

Broken Chain Volume One: The Rescue of the Libertolian
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Smashwords Edition

We would like to dedicate this book to Tyler. Thanks for bringing the cheese.
To Mom and Nana, for putting up with pushy authors wanting feedback.
To Michael and Dad for their unending support.

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[Prologue](#)

In the early 23rd century, the leaders of Earth set upon themselves a mission to colonize the known galaxy. For the next few centuries, mankind left Earth in droves and scattered out as far

as the technology of the time would allow them to travel. Earth remained the seat of the galactic rule.

As time passed by, the technology became commercially available to travel beyond the confines of the Milky Way. It was at this time that mankind staged its first rebellion against Earth. The galactic war of the planets waged for nearly half a century, with Earth's forces crushing the tiny resistance. After the war was over, it was decided on Earth that a new government should be formed.

This new government would have total control over the lives of the people on the colonized planets. Mankind could not embark on any type of endeavor without the consent of the new government. With the population stripped of any liberties, it took the new government less than a hundred years to successfully bend the people's will to their image. This new government was called the Union for Colonial Expansion. Sub-ruling entities included the Border Patrol and the Slave Commission, both established somewhat later. It is a bleak era for humanity.

[Chapter 1 Unemployed](#)

Her hands were bleeding. Her hands bled every day, since she became a slave. Every night she lay down with her hands wrapped in a wet rag, crying herself to sleep. This ends tonight. Tonight, she and Lottery will leave the camp behind, trading a life of servitude and degradation for one of non-stop running. In her eyes it will be a fair trade. And the plan was perfect.

Kate Wayfair threw her legs over the side of her one-man cot and stared down at the scars on her hands. They ached, deep in the nerves. She gave them a massaging rub and traced a couple of the deepest scars with her fingertips. A quick glance at the monitor told her that she had only been asleep for about an hour, but that was long enough for her subconscious to bring back her life as a slave in surprising detail. The physical pain could be dealt with, but the emotional pain claimed its toll on her every night. Kate made her way from the Captain's Quarters down the cargo lift. Her class 5 cargo transport, call sign *Lincoln*, was currently in spaceport awaiting supplies. Being docked was a rarity in her present life and she had found the break refreshing. While the rest of her crew took leave during these times, she found herself anchored to the ship as surely as the tavalium beams that arched over her head. She liked the feeling of being alone on her ship.

As she descended the last stair and turned down the corridor to the galley, she heard music playing softly. Maybe she wasn't as alone as she thought. Three steps further, and the aroma of something close to coffee brewing, greeted her. Lottery must be back on board, she thought. As she stepped into the small but highly functional galley, Lottery slid a steaming mug across the prep table. Kate peered down, picked up the mug and took a sip. Choking it back, Kate set the cup back down and watched as the molten liquid sloshed back and forth.

“This is pretty bad, you know.” Kate said, tasting the bitterness thick on her tongue.

“ Yeah, I know.” Lottery said, “It gets better, keep drinking.”

“What are you doing back? I figured you would've found some sweet gullible mark and be counting caps by now.” Kate said as she picked up the cup and took another sip, the bitterness returned.

“Not on this rock.” Lottery rolled her eyes. “There's not even a game of Quan, much less a game of Scales. I hope Micah is having better luck than I had. I'm tired of freeze dried vegetables and semi-solid coffee. Kate, I'm telling you now, I *will* kill that man in his sleep if he comes back empty handed.”

Micah Sung was head of “acquisitions” on *Lincoln*. Micah joined the *Lincoln* crew 6 years ago when he needed to transport some artifacts of a delicate nature across the Bloodring Border, a highly active civil war zone in the Turmese Sector states. Kate's converted cargo ship, *Lincoln*, was perfect for Micah's needs and Kate's level headed nature was well suited for the job Micah offered. Lottery proved invaluable on that mission also and they made enough caps to keep their small crew afloat and one step ahead of the Slave Commission. After the job was done, the *Lincoln* had a new member.

