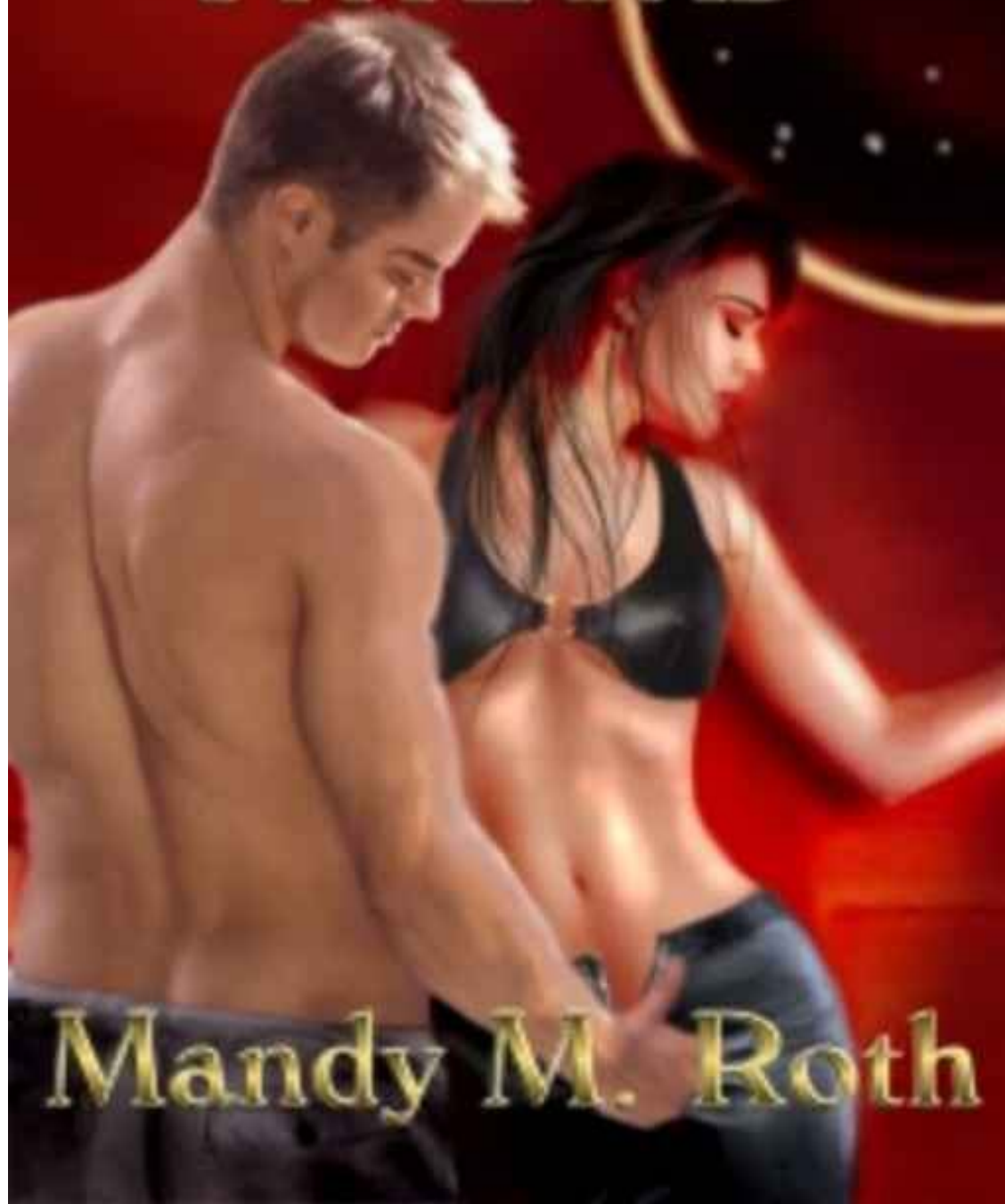


Project Exorcism:  
**PARANORMAL  
PAYLOAD**



**Project Exorcism:  
PARANORMAL PAYLOAD  
By  
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**Dedication:**

To my dad for being a science fiction fan and subjecting me to it all those years ago. I have finally stopped hiding with one eye peeking out from behind a pillow and started spinning dark stories of my own. All the years of pizza, over-sized headphones, movie marathons and laughing until we made ourselves sick still put a smile on my face. And to my mom for having to deal with us after a weekend full of junk food, up all nights and scary movies.

**Prologue**

Sevan moved slightly, getting a better angle on the beauty below him. Lorelei had haunted his dreams now for months and although he'd come to understand that he'd wake to find his sleep quarters empty and the raven haired goddess below him only a memory, he still caressed her

tenderly. For the time being, she was his and he'd use that to his full advantage. He circled her belly button with his tongue as he looked up the length of her perfect body. Letting his eyes linger over her ample breasts and dark nipples, he could find no imperfection unless owning his heart was considered one.

The Fates themselves must have taken pity on him. Loving someone wasn't an option for him or others like him—the ones who carried the tiniest bits of supernatural DNA. Thankfully, Sevan's blood carried so little that the Commission's screening didn't catch it. Only he and his family knew. Humans from Earth had thought they had wiped out all traces of the monsters of night long ago during Project Exorcism. While humans did succeed in escorting the majority of the supernaturals off the planet in 2055 a small percentage remained, hiding among the humans or simply hiding. Now, a little over a hundred and fifty years later, supernaturals still existed, though finding a full-blood was almost impossible.

Hiding under the Commission's nose was the best place to be. The only problem was, should Sevan ever be lucky enough to find his mate, that one special person made just for him, he would have to disappear. If the Commission ever learned of his ancestry they would court-martial him if he was lucky. Death would be the alternative. Not just for Sevan but for his mate as well.

Now, coming upon the phase in his life where he wanted a family more than life itself, he found himself daydreaming about his mate, what she would look like, who she might be. It was then that the dreams of Lorelei began. No part of Sevan believed she was truly the one for him. No. She was too perfect. Too beautiful. Too glorious to be real. He now looked forward to sleeping in hopes of seeing her. So far, in the six months since the dreams began they'd been together each and every night.

Licking his way down her flat stomach, Sevan stopped when he reached the thin well maintained strip of black hair covering her mound. He parted Lorelei's slit, revealing her pink bud and smiled wickedly. “Baby, you're gorgeous. The sight of you all spread out before me makes my dick so hard that I can't stand it.”

“Please, Sevan,” she whispered.

He couldn't help but smile at Lorelei's soft pleas for more. This woman his mind had created was so far beyond faultless that it was immeasurable. The idea of waking terrified him. Inching lower, Sevan

dropped his head down and captured her clit, flicking his tongue back and forth over it.

She inched up on the bed, doing her best to try to escape him. Knowing that she loved it when he did it, Sevan continued, hooking his arms around her thighs and pulling her to him. He licked, sucked and caressed her, bringing about tiny gasps and sweet moans from her lips.

"Please."

Sevan sucked gently, his heart beating wildly. He knew she wanted him in her but he wanted her to come first. Her happiness meant everything to him. Of course, his need to please her was part selfish as well. When she came he was able to lick it, taste it, enjoy it coating his tongue as he shared in her joy, forever committing it to memory. Sliding a hand around, he inserted a finger into her tight channel as he continued to run his tongue over her clit.

Lorelei cried out and laced her fingers in his hair. The knowledge that she was close to hitting her peak spurred him on. He increased his pace and added a second finger. The second her legs drew together, effectively clamping his head, he knew she'd reached culmination. Her pussy convulsed around his fingers and cream trickled freely from her. Sevan's dick jerked painfully, needing to find solace in her and soon.

Crawling up the bed quickly, Sevan took hold of his rigid cock and aligned it with her heated core. He entered, instantly burying himself to the hilt. Lorelei bucked beneath him, grabbing hold of his ass and pulling him to her. He increased his thrusts. Her body took hold of his, fisting his shaft as he worked in and out of her. It was heavenly. Every dream always was. It was as though Lorelei were made especially for him. His subconscious had created a woman so perfect that no woman in his waking hours could compare to her. Sadly enough, he doubted that even his true mate would measure up next to Lorelei and the place she'd taken in his heart.

"Do you like that, baby?" he asked, already knowing she did.

Nodding her head, Lorelei bit her lower lip and stared up at him with eyes so blue they didn't look natural. The walls of her pussy grabbed him tight, holding his cock in her as she came again. This time Sevan joined her, pushing down and locking to her tight. Unable to stop himself, Sevan gave in, emptying his seed deep within her, filling her to the point she couldn't possibly hold it all.

Lorelei's grip on him loosened slowly, making way for tiny caresses. She ran her hands through his hair and hugged him tight, giving him the reassurance he needed that she was still there. "Thank you."

He let out a soft laugh. Normally, it was him thanking her. It had become a running joke between them. The first time he'd experienced the joy of being in her he'd repeatedly thanked her while he fucked her. "Mmm, you are most welcome."

"Sevan?"

He kissed her lips as he stared down at Lorelei, not wanting to pull out. The second her lips began to tremble Sevan knew she was on the verge of tears. "Baby, what's wrong? Did I hurt you?"

"No," she said, her voice weak. "I don't want to want to wake up and find you're not there with me."

For some reason his mind had been having the woman he'd invented react with the same emotions as him. The same fears of waking and the other not being there. No part of Sevan wanted to wake to find himself alone in his quarters, his arms empty and his heart heavy. The idea of remaining in a dream-like state for all eternity had occurred to him more than once. Seeing Lorelei teetering on the edge of tears only added to that. "I'll come back."

"How do you know you will?"

"Because I've come every night for almost six months, Lorelei."

She swallowed hard. "What if the dreams just stop, Sevan? What if this is our last time together?"

Hearing her voice his ultimate fear left him needing to kiss her. Dropping down, he did just that, tasting her mouth as if it were the last time he'd ever be permitted to sample it. The fear of waking at any moment struck him hard and he drew back a bit. "Lorelei, I love you. Know that in case this is the last time."

It didn't matter that she was a figment of his imagination. He'd fallen in love with her upon first sight and it had only increased. In the waking hours he tried to find a real love, someone to fill the hole in his heart but he couldn't even stomach the idea of touching another woman. She was all he wanted.

The stunned expression on her face was priceless. He kissed the tip of her nose and chuckled. "That wasn't the response I was expecting."

She touched the side of his face and locked gazes with him. "And I wasn't expecting to fall in love with you either."

Suddenly, it felt as though he'd been stabbed through the heart. The news of her loving him should have been joyous. Instead, it only made matters harder for him. He was in love with a dream. It was sick and he knew it but he couldn't stop. Too many nights they'd spent together, talking about their pasts, their people, their futures and too many times they'd fallen into one another's arms, making love until it was time to wake.

"Did I say something wrong?" she asked, running her hand over his bare chest.

Taking hold of it with his own, Sevan brought her hand to his lips and kissed it gently. "I want to claim you, Lorelei. Make you mine for all eternity."

"This is only a dream, Sevan. Trust me, I want it too but it can never really be."

"Then what does it matter?" He shifted a bit. "I want to know that I claimed the person I love in my life not just the person I'll be forced to."

"Do it."

"What?" he asked, shocked by her response.

Lorelei reached down, cupped his cock and squeezed it gently. "Fuck me and make me yours, Sevan."

Needing no further encouragement, Sevan adjusted himself over Lorelei and chuckled. She gave him a questioning look and arched a black brow. "Something funny about this?"

"Only that I can't claim you the way it should be done. I can't fully shift, Lorelei. I only possess the strength, speed and skill of a lion. I can't actually shift forms or have my teeth grow long enough to bite you, mark you as my own and taste of your blood."

Running her hands through his hair, Lorelei managed to soothe him. "This is a dream, Sevan. Anything is possible."

His cock responded instantly, seeming to find her wet core all on its own. It wanted her as much as he did. Never one to tell his dick no, Sevan pushed into her instantly finding the pleasure he sought. Lorelei met him thrust for thrust, taking all that he had to offer while begging softly for even more.

"Uh, Sevan, please."

It was on the tip of his tongue to protest and tell her that he truly couldn't mark her when he felt his mouth begin to burn. His gums seemed to light with a painful fire and he felt a change in his mouth occurring. Knowing his teeth were lengthening, Sevan did nothing to try to stop them even though his mind told him to panic. Somehow, his body knew it had been created to do this very thing.

Staring down at Lorelei's creamy smooth neck, Sevan watched with a supernatural eye as the veins seemed to pulse. Unable to control himself, he began to drill into her, striking the head of his cock against her cervix. Lorelei thrashed beneath him, clawing at the backs of his arms and staring up at him with her beautifully blue eyes.

"Mine, Lorelei. Mine," he growled out, his voice suddenly lower than it had ever been. He fucked her harder, knowing she not only could take it but demanded it during the mating ritual. "I claim thee as my mate, my soul, my love for all eternity. Take my seed as proof and taste of my blood as I taste of yours."

He struck out fast, sinking his newfound incisors into her tender shoulder. Lorelei cried out a second before Sevan felt her biting him back. The sweetly coppery taste of her warm blood filled his mouth. The man who had ruled his body all the years of his life was repulsed by the events. The beasts who'd spent that time caged rejoiced in the knowledge that she now belonged to him, real or not.

A spasm tore through Sevan's body as his balls drew up tight and semen shot forth from his cock, filling his mate fully. She wrapped her legs around his waist and held him to her as they continued to drink of each other's blood.

Slowly, she released her hold on him. "Mine."

A wind came out of nowhere, whipping around them, yanking on them yet leaving them joined. A strange force slammed into Sevan, entering his body from behind and coming out the front. He knew the second it hit

Lorelei because she jerked and cried out. Fearing he'd done something to hurt her, Sevan released his hold on her and felt his teeth recede. "Are you hurt?"

"No," Lorelei said, shaking her head and smiling. "It was supposed to happen, Sevan. It means we're true mates." Laughing softly she shrugged beneath him. "Well, I guess in our dreams anyway."

"I'll never take another, Lorelei." Shocked by his own proclamation, Sevan just stared down at his mate—his wife.

She kissed the tip of his nose quickly. "Don't make promises you can't keep, Sevan. Let's just enjoy what we have now."

"I meant what I said. You are my wife now. And I won't...."

Pressing her fingers to his lips, she silenced him. "You will not live for a dream. You will enjoy your life as you were meant to. I love you and understand this. Who knows, Sevan, maybe the fates have bigger plans for us yet."

## Chapter One

Lorelei Janelle plopped behind the control panel in the central observation deck to see what vessel had sparked the warning probe's alert system. She didn't like the idea of intruders in their vicinity, but it only happened every now and then so she couldn't complain. As much as she disliked worrying about outsiders, she did enjoy the company. Her nights had been filled by erotic dreams of a man too good to be true and her days were a rude awakening to the harshness of her world. Her nocturnal lover hadn't come to her in two weeks and her fear that her mind had finally given up generating him was great. It would, of course, wait until she'd mated mentally with him to pull the plug.

"Unit One, this is Captain Vasil of the Alpha Brig Three requesting permission to enter atmosphere and dock. Emergency commission code 327 has been initiated," a deep, familiar voice said in her earpiece.

Her inner thighs damped and for one brief moment, her breath caught in her throat. Who was this man that sounded so very much like her secret lover? How had he elicited that shocking response from her body with nothing more than his words? Fearing he was another Dsendiyun, she



sighed. Lorelei was beginning to think the sex starved planet they came from encouraged them to 'get lost' as close to her people as possible. It wasn't like they got any sort of sexual stimulation while they were here. Not unless they considered being chained together good fun.

Some men do.

Lorelei glanced up at the glass ceiling. Seeing no sign of a vessel nearby, she double checked her radar to be sure she hadn't imagined the entire thing. There was no way she could have received a hail signal yet have the radar detect nothing. The electromagnetic waves that a vessel put out in a non-cloaked state would have shown up before. None did.

Having had many unauthorized vessels attempt to dock in her lifetime, Lorelei knew exactly how to handle them. She tweaked the computer's controls, demanding a more precise reading. Varying the frequency of the waves being sent off, she hoped to initiate a reflection of some sort, allowing the radar system to accurately pinpoint the vessel's location. It didn't work. Tweaking the calibrations even more, Lorelei set the control tower's sensors to ultra in hopes of catching a pattern of bounce backs consisting of the direct opposite waves than they were sending out. If the outsiders thought they were going to get away with active cancellation they were wrong. Dead wrong.

Much to her surprise, nothing showed up on radar. Having never had one elude her, Lorelei tried another approach. She shifted to the Commission based recognition systems they'd installed many years ago after a sanctified vessel crashed into their red sea. Instantly, a blip appeared on the screen. Zeroing in on it, she brought it up closer and began to run a remote diagnostic on it. The main fuel tank had a crack so large that she knew they'd lost the majority of their liquid fuel as soon as it happened. Their life support systems were dangerously close to giving out and their alternate source of power seemed to be having issues as well.

Who would be stupid enough to enter our atmosphere with that amount of damage?

As soon as the question formed in her head, Lorelei knew the answer. The Dsendiyuns. Once located on radar, they were easy to spot with their flashy crafts and telltale too strong pick up lines. They would certainly have announced themselves to her by now. The tiny bit of thrill they got from trying to make her work at pinpointing their point of entry would have long worn off and she'd have gotten it right within seconds. Not to mention their ability to stay cloaked for long intervals within the planet's

atmosphere was almost non-existent. No. Who or whatever approached them couldn't be the notorious romancers from Dsendiyun.

Disappointment shot through Lorelei, catching her by surprise. It had been a long time since she'd been touched by a man her mind did not create. The two weeks that she'd gone without Sevan coming to her nightly felt like an eternity. She missed the feel of his strong arms wrapped around her, the feel of him buried deep within her and knowledge that even though she'd invented him, he loved her. Her body was reaching the point where the desire to reproduce was almost on her. The only problem being, it had transcended her normal boundaries and infected her mind with a make-believe man whom she mated with in a dream.

It was as absurd as it sounded and although she truly did love the idea of Sevan, she couldn't live her life married to a fantasy. Waking up and crying every morning would get her nowhere and she knew it.

Irritated, Lorelei stared at the radar, watching the blip approach. "No way would a Commission vessel venture into uncharted territory. The ship's probably stolen and I bet it was those damn traders again. Probably want to try to nab off with more of our artifacts or to try to sell us more household cleaning equipment. I will not have my people's legacy sold to the highest bidder, nor do I need the latest and greatest debris remover. Do I look like a domestic goddess? No. I swear I will shoot them on sight if they attempt to take one thing." She wagged her brows and smiled. "If they've come to take me to bed, I'll reconsider. Mmm, bloody hell I'm horny."

