawk as he got to his knees and gently scooped up Koori's body. Slowly and carefully, Hawk carried Koori to the burial site of their people where they both had worked together to bury their dead.

Hawk had used Warhawk's talons, his ship, to dig the mass grave before he and Koori carried each body into the pit. Standing near the site, Hawk's painful memories were of the days it took to bury all their friends and family members, and now another searing memory was to be added to the site. A memory of grief, guilt and heartbreaking loss.

Placing Koori to one side and putting his gloves on, Hawk began digging Koori's grave with his hands. The ground was already loose as it was only a month before when the mass grave was dug. Once the shallow grave was finished, Hawk gathered ferns for Koori's body to rest on. Then gently, Hawk picked up Koori and lowered her into her grave. Once she was inside, Hawk made sure that Koori's cloak was wrapped around her and she was surrounded by soft ferns.

Kneeling by the grave, Hawk removed his gloves and, with tears running down his face, held Koori's head gently between his hands. The time he first met Koori came to him as did the day when he asked her to be his mate. Their passionate wedding night when they both declared their love for one another and fell asleep in each others arms in the Soaring Place where all new mates go to bond for life. Pain filled him as the last words Koori said to him before dying came back.

Hawk kissed Koori on the lips and told her, "I'll be soon with you , my love."

Gently covering up her face with a corner of her cloak, Hawk put his gloves back on and gathered the rocks that had been piled up nearby and began placing them carefully over Koori's body. Once the last one was in place, Hawk began creating two markers with Koori's name and his name on each. With the markers complete and after wiping his eyes, Hawk placed Koori's behind her head and his next to it and sat back on his knees.

Buck walked up quietly and stood at what he hoped was a respectful distance. It had taken a lot of effort just to walk up to the birdman. Buck had watched Hawk as he buried Koori and wondered just how he would take him in. Taking a deep breath, Buck was about to tell him that he would come with him when Hawk spoke.

"At least you had the decency to let me bury my mate, Koori," said Hawk as he got to his feet and turned to face Buck, "You and me have unfinished business, human."

Hawk had thought he had seen and heard someone following him back to the Valley of Eagles. He suspected that it had to be Captain Buck Rogers for there was no one else that would dare come after him. Of course, Hawk knew why. The human planned to take him back with him to face the humans' 'Galactic Court'. Hawk felt no remorse for the killing of humans for he had done it in retribution for the mass murder of his people.

Chapter Four

After burying Koori, a plan had formed of getting Rogers to kill him in a fight so he and Koori could be together again. Rather than having to take a sharp piece of rock and use it to slit his own throat, a fight to the death would allow Hawk a better way to defy the humans' 'Galactic Court'. It was just a matter of arranging the location.

Hawk walked away from Rogers knowing full well that he would follow. Getting to the top of the cliffs would be the easy part while the hard part would be engaging Rogers in a fight to the death. The fight would involve Hawk somehow getting Rogers to push him over the edge of the cliff to fall on the rocks below. Rogers had shown that he had some honor for a human. Hawk felt that Rogers would give him a decent burial if he asked him to and make sure he was buried beside Koori.

Buck followed Hawk up to the cliff top as a sickening thought came to him. Hawk was going to use him to commit suicide. Having Buck murder him was the only other option Hawk felt would allow him to die. That Hawk felt that all humans were soulless killers and would feel no remorse for their actions saddened Buck.

Once at the top of the cliffs, Buck's mind began working in overdrive. He had to think of a way to stop Hawk from dying. Buck could understand how Hawk felt in that there was nothing left in this world worth hanging onto. The big question was how to convince Hawk that there was a reason to live and not to die.

Hawk gazed out over the Valley of Eagles. The familiar beauty of the rugged cliffs with the intermingling of vegetation was not lost on him. It seemed fitting that he would be allowed to view what had once been a happy home to his people one last time. Hawk turned to look at Rogers who was standing off to one side watching him carefully. It would hopefully be the last time he would speak to him.

"I have only one request, human. You have shown me that you have enough honor to grant my request," Hawk said in a calm voice. "Will you grant it?"

"Certainly, what is it?" asked Buck, uneasy at the sound of Hawk's too calm words.

"After you kill me in battle, bury me next to my mate, Koori. ... I have already made a marker. ... You have seen how we are buried so that should not be a problem." Hawk stated in a quiet voice as he threw Rogers his cloak.

"I'll do what you ask, if it becomes necessary." Buck told him as he caught the cloak and put it to one side, realizing that there was no way he could talk Hawk out of killing himself and using him to do it.

"Thank you." Hawk murmured as he took a deep breath to mentally prepare himself for the coming battle.

“Don’t you think we are little too high up?” asked Buck, hoping to stall for time.

“This is my home. ... This is where I was born ...and this is where I will die.” Hawk replied, giving no sign of the coldness he felt starting to spread through his body.

Hawk forced himself not to shed any tears as the cold he had been feeling seemed to envelope him like an icy cloak. The realization that death was close at hand was frightening, but the fact he would soon be able to go to his beloved Koori allowed Hawk to push that fear aside.

Buck looked around hoping there was something he could throw at Hawk to knock him off his feet. Anything that would stop Hawk’s suicide attempt, unfortunately there was nothing nearby that he could use.

Hawk started to approach Rogers carefully. He didn’t want Rogers to fall to his death, but he also didn’t want him to get away. As much as Hawk hated humans, he didn’t want the instrument of his death to die before his own death.

As he slowly moved away from Hawk, Buck felt the ground beneath one foot give slightly. Buck found himself near the ledge and there was a hairline fracture running along a large section. It was obvious that anyone putting their full weight on that ledge would wind up at the bottom of the cliff.

“Ah, Hawk. ... There is something you should know about this cliff. The ledge is going to give way,” cautioned Buck.

Rogers’ words startled Hawk, but didn’t surprise him. It was clear that he was mistaken to believe Rogers had any honor. Hawk’s anger and grief came boiling to the surface.

“I don’t believe you.” Hawk yelled furiously. “I thought you had honor. That you would fight me in fair combat, not try to shirk a battle. It is clear to me that you humans have no stomach for hand to hand fighting, but rather use weapons to kill at a distance.”

“Hawk, I’m telling you ...” Buck began.

“Silence, human, you are dead.” Hawk hissed as he lunged at Buck.

Buck backed away from the ledge as Hawk came at him. Hawk moved to the edge of the cliff to charge at Rogers again when the ledge shuddered beneath him. Hawk was surprised at the sudden change of events when the ledge groaned, peeled away from the rock face and then gave way taking him with it.

Debris mixed with rock and vegetation came crashing down the cliff. Hawk found himself being battered from side to side like a piece of wood going over a small waterfall. When the dust finally settled, Hawk was too stunned to move at first as he laid among what was left of the cliff face and ledge.

Chapter Five

Hawk looked around and tried to get up when searing pain lanced through him causing him to scream in intense pain. Gasping in agony, Hawk tried to see where he was hurt. He found that his right leg was pinned under a large rock and appeared to be gashed open by the knee as he could see his blood beginning to stain the rocks.

Hawk felt a jabbing pain in his right side and turned his head to see a sharp piece of rock stabbing him in that side. This wound was bleeding a little more than his leg. Hawk realized that he was now too badly hurt to continue to fight with Rogers and wondered if the human would finish him off by giving him a quick death now that he could not defend himself. Perhaps Rogers would simply wait for him to die.

Buck saw Hawk at the bottom of the cliff and heard him cry out in pain. Realizing that there was very little time to lose, he grabbed Hawk's cloak from where he put it, stuffed it into his shirt and carefully climbed down in order to not start another landslide. By the time Buck reached the bottom of the cliff, it was clear that Hawk needed immediate medical attention.

'Easy, Hawk. Lay very still. I'm going to help you.' Buck said as he ran up to where Hawk was laying.

'Human ...,' began Hawk, when a coughing fit overcame him resulting in a trickle of blood coming from the side of his mouth, which instantly told Buck that Hawk had serious internal injuries.

'Shhh. Don't try to talk. You're obviously hurt really bad, but I will try to do what I can for you,' Buck said in a soothing tone of voice.

Managing to get his breath back, Hawk looked around to find a dagger-shaped piece of rock within reach and managed to grab hold of it. Shakily holding the rock up for Rogers to see, Hawk said. 'Here, human. ...This should ...make it easy ...for you ...to end ...my life.'

Stunned by what Hawk was asking him to do, Buck shook his head 'NO'. He cried out as he took the rock out of Hawk's hand and threw it away. 'No, I'm not going to kill you, Hawk. I'm going to do what I can to save you.'

'But, our fight ...we never ...' Hawk began.

Interrupting Hawk, Buck snapped. 'Our fight is over as far as I'm concerned.'

Kneeling beside Hawk, Buck ripped Hawk's cloak in half and made a tourniquet for Hawk's injured leg. Carefully getting the rock off the leg, Buck saw that Hawk's knee had been gashed open and then bound the gash as tight as he could to stop any more bleeding. Hawk groaned as the bindings were applied.

Then Buck made a bandage for Hawk's gashed side by wrapping the bandage around the edge of the rock knowing that pulling out the rock would only cause more bleeding as First Aid class had taught him. A strained hiss of pain from Hawk's clenched teeth told Buck that the injury to the side was definitely far worse. He continued to keep a steady pressure on it. Hawk's painful reactions told Buck that Hawk had internal injuries, just how serious he had no way of knowing.

"Human ...Do not to try and save me. ... My injuries are ...too bad ...for me to live. ... As I'm going to die anyway, my ...my request to be buried beside Koori ...still stands." Hawk gasped out as the pain got worse and worse.

"You just hang on, Hawk." Buck said, refusing to give up.

"Human ...I am ...asking you to ...to," Hawk repeated desperately in agony.

