



The Scientist's Woman

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Category: Romance, Adult, Paranormal

Description: London will do anything to avoid an arranged marriage to an arrogant General. She dreams of a man who'll nurture and love her without trying to force his will on her. When she overhears a conversation about her twin who was left behind when London and her mother were abducted by intergalactic traffickers, an idea forms. Not only will she flee from her unwanted engagement, but she'll also search for sister. When London arrives on Earth, instead of finding her sister, she encounters a man who makes her heart race.

Astrophysicist Matt Taylor can't believe a beautiful woman has crash landed in his back yard! She's in quite a predicament and he's more than willing to help her find her lost sister, no matter how dangerous the quest. Trouble is, he's falling for the gorgeous London. But can this beautiful woman ever find it in her heart to return his love?

These two star-crossed lovers set off on a journey to find London's sister. But in the process, they'll soon discover so much more.

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Chapter

One

London sat rigidly as her father, Emperor Blaze, stood to make the formal announcement she'd been dreading all night. How could he do this to her and why was her mother allowing it to happen? She shot a resentful glare toward the object of her despair.

General Zahn.

With back erect and head held high, his face remained expressionless. His dark green eyes, which could almost be mistaken for black at times, were hard as though he were contemplating a strategy of war instead of attending his own betrothal dinner. Admittedly, London did find Zahn extremely attractive, with his long black hair, inherited from his Zenobian ancestors, square jaw and strong features. But like so many men on Thibius, Zahn was just too overpowering.

London didn't want the fate of her mother. Granted, her parents loved each other very much, often sneaking off to be alone and always touching, but there was no doubt in her mind that her father was in charge in all matters. That was the way of things in their world, and General Zahn would try to rule her with an iron fist as well. Besides, he didn't make her pulse race or heart beat faster. The one chaste kiss they'd shared didn't stir any fire in her loins like her mother had promised it would.

No. She couldn't let this sham betrothal take place.

Emperor Blaze gestured for her to stand then did the same to Zahn. London stubbornly remained seated. This couldn't be happening. Leaning over, Queen Calliope whispered in her ear, "Stand. Don't embarrass your father in front of our guests."

"You know I don't want this," London hissed back.

"We'll discuss it later. For now you will do as you're told," her mother shot back.

Very rarely did her mother scold her, but the tone let London know there'd be no arguing. With a sigh, she reluctantly stood up and walked over to her father. Zahn flanked the king's other side. London wished the ground would swallow her up, so she wouldn't have to go through this.

Her father stepped up to the podium, a huge smile on his face. "I'm pleased to announce the betrothal of my beloved daughter, Princess London, to Thibius's greatest champion, General Zahn." The room erupted in applause much to London's dismay.

Tears stung the backs of her eyes. Now that the announcement had been made, how could she graciously back out? She couldn't. The Emperor turned to her. "Would you like to say a few words, sweetling?"

"Papa, I can't," she whispered.

The Emperor frowned. "Go ahead, it's expected."

"Let Zahn speak first, I—I can't think of anything to say right now."

"Very well, London." Turning to Zahn, her father nodded his blond head. "Zahn, would you like to say a few words on this joyous occasion?"

Zahn nodded and stepped forward. “Fellow Thibians, it is my great honor to have the hand of the beautiful Princess London. I pledge my allegiance to her, and vow to protect and cherish her, on my honor.”

London clinched her lips to keep herself from gagging. Though Zahn’s words were flowery enough something was missing. Not that she wanted it from him, but the reverence wasn’t there. He spoke as though he were rehearsing a speech. When Zahn had glanced in her direction, it wasn’t the same look of adoration that her father gave to her mother.

If she went through with this farce of a marriage, it would be a loveless union.

Nodding his head to her, the Emperor gestured for her to speak. Stepping forward on tentative feet, London first looked at her big, strong papa, who smiled down at her encouragingly. His green eyes twinkled with love she returned tenfold. Then she glanced at her mother and brothers. They all gazed at her with anticipation in their eyes. The crowd of dignitaries watched London expectantly and for the life of her, the words just would not come out.

“Speak, daughter,” the Emperor whispered in her ear.

“Ladies and Gen-gentlemen, I am pl-pleased—” Taking a deep breath, London tried to continue. “I—I’m pleased t-to —” Again she stopped. Why was it so difficult to say a few stupid words? She stole a glance at Zahn whose mouth was now a tight line. Could she give in and spend the rest of her life with him? “I’m sorry, but I can’t do this.” Racing past Zahn and her father, and ignoring the surprised gasps of the audience, she fled from the hall not stopping until she reached her room.

London flung herself onto her big fluffy bed and burst into tears. She’d shamed her parents, but how could she stand in front of everyone and lie about how happy she was to be betrothed to Zahn? He’d make her miserable. She didn’t love him and she

was certain the feeling was mutual. He was only marrying her out of a sense of duty.

Since she'd reached her twentieth birthday, Lords from all over the planet had offered for her hand in marriage, but her parents had given her the freedom to choose her own mate. Several proposals later, the Emperor and Queen expressed their concerns. After turning down an offer from one of the richest men on the planet, her father had put his foot down, and declared that she would marry a man of his choosing.

At first, she didn't think it was such a bad idea, considering the fact that she hadn't been able to find someone on her own. What was the point when none of the men had inspired anything within her beyond mild interest? Maybe she was silly for wanting what her parents had, but barring that, London at least hoped for a man who wouldn't try to dominate her.

All the men on Thibius however walked two steps ahead of their women. Men had the final say in the relationship. Even her mother gave in whenever her father wanted his way. London didn't want that. She longed for a partnership. She desired to be treated as if her thoughts and wishes were important, not as some haughty Lord's arm decoration.

London realized she was in big trouble the moment she left the dining hall, so it was no surprise when her bedroom door burst open and the Emperor stormed through, eyes blazing green fire. Her mother scurried behind him, trying to hold him back only to be shrugged off.

London stood up, her stomach clenching with nervousness. "Papa?—"

"You will tell me what that all about now! How could you embarrass your mother and I like that in front of our guests?"

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She trembled beneath his fiery gaze. “Papa, please let me explain.”

With nostrils flaring, he crossed his arms. “Fine, daughter. I’d certainly like to hear what explanation you have to give.”

“I don’t want to marry General Zahn. I don’t love him and he doesn’t love me. Besides that, he’s barely said more than two words to me in that sham of a courtship of his. You promised I could choose my own mate, but then you foist him off on me and I’m supposed to be happy about it? I don’t think so. You went back on your word to me.”

The Emperor lifted one blond brow, and a muscle twitched in his jaw. “I went back on my promise?” he asked in a voice of dead calm.

She was in for it now. But if her father could be stubborn, then so could she.

London raised her chin defiantly. “Yes. You have. You promised me, I’d be able to choose my own partner.”

“Within reason. I gave you the privilege in choosing your own husband when it was my right to do so, but you’ve abused that privilege. You are a princess, and every eligible man in the kingdom who has asked for your hand was turned down. You cannot marry some commoner.”

“What if I want to marry a commoner?”

The Emperor shook his head. “You speak nonsense, child. You have to marry

someone of noble lineage.”

“Then I won’t get married!” London countered.

“Watch your tone with me, London. It is your duty to make a good alliance, and I won’t have you shame us the way you did out there. You will go back out to the hall and apologize to our guests, and then to Zahn. I think he’s been very patient with you considering your latest antics.”

“And that’s all you care about isn’t it?”

Green eyes narrowed. “What do you mean?”

London placed her hand over her heart, as anger welled within her. “All you care about is how things will look, not about my feelings.”

“London!” the Queen gasped in apparent outrage as she took a step forward.

Holding her mother back with one muscled arm, the Emperor shook his head. “That’s not worthy of a response. Now come before I really lose my temper.”

London had to crane her neck to meet her father’s eyes. There were times like these when she wished she weren’t so petite. Placing hands on hips, she shook her head. “I will not go.”

“You will go, even if I have to drag you out there myself. We’ll talk about your disobedience later. Will you come under your own volition, or shall I carry you?”

London backed away, knowing her father didn’t make empty threats. She’d never seen him this angry before or at least not at her. Her younger brothers, who were known pranksters, had sometimes been on the end of their father’s tongue lashings

but not her. She'd never defied her parents in anything, but in this she had to stay firm. This was the rest of her life they spoke of.

"Papa, please see reason."

"I've seen reason for two years. Now you'll do as I say."

"Just like my mother does? Do you plan on bullying me into submission as you do her? I don't want to be a glorified concubine for the rest of my life like her."

The words were barely out of her mouth when she felt the sharp sting of his palm. London's hand flew to her injured cheek, and her jaw dropped not so much from pain, but more from surprise. Her father had never laid a hand on her before, and she supposed she deserved it for speaking so disrespectfully about her mother, but it was still unexpected.

From wide-eyed expression on the Emperor's face, it seemed like he was just as shocked. He stared at his hand as though he couldn't believe what he'd just used it for. A fat tear escaped London's eye, but she closed her lips tightly to hold back the cry.

Her father clenched and unclenched his fists before turning to leave. London walked over to her bed and sat down heavily. She shouldn't have spoken to him like that. He wasn't a tyrant, but she'd been so mad that her tongue got ahead of her thoughts.

"I know you're upset, baby but what you said was out of line," her mother's voice cut through London's depressed musings.

"I know. I'll go apologize."

"As you should, but not now. Give him a chance to cool off first. I don't condone him

hitting you and I'll see that he also apologizes but you need to understand he didn't hit you because of the stunt you pulled in the banquet hall. He did it because of what you said about me. Your father is very protective of me and he won't allow disrespect from anyone about his Queen, even you."

London rubbed her cheek. Truthfully it didn't hurt that much. Her father probably held back and maybe even tried to stop himself before he did it but it was too late. She knew how strong he was and had he used his full strength she probably would have been knocked unconscious. "I realize that now. I'm sorry Mom, I was just so angry."

"I know baby, and I accept your apology. We all say and do things in the heat of the moment that we shouldn't. But I'm very disappointed in you, London."

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London swiftly wiped away another stray tear. “Not you too. I don’t think I can bear another lecture right now.”

“Well, that’s too bad because you’re going to get one. What got into you out there, baby? I know it doesn’t seem fair but as a member of the royal family, we’re expected to conduct ourselves in a certain manner to uphold the dignity of the throne. Otherwise, it could cause political unrest.” Taking a seat next to her, Queen Calliope wrapped a slim, dark arm around London’s shoulder.

London laid her head across her mother’s chest like she had when she was a little girl, and allowed the tears to flow. No words were needed then as she allowed herself to be rocked, taking the comfort she so desperately needed.

“Oh, Mommy, I messed up didn’t I?” Her sadness and helplessness had reduced her to using the childhood name she’d called her mother.

“Yes. You did, but a simple apology goes a long way. Your father is more upset that he struck you than anything else. Your father loves you very much and you hurt him.”

“I know and I’m ashamed of what I said. I can’t blame him for what he did, but, Mama, I can’t go through with this betrothal. Zahn frightens me.”

“You have to get married eventually, and as your father pointed out, you’ve rejected the hand of every eligible bachelor in the kingdom. Haven’t you expressed to me on several occasions how much you would love to have a family of your own? You can’t do that without a husband... well, you can actually, but that’s not an ideal situation.”

“I know, but... I don’t want to end up like the women I see walking around after their men, doing their bidding like a bunch of slaves. Slavery was outlawed on this planet when I was only a child, but it seems like when a woman enters into a marriage, she gets the raw part of the deal. I want to be able to love my husband, not be dominated by him. I want to be in love like you are with Papa.”

A faint smile touched her mother’s full lips. “Even though you think I give in to his every command?”

London’s face grew hot. “That comment wasn’t exactly fair was it?”

“No, and it was beneath you to say it. I know you feel that the situation is bleak, but you could always grow to love Zahn. You know the story of how your father and I came together.”

“Yes, you were a harem girl, and Papa instantly fell in love with you. That’s so romantic. I want love at first sight too,” London sighed dreamily.

“Honey, it wasn’t that simple. Your father and I both fought our feelings for each other for a while. We were both stubborn and to be honest, even though I found Blaze attractive, I didn’t love him right away. My love for him blossomed. I used to think the same way that you did. The men in our world can be very forceful, and your father and I clashed at the beginning, but things worked out in the end.”

“I don’t mean to criticize, Mama, but why do you allow him to get away with so much? Whenever he tells you to come, you rush to him. Whenever he makes a decision you go along with it. When do you ever get your way?”

“I get my way quite a bit. There’s a saying on the planet where we come from, you catch more flies with honey than with vinegar.”

London frowned. Her mother often used old Earth sayings that confused her. “What does that mean?”

“It means that I know my place. Your father is the Emperor. How would it look if I were to countermand his every decision in public? He’d lose the respect of his subjects. Sometimes you have to use what you have to get what you want.”

London’s eyebrows furrowed as she tried to figure out what her mother was trying to say. “I still don’t understand.”

“Well, for instance, when your father is in one of his moods where he won’t listen to reason, I’ll give him a back rub or dance for him. I let him know that he has my support in all his decisions. When Blaze is fully relaxed he’s more open to suggestion. How do you think I talked him into agreeing to that two year reprieve you’ve had? Or when he thought Jayru was too young to go on that scouting mission he’d had his heart set on. I was the one who put the idea in his head.”

Comprehension dawned then. “You’re the reason he allowed me to choose my own mate?”

The Queen nodded, smile lines appearing at the corner of her eyes. London still thought her mother was the most beautiful woman in the world, with her youthful figure, rich dark skin and delicately shaped features. It wasn’t hard to see why the Emperor couldn’t keep his hands off her. People often told London that she looked just like her mother. Except for her lack of height, lighter skin, and subtle differences here and there, they did resemble each other.

“Why did he change his mind then?”

“Your father loves you very much and wants to see you settled and happy.”

“If he wants me to be happy then why is he forcing me to marry Zahn? Maybe I can take care of myself. I’m not a little girl anymore.”

Her mother lifted one perfectly arched brow. “Then stop acting like one. You’re twenty-two years old, well past the marriage age here, and while I don’t necessarily care for the arranged marriage thing either, it’s your duty. Your father has gone through a lot of trouble to find someone he feels will be worthy of you. This has been weighing heavily on his mind because he knows that once you’re married, you’ll go live with your husband. It will break his heart, but it’s his responsibility to ensure you make a good alliance.”

“It would make him sad to see me go? The way he’s been lately, I would have thought he’d be happy to see me go. After all, it’s not like I’m his real daugh—” She stopped herself when she saw the look in her mother’s eyes.

Standing up, the Queen shook her head. “I’m just glad your father isn’t in here right now. Those words would really hurt him. Your birth father didn’t care enough to stick around, but Blaze worships the ground you walk on. I see you’re not in themood to listen to reason at the moment, but I don’t ever want to hear those words from your mouth again. I suggest you grow up and do it fast. You can’t always get what you want, but sometimes life has a funny way of working things out.”

Shame washed through London. She couldn’t believe she’d actually uttered those words. Maybe her parents were right. Zahn wasn’t her ideal mate, but if her father thought he’d make her a good husband, then maybe she should at least give it a try “I’m sorry, Mama.”

The Queen bent over and gave her a kiss on the cheek. “London, you are a joy to us. You’re smart, beautiful, and the subjects love you. We only want your happiness. Why don’t you stay here and give what I said some thought and I will talk to your father?”

“Thanks. I love you very much, Mama.”

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“And I you.” The Queen blew a kiss to her as she sauntered out the door.