Lorelei groaned as her nipples hardened. As much as she wanted to sneak away and 'handle' her current problem, she didn't. Thinking about sex was the worst thing she could do. It only seemed to intensify her craving for it—for Sevan. And there truly were only so many times she could masturbate before her fingers pruned and her wrist hurt. Sadly enough, she'd hit that state long ago.

"Excuse me, Miss, but I am no trader, nor am I a thief. Not to sound shallow here but I tend not to agree to fuck someone until I've had a look at them. As shocking as it sounds, not all men stick their dick in whatever moves. Plus, as overly romantic as this sounds, I'm the last guy you want. I'm holding out for a dream, honey, and to date no woman can stack up to her." He cleared his throat and the sound wreaked havoc on Lorelei's body.

She wanted desperately to come back with a witty comment but the tingling in her pussy fogged her mind enough that she didn't know or care how to respond to his comments. All she knew was that his voice was divine and so familiar that she was positive she knew him somehow.

"My ship's run into a bit of a snag and I need to work on it. If you'd be so kind as to tell your people to open the loading doors I will be out of your hair in no time flat. I'll require some fuel along with the use of some of your tools. I can assure you that each one will be returned in pristine condition. Though, I have been wanting a new set of torch acceleration adjustors."

Lorelei cursed herself for forgetting, yet again, that her voice transmitter was on. She had a bad habit of failing to remember to deactivate it after leaving the main tower. The teasing tone in his voice told her his comment was lighthearted, yet it was easy to tell she'd offended him. Why that mattered to her, she didn't know. But it did.

"Need I remind you that I have just initiated a code 327?" The frustration was evident in the heavy sigh that followed his comment.

Not one to fall for a sexy voice or succumb to guilt, Lorelei readied her inborn defense mechanisms. "Need I remind you that we are not part of the Commission and we do not recognize their laws? If you're seeking Commission friendly territory you will not find it here. We are not a repair station nor are we prone to allowing arrogant arses to dock for giggles. And for future reference you will not take that condescending tone with me again or you will sit there until your ship gives out. I am not one of your disciples, nor will I ever be. And, I'll have you know that basing the choice of having intercourse with someone off appearances places you below a lechranki worm in my book."

"Less than a blood sucking worm that eats its own vomit?"

"Mmmhmm." Lorelei grinned from ear to ear as though she were just a child again. Goading this man had to be the highlight of her month. Why? She wasn't sure but it felt good all the same.

There was some mumbling and then she heard another male laughing. "Shut up, Jordan," the sexy man said, his voice reminding her of Sevan's.

"Always good to know that you are an arse with everyone, not just people you are trying to sweet talk into allowing you to dock. And in case you should have the misfortune of needing repairs this deep into space again,

might I suggest you pretend to be mute and allow someone to speak for you. Perhaps sending a holographic image would even work. Just be sure not to model it after yourself or it too will find a rather cold reception."

"Listen lady, you better check that ... ouch! Hit me again and I will toss your ass out into space, brother or not."

Feigning glee, Lorelei clapped her hands together. "Oh goodie, mummy, they come in pairs. Do you think I could have a set of slime lechranski worms to go with the arrogant, ill-mannered boys that wish to dock here? Oh, please, mummy. I've been such a good little girl this year."

Captain Vasil laughed and the seductive sound of it rolled over her, caressing her in places she never dreamed a voice could. Places she hoped he really would touch her. Shocked and a bit embarrassed by her sudden state of need, Lorelei lashed out at him. "Oh my, my, he has a sense of humor. Be still my bored out of its mind heart."

He was quiet for a moment and Lorelei was almost sad that he had no comeback for her. Suddenly a bit panicked that she may have been too harsh, Lorelei took a deep breath and prepared to apologize to the stranger. That in itself should have tipped her off that something was amuck. Before she could get a word out, Vasil beat her to it.

"My apologies. My crew and I have had a rough go of it. We would like to clean up and get our ship fixed before heading onward." Captain Vasil was sincere. Her powers picked up on that immediately. It was a bit disheartening that he'd decided to end their back and forth but understandable due to the serious condition his ship was in. Still, giving in to him could cost him his life.

Knowing the risk he and his crew would be in if they docked here this late in the day and were unable to leave before the suns set didn't sit well with her. The man may possess the sexiest voice she'd ever heard but it would get him nowhere in life if he didn't have his head attached to his body. "Sorry, Alpha Brig Three, permission to dock denied. Seek assistance in the next quadrant over. I'll monitor your ship until it reaches the new destination. Two units will be sent up to refuel and escort you. Control tower out."

Lorelei went to cut transmission when she heard the mysterious man on the other end sigh—again. Her gut twisted and her stomach flipped at the very sound of his breath exhaling in her earpiece. She hated giving in, but disliked the thought of never hearing that voice again.

Am I confident enough that I can keep him safe?

Hating herself for her instant inner 'yes', she rolled her eyes and tossed her hands in the air. "Can you be in and out by suns set?"

There was a moment of silence followed by a low whistle. "Yes, we only need a couple of hours to get everything operational again."

It was Lorelei's turn to sigh. "If you promise to not cause any trouble, take full responsibility for whatever may come from docking here and be out by suns set then you may dock. No exceptions."

"You've got yourself a deal, little lady."

"Refer to me as little lady again and you will rot in space. Are we clear?" Lorelei bit back a tiny smirk as she envisioned the look on the man's face. The only problem was, she tended to insert the face of the sexy stranger who had plagued her dreams for months into every fantasy she had.

"Yes, ma'am."

## Chapter Two

Captain Sevan Vasil glanced over at his brother and second in command, Jordan. "What?"

"Nothing," Jordan said, his lips pursed and his arms crossed.

It didn't take a genius to tell him his brother was pissed. "Spill it."

"I'm not so sure we should dock here. The planet is not marked on the map and you yourself heard that they are not in the business of giving leave to Commission vessels. And what was that about assuming full responsibility for docking and...?"

"And," Sevan interrupted. "We don't really have much of a choice here. Our fuel tank cracked somewhere back near Margaidia and unless you want to chance piloting a vessel with no fuel and limited life supports all the way home, I'd suggest you get real comfy with the idea of docking here. We'll never make it back to Earth unless we do and you know it."

"Captain, I did not mean to question your authority."

"Cut the shit, Jordan! Don't go all military on me. You and I go back too far for you try to be stuffy now. I can still remember you in diapers!"

"You're three minutes older than me. Of course you remember. You were there too, moron. If you want to start flexing your three minute older muscles, let's go...."

The main screen flickered and interrupted Jordan's little rant. Static covered it for a split second before a vision so beautiful that Sevan had to fight to breathe appeared. Angelic didn't even begin to cover her. Instantly, his heart hammered.

It couldn't be. No. It wasn't possible. She wasn't real, was she?

Sevan couldn't think, couldn't move as he stared at her. The woman was identical to Lorelei. Overwhelmed by emotion, he sat there breathing heavy and trying to stop the obvious hallucination before him.

The goddess on the screen looked up at him, her royal blue eyes wide and then glanced down at the control panel before her. "Bugger! How the hell do you turn it on again? If I don't figure it out soon they'll end up stuck in orbit and I am not in the mood to fetch them. The last thing I want to do today is go and tow an arrogant, cocky, too sure of himself man, who thinks the universe should bend at his very command ... errr ... Commission officer's vessel in. I would rather wallow through pikineius dung than retrieve them."

Nice to know where we rank, Sevan thought, chuckling silently.

The hint of an old Earth British accent came through, reminding Sevan of home. They didn't spend nearly as much time among the Free World people on Earth as they'd like. No. Now their days were spent in the Commission going where they demanded.

The woman before him narrowed her gaze on the control board before her. She was obviously oblivious to the fact that she already had the visual communicator working. The thought of telling her he could both see and hear her crossed his mind for a millisecond before he decided to just take in the show until she figured it out. Besides, his cock had joined in the spectacle now and its rather hard state demanded he remain still or risk ejaculating in his pants.

Not an option he wanted to take. Though it was hard to keep from yelling out the name Lorelei but the very idea that it wasn't her terrified him. If she were real and if she too shared the dreams then she could be his mate.

Neither man said a word as the vixen before them leaned forward. Her long black hair fell into her face, looking so silky and smooth that Sevan could almost feel it. Bringing a toned arm up, she lifted it away. Her luscious lips pouted outward, as if she were in deep thought.

You're fucking killing me here. You're a hallucination that's it.

Scolding his mind for placing the vision of his dream lover in place of the actual woman didn't seem to stop the hallucination. Watching the woman only served to make it worse. Sevan had always been a sucker for women who were animated, especially when it came to their lips. Just thinking about how full and lush hers looked made him picture his cock buried in her mouth as he held tight to her silky hair. Flashes of the erotic dreams he'd been having for months flooded back to him. It was her face he'd seen beneath him as he sank into the paradise of her warm depths. But how could that be? Had their ship blown up after the fuel tank cracked? Was he dead now and left to dream of Lorelei forever?

If you've got to go, ending up envisioning her the rest of eternity isn't so bad.

The gorgeous woman punched the controls a few more times before rising slightly from her seat. Wearing a tiny black top that came to just above her navel, his eyes widened as it pulled up to just under her ample breasts. His cock dug painfully into the top of his pants. It would tunnel through the material soon and demand attention from her. Having her with him in bed was the only way he was used to dreaming of her and while this little tit for tat was amusing, he wanted her pussy milking him as he came in her.

Sevan heard Jordan draw in a deep breath and knew that the vision of beauty on the screen was having the same effect on him. A surge of jealousy went through him. Glaring over at his brother, he dared him to have a sexual thought about his woman.

My woman? Great, now I've laid claim to a fantasy woman—again. Next I'll be pulling up various versions of my own harem.

As horny as he was, he'd most likely pop anything inflatable and the holograms, while stimulating, couldn't take the place of a real woman so

he pushed the thought from his mind. Shifting in his seat, Sevan tried his best to distribute the mass between his legs. If he continued to stare at her, his cock would be hard for a week. No amount of jerking off would ease the pain she would no doubt bring him. As if it wasn't bad enough that he already woke each morning to find his dick so hard he could hammer a steel panel into a wall with no further aid, now he would be forced to live out his death staring at her from afar.

She looked so real. Never before had anyone been in his dreams other than the woman on the screen before him. Always ready for him, she appeared to him out of nowhere and with one look they knew what the other wanted. He'd fucked her so many ways that he felt himself blush. He wasn't shy but he wasn't prone to dropping to his knees and licking the sweet pussy of a gorgeous woman who suddenly appeared to him either. He'd done things with Lorelei that he'd never dreamed of doing in real life and she sparked things in him that no one else did. The worst part of it all was that he'd actually fallen in love with her—a dream, a figment of his overactive imagination, a vision that now appeared before him in what he hoped was waking hours. And he hoped beyond hope that she truly was the mate he sought.

"Blasted thing doesn't work! If that lil' Bagardo demon that claimed he fixed this pulled a fast one on me, I'll pull his purple head off and shove it up his lime green..." "Jerking her hand away from the control panel in front of her, she winced as a blue spark shot out at her catching her upper arm and burning it instantly.

No baby, don't ever cross those wires.

Sevan went eerily still. He'd never worried over a woman before. Well, no woman that wasn't related to him or a member of his crew. His cousin had accompanied them on their journey and he worried like hell every time she left the ship.

It shocked him how real and how human the woman on the screen appeared to be. One, if she was real then some deep shit was going on. Dreaming of a woman galaxies away had to have some sort of cosmic ramifications. Mating with her only intensified that. For two, all planets with human or human-like life forms had been mapped out by the Commission ages ago, at least in this quadrant. His luck she was projecting an image that they'd feel comfortable with long enough to lure them in and then he'd find out that she was really an alien with six heads. That had to be it. She was picking his brain and came up with Lorelei's likeness.



Ah, I hope not.

She tried again to fix the panel. Another blue spark shot out and caught her creamy cheek. Hissing, she grabbed hold of it and winced. Sevan stood fast, reaching for her as if he could really touch her through the viewing screen.

Glancing down, he found Jordan staring at him with an odd expression on his face. Wisely, his brother didn't comment on his concern for the beautiful creature before them. She reached out to try it again but pulled away at the last second allowing Sevan to exhale.

"Christian, can you get this thing to work? I can't seem to get it to respond to any of my commands. I swear it bit me twice already and if it does it again I will shoot it and then recycle its parts into a waste receptacle. The damn thing has a mind of its own and I'm frankly tired of dealing with it. I hate technology and it hates me. It's a rather mutual agreement that is best not tampered with."

"Promise you won't bite me if I get close enough to fix it. Though, there are certain places you could nibble if the urge should strike," a very male voice said from off screen.

Sevan's blood ran cold as the beast within threatened to surface. It would control his temper or rather, leave him uncontrollable. He had no right to feel the pang of jealousy that now rode him, but he did. He watched as a large arm appeared first, followed close by a handsome man who looked to be in his mid-thirties. Tattoos covered the man's arms. And upon closer inspection, Sevan saw that the woman had similar markings on her arms as well although hers were a degree lighter than the male's. In his dreams, Lorelei didn't have any sort of markings on her.

Maybe she just looks a lot like Lorelei—a hell of a lot like her.

The man near her looked as though he'd won the strong man of galaxy contest several years running. Sevan was not a small man by any standard, but he wasn't quite the barbarian that stood by the tiny woman now.

Christian moved his body around the woman's and let his eyes linger over her cleavage longer than Sevan could stand. His jaw tightened and he felt Jordan's hand on his shoulder.

"Easy now, brother. We've only come to fix the ship."

"Here you go. Just push this button here." The man put his mouth to the woman's ear, whispering something only she could hear. Her cheeks flushed and her body tensed. "Follow that procedure and you'll be up and running in no time. Not that you need any help in the getting things up category."

"Thank you, Christian," she said, shifting in her seat. She glanced up at the screen and apparently was able to see them now as well because she froze. "No." Her tongue darted out and over her bottom lip. That simple act sent chills of pleasure throughout Sevan's body.

"By gods, she's even more beautiful in person."

Her brow creased as her cheeks flushed. Jordan cleared his throat and Sevan realized that he'd not only said that out loud, but she'd heard every word of it. It was his turn to blush.

"Control tower, this is Alpha Brig Three, requesting permission to dock," Jordan said, laughing slightly.

"Perm ... permission granted." Her blue gaze locked on his. She seemed to study him, tipping her head slightly and narrowing her eyes. Something clicked and she shook her head as she hit another button and backed away from her seat. "Navigation will now be controlled by our tower. Please refrain from attempting to override this or irreparable damage to your vessel will occur. We will meet you in the loading area momentarily."

Stunned by her rather cold tone, Sevan stared mindlessly at her. She went to cut transmission and Sevan leaned forward fast not wanting lose sight of her. "Wait! What policy do you have on outsiders?" It was best to know if they regarded them as hostile or not right off the bat. Not that it mattered what she thought, his dick already thought of her as the only place it wanted to reside and there was no overriding that.

She gave a tiny smile that tugged at his heartstrings before answering. "I think you will find that we're friendly enough. We'll see to it that you're taken care of during your time here today. Come suns set we will not tolerate any excuse causing you to stay on our planet. I take it from the lack of my need for a translator that you speak Earth-English, as do we. That's always comforting. It's rare that any passersby speak our language. Our atmosphere is rich in oxygen so respirators will not be necessary. Our digestive systems are identical to yours so you will find our food adequate to sustain you. All of this leads me to believe that your visit will

be most enjoyable.” A sad look passed over her beautiful features and Sevan wanted to kiss it away. “Be sure to remain armed though. We are willing to allow you to do so in good trust. We shall not harm you and we expect the same in return.”

She cut transmission before he had a chance to ask why he and his men should remain armed. That was an odd request. Most planets they stopped at required them to check their weapons and deactivate any of the Brig's defenses.

"That's interesting," Jordan said, reading Sevan's mind.

"You heard the lady." Sevan pushed the button for the intercom that ran throughout the ship and looked at Jordan. "This is the Captain. We're docking now. Be sure to leave your weapons on and maintain a state of readiness. Travel in groups of two and do not engage without my permission. Anyone who disobeys this command will not have to worry about a court-martial. They won't be alive to stand before the committee."

### Chapter Three

"I hope you know what you're doing," Christian bellowed.

Lorelei let out a small laugh. "Like I had a choice. You saw the diagnostics screen. They've cracked their fuel tank and are running at eighty percent life-support. The ship's climate control is damaged as well. They would never have made it to the next repair station without assistance regardless how many ships I sent up to escort them."

"My, my." Christian touched her shoulder. She tensed. "Aren't we quick to defend our actions?"

Lorelei didn't care for what he was implying, but didn't bother to go into it with him. Christian was known for his jealous streak and that was just one of the reasons why she'd refused to marry him even though law ruled the marriage to take place. It wasn't as though he was a bad man, just not the man for her. There was a time he acknowledged that as well, but those days were fading fast, being replaced by endless sexual banter and tiring tries at bedding her. The Christian she'd known and loved made rare appearances. Today, he seemed to be in hiding.

"Are you coming down to meet our guests or are you planning on standing there sulking all day?" Lorelei asked, annoyed with having to deal with another one of Christian's temper tantrums.

Giving her a nasty look, he put his weapon on. "Oh, I wouldn't miss an opportunity to meet the man you practically drooled over, my dear."

"I did not drool over anyone. And even if I did, what business is it of yours?" She had little desire to go into the fact that when she'd looked into the outsider's eyes she'd been unable to breathe. Never in her wildest dreams had she thought the man she craved nightly was real. The only thing that worried her was that Sevan didn't do much of anything when she looked at him. In her dreams he'd declared his love for her, claimed her as his own, given her pleasure like no other man had and made her feel as though the two of them were all that existed in the universe. Perhaps the outsider just looked like Sevan.

Her chest tightened. Every bit of her body ached to be touched by Sevan, to know the pleasures his body could bring her in the waking hours and to see what she could offer him in return.

Christian held the door ajar for her and let out a wicked laugh. "Perm ... permission granted. Please, Lorelei. Your nipples were so rock hard that you could have impaled me with them. Do me a favor and try not to fuck the outsider before they leave today. I would not want to have to raise another man's baby. That does seem to run in your family. Your grandfather was a better man than I. He raised your father knowing he was not his and knowing that he held the blood of the others in him."

She spun in the hallway to strike him and he caught her wrist. His olive eyes lit with a fury she'd only seen reserved for battle. Christian was beyond jealous and that made him deadly.

"Let go of me."

Leaning down, he put his lips next to hers. "Give me what I want and I will." A low growl trickled from his throat and he didn't sound like himself. "I was chosen to be your mate after Samson gave into the others' pull. Honor what our elders have deemed to be law. Give in and all will be well."

