



# Ravenous Alien Mate

**Author:** *Sue Mercury*

**Category:** Romance, Paranormal, Fantasy, Science Fiction

**Description:** Her freedom comes with a price—her hand in marriage.

After spending ten years behind bars, Leah is offered early release if she agrees to become an alien mail order bride. Though she's nervous about the prospect of marrying a complete stranger—a huge Martian, no less—she's also desperate for freedom. She reluctantly agrees with the parole board's terms and soon finds herself traveling to Mars, where she meets Jav, the huge muscular alien who will become her husband. She soon realizes he's not like other Martians—he's a genetically enhanced warrior, and he cannot help his feral need to claim her over and over again. He seems to harbor a growing affection for her, yet she can't help but worry—what will he do if he learns of her past?

Jav is beyond pleased with the little human called Leah. She's everything he has ever hoped for in a mate—charming, kind, and passionate in the bedroom. He senses she's not telling him the truth about her past, though he's certain she'll open up to him as they become better acquainted. As the days pass, his desire for her grows stronger and his heart aches with tenderness whenever he thinks of her. But his newfound happiness is shattered when Leah is accused of a terrible crime. Can he help clear her name and keep her safe, or will he be forced to say goodbye to his sweet human bride forever?

**Total Pages (Source):** 34

# Page 1

*Source Creation Date: May 21, 2025, 4:58 am*

## Chapter 1

Leah shuffled down the narrow hallway, the shackles around her ankles making her steps slow and awkward. Her wrists also ached and rubbed against the tight restraints she wore, but she knew better than to complain.

The guard holding her arm jerked her around a corner and toward a closed door. His fingers dug into her arms, more firmly than necessary.

She swallowed hard and tried to summon her bravery. He opened the door and ushered her through it so rapidly that she stumbled and would've fallen to her knees if not for his unyielding grip. His hold on her tightened, and he paused and gave her a harsh jerk, obviously frustrated that she couldn't keep pace with him.

She wished he'd let go of her. They'd already reached their destination. She glanced around the room and took in her surroundings.

Five human men sat at a long table. This surprised her. She'd expected to see at least one huge Martian male among the group who would decide her fate today. After all, Martians ran the prisons. They ran the whole freaking world. Would these human men who worked for the Martians be more apt to show her mercy? God, she could only hope.

Her stomach flipped as she studied the men. All were eyeing her critically. The guard finally released her and went to stand along the wall, leaving her alone in the center of the large room while she stared at the five men who apparently made up the parole board.

Please God, let them grant me freedom.

She couldn't take another night in the prison. She'd been here for ten years and each day that passed was worse than the last. If she didn't get out of here soon, she would lose her mind.

The dull concrete walls of her cell threatened to close in on her each day, and whenever she was allowed outside for an hour of recreation, which usually only happened once a week, it didn't quite feel real.

Often, whatever was happening to her felt like a dream. It was in these instances that she worried she was starting to lose her grip on reality.

At least if she had her freedom, maybe she would manage to recover her senses and find herself again. Once upon a time, she'd been happy. Once upon a time, she hadn't known fear and pain and loneliness.

"Prisoner 794-B," the man seated in the center called out as he glanced at a tablet in his hands. He had shoulder-length hair that was the purest white she'd ever seen. "Leah Hartman from Zone 12, convicted of arson and theft. You're serving a twenty-five-year sentence, however, based upon your good behavior, you are being called up for early parole. Have you anything to say on your behalf?"

She drew in a deep breath. She had tried her best to prepare a statement, but now everything she'd so carefully planned to say fled her mind. In a panic, she stared at the parole board and fumbled.

"If you have nothing to say on your own behalf," the white-haired man said, "you will be returned to your cell and you won't be eligible for another parole hearing until next year."

“I made a terrible mistake,” she blurted out. God, she couldn’t fathom spending another year in the overcrowded windowless concrete room that was her cell. “And I- I am truly sorry for the crimes I committed. I should have known better, and not a day passes that I’m not sorry for what I did.” It was the truth. She regretted her part in the arson and robbery for which she’d been sentenced to twenty-five long years in prison. It didn’t matter that she hadn’t planned the crime, started the fire, or actually retrieved the stolen items, but she’d been there that night. While she’d only served as a lookout, it hadn’t mattered when the time for her trial arrived.

“Do you think you are reformed?” the white-haired man asked.

“Absolutely. If I am released, I plan to get a job, obey the law, and work hard to be a good citizen.” Finding a job with her kind of record would be next to impossible, but she decided to focus on one problem at a time, the first being her incarceration.

“You originally were not scheduled for a parole hearing until five years from now, but, due to your good behavior and your statement that you are reformed, we are prepared to make you an offer that will result in your immediate release from prison.”

Her breath caught in her chest. She felt her eyes widen as disbelief swirled through her.

Freedom. Could it be true? Or was this a dream? Given her tenuous grip on reality as of late, she really hoped she wasn’t imagining this entire interaction.

“However,” the man continued, “there are conditions.”

“I assure you that I am prepared to meet the conditions, whatever they are, that you require of me,” she replied in a polite tone.

“I am glad to hear it.” He sat back in his chair and stared at her so intently that a

shiver rushed down her spine. His eyes were cold and calculating. “We are offering early release to certain female prisoners who meet our criteria. You see, we’ve developed a new early release program, one that will help decrease the population in our overcrowded prison system, which I am certain you will appreciate.”

She nodded, hoping he would continue, even as a ball of dread formed in her stomach. What kind of early release program was he talking about? Suddenly, the freedom she had hoped for seemed further from her reach.

“It’s simple really—you will be released from prison if you agree to become a Martian’s bride. If you agree to these terms, you will travel to Mars immediately, along with a regular shipment of mail order brides, and you will be given to a Martian male. You will be expected to become his bride and mate with him.”

“I...” Her voice trailed off. Become a Martian’s mate? She hadn’t known what to expect when she’d entered this room to face the parole board, but it certainly hadn’t been this.

Oh God. Could she do it? Become the mate of a stranger—an alien from a race whose people had conquered her own, no less—and spend the rest of her life on Mars?

“Before you give us your answer, Prisoner794-B,” he said, putting an emphasis on her prisoner number that made her face heat with a mix of anger and humiliation, “keep in mind that Martians mate for life. The mating union you enter will be a permanent one. Many female prisoners who are offered this option prefer to remain incarcerated, though many have also agreed to the terms of this early release program. You have one minute to decide.” As if for dramatic effect, he glanced down at his watch.

What should she do? Her heart raced. She felt shaky and restless. The sudden urge to pace back and forth overcame her, but she couldn’t move around due to the shackles

on her ankles, so she stood before the parole board, her mind racing as she tried to make one of the most important decisions of her life in just one minute.

## Page 2

*Source Creation Date: May 21, 2025, 4:58 am*

She had hoped for freedom, had hoped to leave this prison and try to make a life for herself somewhere. She realized it wouldn't be easy and she would've likely remained homeless for a while until she was able to land a job, but she had never imagined leaving Earth—especially to become a Martian's bride. Oh God oh God oh God.

Her only interactions with Marttiadoxalians, which the humans called Martians for short, hadn't been pleasant. As a child, she'd watched Martian enforcers arrest people in her neighborhood for no good reason at all, then drag them away, never to be seen again. Martian enforcers had also captured her after the fire and robbery.

Furthermore, prisons on Earth were now technically run by the aliens, even though most guards in the prisons were human. Sometimes she would hear heavy footsteps in the night, only to peek outside her cell and see a group of scary-looking Martians had arrived to conduct an inspection.

They were unsmiling, gruff aliens, exceedingly tall and hugely muscled. They also had massive horns that curved over their heads and down their backs, which they used to headbutt their enemies during battle. She couldn't fathom being mated to one of the alien savages.

But what other choice did she have?

She thought about returning to her concrete cell and shuddered. She couldn't do it. She had to obtain some measure of freedom. She wanted to feel the sunlight upon her face, to feel a cool breeze ruffling her hair. To sleep in a warm, soft bed. To eat food that wasn't tasteless and watered down. Most of all, to feel as though she mattered

to someone, even just a little bit.

After drawing in a deep breath, she met the white-haired man's gaze.

"I'll do it," she said. "I will become a Martian's mate."

## Chapter 2

Jav stood on the balcony, staring at a Marttiadoxalian-human couple as they crossed the palace grounds with their two offspring.

An unexpected sense of longing filled him as he watched their interactions, observing their behavior with great interest. The parents kept taking turns swinging the children between them. It was a sort of game they were playing. Simple, but it was bringing the children great joy. Laughter echoed through the courtyard.

He looked down at his hands and frowned at the sight of dried blood underneath his fingernails. Having just returned from a classified mission to dispose of an enemy to the Marttiadoxalian Empire, he had come to his quarters with the intention of cleaning up, only to find himself drawn to the balcony when he heard cheerful voices and laughter outside.

Another glance at the family showed the offspring were now running in circles around their parents, the younger child trying to catch the older one. As Jav continued watching the family, he tried to imagine himself as the father.

Hope started spreading through him, but a moment later, the coldness of doubt slammed into him, an emotion so fierce that it nearly took his breath away.

Would he know how to be a father?



He had never been part of a family. The first years of his life had been spent in an overcrowded orphanage. That was, until a group of scientists came to recruit him, along with dozens of other male Marttiadoxalian orphans, to become genetically enhanced warriors of the Vash'arr Order.

No one had ever told him what happened to his parents, but he had his suspicions. His mother, like so many females of his kind, probably died when the Xieandans poisoned the water supplies on Marttiadoxalia, using a poison that only affected the females of his species. His father had likely been a warrior who'd perished in battle, tragically fighting against the very aliens who'd killed his mate.

Whoever his parents had been, they'd died when he was but an infant, for he had no recollections of them, not even the briefest flash of their faces in his mind. His earliest memories were of the orphanage and feeling completely alone, despite being surrounded by hundreds of other male orphans. As if he didn't matter, as if he had no purpose.

But when the scientists came and took him away, promising they would make him big and strong and one of the greatest warriors his people had ever seen, he had suddenly been given a purpose. He hadn't fought them, even when the process of receiving his genetic enhancements made him feel as though he were being ripped apart.

Instead, he had welcomed the pain, because it meant he would soon become someone other than a scared, lonely orphan. He would become a genetically enhanced Marttiadoxalian warrior of the Vash'arr Order. He would help his people destroy their enemies and remain safe.

His only regret was that by the time the genetic enhancements were finally completed, the Xieandans had escalated their underhanded war tactics, doing something to Marttiadoxalia's sun which caused it to dim. Not long after, his people

had been forced to leave their planet in search of a new home. He regretted that he hadn't been ready to fight during the war against the Xieandans. None of the other Vash'arr warriors had been ready at the time either, as all were still receiving their genetic enhancements.

If the timing had been right, could they have made a difference?

He growled under his breath. He was tired of thinking about the past, but he found he often couldn't stop himself. One doubt, one stray thought, and all at once the regrets wouldn't stop coming.

He tried to think logically during times like these and tell himself it wasn't his fault; it wasn't his fault the scientists and the commanders hadn't finished preparing the first order of Vash'arr warriors for battle before his people went to war with the Xieandans.

He'd fought in the war against the humans, however, taking the lead in many battles and winning every single fight. Because of the Vash'arr, the war against Earth had ended quickly with the humans' absolute surrender. Twenty years later, Earth was still under Marttiadoxalian control, though tensions between humans and his people were starting to lessen.

The sound of laughter in the courtyard quieted, and Jav searched for the family again. The children were now laying on the ground beneath a floweringtrekassatree, staring up at the sky, while their parents were seated nearby.

He eyed the Marttiadoxalian male who had his arm around his human female and wondered if they were as happy as they looked. Again, he felt that ache inside his chest, that immense longing for what this family possessed.

Tomorrow. His heart thundered in his ears.

Tomorrow, he would be given a human female of his very own.

He had recently signed up to receive a mail order bride from Earth. As an able-bodied Marttiadoxalian male, it was his duty to claim a human female and procreate with her. After losing most of their females because of the Xieandans, he needed to help his people grow their numbers. One of the biggest reasons the Marttiadoxalians had picked Mars to terraform and make their new home had been due to its close proximity to Earth, a planet that contained a source of females with which Marttiadoxalians were sexually compatible. Humans.

## Page 3

*Source Creation Date: May 21, 2025, 4:58 am*

Originally, he'd been scheduled to receive the bride several moon cycles ago, but a series of emergency missions had taken him off planet, forcing him to delay claiming his mate from among the shipments of human females that were regularly sent to Mars.

After noticing the continued delays, King Vaath, the leader of their people, had ordered Jav to take a short leave of absence from his work with the Vash'arr, just long enough to allow him to claim his bride and spend some time getting to know her, before he must leave Mars on another mission. Jav was secretly grateful for the king's interference.

Finally, after years of dreaming about being part of a family, Jav would secure a mate of his very own. Leah. That was her name. He knew nothing else about her, not even what she looked like, but a clerk from a Martian Affairs office on Earth had sent a message informing him of his future mate's name. He glanced down at his wrist comm again, just to look at her name once more.

He wondered what part of Earth his bride called home, as well as what had driven her to sign up to become a mail order bride. Most human females who signed up to become a Marttiadoxalian's bride did so under desperate circumstances.

He'd heard such stories from the palace guards who'd already claimed human females of their own. Many women came to Mars because their families were struggling with debt. Females who signed up were given a one-time payment of ten thousand galactic credits, an amount of money that could go far on Earth, should they decide to give it to a loved one, and all of their family's debt would be automatically forgiven. It was incentive enough to attract regular shipments of brides to Mars.

Was Leah fleeing bad circumstances? And in doing so, was she leaving behind a family she loved? He despaired over the prospect of her leaving people she cared about, but he reminded himself that she could remain in contact with her loved ones. It wasn't as though she was saying goodbye forever.

He glanced at her name again, his eagerness to meet her growing with each breath. How many offspring would they have together? He hoped for a large family, a family that spent time together and took leisurely walks through the courtyard while the children giggled and explored the gardens.

Tomorrow. He looked at the sinking sun. The day was finally drawing to a close.

He would meet his new human female very soon.

### Chapter 3

"Your mate won't know a thing about you, except for your name," the elderly male guard said as he escorted Leah toward the waiting spaceship.

"Really?" She looked up at him in surprise.

"Oh yeah." He gave her a wide smile, revealing several missing teeth.

She peered curiously at the kindly human guard. She wasn't certain how old he was, but he was a newer guard at the women's prison, and he was a thousand times nicer than most of the other guards. She wished he'd been hired years ago.

During the ten-minute walk from the prison to the spaceship, he'd been nothing but kind to her. He'd even given her a drink of water and a sugar cookie. Though the cookie was stale, it was still the most delicious thing she'd eaten in years. Better than the cookie, was the consideration he was showing her. Instead of treating her like the

dirt upon his shoes, as most guards did, he was treating her like an actual person. A lump formed in her throat.

She glanced down at herself, still in awe of the clothing she was wearing. A couple of minutes before she'd been escorted out of the prison, he'd tossed her a plain gray sweat suit and turned around to allow her privacy while she changed. She was so grateful she wasn't wearing her normal bright orange prisoner's uniform.

"All the other women should be on board the ship by now," the guard said with a glance at his watch. "Martian Affairs promised to have them loaded by the time I got you here."

"Thank you for taking my shackles and wrist restraints off before we came in sight of the spaceship," Leah said with a glance around. She saw nothing but the outline of darkened buildings, the empty street, and the two Martian enforcers standing near the ship. Even if he'd been an asshole and forced her to walk here while still wearing the leg shackles and wrist restraints, no one but the enforcers would have witnessed her shame, but she still appreciated the elderly guard's compassion.

"I don't know what you were in prison for, young lady," the man said, "but I tell you what, this can be a fresh start for you. Go to Mars, get married, start a family, and never look back."

Never look back.

If only it were that easy.

To her surprise, he patted her back and stared at her with tenderness in his eyes.

"I had a daughter once." A faraway look entered his gaze. "She passed away when she was young, poor thing, but if she'd grown up to reach your age, I would've

encouraged her to go to Mars.”

“But the Martians are our enemies,” Leah said, taken aback. “They conquered Earth and now they rule over us with an iron fist. They’re brutes. I’ve heard terrible things about them.”

All at once, she started doubting her decision to leave Earth and become an alien’s bride. What were fifteen more years of prison compared to the rest of her life spent with a Martian male who treated her with cruelty? What if she was only trading one prison for another?

The guard nodded. “True. They kicked our asses. I was lucky to survive the war. My leg was broken at the time, so I wasn’t sent off to fight. Can you believe my luck? Fell off a goddamn tractor. Anyway, yes, I would send any daughter of mine off to live on Mars. It’s safer there. They’ve terraformed the whole planet and it’s clean and beautiful. I’ve seen pictures. It’s got to be a better life than on Earth.” He gave her an encouraging look and patted her back again.

His casual touch brought her comfort. She was so used to being manhandled by the guards and pushed around by the other inmates, or worse, that she couldn’t recall the last time someone had touched her without meaning her harm.

“This is all so wild,” Leah said. “I-I can’t believe, because of something incredibly stupid I did when I was eighteen, that I’m to become a Martian’s bride. It was either this or remain incarcerated. I had fifteen years left on my sentence. I’ve already been in jail for ten years and it’s felt like an eternity. I couldn’t imagine serving fifteen more. I only hope... I only hope my mate isn’t a monster. I don’t need him to be especially nice, just nice enough. I don’t want him to hurt me.” She couldn’t believe how much she was opening up to this guard, this stranger, but it felt good to finally talk to someone about her troubles. She hadn’t had a single friend inside that prison.

“We all make mistakes, child,” he said, “but you’re getting a second chance. Take it and never look back.”

Never look back. He’d said it again, but she still had doubts. It was so fucking hard not to look back when she’d spent the last ten years of her life constantly regretting her mistakes.



## Page 4

*Source Creation Date: May 21, 2025, 4:58 am*

“But what will I say when my mate asks about my past? I mean, I would assume he would be at least somewhat curious about my life on Earth, if we are to spend the rest of our lives in a mating union.”

“I don’t usually tell people they ought to lie,” he said, his visage growing thoughtful, “however, in your case, it might be best to stretch the truth. You can tell the truth about your childhood and all that, but when it comes to the years of your incarceration, just tell him you worked in a factory and lived alone. Make it sound boring.” He winked at her.

“That’s good advice,” she replied. “Thank you.”

“You got any family left on Earth?” he asked.

Her spirits fell. “I, uh, have a brother. At least I think I do. He’s ten years older than me. I-I have no idea where he is now. Another inmate told me he left the city after I was sentenced. But both my parents passed away when I was seventeen and I don’t have any extended family that I know about. Both my parents were only children.”

“I’m sorry you lost contact with your brother. Were the two of you close?”

“Not really. He left home right after the war, when I was only nine.”

“I see. You didn’t go live with him after your parents passed away?” His brows knitted together, and he slowed in his steps as they approached the spaceship.

“No, I moved in with my boyfriend at the time. Steven.” She hoped he didn’t ask any

further questions about this part of her life. She truly didn't wish to relive it. Steven had received a death sentence for his part in the crime he'd convinced her to take part in. She'd been the lookout while he and his goons robbed a local Martian Affairs office and set fire to the building. A guard had taunted her with the information of Steven's death sentence just a few days after she'd arrived at the women's prison.

"Well, maybe that's for the best then—the part about you not being close with your brother. At least you won't be missing anyone on Earth, will you?"

"No, I suppose there's no one I'll miss." This realization should've brought her comfort, but instead it brought her sadness. She had no one. No one who cared about her on Earth. No one to miss her and no one she would miss.

"We're about there," the guard said, nodding ahead at the entrance ramp of the ship.

The Martian enforcers were staring at them, their dark gazes making Leah uneasy. Oh God. Could she really do this?

She looked behind her at the darkened city. Streetlights flickered and the occasional window was illuminated, but it was after midnight and the city of Richmond was mostly asleep. Dubbed Zone 12 by the Martians, this was an area of the former United States. She had lived here for her entire life. Now she was leaving.

"The name's Thomas, by the way," the guard said.

"I want to thank you for your kindness toward me, Thomas," Leah said, glancing up at him. "You're a good man. I'm sorry about your daughter. I know she must have loved you very much."

They were standing directly below a streetlight, and she saw his eyes mist over as he swallowed hard. He patted her back. "Thank you, young lady. Those are sweet words.

I'm glad I met you."

"I'm glad I met you, too." Leah felt as though her throat might close up. She blinked rapidly to keep from crying. She didn't want to break into tears as she boarded the spaceship that would take her to Mars. Never look back.

"Go on now," he said in an encouraging tone. "Your brand-new life is waiting."

## Chapter 4

Jav stood near the landing platform and watched the ship descend from the clear blue Martian sky. His heart thudded under his growing anticipation. The boarding ramp couldn't descend fast enough.

Leah.

In moments, he would meet her. Gods, he couldn't believe this day had finally arrived.

The day he would meet his human female and claim her as his.

He thought of the family he'd observed in the courtyard yesterday. In a few years, that could be him. He would build a family with Leah and no one would ever tear them apart. Their children would have parents and a home filled with joy.

