

# ENEMY AT BAY

Cercians Book 2

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S. H. JUCHA

*Chapters 1 & 2  
Excerpt*

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Despite the assistance I've received from others, all errors are mine.

## Glossary

A glossary is located at the end of the book.

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# 1: Twin Prizes

## CERCIA, EARTH COLONIST WORLD MALIA SYSTEM

Two Tridents from Mila's flotilla exited the dark to enter the Malia system. The telemetry officers reported hundreds of conclave ships present.

<The second wave has already arrived,> Captain Shelley Thurston shared with her counterpart, Captain Ji-ho Park.

<This means the admiral has arrived,> Park noted. <To whom do we report?>

Vice Admiral Ticnikrok came to the rescue of the arriving captains. <Welcome back,> he sent. <I'm linking you with the protectors and Admiral Cordelia. Be informed that the admiral has placed her forces under Z and Miranda until she understands more about our situation.>

<Greetings, Captains,> Miranda shared. <How does Mila's flotilla fare?>

<No losses while we were with Commodore Pappas,> Thurston replied. <We've returned with two prizes, as Salus refers to them.>

<Due to the size of the download, it would be best to rendezvous,> Park added.

<Then you've managed to orient the maps,> Z surmised.

<That's the smaller prize!> Thurston exclaimed happily. <And it happened in the most unusual manner.>

<We would be curious to learn the details,> Admiral Cordelia requested.

<Certainly, Admiral,> Thurston replied. <We found two systems that matched the fighter's data points. However, we had difficulty locating a third. Gat'r and Escher complained that we'd missed a location during our

journey. Eventually, we backtracked and found a dead star that was represented in the local dome's star map but didn't appear in our telemetry scan.>

<There you located evidence of the Ondas,> Captain Nira Racine offered.

<Your pardon, Captain, but we didn't,> Park interjected. <Gat'r and Escher were convinced the evidence was in the system or nearby. It took some effort, but we found a huge clump of massive asteroids that were stuck together due to the presence of magnetic ore. There were indications that a technologically inferior race had tried to mine the ore.>

Z and Miranda laughed at the characterization of a race like the Ondas trying to take advantage of the anomaly that was described.

<That location gave us the third system with which to align the star maps and provide coordinates for every one of the fighter's data points,> Thurston finished.

<Excellent job,> Miranda encouraged. <We wait to hear of your other success.>

<We've extensive vids of the operation,> Park enthused. <An Onda carrier was investigated, and the pilot's star coordinates and associated details were captured. It's a huge amount of information.>

<This is the best part,> Thurston sent. <Sadie shifted from the traveler with the suits in one go. Escher carried a controller, and Shoya had an energy rifle. Sadie had to return with the suits because the carrier's lower protrusion was a secondary control center that wasn't active. Amalima moved the traveler to the upper protrusion, and Sadie was gone again before you could blink.>

<So, her power continues to grow,> Z shared.

<Without doubt, Z,> Thurston returned. <I would offer that it's more like it's doubled or tripled.>

<There have been concerns among us that Sadie could represent a danger,> Cordelia sent. She was surprised by the captains' laughter.

<No disrespect intended, Admiral,> Park replied. <Sadie has allied herself with the suits, and she now carries an implant.>



Privately, Cordelia linked to Miranda and Z. <Giving a young colonist an implant so soon after arriving appears rushed.>

<Are you asking us if we approved it, Admiral?> Miranda queried.

Miranda's response had Cordelia checking her assumptions.

<My apologies, Miranda and Z,> Cordelia quickly sent. <Peña has been busy.>

<That she has, and rightfully so,> Z responded. <Every individual aboard the *Storyteller* is an independent.>

<Didn't the Darmian defenders accept stipends for the fight against the Radags?> Nira inquired.

<They did, and they gave those up to come here to help keep Cercia free,> Miranda replied. <Z and I fund their efforts now.>

Nira immediately regretted her question. In contrast to the defenders, every individual in the second wave received conclave stipends, herself included.

Privately, Cordelia sent, <Nira, we must tread lightly. More has transpired here in a short period of time than we had imagined. As I shared earlier, we must listen and learn and assume nothing.>

The incoming Trident captains made for the protector's ship, and SADEs of the first wave prepared to examine the prizes.

There were requests from the SADEs of the second wave to participate, but Z asked that they observe until the complexities of the data and its relationship to current events be better understood.

As the data was critical, Z downloaded both Tridents and compared the maps and the carriers' information. Satisfied with the accuracy, Z chose to broadcast in the open his thanks to Captains Thurston and Park for their efforts to deliver what the first wave flotilla had fought to secure.