Kate stole a glance at Lottery's hands and in her mind she traced the near identical scars. She remembered the chaos of the first few days of freedom she shared with Lottery. The brutal barbaric “surgery” they each performed on the other. Removing the tracking chip was a necessary price, and a horribly painful one. The chips were fused with the nerves on the back of the hand. Cutting away the chips left each of them with a constant burning sensation that ran hot and deep in the bones. Luckily, they each retained normal functional movement, although it was still painful, even after all these years. *How long had it been? 12 years*, Kate thought, as she settled herself in a chair at the table and looked back at Lotty.

“You know that's an empty threat, Lotty,” Kate said, her attention back on the conversation, “Micah will get what he can and we'll worry about the rest later. You said yourself that this is a desolate rock of a planet.” she said, leaning into the table, her arms half propped.

Kate watched as Lottery pushed herself up from the table. In one fluid motion she acquired a cooking blade from the wall hanger and sent it flying end over end into the vacuum sealed bag of “coffee”. Kate stared at the bag as it let in a soft whoosh of air, like it was a last breath. With that, Lottery turned and exited the galley, leaving the sound of classical orchestra to fill the silence.

Kate finished her coffee and climbed the stairs to Navigation, which was located in the top level of her triple decked ship. They had only been docked for 24 hours and she could already feel the first itch to leave. She wondered how the kid was doing. Charlie had joined the crew of the *Lincoln* four years ago and he was the best mechanic Kate had ever seen. Charlie first boarded the *Lincoln* at the age of fourteen. He was hungry and filthy and a child prodigy when it came to the inner workings of a class 5 cargo transport vessel. After nearly 8 years on the run, the *Lincoln* was in need of help and that help came from Charlie. Since becoming engineer of the *Lincoln*, Charlie had tweaked the engines into well maintained humming machines. A few modifications later and the ship's light artillery weapons were unmatched in speed and accuracy,

although anyone who looked at the ship in space dock would be fooled by its rough exterior. But, that was fine with Kate. She liked being underestimated. It gave her the advantage.

* * * *

Charlie Ashton sat at a table in the corner of the room, with his back against the wall, just like Kate had taught him. He surveyed the room carefully. Dogan's Drink was a small oasis near the space docks of colony DG112, a small mining community in the outskirts of Region 9. How was he supposed to find a job for the crew of the *Lincoln* in this dump of a planet? He was going to come back without work again and Kate was going to kill him. It was his turn to find the crew a job, Kate preferred legal trading missions but there was no real capital in it. They had managed to survive this far by taking the more frowned upon work, like smuggling and gun running. Charlie waived a cap at the server and she brought him another drink. He tilted in his chair and eyed the serving girl appreciatively. She had white streaks in her hair and piercing blue eyes, a small frame and a pleasant expression. She smiled down at him and broke the ice.

“What are you doing out in this part of the region? You don't look like the normal lot that comes here.” She asked still smiling.

“I'm looking for some *special* work for my crew. You know of any?” He raised his eyebrows in question.

“Haven't heard of anything like that recently, sorry. Can I get you anything else?” She asked as she eyed the three caps Charlie placed on the table. He could see the want in her eyes, three caps was a day's wage in this sector.

Charlie picked the caps up off the table and placed them one by one in the girl's hand. He stared at her, smiling. *She really is pretty*, he thought.

“If you hear of anything, I'll be at space dock G96. We should be there for another ten to twelve hours. I'll fill your hand with caps if you bring me work for my crew.” With that, Charlie winked at the girl, downed his shooter, and left Dogan's Drink without a backward glance.

This was Charlie's last stop on the unemployment line before returning back to the *Lincoln* to finish up the new engine mods he had been working on. The *Lincoln* would have an extra boost of speed and be more energy efficient after this update. These were the types of upgrades that Kate appreciated. Still, Lottery was after him to finish work on the turret gun rotation. She especially liked the new design because it was undetectable in a scan. For her, it was like having an “ace up the sleeve”, whatever that meant.