He was determined to make it happen.

Over a dozen other males gathered near him to await the boarding ramp. When the ramp finally descended, he was one of the first males to board the ship. It took all his self-control not to break into a run and start shouting his mate's name. He couldn't wait to meet her. Couldn't wait to stare into her eyes for the first time and gather her

close in his arms.

As a member of the Vash'arr, he was fully aware that his biological need to mate would be more enhanced than most Marttiadoxalian males. The scientists and doctors who routinely checked his health had warned him that he needed to be careful when he eventually took a mate, particularly a human one, as human females were smaller than those of his own kind.

But the few Marttiadoxalian females who were left usually mated with royalty or males who possessed extreme wealth. No sensible Marttiadoxalian male would see his daughter betrothed to the likes of Jav. Though he was a decorated warrior, he had come from nothing, and he also left Mars frequently to complete dangerous missions on the Marttiadoxalian Empire's behalf. If he wanted to take a mate, he had no choice—he needed to take a human female as his bride.

Would he manage to control himself around Leah? He didn't wish to harm her. He vowed he would try his best to claim her as gently as possible during their first time together, when he took her to bed after they received the traditional blessing upon their mating union from a Wise One.

## Page 5

*Source Creation Date: May 21, 2025, 4:58 am*

He followed the two males who were walking ahead of him into the women's quarters of the ship, the large room where all the human females were housed during the short journey from Earth to Mars.

He scanned the room and immediately fixed his gaze upon a pretty female with sleek dark hair. That's her. That's Leah. He didn't have to ask her name, he simply knew.

She met his gaze and her dark brown eyes widened. At once, she looked away and proceeded to stare at her feet. She slowly shuffled behind three of the other human females.

The other males started calling out the names of their mates. One by one, their respective brides stepped forward and they soon departed the women's quarters. When only five females remained, Jav moved through the small crowd and stood directly before the petite dark-haired beauty. She inhaled a shaky breath and gradually lifted her fear-filled gaze to his.

"Don't be afraid, Leah," he found himself saying, speaking in Galactic Common as he used the gentlest tone he'd ever used with anyone. "I will not hurt you. I am Jav, your mate, and I will always protect you."

Her eyes widened further. "How-how do you know I'm Leah?" She swallowed hard and looked around, as if searching for an escape. When she started to retreat again, he reached for her hands and pulled her closer.

"I had a feeling it was you. When I first looked at you, I just knew." While the scientists who'd treated him during his younger days hadn't been able to explain it,

sometimes Jav simply knew things he had no logical reason to know. He often got a strange feeling before something bad happened, and he also frequently knew other random facts. When the knowledge came to him, it was completely unbidden, but he never doubted his preternatural instincts.

She tilted her head to the side, studying him. “Oh. Are you... psychic?” A look of dread overcame her in the next instant and she fidgeted in place, as if she wished to back away from him.

He offered her a smile, hoping to ease her worries. “No, though I often know things others do not.”

The worried look remained. “Can you read minds?”

“No, I cannot.”

She exhaled as if in relief, and he found her reaction rather curious. Apparently, the idea of him being a psychic, or a mind reader, left her unsettled. He decided to put it down to the obvious—most people would not appreciate someone intruding upon their private thoughts. Likely the prospect of it had frightened her. Yes, that must be it. He stared into her dark eyes, unable to look away.

Gods, she was gorgeous. And so small. He would have to be very, very careful with her.

“So, your name is Jav?” she asked, then drew in a deep breath. He felt her hands trembling in his and he gripped them tighter, hoping to help steady her nerves.

“Yes, and I have been waiting my entire life to meet you, sweet Leah.” As soon as the words escaped his lips, a sense of shock reverberated through him. He hadn’t meant to say something so personal and revealing to her only moments after meeting her.

But, it was the truth. For as long as he could remember, he had wanted a family. When he was younger, he used to dream about having two parents who cared about him. Now that he was older, having a family meant taking a human female as his mate and impregnating her.

Leah's mouth dropped open briefly. "You have?"

"Of course," he replied. "It's always been a dream of mine to have a family, and I imagine we'll start a family together soon. I would like to impregnate you as soon as possible."

"I-I have heard your people are trying to regrow your population," she said, though she suddenly appeared sad, her face falling. He wondered if it was something he'd said.

"Yes, we are. The king is encouraging all able-bodied Marttiadoxalian males to take a human female as a mate. It's a blessing from the Gods that we found Earth when we did."

"Blessing from the Gods? I find that a strange thing to say. After you found Earth, you killed millions of my people." She didn't sound angry, but her tone was curious.

"We tried for peace, initially, but your people attacked our first settlement on Mars, slaughtering over five thousand Marttiadoxalians. We had no choice but to retaliate."

She drew back and her eyes widened. "I-I didn't know about that. I was always told your people attacked us first. That's what my father told me the night your people invaded Earth."

"Your father, as well as many others, was likely lied to by your own government at the time. Come," he said, deciding to change the subject. "I will take you to the

palace temple where a Wise One will bestow a blessing upon our mating union. Then I will escort you to your new home.”

He looked around at the floor, searching for her luggage. By now, all the other couples had left, but he didn't see any suitcases or bags that might belong to Leah.

“Where are your belongings?” he asked.

She paled and gulped hard. “I-I don't have any. I'm sorry.” She lowered her head, as if ashamed.

His heart broke for her. While he didn't know her specific reasons for signing up to become a mail order bride, it pained him to learn she truly had nothing. He reached up and cupped the side of her face, forcing her gaze to his.

“It is no matter, sweet Leah. It will be my honor to provide you with anything you might need. Clothing, food, shelter, and companionship. You will never want for anything again. I give you my word.” He guided her out into the gleaming silver corridors of the ship, anxious to get her back to his quarters in the palace, eager to bring her home.

## Chapter 5

Jav was nothing like Leah had expected. She'd thought her Martian mate would be rather cold, but thus far he had treated her with kindness. She'd been so embarrassed to tell him she'd traveled to Mars without any belongings, only for him to promise to take care of her.



## Page 6

*Source Creation Date: May 21, 2025, 4:58 am*

Tears burned in her eyes and she blinked them back.

He placed an arm around her as they emerged into the sunlight.

She halted in her steps, closed her eyes, and lifted her face to the sky. During the years of her incarceration, she had rarely glimpsed the sun. Most of the time, during her weekly hour of outdoor recreation, the sky was blanketed in smog, blocking out the sun and the blue sky.

She basked in the warmth of the sun upon her face. It was so amazing an experience, she started to wonder if perhaps this was a dream. But she was enjoying the sun too much to really care. If she was dreaming or imagining this, she didn't want to leave the blissful reverie.

"Leah?" The deep masculine voice rumbled through her, bringing her back to her current surroundings.

She was on Mars. Standing at the top of a boarding ramp of a spaceship, her new mate, Jav, by her side.

She peered up at him. "Yes?"

"Are you all right?" A look of concern filled his black eyes and the ridges of his forehead drew together.

"It's been a while since I've seen and felt the sun like this. I mean, where I lived on Earth in Zone 12, the sky was usually covered with smog. It's nice to feel the warmth

of the sun on my face.” She allowed her gaze to wander around the area surrounding the spaceship. Surprise filled her.

Everywhere she looked, it was beautiful and green. There were tall trees, colorful flowers, and thick greenish blue grass. How remarkable. She’d heard terraformed Mars was a breathtaking planet to behold, but she’d never expected it to be so lovely and fresh and clean.

Jav grasped her hand. Out in the sunshine, the deep purple color of his skin appeared even more vibrant than when she’d first laid eyes upon him on the ship. The sunlight glinted off the long, thick horns that curved over his head and down his broad back.

“You’re beautiful in the sun,” she said, then immediately clamped her mouth shut. Had she really just said that? Her heart quickened as she awaited Jav’s reaction to her ridiculous statement. He was a massive Marttiadoxalian male, likely a skilled warrior among his people, and she had just called him beautiful in the sun.

“Thank you,” he said, leaving her shocked. He reached for her hair, which she’d frantically washed several hours ago in the women’s quarters aboard the spaceship, hoping to make herself at least somewhat presentable before she met her mate for the first time. “You are also beautiful in the sun, sweet Leah. The rays of the sun catch each individual strand of your hair, making you appear like a mystical being from the blessed forest of Asitontin.” Warmth infused his voice and he stared down at her, still stroking her hair, his movements slow but certain.

She felt her face heating, and not just from the sun. His compliment was causing her to blush. She struggled to find her voice and finally managed to murmur, “Thank you, Jav, that is most kind of you to say.”

He smiled down at her. “It’s a short walk to the palace. Come, my mate, and I will take you on the most scenic route there.”

Still holding her hand, he turned and led her down the ramp. Above the treetops, she spotted hundreds, perhaps thousands, of reddish orange houses and buildings. Many of the structures, such as the palace, which she could easily glimpse over the trees, contained spires that reached to the sky.

“What is the name of this city again?” she asked as he guided her toward a wooded area that rested between the landing platform and the nearest buildings.

“Ressiktron. It’s our capital city and where the majority of our population lives. However, there are several smaller settlements in other parts of Mars.”

“Where do you live?”

“Here in the city. In the palace.”

Her stomach nearly bottomed out. The palace? Would she be allowed to live with him in the palace, in the same place the king and other Martian royals lived, if anyone on this planet were to learn about her past?

Never look back.

She latched onto Thomas’ words as if they were a lifeline. She needed to keep her wits about her and not accidentally give any secrets away. She must be careful, lest Jav get a sense of the real reason she had traveled to Mars.

It unnerved her that he’d automatically known who she was, just by looking at her in the women’s quarters. All because he’d had a feeling it was her.

She hoped he was telling the truth about not being psychic or a mind reader. She had heard of several alien races who possessed otherworldly powers and hoped Martians weren’t one of them.

As they traveled through a lush, green forest, filled with flowering plants and trees, she kept stealing glances at her mate. Jav. Why was he so much larger than the other Martians she had seen? He was bigger than any enforcer she'd glimpsed on Earth, and well over a head taller than the Martians who'd boarded the spaceship to retrieve their mates several minutes ago.

She wanted to ask him about his size, but she quickly decided that might be rude. Perhaps all the males in his family were abnormally large. As she further considered his massive stature, nerves began to assail her.

Would she be able to handle him in the bedroom?

Her face heated at the thought. What if he was too large for her? She wasn't a virgin, but it had been a long time since she'd had sex. Ten long years, to be exact. Not only was she out of practice, but she was much smaller than Jav.

They walked upon a white stone path that cut through the trees. She got the sense they almost went in circles a few times, as it seemed they were drawing closer to the palace, only to move away later, then turn back again. She appreciated that he wasn't rushing her to the temple inside the palace and whisking her away to his bed. Walking with him in the woods, hand in hand, was nice. She pushed aside her worries about his immense size and started to enjoy herself more.

## Page 7

*Source Creation Date: May 21, 2025, 4:58 am*

Occasionally, there was a break in the trees, allowing the sunlight to pour over their bodies. She wished she wasn't wearing such stifling clothing at the moment, as Mars was hot and humid during the daytime. Several of the women aboard the spaceship had given her a strange look when they noticed her attire, but she was still grateful she wasn't wearing the normal bright orange that prisoners were required to wear. It would've been beyond humiliating to face the other mail order brides while wearing a prison uniform.

A few minutes later, the path widened and they walked into a clearing near the palace. Jav ushered her through a small door that opened upon their approach. She got the sense it was a side entrance of sorts and not the main entrance. After they entered the palace grounds, which were lush and sprawling, the door shut behind them with a slight thud.

"Thank you, Rem," Jav called out.

Leah noticed a large green male standing near what appeared to be a security console. There were screens inside a small enclosed area. The green male walked closer, a serious look upon his face.

"Well, this must be the unfortunate human female who will have to suffer your company for the rest of her life. Hello," Rem said, looking in her direction. He wasn't smiling and she didn't know if he meant it as a joke or if he truly didn't like Jav.

But relief spread through her when Jav chuckled, and the two males soon exchanged the traditional Marttiadoxalian foot tap greeting.

“Rem, I would like you to meet Leah,” Jav said. “Leah, this is my friend, Rem.”

“I’m pleased to meet any friend of my mate’s,” Leah said, forcing a smile. It felt strange to smile at a male who didn’t appear friendly in the least. Perhaps he simply had a very dry sense of humor. She wondered if he had a human mate of his own.

Jav and Rem spoke briefly in their native language. She didn’t speak a single word of Martian and had no idea what they were talking about. Thank goodness Jav spoke Galactic Common. Most humans learned the language at a very early age. She felt suddenly wistful as she recalled practicing the universal tongue with her parents. As soon as she’d started school at the age of five, they had informed her that only Galactic Common would be spoken at the dinner table, to help her better practice the language.

She recalled a humorous incident when she had tried to ask her father to pass the water pitcher, but instead of “pass the water pitcher,” she’d actually said, “pour water on your head.” Her parents and brother had exchanged a funny look, then her father had shrugged, grabbed his glass of water, and dumped it over his head.

Oh how she missed them. She hoped her brother was all right, wherever he was. She supposed he’d been too ashamed to attend her trial or write to her in prison. His silent rejection had been a knife to the heart.

Jav and Rem finished speaking and said their goodbyes. Rem turned back to the security console while Jav escorted Leah toward the palace. Toward her new home.

## Chapter 6

Wyvonus was waiting in the middle of the temple when Jav guided Leah inside. She glanced around, her eyes growing wider as she peered at the large statues filling the room, all of which represented the most revered Wise Ones among his people. There

were also thousands of glimmering prayer lights floating in the air above her, which also caught her attention.

“I had heard you were taking a mate today, Jav,” Wyvonus said in Galactic Common. “I am honored you would seek me out to perform a blessing upon your mating union.”

“The honor is mine,” Jav replied. He quickly introduced the holy man to Leah, then the three of them walked deeper into the temple, closer to a wall where more prayer lights were glimmering.

“Do I need to do anything special?” Leah whispered to Jav. “Do I have to say anything? I fear I don’t speak a word of your language, so if I must repeat vows or something, I’m worried I’ll get it wrong.”

He cupped her face, thrilling at the softness of her cheeks beneath the pads of his thumbs as he stroked her delicate flesh. “Most humans can’t speak any Marttiadoxalian. Even the king’s human wife can only speak a few words. Most words in our language are physically impossible for a human to copy.”

“Well, that’s a relief, I guess.”

He smiled at her. “You needn’t say a word, sweet Leah. Just hold my hands and stare into my eyes while Wyvonus bestows the blessing. And don’t be alarmed if you see the lights moving around us.”

She sucked in a deep breath and then nodded. “Okay. I’m ready.”

He held her hands in his, marveling at how small they were. He lifted his eyes to hers and waited for the holy man to begin his chanting. When Wyvonus’ deep voice suddenly filled the temple, Leah flinched. Jav gave her a small, apologetic smile,

which she returned. He ought to have warned her how loud Wyvonus could be.

The floating prayer lights drifted down from the ceiling and started circling them as the holy man's chanting continued. Leah cast a brief, surprised look around herself before refocusing her gaze on Jav's.

A short time later, the temple was blanketed in abrupt silence. Wyvonus had stopped chanting. The lights swirled around them once more before returning to float along the walls and the ceiling.

He had the sudden urge to move closer to Leah and he followed his instinct. He leaned down and touched his forehead to hers, bringing his hands up to cup the back of her head. "Leah from Earth," he said. "Now you belong to me, in the eyes of the Gods."

A slight quiver affected her, causing her petite body to shift forward against him. The feel of her body pressing to his made his blood heat to scorching levels. He needed to get her alone in his quarters before he lost control.

He breathed in slow and deep, then released the breath just as gradually, before he forced himself to pull away from her. He reached for her hand again, though, unable to stop touching her.

After thanking Wyvonus, he guided Leah back into the halls of the palace, keeping a firm grip on her hand. He became acutely aware of her every movement next to him, her rapid footsteps, her quick intakes of breath, and the nervous manner in which she repeatedly tucked the same strand of hair behind her left ear.

"How long have you lived in the palace?" Her eyes drifted up to his as they rounded a corner.



“Not long, however, before I was given rooms in the palace, I lived in a dormitory on the palace grounds just beyond the gardens.”

## Page 8

*Source Creation Date: May 21, 2025, 4:58 am*

“Are you related to the king?” she asked.

“No, but I consider him a friend,” Jav said. “As you might have heard, King Vaath only recently came into power. The king before him—his father—committed crimes against our people and was banished from the Marttiadoxalian Empire. During the events which led to King Vaath’s ascension to the throne, I helped capture the enemies among us who were threatening our new way of life, an anti-Earther group that was being funded and directed by the former king. King Vaath rewarded me for my service to the Marttiadoxalian Empire by giving me rooms in the palace.”

“I heard about King Vaath’s rise to power,” she said, “though I assumed his father had died. So, you helped defeat anti-Earthers? Does that mean you’re an enforcer among your people?”

He directed her up a flight of stairs, allowing her to pause on the landing above so that she might look down at the statues lining the main entrance of the palace. Her eyes filled with wonder.

“No,” he finally responded. “I am not an enforcer. I’m a member of the Vash’arr, an elite group of Marttiadoxalian warriors.” For a reason he couldn’t fathom, he halted at telling her he was genetically enhanced. Partly because he didn’t wish to frighten her, particularly right before he claimed her as his mate, and also because admitting it aloud reminded him of the stark differences between him and non-enhanced warriors, those who had extended families and were raised in a home with at least one parent.

At last, they reached his quarters. His rooms sat on the top floor of the palace, which was considered a high honor, as King Vaath himself also lived on the highest level of

this grand structure. Jav ushered Leah through the entryway, his hand at her lower back.

He breathed in her feminine scent and felt a growl building in his throat. Gods, he wanted to strip her clothing off at once, carry her to the bedroom, and claim her as his.

His cock thickened in his pants, hardening so fast he felt momentarily dizzy. She peered up at him wordlessly, her cheeks flushed as her breathing grew increasingly rapid. When the undeniable scent of her arousal struck him, he finally released the growl he'd been holding back.

## Chapter 7

Why was Jav growling at her?

Leah hoped he wasn't upset with her for some reason, though she couldn't imagine what she might've done to make him angry. His eyes gleamed dark and dangerous, and his nostrils kept flaring. Furthermore, his muscles were tensed and he looked like a beast on the verge of attack.

She glanced down at herself and frowned. Her attire wasn't as nice as the other women aboard the spaceship. Most had been wearing dresses, likely the nicest outfits they possessed, and now she couldn't help but feel inadequate as her new mate stared down at her.

A heated wave of embarrassment stole through her. She swallowed hard and waited for him to say something. If he scolded her for the way she looked, it would break her heart.

Quickly, she erected a protective wall around herself, hoping she might manage to

shield herself from the worst of his insults. All the men she'd encountered at the prison, save for the kind elderly guard who'd helped her yesterday, had frequently insulted her. She'd been called every bad name she could think of during the last ten years.

She hadn't known Jav for long. What if he possessed a cruel side? He didn't look happy right now and she couldn't help but shudder under his intense stare.

Sure, he'd paid her a compliment earlier, telling her she was beautiful, but only after she praised his appearance first. What if he'd just been saying it to make her drop her guard?

Some of the officers at the prison had done similar things—they'd been strangely nice to her on occasion, only to lead her into a sense of false security and then knock her food tray out of her hands or call her a horrible name, just to watch the surprise fall over her when they betrayed her. She'd quickly learned this was a game many of them played.

Would Jav play such games with her?

To her shock, he stepped closer and took her face in his large, warm hands. Despite her fears, his touch elicited a surge of heat to flare between her thighs, and not for the first time in his presence either. She couldn't help it. It wasn't because he was the most attractive male she had ever seen, but because of the odd tension she continually felt flaring between them. It seemed as though the air around them was electrically charged.

"You are trembling, sweet Leah," he said, stroking his thumbs over her cheeks.

Goosebumps rose all over her body, even as warm pulses flowed through her, his nearness causing a delicious mingling of sensations within her.

“I can’t help it,” she confessed, as she hoped being somewhat honest with him wasn’t a mistake. Perhaps if she was honest with him about everything but her past, it would make up for the secrets she planned to conceal.

“You’re nervous.” He drew in a deep breath and another growl soon rumbled forth from his throat. “Ah, but you’re also sexually aroused. The scent of your femininity keeps increasing on the air. Do you have any idea, sweet Leah, how intoxicating you smell?”

She couldn’t stop a gasp from escaping her lips. She’d thought he was angry, given the dark look in his eye and his tense posture, in addition to the growling, but maybe she was reading him wrong.

Was he simply aroused?

As he stepped even closer, his huge muscular body moved against hers, and she immediately detected the hardness of his cock pressing to her stomach.

She sweltered in the sweat suit she was wearing and felt perspiration break out on her forehead. The heated waves inside her didn’t cease coming, but it soon became clear to her that it was from more than arousal.

Dizziness overcame her and suddenly the whole world went dark.

\* \* \*

“Leah? Leah?”

## Page 9

*Source Creation Date: May 21, 2025, 4:58 am*

Somewhere in the distance, Leah heard a man speaking her name. His deep voice vibrated over her, soothing her, despite the undeniable note of worry in his tone.