Park connected privately to Thurston. <Do you detect tension?> he inquired.

<Without doubt,> Thurston replied. <I imagine there are many private conversations that have taken place and are continuing to take place. I think there might be some confusion about who's driving the operations here and against the Messinants.>

<I hope they get it satisfactorily settled before Commodore Pappas returns,> Park commented.

<Who are you worried about? Mila, the defenders, or Sadie?> Thurston asked.

Park chuckled and queried, <Is your crew anxious to return to the green and blue data points with more ships?>

<Certainly,> Thurston responded. <Doesn't your crew feel that way?>

<Absolutely,> Park replied.

<I see what you're saying,> Thurston suddenly surmised. <We've Mila, the defenders, a young colonist, and three squadrons of crew who won't appreciate being stopped from continuing their mission.>

<That's exactly what I'm thinking,> Park confirmed. <If the admiral and her direct reports want to press for caution and take time to evaluate the present circumstances, we'll lose the advantage we've created. Look what has happened in our absence.>

<A fourth adversary arrived, and a new race got caught in the mêlée,> Thurston noted. <Have you seen the information about the Seppans?>

<I'll get to it later,> Park replied.

At that time, the captains received orders from Ticnikrok. He directed their Tridents to take up station above Cercia, which they appreciated. Neither of them wanted to be assigned to another commodore, especially not one in the second wave.

After the SADEs of the first wave and Hector's explorers received the fighter's newly annotated map with its conclave coordinates, they celebrated. Despite the multiple assumptions they were forced to make, their early efforts to plot the data points by virtue of their place in the listing proved to have been successful.

Next, Z shared the tremendous amount of code obtained by Escher's portable controller after it connected to the carrier pilot's program with the same group of SADEs.

The second wave SADEs closely observed the processes.

The first step was the translation of the Onda and Zaft messages into Con-Fed language. Unfortunately, any other messages had to be left alone.

Although, there were strong indications of which messages were from the Metters.

Miranda searched the download for a means to translate the Metter tongue, but she found none. <Z, the carrier's translation programs must exist in a different location,> she sent. <We need to program Escher's controller with multiple requests and a means for him to execute the programs depending on the time the team has aboard an enemy ship.>

<Several of Mila's Tridents must receive upgraded databanks to manage greater data copies and allow Mila the ability to send those Tridents home,> Z mused.

<I believe that Mila should have more forces. Perhaps, even a class two freighter,> Miranda opined.

<This will take some negotiations,> Z replied. <Essentially, we're creating an independent force under Mila. Have you searched the second wave for information on the *Liberation*?>

<There's a note on the *Nyslara*'s controller that the ship headed from Helgart to Naiad to make some transfers. In time, it was to set sail for Cercia,> Miranda explained. <Were you thinking of the *Liberation* journeying with Mila's forces instead of a freighter?>

<Many advantages to a Quadrant instead of a freighter, especially in the event of emergency acceleration,> Z remarked.

<In that regard, the *Alexander* is among the second wave,> Miranda pointed out.

<It remains to be seen what Cremsylon is thinking,> Z responded. <He might be more comfortable with supporting Cercia than sailing with an expeditionary force, such as Mila's.>

With the data supplied by Mila's flotilla, the SADEs were able to make short work of the mountain of information. The final result was a collection of data folders in which the nature of the messages and the coordinates were placed.

Cordelia requested Cremsylon join her for a conference with Miranda and Z, which ensured that many controllers were handling the vast number of individuals on the call.

<Miranda and Z, while many observe the data that's been translated and compiled, we'd like to understand what this information means to the first wave,> Cordelia sent.

<Essentially, the sum of the retrieved data indicates that a carrier has assigned duties to collect resources from multiple worlds in continuous rotation,> Z replied.

<So, the flotilla risked ships and crews to gather something meaningless,> a second wave captain interjected.

<Captain,> Z returned briskly. <The situation in this area of space is complex. We're not dealing with a single aggressor, such as the Imperium Empire. It will take time to understand the many races we face and the nature of their relationships. And, yes, this will involve risk. We're thankful that Commodore Pappas, her crews, and her passengers are willing to take those risks. If this type of engagement doesn't suit you, I recommend you return to more placid duties.>

<Apologies, protectors, for the interruption,> Cordelia sent, which was a message to every second wave listener.

<While the data doesn't tell us much, it does inform us by what's missing,> Miranda sent.

<Such as no mention of the Messinants,> Dominique returned.

