



CAPTIVE
MATE

PIPER STONE

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Captive Mate

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This book is intended for *adults only*. Spanking and other sexual activities represented in this book are fantasies only, intended for adults.

CHAPTER 1



“Destiny is a predetermined future that cannot be altered by space, time, or living creatures. It is set in motion the day someone is born, challenged often by those who believe they can conquer the fates, altering them completely. But they will always fail.”

—Tanya Fields

Sunny

“Mine. You are coming with me.” The huge barbarian beast glared at me with hunger in his eyes. As he dragged his two-tiered tongue across his succulent lips, I swooned from his close proximity, the heat resonating from his massive body overheating every molecule. He was glorious, chiseled to utter perfection, his copper burnished skin accentuated by long, luxurious reddish copper hair that I wanted to tangle my fingers in.

However, I’d learned a long time ago aliens had hidden agendas.

“I don’t belong to you. I don’t belong to anyone.”

“That’s where you’re wrong, little human. I am now your master. You will obey my every command.”

“What if I don’t?” I swung the knife in the beast’s direction, daring him to

come any closer. He was enticingly gorgeous. My pussy was wet and had been since the moment he'd slithered into my dreams months before. Now, the once pleasurable moments of eroticism, allowing myself to enjoy the searing touch of a fantasy creature, had turned into a nightmare.

He planned on making me his.

That wasn't going to happen. I would kill him first.

Everything about him was overpowering, including his forwardness and his masculine scent. Although I was no expert, still a virgin in fact. And right now, I longed for the creature who'd appeared from the shadows to become my first.

Hold on. Whoa. What the hell was I thinking?

The dude standing in front of me was nothing more than a brutal savage, acting as if I should drop everything in my life and come with him.

Oh, the asshole had another trick coming.

"Then you will be punished."

I snorted and lunged forward, nicking his stomach with the sharp edge of my blade. Sadly, I was no killer, horrified at what I'd done. I couldn't believe I was concerned over the well-being of an alien predator who'd entered my room without being invited.

When he dared to bare his sharp canines, issuing an angry growl, I cocked my head. "Nice try, big boy. The tiny nick didn't hurt you one bit. Now, I suggest you get out of my dream and my room before I inflict more pain and suffering. Got it?" I kept the knife swishing back and forth, barely able to keep my eyes off the thick bulge between his legs. Oh, this dream was much more vivid than I'd had before. It was quite possible I didn't want to awaken from it either. That wasn't in my best interest.

There were companies who specialized in making dreams and fantasies realities. What if that was the case at this moment? What if the big, brawny creature standing in front of me could inflict serious harm? Then again, what if he could provide me with the ultimate in pleasure?

I shuddered from the thought. There had to be a reason almost every dream for the last six months had had this same alien in it. At first, he'd merely watched me in the shadows, never uttering a word and certainly never touching me. But things had escalated. Two nights before, I'd dreamt the beast had spread my legs, driving his long, sinfully amazing tongue deep inside my slickened folds, lapping up my juice for hours.

I'd awakened not only in a bath of perspiration but with my pussy muscles clenching and releasing, smack in the throes of a wild climax.

"Mine," he repeated, as if doing so would force me to obey him.

"Not on your life, buddy. Get the hell out of my dreams and my life." Even though I was bold in my statements, I was swimming in a sea of uncertainty. The huge creature could do anything he wanted to me, and I couldn't do a thing about it.

Monsters.

I'd never been afraid of them as a child. After all, I'd been raised to embrace the hundreds if not thousands of species that filled the universe, dozens of galaxies sporting every color of the rainbow on skin, scales, and every type of fur imaginable. I'd grown up learning about hundreds of species in classrooms and through the various social media sites. There were dating apps designed to bring humans together with the alien of their choice.

If only for a sensual night of rough, raucous sex.

I'd been interested, desire tearing through me like any other young woman, but I'd forbidden myself to partake in any aspect of intergalactic connections. I was beginning to wonder why. What I longed for was the perfect man or beast, one so dominating that he took my breath away.

Lust.

Punishment.

Unbridled and very dangerous passion.

The words were filled with every longing that had filtered through my system since I reached adulthood. I was no fool in that a solid majority of creatures

of the universe were all looking for two distinct and very similar things.

A good time and someone they could mate with. It would seem if there were gods, they'd grown tired of the battles and wars, lives lost, and property destroyed.

Offspring of every species had become rarer. There were rumors of course that the God of Creation himself was attempting to right the wrongs caused by greed and the lust for power. But I wasn't the kind of girl to believe or care. There was also a belief the bastard had all but destroyed Earth eons before, but there would always be ugly rumors. I should simply enjoy what was happening instead of worrying about the consequences.

Except that my dreams had manifested into something that felt more like a premonition, which was a gift I'd experienced as a child. I thought I'd grown out of it or had blocked the ability on purpose. Now I wasn't certain I wanted to fall prey to what could be the truth about my destiny.

Oh, God. I hated that word, a favorite of my mother's vocabulary.

The beast took a single stride closer, my entire body crackling from the electricity shooting between us.

"I said get out. I won't tell you again."

The humongous alien allowed his heated gaze to fall down the length of my body. Only then did I realize I was completely naked. What the fuck? I'd gone to bed with PJs on. I was certain of it. Was this dude magical too?

This is nothing but a dream. Remember?

Yep. I could believe my inner girl voice. Sure, I could. If that was the case, then I could do or be anyone I wanted to be. So I lunged toward him again. Before the blade had a chance to cut a tiny portion of his gorgeous skin, he snapped his long fingers around my wrist, jerking me around and wrapping his other arm around me. The force he used yanked the knife from my fingers. Now I watched in slow motion as it was tossed into the air, flipping several times.

The wild beast caught it with his bare hand. The blade must have sliced through his skin, but I saw no blood. Then as if the knife was a matchstick, he

snapped it into two pieces, tossing it aside. Oh, I had a very bad feeling about this. Very bad.

Then he pulled me so tightly against his body that I was instantly on fire, the hard throbbing of his cock pressing against me unlike anything even the inner bad girl had ever experienced.

“Bad little human.”

His voice was deep and husky, his words vibrating gently in my ear as he eased his large palm beseechingly slowly up my stomach, tickling my skin with the rough brush of his fingertips. Then he cupped and squeezed one breast, using enough pressure I couldn't keep a moan from escalating in my throat.

He nipped my earlobe before driving his tongue into the shell of my ear, his hot breath keeping me fully aroused. My nipples were rock hard, aching to the point I was ready to beg this beast to pluck and suck them. What was wrong with me?

There were always aliens hunting for humans. We were a tradable commodity. The sex trade was still a tremendous issue, our soft skin a draw, especially to creatures who looked like reptiles on steroids.

But this beast was perhaps the most handsome creature I'd ever laid my eyes on. Plus, he had a possessive quality that indicated a 'touch her and die' attitude. Meaning he had no intentions of letting me go.

“Just let me go,” I managed.

“That will not happen. You now belong to me. And you will be punished.”

Uh-huh. For all the fantasies of hearing a male of any species say those words to me, the reality was terrifying. Was this reality or a drift of my mind into insanity? I'd heard it ran in the family. I struggled in his arms but there was no way to get loose from him. None.

To add insult to injury, suddenly he tossed me stomach-down across my already ruffled pillows. Then without explanation or a moment of hesitation, he grabbed something from my dresser and brought it down against my bottom. Three times!

What. The. Fuck?

He was making good on his promise, spanking me like a bad little girl. I'd never been spanked like this in my life. Not once. Holy shit, it hurt. And holy hell, he was using my old wooden hairbrush on me. My possession! How dare he!

"What are you doing?" The pain was blinding. I was out of breath from the strikes, the thudding sound still echoing in my ears. Maybe in a dream the anguish was amplified. Whatever the case, I managed to scramble to my knees, crawling forward on my bed.

Only to be ripped back by the beast, his hand snagging my ankle. Then he started the spanking in earnest, keeping his huge hand pressed against the small of my back. I yanked at the bedding, kicking my legs in an effort to get him to stop. I even managed to drive my feet into parts of his hard body more than once, but there was no way of getting him to stop.

Finally, I was exhausted, panting as he continued to discipline me. The heat sizzling my skin was like an eruption of flames. But even worse, my pussy was throbbing from the building desire. I was so wet that the scent of my longing wafted between us.

When the bastard stopped what he was doing, rolling the edge of the brush down my spine, I tensed. Then he used one of his knees to push my legs further apart.

Oh, I had a very bad feeling about this. As soon as he slipped the brush between my legs, every muscle and synapse erupted in a wildfire, generating wave after wave of crackling electricity.

"Oh. Oh. This is..." No, I couldn't allow him to know how pleasurable I thought this was. Yet when he thrust several fingers deep inside my pussy, I was certain I would come on the spot. "Oh, whew. Oh..." I bucked up from the bed, this time the action involuntary, as if trying to encourage him to fuck me. The vivid dreams had obviously been too much for my psyche to handle.

He pumped his fingers several times. Then he dared to curl them, hitting my G-spot. Holy cow. This was... I couldn't finish the thought, the sensations far too intense. As another wave of heat swept over me, I was drawn into the

most pleasurable moment of my life.

Then he yanked the moment of ecstasy away, resuming the spanking, bringing the thick brush down from one side to the other. For a few seconds, I was still lost in the sweet relief of bliss. Then the agony slammed into my system again.

“Stop. Don’t!”

“Then you will obey. Yes?”

His voice was even gruffer than before. “Sure.”

“I require respect.”

Was this dream beast kidding me? Fine. I’d go along with it. “Yes, sir.”

He kept his hand on my bottom, tapping a single finger against my bruised and aching skin. Then he tossed the brush to the side but directly in my line of sight.

“If you disobey me again, your punishment will be much worse.”

Okie-dokie. Now I knew I was out of it. But fine. I’d enjoy the ride then find a way to drive the bastard out of my system. There had to be a way. “I won’t, sir. Never again.”

“Good girl.”

Praise coming from this mysterious beast? Groovy. I took a deep breath, holding it as I flopped against my soft bedding. Maybe my unwanted visitor was leaving. That would be good. I needed rest before my next exams. This wasn’t boding well for remembering everything I’d learned.

Not when I remained like a live wire or a drug addict needing a fix. I closed my eyes, willing him to leave, trying to find the sweet location of peace that I’d used in stressful times. Images of places I would never visit on a planet that barely existed any longer floated into the front of my mind.

Earth.

Beaches.

Oceans.

Hot cabana boys. Whatever they were. My mother seemed to think they were fabulous.

There. I felt more at ease, already drifting off to sleep once again. When I awoke, light would fill the Earth Station, life returning to normal. I smiled and nuzzled into the pillow, doing what I could to ignore the pain since it wasn't even real.

When I felt the weight of the bed shift, I lifted my head, twisting it to look the other way. "I thought you'd left," I giggled, obviously overcome with exhaustion from studying so hard. Vivid dreams weren't all they were cracked up to be. Or maybe I was having a hallucination.

"Not until I take all I want. I've waited far too long."

"Okay, I'll bite. What do you want?" That was the moment I realized the apparition was also completely naked. And oh, my stars, he was a thing of beauty to look at. Broad shoulders with an even broader chest, which was heaving from the heavy breathing he was doing. Then there was what humans called twelve-pack abs. I counted them. Was there such a thing even with aliens?

I allowed my gaze to fall to his groin and the fully extended cock. There was no way a creature of any kind could be that well-endowed. None. He was Adonis on steroids.

"Wait. What are you doing now?"

He lifted me off the bed with one hand, requiring me to straddle him. I shouldn't be shocked that the tip of his cock found its way to the opening of my pussy. This was magic after all. But the surprise came in full force when he yanked me down, filling me completely.

I threw my head back with a silent scream as my muscles struggled to accept his huge girth. He'd taken my virginity without foreplay or thought.

The craziest thing of all was I loved it. Every sensation. The wildly increasing heat. The need building to a frenzy. And I craved more.

“Oh, my God. That’s awesome.” I no longer recognized my voice as I clawed at his shoulders, gasping for air. Then the crazed beast didn’t need to command me to ride him like a wild stallion, whatever those were. I did so without hesitation, pumping up and down, my pussy aching. But it felt so good, as if his big, fat cock was meant to be driven inside of me.

“My bad little human,” he said with a deep growl that rumbled through my system.

I’d wanted to kill him. Now I craved fucking him. The irony wasn’t lost on me. However, this was what all good dreams were made of.

He continued fucking me, yanking me up and down like a ragdoll. I wasn’t certain the alien knew how to be gentle, but at this point I didn’t care. The hint of pain from the beast first entering me was gone, now replaced by what could only be described as pure, uncensored ecstasy. I could get hooked on this.

There was such a strange attraction to the being, as if our two chemistries were combined, the electricity soaring. My skin felt so alive, but on fire and there was a strange spark in his eyes. I was certain he was going to erupt in flames at any second. As he yanked me up and down, I lolled my head. This wasn’t about passion or any level of tenderness. This was about raw fucking, his taking of me.

And his ownership.

The thought popped into my mind, and I opened my eyes wide. What if a small part of this was real?

All rational thought stopped the moment the most powerful orgasm of my life swept through me like a tidal wave, beating the hell out of the vibrators I’d used. I was lost in a sea of dancing colors.

“Oh, I’m going to…” The bouncing was more ferocious, and I fisted my hand around his long strands of hair to keep myself tethered to him. As the climax reached its peak, my scream could likely be heard from space. “Keep fucking me. That’s it.”

Then I sensed his body tensing, his breathing as irregular as mine. There was something so intoxicating about his deep, rumbling growls, the savage sound

just like an animal would make moments before mating. I realized my eyes were closed, savoring the moment before finding myself in a deep REM sleep.

“Look at me, little human,” he commanded, and I sensed his stern order was not to be denied.

I opened my eyes slowly, blinking several times to try to focus. Then I felt his cock swelling deep inside of me, stretching me to my limits. The roar of passion between us was unbelievable, as if we were always meant to be together.

Destined.

“I will return for you when the time is right. But as of now, you belong to me.”

Then all seemed to fade to black.

“What the fuck?”

Startled, I heard the lilting voice of my dorm mate as she bounded into the room, flicking on the harsh overhead light. “What?” I jerked up, taking gasping breaths, blinking to try to remove the fog from my eyes.

“You were screaming. Well, not at first. You were telling someone to fuck you.” Tory’s eyes suddenly opened wide. Then she pressed her hand across her mouth.

That’s when I glanced down. Oh, fuck me. I was completely naked. What the hell had I done in my sleep?

“I will return for you when the time is right. But as of now, you belong to me.”

The alien’s words lingered in the back of my mind, and I licked my dry lips, yanking at the sheet. Then I stumbled off the bed, realizing the insides of my thighs were sticky.

“What happened?” she asked. “That dream again?”

“Uh-huh.”

“Whew. Girl. I need one of those. A fantasy of some kind.” Tory started jabbering on about something, but I was lost in concentration, unable to get the image of the creature’s face or his delicious body out of my mind.

Then I turned around and stared through the open blinds toward the sky. Even on this blasphemous Earth Station, there were twinkling stars, a reminder that humans weren’t the only creatures out there. And suddenly, I was petrified. When I slipped my hand between my legs, I took a deep breath. Then I pulled my fingers into the light.

The substance was... fluid mixed with blood. My blood.

As if I’d just lost my virginity.

Oh, my lord. What was happening?

CHAPTER 2



*E*arth Station Eighty-Eight
Educational facility

Year twenty-eight ninety

Sunny

This was a very bad idea. Terrible.

The dream had filtered into my mind all day, so much so I was thankful I'd managed to shove it out of my mind for almost nine months. I'd been busy with school and interning at a lovely veterinary hospital, so exhausted at night I almost never dreamed.

Why go now?

I was finally using Tory's birthday gift, which I'd ignored until now. Now I knew why. The horrific yet sensual dream that had haunted me for weeks afterwards. The fact my OB-GYN had confirmed I'd lost my virginity when that wasn't possible had kept me on edge. I had to have a screw loose to allow a dark fantasy of any kind to occur.

I leaned forward, making faces at the girl in the reflection surface, trying to talk myself out of it. A fantasy experience of a lifetime. Who did that? Someone who had a little bit of money and a desire to enter a realm in which

they'd never feel comfortable participating in real life.

If I had to admit it, I'd be forced to say I had an ego. I always had. I'd excelled in everything I did from sports to higher education. I came from amazing parents who adored each other. They were highly respected, and I'd grown up never wanting for anything.

That didn't mean I wasn't a nice girl. In fact, my mother had called me too nice. Accommodating. In other words, I was easy to walk all over and had been several times in my life. Maybe that's why I'd put all my time and effort into my beloved animals, changing majors, studying to become a veterinarian.

That was also likely the reason the couple of boyfriends I'd had in my life had been borderline abusive wanting only one thing. Sex. Sex. And more sex. I spent my days studying, my nights sleeping, not partying like a wild girl.

What I was about to do was without a doubt the wildest thing I'd ever done in my life. And I was merely a ripe old age of twenty-four. Fulfilling a fantasy. Taking a walk on the wild side, whatever that was. The expression was one I'd learned from my parents.

At least I could admit my faults. Dealing with people was one of them. The other? Embracing my kinkiness. Sure, I owned a vibrator or two, but had I ever done anything truly kinky? Nope. Not me. Not this girl. Even now, as I stood in front of a holograph imageboard, I was hesitant to give truthful answers.

That is except in my dreams. Laughter bubbled to the surface. This was just a natural step in entering the real world of kink. So my bestie had told me. Why had I listened to her?

Every desire fulfilled. Every fantasy allowed. Nothing to hold you back. We strive to ensure you'll experience pleasure beyond your wildest expectations, or the credits will be returned in full.

The corporation's moniker was right there on the wall, in the holograph image and nestled in every contract at least twice. My bestie had obviously used up months' worth of leisure credits to provide me with such a tremendous gift and I'd almost allowed them to expire.

Exhaling, I glanced at the questionnaire again, chewing on my inner cheek. Fantasies. I had them. Every woman did. I'd just never acted on them, other than the use of a few kinky little implements now and again. I was as vanilla in the bedroom as it got. But here, I could be as kinky and filthy as I wanted to be. Hmm...

Rough or passionate.

The letters were three dimensional on the air screen, each one color coded to represent the 'hotness factor' of every question. This one was bright orange. Spicy. How come there wasn't a selection for both? Okay, fine. Rough.

Adventurous or sensual?

Adventurous.

Acts of discipline?

Discipline. Hmm... That had to mean spanking. Right? It was a yes or no question without choices. Great. I hesitated, shifting from one foot to the other. Someone, I sensed the droid controlling my fantasy was becoming impatient. Fine. Yes. I dragged my finger across the image screen, forcing another one to appear.

Consensual or nonconsensual.

Now I had to take a pause. This was nothing but a fantasy derived from my deepest, darkest thoughts but the question was one I'd never asked myself before.

Liar. Liar. Pants on fire.

I rolled my eyes and allowed my finger to hover from one answer to the other. "Hmmm... So, droid? Can you find me the biggest, baddest alpha male in the universe?" I issued the question out loud, although I wasn't entirely certain the android controlling my little fantasy was either listening or programmed to give a shit.

"What would you prefer?" The voice was a shock, something so unexpected I felt more naked than I would have if I'd selected some form-fitting attire or if I was standing entirely nude.

“Um... A real bad boy? You know, a ruthless man who refuses to take no for an answer?”

I laughed because I was framing a hero from romance books of the past as well. That wasn't in fashion any longer. There were no men in leather jackets taking a hot woman. I had to admit, hearing about the old days of how men were from my mother, who still read dirty novels, was enticing.

She'd even loaned me some of her prized possessions, books so erotic that I'd blushed more than once.

“I can program that in for you.”

I rolled my eyes. I could only imagine what the droid would come up with. Now I just needed to answer the questions without lying about them. At least my description was as far removed from my sinful dream as possible.

After groaning, I was truthful. Nonconsensual. There. Now all my dirty inner secrets were exposed. No one had to know. Right? Except the droids in charge of the expensive leisure time experience. But they weren't human. They weren't allowed to divulge a single answer for fear of being shut down.

It was funny how my bestie had known exactly what I'd needed for my birthday. Little brat. I read over the normal legalese, muttering as I read. “You will not hold anything that happens against the provider, or the persons, aliens, or robots portrayed in the fantasy.”

Well, duh. They weren't real people or creatures. And who would want to have a sexual fantasy fulfilled with a freaking robot? Yucky.

“Same species or different?” I thought about the question for longer than I should. If I was going all out on a limb, then why not mix it up? I'd never been with an alien, although I'd had a few offers. Hmm...

Alien. “Big, bad alien. By the way, droid. I want the god of all beasts.” I snickered at the thought. There was no such thing but why not test artificial intelligence out fully?

Why not enter into lala-land. Again?

Shut up, little voice.

I shifted to another page on the screen, the questions a little more benign.

Appropriate clothing? Yep. I'd selected comfortable and what my mother called slouchy. Since I wanted an adventure, arriving in a clingy dress and heels wouldn't have worked. Pretend or not, I didn't want to fall on my butt during the middle of it.

A dream or a possible taste of the future?

"Press select," I said out loud although to myself. I had to make a choice. I wasn't certain how a complex series of machines could possibly have a peek into the future but what the heck? I was a risk taker. Right?

The future was mine for the making, mine for the taking. That's what my mother had taught me. Why not find out what the gods had in store for me?

Giggling, I pressed the appropriate button then stepped inside the capsule, placing the gaming command goggles across my eyes before lying down on the cushioned bench.

"Are you ready for the experience of your lifetime?" the droid voice asked in a far too sensual tone. Did it think changing the pitch would put me in the mood?

"Sure thing. Just one question. The possible future is really just a guestimate based on my answers. Right?"

"Karma is fickle and has already preselected your life."

That was an answer.

"Okie-dokie." I tried to relax, but I had a strange feeling pooling in the pit of my stomach. What if my future was provided letter for letter and I hated it? What then?

Stop. Just enjoy.

I remained fully clothed, as per my request given the choice of fantasies I'd selected. I certainly didn't want to be caught dead completely naked in some strange setting when I'd requested rough and tumble style. Almost as soon as I closed my eyes, I gathered a sense of being pulled into a vacuum. I still couldn't believe I'd shoved the coupon into the back of my drawer, only

finding it when I was rummaging for my second vibrator.

I'd decided to treat myself after a particularly grueling week, longing to get away from the stress of everyday life. And live a little. What girl didn't want her ultimate fantasy fulfilled? After answering the volume of questions, what karma had mind for me would start in mere seconds.

And I couldn't be more excited, every inch of skin tingling.

And terrified.

The android whispered softly in the timbre of voice I'd chosen.

"Breathe deeply, Sunny. Allow yourself to feel the freedom of floating. Enjoy the ride."

"Thank you," I said automatically and shifted on the table, making myself more comfortable. Then I took several deep breaths as lights flashed in my periphery of vision, shapes beginning to form. And I'd never felt so free in my life.

Roar!

The horrible sound threw me. I jerked up, scanning the room. Wait. I was no longer in the laboratory setting. Now I was in a dark place, the only lighting torches of some kind lining the walls. Only they weren't walls. They reminded me of being inside a damp cavern. The kind I'd never seen before. The surface appeared craggy.

And dear God, it was hot as Hades. I eased off the platform I was on, glancing down at my attire. I was dressed in what I'd arrived in, my veterinary scrubs and my favorite pair of Converse sneakers. Okay, they were my only pair, a relic from a way distant past, a gift from my mother. At least they were in my favorite color of shocking red.

I'd been lulled into an almost slumber, waking up to this. I wanted a dark fantasy, an adventure but where in God's name was I? I shifted forward, trying to figure a way out. Then I noticed what appeared to be a tunnel leading into the darkest shadows I'd ever seen. I glanced around me, uncertain where I'd heard the horrific bellow.

There was nothing I could do but move forward and hope I'd run into the person who was supposed to seduce me. I took several steps, trying to figure out why my mind would select such a bleak setting.

I mean I hadn't wanted a dance club or a fake ocean/beach scenario, but a dark, damp cave? This was the droid's idea of a thrilling situation? I could see the robot had a sense of humor. Sadly, the droid had to grab the fantasy from my mind. Had I really been thinking this way? I guess it was possible. At this point, anything was. Maybe it was because I'd been working so many long hours. I continued forward, determined to make the best of this.

When I heard another growl, a very savage growl, I stopped in my tracks. Then something dawned on me. I'd assumed I'd be partnered with a human. What if the droids predicted my future with some kind of... alien being? Oh, God. I'd checked noncommittal on that question. The growl couldn't have come from a typical human male. None of them were that rugged, especially in the passion department.

Okay, so maybe he had a pet. That would make sense. I did love animals, all kinds. Additional confidence settled in, and I shifted into the right mind set, allowing myself to enjoy the moment. It wasn't every day a girl could live out her fantasy without fear of persecution.

I moved through the cavern, cognizant of additional sounds and vibrations coming from beneath my feet. And I could swear it was getting hotter, so much so beads of perspiration were trickling down both sides of my face.

With every step I took, I glanced over my shoulder. I had the feeling I was being watched, studied by a predator of some kind. I didn't need to be afraid given this wasn't real. Or was it? I shifted against the wall, a single yelp slipping past my lips from the touch. The surface was explosively hot. Fiery.

I heard a series of noises, hissing and spewing sounds coming from an unknown location. My skin began to crawl, hairs standing up on the back of my neck. Was something there? Had I also heard footsteps?

"Hello?" Dear God, my voice echoed. I leaned my head, taking a deep breath, my top already sticking to my skin. How could I get out of this? It was obvious something was fried within the fantasy system. I'd been sent to hell instead of a fantasy.

My voice echoed for several seconds.

Then I heard a dark, demonic laugh drifting from the direction where I'd come from.

I took off running, sprinting through one tunnel after another, praying to God there'd be something other than orange light. I was certain I could see something up ahead, a brighter light; even if it had a tangerine glow, it was better than being locked in a cave with a...

"Sunny. Come to your master. You now belong to me."

The stark words caught me by surprise, the deep baritone igniting a fire deep within. Or had they shocked me? I had asked for a creature who refused to take no for an answer. I took a deep breath, holding it as I stopped moving altogether. The tone was sultry, dark, and soothing, like a warm blanket being slid over my naked body. There was a low rumble, the slight vibrations coursing through me electrifying.

Suddenly, I was hot and wet all over, but it had nothing to do with the temperature of the air.

"Who are you?" I asked. Where his voice was strong and powerful, mine was shaking and barely audible. That wasn't like me.

"The being who will fulfill your darkest desires. That's what you want. Isn't it?"

Why did the voice have to sound so familiar? Had I manifested the dream from months before into this moment? I had a feeling I had.

I was certain the wild beast was moving closer, but I couldn't tell exactly from which direction. After taking a deep breath, I slowly turned toward the melodic sound of his voice. In the shadows he stood, a formidable form that had to be at least seven feet tall. I'd been asked about likes and dislikes, but not about the person or creature I preferred. Maybe because I'd wanted a peek into my possible future, trying to still my fears that had started months before. I'd worked so hard to drive what could have been a premonition back into its former prison that I wasn't certain what I wanted any longer.

My skin continued to tingle. I was certain he'd taken a long stride closer,

could swear I was able to feel his hot breath cascading across the back of my neck. To make matters worse, I was completely and utterly aroused, my nipples aching from how full my breasts had gotten, how taut my hardened buds had become.

“I don’t know.”

“I think you do.” He issued another throaty growl, the sound tickling every one of my senses.

I was suddenly wild with desire, my mind fuzzy from the dark and filthy images rolling through it. Whew. Okay, so maybe my hatred of the drone was wrong. Yet I had a sense of fight or flight. I had no idea what kind of creatures I was dealing with. Some fucked their mates then ate them. Since I didn’t specify which type of alien, I wasn’t entirely certain reality couldn’t step in, fucking with the fantasy. Whoa. Hold on. I’d never heard of anyone being killed in the middle of the game.

But was this a game when the company had promised I’d selected a scenario from my future? My mouth was suddenly dry yet the throbbing between my legs increased. “What do you want?”

“As I said. Come to me. Come now. You belong to me.”

Oh, this was getting out of hand. The last four words I remembered distinctly. There was no chance this was happening. “I’m sorry. I’m shutting this fantasy down. Thank you for your appearance. Now, go away.”

“That will not happen, little human.”

There was that voice again. His voice. A deep baritone that swept over me like smooth, soft velvet. I shivered from the rich tone.

As it had made me do before. In my dream.

“I don’t think I can do that. In fact, I think there’s been some kind of mistake.” Why had I raised my voice? As if the gatekeeper droids couldn’t hear exactly what I was saying? Whoa. They knew what I was thinking, the connections able to reach into my mind, yanking out my deepest, darkest needs. Then I’d added the bit about an alpha male. What did this say about me as a woman? As a person? As a human being?

“Come or face my wrath.”

Deep vibrations from his voice penetrated my very soul. I was awash with fire and heat, need and desire so intense I couldn't focus. Couldn't think straight. This was maddening. This was...

Not freaking possible.

He took another booming step closer, and I was instantly mesmerized by his insanely good looks. In my dream, the fantasy man had only been highlighted by the bright stars and occasional orb floating high in the Earth Station's sky. However, there was no doubt I'd envisioned the same creature. With burnished red skin and hair that glowed even in the ugly orange light, he was absolutely magnificent. Even his eyes twinkled with an iridescent glow so intense that I was pulled into his aura, my nipples aching to the point of pain, my pussy clenching and releasing.

The beast wore nothing more than a loincloth, which highlighted his incredible physique.

And the outline of one big, fat, delicious cock standing at full attention. For a few seconds, all I could think about was whether even the tip alone would fit inside my mouth. Suddenly, my jaw ached and I pressed my fingers across my lips. Had I just issued a strangled moan of appreciation? Holy cow. His arms were huge, bigger than my thighs. What he could do to me was unimaginable.

But I wanted nothing more than to be writhing underneath him. Oh, hell, no. This was insane. He would tear me apart. He would... I couldn't even finish the sentence in my mind.

What did I do instead of facing my greatest fantasy, allowing my mind to feel free and uninhibited?

I turned tail and ran for my life.

CHAPTER 3



*S*unny

Sexy.

Brutal.

Fuckable.

Dangerous.

My mind was all over the place as I continued racing through another series of caverns. I could tell the alien was close on my heels, yet he was taking his sweet time, cornering his prey.

This was what the company supplying fantasies to every single Earth Station thought was acceptable? I was being chased by a beast who reminded me of one Protogenoi of ancient Greek mythology.

Gods of Earth, Sea and Air, the Underworld, Darkness, and other primal components. While I adored the study, had enjoyed reading about them, I wasn't entirely certain I wanted to be ravaged by one.

Even if I continued to tingle all over.

Panting, the heat became sweltering, fog developing in front of my eyes.

“My sweet human. There is nowhere you can run where I won’t find you.” Even the beast’s laugh was sensual, driving me to the darkest places of my mind. There had to be an off switch on this fantasy. Right?

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Stopping short, I took a quick glance behind me. He was right there, barely a few feet away, slamming his massive fist against the cavern wall. The creature could easily reach out and grab me. So why wasn’t he doing that? Oh, shit. I knew exactly what he was doing. He was luring me into his lair, allowing me to feel as if I was getting away then preparing to corner me.

Asshole.

He had another trick coming. If this was nothing more than a fantasy, then I could be anyone I wanted to be. Brave. Confident. Bitchy.

“Hey, beast of the universe. Catch me if you can.” I took off running, sprinting over rocks and strange-looking debris, sweating like a little pig in the process. There was another burst of light just ahead and I lunged toward it. Maybe if I found a weapon of some kind. Grinning, I continued forward, breaking free of the ugly shadows straight into a...

“Holy shit!”

It was as if I was standing on a cliff looking down at a sea of molten lava. Flames licked at the sides of the sharp precipice, embers popping close enough I skittered backwards, terrified of falling in. Oh, crap. What the hell was I supposed to do now? I turned in a full circle, groaning loudly.

That was just it. There was nowhere to go. It was either head back to the cavern to him or it as the case may be, or jump. Now I certainly was no expert when it came to fantasy companies, but from what I’d heard, it was entirely possible to be scared to death in those geared toward fright. Why couldn’t that happen in the ones geared toward passion?

I wasn’t going to give it a try.

When Mr. Beast tumbled into the opening, I turned and faced him, planting my hands on my hips. “I think we need to talk.”

When he tilted his head, gazing all the way to my prized vintage sneakers, I shivered to my very core, heating to the point I was certain I'd combust. One thing I knew for certain. The gorgeous hunk of meat standing in front of me couldn't be real, no matter what the droid had suggested.

Then he smiled and I could swear I was frozen to the spot, the heat between my legs like firecrackers going off. I was paralyzed as he took three long strides toward me, now standing only a couple of inches away, close enough I could feel the extreme heat resonating off his muscular body.

He took a deep whiff and I was thrown by the way his eyes rolled into the back of his head, his nostrils flaring as if my scent was the best fragrance in existence. Heck. I wasn't certain if I'd dabbed on perfume this morning or not. When he opened his eyes again, I was shocked at his long eyelashes and the change in his irises. It was impossible to put into a neat sentence. They were simply incredible, keeping me mesmerized by their beauty.

"You are a gorgeous human, perhaps the most beautiful human I've ever encountered."

His voice was gravelly, sending another series of sensations dancing down my spine. "Thank you. That was very nice of you. However, that doesn't mean I want to partake in this fantasy. Hear that, droid?"

He reached out and it was as if his fingertips radiated white-hot heat. They did. As soon as he brushed the tips down my cheek, I was thrown into an indescribable moment. As if by a single touch, I suddenly belonged to him. Whoa. Whoa. This was just a fantasy. My fantasy.

I needed to figure out how to escape. There had to be a zone in this very realistic space where I could get to a holograph or something.

The expression on the beast's face suddenly changed. I could swear he'd easily read my mind and the nefarious plans I had.

"I can tell all humans need discipline, including ones as breathtaking as you." With his words stated with absolute authority, he tossed me over his shoulder as if I weighed nothing. Then he proceeded to walk toward the edge of the cliff.

"What are you doing? You can't do this!" I pummeled his back, marveling at

his muscular structure. He was strong as an ox, his shoulders so broad it seemed as if he could place a car on them. I lifted my head, gasping from utter terror as the heat continued to build from deep within me.

“I own this planet. I can do anything I want.” The sound of the embers popping was louder than before, assaulting my eardrums.

“But... But... We’ll die. That’s a fire. Lava.” I had to yell, trying desperately to get out of his hold.

“And I’m a god, little human. Soon you will learn how powerful I am.”

“For this fantasy? This is insane! This isn’t what I ordered at all.”

When the beast cracked me on the bottom with his hand, I was thrown into another wave of shock. “No, little human. Soon, you will become my mate.”

Mate?

Was this creature thing out of his blessed mind? I was no one’s mate. *Remember what he promised in the dream.* Oh, lordy. Before I could react, I felt another explosive wave of heat.

That’s because he’d stepped off the cliff and as soon as he did, I let out a high-pitched scream.

But for a massive man, he landed softly, not jarring me in the least. And a benefit: we weren’t burned to a crisp. That didn’t mean he let me go. Nope. His hold was firm as he took long strides. While the area was similar to where we’d come from, there were plants and strange-looking trees, alongside buildings whose architect and builders should have been fired.

I was thinking crazy thoughts, which was what I’d always done, even allowing them to pop from my mouth from time to time. I thought it was endearing. My mother has said it would be annoying to boys. Maybe she was right and that’s why I’d had so much trouble with them.

Suddenly, there were others just like him. How could I not have noticed we’d entered a building of some kind? There were strange lights everywhere preventing me from gathering a focused look at the creatures’ faces, but I did notice they bowed to him as we passed. Maybe he really was a god of some

kind.

When one of them spoke to him in a language I couldn't understand, I was shocked. Had my mind entered into a world-building event including inventing a different language? Holy crap. I was good at this fantasy thing.

The godlike beast answered the man before shifting inside another location, one that was much quieter than where we'd come from. I was hopeful he'd set me down. As soon as he did, I had plans on racing away from him.

But as I lifted my head again, I knew I was in way over my head. I couldn't see a way out. I'd suddenly become his prisoner. He placed me on my feet, facing me almost immediately. Then he gave me another look, this time one that I sensed scrutinizing. After furrowing his brow, he wrapped his fingers around my top.

And ripped it down the front, yanking the unwanted material off completely. I yelped, immediately trying to cover my naked breasts. "What in God's name do you think you're doing?"

"Punishing you."

I should have paid more attention to covering other parts of me. Before I knew what he was doing, he'd ripped off my pants, lifting me in his arms and tugging off my tennis shoes.

"Hey. Don't you dare tear those apart! They're special. And this wasn't part of my fantasy. I'm not into punishment."

Shit. Shit. Shit. I'd agreed. Oh, this was getting so out of hand and far too realistic. I knew exactly what my bestie Tory would say. "What do you have to lose in going with the flow?" She'd been pushing me to drift out of my comfort zone for as long as I could remember. Live a little. Yeah, walk on that wild side. Only the side I'd landed on appeared to be one full of danger.

Maybe that's what I wanted, a big, muscular alpha male to take what he wanted, ravishing me over and over again. I was suddenly breathless, the anticipation of what he was going to do pushing to the forefront of my mind.

Heat flooded me from extreme embarrassment and even though I tried to keep my nakedness covered, my arms suddenly fell to my sides. I could

swear there was an entire electric field surrounding the beast, sparks flying off his skin as he studied me. The low, rumbling growl became more carnal as he took a step back, walking around me in a full circle to feast on his prize. I should feel like nothing more than a piece of meat, but it was exactly the opposite.

I'd never felt so appreciated in my entire life. I was burning up inside, as electrified as the creature, my heart thudding in my chest.

When he faced me once again, he wrapped his hand around my throat, lifting my head with a single finger. When he squeezed, I knew for certain he could snap my neck if he wanted.

“Hey, Mr. Beast? I'm just a fragile human. That's something for you to keep in mind.” Ha! As if he would.

His chest rose and fell as he rubbed his thumb back and forth across my lips, his hunger evident in his dazzling eyes. I couldn't shift my gaze, the intense moment unlike anything I'd ever felt. While somewhere in the back of my mind I knew this was just a fantasy, I couldn't breathe and in truth, couldn't care less. This was... Amazing. I noticed a set of scales on his shoulders, but they were beautiful, almost delicate enough to be feathers.

When he lowered his head, I was certain he was going to kiss me. Then he inhaled as he'd done before, holding his breath.

“I never wanted this.”

“I can read your mind, little human. Don't lie to yourself. This is exactly what you want. This is what you called to me for. And I'm here to give it to you.”

He hovered over me, his heated breath tickling every one of my senses. Then his mouth claimed mine, his tongue immediately pushing inside. He tasted all of me, exploring the darkest recesses while filling me with dozens of sordid images, some so filthy and sadistic that the simple act of breathing was a feat. He fisted my hair, his fingers digging into my scalp, and in those seconds of tasting him, wanting him, it was as if we'd been forced into one.

One being.

One need.

One explosive desire that would eventually lead to our destruction.

After breaking the heated exchange, he said nothing. Then he pushed me backward, exploring my nakedness with his eyes. I hadn't thought it possible his cock could become any more aroused, but I'd been wrong.

So very wrong.

I wanted so badly to peek behind the loincloth, ripping it aside and allowing myself full gazing pleasure. Then what? I'd drop to my knees? A strange chuckle erupted in my throat.

As he continued studying me, there was no doubt he'd done something to keep me from being able to try to escape. I couldn't move a muscle. Not one. It was strange that where I'd felt fear before, I felt warmth in its place, a serene feeling that squashed everything else. As he explored me using just a single finger, I was shocked how many different sensations coursed through me from warmth to a heightened level of excitement, and my desire that was off the charts.

"You were in my dream," I said absently, not expecting an answer.

And he didn't give me one. Of course not.

His touch was gentle, barely a whisper, but I felt it deeply as if he was caressing my bones. His intense eyes trailed his long digit, a series of growls coming from deep within his system. As the extended exploration continued, I was torn with how sensuous the feelings had become with the need that furrowed deep inside, building to a crazy crescendo.

When he rolled his finger around my nipple, I couldn't stop from moaning. "Oh, my."

He lifted his gaze briefly then rolled his finger under my breast to my other nipple. This time, he pinched the tender tissue between his thumb and forefinger, the corners of his lush mouth turning up. Given I was unable to take my eyes off him, I was allowed to partake in his extreme good looks. I still couldn't find the right words to describe his features. They were godlike, as if the man had been chiseled from stone or lava rock. Yes, that was it. As

if he was the God of Fire himself.

I almost laughed, my love of mythology obviously the reason behind the extraordinary fantasy. But this wasn't something that could become a reality. Obviously, the game console had some screwy gears. I didn't care. This was turning out to be... magical.

The moment he trailed his finger down my stomach, I sensed what he was going to do and whimpered softly, my throat starting to close. He issued a series of animalistic sounds then dipped his finger between my legs, finding my clit with ease. For all the vibrators I'd used, creating fake sensation of my own, nothing had prepared me for the electric vibrations skittering through every cell and muscle the moment he flicked his nail back and forth across my clit.

I could swear his fingernails were sharper, almost as if he'd grown claws. That wasn't possible. Wait. Hold on. In this fantasy, anything was possible. I could imagine him drinking blood, creating an entirely different level of orgasm if I wanted to. Oh, why not?

A not-so-subtle laugh pushed past my lips as I imagined myself with my legs spread wide open, the beast's heat between them, his sharp canines driven into the tender flesh of my thigh as he drank his fill of my blood. Holy cow, I'd been reading too many books from generations ago.

I was certain I wouldn't be able to stand, finally able to move my arms. When I placed my palm against his chest, I yelped. The heat was entirely different than before.

“Be careful, little human. I could consume you with fire.”

His words were said with such sensuality that I wasn't certain I would mind. I jutted my hips forward as soon as he slipped his finger into my pussy.

“Oh, my goodness. You're so... brutal.”

While he didn't respond, I sensed the tension growing between us. He pumped his finger several times and I realized almost instantly I was riding his hand, trying to get off on the slight touch.

What sounded like a dark chuckle rose from his throat and he treated me to

rolling his thumb around my clit at the same time. The moment I started to buck wildly, fighting to achieve a mind-blowing orgasm, he pulled his hand away entirely.

My eyes were hazy, but I noticed he shoved his finger into his mouth, sucking on his slickened finger. I dragged my tongue across my lips, hungrier than I'd been before.

Another fiery look crossing his face, his eyes glowing, he shook his head. And when he spoke, his voice boomed as if he was shouting to the universe. "No more yet, little human. Discipline first."

CHAPTER 4



*S*unny

As with everything else that had occurred with this bizarre fantasy, I was suddenly positioned on all fours on a platform of some kind. I couldn't see a single shackle holding me down. No chains. No rope. Nothing. But here I was completely naked and positioned like a dog, unable to move.

And what was worse? Given the multiple sounds, there were no doubt other creatures in the room. Whoa. I definitely know I didn't check any boxes for approving acts of humiliation. There would be no way I'd do something like that.

Would I?

I cringed from the thought because at this point, I wasn't entirely certain of anything. For all I knew, this could be very real. Was that possible? Given the day and age, anything was possible. Breathe and think. While I did, that didn't mean I could move.

"Hey. Mr. Beast. Where are you?"

The only answer seemed to be gasps from the audience. Maybe I wasn't supposed to talk. I jerked my arms, fighting the fear starting to crawl through my system all over again. This was absolutely insane. There seemed to be a haze surrounding the platform preventing me from seeing more than a few

feet in front of me, but I sensed there had to be a dozen people surrounding me. Why? Why was the beast doing this to me?

Because I was a lowly human and he was a god? That didn't make any sense. I would never fantasize about something like this. Never.

As the seconds turned into minutes, I was starting to become lightheaded. Then I heard another sound and sucked in my breath. Suddenly, the fog just disappeared. Blinking furiously, it still took me a few seconds to be able to focus on my surroundings. This time, the area was a bit lush with what appeared to be foliage attached to the previously dead-looking trees. Leaves in various gorgeous hues of crimson and tangerine whipped in a light breeze, but it was explosively warm, so much so I continued to perspire.

At least I was still able to move my head. That allowed me to see that I was in the middle of a huge auditorium of some kind. And there weren't just a dozen or so people here. There were hundreds, maybe thousands. From what I could tell, my discipline was the only thing they'd arrived to see.

Holy shit.

"Mr. Beast. Where are you?" Heat flashes rushed over the length of my body. Then he suddenly appeared from the shadows.

With a thick leather strap of some kind in his hand.

"Oh, no. You are not going to spank me with that thing. I forbid it."

He smiled and while it wasn't the first time, at this moment it sent the fear of God into me.

"Humans are all alike. You do not rule, my pet. I do. You will take your punishment like a good little girl."

Who was he calling a good little girl?

He walked around me, taking his sweet time. Now the crowd was cheering him on with strange grunts and growls. They were nothing but wild animals. And here I was, nothing but prey. My imagination was way too overactive.

The moment he touched the small of my back, I felt a sense of peace I hadn't before, calmness. It was strange but welcoming and lasted right up until he

cracked the strap across my bottom.

I heard my scream, but the sound and the act seemed surreal, as if I was floating above myself peering down, unable to feel anything. Then he repeated the savage action, and I was one hundred percent aware I could feel everything. The rush of adrenaline. The rapid beating of my heart. The increase in my pulse. And the pain that quickly skyrocketed into utter anguish. Oh, holy hell, the agony was searing.

This kind of thing had never occurred before. I knew what spankings were but from history books, corporal punishment in households outlawed, only allowed in kink clubs. And I'd certainly never been to one of those. It was crazy to even think about it. I was a good girl in all things.

Then why did this feel so good?

My captor snapped his wrist again with enough force, I was certain he'd broken his bones. Then he issued a sharp volley of lashes, one coming right after the other. As I fell into a lull, I wasn't certain if it was from the pain suddenly morphing into explosive need, or the savage growls he was emitting. Either way, the moment was intoxicating. Then there were the howls and catcalls from the audience, the crowd in full approval of the horrible deed being done to me.

Strangely enough, a laugh bubbled to the surface as the round of discipline continued. I was somehow enjoying every stroke of the strap, the buildup of heat delicious in every way. When he cracked at least four across the tops of my thighs, I threw my head back with an animalistic growl, comparable to a lioness in the wild.

And I was proud of myself for doing so.

He stopped long enough to caress me, rolling the rough pads of his fingers across my skin, which created another wave of dancing sensations. By now, my skin was filled with them, my toes curled from the blissful moment of ecstasy.

Was the audience chanting? I might not know their language, but it was obvious to me they were hoping for more.

The god beast succumbed to their desires, delivering four more.

Then I felt another sensation of a vacuum and the moment I blinked the crowd had disappeared. Now I was on my back, spread-eagled, my arms shackled over my head. My God. What was happening here? He could make a thousand people disappear with a flick of his finger? Okay, if he was a god, then he could do anything. Right? My nerves were so shot I wanted to laugh.

I licked my lips, which were now completely parched, and peered down. At least I could move my legs. Uh-oh. Not for long. The beast creature stepped onto the platform. Now he appeared to be ten feet tall, although I knew better. He peered down at me with lust in his eyes. Then he wrapped his fingers around his loincloth, yanking it away.

The moment I was allowed to see the beauty of his... Oh, my God. His cock was a creation from some god. It had to be. There were nubs all over the shaft, which was so long and thick that I was in some crazy kind of shock and awe. It was throbbing and I wasn't exactly sure there was a color on the spectrum chart to describe the hue. But my mouth watered as it hadn't done before, even though there was no possible chance I'd be able to place my lips around something so huge.

But I could look and hunger and thirst to taste him.

He cocked his head, still studying me as he rubbed the base of his shaft. I struggled with my bindings, longing to be able to touch him. When he knelt, I was instantly intoxicated with his scent. It was muskier than before, full of testosterone and crazy exotic spices that infused my senses, leaving me tingling, my core shooting fireworks.

"What are you doing?" As if I didn't know.

"Fucking you." There was no pretend to his words, no sense of romance or foreplay. Just hardcore fucking. Which was fine, better than fine actually.

He used his knee to push my legs apart. Then he slipped his arms under my thighs, bending my knees. To think to this day I'd been licked by a man twice in my life. Twice. And I couldn't say it was anything to write home to Mother about.

In fact, I'd told myself more than once I preferred a vibrator to a man's tongue. But when he dragged his tongue down the entire length of my pussy,

I jerked my head up. That's the moment I noticed his tongue wasn't normal. Oh, hell, no. He had two tongues. Two. It was another moment where complete shock kept my mouth open, unable to blink as he lifted my pelvis off the platform, repeating the same action.

I wasn't the kind of girl to go without words. I retorted. I was smart-alecky after all. But this... this was such an incredible moment there were no words rolling around in my mind, just sheer pleasure. As he continued licking and sucking my clit, I was thrown into bliss. It was breathtaking, stealing more than just my mind.

I eased my head back to the platform as he feasted, cognizant I was making little moaning sounds. My mind was spinning nearly out of control, but this was pure sin, and I loved every second of it. My imagination was incredible. Maybe I should consider writing books in my off time. Whenever that might be.

After a few seconds, he thrust his two tongues inside and I jerked my legs open even wider in a crazy and very blatant offering to this absolute god of a man. He was so damn good at what he did I was in crazed awe of him. As soon as he plunged several fingers inside along with his tongues, I couldn't take the pleasure any longer, it was so insanely good.

"Oh, yes. Yes. Yes!" I screamed as loud as I could, not caring if I was doing so in real life. In this world, it didn't matter who heard my howls of pleasure. Why should I care about the real life I had? It was time to break free from my armor, becoming the wild child. I grinned and dragged my tongue across my lower lip, savoring every growl.

When he flexed his fingers open, I knew that within seconds, I was going to lose the battle of control, exploding in his mouth. That was just fine with me. I tossed my head back and forth, still making the moaning sounds. When he dared to drive his thumb into my asshole, I could take no more, trying and failing to jerk up from the tight confines, my scream now silent. The orgasm was like a slow building tidal wave that erupted over me, electric sensations coursing through every vein throughout my body.

I was nothing but a live wire, a crazed woman. It was insane but I could see doing this for eons to come. Years and years and... It wasn't real. Shit. This

wasn't real. As that single climax turned into a second, I lolled my head to the side. Then I felt a sharp pain tearing through my lower extremities. When I managed to lift my head, I stared down at him, my vision obviously hazy.

Oh, my God. I'd been right. He'd sunk sharp canines into the area of my thigh so close to my swollen folds that my pussy refused to stop clenching and releasing. I couldn't blink or move, the pain quickly shifting away, the blast of ecstasy even more intense than when the climax had spun my body into a frenzy.

He was growling. He was feasting. He was sucking my blood. At least that's what it seemed like. I might be wrong.

A warmth spread over me like a soft blanket and I was pushed into a dreamlike state, my head lolled to the side. All I could concentrate on was the sucking sounds his mouth made as well as the slight echo of my heart beating rapidly. This was pure pleasure as its most basic, primal state. And I loved everything about it.

I closed my eyes, remaining in a beautiful bliss until I realized that he'd moved. Gasping for air, I twisted my head, struggling to see where he'd gone. I was now ready to beg him to fuck me. Was I mad?

Fortunately, I didn't need to. I felt the weight of his body pressed against mine seconds later. Then he yanked one leg over his shoulder, driving the entire length of his cock inside. No pretense. No warning. No foreplay.

Just like I'd requested.

Rough and tumble style.

The air was sucked out of my lungs as my muscles stretched beyond imagination to accommodate his huge girth. It was crazy that he was able to fit inside of me, especially since I hadn't experienced sex in almost two years. I was doing it again, replacing fantasy with the possibility of reality.

Not a chance.

But a girl could dream.

I tugged at the invisible bindings as he pulled almost all the way out, driving

into me again. And again. Screams erupted from my throat as he fucked me, but they were ones of utter pleasure, the kind that would leave my throat scratchy and my mouth dry.

There was a ferocity to his fucking, a need so intense that it left me in the very fog he'd created. Being lightheaded was only part of the feelings and sensations. It was crazy and wonderful.

And I never wanted it to stop.

He fucked me long and hard, every sound he made savage in nature, every hard thrust pushing me further into his darkness. He refused to take his eyes off me, his so piercing I knew I was seeing straight into his soul. And in those few minutes of our coupling, I sensed that he had made me his mate.

I couldn't wait to tell Tory that the credits she'd used had been well worth the money.

Seconds later, I sensed he was close to coming. When he threw his head back, his entire body shaking, his cock expanded even more, swelling to the point I was certain pain would erupt.

But there was nothing but sheer pleasure, another round of pure ecstasy.

When he erupted deep inside, we both issued a powerful roar.

Then he spoke words that I knew would haunt me long after the fantasy had concluded.

"You are mine now, little human. I will come for you when the time is right."

"Fuck." I jerked up from the platform, taking gasping breaths. What the hell was on my face? It felt like it weighed a ton. I ripped it off, realizing it was the goggles I'd been provided for the fantasy.

I will come for you when the time is right...

Holy cow. The sinful experience had been explosively real.

I laughed almost like a crazy woman would, running my fingers through my now very damp hair. Holy cow. I must have gotten into the moment completely. I glanced around the room, and it took a few seconds to focus.

When I was finally able, I swung my legs off the table, my feet still dangling a few inches from the floor.

That's when I realized not only were they untied, it looked like they were charred slightly. Wait a minute. What the hell? I crossed one leg over the other, able to get a better look at the soles. Yep. They were blackened.

As if I'd walked through... hot coals. There was no way I'd manifested a physical reaction. Was there? I slowly eased off the table, then glanced down at myself. Um. There were rips in my pants. More in my shirt.

I lifted my arms, twisting and turning my hands. My fingernails were short. There was no way I could have ripped them myself.

Shivers coursed through me and I bit my lower lip. Then I glanced around me, shifting to a corner of the room. Then I lowered my pants, spreading open my legs, driving my hand between them. When I felt a lump, a cold shiver twisted down my spine.

It was a bite. There was no doubt what I'd experienced had been very real.

CHAPTER 5



*F*orty-seven-and-a-half Earth years earlier
Zatan

Wham.

Wham.

Whoosh.

I sliced through dense bone and tissue, chopping the heads off one alien after another.

And it felt good.

Then I raced to the top of a knoll, grinning when I noticed the leader attempting to hide from me. The ugly beast said nothing, but I could tell in his beady little eyes he knew he'd been beaten. He took swaggering steps toward me, the ground beneath our feet shaking from his heavy weight.

“You will not best us, Fire God. We will return.”

They were wretched creatures, beings that in my opinion should be wiped from the universe. They hunted and ate flesh as a delicacy, preferring three different species: the Centorias, the Gargantas, and humans. All three were fragile species, easily captured. They rarely could put up enough of a fight for it to matter, which was why they were hunted. Humans were their delicacy,

which reminded me why my father hated the species as much as he'd expressed over the years.

