



HUJACKED

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# HIJACKED

SCION: BOOK TWO+

Michael J. Allen



Delirious  
Scribbles Ink

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For Dylan, my very first cosplayer. Thank you and everyone else who  
loves Alaric as much as I do.

For B, B & J.





# Manc in a Bottle

A telltale taste of mint and curdled milk hit Manc. His eyes pried themselves open to all-encompassing black. A piercing throb behind his temples thundered within his enclosed prison of slime.

*Hedrin, not again. I hate elcreites.*

Manc closed his eyes once more. Elcreites filled his lungs, weighing down his chest. It coated his throat, enzymes numbing any gag reflex. He concentrated on his body, trying to ignore his headache while searching for pain. Alaric had fought better than he expected. The kid had gotten in several good shots.

*Of course, no matter how hard he tries to be, he's soft where it counts. He couldn't finish me. He's going to pay for that, assuming they captured him alive.*

The skin on his hand felt tight where the kid had shot a blaster from his grip. Both hands itched despite only one being shot. He found no taste of blood in his mouth, at least not over the elcreites filling it. He'd taken several of the kid's rocket batons to the face. Manc's gut tightened. His tongue sought sideways, finding whole teeth tight in his mouth.

*Could've sworn he at least cracked that tooth.*

He focused again. Not surprisingly, the bruises and scrapes he'd taken fighting the inconsiderate pup were long gone. Nothing burned hot along his skin to indicate a mortal wound. He slid hands over himself unable to find one solid reason someone paid enough for the jar full of amorphs feeding on his damaged cells in exchanged for enhanced regeneration.

He didn't bother speculating. Instead, he swam carefully upward with practiced motions and found the otherwise out of reach nub. He pressed it.

*"Just a minute, Mister Shepherd. I'll get the doctor."*

It took his brain a moment to connect the voice to Captain Shaehri Wekmin. *Good, if she's here, the kid's mine.*

Manc sank to the bottom and knelt in preparation. Gravity asserted itself as the containment jar lifted, spilling dark mucously amorphs into a moat around him and the unit's base. He leaned onto his arms and thought about revolting things. He vomited the brainless little doctors onto the floor. When he'd choked or snorted out all he could, he wiped the slime from his eyes and looked for Wekmin.

The spit and polish mercenary looked haggard. Fatigue ringed her eyes. Her blond hair hung around her chin in limp clumps. She stood at parade rest, but the movement of her arms suggested wringing hands behind her back.

Manc rose, unconcerned only slime coated his nakedness. "Where's Alaric?"

She hurried forward, offering a towel. She glanced at the door.

Manc furrowed his brow, wiping his body clean. "What's going on?"

Wekmin leaned closer, offering him a whiff of unwashed body that twisted his gut more than any remaining elcreite. "Ignaree escaped, but that isn't our biggest problem."

Temper overrode concern. "What do you mean he escaped? I hired a dozen mercs to detain or kill him if he got the better of me."

"Tsin, the Ubori biosavant, killed them—all except me."

"Botracl. I know the kid's charming—"

Wekmin snorted.

"I know he engenders loyalty, but why would a biosavant kill?" Manc said.

Wekmin glanced at the door. "He asked us to stand aside, but that's not what you paid us to do. When we refused, he ordered us. He didn't even have a weapon drawn."

Manc groaned. "Let me guess, someone pulled one on him."

She nodded. "And in a flash, every single one of us was on the ground unable to act, unable to breathe. He let us up, but the moment he did, Aubrey drew. Tsin killed all of them."

"Why not you?"

Her eyes flicked to the door once more.

"What the hedrin are you looking for?" Manc asked.

"Roan-Elbui."

Manc sucked in breath. The Bishop only sent Roan-Elbui out to kill. She didn't negotiate, extort, or otherwise coerce like the late Birak and Strepe. *But how did she get out here so fast?*

"Quick, Shaehri, how long have I been out? What does she know?"

"I couldn't wake you, no matter what. I thought the elcreites might fix you."

"How long?" Manc asked.

"Weeks—some kind of coma."

*Weeks? How am I going to catch the kid now?*

The door opened. A Cybriean woman-woman strolled in. A garishly patterned pastel dress swished around her four legs sedately. Her rightmost oval face smiled



at him, Roaen's blue eyes lit. Her leftmost, Elbui, narrowed brown eyes and glowered.

Wekmin stepped away.

"Well, well, Manc Shepherd in *all* his glory." The four tips of Roaen's V-shaped ears twitched. "If I deigned to breed cross species I'd have to look you up."

Elbui scowled.

Wekmin forced a credit stick into Manc's hand. Manc's brows rose. She mouthed, "Ignaree."