<Precisely,> Miranda replied. <This is not to say that the carrier commander doesn't know of the Messinants. It simply tells us that the commander doesn't rate high enough to receive messages from them.>

<There are no data coordinates that relate to Cercia or any nearby system,> Starman pointed out. <This carrier services systems in the location where Mila's flotilla found it.>

<Curious,> Cremsylon remarked. <An Onda battle fleet sails to Cercia. Yet, one of their ships in an area of space far from here has no data indicating Cercia. Not only does that indicate extraordinary circumstances, but it also speaks to the ability to marshal forces to come here that don't disrupt operations where the carrier is tasked.>

<This underlines our belief that a more powerful race dictated to the three races whom Hector's Tridents encountered,> Ticnikrok shared.

<What are the notations that occur occasionally in some messages that haven't been translated?> Trixie queried.

<Consensus hasn't been achieved, Trixie,> Z responded. <However, there are multiple conjectures, which have high probabilities. The most notable is that they are references to races whom the Onda shuttle commander had no opportunity to teach us with the Messinant language program.>

<What of the various categories into which the data has been divided?> Cordelia queried.

<The coordinates relate to the accompanying messages,> Miranda returned. <We can understand the difference between collection and delivery points.>

<There are many of the latter,> Cordelia continued. <Does this mean that the carrier commander was responsible for distributing his gains among multiple locations?>

<That's our consensus,> Miranda replied.

<An unsettling thought,> Dominique opined. <If one carrier is servicing multiple systems, and this is only one adversarial race, it means our problem just got a lot bigger.>

<Explain?> Claire requested.

<Claire, recall that the three enemy fleets here were similar in power,> Peña prompted.

<Then we should expect their established worlds to possess equal fighting strength,> Claire surmised.

<Possibly,> Peña replied.

<What else should we understand?> Cordelia asked.

<Our basic assumption about the fighter's data was that we could rely on the listing age to indicate the systems' relationships to the mercenary race,> Z replied. <While this appears to have held true for the older data points, it isn't reliable for the newer ones.>

<Any indication of age between the oldest and the newest listings in the fighter or the carrier?> Cremsylon inquired.

<Intriguing question,> Miranda returned. <For the fighter, we've no answer. However, with the carrier, we've analyzed the frequency of

messages over time and related the messages to the systems visited. The information doesn't give us dates relative to our calendar, but it does speak to changes in the Onda society.>

<Which are?> Cremsylon prompted.

<That, over time, the Ondas have undergone a significant shift,> Miranda continued. <This carrier visited fewer systems for pickup and many fewer locations for distribution. Now, the carrier is busier than before, and the distributed systems have grown by nearly fifty percent.>

<And you would relate this to identical processes for the other two races, as Peña proffered?> Cremsylon offered.

<We believe that to be true,> Miranda replied.

<What about this fourth fleet that invaded Cercia and decimated the Seppans' ships?> Cordelia inquired.

<If the Ajastas are mentioned in the messages, they might be included in the portion that we can't translate,> Rexsus replied. <We surmise that the Ajastas represent an order of technical prowess above the first mercenary fleets to arrive here.>

<Is there consensus about expectations of a fifth interloper against Cercia?> Cremsylon queried.

<Yes,> Z replied. <It will come, and it will be more powerful. However, we don't expect it soon.>

<At some point, we believe the Messinants will approach a race who they think can do the job that the other four fleets couldn't,> Miranda added.

<More dangerous ships?> Nira queried.

<Not necessarily,> Lalyah returned. <Perhaps, much more powerful weapons.>

<Weapons that will endanger Cercia,> Nira surmised.

<If we're right that the Messinants are behind these machinations, they'll have an ultimate goal,> Sven interjected. <It will be to end the line of phase shifters, as exemplified by Sadie. If that takes destroying Cercia, I don't think they will hesitate.>

<What preparations should we make?> Cordelia asked.

<For now, every Quadrant should take up station around Cercia,> Z replied. <Before that happens, each Trident should obtain a heavy weapon. We're making more nanites canisters, and the freighters with GEN machines should imitate our version. Distribute the EMP spheres, the Elvian probes, and the nanites canisters. Only Tridents with these weapons should take up positions beyond the far rim.>

<Furthermore, only captains and SADEs willing to use these weapons without hesitation should carry them,> Miranda added.

<Do we have time to make preparations?> Cordelia queried.

<We believe we do,> Z replied. <The Messinants appear to be a deliberate race. They've failed twice, and we think they'll take time to review what they'll consider mistakes and find a better solution.>

Immediately, Cordelia issued orders to the second wave that complied with Z's and Miranda's suggestions.

