



Lost Treasure (Betas in Waiting #22)

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Category: Dark Erotica

Description: Haravin was betrayed and discarded by her best friends. Now that she has a new life, they return and try to drag her back, but she's changed. Really changed.

Hara was a competitive ballroom dancer, but her partner betrayed her by telling her community they were lovers. It led to a cascade of aggravation and punishment from her community, and when it came out that he was sleeping with her omega best friend, he was congratulated for getting one of the rare ones, and both of her besties discarded Hara.

She didn't know what to do and had to leave her family and friends to start over. So, she did. She ends up as a housekeeper in a pride of friendly feline alphas with their two omegas. She occasionally doubles as Ford's assistant. She ends up stunt-dancing, and that spurs Ford to find her alpha. She has a very specific adaptation, and it needs a very specific alpha.

A meeting in a museum sends her across the world and to an island that doesn't greet her warmly. It's all right; she's a treasure to any who meets her, and eventually, she starts to believe it.

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Haravin finished the grocery list and took her apron off. She checked her phone, and there was a message. “Yes, Ford?”

“Oh, thank god. Can you get the call sheets from my desk, Haravin? I need them here as soon as possible.”

She walked into his office and got the sheets that were right on top. “Sure. I am on the way.”

She got her purse, her lanyard, and the pride credit card for incidentals and headed out to run the sheets to the bossy omega.

She hummed as she drove and listened to music. Her head bobbed, her fingers tapped, and her feet wanted to move. The other night at the party, dancing with Rick had woken up some of the ballroom instincts that she had squashed. She wasn’t going to dance without a partner. Her flamenco wasn’t that good.

Haravin got to the studio. “Haravin for studio six.”

“Yes, miss. Straight ahead and to the left,” the man in reflective shades directed her.

“Thank you. Have a good morning.”

The man smiled and shooed her along. The gate went up, and she drove in.

Haravin cautiously drove as folks tended to burst out of the studios and charge into the lanes, no matter the markings.

She got to studio six and parked in an available and unmarked spot, then grabbed the stack of pages and walked with it to the studio where Ford was working. She held up the lanyard, and the guard on the door said, “Morning, Haravin.”

She nodded. “Hey, Ben.”

“Go on in. They are setting up.”

“Uh-huh. For what?”

He shrugged. “No idea.”

She sighed and sensed a setup.

She walked in, and her eyes adjusted to the dimness and found Ford chatting in one of the pools of light. She moved to him, and he beamed when he saw her. “Haravin, can you help us out?”

“Uh, with what?”

“Some of the ladies have been having a problem with the dancing, so we were wondering if we could put tracking dots on you and then superimpose their faces digitally.”

“No credit?”

“Not if you don’t want it.”

She winced but asked him, “Did you want me to mimic their height as well?”

Ford paused. “Could you? We just need to get the scale right.”

She nodded. "I can."

"Great. Get to wardrobe, and special effects will meet you there to place the dots."

"Okay. Here are your call sheets."

He took them and wrinkled his nose. "I have them on my phone."

"I know, but I didn't know why you wanted me here. I don't know which partner you have in mind, but I need somebody with stamina."

He grinned. "That's right up my alley. See you when you are ready."

She snorted and walked off to wardrobe. She got to the average height of one of the elf-mate betas, and from there, they sought out the most generic costume covered with the dots that the computer would use to change appearance. That was Ford's favourite thing. Watching the images being manipulated into something spectacular was his ideal hobby, next to playing with his family.

"So, miss, what are we doing with you?"

"I am getting a dance outfit for what I guess is the credit sequence."

The ladies blinked, nodded, and got her a pixie bodysuit with reflections for wings built into the back of the dress, and other markers were in place so they could turn her into anyone.

She put her street clothes in a locker, and when the special effects team came in, they brought a hairstylist to put her hair up in a tight style and gelled it down. The woman kept apologizing.

Haravin smiled. “Don’t worry. I used to dance competitively. This is not the tightest my hair has been.”

“Oh, thank goodness. Your hair smells great. What do you use?”

“I dunno. All of my products smell like fruit. Or cookies.” She smirked.

“Right. Special effects is here for the dots. Ready?”

“Yup.” She sat still while the man loomed in and checked a chart for dot placement.

When she was set up and moving her face wouldn’t shift the dots, she asked, “I don’t have to smile for this right?”

“No. It is best if you keep your face still as possible.”

“Cool. You have gotten my hands?”

“Yes. We are good.”

“Okay. Any idea where I am going?”

“Main stage. I will walk with you.”

He picked up his kit.

She waved to the wardrobe ladies as she went out and thanked them, then she pattered to the stage with her shoes held in her hand.

She pattered up to Ford and tapped his arm. “Boo!”

He turned and jolted. “Haravin. You look... different.”

She nodded. “Yup. Where is the poor bastard I am dancing with?”

Ford gestured to one of the dark elves in his troll makeup. “Narro. He’s the best dancer in the bunch.”

“Okay. I will go and introduce myself.”

She walked over and said, “Excuse me.”

He nodded. “Yes, what?”

“I am going to be your dance partner for this. What music are you looking at?”

He looked at her. “You?”

“Yeah. So, what are we dancing to? Should we practice?”

He was unimpressed, and she smiled.

“I don’t think you are suitable for this.”

She sighed and grew nine inches. “Right. What are your objections? Quickly. I am on the clock. I have shit to do today, and I can’t wait for a prima donna to delay me. Chop chop.”

He frowned and looked at the sound guy. “Can we get some ear buds?”

They got some earbuds, and the playback started. She read his lips and saw, “Waltz.”

She shrugged, and he held her hand as they walked into the area where the cameras were aimed. The music started, and she moved with him. He looked surprised, and the movements grew more energetic as they twirled and spun through the allotted space.

His gaze met hers, and they started a cha-cha and still moved smoothly. She was lifted, spun, bent back, and flipped into a landing split.

He helped her up and was grinning. The playback was cut, and they removed the earpieces. He blinked. "You can dance."

"No shit. Now, what are we doing and in what order?"

Ford came over with a dazed expression and smiled. "That was great. Narro, you have the list?"

"I do. Can you think of better pairings for the music?"

"I can now that I know how she can move. What is your name, miss?"

"Haravin."

"First or last?"

"First."

"Thank you for coming out to dance with me, Haravin. Ford had the idea but no clue on how to execute it."

Ford was looking excited. "Okay, the list is coming to the tablet. You two practice, and when you are ready to start recording, just give me the signal."

Narro looked at Haravin. “So, what are your thoughts?”

“I need to hear the music.”

“Are you comfortable with lifts and being tossed?”

“Sure.”

“Then, let’s get practicing.” He smiled, and there was anticipation in his eyes.

Four hours later, Haravin was exhausted and sweaty and ready to drop. “If you ask for another one, I am going to break that camera, Ford.”

Narro was leaning over with his hands on his knees, breathing hard. “What she said.”

Ford grinned. “Oh, come on. One more.”

“No! I am neither your omega nor your alpha. Begging me to go again isn’t going to work.” She stretched.

Ford pouted.

“That doesn’t work on me either.”

He paused and grinned. “Fine. You did great. Now the rest of us have to get to work putting the overlays on.”

“Sure. You get the hard job. I am going to get changed, head home, and shower. Everybody’s home for dinner, right?” She looked at him with challenge in her eyes.

“Yes, ma’am.” He looked sheepish.

She patted him on the cheek and headed off with a wink to Dexter, who was on omega-sitting duty that day. Dexter broke off and walked with her. “Can you show me how to dance?”

“Sure, but watch some ballroom and figure out what you want to learn first. There are dozens of different dances. So, pick some songs and text them to me. I will tell you what styles go with which dance.”

Dexter cleared his throat. “Can you even show me when you are as tall as Ambrose?”

“Absolutely. The dances are different, the music sharper or slower, but they’re gentleness and power in equal measure. They are harder to execute, but I can show you some examples.”

He smiled. “It’s Olivia’s birthday soon, so I want to make sure that I can pull off something nice with both her and Ambrose.”

“Sure, tiger. If you get the homework done, we can work on it after the babies go to bed, or do you want to hide it?”

He shrugged. “Nothing much is hidden in our links. We can practice on the patio. May as well use Ford’s sound system.”

They reached the wardrobe trailer. “Fine. This evening. We are having pot roast, salad, roasted potatoes, and trifle for dessert. If I have enough time, Yorkshire pudding.”

He grinned. “You spoil us.”

“It’s fun. You all are appreciative. See you later, Dexter.”

She walked into wardrobe and was stripped of her dots, handing over the shoes. Her hair was stuck gelled, so she just got dressed and headed back to her car. Narro waved as she walked past, and she nodded.

Outside, the light was bright, and she paused for a moment before she headed to the lot to retrieve her car.

She placed an order for groceries and headed to Ford's. There were the daily chores to do and then the after-nursery babysitting while everyone unclenched from their work. She then did three hours after dinner and headed back to her apartment most days, back before dawn for breakfast to watch the family scatter. Olivia and Ambrose worked from home, Argus ran the big cat sanctuary, and Ford went to work under guard. Usually, bodyguards he had used for years. Today, it was Dexter, but Haravin believed it was because Dexter learned about the dancing.

She chuckled and made her way back to the omega district. She got home, parked, and headed inside after notifying security that groceries were coming.

The normal routine settled around her, and she got back to her position as housekeeper for a very active pride.

She was showered, and dinner was underway with timers on her phone. The littles arrived home from their high-security daycare, and their mother emerged from her office. Haravin prepared a snack, and Olivia took care of the babies. Ambrose wandered in, and the pride began to reassemble for the night.

By the time everyone was home, dinner was ready and cleaned up. Ford was the last one in, which meant he had to take care of dishes.

Haravin was loading the dishwasher when Ford came in, and he cleared his throat. "Uh, Haravin, can I show everybody your dancing today?"

“Sure. That is the point, isn’t it?” She smiled. “Go ahead.”

“I want you there to see it.”

She nodded. “I will be in in a minute. Just have to clean the counter.”

He grinned and kissed her cheek. “Thank you. Frankly, you have to explain how you did some of it.”

“Oh. Okay. See you in a minute.”

She finished tidying up and walked into the viewing room, where everyone was settled. She stood at the back and nodded to Ford. He grinned, the lights dimmed, and the playback commenced with her dancing with Narro, flipping, spinning, and moving her feet in rapid steps. It was the final round, and her skin had a golden glow.

Olivia was smiling. “How do you know how to do that?”

“I was enrolled in ballroom when I was five. I danced until I was in my early twenties. Then, my partner and I went our separate ways.”

“Oh, did you break up?”

“We were never together romantically. We were friends, and his omega completed our friend group. They finally formalized things, and I was on my own.” She smiled. “So, I left our hometown and headed here. I didn’t really want to return to competition, so I got some part-time work and eventually ended up here.” Haravin blushed. “That was more than you needed to know.”

Olivia blinked. “Where did you live?”

“Grandview. About seven hours west.”

Ford brought up the new performance. “Let me guess, you came here to compete?”

“Yeah, now and then. Why?”

“Because betas who have your sort of adaptation came here at some point and were altered by the curse or blessing or whatever it was that changed you. The seeds were sewn anyway.”

Ford chuckled. “The guys were working on the first images, and this is what they have.”

She watched as her body was overlaid with one of the pixies’. The tracking hung onto her, and it looked like the other woman was moving around the dance floor. “Oh, wow. That’s amazing. I am out of practice, but it still looks good.”

Ford snorted. “Rick looked this over and was shocked. He never would have put those moves together, but they work.”

“Well, the dark Elite move a certain way, so we had to go with what worked for Narro.”

“Wise.” Ford smiled. “He asked about you.”

“Did you pass him a note in gym class?” She looked at him with raised brows.