"All right, Hawk, all right. If you do die, I will bury you beside Koori, but only if you do die." Buck interrupted.

"Thank you ... now ... I can ... finally be ... with Koori," breathed Hawk as he tried to prepare for death to come.

Looking at Hawk, Buck told him. "You're not going to die, you hear me. You're not going to die!"

"Nothing ...you ... can ... say ...is ...going ...to ...stop ...death ...from ...claiming ...me." Hawk choked out as another trickle of blood came out of his mouth.

The pain kept getting worse and worse. Hawk was unable to stand it anymore and struggled to grab another smaller, sharp piece of rock with his left hand. Once he had a hold of it, he tried to slit his throat with it but was prevented doing so by Buck who grabbed the rock out of Hawk's hand. "Don't you dare!" yelled Buck as he threw the second rock away.

Despite the agony coursing through him, Hawk glared at Rogers for preventing him from ending his life. Why did the human not see that he was suffering? Was it that Rogers wanted him alive to be taken back to his 'Galactic Court' to stand before it? If that was the reason, why try to keep him alive when he would be executed anyway?

Desperate to end the pain, Hawk tried to push the rock stabbing him in his right side deeper into him. Buck grabbed Hawk's hands and pulled them away from the rock to stop him from doing anymore damage. "You will leave that rock alone!" Buck yelled. "If you push that rock any further into you, you will probably puncture a lung!"

Hawk moaned in pain that twisted his features in a distorted mask of agony. He would have to try again to end the searing waves of his suffering. The human would not stop him from doing so no matter what. Better to die now than endure any more agony.

Chapter Six

Then Hawk grabbed at the rock again and tried to pull it out. Once again, Buck was able to stop him by pulling Hawk's hands away and then pined them against Hawk's right side to keep more pressure on the injury. "Hawk, are you out of your mind?! Pulling that rock out of you will cause you to bleed to death!"

"Let ...me ...die!" gasped Hawk. "Just ..."

Interrupting, "Hawk, I am not going to let you kill yourself," exclaimed Buck.

"Why ...should I ... not kill myself. ... There is ...nothing left ...for me ...all that mattered ...to me ...is gone ," moaned Hawk.

"Koori would not want you to kill yourself!" yelled Buck.

"Koori ...Koori ... ," groaned Hawk in sorrow. Then he grabbed at his injured side as the pain got worse. Hawk turned his head to look Rogers straight in the face as a look of fear came into his eyes as the cold he had been feeling began to pour into him. "I am ... feeling cold ...very cold."

"Stay with me, Hawk," coaxed Buck.

Buck grabbed onto Hawk's shoulder and kept pressure on Hawk's injured side as shivers started running through Hawk's body and cried, "Hold on, Hawk! Hold on!" as an agonized grimace came to Hawk's face as Hawk tightened his grip on his side in pain and fear of the painful death that was coming.

Buck realized that Hawk was going into shock and needed to get to a medical center as soon as possible. How and where to get Hawk help ran through Buck's mind when the roar of a starfighter's engines overhead made him look up.

The starfighter circled once overhead before landing not far from the two of them. The cockpit opened and Wilma Deering came out. The sight of his friend running up was a sight Buck was ever so glad to see.

"Buck, are you all right?" Wilma asked as she approached Buck. Seeing Hawk shivering and laying on the ground, Wilma saw that Buck was holding a large piece of black cloth to Hawk's right side with one hand with his other hand on Hawk's shoulder. "You found, Hawk. What happened to him?"

"Wilma, get a medical team down here fast! Hawk took a serious fall and he is bleeding badly! I don't know how bad he is hurt inside! Hurry!" yelled Buck as Wilma ran back to her starfighter to call down a medi-evac team.

Wracked with agony, Hawk watched the human female run back to her ship and wondered just who was this human female Rogers called 'Wilma'. Was she his mate? He knew that humans tended to have companions of either gender and it was hard to tell at times if they were mates or not when they were in male and female pairings.

Wilma ran back to Buck and Hawk. "The medi-evac team will be here in a few minutes, Buck. They told me to tell you to continue with the pressure bandage on Hawk."

"Good. You hear that, Hawk. Help will be here soon," Buck said soothingly.

"Who is ...this female?" asked Hawk, gasping as he looked warily at Wilma.

"Colonel Wilma Deering of the ship Searcher," replied Wilma. "Just lay still. The medi-evac team's shuttle will be landing soon."

The medi-evac team had been on stand-by during the search for Buck. It only took the team two minutes to get planet side by shuttle. Once the team arrived, Buck and Wilma moved aside for them so they could immediately begin treating Hawk's injuries by trying to stop the bleeding and transmitting all of Hawk's vital signs to Dr. Goodfellow in the sickbay of the Searcher. The small trail of blood from his mouth, right side and knee indicated to the medi-evac team that the birdman had possible life-threatening injuries.

Seeing himself surrounded by more humans, Hawk tried to slap any human hands that came anywhere near him. "I ...won't ...be ...touched ...by ...humans . Order ... your people ...away from me ...Colonel Deering ," Hawk weakly commanded.

"I will not! They are here to help you, Hawk," replied Wilma, gesturing the medi-evac team to stay where they were from Hawk.

Buck whispered to Wilma, "You distract him and I will hold him."

Wilma approached Hawk near his feet, and said, "You will die unless we help you."

With Hawk's attention on Wilma, Buck immediately grabbed onto Hawk's arms and pinned both of them over his head. "You will let them touch you," snapped Buck. "They are here to help."

Hawk gasped in agony, "I ...do not ...need ...any humans ...helping me," as he struggled frantically to sit up.

"You do! You have been seriously hurt. Let us help you," exclaimed Wilma as Buck was forced to push Hawk back down on his back.

Hawk stiffened in agony as he tried to suppress a cry of pain. The pain from his wounds was making it harder for him to continue resisting. Once Wilma saw that the birdman's arms were restrained, she motioned the medi-evac team to begin treating his wounds.

Chapter Seven

One medic carefully held the rock that was stuck in Hawk's right side so a second medic would be able to place pressure dressing around it. Despite the gentleness in which the medics worked on his injured side and knee, Hawk still would not trust the humans treating his wounds. The pain of his wounds had not diminished at all. He wanted desperately to get to his feet and run as far away as he could from them. Hawk struggled to get up and move, but he found that Rogers would not release his hold on his arms.

'Release ...me,' ordered Hawk as he endeavored to pry Rogers' hands off his arms in an effort to get free of the human.

'No,' replied Buck as he tightened his grip on Hawk's arms and pushed down again to prevent the birdman from further injuring himself.

When Hawk tried to push one of the medi-evac team members away from him with his good leg, the medic quickly held down the leg, allowing another team member to cut away Hawk's pant leg up past the knee before applying the heavy gauze to his badly bleeding knee.

Looking down at Hawk and holding him down harder, Buck scolded him, 'Stop that! Will you stay still, Hawk? They are trying to save your life.'

Hawk looked up at Rogers, 'Let ...me ...go , human.' He tried to pull his arms free, but the intense pain was like huge waves smashing against him harder and harder.

Hawk found himself gripping tighter onto Rogers' arms as a grimace of pain etched itself over his face and a groan of agony was forced from his lips. He could only lay there floating in a pool of extreme agony and wondered how long it would be before the humans would allow him to die.

With Buck helping keep Hawk still, the medics were able to finish bandaging Hawk's injuries. One of medic took over holding Hawk's arms against his body from Buck so the other medics could gently hold the birdman as still and straight as they could before turning him onto his side so a back board could be carefully placed against his back. Once the back board was in position, Hawk was turned once again onto his back and then straps from the back board were used to hold him in place. As they lifted him up to put him onto the stretcher, Hawk frantically tried to free himself from the stretcher's straps when he moaned in pain from the searing agony that raced through him and he passed out. The sight of the birdman passing out scared Buck.

'Hawk!'' cried Buck grabbing Hawk's shoulders .

'He is all right, Captain Rogers. He just passed out,' assured one of the medics after checking Hawk's pulse in his neck.

“He will be fine, Buck. Hawk is in good hands,” said Wilma soothingly.

With Hawk on the stretcher, the medi-evac team rushed the birdman into the shuttle and Buck hopped in with them. Wilma got back into her starfighter and both shuttle and starfighter headed back to the Searcher.

Once the medi-evac team’s shuttle landed in the docking bay of the Searcher, they immediately rushed Hawk to the sickbay. Buck and Wilma left Hawk in the care of the medical staff after making sure Hawk was in good hands and then they went to report Hawk’s capture to Admiral Asimov .

Once Hawk was brought into the sickbay, the medi-evac team was met by Dr. Goodfellow who had been literally beside himself since learning of Hawk’s serious injuries. The birdman was carefully lifted from the stretcher and placed onto one of the sickbay’s medi-beds.

“How long has he been unconscious ?” asked Dr. Goodfellow.

One of the medi-evac team members replied. “About three minutes. He was conscious prior to being placed in the stretcher and then passed out when we were transporting him, Dr. Goodfellow.”

“Hang on, my dear boy. Do hang on.” Dr. Goodfellow said to an unconscious Hawk and then began to give orders to his medical staff. “Start removing his body armor and clothes. I want full vital scans. We need to know how badly he is hurt before we can stabilize him. We were lucky that a healer on Throm was able to give us information on the correct medications to give a bird person. I want the sedatives, anesthesia, antibiotics and tranquilizers as well as anything else we might need to safely treat this magnificent life-form. Hurry!”

Awakening in pain, Hawk moaned as his body armor and gloves were removed. Looking around, he found himself laying on a medi-bed in an unfamiliar sickbay and surrounded by many humans.