She didn't know where she was or what was happening, but she felt safe. She tried opening her eyes, but the effort left her exhausted, so she stopped trying for a while.

Instead, she allowed herself to drift, only vaguely aware of the sound of two distinct voices speaking in a language she couldn't understand.

But she recognized the tongue. It was Martian. The telltale buzzing and clicking noises of the alien language swirled in her head.

A familiar masculine scent reached her, and she breathed deep, trying to place it, when she heard the deep voice calling her name again.

Something was rubbed across her forehead and her skin instantly tingled and cooled. She also felt pressure at her arm, followed by an odd whooshing noise. Had someone given her a hypospray? And if so, why? Was she sick?

Her eyes finally opened and focused on a concerned looking purple Martian male hovering above her. He glanced behind him and called out what sounded like an order in his own tongue.

A second later, another Martian appeared above her. This alien appeared older than the purple one, and his skin was a deep orange shade.

All at once, her memories returned. Prison. The deal with the parole board. Traveling

to Mars. Meeting Jav. Receiving a blessing upon their mating union.

She was a mail order bride.

A Martian's mate.

She recalled feeling extremely hot and then... nothing. She must have passed out. Her face flamed at the knowledge.

She tried to sit up in the bed, only to realize she wasn't wearing any clothing. A thin sheet was draped over her. She was still wearing a bra and panties, though, for which she was grateful. At least Jav hadn't seen her completely naked yet. She clutched the sheet and sank back on the pillow, staring up at Jav and the orange Martian, who she surmised must be a doctor.

"Leah," Jav said, his voice tinged with relief. "Thank the Gods you are awake. How are you feeling?"

"A bit tired and confused," she admitted.

"You lost consciousness," he confirmed. "The doctor says you are suffering from exhaustion and poor nutrition. He believes that, combined with possibly becoming overheated, caused you to pass out."

"I'm sorry," she blurted, hating that he'd had to call a doctor. She didn't want to be any trouble to him, nor did she wish to draw attention to herself.

"You have no need to apologize," he replied, caressing a hand through her hair. "I am the one who is sorry. I ought to have noticed you weren't feeling well."

The orange Martian cleared his throat and met her gaze. "I have given you a vitamin

infusion and your first anti-aging nanobot treatment.”

“Anti-agingwhat?” Still clutching the sheet over her bosom, she managed to sit up against the pillows.

“All human females on Mars are given anti-aging nanobot treatments that allow them to match their lifespans to that of the average Marttioxoxalian male’s. The nanobot treatments will also strengthen you and heal nearly any ailment that might afflict you. You should start to feel better very soon. However, you must consume healthy foods and not skip meals.”

Leah took stock of her body. Nothing hurt. She was no longer as tired as when she first awoke. In fact, she felt as though her energy was returning to her rapidly. It was a strange sensation, as if she’d just consumed several cups of coffee, but without the jittery side effects of the caffeine.

“Thank you, doctor,” she said, shooting the orange Martian a brief smile. “Um, just how long is the average Martian’s lifespan?” She’d heard they lived much longer than humans but had never really given it any thought until this moment.

“About four hundred years,” the doctor replied in a casual tone, moving toward the bedroom door. He exchanged some words in rapid-fire Martian with Jav and then departed the room.

She looked at Jav. “Four hundred years? Is he serious?”

He grasped her hand and pulled it to his lips, placing a kiss upon her hand as his eyes gleamed with warmth. “Yes, four hundred years. The males of my kind mate for life. We typically become very attached to our females, so as soon as the first human females mated with us, our scientists began developing a treatment to lengthen their lives.”



She was stunned. Not only by the sudden knowledge that she would live far longer than she'd ever imagined possible, but by Jav's statement that the males of his kind became very attached to their females. Did that mean they usually fell in love? A lump formed in her throat at the prospect.

"Do you feel as though you could eat something now?" he asked.

She nodded. "Yes, I suppose so." She felt shy admitting she was hungry, but her stomach was rumbling, and it had been hours since she last ate anything. On the spaceship, she had helped herself to a quick snack in the kitchen, taken a shower and washed her hair, and then fallen asleep in one of the comfortable beds in the women's quarters for the remainder of the trip.

He kissed her hand again and rose to his feet. "Stay here, sweet Leah. I'll be back soon."

### Chapter 8

Jav cursed under his breath. He ought to have noticed that Leah was feeling unwell, but his desire to claim her as his mate had overwhelmed him, clouding his senses.

He stalked to the kitchen and headed for the food replicator, using it to make a large bowl of etaia soup, one of the most nutritious dishes he could think of, for it contained an array of vegetables and lean meats.

Next, he set about filling a tray with fresh fruit, a glass of water, and several slices of bread. He placed the soup on the tray, added the proper utensils and a cloth napkin, and hurried back to the bedroom where Leah was resting.

Her eyes lit up when she saw the food. “Wow, you’re a fast cook,” she said. “It smells delicious. Thank you, Jav, you are most kind.” Moisture glimmered in her eyes, but she blinked rapidly and it disappeared an instant later.

“I made it in the food replicator, but you’re very welcome.” He opened the legs of the tray and placed it over her lap, hoping this sustenance helped her feel better.

The color had returned to her face, a good sign of her returning health, likely due to the healing nanobots, but it pained him to know she had suffered on Earth. She’d come to him starving and with no possessions to her name.

“Mm, this is wonderful,” she said after swallowing the first bite of soup.

He pulled up a chair and sat next to her, unwilling to leave her alone. He watched as

she nibbled on the fruit and took several more bites of soup. She tried the bread and gave him an appreciative look.

“Who took my clothes off?” she asked, her cheeks turning pink. “You or the doctor?”

“I did,” he answered, rage filling him at the thought of anyone undressing her but him, even a doctor. “The doctor believed your attire might be the cause of your overheating, and he also wanted to ensure you weren’t injured anywhere.” Jav stifled a growl. He hadn’t liked it when the doctor had glimpsed her unclothed body, but at the time it couldn’t be helped.

“Thank you for taking care of me and calling for a doctor, Jav,” she said, setting her spoon down on the tray. Again, her eyes shone with moisture. She blinked and the glimmer of tears vanished. He was starting to get the sense that she wasn’t used to being taken care of, and he wanted to know more about her life on Earth.

“What family members did you leave behind in Zone 12?” he asked.

She swallowed hard and avoided his gaze. “I, um, didn’t leave any family members behind. My parents passed away when I was seventeen.”

“You don’t have any siblings?” he asked. “Or aunts or uncles or cousins?”

She shook her head, and she still wouldn’t meet his eyes. “No. None. I was an only child and my parents were both only children.”

Though he sensed this subject pained her, he pressed on. “What about friends?”

“I had friends when I was a child,” she said, her gaze becoming distant as she stared across the room, “but as I got older and started working, we sort of lost touch.”

Her confession left him astonished. He had assumed she would be leaving someone behind that she cared about, only to learn she'd truly had no one, at least not since her parents passed away when she was seventeen. He longed to take her in his arms and hold her, but the food tray was still on her lap and he didn't want to take it away if she wasn't finished eating yet.

"How old are you now?" he asked, wanting to know how many years she'd been without family.

"Twenty-eight."

Not for the first time today, his heart broke for her.

"Why did you sign up to become a mail order bride?" he asked. Her reasons for signing up might be obvious—she was without family, friends, and had likely been struggling to survive—but he wanted to hear it in her own words.

She opened her mouth, only to close it right away. After a while, she drew in a deep breath and finally replied. "My hours at the factory where I worked were reduced and I was no longer earning enough to pay for the room I rented. I had nowhere else to go."

He reached for her hand, lacing his fingers through hers. "You have a home now, sweet Leah, and a family. I am your family. Whatever you need, I will provide. It will be my honor to take care of you."

\* \* \*

Jav was being too nice to her.

She should want him to be nice to her, but she couldn't help feeling as though she

didn't deserve his kindness. She'd spent the last ten years in prison, paying for her crimes. If he discovered she'd been convicted of arson and robbery—for stealing from and burning down a Martian Affairs building—he probably wouldn't be so nice to her. Hell, he would probably put her on a ship and send her back to Earth.

Her stomach lurched. If that happened, would she be returned to prison?

Coldness gripped her at the thought of returning to the frigid windowless cell, only to be let outside once a week for an hour, usually when the smog was thickest over the city.

*Source Creation Date: May 21, 2025, 4:58 am*

Guilt plagued her over the lies she'd told Jav. About not having any siblings. And her claim about her hours at the factory getting reduced. She'd worked in one of the Martian-run factories from ages fifteen to eighteen, but she hadn't been employed by anyone when she'd left Earth. She hadn't just stretched the truth, she'd lied to his face, and more than once.

He had treated her with nothing but kindness thus far, and this fact only deepened her feelings of guilt. She wished she could've been like the other mail order brides on the spaceship.

A few of them had shared their reasons for leaving Earth with one another, and she'd eavesdropped while lying in one of the beds, just before she'd fallen asleep. Most had left for financial reasons, because their families owed back taxes or couldn't afford rent. Most mentioned giving the ten thousand galactic credits they were given upon signing up to become a Martian's bride to either family or friends.

The parole board hadn't mentioned the money and she wondered if it would be in her account if she checked. Not that she needed it. She glanced around the bedroom, still in awe over the spaciousness and beauty of Jav's quarters. Thus far, she had only glimpsed the foyer, a sitting room, and a bedroom. But the door to the bedroom was open, giving a view of another large room. He also apparently had a kitchen.

She'd grown up in a small home, then lived with her boyfriend for a year in a shed he'd rented from a friend, before she'd been sentenced to prison. She wasn't used to such opulence. Or such amazing views. She sat up higher and peered out the nearby window, transfixed by the sight of Ressiktron, the capital city of Mars.

“Are you finished eating?” Jav asked.

“Yes,” she said. “Thank you again, everything was delicious.”

He took her tray and departed the bedroom, calling over his shoulder that he would return to her side shortly.

Wanting to get out of bed, she looked around for her pants and sweatshirt, but she didn't spot her clothing anywhere. Now that her energy had returned and she had a full stomach, she had the urge to explore Jav's quarters and also get a better look out the windows.

She pulled the sheet off the bed and wrapped it around herself, then ventured into the large master bathroom. She closed the door, took care of business, washed her hands and face, and then resumed looking for her clothing.

When she exited the bathroom, she spotted a bundle of gray fabric in the corner of the bedroom, on the other side of a bedside table. She hurried toward her clothing, hoping to get dressed before Jav returned, even if the sweat suit was a bit too warm for this climate. She couldn't very well walk around naked all day or wrapped in nothing but a bedsheet.

A gasp left her when she picked up the pants. They were shredded in pieces. She found the shirt in the same condition. Confused, she stood up and looked at the doorway just as Jav entered the room.

“Why-why did you rip up my clothing?” she asked, shame washing through her once more. He'd mentioned providing for her, but she'd only just arrived on his planet and she didn't have an alternate outfit to change into. She wished she'd had at least one nice dress or outfit she could've brought with her to Mars, just so she wouldn't feel like such a charity case in front of her new mate.

Jav approached her, took the shredded clothing from her hands, and set it aside on a chair. “When the doctor mentioned your clothing might be causing you to overheat, sweet Leah, I immediately tore it from your body as quickly as I could.”

“Oh.” She found herself strangely touched by his admission.

“I realize you have nothing to wear, and I have just called for the royal seamstress to come take your measurements. She is an older Marttiadoxalian woman by the name of Nassia and she has promised to arrive shortly.”

Well, Jav had thought of everything, it would seem. She felt a bit foolish for worrying over what she would wear. But she’d traveled to Mars with nothing but the clothing on her back and losing the one thing she’d brought left her feeling vulnerable, reminding her just how much she would have to depend upon Jav for everything.

“That’s very nice of you, Jav,” she said.

At that moment, a melodious tune filled the room.

“That’s the doorbell. Stay here and I’ll bring Nassia to you.”

## Chapter 9

Jav waited in the sitting room while Nassia took care of Leah. He’d told Nassia to spare no expense when creating a wardrobe for his new mate. The royal seamstress had arrived with a variety of readymade gowns in differing sizes for Leah to try on, and the older female would also make many new clothing items for Leah.

He couldn’t wait to see Leah in her new dresses. He wanted to buy her expensive clothing and gifts, as well as surround her in luxury.



Her impoverishment on Earth had caused her to sign up to become a mail order bride. He wanted to give her all that she had gone without, including companionship. Her description of her life on Earth made him suspect she'd been lonely.

No family. No friends. No one to help her when she couldn't afford decent food or pay her rent. From what he had observed of the human females who came to Mars, they were just as much social creatures as the females of his own kind, and it shattered him to imagine her all alone on Earth, struggling to meet her most basic needs.

"Jav!" Nassia called out. "We're all done in here. Come take a look at your beautiful mate!"

He practically ran back to the bedroom, eager to return to Leah's side. When he first looked at her, clothed in a flowing purple gown that flared outward from her waist, the sight took his breath away. Leah smiled at him and tucked her hair behind her ears.

"I left five dresses hanging in the closet," Nassia said, gathering up a bag of clothing, likely the items that hadn't fit Leah. "I've provided her with undergarments and sleepwear, as well. In the top drawer right there." The seamstress gestured at a nearby dresser. "Only one pair of shoes I brought fit her, but now that we know her size, it won't be any trouble to acquire more."

"I want her to have a pair of slippers to match every dress," Jav found himself saying, as if he knew anything at all about Marttiadoxalian fashion.

"I'll have my assistant bring by some new shoes tomorrow morning," Nassia said, "and I should have some new custom gowns ready for Leah in a couple of days, as well as other clothing items."

## Page 12

*Source Creation Date: May 21, 2025, 4:58 am*

Jav and Leah both thanked the seamstress and she departed his quarters.

“That color sets off your eyes,” he said, unable to look away from Leah. Her dark eyes seemed more luminous than before.

“Thanks.” She looked at her feet for a moment before raising her gaze to his. “It’s the exact purple of your skin. Nassia said it was common for human females to wear clothing in the same shade as their mate’s skin.”

Jav glanced down at himself and then looked at the dress. “So it is.” He drew closer to her, longing to embrace her. Perhaps if he held her long enough, it would help heal some of the hurts in her past. Maybe his past, too.

“I can’t thank you enough for providing me with so many beautiful clothes. Nassia really doesn’t need to make me anything else, though. I have plenty to wear now.”

He reached for her hands, reveling in the softness of her skin. The smallest trace of her femininity reached him on the air and his cock instantly went rock hard. Did she long to mate with him as fiercely as he longed to mate with her? Gods, he could only hope.

He didn’t want to force her to mate with him before she was comfortable doing so, but at the same time he wasn’t certain how long he could withstand not being inside her, claiming her as his. He had heard stories about how Vash’arr warriors became absolutely ravenous for their mates after the first claiming.

Once he got a taste of her, he feared he wouldn’t be able to hold back.

Taking a deep breath, he decided he must give her honesty. It wouldn't be honorable if he didn't warn her about what might happen.

"Leah, I must tell you something."

"What is it?" She peered up at him, her expression a mix of curiosity and worry.

"Do you remember that I told you I'm a member of the Vash'arr, an elite group of Marttiadoxalian warriors?"

"Of course. Do you have to go to work right now? I would understand if you must leave for a while. I realize you are probably very busy."

"I don't have to go to work. The king has ordered me to take a brief leave of absence, so I will not need to leave your side for some time. Ten full days, in fact."

To his delight, she brightened. "Oh. That's good news, then. I must admit, I enjoy your company, Jav. You have been very kind to me."

Her words warmed his heart and he found himself leaning closer, desperate for another whiff of the moisture gathering between her thighs. He repressed a growl and focused on her eyes again, mesmerized by the tiny flecks of gold and their unique shapes.

"I am pleased to hear you enjoy my company, sweet Leah." He kissed each of her hands, then turned them so he could press his lips to the soft undersides of her wrists. When his tongue darted out of his mouth, he moaned as he licked her skin, unable to help himself.

Fluxx, he would be content to spend the rest of the day licking her all over and bringing her to pleasure.

She whimpered and shuddered against him.

“As I said, I must tell you something.” Desire heated his blood and he took several deep breaths, trying to calm his racing heart and tamp down the passions rising from deep within. He needed to warn her first. “The Vash’arr are genetically enhanced warriors.”

She sucked in a shaky breath. “Oh? Is that why you’re so much bigger than all the other Martians I’ve seen?”

“Yes, but it’s more than my size and my strength. I must warn you about something. When we mate...” His voice trailed off. How could he explain it when he wasn’t certain what would happen himself? He had only heard rumors, and maybe he had better self-control than most Vash’arr warriors. He was the commander of his unit, after all, the most skilled among his comrades.

“Will something unusual happen when we mate?” she asked. To his surprise, she didn’t appear the least bit frightened. Her eyes darkened and her breathing became unsteady. The scent of her arousal also increased in the air, causing another wave of heat to flow through him.

“Not precisely,” he said, “but I have heard that once a Vash’arr warrior mates for the first time, he often goes into a frenzy of lust and cannot get enough of his female. They will mate over and over again during a short time period.”

Her lips parted and a flush spread from her neck upwards, until her entire face became a shade of dark pink. She muttered something under her breath in her native tongue and glanced at the bed.

“I will not claim you until you are ready, sweet Leah. If you would like to wait several days, or longer, know that I will not force you.” He pressed a kiss to her

forehead before releasing his hold on her and backing away a few steps. “I want you to think on it.”

## Chapter 10

Leah stared at Jav as she tried to process all that he’d just told her.

Her face flamed when she thought about mating with him. God, he was so sexy, part of her just wanted to jump straight into bed with him, the consequences be damned.

When he’d described what would follow after their first mating as a frenzy of lust, her pussy had spasmed as she conjured a mental image of Jav taking her over and over again.

## Page 13

*Source Creation Date: May 21, 2025, 4:58 am*

Perhaps she ought to be more scared of him, but she wasn't. It was difficult to imagine him truly hurting her when he'd been so sweet to her thus far. Ten days. He had ten days off work. The idea of spending so much alone time with him lifted her spirits. She enjoyed his company and had started to think of him as a gentle giant.

Frenzy of lust.

Her face heated further.

"There are others?" she asked. "Other human females who have mated with Vash'arr warriors?"

"Yes," he replied, his voice strained. It sounded as though he were in pain.

"And they are all alive and well?" she asked in a somewhat teasing tone, trying to bring some light to the situation.

"Of course. A Martiaxoxalian male would never do his female any harm. We treasure our mates, sweet Leah, I promise you that." His dark eyes gleamed with truth.

She recalled what he'd told her when they first met. He'd claimed he'd spent his entire life waiting for her. He'd also mentioned it was a dream of his to have a family. Hope filled her at the thought. If they were ever blessed with children, she would hold those babies tight and smother them with love.

She'd done the math during her time in jail. A twenty-five-year sentence meant she

would be forty-three when she got out of prison, not an entirely impossible age to conceive a child, but a difficult age to start trying. Especially since there was the whole finding a decent father to settle down with dilemma she would've been facing too. A challenging prospect with a record like hers. Most men wouldn't want to marry a woman with a record because it meant she couldn't easily find a job, and it usually took two salaries for a family to survive in Zone 12, as well as most other zones on Earth.

In the confines of her cold jail cell, she had mourned the loss of the family she would never have. Before her arrest, she used to think she'd marry Steven and live happily-ever-after. What a fool she'd been, falling for a guy who had only wanted to use her.

She'd grown since then and was no longer as gullible as she used to be. Thank goodness for that. But she'd rushed into her relationship with Steven. Was she a fool to rush into her relationship with Jav? Maybe it was best to take it slow, wait a few days, or even longer, before they consummated their mating union.

To her shock, the idea of waiting, even another day, left her saddened. She liked it when Jav touched her, especially when he put his arms around her. He possessed a kind heart. And even if he was a complete jerk, they were still considered mates. She'd come to Mars to become his bride. Never look back.

They were bound to remain together for the rest of their days. He'd even had a doctor start treatments on her which would allow her to match his lifespan, and Marttiadoxalians mated for life.

She searched her heart and didn't find much fear. She was a little nervous about mating with Jav for the first time, but she'd already started to trust him.

He'd promised not to hurt her, and the sincerity gleaming in his eyes made it difficult for her to believe he might lie to her. She pushed away the guilt she felt over her own

lies and took a deep breath, meeting her mate's heated gaze.

"I don't want to wait, Jav," she announced, her tone coming out more formal than she'd intended. "I think we should mate right now."

\* \* \*

Jav stared at Leah as desire swept through him. His cock hardened to the point of painfulness and his balls tightened. The scent of his mate filled the air, teasing him with her heady essence.

He took a few steps closer to her but stopped short of touching her. He had a feeling, once he touched her this time, he would give in to the heated passions coursing through his body.

"Are you certain, sweet Leah?" he asked.

She bit her bottom lip and nodded. "I don't see the point in waiting. After all, we're going to spend the rest of our lives together. We might as well start now, don't you think? I do appreciate your patience though. It speaks for your character. It tells me you're not cruel or unfeeling. That's important to me."

