

Book IV

SOLAR WARS

THE DAWN OF TWO SUNS

A long time ago, in unmeasurable eons of time... not in some distant galaxy, far, far away... but right here, in our own cosmic backyard... in our solar system... there was no earth!

Chapter 8

The Princess of Venus, Part 2



Kael'Ryn
MERCURY



Princess Lysara
VENUS



General
Vaelor Krynn
MARS



VX-17 (Vex)
Combat-Droid
JUPITER



The
Shallit'Biru



Xal'Zirath
MERCURY

DEE DOWNING

Chapter 8: The Princess of Venus, Part 2

Meanwhile, in the grand halls of Alaric and Seraphina's estate, a tense conversation was unfolding. Commander Rhenar stood in the polished marble sitting room, his presence as imposing as ever in his dark Solari uniform.

Alaric, seated in a high-backed chair, listened with a calm intensity, while Seraphina paced near the window, her expression tight with frustration.

"They are too young to be sent on such perilous missions,"
Seraphina protested, turning sharply to face Rhenar.

"They have proven their skill in training. Surely that is enough. Send someone else to face the Eclipse head on... We spent years avoiding Eclipse kidnappings of our own... Now we send Kael and Xal straight to them?"

Rhenar remained composed, his hands clasped behind his back.

"Training means nothing if it is not tested in the field. They must learn to apply their skills in real combat."

Seraphina's eyes burned with barely restrained anger. *"And if they die? Are we just to accept that?"*

Alaric, who had been silent until now, exhaled slowly. *"Seraphina,"* he said gently but firmly, *"We both know that battle is inevitable. Keeping them from this only delays their growth."*

Seraphina turned to him, searching his face for some hint of doubt, but found none. *"They are our sons,"* she said, her voice softer now, but no less determined. *"I just don't want to lose them."*

Rhenar's expression softened slightly. *"Neither do I. But shielding them will not protect them... It will only leave them unprepared when danger truly finds them."*

Seraphina clenched her jaw, then turned back to the window, unwilling to argue further but still unsatisfied. **Alaric** met Rhenar's gaze and nodded. *"Keep them alive, Commander."*

Rhenar gave a respectful bow. *"That... is my intent."*

Back on the moon of Xyphos

Kael and Xal continued onward, slipping past the security measures, until they reached the heart of the facility. The walls were thick; the corridors dimly lit with harsh fluorescent lighting.

The air smelled faintly; the chill of frozen technology. The hum of machinery reverberated off the walls; an unnerving constant reminder of the power the Eclipse wielded within this facility.

The deeper they went, the more guarded the area became. At the entrance to the central chamber, Kael paused, scanning the environment with his sharp eyes.

There was a heavy presence of guards and automated defense systems, including laser turrets positioned along the walls.

Kael's voice was barely a whisper. *"No way we'll get through without a fight."*

Xal's lips curled into a thin smile. *"Then we'll make it quick."*

They moved as one, darting forward to the nearest turret. Xal stopped abruptly and shot a blast from his right hand, hitting the control panel with pinpoint accuracy, short-circuiting the system. The twin turrets fell silent, sparing them from detection.

Kael pressed himself against the cold metal wall; his breath steady despite the tension crackling in the air. Xal mirrored his stance on the opposite side of the narrow hallway, gripping the hilt of his twin short swords.

Kael: *"Xal... What's wrong?"*

Xal: *"Nothing... Nothing really... I was just wondering about the great big pink garalephant in the evil fortress."*

Kael: *"And what garalephant is that?"*

Xal: *"Since when are we friends with the Kurai resistance?"*

Kael chuckles.

"You've been harboring that question all this time?... All I know is that the Eclipse and the Kurai had a falling out. The Kurai felt that the Eclipse somehow betrayed them. For all I know, this could be the Kurai getting even by betraying the Eclipse's plans to us."