"I am not going to marry you and how dare you bring him into this, Christian. Your brother didn't give in. No more than you did." The urge to strike him was great, Lorelei held back.

"Marriage is not a word our people use. Stop trying to be more like your very unhuman ancestors. You want me. I can smell it. You might as well rub your cream all over my face. You reek of desire."

"Who said it was you I'm wet for?"

He tightened his grip on her wrist and she cried out. Christian's eyes widened as he came back to his senses. More and more Christian was falling prey to the darkness they'd put in him. Losing him wasn't an option. Though marriage wasn't on her mind, it didn't mean she had no love for him. On the contrary, she loved Christian and always would. "Lorelei. I'm sorry. I didn't mean for...."

Lorelei backed away from him and he made another move to reach for her. She shook her head no. Visions of the nightmare they'd suffered through only seven months before came flooding back to her. They'd lost so much and in the end had overcome it all. None of the memories were pleasant and the thought of reliving that terrified her.

Christian grabbed hold of her and brought her body close to his. "Let's get you to the infirmary. I can harness the power I need to heal you there. The idea of leaving the slightest mark on you sickens me, Lorelei."

Lorelei heard his words, but they made little sense to her. Her mind was still planted back in time, seven months ago, when they'd been sent out to try to negotiate peace with 'the others' only to find it was a trap. 'The others' had used Christian against her. They'd manipulated him and forced him to do things that no man would ever knowingly do to the woman he loved. He had no memory of it nor could he be faulted.

Her brain told her that they were safe within the compound walls and that no evil could befall them, but her body reacted with fear. She dropped to the ground and spun her leg around, sweeping Christian's feet out from under him. Thankfully, Lorelei had the element of surprise on her side, or she would never have been able to budge Christian. His six foot five inch frame crashed to the floor. She sprang to her feet and took off running in the other direction. It was easy to feel the shift in the air around her signaling that Christian was moving at the same speed.

"Lorelei! No!" Christian tackled her to the ground and held her tight, pinning her with such a force that she could barely breathe. Her body shook and the realization that he could hurt her again hit her. From the moment 'the others' had touched his mind, he'd been forced to fight back the demon within. The darkness their leader had put in him wanted to

cause pain and suffering. He smelled of it. The taint. The hatred. The evil. None of the smells that were normally associated with Christian. No. The Christian she'd grown up with was kind, caring and protective.

"Christian, no. Fight him. Don't let him win again." Her voice sounded weak, even to her.

## Chapter Four

"Thought they said they were meeting us in the loading area," Jordan said, glancing around the large, empty area.

On cue, a door opened and a woman entered. At first, Sevan thought it was Lorelei and almost ran to her but the closer she got the more differences he noticed. Her hair, although as long as Lorelei's was several shades lighter. This woman was a brunette, not a coal black beauty like Lorelei. Her features were strikingly similar, giving her that same heart stopping capability. But she wasn't the one he wanted to hold and never let go. She wasn't the one who made his heart ache to just see her one more time.

She smiled at them as she approached. Jordan made a small choked sound. When Sevan looked over at his brother he saw that he was taken aback by the woman who now stood before them.

"Welcome," she said extending her hand to Sevan. "I'm Nina. You spoke with my sister and she granted you permission to dock. I'm sure she explained our policy on you needing to stay armed and the importance of you leaving prior to suns set."

"She did," Sevan said, looking past her for signs of her sister. His chest tightened in anticipation. He needed to touch her, find out if she was his Lorelei, know she was real and then pull her into his arms. No part of him cared if his advance would be welcomed or not. After being subjected to non-stop dreams of knowing her body every possible way, then declaring his love her, he needed to hold her, if only for a moment.

The very idea of Lorelei had ruined him for other women. In six months he hadn't touched a woman carnally. His cock ached to be caressed only by Lorelei. His entire body burned to be buried deep within her as he released his seed. His fantasy woman was real or at least appeared to be.

As good as fucking her upon first sight sounded, Sevan knew that he had to know how she managed to invade his thoughts to begin with.

Nina glanced at him and her smile faded away. "This way ... our men will see to your ship. Let us see about filling your bellies while you wait."

Sevan touched his wrist communicator. "Brig crew, stay alert and remain in docking bay. I'll call you all soon for eating shifts."

They followed Nina as she walked out the double doors and into a large corridor. Jordan seemed to be paying special attention to her backside and he couldn't fault his brother's taste in women. Nina was beautiful. It was apparently genetic.

"If you stare at my arse any harder, it may burst into flames," she said, in a low hushed tone.

Sevan hid his laugh as Nina looked over her shoulder at Jordan.

"Christian. No!" someone yelled, breaking the jovial feeling that had only just begun.

Sevan turned to see the onyx-haired temptress from the visual communicator pinned under the large hulk of a man called Christian. His entire body lit with fury as he shot forward to help her. Jordan seized hold of him and thrust him against the wall. "We are offworlders and this is not our business."

Nina gasped when she saw her sister and Sevan took that as a sign that all was not well. "Let me go!"

Jordan pressed against him hard and whispered, "I know what you're thinking. I didn't forget the description you gave me of the woman from your dreams. That girl isn't her. She's not your Lorelei."

Sevan stared at the raven-haired goddess and lunged for her again. Jordan, of equal strength, kept him in place. The woman twisted in Christian's arms and touched his cheek. The urge to see the man's head on a stake grew by the second.

"Christian, we need to get up now. You have to pull yourself together," she said, putting her forehead to his.

"What?" The man shook his head, seeming to come out of a daze.

The woman shot up and headed straight towards them. Her head was turned, her attention on the hulk of man behind her. She was too fixated on Christian to notice them. Jordan stepped back, allowing Sevan freedom. Sevan put his arms out just in time to catch her. For a little thing, she packed a hell of a punch. They tumbled backwards in a mass on the floor. He landed first, followed closely by her. She smelled of vanilla and he couldn't help but to draw in a deep breath—savoring her scent. It was identical to his dreams.

"Ommpf," she murmured, as she attempted to roll off him. He held her to him, enjoying the feel of her body pressed against his. She was even better in the flesh and he hadn't thought that possible. Her royal blue eyes narrowed on him as she tipped her head slightly, appearing to survey him.

"Lorelei, get off our guest," Nina said, sounding like she wanted to laugh.

Lorelei?

Sevan's gut clenched tight as he lay beneath her. She was real.

Jordan leaned over them and arched a brow. "Not to interrupt you, Sevan, but the ship needs tended to."

Nether one of them moved from their spot.

\* \* \* \*

Lorelei stared down at Captain Vasil, unable to form any sort of witty response to him. It was him! The man she'd assumed was her subconscious' answer to her need for comfort. Unable to stop herself, she touched his face, running her fingers over his stubble and tracing the hard edge of his jaw line. It was easy to relish being close to his chiseled perfection so she did. The gods were good judges of her idea of the perfect man. They had to be. They'd sent her a mate that was made to order.

A mate?

She dismissed the thought of mating quickly. It was just a dream. Having been close to being mated once before, Lorelei had no desire to repeat the horrific events that put an end to her engagement to Christian nor did she intend to give her heart to another. No. Her life was her own and she would never willingly hand control of it to another person. Not again.



As much as she wanted to believe herself, Lorelei knew that resistance to the fates' choice for her was futile. Her body was on the cusp of a reproductive high and already the effects left her in cold sweats with a burning need to be filled with seed.

Staring down at the man below her, Lorelei couldn't stop the feelings that ran through her. So many nights she'd dreamed of his kisses, his touch, his body sweetly invading her in every way possible. To have him here, in the flesh was almost too much. Before Lorelei realized it, she was grinding her hips against his rather impressive erection. The thin layers of material between them did little to prevent her clit from striking against his bulged member. Heat flashed through her cheeks as she thought about the countless nights she'd opened herself for him in her dreams, allowing him to do things to her body she hadn't even thought possible. The feel of his long, wide cock sliding in and out of her pussy still made her wet. Now, with Sevan under her, she wanted to tear their clothes off and fuck him until she could go no more.

The emerald green eyes that stared back at her from under a shaggy veil of blond hair had consumed her thoughts for months. Having them focused on her now, seeming to soak her in, was nothing short of pure torture.

Sevan looked as stunned as she felt. Reaching up, he touched her lips softly, causing heat to flare through her body. Long strands of her hair fell forward, encasing them in a wall of black, giving them a moment away from the prying eyes of the others. A slow, lazy smile moved over Sevan's face as their gazes locked.

Lorelei licked her lower lip out of habit and Sevan moaned softly. It was then she knew the attraction went both ways. Could it be he'd dreamt of her as well? If so, did that mean he truly was the one—her mate, her husband?

Are you the one?

Sevan's brow creased. "What one?"

Shocked that he'd heard her thoughts, Lorelei drew in a sharp breath and searched his handsome face for any clue that might unravel the mystery that had plagued her for so many months. All she found was the face of the man she'd not only come to be addicted to dreaming about but the man she dared to say she loved. Thinking him only a figment of her

imagination, Lorelei was ashamed of her growing need for him, for his tender caresses and his overwhelming feelings of protectiveness.

Now, as his straining erection pressed firmly to her swollen clit the shame she felt began to fade rapidly, leaving only carnal lust in its wake. The steely contours of Sevan's body only served to drive that feeling on, increasing to a dangerous point. Her magic began to pound as hard and fast as her heart—thumping to the point it teetered on the edge of release along with her sex starved body.

Someone cleared their throat, breaking the moment.

\* \* \* \*

Sevan did his best to focus on anything but the need to fuck the beauty above him. His cock had already begun to slink towards her cunt knowing that it would bring him salvation like no other would. He would have acted on it, taking her and fucking her into submission, assuring himself that she would never leave his line of sight. Too long he'd spent thinking he was going mad desiring a woman that didn't exist. Finding out she did changed all the rules of the game. He'd fallen in love with her and there was no way he'd let her go. The only question he needed answered was whether or not she dreamed of him as well.

Not wanting to assume anything, Sevan took a laid back approach to breaking the ice. The only problem was that it came out harsher than he expected or wanted. "That's quite a welcome you have there. Do you greet all your visitors this way?"

"Hardly," Lorelei said, rolling off him, but not before he felt her erect nipple brush past his hand.

He wanted to comment, but as she sat up, her hand ran over his now rock hard erection. Drawing in a ragged breath, he tried to steady himself to avoid coming in his pants. That not only would be messy, it would mortify him. No. The amount of semen he had built up was going to be released into Lorelei not his pants, that much he was sure of.

Sevan smiled, and cocked an eyebrow knowing he was being an ass but unable to stop himself. "I'd be more than happy to accept a greeting like that every time we cross paths."

Stop being such an ass to her. You love this woman, idiot.

She cast an angry look down at him and he cleared his throat.  
“Considering that you are leaving our planet by suns set, I doubt we will cross paths again.”

Don't be too sure of that.

She dusted her firm backside off. Rising to his feet, Sevan purposely lost his balance just so he could use her to steady himself. The second he took hold of her upper arms his entire body lurched back into a state of mind numbing need. Lorelei gasped and he could only hope the feeling was mutual.

"Thank you," Sevan said softly as he caressed the backs of her toned arms, hoping that she would catch their private joke line. She didn't react to it.

Instead, Lorelei's blue gaze raked over him and he wanted to see it above him once more. He wanted to feel her in the flesh while they reenacted the dreams that had haunted him. The call of her lush lips was too much. Bending down, Sevan went to capture them and felt the heavy weight of so many stares that he halted in mid-motion.

"Dare I ask what the two of you were bickering about this time?" Nina said, appearing next to her sister and motioning to the hulk of a man.  
“And why in the world were you on the floor?”

Lorelei turned a bit, still staying close to him but focusing on her sister.  
“It was nothing. Christian and I seem to do that for sport now.”

Christian crossed his large arms over his chest, doing his best to look intimidating. “That is the only sport I seem to get from my wife anymore, Nina.”

Wife?

Nina laughed. “Watch your tongue, Christian. If you keep calling her your wife before the ceremony actually takes place you're likely to jinx it.”

Lorelei was to marry Christian? No. That couldn't be. Sevan stared at her, desperate for her to announce it wasn't true, that it was some sort of joke. No way could she ever take another man into her, not after what they shared. Not after she'd allowed him to lay claim to her. His chest tightened as the realization that the dreams were quite possibly only one-

sided hit him. What force would bring her image forth in his sleep, allowing him to experience a love like no other only to give her to another the moment they met?

"Christian." Lorelei shook her head slightly, exhaling as she went. "Please refrain from discussing marriage in front of others. There is a time and place. This is not it."

"Please refrain from bringing your human terms for what occurs. You share their blood but you share ours as well. Never forget that, Lorelei. And try not to forget the sins of your ancestors. I am not in the habit of raising other...."

Lorelei pulled away from him and directed her attention to Christian. Sevan would have been jealous had he not sensed the rage within her. Nina apparently sensed it as well because she moved next to her sister quickly and offered her a small smile.

"Jacquelyn listens," she whispered to Lorelei.

Lifting her hands up, Lorelei tipped her head back and forth. He watched in awe as a slight wind began to twirl around her. Jordan gasped but Sevan just stared at her, already knowing how very special she truly was. Her hair lifted slightly and the oppressing feeling of rage dissipated instantly. She went to Christian and cupped his face. The second she pressed her lips to his, Sevan saw red.

He moved fast to snatch Lorelei away from the man but found Jordan seizing hold of him. "Captain."

The warning fell on deaf ears. The only thing that mattered was Lorelei and the fact that she was in the arms of another man. A small spark of light passed from her lips to his, causing Sevan to stop his struggle against Jordan's grasp.

Lorelei drew back from Christian as he shook his head slightly, seeming to come out of a daze. He looked down at Lorelei with wide eyes. "It happened again, didn't it?"

Sevan wanted to know what the man was talking about but held his tongue.

Nina touched Christian's arm. "How much can you remember?"

"I knew what I was saying was wrong but I couldn't stop. Lorelei, I didn't mean to pin you to the ground. I..."

Lorelei smiled and Sevan's heart beat madly in his chest. He wanted that directed at him, not the psycho before her. "Christian, we will beat him. I promise you this. See how far you've come in seven months? You're now able to recall what you do during the spells and even fight him. I watched you hesitate a little bit ago and when you tackled me you should have crushed me. You didn't. See, we will beat him."

Christian snorted. "Is that before or after he uses one of us to kill you, Lorelei? I am a threat to you and shall remove myself from the premises. Change all of the access codes and give the information only to the females. It might be wise to section the males off and quarantine them again until the passing of the moons. His power weakens after that and will take some time to recover."

Lorelei shook her head. "No, Christian. You will stay with us. Your place is here."

"It's getting to the point that I'm over reacting to every tiny thing you do. I know that the elders arranged a marriage between us even though we both know it wasn't to be. I cannot replace Samson. Yet I can't stop the hate that burns when I think of you with another man. I want you to be happy, Lorelei. I do. Why am I suddenly jealous of every aspect of your life?" Christian cupped her cheek and Sevan wanted to beat him until he lost consciousness. "I will never forget waking to find you the way I did and I will never forget knowing it was I who caused it."

Nina moved forward fast and pushed him hard. "You did not cause anything. He could just as easily manipulate the men standing among us now and attack her. He picked you to prove a point. The man is a lunatic, Christian, and wants to make the biggest statement he can. Having you, the Chieftain, destroy Lorelei would be the ultimate irony. The only thing that could top that would be for Lorelei's true mate to arrive and slit her throat because he deemed it so."

Sevan stiffened.

Lorelei laughed. "Always a ray of light, aren't you, Nina?"

"I'm honest."

Jordan sighed. "Brutally so."

Everyone just stared at him. Nina cast him a dirty look and Jordan winked at her. For a moment Sevan thought she might actually punch Jordan. He wouldn't stop her. Seeing his brother get his ass kicked by a girl would be hilarious.

Christian nodded. "I shall take my leave of you all now."

Nina and Lorelei grabbed hold of him. Nina shook her head. "He can manipulate any man's thoughts at will. It is a risk we both know and watch for. We know that we are only truly safe with one another, carefully removed from the male population but we also know that these men he uses are our friends, brothers, husbands or fathers. They aren't monsters. They are people we love. Removing ourselves from them means he wins yet again."

Sevan glanced at Jordan and found him staring at Nina with possessiveness in his eyes. Was it possible that his brother was as taken by Nina as Sevan was with Lorelei? Could it be that fate had intervened and caused the rupture in the fuel tanks to get them here on purpose?

"Uhh, is there something we should know about?" Jordan asked, eyeing Nina carefully.

It was Lorelei who answered. "Nina, see to it that our men are aiding in the repair of their vessel and that they are stocked with food and any additional supplies they require. Captain, what is the ratio of females to males aboard your ship?"

Curious as to why her tone was now so cold, Sevan tipped his head and watched her carefully. "I believe it about seven to three, males being the majority. Why?"

Nina stared at him. "Alert your females that they are to watch their male crewmen carefully. It would be wise to suggest they go to a portion of your vessel that they can seal themselves in if need be. We have such locations here and they are most welcome to use them. I can assure you that the facilities are extremely comfortable and quite safe from attack."

"From attack? Watch the male crewmen? What the hell is going on here?"

Christian stepped forth. "My apologies for my lack of manners, Captain Sevan. I am Chieftain Christian Beauden. You have already met two of my head advisors, Lorelei and Nina Janelle. Nina is head of security and

defense and Lorelei's skills do not have a particular label but it is safe to say she is a powerful leader among our people. While it is nice to have visitors among us this is not the best time. To explain it would take longer than you are permitted to be here. It is safe to say that should you or any of your men begin to feel a tugging, the slightest of mental pulls, perhaps a driving suggestion or urge then you should hand your weapon to the nearest female and back away fast. Notify whoever is closest that it has occurred and expect to be placed in restraints until it is clear you no longer pose a threat to anyone."

Sevan's mouth dropped open. "What? Neither I nor my men pose a threat to anyone who isn't trying to kill us."

"Captain," Christian said, softly. "As much as I would love to debate this matter with you, it's pointless. Do as I instructed or live with the knowledge that you may hurt or possibly murder someone against your will." Christian glanced at Lorelei. "From your responsiveness to Lorelei, my guess would be that you are a prime target for manipulation. Currently, it is Lorelei he wishes to destroy. That being said, no females are safe when he strikes so all males pose a risk."

"Who the hell is he and what do you mean prime target for manipulation?" Sevan asked, confused and concerned for Lorelei's safety. "I would never hurt her. I've thought she was a figment of my imagination for...." He stopped instantly, not wanting to reveal that he'd dreamed of her.