He finally reached out to touch her, placing his hand on her shoulder. He stepped closer and peered into her pretty dark gaze, once more mesmerized by the golden flecks in her eyes. Her hair gleamed underneath the overhead lights and shifted slightly as a breeze entered through the open window.

"I vow to cherish you until the end of my days, Leah from Earth." With his other hand, he stroked her hair and cupped the back of her head.

"And I-I vow to honor our mating union as best I can," she said, her voice gentle as



the breeze ruffling her hair. “I was incredibly nervous about coming to Mars, but now that I’ve met you, Jav, I feel as though I’m getting a second chance.” Her eyes widened after she finished speaking and she pressed her lips together, as if she hadn’t meant to utter this confession aloud. But he was glad she’d said it, because it sounded as though she were speaking from the heart.

The scent of her arousal reached him again and he growled deep in his throat. He cupped her face and leaned down to press his lips to hers. He growled again and proceeded to kiss her thoroughly, delving his tongue inside to tangle with hers and savoring the vibration of her little whimpers.

Soon, he would take her to bed and bring her to the heights of ecstasy.

Despite his desperate need to claim her, he also longed to bring her pleasure. He wanted her writhing beneath him in the throes of passion, screaming out his name as she came again and again.

He broke the kiss, but only so he could sweep her up in his arms and carry her to the bed.

“I’m going to claim you now, sweet Leah. I’m going to make you mine.”

Chapter 11

*Source Creation Date: May 21, 2025, 4:58 am*

Leah's body hummed with pleasure as Jav pressed her down on the bed. They were both still dressed, but he kept kissing her, wonderfully passionate kisses that made her feel as though he really cared about her. And maybe he did.

I have been waiting my entire life to meet you.

His sweetly spoken words returned to her, leaving her warm all over. Did Marttiadoxalians fall in love at first sight? Given his thoughtful treatment of her thus far, she was starting to seriously wonder.

Occasionally, he trailed kisses down her neck and over the top of her cleavage. His skin was hard but smooth and she couldn't resist running her hands up and down his arms and feeling his huge muscles. The growls that had once frightened her now turned her on. Every time he made such a noise, the animalistic sound vibrated through her and caused her pussy to clench.

She gasped at the sensation of his erection pressing at her through the layers of their clothing. He ground his center to hers and groaned. He pulled back from kissing her neck and peered down at her, his nostrils flaring and his eyes black as the night. He was panting hard and perspiration gleamed on his forehead.

She was panting pretty hard herself and she drew in a few much-needed deep breaths as she awaited his next move. He growled and pulled her off the bed, but only so he could strip her clothing off. He yanked the dress over her head, leaving her in nothing but her bra and panties, some of the new undergarments that Nassia had given her. She was glad not to be wearing the ugly prison-issued underwear, even though she didn't think Jav cared much about what she was wearing right now. His only focus

was getting her naked.

After he started pulling her panties down, he made a noise of frustration in his throat and proceeded to rip the undergarment off her. He tore her bra off her next and tossed the shredded items to the floor.

His dark eyes roved over her naked body and his nostrils flared wider.

“You are breathtaking, sweet Leah,” he said.

Sweet Leah. She loved that he kept calling her that. After years of being alone, knowing there was no one in the world who cared about her, it made her want to cry. But she blinked rapidly and forced the emotion back. They were about to consummate their mating union and she didn’t want to spoil it with tears. Besides, she had cried enough over the years, in the darkness of the night when no one would see.

Pushing thoughts of Earth and past regrets aside, she focused on the huge purple Martian standing before her. Her neck ached from looking up at him, but she couldn’t tear her eyes from his. She reached out and tried pulling at the waistband of his pants, hoping to help him undress, but he pushed her hands away and did the job himself. He kicked off his boots and stripped his pants and shirt off faster than she could utter “oh my” under her breath.

It was still daylight. Late afternoon, she might guess, and there was plenty of natural light pouring into the room from the wide bedroom window and the skylight above, giving her a perfect view of Jav’s impressive, naked form.

She shook her head. “No, it’s you who is breathtaking,” she found herself saying, awed by the well-defined planes of his muscles. She would have never considered herself the type of girl to lust after an extremely attractive male, but the sight of him, so tall and huge and proudly naked, as well as handsome, left her quivering with

need.

Her gaze drifted lower and she gasped at the sight of his manhood.

“Oh my God,” she said in English, suddenly forgetting the Galactic Common translation. Her thoughts had become too muddled as she stared at his enormous appendage.

“Do not be afraid, sweet Leah.” He stepped forward and embraced her, pressing his erection against her stomach in the process. To her shock, his cock was hotter than the rest of his body. It felt as though his manhood was emitting pulses of heat upon her flesh.

He kissed her again, backing her against the bed until she collapsed on the mattress beneath him. He lifted her slightly and set her in the center of the large bed. His masculine scent surrounded her, and she continued running her hands over his arms and even his back, reveling in the hard but smooth feel of his armored skin.

When she touched the base of his horns, curious about what they would feel like, the growl that escaped him was nearly a roar. He proceeded to kiss his way down her body and settled his mouth between her thighs. She felt her eyes go wide and she started squirming around, her face flaming as she finally understood what he meant to do.

He grasped her thighs and gave her a surprisingly stern look. “Your scent has been driving me wild. I must taste you, Leah.” His hands trembled upon her thighs and she realized he was shaking with need.

Obedying his command, she rested back upon a pillow and parted her legs wider. He dipped his head back down between her thighs and she cried out when he licked the seam of her pussy lips.

His tongue was large and warm, covering her entire center as she lurched upward to meet his touch. He paused and parted her folds, only to press one thick digit into her wetness. Pressure built within her as he started pumping that finger in and out of her, and he soon resumed licking her intimate parts, this time focusing his attention on her pulsing clit.

She gasped at the overwhelming sensation and continually lifted her hips, thrusting her center against his face as the waves of pleasure rushed through her, causing her to whimper and moan and make all other sorts of noises she'd never made before.

"I want to feel you coming upon my tongue, sweet Leah." His eyes flickered up to hers and he increased the pressure of his tongue on her swollen nubbin.

Her mind whirled and her vision swam. She closed her eyes and leaned back on the pillow, crying out as Jav started thrusting his finger into her faster, as well as deeper. When he added a second finger a moment later, the feel of the sudden increased fullness, along with the continued pressure of his tongue caressing her clit, she found herself soaring toward oblivion.

## Chapter 12

The sight of Leah writhing in the throes of an orgasm made Jav's cock harden further. Gods, he had never seen anything so beautiful before. After she stopped gasping, he withdrew his fingers from her center, then waited until she caught her breath.

With his head still between her thighs, he breathed in the heady scent of her essence. Her pussy was slick and pink and swollen. Sofluxxingperfect. He longed to taste her all over again.

And so he did. He held her down, keeping a firm grasp upon her thighs, as he set about lavaging her pink, swollen parts with his tongue. He growled now and then,

causing his tongue to vibrate over her clit. Whenever he did this, she shuddered and cried out and grasped at the covers with frantic movements.

“You’re so lovely when in the midst of a release, little human,” he said. “I could watch you come over and over again. A thousandfluxxingtimes a day.”

He paid homage to her and brought her to the heights of pleasure repeatedly, even when she pleaded with him and claimed she couldn’t take any more. He kissed her inner thighs in between each session, allowing her the time to catch her breath before he resumed licking her and shoving his fingers into her wet heat.

*Source Creation Date: May 21, 2025, 4:58 am*

He was a bit surprised by his own actions. Earlier, he had imagined sinking his cock into her depths as soon as possible, once she agreed to mate with him. But now that she'd agreed to consummate their mating union, all he could think about was bringing her endless pleasure before he made a move to take any of his own.

Her dark locks flailed about her head as she thrashed around and moaned. She'd become so wet that her arousal had leaked upon her inner thighs, causing her flesh to glisten under a layer of her feminine essence.

The exquisite taste of her heated his blood, and his need for her suddenly increased. He brought her to yet another release and then leaned back, wiping his mouth on the back of his hand. He took in the sight of her panting and trembling upon the bed and knew he must have her now.

Settling himself atop her, he was careful not to put his full weight on her. He didn't wish to crush her or harm her in the slightest. She was a treasure, a gift from the Gods, though he couldn't imagine what good deed he'd performed during his life to justify receiving a female as sweet and responsive as Leah. He wasn't about to complain though.

She belonged to him now. She would always belong to him.

He met her eyes and cupped the side of her face. Her gaze was distant, almost dreamy, but she gave him a sweet smile that told him she was still cognizant of what was happening. She emitted a soft sigh and parted her thighs wider beneath him, arching her center up against his ready cock.

He growled and grasped her hips, then pushed forward into her welcoming entrance.

Gods.

His vision blurred and a wave of dizziness came over him. She was so tight, but a glance at her face showed she wasn't in any pain. She still appeared blissful, as if she was enjoying every moment of their first mating.

After withdrawing nearly the entire way from her pussy, he thrust back inside, going as deep as he could manage. She moaned and once more clawed at the sheets. Her breasts were full and pink-tipped, with hardened nipples that drew his gaze. As he commenced plunging in and out of her, he bent down and suckled upon her nipples, even dragging his teeth along the delicate buds.

She uttered phrases in her native tongue that he couldn't understand, so he started talking to her in his own language.

“You are the sweetest, most beautiful female I have ever beheld. You are the answer to my unspoken prayers, Leah, for I have always longed for a mate to call my own, a mate with whom I could start a family and build a happy life. I realize we don't know one another very well yet, but I promise I will always treat you with kindness. I will take care of you always, always, for you are now the force that keeps my heart beating.”

He resumed laving at her nipples and started driving into her tightness faster. And deeper.

\* \* \*

Leah loved it when Jav spoke to her in his native tongue. Perhaps it was because his eyes gleamed with affection and his voice was filled with warmth when he did so.



She peered at him as he suckled her nipples and once again reached for the base of his horns, just to see if her touch would make him growl repeatedly, as it had the first time she touched him there.

It worked, and a split-second later his tongue vibrated against her bosom as he released a deep, feral growl that caused her pussy to clench around his thrusting hardness. Oh God. Her head fell to the side as another wave of blinding pleasure rushed toward her.

She'd lost count of the orgasms he'd given her with the skillful movements of his tongue, and she felt utterly exhausted from having come over and over again during a short time, but she still felt yet another orgasm approaching. She couldn't have stopped it if she tried.

It seemed Jav was determined to wring every amount of pleasure from her body that he could summon, and she was putty in his masterful hands, helpless against the onslaught of passion he elicited from her.

Before she'd left Earth, she hadn't known it would be like this with her Martian mate. She had assumed the act of completing their mating union, as well as all the mating sessions afterward, would be technical affairs, the purpose of which was only to get her pregnant.

But as Jav continued shoving his hugeness into her, she felt as though her heart were softening toward him. He had been so kind to her today. Experiencing the primal force of his desire in the aftermath of his repeated kindnesses left her tingling all over, eager for every plunge of his massive cock.

If he hadn't gotten her so achy and wet before driving into her, she imagined this first mating session with him might hurt. But he'd given her so much pleasure and had taken his time preparing her for his cock that she wasn't experiencing the slightest

pinch of pain.

His massive body shuddered above her and he threw his head back, releasing a powerful roar that made the headboard rattle against the wall. Then he started pumping into her faster and deeper, each plunge stealing her breath. She screamed when a quick but intense orgasm stole over her, and she moaned at the feel of her insides contracting around Jav's plunging cock.

He gripped her hips harder, his fingers digging into her flesh. His dark gaze fixed on her.

"Leah. My mate," he said, his voice deeper than usual. "My female."

Then she felt the gush of his seed filling her, a steady pumping stream of warmth that coated her insides and leaked out onto her inner thighs.

He roared again.

## Chapter 13

Frenzy of lust, indeed.

Leah sat up in bed and winced at the soreness between her thighs. It was a pleasant ache though, the kind that reminded her of all the intimacies they had spent the last two days sharing.

At least she thought two full days had passed since she'd arrived on Mars.

*Source Creation Date: May 21, 2025, 4:58 am*

In between the frequent, rough mating sessions, she'd seen the sun set twice and the moons drift high in the sky. If she was keeping track correctly, that meant Jav still had eight days left before he must return to work.

Her stomach growled and she looked up as he entered the bedroom, carrying a tray piled high with food. They'd spent the last two days having sex over and over again, only pausing when they needed to eat or drink. She remembered one time in particular when she'd ran off to the bathroom, claiming she needed to take care of some business. She'd decided to take a quick shower while in the bathroom, only for Jav to hurl the door open and join her.

He'd bent her over as the water cascaded down upon them and shoved his hard cock straight inside her, plunging deep and claiming her until he erupted in her depths, filling her with his seed for the umpteenth time.

If she didn't end up pregnant soon, she would be shocked.

"Here," Jav said, his eyes growing dark. "Eat quickly, my mate." Ever since the first time he'd claimed her, his voice always came out deep and strained. It sounded as though he were in pain, though he had assured her he felt fine. "I am simply ravenous for you," he had explained. "Eager to sink myself back into your tight depths. Eager to claim you over and over."

Leah tucked into the meal, completely starving after hours of nonstop sex. The food was delicious, as always, even the dishes she didn't recognize. Jav had a knack for replicating foods she enjoyed.

He sat next to her in bed, also helping himself to the meal. His hands shook as he reached for a piece of bread. Ever since he'd first claimed her, he had been shaking a lot. Sweating a lot, too. His forehead glistened under a sheen of perspiration. Whenever she inquired if he was all right, he would give her a long, heated look, then proceed to start claiming her all over again.

He had spoken to her very little and when he did say something longer than a quick command or a short sentence, he spoke to her in his native tongue.

She wondered how long his mating frenzy would last, but she doubted he had the answers. When he'd told her he was genetically enhanced, he hadn't been entirely certain what would happen, as he'd mentioned his knowledge of the Vash'arr mating lust came from rumors.

He ate several pieces of fruit and then shot to his feet, an urgency about him. He rushed into the bathroom and started opening and closing cabinets. She gulped down some water and watched him through the doorway, curious about what he was doing. Just as she was about to call out to him, he emerged from the bathroom holding a large jar.

He immediately picked up the food tray, set it on the bedside table, and gave her a pointed look tinged with impatience. "Spread your legs," he said. "Now."

After a deep breath, she did as he asked, leaning back on the pillows as she spread her legs. She was surprised when he opened the jar and scooped out a generous amount of clear salve. He spread the ointment upon her tender folds, then set the jar aside and looked her up and down.

"Does that make your soreness feel better, sweet Leah?"

Her heart lurched. It was the first time he'd called hersweet Leahin a while. Perhaps

he was starting to come down from the mating frenzy, his rational thoughts returning.

“Yes, actually, wow, it feels so much better.” She looked at him. “How-how did you know I was sore?” She hadn’t complained at all, and really, the soreness hadn’t been that bad, all things considered.

“I’ve mated with you over a hundred times during the last three days,” he said. “It is only logical that you would be sore, though I am certain the nanobots you recently received have helped abate the worst of your pain.”

“Three days? I-I thought only two days had passed.” She shook her head briefly, trying to center herself. She couldn’t believe she’d missed a full day. He really had been keeping her busy.

“Yes, it has been three days since I made you mine, sweet Leah.” He crawled to her and pressed his body to hers, a feral gleam in his dark eyes. “And I’m about to continue making you mine. Bend over the bed. Now.”

With his assistance, she somehow managed to make her legs work. She bent over the bed and he urged her thighs wide apart. He’d taken her from behind like this frequently, but she still experienced a delicious quaking shiver throughout her entire body, as if this was the very first time they would share this experience.

Hell, every time he mated with her, there was that sharp undercurrent of tension to their lovemaking, that same spark of newness and longing she’d experienced during their first mating session. Would the sense of newness ever cease?

Would he always leave her breathless with excitement, as if he was touching her for the very first time?

He gripped one of her hips, then dragged his hard cock through her wet folds. She

was already aching for him, whimpering and on the verge of begging him to shove inside her. When he teased her, even for a few moments, she sometimes became so frustrated that she almost yelled at him to just thrust into her already.

He started speaking in Marttiadoxalian and the foreign words washed over her. Sometimes, when he spoke to her in his own language, she liked to pretend he was confessing his love. She wanted to matter to someone. Did she matter to him? Did he truly hold her in affection?

He'd uttered a few flowery, heartfelt phrases to her in Galactic Common during her first day as his mate, but did he truly care about her? Was he starting to love her?

It was the weirdest fucking thing and maybe she was still on the verge of losing touch with reality, but she still felt as though her heart were opening to him, more and more with each hour they spent in one another's company. She could easily imagine herself falling wildly in love with him.

Jav finally pushed inside her, slamming into her with a force that took her breath away.

He groaned and growled and set a fast pace of claiming her. His balls slapped heavily upon her with each thrust, crashing against her pulsing clit.

She cried out her release as he pumped his seed into her, but he didn't allow her to get up after he finished. Instead, he ordered her to remain bent over the bed with his semen slipping out of her pussy to coat her inner thighs.

"I like it when you're covered in my seed," he said in a hoarse tone as he stepped back, as if to admire his handiwork. Then he pressed himself into her again, already hard and ready to claim her once more. It seemed he barely needed more than a few seconds in between mating sessions. It was no wonder he'd claimed her over a

hundred times in the last three days.

“Jav, please,” she begged. He was teasing her with a series of shallow thrusts that didn’t allow his balls to slap against her clit with much force.

*Source Creation Date: May 21, 2025, 4:58 am*

“Please what?” he asked. “Tell me what it is you need, sweet Leah, and perhaps I’ll be accommodating.”

Her face heated. Could she really ask for what she desired?

She resisted and pressed her lips together, telling herself she had her pride. Surely he would lose control at any moment and start rapidly fucking her again. Or would he? Slow minutes passed as he continued with the shallow thrusts, barely grazing her clit with his scrotum each time he sank into her depths.

“I can do this allfluxxingday,” he said, his voice threaded with amusement. “Tell me what you want. Tell me.”

She whimpered. He must truly be coming down from his frenzy of lust if he suddenly possessed this level of control. The bastard.

“I-I want you to fuck me. Hard. Please.” She buried her face in the covers, embarrassed by the words he’d just forced her to say, but to her great relief, he answered her desperate plea.

He gripped her hips harder and started driving into her with so much force, the bed moved several inches forward. He followed her as the bed continued screeching across the floor, fucking her fast and deep and allowing his balls to slam upon her clit.

She came with a hoarse cry.



Seconds later, she felt the warmth of his seed spilling into her yet again.

## Chapter 14

Leah stared at the star encrusted sky and marveled at the sight of Mars' two moons. Though Phobos and Deimos were smaller than Earth's single moon, as well as irregularly shaped, a sense of wonder filled her whenever she stood on the balcony of Jav's quarters and looked at the night sky. The unusual yet melodious singing of nocturnal insects added to the feeling of adventure, as well as her current view of the palace gardens, which contained many colorful flowers that glowed bright in the darkness.

Two strong arms circled her from behind, and Leah sighed with contentment when Jav's familiar masculine scent surrounded her. There was a cool breeze tonight and she'd been shivering a bit, despite the warm robe she'd borrowed from him, but his body heat instantly chased away the chill.

"I thought I'd find you here," he said, a deep murmur into her ear.

She turned in his arms. "I woke up and couldn't go back to sleep, so I thought I'd enjoy the view. Your planet is breathtaking at night, and so calm and peaceful."

During her years of incarceration, she had never dreamed she would one day set foot on a planet as lovely as terraformed Mars, let alone make it her permanent home. But here she was, secure in the embrace of her new mate while enjoying the most resplendent view she'd ever glimpsed.

"I'm glad you approve." He cupped her face, drawing her gaze to his. The light of the moons reflected in his large eyes.

His nostrils flared suddenly and a low growl rumbled from him, an indication that he

desired her again. But before he made a move to claim her, she wanted to know a little more about him. In the midst of their frequent mating sessions, she hadn't gotten a chance to ask him many questions about his past or his life on Mars. She simply knew he'd recently come to live in the palace and that he was a dedicated member of the Vash'arr.

"Jav, do you, um, have any family who live in Ressiktron?" she asked, hoping this wasn't a dangerous question to ask. She'd heard many of the Martians had lost female members of their families when the Xieandans poisoned the water supplies on their home planet, but she hoped he hadn't lost anyone he cared about during this attack on his people.

He guided her to a nearby chair, then sat down and gathered her in his lap. His naked thighs were sturdy and warm beneath her. Though she couldn't see his expression very well in the darkness, she sensed an abrupt change in his mood. Her question had struck a nerve.

"Wait," she said, holding up a hand. "You don't have to tell me if you don't want to. If it's too painful for you to talk about, you need not say a thing. I'll understand."

He leaned closer and pressed his face into her hair, taking a deep breath, and his arms tightened around her. He pulled back to stare into her eyes and ran a hand through her locks.

"No, it's all right. I want to tell you." He paused and drew in another deep breath. "I do not have any family. All Vash'arr are taken from an orphanage at an early age. I was among the first order of Vash'arr to receive genetic enhancements."

"I-I had no idea." All at once, she doubted he'd had a very happy childhood and her heart broke for him. "I'm sorry," she said, simply because she didn't know what else to say.