London sighed when she was alone again. Her parents were right. She had responsibilities to fulfill and the last thing she wanted was to let them down. But how could she marry someone she didn't love? And worse yet, how could she even think of taking on such a momentous step in her life when she didn't feel quite whole?

Chapter

Two

EARTH

Matt glanced at his watch for the fourth time. Where the hell was his date? She'd been in the bathroom for at least twenty minutes. Either the food didn't agree with her or she wasn't coming back. He could tell by her reaction when they'd met that there were no sparks on her end.

“This is my last damned blind date,” he muttered under his breath inwardly cursing himself for allowing his friends to talk him into this. At thirty-two years old, it would be nice to have someone to spend his life with, but the right woman for him didn't seem to be out there. He'd lost count of all the times he'd been cast in the best friend role or dumped for being too passionate about his love for anything space related. He was simply a big nerd at heart who loved his job.

Matt didn't always know the right things to say around beautiful women, so he was often quiet and shy. It had been that way since he was a kid which is why he focused

on his passion of the universe and space phenomena. He'd buried himself in his studies and eventually focused on becoming an astrophysicist. Only within the last few years he realized he longed for companionship.

He'd had a few sexual encounters throughout his adult life but nothing that had developed into anything long and meaningful. Several of his colleagues were married with children or had partners. And Matt wanted that as well.

On the verge of him signaling to the waiter for the check, Charlene appeared, flopping down with dramatic flair. "Sorry about that, hon, I ran into an old friend when I went to restroom." She flipped a lock of long auburn hair over her shoulder. Charlene was pretty, but well aware of it. Actually those twenty minutes she'd spent in the ladies' room had been a relief because it gave Matt a break from listening to Charlene's favorite subject. Herself.

Not only was she conceited, within the first few minutes of them meeting she'd not so subtly asked what his net worth was.

"No problem."

"Mark, can I be honest with you?" she asked leaning over the table and giving him a generous view inside her dress.

"Of course. I'd prefer it." He smiled, waiting for her to drop the bomb. The least she could have done was get his name right.

"This isn't going to work out. I mean, you seem like a really nice guy, but you're just not my type."

Even though he didn't really want to further their acquaintance either, her words still stung. Pasting a smile on his face, Matt nodded. If anything, he was still a gentleman.

“I understand. Blind dates don’t always work out.”

She snorted. “Tell me about it. Maryanne said you were cute, I mean you are cute, but in a geeky science guy kind of way. I like my men to be a little beefier if you know what I mean. No offense.”

Kind of like how I like my women to have an IQ over 50.

As much as he wanted to say it, his inbred manners wouldn’t allow him. Just because Charlene obviously had no tact didn’t mean that he should follow suit. “None taken. Seeing as this isn’t really going anywhere let me get the waiter and I’ll take you home.”

“Oh, that’s okay, Max. My friend and I are going out after this, but thanks anyway. You don’t mind if I go and sit over there do you?”

“Not at all, and the name is Matt.”

“What?”

“You called me Max. My name is Matt.”

“Oh, did I? Don’t take it personal, hon. I’m not really big on names. It was nice meeting you, Mike.” She stood up with a brief smile and walked over to the table of her friend, who turned out to be a man.

She hadn’t even thanked him for dinner. That’s it. He was finished with dating. His face burned with anger and humiliation. Matt didn’t have to look in a mirror to know his face was bright red. When he got his bill, he threw enough cash on the table to cover the bill and a generous tip and walked out of the restaurant in disgust.

Later that night as he stepped out of the shower, he studied himself in the mirror. He could never be accused of having movie star good looks, but he wasn't completely hopeless in the looks department either. He had a good job, owned his own home, was drug free and had never been married.

Most women called him cute, a word he detested. Wet and wavy brown locks framed an angular face. Hazel eyes ringed with gold stared back at him. An inch shy of six feet, his body was lanky, but toned from years of cycling and swimming. What was it about him that made women overlook him? Was he really that boring? Or maybe he was simply unlucky in love?

He didn't think his standards were impossible to meet. He wanted someone who shared some of his interests, could hold an intelligent conversation and attractive. He found beauty in all types of women so he wasn't picky. Maybe he was destined to be alone. After all, it wasn't as if gorgeous women who were crazy about him just fell out of the sky.

London walked to her parents' bedroom with the intent to apologize. She'd been very rude running out of the betrothal dinner like that, and to later disrespect her parents only added to the offense. Despite how much she didn't agree with her upcoming nuptials, she should have been more mature about the whole matter.

Tapping lightly on the door, she waited for them to answer. She knew they were there because she heard voices. When she pushed gently against the barrier it creaked open slightly. She was about to announce herself, but something stopped her.

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After tilting her head slightly to hear better, London stood completely still. “Don’t cry, my flower. I know that it gets hard for you around this time of year,” the Emperor’s voice flowed to her ears.

Her mother sniffed loudly. “I know it’s been twenty years, and six children later, but I can’t stop thinking about her. I find it difficult to believe that my baby is dead.”

London frowned. Baby? Who was her mother referring to?

“I can’t pretend to know how you feel, my love, but you must face facts. My men found evidence that Paris died in that fire.”

Calliope burst into loud sobs. “I still see her face. I still hear her voice. Every time I look at London, I’m reminded of her. How can I forget my first born, London’s twin?”

London gasped. Paris? Her twin? She had a sister? Daring to step closer, she pressed against the door.

“It breaks my heart to hear you cry like this, Calliope, and if I could change things I would.”

“I know, Blaze, but I feel like such a lousy mother to have abandoned my own child. She must have hated me.”

“It wasn’t your fault. You had no choice when the Adieaens captured you. Don’t blame yourself, my love.”

“How can I not when I failed as a parent to protect my own child? I should have taken her with me to the doctor’s instead of leaving her with the babysitter, but instead I thought it was a hassle to take her along. My selfishness is the reason she’s not with me now.” Again loud sobs filled the room.

“You’re going to have to forgive yourself, my love. She’s gone and there’s nothing you can do about it. We have a beautiful daughter and six strong boys. I’m very proud of all the children you’ve given to me.”

“In my heart she’s still alive. A mother knows these things.”

“My flower, the DNA tracker determined that the remains of the child in those ruins were Paris. I’ve watched you suffer for too long and seen the sadness in your eyes when you’re deep in thought. Perhaps we could have another child, hopefully a girl this time. We can name her Paris.”

“No! It wouldn’t be the same.”

London took a step closer, but this time the door squeaked loudly drawing her parents’ attention. She stared at them stunned. They’d kept the identity of her sister from her for twenty years. She didn’t know whether to feel hurt or angry, especially when random images of a little girl who looked exactly like her flashed through her mind. Paris. She remembered now. Life on Thibius had slowly made her forget the Earth memories, but in her heart, she’d never forgotten her sister.

Her mother’s eyes shone with tears. “How much did you hear?” the Queen whispered.

“All of it.”

The Emperor released his wife and walked over to London. “I’m sorry that you had to

find out this way.”

“Why didn’t you tell me?” London wanted to know.

“We tried to spare you the pain, but I see now that we should have been upfront with you.”

Seeing the anguish in her mother’s eyes, it was hard for London to be mad. What she must have gone through losing a child was unimaginable. London remembered the little girl she had once been so close with, and it brought back a flood of familiar feelings. Love, devotion, friendship. They were still there and whole.

Even though her parents believed Paris was gone, something within London refused to agree with them. That’s what she’d been missing all her life, her sister!

London walked over to her parents and gave each of them a hug. “I wish you would have told me, but I understand that you only wanted to protect me.”

“How do you feel about this news?” her father asked.

“I’m not sure. It’s true I haven’t really given her a lot of thought in nearly twenty years, but I think I’ve always known. She’s inside of here.” London pointed to her heart.

“She’s in mine too, baby. Your father is right, I’m just going to have to accept that I’ll never see her again,” her mother sighed, with lines of pain etched on her face.

“No, Mama. Don’t give up hope. I don’t know why, call it twin intuition, but I feel that she’s alive.”

“How can you when you barely remember her?” the Emperor asked with one raised

brow.

“I don’t know, Papa, but I think maybe you should search for her again. Maybe we can find some clues as to what happened to her. She can’t be dead. I would feel it if she were. Now that I’ve remembered her, how could I even think of getting married without her there? We have to find her!”

“Sweetling, she’s gone,” her father said gently, pulling her into his arms.

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London pulled away. “No. I don’t accept it. If you won’t look for her I will.”

“And how will you go about doing that? You’ve never been past Zenobia, let alone another galaxy,” he pointed out.

“Papa, you were the one who taught me to pilot the heliocraft. I can get to the Milky Way and set my coordinates to Earth. It can’t be that big of a planet. Isn’t it mostly water?”

Her mother shook her head. “Sweetheart, Earth is three times the size of Thibius with at least a couple billion people. Even if your sister is still alive, she could be anywhere.”

“Calliope, don’t give her false hope when there is none.” He then turned back to London. “Besides, I absolutely forbid you to take a heliocraft out of this galaxy. They’re not sturdy enough to enter Earth’s atmosphere without falling apart.”

London had come here with the intention of apologizing, but her father’s autocratic command made her see red. She looked up at him with narrowed eyes. “You forbid me?”

“London...” her mother said in a warning tone.

The King’s lips tightened as he glared back. “Will you disobey me in this? I can easily arrange for your room to be guarded until your nuptials.”

“If you do that, I’d hate you for it,” London promised.

A brief glimmer of something that looked a lot like sadness flashed in his green eyes before it was concealed. “Then so be it. Hate me if you must, but I intend to keep you safe. It is my duty as your Emperor and foremost, your father. I don’t take that responsibility lightly.”

It was on the tip of her tongue to tell her father exactly what he could do with his duty, but she stopped.

You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar.

Maybe her mother was right. Arguing with her father was futile, so why not try a different tactic?

Throwing her arms around him, she gave him a huge hug. “Papa, I’m sorry for my insolence and for running out of the dinner like that. I didn’t mean to disappoint you. I was scared and acted irrationally. I know you only want the best for me, so I will try to do what you want me to.”

His arms squeezed her tightly against his broad chest, reminding her of when she was younger: a time when she thought her father was the greatest man in the entire Universe. She loved him with all her heart, and she wasn’t lying when she said she was sorry for her behavior, but still London couldn’t see eye to eye with him on these issues. Not about Zahn and especially not about her sister.

Stroking London’s hair, her father bent down to kiss the top of her head. “You have no idea how much you mean to me, my precious little girl. You may not be mine by nature, but you are in my heart. I don’t think I can love my sons any more than I love you, so please understand that when I ask something of you, it’s not to ruin your life. I do it because I care.”

A sob caught in her throat. “Oh, Papa. It means a lot to me that you said that.” And it

broke her heart at the same time, because tonight when the Palace was quiet, London was going on a mission to Earth.

Chapter

Three

Matt adjusted his telescope again for the fifth time. Something wasn't right. There was nothing in his calculations about a new comet appearing. The next one expected was Halley's Comet and that wouldn't be for another few decades. It didn't appear to be a meteor either based on the trajectory and its appearance.

But if that was the case, what was that streaking across the sky, and why did it look like it was getting closer? As an avid star gazer since he was child and someone who's career was dedicated to solar, this worried him. He or one of his colleagues would have noticed any asteroids hurtling toward Earth long before now. But whatever it was, he needed to get the hell out of here and fast. Packing his equipment up as quickly as he could, Matt gazed up once again. The thing was getting closer.

Shit.

Running to his truck, he threw everything in the back, and hopped in the cab. When he tried to start it, his vehicle chose that moment stall.

"Just fucking great. I just took this damn thing in for maintenance," Matt muttered under his breath.

He took a deep breath and tried to start the truck again. To his relief it cranked up this time with no problem. "Good."

He stole a glance into the rearview mirror and realized that the precious seconds lost

had cost him because whatever it was hurtling from the sky was coming right at him. Pressing down on the gas, the truck sped out. He hoped he hadn't damaged his stuff in the back as he'd bundled it up so hurriedly, but right now self-preservation took over.

Matt had only driven a couple miles when he heard a loud crash. It was a good thing this was a desert where not much damage could be done. Instinct told him to keep driving and not look back, but curiosity took hold and wouldn't let go. He had to know what had crashed. If it was a space rock then it would definitely be something to share at his next lunar club meeting.

Making a U-turn, he headed back to the crash. "I feel like one of those morons in a horror movie," he muttered, but this opportunity was too great to pass up. What he was expecting and what he saw were two completely different things.

This was no asteroid, it looked like a mini rocket of some sort and it was glowing. Did he dare get out of his truck and investigate further? He'd seen enough alien invasion movies to know that it usually didn't end up favorably for the curious human. If he walked away now, he'd forever curse himself for being such a chicken shit. Besides, hadn't he always believed that Earth wasn't the only planet with intelligent life forms? This could be the discovery of a lifetime.

On the other hand, his only defense out here in the Californian desert was a hunting knife and a black belt in Tae Kwan Do. Who knew what kind of funky technology the aliens would have. They could have incinerating guns or maybe they'd have sharp teeth and claws.

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The little ship changed from a yellow to an orange glow and began to flash. Though this kind of craft looked unfamiliar to him, something told Matt that it wasn't supposed to blink like that. Deciding to take action, he walked over and touched it.

"Fuck!" He immediately pulled his hand away from the hot metal and blew on it. Judging from the vibrating of this UFO, it was about to blow. Disappointment tore through him. He wouldn't get to find out what or who was inside. Matt was about to make run for it when, he heard a faint voice.

"Please help me." It was a feminine voice in an accent unfamiliar to him.

"How?" he asked, cautiously stepping closer to the space ship against his better judgment.

"The door is stuck!" The person inside cried in a desperate plea. It pounded from the inside of the vehicle.

The ship was too hot for Matt to touch, but he had to help and quick or he and his alien friend were toast. "Think, Matt, think," he muttered. He took off his jean jacket and wrapped it around his hand and looked for a latch. Finding a handle that looked like it would open something, he grabbed on, placing his foot against the craft for leverage.

Pulling with all his might, the door opened, sending him flying back. Two slender arms popped out. Rushing over to assist the alien, he yanked it out, and found himself staring into a pair of large brown eyes. "Please, we have to get out of here. When the heliocraft turns red, that means it will be only seconds before it blows," and with that

she fainted. Instinctively he reached out and caught her.

Lifting her up in his arms, Matt hurried back to the truck and stuffed her in. Thankfully it started the first time, and not quite a thousand feet away, an explosion went off. He dared to look behind him one last time and was surprised to see a big nuclear bomb like cloud. He slammed on the gas willing the truck to go faster. "Come on," he said through gritted teeth.

When Matt felt he was a safe distance away from the explosion, he slowed down and looked over at the alien he'd rescued. His breath caught in his throat. This didn't look like an alien at all. She looked just as human as he did, and quite a beautiful at that.

His friend, Chuck, another scientist he worked with closely, would have gloated if he'd seen this woman. Chuck believed that any species on other planets would have a humanoid form instead of looking like those green things with big heads and eyes. When he had a chance Matt knew he'd have to come back here to find the remains of that ship, but in the meantime, he needed to get this woman back to his place.

Besides those gorgeous eyes of hers, the little alien had high cheekbone, lush lips, and even skin that was a smooth rich brown, neither dark nor light. Her hair was twisted into some complicated style on top of her head. She was petite, but her body curved in all the right places. He licked his now dry lips. It didn't help that the gold cat suit she wore left nothing to the imagination. Damn, he could see the outline of dark nipples through the near see through material. His cock sprang to life.