I'd been taught they were pathetically weak, easily killed. But in seeing the females of the species, I knew exactly why they were wanted by various predators. Their scent was one of the most powerful draws in the universe.

I'd learned that many eons ago if only during what humans would call a fantasy. I snickered at the thought.

"Fucking animals," my second in command stated then sliced his blade into a fallen creature, digging the sharp tip into the granite underneath the lifeless body.

"Yes, they are. You are hereby condemned to death," I said to one of the remaining few pieces of scum with glee as I surveyed the area.

"The great God of Fire is resorting to trolling planets. Is it true that your father is ready to retire and he's uncertain of which son to leave his throne to?" the beast dared to ask, to confront me of all creatures.

There was always talk, predatory species trying to grasp power that only our kind had. It was typical, a game that I'd never fallen for. I heard Lieutenant Barto snickering as if the bastard had just made a joke.

We'd been the subject of thousands of intergalactic jokes and betrayals, threats coming from those we'd defeated on a constant basis. That's one reason I traveled as often as I did, ridding the universe of scum like this while maintaining our brutal reputation. Things weren't like they used to be. Alliances had been formed and broken, wars being fought on almost half the planets in the various galaxies. It was cause for alarm, especially since fewer offspring were being produced, an indication my father's reign was coming to an end.

I didn't like to think in those regards, ignoring the signs as my three brothers had. We'd lived the good life, princes of the most powerful kingdom in the universe. Why did I have a feeling it was all coming to a crashing end?

I glanced at one of the last remaining members of what my father liked to refer to as a gang and sighed. We'd taken their campsite by surprise, aided by members of the intergalactic parliament, who'd asked us to intervene on the

species' behalf. I'd only needed fifteen of my most powerful men to wipe them out.

The stench of bodily fluids and gore permeated the dense air. I issued a deep growl as I turned toward him, eyeing their illustrious leader with disdain. "It would appear you are a fool. And you fucked with the wrong Vektorian. You will face your maker." With that, I raked my sabre across his thick corded neck. As his life fluid spewed from the stumps considered his veins, I took a step back, careful to avoid the traps his soldiers had established around their camp.

Except for the weeping Centoria females who'd been captured and were about to be freed, none of the disgusting slime was left standing. I was considered one of the most formidable forces in the universe, my three brothers the only other beings who could challenge me. Even my father no longer enjoyed the battles he'd once loved to fight.

I hunkered down, surveying the scene. The planet had been ravaged by the bastards, its people suffering for far too many years. The price the gang had paid was not nearly enough. Plus, they'd ignored our rules, refusing to bow down to our power. They learned the hard way I was omnipotent.

"They are all dead."

The words rang in my ears, my lieutenant's tone full of disdain. I rose from my crouched position, turning in a full circle as my second in command flanked my side, his weapon still held with both hands. When he shifted the sword back and forth from one grip to the other, I cocked my head. "Are four hundred Creomar creatures not enough for you, Grazine?" He knew when I called him by his given name, I'd become irritated with him.

However, this time Lieutenant Barto grinned before throwing his head back and roaring. Then he kicked one of the severed heads of the disgusting beasts across the terrain, laughing when it launched into the air given the atmospheric change.

"You know how I am, Commander Soltar. I enjoy the blood sport almost as much as you do. Or perhaps I should call you Butcher from now on."

Blood sport. It had been a nickname provided by another lowlife alien species

for our heinous actions, his intergalactic article on my kingdom seeming to reach every corner of the universe. I'd heard there were at least sixteen different production companies interested in the story rights, which the fucker would be happy to sell to the highest bidder. He was another scum species of the universe, capable of selling his firstborn son if he thought he could make a profit.

"Do not call me that." I wiped life fluid from the dozens of recent kills from my sabre, studying the carnage with interest. I'd been angry on this go around, eradicating at least sixty of the fuckers all by myself.

The criminal element had been warned to stop hunting the various species and they hadn't listened. I'd been forced to take matters into my own hands as the God of Fire, son of the creator of the universe. Grazine knew me too well and he was right. I did enjoy the killing almost as much as being the protector of the various species, a task I'd been born into.

All four children had been given responsibilities from protection to annihilation as necessary. We were damn good at it. But I'd begun to think there had to be more out of life than just blood sport.

"It has a nice ring to it." He laughed, completely enjoying my discomfort. "Did you see the last threat?"

"I heard it, Grazine. Nothing new."

"Other than they've found a weakness. Do you have any idea what that means?"

I'd received the communication from an unknown source, which shouldn't have surprised me, but it had. It hadn't been addressed to anyone, which did concern me to some degree, but I refused to allow that to show. "No."

"I attempted to trace it," he said casually.

I cocked my head, glaring at him, the itch to spew fire coming closer to the surface. "Without my authorization."

"I thought you'd want to learn the source."

He was taking far too many advantages of our friendship, which irritated the

hell out of me. I pressed the tip of my blade against his throat, waiting as he comprehended that he'd crossed a line. "You seem to forget I'm your commander."

"Not at all, Commander Soltar. I was concerned for your safety. Nothing more."

"You mean you were concerned that you wouldn't get back to Vektor in time to take the few days off you put in for."

He grinned as if embarrassed. "No, sir. Not at all."

Exhaling, I pulled the sabre away. "What did you find?"

"Nothing. That's what bothers me the most. There was no trace of where it came from."

There were various species that had the capability of hiding everything, including their communications. However, I had a feeling someone was playing a game. "If another communication comes in, I need to know immediately."

"Yes, sir. And maybe you're right. I am looking forward to some R & R."

"And where are you going?"

"One of the Earth Stations." He grinned and I shook my head.

The lure of the human female had drawn many a Vektorian into the danger zone. While my father had yet to forbid the interaction, he discouraged it. The disturbing effect they had on every male no matter what creature had spawned them was undeniable. Males lost their minds with lust. Human females should be avoided at all costs.

"You will be careful, Grazine. If you lose your mind, I'll imprison you myself."

"You are in a pissy mood, Commander. Perhaps you need to consider hunting for a mate."

"Not on your fucking life." My snarl was louder than normal.

He grinned, shaking his head.

While I scowled at him, I realized I was starving. Hunting and killing always made me long to feast. At least our mission had gone better than I'd anticipated. I swung around, pressing the tip of my sabre into his throat a second time, giving him a playful look to break the tension between us. "You know how I get when I'm cranky."

"Yeah, that's the problem. You need to have sexual relations."

Now, I laughed.

He shook his head. The Vektorian had been by my side for generations, which meant he knew my moods better than most. When he grabbed the sharp tip, allowing the blade to slice his hand as he pushed it away, I rolled my eyes. He would be healed within seconds.

"Should I allow the other soldiers to feast?" he asked.

"Their life fluid is poisonous. That's what I've recently been told. I won't risk it. However, after you free the females, present them with several of the heads for their... amusement."

"You are such a bad Vektorian."

"Yes, I am." Which was how I'd built a reputation as being the wild son of the God of Creation, which I enjoyed living up to.

I was a killing machine. To me, it was just business.

As one of my other lieutenants approached, I was surprised. He was in control of our fleet of ships, required to always remain with them. He stopped a few yards from where I was standing, shaking his head.

"Getting out your aggressions, Commander?" Lieutenant Manta asked, a look of amusement on his face.

"They are vile creatures who deserved the punishment."

"You mean they were. It would appear they're all dead."

"What are you doing here, Lieutenant? You were told to remain on the ship." I shoved the sabre into the holster and headed in his direction taking long strides.

“I was sent here by your father. He didn’t care that you were engaged in battle. His orders were clear. As soon as you were finished, we were heading back.”

Exhaling, I stopped short, glancing at him. He knew better than to fuck with me regarding my demanding father. I couldn’t remember the last time he’d ordered anyone to interrupt my work. That meant there was a significant issue on Vektor. “What does he want?” Although I had a feeling I knew. It was time for him to choose which of his four sons would ascend to his throne. The rumors had been started on actual information that had leaked. Or maybe my father had done so on purpose, putting various species on edge. I’d also felt it coming for a long time.

“You know your father. He told me if I asked one more time, he’d have my head on a silver platter. I believe him. I have the ship ready for departure when you command it so.”

Goddamn it. I’d wanted to enjoy my return, including drinking copious volumes of stashed away liquor from one of the three planets I’d had business on. “Fine. Get back to the ship. I’ll be there shortly.”

The lieutenant nodded, whistling under his breath after taking another glance at the mess I’d created before heading to the transport space.

“That doesn’t sound good,” Grazine said.

“No, it doesn’t. Finish up here.”

“I’ll take a few phototron shots to intersperse on the galactic news sites.”

I gave him a hard glare. “Why?”

“Because we need to keep your merciless reputation intact. You’re an enforcer and all species need to realize fucking with you isn’t in their best interest. Maybe that will put an end to some of the threats. Come to think of it. We’re like a Vektorian crime syndicate.

“Mafias, zoltars, dranons. Whatever their name on whatever planet, they ruled the underworld with brutality. Certainly, the God of Fire has heard of them,” he added in way of explanation.

For the hell of it, I tipped my head back, allowing a bolt of fire to expel from my chest.

“Very funny,” he said. “I realize that was a rhetorical question. You know it all.”

As he strode away, I returned my gaze to the terrain I’d littered with bodies. Maybe I enjoyed killing a little bit too much.

CHAPTER 6



*Z*atan

There was nothing that could ruin my mood faster than being summoned by my father. The brutal bastard didn't have father-son discussions. He had battles of wit and will, tests that would determine if any of his four sons was worthy of his love or more important, his throne. While my brothers and I had grown used to his tirades over the years, that didn't mean any of us ever enjoyed family time.

I strode down the cavernous corridor toward his office, cognizant of the creatures he kept as pets lurking in the caged shadows. They always peered at me as if I was nothing but a reincarnation of the man who'd enslaved them, even if my father and I were nothing alike. Except maybe by reputation.

Barbarians.

Predators.

Guardians.

Enforcers.

Vektorian Mafia.

I liked that moniker the best.

I'd heard a few of the terms were distinctly opposite, but they suited who and what we were, including how powerful we were considered in the various galaxies. We were Vektorians, touted by most historians to be the oldest beings across the infinity of space, my father the creator of all things and every species. If that was the truth, then the powerful beast certainly had a sense of humor, something he'd never allowed his family to see.

We ruled with an iron fist because we needed to, dozens of the species brought to life deserving death instead. My father had enlisted his sons to carry out the necessary duties along with keeping the peace in our four corners of Vektor.

Some might call us guardians of the galaxy, but they knew nothing about our hunger or our distinct needs. If they did, they'd shift their beliefs to the truth.

We were monsters who enjoyed indulging in blood and other liquids of life, our carnivorous appetites extending to dozens of species.

As a small creature many moons ago, I'd gotten used to silence, the kind found in barren chambers where the soulless went to die. I'd endured years of cataclysmic anguish, forced to accept that I'd been forged by hatred and rage. Or so that's what I'd told myself during the darkest phases of my life. I'd learned later the punishment inflicted had been to build strength and endurance, a requirement for every child produced by the most enigmatic, dangerous being in all of creation.

My father.

When I was only a few feet away from his sprawling office, I noticed one of my three brothers had also been called to the meeting. I stopped short, glaring at him. Ravat was my polar opposite, his ice blue skin in direct contrast to the burnished red of mine. He was the God of Ice where I was the God of Fire. The fact our younger brothers hadn't been asked to join meant I'd been right in my assumptions as to the reason for the required meeting.

We glared at each other, puffing our massive chests in a ridiculous show of prowess and force. We certainly had different attributes, but one wasn't stronger than the other. Still, we snarled at each other as if we were already being tested.

I rose to my full height, a solid three inches taller than my brother, eyeing him as I would any other enemy. What a shame given we'd once been close, just as the two of us had been to our younger siblings. But there was only one seat on the throne and all four of us were determined to be selected, our methods cutthroat.

We could speak every language, could adapt to almost any culture. We even had an affinity for most foods, although I considered much of what others ate repulsive. However, there was no need for language of any kind between our kind, some refusing to speak at all. I rarely said more than a few words, other than to the single creature I shared my life and home with, a pet I considered a member of my family.

My brother was different, talkative. Popular. Even someone I'd call savvy with regard to females. Yet on this late afternoon, he was solemn. We both knew what today meant. It was the beginning of the quest.

He was the one who lowered his eyes first. Technically, I was the oldest, but hierarchy of age didn't secure my ascension to our father's throne. However, it was clear our father had narrowed down his choice. We'd passed the first test. There was no doubt there would be more.

"I heard about your conquest," he said in a rare moment of recognition and respect.

"Which one?"

He laughed, although there was a bitter sound to his tone. "You always had a big head on your shoulders."

"And you were always frigid."

For a few seconds, it was as if the differences that had built over the years, forcing us to grow apart, were no longer there. Our closeness had been a point of pride to our father. Ravat had idolized me, following me everywhere I'd gone, learning every aspect of becoming a warrior. Then the competition between us had become fierce, our need to best the other snapping our friendship.

"Maybe the best Vektorian win," he said in our clipped language. "For the record, I believe it should be you."

Studying him, I could almost see the young Vektorian in him that I once had been. “You are a formidable opponent.”

“You know what’s funny, brother?” he asked. “I never understood why we couldn’t rule the universe together.”

He had a good point. “It’s not for us to decide.”

“No, you’re right. That doesn’t mean I’m not weary of the battle between us.”

This was the first honest conversation we’d shared in a long time. “True enough.”

I nodded then pointed toward the door, allowing him to make the entrance first. By no means was the gesture one of respect given our father’s penchant for playing games. Often one of his creatures had been freed briefly to confront one or both of us.

This time there was nothing but quiet inside the cavern, the thick walls preventing any sound from filtering inside the oversized space. He was also nowhere to be seen, which surprised both of us. I glanced around the room, realizing he’d been working on several crude paintings, a hobby he’d picked up from a recent visit to several solar systems, the every quarter of a century journey only completed ten months before.

Since then, he hadn’t been the same.

After glancing toward Ravat, I took long strides toward the only other location in his cave I knew he could be.

My father’s beloved garden.

“I hate this place,” Ravat said quietly.

It was at least something we had in common. “Agreed.”

The protected green space was covered by a massive, structured dome, preventing our dangerous weather from destroying the plants he’d nurtured from seeds discovered on various planets. I had to admit, he had what I’d heard in some cultures was called a green thumb. As I walked into the heated environment, I took a deep breath, preferring the sweltering heat, unlike my

brother who hissed as soon as we walked in.

I laughed at his discomfort, surprised to see our mother on her knees deadheading something called roses. They'd been brought from Mars, a planet in a distant solar system considered forbidden. However, Ternan Soltar went wherever the fuck he wanted to.

After waving to our mother, I continued to try to locate the powerful beast, noticing he was standing in front of a vividly colored plant. The gorgeous group of what he called flowers stood almost five feet tall, the petals indicating an unusual species, the base of the flat surface vivid crimson while jagged-looking spines adorned the edges.

“Ah, there you two are.” He was spritzing the plant with a liquid. Then he reached into a jar, grabbing one of our more aggressive insects, tossing it into the center. I'd been fascinated when I'd watched the carnivorous act the first time, the insect almost impossible to kill yet this plant devoured it within seconds. “A beauty. Yes? Droseraceae Dionaea Muscipula. Otherwise known as the Venus flytrap, a very rare, nearly extinct species I was lucky enough to obtain during my last galactic adventures.”

Our father was considered a celebrity of sorts, his planetary visits usually ending in being gifted something of extreme importance. The end of a drought or infestation. The forceable cease to a war. The cure of diseases. He was selective and so powerful that an entourage of two thousand of our soldiers traveled with him to keep him safe. Meanwhile, I'd done everything I could to ignore basic duties as required by one of the man's prince sons. That had been a bone of contention between us.

He stood back, the smile on his face unusual. Then he placed the bottle on his gardening table, moving to the other side and sitting on the edge.

“I won't waste your time, my sons. It is the year the quest begins.”

“Then the rumors are true,” Ravat said through clenched teeth.

Our father glared at him. “Our enemies are chomping at the bit for me to retire. They have no understanding how powerful my sons have become. However, you must take these next steps with caution. There are many threats against us.”

Ravat glanced in my direction. It was unusual for our father to express any concern. He was far too arrogant and self-confident.

The quest, a story told eons before, a requirement set in stone from the beginning of time. We'd been raised hearing what our requirements would be, but maybe we hadn't believed it would come so soon. If ever. It had seemed our father refused to give up his power.

"The threats are mostly frivolous," I said in passing.

Our father exhaled as he'd done so many times when I was a boy, annoyed that I didn't grasp something educational he was providing. "Your strengths will be necessary as we move into a new era."

"Why now?" Ravat snarked as only my brother could do. "It can't be the threats. They are mindless."

"Yes, son. Now. You have both recently turned one hundred in Earth years. And no threat should be taken lightly."

Our father often equated time the last planet he visited, which had been Mars, a colony of the once fertile Earth, a planet he'd all but destroyed to keep the humans from continuously killing each other. What I found fascinating was that we'd been taught that humans were the most primitive of all the species he'd created, incapable of putting intelligent, rational thoughts together. Perhaps he was softening in his old age or maybe it had something to do with his new favorite plant.

I noticed our mother had moved closer, pretending as if she wasn't eavesdropping. How my mother could even tolerate such a brutal man was beyond me, but she had a sense of control over him that my father would deny vehemently.

"What does it matter how old we are?" Ravat continued, his tone nasty. His question was rhetorical. I wasn't entirely certain why he wanted to hear the same information about our heritage but that was my brother, always trying to find a way around his duties. The truth was I'd admired his carefree attitude in my youth. However, if he wasn't careful, he'd lose the battle before he got started. On this day, he annoyed me. Or perhaps it was more about the quest than anything else.

“That means we are required to find a mate,” I hissed in answer.

“Exactly,” my father said, devoid of any emotion as per usual.

“I could use grandchildren, you know. Your father and I aren’t getting any younger. Plus, an heir is required in order to keep the power. And we must keep control,” my mother added.

My mother beamed as if expecting one or both of us to pop out a perfect image of ourselves within a few eons of time. I shook my head, completely disinterested. “And if we don’t agree to this foray into sin, which is what you called my last request at exploring anywhere past our galaxy?”

His laughter boomed into the air, causing a thunderbolt in the distance.

“You are losing your touch, husband,” our mother said.

Father seemed less than pleased at her admonishment but kept a smile on his face. “If you do not follow my orders, then the result will be simple. Your kingdoms will be removed from your authority. You will be forced to live as a soldier and nothing more. If you fight the regime, then you will be banished to one of the outlying moons.”

Our father had threatened many things, but banishment had never been one of them.

Something was wrong that had nothing to do with our enemies. Unless they were from within.

“I refuse to take a mate,” I said to him. I was risking his anger, but I needed to express my opinion.

Our father didn’t seem surprised. Instead, he pulled a furrer rodent from one of the cages, a creature considered a toy for my pet dragon. He knew how I felt about using animals, rodents, or other scaly winged creatures as bait of any kind. It was abhorrent, something only weak leaders did.

“Do you smell the sweet nectar? Do you see how this creature longs for a single taste? Did you know it only takes seconds for the decomposition process to begin?”

“Ternan. Stop tormenting your own sons,” Mother growled as only she could

do with him and get away with it.

He slowly turned his head, keeping the furry creature only inches from the snapping jaws of the plant.

I reached out, snagging the poor beast, stroking its fur as I lifted my head toward the man who'd spawned me. "Fine. I will fill her with my seed. Then I will toss her aside."

"You will do no such thing, Zatan Soltar," my mother said in her defiant tone. While women did not rule anything on our planet, our mother's position was different. She was someone who demanded respect.

Ravat and I looked at each other. Then our father clapped his hands. "Good. We have that settled. You will leave in a fortnight."

A mate. I'd dreaded the concept for years. I couldn't stand the thought of sharing my bed let alone my empire with another creature.

"A what?" Ravat snapped, already pacing the garden, an activity he usually adapted when pissed out of his mind. For a man whose core life liquid was mostly ice, I had a sense he was heating up quickly.

Our father sighed. "Two weeks." When the two of us looked at each other again, he grumbled under his breath. "Fourteen days?"

Still nothing.

"Good God, my sons. It is obvious I've kept your leashes too tight. Fourteen moon cycles."

"Ah," I said. That didn't give us much time to wrap up our business dealings, placing them on hold. There was at least another criminal element who'd ignored paying their dues. I couldn't allow their behavior to continue. Hunting them would be dicey in the timeframe. "How long is this quest?" Our ship could go lightyears in a matter of a short period of time, but I certainly didn't want to be gone for long.

"Fifty Earth years. Not one day more."

Ravat made a strangled noise first. "I can't be gone for one fucking Earth year let alone fifty. I have business to attend to, a new product being

delivered to several ghost starships. Who will rule our kingdoms in our interim?”

“I suggest you get your business affairs in order and have your vice presidents ready to accept their new, temporary positions. Or I can have your other two brothers step in; maybe they’ll get used to being in both your shoes.”

He knew that would goad us.

“No fucking way,” Ravat hissed.

“That’s what I thought you’d say. You don’t have a choice, gentlemen. If you find your mates quickly, then return home. The sooner the better so the additional games can begin. Your mother is right. Heirs must be produced.”

“Which will allow the other species to have additional spawn as well.” I’d made the connection easily. Given he and Mother couldn’t have additional children, the entire universe was suffering.

He lifted his head, nodding once.

Then Ravat and I looked at each other again. For some reason, I was angrier than I should be. Maybe it was because I’d thought our father omnipotent in every way, enjoying being one of the princes more than I should have.

“This is blasphemous,” I told him. Additional games meant we’d endure other more brutal tests upon our return, the judging process continuing. “How long does the selection process take?”

Our father exhaled. “As long as it takes.”

“Zatan is right. This is beneath us,” Ravat declared.

“This is not a request.” Our father’s voice boomed in the cavern, almost everything inside shaking. He fisted his hand, and only when our mother wrapped her long, bony fingers around his arm did he calm down.

“Don’t frighten them, dear. They have enough to deal with.”

“So, I can just grab some female from one of the planets?” Ravat pushed.

Our father rubbed his eyes. “This is about securing your mate, the single

individual who is meant to be with you. You'll know it. I'll know it. Your people will know it. You must be open to every possibility. If you can't find the single mate destined for you, then you will not be able to produce children. We must continue on as a species. It's vital that we do. There are battles to fight in the future, wars to end, diseases to cure. If not, everything I've worked so hard to achieve will be vanquished. Gone."

I, along with all three of my brothers knew that our true mates didn't exist within the Vektorian females. We were not compatible, which made using them to fulfill our carnal needs perfectly acceptable, something Ravat did with flair.

I didn't give a shit about playing with females. They bored me. I craved the power brutality afforded, the influence my position held. A female would be considered a weakness. However, there were things our father wasn't telling us.

"That's why you have the length of time you do. However, if you do not return with a mate within that time frame, one of your other brothers will be gifted your corner of our world. Then they will use the galaxies as they wish." Father glanced from Ravat to me. The bastard had a grin on his face.

He adored tossing that in our faces and had since we were children.

I wondered how long it was going to take before our father allowed the other jab to hit. And still, I could tell by the look in our father's eyes that something was off. I swaggered closer, still stroking the small vermin. "What's the catch?"

"Catch?"

Suddenly, my father didn't know a coined phrase from his beloved humans. "There isn't a single female we aren't allowed to mate with?"

"It's not about being allowed, Zatan. It's about compatibility. At this point, the only creatures who our bodies seem incompatible with are humans. Besides, you wouldn't want to do so anyway. They are reprehensible creatures but entertaining nonetheless."

Why was it that he was looking me in the eyes? Did he anticipate I'd break the rules as I usually did? He'd encouraged me to explore the dark fantasies

of the dream world. I hadn't lied to him that I'd tasted a human, even if only inside the fantasy realm. Why did I feel as if this challenge was being made for me alone?

Our mother nodded, used to hearing the many stories regarding how dangerous human females could be. I knew our father had told her.

There was a distinct twinkle in his eyes.

"What is the real reason for this sudden demand for the quest, Father? You make the rules just like you created our world. Both Ravat and I are very busy creating additional wealth for our people." If he wouldn't tell me the truth directly, perhaps I could glean more from his answers.

"Because I am honoring your mother in her request for grandchildren." His quick answer was followed by a nudge from our mother. "And because our people are getting antsy. They need heirs. They need celebrations. They need a change. Because the various intergalactic politicians have expressed concern for their dying populations."

Well, there was that. There was also more.

"Wow. Now, we carry the burden of whether or not they can all procreate," Ravat snorted.

"We control their destiny as much as we do our own, son. That is something you both need to keep in mind." Our father reached for our mother, which was a gesture that usually didn't happen in front of us.

"What else?" The demand in my tone wasn't unusual. If I was to leave everything I knew and had built simply to find a female to impregnate, which was a dangerous operation, then I deserved to know the truth. "What aren't you telling us, Father?"

He took a deep breath, finally looking toward our mother.

"Tell them, Ternan. They deserve to know," she said in a hushed voice.

"You're right. The truth is my time is about to expire. Soon, you will be required to oversee our work, our galaxy, and the protection and welfare of every species I brought forth."

What the hell? Our father was dying? Was that even possible?

“And if we choose not to?” I asked after the news had settled in.

“Then there will nothing left. Every world, every moon, every star and solar system will be destroyed. That is the burden you both face.”

CHAPTER 7



*E*arth Station Sixty-Nine
Year twenty-eight ninety-two

Present day

Sunny

“Stop worrying, Sunny. They’re going to be fine. You changed their destiny.” My assistant always sounded so certain. Either that or she was tired of me hanging around, fretting over every tiny sound the pups made. I couldn’t blame her. Animals, especially those who’d been injured or abused, were my Achilles heel.

Destiny.

The word stuck in my mind. I hadn’t heard it for several years. People in our culture believed they could alter their futures. My parents had insisted otherwise. To them, everyone’s destinies had been preordained, and we were simply walking through life on a moving platform either heading to that moment where fate intervened or living it. My parents were highly educated, so much so that sometimes I couldn’t understand what they were saying.

What I had gleaned from their beliefs on destiny was that if by chance any creature managed to alter destiny, disaster would follow. As in the universe as we knew it would disappear. Poof. Gone.

I don't why it struck me hard on this day other than I had intervened with the abuse the puppies had been forced to endure.

I yanked off my gloves, tossing them into the recycling bin and crouched down in front of the protection cages. The tiny snores from two of the pups indicated they were comfortable. I opened the gate, rubbing the tummy of one of them. When the furry baby opened his eyes, I almost melted.

I hugged the puppy close, the warmth of his little body invigorating, his little heartbeat a further indication he would pull through just fine. Still, my heart ached for every creature, sometimes including aliens. Once I'd had to use my medical training on an alien creature who'd crash landed on the Earth Station, every doctor refusing to treat the small creature. My father had known I'd never say no to any being who needed help. That was in my makeup. I started to hum, cradling the pup close, noticing a few seconds later my assistant was watching me closely.

"You have a beautiful voice," Cara said. "It's soothing. You could have been a singer."

"Not a chance, but I learned a long time ago it calms creatures great and small."

"I hope I'll be like you one day, a natural."

"You will."

"I feel it's my destiny."

There was that word again.

Had my actions meant I'd altered some aspect of the web of destiny that would lead to the end of civilization as I knew it? Oh, hell. If I believed that then why bother living at all?

Then Thor slid his head under my arm, my Golden retriever-Irish setter mix insisting he give his well wishes for a speedy recovery. "I know they'll be fine in my heart, Cara, but that doesn't make what happened to them any easier to deal with." My assistant was fabulous. It had taken me four months enduring three interns who couldn't care less about animals to find the right person. He or she had to love furry creatures as much as I did. Cara fit the bill

perfectly.

As one of only a few veterinarians on the Earth Station, I felt blessed to be able to do what I loved. Caring for animals was all I'd ever wanted to do. However, in being able to provide love, medical attention, and comfort to various furry creatures, I'd been forced to see how horrible people could still be. Not people. Humans.

Half the alien species were kinder and gentler souls than almost every human I'd come into contact with. The other half were beasts from hell. But hey. Growing up looking like insects on steroids could do that to a creature.

After gently easing the furry baby next to his brothers and sisters, I closed the cage door and kissed Thor on the head, studying the other babies, who'd all come out of surgery successfully.

"I'll stay right here with them tonight so you can go home to that sexy almost fiancé of yours." Cara grinned as she stood over me.

"I don't think that's necessary."

"Oh, I know you. You won't enjoy yourself if you're worried. Admirable but you need to give that man of yours some time. You've been working nonstop since I arrived on your doorstep, begging for a job."

Cara was right. The hours had gotten longer since I was trying to make a name for myself without the influence of my powerful mother and father, considered pillars within the community as well as throughout several galaxies. Tonight could mean Skyler and I were forming a bond that would take us into a beautiful future.

Or so I hoped. As long as he finally popped the question like he'd been hinting at for weeks.

"Maybe you're right," I told her as I stood, yanking off my uniform jacket and tossing it into the laundry system. I'd told him I was going to be late. "Maybe surprising him will fire off the evening, if you know what I mean."

"Ooh-la-la. Absolutely and I'm always right. If anything happens or one of the dogs crash, I'll issue a communications text, but only in an emergency."

“You’re a good friend.”

“Remember that at review time.”

Laughing, I took one last look then headed toward my office to grab my things.

Cara had become a good friend, someone I could talk to, including with my suspicion that my boyfriend was going to propose. It was something I’d even mentioned to my mother, which had prompted her to smile in her uncanny way, making me feel like an idiot. Then she’d reminded me that I was young and had plenty of time to make long-lasting choices that would be difficult to change. She didn’t think Skyler was good enough for me, but in my mind, we fit together like a glove. Some people even thought we were already married given the way we acted around each other.

However, there had been tension between us the past few weeks, our intimacy all but shut down. I equated that to working long hours. Cara was right. He needed some tender loving care.

I rolled my hand down Thor’s back. The pup had been with me for three years, my furry baby more important than any creature in my world.

Including Skyler?

The nagging remained inside the back of my mind as I strode out the door of my clinic, staring up at the still odd-colored green sky. My mother often called this a sunny day on the Earth Station, although I’d never seen a golden orb in any sky in my life. However, the day was warm, vecta flowers in every color of the rainbow blooming and a light breeze that kept the odd scents of the moon-like planet from becoming troublesome.

Thor trotted in front of me, and I studied the huge furball, shaking my head. The inner voice was right in that Skyler came second to Thor, maybe third if I was forced to count the clinic. I wasn’t certain why. I did love the man, but... I still wasn’t certain what I planned on saying when he asked me to marry him. That was terrible.

After ushering Thor inside then climbing into the transport unit, I remained seated in silence without pressing the engine button.

Thor nuzzled next to me, giving a lick of encouragement. “I love you, buddy. I just don’t know what to do.”

Woof!

“Okay. Let’s go home.”

Home.

I enjoyed my life, but I wasn’t certain I considered the apartment home. I started the engine, powering up to full speed within seconds. At least flight time to the complex was only ten minutes old Earth time.

My mother had insisted I learn to tell time by the old standards, which was one of several disciplines from ancient times I’d been required to learn. My mother and father were quirky that way, but I’d learned a great deal of survival skills, which my father had insisted would come in handy one day.

I had no idea why I was going down a rabbit hole of thoughts other than I’d grown up with odd parents, at least according to my friends. They were both brilliant, more so than ninety-nine-point-nine percent of the human population and I felt secure in saying of any alien species out there. Yet as smart as they were, as organized and sought after, what made the two of them endearing was their passionate romance story. Their relationship had withstood not only the test of time but also six moves, a war on one Earth Station that had cost them everything, a society they often said they couldn’t stand, and two polar opposite children.

They were gushy and cute together, still romantic after all the years and everything they’d been through. That’s what I wanted. To finish each other’s sentences. To sneak kisses when I thought no one was looking. To have sex in wild places. Okay, I couldn’t think of my parents that way. Ick.

In truth, that’s what was missing in my relationship. Oh, sure, Skyler was sexy with a loopy smile and dark hair that always seemed to cover one brow, leaving him with a perpetual boyish look. Even his scruffy two- or three-day beard and baggy clothes most women thought sexy. I realized his disheveled look was the way he handled his life.

As usual when I got into these moods, I wasn’t paying close enough attention to traffic, almost powering into two other fly-in-style transport units before

hovering over my apartment complex. Maybe having a long talk with Skyler about how we were starting to grow apart was what needed to happen.

Thor jumped out, trotting toward the front of the apartment building with spring in his step. Meanwhile, I dragged behind him, now wishing I'd been kept at the clinic a little longer. That was telling. Right? The nagging voice was right. I just needed to break things off with Skyler before I made a foolish mistake. Maybe I was jumping to conclusions.

Maybe you're comparing him to your fantasy creature.

Okay, maybe that was part of it. I wasn't entirely certain.

Suddenly, Thor stopped short, turning in a full circle as if something was wrong. I lifted my eyebrows, glancing at the porches of my neighbors. There was nothing out of place or some crazy alien being crawling through the bushes. I'd seen that happen twice before.

Grrr...

"Thor. Don't be silly," I admonished as I pressed my hand on the keypad, allowing the heat sensors to scan my palm print. I'd yet to upgrade this part of the system, the scanner unit about ready to hit the crapper. Just like the building I'd been provided with, the housing supposedly temporary, although I'd lived here for the entire eighteen months I'd been stationed on the colony. I knew I shouldn't complain. Beggars couldn't be choosers.

The truth was I'd been blessed to get the nod for a job right out of school, especially given the terrible economy the last few generations. Granted, my father had managed to snag me an interview, which had surprised me. He never used his powerful influence. Maybe he'd realized how badly I wanted to work with animals. Plus, my mother had all but begged me to live close when I'd been the adventurous one, longing to visit various planets, like a traveling vet.

Here I was stuck in a small apartment for at least another year before I would be able to afford anything more glamorous. That was unless Skyler got his big promotion at his job. There I went again, assuming we'd be married. I had to shove that aside for now. I'd done everything I could with the place to make it bright and bodacious, just like I'd been told matched my personality.

I snickered at the thought. Then the security system flashed red.

My father had been bugging me for weeks to allow his soldiers to finish installing a completely different operational system to go with the security measures he'd already insisted on. Given his top secret, high clearance position, he remained concerned his family would be used against him. There were enemies everywhere from dozens of planets and at least ten different alien species at last count.

But the list was growing.

I could swear it was like the man was worried about a battle of some kind or worse. *Destiny*... Now I rolled my eyes. Cara's flippant statement had really gotten to me.

"Oh, no, you don't, you worthless piece of shit." I snarled at the system, trying to keep my cursing to a minimum. My neighbors were all older, more well-to-do than the upstart kid who'd moved in next to them. I glared at the scanner then back to Thor, who continued to growl.

What in the hell was going on? It had been working fine when I'd left early that morning. I so wasn't in the mood for the system to break down now, not after the long, brutal day I'd had. I had no idea how a dogfight had started, but the injuries to the four beautiful pups had been severe. Fortunately, there'd been no casualties, a godsend since my monthly supply of medication had yet to come in. However, in cleaning their wounds, I'd noticed the signs of previous abuse, which had prompted me to have the pups removed from the man's care.

Care.

That was giving him too much credit. When the dude found out, he'd be pissed, but at least I had a few days before he did.

I was so grateful that surgery had gone well, the pups resting. Even though Cara was right there with them, I felt a heavy burden for their safety. They were my kids, my children. Just like Thor. I'd rescued him from a Ragcat, the huge alien species usually docile, which was why they were allowed on the Earth Station. Unfortunately, dogs were considered delicacies in their culture. It had been as close to killing another creature as I'd ever come.

But I'd do it again.

I took a deep breath, trying the door again.

Maybe Skyler had accidentally set it incorrectly as he'd done twice before, something I'd warned him of more than once. I couldn't be but so angry with the man, especially given the long hours he also worked. However, if he'd already crashed, I would need to break in. The last time I'd been forced to do so, I'd had a pretty testy few moments trying to explain the situation to the two municipal officers, especially since I'd been dressed in a bright red negligee.

The memories were ugly.

Then again, maybe he was pushing my buttons to heighten the excitement and whatever surprise he had in store. After all, he'd called to find out if I'd be home on time, which was something I wasn't entirely certain he'd ever done before. That had really pushed me into believing he was popping the question, especially since three nights before he'd asked if I thought marriage was something I wanted. I'd stalled. I did remember that. Ugh. Was that another telling sign?

"One more time, pup." I rubbed my hand on my medical pants, realizing my hands were sweating. Maybe that was it. I tried it again, even plastering a smile on my face for good measure. The nasty little beep indicated the system was getting irritated with me for trying a third time. "Fuck you." I gave the inanimate object the finger since I knew it wouldn't suddenly retaliate in the middle of the night. Then I pounded on the door, hoping Sky would hear me.

"Skyler! Let me in." I don't know why I was yelling given the walls were soundproof. Besides, he was usually playing heavy metal music. Fan-fucking-tastic.

After I was ignored for a few minutes, one of my neighbors popped his head out of his door, growling at me. The asshole had actually growled. I one-upped him, roaring like a lioness, adding a howl at the end. Then I stomped around to the side of the building, Thor following closely behind. Tonight I wanted a tall drink. Maybe two. "Don't you dare look at me that way. I know what I'm doing," I said, looking back at my companion, his tail wagging.

Oh, sure. I'd scaled the building a solid half dozen times before. I dropped my bag, taking a deep breath before jumping on the trellis. I heard Thor's tail thump several times as I meticulously crawled up the side, cursing the entire time. Fortunately, I always kept a relic of a tool my father had given me a long time ago in my back pocket after the incident with the sexy but unforgiving officers a few months before. The Swiss Army knife had come in handy far too many times.

I twisted my arm around one of the trellis arms, wondering when the whole damn thing was going to pull away from the exterior wall from my weight. Then I grimaced from the thought, images of plunging to my death, splatted out like a beached whale plaguing my mind. No, I wasn't fat, just voluptuous, as my mother told me.

Yeah, I'd go with that.

Thor woofed when I was in position and I took that as a sign of encouragement, yanking out the Swiss Army knife. I remembered the birthday event with greater fondness, my father pleased with himself for finding a useful tool in a secondhand shop, my mother squealing when she realized the treasure he'd found. If my parents could have been born in the twenty-first century, they'd be much happier, preferring antique everything.

Music.

Clothes.

Decorations.

But that made them even more adorable. At least that's what I'd tried to remind my sister of, the girl who was perfect at everything, and who constantly made fun of our parents. She'd even gone through a period of changing her last name so as not to be associated with the people who'd 'spawned her.' Her words.

To each their own.

Within seconds, I managed to slip the knife under the window ledge, jimmying it just like my father had taught me. Thank God, the alarm system didn't go off, which meant Skyler had been careless after returning home. I thumped onto the floor, taking a deep breath, returning the knife as I jogged

down the two sets of stairs to let Thor inside.

As soon I did, he lunged past me like a bullet leaving a pistol.

Now I sounded like my parents. Great. Crude bullet-style weapons hadn't been used in centuries, replaced with various laser weapons and molecular centering rangers.

"Thor? Where are you going? Come on, baby." I closed the front door behind me, placing my bag on the entrance floor, listening for any sound that Skyler was still up. Nope. Then I trudged up the stairs to the second floor, noticing Thor the second before he managed to nuzzle his way into the master bedroom.

I was certain I'd hear his happy bark as he jumped on Skyler. The sound coming from the room wasn't exactly what I was expecting, the squeal ripped with terror.

And unless Skyler had decided to have a sex change operation since breakfast, I'd say my boyfriend who'd followed me here eighteen months before, the one who'd only days before mentioned the big 'M' word for a third time wasn't alone.

Emotions were something I was very good at controlling. But hearing the level of passion, which I didn't remember sharing with Skyler, and seeing their sweaty faces was like having a dagger driven through my heart. Somehow, I had to maintain my dignity.

Even if I did want to return the favor, hurting both of them.

I took a deep breath and walked closer, nodding several times as I pushed open the door. Then I folded my arms, enjoying the fact Thor was attacking both Skyler and his buxom redhead female companion. Well, attacking was too strong of a word. My furry baby was actually trying to lick both their naked bodies to death, but the girl was mortified, finally tumbling from the bed, squealing like a stuffed pig.

Thor was also growling, yelling at Skyler for being an asshole.

Later I'd end up calling my best girlfriend in a panic, beg her to bring Raspberry Blue, my favorite and highly illegal intoxication liquid for

comfort, and hold my hand as I cried my eyes out, but right now I was furious.

And wanted the pissant of a man to suffer as much as possible.

I'd need to ply my neighbors with homemade cookies for what they were being forced to endure. Maybe it wasn't too late to add on an order of chocolate chips to the transport ships.

I leaned against the door, noticing Skyler had dragged out all our sex toys, the ones he normally refused to use. The butt plug and handcuffs, the non-furry variety were my two favorites, but the hefty passion pink vibrator was a delicious treat as well. Then there was the Lexan paddle. Tasty as well as exciting. Whoa. Hold on. The bastard, son of a bitch pig of a prick spanked her? Okay, so I'd been hesitant to comply the first time he'd suggested it, but he was using it on someone else?

As he continued thrusting the anal plug into her ass, it was all I could do to keep from losing the late lunch I'd finally grabbed after my surgeries had been complete.

For a few seconds, I was drawn back to a time when I'd allowed myself to let go, to experience an incredible fantasy because of a gift provided by my best friend. I'd told no one about the experience. Why it came to my mind today I wasn't certain, but it was obvious that his betrayal had jarred the memory.

The funny truth was that I'd wanted Skyler to be more like the huge godlike man who'd fucked me in my fantasy, although I wasn't firmly convinced that what I'd experienced had been fake. Maybe I'd settled for a smarmy ass, which had been my problem all along.

That was going to stop. I was determined to find the inner strong girl, the one that could kick the man in his balls. Yep. That girl existed. And I was bringing her to the forefront today.

Huffing, I rose onto my tiptoes, taking a single gander at her big butt. Yep. The bastard had spanked her first. Fuck him. Sadly, now I'd need not only to burn the bed but the toys as well. Boy, my neighbors would get a little feast for their eyes. Wouldn't they?

I cleared my throat, slapping a smile across my face, one that was as evil as

the vile thoughts running through my head.

Skyler pulled out of the girl's butt, his dick immediately flatlining. Ah, what a shame. He'd be lucky if I didn't cut it off. Hmmm...

His face turned beet red. The unknown girl's did as well. As if I cared.

"Who is that?" the unwanted hussy made the mistake of asking. "Get her out of here. You didn't say this was a threesome."

"Yo, girlie poo. I'm the chick who rents this place. That boy toy over there is no longer welcome. The two of you can go fuck somewhere else. Not. In. My. House."

"Honey. Baby girl. What are you doing home?" Skyler jumped out of bed, offering a shy smile, the one I fell in love with one beautiful night when the orange moon had been full and the smog at a minimum.

I really had no words that would make sense at this point. None.

Thor growled again then lunged forward.

"Get the fucking mutt out of here," Skyler snapped.

As soon as Skyler pushed him hard, my puppy wincing from pain, I didn't give a shit about maintaining dignity or anything else for that matter.

I threw myself at the boy trying to disguise himself as a man, pummeling Skyler in the face with several hard punches. It was good to hear the bones in his nose crunch. "You bastard. You asshole. Son of a bitch. Prick. No, you don't have a worthwhile prick. That's the problem."

"Stop, Sunny. Just stop. You broke my nose!" He jumped back, his eyes open wide in shock, his massive hand wrapped around his nose. And he howled like a baby.

"Good. Come on, Thor." I pulled at my baby's collar, forcing him back then glaring at the two of them. I grabbed a few of his things, tossing them toward the door of the bedroom. "Get the fuck out."

"Hold on. You're tossing me out over this?" He sniffed after jerking his hand away. Yep. I had broken his nose. What a shame.

“Yep. I am.”

“I thought you were going to be late,” he said, adding insult to injury.

“I was. Just not late enough to avoid the festivities. Somehow, I think you were just involved with Ms. Plucky over there and ignored the time.” Marriage. What the hell had I been thinking? I hadn’t been. This was... the worst thing that could happen to me.

No, it was for the best.

When he was stupid enough to walk closer, I made a single clucking sound, the one Thor knew meant ‘get his butt by my side or else.’ My pup flew off the bed where he’d been jumping several feet in the air to my side in a split second, almost knocking Skyler down in the process.

“Sweetie. This isn’t what it looks like. I can explain. She was just leaving.”

“No, I wasn’t!” the girl snapped. Whew. She obviously wasn’t too bright.

It didn’t matter what century sack of shit cheating men came from, they were still lying sons of bitches who used the same crappy excuses.

As if women were that stupid.

“Oh, I’m sure you think you can explain the little filthy event I walked in on. Why don’t I do it for you? You were caught with your pants down, your dick in another chick’s twat and one of my personal sex toys in her asshole in the bed I paid for. You’re lucky I didn’t burn you and the fire hydrant here in the middle of it.”

Skyler guffawed while the girl blew bubbles from her mouth.

“Don’t be this way,” he whined.

God, I did so hate whiny men. Why couldn’t they be strong, alpha types who were possessive with their women, taking what they wanted? Neanderthal he-men. My mother had told me the stories of sexy heroes from days gone by. I longed to find a rugged man who would exterminate anyone who dared look at me crossly. Suddenly the sinful vision in the back of my mind wasn’t attached to a scrawny boy like Skyler. “What way, Sky? Huh? I come home expecting a surprise. Oh, I got one. My problem was trusting you and

thinking you cared. You didn't. You never did."

"That's not true."

"Ri-ight. You know what? I think the real truth is that you're a twisted fuck who didn't deserve me." I could feel the anger rising from deep within. My mother would tell me that it was time to go somewhere reflective, finding my center, a moment of peace before I acted out uncontrollably. I took a deep breath as a compromise, almost feeling cleansed of evil spirits, as she would call it.

Then the stupid bastard made another mistake.

"If you weren't so much of an ice queen then maybe this wouldn't have happened. Work. Work. Work. That's all that matters to you. If you cared about my needs, then I wouldn't have found someone who cared about me. You obviously didn't."

In that moment I didn't care if I would be sentenced to a penal planet.

I cold-cocked him, knocking him flat out.

CHAPTER 8



*Z*atan

Exhaustion.

I'd never thought traveling the universe could be so debilitating. So much so, I found it difficult to keep my eyes open even inside this garish interstellar bar. I loathed everything about the colony, a goldmine operation for galaxy pirates. Almost fifty percent of facilities of this nature were owned by marauding alien beasts who'd banded together to form various corporations over the last few centuries.

Their criminal activities were well known, their control over the recreational industry broader than most species comprehended. The outlying stations like this one were rife with crime and sex, but my ships had been coasting on fumes, my navigational engineer making a tactical error in calculating distances. That had led to the stop being mandatory and expensive.

So, I sat while I'd tasked the man responsible for the debacle to be the one who waited in line for service, which could take two Earth nights if not more.

And my brother had called.

"How's the hunt going, brother?" Ravat asked through the portable communications device.

“Fair. And yours?”

“Fabulous. I’ve enjoyed dozens of beautiful creatures. And not a single one of them gave me anything but hives.”

I burst into laughter. “You always had a way with words.”

“Maybe I’m drunk on life. We have limited time left. Do you think Father was serious?”

How many times had we had the same conversation over the last fifty years? More than I could count. “Maybe.”

“He is a showman.”

“True, but we can’t risk it. We forge on.”

He nodded and his expression changed, darkening. “Our ship was hit last night. We’re still recuperating.”

“Where the hell are you? I’ll come to your assistance.” Bristling, my gut told me the attack had been premeditated. We had far too many enemies. I’d become closer with my brother during the quest, which was undoubtedly something my father had counted on. We’d confided in each other instead of allowing our soldiers to know we were bargaining with time.

“Galtan Nebulous.”

“Jesus Christ, brother. That’s three hundred thousand lightyears away.”

“Warp speed went into overdrive, which is what the attackers were trying to do.”

They’d purposely been pushed into no-man’s land. He’d been sabotaged. I sat back, noticing I was being watched. While few in the universe knew exactly what I looked like, the firebird on my chest the only distinguishing emblem of my royalty, every Vektorian was watched closely, fearful that their worlds would come to an end. My father had done it, wiping out entire civilizations, including Earth.

That wasn’t something he’d touted to anyone, but it had been necessary. “Will you have the engines fully operational soon?”

“That’s why I’m calling. Not soon enough to meet the deadline and I seriously doubt I’m going to find my mate in the middle of nowhere.”

Fuck. The attack had been purposeful. That could mean the search was on for my ship. “Any indication of who attacked you?”

“Negative, brother. It was a cloaked effort and our systems didn’t pick up their photon blast until it was too late to the shields.”

“Damn it, brother. You’re a sitting duck.”

“I think whoever attacked me got what they wanted. Me out of the contest. I called to warn you. You’re our only hope.”

Only hope. That left a huge burden on my shoulders. “Understood.”

“Which I can translate to mean you’re no closer than I was.”

“No, I’m afraid not.”

“Should we contact Father?” Ravat asked, although he knew exactly what my answer would be.

“Over my dead body. I will hunt my mate down. She exists.”

“That might be the case, but you know as I do that if we both fail, Father will remove our positions at minimum.”

“Then so be it. But I’m not ready to give up the throne.”

“I wish you good luck, brother. Be careful. Someone is out to destroy the family.”

If the unknown asshole came after me, he would learn that my wrath was brutal. I ended the communication, attempting to make a plan. The last thing I needed was to sit here and wait for two days that I didn’t have. I made another call, getting my lieutenant immediately. “I don’t give a shit what the engineer has to say. We are leaving within the hour. Do you hear me?”

Grazine exhaled. “That’s a tall order. I don’t think the engineer can make that happen.”

“Yes, he fucking will or he’ll be floating in space by the end of this day.

Make certain he knows that.”

“Dare I ask what happened?”

“Not now. It’s time to continue the hunt.” Now I sat back, surveying the area. There were dozens of females, many appetizing. But as soon as I took a deep whiff, I knew for certain not one of them was suitable. At least we weren’t stuck out in the middle of nowhere.

Sneering, I pulled the plastic container to my lips, tossing back the remainder of whatever liquor I’d purchased, immediately grabbing the bottle. The one thing I’d give the pirates was that they had excellent taste in booze, something that a huge majority of the planets no longer allowed. Tonight, I was tossing one back after another in celebration of my soon to be failure.

Forty-nine years, eleven months, and fifteen days had passed since embarking on this ridiculous adventure my father had sent me on, the few moon cycle nights left looming like a huge guillotine with a rusty blade.

“Son, it is your destiny to find your mate and ascend to the throne.”

Destiny. What bullshit. Yet my father’s words haunted the back of my mind. The ancient customs and cultures were ones every Vektorian had lived with for generations. I was beginning to wonder if some of them should change. Like this barbarian needed to procreate.

However, if the end of civilization was close, that would mean panic and chaos as the populations continued to die out. That wasn’t acceptable either.

Another snarl left my lips as I swirled the liquid in the glass, noticing a group of Cartoids had just slithered into the table next to mine. Fuck, there was nothing worse than the slimy creatures, their forked tongues and long reptilian tails covered in scabs, their pores oozing.

Yet for some reason, dozens of alien women found them attractive as evidenced by the looks they were getting from the females in the bar. That disgusted me.

What I knew about them made me bristle. They were hunting, which usually meant for trading flesh. They were the scourge of all species, loathsome in every way. I’d often wondered why my father had created such monsters.

He'd told me that all forms of life deserved a chance to redeem themselves. I'd laughed in his face. Maybe he'd had no control over what he'd created. That I'd never asked. If I ascended to the throne, perhaps I'd look into changing some aspects of our power.

After one of the Cartoid skanks poured out four glasses for his buddies, the creatures lifted their drinks in a toast, obviously celebrating something while I was wallowing in anger at myself. How many females had I encountered over the almost fifty years? Hundreds. Thousands. Not one had even sparked my interest, let alone had aroused my cock, the first indication of the possibility of a mate.

The only potential saving grace to the disaster that had become my life was that it was possible I and several species were compatible, not just one. However, my odds weren't so good at this point. I pounded back another drink, the Cartoids' exuberance annoying as fuck.

"Did you see the tits on that female?" one of them asked.

"Human females have the softest skin. I'll give them that."

"And the taste of their pussies is amazing."

I shifted my gaze in their direction, noticing the fourth one was deep in thought. When he spoke, his voice was garbled but I understood what he was saying.

"Fucking them is even better. The chick even took my fin up her ass." He grabbed the bulge between his legs, the odd-shaped procreation appendix even bigger than mine and I was considered well endowed.

"Whoa. That isn't possible!" the first Cartoid exclaimed. "Did you tear her apart?"

"She took every. Single. Inch. All twenty of it."

"Whoa."

I licked the rim of the glass and shook my head. I'd heard what my father had said but at this point, desperate times called for desperate measures. It was fascinating that it had taken overhearing a conversation by these

reprehensible creatures to remind me of a strange set of images I'd had a long time ago. The fantasies had been tasty if nothing else, allowing me to gather a sense of why so many males lost their minds over human females.

I had to admit that the gift of displacing time and space, allowing myself to enjoy the time spent with a human female in my mind had been fantastic. The first time had been little more than a dream, the young woman attempting to slice and dice me. That had been amusing. The second time had been... more powerful, as if the two of us were connected. I wondered if she existed in real life. Hmmm... The thought was one I'd ignored for far too long. How would I go about finding her again? While the girl had been a handful, it was obvious she fit my personality perfectly. I had to wonder if human females were all just as rebellious. I also had to consider that my father had purposely attempted to drive me away from any human lifeform. Of course. He did so enjoy playing games.

Perhaps I should listen to my inner self. Maybe thinking that I'd fucked a human was a sign and one I shouldn't avoid. I closed my eyes briefly, remembering the look of the woman in my mind's eye. She was gorgeous in a way that wasn't possible. Was it possible we weren't compatible? Or was it something my father had told me on purpose to push me away from them or a test that I needed to fulfill? No, he'd been trying to provide a message without steering me in one direction or another. Fascinating. And damning. But he'd known I was rebellious. I snickered softly, swirling the liquid once again.

I took another sip of my drink, trying to control my anger at their disgusting conversation. They were planning on abducting several human females. I wasn't supposed to get involved, but I couldn't allow them to do that. It wasn't in my genetic makeup.

Maybe Pops was wrong, and our bodies were compatible. If a Cartoid could fuck a human woman, then anything was possible. Right? Besides, my father had been known to send his sons down mazes to determine who was the smartest of the four of us. Hmmm... I tapped my finger on the rim of my glass. I wouldn't put anything past him at this point.

After all, he'd pitted Ravat against me.

“To the sweetest pussy in the world,” one of them growled then pounded his fist on the table. As they started chanting some shit about using and abusing every human female in their own language, I tuned out once again.

Another wave of anger tore through my system. Even after all these years, I couldn't accept the fact my father was dying. He'd yet to mention why. I'd been told when I was a small child that he would live forever, but others of our species had expired so why not him?