It was a 45 minute hike, through the market, back to the space docks and Charlie was in no particular hurry. He was going over wave boost designs in his mind as he passed the meager collection of shops that had obviously seen better economic times. He was about to round the last corner, when he heard a familiar laugh. As Charlie turned to look back, he spotted Micah, holding the door for a small wiry man with silver wisps of hair feathering out into the wind. Charlie stopped, but did not approach the men. Micah gave him a knowing look that said “I'm about to close this deal, don't interrupt.” Charlie hoped that Micah had found the wave generator that he had been looking for. He watched as Micah and the man talked softly, walking in the

opposite direction. Charlie stood still a moment longer in thought, then turned abruptly and headed home to the *Lincoln*.

* * * *

Lottery stepped out of the washroom feeling cleaner. She ran her fingers through the soft blond curls that framed her face, ridding them of any tangles. She wound her way down the corridor to her quarters where she changed into some fresh clothing. She pulled her small side arm out of her storage locker and placed it into the hidden holster in the sleeve of her jacket. Her hands moved through the motions on autopilot, equipping the small arsenal of weapons that she kept on her person. She had learned to be prepared a long time ago. Had she been prepared the day they captured her, she may not have been caught. She remembered the day well. She had been hitting the scales tables at a hopping establishment on Tarab, deep in the heart of the Beta Sector. There were some serious high rollers at the table. She had been bluffing all evening. She was losing, on purpose. It was part of her con. She was down 3,500 caps and her pockets were half empty. She was going all in on the next hand. She had waited patiently for the dealer to start. She knew her hand before it was dealt. She had been marking the cards since the first hand. The moment she went all in, two of the six players folded. Lotty watched as the rest of the players made their decisions. In the end there were three players risking it all, including Lotty. The cards came to her just like she knew they would. She won and cashed out, leaving the other two players capless. Lotty had cashed out with 15,000 caps. She had left the gambling hall and opted to walk back to the room she had rented. She hadn't seen the two men she had beaten at scales follow her down the street. She hadn't been ready for their attack. They were just angry at being fooled by a woman she had thought at the time. They had subdued her easily, her reaction timed slowed by the alcohol. She had felt the blinding pain as her world went white. When she came to, she was in custody. It turned out that the men she had conned were Union Corporals. They had found her marking kit and she was tried and sentenced to a life of slavery, which is how she first met Kate. And they had been together ever since.

As it was, life aboard the stolen slaver ship was interesting, if sometimes lacking. Kate had renamed the ship *Lincoln*, after the historic Earth President who freed the slaves during the American civil war. *It was a good name*, Lottery had thought at the time, *and now it was home*.

Lottery used the monitor in her room to locate Kate. All communication with the ship's central computer was handled through the various monitor stations scattered throughout the ship. *Lincoln* had Kate's location in the Nav deck. With a press of a button, a comm line was opened.

* * * *

Kate heard the comm system come alive and welcomed the interruption.

"Yeah" Kate said as she turned in her seat to face the monitor.

"You goin' over charts?" Lottery questioned her.

"Yeah, we're so far from the trade routes, I doubt Charlie is gonna find any work here." Kate replied as she shifted uncomfortably in the control chair. She had been planning their next route carefully because they were running so low on supplies and their last paying job had been weeks ago.

“You know,” Lottery started “we could head for the Beta System, there's plenty of caps to be made there. I bet Micah could find some decent supplies, too.”

“Yeah, but there's a lot of attention there, also Lotty. The Slave Commission has been patrolling that system heavy for the past year. I'd rather play it safe, right now. I'm not in any hurry to fly threw that radar.” Kate went on “What we need is a cozy little spot right on the fringe where we can still get some decent supplies and put a few more caps in our pockets.”

“Who knows? Maybe Charlie will come through.” Lottery said with mock enthusiasm.

“Maybe.” Kate said as she broke communication and returned to her work.

* * * *

Charlie entered the cargo bay of the *Lincoln* feeling a little defeated. He had hit every possible avenue for work in the mining colony and had come up empty handed. Still, it was nice to get off the ship every once in a while. Even at 18, he couldn't imagine his life any differently. He had escaped the boredom of advanced learning, coupled with daily wanza practice and political speaking lessons, when he was fourteen. His family had been furious and stripped him of his title, leaving him capless and determined. After a few months of living in space ports, fending for his self, Charlie found a job with the crew of the *Lincoln*. Kate's ship had been docked in a repair stall at the trader's docks and she had needed a fast and cheap fix. Charlie had never worked on an engine, but he knew how an engine worked. A quick look at the engine room and the ship's schematics and Charlie located the problem. All he asked in return was that Kate take him with her when she left the space port. And she had been taking him along ever since.