As second wave Tridents were armed, they relieved Lalyah's and Dominique's tri-hulls on the Malia frontier.

After the Tridents swapped positions, freighters dispersed around the ecliptic for quick resupply of the Tridents.

The two Quadrants, the *Nyslara* and the *Alexander*, made their way toward Cercia. They would take up stations near Peña's *Storyteller*.

Within a few cycles, the integration of the second fleet into the defense of Cercia was complete.

Cordelia and Cremsylon expected many of the first wave crews to board their ships to enjoy the expanse and green spaces. Instead, the crews made for the planet. They were seen visiting the colonists and helping the sisters raise the humans' technological expertise.

When the biological crew members had time off, they would ask to be shifted to the coast, which the colonists were happy to oblige.

At the oceanside, they were seen in the company of Cercians and Seppans. The Seppans were intrigued by the numerous races of the first wave. They issued their high-pitched tones at sight of heavy Hyronzy crew members enjoying the surf, while seawater clung to their wet fur.

As for the Toralians, no coaxing by the Seppan females could get them close to the water.

Earthers, Pyreans, Méridiens, and New Terrans fashioned diving masks and accompanied the Seppans into deeper water. They often dove down seven or eight meters, much to the delight of the Seppans who circled them. Soon, the sisters were constructing masks for every individual who wanted one.

Sven remembered seeing a vid of fins on an Earther who was diving, and he shared that with the sisters. Fins became the next popular item to possess at the beaches.



## 2: I Need a Weapon

The first wave and the second wave enjoyed a short period of rest and relaxation, which was interrupted by the return of Mila's flotilla.

<Every time we make Malia, there's been an extraordinary development at Cercia,> Gat'r mused. <Maybe, we should turn about and sail away for ten or twelve cycles. Who knows what might happen.>

<Those are huge ships,> Sadie remarked, eyeing the Quadrants.

<We've friends aboard the *Alexander*,> Gat'r remarked enthusiastically.

<Then we must visit,> Sadie sent. <Get dressed, unless you want to appear aboard that ship in your unitard.>

Shoya and Gat'r needed no more enticement. They were anxious for the reunion. As well, they knew that Sadie's threat to shift them in their unitards was a tease. At least, they hoped it was just that.

The flotilla crossed above the ecliptic, and Gat'r and Shoya sat on her bunk dressed in their suits.

<Ready?> Sadie asked the pair.

<Now?> Shoya inquired dubiously, eyeing the gulf between their tri-hull and Cercia, where the *Alexander* held station.

<I am,> Gat'r replied, jumping up.

Sadie eyed Escher and Ceda. <I'll be back for the two of you,> she sent. Gripping Shoya's and Gat'r's hands, the trio was gone.

<Shouldn't we check with the *Alexander's* controller?> Ceda asked, worried about a successful phase shift, while she watched Escher's suit rise for him.

<I don't know about you, my love,> Escher sent, <but I'm not anxious to appear anywhere in my unitard.>

Ceda shrugged and hurried to emulate Escher.

The flotilla's trio appeared on the *Alexander's* bridge.

Cremsylon eyed the young colonist. Noting the implant, he queried, <There was a freighter between the flotilla and here. By any chance, Sadie, did you use the freighter as a waypoint?>

<A what?> Sadie returned, which made Cremsylon chuckle.

<I must surmise that you brought Gat'r and Shoya here directly from the flotilla,> Cremsylon offered.

<That's the shortest route,> Sadie replied, shrugging her shoulders as if that should have been apparent.

<It's hard to keep up with the growth of Sadie's power,> Shoya admitted.

<However, if she believes she can do something, then it gets accomplished,> Gat'r added.

Shoya couldn't wait. She hurried to embrace Cremsylon, and Gat'r joined her.

Soon, five youths ran onto the bridge, celebrating the return of their friends.

After much hugging and pats on the backs, Doc shared, <How did you get here? A traveler didn't land.>

<Everyone, this is Sadie,> Gat'r sent with pride. <She's a local colonist with the ability to shift through space. Shoya and I traveled here with her.>

Doc, Bot-boy, and the three clones, ex-nannies, stared at Sadie and then Gat'r. They waited for the joke to land.

<I can attest to the fact that the trio appeared on the bridge out of thin air,> Cremsylon sent.

<That's amazing,> Doc enthused. <Can you do that to anyone?>

<There she goes,> Shoya remarked, after Doc and Sadie disappeared.

It was a couple of minutes before the pair returned.