“He’s interested in you.”

“If I shift while on top of him, I will crush him. Dark Elite or no. I weigh close to two thousand pounds when shifted, so unless there is an alpha who can manage that, I am

not interested.”

Ford blinked. “Right. So, solid gold?”

“Gold encrusted. I am still stab-proof, fall-proof, and I don’t need to breathe underwater.” She chuckled. “Frankly, I am terrified of meeting the alpha who is counterpart to that.”

Ford blinked. “Yes, I am drawing a mental image and can see your point. Do you know where you were when you activated?”

“This doesn’t seem like a group conversation.”

Dexter grinned. “He’s just going to tell us later.”

Haravin wiped a hand over her face. “Yes. Okay. Five years ago, I was in a museum. There was a group of people in suits near a new exhibit. One of the guys backed into me, I fell on my ass, and he helped me up. When I sat on one of the benches, it cracked under me, so I jumped up and ran. I was able to control things for the most part, and then I heard about the book club. I wasn’t sure that I qualified, but they helped me figure out what I could do, and then I got the job here.”

Argus asked, “Which museum?”

“That big one with the giant fish fountain downtown.”

“Uh-huh. And what time of year?”

“August. Why?”

He smiled. “Nothing. Just making some notes.”

Dexter cleared his throat. “Will you show me how to dance now?”

“Sure. We had better practice on the stone.”

Dexter grinned. “Sound thinking.”

They got outside, and she said, “Who is going to lead?”

“Can you teach me both?”

She grew a foot and a half and nodded. “Yes, I can. First, I will lead, and then you will know what you should be doing. Okay?”

He nodded, and she started a slow song to get the general feel of things. They went on to some songs he had picked, and she changed size to match the person he imagined he would dance with. They danced for a few hours, and then she had to call a halt. “Sorry, Dexter. I have to head home.”

“I don’t see why you don’t live in. All the others have.”

“Because I need time without people, and someone is always at my door wanting to chat.”

He smiled. “You are a very good listener.”

“I know. Now, practice on your own or practice with family. I will see you tomorrow morning.”

She double-checked the kitchen and waved goodnight to the pile of bodies tangled in the living area, the babies held carefully by the fathers, and the omegas cuddled on the floor.

She was out the door and on the road in ten minutes. She yawned. It had been an exhausting day.

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Haravin went through the next two weeks in her normal routine but then came the most dreaded day of all. She had the afternoon off to have her annual checkup.

She went and saw her doctor and got the bloodwork done through meditation and calm that let the needle penetrate her skin. As soon as the needle was withdrawn, there was a gold flash, and she quickly covered her elbow with gauze. “Got it. Thank you.”

The tech smiled. “You left a urine sample?”

“Yup.”

“Great. You are free to go.”

She smiled and grabbed her purse, walking through downtown and getting herself some ice cream because she had been a good girl to do personal maintenance. She looked at her fingers. Maybe she could get a manicure in before she returned to work the following day.

She hummed to herself and walked over the bridge, where she found out she couldn’t drown. She had sat at the bottom of the river for two hours before she had walked out and returned home. It seemed that life had something in mind for her, and death wasn’t in the cards.

Haravin walked slowly, and when she got her ice cream, she looked to see how far she had gotten and grinned. The museum. It had started everything.

She worked on her ice cream and smiled at the security guard. “Can I bring this in?”

He nodded. “It’s fine as long as you don’t touch the exhibits.”

She beamed. “Thank you.”

It wasn’t fair. She had probably urged him to break a few rules, but it was a very nice cone, and she didn’t want to waste it. Coaxing people to let her get her way wasn’t something she did often, but today, she wanted her ice cream cone.

She paid for entry and, once again, got her way. She only had about ten minutes with her cone left, so she licked and walked through the exhibits and past other folk who had the afternoon to spend in a museum.

Haravin walked and saw the same exhibit that had been there that fateful day. She stared at the objects from the Wonder Islands and admired the jewels, the throne, and the examples of clothing made of surprisingly fine-woven cloth.

A voice spoke from behind her. “Are you supposed to be eating that in here?”

She winced. “Technically, no, but I asked when I came in, and they let me.” She turned and blinked. Face-to-face with an obvious omega with rich brown skin and icy white eyes. The dark blond hair was cute. Diamonds marched on the outside of his ear, and he wore a necklace with one large stone at the base of his throat.

She absently ran her tongue around the edge of the ice cream, and he blinked. She blushed. “Damn. I didn’t mean to do that. I will throw it out.”

She took a few steps toward the outer gallery, and he caught her arm. He pulled her in close and smiled. “It would be a shame to waste it.”

He leaned forward and licked it, raising dark brows. “Huh. That’s really good.”

He leaned in again and swiped a huge dent in it.

“Hey.” She laughed and tried to keep up, and then they were in a lick fight and only paused when it was down to the cone.

A deep voice muttered, “What the actual fuck.”

The omega with her laughed. “That was fun. Where did you get the ice cream?”

“Out front. Kiosk on the left.”

“Thank you, miss. I am guessing that you know an omega?”

“A few.”

“That explains your lack of hesitation and your defense of your territory.”

“Yeah, well, I am about to do some obscene things to destroy this cone, so I will be on my way. Will you relax your grip?”

He blinked and let her go. “So sorry.”

She warily slid past the equally dark man who had ocean-blue eyes. “Have a nice afternoon.”

She headed to the hub, destroying her cone from the top down in a manner both violent and suggestive. Once she was done, she wiped her hands on her shirt and tiptoed by the gallery again, and to her shock, the museum guards and curators were removing the exhibit.

She slumped. Damn. She had loved staring at that exhibit. It was so soothing. She walked toward them and asked one of the guards, “Where is it going?”

One of the curators turned and said, “It was on loan, and the royal family of the Wonder Islands has recalled it.”

“Oh. They still have a royal family?”

“They do. They were just here.” He smiled.

“Oh. Sorry to disturb you.”

“No problem.”

She turned and left before he could ask her if she wanted to go for coffee. The effect she had on men was general fascination. They wanted to get close but didn’t know why.

Haravin looked over the artwork and the other exhibits, including one from the Emerald Islands. It was there that she ran into the looming alpha and ice cream-stealing omega.

She turned on her heel and was about to leave. They had been cuddling, and she didn’t want to interfere.

“Miss. Come back.” The low voice sent little ripples down her spine, but she just calmed herself.

“Yes? Sorry. I didn’t want to interrupt.”

The omega smirked. “If people walked off every time we cuddled, we would be alone

constantly.”

“Of course.” She folded her hands in front of her.

The alpha asked, “Do you know where this place is?” He showed her Ford’s address on his phone.

“Oh, certainly. It’s fifteen minutes from here. Are you driving, or do you have a driver?”

The omega smiled. “We have a driver.”

“Just tell him to go to omega alley or omega lane. It’s the big house with red flowers in the front and statues of cats on the drive.”

He stared at her. “You have been there.”

“Uh, I have temped there. They have a lot of parties and are always looking for domestic staff.”

The omega smiled. “You can come with us and show us, then the car will take you where you want to go.”

“Oh. I couldn’t. I mean, the directions are clear.”

The omega curled up against her. “Please?”

She sighed. “When do you need to be there?”

“Any time.” The omega leaned in and began to scent her surreptitiously.

“Okay, I will just go to the restroom and then meet you... where?”

They looked at each other, and the alpha said, “Here.”

“Fine. If you aren’t here when I come back, I will just leave and wish you a very pleasant day.”

She nodded and eased away from the omega, who looked like he wanted to start licking her.

She pulled out her phone and texted the entire pride. Who is expecting visitors from the Wonder Islands? They are going to be at the house in twenty minutes.

Ford answered. Geez. Sorry. I know this is your day off. Can you bring them in and get them cocktails or something? Make them comfortable.

Dude, you owe me another day off. So far, this one has been weird.

Yes, ma’am.

She got to the bathroom and did what she had come there to do. Arousal and bladder issues felt the same, so she just took care of the options.

She washed her hands and wished it was a perfumed soap, but it wasn’t. After having her doctor fishing around in her vagina, her body was defending itself against intrusion by giving her body a power wash. The lube was annoying and sticky.

Haravin cleaned up and returned to the exhibit. She sighed in relief when they weren’t there. Not wanting to court disaster, she followed the familiar path to the exit. She left the museum, smiling and waving at the people who were smiling at her and walked down the long path toward the street.

She texted Ford, I lost them, or they lost me.

Shit. Can you get home and greet them?

Olivia is home. She can greet them.

Olivia piped in. Olivia has another chapter to go, and Ambrose is out ordering dinner for tonight.

Fuck. I will be there as soon as I can get a cab.

Thank you. She could almost see Ford's smug face.

She brought up her cab app and was about to summon a vehicle when a hand cupped her elbow.

She turned toward the alpha touching her, and her blood ran cold. "What do you want, Mark?"

"I need to talk to you, Harvey."

"Not today. I have to go to work."

"Tomorrow then. It's important." He smiled.

"Right. Whatever."

"Miss!" The alpha's voice boomed.

She looked toward him, desperation in her mind, and she turned back to Mark. "I have to go. Say goodbye to Tim for me."

“You mean hello.”

“Whatever.” She walked determinedly toward the alpha, leaving Mark behind.

She didn’t look back.

The alpha sighed. “We decided to follow your example, but you are very quick.”

She shrugged. “I work for a living. No time to dawdle.”

He nodded. “This way to our vehicle.”

She walked next to him, extending her stride to match his.

The limo was waiting, and when the alpha opened the door for her, she realized that she was just blindly getting into a vehicle with strangers. She glanced back and saw Mark. She dove into the limo.

Haravin verified the address with the driver, and then she sat back and rubbed her temples.

The omega lunged toward her and pressed his nose into her neck. “You smell of fear.”

“Yeah. Little bit. I wasn’t expecting to run into him... ever.”

“An ex-lover?” The alpha looked disapproving.

“No. Ex-dance partner. Ex-best friend. Ex-guy sleeping with my roommate and telling everyone he was sleeping with me because Timmins hadn’t been confirmed as an omega yet. That kind of ex.”

“Timmins is the omega?”

“Yes, he is. Don’t get me wrong, they are perfect for each other, but he didn’t have to drag me into his affairs in the public eye. My parents disowned me because of the affair.”

The omega was an inch from her and said, “Ouch. You smell good. Like dessert.”

She looked at him, her eyes going hard and emerald. “Do you climb over all betas, or am I special?”

“Oh, with eyes like that, I think you are very special.”

She blinked, and her eyes were normal. “Sorry, didn’t mean to flash you.”

“You know, I think you did.” He tapped her chin.

The alpha was scowling darkly but didn’t say anything.

The omega lay against her and cuddled up on the bench seat.

“I am not sure that your alpha will appreciate beta scent on you. It will probably throw off his groove.”

The omega snorted. “Nothing throws off his groove.”

She swallowed, and silence was in the vehicle for the additional twelve minutes it took to get to the house.

The omega blinked. “Are we here?” He rubbed his chin along her shoulder.

“We are here. Ford has asked me to greet you and get you settled.”

The alpha sat up in surprise. “You?”

“Housekeeper. Today was my day off.” She eased the omega to a sitting position and slid toward the door.

The driver opened the door, and she darted past the alpha, who had been trying to grasp her.

She walked to the house, nodded to security, opened the door, and inclined her head. “May I get you a beverage or something to eat?”

The omega smiled. “Ice cream?”

She nodded. “Bowl or cone?”

“Cone, please. One for him, too. He’s a bit grumpy, but that came with the crown. I am around to lighten him up.”

“Oh, excellent. Chocolate or vanilla?”

“Surprise me.”

“Strawberry it is.”