“The scientists did not take me against my will,” he said in a somewhat defensive tone. “I volunteered. The idea of being able to help my people defeat our enemies filled me with purpose. I do not regret my decision to become a Vash’arr warrior.”

I have been waiting my entire life to meet you, sweet Leah.

The words he’d spoken during their first meeting came back to her now, suddenly more meaningful than when he’d first uttered them.

She shifted in his lap and stared into his dark gaze. “So, you were an orphan, but you used to wish for a family? Is that why...” Her voice trailed off and her face flushed, though she wasn’t certain why she felt so shy about the question she wanted to ask.

She swallowed hard and forced herself to continue.

“Is that why you said you’ve been waiting your entire life to meet me? Because you long for the family you never had?” She had the urge to press his head to her bosom and hug him as tightly as she could, all the while promising that she was now his family and one day they would have children of their very own. But she froze in his lap, waiting for his reply.

After a long silence, he nodded. “Yes, that is correct.” He pressed a lingering kiss to her forehead, and she inhaled deeply, savoring the fragrant yet manly scent of him. “And now you are here, in my arms. My forever mate.” His deep but calm voice reverberated over her, momentarily drowning out the noise of the nighttime insects.

*Source Creation Date: May 21, 2025, 4:58 am*

Her heart fluttered at his words. She reached for him and stroked the side of his face. He tilted his head into her touch. Her throat burned and she struggled to issue the words that now rested on the tip of her tongue.

But, finally, she found her voice.

“On my first day on your planet, you told me that I’m now part of your family, Jav. You said you would always take care of me. I came here, frightened and not knowing what to expect from my mate, a male I’d never met before, and you made me feel safe. I-I want you to know that I will strive to always take care of you as well. You’re my family, too, and one day, we’re going to have a bunch of children. I just know it.” She smiled. An image of Jav chasing around a little purple half-Martian half-human child flitted through her mind, lifting her spirits and making her heart ache for the children they would one day have.

Never look back.

Thomas’ words came to her unbidden, as if on the breeze that was ruffling her hair, and she repeated his words of advice in her head, until it became a mantra for her future. Never look back, never look back, never look back. She couldn’t embark upon the second chance she wanted with Jav unless she stopped looking back.

Jav kissed her forehead again and then rose to his feet while still holding her. The light from the moons was still reflecting in his eyes, and she privately mused that he looked just as beautiful in the moonlight as he did in the sunlight.

“Your words have stirred my soul, sweet Leah. Truly, you are a blessing from the

Gods.”

He carried her back to the bedroom and laid her out upon the covers, his eyes filled with a reverence that stunned her to her very core. His nostrils flared wide as he peeled the robe off her, baring her to his gaze.

He crawled atop her and kissed her, a soft, sweet kiss that soon turned urgent and demanding, their growing passion borne from the tender exchange on the balcony.

Jav’s masterful kisses and caresses left her writhing and moaning beneath him. She was eager for him to claim her, to sink his hugeness inside her.

When he finally surged forward into her tight depths, he set a rapid pace and claimed her with abandon, until they cried out their mutual releases and collapsed in one another’s arms.

## Chapter 15

On day six, Jav announced he was taking Leah to the banquet hall for the evening meal. Shocked, she stared at him, wondering if she’d heard him correctly.

“You mean we’re finally going to leave this room?” She gave him a playful smile and ran a hand over his muscled chest. “And here I thought I was your prisoner.”

He chuckled deep in his throat, a sexy noise that made her pussy quiver. His nostrils flared and he gave her an accusing look. She flushed, knowing he could always smell her arousal.

“Yes, we’re finally leaving this room,” he said, “though not until I’ve taken you again.”

He practically attacked her and she welcomed his rough ministrations as he brought her to release with his mouth, then bent her over the bed for a long hard mating. She rested upon the bed as he claimed her, holding on to the covers and savoring the delicious spasms tightening within her every time he plunged into her depths.

She mused that they would need to take another shower after this. It probably wouldn't be polite if they showed up at the banquet hall smelling of sex.

He came inside her with a roar, then he withdrew from her center and scooped her up in his arms. As if reading her mind, he carried her into the bathroom. He sat on the edge of the tub and pressed the controls. A moment later, the tub started filling with steaming water. Another press of a button and the pleasant scent of yakkarro, a traditional Marttiadoxalian herb he liked, drifted up from the water. The aroma reminded her of eucalyptus and it always left her very relaxed.

After a leisurely bath, during which he held her in his arms the entire time, they started getting ready for dinner. While Leah had enjoyed the last six days with Jav, the two of them all alone in his quarters, immensely, she found herself looking forward to exploring the palace more and meeting some of the people who lived here. He had promised to introduce her to King Vaath and the queen, a human woman named Esmay. As she donned another purple dress that matched the tone of Jav's skin, she exhaled a shaky breath, hoping all went well during the banquet.

She very much wanted to make a good impression upon Jav's friends. He claimed he was friends with the king, which made her a bit nervous, considering the fact that she was an ex-con, but she couldn't spend the rest of her life wallowing in the past. Never look back.

As she stood in front of the closet mirror, fixing her hair, she promised herself she was going to start actively looking forward. The first step, though, was forgiving herself over her past mistakes. If she forgave herself, then maybe whenever thoughts

of the past entered her mind unbidden, she wouldn't feel so rotten anymore.

People grew. People changed. She wasn't the same girl she'd been at eighteen, so foolishly lovestruck by the boy who was promising her the world, that it hadn't taken much convincing when he'd asked her to help rob the local Martian Affairs building. She hadn't known they would set fire to it afterward, thus endangering the lives of those living in the surrounding buildings, but that didn't excuse her participation.

She'd learned a difficult lesson and liked to think she was wiser now, as well as better at reading people.

"You look radiant," Jav said, interrupting her thoughts. He moved behind her and wrapped his arms around her, and she met his eyes in the mirror with a smile.

"Thank you, Jav," she replied, feeling her cheeks heat. She was fairly certain no one had ever called her radiant before, and his compliment warmed her all over.

He was wearing a black uniform that looked a bit more formal than the one he'd been wearing when he met her on the spaceship six days ago. He looked very handsome and her heart raced at the prospect of watching him undress, perhaps later when they returned to his quarters.

His nostrils flared and he gave her a stern glance. "Stop it," he said.

"Stop what?" she asked, feigning innocence.

He leaned closer. "Stop desiring me, or we will never make it to the banquet hall."

*Source Creation Date: May 21, 2025, 4:58 am*

“Well it’s not my fault you look so delicious in that uniform.” Actually, she was pretty sure he’d look hot no matter what he wore.

She giggled when he gave her another sharp look as he escorted her out of his quarters and into the wide corridors of the palace.

It felt nice to stretch her legs for the first time in days and she didn’t mind that Jav was walking fast. She held onto his arm as he escorted her down several flights of stairs. She still couldn’t believe how large the palace was.

The impressive structure contained numerous windows and huge skylights that allowed in plenty of natural light. There were potted plants and flowers everywhere she looked, as well as several trees that were growing straight out of the floors. Intricate patterns and images were carved into the orange stone walls. The large statues of Marttiadoxalian males, all of which she supposed depicted former kings, seemed to stand guard over all.

“We’re almost there,” Jav said, giving her a smile.

A minute later, they entered the huge banquet hall. Leah hadn’t expected the place to be so crowded. There had to be at least two hundred people here. She scanned the room and noticed a head table, where a blue Martian sat next to a golden-haired human woman. There were other Martian males seated on either side of them, most of them with orange skin.

“Come, my mate,” Jav said, “and I will introduce you to the king and queen.”



## Chapter 16

“Welcome to Mars, and to the palace. I am so pleased to finally meet Jav’s mate.”

Jav watched as Queen Esmay welcomed Leah and gave her a hug. Leah appeared rather stunned by the warm reception, but she eventually returned Queen Esmay’s hug and the two human females started chatting animatedly.

“Sit with us,” King Vaath said, gesturing at the two empty seats on his right side.

“You honor us,” Jav replied as he nodded to Leah and pointed at her chair. He helped her into her seat and then took a seat beside her.

Several palace guards, as well as a few members of the Vash’arr, approached the table throughout their meal, anxious to congratulate Jav and Leah on their new mating union. Leah seemed to beam under the attention and she was friendly to all who came up to talk to them. She was especially excited to meet the other human females who lived in the palace and on the palace grounds.

“You must join us in the banquet hall even when Jav is away on a mission,” Queen Esmay said to Leah. “You are always welcome at the head table.”

“That is very kind of you, Queen Esmay. Thank you.”

“Please, just call me Esmay. Feels strange being called a queen all of a sudden,” the blonde female said with a laugh. “Especially when I grew up in a two-bedroom apartment in New York City.”

“Very well. Esmay. I’m from Zone 12. The city of Richmond, more specifically.”

The king struck up a conversation with Jav about a new order of Vash’arr who were

almost ready for training, and Jav upheld his end of the conversation while still listening in on what the queen and Leah were talking about. Leah had told him little about her life on Earth and he was curious to see if she might open up more to a female of her own kind, especially when the wine was flowing freely.

“Congratulations on your baby,” Leah said. “When are you due?”

“In about three months.” Queen Esmay patted her stomach. “It feels as though I could burst at any moment though. Half-Marttiadoxalian half-human babies are huge.”

As the king continued talking to Jav about the new order of Vash’arr warriors, Jav noticed a petite human female with long black hair approaching the head table. The woman walked straight up to the queen and Leah, introducing herself as Miranda.

“I recognize you from the spaceship,” Leah said. “We traveled here together from Zone 12.”

“Yes, we did.” Miranda fidgeted in place, as if she was nervous. “About that. I am sorry I did not talk to you at all, but given how you were dressed and that you arrived so late, I sort of thought you were from the—oh! Oh no!” The black-haired female jumped back as the contents of a pitcher of water spilled all over the front of her dress.

Leah stared at Miranda in horror. “I-I am so sorry. I’m usually not so clumsy.”

“It’s all right. It was just an accident,” Queen Esmay said in a reassuring tone.

Servants rushed in to clean up the mess, one of them handing a towel to Miranda.

“Truly, I am so sorry,” Leah said. “Here, let me help you.”

“No, it’s okay. I’ve got it.” Miranda dabbed at the front of her dress with the towel. “I should be getting back to my mate now. It was nice meeting you both.”

For the remainder of the meal, Jav noticed that Leah was unusually quiet. She had been filled with energy and quite talkative when they first arrived, but now she was answering the queen’s occasional questions with one-word answers and not contributing to their conversation at all. He sensed her dismay and wondered if she was embarrassed over the water incident.

He found it strange. After all, it had been an accident. Hadn’t it?

*Source Creation Date: May 21, 2025, 4:58 am*

But maybe it hadn't. He had noticed she glanced at the pitcher just before knocking it over.

He replayed the scene in his mind and then recalled something Miranda had said just before the water spilled. The black-haired female had mentioned something about not speaking to Leah while aboard the spaceship, hinting that it had something to do with the way she had been dressed. Jav puzzled over this. True, Leah had been dressed a bit strangely upon her arrival on his planet, compared to the other human women aboard the ship, anyway.

Had her attire and the fact that she'd arrived late signaled something to the other women? Something that would cause them not to speak to her?

Wanting to speak with Leah alone, he reached for her hand. "Are you finished eating?"

She nodded, looking relieved. She obviously wished to leave the banquet hall.

Jav and Leah said their goodbyes to the king and queen. He ushered his mate out into the corridor with a hand at her lower back, guiding her through the crowd. She was silent during the walk back to his quarters, which only troubled him further.

"Are you feeling all right?" he asked once they reached the top floor of the palace. The windows of this corridor were open, allowing a view of the moons hovering in the sky. A cool breeze entered to ruffle her hair as she glanced up at him, her demeanor uneasy.

“Oh, I’m feeling great,” she said, the enthusiasm in her voice clashing with the worried glint in her eyes.

She’s hiding something. He didn’t want to accuse her of lying, but he felt it in his bones. He guided her inside his quarters and turned her to face him as the doors zipped shut behind them.

“The human female named Miranda,” he said. “She upset you.”

“What? No, she didn’t,” Leah replied quickly. “I was happy to meet her.”

“I was watching you as the two of you were speaking. Before you spilled the water, I saw you glance down at the water pitcher, then you reached forward and knocked it over.” As he replayed the event in his mind, it didn’t seem as though it had been an accident. “You spilled water on her in order to keep her from finishing whatever it was she was about to say,” he said, careful to keep his tone gentle. “Something about the way you were dressed and not speaking to you aboard the spaceship. Something about being from the...what? What was it you thought Miranda was going to say?”

Leah went pale and started backing away. “I-I am suddenly not feeling well. Excuse me.” She turned and headed for the bedroom. A few seconds later, he heard the closing of the bathroom door.

What was she hiding?

Jav stared after her, completely at a loss. But he was determined to discover what was bothering his mate. He strode into his study and sat down at his video comm.

“Call the Martian Affairs office located in the city of Richmond in Zone 12.”

Chapter 17

Leah sat in a chair next to the bathtub, her mind whirling as her stomach twisted into knot after knot. She ran a hand through her hair and tried to think. She hadn't realized Jav was paying attention to her conversation with Miranda. She'd thought he was busy speaking with the king. But apparently, he'd not only heard every word, but he'd been watching her too.

He knew she'd knocked the water pitcher over on purpose.

Not only that, but he surmised she'd done it to keep Miranda quiet. To stop her from saying something about Leah's past and where she came from. Tears burned in her eyes. Fuck. She glanced at the door. She was a bit surprised Jav hadn't followed her in here, but she was glad to have some privacy.

She had lied to him. Numerous times. How would he react if he found out?

She thought about Thomas' advice to keep the story about her past boring. Well, she'd tried that, but she hadn't expected a woman from the spaceship would approach her like that in the banquet hall. She didn't think Miranda had walked up to her with bad intentions. The young woman's apology for not speaking to her aboard the spaceship had sounded genuine.

Leah sighed and scrubbed a hand over her face. She eyed the door. Jav was probably waiting for her to emerge and tell him something.

But what should she say? She despaired over the prospect of telling him more lies, but she didn't know what else to do. She racked her brain to come up with a story, albeit an untrue one, that he might find plausible.

A knock at the door startled a gasp from her.

Shit. She stood up on shaky legs, dreading what she was about to do. Jav had been so

nice to her. He didn't deserve more of her lies.

"Leah?" he said. "Are you feeling any better? Would you like me to summon the doctor?"

Her stomach flipped. "Be there in a moment! I'm feeling much better though!" she called. "No need to bother the doctor."

She quickly splashed some cold water on her face and stood before the mirror, trying to make herself look presentable. Well, she looked fine, it was just the expression on her face that was the problem. She forced a pleasant smile, hoping Jav would buy it, and strode out the door.

Her mate approached her, his eyes filled with so much concern that she almost broke down and confessed her horrible secret to him on the spot. But the concrete walls of her jail cell flashed in her mind and she soon pushed that idea aside. It was a risk she simply couldn't take.

*Source Creation Date: May 21, 2025, 4:58 am*

“Sorry about that,” she said, still smiling. “I must have eaten too much. I’m feeling perfectly fine now, though.”

His face brightened and he placed his hands gently upon her shoulders. It was dark outside, but the sconces lining the walls inside his quarters shone brightly, accentuating the lines of his sculpted muscles. He’d already gotten partially undressed and was missing his shirt, though he was still wearing pants. The black pants were form-fitting though and didn’t leave much to the imagination. A glance down and she could easily notice the bulge of his sudden erection.

Her heart skipped a beat. Despite their little argument, if it could even be called that, he desired her in this moment. Of course, they’d just gone a few hours without mating, the longest time since he’d first claimed her six days ago. Maybe his mating lust was returning. She could only hope. It would provide the perfect distraction. Perhaps she could make him forget all about Miranda and the water pitcher.

Cupping her face in his hands, he leaned closer, until his forehead was touching hers. She breathed in his masculine scent, musing that it was tinged with the aroma of the eucalyptus-like herb he always added to their baths. His nearness brought her comfort, muting the intensity of her worries, though they didn’t quite abate.

“My sweet Leah,” he said. “You are my mate. It doesn’t matter to me where you came from.”

“I-I’m from Zone 12. The city of Richmond. I swear that’s the truth.”

“I know you’re from Zone 12,” he replied. “For that is where the spaceship that



delivered you to Mars six days ago departed from. All the brides aboard the ship were from Zone 12.”

She fell silent, unsure of what she ought to say. She didn’t want to lie to him unless he pressed her harder for the truth she desperately wished to conceal.

“Before you came here, you lived alone in Zone 12?” he asked in a calm voice.

“Yes, as I’ve told you. I lived alone and I worked in a factory.” Her stomach twisted.

“And the clothes you were wearing upon your arrival,” he said, “why did Miranda mention your clothing? And why would your attire prevent her from speaking to you on the spaceship?”

Her mouth went dry. She peered into Jav’s dark gaze, wishing she was someone else right now. Anyone else. Anyone but the stupid girl who’d let her boyfriend convince her into serving as a lookout that night. When she’d hesitated, he had promised her an even split of the galactic credits they stole. Desperate to please him and also eager for a payout that might be large enough to lead to financial security, she had acquiesced to his demands and in doing so made the biggest mistake of her life.

“Leah?” Jav prompted, his tone gentle as ever. “I would like to understand. Tell me. Please.”

“All the other women aboard the spaceship were wearing their nicest clothing,” she blurted. “Most of them were wearing dresses. Many of them spent some time before we landed putting on makeup and doing their hair. But I-I didn’t have anything similar that I could bring with me. I think the other women looked down on me because of the poor way I was dressed and that’s why Miranda didn’t talk to me. As I told you, I worked in a factory, but my hours were cut and I could no longer afford rent.

“To make ends meet, I sold all my belongings, including the few items of clothing I possessed, in hopes that I could find another job with more hours before my rent was due. But I wasn’t able to find another job. So, I went to the Martian Affairs building, wearing the last outfit I had left, which I kept because it was the warmest, and signed up to become a mail order bride.

“Based upon how I looked, Miranda and the other women probably thought I came from the streets, and they probably worried I was a pickpocket or something. There’s a high level of crime in Zone 12 and I don’t blame them for being wary of me. I suspect that is what Miranda had been about to say. But I didn’t push the water pitcher on her on purpose. That truly was an accident.”

The lie escaped her lips much easier than she had anticipated. It seemed once she started telling the fabricated story, the rest of it just flowed out of her. She pushed away the guilt she felt over telling Jav such an elaborate untruth.

“I see.” His eyes gleamed with compassion and he drew her closer, brushing his fingers through her hair. “Why were you late boarding the spaceship? Miranda mentioned that, too.”

“I-I was the last bride to go through processing in the Martian Affairs building, and the clerk was having difficulty with her computer.”

Jav nodded, his visage thoughtful. “I believe I understand now.” His eyes filled with regret in the next moment. “I am sorry for accusing you of knocking the pitcher over on purpose.”

Leah waved a hand in the air in a dismissive manner. “Oh, it’s all right. I’m not upset with you. It happened so fast.” She exhaled a deep breath and felt utter relief when Jav seemed to accept her elaborate story.

She prayed he never discovered the truth, and she also promised herself she would never lie to him again. She wanted to be a good mate to Jav. She truly wanted Mars to be her second chance.

Never look back.

## Chapter 18

It saddened Jav to learn Miranda, as well as the other human females aboard the spaceship, had refrained from speaking to Leah simply because of the way she was dressed, simply because they thought she might've been living on the streets and stealing to survive. It bothered him that the females had judged her so harshly, especially when the majority of them were probably fleeing bad circumstances as well. He hadn't known human females could be so concerned with appearances and his heart ached for how alone Leah must have felt during the journey to Mars.

When he'd contacted the Martian Affairs offices in Zone 12, he hadn't been able to reach anyone who might help him find Leah's mail order bride application. The first clerk he'd spoken to had transferred him to another worker who'd informed him they were having technological difficulties and could not provide him with any assistance today.

Now that Leah had confessed what had happened on the spaceship, he decided not to follow up with Martian Affairs. But his desire to surround her in luxury and shower her with expensive gifts remained. He would contact Nassia again soon and ask the woman to pick out elegant jewelry to match all of the new dresses she was making for Leah.

He studied her while she sat next to him in bed, a book in her lap. A short while ago, a servant had knocked on the door with a gift from the queen—a box of books written in Leah's native language. Leah had immediately started reading one of the books, a

thick tome that had a picture of a human woman standing on the deck of a ship, the sea breeze blowing through her hair.

“There are many bookstores here in the city,” he said, reaching for her underneath the covers. He gave her thigh a gentle squeeze. “Most of them contain books written in Galactic Common, as well as some human tongues.”

“Really?” she set her book aside and turned to stare at him. “I’d had no idea. I thought perhaps Queen Esmay had brought these with her from Earth, or perhaps sent back home for a shipment of books.”

*Source Creation Date: May 21, 2025, 4:58 am*

“Many of the shops in the city sell items that cater to human females. After all, human females have been living on Mars for twenty years now. Since the war ended.” As soon as he mentioned the war, he regretted it. She’d told him she was twenty-eight years old, which meant she’d been a small child during the fighting. Did she remember much about it?