Lorelei locked gazes with him and his body tightened. "Captain, please do as Nina asked. I don't want anything to happen to you or your crew. Had your ship not been in such a dire state of need I would have had it escorted to the next planet over for your own safety. You and the people who have come with you are my responsibility to keep safe. I was the one who allowed you to dock. I never expected that Stegian and the others would attempt to strike out during the day. All I can ask is that you take every precaution necessary to assure your safety and that of your crew."

No longer did Sevan feel the need to argue for answers. The raw emotion in Lorelei's eyes told him that the steps were needed. He pressed the communicator chip on his waist and kept his eyes on Lorelei. "This is the Captain, all female personnel are to report to level two and are to lock it down at the first sign of trouble. No males are permitted on that level. Non-lethal force is permitted to ensure they stay off it. This remains in effect until a native female from this planet notifies you otherwise. Captain out."

Jordan moved forward. "Sevan, why in the hell are you only allowing females from here to tell them to come out?"

"Because he realizes that should any of you be compromised, himself included, that you would have access to the females and could possibly harm them," Lorelei said, as she teared up. "Thank you, Captain. Should the worst happen I can assure you that we will see them to safety and do everything within our power to break the hold on any males that have been used."

Nina glanced at Sevan and then Lorelei. "I think it best that we get them in and out as fast as possible. I can feel your energy circling them all, protecting them from Stegian. He's powerful, Lorelei. You can't keep that amount of energy up for an extended period and you know it. You already exude enough strength just to keep Christian semi-guarded at all times. You sleep longer than you should and eat less than needed. It's not healthy and our concern for you grows daily. If you fail and your personal shields crumble, he will have open access to your mind. I don't even want to imagine what he'll do to you. He hates us, Lorelei. But mostly, it's you he blames for not winning the last massive strike. And I think we all know that you are the first one he wants to see dead, Lorelei. In his eyes you pose the biggest threat."

"I will never submit willingly to him, Nina. I'll leave him no choice but to kill me."

"What?" Sevan asked, suddenly panicked.

Lorelei smiled. "Tell me, Captain, if you found yourself in hostile territory and in the enemy's hands would you submit to them or not?"

Sevan's brow creased. "No I wouldn't submit to them."

"Neither will I."

Sevan went to question this but stopped when Lorelei put her hands in the air and closed her eyes. Nina and Christian stiffened. Her breathing grew shallow as her lip began to tremble. She faced him fast. "No, he knows that offworlders are here. He fears this group for some reason," she said, staring at Sevan with wide eyes seeming to search for something. Her eyes flickered closed briefly and she gasped. "He believes that many mates for our people reside upon the vessel. He's not waiting for suns set to attack. He's doing it now."



A loud howling noise sounded all around them. Sevan watched as the women grabbed their sides, each one touching weapons that were slightly different from his own. He grabbed his sidearm, uneasy about how close the animal sounded. "What was that?"

Lorelei and Nina exchanged weary glances and Christian moved in closer. "Nina, do a full security sweep of the perimeter and I'll double check that the compound computer system is still in operation. I don't want a repeat of last time."

Nina looked towards the corridor junction and put her hand out. A small panel slid back, revealing controls. "All guards on full alert. This is not a drill. I repeat. This is not a drill."

Christian nodded before turning to leave.

"Christian, wait," Lorelei said, taking a step closer to him. Sevan wanted to sweep her up in his arms and take her as far away from the blond Adonis as he could but he held back. He didn't expect to compete with a man who looked to be cast from stone. Sure, he was fit. In fact, he was rather bulky in the way of muscles too, but nowhere near Christian's size. "I'll check the computers. You know who you need to protect. Jacquelyn needs you near. I'll be fine and you know I can do it. Or at least get them all to spit blue sparks at me." She laughed softly and rubbed her cheek where the mark had been.

Nina stopped dead in her tracks, and spun around to face Lorelei. "Do you think that's wise, Lorelei?" There was an edge to her voice that told Sevan she knew damn well that it wasn't wise, but wasn't about to call her sister out on it in front of the group.

Red lights flashed in the hallway and an alarm went off. Nina shook her head. "We have a security breach."

"Captain Janelle, this is Until Leader Essen. I have three injured and one missing. We're in the fourteenth sector along back climate control boosters. We don't have a visual but they're near us," a voice said over the compound sound system.

"UL Essen, I'm on my way." Nina glanced at Christian and then Lorelei. "If they've made it that far they could make it to the education facility."

Lorelei gasped. "The children are still in session."

Nina nodded. "Christian and I will head to section fourteen. Lorelei, you'll need to check on the computer system. We'll cover the children." She lifted her hand toward the open panel. It was then that Sevan noticed the slight buzz in the air. "Jacquelyn, I know you're listening. Lock down your room and allow no one to enter until you are told otherwise."

Christian pushed past Nina and grabbed Lorelei's arm. "Promise that you'll be careful. You know what he's after and what he will do to get to you."

Sevan saw the array of emotions move over Lorelei's face and knew that whatever came out of her mouth would be a lie. He felt so connected with her and he didn't even know her. It was unnerving to say the least. "I promise. Be careful."

The large man ran off in the other direction and Sevan noticed that Nina had left as well. He looked at his brother and found him staring off in the direction Nina had gone. "Stay here and supervise the repairs and our men."

"What are you going to do?" Jordan asked.

Sevan met Lorelei's gaze and smiled. "I'm planning on going with her to check the compound's computer systems and see to the children's safety."

"Right. Then I'm going with Nina and Christian," Jordan replied.

## Chapter Five

Lorelei ran down the corridor, followed closely by Sevan. Why she'd let the outsider follow her was still unclear. She should have ordered them off the planet, or never allowed them to dock in the first place. Her instincts had been right. This was no place for them. It wasn't a place for anyone.

"How much farther?" Sevan yelled over the sound of the alarm.

She slowed her pace and let him catch up to her. Reaching out, she touched his arm lightly. The compulsion to just feel his skin had been on her since she'd first laid eyes on him. Part of her still couldn't believe that the man she'd dreamt of for the last six months was real, the other part wanted to test just how real he truly was.

Sevan moved in closer to her, dwarfing her frame. At five foot six, she wasn't short but he seemed to tower over her. His mouth twitched and it took everything in her not to touch his full lips. She wasn't used to men like him, men who ran around in full officer fatigues and who didn't have hair as long as hers. Christian hardly ever wore a shirt, more often than not opting only for a vest for warmth. Her people tried to wear the least amount of clothes, leaving their protective markings free to do what they were created to do—heal, guard, and draw power from the land.

Sevan looked down at her hand on his arm and ran his finger, lightly over the first of her faint markings. “Did it hurt?” He asked, taking yet another step closer to her. “Getting these tattoos ... did it hurt?”

She knew what tattoos were. She'd studied enough about the human culture and Earth to understand, and her markings weren't tattoos. “They aren't what you think they are.”

"You're beautiful ... errr ... I mean they're beautiful."

Smiling, Lorelei studied Sevan closely, not wanting to feel anything for him but failing miserably. Too many nights he'd come in the form of dreams and had taken her to levels of ecstasy that she couldn't just turn a blind eye. “Thank you. We're all born with them. Each person's means something else. Some declare their owner to be a warrior. Others mean scholar, healer, leader and so on. The list is endless. Many of the markings are forms of protection or good wishes. They come from the Shamenian side of my ancestry.”

"What do yours mean?" Sevan asked, moving closer to her.

"A number of things. These,” she pointed at her upper arm, “are for my status. These announce that I am supposedly wise although the burn on my cheek would likely state otherwise. The ones on my torso are blessings for fertility and pleasure.”

Sevan's breath caught. “So, the marks are some form of population control, too?”

Lorelei couldn't help but smile. “Trust an outsider to simplify it for us.”

"So, I'm right?"

Shrugging, Lorelei lifted her tiny vest a bit, revealing even more of her faint markings. “In a way. My markings in particular tell that the gods

and spirits of the land will offer the blessing of children when the pairing is with my mate. In short, if they up and decide I found Mr. Right there is no means of population control that will prevent me from conceiving a child."

He took a step back as though she were contagious. "Oh."

"Relax. I'm not any different than a full blooded human female. I can't get pregnant by breathing the same air as you. Coupling is no different for my people than yours. Though we know fairly quickly when we are with child. The marks either disappear or change significantly."

Something moved over Sevan's face. His eyes narrowed. "Would anything else make them disappear?"

"I honestly don't know. It changes with each individual. I've seen some people's fade when they meet their significant other and then completely disappear when they conceive a child. They do return in some fashion, be it a tiny mark on a thigh to a full blown return."

Lorelei took a moment to laugh softly at Sevan's facial expression. He appeared so caught up in their discussion that she worried his forehead would remain permanently crinkled. "Don't quote me on any of this. Like I said, everyone is different. Take me for instance. Six months ago my markings were several shades darker. One morning I woke up to find them faded to what you see before you now."

"Six months ago?" Sevan asked, his voice cracking slightly.

"I understand that to you they may appear a bit off-putting but to our people they're not only important but a thing of beauty. In my eyes, it's odd to not see the markings on you. Here, when a man bears no markings declaring him a Shamenian he is considered the enemy until he proves otherwise."

"Lorelei, they are anything but off-putting. They're captivating." His warm thumb ran over the circular sign for power near her wrist and she felt her magic rise up. Knowing that not all outsiders possessed the same gifts as her people, she tried to pull her arm away, but it was too late. The power within her surged forth.

Images from the reoccurring dreams she had poured forth along with pictures of things that were altogether new. Lorelei's body jerked with each vivid picture of Sevan thrusting himself into her, his hand cupping

the back of her neck as she rode him. Her pussy quaked with need and dampened as her mind shot to images of him nibbling on her breasts, taking each nipple in his mouth and spending equal time teasing them. Her knees went out from under her as yet another image hit her, this one of him buried deep within her, releasing his seed.

Strong arms wrapped around her, keeping her from hitting the floor. She blinked, the visions finally fading away and found herself staring into intense green eyes.

Sevan looked down at her. "What...?"

Lorelei tried to regain her footing, but her inner thighs still twitched as though from the orgasm the vision brought on. "I'm sorry. I think I might be coming down with something."

"Something that involved us fucking?" Sevan shook his head as though he were trying to absorb all that was going on. "The dreams were real weren't they? You had them too. Didn't you?"

Her mouth opened, but no sound came out. The thought of him sharing one of her visions and her dreams was absurd. Not even Christian could do that and he was the greatest Shaman they'd ever had.

Sevan brought his mouth to her neck and let his hot breath move over her skin as he spoke. "Is that really what it feels like to be inside you? I gotta tell you, baby, you are all that I think about. Tell me that I'm not the only one having the dreams."

Lorelei averted her gaze. "You're not."

The feel of his warm lips on her neck made her sigh as her breasts heaved upwards. "What's happening to me? Is it your doing? Did you invade my head so I'd come here and help you?"

"No," Lorelei said fast, hurt that Sevan would suggest such a thing. She tried to pull away but he held tight to her. "Let go. None of this was my doing. I would never lure anyone into this situation. Especially not someone that I..."

"That you let sample every inch of your body? That you let fuck you so many ways that I lost count? Is that it, Lorelei?"

"Stop it." She pushed lightly on him, not wanting to harm him in any way but hating his accusations. Knowing it was for the best, Lorelei focused on putting a wall between them, hardening herself to him so she could send Sevan on his way and not die of a broken heart. Finding out he was real only to have to send him away already ripped at her gut. Letting him love her in the flesh would kill her. "Get away from me. They were just dreams. They meant nothing. I need to see to it my people are safe. Go back to your own kind, fix your ship and leave."

"Don't," he whispered, brushing his lips over her neck. "I'm not sure what to think. My ship, which has passed every inspection with flying colors, suddenly has more problems than I can count when we're passing by your planet. I radio for assistance only to find the woman who has invaded my dreams staring back at me. Now, I'm told that I might be used by some madman to hurt her. This is too much for any one person to absorb. Don't pull away from me just because I questioned it aloud. I need to understand what's going on."

Lorelei shook her head slightly, still needing to put distance between them. "How can I give you answers to things I don't even understand? All I know is that he believes your vessel contains our mates or potential mates." She glanced towards the gray wall not wanting to reveal it all to him but finding it hard to leave important pieces of information out. "Stegian believes you are my mate. He made sure to leak that to me when he was scanning the facility to pinpoint our location. That means he will either attack you to draw me out or use you to attack me."

Sevan snorted. "I won't hurt you." He didn't go into detail on the subject of her being his mate and that scared her. Did he not mean his vows? Did he want to take his claim back? He was human, so he could. And why would the fates give her a human mate? Why not a supernatural to match her strength and speed?

Lorelei closed her eyes and thought hard about all of the human customs, words and phrases she'd been taught of as a child. "Umm, he thinks you're my soul mate. I can't change that and trust me, Sevan. If he decides to use you to hurt me there will be nothing you can do to stop him."

"What? Some insane guy believes there is this one perfect person for everyone and that I'm yours?" Disbelief laced his voice, causing Lorelei's heart to feel heavy. "That's it. I'm heading back to my ship. This is a little too convenient for my taste. You show up out of the blue. Invade my dreams. Let me claim you and make me fall in love with you. Whatever game you're playing ends here, baby."

He loves me? He really does?

Lorelei took a moment to collect herself knowing she had to send Sevan away for his own good. "Wonderful, go. I'm almost sorry that you aren't here to loot us. At least then I'd have started out with low expectations."

"I'm out of here," he said, turning to head in the other direction.

Something howled loudly, signifying just how close it truly was to them. The compound walls were thick. That meant it was just outside of it. The second Sevan stopped dead in his tracks, Lorelei's body tensed. "Go. You're sick of my game and I'm sick of you. I'm glad the nightmares of you have ended." It was harsh and a lie but she needed him to go for his own safety.

Sevan glanced back over his shoulder at her, his eyes betraying his words. He was worried and her powers allowed her to sense that his concern was for her. As heartwarming as that was, he couldn't be allowed to stay.

Aiming her weapon directly at him, Lorelei drew in a deep breath as she stared down the barrel. "Captain, you are to report back to your vessel immediately. I hereby revoke your status of honorable guest. You are no longer permitted to roam freely. Do as I say or...."

"Or what? You'll shoot me in the back?" he asked, his voice low, his eyes still locked on her. "Is that what you do to someone you've spent how many nights with? Is that what you do to a man you allowed to take you as his wife, even if it was only a dream? Is that how you return affection, Lorelei? The second we meet in the flesh you threaten to shoot me?"

Closing her eyes, Lorelei thought of all the nights they'd spent together. The memory of Sevan declaring his love for her, claiming her, had plagued her for two weeks straight. Every second of not being with him had chipped away at her heart. Now, as she held a weapon on him, shame filled her. She couldn't shoot him. Raising her weapon high, she let off the trigger and sighed. "Sevan."

"Was it all a lie, Lorelei?" His green eyes stayed locked on her. "I have to know."

"No," she said, shocked by her own admission.

A wolfish grin appeared on his face. It faded away quickly as another howl filled the air. Sevan moved to her quickly and pulled her behind him. "Stay close."

The thought of Sevan going up against an enemy such as the one waiting for them made her smile. "Excuse me, Captain, but I think it's you who had better stay close to me."

Lorelei didn't wait for his comeback. Putting the code in to open the exterior door, she shook her head. The door opened. Sevan tried to push in front of her, but she held her weapon out towards him and arched a brow. "Want to see if your charm works two times in a row? I should warn you that I have no problem setting my weapon to knock you out rather than watch you kill yourself by running head first into a situation you have not been briefed on."

He froze.

Smart man.

She handed the weapon to him butt first and nodded. Shaking his head no, he touched his own sidearm. It was a cute thought, but unless he was packing ammunition with liquid silver nitrate in it, he might as well walk out unarmed. Her people had spent years synthesizing it for protective purposes since it had first arrived with the humans long ago. Lorelei thrust her weapon into his hand. He tried to hand it back to her. She growled. He smiled. Instantly, she caught the scent of a lion shifter as Sevan touched her arm lightly. It wasn't exuding a smell indicating dominance and danger it was more of a sexual calling.

Confused, Lorelei's brow furrowed as she stared at Sevan. A slow lazy smile remained plastered to his handsome face. "Something the matter?"

Placing her finger to her lips to indicate the need for silence, Lorelei shook her head no and pulled her pant leg up. Sevan gave her a suggestive look and glanced downward. When he caught sight of her backup weapon, he nodded his head and squeezed her arm gently. Tiny shockwaves of desire radiated from beneath his fingertips and Lorelei had to concentrate hard on listening to their surroundings. Something was close and if she didn't stop ogling the outsider, they'd be too dead to act on their mutual feelings.

Another howl sounded and Sevan attempted to push past her. Grabbing his arm, she pulled him back to her and nodded in the direction of the



nearest line of black bark trees. The yellow leaves that draped down provided enough coverage to make it difficult to see very far beyond the first couple of rows. A shadowy figure moved around and Lorelei knew what it was. She could only guess how many of them had actually come to test the strength of their safeguards.

"There has been a breach in section twelve," Christian said over the intercom.

Sevan leaned down and moved in close to her. "Where's section twelve?"

Putting her mouth against his ear, she noticed how tiny flecks of white ran through his otherwise jet sandy blond. "You're standing in it."

Sensing the presence of something evil before she saw it, Lorelei grabbed her backup weapon from her ankle and spun around fast. She let off two shots. A large brown blur appeared out of nowhere and crashed down just outside of the doorway.

"It's a wolf!" Sevan shouted. He pulled on her shoulders as she headed towards the large creature. "It's the biggest damn wolf I've ever seen. My gods, it's as big as me."

It was Lorelei's turn to give him a suggestive look and she did. His gaze met hers briefly, before she concentrated on the bulge in the front of his pants. Licking her lips, she brushed her hair out of her face and turned her attention back to the creature on the ground. The fact that it didn't shift into human form told her that it was a hybrid—one of Stegian's new breeds of fighting 'machines'.

\* \* \* \*

"Devi!" someone shouted.

Sevan spun around quickly with the weapon that Lorelei had equipped him with drawn. He centered it on the two men running towards Lorelei. Their eyes were wide as they caught a look at the scene before them.

"Are you hurt?" one asked, as they slowed their pace.

Lorelei stepped in front of him and put her hand out towards the wolf on the ground. The men stopped instantly. "Please inform the Chieftain that the threat has been eliminated. I'll need you both to stand watch here for any more. I'm not sensing any, but Stegian's tricks have gotten to us

before.” The way her voice trailed off at the end left Sevan wondering who this Stegian was and why the hell he had mutant wolves attacking his woman.

My woman? The thought of that made him smile. She would be his, of that he was sure.

"As you wish, Devi," they said in unison, bowing their heads slightly.

Devi?

Lorelei took him by the arm and the men gasped. He tried to jerk away, afraid that he'd somehow violated something sacred to them but Lorelei yanked him to her.

