



CLAIMED BY THE  
DIAMOND  
KING

MY ALIEN CAVEMAN

VIOLET RAE

# **Claimed by the Diamond King**

**My Alien Caveman**

## **Violet Rae**

# Contents

[Foreword](#)

[Bibliography](#)

1. [Mara](#)

2. [Mara](#)

3. [Drakk](#)

4. [Mara](#)

5. [Mara](#)

6. [Drakk](#)

7. [Mara](#)

8. [Drakk](#)

9. [Drakk](#)

10. [Mara](#)

11. [Drakk](#)

12. [Mara](#)

13. [Drakk](#)

14. [Mara](#)

15. [Drakk](#)

16. [Mara](#)

17. [Drakk](#)

[Epilogue](#)

[Epilogue](#)

[Protected by the Alien Warrior](#)

# Foreword

*CLAIMED by the Diamond King* by Violet Rae and *Protected by the Alien Warrior* by Fern Fraser occur in the same time frame and universe and contain crossover scenes. Think of them as a kind of duet—although each story can be read alone, they are better enjoyed together, a bit like warm milk and chocolate.

Enjoy!

# Bibliography

## T'Hal Glossary

*Man seni soy'arrin – I love you*

*Hawa - yes*

*Nin - no*

*Baldric - leather belt worn over the shoulder for carrying a sword*

*Gyz - virgin, untouched*

*Que'lorá - mate (f)*

*Que'loro - mate (m)*

*Fokk - fuck*

*Fokking - fucking*

*Fokker - fucker*

*Oldi - dead*

*Horaz - cock*

*Vasook - pussy*

*Patysam - my king*

*Dessun - ritual burial*

*Vog'li - small purple creature that looks like a cross between a bee and a duck.*

*Corek - bread*

*Melonia - melon-like fruit*

*Skrotim - balls*

*Pog - a dog-like creature native to Ne'Ander*

*Solar rotation - one Earth day*

*Moon cycle - one Earth month*

*Sekunt - second (time)*

# Chapter 1

## Mara

I LOOK AROUND, seeing so many cute couples as part of our tour. I've always wanted someone to love me like these adorable kissing couples. I want the kids and the house and the husband to come home to. I didn't find any of that back in Michigan, so I doubt I'll find it here in Geneva.

Being six feet tall doesn't make it any easier. Men seem to like dainty women they can tuck under their chins. No one will be tucking me under their chin anytime soon. Add my broad shoulders and wide hips to the equation, and there aren't many men up to the task, at least, not in my experience. They don't see me as someone to take home at the end of a night out, let alone after a date.

But Nessa, my ride-or-die bestie, has convinced me to go out tonight. I think she wants me to meet someone more than I do.

My girl is a bit of a science nerd and is fascinated with the research center here in Geneva with its particle accelerator that does all kinds of weird and wonderful space-bending shit—according to Nessa.

Me? I'd rather read a good romance and dream about a man big enough to sweep me off my feet without giving himself a hernia or popping a disc.

But although we're different in many ways, my friend and I are aligned in our desire to find a soul mate who loves us, flaws and all.

Nessa and I came on vacation to Switzerland a few years ago... and never left. Known for its mountains, clocks,

yodeling, and chocolate, we loved it here so much that we decided to stay and set up a tour company in Geneva.

Happy Trail Tours has taken off in the past few years, offering trips to museums, glaciers, and Lake Geneva, along with chocolate and cheese-tasting experiences, to name a few.

We're finishing a Museum of Natural History tour when I feel a tug on my sleeve. Looking down, I see a girl of about six looking up at me with wide eyes. I crouch to her level, and the little cutie smiles a toothy grin.

She motions for me to move closer and cups her little hand around my ear to whisper, "Are you a giant?"

Huh. Did I think she was cute?

A familiar pang of embarrassment hits my chest. It's not an unusual question. I've often been told that I'm a "big" girl. I've also been misgendered a few times, despite my hourglass figure and big boobs. One guy I dated called me a "freak of nature." Yeah, men are assholes when it comes to their fragile egos, which is why I prefer the big, burly heroes in my romances who toss their women around like they weigh nothing.

So I remind myself that this girl isn't being deliberately cruel; she's simply asking a question in the brutally honest way that only children can.

"I might be from another planet, but you have to keep that secret between us," I reply, giving her a wink.

The little girl's eyes widen further. She picks up her feet and runs back to her mom.

Nessa walks up behind me, laughing loudly. "What'd you say to that poor girl? She looked terrified!"

I sigh heavily and shrug. "She wasn't ready to meet a real-life six-foot alien."

Nessa snorts a laugh. "You told her you're an alien?" She chokes on her own spit and goes into a full-blown coughing fit.

The girl looks back as I smack Nessa several times on the back while she coughs and splutters. She clings to her mother's jacket and starts crying loudly, obviously thinking I'm using my super alien powers to kill my friend.

Once recovered, Nessa blows out a breath and shakes her head. "Are you ready to go and meet a few good-looking guys and show off our dance moves?"

I wave her off. "I don't know about my dance moves, but I've been waiting to meet a guy my entire life. I doubt one night out on the town will do it."

She groans at my pessimistic outlook. "Can we just go out and have fun tonight? No longing looks, no staring down couples, and no daydreaming in the corner of the club. It's a little creepy to some people."

I wave her off. "I do not stare down couples."

She narrows her eyes at me. "We'll head out at nine. No messing around."

"Okay, okay. I got it the first time," I huff.

I'm exhausted from working and giving tours all day, but breaking promises to Nessa is something I'll never do.

---

I'm fresh out of the shower, and my loose chestnut curls are starting to form. I debate straightening them, but I decide I can't be bothered. The world will have to take me as I am: broad shoulders, curly locks, and all.

I sigh at my reflection before applying my makeup, re-doing my eyes twice when I mess up the liner and look like Alice Cooper.

My closet seems to mock me before I even step into it. It contains nothing exciting or new that will make anyone look at me for anything other than my height.

I stream music through my phone to get myself excited for the night ahead. I land on my tight black pants that barely reach my ankles. No heels for me. Flats are my staple footwear.



I pick out a low-cut sheer lace black top over a nude body suit to tuck in all the extra bits that need hiding. Running my fingers through my hair, I give myself a final once-over before conceding that this will do for the night.

Right on cue, Nessa knocks once before entering my room. We share the apartment above the Happy Trail Tours office. Living together was a no-brainer. We've done it since we were five, first in the foster care home and then as roommates once we aged out of the system.

"Ready?" she asks with a big grin.

I nod. "As I'll ever be."

"You look great, Mara," she says, knowing how self-conscious I am about my size.

"Back atcha, bestie," I say, admiring the deep blue jumpsuit that complements her coloring and shows off her curves.

I grab my leather jacket and crossbody bag, and we lock the door on my way out. The air has a crisp, wintry bite to it. I enjoy it for the most part, but with the outfit I'm wearing, I wish it were a bit warmer. Still, we only live a short walk from the bar.

The bouncer winks at us and lets us slide in. Most people know us from our tours, which come with certain perks like jumping bar queues. A few protests from the line of guests follow us inside, but Nessa shrugs, ignoring them.

"They're just jealous of how hot you look," she yells over the music as we head inside. "Let's grab drinks first."

I nod and follow her through the crowd. A few people stare at me as we make our way to the high top. One guy eyes me up as we move past, but I hear his friend snigger, "Jesus, mate, you got a death wish or something?"

*Asshole.*

Devin is working the bar tonight. "Hello, beauties. What can I get for you?" he asks, smiling brightly.

Devin is a relentless flirt, so I'm careful not to read too much into it.

“Rum and coke, please.” Simple is how I like my drinks when I’m out. I’m not the outgoing one in this duo. That honor goes to Nessa.

“Sex on the Beach to warm me up, Dev.” Nessa winks at him.

Devin moves around behind the bar to make our drinks, and he and Nessa make small talk. I ignore them while looking over the throng of people to see if I can spot an eligible bachelor for tonight. Or, you know, for the rest of my life.

There are a few good-looking, tall men out on the dance floor. I blush when one of them looks our way and winks. Then it hits me; he’s staring at the girl on my right. A petite brunette with dainty hands and feet.

She giggles and leaves the bar to join him. Jealousy rises inside me at how easy she makes it look as they laugh and sway to the beat. I’m happy for this random girl, but still wish it were me.

“Don’t do that. We just got here.” Nessa hands me my rum and coke.

I look over my shoulder and blow Devin a quick kiss in thanks. He smirks and moves on down the bar.

Sipping my drink, I enjoy the warmth as it coats my throat and stomach. I imagine I’m the girl dancing with that man, his hands on *my* hips, his hot breath teasing *my* ear.

“Do what?” I ask Nessa. “I’m not doing anything.”

“You’re picturing him taking you home and doing very dirty things to you.” She lifts her brows and makes a suggestive gesture with her tongue in her cheek.

I elbow her. “Maybe. He’s delicious. I thought he winked at me for a second before the tiny pixie flew in and charmed him.”

We continue sipping our drinks, and a few guys approach us. I’m taller than all of them. They all talk to Nessa and make polite small talk with me. It’s all I ever get.

One guy keeps me company for a bit while Nessa dances with his friend. He reaches a hand out for me to shake. “Alex.”

“Mara. Nice to meet you.” Hopefully, he can’t see my cheeks flushing in the dim lighting.

He watches Nessa laugh over-enthusiastically with his friend and chuckles. “She’s trying pretty hard for a night with Sam.”

I shrug. “Sam looks like he’s taking the bait. I don’t think she’s trying hard at all. I’ve seen her try hard.” I point at our friends. “This is nothing.”

Alex holds up two fingers to Devin, but Dev walks right past him. I turn, stick my fingers in my mouth, and whistle.

Devin pops up immediately. “You rang, dear?”

I smother a laugh and point to Alex.

“I’ll have a Crown and water. She’ll have another...” Alex raises his eyebrows in question.

“Rum and coke,” I say with a small nod.

Alex smiles and waits for Dev to slide those across to us. “Here you go.” Alex hands me mine and tilts his to clink our glasses together.

“Thank you.” I take a sip, debating what to say next, when he waves at a group of women and heads toward their table. I sigh. “Right. Bye, then.”

Turning back to the bar, I find Dev looking at me with a sad face. “Honey, the perfect guy will find you when the time is right.”

I drain my glass before setting it down on the bar. “You’ve been saying that for the last two years.” I tap the bar and tilt my head toward the restroom so he can let Nessa know where I am when she returns.

I push my way through the crowd and into the bathroom. Sitting on the toilet in the stall, I’m pondering my lackluster love life when I hear a few women talking while washing their hands.

“Gone?” The water goes on. “*Gone, gone?*”

“Yeah! Sucked right off the face of the earth. I don’t think anyone knows what’s happening to them, but people are going

missing everywhere,” the woman says, letting out a loud hiccup.

I know precisely what they’re talking about. “It’s the particle accelerator at the science museum,” I call from the stall.

One of them snorts. “The what?”

“The particle accelerator. According to my friend, Nessa, it makes weird things happen.” I know neither one of them will understand what I’m trying to tell them because I don’t understand it myself, but at least I tried to do the bathroom friends thing Nessa is so good at.

The women mumble to each other, something about “fruit” and “loop” before the door closes, leaving me alone.

I finish my business and leave the stall to wash my hands. The reflection staring back at me is a sad version of myself. Will I ever find my place in this world? I’ve always felt like I’m on the outside looking in, watching others live their lives.

Nessa walks in with a big smile. “There you are! I wondered where you ran off to. Sam said Alex was talking to you, but you both disappeared.”

“Yeah, he found a table of hot young twenty-one-year-olds. I had to pee.” I place my hand on my hip and smirk. “How is Sam? Promising?”

Nessa hides her smile behind her hand. “He’s something. I felt him grind up against me, and I think he had a canoe in his pocket.”

We laugh as we leave the bathroom, and our mouths drop open as we see the guy Nessa was dancing with leave with another woman.

“Another one bites the dust,” Nessa says with good humor, although I see the hurt in her eyes.

Like me, she just wants to find her one true love. I link my arm through hers. “Fuck him. In fact, fuck the lot of ‘em. It’s you and me against the world, babe.”

Nessa smiles and hugs me. “Friends to the end, right?”

I nod, returning her hug. “In this world and the next, Nessie.”

---

The next morning, I get up and shower before dressing in the company uniform—black pants, a jacket with the Happy Trail Tours logo, and a white shirt beneath.

I knock on Nessa’s door, letting her know we have an hour before the tour starts, hearing her unintelligible mumble from within. We may or may not have opened a bottle of wine when we got back last night, although I limited myself to a small glass, knowing I was driving today. Pretty sure Nessa necked most of the bottle, though. No doubt she’s feeling it this morning.

I head to the kitchen to make her a mug of coffee—sounds like she needs the caffeine boost this morning—before heading downstairs to the office to prepare the tour bus, of which I am the designated driver. Nessa does the whole microphone thing, pointing out landmarks and areas of interest en route.

Today will be fun. We’re taking a bachelorette party on a wine and cheese tasting experience near Lake Geneva before dropping them at a spa for some pampering.

Fifty women are in the party, so it’s bound to be a scream. Becky, the bride-to-be, is wearing a tiara and sash across her dress that reads “Getting Hitched.” Her dress is also covered in condoms, and she’s waving a huge black dildo around, much to the amusement of her sister, Sarah, who keeps switching it on and off.

Yeah, it’s gonna be messy.

Once everyone is buckled in on the tour bus, I start the engine, and we set off. Nessa has arranged a “bridal” playlist for later but kicks off by greeting everyone and pointing out a few landmarks as we weave our way through the city to the outskirts.

“On your left is The Science Museum, where the particle accelerator is located underground,” Nessa says enthusiastically. “On your right...Uh, um, on your right...”

She trails off, sounding confused as I head toward the bridge that will take us out of the city. As I turn to glance at her to see what's wrong, nausea hits me out of nowhere, and I swallow the urge to vomit all over the steering wheel. A weird sensation pulls at my stomach and dizziness washes over me. Jesus, I feel like I'm about to disappear up my own asshole.

And it seems I'm not the only one feeling peculiar as our passengers start groaning and screaming. I hit the brakes, and my gaze flies to Nessa again, who also looks worse for wear. I swear she's surrounded by blinding colors as she stumbles, and the mic falls from her hand. What the hell is happening? Am I having some weird psychedelic experience?

Our eyes meet, and we reach for each other at the same moment, but before our hands meet, everything turns inside-out...

## Chapter 2

### Mara

NOTHING SOUNDS RIGHT.

Nothing *smells* right.

And what the hell is that pecking at my foot?

I peel my eyes open, waiting for everything to come into focus.

Blue sky.

White, fluffy clouds.

Huge dragon soaring through the air.

Wait, *what?*

I jackknife into a sitting position, squinting at the sky. No, not a dragon, but some kind of flying mammal with a huge wingspan.

The insistent tugging at my foot pulls my gaze down. *Aaaaand* there's an insanely large insect trying to eat my foot. It looks like a bee bumped uglies with a purple duck, and all four of its eyes are fixed on me.

I shriek and crabwalk backward. The creature follows, bunting its head against my foot like a cat.

*What the hell?*

I'm supposed to be driving a tour bus. I should be surrounded by traffic and people and the bustle of the city.

"Nessa?" My voice sounds distorted. I squint as the sun reflects off a body of water in front of me. "Where the hell am

I?"

A scream echoes through the trees around me. My spine stiffens, and my heart rate picks up. Was it human? One of the other bus passengers? Another fantastical creature?

I stand with difficulty. My muscles are sore, and don't want to work properly. I wipe my hands on my pants to remove the dust stuck to my palms. God, I feel like I've been through the spin cycle in a washing machine.

Where are the other women from the tour? Where are the busy streets, the cars, and the honking horns of early morning traffic? Everything here is so unfamiliar. Wrong.

I clear my throat, opening my mouth to yell before thinking twice. I don't want to attract attention from whatever was in the trees. As I move toward the lake, something buzzes past my head, and I flap my arms like a mad woman. My eyes widen when I see an industrial-sized mosquito.

How hard did I fall and hit my head?

Was I drugged last night?

Am I dreaming?

The image of Alex ordering me a drink pops into my head, but Devin was standing there the entire time, watching him hand it to me.

I shake my head and keep moving toward the water, followed by my new bee/duck friend.

When I reach the lake, I debate if the water is safe to drink. I crouch and tentatively dip my finger in it. When my skin doesn't boil from my bones, I cup some in my hands and take a small sip.

It tastes sweet. I take another sip, not wanting to risk drinking too much.

I look around for anyone else, searching for signs of life. Preferably of the human variety. That eerie screech is still replaying in my mind. I hope it wasn't Nessa or one of the other women on the tour yelling for help.



I walk along the edge of the lake, feeling exposed and vulnerable. I pinch myself a few times, attempting to wake myself up, but nothing changes. I'm still here.

Memories replay in my mind. Nessa was standing right next to me, talking to the passengers, when she... disappeared. Like she was sucked into some weird vortex bursting with colors.

Is that what happened to me?

I've never believed in that Sci-Fi shit, but unless I accidentally ingested magic mushrooms last night, there seems little other explanation. God, I wish Nessa were here. Not only to know that my friend is safe but also because she's a part-time science nerd and loves all things horticultural. She'd know if we ingested a rare, mind-altering plant.

Is she here somewhere? Hurt and alone? Did everyone on the bus wind up here? How do I get back? How do I contact anyone?

So many questions and no logical answers.

I suddenly realize my crossbody bag is still around my shoulder. Unzipping it with shaking hands, I pull out my phone and tap frantically on the screen. Shit. No signal. It was a long shot. There's no service here—wherever here is.

I'm in the middle of nowhere. The landscape is dominated by a vast expanse of untouched wilderness with mountains towering in the background. A dense forest stretches behind me, and unfamiliar flora and fauna are abundant. The large red flowers with glowing pink veins sway and dance at the water's edge despite the lack of breeze. I debate touching one, but I have no idea if they're poisonous. I remember Nessa saying something about the prettiest plants in nature being among the most harmful.

One thing is for sure: if this is Earth, it's not the Earth I've lived on for the last twenty-four years.

I shiver as a strange sensation washes over me, and the hairs on the back of my neck stand on end. Someone or *something* is here with me.

“Nessa?” I whisper, cringing at the desperation in my voice. Every sound I make is risky.

The water creeps onto the small pebbles on the shore of the lake.

“Where the hell am I?” I ask Bucky, having given my strange companion a name. I’ve decided he’s a male, though I have zero way of knowing.

Bucky makes a strange, trilling sound in response, all four eyes blinking up at me. Now that I know he won’t hurt me, he looks kind of cute.

Jeez, now I’m talking to an overgrown purple insect called Bucky. I need to wake up from this weird dream.

Unease washes over me again, and a sixth sense causes me to look over my shoulder just as a monster emerges from the tree line. I’ve never seen anything like it, but one thing is clear—it’s not friendly.

The thing must be seven feet tall and looks like a massive snake with arms, legs, and a long tail. Its hands and feet are tipped with clawed digits, and its skin is covered with small, interlocking scales in varying degrees of green, brown, and gray, making it appear almost chameleon-like.

The head is elongated, wedge-shaped, and slightly flattened on top, and its eyes are large and lidless. Snake-beast opens its prominent snout in a grotesque grin, revealing razor-sharp teeth.

Yeah, definitely not friendly.

With a hissing roar, it races toward me. Acting on impulse, I turn and run, hearing its feet thumping behind me as it gives chase.

My heart pounds in tandem with my feet, which tangle in my panic, sending me sprawling to the unrelenting ground.

*Fuck, fuck, fuck.*

I roll onto my back, only to find the snake beast looming over me. Shuffling backward, I try to get my feet underneath me, but the creature grabs my leg. I shriek in pain its claws bite

into my flesh, holding me prisoner. It leans in close, its fetid breath washing over me and making me gag. Oh, God. I'm gonna die here in this foreign hell hole, killed by a giant reptile.

It raises its arm to deliver what I know will be a deadly blow. I squeeze my eyes shut and throw my arms over my head in a futile attempt to protect myself.

But the blow never comes.

My hair stirs as something moves past me, something large that emits a ferocious growl, sending goosebumps shivering across my flesh.

Prying my eyes open, they widen at the sight before me.

An enormous man with long dark hair and glittering skin is fighting the snake beast, his muscles tensing and bulging as he moves with effortless grace.

He's... beautiful. And not human.

The sunlight catches his skin, making it sparkle like thousands of diamonds are woven into his very DNA.

As I watch, he throws out an arm, and a tremendous vortex of wind knocks the snake beast off its taloned feet. Wait... did *he* do that?

With an efficiency born of instinct and latent power, the newcomer wields his weapon—a large sword—to decapitate the snake beast as it lies on the ground with one deadly swipe. I hear the *thwump* as his sword cuts through flesh and bone, and the snake-beast's head rolls along the baked earth.

Without sparing his downed opponent so much as a glance, my rescuer turns and stalks toward me, his strides huge, his bright blue eyes capturing mine.

*Oh, shit.*

Is he going to kill me now?

Something tells me no. Why else would he have protected me from the snake beast?

He comes to a halt in front of me, his powerful thighs flexing in his fitted pants. I don't recognize the material they're made of, but they don't hide the gigantic bulge that would give human men a serious inferiority complex.

He is muscular everywhere. His bare chest is massive and swirls with strange colors. I suddenly realize I'm moving slowly toward him, but I don't know why. It's like something within him is pulling me, tugging at me. It's bizarre, yet oddly I'm unafraid.

Holding his huge hand out to me, he says something in a guttural language. His hand lands gently on the side of my face, and it's as if my heart truly beats for the first time.

His eyes widen with something close to shock as he leans in close. His breath lightly kisses my face, and he says something in a guttural language. I'm not even sure it *is* a language. It sounds like a rumble of strange vowels.

His hand grasps mine, and he pulls me to his feet. Oh, wow. He's at least a foot taller than me. I have to crane my head back to look at him, something I've never had to do before.

He continues to talk in his strange language, but I shake my head. I have no clue what he's saying.

This seems to frustrate him. Tugging on my hand, he pulls me toward the woods. I try to resist, but he's too strong.

I don't know who he is, where he's taking me, or what he'll do to me when we get there.

I do know that my skin tingles wherever he touches me. My feet keep moving even though my brain tells me to run. But... maybe he knows where Nessa is.

He doesn't seem shocked by me or by my appearance in this strange landscape. Has he seen others who look like me? And he *did* save me from the snake beast.

I dodge branches and vines as he pulls me further into the forest. I'm being dragged around by an alien. The pit in my stomach grows deeper, even as my heart has me keeping up with him, worried about leaving his side.

Finally, after endless minutes, I dig my heels in, causing him to stop and look back at me.

“What do you want from me?” I yell, my question echoing around us.

He whips me against his hard body and slaps his gigantic hand over my mouth, his eyes full of fury. He whispers harshly to me while gesturing around us with his free arm. He doesn't want to be caught by anything out here, either.

My heart thumps as I nod. If there are things here that scare him, this mighty warrior, I don't want to meet them.

He points to his chest. “Drakk.” Then he taps his finger on my chest and raises his brow.

“Mara,” I answer instinctively.

Drakk circles a finger over the glowing colors on his chest before doing the same to me. “Drakk. Ma'rah. *Que'lora.*”

I have no idea what *que'lora* means, but something tells me I'm not going to like it.

## Chapter 3

### Drakk

I AM HUNTING on the edge of the great lake when the female appears from nowhere. The air swirls and shimmers, and suddenly, she is there. At first, I think she is *oldi*. Lifeless. But then she stirs. Her eyes flutter open, and she sits up, shuffling backward when she sees the *vog'li*—the purple creature—tugging on her foot.

Then I feel it.

The *que'lora*. The mating bond.

I look down at my chest in surprise, seeing my mating colors swirling across my skin. How has this happened? I am millions of *clicks* from my home planet of Ne'Ander. My mating bond should activate for one of my kind, not a fragile-looking female.

My eyes snap back to her as she stands and walks to the edge of the lake, followed by the *vog'li*. She is dressed in blue leg coverings that look reasonably robust and a purple T-shirt with strange symbols on the front. Her hair is golden-brown, the messy curls spilling down her back.

Stooping, she scoops some water into her hands and brings it to her mouth. She does it again, sipping more of the water. She pinches herself a few times. It is... odd. I have never seen someone do that before. I want to ask her why, but I am not ready to reveal myself.

Something urges me to watch her and give her space. She does not seem to have her wits about her yet.

For a moment, she looks sad. She does not belong here. It reminds me of when we first arrived on this strange planet. We did not recognize any of the plant life—what could harm and what could heal. Finding our way in this foreign landscape has taken years and much trial and error.

But this female seems to have decent survival instincts. She straightens her shoulders and looks around, taking in her surroundings. She is as captivated with this world as I am with her.

I watch as the female tenses, looking around her cautiously. Her mouth opens and she says something I cannot hear from where I am concealed. Then she looks down and speaks to the *vog'li*. It trills a reply that our translators have been unable to decipher. Can she understand it?