He wondered what it would be like to peel that outfit off of her slowly and bury himself between her shapely thighs. Was alien pussy anything like human pussy? Not that he'd had much experience having only been with three partners in his life. It wasn't that he hadn't had opportunities, just that he was one of those old fashioned romantics who wanted his sex to mean something. Yet he could barely tear his eyes off of the sexy alien. He'd never been happier in his life to be wrong. Beautiful

women did indeed fall from the sky!

London's eyes fluttered open. She shook her head to rid it of the cloudiness. She was alive! Her last clear memory was losing control of the heliocraft as she neared Earth's atmosphere. She'd taken a huge chance stealing off in the ship having never been outside of her own galaxy since she was brought to Thibius.

Setting the coordinates to where Earth should be, London was pleased that the navigation had gone smoothly, but as she'd entered the Milky Way her craft began to act funny. It shook and rattled so much that London was sure she wouldn't make it to her destination alive let alone find her sister.

Her life passed before her eyes as the ship went hurtling toward Earth's surface. London had thought about her beautiful mother, Papa, and her six younger brothers, Jayru, Fallon, Teagen, Dasil, Baron, and Gage. She'd been sure she wouldn't make it, but the shock absorbent technology of the craft had ensured her survival. For some reason it had also activated the self-destruct mechanism.

Someone had helped! London suddenly remembered a pair of murky colored eyes and an attractive face covered by a pair of primitive glasses. On Thibius, anyone with failing eyesight was given a special injection that fixed myopia in mere seconds.

London sat up. Where was she? Unzipping the top of her body suit she fanned herself. The outfit was designed to keep the body temperature regulated during space travel, but all it was doing now was making her feel extremely hot. If she weren't naked underneath, she'd take the thing off.

Deciding to explore her surroundings and search for her mysterious rescuer, she slid out of the bed. This room was tiny compared to her room back home. It wasn't even the size of her bathing room, but it was interesting with all the pictures on the walls of space and different planets she assumed were part of the Milky Way.

Tentatively she opened the door, and walked down a narrow hall that led to another small room. London halted when she saw a man sitting in front of a large box with moving images. It was like the dimensional projector but more primitive. She vaguely remembered seeing one before.

She studied the man. He was the one who'd pulled her from the heliocraft. There was no doubt in her mind that she'd made it to Earth. This man was human. He wasn't as large as the men on Thibius or as pale, but his skin was fair. She liked his wavy brown hair that just touched the collar of his shirt. He had a strong profile with a long straight nose.

Did she dare approach him? Absently she touched her forearm where the language chip had been implanted. London already spoke the language called English, she'd learned from her mother. Since she didn't know what part of Earth she'd landed on, she couldn't be sure that this man spoke it as well.

London hoped the crash didn't do any damage to the implant. She remembered exchanging a few words with him before he'd pulled her out of the heliocraft, but she wasn't sure if she understood because of the chip or because he spoke her first language.

Walking further into the room to make her presence known, London cleared her throat. The man looked her way, his eyes widening in surprise. When he stood up and she got a really good look at him, her breath caught in her throat. She hadn't seen any man like him before and she liked what she saw.

"So you're up?" his surprisingly deep voice croaked.

She smiled with relief. "You speak English. I'm so glad."

The corner of his mouth tilted slightly. "I think that's my line. I don't know where to

begin.”

“Well, it would be nice if you could tell me where I am exactly. Obviously this is Earth, but what part?”

He was staring so intently that her question seemed to take him by surprise. Shaking his head as though coming out of a trance, he grinned again. “I’m sorry. I didn’t quite catch that.”

“I asked where I was. What part of the world is this? You seem stunned. Are you okay?”

Taking a step closer, he stopped just a foot away from her. “I’m sorry to stare at you like this, but you’re... you’re so beautiful, and you look so human. I didn’t know extraterrestrial beings looked like you.”

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London's face grew warm. He'd sounded so sincere and open. "Thank you, but I look human because I am."

"You can't be. I saw your ship hurtling from the sky."

She shrugged. "So?"

"So, it was unlike any ship I've ever seen before. Besides, that crash should have killed you."

"Judging from some of the technology I've already seen on this planet, maybe you would have died if an Earth ship had crashed. I'm Princess London Blazedawyter of Thibius, and you are?"

Matt raked his fingers through his hair, and he shook his head. "This is getting too damn weird."

London frowned. "What do you mean?"

"I mean, you crash landed from God knows where and then tell me you're human. But you're also claiming to be a Princess from another planet?"

"I can show you the Royal tattoo if you'd like. Anyway, I don't have a reason to lie to you, especially after you've saved my life." She felt shy all of a sudden. Something about this man made London feel uncertain about herself. Usually men were tongue tied around her, but now, she found herself in a similar predicament.

Although he was taller than her by some inches, London liked that she didn't have to tilt her head all the way back just to meet his gaze, and what a nice one it was.

“Uh, you don't have to show me. I'm just surprised is all. Where are my manners? Please have a seat.” He gestured to the couch in front of the large box.

London gratefully sat down. “Thank you. I appreciate this.”

He sat on the other end almost as if he were too afraid to be next to her. “So tell me, Princess London?—

“London is fine.”

“London, then.” He smiled revealing even white teeth.

Her eyes widened slightly and her heart beat faster than normal. What was happening to her? Could this be the feeling her mother described when she'd first laid eyes on London's father? It had to be, why else was her body tightening with awareness of him and sweat popping out of her palms? Her pussy tingled as it never had before.

“You say you're human and a Princess, from Thibius. Is that what you called that place?”

“Yes, it's the planet I grew up on in the Malazian galaxy. I see your confusion and it's easily explained. You see, I was actually born on Earth. My mother and I were taken by Adieaen slave hunters when I was two years old, almost three. That's how we ended up on Thibius. My mother was purchased as a gift for Emperor Blaze Jereksuhn. I was thrown in as part of the deal. They fell in love and married. The Emperor adopted me and has raised me as his own. For the most part, my life was happy there. I don't really remember much about Earth since I was so small when I left.”

Matt's dark brows furrowed together. "Then why did you come back?"

"My main reason was to find my sister. She's my twin actually. When my mother and I were taken, she was with a sitter so she was left behind." London went on to tell him all that she'd learned and remembered about Paris.

She stopped to take a breath. "That was twenty years ago. You never told me your name. Is it a secret?"

He smiled that wonderful smile of his again and London couldn't help but smile back. "Matthew Taylor, but please call me Matt. All my friends do."

"Matt," she tested the name on her tongue. "I like that. It suits you."

His cheeks went red. Did he feel what she did too? Maybe it was too soon to tell, but it was something worth exploring. They stared into each other's eyes, until Matt finally broke the silence. "London, that's an impressive story, but how do you plan on finding her? Even if your sister is still alive, this is a big country. Hell, she may not even be in this country now and it would be difficult for you to travel without a passport or any kind of identification."

"Oh. You actually need that to travel from place to place in this world?"

"If you want to go to another country you do."

"I..." She hung her head inwardly cursing her impulsiveness. "To be honest, I didn't really give this mission a lot of thought. I'd schemed so carefully just to get here and now that I am, I don't know what to do. Now that the heliocraft has crashed, I have no way of getting back home." Tears filled her eyes as she realized that her rashness may have cost her seeing any of her loved ones again. Worse yet, she'd never find her Paris at this rate, not to mention that she was imposing on Matt's hospitality.

“Do you remember where you used to live on Earth?”

“My mother talked about a little town in a place called North Carolina. I remember that, but I don’t remember the name of the town. When she lived on Earth, my mother’s name... well it still is, Calliope Renee Randall.”

“That may be something to go on. You’re saying she was abducted about twenty years ago? Maybe we can look on the Internet and find out some old news articles about it.”

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“Is North Carolina close?”

“Actually, it’s on the other side of the country several thousand miles away.”

“If I hadn’t crashed the heliocraft, we could get there in no time. I’m doomed aren’t I?”

“I wouldn’t say that.”

“You don’t think so? Because from where I’m sitting it looks like I am. I disobeyed my parents, stole one of my father’s ships, and now I have no idea where I am.”

“But finding your sister really meant a lot to you didn’t it?” Matt sounded like he really understood how she felt and that meant so much to her when despair was threatening to take over.

“Yes. It really did. I know this sounds crazy, but even after twenty years, I feel her in my heart. Ever since I heard my parents talking about her, my thoughts have been consumed with finding her whereabouts. Paris is the part of me that I’ve felt has been missing all my life. If I have to walk or swim to my destination I will. I can’t let anything stop me. I’ve come too far to give up.”

Matt stood up abruptly and began to pace the floor. She watched him anxiously wondering what was running through his mind. London liked the way his slim loose limbed body moved. She wondered what it would feel like to have those long arms wrapped tightly around her.

She'd never been in a passionate embrace before. Once, a guard had stolen a kiss from her when she was eighteen. Unfortunately one of her brothers had witnessed the occurrence and informed her father. The guard had been relieved of his duties and that was only because she'd begged for leniency. The Emperor had threatened to have him sent to the Adieaens. She didn't even count the little peck from Zahn.

It wasn't easy growing up with an overprotective father and six brothers who guarded her virtue as though their lives had depended on it. London wanted to feel and know love as her mother had explained it to her. She'd actually stumbled across a guard and one of the maids in the act, and instead of making her presence known, she'd watched. Later she'd gone to her private chambers and fingered her clit.

Masturbation was becoming increasingly frustrating. She didn't know why, but from looking at Matt, London instinctively knew that this man could give her the loving her body had screamed for since she'd matured into womanhood.

She'd been so deep in thought that it caught her by surprise when he stopped pacing and turned to give her an intense stare. "You don't have to do this alone, London."

"No?" She stood up wiping her damp palms against her thighs. "Does... does that mean you'll help me find my sister?"

"If you'd like my help." He said it with a hint of uncertainty that her heart flipped again. Unlike the arrogant men on Thibius, he didn't demand. He was actually asking her. How refreshing.

"Yes, I'd love your help." And a whole lot more.

Chapter

Four

THIBIUS

“Someone will pay for this!” Emperor Blaze roared. “Who allowed the Princess to pilot one of the heliocrasts without my permission?” He looked at all of the guards and pilots of this sector, glaring at each in turn. When no one answered his ire grew. “Someone answer me, or I’ll have every single one of you shipped to the Teriulium mines!” This was no empty threat either. Where his precious daughter was concerned, he’d do whatever it took to ensure her safe return.

Aliak, a lieutenant in this area, stepped forward. “Sire, I gave her the clearance. She claimed that she had your permission.”

Blaze was on him in a flash. Grabbing the inept man by the collar, he slammed his fist into the guard’s face. Bones crunched. “You fool. Every single ship that leaves this dock needs to be cleared by me especially if it’s carrying one of my family members! A lone girl on her own? If harm comes to my daughter, I’ll make sure that you won’t see another day!” The lieutenant screamed in agony. When Blaze pulled his fist back to strike another mighty blow, it was caught.

Dropping the offender, he turned to see who dared to stop him. His best friend and advisor, Radian, looked at him with surprise in his eyes. “No, my friend. This isn’t you.”

“Don’t tell me what this is or isn’t. Because this buffoon couldn’t follow simple instructions my daughter is missing,” Blaze yelled.

“And will beating him to a bloody pulp change things? It won’t. Come away with me and then you can ask your questions when you’re calmer. You’ll do the Princess no good in the state you’re in. You must remain strong for the Queen.”

“Listen to him, Father. It would serve no purpose harming this man who probably

wasn't deliberating disobeying you," Jayru, his oldest son and heir spoke.

Blaze wanted to pound that guard some more but realized his friend and son were right. It wouldn't do the situation any good if he went on as he was. He nodded. "Jayru, see that this guard is taken to the medics for care, then put him in a holding cell for questioning."

His son looked as though he wanted to say something, but decided against it. Nodding his dark head, Jayru barked out orders to two other guards to help the writhing man off the ground. Blaze allowed Radien to lead him out of the sector and into the castle.

Blaze wanted to rage and cry, but tears were not a luxury he could afford. He had to find his daughter. She had no experience in flying a heliocraft so far. What if she crashed? Even though it was designed so that any occupant would survive such a catastrophe, the self-destruct mechanism certainly made him worry.

"You were very hard on that guard out there," Radien said gently.

"He's endangered my daughter! He's lucky to be alive. What am I going to tell my wife, who has been crying her eyes out since we've learned that London was missing? She's inconsolable, and I'm damned near at that point myself. If anything were to happen to her... Radien, I would gladly give my life for hers."

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His friend patted him on the shoulder. “I know how you feel. I ache for you. Your children have been special to me as well, especially London. It was truly a joy to see her grow up, but you know, my friend, violence won’t solve anything. That guard is an idiot I agree, but you know just as well as I do that if London so much as bats her eyelashes men jump to do her bidding.”

Blaze’s eyes narrowed. “Are you saying my daughter is some kind of seductress? You may be my friend, but I’ll knock you on your ass for speaking against her like that.”

“You need to settle down. Right now I’m sure your nerves are a little frazzled but think about it, friend, anything she wants you give to her. I’m not saying that’s a bad thing, but there’s something about your daughter that inspires that in men. She could probably charm the most cold hearted of beasts,” Radien reasoned.

A smile tugged at the corner of Blaze’s mouth. His friend was right. London usually got anything she asked for. She wasn’t spoiled. She didn’t need to be, especially when men and women alike tripped over their feet to do her bidding. “She is charming.” He sighed, sadness flowing through him as he remembered her as a little girl, so loving and sweet. She hadn’t changed in over twenty years though she had the most infuriating stubborn streak.

“Go to your wife, and see to her comfort. I’ll check with the system’s navigators to determine the exact coordinates of the missing heliocraft. At least then we can pinpoint her whereabouts.”

Blaze nodded, appreciating his friend. “Thank you, Radien.” He headed for his room

then only to be stopped by Zahn.

“Sire, I would like to extend my services to you and gather some of my men to search for the Princess. I vow to you that I won’t rest until she’s found and brought back home safely.”

Blaze gave Zahn, one of the few men who topped him in height, a long hard look. The man’s dark hair and slightly darker complexion had a lot to do with his Zenobian ancestors, a race who were a lot like the Thibians. This was the man he’d chosen to marry London and Blaze wondered if he’d made a mistake.

There was a bit of hardness about him that Blaze hadn’t noticed before. Even in his rush to see his daughter securely married, maybe he should have consulted her. He shook his head. It had to be the drama of the moment. Zahn was a fine General who served him well. His loyalty to the crown and service in battle had earned Blaze’s utmost respect.

“I appreciate that. It means a lot to me to have men like you backing me. We’ll speak of this later, but first, I must see the Queen. As you can imagine she’s distressed.”

Zahn inclined his head respectfully. “Of course, Sire. Call upon me when you’re ready. I’ll round up some of my men.”

“Very good,” Blaze dismissed him, turning on his heel.

When he finally reached his room, it was to find his wife curled up on the bed in the fetal position. Tears slowly streamed down her face, and Blaze’s heart broke for her. Even after all the time they’d been together, Blaze believed his Calliope was the most beautiful woman he’d ever set eyes on. His heart raced wildly for her, and his cock jumped to attention whenever she was near, just like it had been when they first met. He knew that long after they were old and feeble, he’d still feel this way about her.

The situation was grave, yet he had to hold her. He gently closed the door behind him and slid onto the bed next to her. She resisted momentarily before allowing him to pull her against him. Calliope wiggled her bottom as though to get comfortable. In the process she rubbed against his cock.

The situation was grave, but he wanted his wife.

Be strong for her. Now is not the time to think with your dick.