Xal: *"So we're doing the Kurai's dirty work?"*

Kael: *"It looks that way... But I doubt if the Kurai can do what we can do".*

Xal's face expresses a resentful agreement with what Kael just said.

The dim glow of the red emergency lights cast eerie shadows, distorting the already narrow passage ahead. The princess was close... just beyond the next set of doors. But standing between them and their goal were three Eclipse warriors.

The first figure stepped forward, his black and crimson armor gleaming under the flickering lights. The Mer'Kurian insignia was carved into his breastplate, marking him as a veteran of the Eclipse.

His two comrades flanked him, each gripping their weapons; one wielding a plasma spear, the other with a pair of serrated daggers that pulsed with solar energy.

"Well, well," the **lead Eclipse warrior** drawled, tilting his head as he assessed the twins. *"The Solari send children now?"*

Kael smirked, rolling his shoulders. *"That's funny. We were about to say the Eclipse must be getting desperate if they're using washed-up warriors."*

Xal, ever the quiet one, didn't waste words. He shifted his stance and flicked his wrist, sending one of his blades spinning through the air. The Eclipse soldier with the plasma spear barely dodged in time, jerking his head aside as the blade sliced through the hood of his armor.

The fight erupted in an instant.

Kael lunged at the lead warrior, his own blade clashing against a solar-forged longsword. Sparks flew; the hallway briefly illuminated with each strike. Xal, moving with practiced fluidity, weaved between the two other Eclipse fighters, using the confined space to his advantage.

He parried a dagger strike and countered with a precise kick to his opponent's knee, sending him staggering backward.

The leader snarled and drove forward, forcing Kael to backpedal under the weight of his attacks. *"You think you can stop us?"* he growled, swinging his sword in a brutal arc. Kael barely blocked in time, the force of the strike reverberating up his arm.

Xal ducked under a wild swipe from the plasma spear and countered with a slicing cut across his opponent's thigh. The Eclipse soldier grunted in pain but lashed out again, thrusting his weapon forward.

Xal twisted, catching the shaft between his crossed blades before snapping his knee up into the warrior's stomach. The Eclipsian stumbled, giving Xal just enough time to drive his second blade upward, piercing through the seams of the Eclipse soldier's armor.

A sharp gasp, a moment of stillness... then the warrior slumped, his daggers clattering to the floor.

Kael, seeing the opening, ducked beneath his opponent's next swing and drove his own blade deep into the warrior's side. The Eclipse leader choked on his own breath, his grip faltering as he stumbled back.

The **Eclipse veteran** murmured, "*You... You're the twins*". Kael yanked his weapon free and let the body drop.

The last soldier, realizing his mistake too late, turned to run. Xal moved like a shadow, closing the distance in an instant. He grabbed the fleeing warrior by the back of his armor and wrenched him backward, driving a knee into his spine before slamming him against the wall.

The Eclipse soldier gasped, struggling, but Xal finished it with a clean strike to the throat.

The twins exchanged a glance, their breaths coming fast but controlled. No words were needed. Kael withdrew his blade from the fallen leader's cloak and nodded toward the doors ahead.

Kael: "*We've got to practice our hand-to-hand combat skills as a first resort and reserve our Solar power.*"

Xal: "*Come on... Let's wrap up this babysitting mission.*"

Rescuing the Princess... Finally

Kael and Xal burst into the chamber where Princess Lysara was being held. The room was dimly lit, the cold glow of artificial light illuminating the delicate, ethereal figure seated on a comfortable, yet confining, chair.

Her long, silken hair shimmered like spun silver, framing a face of exquisite, almost otherworldly beauty. Her skin was flawless and pale, her large, striking violet eyes widening as she took in her rescuers.

For a moment, the Mer'Kurian twins stood frozen. Never in their years of training had they encountered a being quite as beautiful as her. Kael opened his mouth but found no words. Xal swallowed hard, shifting uncomfortably under her piercing gaze.