She put the small stand out, put a cone in each, and loaded each cone with a scoop of vanilla, chocolate, and strawberry she had made the previous week. She handed the omega the first and the alpha the second.

He examined it, sniffed it, and then took a long lick. He grinned. “It’s good.”

“Would you like to sit out on the patio and just relax until everybody gets home? It will be in the next thirty minutes or so.”

The alpha nodded. “Please show us where we can relax.”

Haravin walked out to the back patio and the conversation areas that Olivia had installed. “Here you are. Is there anything I can get you?”

The omega patted the seat next to him. “Please remain with us.”

Haravin thought about what she could be doing, but if Ambrose was picking up food, there wasn’t anything for her to do except set the table.

“I am sorry that no one is here yet.”

The alpha continued licking his ice cream cone. It looked tiny in his hand. “We are hours early.”

The omega pulled her down to sit next to him. He offered her some of his ice cream. She licked delicately at the strawberry and smiled. “That one turned out pretty good.”

“You made this?” The omega stared.

“Sure. It isn’t hard. It’s just milk and cream and eggs and sugar and other stuff.”

He turned the cone and licked where her tongue had just been. She blushed.

They shared the cone one lick at a time, and when Ford arrived, she was beet red and jerked away from the omega she was curled up with.

Ford chuckled. “It seems I arrived too soon.”

She got up, nodded to them both, and left the back patio. She looked to Ford. “How many are expected for dinner?”

He paused. “I didn’t ask you to host them in order to trap you.”

“It’s fine. How many?”

“Nine and the babies if you will stay here.”

She paused. “No clever jokes?”

“No. Why were you curled up with him?”

“He asked me to and used that stupid omega charm.”

Ford grinned. “The one that makes you tell me to take my pouting face and shove it up my ass?”

“Yes. That one. Who are they anyway?”

“Oh, The alpha is Kekoa, the king of the Wonder Islands, and the omega is Alohi.”

“Oh. Delightful. Well, that explains why they were at that exhibit.”

“Exhibit?”

“I ran into them at the museum. I was trying to retrace my steps and that was the first time I have had a day off and in the right area during open hours.”

“How was your medical appointment? Are you close to a heat?”

“It was an annual physical. The gyno part is basic and only takes a minute. My ovulation status isn’t an issue. No one cares.”

Alohi wandered in with a smile. “I am mildly interested. So, are you the one Ford called us for?”

She turned scarlet. “Ford.”

“Olivia said I could.”

The omega in question had been coming into the kitchen, but she changed direction and made a break for it.

“Come back here, Olivia,” Haravin barked.

Olivia slunk back into the kitchen.

“I am sorry. I should have told you, but they were on the way so fast, I wasn’t sure how to bring it up. They met the criteria.”

“Uh-huh. I don’t know how even to bring this up.”

Kekoa stood behind Alohi and said, “The exhibit was being set up. A woman with wide eyes was behind me, and when I took a step back, I knocked her over. I set you on a bench, and there was a tremendous crack.”

“Right. That was me changing.”

Alohi smiled. “You change shape?”

“Yeah, but I won’t do it in here.”

“Why not?” Kekoa asked.

“I would drop into the basement.” She sighed. “Do you want to see it? This way.”

She walked back out on the stone of the patio and felt her clothing seams pop as she grew, and her eyes showed her the world from a different angle.

She looked at them, and Kekoa was still slightly taller than she was. She knew that because he walked up to her and smiled. “Hello, treasure.”

“Hello, Your Majesty.”

“Are you heavy?”

“Very.”

He smiled and silvered over with onyx hair and diamond-clear eyes. He spoke slowly. “Me, too.”

She would have blushed, but the gold didn’t do that.

Alohi was staring with his eyes wide. “Wow. You two are like the myth.”

Kekoa smiled. “I suppose we are.”

There was a crack, and the stone under their feet gave way.

She dropped back into her daily wear and apologized to Ford. “I am so sorry.”

He waved it off. “It’s fine, but I am mourning the chance to watch you square off against Benjiro.”

She smiled slightly.

Kekoa smiled. “May we talk with you for a bit?” He had resumed his normal ridiculous proportions.

Alohi looked at her with wide eyes. “Please?”

She frowned. “Fine.”

They walked back to the seating area, and she sat in a separate chair until Alohi’s eyes welled up. “Don’t you like me anymore?”

She snorted and got up, settling against him until he put his head on her shoulder. There was nothing like being the comfort object of a man her own size.

Kekoa asked, “You are in good health?”

“Yup. Fit as any beta out there.”

“Have you been sexually tested?”

She frowned. “I don’t follow.”

“Disease tests?”

“Oh. Unnecessary.”

He scowled. “Necessary.”

“I haven’t ever...”

He blinked and leaned back. “Oh. But you are not young.”

“Betrayal while young leads to caution when older.” She shrugged. “I just never felt the need.”

Alohi lifted his head and stared at her. “Never?”

“Never. Not once.” She shrugged again. “It’s never come up.”

Kekoa nodded. “Please be tested.”

She opened her mouth and then closed it with a snap. “I hope you have patience. It takes me three weeks to get an appointment with my doctor.”

He scowled and looked at Ford. “What are the options?”

“The McKenna Clinic. They have many betas going to them.”

Kekoa got his phone out, looked something up, and then made a call. He indicated that he wanted a full panel workup on his beta. He listened and nodded. “Tomorrow at ten.”

She felt ill and nodded. It was hard enough to get her own doctor to use the smallest size. She was pretty sure that an omega-focused facility wasn’t going to have the right gear for her.

Alohi said, “It’s fine, and you only have to do this once. Then you can be with us and won’t have to worry.”

She sat there with Alohi on her shoulder, picked at her dinner, and Kekoa was frowning at her. She excused herself after dinner and called her cab home.

Haravin waited outside and jumped when she heard, “Leaving without saying goodbye?”

Alohi and Kekoa were standing in the doorway, and she checked. The phone showed her car was five minutes out.

“Um. There isn’t much to say. I have to find myself at McKenna Clinic tomorrow morning at ten. Ford and the pride are getting their own breakfast.”

Alohi frowned. “If you are worried, it’s just a swab and bloodwork, and you are good. The internal exam is easy.”

Haravin dug her nails into her palm. “I have a different experience. It’s painful, humiliating, and the helpful comments from medical staff are mortifying.”

She dragged in a deep breath. “But it’s fine. I will get this over with, and then we can discuss what happens next.”

Alohi asked, “Do you have a passport?”

“Yes.”

“Good. That’s one thing we don’t have to mess with.”

Her vehicle pulled up, and she darted to the door. She yanked it open and got inside. She buckled in and said, “To the address, please.”

“The Monarch Hotel?”

“Yes, please. One stop at the apartment on the way. I just have to grab a bag, and I will be right out.”

“Sure.”

He drove her home, and she grabbed a few changes of clothing and extra shoes, plus her passport. She returned to the car in four minutes, and they were on their way.

She didn't know how Mark had found her, but she didn't trust him. She would never make that mistake again.

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Haravin heard a knock at her door at three in the morning. She walked to the keyhole, and her guts turned to ice. She called security and said calmly, “There is a man knocking on my door. I need him removed. He is my ex and means me harm.”

“Yes, ma’am. We will send someone up there in the next ten minutes.”

The knocking resumed. “Harvey. Harvey, let me in. I just want you to have Tim’s baby. You know he can’t carry to term. So, we want you to be our surrogate. Then we can just be the three of us until the baby is born, and maybe if there is another one that Tim wants, you can carry that, too.”

“Hire a surrogate, Mark.”

“No. They are expensive. You are free. You are also in really good shape.”

“No, Mark. I am not going to carry a baby for you and Tim. Get someone else.”

He growled low. “Don’t be that way.”

“Don’t be an ass. The growl doesn’t work on me anymore. I am immune.”

He punched the door, and she stepped back. He punched again, and she was reaching for the phone when it rang. “Ma’am. You need to stop whatever you are doing. People are complaining.”

“I have already called security. My ex is outside my room, punching my door and refusing to leave.” She sighed. “I did not invite him.”

The thudding picked up tempo, and her door began to bend.

“Fine, ma’am. Security is coming right up.”

“Great, and check your call logs before someone deletes them. I called five minutes ago.”

The door shattered inward, and Haravin screamed as a hand wrenched the hotel phone out of her hand.

Mark grabbed her neck and held her in the air. His veins were distended, his neck wide, and his face flushed. “Have my baby!”

She saw movement in the hall and said, “No!” She couldn’t get a lot of energy behind it. He was slowly strangling her.

A dark shape walked into the room behind Mark and got him in a headlock. Surprisingly, he didn’t drop her but rather took her to the floor when his knees buckled.

The figure punched him in the head, and he went limp, letting Haravin roll away, coughing and gasping for air.

She crouched on the floor, and security arrived. When oxygen came a little easier, she looked up and blinked. “Oh, hey, Kekoa. Um, thanks for that.”

He looked at her in surprise. “It sounded like someone was being murdered in here. Why didn’t you change?”

“I don’t know what the floor is rated for.” She shrugged.

Security dragged Mark out. She asked, “Which one of you got the bribe?”

One of the guys darted their gaze around. She muttered, “Classy.”

The others looked at him and hauled the rage-swollen alpha out of the room and down to the main floor where police were coming.

Kekoa tilted her head to the side and looked at her neck. “The swelling is increasing.”

“Yes, it is.”

The night audit came in and looked around. “You need another room.”

She croaked. “Probably. How did he find me?”

She looked at the clothing she was wearing, and there on the arm of the blouse was a tiny tracker. She croaked again. “I am stupid.”

The night audit said, “Please come downstairs, and I will get you a new room. Bring your things.”

She nodded, threw her blouse into the garbage, and tossed everything else in her bag.

Kekoa said, “What are you doing?”

“Packing my stuff.”

“They should send a bellman.”

“Not for betas. I am just going to get a new room. Thanks for the save. I will see you in a few hours.”

He paused. "When you get your new room, come to room twenty-twenty and knock."

"Why?"

"Because we have an extra room, and you should not be alone."

"I am usually fine."

He sighed. "Go get your new room."

"Yes, Your Majesty." She put her bag over her shoulder, headed downstairs, and got room five-seventeen. She bit her lip, and when she got in the elevator, her finger hesitated over the five and then moved to press twenty.

She called herself sixteen types of stupid, but she would at least be able to sleep without worrying about Mark getting loose.

She stood in front of twenty-twenty and knocked softly. The door opened, and Kekoa stood aside to let her walk in.

"Come in." He walked her past a closed door, and a second, smaller room was behind the next door. "Alohi sleeps like the dead. I do not."

"So, you heard the thumping from twelve floors away?"

"Sure. We can call it that."

She swallowed painfully and went to the bathroom, cooling a small towel and using it as a compress.

Haravin put the compress on her throat and turned to see Kekoa standing in the

doorway. “Thank you so much for your help. I think Alohi will freak out if you are not there when he wakes.”

“He will be fine. Are you all right?”

She shrugged. “I have been attacked by that particular alpha before. The last time was when I told him that his screwing around was going to hurt his partner. Based on what he was ordering me to do, Timmins is sterile or can’t carry. They want me to carry for them. I declined.”

“You want children?”

“Children, yes. An alpha, no. I would rather go the IVF route.”

“Why?”

“Because I don’t crave sex. I don’t seek it out. I don’t understand the fuss. It traces back to before we had contact. It was what made it so easy for Mark and Timmins to use me to hide their relationship.”

His astonished expression made her smile.

She pulled the bedding down and kicked her slippers off, easing herself into the sheets. “Good night. I have my alarm set for tomorrow. I won’t miss the appointment.”

He walked over to her and kissed her forehead. “Sleep well.”

“Thanks for the save.”