The sad thing was that I'd been lonely on the trip even with bringing Zaz with me. Somehow, carting around a dwarf dragon with an attitude had seemed easy. However, my pet demanded far more of my time than I'd been able to give him. Now he was a cranky boy heading into his twilight years.

I scrubbed my face then stood, snagging the bottle. Maybe a good night's rest would do me some good.

“Don't look now but there's one of the Vektorian pigs over there.”

“They truly think they own the universe.”

My kind had been called many things over the years, but 'pigs' was truly derogatory. There were still some species who refused to believe my father was the God of Creation, believing in the barbarian story instead. It was interesting that most humans and a few other species who refused to believe in our superiority, never once bowing to our command. Some had even called us names. I couldn't care less for the most part, but to have a member of the slithering scum throw slander like that in my direction made me bristle.

I did my best to walk away, preferring to end the night without killing anyone.

But as suspected, the fucker kept going. I was able to take a single step further away.

“Yeah, I heard they eat their young in blood sacrifices.”

They all laughed and that's the moment I could tell my patience had reached its end. When I turned around to face their table, the smart creatures who were close realized what was about to happen and immediately jerked up from their tables, backing away before the storm hit.

I slammed the bottle on the table where I'd been, hoping to keep it out of harm's way. Then I allowed my claws to extend on my right hand, snatching the largest reptile off his chair. Every time I issued a roar, people scattered away like the kind of vermin my father fed his beloved plant. While I'd reined in my anger successfully after several dozen near skirmishes, tonight my patience was all but gone.

As soon as I lifted the reptile into the air, cutting off his air supply, his skin oozed an entirely different substance, the green goo acid to most other creatures. It was their protective mechanism, making them virtually indestructible.

What a shame they hadn't heeded the warnings about Vektorians. Our skin was made of molten fire or ice, both killing substances. On top of that, they'd gotten it right that we were bloodthirsty, only I had a feeling the puke green bodily fluid running through their veins would be rancid.

One bite into the serpent's neck and I knew I'd been right. I spit out the hunk of flesh, sucking down only a pint of his life's liquid before tossing him aside. The taste lingering in my throat was disgusting. The other three assholes were momentarily shocked.

Then they thought they could take me on three against one. The dumb fucks had no idea what I was capable of. I took a deep breath, holding it for cause and effect. Then I blew it swiftly over their four figures. Almost instantly, the stench of their charred flesh permeated my nostrils, a pleasure that I hadn't succumbed to in eons. Far too long.

At least my actions had been controlled, concentric to the table and where they'd been. Easy cleanup for the barkeeper.

When they were dead, I grabbed my bottle of booze, taking a swig before heading toward the exit.

That's when I heard a squeal from one female to another.

"Oh, my. Do you know who that is? I think that's the God of Fire, the sexiest beast in any galaxy. I've seen his picture. Look at that stud muffin."

Stud muffin. Now that was a term I preferred to pig.

I took a deep whiff, hopeful the woman in question could be a possible mate.

Another disappointment.

At least I ended the night with a compliment. That was something.

Now it was time to return to the ship and plot a course for the closest human colony. I had nothing to lose at this point.

And I would open my mind, trying to locate the little human from before. What if she'd been my mate all along? I closed my eyes briefly, allowing an expansion of my tentacles of electricity to rush into the atmosphere. It was another gift. If the little human was out there, I would find her. However, if I was wrong that she was the one who had been my destiny for years, then I'd lose precious time that I didn't have.

The proverbial clock was ticking down.

I only hoped at the end there wouldn't be a huge boom as the universe began to disappear.

CHAPTER 9



*S*unny

My head ached and had for hours. I never got headaches. Or rarely.

Maybe the fight I'd had with the owner of the pups I still had in my care was the reason. The fucker had threatened me. I'd pulled out my bat and that had been that.

However, the stench of his alcoholic breath had lingered in the office, creating a violent wave of nausea. I could swear it was like someone had an ice pick, jamming it into my brain.

"I just worry about you, honey bunny."

It was my mother's favorite pet moniker to call me, something she'd done since I was a small child. I shoved the last of my things into the duffle bag, finally ready to go back to what would be my lonely little apartment.

At least a good portion of it had been renovated since I'd almost managed to burn it to the ground. "I'm fine." I rubbed my eyes and was instantly chilled when a vision slipped into the back of my mind. Not a vision exactly, a single image.

Him.

The alien.

The creature from my past, well, my fantasy past.

Or was it?

No. I was exhausted, which had to be the reason I'd thought about the gorgeous alien. There was no other explanation.

"That's what you've said for days. You know, you're better off knowing what Skyler was made of before you dropped into a lifetime of hatred and angst."

I felt her hand touching my arm and opened my eyes.

"Are you okay, honey? You look flushed."

"I'm fine, Mama. Really, I am."

Hatred and angst were exactly what I felt. Just stepping foot into the bedroom where we'd... been nonromantic would push every button. Why couldn't I find a man who was all male, strong and confident, and eager to spend the rest of his life with me? Was that too much to ask?

At least I had plans to stop at a local megawatt fantasy club at my bestie's insistence. As she'd reminded me, I could ogle and google men without taking one of them home for keeps. Tory always knew how to drag me out of a bad mood, which I'd remained in since finding Skyler with the woman of his dreams, as he'd been stupid enough to call her.

I'd followed through with my plan, kicking him out without his clothes, the little hussy as well. Then I'd carefully set the bed and my sex toys on fire, which had technically been a crime. Fortunately, my dad knew the fire chief, who'd slid the event into a mystery file never to be brought to the light of day again.

"I think you should stay for a few more days. You need a vacation."

"You know I can't do that. I love you but I'm a big girl. I have a business to run and a life to get back to." The puppies I'd rescued were still in the infirmary, although they didn't need to be. I simply wanted to continue protecting them, especially since their soon to be former owner had threatened me. Fuck him. The intelligent girl with the calm demeanor had

changed over the last week. In my mind for the better.

I zipped the case holding my things, laughing as I heard Thor's whine. It was funny how he hadn't been bothered in the least by Skyler's absence. In fact, if my memory served me correctly, my beautiful golden child had nipped at Sky's heels on the way out. The evil girl inside of me had wanted to encourage the pup to take a chunk out of him, but I'd shown extreme restraint, something my mother should be proud of.

"I know, baby. It's just your father and I worry about you. Plus, we like having you around."

I truly did adore my parents but after spending a full week with them, I'd been reminded why I'd wanted the apartment in the first place. My mother had fawned over me like I was five and needed constant care and attention.

That wasn't the kind of woman I'd turned into. Nope. I was a badass bitch with a haughty attitude. Wait. Isn't that what Skyler had spewed with difficulty after I'd issued a second savage punch, splitting his lip and breaking his front tooth? Yes, I think it had been.

I grabbed the bag, tossing it over my shoulder.

"Stop worrying, Mom. I'm fine now." Sure, I'd shed a few tears but not nearly as many as I'd originally thought. Maybe the asshole had done me a favor after all.

"Remember that you're a highly intelligent, extremely special woman. You have five degrees, can speak several languages, and have your entire life ahead of you. You were born to have your moment in destiny."

I froze hearing the word yet again. What I didn't believe in were coincidences. "Destiny. I'm curious, Mama. You truly think my destiny has been planned from my birth?"

Almost instantly she appeared uncomfortable. "It is a belief both your father and I have." When she looked away, I took a deep breath.

"Okay, if that's the case then what's my destiny? Obviously, not with Skyler."

She laughed, but I could tell she was searching my eyes. “Oh, dear heavens, no.”

“Do you know? Is that why we moved to this godforsaken Earth Station when we could be living anywhere? You have premonitions just like I do. Don’t tell me your gift has died out. I know better. You’re the soothsayer of the family.” The outer lying post was beneath my father. I’d never asked him why he’d chosen the position. I realized my parents had been the ones responsible for me getting the veterinarian position when I’d known there were more qualified candidates.

She appeared more uncomfortable than ever, and my skin started to crawl. “Honey. If anyone knew their destiny, don’t you think chaos would ensue? There are reasons we are not told. My premonitions come and go like yours. You haven’t had any recently, have you?”

I’d never told her about my experiences in college. I was fearful that she’d tell my father. Then if the creatures I described even existed, he would do everything in his power to eradicate them. I honestly doubted my father wanted his little girl married to anyone. “Nope. Not in a long time. When you met Daddy, did you know he was the one?”

Her eyes lit up once again. “I honestly believe there is a single person for us out there. I know that’s not what most humans or any creatures believe any longer, but that’s the way I was brought up.”

“So, if my right mate comes along, alien or human, then it’s okay.”

The single look of horror flashing across her face made me cringe. “You need to be careful. There are many out there who can disguise themselves as your mate.”

“O-kay.” Maybe she was right in that I didn’t want to know. I wasn’t entirely certain how that was possible, at least for humans. Maybe we were more susceptible to mind games than I was aware of. “I’ll be careful.”

“Good girl. But to answer your question, the moment I walked into a room and saw your father, that was it. I was entranced.”

When my mother started to reminisce, I could tell she had something else on her mind. Both she and my father had been highly disappointed when I’d left

the aerospace program, deciding weeks before graduation to switch my major to veterinary school. I'd realized I didn't want to become a starship pilot or engineer, preferring soft, furry creatures to commanding powerful ships cruising the various galaxies. Then they'd done everything in their power to convince me to come to the same Earth Station. I had to shake this craziness. I was just angry with Skyler because he'd rocked my world. There was no other decent explanation.

"That's why I want you happy, sweet Sunny. You deserve it," she concluded.

"Mother darling, I am happy. I've gotten a chance to do what I love most in the world. Isn't that what matters the most?"

She still had a strange look on her face, an unreadable expression. "Of course, dear. Your father and I are so happy you took the position."

Uh-huh. I wasn't in the mood to get into her pep talk about how I was wasting my life or that I needed to find a suitable husband. That wasn't in the cards at this point. Obviously. "I'm leaving now, Mommy dearest. Going out with friends tonight."

Another flash of concern swept across her face. We had our share of crimes here, but the Earth Station was one of the safest places in the world.

"Be careful. There are reports of trespassers everywhere."

Why was it that I felt as if she knew more than she was telling me? While my father wasn't supposed to confide confidential business to her, especially those required the highest level of clearance, I'd always suspected he had. "Yes, Mother. I'm always careful."

"Will you promise to come for Sunday dinner? Your sister managed to get on a transport ship at the last moment. I'm so excited to have you girls in one place."

My sister was so entirely different that I was shocked she'd bothered to take the time to even see my parents. She hadn't been to the Earth Station once since they'd moved here years before.

"Sure, Mom. I'll be here." My sister and I didn't really get along, but I wouldn't disappoint my mother, especially since her birthday was coming up.

“Maybe tell her to pick up a shipment of Triander while she’s on her way.” The drug had yet to arrive, and it was desperately needed, other babies at the clinic suffering without the antibiotic. I hated the fact the drugs were so highly controlled, but as with so many things in our world, the bad eggs made it difficult for all of us.

“I’ll let her know, dear. Take care of yourself and don’t set your apartment on fire again. Your father has used up his get out of jail free card.”

I’d heard the expression yet frowned. Sometimes I was certain my mother belonged in a time capsule. “Okay, Mom. Talk to you soon.”

As soon as I was out of her house, I pulled out my communications system, contacting Tory.

“Woo-hoo, baby girl.”

I glared at her. “Don’t call me that.”

“Oops. I’m sorry. I’m just excited. Where are you?”

“Trying to get out of my mother’s house. I need to drop Thor off at the apartment and I’ll be right there.”

“He can come with us. The fabulous place is pet friendly. Maybe he’ll attract a sexy guy or two.”

“Uh, no. I’m not using my dog as bait, thank you very much. I’m also not interested in picking up some hot guy.”

“You know what your mother would say,” Tory said, laughing her ass off. I could barely hear her from the music pumping in the background. The lights pulsing around her were colorful but dizzying, enough so I had to pull the communications device away by several inches. I opened the door of my transport unit, allowing Thor to jump into his regular seat. Then I climbed inside, immediately pressing my index finger against the starter. When it roared to life, I realized I finally felt as if I could take control of my life, which was something I hadn’t been able to do around Skyler.

“When are you coming home?”

“Did you stop and pick up something for dinner?”

“Nah, I’m too tired to go out.”

“Why do you work so many long hours?”

The statements and questions had been the same for the last eight or nine months. Now I knew why at least. He’d been seeing the redhead for a long time instead of working extra hours like he’d told me. No wonder I paid for almost everything. “I’m afraid to ask.” I closed the door and threw the shifter into drive. I’d ordinarily punch in the coordinates for my apartment, allowing the intellectual piece of property, as I’d been reminded it was, to do all the work. Tonight, I felt like driving it myself.

The thrill never got old, the need for speed one of my father’s favorite sayings.

“That if you get knocked off a horse, get right back up on it. I’ll add, ride a cowboy, save a horse.”

“What?” I almost choked, accidentally veering the transport unit to the right, nearly jumping into the other lane of airspace traffic. The flash of neon blue light let me know I’d almost caused a collision midair. I switched to the console communicator, shaking my head and planting both hands on the directional device.

“You heard me. You need to fuck a hot man. Maybe instead of a human you could find yourself a sexy alien. I’ve heard the Ganglors are impressive as hell in bed.”

“Absolutely not.” But they were supposed to be well endowed and for some reason, they enjoyed coming to the colony. Maybe because it had been designed and created to resemble Earth. Sadly, I’d never been to the now barren planet because of the continued toxic fumes from the last world war. I’d seen digitized pictures, our robots providing beautiful three-dimensional renderings from ancient books and computer systems that I’d heard our scientists had managed to get into. “Besides, not that many aliens are allowed on the colony at one time. The likelihood that I’ll find any of them attractive ranges from slim to never going to happen. You know that.”

“I dunno.” Her voice was singsong, and she shifted the communications device, allowing me to see a full circumference of where she was seated. “I

see some sexy hunks of meat myself.”

A fleeting moment regarding the dream slithered into my mind all over again, the sharp intensity pushing my concentration level to a minimum. Then I forced myself to glance at the sexy alien creatures, trying to control my breathing.

I took a few seconds too long gawking at one of the sensual yet brooding aliens, almost running into an air sign. Then he noticed he was being watched and opened his... beak. Fuck me. Anyone with razor-sharp teeth wasn't getting anywhere near my private parts. Nope. Not going to happen.

“Nice try. I'm coming for a few drinks and nothing more.”

“We'll see. You know I'm good at convincing you to do very kinky things.”

“That's the problem. Never again.” I still blamed her for the wackiness of the dream, even though she couldn't have had anything to do with it. The fantasy gift was something else.

Laughing, Tory winked then ended the call.

I glanced at Thor, who pawed his face. “I'm with ya, buddy. No more men. Ever. Okay, for least a year. Deal?”

Woof!

CHAPTER 10



Sunny

“Come enjoy your greatest fantasies. Indulge in your darkest proclivities. All while surrounded by everything you need to bring your sin and shame to life.”

The commercial was one I’d memorized, the girl’s voice sultry and her outfit barely there. Her figure crawled across the humongous screen, the advertisement doing exactly what she was paid the big bucks to do.

Entice men and women alike, encouraging them to feed their hungers. Her shimmering skin and bright purple eyes were only the beginning of why men preferred taking a Baristan woman to bed. I’d also heard their acrobatic abilities were... out of this world.

Sighing, I glanced at the second billboard before drifting around a series of slow-moving transport units. The fuchsia-haired model hired to beckon customers with a single finger and a lick of her lips was deliriously good at what she did. I’d heard she was one of the highest paid actors in the galaxy when she’d only appeared in two commercials, both for Sin and Shame, the club Tory had lured me to for a night of debauchery. It was her attempt at making me forget what I’d recently been through.

Sadly, I’d only been to the sensual location once for a bachelorette party for

one of my old college friends. I had no idea why I'd been talked into it, other than Tory had been involved. She was like a strange noose around my neck.

The experience had neither been indulgent nor provocative, just shameful. At least for me. I'd remained red-faced the entire time while the other girls had dragged me into various specialty rooms where acts had been performed that I'd never even heard of. I'd certainly gotten a crash course in sexuality that night.

Not that I'd been a virgin any longer.

No, the big, bad alien took your prized virtue from you.

I couldn't relive that over again. Not a chance.

Sadly, the fantasy realm would forever burn into the back of my mind. Why more tonight? I could almost reach out and touch the creature. Insanity.

What had come out of the salacious experience was my follow-up order of copious numbers of sex toys. I rolled my eyes at the thought since I'd tossed out every single delicious toy after the crap with Skyler. I could see a huge order in my future.

At least tonight I wouldn't run from the club with tears in my eyes. Chuckling, I pulled the transport unit into a hover space, immediately noticing how crowded the club was. I knew the place was popular but holy moly, it was difficult to maneuver into the tight space, the various transport units at least four high. That wasn't legal. Was it?

As soon as I jumped out, heading for the pathway walker, I heard the club's pulsing music. I adored all kinds of sounds, vibes from everything classical to jazz, heavy metal my favorite, but what I heard could only be described as tribal, island music, something my mother used to play nonstop on some crazy player where you stuck a disc inside. Somehow my father had found an oldie but goodie player for her for one holiday event. Or maybe their anniversary.

"I'm here," I said into the communications device as I stepped on the platform.

Tory's face appeared, a grin on her face. I could tell by her glassy eyes she

was already intoxicated. Oh, boy. I might need to cart her home for the night. Hissing, I realized I was the only person on the platform and sighed. So what if I was fashionably late? I grabbed the handle, surprised at the rough movement of the walking system. It was usually a smooth ride down to the main stationary floor.

I studied my communications device, noticing Skyler had tried to contact me four times. And he'd texted six. To hell with him. I had nothing to say to his cheating ass. I shoved the device into my small bag then ran my hands down the front, ready to step into a moment of pure sin.

My mother had told me more than once I had an excellent sixth sense, which allowed me to know when something was wrong. It was a fancy way of saying that I should follow my instinct at all times. The best indication something terrible was about to happen was the way my skin crawled. The second was just as viable. There was a distinct stench in the air. I'd know the godawful odor from a mile away. There was a single creature who stunk like aging garbage.

And the beast was one of the most dangerous predators in the universe, their mercenary and alien trafficking services legendary. They preferred humans, especially women, obtaining a significantly higher price for us on the black market. Once in their clutches, it was almost impossible to break free without serious bodily harm.

How in the hell had they gotten onto the Earth Station? I hadn't heard they'd been allowed any diplomatic stance given the atrocities they'd performed. Oh, God. If they were rogues, I could be in trouble.

That meant I had to act quickly, reaching into my bag to find my universal killing spray while jumping backward out of their reach, spinning around then landing a savage kick against the approaching creature. Within seconds, I realized I was outnumbered five to one, the winged creatures with sharp canines and bulging eyes dead set on taking me with them.

"Uh-oh." I couldn't wrap my fingers around the flask soon enough, one of the creatures snagging and tossing my bag. Now I was defenseless, the classes I'd taken in self-preservation not holding a candle to what the fuckers could do. However, I refused to go down without a fight.

“Come on, boys. Let’s get it on.” I took a fighter’s stance, ready to throw hard punches. Unless I was knocked out by their stench first. When they glanced at each other, their communication systems non-vocal, I took the opportunity to kick one of them between its birdlike legs.

That didn’t go over well, the asshole leaping off the ground. He had his bony fingers wrapped around my neck within seconds, preparing to drag me off the surface. I fought with everything I had, pummeling my fists into his face, but the hard-shell exterior prevented me from causing any damage.

Still, I kept trying, issuing brutal swings, one after another until I was exhausted. The fuckers were shocked, glaring at each other in wonderment. I’d run except they had me backed against a wall. This was getting ridiculous. I said a silent prayer, trying to figure out if there was anything I could say to them to try to resolve the conflict. Right. As if they had brains larger than peas. One of them stepped forward, his clicking noises as disturbing as the reprehensible stench.

Just seconds before I was whisked toward their awaiting ship, the ground started to rumble. Then shake.

Then we all heard a roar.

I’d seen my share of action flicks over the years, powerful heroes and heroines who saved the day, but I’d never experienced anything like the ridiculously outlandish stories in real life. There was danger all around me of course. I wasn’t immune to criminal elements. My little veterinary clinic had been broken into twice, both times by an unspecified beast searching for drugs. I’d seen it all. Hell, I’d been required to provide aid to aliens I hadn’t been able to communicate with.

However, when a mammoth alien suddenly appeared, especially one with burnt russet skin and eyes the color of flames sparking in the night sky, I was momentarily shocked. So were the nasty Tantian creatures; the one alien dropped me like a lead weight then all five snarled as they flew off into different directions.

My skin crawled, but not necessarily in a bad way. I was reliving the dream, the fantasy. And I was certain the beast had come to make good on his promise. Hell, no.

I scampered toward the building, crouching low and headed for the main entrance while the wildly gorgeous beast of a man proceeded to attack. With a hard swing of his massive, muscular arm, two of the creatures were tossed toward the sky like bothersome insects.

The three others were undaunted, barreling toward the mystery hero. The loud cracking sound filtering into the air was a clear indication the neck of one assailant had been snapped. When the dude's head rolled off, I winced, which wasn't like me at all. I was the girl who wanted to see the bloodshed in a movie, the gorier the better.

Maybe it was seeing it up close that made all the difference. I scampered closer to the edge of the building, the thumping music creating a wave of nausea. Or maybe it was the stinky odor lingering in my nostrils. I hadn't realized I'd made a single sound as my savior let off a bolt of flames from his fingertips, incinerating another creature in seconds.

But I had and it drew the attention of one of the beasts who'd been flung to the side. I could see his beady red eyes peering down at me from his perch high on another building.

Now there was the stench of rotting and charred flesh. I pressed my hand over my mouth and nose, scrambling to get inside to safety.

Too late.

The winged creature had me in his claw seconds later, snarling in enjoyment as he attempted to break free of the carnage. However, my hero was too quick for him, crushing his foot down on the head of another Tantuan, squashing it like a cantaloupe. Then he sailed into the sky, managing to wrap his arm around my waist and pulling me free while spewing flames from his open mouth.

This time, I had an up close and personal view of the horror. My savior tossed what little was left of the creature to the side, carefully returning me to the ground. What I noticed immediately was that his hold remained firm while he scanned the perimeter, searching for another winged creature to make an entrance.

It was insane how much electricity was coursing through me. I could feel my

pulse increasing, the blood in my veins heating up by several degrees. I placed my hand on the beast's chest, blinking several times to try to alleviate the fog that had developed around my eyes. I'd never seen nor experienced anything like I just had. Almost instantly, the tips of my fingers were seared from the touch and I jerked my hand away, studying my fingertips to see if the skin was peeling off.

The sensations were just that, nothing real, relief spreading through my fingers as soon as I'd removed my hand. However, I wanted to touch him again. I longed to feel him, to caress him. To kiss him.

I tilted my head, studying his features, memorizing every detail. He wasn't human but his physique was damn close, the bones in his face sculpted as if from the finest granite, a rare and expensive substance that had been stripped from Earth. I had the urge to touch his face. When I did, my gesture seemed to shock him.

A trickle of complete uncertainty tore through me. My God. This beast was the spitting image of the creature I'd conjured up in the fantasy from over two years before. I'd been right that he was also the one from the dream. Was this the reason I'd thought about him for hours? I'd known I would be in danger later? There was no chance in hell I'd ever seen this beast before in real life. Was this some crazy manifestation of the beginning of insanity? Wait a minute. Of course it was possible given the work my father did for a living with the government.

He'd worked with dozens of species that most humans had never seen in pictures and certainly not in real life. Those who were troublemakers were kept on a list, their images captured, every scrap of information placed on a database. It was entirely possible I'd caught a glimpse of one or more of my father's files over the years.

Okay, so it was likely given I was a little snoop and wanted to know what was going on in the universe. But to see this creature in real life, I was even more stunned than the memories had allowed me to be. He was freaking gorgeous with a capital F and a capital G.

However, what if he was a bad dude as well, saving me so he could abduct me or worse? He'd been utterly possessive in the dream and fantasy, telling

me in no uncertain terms he'd come for me one day. Hold on. I was buying into this crazy notion I'd created a savior-captor of my own? "I can handle this."

A slight growl erupted from his barrel chest as he turned and lowered his head, studying me intently. As if I was nuts. Yep. I was.

The way he was looking at me was as if he recognized me as well. No, not recognized. Hungered for. I'd gone from the frying pan into the fire.

The electricity continued to flow, the heat in my fingertips entirely different than before, more sensual in nature. Suddenly, I was wet between my legs, my pussy throbbing. I was shuddering, vibrations tearing through me as my very core heated up to an explosive point.

The unknown creature stared at me with such intensity I was pitched into a vacuum, everything else around me fading away.

He kept his hold, raking his heated gaze down my face to my neck and breasts. I didn't need a lesson in the beast's anatomy to know being this close to me had him fully aroused. Whatever appendage he had between his legs was huge, as in twice the size of any normal human.

You've had him before. He fit just fine, remember?

Sometimes I hated my inner voice.

Swallowing, I realized I was playing with fire.

The quip wasn't lost on me. The man had spewed the substance seconds before and I was making jokes. What in the world was wrong with me?

You're in shock. That's what. This beast could do more harm to you than the others. You need to get away. Fight or flight.

As soon as the words were whispered into my mind, he let me go, his chest rising and falling as he took rapid breaths. Dear God. The beast could also read my mind?

Just like the one from the fantasy. The weirdness about the situation was getting off the charts.

When he reached for me again, I knew I had to do something.

I decided to choose flight, pushing hard against him to try to break the connection. But I added insult to injury, managing to kick him hard in the groin.

He responded by issuing a terrifying roar, the sound booming in the space around us. Why the hell didn't club guards come running?

I backed away quickly, struggling to find any words to say to him. A hum of vibrations danced from the ground underneath his feet to just beneath mine. I glanced down quickly, half expecting to see a massive hole opening up to swallow me in or to see the earth scorched.

There was nothing odd. I couldn't seem to stop shaking, the beast's silence unnerving. But I could swear he was letting me know through mental telepathy that he wouldn't hurt me, not after he'd saved my life.

I backed away even further, still tongue tied. Fortunately, I managed to find my voice. "Thank you for saving my life." Then my behavior was as unusual as before. Instead of peppering the beast with questions, I turned around and fled, grabbing my fallen bag then moving quickly toward the entrance without looking back.

But after rushing inside, I glanced over my shoulder.

My hero had disappeared.

* * *

Zatan

Humans.

They weren't anything like what I'd expected seeing them in real life. They were indeed as frail as I'd heard, so fragile that with a snap of my little finger bones would break. Their skin was so thin that a few seconds in my sun, and they wouldn't recover from the burns. There was also an arrogance about

them that defied logic.

However, I sensed the exact reason the males of other alien species lost their minds, eager for a single taste. Her scent alone was enough for any beast to become intoxicated, almost like a combination of the flowering objects on Vektor coupled with the aroma of a spring rain. As strange as it sounded even to a god like me, the sweet taste of her pussy lingered on my tongue from the ridiculous fantasy I'd been involved in.

She'd called to me, her dream awakening the sadistic creature inside. That's when I'd known for certain our meeting had been arranged years before, nurtured by suggestion by my father. He'd played a game with me, refusing to direct me toward her because he knew I'd do exactly the opposite. The man was smart as a whip. I had to wonder who he'd planned for my brother.

And I had no doubt our father had the entire future laid out. Why wouldn't he? I snickered at the thought.

The males of the species were entirely different. I'd encountered four of them when forced to go through a short quarantine. They'd acted as if they were better than me, making fun of my battered ships, not bothering to notice the battle scars from lightyears of travel.

If I had to guess, I'd say they'd never been off Earth Station Sixty-Nine. While I had to admit the location was colorful with vibrant hues from reds to greens, the unpredictable weather and cool breeze was nothing as I'd expected.

I'd walked the streets, searching for any sign of intelligent life, finding nothing of interest. There were few other species allowed on the moon star, which meant humans were also fearful for their safety. Perhaps they possessed certain aspects of wisdom. Perhaps.

The time spent had been interesting but not fruitful. I'd been drawn to her but given we'd yet to meet, I hadn't been able to find her location. That had wasted valuable time, increasing my rage. I'd begun to think I was on a fool's quest.

Until I'd caught a whiff of the cretins who'd managed to fly in under the human's radar system. Tantians were vile creatures, more so than the dozen

or so others within their genus. As they were hired mercenaries, I'd realized instantly that they had a particular mark in mind, a human they'd been paid to kill or capture.

On a highly protected Earth Station such as this one, that usually meant a powerful influencer, a black-market criminal, or a politician. While known for trafficking in females, they usually gathered their prey at much easier spots than one so secured. I'd been curious as to their intended target, my anticipation they were after a human female correct.

Although I hadn't anticipated it would be my mate. Instantly, my hackles had been raised. What were the chances she'd been selected at random? Zero. There were dozens of attractive human females on the Earth Station. Why hadn't the Tantians scooped them up and been on their way before risking the chance the stringent security system installed on the moon planet would draw attention to their presence? Granted, I'd heard the Tantians had recently unveiled a cloaking system that could challenge every alien security. Still, the risk had to be worth the reward, especially given the reputation of the man who controlled the armed forces on Earth Station Sixty-Nine.

He just happened to be my mate's father.

Too many coincidences at a time when I couldn't be wrong about my choice.

Hissing, I realized that whatever was happening was likely a conspiracy to keep me from mating with her. That could push the timing up. However, prudence was required. I had to know for certain she was my mate. Anything else could start an interplanetary war. Her father wouldn't let her go easily.

I would give the human some credit, as foolish as her behavior had been. She refused to take shit from anyone. She wasn't what I'd expected, even contemplating finding a weapon to use against me. I could read her mind, something that was both tempting as well as annoying.

She'd glared at me with twinkling eyes, attracted yet furious I'd come to her rescue. Had she no clue that she'd come close to becoming a slave for the rest of her life? Humans. They were aggravating as fuck. Could I stand living with her for all eternity?

Only if I trained her. That could be enjoyable. I had to admit it. There was no

denying our intense connection or the electricity we shared.

I understood to many she'd be considered beautiful with her long golden hair and bright green eyes. Her skin had been softer than anticipated as well, searing slightly under my fingertips. What had surprised me more than anything was her fighting spirit. She would never have had a chance of survival with the Tantiens, yet that hadn't stopped her. She'd fought them with everything she had.

Then she'd fought me.

That had forced my cock into a fully aroused state, something that hadn't occurred in a long time. A reason to find her again.

But there was more than one reason. The fact we'd engaged in carnal activity before was stimulating. The first night had been little more a dream state, a taste of the gift provided to all four sons of the God of Creation. Leaving my body for extended periods of time, exploring the universe in an altered state had never intrigued me. Until my father had suggested I could leave it to satisfy my dark cravings. I'd listened to him, enjoying the refreshing activity.

And I'd done it again, going to the next level to allow what my body and mind remembered as a physical connection. Again, at my father's suggestion for a birthday present. I wanted to laugh. He'd led me along a path for years, waiting for the right time. The man was a genius manipulator.

I'd done it a few times but had grown bored with the gift from my father, preferring actuality to the esoteric experience. I'd experienced a few other alien females, always hungering for the human. Why tell me we weren't compatible? To push my cravings even more. I would have a long conversation with him when I returned to Vektor.

The bottom line was I'd tasted her before and I would do so again. And this time, she wouldn't be allowed out of my sight. I took a deep whiff, locating her easily by her exotic scent. She was inside the building where I could hear strange music. And there were dozens of males, some from other species. And I sensed their hunger for her.

That wasn't going to happen.

No other creature would ever touch her again.

As I headed for the door of the strange establishment, I rolled the tips of my fingers together, gathering another whiff of her scent. I was already drunk off it, which didn't bode well for ensuring we both left the planet without harm. If the Tantians wanted her for a specific reason, that meant they'd try again. Now, they'd be angry. At least I hadn't allowed them an opportunity to make contact with their mother ship, warning them a Vektorian was in the same location. That would also place the lives of the other humans living on the Earth Station in jeopardy.

I had to remember my oath to protect the good people of every species. The bad people? I could kill them and had every intention of doing so as often as necessary.

After throwing open the door and storming inside, I brought my hand to my face, taking a deep whiff again. The fragrance was delicate, exotic. Pleasurable. The experience had been electrifying and not only because I'd crushed five of the unwanted beasts but because I'd had a chance to come close to a dazzling human female.

What had surprised me more than anything was the connection I'd felt to her, including being able to read her mind. My father had never mentioned that was possible with humans. He'd made it seem like their brain waves couldn't function at such a high level. Maybe there were aspects about humans he had no clue about.

In fact, the synergy I'd experienced with the girl had been so powerful there was no doubt of how much importance she had to my life and that of every Vektorian. However, given my father had already known that, why the games? For political reasons? I wouldn't put it past him. Humans were powerful in their own right, their people living in several galaxies. Still, an interesting choice. Not that the thought of fucking a human was appetizing, but that was the only to ensure that our two species would work in the biological sense.

I scanned the facility, my senses immediately assaulted by noise I'd never heard before. It was as if there was something wrong with almost everyone inside, their bodies jerking in strange actions to the heavy beat of a horrific sound that they seemed to enjoy. It strained my ears.

Snarling, the second some asshole stopped me by placing their fingers on my skin, I snapped my head in their direction. Fortunately, the large human backed off, shaking his hand from the slight burn. I had the ability to turn my skin into molten lava, another attribute that made our kind all but indestructible. I could also turn it off if desired, which up to now was something I'd yet to do. The fact it had shifted to the lowest level when I was near the girl was another reason I needed to fuck her.

It had been my body's involuntary reaction. The asshole who'd dared touch a god had learned his lesson, currently howling like some crazed banshee animal. Even my pet dragon didn't make screeching sounds like the human was doing.

I took a deep whiff. It would seem everyone on the planet wore some kind of artificial fragrance, every scent assaulting my senses. Her fragrance was special. It was merely a matter of weeding through the hundreds of humans to find her. My balls tightened at the thought.

As I pushed my way through the crowd, some glared at me in horror while several females attempted to pull me onto a brightly lit floor, the pulsing lights matching the odd beat I'd heard from before. I made mental note of the layout of the facility, realizing there were separate rooms with dozens of other bodies inside. I'd gathered the scent of sex, which I found interesting, somewhat arousing. I couldn't discern the girl's fragrance. However, she was here. I could feel her.

I was surprised at the attire, items of clothing that certainly wouldn't protect them if a war broke out. Perhaps they didn't care or enjoyed being sitting ducks. I powered through the room, realizing there was several floors to the ugly location. It was just a matter of time before I found her.

“Hey, sugar. Would you like to dance?”

The lilting voice came from the side. I stopped long enough to turn my head in her direction, watching as her eyes opened wide. I had little desire to say anything to any of them, preferring to remain an observer for now. I flared my nostrils, which usually worked in pushing unwanted beasts aside. Only the diminutive female refused, jumping in front of me after I took a long stride forward once again.

“Oh, the strong, silent type. How delicious. Care to buy me a drink?”

I cocked my head, studying her intently. Then I placed my hand around her throat. “Female dressed in pink. Long blonde hair. She is mine. Where is she?”

“Sugar. That describes almost every chick in here. You’ll have to be more specific.”

She clawed my hand, shocked at the warmth my fingers emitted. When I lowered my head, I allowed her to catch a single vision of the blonde. The dark-skinned girl swallowed hard then pointed behind her. “She went that way. There are private areas upstairs. That’s all I know.”

I let her go, giving her a hard look before storming away toward the direction she sent me.

When I found the stunning woman I’d saved, I would fuck her. Then if our tethering was strong, I’d capture her once and for all.

Then she’d become mine.

My mate.

My queen.

Forever.

CHAPTER 11



Sunny

“Aren’t you glad we came?” Tory asked.

I sucked down my drink so fast I almost had an icy blast to my head. I was ripped from adrenaline, horrified at what I’d seen. I was still shaking.

And I could still feel him.

His touch.

His heated gaze.

The searing electricity.

My dream date. My fantasy. The man who was hell bent on making me his.

You’re a human. There are rules. Laws.

Yeah. As if they mattered to alien beings.

“O-kay. You look like something happened. What’s going on?” Tory glared at me. “Were you dreaming again of the perfect man?” There was a twinkle in her eyes, an attempt to make me feel better after Skyler’s betrayal.

“Nothing. I’m fine. I’m just thirsty. It was a long drive.”

“Uh-huh.” She motioned toward the android then placed her drink in my hand. “What gives?”

“Do you remember that fantasy you gave me a couple years ago for my birthday? Do you remember the odd dream you walked in on?”

“Sure, although you told me almost nothing about what happened?” She gave me a wicked smile. “But the dream, oh, my lord. Do you remember we found a knife blade stuck in the wall?”

Oh, God. I’d forgotten about that.

“Yeah, that.” I laughed, the memories sending a powerful series of vibrations through me.

“How could I forget? From what you told me about that dream, I need to find a hunky man like that.”

“That’s because both were insanely powerful. Do you think it’s possible that the experience was real instead of computer generated?” I scanned the room, certain he wasn’t ready to let me go.

Tory narrowed her eyes, glaring at me as if my skin had turned green. “Um. They are called fantasies for a reason.”

“Have you ever experienced one?”

She raked her hand through her hair. “Honestly? No. I’ve been terrified to after what you told me.”

“You little bitch!” I teased, the fire in my system remaining. “Interesting. I chose the possible future selection. Do you think that’s real?” When she didn’t answer me right away, I turned my head. “What? What do you know and aren’t telling me?”

She shrugged and sucked on the straw in her drink.

I smacked her arm. “Talk or I’ll kick your butt.”

“Don’t you remember the near shut down of the company like six months after you had your experience?”

Exhaling, I thought about her question, allowing my brain to process it.

“Kinda. What happened?”

“Look, my father was one of the people investigating the firm.” She pulled me further away from any chance we’d be overheard, which was ridiculous considering the loudness of the music.

“Okay. I had no idea.”

“Yeah, well, it’s one of the many secretive projects he was working on. Anyway, he didn’t tell me much other than forbidding me to ever consider going to them for a fantasy fulfilled, but he did say that the owners of the company had developed some crazy technology.”

Why did I have cold shivers jetting down my spine? “As in what, the ability to make what happens real?”

She nodded. “I didn’t know before I gave you the gift or I never would have done that to you. Was it horrible?”

Now I was the one raking my hand through my hair. “The thing is, I loved it. Every. Single. Second. When it was over, I felt a loss. It was as if I was close to this alien, connected somehow.”

“Okay, then why ask about it now? Obviously, you weren’t hurt?”

“Does it mean others were?”

After biting her lip, she wrinkled her nose. “From what I overheard, yes. There were at least twenty unexplained deaths. Supposedly, the company said that the guests to their facilities lied on their forms about a physical condition, but that’s the reason the investigation was started in the first place.”

“But they’re still in business.”

“Yeah, but from my understanding, they paid out a lot of trident coins to keep people from suing their asses. Plus, their fantasies are little more than vanilla custard now.”

Exhaling, I glanced around the club, the prickly sensations remaining. “Good to know.”

“Why are you curious?”

“Just because.”

“You beast of a friend. I’ll get it out of you before the night’s over with,” she said through clenched teeth. “Incidentally, I sent you something. It should be delivered by the time you return to your apartment tonight.”

I grabbed her drink, and she glared at me. What she’d told me was far more unnerving than I wanted her to know. Was it really possible the entire experience had been real? How many times had I asked myself the same question? Now I had my answer. Yes. Insanity or not, there was no way I’d imagined the big bad dude coming to my rescue.

I thought about the bite marks, which by the time I’d returned home that night had faded. Granted, my body had been aching, but it had been conceivable that I’d been thrashing around. That’s why I’d been told to wear comfortable clothes when seeking adventure.

Now I was mind fucking myself. Finally, her words registered, pulling me back to reality.

“Oh, dear God. What did you do? And what did you send?” I sniffed her fruity beverage and handed it back to her. What I was drinking was much stronger. Within seconds, the faceless android rolled forward, placing the drink on the gyrating bar that had already made me dizzy. I faced the steel machine, allowing him to scan my face not only for recognition purposes but so a bill would eventually arrive in my planetary email system.

“It just seemed like such a waste that you threw out all those sexy toys of yours.” She burst into laughter and heat shot across my face. “I just sent you a subscription. Soon, you’ll have all the kinky shit you need to use on a brand-new boyfriend.”

“That’s not funny and I’ve given up men for a long time.”

“I’m not kidding. Call it the apartment warming gift I never sent you. So what gives? You seemed excited and terrified at the same time. Did you have another dream?”

“Not exactly.” The excited part was because of the sexy, massive alpha beast

who'd protected me. Who'd saved me. He'd swooped in like the perfect hero, although I could swear the dude had an ulterior motive.

"O-kay. Do you want me to provide pictures of the sexy objects? Real solid-state handcuffs, forged from the finest steel. Leather whips with long tails that will wrap around your thighs when your new master spansks you."

"Stop it! Jesus. You're incorrigible."

She shrugged and winked at the same time. "All's fair in friendship. If you don't tell me whatever you're hiding from me, I'll make certain your neighbors know exactly what you ordered."

"I'm going to kill you. You do know that. Right?"

"You can try but I'm a tough girl. Now, what in God's name made you ask about the fantasy experience after two years?"

The woman was serious. At least she could make me laugh. I scanned the bar, still expecting to see the brute standing only a few feet away. If I was so afraid, why was my pussy aching? "I was almost killed outside the club." I took a gulp of the new drink, enjoying the bitter taste.

"What? What are you talking about?" She grabbed my arm. "You're serious."

"I am. Tantians."

"Tantians? Are you certain?" She appeared horrified.

"Yeah."

"My God. Did you call an officer? Did you call your father? Isn't he in control of who gets into our space?" She knew the second answer. Of course he was.

"Remember my history with the authorities? Besides, I don't think they'd believe me. And my dad would just go into hypervigilant mode, which would mean he'd force me to stay with them. I don't think I can handle it for an extended period of time. Besides, there's no evidence left anyway." Or at least I hoped not. If I had to see charred bodies again, I was certain I'd throw up.

“What do you mean there’s no evidence left? Did some creature swoop in and eat their bodies? I’ve heard there are prehistoric birds who make camp on the Earth Stations.”

“What? My God. No, just fire. I kicked some butt too but this... alien saved my life.”

“An alien. That’s not abnormal.”

“Um. Yeah, it is.”

“Why?”

“Because he looks kinda like the guy I shared the fantasy with. I mean the huge alien.”

“Oh, my oh my. Kinda like him? You mean same species?” Tory fanned her face on purpose, not taking me seriously yet.

“I don’t know what species he’s from. That’s the thing, and I mean exactly alike. I swear he recognized me too.”

“Wow. You’re serious. Are you certain you haven’t been taking those veterinary drugs?” she teased. Then her face fell. “You really are being serious. Are you okay?”

“Yep.”

My bestie was looking at me as if I’d grown two heads. “My, my. You are the original bad girl. If trouble could find anyone, it would be you.”

“Very funny.”

“Who says I’m teasing? Tell me what happened.”

I took another sip then I did in animated fashion, leaving nothing out. When I was finished, there was nothing but dead silence all around me. My bestie twisted her mouth, and I could swear her skin had turned an odd shade of pale green. Then she took a deep breath and there was no doubt by her expression that she doubted the validity of my story. Although there was a strange little spark in her eyes I could detect even with the flashing lights all around us.

“Are you okay?” I finally asked.

Tory gave me an odd look. Then she burst into laughter. “You’re trying to tell me that out of the blue, not one but five Tantians appeared trying to abduct you?”

“Yes,” I said without hesitation. Of course it sounded crazy, but it wasn’t something I could just make up. I glanced around the top floor of the club, almost hopeful I’d see the guy. And in truth, he had been a hunk: a body of hand-crafted steel with arms bigger than my thighs. I dragged my tongue across my lips, the vision floating in my mind delightfully sinful.

“Then a gorgeous bronze hunk swooped in like an action hero from the shadows to save your life, incinerating all five of these disgusting beasts. And this massive monster of a man just happened to be the same alien creature you shared a fantasy with, one who gave you several powerful orgasms. Is that what you’re telling me?”

“That’s exactly what happened.” God, I wanted to strangle her.

My bestie’s laugh continued. She lifted her glass, waiting until I did the same. “First of all, Tantians aren’t allowed into this airspace. Remember? Even approaching the Earth Station would violate every single interstellar law. They were banned from this galaxy.”

I gave her a hard look. Given my father’s position in the military, I had more firsthand knowledge of how lax some of our security systems had become, but Tory didn’t know that. She, like everyone else on the station, needed to believe we were completely safe from unwanted predators. Other than humans gone bad. Still, for the Tantians to risk flying through the radar system was disturbing.

The fact that another creature that I’d never seen before had suddenly arrived right after the Tantians couldn’t be a coincidence. What about my almost abduction? I’d need to talk to my father in the morning. He would be required to put his soldiers on notice. I chewed on my bottom lip. “I hate to tell you this, Tory, but you’re living in a dream state if you believe our security is that tight. We don’t live underneath a protective bubble, remember? That’s because humans want fresh air and unfabricated weather systems instead of total security.”

Tory rolled her eyes, motioning for the android behind the bar to bring us another round of drinks. “Whatever you say, darling. My father would tell me if I had anything to worry about. I think you were having another lovely little fantasy. Or in truth, I think you need to get laid. That’s why you had a fantasy session with some mystery hero from the stars.”

Okay, so it sounded crazy to me as well, but I know what I felt.

What I’d witnessed.

And what I knew in my gut was going to happen.

Capture.

“I do not need to get laid!” I said the words with far too much vehemence, which meant almost every male creature around me turned in my direction, eager to offer their assistance. Sometimes I was too boisterous for my own good.

“Yep. That’s my diagnosis. Let’s find you a hunky man that’s very human. Maybe that will soothe your beast.” The girl took my arm, trying to jerk me toward God knows where. I yanked it away with enough force I was pummeled backward.

And smack into something rock solid. I tumbled forward, noticing the look of sheer... lust in Tory’s eyes as she allowed her gaze to drift from my eye level up by a solid foot if not more. Then she swallowed hard, blinking rapidly.

That’s the moment I felt something akin to the blast of a warm fire. I straightened to my full height, trying to keep my wits about me, refusing to turn around. “What’s wrong?” Christ. There was a slight cracking sound in my voice. It had dipped low enough that I was shocked she’d heard me. I backed away from what I’d run into, taking gasping breaths.

Bubbles popped from her mouth, and she pressed her fingers against her lips. “Nothing,” she choked out. “I think I was wrong.”

“Meaning?” Every inch of my body was tingling, every nerve ending dancing as if dipped in the strongest level of current. I found it difficult to breathe, my legs even trembling.

“Meaning. I think your hero was very real. And... um... he’s perhaps the most gorgeous specimen of manhood I’ve ever seen. Was that your fantasy man? I mean, not that I’m an expert or anything but he’s pretty... let’s just say he’s hot.” She waved her hand in front of her face, beads of perspiration trickling down both cheeks. “And I think he wants you, as in all of you. Again. I don’t know.”

I wanted to say something cheeky like she should be standing where I was but couldn’t find my voice, just like had occurred before. I took a deep breath instead, slowly turning around. Then I looked up. I hadn’t had the opportunity to catch the details of just how tall my savior had been. Standing at least six foot eight, he made every other alien and human in the place look like dwarfs.

In the muted yet colorful lights, his skin shimmered as if sparkling from rays of sunshine. While he wore a uniform of some kind, it was form-fitting, like liquid skin, unable to hide the ginormous gifts he’d been given by whatever god had created such a marvelous creature. My mind shifted to when I’d had the fantasy, the loincloth he was wearing. It was ridiculous of me to be thinking that way, but I couldn’t help myself.

We stood gawking at each other as the electricity soared. It was entirely possible the building might burn to the ground given the excessive combustion happening between us.

“God. That beast looks like he’s from the mafia.”

I glanced at Tory, wrinkling my nose. “The mafia? How the hell do you know that term?”

“I got into a conversation with your mother the last time I saw her. She told me all about them.”

“You do know they killed people. Like they were really bad men?”

Tory shrugged. “So what? They were also possessive, and they took what they wanted. That’s every woman’s fantasy.”

I gritted my teeth as soon as she said the words, given they were ones I’d said to myself two years before. Oh, I’d gotten a beast who’d taken what he’d wanted alright. “Not mine.”

“Bullshit and you know it. I know it. Hell, everybody knows you hunger for a bad boy.”

“Tory!”

“Just look at him. He’s hot as Hades and sin wrapped up in a sexy outfit. But imagine him in a loincloth.” She giggled, almost choking while making fun of me.

“I will never trust you with anything again.” I couldn’t believe I’d told her every detail about the crazy fantasy gift. But she did have me returning a lust-filled gaze in the beast’s direction. She was right that he was hot, hot, hot. It was as if I was seeing him for the first time, allowing myself to bask in his extreme beauty and in truth, there was no other word to describe him.

Other than possessive. Even the look on his face screamed of obsession. I was thrown into a whole-body fog, incapable of producing coherent thoughts. But I allowed my gaze to fall to his large boots, my libido increasing.

While his neck was covered in mottled skin or scales of some kind, they added a look of power and dominance to his massive frame. He had wild hair, long and thick strands of gold and red mixed together, hanging almost to his waist. His arms were mostly bare, the tee shirt-like jacket accentuating his biceps. And they were a beautiful thing.

He was slightly different than I remembered, even more handsome than the fantasy world I’d created. And he appeared much more dominating.

Then he opened his mouth and the entire world around me faded. There was no one else. No noise. No fear. No life ahead of me. All I could do was concentrate on the powerful piercing look of his eyes as they bore into mine.

And the booming voice that carried into the distance.

“You belong to me, little human. I told you before I would return. Now is the time. You’re coming with me.”

CHAPTER 12



*S*unny

An instant fog had developed.

“I beg your pardon? I’m not going anywhere.”

Suddenly, I was closer to the gorgeous beast, so close I could feel his heated breath. Whew. Had I lost track of time or what?

Then his words sank in.

“What did you just say to me?”

“You. Are. Mine. For now. Forever.”

His voice was just as gravelly, so seductive that I was hot and wet all over. I shook my head, ridding my mind of the cobwebs from his glorious form.

He had not just claimed me as his. Not a chance in hell.

Just like he promised.

I remained in some crazy kind of limbo, trying to figure out why he was standing in front of me. When he narrowed his eyes, his chest rising and falling, I had the feeling he was peeling away my skimpy dress like any other red-blooded male would do. That’s the moment the beautiful fantasy bubble

was popped, aggravation settling in.

“Hey, buddy. While I appreciate the fact you saved my life, that doesn’t give you the right to follow me. We also might have shared a wild and wicked past experience, which I don’t completely understand, but that didn’t tether me to you. I don’t belong to anyone. I’m curious. Are you looking for payment of some kind cause this girl is broke. Do you know what that means?”

“Um, Sunny. Fantasy or no fantasy, I doubt he can understand English let alone comprehend what being broke means. Very few species understand the colloquialisms you use.” Tory jerked my arm, trying to drag me away.

“I don’t use them,” I barked in response, acting as if I had no clue what she meant.

“Um, yes, you do. You’re just like your mother.”

Hissing, I shook my head. Then I planted my hands on my hips, tilting my head so I could look the beast clearly in the eyes. “How about this. Back the fuck off. You’re cute and all, but I’m not interested. That should be understood in almost any language.”

The alien stood like a statue, his breathing remaining labored. He took a quick glance toward Tory, then back to me.

“Um, I think he wants you for something,” she said as she wrapped her fingers around my arm one at a time. “Maybe we should get out of here.”

“He saved my life. I think the brute just wants another thank you. He’s not getting one.” I turned to the alien, “Buddy. Time to go before I call security.” Although that would put their lives in jeopardy.

“Whew. He’s powerful.”

There was a lilt in her voice and I narrowed my eyes. “Do you think someone sent me another little gift from Fantasy World? Did you do this?”

“Not a chance, girl. I knew you’d kick my butt.”

Tory was right. The latest rage happened to be hiring humans and aliens alike to provide real life fantasies, although not nearly as complicated as what I’d

experienced. From what I knew, the ones in real life were tame in comparison. Anything would be given the craziness of my fantasy.

“Plus, I don’t know anyone that rich,” she added.

My parents certainly were. There were various names for the rich people’s game, but the new leisure time had been coined the Fantasy World. The dark, kinky, and sometimes dangerous activities and highly played out games were sold to the upper echelon of society in several Earth Stations. Corporations had formed almost overnight, some using alien creatures to fulfill more stylized fantasies. Several actors often played roles to make the dream fantasy come true, but whatever happened remained with the parties involved. No one talked about it given they were private.

And there were strict rules of conduct, including secrecy.

Just like the company who’d almost gone bankrupt according to my bestie. Anything was possible but if someone had provided the hunk for me, the coincidences were too crazy and farfetched.

Maybe the crispy critters hadn’t really happened. Through the use of androids and creative software, engineers could make anyone believe anything. Maybe that’s why I sauntered closer to the beast, acting as if I owned the place. Whatever the case, I needed to get rid of the creepy crawlies and this guy. For good.

“Hiya, big boy. Maybe you didn’t hear me correctly. You’re cute and all, but I’m not interested.” Winking, I planned on leaving him in the dust when his eyes flashed, holding me frozen to the spot.

He inched closer, taking a deep breath and for a few seconds, it felt as if he’d managed to see beyond the thin material, eyeing every inch of my body. There was more power in his stare than I’d believed. Suddenly, I was shaken to my core but before I had a chance to react, he grabbed me around the waist, tossing me over his shoulder.

Then I could swear I heard him speak and what he said shocked me into silence.

“Now, I fuck you.”

Whoa. Hold on.

The shock remained. I had to be hearing things. There was no other justification because it was obvious he had no clue about our language. He wasn't daunted by a single person inside the club, passing by them as if he knew exactly where he was going.

But he'd known it before.

Stop it. That wasn't real.

Maybe I just couldn't allow my brain to think that it had been.

As he trudged down a long corridor, I finally was pulled out of the same kind of vacuum as before, lifting my head and slamming my fists against his back. "You need to let me go. If you don't, you will face serious consequences. Do you understand?"

If he had spoken before, he'd gone back to being the brooding silent type. I'd normally prefer that, but right now, I needed to find out what in the hell he thought he was doing.

"Let me down." I shifted with enough force I almost managed to toss myself from the perch. Then he did something else so unexpected a wave of shock tore through me like a tidal wave.

He cracked his oversized hand against my backside. Since my dress had already ridden up, the pain was sharp and breath-stealing. Of course the bastard didn't stop there, issuing three more. I was stunned. I was sickened. I was... turned on. Oh, my God. This had to be some crazy kind of dream. Maybe they'd put something in my drink, a hallucinogenic like the one my mother had told me about.

They'd been outlawed for generations. That didn't mean some jerk hadn't found a source and decided tonight was the night to create a funhouse out of the club. I wiggled again, the result the same.

