



# TAMED

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

LOKI RENARD

TAMED

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LOKI RENARD

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# 1 AWAKE

**S**tella

I wake up in a white room.

Smells like... nothing.

That's weird.

I lie still for a long moment. Maybe several. My brain feels like someone hit the pause button on something very important. Something I can't entirely remember. I sit up. Things hurt. I feel thirsty. I feel hungry. A surge of temper brings me to my feet. I don't know *why* I'm angry. I only know that I am angry.

I don't know where I am, and instead of confusing me, that just infuriates me.

But what really annoys me is what happens next.

I try to walk away from the bed, and within about three steps I run nose-first into an invisible barrier. Like a glass wall, except it's not the kind of glass that shatters. It's the kind of glass that makes your bang your nose.

I curse loudly and kick the invisible barrier. I guess it's not super smart if it is glass, in case it is glass, but I'm already in motion. And I'm stubbing my toe. And now my nose and my toe both hurt, and swearing at the top of my lungs only goes so far toward making either of those painful indignities any less painful.

"Where the fuck am I?"

Nobody answers, because nobody is here.

I must have been caught. But that doesn't make sense, because if I'd been caught, I'd be back in the city or in a hospital. But hospitals smell like something, and this doesn't.

"Hey! Anybody there! Let me out!"

A girl appears. She's around my age, with long pink hair. She looks very, very cool, and she looks like she comes from the city. That makes me feel a little better, and a little worse. Better, because city people are familiar. Worse, because it makes me feel like I've definitely been captured.

"Hey," she says. "You're awake."

She looks... I don't know. Pink hair, smug expression, cool clothes. She looks like someone I'd be friends with if I wasn't so thoroughly freaked out and angry at finding myself in some weird captivity.

"How do I get out of this bubble thing? I can't see the fucking walls, but I keep walking into them."

"They wouldn't like if I let you out," she says with a grin that suggests she's probably thinking of doing that anyway.

"Who is they? Are you working for city security?"

She snorts at me. "Do I look like I work for city security?"

"You look like a hooker," I blurt.

"Aw thanks, that's sweet," she says, immediately taking it as a compliment. "I'm Jennifer. What's your name?"

"Stella," I say.

"Stella. Cool name. Do you remember how you got here?"

"I ran from the city. I guess I'm back somewhere in it?"

She laughs. Hard. Too hard.

"You are so far from the city," she giggles. "You're going to lose your mind when you find out where you are."

"Where am I?"

“I don’t think I should tell you that yet. I don’t think they’d like that either.”

“Who the fuck are they?”

“I guess you’d say they’re our owners.” She grins, as if that’s not a completely horrific thing to have said.

“We’ve been captured by slavers?”

“Not quite. Sorry, I forget that’s a thing on Earth now.”

“That’s a weird way to say that thing.”

“Yeah. There’re going to be a lot of weird things you’re going to hear and see. You’re going to freak the fuck out. I guarantee it.”

That makes me very determined not to freak the fuck out. I stop asking questions and I start thinking back to the last thing I remember. If my brain serves me correctly, or indeed, at all, I was in a field somewhere, approaching a village. There were people inside and they were yelling at me, and I was yelling at them, and....

I’m lying on the ground, bleeding out from a hole in my leg and something massive and green and entirely inhuman is picking me up...

And now I’m here.

In a white room. In a clean place. Alive. Not dead.

I look down at my leg, but I’m wearing white scrubs and I’m not pulling them down in front of this stranger to see if I’m wounded. I think I can trust my memory enough to know that I was.

“I was shot by some villagers.”

“Yeah. They don’t like city people. They’re very insular. They kill anybody who gets too close. I heard all about it. You got lucky. More than once, actually.”

“I want out of this bubble or whatever it is. It’s not glass. It’s not going to shatter if I break it, right?”

“Don’t break it. They’ll get angry.”

“Who the fuck are they?”

“The owners.”

She giggles again, like she has a fun secret that she isn't going to let me in on. This is getting frustrating. I'm starting to feel like she's fucking with me, and I'm starting to feel like I'm trapped. Neither one of those things pleases me.

“I think they're coming...” she says, a moment before a very deep, very authoritarian voice that immediately rubs me the wrong way rumbles through the air.

“What are you doing, Jenn?”

“The other human woke up,” she says, answering someone outside. “And she's kinda mad.”

A big blue alien walks into the room. I instantly know he's an alien, because no human has ever looked the way this guy looks. Also, I've seen one before. In the brief moments before I passed out from blood loss, I saw a creature just like this one, though he was kind of green, and this one is blue, with cascading blue hair.

No sooner has this massive blue dude entered the room than another one follows in his wake. The other one is slightly shorter, and bulkier maybe? His hair is definitely shorter, which is probably one of the only ways to tell them apart. They share what I want to call a familial resemblance, something about the way their eyes, noses and mouths are... basically, you can tell that they must be siblings, or cousins or... what the fuck do I care?

All that really matters is that there're now two big blue scaled aliens with big tusks and fangs in the room. It's starting to get crowded out there.

The aliens look at one another and I can just tell by their expressions that they're talking somehow. Their faces contort with expressions, but no words are coming out of their mouths.

“Do they not speak?” I ask the girl the question. I already know they talk. One of them talked to her not a minute ago.

“They can speak,” Jennifer says. “But they naturally talk in their heads. There’s a lot of this. You should probably get used to it.”

Getting used to aliens is not something I plan to do, but what’s annoying me far more than the aliens in this moment is the fact that I am still imprisoned for reasons I do not understand and wouldn’t tolerate even if I did.

I back up a few steps, as far as I can, and I just fucking run, throwing myself at the place I’m pretty sure the barrier is.

It works.

It works a little too well.

I feel a crack as I hit whatever that clear barrier is made out of, and there’s a brief moment of resistance before I pass through, bits of clear stuff shattering all around me. Funny how when you break things, they get more visible than they were before.

My plan, as far as it can be called a plan, is to run past these weird fucking creatures and get the hell out of here.

The plan fails almost immediately.

I get out, and I’m free and that’s good, but what’s not good is the fact that the blue monster with the shorter hair and the more snarling disposition snatches me up like I weigh nothing at all and throws me over his lap. He sits down in a chair that is made to suit his scale, and he locks me in place over his lap.

I know what’s going to happen. Only one thing ever happens in this position. But I also can’t believe that’s what’s going to happen to me. I used to get my ass spanked all the time, so I’m shocked, but not surprised when I feel a sudden slap across my cheeks, bringing a flash of hot pain zipping through me.

“Fuck!” I curse. It hurts more than I remember, even through the light cloth of the scrubs. It’s been a while since anybody did this to me. When I was a young tearaway, this’d happen all the time. Nurses, governesses, sometimes even my guards, they’d all deal with me when they saw fit.

Never actually worked on me though. Never made me any better behaved. Never stopped me from growing up rebellious

and wayward. This alien doesn't know that though. He probably thinks he's going to make a difference by smacking my ass.

He keeps spanking me, firm swats that make my ass tingle, sting, and then burn. He doesn't say a word at first, he just spanks me like it's his fucking job.

I suppose I should be grateful. These creatures are huge. He's got to be the size of two men at least, maybe three. I bet he could crush me if he wanted, but somehow he knows how to smack me just hard enough to really fucking hurt, but not do actual damage.

"I am tired of misbehaved humans," he says to the other alien, speaking out loud for what I'm guessing must be my benefit, though he still hasn't addressed a single word directly to me. "I am done with allowing their actions to cost lives and cause trouble. I absolutely refuse to have another human on this ship who will not obey."

He's smacking my ass and not even talking to me as he does it. I feel like an entirely incidental thing, just a problem he has to solve, not even a human, as he calls me.

"Let me go, you fucking psycho!" I curse him out. "What the fuck are you?"

"They're aliens," Jenn says. "You're on an alien ship."

Maybe I am. And maybe it's fucking stupid to try to fight against something this strong if it decides it's going to whip your ass, but I can't help myself. I start fighting and struggling properly. I curse this asshole alien, refusing to be impressed by his massive size and strength and the fact that by all accounts, he comes from outer space.

"Let me fucking go!" I curse at him.

Now he talks to me for the first time. "I have no intention whatsoever of letting you go until you find some manners in your tongue, and some submission in the rest of you."

*Submission.* That word rankles. I'm not fucking submissive, and I don't care what he does to me, I'm not going to become submissive either.

“You’re going to be waiting a really long time,” I tell him, grunting the words between slaps.

“And you’re going to be sore for a very long time,” he snaps back.

He holds me down and he spanks me like I’ve never been spanked before, long and hard, and without mercy. He yanks my scrubs down, bares my ass and keeps spanking from the center of my butt all the way down to the middle of my thighs. He’s done this before, obviously. Many times. I have to wonder where these aliens are meeting so many people they know how to spank them properly. It feels like being cast back in time a very long way, when misbehaved, willful women would be thrashed to put them back in their place.

He’s an old-fashioned alien.

I let out a laugh at that paradoxical thought, even through the discomfort of having my ass whipped, I have a strong sense of humor — and an even stronger sense of not letting the bastards keep me down.

“You find this amusing?” He growls the question down at me, and I immediately take the opportunity to get under his skin.

“Yeah,” I say. “I do.”

“Then let me make this much less so,” he says. I don’t know where he gets the implement he uses. Maybe someone hands him a thick leather strap. Or maybe he just has something in his pocket. Both aliens are wearing something like an approximation of human clothing in that they’re wearing pants and shirts. It doesn’t really matter, because all thoughts flee my head the second whatever the hell it is makes harsh, stinging contact with my ass and then doesn’t stop.

Slap after slap, stroke after stroke, the alien punishes me.

I feel tears leaping to my eyes within seconds of this new phase of the punishment starting. I try to blink them away, because the last thing I want to do is cry in front of this thing, but goddamn he knows how to spank. Every slap jolts me against his hard leg and sends shocks running all the way

through my body. I can feel him spanking me in my knees and in my toes and in the roots of my hair.

I'm almost at breaking point when he tips me onto my feet and holds me between his legs. My pants are down, and they fall all the way in this new position, which means I'm now bare-assed and he can see the dark curling hair between my legs. I try to squirm away, but he locks big alien hands on my hips and keeps me still.

"You've broken something on our ship after we spent weeks of resources on saving your life. It is clear that you make reckless decisions, because you got yourself shot before you arrived here. You are fortunate that my brother and his pet took pity on you, or you would have bled out on earth, you ungrateful little wretch."

His lecture is short, but harsh. He doesn't know me, but somehow he's breaking through all the shells and walls I've put up over the years. I feel my lower lip start to quiver. I must be sick or something, weak from my injuries. I am absolutely NOT going to cry for this big, mean, fanged and tusked alien who talks to me like I'm his personal problem and who has made my ass burn like it's on fire.

Just when I think I will completely melt into a puddle of tears and hot contrition, he stands me up between his legs, takes my chin in his big, scaled, alien hand, and directs my gaze toward his. He has the most piercing blue eyes. Looking into them makes my heart skip a beat. I try to lower my eyes, but he doesn't allow that evasion.

"Look at me," he insists.

I look at him, my eyes meeting his stern, judgmental gaze. It's a look that makes me swallow hard. I am in so much fucking trouble. I may never have been in this much trouble in my entire life.

"I don't know where you came from," he says. "Or how you got yourself so sick and wounded, but you are in my care now. Understand? You will be obedient, you will be polite, and you will act with decorum — or you will suffer the consequences."

This damn near headmaster speech is emerging from the wild, scaled, tusked and fanged face of a creature so much larger than me I am made to feel positively diminutive in comparison. My chastised mind does not know how to respond to this kind of energy from this kind of being.

Rebellious as I am, and will always be, for the moment, I nod.

## 2 MY MISTAKE

**K**ahn

It was a mistake to keep this human on board, but she was so sick she could not be safely returned to Earth when the others were returned. Arkan is busy with his pet, and there is a small contingent of soldiers on board who he is ostensibly in charge of, so, since this little human's arrival on this ship, I have been the one checking in on her multiple times a day, monitoring her vitals and ensuring that she is improving.

It is actually a pleasure to see her awake, and feeling so well that she has immediately broken through the shielding designed to keep her in a bio-safe environment. But that pleasure is immediately tainted by the realization that this human is wild. I already know by the defiant glint in her eye which, yes, remains even though she is being contrite for the moment, that she is not of a suitable temperament to be a pet.

I have trained hundreds of humans in my time. I know their anatomy, their psychology, and I am adept in their care. The humans best able to adapt to being owned by aliens such as ourselves are ones with a softer temperament who are amenable to being cared for and easily show affection and gratitude. This young lady does not fall into any of those categories.

And yet, she remains my problem and my responsibility.

At some point during the punishment, Arkan must have ushered his human pet away. That gives this human and me some privacy, which is a good thing. Humans quite often play

off one another, and Arkan's pet is also of a rebellious temperament. I wouldn't put it past her to have created some of this agitated state in this woman just for amusement's sake.

I make sure the door is locked before gently but firmly steering this hot-bottomed human into the nearest corner.

"You can stand there and think about what you've done while I clean up your mess."

She does as she is told, which even after mere minutes of knowing her as a conscious creature feels like a significant win. Very rebellious humans will continue to misbehave even when they are at their limit for tolerating discipline. This is obviously a challenge for any alien who imagines he or she might make a good owner. Humans like these need firm boundaries. I leave her pants down, displaying her bottom, knowing that the added vulnerability of being deprived of her covering will make the lesson stick all the more.

Once I have swept all the broken pieces of the barrier away and disassembled the rest of it for insertion into the ship's matter recycling system, I turn my attention back to the young female.

"You may pull your pants up. I want you back up on the bed. I need to see if you have done any damage to yourself as a result of running through a barrier."

"If I got damaged, it was from you beating my ass," she argues, immediately intemperate.

I don't want to hear her arguing, so I simply pick her up under her arms and lift her onto the hospital bed, putting her where I need her.

I prefer to choose the humans I train, but there is nobody left on this ship to look after this girl except me. This brash, rude, undisciplined little human is now my problem, and I intend to take full and proper responsibility for her.

Unfortunately, I feel as though I have already failed in that regard. I should have checked her medically before spanking her. She's been very ill and she's only just woken up and here I am, whipping her bottom as if she's perfectly sound.

I was rash. I was annoyed at her destructiveness and her brash behavior, and she paid for it.

Though I feel guilty, I know the only meaningful thing to do about a mistake is rectify it.

“Lie down,” I tell her.

She doesn't obey, so I press her back down against the bed, her breasts soft beneath parts of my palm as my hand splays across her chest to ensure her obedience.

“Down,” I growl. “When I give you an order, you follow it.”

She makes a disgruntled sound, mixed with a yelp from the pressure of her sore ass being pressed more firmly into the firm bed.

I take the medical scanner we use for humans and run it over the length of her body. She has been fighting a great internal battle. The scanner shows that she has almost entirely recovered from a significantly serious infection, and that the wound from the brutally archaic bullet she was hit with has also largely healed.

She is a tough little thing. As I perform this scan with her awake for the first time, I remember when she was brought aboard. I scanned her then too, as there was nobody else to do it. I would not call my brothers irresponsible, and yet they are. Since the passing of our father and the desertion of our mother, all matters of organization have fallen to me. Arkan maintains his position as eldest, theoretical head of the family, Zain can do as he pleases in his eternal role as renegade, and our other brother is lost entirely in the woods. That leaves me to be the voice of reason, the responsible one. Always the responsible one.

“Am I alright?”

She asks the question in a slightly worried tone, distracting me from my self-pity.

“You are strong,” I tell her. “And you are, against all odds, healthy.”

“Yeah, I am!” She grins. “I knew it. I feel great. Hungry, though. So hungry. And thirsty.”

“You may come with me,” I tell her. “We will go to the kitchen.”

I help her down from the medical table, take her by the hand, and lead her through the ship. It is a large vessel, and it is easy to get lost here. Plus, I cannot trust her out of my grasp, even for a moment. Humans can scamper surprisingly quickly, and once out of sight she would be close to impossible to track down if she decided to hide. My brothers and I used to play hide and seek around this ship all the time — which explains why my twin brother Rake has managed to disappear into the Euphorian woods entirely.

The kitchen I choose to use is the one reserved for family only. We had a secondary mess set up when we found ourselves transporting soldiers and villagers in the lower decks, and those facilities are still operational, but I would rather starve than eat shoulder to shoulder with our rough passengers.

Arkan has decided it is for the best to bring a pack of human soldiers back to Euphoria in hopes of using them as security for our interests. I believe they have their own interests and will never be anything even slightly resembling under control.

But that is the least of my worries in this moment. For now, I am in the cozy space kitchen in which meals were prepared for us when we were small. There is a refrigerator which I keep stocked with human-class foods. There is also a machine that takes essential minerals, vitamins, proteins, starches, etcetera and prints food onto a plate. I tend not to use that. It is possibly a technically superior way to eat, but I think something is lost in not eating food that has undergone the formality of being born, growing, and then dying.

The walls of the kitchen are a lemon yellow. The plates and other accoutrements are blue ceramic designed after the style of the old Euphorian ways, when settlements were small, before the major city dominated the landscape and the lives of our kind. They look like they could be antiques, but having fed

a family of four boys, they have been reconstituted and replaced many times.

“Sit down,” I say, once again lifting her up into a chair. These are stools that sit at the counter and of course they are all too high for her. Nothing on this ship was made with human proportions in mind.

“I don’t want you touching anything, except what I feed you.”

Humans are filthy little things sometimes, and though this one is quite neat, she is undoubtedly dirty with the simple effects of being human and having laid in one bed for quite some time.

Her hair curls quite wildly but is hanging heavy around her face. She needs to be bathed after her long convalescence. That will be my next task, once she is fed.

“You’re mean, you know that? And rude.”

“I am much meaner to young ladies who do not do as they are told.”

She lets out a little snort. “Did you just call me a young lady? You’re so old-fashioned. Also, what the fuck are you?”

I respond to her curiosity, because that is something I do encourage. “My species are called Euphorians in your tongue. In case you do not remember, you are aboard our ship after being wounded in an altercation on your planet. You are safe here and will be taken back to our world.”

She ignores the information about her predicament and instead continues to focus on me as I search through our stores to find a suitable meal for her. I have quite a softness for hamburgers, and I know many humans consider them to be a comfort food. She deserves a little comfort, perhaps.

“You look like a cross between a vampire, an orc, and an elf.”

“I am sure our appearance has contributed to the lore of your world over the years. We have been visiting for a long time.”

“Yeah? What the fuck were you doing with the cows? You know how much creepy stuff you guys have been doing to

cows? Removing their assholes? Seems to me you're assholes enough?"

I was reaching for the ground meat when she made that particularly crude comment, but upon hearing it, I withdraw my hand and close the refrigerator. Bending down, I take a bowl and a bag from beneath the counter, filling one with the other.

"I would appreciate it, and you will be much happier, if you speak when you are spoken to, and do not indulge in casual disrespect. I am very busy, and I do not have time for an unruly human pet."

"Pet?"

I put food in front of her in a shiny metal bowl. She looks at it, and surprisingly for a supposedly starving human, wrinkles her nose at it.

"What is this?"

"It is a pelleted nutrition containing everything a human needs in order to be healthy and have a shiny coat."

She looks at me with those rebellious dark eyes. "The actual fuck is wrong with you."

It's not a question. It's a statement. It's rude.

"This tastes like ass," she declares as she starts eating. I note that the taste does not stop her from consuming every single morsel of it. Her appetite is healthy, and so is she. In spite of my irritation at her verbal rudeness, I find myself feeling a great deal of admiration for her. I have overseen the capture and training of many humans over the years. Many of them weaken under far less stress than she has recently experienced.

I find myself watching her, assessing her. In terms of appearance, she is quite pleasing. She has a strong but soft body, smooth skin, and pretty features. A lot of Euphorians appreciate the larger eyes, and hers are wide with curiosity, but also rebellion. Her hair is dark and curling, which is relatively rare, and would potentially mean she would fetch a fine price. It's possible she could have a place in one of the more

established houses if she were used as display only, but I suspect her temperament is too wild for such refined locations.

Taming can only go so far toward changing the essential nature of a pet. This is why we usually select our pets with more care. Or I did, when choosing pets was my domain, before Arkan decided that he should give things a go and essentially kicked off an entire planetary civil war in the process.

“You should smile more,” the human says to me.

“Excuse me?”

“Turn that frown upside down. You look so serious. It might never happen.”

“What might never happen?”

“Whatever it is you’re so worried about.”

“I am not worried, human.”

“You can lie to yourself all you like, but I know a worried man, or whatever you are, when I see one. You’re shitting yourself about something.”

I’ve never known humans to be particularly insightful when it comes to reading our species. After all, most of our communication is telepathic, and humans have no mind reading abilities at all. They are simple creatures entirely dependent on small mouth noises. But this one seems to have a strangely powerful sense of empathy.

Interesting.

She smirks to herself. “Can I get another bowl of human chow, mister?”

“Yes,” I say, refilling the bowl. Her need for nutrition is great, though she should not eat too much all at once. The first amount of food was a relatively small amount. This is another smaller amount. I’m now feeling better about not having made a hamburger. It would have been too much for her to eat anyway.

“Stingy,” she notes.

“You have not had food in your stomach in weeks. If you eat too much, there is a very real likelihood that you will eject it all as quickly as you ate it. I will feed you often, human.”

“My name is Stella.”

“I will feed you often, Stella.”

“That’s the only nice thing you’ve said or done since I met you,” she says.

“I’m not here to be nice. I’m here to keep you alive.”

A little grin crosses her impudent features. “Damn. Keep talking like that and I might fall in love.”

She starts eating again, and I am left to wonder if that last comment was sarcasm or not. This rude little human has me unsettled. Of course, I did not intend to be dealing with a conscious, wild-caught human not of my choosing today. I had other things to worry about. I still have other things to worry about.

We are flying home, though I do not know if that is advisable. A civil war seems inevitable. Our father is dead, and...

The bowl clatters across the floor.

“I’m done,” she says.

“Pick that up,” I snap.

“You pick it up.”

“The only thing I will be picking up is you, to put you back over my knee if you don’t do as I say this second.”

She hesitates for a moment, then tosses her curls, gives me a gesture involving her middle finger — which I have come to learn is a gesture indicating the height of human disrespect, and runs. She doesn’t know where she is running, of course. She doesn’t even know she’s on a spaceship. But she does not care.

Humans are well known to have the flight, fight, freeze response. This one has an additional mode: chaos.

She is not quiet as she runs. This is not a true effort at escape. She is laughing at the top of her lungs, using precious oxygen that could be deployed in the futile effort to outrun me to express her disrespectful mirth.

I have never wanted to discipline anybody as badly as I want to discipline her. My palms itch with the need to make contact with her impertinent flesh. I want to make her sore. I want to make her sorry. I want to make her cry contrite tears.

At some point in this chase, and I cannot be entirely sure when, my irritation becomes anticipation. I can do with this human as I please. I can indulge my dominant urges on her with complete freedom. She is not suitable for sale in her current condition, and she would absolutely never meet my selection requirements for training under normal circumstances. She's fair game for whatever I choose to do with her. I'm not even going to log her into the inventory.