<I was just on Cercia's coast,> Doc sent happily. <Crews are swimming with aquatic races. Bot-boy, we must join them.> She turned to regard Sadie. To satisfy her welling emotion, she hugged Sadie and sent, <Welcome aboard the *Alexander*.>

Following Doc's example, Bot-boy and the clones also hugged and welcomed Sadie.

<How may we assist you, Sadie?> Indigo inquired. When she saw Sadie frown, she added, <Apologies, old habit.>

<The three of us,> Kadie sent, indicating Indigo, Jewel, and herself, <were trained to serve.>

<I thought I saw something that triggered an impression,> Sadie returned. <There's a way that you carry yourselves that reminds me of Ceda. She's a clone. Is that how you were created?>

The three young women nodded in unison.

Sadie's frown faded. <I like Ceda. Anytime you want to go anywhere, you just send me your desire,> she shared.

<When Sadie says she'll take you anywhere, you might like to know that we left the flotilla as it crossed the rim,> Gat'r explained.

Mouths briefly dropped open.

<Cremsylon, Peña and Sven aren't aboard the liner. Do you know where to find them?> Sadie asked, as Doc, Bot-boy, and the clones stared.

Cremsylon activated his holo-vid. <Do you know this place?> he inquired.

Sadie frowned again. <If you're a SADE, why do you appear as an old man?>

<Apologies, Cremsylon,> Gat'r sent privately. <Subtlety isn't Sadie's forte.>

Cremsylon chuckled. <This appearance has a way of confusing adversaries. They're not prepared for a SADE with more than five hundred annuals of existence,> he explained.

<I can see that happening,> Sadie admitted, grinning. Pointing at the holo-vid, she added, <I know that place.>

Turning to Gat'r and Shoya, Sadie sent, <Enjoy your reunion.> She nodded to the clones and the ex-mickies and shifted.

<Just like that?> Bot-boy queried. <No equipment necessary?>

<None,> Gat'r responded.

<An amazing young woman,> Cremsylon commented.

<You've no idea,> Shoya remarked. <As her power grows, Sadie wishes to push the envelope of her capabilities. When we shift with her, we can only trust that what she senses or feels will come to fruition. For instance,

our appearance here is the farthest that she's ever shifted, and she did it by connecting to the Trident's controller and identifying your ship, which is where we wanted to go.>

<I see what you mean,> Doc added. <Query her about her capabilities and she's eager to demonstrate them, no further exchange needed.>

On Cercia, Sadie appeared at the celebration center.

The sisters were operating the GEN machines, and Sven and other sisters were unloading a traveler and setting up services for biologicals.

<Greetings, Sadie,> Peña sent from the traveler's pilot cabin. <Whom do you seek?>

<Sven and you,> Sadie replied.

Sven handed off his crate to a sister, and Peña exited the traveler to join him.

<Welcome back, Sadie,> Sven said. <I didn't notice the flotilla arrive. Is everything okay?>

<We didn't lose anybody. The flotilla is inbound, passing above the rim when I left,> Sadie replied.

<And you just chose to come ahead?> Peña queried.

<Gat'r and Shoya wanted to visit with their friends on the *Alexander*. So, I moved them,> Sadie explained. She watched Sven and Peña process what she'd said. As her power grew, it seemed to confound every individual, except for one, her big brother. The thought of Escher's trust in her made her smile.

<So, Sadie, how can we help you?> Sven asked.

<I need a weapon,> Sadie replied.

<Why would you need a weapon?> Peña inquired.

Sadie's eyes narrowed. She didn't like the idea of being questioned.

<Sadie, how about you and I talk?> Sven suggested, pointing at a nearby bench.

Sadie merely nodded and walked that way.

Sven turned to Peña, shrugged, and strode quickly to catch Sadie.

<What kind of weapon do you need?> Sven queried, as they sat on the bench.

<A small one,> Sadie replied.

Sven stared at the ground, as if deep in thought, as he nodded. <For aboard ship or in the open?> he asked.

<Aboard ship, naturally,> Sadie returned.

<If I'm to help you, Sadie, you must be patient while I ask my questions,> Sven soothed. <The fact is that I don't know of any such device. It might have to be made for you. Tell me about the circumstances under which it will be employed.>

Sadie heaved a sigh, as if there was no need for a laborious round of question and answer. <I've shifted aboard multiple enemy ships. Recently, a carrier twice. In most cases, alien crews take some action against the team. So far, the suits have handled the crew members. But what if something happens that the suits have trouble handling?>

<How does that affect your ability to shift them back to your ship?> Sven asked.