She has a bag on her body. Curious, I watch her dig into it and pull out a device. It looks like a communicator. She taps on it and groans in frustration. I doubt it will work here without our tech.

I am so busy watching the female that I do not notice the danger until her head whips to the tree line.

*Fokk*

It is a *fokking* Manx. I recognize him from the ship that transported us here. Those Manx who did not perish in the crash scattered, knowing my fellow prisoners and I would kill them for taking us from our home worlds and holding us captive.

The Manx emits a hissing battle cry and sprints toward the female, who screams and takes off at a run. She doesn't get far before tripping and landing heavily on the ground.

*Protect your mate.*

My instincts kick in, and I race toward them, pulling my sword from my shoulder armor just as the Manx grabs the female's leg. She screams again, in pain this time, as the *fokker* sinks his claws into her leg.

The Manx is so focused on the female that he does not see me coming. I am on him in an instant. The element of surprise

gives me the advantage. The battle lasts mere *sekunts*, ending with his head sliced from his shoulders, courtesy of my sword.

With my enemy dispatched, I turn and head for the female. She is still lying on the ground, vulnerable to attack from other Manx scouts or predators.

She studies me intently as I stride closer. I have never seen anything like her. Her wide eyes tell me she has never seen anything like me, either.

The sunlight bounces off her features, revealing high cheekbones, pink lips, and strange brown spots across her small nose. Her eyes are a curious shade, like the emeralds mined on my home planet.

Those eyes move down my body, lingering on my *horaz*, which has swollen in response to the mating call. Succumbing to the urge to touch her, I move closer, placing my hand gently on her cheek. Her skin is smooth, much softer than mine, and energy thrums through my system at the contact.

She does not flinch from my touch, but uncertainty and hunger swirl in her eyes. Yes, she is feeling it too—the effects of the mating bond, but she does not understand it.

Is she built like our females? I yearn to find out, to slide my *horaz* into her *vasook* and plant my seed deep in her body.

She belongs to me now.

Leaning in closer, I inhale her fragrance, and she shivers. She is already emitting the mating hormones.

“You are my mate.” I tilt my head to the side and watch her expression morph into confusion. “Do you not know what mate means?”

Her brow lowers. She does not understand me. That will make things difficult.

Recalling the Manx grabbing her, I point to her leg. I need to check her injury.

She gives me a barely imperceptible nod, and I raise her leg covering. The wound is not as deep as I feared. I managed to



dislodge the Manx before he did too much damage to her delicate skin. Still, it will need cleaning and dressing.

“We need to get out of here. Darkness will fall soon, and it is unsafe beyond the encampment at night.” I say, grabbing her arm and helping her to her feet.

Female T’Hal are almost as tall, powerful, and muscular as the males. But my mate barely reaches my chin, and her body is thick with curves. She is delicate, and I must protect her.

I look her up and down again, groaning as my *horaz* throbs.

I am beyond frustrated. I have found my mate in the most unexpected circumstances, but she cannot understand me.

I tug on her arm, leading her into the cover of the forest. “We must get you to my encampment,” I tell her again. “We can treat your wound and get you a transmitter there. It will make this easier.”

Her eyebrows furrow together at my words, but she continues to follow my lead. We walk in silence for some time before my female suddenly digs her heels in, forcing me to stop.

She looks at me directly, shouting something I do not understand.

Whipping her toward me, I clamp a hand over her mouth. “You must be quiet. There are dangers everywhere, perhaps more Manx.”

Her eyes widen, and she nods.

I release her, stepping back slightly and pointing to my chest. “Drakk.” I press a finger to her chest, surprised as it sinks into a soft globe, and raise my brow in question.

“Ma’rah,” she replies, her husky voice like a caress to my *horaz*.

The female’s name is Ma’rah. It is a strange name, but I like it.

I circle my finger over the glowing colors on my chest before doing the same to her. “Drakk. Ma’rah. Mates.”

It is evident she understands my name, but I doubt she understands that she is my mate.

My body vibrates at her proximity. The longer I hold her, the closer she moves. The mating bond has her wanting to be near me without conscious thought.

We continue onward while Ma'rah talks in her native tongue. I do not know if she is asking me questions or commenting on our environment. If she keeps talking like this, she will get us caught, hurt, or worse before we reach the encampment.

I glance back at her. Her eyes are on the ground as we walk, her mouth downturned. I cannot wait to get that mouth on me. I cannot wait to claim those lips and her soft body.

I shake the thoughts from my head. I need to focus. My ears are tuned to every sound as I survey the forest, picking up the trail that will take us to safety.

It took us a while to set up the encampment when we crashed on this planet. Many of the survivors separated, eager to find their own way, but more than three hundred T'Hal put their faith in me and chose me as their leader. We also have a few Vhar'Khyng, Vengar, Thraxians, and Zephrions.

When we found a suitable location, we built shelters for safety and protection, using natural resources and materials from the Manx spaceship. The welfare of my clan is a huge responsibility, but one I was born for. I was a prince on my home planet, in line for the throne. My title means nothing here, but my natural leadership skills have earned me the loyalty and respect of the other species in the encampment.

The only thing missing? Females. Which means no way to reproduce. Although, that has changed today. Finding Ma'rah and discovering that she is my mate gives me new hope. My mating bond would not have activated if we were not compatible.

But now we have the threat of the Manx again. They are parasites who capture us and use us for their deranged purposes and have no regard for life forms other than their own.

I communicate with gestures as we continue, but she seems intent on tugging against my hold. Doesn't she realize I am

trying to keep her safe? She is not one to submit easily, and the thought fills me with anticipation.

The thought of her submitting to me beneath the furs sends a shiver up my spine. Despite her stubbornness, her survival instincts keep her close.

We finally reach the camp, which is bustling with activity. My clan is expecting me to return with food, not a female. I can see their curiosity and shock as I lead Ma'rah through the camp and feel the fear rolling off her. She doesn't understand where we are or what is happening. I pull her closer, letting everyone know she is mine. My message is clear. No one touches her but me.

Lattan, my second in command, spots me and strides toward us. I quickly apprise him of the situation and instruct him to increase the guards around the encampment. He throws Ma'rah a curious look before giving me a curt nod and following my order.

I guide her into the dwelling of our surviving elder.

Mattul's eyes widen as he sees the colors swirling on my chest before they land on Ma'rah. "Who do we have here?" he asks, recovering quickly. He clicks his tongue as he looks her up and down.

I refuse to release Ma'rah's arm as I lead her to sit on the examination table. "This is Ma'rah. She is my mate."

"Your mate? How...? When...?" His shock is evident.

"She appeared near the lake and was attacked by a Manx. Her leg is wounded, so I brought her here."

Mattul's eyes narrow. "A Manx?"

"A scout. I dealt with him."

"They have returned," Mattul says grimly.

"It would seem so. We must be vigilant. I believe there will be others."

Ma'rah looks between us. My mate is confused about her surroundings and does not know the danger the Manx

represents.

She says something and tries to get off of the examination table. I spin to face her and hold her there with a firm shake of my head. She moves to kick me, but I'm quick to stop her, placing my hands on her shoulders.

Mattul smothers a laugh at the scene unfolding in front of him. "She is a handful, Drakk. Are you sure you are prepared for a mate like her?"

"I am more than prepared, Mattul," I growl, glaring at him. "She is mine." My chest warms as the mating patterns dance across my chest.

Ma'rah's gaze drops to my chest and curiosity flares in her emerald eyes.

I have been familiar with the mating bond since I was a youngling. It was part of our lore on Ne'Ander, but when I was taken from my home world, I did not think it would happen. Until Ma'rah appeared. I do not know what force sent her here, but she is now mine to protect.

Mattul approaches her to clean her leg and other shallow cuts, and she backs up on the bed. I grab her by her deliciously thick thighs and tug her toward me so I am between her legs.

She says something and slaps me across the face.

I growl low in my throat, grabbing her chin and forcing her to look at me and willing her to understand my words. "No one is going to hurt you. We want to help."

Mattul's laughter quickly becomes a cough when I send him a death glare. He points at Ma'rah's leg wound and holds up the bandage.

Her eyes hold mine for several long seconds. Finally, she nods and lifts her hand to my cheek, rubbing the area she slapped in a wordless apology. I place my hand over hers, letting her know she is safe. Her shoulders sag, losing their tension for the first time since I met her.

"She does better with visual cues." Mattul's voice interrupts the moment.

I nod abruptly without breaking eye contact with her. “I want her to have a translator, but I cannot explain the process to her. If we force it on her, we risk traumatizing her after what she has already endured.”

“How do you intend to approach the conversation then, *Patysam*?” he asks, referring to me as his king. It’s a title I never had the chance to inherit. He doesn’t look up from Ma’rah’s leg as he cautiously applies the healing paste.

I point at my mouth and talk while staring at her. “Do you understand anything?” I tap her temple gently.

She swats my hand away.

Mattul smirks. “I think that would be a negative.”

I ignore him, pointing at her mouth and then to my temple.

She shakes her head.

I sigh. “I want to understand her, but our implants are not translating her language.”

“I am sure if you take her to Demmox, he can have that amended quickly with a cochlear implant,” Mattul says, referring to our tech expert.

Mattul gives Ma’rah a gentle smile as he works, and she returns it tentatively.

Jealousy explodes in my chest. I want her to smile at me that way. These possessive feelings will only grow until we complete our bond.

Mattul finishes bandaging her leg and moves on to a small cut on her arm.

I should have been more careful bringing her through the forest with her injuries, but I was in a hurry to get her to safety. It would have been far easier if we had been able to communicate.

Ma’rah watches Mattul as he applies more healing paste to her arm. She touches it and brings it to her nose, pulling back sharply with a look of disgust.

Laughter escapes my throat at her expression, at how her mouth twists and her nose wrinkles. It has been many moons since I have had something to laugh about.

She looks at me in surprise, and then she laughs, too. Her face lights up, and her eyes dance as she looks at me.

I decide then that I will do anything to make her laugh again.

## Chapter 4

### Mara

THE GOO SMELLS TERRIBLE. It's cooling on my wounds, but it smells horrible. I almost gag as I sniff it, and this big, incredibly hot alien has the nerve to laugh at me.

Only I find myself laughing too.

I can't believe I slapped him before. I was sorry the moment I did it. I'm not a violent person, but I was scared and on edge, not knowing who to trust. And then he took my face in his hand and spoke words I didn't understand. But I did understand the message in his eyes—he will never hurt me.

And what is this tremendous attraction toward him? It feels... otherworldly. Ironic considering I seem to be on another planet. Or am I? This place is very Earth-like. Maybe I'm in an alternate reality? Maybe I've traveled back in time? Both notions make me want to laugh hysterically.

Heat rises in my cheeks as Drakk tilts his head and stares at me. Goosebumps break out across my skin, causing my nipples to tighten and my core to tingle. He may be an alien, but he's as hot as hell. Like some ancient warrior in the romance books I read.

The older-looking one is the same species as Drakk, but he has a gentler demeanor. It seems he's their doctor and is also going out of his way to let me know he won't hurt me.

I guess I should count myself lucky. Not only did Drakk save me, but he also brought me here and had their doctor treat my wounds. I could be seven-foot snake chow by now.

Drakk points at my mouth and his head. This is the second time he's done it. I think he wants us to be able to communicate beyond basic sign language. Do they have some kind of tech to enable this?

I tap my mouth and then tap his temple.

Drakk nods, which I take as confirmation. He places my hand on his chest over the swirling colors. My fingers tingle at the contact like a low electric pulse is thrumming through my system. His warm skin is pulled tautly over his enormous muscles, smooth yet resilient and glowing with that inner shimmer I noticed when I first saw him.

"*Que'lora*," he says, his voice rumbling against my fingertips.

He said that word earlier, but I have no idea what it means. I lift my eyes to search his for a clue, and my breath stalls in my throat. My pulse pounds in my ears, and heat pools between my thighs.

Dear God, what *is* this? It's all I can do not to launch myself at him and demand he show me *all* his alien parts in detail.

I break our intense gaze and peer out the makeshift window.

This place is pretty cool now that I take the time to look at it. As we entered the encampment, I was struck by the blend of nature and technology. The dwellings consist of stone, wood, and some type of metal I've never seen before, giving them rigidity and durability. Reflections move across the metal as if it's somehow alive. It reminds me of the patterns on Drakk's chest. Which I'm still touching.

I quickly snatch my hand away and dip my head, allowing my hair to swing forward to hide my embarrassment.

The other thing I noticed as we arrived was that there were no women—at least, none I could see as Drakk walked me through the camp. Perhaps they were all inside the dwellings, although the looks the males gave me suggested they hadn't seen a female for a long time.

I bite my lip and blink back tears as I think about Nessa, lost somewhere in this strange place. Or maybe... Is she here too?



My heart bumps in my chest as I hop off the examination table and rush outside.

“Nessa!” I call, casting my gaze around frantically. The males around me stop and stare with wide eyes. “Nessa!” My voice cracks, and a tear spills down my cheek.

Large hands land on my shoulders and spin me around to face him. “Ne’ssa?”

I nod. “Yes. Nessa is my friend.” I touch my heart. “Is she here?” I indicate the area around us.

Drakk doesn’t reply, simply shaking his head. I’m unsure if he’s answering my question or indicating that he doesn’t understand.

Overwhelming disappointment settles in my chest. He found me, but there’s no sign of Nessa. She’s not here. I sniffle, and another tear slides from my eye.

Drakk cups my face gently, swiping his thumb through the moisture on my cheek. He looks at it, his brow pulled down in a frown. Then he brings it to his mouth, flicking his tongue out to taste it. For some reason, my core tightens at the gesture, and my eyes flicker up to his.

Holy hell, I don’t know what this is between us, but it has the power to suck the air from my lungs and turn my knees to butter. I want to rub myself all over him. Naked. I want to see if that bulge in his pants is all him or if they have some alien version of sock stuffing here.

“Ma’rah.” Drakk says my name in his guttural language. *Sweet Jesus*, it sounds good rumbling from his chest. He says something else, but all I pick up is “Drakk,” “Nessa,” and something that sounds like “cheese.”

This whole language barrier thing is starting to wear thin.

I look at the gate we walked through earlier. Drakk follows my gaze and gives a stern shake of his head. He doesn’t want me venturing back out on my own. Not that I would. It’s clear I wouldn’t do well out there alone.

But if I can convince Drakk to come with me...

I need to find Nessa. I won't give up on her because she wouldn't give up on me.

*In this world and the next, Nessie.*

My words from—was it only last night?—come back to me. I had no idea how prophetic they would be.

And what about the others on the bus? Were they pulled into this world too? What if they landed somewhere else, and I'm truly alone? The thought is paralyzing.

Drakk reaches for my hand, sensing my turmoil, but I pull it away. I know he's trying to comfort me, but what I need most is my best friend. She'd be way better at figuring all this out. She'd probably be communicating with these hot, sexy aliens by now and talking their alien ears off about the exotic plant life.

Me? I don't even know where *here* is.

Drakk turns and starts walking. With no other option, I follow as he enters a small dwelling on the edge of the camp. My mouth falls open as I enter.

The interior does not match the exterior. It's like someone took a modern lab and plopped it inside the dwelling. Various tech and blinking machines sit on smooth white countertops, and seated among the paraphernalia is a one-eyed, one-horned, purple alien with wings and four arms. Hope to God he doesn't eat people.

He looks up as we enter, and his eye (black and eerily pupilless) widens when he sees me. He says something to Drakk, his language a series of clicking and popping noises. They seem to understand each other, though, as Drakk replies with his usual grunts. He points behind his ear and then at me.

One-Eye nods and reaches into a drawer, pulling out a small device that looks like a small hearing aid and handing it to Drakk. I'm guessing he's their tech guy. He clicks and pops some more before looking at me again—or at least, I think he is. It's hard to tell with that spooky eye.

Drakk looks at me, points at One-Eye, and says, "Demmox." Then he points at me, looks at the purple alien, and says,

“Ma’rah.”

I smile and give him a little wave. “Hi. Um, nice to meet you, Demmox.”

His mouth opens to emit more clickety pops, and I take that as, “Nice to meet you too,” although he could be asking if I like nachos for all I know.

Yep, most bizarre introduction ever. *Way to go, Mara. You’re making great leaps in human/alien relations.*

Without further ado, Drakk takes my elbow and guides me from the building toward a larger dwelling on the other side of the camp. A large fire burns in the middle of the camp with what looks like an earthenware pot hanging from a tripod.

I try to ignore the stares from the alien males, who stop their activities and look at me with varying degrees of curiosity and... awe? I’ve never been the center of so much male attention. Great. The one time I draw glances from the male species, it’s from a bunch of aliens who look like they want to touch, eat, or fuck me.

Many of them look like Drakk, presumably from the same race. But there are also aliens with green hair and tusks, purple-veined wings and pure white hair, and something that looks like a grasshopper with an overgrown mustache and pincers for hands.

Drakk leads me into the building a little further from the camp. Like this whole place, the interior combines ancient and modern. The furniture is sparse: a table, chairs, and what looks like a bed in the corner, draped with animal hides, all exquisitely handmade. Roughhewn counters line one wall, forming a kitchen area.

Drakk pulls one of the chairs from the table and grunts, indicating I should sit. I do so, and he pulls the small device Demmox gave him from his pocket. He taps a spot behind his ear and then his mouth. Moving forward, he does the same to me.

He presses a recessed button along the edge of a small device, and a panel slides back soundlessly. He removes a tiny sphere

nestled between a tangle of wires and holds it up. It looks like a small pearl plucked from an oyster.

“You want to put that device in my ear?” I ask, looking at him warily.

Drakk presses another button, and a thin wire snakes out. He points at my ear again.

I shake my head, shivering at the thought of it winding through my ear canal. “Okay, big guy. No way are you putting that in my ear to burrow into my brain.”

He puts his finger to his lips and then to mine. His eyes seem to be conveying a message. Like earlier, as I lose myself in those blue, blue depths, I realize I trust him. He’s had ample opportunity to kill me, but instead, he rescued me from the snake beast and brought me here. I still don’t know where here is, but it’s a damned sight better than where I was.

“This is a translator?” I ask as if he knows what I’m saying.

His brow raises, and he points at it again before tapping behind my ear.

Taking a deep breath, I nod. He’s done nothing to harm me so far, and communication will be essential if I want his help finding Nessa.

Drakk’s hand threads through my hair and cups the back of my neck. His thumb swipes back and forth lightly, applying slight pressure, and I fight the urge to moan at the sensation sparking over my skin. Everything in me vibrates. I can’t believe how my body reacts to his touch.

I want to ask if he feels the same, but I know he won’t understand until he puts this device in my ear.

Without realizing my body has shifted, I lean into him. His fingers splay at my nape, moving in massaging circles that make my body throb with need.

Holding me still, he places the device behind my ear rather than in it. I panic for a second, trying to move away, but he shakes his head and holds me firmly.

He touches my lips gently and leans his forehead against mine. The tender gesture brings a lump to my throat. He couldn't have said it any clearer. He's got me.

I feel slight pressure. Then, the pain hits.

I scream, and the ground rushes up to meet me.

## Chapter 5

### Mara

CONSCIOUSNESS RETURNS with an odd buzzing in my ears.

I'm lying on something soft and warm. My bed? How did I get here? Voices ebb in and out, their accents strange.

I groan. My head throbs like I downed an entire bottle of rum last night. Jeez, how much did I have to drink? I only remember necking two rums and cokes. I recall leaving the club with Nessa and going home, and then...

My eyes fly open, and I shoot upward, regretting it instantly as my head feels like it's splitting in two. I groan and squeeze my eyes shut, fighting the nausea climbing my throat.

Large hands land on my shoulders, urging me back on the bed. I peel my eyes open again, and they collide with Drakk's azure gaze.

Okay, then. Not a dream. I'm still in this nightmare with my hot alien and a one-eyed purple extra-terrestrial who may or may not eat people.

"You should rest. You reacted far more vigorously to the cochlear implant than I expected," he says, sitting on the edge of the bed.

My mouth drops open. "I-I can understand you!"

Drakk's mouth twists into what I can only assume is his version of a smile. "I must admit, I was not sure it would work. Your language is unlike anything I have encountered before. All soft, squeaky sounds."

Soft? *Squeaky*? My voice isn't squeaky. Is it?

“Well, at least I don’t sound like a grunting, farting Neanderthal,” I huff.

Drakk’s eyes narrow. “How do you know my species and home planet?”

I look at him blankly. “Um, what?”

“How do you know I am a T’Hal from planet Ne’Ander.”

Holy shit. He’s a real Neanderthal? This is getting weirder by the second.

I frown. “You’re from another planet?”

He nods. “I was captured by the Manx, along with many others. We were being transported to a prison planet when the ship crashed here.”

“Manx? Prison planet,” I squeak. Damn it, I just proved him right.

“The being who attacked you. The Manx are our enemy,” he explains. “They plunder planets, and those they do not kill, they take as their prisoners.”

“Oh. So, you’re not a criminal? You didn’t hold up a bank or get busted for drugs?” I ask for want of something more intelligent.

Drakk taps his ear, looking confused. “If you are asking if I was a prisoner of the Manx because I committed a crime, the answer is no. I am guilty of many things, including stubbornness and pride, but I did not hold up a bank or get busted for slugs.”

Okay. The cochlear implant is clearly still working out the kinks.

Drakk moves away and retrieves a palm-sized device from a counter in the corner with intricate patterns etched into its surface. As he moves back to me, a holographic projection emits from the sphere and hovers above his hand. The image is of peaks and valleys painted in greens and blues. My eyes widen. It’s Earth, but not as I know it.

“We have been mapping the area,” Drakk explains, “and receiving information from others to fill the gaps.” He touches the orb again, and the holograph changes, showing towering cities and landscapes unlike anything on Earth.

“Is this your home world?” I ask in wonder, taking in all the details.

“Yes. I was a prince on my world. Next in line for the throne along with—” He stops, and something akin to pain flashes in his eyes.

I reach for him instinctively, covering his free hand with mine. I don’t know what he was about to say, but it was obviously a painful memory.

“I was T’Hal royalty. We are not a technically advanced race, but we possess unique gifts due to the rich carbon deposits deep within our planet’s core.” He points at his glimmering skin. “The T’Hal royal family is revered for their pure bloodline, which is connected to the core of Ne’Ander. We are unique because of our connection to Ne’Ander’s ecosystem. The vast carbon reserves infuse our biology and mutate, giving our skin a diamond-like quality. For this reason, the royal family is called Diamond Bloods. And some of us possess abilities unique even to our race.”

I frown, remembering his battle with the Manx. “You created some kind of mini-twister that threw the Manx off its feet.”

“On my home world, I was known as The Eco Prince. I could manipulate the wind and atmosphere. I could control the wind patterns and bring life to barren landscapes.”

My eyes widen. “So, you’re like Superman or something?”

“Superman?”

I wave a hand. “Never mind. He’s a fictional superhero where I’m from.”

“I do not know this Superman, but my abilities are muted here. The atmosphere is denser. Different. I can still manipulate the elements, but not as efficiently. On my home world, I am the son of the reigning T’Hal King and Queen. Or I was.”



“You were?”

“No longer, considering I am here, light years from home. The Manx invaded our world, capturing millions and forcing those of greatest value onto their ships to be transported to Primus 2, their prison planet.”

“I’m so sorry,” I murmur, tightening my hand on his. What do you mean, those of greatest value?”

Drakk’s expression darkens. “The Manx quickly realized they had uncovered an endless supply of power and energy when they discovered the carbon-rich bodies of the T’Hal, of which the Royal Family were the most potent. They discovered a way to harness the energy we emit, effectively using us as batteries. The females were taken and subjected to artificial breeding, and their young were taken from their wombs to hook into their energy matrix.”

“Oh, God.” My hand flies to my mouth in horror. “That’s... barbaric.” I swallow down bile at the images his words have sparked. “What about your parents?”

His jaw tightens. “They died in the crash. They were buried at the site, and I performed the *dessun*, the ritual to ensure their souls were returned to the stars. The rest of us salvaged what we could from the wreckage. Many of us separated into groups and set off to explore the landscape. The T’Hal who wished to follow *me* did so, and we have built a home here.”

Is it my imagination, or did he emphasize “me?” As opposed to someone else?

“How long have you been here? How many of you are there?”

“There were more than a thousand captives on the Manx ship, all male. As to how long, we have been here for one thousand eight hundred and twenty-five solar rotations.”

Solar rotations? I do a quick mental calculation. That’s... “Five years?”

“I do not know these ‘years.’ But we have been here for a long time.”

I sigh, rubbing my aching temples. “I’ve been here less than a day... solar rotation... and still feel like I’m dreaming.”

“You appeared from nowhere,” Drakk says, frowning. “One *sekunt*, there was nothing, and the next, you were there.”

“You saw me appear?” I ask in surprise.

“Yes. I was hunting for my clan. I watched you for a few minutes, and then the Manx appeared from the tree line.”

“Thank you. For saving me. And for bringing me here. Although, I still don’t know where here is. Everything is so strange. I mean, it looks how I imagine Earth looked millions of years ago, but nothing like what I left behind.”