Dr. Goodfellow heard Hawk’s moan of pain and hurried to his side. “Easy, my young friend, easy. You are safe now. We will treat your injuries. Try and lay still now. You will be fine.”

“Careful, Dr. Goodfellow. The birdman, Hawk, was combative when we were trying to treat him. Colonel Deering had to distract him so Captain Rogers could restrain Hawk before we could even begin to treat him. If it was not for Captain Rogers and Colonel Deering, we would not have been able to get his bleeding under control,” cautioned one of the medi-evac team members.

“Where am I? Let ...me ...go ,” gasped Hawk as he tried to sit up, but failed as the pain proved to be too much for him and wound up grabbing the sides of the medi-bed in agony. “I ...won’t ...be ...treated ...by ...humans.”

Chapter Eight

“You’re in the sickbay of the Searcher. Relax, dear boy. I can understand that you find it unnerving to be with humans.” Dr. Goodfellow told Hawk as his hands were gently, but firmly pried from the sides of the medi-bed and his shirt was cut off of him and removed by the doctor and one of the medical staff.

The birdman wondered what the humans planned to do to him as his boots were pulled off and his pants were also cut off by medical staff and removed. Hawk soon realized that he was in the presence of both male and female humans with his maleness for all to see. The presence of the males did not bother him, but the females did as it was not customary to be seen undressed by any female except one’s mate. Hawk could only wish that his soft, white body feathers provided more cover instead of only in large numbers on certain areas of his body and few and far between on the rest. The birdman used his remaining strength to cover his maleness up with his hands in an attempt at modesty when a female human with a name tag with one name on it of ‘Jensen’ approached him.

‘It will be all right,’ the female human called ‘Jensen’ said reassuringly to him as she picked up a large, medical green piece of cloth. Then she draped the cloth over his body to cover him from his waist to his upper thighs which effectively covered up his maleness and gave him some dignity. Next thing Hawk knew was that his arms were placed on each side of the medi-bed by the female human ‘Jensen’. His left arm was then picked up and held by Dr. Goodfellow who began to swab the inside of his elbow.

‘What are ...you doing?’ asked Hawk.

Looking Hawk in the face, Dr. Goodfellow said to him as he inserted a needle directly into Hawk’s arm. ‘I am administering an anesthesia to you. You don’t want to be awake during your surgery now, do you?’

Fearful of what they will do, ‘No ...don’t ,’ Hawk gasped pleadingly as he felt the needle go into his arm. He reached out to stop Dr. Goodfellow with his other arm, but found he was too late as the anesthesia quickly took effect. Hawk soon found himself slipping down into a soothing nest of painless warmth as he drifted off into a drugged sleep.

Once Hawk was safely under and prepared for surgery, Dr. Goodfellow began the emergency surgery on Hawk’s right side as it was the most serious injury. It took about two hours to carefully removing the rock that had been embedded in it, get the bleeding under control and finally stopped using artificial blood as a safe blood transfusion. Hawk’s injured right knee had suffered less damage and took roughly an hour to repair.

After surgery, Dr. Goodfellow ordered that Hawk to be given intravenous nutrients to bring up his electrolytes through an intravenous tube and bag as well a catheter was attached to his body to remove all body wastes while he was placed under a sedative for a few days to allow his wounds to completely heal.

The next day, Buck and Wilma entered Dr. Goodfellow's office which was next to the sickbay to inquire on Hawk's medical condition. The monitors in Dr. Goodfellow's office showed Hawk's heart rate, respiration and other vital functions.

"Oh, Colonel Deering and Captain Rogers, how good to see you. No doubt you are here to see how our friend, Hawk, is doing," said Dr. Goodfellow as he looked up from the readouts of the various monitors hooked up to Hawk.

"Is Hawk going to make it, Doc?" asked Buck.

"Oh, yes. Yes. We were very lucky that you had First Aid training, Captain Rogers, and were able to get Hawk's bleeding under control before help arrived," said Dr. Goodfellow, cheerfully. "Very lucky indeed. Hopefully Hawk should be able to be on his feet in a week or two. We mustn't rush such things though. Hawk did lose quite a bit of blood, but luckily we were able to use artificial blood for a transfusion. It will take his body time to replace the artificial blood with his own."

"That's good, Doc. Hawk looked like he was in real bad shape," said Buck in relief.

Wilma looked at Hawk through a monitor and asked. "Why isn't Hawk in restraints, Dr. Goodfellow? Buck had been attacked by him and Hawk has attacked humans before."

"My dear Colonel, I just took Hawk off intravenous nutrients and he is unconscious and sedated. The restraints are unnecessary," said Dr. Goodfellow.

"Doctor!" exclaimed Wilma.

"All right, Colonel, all right. I'll have Hawk put in restraints, but in belt ones. Hawk acted like he was afraid of humans before he was sedated for surgery and I don't want to scare him any more than he already is," Dr. Goodfellow relented.

"It is more for your safety, Doctor. You know that," Wilma said soothingly.

"I know, Colonel. I know, but it pains me to have such a superb being tied down like that," replied Dr. Goodfellow. "I do not wish to frighten him that is all."

"Besides, Wilma. As I said in my report, Hawk obviously wanted me to kill him so he could be with his dead mate, Koori, and the rest of his people," Buck reminded them.

"Oh, yes. Such a tragedy. Such a cruel loss to science. To have almost all the bird people killed off except for one. It can make one weep at the loss of such rare culture. Human stupidity has to rear its ugly head and destroy those who are so unique," lamented Dr. Goodfellow. "I can't blame Hawk for attacking humans as some of them were the ones responsible for the deaths of his people."

Chapter Nine

‘It is what the Galactic Court wants to know. They want Hawk to explain why he went ahead after every human ship and outpost and destroyed them instead of those responsible for his people’s death,’ said Wilma. ‘The Court will also want to know when Hawk will be well enough to stand trial, Doctor.’

‘In a few weeks, maybe three at the least, Colonel,’ stated Dr. Goodfellow.

‘Maybe Hawk didn’t know which humans did the killings, Wilma. Maybe he only found evidence that showed humans had attacked his people, but there may have been none of his people who lived long enough to tell him,’ contemplated Buck.

‘Well, until Hawk wakes up, we will not know will we,’ said Wilma.

Dr. Goodfellow reluctantly placed Hawk in belt restraints and returned to monitoring Hawk’s condition. Two days after his surgery, the I.V. and catheter were removed. Dr. Goodfellow was out of his office doing further research on the bird people when Hawk woke up again to find himself on a medi-bed and still in the sickbay of the Searcher.

At first, Hawk thought he was still dreaming, but the events of the past month came crashing down upon him. He closed his eyes in grief as the memories of his true love Koori came to him before he forced himself to push them aside. As he tried to sit up, Hawk found that he had been completely undressed by the humans with only a blanket covering his feathered body. Hawk also found his wrists were held down by belt wrist restraints with a belt chest restraint under his armpits across his feather covered chest.

Fearful what the humans might have planned for him, Hawk tried to see if he could get free and found that the wrist restraints were loose enough that when he pulled on them he was able to get his hands out after only a little tugging. Once his hands were free, he undid the belt chest restraint.

Then Hawk looked around carefully to find he was all alone and sat up only to grab his right side and right leg as searing pain surged through both of them forcing him to lie back down again. He shut his eyes against the pain and forced himself to relax so that the agony he was feeling would pass eventually. Once it subsided, he would be able to look at himself and see what the humans had done to him.

Forcing himself to remain calm and carefully touching his injuries, Hawk found that his chest and his right knee had been swaddled in bandages. Bracing himself for the loss of his body feathers as he pulled back the edges of the bandage on his chest, Hawk was surprised that none of his feathers had been removed by any of the humans he had seen in the sickbay prior to the anesthesia being administered to him by the elder healer. That the humans were able to perform surgery on him without removing any feathers came as a surprise to Hawk since his own people’s healers often had to remove one’s body feathers when treating injuries.

Since he had no way of knowing when a human might enter the sickbay, Hawk could only guess that he had little time to find something to wear and get out of the sickbay. Then it was just a matter of stealing a ship to return to Throm. The desire to lay down and die so he could be with Koori again had not faded. It was the only thing he wanted to do and no one would stop him. Hawk knew that the first thing to do was to try and get off the medi-bed. He laid still for a few minutes to steel his resolve and to focus on his goal.

Gasping in pain, Hawk steeled himself to get off the bed by gritting his teeth and forcing himself to sit up despite the throbbing pain in his right side and knee. Then pulling the blanket up around himself for modesty as well to have it out of his way, Hawk eased his good leg onto the floor.

Once he was able place a foot on the floor, Hawk slowly pulled his injured leg to the edge of the bed before carefully lowering it over. Sitting up sent shooting pains into his right side, but Hawk forced himself to look around and saw, through the glass portion of a closet, a hospital gown hanging there.

Hawk knew that holding onto the blanket would make it hard for him to move around so he dropped it onto the floor. Taking a deep breath, he then clenched his teeth once again and pushed himself off the bed. Steadying himself against the bed, the birdman gathered his strength to walk. Weathering the pain, Hawk managed to hobble to the closet where he opened the door and grabbed the hospital gown.

He had been embarrassed that he was seen undressed by all the female medical staff. Only mates were allowed to see each other undressed on their wedding night and during their married life together. Any exception to that would be someone of the same sex. It would be the same for any female of his people. When one was young, the only adults that would be allowed to see one undressed would be one's mother and father. The only exception to that would be when one was an infant up to the age of a toddler.

Hawk wrapped the gown around his waist to use as a loincloth for modesty sake and to make it easier to move around. The hospital gown was just large enough to only completely cover his front and sides. Hawk had to find something better to wear because his sparsely-feathered behind along with his two-inch, soft, fluffy, white tail feathers, located at the base of his spine, were showing for all to see.