Four sisters hurried to Sven and Sadie at her request. A quick image from Sadie had the sisters lining up, as if they were the suits and ready to transition.

<This is how I've recently moved the four team members together,> Sadie explained, standing and placing her hands on Ellyz's and Charise's necks.

<So, if a suit is hurt, they'll probably fall on the deck,> Sven surmised.

In response, Ellyz collapsed on the ground, which had Sadie convulsing in laughter.

<Quite convincing, Ellyz,> Sven shared dryly.

<I can't respond. I'm injured,> Ellyz returned, which made Sven chuckle.

<You see the problem,> Sadie demanded. <What am I supposed to do? If I shift the three healthy individuals away, I expose the wounded one.>

<Don't one or more of the suits carry an energy rifle?> Sven asked.

<On the bridges, which are mostly where we land, the rifle is for intimidation,> Sadie replied. <Escher used it in the carrier's bays, while it was in our system. That's a nasty weapon.>

<You're right, Sadie, I do see the conundrum,> Sven sent. <The injured may rise now,> he added.

Ellyz popped up, grinned, and the sisters returned to work. As they walked away, Charise shared, <Next time, I get to perform.>

Sven ruminated on his options. Sadie had a point about the potential dangers of appearing suddenly in the midst of enemy crews. He was relieved that her primary concern was protecting the team. Via his continual link with Peña, he queried, <Who would be the best individual to help?>

<Admiral Cordelia would have the knowledge of what Alex Racine and his New Terrans used in their earliest cycles of spaceflight aboard the *Rêveur*,> Peña advised. <However, the most cooperative individual would be Cremsylon.>

<I'll be in touch,> Sven replied. Through a private link with Sadie, he sent, <Take me to the *Alexander*.>

Sven disappeared with Sadie so quickly that the sisters stared with concern at Peña.

<Her power grows at a fantastic rate,> Evelyn shared.

<That's a good thing,> Peña returned. <It means that she will make her destination without difficulty.> Despite Peña's statement of assurance, it was more about hope than certainty.

Sven and Sadie landed in a corridor.

<Through those doors,> Sadie sent, pointing.

<How?> Sven queried.

<I was headed for the *Alexander's* bridge, but the controller indicated Cremsylon was on this deck,> Sadie explained.

<You could make your arrival decision that quick?> Sven asked.

<The results of becoming a lurker,> Sadie replied, laughing heartily.

<Due to your implant trainer, Escher,> Sven surmised, and Sadie nodded enthusiastically.

Sven did locate Cremsylon's ID, and he was on the other side of the doors. Signaling the doors aside, he discovered they were interrupting an education class.

Human children sat comfortably on a broad mat that could serve multiple purposes, and Cremsylon sat on a small stool.

“We’ve guests,” Cremsylon announced in Con-Fed, and the heads of children, seven to nine annuals old, swiveled Sven and Sadie’s way. “I was just telling the children about Sadie’s impressive appearance, and she arrives here with Sven Nilsson. Say hello to our guests.”

The children jumped to their feet, briefly tipped their heads, and greeted the pair in a single voice.

Sven and Sadie returned the welcome.

A young female gripped Sven’s hand and pulled him onto the mat. A little male did the same for Sadie. After which, the class resumed.

“Can you really disappear and reappear?” the small boy asked Sadie.

The children saw Sadie appear behind Cremsylon and resume her seat.

Sadie had slowed the movement to allow the children to follow her actions.

Immediately, the little boys and girls were applauding and whistling.

Cremsylon calmed the children and said, “As I told you, there are many wondrous things in this world. While all are fascinating, we must be careful that they don’t intend to harm us. Our guests are two of those who help us.”

Hearing Cremsylon pronounce the guests as supportive of them, the young ones beamed at Sven and Sadie.

“Now your meal awaits you,” Cremsylon announced.

The little ones stood up and hurried to the doors, where Kadie, Jewel, and Indigo waited for them.

<Who are the children?> Sadie asked, as Sven and she stood with Cremsylon.

<Ex-mickies,> Cremsylon replied. <Their gang leaders, who were no more than teenagers, gave them up in hopes that they could be cared for better than becoming gang members.>

<They made great decisions,> Sven commented, watching the healthy, happy children greet the ex-nannies at the doors. He noticed that when the young women saw him watching the children, they smiled at him.

<By your interest, Sadie, I believe it’s you who have the need,> Cremsylon shared. <And what is your role, Sven?>

<Translator?> Sven offered more as query.

<Intriguing,> Cremsylon remarked.

<So, translate, Sven,> Sadie urged.

