



# Her Alien Spy (Asterion Station #2)

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**Category:** Fantasy

**Description:** Julia spends her evenings slinging drinks at Asterion Station's popular Mars Lounge, and the rest of her time just enjoying life. After a career in the military, she's earned all of the relaxation and fun she can get.

She's lonely, but not lonely enough to put her heart on the line again.

Until a friend.. a sexy, big, blue alien friend asks her for a favor..

Most on Asterion Station know Andethor as the lead singer of a rock band that packs Mars Lounge every time they perform there. Few know that he's actually a Bellarian spy, working to secure the galaxy against threats like the one they recently avoided.

He's learned that relationships and the life of a spy don't go together. They tend to crash and burn. Otherwise, he would have asked the curvy, confident, sexy bartender he's friends with to consider being something more long before now.

When he's given a mission he can't handle alone, he turns to Julia, knowing she's exactly who he wants at his side. It might end up being a more intense mission than either of them bargained for.

**Total Pages (Source):** 15

# Page 1

*Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 5:10 pm*

The Bellarian rock band was on fire, their lead singer, Andethor, in fine form.

Really fine. Like, shirt off, muscular blue flesh shimmering with a sheen of perspiration from how energetically he'd been making that guitar he was playing sing, fine.

Not that Julia noticed. Definitely not.

Seeing the big, burly, blue alien playing Earth's best gift to the galaxy like that? Amazing.

She waved goodnight to a couple of the regulars, looking around Mars Lounge. It was hopping, as usual, even more because of the band on the stage. Dreadnought had been playing three nights every week for the past few months, but recently they'd cut it back to a single night.

The fact that it always happened to be the night Julia worked was definitely a bonus.

She bobbed her head as she poured a round of drinks for an Altarian couple who could barely keep their eyes off of one another.

Now that the war that had been plaguing the Altarians for decades was over, thanks in large part to her best friend, Maggie's, big grumpy Altarian betrothed, they were seeing more of the absolutely beautiful, nearly celestial-looking, aliens around than ever.

The band finished their current song to wild applause and Andethor told the crowd

they'd be back in a few minutes.

Julia smiled, already pouring Andethor's drink of choice, Bellarian fireshot, into a glass.

He sauntered over to the bar, giving her one of those devastating grins of his, his dark blue hair, several shades darker than his skin, wild around his face.

He looked like some sort of barbarian. The kind that would carry a woman off and do all sorts of filthy things to her...

"You alright there, Jules? Looking a little flushed, sweets," he said, the sparkle in his golden eyes letting her know he knew damn well the effect he had on females, hell, males too, of just about any alien race.

"Just fine. Drink your fireshot," she said, picking up a cleaning cloth and polishing the bar nearby. Andethor grinned at her, raised his glass, then downed the fireshot, never taking his eyes off of her.

"You haven't danced yet tonight. I like it when you dance for me," he said in a low, teasing tone.

She rolled her eyes. Typical. "And who says I'm dancing for you? Maybe I'm dancing for me."

A wide smile curved his firm, rather haughty-looking, mouth. If Andethor didn't have the personality he did, she easily would have mistaken him for a noble from one of the many Bellarian noble houses.

"Even better. A woman like you deserves all the pleasure she can get." He set the glass down, meeting her gaze. "We'll have to see if I can convince you to dance just

for me, sometime, and see what we can get up to.”

Her body screamed, “Hell yes, let’s fucking go!” but all Julia did was laugh. “Mistaking me for one of Dreadnought’s groupies, huh? Sorry to disappoint,” she said, chuckling as she walked away, noticing another guest flagging her down.

“ Very, very disappointed, Jules. But I’m a stubborn male, or so I’ve heard,” he said, flashing her another one of those smiles before he headed back to the stage.

Julia bit back a smile. He would be fun, she had no doubt.

But he’d also be a complication she didn’t need, and he was very clearly the type who had fun and then moved on.

She’d learned, long ago, that she wasn’t that type.

Maggie had been that type, before meeting Xarek.

She’d never understood how her friend did it. How do you not get attached?

She’d get attached, if she and Andethor ever did anything more than flirt. And she was not going to mess up what was turning out to be a decent friendship with the Bellarian singer by ruining it with a romance that was destined to crash and burn.

Been there, done that, had the t-shirt to prove it.

She watched as he turned and talked to his two bandmates. His back was all lean, blue flesh, ridged with muscle, wide at the shoulders, then tapering to a trim waist. The black pants he was wearing did absolutely nothing to hide the squeezable, firm ass she’d admired one too many times.

She wished, sometimes, that she could be the type of woman who just had fun and moved on.

But she liked Andethor. They spent a lot of time together with Maggie and Xarek, and had found he was around the same age as her.

He'd grown up with a fascination for Earth music, especially rock, and they'd spent an almost embarrassing amount of time talking about that, playing each other parts of songs they liked on their comm devices, usually while Maggie and Xarek looked on in amusement.

He was a friend. He'd stay that way, no matter how charming or sexy he was. She was too softhearted to even consider anything else.

Andethor talked to his bandmates, Berrex and Terne, as they prepared for their next set. He named a few songs, and Terne smirked.

“What?” Andethor asked.

“The bartender likes all of those,” he said with a punch-worthy look on his bearded face.

“The bartender has good taste and likes most of our songs,” Andethor muttered.

“Yeah but she likes those enough to start swaying her hips and singing along.”

Berrex laughed, nodding in agreement.

The asshole wasn't wrong. There was a reason he added those songs to the rotation so often. Seeing her face light up, watching those rare moments when Julia forgot herself and started swaying, moving her curvy little body to the music he was

making?

Nothing better in the entire universe than that. At least, as far as he knew. If he ever managed to charm the gorgeous bartender out of her clothes, he had a feeling he'd have a new favorite thing.

Not that he hadn't been trying, as subtly as possible, for months now.

He'd noticed her, of course, even before that.

Dreadnought had been playing at the Mars Lounge on Asterion Station for a few years now, and she'd been working there ever since.

They'd sort of orbited one another but never really got beyond that point, until Andethor and the Altarian had started working together.

The Altarian's human mate was Julia's best friend, and he'd suddenly found himself spending more and more time with her.

And trying and failing to coax her into his bed.

Someday.

He finished talking to his dickhead bandmates, then slung the guitar strap back over his shoulder and turned around. The crowd, which was a full house again, the way it usually was when his band played, cheered, and Julia and her coworkers hustled making sure everyone had their drinks.

Terne started the count for the first song of the set, and within moments, Mars Lounge was full of the sound of drums banging, guitars wailing, and, soon, his own roughened voice singing.

His gaze kept swinging toward the bar. Julia and her coworker were mobbed, getting drinks for guests, and he had the urge to leap off stage and start tossing people around so she'd hear the song she liked so much.

She worked her ass off. Full time here, part time in the fitness center the past few months. He hadn't seen her in action there, not wanting to be one of those creepy males who haunts a woman's steps just because he has a hard-on for her.

And he did. Most definitely. Which was why when she started swaying her luscious hips, even as she poured drinks, and then slowly started moving more of her body until she was doing a slow, sinuous, full body sway that turned his mouth dry, he forced his gaze to the other side of the room.

That only lasted for about four seconds before he was looking at her again. And this time, she was singing along. She finally had a break in customers, and she was still doing that maddening dance, now with her arms raised in the air, and he could see her singing the words along with him.

Fuck. That, right there, was better than most sex he'd had.

They hit the bridge, and he played harder, nearly screaming the words of one of their least popular songs, but one of his favorites.

And one of Julia's favorites.

And she seemed to be screaming right back at him, and she caught him looking at her, caught his eye, and fucking smirked.

He was gone. The body, the smirk. All of it.

He couldn't take his eyes off of her. At that moment, he was playing for an audience

of one, every strum, every growled word, for her.

She stayed with him through it, and when the song ended she raised her arms, cheering, then winked at him and turned to the customer who was waiting for her.

His entire body was buzzing. Adrenaline, excitement, frustration, happiness... all of it, rolled into a hot little ball that seemed to be zinging throughout his body, making him feel like he could outrun the fastest space cruisers.

He took a breath and pulled himself together enough to start the next song, glancing back at Julia as she worked. No one had ever had this effect on him.

He was determined to see if it lasted. And if, maybe, she'd someday feel the same.



## Page 2

*Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 5:10 pm*

By the end of her shift, Julia was nearly dead on her feet. Dreadnought playing meant a packed house, rowdy patrons, and never-ending drinks to make and serve. She dragged herself through the corridors to her quarters.

At this hour, the station was much quieter.

Most people were sleeping, and the few who weren't were generally station staff.

It was weirdly comforting, being up and around when everything was calm and quiet.

She'd always been a night owl, which had made life interesting when she was in the military.

She'd always felt out of sync with everyone else, though she absolutely thrived during night missions.

And when she'd finally been assigned to serve in space, which was her goal, she'd felt like she was home.

When she got to her quarters, she noticed a package at her door. It was one of the sleek white metal containers used for sending interstation mail. She grimaced. She hadn't been expecting anything, so this likely meant she'd have to contact the delivery system to report the mistake.

Tomorrow. She was tired and starving.

She picked the package up as she put in the code to her quarters, surprised to see that

it was addressed to her.

Shower first. Then whatever this was.

She went into her bathroom and took a quick shower, then changed into her soft, comfortable sleep pants and top. She pulled her hair up into a messy bun, then went back out to her living area and brought the package to the table she usually ate at.

Her stomach growled. She usually had a quick bite during work, but it had been so busy tonight she'd barely had a chance to breathe, let alone eat.

She pressed her fingerprint to the spot on the package that ensured only the person the package was meant for would be able to open it, and the container gave a small "beep," indicating she could open it.

When she did, she saw more small white containers with lids.

At that moment, her communicator buzzed and she looked at it.

"You were very busy tonight at work. My fault. Eat something before you go to sleep. I ordered some of your favorites. -Andethor

She set her communicator down onto the table, then started taking out containers.

Each one, when she opened it, revealed another of her favorite foods.

A variety of cheeses and crackers in one, a container of almond chicken and rice, which had been her go-to meals growing up on Earth.

A fruit salad, another container with spicy roasted vegetables, one with cherry pie, and another with a selection of chocolates.

She shook her head and picked up her comm again.

Thank you. I was starving. You know this is more than I can eat tonight, right?

He responded a few seconds later. I know. But now you have some treats for tomorrow too.

She shook her head and looked at the selection of food he'd sent. He'd nailed every single one of them. How did you know what to pick?

I pay attention. Now eat and relax. Thanks for dancing for me.

She rolled her eyes, unable to stop the grin on her face, and set her comm down again.

She grabbed the container of almond chicken and the piece of cherry pie, setting them aside to eat now, then put the rest away for the next day.

She carried her surprise dinner and dessert into the living room, plopped down onto the sofa, and put on one of her favorite shows, watching happily as she ate.

He was a pain in the ass. And too handsome for his own good. But any male who knew enough to send food at the end of an exhausting day had a few points in his favor.

She'd just finished the pie, feeling full, content, and sleepy, and picked up her communicator.

Dinner was perfect. Thanks again.

Anytime, Jules. You missed your usual snacktime because of how busy it was

tonight.

She shook her head. You noticed that?

There was a short pause. Like I said. I pay attention.

What could she say to that? Julia set the comm down on the table as she looked around her living space, trying to think about anything but the way her body heated at those three words:

I pay attention.

She'd been in her last relationship for three years. He'd had no idea what kind of food she liked, almost actively choosing restaurants she hated. He never noticed when she was tired or stressed or feeling lonely or touch-starved.

She had no misconceptions about Andethor. He was a musician, and a gorgeous one, and one who traveled a lot. He'd just gotten very good at charm and was used to getting what he wanted. For some reason, he'd set his sights on her.

Not. Gonna. Happen.

She laughed and stood up, bringing her dirty dishes to the kitchen to wash. Like all take away containers on the station, these would be returned to the kitchens, sanitized, and then sent out with the next order. Very little waste when you live in the middle of space.

She finished cleaning up, brushed her teeth, then crawled into bed, happy to finally cocoon herself in her blankets.

She was just about to drift off when her comm buzzed.

Her first instinct was to ignore it. But, a career in the military ingrained that you never ignored communications, and she still hadn't quite managed to shake that habit.

Julia groaned and stuck her hand out of her warm, cozy cocoon, grabbing her comm to read the message.

At least it wasn't a video call. She definitely wasn't in the mood for that.

She read the beginning of the message, then sat up. It was from her friend, Agatha, who'd moved to the station a few months ago to work in sanitation.

He's cheating on me. There's no way he's not.

, the message read, and Julia groaned.

Agatha had been in a very tumultuous relationship with one of the human guys in engineering for the past few months.

If she could have politely screamed "stop seeing him, for fuck's sake!

" at her adorable, sweet, funny-as-hell friend, she would have.

But that would be rude. And Agatha was a grown woman who could make her own choices.

What makes you say that?, Julia messaged back.

He's not answering my calls. Not answering the door at his place, and I saw a woman leaving it a couple hours ago. Still no response from him.

Julia sighed. Some men deserved to have their dicks removed and thrown out an

airlock. You know what I'm going to say here, she replied.

I know. Dump him and never think of him again. But nobody does what he does when things are good

Julia rolled her eyes, even more grateful now that it wasn't a video call. She did not want to hear about Agatha's sex life. Her advice to start trying out dildos, because they were less work and probably just as satisfying, had made it so Agatha hadn't talked to her for about a week.

So what are you going to do?

There was nothing for a couple of minutes. I don't want to DO anything right now. I feel like shit.

Julia pantomimed throwing the comm across the room. In the end, she messaged back, I know it's hard and you feel like shit. I hate that he makes you feel this way.

Thanks, J. I'm gonna go take a long hot shower and let you get some sleep.

"Thank fuck," Julia muttered to herself. She told Agatha good night, then put her comm back down determined to absolutely NOT look at it again, no matter what was going on.

