

**Encounter: Conviction (Spaceport)**  
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## Conviction

### Welcome to Charon Interstellar Space Port

The sign looked like crayon on paper.

Apart from being tacky, it was a tad grandiose and premature. This was just a small station module in orbit around Pluto and its tiny moons. Choosing Charon as the launch site, considering he was the mythological ferryman of the dead, was just a morbid joke. What was about to happen here was an experiment, it might not work, probably wouldn't, but who was I to judge? Me, a convicted felon.

Twenty second century justice is a curious thing.

We no longer execute criminals, no matter how heinous the crime. No, in our enlightened times we essentially lobotomize the nut jobs, and turn them into benign house slaves for those who can afford them. Nonviolent criminals, like me, well, we are given choices. Go to jail for twenty years hard labor, sign a contract to be a house (read that as sex) slave for ten, or be an explorer on a one way trip to the stars.

Guess which option I took.

Why, you may well ask. Who in their right mind would sign up for an experimental interstellar journey during which I'd be hibernating for a few centuries -- if I survived that is. I have to be honest; I don't think my mind has ever been *right*.

But I was a lunar city brat, born and bred on the Clavius loading docks, my mother a ten dollar whore and my father a company pilot, or so she told me. Who knows? She may have been right, because I've always had the wanderlust, an irresistible urge to go places. That's how I ended up on Mars, Io, Titan and now Charon, where it will all probably come to an end.

Here I wasn't an award winning journalist, but a doomed prisoner being loaded onto the convict ship. Some PR bright spark called the prototype ship *Sydney Cove* to

remind us that four centuries ago a once prosperous country was settled by convicts sent in sailing ships.

The plethora of military uniforms bustling about confirmed that this was not a Department for Corrections project.

“Name?”

I glared at the Marine with the hand scanner. “Don’t you know?”

He pursed his lips and glanced at the holocam. “For the record. For posterity.”

“I don’t give a rat’s...”

His expression turned threatening.

“Oh, all right. My name is Phoebe Barberossa.”

“Age?”

“Twenty three.”

“Occupation?”

“Reporter.”

His bushy eyebrows drew together. “No. What will it be at your destination.”

I smiled sweetly. “Oh, I’m sorry. Broodmare.”

“Huh?”

“Well, what do you think I’ll be?”

His face reddened. “Aren’t you the Colony Clerk?”

“Oh, yeah. That’s right. I’ll be doing the filing while I’m not breeding colonists.”

Behind me came an angry hiss. “I’ll take it from here, Benson.”

“Yes sir.”

I knew that voice. A crisp military uniform stepped in front of me. The man inside the uniform was tall, square shouldered, with a trim waist, and no hips to speak of, attached to long lanky legs. I couldn’t help the buzz between my thighs, a memory of passion from what seemed a lifetime ago.

Funny how I never imagined I’d see him again. How stupid that I’d thought he’d give up. Major Callum Branagh of the Colonial Marines never gave up on anything.

“Come with me, Miss Barberossa.”

With my gaze fixed firmly on that impossibly flat butt, so firm you could bounce a coin off it, I followed him into a tiny office. He closed the door and placed his hands on my shoulders. He turned me so we faced each other squarely. His dark eyed glare bored into my skull -- right between the eyes. "It doesn't have to be this way."

"You know me. I always take the hard way."

"Two words. That's all it takes. A first name, and a surname. Give me that and I'll have you back where you belong in no time at all."

"Exactly where do I belong?"

"Anywhere you want to be. But not here. Not this." He patted his breast pocket. "I have the pardon ready to sign. Please, Phoebe."

My heart melted. There was a tremor in his voice. He actually meant it. I gritted my teeth. I couldn't give in. Surely he knew that.

"This is so unfair, Callum. You can't do this to me. Not now."

"Do this to you? My God you're conceited. What about me? Why won't you think of me? Of us? I love you, damn it!"

I blinked away tears, and before I knew it I was in his arms, his mouth on mine. It's funny what the possibility of imminent death does to one's libido. Overdrive doesn't quite describe it. We attacked each other like starving wolves that fed only on feral lust.

I don't know what Callum's motivation was -- the obsessive need to identify the traitor that assisted Mars during the war, simple lust, or, dare I think it -- true love? Whatever it was he was in a hurry.

In a trice he had my flimsy prison issue jumpsuit on the floor and in an untidy heap around my ankles. His broad hands scooped up my breasts, and he pinched both nipples simultaneously, just the way I like it. My pussy throbbed with an ache I never thought I'd feel again. I hadn't had anyone touch me for the year I'd been in the Ganymede Labor Camp, and this, my pussy must have realized, might be my very last chance.

I closed my eyes. I savored every sensation, each electric touch of his fingers, even the tight bands of his arms which he'd wrapped around me. Strong, safe arms. My flesh thrilled at every contact; the caress of his breath on my face, the tough musculature of his chest against my palm, the heaviness of his cock in my hand.

With our lips locked, and our tongues dancing in each other's mouth, he lowered me to the floor. It was cold against my naked skin, but I didn't care. It was part of the experience, something to be treasured. After all, it was probably going to be my last consensual fuck.

"Take me," I urged as he pushed my knees apart, and exposed my wet and open desire.

I'd forgotten how thick the head of his cock was, and grunted contentedly as it pushed aside the lips of my pussy. He filled me up, and as he sank each centimeter into my wetness I sighed. One long drawn out sigh, from one expecting to die within the hour, hoping this ecstasy would never end.

"Phoebe," he whispered in my ear. "Phoebe..."

His thrusts were gentle at first, but they soon became more determined. I guess he was working out his anger at my intransigence by fucking the hell out of me. I didn't care. It was glorious; every moment a wonderful eternity.

I soon fell into an orgasm that was like a freefall drop on the Indonesian Space Elevator. It took my breath away, leaving me gasping, my heart thumping against my ribs, and my pussy walls clenching forlornly around his pulsing shaft. Callum moaned like a wounded animal as he emptied his posterity inside me.

*So this is what I'm giving up.*

"I'm afraid everyone must have heard me," I whispered, an attempt at gallows humor. "Your reputation among the troops will be legend."

"Phoebe, please stop it. I don't want to lose you."

We stared silently into each other's eyes for a long time. Insistent knocking on the door broke the spell. "It's time, sir."

Callum's breath was hot upon my neck as he begged one last time. "Please, Phoebe. This is your last chance. Let me set you free. Give me his name."

"You know I can't."

Protecting one's sources was not a principle a journalist can easily give away, especially when it would mean that person's certain death. Military justice was not so gentle on traitorous soldiers. To be honest I cannot say that it was only journalistic conviction that kept my mouth firmly shut, it was love, stupid love.

Callum squeezed my hand as the needles pierced my flesh, and the machines drained my blood from one arm and filled me with chemicals through the other.

He cried, and hot tears bounced on my cheek, mingling with my own.

I desperately wanted to say I'd see him on the other side. But of course that was impossible, so I tried to content myself by lingering on the carnal sensations that kept my belly tingling.

"I love you," I wanted to say, hoped I did say, but I couldn't be sure if my lips actually moved. I was so cold, so very cold.

If there was another side of this experiment it would be a dozen or so light years away, and centuries into the future. Centuries away from Callum, and the traitor I couldn't name -- his little brother.

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