I might even let her run a little. Tire herself out. She has been sick for a long time. Static for a long time. Whatever muscle tone and fitness she might have had before has abandoned her.

So I let her go.

I let her deplete her limited resources, and I ensure that when I do scoop her up, she is panting and barely able to smile, let alone laugh.

There are specific ways to carry a human in order to make them feel safe and secure. I wrap an arm around her midsection and she cartwheels around in her struggles, ending up with her head toward the ground.

This seems to delight her far more than I intended it to. But that does not matter. My grip is secure, and she is recaptured for the moment.

This human needs so much taming. I do not have the time, and yet I find myself taking it anyway. Perhaps it is because I cannot resist a challenge. Or maybe it is simply that there is nobody else to take care of her. I consider, briefly, the fact that there are soldiers on board, but I have a feeling she would cause chaos in their ranks. Also, the idea of one of those

human males laying hands on her makes my stomach turn, but there is no reason for me to feel that way, so I ignore that portion of my reaction I carry her off to my room, where further discipline awaits.

### 3 A COLLAR

**M**y room contains a great many prototypes for pet products. Most of them I have never had any chance to use on a long term basis, not being interested in pets themselves. Humans are a means to an end, a profit stream we have been using to build our family's fortune after Wrathelder's strike on my father. I've never kept one, and still intend to never keep one. But I can toy with this one for a time.

Several of my more interesting inventions have never had the opportunity to be tested. Arkan considers them too harsh for the soft tempered humans we tend to take as pets, and I agree. I suppose I have been developing tools for a more badly behaved human all along. I have a faint sense of wonder as to why, but then the human takes the chance to try to bite me and I stop questioning my motives and actions. Instead, I focus on dealing with the problem.

"Stop that. Now."

She has fastened her dull teeth on a particularly scaled portion of my thigh. Our anatomy allows us to resist attacks from much more fearsome creatures than she, so it does no damage, but the impudence cannot be tolerated.

I land a firm slap to her bottom, catching thick, round cheeks with the flat of my palm. It is the most satisfying thing I can do to her. Every time my palm lands, I feel a certain thrill running through the cold core of me. My indifference to humans is turning into something with more heat and charge.

In picking the good and the compliant, I may have denied myself the joy of taming the disobedient.

I hear her grunt upside down, the sound coming from somewhere near my knees. In this position, I am barely holding her like an adult woman. I am holding her like a spoiled little animal, which is precisely what she is. She deserves to be spanked. She needs to be disciplined. Thoroughly.

As I carry her into my room, I strip her down. It is easy enough to pull the pants from her body, transferring my grip to the bare skin of her shapely legs. There is no point keeping her clothed. She needs to be naked and exposed. I need to see the effect I am having on her skin. She is tender and she is soft and though I must punish her, I do not wish to damage her. I am responsible, and I will continue to be so, even when handling this unplanned human who is not a pet but will have to be treated as one.

Setting her down the right way up, I grip the hem of her shirt and pull the garment up and over her head. Her hands scramble in the aftermath of the stripping, seeking to cover various sensitive portions of her anatomy. The thick dark hair at the apex of her thighs leaves little to be observed, but she hides it anyway. Her other arm sweeps around her body to cover her nipples. I know from past human captures that human females tend to be sensitive about them, as if having those two buds seen by masculine eyes is a deep shame.

I want to play with her shame. I want to see her cheeks flush as brightly on her face as they do on her bottom. I want her to squirm in front of me and submit to me with all the reluctance in the world. I feel my cock engorging both at the sight of her and the thought of how precious that hard-won submission will be once I have it.

“Give me my fucking clothes back!”

“No,” I growl, my voice low and deep. I sit down on a chair and pull her forward, over my lap yet again. She cannot keep her hands covering her intimate areas now, nor can she stop me from spanking the pink curve of her ass. There is a

particular beauty to the way her reddened bottom curves to her thigh. It draws my palm, and I strike that spot, listening to the satisfying sound of my skin on hers, and the resulting yelp of a human who has already taken some small amount of punishment and yet deserves more.

“If you wish to avoid punishment, you first need to avoid misbehavior,” I lecture her. “Biting me will always make you more sore than it does me.”

“Asshole,” she growls, even as my palm paints her ass harder and faster, spanking her firmly as she wriggles and curses and tries to fight against the discipline she so desperately needs and deserves.

“You bit first, human,” I remind her. “And you knew punishment would follow. What is happening to you is what you asked for, and it is what you will get each and every time you act out. I am accustomed to disciplining more well-behaved humans, but you will be tamed and trained as well as any other by the time I am done with you.”

She responds to this set of revelations with a series of curses that do nothing to shorten her punishment. It is not going to be easy to convince her to behave. It will not be a short-term project in any sense.

I spank her until her curses turn to cries, her flesh taking on a deep red, well-punished hue. Every slap is another reminder that her submission is not optional when it comes to me. If she will not give it willingly, it will be taken from her and the price for her disobedience will be paid in pain.

“You’re a monster! You’re cruel! You’re sick!” She complains throughout, though the accusations and labels become significantly less clear as she starts to sob. I speak most human languages fluently. The language of tears is both much more clear and absolutely impossible to understand.

Locking her in place over my lap with one leg over the back of her thighs, I reach for the instrument I had in mind when I brought her in here. In some respects, it is as simple as can be. It might be mistaken for nothing more than a collar.

It is a complex device made in an ornate design that will cover most of her throat, and it has a few tricks to it that traditional collars do not. It contains a tracking beacon, which is not uncommon for higher end collar setups, and a few other functions of my own design. It is actually quite useful to have a wayward human to try some of my more intense disciplinary designs upon.

She is not cooperative as I put it on, but she is also easily locked into position over my lap. Squirm as she likes, her throat is as vulnerable to me as any other part of her anatomy. It is immensely satisfying to fasten the tool around her neck, and to know that now she is contained in a way she has likely never been contained before.

“This is a collar,” I tell her as I fasten it. The ends slide into one another, locking in a way I will have no trouble removing, but which her fingers will have no chance at taking off.

“No shit!”

“It is more than a simple piece of apparel. Among other things, it is designed to be able to apply punitive stimulation if you disobey one of my rules or leave a set area. In this case, that would be my quarters. One step outside the door, and you will regret it.”

As I tell her this, I stand her up again, still properly naked aside from the collar.

“You mean this is a shock collar, you freak.”

She satisfies her need to cover herself by crossing her arms over her breasts. Her outrage at being spanked and collared is enough to give her the nerve to deploy her most sassy attitude. Some humans learn quickly when punished. Others, not so much.

“Yes. It may very well shock you. You catch on quickly. Perhaps you’re not completely untrainable.”

She narrows her eyes at me with a flash of temper, but she keeps her thoughts to herself for once. It may be that she is beginning to learn.

“I don’t care what you put on me. I’ll always run. That’s what I do.”

In spite of being warned for the consequences, she proceeds to do just that. She rushes for the door, still entirely naked, wearing only the collar. I thought the most satisfying thing I would do to her would be to spank her. Suddenly, I realize I was wrong. Watching her leave my room is going to be much, much more satisfying.

The sight of her red bottom wriggling side to side as she dashes through the door is quite enchanting. The sound she makes as the collar activates once she is a fraction of a hair of a millimeter through the door is very gratifying. It is somewhere between a yelp and a howl.

Her hands shoot back to cover her rear, fingers splaying across bright red cheeks. The heat and the hue are from my own treatment of her disobedient flesh, but I am certain she imagines she is experiencing physical stimulation all over again. The beauty of the collar’s work is that it plays with the nervous system, recreating sensations of pain without actually harming the physical flesh. I have calibrated the system to a relatively low level of stimulation, which means she is experiencing the equivalent of a very well-deserved spanking right now even as she dances about in rebellion, hands cupping her cheeks, tip-toes dashing against the floor.

She is so immersed in the intensity of the punishing experience, she has forgotten that she was the one who initiated it, and the one who can make it stop. She rebels not only against me, but against the simple concept of common sense. And so the pain goes on for her, little gasps, groans, and even moans escaping her lips.

I feel myself getting hard again. I swore I would never have a human pet. I definitely told myself I’d never mate one, no matter how fuckable she might be. That was before I met this stimulating, rebellious creature.

She dances forward a few steps, moving ever further away from the safety of my rooms, but quickly discovers that only makes matters worse...

## *S* tella

I thought the collar would send a pulse of pain around my neck. It doesn't. It somehow creates a cascade of sensation that rushes down my spine and terminates across my ass. It feels like being spanked super hard by an unseen hand.

"Come back inside the allowed area to avoid further pain," he says, looking at me with his smug and icy gaze. This alien seems to have some personal investment in making me hurt. My pain seems to please him, even more so when it is self-inflicted.

I resist the urge to obey as hard as I can. Every second I spend outside the collar's allowed range, I feel my cheeks getting hotter and more sore, responding to the electrical pulses which hijack my nervous system. I know I should go back, probably. But I don't. I take another step away, even though I can barely do it. My muscles are tight and the pain is getting even more intense, and the surface of my skin across my ass and even the tops of my thighs feel like fire ants are running across them. But I'm fucking stubborn. I'm not going to stop until something stops me.

Another step.

I grunt. Sweat is starting to run down my forehead and into my eyes. I wasn't even aware of it until this very moment. This collar is activating every potentially punitive system in my body, and I know there's a limit to what I can take. It really feels as though my ass is being beaten now. There's a steady pulse, a thrum that works its way through me every other second or two. I feel an impact that isn't there. I feel pain that is all too real from a strike that never happened.

"This won't stop hurting when you finally give in, stubborn little thing," he growls, watching me from just outside the door. I've gotten three steps away from him. This collar is definitely going to slow me down, even if it doesn't stop me.

"I... don't... care," I grunt.

“You will,” he says. “If that collar keeps doing its work, then your muscles will be cramped and aching for days.”

“I.... Don’t... Care,” I repeat. I mean it.

“You won’t even act in your own best interest,” he says. “You’ll hurt yourself, and for what? To prove a point to yourself? To me? Is this how you got yourself shot? By refusing to notice when you are making a terrible decision?”

Being lectured while I am in pain is worse than being in pain. It’s one thing to be getting hurt because I refuse to submit, but it is something else to be observed and have my rebelliousness commented on while it is in progress.

“I can stand here and watch you fight your way through this as long as it takes,” he says.

“Fuck you,” I curse, pushing through the pain to take two more steps.

I scream out as that additional distance makes all the difference. The alien tech fixed around my neck is now producing sensations that feel like a cane making rough contact with my tender ass. I can’t move back toward the safety zone, because now I can’t move at all. I’ve overloaded my body. I’ve put myself into a position where all I can do is collapse from the pain.

I hear him make a sound that really seems a lot like a human tut.

“Silly girl,” he growls, even as he takes pity on me.

He scoops me up from the ground, one arm around my waist, the other hand curling into a thick grasp at the back of my head. The latter grip doesn’t seem to be for anything other than making me feel his strength and how much he has me under control. He must know what that grip does to a woman. Even in my pained state, I feel that flush of sensation, endorphins and dopamine and whatever other chemicals are rushing through my body at the curling of his alien digits, the tips of his claws scratching across the hypersensitive skin of my scalp.

The moment we pass through the door, the pain subsides significantly. New stimulation is no longer being added to the burden I have saddled myself with. But it is not over. True to his word, the pain I have accrued continues to seep through me. He lets me slide down onto the floor and stands over me as I try not to writhe embarrassingly in front of him. I fail in that mission immediately. Squirming around on the ground in an effort to make myself comfortable in a situation that does not allow for any level of comfort whatsoever is about as humiliating as anything in my life has ever been.

“Sadist,” I curse him.

“Brat,” he replies.

I don't have the energy to argue any more than that. I have to use all my energy to keep myself in check and to stop from being a complete mess. I've never felt so weak and pathetic as I do right now, and his slight smirk of satisfaction makes it all that much worse. I take deep breaths, trying not to gasp as I do my best to get my body's reactions under control. It's hard, lying here absolutely buck naked, no semblance of modesty. I feel less human than I ever have been and so much more animal.

“You like pain, don't you.”

It's not really a question.

“What?! No!” I deny the accusation hotly, even as my cheeks flush with embarrassment.

I'm starting to be able to breathe properly now. I thought I was getting myself under control, but now his words are sending me spinning again. The truth is, I do like pain. Sometimes, in some ways.

Even now, I'm starting to like the feelings that are beginning to seep through me. Now that I'm no longer actively being hurt, I'm left with the remnants of the collar's effects. There is a low, hot pulse running through my body and flashing across my cheeks. My muscles twitch a little, acclimating to the reality that nothing is there, and that the impulse that made them react as if there was is gone.

I'm left with heat and humiliation. I'm left with tingles and excitement. I'm left with shame and more than a little sexual charge. In all my squirming, my hips are grinding, my thighs are squeezing together, my nipples are hard, and my breath comes in short little gasps. I do like pain. And now that it has stopped... I do like that pain I just experienced.

There's a part of me that wants to jump out the door again. I kind of want to feel that hot flashing sensation again. I could sneak out the door just a little, get a little hit, then come back in, and then I could...

The alien crouches down and reaches out, capturing my chin with his big clawed fingers, and directing my attention to his bright blue gaze.

He is so much larger than I am, and even in this crouched position, he looms over me all scales and fangs and power. I feel fresh thrills running through me. I want to fight him. Not like men fight. I don't want to punch or hit. I don't even want to bite. I want to *resist*. I want to keep him from taking what he seems to think is his. I want him to feel the frustration of being unable to subdue me, even though I am smaller and weaker and human and female.

"What is your name?"

"Stella," I say for the second time, immediately wishing that I lied. I don't think he needs to know my real name. That gives him a little extra sliver of power over me. Fuck.

"My name is Kahn," he says. "And I am your trainer. I have trained many humans before you. I know how to break resistance. I know how to punish disobedience." He leans down and pulls my chin closer to him at the same time. "And I know when a girl likes pain."

My blush makes my face feel as hot as my ass did when his collar was working its twisted alien magic on me. He sees me. I don't know how, because nobody I have ever known has ever really seen me and it seems very strange that an alien I only just fucking met would know anything about me.

"What are you? A mind reader?"

“Yes,” he says. “Our entire species is able to read minds. Not human ones, however. Your thought processes are too simple. Too animal. To read a human’s mind, all you need to do is watch their bodies. Yours is betraying you with every breath you take.”

“Whatever,” I say.

I hate how lame that word feels. It’s supposed to indicate how little I care, but it sounds weak and as though I care very deeply.

“Are you paying attention to me, human?”

“Why? You needy?”

I’m being rude, and that’s because I don’t want him to think for a single fucking second that I care if he hurts me. I don’t want him to think pain will stop me. Yeah, I like it sometimes. I’m a little bit of a freak that way, but everyone has their limits. This collar dropped me. It can stop me. I refuse to openly admit that, though. The second you let anything make think they can hurt you and get what they want, they never stop hurting you. You have to make them think you’re impervious to pain.

This alien might be big and mean and cruel. He might think he’s better than me. But I’m smarter than him. I’d put money on that. Even if he is a fucking mind reader.

He makes a snarling sound of annoyance.

“Let me go. Don’t waste my fucking time or yours. Because I’m telling you, big guy. I’ve beaten bigger, smarter, meaner things than you.”

“I am an alien of the likes most of your species has never seen.”

He is big, that’s true. And yes, he has tusks and fangs. And yes, he has the bluest eyes of all time, and when he looks at me it feels like I’m being regarded by a deep and intense iceberg of a man — because for some reason I keep thinking of him as a man no matter how alien he is. His hair is thick and blue, swept to the side in a way that makes him look restrained and refined.

He's hot.

But I'm not here to drop my now nonexistent panties for a hot guy, alien or not. I have my own mission to attend to. That means getting as far away from the city I came from as possible. Looks like I've achieved that. If I end up being owned by some freaky alien, the whole thing was pointless. I've got to convince every male who comes near me that I'm more trouble than I'm worth. I'm well on the way with Kahn.

"You are a wild little thing," he growls. "You are badly behaved. You are rude. You are not suitable as a pet."

"Good! I don't want to be a pet. What is that supposed to mean?"

"Our species has a fondness for well-behaved humans. They live in our homes, their every need tended to. They are loved and they are cherished and they live out their lives in peace and safety."

It sounds nice, too nice. The idea of being loved and cherished does make me feel a little weak at the knees, though I can't let that be known, so I fall back on an old go-to and make a gagging sound.

"Gross," I say, rejecting all notion of love. "Is that what happened to the girl with the pink hair? She fucks that other long-haired guy? What is he? Your brother?"

"She is my brother's pet. Yes. She was reluctant at first, but she was trained. As you will be. You may not be suited to being owned, but you will learn to submit to my rule."

"I'm not submitting to shit, asshole."

Kahn releases my face and stands up, drawing in a deep breath. "You are combative," he says. "You are poorly behaved. You are..."

I put my hands to the collar, wondering if I can take it off. It feels a little looser than it did before. The second my fingers touch it, it snugs up again. I've got to be real. This feels less like a piece of clothing and more like a sentient being wrapped around my throat, jacked into my body. It reads my intent. Or it seems to.

I don't believe in a mind-reading strip of alien leather, though. There's got to be a trick to this. Something I'm missing. I run my fingers over the indentations and ridges and such. There's stuff inside the collar, but it's not thick enough to contain all that much machinery.

"How does this work?"

I don't think he's actually going to tell me, but then he actually does. An expression of pleasure crosses his handsome alien face, along with pride. I make a bunch of deductions almost instantly. He made this thing. He wants to talk about it. I bet nobody ever listens to him when he talks about these little technical details. I bet he's been in this room for god knows how long, putting together his twisted control devices, his dark genius unappreciated by those around him.

"It has certain capacities linked to our telepathic abilities."

"You mean you're controlling it with your mind."

"Yes, that's a simple way of putting it."

Interesting. That means if he doesn't know I'm doing something bad, then maybe the collar won't know either. Maybe it's not actually as smart of a device as I imagined it to be.

He looks at me. I look up at him. There is a moment in which we both size one another up and realize we're both in trouble. I don't think this guy is going to let me go. I don't think he's going to give in just because I'm hard to deal with. He has the demeanor of someone who likes challenges and problems.

**K**ahn

I am not temperamentally suited to the task of handling a badly behaved woman. Or at least, I did not think I was. But now I see my invention securely around the neck of a pet who needs it, and I see how well it is working, I have to wonder why I made it at all if I did not want to contend with a difficult woman.

I have been preparing for her, I realize. I have been making tools and developing strategies for just such an occasion.

“Sit up on your knees,” I order. “Your training may as well begin now.”

To my surprise, she obeys me. She stops trying to hide any parts of her body that she considers shameful and just does as she is told. In the process, she exposes her breasts and the soft curve of her belly. She shows me who she is, embracing her femininity. There is a kind of defiance in her expression. She is submitting physically, but there is no submission in those eyes.

I wonder if this is a test on her part. She is seeing what I want to do with her. Almost certainly. She is probably just curious as to what I want. That may be one of my biggest points of leverage with this pretty young human. Her curiosity, her rebellion, and her intellect. She is clearly far from stupid, even if she is reckless.

The motion and the position make her ass press against the backs of her calves. This pressure reignites some of the sensation the collar created just a few minutes ago. I hear a slightly hissed intake of breath, and I see the wriggle of her hips as she both tries to avoid the feeling, then settles down into it.

I feel a flicker of arousal while watching her. She is very appealing in her visage and in her body. Even after illness and recovering from a wound, she has a certain vitality about her. I remind myself that I need to be careful. She has been sick. And while her attitude and her mouth are busy creating all manner of reasons for punishment and discipline, her body is unlikely to be able to handle any of it.

I have to be stern. I have to be firm. And for now, I have to be relatively gentle.

“Very good,” I praise as she does as she is told. “This does not need to be an unpleasant experience for you. When you do as you are told, you will be rewarded.”

*S tella*

“Oh yeah? How are you going to reward me?”

No sooner are those words out of my mouth than I feel my clit throb with heat and warmth. Holy shit. It's the collar again, and it has found a new set of nerves to stimulate. It feels as though my clit is being suckled at by a nice, hot mouth, an agile tongue looping around the tight little bud that should be hidden from any stimulation, tucked away inside my lips, between my thighs.

He can access any part of me at any time he pleases, I realize. He can make me feel like I am being spanked. He can make me feel like my clit is being pleased. I bet he can make me feel like I am being fucked.

I draw in a shuddering breath as the sensation abates.

“That's...”

“That is what good girls get,” Kahn drawls, his eyes hooded as he gazes down at me, his lips curled in what I can only call carnal triumph. “And there's more where that came from, if you want to keep being a good girl. Now. I think it is time you were dressed.”

He's going to leave me like this. Aroused. Needy. Feeling a carnal desperation. A man would fuck me now. He'd give into his desire and he'd take me. He'd give me the power and I'd feel how much he needed to be inside me. He'd worship me. He'd make a fool of himself for me. He'd say what he had to say, do what he had to do. Anything. Anything to be with me.

I'm a virgin. I've never had the chance to be with any man of my choosing. My purity has been closely guarded, and though I have felt desire, there have been no opportunities to ever indulge it. This is the first time I have ever been safe enough and free enough to want someone and be able to act on it. How ironic that it is happening now that I am being held captive as an alien's pet.

I don't want my clothes on. I want my legs wrapped around his waist. I want his cock buried deep inside me. I want to be taken. Fuck me. He is under my skin, and he is in my head. I

don't like him. I think I might hate him. He has all the traits of the men I most loathe. He is demanding, he is dominant, he is arrogant, and he has a capacity for cruelty as shown by his decision to make this collar that allows him to punish a human without touching her.

I know him on some level. I know him in the way I know all men like him. Dominators. Creatures who seek to control and to own and to possess. It shouldn't turn me on. It should repulse me.

“The clothing you got yourself shot in...”

“Why do you keep saying I got myself shot?”

“Because you did.”

“You always blame the victim?”

His gaze sweeps up and down my frame. “You're not a victim. There's not an inch of you that is a victim.”

Dammit. With two sentences he's winning me over again.

He's so much bigger, so very alien. He captures people as pets. He could easily see me as a weak little victim, but he doesn't. He sees me for all the trouble I am. I like that. Makes me feel respected, even as I kneel here before him with a stinging ass and now a pussy that wants attention he clearly has no intention of giving me right now.

This is going to be more than a battle of wills between him and me. This is going to be a war of the minds and maybe of arousal. I know his species likes to fuck humans. The other girl is testament to that. They like to keep people as what he calls pets. I think that's clearly just another term for fuck toy.

So I stand up. Slowly. Elegantly. I stretch my arms up over my head, making my body long. I show him every bit of my curves and skin, unashamed and unafraid. And I watch his face. His eyes. And his crotch. He's got to have an alien dick in there. Will it move? Engorge for me?

As alien as he is, as advanced as he claims to be, his pupils dilate as I make these languid motions of display. He makes a soft growling sound under his breath, which comes in a sharp

intake as I perform a very slow turn, showing him what I bet is my reddened ass.