As if sensing his thoughts, she said, “My father built a bunker in our backyard well before humans made first contact with your people. I’m not certain what prompted him to do it, but I remember helping him put the final touches on it. He would always ask me to hand him tools. Anyway, after the fighting started, we hid in the bunker and didn’t come out until after Earth surrendered.”

“Were you frightened?”

“No. My parents made it fun. We played games and listened to music. They had me keep up with my studies, too, of course. I was only vaguely aware of what was going on. Sometimes I would awake in the middle of the night and hear my parents talking. Sometimes the ground would shake and I’d see my parents exchange a worried look. The war lasted for a few weeks and when we emerged, there wasn’t much left of our house. We had to continue living in the bunker until repairs could be made.”

“I am glad you had a safe place to hide during the war, sweet Leah.” He stroked her hair. “The thought of you frightened or in danger fills me with rage.”

“You were there, weren’t you?” she asked, though she sounded more curious than accusing. “The Vash’arr, you were on Earth fighting, is that correct?”

“Yes, I was there during the first attack and I stayed until Earth’s surrender.” He didn’t regret fighting the humans. They had attacked his people first. But it still saddened him to know she could’ve been injured in the fighting, had her parents not provided a safe location for her family to ride out the war. Many humans hadn’t been so lucky. Millions had died, though his people had been careful to keep civilian casualties low, instead focusing their efforts on human soldiers and political leaders.

Her breath danced across his chest as she exhaled. She turned further on her side and shifted closer to him. He draped an arm around her, feeling hopeful that she wasn’t pulling away from him after he’d confirmed he’d fought against her people.

“I figured you’d fought in the war.” She glanced away from him for a long moment, and when she finally returned her gaze to his, her eyes were brimming with emotion. “I-I’m glad you survived.”

Her words caused his heart to swell with tenderness. He sat up against the pillows, picked her up, and cradled her in his lap. He pressed a kiss to her forehead. When she wiggled slightly in his lap, his cock went hard and his desire for her ignited anew.

I’m glad you survived.

Her words kept repeating in his mind, bringing him hope for their future.

The sudden scent of her arousal reached him, and he could hold back no longer. He leaned down to kiss her, tangling his tongue with hers and growling into her mouth. She tasted like the sweet berries that had been served for dessert. He drank her in, unable to get enough, and he soon became lost in her scent, her taste, and her touch as she caressed the base of his horns as he continued kissing her.

“I want you, Jav,” she said, pulling back from his kiss. She squirmed in his lap. “I-I need to feel you inside me. Please.”

Another growl rumbled from him. Consumed by his increasing need, he placed her down on the bed and forced her legs apart with his knees. Her sweet but desperate plea to be claimed rang in his ears, prompting him to shove into her particularly hard. He gripped her hips and pumped into her.

“Is this what you want, my sweet Leah?” he asked, then bent over her to take one of her nipples between his teeth. He bit down, just hard enough to make her whimper. “Is that what you want? To be filled with your mate’s cock?”

A shuddering breath left her, and she soon started meeting his thrusts, arching her center upward each time he slammed into her depths. She was soaking wet and her pussy kept pulsing around him. His balls tightened and he groaned.

She whimpered louder and he reached for her clit, wanting to feel the heated pulses of her arousal. Still driving into her, his pace steady and rapid, he swirled his thumb overtop her swollen nubbin. She jerked underneath him and cried out. Moments later, he felt her insides contracting around him as she found her release.

Fluxx. A wave of primal satisfaction flowed through him. He liked bringing his sweet mate to the heights of pleasure. He liked watching her writhe and scream and whimper as she orgasmed on his plunging cock.

He withdrew from her, but only long enough to flip her over on the bed. He arranged her on her hands and knees, then pushed down on her lower back, forcing her back to arch and her center to rise straight up to meet his greedy cock. He gripped her hips and shoved into her, and the sound of his scrotum slapping against her soon filled the room.

The act of claiming her, and at her own request, was helping to close the divide that had opened between them earlier. He regretted that he’d accused her of spilling the water on purpose and treating her as though she were keeping a secret from him. But

she wasn't holding a grudge. She'd forgiven him.

She truly was the sweetest female he'd ever met. The treasure of his life.

I love her.

The realization struck him with a force that took his breath away. In the next instant, he erupted inside her, his seed pouring into her depths in a series of rapid spurts.

He stroked his hand up and down her back as he caught his breath. Then he withdrew from her center and gathered her up in his arms.

"Leah," he said, his lips at her ear. "My sweet mate. Know that I will cherish you always."

## Chapter 19

Slowly but surely, Leah was starting to feel as though she belonged on this planet.

She wandered through the corridors of the palace, still awed by the beauty of the structure even after two full weeks on Mars. She'd taken to exploring the palace while Jav attended to his duties with the Vash'arr each day.

Sometimes she would run into Queen Esmay and would receive an invitation to venture to the shopping district, which she always accepted, even though the invitations had made her a bit uneasy at first. She wasn't used to people being nice to her, nor was she used to having friends.



*Source Creation Date: May 21, 2025, 4:58 am*

On occasion, other human women who lived in the palace would join them during their adventures beyond the royal grounds. She'd met women who came from many different zones on Earth. Some of the females already had children with their Martian mates. Leah had never held a baby in her life, but during the last week she'd held at least a dozen.

And oh how she longed for a child of her very own. A child with Jav.

Would they ever be blessed with children?

She sighed and placed a hand upon her stomach, wondering if perhaps she was already pregnant. Given the amount of sex she'd had with Jav, it was certainly possible. If she was keeping track correctly, her period wasn't due for another week or two.

As Leah rounded a corridor, she bumped straight into another woman.

"Oh, I'm so sorry," she said, backing up. Her eyes widened when Miranda straightened in front of her, her hands upon the wall as she righted herself.

"No, I'm the one who's sorry," Miranda said, her voice shaking. It was then that Leah noticed the woman's eyes were swollen and red, as if she'd been crying recently.

"Miranda, are you all right?" Leah grasped her arm and gently guided her into an alcove at the end of the hall, which contained a private seating area.

Miranda drew in a shuddering breath and shook her head. "Not really. Pettak and I

got into an argument.”

“I’m sorry to hear that,” Leah said. “Would you like to talk about it?” She hadn’t run into Miranda since the night she’d spilled water on the woman, and while they didn’t know one another well, the fact that they were both mail order brides who were far from home made it feel as though there was a kinship of sorts between them.

Miranda growled under her breath and fisted her hands in her lap. “He wants to retire from being a palace guard and move to the other side of Mars, in one of the more rural settlements. He made the decision without even asking for my opinion.”

“And I take it you don’t wish to move?”

“No. My cousin, Andrea, lives right here in Ressiktron. I saw her the other day for the first time in years and it was wonderful. It was sheer luck that saw me mated to a Martian who lived in Ressiktron near Andrea and her mate, but Pettak knows how happy I was to see her again. But now he wants to move away and... and...” Her voice trailed off. She covered her face and sobbed.

Leah wrapped an arm around Miranda. “I’m so sorry. What made your Pettak decide to move so suddenly?”

“He says he’s been planning it for some time, since before I even came to Mars. But the jerk didn’t inform me about the move until today.” She sniffled. “I’d just started to feel happy here. It was starting to feel like home. But now I don’t know what will happen. I suppose I have no choice. I’ll have to move away with Pettak and be far away from my cousin.”

Leah’s heart ached for Miranda. She patted her on the shoulder, trying to think of something to say that might alleviate her grief. But it was a difficult situation, and it reminded Leah just how precarious her own situation on Mars was. Marttiadoxalian

males were in charge of this planet and their human mates were at their mercy.

“Has Pettak mentioned allowing you to return to Ressiktron for the occasional visit?” Leah asked gently, hoping the answer to the question was yes. If Pettak was refusing to allow Miranda to spend time with her cousin, that really would make him a jerk.

“Well, he hasn’t mentioned visiting yet. He was still talking when I stormed out of his quarters.” Miranda wiped her tears on the back of her hand and sat taller, looking a bit more composed. “It’s bad enough I won’t see my parents again—in person, anyway—and now to have Andrea back in my life, only to lose her again, it’s too much. Pettak doesn’t understand. He’s too stubborn.”

Leah thought about the time she’d spent with Queen Esmay and other women from the palace in recent days. Quite a few of them had mentioned their mates were stubborn or bossy. Some women also said their mates were possessive and rarely allowed them out of sight.

“It’s clear that Martian males are a bit different from their human counterparts,” Leah began, hoping she would be able to help. “I suppose all we can do is try to be patient and try to reason with them and pray that we’ll eventually find common ground. Do you think Pettak has grown to care for you?”

Miranda blushed, nodding. “Yes. He has told me he loves me several times, though I haven’t said it back yet. Seems too soon.”

Leah tried to push aside the jealousy that fell upon her at hearing Miranda’s confession. Jav hadn’t told Leah he loved her yet. She quickly reminded herself that he said plenty of other sweet things to her on a regular basis. He often told her she was a gift from the Gods. He kept telling her he cherished her and thought she was his treasure.

“You and Pettak haven’t been mated for very long,” Leah said, “and he is probably not used to having to run his plans by another person. I’m not trying to make excuses for him, but your mating union is as new to him as it is to you. It sounds as though he’s made an error in judgment, but perhaps he will come to his senses. But if he does decide to go through with the relocation, if he loves you then surely he will make sure you still get to spend time with your cousin. Perhaps you can visit the capital city and sometimes your cousin can visit you on the other side of Mars.”

“He has allowed me to speak with my parents and sisters using his video comm. They’re still all on Earth, of course. Hm. Maybe you’re right.” Miranda’s expression brightened. “Perhaps I shouldn’t have stormed out the way I did. I suppose he’s looking for me right now. Thank you for your advice, Leah. You are very wise.” Miranda gave Leah a hesitant look. “Have you been married before?”

Leah shook her head. “No, Jav is my first husband. Or mate. Whatever you want to call it.” She smiled, her heart filling with warmth as she imagined him returning home to her tonight.

“I see. Um, about last week,” Miranda said. “I’m sorry if I embarrassed you in the banquet hall. I just felt bad that I didn’t talk to you on the spaceship. I heard some of the other women whispering that you probably came from the prison. I should’ve ignored them and talked to you anyway. Friends?”

Leah smiled. “Friends.”

“Well, did you?” Miranda asked. “Did you come from the prison?”

Leah stared at the woman, unsure of what she should say. She had lied to Jav’s face, telling him the boring story about working in a factory and living alone. It still bothered her that she couldn’t confide in him, but she couldn’t risk being sent away.

Martians mated for life, but what would he do if he found out she wasn't what she seemed? Would he believe she was a danger to others? As close as she was becoming to the queen, it might present a problem. The palace guards, as well as the Vash'arr, were supposed to protect the king, the queen, and all other members of the royal family at all costs.

*Source Creation Date: May 21, 2025, 4:58 am*

“You don’t have to tell me if you don’t want to,” Miranda said after Leah was silent for too long.

“Let’s just say that I’d like to forget where I came from.”

“Fair enough.” Miranda patted Leah’s hand, then rose to her feet. “Well, I suppose I ought to go find Pettak. Thank you for speaking with me. I’ll be sure to find you and say goodbye if we do end up leaving Ressiktron.”

“I hope you’re able to come to an understanding with your mate. Good luck.”

After saying goodbye to Miranda, Leah decided to head for the gardens. On her way to the palace’s main entrance, she spotted Jav.

The sight of him, so big and tall and handsome, as he strode toward her, made her heart race with excitement. His black warrior’s uniform clung to his body, the form-fitting material accentuating his sizable muscles. His nostrils flared when he reached her, and he grabbed her hand without a word and led her down a corridor.

She was shocked when he urged her into an alcove and pulled a curtain to close them in. Her pulse increased as she stared up at him, wondering what he was planning to do. There was a heated look in his eyes, but surely he didn’t plan to claim her here. She could hear the footsteps of passersby in the corridor. They didn’t exactly have adequate privacy at the moment.

“Jav, wait. What are you—”

He grasped her hard and kissed her, cutting off her protests.

## Chapter 20

Jav couldn't wait until he brought Leah back to his quarters.

He had to have her. Rightfluxxingnow. But before he sank his cock into her welcoming depths, he had to taste her. His blood heated and his vision blurred as his craving for the sweetness between her thighs spurred him into action.

He pushed her back on the padded bench seat and started pushing her dress up, anxious to bare her to his gaze.

“Jav, for the love of God, we're in public. Someone might hear us.” She whimpered when he trailed two fingers over her pussy, touching her through the thin layer of her undergarments.

Meeting her gaze, he said, “Then you'd better be very, very quiet, my sweet mate.”

Pink suffused her cheeks and her eyes widened. She opened her mouth to protest again, but soon covered her mouth with one hand. He was touching her again, stroking his fingers along her intimate parts, teasing her overtop her panties. She jerked toward him and released a soft moan. Her eyes widened further and she clamped a second hand over her mouth.

“Naughty, naughty,” Jav said in a teasing tone. “You'd better control yourself, Leah, or the entire palace is going to know you're in here getting your pussy licked.”

“Jav, keep your voice down!” she whispered after briefly uncovering her mouth.

He chuckled and slipped a finger beneath her panties. With a light touch, he ran his

digit through her nether lips, groaning when he felt the warmth of her moisture.

“So wet,” he murmured. “You’re all wet and ready for my cock, aren’t you?”

She shuddered and whimpered, her thighs quivering as she rolled her hips toward him, seeking his touch even as she gave him a sharp look, still obviously nervous over the prospect of others hearing them. His enhanced senses would allow him to detect even the faintest of footsteps approaching, however. If anyone walked too close to the alcove, he would be ready in case they dared to peek inside.

With one quick movement, he tore Leah’s panties off her. He shoved the remnants of the fabric into his pocket and wagged his lower forehead ridges at her. “A souvenir,” he said.

Her eyes danced with humor for a moment, but her visage soon turned urgent when he pushed two thick fingers into her sopping wet entrance. She tensed around the intrusion and another soft whimper left her. Her body arched and she writhed upon the bench seat as he traced her clit with his tongue, savoring the sweet but pungent taste of her feminine arousal.

Gods, he couldn’t get enough of her, this beautiful human female who was his sweetest treasure.

He created a steady rhythm of thrusting into her tightness with his fingers, still circling his tongue over her pulsing clit. She continually whimpered and arched into his touch, so lovely, so responsive, and his cock hardened as his balls drew up tight.

Fluxx, he ached to be inside her now, but he wanted to feel her coming on his tongue first, wanted to feel her insides clamping down around his plunging digits as a quaking release stole through her.



The intoxicating scent of her was enough to drive him to madness. He rocked back on his heels for a moment, removing his tongue from her clit, and took a long inhale. He started growling, then quickly stopped himself when Leah shot him a worried look. He didn't wish for anyone to overhear them and walk too close to the alcove out of curiosity. He needed to stay quiet, just as he'd ordered her to do.

He returned his attention to her pussy, deepening the thrusts of his fingers and swirling his tongue faster over her clit. She came upon his mouth but a moment later, writhing and keening low in her throat, the slightest noise of pleasure, but he heard it. He also heard her shaky exhale and the rapid beating of her heart.

After wiping his mouth with the back of his hand, he fixed her with a commanding look.

“Turn around and bend over the bench, sweet Leah. You're going to take my cock from behind.”

\* \* \*

Leah quivered with need as she awaited the first thrust of Jav's cock. Even though she'd orgasmed but moments ago, she was aching for him anew, lost in a sea of primal cravings. She wanted him inside her right now, fucking her hard and fast. She also longed to feel the sharp pulses of his seed filling her when he reached the precipice of his own pleasure.

“Spread those legs wider. Wider. Good. Now lift your bottom up.”

Her face heated as she obeyed his directives. She could only imagine the sight she presented now, with her dress raised up and her bare ass on display, as well as the area between her legs. She could feel the wetness of her arousal on her inner thighs and suspected her pussy was still gleaming from it. The alcove was illuminated by two bright sconces, which only deepened her sense of vulnerability.

She was on display for her mate and he was about to claim her from behind.

When she felt the pressure of his cock sinking into her, she clamped her lips together and covered her mouth with both hands, trying to stifle the moans that were building in her throat.

Oh God yes. More.

She whimpered as he shoved all the way into her depths, then pulled out slightly only to shove fast and deep.

His fingers dug into her hips as he claimed her, the pace of his strokes increasing. She came twice while he pounded into her, unable to restrain herself when his balls slammed heavily upon her clit.

She lost all sense of time and place and was only aware of the sensations Jav was drawing from her, and the fullness of his huge cock in her pussy. Her hands fell away from her mouth and she panted breathlessly, adrift in the rising euphoria that only he could give her.

His manhood pulsed within her. Hard and hot and large.

Seconds later, she felt the first spurt of his essence.

It was the first time he'd ever come inside her without growling, and his body tensed behind her, making her think he was having a difficult time keeping quiet. This brought a smile to her lips, knowing that she could drive him to nearly lose control.

When his cock stopped throbbing inside her, he withdrew from her center and she immediately felt a cloth being placed between her legs, which soaked up the flow of semen that always trickled out of her after he came inside her. It still astounded her that Marttiadoxalian males could produce so much semen during one session of lovemaking.

She glanced over her shoulder, curious about where he'd gotten the cloth, only to see the light from the sconces dancing over his bare, muscled chest.

“Jav! What happened to your shirt?”

“It's between your thighs. I couldn't very well expect you to walk back to our quarters with my seed leaking down your legs, could I? You'd likely make a mess on the floor, and I think it would be rather impolite to expect the palace servants to clean

up after us.”

She chuckled. “But now you’re missing a shirt! What will people think when they see you leaving the alcove missing your shirt? I never see Martian males walking around the palace half dressed. People will talk.”

“Let them talk.”

They were four flights below their quarters, too. She shook her head in amusement.

“Really, Jav, you should let me go back to our rooms and fetch you a fresh shirt. I would be quick about it.” Of course, someone needed to carry the semen-soaked shirt back upstairs, too. They couldn’t just leave it here. Her face grew hot and she swallowed hard. Talk about the walk of shame. She chuckled again and turned around with Jav’s help.

He finished cleaning her up, rolled his soiled shirt into a tight ball, and somehow managed to shove it into his pants pocket. It bulged in his pocket ridiculously huge and she laughed at the sight.

He winked at her and drew her up in his arms, holding her tight against his chest. Her spirits soared. His playfulness never failed to surprise her, and she enjoyed this side of him. Not for the first time, she felt lucky to have been matched with him.

“Come, my mate. Let’s go get cleaned up for the evening meal. I will take you to the banquet hall tonight.”

## Chapter 21

As soon as they stepped out of the alcove, Leah and Jav came face to face with Wyvonus, the Wise One who had bestowed a blessing upon their mating union. She

felt her eyes widen as a full body flush overcame her. Oh dear. Had he heard anything?

She glanced down at herself and noticed her dress was deeply wrinkled. Reaching up slowly, she surreptitiously ran a hand through her mussed hair, trying to smooth it out.

The holy man pressed his hands together and inclined his head toward them in greeting, his expression betraying nothing.

Jav nodded politely at Wyvonus. “A blessed day to you, Wise One.”

“A blessed day to you both,” the holy man said, “and may the Gods continue to bless your mating union.”

*Source Creation Date: May 21, 2025, 4:58 am*

Leah couldn't be sure, but she thought she noticed the smallest hint of a smile upon Wyvonus' orange lips as he continued his way down the corridor. Well, at least he was walking in the opposite direction of the staircase. And at least this hallway was otherwise empty.

"He knows exactly what we were doing in there," Leah said, attempting to give Jav a cross look. Instead, she broke into a smile and soon laughed.

Jav returned her grin. "I imagine so. I'd better go find a new shirt." He wrapped an arm around her and escorted her out into the main corridors of the palace, where the well-traveled staircases curved upward to the higher levels.

She felt numerous pairs of eyes upon them but made a point not to look at anyone they passed. Ignoring their surroundings proved difficult, however, when the sound of Queen Esmay's voice reached them.

"Good evening, Leah and Jav."

"Good evening," Jav replied, inclining his head in the queen's direction.

"Yes, good evening," Leah said, her face growing hotter. Especially when she spotted a human female she'd never met before standing next to Esmay.

"We're on our way to dinner," Esmay said, giving Jav a strange look, likely wondering why in the hell he was walking through the palace corridors shirtless with a weird bulge sticking out of his pocket. Was Leah's hair still a mess? With her luck, probably. She wouldn't be surprised if they ran into King Vaath next, as he walked

through the halls with his horde of royal advisors following him.

“Perhaps we’ll see you there,” Leah said, taking a step back and hoping to extract herself from this conversation as quickly as possible.

“Yes, I am certain we will,” Esmay replied, then gestured at the beautiful dark-haired woman standing next to her. “But first, let me introduce my friend Tyra to you. She’s Rem’s mate. I believe you’ve met Rem.”

Ah, Rem. The grumpy looking green Marttiadoxalian she’d met on her first day on this planet—Jav’s friend who’d admitted them onto the palace grounds.

“It’s nice to meet you, Tyra,” Leah said with a smile as she shook the woman’s hand. “Yes, I met your mate about two weeks ago when I first arrived.”