“What is this Earth?” Drakk asks, stroking his huge thumb over my hand.

“It’s the name of my planet. My home world. One minute, I was with my friend, Nessa, and the next, she vanished. And then I was here. I think whatever happened to me happened to her too. And the other people we were with. There were fifty women besides Nessa and me. They could still be out there somewhere. Nessa could be out there,” I say, pointing in the general direction of the forest, “alone and frightened. At the mercy of another of those Manx. I have to find her, Drakk. And the others. Will you help me?” My voice breaks, and my throat is thick with emotion as I think of Nessa and the other people on the tour bus.

He reaches out to stroke my cheek. “Calm yourself, Ma’rah. The solar rotation grows dark now, but I will head out tomorrow to see if I can find your Ne’ssa and the rest of your people.”

I press my lips together. “*We*. I’m going too.”

“No. It is too dangerous for a female as delicate and precious as you.”

I’m unsure whether to laugh or punch him in his stupidly handsome alien face. “Delicate? Have you *seen* me? Believe me, where I come from, I am not considered delicate. Or precious. In fact, men consider me entirely too *indelicate* to be desirable.”

His eyes roam over me leisurely, causing butterflies to erupt in my stomach. “Then they are fools because I see you very clearly, Ma’rah, with your soft skin, rounded contours, and eyes like jewels from the Krypto mines on my home planet. It is true that you are shorter and weaker than the women of my species, but I find this highly attractive. I find everything about you attractive, my *que’lora*.”

*Shorter? Weaker?*

I’m guessing this guy didn’t take Modern Women’s Studies at the University of Ne’Ander.

While I’m secretly thrilled about the shorter part, I’m certainly not weak. You don’t get broad shoulders and a solid bone structure like mine without having some strength.

Although, didn’t I dream about finding a man who could lift me effortlessly without injuring himself? Something tells me Drakk could fling me around like a ragdoll—in and out of the bedroom. The thought sends a shiver down my spine.

If this really is a dream, I’m starting to change my mind about waking up. Because this sinfully hot alien just told me he finds me attractive despite being “shorter.” He likes my soft skin, rounded contours, and jewel-like eyes.

“You called me that before. *Que’lora*. What does it mean?”

“It means we are bound together, and I will always protect and cherish you. It means we will join our bodies, and I will plant my *sperma* in your *vasook* because you are mine. You are my mate.

## Chapter 6

### Drakk

MA'RAH STARES AT ME VACANTLY. "Um, I'm your what now?"

"My mate," I confirm, holding back a smile at her nonplussed expression.

"And you want to plant your *sperma* in my whatta?"

"In your *vasook*. It is part of the mating ritual. Does your species not do this to propagate?"

She licks her lips. "Among other reasons, yes."

"So you have performed this act with the males on your planet?"

Ma'rah drops her gaze. "Well, that's the thing. I haven't mated with any males. On any planet. So if you think you can swan in here with your claims to protect, cherish, and plant your *sperma* in my *vasook*, you can jog on, mate."

I frown. "Jog on? What is this jog on?"

"It's like a slow run." She waves a hand. "Never mind. My point is, you can't simply tell me that you're going to stick that"—she points at my *horaz*—"in here"—she gestures to her *vasook*—"like it's a done deal. Nu-uh. No way, buster."

"Are you saying you are gyz?"

Her eyes widen in shock. "Did you just call me jizz?"

Now she looks offended. It is evident the cochlear implant is unable to decipher certain words.

“Gyz means an untouched female. One whose *vasook* has never been plundered by a *horaz*.”

“And a *horaz* is?”

I stand, unzip my leg coverings, and pull out my *horaz*. “This is a *horaz*,” I say proudly.

Her emerald eyes nearly pop out of her head. “Holy. Fucking. Shit. Yeah, there’s no way that thing will fit in my *vasook*.”

I smirk. “It is true that I am larger than most males of my species, but I can assure you it will fit. You are my *que’lora*, which means we are physically compatible. Besides, my *sperma* has special qualities, which allow our females to stretch when we *fokk*.”

She raised an eyebrow. “But I’m not one of your females. I’m human.”

“Hoo’man?”

Ma’rah shrugs. “Close enough. My race consists of men and women. And, of course, there’s the LGBTQIA+ community. Oh, forget I mentioned it,” she adds when she sees my look of confusion. “It would take me too long to explain. Let’s just say we’re a very diverse race.”

Her stomach chooses that moment to growl loudly. “You are hungry. I will feed you, and then I must check in with my second, Lattan.”

I tuck myself away and head outside, filling a bowl of *murrasch* from the fire and carrying it back to my dwelling.

“What is this?” Ma’rah asks as I hand the bowl and an eating utensil.

“It is *murrasch*. Meat and vegetables. Eat. You must regain your strength if you are to accompany me to search for your friend in the morning.”

Her eyes widen. “I can come with you?”

“Yes, but you must follow my instructions and do exactly as I say. I will not risk your safety, *que’lora*. Not because you are weak,” I say, holding up a hand as she opens her mouth to

object, “but because we have been here for much longer than you and know the dangers of this planet. And the Manx are still a threat.”

My words seem to reassure her as she nods and takes a tentative mouthful of the *murrasch*.

“This is good,” she says in surprise, eating another mouthful. “Reminds me of stew.”

I do not know what this *stew* is, but I am pleased to see her eating. “You will soon learn that your welfare is my priority, my mate.”

Ma’rah looks at me as she chews. “I hope that extends to this *que’lora* thing because I’m not ready to have your *horaz* in my *vasook*.”

“My honor means everything to me, Ma’rah. I would never force you,” I reassure her. “But with each solar rotation that passes, the urge to mate will grow stronger until we can deny it no longer. You cannot tell me that you do not already feel it.”

Her cheeks redden, and she drops her eyes. “I thought it was just the whole danger-adrenaline thing. It happens all the time in my books. The hero saves the heroine, and they then fuck like rabbits because they’re so happy to be alive.”

I move toward her, cupping her cheek and smoothing my thumb over her soft skin. “When we *fokk*, I promise it will be because you want it as much as I, *que’lora*.”

Ma’rah shivers, and her emerald eyes darken with desire. Yes, she is experiencing the inevitability of our mating bond. I cannot wait to sink deep inside her feminine sheath and spill my seed. The fates would not choose her as my mate if we were incompatible, but this feels like more.

“You’ll be waiting a long time,” she mutters, her eyes flashing with determination.

“Or perhaps you will end up begging me to slide into your aching cunt. To fill you with my seed as you scream and writhe beneath me.”

Ma'rah swallows loudly as her fascinated gaze drops to my *horaz*, which has hardened and lengthened.

“Not tonight, big guy,” she squeaks. “And can you put that away, please? Trying to eat here.”

“No, but soon.” I smile as I tuck myself away.

She shakes her head, and liquid pools in her eyes. “I need to find my friend and figure out how to get home. I don't belong here.”

“Neither did we,” I reply, waving a hand in the general direction of the camp. “But we have made a home here because we have accepted that there is no returning to our planet.”

“What about the Manx ships? Can't we hijack one and fly home?”

“Their vessels are biometrically programmed only for the Manx. They cannot be piloted by another species. We tried to repair the spaceship after we crashed, but the only useful items were the cochlear implants, replicators, and everyday tech used for powering the sonic showers and shielding devices.”

“Shielding devices?”

“Yes. They are set up at intervals around the encampment. They shield our presence from the Manx.”

“What happened to the Manx piloting the ship?”

“We killed those who did not run,” I state bluntly.

Ma'rah's nose wrinkles. “Oh.”

“I believe that the Manx who attacked you today was one of the escaped guards from the ship, but I cannot rule out that their long-range scanners have found the wreckage,” I say grimly. “It could have been a scout.”

Disappointment settles on Ma'rah's features. “I can't stay here. I have a job, a life,” she whispers. “There has to be a way.”

“There is not, and the sooner you accept it, the better it will be for you,” I say firmly. I do not like seeing my mate sad, but I will not lie to her or give her false hope. “Finish your meal

while I speak with Lattan. The sonic shower will cleanse your body and clothing without harming your wounds.” I point to the cubicle in the corner. “Press the button on the wall. It is on a timer. Then I suggest you get some sleep. You have had a difficult solar rotation.”

Ma’rah sighs in resignation. “Okay.”

I turn to leave the dwelling.

“Drakk?”

My *horaz* hardens at the sound of my name on her lips, and I look over my shoulder.

“Thank you,” she whispers. “I’m glad it was you who found me.”

My little mate looks so defeated, and both of my hearts stutter behind my ribs. I nod abruptly and head outside before I break my word, tug her into my arms, and complete our mating bond.

I find Lattan at the gates, conversing with the guards.

“*Patysam.*” He greets me with a respectful inclination of his head, eyeing the tattoos swirling on my chest.

“Any sign of trouble?” I ask, surveying the immediate vicinity.

“No.” Lattan shakes his head. “Apart from Zaryk, we do not know how far the others have traveled since we parted ways.”

His mention of Zaryk causes my jaw to tighten. Thinking of him always brings guilt and pain. “They could be on the other side of the planet by now. The Manx I killed was one of the guards from the ship. But we cannot take any chances. We have traveled many *clicks* from there, but we would be foolish to assume that our shielding tech will hide us for long. If one Manx was here, others may follow.”

Lattan nods grimly. “I have doubled the guards. Demmox is monitoring the immediate area, and Gaul is fashioning more weapons.”

“Good. We will need to be prepared.” I turn to head back to my dwelling, already missing Ma’rah’s presence.



“Who is the female?”

I halt and turn to face my second. “I wondered how long it would take you to ask.”

“You cannot stroll into camp with a strange-looking creature and not expect the clan to be curious, *Patysam*. It has been many solar rotations since we have seen a female.”

“Refer to Ma’rah as a strange-looking creature again, and I will end you,” I growl.

Lattan does not take offense at my words. We have known each other too long, and he is like a brother to me.

*Brother*. Memories assault me, and I clench my hands into fists.

“I meant no offense, Drakk,” Lattan says. He is one of a few who use my given name. “But you owe our people an explanation.”

“I owe them nothing when it comes to my mate,” I hiss, pinning my friend with a harsh glare.

Lattan’s blue eyes widen and his eyes drop to my chest again, where my mating colors swirl. “So it is true.”

“You know this happens when the mating bond activates.”

“I did, but it has been so long. It seems... strange that your mating bond should be activated by the first female we have encountered.”

I shrug. “It is not for us to question. It is a part of our genetics. But even if it weren’t, I am still drawn to Ma’rah.”

Lattan frowns. “What do you want me to tell the others?”

“The truth. That Ma’rah is mine, and if anyone touches her, they will pay the price.”

Lattan inclines his head. “As you wish, *Patysam*.”

“Ma’rah’s friend, Ne’ssa, is also here somewhere, and Ma’rah is desperate to find her. Tomorrow, I will take her, and we will search the area around the lake.”

“Is that wise with the Manx threat?” Latten asks, his expression troubled.

“Ordinarily, I would not entertain it, but there are fifty others like Ma’rah. Hoo’man. All female.”

“All?” Lattan asks in shock.

I nod. “Yes, and I can see you understand what this means. If we are to survive here, we need mates. *Willing* mates,” I emphasize.

“Of course,” Lattan agrees. “Our honor demands it.” He pauses as he considers something. “I should come with you.”

“No.” I shake my head. “I need you here. You are the only one I trust to oversee things in my absence. I will take Jamma and Lukkan,” I say, naming two of the T’Hal guards.

I turn and leave before Lattan can object, pulled back to my dwelling and my *que’lora*.

When I step inside, Ma’rah is curled up beneath the furs, sound asleep. Darkness has fallen, so I quickly clean up in the shower and slide beneath the furs, naked.

Ma’rah mumbles something in her sleep and burrows into me, throwing a leg over mine. She feels so right, tucked against my side.

“Soon, I whisper, willing my engorged *horaz* to behave as I wrap my arms around her and succumb to sleep.

## Chapter 7

### Mara

I'M HAVING A DELICIOUS DREAM. My core aches and throbs. I'm wet—soaked—and I need...

“Wha—”

My eyes fly open as something soft, warm, and delicious strokes between my slick folds.

I lift my head to see Drakk between my thighs, his dark hair spilling over my pale flesh. Oh, God. When did he remove my pants and underwear?

“Drakk...” I shudder as he gives me a strong lick, twirling his tongue around my clit.

His head lifts. “You were moaning and rubbing yourself against me in your sleep, *que'lora*. It will be my pleasure to give you release. Do you wish me to stop?”

“I—” My words dry up as he nibbles my sensitive flesh.

I've masturbated plenty of times, but I've never experienced anything like this. My body is a raging inferno, and the need to come is stronger than the need to push him away.

“No. Don't stop,” I hear myself whisper.

Drakk growls and dives in again. “What is this?” He runs his thumb over my clit, and I arch off the bed.

“M-my clit,” I huff as my pussy clenches on air.

“What is this clit?” he asks, repeating the motion.

“It’s a b-bundle of nerves that gives human women pleasure,” I choke out, unable to believe I’m giving this large alien wedged between my thighs a female anatomy lesson.

Another growl as Drakk pushes my shirt up, exposing my naked chest. I removed my bra before I climbed into bed last night, wanting to free the girls from its restriction.

“And these fleshy mounds?”

“M-my breasts. Your females don’t have these?”

“Only when they are feeding our young, but they are much smaller. Yours are big and squishy. They make my *horaz* as hard as magnite.”

I swallow. “Magnite?”

“The hardest metal on my home planet. Your body is soft and lush, Ma’rah. I want to explore every dip and curve with my tongue.”

I gulp. “O-okay. But no *horaz* in my *vasook*.”

“Not until you are ready, little one.”

*Little one?* Nothing about me is little, but right now, I don’t care. All I can focus on is Drakk’s talented tongue on my pussy.

He cups a breast, flicking his thumb over my nipple, and my eyes flutter shut to relish the pleasure of his touch.

He brushes more kisses against my inner thighs before burying his face in my pussy.

I tremble, not because I’m cold but because I want him to tongue-fuck me into oblivion.

I tilt my head back and moan, forgetting all about how I got here and what my future holds. Nothing else matters at this moment.

It’s just Drakk and me.

He’s all I need.

My pussy throbs as Drakk moves back and forth between flicking his tongue and sucking my clit.

“Your musk is rich and sweet. I need more,” he growls against my skin, sliding his tongue from my entrance to my clit.

I clutch his head as my breathing becomes ragged, thrusting my hips toward his mouth as I seek more stimulation.

Drakk nudges my legs further apart, giving himself more space to lick me from hole to hole. He reaches up and gives my nipples a hard tug. I quiver as my orgasm builds, but I’m not quite there yet. I know it’s going to be a doozy.

“Drakk... please,” I mewl, reaching for the peak.

He pushes two thick digits inside me as his thumb finds my clit, and...

“Oh!” I gasp as I barrel over the edge into pulsing ecstasy.

My breath comes in sharp spurts as my pussy clamps around his fingers, riding out wave after wave of sharp, delicious pleasure.

Pulling his fingers from my still pulsing core, Drakk straddles me in all his naked glory. His defined abs clench as he takes his massive cock in his hand. I watch in awe as he pumps himself, the huge bulbous head throbbing with each pass.

With a roar, he spills his seed onto my pussy, painting it with his cum. The colors on his chest swirl brighter than ever as he arches his neck, his expression magnificent in orgasm.

I look on in wonder at his release coating my flesh. Reaching down, I scoop some onto my finger and bring it closer to my face. It sparkles and shimmers like his skin.

White hot pleasure grips my core, and I look down, watching in amazement as his cum sinks into my mound. I cry out as another climax slams into me unexpectedly, longer and more intense than the previous one.

When I finally come back down, panting and sweaty, Drakk is regarding me with fierce pride and possession. His cock is still semi-hard as it bobs impressively between his legs with his heavy sac beneath.

“What *was* that?” I ask breathlessly.

Drakk cups my pussy possessively. “More proof of the mating bond. I told you my *sperma* has special qualities, one of which will allow your body to stretch to fit my *horaz*.” He grins. “You have just experienced the other.”

I must be dead because this cannot be real. Spontaneous orgasm by alien cum? “Does your *sperma* have this effect on all females?”

“No. It only happens with our mates.”

“Why is it all sparkly?”

“It is infused with the carbon deposits our bodies break down.”

“Are you telling me you have diamond cum?”

Drakk nods like it’s perfectly reasonable to have diamond-infused sperm. Well, fuck me. I guess diamonds really are a girl’s best friend. My pussy agrees, still throbbing from two spectacular orgasms.

“I can pleasure you many times with my hands and my mouth and my *sperma, que’lora*. But it will be nothing compared to the pleasure we will experience when I slide into your hot cunt.”

Dear God, I’ve only gone and found myself a dirty-talking alien with a massive diamond-shooting cock.

What’s a girl to do?

---

I’m still throbbing in peculiar ways as Drakk and I walk through the forest after breakfast and a sonic shower. We have two hulking T’Hal with us, whom Drakk introduced as Jamma and Lukkan. Both are as big as Drakk with the same blue eyes, but I don’t feel the same pull to them that I do to Drakk.

My cheeks heat as I recall what happened this morning. I’ve never done anything like that before. No one has ever seen me that way or heard me make the noises Drakk pulled from my throat as I came. But I can’t bring myself to regret it because, holy shit, it was hot.

Drakk gives me a sideways look. “Do you need assistance, Ma’rah?”

I frown. “Um, nope. All good. Why?”

“Because you moaned,” he says with a knowing smile. “I thought perhaps you were in... need of something.”

I moaned? Huh. That’ll teach me to think about Drakk’s super alien jizz while we’re hiking through the forest.

A branch snaps ahead, and Drakk pulls me back against him, holding up a hand to Jamma and Lukkan. His demeanor transforms from teasing to high alert in a split second.

Something moves quickly past us. The sunlight doesn’t penetrate the canopy of trees enough to determine what it is.

Drakk moves his hand to cover my mouth. I tip my head back to look at him, and he gives me the tiniest shake of his head. I nod, then let out a muffled scream as something attaches itself to my foot.

Drakk is on it immediately, swooping down to pluck the threat from my person.

“Wait!” I hiss as he draws his sword from the baldric crossing his chest. “It’s Bucky!”

He looks at the purple creature I met yesterday and then back at me, his brow pulled down in a frown. “Bucky?”

I nod. “That’s what I called him. He was here yesterday when I woke up. Hey, little guy,” I coo, reaching to take him from Drakk, who looks like he’s about to snap Bucky’s neck. “I thought I lost you,” I murmur, chuckling as Bucky trills and burrows into my neck, butting his head against my chin.

“You have befriended a *vog’li*?” Drakk asks in horror. “It could be dangerous.”

“Well, this guy seems pretty harmless,” I point out as Bucky licks my face. “Apart from that,” I add with a grimace, wiping the sticky trail of purple saliva from my cheek. “Wanna help us find the others?” I ask my new little friend. I take his enthusiastic trill as a yes and place him back on the forest floor.

Drakk shakes his head and mutters something about “females” and “stray animals” as we continue with Bucky on our heels.

Eventually, the forest thins, and we come to the open terrain where I first appeared. The lake glimmers under the sun, and the crimson flowers dance at the water’s edge.

I notice a small river meandering off the lake. I didn’t see it yesterday, what with the whole Manx attack. A creature I thought was a dragon circles the sky, but on closer inspection, it seems to be some kind of giant bird. Everything is so different yet familiar here, and I’m in awe of the landscape around us.

We split up, with Drakk instructing Jamma and Lukkan to take the east side of the lake while we head west with Bucky following behind.

Being with Drakk is oddly comfortable. I feel so close to him, considering we’ve known each other for less than a day. Nothing about it makes sense, although I guess the mating bond has something to do with the strong pull between us.

I look over at Drakk as we walk. He moves with the grace and stealth of a warrior, all bristling masculinity and hard muscles. There’s no denying his alienness is magnificent, calling to me in ways no human man ever has. I secretly enjoy his attention and possessiveness, something I’ve never experienced before.

I want to ask if he feels the same as me, but I bite my tongue.

We’ve been scouting the area for a few hours when Drakk suddenly throws an arm out to stop me. I halt immediately, instinctively trusting his instincts, although I can’t see or hear whatever has alerted him.

“There.” Drakk points to something near the tree line.

I squint, trying to make out what he sees as he draws his sword.

“Stay behind me,” he instructs as we slowly approach what looks like a bundle of rags on the ground.

As we draw closer, I see it’s not a bundle of rags at all. It’s a body.



“Oh, shit.” My hand flies to my mouth. I recognize the clothing. “It’s one of the women I was with when I was brought here.”

Drakk sheathes his sword as I run toward the woman.

“Becky?” I fall to my knees, gently smoothing her hair from her face.

Her eyelids flicker before cracking open. “Mara?” she asks hoarsely. Her hand grips mine with surprising strength. “Is that really you?”

“Yes, it’s me. You’re okay. You’re going to be okay,” I reassure her.

Becky’s eyes widen and she tries to scrabble away as she sees Drakk behind me, silently taking in the situation. “What the—”

“It’s okay. He’s a friend,” I say quickly. “Drakk found me yesterday. He took me back to his encampment, and he’s taken care of me. You can trust him.”

“Who... What is he? Where are we? We were on the bus, and then I was here. Alone. I wandered for hours, and I must have passed out, but I don’t know where here is, and—”

“I’ll answer all your questions, I promise. But we need to get you back to the encampment. You need food and water,” I say, taking in her chapped lips and sunburned skin.

She shakes her head, and I see the panic rising in her eyes. “I need to find Sarah. I need to get home. I’m getting married, remember?”

“I remember.” I nod. Becky is the bride of the bachelorette group on the tour. “We’ll find your sister. One thing at a time, okay?”

Becky nods uncertainly. “Okay. I-I don’t feel so good.” Her face pales, and her eyes roll back in her head.

My eyes widen as Drakk swirls his hand, and water pools in his palm. It’s like he has literally plucked the water molecules from the air. Incredible.

He bends, dripping the liquid between Becky's parched lips.

"She is unconscious." He speaks for the first time, stating the obvious. "I will carry her back to our encampment."

Before I can open my mouth, he scoops Becky from the ground with a gentleness that belies his massive frame.

"Come," he instructs, striding back the way we came, carrying Becky like she weighs nothing. "Stay close to me, *que'lora*. I need to know you are safe."

*Sigh.*

My protective alien's words make my heart melt, and my lady bits quiver.

I check behind me to ensure Bucky is still with us, and he takes the opportunity to hop into my arms, tucking himself into my armpit. All four eyes close, and within seconds, he's snoring—or rather, trilling—contentedly.

By the time we reach the rendezvous point where we left Jamma and Lukkan, every muscle in my body aches, and my injured leg throbs with my heartbeat. I've barely paid it any attention since Mattul applied the smelly goo, which worked wonders. But now it feels hot and swollen. Perhaps it's simply having my weight on it for hours, but I should check it's not infected.

I'm about to pull up the leg of my jeans when Jamma and Lukkan appear—both carrying women.

Jamma is carrying another woman from the tour whose name escapes me. But it's the woman Lukkan is cradling protectively in his arms that has me gasping in shock. Or rather, the mating colors swirling on his chest.

"Oh, my God," I whisper, recognizing Becky's sister, Sarah. "She's his—"

"*Que'lora*," Drakk finishes with a nod.

Lukkan's mating tattoos differ from Drakk's but are no less impressive as he holds Sarah, his blue eyes burning possessively.

Just how Drakk is now looking at me.

I swallow, the discomfort of my leg forgotten as I lose myself in his heated gaze, and other, more intimate parts of my body throb with need.

I tear my gaze away, focusing on the two T'Hal guards as they reach us.

“We will take the females back to the encampment where they can be cared for,” Drakk instructs, and Jamma and Lukkan nod.

When Becky wakes up, she'll be relieved to know her sister is okay. I guess that's one problem solved.

But something tells me it won't be the last.

## Chapter 8

### Drakk

IT HAS BEEN five solar rotations since I discovered my Ma'rah, and there have been no further sightings of the Manx. We have, however, found six females, seven including my *que'lor*a. One, Sa'rah, is bonded to Lukkan. Another, Loo'cy, has bonded to Jamma.

Ma'rah has been occupied with settling the females into the encampment, answering their questions, and easing their fears. She has also convinced them to have the translators fitted so they can converse and understand.

The females' reactions have ranged from shock and disbelief to anger and denial. Acceptance will take some time, but I know they are in good hands with my *que'lor*a. I am proud of my mate, who is a natural leader. While she may appear delicate, she has an inner strength and nurturing manner that only confirms she is perfect for me.

I have woken her each morning with my head between her thighs, swallowing her cries and sweet cream as I lick her to completion. This morning, Ma'rah taught me something called a "kiss," a mating of mouths and tongues before pumping my *horaz* to completion in her small hands. My "diamond jizz" as she calls it, coating her "tits" and brought her to orgasm again.

It was beyond anything I had experienced before. With every day that passes, the desire to slide inside her tight heat grows, mostly because of the bond but also because my mate is becoming essential to me in so many other ways.