“I’m just so stiff,” I say. “You don’t mind me stretching, do you?”

He doesn’t reply. He turns away, but not without one last glance. That makes me laugh inwardly. The scales and the hair and the eyes don’t matter. This is a horny male the same as any guy. He wants me. And that’s going to be how I fucking break him.

“Put this on,” he says, holding out a black garment that is too long to be a two piece. Sure enough, when I take hold of it I see that it is a jumpsuit, made out of a fabric that’s somewhere between cotton and rubber. It feels stretchy, but not like it won’t breathe. There’s an open weave, but it also snugs tight to my hand when I put my hand inside it.

“What the fuck is that?” I turn the garment around and gesture to the rear, where there is a rounded area with a seam that looks like it is being held together the same way a garment with a zipper would be. Kind of looks like horse riding apparel does, the kind where you have a different fabric to keep you in the saddle a little better.

I had ponies growing up. Yes, even in the city, even amid an apocalypse. My father always wanted me to have the best of everything, so I learned how to ride, and how to love big animals that were built for freedom even if they were deprived of it.

“An access panel,” he says.

“Gross. You’re so disgusting. And you’re not different because you’re an alien. You’re acting like all human men do when they get a chance to take advantage of a woman. You...”

“I haven’t touched you, except to spank your spoiled, impudent bottom,” he growls. “Put it on.”

I don’t really have any choice, do I. It’s this or keep wandering around naked, and as much as I’d enjoy teasing him, there are advantages to being clothed. So I stop complaining for a minute, and I slide my legs one at a time into the suit before

pulling it up over my body and zipping it in the front. Just like I thought, it snugs tight wherever there's a curve. It's not restrictive, but it does feel supportive, of both my ass and my breasts, most notably.

I should be grateful for how comfortable this is, I suppose.

He also provides socks in a similar, though lighter fabric, and a pair of boots that match the outfit. They too, snug in place.

“So this is all one-size-fits-most, huh,” I muse as I pull the first black boot on, finding that it comes up as high as I want it to, which in my case is just below my knee. This is actually a badass outfit. I love black clothing, and I love clothes that hug my body, and the feeling of being contained and supported is really nice. It's like being held in a gentle, but firm continuous embrace.

“I designed that outfit for nervous humans,” he says. “Pressure is calming to your species.”

He's not wrong. He must have studied us for years. He seems to have the kind of understanding you only get when you've done a really deep dive into a subject. There is an intensity to Kahn that I'd find really attractive if he wasn't... aw, hell. I have to admit it to myself. I find him attractive. He gives me the feeling that I might have met my match — and that has never happened before.

*Kahn*

She looks adorable in the pet uniform I designed. She has a cute body. Her ass was made to be spanked, and her attitude practically demands discipline. I find myself uncharacteristically aroused, half-wishing I had not gotten her dressed. I can always undress her, I suppose. That will be enjoyable too. I can let her get used to the luxury of being clad, only to strip it from her, exposing her to my gaze all over again before claiming her rebellious body and making it mine....

*Get a grip, Kahn.* I speak to myself inside my head. Our telepathy is usually reserved for speaking to others, but

sometimes I like to telepathically talk to myself. It allows me to have conversations without the inconvenience of having to tolerate anybody else's opinions. *She's a spoiled human girl, and she's trouble. Mating her would be a mistake.*

***But she's attractive. And smart. And brave. And bold. And you like her, even though you barely know her.***

A part of my mind that rarely gets to have a say speaks up from one of the deepest recesses. I've put away this part of me even deeper than my desire. This is my romantic side, my softer side, my capacity for love. I don't listen to him anymore. Not after seeing how my family was destroyed by love, my father betrayed and killed by the the mother of his children. I don't trust this softer part of myself. It is weak and it will get us all killed if I listen to it.

"Stay in the room," I tell her. "Stay in this room. There is a bed in here you can sleep in, and I will bring you food if you need it. The ship is not yours. And touch nothing..." Looking around, I realize I cannot leave her in here. There is far too much for her to get into.

"Actually, never mind. I am going to put you in one of the human containment rooms. It will be more suitable."

"Sounds like a cell."

"It is smaller, but also has a bed."

"Is that what you think people want? Beds?"

"I think not having a bed is very uncomfortable for a human, but if you'd like to continue to be ungrateful for what you are given, I can remove it."

I see her eyes widen a fraction as she digests my words. They are designed to remind her that she is here at my pleasure, and that everything she has comes from me. They are supposed to put her in her place. They absolutely fail to do that.

"Such a fucking asshole," she curses under her breath.

She's rude and she's self-possessed. She's not going to be grateful to me for small mercies because it doesn't occur to her

that she needs to be grateful. She thinks the universe owes her something, and therefore, I owe her something.

The temptation to spank her again, this time for no reason other than she is a spoiled little brat, rises in me. She could do with a series of painful lessons. Perhaps they would teach her some humility and appreciation.

Then again, if being shot didn't bring her down a peg or two, as the humans say, perhaps nothing will. Or... perhaps being shot did bring her down a peg or two, and she was even more insufferable beforehand. She is an unknown quantity, one I intend to become entirely knowledgeable about.

"Come with me," I say. "We will find a suitable room for you."

"It better have more than just a bed, or I'm going to fucking riot," she replies.

"Oh? What other accoutrements does the lady require?"

She glances up at me, and even from her relatively diminutive height, I see that she has the spark of a little dominance in her. She does not like being spoken down to. She likes to be taken seriously. I suppose I can understand that.

"I need some form of entertainment so I don't go completely fucking mental," she replies brashly. "And I need to be able to exercise. And ideally, I need to be able to, uhm, escape."

I laugh inadvertently at that last addition.

"Where would you escape to, even if you could? We are on a ship light years from your home."

"It's not the where that matters. It's the principle of not being under some dude's thumb," she says. "It's about freedom."

## 4 PAST PRESENT

**S** *tella*

This alien is a psycho. He laughs at the idea of freedom, as if there's no way in the universe I'd ever be allowed that. It doesn't even occur to him that maybe I deserve it. Maybe it's my fucking birthright. He's not the first male I've encountered who thinks of me as property, something to possess and inevitably trade. It's just so fucking disappointing to discover that even massive, advanced aliens who look like an orc and an elf fucked a dragon are just as misogynistic as fleshy human men.

I want to teach him a lesson. I want to teach them all lessons about captivity and freedom and what it means to be a fucking person even if, yeah, you happen to have a vagina.

I need to get off this ship and back to Earth, I guess. Earth was also full of psychos, though. It's possible that if everybody you meet is a psycho, then you might be the actual psycho, but I refuse to think about that too deeply. My ass is sore inside the snug confines of my new clothing, and the collar around my neck feels like a heavy thing weighing me down, containing and grounding me. I keep putting my fingers up to touch it, sometimes to curl around the edge and tug, sometimes to run my fingers over the ridges and valleys of it. These wires are primed to deliver pain, but only if I disobey him.

"Come with me," he orders.

I leave the room without ill-effect this time, which tells me the collar only works if he is there to make it work. Alright. That's

going to make my life easier when it comes to...

I hear voices. Human voices. Male and female. I assume they're other pets. I'm keen to see who else is on this vessel. Maybe I can get them together, stage a mass escape. There's power in numbers, right?

Rounding a corner, I catch sight of what looks like camouflage uniform. For a split-second, I'm confused. More than confused. I am thrown back to another place and another time. I am smaller. I am scared. I am suddenly alone in the world — or at least that is how it feels.

The scent of my mother no longer comforts me. The house is cold in her absence. In her place are soldiers. A lot of them. Their heavy boots stamp above my head and below my feet day and night as they make their patrols. My father tells me that they are here to keep me safe, but I do not feel safe. Not even a little bit. The home I once knew has been invaded, and I'll never feel safe again.

I throw myself back around the corner, pressed hard against the wall.

Kahn follows me, a curious expression as he looks down at me.

“What is the matter?”

That can't be a uniform. It can't be. I'm probably just going insane from stress. That would make so much more sense. I'm on an alien spaceship. There's no way I just saw what I thought I saw. It's not actually possible. Is it?

I take another peek around the corner and almost pee my pants. I wasn't imagining it. There's a tall human man wearing an army uniform, standing and talking to another human man, wearing another army uniform.

“Those are fucking soldiers,” I hiss at Kahn.

“Unfortunately, yes,” he sighs.

With that confirmation reassuring me that I am not, in fact, crazy, I scramble away from the corner and retreat to his room — the same room I just ran from.

“Don’t let them see me,” I beg as he follows after me. “Don’t let them know I am here. Please. I beg you.”

“Why?”

“They’ll kill me,” I blurt.

He cocks his head and looks at me, even more deeply curious. “Why would they do that?”

I just start talking as fast as I can, saying the first things that come to mind. “Because they’re after me. They were hunting me. That’s why I was trying to get to that fucking village. I figured if I could pass myself off as one of the country people, they’d lose my trail.”

“My brother believes they were coming after him as a result of the crash. The villagers led him to imagine that they had seen the ship, and...”

“No. They weren’t coming for a ship. They were coming after me. They can’t know I’m here. And they... you have let me go. You have to get me a very, very long way from here. Do you understand?”

“I understand you’re panicking,” he says, going to one knee in front of me as my breath comes in short gasps. He puts his hands on my shoulders, pressing down firmly but not hard enough to hurt me. I feel myself being physically grounded by this great big alien who I have already decided to hate.

I am trembling. I hate that I am trembling. I want to give him a show of strength so badly, but I can’t. Seeing those soldiers makes me want to curl up in a little ball and sob like a baby.

**K** *ahn*

“Come here,” I hear myself saying, drawing Stella into a tight hug. I did not intend to coddle her. Not one bit. I intended to keep her like the little animal she is, in appropriate caging. But suddenly she looks so scared and so small. My sympathies are aroused, which is a great surprise to me. I did not know I had any.

I pick her up and I carry her to my bed. How many times have I warned other owners not to ever let pets sleep in their bed? Dozens. Dozens upon dozens. I've given extensive lectures as to how allowing a human pet to sleep with its owner can result in an inflated sense of importance in the pet and create behavioral problems.

Now I am carefully tucking a feral, disobedient, and outright naughty human into my very own bed. I am stroking her curls back from her head and making little soothing sounds that aren't even words, just crooning.

She closes her eyes and grips the covers, pulling them tight up to her chin. She wants to hide. She wants to be kept safe. As chaotic and wild as she appears, she has all the needs of any well-behaved pet. She needs to be protected.

Silently, I swear to myself to always protect her.

Even, and perhaps especially, from herself.



I lock the human in my room, safe and sound, and turn to address the next major problem. Arkan still insists that it is a good idea to transport Euphorian-slaying humans to Euphoria. My older brother has a kind of arrogance which cannot be argued against. Logic is not enough to stop him from doing something insanely stupid. He wants power. He wants domination. He is eager to return to Euphoria and rub the death of Phenix Wrathelder in the faces of his family and our traitorous mother. Arkan believes we are returning to Euphoria in triumph, and the human soldiers are like our dogs of war. They will strike awe into the hearts and minds of all those who see them.

I think we are returning to a civil war, and that we will get a great many killed, humans and Euphorians alike. I believe we should return the soldiers to Earth, and perhaps consider not returning to Euphoria ourselves at all. Though we may have very well been treated unfairly, we are a toxic presence in the world from which we came. The feud between our family and

Wrathelder has already expanded into wider society, bringing chaos and destruction.

Landing back on the planet, declaring the patriarch of Wrathelder dead, and allowing a contingent of Euphorian-slaying humans to set foot on our soil seems to me to be an act of war against all that is good and safe and proper.

The human soldiers we now have in our midst happily destroyed an entire Wrathelder crew. They are dangerous, and my brother and I are outnumbered. Stella believes in my power, but suddenly I am seeing through her eyes. Feeling her powerlessness. Knowing that our cargo is more dangerous than Arkan or I would like to admit, and wondering if our arrogance will be our downfall. We waged bitter covert war against Phenix Wrathelder for years, and in the end it was a human who slew him.

Humans are dangerous creatures, but Arkan believes our alliance with them will hold. This, in spite of the fact that human alliances historically never hold. They are a warlike, vicious, terrible little species, and our decision to turn them into pets now seems like a laughably arrogant aim.

I've had this conversation a hundred times. It's time to have it for the hundred and first time.



“I have the human contained,” I inform my brother. He is on the bridge, piloting the ship even though the ship does not need to be piloted. His human pet is happily curled up in his lap, her pink hair and his long blue locks mingling with their casual intimacy. I have to admit, they make a fine pair. Arkan's pet is more than someone to own. She has become his mate, his confidante. Dare I even say, his equal.

I cannot imagine ever allowing a human to take such a position in my life. Stella might be cute, and perhaps I may very well end up in charge of her for an extended period of time — but I see the animal in her very clearly. She could

never be an equal to me. She will always be something to be looked after.

“Thank you,” he says.

“Poor thing,” Jennifer says, peeking out from the curtain of his hair with a little smirk. “I bet you were so mean to her.”

“I am never mean,” I reply. “I am always firm. But that is not what is at issue now. Stella — that is her name, by the way. She says that the soldiers we have on board are a lethal threat to her life. I believe it is time to reconsider our plan.”

Arkan sighs. “We are going home,” he insists. “We are taking them with us. I won’t keep having this conversation, Kahn.”

He will, though.

“We are going home as murderers. We are going home bringing chaos and war. I wish you would reconsider our course of action, Arkan.”

“No matter how many times you say that, I have no intention of changing my course of action, or the course of this vessel.”

Arkan can be an absolute idiot sometimes. He wants to go back to prove something to the world. He absolutely refuses to understand that what others will perceive is not what he wants to project. He thinks everybody will be wildly impressed at the sight of what he imagines to be a well-trained platoon of soldiers obeying his every command. I know better. I know the soldiers will follow the commands of their own commander. I know that they will quickly become entirely uncontrollable. I know that the disappearance of three vessels of our family’s greatest enemy, including their patriarch, will be looked upon with suspicion.

Sometimes, I grow very tired of being correct. There are only so many times one can say *I told you so*.

But what options do I have? I could demand he let me off the ship and avoid the chaos which is almost certainly coming, but I am loyal to my family. My other brothers are not burdened with the same level of dedication. Someone has to try to keep things sane. Someone has to be responsible. Arkan thinks the latter position is his. It is not. It is mine. The burden of

keeping this family alive has been mine since our father passed.

I try not to be bitter, even as my efforts go unacknowledged. I am the one who runs the human pet shop books. I am the one who understands the accounts. It is I who presents to the council of Elders, who negotiates with others. Arkan is eldest, and that is all.

I leave his presence before I lose my temper. These unbalanced familial dynamics are fast coming to a head. I cannot cover for every one of my brothers' rash actions. One of us has abandoned the family completely, the other now makes his home among humans, and Arkan, Arkan seems intent on war.

The human soldiers have given themselves the run of the ship, another decision of Arkan's. He believes they will be more settled and less aggressive if they do not believe themselves to be prisoners. I believe them to be arrogant and destructive regardless, and if it was my choice they would be confined to a single bay on the lower deck.

Instead I am forced to endure yet another indignity at the hands of Arkan's guests: small talk.

“Big guy!”

The leader of the humans approaches me with a broad grin which implies he imagines himself to be my friend. Of course he is anything but. If it was up to me, I would strip him of all weaponry and send him back to where he came from, albeit a more remote location than the city from which they originated, a place they help control with violence and fear. Most of the trouble with humans — and the reason we decided they needed help and rescuing in the first place, is their chaotic, warlike tendencies.

“Yes, human?”

“The boys were thinking, it might be nice if we could...”

My mind tunes out the rest of his odious request. This creature should not have the nerve to address me. He should be on his knees, wearing a war collar. I made one shortly after their

collective arrival. It is a more vicious version of the collar Stella is wearing. It would not give spankings. It would give one warning pulse and then drop a grown man like a sack of potatoes.

I've suggested we fit the soldiers with my invention, but Arkan disagrees with that plan too. He has become convinced that people can be allies rather than owned creatures. I blame his pet for that.

“So anyway, we were thinking...”

The human is still talking about some adjustments or something or other his engineers want to make to their quarters. He should be afraid to address me, let alone speak to me with such insolent, casual tones. My hands flex inadvertently as I do my best to restrain myself from kicking him to the ground and putting my boot on his neck.

Yet again, I reflect on the fact that this is our family vessel, and my brother has seen fit to let humans have the run of it. This is what happens when a Euphorian gives into desire for humans. This perversion of all that is good and proper is the result. Humans run in our private places like vermin.

I put my hands behind my back to hide the clenching and make a show of listening to the soldier. He wishes to be able to play some sort of game in the cargo bay. I give my permission with a swift nod. There is little point in denying them anything. Arkan will only say yes if I say no.

Having been accosted by the human, I return to my quarters. I have spent many hours and days here working on various plans, trying to come up with some method of returning to Euphoria without setting off a civil war — not to mention trying to ensure that the importation of human pets from Earth is ceased forthwith. We are meddling with forces we do not understand, and it is causing suffering and pain.



The human, Stella, is asleep in my bed when I return. I hear the soft, slow rhythm of her breathing. It is pleasant, even

though I am officially still irritated by all things human. Sitting down at my desk, I return to my labors. There is much to be done.

I lose track of time, immersed in my work. I have drafted many letters, one to each of the council and several to the older and more powerful members of the Wrathelder clan. I am hoping that diplomacy might yet lead to a peaceful outcome, but I know the likelihood is low.

“What are you doing?” The question emanates from somewhere near my elbow.

I startle, albeit without actually moving or making a sound as Stella breaks my attention. I had almost forgotten she was there. I get so immersed in my work that I often forget to eat or to drink, but I suppose having a pet around means forgetting is no longer an option.

She looks rested and happy for the moment, however, and more interested in the contents of my desk than the contents of her stomach.

“Working,” I answer her question.

“What are you working on?”

“It’s complicated.”

“I have time.”

She looks at me with curious dark eyes, and though I know there is little point in talking to a freshly captive human about matters of state, I suppose it cannot hurt either. It will be, at the very minimum, at least as satisfying as talking to a wall.

“Matters of politics on our world,” I say. “My brother and I are returning to our world with blood on our hands.”

“Really? Wow. Very cool.”

“Not very cool,” I correct her.

“Sorry, I’m used to people saying they have blood on their hands like it is a good thing. I think the meaning of the phrase has changed over the years. It seems like it should be bad, but nowadays, with war being constant and the city being such a

fucking mess, having blood on your hands is kind of just like, a Tuesday, I guess?”

“Well, it is not like a Tuesday on our world. We are an orderly and largely peaceful species.”

“Why do you have such big fangs and tusks, then? They kind of make you look like oversized staple removers from a certain angle. Is that what you evolved as? Staple removers?”

“No,” I laugh. “We evolved as apex predators on our world, just as humans did on yours. The fangs and tusks are largely vestigial now.”

I never thought talking to a human would be satisfying. Usually conversations with them are like having conversations with a self-involved, barely sentient little beast. But Stella seems genuinely interested in me, and in the matters I am referring to, even if she does not have an understanding of any of the wider issues.

She leans on the desk and looks up at me. “Are you important then, you and your brother? Politically? Are you powerful?”

“Our family has historically been influential in politics, yes. But our father was slain, and our mother either seduced or bribed away, and the result is that we are something of the black sheep of our world. We are still part of the nobility. Still influential. Still possessed of some wealth.”

“Rich and handsome,” she says. “What a score. I’m surprised you’re not married.”

I glance over at her to see if she is being sarcastic. She is smiling, but it is hard to say why. This human keeps her secrets, and I sense she has many.

“I am not interested in marriage,” I tell her. “That is a human custom.”

She rests her chin on her hands, her eyes running over documents I know she cannot hope to read. Our written system is far too complex for humans to learn, especially wild, rough things like this young woman.

“I think marriage is very romantic,” she says. “Pledging your entire life to someone else, promising to be there for them no matter what. It’s about loyalty, really, isn’t it.”

“I had not thought about it that way.”

“That’s funny,” she says, glancing back at my many papers. “Seems to me like you think about everything pretty much every way it could be thought about.”

I look at her with no small measure of surprise. That was a very insightful comment for a human, especially one who has only just come into my custody and has been absolutely insensate for weeks. She pays attention, clearly. I know it is just a survival skill, but I would be lying if I said it was not the slightest bit flattering to have some facet of myself noticed.

“I have not had time to consider marriage. I have been busy considering all the many other things.”

“Hm,” she nods. “So you’re the paperwork guy. There’s always a paperwork guy. My father said he’s the one with the real power, because he’s the only one who really knows what’s going on.”

“Your father sounds like a wise man.”

“He’s a lot of things. I guess wise is one of them. What’s all this paperwork about? Do advanced aliens have to fill in a lot of forms?”

“These are plans, and letters of explanation,” I say. “When we return to our world, we are returning to a complicated political situation. It will matter who we, or I, I suppose, can get on our side if peace is to be maintained. I have mapped out multiple scenarios in which various factions are either for, or against us, and how events are likely to pan out based on those scenarios.”

“So you think that if you just think of everything, you’ll be in control of it. But you’ve got to know that even with all these plans you’ve made, things are just going to happen how they’ll happen, and what really happens won’t be anything you’ve thought of. That’s how it always is. The universe hates plans.”

I feel a pang of irritation at her dismissal of my work. It reminds me of Arkan's approach to life.

"I find that people who think that thinking isn't worth the time it takes spend a lot of time being surprised by the way things happen, which only reinforces their ideas that thinking doesn't work."

"Hm," she nods, cocking her head to the side. "Maybe that's it. Maybe I don't think enough."

Again, I am surprised. Usually when I provide such feedback, all that happens are dismissals and denials. This human considers my point of view immediately and considers that her own point of view might be less than perfect. She is intelligent, I realize. Deeply so. Maybe more intelligent than I had ever given humans credit for being.

"I'm hungry," she announces.

"Of course. I will get you something to eat. Stay here."

"Don't worry. I'll stay. There're those soldiers out there, and there's food in here. Or there will be. Is there entertainment? Anything to watch or read?"

"I have paper and ink pens. You could write or draw. Just don't write or draw on anything I've already written or drawn on. Here." I pick up a stack of unused paper and a couple of spare pens full of dark ink and press them into her arms. "Entertain yourself with these."

She looks down at the things in her arms. "Will you teach me how to read and write your language?"

For a third time, I am taken aback. Never once has a human I have taken into my custody for training asked to be taught how to use our written language. Usually the fact that we are able to speak to them in their human tongue is enough.

"Yes. I can teach you. I can try. I do not know if it will translate, as we have telepathic elements which are reflected even in our written words, but it would be interesting to attempt."

She looks around for somewhere to sit, and that is when I realize there is basically nowhere for her to get comfortable other than the bed. My quarters are minimalistic at best. I have never bothered to put much in them besides what I need for myself. I have never tried to make them comfortable for anyone else, including a pet.

“You can sit on the bed,” I tell her. “I will get some additional furnishings for you.”