Now it was only the matter of getting a ship and leaving for Throm. Steadying himself against the closet door, Hawk started to head for the door when Dr. Goodfellow entered the room with his notes and accompanied by his head nurse. With his mind intent on going over Hawk's treatment, he headed for his office with Nurse Jensen.

Hawk quietly waited to make sure the two healers were heading away from him before he tried to slip past. Dr. Goodfellow stopped and chided himself for not checking on his patient. Leaving his head nurse and turning toward the medi-bed, Dr. Goodfellow was startled to see that Hawk was not in bed. He turned to find out where Hawk had gone and saw him limping for the door.

Chapter Ten

“My dear boy, you should not be out of bed!” cried Dr. Goodfellow, going after Hawk who turned to face the surprised doctor and the nurse.

Realizing that the two healers had seen him, Hawk backed painfully away from both of them until he bumped into the door. Reaching around frantically for the release button, Hawk finally found it and backed out while still facing the two healers.

The two security guards at the door, who were nearing the end of their shift, were surprised to see the birdman backing out of sickbay. Hawk turned just in time to be grabbed by the two guards at the door. He tried to fight off the male guards. Then two more of their male colleagues, who had been coming to relieve them, came running up to help subdue the birdman.

Even though he was caught off-guard, Hawk struggled with both guards as he tried to break free of their grasps regardless of the throbbing agony that raced across his chest along his right side. He almost succeeded when the other two guards joined in. Then Hawk tried to kick one of the guards with his good leg, but was unable stand too long on his injured leg and it collapsed under him causing him to cry out in pain.

Dr. Goodfellow cried out to the guards as they struggled with Hawk. “Be careful with him. Hawk is still badly hurt. He is not yet fully healed.”

Despite the excruciating pain that was threatening to overtake him, Hawk continued to fight the guards even though he could hardly stand up. The struggle continued until one guard managed to grab him by his good leg and the other guard grabbed his injured leg before Hawk had a chance to get to his feet again.

Then all four guards carried the struggling birdman back into the sickbay and tried to put him back onto the medi-bed. Hawk continued to thrash around in their grips. He had to get free. He just had to. There was no way he was going to lie down and let the humans do whatever cruel deeds that they had planned for him. None at all. But the extreme agony that coursed through him left Hawk weak and gasping in exhaustion.

Once Hawk was inside the sickbay, Dr. Goodfellow called, “Nurse Jensen, get me one vial of the tranquilizer for Hawk. We need to calm him down before he seriously hurts himself. We don’t want him crippled for life.”

Gesturing Nurse Jensen to stay back after receiving the tranquilizer, Dr. Goodfellow was about to approach Hawk to inject him, when one of the guards cautioned. “Stay back, doctor. It’s not safe. We haven’t got him into the restraints, yet.”

Realizing that the elder healer held some importance to the guards, Hawk looked at him and desperately begged him. “Elder healer, tell them to let me go!”

Before Dr. Goodfellow could answer him, two of the guards pushed Hawk back down onto the medi-bed where they held him down by the shoulders. Hawk struggled to break free of the guards' grip, but the pain of his injuries had begun to take their toll on him.

Hoping that his cries to be released would prompt the elder healer to force the guards to let him go, Hawk tried to continue breaking free of the guards' hold on him and cried out. 'Let ...me ...go! ... Let ...me ...go!'

Meanwhile, one guard managed to pin Hawk's good leg as well his injured leg down on the medi-bed so the second guard could put the metal restraints on both of Hawk's ankles. The guards used padded metal restraints which were designed to hold down an unruly patient for the medical staff's safety.

The two guards were then able to help the other two guards pinning Hawk to the medi-bed by his shoulders until Hawk's wrists were finally placed into the arm metal restraints. Once Hawk was securely restrained, the guards felt that they could leave him alone. There was no way the birdman could get loose again now.

Finding himself back in restraints, Hawk began thrashing around in the restraints trying to break free despite the pain wracking his body, but was unable to and finally had to stop moving. Seeing that the birdman could not break free of the padded metal restraints, all four guards were finally able to relax and back away from the medi-bed.

'Okay, doctor. He is safely restrained so you can treat him. One of us can stay inside for your safety,' One of the guards told Dr. Goodfellow

Dr. Goodfellow told the guards. 'You can all go now. There is no need for a guard inside the sickbay. Besides, you already scared this patient half to death with your manhandling, even if it was necessary.'

'We will be reporting this incident to Admiral Asimov and Colonel Deering, doctor,' informed one of the guards as they all left the sickbay.

'As you wish, but I lock the door so I won't be disturbed while checking my patient,' Dr. Goodfellow told the guards as they closed the door to the sickbay.

With his chest heaving from all his exertions, Hawk watched the guards leave. Once he was sure that they were gone, Hawk tried to hide his pain from view as he turned to the elder healer in hopes that he would take pity on him and release him. He pleaded once again. 'Elder healer, I won't hurt you. Please let me go.'

'I'm sorry, my dear boy. I can't let you go until I have seen how badly you may have re-injured yourself,' apologized Dr. Goodfellow as he gestured for Nurse Jensen to approach Hawk's medi-bed.

Chapter Eleven

Seeing the other healer come up beside the elder healer, Hawk turned his head back to Dr. Goodfellow only to see that the doctor was about to give him the tranquilizer handed to him by Nurse Jensen. Weakly shaking his feathered head from side to side, Hawk moaned. “No! ... No medicine! ... No!”

“It will be all right, my boy. This is to calm you down,” said Dr. Goodfellow as he swabbed Hawk’s inner arm and injected him with the tranquilizer.

Dr. Goodfellow gently held Hawk’s arm and tried to calm him down by saying repeatedly. “There, there. Calm down, my boy. No harm will come to you. You are safe. Just relax. You are safe.”

Hawk’s panting from his exertions began to ease as the tranquilizer took effect and he looked at the elder healer in the face with eyes filled with pain and exhaustion. “Please, elder healer. Let me go.”

Dr. Goodfellow smiled gently at Hawk, telling him. “It will be all right, my dear boy. My name is Dr. Goodfellow. This is Nurse Jensen.”

“Hello,” said Nurse Jensen who smiled reassuringly at Hawk, who blushed at the memory of seeing her seeing him undressed for surgery.

“I am told your name is Hawk, correct?” asked Dr. Goodfellow.

“Yes, Dr. Goodfellow.” Hawk replied and then, hoping that he can still talk Dr. Goodfellow into letting him go, said. “Release me, I beg you.”

As he put his other hand onto Hawk’s shoulder, Dr. Goodfellow said apologetically to him. “I can’t release you, Hawk. For you are still badly hurt and you need to let yourself heal. Your injuries require time to mend. When comparing your right knee’s injury to your right side’s injury, you were very lucky that the rock did not puncture your right lung as it passed right between two of your ribs. You also lost enough blood to require a transfusion of artificial blood, but rest assured your body will be able to replace the amount of blood you lost in a few months.”

Then Dr. Goodfellow released his grasp on Hawk’s arm and shoulder began his examination of Hawk to check for any bleeding from his right side and right knee. Hawk cried out in extreme pain and grabbed onto the blanket with both fists when Dr. Goodfellow touched his injured right side.

“Oh, my. I am sorry, my dear boy. I’m so sorry,” said Dr. Goodfellow apologetically to him as Hawk tried to hold back another cry of pain.

Dr. Goodfellow said Nurse Jensen. "Get me two needles of the local anesthetic and one needle of the sedative that we can use on Hawk."

Hawk tried to talk Dr. Goodfellow out of injecting him with any medication. "It ... it ... doesn't hurt ...that bad. ...You ...you don't ..."

Once Nurse Jensen came up with the much needed medication and bandages, Dr. Goodfellow gently placed a hand on Hawk's feathered forehead and interrupted Hawk's denial of pain by saying. "You are in a great deal of pain, my dear boy. So don't try to deny it. I will not have any patient of mine in any degree of pain no matter how much they say they do not hurt."

Dr. Goodfellow injected Hawk with one needle of the local anesthesia near the injury of the right side and then proceeded to gently remove the bloody bandages and check for any damage caused when Hawk tried to escape. In the meantime, Hawk's gasps of pain began to subside as the anesthesia took effect. It was obvious that the birdman began to feel relief from the searing pain in his side.

Finding no major damage, instead just slight leakage of blood, Dr. Goodfellow then rewrapped the right side with clean bandages handed to him by Nurse Jensen. He then went to the right knee and gently examined it for possible damage also caused in Hawk's escape attempt.

Hawk tried to suppress a strangled cry of pain when Dr. Goodfellow touches his injured right knee. "It ...does not ...hurt ...that much."

Dr. Goodfellow was quickly handed the second needle of the local anesthetic by Nurse Jensen which he immediately injected into the injured knee before Hawk could protest again. "Hawk," he said in a scolding tone. "It does hurt."

As Hawk's painful gasps began to subside, Dr. Goodfellow once again gently removed bloody bandages to check for any damage. Once again he found little blood leaking from the injury and rewrapped Hawk's right knee with more clean bandages. After he carefully removed the hospital gown Hawk had taken, Dr. Goodfellow was then handed a blanket by Nurse Jensen and he gently covered Hawk up with it. The doctor tenderly tucked the blanket around the birdman as though he was tucking a small child in his bed.

Hawk, drugged from the tranquilizer and anesthesia, was surprised at the reassuring manner in which the blanket was laid over him and looked at the re-banded side and knee that were under the blanket and groggily asked. "Why ... would ... a human doctor ... even care ... that ...I was in ... any pain ... from my injuries?"

Dr. Goodfellow said to Hawk. "I have been told of what had happened to your people in their homes. I am simply furious that some brainless fools would callously destroy a group of innocent life-forms just for fun!"