Then her expression twisted into something between shock and disappointment. *"Men?"* she scoffed, crossing her arms over her elegant gown. *"Someone sent men to rescue me? Who's great idea was that?"*

Kael blinked. *"Uh..."*

"From Venus?" **Xal** added, as if he had misheard.

Lysara let out a sharp exhale, shaking her head. *"Unbelievable. The Solari think so little of me that they send Mer'Kurian brutes?"*

Kael stiffened at the insult, but before he could reply, she continued, her tone dripping with disdain.

"This is absurd. Venus has an all-female population for a reason. I am accustomed to warriors... True (woman) warriors...Not..." she trailed off, her gaze sweeping over them. *"Not whatever **you** are."*

Kael opened his mouth again, then closed it. Xal, usually the composed one, cleared his throat but said nothing. They were both utterly dumbfounded.

Lysara scoffed again. *"Do you even have a plan? Or did you think you'd just stumble in here and brawl your way out like primitive barbarians?"*

Kael exchanged a look with Xal. *"Well... Technically, we did just fight our way in here,"* he muttered.

Lysara rolled her eyes. *"Wonderful. This is going to be a disaster."*

The twins, still stunned by her words and her presence, found themselves at a loss for the first time in their lives. They had faced the most fierce Eclipse warriors, the beast guardian of Xyphos, and grueling Solari trials, but none of it had prepared them for...

Princess Lysara of Venus.

The princess stood taller, her expression firming as she met their gaze.

*"Anyway... I know what they're planning. From what I could gather, they're using **me** as a bargaining chip to bring the mighty Venus to her knees. That would change the balance of power in our solar system. We can't let that happen. Let's get out of here!"*

Kael's jaw tightened. *"We?... won't. We'll get you to..."* The princess marches off, as if leading the way. *"safety".*

Xal: *I think 'she's' going to get 'us' to safety.*

The twins followed the princess outside the chamber. As they stepped out the sound of approaching footsteps echoed down the corridor.

Kael and Xal instinctively shifted into defensive stances, putting the princess behind them... gripping their weapons as six Eclipse warriors came running toward them.

"Great," Kael muttered. *"Time to..."*

Before he could finish, Princess Lysara charged forward.

The twins had barely registered her movement before she was already on the first Eclipse warrior. With a graceful twist of her body, she delivered a lightning-fast strike to his throat, then flipped over his falling form, landing a devastating kick to the second warrior's head.

The man crumpled before he could even raise his weapon.

Kael and Xal stared; stunned into silence. The Eclipse soldiers were just as caught off guard, hesitating for a fraction of a second too long.

"Are you two just going to stand there?" Lysara snapped, flipping her silver hair over her shoulder as she turned to face the remaining warriors.

Kael and Xal exchanged a wide-eyed look.

"She's fast," Xal murmured.

"No kidding," Kael replied before shaking himself out of his daze. *"OK, Com'on!"*

With renewed focus, the twins launched into battle, joining Lysara in the fight, though now with a newfound respect... and a bit of intimidation... for the Princess of Venus.

But more were coming... too many for the trio to handle.

As only two Eclipse remained, Kael took off to clear the way out. After the two Eclipse fell, Xal and Lysara made their way through the winding corridors; the cold grip of danger tightening around them.

The path was treacherous, but Xal's instincts were sharp. His thoughts were focused on the princess' safety, and his every movement was calculated. Although, Kael had marked the traps the Eclipse had set.

As they neared the back exit, **Kael's** voice crackled through their communication link. *"I've cleared the path. Hurry!"*

Xal didn't hesitate. With one final glance back, he ushered the princess toward the exit. The cold wind of Xyphos greeted them as they burst out into the open. A short distance away, a shuttle waited for their escape.

The twins had done it... they'd rescued the princess... or visa versa. But they knew this was only the beginning.

The Eclipse would not let this defeat go unchallenged.