

Sinderella and the Aliens

* * * *

Sinderella got the alien ship in her sights.

"Lock on," she commanded.

"Locked on," responded the computer.

"Fire."

"Firing."

The alien ship became an enormous red blossom, then vanished.

"That's three of the bastards," she said. "Now let's scam before they spot us."

"I require directions."

"Take us to the Wedding Rings."

"Which of the six rings?"

"Take your choice," said Sinderella.

"I am not programmed to make value judgments. I require guidance."

"All right," she said. "Anne Boleyn."

"Course laid in. Shifting to light speeds."

"Good. And while you're at it, see who's available on the scrambled channel."

"Working..."

"This is Nicodemus Mayflower," said a familiar voice. "How are you doing?"

"So far, so good," answered Sinderella. "Maybe I can't match the aliens physically, but my ship sure as hell can. I've taken out three of them that were in transit from Henry VI to Henry VII."

"Good!" said Mayflower. "Now, unless you're skilled in evasive maneuvering and defensive warfare, get the hell out of there. One ship might go unnoticed and unavenged, but not three of them."

"Don't worry, I'm headed toward the Wedding Rings right now. I should be safe there. I don't think they can afford the time and manpower -- well, alien power -- it will take to find me in all that debris."

"Fine," said Mayflower approvingly. "It's a good place to sit out the rest of the war."

"I'm not sitting anything out," she replied. "I'm just sort of regrouping, giving them time to get their minds on something else before I re-enter the battle."

"Okay, but take it easy. We've got enough heroes out here. Don't try to be another."

"These bastards beat the Navy. We need all the heroes we can get."

"Being a hero isn't something you learn on the job," said Mayflower. "You nailed three of them, and that's

something to be proud of -- but they probably weren't expecting to be attacked in their own spacelanes. Now that they're ready for you, you're liable to get your ass whipped."

"It's my ass," she said stubbornly.

"Well, there's those of us who've grown increasingly fond of it and would like to see it survive intact."

"Thank you, Nicodemus Mayflower," said Sinderella. "I haven't blushed in more than a dozen years -- but if I still could, that would have brought a rush of color to my cheeks."

"Just take care of your cheeks," said Mayflower. "All of them."

"Not to worry," she replied. "Who's going to chase me all the way out to the Wedding Rings?"

"Braking," announced her ship. "We have arrived at Anne Boleyn."

"Okay, Nicodemus," she said. "I'm going to kill the connection, make a sandwich, take a nice long Dryshower, and -- " There was a stunned silence. "Oh, shit!"

"What is it?"

"Five of the bastards! They were waiting right here for me. They must be able to read our scrambled channel!"

Another silence.

"Damn! They're shooting at me!" She paused. "It may be easy to hide in the Rings -- but it's hard as hell to maneuver with all the junk floating around here." Another pause. "Something hit me! I don't know if it's a rock or one of the aliens!"

"Where are you? I'm on my way, but it's a hell of a big ring!"

"You'll never make it! They just -- "

The radio went dead, and a moment later Sinderella's ship began spinning end over end, one more piece of debris in the Wedding Ring known as Anne Boleyn.