It was as if he knew where he was going, stopping in front of a room. When he opened the door, I used his back to push up to see where he'd taken me. Oh, Christ. It was one of the private sex rooms. I'd seen two of them when I'd been here before. What I'd heard was true. Was this... beast out of his

mind? I had no intention of allowing him to fuck me. Not now. Not ever.

When he finally placed me onto my feet, I backed away instinctively. Everything about this moment was horrific, especially the fact I was standing in the middle of a festive purple room that had a huge circular bed, a three-way mirror, and a dresser that had an unopened box of brand spanking new sex toys in them.

Maybe just like the ones Tory had sent to me.

Oh, this was bad. Very bad.

“Um, look. Maybe we got off on the wrong foot but I’m not having sex with you. Thank you for saving my life. I really do appreciate you risking your life to do so but I’m not that kind of girl. I mean most humans aren’t. I’m not certain what you’ve heard but we’re not all easy pickings. Okay?” I was shocked to watch as he peeled off the shirt he was wearing, tossing it aside.

I was momentarily lost in studying his supreme physique, the scales that extended over his broad shoulders. His chest was a masterpiece; instead of the traditional six-pack abs like a well-crafted human male could have, he had twelve. There wasn’t an ounce of fat on him, so stunning that I didn’t realize until it was too late that I’d dragged my tongue across my lips in appreciation.

He remained as silent as a chiseled god.

“Okay, Zeus. Back off. Seriously. I adore the big he-man come-on more than most girls but that doesn’t change anything.” He still said nothing. That’s when I skirted as far to the left as possible, moving quickly toward the door. For a huge man, I was utterly shocked at how quick his reflexes were, yanking me back and planting me in the middle of the room where I’d been before.

Swallowing, I backed away until I could tell one of the flaps was open. Maybe I could use something inside as a weapon. Oh, yeah, against a godlike creature.

He seemed amused, even pointing at me. When he spoke the single word, there was no doubt I wasn’t hallucinating.

“Mine.”

His voice was dark and ominous yet tinged with a gloriously sexy tone. The deep bass had the kind of vibrato that fantasies were made of. He never blinked, never took his luminous eyes off me as he yanked off his pants in one swift motion. He wore no underwear. I almost laughed at the thought. Humans were one of two species that did.

I pressed my hand against my lips to keep from moaning. There were no words to describe how magnificent he was. His cock was... huge. And it was ribbed and had a shape that was unlike any toy I'd ever used, but seemed designed for my pleasure. It was the color of strawberries mixed with tangerines, both fruits that I'd been lucky enough to taste once. I could only imagine what his cum tasted like.

Wait. Did this creature of unknown origin have cum or was it some reprehensible substance? And whoa. Could he make me pregnant?

Of course not, idiot. You have the stick inside of you.

The stick, a surefire method of making a woman infertile for as long the human was wearing it. I had no idea why in God's name I was thinking of something so ridiculous. Other than I was certain this alien had taken my virginity. Holy cow. There were very few species that could be cross mated, fewer still where the children were born without... issues. That kept marriages between different creatures down to a minimum. Now I was analyzing the situation as I did everything else, something I'd picked up from my anal-retentive father.

Then why was I one hundred percent certain that's what was happening?

Fulfilling a destiny. I was certain of it.

My parents had known all along. Had they made a deal with this creature? Oh, God. I was really going out on a limb. Maybe my parents' protectiveness had been all about keeping me from him.

A laugh bubbling to the surface, I forced myself to look away, rummaging through the box and pulling out the first large object I was able to get my hands on.

When I yanked out a vibrator, I accidentally turned it on, the whirling sound dragging both of our attention to the festive pink sex toy. I held it out as if it was a secret weapon, giving off a throaty sound.

“I’ll gut you if you don’t leave.” I shifted back and forth from one foot to the other. The strange beast only stared at me for a few seconds then advanced without hesitation, taking the vibrator from my hand and tossing it aside. Then he wrapped his fingers around the back of my neck, pulling me onto my toes and against him, issuing the same word once again.

“Mine.”

And somehow, I knew he meant it. As he tilted my head, he crushed his mouth over mine, pushing my lips open forcefully. The beast was going to take what he wanted with or without my permission.

I smacked my hands against his chest several times, whimpering into the nasty moment that had me all wired and on fire and...

Then everything moved into a dull roar. My heartbeat. My rapid pulse. The vibrator. My whimpers. Suddenly, the moment was entirely too passionate, as if we’d been lovers for years. I was lightheaded, trying to fixate on anything else but how deliriously amazing this felt. But it was impossible.

When he swept his tongue inside, I was pleasantly shocked all over again. There were layers to the long appendage, curling on both the top and bottom, able to explore every single inch. I was teetering on a wave of madness, unable to stop myself from sliding my arms over his shoulders, even daring to tangle my fingers in his hair. Who did this kind of thing when first meeting someone?

An alien beast. That was who.

What I found fascinating was that while heat exploded between us, it was entirely different than before, as if he’d controlled his body temperature so as not to burn me. Was that even possible? He continued dominating my tongue, the taste of him surprisingly sweet. It seemed to awaken my senses, sending a shower of vibrations dancing down the back of my legs.

Or maybe my heightened excitement was because of how hard his cock was throbbing between my legs, pulsing to the point I longed to wrap my lips

around it. I must be going crazy. My mouth wasn't big enough to accept something so huge.

My mind spun at the thought of the crazed beast driving his red-hued cock deep inside my pussy. While it ached, throbbing as much as his shaft was pulsing, I was terrified that when he was finished, I'd never be able to walk again.

He rolled his hand down my back, cupping my bottom. I was shocked at the spines in his hand, which allowed his grip to be extremely firm. He lifted me even further off my feet and I awkwardly slipped my leg around his. I was acting as if I wanted this. That was as nuts as the fact the beast thought he could do anything he wanted to do to me.

Yet I was lightheaded, my entire body aching from his touch. I was also wetter than I'd ever been, my juice slickening the insides of both of my thighs. I'd been with guys who had a nice cock but this beast's was entirely different, something special. I had to admit to myself, I was intrigued, more so than I should be.

The creature could split me in two and I didn't even know his name or his species. However, he certainly seemed to know me, as if he'd been stalking me. Maybe that's exactly what had occurred. Now I was lightheaded not only from the powerful kiss but also from the varied thoughts scuttling through my brain.

Maybe I was as scatterbrained as my mother appeared to be, even though that was a complete façade. She had eight degrees, was a doctor of four, could speak several languages, and could recite ancient books front to back.

And why was I thinking irrational thoughts while a sexy alien with burnished copper skin and eyes the color of fresh oranges was kissing me as if his life depended on it?

Because I'd gone and lost my mind.

Beast man pushed away seconds later and when the intimate hold was broken, I felt a complete loss. Enough so a whimper escaped my lips, which was thoroughly embarrassing.

The intense look in his eyes was different than before, a strange smile curling

on the corners of his far too voluptuous lips. I'd never met a single alien with attractive lips. I found myself reaching out with another involuntary gesture, rolling the tip of my pinky around them just to know if they were as hot as the rest of him.

He narrowed his eyes, grunting like the predatory beast he was.

I allowed my gaze to drop to his chest, noticing what reminded me of a firebird tattooed in the center. For some reason, the caricature troubled me. I was versed in mythology going back to the dawn of time. And this one indicated the God of Fire. That wasn't possible. He didn't truly exist.

Of course, whoever the beast was could have been inked on the black market but somehow I doubted it. Maybe my nickname of Zeus wasn't all that far off.

Because I had a chance to contemplate this thought any further, he continued taking full control over me and the situation, yanking off my dress with such ease I didn't notice until a cool breeze hit my nipples.

Then I froze, opening my mouth with a silent scream. "What... What are you doing?" Oh, great. My tone was now commanding. I was certain that would go over well.

He allowed his gaze to fall to the teensy-tiny thong I'd worn with my dress on a dare from Tory before snagging it with one of his fingers, ripping it off and tossing the lace over his shoulder. It was confirmed once again that he understood English very well by his succinct answer.

"Fucking you."

CHAPTER 13



*Z*atan

Sunny.

Even the human female's name was enticing, the meaning not lost on the God of Fire himself. Once Earth had been blessed with beautiful days where a bright sun brought a glimmer of golden rays across the oceans and mountains. It had provided warmth without burning, at least at first, until the atmosphere had been destroyed after centuries of war. I knew everything there was about every planet in every solar system, including their full compositions. I'd also stored in my third brain the reasons for the destruction of every civilization.

Some might call that a perk of being the son of the god of all creation.

As well as the memories of a mental and emotional trip I'd obviously taken. There was no mistaking the connection I shared with the woman, even if I couldn't understand all the ramifications.

I called these supposed gifts a burden, ones so significant that I often did all I could to shut out thoughts and memories that I could pick up on like molecular radio waves. With this woman, the fact I knew exactly what she was thinking made tasting her in real time far too tempting to resist.

Now, seeing her devoid of the ridiculous clothes humans were required to

wear actually did something that had never happened before. Her beauty took my breath away. She was perfect. If that was a possibility with any creature. Just basking in her stunning good looks was almost enough for me to decide to take her back with me. However, I needed to know for certain.

While almost everything humans did annoyed me, the girl's continued effort to fight me was priceless. The human word was cute. Yes, her actions were adorable. However, she would need to be tamed if she was going to live on my planet. I would keep her in a cage until she learned her manners and played by the rules.

I was jumping to far too many conclusions. In the few seconds I wasted thinking about my future plans, she'd pulled the vibrating piece of plastic into her hand for a second time, lifting her arm and trying to bash my head in. All the while, the scent of her desire was stronger than before, the glisten of her pussy keeping my mouth wet. I snagged her arm with ease, shaking my head then spinning her around to face the reflective surface. I had no idea why humans enjoyed looking at themselves when fucking but why not.

It would be enjoyable to see her face.

“Let go of me, Zeus.”

The name she'd picked was interesting, one of my distant cousins who my father called in a pinch when necessary. For battle. For taming a nation. For keeping the peace.

I pulled the implement from her hand, reading her thoughts. Hmmm... It was used as a sexual appetizer, keeping a woman wet and pleasing her through its stimulation of her clitoris. Why not try it? Perhaps that would soothe the beast inside of her. Her eyes were open wide as I held the vibrator into the light, twisting it back and forth.

When I pressed it against her breasts, she gasped, undulating her bottom against my already aching cock. It was already engorged, the need to fill her with my seed more intense than I'd experienced before. That was a good sign and made me crave her that much more. But I knew human women needed encouragement. I rolled the whirling circular head around one nipple, shocked when the tip became even harder.

Sunny threw back her head, slapping one palm against my thigh then digging her nails into my skin. She gasped then laughed, blinking several times as she watched everything I was doing. Every sound she made pushed me closer into losing control, which wasn't something I wanted to do. Hurting her wasn't my objective, even if my needs were increasing every few seconds.

As I shifted the implement to her other breast, she took gasping breaths, her legs starting to buckle. I kept my arm wrapped around her waist, holding her tightly against me. It was impossible to take my eyes off her, every image entering my mind filling my balls with additional seed. Her scent was intoxicating, as much as any liquor I'd ever consumed.

The moment was dangerously appealing. Even if she wasn't a suitable mate, I could certainly enjoy indulging in using her as a toy of my own. Hmmm... While my behavior would be frowned upon, I was the God of Fire after all. I subscribed to no one else's rules but those of my father.

And he would approve.

She panted, tossing her head back and forth and the moment I rolled the spinning head down her stomach, she tensed. "Oh, my. You can't... I mean you can, but you shouldn't." She laughed, licking her lips as she tried to maintain focus. I'd never witnessed anyone showing such pleasure. The moment was far too appealing. I made a mental note to have more reflective surfaces installed in my place of residence.

My excitement and desire continued to spin out of control. As soon as I slipped what she called the vibrator between her legs, she issued a series of strangled moans. I had a feeling she wouldn't mind receiving the kind of ecstasy I could provide.

If she was obedient.

Wasn't I turning into a dominating beast? That was in my makeup after all. I let off a single growl, which caused her to tense, her fingers gripping my arm with enough pressure I was amused. A frail little thing like herself thought she could outrun, fight, and outmaneuver me. Now, this. I rolled it up and down, using my leg to force her open, allowing me complete access.

"Oh, yes. Oh... That's very... Um. Good." Her face had already turned a

beautiful shade of red, which happened to be my favorite color. The breathless sounds she was making alone were enough to push me into fucking her.

I did what I could to keep control, pushing the vibrator between her swollen, glistening folds. Almost immediately, she bucked hard against me, rubbing her bottom back and forth across my cock. Did the woman have any idea what she was doing to me? I doubted it. She was embroiled in the raw ecstasy I was providing, lost in a moment that would likely leave a bad taste in her mouth later.

“Oh. Oh. Oh. Oh!” Her entire body started to shake so much that she almost managed to pull out of my arms.

While I had no real experience with human women, that didn't mean I wasn't aware of what her actions meant, or the fact she was having an orgasm. I kept the whirling implement going, devouring her scent then lowering my head, biting down on her neck.

The taste of her would be another indicator whether we were compatible for mating. As soon as the few drops of her rich blood entered my mouth, I tossed the vibrator aside. Then I shoved my hand between her legs, pumping my long fingers into her tight channel.

“Oh, God. Oh...” While her first fleeting thought was that I was going to kill her, as soon as the rapturous experience floated into her system, she was putty in my hands. Smiling, she tried to take several deep breaths, half laughing as I raked the pointed tip of one of my tongues across the open wound. Then I bit down even harder, capturing a full mouthful. She could become a drug I needed every day, which wasn't in my best interest.

Or hers.

But right now, I couldn't seem to get enough, indulging in the taste of her.

She stiffened as she'd done before, her eyes once again opening wide as I breached her lovely skin with my sharp canines. Seconds later, I pushed her forward to the mirror, forcing her to slam her palms on the glass.

Then I raked my sharp nails down her back, spreading her ass cheeks wide open. When I glanced into her face again, I could tell she was doing

everything she could to keep from screaming. Another moment of fear rushed into her, terror of the unknown keeping her breathless. As I pushed the tip of my cockhead against her slickened folds, she stiffened even more than before.

She pressed her hand across the spot where I'd tasted her life's blood, whimpering as soon as she realized that the wound was healed. The power of my saliva. When I pressed an inch inside, she rolled onto the balls of her feet, smacking the mirror several times. Another inch and she couldn't stop shaking.

When I was halfway inside, my cock throbbing, she dropped her head, scratching her nails down the reflective surface. She was wet and hot, more so than I'd anticipated. With another thrust, I knew for certain that not only were our bodies compatible but that she was my one true mate, which also meant her body would adapt to mine.

I thrust the remainder of my shaft inside, marveling at her strangled sounds and the way her muscles clamped around the thick invasion.

“Oh. Sweet. Heavens. On. Earth.” The sound of her voice penetrated my entire head, cascading down the length of my body.

I'd heard that when one found their true mate, everything changed, including the electromagnetism of their body's composition. Little did I know how true that was going to be.

When my shaft was fully seated inside, I took another deep breath, studying her shimmering face as beads of sweat rolled down her cheeks. Then I started fucking her in earnest, pulling out and driving my cock inside several times. It was the already the best sex I'd ever had, the joy of sharing this with a human filthy and delicious.

A few terms I'd heard while walking into the club.

I kept my fingers dug into the skin on her hips, keeping my claws retracted. I could no longer be gentle, thrusting into her with crazed abandon. If it bothered her, I couldn't tell, her lovely mouth twisting as I fucked her long and hard.

Every sound she made was animalistic, replacing the beautiful, soft moans

from before. And her eyes remained glassy, shimmering in the strange lighting of the room.

Panting, she cocked her head, her gaze falling all the way down the length of my body. I sensed she'd never been with a beast before and was trying to determine whether she could enjoy this for a second time. I took a deep breath of her rich scent at the thought, wanting nothing more than to sink my canines into her neck once again. The taste of her sweet blood lingered on my tongue.

Next time, I would enjoy feasting on her pussy.

As I continued ravaging her, I sensed she was close to another climax. I'd never cared about pleasing a partner before but to be able to see the changes on her face, to hear her strangled whimpers was enjoyable.

So I held back, pumping deep yet keeping full control of the savagery buried deep inside.

"Oh. Oh. My. Yes. I..." She threw her head back, undulating her hips and meeting every brutal thrust. I didn't think the fragile creature would be able to tolerate my actions. It would seem I'd been wrong about humans on several layers. I wondered what other kinds of surprises the woman might have in store for me.

As her body began to tense, I took a deep breath of her scent, holding it deep within my lungs. When she let off a ragged scream, I plunged into her with more ferocity, pounding like the crazed beast she'd made me.

"Yes!" Her pussy muscles clamped and released, pulling us both closer to what humans called ecstasy. I had to admit I was enjoying this more than I originally thought.

When her head hung limp, her long hair falling down by several inches, only then did I allow myself to release, filling her with my seed.

I knew the Tantians had hunted this woman in particular. That meant I could have an issue to deal with that I'd possibly bring back to my planet. Inciting a war within my own territory wouldn't be in my best interest. However, she belonged to me.

I'd need time to determine why she was important to them and possibly to more than just two species. Then I'd know how to handle her and the situation.

And whether or not to strike against the entire Tantuan civilization.

I lowered my head, taking several deep breaths, fisting her hair until I was able to whisper a few words into her ear. "I will return. No one will ever touch you again. No one."

I'd issued the words before. Now I'd ensure they held true. I'd need to ascertain the level of danger before removing the human from her life. A series of ugly sensations rolled through me. The danger was just beginning.

It was apparent I'd laid claim, my bite the first stages of her becoming my mate. That meant soon not only my people would sense it but other species as well. That would cause a frenzy, even some chaos in outlying galaxies. And the Tantians would become more determined to rip her away from me.

Why hadn't my father mentioned it? And more important, what other plans did he have?

CHAPTER 14



Sunny

“I will return.”

They were close enough to *“I will come for you when the time is right”* to make me have the heebie-jeebies all over again. He was also entirely too possessive. No man would ever touch me again? I snorted, rolling my eyes. What a jerk.

I could swear I’d imagined the words, yet the echo of his deep voice continued to penetrate the deepest parts of my brain. Just like the heated touch of his fingers had already stained my skin. I wanted to laugh. I hadn’t asked my fantasy creature’s name two years before and I still hadn’t. Zeus suited him just dandy. The beast exuded raw power and dominance, a level of possession that I’d known existed but had never experienced.

Well, okay. Twice. In fantasyland.

I let myself into the apartment, exhausted but elated. The truth was I wasn’t entirely certain the experience with the... alien had really happened or if I’d been pulled into a drug-induced fantasy, which the club was well known for doing. Given he’d been the subject of my fantasy years before, it was logical my mind would shift to the same place. When Tory had found me inside the private room, I’d been fully dressed, standing in front of a three-way mirror

staring at myself.

No one else had been there and there'd been no evidence of them either.

Maybe I was losing my mind. If I remembered correctly, insanity was somewhere in my lineage. My great-grandfather had gone completely off his rocker, ending up in a straitjacket until he'd pulled a Houdini act, stealing a primitive transport unit and crashing into a building. I shuddered from the thought. Was that my fate as well?

"Oh, God. What is wrong with me?" I asked no one, grateful my whisper hadn't been loud enough for my overbearing computer system to hear. I closed my eyes, the image of the beast's face remaining in my frontal lobe.

As soon as I was inside, Thor came bounding to greet me.

Woof. Woof. Woof!

"Hi, baby. I told you I wouldn't be gone too long." I bent over, giving him kisses, still unable to get the experience out of my mind. At least my pup grounded me.

I remembered blubbering something to Tory about being bitten on the throat, which was an old fairytale about creatures called vampires from our ancient history. I'd made mental note to ask my mother about the myth, which was one I barely remembered.

You were bitten on the inner thigh.

I groaned then slapped my hand across my mouth. That was ridiculous. There'd been no signs of it after I'd left the facility. Maybe I should make an appointment with a shrink.

I'd forced Tory to search my neck to try to locate puncture wounds but there hadn't been any. And as far as semen, I hadn't found that either, although I'd been wet, my thighs sticky as if I'd orgasmed. Granted, the huge vibrator had been humming on a low setting when she'd walked in. At least I knew that part of my memory bank hadn't been false. Maybe that was the reason I continued to be hot and bothered.

I glanced down at the treat she'd sent me, rolling my eyes.

A fairy pink box had been delivered just like Tory had promised. Sadly, she'd either forgotten to tell the company to make the delivery discreet or had done this on purpose. Since it was sitting directly under the building's main light, the words *Eden's Sinful Closet: Where the wicked keep their toys* written in glistening gold across the top were clearly visible. I suspected she wanted to embarrass the hell out of me.

I would so get her back for this. She would pay big time.

Every neighbor who'd returned home had seen the box. I had no doubt. I kicked it further inside, finally setting the security code before grabbing the heavy box and trudging up the stairs. I'd paid little attention to the apartment when I'd dropped my puppy off before heading to the club. I'd preferred not to dwell on the fact I'd moved in with my boyfriend in tow, never having spent a night alone until now.

Now the place felt strange to me, more than I'd thought it would.

As soon as I turned on the light in the bedroom, I grimaced, noticing the partially open closet door, the empty space where his clothes used to be.

He who no longer had a name.

A cathartic moment settled in, visions of the girl playing out in my mind. Would I ever be able to let them go? Maybe staying in this room wasn't a great idea. Thor sniffed then woofed and I sighed. "He's not here, baby boy. He just didn't care about us." Why was it that my thoughts automatically drifted to the hunk I'd nicknamed Zeus? It made no rational sense. But maybe that's what my psyche had needed.

I tossed my bag onto the dresser and the box onto the bed before studying my face in the reflective surface. I brushed my fingers down both sides of my neck, confirming there were no puncture wounds or bruising. There was no sign I'd been accosted by anyone.

The android must have provided a fantasy when he'd scanned me. There was no other explanation. I glared at the box, laughing as Thor jumped onto the bed, sniffing as if there was a bomb inside. A sudden slice of excitement tore through me, and I moved toward the box, ripping it open.

Then I grimaced, moaning far too loudly. She'd pulled out all the stops,

purchasing a new set of everything I'd tossed out and then some, including a nasty-looking six-tailed tawse. I held it up and swallowed hard. "Wow." Talk about a spanking.

Wait. Wait. Maybe that would prove I'd been taken advantage of. With the leather strap still in my hand, I returned to the dresser reflection device, turning so my butt was toward it and lifting my dress. Hadn't the beast torn my panties off? He hadn't. They were intact, positioned just where I'd placed them. And there was no sign I'd been spanked like a bad girl. No red marks. No welts.

"What is wrong with you, girl?"

There was no correct or decent answer.

After tossing the whip onto the top of the box, I headed into the bathroom, yanking off my things. I even brought them to my face, taking a deep whiff. I could swear a very masculine scent remained, lingering in my nostrils. But that meant nothing given the number of males inside the crowded club.

Ugh.

At least I knew fantasies could be delicious. What I wasn't certain of that bothered me even more was if the attack had occurred. When I'd left, I'd seen nothing. Not a body. Not a single charred relic. Nothing. The other possibility was that I was losing my mind.

"Are you hungry, boy?" I asked as I yanked off my clothes, pulling my nightwear from the linen closet.

Woof!

"Okay. I'll indulge myself with some ice cream while I feed you. How about that?" The sound of his tail thumping back and forth was the only answer I needed. Laughing, I pulled on my boy shorts and colorful tee shirt, the cotton material a luxury to sleep in. So soft. So freeing. Tomorrow was going to be a long day at the clinic so I needed a good night of rest.

I padded down the stairs into the kitchen, grabbing his bowl and filling it with kibble. I'd called it that for as long as I could remember. Likely another memory from my mother's mental images of the long ago past. Maybe I was

just like her, preferring to live in a past I knew nothing about, except vicariously through her eyes and stories, aging photographs, and memory books. Earth intrigued me, so much so one day I would find a way to return.

With the pup happily eating, I grabbed a carton of ice cream from the freezer unit, yanking out a spoon. Then I flipped on the telecom system, curious as to what was going on in our little world. I navigated to one of the few systems that still had human reporters, their popularity growing. They were animated, always smiling, usually brightening my day.

“Yum,” I purred after taking the first bite of chocolate mint ice cream. Okay, so this was another luxury as well, costing a full day’s salary, but the creamy goodness was well worth it.

I stood against the counter as Thor chowed down, barely paying any attention to what the reporters were saying. Then something dragged my attention to the screen. There had been an illegal entry. Stiffening, I moved closer to the 3-D system, even moving around it in a full circle. I could tell my pup was studying me like I was nuts. I sucked on my spoon, listening to what they were saying.

The ship had been identified as belonging to Tantian warriors. Fuck me. Maybe the entire night had been real after all. Was that even possible? Why had they arrived in our solar system? They always had a reason, especially since they could easily hunt for food or sexual prey on hundreds of planets that had no sanctions against them.

My legs felt like lead as I returned to the carton of frosty deliciousness, grabbing the small container in my hand. My nerves were on edge, especially since the reporters were reminding everyone on Earth Station Sixty-Nine to report any sightings and to stay away from the dangerous creatures. Then they bantered on about the government, and the reason the creatures had landed in the first place. The Tantians always had a reason to risk entering a sovereign, forbidden territory.

And they usually got what they wanted.

Did that mean they’d wanted me in particular? If so, why? And why were my mother’s strange comments suddenly floating to the forefront of my mind? Without a doubt, I would need to talk to my father in the morning. Maybe he

could provide me with answers. After what had happened with the creature, I wasn't certain what I'd experienced. Would my dad think I was as nuts as I did? No. With the news report, it would seem the Tantian visit had been real.

Think. Think. Think.

Maybe my father could view my memories to see for himself. I hated going through the process, the apparatus stealing my memories, but often it was necessary to get to the truth. At least my father had perfected the system.

“Philipe. Has there been any intergalactic chatter regarding the Tantians?”

“Let me scan the databases for you, Sunny.” The interactive computer system had its mental webs tossed out to various sources that I had no access to. “It would appear there is nothing regarding them other than their sighting in our atmospheres.”

That meant they weren't on a killing spree, which unnerved me even more. If they had been, the chatter would be significant. Groaning, I glanced at the time and sighed. I couldn't stand not knowing what was going on. “Philipe. Do you know of a creature with bronze-red skin and bulging muscles with long golden red hair who can intermittently shoot fire and laser beams from their clawed fingertips and eyes?”

I wasn't certain if I wanted my savior beast to be a viable creature or not. I certainly didn't find spending the rest of my life drooling in a protected cell attractive in the least, but the alternative terrified me.

He'd come for me. He'd made good on his promise to make me his mate.

“That would be one of the members of the Vektorian race. They are comprised of four different species, some with attributes such as you describe. The God of Fire, God of Ice, God of Water, and God of Wind rule different kingdoms. All were created by a fierce god some consider the first creature, born by the fusion of sun and the stars, wind and water. They are fierce warriors, considered the oldest creatures in the universe, the creators of life as we know it. They are protectors as well as political parliamentarians, supporting peace. But in doing so, they are also enforcers, eradicating anyone who ignores their rules or those who kill others for nothing more than the sake of killing. They are savages, feasting on blood and flesh. But the last

part is just a rumor.”

Jesus Christ. The Vektorians in general sounded more like the mafia. Whew. Now I was going out on a limb. Every crime syndicate had been erased. Hadn't they?

“Philippe. Do mafia organizations still exist?”

“Yes, Sunny, on almost every Earth Station as well as on various planets. It is a euphemism for organized criminal activity. There will always be criminal activity.”

That was fascinating. The dude might be the son of the creator of the universe, but he was nothing more than a glorified big time criminal. Awesome. I'd wanted a bad boy. I'd certainly picked one out.

Shush. This isn't real.

Wasn't it?

I wasn't certain of anything at this point.

Wow. Now that was a glorified advertisement to visit Vektor if I ever heard one.

I searched my memory, barely remembering details about their civilization. I'd learned about thousands, and it would be impossible for anyone to remember more than a small percentage. However, given my study and love of ancient cultures as well as mythology including the fascinating Greek gods and goddesses, I was curious how their species fit into classic history. I rolled my eyes at the thought. As a child, I lived in worlds of fantasy, something my mother and father hadn't dissuaded given their love of the classics. However, there were scientific truths to the creation of worlds and it had nothing to do with Greek or Vektorian gods.

After taking another bite and licking the spoon, I glanced toward the home communications system. “Philippe. Call my father at his office.” I would continue searching for information on the Vektorian god myself. What would it mean if I had a mafia dude after me? Had my father done something wrong? Did he owe people money? Gambling? Oh, dear God. Please don't be gambling. I remember stories my mother told me about what mafia kingpins

did to people who owed them money. Broke their arms. Raped their wives. They were terrible human beings.

Why else would this dude have interest in me?

I knew that's exactly where my father would be. The man worked longer hours than anyone I knew.

"You do know it's late, Sunny," the system's animated voice admonished. I'd selected a sexy male voice after I'd moved here. While I often enjoyed the banter we shared, the computer-generated program learning far too much about me, I was cranky and not in the mood.

"And you know my father will be concerned over the arrival of the Tantians."

The system sighed and I rolled my eyes, pressing my fingers against my lips as Thor whimpered near my feet. He'd often tried to find the source of the sound, confused and frustrated when he couldn't. What had almost dropped me to my knees one afternoon had been when I'd returned home and Philippe had been cooing with my furry baby, trying to get him to follow commands. Yeah, I preferred humans.

"I've done a scan and there are no distinct life sounds or bodily functions coming from the alien beings. I believe a crisis has been avoided."

While I did appreciate the fact my father had instructed one of his technicians to install both the latest communications and security systems inside the apartment, something only the upper echelon of society could get their hands on, the program's cognitive abilities and eerie sense of timing, combined with how much of my information it had access to, remained unnerving.

However, I was curious. "Philippe. How did they die?"

It took a few seconds for him to come back to me.

"While I'm uncertain my data is one hundred percent accurate, it would appear they were rendered lifeless by an unknown force. The cause appears to be asphyxiation by method of smoke and fire."

I couldn't help but slump against the counter. My beautiful pup noticed my distress and jumped on my legs, whining even though he was wagging his

tail.

“Thank you, Philippe. Please contact my father.”

“As you wish.” The connection Philippe made was almost instantaneous.

“Please tell me that you are safe, Sunny,” my father said. I could hear the exhaustion in his voice, his entire demeanor riddled with concern.

“I’m fine. I was curious about the Tantians. I noticed the broadcast. Where did they come from and how did they manage to breach the security system?”

He did something I rarely heard him do, curse. “Damn reporters. They should be shut down. I’m working on how the creatures got through our security systems, but it would appear there was a breach that was masked completely by methods I’ve never seen. As you might imagine, daughter, that’s all I can tell you.” He even wagged his finger, as if the point would be clearer.

“But they were here for a purpose, not just a night out on the town. Right?”

He chuckled. “Tantians don’t share our love of good times, Sunny. You know that. Given they risked additional sanctions that could bankrupt their society, I’d say they were here for a very pointed reason. That’s what my men and women will be working on round the clock.”

“But if they target a specific person, what does that mean?” I tried to ask in such a way that it wouldn’t raise red flags, but I should have known better. My father had a sixth sense about him, the ability uncanny.

“Did something happen that you’re not telling me about? Did you have an interaction with the wretched beings?”

“Oh, no. I’m just curious. They are such hideous creatures.”

His gaze turned stern. “Do not lie to me. Do I need to remind you of how dangerous they are? If you had any kind of interaction, I need to know the details.”

Telling my father the details would lead to him placing me on house arrest for my protection. I couldn’t allow that to happen.

“No, Daddy dearest. You do not. Stop worrying about me. I’m locked tightly

away in my tidy little apartment. However, I have one more question. Do you know of the species of alien who wears a firebird on their chest?"

My father often didn't show any emotion. He'd learned that from his years of being in the military, his position requiring him to remain stoic and patient at all times. Seeing amusement in his eyes was fascinating. "Are you delving into your love of mythology again, dear daughter? The symbol is for the God of Fire, supposedly one of four sons of the God of Creation, the being responsible for every lifeform in every galaxy. While it's a wonderful story, it's a fable and nothing else. At least I hope that's the case."

"Why?"

"Because if a sighting of him actually occurred, that would mean the end of civilization is near, catastrophe looming."

Catastrophe? What the fuck?

"Oh. Okay. I just saw something and was curious." Thor jumped down, heading toward the entrance to the kitchen. "Vektorian race?"

"How do you know so much about them?"

"Daddy. As you said, I adore mythology and stories of ancient civilizations. With my horrible ex now out of my life, I have time on my hands."

He lifted his eyebrows and I kept a smile plastered on my face. "Fine, Sunny. Then I'll tell you what I know. The Vektorians are real. They are indeed an ancient civilization considered brutal in nature. They are also enforcers, using their powers to engage in warfare."

"I thought they were protectors."

"Not from what I've heard. They were responsible for destroying Earth."

That was something my mother hadn't told me.

"And the God of Fire? Is he a Vektorian?"

It was obvious he didn't want to answer. "The master of their world is considered the God of Creation. Again, all of this is a fable created by a defeated enemy, carried through various generations and civilizations. There

is no way of telling what the truth is and what is part of an ever-changing story.”

“So, the God of Fire is this creator’s son?”

“One of many. Supposedly. But their appearance means the God of Creation is on his deathbed. The story goes that if his sons cannot mate, then the end of civilization as we know it begins.”

“Wow. That is quite a story.” My thoughts drifted to both my fantasy and the encounter that I knew for certain hadn’t been some moment of imagination or a drug-infused vision. It had been real. A cold shiver drifted down my spine, curling my toes. Was I a target and if so, for what reason? There was one aspect that was without a doubt true.

The God of Fire had taken a liking to me. Oh, hell, no. I wasn’t some creature’s mate. That wasn’t going to happen in this lifetime. I tapped my finger across my lips, looking away as images of the dazzling beast rushed to the forefront of my mind. Even if the alien was perhaps the most gorgeous creature out there, I still wouldn’t surrender to him willingly. What was I thinking? I’d stay behind locked doors if necessary.

My father leaned into the screen and I looked away. “I know you, my dear daughter. You’re planning something. I will remind you that you are a veterinarian with your entire life ahead of you. Let’s keep it that way. Eventually, I’d enjoy having grandchildren but only if the man you choose has half a brain. Skyler did not or he wouldn’t have dared hurt my daughter. If you have any interaction with an alien creature, it is your duty to tell me. Not just as your father but the man who controls our people’s safety.”

“Yes, Father. I am well aware. Stop worrying. Goodnight.” Groaning, I ended the call, leaning back against the counter. The end of civilization? Mate? Tantians here for a specific reason? Oh, God. After closing my eyes, I realized my father almost never came to my defense, but he was angry at what had occurred with Skyler. But he was also terrified of whatever was going on.

I continued digging into the ice cream, barely noticing Thor had finished eating. I licked the spoon, trying to piece together what little I knew. Yes, I’d been a target and the God of Fire had come to my defense. I took another

bite, the icy chill returning.

Then I could swear the hair was standing up on the back of my neck. But my pup was still slowly wagging his tail, not bothered by anything. “Come here, baby.” A strange tingling of electricity created a wave of heat so powerful, I took several shallow breaths.

His entire backside was wiggling, as if he noticed something that intrigued him. Then he bounded away from me, still not making a single sound.

My throat tightened, my heart racing.

No. No. No.

This was bad. Someone was inside my apartment. I was certain of it.

I remained frozen for a few seconds, moving slowly toward the kitchen door and darting my head out into the corridor. Oh, great. Now I was acting as if I’d get a warning I was about to be beheaded, captured, or worse. I should know better. Holding my breath, I scanned one side then the other, listening for any sounds.

There wasn’t a single noise, not a peep. I realized I had a spoonful of ice cream that was about ready to drip onto the floor. I gobbled it up, an icy chill coursing down my spine. I inched toward the front door cautiously, noticing the security system lights were all on, the flashing blue a clear indicator.

Maybe I was losing more of my mind, the slip slide straight into madness not preventable. I dug the spoon into the carton, realizing my hackles were no longer raised. “Thor, baby. Come on. Let’s get you some water.” I spooned another mouthful, crunching down on the chocolate chips.

When I didn’t hear a single sound, including the scrambling of his big paws on the hard floor, I almost panicked. I backed away, trying to remember where I’d left the weapon my father had insisted I learn to use and keep in my possession. Shit. It was upstairs in the same box since the day he’d dropped it off. Fuck. Fuck. What was wrong with me? It was back to the kitchen for an old-fashioned knife. While that wouldn’t kill whatever alien creature might have broken into my apartment, a significant wound might buy me some time.

I slunk into the shadows, able to retreat into the kitchen without making a sound. That's when I heard Thor racing in my direction, woofing in excitement, not in terror. As soon as he was inside the kitchen, he lunged toward me, which forced both of us to topple to the floor. Shockingly, I held onto the ice cream container, although it was getting to be slippery in my hand from starting to melt.

After Thor woofed, he proceeded to lick remnants of ice cream from my face.

"Baby. What were you doing? Looking for rodents outside the window again?" I couldn't help laughing as he continued licking with exuberance while I struggled to stand, tottering forward as I tried to place the ice cream on the counter. When I quickly turned around, the entire container flew out of my hand, hitting something with a solid thump, ice cream splattering across a broad surface.

That's when I detected heat, lots of heat.

And the sound was from the ice cream melting, dripping onto my kitchen floor.

He was here, the beast who'd stripped away the last of my innocence.

Zeus.

The God of Fire.

Son of the creator of the universe.

The man who'd slithered into my fantasy world all those years ago.

The one who'd bitten me twice.

The one who'd saved my life from certain death.

And the one who told me he would return had made good on his promise.

Now I had to figure out how to get rid of him.

CHAPTER 15



*S*unny

Fear was a fascinating emotion with mental, emotional, and physical characteristics. When it was boosted to sheer terror, thoughts became like firecrackers, certain senses heightened while others were diminished. Then there were the ominous characteristics, an innate understanding that something terrible was about to happen.

Maybe that was just my sixth sense taking over everything else. Every nerve stood on end, points of my life flashing before me.

Drip. Drip. Drip.

The beseechingly slow drops to the floor instantly grated my nerves, masking even the sound of my rapidly beating heart. I looked up, stretching my neck, my eyes locking on the firebird tattoo in the middle of the beast's chest, the creature who'd become my savior. The God of Fire. Wow. My heart raced as several impure thoughts formed in the back of my mind.

The beast took a deep breath, a slight rumble occurring in the creature's massive chest.

Ice cream also dripped down the Vektorian's chest in silent strings of gooiness, and all my wacked brain could think about was dragging my tongue through the thick ice crystals, slathering my tongue with the delicious goo.

And I could envision licking every inch of him until he was clean.

Finally, I was able to blink, almost ready to breathe again. I reached out then immediately pulled my hand away, fisting my fingers. I was fearful my arm would burst into flames with a single touch. This was crazy but he was standing in my kitchen covered in ice cream.

“The God of Fire. I didn’t imagine you.” There was the second ‘oh, great’ moment of the evening. Or was it the third? I’d already lost count, my mind one big, fat blur of information. What a ridiculous statement to make. “You came for me. This is unreal.”

He slowly lowered his head, obviously noticing the ice cream as it ceremoniously continued sliding down his chest to his chiseled abdomen. A slight growl drifted from his throat. His skin took on a luminescent glow, so much so I was terrified I’d angered him. His upper lip curled, his heated aura becoming far too fiery for me to handle. He was concerned. He was angry. He was... sexy as hell.

“It’s not harmful. We eat ice cream as a treat. We as in humans. I don’t know about your kind. Whatever kind that is. Vektorian? Is that what you are? What the hell are you? My father says you’re the God of Fire. I guess I wasn’t too far off when I called you Zeus. Huh? Is your daddy going to annihilate the world? Is that what’s happening here? And the Tantiens know I’m special to you somehow. Oh, Jesus. If I really am your mate, then they wouldn’t want that to happen. But why not? Wouldn’t that stop the destruction of the universe?”

When I was nervous, I chattered away. My mother used to tell me that she knew when I’d been a bad girl because I refused to stop talking. But I wasn’t just nervous. I was terrified out of my mind.

His expression changed, becoming agitated. Probably because I knew more about him than I was supposed to. My throat was dry, my mind blown. But I had to figure this out.

I looked away, shocked that Thor wasn’t barking or terrified, just sitting on his haunches staring up at the huge alien as if they were already best friends.

But the draw to the alien was intense, powerful, and I returned my gaze, my

throat trying to close down tight. There was a screaming jolt of electricity tearing through my muscles, passing back and forth between us. He obviously felt it as well given the way his nostrils were flaring. My goodness in heaven above, the creature was handsome.

After taking a deep breath, the beast ran his fingers through the icy mess, holding up his dripping fingers then sniffing. He was exactly as I remembered, rough and tough looking, but sexier than the man who'd... Oh, dear God. His sudden appearance meant I hadn't been imagining the brutal fucking he'd given me. Come to think of it, my pussy was aching. Had I not noticed it before? Really? Or was his sudden presence the reason I felt aches and pains when I hadn't before?

The fantasy. Had it been a premonition that I'd drawn to life? Or a warning?

When the beast shoved his fingers into his mouth, I shuddered to my very heated core, glancing toward the drawer where I had a set of knives my mother had found in a thrift shop years before.

Then the sounds he was making drew my attention once again. He was staring at me as he sucked his fingers, licking every drop of cream from them. All I could do was watch as the ice cream dripped one bead at a time onto the floor, his skin already melting every frozen globule.

Because he was the God of Fire.

Get a grip. This isn't fantasy time. He's not here to be your friend.

Swallowing hard, I realized Thor was looking at me and I used my eyes to try to get him to come closer. He was having none of it. Well, this was a quandary. My pup had wanted to rip into Skyler yet a truly dangerous beast he had no interest in. What did that say about the mysterious creature standing in the middle of my house? "What do you want?"

My unwanted barbaric guest said nothing, studying the kitchen as if he'd never seen anything like it. Mystery was right. For all my studies, I'd never run across the stories my father was talking about. Had humans shut down the rumors? Or had my father and others in his position provided damage control? They often hid enemies from the public eye, preferring to allow our civilization to live without being completely terrorized.

Zeus studied me more intently, allowing his heated gaze to fall to my feet. I'd never felt so undressed or hungered for in my life. But for sex or food? Oh, God. My mind was taking me to every horrible place.

"I'm going to ask you one more time. What. Do. You. Want?" I held the level of demand in my voice, trying to keep my shit together.

A sneer was his answer, which pushed my anger to a heightened level.

I had no clue what this beast wanted but the fact that he'd broken into my apartment didn't sit well with me. The longer I waited to do something or try to get help, the more control the possible assassin could believe he had.

"Philipe, call the authorities," I said quickly.

"Philipe," the beast mimicked my exact tone, including with my hint of arrogance. "I was only testing to see if you were awake." Oh, lord above. His voice sounded exactly like mine. Exactly, inflection by inflection.

"Why, yes, Sunny. I am always here if you require assistance," Philipe answered. "Do you need me to contact the authorities? They will be here in two minutes and six seconds by my calculations."

"No, but thank you," Zeus said, still using my voice. Was there a twinkle in his eyes?

Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.

"How did you do that?" I whispered. "And how dare you! This is my home. You're not welcome here."

Somehow, I knew he wasn't going to answer. He exhaled and almost every muscle flinched. The beast was tense. Was he here alone? No, I doubted it. He'd come from a far distance. I knew every alien species in the galaxies we were sandwiched between. That was something else my father had taught me.

Know thine enemies.

My mother would say, 'Don't be caught with your pants down.'

I took a single step backward and he moved closer, allowing a solid whiff of his testosterone and masculinity to slide into my system.

Sadly, my mind was still in the gutter, envisioning being on my knees between his legs, waiting with a wide-open mouth until the drips fell into the back of my throat. Then I could almost see the sexy beast slathering me with the cream, taking his time feasting and quenching his thirst before driving his huge cock all the way into my womb.

I couldn't help but wonder what his long double tongue could do to my pussy.

He chuckled almost like a human would and allowed his gaze to fall between my legs. Was the asshole able to read my mind? *Lick me, hunk of a beast. Just lick me.*

In response, he dragged that very strange tongue across his lips. Oh, my lord.

Oh, I had to get a grip.

“Just out of curiosity. You're not from Fantasy World. Are you?” There was a hopeful tone in my voice.

The way he cocked his head, staring at me as if I'd been the one to turn into an alien was my answer.

“A fantasy someone purchased for me, maybe to try and take my mind off my cheating ex-boyfriend?”

Zeus remained quiet.

“No, of course not.” My palms were suddenly sweaty. “But you were my fantasy two years ago. You were also the man who claimed me for the first time. How did that happen? Were the gods warning or preparing me that you'd eventually come for me? I was right all along. My premonitions were all about my destiny. That is exactly what happened.” The question was who'd known about it? The droids? Not a chance. The people who owned the fantasy company? That was doubtful, although given what Tory had told me, maybe I was right to be concerned. Maybe the God of Creation. Yeah, that could be it. I was asking myself questions that likely had no good answers, or at least not ones I wanted to hear. When I glanced at him again, I ascertained he was thinking the exact same thing. Huh. Wasn't this godlike creature omnipotent? I almost grinned at the thought.

Then I dragged my tongue across my lips, still trying to figure out how to get him the hell out of my apartment. After making the special clucking sound, which I'd taught Thor when he was a puppy, a sound meaning I needed help, I expected him to react instantly. Instead of jumping to his feet, baring his sharp canines and growling at the intruder, he simply whined, staring at me with his puppy dog eyes. This was getting ridiculous.

Without wasting more time, I lunged toward the drawer, managing to get my hand wrapped around the handle of one of the knives. "Don't come any closer or I will cut you." I shifted back and forth, jabbing the knife into the air like some badass warrior.

As he'd done before, the beast simply studied me, raking his finger down his chest and gathering what little of the ice cream was left, sticking another finger into his mouth. Oh, this had to be some leftover effects of the drugs, but I wasn't taking the chance. I wanted to pray that's what had occurred, some horrible creature slipping something into my drink. But I knew otherwise. I believed everyone had a single destiny. It seemed mine had come a-calling.

I allowed my gaze to fall, drinking in his utterly gorgeous essence, another round of salacious thoughts coursing through my mind.

Was the alien smiling? Could he read my mind? As if to answer my mental question, the bulge between his legs swelled to the point my mouth opened wide. He was fucking huge. Just like I remembered. How could a cock so big fit inside my tight little pussy?

Zeus slipped his hand down his chest, wrapping his fingers around the large appendage, stroking the base.

"Stop that. Stop reading my mind." I purposely looked away but jabbed the knife toward him again, not that it was close enough to do anything. When I had the courage to glance back one more time, he'd stopped the naughty actions.

He reminded me of a true warrior, a creature sent across the universe to eradicate crime. They existed alright, a special force that only a few humans had ever been invited into.

“You’re not wanted here. I don’t belong to you. Just leave. Now. Thor. Come.” When the creature stood his ground, I felt I had no other choice. I turned and bolted, my mind a complete blur.

Thank God my puppy followed me, bounding up the stairs. I raced into my bedroom, slamming and locking the door. My entire body was shaking as I stepped backward, tripping on the corner of the bed, my ass falling smack into the middle of it.

And the sex toys.

With the weapon still in my hand, I scrambled toward the closet, hating the fact I’d purposely refused to have a communications system put in the bedroom. Or maybe I could blame Skyler since he was terrified our bedroom antics would be recorded. Ha. After three months that had faded into the woodwork. Thank God I had my handheld in my purse. The weapon or the communications device? What would be more helpful? The powerful laser weapon.

I didn’t have a chance to grab the box off the shelf before the door was not only kicked in but knocked completely off its hinges.

The gorgeous creature stood in the entranceway, his chest rising and falling. Then he took long strides inside, bending down and picking up Thor. He studied the pup’s face then started stroking his head, which confounded the hell out of me.

“Thor. Protect!” My furry baby was so confused, licking the alien’s face instead of attacking as trained. Although, come to think of it, he wasn’t trained to attack but to protect me.

“You are coming with me, Sunny, human woman of Earth Station Sixty-Nine,” the beast said.

“No, I’m not.”

“You have no choice. I am bigger and stronger.” He was comfortable being the big alpha he-man.

Isn’t that what you wanted?

“And yes, I know what you’re thinking,” he added.

Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.

I had created this exact fantasy. Hadn’t I? Yeah, well, maybe not exactly like this. Still, my nipples were fully aroused, poking through the thin material of my nightshirt. It was obvious he could tell, a sensual smirk remaining on his face. If a creature like him smirked. I folded one arm across my chest, feeling ridiculous at being attracted to him.

“That’s not what happens on this Earth Station. You can’t just take someone against their will. That’s a crime. I don’t care if you’re some Vektorian mafia god. However, I am curious. Where would you want to take me?”

“To my planet, Sunny. You are my mate and were destined for me.”

If I heard the word one more time, I’d issue a primal scream.

“You can’t do that. I have responsibilities right here. I’m a very important person on this Earth Station, animals are counting on me. I own a veterinary clinic on Broadway. Well, I’m renting the space, just like this dump, but that’s not what matters. It’s not much but it’s very important to me. All I ever wanted to do was care for animals, puppies in particular, although I’ve learned to love kittens and cats. Sadly, they’re mostly extinct after a feline crisis almost two centuries ago. Anyway, dogs are my world. Thor is mine but there are some recovering at my clinic. Do you even have the need for people like me where you live?” What was going on with me? This was way beyond certifiable. My nerves were frazzled.

He took a deep breath, holding it in as he studied me. I was obviously not getting through to him so why bother?

“Don’t mind me. I don’t know what I’m saying but I will need to put my foot down. I can’t go with you.” As if that was a choice?

“Like this? Animals.” He held Thor out and for a few seconds, I was certain Zeus was going to drop my baby. I lunged forward and the beast growled.

“Don’t hurt him. He’s all I have. He’s my child. Maybe you don’t give a shit but if you hurt him, I will find some way to kill you! Do you hear me?”

The alien looked at me just like Tory had earlier. Then the amusement returned, his eyes dancing like firecrackers. "I will not hurt him."

Was I supposed to be reassured? Hog-fucking-wash.

"Maybe you don't have pets in your world, but Thor is my companion. Just let him go." I rubbed my fist against my pajamas, suddenly feeling more self-conscious than I had before.

"Thor. You enjoy mythology."

Now we were having a conversation? His question caught me off guard. "Um. Yes. A hobby of mine. That's why I called you Zeus."

"He looks nothing like me."

I know I opened my mouth at least twice before I could respond. "Maybe not. I was thinking more about his power and strength. Look. I have things to do so it was nice meeting you, whoever you are. Thank you for saving my life and for... some fascinating sex. But I'm going to stay here and enjoy my life."

He cocked his head. "No longer. Not possible. We are supposed to be together, mate."

Mate.

I loathed the word.

"Not happening. I'm a human."

"Yes, you are." He made it sound disgusting. "We will work it out."

Uh-huh. That was it. I wasn't interested in playing games any longer.

"Work it out? Here's the thing. You can't tell me what to do, Zeus boy. I'm not going anywhere with you." I swung the knife back and forth, moving from foot to foot. I wasn't entirely certain what the hell I was doing, but he wasn't taking me anywhere. Over my dead body.

Without any hesitation or issue, he snatched the weapon out of my hand, pitching it behind him, the blade sticking into the wall.

“You bastard!” I lunged toward him, able to smack my fists against his chest. He grabbed my wrists, yanking me off the floor as if I weighed nothing. This was nothing more than a nightmare.

“Stop, little human. I do not want you hurt.”

I was out of options and sighed. When he let me down, I backed away, folding my arms.

Then he sniffed Thor. What was he going to do, eat the puppy? Hell. This wasn't going well. He moved to the box of toys and I cringed, glancing toward the open door. What good was it going to do me to race down the stairs? He obviously could break through time and space barriers. When he picked up the tawse, twisting it in his hand, I could feel all the blood drain out of me.

“You sucked my blood. Didn't you? I mean you bit me like a vampire would do.”

“Yes.”

“Why?”

He cocked his head as if trying to figure out how to answer.

“Because I craved tasting you. Because I had to know if my assumptions were correct,” he answered, snapping his wrist, the sound of the leather whooshing through the air forcing a sharp cry from my throat. When he nodded then attached the whip to something on his uniform, I cringed inside.

“Your assumptions? What does that mean? Is this about the damn fantasy and the promise you made then? Of course it is. My destiny.”

“I had to know if you were the one. Destiny. Preordained.”

Preordained, my ass. Things were getting out of hand. Had he been talking to my mother?

“Um, whoever you are. I'm not going anywhere with you. Seriously. Please just leave before things get ugly.” Things went from bad to worse when he held up the handcuffs, twirling them in the light. Why did they have to sparkle? The butt plug was next and all I could think about was seeing Skyler

while he'd been shoving it into the redhead's asshole.

My head ached, my mind a fuzzy mess.

"You are in danger. They will come for you again. They are assassins." His tone was full of conviction, something else that shocked me.

"Who are you talking about?"

"The Tantians. This time, they will not fail."

"Why were they trying to capture me?"

He studied me intently. "I do not know the answer to your question affirmatively. I will find out as it is vital to your life. You cannot die. That can't happen, little human."

"Why is that?" He was terrifying me even more.

His answer was powerful and without question.

"Because you are my mate. You have the power to save my kingdom. Then together we will rule the universe."

There it was, the elephant in the room.

Now I knew I'd lost my mind. But in truth, I was starting to think of a straitjacket that was fashionable.

CHAPTER 16



*S*unny

Ding dong. Wake up, silly girl.

I had to be dreaming. There was no other explanation.

Other than you're cuckoo. Nutso. One screw loose.

I rubbed my eyes and took another deep breath before addressing him. "So let me get this straight. You're a king? For real?"

"Yes. Well, I will be. I am considered a prince of my people."

Oh, boy.

Any other woman in my position would take advantage of the information and perhaps the awkward situation, but not this girl. I wasn't interested in mating with anyone, no matter how gorgeous they were. Or the fact I didn't have any better offers.

"Impressive. Thank you for the offer but that's impossible. Our anatomies are not compatible. We aren't the same species, you and me. In case you haven't noticed. I mean at least as far as producing children. Spawn. Eggs. Whatever happens in your world." I pointed up and down his body, trying to figure out why Thor liked him. The pup was still licking the alien's face with vigor, his tail whapping back and forth.

“You are incorrect, little human. We are to be mated. You will be my queen. Together we will run the entire universe or at least a part of it.”

“I see. And who runs the other part?” A lump had formed in my throat, another wave of fear trickling through me. At least Thor was curious as to why his mommy was swaying back and forth. I wasn’t prone to fainting but at this point, I also wasn’t certain I was grasping onto reality.

“My brothers.”

Another truth. What else did my father know but had decided not to tell me?

“Let me guess. Gods of water and wind? Or the Ice Man?”

He glanced at me, another smirk crossing his face. “Something like that.”

“Uh-huh,” I said, still trying to keep my wits about me. “Well, at least you can speak and I can understand what you’re saying.”

I obviously amused him, something close to a laugh replacing his usual growling sounds. “Yes, every language.”