Cremsylon walked into the corridor and headed toward a lift, while Sven and Sadie kept pace with him.

<Sadie has been shifting the suits aboard Onda fighters and a carrier,> Sven explained. <In each case, the crew members have tried to intercept the suits' actions. She has an inimitable method of moving the suits as one. However, if one of the suits is disabled, they will break the chain that enables her to move them as one. With that worry, she's asked for a weapon to use in their defense.>

<A close-quarter defensive weapon,> Cremsylon mused, as they stepped into a lift. <I recall that there were ones belonging to Alain and Étienne de Long.>

<What kind of weapons were they?> Sven inquired.

<Stun guns employed by the twins for the personal protection of Renée de Guirnon,> Cremsylon replied.

The lift arrived, and the doors opened. The trio stepped into one of the Quadrant's extraordinary green spaces.

<Would a controller have the mechanical drawings so that we might recreate one?> Sven asked.

<If anyone would have what you need, it would be Admiral Cordelia, Miranda, or Z,> Cremsylon responded. <I'd try the admiral first.>

<Thank you,> Sadie sent.

<You're ...> was as far as Cremsylon got. Sven and Sadie were already gone. His thought was, *Remarkable*.

Sven and Sadie appeared in another corridor. He looked around. The only thing of note was a bay hatch.

<In there?> Sven asked, pointing at the hatch.

<The admiral just landed,> Sadie replied.

<The controller again?> Sven queried.

<It's extremely convenient,> Sadie admitted happily.

Stepping from the traveler, Cordelia noted that Cremsylon's message finished about the time she recognized that Sadie and Sven were in the corridor. *Instantaneous phase shifting* was the thought in her kernel.



Entering into the corridor, Cordelia sent, <Come with me.>

<Cremsylon shared,> Sven sent privately to Sadie, as they followed Cordelia.

In the admiral's quarter, the pair waited, while Cordelia disappeared into her sleeping quarters. Although, that was a misnomer. It was filled with display cases of the mementos that Julien and she had collected through their centuries.

The door of one of the oldest cases opened, at Cordelia's approach. She removed a metal box, which was intricately engraved and returned to the salon.

Setting the box on the table, Sadie and Sven were mesmerized by the artisan's work.

<It's so beautiful,> Sadie breathed out softly. Glancing at Cordelia, she inquired. <May I touch it?>

<It deserves to be admired,> Cordelia responded, appreciative of Sadie's awe.

Running her fingers across the top of the box, Sadie could feel the depth of the etching. She leaned forward to examine the scene that was depicted. <I've never seen the like,> Sadie sent.

As Sadie straightened, Cordelia opened the lid.

<What are those?> Sadie queried in surprise, as she saw two hand weapons.

<These belonged to the twins, Alain and Étienne de Long. Renée was given them when the twins became Trident captains,> Cordelia sent. <When Renée received star services, she passed them to me. I think Alain, Étienne, and Renée would be pleased to see them used again in the service of the conclave.>

Sadie ached to touch them, but she knew that would be premature.

<What are the particulars of these weapons?> Sven inquired.

<They were produced by Méridiens,> Cordelia explained. <That means that they were created not to kill or to mortally wound but to momentarily disable an opponent.>

<That's what I need,> Sadie enthused.

Cordelia discussed the mechanical-electronic components, the stun levels, and the crystals that fed the energy spooling process, allowing for multiple shots with no recharge time.

When Cordelia finished her explanation, she sent, <You may have this pair of weapons, Sadie, if you abide by my stipulations.>

<Both of them?> Sven inquired.

<Sadie's dilemma is that she'll never know which hand is free to move the suits,> Cordelia replied. <Wearing a weapon on each hip will ensure that she can respond in either condition.>

Cordelia saw tears welling in Sadie's eyes, and she knew the extent to which Sadie appreciated her offer.

<I'm listening,> Sadie shared.

<These weapons aren't yours until they're refurbished, which includes a fitting for the holsters,> Cordelia stated. <Next, either Miranda or Z must teach you how to use them safely and effectively. Lastly, you'll never deploy them unnecessarily and never against anyone but the enemy. Are these conditions acceptable to you?>

<Completely,> Sadie replied, shifting to be next to Cordelia and hugging her.

Nira entered the salon, nodded to the trio, collected the box, and sent, <Sadie, come with me.>

After the pair left, Sven focused on Cordelia and waited.