“I can’t lose another daughter, Blaze. How will I go on? I was just starting to realize that Paris is lost to me. I can’t go another twenty years like this. I think I’d rather die,” Calliope whispered, her voice racked with anguish.

He pressed a kiss on the back of her neck. “We’ll find her, my love. I promise you.”

She turned around in his arms, her forlorn brown eyes locking with his. “Oh, Blaze, I’m so scared.”

Blaze caressed the side of her still youthful face. He could search the universe for a more perfect woman and he wouldn’t be able to find one. She was slightly rounder from giving him six sons, but Calliope had kept her body tight by keeping up with her dancing, and giving lessons to little girls for their festivals. Their nightly and sometimes morning lovemaking sessions didn’t hurt either.

“I’m scared too.” Blaze wouldn’t have admitted that to anyone but her.

“Take my fears away, my King. Make love to me. I need to feel another emotion besides despair.”

His cock jumped to attention. He wanted to slide between those beautiful brown thighs more than anything, but didn’t know how appropriate it was when their

daughter was missing.

Calliope took the decision out of his hands when she pressed her full lips against the column of his throat. Her hands worked on the ties of his top. “Ah, Calliope,” he groaned as she bared his chest and licked one flat disk to hardness. Her hands caressed his dick. He stroked her head, enjoying the feel of her tongue grazing against his hot skin.

She turned her attention to his other nipple, nipping it gently with her teeth. He gasped with a mixture of pleasure and pain. “Oh, Calliope, my love.”

Her hand sliding over the bulge in his pants, she looked at him, a wicked gleam in her eyes. “Your cock is ready for me. Would you like me to take it in my mouth?”

Blaze released a stilted breath. “You know what happens when you do that to me. I can’t hold out for very long.”

She grinned. “Maybe that’s what I want. I love it when you lose control and slam this big hard cock into me like a rutting beast.” She undid his pants and slid them down his hips.

His body tensed in anticipation. Just the feel of her warm breath against his throbbing erection was nearly enough for him to erupt. Kicking the pants aside, Blaze licked his lips. “Then do it. Let me fuck your mouth. Wrap your lips around me, my love.”

Small fingers wrapped around his shaft, while her other hand lovingly caressed his balls. Bending over, she licked the tip of his cock.

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“Damn, don’t tease me, woman. Suck it!”

She chuckled. “Patience, my love. It’s such a rare treat for me to enjoy it. You’re always impatient to get to the main course.”

He gritted his teeth, trying to hold back. Blaze wasn’t sure how much more of this teasing he’d be able to take, but he waited. She ran her tongue slowly along his length taking her time exploring and savoring. He thought he’d die before she finally took him into her mouth.

Her lips tightly hugged his cock as her head bobbed up and down. His fingers gripped a handful of her locked hair. Already he was close to his peak. This was why he rarely allowed her to orally gratify him, because he enjoyed it too much! Blaze prided himself on being an excellent lover.

His chest swelled with manly pride whenever Calliope complimented him on his skill. There was a time when he’d had a harem and he could satisfy several women at once, but only with his wife could he lose complete control. He loved what she did to him, but at times it was embarrassing to finish so soon. Was it possible for his passion to be too strong for someone? He didn’t know and she never seemed to mind, because Blaze always made sure she too was satisfied by the time all was done.

She bobbed faster, her mouth tightening around him. He didn’t want to come in her mouth. Blaze wanted some of that warm slick pussy of hers. He pulled her against him then smashed his mouth against hers as he tore her gown off. Through the years, he’d destroyed so many of her garments in the throes of their passion that she had new outfits made for her daily.

He couldn't get enough of the sweet and tangy taste of her. Calliope ripped her mouth away. "Please, let me finish, Blaze."

"Not on your life. I want some pussy and I mean to have it now. There will be other times for you to suck me, my flower. I need to be inside of you now."

His fingers dug into her slender waist holding her steady as she straddled his cock. He surged up, the tip of his cock slipping into her moist cunt. When she lowered herself down on his dick, his hands slid to her rounded hips. She moved slowly at first, until she was bouncing up and down on his cock, her breasts jiggling.

Blaze reached up and squeezed the full globes. There was no doubt that the years had been kind to his wife. Though they sagged ever so slightly from having nursed eight children, her breasts were still large and firm. He loved caressing and sucking them as they fucked. She arched her back against his touch as though offering herself to him. "Oh, Blaze, that feels so good. I love the way you touch me."

"And I love touching you, flower. I love the way your pussy is so snug around my cock, and the way your hands explore my body. I love the expressions you make in the throes of passion. I just love you."

She smiled down at him. "You do know how to say the right things." Her pussy muscles squeezed his cock, making him groan with desire. Calliope bounced faster, sucking his cock in until his balls tightened, ready to spill his seed.

Her body quivered a little at first then started to shake. "Oh, Blaze!" she screamed his name, reaching her peak, but she continued to move. Mere seconds passed before his fingers dug deeper into her flesh, and he came, shooting his seed up her channel. He grunted and moaned emptying his balls into her.

She collapsed against his chest, her breathing ragged. "That was wonderful, Blaze."

Thank you,” she said with a content sigh, pressing a kiss against the side of his neck.

“No, thank you, my flower. I think we both needed that.”

They lay in silence for a while, Calliope still on top of him, her breasts crushed against his chest. He absently stroked her back loving the way she felt pressed against him. Blaze didn’t know what he would do without this woman. He was grateful for every single day that she was in his life. Calliope was his Queen, the mother of his children, his confidant, lover and best friend. He loved his children to death, but his wife was the one person he couldn’t live without. Even after all these years, instead of his feelings fading they only grew stronger.

It was she who finally broke the silence. “Blaze?”

“Yes, flower?”

“We will find her won’t we?” She sounded so scared and uncertain.

“Yes. I won’t rest until we do.”

Just then, someone knocked on his door. No one disturbed them unless there was an emergency. Calliope scrambled under the covers. Blaze reluctantly rolled off the bed and donned his pants once more. The knock came again.

“Give me a minute!” he yelled.

When he was presentable, he opened the door to find his son, Jayru, standing there with despair in green eyes so like his own. He looked paler than normal and Blaze knew something was wrong. “What is it, son?”

“We have a lock on where London’s heliocraft crashed. The navigators have

determined that the self-destruct mechanism was activated.”

“No!” Calliope screamed from the bed.

Chapter

Five

Matt couldn't keep the grin off his face as he watched London take another healthy bite of her cheeseburger. He'd never seen a woman of her size eat with so much gusto. It was her second one and she didn't look like she'd slow down anytime soon. “Mmm, this is so good. Can I have another one? And some more of these fry thingies with extra ketchup please,” she said with a full mouth.

Matt chuckled. She looked so adorable with that ketchup smear on the side of her mouth. Carnal images of him licking it off filled his mind. It was day three of their trip and already he was falling for her in a big way. That was dangerous considering a woman like her couldn't ever possibly be interested in him. He'd been burned too many times before and knew better than to try anything.

His main goal was to help London find her sister. It hadn't been a problem getting the time off at the software company he worked for because he'd had a lot of vacation time banked. Matt tried to convince himself that the reason he'd volunteered to help her was because he wanted to find out all he could about where she'd lived for the past twenty years, the other species and what their technology was like.

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It was true that extraterrestrials and space interested him. He'd always believed that the government had covered up what had happened in Roswell, New Mexico. He'd only ever shared these opinions with other alien enthusiasts, because most people didn't understand the fascination. Now he had living proof sitting across from him and all he could think about was how she'd feel in his arms. How her hair and skin smelled. Her smile, and the way her eyes lit up whenever he did something for her.

That was another thing that made her special. When he'd taken her shopping for clothes to wear for their trip, or when he'd take her to dinner, she was appreciative. It seemed like such a rare quality with the women he'd dealt with, and the fact that London was a bona fide Princess made it even more amazing.

Matt knew he could tell himself a number of times why he was here with her, but the real reason was, he couldn't let her get away. He knew nothing would probably come of this, but as long as she was here with him, he could pretend.

"Are you sure you want another one? Your stomach is going to hurt if you eat this much. If you want, we can go to another hamburger place tomorrow for lunch or we can get some to go for the road."

"Oh could we? I think I could eat a hundred. This is the best food I've ever eaten."

"You said that yesterday when you ate hotdogs and the day before when we had tacos. Actually, we should probably be eating healthier foods, but this is quick and easy."

"Oh, but I love this stuff. There's nothing like this on Thibius. Don't get me wrong,

the food is good, but not like here. On my planet there is no natural vegetation, everything is grown by machine, and there are no chickens or cows either. The meat we consume is from the ropies. They're big, green and furry. Their meat is also really tough if not cooked for a couple days. We only eat it when there's a big celebration because of the effort it takes to get it just right."

"So the Thibians are mainly vegetarians for the most part?"

"No, there are other meats, but they're found mainly on other planets. When we visit different worlds, we try stuff indigenous to their land, but nothing has compared to the food on Earth so far. I think I could get very fat here."

"And you'd still be very beautiful."

For the first time since they'd been served their food she put the cheeseburger down. Her grin was wide. Damn, even with that piece of lettuce stuck in her teeth she was still hot. "Do you really mean that?"

"Yes. I do."

"Then why haven't you... well... you don't touch me or anything."

He gulped. Was she serious? She had to be teasing him. "Touch you how?"

"I don't know. Like a man touches a woman."

Matt had been in the middle of taking a sip of his soda and nearly spit it out. "Excuse me?"

"We've been riding in your really uncomfortable vehicle for three days now, and the nights we've stopped at hotels, you've insisted on two separate rooms. Why can't we

share a room? If two people like each other, isn't that what they do?"

"London, you don't know what you're saying. You don't have to offer yourself to me out of gratitude."

She picked up a napkin and wiped her mouth. "I am grateful, but gratitude isn't the reason, I'd like to..."

"Then what's the reason?"

"I would have thought it was obvious. You're a smart guy. You were able to find articles about my mother and me, and the last known location of my sister. So if you can figure that out, something this basic should come to you." She winked at him and then took a sip of her drink.

Matt's heart began to beat at an erratic pace. Her words and tone seemed sincere. But did he dare hope that she was feeling for him what he'd felt for her since the moment he'd laid eyes on her? London was so pretty and sweet. If she was only toying with his affections that would crush him.

"London, I think all that beef is going to your head. What you probably need is a good night's sleep and in the morning you'll have a clear head. We'll hit North Carolina tomorrow so that should make you forget this nonsense. By the way, you have something between your teeth. Excuse me while I go to the restroom." He slid out of the booth and headed for the men's room, but not before he saw the crestfallen expression within the depths of her brown eyes.

"What a coward," he muttered to himself as he walked away.

If she really was serious, he was an asshole for reacting the way he did, but he just couldn't take that step.

Damn. Damn. Damn!

Standing at the urinal he cursed himself several times and didn't notice a large bald man standing next to him until the other guy spoke.

“Is that your bitch out there?”

Matt frowned and looked up at the large bald man clad in a leather vest and dusty jeans. Stuffing his dick back into his pants, he zipped up and flushed.

“Uh, we're just friends and I'd appreciate you don't refer to her a bitch.”

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At the sink he quickly washed his hands, but the man didn't seem to be finished with his questioning. "And what are you gonna do about it if I say it again?"

Matt ignored him. He knew how to defend himself but he wasn't looking for trouble.

"That's right buddy. Keep your mouth shut. Thatbitchout there looks like she could use a real man if you know what I mean. I guess you don't mind my talking to her?"

Matt's lips tightened. He wasn't going to let this oversized jackass intimidate him. "It's a free country, buddy," he mocked.

"Are you trying to be funny, four eyes?"

"Not at all. Now if you'll excuse me."

When Matt moved to pass the biker, he was stopped. "I don't like you, and there's going to be a toll to get past me."

Matt was a second degree black belt in his discipline, but he only used his skills when absolutely necessary. Though he was fast losing his temper, this jerk just wasn't worth it. He dug out the twenty he'd had in his pocket, thankful that his wallet was on the table with London. "Here this is all I have on me. Now can I go?"

Baldy snatched the money from his hand and immediately stuffed it in his own pocket. "You got a smart mouth, nerd. You better watch it before you get hurt."

When Matt walked back to the table, he knew he'd messed up. London hadn't

touched any of her food since he'd left her, and her eyes were red and swollen. He grabbed his wallet and called the waitress for the check.

London didn't bother looking in his direction, her gaze firmly trained on the window. With a heavy sigh, Matt reached over and took her hand. "London, I'm sorry for what I said."

She snatched her hand away and turned a blazing pair of brown eyes in his direction. "Don't patronize me. One of the things I hated about Thibius was that the men thought they knew everything. I know my own mind and my feelings. I don't know why you think you're an expert about my feelings, but don't insult me like that again."

"I didn't mean?—"

"Yes, you did. I'm not stupid so don't treat me like I am. I like you, and I was hoping that you liked me a little too."

"I do like you, London."

More than you know.

"Then why are you always backing away from me like I'm some kind of undesirable?"

He shrugged. The last thing he wanted was to get into his boring history with the opposite sex. She'd probably laugh at him and after the way he'd treated her, he deserved it. "You wouldn't understand."

"Then make me understand."

She sounded so sincere that he was on the verge of telling her everything when the waitress showed up with the check. Talk about perfect timing. He threw some bills on the table. “Come on, London, it’s getting dark and we need to find a hotel for the night.”

“Are you going to insist on two separate rooms again? I’m not too crazy about that arrangement, Matt. The strange sounds at night make it difficult for me to sleep.”

“We’ll talk about it when we find some place to stay.”

“No. I want to talk about it now. Why not share a room? It will at least save you some money. The room I was in last night had two beds.”

“Don’t worry about it. Paying for two rooms is hardly going to break me.”

“It’s not about that, and you know it.” She stood up, shaking her head. It was evident that she didn’t like the answer he’d given her, but what exactly could he say? That he wanted her desperately, but was too scared to act on his impulses for fear that she’d break his heart?

He shook his head. “Could we have this discussion in the truck? It’s starting to get dark and I was hoping to at least get to Interstate 40 before we stop for the night.”

London opened her mouth as if she wanted to say something but closed it again. Lowering her head she walked in front of him as they left the diner. Matt stared at her retreating figure as she walked away, admiring the way her jeans clung so lovingly to ample hips, and the way her baby tee barely covered her flat stomach. She wore her hair in a braided ponytail that swung back and forth as she moved. How he’d make it through another sleepless night he didn’t know.

As they stepped outside, the man who’d confronted Matt in the bathroom was leaning

against the wall with a couple of his companions.

“Well, well, well, if it isn’t four eyes. Fellas, I have this guy to thank for gas money. I’m sure if you ask, he’ll give some to you too. How about it, buddy? Do you have some money for my friends?” Baldy blocked his way so he couldn’t get by.

His face grew hot with anger. It was one thing to try to intimidate him alone in the bathroom, but with London standing there, a line had been crossed. “I gave you all you’re going to get. Now, if you’ll excuse us, we’d like to pass.”

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His two friends chuckled. A tall shaggy redhead who resembled the missing link patted Baldy on the shoulder. “Hey, Axe, it looks like this guy’s got a set on him after all. I’d be shaking in my boots if I were you.”

“Shut up, Red. I can handle this guy,” Axe spat, and then glared at Matt. “If you want to keep your teeth, I’d suggest you hand over your wallet. I wouldn’t want to embarrass you in front of the lady.” Dark eyes raked insolently over London’s body.

It was on the tip of his tongue to say something when London spoke up. “Leave him alone!”

“London, stay out of this,” Matt hissed through gritted teeth. The last thing he wanted was for any harm to come to her.