## Page 3

*Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 5:10 pm*

Andethor sat across from Xarek in one of the small restaurants on the station. This one specialized in Paraxian food, which tended to be hearty, spicy, and cheap.

And it often gave Xarek heartburn, which Andethor thought was hilarious. Big grumpy Altarian bastard couldn't handle a little spice.

“ Still working on the Paraxians,” he said after taking a bite of his food, keeping his voice pitched low. “They’re sticking to their neutrality.”

Xarek grunted, offering a terse nod. “The Paraxians are set in their ways. They’ve learned to stick to the shadows.”

“ And it’s benefited some people. Like yours,” Andethor reminded him.

Xarek gave him a look that would have struck fear into the heart of most males. “It also worked against us. They maintained that neutrality, as you call it, by helping both sides until it became to their advantage to finally choose one.”

“ So we need it to be very clear to them that being part of the Alliance is an advantage to them. They seemed ready to sign on after they helped your people.”

“ They did, until their leader started getting resistance from the council. Their neutrality is their safety at this point. And they don’t trust the Alliance to keep them safe. They’ve worked against too many of us to feel secure of our goodwill.”

Andethor set his eating utensil down and thought for a while. Their past definitely made the Paraxians a target for far too many.

But that wasn't the entire story. It was coming down to one very, very stubborn representative. One who could very well be doing something to undermine his own people in his greed. Andethor and a few other members of Bellarian Intelligence had turned their focus to him. Jax'el Xiaron.

As the humans would say: what a dick.

He was squeaky clean as far as they could tell. He'd set his public image in stone. Serving the Paraxian people like his father before him, and his father before him...

Sounded an awful lot like nepotism to Andethor, but if that's what the Paraxian people put up with, it wasn't his problem.

Until it was. And Jax'el Xiaron was definitely a problem. Not only would the Alliance help protect the Paraxians, it would also keep them in line. Ideally, keep them from sabotaging any of the other Alliance members at the behest of an enemy.

He and Xarek ate in silence until the Altarian got up, clapped a heavy hand on Andethor's shoulder, and lumbered off without another word.

How the hell Maggie, who was one of the most bubbly people he knew, lived with such a grumpy bastard was beyond him.

He ate more, thoroughly enjoying the food. He needed to do some maintenance on his ship to make sure it was ready to go if he needed to be off in a hurry. Stock up on a few supplies...

... Definitely avoid going to the fitness center to ogle a certain luscious bartender who did her volunteer shifts there twice a week.

He'd barely been able to stop thinking about Julia after she'd danced like that.



He'd sent her food, and then felt like an idiot, but then felt like much less of an idiot after she'd started messaging him.

And it felt good to take care of her like that. To know she was eating something she enjoyed instead of whatever she would have managed to scrounge up in her exhaustion.

He wouldn't examine that too closely. He didn't make connections like that anymore.

He didn't have the kind of life that allowed for stable, long-term relationships.

He was away too much, might have to leave at a moment's notice, and couldn't just talk about his day at work.

Too many secrets, too many absences he couldn't explain.

It was no way to treat someone he cared about, and he'd seen firsthand how completely everything could explode after the little tensions and arguments built up too much.

He cringed. Ayza. He'd been so in love with her he'd almost walked away from the work. A job had taken him away for a few months of deep cover. Longer than he'd expected it to.

And when he got home,.. Well. It hadn't been the homecoming he'd hoped for.

Andethor shook off memories of Ayza and took a last bite of his food, then carried his dishes and utensils to the sanitizing station before heading through the corridors to the docking bay.

This was just what he needed. Some time on his ship, which felt more like a home

than most places did, now. Preparing, planning. Some Earth metal blasting. No one talking to him.

So when he drew closer to his ship and a figure stepped out of the shadows, he could have punched something. When the person stepped into the light, he straightened, his formerly-scattered attention coming back into deep focus.

“ Andethor.” The towering Bellarian, the man who’d trained him, crossed his arms over his powerful chest. “We should speak,” he said, nodding toward Andethor’s ship.

Andethor nodded, hit a button on his comm, and a hidden panel on his ship dislodged, revealing a short stairway that led into the ship.

He waved the other Bellarian in, then followed.

Once the door was secured behind them, he nodded. “Vexlan. I’m guessing you have news or you wouldn’t have made the trip.”

The other Bellarian nodded and took a seat at the small table Andethor ate at when he was away on long missions. Andethor sat, watching as Vexlan ran his fingers through his short hair. He looked exhausted.

“ We finally may have our chance. Our Paraxian contact got in touch. Apparently Jax’el Xiaron enjoys visiting pleasure resort planets when he takes time off. And he is doing that now. For the next 7 days, as they tell time on this station.”

Andethor nodded. It was just what they’d been waiting for.

Getting to the councilmember on his home planet was nearly impossible, especially now that he knew they wanted to talk to him.

His staff was an impressive wall between him and anyone he didn't want to talk to.

His home, like those of every high-ranking Paraxian, was under heavy security. He traveled rarely.

“Security detail?” Andethor asked, and Vexlan shook his head.

“Apparently the councilmember doesn't want his people to see whatever it is he plans to get up to on Eralis,” he said with a smirk, naming one of the most popular pleasure planets.

Andethor huffed out a short laugh. “So I'm going to Eralis, it sounds like.”

“You are. You should find someone to bring with you.”

Andethor jerked in surprise. “Why?”

“He's skittish, as we well know. A big Bellarian showing up?

He knows we want to talk to him. And we know he's up to some shady shit or he wouldn't be preventing this movement among his people to join the Alliance.

But. You show up with an attractive woman hanging all over you? Just another tourist.”

And why, damn it, did his mind immediately go to Julia? Her curvy, mouthwatering body pressed against his, her lips on his neck, making it look for all who saw them that they were there to partake in the planet's more... exotic... pleasures, like so many other couples.

His cock definitely seemed to like the idea, and he nearly growled.

“ I don’t have a woman.”

The look Vexlan gave him said all it needed to: Find one.

“ I’ll take care of it,” Andethor said, wondering how the hell he was going to do that.

“ Do it fast. Your reservation is set for tomorrow through the next 5 rotations. Enjoy your trip, Savis Eletath.”

Andethor blew out a breath when Vexlan named that particular alias of his. Savis was a partier, known for opulent tastes, a complete damn deviant in every way. Especially when it came to women.

Eventually he nodded, and Vexlan let himself out, returning to the shadows so many of the people he knew best lived in.

Now, he just needed to collect the clothing Savis Eletath would wear, instead of what Andethor would wear.

And he needed to find a woman who’d be okay with him treating her less than respectfully.

## Page 4

*Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 5:10 pm*

Julia finished her shift at the fitness center.

She volunteered there because she'd personally experienced how much better she felt when she got regular movement, and it often helped with the sameness of everything sort of being the same, no matter what time of the day or night it was, in the middle of space.

Plus, it gave her even more chances to talk to people, which usually kept her in a better mood.

She'd just stepped out of the fitness center to see Andethor leaning against the wall of the corridor, arms crossed over his chest.

“Um. Hi,” she said, wondering what the hell he was doing there. She hadn't even realized he knew she worked here. But then again, what was it he'd said the night before about how he knew what food she'd like?

The man pays attention.

“Hi. So. I have a favor to ask you. But it's...

it's fucking weird. I'll say that in advance.

And if you say no, there won't be any hard feelings because the last thing you should do on your vacation is be stuck dealing with me,” Andethor said, and she raised her eyebrows, waiting for him to continue.

After a moment, he blew out a breath. "Can we grab some food and go somewhere quiet?"

"It's... it's a lot," he said with a shrug.

Julia watched him. This wasn't the Andethor she was used to. He was tense. A little irritated, almost. She nodded. "Sure. I was about to grab takeout from that pasta place on level nine."

"That sounds good right now. I'm buying," he said, waving her ahead of him.

They walked in silence together before getting on the crowded lift that would take them to level nine, which was where a lot of the restaurants and takeout places were located.

There was another area like it on level fifteen, but the offerings on level nine were the best.

They stepped off the lift and Andethor followed her to her favorite pasta takeout place. She already knew what she wanted: Fettuccine Alfredo. With grilled chicken and extra Parmesan cheese. She looked over at Andethor to see him studying the menu on his comm. "Is the ravioli good?" he asked.

"It is. The cheese and the meat ones are both good."

He nodded and pushed his comm back into his pocket, then turned to her and caught her looking at him. "What?" he asked quietly.

"You're acting weird."

"You haven't seen anything yet, Julia."

“ See, usually when you say that I assume you mean something fun or ridiculous,” she said as they stepped up to the counter to order. They both did, then stepped aside to wait.

“ Usually, I try to make sure it’s fun or ridiculous,” he agreed.

She studied him more, and he met her gaze. “I’ll try to make up for this bullshit later with more fun and ridiculous than you can possibly handle.”

“ You are not exactly inspiring confidence here, Andethor.”

He smirked, then shook his head. Ugh. How could any male possibly look this good all the time? Jerk. She had a feeling she’d say yes to whatever it was he was about to ask, if only because it threw her off seeing him tense and irritated like this.

The human woman behind the counter, Elise, handed their takeaway containers over with a smile. Andethor took both of them.

“ Do you want to eat in my quarters?” she asked.

“ I was thinking on my ship, if it’s okay. It’ll make some of this easier to explain,” he said with a grimace.

“ That’s fine. I’m assuming you’re not luring me away to kidnap me,” she teased, and he rolled his eyes.

“ Not today, Julia. If I ever abduct you, it’ll be to have actual fun.

See the waterfalls on Al’teth, or the pink sand beaches of Vesda,” he murmured, naming a few of the more beautiful planets in this sector.

They got on the lift again to take them to level one, which was where the docking bay entrance was.

She bumped her shoulder against his arm as they rode in silence, and he looked down at her.

“ Whatever it is you’re going to ask, I won’t get mad at you. Okay?” she said quietly.

“ You say that now. But I wouldn’t blame you if, when I asked, you punched me in the gut.”

“ I like that you assume I can punch.”

“ Julia, I have no doubt you have a mean left hook,” he said, and she could tell he actually meant it.

And, he wasn’t wrong.

They got off the lift and wound their ways through the corridors to the docking bay, finally stopping at a sleek black ship. No markings other than the required identification numbers on the side panel in simple white text.

“ Welcome to the Hendrix,” he said, digging his comm out of his pocket with his free hand and hitting something that opened the door, a short ramp leading up into the ship.

“ Of course. The Hendrix,” she said with a smile.

They’d had that talk, shortly after they’d met one night when she was working at the Lounge and Dreadnought was playing.



How, as an adolescent, he'd heard a recording of Jimi Hendrix and he'd become obsessed with the instrument he was playing. That had pretty much started it all.

Andethor smiled at her comment, nodding.

Julia made her way onto the ship and looked around. The interior was spotless, well-organized, well-lit. A table and seating area tucked into one side, a bed toward the rear of the ship. Storage cubbies and a workbench. At the front, two seats and the controls to fly the ship.

Andethor followed her onto the ship and closed the door behind them, then set the takeaway containers on the small table. He grabbed two cups and poured a fizzy, fruity, slightly spicy drink they both enjoyed, setting them down on the table with their food as he motioned for her to sit.

She did, and for a few minutes, they focused on opening their containers, drinking, and digging into the pasta they'd ordered.

Andethor nodded in approval when he tasted the ravioli he'd ordered.

She tilted her bowl toward him, offering some of the fettuccine, and he did the same, letting her spear one of his ravioli.

They made small talk about his band, and her jobs, and he made her laugh telling her about how badly Xarek handles spicy food. She was curious as hell about what was really going on, but it was clear he needed this, just something normal, and she was more than happy to give it to him.

When they were finished eating, Andethor leaned back in his seat, sipped his drink, and watched her. She was tempted to smooth that deep furrow from his brow, but that would be silly.

And there was no guarantee she wouldn't end up on his lap. Though at the moment, feeling relaxed and with a full belly, she was having a hard time thinking of why that was such a bad thing.

“ All right. So.” Andethor said, making a face. “First off, I have never lied to you. I just didn't tell the entire truth.”

She raised her eyebrows. “That is possibly one of the worst ways to set up an explanation, ever.”

“ I know. But.. it'll make sense. I promise. Unfortunately.”

She watched him, staying silent. Part of her was delighted to see the normally smooth, cocky Bellarian so rattled. The other part was nervous about what could be such a big deal that he was this uncomfortable.

“ The band is a cover. Or. It's sort of a cover. For my other job.”

She continued to stay silent, and he got up, leaned against the counter, and looked at her. “I'm counting on you to keep it to yourself. The only ones on Asterion who know are Xarek and my bandmates. And probably Maggie, since Xarek tells her everything.”

She nodded in agreement with that. It was something she admired about Xarek and Maggie's relationship: the honesty. Sometimes painful honesty, but they were honest with each other and seemed to work through any awkwardness.

“ I am fairly good at keeping my mouth shut,” she said, tilting her head as she watched him.

“ Right. So. I'm actually a spy. For Bellaria, obviously.

Um. My last big mission was getting to know Xarek so I could learn what their plans were against the ENEMY.

Getting close to him, getting him to trust me and confide in me so we could help and maybe...

. Guide those efforts, a little. Though I didn't do much of that. Most of that came after."

Maggie listened, and he watched it happen: her expression shifted from open and curious to blank and distant. His heart sank.

"So was any of it real?" she asked after what felt to him like an eternity of awkward silence.

"What do you mean?"

"Your friendship with Xarek. The get togethers and game nights at Xarek and Maggie's place. The flirting and sending me food. Though now I understand why you're so observant."

Ouch. It was like a punch to the gut, even though he'd expected it.

"I'm a good spy because I'm observant, not the other way around. Like I said, Xarek and Maggie are well aware of what I am. There wasn't any need to keep hanging out with them in a social manner unless I wanted to."