“O-kay. So your father is the God of Creation, the being responsible for everything I see around me?”

He was thoughtful for a minute then nodded. “Yes.”

“Including the destruction of Earth, my home planet.”

His expression changed, highlighting he’d grown more agitated with the conversation. “Humans are destructive individuals. My father taught your ancestors a valuable lesson.”

Now I had several reasons to hate him and his kind. “This is insane. I can’t go with you. That’s final.” *Right, girl. As if he’s going to listen to reason or demands.*

“You will. By force if necessary.” He put an exclamation point on his statement by taking a menacing step closer.

It would seem I was out of options. For now. Maybe it was best to play along with him until I could signal for help.

“Not without my puppy as well as the ones at my veterinary clinic. They need to be taken care of. They need me. So, just go ahead and leave and I won’t tell anyone you were here. I promise.” I was hoping that would deter the creature from his decision.

First, he glanced at me as if I was some crazy chick. Then he added a few of the other toys from his box to his uniform, even shoving one of the vibrators into an unseen pocket somewhere.

There were few chances to do anything; my last possibility was getting to the transport unit. Then there’d be some sense of hope, an ability to fly directly into the main military scanners surrounding the base where my father worked.

I inched closer to the dresser, waiting as I made cooing noises to my fur baby. At least Thor responded like normal, wiggling to try to get to me. That’s the moment the firebird beast placed him gently on the floor, immediately returning his attention to the box of goodies. There wasn’t a second to lose. I snatched my baby first, struggling given his size and weight then my purse.

And I flew down the stairs, making it to the front door without being snagged. My breathing was heavy but thankfully, Thor was a good boy, not fighting me too much. I was out the door in seconds. But I heard a deep rumble, as if a massive galactic storm was headed toward the Earth Station. That’s when I altered my plans, racing toward the nosiest neighbor on the block, pounding on his door and ringing the security bell several times.

Then I heard a roar and threw a look over my shoulder.

Oh. My. God.

They were the only three words that came to mind; the beast was standing maybe twenty feet away morphing into something almost completely unrecognizable. His hair was flayed out, electrified by some crazy technique, rays of something horrible sparkling from every strand. His skin looked like molten lava, oozing up and down his sinewy muscles.

He took two steps toward me and I shrieked. That’s when he decided to show me just how powerful he was, throwing out one finger and an entire twenty-foot area was incinerated immediately.

“Oh, the big bad bully thinks he can scare me. To hell with you.” I backed away then took off running, determined to head around the group of buildings toward the area where I’d parked the transport unit. As soon as I was locked away inside, there would be no possibility he could get me. None.

I pumped my legs as fast as possible, but Thor kept slipping in my arms. I refused to drop him, banking around one corner then another. When I heard another roar, I slid against the side of one of the buildings, crouching down and taking several deep breaths.

Then all was silent.

I kissed Thor’s face, holding him close and whispering for him to stay quiet. He understood English, panting but remaining as silent as a pup could. “We’re going to be fine. Okay? Just a few more steps.” I took another deep breath then crept closer to the edge of the building, peering out. From where I was, I could see the covered space where several transport units were kept. Less than a minute and I’d be safe.

Giving myself a mental boost, I rushed forward and around the corner.

Straight into a hard body.

The muscular structure of the man determined to capture me. The hard hit was jarring but I managed to stumble backwards, slowly lifting my head to stare into his eyes, ones that appeared to be on fire.

“Bad human. There will be consequences.”

Gone was the fire-breathing dragon from before, the alien returning to a more natural state. That didn’t mean I couldn’t see both anger and disappointment in his eyes. Suddenly, I felt like a bad little girl, which was ridiculous. Who was this... being to tell me what I could or couldn’t do?

I was angry myself. I was incensed. I was also close to becoming emotional.

Especially when Thor did everything he could to get out of my arms, finally succeeding and running toward the alien, rubbing his face against the male’s legs.

“Traitor,” I hissed.

Woof!

“Look, beast. You come into my world and act as if you already own me. That won’t help anyone to display good behavior.”

I’d expected at least one of my neighbors to turn on an exterior light or to have a security system do it for them, but it was as if the beast was controlling everything around him.

He did something so unexpected I couldn’t speak or think. I also didn’t try to escape. He pulled a chair from the porch of one of the larger units into the center of the decking platform then sat down, yanking me closer.

“What are you doing?” I demanded, finally trying to get out of his hold.

“Humans need discipline and structure. That’s what you will get.” He had the audacity to yank down my boy shorts, exposing me in such a shameful way that I was mortified, a rush of heat racing across my cheeks and down my neck to my chest.

“Don’t. You’re crazy.” I was tongue tied, horrified that he was acting like he owned me. I stood where I was, staring into the most glorious set of eyes I’d ever seen. They shimmered, changing colors even in the darkness. Orange. Red. Gold. There was so much depth to them, as if the man actually had a soul. Oh, hell, no. Blinking, I did what I could to look away, but I was drawn to him more than anyone I’d met before.

The air seemed sucked out of my lungs, especially when he rolled his fingers down both arms.

Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed he dragged the tawse he’d stolen from my box into his hand. The hard cracking sound as he snapped his wrist brought a strangled moan from my lips. Then he yanked me over his lap and another wave of embarrassment and shock tore through me.

While Skyler and I had played a little early in our relationship, his idea of spanking me had been issuing two swats against my bottom seconds before driving his cock into my pussy. That was all I’d been able to tolerate. This was entirely different.

The second the thin leather tails were brought down against my buttocks, I

jumped, almost able to scramble away. “Ouch!” He delivered three more and tears formed in my eyes. I was shaken, trying to process what was happening. The entire situation was out of a dream. No, a nightmare. This was nothing but a nightmare.

A deep rumble erupted from his throat, and he yanked me against his broad chest, holding me down.

Against his throbbing cock.

I hadn't been dreaming before. He'd fucked me in the club.

“Stop. Just stop!”

Another growl indicated he had no intention of doing so. The nagging in the back of my head reminded me that I should be fighting him harder, doing everything I could to get away. Even if Thor sat right where I could see him, dragging his tail back and forth across the surface of the ground.

The harsh spanking continued, the beast skillful in the use of the implement. With every brutal strike, the pain morphed into raw anguish, a terrible reminder that given his size and ferocity, he was in complete charge.

Tingling sensations rocketed through me, heading straight to every cell and muscle and the mortification continued. Suddenly, my cries of agony turned into whimpers of desire, my pussy clenching and releasing as the round of discipline continued.

That's when I realized that lights had been turned on. I lifted my head, able to catch sight of my neighbor peering out the window of the house where the chair had been... borrowed. Maybe the hallucinogenic effects continued, but I could swear she was smiling, egging the alien on.

What the hell?

When I looked again, she was gone, but I sensed people were standing on their porches and in the common areas, watching the wretched moment as if indulging in a specialized 3-D program. It was crazy, so much so that I tried to claw the alien's leg. That did nothing except to entice him to bring the tawse down harder and faster, catching my upper thighs in the process.

I was in some kind of shocked limbo, uncertain of what to do or how to act any longer. The pain had completely drifted, morphing into a lovely peaceful moment of euphoria. I closed my eyes, bucking gently against his lap, creating friction.

And there was no doubt how aroused he remained. He was determined to prove to me that I was as well, rolling his rough fingers under my nightshirt then dragging the tips down to the crack of my ass.

I no longer had a voice, an amazing blur of images from what he'd done before causing a drifting of electric sensations to course down my spine. When he dared slide his fingers between my legs, tickling my clit with what felt like a claw, I issued so many loud moans I was certain everyone in the complex heard me.

“Just fuck her and get it over with.” The unknown voice was my answer.

We were being watched, what he was doing to me enjoyed.

When he leaned over only by a few inches, I could feel his hot breath cascading across the back of my neck.

“That’s exactly what I plan on doing. After I honor your request.”

“My request?”

“Of licking your pussy.”

Oh. My. Heavens.

I was in so much trouble.

CHAPTER 17



*S*unny

Feasting.

It took on an entirely different meaning when he eased me off his lap. I half expected him to make good on his promise right here in front of my neighbors, which would have pushed me over the top with embarrassment. Instead, he almost acted chivalrously, if that was possible, pulling my shorts back into position then lifting and cradling me in his arms.

He obviously knew exactly where he was going, heading back to my apartment.

It felt strangely normal in the alien's arms, as if he was able to protect me from anything. Any creature. Any danger. That was comforting.

That was wrong.

Somewhere in the back of my mind I knew it but couldn't seem to process the information well enough to try to reason with him.

"I don't know your real name." I peered up at the godlike creature, uncertain what I was thinking by even asking.

"Zatan. Come, Thor," he demanded, although there was a tenderness in his tone I hadn't heard before. He obviously cared more about my puppy than he

did me. Hmm... I wasn't entirely certain how I felt about that.

Zatan. Why did that remind me of Satan right away? The devil was in control of fire too. Had I become such a bad girl that I'd been sent to hell? And was it possible I was the new queen of the underworld?

The fact the alien was taking control of my dog should do nothing but irritate me, but I was mildly amused my furry baby came trotting along, acting as if he was happy as can be.

"Zatan, God of Fire," I repeated. "From what planet? Vektor. Right?"

"Yes. How do you know?"

Philippe had been right. My father hadn't lied. Hell's bells. "My father. He knows almost every species."

"Yes, your father." He issued the words in a knowing way.

"Is it beautiful on your planet?" Why was I bothering to ask? I had no intention of allowing him to take me.

"The most beautiful place in any galaxy, Sunny. A place where the sun always shines, the world always beams with golden flecks and the people are happy. There is no disease, no crime, and no worry about death."

That wasn't the place I visited in my fantasy.

"No, what you dreamt up has nothing to do with my planet," he said in a grouchy kind of way.

"Stop reading my mind. How do you... Oh, never mind."

"You and I are connected."

I wasn't certain whether his planet sounded beautiful or not. Just foreign.

Home is where the heart is.

Why did the words my mother had told me hit home so hard today?

He glanced at the scanning device and suddenly a burst of colors sparked from the console, the front door sliding open. At least it had been answered

how he'd gotten inside without setting off the alarm.

He waited patiently as Thor raced inside, closing the door then returning the system to armed. It was obvious he didn't want us to be interrupted.

As Zatan headed up the stairs, he dropped his head, keeping his eyes piercing mine. I'd never felt so dominated in my life or as dissected.

"You really can read minds," I whispered.

"I can read yours when we are physically close. That's all that matters."

There didn't seem to be the need to say anything else.

Except I wasn't certain I could tolerate whatever he was going to do to me in the same room where I'd found Skyler. Maybe that was silly since he was completely different. I wanted to laugh at being so ridiculous. The creature who held me in his arms was an entirely different species. What Zatan didn't know was that Skyler had been my only lover. I'd been a virgin, my first time with him nothing to write home about either.

Now I wondered if I'd remained with him since he had been the one I'd lost my virginity to. What did it matter? I'd never felt anything like what I'd felt with this creature. Raw ecstasy. It had been amazing, life altering, and I wanted more. Did that make me a very bad girl?

Maybe so but at this moment, I didn't care. I needed to feel alive, and this creature had the ability to do just that.

Before he even lowered me onto the bed, he raked his arm across the surface, knocking the box to the floor. I laughed nervously at his actions, crawling backward in another crazy attempt to get away.

He reached out without hesitation, dragging me down to the end of the bed. Then he leaned over, planting his hands on either side of me.

"Bad human." The way he said the two little words in English seemed dirty and forbidden, as if I'd earned a moment of pure sin by attracting him. I wasn't immune to the effects of men or their engaging looks, the desire that few humans could hide. However, the way this creature's eyes sparkled in the dim lighting of my bedroom wasn't just intoxicating, it left me breathless

knowing exactly what he was thinking.

But he said the words anyway, as if reaffirming them made a difference.

“I need to eat your pussy.” He raked his explosive gaze all the way down to the area between my legs, his nostrils flaring to the point I was certain the action was painful.

I had no fight left in me when he stripped away my shorts altogether. I’d been completely exposed before, but in truth, I wasn’t entirely certain I minded.

Zatan seemed ravenous, lifting and spreading my legs wide apart. I pointed my toes in response, trying to keep my breathing even as I studied him inch by inch. I’d seen thousands of aliens in my lifetime, both in real life or in various communication broadcasts, but I’d obviously never really taken into account that some of them were gorgeous.

He made a guttural sound, one so predatory and possessive that I shuddered then yanked the pajama top over my head. Now I was completely naked in front of a stranger, one that could kill me with an outstretch of his hand, charring my remains until they were unrecognizable. Maybe I should fear him, but I knew if he’d wanted to kill me that would have already happened.

Besides, there was the strange statement he’d made regarding my importance. He’d meant the words, the beast needing me for some crazy reason. I rose onto my elbows, trying to think of anything to say. There was nothing appropriate, not a single word in the English language that could totally describe my thoughts or feelings.

I hadn’t anticipated there would be anything sensual about him or in the least bit romantic, but I was wrong. The moment he pressed his soft lips against the skin just below my breasts, I threw my head back, gasping for air, laughing nervously because of the situation. I wasn’t used to being touched so intimately, with such brazen hunger. That just didn’t happen to a girl like me.

The heat he used scorched my skin as he drank in my body, his guttural sounds increasing, vibrations dancing all the way to my toes.

He continued his blasting trail of kisses, darting his crazy tongue around my bellybutton in feathery motions. My mind was crazed with the thought of

what he could do when eating me like the beast he was.

At least the seductive, dangerous savior didn't make me wait very long, pinning my knees to the bed then blowing a swath of hot air across my aching pussy. I sensed I was wetter than before, the scent of my longing floating between us.

"You are a beautiful human," he said as if the realization shocked him. Then again, humans certainly had their share of likes and dislikes with other species. I wasn't certain whether to make a sound or just remain quiet. "Arms over your head."

His dark command sent a swarm of butterflies into my stomach, so much so that I was shaking from head to toe. He lifted his gaze briefly before he dragged his tongue around my bellybutton. Somehow, I knew without question that I needed to obey him.

As I lifted my arms, folding my fingers together, what was happening almost seemed natural.

"You taste sweet," he said in a harsh whisper.

I arched my back, the light touch of his lips and tongue driving me crazy. When he placed his massive palms against my thighs, I let out a series of moans. I was finally able to capture the sight of claws barely slipping past the tips of his fingers. His species was gifted with several abilities, not just the fire-breathing dragon effect.

He wrapped his arms around my legs. Then he lowered his torso to devour me. He was obviously a man who was used to taking what he wanted, refusing to tease or tempt me any further. He simply thrust his tongue past my swollen folds, flicking the dual tips in different directions.

"Dear God." I clawed at my hands, trying to remain obedient while he feasted on my throbbing channel. I certainly had never experienced a moment like this, something so spectacular that I lost myself in the reverie and passion. Every inch of my body tingled as a rush of adrenaline and excitement continued to build. I bit back strangled cries when all I wanted to do was scream at the top of my lungs.

There was no use scaring my puppy. Right? I glanced over, my vision foggy

and unfocused, but I could easily see Thor was comfy, lying on his back as if begging for a belly rub, his legs spread wide open. Another nervous laugh threatened to give me away.

I closed my eyes, my body rocking to the rhythm of the way he was licking me, drinking in my juice. Every sound was an animalistic growl, his long fingers digging into my skin, but it wasn't painful. He was completely controlled, likely watching my every expression, learning what pleased me.

What was wrong with that?

Seconds later, he speared me with at least two fingers, pumping deep inside, adding a perfect orchestration with his tongue.

“Uh. Uh. Uh. Uh. Uh.” I heard the sounds erupting from my throat and almost didn't recognize them. I was letting go, feeling completely free and uninhibited. When he shifted his lips, sucking on my clit, I was certain I was coming close to being rocketed into a powerful orgasm. I wanted to laugh and cry at the same time, my emotions still all over the place. I continued rocking, arching my back and driving my pelvis into his face. I'd become a wanton, crazed woman, thoroughly addicted to his ravenous licking and powerful jaws as he sucked on my tender tissue.

Even his exotic scent tinged with smoke was intoxicating, filling my system and bringing it further to life. There was so much electricity shared between us that I was jarred from the constant shots of current. He obviously enjoyed what he was doing, his actions those of a parched man.

Not a man. A beast.

The thought brought another wave of salacious thoughts. While there were no laws against fraternizing with a member of another species, that didn't mean there weren't taboos. There certainly would be around fucking a fire-breathing god.

As he buried his face into my wetness, sucking and licking, I wanted the moment to continue yet my body refused to be denied. A climax swept through my system like a raging tidal storm, the force he used to suck my juice unimaginable. I was dizzy from joy, delirious from continued need, alternating between laughing and moaning as I tossed my head back and

forth.

I could hear myself screaming as a second orgasm barreled through me and I was caught in a crazed moment of letting go. I was no longer the girl who'd been cautious her entire life, the good girl who followed every rule.

A slight hint of pain almost immediately turned to a wave of pleasure that I would never be able to adequately describe. It was as if I was floating on a wave of perfect air, watching what was happening from somewhere in the stratosphere. Blinking furiously, I tried to focus, to see the reason behind the split second of anguish.

When I lifted my head, I heard the garbled sounds pushing up from my throat. He'd driven his sharp canines in the sensitive, fleshy area of my inner thigh so close to my pussy that I wasn't entirely certain he wasn't drawing blood from there.

"You're... I mean..." The wildest hallucinogenic vibrations and vivid colors rushing by my periphery of vision were unlike anything I'd ever felt. So intense. So mind-blowing that my lips had formed a perfect O as the purest form of euphoria rushed in.

He growled and pulled away, dragging his rough tongue around the area where he'd bitten. If that's what had really happened.

I was suddenly the one who fisted an alien stranger's hair, pushing his face into my wetness as I dug my heels into the comforter. Nothing had ever felt this amazing. He refused to stop, his two tongues finding my G-spot and refusing to let go. I sensed I was shaking violently, the orgasm the best one of my life.

If the walls hadn't been soundproofed, there'd be no doubt my neighbors had heard the explosive sounds. My ears were ringing from the high-pitched, ragged sound of my own voice, my eyelids barely able to move let alone stay open.

"Look at me, little human."

The sound of his deep voice was melodic and commanding, but I had no energy at all. All I wanted to do was to roll over and fall fast asleep. Then in the morning, I wanted my life to return to normal, leaving me with a

beautiful, filthy dream.

“Little human. Open your eyes.”

I licked my dry lips, trying to be obedient, the haze surrounding my head continuing. Yet I knew I wasn't hallucinating. There was a gorgeous beast positioned between my legs, his chest rising and falling as he stared at me. I was locked into the moment, now unable to blink as he reared back onto his haunches, allowing me to see more definition in his sculpted arms and massive thighs.

When he peeled off the shirt, I took and held my breath, the glorious view in front of me something most women were never allowed to see in their lifetimes. He was a stunning specimen, perfect in every way.

I had to be drunk on the passion to be thinking that way. The moment I tried to pull up onto my elbows, he pressed his hand against my stomach, the touch alone providing another wave of tingling sensations. A part of me wanted to ask him how he thought I tasted, which was insane all on its own.

Silly me forgot he'd admitted being able to read my mind. When he thrust two fingers inside my aching pussy, pumping several times, I gasped. Then as he pulled his hand free, sliding the tips around his mouth before shoving them inside, I bit my lower lip. Crazy thoughts were racing through my mind. I'd never been this hungry for a man in my life. I'd never acted like some schoolgirl with a crush.

And I'd never responded to anyone being all controlling with such glee.

When he yanked his fingers away, moving off the bed completely, I held my breath.

“You taste perfect,” Zatan said, his tone gravelly and his eyes changing colors several times, so luminescent that I could get caught in them for hours. “Now, I fuck you. Then I take you.”

He was so matter of fact, as if arguing with him was pointless. I watched in sheer awe as he removed the remainder of his clothes. It was as if the experience in the club hadn't occurred and now, I was seeing him for the first time. I couldn't stop shaking, the combined scent of our needs filling the room, becoming almost suffocating.

There were a million things I wanted to say, rambling thoughts that had no beginning or end, but they all flew out the window when his cock sprang free. Talk about seeing something for the first time. What I'd gathered from looking in the three-way mirror seconds before the alien had shoved the humongous appendix into my still aching pussy wasn't even close.

“Oh. My.”

It was the first time I could see he was pleased at something I'd said, not just aggravated or amused. How could I not be? I couldn't care less what color he was or what type of alien. He was gorgeous in every language and on every planet.

What are you thinking? He's determined to derail your life.

A small part of me was hoping this was still nothing more than a fantasy. After all, they were all the rage. Nope. I knew better. I just couldn't get my mind out of the intense fog.

Or the gutter.

With the scent of raw sex in the air, I couldn't deny what was happening between us.

He crawled onto the bed with intent in mind and I shoved my heels into the bedding several times to try to pull myself out of his clutches.

Of course there was no chance of that.

Zatan sat down, the heavy weight of his body creating creaking sounds under my bed. I couldn't take my eyes off his cock, licking my mouth as it watered from the sight of his leaking pre-cum. The crooked thing was truly something of utter beauty.

“Come here,” he commanded, although I could barely hear his voice given the deep, throaty sound.

“Who, me?” The fact I continued to attempt to use humor showed how nervous he made me. I made no attempt to move closer, although I did pull my legs as far away from him as possible.

I could tell he was a man with no patience, reaching out after only a few

seconds and wrapping his fingers around my wrist. Instead of jerking me against him, he pulled me slowly, allowing me to crawl to him in a dignified manner. He kept his hold as he raked his eyes down my chest. Then he took my free arm with his other hand, placing my fingers on his cock.

The move couldn't have been any more surprising. I didn't react at first, but feeling the throbbing against my fingers was too powerful to ignore. I slid several fingers down the side of his cock, another laugh bubbling to the surface from how ribbed his shaft was. There were nubs of various sizes covering it.

All the better to fuck you with, my dear.

Swallowing hard, I sensed goosebumps were starting to pop across every inch of skin, which was another foible I had when I was nervous. My heart continued to race but the sensations became more dazzling, drawing my attention away from being nervous. Even the anxiety started to slide away.

Zatan took a deep breath, holding it as soon as I finally wrapped my hand around the base, stroking up and down lightly. While his breathing was ragged, he remained quiet, never blinking as he watched my actions.

And my growing fascination.

He continued to hold my arm, as if weary of hunting me down, determined to keep me in his presence. While I only had a single hand to use, I did so wisely, pumping him with more vigor, alternating my gaze from his face to his cockhead. My mouth continued to water and when additional drops of golden cream slipped from the long slit, I couldn't resist, bending over and dragging my tongue across the liquid gold.

"*Karanta*," he hissed, which I had a feeling was a curse word or perhaps one of joyous exclamation in his language.

The taste was extraordinary, so sweet that an explosion of sensations rushed into the back of my throat. I was suddenly greedy with my actions, longing to taste more of him. There was no chance at taking the entire thick cock into my mouth, but I would do my best to enjoy every inch possible.

I slathered my tongue around his cockhead then took it into my mouth, using my strong jaw muscles to suck. The nubs tingled my tongue as they had my

pussy muscles before. I closed my eyes, enjoying the moment, not even realizing at first that he'd let my other arm go until he'd tangled his fingers in my hair. He was holding me in place, every sound he made providing a sense of how much he was enjoying the moment.

The sound of my licking and sucking permeated the air, finally mixed with very dark growls, so animalistic that I was certain a bear was in my room. I took him down an inch at a time, trying to relax my throat muscles, enjoying the moment more than I'd thought I would. It was almost relaxing, which was utterly impossible to believe.

He pushed my head down, using more control than I'd ever thought he would, and I could feel his leg muscles tensing. I planted one hand on his thigh, no longer surprised at the heat resonating from his skin. How he was able to control the fire-breathing creature living inside of him was beyond me.

As seconds turned into a couple of minutes, I was certain I was going to be rewarded with his full release, allowing me to drink every drop of his sweet cum. But when he pushed me back, breaking the connection, I sensed he refused to come in my mouth just yet. What was I saying? There couldn't be a next time.

Maybe if I continued to tell myself that, it would come true.

He brushed his fingers over my shoulders and down my arms. Then he lifted me as if I weighed next to nothing, forcing me to straddle his legs. The tip of his throbbing cock was dangerously close to my glistening pussy. I couldn't believe how hot and wet I was all over, tiny beads of perspiration trickling down the back of my neck.

It was as if he was waiting to see if I'd obey his mental command. The strange connection we shared seemed to be growing stronger, so much so that I didn't hesitate to slide the tip of his cock against my swollen folds. As he pulled me down, my muscles struggled to accept his wonderfully unique shaft, wrapping around the thickness like a tight vise.

There was no discomfort, no pain of any kind, just beautiful pleasure. I didn't even realize I'd placed my hands on his shoulders, running both index fingers back and forth across the scales. They were iridescent, so beautiful I was

captivated by their design and coloration.

He dug his fingers into my hips, lifting me until only the tip was inside. Then he pulled me down, a smile crossing his face as I was forced to take every inch of him.

“I... Oh, yes.” The moans slipping past my lips were strangled, breathless from the extra sensitivity and rush of emotions. Whatever we were doing meant something to both of us. Or maybe the deep bite that I could no longer feel was the reason behind my longing for him.

Another surge of electricity powered into me, tickling every muscle and heating up every cell, my breathing so irregular I was lost in a sea of fire. Maybe that was the point, my blood heating up to accept what we were sharing.

He kept his firm hold but there was no reason to as I bucked against him, marveling at the way my muscles accepted every inch of him, opening up like a flower in the sunlight he'd talked about. Was it real? Was his world as beautiful as described? Was it possible we were meant to be together?

“Perfect, little human.” His voice was gravelly, pulling me back to reality.

I bucked hard against him, taking shallow breaths. When he lowered his head, I tilted mine. When I pressed my lips against his, he jerked back. Then he sensed what I was doing, capturing my mouth.

I'd been kissed by a few guys in my life, but the way Zatan took his time exploring my lips, enjoying the taste, was so sensuous it was beautiful. When he finally slipped his tongue inside, he took over, dominating my tongue as he forced me to ride him. Seconds later, I knew he was close to coming.

That's when I squeezed my muscles on purpose, my body quivering from a rush of adrenaline and the roar of another climax. As he erupted deep inside, he threw his head back, releasing a cry that reminded me he was the God of Fire.

As he filled me with his seed, I wondered if what he'd said was the truth. Mates. For life? There were answers I required, ones I was terrified of learning. When he finally lowered his head, his eyes appeared dilated, the look in them so serious I was suddenly fearful.

I was also lightheaded, so much so spots had formed in front of my eyes. This wasn't good. No, this wasn't good at all. I rubbed my eyes, flashes of my life rolling in front of my field of vision.

“So you saved my life because I'm your mate? That's what you're telling me?”

“Yes, little human. Because you belong to me. I've been searching for you for a very long time.”

“How long?” Now he had me curious.

“In your terms, almost fifty years. My time was almost expired.”

“Expired? Then what would have happened?”

There was something destructive about the change in his expression, a hidden meaning behind the premise of spending the rest of my life with him. My God. I was taking this nightmare seriously. Then I remembered the story my father had told me.

“Your father is dying.”

He snorted, eyeing me carefully. “So he tells me.”

“I'm sorry,” I said. When he didn't respond, I changed the subject. “I wasn't even born fifty years ago. How old are you?”

“Older than this Earth Station.”

Now I had no idea what to say. Only a strangled sound slipped past my lips. Then another attempt at denial. “I don't believe you. No one lives thousands of years.”

“I will prove it to you.”

“How is that possible?”

“Because we were destined to become fated mates.”

The words as well as the situation were finally starting to settle in. “Do you remember the fantasy we shared?”

Zatan cocked his head. “Two years ago.”

“Yes. I don’t understand how it is possible.”

There was a strange look on his face but only for a few seconds. “Because my father can alter time and space if so desired.”

Why did it seem as if he was blaming his father for something?

“So it was real.”

“Yes.” He reached out, brushing the back of his hand across my cheek. Then he placed his flexed fingertips on my face, the move very gentle, tender as if he cared about me.

Which of course was ridiculous. He didn’t know me.

The world around me continued to spin and I wasn’t certain if I was floating or falling. Then suddenly, an electric shock tore through me, one so powerful that I could barely breathe.

Then a series of visions tore through my mind, all of them vivid in color, so full of detail that I could swear the actions were happening right in front of me. It wasn’t like 3-D images that humans had produced for generations but as if I was seeing the action that was happening, experiencing the sights, sounds, and tastes.

The scents were captivating, the colors of the sky were breathtaking. And the fire all around was incredible.

“Where is this?” I managed to ask.

“This will be your new home.”

As soon as he removed his hand, I turned my head.

Then I slipped ever so peacefully into a satisfied oblivion.

CHAPTER 18



*Z*atan

My world had just gotten much more interesting with the inclusion of the little human and her dog.

Although it was painfully apparent that she would need to be tamed. Just as I'd suspected. She'd slipped into a few moments of unconsciousness, which was also fascinating.

I was eager to talk with my father, furious that he'd obviously manipulated the entire situation. There had to be a significant reason why, something he'd refused to tell his own sons. It was time to get back to the ship, setting a destination course for Vektor prior to the Tantians learning for certain I'd snagged what appeared to be their current bounty. What did they want with her?

"Where the hell am I?" Sunny struggled in my arms, her eyes opening wide.

I didn't fight her, instead scanning the area as she pushed her way from my hold. I'd brought the smallest of my container ships into the atmosphere, determined not to bring attention to my identity. While the humans hadn't detected who I was, it would appear my actions had drawn other unwanted attention.

I'd also overheard the conversation she'd had with her father. Given her

questions, it was entirely possible he would begin an investigation into the fact the Tantians had breached their secure space. That would lead him into realizing that he had a Vektorian ship in his vicinity as well. Leaving the area was necessary, even if I longed to talk with her father. It was obvious he knew more about our species than most humans or other aliens did. That could make him extremely dangerous.

Or a useful tool in the future.

“We need to get to my ship, Sunny. We’re running out of time.”

“I thought I made myself clear. I’m not going anywhere with you. To hell with whatever destiny both you and my mother think we share.” She wrapped her hand around Thor’s collar, backing away into the early morning light.

“No can do, princess. Take a look at the sky.”

What continued to surprise me was how tangled our connection had become in such a short period of time. It wasn’t just our physical needs or desires that had embroiled us in a bubble of electric current, but also a strange series of emotions that I still had yet to comprehend. That’s why she’d responded the way she had, finally succumbing to the shock of being told she wouldn’t be allowed to continue with life as she knew it.

I’d managed to get her out of her apartment but had sensed we’d been watched as I made my way to the concourse holding my ship. Now my suspicions had been confirmed.

When I pointed, she stopped short, finally glancing up at the sky. “What am I looking at? Orange dots?”

“You tell me.”

“Oh, shit. Ships. They’re coming closer.” She tipped her head toward me.

“If I had to guess, I’d say the Tantians continue to hold interest in you.”

“Why?”

“That’s what I need to find out. If you want to live, you’re coming with me.”

“Do I have a choice?”

I grabbed her arm, pulling her toward down the concourse walkway. There was far too much red tape on Earth Stations, protocols that were required to be followed. Unfortunately, the Tantians had no intention of doing so. “Your father controls the military on this Earth Station?”

“Yes. Why?”

“Then he should be aware of their arrival.”

“Absolutely. What are you getting at?”

I headed straight for my ship, waving my hand and disengaging the forcefield. “We need to ensure that my ship won’t be caught in the crossfire.”

“What do you mean crossfire?”

“You know who I am, little human. So does the commander of the Tantian ships. They would very much love to add me as one of the casualties while claiming you. They also won’t care who they kill in the process. Do you understand what I’m saying?”

“The Earth Station is in danger.”

“Yes.” I opened the door, glancing back at the sky. There was no doubt they would locate my ship given the forcefield was down. “Get in. The dog isn’t coming.”

“Like hell I will.” She jerked out of my hold, almost tripping given the force she used. “Where I go, Thor goes. And I need my animals from the clinic.”

She had no understanding of what we were facing. When I lifted my hand to try to grab her, Thor finally growled, baring his teeth. Her look of satisfaction that her pup finally made a stand was irritating.

“Hear me, little human. The pup can accompany you, but we don’t have time to get the other animals you mentioned. As I said...” I didn’t bother finishing the sentence.

“Yeah. Yeah. I hear you. You’re a badass warrior and the only creature in the solar system who can keep me alive.”

I glanced at the sky then back to her, pointing to the interior of my ship.

“Come on, Thor. It seems we have no other choice.” Sunny waited until her pup jumped in, giving me a dirty look before doing so herself. I could already tell that the little human was going to keep my anger close to the surface. “My father will hunt you down.”

“If he does, I will be forced to react.”

“My God. You mean by killing him. Don’t you?”

“If necessary. I do not think you want that to happen.”

“You’re a monster.” Her voice was filled with hatred.

“Yes, I am.”

I didn’t waste any time, crawling in and closing the door, immediately placing my hand on the console for the engine. As it whirred into life, she inspected the small bridge of my ship, her expression indicating she was scrutinizing it.

“Sit down. This will be a bumpy ride.”

She glared at me then thumped down into the seat beside me, trying to find the harness unit.

As the engine prepared itself, I rose from my seat, yanking the straps from beside her, pressing them over her body.

She held out her arms, her breathing shallow not from the fainting spell she’d had before but from the continuing desire that roared through both of us. Our attraction was significantly higher than before, the electricity we were both experiencing and the chemical reaction fascinating.

But not something I could think about until we were safely stowed away on the ship.

When she was harnessed in, I did the same, immediately sending a request to the ancient tower the Earth Station used for lift-off.

“How close are the Tantians?” she asked when I pulled away from the docking station.

“Too close. They’ve broken through your fourth atmosphere.”

“On the third, they’ll encounter resistance.”

“Meaning what?”

She threw me a look that clearly stated she didn’t trust me completely. “Meaning they’ll be advised they’re not welcome.”

“That obviously didn’t matter before. It would also appear they managed to bypass your systems. While they have a cloaking device, I thought your station had the finest equipment.” I maneuvered toward the area I required to leave the atmosphere, growing more concerned by the second of our possible discovery.

“A little-known fact that we don’t advertise. The systems have been down for almost two of our Earth months. To you that’s a blip of time but for an Earth Station of this size, it’s a significant issue for my father. The funding is almost nonexistent.”

That was more than just a significant issue. That warranted a possible death sentence. At the same time I noticed the code was given to exit the planet, I also realized the Tantian ships had locked onto mine, attempting to use a gravitational ray prior to my shields being fully operational. When the ship jerked, Thor barked once.

“What is it?” she asked.

“We’ve been found, princess. Things are about to get very difficult.” I banked hard to the right, using a battle maneuver that I knew would draw not only the Tantians’ attention but those of the earthlings assigned to the tower.

“You’re trying to evade them.”

She made the statement with certainty, which was exactly what I was attempting to do. “A highly intelligent human.”

“Don’t patronize me.”

There were five ships, two of them cloaked before. Hissing, I took a hard pull to the left, rolling under the radar and over one of the Earth cities. “I assure you I’m not trying to patronize you. I’m trying to keep us alive. Until we’re in my starship’s beam, we won’t be completely protected.”

“I’m surprised a king such as yourself would not have an escort.”

“Now, who’s patronizing who?” As I noticed one of their ships had armed their weapons, I issued a hard growl.

“What now?”

“They’re attempting to eliminate us or at least shoot us down. That would lead me to believe they had a crew on the ground ready to take you.” I shot up to the second atmosphere, still trying to avoid warfare.

She peered at the navigational system, studying it intently. “If I’m reading this correctly, we’re over the black swamp.”

I turned my head slightly.

“Coordinates seven-ten, nine-twelve.”

“Correct.” How the fuck did she know that? Our systems had been designed so that no one could break the codes. “Meaning what?”

“Meaning we’re directly over the Cannibal Swamp.”

“I don’t understand.”

“You aliens have no sense of humor,” she said. “It’s a five-hundred-kilometer area of swampland where the inhabitants are some of the most dangerous predators in this or any galaxy. Think predators on steroids.”

When I said nothing, she laughed.

“Alligators? Piranhas? Venomous snakes that with a single bite will render you paralyzed but you’ll feel every single nip and bite as they swallow you whole?” She sighed when I remained quiet. “Trust me. I don’t care what kind of alien being you are, no one can survive being dropped into the swamp.”

“Then I will shoot them down into the area,” I told her with confidence.

“That means you’re willing to risk the fighter pilots who will come after you?”

There was a rebellious tone in her voice, as if she’d caught me being ill-prepared for handling situations in her small world. The truth was she was

right. Once I'd made my decision to find the closest location to attempt to find a human mate, I hadn't looked back, nor had I done my usual thorough research. That could cost me dearly. Then as I'd taken a single deep breath of her intoxicating scent, I'd forgone all other safety protocols, acting as if no other species would dare attack a king. The lovely human was making jest of my arrogance.

“Automatic?”

“That is a system that works very well since my father was a fighter pilot for twenty years. I assure you they are aggressive and stop at nothing. If they'd gotten wind the Tantians were here before, they would have come down on them like flies to honey.”

Her use of the English language was confusing as hell. I understood various specialty words for every alien creature, but hers were of a different era entirely.

“So what do you suggest, little human?”

“I suggest you take them to the furthest atmosphere where I'll show you a special location where the black holes are hiding. Then you can send them away forever. They won't be coming back. As with the swampland. No one ever has.”

“How many kilometers?”

“Less than a half narna ring.”

She was abreast of intergalactic space jargon, likely from her father. “Unfortunately, it's possible I won't be able to outrun their ships for that distance.”

She burst into laughter. “You must be kidding me.”

“I do not make jokes.”

“Then I guess you'll need to trust me if you want to get us out of here.”

I narrowed my eyes when a single shot was fired. “Meaning what?”

“Meaning let me be your wingman.” She opened her eyes wide when I

continued to remain quiet. “God. Your second in command on this ship? I can get you through some solar rolls with the ship intact. If we’re lucky, their hulls won’t be able to take the explosive heat. If not, the black holes are just beyond.”

She gave me the kind of salacious look that could draw any alien into her lair. “If you wreck this ship, there will be hell to pay.”

“You have no idea the kind of pilot I am.” She rubbed her hands together. “Let me have the controls.”

I continued to give her a stern look.

“I have many talents, Zatan, including complete combat training and I am qualified to handle almost any fighter ship built.”

Remaining irritated wasn’t in our best interest. I scanned her eyes. She was telling me the truth. The little human was getting more interesting. “Just remember what I said to you.” I pressed my fingers on the console. “You have navigational control.”

“Woo-hoo!” Her glee at being allowed even a small sense of command was as disconcerting as the situation.

However, I needed to concentrate on ensuring we weren’t turned into ash prior to her comprehension of the powerful tool she had at her fingertips. “Watch out, little human. The ship is small but mighty. Be careful what buttons you press.”

“Don’t worry, Zatan. My father instilled in me a sense of loyalty to soldiers. At this moment, that includes you since you’re insistent you’re the only one who can save my life.”

I noticed she was studying every inch of the display, her lips moving as if remembering something she’d seen. Then she gave a nod of confidence before allowing her finger to fly across the screen. “Setting course for coordinates seventy-eight, fifteen sixty-two, forty-nine. You’re telling me this baby can take anything?”

“She is designed to withstand all aspects of planetary gravitational pull. She can withstand five gar in scorching heat and can be submersed to the pressure

point of seven miles underneath water. She is solid.”

“I’m glad to hear you say that. So you know, there will be a hard pull in five. Four. Three. Two...” As the ship roared straight up, banking at a screeching velocity of eighty-five degrees followed by a roll and hard jerk encompassing another two hundred seventy degrees, she laughed as if having an amazing time.

I clenched my jaw, doing everything I could to control the steering. It was obvious the girl had more talent than I’d discovered in a short period of time, which would prove to be interesting. Perhaps her assistance would be worthwhile. It remained to be seen.

As she continued controlling the ship, I studied the systems. The Tantian ships were making headway, the positions getting closer. “It would appear your Earth Station fighter pilots are in orbit.”

“As expected. If you fire a primary weapon, they will return fire.”

She made the statement sound as if she had gone through military style training. Everything about the human female was surprising. I kept the shields on high, following her lead and maneuvering the ship through the third atmosphere.

“I should warn you that the combat pilots aren’t allowed to enter the fourth ring. The special coordinates you were provided when entering our space kept you alive.”

I turned my head, issuing a growl. “You’re just telling me this?”

“Oops. You said the ship could withstand anything.”

“The Tantians are firing.” I banked right, barely avoiding the photon shot, which was the least destructive of their weapons. It barely missed the hull, but the ship rocked hard from the close proximity.

“I’m turning toward the black holes now. You’ll have three seconds to lower your shields and fire a single blast. Anything else and it will push us into the event horizon. And I assure you that we will never return. After you issue the pulses, you’ll need to accelerate your thrusters in order to get us out of the ring altogether.”

Her confidence in the knowledge forced me to nod. I wasn't used to taking orders from anyone. Including a beautiful female.

“Commander Soltar. Our systems have detected a series of classic black holes. The ship will not withstand the gravitational pull.” Lieutenant Barto's voice sounded from the command center, the message in our language. That didn't prevent my guest from tossing her head in my direction, trying to figure out what was going on.

“I know what I'm doing, Lieutenant. Plan for a hard docking.” I also answered in our language, turning my full attention to the Tantians. “They're prepared to fire. It is my hope you are right about this, little human. Today is not a good day to flame out.”

“I don't take it lightly when Thor is by my side.” She banked once again. “Drop the shields!”

It was impossible not to growl but I followed her direction, dropping the shields and issuing a range of pulsing blasts.

That's when I heard the Earth Station's warning system go into effect. They were none too happy I'd fired, likely concerned I'd miss the target. Not possible. I knew exactly what I was doing. Unfortunately, one of the Tantian ships managed to get off a single photon blast and it was locked on.

“Well, little human. Now you'll see what one of my ships is made of. Brace for impact and for new coordinates.”

As the photon blast spun in a circle of gold, I noticed Thor jumped on her lap, the little female wrapping one arm around his neck while keeping the other hand on the controls. As soon as I powered on the thrusters, white-hot heat shot over the entire system, every control board cut briefly. As pinging echoes of the harsh blast roared through the entire cabin, the thrusters took over, jettisoning us out of the atmosphere completely.

But not before we were able to see the Tantian ships disappear.

“Woo-hoo!” my lovely mate whistled.

Sadly, there would be more. If my assumptions were correct, the Tantians wanted nothing to do with me.

They were definitely interested in my mate. Why would they risk complete extinction? Because they were scavengers, hired guns and little more. They'd sell their firstborn for trinkets and jewels. And power.

Additional questions were raised.

Who were they working for? More important, who'd betrayed my people?

CHAPTER 19



*Z*atan

Proof.

The word had slipped from the little human's mouth more than once, her voice becoming more agitated. She was truly becoming one of the most fascinating creatures I'd ever encountered.

She was also the most irritating.

"I don't want to be here. I told you that before," Sunny growled at me. "I need proof of what you're telling me. I can't be your mate. And abducting me against my will? I know the intergalactic parliament would have an issue with this, god or no god. My father is an important man. Did you know that? Besides, I have a degree in veterinary medicine. Remember? We are not compatible. Very few aliens are with humanoid bodies. That's just a fact every alien creature with any level of intelligence knows. God, I'm babbling again. I loathe being nervous. No, I hate some big bad alien acting as if he has any right to kidnap me."

"My power exceeds that of the parliament. They have no jurisdiction over the Vektorian race."

"Of course they don't. Go figure. I couldn't be kidnapped by an ordinary alien species. It had to be some god in a perfect body."

She was as infuriating as she was beautiful.

She was also in heightened danger. I was certain of it.

I kept my hand pressed against the small of her back as I led her from the battered pod into the main corridor, her dog dutifully following.

Every soldier saluted, all confused as to why I had a human in tow. She managed to keep up with me as we entered the decontamination room. “Stand there.” My command seemed to shake her.

“Why?” she confronted.

“Because you’re being decontaminated.”

Sunny shook her head. “Another reason not to be here. Trust me. I don’t want your germs. I don’t want you.”

“Your body betrays you.”

“Fuck you!”

Her voice had risen enough so that others in the corridor were staring at us. Any other creature who challenged me would face my wrath, but I could easily break her, and I had no intention of doing so.

“You don’t have a choice, little human. You’ll be killed if you return or worse. I don’t think you need to hear the stories of what the Tantians do to the females they capture, but it starts with allowing hundreds of their creatures to engage in carnal activities prior to being sold to the highest bidder. And I assure you those bidders are the worst of the creatures you’ve come into contact with. I’m the only hope of keeping you alive.”

While she trembled slightly, her defiance remained, something I would need to break. “Why? Because you’re a big, bad god beast?”

“Because contrary to what you believe, I do not want you to die.”

“Because I’m your prisoner.”

Every Vektorian in the room quickly glanced in my direction, trying to contain their surprise that I was accepting the human female’s behavior. If the beautiful woman wasn’t careful, I’d need to make an example of her,

providing punishment that she wouldn't forget anytime soon.

I grabbed her arm, pulling her against me. "Your father is an important man within the intergalactic realm."

"Your point?" Sunny hissed. "He will send people to bring me back. I assure you of that."

"Your father learned a long time ago that politics plays a role in every environment. My guess is that he trained you in various techniques. I suggest you remember what he taught you. It is also likely that he made an alliance with my father. And if he attempts to board this ship, his fate could possibly lie in your hands." I gave her a stern look.

"That sounds suspiciously like a threat. It also sounds like blackmail. What kind of alliance? You're out of your mind." As soon as she spouted off the words, I sensed she was just as concerned by what had occurred as I was.

"I will find out, little human. All in good time. First we get this ship to safety."

"Maybe I'd prefer taking my chances with the Tantian beasts."

"Call it what you will, little human. It is a promise of punishment if and when necessary. Up until this point I have been lenient with you. If you continue with your behavior, you will soon learn that our discipline system is quite harsh in comparison to other alien races. And yes, if you want to keep your family safe, you will come with me willingly. Do you understand what I'm telling you?"

She lifted her head, studying me intently. "Yes, I believe I do. That I should revere the ground you walk on. I'm not that kind of woman. Plus, you underestimate my father's power."

Perhaps that was the case. I would need to put a plan of action together in case there was a human challenge. The last thing I wanted was to start a war on her planet, but I had a feeling that my return to Vektor needed to be handled expeditiously.

"You are even more rebellious than I believed. You will be uncontaminated. Then you will be contained." I eased her into the chamber, moving beside

her.

“Which translates to I’ll be held your prisoner for the rest of my life. For the record? I want no part of your world. And you imprisoned me. The blackmail is just icing on the cake.”

After issuing a harsh growl, I nodded toward the technician, the system providing a cooling mist. Within Earth seconds, the tech nodded, releasing the chamber door.

Fortunately, there was nothing to be concerned about, at least with my mate. Her system hadn’t been attacked with a Tantian protective layer, which allowed them to handle the unruliest abductees.

“Come with me.” I waited as she scanned the area, obviously enjoying a moment’s celebration of being right.

I’d stormed onto the ship with purpose in mind, told that another fleet of Tantians were headed toward the Earth Station. It was something I’d yet to disclose to her. She would fight me to try to return or strike against them. The ships we’d eradicated had been sentries, their commander sending them on a suicide mission to try to capture the human as well as killing as many Vektorians as possible, including the God of Fire. The move had been bold as well as stupid, which meant they were desperate. The why was one of the first things I needed to determine.

This time they weren’t bothering to disguise themselves, heading in a battle-ready trajectory. Given our ships had been provided with access to the outer atmosphere surrounding Earth Station Sixty-Nine, the creatures responsible for the two attacks had been well aware of our presence from the beginning. The commanders had undoubtedly checked the docket of every ship in the various ports, which meant they were also aware we were battle ready as well.

What hadn’t been disclosed was the identity of one of the passengers on the Vektorian ship. Keeping my presence hidden had been vital for the entire quest, all but eliminating potential threats.

However, something told me my disruption of their attempt at abducting the human had sent an alarm that my presence was possible. If that was the case,

they'd arm their warheads at any time. Damn it. I shouldn't have allowed my fury to get the better of me.

"What are you doing with me?" Sunny asked as one of my other lieutenants approached, a look of chagrin on his face.

"You're going to remain in my quarters until I handle aspects of business." I gave Lieutenant Manta a harsh glare, which said without words to remain silent at this point.

"Then what?" she asked, stopping in the middle of the corridor. She scanned the various soldiers and other workers, the shimmer in her eyes reflecting concern.

I wasn't considered a warm, accommodating male by anyone, including the females I'd enjoyed over the years. However, there was something about the little human that pulled at an entirely different level of emotions, even if I was unused to being challenged by anyone. I moved closer, towering over her smaller body. "Then we have what you call a discussion about your role."

"My role. I have a family on the Earth Station, a mother and father that love me and while they're annoying, I don't want to lose them. Since you can read my mind, you already know I'll stop at nothing to protect them. I have a job, a career. A sister. I know you don't care but it's important to me. They're important to me. I already told you this and it just doesn't matter. I guess I need to get used to the term prisoner. Isn't that what mafia men did from the past?" She backed away, turning and heading down the corridor, my soldiers trailing behind her at my unspoken command. I could see her getting into trouble easily.

The feisty female was trying to comprehend what was happening to her. I could only imagine how challenging that must be. However, her insolence was becoming a serious issue. The last thing I needed was to appear weak, especially given my father's condition.

"Whew. It would seem you have your hands full," Lieutenant Manta said quietly as he flanked my side. "Humans are not what I expected. Mafia. Interesting terminology. She is... fascinating."

"Yes, she is, but difficult as well. We will need to ascertain whether the

humans are aware she's missing. Make no mistake, Zican, she is... special." He was right in that humans were entirely different than the limited stories I'd heard from my father. My thoughts drifted to the experience from two Earth years before. I still couldn't get past the suspicion my father had lured me to Earth in his own way. The man was a clever beast, truly pitting Ravat against me. Testing our resolve. The fantasy had been a test as well, allowing him to see if we were compatible. I'd ignored all the signs.

Manta laughed. "I'm surprised to hear you say that."

Snarling, I threw him a glaring look. "Destiny seems to be out of my hands."

"And in your father's. I have no doubt that irritates you. Incidentally, the search transport unit took some serious damage."

"I'm aware." I kept my little human in sight, keeping a distance behind her. He knew my mood swings better than most. My father could get under my skin quicker than anyone ever had, which usually meant I went off the rails, burning plant life and buildings to a crisp.

"Any reason for the attack? Your identity was purposely contained." He kept pace with me as I moved from one section of the ship to the other. We'd grown up together, his father serving as one of two advisors to mine. That meant the two families had grown up in wealth and posh surroundings while others within our boundaries lived by modest means. He'd been provided with the finest education and weapons training, opportunities usually only allowed to royalty.

"The woman is the reason for the attack. I'm certain of it."

"Why? That doesn't make any sense."

"No, it doesn't. She has suddenly become as important to the Tantians as she is to me." I would keep my theories to myself for now. Spouting off about a possible traitor wasn't in anyone's best interest.

"But if you don't mate with her, their worlds could be destroyed."

"Yes, I'm painfully aware. There is another reason they want her."

The sound of my heavy footsteps echoed in the dense space, everyone in the

corridor moving to the side to allow us to pass. I'd brought the equivalent of several small cities with me, male and females serving in various important capacities, their families along for the extended trip. I was in charge of their care. Suddenly, I had a feeling they would soon be threatened.

"Fascinating. I wonder who she truly is. That will make the return trip dangerous if they're aware she's on the ship, which I fully suspect they do given their attack. And you have no understanding of why they would want her? She is fascinating to look at, but their tastes are usually more eclectic. Although she could fetch a hefty price if she's a virgin. Completely untouched."

I had to laugh. "She's not a virgin." No, the dream had very much been real. I'd taken her virtue on that night. The how no longer mattered. What did was simply that I'd marked her then as mine, waiting for the right time. Or my father had waited on purpose, enjoying his twilight years of service. The manipulative bastard.

"Fascinating, our soon to be king. You've already tasted her. Maybe that's why the Tantians are after her."

"Not possible. However, I tasted her years before."

"Oh," he said quietly. "She was the one you mentioned."

I'd told him about the experience over drinks on another mission. We'd laughed about it at the time.

"Yes. Enjoyable then and I dare say more so now. I do not know the Tantians' mindset, Zican, which disturbs me greatly." I'd had some time to research the human's family, including her father whom I'd sensed was a human male of importance, especially given the communication she'd acted on during my visit. As a commander of the Earth Station, his political position could present a problem, but that wasn't the sole reason for the Tantians' reactions. However, I had a feeling I'd need to speak with him. If he'd made a deal with my father, perhaps he'd have an insight as to who could possibly be vying to destroy my entire family. The list was far too long.

Still. There was something I wasn't aware of, which made the situation that much more dangerous.

“I’m surprised, Commander.” Zican was obviously concerned.

I threw him a look. “Don’t be. This entire situation confounds me. What I do know is that the Tantians are on a collision course for destruction. Our destruction. That is not going to happen.”

“Everything is in place for entering into light space as soon as you give the command. I for one will be glad to enter another galaxy. What about your brother? Have you heard from him?”

“Not lately,” I told him, which had also raised the scales on the back of my neck. “I won’t allow this Earth Station to be reduced to cinders. We are also protectors. Remember?”

His sigh was one of confusion. “Yes, sire. However, your loyalty should be to our people first.”

I turned swiftly, surprising myself when my claw extended seconds before I wrapped my fingers around his throat, slamming him against the wall.

The sound was enough to draw Sunny’s attention as well as every Vektorian in the corridor. I could feel the heat of her glare as much as that of Zican’s. While used to my outbursts, this time he’d been caught off guard. I lowered my head, using our normal method of communication, refusing to allow her to overhear my harsh words.

The little human already hated me as it was.

Do not attempt to challenge me again, Lieutenant. You will not enjoy my next response. Do you understand me?

He appeared shaken, his entire body tense in anticipation of how far I’d go. I hadn’t realized I’d dug my sharp nails into his neck until his fluid of life began to leak. I released some of the pressure, disgusted with myself. I’d been on edge almost the entire duration of the excursion, refusing to either accept or believe what had been communicated to me by my father.

While my second in command didn’t fight me, I sensed that’s exactly what he wanted to do.

“What is wrong with you?” Sunny asked from directly behind me.

“It does not concern you, little human.”

“You’re a bully. Aren’t you?”

I threw my head over my shoulder. “And you’re completely undisciplined, like most humans.”

“You have no clue about humans, bad beast. But I sense you won’t take the time to learn. Just like your father.” Crossing her arms, she turned around, huffing under her breath.

The sudden look of amusement in Zican’s eyes forced a slight chuckle as I let him go. “We need to play this carefully. However, I refuse to allow the Earth Station to be eliminated based on my actions. Ensure that doesn’t happen.”

Thor whined behind me, pressing his face against my leg as he’d done so many times before.