“I’m not going to let him pick on you like this. He owes you an apology, and I demand that he do it right now.” She walked over to Axe and poked him in the chest. “You are rude and ought to be ashamed of yourself.”

“Look, guys, the little dude has his woman fighting his battles.” Axe laughed.

Matt grabbed her arm and pushed her behind him. He didn’t know what these three were capable of. They could do what they wanted to him, but he’d die before he let them harm a hair on her beautiful head. “London, you’re not helping.”

“But he can’t talk to you like this,” she protested.

“Just be quiet and leave it to me,” he shot back.

“Maybe I’ll let you off easy if I can get a kiss from the babe. I like my women feisty, and I heard black chicks are wild in the sack.” Axe grinned, revealing grimy teeth.

“Leave her alone.”

The tallest of the three grabbed London by the arm and pulled her against him. “I think I should get a kiss too.”

“And me.” The one called Red grinned.

Instead of screaming, she elbowed her assailant in the stomach. “How dare you touch me!”

Red doubled over, releasing his grip on her. “You black whore!”

That was the final straw. Matt pushed London out of the way and sent a blow to the side of Red’s head. The man hit the ground.

Axe’s nostrils flared. “Why, you little shit, you’re going to pay for that.”

Matt just managed to miss the punch sent flying his way, before kneeing his attacker in the stomach. The wind knocked out of him Axe bent over, and Matt gave him a quick knuckle punch to the throat followed by a knee to Axe’s nose.

London’s scream alerted him to more danger. The tall one charged at him. Matt served him a roundhouse kick to the chest. When all three men were disabled he grabbed a stunned London by the hand and ran to his truck with her. “Hurry up and get in. There’s no telling when those men will recover and they may have weapons.”

He didn’t feel completely safe until they were back on the main highway. There was always a chance that the big goons could chase them on their motorcycles. “Matt, that

was amazing,” London said in awe.

“It was nothing,” he muttered, his heart still racing. He’d never really had to use his fighting skills before besides at the dojo for practice. The adrenaline was pumping through his veins.

“Yes, it was. That was... I mean I’ve never seen anything like that before. You took those bullies down.”

“Well, I couldn’t let them disrespect you like that. They shouldn’t have touched you.”

She smiled at him, unbuckling her belt and sliding closer to him. He nearly swerved off the road when she pressed her lips against his cheek. “Jesus, London. Don’t do that.”

“I was only trying to thank you. That was so brave and exciting.”

He knew he had to get out of this vehicle before he pulled over and fucked her senseless. “You have to buckle up, it’s the law,” he said softly, trying to get his breathing under control. His cock strained against his jeans and if London looked down, she’d notice too.

She pouted sliding back to her side of the cab. He dearly wanted to hold her, but wouldn’t let her make an advance on him out of gratitude. They drove without saying a word for an hour. Matt purposely turned up the radio to discourage any conversation.

When they finally pulled into a hotel, just outside of Memphis, he paid for two separate rooms. It was just safer thatway. London didn’t look happy when he handed her the key to her own room.

“Matt, why can’t we just share a room? You said we’d talk about it.” Her eyes were glistening with what looked like unshed tears.

He stilled himself against the look she was giving him. “I gave it some thought and decided it would be best. Look, our rooms are next to each other so if you have any problems just knock, or give me a call on the phone. Okay?”

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“I wouldn’t have any if we’d just share a room, besides I have trouble getting to sleep.”

So do I, he wanted to say but kept it to himself. “You’ll be fine.”

“But —”

He gave her a quick peck on the lips to silence her, but instead of serving its purpose, it gave him a taste for her. Her lips were soft, warm and welcoming. Matt immediately pulled away. “Let’s go.”

After seeing her settled in her room, Matt quickly ran to his room, and got into the shower, hoping the cool spray would douse the fire burning within. He must have stayed under the water for several minutes, because he felt like an ice pop by the time he stepped out.

He was drying his hair when he heard a knock at his door. It had to be London. Wrapping the towel around his waist, he grabbed his glasses. When he opened the door, he was surprised to find London standing on the other side wearing nothing but his shirt and a smile.

Chapter

Six

London knew she’d have to take matters into her own hands. She could tell that Matt was attracted to her, but for some reason, he was holding back. She couldn’t spend

another sleepless night tossing and turning, wishing to feel his hands on her body. So when he left her alone for the night, she showered and rubbed on the scented lotion he'd bought for her. Then she donned the shirt he'd lent her the night she crashed on Earth.

There was no way she would take no for an answer. She meant to have him. Now standing in front of him, her mouth went dry. His chest was bare, and she wanted to run her hands over his slender, but well-toned torso. She'd seen topless men before, but she loved the dark sprinkling of hair covering his skin.

"London, what are you doing here?"

"I couldn't sleep. Can I come in with you?"

"That wouldn't be a good idea. I think you need to go back to your own bed. Count sheep or something."

"I don't even know what sheep are. It's so dark and cold in my room. Please let me stay with you."

"I only have one bed in here."

London was in this to win. If she had to play the heroine in distress then so be it. She wanted this man. "So, we can share. Please. I'm frightened. I heard noises and I don't think I can sleep. You wouldn't send me back in those circumstances would you?" She pouted.

"London, I can't let you do that."

"Why?"

“Because. Dammit, if you share a bed with me, I don’t know if I’ll be able to stop myself from touching you.”

“And that would be bad because?”

“Because once I start, I won’t be able to stop.”

Triumph soared through her. “Aha, you do want me. I want you too. Why can’t we do what our bodies want?”

“Because I don’t want you to have sex with me out of gratitude.”

Just then a couple walked by and gave her a look of disdain. She was sure she looked quite scandalous to them standing there wearing almost nothing. “Umm, can we at least discuss this in your room? It’s getting kind of cold standing out here in the hallway.”

He sighed, opening the door wider to admit her. “Come in, but only for a minute.”

“Just a minute?” She grinned at him when he closed the door behind her.

“Yes, one minute.”

This was going to be harder than she thought. “Matt, why do you assume that I only want to make love with you out of gratitude? I am grateful, but I find you extremely attractive. I’m sure you get that from quite a lot of women on Earth.”

He snorted with a look of disbelief in his hazel eyes. “In my dreams.”

“You’re kidding. I find it very surprising that women aren’t tripping over their feet trying to get you. You’re attractive, very intelligent, sweet... and I’ve wanted to do

this from the moment I laid eyes on you.” Taking a deep breath, she pulled the shirt over her head, and unclipped her hair, baring herself to him. London knew she was taking a big risk, but hadn’t her mother once said if it wasn’t worth fighting for, it wasn’t worth having?

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Matt was worth fighting for, and she didn't want to go another night without knowing what it was like to be held in his arms. A delicious thrill of anticipation raced up her spine as his hazel gaze slowly slid up and down her body.

"Don't fight what we both want." She stepped closer to him and pulled his glasses off before putting them on the closest dresser, and then she twined her arms around his neck. London pressed her breasts against his chest and placed gentle kisses against his neck.

Her tongue grazed his throat and Matt shuddered in reaction. She felt something hard pressing against her thigh and knew he was aroused. Through her mother, London knew enough about how things worked between men and women.

With a low groan, Matt wrapped his arms around her and his mouth crushed hers. The kiss was urgent and hungry, devouring her as though she were a tasty morsel. Fingers dug into her hair, holding her head steady as he ravaged her lips.

London parted them under the pressing insistence of his tongue. It swooped in, seeking to conquer. Her knees felt like they'd give out on her. The kiss she'd had before had not prepared her for this torrent wave of need that surged through her, taking her on its heightened crest of sensation.

Her nipples tightened, straining against his pecs, as she moaned into his mouth. London's tongue moved tentatively out to meet his, swirling and moving around it. He tasted of cool mint and fire. Dampness formed at the vee of her thighs.

Inexperienced though she was, instinct guided her. She tugged the towel away from

his body and immediately felt his stiff member. “God, London, you have no idea how long I’ve wanted to do this to you,” he groaned.

“I have a pretty good idea, because I’ve wanted this too.” Growing bolder, she traced the outline of his lips with her tongue savoring the taste of him.

Matt caught her by surprise when he scooped her into his arms and walked the short distance to his bed, almost reverently. While he looked at her body, she did some perusing of her own. He was magnificent. Matt wasn’t nearly as built as the men on Thibius, but she found his body fascinating nonetheless. He was slender and toned, without an ounce of fat on his frame.

Her eyes slid to his cock. She’d never seen one before, but she liked what she saw. She didn’t really have any comparison size wise, but it looked just right for him, and it was thick. Pinkish and veiny with an angry purplish helmet, it was one of the most beautiful things she’d ever seen.

“You’re so perfect,” she whispered, reaching out to touch it.

This seemed to take him by surprise. “You think so?”

“Oh, yes.”

She licked suddenly dry lips as she slid closer to him. Matt held himself erect, but his breathing was shallow. Her hand grazed the length of his cock, loving the way his hard shaft felt beneath her fingers. She circled him in her fist and leaned forward.

London kissed it.

“God, London, if you do that again, we’re going to be finished before we even get started,” he groaned.

“But I want to touch you. Doesn’t it please you?” she asked wanting very desperately for him to say yes. It meant a lot to her that she gave him pleasure. She was sure that a man like him had a lot of experience, and she’d barely been kissed.

“More, than you know, sweetheart.”

“Then let me do it again,” she said not waiting for him to answer. She licked the tip of his cock testing its texture on her tongue. A pearly drop of moisture spouted out of the tiny hole, which she immediately captured in her mouth. “Mmm.”

He grabbed a handful of her hair. “Damn you I can’t fight this anymore,” he moaned sounding as though he was talking more to himself than to her. “Take me in your mouth.” She did as he commanded. “That’s it, sweetheart. Wrap those beautiful lips of yours around my cock, take as much of me in as you can. Ahh, yes, just like that.”

She tried to stuff as much of his cock into her mouth as she could, but when the tip hit the back of her throat, she gagged a little and pulled away. Embarrassed, she looked up at him. “I’m sorry. Let me try it again.”

He stroked her hair reassuringly. “It’s okay, sweetheart, take it easy. Go slowly. You don’t have to take the whole thing in your mouth. Just do whatever feels comfortable.”

“But I want to please you.”

“Sweetheart, having my dick in your mouth pleases me very much.”

She smiled, feeling better. His words gave London the confidence to continue. Opening her mouth over him again, she took a little of him in at a time, going slowly. His moans of pleasure were turning her on. Matt’s evident arousal egged her on, her head bobbing up and down on his cock.

“That’s it, sweetheart. Yes, that’s it. God, yes!” Matt yelled.

With her free hand she fondled the soft sac beneath his shaft. By the end of the night she didn’t want to leave any inch of Matt’s body unexplored. Everything about this man turned her on, from the little noises he made in the back of his throat to the way her dark hands looked against his pale skin.

Never in her life would she have thought something like this could be so erotic. She loved every minute of it. He guided her head back and forth over him gently at first, and then his movements became erratic. London did her best to keep up with him, loving his loss of control. It showed her just how much he desired her.

“I’m going to come!” he groaned letting go of her hair and pulling away.

She whimpered when his cock was ripped from her mouth with a resounding pop. She looked up at his flushed face. “Didn’t you like it?”

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“I loved it, but I don’t want our first time together to be like this. I was selfish for letting you do that to me.”

“No, I wanted to do it.”

“Regardless, I let the little head guide the big one. Now it’s my turn to savor your beautiful body.” He pushed her back, and she shivered as he covered her body with his lanky one.

This time when he kissed her he took his time, but the feeling wasn’t any less intense. He raised his head then and their eyes locked. “You’re so beautiful, London. I never imagined that we’d end up together like this.”

She smiled, stroking the side of his handsome face. London wasn’t sure if this was love, but it sure felt like it. “I imagined us like this. I’ve thought of nothing else but this. The women on this planet must be crazy not to realize how special you are. Please kiss me again, Matt.” She sighed pulling his head down to hers.

His tongue plunged deep into her mouth. London knew she could easily lose herself this way. Matt’s body pressing her so lovingly into the mattress set fire to every inch of her flesh. Her pussy ached with the need to be filled by him.

She slid her nails lightly up his back, careful not to break skin. He lifted his head then and slid down her body ever so slightly before lowering his head and closing his mouth around one throbbing nipple.

London gasped in surprise and delight. She moaned and arched her back, offering

herself to him. When she'd dreamed of him on the previous nights, she knew things could be good with him, but she didn't know they'd be this good.

He licked and laved the tight peak until she cried out for mercy. Feeling like she'd explode, she pushed his head away. "Oh, Matt, I don't think I can take this."

Matt chuckled. "You can and you will. I'm going to give you so much pleasure you won't know what to do with yourself." And with that he transferred his attention to her other breast.

She writhed and wiggled under the ministrations of his mouth, reveling in the decadent sensation. What was he doing to her? "Oh," she groaned when he slid further down her body, pressing kisses on her heated skin as he went.

"So beautiful," he groaned.

London groaned when his fingers tangled in the tight patch of curls between her thighs. His fingers pried them apart, and London knew she'd lose it when he grazed the hot little button between her labia.

There'd been plenty of nights she'd lain in her bed back home and touched herself, but it hadn't felt this good. Nothing could compare to this. "Please," she whispered, not exactly sure what she was begging for.

"Oh, I intend to. Open you legs a little wider for me, sweetheart."

London didn't even think to disobey him. Just feeling his warm breath against her clit was enough to send an electric current through her body. His lips latched on to the tiny nub sucking it voraciously. She lifted her hips, grinding her pussy against his face. Hot pleasure tore through her, causing her to scream his name. "Matt!"

Her thighs closed clasp the sides of his face, but still he sucked. When he slid a finger into her channel, London thought she'd faint. "Matt," she groaned, her head lolling back and forth. She wasn't sure how much of this sexual torture she could take.

Looking down to see his head between her thighs, pleasuring the most intimate part of her body was enough to send a dark thrill racing up her spine. She knew in that moment that she loved this man, and the discovery of her feelings only intensified the passion.

He slid another finger into her. It felt slightly uncomfortable, but the pleasure far outweighed the pain. Lifting his head, he looked at her as though trying to gauge her reaction. "You're very tight, London."

"I know. I've... I've never done this before."

He stiffened. "You're a virgin?"

"Yes. Is that a problem?" she asked, feeling uncertain again. On Thibius, virginity was highly valued. She hoped he wouldn't disdain the gift she was offering him.

Chapter

Seven

Several thoughts ran through Matt's mind at London's confession. He could tell that she wasn't very experienced, but she'd been so natural it didn't cross his mind that she was a virgin.

Being her first was a big responsibility and whenever she made love to anyone else he'd always be the standard. Just thinking about her with other men sent a spark of

jealously through him that made him grind his teeth. She belonged to him! It was a great honor to be her first, but he had to make sure they were both on the same page. “Is this what you want, London? Once we go through this, there’s no going back.”

She lifted her head to kiss his chest. “I want this. I really do. If we don’t finish I think I’ll go crazy, please, Matt, don’t leave me in this state.”

He couldn’t if he tried, and when she wiggled beneath him, his cock throbbed painfully. He needed to be inside that juicy pussy, now. Then it suddenly occurred to him that he needed protection. With London being a virgin it wasn’t likely that she was on any type of birth control. He remembered that he usually carried a couple condoms in his wallet just in case.

He kissed her lips, again savoring the sweet taste of her. Matt didn’t think he’d ever grow tired of doing that. “I do want it, but first, I have to get something okay?”

She frowned clinging to him, not letting him up. “What?”

“I need to get protection.”