Manc frowned down at the stick. *The kid said he had my credits, but why would he pay me after thinking he killed me?*

"I'm sorry to interrupt your intimate moment, Captain Wekmin, but I *warned* you that I get Mister Shepherd first," Roaen said.

"I've got the Bishop's credits," Manc said.

"Interesting," Roaen said.

"But unimportant," Elbui said. "Someone killed Birak and Strepe here."

*Fabtsys.* Manc wrapped the towel around one hand. "Talk to the kid."

"We're talking to you," Elbui growled.

Manc's eyes flit around the room, searching for a distraction sufficient against both Cybriean heads. "I can only tell you what I know. The kid landed here. Birak and Strepe tracked him down. They're dead, and he infiltrated Rukerd's estate with their ship."

"We got word Rukerd captured you." Roaen's head tilted slowly one side then the other, never settling. "How did you escape when Ignaree wiped it from the face of Ostos?"

"He let me go," Manc said.

Hotter, darker fury rose up inside him. Roaen's expression remained passive, but Elbui's expression broadcast her feelings almost as clearly as the projected emotions roiling off of her into him. Manc ran roughshod over the words perched on Elbui's lips, venting his own fury with hers. "He *tortured* me, nearly killed me. I'm not allied with him. Hedrin, ask Wekmin. I met him here to kill him."

Wekmin swallowed. "I can show you my contract. The terms require us to capture or kill him if Mister Shepherd somehow lost the upper hand."

"Where is Ignaree then?" Elbui demanded.

"L-like I was telling Mister Shepherd when you came in, the Ubori attacked us. We didn't have a chance," Wekmin said.

"You look alive," Roaen smiled, "right now."

Wekmin threw up her hands. "The Ubori let me live because we served together until they started talking about attacking the Corollas. I refused any part of it. I swear."

"The kid's your culprit. Give me the contract," Manc said. "I want him worse than you do."

Roaen's smile widened. "Perhaps, but we don't want either of you dead."

"Then why are you here?" Manc asked.

“Birak and Strepe were beloved. Their passing must be addressed. The Regis demanded our involvement. The Bishop will have both of you.” Roaen’s head swayed back and forth, eyes shifting to Wekmin. “And the killer responsible.”

“Fine,” Manc snapped louder than necessary. Roaen-Elbui shifted their attention to him. His stomach knotted tighter as his gambit rolled from his lips. “I’ll come peaceably. I’ve paid my bounty. I serve the Bishop. I’ll prove my word in the thorns, but if I do, I want in on punishing the kid. What do you say? Will you support that?”

Roaen curled a corner of her mouth, her head stopping its hypnotic tilting.

“What do you think, Elbui?” Manc asked. “Back me in hunting the kid? I owe him serious pain.”

“I’m just waiting for her to let me kill you,” Elbui said.

Their faces turned toward one another. Neither spoke, but their facial expressions changed. Roaen’s smile grew wide and cold. She tilted her face back to him. Menace darkened Elbui’s expression, and anticipation brightened it.

*What’ve they decided? What do I do if they say—*

“No,” Roaen whispered. “Oh, no, Shepherd. You and Captain Wekmin will be coming with—”

Manc snapped the towel into Wekmin’s face. She started, squeaking in shock. In her momentary distraction, he seized her, pulled her blaster and wrapped an arm around her chest. “Step out of the way. I’m not letting even the Regis get between me and hurting that kid. I gave my word.”

Elbui’s high pitched laughter sent pins and needles up and down his skin. “Oh, no, he’s captured his woman! He’ll shoot her if we disobey!” Elbui’s eyes narrowed as her opposite hand drew a knife from a slit in their skirts. The blade telescoped outward, each section a languid, jagged sawtooth. “Go ahead, kill her. Let’s dance your dance.”

Manc snapped a shot at the blade. At the same moment, he hurled Wekmin forward, twisting her fall to send her careening into their four legs. The sword drank the blaster bolt as it swept forward to bisect Wekmin. Manc didn’t wait to see the resultant tangle. He leapt around them toward the door. Roaen flicked hooked triangles at him. One snagged his torso, beeping sedately. He stifled a cry, ripping it out as he bolted through the door.

A half dozen guards flanked an uncomfortable looking Xidian doctor. Manc stopped for only a moment, spreading arms and thrusting his pelvis forward. “Look, penis!”

He headshot half the distracted Corollas before they recovered, tossing the blade into another. Its micro-explosion amplified the chaos. He knocked through the others and out another door. Manc’s chest heaved. His heart thundered. He snatched a doctor’s coat from behind one door. He kept moving, evaluating pathways and choosing doors in milli. He emerged into a station corridor, whipping the coat around him. Red stained its white fabric almost immediately, pumping from his side in time to the drummer in his ears.