“Rem mentioned he ran into you as Jav was bringing you to the palace. I’ve been looking forward to meeting you. Congratulations on your mating union,” Tyra said.

“Thank you, that is very kind,” Leah said, with a glance at her shirtless mate.

They exchanged a few more awkward pleasantries and said their farewells for the time being. Leah was relieved when no one else talked to them during their return to Jav’s quarters. Once they were inside, safe at last, she drew in a deep breath and turned to face her shirtless mate.

“You!” she said, placing her hands on her hips. “I can’t believe you—”

He silenced her with a kiss that made her toes curl. She tasted her own arousal on his lips and shuddered against him as he circled his arms around her.

A delicious pressure coiled in her lower belly and she found herself urging her center

against Jav, practically humping him in the entryway as he kissed her most thoroughly.

He tangled his fingers in her hair and gave her locks a gentle pull, forcing her head back as he deepened the kiss. She grasped at his crotch area, trying to free his cock, but she'd never been good at getting his pants open—damn difficult Martian fastenings—and he quickly brushed her hands out of the way and took over the task, freeing his huge erect manhood in one swift movement.

“On your knees.” He pressed down on her shoulders, urging her to the floor.

Her heart drummed fast in her chest. She sank to her knees, her gaze on her mate's formidable appendage, so long and thick and hard. Leaning forward, she parted her lips and allowed her breath to dance over the tip of his cock.

Growls emanated from him and he cupped her head in his hands, applying the slightest bit of pressure upon the back of her head, urging her to lean even closer and take him in her mouth. She reached for him, taking the base of his cock in her hand. His length jerked in her grasp as she brushed her lips against his hardness.

Then she finally took him in her mouth, whimpering around his mighty length as he pushed deep in her throat. She struggled to keep from gagging and was grateful when he paused in her mouth, allowing her to become used to his size. This was the first time she'd sucked his cock and she found she was enjoying herself more than she'd imagined.

His masculine scent washed over her. She reveled in his growls and moans, thrilled she could draw such noises of pleasure from him. And it seemed he was now releasing all the noises he'd held back in the alcove. A steady growl, interspersed with the occasional groan, issued from his throat.



Still holding the base of his cock, she started moving her head forward and back over his stiff length, delighting in the carnal way it pulsed hot and hard in her mouth, as if to instruct her to suck even faster. She happily obliged, increasing her pace and taking Jav deeper in her mouth.

Of course, he was so large that she'd never manage to take all of him, but she did her best, recalling all the times he'd put his mouth to her pussy and made her see stars. He was a generous lover and there were times she felt as though she wasn't doing enough for him, though she never heard him complain.

"Swallow all of it." His eyes blazed down at her, his expression one of pure rapture. "Swallow every last drop."

The unexpected order caused the quakes between her thighs to erupt full-force, and she whimpered around his huge cock as she tried to mentally prepare herself for the first spurt of his seed. He groaned and she tasted the saltiness of his essence filling her mouth and her throat.

She swallowed. Once. Twice. Then she lost track of her efforts as the spurts kept coming and she continued to swallow every last drop he gave her, the urge to please him overwhelming in its intensity. But the amount of his seed became too much and soon some of his semen escaped her lips to run down her cheeks and neck.

His manhood ceased pulsing and he pulled out of her mouth, cupping her face as he stared down at her. He ran a finger through the wetness on her cheek, the seed that had escaped her lips. He gave her a brief smile, though his eyes remained clouded with the remnants of lust. His next words sent a surge of excitement through her, causing her clit to throb unbearably and her nipples to tighten to the point of painfulness in the confines of her bra.

“My sweet Leah,” he said. “It appears as though you’re going to need more practice.”

### Chapter 22

Jav’s duties with the Vash’arr took him away from Leah on occasion, but for the most part he was never away from her for more than two days at a time. Luckily, all of the recent classified missions conducted by the Vash’arr had taken place on Earth. He and his team were skilled at finding their targets and eliminating them quickly or bringing them back to Mars to face questioning and judgment.

Today was such a day when Jav’s unit was bringing several human male prisoners back to Mars for an interrogation. The six human men, all members of a small resistance group that had taken to targeting Martian Affairs buildings on Earth, were being taken to the dungeons deep beneath the main levels of the palace.

The moons hovered high in the sky and the stars sparkled brightly overhead as Jav and his unit marched the human males into a side entrance of the palace. King Vaath wished to bear witness to the interrogations, otherwise the Vash’arr would have conducted their questioning while still aboard their spacecraft during the trip back to Mars.

Violent visions danced in Jav’s mind. He longed to crush the skulls of these human men, to make them suffer for having harmed others. Their attacks on the Martian Affairs buildings had left three dead—all human female clerks who’d worked in the mail order bride processing centers.

But before he could make them pay for their sins, it was necessary to learn whether or

not more attacks were being planned soon. Jav believed that with enough force applied during questioning, he could get each and every one of the human men to confess all. By the time he was finished with them, they would be telling him all their secrets, even those that were of no consequence, in the hopes that he would show them mercy.

He would show no such mercy.

Threats against Marttiadoxalians were serious, and his people did not take kindly to attacks. The group of men were responsible for setting fire to at least four Martian Affairs buildings, all of them in Zone 12, which happened to be the zone Leah had once called home.

It especially angered him, knowing that if the resistance group had decided to strike on the night of Leah's departure from Earth, she might've been harmed during the attack. He tightened his grip on the back of the human male he was dragging toward the dungeons.

"Please," the man said, "Please, don't hurt me. I'll tell you everything," the man whispered, shooting Jav a wide-eyed look of fear.

"Don't tell these motherfuckers anything!" another captive yelled behind them, and a moment later Jav heard the sound of a bone cracking. The man screamed and started sobbing, his brave words dying in his throat.

In Jav's experience, human men liked to behave in an arrogant manner during the beginning of their time in the dungeons. They would shout obscenities and refuse to divulge even the smallest detail to the Vash'arr or the palace guards who were questioning them. But apply the right amount of pain and the human males would reveal all.

Marttiadoxalian males, in contrast, rarely ever broke under the pain of torture. Most warriors of Jav's kind possessed the self-discipline to endure any agony their enemies inflicted. Jav had no respect for these human males, as he knew they would soon betray their own people by revealing secrets of their illegal resistance group.

Jav dragged his prisoner into a cold, damp cell and shoved him to the floor. The man curled up in the corner, trembling and muttering to himself in his native tongue. He was crying and it sounded as though he might be praying.

King Vaath's voice echoed in the corridor. "How many?"

"Six taken alive," came Rem's familiar voice. Though Rem wasn't a member of the Vash'arr, he was a formidable warrior and often assisted with Vash'arr operations. He had a talent for understanding the workings of humanmade weaponry, as well as destroying it. During the war against Earth, he'd deactivated a nuclear weapon that would've caused utter devastation upon a large force of Marttiadoxalians, Jav among them.

It was quickly decided that Jav would question his prisoner first. He entered the cell and closed the door behind him, though Prince Vaath and others would be able to witness the interrogation by looking at the screens outside the room.

"Your name," Jav demanded, coming to stand over the sobbing human male. He crossed his arms and glared down at the man.

When the prisoner took too long to answer, Jav delivered a powerful kick to his ribs. The human fell over, gasping and writhing on the floor. His pained moans filled the cell.

"Your name."

“Steven.” The man held his hands up as if in surrender. “Please, I-I’ll tell you what you want to know, just don’t tell the others from my group that I was the one to snitch. Maybe we can make a deal, you and I? I give you what you want, and you’ll let me walk out of here with my life.”

The human man called Steven disgusted Jav. What a pathetic, cowardly fool.

“All you can hope for is a quick death.”

“Please, I’ll tell you everything about the resistance on Earth. I-I’ll even tell you about a threat on your soil. A threat to the Martian king.”

Alarm filled Jav, though he was careful not to allow his emotions to show on his face. He always stayed calm but calculating during an interrogation. He would threaten and inflict pain, but he would not start beating a male in a senseless fit of rage.

He crouched down and grabbed the male by the scruff of his neck, digging his fingers deep in the male’s flesh. “Start with the threat to the Martian king.”

Steven’s eyes widened and he nodded with enthusiasm, apparently believing that by asking his next question, Jav was agreeing to show the human male mercy.

“Well, you see, I’ve heard that one of our women—a human female from Earth—has come to your planet as a secret agent. I don’t know her name, honest I don’t, but I’m certain the rumors are true. Heard it from my friend Will who’s friends with a resistance leader.”

“What else do you know about this?” Jav tightened his hold on the man’s neck, until he felt the warmth of blood on his fingers.

## Page 28

*Source Creation Date: May 21, 2025, 4:58 am*

“I heard she came from a shipment of mail order brides from Earth. She was supposed to smuggle in a mini-blaster, mate with one of you, and try to get close to the king.”

“A blaster shot won’t do much harm to a Marttiadoxalian,” Jav said. “Our skin is impervious to your inferior human weaponry. A mini-blaster would not even stun the king for a moment.”

“This one’s been modified with Xieandan technology,” Steven said, a triumphant gleam in his eye. “Apparently it was smuggled in from sector 4384. It was fixed with a cloaking device so it wouldn’t be detected by the Martian guards aboard the spaceship that brought the mail order bride to your planet.”

Fluxx.

“Do you know anything else about this female?” Jav demanded, a chill descending upon him. He suddenly had a very bad feeling. Something awful was about to happen, though he could not specify what it was.

“I heard she was from the same zone as me. Zone 12.”

## Chapter 23

Jav watched as Orrsa, a member of his Vash’arr unit, displayed an image of each human female who’d recently arrived from Zone 12 on a set of screens. Jav, along with Orrsa, Rem, and the king, had gathered in a situation room near the dungeons while the other members of the Vash’arr finished interrogating the six human

prisoners.

His blood ran cold when he spotted Leah among the females on the screens. He'd known he would see her. She'd been born and raised in Zone 12. The back of his neck prickled, but he cleared his throat and forced himself to focus on the task before him.

"Highlight any females who have criminal records of any kind," he said.

Disbelief spread through him when Leah's picture remained on the screens. Fluxx. Was it true? What crimes had she committed? He fought back a growl at the sudden silence that filled the room. The others had noticed Leah's image on the screens, but they were too polite to mention it.

Perhaps she'd only been arrested for stealing to survive. He thought about her story of the way the women had treated her aboard the spaceship that brought her to Mars. She'd said the other women had likely thought her a pickpocket from the streets. But if this was the case, why hadn't she told him about her past?

The sharp pang of betrayal echoed in his bones. How could she keep such a secret from him? He had asked her numerous questions about her time on Earth and until now, he'd believed her to be truthful.

"Highlight any females with any known ties to suspected members of the resistance."

Again, Leah's picture remained on the screens. In fact, only five females remained. He recognized one of them as Miranda, the human woman Leah had spilled water on in the banquet hall.

Dark suspicions gripped him, and he once more had to force himself to focus. He had a duty to perform, and while the queen was currently safe and under guard in her

quarters, and the king was well-protected at the moment as well, it was still vital that they discover the identity of the human female agent who meant to harm King Vaath.

The information system Orrsa had pulled up included all known intelligence on Earth citizens collected by Marttiadoxalian enforcers since Earth's surrender. Records from all zones were included.

Jav recalled the excuse Martian Affairs had given him when he'd requested a copy of Leah's mail order bride application, wondering what he might've found had the application been readily available. Had the clerk truly been having technical difficulties, or was something much more sinister going on?

"Let's examine their individual records, one by one," Jav said, and to his relief, Orrsa didn't start with Leah's records. He wanted to believe she had nothing to do with the current threat against the Marttiadoxalian Empire, but he couldn't ignore the fact that she'd been keeping secrets from him. How serious were the crimes she'd committed? Had she spent time in prison?

Just as they began looking at Miranda's records, Rem's wrist comm beeped. He looked down at it and growled. "It's a message from Pettak. He says his mate just confessed to him that she knows of a threat against King Vaath. She has named a human female she claims is an agent sent to assassinate both the king and the queen." Rem looked at Jav and hesitated, his eyes brimming with apology.

"Say it," Jav growled. "Tell us the name of the agent."

"Leah Hartman."

## Chapter 24

Leah looked up from the book she was reading and smiled at the sound of



approaching footsteps. Though the hour was late, Jav was home earlier than she'd expected, as he'd recently departed Mars for a mission with the Vash'arr that would take him to Earth. She hadn't expected him home for another day or two and hoped his early return meant the mission had gone well. Warmth spread through her at the prospect of spending the remainder of the night in his company. She set the book aside, rose to her feet, and faced the entryway.

A gasp left her when Jav appeared, his face like a thundercloud. Her stomach flipped and she took a few steps back. "Jav? What's wrong?"

Seconds later, four uniformed palace guards appeared behind him. She spotted Rem among them and gazed at him in confusion before returning her eyes to Jav. What was happening? None of these males appeared happy. All of them were staring at her as if she'd just committed a terrible crime.

Oh God. Oh God, no. He knows.

He'd learned of her past crimes on Earth. He'd learned about her incarceration and he knew about her lies. She was certain of it. She could think of no other reasonable explanation for the sudden appearance of her furious looking mate and a small unit of palace guards.

Were they here to take her away? Here to drag her onto a spaceship and send her back to Earth? Send her away from Jav? Her heart broke, knowing she had misled him, knowing she had lied to his face. Her eyes filled with tears and she blinked rapidly, trying desperately to keep her wits about her.

Jav called out an order in his native tongue, speaking to the guards who'd accompanied him. Rem answered him, sounding tense and angry, and Jav spun around and bellowed another order and gestured toward the door. Rem spoke quietly to the other guards, nodded at Jav, and then the four guards departed. Leah had a

feeling they were probably waiting outside in the corridor. Apparently Jav wished to speak with her alone before he sent her away.

*Source Creation Date: May 21, 2025, 4:58 am*

She lowered her head as he approached, too ashamed to look him in the eye.

“I’m sorry,” she whispered. “I guess you’ve discovered what I’ve done. I’m sorry I couldn’t tell you, Jav.”

He grabbed her by her shoulders, his touch gentler than she expected. Hurt reflected in his gaze. He opened his mouth and closed it a few times, as if at a loss for words. After all the kindness he’d shown her, she would never forgive herself for hurting him.

A lone tear trickled down her cheek. To her surprise, he caught it with his thumb.

“Tell me it’s not true, sweet Leah,” he finally said. “Tell me you’re innocent in this.”

“I wanted to tell you, I-I thought about confessing to you about my past many times, but I always froze up and decided against it. I worried you would think I’m a threat to the king or something, since you lived in the palace, so I kept quiet.”

“Of course I would think you’re a threat to the king,” he said slowly, shaking his head. He still appeared lost and hurt and she hated herself even more in this moment. “After all, you came to Mars with orders to assassinate King Vaath and Queen Esmay.”

What?

Her gaze flew up to his. “Assassinate?” she asked, completely bewildered. What in the hell was he talking about?

“Miranda confessed to her mate, a palace guard named Pettak, that you told her you were part of the resistance. She told us you confided in her several days ago while you had a private discussion in an alcove. Our security footage confirmed you were in the alcove with her for quite some time.” He drew in a deep breath, a shudder running through him.

“Wait a second, Jav. None of that is true,” she answered, her mind racing. “Well, I did speak with Miranda in an alcove, but that’s not what we talked about. She was crying and said she’d gotten into an argument with Pettak, so I talked to her for a while and tried to help her. That’s all. I-I’m not planning to hurt anyone. I can’t imagine why she would say such a thing.”

Jav studied her, staring at her for long minutes. She stared back at him, unable to look away. “Do you swear to me you are innocent in this?” His grip on her shoulders tightened, but only a little. He still wasn’t hurting her and she didn’t think he would. But she couldn’t bear the thought of him sending her away. That would be the worst pain imaginable.

“Yes,” she said, lifting her chin. “I mean, at least in this. I had no plans to harm the king or queen or anyone else.”

A look of immense relief filled his dark eyes, though after he blinked twice, he once again appeared angry and suspicious. A shiver ran through her.

“Then what were you referring to earlier when you said you thought I’d believe you were a threat to the king? What did you think I was talking about when I first started questioning you? Don’t you dare lie to me,” he said. “You are my mate, Leah, and I expect the truth. The full truth with nothing held back.”

She swallowed hard. What choice did she have? She had to confess, she had to tell him about her conviction and her time in prison. How would he feel about her when

he learned the terms of her early release? That she'd agreed to become his mate only in order to secure her freedom? Her heart fell to the floor.

"When I was eighteen, I served as a lookout while my boyfriend and his friends broke into a Martian Affairs building in Zone 12," she began, as a deep sadness gripped her. Soon he would know her secrets. Soon he would send her away. "They'd heard the building contained a shipment of galactic credit coins that were bound for Mars. They didn't find any galactic credits, but they stole some pricey equipment from the building, and then they set fire to it. I was tracked down and arrested by Martian enforcers two days later." She shuddered, recalling her terror at being chased through the park where she'd been hiding, certain the enforcers would kill her on the spot once they caught her.

"Tell me what happened next," Jav said in an encouraging tone. She didn't understand how he could look so angry, yet touch her with such gentleness and not scream at her while he questioned her.

"Steven, my boyfriend, was also captured, along with all his friends. Even though I only served as a lookout, I was convicted of robbery and arson and sentenced to twenty-five years in prison. A guard once told me that Steven was sentenced to death."

Jav's eyes widened. "Steven?" He released his hold on her and backed away, then pressed on his wrist comm. A second later, an image of Steven, though looking noticeably older than when she'd last seen him, appeared in the air as a three-dimensional hologram. "Is this the human named Steven you are talking about?"

Leah felt faint. "Yes, but I-I thought he was dead."

"Our investigation has revealed he was wanted by Martian authorities. He escaped from prison after his sentencing and before his punishment could be carried out."

“Oh my God.” Panic gripped Leah. “Why do you have a picture of him?”

“He’s in the dungeons.”

## Chapter 25

Jav stared at Leah, processing her responses to his questions. If she was telling the truth, which he prayed to the Gods she was, that still left him with the difficulty of proving her innocence. He’d hurried to find her without taking the time to read over her records first, but he’d asked Orrsa to transmit all information pertaining to Leah directly to his wrist comm, including her mail order bride application.

“Why is Steven in the dungeons?” she asked.

“He’s part of a resistance group that is challenging Martian rule on Earth. He has attacked several Martian Affairs buildings and caused the death of three human females who were inside those buildings at the time.”

“And you were sent to Earth to find him?”

“My unit of Vash’arr warriors was sent to locate as many members of the resistance as we could round up within Zone 12, where the Martian Affairs buildings have been set ablaze. We killed dozens of human males and took six resistance members alive. Steven was among them.”

*Source Creation Date: May 21, 2025, 4:58 am*

“That’s terrible,” she said. “I mean, whathedid was terrible. Not what you did. You were right to capture them. Those poor women.” She moved several steps back and sank onto a sofa, her hands shaking at her sides. She appeared as though she were in shock.

He longed to go to her side, but he needed to verify she hadn’t lied to him just now. He hated that he must check, but he had no choice. After erasing the image of Steven, he pulled up the information Orrsa had sent and began to study it, praying he didn’t find any inconsistencies in Leah’s story.

Though his heart remained heavy, hope filled him when he didn’t find anything to suggest she had told him further lies.

Jav went to Leah, sat next to her and grasped her chin, bringing her gaze to his. “Miranda knew you came from the prison,” he said. “Didn’t she? That is why the women aboard the spaceship didn’t talk to you, and that is what she’d been preparing to say to you in the banquet hall before you caused a distraction by spilling the water pitcher.”

“Yes.” Her bottom lip quivered. “I am sorry for lying to you, Jav. I-I didn’t want you to know about my past. I was so ashamed and I wanted a second chance so badly. Please understand.”

Another tear trickled down her face and he was quick to wipe it away. The sight of her anguish pained his own heart.

“I have come to truly care for you, Jav,” she said, her voice cracking with emotion.

“I-I agreed to the parole board’s terms for early release because I couldn’t bear to spend another night in jail. I felt as though I was losing my mind in that cell. But ever since I came to Mars, ever since I met you, I started to feel whole again. You made me feel safe and you always treated me with kindness. It was wrong of me to lie to you, Jav, and I am so very sorry, but I did care for you. I wasn’t faking any of that. Being sent away from you is my greatest fear.”

“Send you away?” A deep growl tore from his throat. “We will never be parted, Leah. Never.”

He cupped her face and continued wiping at her tears. His chest ached and each breath became a struggle as he imagined life without his sweet mate, the human female he had come to love. Even after learning of her deceit, his devotion for her remained unwavering. He still loved her, and he would still protect her with his life.

“I want to prove your innocence, my sweet mate. Is there anything else you have been keeping from me? The more I know, the more I can help you.”

“This won’t help with our current predicament, but I want to come clean about everything. I-I told you I was an only child, but I had a brother. I’m not sure if he’s alive. We were never close and he never contacted me in prison. Also, the reason I gave you for applying to become a mail order bride was false.”