“What kind of protection? I don’t understand.”

“I need to put on a prophylactic to prevent you from getting pregnant.”

It seemed to take her a moment to comprehend what he was saying, but then she smiled. “I won’t get pregnant.”

“How can you be so sure?”

“On Thibius, when a girl goes through her first womanly cycle she’s implanted with a special chip that prevents that. It lasts until it’s removed.”

“The technology in that world must be amazing,” he said, the geek in him coming out.

“Well, it’s a lot more advanced than here, but of course, Earth still has real flowers and trees, so I guess it balances out. Now are we going to talk about Thibius or are you going to make love to me?”

“It may hurt a bit when I first enter you.”

“I know, but I’m ready.” She smiled at him bravely.

Matt placed a kiss on the tip of her nose. It was still hard to believe that this gorgeous creature was here with him like this looking at him with trusting eyes. When she’d

studied his body with lust in those beautiful brown eyes, his chest had swelled with pride. No one had ever looked at him quite like that before and the feeling was empowering.

He'd never wanted to please anyone as much as London. She inspired him in ways he didn't think possible. Nudging her thighs apart, he guided his cock against her slick opening. She was wet and ready for him and more than anything he wanted to surge forward and claim her, but knew he had to take things easy.

When she lifted her hips, he chuckled. She was eager for him and he liked it. "Patience, sweetheart. This is your first time so we need to go slow."

"Maybe you need to, but I don't."

He wiggled his eyebrows at her. "You're used to getting your way aren't you, Princess?"

"Only when it's something I really want."

With a groan he thrust into her with one swift movement, breaking through the thin barrier of her hymen. When he heard her sharp intake of breath, Matt forced himself to be still.

"It hurts," she said with obvious surprise. She pressed her hands against his chest as though she wanted to push him away.

He planted kisses against her face and neck. "Shh. It's okay, Princess. It's okay. Remember I said it would hurt a bit. The worse part is over. Dig your nails into my back if you have to."

London did just that and he gritted his teeth not to cry out when she broke skin. The

pain was small compared to the unadulterated pleasure of being inside of her. London's pussy felt like warm wet velvet wrapped snugly around his cock. If he died this very moment, it would be as a very happy man. Matt waited for what seemed like forever before she let him know that he could move. "I think I'm fine now. The pain is gone."

"Good, now hold me tight."

She wrapped her arms around his neck as he moved within her. He withdrew slowly, and then entered her again. "Oh, Matt, that feels so good. I didn't know it could be like this," she sighed.

"Neither did I," he groaned never wanting this to end. Her pussy muscles clenched his cock and he nearly came right then and there, but by sheer will he stopped himself. He looked into her face and saw the wicked gleam in her eyes. She may have been a virgin, but she knew exactly what she was doing.

"You little minx. You want me to lose control don't you?"

"Yes!"

Matt surrendered to the strong passion that had built up within him. This woman was driving him wild. His mouth latched on to hers as he drove into her over and over again, lost to the furious passion and heat they generated.

Her nails bit into his back, and she cried out his name. He penetrated her harder and faster, deeper and longer. It had never been like this with the other women he'd been with. His experiences had been nice, but they'd been nothing like this. Only London had ever inspired within him this awesome desire that threatened to splinter his entire being.

“Matt, I think I’m dying!” she cried out, her eyes rolling back in her head.

“If you are, Princess, then I’m coming with you.” And then the explosion came. He came, shooting his seed up into her channel until his balls were empty.

Collapsing against her, his breathing was ragged. It was so amazing that it was so surreal.

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“Matt, I think I love you,” she whispered.

He lifted his head not sure that he’d heard her correctly. “What?”

“I said that I love you. I knew from the moment I first saw you that there was something special about you, but now I know.”

Her words should have freaked him out, but instead they filled him with a joy he’d never thought he’d experience, because by God, he loved her too. Sure of his own feelings he needed to be cautious. He didn’t want her to mistake sex for love.

“London, what we shared was very special. It was earth shattering in fact, but I don’t want you to confuse it for love.”

Her eyes narrowed. “I think I know my own mind. Matt, I felt this way before we made love. I’ve been racking my brain for the past couple of days trying to think of ways to seduce you.”

It took him a moment to take in her words. Her passion flushed face looked so sincere. He really wanted to believe her, but did he dare? “You have?”

“Of course. You’re the best thing that’s ever happened to me in my life. How... how do you feel about me?”

Matt brushed his lips lightly against hers. “Can’t you tell?”

“I want to hear the words.”

“I love you too. I think I’ve loved you from the moment you collapsed in my arms.”

Her smile widened then. “I’m so glad to hear it. If Zahn comes looking for me, then there’s no way he can claim me now that I’m no longer a virgin.” She smiled with smug satisfaction.

Matt sat up. “Who’s Zahn?”

“General Zahn leads my father’s troops. He was also my betrothed but I didn’t love him.”

His heart felt tight all of a sudden, and he had difficulty breathing. “So now that you’re no longer a virgin he won’t want you?”

“Probably not. He has a lot of pride. There’s no way he’d accept an impure bride.”

Matt slid out of the bed needing to put some distance between the two of them. “So what you’re saying is that you were anxious to lose your virginity?”

“I don’t know why you’re making such a big deal about my virginity, Matt. It was inevitable that the two of us would make love.”

“Answer my question, London. Were you eager to lose your virginity so General Zahn wouldn’t want you anymore?”

“It’s true that I was eager to lose my virginity, but to you. I couldn’t think of a better gift to give you for all you’ve done for me.”

He felt like he’d been punched in the stomach. London had used him. He should have known. Angrily, he dug in his bag and pulled out a pair of boxers and then his jeans.

London sat up in the bed, her large dark mounds jutting out so temptingly. “Why are you getting dressed?”

“As if you didn’t know.”

She slid out of the bed and walked over to him. When she touched him, Matt flinched away. “What did I do wrong?”

“You did nothing wrong. You only did what I expected from the beginning. But don’t worry, I don’t blame you.”

“I wish you’d tell me what you’re talking about.” She batted her eyelashes at him and he could almost believe that she was telling the truth, but her own words had condemned her in his eyes.

“You used me, London, and I don’t like being used. You can keep your gratitude, because I don’t need it. Once we find your sister, we’ll part ways okay?”

Her jaw dropped. “Matt, why are you acting like this?”

When she attempted to touch him again, he moved away and grabbed his glasses, shoving them on his face. He took her room key. “You can stay here for the night. I’ll sleep in your room. And if you have trouble sleeping, find some other sap to bother.” And with that he stormed out the room, slamming the door behind him.

Stunned was not exactly what she felt. Mortified was more like it. Somehow Matt had managed to turn something very beautiful into something wrong and sordid. He’d accused her of using him but there was nothing further from the truth.

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London wouldn't deny that one of the benefits of giving away her virginity would be that Zahn would no longer want her, but it hadn't been the reason she gave it to Matt. If her goal had been to do what he'd accused her of, she could have done that on Thibius and risked her family's wrath.

Love was the only reason she'd made love with him and she resented that he so easily believed the worst of her. She wanted to be angry and rage at him for being such a big fool, but actually taking the time to give it some thought, compassion and understanding made her realize that there was more to this that she wasn't seeing.

She tried to think of things he'd said to give her some kind of clue to his feelings and then she remembered. You only did what I expected from the beginning. It was as though he was waiting for her to let him down. That was it. Someone had hurt him before.

It bothered her that someone may have crippled Matt emotionally so much so that he didn't recognize true love when it was staring him in the face. She'd be damned if she allowed his past hurts to get in the way of what they had. He was her man and she'd fight for him. This wasn't over by a long shot. Matt had been joking when he teased her about getting what she wanted. Mr. Taylor was going to find out just how true that was.

Chapter

Eight

"This is the place where we used to live?" London asked in awe as she stepped out of

Matt's truck. The little house before her seemed so familiar. Flashes of memory came back to her. She saw herself as a little girl, playing with her sister in the front yard, her mother indulgently watching on. She and Paris used to share a bed, even though they each had their own. They hated to be separated.

It all came back to her then. The night she and her mother were taken by the Adieaen slave hunters. She hadn't been feeling well. Her mother left Paris with a lady from across the street. London wanted Paris to come with them, but her mother had insisted that it wouldn't take long for her to get to the doctor and back. She'd cried for her sister, but the doctor had given her a lollypop to take back to Paris. On the way home, the car crashed, and that's when her life had been forever changed.

"Yes, according to the information we found, this was the last known residence of your mother. Maybe one of the neighbors will know something about your sister." His words sounded clipped and she tried to ignore his coldness. Since last night, they'd barely spoken.

She tried not to let the excitement of finding some clues about her sister be overshadowed by the way Matt was treating her. "What should we do now?"

"Well, it's about the time when people would be home. We can try knocking on some doors. Does this place look familiar to you?"

"Yes. This is where I lived for the first two and a half years of my life. It's strange that it's all come back to me with just a look. The neighborhood has changed, and there are new houses here, but I definitely recall this place."

"I don't think it's strange at all. Sometimes we repress memories as a protection mechanism. You obviously tried to forget because of the guilt you must have felt concerning your sister. Let's get started before dinner time. People don't take too kindly to having their dinner interrupted," Matt suggested.

They first knocked on the door of her old house with the hopes of maybe learning some information. A little girl with a head full of plaits and barrettes answered the door. London knelt down to face her. “Hi, may I speak with your parents please?”

The child stared at them with wide eyed wonder and for a moment, she thought her request would be ignored when an older woman came to the door, a deep frown on her face.

“I’m not interested in reading the Watchtower. I’ve told you people not to come to my door anymore.”

London looked at Matt not knowing what this woman was talking about. He stepped forward. “I’m sorry to disturb you, ma’am, we’re not trying to sell anything or convert you. We’re just looking for information. You see, my friend lived here in this house twenty years ago, and she’s looking for the whereabouts of her sister who last lived here. They were separated when they were children.”

The woman’s face softened. “Oh, well that’s okay then. I’m not really sure how much help I can be. My husband, Tyrone, and I have only lived here for the last ten years. We’ve probably been here the longest.” She looked down at the little girl. “Shonda, go set the table for dinner.” The little girl continued to stare at them like a couple of oddities. “Shonda!” her mother said sharply.

The child rolled her eyes, and huffed off. London covered her mouth to stifle a giggle. “She’s adorable.”

The woman sighed. “And too damn grown for her own good. I’m sorry, but if you’d like to come in and take a look at the old place, you’re very welcome to. My name is Shirley by the way, and you are?”

“I’m London and this is my... this is Matt.” What exactly were they? She couldn’t

even introduce him as her friend because he barely spoke to her now.

“We’d love to take a look around.” Matt smiled at the pretty woman.

Jealously cut through London like a knife. She wished he’d smile at her like that, but he was such a stubborn fool.

Shirley showed them around the house. The inside had totally been remodeled. Some of the walls had been knocked down to make more room. Tears sprang to London’s eyes when she entered the bedroom she and Paris used to share. She felt an affinity for this place.

“This is my room,” the little girl called Shonda came in not looking too happy to find strangers there.

London smiled at her. “And it looks like you take very good care of it. You know, I used to sleep here too when I was a little girl.”

“That must have been a long time ago. You’re pretty old,” the little girl observed before stuffing a thumb in her mouth.

“Shonda! That was rude, and take that thumb out of your mouth. You know you’re too old for that,” scolded the mortified mother.

Shonda reluctantly tugged the thumb from her mouth, and sauntered out of the room again, but not before shooting London and Matt a venomous glare. London liked that kid.

“I’m really sorry. She’s usually a sweet girl,” Shirley apologized.

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“No harm done. She’s a beautiful child.”

“And she’s a handful. You know what, I just thought of something. There’s an older woman who lives across the street. She was here before we moved in. I think her name is Mrs. Hines or something like that. She keeps to herself and rarely comes out of the house so not a lot of people know too much about her. I say hello when I see her, but that’s about it.”

“Mrs. Hines! That’s the name of the sitter who used to watch us!” London turned to look at Matt, excitement rushing through her veins.

“Do you think she’ll be home?” Matt asked.

“She hardly goes anywhere. She has a daughter Carol or something like that who comes to visit with her two bad ass children occasionally. Shonda plays with them when they’re here. That’s probably where she’s starting to pick up this attitude,” Shirley mused rubbing her chin.

“Thank you so much. You’ve been a big help to us.” Matt shook hands with the woman, and London gave her a hug.

“Thank you so much for letting us see the house. It really meant a lot to me.”

“No problem. This house has given us many happy memories. I hope it brings as much joy to the next family.”

“You’re moving?” London asked.

“Yes, we’re house hunting. We’re having a baby at the end of the year, and this is only a two bedroom so we’ll need the space.” Shirley led them back outside and waved them off. “I wish you both luck in your search. I’ll pray for you.”

“We should go and see Mrs. Hines. I remember her. She used to watch me and Paris.” London was about to cross the street when Matt grabbed her arm and pulled her back just in time for a car to speed by.

“Watch where you’re going! Are you trying to get yourself killed? If you are, try not to do it when I’m around,” he barked.

“And what does it matter to you anyway? I bet you can’t wait to get rid of me. You’ve been nothing but cold and nasty to me since last night and all because you’re a big coward!”

An incredulous look crossed his face. “I’m a coward for not wanting to be used which is exactly what you did?”

“Don’t give me that. I told you I loved you and I’m not a liar. I’m sorry you let your insecurities get in the way, but it’s how I feel and I’m not going to stop feeling it just because you can’t handle it. No matter what happened in your past, it’s time to get over it. I don’t deserve to be treated like this and will not be.”

His face went bright red. “You admitted that you gave me your virginity to break your betrothal. How’s that supposed to make me feel?”

London rolled her eyes, tired of hearing it. “And how do you think it feels to have my love thrown back in my face? One of the reasons I fell for you, Matt Taylor, was because you were sweet and kind to me when you didn’t have to be. Plus the fact that my heart beats fast whenever you’re near and you consume my every thought. I thought you were different from all the men on Thibius, but you’re just like them, all

about yourself. Fine, don't love me back, but I want you to know the only person who's made you a victim is you!"

London made sure to look both ways before she crossed the street this time, her righteous indignation carrying her to the other side of the street. She didn't even look to see if he was following her. If he didn't believe she really loved him that was his problem and not hers. Why'd she have to fall for a guy with so many issues anyway?

When she rang the doorbell to Mrs. Hines' house, no one answered. She tried again. Still no answer. "She's got to be home," she whispered.

"If she hasn't answered by now, she's probably not home," Matt said at her elbow. She didn't turn to face him not wanting to look into his face in case she started crying.

"We've come so far."

"I know. But maybe we can go to dinner and when we come back she'll be here."

"If you're looking for Addie, she's not there. She was taken to the hospital last night complaining about chest pains. They're keeping her under observation last time I heard." A lady watering her yard called over to them.

"Which hospital is she at?"

"The one in Wilmington. It's only about twenty miles away. You get back on the main road, and you can't miss all the signs."

Matt nodded in the neighbor's direction. "Thank you very much."

"I feel like we keep hitting one dead end after another."

“I know how you feel. Let’s get something to eat and then head over to the hospital. We can try a pizza place this time,” Matt suggested.

“I’m not really hungry. I just want to get to the hospital to find out information on my sister. The sooner this is over you can get me out of your life right?”

“London—” he began, but she cut him off.

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“Let’s just go, Matt, I’m not really in the mood to talk right now.” She walked past him and headed back to his truck.