He nodded but didn’t reply.

The door was nearly closed, and she kept the compress around her neck until she fell asleep.

She woke feeling very warm with an arm around her waist. She turned, saw Alohi, and sighed. She checked her phone, and she still had twenty minutes until it was time to get up.

Haravin also saw several missed calls. She listened to the messages, and it was the police. She returned a call and spoke softly. “Hello, I am looking for Sargent Agerton?”

She waited and was transferred.

“Miss Dillard?”

“Yes. I decided to go somewhere safe.”

“The hotel said they had gotten you a new room.”

“Yes, but he found me once and bribed security to ignore me, so I did not trust them. One of your officers should have taken my statement when they were here. Is he still in custody?”

“No, ma’am. He has been released.”

“Of course. Well, I will get a medical report on the damage to my neck and hip today and send it to attach to the police report. Wait. Is there a police report?”

“No, ma’am. There is a drunk and disorderly report, and the hotel is dropping charges in return for repairs.”

She touched her throat and said, “What if I want to press charges?”

“You will have to come in.”

“Fine. I have an appointment at ten, but I will come in after that. Can you send me a reference number?”

“Of course. I will text it to you.”

“Thank you. How did you get my number?”

“From the hotel.”

“Of course. Right. I will be in touch.”

She hung up and waited. When the text came through, she used the number to make a report and take a selfie of her neck damage.

Alohi asked sleepily, “What are you doing?”

“Documenting my injuries, saving them to the cloud in a few places. Mark has a skill for making evidence disappear.”

She finished saving the images and began making a police report. Saving and screenshotting it, then going through all of her backup procedures.

Alohi wrapped his arms around her waist. “I am very angry that you were hurt.”

“I am not a fan myself. I need to take a shower and get ready for the doctor’s visit.”

“You are having breakfast, right? This place has a great breakfast.”

“It wouldn’t be wise. I have an idea of what’s about to happen. I will eat lunch if I can.” She saw his disappointment. She smiled. “I can have juice.”

Alohi blinked his cool crystal eyes. He smiled. “I can work with that.”

She stroked his forehead and croaked, “Why are you here?”

“I thought you needed a hug.”

She chuckled and winced. “Well, I am getting ready for my appointment. Where will you be?”

“In the dining room. I will order the smoothies now.”

She grabbed her bag and tapped his arms to release them from her waist.

He sighed and rolled to his back, stretching under the sheets. It was an interesting sight, but she had to get into the shower. She had to leave for her appointment in forty-five minutes.

Clean and with her hair back in a ponytail, she walked into the large area of the hotel room, and Alohi smiled and beckoned her over. Keko was sipping coffee and reading his tablet. He didn’t look up when he said, “Good morning, Haravin.”

“Good morning, Your Majesty.”

Alohi pulled a seat in next to him and smiled. “Sit close. I will show you what I ordered.”

He walked her through three smoothies that he had ordered for her, and they taste-tested things. She kept an eye on the clock, and when her alarm went off, she stopped

sipping the pineapple smoothie and stood up. “Thank you very much for breakfast. I am heading to the police station after the medical check, so you probably won’t see me again.”

Alohi teared up. “You don’t want to see us?”

She moved to calm him. “Of course I do. I am just not expecting you to shift your schedule around for me.”

Kekoa said, “We are taking you to the medical centre.”

Haravin winced. “You don’t have to.”

Alohi nodded. “He wants to make sure you go.”

She sighed and agreed. “Fine. Then I can have a bit more smoothie.”

Alohi curled against her arm and rubbed his head against her. He was acting like a giant kitten. Haravin ran her fingers through his hair, smiling at the feel of a light product.

“Why do you keep your hair in a ponytail?” he murmured.

“Because I am a housekeeper; we need to keep our hair out of our faces and out of the food.”

“You aren’t going back to work today.” Kekoa frowned.

“Probably not. I expect to be arrested. That is the kind of thing that Mark arranges.”

“Why does he want you so much?”

“Oh, well, everyone kept gushing that we were perfect. My friend Timmins was a blooming omega, but he was a slow manifestation. When Timmins started going into heat, Mark was on him constantly. Unfortunately for Timmins, Mark had already been screwing around with a number of contestants at the dance competitions. He got chlamydia, gave it to Timmins, and effectively sterilized him.”

Kekoa looked at her. “Did you get treated?”

“No. Why would I? I wasn’t Mark’s lover. I wasn’t anyone’s.” She rubbed her forehead and shrugged. “The exam will prove my situation.”

Alohi frowned. “I don’t understand.”

“I didn’t need sex, so I didn’t pursue it. That simple.”

They went a little quiet, and when Kekoa got to his feet, they were all on their way. Everyone moved when he moved.

They headed down to the main floor. The limo was visible through the heavy glass panels. Haravin was getting several stares, and Kekoa was getting dark looks, but she paused and spoke to the staff, explaining the situation in four sentences. The counter staff began whispering, and the gossip mill began to work for Kekoa. He paused and looked at her. “What did you do?”

“They thought you had done this, so I disabused them of the notion and explained who it was and who they were bribed by.”

“Thank you, but it wasn’t necessary.”

“It was. This is a very connected city. If you ever plan on returning, you don’t want woman-beater attached to your name.”

He nodded, and the driver opened the door. “You are very sensible.”

“Yes, I hear that a lot.”

Alohi dove into the car, and Haravin went in next. Kekoa was the final, and he settled in as the door closed and began to work on his tablet.

Haravin was nervous. After yesterday, she knew there was going to be blood, pain, and embarrassment.

They got to the centre, and the lower floors catered to betas, while the upper focused on omega. She walked up to the reception area and spoke softly. The woman nodded. “Room six-oh-three. Your alpha and omega can be with you.”

Haravin blinked. It was an upper floor.

She went into the elevator, and her companions were behind her. She pressed the floor and locked her fingers in front of her. Fear was pouring off her, and she went to the room and swallowed when they followed her in.

An alpha doctor came in and smiled. “Haravin? I am Dr. Oriel. So, it says here I am doing a full panel and check on you.”

“Yes, ma’am.” She tried to turn off the fear, but it didn’t help.

“All right. Well, put on this gown, and I will be back in a minute. Sir, may I speak with you?” The doctor looked at Kekoa, and they spoke outside.

Alohi asked, “Why are you so scared?”

She removed her clothing and put on the wrap. “Because it is going to hurt.”

“You have had scans before. Tests.”

“Yes. And they hurt.”

“I will hold your hand.” He chuckled.

The doctor came back in with Kekoa, who was scowling. His scowl was directed at her, and she flinched. She got up onto the exam bench and sat with her knees closed.

“First, I am going to make a note of this mark. With the red and darkening purple, it was this morning?”

“Yes. Around three. An ex-dance partner of mine came in and wanted my cooperation. I declined. He grabbed me. He did that thing alphas do when they are really mad.”

The doctor’s hands were careful, but a few sensitive spots made her flinch. “Your voice will be rough for a day or so. Are you on any painkillers?”

“No, ma’am. I didn’t think to grab any before I headed out.”

“Well, we will get you some before you leave.” She smiled. “Well, turn to the stirrups, and we will get the worst part over.”

Haravin nodded and did the scooting when required. “Ma’am. Can you use the smallest speculum, please?”

There was a knowing chuckle. “No need to be shy.”

“Please.”

Oriel snorted softly but rummaged around in her drawer. There was the sound of opening plastic wrap, and then Haravin felt the pressure on her opening. She turned her head away from the fascinated alpha and omega and tried to pant through the pain. She did pretty well until the medical device was ratcheted open. The sob was unmistakable, and the scent of blood filled the space.

The doctor went, “Oh, shit. Okay, Haravin, I am going to go as fast as I can.”

Haravin said, “Just do it all so this doesn’t have to happen again.” She kept her breathing shallow, but her face was turned toward the wall.

The doctor moved swiftly and released the speculum, removing it carefully. A cool compress was held against her, and Haravin swallowed. “If you could just get the other part out of the way, please.”

“Are you sure? You can come back when you are healed.”

“If you think I am coming back, you are fucking kidding yourself. Let’s just learn what we need to learn. The blood won’t interfere with it.”

“I am not comfortable with this.”

“Great, me neither.”

The doctor got the portable ultrasound and prepped the wand. “This will be cold.”

“Great.” Whatever else she was going to say was lost in a sharp inhalation.

There were images taken, and her ovaries were pronounced fit and healthy. They had the pictures to prove it.

The room was silent, and the doctor cleaned her up and then applied a new compress, checking the bleeding.

“Okay, sweetheart. You can sit up, and oh.”

The doctor looked at her face, and her red eyes and tear-stained face were unmistakable. The doctor dropped professionalism and pulled her in for a hug.

Haravin held back until the doctor murmured. The floodgates broke, and she wailed with an age of pain at the hands of alphas and no one offering her comfort. Others took comfort from her, but no one ever gave it.

Dr. Oriel finally leaned back and gave her two lollipops. “You were a brave girl, Haravin. It’s done. You are good. Everything is healthy and pink, and your follicles look great.” She stroked her cheek. “How often do you get your period?”

“Twice a year. I just had it.”

“Then, you are out of pace. You have a few days until ovulation.”

“Sucks to suck, I guess.” She slumped. “So, I can go now?”

“Do you have a pad?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“The bleeding has slowed. How do you feel?”

“Like raw hamburger.”

The doctor winced. “I know. I am so sorry. With an alpha and omega with you, I

thought you were joking.”

She nodded. “I know that’s what you thought. Everyone out, please. I need to get dressed.”

Alohi frowned. “I will help you.”

“It isn’t necessary.”

“It is necessary. Kekoa, we will be out in a minute.”

Kekoa nodded, and he and the doctor left when she gathered her samples. She said something about the lab and results in the next twenty-four hours, but Haravin was trying to figure out how to get into her purse.

She eased off the bed and winced when she peeled the stuck paper from the back of her thighs. Alohi silently moved to get some wet paper towels and cleaned her up with the warm strokes that removed the blood.

He spoke softly. “We didn’t know.”

“I told you.”

He froze. “You did. Kekoa didn’t believe you.”

“I know that.”

“You are very pretty.”

“I really am not. Or I wasn’t. Now I am just me.” She got her pad out of her purse and attached it to her underwear.

Alohi cleaned her up with fresh towels, and he held one against her. “It’s nearly stopped.”

“Yeah, until I start walking. Then it is going to continue as I move for a day or two.” She started getting dressed.

“You knew.”

“Yup. I also knew that the smallest unit she could find would still be oversized for me. You go long enough, and even a finger doesn’t fit.”

“Oh, that might be a problem. Kekoa is a little sudden with his attentions.”

She shivered and stepped into her shoes. “Then, he will either have to slow down, or it will be a battle of the metal monsters. Or he could just consider me a missed match and move on with his life. He has you; he’s the king of a fucking set of islands; he doesn’t need a petrified virgin whose only claim to fame is turning into a statue.”

“I don’t think so. I know he doesn’t show much, but he really likes you. He thought it was funny the way you put Ford in his place and called Olivia to task.” He helped arrange her hair. “He also thinks it’s cute the way you deal with me.”

“I just have to sit still and let you cuddle on me. It doesn’t take a lot of effort.”

He smiled. “A lot of folks don’t have patience for omegas. We are very needy creatures.”

She straightened her shoulders when she wanted to curl into a ball. Her neck ached, and her sex was shrieking in pain. She walked to the door, and Alohi opened it for her.

Haravin looked at Kekoa and the doctor. They had been in deep conversation. “Next stop, the police station because this day doesn’t suck quite enough.”

Alohi gripped her wrist. “You are waiting for us.”

“Why?”

“I am guessing that your ex is a pusher. He convinces people that he is reasonable and correct.”