She stayed silent, and he continued.

"And as far as you, and sending you food, and being a flirting, ridiculous asshole, that's purely because I can't seem to help myself when you're around.

Every time you dance, or... when you sing back at me like you did the other night?

I feel like I'm doing something right and I want that feeling forever. ”

Way to spill your guts, he thought to himself, groaning inwardly for confessing that much. Spy extraordinaire, for sure.

She was still quiet, that blank look on her face as she sipped her drink.

“ So... you've been here collecting information on us?”

“ Not all of you. There are a few people I'm watching who come through here pretty regularly, so our appearances in the Mars Lounge generally match up with that so I have a good excuse to be on the station when they are.

Xarek was an assignment. Now we work together.

And we're probably friends, though I don't know if he sees it that way as much as he tolerates me hanging around.

” He studied her, waiting for her next question, knowing Julia well enough to know that she'd attack something from every angle.

“ Are your bandmates spies?”

He shook his head. “No. The band is real. I've been friends with those guys since we were teenagers and started playing together.

They know, mostly because they're like family.

They're great about adjusting the band's schedule and travel based on where I need to

be, and I don't talk about my missions with them, and they don't ask. ”

She nodded, and it seemed like maybe her shoulders relaxed a tiny bit. Or maybe that was just wishful thinking on his part.

“ How long have you been a spy?”

“ Almost 20 years. Military when I finished school, then promoted and went through training when one of my commanding officers saw something in me that indicated I'd be a good candidate for this kind of work.

I was insulted at first, thinking they meant I seemed sneaky.

But it turns out that when I want to, I can blend in really easily and people barely notice I'm there.

I'm also good at playing a role, when I need to. ”

“ Like wild rock singer,” Julia said, and he shook his head.

“ Like I said, that's real. The band, my friendships with those guys, my friendship with Xarek and Maggie and you...” and the way I want to kiss you breathless, he thought but left off. Not the right time. “All of that is real.”

“ Exactly what a spy would say,” Julia said with a shrug.

“ A spy who was trying to play people wouldn't tell them all ‘hey by the way I'm a spy for the Bellarian government.’”

“ I mean. A really bad one might,” she said, and he definitely saw a slight smirk there.

“ A really bad one might. But I’ve never been bad at anything in my life.”

“ Except Scrabble.”

“ Maybe I’m just lulling you into a false sense of security,” he said, taking a gulp of his drink.

“ Maybe.”

The silence between them during the next little while felt like a chasm that he’d fall straight into if he dared trying to cross it.

He knew Julia. She needed time and space and that was why he’d brought her here to tell her this particular news.

It was less likely they’d be interrupted here, and she could ask him any question she wanted.

“ Is Andethor your real name?”

He nodded. “That part’s also real. I have aliases I go by, when I’m undercover.” One of which she’d learn, unfortunately, if she agreed to this ridiculous idea.

“ It must be a weird life. Being around people but not really able to just be,” she said after a while.

“ It is. That’s part of why I like being on Asterion Station.

Other than my family, my band, and my coworkers, this is the only place where anyone knows me and what I really am.

It's the only place I travel to where I can just relax and not have to think through which layers of me are the right ones to share.

That's probably why I spend so much time at Xarek's place when I'm not hanging out with my band. ”

She nodded, and he continued.

“ I like my job. I like knowing I'm keeping my people safe. But it does make friendships and other relationships difficult. I can't really confide in most people, because who knows who they'll talk to, right?”

“ But you assume I won't talk?”

“ I know you wouldn't talk, Jules. You're one of the most straightforward, loyal people I've ever met. We talked before about your time in the military, how you took pride in that because you were doing something meaningful. I think you understand what I do better than most.”

He watched as she looked around, clearly deep in thought.

She was either thinking he was being earnest or that he was really good at flattery, he suspected.

And he was good at flattery and bullshitting, as the humans liked to say.

And he'd spent so much time flirting with her, he wouldn't blame her for thinking the same thing.

“ So you're going to ask for my help with something spy-related?”

He gave a brief nod.

“ Can we hold that thought for a little bit?”

“ A very little bit. I have to leave tomorrow at seven. But you can take until then if you want to,” he added, already trying to figure out who the hell he’d ask. The only other sensible one here would be Maggie, and Xarek would kill him. So that was a definite no.

“ It won’t take that long. I’ll be back in a bit,” Julia said, rising from her seat. He nodded, watching as she hit the button for the door and walked out of his ship.



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Either he was full of shit, or he was completely earnest and wasn't entirely who she'd thought he was. Luckily, there was a fairly easy way to find out.

As she made her way through the station, Julia ran through what he'd said. What had been real, what hadn't, who he really was. Parts of it rang true. But she wasn't sure, at the moment, if that was because she wanted to believe him or not.

She wasn't doing that again. Believing the best from someone just because it was what she wanted to believe.

A few minutes after leaving Andethor's ship, she stood outside of Maggie and Xarek's quarters in the area where a lot of the diplomats seemed to have congregated. When she hit the buzzer, it only took a few seconds for the doors to swing open, and Maggie greeted her with a smile.

"Julia! We were just about to sit down to dinner. Join us! I wasn't sure I'd see you today."

Julia chuckled. "I actually just ate, and this won't take long. Can I talk to you and Xarek for a minute?"

Maggie nodded, squeezing her in one of her typical quick, warm hugs as she guided her into their quarters. Xarek was sitting on one of the plush, comfortable sofas, and he stood when they walked in.

"Hey, Xarek," she said in greeting, and the taciturn Altarian nodded in return. They all sat as Maggie explained that Julia said she had something to talk to them about.

Xarek put down the tablet he'd been reading, giving her his total attention.

Julia could see why Maggie had fallen for him.

So serious, so quiet, but you never got the feeling that Xarek was giving you anything other than his total attention, even when you were just asking him what kind of drink he wanted.

“ Okay. Thank you. This won't take long, and then I'll let you two get to your dinner,” she said with a laugh, and Maggie waved it off. “So... I just left Andethor's ship.”

That statement alone earned her a raised eyebrow from Xarek.

“ He said some things.... Uh. I honestly don't know if he's full of shit or not.

” She took a breath and then relayed the conversation she'd just had with Andethor.

Once she was done, she shrugged. “So, since he says you two know the truth, I wanted to verify it with you and get a sense of what you think of him.”

She looked between the two of them, and Maggie was looking at Xarek. They exchanged a look, and Xarek picked his communicator up off of the side table, quickly typing something into it. He waited a moment, watching the screen, then set it down and looked at Julia.

“ I hope you understand. I had to verify that he'd actually told you that,” Xarek said, gesturing at the comm.

“ So you're saying it's true.”

“ It is. He is what he says he is. And he downplays his significance to the Bellarians, which is very like him. Not only was he integral in forming the Alliance, but he works tirelessly for the safety of not just his own people, but the Alliance as a whole. Just last cycle, he infiltrated a group that was planning assassinations of some of our members and apprehended those masterminding it.”

Julia stared.

“ He did?”

“ He did. He is too... loud and excitable, a lot of the time, when he is not working. But he is a person I would trust with my life. Entrust the lives of the Altarian people to, and I have never had cause to second-guess that.”

Julia nodded. “So you know what he is, but you don’t wonder if he’s lying to you about your friendship, just to stay close to you?” she asked, and Xarek tilted his head.

“ A fair question. It is always a chance, I suppose. That he is just that good at subterfuge that he has me believing he’s truly a friend.

But, I have seen him in moments of stress, anger, tension...

and quiet moments, times spent here in our home.

I don’t believe anyone can be playing a role all the time, not even a master spy like Andethor. ”

Maggie nodded in agreement. “He never actually told me he’s a spy, but apparently he knows Xarek enough to know that he would tell me. I know I’m a good judge of people and he’s one of the good ones.”

Julia let that sink in. Maggie was definitely that.

“What do you think he’s going to ask you to help with? Nothing dangerous, or I will destroy him personally,” Maggie said, and Julia couldn’t help but laugh.

“Andethor would never put anyone in danger. Especially a civilian and a friend,” Xarek said, and Maggie nodded after a moment.

“True enough.” She swung her gaze back to Julia. “Do you think you’ll help him?”

Julia sighed, then shrugged. “I’m not sure. It depends on what he’s going to ask me. But I guess I’ll find out.

Thanks for settling that!” she said to both of them, rising to leave.

After a nod from Xarek and a hug from Maggie, she was back out in the corridors, making her way through the station again.

As she walked, she went over what she knew now about Andethor.

And damn it all if it didn’t make her like him more than when he was just a cocky, arrogant, flirting musician.

She approached the Hendrix to see Andethor outside the ship, one of the panels open as he worked on something inside. He turned, studying her as he closed the panel.

“I hope you’re not offended that I went to Xarek to ask about you,” she said as she stepped closer.

“I would expect nothing less. I hope you weren’t offended when he messaged me to make sure it was actually me that told you what I am.”

She laughed and shook her head. “No. That alone convinced me you weren’t messing with me.”

He grinned, and it seemed like some of the tension went out of his shoulders. “So. I am what I say I am, and you aren’t secretly a spy working to ruin my cover,” he said quietly.

She nodded. “Want to go inside and talk about it?”

He shot her one of those devastating smiles and gestured toward the door, and she walked back into the ship and settled into the same seat she’d taken before.

Andethor followed her inside, sealing the door behind them, then moving to the small galley and pouring two cups of coffee, which he brought to the table.

“Perfect. Thank you,” she said.

He nodded. “This might be a long talk, and that may very well still end up in my face. Hopefully you’ll let it cool a little first.”

She laughed, taking a sip of the coffee. Black as night, bitter as sin. Perfect.

“So. Probably the least painful way to do this, since you seem so uncomfortable with it, is for you to just say what you’re going to say, ask what you’re going to ask, and explain or whatever you need to do, and then I’ll ask questions once you’ve exhausted yourself.”

He smirked. “You assume I can’t keep going?”

She grinned. There was the Andethor she knew. “I don’t know. You’ve talked a good game, but let’s see how it goes.”

He groaned, then took a gulp of his coffee. “Going to be the death of me, Jules.”

“ Likely not. Now start talking.”

He shook his head. “Okay. I need you to go to a pleasure planet with me and pretend to be my submissive little pet.”

Her cup was halfway to her mouth, and she set it down. “Come again?”

“ There is the perfect joke I could be making right now, but I won’t.”

“ Smart male.”

He smirked, then took a breath and continued. “Maybe I should start at the beginning, now that the big weird thing is out in the open.”

“ We are not talking about your penis right now.”

He stared, then laughed, his entire body shaking, and it was one of those laughs where, each time it was about to wind down, he started laughing all over again.

Julia chuckled, watching him, and eventually he just rested his arms on the table, buried his face in them, and tried to get himself under control.

“ You’ve been a little stressed about asking me about this, huh?” she asked.

He held up a hand, his index finger and thumb with a tiny space between them. “Just a little,” he said, his voice muffled by his arms.

“ Get yourself together, master spy. Did you know Xarek actually called you that?”

Andethor looked up at her, sitting up straight. “He did?”

“ He did.”

Andethor thought about that for a moment, then nodded and took a breath, straightening his shoulders.

“ That means a lot. Thanks for telling me.”

“ Of course.”

“ I need you to understand a couple of things about this. This literally just fell into my lap today and my superior told me I need to be gone tomorrow morning.”

“ To the pleasure planet,” she added, and he nodded.

“ And you were both the first person I thought of and the last person I wanted to ask to do this.”

“ Explain that,” she said, sipping her coffee, and he gave her a look of what almost looked like respect before continuing.

“ The first person, because I’m a male with all of my senses intact and I don’t think it’s any secret to you that I’m attracted to you. The thought of bringing you to a pleasure planet is pretty alluring.”

Damn it all, she could feel her face heating when he said that. She nodded, trying to keep her expression blank.

“ And the last person I wanted to ask, because... Jules if I’m ever taking you to a pleasure planet, I want it to be as me. Not as Savis Eletath,” he said, and the way he

said that name, with pure venom, made her lean in.

“ Who is that?”

“ One of my aliases... no one knows that other than me and my superior by the way. And now you. Not even Xarek.”

“ No one will ever hear it from me. What’s Savis’s story?”

He sighed. “The guy’s an absolute scumbag. Sees women as playthings, throws money around like he’s looking for some kind of reward for person you’d most like to punch in the face. Gambler, drinker, flashy dresser...” he shook his head, and Julia scrunched up her face.

“ Yeah he sounds like I’d want to kill him within about five seconds. I deal with guys like that at Mars Lounge all the time.”

“ I know. I hate him. I hate having to pretend to be him. But he’s effective. No one expects a Bellarian to act like that, so it throws people off. And he’s so flashy and over the top, you immediately write him off as a moron.”



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She nodded. “I can see how that would be effective. The persona is so distracting people don’t realize what you’re actually doing.”

“ Right.”

“ Okay. So how does Savis taking an obviously hot, stunning, 40-something bartender to a pleasure planet fit into whatever your work is?” She knew she wasn’t letting him off easy. But if he knew her at all, he had to have expected it.

This was pure Julia, and it made him calm down, knowing she expected answers, knowing she wasn’t going to give him any space to stretch the truth or leave things out.

It just brought the whole mess into focus. She might very well agree to help him. And then hate him or feel weird with him after. And there would go his chances with her.

But he also realized, sitting there talking to her, that he didn’t have it in him to play Savis Eletath with anyone else. That she was the only one who really knew the Bellarian behind the asshole persona. And that mattered.

He’d deal with it later. Figure out how to repair whatever this did to the friendship he and Julia were building. Hopefully more.

“ So, you know about the Alliance of Planets that Xarek spearheaded. A bunch of planets joined immediately.”

She nodded. “Sure. The Altarian home world, Bellaria, Cendil, Plantis. Earth joined

pretty quickly, too.”