“Thor. Do not get close to him. He’s a bad man, and we’re not staying long enough for my mind to be changed,” Sunny called. The dog’s tail whapped back and forth, his whine continuing until she called him again. Then the pup growled at me for the first time. She walked even further ahead, never once glancing back in my direction.

So much for my charming personality.

“Yes, Commander,” Zican said then rubbed his neck. We walked together in silence for a short duration. “What do you want me to do with the female?”

“For now, keep her out of harm’s way.” The last thing I wanted was to face a battle, but I doubted the situation could be avoided. I held her close, paying attention to her labored breathing. She was drained from the experience, my actions stealing a portion of her energy. She would recover, although she’d remain weak for at least a full day. “She needs rest. Everything else will be handled later.” As Thor meandered back to me, Sunny shot me another hateful look over her shoulder. Truth be told, I preferred her spunk to other females that bowed to my omnipotent presence once they learned my identity. To this human, I was nothing special.

“And this... creature?”

I glanced down at Thor and sighed. “Have him checked out by our medical personnel. Then return him to the human when you are finished. He is her pet. We don’t want anything contagious brought to our animals, but this creature is important to her.”

“An interesting beast. I don’t think I’ve ever seen anything like it.”

Exhaling, I couldn’t help but stroke the pup’s head. He and I had developed a strange bond, which had allowed Sunny to trust me to a small degree. His companionship would be important for her welfare. “He is very interesting. I find his companionship favorable as well.”

“And he likes you. Rare indeed,” he teased, which was something he’d been allowed to do over the years, another rarity in my world.

“Be careful, Zican. I could have you exiled for your words alone.”

“You could but you won’t.”

He was right of course. “Just ensure she is kept on lockdown. She’s very clever.”

“It will be fascinating to get to know her. I’ve always craved to meet a human. Are they tasty?”

My cock twitched at the thought of the hard fucking from before. “She tastes like our sweet tunga fruit.” A rare delicacy in our world. I was surprised I was even sharing that with him.

“I should have gone with you and found a creature of my own,” he growled, which made me smile. “Is she really the one, the reason for this excursion?”

As I rounded the corner to my quarters, I glanced at her pale face and pensive expression. “It would appear she is.”

“Fascinating but not a moment too soon. Our time is almost up. What about the Tantians? Do I prepare for battle?” The little human appeared even more rebellious as she was paraded in front of the oversized soldiers on my ship, snarling at them when they got too close. The thought of returning home to Vektor with a girl called Sunny brought along a series of issues, but I’d been sent on a quest, one where only two of my closest soldiers were aware of the

true reason for our elongated trip. We'd carried out diplomatic duties as required by my father in addition to the real reason for the quest, Zican being one of my men who'd been told the truth.

"For now, we keep close watch. If there's any sign of trouble, I am to be notified immediately."

"Yes, sire."

I'd met with several heads of state, had signed six treaties, had been photographed thousands of times, and had provided several interviews on eight different planets. It was all within the keeping the peace effort my father had started two hundred years before. I'd mistakenly believed humans didn't believe in our existence, at least not entirely. It would appear her father, along with other human heads of state had made a concentrated effort to keep our existence as secretive as possible. Why? Was this a personal reason? There were too many questions with no answers in sight. No one could know of the dire condition my father was in or that two of his four sons were required to find their mates.

It was ridiculous to keep the secret from our people, but there was enough power on our planet to cause the kind of disruption to lives within several solar systems. There were also gifts that could be bestowed by my father, significant sources of power for planets in need that could also enhance their regimes. I couldn't see her father as needing either.

What I hadn't expected was for my beautiful little human to become a battle savvy second in command when leaving the Earth Station heading for the ship. Her knowledge of the outer rings of the planet as well as the active black holes had likely kept us alive. It was possible her different level of expertise would continue being an asset.

But only if I could find a way to control her.

I glanced at the security pad, waiting as I was identified, the door opening. She remained by the open door, peering inside as if expecting cages instead of comfortable surroundings. I nodded for her to go in, following closely behind. Without acknowledging the lieutenant, she moved toward the thick oversized window, staring out at the Earth Station in the distance. "We will do what's necessary," I told him, keeping my voice low.

“Do you want me to have the missiles armed given the strong possibility they will attack?” He dropped his voice as well.

“Not yet. It’s possible given the improvements made by the Tantians they will be alerted. The last thing I want to see happen is a war on earthling soil.”

“Yes, Commander. As you wish. I will have one of the men attend to your... human.”

I stopped short, turning to face him. “Zican. Ensure she is well provided for. Do you understand?”

“Yes, sire. Absolutely. I’ll have someone attend to her needs.” His eyes were sparkling in happiness not only for me personally but also for our entire species.

Plus, he knew better than most that making me angry wasn’t in his best interest.

Zican backed away, but not before giving her another look. I waited until the door was closed before heading to Zaz’s quarters. My dragon had his own space, especially when I was on a mission. As soon as the door was opened, he bounded out to see me.

Thor immediately growled, Zaz imitating him. Then my pet bounced toward Thor, acting playful.

For the first time, I heard Sunny laugh. Her face was lit up as she watched the two beasts playing. I wasn’t the kind of creature who’d cared to ensure anyone was happy. But with her, everything was different. I wanted to ensure she found a place in my world that would bring her some joy.

And perhaps, she would do the same to a life that had become lonely.

“Oh, my goodness. Who are you?” she asked, although it was obvious she wasn’t talking to me.

“His name is Zaz. He’s my pet. So you see, little human. I do understand the importance of your... animal.”

She made a snide comment under her breath. “At least you get it. That’s what I want to do for the rest of my life, care for animals. Do you have others on

your planet?”

Zaz snorted, rolling his eyes, chattering in the language he'd gleaned from his master.

That forced Thor to bark and my little human to laugh again.

“Yes, Sunny. We have thousands of animals roaming our lands. You will have free rein to look after them.”

She narrowed her eyes as if trying to determine if she could trust me.

Zaz mimicked Thor's sounds, growling and barking, which seemed to excite the dog even more. I moved into my quarters, noticing her arms were folded, her face pinched. “You should be comfortable here.” I glanced at Zaz, the creature making fun of the two of them. *You will protect the two of them. However, the female is cunning. Keep an eye on her.*

The creature knew exactly what I was telling him using my mind, taking the opportunity to move closer to both creatures, sniffing as only the dragon could do. *Can I play with them?*

As long as you do no physical damage then yes, I told him. The miniature dragon had no idea of his level of strength or the damage he could cause.

He narrowed his eyes, giving me the same kind of harsh glare as the female was.

When he stuck out his tongue, licking the dog's face, the creature yelped and jumped backward by several feet.

“Thor. By my side. Do not hurt my family, Zatan.” The female had no idea the iciness of her tone only further aroused me.

I had a feeling her belligerence would continue until I told her the truth.

Hearing a sound, I turned my head. Thor's tail was thumping again, watching me with tired eyes. No matter the connection I shared with the furry creature, his master would always be the woman he would guard with his life.

“I have no intention of it as you are to be my mate.”

“So you've said. What else, other than your prisoner? Am I to bow at your

feet, do your biddings? Am I to submit to all your needs, no matter how kinky and heinous?”

Her glare was even harsher than before.

“You will obey my every command. As I told you before, soon, you will become my queen.”

CHAPTER 20



*Z*atan

The door closed behind me and I took a deep breath. The woman was even more infuriating now that she'd become my captive. Although my cock ached significantly, the desire for her only increasing; the life fluid flowing through my veins had created tremors within my muscle given the potency.

I found it interesting that I was being watched, as if the other Vektorians were confused as to why I'd have a human on the ship. It wasn't their call and in truth, I was irritated. Enough so I snarled at a few of them while making my way toward the bridge. I was no fool. I'd heard the rumblings within my own people, the chastisements of how my father had altered his methods of leadership. There were some who wanted him removed as king, which was blasphemous. I would kill anyone who openly challenged him.

Admitting my appreciation of the woman's abilities wasn't something I would readily do, but she had proven herself to be quite formidable in several aspects.

I headed into the front of the ship, glaring out the windows, then to the console, noticing the shift in their positions. "The fucking Tantuan ships are determined to fire on the Earth Station. What are the humans doing about it?" I barked my question, my impatience increasing.

Two of the men shifted to face me out of respect, acknowledging my sudden appearance.

“Commander. You’ve returned from your... excursion,” Lieutenant Barto said, barely glancing in my direction. He’d known the moment I’d stepped foot on the ship. It would appear both my lieutenants were testy, which didn’t bode well for what we could possibly be facing. “We need to annihilate the Tantians. They will only continue to cause serious issues. We don’t know if they don’t have an entire fleet waiting for us to leave this somewhat protected area.”

Protected area, my ass. They’d be happy to destroy an Earth Station if they believed it would send a message about their increasing authority. They’d gained far too many followers over the last hundred years, some of the species smaller in number needing a leader to guide them from what so many called the darkness. And many blamed my father, citing greed.

That was ridiculous. My father had a balance of power to distribute, something lesser beings couldn’t understand. That much I’d studied over the years, gleaning as much of his innate knowledge as possible.

I had to admit that his job as God of Creation was brutal.

“As I told Lieutenant Manta, not unless absolutely necessary.” I glanced at him, noticing his discontent. We were all on edge. That was something I’d need to continue reminding myself.

He snorted. “They are in position to do significant damage to our ship. Their new systems are online and ready.”

“They allowed you to see that without their cloaking device.”

“Yeah. It was less than three nanoseconds, but I am certain it was done as a threat.”

I wouldn’t put it past the Tantians.

The lieutenant was the other man I’d told about the quest, considered a trusted advisor. However, it would seem both Zican and Grazine were in need of readjustment. My father had often told me I ran a loose ship, at least with regard to my lieutenants. Perhaps he was right, yet I was well aware we

were all weary, eager to return home. Now we could do so, something he'd yet to accept or acknowledge.

"Maintain our current position. If they fire on the Earth Station, initiate a warning. If they make an attempt again, destroy them."

"I thought you didn't want to start a war."

"I've already stated my parameters. That moon planet is not to be annihilated."

"Because that's your girlfriend's place of residence?"

"Be very careful, Lieutenant," I told him, drawing closer.

He looked down at the ship's floor out of respect and I took a step away. "It is true what they say about human females."

"Which is?"

"That males of every species lose their minds. The human should be in a cage, by the way. She will increase the wedge between our people. Mating or no mating, Commander, you are risking everything we hold dear."

I was cranky as fuck, taking two long strides in his direction. When I cracked my arm across his face, sending him reeling across the deck, four of my other soldiers stood, their shock evident.

"You do not speak about the future queen in that regard." When he didn't act contrite enough, I wrapped my fingers around his throat, yanking him to his feet, slamming him twice against the hull of the ship.

"Queen? That's blasphemous. None of our people will ever accept her."

I issued a heated breath, lightly searing his skin.

At least Grazine was smart enough to shut his mouth at that point. "Do not rile me, Grazine. Yes, I am very concerned about our people and their future, but I have no choice. Neither do you if you want to continue commanding by my side. Now, I believe I've made myself very clear."

He sucked in his breath, his eyes close to forming a blaze. All I needed to do was to cock my head and he lowered his gaze. How fortunate for him. He

would be allowed to live.

I slowly let him down seconds later, keeping my firm hold, my rage still intact.

“It was not my intentions to challenge you, Commander. However, I’m concerned about your welfare.”

Concerned. I wasn’t certain whether he was worried about me or saving his own hide. Either way, I wasn’t in the mood.

“Set a course for Vektor,” I ordered another lieutenant. “But hold our position and send a communication to the Tantians that they are to leave the airspace, or they will be removed.”

“Yes, Commander.”

My second in charge remained shocked yet knew better than to fight my hold. I squeezed my fingers around his scaly flesh, shaking my head. I hadn’t been this enraged in a long time. Only when his face had turned an enchanting shade of purple did I let go. Then he took a deep breath, and I sensed his discord had turned into repulsion.

“The human has already changed you as I feared.”

Snarling, I held my glare. “That is none of your concern, Lieutenant. She and her companion are guests on this ship. They will be treated accordingly. And if you utter another word of disrespect, you will be imprisoned awaiting trial when I determine I have enough time to deal with you. As for now, you are relieved of your duties.” I held my glare toward Lieutenant Barto, waiting to see if he had the audacity to challenge me a second time. He was a staunch believer that humans were not only worthless but disposable. Although I had a feeling he wouldn’t mind burying his cock deep inside a sweet pussy like I’d found.

The only sound on the bridge was that of the instrumentation panels.

And the rattled breathing of my other soldiers.

His glare reminded me of the human’s, his eyes full of as much rage as I felt. Then I could tell he lost control. “You will regret this. Your people will turn

against you. You will kill us all.” He pointed his finger, his challenge one he knew was likely to be his last. While his traitorous behavior should surprise me, in truth it didn’t. Our entire population was on edge, uncertain of what was happening.

“Then I will deal with them as well. Get out, Lieutenant Barto,” I told him.

His eyes opened wide. “You can’t mean that. I earned this command.”

“I mean everything I say. Out. Now. You are relieved of duty pending an investigation. When I have the time.” I pointed toward the door then turned my head toward another soldier. “Lieutenant Pakar, you are now in control of this bridge and the weaponry systems. You will not fire without my authorization. Is that clear?” I had to put some controls in place. It was apparent a mutiny was possible. “Let the Tantians know we are here.” Which meant allowing them to see we were ready for war. If the creatures were bucking for a fight, they’d get one. I was finished with playing games, exhausted from the time in space.

“Yes, Commander,” the lieutenant said without hesitation, issuing several orders to those he was now placed in charge of. But I could hear the reservation in his voice, the uncertainty that could work against me.

Very slowly, I turned my head, studying Lieutenant Barto. He finally realized I was serious, storming off the bridge.

But not before shaking his head, his eyes now haunted. I hated being at odds, but the choice was clear. My mate had become the most important creature in my life.

Fuck. It was still a long way back to Vektor.

I backed away, folding my arms across my chest, returning to one of the consoles. Contacting her father was dicey at best. But the information he could provide might prove more useful than anything else.

Then I noticed some heat-related activity coming from the Earth Station. I shifted my hand over the screen, realizing the humans were prepared to fire on the Tantian ships. That was a rash reaction, which could mean her father had gotten wind of the fact she was missing.

“Has there been any communication from the Earth Station to the Tantuan commander?” I asked.

Lieutenant Pakar gave me a wary look before moving toward his place in front of his console, rolling his fingers across the illuminated screen. “None that I can see, sire.”

“If the humans fire, block the shot.”

“Yes, Commander.”

Several Earth minutes passed, and the lieutenant seemed even more agitated. “What is it?”

“It’s the humans. They’ve requested a full communication.”

I laughed softly, rubbing my jaw. Then I moved in front of the teleprompter. Her father had known all along that I was on a Vektorian ship. “Then so be it. Make the connection.”

As images flashed onto the screen, I wasn’t surprised her father had made the request. He stood in full battle uniform, at least six of his men standing behind him. While there were no weapons, no obvious sign of threat, his uniform alone meant war was implied.

He stood with his arms behind him. “I am Commander Donald Fields of the Earth Station Sixty-Nine. It is my understanding that you have my daughter as your prisoner of war. She is to be released immediately.”

I’d become a very observant man. I also had a gift of knowing when people were hiding something. Her father was... saving face with his soldiers. In other words, he was holding a secret he didn’t want his people to learn. If he’d sold off his daughter to another species, his people would certainly bring him before the parliament for possible punitive measures.

“And I am Commander Zatan Soltar of the planet Vektor. But you already know that. Don’t you, Commander?”

His eyes flashed but he remained quiet. It wasn’t the time to confront him with an audience on both sides; I would do so when we were in private.

“Very well,” I continued. “Your daughter has become an important part of

our future, Commander.”

I could tell by his stoic expression that he was also nervous, concerned for his daughter but also for himself and his moon planet. He hadn't anticipated the Tantian arrival. “Whatever business you have on this Earth Station and with the Tantians is of no concern to our people. I am allowing you to leave this solar system by your own free will if you release my daughter.”

“I'm afraid that cannot happen. However, she will not be harmed.”

He moved closer, pointing his finger. “Then you will face our wrath.” In truth, his eyes were imploring, sadness overtaking his practiced anger. He wanted me to see his level of anxiety.

“Commander, the Earth Station has full intentions of firing their main weaponry on the Tantian ships. The Tantians are aware of the Earth Station's intentions. They have armed their secondary weapons.”

That meant it was possible they were yet to be made aware I had the female. I was basing this on my instinct and nothing else, but there were far too many coincidences at this point. I moved closer to the main reflection unit, glaring out at the Earth Station. What I'd learned about Sunny's father told me the man wasn't stupid. What was his intent in engaging in possible conflict? Commander Fields had been involved in several world wars in his career, engaging in countless combats.

“Is that your intent, Commander Fields? To start a war that will mean battle on your soil? If so, I can assure you that it is entirely possible your daughter will be harmed. I do not believe that is what you want. In fact, I'm certain of it.”

The human gritted his teeth, glancing toward one of his soldiers. “What do you want with my daughter?”

The game continued and I was growing weary of it, but I would play along for now.

“As it is obvious you are aware of our existence, then you're likely to know that my father is in the process of stepping down from his command. He will only do so after his sons have found their rightful mates. I have found mine.”

The single flash in his eyes confirmed my summation. Did Sunny have any idea what lengths he'd gone to in order to protect her until the time was right for our mating cycle to begin? He'd gone from commanding a massive operation to what was considered nothing more than an outpost. He'd tried to protect her and the destiny that had been laid out in the stars long before her birth. Now that I could see he understood my intentions, I moved closer to the screen. He needed my help but couldn't request it for fear of appearing weak. "Disengage your weapons, Commander. The Tantians will not hesitate to fire. I made a promise to your daughter that I would protect you, your family, and your entire moon planet as long as she agreed to our union, which she has done. I intend on keeping that promise to her if you do not initiate a war. Are we clear?"

The story I'd given him was a partial lie, but it was a promise I was willing to provide, a deal made with my little human.

Commander Fields hesitated for a few seconds. Then he nodded toward the same man from before. I could tell his decision wasn't met with approval, but he was relieved. "Very well, Commander Soltar, for now. But I assure you that if any harm comes to my daughter, I will send my entire fleet and that of several other Earth Stations to Vektor. And you will be hearing from the Intergalactic Parliament Council. Contrary to what you believe, you are not gods. Simply creatures who can and will be annihilated."

The fact he didn't push any further in attempting to free his daughter was noted. It was almost as if he was providing his approval. Still, I didn't like where this was going. It was possible he'd been used.

We studied each other for some time, as if there was no one else around us. Yet in his eyes I could see he was continuing to plead with me to take care of her.

Walking closer to the screen, I gave him a single nod, allowing him to see more than just anger in my eyes.

Then he flipped off the communications system before I had a chance to reply. But not before I'd noticed tears in his eyes. His warning was without merit, but that wasn't something my people could understand. And how was I supposed to tell Sunny that her father wouldn't put up a fight?

“What now, Commander?” Lieutenant Pakar asked after he flanked my side.

“Have the humans disengaged?”

“Yes, Commander. They have.”

“Good. Maintain our presence. Send a message to the Tantians that they are not to engage in warfare lest they face our wrath. And keep watch on the humans for me. I do not trust them. It’s vital we make our way out of this galaxy as quickly as possible.” That was still the best for our ship as well as the Earth Station. If the Tantians got wind of the fact her father was working for mine, they’d blow the place all to hell.

“We will be entering light speed shortly. Perhaps that’s their intentions, to draw you out,” my lieutenant said.

“Which species?”

“Both.”

I chuckled at his summation. Perhaps I hadn’t given the junior officer enough credit. “Then let’s razzle and dazzle them.” It was a term I’d learned from being on the Earth Station a short period of time.

“Sire?”

“Send a rocket display, including vapors. That should provide a clear showing of our abilities.”

The lieutenant grinned. “Brilliant, if I may say so, Commander.”

I stood waiting as the lieutenant prepared what was little more than smoke and mirrors for both species. We were considered showmen after all. Little did they know the technique had been used with great success hundreds of times.

It had damn well better work now. Explaining to my mate her entire world had been destroyed wasn’t on my day’s agenda.

However, speaking to my father was. It would seem he had some explaining to do. And I’d have a chat with my brother to learn if he had any clue as to the identity of the saboteurs.

What troubled me more than almost anything was the fact I suspected Grazine had betrayed me and had full intentions of continuing to do so. He was someone else I'd trusted, a man with honor, yet I was certain that he was being used. By the Tantians or a faction of the Vektorian race? That was what I needed to determine.

"I have some things to take care of, Lieutenant. Contact me if anything changes. Enter light speed with a course set of Vektor."

"Yes, Commander."

I left the bridge, longing to talk to my father. First, I would spend time with my little human. I needed not only her surrender but support as well. If I was right about my beliefs, we wouldn't make it to Vektor without being attacked.

In my mind, I had a terrible feeling one or both of us would die.

As I took long strides down the corridor, I realized that the little human had already gotten under my skin with her sass and verve.

She belonged to me and always had.

My destiny.

And no one was going to try to take her away from me and survive.

No one.

CHAPTER 21



*S*unny

“So, you’re a dragon, huh?” The purple creature remained with his tail swishing back and forth, studying me intently. “Did anyone ever tell you that you reminded them of Barney?” I might be the only human left alive, other than my parents, who had a clue who Barney was from a gazillion years before.

The sound of the creature’s huge tail wagging grated on my nerves. Thor was certainly curious about him, continually pacing around him. I’d seen the dragon’s huge canines. Did everyone in Zatan’s world have sharp teeth? I shuddered from the thought, easing my hand between my legs. Then I skirted around Zaz, heading for the door.

The squawking sound the beast made was shrill, a warning.

Or maybe the beast was issuing a threat.

“Don’t worry, Barney. The door isn’t opening. It would appear I’m not going anywhere. Why don’t you go feast on smaller creatures or whatever it is you do when not playing guard dog.”

Woof!

Thor’s bark was followed by one sounding exactly like my puppy’s by the

dragon. I glared at the purple creature, shaking my head. “Very funny.” There was no recourse but to hang tight until the massive rough and tumble hunk returned. I rubbed my eyes. Exhaustion must be settling in if I was thinking of Zatan as anything other than my abductor.

My alluring abductor.

And what was all the hogwash about me being his queen? That was crazy. Why would he select me? My thoughts continued to roll back to the Tantuan attack and to my father’s odd behavior. At this point, I wasn’t entirely certain what was the truth any longer. I closed my eyes briefly, suddenly remembering something my mother had told me about destiny many years before. I’d asked her what the word meant, and her reply had been flowery at first, which I’d grown accustomed to. But I would never forget the clearest portion of her answer.

“Destiny is a predetermined future that cannot be altered by space, time, or living creatures. It is set in motion the day someone is born, challenged often by those who believe they can conquer the fates. But they will always fail.”

She’d looked so forlorn, stroking the side of my face. Then she’d pulled me into a tight hug. I couldn’t stand what I was thinking: that my parents had known I’d be hand-picked by this Vektorian creature. Why hadn’t they told me? Why hadn’t they put something into place to keep it from happening? What if they’d ordained this? I had to stop thinking that way. Certainly, my father would use his power and influence to get me back. Right?

I heard a sound and turned around, sucking my breath when the door was opened, the soldier who’d walked with Zatan easing inside. “What are you doing here?”

He cocked his head as if I didn’t know he could speak the language.

“Don’t fuck with me. I’m not in the mood,” I told him. “You can understand me. Unless you’re releasing me, just get out.”

Amusement crossed his face. “I have come for the beast.”

“Zaz? Good. I don’t need a dragon watching my every move.”

“No, the... furry creature.”

I immediately walked closer to Thor, placing my hand around his collar. “If you touch him, I will kill you.” Thor finally sensed I was in discord, his growl deeper than normal.

“He’s to be checked. Nothing more.”

“Who the hell are you? What authority do you have?”

The creature seemed amused. He was similar to Zatan, although not as large or as rugged. However, there was kindness in his eyes, a reflection that drew me in immediately.

“I am Lieutenant Manta, also considered a friend of Commander Soltar.” He studied me intently, the amusement remaining. “I need to ensure that he is healthy and will not infect our creatures.”

I studied him for a few seconds, trying to decide if I could place any trust in him. His smile was genuine. “Then I will go with him.”

“You are not allowed. I will be... gentle with him.” When he lifted his arm, Thor reacted as he’d done with Zatan, appreciating the attention.

The pup pulled away from me and I shook my head. “You remember what I said. He means everything to me. Everything. Do you understand at all? Or are you creatures who are incapable of expressing love and tenderness? Besides, you know nothing about our kind. Nothing. But it’s easy to tell you are primitive in nature.” Why I was lashing out at a soldier was beyond me.

“Do not judge lest ye be judged.”

I was shocked hearing the sentiment, almost as if he’d been reading the Bible. “You’re right. I’m sorry I’m taking this out on you when I should be berating your boss. He’s a piece of work, by the way. You do know I’m a prisoner here. Right?”

He’d blinked several times, and I hadn’t realized that every time he did, his eyes changed color. “You should be honored to accept the gesture from our future king. He is worthy of your... love. He is a good leader, a kind man. He will make an excellent mate.”

I wanted to laugh but my throat was threatening to close once again. The

beast's admiration was honorable. "You'll forgive me if I don't accept what you're saying at face value. That's very difficult for me right now. I've been shot at, pawed, pushed into some crazy kind of psychotic event not once but several times, and I was just abducted by a race of aliens that up to this point I thought only lived in nightmares. You'll have to forgive me if I seem a little cranky." The blank stare meant he had no understanding of what I was trying to say.

"I promise you that I will not hurt your pet. I have two creatures of my own that I miss deeply. They are... what you humans would call my heart and soul."

Thor whined and I let him go, relief flooding me. I sensed he was being genuine. Unless they were masterful game players. Trust wouldn't come easily. "Then you do understand."

"Yes. Besides, you are special to our god. That means I will protect you with my life as well as anyone you care about. The way of our people."

Exhaling, I nodded. "Thank you." What else was I supposed to say?

"Come, Thor. I will provide you with a treat when we are done."

The alien winked and I was pleasantly surprised, more so than I wanted to admit. As he walked out, before the door closed, he gave me a kind smile. Somehow, I knew the entire species was dangerous, more so than they wanted me to see. What I couldn't understand was the interest in me.

However, I would get to the bottom of it one way or another.

I paced the floor, glancing every so often toward Zaz as I continued to allow myself to be lost in conjectures. Why would I be needed by some godlike man? That much I couldn't be certain of at all. At least not until I grilled Zatan.

"Is your owner really good, Zaz? Can I trust him? Not only with my body but with my heart?"

Zaz studied me and I almost laughed. Of course, the creature couldn't understand what I was saying. When he trotted over to me, placing his head against my hand, I was taken aback.

“Is that your way of telling me that I can trust him?” When the creature started to purr, I almost melted. Then I stroked his head, marveling at the way his coarse fur felt against my fingertips. “You are a special little creature, aren’t you?”

He made sounds almost exactly like Thor, lifting his head and batting his long eyelashes. Okay, so maybe there would be a few things to love on Vektor.

When I walked toward the window, I studied the Earth Station, pressing my hand against the glass. When I felt a rumble beneath my feet, I realized the engines had just engaged. Zatan was making good on taking me away from everything I’d ever known. I wasn’t the kind of girl to cry over much of anything. But the week had been arduous and painful, and it seemed that everything I thought I could believe in was a lie.

What shocked me more than anything was the odd closeness I felt to the beast. Then again, I had for a long time. As a single image of his face slipped into my mind, I shivered, a moment of desire edging out the anxiety.

Yet as the rumbling continued, tears slipped past my lashes. Why such confusing emotions? Yes, my parents had raised me to be independent, but this wasn’t what I thought they’d had in mind.

When I heard the door, I did what I could to suck up my tears. How was I supposed to do this? How could I possibly handle being a part of his world? His queen?

Electricity crackled as it had done every time Zatan had entered a room. I hated my body’s reaction, but there was no denying the attraction we shared or the hunger that furrowed deep inside.

When I turned around, I took a deep breath. I wanted to hate the creature remaining several feet away, but I couldn’t, and I wasn’t certain why. Would destiny allow for our relationship to build instead of being forced?

He studied me as if for the first time before taking slow and deliberate steps in my direction. When he stopped only a few feet away, he held his breath.

“We are leaving shortly,” he said. I sensed an entirely different emotion in him. Sadness.

“Will I ever see my parents again?”

The question seemed to be a difficult one for him. “I do not know, little human. But I assure you once again that I will do everything in my power to keep them safe.”

“They are in danger and not just from the Tantians. I’m right, aren’t I?”

There was a strange sense of knowing yet it didn’t terrify me as I’d thought it would. Maybe reality was finally settling in, allowing my rational thoughts to begin taking over.

“There are forces working against me. I need your cooperation.”

“I see.” I walked closer, which seemed to surprise him. “You don’t know who this enemy is, do you?”

“I do not. But there is danger surrounding us.”

“Then what are you going to do?”

He took a deep breath, holding it for several seconds. “Protect the woman who belongs to me.”

“I appreciate the possessiveness but you’re one man, one beast.”

“Yes, but I have an army. No one will ever hurt you. Lest. They. Die.”

There was so much conviction in his voice, his jaw clenched more than I’d seen it before. I knew as well as anyone that chemical reactions often caused false emotions, allowing people to care about someone when they shouldn’t. Yet there was something different about him. Something had happened in the space of the last thirty minutes that he’d been gone. I was certain of it.

“What aren’t you telling me?” I closed the distance, placing my hand on his chest. The energy was off the charts, so much so that the electric jab of current yanked my breath away. Moaning, stars floated in front of my eyes and for a few seconds, I couldn’t see anything in front of me. “Why are we so connected? I feel everything you’re feeling. Pain. Anger. Someone betrayed you.”

He slipped his hand around the back of my neck, squeezing. Not with anger

or threats, but with the need to feel even more tethered. “You were always mine. I just didn’t understand.”

“Destiny. How?”

“I do not know, little human. But I do know what I feel, a need so intense that I doubt I can breathe without you. It is as uncertain for me as it is for you.”

I brushed my fingers up and down his chest, marveling in the tingling sensations coursing through them, the jolts traveling all the way to my toes. When he slipped his other arm around me, sliding his arm under my bottom and lifting me off the floor, I didn’t object. There was so much desire racing through us that the haze of lust was unstoppable.

We were at the same height, his gorgeous face inches from mine. “Your eyes are like firecrackers.”

“Yours are like the depth of the ocean.”

“How would you know?”

“Because I can see it in your mind. I can see how beautiful you believe your Earth to be.”

“But I’ve never seen it. Perhaps I never will, but I want to more than anything,” I whispered, brushing the backs of my fingers across his jaw. It was so strange to feel so protected in the arms of someone I’d called a monster only a couple of hours before. And I’d meant it. “My mother told me about how beautiful everything used to be. She has pictures from generations ago. It was so stunning, breathtaking really.”

He pulled my head closer. “You’re breathtaking, little human. And no, I don’t fully understand our connection, but my need for you only increases.”

“The blood you took from me.”

“Yes, that is part of the reason but not the entirety. Taking your blood produces an enzyme that heightens your pleasure. I will enjoy ravaging you several times a day.” There was such a power in him, a need so all-consuming that I remained mesmerized, quivering in his arms. I pressed my hand against his chest. But I wasn’t trying to push him away. Wanting him

closer, I wrapped my fingers around his shirt, tugging as if I had any control whatsoever.

This was lust and nothing more, but I couldn't ignore my longing any more than he was able. He captured my mouth, holding our lips together. With the way he'd taken me before, there'd been explosive passion, but I'd been in a strange vacuum. Now, the taste of him was stronger, the need as if I'd never be able to breathe without him.

He was my drug.

My destiny.

I hated the word but there was no other one that fit the situation. He thrust his tongue inside and I was taken aback by the sensations sweeping through me. There was a tidal wave of yearning, my pussy clenching and releasing several times. His tongue had done magic on my wetness before. Now, as it explored the darkest recesses of my mouth, I was floored by how crazed it made me feel, free to unlock the chains I'd had wrapped around me.

I threw my leg around him, moaning into the kiss as he took long strides out of the room I'd been standing in. I couldn't see anything, but it didn't matter. I was lost in his arms, wanting nothing more than to feel the crushing weight of his body against mine.

Zatan shifted his hips back and forth, the feel of his throbbing cock driving me insane. I threw my arm around his neck, tangling my fingers in his hair. It was softer than I'd remembered, adding to the increasing tingling vibrations. I could feel the rapid beating of his heart. I almost laughed into the moment of intimacy. I hadn't been certain the man had a heart. Now I knew better, the rapid beating indicating there were two.

When he sucked on my tongue, a wild whirl of electric jolts coursed all the way to my toes. Heat spread from his touch, sweeping over me like a blazing fire. Images of flames erupting from his fingertips remained, a wild level of excitement fluttering all the way to my core.

Seconds later, he gently eased me down, keeping his long, thick fingers wrapped around the back of my neck as he issued several growls. When he broke the kiss, his jaw was clenched as it had been before, the expression on

his face that of a true predator in the wild. The man was going to ravage me.

And I wanted him to. God help me, but I did.

He yanked on my nightshirt, ripping it from my body and tossing it aside as if I'd never wear any piece of clothing again. Then he cupped both breasts, squeezing until I cried out in pain. Yet it quickly morphed into something intensely pleasing, my mind trying to capture the essence of what he was doing to me. The moment was raw, ripped with even more passion.

I studied his fingers as he flicked his thumbs back and forth across my already pert nipples. They were hard as pebbles, aching from building need. His eyes were no longer recognizable, the shimmer in them highlighting flickers of flames. I was certain of it. Blinking rapidly, I tried to focus but it was next to impossible.

He dropped his head, taking a hardened bud into his mouth. When he sucked on my tender tissue, I was forced to grip his shoulders for fear of falling. He took his time, licking and nipping, moving from one breast to the other. This was as close to nirvana as I'd ever experienced and the sex with him had been incredible before.

When he pinched both nipples between his fingers, I threw my head back and moaned. Then I crawled my fingers down his chest, wrapping them around his thick cock. I could feel every pulse, every throb and it made my mouth water all over again. I struggled to figure out how to unfasten his pants, finally managing to locate the hidden zipper. The second I slipped my hand under the thin material, he pulled back, growling in a deep tone that set my mind and my body on fire.

“Careful, little human.”

“I can't be.”

He stuck out his tongue, the slight hissing sound adding a frenzy to my heartbeats, the rapid thudding echoing in my ears. I stroked him, laughing then cooing when I couldn't get my fingertips to touch. He was larger than I remembered. I dragged my tongue across my bottom lip then shoved the material down his hips, sliding my other hand under his cock. His balls were exorbitantly large, so swollen that they also barely fit in my hand.

How could any beast be built to such utter perfection?

He remained unblinking, allowing me to play. When he finally pushed me to my knees, muttering something in his alien language, I was so turned on that sparks of light floated in front of my eyes. I licked down the underside, shocked at the sweetness that tingled my tongue. I swept the tip back and forth before engulfing a single testicle in my mouth.

Holy cow, my jaws ached almost instantly. He fisted my hair, holding me in place as he rolled onto the balls of his feet. The silent, brooding beast continued to stare at me, watching every move I made. I could swear his body was on fire, so electrified that even his shaft exuded extreme heat.

I licked and sucked, moving from one ball to the other, but I sensed he was growing impatient, so I slid my tongue in a zigzag pattern up to his odd-shaped cockhead. The crook was inviting, beads of pre-cum already covering the tip. I engulfed it greedily, using my strong jaw muscles to suck. The taste was even better, dazzling my senses. As I tried to take more of him into my mouth, I had a sense I would fail given his wide girth.

Mu pussy continued to ache, longing for him to thrust the entire length inside. I was soon crazed with need, unable to stop trembling. At this point, I couldn't care less why we were so connected, the cravings become dark and dangerous. He pushed my head down, forcing me to take more of him. I almost gagged trying to relax my throat.

“My perfect little human,” he growled, the sound reverberating through every cell.

Now I was lightheaded, still fighting to breathe normally. After a few seconds, he ripped my head away from his shaft, his chest heaving. Then he slipped his arms under mine, yanking me up by several feet. When he easily placed my legs on his shoulders, I was certain I would fall, a heightened level of anxiety coursing through me.

But the moment he thrust his tongue past my swollen folds, I threw my head back and stared at the ceiling, shocked at the pleasure driving into every cell and muscle.

“Oh, my... Your tongue is... fabulous.” His hold on me was tight, as if he'd

never let me go. Every sound he made as he buried his face into my pussy was amazing, almost immediately driving me to an orgasm. I closed my eyes, longing for the moment to last. There was nothing better than what he was doing to me, pushing me to the point of being crazed.

My toes curled, a series of stars floating in front of my eyes. And the dreamlike state only continued to build into a slice of pure heaven. He sucked on my clit then flicked the raspy edge of his double tongue across the tender tissue until I was certain I'd lose it. I found myself bucking against him, shoving my pussy into his face.

I wanted to laugh and cry at the same time, the raw ecstasy so explosive it was almost painful. When he bent me back, forcing my head toward the floor, my arms flailed. The sensations were suddenly entirely different, my mind blown from the shower of powerful emotions. A giant wave of a climax roared into me. I was lost in the moment, unable to think or focus, or speak at this point.

But every sound coming from deep within his chest was guttural, animalistic, and he licked me like a wild beast, driving his tongue inside. When he flicked it rapidly, I laughed, my body spasming as white-hot heat and sparks tore through me.

I finally found my voice, issuing a sharp cry. Then the air was ripped from my lungs as he shook his head back and forth, licking every drop of juice.

Just when I thought I might pass out from the ecstasy, he yanked me back to an upright position, licking his lips several times in an exaggerated manner. Then he tossed me onto a platform that reminded me of the one from the fantasy, yet I felt softness underneath, as if I was floating on air.

Within seconds, he crawled between my legs, planting his massive hands on either side of me. As he peered down, he allowed his gaze to fall ever so slowly.

“Now I fuck you, my little human. And soon, we will be mates. Forever.”

CHAPTER 22



*Z*atan

Sex.

It was a necessary requirement in my world, a need that had to be fulfilled at certain points. It was a biological thing, something that other species would call clinical. Vektorians rarely fucked for pleasure, the perfunctory actions stimulating but not something we craved on a regular basis.

With Sunny, the little human who refused to fall under my command, it was entirely different. The touch of her skin. The way our lips connected. Thrusting my tongue into her mouth. And the taste of her pussy. I wanted more, craved more. The need was so powerful I wasn't certain I could make decent decisions around her.

At least until we were fully mated.

I'd wanted to take her to Vektor prior to finishing our coupling, but I knew that timing was of the essence. I felt it in my life fluid as much as her touch affected me. The term 'she'd awakened the beast' held new meaning. When I lifted one of her legs, placing it against my chest, I couldn't help running my callused fingers down the length. Her skin was so soft where mine was mottled and scaled, as was every Vektorian's.

Yet as I studied her, watching the way her lips pursed and her eyelids

fluttered, I was reminded how fragile she was. I could easily crush her with my body weight if I wasn't careful. I refused to allow that to happen, even if my needs were rapidly increasing. I was no longer surprised by anything she did, including sucking my cock or the fact she'd wrapped her long fingers around the tip, watching me with a voracious look in her eyes before placing my cockhead against the entrance to her tight pussy.

"My little human is hungry."

"Famished."

"Be careful."

"I don't want to be careful." She was as breathless as I was. Even though a portion of our anatomies were different, I still needed air in order to survive. Around her, the heat expelled from my lungs was close to becoming flammable. A man with no control could destroy his mate accidentally, especially one so beautiful and vulnerable.

I pressed a few inches of my cock inside, allowing her muscles to expand, clamping around the thick invasion as her tiny mouth opened in a perfect O. The way her eyes floated into the back of her head was another amazing reaction, the shimmer on her face increasing my desire.

She bucked against me, forcing another few inches of my cock inside. The moans slipping past her lips, and the way her face contorted from pleasure and a hint of pain, were drawing me deeper into the kind of need that would never be satisfied. While the surreal fantasy we'd shared had been cathartic, our tether beginning the moment I'd erupted deep inside of her, filling her with my seed, the reality was much better.

And the beast inside of me wanted nothing more than to consume her for hours.

"So big," she murmured as she raked her nails down my chest, her long eyelashes fluttering against her glistening cheeks.

"Tight little human."

She laughed as she brushed the tip of her finger along the edges of the ink that I'd been adorned with as a young man now well over seventy-five of her

Earth years before. I'd lived a lifetime while hers was just beginning. Should I feel guilty for taking her away from everything and everyone she loved? I wasn't the kind of creature to feel an emotion such as remorse. I took what I wanted and that would never change.

However, I hadn't expected she'd draw out a more passionate side of me, the need to hold her close, to taste her lips more powerful than the rage that had once filled me. I pulled her other leg against my chest, leaning over and holding my body aloft.

"I'm not going to continue being gentle, little human."

She half laughed, dragging the tip of her tongue across her bottom lip, the move subtle yet attracting the darkness inside of me. I wanted to shackle her to the platform, keeping her spread-eagled to return to whenever the hunger got out of hand. Perhaps that's exactly what I'd do. The thought was far too delicious. I dipped my head, biting her lower lip until she cried out. The single drop of blood gathered on my tongue, reminding me that the taste of her from before had almost driven me to madness.

"Don't be gentle. Just fuck me. I need to feel you deep inside."

Every muscle tensed and I held off for a few seconds. Then I thrust the remainder of my cock inside, nearly splitting her wide open.

She issued a series of husky moans, tossing her head back and forth as she dug her nails into my skin. If she thought she would hurt me, she was sorely wrong. Her pussy muscles clenched then released several times, tiny beads of wetness forming on both sides of her face.

I pulled almost all the way out again, studying her as intently as I'd grown accustomed to doing. Then I plunged into her again, basking in her squeals and breathlessness. Taking her was sweeter than I'd remembered. As I developed a rhythm, she continued to buck against me, rubbing her fingers up and down my chest. I sensed my body overheating, the flames of passion burning brightly.

Then I started fucking her with wild abandon, the sounds we made together animalistic.

"Oh. Oh. Oh. Oh. I'm going to..." She laughed softly, blinking several times

in her attempt to focus. Every thought rolling through her mind was one of almost desperate need, unable to understand why the yearning between us was this powerful.

She was also questioning why she'd surrendered to a creature like me. I lowered my head, dragging the length of my tongue along her cheek, tasting her with voraciousness. She gasped from my actions, her body convulsing as an orgasm rushed into her system. Every sound she made became heightened until suddenly there was utter silence as she cinched her eyes shut, jerking up from the platform.

I wasn't finished with her yet, only waiting until her body stopped spasming. When I pulled all the way out, she opened her eyes wide, gasping. "No!"

Issuing several growls, I backed away, immediately lifting and placing her onto her hands and knees. "I never said I was finished with you yet, sweet Sunny. I can go all night." I drove my cock back inside, fisting her hair and using it as a leash.

"Oh, my... Yes. Yes. Yes!"

There was nothing better than hearing her exclaim, watching the way her body shook from the ferocity of my actions. I pumped long and hard, the force pushing her face down toward the platform. But she refused to surrender completely, pushing her palms against the thick surface, trying to meet every brutal thrust with one of her own.

I was impressed she was attempting to take any control, purposely squeezing her pussy muscles to tease me. I threw my head back and roared, the sound vibrating the area around us. She moaned her response then laughed in a throaty way, as if adoring every sound I made. My muscles remained tight, hard as a rock as I pummeled hard and fast. I wanted this moment to last, but the need to fill her was too intense. I pushed myself beyond the limits, my canines lowering in anticipation of tasting her sweet flesh.

Yet as my balls filled with seed, I did what I could to retract them. Not yet. I wanted the moment we mated to be something to remember.

So I would wait.

For now.

As I filled her with my seed, I issued a husky bellow that the entire ship could hear. Now they would know without a doubt that the human belonged to me.

I yanked back her head by her hair as I wrapped my body around hers, my cock swelling more than normal, pulsing rapidly.

Her whimpers were as enticing as before, the smile on her face providing me with a moment of joy.

But I sensed danger lurking in the shadows, which for me wasn't as surprising as it was disturbing. The female was far too important, but if my instincts were correct, I'd find a bounty on her head. While the reasons remained unclear, I couldn't ignore what was staring me in the face.

It was entirely possible she was worth more dead than alive.

“What now?” she asked. “Mating? Is it different?”

“Somewhat.”

“Will there be a wedding?”

I brushed my fingers down her arm, marveling at the way her skin felt against mine. “Yes, a lavish one.”

“Your whole family will be there?”

“Yes.”

“Then I would like my family to be there.” She lifted her head, waiting for my answer.

“I will see what I can do, little human.”

“Good. This mating thing. Now? Tonight? Tomorrow? Ugh, I sound ridiculous.”

“You do not sound ridiculous, and it depends, little human. With factions working against us, that may become necessary.” I took a deep breath, filling my lungs with the scent of her. That only pushed me closer to the edge, my rage threatening to consume me.

“Wow. You really are concerned.” She eased back, her eyes darting back and

forth.

I moved off the platform, heading to the cabinet where I kept some of my finest liquors. “There is a group of Vektorians who are against my father’s leadership. It is entirely possible someone close to me is betraying this mission. I’ve yet to learn if that is so or the reasons why.” I poured two glasses, returning to the bed.

She glanced at the cup then took it from my hands, our fingertips touching. She took a deep breath when they did, biting her lower lip, a very sensual move. “Why are you telling me this?”

“Because you need to be careful who you trust. Other than me.”

“Trust is earned, Zatan. You took me.”

“And you knew all along it was happening.”

She took a sip of her drink, closing her eyes almost instantly. “My destiny. It’s been planned most of my life. Right?”

Exhaling, I returned to the bed, although I couldn’t take much longer before attempting to find out what the hell was going on. “Yes.”

The way she wrinkled her nose made my cock twitch all over again. “Yes, I believe you’re right. I’ve known for a long time my parents had planned something. I just didn’t know what. Can our mating really save your people?”

“And yours as well.”

“Then I have no choice.” She opened her eyes again and I noticed they were misted, but there was a heightened level of strength and resolve in them.

“I do not claim to be a good alien, Sunny, but I will care for you and protect you until the end of time. Our children as well.”

“But what about love?”

I fought with myself prior to giving her an accurate answer. “We do not understand what you call love. Adoration, yes. Attraction, absolutely. Love is foreign.”

“You are missing out, Zatan. Love is amazing. I’ve seen it with my own eyes.

That moment you walk into a room when you meet for the first time and no one else exists. The realization that you can't live without the other person. The tingling sensations that occur when you're close, the need to know about the other person when you're not. The longing to spend the rest of your life with that person and no other. And the realization that if the world faded to black and you only had that single person in your life, you'd be just fine. That's what love is. That's what I want."

She looked away and I cupped her jaw, forcing her to look at me. "Then I hope I can give you what you need, little human. You are worth the challenge."

For the first time I saw something other than hatred in her eyes. I witnessed hope for a future that was uncertain. Perhaps I could learn much from the little human.

* * *

Sunny

We'd talked for almost an hour before Zatan had had to leave, attending to business. Everything felt surreal, as if I was living in a fog.

Could the big, bad, brawny alien understand love? More important, could he ever feel it?

I wasn't certain but I had seen something so unexpected in him that I was uncertain how I felt. He'd shown me a hint of vulnerability. Maybe it was something he hadn't been aware of but for a few seconds, I felt as if I could trust him.

Even stranger was that I also believed I could learn to care for him, and not just because of our physical connection. Although that was... Amazing.

Giggling, I pressed my hand over my mouth and rolled over on the platform that I realized was his bed. There was nothing like languishing in the afterglow of sex. I was still shocked that suddenly the softest comforter I'd

ever felt had suddenly appeared. I could swear Zatan was a magician, his strange attributes keeping me not only on edge but also excited as to what would happen next.

A wedding? Had I really asked that question? What was wrong with me? “Growl,” I said out loud. I wasn’t some schoolgirl in love, for God’s sake. I’d sworn off men. Okay, so this was different. Entirely different. I had no choice.

Zaz appeared a few seconds later, popping his head into the room. I shifted into a sitting position, immediately covering myself. Then I laughed once again. He was an adorable pet, much like my baby. And I’d never worried about Thor seeing me naked. Still, it prompted me to get off the bed, wrapping the thick piece of material around me then yanking my clothes from the floor.

“Don’t worry. I’m fine,” I told the creature, keeping a smile on my face. Did he understand whatsoever? When his huge tail thumped back and forth, I wanted to scratch the little beast under his chin. I had a feeling he did understand every word being said. “I’m going to dress now. I’ll be right there.”

He issued the same purring sound as before, hanging his head and trotting out of the room. Just like Thor did when I shooed him away. I noticed another doorway I hadn’t noticed before and walked to it. While it was definitely a bathroom, it was unlike any I’d ever seen. Regal, even though I wasn’t certain I could turn on the water let alone figure out how to use the bathroom.

Hmm...

I worked it out, got dressed, and freshened up. Then I wandered into the main room, trying to figure out what to do during my wait. It would seem Zatan lived sparsely. I had to wonder what his people did for entertainment. I walked the perimeter as Zaz lounged on the floor in the middle of the room. Then I ended up in front of the massive window staring out at the stars. We were still in orbit, which surprised me. I stared out at the Earth Station, wondering just how much my father had known and when.

I heard another sound and tensed. Then I heard footsteps. Almost instantly I could tell the intruder wasn’t Zatan. When I spun around, the look on the

Vektorian's face was as full of uncertainty as mine.

"Is there something wrong?" I asked, glancing at him and hoping that Thor was with him. When I didn't see my puppy, I took a step away. I'd been good on following my instincts and the presence of this being screamed that I was in danger.

He took a step forward without issuing a single word. But there was no doubt he knew what I'd asked.

"Whoa. Hold on. What is going on?"

"I brought you some food." He placed a tray on one of the tables.

When Zaz did nothing more than lift his head, I nodded. "Thank you."

"Of course. We will be leaving orbit soon."

"So I understand."

A cold chill drifted down my spine from the way he was looking at me. Was it obvious that I'd had carnal relations with his boss? I wasn't entirely certain, but I was completely self-conscious. However, I walked closer to the tray of food, surprised that I recognized fruit that was native to humans, or so I thought. "Strawberries."

"Gigaberries," he corrected. "Just as sweet."

I laughed, grabbing one, realizing it had been forever since I'd eaten anything but ice cream. Somehow, I sensed he was waiting for me to take a bite. As soon as I did, I was shocked at how amazing it tasted. "This is fabulous."

He finally grinned. "I'm glad you like it. I thought if it reminded you of home, that would make you feel better."

"It does." I found myself gobbling not just one but three in a matter of seconds. Then I snagged a fourth, spinning around and glancing toward out the window again. "Vektor sounds lovely." I chewed thoughtfully, realizing he hadn't said anything in return. Then I could swear by the reflection he'd gotten closer silently.

Another chill shifted down my spine and I spun around, swaying slightly.

Then I glanced at the fruit, starting to feel... lightheaded. "Did you poison me?"

He pulled something from what reminded me of a belt, walking closer while obscuring it. Then he advanced as he'd done before.

No. No. No. Something was very wrong.

"Get away from me!" I tumbled backward, fighting the nausea, fighting to move away.

He kept coming. When he was close, I noticed what he had in his hand. It was some kind of syringe. Oh, no. Oh, hell, no.

There was a fire in his eyes that terrified me. I lunged forward, refusing to continue being a victim. Then I remembered what Zatan had said. He had been betrayed.

By someone he trusted.

I lashed out, knocking my arm across his throat, shocked when he went down with a hard thud.

Zaz immediately reacted, jumping to his feet and issuing a snarl unlike anything I'd ever heard. The little dragon rushed the bastard, allowing me to try to race toward the door. It had to be unlocked. What did he think he was going to do? I lumbered forward but everything was in slow motion already.

As soon as I reached the door, I heard a sharp cry. When I tumbled backward, I landed on my butt, immediately trying to see what happened. Zaz lay on the floor, some fluid leaking out of him. "No. No! You hurt him. Why?" I tried desperately to get to my feet. I had to find a weapon of some kind. I had to get help.

The alien's chest heaved as he turned to me, his eyes burning like a wildfire. Then he advanced, dropping down in front of me. "You will fetch a hefty price, little human. Then I will live out my life on a distant star."

I reached out, able to scratch his face. Then he backhanded me and I was down, blinking rapidly as anguish and the feeling of suffocation tore through me. "Zaz. Zazzy..."

As tears formed, the spots in my eyes turning black, the asshole rose to his feet, towering over me. Then all began to fade away.

I was lost and the last thing I could do was cry out for my... savior.

CHAPTER 23



*Z*atan

My father seemed amused, which was something I rarely saw in him. He was back in his freaking garden tending to his precious plants.

“You are aware that your brother had failed his mission. Yes? Even if his ship is repaired today, he will not finish the quest.”

“Which is exactly what you knew would occur.” I remained standing, trying not to react out of anger. “You are also aware he was sabotaged. Yes?”

“So he said.”

“But you don’t believe him?”

He glanced toward the screen. I could swear the powerful man had lost weight in the time since our last communication. “I knew you would prove to be the victor, my son. It is your rightful place.”

To say he had a favorite wouldn’t be the thing to do, even in our family. Sighing, I rubbed my jaw. “That might be the case, but Ravat could have been killed.”

He nodded, dismissing the entire situation. That pissed me off.

“You also knew I was intended on mating with a human because you

arranged it. Didn't you?"

"Do not challenge my authority!"

"I feel I need to, Father. You haven't been completely honest with me for years." The tension only increased between us, which was little more than an irritant. I wanted to lash out at him, but what good would it do?

"Let's just say I met her a long time ago when she was very young. It was during a meeting I had with the Parliament Council. Various leaders were there. There was no denying who she was."

"Then you made a deal with her father."

He half laughed. "Everyone has a price."

"For his daughter?"

"For the safety and sanctity of his people, yes. He cares very much about the human race."

"As you did when you destroyed Earth?"

His glare was harsh. "It is not destroyed, Zatan. It is in a state of limbo. Perhaps if you become king, you'll learn that some species need a harsh lesson."

I took a deep breath. Bitching wasn't going to get me anywhere. However, I could tell how pained my future mate was, as were millions of humans. "When did you make the arrangement with her father?"

"Years ago on a return trip and a private meeting with the man. Yes, I made him an offer. And no, it wasn't easy for him."

"Dare I ask what you offered him in return?"

"I promised to restore Earth to what it once was."

I stared at him incredulously. There it was. "Fascinating. I honestly didn't know you were that powerful."

"You might be surprised what I can do, my son. Now, are you on your way?"

“Soon. The Tantians know of her existence.” I studied him carefully and for the first time, I noticed his hands had started shaking.

My father often refused to show any emotion, preferring to act as if nothing ever bothered him, but I sensed what I’d said both enraged and worried him. “You need to return home.”

“Yes, I’m aware, but I have a duty to protect the Earth Station. What do you know about the faction of Vektorians who are against me taking the helm?”