“That sounds like the weight on my thoughts. Right, so up against that. When we get to the police station, don’t freak out.” Alohi was walking with her.

“Why would I freak out?”

“I am about to look all weak and helpless and project it. It might be disconcerting. I am going to cry and snifle and make a scene.”

Kekoa spoke slowly. “I look forward to seeing this.”

They made their way down to the main floor. They got into the limo, and she curled by herself up against the wall. The next agonizing appointment was just ahead.

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Walking into the station, she felt like a whipped dog. Haravin quietly spoke while she talked to the desk sargent, asking for the man from earlier.

The man stepped out and smiled. “Miss Dillard? I am Sargent Agerton. Oh, god. Your neck. Was that... was that done last night?”

She handed him the medical report and croaked. “It was confirmed that the bruising is less than twelve hours old. I also have images from just after the attack and when I woke up this morning.”

He nodded. “Come with me, and I will get your statement.”

Kekoa and Alohi stepped forward. Agerton looked at them.

“Who are they?”

“This is Kekoa. He was the alpha who took Mark down and got him to let me go. That is his omega, Alohi.”

He frowned. “He didn’t mention there were witnesses. Please, come to the boardroom.”

Haravin focused on slumping and looking weak. She also broadcast injury and innocence.

They were seated, and Agerton and another detective began to take notes as they asked for her story and questioned her.

She told them when she had checked in and when the knocking began. Everything right up until she knocked on Kekoa's door.

"Miss Dillard, why did you go to Kekoa?"

"Um, nothing is certain yet, but I am being considered for the position as their beta. I went to the hotel in general because Mark called me and wanted me to meet him at my house tomorrow, which is today. He's a weaselly bastard from my past who gave his own omega chlamydia and sterilized him. Now he wants me to carry their child because Timmins doesn't trust anyone else, but I don't want any part of those two inside me." She shuddered and started crying. She squeaked, "Why won't they just leave me alone?"

The other investigator said, "He informed us you were an ex-lover."

"Never. Check that medical report. I haven't had sex with anyone. It's never been something that I went in for."

Alohi nodded. "We have time to ease her into our way of life, but her ex-dance partner has suddenly decided to take her back, and she doesn't want to go. So, we are not going to let him have her. If he wants a fight, he will take his life into his own hands."

Agerton smiled. "Omega is proud of his alpha. Cute."

Haravin pinched the bridge of her nose and croaked. "Kekoa grabbed a rut-crazed alpha with one hand and held him on the floor then convinced him to let me go. I was being strangled the whole time." She stretched her neck. "His nails cut in here and here."

They took photos, and she looked at them and said, "Have you guys run into alphas

who are pushers?”

The men paused, and Agerton asked, “What do you know about that?”

“Mark is one. He pushed anyone who got in his way. I am resistant to it, but I see it everywhere he has been. The security guards forgot that he had even been there when I was on the next elevator down at ten after three.” She sighed. “The lobby was going about things as if police and an alpha out of control hadn’t just been there.” She shrugged. “You may want to access the cloud backups before someone overwrites them.”

The detective nodded, and he tapped something into his phone. “I am just making notes for the warrant.”

“Great.”

Agerton smiled. “Miss, where can we reach you today?”

“My phone? Mark had a tracker that he attached to my shirt, but I left that in the garbage.”

Kekoa pulled her blouse out and handed it to the officer. “I retrieved it.”

They looked at the shirt in the plastic bag and stared. There was a smear of blood down the side of the neck and a clear handprint on the breast of the blouse.

Agerton looked at him and cleared his throat. “Sir, can you hold your hand next to the print?”

Kekoa smiled and held his hand next to the print. His hand was still considerably larger than the print Mark had left behind.

The guy nodded, and the detective took another picture.

Agerton sighed. “Well, in light of this, we will advise the hotel that they don’t have grounds to sue for damages.”

Kekoa scowled. “They wouldn’t dare. She called for help. Twice.”

“Once. The second time, they called me with a noise complaint when he was beating his way through the door.”

Agerton nodded. “Right. How did you keep such a precise timeline?”

“I have dealt with Mark before. Facts that can be backed up with phone records and security footage are all that works, and he knows it.” She put her hands on the table.

“Are we done? I am really not feeling well.”

“Uh, yes. Can we call with any additional questions?”

“Sure. Maybe eventually you can answer why you let a man who was trying to strangle me to death wander free while blaming me for the wreck he made of the door.” She pushed herself up and muttered, “So, attempted murder, attempted kidnapping, disturbing the peace, and vandalism. One of those has to stick.”

She clutched her purse and walked slowly out of the room. She projected what she felt. Pain, dejection, sorrow, loneliness, she let it all sweep through the police station in waves. Heads were turning toward her, and she showed the discomfort in her body as she moved. Doors were opened for her, and her elbow was supported whenever she passed someone.

When she got out the door, she shuddered, and Alohi walked next to her. Kekoa was at her back. “So, since I am done now, and I only got the hotel for one night, I guess I

will hear back from you when the test results are in.”

Alohi touched her hand, and she looked down at his hand against hers.

Her phone rang, and she moved slowly, answering it. “Mark. Fuck off and die.” She pushed speaker and listened to the roaring and screaming on the line.

When he calmed slightly, she said, “I would never be your surrogate. Pregnant betas with alpha partners need support from those partners. We all know that that isn’t what would happen. Hi, Tim.”

A more moderate tone said, “Hey, Harvey. Why won’t you help?”

“I am not dying for you, Tim. Your child isn’t worth my life. Also, no way in hell would I let anything that belonged to Mark inside me.”

“It was so long ago, can’t you just forgive? We were best friends.”

“Uh-huh. What have I been up to since then?”

“Oh, um.”

“Yes. That’s it. A friend would be mildly interested in my life after both my best buddies fuck off on me.”

“I am sorry about that.”

“Huh. First I have heard that. Better late than never. Well, bye.”

“Wait! Mark says it has to be you. He doesn’t trust anyone else. He thinks they will sleep around while pregnant.”

“Right. Because surrogates are generally betas with alphas and families. In that case, the alpha takes care of their beta, no matter whose child she is carrying.”

Tim paused. “Really?”

“Really. Now, imagine what it would do to me to be pregnant without a touch, a kind word, or someone to rub my shoulders or swollen feet because you know fucking well he would never take care of anyone but you. I wouldn’t make it through the pregnancy.”

Tim started crying with a hiccup in his voice. “We just want a baby.”

“Then go through a fertility clinic to get one. Leave me alone.”

“Yes, Harvey. I am sorry that we bothered you.”

“I am very sorry, too. Let this be the last time I hear from you.” She hung up.

She shuddered. “And that caps it. The only thing left on my bingo card is getting hit by a car or having a plumbing leak in my apartment.”

Haravin put her phone in her purse. She wiped her tears and exhaled slowly. Her groin felt hot and bruised, and she was hungry. “I am heading home to sit in a tub full of ice. Oh, maybe I could wake up without a kidney.”

She turned to the alpha looming behind her. “Well, I will hear from you later, or I won’t.” She was at a loss and said, “Thanks for the ride and the witnessing and the escort, I guess.”

“You are parting ways with us?” He raised his brows.

“I sort of have to. Out of clothing. I just wanted to get safe for a night, and today, I really need to rest, and I can do that best off my feet. Plus, I need painkillers, stat.”

She pulled her phone out again, went for her rideshare app, stepped away from the quiet Kekoa, and wobbled to the nearby bench.

She didn't sit. She held onto the back of the bench. Alohi came over to her, and she saw their limo was waiting for them. “We can take you home.”

“No. I am sure you had a schedule today. I am Shroedinger's beta right now. Not myself. Not yours. Definitely not Kekoa's. If he scowls any harder, my skin is going to fall off. I am sorry that my mark matches his. I don't want to be an inconvenience, and I have already given him PTSD.”

Kekoa scowled harder.

“Oh. Here's my ride. If I don't hear from you by the end of the week, I know that something went weird at the lab.”

She moved carefully to the rideshare, who got out to open her door. She slid in carefully. The door was closed, the address confirmed, and they were away.

* * * *

Alohi looked at his mate. “Why did we let her go?”

“I have her address. If she needs to be home to rest, she needs to be home to rest.”

They walked to their car and got in. Alohi looked at Kekoa. “What's really wrong?”

Kekoa's eyes were watery. “I ordered them to hurt her and then stood there and let

them do it.”

Alohi held him as Kekoa struggled with regret. “She told us, but she’s a stranger. There is no reason for us to trust her.”

Kekoa swallowed. “Except there is no reason not to trust her. Well, there is one. She’s gorgeous, graceful, and has a sense of humour.”

Alohi leaned back and looked Kekoa in the eye. “Those are reasons not to trust her?”

“You know how I feel about pretty women.” He exhaled and shuddered.

“Yes, yes, all vipers. How many of them turn into gorgeous gold statues?” He held Kekoa’s head between his hands.

“None. Do you think she will come with us?”

Alohi nodded. “I think she will. She has been taught about the marks and the matches they make. What we can do today is get her some things that she will find helpful.”

“Like what?”

Alohi leaned out and called to the driver. “Can we stop at the nearest sex shop?”

The driver said, “Nearest or best?”

Alohi nodded. “Best.”

“It’s an extra twenty minutes.”

“Fine. Let’s go.”

Alohi went back to Kekoa and grinned.

“Alo, where are we going?”

“To get her some presents for when she arrives on the island and maybe for the flight.”

Alohi looked at his mate and said, “Trust me. I have both your interests and hers firmly in mind, and I want to see if I can make your credit card cry. It’s a goal of mine.”

Kekoa cracked a slight smile. “Are you planning on buying her her own aircraft?”

“We might save that for her first anniversary.”

Kekoa sighed. “How do I make this right?”

“Well, you just deflowered a virgin from ten feet away, so you have weird alpha bragging rights.”

“Alo.” The warning in his voice was familiar to his omega.

“It will be fine. She’s a smart woman and very practical. There is only one thing that startled me about her.”

“What?”

“Well, she’s tough, right? Practical?”

“Yes.”

“Then why did she cry like a wounded child when the doctor held her? It’s very out of character.”

Kekoa paused as things began to click for him. “When she was crying, what did you see and hear?”

“An alpha comforting an upset, oh... omega. Holy shit. You don’t think...”

Kekoa sent a text to the only other person he knew who had a beta that acted like an omega.

A call started a moment later, and he answered. “Yes, Syar?”

“To be blunt, yes. Absolutely. Taller, stronger, and generally more emotionally stable, the beta-omegas are just the same as an omega. They are just infinitely more fun. Just ask Reynaldo.”

“He has no problem with her?”

“No, they regularly play hunting tag up into the hills and come back the next morning.” Syar chuckled. “Of course, I can feel everything they do through the links, so I can assure you they are both having a good time.”

“Did you have any trouble having sex with her?”

“A little. Ven had been assaulted, so she needed a lot of reassurance and lots of cuddles while she slept. We got her used to us one cuddle at a time. Getting her used to us was the hardest part. She didn’t want to intrude on our partnership. Betas have a pathological respect for couples. Don’t be surprised if she jumps out of bed to get away from you two. Just order her back to bed and pull her in.”

“I don’t think she would take kindly to that.”

“You will have to figure out what is right for her. And, it is unlikely that she will have a fast gestation like Ven does.”

“I am not counting on that, but your children are very cute.”

“Aw, thanks, Uncle Kekoa. Oh, what is your lady’s name? Ven might know her.”

“Her name is Haravin Dillard.”

“Ven is feeding the babies, so I will ask her in a few minutes.”

“Thank you. Any information I can get would be beneficial.”

He sighed off politely and looked to his omega. “I am trying.”

Alohi patted his leg. “It’s a start.”