Charlie remembered the argument between Kate and Lotty when he boarded the *Lincoln* as they were leaving the Gamma Sector.

“He's a child, Kate, what are you thinking?” Lottery had said. “I'm not taking care of him. What is he 15? 16, maybe?”

“He told me he was 14 and he's been taking care of himself, Lotty. I don't know, we need someone who can keep this ship running. I can fly it, but I can't work on it and he saved us 2000 caps in repairs. Surely you can appreciate that. Besides, I gave him my word, he's coming with us.”

They both knew that that wasn't the only reason for taking Charlie along. Kate and Lottery both recognized Charlie for what he was. He may have never been in a slave camp and forced to wear a brand, but he was still a slave all the same and Kate was going to free him. And the question was never up for debate again.

* * * *

Kate was walking towards the galley to meet Lottery for some lunch, when she spotted Charlie leaving his quarters heading towards her.

“Hey! Are we working or what?” She called out. Charlie looked up and saw Kate a few feet further up the corridor.

“Sorry, Kate, I couldn't find anything. No leads. Nothing.” Charlie pushed a tuft of reddish gold hair out of his eyes and flashed her one of his most innocent smiles, Kate noticed.

“Your charms don't work on me, Charlie. If you don't find us some work soon, I'm setting a course for the Gamma Sector and dropping you back off at the same space port I picked you up at.”

“I'm trying, Kate really, there's just no work here. We've got to get closer to the trade routes.” Charlie said in his defense.

“I know.” Kate said as Charlie passed her and bounded down the stairs to the deck below.

[Chapter 2 Abrupt Departure](#)

Chee-Lan could not believe her luck. The strange, nice looking boy with the red-gold hair had given her three caps for a tip. She needed the caps desperately. She was saving for a transport passage to the Grendall Quadrant, just inside the fringe. She was joining the Libertolian fighters. She had plans that extended beyond the confines of DG112. Chee-Lan had been trying to leave the little mining colony since she had first arrived there four years ago. She had been ripped from the only home she had ever known when she was sixteen, where she had been living in a Union run facility for orphans. All the children there were used in colonization, transplanted to one fringe planet or another. She had been dropped off at DG112 with nothing but the clothes on her back. She *hated* it. She didn't belong. This was not the life for her. She wanted to do more than just serve shooters at Dogan's Drink. She wanted more than just scraping by on tips. She just wanted more.

Chee-Lan was just finishing her shift, when she saw Soralee, her roommate, waiting for her outside. Unlike Chee-Lan, Soralee had spent her whole life on DG112. She had roots here. The thought saddened Chee-Lan. She smiled at her friend through the glass, as she headed for the exit.

“Did you hear?” Soralee asked as Chee-Lan shuffled through the door.

“Hear what?” Chee-Lan asked as she fastened her jacket for the walk home.

“They captured him, Chee-Lan.” Soralee whispered, carefully scanning the street outside of Dogan's Drink.

Chee-Lan fought back a gasp, but managed to ask “When?”

“Today about noon.” Soralee answered. “That's all I know. I figured you could find out more since you're in contact with Aaron.”

“Ok, let's not talk about this, right now, I need to think.” Chee-Lan said as she picked up her pace. Chee-Lan had grown up with Aaron at the children's home. He was two years older than she and had been sent to the Grendall Quadrant. Chee-Lan had wished that she had been sent there also, as she could have already joined the movement with Aaron. She could already be a Libertolian. Now, the Libertolian leader had been captured. Chee-Lan could see everything she had been working for going up in smoke. *This can't be happening*, she screamed to herself. She couldn't become a Libertolian if there were no Libertolians. Surely it was a mistake. She needed to get home. She needed to speak with Aaron. She needed certainty. And she knew that Aaron would have it.