Damn, she's strong.

In an instant, she had his face cupped in her hands and was pulling his lips towards hers. Hearing the men's shocked responses, he tried to stop her, but he was too late. Her full lips met his and the world around him was lost. The only feeling left was that of Lorelei's lush body pressed tightly to his. His cock throbbed and his body ached to toss her to the ground and ravish her. When she raked her nails lightly down his back, he groaned in her mouth.

She pulled back slowly, leaving his lips tingling. He dared a sideways glance at the men who'd arrived and found them with one knee on the ground and their heads bent. He looked at Lorelei and she smiled down at the men.

"You shall act as my witnesses."

"Yes, Devi," They answered, rising slowly to their feet. They looked at him and for a second Sevan almost checked to see if he'd sprouted markings as well.

Lorelei bit at his lower lip, leaving his cock twitching and his body aching to find release in her. Bending down to meet her head on, Sevan gave into the urge to pick her up. Being face to face with her only made his hunger grow. Now, the need to fuck her actually bordered on painful. "I need to be in you."

Pulling back slightly, Lorelei pushed on his chest and dropped to her feet. She glanced at the men before them and smiled. "Bear witness that this man is not my mate."

An uncontrollable urge to peel his shirt off hit him. It was so spontaneous that Sevan gave into it without a fight. He pulled his black shirt over his head and turned his backs to the men, hoping to get Lorelei to speak with him alone. The men gasped.

Lorelei's smile faded. "What is it?"

Sevan noticed her markings fading before his eyes to the point they were almost gone and his breath hitched. "Lorelei?"

"What?"

"Say you were to find that mate of yours and things were to happen, you know, progress further."

Lorelei cast a wary look at him. "You mean we fuck?"

"Yeah, that will do. Say you were to find him and be intimate with him. How long would it take for your markings to fade?"

"I don't know. I've seen them fade instantly on women who simply stand next to their mates. I imagine they would...." She stopped suddenly and looked down at herself. Her blue eyes widened. "No. You can't be him."

Slightly offended, Sevan raked his hot gaze over her tight body. "Why not?"

"Because you're human and ... and, well I don't know why but there is no way that you are my mate. Stegian and gods who brought us into the same dream plane are all mad."

"Hold on," Sevan said, putting his hand up. "What do you mean dream plane? Are you telling me that," he stared at her stomach and watched as the circular markings there began to regain their color quickly, "Lorelei, what does that mean?"

She followed his gaze and covered her mouth fast. Shaking her head, she tried to run past him. Not wanting to let her out of his sight, Sevan grabbed her arm and pulled her to him being careful not to harm her. "No. You will stay here and answer my questions."

"No. You don't understand. I have to get to Christian." Lorelei's blue eyes stayed glued to her stomach.

"Why?"

One of the men stood quickly and came to her. He stared at her stomach in awe. "Devi, the legends are true."

"What legends?"

The men looked at Sevan with nothing short of wonder in his eyes. "The legends that speak of the powerful ones being given great signs when the time came for them to reproduce the next line of leaders." He pointed at Lorelei's stomach. "The symbols stand for fertility. When brought out as they are now, it means that now is the time that she is most fertile. Her body thirsts for the seed of her mate."

Sevan let the man's words sink in. "Why in the hell are you trying to get to Christian?"

She looked at him like he was insane. Since the thought that she might be had crossed his mind, he let it go. "Captain..."

"Call me Sevan, Lorelei. I think we're way past pleasantries."

"Fine. Sevan, I need to get to him so that he can assure the coming of the next line of leaders. It's not something that should require an explanation."

Instantly, it felt as though Sevan had been kicked in the chest. The idea of Lorelei running to another man to give her a child not only sickened him, it infuriated him. "You will not let any other man touch you. You are mine. I have spent six months loving you and I am not about to let you lie with another man."

The two men gasped and stared at him with wide eyes.

Lorelei shook her head. "Don't give him that look. He's not my mate. He can't be my mate."

One of the men moved behind Sevan and touched his upper right shoulder blade. "Look, Devi. He carries you on him."

"Huh?" he and Lorelei said.

Turning his head, Sevan strained to see what the man was pointing at. "How is my tattoo of a woman with a black panther painted on her leg lying cuddled with a lion a symbol of Lorelei?"

Lorelei lunged at him, twisting him around fast and making a noise that was a cross between a yelp and a cry. "Bollacks! Get the Chieftain now. Tell him that he'll need to perform a bond breaking ceremony immediately. Sevan cannot be permitted to stay on our planet any longer than necessary and I'm not about to allow him to remain bonded to me any longer than necessary."

"Bonded?" Sevan asked.

"Would you stop asking so many questions? I'm trying to fix this."

"Hey, lady, don't start yelling at me because I don't understand your lingo for soul mate haven here. I'm just trying to get by. You know, friendly alien relations."

Lorelei snorted. "Bloody hell, if I'm an alien what are you? Oh, I know. A lower life form."

"A lower life form? Is that why you keep saying human like it's a dirty word? Do you think you're better than us?" Sevan asked, his anger with her growing but somehow channeling into the need for sex. "I saw your little magick trick in the corridor Lorelei. You may be gifted but you aren't the only one with special qualities, honey."

"Are you trying to tell me something, Sevan?" Lorelei arched a brow. "I'm all ears. Are you ready to tell me why in my dreams I just knew something was different about you, that there was something more? When you bit me, it was with the teeth of a shifter, not a man. Yet, when you set foot on my planet I sense nothing more than human in you. How is that?"

"Because I told you once already, Lorelei. I am not full-blooded. I carry a small bit of lion DNA in me. I don't know how the hell I shifted in the dream. But I can tell you this. From the moment I entered your atmosphere the beast I carry in me has wanted out. It's wanted to destroy Christian for daring to touch you and it's wanted to fuck you as bad as I have. So you can check that holier than thou attitude at the door, sweetheart."

The men exchanged knowing looks and smiled. "It's good to see that you and your mate love one another."

Sevan stared at the men, unsure if he wanted to shoot them or hug them for bringing the love word up.

Lorelei shook her head, sending black tendrils cascading over her shoulders. "We are not mates and we are not in love. We only just met and he's leaving very shortly." She pushed past him fast, nearly knocking him over.

She's really fucking strong.

Rushing up behind her, Sevan turned her to face him and stared into her blue eyes. "I'm not going anywhere. Do you mean to tell me that by claiming you in the dream, I've claimed you in real life? Are we husband and wife?"

She let out a soft laugh. "All evidence is proving that theory though I personally think it's ridiculous. If you were able to successfully claim me in a dream why is it that I didn't end up with child? It's not like we didn't join enough. Bloody hell, I've lost track of the amount of times we spent the night banging away."

Walking into her, Sevan forced her against the hallway wall, pinning her in place so he could speak to her without fear of her running. He didn't have all the answers but he did know that he loved her. "I'll admit that I'm a little lost here. I don't have all that great knowledge of the dream plane things like you do. I do, however, know that you are in no way, shape or form allowing another man to touch you. I told you once already, you are mine, Lorelei. My woman. My love. My mate. And my wife, if we believe that what happened in our dreams is real. I believe, Lorelei. I fully believe that I took you in my arms, marked you while I offered you my seed, my essence, making you my mate. I'll do it again right now if it will make everyone feel better but you said it yourself, your markings began to fade six months ago. That is the exact time that the dreams started. I am your mate and you are mine. I'm the one who will handle what you need, not some muscle bound guy with hair like a girl. I am the man who will plant the seed deep within.... "As the words fell from his lips, Sevan's body tightened along with his stomach.

One look at Lorelei told him that she was as shocked by his declaration as he was. She shook her head. "Take it back, now!"

"It is too late, Devi. We have borne witness to the marks and the gods' sign but have also heard his vows to you. It is official."

"No, it is not. You can't count that. He's an outsider. A cocky one at that." She tossed her hands in the air. "There is no way that can count. He didn't know what he was doing."

"What did I do?" Sevan asked, concern still gripping his stomach.

"You stated before witnesses that you claim her with a bond in place." The man was so matter-of-fact about it that Sevan actually felt a little slow not getting it.

"Huh?"

Lorelei glared at him. "Tell them you didn't understand what you were doing and we can get this taken care of. I want to keep you for a husband like I want a gabaetion rash."

Sevan balked. "You would rather have a flesh eating rash devouring you than be my wife?"

The realization of what he'd just said hit him hard. Joy tore through him. "I'm your...? You're my...? We're...?"

"Married, yeah, now that you're up to speed can you take it back? I need to find Christian and...."

Sevan dropped his lips down on hers, rendering her silent as his tongue did what it wanted to do, memorize her mouth. He heard the sound of the exterior door closing and planted his palms on the wall along the sides of Lorelei's head. She tasted so sweet that it was intoxicating. The more she wiggled against him the stiffer his dick became.

"Sevan, please," she whispered, sliding her tongue over his lower lip. The small action told him how much she wanted what he wanted. If that was true they'd both be very happy very soon. The idea of waiting another moment to touch her, to take her was ludicrous.

Chuckling into her mouth, Sevan continued his invasion of her mouth, not caring who watched him do it. He inched his fingers down her arms and over her smooth stomach. Aching to be in her, he went for the top of her pants, no longer able to wait or take it slow. The tops of his fingers grazed the tiny thatch of black hair he knew she possessed and need

slammed throughout him. His pulse sped while his body tightened. "I need to be in you, Lorelei."

Instantly, her body began to heat up, so much so that Sevan had to take a step back. As soon as he opened his mouth to question her, some sort of power shot forth from her, hitting the wolf on the ground and lifting it high into the air. Sevan watched in awe as it burst into a ball of red fire before vanishing. He would have questioned her on it but he already knew she was beyond special. She was magnificent.

"There," she said, lowering her blue gaze and smiling with wanton wonderment. "Now we're alone."

"Mmm, have anything special in mind?"

Lorelei's tongue slid out and over her lower lip, teasing him to the point the beast within threatened to rise. Doing his best to hold it down, not liking the surge of power it seemed to now carry with it, Sevan took a step closer to her. He couldn't fight the desire. He didn't want to.

She smiled. "You should let me go, Sevan. Christian has understood that when the time was right he'd be the one to fill me with his seed and that we would have a child together. It doesn't matter what my feelings or his are. All that matters is that our kind be able to once again conceive children. We are a dying race, Sevan. Please."

He clenched his fists, doing his best to squelch the beast within. It had never been this strong or this close to the surface in his waking hours. "Lorelei, you are mine. And I don't share my things with anyone."

"I'm a thing?"

"You're my wife."

Shaking her head, she moved in even closer, running her hands over his bare chest. "Sevan, you can renounce it in front of witnesses and be free of me—of this place."

The idea of taking his claim back was absurd. "No. You are mine forever, Lorelei."

She bit her lower lip as tears welled in her eyes. "If I don't get to Christian soon the window of my fertility may close, Sevan. I can't let that happen and I sure in the hell cannot allow you to father a child with



me only to leave. In the end it will be Christian who raises the child so it should be he who fathers it," she said, whispering the last part so softly that Sevan knew that she didn't believe her own words. She wanted him but had been conditioned to believe that if the time came she should run to another.

Growling out, Sevan pulled at Lorelei's vest, freeing her ample breasts to him. He cupped one harder than he should but he didn't care. She needed to hear him. "Lorelei, I am not going anywhere. I've spent six months thinking I was going mad. Thinking I was in love with a dream. Now that I've found you, I'm never letting you go. If you decide that here is where you want to be then here is where I'll stay. No man but me will raise my child and trust me when I say it will be my child that grows in you."

"Sevan," she whispered, raking her fingernails over his skin, sending his cock into duress. It needed in her soon. "It's too deadly here for you."

"Do you want me to go? Do you want to push me out of your life?"

"No."

Exhaling, Sevan rolled her nipple between his thumb and first finger. "I'm not going anywhere, baby. When the ship is fixed Jordan can take it over."

"You'd say goodbye to your brother so easily?"

He shook his head. "It won't be easy but I can't leave my mate behind. I can't. Especially not since she'll be carrying my child in her very soon." Dipping his head down, he captured her nipple with his mouth and moaned.

\* \* \* \*

Stegian raked his nails over his desk, channeling the fury that burned inside him. The Janelle girl had managed to elude him yet again, this time finding her true mate. The moment he'd sensed the vessel enter the atmosphere he knew it had begun. Endless dreams of the Janelles mating, growing stronger in both strength and number as they mated one by one. Seven in all, he had never assumed he'd have so much grief over the only three who remained on the planet.

They were nothing more than women. Their brothers had been forced into exile long ago, leaving them defenseless. Well, all except for the

Chieftain and his brothers. Samson had taken some effort to sway but when he finally managed to find his weakness, Lorelei, he broke the man quickly. The nameless, faceless elders—the ones who managed to exist beyond his grasp had deemed Samson worthy of Lorelei's hand should her mate not show himself. No one held out much hope of finding their one true mate on Sargaidia. Its sister planet, Margaidia was more a vacation paradise, held under tight control by the Commission.

Having crashed aboard a Project Exorcism vessel over a hundred and fifty years ago, Stegian had reveled in the fact that the planet's natural resources began to immediately enhance his already superhuman qualities. No longer requiring daily feedings, Stegian could go for extended periods of time and not lose his strength or powers. Being both a vampire and a sorcerer had left him in need of replenishing his system often while on Earth.

The human officials who had come to an agreement with the traitorous heads of the supernatural committee never planned on an accident throwing their vessel off course and they never planned on how much stronger the supernaturals would be on account of it.

Sensing Lorelei's power riding the air, Stegian narrowed his eyes and sought to connect with her mentally again. He'd been doing it on and off for six months each time managing to stay a bit longer before she noticed he was there. In his mind he could see her mate, his blond hair and green eyes staring down at her as he caressed her body slowly.

The smell of arousal managed to transcend the distance between Stegian and Lorelei, allowing him to catch the scent of her damp pussy. Need slammed through him and his dick hardened instantly. She and her sister, the captain of the Shamenian guards had always made his cock thirst to be buried in them. Now, as he stayed linked to her, viewing the events in third person, Stegian couldn't help but reach down into his pants and stroke his rapidly growing erection.

"Yunoc," he called out, knowing his loyal servant would come immediately.

He heard him standing quietly behind him but didn't bother to turn around. "Bring me one of the Shamenian mixed females we have. I want one with black hair and an appetite for rough sex."

"Yes, Master."

Stegian concentrated on Lorelei again, mentally tracing the contours of her body, wishing it was he touching her now not that dreaded Commission Captain whom he'd tried desperately to block from her dreams with no success. The man slid his hand down the front of Lorelei's pants and cupped her mound. Stegian could almost taste the cream the smell was so great.

Warm hands moved over his arm and he knew the woman he'd sent Yunoc for had arrived. Looking up, he smiled as he found her wearing nothing but a collar. Being part wolf and part Shamenian left her an outcast in both worlds. Stegian knew she'd have been better off staying with her own kind but when he'd first spotted her, he had to have her. The female reminded him of Lorelei and Nina, making her a perfect bed partner when the mood struck him.

Taking hold of her waist, he pulled her before him, still sitting in his chair and still smelling Lorelei's cream. He stared into the female's well maintained black thatch between her thighs and snapped out at it, not biting but wanting to. Parting her folds, Stegian leaned forward and licked her, instantly picturing Lorelei's pussy before him. Not the woman there now. "Mmm, you taste sinfully delicious."

When Stegian watched the Captain before Lorelei drop to his knees, pull her pants down and mimic Stegian's actions he couldn't hide his joy. The man was sensing his presence and reacting to Stegian's lead.

Wanting to test the theory, Stegian pushed two fingers into the slut before him and began thrusting them into her with superhuman speed. The Captain followed suit. Still wanting to push it further to know for sure, Stegian stood fast, licked the cream from his fingers and immediately spun the woman around. Grabbing her hips, he bent her over exposing the globes of her ass to him.

He freed himself from the confines of his pants and fisted his cock. The Captain continued to do exactly as Stegian did. He rubbed the head of his penis over the female's wet core twice before grasping her hair and ramming himself to the hilt in her. She screamed out and tried to get away from him. Tightening his hold on her, he kept her in place. Slowly, her tight channel loosened for him and she began to rock back onto his dick.

"Do you like that, slut?" he asked, shocked to hear the Captain ask Lorelei the same question.

Lorelei nodded as best she could, moaning and arching her back, leaving Stegian drilling into the female before him, fucking his desires away and not caring how rough he was. The woman didn't seem to mind. She continued to cream on his shaft as he fucked her and began to knead her fingers into her thighs, panting as she went.

"Yes. Take it, slut. Take it."

He fucked her harder, bending her over more, exposing the pink rosette of her ass to him. The need to take it hit him hard. Knowing that he couldn't let Lorelei's mate spill his seed into her, Stegian pulled his cock free from the female's pussy and pressed it into her ass quickly, allowing her little to no time to prepare for it. She bucked against him, taking the full, massive length of him into her tight ass.

It felt too good to stop. It wasn't the woman from his never ending harem bent over before him in his mind. No. To Stegian it was Lorelei's ass he was in. He searched out and to his shock found the Captain still fucking her pussy, still thrusting into her. Each of them panted as they stay locked together. The second Stegian saw the Captain reaching around to tweak Lorelei's clit, he let his rage out.

"No! Obey me. Pull out and do not release your seed into her."

"Master?" the woman before him asked, sounding as though his dick was filling her to the point she bordered on pain.

"Speak only when spoken to." Unable to stop himself, Stegian continued to thrust into her, enjoying the feel of her tight passageway around his shaft.

"Pull out!"

The captain ignored his command. Infuriated, Stegian thrust harder, needing to find the ever elusive release he thought sure would come. As the smell of Lorelei hitting her peak hit him, Stegian gave into the need to ejaculate, instantly bathing the woman in his come. It was then he knew that the captain, Lorelei's true mate was filling her with his seed, fertilizing the egg that had come forth demanding his seed.

Raking his dagger-like finger nails down the female's back, Stegian smiled as she cried out. Pulling his dick free from her, he turned her quickly and bent her over his desktop. The blood that welled to the surface on her back called to him. He dropped his face down and lapped

it up slowly. Stegian's cock returned to a need of sex almost instantly as the blood of the woman filled his veins, breathing new life into him.

In mere seconds he had his cock shoved back into her ass as he bent down, licking her wounds. It was exactly what he liked—a fuck and a suck. As a vampire there was no greater high. Well, the Janelle sisters would certainly improve that.

Stegian focused on the female before him, breaking away from Lorelei just as she began to sense him. “I shall deal with you later. Know that I will not permit a child to be born from you.”