He’d screwed up. Big time. Deep down when London confessed her love for him, he’d known it was sincere, but he let his old insecurities come to the surface and he’d lashed out at her. Matt realized he shouldn’t have accused her of being a user. Now she was angry at him, and he didn’t know how to rectify it. Things had happened so fast, he didn’t really know how to get a handle on them.

As they drove to the hospital, London sat quietly on her side of the cab instead of sliding next to him like before. He missed her closeness. His balls tightened as he thought of the explosive passion they’d shared. He couldn’t go through the rest of his life without knowing that kind of love again.

Unable to take the silence any longer, he said, “London, we can’t go on like this.”

“Can’t we? You’re the one who set the rules. Isn’t this what you wanted?”

“No, it damn well isn’t. I owe you an apology.”

She turned her head, her lips still tight, but at least she was no longer glaring. “Oh? I’m listening.”

“I shouldn’t have said the things I did or treated you like that. I’m sorry,” he said as humbly as he could.

She didn’t say anything for a while, and he didn’t think she would until a sigh

tumbled from her pretty lips. “Then why did you, Matt? You really hurt me you know. I didn’t exactly like being ignored. You’ve been fighting this instant attraction we’ve had for each other from the beginning and when you do finally give in to it, you go all crazy on me. I’m tired of the mixed signals.”

“I can’t blame you if your feelings aren’t the same,” he sighed.

She looked at him with a shake of her head. “That’s just it. You assume that my feelings are so fickle that they’d change. Please give me a little more credit than that. Just because you’re being a jerk right now doesn’t mean my love will cease in an instant. There have been plenty of times when one of my brothers has tried my patience to the absolute limits, and let’s not get started on my parents. I don’t love them any less. Real love is unconditional. Even though you’re a little on the sensitive side, I could no more stop loving you than I could stop breathing.”

“You’re one in a million, London.” His heart swelled with overwhelming emotion for this woman. He wished they weren’t driving in his truck because he wanted very dearly to show her how he felt.

“Only a million? I heard there are at least a few billion people on Earth,” she teased.

“And none of them compare to you.”

“Won’t you tell me why you were so scared to open up to me?”

“You were right. I’ve been hurt before, London. Not just by one woman, but lots of them. As long as I can remember, I’ve been pushed into the best friend role, and stood up and dumped on. Sometimes it seems that women are only nice when they want something from me because they know I’ll come through for them, especially beautiful women. I guess that’s why I was a little wary of you from the beginning.”

“Just because the women on Earth are idiots, it doesn’t mean I am. Where I come from, there aren’t a lot of men like you. The women on Thibius would fight to the death to win a man like you.”

He smiled. “That sounds like my kind of place. When can we go?”

“Not on your life. You’re mine, and I’d scratch out the eyes of any woman who tried to take you away from me.” She unbuckled her seat belt then and slid next to him, her hand slowly moving up his thigh.

His cock jumped to attention. Matt groaned. He’d never be able to concentrate on the road if she kept that up. Turning off of the main road, he followed a dead end sign and parked. London straddled his hips and kissed him hungrily on the lips.

Matt’s tongue darted out to meet hers. God, he loved this woman. Just the feel of her soft lush lips over his was enough to send shock waves of sensation coursing through his body. She ran her fingers through his hair and lifted her head with a smile. “I love you, Matt, and if you ever doubt my word again, I’ll make you very sorry.

He chuckled as she pulled his glasses off. “I’ll keep that in mind.” His hand slid down her back lifting her T-shirt, thankful that the clasp of her bra was in front. Matt unhooked the snap and her generous chocolate mounds came spilling out.

Cupping them gently in his palms he grazed his thumb over her nipples, and London moaned. “I love it when you do that to me.”

“And I love doing it to you,” he muttered bending over to take one dark tight peak into his mouth. He suckled on the tip and she gripped his shoulders arching her back, offering herself to him. His teeth nipped at the nub. She gasped.

“More,” she begged grinding her hips against his erection.

He'd come in his pants if she kept that up. "Easy, baby," Matt moaned transferring his attention to her other waiting nipple. He took his time licking and laving the tip before taking it fully into his mouth. He could do this for hours if she let him.

"I need you inside of me," she whispered, leaning over to graze her lips against his neck.

Hurriedly he fumbled with his jeans, sliding them off his hips, while she worked on hers. It was a bit awkward maneuvering their way out of their pants, but they somehow managed it.

Being outside in his truck somehow made the ordeal more exciting knowing that anyone could walk out here and catch the two of them like this. He didn't care, because he intended to get some of her sweet pussy before this day ended.

Matt ran his fingers along her already damp slit, readying her for his cock. She buried her face in his neck when he slid two digits into her channel, sending them as deep as they'd go. London gyrated her hips wiggling and squirming. "Please, Matt. I want your cock."

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“And you’ll have it. Lift your hips up a little, my dear.” Matt eased his fingers out of the tight damp hole when she did as he asked. He grabbed the base of his cock to slowly guide it into her. “That’s it, baby, sit on my dick. Yes, just like that.”

Again Matt felt like he was being swallowed by a tight vacuum. It was as if her pussy was made exclusively for him. He had no intention of ever sharing it with anyone for as long as he lived. Matt loved her to distraction and silently cursed himself a thousand times for nearly throwing her love away.

It was true that they’d only known each other for such a short while, but love couldn’t be measured by something as mundane as time. Maybe it took some people a while to discover it, but with him and London, it had been instant, and consuming.

He gripped her hips as she bounced up and down on his cock, her breasts jiggling. She was so beautiful and all his. Matt could accept that now. Whoever she’d belonged to on Thibius, she was his now. “I love you, London.”

Her fingers tightened on his shoulders. “I love you too, Matt,” she groaned her response riding his cock like a champion rodeo star. Her muscles clenched around him each time his dick slid in and out of her. The head rush of their joining was like nothing else. The rhythm became faster and more intense until they were fucking as if their lives depended on it. His balls grew uncomfortably tight and he knew he’d shoot his load any minute.

When London screamed her release, Matt felt a warm gush of her honey. With his own peak so close it was enough to send him over the edge. Matt came, sending a jet of his secretions up her hot hole. They clung to each other, breathing ragged after

sharing such an incredible experience. There was no turning back now.

No matter what happened, Matt knew he could never let this woman out of his life. He'd protect her, and keep her until he drew his last breath. The other disappointments in his life where women were concerned meant nothing to him now. It was their loss, because London had made him see that they weren't the ones who'd been too good for him. He'd been too good for them.

One thing was left up in the air however. What would happen when she actually found her sister? "London?"

"Mm?"

"When we find Paris, what do you intend to do?"

"Well, I... you know, I honestly haven't given it a lot of thought, but I want to spend as much time with her as I possibly can, before you and I settle down."

He raised a brow, amusement taking over. "Before we settle down?"

"Of course. There's no way I can go back to Thibius with you here. Once I get my chip removed we can have a family too. I was thinking of ten, what do you think?"

Matt chuckled, finding the idea of starting a family with his beloved London very appealing. "You have it all figured out don't you? What about your family on Thibius?"

A glimmer of sadness entered her eyes then. "I don't know. They may come looking for me I suppose, but if not, I knew it was a chance I'd have to take when I set off on this journey. My place is with you now."

Matt couldn't have loved her anymore than when she made that declaration. "And I vow that whatever happens, I'll make it a happy place."

He lowered his head and kissed her gently on the lips.

Chapter

Nine

"Sire, our men have contacted us from the site of the crash. No body was found and it looks like there were two sets of footprints where shards of the Princess's heliocraft lay," the Lieutenant reported. "As we speak, they're trying to get a trace of the vehicle that left the marks not too far away from it."

"Thank you, Leeo. That will be all for now," Blaze nodded curtly dismissing him. Relief nearly made him weak. His daughter was still alive. He knew he could count on Zahn to bring London back to them safely.

Calliope walked into the great hall at that moment, anxiety shining in her eyes. "Has there been any news?"

"Yes, there was no body found out at the site of the crash and no trace indication that anything bad happened to her."

The Queen released a deep breath. "Thank goodness. Let's hope that wherever she is, she's safe. Are you sure Zahn will be able to find her before something does happen?"

"I'm sure he will. I'm trusting him with our most precious commodity. If he fails, he'll pay dearly," Blaze promised.

The nurse had informed them that they'd only have a few minutes to visit with the patient. London hoped Mrs. Hines was still awake. She walked into the hospital room and saw an older woman in a bed, watching the box on the wall. She turned her head with a smile, then it fell. "Oh, I thought you were Carol. You must have the wrong room, because I'm the only occupant here," the woman said.

"Are you Mrs. Addie Hines?" London asked.

The woman frowned looking the two of them over suspiciously. "Who wants to know?"

"My name is London Blaz—Randall."

The woman gasped, abruptly sitting up in her bed. "No, you can't be! London Randall and her mother have been missing for years. What kind of game are you trying to play, child? This isn't very funny."

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“I can assure you that I am her. My mother and I were... well, we have lived in another place for a long time, and now I’m looking for my sister. It’s my understanding on the night my mother and I went missing that Paris was left to you.”

“If you’re London, then where’s your mother?”

“She’s safe and doing well. I would really appreciate it if you could tell me anything you know.”

“London had a birthmark on the inside of her wrist the shape of a heart,” Mrs. Hine pursed her lips waiting for her to produce the evidence.

London walked closer, holding out her wrist. “You mean like this?”

The woman’s jaw dropped. “Well, praise Jesus. Hallelujah! Come and hug my neck, baby. Miracles do happen,” the woman shouted.

Leaning over, London allowed the woman’s massive arms to engulf her. For a moment she didn’t think she’d let go. The woman finally did, a big toothy grin on her face. “Is this your young man?”

London smiled. “Yes, this is Matt Taylor.”

Matt stepped forward and he and Mrs. Hines shook hands. “Nice to meet you,” he said politely.

“Well, have a seat, you two. Oh, my London, you’re just as pretty as you want to be,

child. I've prayed for you and your mother. Every year I light a candle for the two of you at Christmas. Praise Jesus." Mrs. Hines wiped a tear from her eyes. "And how sweet of you to come visit an old lady. Caroline and the girls haven't come by once. Shayla and Alana are big girls now, so they don't pay their old grandma any mind."

London didn't want to be rude by interrupting, but she was anxious to ask questions about her sister. "Mrs. Hines, I need to know what happened to Paris. My mother did try to find her, but she had reason to believe that she'd been killed in a fire."

The older woman frowned. "I tried to keep Paris as long as I could, but I'm an old lady living on a pension. I had to turn her over to the state. She did live in a group home, which I did hear burned down."

London's heart thumped wildly. No. It couldn't be. Her sister couldn't be gone. She hadn't come all this way just to be told that Paris was indeed dead. "Please tell me that she's not..."

"Dead? No, thank the Lord. Most of the children were rescued. There were a few casualties, God bless their little souls, but I know your sister was not one of them. She was in foster care for a little while, and I kept tabs on her while I was still about but I haven't seen her since she was a child. She may or may not be in the State. She was a tough little thing. I don't think poor Paris had an easy time in those foster homes she was tossed around in. I still pray for her though."

London looked over at Matt, a sense of joy and despair rushing through her. Paris was alive, but now what? They had the ominous task of trying to track her down. As though sensing her uncertain emotions, Matt took her hand and brought it to his lips. "No matter what it takes, we'll find her."

London certainly hoped so.

“Paris! I thought you said you were heading back to your place. What are you doing back here and how did you change outfits so quickly?”

London turned around to see a tall dark-haired woman approach. She gave her boyfriend Matt a questioning look. “She thinks I’m Paris. Could this mean...

Hazel eyes twinkled from behind wire-rimmed glasses. “I think so.”

London turned back to the woman with a smile. “I’m not Paris, but I’m looking for her.”

The woman frowned. “What are you talking about? Of course you’re Paris. You were just here not even an hour ago. Wait a minute, why are you talking like that and what did you do to your hair?”

London touched her long braid self-consciously. “What’s wrong with it?”

The woman scratched her head, her confusion apparent. “Uh, nothing, but...you’re not Paris?”

“No. I thought I just said that.”

“You look remarkably like her. Are you...”

“Her sister? Yes, I am.”

The brunette’s mouth gaped open. “Funny, Paris never mentioned a sister, let alone a twin. Actually, I was under the impression she was an orphan.”

“Perhaps I can explain,” Matt interjected. “My name is Matt Taylor.” He held out his hand which the woman hesitantly took.

“Uh, nice to meet you. Carol Dunlop.”

“This is London, Paris’s sister as you’ve already noticed. You’re not far off in thinking Paris didn’t have family. It’s a delicate situation. There were some extenuating circumstances and the two of them, London and Paris, were separated. For the past few weeks we’ve been looking for her and recently learned she’s here in New York. We’ve been here for a couple days and this has to be fate to have run into you like this. It’s such a huge city. Could we have a minute of your time?” Matt asked.

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The woman's eyes had widened with each word. "Well, sure. This is amazing.

It's like one of those stories you see on television. I just left the bar behind us, but it's kind of noisy in there. We can go to the coffee shop down the block."

London perked up at the mention of one of her favorite Earth beverages.

"Coffee? I love that stuff. Let's go!" She took Matt's hand and followed the woman toward their destination, heart pounding in her chest. They were so close to finding her sister, she could feel it.

Only days ago, they'd learned Paris had attended college in New York City. Matt had suggested they check the directories to see if she still lived in the city. They'd found three Paris Randalls. The first two people on the list were definitely not her sister, but the last one they'd come across had moved, leaving no forwarding address. London knew that was the Paris they'd been looking for, because the landlord had made the same mistake Carol had.

It was hard to believe all the events that had led her to this moment.

When the three of them were seated in the coffee shop, London told Carol a made up story of how she, her mother and Paris had become separated. Matt had warned her most people wouldn't believe the truth.

Carol listened intently, nodding at all the appropriate moments until London finished. "How amazing. So your poor mother... whatever happened to her?"

London's eyes darted to Matt's for help. "Well, she's in..."

"Another country," he supplied.

Carol frowned. "Why didn't she try to look for Paris herself? And why did you wait until now to try and find her?"

"Like I said, my mother was led to believe Paris died in a fire, but I'd recently learned of this myself. My mother didn't want to upset me by mentioning it."

"I see," Carol said, though her tone suggested otherwise. "So your twin intuition told you she's alive?"

London nodded. "Something like that. So how do you know my sister?"

"We work together -- not in the same department, but we interact enough where we've become friendly. I like Paris a lot. She's a nice lady — a little reserved maybe, but she's a sweetheart. I've been trying to get her to come out of her shell, but something holds her back. I don't know what it is. Seeing you will probably do her a lot of good. I can't get over how much alike the two of you look." Carol shook her head in apparent amazement.

London giggled. "Well, we are twins."

"Touché. You must be the bubbly twin."

"Maybe. I've been told I talk a lot. I know this may seem weird, but the closer I get to finding Paris, the more I remember. When we were younger, I was the one who spoke for the two of us, but she was the one with the ideas. It's funny the things you retain from childhood."

Carol nodded. “Yes, that’s so true.”

“Could you tell us where Paris lives?” Matt asked.

“I’ve never been to her place. I know she lives in Manhattan, but I don’t know her exact location. I can write down our business address. I know she’ll be there tomorrow. Better yet, here’s one of my cards.” Carol dug into her purse, and produced a small rectangular card.

London took it. “Thank you so much.” She could barely contain the excitement pounding in her chest. In less than a day’s time, she’d be meeting her sister for the first time in twenty years!

Chapter

Ten

“What do you mean she didn’t show up for work? But you said she’d be here!”

London exclaimed.

She looked at Matt, then back at Carol. The woman gave her a sympathetic look.