“Their blasphemous behavior isn’t about you, but about challenging the system.” He tossed the implement that was in his hand, growling his frustration. “About challenging their king. I’ve allowed it to go on for far too long.”

“What can be done?”

“The insurgents can be rounded up.”

“Then what? Extermination? Prison? What about needed changes?”

Now his laugh irritated the hell out of me. “Changes? We have rules for a reason. You’ll understand.”

Taunting me was only pissing me off. “Who’s leading the insurgence?”

He took a deep breath. “I do not know. He lives in the shadows.”

My father didn’t know something? It would appear he wasn’t as omniscient as I’d once believed. “Fine, Father. Then I will find out. I will track the bastard down and rip him apart with my bare hands.”

“Your mission is to return safely with your mate. Period. I will handle the rest.”

“You may not have that option, Father. It would appear someone has betrayed me. Our entire family has targets on their backs.”

He walked closer to the screen, cocking his head. “Who?”

“I also do not know. But I’ll find out.”

My father’s eyes flashed with fire. He would soon destroy something to

relieve his rage.

“Contact me once you’ve departed the Earth Station. I will have a fleet meet you halfway to ensure your safe arrival.”

“I will do that.” But first, I had other things to take care of, including ripping apart the ship if necessary in order to find the traitor. But first, I’d contact my brother. Perhaps his help could be useful.

My brother was in a much better mood when he answered the communication. “The ship is repaired. Who knows, brother. Maybe I’ll still be able to give you a run for your money.”

“Be careful. I have no doubt the Tantians are preparing another attack. They do not want us to survive.”

“What aren’t you telling me?”

I shared with him everything I knew up to this point. Then I felt a pain in my head that was unusual. I glanced to the side, trying to determine where it was coming from.

“What’s wrong, brother?” he asked.

“I do not know, but I have a feeling the traitor is continuing his personal quest.” I laughed bitterly, sensing the little human’s distress. What the hell were we still doing docked? I moved toward one of the consoles. “Lieutenant Pakar, what is the status of our departure?”

“Sir, we may have a problem,” he answered.

“What is it?”

“The ship has been sabotaged. I need some time for the engineer to make repairs.” His face was twisted, full of discord.

What the fuck? “Get it repaired. We’re sitting ducks where we are.” Just like my brother had been. My assumptions had been correct.

“I know, sir. I’m trying,” my lieutenant stated.

“All hands on deck. Send out a beacon to our people.”

“Will do, Commander.”

A sudden, sharp pain entered my system, so much so I doubled over. Then I was certain I heard her voice asking me for help. What had I done?

“What the fuck is going on, brother?” Ravat demanded.

“I’m under attack. I’ll plug in my coordinates. I need your assistance, brother. Something is very wrong.”

“I’m on my way. Are you ill?”

“No, but I need to protect my mate.”

“I always knew you’d find the right one, brother. Go be with her. I’ll continue investigating who might be behind the insurgency.”

“Good enough, brother.”

With the communication ended, I backed up, bursting through the door. The pain was even more, almost blinding. I stumbled through the crowded corridor, yanking out my personal communications device. “Lieutenant Manta. Head to my quarters, stat.” I was forced to press against the hull, gasping for breath. It felt as if I’d been drugged. When he didn’t answer, I snarled into the device. “Zican. Where the fuck are you?”

The alarm sounded, which would bring everyone out into the corridors. I had to be prepared for battle.

The silence was horrifying. What if something had happened to my second in command and my friend? I continued stumbling from one corridor to another, finally reaching the level where my quarters were located. When I made it inside, I noticed Zaz on the floor, his breathing irregular. I rushed forward, dropping to my knees and lifting his head. “What happened?”

He finally opened his eyes, pain in both of them. *She was taken.*

Just answering me took a toll on his body.

“By whom?” I asked out loud as I scanned the room, trying to figure out what had happened. I could tell there’d been a struggle. Then I noticed the food on a platter.

Your... lieutenant.

That meant I'd been right about Grazine. The pain coursing through me no longer only had to do with the psychic energy I'd obviously felt from my little human's cry. It was also based on the treachery of believing in someone and being blindsided by them.

I eased my pet's head to the floor, trying to connect with her. Then I moved toward the fruit, taking one of the pieces. *Poisoned. You'll be okay, Zaz. Just rest. I will send a medic when I can.*

Find her. I like... her.

"Yeah, my little pet. Me too. Where is the dog?"

He lifted his head, his eyes starting to glaze over. *Never came back.*

Fuck. This was ridiculous.

"I'll handle it. Just rest."

I stormed toward the corridor, making my way toward Grazine's quarters. When I rounded the corner, I noticed him leaving his room. Without hesitation, I grabbed him around the throat, shoving him against the wall. Then I yanked my weapon from the holster, planting it under his chin.

"I have no problem ending your life if you do not tell me where she is."

"What are you talking about?" Grazine threw up his arms, confusion in his eyes.

"You're lucky I don't end your life right now. My mate. You've taken her. You poisoned her."

"No, I did not. Are you crazy? I would never do that."

Vektorians hurried on their way to their stations, panic in the air.

"You're lying to me. I will cut out every major organ until you tell me. I assure you that your death will be painful and the duration as long as it takes for a moonbeam path to cross our world. Do you understand me?"

"I'm not betraying you, Zatan. I'm your friend whether you want to believe it

or not.”

I let him down, taking a step back. Then I issued a brutal swing, hitting him in the face with the weapon. This time, he refused to accept my punishment, throwing several brutal punches.

Several of my people gasped, giving us a wide berth as they scurried on their way. They knew my temper. They also knew what I was capable of and wanted no part of my wrath. He managed to pitch me to the corridor floor, the thud jarring, both the weapon and my communications system knocked out of my hand. As we wrestled, we both got in several punches, our combined anger likely to start a fire.

As soon as he pitched me backward into the corridor wall, I jerked to my feet, throwing out my hands. Fire erupted from my fingertips. He barely had time to jump out of the way. Then he threw a bolt of lightning in my direction, searing one of the metal girders.

“I didn’t betray you!” he insisted, his voice deeper than normal, his entire body shaking from rage.

“Then who the fuck did?”

“Let me help you find out. You need someone you can trust.”

Trust. Perhaps the little human was also right about daring to trust anyone at this point.

I thought about his offer, taking a deep breath. Then I threw another line of flames, this time catching him on the side. Hissing, he dropped and rolled.

Then the entire ship started to shake, enough I was almost dumped on the floor.

“What the fuck?” I snarled, immediately reaching for my fallen communications device.

Boom!

The explosion was loud, debris flying immediately. Both Grazine and I were tossed to the floor, hitting the metal walls with brutal thuds.

“The Tantians,” he snarled.

I moved past him and to his quarters, moving inside.

“She’s not here. I have not seen her,” he assured me.

After ensuring he wasn’t lying, I turned around to face him, getting in his face. “If you fuck with me, Grazine, or if I find out you’re lying, I will tear you limb from limb. Do you understand?”

“Yes, Commander. I am on the same side.” His eyes reflected the truth. If that was the case, then what the hell was going on?

That remained to be seen but if he had her, I would discover it. He trailed behind me as we headed for the bridge, the stench of fire and smoke getting worse. When we were on the correct level, Lieutenant Pakar rushed into the corridor, bending over and coughing from the smoke.

“What the hell happened?” I demanded as I stormed toward him.

“Commander Soltar,” Lieutenant Pakar choked out. The smoke was thick and acrid, filling the space.

“What the fuck is going on? Talk to me.”

“The transport unit has left without permission. There was an explosive device. I tried to stop it. It was nothing but a diversion. The fire is out. Only a few minor injuries. The Vektorian responsible knew exactly what they were doing.”

“Who did this?” Grazine asked. “Do you have any idea?”

“None, but the moment of sabotage was planned carefully. It was someone who had secure access.”

That left a handful of Vektorians who worked for me. “And the ship?” I asked.

“Damaged but repairable.”

“Track the transport unit. I want it pulled back immediately.”

“I can’t do it, Commander,” Pakar said, continuing to suffer from the effects

of the smoke. “I tried, but the tracking beam was the first thing that was disabled. The cloaking system has been initiated. They’ve disappeared.”

Fuck.

“We’ll never find them,” Grazine said through clenched teeth.

“Like hell we won’t. I’ll scour the goddamn universe,” I snapped. “The Tantians?” Even as I pressed him for additional information, I was beginning to understand what had happened.

“There’s been no movement, but I grabbed a communication to them from somewhere on the ship. I’ll track it as soon as I can.”

“Get back to work,” I told him.

“Yes, Commander. I’ll let you know as soon as it’s fully functional.”

I closed my eyes, no longer feeling the same sharp pain I had before. That meant Sunny was either dead or unconscious. Either way, the fucker responsible would pay. The Tantians had been hired by someone from my own species. My God, the mutiny had gone undetected. How could we have been so... arrogant? A rush of thoughts ravaged my mind.

There was only one person with security who had the expertise to handle the kind of explosion that had occurred.

The only question was why would Zican betray me?

“Get on the bridge, Grazine. I need your help. We must find her.” I turned toward him and we locked eyes. I offered him my trust. But if he fucked with me, I would kill him.

“Yes, sir. You have my word I will do what is necessary right by your side.”

CHAPTER 24



*S*unny

Pain.

Mind-numbing, blinding anguish tore through me as soon as I opened my eyes. My mouth felt like the Sahara Desert, my throat almost closed. I clenched my eyelids shut, listening for any sounds. Then I realized the low rumble was something I'd heard before.

The transport ship that had brought me to Zatan's battleship. I opened my eyes a second time, wincing before I realized the bastard who'd taken me was only a few feet away. I shifted without making any noise, never allowing my eyes to leave the asshole. He was far too busy maneuvering out of the various security systems that had been installed the moment my father had arrived on the godforsaken Earth Station.

He'd done nothing more than dump me onto the floor behind him.

I tried to remember the last thing and it was of his face staring at me, the man who'd taken my puppy. A single tear slipped past my lashes. What if I'd allowed something horrible to happen to Thor? My heart racing, I did what I could to shut down my emotions. They did no good at this point. However, it was almost impossible to stop the tears.

Or the building rage.

How dare the motherfucker take me not only away from Zatan but also from my home moon planet. I lifted my head, trying to ignore the continuing haze and the pain from the wretched drug. I'd been such a fool. After taking a series of deep breaths, I managed to sit up, making almost no sound.

The idiot hadn't bothered to shackle my wrists or ankles, likely believing the drug would last until he had me out of the solar system. I wanted to laugh but bit back any sound, crushing my lips together. The element of surprise was the only advantage I had. I fought to maintain steadiness as I shifted directly behind the son of a bitch alien, swaying slightly the moment I tried to stand.

There were no rearview mirrors in the transport ship, no possibility unless he had keen senses for him to know I was ready to attack.

Then I realized I had nothing to defend myself with. I glanced right to left, grabbing whatever I could get my hands on. The strange-looking box was heavy enough but made a single sound as I disengaged it from its position.

That's when the Vektorian beast snarled, jerking to his feet.

"The little human awakens."

I didn't waste any time, smashing the box against the side of his head. I'd shocked him and myself, given his body was pitched to the side. Then I lunged forward, issuing three punches in a row. When it appeared that he'd been knocked out cold, I glanced at the same mission control system I'd been allowed to touch when helping Zatan before.

You can do this. You must do this.

I calmed my breathing for a few seconds. Then I started pressing buttons, trying to find a communications device. When I was certain I'd found it, I started whispering hoarsely.

"Mayday. Mayday. This is Sunny Fields. I'm being taken by a Vektorian warrior to God knows where."

The roar was intense, the rush of adrenaline not enough before I was tossed over the alien's shoulder, the beast taking long strides through off the small bridge to parts unknown.

I struggled in his arms, pummeling his back, but it was of no use. “Get off me!”

He moved into another room. I had no idea what he was doing. Then he tossed me into something.

“Yes, you will fetch a hefty bounty. You’re a fighter.”

“And you’re his friend. Why did you betray Zatan?”

I’d been shoved into a cage. An old-fashioned steel cage. What the hell?

I managed to wrap my hands around the bars, rattling them to try to get his attention.

“Lieutenant Manta. Zatan spoke highly of you. He thought of you as a friend.” I wanted to keep him talking, enough to try to give time in order for someone to find me. Damn it.

He stiffened then turned around, fisting his hands and fire in his eyes. I’d seen the look before. The bastard was ready to lose control. If he did, there was a distinct possibility that the entire transport ship would be blown to bits. It was a chance I was willing to take.

“Huh? What’s wrong, you alien reptile? Cat got your tongue? He cared about you.”

He flexed his muscles, obviously trying to control not only his breathing but his heightened level of rage. Then he dropped to his knees directly in front of the cage, lifting it off the floor and slamming it down.

I screamed, scuttling as far backward as the cage would allow, gasping for air. The freak wanted me terrified. It had worked. He didn’t care about his people or the alien who’d been his friend. There was no loyalty, only a need for revenge.

“You stupid little human. You have no understanding of our people or our ways. There is nothing but rules to follow, harsh punishment when we don’t. There are prisons and extermination drills. There’s no chance for improvement, no escape from the wretched tyranny. There’s only pain and suffering. We aren’t allowed to choose who we mate with or indulge in our

greatest fantasies. Unless, of course, you're royalty." He laughed bitterly, the flashes of light in his eyes indicating sadness. His entire body shook, his skin alternating in various colors of bronze and red.

And for a few moments, I felt his despair. What in God's name was Zatan planning on doing to and with his people?

"I'm sorry." My whisper was hoarse.

He stared at me, studying my eyes for a few seconds. Then he laughed. "Zatan isn't who you think he is. He is not your savior."

I took a deep breath, holding it, watching the beast intently as he stood. Then he backed away, turning abruptly.

When he stopped short, I was certain he would inflict his anger on me just to satisfy his need to destroy his friend.

"There must be more of a reason. Zatan isn't like his father." I needed more information. I had to know the truth.

He snorted then dropped his head. "You'll need to ask him. If you try and attack me again, you will be punished. And I assure you, then I'll find the worst creatures in the universe to purchase you."

"Why hurt me?"

"Because you care about the man I hate."

With that, he walked out, his heavy boots echoing on the corridor floor.

I remained almost paralyzed, pressing my hand across my mouth, trying to blink away the tears. Whatever the lieutenant had suffered was horrific, but I doubted Zatan was to blame. I'd seen the goodness in the man, the need to save my life an indication of who and what he was. Perhaps he didn't know what his people had endured. Perhaps he needed to learn.

And perhaps I was out of my freaking mind and the Vektorians were nothing but savages, brutal barbarians who ate their young. Whatever the case, I refused to be sold off like a piece of meat. That meant I needed a plan. I sucked up every emotion but anger, wiping away what would be the last of my tears.

Then I looked around at my surroundings. I'd been dumped cage and all into what appeared to be a storage unit. If I was right about being on the same transport ship, I knew there were at least two levels, several locations throughout. I'd seen them when I was being escorted by Zatan after being captured.

The bastard who'd snagged me had managed to get away from the mother ship. I was shocked that he had. However, if I could get out of my confines, it was possible I could at least send a beacon or a communication of some kind to Zatan's ship. If what I'd attempted earlier had worked, the cavalry should be here by now. Maybe it was wishful thinking but there was no doubt I was in significant danger. I had to pull out the stops or I'd be killed. After being used like a slave. The why no longer mattered. All that did was escaping.

I continued glancing at items that were almost within reach. The lock didn't appear too complicated, but it would help if I could snap it in two. I rattled the bars once again, realizing the cage itself had seen better days. There were strange splotches on it, almost like dried blood. I didn't want to know, nor did I care at this point. As I looked at the diameter of the bars, I realized my arms were small enough I'd have a full extension reach. Now, to find something useful.

I was crouched down, unable to move more than a few inches. However, I was able to carefully twist in a full circle, ignoring the continuing ache in both my muscles and my head. Then I noticed something shiny. A bar of some kind. I studied it for a full minute before inching to the closest area in the cage, sticking my arm through it, stretching with everything I had. I was inches away.

"Damn it." My voice echoed in the space. I tried again, shaking from exertion and the remaining effects of the drug. Right now, I needed a miracle, or my savior wouldn't be able to ride in on his white steed, rescuing the princess stuck in a... ugly transport ship. When I laughed, my head pounded. I was obviously exhausted from everything that had happened, not completely in my right mind.

I closed my eyes, trying to gather my strength. Then the ship lurched, hitting what could only be described as turbulence. I yelped not from pain or fear but from a split second of glee as the thick metal surface of the cage slid closer to

the shiny object.

Before another jolt of turbulence threw me the other way, I reached through the bars once again, just able to wrap my hand around the deceptively heavy piece. A pipe of some kind. If I could maneuver my hands, I might be able to pop the lock. As I tried to follow through with my plan, I couldn't help but think about why they'd have a cage in the first place. No, I certainly didn't want to know at this point.

I wanted to wake up in my soft bed, realizing I'd had a terrible nightmare. Then I realized, as crazy as it sounded, that I already missed Zatan. How was that possible?

After three tries, I became frustrated. Then I heard a slight click followed by a clang as the lock fell ever so slowly to the metal floor. I wanted to dance a happy jig at my success. Now what the hell did I think I was going to do?

Maybe I'd do a little sabotaging of my own. I opened the door, slipping out. Then I prayed the door to the basic closet hadn't been locked.

When I managed to turn the handle, I was rewarded with a stream of air. Maybe things were looking up.

A girl could dream anyway. It was time to put my years of studying aerospace to good use.

I would send a message. Somehow. Then I would knock the lieutenant out cold.

So help me God.

My God of Fire.

* * *

Zatan

I slammed my hands on the table in my quarters, denting the dense metal, my breathing irregular. Then I raked my arm across everything on the surface,

tossing it across the room. When the items smashed, breaking into hundreds of pieces, I snarled. Then I threw my arms back and roared. How the fuck had I allowed someone I'd trusted to get the better of me?

"This isn't going to do any good."

I heard Grazine's voice and hissed, slowly dropping my head. "And what is?"

"Developing a plan. That's what you're known for, oh great God of Fire. That's why you're respected more than your father or any of your brothers. You plan before acting. You take into consideration how your decision will affect other people. That's why our situation can be tolerated."

When he looked away, I narrowed my eyes. I sensed the beast had something on his mind. "What are you trying to tell me, Grazine?"

"Nothing, sire. Nothing at all."

"Did you find her dog? Thor? Is he safe?"

"Yes, Commander. He is safe. At least Zican did as you asked, having him checked and nothing more. Maybe because he has pets at his home on Vektor."

Pets. How had a man I'd trusted fallen so deeply into betrayal? How? I'd asked myself that question at least a dozen times with no answer. I was fed up with wallowing in self-pity and rage.

I took a single stride, closing the distance. Then I noticed fear in his eyes. Exhaling, I backed away, even turning around to give him space. "Why is Zican doing this?"

He snorted and moved further into the room, picking up a few of the items I'd destroyed. "Because he feels he has no way out from the prison he's lived in his entire life."

"What does that mean? There are few prisons on Vektor."

"Don't be a fool, Zatan. While I know you preferred staying to yourself, hating the politics your father played, you couldn't have been blind. There are hundreds of prisons. Maybe you refused to tour them."

What the hell was he talking about? In the back of my mind, I'd known. I'd ignored my father's brutality. What the hell had been wrong with me?

"Meaning what? Out with it," I demanded.

"I mean no disrespect to you or your father, but he is a savage."

"You can speak freely, Grazine. I need answers."

He studied me for a few seconds then nodded. "Our people are scared of the great king. Terrified. They live in scrutiny, watched constantly. They know if they make a wrong move, they'll be punished or worse."

Punished. Yes, my father had strict rules in place much like any other species, but few of our people were ever punished. Or were they? "Go on."

"They want changes, the ability to make decisions for themselves. They want to travel, to raise families with mates they choose. They long to explore other galaxies, indulging in the same opportunities you and your brothers were provided by birthright. And they don't want to be imprisoned for minor infractions."

I turned around, staring at him. My father's reign had needed to come to an end decades before. "You know why Zican betrayed me."

"If you're insinuating that he and I were conspiring together, then you don't know me or respect my loyalty to you and your family." There was conviction in his voice and condemnation as well as sadness in his eyes.

"No, I am not, Grazine. I am asking for your assistance."

He seemed surprised at first then offered another nod of respect. "Your father had Zican's brother imprisoned for speaking out against the regime. Zican tried to talk with you. You refused."

I thought about the statement and sighed. "And I was too busy worrying about the quest I'd been sent on." I fisted my hand, closing my eyes and allowing the pain of losing not only a friend but the woman I... A laugh bubbled to the surface.

"What's so funny in all of this?" Grazine asked.

“The little human told me that there is such a thing as love within humans.”

“I’ve heard of it, but that is not our way.”

“Is it not really, my brother in arms? Have you not tasted a female that you longed to taste again or hungered in a way that kept you awake at night?”

I could tell he was thinking about what I was saying. “That is love?”

“That is love. When you are unsure whether you can live without that person. Or if you’ll choose to die in order to keep them alive.”

He narrowed his eyes, walking closer. “She is your rightful mate.”

“Yes. At least my father, for all his ridiculous decisions, did something right. He knew what I needed.”

“Perhaps he knew what our planet needed and our people.”

“You’re right. You’ve always provided good advice.”

Grazine’s body stiffened, and he gave me a salute meant for a king. “Then what will you have me do, King Zatan?”

“I’m not king yet, brother in arms. And my friend. I will find her, the human woman I love. Nothing is going to stop me.” The communication from Lieutenant Pakar forced my muscles to tense. “What is it, Lieutenant?”

“Our transport unit has disappeared, engaging the cloaking device, one that I cannot override. Fortunately, our ship is repaired. And you should know that the Tantians are preparing to leave the Earth Station’s orbit. What would you like me to do?” Lieutenant Pakar had the same look of concern as before. But it was obvious he needed direction that only I could give.

“Stand by, Lieutenant. However, maintain battle stations until otherwise advised.”

“Yes, Commander. So you’re aware, Prince Ravat’s ship has set course for interception with ours.”

“Excellent. I will have orders in minutes.” I clicked off the communication and took a deep breath.

“What are you planning?” Now Grazine had a mischievous look on his face.

“To hunt down the transport unit.”

“How?”

“I have a feeling my little human will be resourceful. She is... cunning.”

He grinned. “Then she’s exactly the person you need to control you. I mean adore you, Commander.”

I shook my head. I’d sense if the luscious woman was dead. She wasn’t. No, she was very much alive, and she was angry as only a human woman could be. And I adored that about her. “She belongs to me, Grazine. She has for a very long time. I refuse to lose her.”

“It may take some time to find her. Zican is aware of the deadline, which is rapidly approaching. He may be drifting in space, waiting until that timeframe has passed. However, if what you say is true, I will watch the intergalactic communications to ensure if a distress signal is issued, we are notified.”

“Do that.”

“But it may take time is what I’m saying.”

I knew his warning wasn’t without merit or concern as my friend. “I’ll handle the consequences if we don’t find her in the allotted time. Even if we fail, she will continue to be important to me, no matter what my father does. It’s time for changes, Grazine. Our old ways need to be buried in the past. I will convince my father even if it means taking over by force.” I slowly turned my head so he knew what I was saying was truthful. My mother had always told me I was a terrible liar.

As usual, she’d been right.

He took a deep breath. “Then I will be honored to fight by your side to protect the woman you love. We will find her.”

“Yes, I am certain of that. Lieutenant Barto, contact Commander Fields from the Earth Station.”

“And tell him what?”

“That I need his help. And I’ll make it worth his while.”

He eyed me carefully, a grin appearing on his face. “Yes, Commander. As you wish.”

“And bring Thor to me. I don’t want him suffering.”

He hesitated then shook his head. “You surprise me, sire. I think the human has done you a world of good. Perhaps you’ll no longer be the asshole I’ve known you to be my entire life. No disrespect meant of course.”

At least my friend could make me laugh. “None taken, but you’re right, Grazine. She has shown me an entirely different world through her eyes, one I’d like to learn more about.”

The little human was mine. All mine. I’d never experienced the kind of deep emotions I had since meeting her in real life. My hunger now knew no bounds, my need to protect her stronger than ever.

When she was mine, we would mate. Then we would begin a new regime, one that would honor our combined past while embracing an entirely different future.

And we would rule together with compassion.

As images of the lovely Sunny floated into my mind, I watched Grazine out of the corner of my eye as he followed my orders.

Then he turned to me. “Sire, I have Commander Fields on the screen.”

“Excellent.” I raked my hands through my long hair before approaching. I was dressed in battle gear instead of my royal cloak, which was attire I hated anyway. “Commander Fields.”

“What do you want, Commander Soltar?”

“You are aware a transport unit left my ship.”

“Of course I am aware. I take it that it’s your attempt to thwart any possible attempt on rescuing my daughter.”

“Quite the contrary. She was taken from me. I want her back.”

He inched closer to the screen. “You lost my daughter?”

I waved my hand, ignoring his reply. “It would appear I have a difficult enemy to handle. I have a proposition for you, Commander, one you’re going to want to hear.”

“And why would I do that?”

“First of all, you made a dirty deal with my father. I plan on honoring that. However, I have an entirely different offer, one that should lessen your concern about your daughter. But only if you agree to my terms.”

He acted as if he was going to rebuff my gesture, rubbing his jaw as he stared at me. Then he huffed. “Go on. I’m curious as to your offer.”

While I’d yet to formulate a complete plan, what I laid out seemed to agree with the human. I took a deep breath after I was finished, awaiting his answer.

“I’ll be happy to provide assistance, Commander. Just tell me what you need me to do.”

CHAPTER 25



*S*unny

Someone in my life had once told me it was always darkest before the storm. Or maybe it was that everything was darkest before the dawn. I wasn't entirely certain any longer. I'd lost track of time and perhaps another portion of my mind in my attempt to hide from the alien who'd taken me prisoner. I longed to be in Zatan's arms after enduring mind-numbing fear. When the bastard had discovered me missing, he'd almost torn the ship apart in his search for me.

I'd had to stay awake for fear of being found. And the way Zican raged was a clear indication he was losing his patience. I had no doubt whatever punishment he'd inflict would be horrific. I'd tried for hours to find a way to send another message, learning as much about the ship as possible.

Now I stood in silence, holding my breath because I'd heard Zican crawling around the area I'd called the pit as soon as I'd dropped into it. It was little more than a crawlspace where some of the equipment had been positioned, likely accessed from the exterior when necessary through a welded panel.

There was no chance one of the huge beasts could fit in the compartment. Hell, I could barely breathe. The problem was even though various screens glowed in rainbow colors, the darkness was otherwise oppressive. I felt claustrophobic as hell.

I shifted from one panel to another, trying to decipher what I was seeing. My gut told me in addition to the thrusters and communication systems, the various screens also controlled the fuel used by the aliens. I had no idea what that was nor was I interested in opening a port so we'd fall from orbit, burning up within a matter of minutes.

That's what had kept me full of trepidation, unwilling to make a selection. But I was running out of time. I'd heard the bastard using some kind of a tool above my head, likely searching every compartment such as this one.

I shifted carefully, still trying to remain as quiet as possible. I was exhausted, famished, and could tell I was running out of energy. When the bastard found me, and there was no doubt he would, I'd have nothing left in me to be able to fight him off. I shifted from one panel to the other, fear crawling through me like a bug caught in a spider's web, the long-legged creature preparing to feast on its prey.

My finger remained hovered over one selection then another. Then I closed my eyes briefly, once again saying a silent prayer before making a choice.

The moment the selection was made, I pressed my back against the metal girder, staring at the consoles, still praying that the ship wouldn't spontaneously combust. When nothing happened at all including no clicks or additional lights, no flashes or sudden alarms, I slid down the wall, folding my arms over my bent knees.

Then I allowed myself to do what I'd refused hours or days before.

I wept like a baby, tears trickling down both sides of my face to my legs. There was no telling how long I allowed myself to cry but I sensed I was falling into a fitful sleep and allowed it to happen. Why the hell not? I was likely going to die.

My eyes cinched closed, I allowed a flow of images to pulse through my mind, including my past. And my furry baby. Another batch of tears slipped from my eyes. I would likely never see Thor again. That was...

As I slipped further into the darkness, I whispered my baby's name. Then that of the being that had awakened my heart, allowing me to see an entirely different world through his eyes.

“Zatan. Where... are... you?”

* * *

Zatan

Almost two Earth days had passed. It was almost tripled for my world, which meant I had almost no time left to take her as my mate. However, that wasn't the only thing on my mind. In truth, I wasn't certain I cared about the consequences for my planet. Even though I knew that was being selfish, the weight of my people resting on my shoulders, my thoughts were concentrated on finding Sunny.

And it was as if Zican had managed to slip into a black hole that he could fly out of where he knew he would never be found.

With Thor by my side, I headed onto the bridge. Everyone stationed was worn down from being on edge. Partially because with Commander Fields' help and what his beloved daughter had taught me, the remaining Tantian ships had been forced into the same black holes to join their friends.

Now there was no doubt the Tantian planet had been placed on high alert and warriors were preparing for battle. It had been a calculated risk and one I'd take again.

But was it worth it?

“Commander,” Lieutenant Pakar half whispered.

“What is the latest?” Lieutenant Barto had returned to his place on the bridge, keeping an eye on all contacts throughout the universe in his search for any possible sign of communication from the little human.

Pakar simply shook his head.

“There's nothing new, Commander,” Grazine told me. “I'm fearful I was wrong.”

“You mean that I was wrong in my ridiculous assumptions the human could

outwit a highly trained soldier. Don't you?"

Every soldier on the bridge tensed.

"It could still happen," Grazine said quietly.

No, it wouldn't. Our kind believed in reality, not in hope or chance. But perhaps some of Sunny's attitude and spunk had worn off on me, or maybe spending time with her furry pup had softened me. I'd had hope.

"Plot a course for Vektor. It's time we returned home."

Grazine jerked to his feet, cocking his head. "You don't want to do that, Commander. Give it additional time."

"Don't tell me what I don't or do want, Lieutenant." My voice boomed in the space, my tone harsher than normal.

None of the soldiers said anything, including Grazine.

Then Thor jumped up unexpectedly, whining and barking as he placed his paws on my chest. There was an imploring look in his eyes as if begging me not to give up hope or the search for his mistress. I lowered my head slowly, shocked when the dog swiped his long tongue across my face.

While the majority of soldiers gasped in horror, Grazine laughed. "He's showing you a sign of affection. He's also giving you his belief that you can find the human. Don't abandon her, sire. That's not what you want."

He was right but my father had tried to contact me three times. Three times that I'd ignored. It was time to face the truth that I'd also failed in my mission, a quest that I should have accomplished easily.

If I'd allowed myself to believe in fantasies and destiny.

"Set a course for Vektor. Wait for my command before engaging. I will take your advice, Grazine. Let's hope you are not wrong." I eased Thor to the floor, taking long strides from the bridge. When I was sufficiently out of range, I raged inwardly, every emotion that I'd allowed myself to experience around the little human rushing through my system.

Then something strange happened, a wetness from my eyes. I dragged my

fingers through it, horrified at what I'd find. Tears. I was crying over the loss. It was something I'd never done before.

Anger returned and I glanced down at Thor, rubbing his head. "I will protect you, little creature." Only I hoped I wasn't telling him the same lie I'd said to the human woman I... loved.

Exhaling, I started to head toward my quarters when I heard Grazine behind me.

"Commander Soltar. Wait. I think I have something."

I spun around, my nostrils flaring. "What?"

"Allow me to show you."

No time was taken to return to the bridge. Lieutenant Pakar was already standing in front of Grazine's system, peering down at something curiously.

"What is it?" I repeated.

"A blip. It's not much but it's constant." Grazine turned up the volume. "I wouldn't have heard it, but I switched to different channels."

"That's from the transport ship," Pakar said. "It's a little-known communications beacon that can only be activated by the commander of the ship or by reaching through the equipment console. It was installed prior to leaving for your quest, Commander."

"And I wasn't told?" I demanded.

"That wasn't my place. Remember, you were not inclined to going through the flight plan or security measures." He glanced at me sheepishly.

He was right of course. "Are we certain it's coming from our transport unit?"

"There is an expression humans use. It's called making a bet. If I had to bet, I'd say I'd be a clear winner. The sound is unique to the ship." Pakar threw me a look, his eyes lighting up.

"Can you track it?"

"Of course, sir."

“Then do it!” I growled, shifting my gaze toward Grazine, offering him the nod of respect this time.

“What happens when we find the transport unit?” Grazine asked, a grin on his face.

“We will board it by force. And I will take back what already belongs to me. After that, we will begin to make some changes.”

“What about Zican?” This time, his question was asked quietly.

I thought about what he was insinuating. His act of treason should mean his death. “Only when she is safe will I decide on his fate. Her safety is of utmost importance.”

“Understood. I know you’ll do the right thing.”

The right thing. I hadn’t done the right thing my entire life. What I hadn’t realized was that my father hadn’t hated the fact I’d been the rebel. In fact, he’d embraced it, even trying to nurture the fact I was different. I’d ignored his tutelage and my heritage for far too long.

“Contact Ravat, Grazine. I’m going to share the news.”

“He’s in our orbit, Commander,” Lieutenant Pakar said in passing. “Would you prefer to contact him yourself?”

“Send him an invite to the ship. I think I’d prefer to have a talk in person. And Lieutenant, when you locate the transport unit, ensure that we are cloaked. I want on that ship without Manta knowing.”

“Easily done, Commander. It will be my pleasure to have the molecular unit standing by.” Lieutenant Pakar was obviously happy with my decision.

“Excellent. A surprise.”

Given my brother and I had been at odds for so long, the shock was already evident.

And that made me smile. My people would be prepared for additional shocks in the upcoming various moon cycles.

I glared out the window at the beautiful stars. At least I hadn’t lied to her. I

couldn't wait to share the beauty of my planet with her. And vice versa. It would be a pleasure to share the experience of stepping on Earth for the first time. Together.

Little did the Vektorians know a true celebration was in order. For every male and female. And the reason? A new life for everyone.

* * *

Sunny

Clang.

I woke with a jerk, immediately trying to focus in the darkness. Almost instantly, I realized where I was, stuck in a cramped equipment room. At least I was alive. I shifted to a standing position, my muscles aching. Then I listened again to try to determine what I'd heard.

How long had I been asleep? There was no way of telling. However, it was time to find another hiding place. How long could I keep it up?

As long as it took. If I could only find a weapon more powerful than the steel pipe that had broken me free from the cage, then maybe I could take control over the ship. I'd toss the alien's ass into the cage. But at least the pipe would help if I was attacked.

That's what I would need to do. It was obvious my hero wasn't coming to save me. That gave me a moment of sadness, Zican's words of hatred toward his commander sticking in the forefront of my mind. However, I no longer had the luxury of worrying about whether I'd be saved.

I moved to the small hatch door I'd found, shocked the alien had yet to peer inside. After sucking in and holding my breath, I popped it open. Hearing nothing for a full thirty seconds, I eased it back, struggling to crawl out of the hole. Then I carefully returned the lid into position, scanning the larger equipment room before moving toward the door. It had been left ajar and not by me, which meant Zican had come into the room at least once. With the

pipe tightly held in one hand, I moved into the corridor.

Thankfully, there was no one close and no sound either. Without knowing every inch of the small ship, I moved to the right, heading toward what I remembered to be the sleeping quarters. As I rounded a corner, I was stunned into a moment of utter panic.

There he was headed in my direction.

He lifted his head, recognition forming a smile on his face. Then he lifted his arm, beckoning me with a single finger. "Come to me, little human. You've been very bad. However, I'll go easy on you if you obey me."

I broke free from the moment of paralysis, shifting the pipe from one hand to the other. "Not a chance. Fucker. Catch me if you can." I took off running in the opposite direction, praying I was headed to the bridge. Although when I got there, I had no idea what I thought I could do. I kept my feet moving even though I was still exhausted, flying down several corridors, glancing over my shoulder only once. The alien was pissed, so much so I was shocked he hadn't thrown his arm in my direction, allowing fire to flow from his fingertips.

I continued running, realizing I would be cornered in less than a minute. I had to take a stand and fight him.

He issued a harsh bellow and before I had a chance to turn around, he wrapped his hand around my long strands of hair, ripping me off my feet then tossing me against the wall. I hit with a savage thud, sliding down the slick wall, trying desperately to keep my hand wrapped around the pipe.

"No!" I screamed, fighting with everything I had to get to my feet. He watched me do it, an evil grin on his face. When he started to take a swing, so did I, managing to catch him across the face. I lunged forward in an attempt to run away again but he snagged my arm, pitching me backwards. This time, I lost my grip on the pipe, the metal tossed into the air as I watched it almost as if in slow motion.

And at that moment, I knew I was going to die. As I fell to my knees, the last vision was of Zatan before I closed my eyes.

Then I heard another roar, one that sent a dazzling shiver of electricity

coursing through me.

“Zican Manta. You will stop.”

The booming sound of Zatan’s voice created a whirl of sensations dancing through me. I took several deep breaths as Zatan issued several brutal blows to someone he’d once considered a friend.

I noticed another alien similar to Zatan standing only a few feet away, but where my mate had burnished red skin, the icy blue color of the other was the polar opposite. Then I realized he had to be Zatan’s brother, the God of Ice.

Zatan shifted backward as soon as Zican fell, turning toward me. “My little human.”

“You came for me.”

“I told you I would hunt you down wherever you are. You are mine.”

I noticed Zican forcing himself to his feet while the God of Ice stood with his arms crossed, a smirk on his face. When Zican yanked the pipe I’d lost into his hand, I reacted instantly. “Look out!”

Zatan didn’t hesitate, issuing a thunderous bolt of red-hot lightning from his fingertips, the electric current tossing Zican back by a solid twenty feet. But he wasn’t finished yet, rushing Zatan with a bellow unlike anything I’d ever heard.

Then a horrific fight ensued, both creatures managing blow after blow. Finally, Zatan had the advantage, yanking a battle weary Zican over his head. When he brought him down with a vicious thud, the sound echoed in my ears. Zatan stumbled backwards, glaring at the ice blue creature.

“Any time, Ravat. Your help would have been appreciated.”

Ravat laughed. “You were doing just fine, brother. Besides, you are obviously going to be king of the universe so I thought I could learn something from you.”

“Remind me to kick your ass later,” Zatan snarled.

Then he stood over the man, pulling what appeared to be a sword from a

sheath. When he pressed the tip against Zican's throat, I tumbled forward, touching his arm.

As before, the electricity soared between us. "Don't kill him. He's suffered enough. He deserves a second chance. Everyone does."

Zatan growled and turned his head in my direction, his eyes searching mine. "You are a frustrating human."

"Just wait until we're mated."

With that, he thrust his sword back into the sheath and pushed me gently against the corridor wall. Then he cupped my face, shaking his head. "I almost lost you, my beautiful little human. You will never be allowed out of my sight again."

As he crushed his mouth over mine, I shivered to my very core. He had a way of yanking away the fears and concerns, the need we had for each other transcending time and space. I wasn't an expert on relationships, but in the few seconds of being in his arms, I knew that destiny had prevailed.

He was my mate.

My lover.

My master.

He was also the man I would marry on another planet in another solar system.

And one day very soon, he would become the father of my children just as he would take the place of his father, the God of Creation.

I'd be right by his side as his queen.

Who knew a girl from Earth would become the most powerful woman in the universe...

CHAPTER 26



*S*unny

How had almost a week passed?

A week of strangeness and passion, learning a new culture and taking care of a purple dragon, who'd turned out to be a huge baby about taking pills. I chuckled and pressed my hand against the reflective surface, marveling in the warmth spreading across my fingers.

There was something to be said for orange skies. Not just tangerine but bright orange. I stood at the window of a gorgeous home nestled in the side of a mountain, staring out at the sky. As with my fantasy, I'd been right that there were pools of lava in different areas, but there was also rich terrain in dazzling colors. How they survived the heat, I wasn't certain, but they were beautiful nonetheless.

Zatan's home was majestic, certainly not what my fantasy had come up with.

I pulled the blanket around me, chilled from his palace being nestled inside thick walls. It was so odd to me that I could be freezing inside the house but warm as toast outside. My mate had tried to explain that with all aspects of the planet, the four corners of fire, ice, water, and wind worked together, creating the most incredible location I'd ever seen. Heck, it even rivaled the pictures I'd seen of Earth.

At least that's what I'd seen from the whirlwind tour I'd been given before being locked in the beast's bedroom, the passion unlike anything I'd experienced before.

Although we'd yet to mate, I sensed it was coming.

Whatever that meant.

Maybe a small part of me was eager. I pressed my hand against my thigh, the bite still there from our raucous round of lovemaking before. It was the second to final step of our mating process. And it was without a doubt the most sensual thing anyone had ever done. I was still reeling from the intoxicating effects. Who knew a beast with sharp fangs and the ability to shoot flames from their fingertips could be so darn sexy.

Woof.

Thor nestled his muzzle against my leg. He adored looking outside almost as much as he enjoyed frolicking with Zaz, who was lying comfortably on a new fluffier bed that I'd insisted Zatan provide.

It had been in my calculation almost a full week since the incident with Zican. However, it was difficult to tell time since it was entirely different on Vektor. Zican had been tossed in prison awaiting trial, although I had a feeling Zatan would be lenient.

Or so I hoped.

I felt his presence behind me and sighed, the crackle of electricity as it had been before even more indulgent and satisfying. He had a way of making me swoon.

"It is time, my beautiful creature." He nuzzled his face into my neck, raking his sharp canines across my heated skin. Then he removed the blanket from around my shoulders, pressing his throbbing cock against my bottom.

Shuddering, I closed my eyes, the longing for him more intensified than before. I'd never felt so alive and eager for the future. The fact I was getting married in a couple of days kept me on a strange plateau. At least the aliens on his planet hadn't tarred and feathered me.

Yet.

“So soon?”

“I need you. I need to fill you with my seed.”

“You mean you want an heir.”

He threw his head back and laughed. “Not too soon. We will take our time getting to know each other.”

I pushed away from him, turning around and wrapping my arms around his neck. Then I peered down at the firebird. “What do you think, Thor. Do you want this to be your home?”

Thor barked enthusiastically, his tail whapping back and forth.

“Zaz. Take Thor to another room,” he commanded. Then when Zaz continued to lounge on his bed, he issued the same growl that I’d heard Zaz do.

Zaz hissed but got up, shaking his head as only a miniature purple dragon could do. Then he woofed at Thor who followed him almost immediately.

I couldn’t help but laugh. “You’re good with them.”

“Zaz has behavioral issues all because of you.” He gave me a stern look. “I adore you, my little human, but you are in need of being trained.”

“Oh, come on.” I traced his tattoo. “I’m such a good girl.”

He shook his head and without hesitation, tossed me over his shoulder as if I weighed nothing. Then he took long strides, returning us to the bedroom where he plopped down on the soft platform, dragging my naked body across his lap.

“You are such a big, bad alien. As mean as they come.”

He cracked his hand across my bottom, moving from one side to the other. The funny thing was that the smacks didn’t hurt. Instead, they made me wet and hot, more so than normal. I shifted back and forth on his lap, creating a wave of friction that I knew drove him crazy.

Yet he continued spanking me, every crack of his hand harder than the one

before. There was something almost cathartic about being here. With the beast. I couldn't deny that I'd enjoyed every moment, especially when he'd saved me from certain death.

Again.

As the round of discipline continued, I fell into a sweet lull. Then I realized he was caressing my skin, the rough pads of his fingers providing a wild hit of sensations.

"You will be my very good little human." When he gathered me into his arms, I purred like a wild kitty, which made him smile.

"Never."

"Then I'll keep you locked in my room."

"We'll see about that, king of the universe." He eased me onto the bed, pushing me up to the center then spreading my legs wide open.

"King of you anyway, my soon to be mate." His voice was gravelly, his heated breath skipping down my face. Then he leaned over, capturing my mouth as he used his knee to press my legs apart.

I slid my hand down his chest, wrapping my fingers around his thick shaft. After I pushed the tip against my pussy, I wrapped my leg around his thigh. He slowly lowered his body, guiding his cock inside.

There was something different about having his cock buried so deep, as if he was filling me completely. When he broke the kiss, he remained hovering over me, taking shallow breaths.

"You are my love, my mate, and the little human I want to spend the rest of my life with."

They were words that most people would find so strange but to me, they meant everything.

As he started thrusting hard and fast, I realized that I was the luckiest girl alive.

For a little human that is.

* * *

Zatan

Weddings.

The celebration was festive, decorations everywhere. My mother had taken to ensuring that everything was perfect. At least she had a purpose, which shouldn't annoy me but did.

Grazine chuckled as he watched me. He would be by my side during the formal ceremony. Rules were rules, although there were already changes in effect for many of the others, including allowing additional freedoms to my people.

I'd had a long discussion with my father. While he was dying, he'd used his condition as an impetus for his sons to find mates. The clever bastard had fooled us. Never again. He would live another two hundred years but in full retirement. He'd relinquished control already, but with the conclusion of the ceremony, he'd step down from the throne.

And my mother couldn't be happier, pushing him to go on various trips already across the universe.

Good for them.

My rule would be entirely different.

"You look regal. Stop fidgeting," Grazine told me.

"I'm not fidgeting. I need to look perfect for my bride."

"She's already your mate. She likes you. Or so it appears anyway."

"Very funny." I glared at myself in the reflection surface, the robes I was required to wear also annoying. However, the pomp and circumstance were beneficial for the moods of my people. In seeing change already in the few days since my return, they'd become more hopeful. It was a word that was starting to become normal in my vocabulary. "Did the transport ships

arrive?”

“Yes, sire.” He rolled his eyes. “The surprise is already waiting for her.”

“And the facility? It is ready for operation. Yes?”

“I thought you two were going on a honeymoon. Isn’t that what humans do?”

I stood back a few inches, nodding to myself. “We will but not right away. I need to do damage control from my father’s reign.” That would take months to undo some of the atrocities, but it was already in motion.

“Ah. Yes, the veterinary clinic is fully operational. Your bride will be happy, especially since the furry creatures you requested have also arrived. You do know that eventually, our planet will be overrun by dogs. Such strange creatures.”

“Yes, but that will make my bride happy. Plus, they make excellent pets. Don’t you, Thor?” I crouched down, allowing the pup to jump into my arms. As he licked my face, I couldn’t help but laugh.

“I’m uncertain at this time. By the way, where are you going on your honeymoon?”

I shifted more of a mischievous look in his direction. “Why, Earth, my friend.”

“So the rumors are true. You used your powers to restore Earth.”

“What one god taketh away, another giveth. As my lovely bride-to-be taught me, everyone deserves a second chance, including humans. There will be controls established so they don’t destroy themselves as they’ve done before, but I have faith in Commander Fields. He’ll be controlling the planet, providing regular reports. Plus, I’ve promised Sunny that we’ll be making regular trips. The first wave of refugees will be returning in a few Earth weeks. Sunny and I are going to make certain everything is as it should be. Beaches. Mountains. Streams. Oceans. Lakes. Wildlife. Plus, I need to ensure that the infrastructure is safe, built to my satisfaction.”

“I must admit, I am impressed. Let me guess. Earth will be considered a destination for our people.”

I raked my hands through my hair, eager to spend my wedding night with my bride. “You catch on quickly, my friend.” When he shook his head, all I could do was grin. “What’s wrong?”

“You are entirely different from the man I’d grown to doubt my respect for. I mean that I always respected.”

“You are bucking for time spent in a dark cavern.”

“Speaking of which, the fact you pardoned Zican’s brother, setting him free didn’t surprise me. But your release of Zican did. Hmm... I think the little human had changed you entirely.”

“Maybe so, Grazine. But I think for the better. Don’t you?” I rose to my full height, turning toward him.

“What is the human expression? The jury is still out.”

Grinning, I knew it was about time. “Zican will serve me in other ways, Grazine. He deserves a second chance. It would seem that’s my new motto as of late.”

He tipped his head, studying my eyes. “Hold on. Both he and his brother have construction experience. Don’t they?”

“As I said, you catch on quick. They will lead my team on Earth. It won’t be glamorous, a hell of a lot of hard work, but both men were eager to fulfill the duties I assigned.”

“Uh-huh. And it doesn’t hurt that human females will be fawning all over them either. Right?”

I shrugged. “Perks of knowing the king.”

“You are a force to be reckoned with. Now, let’s get you married. The crowd is already cheering. Plus, your human female seems to get exactly what she wants and she’s grown impatient.”

“How do you know?”

Grazine now offered a grin. “You’ll learn, my friend. A happy wife means a happy life.”

“A kingdom to rule, a woman to seduce.”

“Haven’t you already done that?”

We both laughed as he led the way toward the bride’s chamber where I would walk her onto the balcony where her surprise awaited.

As soon as I opened the doors, Sunny turned to face me. With the golden light of the afternoon sky, she was luminescent, the woman taking my breath away. As I walked closer, she lifted her chin, studying me from head to toe.

“Do you approve, my delightful bride?”

“I do. Now, let’s get this over with. The robe is itchy.”

I laughed then took her arm, ready to lead her onto the balcony. “Not before I give you your wedding presents.”

“Presents, huh? As in plural? I think I like this betting married to big, bad, brutal barbarian.”

“You haven’t seen anything yet, my love. First things first. You have a veterinary clinic awaiting you.”

She narrowed her eyes, laughing at first. Until she realized I wasn’t joking. “You did that?”

“I did. And you can staff it any way you want, including with humans if you so desire.”

She threw her arms around me. “Oh, I do love you.”

“You better.”

“What’s my next present?” The lilt in her voice was one I’d hoped to hear.

“See that door over there? Go open it.”

My little human narrowed her eyes then sauntered toward it. “My own dinosaur?”

“Something like that.” I held Thor’s collar as she opened the door. When her parents walked out, the dogs she’d insisted on saving and protecting soon

after, her cry of glee was one I knew the crowd would hear.

“You made her very happy,” Grazine said. “I think you’re going to make an excellent leader.”

“That’s something else I need to talk to you about. My brothers will take a part of the command as well.”

“All in the family?”

“For now. But rules are meant to be changed, my friend.”

Minutes later when Sunny finally turned around, there were tears in her eyes. I walked toward her slowly, allowing her to take my arm. “Are you ready?”

“I believe I am, my mate, my king.”

“You forgot to call me your master.”

“That will never happen.”

Laughing, I threw open the door, escorting her outside onto the balcony.

“Fellow Vektorians. Please welcome your new king and queen of Vektor!”

As the crowd cheered, I glanced at my mother and father first, my brothers second. They all wore expressions of pride and happiness.

So did those in the crowd.

Perhaps humans knew better after all. Acts of kindness could go a long way.

The End

AFTERWORD

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BOOKS OF THE RUTHLESS EMPIRE SERIES

The Don

Maxwell Powers swept into my life after my father was gunned down, but the moment those piercing blue eyes caught mine I knew he would be doing more than just avenging his old friend.

I haven't seen him since I was a little girl, but that won't keep him from bending me over and belting my bare backside... or from making me scream his name as he claims my virgin body.

He's twice my age, and he's my godfather.

But I know I'll be soaking wet and ready for him tonight...

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The Consigliere

As consigliere of New York's most ruthless crime syndicate, Daniel Briggs rules with an iron fist. But here in Los Angeles, he's just my big brother's best friend, forbidden in every way.

This stunningly handsome billionaire may be the most eligible bachelor on the West Coast, but to him I'm still just a little girl in need of protection from men who would ravage her brutally.

Men like him.

But he'll soon realize I'm all grown up, and then it won't be long before my teenage crush finally shows me the side of him he's kept hidden from me—the savage side that will blister my bare ass for talking back and then take what has always been his with my hair gripped in his fist.

I don't know what comes after that. I just know everything he does to me will be utterly sinful...

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The Underboss

When Francesco Arturo helped me escape an unwanted arranged marriage three years ago, I didn't know he was the underboss of the most powerful mafia organization in New York.

I was just an eighteen-year-old virgin on the run, and he was the handsome savior mesmerizing me with eyes the color of the Aegean Sea before carrying me off to his bed to make me his.

He could have taken my innocence that day, but he didn't.

I gave it to him.

But this isn't a fairy tale. When that perfect night came to an end, I was still the daughter of a Chicago crime boss with a father set on marrying her off to whatever vile man paid the most.

Now he's finally found a suitor for me, but there is something the brutal bastard doesn't know.

I already belong to someone else, and he's coming to take me back.

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BOOKS OF THE TAINTED REGIME SERIES

Cruellest Vow

D'Artagnan Conti was born into poverty, raised to be a soldier in my father's savage regime. I grew up in luxury, longing to escape my family's cruel machinations, and the young man with sapphire eyes and the voice of an angel became not just my forbidden crush but my everything.

Then he was taken from me, killed in a brutal attack by our enemies. Or so I was led to believe...

For twenty years I did my best to forget him, until a devilishly handsome stranger awakened my desire in a way that I hadn't thought possible, baring my body and soul and setting them both ablaze with passion so intense it burns hotter than the lash of leather across my naked backside.

Every taste of his lips, every whisper in my ear, and every quivering climax pulled me deeper into this dark, twisted rapture, and only when I was already under his spell did I learn the truth.

The man I thought I'd lost is the one who has made me his.

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Twisted Embrace

Enzo Lazaro is my best friend's brother, yet the fact that it was taboo only left me even more desperate for him to undress me with those piercing eyes and then strip me bare and ravage me.

But until he found out a secret I hadn't even known myself, I never thought I'd be screaming his name in bed with my belted ass still burning because he decided I needed a lesson in obedience.

...or that he'd be claiming me as his bride.

It turns out I'm the daughter of a Russian mobster, and even though my adopted parents never told me, that means I have dangerous enemies. He says he's making me his wife to protect me.

But we both know he would have taken what he wanted eventually anyway.

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Captured Innocence

When Mattia DeLuca paid my father handsomely for the right to claim me as his bride, it didn't matter that I wanted nothing to do with my own Cosa Nostra family, let alone someone else's. Long before he put a ring on my finger, my own screams of climax told me I was his forever.

Even when I ran away, hoping to leave my family's mafia world behind, I always knew Mattia would track me down one day and take his belt to my bare ass before taking me to his bed again.

But when he came for me, it wasn't just to punish, ravage, and then wed me.

It was to rescue me.

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BOOKS OF THE CARNAL SINS SERIES

Required Surrender

My first mistake was agreeing to participate in a charity auction. My second was believing I could walk away from the commanding billionaire with a brogue accent and dazzling green eyes.

It was supposed to be one date, but a man like Lachlan McKenzie plays by his own set of rules.

As the owner of Carnal Sins, DC's exclusive kink club, his reputation is as dark and demanding as his desires, and before I knew it I ended up his to enjoy not for just one night but a full week.

I fought his control, but I knew I wouldn't win... and in my heart I don't think I even wanted to. Not after he called me his good girl, stripped me bare and spanked me with his belt, and then made me blush and beg and come so hard I forgot all about being his only for a few more days.

That didn't matter anyway. We both know he's keeping me forever.

