



©1986 Omlahl

**T**

ravis loped into the bar, his shoulders slumped dejectedly. He stumbled over to the bar railing, dropped his prosthetic arm onto the counter, and pounded on the surface with his right fist.

"Give me a vitazaide, Chenie," he growled unconvincingly.

Chenie came over to him, glared at the ... thing on her counter, and wrinkling her nose, demanded, "What is that?"

"It's my arm," he snarled half-heartedly. "Haven't you ever seen an arm before?"

"Yeeech!" she commented, pushing it away from her. "Usually connected to something, not just lying around like an old pump or something."

Travis grabbed his arm and hugged it protectively (not an easy feat with only one arm, but he managed bravely). "Just get me the vitazaide, will you?"

"Alright, alright, keep your ... well, just a minute, anyway," she answered, and disappeared under the counter.

"There," she snapped, sloshing the drink onto the counter in front of Travis.

"Hey, you got my arm wet!" he complained, shaking off the liquid from the false arm. "You could short-circuit it or something!"

"I don't think that's the only thing that's short-circuited around here, Travis," she said sweetly.

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"Drink your vitazaide like a good boy, Travis."

He lifted the glass, and poured the fluid right onto his eyepatch. With a dejected sigh, he sank down onto the bar. "Of all the indignities," he muttered.

Chenie moved to touch his shoulder sympathetically, but couldn't figure out which one was real, so she just stood there staring at the slovenly ex-Space Commander. "What's wrong, Travis?"

He lifted his head, but he couldn't see her. Then he realized he'd looked up with the wrong eye, and he turned his head to look at her. "All the fun's gone out of life, Chenie."

"Oh, is that all. That's alright, then. A man with your prospects," she looked at the arm again and shook her head. "I see what you mean. Not much of a market for a one-armed sadist, is there?"

He shook his head morosely. "That's not it. I could always get a job as a nutcracker," she nodded at that, thinking someone ought to crack this nut, "but that's not fun at all."

"So what is wrong, Travis?"

He smiled sadly. Chenie felt a thrill of nausea at the sight. "I'm bored, Chenie. Bored silly."

Oh, that's a good one, she thought. You're bored silly -- got the last word right, anyhow. Aloud, she answered, "You don't mean to say you're bored --"

"That's right, Chenie. I'm bored without Blake, and his miserable ... what is it now, six?"

Chenie clucked appropriately, and turned away shaking her head as Travis tried to drink his vitazaide again. I'll have to get him a rubber suit to go with his rubber room, she thought, turning her attention back to her other customers. Bored without Blake, indeed!

**end**