



City of Glass

MICROFICTION OF THE ALLIANCE

Liana Mir

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SEARA MARRE leans both arms on the starship railing and stares into the magnificent starscape and swirling nebula. She is dressed in militancy garb, as the man behind her.

"What happens," she asks, "when the glass cracks?"

A pause. "It doesn't."

In her mind she knows this. The thick glass hull was designed to withstand the speed, pressure, and debris of space, to give the controller the most forewarning. Still she studies a tiny bubble in the thick glass hull.

She should call the nanobots to fix it.

She waits a while, staring at the cobwebby dust between the stars.

KEYSTATION shimmers brightly over the gas giant of Talon Mede. It's all glass and dark metal glimmering under the brilliance of the system's near sun.

Kayda, a tall girl with dark hair and fair skin, stands where she can look out toward other stations, shy fingers nearly touching the glass. She is a Mede, sworn enemy of the Talons.

She thinks that if she could step outside the glass, then she could love and be loved by Evan with his red hair and brilliant smile. She thinks if she steps outside the glass, there will be no air to breathe.

SIENNA LARIK loves to fly, especially in the Class I ships. More like manned guided missile than spaceship, it houses little more than Sienna, her daypack, and a couple of engines.

The I shudders into the gaping maw of Kippler's. Technically, it's not a wormhole, but nobody knows what else to call it, so they don't.

Sienna is staring through the glass window at the rippling colors of the wall when, for a fleeting moment, she can feel indescribable *vastness* opening up before her.

She grabs the throttle and rams it forward. She stays on this side of the glass.

STEPHANIE tries desperately to ignore the fire of pain in her leg. "I *told* you not to walk into an alert on Talon Mede." She glares at her captain, who looks positively miserable.

"I recommend some downtime," says Rayanne, standing medical officer.

Stephanie scowls. She doesn't want downtime. She wants to fly. She wants out of this Alliance ship with its dark metal walls and no windows out.

Her leg is throbbing. She stares up at the sheen of blue ceiling above her. The world seems to close in, and she wishes she could see the stars through Talon glass.

ALARMS RING loudly in Andrea's ears. She lies in the pilot's bed, shimmering metal at her back and the glass expanse over her head—*cracking*. Even without the alarms, she can see the monstrous Talon pirate ship with her own eyes.

What happens when the glass cracks?

Elysium spaceship glass is not supposed to crack, but Talon glass is stronger. Elysia is a planet; Talons live only in space.

Andrea tries desperately—futilely—to avoid the collision that will destroy her ship and allow the pirates salvage. For an instant, she feels the vastness of eternity waiting.

The glass shatters.

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