
FINDING
REFUGE
P. N. SIMPSON

F I N D I N G
R E F U G E

P.N. SIMPSON

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Star Explorer Books

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To Graeme

Husband and father who encouraged

and inspired us in our writing.

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Chapter 1

"Lee crossed into League space two days ago, and will reach Galaxea in three weeks," Grandfather announced as he stood to leave the breakfast table.

Jeremy watched as he glared at Mother, who'd caught her breath, and glanced at his grandson with an equal touch of disdain before he continued.

"I'll be in my office dealing with family business affairs, so he's not distracted from his Foranza responsibilities on his return. After four months in the Unaligned Zone dealing with the mess his idiot younger brother left on Narevak, he won't appreciate domestic chaos."

Grandmother patted Mother's arm as he stalked off, and whispered to her grandson, "Come out to the garden and talk with me, Jeremy."

Jeremy followed her to the garden house at the Centre of the Bridger compound courtyard where she sat on good days, carrying her bits and pieces like a good grandson. It was good Grandfather's home office was on the other side of the building with no courtyard view, he thought as he helped her up the steps.

There'd be an alert on his mocom, and Grandfather's voice would drip with disgust as he said something like, 'We have plenty of servants, Jeremy, and you have better things to do than cater to an old woman.'

"Your father sent me a separate message," she whispered as she settled into her comfortable chair. "One your Grandfather didn't see."

She smiled at his surprise.

"The message explained the secrecy. On Narevak he discovered your Grandfather intercepted all the messages your Uncle Martin sent after he went to the Zone. Made us believe he turned his back on his family, as well as the League. Especially me and…"

Her voice trailed off, and Jeremy felt a stab of anger.

"We all knew how much that hurt you, not hearing from your son for years," he said, and put his hand on her arm. But he didn't go on. If he told her what he thought of that vicious old man, it would only frighten her more.

She sighed. "But that wasn't all, or even the most important part. He also warned me your Grandfather claims you're unstable, and plans to send you to a rehabilitation centre. And some of those centres have a reputation for being harsh."

She took a deep breath, and added in a rush, "Jeremy, you need to stay out of your Grandfather's reach until your father gets back."

He stared at her.

"Out of Grandfather's reach, on Galaxea? I could manage for a few days, but three weeks? He'd track me down if I stayed with any of my friends, and none of them would dare hide me."

"I don't know how, Jeremy. Even a few days might make a difference."

She closed her eyes, and he put his hand on her arm again. It was trembling.

"I'll give it a try. There's a group going to Hardin Park tomorrow for off-grid hiking. Grandfather told me not to go since Father's away, but I haven't told the others I wasn't coming. I can slip out early in the morning and catch a ride."

She opened her eyes, and smiled with relief.

"You have the credits you need? To stay away longer even if you're on your own?" She reached for her bag.

"I have plenty. Father's always been good with credits, and gave us extra before he left."

He kissed her cheek, and was back in his bedroom suite looking over his gear when the com buzzed. Grandfather.

"Jeremy, I need to talk with you. Come to my office," he snapped, and cut the link.

* * *

"Sit down, Jeremy," Grandfather said as the door slid shut. His home office hadn't changed since the old man retired from Foranza Corporation, and Jeremy often wondered what he did there these days.

He sat in the only vacant chair, next to where three men were standing. They were dressed in unfamiliar uniforms, looking like security guards but without the Corp identification patches you usually see.

Grandfather was smiling, and that bothered Jeremy. The old man disapproved of him so much, he was more used to frowns.

"I spoke with your father last night," he said.

"You didn't tell us that this morning," Jeremy said. "Mother and Grandmother would have liked to hear how he is. They've been worried."

Grandfather narrowed his eyes.

"He checked in at Foranza headquarters on the border planet where he crossed into League space for a debriefing, and took the opportunity to let me know his plans. Nothing Shara or your Grandmother need to worry about.

What you need to hear is his disappointment that you accepted the place at Roganan Institute. He only agreed to allow you to delay tertiary entry a term, so you could join the new intake at Galaxea City and follow in his footsteps like your brothers."

"We talked about it before he left, Grandfather," Jeremy protested. "He agreed I should spend another term on Secondary studies, and---"

"And waste time," the old man growled.

"Now that he's seen the mess your Uncle Martin made of his life, he agrees we need to take a firmer hand with you. I'm acting now, so he won't have another distraction from work when he gets home."

He gestured to the men.

"I'm sending you to the Berigan Rehabilitation Centre. They'll do an assessment and---"

“Sir, I don’t have halu or alco problems, you know that!” Jeremy protested, lurching from his chair.

“If Father is really angry about my decision, he’ll be home in plenty of time---”

Next in the series

Taking Ghost

P.N. SIMPSON

Taking Ghost follows Meilin Bao, a confidential aide to Zone Rep Legus Balanar, who sees her fulfilling life come to an end when he is chosen as Corp President, and her past prevents her joining him.

Legus kept her telepathy a secret when he found her at an internment camp in the Zone, and can't risk others finding out about her abilities.

Pensioned off in luxury, Meilin grows bored with her now empty life, until a rogue intel agent kidnaps her for revenge against her former boss. To survive she must draw on her internment camp identity as Ghost.

When Legus' estranged son Sagan and his crew rescue her, she decides to remain Ghost and join the crew of the Wanderer. Ghost finds her abilities offer her the chance to fight injustice in the Zone, if they can convince Legus she is no longer a threat…

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