His omega curled up against him, and he inhaled. Hmm. Neither of them had a trace of Haravin on them. They had been around her at close quarters, but neither of them had touched her. She had needed comfort, and neither of them had given it to her. She had lifted her little chin and walked out, apparently knowing that she had no source of comfort.

Alohi knew what his mate was thinking. “I can’t fathom being that alone.”

Kekoa wrapped his arm around his omega and soothed the agitation. Hopefully, the shopping therapy would help Alohi.

* * * *

Haravin hadn't been kidding about the ice bath. She needed to reduce the swelling, and her cool pads were already in the freezer. When she finished panting through the pain, and it subsided, she waited for her over-the-counter medication to kick in.

It took half an hour, but she felt less like she had gone on a slide made of cheese graters.

When she got out of the cold bath, she pulled on a sun dress without anything under it and went to lie down. The active bleeding was over. Now, it was just heat, swelling, and pain. Fantastic.

She sent Ford a text that she would be sick the following day, with her apologies. With the important things done, she crawled into bed and pulled the puffy duvet over her. Memories of Alohi curling up behind her in the morning flickered through her, and then she pushed them away. She would sleep better alone.

* * * *

Ford grinned and called Olivia. "Well, things must have gone well. Haravin took tomorrow off."

"Well, that's good. Was she excited?" Olivia was grinning; he could tell.

"She said she was sick and apologized."

The bubbly joy in their link fizzled. "What?"

"She said she was sick and that she was sorry. Wait. Now that I listen to it out loud, it isn't good."

"Can you watch the babies? I will head over to her place and check on her."

Ford frowned. "I can do it. The video is rendering."

"I think she would be more likely to talk to me, Ford. Omega or not, you are still a man."

"Fine, but take Ambrose."

"Fine. See you for dinner. Looks like you are cooking."

Ford blinked. "Shit. Gotta go."

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Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 3:23 am

Olivia knocked and said, “Haravin, it’s Olly.”

There was a sound from inside. “I will be there in a minute.”

Haravin opened the door and said, “Hey, Olly, come on in.”

Olivia was shocked. Haravin was white with grey around her lips and eyes. The pain in her expression was one that Olivia was familiar with.

“Oh, honey, sit down. What happened?”

Haravin sat, her sundress bagging around her, and a pillow pulled onto her lap. Haravin told her what had transpired.

Olivia covered her mouth. “Oh, no. Honey, what do you need?”

“I just need to lie down for twenty hours and keep cold compresses on my junk.”

Olivia said, “You have to come home.”

“No. Not my home. This is my home.”

Olivia looked around and finally took in the giant wall case full of trophies and ribbons. “Wow. You got all these?”

“Yes. With my dance partner. We were good.”

“Really good. Astonishingly good. Is this a national?”

“Yeah. I appreciate you coming down, Olly, but I will recover. I guess it had to happen eventually, but I always thought there would be another body involved.” She chuckled weakly.

Olly knelt in front of her. “Please. Please come home. It is no trouble. You have done so much for our family in the last few months. You even taught Dexter to dance. That must have been difficult.”

“He already had basics. He really wanted to learn to dance with Ambrose.”

Olly smiled. “He told me.”

“Of course.”

“Now, I am going to nag you again. Come home.”

Haravin looked mortified. “I can’t walk that far.”

“Oh. Too easy. Ambrose can carry you.” Olly grinned and went to the bedroom, gathering dresses and underwear with a few pairs of sandals. She grabbed Haravin’s purse and verified that the passport was inside along with identification and her cards.

“Okay, Haravin, as your employer, more or less, I am ordering you to come to our place to be set up in the guestroom and to remain there until your body doesn’t feel like raw meat.”

“I don’t want to be fussed over.”

“Well, I have already called Nora, and she’s willing to do a shift with you, helping

you navigate to the bathroom when I have to do stuff with the publicist.”

There was a soft knock, and Ambrose opened the door, smiling, “Hey, Haravin. I am going to pick you up very carefully.”

She nodded, and he followed up with very carefully picking her up, and when she whimpered, he paused. He set her down carefully and pulled Olly aside for a rapid conversation.

Olly swallowed. “Okay. Right. Haravin, do you remember which doctor you saw this morning?”

“Dr. Oriel. She was very nice.”

Ambrose nodded and walked into the bedroom, closing the door.

Olly took her hand and said, “Haravin, how long were you dancing?”

“Since I was a kid.”

“Have you ever gone in for any kind of surgery?”

Haravin frowned. “Yeah. I had my appendix out when I was thirteen. Why?”

“You had abdominal stitches?”

“No. But I had to move carefully for a while. I was back to normal dancing in two weeks.” Haravin asked, “Why?”

“Because Ambrose was there when they picked me up, and I had been sewn shut. I don’t think you were pulled all the way shut, but I think they narrowed you to stop

you from doing anything with any of the alphas around at the dance competitions.”

“Wait. How did he know?”

“He remembers the sounds I made. Apparently, they haunt him.”

Ambrose came back in. “The doctor is waiting at her office for us.”

Olly watched him carefully lift Haravin. “I will let Ford know.”

Haravin was blind with pain, and she tried to hold the sounds in. Instead of getting better, as soon as she had left the ice bath and cold compresses, the pain was so much worse.

Olly held her hand and stroked her head, nuzzling her cheek like she did at home. Haravin chuckled, and soon, they were at the centre. Ambrose picked her out of the car like she was made of glass, and he and Olivia escorted her to the building. They went up to the eighth floor. Even the pressure of the elevator hurt.

The doctor and a nurse were waiting. They sedated her, strapped her down, and then went looking.

Haravin sighed and pressed her thighs together with only a burning twinge. No more pain.

She sat up and looked around. “How did I get to the hotel?”

Olivia rushed in and crouched over her, stroking her hair back with tears in her eyes. She swallowed and smiled. “You owe Ambrose a pavlova. Ten stitches torn loose and hanging. Dr. Oriel had no reason to think they were there, so she wasn’t looking for them.”

“Well, three cheers for PTSD, I guess?”

“With me, they tried to sew me shut; with you, they were aiming to narrow you, so the damage was all the way up to your cervix.” Olly held her hand. “Well, at least it heals fast.”

“Oh. Hooray. So, why am I at the hotel?”

Alohi came in. “Because if you need help, we want to be the ones providing it.”

She smiled. “Oh, hey, Alohi. I think I am stoned.”

He smiled and crawled onto the bed, moving over her until he was on the other side of her, curled up against her shoulder. “Yes, you are, and it couldn’t happen to a more deserving lady.”

She ran her fingers through his hair. “Pretty hair.”

He chuckled.

Olly smiled. “Anyway, we thought you would be better in the arms of your alpha and omega.”

Alohi wrapped his arms around her and held her carefully. “I will be careful and take care of you, I promise.”

Ambrose poked his head in. “They arrived at the clinic shortly after we did. The second the doctor put through a charge for the surgical room, he was on his way.”

Kekoa eased past Ambrose and bowed to her, taking her hand. “I am sorry that I put you through this.”

“Me, too, but you were never gonna fit with that stuff in there. Like, I am talking not even a finger.” She shook her head while her embarrassment screamed from the back of her mind.

He raised his brows.

Alohi snorted. “She’s still sedated, Kek.”

Olly said, “She’s a little loopy.”

“But she’s not in pain?”

She shook her head. “No, just feels like... I dunno. There’s a bit of a burn, but I feel better. How long do I have to lie here to be weirded out by everyone staring?”

Olly said softly, “Dr. Oriel said you are good and that you will heal naturally. She sent along some cream to help you stave off infection and is going to write you up in a medical journal.”

“Did we ever find out how Mark found me? I mean, I guess that was just me wondering there.”

Olly kissed her cheek and nuzzled her again. “One of the programmers working on the pixie clips put your name on the behind-the-scenes feature.”

“I thought that might have been it. He would have been looking for my name and dancing. It was an easy hit.” She tried to push up, but Alohi pulled her back down with careful but inexorable strength.

She looked at him from far too close. “I thought that most omegas were feeble.”

Olly said, “Hey.”

“You are a country girl; Ford works out like an addiction.”

Alohi smiled. “Kekoa puts in the effort, so I put in the effort. You have a lot of nice muscle. All those years of dancing?”

“Yeah. I still have abs. Wanna see?”

Olly held her hand when she would have pushed the sheet down.

Alohi chuckled and put his hand over hers. “Show and tell can wait for another time, but I appreciate the enthusiasm.”

She looked at what her hand was doing and said, “Ohhh.”

Alohi cuddled her close and kissed her neck. She giggled.

He smiled. “This is a nice change.”

Olly smoothed her fingers against Haravin’s cheek. “She was constantly in pain to the point where she couldn’t even register it. She doesn’t know what feeling good is because it has never happened. Everything is going to be new now, and pleasure is a possibility. Also, her scent is going to come in fairly strong. I can already get notes of it. She’s fruit. Pomegranate, mango, hints of pineapple, and a touch of honey.”

Haravin said, “I’m dessert.”

Kekoa covered his mouth, and she could see he was laughing.

Alohi had his face pressed against her neck. Haravin blinked. She frowned and

looked at Kekoa. “He’s licking me.”

Alohi started sucking.

She grunted as her lower body tried to do something it hadn’t done before.

Ambrose chuckled and went to Olivia. “Come on. She’s going to be fine. If anything happens, they have Dr. Oriel’s private number.”

Haravin whimpered, and the feeling in her sex was confusing as hell. That just hadn’t happened before.

Olly and her alpha left.

Haravin hissed, “Get him off.”

Kekoa grinned. “Why? He has gone around the bruising. Olly was right. Your scent is coming in, and it is sweet and bright.”

Alohi eased on his one-man hickey production and kissed the little mark he had made. “Pretty. Mine.”

“I am not a pot roast or a ham. I am not yours just because you licked me.”

He loomed over her and brushed his lips against hers. He murmured, “You smell so good.”

She pressed against his chest and said, “I am recovering from someone pleating my vag.”

Kekoa said, “We will get to the bottom of it. Someone has already been going

through your medical history.” He paused. “Are you feeling better?”

“Aside from the removal of certain social strictures? Yes. Olly was right. My pain was so much a part of me that now that the worst of it is gone, I feel so free.”

Alohi smiled down at her and brushed soft kisses against her lips again.

“I think I need to sleep again.”

Alohi chuckled. “I will watch over you.”

Kekoa said, “I will be back.”

She was pinned under the omega and tried a casual, “Come here often?”

He smiled. “I would like to.”

Blinking rapidly, she settled with, “Oh.”

She tried to stare into his eyes, but she was so tired.

Haravin woke up in the dark of the night and was warm. Really warm. She sat up and eased her way off the end of the bed. She went to the bathroom and held her breath as she peed. It wasn’t as bad as she thought. There was a bit of a burn, but it faded.

She washed up, scrubbed her face, and brushed her teeth with the brush from the amenities kit. Her hair was still in a thick tail, so she didn’t have to mess with it.

She headed back to the bedroom, and Alohi had scooted up against his alpha. She tiptoed to the far side of the bed, away from them, and lifted the sheet to settle under. She was asleep in minutes.

She was facing Alohi with an arm around her waist. Kekoa murmured, “I told you I was a light sleeper.”

She settled back against him and returned to sleep.

Alohi woke her gently and helped her sit up. “Come on, Haravin. You have to have breakfast and some medication. You can’t take it on an empty stomach.”

She felt a light ache and moved carefully to swing her legs out of bed. She was wearing one of her nighties, and it covered her to her knees.

She got up, swayed, and steadied. “Okay, where is my phone? I have to send Ambrose some flowers.”

Alohi hovered around her as she walked slowly and then with more confidence.

Kekoa was sitting at the table, and he smiled when she came in. “Good morning, Haravin.”