“I suspected as much,” Jav said, stroking her hair. Her application hadn’t contained any detailed information about her, though it had displayed her status as an ex-prisoner. Orrsa had managed to access the Martian Affairs systems in Zone 12 to provide him with a copy of the application. “Leah, but you must promise to be honest with me from this day forward. No more untruths between us.”

Her eyes glittered under a fresh sheen of tears. “I promise. But what will happen? Miranda has accused me of something very serious and I do not know how to help



you prove my innocence.”

Just then, Rem marched back into the room, the other palace guards following him. Jav rose to his feet and growled. “I told you to give me some time alone with my mate,” he growled in Marttiadoxalian. He stood in front of Leah, prepared to protect her if they tried to take her into their custody. He wouldn’t allow them to lay a finger on her, not even Rem, who had been his friend for many years.

“Search the bedroom first,” Rem called out to the guards. He crossed his arms and stared at Jav as the guards disappeared in the direction of Jav’s bedroom.

“What are you doing?” Jav roared.

Before Rem could answer, one of the guards appeared at his side, holding one of Leah’s dresses. It was the same purple gown she’d been wearing the day he’d claimed her in an alcove, which had occurred on the same day of her private conversation with Miranda in another alcove.

When the guard pulled a mini-blaster from the pocket of the purple dress, Jav’s heart nearly stopped.

“I am sorry, old friend,” Rem said, “but I have no choice. There is physical evidence against your mate. I must take her into custody. She will not be harmed; I give you my word.”

Jav lowered his head and drew in a deep breath, preparing to rush at Rem and the other guards. His head and his horns were much larger than theirs. He was certain he could take all of them down easily. One headbutt to any of their skulls and they would likely be knocked senseless. Leah wasn’t going anywhere with them. He would die before he allowed them to touch her.

She was his. His mate. His love.

“Leave my quarters at once,” Jav said, his voice a menacing rumble. “You know my strength. You know what I am capable of. I don’t wish to hurt you, Rem, but if you take one step forward, I won’t hesitate.”

“Jav,” Leah whispered behind him. “Please, I don’t understand what’s happening. I don’t understand a word of your tongue, and I don’t know how that weapon got in my dress. I swear it’s not mine.”

Jav drew himself up to his full height as he stared down at Rem and the other guards.

“When the fighting starts, my sweet mate, I want you to go hide in the closet. Don’t come out until I call your name.”

## Chapter 26

Leah watched in horror as Rem approached. Jav growled and tensed, then lowered his head and flew at Rem. The green Martian guard lowered his own head and the ear splitting sound of their horns crashing in battle soon filled the room.

“Go, Leah! Now!” Jav’s command reached her and she forced herself to her feet, though her legs were trembling so hard she could barely make them move. She couldn’t believe it had come to this, couldn’t believe Jav had to fight his own people. By now, she had surmised that Rem and the other guards wanted to arrest or at least take her into custody. That’s why Jav was fighting for her, because he didn’t wish to let her go.

Beneath her fear, her heart fluttered with the knowledge that Jav still wanted her. He wasn’t handing her over to the guards who’d come to take her away, even though they’d found a freaking weapon in her things. Just as she started to suspect how it had

gotten there, a deep male voice called out over the noise of Jav and Rem's continued fighting.

She paused in the bedroom doorway, clutching onto the wall for support. The sitting room was in disarray, with furniture upturned and smashed to pieces, paintings knocked off the walls, and light fixtures lying broken on the floor, pieces of glass covering the entire area.

## Page 31

*Source Creation Date: May 21, 2025, 4:58 am*

Jav and Rem ceased fighting, though their horns were still locked together.

The new voice rose again, and Leah's gaze traveled toward the entryway. An angry looking red Martian stood before them, holding a tearful Miranda by her arm. Leah couldn't understand what the red Martian was saying, though she suspected he was Miranda's mate, Pettak. Why had they come here?

She watched as Jav and Rem unlocked their horns and backed away from one another.

The red Martian continued talking and occasionally gave Miranda a sharp shake, which only made her cry harder.

"Your people killed my brothers!" she cried out in Galactic Common. "In the war. I lost my three older brothers in the war! You are nothing but vile savages. All of you. When the resistance recruited me, I accepted their proposal." Despite her tears, she shot a furious look at the red Martian, who growled and shook her again.

Jav approached them. "Did you plant the mini-blaster on my mate?"

Miranda sniffled and nodded.

"Why? Why did you plant the weapon on Leah?" Jav asked. "Why get rid of it before you had a chance to complete your mission?"

Miranda's tears suddenly came faster. She wiped at her face and looked around the room. "I-I started to have second thoughts. Queen Esmay has been very kind to me,

and she's human. I couldn't hurt her, especially knowing that she is carrying her first child. So, I decided I would simply kill the king, but the queen loves him. I-I couldn't do that to her."

"That still leaves the question of why you planted the weapon on Leah when you could've disposed of it elsewhere." Jav crossed his arms and stared at Miranda.

"Because I know the Marttiadoxalians plant spies among the resistance. I feared word would get out that a human female was planning to attack the king and queen, and even though I was assured my identity would be kept a secret, I still feared capture." Miranda looked at Leah, her expression turning apologetic. "I'm sorry. I feel awful for what I did, how I lied to you and drew you into speaking with me in the alcove. I made the whole argument with Pettak up just so I could find myself alone with you. I knew it was only a matter of time before the Vash'arr discovered the plot against the king and queen, but I thought if I planted the mini-blaster on you that I could get out of this with my life."

"You think we'll kill you?" the red Martian asked, and for the first time since his arrival, his eyes gleamed with warmth. "We do not kill females, particularly those we have taken as mates."

"You would still consider me your mate after what I have done?"

"Yes, and I will not let you go." The red alien paused for a moment, appearing thoughtful. "I suspect you will be banished from the Marttiadoxalian Empire as a result of your crimes, but you will not be leaving alone."

Miranda started to shake her head, but Pettak lifted her in his arms and started heading for the exit. "I trust you will inform the king about my mate's confession. I know she must be held in the dungeons until her trial, though I am prepared to stay with her. I'll not be parted from her."

Rem and the other guards followed Pettak out of the room, leaving Leah alone with Jav.

Her heart raced as she stared at him from across the mess of the sitting room. She started to walk toward him, but he shot a hand up, motioning for her to stop.

“Stay right where you are,” he said. “I don’t want you stepping on any glass.”

He was at her side a second later, his arms wrapped tight around her. She rested her head against his chest, secure in the refuge of his embrace. Warmth filled her heart to overflowing.

He’d listened to her. He hadn’t judged her or scolded her for her past mistakes. He hadn’t threatened to send her away. And he’d fought for her. She could only imagine what would’ve happened if Pettak and Miranda hadn’t shown up in time, before the fight between Jav and Rem had become even more serious.

“Are you all right, Jav?” She asked, reaching for his head. She cupped the side of his face and peered into his dark otherworldly gaze.

“I am well, my mate. No need to worry. Rem is a formidable warrior, though he is not a member of the Vash’arr. He would’ve died trying to take me down.”

“I’m glad it didn’t come to that. He’s your friend,” she said. “Or, rather, he was your friend. I am sorry to be the cause of discord between you and Rem.”

Jav stroked her back and leaned his forehead to hers. Then he straightened and ran his hands through her hair, his touch bringing her comfort. “Miranda was the cause of the discord, not you, my sweet mate. Besides, Rem and I are still friends,” Jav said, sounding a bit confused. “Why would you think otherwise?”

“Well, the fact that you both just tried to kill one another.”

Jav chuckled. “Rem was only performing his duties to the crown, and I was protecting my mate, as any honorable Marttiadoxalian male would. I know, if our situations had been reversed, Rem would’ve fought anyone who came near his mate. In fact, I’ve seen him do it before. Rest assured, we are still friends.”

She shot him a relieved look. “I’m glad to hear it.” She inhaled a deep breath and summoned the bravery to ask the next question on her mind. “Jav, um, what will happen to Steven?”

“Do you care for the male?” Anger glimmered in his eyes, his nostrils flaring.

“No, of course not. I’m just curious. I-I’m still shocked to learn he’s alive. I feel as though I’ve just seen a ghost. Years ago, when we lived together, he would occasionally speak out against Martian rule, though I never imagined he would join a resistance group.”

Jav’s expression relaxed, the gleam of fury in his gaze fading. “Steven, along with the other males who were captured alive, will be interrogated and then put to the death. We are not in the habit of showing our enemies mercy.”

*Source Creation Date: May 21, 2025, 4:58 am*

His answer confirmed her suspicions. It also reminded her just how fierce the Martians could be, as well as how fierce her own mate was. Sometimes, given how gently he treated her, it was easy for her to forget that Jav came from a race of aliens who'd conquered her own. "I suspected that would be the case." She straightened. "I-I wasn't planning to beg you for his life, I just wanted to know. It's strange. It feels as though a lifetime has passed since I last saw him."

She had mourned Steven's loss, ten years ago when she'd thought he'd been put to death. Hearing that he was still alive, and apparently wreaking havoc within Zone 12 with a group of resistance fighters, left her a bit shaken.

He'd somehow managed to escape prison. How, she had no idea, but she couldn't help but feel bitter toward him, knowing that he'd been alive and well while she'd been losing her mind in prison. Had he known about her twenty-five-year sentence? Had he ever thought about breaking her out? Knowing his character, she doubted it.

But Jav... he would never allow her to go to prison. He'd fought his own friend in order to keep her out of captivity.

His wrist comm beeped and buzzed. He looked down at it with a frown. "It's a message from the Vash'arr. One of the human males in the dungeons just confessed that some of the prisons on Earth, including the women's prison in Zone 12, have been supplying brides to the mail order bride program."

"Is that illegal?"

"No, however, some of them, including the prison you were held in, have conspired



with humans who work for Martian Affairs to steal the galactic credit payments that are supposed to be given to the human females upon being accepted into the mail order bride program.”

“Wow. I’d wondered why the parole board never mentioned the money when they offered me a chance to leave Earth. Now it all makes sense.” She sighed and wondered how many other women had been released from prison under similar circumstances.

“Arrest warrants have been issued for many humans who work inside the prisons, as well as those from Martian Affairs who joined their scheme.” He paused and his gaze turned thoughtful. “A few days after you arrived, I contacted Martian Affairs in Zone 12 to ask them for a copy of your mail order bride application, but I was told that they were having technical difficulties and could not help me at the time. Now I know they were likely stalling.”

“Why did you want to see a copy of my application?”

“I sensed you were hiding something, and I was worried about you.”

She couldn’t blame him for trying to check up on her. She had been hiding something from him. But now the entire truth was out in the open, staring them both in the face. Her chest tightened with emotion. Despite her mistakes, he still wanted her.

A long silence fell between them, during which he continued running his hands through her hair and over her face, all the while staring at her with an intensity that stole her breath. It was as though he were trying to memorize her features.

Feeling a bit shy under his attentions, she tore her gaze from his and looked at the mess in the sitting room. “Should we start cleaning up?”

“Not now.” He swept her off her feet and carried her into their bedroom.

“What are you doing?”

He stood her beside the bed and started stripping off her clothing, his movements slow and gentle, and every few seconds he paused to kiss her shoulder or her stomach or even her elbow.

Finally, once he had her completely naked, he rose to his full height and stared down at her, his eyes shining with affection. When he finally spoke, his reply to her question made her heart dance.

“I am preparing to claim the female I love.”

## Chapter 27

He loved her.

Leah stared up at Jav, her spirits soaring. Not only did he still want her, despite the many lies she’d told him, he loved her.

His forgiveness, so easily offered, as well as his affection for her, caused a lump to form in her throat. Her eyes burned with tears and she didn’t try to hide them. He was her mate and they were to spend the rest of their lives together. It was time to stop hiding from him and finally share all of herself.

No more walls. No more holding back.

“Jav, I love you, too. With all my heart.”

He gathered her close. “My sweet mate,” he murmured into her ear. “My sweet Leah.

I have known I loved you for some time and I only wish I'd told you sooner. I am sorry you feared I might send you away if I learned about your past. We will never be parted. Do you hear me? Never."

He tightened his hold on her, and she buried her face in his chest, intense waves of relief causing her to shudder in his arms. She had been so nervous about what might happen should he learn her secrets that she'd been in a state of constant anxiety since her arrival on Mars. As the worry drained from her, she continued quaking in his arms. Though her legs felt weakened, she trusted he wouldn't let her fall.

He pulled back and gazed into her eyes, then leaned down to kiss her. As his lips pressed to hers, he backed her against the bed and set her upon the mattress, bringing his body atop hers. He proceeded to kiss her all over, trailing his lips down her neck and over her bosom, then kissing the length of each arm and leg. When he kissed the soles of her feet, she giggled and thrashed around.

"Please, no! I'm ticklish!"

He shot her a wicked grin and commenced running his tongue along her stomach, only to work his way lower, and lower still, with each passing moment. His mouth came to hover at her aching entrance and he breathed against her lips, the hot puffs of air making her whimper with longing.

*Source Creation Date: May 21, 2025, 4:58 am*

“No matter how many times I taste you,” he said, his voice deeper than usual, “and no matter how many times I sink my cock into you, I can never get enough. I crave you with every moment of every day. Three hundredfluxxingyears from now, I will still crave you just as fiercely as I do now. I’ll never stop desiring you, and I’ll never stop loving you.”

He lowered his mouth to her slit and licked through her folds, a slow and tortuous swipe of his tongue over her aching center.

Leah gasped and writhed against his probing tongue. When he pushed a finger inside her, the added pressure left her sweltering under her mounting need. Oh God yes. She reached for him, grasping the base of his horns as she undulated her center upon his mouth.

He added a second finger and pushed deep into her pussy. She cried out, the sudden fullness causing a jolt of euphoria to rush through her. He pressed his tongue hard upon her clit and started growling, which caused an immense vibration on this most sensitive part of her.

“Jav.” She tossed her head from side to side.

He growled louder, increasing the vibrations, and she couldn’t have held back if she tried. She shattered and screamed as she rode the waves of bliss, straight up into the starry sky. Before she had a chance to catch her breath, he stripped off his clothes and crawled back atop her.

His massive muscles gleamed in the light of the sconces. Her breath caught in her

throat. He was so beautiful, so handsome, so kind. He was her lover, her mate, and her protector.

Despite her utter fatigue, she managed to shoot him a smile. She wrapped her arms around his waist and sighed with contentment. He tapped at her inner thighs.

“Lift your legs up and place them over my shoulders.” The dark, sexy gleam in his stare made her shiver with anticipation. “I want to fuck you as deeply as I possibly can, while still gazing into your eyes.”

An erotic thrill assailed her. She lifted her legs up and he assisted her in placing them over his shoulders. She privately mused that it was a good thing she was so flexible.

“Beautiful,” he said with a glance at her very exposed center.

His hands clamped down on her hips. In the next moment, he thrust forward with a groan, driving his cock impossibly deep. She shuddered and cried out as he set a fast pace of plunging in and out of her, and the sound of flesh slapping flesh soon filled the room. His balls kept hitting her bottom and the repeated impacts sent vibrations through her aching nether parts.

His deep, rapid strokes, combined with the feel of the smooth flesh above his cock striking directly over her clit with each plunge, caused a swift release to descend upon her.

Not for the first time since they’d become mates, she lost count of the orgasms he gave her. She came around his cock again and again, her mind becoming completely unaware of the outside world. Her only focus became Jav, the Martian male who’d claimed her as his mate. The huge gentle giant of a warrior who loved her, and whom she also loved with her whole heart.

His cock swelled larger inside her and his ferocious growl rattled the walls.

Torrents of his seed shot into her, bathing her insides with warmth. She trembled in his arms and struggled for air, breathless in the aftermath of their shared passions, and she was entirely certain that three hundred years from now, she would crave Jav just as fiercely as she did now.

He wasn't the only one with a ravenous appetite.

Once they'd both caught their breath, he withdrew from her tender parts and hurried into the bathroom. She waited on the bed, knowing he was probably intending to fetch the healing salve he often used on her after a rough mating session. Sure enough, he sat between her legs and began cleansing her with a towel, then he applied a generous amount of the healing salve.

"Mm." She stretched on the bed, testing her strength. "Thank you, Jav. Thank you for always taking care of me."

He gathered her close and kissed her forehead. "It will always be my honor to take care of you, sweet Leah. Always."

## Epilogue

Three years later...

Jav and Leah walked hand-in-hand through the gardens on the palace grounds, watching as Daxxel, their two-year-old son, chased Jexsa, Tyra and Rem's daughter of the same age, around the tall flowering trees. His heart swelled at the sight, but when he glanced down at his mate, his sweet Leah, his sudden happiness became so great that his throat started burning.

He bent down and planted a kiss atop her head.

“You look radiant today. Beautiful in the sun,” he said, echoing the compliment she’d given him on the very first day they met. Three long years ago. Much had changed since then.

He placed a hand upon her swollen belly. She was due to give birth any day now and he couldn’t wait to hold their new child in his arms. A girl, the doctor had told them. They were about to add a baby girl to their family.

“Well, you look pretty nice yourself,” she said, batting her eyelashes at him in a playful manner. “Perhaps later we ought to ask Aunt Tyra to watch Daxxel for a few hours.” She squeezed his hand and stepped closer to him, her eyes filled with mischief, but also an unmistakable glimmer of longing.

“Not when you’re so close to your due date,” he said in a scolding tone. “I don’t want to hurt you or the baby.”

She rolled her eyes. “Oh please, it won’t hurt me or the baby. I asked the doctor, remember? He even suggested that as I get closer to my due date, it might help speed things along.”

Before Jav could respond, Rem and Tyra entered the gardens, followed by King Vaath and Queen Esmay. Princes Krakk and Naxx, their energetic twin sons, ran to join Daxxel and Jexsa’s chasing game. Soon the entire garden was filled with the sound of playful taunts and children’s laughter.

## Page 34

*Source Creation Date: May 21, 2025, 4:58 am*

The adults greeted one another and the six of them stood watch over their little ones.

“I’m coming for you, Jexsa!” Daxxel shouted, running faster, his body a blur of purple amongst the bushes, trees, and flowers.

Leah giggled and looked at Tyra. “She’s a fast one.”

“That she is,” Tyra said with a shake of her head. “She runs me ragged every day. And to think, Rem wants to have more children!”

Krakk and Naxx, who were a full year older than Daxxel and Jexsa, gained speed and were rapidly catching up to Jexsa. The little girl rushed around a tree, paused briefly to turn and stick her tongue out at her pursuers, then took off running again.

“You’ll never catch me!” she taunted with a wide grin, clearly enjoying herself.

Everyone, except for the three boys chasing Jexsa, broke into laughter.

It was a sunny day, no clouds in sight, and the beautiful day was a nice reprieve from the recent rains Relliktron had received. Jav wrapped an arm around Leah and she leaned against him.

He surveyed his surroundings, looking at his friends and the children who were still running about the gardens, as a deep sense of contentment filled him.

He might not have a large biological family, as he used to wish for, but he had his friends, and as far as he was concerned, King Vaath and Rem were the brothers he’d



never had. Their children had taken to calling him Uncle Jav and also viewed Leah as their aunt, and likewise Daxxel considered Esmay and Tyra his aunts and Vaath and Rem his uncles.

Furthermore, Rem's parents, Teva and Alissina, considered themselves the surrogate grandparents of all their offspring, particularly his mother. The woman often spent hours entertaining the children, taking them on adventures through the capital city, and feeding them all manner of sweet treats. Whenever Daxxel came home from Grandma Alissina's house, he often collapsed and fell asleep in the middle of the floor, the remnants of whatever dessert Alissina had given him still smeared on his face.

Jav placed another kiss atop Leah's head and she sighed in his arms. The Gods had blessed him with a sweet mate to call his own, as well as a son, born of his own blood, and soon he would be further blessed with a baby daughter.

"It's a perfect day," Leah said, "don't you think?"

"Yes. It is quite perfect." He touched her stomach and smiled when the baby gave a vigorous kick.

She winced. "Ouch. I think your daughter is trying to fight her way out of there."

"Tell her to hurry up, won't you?" Jav said with a chuckle. "I am eager to meet my daughter."

"Do you hear that, little one?" Leah said, staring down at her stomach. "Daddy says you need to get a move on."

Tyra stepped closer and cleared her throat. "Thank you for watching Jexsa for us."

"You're very welcome," Leah said. "It was no trouble at all."

“Rem and I would be happy to watch Daxxel for a few hours if the two of you would like some alone time.” Tyra winked at her.

“That sounds wonderful. Thank you,” Leah said, turning to Jav. She gave him a pointed look. “Let’s hurry off before she realizes what a handful Daxxel is and changes her mind.”

“We’re planning to stay here for a while, too,” Esmay said. “We’ll help keep an eye on him.”

Jav called out instructions to Daxxel to behave while they were gone, then he laced his fingers through Leah’s and led her back to the palace. Before they entered the large structure, they paused and stared out at all the children and the friends who’d become their family. Leah smiled up at him, and her next words touched a part of his soul he hadn’t known existed.

“Thank you for being you, Jav.” Her eyes gleamed with moisture, even as she continued smiling. “Thank you for being my mate, my family, and the father to our children. I couldn’t imagine life without you. I love you.”

He pressed a lingering kiss to her forehead. “And I love you, my sweet Leah.”

THE END

\* \* \*