“Additional furnishings,” she says. “Aren’t I lucky.”

“You very much are,” I agree, ignoring what is probably a hint of sarcasm.

Leaving her sitting on my bed, I go to run errands for my pet. It’s strange. For the last however long, I have visited her unconscious body several times a day, never really thinking of her as anything more than a task that needed to be completed. Now that task is sending me on more tasks. It may very well never end. Oddly, I find myself not minding that thought as much as I imagined.

I raid my brother Zain’s room. He has blankets, throws, pillows, all manner of decadent comforts collected over the years. If he likes something, he takes it. I have always been more circumspect about what I gather. If I do not absolutely need something, it is discarded. There are also some small tables that she can probably sit at with the aid of cushions and such.

## *S tella*

Kahn returns absolutely festooned with blankets, cushions, and small pieces of furniture, carrying what seems to be the contents of an entire room in one go. His arms are full, and more is balanced on his shoulders. He looks like a walking alien interior design store.

He also has a grilled cheese sandwich sitting precariously next to a bowl of hot tomato soup, balanced against all known laws of nature on the back of his left hand. He steps into the room with this inherently unstable configuration very obvious, to the

extent that I rush forward to grab the hot liquid before the entire unbalanced load comes down in a hefty crash.

Sure enough, my removing the plate and bowl are enough to destabilize Kahn's load, and the rest of the items tumble from his grip one after the other as he reaches out to stop the heaviest and most breakable things from hitting the ground directly.

I am left standing holding my lunch, or is it dinner, in the midst of a bunch of stuff I know he must have spent the last hour or so picking out for me because there's no way a grilled cheese and tomato soup took that long to make.

"I found a small table that should fit you," he says. "And cushions. You can pile these up. And a rug, to make the floor more comfortable, so you do not lose too much body heat through it."

He sets everything up as he talks, giving up his pristine, clear floor in favor of brightly colored rugs and throws and pillows that must come from someone with a very different temperament.

"There," he says. "A place for you to sit, and to eat, and to write, and to draw. A proper place."

"Thank you," I say. He is an alien oppressor and obviously my enemy, but I can appreciate kindness, especially as it doesn't feel like I've experienced much of that in a while.

"You can sleep on the cushions too," he says. "I brought plenty of blankets so you will be comfortable."

"Oh, I'm not allowed to sleep in the bed with you?"

I intend the question to come out sassy and sarcastic, but for some reason it sounds genuinely disappointed.

"I have no intention of taking a pet for myself. I will train you," he says. "That is all."

"Oh, you'll train me, huh?"

I sit down at the table and stuff a corner of the grilled cheese into the tomato soup while looking him in the eye.

“You’ll have to be trained,” he says. “You will need to know how to fit into our world. Where you came from, you were an apex species. On Euphoria, you are more of a pet than anything. You will have no political power, no legally protected rights. You will live according to the whims of those who own you.”

“Sounds like being a woman on Earth,” I quip, though I’m not really joking. Women’s rights used to be something a long time ago, but in my experience we get traded and used just as much as animals and probably more. And we’re expected to make the soup. Nobody brings it to us.

“There are plenty of humans who are quite comfortable in their role as pets,” he says. “There is a certain safety to the arrangement. You are provided for and looked after. You do not need to seek shelter or maintain financial independence.”

“All of that in exchange for all our freedom forever, huh? Sweet deal.”

I’m not serious, of course, and he is talented enough a communicator to realize that.

“You appear to have left the city in search of freedom,” he says. “I know you do not value security. If you did, you would make better decisions and seek less pain.”

“Maybe I’m just a freak,” I say. Maybe I am. Right now, I’m a freak eating a very good sammich and having some pretty good soup too. I can see how people are lured into this arrangement with these aliens. On some level, fighting it seems like the stupid option. I take a lot of stupid options, though.

“You are a particular kind of human. There are many different kinds of humans. Some are suitable as pets. Others are not.”

“How many kinds of humans are there, you think?”

He smiles, pleased to be asked his opinion. I know how to read men like this. They think they’re smart. They usually are too, intellectually. Most of the human men I know like this wouldn’t know a feeling if it slapped them in the face though.

“I would not like to quantify the types of humans. There are many different ways to sort your species. Also, life changes can change temperament. Breeding humans generally calms them down. It is possible you would be a more tamable creature if you were to be bred. There are hormonal changes and the requirements of raising young also drain energy...”

“I’m not interested in being bred. What would you do, anyway, get some guy to fuck me?”

“There are breeding studs available on Euphoria. Their owners make good money when others want to create new life, though it does not often work. I have hypothesized that something in the Euphorian atmosphere acts as birth control for humans...”

He is really off on his specialist subject. If he was a normal guy, I’d say that he’s been starved for someone to talk to. I’m listening, somewhat. I’m mostly eating though, enjoying the buttery bread and cheesy filling. I’ve got a lot of eating to catch up on.



When I’m done and feeling full, I brush my hands off and look him dead in his handsome alien face. It’s time to tell him the truth.

“So, here’s the deal. I’m going to escape your custody, and this ship, and go back to Earth, because being a pet to an alien sounds fucking awful. I’ve been looking for freedom, not greater captivity.”

“There is no chance of you escaping either this ship or my captivity, human. If you want to make life easier for yourself, accept your new circumstances.”

“Get fucked,” I reply, succinctly.

He smirks at me. “That language will earn you punishment. I thought you would understand that I expect respectful behavior from you.”

“That’s hard, though, because I don’t respect males.”

“I see,” he chuckles. “Let me see if I cannot make you respect at least one.”

He grabs me up and for the second time in what feels like a handful of hours, I am over his lap. He could use the collar, but I don’t think he wants to. I think he wants me to feel this helplessness over his big thighs.

I squirm and wriggle and find myself not so much over his thighs, but over one of his thighs, my legs splayed on either side of his thick muscular leg. His scales can be felt through the fabric of his pants, and with the weight of my body now coming down through the fulcrum of my crotch, I feel parts of my anatomy sparking to life in a way they probably shouldn’t.

The pain of the collar punishment already got me started. Then I calmed down through the sammich part of the proceedings, and now I am fed, rebellious, and turned the fuck on with this full body contact I’m getting from this monstrous alien beast who wants nothing more than for me to act like a good girl.

I bite my lower lip and I try my very best not to show how turned on I am. Outwardly, I’m as stoic and rebellious as ever. Inwardly, there’s pleasure right at the place where my clit meets his thigh, and it is radiating out through the rest of my body.

“I enjoy spanking badly behaved pets,” Kahn informs me. “Seeing a human bottom turn pink and then red beneath my palm is a very satisfying process, especially when it results in a well-behaved boy or girl.”

“You spank men too?” I squeak the question in surprise.

“I punish pets who need to be punished. I am a trainer. That means being able to handle any kind of human who requires discipline.”

“I’d like to see a man get punished.”

“Would you?”

“Men deserve punishment, but they never get it. They’re always bigger and crueller and in control.”

Being held in this position while complaining about men is quite something, but Kahn doesn't seem to mind. He's not in a hurry to punish me. He takes his time about such things, which means he listens.

"Respect is important for all pets," he says. "Of any gender. And on that note, it is time you were spanked."

"Ow!" I gasp the word a second before his palm lands.

"Ow?" He laughs. "I hadn't even touched you, you dramatic little human."

"But then you did and it hurt," I say. That's not actually true, because his response to my yelp was to not smack me all that hard after all.

"You are such a..." He fails to finish his sentence, but I think I know what he means anyway. Maybe I'm becoming psychic too.

## **K** *ahn*

I very rarely, if ever, find humans amusing, but this one has a certain spark that tests the limits of my stoic exterior. She is not trying to escape punishment. She is not begging me for mercy. She is simply... adorable. Every inch of her, from her dark curls to her sassy words. I don't enjoy sass usually, but from her it is somehow charming.

"You are a brat," I growl, slapping her cheeks, but not nearly as hard as I feel I probably should. I should be teaching her a stern lesson about respect and speaking to her alien betters with some kind of decorum. I will not tolerate a verbally chaotic pet around the place.

That slap leaves her skin reddened, and also brings another response from her. A moan. She grinds her hips and I know why. She is working her pussy against me, just a little. She is tentative, but she is aroused. I should move her out of this position. I should make it so there is no potential for arousal, because this punishment might very well start to become something else if I do not. At the same time, this is a very

satisfying way to hold her, and if she wants to desire sex while she is treated to a very sore rear, that does not inherently stop the discipline from being discipline.

I whip her rear, giving her a fast flurry of slaps that make her skin redden in a pleasing manner from the tops of her cheeks to the tops of her thighs. There is no part of this young woman that is not potentially punishable, but for now I am keeping to the traditional locations of her kind. Usually when a human finds themselves in this position there is an ancient submission response. I might be getting that from her already, given how misbehaved she is. This might be Stella's best behavior on display right now.

"Are you learning your lesson, human?"

"Probably not," she moans.

"Then let me work harder to teach you what you so badly need to learn..."

I push my fingers inside her, feeling the tightness of her flesh wrapped around my scaled digits. This is my first foray into her interior, and the way she grips me makes me feel welcome. I have resisted exploring her interior because I knew on some level that exploring her this way would inevitably draw me in mentally as much as it did physically.

I have put so much effort into resisting this hot little human, and now as my fingers experience the slick welcome of her pussy, it is almost impossible for me to stop myself from throwing her on the bed, spreading her thighs wide, and sliding my cock deep inside this tight hole of hers.

*Mine. She's mine.*

Possessive thoughts run rampant through my mind as she starts to squirm, grinding her hips against my thighs as she works her greedy pussy on my fingers. The collar is doing its work, teasing her clit.

*Stella*

Oh shit.

He's doing it. He's playing with my pussy with both his body and his mind, and I think I'm going to fucking come right here and now.

"My god my god my god," I whimper under my breath, trying to get control of myself, and failing terribly. I don't want to show him how much he turns me on. I don't want him to know that I fucking melt for him, and that he can play my body like a whole goddamn orchestra.

My legs are shaking as tremors of pleasure rush through me. That damn collar has my clit tingling and feeling like it is being licked and teased by the most skilled tongue in all creation. He must have a filthy and yet incredibly particular mind to have such control over the impulses he is sending between my legs.

Speaking of between my legs, his two fingers are still deep inside me, spreading me, taking a little of my long-held innocence and giving me a taste of what it might be like to be fucked by him.

That thought almost makes me orgasm. Just imagining his powerful alien body rising up over mine, his no doubt thick, long, proportionate cock turning my delicate human sex into... I don't even know how to describe it in words. It is just a mental image of being helpless and overpowered and absolutely enthralled by his use — and it is enough to send me over the edge.

Try as I might to resist, I orgasm on his fingers. Squirming and moaning, my hips buck and my pussy grinds over the scaled digits deep inside me. My clit feels like it might explode from the tenderness and the sensitivity which suddenly inundates my overwhelmed nervous system.

Kahn chuckles with husky triumph, slowly sliding his fingers out of me. He says nothing as he picks me up off his lap and very much puts me to bed amid the cushions and blankets he recently retrieved for my use.

I curl up beneath a cozy blanket. My eyes are heavy, and the advantage of closing them also means I don't have to meet

Kahn's no doubt triumphant gaze. I have behaved like a horny little animal, and I know it.

Fortunately for me, sleep is now an absolute imperative.

## 5 ENEMIES TO LOVERS

**S** *tella*

After being masturbated and pleased and spanked to bed, I should drift off for a long and blissful sleep, but Kahn put me in the blankets and pillows nested next to his own bed, and not in it.

There is no way for him to know this, but I hate sleeping alone. I hate the dark. I hate everything about waking up in a cold sweat, freaking out about everything and nothing at all. I fell asleep when the lights were on and the room was on, and Kahn was working away, the rustle of his alien pen on alien parchment and the occasional growl that he makes when he is thinking accompanying me to sleep.

But I wake up in the dark. A complete dark. A total, silent dark.

I know he's near me. Unless he's not? Suddenly, it is very fucking important to be near him. This darkness feels all too encompassing, almost as though it is not just around me, but inside me.

I crawl over to where I think his bed is. It's not far from me in terms of distance, but darkness makes short distances seem like vast spans. At least all his things are in the one big room rather than in a sprawling suite. I guess even on a big alien spaceship, actual space is probably at a premium. I find the edge of his bed in the dark and start up the side of it, finding the blankets and sliding up under them.

I'd never be caught dead doing this in the light of day, but in the dark and in the middle of the night, things make sense that don't otherwise make sense, and suddenly seem like a very good idea. It's warm under his blanket, which suggests to me he's in this bed somewhere. Not that I want to find him, of course. I just want to know I am not alone.

**K**ahn

I wake up to feel something moving beside me. Fortunately for the human, I tame the immediate impulse to kick at a nocturnal intruder for long enough for my mind to work out what is happening.

She is definitely not sleeping in the bed with me. She is a stranger, a human, and an animal. She is badly behaved. She is... creeping up under the blankets, and I am not stopping her. I should. I should get up and put her back into her own bed. This is another pet keeping tip I have given hundreds of times over.

*"Don't ever let your pet sleep in the bed with you,"* I said in a past life. *"Pets need their own beds. Pets need to know their place."*

She's a warm little bundle next to my hip and thigh, curled up backward against me. I do not know why she seeks my company in the night. It is possible she is afraid of the dark. She was cursing me as she drifted off to sleep.

If I get up and put her back in bed, we will both lose sleep.

I decide to leave her be.

I have the best night's sleep I have had in a long time. Something about her presence, trusting and comforting and soft makes me relax and stops my mind from doing its usual swift revolutions thinking about what is to come.

My sleep would be counted as perfect if not for the fact that I wake up because I cannot breathe. Somewhere in the remnants of sleep, I am aware that my breath is coming ever shorter and with more difficulty. I open my eyes, thinking that there is a

very real chance that some terrible illness has befallen me. But before my sleep-addled brain can catch up with my concerns, Stella shares hers.

“I’m hungry.”

I wake up to a pair of dark eyes looking down at me. The human is sitting on my chest, cross-legged, looking down at me with what I can only describe as annoyed judgement. I reach up, take her by the hips, and lift her off my chest. I can immediately breathe better, which is a considerable relief.

Humans eat little and often. That’s yet another fact I often have to remind new owners. On Euphoria, the day/night cycle is a great deal longer than it is on Earth. That messes with human circadian rhythms and sometimes leads to owners failing to feed their pets regularly enough. That will not be an issue with Stella, who demands food whenever she feels a slight pang.

“If you need to wake me, try to do it without sitting on me,” I say as I get up.

“Why? Am I too big for you?”

“You’re a not inconsiderable weight.”

“You calling me fat?”

I turn her over on the bed, pin her to the mattress, and spank her ass hard. It is the firmest discipline I have given so far, and I make full use of the drop seat of her attire to bare her ass for the punishment. I have trained enough female pets to know what that question means, both where it leads, and where it comes from. If I could spank that damn thought out of every human in existence, I would.

“You will never, ever, indulge in that particular human pastime time of denigrating your body, or assuming anybody else is.”

“You said I was a considerable weight!”

“Yes. Because you are an adult human being. That means you have mass. It does not mean you are fat, and I will absolutely not countenance that toxic line of thought, do you understand me?”

“Ow! Yes! Okay! I’m sorry!”

I take her apology, because it seems to be sincere and because my vigor has already turned her ass a very hot red hue. It does not take much to damage these creatures. I need to search through my implements or make use of the collar. I just couldn’t resist a proper physical interlude for that particular punishment.

“Sheesh,” she says, sitting up on her knees, her hands going back to rub her butt. “Where did you learn to get so mad about that question?”

“When almost every female pet I ever worked with asked it at one point or another and I learned how toxic it was,” I say.

“You really know people, huh. Women, I guess.”

“I know enough to train a brat like you.”

She smirks at me. If I am not mistaken, she is quite happy to have been corrected away from worrying about her weight and body composition. This is the best she has taken any punishment so far. I think she is starting to understand how things work and accept them. The training is working.

“Time to feed you,” I declare. “It would be easier to take you to the kitchens, but you are still concerned about the soldiers, no?”

“Concerned? Yeah. I’m pretty fucking concerned.”

“Then I will once more retrieve you food. I assume pancakes will be a suitable breakfast?”

“Pancakes sound perfect,” she says, her eyes lighting up. “With syrup?”

“With syrup,” I agree.

## *S tella*

I’m supposed to hate him. He is a cruel alien who has abducted me and is training me like a goddamn animal — and he keeps spanking me. But he’s also bringing me pancakes, and damn if that doesn’t make up for a lot of sins.

It has been a while since anybody looked after me. Also, I can't work out what Kahn is trying to get from me. There's always something that someone wants when they're doing something for you. Kahn keeps telling me I'm not going to make a good pet, so I don't think he's intending on making me one of those for anyone else. I think he's just dealing with me because I'm awake now and he doesn't want any more chaos on his ship.

But what happens when we land back on his planet? What happens when all these terrible things he's trying to stop from happening inevitably happen? What happens when the soldiers get out and into his population? I have so many questions.

"Pancakes," he says, returning with a large stack.

"Do you ever think about running away?"

He looks taken aback for a moment. "Running away?"

"Yeah. Do you ever want to just... not do all of this?" I gesture with my sticky pancake fork toward all his many papers.

"There's nothing to be gained in life by running away."

"I disagree. Sometimes the bullshit belongs to someone else, but they just keep dumping it on you. And you'll never fix it, because you're not the problem. So you got to get out of there. No matter what."

"Hm," he says. "Is that what you did? What were you running from?"

"I'm not talking about me," I say, lying instantly and smoothly. Well, I hope smoothly. I don't want to talk about my problems.

"Of course you are. You want to run now, don't you?"

"I mean, yeah. Of course."

"Remember that collar around your neck," he says. "It tracks you not just on this ship, but anywhere in the universe. I will always be able to find you."

I put my fingers to the collar. I'd almost forgotten it was there. It has started to feel like a part of my body, not something

separate put there by someone else. It's warm to the touch, sharing my body temperature.

"You might always be able to find me," I say. "But why would you bother? Look at all the work you have to do on your world. You don't have time to chase a human around. You have better things to do. Right?"

He narrows his bright blue eyes at me, giving me a stare that makes me quiver right down low in my belly.

"I would make time to find you," he growls.

"Why? Are you going to keep me?"

"I am going to keep you out of trouble," he says, dodging the question. He doesn't want me, but he doesn't want to not have me either. He is possessive, and I don't think he knows why.

"I doubt that," I say, making sure to finish every bite of my pancakes. If I'm going to start annoying him, I want to do that on a full belly.

"Doubt all you like. I have no intention of allowing a rogue human to add further chaos to an entirely chaotic situation. You are very much in my possession, Stella. Get used to it."

"Oh yeah?"

"Yeah."

*"Oh yeah!?"*

I repeat the question but with way more sass and hopefully, threat. I don't like him assuming that I'm just some little human he can control with a collar and a stack of pancakes. It's offensive.

"Yeah," he says.

There's a charge between us. Something between my rebellion and his dominant temperament. We're like two chemicals that just can't help but react. We've been fighting it since we met. I don't know if it is an effect of the pancakes, or the fact that we snuggled up and slept together last night, or hell, maybe there is some part of this big, super-serious alien who wants to break free of his chains of his responsibility.

“I’m going to get away,” I tell him. “There’s nothing you can do about it. This collar won’t make any difference once I hit a real landmass. Nobody can control me. Not even you.”

Kahn growls and reaches for me. I don’t even try to escape. I let him grab me and do what he needs to do to me. In his hands, I’m little more than a rag doll. The feeling of helplessness and safety together is so intoxicating. I’m genuinely not afraid of him, because I know he has no intention of hurting me. Kahn is the most protective creature in the universe as far as I am concerned.

He pulls the seat of my suit down, baring my ass. I brace for a hard slap, and that’s what I get. But it’s not all I get. His fingers draw down the center of my cheeks, the pads of his fingers brushing over the seam of my pussy. I gasp, a little breath pulled in through my teeth as he finally starts touching me in a way that isn’t just disciplinary.

He wants me, and I fucking love that. He’s so possessive, and so intense. He wants to act like he’s so far above all humans. He talks about training them and selling them and mastering them, but I’m under his skin. I’m in his blood. He wants me, and I know it.

“You create a great urgency in me,” he growls. “I have never been with a human before. I refuse to mate one.”

But he doesn’t snap my clothing back into place. He just keeps looking at my ass, keeps palming my bare cheeks with his massive hands, pulling my cheeks open to inspect what’s between my legs.

*You create a great urgency in me* isn’t I want to fuck you, but it means the same thing. I know that much as his words reverberate through me in low growls, igniting the desire I’ve been fighting since he first laid hands on me.

“Mine,” he purrs as he rubs my sex with the flat of his hand, my pussy leaving a trail of need against his rough skin.

My legs part, spreading for him. I’m going to let this happen. I’m going to let him claim me. This might be madness, but it’s madness I want to fall into. I was never going to stay a virgin.

My purity has been a matter for the highest bidder for as long as I can remember, jealously guarded, and an object of trade. With this alien, nothing is being sold. I'm going to be fucked because he wants to fuck me, because his lust is too powerful for him to resist.

“A soft human brat made for me,” he growls, keeping me in that position, making me wait for what I have always known was inevitable.

*Kahn*

At first I wanted to teach her a lesson, to show her where she belonged. Then I realized, sharply, that it was not so much where she belonged that I wanted to teach her, but to whom she belonged.

**She's mine.**

I know it.

I know it the way I know that Kahn is my name and I need oxygen to live.

I always thought that my brothers and others who mated with humans were giving into some decadent, primitive urge that a Euphorian of greater refinement would never fall prey to, but with her pheromones coursing through me, I am chemically commanded to mate this woman and make her mine forever. The word pet now seems like a silly, shallow thing, cute, affectionate, but in no way able to speak to the depths of this connection.

Some small part of my mind is still trying to resist. It's telling me that I'm under a chemical spell that will wear off and leave me back where I started, except horrified at my lapse in judgement. It's that lecturing voice, the same voice that insisted pets can't sleep in the bed. It's the part of me that knows better. And it is the part of me that has absolutely no control over the situation whatsoever.

My cock is rock hard. It has been a long time since I mated any female. The political situation on Euphoria has been too

delicate to risk any kind of mate taking. If I was to bond with the wrong female, I could contribute to the deterioration of the social contract between our family and the wider society. Euphorian females of good breeding are closely guarded, and very rarely interested in mating for any reason other than social advancement.

When we were younger, and my father was still alive, many females used to court our family. We were considered highly eligible bachelors, and we made the most of the opportunities we were given. Once my father passed, and the conflict with Wrathelder became evident to all, those same females and their families now considered us too great a risk.

Stella is not resisting. Quite the opposite, she is presenting herself as submissively as she ever has. Her scent is filling the air, and the slight glimmer of arousal between her lower lips entices me.

It's wrong to do this.

It's against my principles.

I am hesitating, even though every impulse I have demands I drive my cock deep inside this human vessel, demonstrating not only my dominance and ownership, but unleashing the desire I've been holding onto for all this time. I have suppressed all mating drive to the point I thought I no longer had one, but now, suddenly, I feel all those years of repression tearing away,

I'm going to take her.