Chapter Twelve

Hawk looked Dr. Goodfellow in the face and tiredly said. "I am ... surprised ... that ... any human ... would ... feel ... that way."

Dr. Goodfellow told Hawk. "There are humans, like me, who only wish to expand of our knowledge of other life-forms, to become friends with them and let them live in peace on their home worlds."

Hawk moaned. "I just ...want ...to go ...home."

"You can't right now," said Dr. Goodfellow soothingly as he placed a hand on Hawk's chest. "Relax and go to sleep."

Hawk said as he shook his feathered head sluggishly from side to side. "I ...I can't ... I ...m ust ... get ... out of ... here."

Suddenly a loud pounding on the door of the sickbay startled all of them. Whoever was on the other side was determined to be let in. In his drugged state, Hawk could only stare at the door and wish that he was able to get off the medi-bed he was on.

Realizing that the person on the other side of the sickbay door had to be dealt with, Dr. Goodfellow gestured for Nurse Jensen to deal with it. "We best see who it is so I can tell them I am busy," said Dr. Goodfellow in a miffed tone of voice. "I knew I should have said I did not want to be disturbed."

Nurse Jensen went to the sickbay door and called through the intercom. "Dr. Goodfellow does not want to be disturbed unless there is a medical emergency," she informed the person standing just outside the sickbay door.

"Dr. Goodfellow, this is Captain Buck Rogers! Would you please open the door?! I only want to see how Hawk is doing and I do not want to use the emergency override command to get into the sickbay," replied Buck.

Hawk turned his head back to Dr. Goodfellow and exhaustedly asked, "Are you ... going to ... open the door ...healer ," then corrected himself, "... Dr. Goodfellow?"

Knowing that Buck would no doubt use the emergency override command to enter the sickbay in his anxious state to see the birdman, Dr. Goodfellow decided that letting Buck in would be the best thing to do. Sighing as he looked at Hawk, Dr. Goodfellow replied, "I will have to, my boy. But do not worry, I will stay by your side," and then Dr. Goodfellow nodded to Nurse Jensen to let in Captain Buck Rogers.

The sound of the door of the sickbay opening made Hawk turn his head and he saw Rogers enter the room. The birdman found himself gripping the blanket in tightly balled fists in uneasy expectation of another encounter with the human who had captured him.

Just what did Rogers want with him now? Even with the elder healer beside him, Hawk felt fear course through his body as Rogers started to walk toward him. He struggled to control his breathing and keep his body relaxed, but the knowledge that he was helpless and vulnerable made it hard to do.

Upon entering the sickbay, Buck saw that Dr. Goodfellow was standing by Hawk with a hand on Hawk's chest. He could see that the birdman's body was tensing under the restraints that held him down on the medi-bed.

Buck also noticed Hawk's chest as it started to heave in apprehension and just how white the knuckles of Hawk's fists were as they tightly clenched the blanket. It was obvious that he would have to assure the birdman that no harm was going to come to him. With a gentle smile, Buck carefully approached the medi-bed that Hawk was laying on.

"Dr. Goodfellow, Nurse Jensen," greeted Buck as the doctor and nurse who both nodded a greeting and then turned to Hawk, "Easy, Hawk. I only want to see how you are and to talk to you," assured Buck in the gentlest tone of voice he could muster.

Hawk looked back at Dr. Goodfellow for reassurance, before deciding on answering Rogers and then he turned his head back to look at Rogers again. "I am ...still alive ... as you ...can see. ... What ...do you ...want ... to ...talk about ... human?" Hawk asked as he struggled to get his breathing under control.

"Yes, I can see you are still alive. Security informed us of your escape attempt. Just what were you thinking, Hawk? Even if you did manage to get past all the guards and escape, how long do you think it would have been before you would be recaptured? Even if you had managed steal a ship and fly out of here, you would not have gotten far with your wounds. You are in no condition to fly a ship," Buck said to Hawk in a voice he hoped conveyed the concern he felt for the birdman.

"I ...would have ...been ...free ... and ...not ...in ...these restraints ... I ...would be ...with Koori," gasped Hawk and then with sobbing breath asked, "Why ... did ...you ...save me ...instead ...of ...letting me ..die?"

"Because ...it was the right thing to do, Hawk. I had to try and save you. To prove to you that not all humans are uncaring and unfeeling. You do not believe that now, but I hope that I can convince you in the future," replied Buck as he gently placed a hand on Hawk's shoulder and then added softly, "I am sorry that you had to be put in restraints, but it is for your own safety. You need to heal. I do not want you to die. I want you to know that I understand your grief, Hawk. I wish that Koori was still alive and that she could be with you."

Rogers' hand on his shoulder was a touch that Hawk was surprised felt comforting, but it was the words that Rogers wished Koori were still alive stunned Hawk. It took a few minutes for Hawk to finally find his voice. "You wish ..?" he asked quietly, unable to finish what he wanted to say, but somehow Hawk knew that Rogers understood him.

Chapter Thirteen

“Yes, I wish,” Buck repeated Hawk’s sentence as it was obvious that Hawk was now starting to realize that he really did care about him and also felt sorry for the loss of his mate. “I will let you get some rest, Hawk. Call me, Dr. Goodfellow, and you too, Nurse Jensen, if there is any change in Hawk’s condition.” Then Buck patted Hawk’s shoulder comfortingly as he could before leaving Hawk’s side.

“I will, Captain Rogers,” assured Dr. Goodfellow as Buck turned and left the sickbay.

“We will keep you informed, Captain,” called Nurse Jensen as the door closed.

Seeing how exhausted Hawk was after all that had happened to him, Dr. Goodfellow then said to Nurse Jensen. “Hand me the needle with the sedative to give Hawk so we can allow him to get some much needed sleep.”

Hawk protested again being given any more medication. “I ...don’t need ...”

Dr. Goodfellow told Hawk as he gives him the sedative. “You need to rest, Hawk. You have been through too much lately. More than anyone should ever be put through.”

Then Dr. Goodfellow put a hand onto Hawk’s shoulder as the sedative started to take effect and repeatedly said. “Shhh. Sleep now, my boy. Sleep.”

Hawk, facing Dr. Goodfellow, fought to stay awake by shaking his head trying to keep from going under. But the sedative proved to be much stronger than his will and Hawk soon stopped shaking his head and his eyes slowly closed as he finally drifted off into a much needed, drug-induced sleep.

Dr. Goodfellow kept his hand on Hawk’s shoulder as he watched Hawk’s breathing becomes more and more relaxed. The doctor felt intense sorrow and pity for Hawk. To have all his family and friends and most of all his mate die, was a terrible thing to have happened to the birdman. Knowing that humans were the cause, only added shame to the sad events that occurred within the last month on the planet of Throm.

It was late in the morning of the next day when Hawk woke up again in the sickbay. Looking around to see if the elder healer, who called himself Dr. Goodfellow, was nearby and not seeing him, Hawk decided to take a good look at his metal restraints, trying to see if he could get free of them as he did the belt ones. Hawk found that all of his struggles against the restraints proved to be futile as they would not budge no matter how hard he pulled on them.

The thought that he would not be able to lay beside his beloved Koori’s grave in his own was a painful thing for Hawk to acknowledge, but the thought that he could still find a way to die and rejoin his mate to be winged spirits eased that pain. His death would allow him to be finally free of this life and with his beloved once again.

Rogers' show of compassion might have been real, but Hawk's heart ached for his beloved Koori. Death would be the only way that the both of them could be together again. To die would be a simple matter of refusing to eat. Not that it would be hard for him to do. Hawk had been unable to even think of food since Koori's death. To sit down to eat and not see the face of his beloved across from him was the one thing that he could not bear to face for the rest of his life.

Nurse Jensen entered the sickbay and, seeing Hawk was awake, came up to his medi-bed. "Well, good morning, Hawk. Do you want something to eat?"

"No." Hawk replied as he shook his feathered head negatively. "I'm not hungry."

"That's all right. You call if you change your mind," said Nurse Jensen. She reported the incident to Dr. Goodfellow who ordered an intense monitoring of Hawk's vitals and the results frightened the good doctor. Hawk would not survive another week if he did not get proper nutrition soon.

Dr. Goodfellow entered the sickbay later that afternoon. Going up to Hawk's medi-bed, he asked. "Are you all right, my boy? You haven't had anything to eat for some time. Are you sure you don't want even a little bit of food?"

Hawk looked at Dr. Goodfellow and said in a strained voice. "I don't want anything to eat. ...I just want to die."

"You must not say that. My dear boy, you need to eat." Dr. Goodfellow exclaimed. "If you don't eat soon, you will give me no choice. I will have to put your head into a restraint and put a feeding tube down your throat. Please reconsider."

"I'm not hungry." Hawk said just loud enough to be heard as he stared at the ceiling. He knew that he would not be able to resist the elder healer's pleas for him to eat if he looked at the elderly human. Hawk did not want to believe that the elder healer would put a feeding tube down his throat. He would not, would he?

"When you feel like having something to eat, just let us know." Dr. Goodfellow replied.

Hawk hated lying to the elder healer that he was not hungry when he was, but he refused anything to eat for the rest of the day no matter what was offered. The not eating worried Dr. Goodfellow as he had looked at Hawk's vital scans and they showed that Hawk had not eaten properly for almost a week. If he refused food again the next day, the doctor knew he would have to force feed Hawk in order to save his life.

The smell of food had been tempting, but Hawk was reminded of the meals he had shared with Koori when they were mates. Meals that he would never share with his beloved ever again and it took almost all of his will not show his pain of her loss. Hawk would simply continue to refuse food until the humans gave up trying to feed him. Then it would simply be a matter of time until death claimed him

Chapter Fourteen

The next day, Hawk woke up feeling nauseous, but determined once again not to eat. When Nurse Jensen came by with an offer of food, Hawk just shook his head at her even though he felt light headed and about to throw up.

