STARSHIP DOMINATRIX

SOLACE

By Dustin J. Craig

Copyright

The story, all names, characters, and incidents portrayed in this novel are fictitious. No identification with actual persons (living or deceased), places, buildings, and products are intended or should be inferred. Although, if you live forty-two floors up in the Apex Tower in West Valley City, Utah, I'd like your number.

Copyright © 2026 by Dustin J. Craig
All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law.

Published by BOFF! Comics
Taylorsville, Utah

The Boff! Comics logo is a trademark of Boff! Comics. All rights reserved.

Trigger Warning

For Those Who Live in La-La-Land

This story dives into some heavy shit.

Expect suicidal ideation, a loaded weapon, alcohol, and a Christmas Eve that doesn't come with decorations, presents, or joy.

This is a prequel to Starship Dominatrix, an unapologetically queer space opera series by Dustin J. Craig. If a minotaur-like alien talking his human boyfriend out of pulling the trigger on Christmas Eve sounds like your kind of story, then welcome aboard. Buckle up, cupcake. You're in for a badass, no-holds-barred, muthafuckin' ride!

Acknowledgments

Jacky (Erzengel Setsuko) absolutely crushed the German translation work. She understood not just the words, but the tone, subtext, emotional rhythm, and weird little nuances buried between the lines. Half the time it felt like she was reading my brain directly. Fast, sharp, reliable, and terrifyingly on point. Honestly, she carried this thing like a machine.

Elyx1 spent an admirable amount of energy trying to discover ways to avoid the suffering traditionally associated with translation work. But despite the occasional tactical dodging, he pulled through and delivered a genuinely solid Brazilian Portuguese translation that helped bring the project to an entirely new audience beautifully.

Gabrielv787 deserves major credit for painstakingly reviewing and validating the Spanish translation work. Gaby stepped in to carefully double-check accuracy, consistency, and flow across the project. Translation review is thankless work, but he helped make sure the final Spanish version actually worked properly.

To those who carry burdens
nobody else can see
behind an ordinary smile.

Thank you for staying.

The Utah snow drifting through the nighttime air outside the windows of Apex Tower in West Valley gave the world a stillness that dampened the noise of hovercars flying along Redwood Road. Forty-two floors above the street, the warmth of housing unit slot B wrapped the room in a quiet, sheltered comfort against the middle of the cold winter.

Talonor slept in the queen-sized bed—too small for his size but the only one that barely fit in the room—and his snoring rang like a brass bell.

A drawer squeaking open in another room made the massively muscular minotaur-like alien stir. He rolled over, bleary-eyed, and found an empty space beside him in the bed. His breath caught and a chill ran down his spine.

"Ah fuck, it's that time of year," Talonor growled. He threw the covers off and sat up, alone, trying to get his heartbeat pumping to match his body. "I hope he's alright," he said quietly to himself as he rubbed his right broken horn.

He stood up and his hoofsteps trudged toward the

door. The warm light above the kitchen table softly lit the living room outside the bedroom. Talonor poked his head out and saw Jack's head over the kitchen counter.

Jack's left eye implant glinted in the light above him. His human face was solemn, staring down at something as he sat at the kitchen table. Talonor didn't have to see it to know what Jack was looking at.

Talonor walked through the living room area, devoid of Christmas decorations, a tree, or presents. He stopped near the kitchen counter. On the table sat a half-drunk bottle of Vulfgarr whiskey, and beside it sat Jack staring silently at the plasma bolt pistol in his hand.

Talonor stood motionless, seeing Jack with his shirt off, knowing the weight of Jack's human pain. "Jack…"

"Go back to bed, Cowboy," Jack replied.

"You first."

Jack rubbed his fingers along the barrel of the weapon as he inspected it. "I couldn't sleep."

"Jack, you gotta quit doing this. Every year—"

"I know, it's just…I hate it. I hate this time of year…the memories. Every night I close my eye, I see him. Laying there."

"But this night is always different," Talonor said.

Jack bowed his head. "It *hits* different."

"Jack, that was twenty-seven years ago."

Jack sighed as he leaned back. "It doesn't make it any easier."

"Trauma doesn't get to decide who you are, Jack. It hurts, yeah, but what you do after the pain…that's the part that defines you."

Jack tightened his hand around the grip of the gun, staring at it blankly. "It would be so easy."

"Jack, don't think like that—"

"No, it would. Just one second and I can escape the pain…the memories."

Talonor stepped forward and rested a gentle hand on Jack's shoulder. "Jack, please don't go. I'd miss you. You'd be leaving me forever. You might have lost him, but I'd be losing you too."

A tear escaped Jack's eye. He slowly placed the gun on the table. "I'm sorry. I just…I just wanted it to end."

Talonor studied Jack. "Come to bed, Jack. I can't lose you. Not tonight. Not ever."

Jack sniffed and nodded. "Yeah. Yeah, you're right."

Talonor reached out his hand. Jack looked at it like an enigma. Slowly, he lifted his own hand and took Talonor's. Talonor helped Jack up, and the moment Jack stood, Talonor wrapped his huge arms around Jack's frame and hugged him tightly. "I love you, Jack. You're my everything."

Jack gently wrapped his arms around Talonor. "I know, Cowboy."

Author's Note

This story is set on December 24th, 2593 CE, a few days before the events of *Starship Dominatrix,* Book One of the *Starship Dominatrix* series. It's an unapologetically queer space opera series by Dustin J. Craig. Jack and Talonor's full story—with all its heartbreak, laughter, spacetime fractures, and fierce love—is waiting for you.

About the Author

Dustin J. Craig is a writer and illustrator from Utah whose stories explore identity, loss, love, and what it means to remain human in difficult circumstances. Through science fiction, comics, and worldbuilding, he creates characters who face impossible choices and reminds readers that no one has to face darkness alone.

Thank You!

Thank you for diving into this novel. Your time and imagination brought the story to life. If you enjoyed this novel, please consider leaving a review. Your feedback helps others discover and enjoy the story, too.

Continue the journey at BoffComics.com

Meanwhile...

The laboratory was dark. Every screen, every console, every humming piece of equipment that had filled that room with light and purpose for the better part of four decades—all of it powered down, one switch at a time, like putting children to bed.

Tomas Tristar stood alone in the silence he'd made. A coin purse sat on the workbench in front of him, open, and inside it a small spherical object caught the last light from the hallway. He picked it up and held it between his fingers, turning it slowly.

It was beautiful. It was complete. It was…perfection.

He placed it back in the purse, closed it, and tucked it into his pocket.

He looked around the room one final time—at the empty chairs, the blank monitors, the years—and felt nothing he hadn't already grieved.

He knew where he was going. He knew what would happen when he got there.

Tomas turned off the hallway light and walked out the door into the wet Martian downpour.