I'm going to make her mine.

Her pussy has become the center of my universe. The middle of everything. The dark hair curling around that pink flesh that is already beginning to open for me, unfurling with her arousal as blood rushes to these nether regions.

She's moaning now, letting out soft little gasps and sighs.

For a moment, I am slightly confused. Then I remember. The collar. My desire must be activating the collar, and it must be pleasuring my pet even as I stand here locked between morality and carnal need. Sometimes I forget what a useful

tool it is, as it quite often activates without my needing to consciously think about it.

I am surprised to note that I feel a pang of jealousy. Yes. I am jealous of a collar of my own making. It feels as though the device has a closer and more intimate relationship with Stella than I do — and that will not do.

## *S* *tella*

The collar is sending pulses of pleasure to my pussy over and over again. He's barely touching me. He's only looking. But his need and my need are mixing together, and my clit is tingling so intensely it feels as though I am being licked by a thousand little tongues.

Being kept in position this way, spread open and observed, able only to grind and wish and fantasize is a sweet form of absolute torture. He did this to me once before, but now I need more. Fingers, collars, they're not enough. My body is primed and ready for something more.

Suddenly, Kahn's fingers are wrapped in the back of my hair, and he is moving me to a position on his bed that can really only be for one thing. He puts me face down, then lifts my hips up, encouraging my knees to bend and propping me up in a lewd way that exposes my pussy to him for the taking.

"You're mine," he tells me, slapping my upturned ass. "It might not be what you might have chosen for yourself, but it is true, regardless. You belong to me, and you will always belong to me. And that includes..." He pauses for a moment to press two fingers to my labia, spreading them gently with a scissoring motion of his digits. "This dripping wet, greedy little cunt."

"Fuck," I curse beneath my breath.

He is humbling me and seducing me at the same time. He is making me crave his cock, and his domination. I've been fighting this too long. He knows I want him. He can read me like a book, mostly because my body is constantly betraying me and giving me away.

I feel his cock slide along the length of my slot. I feel my body quiver in primal response to the sensation of a hard mating rod teasing me. I am going to lose my purity to this alien. He is going to take my virginity and the rest of me with it. I am already so hopelessly, helplessly attached to him, and once he is inside me, I will be his.

I've been fighting it internally. I've been trying not to want this. But all I have done is create a craving so intense I would submit every and any part of me to him.

A big alien hand fists my hair.

And a big, alien cock penetrates my tight, virginal pussy.

I am stretched. I am opened. *I am claimed.*

**K** *ahn*

The feeling of her hot human flesh enveloping my cock is a sensation like no other. It feels like being gripped by a creature beyond my understanding.

I've always thought of humans as so simple and so primitive. I assumed the sex would be basic and animal as well. But it isn't. It is complex. It is deep. It is passionate, and above all, it is meaningful. With every stroke, I feel a bonding taking place between us. This is not just rutting. It is mating. It is lovemaking.

Her moans are poetry to my ears, and the way her smooth, reddened ass bounces back against my scaled crotch is just the right kind of wrong. Our bodies were not strictly made to fit together. I am large and she is made on a smaller scale, but her inner walls stretch for me and grip me like they have been craving me, and my cock fills her in a way that seems to more than satisfy, judging by the way I have to grip her hips to keep her still in the moments in which I am fighting for carnal control of our coupling.

She is a wild thing, thrusting herself back on me, wordlessly demanding more. I was being careful out of a desire not to do

damage to her, but it seems Stella can take everything I have to give. Or at least, she wants it.

My human pet is sexually voracious, her cunt gripping me with an urgent desire that threatens to milk the seed from me in an instant. I hold back, maintaining self control because I want her first time with me to be more than a wild rut. I want it to encapsulate everything about our relationship. I want her to feel kept and disciplined. I want her energies to run rampant right up until they find the hard boundary of my being.

I let her bounce herself back and forth on my dick for a time, coating my scaled cock in the gleaming dew of her human arousal. And then I clamp down on her hips, holding her in place while she lets out little whimpers of complaint that become a full body protest, her toes curling, her feet kicking.

“More,” she begs.

“Don’t worry, pet. You’re going to get more. You’re going to get much more, but it’s going to be on my terms.”

I pull my cock almost the entire way out of her, leaving her with just the thick blue head of my dick stretching her lips. Perhaps this is cruel? If it is, it is the kind of cruelty I very much enjoy. I am making her be patient. I am making her wait for her pleasure.

And I am giving her poor pussy a chance to recover from the absolute pounding she has been giving it with her wild motions. Her first time should have been slow and tender. Should have given her body a chance to adjust. But Stella is not the sort of woman to take things slowly. She wants everything at once.

“Fuck me, Kahn, please,” she moans.

Her words make my cock throb visibly.

I had no idea how powerful a human begging on the end of my dick would be until it happened. Denying her that wish is almost impossible, because all I want is to give her everything, every fucking inch of me.

I slide back inside her, giving her what she asked for so nicely. In doing so, I get what I need too, the warmth of her body, the

feeling of conquest and of laying claim to someone who is uniquely and entirely mine. Being inside Stella is like coming home.

Setting up a more languid pace, I mate her slowly. She can have my cock, but she will have it on my terms. She will learn how to take me with some patience, and have her pleasure build in a slow burn.

I want to look into her eyes. I want to see her surrender on her face, so I pull free of her pussy and I flip her onto her back before driving back deep inside her.

## *S* *tella*

God, he's... he is fucking everything.

Looking up the massive, muscular length of his body, I feel myself melting into total submission. Not the kind of submission I was always so afraid of, the kind that feels like a forced humiliation, but a rich, deep, loving submission that makes me feel safe and held and cared for — and absolutely, completely, fucking owned.

I can't take my eyes off him. And I cannot stop them roaming from his feral, handsome face, to his massive shoulders and powerful arms, scales and muscles flexing and rippling as his hips undulate in a skillful motion that makes my pussy stretch in the most incredible ways. There are hidden parts of me, complexities to this inner place, and every motion of his alien cock inside me unleashes fresh feelings.

My entire body and being is wrapped up in this moment. I am transported out of myself and into someone new. Someone who knows what it feels like to be physically connected to another being. He is dominant, and he is possessive, and he is protective, but more than that, he cares deeply for me. He is being careful, and though he could crush and rip and destroy me, he is using every bit of his self-control to fuck me as hard as I want to be fucked without actually breaking me.

Kahn is the most dangerous creature I know, and I am the safest I have ever been with him in this moment of supreme

vulnerability.

And that is when I can no longer hold back. Orgasm floods me in the very moment I finally understand what being loved feels like. It feels like a heat that animates but does not destroy. It feels like pleasure that spirals from the core of me where we meet as two alien animals, foreign flesh creating new connection. It feels like being cared for, nursed to health, disciplined, collared, and claimed. It feels like everything I have always wanted, and everything I have never had.

I scream my orgasm and my joy, and in turn Kahn grips me and plunges as deep as he can go, spilling his seed inside me for the first time, filling me with his essence. A fresh rush of incredible pleasure hits me like a drug as I feel every nerve ending in my body hit with the effects of this new stimulus.

I shake and I shudder as he covers me with his body, drawing me up to his chest in a tight embrace. He turns to the side so as not to crush me as all the energy leaves his body, having been pumped into me, and he holds me tightly as we both recover from my first full sexual experience.

*Kahn*

It takes some time before Stella speaks, and when she does, her voice is somewhat halting.

“That was...”

“Perfect.” I finish her sentence for her.

“Pretty good.” She grins, but in a way where I know that she is simply teasing me. She is flushed and soft and supple in my arms. She has relaxed completely into me, given me the surrender that only comes with sexual satiation.

“What are you going to do now?” Her eyes gleam with post-coital pleasure.

“Now I tame you and train you for my own,” I smile down at her. “Now I truly never let you go.”

“Oh no, I’ve made the big, mean, possessive alien even more big, mean, and possessive,” she says, not seeming to truly

mind one bit.



When I wake from a post-coital nap, my human mate is no longer in bed with me. I feel her absence immediately. The collar did not alert me. Why did the collar not alert me?

It turns out that is because she is only in the bathroom. I hear her moving around in there,

When she emerges, she looks pale and unwell. Her hand is over her lower belly, and my stomach sinks to see her in what is clearly an uncomfortable state. My mind flashes back to how sick she has been, and how wounded she was. Is it possible she was not ready for sex? Was I too rough with her? Have I harmed her in some way? Guilt floods my body as I leap from the bed and go to her side.

She waves me away with a clammy hand.

“I’m okay. Don’t touch me.”

“You are clearly not okay. What is wrong, human?”

“Nothing.”

“That is clearly a lie. You are in pain. And not the kind of pain I have ever intended to inflict upon you. Are you damaged? Did our copulation cause some kind of internal wounding?”

“It’s just what happens sometimes. It’s my body. Don’t worry about it.”

“I will worry about it.”

“It’s just a period.”

“I have observed many human cycles. The state you are in does not suggest a period. Also, you’re not bleeding.”

“Well, in my case, my period hurts like hell before it starts. It’s fun. I had to lay up in abandoned buildings on my way out of the city to let it pass. I’ll be fine here. Don’t worry.”

There is a fine sheen of sweat on her brow that speaks to the fact she is not fine and will not be without some intervention.

I want to pick her up, but I do not know if doing that will cause her more pain, so instead I am left with giving her orders.

“Get into bed. I will get something for the pain.”

The collar should be activating, should be soothing this pain. I send a pulse of intention to the device and feel the slight ping of response. It’s working.

“Can you not feel the collar?” I ask the question as she climbs into bed slowly. As she does so, I note that the suit I dressed her in doesn’t seem to be appropriate anymore. I want her to wear something else. Something softer and something more comfortable.

“I can feel it,” she says with a wince.

“It should be soothing you.”

She turns around slowly and gives me a dark, pitying look. “It’s pretty hard to soothe this shit, my guy.”

“Stay there,” I tell her. “I’m going to get something to help.”

I go and I get pain relief. I go and get food. I go and get better clothing. I am not prepared for the task of taking care of a human. I have the collar, and I have the tools to contain and punish. But the pieces needed to comfort and care? They have been entirely absent from my repertoire in ways that are more than merely practical.



**S**tella is still in bed upon my return. She looks pale and deeply uncomfortable. It is as though the very spark has been drawn out of her. It is astonishing how much pain the human body can generate for no good reason whatsoever.

“Drink this,” I say, giving her a small cup of liquid.

She drinks it without argument, and without asking what it is.

“Gross,” she says, without any real intonation.

“It’s not pleasant, but it will work.”

“Cool,” she says, lying back on the pillows.

I am not given to feeling pity for humans, but I feel an immense amount of concern and dismay. I do wonder if my treatment of her might not have caused some of this physical fallout. Her internal organs are delicate, after all. I should have been more careful. I should have...

“Can you turn the light off?”

“Of course,” I say, immediately making the room dark.

I then stand there, not certain what else to do.

“You can go and...” her soft voice floats to me in the dark.

“I can go,” I say. “Yes. I will come back soon.”



I come back an hour later. Or, more accurately, I stand outside the room for a human hour. I want the medicine to have time to do its job, and I don’t want to go too far in case she needs me. But she also needs time to herself.

I check in with her via the collar. It is not transmitting much in the way of data, which probably means she’s resting. Good. That’s good.

“What’s wrong? Been kicked out?”

One of the human soldiers who should not have the run of the ship walks past and throws out a disrespectful quip. I restrain the urge to crush his throat. These humans are arrogant, and Arkan is doing little to control them.

I say nothing. I lean against the wall, standing guard over my unwell mate and loathing the situation in which I find myself. Much has changed in the last twelve hours. I have learned that I am capable of bonding deeply with a human and caring about her so completely I would tolerate the indignity of being put out of my own room like a house cat. But some things have

not changed. Arkan's insistence on transporting these arrogant, dangerous, murderous humans, for instance.

"Kahn?"

The instant I hear her voice, I forget all about my other concerns. I rush into the room, where I can instantly tell she is in much less pain. She is sitting up in bed, the color has returned to her face, and her features are no longer contorted in agony.

"Thank you," she says. "I can't believe you made that stop. Nothing on Earth ever seemed to make that stop."

"You need to rest. Your body is lacking sleep and several key nutrients."

"Most people would say something like, you're welcome."

"I don't know what that would mean in this context. You are welcome to being free of pain?"

"Weirdo," she laughs, but in a way that indicates she is pleased with me.

"So dense," she mutters to herself. I am borderline compelled to remind her that of the two of us, I am the advanced alien. But there is no convincing this human that she is any less than I, and I am beginning to agree. She is strong. She knows how to contain secrets, and to be stoic in the face of pain. She is difficult to handle because she has never for a second considered surrender as an option. This young woman is a fighter and a survivor.

And that is why I get her some candy. I usually reserve this for rewards for good behavior, but in Stella's case, I find myself wanting to reward her simply for being herself. It feels good to spoil her — and yes, I am aware that I am spoiling her. I am also aware that after one instance of copulation I have become something of a simpering slave to her whims. I promise myself that I will not allow that to interfere with her training. She still needs to be trained. Mate, pet, or simply human companion, she cannot be allowed to behave in an uncontrolled manner.

In another hour, she is sitting up in bed quite happily with wrappers all around her, watching some of the media we have

salvaged from human history. Humans like to watch moving talking pictures. They are able to immerse themselves in such narratives, suspending their disbelief, and feeling all the feelings of the characters. It is quite a phenomenon to behold.

“I wish we still made movies,” she says. “But the only entertainment left on the planet is watching people get zapped by security fences, or shot by security forces or... you know, it’s weird, but it’s almost like the word security doesn’t mean anything anymore. These movies, it’s like they come from another planet. A whole different species of people who actually liked each other. Nobody gets stabbed in the street. At all. And it’s all so clean. And the buildings are intact. And....”

She is becoming quite upset as she notes all these little differences from past to present. She has lived in the ruins of a much kinder world her entire life. My brothers and I have often commented how difficult it is to find suitable pets, and that is partly because soft temperaments rarely thrive in a world where survival is a struggle each and every hour of each and every day.

“You are going to a new world,” I tell her. “A world where humans are prized. You have quite a pleasant life ahead of you.”

“As your pet?”

“Yes. In the eyes of the world, that is what you will be. My pet. My owned little beast.”

She emits a low growl. The painkillers may have removed the pain, but they have done little to shift her temper, which has taken a dive. I notice she is much grumpier than she was before the cramps began, even taking into account how wild she was.

“You’re warm.” She scowls up at me. “You’re better than heating pads, because they run out of heat in a couple hours. Don’t make anything weird out of this.”

*Don’t make anything weird out of this*, I repeat to myself, smirking. As if there is nothing weird about having mated with an alien and become his property. She is a funny little thing,

clinging to normality that she herself did her level best to flee from in the first place.

“You know, you’d make a much more pleasant pet if you were just gagged,” I muse aloud. It is enough of a hint for her to fall silent and curl up next to me before falling asleep.

I lie awake for a while, my fingers curling through her hair, running down the back of her neck and scratching lightly at her nape. It is very soothing to pet her, and she seems to find it equally pleasing. Before long she is emitting soft snores and stretching out against me, taking up much more of the bed than anything her size would seem to be able to.

## 6 TESTING THE LIMITS

*“It feels as though I have not seen you in a long time.”*

It has been several days since I spoke with my brother. I have spent most of that time in bed with Stella, one way or another. Either making love or acting as a large heat source. Both have been surprisingly pleasant for me. Of course, my absence has been noticed. Arkan and I are running this ship together, and if one of us stops showing up for bridge shifts, the other has to pick up the slack. Arkan is not used to covering for me. He is used to me taking care of all the details and showing up for shifts early and staying late and having nothing to do but worry.

*“I have been taking care of the wild human.”*

*“Taking care of her, hmm?”* Arkan lifts a brow at me and smirks in a knowing way. *“I enjoy taking care of my pet the same way. Are you going to admit you’ve fallen for the charms of a disobedient, mouthy human who is practically your living, breathing antithesis? Or are we going to keep pretending that you are somehow doing the rest of us a favor by not allowing her out of your sight, or your room, for that matter.”*

*“I am doing you all a favor keeping her out of the way. She’s a feral little thing at the best of times. You would not enjoy her company, of that I am certain.”*

*“I don’t know about that. I am used to challenging pets.”*

*“She is not challenging. She is sensitive to her hormones, and there is little we can do about that. For the moment, she is an*

*absolute...*” I do not finish the sentence. Terror would be an appropriate word.

“Kahn!”

As we speak of the devil, she comes stomping down the hall wearing a big, soft suit made of a material I fabricated for her. I chose to make it in a pink fabric and it has a slight fuzz to it, as well as a hood, which she always wears up. The effect is to create a scowling face framed with curling hair emerging from the hood. It’s adorable. She looks every inch the animal she is. She’s also clutching her heating pad, which she clings to like a child with a security blanket. Poor thing is suffering in the throes of hormonal torment, and there is little I can do to stop it.

“You’re dressing her up,” Arkan says. “You’re dressing her up like a...”

“Kahn,” she says, ignoring Arkan entirely. “I’m hungry.”

She’s always hungry. I’m surprised she braved the halls, given how afraid of the soldiers she is in general, but she soon addresses that point herself.

“I had to hide from those asshole fucking soldiers you idiots let run around this ship. Don’t you know who they are? They’re...”

“Do you know who they are?” Arkan cuts in with the question.

Stella cuts her eyes at him. “I was about to tell you. But now I don’t think I will. Because you interrupted me.”

Arkan looks at me. *“She does know she’s a tiny little female human and either one of us is capable of whipping her until she cries, right?”*

*“Of course she knows. But the interesting thing about this woman is that she really does not seem to be capable of caring, at least, not at the moment. I’ve encountered war hounds with softer temperaments.”*

“I’M HUNGRY,” she repeats the words loud and slow. “GIVE ME FOOD. PLEASE.”

At least she said please.

To be fair, she is unable to fend for herself, and that means being demanding of me is the only way to have her needs met. That puts her in the same position as a yowling cat or whining dog. I'm surprised at the amount of sympathy I have for her. If any other human were to act this way, I am certain I would bring them to their knees, sobbing and begging for forgiveness.

"Stella, I'm going to get you something to eat," I say.

"Now," she says. "I'm literally dying."

Arkan looks at her, then back at me.

*"She's spoiled,"* he says, sounding shocked even in his telepathic tone. *"I can't believe you'd ever have a spoiled mate."*

*"Yours punched an elder in the face in public. I don't think my girl being slightly mouthy is the issue you think it is."*

"I think yours is about to do some physical damage of her own."

"Is this food? I'm eating it."

Stella has spotted what is probably the remnants of Arkan's lunch. It looks like he had a roast vegetable medley which is now drawing Stella like a moth to a flame, mostly because of the heated oil content, I imagine.

I reach out to stop her.

"No, you can't eat that. It's not suitable for humans. The plant it comes from..."

She whips around and bites me, short, dull teeth making as much of an impression as they can on my scaled hand. I don't feel physical pain, but I do feel the energy of her intention. I also feel my response, a certain amount of reasonable outrage.

"No!" I say firmly, gripping her by the back of the neck. "I've told you before, Stella. I will not tolerate aggression from you. You're a little human and this behavior will not be tolerated."

There's a snort in my head. *"Even I don't believe you,"* Arkan says. *"You're smitten and she knows it. I never thought I'd see*

*the day a human woman walked all over the great, stern Kahn."*

"She's not walking all over me," I say, accidentally speaking out loud. It is confusing carrying out two conversations, one verbal, one telepathic.

"Yes, I am," Stella says immediately.

She is a spoiled, brash, bold, brave young lady, and I am going to spank her ass good and hard, proving something to both her and my brother at the same time.

"What the fuck are you doing!?"

The outrage in her voice as I sit down and pull her over my lap suggests that she really thought the disciplinary aspect of our relationship was over. One day of spanking and collar punishment followed by several days of snuggling and sex has altered her perception of what sort of trouble she can get herself into.

"Not in front of this guy! Isn't he your brother? This is wrong!"

"Your behavior was wrong. Demanding, strident, and then aggressive. What were you thinking? Did you let yourself forget what happens when you're disrespectful? Did you forget why you're wearing the collar?"

"Kahn! Please!"

She's desperate now, but it is all much too late. Arkan is right, and this will do her good. A strong application of consequences will teach her a much needed lesson.

This clothing, as with the initial outfit, has a rear access panel. I would never dress a pet in anything that didn't have a convenient way to deal with her directly. Exposing her ass creates another gasp of outrage. She truly cannot believe this is happening, and yet this is the only thing that can happen. She needs to be trained to behave in front of others. The idea she can simply rampage about speaking disrespectfully and taking physical action against me is unthinkable.

*S tella*

I probably knew better. I knew I was pushing my luck days ago, to be honest. But I really thought I had him where I wanted him. I figured now we were fucking, he'd do what I said. I thought I'd broken his will with my pussy, proved my dominance over him with my....

"Ow!" I gasp as his palm makes contact with my bare ass.

This is the most embarrassing position possible, not just because it's over his knee like I'm a damn baby, but because it is in front of his brother, who has said fuck all verbally to me, but I bet was talking mad shit in that telepathic way they do.

I'm just glad the other human girl isn't here. And that none of the soldiers are around. If they saw me like this... hell. It might start a war. These aliens don't know who I am. They don't know... fucking anything. But Kahn sure as hell knows how to make my ass hot and sore.

"You're going to speak with respect," he says. "I understand that you are hungry, but rudeness will not get you anything from me. I think you were testing me on purpose. Is that right, pet? Did you want to see what you could get away with now we have mated?"

"Maybe?" I squeak the admission.

That earns me a stinging slap to both cheeks, but not a hard one.

"I thought so," he growls. "You do not need to test me, human. You will never need to test me. I will always be here to discipline you when you need it. And from what I know of you, you will always need it."

That's a strangely comforting statement, though the rapid-fire series of smacks heating my ass up to what feels like tectonic levels of heat is not. I know I brought this on myself, but that doesn't make it hurt any less.

Kahn spans me until I am squirming and gasping and feeling thoroughly embarrassed. I really wish this wasn't being observed by another alien. I hardly know Arkan, but I know he

shares Kahn's values, and I know he's seeing my butt get absolutely roasted.

Amid all the embarrassment, I am starting to feel something else. Safety.

It's strange, but Kahn's absolute insistence on discipline no matter what the circumstances makes him predictable, and predictable is safe. I come from a world of chaos, where nobody is what they seem, and where everyone is always fighting for survival. I was lucky enough to be more insulated from some of the chaos than most people, but it was still intolerable.

Kahn stands me up again. I am blushing and embarrassed, but against all odds, incredibly happy. He looks down at me, big hands on his hips, a deep growl emitting from his throat as he begins to speak. I brace myself for what would be a well-earned lecture. But that's not where he's going with this.

"Let's get you something to eat."

## 7 BLOODY HELL

**K**ahn

Another day dawns with my sweet, rebellious pet sleeping not where pets should, but instead, in my bed. I wake up with the awareness of a slight stickiness between my pet and myself.