Ma'rah's leg wound is not healing as well as it should, and she has returned to Mattul for further treatment. I have insisted she rests, so she has not accompanied me on our search since that first morning. Each time we have returned with more females, I have seen a little of the light die in her verdant eyes. I know she is happy we are rescuing her friends, but with each passing solar rotation, the chances of finding Ne'ssa alive reduce.

This morning, however, my mate is determined to accompany me. I refused at first, but I know this could be the last chance we have to find Ne'ssa alive, and Ma'rah has promised to stay by my side and follow my instructions.

And her new pet, of course, who follows her everywhere. I have watched Bucky carefully to ensure the creature is not a risk, but so far, it seems harmless and refuses to leave her side. I have even set up a crate lined with furs in our dwelling where it sleeps, something it seems to do a lot.

"Are you ready?" I ask Ma'rah, returning to our dwelling after checking in with Lattan.

Ma'rah is dressed in leg coverings and a shirt Demmox procured from the replicator, which offers far better protection from the elements. The clothing clings to her succulent curves, and I want to toss her on the bed and bury my face between her thick thighs again. Later.

"Ready," Ma'rah says with a wan smile.

"Are you sure you would not rather stay here," I ask, moving close and cupping her pale cheek.

She shakes her head. "No. It's been four days. This may be our last chance to find Nessa alive." She swallows, her beautiful eyes shining with moisture.

"We will find her, *que'lora*," I promise, swiping my thumb over her cheek.

She nods, though I know she is losing hope, which causes my hearts to ache behind my ribs. Taking her hand, we walk to the perimeter of the encampment, closely followed by Bucky.

Pollan and Hekkar, two more of my guards, are waiting for us at the gate. New guards have been volunteering to search, and

I know it is in the hope that they will also find their mate.

We have extended our search in the last three solar rotations, hoping to find more females in the terrain beyond the Great Lake, but I know that the further we go, the less likely we are to find living survivors. Ma'rah has told me that hoo'mans can live without food for approximately twenty-one solar rotations but only three without water—much less than the T'Hal, who can survive much longer due to our genetic makeup. It is one of the reasons we survived following the crash when other species did not.

As usual, Ma'rah and I separate from Pollan and Hekkar to increase our chances of finding more survivors. We take a different route, bypassing the Great Lake and moving into more open terrain. After a while, Bucky grows tired and ends up tucked beneath Ma'rah's arm.

As we walk, I see the hopelessness increase in Ma'rah's expression and the slump of her shoulders. I wish I could take her pain away, but I know nothing will ease her torment until she knows one way or the other if her friend is alive.

I am so lost in my thoughts that I do not see the danger until Ma'rah shrieks as she moves through some thick foliage. My arms snap out as she loses her balance, and I drag her to my chest. Looking over her shoulder, I see where the ground drops steeply away, hidden by the foliage. My hearts thrum as I realize my mate almost tumbled to her death down a cliff face to the basin of a waterfall below.

“Are you well, Ma'rah?” I ask, checking her over. Miraculously, Bucky is still tucked beneath her arm, sleeping.

She turns in the circle of my arms to peer down. “I'm fine. That was close.” Her eyes narrow. “Is that—”

“Biters.” I nod as she points at the creatures lining the riverbank below.

“We call them crocodiles,” Ma'rah says shakily. “But they're much larger than the ones I saw at the zoo.”

“What is a zoo?”

“A place where people go to see wild animals. A huge building with different enclosures where the animals are kept.”

“If they are wild, why are they kept in enclosures?” I ask, confused.

“Good question,” Ma’rah says, turning and patting my chest. “Thanks for saving me. Again. Pretty sure I’d be dead ten times over if not for you.”

“I will always save you, Ma’rah,” I say simply.

Her eyes soften, and she presses her lips to mine in one of the kisses I have come to enjoy very much. I growl, thrusting my tongue into her mouth the way she likes, licking and tasting every inch.

“What are you doing to me, Drakk? I’ve never felt this wanted before,” Ma’rah murmurs, breaking the kiss.

“The same thing you are doing to me, my *que’lora*,” I rasp, fisting my hand in her hair and tugging her head back to claim her mouth again.

She moans as our tongues slide together, digging her fingers into my biceps as if I am the only thing anchoring her to the earth.

“You were right,” she says breathlessly when I pull my mouth from hers. “This mating bond is getting harder to resist.”

I growl, sliding my hands to her hips before palming her juicy ass. “It is inevitable, Ma’rah. *We* are inevitable.”

“I’m at war with myself, Drakk,” she whispers. “Being here, with you, feels so right. I’m so confused. Do I even want to go home? Despite what I told you, there’s nothing there for me, not really. Nessa and I grew up in foster care, so we never knew our parents. She’s my only family. My heart aches, wondering where my friend is and if she’s safe. Alive. The thought of losing her is unbearable.”

I do not know what this “foster care” is, but knowing that Ma’rah did not have the love of her parents is difficult for me to understand.

Pain hits me as I remember my mother and father. I was never left in any doubt of their love for me. But now they are gone. More casualties of the Manx. All that remains is shame. I failed them in so many ways. I failed my people. Time and being stranded on an unfamiliar planet has a way of forcing you to see things far more clearly.

“Come,” I urge, tugging her away from the cliff. “We have a few more hours before we need to turn back. We will find a spot to eat and rest for a while.”

We continue through the undergrowth until it thins, opening to a small clearing, the sunlight dappling the ground. I spot a fallen tree ahead, and we sit, leaning against it as I pull our food rations from my utility belt. I pass the *corek* and fruit to Ma’rah.

“This stuff is just like bread where I’m from. Or should that be *when* I’m from?” she says as she takes a bite of the *corek*.

My brow rises in surprise. “You think you have traveled through time?”

Ma’rah shrugs. “I don’t know what to think. Everything I thought I knew has been turned on its ass. I’m no historian, but we studied ancient history at school, and this place reminds me of the pictures of Prehistoric Earth. Not that there was anything like Bucky in my textbooks,” she says wryly as the purple creature waddles around the clearing, pecking at fallen seeds.

“I do not know how the Manx vessel came to crash here,” I say thoughtfully. “As their prisoners, we were kept in cells aboard the ship. All I remember is an impact as if we had hit something very large, and the next thing I recall is waking in the wreckage. Some of the prisoners had escaped and freed the rest of us. The rest, you know.”

“Maybe we were both pulled through a wormhole or something,” Ma’rah suggests. “I mean, I never believed in all that science fiction stuff, but here I am, eating *çörek* with an alien while my pet *vog’li* runs around. I’m just waiting for Elvis to arrive and sing “Love Me Tender” before the Morlocks sacrifice me to their Vegan god.”



I look at my mate for a long moment, wondering if she has the *dali* sickness that sends my people insane. She has the same wildness in her eyes that affects my race when this illness strikes them down, and her cheeks are flushed.

“Rest for a short while. I will keep watch,” I say, concerned.

We have traveled much further today in our attempt to find Ne’ssa. Further than we should have.

Ma’rah snuggles into me, laying her head on my lap. “Okay. Just for a little while. And then we’ll look for Nessa again,” she says drowsily.

I open my mouth to reply, but my mate is already asleep. The last few solar rotations have been difficult for her. Arriving here, being attacked by a Manx, learning she is my mate, finding the other women but with no sign of her friend.

Whatever anomaly brought them here, they all arrived alone and afraid. At least we were with others when we crashed on this strange planet. It is our duty to use the knowledge we have gained to care for them now and ensure their safety and welfare.

Ma’rah shivers and mumbles in her sleep. I brush her hair from her forehead, frowning at the heat emanating from her skin. Hoo’mans are far more delicate than the T’Hal. Our skin is much more resilient than theirs.

Her hairline is damp with “perspiration,” something hoo’mans do when they are overheated, according to Ma’rah. The T’Hal do not leak water from their skin, so this discovery was unusual.

Is she sick? I remember how pale she looked this morning, and want to kick my own ass. I should not have allowed her to sway me in my decision not to bring her, particularly when her leg is not healing as it should.

Moving carefully so as not to disturb her, I raise the hem of her leg coverings. I frown as I reveal the dressing Mattul placed over her wound for protection. The skin around it is a bright red with black veins stretching from beneath.

Gently removing it, I issue a curse at the angry-looking wound. Not only is Ma'rah's wound not healing well, but it is becoming worse. Why did she insist on coming, knowing it was so bad, and why did Mattul not notify me? I will knock their heads together once Mattul has healed her and Ma'rah has regained her strength. Then I will kick myself in the ass for not listening to my instincts.

"Drakk," Ma'rah mumbles, clutching her stomach. "Not feeling so good."

Before I can ask her more, she twists her body to the side and vomits violently. She moans, shaking and shivering as she wipes her mouth. When she turns to look at me, her emerald eyes look huge in her pallid face.

"Hard... to breathe," she gasps, moving her hand to her throat.

I turn her to face me, pressing my hand over her heart. It races beneath my palm. I should have known she was reacting so badly to the wound the Manx inflicted. Why did I not see it? The sickness seems to have amplified in the space of hours, and the poison is now in her bloodstream. We know so little about the hoo'mans' biology, and I am worried my mate is in grave danger. If she dies, I will surely die with her.

Anger and fear roar through me. I will kill Mattul with my bare hands when I see him.

"I need to get you home," I say briskly, pushing to my feet and bending to scoop her into my arms.

"Nessa," she croaks, her eyes glazed.

"You are more important," I state, calling to Bucky as I stride from the clearing.

The *vog'li* follows behind but quickly stops, its feathers ruffling as it emits a loud screech I have not heard before.

I turn to glare at it, and my eyes widen as large wings erupt from Bucky's back, unfurling with mesmerizing grace. Now fully expanded, the wings are etched with intricate patterns and vibrant colors. But the most surprising are the razor-sharp blades at the tip of each wing, reminiscent of a fusion between a sword and a serrated edge.

Bucky, Ma'rah's seemingly harmless pet, is now armed with wings that double as lethal instruments, ready to protect his mistress from—

The thought dies as a sword is pressed to my chest.

“What the *fokk* are you doing here?” an all-too-familiar voice demands—a voice I have not heard for many solar rotations.

I turn to face the T'Hal with his sword poised at my chest.

It is Zaryk.

My brother.

## Chapter 9

### Drakk

“WHAT THE *FOKK* are you doing here?” Zaryk repeats.

“I could ask you the same thing,” I reply, hugging a now-unconscious Ma’rah to my chest.

“You are far from your encampment, Drakk,” he replies, his eyes narrowed on my mate. “Who is the female?”

“She is none of your concern,” I hiss, deliberately leaning forward so his sword digs into my chest, daring him to challenge me.

I haven’t seen my brother since we parted ways at the crash site. Half of the T’Hal survivors followed Zaryk, and the other half followed me, dividing our people just as we did on our home world.

“I see you have a bodyguard.” Zaryk tips his head toward Bucky with a smirk.

“I need no bodyguard to protect me from you, *brother*,” I snarl, making the word sound like an insult.

“The *vog’li* protects your *que’lora*. She is hoo’man,” Zaryk says knowingly, lowering his sword, his eyes on my chest.

His words take me by surprise. “You know of the hoo’mans?”

“We have ten females at my compound. Two appeared in the immediate vicinity three solar rotations ago. The others have been found in various locations over the last few solar rotations. Six have bonded with the T’Hal at the compound.” He pauses, lifting the garment covering his torso to reveal his mating colors. “Including me.”

My brow furrows. “It would seem the females arrived at the same time. I was hunting three solar rotations ago when she materialized from nowhere by the Great Lake, and my mating bond activated. We have discovered six more females since Ma’rah appeared.”

Zaryk startles and his gaze flies to my mate. “You say her name is Ma’rah?”

“Yes. Why?” I ask suspiciously.

“Because my *que’lora* has been begging me to find her friend, Ma’rah. They were separated by whatever brought them here.”

My hearts jolt. “Ne’ssa?” She is with you? Your *que’lora*?”

Zaryk nods. “Yes. But she is very sad because she thinks Ma’rah is dead.” His jaw flexes. His *que’lora*’s sadness bothers him greatly. He tips his head toward my unconscious mate. “I am glad to see that she is not, but her energy is waning. She is very sick.”

“She was attacked by a Manx soon after she appeared. I killed him, but not before he clawed her.” I raise Ma’rah’s leg covering to reveal her wound. “Mattul applied *balsam*, but it has rapidly worsened this solar rotation.”

“She is unable to fight the venom from the wound the Manx inflicted,” Zaryk says grimly. “May I?” he asks, looking at Ma’rah as he steps closer.

I tense. My brother and I have many obstacles between us, most of our own making. But I know he will not harm my mate. At this point, he may be the only one who can help her.

Where I have the power to manipulate the elements, Zaryk can mend injuries, cure illnesses, and even save those on the brink of death, earning him the title of The Spirit Prince on our home world.

He was a beloved figure among the T’Hal, as was I. We were close then. Our pure Diamond Blood bestowed us with beautiful gifts until we allowed greed, jealousy, and uncertainty to tear us apart. Our mistrust and hostility seem so unimportant now we are here.

I jerk my head in a nod, and Zaryk moves closer, placing one hand on Ma'rah's forehead and the other over her heart. I do not like him touching my mate, and I grit my jaw to stop myself from tearing his hands from her skin. But there is far more at stake than my ego. This is about Ma'rah's life.

She whimpers at Zaryk's touch as if even the weight of his hands on her skin is too much to bear. I bend my head to her ear, murmuring words of comfort, which seem to settle her a little.

Zaryk's mouth tightens. "She does not have long. Her system is shutting down."

His words send fear spiraling through me. I cannot lose Ma'rah. I cannot. I will do whatever it takes to save her, including swallowing my pride. "Can you heal her?" I ask roughly.

My brother frowns. Now he is mated, he understands the gravity of the situation. "I believe so, but I must take her to my compound. I have slowed the infection for now, but she will need multiple healings over several solar rotations. My abilities are not as potent here as on Ne'Ander."

"It is the same for me," I admit reluctantly.

"Come," Zaryk urges. "Time is of the essence if we are to save your *que'lora*."

*We*. It has been many, many solar rotations since Zaryk and I have been a "we." Too long.

We went our separate ways when the Manx vessel crashed, but we did not venture far from the other. We each knew where the other's encampment was. Perhaps, unknowingly, we knew this solar rotation would come. That our paths would cross again when the time was right. When one of us needed the other. It seems that time is now.

"I will come with you for the sake of my mate," I agree. "But Pollan and Hekkar are searching for more survivors to the east. I must send word to them."

I follow Zaryk as he begins to walk, casting a look over my shoulder to ensure Bucky is following. His enormous wings

are tucked away now the imminent threat has passed.

“I will send two of my warriors when we reach my compound. I trust they will be well-received at your encampment,” he says, arching a brow.

“Of course. It is true we have had our... *differences*, Zaryk, but your warriors will be welcomed.”

“Good. I will inform Ne’ssa that I have found her friend and we are returning,” Zaryk says.

My eyes widen as he falls quiet and his blue eyes shimmer momentarily.

“You are communicating with Ne’ssa via the mind link?” I ask when his gaze refocuses on me.

He frowns. “Of course. We are mated.”

“So you have completed the mating bond?” I ask, knowing this is the only way he would be able to communicate telepathically with Ne’ssa.

Zaryk smirks. “Your question leads me to believe that you and Ma’rah have not? It is unlike you not to take what you want, brother. Your exploits were well known on Ne’Ander.”

“As were yours,” I growl, glaring at him. “Not that it is any of your business, but Ma’rah wanted to wait. She is *gyz*.”

Zaryk nods. “Untouched. As was my mate. Ma’rah is a fine-looking female. I am surprised at your restraint.”

A primal rumble issues from my throat. “It would serve you well to keep your eyes off my mate unless you wish to choke on your own *horaz*.”

Zaryk tips his head back and laughs. “It is good to see some things never change, brother. Still making empty threats.”

My mouth twitches at the sound of my brother’s laughter. I have not been the cause of his mirth for many moons. “You should know my threats are never empty.”

Zaryk smirks and shakes his head. “How many Manx have you encountered?” he asks as we walk, changing the subject.

“Several when we first set up our encampment. None since until the one that attacked Ma’rah three solar rotations ago. I recognized him from the ship that brought us here, but that is not to say the Manx have not discovered their vessel and sent more soldiers.”

Zaryk looks over his shoulder at me, his expression dark. “It is a concern. We have killed four Manx since the females appeared. I have doubled the guard at the compound.”

“I have done the same. The increased Manx presence is no coincidence,” I observe grimly.

“It is not,” he agrees, casting me a grim look.

Are we both thinking the same thing? That it is time to bury our past and move into the future together? Stronger?

---

We finally reach the edge of the valley, and Zaryk’s compound comes into sight. There will be many T’Hal here who are not thrilled to see me, but they would not dare attack the brother of their leader.

Ma’rah is sweating and shaking in my arms, but she has not regained consciousness. The infection is spreading. I can feel the energy radiating from Zaryk, and I know he has been keeping her alive as we journeyed here, for which I am grateful. My fear for my *que’lora* is a living, breathing ache in my chest.

The gates loom ahead, and I grip Ma’rah protectively.

Whispers and murmurs surround us as Zaryk signals for the guards to open the gates for us to enter the main compound. I have not seen these people for many moons, and their curiosity, and in some cases, animosity, is written plainly on their features.

One hissed comment catches my attention as we pass.

“The Eco Prince has returned. Why is he here? The throne does not belong to him.”

I throw him an icy glare. Have they not realized that there *is* no throne? That everything we knew on Ne’Ander is gone,



plundered and razed to the ground by the *fokking* Manx?

His words only cement my belief that the old ways must make way for the new. Zaryk looks back at me, and I see the same realization in his eyes. Perhaps all is not lost between us after all.

My attention is pulled from my brother as a small female races toward us.

“Ma’rah!” she shouts, wetness leaking from her eyes as she sees my mate cradled in my arms.

Her hair is the same color as my Ma’rah’s, but her eyes are not green, they are light brown. I would almost believe they were sisters, except this woman is even shorter than Ma’rah.

The love and concern in her eyes as she looks at my mate tells me precisely who this female is.

We have finally found Ne’ssa.

## Chapter 10

### Mara

I'M SO COLD.

I'm so hot.

Freezing.

Burning.

Pain.

Every cell in my body hurts.

What's wrong with me? Snatches of memories flutter through my mind like fragments of paper tossed on the wind. Leaving the encampment to look for Nessa. Almost tumbling to my death and becoming crocodile chow. Resting in a clearing in the forest with Drakk. Then... nothing. Only pain and cold. So very, very cold.

Voices fade in and out, but I can't make sense of what they're saying.

I whimper as pain radiates from my leg, traveling through every nerve ending like fire.

"You are safe, *que'lora*. I am here. I will not leave you."

My only anchor is the hard mass of warmth pressed to my side and the low, raspy voice I've come to know so well.

Drakk.

My mate.

But I'm so tired. I try to pry my eyes open, but it's impossible.

“You have to save her, Zaryk. I can’t lose her!”

The words are laden with panic. I know that voice!

*Nessa.*

I try to say her name, but it emerges as a hoarse mumble. My tongue is thick, my mouth parched.

A soft hand squeezes mine. “Fight, Mara Lolly Legs. You’re not leaving me now I’ve just found you again.”

My mouth twitches slightly at the nickname Nessa gave me the day we met...

*“I’m scared.”*

*The girl with shiny hair and light-brown eyes squeezes my hand. “Don’t worry, I’ll look after you.”*

*This is the third foster home I’ve lived in. I was brought here this morning by Jackie—she’s something called a social worker. I’m not sure what that means exactly, but she’s always the one who brings me to a new place. And then she leaves.*

*I wasn’t at the last place for long. The man in charge there did some naughty things—I’m not sure what, but the home was closed down. So here I am, alone and afraid again.*

*“You’re not alone,” the girl with the pretty eyes says as if she’s heard my thoughts. She’s wearing a T-shirt with a mermaid on the front. “I’m Vanessa, but you’re my friend now, so you can call me Nessa. I’m five. It was my birthday two weeks ago, and I had a cake with five candles on it.”*

*“I’m Mara. I was five last week,” I whisper as we sit side by side in the dining room. The naughty man at the other place didn’t like talking when we ate, so I learned to keep quiet.*

*Nessa claps her hands in excitement. “Our birthdays are close together. I knew we were going to be best friends when I saw you arrive this morning. Did you have a birthday cake with candles?”*

*I shake my head. “I’ve never had a birthday cake or candles.”*

*“Never?” Nessa’s eyes widen when I shake my head again. She frowns. “I’ll make sure you have a birthday cake next year*

*with six candles and lots of chocolate frosting.”*

*I smile my first smile since I arrived. “I love chocolate frosting. It’s my favorite.”*

*My new best friend grins. “Mine too.” She looks me over as we finish our lunch and stand. “You’re very tall. I wish I were tall like you. And you have very long legs, like lollypop sticks. I wonder if I can stretch my legs that long. Then we’d look like sisters.” She holds her hand out to me. “Come on, Mara Lolly Legs, I’ll show you my room.”*

*I reach for Nessa’s hand, but she’s suddenly pulled away from me, sucked into a whirling vortex...*

*“Nessa!” I scream. “Nessa! Don’t leave me...”*

*“It is okay. I am here, *que’lora*. I am right here.”*

The deep voice pulls me from my dream, and my eyes fly open.

“Breathe, Ma’rah. You are well.”

“Drakk?” I whisper as his beautiful face comes into focus.

His hand settles lightly on my cheek, and his thumb moves gently back and forth, infusing me with warmth. I don’t know what happened, but I want him to hold me.

He smiles down at me and places his forehead against mine.

“That was too close, my mate. I thought I had lost you.”

“Sorry about that. It was no picnic for me either.” I smile lightly, lifting my hand to cover his on my cheek. “What happened?”

“Your leg wound was infected. The infection spread to your bloodstream.” His cerulean eyes burn into mine. “Next time, tell me you are unwell before insisting on a ten-mile hike.”

I frown, momentarily confused. “I felt a little weak before we left, but the sickness came on so suddenly. One minute, I was sleeping, and the next, I thought I was dying.”

“You almost did,” he says grimly. “You are mine to protect and cherish, Ma’rah. I will not have you risking your life. I cannot go through that again. You mean too much to me.” He

takes a shuddering breath. “If you so much as break a nail in future, I wish to know.”

Lifting my head slightly, I place a kiss on his mouth. “I’m sorry I worried you. Thank you for saving me. *Again.*”

“Thank Zaryk. It is he who has spent the last three solar rotations healing you.” Drakk tips his head toward the corner of the room.

I frown. “Who is Zaryk?”

I look around me, not recognizing this sterile place—some kind of medical facility?—or the bed I’m lying in, and startle when I see the unfamiliar T’Hal. He steps forward, and I do a double take as I see his features. He looks just like Drakk—well, not exactly. His nose is a little longer, his forehead a little broader, but they share the same high cheekbones and stubborn chin.

He steps forward. “It is good to see you awake, Ma’rah. You had us all worried for a while. I was not sure I could cleanse all of the poison from your system. We may have physical similarities, but hoo’man biology differs greatly from ours.”

“You... healed me?”

Zaryk nods. He looks exhausted. “Like my brother, my healing abilities are not what they were on Ne’Ander, so it took much longer.”

“I... Your brother?” My gaze swings from Drakk to Zaryk before landing on Drakk again. “I didn’t know you had a brother.”

“Twins. Although I am older by ten minutes,” Drakk says with a smirk. “We were... estranged.”

*Twins?* Why didn’t I know this?

“I’ve been unconscious for three days?”

“As I said, my abilities are less potent here,” Zaryk repeats. “I was able to heal much more quickly on my home world.”

“Why were you estranged?” I ask bluntly.

“That is a long story for another time,” Drakk says, avoiding my gaze. “How are you feeling?”

I frown at his change of subject but decide not to pursue it—for now. “I feel... amazing,” I reply, doing a quick internal check of my body.

“No pain?” Drakk asks, his eyes shadowed with concern.

I shake my head. “No. In fact, I can’t remember the last time I felt this good.” My gaze flicks to Drakk’s brother again. “Thank you, Zaryk. It seems I’m now indebted to you as well as Drakk.”

Zaryk looks amused and raises his brows at me. “You are welcome. Ne’ssa would never forgive me if you had died.”

My eyes widen. “N-Nessa? She’s here?”

Zaryk nods. “She will be here any *sekunt*. She would not leave your side until I insisted she get some sleep. I promised to let her know as soon as you awoke.”

No sooner have the words left his mouth than the door bursts open and my best friend explodes into the room. Her frantic gaze immediately lands on me.

“Mara? Oh, thank God,” she wails, making a beeline for me.

She clambers onto the bed, hugging me close, much like she did when we were kids and we consoled each other when one of us had a nightmare.

“Nessie,” I sob, clinging to my friend. “I thought you were...” I trail off, shaking my head as tears pour down my cheeks.

We hug and cry for endless minutes, overwhelmed with relief and happiness at finding each other again.