Dr. Goodfellow came by and asked. "You have not eaten anything in these last few days, Hawk. Nurse Jensen says you still don't want anything to eat, is that true?"

"Yes," replied Hawk.

Sighing, Dr. Goodfellow looked at Hawk and said. "You give me no choice, but to put a feeding tube down your throat. Nurse Jensen, the feeding tube and head restraint."

"What?!" Hawk cried as Dr. Goodfellow slipped a head restraint on him.

Once Hawk found he couldn't move his head, he protested. "You ...you can't do ..."

"I am sorry, but you leave me no choice." Dr. Goodfellow interrupted as he put a brace inside Hawk's mouth to keep it open while he inserted the feeding tube. "There. You will feel the tube go down your throat, but rest assured, there will be little discomfort. I know that this is frightening for you, but I don't want to lose you to starvation."

Hawk struggled against the tube as it went down his throat into his stomach, but was unsuccessful in stopping its progress. Unable to bite down on the tube to stop its journey due to the brace holding his mouth open, the birdman could feel it as it proceeded on its way down his throat towards his digestive tract.

Hawk never thought that he would feel so frantic or as helpless as he did at that moment. He could do nothing to stop the elder healer from carrying out what he felt was his duty. Hawk desperately tried to think of a way. There had to be a way.

Dr. Goodfellow watched the process from a monitor to ensure the tube went into the stomach and not the lungs. Once one end of the feeding tube was safely inside Hawk's stomach, the doctor removed the brace and taped the remaining part of the tube to one side of Hawk's mouth. The rest of the tube leaving Hawk's mouth continued on to a machine that would dispense the necessary nutritious liquids at timed intervals.

Then Dr. Goodfellow gently removed the head restraint from Hawk's head and he apologized to Hawk. "I'm sorry to do this to you, but I am not going to let you try to starve yourself to death."

With his arms restrained, Hawk realized that he could not remove the feeding tube by himself. Laying on the medi-bed and trying to think of a way to have the tube removed, an idea came to him on how he convinced the healer to do so.

“You will not be able to keep this feeding tube in me if you don’t want me to soil the bed,” Hawk exclaimed.

“Oh, I think that problem can be easily corrected. Nurse Jensen, I need the catheter,” said Dr. Goodfellow.

“What are you doing?” Hawk asked Dr. Goodfellow as he pulled up the blanket past Hawk’s knees to his hips.

“Just relax, my boy. This won’t hurt a bit,” replied Dr. Goodfellow as he was handed the catheter by Nurse Jensen.

Hawk saw the strange looking device just as it was placed between his legs. Suddenly, the purpose of the device came to him as it was attached to his body between his legs. The idea of having another medical device attached to him was unnerving for Hawk. Without thinking, the birdman tried to kick at the catheter, but the leg restraints prevented him from doing that. Then desperately, Hawk tried to pull himself away from the catheter with its large, attached tubing, but it was too late as it would not release itself.

Seeing Hawk’s reaction to the catheter, Dr. Goodfellow immediately put a hand on Hawk’s shoulder and soothingly said, “Calm down, my dear boy. It is for your own good. You will only have to wear the catheter for a few days, I assure you.”

“A few days,” growled Hawk at the thought of being attached to another medical device.

As Dr. Goodfellow covered his legs with the blanket again, Hawk realized that he was literally at the mercy of humans now even more apparent. If things could not be any worse, the humiliation of the tube for force feeding and now a strange device attached to him obviously designed for the removal of body waste made Hawk wish he had died on Throm instead of being saved by humans.

On the verge of tears, Hawk moaned. “Please ... just let me die.”

Dr. Goodfellow, just managed to hear what Hawk said and saw the tears start to form in the birdman’s eyes, became extremely worried about Hawk’s death wish and asked. “Why do you want to die so badly, Hawk?”

Managing to talk past the feeding tube, Hawk said. “I want to be with my beloved, Koori. She was my mate.”

Remembering when he lost his own wife a few years ago, Dr. Goodfellow said. “I understand that you are upset. Losing your mate, Koori, especially after being together for quite a while ...”

Chapter Fifteen

Hawk thought that he could handle the pain and grief that he has endured through the past few days. The loss of his people and, most of all, his beloved mate, but his injuries, capture by humans, and the inability to make an escape had been bad enough. But now the indignity of having tubes put into his body had pushed Hawk to his limits of what he could possibly take mentally and physically.

Hawk felt trapped and the humans would now be able to do things to him without him being able to stop them. That and the fact that they would also keep him from joining Koori was too much for Hawk. He struggled to maintain his hold on his emotions, but gradually the strain of trying to keep control began to take effect. Hawk found himself slipping closer and closer to losing whatever power he had over himself. He realized that his hard earned discipline was starting to break down.

Unable to take it anymore, Hawk yelled at Dr. Goodfellow. "Koori and I had only been mates for about a month! Twelve of those days we had spent at "the Soaring Place" where all newly bonded mates go to be together! When we came back to our people, we found that everyone waiting for our return was killed by humans! Those murdering humans butchered everyone including the children!"

Hawk finally broke down and started shaking and crying from grief and all the events that has happened to him. Everyone and everything that he ever cared about was gone forever only to leave a void in his heart. Unable to just stand by and see such a young creature in pain, Dr. Goodfellow put his arms around Hawk to console him.

"I know what it is like to lose a wife as I am a widower as well. It has been a few years since my wife's death." Dr. Goodfellow told Hawk repeatedly as he started to squirm in Dr. Goodfellow's arms. "It will be all right, my boy. It will be all right."

Ashamed that he showed any weakness to a human in his vulnerable state, Hawk continued to try to get out of the doctor's hold, but could only move his head to one side away from Dr. Goodfellow. He could not believe that a human would possibly care about him to try and comfort him. But Dr. Goodfellow gently took Hawk's head with one hand and held it against his own head. The doctor's kind words and gentle touch finally got through to Hawk and gradually Hawk's squirming came to a stop.

Hawk apologized between sobs. "I'm sorry ... for yelling at you ... elder ...doctor ."

Dr. Goodfellow told Hawk. "Apology accepted. It is all right. I understand your pain."

Hawk managed to control his crying long enough to ask. "Doctor Goodfellow, just how long were you and your mate together?"

Smiling sadly, Dr. Goodfellow told him. "We were happily married for 55 years and had two boys and two girls."

Hawk began crying and shaking again. "Koori and I ... also hoped ... to have children. We ...we thought ...we would ...try again ...next month ...and Koori ...would have ...become pregnant ...by then ... but Koori's death ...it ended that hope."

"I am so sorry, my dear boy. I am so sorry," Dr. Goodfellow said softly, hoping his compassionate embrace would be a comfort to Hawk.

Dr. Goodfellow held Hawk until the birdman had calmed down enough to stop his shaking and crying. Then gently, the doctor wiped away Hawk's tears from his face as he murmured words of comfort. The gentle touch of the doctor was a much needed solace that Hawk thought he could never experience with a human. The fact that he was not afraid to be held by this human surprised him. It made Hawk wonder if there were more things about humans that he had been wrong about.

Much calmer, Hawk looked at Dr. Goodfellow and said. "I am surprised that you would show so much concern for me even though I am not human."

Dr. Goodfellow told Hawk. "I have had many patients over my years as a doctor and many were not human. As far as I am concerned all life-forms whether they are human or are similar to or not deserve to be treated with respect no matter what they look like."

Dr. Goodfellow's admitted concern for all life forms allowed Hawk to finally feel that he could trust this elder healer with his life. The genuine concern that the doctor expressed during the time he had been in the sickbay surprised Hawk so much that he started to feel caring and concern for Doctor Goodfellow in return.

Hawk asked. "How long will I have to have these devices in me and be in restraints?"

Dr. Goodfellow said. "It would be for about a week as you still need to heal fully. But, Hawk, if you can demonstrate that you will not fight the restraints and stop begging to be allowed to die and eat, and then you will have the feeding tube, catheter and restraints removed within two days."

Hawk agreed with a faint smile. "I will agree to stop fighting the restraints, the begging to be allowed to die and I will eat."

With a reassuring smile, Dr. Goodfellow told Hawk. "That is good, my dear boy. The lack of proper food and rest has taken a toll on you. Now, you need to rest. I can give you a sedative to help you with the healing process?"

"Yes, you can." Hawk said as he allowed Dr. Goodfellow to sedate him without protest, then his eyes closed and he fell into a deep, peaceful sleep.

Two days later, Hawk's feeding tube, catheter and restraints were removed. Hawk was relieved to be finally released from them. When Nurse Jensen came in with breakfast, Hawk was surprised to find that he was able to finish the entire meal.

Chapter Sixteen

Dr. Goodfellow came to see Hawk and check on his injuries. “Well, my boy. There is no longer any need for bandages. Your right side has healed well. It looks like we can soon start with physical therapy on your leg. We will have you walking again. It will take some time, of course.”

“Will there be much pain?” Hawk asked warily.

“You will feel some pain, but be assured it will go away as we will start out very gently with your therapy,” Dr. Goodfellow replied with a comforting hand on Hawk’s shoulder. “First, we need to get you some clothes. No doubt you will want to take a shower first.”

“Yes, if it is all right?” Hawk asked.

A loose fitting shirt and long gym pants were found for Hawk and Dr. Goodfellow brought to him and said. “Of course, my dear boy. I will even help you wash yourself.”

“Healer ...Dr. Goodfellow, I can do it myself,” Hawk replied reassuringly.

“All right, but at least let me help you walk to the shower. Your knee no doubt will be stiff at first and you will find it hard to bend,” proposed Dr. Goodfellow.