“ Right. We want as many people as possible, as many worlds—”

“ We? So this was something you were involved with?”

He nodded. “Xarek and I came up with it. Presented it to his people after their war was over—”

“ Holy shit. You helped them fight the Redlians,” she murmured, and he nodded. The Redlians had been terrorizing planets with their advanced technology, until the Altarian and Bellarian military formed a united front and took them down, with the help of another alien race.

“ I helped from behind the scenes. And I helped after. Some of the planets needed a little... convincing... to join,” he said, feeling his shoulders stiffen, knowing how people usually looked at things like that.

He took a sip of his coffee, his gaze dropping to the table top so he couldn’t see the condemnation on her face

“ Hey.”

He looked up at her, and she smiled. And his heart did this weird little stutter, and he knew he was gone.

“ I’m former military, remember. I know how things work. Everyone hates a spy until you have one on your side, right?”

If he could have kissed her, he would have. Wrong time, which he suspected would be something he’d end up saying a lot about him and Jules.

“ Right,” he said, nodding. “Well. All of the major players have signed on, except one. Remember how Maggie had all the bartenders watching for a Paraxian?”

She nodded.

“ Xarek had a contact that helped mess up the Redlian tech enough to enable us to get past their shields, finally. They do that a lot, for pretty much anyone who wants it.”

“ Playing all sides,” she murmured.

“ Exactly. Because of what they do, there’s a good chance plenty of planets would love to destroy the Paraxian Empire. But, the fact that they’re useful keeps people from doing it, because what if they need a technological sabotage job done someday.”

“ Right,” Julia nodded, following what he was saying.

“ The Redians were such a powerful enemy that even the Paraxians decided it was worth leaving the shadows, helping the Altarians to end the Redlian threat. And afterward, they were ready to join the Alliance, assured that they’d have the safety of the Alliance military at the ready if they ever needed it. ”

“ Seems like a smart plan. But they haven’t joined,” she said, watching him, and for just a second, he was distracted by how damn pretty she was. Those green eyes, her dark, curly hair, a little messy after she’s run her fingers through it a few times.

“ They haven’t,” he finally managed. “They have a council that has to agree unanimously to join anything like that, and one of the council members is holding out. Our intelligence suggests he has lucrative contracts in the works with some non-member planets, things that could make him even richer. So he’s betting his world’s safety against his own desire for wealth. ”

Julia made a face, and he nodded in agreement.

It was disgusting. And something that, in most societies including the Paraxian Empire, didn't usually happen anymore.

The hoarding of wealth to the detriment of everyone else in society was an ancient, backwards mindset that few, if any, still took seriously.

“ So, what? Are you trying to get dirt on him then?” Julia asked after a moment.

He shook his head. “No. The pleasure planets are legal and trying to shame him for partaking in something like that is pointless. I just want to get him alone. On Paraxia, we can't get to him.

He keeps himself surrounded by guards and assistants who are great at keeping people away from him.

But, our sources tell us there won't be any such barrier on Paraxia. ”

“ Doesn't want his underlings seeing how he has fun,” Julia said. She took another sip of her coffee and he nodded.

“ But if I show up there, as me, alone, he'll know something's up. Savis Eletath, a known degenerate, shows up with a gorgeous brunette on his arm? No one, including my target, would blink an eye. I can keep an eye on him, and, when I get him alone... have a little talk with him.”

“ Are you going to threaten him?”

He studied Julia. “There are things we know about this council person that he definitely doesn't want getting out.

I'm pretty sure I can make him see reason, once he realizes how much is at stake for him personally, since that's all he ultimately cares about," he answered, watching her, studying her face for a reaction.

She smiled. "Good. Yes, I'll help you."

He stared. "Wait, what?"

"Yes, I'll help. This is important, and the work you and Xarek did together to end the war with the Redlians, with the Paraxians help, made it so my best friend could have her happily ever after. I'm in."

"I... did not expect it to be so straightforward," he said, furrowing his brow.

She grinned. "Pick your jaw up off the floor and tell me what I should pack, spymaster."

## Page 7

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At an ungodly hour the next day, Julia sat in the navigator's seat in the cockpit of Andethor's ship. The navigation was all automated, of course, so all there was for her to do was try not to constantly sneak peeks at the Bellarian as he flew the ship.

She'd be lying if she said she wasn't nervous.

She'd also be lying if she said she wasn't excited about it.

Helping the Bellarian spy with his mission felt so much like the adventure novels she'd become obsessed with as a teenager.

Living dangerously, doing something for the good of the Alliance...

that felt like what she'd done in her years as a soldier.

And, if it meant having to pretend to be Savis's ditzy little plaything... well. At least the male playing Savis was the type of male she felt like she'd happily take orders from.

And that, right there, was dangerous. She would have to constantly remind herself they were on a mission. It would be too easy for her, even as level-headed as she was, to get caught up in the moment with him.

It wasn't long before their destination came into view, and she took a deep breath. She was pretty sure she heard Andethor do the same.

"Okay. Before we leave the ship, we should both change," he said, and she nodded,

fidgeting a little.

When she'd gotten home the night before, she'd looked up images from the planet they'd be visiting...

and then quickly went through every single article of clothing she owned to find something revealing enough.

After going through clothes she hadn't even thought about in years, she'd found that she had a surprising number of things that might work.

She wryly thanked all the times she'd assumed the burden of keeping a relationship going fell on her, that she must have needed to "spice things up" to keep a man who was beneath her.

At least it would help this little adventure. And then she'd likely recycle all of them when she got back to Asterion Station.

"You okay?" Andethor asked quietly, and she looked at him to see him watching her, a serious look on his face. Focused, intense. She wasn't used to this side of Andethor. This side that could be quiet and serious, not flirting or joking.

It only made her like him more.

"I'm okay," she promised. "Just nervous. I don't want to somehow mess up your cover."

He smiled then. "You won't, Jules. You're gorgeous and curvy. Just the kind of woman Savis drools over." He met her gaze for a second, then faced forward again. "The only thing I have in common with that bastard is that we'd both be all over you in half a second if we were able to."

All she could do was look at him. It wasn't the compliment. She knew he was attracted to her. It was the bitterness he talked about his alter ego with. And now she felt like it was her turn to reassure him.

"I know Savis is an act, Andethor. I know you," she said quietly, and he turned to look at her. "Whatever you say or do when you're in character, I know it's just that." She smiled. "It's a pleasure resort, right? We'll be expected, as a couple, to spend a lot of time in our cabin having fun."

He nodded. "If I didn't have to keep an eye on my target to find a chance to get him alone, that's all we'd be doing."

Of course, those words didn't elicit thoughts of sitting around with him playing cards or watching movies, which is what they'd usually done when they got together with Maggie and Xarek.

"Right. But there will still be times, and in those times you'll get to be Andethor again and I'll get to be the pain in the ass bartender who likes messing with you."

He laughed, offering her a wink. "I like when you mess with me Jules."

She shook her head, looking straight ahead as he pulled into the hangar and got the Hendrix situated in the docking bay.

Once that was done, he looked over at her and gave her a nod. She gave one back, then stood up and patted his shoulder, heading to the rear of the ship. She grabbed her bag along the way and closed herself inside the small washroom.

It only took her a few minutes to transform from the person she usually saw in the mirror to one Savis Eletath would have on his arm.



She swapped her usual comfy clothes for an almost indecently short black skirt and a sleeveless black top with a plunging neckline and almost no back to it at all...

not the type of thing you could wear a bra under, and her girls bounced free and happy.

The look was completed with strappy stiletto heels. She took her dark brown hair down and let it flow a little wild around her face. Her makeup took the longest. Smoky eye makeup and dark red lips.

She nearly laughed as she looked at herself.

She looked damn good. And unlike every other time she'd worn these clothes, there wasn't a single sense of guilt or stress or disdain involved.

She chose this. And she was looking forward to whatever came next.

She was taking it as her own personal challenge, to play this role to perfection, and still be able to be friends with Andethor after.

Julia gave herself a nod in the mirror, then closed her bag and stepped out of the washroom. The sight that met her eyes was... not what she'd expected.

Andethor stood awkwardly near the table where they'd eaten, and it was only the fact that she knew his face well that kept her from thinking a totally different person stood in his ship.

Gone were the concert t-shirts from Earth and other planets.

Ditto the denim or leather-look pants. Even his hair was different.

The long, thick dark blue locks she'd thought more than once about dragging her fingers through had been swapped out for a bright green, short style, tall and poofy on top.

He was probably wearing at least as much eye makeup as she was, and his pointed ears were adorned with enough metal, clanking and dangling, to make her wonder if it hurt.

He wore a flouncy top that brought to mind old pirate movies she'd watched as a kid.

Over that was a flowy, bright purple topcoat that almost looked like a bathrobe.

Skin-tight white pants, the same color as the flouncy top, and tall black leather boots completed the look, along with flashy rings on his fingers and a thick chain around his neck.

She'd been so absorbed in taking in the difference that she hadn't even noticed the way he stared at her. She finally met his gaze, and he gave a small shake of his head.

"Stars, Jules," was all he managed, and the want, the almost painful craving in those two syllables cracked something inside her that she'd kept solidly frozen since her last relationship crashed and burned.

"Hi," she said, laughing softly. "Pick your jaw up off the floor, spymaster. Savis Eletath has had all kinds of women to play with. I'm just one more in a long line."

She watched as Andethor took a breath, and then she watched with interest as another transformation took place.

Andethor's entire posture changed, from that sleek, powerful stance she usually associated with him, to a slumped, lazy, somehow slimy looking posture, his body

almost snake-like in its movements as he fell into character.

Even the expression on his face changed.

A leering, haughty, petulant mask fell over his features.

If she'd seen Savis Eletath in the Mars Lounge, she would have immediately wanted to punch him in the face. And she would have kept an extra eye on the other servers and bartenders, just to make sure he wasn't harassing them.

"Wow. I hate him already," she said, and it earned a laugh. But not Andethor's usual deep, rich laugh. This was more like a high-pitched cackle.

"Come, pet. Pleasure awaits and I expect you to please me," he said in a snide, careless voice, and only the look in Andethor's eyes, almost pleading could reassure her that her friend was still there, buried deep in the persona he hated. She gave him a small, hopefully reassuring smile.

"You're good at this," she whispered, and then went for her own transformation, trying for a blank, ditzzy expression and wrapping her arm around one of Andethor's. "Yes, sir. Let's go play," she said in a bubbly voice, and she heard him groan.

"Killin' me, Jules," he muttered as he grabbed their bags and started walking off of the ship, pulling her with her.

He tossed the bags carelessly at a porter who was waiting there, and she had to hide her surprise when she got a look at the Hendrix...

which had undergone a transformation of its own.

It was now the same bright blue as Savis's hair and had a very prominent, very busty

trio of naked women on the side, of different alien races.

“Paradise” was painted in bold, flowing letters under the trio of naked women, and she had to bite back a laugh.

When Andethor played a role, he clearly played it all the way.

He started moving through the port in that lazy, sinuous way, and she kept a hold on his arm, walking by his side, looking all around.

They’d talked about that before, that it would be more than okay for her to play a wide-eyed, ditzy woman getting her first glimpse of the pleasure planet.

At least she wouldn’t have to pretend not to be surprised by the things she’d likely see there.

“Stop gawking and touch me,” he demanded in that snide voice. People were looking at them as they moved through the busy port, and she obeyed, moving one of her hands from his arm to trail along his body, caressing his chest and stomach, his lower abs openly as he walked them toward the exit.

She tried very, very hard not to think of all the rigid muscle she was rubbing as they walked. “Yes, Savis. I’m sorry, baby.”

“Don’t forget again. This isn’t a free trip for you, toy. I expect your constant fucking attention,” he said, and oh she would make him pay for that petulant tone later.

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“ Yes, Savis,” she said in her best air-headed tone, letting her fingers tease at his navel for a moment before moving lower, toying with the buckle of the belt on his low-slung pants.

They exited the port, and the presence of warm, bright sunlight made her gasp. It felt like the perfect early summer day on Earth: warm but not hot and humid, with a gentle breeze blowing the fronds of the tall purple and pink trees that lined the front of the port.

A transit car was waiting at the curb, and Savis pulled her toward it.

She could see that their bags were already waiting inside, and when they got in, Andethor dragged her onto his lap.

“The Heights, Cabin 13,” he said, and the transport zoomed off as she did her best, trying and failing not to think about how good and hard he felt under her.

How hard every part of him felt under her.

She felt her face heat. Had she really done that to him with just a few touches? The sense of power that gave her was almost overwhelming. She knew she was a good-looking woman. But it had been a long time since her effect on a male had been this immediate and obvious.

She couldn't help it. She shifted her ass and was rewarded with a deep groan.

“ If this was a bigger transport I'd have you on your knees right now,”

Savis/Andethor said in that snide tone.

His hand was on her side, but a second later, he lifted it to her back and she felt him trailing his fingertips on the bare skin of her back.

A little shiver went through her and it took her a second to realize he was tracing letters on her back.

She rested against him and tried to focus, following the movement of his fingertip.

I'm sorry.

She turned and looked at him, lowering her lips to his earlobe, licking at it between all of that dangling metal. "You don't have to be," she whispered. "Stop worrying." She nipped the edge of his ear and earned a deep grunt, feeling him throb beneath her.

"Harlot," he sneered, and she got the sense that it was both Savis addressing his toy and Andethor joking around with her. A glance at his eyes reaffirmed that, a warmth there that she knew she'd see rarely when they were in public together here.

"I thought you liked harlots," she pouted, and Andethor squeezed her hip.

"Oh, I do. We'll see what a good harlot you are the next few days," he said lazily, squeezing her hip more.

She lowered her head again to the side of his neck.

He'd also applied an almost overwhelming cologne, and she wished she could smell him instead.

But she nuzzled him, trailing her lips down the side of his neck and felt him throb

under her ass again.