\* \* \* \*

Lorelei's head snapped up as she felt the presence of evil all around them. Holding tight to Sevan's thigh, she continued to feel him coming in spurts deep within her, fertilizing the egg that her power assured her was there. “Sevan?”

Running his hand over her low abdomen, Sevan sighed in her ear. “I'm sorry our first time was like this, Lorelei. I couldn't seem to stop myself. The need to be in you was unlike anything I've ever felt before.”

Every alarm bell in her went off. Stegian. It was his presence she'd sensed. “He touched your mind, Sevan.”

“Who touched my ... oh, gods. That's why I wanted to pull out in mid thrust and ram my cock into your....” “He stopped in mid-sentence.

“Into my what?”

Sevan hugged her tight to his chest. His cock was still in her, partially sated but there all the same. “I had the strongest urge to pull out and come in your ass.”

Lorelei nodded as she drew in a deep breath. “He didn't want you to release your semen into me. The last thing he wants is another generation of Janelles standing in his way of owning everyone on this planet.”

“It was hard to resist, Lorelei. All I could think about was missing our window of opportunity for a child together. I couldn't do it. I couldn't give that up. Not when you want it so bad. Hell, I want it too. I want a life with you. I want a family. There is no way in hell that some crazed lunatic with some half cocked gift of mind control is going to stop that.”

It hit Lorelei then. Sevan had stood up to Stegian without even knowing it. Somehow he'd managed to keep from falling completely under his spell. If he'd found a way then that meant the others might be able to as well. "You did it. You blocked him from taking full control."

"No. I didn't allow him to take my chances at a family with you, Lorelei. That's all I did."

He didn't understand. He couldn't. Sevan wasn't raised with the fear of Stegian in him. No. She understood that and she almost felt sorry that he couldn't appreciate what an accomplishment he'd achieved.

Opening her mouth to comment, Lorelei stopped when her stomach cramped. She took hold of it, cradled it tight and cried out as heat flared through it. Sevan's hand which still rested on her lower abdomen pulled her back into him more.

"Baby, what's wrong? Why are you so hot?"

Lorelei glanced down and watched her markings fading fast. "Oh gods, Sevan."

"What?" he asked, sounding as panicked as she felt.

"It worked."

"What worked?"

Placing her hand over his, she smiled. "We created life."

He held her so tight that Lorelei thought she might burst. The feel of Sevan's large arms wrapped around her and the sense that he was as happy if not happier than her made it all perfect. Granted, being bent over outside and fucked hard and fast wasn't how she envisioned their first meeting to be but in truth, this wasn't their first time together. Six month's worth of dreams had placed them in one another's arms more times than she could count.

Holding tight to her husband's hand, Lorelei let it all sink in. "You're here. You're real and you're here."

"And I'm not going anywhere, honey. I promise you that."

## Chapter Six

"Yeah, back at you, lady," Jordan bit out glaring at Nina as she stormed off in the other direction. Her tight little ass sashayed even though she struck him as a woman who would never do it on purpose. Naturally sexy and everything his cock could hope to dive into, the woman could bring him to his knees if she tried hard enough. Christian laughed and Jordan snarled. "What's so funny?"

"I have not seen Nina take a real interest in a member of the opposite sex ever."

"She's into women?" The thought, while exciting, worried Jordan. He'd already made a fool out of himself by opening his mouth and inserting his foot when he suggested that someone with breasts was hardly qualified to lead an army but the idea of Nina not even giving him a second thought because he had a penis scared him even more.

Christian laughed again. It seemed to be what he'd done most since they'd gone to assure themselves that the children were safe. "Jordan, she more than likes men. The problem is, Nina views them as disposable. She can bed one and move onto the next. She has unlimited access to the unmated males and they adore her."

He swallowed hard at the implication that Nina fucked her entire army. "She hasn't, um...?"

Christian pulled a box of tools down from the cargo bay container and arched a sandy blond brow. "If you are asking if Nina has pleased the entire legion of men under her command the answer is no. Even she needs to pace herself." The smirk on his face told Jordan he was kidding but that didn't stop the jealous streak that threatened to consume him.

"Have you been with her?"

"No."

Jordan kept a close eye on Christian, hoping to get to know him better. There was something about the man that screamed powerful yet he hadn't tried to use that on any of them yet. "Have you been with Lorelei?"

Christian stilled and Jordan knew the answer to his question. Christian had indeed been intimate with Lorelei. It would kill his brother to know that but if Jordan had to guess, Sevan already knew and didn't like it one

bit. "Lorelei and I have a unique relationship. It is difficult to explain to an outsider. Our customs and ways, while similar to that of humans, are not the same."

"Meaning you've not only fucked her, you've done it many times."

"She is to be my wife as decided by the elders and that is all I am willing to offer on the matter at the moment. Let us see to your ship. So far, the reports coming in from our FST department are bleak."

"Yeah, one of my Lt. Commanders gave me the abridged version of your Fleet Support Team's analysis. Our own system dialogistic matches and I have to agree it's not looking so good." As Jordan looked out at Alpha Brig Three, he shook his head and sighed. "The air compression chambers in all space pod docks have completely gone haywire. Our navigational system appears to be offline but we can't tell for sure due to our data analysis log's issues with staying active."

"Do you often pilot a vessel that should be in a salvage station?" Christian asked, his lip curling into a half smile.

If the man didn't fill the doorway and look as though he made a habit of breaking others in two, Jordan would have punched him just for the hell of it. It wasn't like he was a small guy in any way, shape or form but Christian had him beat. "No, I don't make a habit of that. The Alpha Brig Three is only four years old and that makes her a baby in the eyes of ship life. She's also top of the line and has passed all of her inspections with flying colors. It was weird. We were on our way to Margaidia and passed through a stream of stellar remains. Our fuel tank spontaneously cracked, leaking fuel out and into the gas from the remains and we cut the engines, unsure if a spark would ignite a massive explosion or not."

"Stellar remains? Where? We've had no supernovas in our region of the galaxy for thousands of years," Christian said, confirming what Jordan already believed.

"What would you say if I told you that it didn't feel right? The entire event felt different, like something was interfering with us, something big and...."

"Mystical?" Christian nodded. "It would explain much. It was written long ago that when the time came for the rise against evil that great warriors would fall from the sky and old ones we'd lost along the way would return. I did not believe this legend. Perhaps I was wrong."



"Warriors would fall from the sky?" Jordan wasn't sure he liked the sound of that.

Christian nodded. "Yes. Long before the others came to be it was said that demons populated us and that warriors would soon follow. Well, the demon part was accurate. But they have all but overrun our planet in the last one hundred and fifty years. Not all are demons and evil. In fact, it is the select minority that terrifies so many villages into states of panic, leaving them prejudice to any who contain the blood of the others. I find that rather ironic due to the fact that Shamenians and natives of Sargaidia have always possessed skills and gifts greater than humans."

"The others? Care to elaborate?"

"Don't bother going into detail with the likes of him. You will waste your breath and he will retain but a tiny bit of it all."

The sound of Nina's voice, while alluring and cock hardening made Jordan see red. "Woman, stop treating me as though a human is the lowest life form in the universe."

"Stop treating me as though a woman should be barefoot and in the kitchen and we will no longer buck horns, Vasil."

"It's Jordan and you know it."

Nina smiled and blinked her eyes innocently. "Right you are and my name is Nina not woman."

"Touché."

Grinning, the vixen pushed past him and put her hand on her slender hips, leaving his cock twitching madly in his pants. "Christian, it is clear we cannot have them up and operational at the current rate of repairs on their vessel. As adamant as I am that we not allow outsiders to stay on our world after suns set, it would appear we have little choice in the matter."

"I agree. Have sleeping quarters arranged for the entire crew. Give them free access to the village but allow no outside passes to be administered to them. I will not allow them roaming out of the boundaries and ending up food for Stegian's men."

Nina nodded and glanced over her shoulder. The second Jordan locked eyes with her his chest pounded. She smiled wickedly. "You can pretend

not to like me all you want, Vasil. I can smell your desire pouring off you."

"Yeah and I can smell your bitchiness, woman, so we're even." Jordan had never wanted to fuck a woman more and she knew it. Since the moment he'd stepped off the ship and watched her approach, his cock had been in a constant state of readiness.

Watching Nina in action only served to make it worse. The way she seemed to handle herself, no fear, no restraint, made his gut twist into a tight knot. Sure, Jordan was accused of the very same things when it came to issues of his own safety but that was different. He was a man, not the most beautiful creature in the entire universe. The need to protect her was almost overpowering.

Nina licked her lower lip. "Can I help you?"

"Huh?"

"You are staring at me."

"No, I'm not," Jordan said firmly but somehow still managing to sound like he was only ten years old.

Nina offered him a sly smile and shrugged. "Your eyes are locked on me and you aren't looking away. Correct me if I am wrong but is that not staring among your people?"

"Perhaps it is just called concentrating too hard where he comes from," Christian said, laughing softly under his breath.

Clearly not getting any help from Christian on the Nina front, Jordan narrowed his gaze. "I'm not staring—well, not that much anyways."

The second a smile poured over Nina's face Jordan couldn't help but grin. This woman, this compact, petite stick of dynamite had the power to break him with nothing more than a flash of her amusement. She also held the gift of being able to set his temper off faster than a Palertaire barge trader on a hot Exellion day.

## Chapter Seven

Sevan stared up at the electromagnetically charged village fencing system. "With the amount of panic that wells up at the very mention of this Stegian's name and from the sight of what lengths they go to in order to keep him out, I'm beginning to think he's fifty feet tall."

"At least," Jordan said, arching a brow as he tossed a rock towards the fence. It bounced back hard and fast, nearly taking Jordan's head with it as it went. Nina appeared behind him and caught it with one hand so effortlessly that both Sevan and Jordan's jaws dropped.

She smiled. "Careful, boys, it would be most unpleasant to find you decapitated by your own hands."

"See," Jordan adjusted his navy blue, off-duty, shirt collar, "told you she cared."

Nina laughed. "If caring means I will have to spend my evening gathering outsiders' heads off the ground before a child can wake to find them, then yes, I do care."

Unable to hold his laughter in, Sevan let it loose as he watched his brother do his best to play off the obvious blow to his ego. Nina walked up to them slowly, eyeing Sevan in a way that left him unsure if she was about to turn on him as well.

"You never made it to the quarters that were arranged for you, Captain."

"Uh," he murmured, drawing a blank instead of an explanation. Somehow, he didn't think she'd want to hear that he'd spent the night bunked with Lorelei, holding her in his arms and making love to her again and again as he had in his dreams.

"Want to tell us about this Stegian guy?"

"Not particularly." Her lack of emotion took him by surprise.

Sevan shifted awkwardly at first before deciding he had a right to know. "Excuse me but after the report I received about someone sabotaging repair efforts on my ship and the encounter with the were creature yesterday, I think circumstances warrant us being informed about the situation, in full."

Nina drew in her lower lip, an action he'd seen Lorelei do in many dreams. "I see. So, I take it that you believe it was one of our people that tampered with your vessel?"

"I can assure you that it wasn't one of my own." As Sevan said it, he wasn't sure he believed it. If what they had told him was correct and Stegian really did have the power to control men's minds then it could very well have been one of his own. The thought left him slightly chilled.

Nina merely smiled, not appearing offended in any way by his comment. "Captain, how well do you know your people's history?"

Jordan snickered and Sevan shot him a nasty look. He shut-up. "Well enough. Why?"

"Do you know of Project Exorcism?" she asked, arching a dark brow as she ran her fingers over a set of blue markings on her forearm. For a split second, Sevan was positive that they began to glow. It was gone so fast that he wasn't positive it was his mind playing tricks on him or not.

Jordan cleared his throat. "What does Earth's removal of supernatural beings have to do with Stegian? Of all the vessels sent out containing paranormal payloads, only one survived."

A horrible thought occurred to Sevan. He gasped, not wanting to believe it to be true. "No, brother. Only one made it to the predetermined destination. The rest were presumed lost—destroyed by the meteoroid shower."

Nina nodded. "I see that you're a fast thinker, Captain."

"Are you telling us that Stegian escaped from one of the vessels before it was torn apart?" Jordan asked, stealing the question from Sevan's lips.

"No," she let out a soft laugh, "no escape pods were necessary. The vessel made an unauthorized, emergency landing just outside of our village almost a hundred and fifty years ago."

"Nina."

Sevan looked behind him to find Christian standing there, his blond hair tied back at the base of his neck and wearing only a pair of dark brown pants. He locked gazes with Nina and the look he gave her was anything

but friendly. "The man you assigned to do morning systems checks has not completed them or reported in. I sent Pheebes to look into the matter."

"Hey, Chieftain," Sevan said, not caring how sarcastic he came across. "How's your day so far? Anything evil take your mind over and try to make you hurt my wife?"

Nina and Christian both stared at him with wide eyes. It was Nina who finally spoke. "Your wife?"

Jordan tipped his head, looking past Nina and smiled as he locked eyes with Sevan. "Smooth way to let them know."

"Let us know what?" Christian asked, his already deep voice suddenly sounding even lower.

"Jacquelyn!"

Sevan glanced around and did his best to figure out what was going on. They'd all mentioned Jacquelyn several times since he'd arrived but he had yet to meet her. In an instant, a young girl, no more than twelve appeared before him. She was so close that part of her should have brushed up against him or even pushed him back. It didn't. No. The girl before him, with a head of long black hair and bright blue eyes, seemed to go through him. "What the...?"

She giggled. "It's nice to finally meet you, Brother-in-law."

"Brother-in-law?" Christian asked. "So, it is true?"

The young girl nodded. "Yes. The ritual was completed yesterday. The prophecy is coming true, Christian."

"Umm, anyone want to tell me why my hand is going through her?"

"Her name is Jacquelyn." Nina took a small step forward. "She is the youngest of the Janelles."

"She's your sister?" Jordan asked, shaking his head in disbelief.

Nina snorted. "While sharing your mother's womb did you allow the Captain to soak up all of the fluids necessary for natural thought?"

"No. Why?"

Sevan couldn't help but laugh. "Jordan, I think she was making a joke."

"Oh, I knew that."

Jacquelyn giggled again, this time disappearing quickly. Sevan felt around the spot she'd been in, finding nothing to prove anyone at all had been there.

"The place is haunted," Jordan said, softly.

"No, not haunted. Come quickly I'll show you to Jacquelyn," Nina said, appearing less than pleased with the entire arrangement. She quickened her pace and they were forced into a slight jog to keep up with her.

They followed, but didn't say a word. Long, gray corridors began to run into one another, leaving Sevan unsure where one stopped and another began. For a brief moment he was positive that they'd walked in circles but when Nina stopped outside of a large red door, she looked back at him nervously. "This, gentlemen is my sister, Jacquelyn."

Nina put her hand on the door panel. It slid open quickly. Sevan stopped and grabbed hold of the wall for support when he saw the mass of tubes, and medical equipment hooked into the tiny frame on the bed. It was barely recognizable as human. Had he not seen the tiny girl standing before him only moments earlier he would not have associated such a beautiful, radiant young child with what lay before him.

"What ... what happened to her?" Sevan asked, moving forward slowly and reaching out to touch the white sheet that covered her tiny body. The compulsion to prove that it wasn't the young girl was great. The need to know that Lorelei hadn't suffered a blow as big as what lay in the bed was greater. It was her baby sister there. The thought of that ripped at Sevan's gut.

Nina touched his hand and shook her head. "She says that it hurts when people touch her."

Puzzled, he shook his head. "How did she project her image outside?"

Nina glanced around at the machines that filled the room. "Christian built this all after we found her ... umm ... after the incident. Jacquelyn came to him first, in a vision. He is our healer, our Chieftain. With that position comes the power of the shamans and the strength of our greatest warriors. He was able to sense her near him. He knew what must be done. Her

body may be useless and comatose, but her mind is very active, Captain. Of this, I am sure."

Sevan had a hard time believing that the large man who Nina had accused of attacking Lorelei could build such a thing, but it was clear by the way Christian stared at the child in the bed that his love for her was great. Had Sevan misjudged him? Had he let petty jealousy blind him to who Christian truly was?

Not wanting to think too hard about the answers, Sevan focused on the situation. Panel upon panel of computers lined the walls, each one seeming to be activated. A few screens were littered about, almost appearing random in the room but as he watched the code moved over them, he knew they were there for a reason.

He heard a giggle and turned to look at the door. Jacquelyn's apparition stood there grinning at him. Christian walked over to her and put out his arms. She ran into them and for a moment, Sevan could have sworn that she was real.

"How?"

"Christian loves me and he made it so I can still run around and play, when I want to, and...."

"Get into mischief," Christian said, pulling her head against his chest.

"I wish things could have been different, Christian. I saw Samson again today. He is well ... or as well as he can be now."

Christian stiffened at this statement, but forced a smile to his face. "Any news of pending attacks?"

"Yes, I overheard some of the others, ones that wandered near the outer edges of our village." Jacquelyn glanced at Sevan. "They spoke of the prophecy and the warriors from the sky that would come to aid in the fight against evil. Stegian tells them that the prophecy is a lie but they aren't so sure."

Christian exhaled loudly as he set Jacquelyn down to stand on her own. "I see. What else did they say?"

"Nothing," she said quickly.

Nina ran a hand over the markings on her left forearm again. "Jacquelyn."

Jacquelyn's face scrunched up and it was easy to see the resemblance to her sisters. "I hate that you can sense a lie, Nina."

"Yes, I know. Now, what else did they say?"

The young girl glanced nervously towards Christian. "They said that they know of Lorelei's mate coming from the vessel and that Stegian tried to control his mind fully but failed." She pointed at Jordan. "They know of you as well and believe you to be a great threat. Their instructions had been to kill you on sight and capture Sevan if at all possible. Stegian no longer wishes Lorelei dead either."

"What?" Christian asked, putting his hand on Jacquelyn's tiny shoulder.

"He wishes her brought to him alive so that he may have his hags drain the life force of the child she now carries. Stegian refuses to acknowledge that the prophecy is true, yet he is going out of his way to assure that the child of light be brought to him immediately."

Christian stepped back quickly, clenched his fists and tipped his head back. "Lorelei is with child?"

Oh, shit. It's about to get ugly in here.

Sevan took a fighting stance, ready and willing to fight Christian if need be. Much to his surprise the attack didn't come from Christian. It came from Nina. She kicked out fast, catching him in the gut, sending him tumbling back into a wall of computers. He struck it hard and then hit the ground. He clutched his stomach and fought for breath.

Nina came at him fast, her eyes burning with a fury he'd never seen a woman hold before. "How dare you show up here out of nowhere and use my sister? You're nothing but an outsider, an offworlder who doesn't belong here and cannot wait to be rid of us."