It took only minutes to reach her tiny flat at the pace she was walking and Chee-Lan opened her door in a pant. Once inside she threw off her jacket and ran to the monitor. After a few tries, Aaron's face came into view. He looked absolutely haggard and when she saw this her heart sank into her stomach.

"It's true, Chee-Lan." Aaron said.

* * * *

Micah reached the *Lincoln* just as the second moon was rising. Charlie would be thrilled. He had actually found one of those damn things and he was bringing it home. Pleasing Charlie wasn't his only accomplishment for the day. The old man Charlie had seen him with earlier had some coffee smuggled in at a second warehouse and he had been able to procure 20 pounds of coffee for a good price. Maybe that psycho would get off his back, now.

"Speak of the devil." Micah said as he spotted Lotty, when he entered the Lincoln through the open cargo hold "Look at what I was able to get today. That's right, coffee." And Micah threw the coffee over to her.

"What about my vegetables, Micah?" Lottery asked as she caught the bag of coffee and without waiting for an answer, said "And how much did the coffee cost us?"

"You know you can't get fresh vegetables this far out, and we" he said, pointing a finger back and forth between himself and Lotty, "don't discuss how much I pay for anything? Okay?" He paused. "I found the thing that Charlie has been wanting." And he waited a moment for it to sink in, then turned and headed for the engine room.

"You're joking, right?" She called out after him as he walked away.

Micah found Charlie just cleaning up after finishing his work. "You busy?" Micah asked as he watched Charlie slide the last of the tools into the compartment under the floor.

"Not at the moment." Charlie replied as he turned to face Micah.

"Good. Come with me." Micah said as he moved, toward the hatch, leading to the cargo bay.

"You got it, didn't you?" Charlie guessed and laughed. "Wait, you got it here? What would one be doing here? How did you find one here?" Charlie asked in bewilderment.

"I'm a professional, kid." he said "Did you find us any work?" Micah asked as they entered the cargo bay.

"No."

"You're an amateur." And he walked to the bay door in time to see the men hauling Charlie's crate up the loading ramp.

* * * *

Chee-Lan was all but running towards the space port. She looked up at the sky and tried to remember how long the strange boy had said that he would be docked. The second moon had risen and the first moon was soon to set. *Please still be there*, she thought as she rounded the corner and the lights of the space docks came into view. She located the correct aisle and started moving down, checking dock numbers along the way. G96 was only a little further and she could see the bay doors closing from where she was. Chee-Lan broke into a run, gaining the attention

of the port authority, which was already under an alert because of a stolen wave generator from one of their patrol units.

* * * *

Charlie slid the crate into the corner and turned back towards the bay door in time to see someone running down the hanger corridor, shouting and waving, passing by the men who had brought the crate on board. A second later, he could tell that it was a female. He could almost make out what she was yelling. Charlie hit the Cargo door control to let the door back down.

“Charlie, why did you open the door? I thought you said the engine tests were positive and we were clear to depart?” Kate asked over the monitor and he could see that she was annoyed.

“There's a girl headed this way, screaming at us to wait, Kate.” Charlie said and as the girl came closer he recognized her from the pouring establishment he had visited earlier that day looking for work. Her platinum streaks had become a ghostly white under the harsh lighting of the space docks.

Charlie stepped out onto the docks as the girl was about to reach the loading plate.

“I'm so glad I caught you” the girl said, breathing hard. “I have a job for you, but first we need to reach DG562. Can we do that?” she pleaded and followed Charlie's gaze where it terminated at a tiny flashing light that seemed to be getting closer.

“That looks like the Port Authority, doesn't it?” Charlie asked her a moment later.

“Probably looking for that stolen wave generator I heard them talking about at the market on my way here.” The pretty girl said, as she tugged absently on her black and platinum bob.

“Talk to me, Charlie, can we leave?” Charlie heard Kate echo through the cargo bay behind him.

He looked down at the girl and asked “You said work?” and she nodded.

Charlie grabbed her by the hand and dragged her up the loading plate and into the cargo hold of the *Lincoln*.

“Let's go, Kate. The port authority is after my wave generator.” he yelled over his shoulder as he hit the close button on the cargo door.

This is the end of the excerpt.

We hope that you enjoyed it and wish to read the rest of the story.