Was it evil that she was enjoying this? Probably. She'd make it up to him later. Or they'd call it even for all the times she'd undoubtedly want to punch him in the nuts during this trip.

As she teased him, she watched the passing landscape.

It looked like a huge resort. There was a large central building, which they passed on their way to their cabin.

The main building was set along a long stretch of white-sanded beach.

She could also see an enormous pool, several umbrellas and small canopies for people to rest under.

There was, of course, a full bar right on the beach, and she could see servers carrying trays of food as well.

She was glad she'd packed that bikini, just in case. She imagined they'd spend a lot of time there if Andethor's target ended up being a beach person.

When the transport stopped, Andethor stood, dragging her up with him, grunting as she brushed against his crotch in the process.

He grabbed their bags and pulled her toward the nondescript light blue cabin.

Same shape as the rest of the cabins on this thoroughfare, but each was a different color, A bright pink one and a deep green cabin flanked theirs, she noted, as Andethor used his comm to unlock the door.

He pulled her inside and held a finger to his lips, a signal not to say anything yet.

She nodded, and he took a small device out of his pocket, pressing it to the wall and tapping the screen a few times.

It gave a soft beep, and he nodded in approval. Then he turned to her.

“ Just in case the cabin was bugged. We can speak freely in here,” he said in his normal tone, and she nodded.

“ Thank you. It’s exhausting pretending to be that ditzy,” she said, and he laughed.

“ I’m... uh. I’m sorry. I can try to touch you in ways that won’t affect you...” she said, and he stepped toward her.

“ Jules. Any way you touch me is going to get me worked up.” She looked up at him, and the heated look in his eyes ignited something deep in her belly.

“ This might have been a bad idea. You need to be able to focus,” she said softly.

“ I’ll live with it. At least I won’t have to pretend to be a lust-filled pervert. You’ve already got me there, without any acting at all.”

Something made her wrap her arms around him.

Whether she needed the closeness or thought maybe he did, she couldn’t say.

But the next thing she knew, she was pressed close, holding him tight, and then his arms were around her and he was bending his head, pressing his face against the side of her neck, breathing deeply.



They stayed like that for a little while, and, at least to her, it felt like a whole unspoken conversation passed between them.

It would be so damn easy to fall for him. So easy to lose herself in the way he made her feel. Now that she'd seen him, the real him, the spymaster with the quick mind and deep sense of responsibility... yeah.

They'd both misjudged how complicated this little trip would be.

They'd deal with it. If there was one thing that was crystal clear now, it was that they'd both done difficult things in their professional lives. This was just one more.

He took a deep breath and finally, slowly pulled away. She got the feeling he didn't really want to, and they were in agreement on that. But, at the same time, she was relieved. The longer she stayed held that way by him, the more she knew she'd be thinking about how good it felt.

Andethor straightened and looked at her. "Okay. Thank you for that," he said quietly, and she nodded. "We'll put in an appearance at the resort center first. There's a bar there. Dance floor. Exotic dancers. Lots of gambling and expensive food and drinks. It's the most likely spot to run into him."

She nodded. "Should I change or is this okay?"

His gaze darted down to her body and he groaned. "More than okay, Jules. You're perfect. I'm going to have to do my best not to fight everyone who looks at you."

She laughed. "You're doing an awful lot of looking," she teased.

He met her gaze again. "I am. I shouldn't do that unless I'm in character. I'm sorry."

Why in the hell couldn't he be a jerk? Every sincere, caring word only made that shield of ice she'd spent so long building around her feelings crack a little more.

“ You're forgiven. Let's see if we can find your guy,” she said, and he nodded, and adopted Savis's slouchy, careless posture and held his arm out for her. She took it, hoping, and also not hoping, that they'd find him easily.

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She could also see why Andethor had chosen this spot. As he sat lazily in the chair, with a pair of dark, ridiculous glasses on, he could scope out the entirety of the area while looking like they were merely relaxing after their trip to the planet.

The main part of the center of the space was taken up with gambling.

Table games that looked similar to what she'd seen on earth, with couples around them gambling, laughing, cheering, and talking.

Andethor had explained that they weren't gambling for money, but as a way to add to the excitement of their trip.

Apparently the prizes for winning had to do with things one wanted their partner to do for them.

Music filled the area, coming from the other large area past the gaming tables, where a sultry singer performed on stage and couples danced on a dark dance floor. The floor was ringed with smaller platforms where exotic dancers performed to the music.

The only other thing of note was a large bar area in the corner opposite where Andethor and Julia were settled. Servers constantly went back and forth, bringing drinks from the bar to other parts of the area.

“Come up here. I want you on my lap,” Andethor said in his bored Savis voice, and Julia nodded, slowly rising to her feet, trying to hide the wince.

Forty-something knees weren't great at kneeling on for an hour.

“ Yes, sir,” Julia said in her soft plaything voice.

He opened his arm, and she settled across his lap, her arm slung over his shoulders, her legs across his thigh.

One of his hands immediately buried itself in her hair, and she did her best not to moan when he gave it a little tug.

His other hand rested high on her thigh, on her bare skin where her short skirt had ridden up.

Andethor tilted his head to the side. “You know what I like, toy,” he said, guiding her face to the side of his neck, and she immediately started nuzzling and kissing just below his ear.

She was rewarded with a low growl that may or may not have been in character.

“ Fuck,” he muttered, and she knew then it was Andethor and not Savis saying it.

He cleared his throat, squeezing her thigh.

“That’s our man. By the big card table with the Cenilax dealer.

Wearing black from head to toe like an asshole,” he said in a low voice, gripping her hair, gently tilting her head so she could see while making it look like he was positioning her the way he desired.

She spotted him. Like the Paraxians she’d seen on Asterion Station before, he had bright white hair and tawny skin.

Dressed, as Andethor had pointed out, in a black suit, black shirt.

But where the Paraxians she'd seen were often lean and powerful, this one looked almost sickly.

He had a too-thin, pinched look about him.

He was focused on the cards the dealer was passing out to everyone at the table.

“ You often wear black from head to toe,” she murmured, gently nipping the side of his neck, and he grunted.

“ Yeah but I make it look good,” he murmured while rubbing her thigh, still gripping her hair. “Don't I?”

She laughed softly, licking just below his ear.

Why did he have to taste so good? She could have spent hours nuzzled there, kissing and licking and nibbling him, hearing him groan for her, listening to those shaky breaths as she affected him.

“ You do. And you already know that,” she murmured against his skin. He squeezed her thigh in response, and she felt the effect she was having on him pressing into the back of her other thigh.

“ Gonna need a cold shower when we get back to our cabin,” he muttered.

She laughed softly. “Want me to stop?”

“ Fuck, no,” he growled, gripping her hair a little tighter, and she laughed against his skin.

Just a role. Playing a role. Helping Andethor.

She was very, very helpful.

Even she could barely take herself seriously. She sucked on the skin just beneath his earlobe.

“ I don’t see a partner with him.”

“ No. But, he can pay for a few hours of fun here if he wants it. And, some people prefer that. The excitement of paying for it, of having a new plaything every few hours if they want it.”

She nodded. “What do you think of that?” The question was out before she even knew she was asking it.

He squeezed her thigh. “Not for me. I did it once when I was young and stupid, just because it seemed like something to try. No challenge in it, no fun. And there’s something depressing about a woman pretending to enjoy your touch so you tip her better.”

She squeezed his side. And here they were, pretending.

Except... not. She very much liked his touch.

She pressed a soft kiss to his earlobe, and he wrapped his arms around her waist, hugging her tightly against him.

She saw it at the same moment he did, probably.

Their target winning a hand, and then pointing at one of the women gathered near the Cendilax table dealer.

The dealer nodded and gestured for the Tilesian female the Paraxian had pointed at to join him.

The Paraxian wrapped his arm around the Tilesian's waist and they moved toward where she and Andethor were sitting.

Andethor bent his face down, burying it against her hair, squeezing her when their target and his partner sat on a plush sofa a few feet away from theirs.

“ Sorry about this, Jules,” Andethor said, and before she could ask what he was apologizing for, he was picking her up, turning her so she was facing him. He set her down so she was straddling his lap, and then he was whipping his glasses off and burying his face between her breasts.

Her mouth fell open in shock, and Andethor gave a small, frustrated-sounding groan as he held her tight.

She massaged his shoulders, staying quiet, knowing he was trying to hear whatever the Paraxian might be saying.

She watched as Andethor reached up smoothly and tapped the area behind his ear, then went back to squeezing her against him, nuzzling his face between her breasts.

She kept kneading his shoulders. It occurred to her that she should probably be reacting in some way to him, but then she realized anyone looking at her would probably already be able to see that she was enjoying it far too much, having him like this.

His hands squeezed and kneaded at her lower back, and when they fell to her ass, squeezing greedily, she couldn't help the tiny whimper that escaped her.

Damn, his touch... strong, firm hands gripped her cheeks and she got the immediate sense that he knew exactly how to use those hands on a woman.

He squeezed again, and she pressed her lips together.

She watched him as he turned his head, just a little, so he could see the Paraxian.

Of course, turning his head put his mouth against the side of her breast, and she nearly cried out in pure, agonized need when he kissed...

then softly sucked the side of her breast.

He was working, she reminded herself. Playing a role.

So hard to remember with his mouth and hands on her like this...

He gripped her ass harder and pulled her tighter against him, and she got a clear reminder that it wasn't all acting as his hard length pressed against her body.

He only held her there for a second, almost as if he wanted her to know what this was doing to him, and she couldn't help paying him back in kind, grinding against that hard, thick bulge for just a moment, drawing a hungry growl from the spy.

"You're killing me, Jules," he whispered, not for the first time.

"Consider it payback," she whispered back, continuing to knead his shoulders. He gave her ass a little pat, then moved his hands back up to her lower back. They went quiet again, just another couple lost in the experience of being close to each other.

She hoped he was at least hearing something helpful.



She was learning that Andethor was excellent at giving back massages as his hands traveled up and down her back, kneading, massaging, and rubbing the tension away.

By the time the Paraxian and his partner left, she felt nearly liquid, warm and sleepy, so relaxed she could have curled up in Andethor's lap and slept.

He gently hugged her, then looked up at her after the Paraxian was gone. "I'm sorry, Jules. And thank you," he said softly, his bright amber gaze meeting hers. "I got...uh. Too free with my hands and other things there and you deserve better."

More cracks formed around that iceberg around her heart. She could practically hear it now.

"We both got carried away. I'm sorry, too."

He gave a little shake of his head, then took a breath. "The good news is, we can hide away in our cabin for the rest of the evening."

"Great. A shower, some food, and relaxing on one of those overstuffed chairs sounds perfect right now."

Andethor nodded, flashing her a smile before standing, picking her up with him and carefully setting her on her feet.

"Come on, toy. I hope you don't plan on sleeping tonight," he said in his Savis voice, and then he was pulling her through the casino, then finally outside.

She was surprised by how much time they'd spent in there; the sun was setting, and the sky was a gorgeous peachy-pink color, fading to deep purple.

Andethor guided her to a transport, and then they were traveling back to their cabin.

Neither of them bothered speaking. In Julia's case, she was somehow both mentally and physically exhausted, just from those few hours of playing his plaything.

And, what do you even say to a friend after you just teased them by grinding on their lap?

Only she could manage to get herself into a situation like this one.

When the transport stopped in front of their cabin, Andethor helped her out, and they both sighed in gratitude when the door of the cabin closed behind them.

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“ Thank fuck that’s over,” he growled, and she couldn’t help but laugh. He whipped off the jacket and shirt he’d worn as Savis, immediately digging out one of his usual concert t-shirts.

“ You can have the shower first if you want it, Jules,” he said, glancing up at her.

She nodded, flashing what she hoped was a relaxed smile, then made her way into the large bathroom.

Clearly, it was made for couples or more.

A large soaking tub that would fit at least three people easily.

A large shower which, she noted, had strategically placed handles and jets that had nothing to do with shower safety or getting clean.

She shook her head, laughing softly as she stripped.

She took her time in the shower. And might have made use of one of the jets, thinking about Andethor’s hard, thick bulge between her thighs, the feel of his hands on her body, his mouth on her breast.

She ended up going for round two with the jet. It didn’t take long.

When she finally left the bathroom, she felt a little less frayed and tense.

She was dressed in a pair of comfy, soft pants and a tank bra under an oversized

cardigan.

Maggie liked to call it her “librarian at home” look, since she usually spent the time she wore this outfit curled up in her favorite reading chair, lost in a good novel.

She didn’t know how well she’d be able to focus on reading with Andethor so close. And that would have to be something to examine when she had a little distance from him. For now, she’d lock that away along with the knowledge that just the thought of him could have her near the edge of orgasm.

When she finally felt ready to leave the dressing room, she took a deep breath. As soon as she opened the door, she was hit with the scent of something delicious, and she walked into the cabin’s small dining room to find Andethor opening different containers of food.

“Again?” she asked with a soft laugh, leaning against the doorway.

He grinned. “You seemed to enjoy it last time. I also noticed you liked traditional Earthling Italian food and saw they had a selection... I can order something else if you’d prefer.”

She looked over the spread and smiled at him. “Italian sounds perfect, and it smells amazing.”

He nodded, then glanced away. “Please consider it an apology. I... I should have kept better control of myself with you. I’ll try not to let it happen again.”

She watched him for a moment, and when she didn’t answer, he looked in her direction, meeting her gaze.

“We both got a little worked up in the moment, I guess,” she said.

“ We did. But I should have been better. You’re doing me a favor, helping me with this. I overestimated how much self control I have when it comes to you.”

She smiled, then stepped next to him at the table, looking down at the spread he’d ordered for them.

Fettuccine alfredo, lasagna, gnocchi, warm, garlicky bread sticks.

She leaned against him, nudging her shoulder against his arm.