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Demanded Submission

When he came to my aid after a head-on collision that seemed not to have been an accident, Jameson Stark offered me a ride, help with my car, and a job at the most exclusive club in town.

He also bared me, spanked me until I knew better than to argue with him again, and then showed me what it means to be in the debt of a billionaire who isn't afraid to take everything he's owed.

But as the owner of the Miami branch of Carnal Sins, it isn't just Jameson's wealth and good looks that draw attention, and I knew a man like him must have enemies. I just didn't care.

Not when his every smoldering glance all but demanded my submission...

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Compelled Obedience

Grant Wilde is as arrogant as he is rich and powerful, and if I didn't need his help so desperately I'd tell him exactly where he ought to shove his money, his exclusive club, and his cocky smirk.

But I do need his help, and it will come at a price...

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BOOKS OF THE KINGS OF CORRUPTION SERIES

King of Wrath

After a car wreck on an icy winter morning, I had no idea the man who saved my life would turn out to be the heir to a powerful mafia family... let alone that I'd be forced into marrying him.

When this mysterious stranger sought to seduce me, I should have ignored the dark passion he ignited. Instead, I begged him to claim me as he stripped me bare and whipped me with his belt.

He was as savage as I was innocent, but it was only after he made me his that I learned the truth.

He's the head of the New York Cosa Nostra, and I belong to him now...

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King of Cruelty

Constantine Thorn has been after me since I saw him kill a man nine years ago, and when he finally caught me he made me an offer I couldn't refuse. Marry him and he will protect me.

Only then did I learn that the man who made me his bride was the same monster I'd feared.

He's a brutal, heartless mafia boss and I wanted to hate the bastard, but with every stinging lash of his belt and every moment of helplessly intense passion, I fell deeper into the dark abyss.

He's the king of cruelty, and now I'm his queen.

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King of Pain

Diego Santos may be wealthy, powerful, and sinfully gorgeous, but his slick veneer doesn't fool me. I know his true nature, and I had planned to end this arranged marriage before it even began.

But it wasn't Diego waiting for me at the altar.

By all appearances the man who laid claim to me was the mafia heir to whom I'd been promised, but I sensed an entirely different personality, one so electrifying I was swept up by his passion.

A part of me still wanted to escape, but then he took me in his arms and over his knee, laying my deepest, darkest needs bare and then fulfilling them in the most shameful ways imaginable.

Now I'm not just his bride. I'm his completely.

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King of Depravity

When Brogan Callahan swept me off my feet, I didn't know he was heir to a powerful Irish mafia family. I didn't find that out until after he'd taken me in his arms... and over his knee.

By the time I learned the truth, I was already his.

I went on the run to escape my father's plans to marry me off, but it turns out the ruthless mob boss he had in mind is the same sinfully sexy bastard who just stripped me bare and claimed me savagely.

He demands my absolute obedience, and yet with each brutal kiss and stinging lash of his belt I feel myself falling ever deeper into the dark abyss of shameful need he's created within me.

At first I wondered if there were bounds to his depravity. Now I hope there aren't...

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King of Savagery

I knew Maxim Nikitin was a man to be reckoned with when I went undercover to help the FBI bring him down, but nothing could have prepared me for his raw power... or his icy blue eyes.

He caught me, and now he's determined not just to punish me, but to tame me completely.

Every kiss is brutal, every touch possessive, every fiery lash of his belt more intense than the last, yet with every cry of pain and every scream of climax the truth becomes more obvious.

He doesn't need to break me. I belong to him already.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

King of Malice

When I met Phoenix Diamonds, I didn't know anything about him except that he had a body carved from stone and a voice that left me hoping he'd order me to strip just so I could obey.

By the time I learned he's the head of a Greek crime syndicate intent on making me pay for the sins of my father, he'd already mastered me with his touch alone, belted my bare ass for daring to come without permission, and ravaged me thoroughly both that night and the next morning.

All I can do is try to pretend he isn't everything I've always fantasized about...

But I think he knows already.

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BOOKS OF THE SINNERS AND SAINTS SERIES

Beautiful Villain

When I knocked on Kirill Sabatin's door, I didn't know he was the Kozlov Bratva's most feared enforcer. I didn't expect him to be the most terrifyingly sexy man I've ever laid eyes on either...

I told him off for making so much noise in the middle of the night, but if the crack of his palm against my bare bottom didn't wake everyone in the building my screams of climax certainly did.

I shouldn't have let him spank me, let alone seduce me. He's a dangerous man and I could easily end up in way over my head. But the moment I set eyes on those rippling, sweat-slicked muscles I knew I needed that beautiful villain to take me long and hard and savagely right then and there.

And he did.

Now I just have to hope him claiming me doesn't start a mob war...

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Beautiful Sinner

When I first screamed his name in shameful surrender, Sevastian Kozlov was the enemy, the heir of a rival family who had just finished spanking me into submission after I dared to defy him.

Though he'd already claimed my body by the time he claimed me as his bride, no matter how desperately I long for his touch I vowed this beautiful sinner would never conquer my heart.

But it wasn't up to me...

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Beautiful Seduction

In my late-night hunt for the perfect pastry, I never expected to be the victim of a brutal attack... or for a brooding, blue-eyed stranger to become my savior, tending to my wounds while easing my fears. The electricity exploded between us, turning into a night of incredible passion.

Only later did I learn that Valentin Vincheti is the heir to the New York Italian mafia empire.

Then he came to take me, and this time he wasn't gentle. I shouldn't have surrendered, but with each savage kiss and stinging stroke of his belt his beautiful seduction became more difficult to resist. But when one of his enemies sets his sights on me, will my secrets put our lives at risk?

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Beautiful Obsession

After I was left at the altar, I turned what was meant to be the reception into an epic party. But when a handsome stranger asked me to dance, I wasn't prepared for the passion he ignited.

He told me he was a very bad man, but that only made my heart race faster as I lay bare and bound, my dress discarded and my bottom sore from a spanking, waiting for him to ravage me.

It was supposed to be just one night. No strings. Nothing to entangle me in his dangerous world.

But that was before I became his beautiful obsession...

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Beautiful Devil

Kostya Baranov is an infamous assassin, a man capable of incredible savagery, but when I witnessed a mafia hit he didn't silence me with a bullet. He decided to make me his instead.

Taken prisoner and forced to obey or feel the sting of his belt, shameful lust for my captor soon wars with fury at what he has done to me... and what he keeps doing to me with every touch.

But though he may be a beautiful devil, it is my own family's secret which may damn us both.

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BOOKS OF THE BENEDETTI EMPIRE SERIES

Cruel Prince

Catherine's father conspired to have my father killed, and that debt to the Benedetti family must be settled. Just as he took something from me, I will take something from him.

His daughter.

She will be mine to punish and ravage, but when she suffers it will not be for his sins.

It will be for my pleasure.

She will beg, but it will be for me to claim her in the most shameful ways imaginable.

She will scream, but it will be because she doesn't think she can bear another climax.

But when she surrenders at last, it will not be to her captor.

It will be to her husband.

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Ruthless Prince

Alexandra is a senator's daughter, used to mingling in the company of the rich and powerful, but tonight she will learn that there are men who play by different rules.

Men like me.

I could romance her. I could seduce her and then carry her gently to my bed.

But that can wait. Tonight I'm going to wring one ruthless climax after another from her quivering body with her bottom burning from my belt and her throat sore from screaming.

She will know she is mine before she even knows she is my bride.

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Savage Prince

Gillian's father may be a powerful Irish mob boss, but he owes a blood debt to my family, and when I came to collect I didn't ask permission before taking his daughter as payment.

It was not up to him... or to her.

I will make her my bride, but I am not the kind of man who will wait until our wedding night to bare her and claim what belongs to me. She will walk down the aisle wet, well-used, and sore.

Her dress will hide the marks from my belt that taught her the consequences of disobeying her husband, but nothing will hide her blushes as her arousal drips down her thighs with each step.

By the time she says her vows she will already be mine.

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BOOKS OF THE MERCILESS KINGS SERIES

King's Captive

Emily Porter saw me kill a man who betrayed my family and she helped put me behind bars. But someone with my connections doesn't stay in prison long, and she is about to learn the hard way that there is a price to pay for crossing the boss of the King dynasty. A very, very painful price...

She's going to cry for me as I blister that beautiful bottom, then she's going to scream for me as I ravage her over and over again, taking her in the most shameful ways she can imagine. But leaving her well-punished and well-used is just the beginning of what I have in store for Emily.

I'm going to make her my bride, and then I'm going to make her mine completely.

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King's Hostage

When my life was threatened, Michael King didn't just take matters into his own hands.

He took me.

When he carried me off it was partly to protect me, but mostly it was because he wanted me.

I didn't choose to go with him, but it wasn't up to me. That's why I'm naked, wet, and sore in an opulent Swiss chalet with my bottom still burning from the belt of the infuriatingly sexy mafia boss who brought me here, punished me when I fought him, and then savagely made me his.

We'll return when things are safe in New Orleans, but I won't be going back to my old home.

I belong to him now, and he plans to keep me.

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King's Possession

Her father had to be taught what happens when you cross a King, but that isn't why Genevieve Rossi is sore, well-used, and waiting for me to claim her in the only way I haven't already.

She's sore because she thought she could embarrass me in public without being punished.

She's well-used because after I spanked her I wanted more, and I take what I want.

She's waiting for me in my bed because she's my bride, and tonight is our wedding night.

I'm not going to be gentle with her, but when she wakes up tomorrow morning wet and blushing her cheeks won't be crimson because of the shameful things I did to her naked, quivering body.

It will be because she begged for all of them.

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King's Toy

Vincenzo King thought I knew something about a man who betrayed him, but that isn't why I'm on my way to New Orleans well-used and sore with my backside still burning from his belt.

When he bared and punished me maybe it was just business, but what came after was not.

It was savage, it was shameful, and it was very, very personal.

I'm his toy now, and not the kind you keep in its box on the shelf.

He's going to play rough with me.

He's going to get me all wet and dirty.

Then he's going to do it all again tomorrow.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

King's Demands

Julieta Morales hoped to escape an unwanted marriage, but the moment she got into my car her fate was sealed. She will have a husband, but it won't be the cartel boss her father chose for her.

It will be me.

But I'm not the kind of man who takes his bride gently amid rose petals on her wedding night. She'll learn to satisfy her King's demands with her bottom burning and her hair held in my fist.

She'll promise obedience when she speaks her vows, but she'll be mastered long before then.

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King's Temptation

I didn't think I needed Dimitri Kristoff's protection, but it wasn't up to me. With a kingpin from a rival family coming after me, he took charge, took off his belt, and then took what he wanted.

He knows I'm not used to doing as I'm told. He just doesn't care.

The stripes seared across my bare bottom left me sore and sorry, but it was what came after that truly left me shaken. The princess of the King family shouldn't be on her knees for anyone, let alone this Bratva brute who has decided to claim for himself what he was meant to safeguard.

Nobody gave me to him, but I'm his anyway.

Now he's going to make sure I know it.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

BOOKS OF THE MAFIA MASTERS SERIES

His as Payment

Caroline Hargrove thinks she is mine because her father owed me a debt, but that isn't why she is sitting in my car beside me with her bottom sore inside and out. She's wet, well-used, and coming with me whether she likes it or not because I decided I want her, and I take what I want.

As a senator's daughter, she probably thought no man would dare lay a hand on her, let alone spank her thoroughly and then claim her beautiful body in the most shameful ways possible.

She was wrong. Very, very wrong. She's going to be mastered, and I won't be gentle about it.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Taken as Collateral

Francesca Alessandro was just meant to be collateral, held captive as a warning to her father, but then she tried to fight me. She ended up sore and soaked as I taught her a lesson with my belt and then screaming with every savage climax as I taught her to obey in a much more shameful way.

She's mine now. Mine to keep. Mine to protect. Mine to use as hard and as often as I please.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Forced to Cooperate

Willow Church is not the first person who tried to put a bullet in me. She's just the first I let live. Now she will pay the price in the most shameful way imaginable. The stripes from my belt will teach her to obey, but what happens to her sore, red bottom after that will teach the real lesson.

She will be used mercilessly, over and over, and every brutal climax will remind her of the humiliating truth: she never even had a chance against me. Her body always knew its master.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Claimed as Revenge

Valencia Rivera became mine the moment her father broke the agreement he made with me. She thought she had a say in the matter, but my belt across her beautiful bottom taught her otherwise and a night spent screaming her surrender into the sheets left her in no doubt she belongs to me.

Using her hard and often will not be all it takes to tame her properly, but it will be a good start...

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Made to Beg

Sierra Fox showed up at my door to ask for my protection, and I gave it to her... for a price. She belongs to me now, and I'm going to use her beautiful body as thoroughly as I please. The only thing for her to decide is how sore her cute little bottom will be when I'm through claiming her.

She came to me begging for help, but as her moans and screams grow louder with every brutal climax, we both know it won't be long before she begs me for something far more shameful.

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BOOKS OF THE EDGE OF DARKNESS SERIES

Dark Stranger

On a dark, rainy night, I received a phone call. I shouldn't have answered it... but I did.

The things he says he'll do to me are far from sweet, this man I know only by his voice. They're so filthy I blush crimson just hearing them... and yet still I answer, my panties always soaked the moment the phone rings. But this isn't going to end when I decide it's gone too far... I can tell him to leave me alone, but I know it won't keep him away. He's coming for me, and when he does he's going to make me his in all the rough, shameful ways he promised he would. And I'll be wet and ready for him... whether I want to be or not.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Dark Predator

She thinks I'm seducing her, but this isn't romance. It's something much more shameful.

Eden tried to leave the mafia behind, but someone far more dangerous has set his sights on her. Me. She was meant to be my revenge against an old enemy, but I decided to make her mine instead. She'll moan as my belt lashes her quivering bottom and writhe as I claim her in the filthiest of ways, but that's just the beginning. When I'm done, it won't be just her body that belongs to me. I'll own her heart and soul too.

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BOOKS OF THE DARK OVERTURE SERIES

Indecent Invitation

I shouldn't be here.

My clothes shouldn't be scattered around the room, my bottom shouldn't be sore, and I certainly shouldn't be screaming into the sheets as a ruthless tycoon takes everything he wants from me.

I shouldn't even know Houston Powers at all, but I was in a bad spot and I was made an offer.

A shameful, indecent offer I couldn't refuse.

I was desperate, I needed the money, and I didn't have a choice. Not a real one, anyway.

I'm here because I signed a contract, but I'm his because he made me his.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Illicit Proposition

I should have known better.

His proposition was shameful. So shameful I threw my drink in his face when I heard it.

Then I saw the look in his eyes, and I knew I'd made a mistake.

I fought as he bared me and begged as he spanked me, but it didn't matter. All I could do was moan, scream, and climax helplessly for him as he took everything he wanted from me.

By the time I signed the contract, I was already his.

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Unseemly Entanglement

I was warned about Frederick Duvall. I was told he was dangerous. But I never suspected that meeting the billionaire advertising mogul to discuss a business proposition would end with me bent over a table with my dress up and my panties down for a shameful lesson in obedience.

That should have been it. I should have told him what he could do with his offer and his money.

But I didn't.

I could say it was because two million dollars is a lot of cash, but as I stand before him naked, bound, and awaiting the sting of his cane for daring to displease him, I know that's not the truth.

I'm not here because he pays me. I'm here because he owns me.

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BOOKS OF THE CLUB DARKNESS SERIES

Bent to His Will

Even the most powerful men in the world know better than to cross me, but Autumn Sutherland thought she could spy on me in my own club and get away with it. Now she must be punished.

She tried to expose me, so she will be exposed. Bare, bound, and helplessly on display, she'll beg for mercy as my strap lashes her quivering bottom and my crop leaves its burning welts on her most intimate spots. Then she'll scream my name as she takes every inch of me, long and hard.

When I am done with her, she won't just be sore and shamefully broken. She will be mine.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Broken by His Hand

Sophia Russo tried to keep away from me, but just thinking about what I would do to her left her panties drenched. She tried to hide it, but I didn't let her. I tore those soaked panties off, spanked her bare little bottom until she had no doubt who owns her, and then took her long and hard.

She begged and screamed as she came for me over and over, but she didn't learn her lesson...

She didn't just come back for more. She thought she could disobey me and get away with it.

This time I'm not just going to punish her. I'm going to break her.

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Bound by His Command

Willow danced for the rich and powerful at the world's most exclusive club... until tonight.

Tonight I told her she belongs to me now, and no other man will touch her again.

Tonight I ripped her soaked panties from her beautiful body and taught her to obey with my belt.

Tonight I took her as mine, and I won't be giving her up.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

MORE MAFIA AND BILLIONAIRE ROMANCES BY PIPER STONE

Caught

If you're forced to come to an arrangement with someone as dangerous as Jagger Calduchi, it means he's about to take what he wants, and you'll give it to him... even if it's your body.

I got caught snooping where I didn't belong, and Jagger made me an offer I couldn't refuse. A week with him where his rules are the only rules, or his bought and paid for cops take me to jail.

He's going to punish me, train me, and master me completely. When he's used me so shamefully I blush just to think about it, maybe he'll let me go home... or maybe he'll decide to keep me.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Ruthless

Treating a mobster shot by a rival's goons isn't really my forte, but when a man is powerful enough to have a whole wing of a hospital cleared out for his protection, you do as you're told.

To make matters worse, this isn't first time I've met Giovanni Calduchi. It turns out my newest patient is the stern, sexy brute who all but dragged me back to his hotel room a couple of nights ago so he could use my body as he pleased, then showed up at my house the next day, stripped me bare, and spanked me until I was begging him to take me even more roughly and shamefully.

Now, with his enemies likely to be coming after me in order to get to him, all I can do is hope he's as good at keeping me safe as he is at keeping me blushing, sore, and thoroughly satisfied.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Dangerous

I knew Erik Chenault was dangerous the moment I saw him. Everything about him should have warned me away, from the scar on his face to the fact that mobsters call him Blade. But I was drawn like a moth to a flame, and I ended up burnt... and blushing, sore, and thoroughly used.

Now he's taken it upon himself to protect me from men like the ones we both tried to leave in our past. He's going to make me his whether I like it or not... but I think I'm going to like it.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Prey

Within moments of setting eyes on Sophia Waters, I was certain of two things. She was going to learn what happens to bad girls who cheat at cards, and I was going to be the one to teach her.

But there was one thing I didn't know as I reddened that cute little bottom and then took her long and

hard and oh so shamefully: I wasn't the only one who didn't come here for a game of cards.

I came to kill a man. It turns out she came to protect him.

Nobody keeps me from my target, but I'm in no rush. Not when I'm enjoying this game of cat and mouse so much. I'll even let her catch me one day, and as she screams my name with each brutal climax she'll finally realize the truth. She was never the hunter. She was always the prey.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Given

Stephanie Michaelson was given to me, and she is mine. The sooner she learns that, the less often her cute little bottom will end up well-punished and sore as she is reminded of her place.

But even as she promises obedience with tears running down her cheeks, I know it isn't the sting of my belt that will truly tame her. It is what comes next that will leave her in no doubt she belongs to me.

That part will be long, hard, and shameful... and I will make her beg for all of it.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Dangerous Stranger

I came to Spain hoping to start a new life away from dangerous men, but then I met Rafael Santiago.

Now I'm not just caught up in the affairs of a mafia boss, I'm being forced into his car.

When I saw something I shouldn't have, Rafael took me captive, stripped me bare, and punished me until he felt certain I'd told him everything I knew about his organization... which was nothing at all.

Then he offered me his protection in return for the right to use me as he pleases.

Now that I belong to him, his plans for me are more shameful than I could have ever imagined.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Indebted

After her father stole from me, I could have left Alessandra Toro in jail for a crime she didn't commit.

But I have plans for her. A deal with the judge—the kind only a man like me can arrange—made her my captive, and she will pay her father's debt with her beautiful body.

She will try to run, of course, but it won't be the law that comes after her. It will be me.

The sting of my belt across her quivering bare bottom will teach Alessandra the price of defiance, but it is the far more shameful penance that follows which will truly tame her.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Taken

When Winter O'Brien was given to me, she thought she had a say in the matter. She was wrong.

She is my bride. Mine to claim, mine to punish, and mine to use as shamefully as I please. The sting of

my belt on her bare bottom will teach her to obey, but obedience is just the beginning.

I will demand so much more.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Bratva's Captive

I told Chloe Kingstrom that getting close to me would be dangerous, and she should keep her distance.
The moment she disobeyed and followed me into that bar, she became mine.

Now my enemies are after her, but it's not what they would do to her she should worry about.

It's what I'm going to do to her.

My belt across her bare backside will teach her obedience, but what comes after will be different.
She's going to blush, beg, and scream with every climax as she's ravaged more thoroughly than she can imagine. Then I'm going to flip her over and claim her in an even more shameful way.

If she's a good girl, I might even let her enjoy it.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Hunted

Hope Gracen was just another target to be tracked down... until I caught her.

When I discovered I'd been lied to, I carried her off.

She'll tell me the truth with her bottom still burning from my belt, but that isn't why she's here.

I took her to protect her. I'm keeping her because she's mine.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Theirs as Payment

Until mere moments ago, I was a doctor heading home after my shift at the hospital. But that was before I was forced into the back seat of an SUV, then bared and spanked for trying to escape.

Now I'm just leverage for the Cabello brothers to use against my father, but it isn't the thought of being held hostage by these brutes that has my heart racing and my whole body quivering.

It is the way they're looking at me...

Like they're about to tear my clothes off and take turns mounting me like wild beasts.

Like they're going to share me, using me in ways more shameful than I can even imagine.

Like they own me.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Ruthless Acquisition

I knew the shameful stakes when I bet against these bastards. I just didn't expect to lose.

Now they've come to collect their winnings.

But they aren't just planning to take a belt to my bare bottom for trying to run and then claim everything they're owed from my naked, helpless body as I blush, beg, and scream for them.

They've acquired me, and they plan to keep me.

Buy on Amazon

Bound by Contract

I knew I was in trouble the moment Gregory Steele called me into his office, but I wasn't expecting to end up stripped bare and bent over his desk for a painful lesson from his belt.

Taking a little bit of money here and there might have gone unnoticed in another organization, but stealing from one of the most powerful mafia bosses on the West Coast has consequences.

It doesn't matter why I did it. The only thing that matters now is what he's going to do to me.

I have no doubt he will use me shamefully, but he didn't make me sign that contract just to show me off with my cheeks blushing and my bottom sore under the scandalous outfit he chose for me.

Now that I'm his, he plans to keep me.

Buy on Amazon

Dangerous Addiction

I went looking for a man working with my enemies. When I found only her instead, I should have just left her alone... or maybe taken what I wanted from her and then left... but I didn't.

I couldn't.

So I carried her off to keep for myself.

She didn't make it easy for me, and that earned her a lesson in obedience. A shameful one.

But as her bare bottom reddens under my punishing hand I can see her arousal dripping down her quivering thighs, and no matter how much she squirms and sobs and begs we both know exactly what she needs, and we both know as soon as this spanking is over I'm going to give it to her.

Hard.

Buy on Amazon

Auction House

When I went undercover to investigate a series of murders with links to Steele Franklin's auction house operation, I expected to be sold for the humiliating use of one of his fellow billionaires.

But he wanted me for himself.

No contract. No agreed upon terms. No say in the matter at all except whether to surrender to his shameful demands without a fight or make him strip me bare and spank me into submission first.

I chose the second option, but as one devastating climax after another is forced from my naked, quivering body, what scares me isn't the thought of him keeping me locked up in a cage forever.

It's knowing he won't need to.

Buy on Amazon

Interrogated

As Liam McGinty's belt lashes my bare backside, it isn't the burning sting or the humiliating awareness that my body's surrender is on full display for this ruthless mobster that shocks me.

It's the fact that this isn't a scene from one of my books.

I almost can't process the fact that I'm really riding in the back of a luxury SUV belonging to the most powerful Irish mafia boss in New York—the man I've written so much about—with my cheeks blushing, my bottom sore inside and out, and my arousal soaking the seat beneath me.

But whether I can process it or not, I'm his captive now.

Maybe he'll let me go when he's gotten the answers he needs and he's used me as he pleases.

Or maybe he'll keep me...

Buy on Amazon

Vow of Seduction

Alexander Durante, Brogan Lancaster, and Daniel Norwood are powerful, dangerous men, but that won't keep them safe from me. Not after they let my brother take the fall for their crimes.

I spent years preparing for my chance at revenge. But things didn't go as planned...

Now I'm naked, bound, and helpless, waiting to be used and punished as these brutes see fit, and yet what's on my mind isn't how to escape all of the shameful things they're going to do to me.

It's whether I even want to...

Buy on Amazon

Brutal Heir

When I went to an author convention, I didn't expect to find myself enjoying a rooftop meal with the sexiest cover model in the business, let alone screaming his name in bed later that night.

I didn't plan to be targeted by assassins, rushed to a helicopter under cover of armed men, and then spirited away to his home country with my bottom still burning from a spanking either, but it turns out there are some really important things I didn't know about Diavolo Montoya...

Like the fact that he's the heir to a notorious crime syndicate.

I should hate him, but even as his prisoner our connection is too intense to ignore, and I'm beginning to

realize that what began as a moment of passion is going to end with me as his.

Forever.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Bed of Thorns

Hardened by years spent in prison for a crime he didn't commit, Edmond Montego is no longer the gentle man I remember. When he came for me, he didn't just take me for the very first time.

He claimed my virgin body with a savagery that left me screaming... and he made me beg for it. I should have run when I had the chance, but with every lash of his belt, every passionate kiss, and every brutal climax, I fell more and more under his spell.

But he has a dark secret, and if we're not careful, we'll lose everything... including our lives.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Morally Gray

Saxon Thornburg is known to the world as a reputable businessman, but I knew his true nature even before he kidnapped me, bared, bound, and punished me, and then shamefully ravaged me.

He is not just the billionaire boss of a powerful crime family. He is the Patriarch.

Women drop to their knees on command for him, but he chose me because I didn't surrender.

Until he took off his belt...

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Vicious Intentions

Cain, Hunter, and Cristiano were heirs to some of the richest and most powerful families in the world, men who might as well have been kings. Ten years ago they caught me eavesdropping, and when they were done setting my bare ass on fire with a belt they claimed and ravaged me.

Or at least that's what happens in the fleeting memories I still have left after the car accident...

Though I'm a successful musician now, wealthy and famous myself, in my heart I know if one of those brutes—let alone all three—ordered me to strip and surrender to them in the most shameful of ways, I wouldn't even need the threat of another humiliating punishment to obey immediately.

I never expected to see them again, of course... or to find myself naked, wet, and blushing as a ruthless Chicago crime boss takes his time enjoying me along with two of his closest friends.

But even before the memory of their faces returned, my body remembered its masters.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Scandalous Liaison

Recently divorced from my cheating ex, the last thing I needed on the flight home for my brother's wedding was a too-hot-for-his-own-good asshole sitting by me in first class.

But when I escaped to the bathroom to hyperventilate in peace, Mr. Tall, Dark, and Surly followed me. Then he made me forget all about the turbulence with a punishing kiss, a hard spanking, and a series of screaming climaxes loud enough for everyone on the plane to hear.

It wasn't until after our deliciously shameful tryst that I learned the truth.

The man who ravaged me is my father's greatest enemy... and he's willing to help me take control of the company my father has used for his ruthless schemes for far too long already.

All it will cost is my complete surrender.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

BOOKS OF THE MISSOULA BAD BOYS SERIES

Phoenix

As a single dad, a battle-scarred Marine, and a smokejumper, my life was complicated enough. Then Wren Tillman showed up in town, full of sass and all but begging for my belt, and what began as a passionate night after I rescued her from a snowstorm quickly became much more.

Her father plans to marry her off for his own gain, but I've claimed her, and I plan to keep her.

She can fight it if she wants, but in her heart she knows she's already mine.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Snake

I left Missoula to serve my country and came back a bitter, broken man. But when Chastity Garrington made my recovery her personal crusade, I decided I had a mission of my own.

Mastering her.

Her task won't be easy, and the fire in her eyes tells me mine won't either. Yet the spark between us is instant, and we both know she'll be wet, sore, and screaming my name soon enough.

But I want more than that.

By the time my body has healed, I plan to have claimed her heart.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Maverick

When I found her trapped in a ravine, I thought Lily Sanborn was just another lost tourist. Then she tried to steal my truck, and I realized she was on the run... and in need of a dose of my belt.

Holed up in my cabin with her bottom burning and a snowstorm raging outside, there's no denying the spark between us, and we both know she'll soon be screaming my name as I take her in the most shameful of ways.

But when her past catches up to her, the men who come after her will learn a hard lesson.

She's mine now, and I protect what's mine.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

BOOKS OF THE MONTANA BAD BOYS SERIES

Hawk

He's a big, angry Marine, and I'm going to be sore when he's done with me.

Hawk Travers is not a man to be trifled with. I learned that lesson in the hardest way possible, first with a painful, humiliating public spanking and then much more shamefully in private.

She came looking for trouble. She got a taste of my belt instead.

Bryce Myers pushed me too far and she ended up with her bottom welted. But as satisfying as it is to hear this feisty little reporter scream my name as I put her in her place, I get the feeling she isn't going to stop snooping around no matter how well-used and sore I leave her cute backside.

She's gotten herself in way over her head, but she's mine now, and I protect what's mine.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Scorpion

He didn't ask if I like it rough. It wasn't up to me.

I thought I could get away with pissing off a big, tough Marine. I ended up with my face planted in the sheets, my burning bottom raised high, and my hair held tightly in his fist as he took me long and hard and taught me the kind of shameful lesson only a man like Scorpion could teach.

She was begging for a taste of my belt. She got much more than that.

Getting so tipsy she thought she could be sassy with me in my own bar earned Caroline a spanking, but it was trying to make off with my truck that sealed the deal. She'll feel my belt across her bare backside, then she'll scream my name as she takes every single inch of me.

This naughty girl needs to be put in her place, and I'm going to enjoy every moment of it.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Mustang

I tried to tell him how to run his ranch. Then he took off his belt.

When I heard a rumor about his ranch, I confronted Mustang about it. I thought I could go toe to toe with the big, tough former Marine, but I ended up blushing, sore, and very thoroughly used.

I told her it was going to hurt. I meant it.

Danni Brexton is a hot little number with a sharp tongue and a chip on her shoulder. She's the kind of trouble that needs to be ridden hard and put away wet, but only after a taste of my belt.

It will take more than just a firm hand and a burning bottom to tame this sassy spitfire, but I plan to keep her safe, sound, and screaming my name in bed whether she likes it or not. By the time I'm through with her, there won't be a shadow of a doubt in her mind that she belongs to me.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Nash

When he caught me on his property, he didn't call the police. He just took off his belt.

Nash caught me breaking into his shed while on the run from the mob, and when he demanded answers and obedience I gave him neither. Then he took off his belt and taught me in the most shameful way possible what happens to naughty girls who play games with a big, rough Marine.

She's mine to protect. That doesn't mean I'm going to be gentle with her.

Michelle doesn't just need a place to hide out. She needs a man who will bare her bottom and spank her until she is sore and sobbing whenever she puts herself at risk with reckless defiance, then shove her face into the sheets and make her scream his name with every savage climax.

She'll get all of that from me, and much, much more.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Austin

I offered this brute a ride. I ended up the one being ridden.

The first time I saw Austin, he was hitchhiking. I stopped to give him a lift, but I didn't end up taking this big, rough former Marine wherever he was heading. He was far too busy taking me.

She thought she was in charge. Then I took off my belt.

When Francesca Montgomery pulled up beside me, I didn't know who she was, but I knew what she needed and I gave it to her. Long, hard, and thoroughly, until she was screaming my name as she climaxed over and over with her quivering bare bottom still sporting the marks from my belt.

But someone wants to hurt her, and when someone tries to hurt what's mine, I take it personally.

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BOOKS OF THE EAGLE FORCE SERIES

Debt of Honor

Isabella Adams is a brilliant scientist, but her latest discovery has made her a target of Russian assassins. I've been assigned to protect her, and when her reckless behavior puts her in danger she'll learn in the most shameful of ways what it means to be under the command of a Marine.

She can beg and plead as my belt lashes her bare backside, but the only mercy she'll receive is the chance to scream as she climaxes over and over with her well-spanked bottom still burning.

As my past returns to haunt me, it'll take every skill I've mastered to keep her alive.

She may be a national treasure, but she belongs to me now.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Debt of Loyalty

After she was kidnapped in broad daylight, I was hired to bring Willow Cavanaugh home, but as the daughter of a wealthy family she's used to getting what she wants rather than taking orders.

Too bad.

She'll do as she's told or she'll earn herself a stern, shameful reminder of who is in charge, but it will take more than just a well-spanked bare bottom to truly tame this feisty little rich girl.

She'll learn her place over my knee, but it's in my bed that I'll make her mine.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Debt of Sacrifice

When she witnessed a murder, it put Greer McDuff on a brutal cartel's radar... and on mine.

As a former Navy SEAL now serving with the elite Eagle Force, my assignment is to protect her by any means necessary. If that requires a stern reminder of who is in charge with her bottom bare over my knee and then an even more shameful lesson in my bed, then that's what she'll get.

There's just one problem.

The only place I know I can keep her safe is the ranch I left behind and vowed never to return.

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BOOKS OF THE DANGEROUS BUSINESS SERIES

Persuasion

Her father stole something from the mob and they hired me to get it back, but that's not the real reason
Giliana Worthington is locked naked in a cage with her bottom well-used and sore.

I brought her here so I could take my time punishing her, mastering her, and ravaging her helpless,
quivering body over and over again as she screams and moans and begs for more.

I didn't take her as a hostage. I took her because she is mine.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Bad Men

I thought I could run away from the marriage the mafia arranged for me, but I ended up held prisoner in
a foreign country by someone far more dangerous than the man I tried to escape.

Then Jack and Diego came for me.

They didn't ask if I wanted to be theirs. They just took me.

I ran, but they caught me, stripped me bare, and punished me in the most shameful way possible.

Now they're going to share me, and they're not going to be gentle about it.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

BOOKS OF THE DARK WOLVES SERIES

His to Claim

For centuries my kind have hidden our feral nature, our brute strength, and our carnal instincts. But this human female is my mate, and nothing will keep me from claiming and ravaging her.

She is mine to tame and protect, and if my belt doesn't teach her to obey then she'll learn in a much more shameful fashion. Either way, her surrender will be as complete as it is inevitable.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

His to Possess

Stone Keeler is a six-foot-four hunk who could win any girl's heart and then make her scream in bed, but as he claimed my quivering body for the first time the look in his eyes was terrifying.

It was dark and savage, as if at any moment he might lose control completely and take me like a beast takes his mate, mounting and rutting me and marking me as his with every brutal climax.

I ran from him... but I couldn't stay away for long.

Not when I belong to him already.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

BOOKS OF THE ALPHA DYNASTY SERIES

Unchained Beast

As the firstborn of the Dupree family, I have spent my life building the wealth and power of our mafia empire while keeping our dark secret hidden and my savage hunger at bay. But the beast within me cannot be chained forever, and I must claim a mate before I lose control completely...

That is why Coraline LeBlanc is mine.

When I mount and ravage her, it won't be because I want her. It will be because I need her.

But that doesn't mean I won't enjoy stripping her bare and spanking her until she surrenders, then making her beg and scream with every desperate climax as I take what belongs to me.

The beast will claim her, but I will keep her.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Savage Brute

It wasn't his mafia birthright that made Dax Dupree a monster. Years behind bars and a brutal war with a rival organization made him hard as steel, but the beast he can barely control was always there, and without a mate to mark and claim it would soon take hold of him completely.

I didn't know that when he showed up at my bar after closing and spanked me until I was wet and shamefully ready for him to mount and ravage me, or even when I woke the next morning with my throat sore from screaming and his seed still drying on my thighs. But I know it now.

Because I'm his mate.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Ruthless Monster

When Esme Rawlings looks at me, she sees many things. A ruthless mob boss. A key witness to the latest murder in an ongoing turf war. A guardian angel who saved her from a hitman's bullet.

But when I look at her, I see just one thing.

My mate.

She can investigate me as thoroughly as she feels necessary, prying into every aspect of my family's vast mafia empire, but the only truth she really needs to know about me she will learn tonight with her bare bottom burning and her protests drowned out by her screams of climax.

I take what belongs to me.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Ravenous Predator

Suzette Barker thought she could steal from the most powerful mafia boss in Philadelphia. My belt across her naked backside taught her otherwise, but as tears run down her cheeks and her arousal glistens on her bare thighs, there is something more important she will understand soon.

Kneeling at my feet and demonstrating her remorseful surrender in the most shameful way possible won't bring an end to this, nor will her screams of climax as I take her long and hard. She'll be coming with me and I'll be mounting and savagely rutting her as often as I please.

Not just because she owes me.

Because she's my mate.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Merciless Savage

Christoff Dupree doesn't strike me as the kind of man who woos a woman gently, so when I saw the flowers on my kitchen table I knew it wasn't just a gesture of appreciation for saving his life.

This ruthless mafia boss wasn't seducing me. Those roses mean that I belong to him now.

That I'm his to spank into shameful submission before he mounts me and claims me savagely.

That I'm his mate.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

BOOKS OF THE ALPHA BEASTS SERIES

King's Mate

Her scent drew me to her, but something deeper and more powerful told me she was mine. Something that would not be denied. Something that demanded I claim her then and there.

I took her the way a beast takes his mate. Roughly. Savagely. Without mercy or remorse.

She will run, and when she does she will be punished, but it is not me that she fears. Every quivering, desperate climax reminds her that her body knows its master, and that terrifies her.

She knows I am not a gentle king, and she will scream for me as she learns her place.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Beast's Claim

Raven is not one of my kind, but the moment I caught her scent I knew she belonged to me.

She is my mate, and when I claim her it will not be gentle. She can fight me, but her pleas for mercy as she is punished will soon give way to screams of climax as she is mounted and rutted.

By the time I am finished with her, the evidence of her body's surrender will be mingled with my seed as it drips down her bare thighs. But she will be more than just sore and utterly spent.

She will be mine.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Alpha's Mate

I didn't ask Nicolina to be my mate. It was not up to her. An alpha takes what belongs to him.

She will plead for mercy as she is bared and punished for daring to run from me, but her screams as she is claimed and rutted will be those of helpless climax as her body surrenders to its master.

She is mine, and I'm going to make sure she knows it.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

MORE STORMY NIGHT BOOKS BY PIPER STONE

Claimed by the Beasts

Though she has done her best to run from it, Scarlet Dumane cannot escape what is in store for her. She has known for years that she is destined to belong not just to one savage beast, but to three, and now the time has come for her to be claimed. Soon her mates will own every inch of her beautiful body, and she will be shared and used as roughly and as often as they please.

Scarlet hid from the disturbing truth about herself, her family, and her town for as long as she could, but now her grandmother's death has finally brought her back home to the bayous of Louisiana and at last she must face her fate, no matter how shameful and terrifying.

She will be a queen, but her mates will be her masters, and defiance will be thoroughly punished. Yet even when she is stripped bare and spanked until she is sobbing, her need for them only grows, and every blush, moan, and quivering climax binds her to them more tightly. But with enemies lurking in the shadows, can she trust her mates to protect her from both man and beast?

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Millionaire Daddy

Dominick Asbury is not just a handsome millionaire whose deep voice makes Jenna's tummy flutter whenever they are together, nor is he merely the first man bold enough to strip her bare and spank her hard and thoroughly whenever she has been naughty. He is much more than that.

He is her daddy.

He is the one who punishes her when she's been a bad girl, and he is the one who takes her in his arms afterwards and brings her to one climax after another until she is utterly spent and satisfied.

But something shady is going on behind the scenes at Dominick's company, and when Jenna draws the wrong conclusion from a poorly written article about him and creates an embarrassing public scene, will she end up not only costing them both their jobs but losing her daddy as well?

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Conquering Their Mate

For years the Cenzans have cast a menacing eye on Earth, but it still came as a shock to be captured, stripped bare, and claimed as a mate by their leader and his most trusted warriors.

It infuriates me to be punished for the slightest defiance and forced to submit to these alien brutes, but as I'm led naked through the corridors of their ship, my well-punished bare bottom and my helpless arousal both fully on display, I cannot help wondering how long it will be until I'm kneeling at the feet of my mates and begging them take me as shamefully as they please.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Captured and Kept

Since her career was knocked off track in retaliation for her efforts to expose a sinister plot by high-ranking government officials, reporter Danielle Carver has been stuck writing puff pieces in a small town in Oregon. Desperate for a serious story, she sets out to investigate the rumors she's been hearing about mysterious men living in the mountains nearby. But when she secretly follows them back to their remote cabin, the ruggedly handsome beasts don't take kindly to her snooping around, and Dani soon finds herself stripped bare for a painful, humiliating spanking.

Their rough dominance arouses her deeply, and before long she is blushing crimson as they take turns using her beautiful body as thoroughly and shamefully as they please. But when Dani uncovers the true reason for their presence in the area, will more than just her career be at risk?

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Taming His Brat

It's been years since Cooper Dawson left her small Texas hometown, but after her stubborn defiance gets her fired from two jobs in a row, she knows something definitely needs to change. What she doesn't expect, however, is for her sharp tongue and arrogant attitude to land her over the knee of a stern, ruggedly sexy cowboy for a painful, embarrassing, and very public spanking.

Rex Sullivan cannot deny being smitten by Cooper, and the fact that she is in desperate need of his belt across her bare backside only makes the war-hardened ex-Marine more determined to tame the beautiful, fiery redhead. It isn't long before she's screaming his name as he shows her just how hard and roughly a cowboy can ride a headstrong filly. But Rex and Cooper both have secrets, and when the demons of their past rear their ugly heads, will their romance be torn apart?

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Capturing Their Mate

I thought the Cenzan invaders could never find me here, but I was wrong. Three of the alien brutes came to take me, and before I ever set foot aboard their ship I had already been stripped bare, spanked thoroughly, and claimed more shamefully than I would have ever thought possible.

They have decided that a public example must be made of me, and I will be punished and used in the most humiliating ways imaginable as a warning to anyone who might dare to defy them. But I am no ordinary breeder, and the secrets hidden in my past could change their world... or end it.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Rogue

Tracking down cyborgs is my job, but this time I'm the one being hunted. This rogue machine has spent most of his life locked up, and now that he's on the loose he has plans for me...

He isn't just going to strip me, punish me, and use me. He will take me longer and harder than any human ever could, claiming me so thoroughly that I will be left in no doubt who owns me.

No matter how shamefully I beg and plead, my body will be ravaged again and again with pleasure so

intense it terrifies me to even imagine, because that is what he was built to do.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Roughneck

When I took a job on an oil rig to escape my scheming stepfather's efforts to set me up with one of his business cronies, I knew I'd be working with rugged men. What I didn't expect is to find myself bent over a desk, my cheeks soaked with tears and my bare thighs wet for a very different reason, as my well-punished bottom is thoroughly used by a stern, infuriatingly sexy roughneck.

Even though I should have known better than to get sassy with a firm-handed cowboy, let alone a tough-as-nails former Marine, there's no denying that learning the hard way was every bit as hot as it was shameful. But a sore, welted backside is just the start of his plans for me, and no matter how much I blush to admit it, I know I'm going to take everything he gives me and beg for more.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Hunting Their Mate

As far as I'm concerned, the Cenzans will always be the enemy, and there can be no peace while they remain on our planet. I planned to make them pay for invading our world, but I was hunted down and captured by two of their warriors with the help of a battle-hardened former Marine. Now I'm the one who is going to pay, as the three of them punish me, shame me, and share me.

Though the thought of a fellow human taking the side of these alien brutes enrages me, that is far from the worst of it. With every searing stroke of the strap that lands across my bare bottom, with every savage thrust as I am claimed over and over, and with every screaming climax, it is made more clear that it is my own quivering, thoroughly used body which has truly betrayed me.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Primitive

I was sent to this world to help build a new Earth, but I was shocked by what I found here. The men of this planet are not just primitive savages. They are predators, and I am now their prey...

The government lied to all of us. Not all of the creatures who hunted and captured me are aliens. Some of them were human once, specimens transformed in labs into little more than feral beasts.

I fought, but I was thrown over a shoulder and carried off. I ran, but I was caught and punished. Now they are going to claim me, share me, and use me so roughly that when the last screaming climax has been wrung from my naked, helpless body, I wonder if I'll still know my own name.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Harvest

The Centurions conquered Earth long before I was born, but they did not come for our land or our resources. They came for mates, women deemed suitable for breeding. Women like me.

Three of the alien brutes decided to claim me, and when I defied them, they made a public example of me, punishing me so thoroughly and shamefully I might never stop blushing.

But now, as my virgin body is used in every way possible, I'm not sure I want them to stop...

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Torched

I work alongside firefighters, so I know how to handle musclebound roughnecks, but Blaise Tompkins is in a league of his own. The night we met, I threw a glass of wine in his face, then ended up shoved against the wall with my panties on the floor and my arousal dripping down my thighs, screaming out climax after shameful climax with my well-punished bottom still burning.

I've got a series of arsons to get to the bottom of, and finding out that the infuriatingly sexy brute who spanked me like a naughty little girl will be helping me with the investigation seemed like the last thing I needed, until somebody hurled a rock through my window in an effort to scare me away from the case. Now having a big, strong man around doesn't seem like such a bad idea...

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Fertile

The men who hunt me were always brutes, but now lust makes them barely more than beasts.

When they catch me, I know what comes next.

I will fight, but my need to be bred is just as strong as theirs is to breed. When they strip me, punish me, and use me the way I'm meant to be used, my screams will be the screams of climax.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Hostage

I knew going after one of the most powerful mafia bosses in the world would be dangerous, but I didn't anticipate being dragged from my apartment already sore, sorry, and shamefully used.

My captors don't just plan to teach me a lesson and then let me go. They plan to share me, punish me, and claim me so ruthlessly I'll be screaming my submission into the sheets long before they're through with me. They took me as a hostage, but they'll keep me as theirs.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Defiled

I was born to rule, but for her sake I am banished, forced to wander the Earth among mortals. Her virgin body will pay the price for my protection, and it will be a shameful price indeed.

Stripped, punished, and ravaged over and over, she will scream with every savage climax.

She will be defiled, but before I am done with her she will beg to be mine.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Kept

On the run from corrupt men determined to silence me, I sought refuge in his cabin. I ate his food, drank his whiskey, and slept in his bed. But then the big bad bear came home and I learned the hard way that sometimes Goldilocks ends up with her cute little bottom well-used and sore.

He stripped me, spanked me, and ravaged me in the most shameful way possible, but then this rugged brute did something no one else ever has before. He made it clear he plans to keep me...

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Auctioned

Twenty years ago the Malzeons saved us when we were at the brink of self-annihilation, but there was a price for their intervention. They demanded humans as servants... and as pets.

Only criminals were supposed to be offered to the aliens for their use, but when I defied Earth's government, asking questions that no one else would dare to ask, I was sold to them at auction.

I was bought by two of their most powerful commanders, rivals who nonetheless plan to share me. I am their property now, and they intend to tame me, train me, and enjoy me thoroughly.

But I have information they need, a secret guarded so zealously that discovering it cost me my freedom, and if they do not act quickly enough both of our worlds will soon be in grave danger.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Hard Ride

When I snuck into Montana Cobalt's house, I was looking for help learning to ride like him, but what I got was his belt across my bare backside. Then with tears still running down my cheeks and arousal dripping onto my thighs, the big brute taught me a much more shameful lesson.

Montana has agreed to train me, but not just for the rodeo. He's going to break me in and put me through my paces, and then he's going to show me what it means to be ridden rough and dirty.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Bounty

After I went undercover to take down a mob boss and ended up betrayed, framed, and on the run, Harper Rollins tried to bring me in. But instead of collecting a bounty, she earned herself a hard spanking and then an even rougher lesson that left her cute bottom sore in a very different way.

She's not one to give up without a fight, but that's fine by me. It just means I'll have plenty more chances to welt her beautiful backside and then make her scream her surrender into the sheets.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Beast

Primitive, irresistible need compelled him to claim me, but it was more than mere instinct that drove this alien beast to punish me for my defiance and then ravage me thoroughly and savagely. Every screaming climax was a brand marking me as his, ensuring I never forget who I belong to.

He's strong enough to take what he wants from me, but that's not why I surrendered so easily as he stripped me bare, pushed me up against the wall, and made me his so roughly and shamefully.

It wasn't fear that forced me to submit. It was need.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Gladiator

Xander didn't just win me in the arena. The alien brute claimed me there too, with my punished bottom still burning and my screams of climax almost drowned out by the roar of the crowd.

Almost...

Victory earned him freedom and the right to take me as his mate, but making me truly his will mean more than just spanking me into shameful surrender and then rutting me like a wild beast. Before he carries me off as his prize, the dark truth that brought me here must be exposed at last.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Big Rig

Alexis Harding is used to telling men exactly what she thinks, but she's never had a roughneck like me as a boss before. On my rig, I make the rules and sassy little girls get stripped bare, bent over my desk, and taught their place, first with my belt and then in a much more shameful way.

She'll be sore and sorry long before I'm done with her, but the arousal glistening on her thighs reveals the truth she would rather keep hidden. She needs it rough, and that's how she'll get it.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Warriors

I knew this was a primitive planet when I landed, but nothing could have prepared me for the rough beasts who inhabit it. The sting of their prince's firm hand on my bare bottom taught me my place in his world, but it was what came after that truly demonstrated his mastery over me.

This alien brute has granted me his protection and his help with my mission, but the price was my total submission to both his shameful demands and those of his second in command as well.

But it isn't the savage way they make use of my quivering body that terrifies me the most. What leaves me trembling is the thought that I may never leave this place... because I won't want to.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Owned

With a ruthless, corrupt billionaire after me, Crockett, Dylan, and Wade are just the men I need. Rough men who know how to keep a woman safe... and how to make her scream their names.

But the Hell's Fury MC doesn't do charity work, and their help will come at a price.

A shameful price...

They aren't just going to bare me, punish me, and then do whatever they want with me.

They're going to make me beg for it.

Buy on Amazon

Seized

Delaney Archer got herself mixed up with someone who crossed us, and now she's going to find out just how roughly and shamefully three bad men like us can make use of her beautiful body.

She can plead for mercy, but it won't stop us from stripping her bare and spanking her until she's sore, sobbing, and soaking wet. Our feisty little captive is going to take everything we give her, and she'll be screaming our names with every savage climax long before we're done with her.

Buy on Amazon

Cruel Masters

I thought I understood the risks of going undercover to report on billionaires flaunting their power, but these men didn't send lawyers after me. They're going to deal with me themselves.

Now I'm naked aboard their private plane, my backside already burning from one of their belts, and these three infuriatingly sexy bastards have only just gotten started teaching me my place.

I'm not just going to be punished, shamed, and shared. I'm going to be mastered.

Buy on Amazon

Hard Men

My father's will left his company to me, but the three roughnecks who ran it for him have other ideas.

They're owed a debt and they mean to collect on it, but it's not money these brutes want.

It's me.

In return for protection from my father's enemies, I will be theirs to share. But these are hard men, and they don't just intend to punish my defiance and use me as shamefully as they please.

They plan to master me completely.

Buy on Amazon

Rough Ride

As I hear the leather slide through the loops of his pants, I know what comes next. Jake Travers is going to blister my backside. Then he's going to ride me the way only a rodeo champion can.

Plenty of men who thought they could put me in my place have learned the hard way that I was more than they could handle, and when Jake showed up I was sure he would be no different.

I was wrong.

When I pushed him, he bared and spanked me in front of a bar full of people.

I should have let it go at that, but I couldn't.

That's why he's taking off his belt...

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Primal Instinct

Ruger Jameson can buy anything he wants, but that's not the reason I'm his to use as he pleases. He's a former Army Ranger accustomed to having his orders followed, but that's not why I obey him.

He saved my life after our plane crashed, but I'm not on my knees just to thank him properly.

I'm his because my body knows its master.

I do as I'm told because he blisters my bare backside every time I dare to do otherwise.

I'm at his feet because I belong to him and I plan to show it in the most shameful way possible.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Captor

I was supposed to be safe from the lottery. Set apart for a man who would treat me with dignity.

But as I'm probed and examined in the most intimate, shameful ways imaginable while the hulking alien king who just spanked me looks on approvingly, I know one thing for certain.

This brute didn't end up with me by chance. He wanted me, so he found a way to take me.

He'll savor every blush as I stand bare and on display for him, every plea for mercy as he punishes my defiance, and every quivering climax as he slowly masters my virgin body.

I'll be his before he even claims me.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Rough and Dirty

Wrecking my cheating ex's truck with a bat might have made me feel better... if the one I went after

had actually belonged to him, instead of to the burly roughneck currently taking off his belt. Now I'm bent over in a parking lot with my bottom burning as this ruggedly sexy bastard and his two equally brutish friends take turns reddening my ass, and I can tell they're just getting started. That thought shouldn't excite me, and I certainly shouldn't be imagining all the shameful things these men might do to me. But what I should or shouldn't be thinking doesn't matter anyway. They can see the arousal glistening on my thighs, and they know I need it rough and dirty...

[Buy on Amazon](#)

His to Take

When Zadok Vakan caught me trying to escape his planet with priceless stolen technology, he didn't have me sent to the mines. He made sure I was stripped bare and sold at auction instead.

Then he bought me for himself.

Even as he punishes me for the slightest hint of defiance and then claims me like a beast, indulging every filthy desire his savage nature can conceive, I swear I'll never surrender.

But it doesn't matter.

I'm already his, and we both know it.

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Tyrant

When I accepted a lucrative marketing position at his vineyard, Montgomery Wolfe made the terms of my employment clear right from the start. Follow his rules or face the consequences.

That's why I'm bent over his desk, doing my best to hate him as his belt lashes my bare bottom.

I shouldn't give in to this tyrant. I shouldn't yield to his shameful demands.

Yet I can't resist the passion he sets ablaze with every word, every touch, and every brutally possessive kiss, and I know before long my body will surrender to even his darkest needs...

[Buy on Amazon](#)

Filthy Rogue

Losing my job to a woman who slept her way to the top was bad enough, and that was before my car broke down as I drove cross country to start over. Having to be rescued by an infuriatingly sexy biker who promptly bared and spanked me for sassing him was just icing on the cake.

After sharing a passionate night, I might have made a teensy mistake in taking cash from his wallet in order to pay the auto mechanic, but I hadn't thought I'd ever see him again...

Then on the first day at my new job, guess who swaggered in with payback on his mind?

He's living proof that the universe really is out to get me... and he's my new boss.

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ABOUT PIPER STONE

Amazon Top 150 Internationally Best-Selling Author, Kindle Unlimited All Star Piper Stone writes in several genres. From her worlds of dark mafia, cowboys, and marines to contemporary reverse harem, shifter romance, and science fiction, she attempts to delight readers with a foray into darkness, sensuality, suspense, and always a romantic HEA. When she's not writing, you can find her sipping merlot while she enjoys spending time with her three Golden Retrievers (Indiana Jones, Magnum PI, and Remington Steele) and a husband who relishes creating fabulous food.

Dangerous is Delicious.

* * *

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