“Stella?” I nudge her gently. “Are you alright, pet?”

It takes her a moment to wake, but as her eyes flutter open, she suddenly becomes aware of the predicament we now share.

“Oh my god!” She emits a gasp of horror as she pulls away from me.

I see a flash of red beneath the covers. Blood. Human blood.

In a brief flash of incoherent pre-awake thought, I am convinced we have been attacked in our sleep. I wrap an arm around her waist and I swing her up and out of the bed, away from where the attacker may be. Her cry of surprise at being dragged out of the bed exacerbates the general atmosphere of concern.

“Put me down, you big stupid idiot!”

“You’re bleeding!”

“I know! It happens! It’s.... I can’t believe you don’t know what a period is!”

A period. Of course. Except it makes no sense that there could be this much blood from one woman on her cycle.

“A period is only a few tablespoons of blood....”

She laughs and she does not stop laughing.

“Not for me,” she says. “Not ever for me. I bleed a lot. Always have.”

*S* *tella*

He looks absolutely horrified. The funny thing is, this isn't the first time I've seen this kind of expression. It's just that last time I saw it, it was on a human man's face. Seems like males of all species are shocked at the wildness and unpredictability of my flow. My uterus is on a sacred mission to purge my body of all the blood she can.

He gets out of bed and immediately starts striding away. I'm just as quickly certain that he's grossed out as hell and is going to leave me.

“What are you doing? Running away?”

“I am running you a bath,” he says.

I'm stunned. I've never, in all my life, had anyone look after me in this state. The only men who have ever seen me in this state have expressed their disgust. The alien was surprised, but he is not disgusted. He is concerned for me. He wants the best for me.

That's a lot to realize all at once, especially with cramps pulsing through my lower abdomen. A bath would be the perfect thing right now. How does he know?

Kahn disappears into the bathroom for a little bit, cleaning himself up probably, but also preparing a nice bath for me.

“Stella! Come here,” he calls out. “You can shower first, but I want you to take a long bath. I am going to make you a grilled cheese sandwich and a chocolate milkshake.”

That should sound like a weird combination, but it's basically the perfect meal for my current state. The idea is as comforting as it is delicious.

He ushers me into the bathroom. The bath waits for me while I shower off the sanguine flow, then welcomes me into a warm

and soothing embrace. The last time I had a period, I was stumbling through the desert scrub outside the city, aiming for what I thought and hoped would be safety.

And then I was shot.

When I look down, I see the wound on my leg. It has scarred, as one might expect. Through the refractive qualities of the water, I can see it there. A permanent reminder of the one time I was stupid enough to put myself at the mercy of anybody else. It's weird now, being looked after by an entity I thought of as my enemy from the very first moment we laid eyes on one another.

The warmth of the bath washes around me and sinks into me, the little cramps and tension that have been threatening to become deeply unpleasant start to melt away, and I close my eyes just... for... a.... moment.



Suddenly, there's a splash and a sudden blast of cold. For a second I am absolutely disoriented, and then I realize I have been bodily hauled out of the bath, naked and exposed to the cool air. Kahn is already wrapping me in a towel, tight wraps of thick, long, plush fabric that goes all the way from my neck to my toes, turning me into a Stella burrito. These towels were not made for creatures my size.

"Unbelievable," he growls as he works, simultaneously being very nice and very mean at the same time.

I have no idea what the hell is going on. Last I knew I was having a nice warm bath, but nothing feels nice and warm anymore, and I have no idea why he is so very grouchy. It is very confusing to be simultaneously swaddled and lectured.

"What is happening?"

"You almost drowned. I found you falling asleep in the bath!"

"What?"

His ice blue eyes sear down at me. “You truly cannot be left alone for a single moment, can you?”

“Of course I can. I spent an entire lifetime looking after myself before you showed up. I wouldn’t have drowned in the bath.”

“You were sinking below the water while asleep.”

“YoU WeRE SInKINg...” I start to mock him, because I’m out of arguments that explain why I wasn’t in mortal danger, but the look on his face as I get even partially through the sentence is enough to make me stop. He takes this seriously. He takes me seriously.

“Sorry. I guess I was tired.”

“It is not your fault,” he says, sweeping me up in his arms. I couldn’t walk now if I wanted to with the way the fabric is wrapped so tight around me. “I should not have left you unsupervised.”

“I can keep myself alive, you know.”

“There is very little evidence to support that claim. I think it best if you stay in bed.”

At this point, I’m not listening to him at all. I’m smelling food. Good, hot, fatty, salty, sweet, delicious food. Everything a body needs.

**K** *ahn*

She has freed her arms from her towel and is sitting propped up in bed, her toes wagging back and forth happily as she consumes her nutrition. She is, I realize, absolutely adorable.

“This is so good,” she says. “I bet a burger would go really well with this. You know, meat and vegetables, and cheese between two buns.”

“I’ll get you a steak,” I say. “Stay there.”

She’s not going anywhere, not in that cozy, blissed-out state. I feel very much the protective provider. I want to keep her nice

and safe and well fed. I want to bring her the best of everything, and to see her deeply happy.

I have to remind myself that I never wanted to have a human pet, and that becoming attached to this one is a bad idea. My job is to keep her alive and stop her from adding to the overall chaos of the ship. And now, to get her some meat.



The ship's stores always contain a generous amount of human food, but I have to ensure the source of it. The villagers who occupied the ship for a short period of time have contaminated some of our stores because of their feral habits when it came to consuming certain types of flesh. Those humans, simple and silly as they seemed sometimes, considered our species a potential food source. I spent hours going through removing what they considered to be fine flesh and giving it a proper send off. Euphorians are not food, especially not for a lesser species.

Are humans a lesser species?

Again, I feel a little twinge of misgiving.

Humans are dangerous. They may look soft and sweet and simple, but they contain multitudes. They are predators without tusk or fang or claw. They are wickedly intelligent, and their ability to function in groups makes them almost unstoppable.

Once upon a time, we considered our forays to Earth a type of conservation. We were attempting to save this species from what appeared to be almost certain destruction. Now I am beginning to wonder if they ever needed our help at all. Perhaps we inserted ourselves where we did not belong, and in doing so, sowed the seeds of our own destruction.

I am not given to paranoia, and yet everything about our current trajectory fills me with a sense of palpable doom. The frozen steak in my hand comes from an Earth cow. I know it is not the flesh of my own flesh, or blood of my own blood, but

there is something about holding this cold lump of flesh in my scaled hand that makes me pulse with deep concern.

The cooking process is quick and simple. Apply salt and heat. Easy. Done.

Take it back. Feed my pet. Make her happy. Easy. Done.

“Oh my god. That smells amazing!”

I watch as Stella tears into the flesh, her relatively soft and small teeth still making very short work of the beast’s meat. Humans have been surviving in a world of monsters from the very beginning. They evolved as weak, hairless mammals who had lost the ability to retreat to the trees. They should never have survived. They should be a footnote in the fossil record.

And yet they are not.

One is sitting tucked up in bed in my room, and a good dozen on board the ship, milling about with their latent aggression barely under control.



I know it is probably a waste of time, but yet again, I go and talk to my brother.

“Arkan.”

“Hmmm?”

“We cannot deliver an army of aggressive humans to Euphoria.”

“Of course we can. They are our humans, Kahn. You worry too much.”

“They could turn on us at any moment, attack us, potentially kill us, and take both women for themselves.”

“Obviously, we wouldn’t let that happen,” he says.

“What makes you think the two of us are more powerful than an entire crew of Wrathelder, which they already wiped out?”

“What makes me think the two of us are more impressive than a Wrathelder crew? Listen to yourself, Kahn. One of us is more impressive than a Wrathelder crew. I know our family has taken a few psychological hits lately, but don’t forget who you are. Don’t forget who we are. Brothers who hold the destiny of Euphoria in our hands.”

He’s drunk on his own sense of importance, and he is making a terrible mistake. I am no longer certain that I am going to be able to cover for the magnitude of the chaos that is coming our way.

## 8 OLD FRIENDS

**S** *tella*

My period always sucks, but I find that in Kahn's care, it sucks considerably less. He's so attentive, and he looks after me in every way possible. I am being taken care of so incredibly well that it almost feels like I'm doing something wrong when I decide to sneak out once I stop bleeding and start feeling better. I can't stay captive. I need to move. Being cooped up is making me crazy. I did almost fall asleep in the bath, but that's just because I haven't been able to get the hell out of Kahn's rooms.

I tell myself that I'll just be careful, and I won't be long. I've spent a lifetime learning how to evade soldiers, after all. If I get caught, it's because I've been very stupid. And I'm never stupid.

I step out of Kahn's room, and...

"Stella?"

My name, spoken in a human voice, makes me freeze. I know that voice. I know what it means. It means the end of everything. It means I've been caught. Instantly. After weeks on the run, after leaving everything I ever knew behind and venturing into the uncivilized wilds, after getting shot and being sick and getting alien abducted without even noticing it and then captured and thrashed, I've been caught.

By someone I know.

Maybe that fact should make me homesick.

Maybe it should fill me with guilt.

All it does is make me freeze.

That is not the voice of a stranger. It's a voice from the past. My name, spoken in those familiar, if a little shocked and stern tones, drags me back through time to when I was half my age and my size.

I can hear footsteps approaching. Overhauling me.

Why can't I move? After all this running, why am I suddenly staying still and just letting this happen?

There's a kind of helplessness that only emerges around people from the past. If I met this guy now, I wouldn't think twice about running, or fighting, or...

A big hand clamps down on my shoulder. I know logically that it has to be smaller than Kahn's. No human's hand is bigger than Kahn's. Somehow, though, it feels bigger and heavier. It is like something reaching out from the depths of years to grip me and hold me still.

He turns me around, and I find myself looking into a grizzled, wiry, square-jawed face.

"Rex."

"I told him I'd find you," he says, his eyes burning with glee at the sight of me. "I told him I would do whatever it took to bring you back. And now here you are."

Commander Rex is far from a stranger to me. You could say he's something almost like an uncle. He had a place in my family home for a very long time. I played around him and his soldiers when I was still a child.

He's grayer now, and more intensely devoted to the cause than ever. There might have been a brain in his head once, but now every bit of him is slavishly devoted to the cause and the man he serves.

"I knew there was a reason I was drawn to stay on this vessel of evil," he says. "I knew I had a calling here. It was you, Stella. I must have felt you. It's so good to see you."

A glimmer of a tear lights the corner of one of his eyes. He's thinking about all the praise and adoration he is going to get when it turns out he rescued me from evil aliens. I look around him, and see that true to form, he is not alone. Rex never travels without a contingent of soldiers. They are maintaining a respectful distance, but their excitement is palpable — as is my dread.

“Don't worry,” he says. “You're safe now. We can get you safely back to Earth. We can take this ship and all its technology to your father's stronghold. We can...”

The newer, braver, bolder part of me finally speaks up.

“No.”

It doesn't say a lot. But it says what matters.

He cocks his head at me in surprise. He expects me to be grateful to him as a rescuer.

“You want to stay here?”

I nod.

Rex makes a sound of deep concern. “You cannot possibly be happy as the captive of this alien beast. Has he put his hands on you? Has he besmirched your purity?”

My stomach turns at that last question.

“My purity is none of your damn business.”

“I do not mean to disrespect you, Stella. I am concerned that you have been defiled in the company of this monster. You wishing to stay is...”

“I ran away from home, Rex. I'm done with everything. Forever. So go back to my father and tell him whatever you have to tell him. Tell him I'm dead. Tell him I'm gone. Tell him I fell into the sun. I don't care what you say, as long as you and he, and everyone from Earth leaves me alone forever!”

“You're hysterical, Stella. Get a grip of yourself. Remember who you are.”

“I have done nothing besides try to forget who I was.”

“You can’t escape your bloodline, Stella. You cannot escape yourself. No matter how far you run. You were born special. You were born to the greatest man in history. You were born to the man who is going to restore peace on Earth. You are...”

He talks with zeal and such deep-seated belief I almost envy him. It must be amazing to think you know what is right, and to be so convinced of it that absolutely nothing scares or dissuades you. Rex is going to do whatever it takes to get me back to Earth. I am certain of that.

“I’m not yours! I’m not his! You can’t make me go back! The alien owns me now!”

It’s sad that I have to tell this asshole that I am owned by someone else, because he cannot process the idea of me being owned by myself, but that’s what I do. I know how to manipulate these radical freaks.

“How could the alien own you? Wait. Are you saying... are you one of...”

And for the first time, he notices the collar.

His eyes widen as that information and all it suggests goes rushing through his brain.

“He’s taken you for his own,” he says in the sort of tone one might use to tell someone else that they are about to die any moment. He does not approve.

I don’t care. I don’t want his approval. I want him to leave me alone. I want him and all his soldiers to stop coveting me with their weird obsession. I want them to think I am desecrated and despoiled.

“It doesn’t matter,” he says, recovering from his shock. “You are your father’s only daughter.”

That could sound sweet. Could sound like it doesn’t matter what I do because daddy will love me anyway. But that’s not what it means at all. It means he still thinks he can drag me back and ensure that I am used for my father’s ends. I am my father’s only daughter, and that means I am the only marriageable pawn. My pussy has been for sale since I turned

eighteen, it's just they were waiting for a bigger payout than most pimps.

"Leave me alone."

"I can't do that. I won't do that."

Rex reaches for me. *He tries to grab me by the fucking collar*, attempting to use it as a handhold. I try to swing away, start to run, but he's a big guy and he's been fighting his entire life. He's stronger, faster, and he's psychotically determined to catch me.

I let out a shriek as I feel the collar tighten around my neck. There's a pulse, and then a flash of sensation. I don't know if it is detecting his fingers, or if it thinks I am trying to take it off, but whatever is happening, it doesn't like it. A spark jumps down my spine, flashes across my scalp. I hear Rex let out a grunt and feel his fingers slacken and fall away.

When I turn around, all hell is breaking loose.

There is a snarl that makes the walls of the ship shake as Kahn appears out of fucking nowhere. Rex is collapsing, on his way down from whatever the collar just did to him. I'm guessing one hell of a belt from the device. I had no idea that it protected me as much as it claimed me.

My shock roots me to the spot as Kahn sends the soldiers flying like skittles and snatches Rex by the neck, wrapping big, long, clawed alien digits around his throat. That's one hell of a way to break a fall. Seeing Rex handled by Kahn is like seeing a doll being roughly handled by a boy child whose only interest in the toy is breaking it.

While Kahn takes hold of Rex, Arkan is handling the rest of the soldiers. He gathers them up like a bundle of dropped sticks, pulling them up into his arms before pushing them through the nearest doorway and sealing them behind it. It all happens too quickly for them to be able to fight back. I hear them clamoring at the door, but I know there's no chance they're getting out of there in the short term.

Arkan and Kahn look at one another, and I know that the two of them are doing that thing again, that thing where they talk

with their minds.

I have no idea what they are saying, but they clearly intend to take Rex away, judging by the way Kahn has already started to drag him away down the hall. I am surprised that nobody is paying much attention to me. I am left standing in the hall, free, but confused.

But of course, I have not actually been forgotten.

“Go back to the room,” Kahn barks over his shoulder. “NOW!”

There is such deep authority in his voice I don't dare disobey him. I know I've fucked up. I know I almost got people hurt right now. The soldiers could have been killed. I don't know what he and Arkan are going to do to Rex, but I bet it's not going to be fun.

I have the strangest feeling in my belly. It takes a minute to realize what it is, because it's not something I'm accustomed to feeling: guilt.

I feel bad for sneaking out. I feel bad for taking advantage of Kahn's kindness. I feel bad for creating a dangerous situation where any of us could have been seriously hurt or worse. I feel horrendous for getting caught by Rex. He didn't know I was here, and now everybody knows.

I fucked up, and not for the first time.

But for the first time, it suddenly feels like my fault. And it suddenly feels like I care.

I mope back to the room, knowing that Kahn will return, and that when he does, I am going to be in trouble.

Proper trouble.

The kind of trouble that is going to make me sorry and sore.

## 9 REVELATIONS

**K**ahn  
The human twitches in my grip.

I thought I would kill him when I saw him touching Stella. I felt pure rage surge through me. Not the cool, collected murder urge I am accustomed to feeling. I have always been so logical and so in control of my temper. But when this man put his hands on her, I felt like an absolute animal.

Arkan puts a hand on my shoulder. I hear his voice in my head. Soothing.

*“She’s safe.”*

But she’s not safe. None of us are. Not while we exist in this uneasy truth with a pack of fierce hominids. Even now they are probably trying to break out of the room Arkan locked them in.

*“Are the other humans secure?”*

He glances at the bridge’s control panel.

*“Yes. And Stella is back in your room. I’ve closed the doors. The ship is in a complete lockdown.”*

For now. Until that pack of animals finds a way to pry the doors open and flood toward the bridge. I suppose, if anyone were to hear my thoughts, I might sound afraid of humans. I am not. I am afraid of what they will make me do to them. I will not be caught off-guard. I will not fall where others have fallen. And I will never, ever allow them to put hands on Stella again.

“Let... me... go...” the human rasps.

“Not until you understand that Stella is off limits to you. To all humans.” I flex my fingers and tighten my grip, cutting off a little more of his air. I wonder if he has ever been held this way. I wonder if he has ever been made to feel truly helpless. He is an older male, and clearly one who has excelled in the military. The way he gripped Stella was with an easy kind of ownership, as if he had every right to touch her. As if she belonged to nobody, least of all herself.

He does not respect her. She is a thing to him.

*“You’re going to kill him.”* Arkan’s voice enters my mind. I notice that he doesn’t intend to stop me. Maybe he is beginning to understand the nature of the burden we have brought upon ourselves by not returning this contingent of potentially hostile humans to Earth. I have tried to tell him over and over that they will never be tameable or controllable. He didn’t listen. I wonder if he is starting to understand now.

I loosen my grip ever so slightly. This gives the human the opportunity to start talking. He wants to explain himself. I don’t want to hear a word, but I know I have to.

“You don’t understand,” Rex says, his neck straining with the urgency of every word emerging from his throat. Again, I am reminded of how easily I could crush his windpipe. I probably should. The entirety of my being is currently being directed toward the task of refraining from doing just that. He deserves to die, but he also has information I do not have.

“Make me understand.”

“Let me go.... And I’ll tell you.”

“You will talk now.”

“Let me go...”

Held in a literal death grip, this human still believes he has a position of power to bargain from. I would laugh, if I had any capacity for amusement at all in this moment — which I do not.

“If you do not explain yourself, I will kill you and get the information from one of your underlings. Someone less willing to die for no discernible reason. You are trying my patience, human.”

I feel him slump in my grasp as he gives up on trying to negotiate his release.

“That woman needs to be captured and returned to Earth,” he rasps out.

“Why?”

“Because she belongs to a very powerful man.”

“She belongs to a very powerful me,” I snarl in his face, tusk and fang slicing a fraction of a hair of an inch in front of his smooth human skin. “Do you imagine that any human man would have a greater claim to Stella than I do?”

“Her father,” the human says. “She is the daughter of Antoine, the Rex Regem Hierophant. The most powerful man on the planet. General of the Last Armies. Deliverer of the Masses. He who commands the Atomic Forces.”

He names all these titles with the gasping, rasping breaths of a desperate man near passing out, but too enamored of the one he is naming to dare miss a ridiculous syllable of any one of them.

I look over at Arkan. “*Do we know this Rex Regem Whateverelse?*”

*“Might be a more recent political development.”*

*“We don’t pay enough attention to their societies. We take them without thinking. It has to stop.”*

*“You’re going to choke him out,”* Arkan reminds me.

Once again, I very nearly forgot about the man writhing in my grasp.

When I direct my gaze to him, his lips are starting to turn blue. I drop him, not because he deserves release, but because I want to ask more questions and I am clearly on the verge of an inadvertent slaying.

He drops to his knees but quickly attempts to rise. This motion I arrest with a firm palm, pressing him back down. It is about time this human learned his place.

“Tell. Me. Everything.”

## 10 GUILT

**S** *tella*

It's a long time before Kahn comes back. That means it is a very long time to think about what I've done. The feeling of guilt only deepens as the minutes pass into what have to be hours. I start to get a little hungry, then I stop being hungry as the guilt eats my appetite.

"Did you kill him?"

"Why did you not tell me that you were a runaway?"

I stare at him. He still has that vibe going on. That big, mad, alien vibe that makes me reluctant to say what first comes to mind when I hear that question: none of your business.

"The first step to getting away with running away is not telling people that you're a runaway," I say. "I wanted out of the city. I wanted out from under my father's influence. He was using me, and he was going to trade me for power, basically. I didn't want to be forced into marriage or made to live a life that was never mine. I wanted to be free. That's why I ran. That's why I'm still running."

"You said the soldiers would kill you if they found you."

"They may as well. It would end my life one way or another. Now they know I'm on this ship, they're going to do everything in their power to turn it around and get it back to Earth. They will do anything to please my father. Absolutely anything. They're obsessed with him. He's like a cult leader. With a lot of weaponry."

“Understood,” he says. “Is there anything else I should know?”

“Probably a lot of things.”

His tusks and fangs clamp together with the action of his jaw. He does not like my flippant response. He wants me to take this seriously and tell him everything. I bet those soldiers already told him. I bet Rex told him all sorts of shit.

“No more secrets,” he says, stepping forward to pick me up from the bed. I don’t resist. I’ve been anticipating this from the moment I saw him grab Rex.

“Did you kill him?”

“Not yet.”

“Don’t.”

He has me in his grasp, his massive, clawed hands on my hips. When I tell him not to kill Rex, he pauses and looks down at me. I’ve just stalled him. Maybe if I keep talking, I can spare my ass some of the pain I know it has coming.

“Why do you wish for me to spare his life?”

“Rex has been around for as long as I can remember. They’re not bad people. They just suck because they’re brainwashed, and they work for my father, and nobody can be in his presence without being brainwashed. He’s very charismatic. He’s a force of personality you can’t really understand.”

He nods and turns his big alien body so he can sit on the bed, swiveling me with him so I end up between his big, powerful thighs. I know I am in trouble. I can feel that fact all the way to my soul. There’s a tremor in my hands. My knees feel wobbly. Kahn has always been big and strict and stern, but he seems even more so now that he has my guilt on his side.

“So you ran away from home,” he says. “You ran from your father’s protection.”

“He wasn’t protecting me. He was going to make me marry someone I didn’t want. He was using me as a pawn. Rex isn’t trying to take me back to my loving father. He’s fetching lost cargo.”

Kahn's hands tighten on my hips, but not in a way that frightens me or threatens punishment. It is a comforting squeeze. I never thought he'd comfort me. The feeling throws me off, confuses me, makes me squirm in his grip. He tightens his hands again, this time to still me.

"Nobody is taking you anywhere," Kahn tells me. "You are mine, and I will keep you safe."

He speaks with total conviction, in a tone that makes me feel so completely cared for, and I start to cry. Tears just start flowing, running down my face. I haven't cried in so long it feels as though my skin is parched, a desert of despair. The tears are like a river suddenly flowing from a dam I've been keeping inside me for too long.