“Apology accepted. I think we can give eachother a little leeway here. It’s a weird situation. I’m not mad at you.”

He wrapped an arm around her and gave her a small side-hug. “I’m glad. Which is your favorite of these?”

She laughed and sat down, and he served her a big plate of gnocchi with plenty of shredded cheese, and they spent a relaxing meal talking about the stuff they usually talked about: music, movies, and people they both knew from Asterion Station.

“ So, did you learn anything useful?” she finally asked. They’d demolished most of the food he’d ordered, picking away at it while talking.

He nodded, picking up the empty containers and scraping them off into the trash recycler before stacking them together. Housecleaning would pick them up the next day. “They’re going to be spending the day on the beach tomorrow.”

Julia grimaced. “The nude beach?”

He grunted. “That’s the only kind of beach this place has, Jules. I don’t think I want you to go with me tomorrow, though.”

She looked up at him. She didn't really want to argue with him. The idea of being naked on a beach with a bunch of other naked people seemed more like a nightmare than her idea of a good time. "We came here for a reason."

He sat back down, scooting his chair closer to hers. "We did. And I will do what I need to do. I need to get Ja'xel alone, and I'm unlikely to be able to do that there anyway. But maybe I can hear what his plans are for the evening."

"So... you're just going to go to a nude beach at a sex colony by yourself?" she asked dubiously.

He laughed, then rested his elbows on the table, burying his face in his hands. "How do I end up with jobs like this, Jules?"

She poked his ribs and he jumped. "Because you're good at your job."

"I should be less good at it," he grumbled.

She rolled her eyes. "So dramatic." She thought for a moment.

"If it's the nudity thing, when I was researching this place, I saw images of people dressed in long, gauzy, flowing robe...

things... that pretty much covered them from head to toe, fanning their partners on the beach.

"She studied him. "Is there any way we could make something like that work?"

When he lifted his head and looked at her, she had to fight back the urge to kiss him.

His hair was a mess from running his fingers through it, she'd had fun talking to him,

he'd made sure she had her favorite foods yet again, and she was relieved to have Andethor instead of Savis for a while.

His gaze caught hers, held, and the air around them almost seemed to crackle as the silence of their cabin surrounded them, wrapped them in a little bubble where all they had was each other.

“ We can make it work,” he finally said in a low voice, his amber eyes locked with hers, and her stomach fluttered. Something in his tone made her feel like he wasn't just talking about the next day's beach plans.

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*Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 5:10 pm*

This was the worst idea in the universe. By far. And the day had just started.

Andethor was lying on a cushioned lounge chair.

A bright blue umbrella shaded him and Julia...

well. The gauzy, flowing robe covering her from head to toe was just see-through enough to let him get an eyeful of the dark purple bikini Julia wore.

She stood nearby, slowly fanning him like some sort of ethereal sex goddess.

It took every bit of his focus to keep an eye out for his target.

He and Julia had arrived at the beach before the crowds, and he'd picked a seat that would give him a good vantage point to see the rest of the lounge chairs and hammocks arranged around the area.

He'd asked Julia if she wanted to sit a few times already, and she'd shaken her head. She seemed to be enjoying the sight of the water, the colorful shorebirds dancing along the edge of the sparkling white sand.

One day, he'd bring her to a place like this and just relax with her.

He fought back a grimace. Assuming she'd even want that.

She was here as a friend, doing him a favor.



And he'd already pushed that further than he should have.

Taking her away to a place like this would imply more, promise more.

And as he'd been made abundantly aware in his last two relationships, he was fully incapable of the "more" part of any of it.

Not around enough, not present enough even when he was around.

He glanced up at Julia, hoping his dark glasses hid the way he was focused on her.

Something about her made him almost dare to believe they could actually make it work if he was willing to try.

Even more, something about her made him want to be willing to try.

If she'd even want that. She seemed to have a pretty full life as it was.

And, he was an idiot, letting her just stand there like that.

"Enough of that now," he said in his Savis voice. "Come lay with me."

She raised her eyebrow, then set the large fan down in the sand, wedging it under the lounge so it wouldn't blow away in the breeze, then settled onto the lounge beside him, lying on her side facing him.

Which gave him a fantastic look at her cleavage. Stars, did she really have no idea what she did to him?

Andethor took a deep breath, then rested his hand on her thigh.

As Savis, he wore colorful, chunky rings on almost every finger, and he hated his alter ego a little more.

He couldn't run his knuckles along her thigh, not like this.

The rings would snag on the gauzy covering she was wearing.

They might even scratch her delicate skin.

Savis really was the worst.

"I thought they'd be here earlier," he murmured, laying his head back and putting on an air of laziness as he rubbed her thigh. For show, of course. Not because he was obsessed with touching her.

"He and whatever 'pet' he borrowed may have had a late night," she said softly, running her hand along his bicep. How a soft touch to his arm could make him start waking up below the waist was a mystery to him, but it was happening anyway, and he nearly groaned in frustration.

"True. So you may as well lie here with me. I wish you could read or something, but I don't think Savis is into women who read," he muttered, and her soft laugh soothed him a little bit.

She patted his thigh, and they stayed quiet, just relaxing. It would have been perfect if they hadn't both also been looking out for the Paraxian.

He leaned in and pressed his face against her neck, and she arched toward him.

An act. It was an act, he tried to remind himself. He either loved or hated that this was the easiest way to talk to her as himself, getting close, like Savis was sampling

the goods.

“ Do you have any idea how tired I am of Paraxians? Waiting for them, thinking about them, worrying about them. He should feel lucky if I don’t punch him in the face,” he murmured as he ran his mouth along the side of Julia’s neck, just beneath her ear.

For her part, she rubbed and kneaded his bare shoulders, and it definitely wasn’t doing anything to calm the situation below his waistline.

“ I am almost right there with you,” she murmured, tilting her head to the side as if offering her neck to him.

And he was just asshole enough to take it, pulling the gauzy fabric down so he could press his mouth against her bare skin, gently sucking, then not so gently biting, giving into an almost feral urge to mark her.

She gasped, and her hands gripped his shoulders harder.

“ Liked that, did you?” he said against her skin, and earned a whimper in response.

He did it again, harder, then sucking at her tender flesh to soothe it, rewarded with the sensation of her sweet, curvy body trembling against his.

“ I... shit. I think he’s here,” she whispered, and he groaned a particularly foul Bellarian curse before straightening, lazily lying back as he looked around.

On a chaise lounge nearby, a female had her face in her companion’s lap, head bobbing eagerly, and all he could think of was Julia doing the same to him.

He forced the thought away and scanned the beach behind his dark glasses.

And, there he was. Along with two female Cendilax, both completely nude as they followed the council member across the beach.

He stopped and pointed at the sand, and the two Cendilax got to work helping each other spread out a blanket, while an attendant secured a shade umbrella over the area.

What followed was... way more than Julia wanted to see.

The Paraxian said a few words, and the Cendilax females started touching and making out with each other, eventually ending up with their faces between each other's thighs as Xiaron, Andethor's Paraxian target, watched them, occasionally saying something she couldn't hear.

Julia looked away several times during the Paraxian's fun, not wanting to see.

Not so much because she cared, or because she was a prude, but because all her mind kept going to was that Andethor would never.

He'd hide her away with him, keeping her safe and completely to himself...

and then she had no doubt she'd end up exhausted and messy and willing to do anything he wanted her to.

Her stomach twisted. This was getting out of hand.

Andethor kept lazily squeezing and fondling her thigh, occasionally moving his hand up to her hip. She trailed her fingertips along his bare chest, brushing over his dark blue nipples purely out of curiosity, which earned her a quiet groan in response.

She kept her hand away from them after that, but definitely tucked that piece of information away. Even if she didn't want to inspect too closely why she was tucking

it away for later.

She felt Andethor tense, and she glanced toward where Xiaron was. He'd apparently gotten restless, and was stalking away from the two Cendilax females. He walked toward the building where there were washrooms and showers, and Andethor gave her thigh a squeeze.

"Let's see if we can get off this damned planet soon," he muttered, and she laughed and gave his shoulder a pat.

"Want backup?" she asked. He was about to answer, and then she saw his eyes narrow slightly, as if he was reconsidering something.

"Actually, yes. If you wouldn't mind," he said, and she grinned, nodding.

He stood up and held his hand out, helping her up.

"We earned an actual vacation after this," he muttered as they walked together in the same direction the Paraxian had gone, holding hands as if they were lovers. She squeezed his hand.

"We have. Is it weird that I just kind of want to go home? Movie marathon and takeout, not moving until I've become one with the couch," she said with a soft laugh, and she caught that grin of his as he looked at her.

"That... actually sounds perfect. Would you be up for letting me in on that dream vacation if we can get out of here soon?"

She nodded, studying him, and it hit her that for that outward appearance he'd always given of a carefree party boy, he'd likely not had much downtime. She shook her head.

“What?” he asked, giving her hand a squeeze as they drew nearer to the streamlined building they’d seen the Paraxian enter.

“I was just wondering how much fun you’ve actually had in the last few years,” she murmured.

He tilted his head, thinking, then gave a small shrug. “It’s hard to have fun when you know you might get called in for a mission at any time.”

“Will you get time off if you get this guy to do what he’s supposed to?” she asked, and he smirked.

“Pretty sure I’m allowed some leave time soon.”

They reached the building, standing in the arched portico that surrounded the building, right next to the door the Paraxian had gone into.

Andethor gently pushed her back against the wall and lowered his face to the side of her neck, burying his face there, nuzzling her.

It felt all too natural to rest her hands on his hips, to squeeze and massage them as she tried to keep her mind on watching the door.

“You’re not going in there?”

He shook his head. “There might be other people in the washroom with him. Better to get him out here, lure him to a quiet spot,” he explained quietly, his breath warming the side of her neck.

A little shiver went through her. Being like this, his big body caging hers against the wall...

she'd be lying if she said she hadn't had more than a few fantasies about the Bellarian that had started out just like this.

“I'm sorry, Julia,” he said quietly.

“Don't be. There are worse ways to wait for someone.”

He kissed the side of her neck, just beneath her ear, and she knew from the sweetness of it that it was for her, not part of the act, not part of their cover as a horny couple making out wherever they ended up.

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She squeezed his hips, softly nuzzling him back. This was the dangerous part of what they were doing. It would be so easy to fall for him, to end up like some lovesick teenager watching the door all the time, waiting for the days he finally came back to the station.

Before she could go too far down that path, she heard the door open and felt Andethor tense. He shifted into Savis mode immediately, throwing a roguish grin at the Paraxian when the councilmember looked at them.

“ Ah, look, toy. It’s the lucky male from the beach,” he said in his ridiculous Savis voice, and she ducked her head shyly, looking at both of them from beneath her lashes. “She enjoyed watching your Cendilax friends,” Andethor explained.

The Paraxian laughed. “Ah, a dirty little toy. Nothing better in the universe than one of those. And this one has the body to back it up.”

She was watching Andethor, saw him keep that same slimy grin on his face, even as she felt his body tense beside her.

“ I mean, the tits alone are... mmm,” the Paraxian said, and she kept her gaze down, reaching over and gently rubbing the base of Andethor’s spine, willing him to stay in character. As tense as his body had become, she was half-sure he’d throttle the Paraxian where he stood, blowing their cover.

“ They’re the best thing about her,” Andethor said, looking at her with the bored, petulant gaze he wore so easily as Savis. “Well, that and what’s between her legs.”



The Paraxian laughed. She knew it was all an act. An act she'd agreed to, but damn if she didn't feel ashamed anyway, her stomach clenching as she did her best to stand there submissively and take it.

“Holes and tits. That's all they need to have,” the Paraxian said, and Andethor/Savis laughed, nodding enthusiastically. The Paraxian was looking at her in a way that made her want to take the longest shower of her life. “I don't suppose you share, do you, friend?”

“I think we can work something out,” he answered, and it took everything in her power not to react. She knew Andethor would never let the slimy politician touch her. And if he ever did, she'd happily reward the dickhead with a broken finger or two, and maybe a broken nose to go along with it.

“My day just started looking up,” the Paraxian said, his gaze raking over her body as she stood next to Andethor.

Andethor gave him a grin that matched the Paraxian's sliminess.

“Loaning her out is fun. Keeps her in her proper place,” he said in that grating Savis voice, and the Paraxian laughed, nodding.

“What do you say friend? A drink, setting some rules to this agreement?” he asked, gesturing to the small bar at the edge of the beach.

The Paraxian kept his greedy gaze on her, nodding.

Andethor wrapped a hand around her upper arm and tugged her toward the bar, the Paraxian moving to her other side as they walked.

Andethor chatted with him, slowly rubbing gentle, soothing circles on her skin with

his thumb.

It was shocking, honestly, seeing him in action like this.

He slipped into the Savis persona like it was a second skin.

If she hadn't just been talking to him about wanting to get off of this planet, she'd think he was having the time of his life.

The two males chatted like they were the best of friends, mostly about how fantastic the planet was.

They got to the bar, and Andethor gave her arm a gentle, reassuring squeeze as they stepped into the dark interior.

A glance around showed that, like many of the public places here, there was a large open area, and, off to the sides, arch-shaped doorways that led to private rooms. The Paraxian gestured toward one of those, and Andethor/Savis nodded enthusiastically.

They made their way into the dark room. There were a few wall sconces with violet, gauzy fabric, and Julia knew it was intended to give the room a sultry feel, but it just felt menacing, somehow.

They got settled at the small table with its gleaming stone top, ordered drinks, and, once they were served, the server closed the heavy drapes over the doorway behind her.

Oh, Andethor was smart. She had no doubt he'd known about these rooms when he'd suggested getting a drink here.

“Why don't you come sit on my lap, sweet thing. Stars, I love human girls,” the

Paraxian said, throwing a grin Andethor's way. Andethor met her gaze, and it was clear he was giving her space to decide. She raised her gaze to his, and whatever he saw there drew a grin from him.