“We will leave you to talk,” Zaryk says as we wipe our tears.

Drakk squeezes my hand, and he and Zaryk leave the room.

And then Nessa and I are both talking at the same time, sharing our stories in a ramble of words interspersed with more hugs and plenty of tears.

“So Zaryk found you and brought you here?” I ask, clinging to my friend’s hand.

“In a nutshell.” Nessa nods. “I mean, getting back here wasn’t all plain sailing, but I’m so glad Zaryk found me and not one of those Manx fuckers. And then he gave me one of those cochlear implants”—she taps her ear—“and his chest did that glowy thing which he told me meant I was his fated mate.”

My eyes widen. “Wait. You’re Zaryk’s *que’lora*?”

“Yep. And he’s my *que’loro*. The T’Hal word for male mate. Sounds Spanish, eh?” She snickers. “Although I’m not gonna lie, I thought the guy was nuttier than squirrel shit when he first told me. I mean, come on, that fated mates crap is like something from one of those paranormal romances you read.”

“Says the woman who thinks Star Trek is the most realistic program on TV,” I snort.

“Yet look where we are,” Nessa says smugly, sweeping a hand around her. “Mated to seven-foot aliens with sparkly skin and diamond cum.”

I clear my throat. “Oh, so you know about the diamond jizz thing.”

“Uh, yeah. That stuff is freaking amazing, right? Especially when it’s inside you.” She blows out a breath and fans herself. “Dear God, I thought I was turning inside out.”

“When you say inside you...” I pause, biting my lip.

Nessa’s hand tightens on mine. “Wait. You and Drakk haven’t buried the alien sausage yet?”

“It’s only been eight days, Nessie,” I huff. “And I’ve been unconscious for three of them.”

“Still, five days is a long time with all those pheromones flying around. That’s some willpower you have, girl. How the hell did you resist? That whole mating bond thing is crazy hard to ignore. My hoo-ha was out of control.”

“We’ve done... stuff,” I mumble, my cheeks heating.

Nessa claps her hands, her eyes dancing with excitement. “Oh, shit, are you in for a treat when it happens. Several treats. *Multiple* treats, if you get my meaning.” She gives me an exaggerated wink.

“Seems like you’ve embraced all this pretty quickly,” I say suspiciously.

Nessa sobers. “Oh, believe me, I didn’t. At first, I was terrified. Then, I thought I was hallucinating. But when we arrived here and I saw some of the other women from the bus tour, I knew it was all real. And every day that passed with no sign of you was”—she shakes her head and dashes at a tear—“excruciating.”

I pull her into a hug. “For me too. I’m so glad we found each other. Can you believe we’re mated to brothers? Twins?”

“Of course I can. This is us, remember? We’ve done everything together our whole lives. Makes sense that fate, destiny, whatever the fuck sent us here, would honor our sisterhood.”

I smile, liking that thought. “Do we know where here is?”

“Zaryk’s compound. Drakk brought you here so he could heal you.”

“I meant here as in where the fuck in the universe are we? This place is like Earth, but not.”

“One of Zaryk’s men, Hoffel, is a damn genius. He can’t know for sure, but he believes we were sucked through a wormhole and brought back in time to Prehistoric Earth. But the T’Hal are from a different dimension.” Nessa’s voice lowers like she’s sharing state secrets.

“Right. Time travel. Prehistoric Earth. Different dimension,” I summarize like these phenomena are everyday occurrences. A half-hysterical laugh bubbles from my mouth. “And then The Mad Hatter arrived with Alice and Captain America, and they had Unbirthday Cake and a threesome.”

Nessa bursts out laughing. “I know, babe. It’s a lot to take in. I’m still pinching myself a week later, and... Oh, shit!”



“What’s wrong,” I ask, clutching her hand.

“They’re fighting,” she says, scrambling off the bed. “Quick. We have to stop them.”

“Who’s fighting?” I ask, throwing off the furs.

Nessa tosses me my clothes. “Zaryk and Drakk.”

“How do you know they’re fighting?”

She taps her temple. “Mind link.”

*Mind link?*

Nessa speaks again before I can open my mouth to ask what the fuck a mind link is.

“Hurry. Before they kill each other.”

# Chapter 11

## Drakk

ZARYK'S FIST hits my face, and blood sprays.

"This is *my* domain," he growls. "You do not give orders to my people."

I block his next blow and deliver a gut punch that has him doubling over. "I was not giving orders, you *fokker*, merely suggesting to your second it would be wise to strengthen the guards at your gate."

Zaryk rears up, catching me in the chin with his knee and sending me sprawling on the ground. "Trying to take over, like always, *brother*."

"And you refuse to listen to anyone's counsel, like always. Least of all mine," I spit, sweeping my leg out and taking his feet from under him.

We roll in the dirt, aware of the crowd we are drawing and their shouts and cheers as we pummel each other. It has been many moons since Zaryk and I engaged in hand-to-hand combat, and we are both baying for blood.

Zaryk delivers a bone-crunching punch to my jaw, which makes me see stars.

I retaliate with an uppercut, which sends his head whipping back.

Punch after punch, blow after blow, hit after hit, we continue to punish each other until we are both panting and spitting blood. But *fokk*, it feels good. We knew this was coming from the moment we saw each other in the forest after so many

solar rotations and so much to settle between us. This battle is a physical outlet to partially settle our grievances and enable us to move forward. At least, this is what I hope.

But first...

I land a fist in Zaryk's eye, and we roll again, each striving for the upper hand. Much as we did back on Ne'Ander.

"Stop!"

Ma'rah's voice reaches me through a haze, distracting me for a split second—long enough for Zaryk to land a blow to my ribs.

"Zaryk Diamondblood, Eco Prince of Ne'Ander, *que'lora* to Vanessa Landers, you will stop what you are doing this minute!"

My brother's head whips to his mate, watching as the crowd parts for her like a queen. She comes to a halt in front of us with her hands on her hips, her light-brown eyes flashing fire.

"Stay out of this, *que'lora*," Zaryk growls, wiping blood from his face as he hauls himself to his feet.

"I will not stay out of it, big guy." She crosses her arms over her chest and taps her foot. "Do you intend to kill each other, or are you done with your pissing competition?"

Zaryk looks at me in disgust. "You have urinated?"

I throw my brother an icy glare as I stand. "I would not urinate on you if you were on fire."

He takes a step closer. "And I would not offer you my hand if you were drowning in the Strentian Sea. I would not—"

"Enough!" Ma'rah shouts, stepping between us. "Stop behaving like spoiled children. You are brothers, Twins. Do you know how valuable family is?"

I open my mouth to speak, but my mate plows on.

"No? Then let me tell you. Nessa and I never knew our parents. We didn't grow up with their love or guidance. We didn't have brothers or sisters. So we became sisters. We became family in every way that matters. Did we argue? Of

course. But we would never allow our disagreements to ruin what we have. Because family? It's precious. It's everything. And you should both be ashamed of yourselves."

By the time my mate has finished, she is breathing hard, her tits heaving, cheeks flushed, green eyes sparkling with anger.

And she is right.

*Fokk*, she is magnificent.

"Couldn't have said it better myself," Nessa states. She grasps Zaryk's hand and tugs. "Let's get you cleaned up, and then it's time you and your brother put an end to this ridiculous feud."

I hide a smirk as my brother's tiny mate leads him away like a whipped *pog*.

"Same goes for you, buster," Ma'rah snaps, wiping the smirk off my face. She grabs my hand. "Off you go." She waves her other hand at the crowd. "Show's over. Nothing to see here."

They all grumble as they disperse, some laughing under their breath as their Princes are brought into line by their mates.

My eyes drop to the sway of Ma'rah's wide hips as I allow her to lead me away, and my *horaz* swells painfully. I want to scoop her up, carry her to the nearest horizontal surface, and sink into her wet heat.

But first, I must salvage my relationship with my brother.

---

"So, spill," Ne'ssa demands from her chair.

We are in Zaryk's dwelling, Ma'rah and I sitting on the long seat with Zaryk in another chair opposite Ne'ssa. His healer has tended to the injuries we inflicted on each other, not that it was needed. Fortunately, our species heals quickly.

"Spill? What do you wish to spill?" Zaryk asks in confusion.

"It's an expression." Ne'ssa waves a dismissive hand. "Start talking. Why are you two fighting?"

"That is a good question," I say, blowing out a heavy breath as my gaze catches my brother's. "Our differences seem

irrelevant now we are here. We have far greater matters to contend with.”

“You are not wrong, brother.” Zaryk sighs and shakes his head before turning his gaze to Ne’ssa. “Ne’Ander was a utopia. The T’Hal lived in harmony with their planet, taking only what we needed to sustain us and giving back to the earth to ensure regeneration. Our livelihoods were built on trade, not currency. The T’Hal Royal Family were revered for their pure bloodline, which is connected to the core of Ne’Ander and its ecosystem.

“Hence your sparkly skin, big muscles, and diamond jizz,” Ne’ssa says with a smirk.

“Yes.” I nod. “Zaryk and I were born to the reigning T’Hal King and Queen and had abilities unique even to the Diamond Bloods. I could manipulate the atmosphere, and Zaryk had unprecedented healing abilities. As younglings, our rivalry was friendly, with each of us striving to outdo the other in feats of strength and wisdom. But, as we grew older, so did the weight of our royal responsibilities. As our father’s retirement approached, it was time to choose the next T’Hal King. Drakk and I both believed we were the right choice, and our rivalry became something far... darker.”

“So succession didn’t automatically fall to the eldest son?” Ma’rah asks from beside me, her brow furrowed with a slight frown.

“No,” Zaryk confirms. “There was no first-born succession on Ne’Ander. Rather, it was based upon worthiness, which placed huge boundaries and points of contention between us. Drakk believed his ability to control the climate was essential for the survival of Ne’Ander’s harsh environment, while I was convinced that my gift of healing was what the planet needed to thrive and flourish.”

“Our feud tore the royal family apart,” Zaryk says roughly, his jaw clenching. “We each had loyal followers who clashed in battle. The palace, once a symbol of unity, became a battleground. The T’Hal Council of Elders tried to mediate, but their efforts were in vain. We would not listen.”

“The situation between us became untenable, and the once-proud T’Hal race began to crumble,” I continue when my brother falls quiet. “The Manx, a technically advanced species from a neighboring star system, became aware of the turmoil on Ne’Ander. They had depleted the carbon resources on Nexus, their home planet, and exploited our weakness to launch an attack. Zaryk and I were captured, along with our parents and many others. We were imprisoned on a Manx vessel with other species who had also fallen prey to the Manx’s cruel objective. The vessel was bound for their prison planet, Primus 2.”

“The Manx quickly realized they had uncovered an endless supply of power and energy with the carbon-rich bodies of the T’Hal, of which the royal family were the most valuable. They hooked us up to their matrix, used us like batteries...” Zaryk trails off, his voice harsh with emotion.

Ma’rah reaches for my hand, having already heard this part of the story. I link our fingers, taking comfort from her touch.

Ne’ssa stands and moves toward Zaryk, settling in his lap and holding him close.

“Obviously, we did not reach Primus 2,” I say gruffly.

Ne’ssa rests her head on Zaryk’s shoulder. “Those Manx fuckers have a lot to answer for.”

“Understatement,” Ma’rah murmurs sadly. She moves closer, and I tuck her beneath my arm as she sinks against me.

“So much needless pain and destruction,” Ne’ssa says with an unhappy sigh. She looks at me and then Zaryk. “Don’t you think it’s time to let bygones be bygones? Start thinking with your brains instead of your ball sacks?”

“What are ball sacks?” Zaryk asks.

“Those soft, dangly bits between your legs,” Ne’ssa says dryly.

“My *skrotim*? You do not like them? That is not what you said the other night when your mouth was—”

“Okay, okay. We don’t need to hear what her mouth was doing to your *skrotim*,” Ma’rah cuts him off.

Suddenly, all I can think about is the delight of my mate's mouth on my *skrotim*.

"The point is, you've both been idiots, and it's time to leave the past where it is and focus on the future," Ne'ssa says wisely.

Ma'rah nods. "Your parents wouldn't want you fighting like this. They would want you to work together. You're far stronger united than divided."

"Your *que'lora* is right," Zaryk says gruffly.

"As is yours," I concede with an abrupt nod. "I no longer wish us to be at war, brother. The Manx is the real enemy."

"I concur," Zaryk says, holding my gaze.

"Hallelujah," Ne'ssa says, pressing her palms together. Her gaze swings to Zaryk. "Okay, big guy. Time for the painful part."

He frowns and touches his swollen eye. "I believe we did the painful part outside."

She shakes her head. "Nope. Now you both apologize to each other."

Zaryk looks outraged. "I have never apologized to him, just as he would not."

"Well, now is as good a time to start as any, my prince."

His eyes darken with lust. "You know what happens when you call me that, *que'lora*."

Nessa smirks. "Oh, I know exactly what happens. I get what I want." She extricates herself from Zaryk's embrace and stands. "Come on, big guy. On your feet for this."

Zaryk grunts as he rises from the chair. "You will pay for this later, my mate."

Ne'ssa clutches her heart and flutters her lashes. "Oh, I hope so."

"You too, buster," Ma'rah says, standing and tugging me to my feet.

“You will also pay later, *que'lora*,” I growl.

Her green eyes capture mine, her message loud and clear as she says, “Oh, I’m counting on it, *que'loro*.”

*Fokk*. My *horaz* almost leaps from my leg coverings at the promise in her eyes.

I turn to Zaryk, willing to do anything to get my Ma’rah beneath me on soft furs. “I have been stubborn and prideful, and for that, I am sorry, brother.”

“And I am sorry for my bitterness and jealousy. I would like us to move forward, Drakk. Together.”

“Nice,” Ne’ssa says with a pleased smile. “Now, in our culture, we shake hands as a sign of trust and respect.”

Zaryk’s mouth curls up in a smile, and I know what is coming.

“In our culture, we do this,” he says right before he plants his fist in my face, knocking me back a few feet. “Your turn, brother,” he invites, pointing to his cheek.

My punch is equally hard, causing him to stagger back.

“It is good to know you have not lost your touch,” he mumbles, rubbing his jaw.

“Oh, for heaven’s sake,” Ne’ssa says in exasperation. “Neanderthals, the both of you.”

Zaryk steps forward and slaps my shoulder. We grin at each other as we turn to look at our mates and say, “Yes. Yes, we are.”



## Chapter 12

### Mara

AS SOON AS we're through the door of the dwelling Zaryk has allocated us, Drakk is on me. He scoops me up in his arms and strides to the bed, tossing me onto the furs.

"It's time for your payment que'lora," he rasps, his blue eyes glowing with dark promise.

I lick my lips, nervous now that the moment has arrived. "This is more than the mating bond, isn't it?" I ask uncertainly, waving a hand between us. "I mean, would we still like each other without it?"

Drakk's eyes soften. "I cannot lie, Ma'rah. The mating bond is a big part of it, but I would want you, desire you, without it. Many of my people join for life without the mating bond."

I frown. "So it doesn't happen for everyone?"

"No. There were many successful, long-lived unions on Ne'Ander among the T'Hal without it. But it is common knowledge that the mating bond enhances everything for those fortunate enough to experience it. It will tie us together, body and soul. You may be small physically, but you are strong in mind, spirit, and heart, my mate. I have never met a female like you, and I cannot imagine sealing my fate with another. When I thought I would lose you, I feared I would succumb to the *däli* sickness," he says, his jaw clenching.

"*Däli* sickness?"

"A sickness that causes insanity," Drakk explains, his eyes now dark with remembered horror.

I shuffle to the end of the bed where he's standing and wrap my arms around his waist. "I'm here, Drakk. With you," I murmur, pressing my cheek against his hard chest.

He cups my chin in his big hand, tilting my head back so our eyes meet. "Yes," he rasps. "With me is where you belong, Ma'rah. Always."

Before I can reply, Drakk's mouth claims mine in a passionate kiss, his tongue delving deep. Kissing is not customary to the T'Hal, and the first time I pressed my mouth to his, he was surprised and a little shocked. But, holy crap, he's taken to kissing like a pig to shit. Okay, not the best analogy. A duck to water. That's better.

He bites and licks at my mouth, leaving no part untouched in his need to taste me. And that need is mutual. My body is on fire as the mating bond swirls between us, beckoning us to join our bodies in the ultimate union. Nessa was right—how have I resisted this beautiful, protective, possessive alien for so long? Seven days may as well be seven years right now as my body demands to be filled by his on an elemental level.

"You called me your mate before," Drakk growls against my mouth. "It is the first time you have said those words, Ma'rah. I need to hear you say them again. Am I your mate, Ma'rah?"

"Yes," I gasp, my eyes flying to his. "You are mine."

"I want to bed you," he says harshly, fisting his hand in my hair and tugging my head back. "Tell me now if you are not ready."

Heat pools in my core. "I'm ready, Drakk. Ready to be yours."

His blue gaze bores into mine as if I'm his prey. "Good, because I want it now. *Need it, que'lora.*"

I gulp. "I need it too, my mate. Need *you.*"

Drakk releases my hair and steps back. "Remove your body coverings, Ma'rah. I wish to look upon my mate's soft body. I wish to gorge on your *vasook* until you spill your female juices into my mouth. And then I will feed my *horaz* into your hot, tight sheath until I am so deep, you will not know where I end and you begin."

I whimper. *Whimper*. Because, ye gods, my alien has a dirty mouth on him. And I love it. I love *him*. I don't know how or when or if it's even possible to fall in love with a seven-foot alien with diamond jizz in the space of a week—but, well, I have.

He's taken care of me in every way, saved me from danger, fed me, given me other-worldly orgasms, and saved me from danger again. All while making me feel cherished and precious. And yes, I know I should be all "girl power," but I *like* being taken care of. I like that my alien savior is huge and brawny and an alpha male with a cinnamon roll center where I'm concerned. Because apart from Nessa, I've never had anyone take care of me. No one has put my needs above theirs.

Drakk is already undressing, unlooping his baldric from his shoulder and tossing it on a nearby chair. He makes quick work of his pants, leaving him gloriously naked to my greedy eyes. It's not the first time I've seen his cock, but it never gets any less impressive. It curves toward his ridged abdominals, a bead of sparkling pre-cum pooling on the end.

I lick my lips, wondering how it will taste and how much of him I can fit in my mouth. Drakk has given me oral several times over the last week, but I've yet to return the favor, mainly because it will probably involve unhinging my jaw.

"Ma'rah," he growls, pulling me from my rampant thoughts. "Remove your body coverings, or I will do it for you."

*Yeah, like that's a threat.*

Still, I find myself suddenly shy. It's not like he hasn't seen me naked before, but only in the heat of passion when I've woken to his head between my thighs, my shirt pushed up around my neck, and his hands on my tits. This is different somehow.

My cheeks heat as I quickly remove my clothes, desperate for his heated skin against mine.

"Do not be shy," Drakk says, his cock bobbing and his heavy sac swaying as he advances on me. "Your body is lush and *fokking* perfect for me, *que'lora*. I am panting like a *pog* at the

sight of all that flesh waiting for my touch, my mouth. I would die a happy T'Hal between your soft thighs, sucking your critterous until you arrive."

"Um, that's sucking my *clitoris* until I *come*," I correct him with a soft laugh.

Damn cochlear implant still has trouble translating certain words and phrases. Doesn't matter either way because my clit understood and is already anticipating his mouth and tongue.

I lie back as Drakk prowls to the bed, his knee sliding between my thighs as he looms over me. His eyes drop to my mouth as I lick my lips, and they darken with lust.

His hands tangle in my hair and his mouth lands on mine, holding me where he wants me as his tongue plunges between my lips. He bites down on my bottom lip, giving it a painful nip, and I whimper, loving the hint of pain with pleasure.

My whimper seems to light something instinctual inside him because his kiss becomes ravenous, leaving no part of my mouth untouched. The kiss is messy, but I don't care. He licks and nips and sucks at my mouth, much like he does when he eats me out.

Drakk pulls back to look down at me, his chest heaving like he's just fought a mighty battle.

"You are a vision of beauty, my mate, with your wide, hungry eyes and swollen lips. And these,"—he cups my breasts and squeezes them together—"I want to slide my *horaz* between your tits while I spill my seed over them."

"Pearl necklace," I say breathlessly, remembering it from one of my romance books and thinking how hot it was. Only mine would be a diamond necklace because only the best alien jizz for this girl, right?

"I do not know this pearl necklace, but you will look *fokking* magnificent with my seed covering your nipples and throat and dripping from your mouth."

"Sounds nice," I gasp as he kisses his way down my body, nipping at my stomach rolls and licking my stretch marks. He

seems to love the ugly silvery lines that suddenly appeared with a massive growth spurt in my teens.

Yeah, my alien caveman has stolen my heart, the sneaky fucker.

Every small caress is delicious. Lower and lower until his lips reach my inner thighs, where his kisses are interspersed with nips and gentle lashes of his tongue.

“Bend your knees and show me your beautiful cunt,” Drakk demands, biting my inner thigh.

Holy hell. Where did he learn that word? What happened to *vasook*?

I obey instinctively, planting my feet on the bed and spreading my pussy lips with my fingers.

“So *fokking* wet for me, Ma’rah,” he growls, his eyes on my pink center. “You are dripping onto the furs as if I have been *fokking* you with my tongue.”

He covers my hand with his, and I raise myself on my elbows for a better look, watching as our fingers stroke the slick lips of my sex in unison. When they graze my clit, I fall back with a whimper, squeezing my eyes closed as we both work my bundle of nerves.

Faster.

Faster.

Until I’m teetering on the edge and my thighs are trembling.

Then he removes his hand, taking mine with it and bringing it to his lips to suck my fingers clean.

“Why did you stop?” I ask, aware of the whine in my voice.

“Because I want to be inside you when you arrive this time.”

“Come,” I correct automatically, but who the fuck cares? Arrive, come, climax—I’ll have all of them, please, and an orgasm for dessert.

“Are you ready for me, *que’lora*? Ready to be mine? Ready for my big cock to fill your tight cunt?”

Jesus, his English is coming on in leaps and bounds.

*“Hawa, que’loro,”* I huff. *Yes, my mate.*

His eyes kindle at the T’Hal words, and I swear his chest rumbles with a primitive growl. His mating colors are swirling in earnest now, and I trace them with my fingers, marveling at their beauty.

Drakk slots his hips between my thighs, fisting his cock at my entrance and rubbing the broad head over my folds. “My pre-seed will prepare your intimate tissues.”

I gasp as his shaft bumps over my clit. “Please, Drakk. I need you inside me. I need all of you.”

“As you wish, my mate,” he rasps, pushing the first inch inside me.

I tense, waiting for the pain.

“Oh,” I huff, my eyes widening in surprise.

Some of the bodice rippers I read led me to believe his cock would burst through my hymen like a football player charging through a marketing banner. But no. Other than a slight pinch, Drakk sinks all the way inside me until our pelvises are pressed together. Still, he’s so long and thick that I swear I can feel the end of him poking my pancreas.

“Are you well?” Drakk grits, holding still inside me.

“I thought it would hurt, what with the baseball bat you call a cock,” I explain, moving my hips experimentally.

*“Fokk, you drive me insane when you move like that,”* he groans.

“Like this?” I tease, circling my hips.

Drakk’s jaw tics, and he releases a long groan. “You will be the death of me, *que’lora.*”

He pulls out before driving back in with a snap of his hips, and it’s my turn to groan.

“Then let’s go together, *que’loro,*” I pant, raising my hips to meet his next thrust.

“Anywhere. I will follow you anywhere, my Ma’rah, even into death.”

His words bring unexpected tears to my eyes. I cup his face, tugging his head down for a deep kiss, hoping it conveys everything I’m unable to say yet.

Breaking the kiss, Drakk grabs one of my legs and hooks it around his waist, opening me further to the invasion of his cock. My boobs jiggle with each thrust of his hips, and he dips his head to suckle my nipple.

I gasp as he bites down, muttering something against my breast. Then I hear it.

“Mine.”

Thrust.

“Mine.”

Thrust.

“*Fokking* mine, Ma’rah.”

He repeats it like a litany as he fucks me. Hard.

And I love it. Every. Single. Second.

His cock hits some secret place inside me with each pass until I’m writhing and whimpering beneath him. Begging. *Pleading* for release.

His colors swirl faster. Brighter. Tendrils of light unfurl from his chest, reaching toward mine.

“It is happening,” he grunts as his hips piston against mine.

I watch in amazement as the colored tendrils sink into my chest, spreading like a rainbow lattice before being absorbed by my body.

“What—”

My question dies on my tongue as I splinter into a thousand shards of pleasure. I’m barely aware of Drakk’s roar as he climaxes, spilling his seed inside me, and the ecstasy I was experiencing now seems like a drop in a vast ocean as my body implodes.

I knew Drakk's super spunk had orgasmic qualities when he came all over my stomach and chest every morning, but when his cum jets into pussy? I have no words. No thoughts. I'm pure sensation. The pleasure turns me inside out. Upside down. Back to front. Topsy turvy.