“I’m really sorry. I expected her to come in today. She said she would. For as long as I’ve known her, she never calls out. I spoke to her supervisor who told me she hadn’t heard from Paris. I believe she’s been phoned, but with no answer.”

London sighed. “Carol, I appreciate your help, but doesn’t someone know where she lives, anyone who can check in on her to make sure she’s okay?”

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Carol shrugged. "I guess I could ask her boss for an address. Why don't you two wait in the lobby for me and I'll see what I can find out," she offered.

London and Matt followed her inside and took a seat on a plush couch. London turned to Matt when Carol was out of earshot. "Something's happened to my sister."

Matt took her hand in his, patting it in reassurance. "She might be running late."

London snatched her hand away, shooting him a glare. "I'm not in the mood to be patronized, Matt."

He lifted a brow in surprise. "I wasn't trying to do that, babe. I'm simply weighing all the possibilities."

She rubbed his knee. "I'm sorry. I guess I'm being a little testy, but it's hard to explain what I'm feeling right now."

"Then make me understand. Try."

She searched his thin face. The warmth of his hazel eyes was reassuring. London loved Matt with all her heart. How lucky she was to have literally crash landed into his life.

Finding Matt on the quest to locate her missing sister made every ordeal she'd faced thus far worth it. Without him, she'd be lost. He wasn't like the overbearing men on Thibius. Instead, he possessed a quiet inner strength that drew her to him like a moth to flame.

His every touch set her body on fire and every look made her heart beat faster.

London never thought she'd ever find anyone to love as much as she did Matthew Taylor. Now, she finally understood why her mom walked around with a perpetual smile on her lips and a spring in her step.

Love had opened the door to so many wonders London hadn't known existed. Though she wouldn't have done anything differently, her one regret for stealing away to Earth the way she had was leaving her family behind.

She couldn't help but wonder how General Zahn had taken the news of her disappearance. He probably didn't care. She would have been nothing but another trophy to him anyway.

Matt waved his hand in her face. "Earth to London."

She snapped out of her musings and looked at Matt. "I'm sorry."

"Where were you just now?"

"I was thinking about us, and how much I love you."

He captured her hand and brought it to his lips.

Her pulse quickened.

"And you know how much I love you. How about telling me what you were feeling, about your sister, I mean."

"Well, I know we've been separated for a long time, but ever since I've come back to

Earth, I've felt another force. Maybe it's her spirit. Now... I don't have that sensation anymore. I fear something has happened to her, almost as if she's far away."

"Hopefully that's not the case. Look, there's Carol now."

The brunette approached them. "It took a little arm twisting, but I have an address. I would like to go with you two, but I have to get back to work. I hope you find her okay."

London took the slip of paper Carol held out. "Thank you. I hope things will be okay too."

"I don't have a good feeling about this place, Matt." London studied her surroundings.

Matt frowned. "What do you mean? This is the address Carol gave us."

"I know, but I don't feel my sister's presence. If she was on the other side of this door, I'd know it."

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“It’s possible she’s stepped out.”

“But Carol said it isn’t like her to not show up for work. Something tells me she’s in distress.”

“How about we knock on the door first and see if she’s home. Then we’ll go from there,” he suggested.

“What, sweetheart?”

“Okay, but you knock. I’m way too nervous. You know what?” London had a sudden epiphany.

“That door we went through to get inside the building...”

“Yes?”

“It was supposed to be locked wasn’t it?”

Matt scratched his head. “It looked like it was.”

“So why wasn’t it? We were able to walk in. It was almost as if someone tampered with the lock.”

“That doesn’t mean anything. The door could have been broken.”

London sighed, still feeling uneasy about the situation. “I suppose you’re right.

Maybe my imagination is getting the better of me. Go ahead and knock.”

When Matt’s fist connected with the door, it flew open. “Okay, now I don’t like the looks of this. Something is definitely amiss.”

London followed Matt inside, her body tense from not knowing what to expect.

The tiny room had an abandoned feel about it. Stranger still, the shower was still running.

She felt a sinking feeling in the pit of her stomach. “Now I know for sure. Something has happened to my sister.”

“I still think we should call the police,” Matt suggested.

London and Matthead spent the night in Paris’s apartment in hopes that she’d return. There was no sign of her, but London had found some old pictures of her sister stored away, confirming this was indeed where Paris lived.

“And what exactly will I say to them? You said yourself police don’t usually fill out a missing person’s report for at least forty-eight hours.”

“That’s if foul play isn’t suspected.”

“I can’t say ‘I think my sister has been kidnapped because I feel it.’ They would want physical proof right?”

Matt grimaced. “Maybe you should leave that part about your feeling out of it and stick to things they can report, like the fact that she didn’t show up for work

yesterday.”

London sighed. Matt was probably right like he usually was. “That makes sense, but?—”

A sudden pounding of the door cut off what she had to say next.

Matt stood up from his chair and pushed her behind him. “I’ll get the door. You stay here.”

“Do you think it could be the people who took Paris away?”

“We don’t know for sure if a third party was involved.”

Matt didn’t have a chance to answer the door because it burst open. A tall blond man flanked by two companions stood in the doorway.

London's eyes widened. "Father!"

"Please don't be mad at me, Papa. I had to find my sister. It was important to me. She's my other half. I couldn't go on without at least seeing her for myself and knowing she is happy. Besides, I can't marry Zahn, even if I hadn't met and fallen in love with Matt."

London took her father's hand, hoping he wouldn't be too angry with her. It surprised her to see her father here on Earth. After giving her a fierce hug, he and his men had escorted her back to their ship.

London had refused to leave without Matt. It had taken some convincing, but her father finally conceded. Once on the ship, he ushered her to his private study and demanded she tell him everything that had happened to her from the time the heliocraft crashed.

She looked at her father wishing he would say something —anything. "Why aren't you speaking to me? I know I shouldn't have stolen your ship, but..."

He held up his hand to halt her words. "London, it's not that you stole the ship that upsets me, but your blatant disregard for other people's feelings. Your mother cried herself to sleep every night since you left and when we heard the heliocraft crashed, it was another nightmare we had to deal with. I don't think I ever want to go through that again. If I'm angry, it's only because I love you very much and I feared for your life."

Tears swam in her eyes. "Oh, Papa. I can't tell you how sorry I am. I've dishonored

your name.”

He squeezed her hand. “You could never do that. I’ve never been more proud to call you daughter. Though I can’t condone your methods, what you did was a brave thing. And it was a noble cause. You never gave up on finding Paris when others had.”

“I felt that she was alive.”

“We should have listened and if we had, we could have found her together.”

“Maybe but then I wouldn’t have met Matt. He’s the most amazing person. He’s handsome, considerate and super smart. He knows things about space that I bet even Thibian scientists don’t know.”

The Emperor’s lips tightened to a firm line. “London, you’re a princess and meant to live like one. From what you tell me, this Matt person owns a small house and doesn’t make that much money.”

“I never said that. He makes pretty good money for this country’s standards.”

“But not to mine.”

Paris rolled her eyes. “You’re the Emperor of Thibius. There aren’t many people who would equal you in wealth.”

He folded his arms across his massive chest. “But that leads me back to my question. What does he have to offer you?”

“Love. He can give me that and then some. When I look at him, I feel the same way you do when you look at my mother. He makes my heart beat fast and I feel sad when he’s not around. He’s kind, gentle, considerate and he treats me like a queen.”

Blaze rubbed his chin, as though contemplating what she'd said. "A queen you say?"

"Yes. He wants to marry me and I'd like to raise a family with him."

"If your wish is to be with Matt, then I'll see to it that he's given a proper job once on Thibius, earning enough to keep you in the style you're accustomed to."

"Papa." She tried to gentle her voice because the next bit of news would probably upset him. "I don't think you understand what I'm trying to get at."

"What?"

"Matt and I... we're going to live on Earth. That's where I'd like to raise my family. Being a princess was nice, but I want my children to grow up in the place of my birth. I think it would be an ideal situation."

He stood up suddenly. "No!" he yelled in a thundering voice. "I can't let you do that."

Weeks ago, she would have argued with him, but now she saw his anger for what it was, fear of losing her. His love for her was so touching the tears ran down her face. "I've given this some thought and my mind is made up. I'm not a little girl anymore and the decision is mine."

"Do you realize how your mother will take this news?"

London nodded. She'd already thought about it. "Yes, I think she'll be upset, but I think she will eventually understand."

"But Earth is so primitive. They get around in cars. We haven't had cars on Thibius for at least several hundred years."

“I can learn to deal with the technology here. As long as I have Matt by my side, I can make it through most anything.”

Her father paced the room before halting to give her a long hard look. Finally his features softened. “You’re serious aren’t you?”

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“Yes, Papa. You could always send a ship for me to visit and I can take some Thibian technology back to Earth with us to stay in contact with you and the family.”

“Zahn will have to be informed the engagement is off.”

“I know. Maybe when we get back to Thibius I should be the one to tell him. That would be the right thing to do.”

Blaze smiled. “I’m very proud of you. I appreciate your maturity. This Matt has certainly changed you for the better. And if you love him, I could learn to love him too.”

“Do you think Zahn will be very angry?”

“Knowing what a prideful man he is, probably. He went in search of you.”

“Oh, no!”

“What?” her father asked with a look of concern on his face.

“I just had a thought. What if Zahn went to Earth with a DNA tracker and got Paris instead of me? That would be a disaster.”

“Hmm, I hadn’t thought of that possibility, but if that’s the case, we’re in for a nice family reunion.”

“But what if he mistreats her? He’ll think she’s me, and...”

Her father raised a dark blond brow. “If I for one moment thought General Zahn had it in him to mistreat a woman, do you think I would have chosen him for you? I know you didn’t care for him, but he is a good man, London.”

London knew her father was right, but she couldn’t shake the uneasy feeling that had taken over. Even if Zahn didn’t hurt her sister, she could imagine how frightened Paris would be to be taken by some strange man who claimed he was her mate. She shuddered at the thought. “If she is with him, I hope she’s safe.”

Blaze smiled at his daughter. “If she’s anything like you, then she’s a fighter. I have a feeling a reunion between the two of you is imminent.”

“I hope so. Seeing her again will make everything perfect.” The thought of seeing her sister filled her with excitement.

“Yes, it would. It would certainly make your mother happy. I’m also eager to meet her. If she looks anything like you, I’m sure I’ll love her just as much as I love all my children.”

London giggled at her father’s joke. “Papa, we’re twins!”

He winked at her. “I know.” Then his smile slowly faded. “There is something I’ll have to learn how to do,” he said with a sigh.

“What’s that?”

“Letting you go.”

The tears wouldn’t be held back this time. London walked into her father’s arms.

“You’ll never have to let me go With Thibian technology we can see each other

often.”

“If only you didn’t run off in the first place.”

She sighed. “But then I wouldn’t have met Matt.”

Her father frowned. “I’m not really sure I’m happy with this Matt person. He seems like a nice enough man, but he’s a commoner. What could he possibly offer my daughter who’s grown up in the lap of luxury?”

London smiled. “Everything, Papa. He can offer me everything.”

Epilogue

London gave Matt’s hand an encouraging squeeze. He barely spoke a word throughout their entire trip Thibius except initially when her father interrogated him about how he planned on taking care of her.

His answers were so endearing. And the more time she spent in his presence, the more in love she felt. London had lived her life as a princess, pampered and sheltered. But she had always longed for something more exciting, something adventurous.

She’d never been more excited than traveling with Matt. She wanted to explore Earth with him, visiting every state in her home country and then seeing the rest of the world. As long as Matt was by her side, every day would be a journey worth going on.

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Of course, her father wasn't happy about London's decision to live on Earth but she was glad he understood that she had to follow her own path. As a compromise, Matt suggested that he and London stay Thibius for a couple months to get her parents used to the idea of London's eventual departure.

Most of his work was research based which could be done from any location. It allowed him to be able to take the time off. London believed her father also conceded because Matt promised to bring her back to Thibius for one full month out of the year.

Her mother wouldn't be happy about it, she was sure, but at least Paris would be on Thibius.

Paris.

London was soon to be reunited with her sister!

The biggest surprise wasn't that Paris was now on Thibius but that she and Zahn were now betrothed. It's true she'd hadn't seen her sister in years, but did she have the temperament to put up with a man like Zahn? Maybe there was something Paris saw in Zahn that London didn't but if her sister was happy with the match then she was happy for her.

As they walked down the tarmac toward the castle, excitement filled her heart.

"I can't believe I'm on another planet," Matt glanced around with wide eyed wonder. "I've dreamed of something like this all my life. But that dream pales in comparison to having you by my side for the rest of our lives."

Tears welled in London's eyes. "You're my dream come true as well, Matt. I can't wait to start our adventure together."

As they leaned in to kiss each other, the Emperor cleared his throat loudly. "There will be time for that later. Your mother and sister await you."

"Are you ready, sweetheart?" Matt asked with a gentle smile.

"Absolutely."

"I'm a little nervous about meeting your mother...The Queen."

She leaned over and gave him a light kiss on the cheek. "Don't be nervous. My mom will love you, but not as much as I already do."

Queen Calliope turned to her daughter Paris with glistening eyes. She still couldn't believe her daughter was here with her on Thibius. "Your sister should be joining us shortly. I hear the ship has arrived."

Paris took a deep breath. "I'm so excited to see her. I never forgot her."

A smile touched Callie's lips. She couldn't tear her gaze away from Paris who looked so much like London. It made sense because they were twins but it surprised her that they shared so many facial expressions despite being separated for so long.

For the last twenty years, Callie had known true happiness with the love of her life Blaze. In the beginning, she couldn't have imagined her life would turn out like this. She'd started out as a concubine but was now a queen. She'd grown to love Thibius as much as she adored her big brutish husband.

Despite people perceiving him as overbearing and stubborn, she felt cherished and loved. He would go out of his way to make sure she was happy, even changing laws

to appease her. In the public eye, he was the Emperor, but in private she had his ear. They were a team and had ruled this planet together. They'd had a good life together.

But a piece of her had always felt like it was missing. With Paris back in her life, she was finally complete. Having her daughters reunited was more than she could have ever hoped for.

Being reunited with her daughter after all this time was more than she could have ever hoped for. These past few days, she didn't want Paris to leave her sight.

She was happy that Paris and General Zahn had made a connection. Zahn reminded her of a younger Blaze. She could see his proud, stubborn side, but she also saw the look of love in his eyes whenever his gaze was focused on Paris. According to Blaze, London had apparently found her perfect match on Earth. And she was eager to meet this young man who had captured her daughter's heart.

In her heart, she'd never stopped believing Paris was alive, but the evidence back then had been so conclusive. At the time the search parties had been sent to Earth to find Paris, the DNA tracker was still not as sophisticated as its current model, so the margin of error had been larger.

Calliope had London to thank for believing, when hope was slowly beginning to fade.

Tuk, their faithful servant for many years, entered the throne room. "Your

Highnesses, they've arrived."

Calliope's heart raced with excitement and fear.

"Please show them in."

Tuk bowed her head in reverence. "Of course, your majesty."

When Tuk returned, she was followed by Blaze. Behind was London, holding hands with a slender young man with glasses.

London's gaze fell on her twin.

"Paris! She yelled with tear filled eyes.

London ran to Paris, nearly knocking her twin over.

Paris seemed surprised by her sister's exuberance, but she returned the hearty embrace.

Soon the twins were both laughing and crying as they held on to each other.

Though Callie knew her twins would soon take different paths, it was good to have them both with her. Joy soared through her chest. Her broken heart had finally mended.