Kahn's hands move from my hips and his arms envelop me. Big, warm, comforting. I bury my face in his alien neck, feeling his scales against the tip of my nose as I hide from my pain and my sorrow in his sheltering embrace.

## **K** *ahn*

Telling my human that I will look after her seems to have created this pain reaction. It could be confusing, if I did not understand that humans quite often cry when they are happy and laugh when they are sad. This reaction is of a confused and dysregulated nervous system. She needs to be calmed down. She needs to be comforted. And, as luck would have it, she needs to be spanked.

I put her over my lap, still sobbing, and run my palm over her upturned cheeks.

"Part of looking after you is ensuring that you understand disobedience will not be tolerated."

My palm meets her cheeks, soft human flesh turning pretty pink from the very first application of my rough hand. It is not nearly as hard as it would have been before she showed me her contrition and her pain.

“Your habit of leaving the safety of the confines of my room has once again put you in danger,” I lecture. “You told me you wanted to remain far from the eyes of these soldiers, you did not tell me why, and now you have not only been seen, but the humans are aware that you are alive and well and on this ship. You have put everybody in excessive danger because you are incapable of the most basic obedience.”

My words are accompanied by sharp slaps that I very much hope impart a good, shocking sting to her body, somehow driving my words deeper into her mind so the next time she considers a wayward course of action, some mechanism is enabled to stop it.

“I know,” she whimpers. The first time I spanked her, she was stiff and tense over my lap. She flailed and she kicked and she cursed. This time she is softer and more relaxed. She is submitting to me, and to her own guilt. She is learning, I hope, though no training can ever be said to be complete until it is tested.

“Are you going to be a good girl for me?”

There is a small pause in which she sniffs and sobs. “Yes,” she says in a very small voice.

“Good,” I reply. “Because that is the only choice you have. I expect and will enforce obedience. And I will continue to punish you each and every time you disobey me.”

I follow that statement up with three hard slaps that make her contort over my thighs with shocked little gasps. She thought I was going to continue to be gentle with her. And in truth, I am. She deserves a thorough strapping. Perhaps even a caning.

“You were badly behaved, weren’t you, Stella?”

“Yes,” she admits again, in another small voice.

“You knew when you disobeyed me there would be a consequence. You failed to anticipate how serious a consequence it would be. But you knew you would be caught. You knew the collar would notify me of your movements. Which means you wanted to be in trouble. And that means on some level you wanted to be disciplined.”

The soft and tender phase of this spanking is over. She knows she is in good hands, but she does not yet know that there is no display of emotion, no matter how sweet, how sorrowful, or how soft that will get her out of receiving each and every bit of what she has gone so far out of her way to earn.

*S tella*

Kahn's strap lands hard across my ass, but the warmth of the gentle spanking he already gave me means that when it bites, it doesn't bite hard. Or at least, it doesn't feel as brutal and as unyielding as his thrashings usually do. Instead, it feels like a sudden bath of more intense heat. Pain might be part of the equation, but my body isn't interpreting things that way. Instead, I feel a hot flush rushing through me, followed by another as the strap lands a second time, and then a third as it lands once more. I stretch out, languid, like a cat being petted as his punishment suffuses my body with heat.

"You're going to be my good girl," he growls. "You're going to do as I tell you, and you are going to stay safe by behaving yourself."

Every one of those words is accompanied by another hot lick of the leather lash, and every one of those lashes makes me sink deeper into this welling pool of sensation. I've stopped thinking. Stopped worrying. I've stopped being sad, or guilty. Even contrition is a long way away from where I am now.

I usually want him to stop spanking me. But now all I want is for this to go on forever. I want to stay in this place where nothing matters besides the regular falling of the lash that no longer bites or stings but simply warms.

My eyes are starting to feel heavy. It's hard to keep them open. Everything is just so warm and so fuzzy. I'm starting to float down into a space...

"I am going to fuck you, pet," he growls through the haze. "I am going to teach you a lesson with my cock."

"Mmm... yes, please."

He lets out a chuckle. “This is not supposed to be something you want.”

“I’ll always want sex with you.”

“Sweet thing,” he rumbles, rubbing his palm over my hot ass.

The collar makes my clit thrum, and with the heat in my cheeks, desire is not far away. I am already wet. I am already wanting. I need him inside me and I do not see how sex with him could ever be anything other than an absolutely delicious reward. I am already absolutely charged with arousal, and so very quickly I get so close to coming, I can almost...

“No!”

I wail as the sensation abates. There is no more stimulation. There is nothing. The orgasm is stunted and ruined. My whimper of complaint only seems to satisfy him, however. This is what he had planned all along.

“Bad girls who hide their entire pasts from their alien masters don’t get to come,” Kahn says. “Bad girls get kept on the edge until I see fit, their naughty pussies punished.”

He spanks my lips with a swift little smack that makes them sting, emphasizing his point and his power. There’s nothing I can do now. I am at his mercy. If I want an orgasm, I have to submit to his discipline.

Again he spanks me, and again, making my pussy sore and sorry but also very wet and from the feel of it, quite swollen. Kahn can be a twisted master when he wants to be. This is a perverse way to be punished. It makes me sore and it turns me the fuck on. Every slap not only hurts, but drives me back toward that orgasm he wouldn’t let me have.

This time, I try to be smart about it. I try to hide how close I am coming to climax. I bite my lower lip and I tense all the muscles in my belly, and I get so fucking close...

“NO!” I wail as once again he removes all stimulation from my greedy pussy.

“Yes,” he chuckles, enjoying my writhing desperation. He sits me up and clamps my hips in place, making me stay still and

denying me the chance to wriggle my way somehow free of this overstimulation that has no outlet.

He does this again and again, spanking me, pleasuring me, sometimes letting the collar make my clit sing with need while spanking my pussy at the very same time. Each and every time I get close to orgasm, he stops. I don't know how he knows, but he always knows.

"This is so cruel," I whimper as my dripping pussy coats his scaled fingers with my need.

"It's not cruel. It's what you need. You need to learn that you are mine, and I want to know every part of you. Every secret. Every impulse. Every fear. Every pleasure."

He spans my pussy, emphasizing every one of those phrases with a stinging slap.

"You will not hide from me, Stella. Not ever. No more secrets, pet. Your sorrows are my sorrows, your burdens are my burdens. You are mine, in every sense of that word."

Those deeply romantic words are thrashed into my sex. He holds me back against his body, one massive, scaled arm around my waist, my legs spread wide, and his cock pressing against my ass through the barrier of his clothing.

He said he was going to fuck me. I really wish he would fuck me. But he is not done teaching me a lesson yet. Another orgasm rises in me and is denied. He holds my legs open, keeping me exposed, making me feel the depths of my personal depravity and desire. I'll never be able to deny that I want him after this. Not even in the crevices of my mind. He has taken all of me and shown me how I have given myself to him.

"Please," I beg. "Please fuck me, Kahn. I'll be good. I'll tell you everything. I'll never lie. I'll never disobey. I'll be your good little pet forever. I promise!"

There is an answering growl behind me and a slight rustling as my alien master makes the necessary adjustments needed to lift me up and plunge me down on the erect rod of his cock, sheathing my aching cunt on his flesh. I explode with the force

of all the orgasms he previously denied me, my mind going blank with the overload of sensation. I come so hard as he fucks me, lifting me up and down, working me on his cock, taking his pleasure from mine. He has to hold me in place, because I am no longer capable of holding myself up. My energy has been drained with the force of climax, and I am like a rag doll, his personal fuck toy, a hot, soaked hole for him to spill his seed deep inside...

“Have you learned your lesson?”

By the time I am aware of that question, I am post-verbal, snuggling up in his arms and entirely unable to do anything else.

**K**ahn

She is the hottest, most perfect, precious little thing in all the universe, and though I appear to have temporarily fucked the sass, not to mention the brains out of her, I know she will soon recover.

I feel a fresh rush of affection and an intense bonding, knowing how rare a moment like this is for her, and how much it means for her to demonstrate such trust.

I slide her from my lap gently and put her into bed. I have learned much about this little human and her life before me today. I know the ways she has been hurt, and how she has been failed. I know that she has been brave, and reckless, and bold and uncontrollable — and that those traits have been her salvation.

How can I hope to control someone who has only ever found safety in being uncontrollable? She will resist being disciplined to her very last breath. She will reject order. She will find her own way. She will fight authority, because authority has failed her.

I listened to Rex talk. He told me of her father’s power, how he is effectively a warlord, a charismatic and brutal man who has pulled together remnants of multiple warring forces to create an enclave under his control in the city. He is

dangerous, and he controls not only men, but machines. He has no idea where his daughter has gone, and even less idea where his soldiers have disappeared. As far as he is concerned, the moment his daughter and his troops left the city, they were erased from existence. I feel a brief blip of empathy for him, but it is quickly extinguished by the fact he was trying to force Stella into marriage. She is too wild and fine and beautiful a creature to be bullied into taking a mate.

Stella lets out a little moan and shifts under the covers in her sleep.

She's still not a suitable pet.

But she's still mine.

And now we have humans who have to be handled.



Again, I go to Arkan, but this time it is for the last time. There is a finality to this conversation which now takes place on the bridge of our ancestral ship. He has made sure that his pet is stowed away safely. Now I think about it, he has jealously guarded her from the human soldiers the entire time they've been on board. His instincts told him what his arrogant conscious mind refused to acknowledge: these creatures are dangerous to us, and our mates.

“Do you understand now why we absolutely cannot bring these soldiers back to Euphoria?” I open the discussion with a question.

Arkan sighs, running a hand through his hair. “What do we do with them if we do not bring them back? They cannot go to Earth. They will tell stories of our kind. They may lay traps for future visitors. They are sullied by us and the experiences they have had with us. And they may have already observed more than is safe for them to have seen. Some of those soldiers are technicians. They've taken things apart in some places on the ship to see how they work, I'm sure of it.”

“Then we eliminate them,” I say. “As threats.”

“I don’t like that idea,” Arkan says.

**“I don’t like that idea either.”**

That’s the sound of Rex, a man who should not be here, speaking up from a dark corner of the room. This is the problem when maintenance starts getting missed, and lights aren’t replaced in a timely fashion. You end up with a bridge with a literal blind spot on it, where a tactically minded human can lie in wait while setting up an ambush.

There are three access points to the bridge. Each and every one of them slides open simultaneously, revealing a contingent of soldiers. They are armed — with our weapons. No doubt they were retrieved on one of their very many excursions about the ship. Arkan and I are surrounded. If Stella were here, she’d describe the situation even more succinctly.

Arkan and I are fucked.

“See, you aliens, you have an arrogance about you that’s always going to be your downfall,” Rex says. “You always...”

As he embarks on what is clearly a prepared speech, I realize that the situation is even worse than I suspected.

He’s going to bore us to death.

## 11 RESCUE

**S** *tella*

One moment I am asleep in the arms of my alien lover with a sore ass and a very satisfied pussy — the next I am waking up in a bed that does not have an alien in it. It's a small, stiff, white bed in a small, stiff, white room. From the moment I open my eyes it is clear that I am on a much smaller ship. Everything about it feels wrong. There's a weird taste in my mouth and a sort of fuzziness in my head. I've been drugged. It's not the first time. I know how that feels. I don't understand how. Did someone jab me with something while I was asleep? Why the hell would they do that? Surely Kahn wouldn't...

“Kahn?”

I call his name, but there's no answer.

I put my hand to the collar, but I don't feel anything. That's weird. Usually there's sort of a residual hum, a sort of being. I never really noticed that before — but I note its absence now. The collar doesn't feel alive anymore. It feels like a thing.

Dread forms in the pit of my stomach.

Something is deeply, deeply wrong.

I get up and leave the room, finding myself in a claustrophobic little corridor which leads to a very small bridge. There I find Rex and two of his soldiers. They all look worse for wear, bruised and bandaged. They look like they've been in one hell of a fight with something designed by nature to do damage.

“What the fuck is happening?”

“Good to see you awake,” Rex says with a broad, shit-eating grin. He doesn’t bother to actually look at me. He doesn’t need to. He knows he has me right where he wants me.

“Seriously. What is happening. Where am I? What is going on?”

Rex looks at me over his shoulder for a brief moment before returning his attention to the controls. “I have rescued you from the alien defilers. I am taking you home.”

I don’t want to ask the next question, but I know I have to.

“What did you do to the alien defilers?”

“We killed them and we took this auxiliary ship. Their main vessel had several. We’ve taken most of the ships, crewed with three and four soldiers...”

I interrupt his tedious explanation of what I am sure he imagines to be his brilliant plan.

“You killed Kahn and Arkan.”

“Of course. It was the only way to secure you. Once we saw you, our plan was finalized. Bringing you back to your father, returning you to Earth is all that has ever mattered. And we are returning with an incredible cache of technology that will see your father’s dominion grow. This is a triumph beyond triumphs. In fleeing your wedding, you set a chain of events in motion that has brought us knowledge, power, and riches beyond anybody’s wildest dreams. You will be celebrated, Stella. You will...”

Rex keeps talking, but I am not listening. Everything sounds hollow all of a sudden. The notion of a universe in which Kahn no longer exists feels like a very cold and miserable one. I once thought the worst thing would be to get caught and taken back to my father’s house. I thought it would be worse than death.

Now I know that’s not the worst thing. The worst thing is being taken back to my father’s house and knowing that I got

the only creature in the universe who ever loved me killed in the process, including his family.

“And how did you get me without waking me up?”

“You’ve always responded well to sedatives,” Rex says. “It was not hard to slip some into your food. It also wasn’t all that hard to slip some into theirs.”

So it wasn’t a fair fight. They drugged us all, and...

“What about the other girl?”

“What other girl?”

I clamp my lips together. Arkan must have kept his mate away from the soldiers. I haven’t really seen Arkan’s pet since I woke up. That was smart. A contingent of horny men is a clear and present danger to any female on a ship. Either that, or Rex is just so single-minded and hyper-focused that it hasn’t occurred to him to think about anybody besides me. That’s possible.

“Why didn’t you take the big ship?”

“We couldn’t work the controls,” Rex says. “The Voros ship is quite different from the other ones. More complex. More advanced. Don’t worry. We’ll retrieve it later. Now that we have this ship capable of leaving the planet, our scientists will be able to replicate the tech, and...”

I tune out again. He’s just so pleased with himself he doesn’t notice my lack of response. He has an almost rapturous expression on his face. This is the peak of his career. My father will reward him richly. He’ll probably have an entire city quarter to his name by the end of this. I’ll be married off to the highest bidder with the most power — though that might change, given the fact that my father will now be in possession of alien technology.

I feel the sickest, most crushing sensation as I realize this is all my fault. If I had not run away, I would never have been alien abducted, and the soldiers would never have come into contact with Kahn and Arkan. My decisions have led to so much suffering, including my own.

Maybe my father was right. Maybe I would have been better off married. If I had let him have his way, Kahn and Arkan would not have any humans to worry about besides the ones they want to worry about. They wouldn't be dead on their own family ship now, their bodies floating through deep space millions of miles away from me.

## 12 HOMECOMING

“We are home, Stella.”

The journey must have taken weeks, but I have been almost entirely numb for all of them. Even when we risked re-entry to Earth’s atmosphere in this relatively dinky little craft, I didn’t particularly mind if we all burned up. It felt like it would be a correct sort of thing to happen, really. All the fight has gone out of me, and Rex’s latest words bring me only more despair. I don’t want to be home. I don’t want to be anywhere. I feel absolutely adrift from everything, as if I, myself, have ceased to mean anything. I don’t belong here.

We land in triumph, probably. I don’t really notice or care. There’s always a lot of yelling in the city. Sometimes it’s excited yelling, sometimes it’s more like murderous screams. It all just sounds like noise to me as I am flanked by soldiers and escorted ‘home.’

My father’s residence is one of the few entirely intact and repaired buildings in the city. Once upon a time it was a library. I know this because the letters of the word still remain on one of the ornately carved parapets. It was probably something else before a library too.

It is heavily guarded, of course, but Rex and I are well known enough that even after all this time my father’s guard does not have the balls to stop us or ask questions.

I cry softly to myself as Rex leads me back into my family home. I will not be making another escape anytime soon. The eyes of dozens of soldiers are on me, and the cold gaze of

dozens upon dozens of cameras are also tracking my movements. Rex leads me into one of the many vestibules, a place of theoretical privacy. Once upon a time these made a nice place to study or take meetings. Now they are a good place to contemplate the end of all things.

“Keep her here,” Rex orders his men. “I must report to the President.”



“S TELLA!”

My father booms my name from his office. I know he is in his office, because he is never anywhere else.

I hear his footsteps coming down the stairs, shaking the old wood beneath the weight of his gravitas.

I rise to my feet and move toward him out of some old instinct.

He sees me as I leave the vestibule and rushes toward me like a force of nature.

My father is a massive man. He stands well over six feet in height. I get my hair and eyes from him. His dark locks are long and curling, cascading over his shoulders. His dark eyes are ringed with dark lashes and even darker brows. He has seven wives, and counting. But there’s only one daughter. Plenty of sons. Only one. Me.

He looks like a pirate, basically. A massive, swashbuckling, city-controlling, probably-evil-except-he-is-my-father-so-I-can’t really-dislike-him-properly, pirate.

“Stella! My little star!” He engulfs me in the biggest, warmest, most relieved hug.

Tears escape my squeezed eyelids. I have missed my father. He wanted the best for me, but his best for me is my worst for me. Didn’t mean he didn’t love me. Doesn’t mean I don’t love him.

“Rex tells me of incredible adventures,” he says. “My Stella, among the stars. I thought you had run away, but you were leading my best men to treasures beyond any found anywhere on this world.”

He’s giving me a lot of credit, and I know that’s partially because in spite of wanting to marry me off, my father truly believes I could never do anything wrong.

I wish so badly I had been born a male. If I had been, I would have been one of his finest generals. I would have conquered every inch of this city and all the remnant cities beyond. Instead, I have been relegated to an object of tender care but not a person worthy of respect.

“Why do you sob so?”

“I fell in love in the stars, Father. Rex and his men killed him. The one I loved.”

“You met a man out there?”

“A man of sorts. He had fangs and tusks and he was big and he was strong. And they killed him because they feared him.”

My father has undoubtedly already been briefed on the alien situation. There is no way he does not know what I am talking about, but he plays ignorant so that I can tell him the situation as I see it.

“This man, he was an alien?”

“Yes, but he was just as we are inside his head. He had thoughts. He had feelings. He had... he had a life. And Rex took that because he thinks I’m a thing. But I’m not a thing. I’m me.”

“Of course you are you, Stella. There is nobody like you. Not on this world, or off it. Of course an alien fell in love with you. What other choice would he have had?”

My father’s excessive flattery is almost enough to make me smile. He has such a charismatic way about him it is easy to forget the heinous cruelties done in his name. But I won’t forget this cruelty. Not the one that wiped Kahn off the face of the universe.

“We are going to have a great celebration in honor of your return,” my father tells me. “You need to immerse yourself in this world, and in all the goodness that awaits you here.”

I know I don't have any choice, and I know that pretending to play along is the only way to save face, which is what my father really wants. Nobody is going to talk about my running away. Not in any way that acknowledges how miserable and desperate I was when I did it. That's one small mercy, a little silver lining in this complete bullshit. I won't be humiliated, because humiliating me means humiliating my father and nobody dares do that.

In some ways, I'm getting away with everything.

In other ways, I'm getting away with absolutely nothing.

## 13 WEDDING BELLS

“Let’s take that collar off, it really doesn’t fit the dress.”

A very nice woman is fussing with my hair and my makeup and everything else about me. It is her job to ensure that I look as good as I can possibly look. My appearance in the next few hours matters more than it has ever mattered in my life, and much more than it will ever matter again.

She hooks her fingers in the collar and tries to tug it off, searching for some kind of clasp or buckle. There isn’t one, of course. Kahn fused this to my throat. He marked me as his, and his I remain, even if he is gone.

“The collar doesn’t come off,” I say.

“I’m sure we can cut it...”

“The collar does *not* come off,” I repeat in tones that hold the very real possibility of violence.

She takes a step back, putting her hand to her mouth at my indelicate display of temper. But she recovers quickly. She is a wedding attendant after all, she knows how to work with one of mankind’s most dangerous and irascible of creatures: the bride.

“Very well. We will cover it with a lace choker. Lace neck adornment is very fashionable right now, and you do have a good neck.”

I let her do her thing. I tolerate all her annoying little last minute pampering touches, like the way she coils my curls around her finger and places them in just the right position,

then sprays them in place so they cannot move. My hair looks amazing, but it is stiff and unmoving, just like the rest of me.

I feel absolutely empty inside, as though I have become either numb or completely void of soul.

It is my wedding day.

I am sitting in a dressing room festooned with white flowers, wearing an exquisite gown of such incredible artistry that every inch of it is fresh delight. This dress was created by the very last of the fabric artisans, women who require years to hand-sew endless numbers of pearls into the handmade lace of the entire garment.

This is the sort of gown that girls and women alike dream of. It fits me perfectly, the bodice fitted to my curves, the skirt flaring out in a grand dramatic sort of way in all directions. I barely look like a woman. I look like half of a woman sticking out of a very large silken creature. Walking in the thing is going to be practically impossible, but I'll do it anyway.

My makeup has been done by a very nice team of people who have transformed me into a version of myself that never existed. My cheeks are blushing and yet somehow paler than they usually are. That's because I'm miserable. Deeply, totally, broken.

The wedding I ran from is going ahead, of course.

In the eyes of the world, there was merely a short delay in the preparation for the city's wedding of the century. My objections, if anybody is aware of them, are absolutely irrelevant. I was made to be a thing to be traded, and traded I shall be.

I stare at myself in the mirror, barely recognizing the woman who looks back.

Then, in the midst of what truly feels like the absolute pit of despair, my collar pulses. Warm. Comforting. Powerful.

Goosebumps appear on my arms as I realize that can only mean one possible thing:

*Kahn is alive.*

Somewhere. Somehow.

*And he's close.*

I remember what he told me all those months ago. I remember how intense and blue his stare was as he informed me that the collar meant he would always be able to find me.

He meant it.

He's found me.

I feel an electric charge running through me. I look around, drying my eyes to try to see where he's coming from. I even peek out into the church. I feel as though if he were here, people would be running and screaming and panicking. But they're not. They're talking, in many cases, quite loudly.

I don't see any sign of him. This wedding venue is absolutely packed, though. There are quite literally thousands of people here. They don't care about me. They don't care about the wedding. They care about earning my father's favor. They care about being seen here, and what being seen here means for their own power and their own status.

I retreat back into the little room in which I have been cloistered. I sit here like a pretty doll in a brand-new box waiting to be opened. As more time passes, I start to wonder if I was wrong. Maybe I imagined the pulse on the collar. Now when I reach up to touch it, it feels as if it has felt for a while. Dull and plain and inactive. Wishful thinking.

"It is time, Stella."

My father appears in the doorway. He is dressed in a gold suit which does absolutely nothing to avoid upstaging me in white. We all know what today is about. Him. Everything is always about him.