Sevan refused to fight back. There was no way in hell he was going to strike Lorelei's sister. She came at him again and Jordan stepped in front of her, blocking her path. "Enough."

A slow smile crept over her face as she swept her arm out. The next thing Sevan knew, Jordan was airborne. He hit the floor with a thud and moaned. Christian appeared and wrapped his arms around Nina. He lifted



her off the ground as he rolled his eyes. "Nina, control yourself. Do you not see what has happened?"

She snarled. "All I see is a fast talker who couldn't even wait an entire day before sinking his cock into my sister. He used her, Christian, and now she will bear his child and spend her life protecting it from Stegian and his people while this ... this," she spat at him, "outsider goes back to his Commission life. It is my sister who will give her life for his need to sate his sexual appetite. You were to be her mate, Christian."

Christian shook his head. "No, Nina. I was not originally chosen. Samson was and I think we learned a hard lesson about pre-selecting mates from that, do you not agree?"

"Samson?" Jordan asked, rubbing his head.

Jacquelyn moved in close to him and touched his forehead lightly. A spark of light emanated from her hand and Jordan's eyes widened. "Thanks."

She smiled. "You're welcome. And to answer your question...."

Nina snarled again. "Tell them no more. They are leaving. I do not care if their ship is airworthy or not."

Jacquelyn giggled. "I never understood why Christian mumbles about the Janelle girls' tempers until now. He is right. You are the worst of the lot of us."

Jordan chuckled, earning a rather threatening look from Nina in the process. "I am not the worst of us all. Lorelei is."

Sevan got to his feet slowly, a bit achy and bruised. The woman packed a hell of a kick, that much was for sure. "Speaking of Lorelei, does she normally spend this long getting ready for her day?"

All eyes fell upon him. Nina's expression went from livid to concerned. "What do you mean?"

"She woke me and told me that she was going to get cleaned up and stop in to let Christian know that we were spending the day together. She mentioned wanting to show me the temples of Shamenia."

Christian ran quickly towards the panel at the far end of the room. He touched the pad and keyed in a set of numbers. "Attention, this is the Chieftain, all personnel report to your posts—the High Priestess is missing. I repeat. The Devi is missing."

High Priestess?

Jacquelyn nodded. "Yes, brother-in-law, Lorelei is a high priestess, a Devi as the villagers call her. She is capable of great things. Yet, her abilities make her vulnerable to Stegian."

"You don't talk like a child," Jordan said, getting to his feet.

She smiled. "Because I am not really a child. My mind has been free to wander the computer systems since the day of my attack. Christian built the system to project the image of me as I was then. It has been many years since then. If I were still walking among you, I would be approaching my eighteenth birthday."

"Still, you sound even older than that at times but young at others." Jordan reached out and touched her tentatively.

She winked. "It's a programming flaw that Christian is trying to overcome. He is a genius so he'll have it figured out in no time. I think, one day, he'll be able to build me a new body, one that will let me run and be free to roam further than the outer limits of our village."

Christian moved past Jordan and headed straight for Sevan. "Lorelei never made it to meet me this morning. We need to split up into teams to search for her. I'm unable to get a lock on her location." He looked back at Jacquelyn. "Run a scan of the village. She'll be easy to find if you search for new life forms. The child within her will trigger that."

A sick feeling crept over Sevan. "Wait, are you thinking that this Stegian guy got his hands on her?"

Nina shook her head. "Not him personally, unless he's found a way to travel about during suns up. He's a vampire and a sorcerer. Your people feared him so much so that legend tells he arrived in chains and that it was the other supernaturals aboard the vessel that imprisoned him."

Jacquelyn closed her eyes and put her hand out, appearing to scan thin air. She squinted and then gasped. "No."

"No, what?" Nina asked.

"I'm picking up residual blood spots near the fourth gate to the outer limits. My sensors indicate it is Lorelei's blood. If that's true then she is badly injured."

Sevan charged toward the door only to find Christian grabbing hold of him. "Let go of me. I'm going to get my wife."

"We are all going to get her. Trust me when I say it will take the entire group to ensure we get to her."

"What if that guy fucks with your head again? Huh?" Sevan needed to lash out at someone. Christian was the closest target. He shoved hard, breaking the man's hold on him. The beast within roared dangerously close to the surface. It felt as though it might actually break free. Unsure if he could really control it, Sevan looked to his brother with wide eyes. "If something goes wrong and I shift, don't let me hurt anyone."

"If you shift?" Nina asked. "You mean you are not straight humans?"

"No," Jacquelyn answered for him. "They both carry the gene of a lion within them. It was a recessive trait, one that had been thinned to the point of barely registering. That's why my sensors didn't pick it up when their ship entered our atmosphere."

"Then how are you sensing it now?" Nina asked.

Christian touched Sevan's shoulder and squeezed it gently. "Because the prophecy is true. The warriors that will help in the fight have been summoned to what was meant to be their home—they've come to grow into their full power and potential."

"Will we shift fully?"

"I would assume that in time you will. And I share your concern about not knowing if you will be able to control yourself the first time out." Christian narrowed his gaze on Nina. "Gather your men. Have them each cover an area and report to one another on their progress. Also be sure that each team is equipped with tranquilizers, should Lorelei's husband and the father of your future niece or nephew lose control and shift, they are to shoot him with them and get him back to the compound. He can be put in a holding chamber until morning."

Nina shook her head. "He'll never stand for that."

Sevan's nostrils flared. "Listen, lady. I don't know or care what your problem with me is but I can tell you this. I am not now, nor am I ever leaving Lorelei or our child. She is my wife and I love her more than life itself. If I become a threat to her you have my permission to shoot me in the forehead with a silver bullet."

"He means it," Jordan said, backing him up.

Nina smiled. "Good to know."

## Chapter Eight

Lorelei lifted her head slightly and tried to make sense of where she was. The minute her gaze fell upon the bladed torture chair she knew right away—she was within Stegian's compound, or castle as he so often referred to it. In its hundred and fifty years it had played home to countless murders and torturous acts. In fact, only six months prior Lorelei had found herself in a similar room, only Christian had been strapped to the torture chair while Stegian fought for control of his mind.

"There is my Lorelei," a deep, familiar voice said. "I didn't think you'd wake yet today."

Lorelei did her best to sit up but her entire body ached and lying on the cold stone floor hadn't helped that any. "Samson?"

"Yes," he said, stepping over her body.

She stared at his shiny black boots and did her best to focus on them, not him. The pain in her chest wasn't from a wound but from the knowledge that the man before her had owned her heart at one point in her life but was now a puppet for evil.

"Why do you not look at me, Lorelei? Have you not missed your chosen mate?"

"You gave that right up when you.... "There was no way she could bring herself to say it.

Samson laughed, sounding so very much like his brother, Christian, that Lorelei forced her guard up, afraid she'd trust or believe him. "Are you still upset about our last meeting, Lorelei?"

He bent down and for the first time in six months, Lorelei looked into the face of the man she had mistakenly trusted with her life. While Samson had Christian's same long blond hair and muscle bound body, he had a face that had often left him being razed for being as smooth as a baby's bottom. It had also been one of the many things she'd loved about him. Sadly enough, his innocent good boy looks were the reason she'd fallen into Stegian's trap six months earlier.

Samson ran his cool hand over her arm and tipped his head. "Your markings are gone. Why?"

He doesn't know?

He jerked his hand away as if she'd burned him. "He has done it, hasn't he? My brother has claimed you and planted his seed deep within you." Samson stood quickly. Sharp, dagger-like finger nails shot out as his incisors lengthened before her eyes, leaving fangs in place of his normal teeth. "Tell me, does he fuck you better than I did?"

Lorelei knew better than to answer. The thing that stood before her was no longer a Shamenian royal, it was a monster—a vessel for pure evil. Somehow Stegian had not only managed to break Samson mentally, he'd converted him physically as well. Samson now possessed his powers as a Shamenian and those of a vampire. If that wasn't bad enough, his sire had been none other than Stegian himself.

Where once there had been emerald green eyes, there now lay black pools of hate focused solely on Lorelei. She shifted a bit and cried out as the open gash on her upper right thigh pulled slightly.

Samson smiled, looking every bit as evil as she knew he could be. "So sorry about that leg, Lorelei. My men tell me it was necessary, that you tried to fight them all single-handedly. Is this true?"

Narrowing her gaze, Lorelei let it go hard. "I won't let you hurt Christian again."

"Ah," Samson tipped his head back and laughed, "It is so like you to be more concerned about others than yourself. What if I told you that my master has a new set of targets in mind?"

Sevan.

Lorelei?

The sound of Sevan's voice in her head sent a surge of hope through her. Doing her best to hide her joy, Lorelei continued to stare at Samson with a hard look.

Lorelei, baby, where are you? We're all looking for you. Jacquelyn says you're injured and it's bad.

It's just my leg. I'll be fine.

Sevan's worry was so great that Lorelei actually felt it through the mental link they'd managed to forge. True mates did that. Powerful true mates could do that and so much more.

The air around her grew heavy with the smell of stagnant water. For a moment, the scent of death seemed to coat her tongue, bringing her dangerously close to vomiting. She closed her eyes and did her best to control herself.

"Hag, what business have you here?" Samson asked.

Hag? Stegian was rumored to have a set of hags at his disposal. It was rumored that they were just as evil as he was. No Shamenian had ever lived to tell if the rumor was true or not. Now, Lorelei knew it was.

Think. How can I defeat a hag?

"The master has sent me to drain the child's life force. His power can be harnessed and used to fight the rest of the group," a shaky, old voice said.

Lorelei didn't open her eyes. Instead, she did her best to clear her mind of worry, of fear and most of all of hate. A pure mind was the only answer. If the hag fed off power, energy and emotion, Lorelei needed to be a blank slate.

Concentrating, the things around her seemed to amplify. The cold, hard stone floor now seemed to have a distinctly musty order. She'd smelled something similar as a child. The lagoons near the edge of the red sea were known to emit odd odors dependent upon the way the winds blew. Stegian's castle wasn't near the lagoons.

What was going on?

Opening her eyes, Lorelei found herself surrounded by overgrown foliage in shades of red, green and yellow. The red leaves, so long as they weren't attached to a tree with a sage green trunk were safe. If they were and she was somehow nestled in a patch of poisonous ollenna trees then she wasn't much better off than she'd been in Stegian's dungeon. It was still a mystery how she'd even ended up outside to begin with. Could her own, inborn powers have kicked in and removed her from harm's way or had it been the baby?

Concern for the safety of the child she now carried kicked in and Lorelei struggled to sit up. Pain rippled through her upper leg, causing her to cry out. The slightest rustling in the bushes behind her told her she wasn't alone. "Who's there?"

"Me," Jacquelyn said, appearing next to her quickly. The young girl put her hand out and covered the wound on Lorelei's leg. "This is deep and it's infected."

"I'll heal."

Jacquelyn's penetrating gaze suggested otherwise. "I'm picking up traces of ollenna poison. You might have cut yourself on one of their razor sharp thorns when struggling or...."

"Or they could have deliberately put it in my wound." Lorelei bit back tears as she held her cry of pain in as well. "Bloody hell, Jacquelyn, I've not the strength to heal myself of something that major right now and I can't possibly walk back to the compound."

Jacquelyn nodded. "I know. I've been trying to reach Sevan and the rest of them but Stegian is going out of his way to jam technology. He knew we'd come looking and he knew they'd need my help."

"Yeah, but did he know I'd end up out here instead of locked in a torture chamber with Samson?"

"Did he hurt you again?"

Lorelei snorted. "No, but a hag came into the room with the intent of draining the baby's life force."

"How did you end up here?" Jacquelyn asked. "You just appeared out of nowhere and my sensors instantly picked you up."

"That, I don't know."

\* \* \* \*

"What do you mean she simply vanished?" Stegian asked, his jaw tight and his gaze hard. The urge to kill something was great. All that stood before him was one of the hags and Samson.

Samson shook his head, still appearing shocked by the entire affair. "Master, she simply closed her eyes and vanished."

"She came into her full powers," the hag said, looking back at him with milky-white eyes.

To his knowledge, the hags were all blind but somehow, they managed to see. The one before him smiled, revealing a mouth full of missing teeth. "It is the third eye, master."

"And did this third eye prove useful when the prisoner was escaping?"

Her already pale, light green skin seemed to lighten even more. Stegian couldn't help but pride himself on the fear he could instill in others. "I await an answer."

"N-o," she said, shakily.

"I see." Stegian took a step forward. "Would you please enlighten me as to why I should keep you around? Samson fights on the front lines, killing Shamenians and Tegmen. What is it you and your sisters provide?"

The hag tossed her head back and shrieked as Stegian thrust his power out and through her ragged body. Her skin began to sink in on itself as he drained her body of its power.

The cell door blew open and the other two hags appeared. Stegian smiled, licking a fang as he did. They stopped instantly. "Master, we have located the Janelle woman. She lies near the lagoons. An energy force is with her. We believe it to be both natural and unnatural."

"Meaning?" He released his hold on the hag for a moment to hear the others out.



"It means that the woman is somehow emitting extremely high levels of energy and that something else, we do not understand what, is aiding her."

"The prophecy," Samson whispered. "It's coming true."

There was a time when Stegian dismissed theories containing ancient prophecies. That was until he held the scrolls in which they were written and had a vision so clear that it did the unthinkable—it terrified him.

"I shall go to the lagoons, Master," Samson said.

"Take several others with you." Stegian stared at the converted Shamenian. "Do not think yourself better than an offworlder."

## Chapter Nine

"Jordan, do you read?" Sevan repeated into his headset. "Damn thing isn't working."

"It's not your equipment, it's the others. They can jam electronics. That's why Jacquelyn could only reach so far to find Lorelei. They make it almost impossible for her signal to come through. Every now and then she gets the best of them, but it doesn't happen too often," Nina said, her back to him.

"Can I ask you something?"

"You want to know who the others are," Nina said, stopping on the worn path. "You don't seem to believe what Christian and I have already told you."

"Yeah."

"We spoke the truth, Captain. The others are your world's nightmare creatures. The ones you gathered up and shipped away. We are not lying when we say that they are a result of Project Exorcism."

Sevan thought back and his eyes bulged as he thought back to all he knew about Project Exorcism. It had been called that due to the nature of the cargo being gathered and shipped out—vampires, werewolves, witches, anything that wasn't human was either forced into hiding, killed, or placed on containment ships.

The deal had been struck with the paranormal leaders, allowing them to pick the planet they would relocate to. They were given the choice of five, but only allowed to choose one. Five ships were loaded to capacity, only one arrived at the destination. The other ships were thought to have perished in the meteorite shower that occurred shortly after take off. No one had heard from them since they'd departed all those years ago, each carrying nearly a hundred military personnel, several top-notch scientists and doctors, along with several thousand supernatural creatures.

"How many of them survived?"

Nina laughed. "I couldn't honestly tell you. It was our grandparents who were directly involved in the great coming." She took a deep breath before continuing. "From the stories and the records, the crash happened at dusk. From all accounts, the human crew had come under attack from a select number of supernaturals who were not pleased with the idea of being cargo sent out into space. I know that many lost their lives directly after the crash, but some were spared by the intervention of the natives that were here along with the aid of those supernaturals not believing death should come to all humans."

She slowed her pace a bit and glanced back at him. "Christian's family was the head family, similar to a royal family. The head of the supernatural rebellion overthrew them almost immediately. That was no small feat. The people, my people, the Shamenians, who have lived on this planet since the dawn of time are not as normal as the humans who'd come here with the ship. We have abilities that supersede your kind. I believe, as do many of our scientists, that we were all one once, long ago, but that we separated somehow, spreading out over six different galaxies. I also believe that the environments we inhabited pre-determined our evolution from there. This would explain why by all outward appearances we are the same as the humans.

"I believe in many ways we are similar to," she seemed to search for the right words, "the magical ones. I'm sorry I do not know your history as well as I should. Lorelei is better at this than I am. We were all educated in your ways and customs growing up. There are still a select few pure humans here, but almost all are forced to live within the safety of the compound walls for fear of being slaughtered by the others."

"Not all of the others are evil. Many have villages, children, education facilities, the works, set up throughout these lands, but even those places are not safe for straight humans. The others have taken to attacking their own kind if they believe them to be sympathizers with the day creatures.

That's what they call us, you know. They can't very well call us human. We're not all the same, so they came up with that. Though, Stegian, the leader of one of the largest packs of the others refers to us as Shamenians. Why he seems to be the only one who understands is not a question I require an answer to."

"I get the sense that you're holding back on me," Sevan said, watching Nina carefully.

"I am. The Janelles carry the gene of a werepanther in us. Our grandmother fell in love with one of the werepanthers upon their arrival and together they had a child, our father. My grandfather was killed by his own kind for loving a local, a day creature. My grandmother was forced to marry her original chosen mate, and he aided in the raising of my father. This was much to the dislike of the community, but necessary all the same. My grandmother's second husband was the only grandfather we knew. He treated us well enough while he was alive. Though I do not think he liked my father much."

"Where's your father now?"

"Dead."

"I'm sorry."

Nina stopped walking and gave him a serious look. "Don't be. Lorelei killed him and I helped her."

"Why the hell would you kill your own father?"

"You've seen Jacquelyn."

The realization of what she was saying sunk in and he felt sick to his stomach. Heat flared through him and he had to stop a moment to keep from vomiting. "What kind of sick bastard does that to his own daughter?"

"The kind that is being controlled by Stegian while in full shifted form."

"Nina?" A small voice called out from the darkness.

Nina froze and Sevan followed suit. She tipped her head to the side and seemed to sniff the air.

"Nina?" The voice spoke again. It sounded a hell of a lot like Lorelei to him so he started in the direction the voice was coming from.

"No," Nina said, slamming her hand back into his chest. The wind was knocked out of him and he was left coughing to regain control of himself. She packed a hell of a punch, that much was clear.

"Stegian, has used tricks to lure us into traps before and he's famous for mimicking our voices. It's how he lured Jacquelyn away so easily. He used my voice to call her to him and then he...."

"Nina?" The voice was there again, this time weaker sounding than before. There was a shuffle in the brush off to their left and they swung around with weapons drawn.

"To hell with this," Sevan said, pushing past Nina and rushing towards the sound of Lorelei's voice. When he broke through the dense brush, he found her lying on the ground, her leg covered in blood, her face pale and her eyes locked on him.

She blinked. "Sevan?"

His heart slammed in his chest as the beast within him fought to be free. His skin tingled and his neck tightened. That was his wife lying there, hurt and scared. Yet, he was too afraid to go to her and touch her.

Nina pushed past him and he snarled, sounding so much like an animal that it shocked even him. She stilled and began backing slowly towards Lorelei. As she reached for her side, Sevan knew what she was about to do—shoot him with a tranquilizer.