<When I arrived here and heard the stories about Sadie, I admit that I had my concerns,> Cordelia sent. <Her power is alarming, but meeting her dispels those questions. She's a young woman who is worried about how to protect her friends.>

Sven smiled. <Sadie has been adopted by the defenders, and I think that's become everything to her,> he shared. <You might like to hear that she calls Escher her big brother.>

<She'll be devastated by the loss of any one of them,> Cordelia pointed out.

<That happens to all of us someday,> Sven sent. <No race knows that more acutely than yours, Cordelia.>

Sven touched two fingers to his brow and exited the admiral's quarters. In the corridor, he located the directions to a bay level and headed there. After walking half the distance to a lift, Sadie appeared beside him, grasped his hand, and they appeared at the celebration center.

But Sadie wasn't done. She jumped up to wrap her arms around Sven's neck. As her feet dangled above the ground, she whispered, "Thank you." Then she was gone to return to the *Alexander*, collect Doc and Bot-boy, and shift them to the Seppans' bay.

<You look stunned, my love,> Peña sent.

<Sadie is a force to be reckoned with,> Sven replied. <If you do her a favor, which she earnestly desires, then you'll have entered the whirlwind.>

Peña and the sisters had gathered to show their concern for Sven's strained expression.

Rather than explain, Sven shared the conversations with Cremsylon and Cordelia, including the abrupt phase shifts.

<With Sadie's implant, her capabilities have multiplied,> Charise offered. <She has all the benefits of our technology to assist in the use of her power.>

<Did you take offense at her movements of you?> Ellyz inquired.

<That's hard to do,> Sven replied. <She's a youth, fighting for her planet, with every asset she can possess. All I can say is that she deserves our understanding.>

Peña watched her sisters crowd close to Sven. She knew their synth-skins had been warmed for the occasion, and she smiled sadly. They would miss Sven, as dearly as she, when that awful time came.

## My Books

*Enemy at Bay* is the second novel in [Cercians](#), a series in the Earthers Saga that relates the stories of the descendants of Earth's colony ships.

The novel is available in e-book, softcover, and audiobook versions. Please visit my website, <https://scottjucha.com>, for publication dates and purchase locations. You may register at my website to receive email updates on the progress of my upcoming novels.

### The Silver Ships Series

*The Silver Ships*

*Libre*

*Méridien*

*Haraken*

*Sol*

*Espero*

*Allora*

*Celus-5*

*Omnia*

*Vinium*

*Nua'll*

*Artifice*

*Sojourn*

*Alliance*

*SADEs*

*Earthers*

*Talus*

*Elvians*

*Q-Gates*

*Conclave*

### Pyreans Series

*Empaths*

*Messinants*

*Jatouche*

*Veklocks*

**Gate Ghosts Series**

*Axis Crossing*

*Clone Crisis*

*Race Rivalry*

*Vortex Incursion*

*Dual Domains*

*Alien Intrigue*

*Deadly Gambits*

*Allied Enemies*

*Chaotic Futures*

*Empire Turmoil*

*Perilous Choices*

*Dubious Risks*

*Fatal Flaws*

*Imperium's Demise*

**Cercians Series**

*Clash of Wills*

*Enemy at Bay*

*One of Three* (forthcoming)

## The Author



From my early years to the present, books have been a refuge. They've fueled my imagination. I've traveled to faraway places and met aliens with Asimov, Heinlein, Clarke, Herbert, and Le Guin. I've explored historical events with Michener and Clavell, and I played spy with Ludlum and Fleming.

There's no doubt that the early sci-fi writers influenced my series, [The Silver Ships](#), [Pyreans](#), [Gate Ghosts](#), and [Cercians](#), which comprise the Earthers Saga. I crafted my stories to give readers intimate views of my characters, who wrestle with the challenges of living in space and inhabiting alien worlds.

Life is rarely easy for these characters, who encounter aliens and calamities, but they persist and flourish. I revel in examining humankind's will to survive. Not everyone plays fair or exhibits concern for other beings, but that's another aspect of humans and aliens that I investigate.

My stories offer hope for humans today about what they might accomplish tomorrow far from our home world. Throughout my books, humans exhibit a will to persevere, without detriment to the vast majority of others.

Readers have been generous with their comments, which they've left on Amazon and Goodreads for others to review. I truly enjoy what I do, and

I'm pleased to read how my stories have positively affected many readers' lives.

If you've read my books, please consider posting a review on Amazon and Goodreads for every book, even a short one. Reviews attract other readers and are a great help to indie authors, such as me.

*These novels have reached Amazon's coveted #1 and #2 Best-Selling Sci-Fi book, multiple times, in the science fiction categories of first contact, alien invasion, and spaceflight.*