On and on it goes until I'm sure I've set a Guinness World Record for the longest, hardest orgasm ever. Until my voice breaks and my scream becomes soundless. Until everything around me fades...

*Ma'rah. Ma'rah! Speak to me.*

I pry my eyes open to see Drakk looming over me. *Hey, gorgeous*, I slur, wondering why I sound drunk.

*Are you well, my mate?* he demands, his brow bunched with concern, his eyes frantic.

*Soooo, so well.* I sigh blissfully. *Did I check out there for a minute?*

*Yes*, he replies, releasing a relieved breath. *You lost consciousness.*

I giggle. I never giggle. *You made me come so hard that I passed out.*

*It was the mating bond*, Drakk says, rolling to his side and hauling me against him.

I frown and touch his mouth. "Um, how did you say that without moving your lips?"

*It is the mind link. It has activated now we have completed the mating bond.*

My eyes widen as I recall Nessa mentioning the mind link. It's how she knew Drakk and Zaryk were fighting earlier.

"We can communicate telepathically?" I squeak.

Drakk sits up, pulling me onto his lap and stroking my damp hair from my face. "Yes," he says aloud. "You were just doing so. Try it again. Simply think your thoughts and project them to me."



I nod, a little overwhelmed to have another person in my head. *So now we're mated, we can always communicate like this? We don't need the cochlear implant?*

*Yes, we can communicate like this now, within a specific range, but we still need the implant to understand other species here.*

He places his hand over my heart and rests his forehead against mine, using his other arm to pull me down on his already hardening length. I don't need a mind link or translation device to know his meaning.

*Will it be like it was before?* I ask uncertainly. *"I never thought I'd say this, but I'm not sure I can survive another bodygasm like that.*

Drakk chuckles. *It was only like that because we completed the mating bond. But—he presses into me an inch—there is still much pleasure to be had, my mate.*

*Oh, goody.* I lift my hands to his face, caressing his strong features.

I gasp as he grips my hips and pulls me down hard. He groans as he fills me completely. I clutch his shoulders, and my head drops back at the wondrous fullness.

*So responsive to me.* Drakk's voice is a growl in my head.

*Harder. I need it harder. Please, fuck me harder.*

He wraps one hand around my nape and grips my hip with the other, bouncing me up and down on his thick cock.

*You are insatiable, my mate.* His deep voice echoes in my head. *You will be sore tomorrow, but I cannot help myself. I need to be connected to you in every way for as long as possible.*

I can't hold back my release. He's too perfect. This time, it's a gentle wave of pleasure, ebbing and flowing through my body. And then he spills inside me, elevating the gentle wave to a tsunami of hot, delicious ecstasy.

Afterward, I can barely keep my eyes open as Drakk tucks us beneath the furs.

“Sleep now, *que’lora*,” he murmurs aloud, kissing my forehead.

And I do.

## Chapter 13

### Drakk

I GAZE at my mate as she sleeps peacefully. She is breathtaking with her shiny hair, flushed cheeks, and squidgy tits. I love those creamy mounds with their dusky tips. Her delicate body is worn out from completing the mating bond and our satisfying coupling. I do not understand why another male has not claimed her before, but I am glad she is now mine.

I have never experienced anything like the connection we now share. I heard my people speak of the intensity of the mating bond back on Ne'Ander, but nothing could have prepared me for the reality. Pleasure beyond belief. It was as if our very DNA merged when she absorbed my mating colors. Usually, when this happens with T'Hal females, it establishes the mind link and primes their bodies to reproduce and grow our younglings.

But Ma'rah is hoo'man. I do not know how the bond will affect her. I frown, remembering how she lost consciousness during the act. I should have considered the risk to her before sealing our bond. Not that it would have changed anything. Once activated, it is a matter of if, not when. Those who chose to ignore or reject the bond on Ne'Ander fell victim to the dali sickness. It happened rarely, but it did happen, and death was inevitable following much suffering.

I am glad Ma'rah and I have avoided such a fate. My mate has become more precious to me than my own life, and the mating bond has only amplified my emotions and protective tendencies.

Kissing her forehead, I pull the furs over her delectable body and reluctantly leave the sleeping platform.

I need to speak with my brother.

---

Zaryk answers the door to his dwelling and steps back to allow me inside.

“Is everything okay?” Ne’ssa asks from the kitchen area when she sees me. “Mara—”

“Is sleeping,” I confirm. “She is exhausted.”

Her eyes drop to my chest, where my colors are now a muted glow, and she grins. “Well, well. As Ne’ssa would say, you have finally buried the bone.”

“I did not bury any bones,” I grunt. “I have been pleasuring my beautiful mate.”

Ne’ssa shares a look with Zaryk. “If she’s anything like me, she’ll be out for hours.”

Zaryk grins as he wraps an arm around her waist and pulls her close. “Yes, my mate. You were very loud for such a small female.”

Ne’ssa’s cheeks redden in what I now know is a blush, something my mate does a lot. “Right. Well, I need to go and check on the other ladies. I’ll leave you two to talk.” She kisses Zaryk and heads for the door. “And no fighting!” she throws over her shoulder, closing the door behind her.

Silence stretches between my brother and me as we stare at each other. The awkwardness between us is to be expected after so many moons of being at war.

Zaryk clears his throat. “Our mates are very close.”

I nod. “It seems fate has blessed us both with loving, resilient females.”

He moves to the chair, indicating I should sit opposite. “There is nothing I would not do for Ne’ssa. She is... everything to me.”

“It is the same for me with Ma’rah,” I say, settling in the chair and fixing my gaze on my brother. “Ne’ssa and Ma’rah have been instrumental in helping us to resolve our differences. I am ashamed to say that it took the loss of everything I knew and loved to realize the importance of family. Even when we crashed here, we could not resolve our differences and went our separate ways. There was still too much bad blood between us.”

“Yet we did not venture far from the other,” Zaryk says, echoing my earlier thoughts. “I dreamed of this day, brother.”

“You still have the dreams?” I ask, recalling the visions that began when he was a youngling.

“Yes, although they have been less frequent here until recently. It is how I knew you would be in the clearing, although I did not see Ma’rah in my vision.”

“You sought me out?”

“I did,” he confirms. “We have both observed an increase in The Manx presence since the arrival of the hoo’man females, and we agree that it is not a coincidence. Hoffel believes the anomaly that brought the females here caused a disturbance large enough to alert The Manx.”

“And they sent a scout ship to investigate,” I finish. “Ma’rah said there were fifty more who disappeared with her and Ne’ssa. Who knows how many more were pulled through the anomaly?”

We fall quiet, lost in our thoughts, as we try both to contemplate the increased Manx presence.

“We can no longer keep our clans separated, Zaryk,” I say, finally breaking the silence. “More Manx will be arriving if they are not already here. We will need every one of our warriors to stand any chance against them should they decide to attack.”

My brother leans forward. “You wish to merge compounds?”

“No. I wish to establish a new, united compound.”

“And who will lead this new, improved compound, brother? You?” Zaryk asks, his voice heavy with cynicism.

“Yes.”

My brother’s expression darkens with anger. “Of course. I should have known you would want the mantel of ruler based on past—”

“With you,” I interrupt. “I am suggesting that we lead together.”

His brow rises in surprise. “Together? Two rulers?”

“Why not? We are stronger together than apart.” I pause, knowing I need to discard my pride in this instance. “Our people need you. *I* need you.”

Zaryk stares at me for a long moment before his face splits into a grin. “I believe we will make fine kings, brother, and our mates will be exceptional queens.”

---

I return to our allocated dwelling feeling lighter than I have in many moons. Ma’rah is still sleeping, so I slip out of my leg coverings and climb in beside her, pulling her against me.

“I missed you,” she mumbles sleepily. “Where did you go?”

“To talk with Zaryk.”

Her eyes pop open. “Everything okay?”

“All is well, *que’lora.*”

“You didn’t hit each other, did you?”

I chuckle. “No, we did not. We have come to an understanding.”

“Oh?”

I roll so she is beneath me, bracing my hands on either side of her so as not to crush her. “I will tell you all in the morning, but until then, I need to hear you scream my name again.”

Her “Oh” is breathy this time, and her emerald eyes darken with need.

I lower my head, slipping my tongue between her lips and kissing her. *Fokk*, just the taste of her mouth is enough to harden my *horaz*. She moans as I nip at her lips, *fokking* her mouth with my tongue.

“I want to slide my cock between your tits, que’lora,” I rasp as I trail kisses down her neck.

“O-okay,” she whispers, licking her lips.

I raise myself over her, one knee on either side of her rib cage. My gaze falls to her tits. *Fokk*, they are mouth-watering. Like the ripe *melonia* on Ne’Ander.

I grip my shaft and pump it a few times, collecting the fluid at the end and smearing it between her tits. Ma’rah moans as she watches, her eyes hooded.

“You like watching me pleasure myself, my mate?”

She nods, wetting her lips with the tip of her tongue.

Cupping her beautiful mounds with both hands, I push them together, making a channel for my cock. She whimpers as I thumb her nipples and slide between them, slowly *fokking* her there.

Her breathy pants tell me she enjoys watching the slide of my shaft and my cockhead appearing and disappearing beneath her chin. I fall into her gaze as I pick up speed, my rhythm stuttering as my release becomes imminent. I roar as I spurt, my *sperma* jetting over her tits, her nipples, her chin, and even her mouth.

I watch as my creamy seed sinks into her flesh and release her tits to scoop up a blob before it disappears. Bringing my fingers to her mouth, she opens and sucks them clean.

Her pupils dilate as my seed takes effect. Her back arches off the bed, almost dislodging me as her orgasm slams into her. I love her passion. I love watching her reach her peak. I love *her*.

I claim her plump mouth as she rides out the last of her climax until she finally relaxes on the sleeping platform. Too

exhausted to do anything other than mumble beneath her breath, her breathing evens out, and she sleeps.

I lie next to her and tug her to my side, throwing a leg over hers, my face nuzzled into her throat.

And I join her in sleep.



# Chapter 14

## Mara

### THREE MONTHS Later

I wipe my sweaty palms on my pants before grabbing the door handle and entering the med bay.

Like all the structures, it's new and a far cry from the small, dingy room I entered when I met Mattul that first day. It's a blend of ancient and modern, like the rest of the compound. Drakk and Zaryk's healers have come together to provide medical support to the inhabitants of our new home. The salvaged tech allows for various diagnoses and healing, along with the herbal remedies and elixirs.

Uniting the clans wasn't without its difficulties. We lost some of the T'Hal who couldn't relinquish the old ways and get behind two leaders. They left with a few other species to establish their own encampment. I thought it was a mistake—there's safety in numbers, after all—but Drakk and Zaryk made it clear they would be welcomed back at any point if they changed their minds.

Drakk and Zaryk went back and forth about the best location for the new compound, with Nessa and I mediating when necessary. There was a lot of water under the bridge between them, and forgiveness has been vital in repairing their relationship, but they grow closer with each passing day.

In the end, we settled on a midway point between the two original encampments on higher ground. Knowing the surrounding land was a huge advantage and made transporting and rebuilding much easier. Our new home is a strange mix of

organic and tech salvaged from the crashed Manx ship, but it works. Having a mate who can uproot trees for building materials and create a water source was handy. The great lake protects the compound on one side, and sturdy walls encompass the other three sides, protecting the five hundred-plus species within, mostly T'Hal. If the Manx attack, we'll see them coming, which gives us the advantage for defense.

Four more women were recovered from the bus tour, but two didn't make it. The other two immediately bonded with T'Hal mates. Becky, the bride-to-be from the bus tour, has taken the transition to this world the hardest. One second, she was due to get married. The next, she was here, and Lattan, Drakk's second in command, was claiming her as his mate. Or rather, trying to claim her because so far, she's resisted. God only knows how because that bond shit is powerful stuff, and they're both suffering more each day. Drakk says if they don't complete their bond, they'll succumb to the *dali* sickness, which will eventually be fatal for both.

I get it. How do you go from preparing to spend your life with one man only to be sucked into a new world and bonded to a seven-foot alien? Still, I don't want to lose Becky or Lattan. The choice between completing the mating bond or dying doesn't seem much of a choice to me.

As the "queens" of the clan, Nessa and I have fallen naturally into the role of acclimatizing the women and adding our influence on the new compound. Drakk and Zaryk involve us in many of their decisions for the camp's welfare, which is just as well, as we both have a lot to say.

The Manx threat seems to have diminished, with no further sightings. They could be anywhere on the planet. We know they have an agenda. We just don't know what yet or why they're waiting.

"Let's do this," I say, glancing down at Bucky. If he's not with me, he's with Nessa, like a purple, four-eyed watchdog.

"My queen, to what do I owe the honor?" Mattul asks as I enter the med lab.

“The whole “queen” thing doesn’t sit right with me, Mattul. I’m as far from “queenly” as it gets. We’re friends, so please call me Mara.”

“You are just like Ne’ssa,” Mattul sighs, tipping his head toward a private cubicle. “She does not like it either, but you are both mated to T’Hal royalty. You are as much our people now as we are yours.”

His words make me all warm and glowy inside because I feel the same way. I frown as the rest of his words sink in. “Wait, Nessa’s here? Is she okay?” I approach the cubicle Mattul indicated before he can reply.

Nessa is reclining on a treatment bed, her eyes closed, her complexion pale. “Hey, Mara,” she says with a little wave.

I narrow my gaze on her as I step inside. “Don’t ‘Hey, Mara’ me. What’s up? Are you sick?”

“Not exactly,” Nessa says with a sheepish grin. “I missed my period.”

My heart stutters. “Jesus! Oh, shit. Uh, I mean, what the fuck? Ah, crap. Sorry, that’s not what you need to hear right now.”

“Believe me, it’s nothing I haven’t been saying to myself for the last three days. I finally pulled up my big girl panties and came to see Mattul, seeing as how we’re a little short on pregnancy tests here,” she says with a wry smile. “Apparently, their tech can confirm pregnancy from a blood test. So, here I am, waiting to discover if I’m knocked up with an alien-human hybrid on a strange planet with no real OBGYN services or gas and air.” She pauses, eyeing me shrewdly. “Why are you here?”

I clear my throat. “I’ve been puking every morning for the last two weeks, my boobs hurt, and I can’t stop peeing.”

Nessa’s eyes widen. “Oh, fuck.”

I nod. “Yeah.”

Nessa surprises me by bursting out laughing. “Of *course*, that’s why you’re here. I mean, it makes sense, right?”

Nessa scoots over, and I lie beside her as we dissolve into hysterical laughter. “What the fuck are we going to do?”

Nessa reaches for my hand. “Get through it together like we always do.”

Tears prick my eyes, and I dash them away. “Fucking hormones.”

Bucky hops onto the bed, all four eyes blinking at us as if figuring out what’s going on.

“Is everything well in here?” Mattul asks, poking his head through the curtain, no doubt alerted by our hysteria.

Nessa and I look at each other and grin before I turn to Mattul and say, “We’re going to need another blood test.”

---

“What do we tell our guys?” Nessa asks an hour later, reclining on the makeshift sofa at the dwelling Drakk and I share. Bucky is curled up beside her, trilling softly as he sleeps.

“The truth. That their super sperm means we’re carrying their alien offspring?” I suggest, boiling the water for the herbal tea Mattul gave us. Apparently, it helps with nausea and is beneficial to our growing babies.

Nessa snorts. “This is so not how I expected my life to play out.”

I laugh. “Me, neither. But we both wanted the husband and kids and security. The whole wormhole to a different world and seven-foot, horny aliens thing is just a bonus.”

Buck is almost dislodged as Nessa sits up but quickly climbs into her lap and promptly goes back to sleep. Nessa turns serious hazel eyes on me. “You really believe that? That it was a bonus?”

Do I? I pause as I pour hot water into two mugs with the herbal tea. I shrug. “I just know I’m happier here than I ever was on our Earth. Home has always been wherever you are,” I say as I carry the mugs to the couch and sit beside my friend, “but now home also includes Drakk and Zaryk.”

“You love him,” Nessa says softly, taking the mug I hand her.

“With all I am. He’s everything I’ve ever wanted. Loving, protective, possessive yet supportive.” I grin. “Tall.”

“Yeah, our aliens are pretty damned amazing.” Nessa sighs, then pulls a face as she sips her tea. “God, this is fucking disgusting.”

I take a sip of mine. “Tastes like sweaty socks with a hint of piss.”

Nessa laughs. “Now I’m worried you know how either of those tastes.”

I grin. “Reminds me of that godawful broth they served in the foster home.”

“Ugh, don’t remind me, or I’ll never be able to drink this stuff, no matter how beneficial Mattul says it is,” she says, glaring at her mug.

A ball of panic forms in my stomach as the reality of our situation washes over me. “What the hell are we doing, Nessie?” I whisper. “We have no idea if we’re carrying something that will explode from our stomachs like that thing in Alien. Not to mention how long we’ll be pregnant. What if we’re like African elephants? Did you know that they’re pregnant for almost two years? *Two years*, Ness! Imagine the state of our pelvic floors after having an alien baby trampolining on it for that long. And what about when they eventually come out? How are we supposed to feed them and keep them alive—”

Nessa holds up a hand to stall my outburst. “It won’t be easy, babe, but we’ve got this. Remember what you said to me when we left the bar that night? Friends to the end, right?”

“In this world and the next.” I smile as I recall. “I guess I just didn’t realize how literal that would be.”

“Me neither.” Her gaze softens. “But so long as I’ve got you and Zaryk, I know we’ll get through this.”

“You love Zaryk too,” I murmur.

“Yeah, I do. At first, I thought it was the mating bond, but it’s so much more than that. It’s him. It’s how he makes me feel. Apart from you, he’s the only one who’s ever made me feel truly cared for. Important. When I’m with him, I feel settled. Peaceful.”

“Same,” I whisper. “I’ve missed Drakk like crazy. Missed waking up next to him. Missed his touch and—”

“Enormous cock,” Nessa finishes, wagging her eyebrows above her mug as she forces down another sip.

I laugh. “I was gonna say our mind link, but yeah, that too.”

“It’s too bad the mind link doesn’t work beyond a certain distance. Connecting with Zaryk would’ve helped while they’ve been off looking for the location of this beacon thingy,” she says, referring to the signal Demmox picked up ten days ago.

It blipped onto his radar with a cipher buried within the message. Rather than reply and give away our location, Drakk and Zaryk took a small team of warriors to track the beacon’s location. Nessa and I weren’t happy with our “kings” leaving the compound, but with no sightings of the Manx, they felt it safe to leave Jorax, Zaryk’s second in command, and his team of warriors in charge.

Drakk and Zaryk agreed on minimal contact during their trip to avoid putting our compound under threat, and the last ten days have been rough on Nessa and me, with little to no news from our mates.

“At least we know they’re alive and on their way back,” I say, referring to the communication Demmox received last night.

My heart flutters. I can’t wait to see Drakk and assure myself he’s in one piece. He’s an accomplished warrior with diamond-hard skin and the elements at his fingertips, but that doesn’t mean he’s invincible.

I smile, then almost barf as I swallow another mouthful of Mattul’s tea. I imagine Drakk’s response to the news he’s going to be a father. Something tells me it will involve

carrying me off to bed for at least a day and cossetting me even more than he usually does. Yeah, my life here isn't so bad.

"I can't wait to hear about what they found out there. I mean, if it were anything bad, we'd know, right?" Nessa asks, her brow wrinkling with concern.

"We'd know," I say confidently. "We'd know in here." I touch my heart.

She smiles and nods. "Yeah, you're right. Look at us. Two lovesick women waiting for their males to return. We'll be getting their pipe and slippers ready for them next."

I shake my head and pretend to shiver. "Never!"

Our laughter is interrupted by a knock at the door, and I stand to answer it.

"Sorry to interrupt you again so soon," Mattul says on the threshold, "but your blood analysis came back with some interesting results."

"You mean, other than us being knocked up?" Nessa asks as I hold the door open to admit Mattul.

"Yes, besides that wonderful news." Wrinkles form beside his eyes as he grins widely.

Nessa and I have grown close to the healer over the last few months, and I think he's almost as happy about our news as we are.

"What did you find?" I ask, indicating for Mattul to sit in the chair. "Is there something wrong? The babies...?"

"No, no, not at all." Mattul shakes his head as he sits. "You recall the Manx who attacked you when you first arrived?"

I nod. "Not something I'll ever forget."

"My colleagues and I have studied your blood samples, and if we are correct, we believe we know why," Mattul says, his blue eyes lit with excitement.

Nessa pins the elder T'Hal with her gaze when he falls quiet. "Care to share?"

“When you arrived, you both immediately bonded to your respective mates. Your DNA fused with a protein marker found in T’Hal blood to create something we have never seen before. A new genetic material. We missed it in the initial blood analysis we took from you both because, well, we were not looking for it. It does not occur with T’Hal females, and the markers were infinitesimal at that point.” He turns to Nessa. “Your pregnancy has amplified this new genetic material we have called stromtropes by twenty-five percent, and we believe it will continue to increase as your pregnancy progresses. In Ma’rah’s case”—Mattul turns his gaze on me—“it has doubled.”

“Are they harmful to us? To our babies?” I ask, concerned.

“Not in the slightest,” Mattul reassures as he looks between Nessa and me. “In fact, these stromtropes have been amplified by your pregnancies and will protect you and the younglings in your wombs.”

“So why do I have more?”

“In your case, Ma’rah, we believe the stromtropes are exponentially higher due to the infection from your wound. A by-product of the antibodies produced when the Manx clawed you, and—”

“Okay, I realize English isn’t your first language, Matt, so let me get this straight,” Nessa interjects. “Mara and I have stormtroopers in our blood instigated by the mating bond and boosted by our pregnancies, but Mara has lots more stormtroopers because her body produced antibodies from the Manx wound.”

“Stromtropes,” Mattul corrects, “but yes! A fascinating discovery.”

*For a science nerd, maybe, I can’t help but think.*

“Jeez, this is becoming more like Star Wars every day,” Nessa huffs. “You’ll be telling me you have a pal called Yoda next.”

Mattul frowns. “Who is this Yoda?”

Nessa waves a hand. “Never mind. What exactly does this mean for us?”



Mattul sits forward in his chair, his gaze on me. “You will recall that Drakk suspected he defeated the Manx who attacked you with minimal effort, almost as if the Manx were weakened somehow.”

I nod. “Yes, he mentioned it.”

“The Manx are fearsome warriors. Their bodies are designed for battle. For Drakk to defeat one so easily is... unusual.”

“My mate is an awesome warrior,” I point out proudly, having watched him training with Zaryk and the others, my tongue lolling on the ground at the sight of his effortless grace and gleaming muscles.

“Yes, his skill is unsurpassed by any except Zaryk. They were trained in combat disciplines from a young age on Ne’Ander, and both possess fearsome battle skills,” Mattul confirms.

“So you think the Manx was already wounded in some way when Drakk killed him?” I ask, trying to piece things together.

“In a manner of speaking. We believe that when he clawed you, the stromtropes in your blood weakened him somehow.”

“From a mating bond that had only just been established?” Nessa asks in disbelief.

“It is our best hypothesis.” Mattul pauses, scratching his chin thoughtfully. “To test the theory properly, we would need to capture a Manx and subject him to a greater quantity of your blood.”

“Right. Capture a Manx. Subdue him and have us bleed all over him. Piece of cake,” Nessa snips.

“No, you would not need pieces of cake,” Mattul says seriously.

Nessa and I smother our smiles.

I ponder Mattul’s words for a minute. “So this is the case for all of us who’ve mated?”

“We will need to sample the other females’ blood, but I believe so, yes,” Mattul replies.

“And these stromtropes are like kryptonite to the Manx?”

Mattul eyes me doubtfully. “I do not know what kryptonite is, but if you are suggesting they weaken the Manx, the answer is also yes. In harming you, the Manx also unknowingly harmed itself.”

“Uh, yeah, but you’re missing one important point. I almost died from the wound it inflicted,” I remind him.

“The only reason the infection almost killed you was that it had advanced into your system before Zaryk was able to heal you,” Mattul explains. “But now, your immune system is primed against the antigens introduced by the Manx.”

“Sounds a bit like a vaccine,” Nessa observes. “You get a small dose of the disease to build immunity.”

“In simple terms, yes,” Mattul says enthusiastically. “But the key point here is that your blood weakens the Manx. If a small amount affected the Manx as we think, imagine what your blood could do now, especially you, Ma’rah.”

“Great. So not only are we pregnant with alien hybrids, but we also have weaponized blood. How... comforting,” I say sarcastically, struggling to absorb all this information.

“That’s not the only thing we found,” Mattul announces.

“Of course not!” Nessa exclaims, her tone verging on hysterical. “Let me guess, along with these stormtrooper thingies, you also found an encrypted message from Princess Leia to Obi-Wan Kenobi.”

Mattul throws Nessa a concerned look. “Are you well, my queen? Do you need to rest?”

“And miss this crazy soap opera? No chance!” She laughs. “Where’s the popcorn when you need it?”

“So, this other thing?” I prompt Mattul.

“Yes. We also saw a huge increase in klon cells.”