My brothers are ranged about the cathedral. Their wives and their children are up the front. They all look perfectly beautiful.

If one were to look inside the cathedral and nowhere else, one would think that the world is as it once was. Everybody here is well dressed and well fed. The children are in little suits and

dresses that mimic the fashions of their parents. Everything is clean and fresh and new. But I know that two blocks away, the world is burning. People just like us are eking out a pathetic survival on whatever is left over from my father and his ilk's hoarding.

My father offers me his arm.

There is a brief moment in which I consider not taking it. I could defy him openly for the first time in my life. But I look up into his face and I feel the impossibility of that action. I can do so many things, but I cannot say no to my father.

There is a collective gasp as my father and I appear at the end of the aisle. It's the sound of people who are obligated to be impressed. We're all pretending they think I am beautiful, but there is no beauty like that of my father. They stare at him as if he is the sun himself.

My husband to be is up at the altar. I should have some kind of opinion on him, but I don't. I've never even bothered to learn his name. It doesn't matter. He doesn't matter. This marriage does not matter. I have no intention of honoring these vows if I am forced to make them. I already know that I will run again, and that I will likely die in the escape attempt. I've accepted that there's no place for me on this world. There was a place for me somewhere once, but Rex ensured that no longer exists. As soon as I am married, my worth as a pawn will be expended and I will be free to return to the dirt from which I came.

My solemn expression only seems to please the onlookers. I hear whispered comments as to how composed and exquisite I am. I know that all brides for the foreseeable future will be walking down the aisle looking utterly miserable. Pale pallor and downcast eyes are going to be so very fashionable.

I take step after step. Each and every one of them seems more wrong than the one before. How am I able to do this? Why are my feet prepared to move? It feels as though my body should refuse to take any action that brings me closer to this forced marriage.

The closer I get to the altar, the more I take in unwanted details, like the groom's guard. They would usually be his best men, but my father is leaving nothing to chance, and I see that Commander Rex is actually up at the altar, grinning broadly as if this triumph is his triumph. ‘

The sick thing is, both my father by my side and Commander Rex up at the altar, firmly believe that this is the best thing for me. They are giving me to a man, so that I might live my life as a woman. There is nothing in this banal yet overdone horror that strikes them as wrong. Of all the attendees, I am the only one struck with a sickness deep in my belly. I am surrounded by many hundreds, and watched by thousands more, and yet I am alone in my despair.

We are almost at the altar. I am on the precipice of being legally and spiritually bound to another man...

**BA-BOOM!**

The sound of the cathedral doors exploding is immense. It is like the hand of God herself made a fist and punched through, splintering ancient, carved wood as if it were made of nothing but cheap matchsticks.

It is followed by frankly refined tones.

“My apologies.”

I turn around and, scales gleaming in the light of a post-apocalyptic day, is Kahn.

Everybody should be screaming, but they're not. They're just stunned, wondering if this is part of the plan. My father does like to put on a show. Perhaps they think this is just a little dramatic twist.

“I'm here for my mate,” Kahn says, striding down the aisle as if he has every right to be here. “I would have come earlier, but I was... tied up.”

Seeing Kahn standing in the middle of all my father's guests is an incredible sight. He is dressed for the occasion, or at least, he is dressed for battle in the shiniest of armor. It gives him a slightly formal but very regal appearance. Kahn has always

been gorgeous, but he has never looked as handsome as he does in this moment.

There is a scar on his face, a nasty gash that runs from his hairline to his left brow in a rough slice which has mangled several of his scales and even those that remain somewhat intact have not knit back with their neighbors as they once were. His hair is braided in a thick plait back from the center of his head, the back left loose and falling to his shoulders.

He looks so fucking hot, and more importantly, so very fucking *alive*.

I thought I would never see him again. I thought I'd never again feel the way I currently feel, filled with hope and joy. The collar is pulsing rapidly, but my own physical reaction to seeing Kahn in the flesh, now striding down the aisle after me, for me, to claim me is so strong I can barely tell what is the collar and what is me. I let out little gasps of excitement and glee while my very soul is suffused in a kind of relief so potent I am sure I will never feel pain again.

I drink every bit of him in with incomparable thirst. He is so distinguished, so proper, so rough and so fucking ready to do battle for me — though he's not making even the slightest hint of an aggressive move, everybody in this massive cathedral knows better than to fuck with him. He must have fought through hell to come and find me.

“Kahn!” I call his name with wild and unruly excitement.

I try to run to him, intending to meet him halfway down the aisle, but there is no running in this dress, and it feels as though someone is stopping me... yes, when I look over my shoulder, I see Commander Rex standing with both feet on the extensive hem of the dress. I shoot him daggers, which he ignores, as he is too busy staring at Kahn. None of the guard present today are armed in a way that would make the slightest dent in this alien's armor, and nobody wants to create a scene. Better to allow a massive alien to crash the wedding than to cause a public scandal on this, my father's special day.

My father steps out in front of Kahn, blocking the aisle. I always thought my dad was the largest person in the world,

but of course Kahn is much larger than he is. Kahn could roll right through him if he wanted. He could rip my father's head off.

But Kahn doesn't. He comes to a respectful halt.

"Who do you think you are?"

"Kahn Voros," Kahn says, offering my father his hand. "I'm the rightful owner of your daughter. I am also heir to a great alien fortune and large estates on my home world."

If anybody else introduced themselves that way, I'd assume they were a huge fucking jerk, but I think Kahn has taken my father's measure in an instant.

My father hesitates for a moment. I know he is running some calculations in his head. He is wondering if it would be better to attempt to continue this wedding as planned in spite of the very large, clearly warlike alien now standing in the middle of the cathedral — the very same alien he has already been briefed on by Commander Rex, or if it might be better to just give Kahn and me what we want.

Political and material considerations aside, my father has always been impressed by displays of boldness and strength, and what is more bold than quite literally crashing a wedding and demanding the bride? I cannot see my father's face, but I imagine there is a look of quiet respect in his eyes.

He takes Kahn's offered hand.

"Nice to meet you, Kahn Voros."

The man who was to be my husband is very put out and making little mouth noises of protest, but nobody particularly cares. Everybody has already forgotten he exists. Even his own family doesn't really seem to care. Kahn has stolen the show in every way possible.

"So you have come to marry my daughter," my father says.

"Your daughter is already mine."

"So," my father repeats, with more significance in his tone. "*You've decided to marry my daughter.*"

This time, Kahn understands what my father is saying. He looks from my father, to me, while my father's guard, also very much understanding what my father is saying, go about removing the man who was my husband-to-be.

"Yes. I have come to marry your daughter."

My father steps aside, allowing Kahn to come to me.

Ever the proper gentleman, Kahn plays along with the requirements of the ceremony. He stands opposite me and takes my hands in his. I am beaming so broadly my face hurts. The tears in my eyes prevent me from taking his expression in properly, but I feel his love wrapped around me like a physical embrace.

I know he has sacrificed everything to be here. He has exposed himself to the world. He knows that from this moment forth, everybody will know that his kind exists. For centuries, humans have wondered if they are alone in the universe.

Nobody is wondering anymore. Aliens are among us, and they are marrying us.

"Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today to celebrate the union of..."

The ceremony begins, a rather flustered priest doing his level best not to show the great fear he has of Kahn. If I was not entirely enamored of Kahn and so obsessed with him that I cannot think of anything else whatsoever, I would take extra pleasure in the fact that Commander Rex, who did everything in his power to destroy Kahn, is forced to stand by and watch the alien he said he killed, marry me with my father's blessing.

**K**ahn

I love this woman more than I ever knew I was capable of loving anybody.

It has been a long, hard journey to get here, but there was never any doubt in my mind that I would get here. Every breath I took drew me one breath closer to this moment.

After Rex and his men left Arkan and me for dead on our ship, we had some recuperating to do. At first it seemed we very well might die, and then we did not die, which was very fortunate. Arkan's pet was instrumental in nursing us back to health.

Naturally, we immediately set a course for Earth.

I had no intention of losing Stella. My plan was to reclaim her at all costs. Killing Rex was also on my agenda, but as a lesser item. He is within arm's reach right now, but crushing his throat might put a certain pall over the ceremony.

I do not need revenge. All I ever wanted to do was get Stella back. That was all that mattered to me, and it continues to be all that matters to me.

Arkan and Jennifer remain aboard the ship, safely in orbit. I took one of our remaining shuttles down and landed it in a fairly broken and abused part of the city. There, I frightened the hell out of a great many foraging humans, who fled screaming. It seemed as though I was looking for a proverbial needle in a haystack in attempting to find Stella, but of course I had the collar. As it turned out, I did not need that. Directly opposite my landing site, I saw a sign.

There was quite literally a very large billboard illuminated garishly bright — and on that billboard was Stella's face. Her wedding was to be the wedding of the century, the billboard declared, and all city dwellers were invited to help celebrate.

The crowds outside this cathedral are massive, but I had no trouble making my way through them. There was some screaming and running, and a good amount of getting the hell out of my way. I did not pay much in the way of attention to their reactions, being far more interested in what lay beyond the doors than the throngs of irrelevance outside it.

The doors to the cathedral were locked, naturally. But the doors were also made of wood, and I was made of alien, and so one thing led to another and now I am here, with my mate standing before me, looking up at me with tears in her eyes.

I know she has no idea how this all happened, and now is not the time for a full debrief. Now is a time for feelings, and the expressing of such. I have barely verbally confirmed my affection for my pet. That must change.

“I lay not knowing if I would live or die for days,” I say. “And the only regret I had in all that time... Well. I had two regrets, I suppose. One was not killing Rex the moment I saw him.”

There is a chuckle from her father, a man who not only clearly appreciates strength, but has a good sense of humor in general.

“The other regret, and the deeper one, was not taking you immediately for my own the very moment I first laid eyes on you. I let myself believe more deeply in all the limitations of my heart rather than giving into the...” I’m saying too much. Analyzing too much. This is so much more simple than I am making it.

So I make it simple.

“I love you, Stella. I love you more than any creature anywhere in the universe. I would gladly die for you, but I would rather live for you. Do you agree to be mine?”

“I do!” She sobs, abandoning all pretense of propriety and throwing herself into my arms.

A huge cheer goes up from all in attendance, as our emotional reunion strikes a resonant chord. There is a man in a gown mumbling something next to us. I pay no attention to his words as I sweep Stella Voros up into my arms and carry her out of the cathedral. My love. My property. My pet. My wife.

## EPILOGUE

“My father is insisting on access to your technology,” Stella sighs, pushing back from the message displayed on one of the screens on the bridge.

One Earth week has passed since our marriage, and we are once again safely among the stars. I do not intend to take her to Euphoria. I do not intend to stay anywhere near Earth, but I have agreed to return Arkan to our home planet so he can pursue whatever madness he chooses.

My eldest brother has finally seen the error and arrogance of his ways. It was his decision that led to our near mutual death. I told him time and time again that the human soldiers were a clear and present danger, but of course he never listened. Not until it was far too late.

I will be the next captain of this vessel, and I have determined that my human wife and I will spend the next few years traveling the universe together. Stella has always been a wild little runaway, and I think it is time I also learned to abdicate some of my self-assumed responsibilities, and instead live my life.

“Long may he continue to insist,” I reply. “And long may I continue to ignore those requests.”

She grins as she comes over to me, crawling into my lap in the way she has of doing when she wants attention and pets.

“It’s so fucking hot how you can say no to him,” she purrs up at me.

“I can say no to you too,” I growl in the way I know makes her melt.

“No, you can’t,” she laughs.

She’s right. I can’t. I’ll never be able to say no to her ever again. And maybe that’s the way it’s supposed to be.

Right before she was taken from me, I asked myself how I would ever control her. The truth, as I now understand it, is that I will not. She’s not mine to control. She is mine to care for. Mine to protect. She’s mine to love. Forever.

But that doesn’t mean I can’t remind her who she belongs to.

With the merest thought, I make her pussy pulse, the collar doing its work ever so efficiently. I watch as her face turns pink and her eyes take on that particularly delicious glassy quality they get when she is turned on.

“This isn’t fair,” she whimpers. “You do this to me and I can’t... I... mnnghh...” she pushes her hand down between her thighs and tries to satisfy herself. I let her, because it amuses me to let her try to deal with the collar’s devilish sensations on her own.

“Kahn,” she gasps. “If you’re not going to fuck me, then this is... this is wrong.”

I chuckle, allowing my amusement and enjoyment to show through quite clearly. My mate is still not tamed, and that means I am free to continue to train her.

“Kahhnnnnn...” she begins to beg properly now.

“Take your clothes off and bend over, pet. Present yourself to me.”

I give the order in a deep, husky voice. I am not immune to arousal myself, of course. I have to maintain control of myself because I want to keep control of her.

Stella does as she is told, stripping off her clothing, revealing those beautiful curves of her body to me. She is blushing with just a little arousal and shame. I know she wants to have more self-control than this. I know there is a part of her that still

rebels when I make her show herself to me, dripping wet with desire.

She bends over before me, hands on her knees, the round curves of her cheeks far too pale for my liking. But it's not her ass that's getting my attention right now. It's the mound between her thighs.

I'm yet to touch her, and my cock is throbbing inside my pants with the need to feel that hot, wet slit spread around my rod. But I stay patient.

“Who do you belong to, pet?”

“You, of course,” she moans. She's so good when she's aroused. She'll say anything to get relief. It's almost like she's tamed, but I know better.

“And what do you want from me?”

“I want...” she hesitates, a little ashamed of how explicit she is going to be now at my behest. “I want you to fuck my pussy.”

I extend a hand and brush the flats of my fingers between her thighs, grazing her outer lips and teasing that sensitive little clit with the merest of touches. She grinds down, sticking her ass out as she tries to get more contact with my fingers.

“Stay still, pet,” I chide gently, moving my hand away for a moment before repeating the treatment again.

“You're teasing me and it's not fair!”

I feel a little pang of sympathy for her. “Poor little pet,” I croon, giving her hungry pussy a gentle rub. “Having to be patient is so hard for you, isn't it?”

She moans in the affirmative, and I continue to tease her with soft touches and collar pulses. Her pussy is getting wetter and wetter, and increasingly more swollen. Her outer lips are engorged and open, revealing the more tender lips inside and the dark hole that always seems too small for my massive alien cock, and yet takes it anyway.

“You're my wife now, pet,” I remind her. “You're my little owned, human wife, given to me by your father. You were

traded to me like the sweet flesh you are, weren't you?"

If I said those words to her at any other time, she'd probably try to slap me, but right now, with her pussy so wet and desperate for fucking, she merely moans and agrees.

*"Yes, sir."*

It takes a supreme act of self control to not just free my cock and pull her back onto it. I know how it will feel when she engulfs me, how buttery hot and tight she'll be.

"My wife has to behave herself, and obey me," I tell her, tapping her pussy lightly. It's not hard enough to sting, but it is enough to remind her of what it feels like to be spanked this way. Stella does best when she is reminded by the possibility of punishment.

Her moan is enticing, as is the now regular sway of her hips. She is doing her level best to seduce me, my pretty wife, my perfect pet, my wanton little runaway turned married woman.

I grip her hips and I pull her back toward me, freeing my cock from the prison of my pants. Stella drives me wild, makes me feel things I had no idea I was capable of feeling. The need to be inside her is as urgent as the need to go on breathing.

I draw her back...

*Almost...*

I let the head of my cock run lightly over her soaked sex, teasing her all the more now she feels the hotness and hardness that will soon be hers to enjoy.

She curses under her breath. Is it desire, or is it impatience? A combination of both, I think.

Sliding one hand up her body, I grip the collar, curling my fingers in the back of it to pull it tight enough for her to feel my mastery. I feel a shiver run through her as her anticipation spikes even higher. The scent of her longing fills the air, and I can no longer resist.

Snarling with the effort it takes to be careful with her even in this primal, carnal moment, I pull her down on my cock and

surge forward at the same time, driving inside her with the thickness and dominance of my alien rod.

She comes practically instantly, her pussy clenching tight around my cock with a now familiar and oh so precious grip. I fuck her through her orgasm, wet sounds of a well-satisfied pussy filling the room along with my deep animalistic growls and her high pitched human moans.

I went through hell itself to claim this human for my own. We have both suffered greatly and sacrificed much. Her purity is a distant memory, her freedom an entirely forgotten thing. She is chained to me in these bonds of matrimony that make her mine in my world, and in hers.

She takes every increasingly rough thrust of my cock, making the scales at the base of my dick gleam with her human juices. I am going to fill her up with my seed.

Her ass bounces back against my thighs with every thrust, her long curls tossed as she writhes and wails, sounding every bit like a feral little animal. She doesn't sound tamed now. She sounds like a wild beast being fucked by her dominant mate. Those sounds spur me on, and nearly make me come, but I am not done with this little session. Training my pet means training myself, taming my own urges as much as I tame hers.

I pull free of her dripping pussy, knowing that her first orgasm will surely not be her last this session. She looks back at me with her face all flushed and her eyes bright with need and I crave another part of her.

“Come here,” I growl, using the collar to pull her back and also turn and push her down. She is between my thighs now, kneeling beneath my cock, her mouth open like a good little girl.

She doesn't have to be told twice to start sucking. It is part of the human oral psychology to want to wrap their lips around the things they desire. She craves my cock inside her in any way possible, and she shows me as much by lapping at the underside of my juice soaked rod with her agile, eager, soft tongue.

“Such a good girl,” I praise her. “Such a good pet.”

*S tella*

He knows how to make me melt for him. He knows how to pleasure me so intensely that I forget myself and just become slave to the sensations. My pussy has that comforting, hot ache I get every time he fucks me, and my clit is tingling with fresh interest in new orgasm as I take Kahn’s alien cock into my mouth, feeling him slide over my tongue time and time again. I want to swallow his seed down. I want to be filled with him so completely I never feel separate from him again.

It was only a matter of days, really, in which we were separated, but our separation was so painful that every minute felt like an hour, and every hour felt like a day. Kahn has become the center of my universe, and I know that I occupy the same place in his life. We are like two stars, orbiting one another for eternity.

Kahn’s fingers curl, his breath coming in shorter, harsher grunts. He’s got to want to come so badly, but he’s holding back. He loves to be in control, and he wants to be in control of this too. But it’s my mouth pleasuring him, and I am learning how to kick and kiss and suck in all the ways that drive him wild.

Just as he is surely about to spill his seed, I draw back, leaving him with nothing but cool air on his cock.

“What... what do you think you are doing?” He snarls the question down at me.

“Giving you a taste of your own medicine,” I smirk up at him.

I should know better than to tease Kahn, especially when he has an erection on the verge of orgasm. He’s extra merciless in these moments where his arousal is on the verge of overcoming the restraint he has to have in place in order not to hurt me.

He grips my hair tightly and lifts me halfway up his body. When he speaks, it is in a deep growl that, combined with the

collar, sends a dangerous thrill down my spine.

“That was a bad move, pet.”

I am in trouble, and I love it.

“Was it?”

He bends me over the console, spreads my legs, and proceeds to fuck me. But not where I expect it. Not where I’ve ever had it before. Instead of surging inside my pussy, he instead pushes the powerful, hard head of his cock against my ass.

“Wait!”

“Wait? For what?”

“That’s the wrong hole.”

“I can assure you, it’s not,” he rumbles behind me.

“It’s too small. It’s too tight. It’s...”

I feel a light drizzle of oil dripping against my ass. God knows where that came from. There is a small shelf on the bridge containing various lubricants and sprays and things. I don’t know that any of them were meant for human lubrication, but alien technology is an incredible thing, and I have bigger things to worry about. Like his cock which is already surging inside me, spreading me open.

“You’d better relax, pet, or this is going to hurt,” he warns me.

I take a deep breath and try to relax my muscles. It’s not easy. The collar is pulsing too, making me feel like my ass is behind smacked hard and fast.

“You were being so good, then you just had to be so bad, didn’t you,” he growls. “You’ve always got to test me, don’t you.”

A whimper escapes me as he breaches the tight ring of my ass, pushing an inch inside me. It feels like I’m being split open completely. I grip at the edge of the console and grit my teeth, hoping for mercy, but not expecting it. I do know better than to test Kahn, but I can never help myself.

I'm regretting it now, as I always do. He is pushing in, taking my ass inch by inexorable inch. There is some pleasure, but it is matched in equal measure by shame and pain.

"I should have taken your ass before," he grunts. "But maybe it was proper to wait until the ceremonies had been completed, the rituals that made every bit of you mine. This makes those words feel very real, doesn't it, pet? Having your ass fucked, being humbled before your master, this is precisely what you need."

Kahn's ability to narrate my sexual surrender has always heightened the sensations and experience. Now his words are setting me firmly on the path to another orgasm, one that will come from the thrashing sensation of his collar, and the slow but deliberate thrusts in my ass.

"Bad girl," he growls. "Naughty little brat pet getting her ass fucked because she wouldn't suck her master's cock like she was told."

Fucking hell.

I'm going to come. I'm going to lose control on his cock, my ass clenching tight as my toes curl and my hips rise between his massive alien hands. He's going to come in my ass. I'm going to come with him in my ass.

"FUCK!" I scream the curse as orgasm rips through me, Kahn's throbbing cock spilling his seed deep inside my ass.

Kahn's growl is louder than my curse as he grips me tight and fills me up, using the last hole of mine that could be classified in any way virginal. Together we grind through a filthy punishing climax, taking pleasure in all the twisted ways we fit together so perfectly.

He is my lover. My master. My husband.

And my happily ever after.

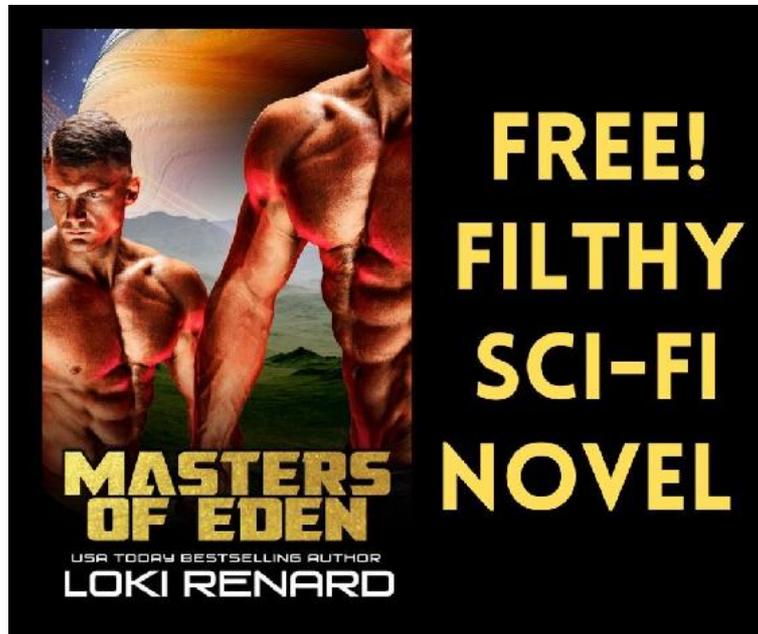
## **A note from Loki...**

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