Remembering how hard it was to use his right leg when he tried to escape the sickbay, Hawk admitted, “I will accept your help, Dr. Goodfellow.”

With a smile, Dr. Goodfellow went to get a large towel to wrap around Hawk before he headed to the sickbay’s shower facilities. When the doctor came back with the towel, Hawk pulled the blanket away from his legs. Then the birdman placed his good leg onto the floor before carefully pulling his injured leg to the edge of the bed and lowering it down. After he removed the blanket from around him, Hawk wrapped the towel around his waist and pushed himself off the medi-bed.

Bracing himself for the pain, Hawk felt only a throbbing soreness coming from his right knee instead of the excruciating agony he had experienced before. Hawk balanced himself against the medi-bed and then started to carefully walk with a slight limp toward the shower facilities.

Dr. Goodfellow came up beside him and placed his shoulder under Hawk’s left arm and said, “I don’t want you to slip and fall now, my dear boy.”

Hawk smiled at the elder doctor’s demonstration of care and concern and made sure to put only a little of his weight on Dr. Goodfellow’s shoulder, “Thank you for your help, Dr. Goodfellow. My right knee is a little stiff.”

With Hawk was braced against him, Dr. Goodfellow assisted the birdman in walking towards the shower facilities. Once he was inside the shower facilities, Dr. Goodfellow helped Hawk remove the towel so he could sit down upon a shower chair that was inside the shower stall itself.

“If you need any help just call out and I will assist you,” said Dr. Goodfellow.

“I will be fine,” assured Hawk as he put the towel on a rod next to the shower stall.

Once he was sure that Hawk would be fine, Dr. Goodfellow closed the shower stall door and left the birdman alone to his shower. With his privacy confirmed, Hawk breathed a sigh of relief at the thought of the seclusion his shower would bring.

The shower controls were easy to operate and soon the tranquilizing effect of the warm water flowing over him helped Hawk to relax. With a washcloth and a bar of soap, Hawk was finally able to scrub himself down. The birdman gave himself a thorough washing from head to feet and make certain that all his body feathers were properly cleaned. Sitting on the shower chair helped Hawk to wash his healed over wounds and, at the same time, allowed him to see just how well they were healing.

After finally rinsing himself off, Hawk sat on the shower chair and let the warm water cascade over him as he bent his head down slightly towards his chest. Hawk wanted nothing more at that moment than to sit peacefully under the soothing stream of warm water. Several minutes passed before a quiet tap on the shower stall door, brought Hawk out of his reverie.

It was Dr. Goodfellow with a concerned look on his face. “Are you all right, my dear boy?” he asked. “You were very quiet in there.”

“I am all right,” Hawk said with a smile and reached for the shower controls to turn off the water and then picked off the towel from the rod.

Dr. Goodfellow hovered nearby as he watched Hawk’s movements as the birdman carefully stood and dried himself off. Hawk then wrapped the towel around his waist again and, once more with Dr. Goodfellow’s assistance, walked back to the medi-bed. Even though he felt tired, Hawk removed the towel, picked up the clothes given him and dressed himself before laying back down on the medi-bed.

“We will start your therapy tomorrow, Hawk. Now you get some rest,” said Dr. Goodfellow as he patted Hawk’s arm.

“I will, Dr. Goodfellow,” replied Hawk before he shut his eyes and fell asleep.

Hawk woke up later and wondered why he felt so sleepy even after he had slept. He decided to speak to Dr. Goodfellow about it, “Dr. Goodfellow, what is wrong with me? I cannot seem to stop sleeping.”

Chapter Seventeen

“Don’t worry, my dear boy. There is nothing wrong with you. It is just the anesthesia and tranquilizer that was given you has not yet worn off. You suffered injuries that took time to heal as well so sleeping will help you recover from both,” replied Dr. Goodfellow in a reassuring manner. “So you just sleep when you feel tired.”

“Thank you, Dr. Goodfellow. I will rest when I feel I must,” said Hawk, relieved to know that nothing was wrong with him.

The next few days were unnerving for Hawk as the therapy for his leg started out slow. It was only the reassurance of Dr. Goodfellow that the speed of his recovery would improve over the next few days. Hawk’s frustration at the rate of his recovery went away as his leg improved and he was soon walking on his own. Later, after being repaired, his black shirt and pants were returned to him along with his black armor, gloves and boots. Their return helped strengthen Hawk’s trust in Dr. Goodfellow.

Buck and Wilma came to see Hawk in the sickbay. It was only after eating on his own for about a week that he was well enough for company. They had been informed of the force feeding to save his life. From his medi-bed and wearing his own clothes, Hawk saw Buck and Wilma as they were greeted by Dr. Goodfellow who then left them alone.

Hawk could only wonder what they had planned for him now after he had recovered from his wounds. He knew that as their captive he was at their mercy. So far, Hawk had found himself being treated well, but for how long was the question.

“Well, you are looking better than when you first came in and when I last saw you in the sickbay,” Buck said to Hawk.

Hawk was stunned by the amiable words. “You were concerned about me?” he asked, surprised that a human would feel any concern for him.

“Yes. Dr. Goodfellow told me just how close you were to dying that he had to force feed you. The doctor wanted to give you a week to recover before allowing you to see anyone,” Buck said. “We are glad that you agreed to allow yourself to be cared for by our medical staff.”

“Why? I am not human.” Hawk asked.

“It doesn’t matter if you are human or not. You must understand that we humans do have compassion. I told them what you told me on Throm,” informed Buck. “It is obvious that you had been attacking humans in retaliation for the deaths of your people.”

“We are here to find out what happened to your people on Throm,” Wilma replied. “The question that the Galactic Court will ask is if you had any idea who was responsible for your people’s deaths. They also want you to go on trial for the humans you killed.”

“I don’t know. All I know is that it was murdering humans that killed all of my people,” Hawk muttered sullenly. “You don’t know what it is like to be all alone. The last of your kind. Why should I be afraid if your ‘Galactic Court’ decides I should die? There is nothing left for me.”

Buck looked at Hawk straight in the face. “Hawk, I know what it is like.”

“What? How?” asked Hawk.

“I went through what you are going through. You see I lived about 500 years ago on Earth. I was on a deep space mission. Something went wrong when I passed too close to a comet. It is believed that the gases in the comet froze my ship and me. During the time I was frozen, a terrible holocaust occurred on Earth. My family and friends died in that holocaust and the worst part is that the cause of the holocaust remains unknown to this day. Believe me, I didn’t want to live at first, but I found friends who I came to trust and who helped me to live in this new world and to adapt to it.”

“When I first met Buck, I didn’t know if I could trust him. After he risked his life to save Earth and proved that he was no threat, I had to help him come to terms with his loss of family and friends. I also learned to trust him and became his friend,” said Wilma.

“We are going to help you with your trial, Hawk,” said Buck.

“You will be facing the Galactic Court in a week’s time,” Wilma told Hawk.

Hawk gave a short laugh. “Your efforts would be in vain. Your ‘Court’ will want me dead no matter what you say to them.”

“You just tell them what happened to your people,” replied Buck.

“I still don’t see what anything I say would be of any help to me,” Hawk stated flatly. “Even if I spoke at my trial, would your ‘Galactic Court’ believe what I say? For all they care, I am a mad creature that must be destroyed.”

“If you won’t talk to the Galactic Court, then I will. I will plead your case,” Buck informed Hawk. “I will make them listen. I promise you.”

“If that is your wish,” Hawk said quietly.

Saddened that Hawk believed there was no hope for him to escape the death penalty that he felt the Court would pass on him, Buck and Wilma left him in the sickbay. Buck felt heartsick about Hawk’s situation. He had to find a way to save the birdman. He had to. There had to be a way that he could show the Galactic Court that Hawk felt justified in killing humans in retaliation for the deaths of his people.

Chapter Eighteen

‘I don’t care what Hawk thinks. There has to be a way to save him,’ Buck said to Wilma. ‘There has to be!’

‘You will find a way, Buck. You always do,’ Wilma replied in a matter of fact voice.

The day of Hawk’s trial came up and Buck tried to get Hawk to talk to the Galactic Court. An hour before the trial, Buck saw Hawk and said to him, ‘Are you sure you will not speak in your own defense, Hawk? Not one word?’

‘No, there is no point,’ Hawk sadly said to Buck.

‘Hawk ...’ Buck sighed.

‘I do not want to die. I did want to at first so I can be reunited with Koori, but now ...’ Hawk said softly and sadly.

‘Then talk to the Galactic Court,’ Buck pleaded, but Hawk only shook his head.

Sighing, Buck headed for the door when Hawk’s voice stopped him. ‘Buck, I will like to say I am honored that you regard me as an equal.’

‘I am honored that you do and I am still going to talk in your defense whether you like it or not,’ Buck told Hawk as he went out the door. Frustrated by Hawk’s refusal to defend himself before the Galactic Court, Buck quickly worked on a speech he hoped would convince the Court that Hawk deserved to live.

The trial proceeded with Hawk saying nothing. Buck began his speech to convince the Galactic Court of Hawk’s reasons for attacking humans. Hawk was stunned to think that a human would ask to be killed as well if he was put to death. He never thought that a human would care so much about someone like him who was not human.

Hawk’s thoughts went back to when he first encountered Buck and the trek they made in a desperate attempt to get his mate, Koori, medical attention. Buck’s reaction to Koori’s death and the fight where, instead of killing him, Buck treated his injuries and got Hawk to the sickbay of the Searcher so Dr. Goodfellow could perform surgery saving his life. Even now, Buck was determined that he do whatever it took to save Hawk.

After the trial, Hawk was surprised that Buck offered to help him find more of his people. Hawk wondered what it would have been like if he had encountered Buck before the attack on his people. Would Buck have helped him protect his people? A definite possibility given what he has seen of Buck’s willingness to help others no matter who they are and what they appear to be.