“Good morning. I formally apologize for anything I said last night, but I react that way to sedation or alcohol.”

Alohi snaked an arm around her waist. “You were adorable. Very proud of your body.”

She froze in place. “Oh. I am sorry.”

Alohi urged her to keep walking. “It was cute. We saw another side to you.”

“The heavily sedated side?” She walked toward the table, where a plate was covered, and a cup of coffee and another of juice was standing by.

She eased down onto the chair, and Kekoa glanced at her before resuming whatever he was reading.

Dismissed, she lifted the lid off breakfast and found her favourites. A ton of protein and a single slice of toast. She worked her way through the eggs, bacon, and sausage.

Alohi kept rubbing her back. “I am so sorry that happened to you.”

“It is what it is. I am going to be doing a video call with my family, though. All these years and no one said a thing. Even my regular GP didn’t notice.”

Alohi murmured, “Dr. Oriel likened it to a popped seam on your jeans.”

She put her fork down and covered her face, breathing slowly.

“I have no idea how I am going to address this. I have regular medical exams that can attest to my ridiculous narrowness. A history of agonizing periods. Pain when I walked, moved, danced. Panic at the thought of sex.”

Alohi said, “Olivia said that it was trendy for religious fanatics and beta purists to sew females closed. In her case, it was messy; in your case, it was so tidy that it was not visible if you didn’t know what you were looking for.”

“Right. I don’t know what to do about this.” She paused. “Actually, I know where to start. I need to find my medical records for the appendectomy.” She wiggled her fingers in the air around the final word.

Kekoa nodded. “We have a cyber investigator working on it.”

She frowned at him. “You do?”

“We do. We are taking you on as our beta and, hopefully, offering you an environment that is easier and less painful.”

She swallowed. “I feel like I am offering you a product with a manufacturer’s defect.”

Alohi caressed her shoulders. “You are not a product; you are a charming woman with good taste in museum exhibits. So, can we take you home?”

Haravin cocked her head. “Home?”

Kekoa smiled. “The Wonder Islands. We are not from around here.”

“Oh. Do I need a travel visa?”

“It’s been granted. Indefinitely until you go for citizenship. There are a few paths to citizenship.” He smiled.

Alohi snorted. “Yeah, I know what those paths look like. They all involve you riding him like a surfboard.”

“Alo!” Kekoa snapped.

Haravin felt the slow creep of heat that was dying her red. She blindly reached for her juice.

Alohi kissed the mark he had made earlier. “Or me. I make an excellent boogie board.”

She looked at him. “You are serious about this.”

“Yeah, you smell like a harvest in the islands. You smell like home.”

“How long have you been here?”

Kekoa shrugged. “Four days. We are homebodies by nature. We borrowed Syar’s plane and came to see if your employer was accurate in his assessment. He has also been offering me tips that he used to get Olivia through her initial adaptation.”

Alohi smiled. “And I will help.”

Kekoa smiled. “Alo will keep himself near you and give you plenty of contact. The exposure to an omega will be beneficial.”

“Why?”

Alohi wrinkled his nose. “I will get you used to being touched.”

She blinked. “Omegas touch me all the time. So do alphas, for that matter.” Haravin frowned. “Why would they do that?”

Alohi crouched next to her and stroked her skin. “I told you. You smell like home. I am guessing that each omega smells something different from you. Alphas as well. Have you noticed any other behaviours?”

“Well, I am a minor pusher. Once I make contact, I can convince most alphas around me to bend the rules.”

Alohi chuckled. “The ice cream in the museum.”

She wrinkled her nose. “Yeah, and other stuff. Traffic tickets, parking violations, getting folks to carry my stuff to the car.”

“So, you make alphas behave like alphas.” Kekoa smiled. “Or what our instincts are supposed to make us.”

She finished her breakfast and put it aside on the cart. She did the same with the coffee and orange juice.

“I am just going to grab a shower and then get dressed. I think Olivia grabbed sundresses. Jeans are not my friends right now.”

Alohi chuckled. “Good thing you won’t have to wear a lot at home. I hope you like relaxing on the beach while Kekoa does all the hard work.”

“I think I can use some relaxation. My last day off was a nightmare.” She sighed. Her phone pinged, and she looked at it. “Who keeps charging my phone?”

Alohi sighed. “Dead tech is a pet peeve.”

Kekoa said, “He has a complete set of charging cables. He can energize any orifice.”

The words gave her pause, and she stared at him. “I beg your pardon?”

He smiled.

Alohi blinked innocently. “Well, technically, he’s not wrong.”

She snorted and went to shower and get dressed. She had to call the book club and tell them she was heading out of town.

The call to Ford was full of tears on his side, so she gave him a verbal hug and went on to Olivia. “Don’t say goodbye here; we are meeting you at the airport.”

“What?”

“Oh, yes. The whole family. We are just packing up to come and see you off. Even the littles.” Olivia chuckled.

“That is so sweet. Um, when are we meeting?”

“In about an hour. You had better finish packing.”

Haravin swallowed. “See you there?”

They hung up, and Haravin finished packing her few items.

She carried her pack to the living area, and Alohi and Kekoa smiled. The luggage rack was there and attended by a bellhop. She got her purse out and put the pack on her back.

Alohi sighed and came up to her, sliding the pack off her shoulders and handing it to the bemused bellhop. He kissed her neck and said, “Come on, treasure. Let’s go.”

She swallowed. “Okay.”

He beamed. “Okay?”

She nodded. “Okay.”

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Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 3:23 am

Wiping tears from the sweet farewell, Haravin sat in one of the comfortable seats while her companions sat next to each other. That was it. She was on her way to the Wonder Islands. At the back of the cabin there was a woman who was heading to a place called Blackridge Island. It would be a ferry from Wonder to her destination.

Haravin got up and wobbled to the seat where the woman was watching a video on a tablet. "Hello."

The woman looked up from the depths of her hood. "Hello."

"You are a member of the book club?"

"Yes. You?"

Haravin nodded. "Yes."

The woman paused her video. "Those are your matches?"

"Yes. How can you tell?"

"They both look incredibly concerned."

"Oh. Is your match on the island?"

"No. My brother is. He's on a research team. Some days, you just want a hug from someone familiar."

“Oh. How will you get home?”

“Well, I will take a ferry back to Wonder then another one to Emerald. From there, I can get a commercial flight.” She smiled.

“Oh, well, you seem to have a plan.”

“I usually have a plan. And then an alpha knocks me into the ocean, and I get waves on my back, and then I am on a charter flight out to the islands so that I can see some family and get some rest.”

“You can’t rest?”

“Not unless I can hear the ocean. It sucks.” She tapped the headphones around her neck.

“What is your name?”

“Nerina. You can call me Nina.” She smiled.

“I’m Haravin. I am going to be somewhere on Wonder if you want to have lunch or something before you leave.”

“Any nickname?”

Haravin grimaced. “Harvey. I am not really a fan.”

“How about Hara?”

She hadn’t ever had anyone give her a non-annoying nickname, so she nodded. “That sounds good.”

“You are here for a permanent relocation?”

“Yes.”

“There are two of us on Emerald. Well, two that I am aware of.”

“Really?”

“Sure. Ven is part of the alpha and omega ruling family on Emerald. Eliana is there as well. Have you met them?”

Haravin was smiling. “I have. And you say there are ferries?”

“Yes. Helicopters if you are in a hurry.”

“Wow. Somehow, I had an image of me standing on a pile of sand in the middle of nowhere.”

Nina smiled. “There are other islands everywhere. The weird thing is that many have different geological makeup, which suggests that they have other world traces. Like chunks of other planets that got wedged in after Pangea spread out.”

Hara smiled and wanted to continue, but Kekoa touched her shoulder. “You need to take your meds, Haravin.”

“Could you call me Hara?”

“Certainly. Can you call me Kek?”

She beamed and nodded. “Sorry, Nina. I am about to get very sleepy.”

“Take all the time you need. I am going to see if I can chase a nap down myself.” She pulled her headphones on and keyed something on the tablet.

Hara walked with Kek to where Alohi had the medication in his hand. She took it with some water brought by the air hostess, and then he handed her the second packet. She blinked. “I don’t know if I can manage this in the lavatory.”

Alohi drew a curtain over the area where he and Kekoa had been sitting. “There you go. Privacy.”

“You are in here with me.”

“That is true. So, have a seat, and I will help.”

She stared as he eased her onto one of the seats, carefully reached under her skirt, and removed her panties. The first rod was a sort of flexible vaginal suppository that omegas used when they got internally abraded.

He coated it with the antibiotic ointment and used one hand to open her and get her a little slick, and then the four inches of medication were inside her, and the treatment was over. She was clenching on it something fierce, and her underwear was slid back in place.

The sedatives were to keep her from fighting it, so she carefully got up and waddled over toward her previous seat.

Alohi sighed. “Get back on that chair and get some sleep. You need it.”

She frowned. “That’s what I am doing.”

“I mean the spot you were just in a moment ago so that we can take a nap.” He

flipped the arms up and made a wide bed, pushing the seats back.

She swayed, and he settled on the bed with his back against the wall, and Kekoa came in. He eased her toward Alohi, and she stumbled before climbing onto the omega and putting her head on his chest.

Kekoa chuckled and lay next to them, pressing his chest to her back and wrapping his arm over them both. The sedative swamped her, and she fell asleep as the middle of the sandwich.

She smelled coffee and heard a slurp next to her ear. She hummed and started to push her way to sitting. Alohi looked different. She blushed and tried to push away from Kek. “Oh. I am sorry.”

He smiled slightly and offered her coffee, pressing the cup to her lips. “We are going to be home in an hour.”

“Oh. I should wake up then.” She sipped at the coffee.

Kekoa nodded. “Good idea.”

She drank the whole cup of sweetened coffee and fought the urge to collapse on him again. He took the cup from her hand and stroked her back until she was lying across him.

“So, when we get home, I have to put through your residency visa.”

She was going to look up, but he had his enormous hand on her head. She rubbed her cheek against his chest.

“How are you feeling?”

“Sleepy.”

“That is so that you don’t tear the healing tissues.”

“I know.” She lay against him until she felt a little stronger.

“So, I will issue your permanent resident visa, Alohi has arranged some clothes, and when you are ready to learn about your new country, we will be ready to take you for a tour.”

“Alohi keeps mentioning a beach. Do you have beaches?”

He chuckled. “We have beaches. The main island is a tourist destination. The mining that we have is on our smallest island.”

He rumbled on, but she dozed off again. There was no way she could remain awake with the heat of him under her.

She was being carried. The air was warm, and her passport was checked. She lifted her head, and Kekoa talked softly to the customs officer. There was a congratulations mentioned, and Kekoa chuckled. “Now we are complete.”

Hara squirmed and looked up at him. “Where did my friend go?”

“Oh, the other beta? She’s on the way to the ferry.”

“Oh. Good.”

“She had Alohi put her number into your phone.”

Haravin smiled. “Good. How did you get my phone open?”

“It’s a new one that was waiting for you here. We have a different service here, and I don’t want you incurring any odd bills.”

“Oh. Thank you. I can walk.”

“I am trying to give you a little more healing time.” He pressed a kiss to her forehead.

“Where is Alohi?”

“Arranging the luggage. He does not pack light.”

She nodded. “Right. That tracks.”

He chuckled, and she frowned at the type of platform they were approaching. There was a man at the controls, and Alohi was fussing with the luggage.

“We will take the hovercraft.”

She stared. “Aw, cool.”

He chuckled. “You like technology?”

“Yeah. I am a sucker for it.”

“We design and test it here. We have a heavy iron content in our islands, so it is easy to run magnetically sensitive tech. We just have massive shielding on our phones.”

“Oh, so another reason for the new phone.”