“Um, okay. What are klon cells?” I ask when Mattul continues to look at me as if I should know what this means.

“Your mates both have large quantities of klon cells due to their abilities. It would appear that, due to your pregnancies,

you and Ne'ssa may adopt their abilities and—”

Mattul doesn't get a chance to finish his sentence as a massive explosion shakes the compound.

Screams and shouts reach us from outside.

“Attack! We're under attack!”

## Chapter 15

### Drakk

“WHAT ARE YOU THINKING, BROTHER?” Zaryk asks as we enter the forest leading us to the Great Lake and the compound.

“I am thinking I cannot wait to see Ma’rah. Ten *solar rotations* feel like ten moon cycles. Too long to be parted from my mate.”

“It is the same for me. I cannot settle without Ne’ssa by my side,” Zaryk replies, checking over his shoulder to ensure the small team of warriors we brought with us is keeping up.

“We are in agreement again,” I say with a smirk.

“It is becoming a habit.” Zaryk chuckles as he turns his gaze on me. “A good one.”

I nod.

Zaryk and I have grown closer since we agreed to lead the compound together. That is not to say we have not had our disagreements, but so far, we have resolved them without resorting to fighting.

Ma’rah and Ne’ssa’s calming influences have helped. It is evident my brother feels the same for his Ne’ssa as I do for my Ma’rah, which makes me happier than I have been in a long time.

“And the biodome? What are your thoughts on I’zzy and Xandor’s offer to join them and the others?” Zaryk asks, referring to the source of the beacon Demmox intercepted.

We observed the dome for two solar rotations to ensure there was no overt danger before we ventured closer. Initially

cautious, we were greeted warmly by a hoo'man female, I'zzy, and her mate, a Zorathian named Xandor, who soon put our fears to rest.

Xandor is one of the surviving captives of the Manx crash who left on his own journey and stumbled upon I'zzy. The hoo'man female was brought here by the same phenomenon as Ma'rah and the others, although there seems to be a time differential as I'zzy was ejected from the anomaly much earlier than them.

Xandor and I'zzy have created a transparent dome perched atop a mesa, where the self-sustaining biome thrives. Crops grow on the stepped sides of the mesa while the inside of the dome has its own ecosystem and is powered by an enviro-shield generator scavenged from the wreckage.

It is a self-sustaining sanctuary, a testament to I'zzy and Xandor's skills. The mates set up the beacon to encourage other survivors to the biodome, offering safety and sustenance.

"I am still thinking about their offer," I finally reply. "We have just rebuilt our compound and settled our people, but I cannot deny the advantages of living beneath the biodome."

"But?" Zaryk prompts. He knows me well enough that he senses I have left something unspoken.

"But we have only recently found harmony, you and I," I say, glancing at him. "We have successfully united to lead our people, and I am concerned about the change in dynamic were we to relocate to the biodome with other species."

"I concur," Zaryk says with a nod. "We are both stubborn. I am unsure we could live under the rule of others."

"Yes, but we have more than ourselves to consider. We have to do what is right for everyone."

"It is a difficult decision, to be sure," Zaryk agrees. "I am sure Ne'ssa and Ma'rah can assist us on our return."

"And what of the cavern we discovered on our journey? You seemed drawn to it," I observe.

Zaryk looks thoughtful. “There was something almost otherworldly about it. I saw it in my dreams.”

The cavern was huge, as if something had drilled directly into the earth’s center. We had little time to investigate further on our journey, but Zaryk was fascinated by it.

“You had a vision?” I ask in surprise.

“Yes, but the details were vague. I had almost forgotten it until we came across it. I have a strange sense of premonition about what lies beneath that I cannot explain.”

“Perhaps we can return to investigate further,” I suggest.

Zaryk nods. “Yes, I believe we should, if only to—”

*Drakk!*

Zaryk and I stop walking at the same time.

“Ne’ssa is calling me,” Zaryk says. “Something is wrong.”

“Ma’rah too,” I say grimly. “Our mates are in danger. The compound is under attack,” I hiss.

“*Fokk!*” Zaryk curses as we take off at a sprint.

“Manx attack. They breached the compound on the east side!” I relay to our fellow warriors, relaying the information as we run, the fatigue from our return journey forgotten.

“We must protect our mates,” Zaryk growls, picking up speed.

I have never seen my brother so consumed with fear for another. I know how he feels. Ma’rah is everything to me.

My hearts thunder as we skirt the edge of the great lake, seeing smoke rising beyond the trees. Zaryk barks orders to the five warriors accompanying us, telling them to split up so we can approach the compound from different directions. Zaryk and I stay together, pulling our swords from our baldrics as we approach the front gates, which hang uselessly from their moorings.

My fear rises when Ma’rah falls silent, no longer communicating through the mind link. If something has happened to her...

“Is Ne’ssa still communicating with you?” I ask Zaryk.

He shakes his head, his expression taut with concern. “No. She does not answer.”

I push the terror down, forcing myself to focus on my training. I cannot afford to be distracted if I am to save my mate and my people. I glance at my brother, his face equally grim. No, not my people. *Our* people. And they are engaged in battle with the Manx, who have brought war to our doorstep. They will not live to regret it.

I scan the compound. Smoke billows. Fires burn unchecked. Only the screams of the dying and the shouts of battle can be heard.

Zaryk looks at me, and I nod. As one, we move past the wrecked gates and into the compound. The air crackles with tension as we’re immediately set upon by two Manx. We meet them with a ferocity born of the deep connection we have forged with our home and people. Our swords clash, sending shockwaves through my arms as I parry a blow from my opponent. Beside me, Zaryk spins with a swift grace, slashing his foe across the chest.

The battle rages on around us as our warriors fight bravely and with a unity that comes from years of training and a shared purpose. Their tribal chants resonate in the air, a powerful counterpoint to the guttural rattles of the Manx as we cut our way through the arrogant *fokkers*. But as soon as one is dispatched, two more seem to take its place.

I bump into someone behind me and turn quickly to see Zaryk. He grins. The fire of battle in his eyes is no doubt echoed in mine. At this moment, we are brothers in every sense, bound by blood and purpose, united amid the chaos.

My eyes lock onto the approaching wave of Manx, their serpentine faces etched with contempt and determination.

The sun dips below the horizon, casting an orange glow over the battleground, accentuating the silhouette of swinging blades and desperate clashes.

Zaryk and I move in tandem, our swords weaving a dance of death. Despite the grim circumstances, I revel in fighting in synchronized precision with my brother, defending and attacking in perfect harmony. Zaryk's blade meets the weapon of a burly Manx, deflecting the strike just in time for me to retaliate with a sweeping cut. The Manx falls, and we move seamlessly to the next threat.

Amid the chaos, I spot the Manx leader, a towering figure adorned with bone ornaments of his fallen victims. He is unusually still as his warriors battle my people around him.

Holding up a clawed hand, he roars, "Stop!"

His soldiers immediately cease fighting, keeping their weapons drawn as they step back from their opponents.

"What the *fokk*?" Zaryk mutters.

I glance around, seeking Ma'rah and Ne'ssa, but they are nowhere to be seen. A *sekunt* later, I realize why.

The Manx leader steps aside to reveal Ma'rah on her knees. Mattul lies motionless on the ground beside them. The other females are gathered a short distance away, guarded by more Manx soldiers. Anger roars in my ears as I see the blood trickling from a wound on Ma'rah's cheek.

"Where is Ne'ssa?" Zaryk mutters beside me.

I grit my teeth. "I do not see her."

My eyes narrow in fury as the Manx leader hauls Ma'rah to her feet by her hair. One clawed hand grips her throat as he holds her in front of him. Black blood oozes from a wound on his arm and drips onto Ma'rah's shirt.

"Do not come any closer if you value the female's life," he hisses. "I will snap her neck with a flick of my wrist."

Fury unlike anything I have ever known boils in my blood. My every instinct demands vengeance from the Manx *fokker* who dares to touch my mate. I want to remove his head from his shoulders and his entrails from his sniveling belly.

"My name is Dredlan. My people no longer have any interest in you. This planet's gravitational forces have weakened your



species. Our scans show that the hoo'man females are a far richer... *resource* for my people.”

There is no mistaking what he means. They have captured other females brought here by the anomaly and done *fokk* knows what to them. I see the same realization reflected in Ma'rah's horror-stricken eyes as wetness trails down her face.

Raising her chin slightly, she fixes her gaze on me as if trying to convey something. I attempt to communicate with her through the mind link, but she does not reply. Why does she not answer me? Fear settles in my gut as she gives an almost imperceptible shake of her head. What is she trying to tell me?

*Talk to me, que'lora.*

Her eyelids flicker at my plea. She *can* hear me. She communicated to me on our way here. Warned us of the Manx attack. Why will she not answer me now? She casts a furtive glance toward the bushes on her right, and I catch a flash of purple amongst the foliage and a hint of hoo'man hair.

Bucky.

And Ne'ssa.

I am not her only protector. Ne'ssa and the *vog'li* is as fiercely loyal to her as I am.

I dare not tell Zaryk in case he loses control, but when I glance at him, I realize he has also seen Bucky and Ne'ssa. His face is rigid with tension, but he is otherwise composed. I should have known better—my brother is much changed since our days on Ne'Ander, as am I, and pride fills my chest.

I return my gaze to my mate. *You have a plan, my queen?*

Ma'rah blinks.

So much is conveyed in that subtle motion. She is asking me to trust her. It is hard for me to relinquish responsibility for her safety, but I know my *que'lora*. She is strong in ways I did not appreciate when we first met. Ways that have nothing to do with physical strength but rather a fortitude of the mind, spirit, and soul.

“Tell your warriors to lay down their swords, and no harm will come to the females,” Dredlan demands, tightening his grip on Ma’rah’s throat.

In a seemingly deliberate move, she swipes her hand over the wound on her cheek, coating it with her blood. She clutches Dredlan’s arm, trying to pry it free. Her eyes plead with me to understand... To understand what? What am I missing?

My mate and I have grown to know each other inside and out over the last three moon cycles. I have learned every expression on her beautiful face. When she is sad. When she is angry. The glow that surrounds her when she is happy and the bliss in her stunning emerald eyes when she arrives on my cock.

I study her again. Her long, curly I love to wrap around my fist as I fuck her from behind. Her small nose sprinkled with brown spots and her soft mouth. Her wide hips, large tits, and delicate hands, one of which now clutches the Manx as she struggles in futile against his superior strength.

Her delicate hand.

Coated in her blood.

Pressed to the wound on the Manx’s arm.

*Fokk.*

Some of the pieces fall into place. The blood. There is something about the hoo’mans blood.

Ma’rah knows something I do not. I cannot risk my mate. I cannot risk Zaryk’s mate and the other females. Yet we must make Dredlan believe that we do not care.

I grit my teeth, hoping my next words are what Ma’rah needs. “Do as you will. Take the women, but we will not relinquish our weapons. They are our only means of defense.”

Ma’rah’s expression flickers with relief, letting me know I have chosen well. I need Dredlan to think we are weak and we fear them, that the females are of no importance to us.

“What the *fokk* are you doing?” Zaryk growls angrily beside me.

“Do you trust me?” I ask, my voice low.

Fear for his mate and uncertainty about my question swirl in his eyes as he regards me. His jaw flexes, and he finally nods abruptly. “I trust you, brother.”

His words wash over me, removing the last shackles of doubt between us. “Stay your sword and do nothing until I say,” I instruct quietly, waiting for his nod of acknowledgment.

I grip my sword and return my gaze to Dredlan. “The females are nothing to us. We stumbled across them and offered shelter, but they are a drain on our... *resources*,” I reply, throwing his earlier word back at him.

“You are a fool if you expect me to believe you will simply allow us to walk away with the females without further bloodshed,” Dredlan sneers.

“Is that not what you came for?” I challenge.

“Perhaps if you had merely asked nicely, we could have avoided the destruction of half our compound and the sacrifice of our warriors,” Zaryk says, following my lead.

Dredlan’s eyes narrow. “Do not lie. You would not...” He stumbles and shakes his head as if to clear it before regaining his balance. “You would not relinquish the females so easily.”

I glance at Zaryk, whose eyes are narrowed on Dredlan. His gaze moves from the Manx leader’s face to his arm, where Ma’rah clutches it with her bloodied hand. Is my brother drawing the same conclusions as me?

“We have no reason to deceive,” Zaryk points out. “It is you and your soldiers who have attacked our compound without provocation. You want the females? Take them. Initially, we thought we might bond to some or all of them, but it seems our DNA is incompatible. We have no further use for them.”

The Manx know little of the T’Hal mating bond. Their species pays no attention to matters of love and loyalty, existing only to conquer and destroy, to absorb the energy of other species for their nefarious purposes. Still, I am grateful my warriors and I are fully clothed so as not to reveal the mating colors of those of us who have bonded.

Dredlan's eyes narrow. "You attempt to deceive me. It should not"—he sways on his feet again—"it should not be this easy."

His words are slurred, and his pupilless eyes are strangely glazed. His soldiers stir restlessly as if sensing something is amiss.

Dredlan looks down at Ma'rah, his snout pulled back in a grimace to reveal razor-sharp teeth. "What h-have you done to me?"

Ma'rah calmly lowers her hand from Dredlan's arm and holds it up, palm facing him. "Hate to break it to you this way, asswipe, seeing as we're getting along so well, but my blood is like poison to your people. Right now, it's metabolizing in your system. You're becoming weaker by the second." My clever, beautiful mate turns her gaze on Zaryk and me and points. "And in a few minutes, those very pissed-off T'Hal warriors are going to slice your ugly-ass head from your shoulders."

Dredlan is panting now. His soldiers cast uncertain looks at each other. "You lie. You c-cannot—"

"But just in case my little blood donation wasn't enough," she cuts him off, "here's a booster."

Her other hand moves so swiftly, I almost miss it as she buries something into his lidless eye. With a pained roar, Dredlan backhands her, sending her sprawling beside Mattul.

Dredlan tugs the object still embedded in his eye free before collapsing to one knee. He looks at it in astonishment. "The b-blood—"

Ma'rah looks at me and speaks to me through our mind link. Just one word, loud and clear.

*NOW!*

And all hell breaks loose...

## Chapter 16

### Mara

*NOW!*

It's the first time I've spoken to Drakk through the mind link since warning him of the Manx attack. Mattul warned Nessa and me not to communicate with our mates using the mind links, worried that they would become distracted and lose their focus if they discovered we were pregnant. He was right. My pregnancy is at the forefront of my thoughts, and I couldn't risk letting it slip into my thoughts and having Drakk pick up on it because I knew *nothing* would stop him from trying to rescue me, which would only result in his death. And losing my mate was *not* part of my plan.

After the explosion, Mattul hurried Nessa and me to a secure room in the medical building—which turned out not to be so secure when the Manx blasted through it—and quickly drew vials of blood from us both.

*If I am right, this could save your lives. Remember what I told you about your blood. There is a bunker to the east of here, at the edge of the compound. You will be safe there until Drakk and Zaryk return.*

I recall his words as he capped the vials and tucked them into our pockets. Seconds later, Dredlan and his not-so-merry band of reptilian assholes burst into the building but not before Nessa and Bucky managed to escape through a concealed door in the med lab leading to the bunker.

Unfortunately, I wasn't so lucky. The power chose that moment to die, sealing Nessa and Bucky behind the door. I

prayed they would reach the safety of the bunker. Mattul put himself between the Manx and me but was severely outnumbered and soon subdued by a blade to his chest. It was hard to think of the mighty T'Hal as anything but invincible until I saw his blood spilling onto the floor.

I tried to fight, grabbing Mattul's knife from its sheath and slicing at Dredlan's arm. His retaliation was swift as he struck me across the face before his lackeys dragged me and Mattul's prone body outside.

Mattul now lies beside me, unmoving. He urgently needs medical attention. I know he's dying as his blood pools on the ground beneath him. But I can't focus on that right now as Dredlan collapses to one knee. Pushing down my anger and fear, I send the signal to Drakk, praying he's figured it all out.

No sooner have I given him the signal than Ne'ssa appears from nowhere with Bucky. Damn. I should've known she wouldn't leave without me or shy away from a fight. Crazy, stubborn, wonderful woman.

The next few minutes happen in a blur. Bucky wings erupt from his back, razor-sharp blades tipping each wing. He swoops toward the Manx soldiers surrounding the women, slicing through flesh and bone like butter. My eyes widen. Holy crap, the cute little vog'li who's been following me around like a doting pet is actually a weapon of mass destruction.

While Bucky makes snake-chow of the Manx soldiers, Nessa sprints toward Dredlan, unleashing a battle cry that would make any T'Hal warrior proud. In mere seconds, she's pulled her vial from her pocket, activated it, and buried it in his flat head.

"Metabolize that, you slimy fucker!" she screams, her eyes lit with fury.

Her actions earn her another backhand from Dredlan, and she lands beside me with a thump.

A split second later, Drakk and Zaryk advance on Dredlan with a mighty roar, determination and sheer bloody vengeance

blazing in their eyes. Our warriors re-engage in battle with their foes, sensing the tide has turned.

The clash of swords and the screams of the fallen fill the air as Nessa and I hover protectively over Mattul. We've done our part. It's up to our mates now. My eye throbs from Dredlan's blow, but I ignore the pain, watching in awe as Drakk and Zaryk engage the Manx leader, who has now stumbled to his feet.

With a mighty swing of his sword, Zaryk disarms Dredlan, leaving him vulnerable. Drakk seizes the opportunity, delivering a precise strike that decapitates Dredlan. The Manx forces falter as they witness the death of their leader.

Our warriors press their advantage, driving the Manx back. But then I spot a rogue Manx soldier. Somehow, he's circled behind Drakk, his weapon raised to deliver a killing strike. Drakk doesn't see him because his brilliant blue gaze is fixed on me.

"Noooo!" My scream is guttural and laden with fear for my mate.

A strange energy bursts from within my core, and the next thing I know, the Manx soldier is blasted from his feet by a mini tornado. Shit. Did *I* do that? Is that what Mattul was about to tell us as we were attacked?

*...due to your pregnancies, you and Ne'ssa may adopt their abilities...*

Drakk whirls in surprise as the soldier crashes to the ground but wastes no time plunging his sword into the belly of the beast.

The last of the Manx soldiers are cut down without remorse, and the compound echoes with the triumphant cheers of our warriors. Drakk and Zaryk, bloodied but unbowed, stand amid the battlefield, two worthy leaders of our people.

Tears stream down my cheeks as both T'Hal kings sprint toward us. Zaryk drops to his knees beside Nessa as Drakk sweeps me into his arms, almost crushing me.

“*Que’lora*,” he says roughly, burying his face in my neck. “I thought...” His words trail off as he audibly swallows. “You scared me. I would not survive losing you.”

“I’m okay. Everything is okay,” I murmur, hugging him tight. “I love you, Drakk. So much.”

“I love you,” he whispers.

He pulls back, his eyes tortured as they roam over my bruised face. “Why did you cease speaking through the mind link, *que’lora*?”

I shake my head as tears roll down my cheeks. “Couldn’t risk you finding out that—”

“*Fokk*,” Zaryk exclaims before I can finish.

My heart pounds as we both turn to look at him. He’s leaning over Nessa, one hand pressed to her eye as he heals the wound Dredlan inflicted, the other on her stomach.

His eyes widen with shock. “You are—”

“Pregnant, big guy,” she finishes, her voice slightly slurred. “Surprise!”

“We both are,” I say, returning my gaze to Drakk. “We found out this morning. We were with Mattul when...” I trail off, biting my lip as my gaze falls on our fallen friend. “Is he...?”

I know the answer before Zaryk inclines his head.

“Oh, God. Mattul! He p-put himself between us and the Manx. Tried to save us,” I sob.

Drakk pulls me into his arms, his chest rising and falling in rough breaths as he places one hand on my stomach. “It is an honorable death for a T’Hal. He was protecting you and Nessa and our younglings.”

The news of our pregnancies is bittersweet because we’ve lost Mattul. He saved four lives by sacrificing his own.

“Our friend is dead, and we will mourn him with the others we have lost,” Zaryk says, holding a distraught Nessa. “But first, we must burn the bodies of the Manx and tend to our injured.” His eyes zero in on my face. “May I?”



I nod, and he starts to move toward me when Nessa stays him with a hand on his arm.

“Wait,” she says, moving closer. “Let me.”

Zaryk looks surprised but moves aside.

Nessa approaches, touching the wounds on my face. Her face screws up as she concentrates, and I sigh in relief as the throbbing immediately abates. She places her hand on my stomach and closes her eyes. After a moment, she opens her eyes again and smiles. “There’s obvious stress, but the baby is fine,” she says, her voice husky with emotion.

I pull her in for a hug. “You too, huh?”

She nods. “Yeah. This is some weird shit. Guess that’s what Mattul was trying to say when—” She pauses to wipe away a tear and gives me a watery smile. “Kinda cool to have superpowers, though.”

“I’m so glad you’re okay,” I say brokenly.

“Me too,” she whispers. “Couldn’t leave my bestie to face those bastards alone.”

“Perhaps one of you would care to explain what is going on,” Zaryk says.

“It seems they have much to tell us,” Drakk adds.

Nessa and I turn to look at our mates and say in unison, “You have no *fokking* idea.”

## Chapter 17

# Drakk

### Two Days Later

Ma'rah and Nessa stand beside Zaryk and me as we gaze upon the burial sites. This night, we honor their sacrifice with the *dessun*, our people's burial ritual. A patch of land south of the compound has been prepared for those we lost—thirty-one in total, including Mattul. My heart aches as I stare at each mound of soil decorated with local flora and fauna.

After the injured were healed, Zaryk and I took our mates to his dwelling, where we told them about the biodome and the strange cavern we discovered on our journey.

They relayed all that had happened in our absence: the stromtropes in their blood and the increased klon cells due to their pregnancies. I am still reeling over the news that I will be a father. And not only me but also my brother. I have spent the last two nights simply holding my mate to reassure myself that she and our youngling are unharmed.

We called a meeting following the attack to inform our people of I'zzy and Xandor's invitation to join their community. We decided that the best course of action was to take a vote, and the result was unanimous—to relocate to the safety of the biodome. This came as no surprise after the Manx infiltration.

Zaryk and I are still wary of joining our people with others, but their welfare is our priority. We know the Manx will return in greater numbers, and we must be ready to defend against them. There is no doubt that our odds will be markedly improved by relocating to the biodome.

And we also have our unborn younglings to consider. Their safety is paramount. They will be vulnerable and unable to defend themselves in this harsh environment. It is our responsibility to cherish and protect them and any other younglings born due to the other mate bondings.

One bright event that has emerged from the sadness is that Lattan and Be'cky have completed their mating bond. I know Be'cky has had a difficult time adjusting, but I am hopeful they can now be happy and move forward together.

Zaryk and I turn to face our people, and Zaryk steps forward.

“We are here to share our loss and pay tribute to those we have lost. We suffer these losses together. We fought together. We won together. We will move into the future together. We have agreed as a community that this place is no longer safe, and tomorrow, we will journey to our new home.”

The crowd murmurs and nods in agreement.

I move to stand beside my brother. “We are proud that you all stood and fought for our freedom. You are the best that this new world has to offer. Zaryk and I are blessed to lead you. Now, it is time to thank our departed souls for their sacrifice. We honor them by returning them to the stars.”

Ma'rah slips her hand into mine as the fire is lit, and the T'Hal sing a hymn to pave the way for those we lost from this life to the next. It is a beautifully bittersweet moment and something I will share with my younglings when they are old enough.

The day we learned the true meaning of peace.

Once the ceremony is complete, the crowd drifts back to their dwellings. Those whose homes were destroyed in the attack have been given shelter with others for now.

“How are you?” Ma'rah asks once we have bid Nessa and Zaryk goodnight and returned to our dwelling.

I give her a puzzled look as I sit on the cushioned seat Ma'rah calls a *sofa*. “I am well, *que'lora*. It is I who should be asking you that question.” I tug her onto my lap, kissing her nose and covering her stomach with my hand. “Are you well?”

Ma'rah runs her hand through my hair. "I'm good. A little sad but grateful for all I have. All *we* have," she says, placing her hand over mine. Her eyes narrow on me. "What's troubling you?"

My mate knows me so well. "Are there risks? With our youngling? Did Mattul mention anything?"

"With us being different species?" She shrugs when I nod. "I don't know. I've spoken to Sennal, one of the other healers, and he doesn't know either. Nessa and I are the first to experience this. But I can't imagine for one second that the mating bond would allow us to become pregnant if our bodies were incompatible with our babies."

"I cannot lose you," I mumble, holding her close.

She tips my chin up and pins me with those beautiful emerald eyes. "I'm not going anywhere, *que'loro*. We are going to have a healthy, happy baby. Youngling." She grins. "Babyling."

I smile and lean forward to claim her mouth in a kiss.

"Drakk?" she mumbles against my lips.

"Yes, my mate?"

"I need you. All the cuddling over the last two days has been great, but it's twelve days since you've been inside me. I miss you."

"I need you, too, but I do not want to hurt you or the baby."