Buck showed Hawk his new quarters on the Searcher after a tour of the ship. Settling in, Hawk sat on the bed with his forearms on his knees. A pensive mood came over him. His people and Koori were gone and it would be an unknown length of time before he encountered another one of his kind. Now he had to stay onboard a vessel until such time it was deemed he would not threaten any more humans.

A knock on the door broke into Hawk's thoughts. "Enter."

Buck was standing in the doorway. "Can I come in?"

Looking up, Hawk sighed. "Yes. What do you want?"

"You are still bothered being here, aren't you?" Buck asked as he pulled up a chair and sat down in front of Hawk.

Letting out a sigh from deep inside of him. "Yes," Hawk murmured.

"I know how you feel," Buck said in a quiet voice as Hawk looked up at him. "When I came back from that mission that lasted 500 years, it took a long time for me to adjust to the fact that everyone I knew was dead. The worse part was knowing I would never get the chance to marry my girlfriend, Jennifer. We were thinking of getting married right after my mission," Buck replied in a not quite steady voice himself.

"You lost your world, your family and the woman who was to be your mate. We have both suffered losses," admitted Hawk as Buck nodded in agreement.

"It is how we deal with those losses over time. I know there is nothing I can say or do that will undo what has happened to you, Hawk. But what I can do is be here for you when you need to talk," Buck offered.

"Thank you. There is one question I want to ask. How did you deal with your loss of your loved ones?" Hawk asked.

"All I do know is that what helped me deal with the loss of my family and friends were the happy memories of them. That is also what has helped me to learn to live in this world," Buck said with a smile tugging at his face.

"Happy memories. It will be some time before I can even think of such things," Hawk remarked as he rubbed his face.

"It won't be easy, and you are right in that it will be some time," Buck said as he got up to leave the room. "I better let you get some rest. Good night, Hawk."

"Good night, Buck," Hawk called as the door closed.

Chapter Nineteen

That night, Hawk fell into a restless sleep broken by nightmares of the dead calling out to him. Hawk would dream he was on Throm again. He would find himself standing by the mass grave where the rest of his dead flock would appear and ask him to join them. Hawk would find his wounds bleeding again and one of the elders would tell him he will soon be with them. He would collapse onto the ground from blood loss and be pulled into the mass grave by the others who would tell him he is now home once more. Hawk would wake up begging to be let go. He would find himself so exhausted that he would fall back to sleep again only to have the nightmares come to him once again.

But the worse of the nightmares was of Koori. Hawk would dream he heard a knock on the door, got up to open it and saw Koori standing there. Koori would run into his arms, but when Hawk touched her, blood would appear on her and she did not seem to notice until he told her. Then Koori would vanish into the darkness with Hawk frantically searching for her until he came upon her grave. He would wake up screaming her name. But upon awakening to find himself alone only seemed to strengthen Hawk's desire to die so he could be with his beloved Koori. The nightmares would repeat over and over to the birdman to the point Hawk found himself wishing longingly for death to come to him.

When Buck knocked on the door to Hawk's quarters, there was no reply. An uneasy feeling came over him and he quickly overrode the lock on the door and hurried inside. Looking around, Buck found Hawk huddled in a corner with his arms around his knees, a look of utter exhaustion plastered all over his face.

"Hawk!" Buck knelt down beside him.

"Buck? I ...I thought ...you were someone else ," Hawk said in a tired voice as Buck put his hand on his shoulder.

"Who?" Buck asked as Hawk struggled to his feet.

"It is not important. I just need to sleep," Hawk said as he tried shrugging off exhaustion.

"Hawk! It is morning and you look like you have been up half the night. What's wrong? Please tell me," Buck queried in a worried tone.

"I ...I thought you were Koori at my door ," Hawk finally said.

"Bad dreams about Koori, isn't it ?" Buck concluded.

"Yes and the rest of my people," sighed Hawk.

Buck helped Hawk back to the bed. Hawk laid down with a tired groan. "Do you want to talk about it?" Buck inquired gently. "Sometimes talking about bad dreams can help to deal with them."

“How can I describe them? Maybe it would have been better that I had died instead of lived. Why else would I have these dreams? The dead want me to join them,” Hawk cried desperately before turning away to face the wall.

“Hawk, that is not true!” Buck cried, making Hawk turn back to face him.

“Then what is the truth?! What?!” Hawk yelled desperately as he sat back up facing Buck. Not trusting himself to speak, Hawk bowed his head for a moment. “You should have let them kill me.”

“What?! Why?” Buck asked in a shocked voice.

“I am guilty of not saving my people. Of not saving ...my mate. I killed her. I ...” Hawk sobbed as he put his head in his hands.

“Hawk! Hawk, look at me,” Buck ordered as he put his hands on Hawk’s shoulders.

Hawk forced himself to look up, sobbing. “I ...kill ...”

“Hawk, it was an accident. Koori was trying to stop me when you grabbed my ship with your ship’s talons. You had no way of knowing she had undone the safety harness. As for your people, you had no way of knowing that they were in any danger. You have to stop blaming yourself,” Buck said in a soothing tone of voice. “I went through almost the same thing as you are going through. I blamed myself for not being there. I had to come to terms with the fact that there was no way I could have known what would happen to me or to my family and friends. It is called survivor’s guilt, Hawk. When someone has survived a terrible event in which other people do not, the survivor feels guilty to have lived while others died when it appears that they should have lived also.”

“You talk of it as if you had experienced this ‘survivor’s guilt’. You have, haven’t you, Buck,” Hawk said in amazement as he forced himself to calm down. As realization was quickly dawning on him that Rogers had indeed suffered through what he was suffering.

“Yes, I have and I want to try and help you deal with it as I have done, if you will let me,” Buck replied.

“Yes, please help me,” Hawk asked in a soft tone.

“Of course, that is what I am here for,” Buck replied with a gentle smile.

The next few days, Buck spent time with Hawk trying to help him to deal with the nightmares. Buck helped Hawk to put the guilt behind him and get the much needed rest he deserved. For that act of kindness, Hawk felt he owed Buck a debt which would take a long time to repay. He would not have thought that a human care so much about him, but now he did. Hawk also felt the beginning of a close friendship starting.

Chapter Twenty

Buck had been busy teaching Hawk about the various functions of the ship, Searcher. Even though Hawk showed some enthusiasm for handling the vessel, there was a slight sadness almost a longing for something lost. Buck had a pretty good idea just what was bothering Hawk.

After making some inquiries, Buck decided it was time to take Hawk to the hangar bay on the pretext of teaching him how to fly one of the starfighters. "You did very well with handling the Searcher, Hawk. Now let's see how you handle a starfighter. You seen one before, remember?" Buck reminded him.

"Yes. As I recall, you flew one with great skill," Hawk replied.

A few meters from the hangar bay, Buck decided it was time to spring his surprise on Hawk. A surprise he knew that Hawk would definitely be happy to have.

"Hawk, I have some good news. You remember you were forced to make a controlled crash landing in the jungle," Buck said to him.

"Yes, I remember. My ship was damaged in the crash as was yours," Hawk replied.

"Not any more," Buck said.

"What? The Warhawk has been repaired? How?" Hawk asked.

Together they all went to the hangar bay where Hawk's ship, the Warhawk, was sitting. Hawk went over the ship and found that it was back to being fully functional. The necessary repairs and upgrades made to his ship had been started just after his trial was over, but not completed until a week later.

"Well, what do you think?" Buck asked with a grin.

"It's ... nice," Hawk replied in a voice so low that Buck could barely hear him.

Buck turned to look at Hawk and found him looking at his ship, but not really seeing it. It was then that Buck realized there still were some bad memories connected to Hawk's ship that could not be erased within a few weeks.

"You don't have to go out and fly your ship right now, Hawk. Maybe later, when you feel better," Buck said compassionately.

Hawk let out a sigh from deep within himself. "I must fly my ship or I will never be able to fly again."

“I understand,” Buck said placing a comforting hand on Hawk’s shoulder. “Do want me to accompany you?”

Turning to look at Buck, Hawk could only nod. There still were some painful memories connected to his ship, but Hawk knew he would have to face them sooner or later. Soon as he found his voice, he asked. “Yes ...please . I would not mind your company.”

Soon a bird-shaped ship and a starfighter flew out together from the Searcher’s hangar bay into the void of space. Once free of the larger ship, Hawk put his ship through a series of tests to see just how well the repairs had been done. Buck watched the Warhawk go through its maneuvers like the fully operational ship it appeared to be.

“Is your ship operating within all its parameters, Hawk? Were all the repairs successful?” Buck asked as Hawk pulled his ship along side Buck’s.

“Yes,” Hawk replied. “I want to thank you, Buck.”

“For what?” Buck asked.

“For helping me deal with my pain. I thought it would be impossible for me to fly once again, but you being here helped. You did not force me to fly, instead you let me make my own choice as to when I would fly,” Hawk replied.

“That is what friends are for ; to help each other when they need help,” Buck said, happy that he was able to help Hawk.

“Friends. I like the sound of that ,” Hawk said, feeling that he was no longer alone.

Returning to the hangar bay, both ships landed in their respective places that had been assigned to them. Both Hawk and Buck headed for the door leading out of the bay.

Hawk turned to Buck. “At first, I didn’t believe that any human would show any compassion. I was wrong. I understand now why you, Buck, wanted to save me. You are an honorable man. You have shown me that not all humans are dishonorable and I can see that in time I will be able to trust you.”

“I know that it will take time, Hawk, but we all promise to help you adjust to life here on the Searcher and to find the rest of your people,” Buck said with a smile.

Leaving the hangar bay together, Hawk felt that he now had a reason to live. He had a friend who would be there for him, Buck Rogers.

THE END