Lorelei's eyes widened. "No, Nina, don't!"

"Sevan knows that he can't control the beast his first shift out, sister."

As much as he hated to admit it, it was true. Hot, searing pain tore through his hands and he watched as claws erected from them. Shaking his head, Sevan couldn't comprehend all that was happening. His entire life he'd lived with the knowledge that somewhere deep within him lay a lion. A beast with no remorse and little concern for anything beyond itself. Now, as it began to take shape it was almost too much for him to comprehend.

A sharp pinprick hit his neck and he knew then that Nina had decided to shoot him with the tranquilizer. It was then that he also realized they were not alone. Darkness swallowed him before he could shout out a warning.

\* \* \* \*

Lorelei watched in horror as her own sister shot Sevan. "Why?"

Nina glanced down at her and offered a small smile. "Lorelei, he agreed ahead of time. He told me to shoot him between the eyes if needed. At least I used a tranquilizer and not a real bullet. Christian and Jordan will be along soon. They'll carry...."

Something was horribly wrong. The feeling of evil seemed to close in on them. Lorelei struggled to her feet, grabbing hold of Nina's arm for help. "They've found me."

"I know." Nina glanced towards Sevan's lifeless body, looking as though she regretted her decision of knocking him out.

The smell of a werewolf and something else, something familiar, threatening and close. Lorelei drew in a sharp breath. "Samson."

Nina lunged for Sevan and Lorelei grabbed hold of her, afraid that she was going to try to finish what she started. "No."

"Let go! He can't defend himself."

"Oh, I thought...." "She stopped not wanting to accuse her own flesh and blood of trying something so heinous."

"Lorelei," Nina said, softly. "Do you love Sevan?"

"Yes."

"He says that he won't leave, Lorelei. That he'll stay and stand by his family's side."

Lorelei held tight to her sister as she drew on the power of the earth, the Shamenian spirits of long ago and of the werepanther within her. Power surged through her veins, harder and faster than it ever had before. Her breathing quickened and her heart raced. "By gods, I think the baby is powerful as well."

Nina nodded. "Of course, she's a Janelle."

"She?"

"Just being hopeful. We have enough boys in the family."

Not wanting to think of her brothers that had been forced off the planet long ago, Lorelei simply smiled, feeling invigorated and up to the task of fighting even the greatest of Stegian's warriors. Even if that meant fighting the man she used to love.

A dark mass leaped out from the tree line and something swooshed past them quickly. The moment Lorelei saw the silver dipped arrow sticking out of a now dead werecougar's chest, she knew Christian and back-up had arrived.

Nina wasted no time. She let her claws erect and her eyes swirl to light blue. She took off, running straight ahead, clearly sensing something. Before Lorelei could comment, Jordan appeared next to her.

He glanced at Sevan and his brow furrowed. "He's not...."

"No," Lorelei said quickly. "He's just sedated. He started to shift and Nina shot him with a tranquilizer gun."

"In the middle of a battle? Is the woman mad?" He put his hand through his hair and then gritted his teeth. "Of course she is."

"In her defense, she shot him before the enemy arrived."

He tossed his hands in the air. "Well then, that makes it all better." He looked around frantically. "Where the hell did she go? Is she trying to get herself killed?"

A blur moved at them fast. In a flash, a fully shifted weretiger had its teeth sunk deep into Jordan's arm. Fearing that Jordan would lose his arm if she didn't act quickly, Lorelei let the power that had been building within her loose. It slammed into Jordan and then his attacker.

Both men went to the ground fast. Lorelei held her breath, fearing she'd killed Jordan by accident. She reached for him, hoping he still had a pulse. Something dropped down on her, smashing her body to the ground. Crying out wasn't an option. Whatever was on her had knocked the wind out her.

"That was bad, Lorelei, running out before we were finished," Samson said, pressing his body against hers.

"Get off of her!"

The sound of Christian's voice should have been music to her ears but not now. Not when Samson was so close. The last time they'd been face to face, Christian almost lost his battle to remain on the side of good.

"Ah, if it isn't my baby brother." Samson pinned her even harder. "Tell me, do you think you are finally strong enough to defeat me?"

"Not alone but together with my new friend, I think we will manage just fine," Christian said.

New friend?

Something growled, its voice deep, making the ground around her vibrate. That wasn't a panther. No. That was a lion. "Sevan!"

Instantly, Samson was thrust clear of her body. As Lorelei went to roll over the pain in her leg reached new levels causing her to bite her lip as tears dripped down her cheeks.

A ringing started in her ears and a light tingling sensation surrounded her. "Sleep, Lorelei. Sleep. All will end well here. I promise. I will watch over them all."

The soothing sound of Jacquelyn's voice coaxed her into a relaxed state allowing much needed rest to occur.

## Chapter Ten

"Sevan, I can't rest if you keep doing that."

Running his hand over his wife's slightly swollen belly, Sevan tried to imagine what their child looked like within her. Hopefully, it would come out with Lorelei's looks and his temper. With her quick temper Sevan would never survive living in a house with two of them. "Mmm, I can't help it, Lorelei. I thought I'd lost you."

"I have been out of the infirmary for over a month now."

"Yes but you were in it for over a month too," he said, not letting her forget how close to death she'd come. "Losing that much blood and using that much power almost did you in, baby. I can't close my eyes without thinking about it."

She snickered, obviously not taking him very seriously. "Try watching your brother shift back and forth between a tiger and a lion. That should give you something else to focus on."

"No thanks. I can hear Nina and Jordan arguing from across the village about it. She still thinks both are inferior to the panther."

"Aren't they?" she asked, smoothing her hand over his naked thigh.

Instantly, his cock jerked to life, wanting to be buried deep within her again. He nudged her with it, doing his best to ease it between her ass cheeks without having to release his embrace.

Lorelei moved slightly, allowing him easier access to her. "Hmm, is someone horny again?"

"I can't get enough of you or this place." Sevan took a deep breath in. "This feels like home and I love it. I love you."

"I still don't understand why your entire crew refuses to leave."

Sevan smiled. "Lorelei, Earth, or rather, the portions of Earth that we're permitted to live on aren't like this anymore. There are no more trees, plants or animals around. It's all industrialized. The portions that are marked off are kept under heavy guard. This is paradise to people from Earth."

She snorted. "We have monsters that walk among us."

"So do we." Sevan eased his cock in more, nudging at the cleft of her warm ass. "Earth officials just don't realize it yet. Not every supernatural made it aboard a vessel and I can't tell you how many more have immigrated to Earth from other galaxies. They don't have a handle on anything. And if they knew that Project Exorcism didn't go as planned—that the vessels thought lost really weren't, they'd declare a state of emergency."

"But we don't know for sure that other vessels survived, Sevan," Lorelei said, adding reason to his insane ramblings.



He licked his fingers, letting an ample amount of saliva build on them before rubbing it over the head of his cock. Repositioning himself between the soft globes of his wife's ass, Sevan lined up and eased the tip of his cock in. Lorelei bucked slightly against him and moaned out.

"Uh, yes, Sevan."

Reaching around her, Sevan stopped long enough to let his hand glide over her tiny rounded lower abdomen before heading straight for her pussy. He parted her slit and began to rub her already swollen bud as he worked his cock into her more. Her tight ass fisted it, leaving him panting softly as he continued to delve into her dark depths.

"Sevan."

He placed a tiny kiss on Lorelei's neck and thrust in the rest of the way. She cried out and then reached back and seized hold of his ass. "Harder."

Never one to disappoint, Sevan gave in and began moving in and out of his mate, his wife, savoring every second of sheer bliss as he went. She was so tight. So hot. So made just for him. He knew he'd never leave her and that he'd never be able to go on living without her.

He tweaked her ripe bud, working it to the point that Lorelei squirmed and thrashed against him. He knew her body well now and knew that she was close to an orgasm. "That's it, baby. Let go. Come, Lorelei. Come."

She pushed back against him as he continued to spoon her and fuck her. The feel of her channel clamping down on his dick caused him to lose control. Sevan pushed and then held tight to her as he rubbed her clit. His balls drew up and his cock twitched a second before he released his semen deep into her.

Lorelei cried out, digging her nails into his upper thigh and holding tight as she came as well. Another orgasm ripped through him, causing him to shoot even more seed into her. "Uh, baby...."

She snickered. "Yes, darling. I love you too. Now, what do you say to a shower?"

Sevan smiled as he held his wife to him. "I think that sounds wonderful but how about a bath instead? I can rub your shoulders easier that way."

"A girl could get used to this, Captain."

"That's a good thing. I'd hate for you to change your mind and start wanting that lechranski worm again."

Lorelei's warm laugh moved through him, leaving him feeling complete. "But blood sucking worms that eat their own vomit are so very adorable, honey."

The End

Unedited Excerpt from Project Exorcism: Force of Attraction by  
Mandy M. Roth, coming soon to NCP!  
Chapter One

"Have a seat," Marisa said, hearing the door to her exam room slide shut. "Go ahead and gown up."

"Ah, Doc, I knew you wanted me out of my pants. I told you yesterday that all you had to do was say the word and I would show you what a real man could offer you."

Marisa cringed at the sound of Bradi's voice. The man lived to make her life hell. He seemed to take great pleasure out of embarrassing her whenever possible. There was something about him that made not only her blood boil but her body burn in ways it shouldn't. "Lieutenant Commander Bradi, I thought you canceled your physical today." She let her voice go hard, knowing full well why he was standing there.

He cleared his throat. "I did, but since you went straight to the big boy about my file not being complete, I got a call telling me to get my ass in here. You wouldn't know anything about that, would you, Doc? I mean, you don't have any certain pull with the Commander do you?"

Smiling, Marisa turned towards him, wanting to give him the impression that he didn't get to her, but he did. Everything about the man got under her skin and she wasn't entirely sure it was in a bad way either.

Bradi seemed to take up so much room that he demanded attention. The man was pure muscle, at least from what she could tell. He'd never allowed her to examine him in the two months she'd been the ship's assistant physician. As far as she could tell, Bradi hadn't allowed anyone to examine him in well over a year. From his tight regulation black tee shirt, his upper body was sculpted to perfection. The lower half of him

didn't look so bad in a 'great ass, large muscular thighs and an even larger bulge between the legs' kind of way, but who was really looking at that anyway?

Who am I kidding? I can't keep my eyes off him.

Bradi pulled the leather tie out of his hair and she watched in silent wonder as waves of silky black strands spilled over his shoulders. His light blue eyes locked on her as his tongue darted out and over his bottom lip. The sight of his long tongue brushing over his full lips, made her hands shake from a need to touch him. On more than one occasion, she'd wondered what it would feel like to have him above her, sliding in and out of her body while she caressed him.

He was so different from the men she knew. So wild. So free that the idea of not being close to him to see what it was he'd do next wasn't an option. He was certainly an individual in a sea of the same. She wasn't used to men with facial hair, the Commission frowned upon it, so Bradi stood out even more than normal. His goatee was well maintained, and it not only suited him, but added to the mystique behind him going down on her.

It'd be a cold day in hell before she admitted that though.

"As much as I love the fact that you felt the need to show off your non-regulation hair, I don't need that down. I need your pants down," she said, sure that her sexual suggestion wasn't lost on him. "You need to update your shots. You're dangerously close to the expiration date on your old ones and gods help us all knowing the way you bed hop."

"Is that an invite to hop into your bed, Doctor? Cause if it is, I will graciously accept it. But only if you promise to let me play doctor with you. I have the perfect thing to take your temperature with." Bradi took a step towards her and grabbed his belt.

Marisa's pulse quickened and she had to look away. Her cheeks flushed. Crawling away from him wasn't an option. Standing there while he dropped his pants before her was what her job demanded. Wanting to see all that he had to offer was something her body demanded.

You hate him. Remember?

"I've been meaning to ask you about your heritage, Lieutenant," Marisa said, doing her best to stay focused.

"My heritage?" he asked, taken aback.

"Yes, you aren't like other Corneusims I've met before."

Bradi laughed slightly. "Why would I look like a horny toad warrior from the planet Cornu?"

It was as she expected. The man had doctored his medical records. Whatever reason he had for hiding must have been a good one—to make him as desperate as he'd been. "Hmm, just wondering. After all, your last blood scans showed traces of Corneusim DNA in it."

Bradi mumbled under his breath and rubbed his strong jaw. "Doc Graves is ancient. I bet his equipment failed again, or more likely he just mixed up the samples."

Bradi was right, Dr. Graves, the ship's head physician was old, but not careless. She decided to fight this battle with him at a later date. Right now, she planned on immunizing him and drawing a sample of his blood in the process. "Ready to bare it all, Lieutenant Commander?"

He dropped his pants to his ankles and cocked an eyebrow. The absence of underwear gave her a quick flash of his front side before he turned around and pulled his tee shirt up. Her breath caught and her inner thighs tightened. Not erect the man was impressive. Staring at his rock hard ass did little in the way of alleviating her need to touch him. She licked her lips imagining her fingers digging into each cheek as he fucked her. "I would much rather have you remove my pants next time, Doc."

"I'm sure you would," she said wryly, trying to shake the lust from her head. Grabbing her booster gun, Marisa moved up behind him. Placing one hand on his ass, and confirming the fact that he was indeed rock hard, she released the Star Union's recommended dosage of immunizations. Bradi would now be disease free for at least another year and with the stories she'd heard about his prowess that was a blessing.

Bradi flexed his ass slightly, and temptation ran through her. She clutched her hands tight to avoid reaching for him. "Have you talked to Peter today?"

He stood quickly, pulling his pants up as he went. The second he turned to face her, he rolled his blue eyes. Running a large hand over his chin, Bradi shook his head slightly. "You always do that. You always toss Pete

in my face whenever I make a comment that turns you on. What? Do you think I forget that you are engaged to my best friend?"

Marisa's jaw dropped. "I do not toss Peter in your face every time you turn me on." It hadn't come out the way she'd intended and she wished she could take it back.

"See, was it so hard to admit that I make you horny?"

Yeah, must be the Corneusim blood in you. I've always wanted a toad.

"Lieutenant Commander Bradi, my time is precious and while engaging in stimulating conversation seems so tantalizing, I have more important things to do with my time, so if you wouldn't mind..."

The ringing of her communicator cut her off. She narrowed her gaze on Bradi, daring him to continue with his juvenile behavior and answered the call. "Dr. Langston here."

"Hey sweetheart, are you done yet? I'm going crazy waiting for you," Peter said in his bedroom voice.

Marisa turned to avoid the penetrating look from Bradi and nodded her head. It took her a moment to realize that Peter couldn't see her. "Yes, I think I'm done here. My last patient was just leaving." She heard the door to her exam room open and close. Suddenly, she felt bad for her brashness. "Listen, I'll see you in a bit. There's something I need to take care of before I call it a day."

"Very well."

Marisa clicked the communicator off before responding to Peter. Tension filled her neck and shoulders as the weight of her behavior towards Bradi weighed on her. In truth, he was no worse the rest of the male crew on board. Being one of only a handful of females on a two month deep space journey had left her the target of many deprived males, but none rubbed on her nerves the way Bradi did.

"What the hell is it about you, Bradi, that gets me all fired up?" She reached down to grab a file off her desk shaking her head at the idea that she would give Peter up in an instant to be with a man who only wanted a free fuck.

Two strong hands touched her shoulders and she froze. "If I have to guess, I would say it was my charming personality, my devilish good looks, or the fact that I have got an eleven inch...."

Marisa spun around to find Bradi standing there with a wicked grin on his entirely too handsome face. "Want me to take my pants off again? Or better yet, take yours down and I'll stick you with something special."

Growling, she shoved him hard in the chest. He didn't budge. "Get out now, or so help me gods...."

Instantly, his mouth covered hers. As Bradi eased his tongue in, she lost all rational thought. Licking the inner edges of her mouth, he made her knees shake. Marisa's brain screamed at her to bite his tongue off, but her body reacted by reaching up to touch him, to pull him closer.

With his height advantage, Marisa was left standing on her tiptoes while he bent down to her, but it was worth it. The feel of his hot mouth pressed to hers and of his gifted tongue tracing circles around her own made her nipples harden. Liquid pooled in the apex of her thighs and it wasn't until she felt Bradi's hands moving up and under her shirt that she realized what she was doing—making out with a man who could own her heart if he decided he wanted it.

Yanking back from him with a force, Marisa staggered. Bradi grabbed for her and pulled her into his warm body. "Careful now, Doc, wouldn't want you to hurt yourself."

"That's why I'm keeping you around, Bradi. You know how to take care of what's important to me," Peter said, appearing in the doorway suddenly.

Marisa's eyes met Bradi's and she saw a shadow pass over them. Bradi nodded and eased her up. "Yeah, if nothing else, I make a good watchdog."

She wasn't sure if that was hurt she saw on Bradi's face, or if he was just toying with her so she glanced over at Peter hoping he'd shed some light on it. He offered none. No surprise there. Peter rarely had much to offer in the way of insight into Bradi. He was such a sharp contrast from Bradi that she wondered how they'd even become friends.

"Hey, Commander, I thought I told you that I'd meet you in a little bit." Marisa winked at Peter.

Walking towards her, Peter took hold of her arms a bit harder than needed. "And I've told you before that I do not like to be kept waiting—ever."

Marisa gave Peter a questioning stare as she tried to wiggle free of his grasp. "That's hurts," she whispered, hoping Bradi wouldn't overhear her.

He eased up a bit but gave her a hard stare in the process. Peter's normally warm personality seemed ice cold almost daily now. She'd noticed it more and more lately and wasn't sure what had prompted it. Sure, Peter was under a great deal of stress from his new title but he'd had that for two months now. The hard as nails persona had come on in the last three weeks.

Glancing down at her, Peter smiled. "Excuse us Bradi, but I need to kiss my woman."

"Your woman?" Marisa shot back, not caring much for the reference and still a bit upset about the rough handling.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to snap at you before." Peter gave her a sheepish grin and leaned down to whisper in her ear. "I love you."

"On that note, I am leaving," Bradi said, sounding oddly even tempered. "I have to check in on the command deck. We are heading into non-Commission territory and it looks like we'll have that damn meteoroid shower to contend with after all. Our scouts tell us that it's not bad, but I would advise going around it if at all possible. I think it might be safest."

Peter gave Bradi a sickening sweet smile and when he spoke, Marisa could almost hear the sarcasm dripping from his every word. "That is precisely why you aren't required to think—buddy. I'll catch up with you in a bit. Drinks and a round of cards sound good to you, too?"

"Yeah, sure." Bradi headed for the sliding doors, not once bothering to look back. It was as though he'd already forgotten what had passed between them.

How could she have allowed him to kiss her? What was she thinking? He was Peter's friend and a jerk.

Yeah, a jerk who can really kiss!

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