Ma'rah glares at me. "Haven't you figured out yet that I'm not a delicate little flower?"

I grin. "No, you are not. You are a large, robust tree trunk."

She pulls back to look at me. "We really need to work on your love language."

I frown. "Was that not a compliment?"

"Nowhere near," she huffs.

"I am sorry, *que'loro*. Perhaps I can make it up to you by telling you how much I love suckling your tits, how I could

live on the nectar from your cunt, and die a happy T'Hal buried in your tight, wet sheath.”

“Better,” she says breathlessly. “Much better.”

Ma'rah squeals as I surge to my feet and head for our sleeping platform. “But as you say, actions speak louder than words, so let me show you.”

She nods eagerly. “Yes, please.”

I place Ma'rah gently on the sleeping platform and quickly remove my body coverings, watching her do the same. I drink in the sight of her naked body, lingering on her tits and stomach, which already show signs of the life she is growing inside her.

“*Fokking* magnificent,” I mutter, raising her legs and hooking them over my shoulders.

“You're not so bad yourself... Oh!”

Ma'rah gasps as I fasten my mouth over her dewy cunt. The taste of her juices on my tongue is almost enough to make me arrive. I lick every crevice, pulling her clit into my mouth and sucking hard.

I hum with approval. “*Fokking* perfect.”

My mate grinds her hips against my mouth as I roll my tongue over her pearl. “Oh, God, Drakk. It feels so good. Please. I need more.”

I suck harder, licking her from back to front and pushing my tongue into her tight channel. Feasting on her sweetness. Devouring her like she's my last meal. I do not stop until her body bows and she screams my name. I work her through her release until she sags onto the sleeping platform.

“Turn over. On your hands and knees,” I command.

Ma'rah's eyes widen and she bites her lip but does as I ask, gripping the furs.

I run my fingers slowly down her spine and over the roundness of her ass. Following the crease to her center, I dip two fingers

into her cunt, coating them with her release. I rub it into her asshole and press a thick finger against her back hole.

Ma'rah gasps and looks over her shoulder at me. "Do not think even about putting your massive cock in my ass."

I grin. "You will beg me to breach you here, *que'lora*. But not this night. I will need to prepare you properly first. Would you not like that? My cock *fokking* your ass while my fingers *fokk* your cunt?"

"Maybe." She huffs and then moans as I push my finger deeper into her ass.

I want to do everything with her, but I know I cannot rush. We have the rest of our lives to explore and bring each other pleasure.

I find her clit with my other hand and roll it between my fingers as I penetrate her ass. "So good, my mate, taking my finger in your tight little hole."

As soon as I say it, she loses what little control she has. She likes to be praised. She groans harshly, shaking and trembling as she explodes on my hand, coating it with her wetness.

Lining myself up with her entrance, I slowly stretch her out around me. I let out a guttural moan as I pull her hips tight against me, plunging deep.

"Please!"

Ma'rah wiggles against me, ready for more. I adjust my hold on her hips and pull out before filling her again. I keep my strokes slow and steady for now, treating her like the queen she is.

She pushes her hips back to meet each thrust, greedy for me. I grip tighter, knowing I'll leave marks on her delicate skin. The thought only urges me on.

Pulling out of her, I flip her over, needing to look into her eyes as we both arrive. I kiss her hard, hitching her knee up over my arm and slowly entering her again.

My mate's face is flushed with lust. She feels everything I feel. I thrust faster, as deep as her beautiful body will allow, and she

takes me so perfectly. She was made for me, and somehow, we found each other.

My spine tingles and my sac throbs with my impending release as Ma'rah tightens around me. Her walls pull everything from within me as her nails dig into my shoulders.

"I am going to arrive," I grunt, pounding into her.

"Come," she huffs. "Oh, God, me too."

I spill inside her with a roar that rattles the sleeping platform. Her eyes lock on mine. She knows what happens next as her body receives my seed.

Then it hits her. She screams and writhes, her body rigid with ecstasy. Everything around us fades. It is as if I am seeing myself through her eyes. More than that, I *feel* what she feels.

Afterward, we stay locked together. I do not have it in me to withdraw from her snug heat.

*I love you.*

Her declaration reaches me in a whisper through our mind link.

*Man seni soy'arrin.*

I reciprocate in the T'Hal language, kissing her gently.

I do not know what the future holds, but I know my mate and I will face it head-on.

# Epilogue

**Mara**

## **FIVE MONTHS later**

I'm very pregnant, very tired, and very content with our decision to move to the biodome after the battle with the Manx.

Izzy and Xandor welcomed us all, and our people have settled well into the community they have built here. This place is as beautiful as Drakk and Zaryk said, and for the first time since I was pulled through the anomaly, I feel I can relax.

All of the women who bonded with T'Hal are now pregnant. Seems all T'Hal males are super compatible with human females, which is a good thing, I guess, as we're creating the first generation on this new world. Hopefully, our children will go on to find their own mates, and so on and so forth. Knowing we're the origin of future generations is a little daunting.

As for Nessa and me, our pregnancies have been advancing faster than human pregnancies because we're already huge. We can barely even hug now without our bellies getting in the way. Still, our alien cavemen seem to love our "I've eaten a beachball" look because they can't keep their hands off us.

Having "superpowers" is also kind of cool. Our abilities are nothing compared to our mates, but it's cool when I fill a cup of water from the molecules in the air, or watch Nessa heal minor bumps and bruises. Drakk tells me our abilities are likely borrowed from the babies and will disappear once we



give birth. Bummer. Although I can't wait to meet our little one and see how his abilities manifest.

And talking of expectant mothers—turns out Bucky isn't a male at all. Well, unless the males of the species carry the babies because Bucky is baking a little one of her own. My little purple protector has been off having some sexy times between the long naps she likes to take.

All the expectant women have been donating blood at safe intervals, and our scientists have been using it to weaponize against the Manx. We've had no further sightings of them, but we know another confrontation is inevitable at some point in the future.

For now, we're enjoying the safety the shield offers us and anticipating our new arrivals. I was worried for two months after the battle that the injury I sustained may have hurt our little bundle of joy, but I was assured again and again that nothing happened. I hope he or she puts in an appearance soon. Drakk and I can't wait to meet our "babyling."

I'm in the kitchen pouring myself some water when Drakk's hands wrap around my swollen belly. I lean back into him, humming in contentment as he kisses my neck.

His hands find their way to my hips, and one moves under my belly to slide between my thighs.

"Oh." I gasp in immediate pleasure as his thumb finds my clit.

"You look beautiful, my queen." He nips at my neck and rubs his steely length against my backside.

"What exactly will you do for your queen today?" I ask breathily as his finger dips inside me, slow and teasing. I give my strong warrior my weight, letting him hold me up so that I can focus solely on the pleasure he gives me.

"I will make you arrive on my fingers."

"Come," I correct for the hundredth time.

Drakk's other hand wraps around my throat as his finger sinks deeper. "I prefer arrive. Because each time you release on my

hand, mouth, or cock, you reach the place for which you were destined. My arms.”

“Oh, God, you’re getting good at the love language,” I moan, clenching around his thick digits.

He spins me to face him and lifts me onto the counter. I watch him drop to his knees. He pushes me back onto my elbows gently and slides my hips to the edge of the counter.

I know he’s got me, so I let him have total control of my body. His tongue runs up each thigh as he slides my sundress over my belly. I moan as he lightly flicks his tongue against my clit and sucks once quickly.

He moves to the other leg, making his way up slowly, teasing me. It’s the most amazing feeling when he touches me. Our bond is all I’ve ever known, and I never want to know anything else.

Drakk’s tongue teases me inside and out. My clit throbs, and when he rolls his tongue over it, I explode. He hums as he licks up every last drop before standing and positioning himself between my legs. His hand winds through my hair, tipping my head back so our eyes meet, green on blue.

“You are greedy today, *que’lora*.” His voice is deep and husky.

I inhale quickly. “For you, I’m always greedy.”

He lines himself up with my entrance. I know he’ll go slow because I’m heavily pregnant, but I can’t wait for the day when he can fuck me hard and deep again.

Still, he knows exactly what I need. How to position me so he hits that sensitive spot inside me with each pump of his hips, letting me know that he’s the one in control.

When he feels me tightening, he pulls out, picks me up, and carries me to our room. I know what’s coming next. He gently places me on the bed on my side and climbs on behind me. Lifting my top leg to open me wide, he slides in behind me. This is my favorite position since my belly grew so big.

Drakk starts slowly, but in this position, he can go a little faster, a little deeper, a little harder, and I whimper each time

he hits my G-spot. He shifts his position slightly so that he's barely kissing that spot. He knows precisely what he's doing. He's teasing me, drawing it out, and driving me to the edge.

I move against him, fucking myself on his long, thick cock. His hand wraps lightly around my throat, forcing me to turn my head so he can kiss me deeply. I moan into his mouth as he hits that spot over and over again, straining toward my orgasm.

Drakk's pace becomes erratic, and I know he's close. I am too. I'm almost there. Almost...

I scream his name as I climax, knowing everyone in the biodome can probably hear me. But I don't care. He finishes with a roar as he spills inside me, extending my orgasm.

Afterward, he turns me and pulls me tight against his chest.

"I'll never get tired of that," I mumble in a raspy voice.

He chuckles and kisses my forehead. "Good, because neither will I."

"I'll miss sleep once this little one gets here."

It takes him a moment to realize what I'm talking about. Then it hits him: sleep is about to be almost nonexistent for us.

He pulls me in closer. "Zaryk can handle things for a while if you want to take a map with me."

"Nap," I correct with a laugh. "And he's probably doing the same with Nessa," I say with a knowing grin. "We can't let things descend into chaos."

He laughs and buries his face in my hair. "We wouldn't want to bring our child into a world of chaos, would we?"

"It's the best kind of chaos with you by my side," I say, snuggling further into his side.

I remember the night Nessa and I went to the club, trying to find our forever person. It seems like another lifetime now.

"You're thinking too loud. Close your eyes and nap with me." He rubs his hand over my belly.

I set my hand on top of his as our child kicks.

“And I will never get tired of that,” my mate says, his voice rough with emotion.

“I don’t think it will be much longer,” I say, trying to keep the nerves from my voice.

“All will be well, *que’lora*. I will be here, no matter what.”

I let his words reassure me. We’ll get through whatever is to come because we have each other.

I listen to Drakk’s breathing as it evens out in sleep. He’s been working like crazy to prepare everything before the baby gets here.

My thoughts shift to the nursery. I’m not sure I have everything how I want it, but I can always make adjustments in the next few days.

I let my thoughts fade quietly to the back of my mind as I fall asleep, wrapped in the arms of my mate.

My king.

My alien caveman.

# Epilogue

Drakk

## EIGHT MOON CYCLES Later

A plaintive cry rouses me from my slumber. I reach across the sleeping platform for my mate, only to find the space beside me empty. Tossing back the furs, I pull on my leg coverings and go in search of her.

I find Ma'rah in the seating area, sitting in the chair with our son cradled in her arms. She hums a soft tune as she strokes her hand lovingly over his dark hair.

Our son is almost seven moon cycles old. He has my diamond-imbued skin, dark hair, chin, and Ma'rah's green eyes and nose. The birth was not easy, but my mate was a warrior as she pushed our little one into the world. I have never known a love like I feel for our son. It is different from my love for Ma'rah but no less powerful. I would give my life for them both.

"You should have woken me," I murmur, kissing my mate and then dropping a kiss on our son's tiny head.

"It's fine. He's sleeping again now. He was hungry," Ma'rah says softly, stroking a finger over his soft cheek.

"He is always hungry," I observe.

"Just like his father." Ma'rah smiles up at me, her eyes shining with a love that causes my hearts to skip a beat.

I open my mouth to reply when there is a knock at the door. I open it to reveal Zaryk and Nessa, their youngling cradled in Nessa's arms. Nessa birthed a female, Lau'ren, a few days

after Ma'rah, and the other pregnant females are due to give birth any day.

“Morning, Pops.” Ne'ssa smiles as she breezes past me.

Apparently, *Pops* is a nickname given to fathers where she and Ma'rah are from.

Zaryk follows after her, his expression grim.

“What troubles you, brother?” I ask quietly, pausing by the door as Ne'ssa joins Ma'rah in the seating area.

“Another vision,” he replies, crossing his arms over his chest.

For the last few moon cycles, Zaryk has had visions about the huge cavern we discovered on our journey to the biodome. His dreams seem to be an omen, a prediction of our future. We have traveled back there several times to investigate, and I cannot deny that I have also felt a pull to what lies beneath.

“What did you see?”

“A new world, one for which our people are destined. A self-contained, subterranean ecosystem inside the earth, rich in carbon.”

Carbon. The source of our abilities.

Zaryk and I have become concerned that our powers have waned under the protection of the biodome, where we are no longer in direct contact with the natural resource. And our younglings show no sign of coming into their abilities as Zaryk and I did by their age on Ne'Ander.

“I saw an intricate system of tunnels and cavities and a channel of water connecting the planet's poles,” Zaryk continues. “Climates both tropical and icy. Subterranean oceans, and a sun at its center.”

I nod thoughtfully. “You believe this planet is hollow.”

“I do. But more so, I believe it is our home. Where we are destined to thrive and build a community.”

“Your visions have never led you astray. If you say this hollow earth is where we should lay the foundation for future generations, I believe you. I trust you.”

Zaryk places a hand on my shoulder. “Thank you, brother.”

“It will not be easy. We have much to learn and prepare before we can truly call it home. We cannot relocate our people until the other females have birthed their younglings and are robust enough to travel. Some may wish to remain here in the biodome.”

“That is true.” Zaryk grins. “We have much to plan. A future to forge, side by side.”

I return his grin. “I would not have it any other way, brother.”

We join our mates in the seating area. Our family.

The sun is clearing the horizon through the window, lighting a new solar rotation and a bright future.

**Keep reading for a sneak peek of Protected by the Alien Warrior by Fern Fraser...**

# Protected by the Alien Warrior

## Sneak Peek

### CHAPTER 1

#### Nessa

The knock at the door rouses me from sleep.

“Nessa, time to get up,” Mara whisper-hisses through the door.  
“Tour starts in an hour.”

My head feels like a marching band is using it for practice. And my mouth? It tastes like I’ve been gnawing on dirt-covered socks soaked in acid. Ah, just another fabulous morning after a night of bad decisions and regrets.

“M’up,” I mumble, peeling my eyes open.

“I’ll get your coffee ready,” Mara replies, and I hear her footsteps retreat to the kitchen.

Ah, my bestie knows exactly what I need after last night.

We went to the local bar, hoping to each meet someone to end our lonely streak where the opposite sex was concerned. Needless to say, we both came home to our apartment sans men.

I sigh. At least Mara and I have each other. It’s always been us two, from the time we were five and Mara was brought to the foster home where I was living. I took one look at her and just knew we were going to be best friends.

I curse myself for drinking so much last night. We had a few at the bar and then opened a bottle of wine when we got home, most of which I drank as Mara is driving today. Hence the



marching band in my head and the breath like Ghandi's flip flops.

What was I thinking? I'm paying for it now, that's for sure.

I drag my sorry ass out of bed and down enough Advil to sedate a rhino before heading for the shower. The thing I love about our apartment is that we both have adjoining bathrooms. The place is perfect for us, situated above the Happy Trail Tours office, the tour company Mara and I run here in Geneva.

We decided to vacation here a few years ago, and somehow, we never left. We took loads of sightseeing trips, and got friendly with the owners of the tour company, an older couple called Bryan and Polly. Turned out they were nearing retirement, and were looking for buyers. Mara and I had a few savings, and we managed to get the bank to loan us the rest. So here we are, the owners of a flourishing business in one of the most beautiful cities in Switzerland.

Once dressed in the company uniform, I down my coffee and drag myself onto the tour bus, my head pounding with each step.

Mara takes one look at my bloodshot eyes and grins knowingly. If anyone can drink till dawn and still look flawless, it's Mara. Me? I'm a mess.

I grimace. "Why do I let you talk me into these things? Remind me never to do that again."

She laughs. "I'll remind you, but we both know last night was your idea. Maybe next time we'll actually meet someone decent."

Meeting someone special seems about as likely as this bus sprouting wings and flying me out of here.

"We've got more chance of meeting a charming mountain troll looking for a bridge to lurk under," I say, willing my churning stomach to settle.

Our conversation is cut short as our tour group arrives—a bachelorette party, which should be fun. I plaster on a smile, greeting the excited ladies as they climb aboard. Becky, the

bride-to-be, looks hilarious with condoms pinned to her dress and a tiara perched on her head. Her sister, Sarah, waves a big black dildo around, making obscene gestures with it that make even me blush.

I adjust my blazer and straighten the tour guide pin on my lapel as Mara starts up the rumbling bus. My voice echoes through the bus speakers. “Good morning, everyone! My name is Vanessa, and I’ll be your guide today as we head for your cheese and wine tasting tour and then onto the spa for your afternoon of pampering. The beautiful Mara is our driver. She knows all the shortcuts and back roads most tourists don’t get to see, so you’re in for a treat.”

The ladies hoot and holler as they take their seats and buckle up.

“The Rhone starts from the Rhone Glacier in the Swiss Alps and is one of the significant rivers running across Europe.”

*Same as the headache determined to travel across my entire skull.*

As Mara maneuvers the rumbling tour bus through the Saturday morning traffic, I groan and clutch my throbbing head. Oh goody, nothing like a thrill-a-minute tour to settle my hangover.

“On your left is The Science Museum, where the particle accelerator is located underground,” I say enthusiastically. “On your right...Uh, um, on your right...”

I sway on my feet as we round a tight bend. Oh, God, I think I’m gonna hurl. The mother of all migraines hits me, along with a blinding flash of light that fills the bus.

I brace myself, trying not to lose my balance. If Mara keeps driving like a stunt driver, I’ll end up sliding right into Becky’s ample bosom. Tires screeching, Mara curses and slams on the brakes, sending the bus into a harrowing fishtail skid.

An unseen force, like a giant invisible hand, rips me from my feet. I scream, reaching for Mara’s outstretched hand. It’s clammy. The world spins violently around me. My stomach heaves, and everything fades to black...

\*\*\*

Consciousness returns slowly. I open my eyes slowly and everything is hazy, like I'm underwater. I'm lying against something warm, hard, and strangely comforting. Peering up, I realize I'm in the arms of a striking, long-haired man, his golden eyes piercing mine. A dizzying swirl of emotions engulfs me. I have no idea who he is or where I am, yet I feel oddly safe and protected.

I blink and the vision blurs and fades, replaced by a sea of green. I'm lying on a mossy bed in a forest. The small clearing is surrounded by towering ferns, cycads, and conifers. I blink in confusion as giant bugs skitter past my feet.

Everything looks so strange, like something straight out of Little Shop of Horrors. I must be hallucinating. Did someone slip me something last night?

"Mara?" I call out hesitantly. "Becky? Anyone?"

I pinch myself harder than a kindergarten bully but don't wake up. Crap, this nightmare is real.

I'm alone in the wilderness with no idea where or when I am, only a crazy theory. I have no supplies, Wi-Fi, latte, or even a bathroom. I'm so not prepared for this. My idea of roughing it is a hotel without twenty-four-hour room service.

I take a deep breath, trying to calm my racing heart. Freaking out will get me nowhere. Focus, Nessa!

"Seriously, how did you get here?" I ask myself, trying to piece together the puzzle with the efficiency of someone who arranges guided tours for a living. "And where's here?"

My mind races, trying to make sense of it all. All I remember was a flash of light before the bus crashed. Wait, did it crash?

The only explanation that makes any shred of sense is impossible. We were passing the Science Museum. I know what kind of woo-woo shit they get up to underground. Did some kind of phenomenon bring me here? Wherever that is.

"Oy, particle accelerator, did you zap me to the Stone Age?" I ask the air, half-expecting some lab-coated boffin to pop out

and apologize for the inconvenience. No such luck.

I always dreamed of going back in time, but I pictured a TARDIS and Doctor Who. Me and a hot Time Lord. I wouldn't mind meeting Jamie Fraser from Outlander, but this is more like the freaking Flintstones.

As soon as I figure out how I got here, I can find a way back home.

I'm not waiting around for rescue, which may or may not come, like a damsel in distress. If these leafy giants can stick it out for a few million years, I can survive one peculiar day.

Time to go all Lara Croft and figure this out this shit so I can get my ass home.

Grit and wits are all I need to handle this. Relying on the self-sufficiency my life has drilled into me. My mantra echoes through my mind, equal parts comforting and caustic.

*"Complacency kills, Nessy. But determination wins the day."*

I need to find food, water, and shelter. That's what I need to concentrate on.

Oh, and the truckload of therapy I'm going to need after this to process the lifelong trauma. Cool, cool, cool, cool...

I recall some basic wilderness tips from watching the Discovery Channel. Water flows downhill. Nervously, I venture into the unfamiliar jungle, wading through foliage taller than me as I call Mara's name.

It's slow going. I fumble over raised roots and sink into marshy sections of the forest floor. Every step I take seems harder than the last, thanks to the slippery moss covering everything.

Massive fronds brush across my face and shoulders like giant green spider webs. I duck under looping vines as thick as my arms hanging between the trees.

Vines snag my hair and clothes, tangling their tendrils around me, trying to hold me back.

*Where are you, Mara? Please, give me a sign. I can't do this without you.*

I stop, leaning against a massive tree trunk to catch my breath.

The triangular fronds of giant horsetails, the spiky leaves of ginkgo trees—I recognize them from textbooks. Had I not been familiar with elementary botany, I might have failed to identify them.

But then things get weird.

A few plants sport flowers so neon bright they'd glow under blacklight. Others reek nastier than Mara does after Taco Tuesday.

One bush catches my eye, covered in plump berries resembling juicy blueberries. My stomach rumbles loudly, ready to dive in face-first. But I halt, hand mid-grab. What if they're poisonous?

There are toxic berries in Africa that can kill in hours. Much as I'd love to be Eve tasting the forbidden fruit, I decide living through this freak-fest trumps a snack. I'll resist temptation until I find something safe to eat that doesn't require having a Ph.D. in botany.

As I head down the slope, my eyes sweep over the dense foliage. I blink hard, shaking my head to clear the haze. This can't be real. I'm surrounded by plants so prehistoric they belong in a Flintstones cartoon.

If this keeps up, I may start thinking I actually did get zapped back to the Stone Age. Nah, couldn't be. There's no way I time-traveled, but that monster fern has leaves the size of surfboards.

I haven't seen another human, but if I've gone back in time, maybe it's better if I don't meet a Neanderthal, or they might bash my head in with a club.

*Keep it together, Nessa.* Freaking out won't help.

My head is spinning, and the further I go, the stranger things get. It's like the produce aisle, and the flower shop had a wild

love child. Wacky flowers with hot pink and orange blooms that look radioactive.

God, what's that stench? Smells like someone roasted cabbage, Limburger cheese, and BO over an open fire. I gag and cover my nose. I've got this. There has to be some way out of this place, right?

The ferns reach out like green hands, and as I push through, the sharp leaves scratch my arms. "Survival tip number forty-seven. Always carry a machete. For foliage. Not the cake."

I snicker at the thought, but there's no one around to appreciate my cheesy humor. Mara would tease about my 'encyclopedic brain'. If only she could see how that botany trivia is coming in handy now.

I curse under my breath. Of all the outfits to get stranded in, at least it's my company uniform—black pants and jacket with the Happy Trail Tours logo and a white shirt beneath. And I still have my crossbody purse—not that my phone, gum, and tampons will be much use here.

The bubbling of water catches my attention. Hope sings in my chest as I follow the flow until I'm standing by a stream so clear it's like looking through glass. I scoop up delicious cold water in my hands. It's the best thing I've ever tasted.

Exhausted and fighting panic, I sink down onto the moss. A chill creeps in, and I draw my knees up, wrapping my arms around them. A cricket chirps a rhythmic taunt from somewhere in the deep forest, and as darkness blankets the jungle, eyes peer out from the shadows.

I'd trade anything for a map back to crappy dive bars and guys delivering bad pick-up lines. I'd prefer that to being dinner or dating material for whatever's lurking out there.

If I ever get back home, I'm hiding under the covers until I'm ninety. No more nightclubs. I'll adopt twenty cats and binge-watch Netflix for the rest of my life.

Hot tears spill down my cheeks. I'm going to die here alone, and a virgin at that. So unfair. This is not how I imagined my life ending.

“Universe, you have a sick sense of humor!”

Continue reading here: <https://geni.us/pbtaw>



Thank you for reading *Claimed by the Diamond King*. This is my first sci-fi book (eep!) so I hope I did Mara and Drakk’s story justice and you enjoyed their timeless love story.

If you enjoyed this book, please leave a review wherever you borrowed or purchased it.

Check out the entire series here:  
<https://geni.us/myaliencaveman>

Join my [newsletter](#) for details of upcoming releases, free and discounted books, and competitions.

Head on over to my website for details of all my books:  
<https://www.authorvioletrae.com>

Thanks for choosing my stories—I hope they allow you to escape for a few hours.

Much love,

Violet.