"Go ahead, toy. Make our new friend feel welcome," Andethor/Savis said, and Julia stood up, giving Andethor a look she hoped he'd read as well as the last one, and she settled on the Paraxian's lap, straddling him.

He laughed, a slimy, self-satisfied sound, resting his hands on her hips.

She kept her gaze down while she got into position.

From what Andethor had told her about this particular politician, he liked to bolt when he felt cornered.

So, he wouldn't be able to bolt.

Julia hooked her legs around the sturdy legs of the chair he was sitting in and gripped the back of his chair with her hands, making it seem like she was wrapping her arms around him. The back of the chair was metal, solid bars.. perfect for holding onto.

Once she had her hands and legs secure, she looked up at him and smiled, and he seemed taken aback by it, his hands pausing as he fondled her hips.

"And, there we go. Stop touching her, or I'll break every bone in your hands," Andethor said, in his own voice, not the Savis persona.

The Paraxian froze, going still under Julia as he dropped his hands.

Andethor stood up, and she felt the Paraxian tensing beneath her.

She tightened her grip, just as he tried to stand up, ready to bolt just as she'd guessed.

Andethor clamped a hand down on his shoulder, helping Julia keep him in his seat.

"You're a hard person to reach, Councilmember Xiaron," Andethor said, keeping his hand clamped firmly on the Paraxian's shoulder. "Almost like you're trying to avoid something."

"This is illegal. You have no rights here, Bellarian!" Xiaron hissed, and Andethor smiled. Not his usual smile, and not the slimy, self-satisfied smile of Savis Eletath. No, this smile was pure, cold confidence, with more than a touch of menace to it.

"Neither do you," Andethor said quietly.

"Places like this? Outside of the jurisdiction of any planetary government? Anything could happen to you, and no one would blink an eye." The Paraxian was still now, but Julia didn't ease her grip on the chair.

If he got scared enough, he still might try to bolt.

"You have no power over me," Xiaron snarled.

"Don't I?" Andethor asked in a purposefully innocent voice.

"Nothing illegal about pleasure planets. You know that," Xiaron said.

"Nothing at all. Good thing that isn't what I have on you. I do think there are a few deals you've made that you wouldn't want your fellow councilmembers to hear about. Including the one behind why you're holding up approval for joining the Alliance."

Xiaron tried to play it off, rolling his eyes, but Julia didn't miss the way he swallowed. Something similar between this alien species and humans, she guessed. Nervous, hard swallows, as if he might be sick.

"I have all the evidence I need. It would be enough to remove you through the proper channels. But we both know that takes time, and your people need to be in the Alliance now. You've made enemies."

"Thanks to you and the fucking Altarians,"

Xiaron muttered.

Andethor shook his head. "We both know that's not why, but it's okay.

I know you can't stop yourself from lying.

" He paused, just looking at the Paraxian.

The silence in the room turned from uncomfortable, to awkward, to downright oppressive, and Andethor just continued to stand there, cold, calm gaze on his prey.

Julia was just thinking she could probably relax her grip, and maybe even get off of the Paraxian's lap, when she felt him tense, and then he was trying to push his way out of his chair, doing his best to dislodge her from his lap.

She held fast, grateful she kept up her strength training even after going into retirement.

Andethor exchanged a glance with her, and she caught a hint of humor in his gaze.

The sexy bastard was enjoying this. She practically laughed, but it didn't seem like

the right time.

Andethor clamped a hand on the Paraxian's shoulder again, then added a hand on his other shoulder, holding him down.

“Stronger than she looks, isn't she?” he said quietly.

“I'd behave if I were you. It's been a long couple of days and you really don't want to irritate us any more than you already have. ”

“What do you want?” Xiaron finally growled, giving up, glaring at her as if she'd personally landed him in this predicament. She smiled, and he looked away in disgust.

“You're singlehandedly holding up your people's entry into the Alliance.

The Paraxian people overwhelmingly want the protection the Alliance offers.

The Alliance wants Paraxia's technological talent.

And we know you're only holding out because you've been paid to stall, by an entity who doesn't want you to join. ”

“I don't know—”

“Don't play dumb. And don't worry. We already know who your contact is. All you need to worry about right now is yourself, and what your next step is.”

“And if I don't do what you want?”

“If you don't...” Andethor patted his shoulder, almost as if he were a friend. “If you

don't, your people will find out about every shady deal you've done, every time you put your own barbaric greed over the good of the Paraxian empire. I guess, when that happens, you might decide to just run."

Andethor met her gaze, then bent, so his mouth was close to Xiaron's pointed ear. "If you run. I will find you. And you won't like what happens when I do."

He stood up straight, then gave Julia a small nod.

She got up, patting Xiaron's shoulder as she did, standing next to Andethor as he watched Xiaron rise from his seat.

"If you know what's good for you, you'll go home, now.

You'll call a special session of the council.

And you'll give your unequivocal support to joining the Alliance.

If I don't see that exact news on my feed in the next...

" he pretended to consider for a moment, "twelve hours, as time is told on Paraxia, you can kiss the opulent little life you've stolen for yourself goodbye. "

She'd been at war. She'd fought. And she'd never seen the kind of hatred in anyone's gaze before that she saw in Xiaron's at that moment. It was a look of bitterness, of rage, of a caged beast who knows it's been defeated.

He tossed a glare her way for good measure, then stormed out of the room.

They gave it a few moments, and then Andethor turned to her.

The cold, hard gaze was gone, replaced with the personality she was used to seeing from him.

And even though he looked at her with warmth, with concern, there was an uncomfortable twist in her stomach.

She'd seen so many personalities from him, just in the last hour and a half.

Slimy Savis. The cold-hearted spy. And now the Andethor she knew, or thought she knew.

Was any of it real? He was clearly a master at getting what he wanted from people, of being who he needed to be to get what he wanted. She'd been with someone like that before, and she believed the persona for far too long.

"Hey. What's going on?" he asked quietly, concern in his dark gaze. Of course he'd picked up on her discomfort. He paid attention.

He was trained, and paid, to pay attention, she thought, before she could shove the thought aside.

"Nothing. I'm fine. Glad that's over, though," she said with a soft laugh, trying to keep her voice light. He furrowed his brow, watching her. "What do you think? Can we get out of here?"

"Back to the cottage?" he asked, and she nodded.



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He nodded and gestured toward the door. He kept a respectful distance from her as they walked back to their cottage, and she was grateful while also missing the closeness they'd had on the beach.

That felt like a long time ago. Another life, another reality.

I'm overreacting to this, she thought to herself as they walked. He'd told her he was a spy. Warned her this would be weird. He'd been straight with her.

Well. He'd been straight with her when it had become advantageous to do that. Up until that point, he'd been fine lying to her about who he was.

Even knowing she'd given him a pass for that, that she'd told him she understood... seeing all of it the way she just had made her feel like everything was upside down.

They got back to the cottage, and she grabbed some clothing and ducked into the bathroom.

The first thing she needed was a shower.

She scrubbed every inch of herself, washed her hair, then dried off and took her time drying her hair, pulling it up into a messy bun, and generally pulling herself back together again. She felt a little more like herself, a little calmer, by the time she opened the bathroom door.

Andethor was sitting on the sofa, quietly speaking into a communicator. Not the one he usually used. This one was much smaller, more the shape of a large pill.

She grimaced. She guessed that would make it easier for him to hide it, if he ever needed to. He gave her a small nod and continued speaking, listening occasionally, and she realized he was talking to someone. She'd thought he was just recording a log of the mission or something.

Andethor nodded toward the small kitchen table, and she saw that there was food waiting. Of course there was. And even with as weird as she was feeling, her stomach rumbled. Breakfast had been forever ago.

She took her tablet to the table, helped herself to a pasta dish he'd ordered, and settled in, reading and enjoying her meal, trying to focus on the adventure story she was reading instead of listening to Andethor.

He spoke in a low voice, very business-like, his words short and clipped.

She couldn't help hearing him say that he'd be returning to Asterion Station, and he asked for a few days' leave.

Apparently, it was granted, because he thanked whoever was on the other end of the communication, and then a few seconds later, he was up and walking into the dining area as well.

Andethor sat down and added some sort of fish to his plate, as well as some of the spicy roasted vegetables she had on her plate as well. They ate in silence for a few moments.

"My supervisor is pleased, for the moment. He'll be more pleased once it's confirmed that Xiaron actually followed up on what we told him to do."

She nodded, watching him as she chewed a bite of her pasta. "Do you think he'll do it?"

“His kind only cares about self-preservation. Now that he’s against a wall, he’ll fold,” he said with a shrug, still studying her closely. “I’m more concerned with you. Something changed back there.”

She shrugged. “It was strange, seeing how easily you could switch personalities.” She took another bite, focusing on her food, aware that he was still watching her closely.

“That’s part of the job,” he finally said, and she nodded, taking another bite.

They ate in silence for a bit, and her gaze returned to the book she was reading. She read the same sentence at least three times before Andethor cleared his throat. She looked up at him.

“I don’t know what’s going on here,” he said. “Help me out a little, Jules.”

She set her fork down. “It... honestly it isn’t anything you did. It just brought back some things from my past, seeing you change so quickly, so easily. You didn’t do anything you need to worry about. This is my own baggage. I’m happy we were able to get him,” she said, meeting his gaze.

He was watching her, and his gaze was the Andethor she knew. Or thought she knew. That was the thing, wasn’t it? How could she even know what he was really like?

“Can you tell me about it?” he asked. “We’ve been friends for a while. I want to make sure I’m doing everything I can to make you feel comfortable around me again.”

Her heart did a weird little stutter step, and she took a breath, trying to think past it. “That’s... I mean. It’s kind of what you do, right? Learn about people and use what you learn to get what you want?” she asked quietly.

His gaze sharpened, and for a second, she felt bad for saying it. But she'd always been straightforward with him. Changing that now would be foolish.

“Professionally, yes. That’s a big part of what I do. I don’t do that in my personal life, though.”

“How can you be sure?”

He set his fork down. “What do you mean?”

“It all seemed to come so naturally. Switching from my friend, Andethor the musician, to sleazy Savis Eletath, to this... cold, hard spy. I know Savis isn’t really you. But how much of what I’ve seen of you is an act?” she asked quietly.

“Jules.”

“I know. I know I’m making too big a deal of this...”

“Hey. You aren’t,” he said gently, and she met his gaze again. “When I’m with you, when I’m with my band, when I’m with Xarek and Maggie... that’s me. That’s pretty much the only time I get to turn the rest of it off.”

She looked at him, and a wry smile curved his mouth.

“And that’s exactly what I’d say if I was trying to pull something over on you, if everything was an act,” he said quietly. “But it’s still the truth.”

She nodded, pushing her plate away.

“Someone hurt you to make you this suspicious. It makes me want to hunt them down and let my fists have a nice long talk with them,” he said in a low voice, and she

couldn't help but chuckle.

"I was engaged for a while," she said after a few moments. "It was... I was happy, you know? Taking care of our house, planning the ceremony. I hadn't retired yet, but I'd taken more of a civilian-facing role. And he seemed just as happy. Affectionate, warm, caring." She shook her head.

"What happened?" he asked quietly, his food forgotten as his dark gaze stayed fixed on her face.

She took a deep breath, then shrugged. "It was all a lie. All of it. He had a wife and kids on a neighboring planet, which I only found out about when there was a report about him on the newsfeeds. He'd won some big interplanetary contract to build housing.

And he was surrounded by his loving family as he accepted," she finished quietly.

She looked up to see Andethor's jaw tighten.

"I had no idea," she continued after a moment.

"Afterward, after I'd confronted him and kicked him out, I don't even know how long I spent trying to remember if there were signs.

There must have been, right? A man's hiding a whole other life, there have to be hints.

But I couldn't find any. Yeah, he traveled a lot, but he's a businessman with projects all over the galaxy.

" She took a deep breath. "It just reminded me of that all over again. And that is not

your fault. It's just... it's what it is."

He was quiet, and she could tell he was thinking it through. "I'm sorry you went through that. That guy is complete garbage," he said, leaning back in his chair. "Now I want to punch him even more."

She nodded and took a sip of her drink.

"What you saw... what I do... I'd never pretend in my personal life. I have to do it enough in my professional life."

"You were pretending most of the time we've known each other," she said, shaking her head. "Playing at being nothing more than a musician traveling from gig to gig."

"I don't think even I can fake how much I love music. None of that was an act. That's life, and then there's my job. And unfortunately my job isn't one I can talk about openly."

She looked at him. "All of that makes sense. This is a me thing, and I understand why you couldn't just tell me."

"It still brought up some bad feelings, though," he said quietly, and she shifted under his gaze. "Which means that, if I want to see where this goes with you, and I very much do, I need to give you every reason to trust me and no reasons to doubt that I am who I say I am."

She shook her head. "That's not the kind of thing I expect you to do. That's a lot to expect of anyone, and even more of you, when I know now that you can't just say everything you might want to."

He frowned, then pulled another container toward him and opened it, and the scent of

chocolate cake wafted through the air.

“It’s not a lot to expect that people are honest with you.

And now I recognize that I already had one strike against me in the trust department because I kept my role to myself.

And an added strike because now you see how good I am at pretending to be something I’m not.

” He pointed to the cake, asking if she wanted some, and she nodded.

He dished a piece out for her and then took one for himself.

“I care about you. I want you to feel safe and secure with me,” he said after a few moments.

She took a bite of her cake, nodding. “I do. Like I said, just rattled. You’re really good at that. All of it. Bellaria and the Alliance are lucky to have you.”

When he looked up and his gaze met hers, it felt like being in high school again, with that one boy she was sure was her future.

Her face heated, and it felt like butterflies were having a rave in her belly.

And the most alarming thing was that the last time she’d had that feeling was when she was a teenager, before she focused, before she knew better.