Witnesses yelled. Passersby gawked. Security vids tracked him. All would point Roaen-Elbui his direction in a frightened heartbeat. *They'll be on my birds, but I'm not leaving them behind.*

He turned toward the fighter docks. An extended search would turn him up one way or another. The Regis had gotten involved. His only chance to keep his promise would be to escape.

Manc's breath labored harder as adrenaline and lost blood sapped his energies. His only salvation lay in his father's old fighters which—due to flagging strength and leaking side—might as well have been halfway across the solar system. He shifted half his thoughts to Alaric, focusing on the kid standing over him in golden armor. Alaric's cruel, arrogant tone ordered him tortured.

Fury fueled Manc forward.

Manc smashed a fire suppressor cabinet, leaving acrylic shards in the fist still gripping his blaster. He yanked the suppressor free and kept sprinting down the fighter slips a level above his own. He reached the end of the correct spoke, shoved the blaster into a coat pocket and fingered a preprogrammed override on a slip access panel. It let him through the first lock. He took several deep breaths, exhaled all his air and keyed the next panel.

The dock jettisoned someone's fighter. Vacuum sucked him out of the Holite station. His hand, side, and thigh fizzed as blood boiled off from the wounds he knew and the one he hadn't noticed. Capillaries burst beneath every inch of his skin. He blinked through boiling tears, targeted in on his fighters one slip below and shot suppressant.

Manc caught the wing, his lungs straining to force a breath. He walked himself hand over blood-smearing hand to the fighter cockpit opposite its docked mate as the fire suppressor floated away. He keyed the security panel.

It blinked a silent, angry red.

He keyed it again with a shaking hand.

Its buzz glared unheard once more.

His lungs ached to inhale cold vacuum. He stabbed the code a third time. The canopy slid open. He jerked himself forward, stretching for an edge to tow himself inside. His grip landed wrong. His fingers slipped from sanctuary one at a time.

He floated away from safety, air, life.

A flailing sleeve caught on the weapon extension of an upper tailfin. He twisted, righted, and launched himself into the open cockpit once more. He hit too hard, almost gasping vacuum. He fumbled and twisted inside the spacious cockpit, finally slamming a shard-pierced hand into the right control.

Even as the canopy closed, he forced the docking slip to release its hold. Air and gravity, warmth and pressure reasserted themselves. His father's Mark II flamerge star launched him into space, once more saving the boy that'd played fighter pilot at its controls so long ago.

## GET INVOLVED:

While you're waiting for my next novel, get involved with helping your other favorite authors by being part of the little rectangular miracles called books. Here's how you help ANY author:

1. Read our books and enjoy them. That's why we wrote them.
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4. Share links to reviews, posts, etc. on social media. The more the merrier!
5. Post a review on Amazon.com or Goodreads. This REALLY helps.
6. Click "Like" on their Book and Author pages on Amazon
7. "Share" links to their Book and Author Pages on social media.
8. Read some more!

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Wow, everyone survived—though they might have interesting futures left ahead. Thank you for reading Hijacked. I hope you enjoyed journeying this leg of the SCION story with Manc, Tyne and the rest. Alaric—at least—will return in the next adventure: Unchained.

I cannot emphasize enough how grateful I am to all my readers, fellow writers and everyone else involved in making each book one worthy of you the reader.

First revision thanks go out to Johanna, Virginia, Jennifer, Parker, Karen, Shannon and Mike—my original core support. From there the cast of characters includes Bryan, Trint, B, B & J, Scott R, a new addition Sarah, and my newest launch team members Sunny and Caleasha.

Manc, you're a piece of work. I can't say what the Dominari might have in store for you or what Tyne meant with those last cryptic words, but we'll all find out later this year in SCION 3. See you soon.

## ABOUT THE SCRIBBLER



(Photo credit: Jim Cawthorne)

Originally from Oregon, Michael J. Allen is a pluviophile masquerading as a vampire IT professional in rural Georgia. Warped from youth by the likes of Jerry Lewis, Robin Williams, Gene Wilder and Danny Kay, his sense of humor leads to occasional surrender, communicable insanity, a sweet tooth and periodic launch into nonsensical song. He loves books, movies, the occasional video game, playing with his Labradors – Myth and Majesty. He knows almost nothing about music.

A recovering Game Master, he gave up running RPG's for writing because the players didn't play out the story in his head like book characters would – we know how that worked out.

Suddenly fresh out of teenagers, his days are spent writing in restaurants, people watching and warring over keyboard control with the voices in his head.

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