She couldn’t remember the name of the boy she’d had such a huge crush on in high school, but she had a strong suspicion she’d never forget Andethor.

She giggled, and then it turned into a full-blown laugh as Andethor looked at her in confusion, his mouth quirking in a smile as he watched her, waiting for her to collect herself.

She shook her head, and he laughed. “What was that all about?”



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“I was just thinking, this is the part in the story where, now that you’ve basically convinced me to trust you, and I want to trust you, you betray me in the worst possible way,” she said dramatically, and he rolled his eyes and laughed.

“My devious plot all comes together, and I was actually really Savis Eletath all along, trying to use and corrupt you into being my personal sex doll!” he said, raising an eyebrow at her, and she laughed, shaking her head.

“I knew it!” she exclaimed, and he smirked and flicked the piece of cake that was on his fork at her, hitting her smack-dab in the middle of the forehead with it. “Oh, that’s how it is, huh?” she mutters, a smirk curving her lips.

“Yeah, that’s how it is Jules. What are you gonna do about i—” That final word cut off as a chunk of chocolate cake splattered against his nose, and then it was on, and before either of them knew it, they’d ended up flinging most of the leftover food at one another making a mess.

Andethor’s hair was dripping in sauce from the pasta dish they’d ordered, both were a mess of cake and frosting, and a piece of tomato clung stubbornly to Julia’s cheek.

Andethor flung one last piece of chocolate cake at her, and she laughed as it lodged itself in the cleavage peeking over the top of her tank top.

His eyes darkened, and a little shiver went through her. They were both standing on opposite sides of the small table, and he slowly moved around to her as a shiver of lust-fueled excitement ran through her body.

“No way I can pass up this chance,” he murmured, and then he was ducking his head, and she felt his tongue lapping at her cleavage as he ate the cake that he’d flung there, groaning against her skin as he licked and sucked at that spot some more.

“Need to make sure I get it all...” he murmured, and she tangled her fingers in his hair, arching her back, losing herself in the moment, this fantasy she’d had too many times about this particular alien coming true...

and so much better than she could have expected.

His mouth... his tongue and lips and teeth teasing the delicate skin between her breasts.

“Please...” she begged, and he groaned. In the next instant, he dragged her top and bra down, exposing her breasts to him, and then his greedy, talented mouth was on one nipple, kissing it, licking it, nibbling at the delicate underside of one breast as he palmed and teased the other with his large, warm hand.

She desperately gripped his hair, whimpering his name, earning a harder nip with his teeth, just beneath her nipple. “Say it again. Just so I’m sure you know exactly who’s doing this to you,” he growled, and the sound went straight between her thighs.

“Andethor,” she panted. Her free hand made its way down to his belt, unbuckling it as his lips found her needy, aching nipple, closing over it in a way that sent jolts of pleasure through her body.

Once she had his pants open, she almost reverently stroked his hot, hard length as he sucked and nibbled one aching nipple, and then another, releasing it with a pop as he snarled and carried her to the seating area, stripping her pants off of her on the way, before positioning her on the sofa, sitting, looking up at him, and her first instinct was to lean forward and show him with her mouth just how much she’d fantasized about

this moment.

He seemed to sense it, and gave a small shake of his head, putting his hands on her shoulders, making her lean back against the soft cushions.

He kept his eyes on hers and reached down and caressed her inner thighs before slowly pushing her legs open, wide, making her feel the cool air on her overheated slit.

“Tell me you want this, Jules,” he said in a low, rough voice as he rubbed the tip of his cock through her wet folds, drawing a ragged cry from her.

It was almost too much, and her first instinct was to closer her legs, but he held them spread, mercilessly rubbing against her as he waited for her answer.

“I want it...please,” she begged, and he groaned, and then they were groaning together as he started pushing slowly into her, stretching her, giving her exactly what she was so desperate for.

“Watch. Watch us and remember this is exactly how it should be,” he demanded, and she moaned and followed his gaze, watching as he pushed in deeper, splitting her, drawing a ragged cry from her before slowly pulling back and doing it again.

“When we get back to Asterion Station, you’re still mine. This isn’t something that we leave here. I’m not fucking letting you go, Jules,” he said, his voice roughened by desire, and all she could do was moan, panting helplessly, overwhelmed with need for him, already on the verge of falling apart.

“Please...” she begged.

“Say it. Say you’re mine and I’ll give you everything you want,” he demanded, and

she nearly wept in frustration as he held his hard, thick cock still in her needy body, so close to giving her what she needed.

“I’m yours,” she cried, desperate for more, but also knowing it was true. It scared the hell out of her, but she couldn’t focus on that as he started thrusting into her, giving her long, slow, deep thrusts that had her on the edge almost immediately.

“You’re damn right you are,” he grunted, and then he was taking her harder, faster, keeping her legs spread wide so he could get as deep as he wanted, making her ache in ways she didn’t even realize were possible as he thrust wildy into her, and when she shattered under the onslaught, he gripped her chin, making her look at him, holding eye contact with her as he kept relentlessly thrusting into her through all of it.

They were both panting, and she felt like molten lava ran through her veins, as if her body would never be cool or calm again.

“Beautiful. Again,” he growled, and it wasn’t long before he had his wish as she shattered into a million pieces, breathless, dazed, staring up at him as he pulled out of her and continued to hold her there, a fiery look in his eyes that sent shivers down her spine.

“You too,” she panted.

He shook his head. “Not yet. That was better than any fantasy I’ve ever had of you.

And I’ve had plenty, Jules,” he added softly.

And then he was on his knees between her spread thighs, and all semblance of thought left her mind as he played her body just as expertly as he played his guitar, his tongue and lips and even his teeth working her into a frenzy that left her thighs shaking, her heart pounding, and her mind more blank than she could ever remember

it being.

It was as close as she'd ever likely come to any form of heaven.

And he was clearly enjoying himself, gripping her thighs, moaning and groaning as his tongue swept along her slit, toyed with her clit, and generally turned her into a dazed mess.

And he didn't stop after bringing her to one shattering orgasm.

No, Andethor was an over-achiever in every way, gently soothing her with his tongue after her orgasm only to work her back up into another frenzy... and then another.

When he drew that final orgasm from her, she was literally weeping, overwhelmed with sensation, and she begged him, her voice shaky with everything he'd made her feel.

"Please... I can't... it's too much, Andethor," she panted, and he slowly drew his mouth from her oversensitized clit, kissing her mound, then the inside of each of her thighs before he moved up to the sofa and pulled her against him, cuddling her, gently trailing a hand up and down her spine as he held her.

"Shh.. you're okay, sweetheart. I've got you," he murmured softly, gently sweeping the tears from her face with his thumb before leaning in and kissing her.

She could taste herself on his lips, his tongue.

He held her, soothing her with his touch.

She glanced down at his lap to see his cock still rock-hard, and she lowered a hand to it, slowly stroking him.

Andethor groaned. "I'm going to embarrass myself if you keep touching me, Jules," he warned, and she chuckled.

"You've shown remarkable self-control so far," she teased.

"I'm about at my limit."

She grinned, and then scooted over on the sofa so she could lie with her head in his lap, her body curled up on the cushion next to him. He tensed, and she blew a warm, gentle breath at the head of his cock.

"Jules," he said in a strangled voice. "You don't have to."

"Oh, I know. But I very much want to," she said, licking him from the wide base of his cock to the thick, purple-blue head, earning a ragged, rough groan from the big alien.

"I like that sound. I wonder if I can make you do it again," she teased, and he reached down and slapped her ass, drawing a surprised gasp from her. She met his gaze and took him into her mouth, slowly sucking the head of his rigid, throbbing cock as he groped her ass.

His groans and growled praises only made her enjoy herself more, lavishing his cock with attention as she felt him shiver under her in pleasure, groping her ass more firmly as his body tensed. The muscles in his spectacular, lickable abdomen flexed as he desperately tried to maintain control.

That was actually the last thing she wanted. She wanted Andethor undone, as much of a mess as he'd turned her into.

She moved her hand to his heavy balls, gently massaging them as she took him

deeper into her mouth, sucking firmly as he groaned desperately for her.

It wasn't long before his entire body went rigid. "Jules," he said, giving her a warning she had no intention of heeding.

He tried. The effort he was putting in not to release in her mouth was impressive.

So it was even hotter when he lost it, moaning her name as he gave her what she'd been working toward so diligently.

In a little bit of very appreciative payback, she kept lavishing his dick with attention even after he'd unloaded down her throat, after she'd taken every drop from him.

Feeling him tremble for her... stars, that could be addictive.

"Jules. Sweetheart. I'm gonna pass out if you keep that up," he said, and he gently pulled her up, lifting her so she was cuddled next to him again.

He held her gaze, giving a small shake of his head, a look of pure, satisfied bliss in his dark eyes.

"You're going to kill me with that mouth of yours," he said softly, and she smiled.

"What a way to go, though," she joked, and he chuckled and leaned in, kissing her deeply, holding her against him.

They spent the night cuddling in the ridiculously oversized bed, talking, kissing.

A few hours later, she rode him until they were both exhausted and aching, and then they fell asleep in a tangled, hot mess, his big body on top of hers, and all she could think was that she hoped the magic didn't end when they left the pleasure planet.

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*Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 5:10 pm*

After reading through his comms, Andethor sighed and slipped back into bed. Julia was asleep, her hair tousled all over her pillow, curled up on her side.

Immensely cuddleable, when she looked like that...

He wrapped a hand around her waist, then couldn't help cupping one of the large, soft breasts he'd worshiped the night before. He lazily teased her nipple with his thumb, earning a soft, sleepy whimper that had his cock coming to attention.

Too bad he didn't have time for anything fun at the moment.

"Sorry to wake, you, sweetheart," he murmured, kissing her shoulder.

She smelled like vanilla and something floral, a slight undertone of something purely Jules.

He'd pleased her late into the night, made her body glimmer with a light sheen of perspiration.

He'd never get that sight out of his head: Julia, dazed, panting, sweating, with that grin curving her lips that let him know he'd more than satisfied her.

He forced the image away, since it was doing nothing for the state of his cock.

"But I just got word that our Paraxian friend checked out and left a little bit ago. I need to get back to fill my supervisor in," he said softly, and she nodded.



He held her as she woke up, and as he did, he could feel her posture changing, from warm and relaxed to tense, almost rigid.

“Hey,” he said, moving aside so he could roll her onto her back. “What’s wrong? Your entire body tensed up.”

“I hate that you’re so damned perceptive,” she muttered, glancing away.

He gently turned her head, making her look up at him. “One of the things I’ll get to annoy you with fairly often, probably. Curse of being involved with a spy.”

“Are we?”

“Are we what?” he asked, furrowing his brow.

“Involved.”

She watched him as he opened his mouth to speak, then closed it. “Yeah, that was presumptuous of me,” he finally said. “It feels like it both took forever to get to have a night like that with you, and also like it happened ridiculously fast.”

She nodded, and he took a breath, then patted her hip and sat up, then got out of bed and strode to where he’d set his bag so he could finish getting dressed.

“Still. It was a good night,” he said, trying to keep his tone light, even as he felt an empty pit in his stomach and a weird ache where his heart used to be.

He should have known better. He knew he wasn’t enough. Wasn’t around enough, wasn’t able to share everything about his life with her. He also knew Julia. She was fine being alone. She had been the whole time he’d known her.

Presumptuous idiot, he thought as he pulled his shirt on, then shrugged into a jacket,

checking his pockets to make sure he had everything he needed, aware of her moving around collecting her clothing before going into the bathroom.

He walked over to the dresser and finished packing up his bag. A fun side trip. A fling. That was all it was. He didn't have to make more of this than it was.

Right.

When she was dressed and packed, they left, taking a transport to the docking bay, then getting back on his ship.

To say things were awkward between them was an understatement.

Or maybe that was just him. For her part, she sat in the navigator's seat, reading something on her tablet, snacking on some chocolate cookies they'd bought from a vendor on their way to the docking bay.

"So you're going to be away from Asterion Station for a bit, I'm guessing?" she finally said after a while, and he turned his head to look at her, meeting her gaze.

"Yeah. I'll need to file my report and then keep an eye on the situation to make sure he does what he said he would. A follow-up report and debrief after once all of that is done."

"Who knew spies had so much paperwork to deal with?" she asked with a soft chuckle, and he rolled his eyes.

"Let's keep it our secret. I'll lose all of my mystique if everyone knows that," he said, and she laughed.

"But you'll be back when you can, right?" she asked after a moment, and he turned to look at her again.

“Do you want me to?” he asked, hating himself for even feeling like he had to ask. Just let it go. Be laid-back about this. He couldn’t do it.

She gave him a look. “I should smack you right now.”

“For what?”

“Andethor. I just had the best night of my life and you’re honestly asking me if I want you to come back?”

“You want more?” he asked dumbly.

“Don’t you?” she shot back, and he hated the uncertainty he saw in her eyes. Uncertainty he put there, and he’d kick his own ass if he could.

“That’s all I’ve wanted since the second I laid eyes on you, Jules,” he answered, and the smile she gave him then made him feel like a god, like he’d won every prize, every award, every accolade it was possible to win, all at once.

He leaned toward her and tangled his fingers in her hair, dragging her in close for a deep kiss that left them both breathless.

“Then when you’re not doing super-secret spy stuff, I want you to come home to me,” she said softly, her gaze locked with his. “Okay?”

He felt like his face was going to split, he was smiling so much. “Okay, Jules. I’ll come home as often as I can,” he said, his stomach twisting a little as he hoped it would be enough.

“And I’ll love knowing you’re doing work you’re clearly good at, and then exhausting you when you come home to me,” she teased.

He kissed her again, hard, deep, hoping she could feel every ounce of his complete love and worship of her. When she pulled away, she grinned at him. “Maybe I’ll even dance for you,” she teased.

Asterion Station came into view. Home. As long as Jules was there, it was home, and he couldn’t think of anything better in the entire universe.

THE END