“Yes, and your old phone is trash.”

“Oh, right. Snob.”

They got on the transport, the driver powered it up, and then it hummed as it skimmed along a coastal pathway to a village a distance away from wherever they had landed. Kekoa pivoted and showed her. “The vacationers’ town is there. Locals live in the sheltered cove. We occasionally get strays, but generally, they stay on their end, and we stay on ours, except for the few who service the visitors.”

Alohi chuckled. “Yeah, he means that as well.”

“So, it’s a sex resort.”

Kekoa shrugged. “Not all of it.”

Alohi smiled. “Just some of it.”

“Please tell me that it isn’t where you met.”

Alohi wrinkled his nose. “I used to come and visit during certain times of the year. I hired professionals and managed to get through four years of it until I propositioned this fella, and it turned out he wasn’t on the menu.”

She smiled at Kekoa’s smirk. “And then I was. And I had an omega that stumbled from Emerald Island to here and never left.”

The wind was whipping past them, and they were already in the village.

Alohi smiled and said, “Kekoa’s parents and sister live in the palace. They are very nice.”

Hara paused. “Oh. I see.”

“You said that like you are bracing for something.”

Kekoa looked at her. “You are concerned about my family.”

“Yeah, well, families who have omegas tend not to like jumped-up betas who butt into a couple. It’s happened a few times. People are protective over their omegas.”

Alohi frowned. “Seriously?”

“Yes. Seriously. My friend Nora went through seven shades of hell and nearly lost her baby over being considered unworthy. If I disappear suddenly, I just want you to be aware.”

Alohi snorted. “Things will be fine. They are amazing.”

“Okay. I am just braced for it to be otherwise.”

Kekoa nodded. “We will be watching for it.”

“Can you put me down?”

Kekoa shrugged. “No. You are not strong enough.”

She exhaled. “That’s true.”

He walked to the porch that surrounded the huge three-story home, and Alohi was next to him. An older couple and a woman in her early twenties came to greet them. They kissed Alohi, hugged him, and stopped when they looked at Haravin. She whispered, “Put me on my feet so they can hug you.”

The young woman raised her brows. “You give the king orders?”

Haravin sighed, and Kekoa carefully set her down. She stepped aside, and his family hugged him. His sister bumped her, and Haravin stumbled back, hissing in pain.

She saw a servant at the back of the entryway and walked up slowly. “Where is the fastest path to the ocean?”

“There is a path down the hill, and it leads to the lagoon.”

She nodded and moved slowly out the back and down the hill. There was a greeting ritual from the household, and they weren’t going to miss her for a while. She really needed to soak in cool water, and there was only one way to do it.

She made it the forty feet from the house to the water, turned to gold, and walked into the water until she was twenty feet deep and watching fish going by.

She had made it to her new home, and now, she just had to find out how to navigate it. It would take as long as it takes.

* * * *

Kekoa sat next to Alohi at dinner, and he smiled at his sister. “How did Haravin enjoy the tour?”

She paused. “What tour?”

“You said you would show her around.” He frowned. “You hugged me and said that you would take care of her.”

Kira shrugged and smiled. “I did. She’s gone, right? Now it is just family.”

Kekoa froze. “What do you mean?”

“Well, you didn’t need a beta from the mainland; you have Alohi.”

Alohi blinked. “She fucking called it.”

Kekoa’s father frowned. “I don’t understand.”

His mother said, “I mean, betas are fun, but they aren’t for keeping.”

Kekoa looked around. She wasn’t marked, so he couldn’t track her.

Alohi put a hand on his arm. “Stop panicking. She isn’t going to put herself in danger. She wants to rest and be quiet. Where would you go if you didn’t want to be too far from the house?”

Kekoa nodded and bolted out the back door and down the pathway to the lagoon. There was no sign until he got next to the edge of the water, where deep feminine footprints were in the sand. He transformed and walked into the water, looking left and right to find her. He sighed in relief, letting a stream of bubbles rise. A glint of gold sitting on the edge of a rocky outcropping showed Haravin looking at the bright fish with her gemstone eyes.

He walked up to her, and she grimaced and mouthed Sorry.

He held his hand out to her, and she took it, floating gently to the floor of the lagoon as he walked them up and out. His family was waiting for them, and Alohi rushed up to hug Haravin when she appeared.

His family’s collective mouths were open at Haravin’s appearance. He pulled her in front of him and wrapped his metal arms around hers.

Alohi translated. “This is Haravin. She is ours. She was meant to be ours. As you can

see, she and Kekoa have a lot in common, but we have to go slow as she is recovering from a procedure that I don't want to go into."

Haravin reached out and touched his arm, nodding.

He shrugged. "Right." He explained in blunt terms what had been done to her and how recently it had been discovered. "So, that is why she was being carried. She got a treatment on the plane."

Haravin spoke slowly. "So, sister of Kekoa, the next time you try to knock me over, you will be pushing against this, and I will push back."

Kekoa tensed and held her close. She had been right. Family gathered around to defend Alohi against an interloper.

She tapped his arm and looked up at him. When he relaxed, she turned soft and pink. "So, I missed dinner?"

Alohi hugged her. "I didn't know what to think when he went walking into the water."

She shrugged. "I couldn't have done it in the house. I would have dropped through the floor."

Kekoa returned to flesh and hugged her. "You scared me."

"I just wanted to go somewhere safe as I thought things through."

"That was pretty fucking safe."

She beamed at him. "Thank you."

He leaned in and brushed his mouth against the hickey that Alohi had left behind. She shivered in his arms, and her scent returned rapidly.

He inhaled deeply, and the scent of the water mixed with the bright scent of fruit made him smile. She was home. Her scent settled his soul in a way that Alohi hadn't been able to. He was love and affection, but he wasn't what Kekoa needed. She was serenity and calm. She had looked perfectly comfortable in the lagoon, her sundress flowing around her. He doubted that she knew it was transparent.

Alohi met his gaze and grinned. "Well, treasure, we have to get you dressed. This cotton is transparent."

"Oh. Damn."

She moved her hands to cover her breasts and her groin. "So, I am going to need to know where I am going."

Alohi took her hand. "Come on. Kek, let her go. I will see what we can find for her to wear. After that, we can introduce her to the food."

Kekoa watched his tiny pack make their way up the hill, hand in hand. He looked at his sister. "So, you tried to push her over?"

She tangled her fingers together. "I didn't want you upsetting Alohi."

"He's cuddling with her at every opportunity. There is genuine affection there. Alohi is what will tie us together." He smiled. "And if you ever raise any part of you against her, I will walk you to the middle of the lagoon underwater and see how long you last."

She cringed. "Got it. I'm sorry. I just think you and Alohi are so good together."

“And with Haravin, we will be better yet. She gives both of us someone to fuss over.” He smirked. “Watching Alo fuss over her is fascinating. He wants her when she’s strong or when she’s weak.” He laughed. “And definitely when she’s wet.”

His parents looked at each other and were slightly embarrassed. They were betas who had raised him and his sister. His designation had come as a surprise, and the food expenses had been extreme, but now, he allowed them to live with him at the royal residence after he had been elected king of the Wonder Islands.

Kira was interested in dating now that she had finished her first year of college. Kekoa sighed and headed up to the palace with his family. If Kira were interested in betas, Haravin would be an excellent wingman. Woman. Whatever.

Alohi was broadcasting arousal and excitement, along with amusement. It seemed he hadn’t been able to wait to hand over the gift bag they had chosen for her.

He really wanted to pass his family and join them to see the shy blush cross Haravin’s face. “Excuse me. We will join you for the meal in a few minutes.”

He passed his family and headed for his quarters, where his omega’s amusement meant an interesting face on his beta.

* * * *

Haravin looked at the huge box of dildos that went from slender to that has to be a hospital visit.

Alohi laughed. “Your face. Oh, Kekoa should be... oh, here he is.”

Haravin tried to close the box, but one of the dildos had rolled, and the box was wedged open. She whined in frustration, and Kekoa plucked it out of her hands.

He opened it and examined it. Her face was on fire.

“Alohi picked it up at the shop. I didn’t have a chance to see it, but it turns out that it is the same kind of configuration that Olivia used to recover from her situation. So, we will use these with you until you can take either one of us without discomfort.”

“Oh. Um. Okay.”

He rolled the rogue dildo back into its fitted spot and closed the toy box. He set it on the edge of the bed and looked at Alohi. “Did you get the lube?”

The omega lifted the bag high. “Of course.”

“You ordered clothing for her?”

“It’s in my drawer.”

Kekoa smiled. “In that case, I believe we should get dressed for this heat and a long, slow meal.”

She blinked. “It’s late.”

“Are you hungry?” He asked as he stripped out of his mainland clothing.

Her mouth started watering as she noted that there were no tan lines. Anywhere.

Alohi came by with some fabric in his hands. “Take off your dress, and I will help you get this on. And close your mouth. It isn’t just your dress leaving a puddle.”

She closed her mouth with a snap and mechanically moved her dress up and over her head, then she shucked out of her underwear and looked at Alohi. “What goes

where?”

Kekoa reached around Alohi and closed his jaw with a light tap. He took the fabric and beckoned to Haravin. “I am going to kneel for this.”

She nodded and tracked her gaze over him while Alohi stared at her. The fabric was wrapped twice around her breasts before the tail came over her shoulder and was knotted between her breasts, offering support. The skirt wrapped around one and a half times before being cinched at the top of her hips.

“My navel feels weird. Even my dance costumes covered it.” She bit her lip. “I had no idea it could register a breeze.”

Kekoa stroked her belly. “Well, you do have amazing abs. You were not wrong about that.”

He skimmed his fingertips across her navel, and she inhaled sharply. He chuckled and got to his feet. “Just one more thing.” He reached for her braid and unravelled it. “There. Lovely.”

Alohi was fastening the wrap at his hips. There were two inches between the fabric and his knees. There were four inches between Kekoa’s wrap and his knees.

“Well, now, I believe we are all ready to face my family and have dinner in the entryway.”

Alohi took her hand and led her. “From now on, you will lead, I am second, and then Kekoa is last.”

“Oh. Protocol.”

“Yes. And you look amazing in that outfit and definitely need to be seen.”

“It’s just his family.”

“Now your family.”

Haravin shrugged and walked in front of them, making her way back to the entryway where they had arrived. She kept her head high and her smile neutrally pleasant. This was just another performance.

When she walked into the entryway, she noticed that the skirts of Kekoa’s mother and sister were higher. Hm. She walked along the table where there were cushions, and she moved to a distant one before Alohi grabbed her and led her back to sit on Kekoa’s right side.

Alohi nodded to her, and she sat. He sat next and then Kekoa. Servers from the household came and brought the meal for them, and light spilled outside.

When the first person from the village came up to congratulate Kekoa on his return to the island, a few mentioned his new acquisition. Haravin didn’t care. She was hungry, so she ate, following Alohi’s table manners as well as she could.

Haravin was full and had only touched about a quarter of the meal. Kekoa looked at her. “Go with Alohi and take your medication.”

“Aw, dang it.”

Alohi gracefully got to his feet, and she clambered up far less nicely. He took her hand and led her off through the palace. Two more days of the medication and she would be done. At least there didn’t have to be any more suppositories.

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Back at Kekoa's side, Haravin swayed and tried to keep herself awake. The lights outside were an invitation to come and chat with the king. Haravin was stuck.

He shifted his position, and Alohi moved between them and pulled her against him. Kekoa slid a hand to the back of her head and massaged slowly.

She heard the conversation flow around her, and Alohi spoke periodically, but the medication held her down.

Eventually, Alohi shifted, and Kekoa settled her on his lap, a hand wrapped around her hip and the other behind her back.

He cuddled her against him for hours, talking to all the people who had heard of the new addition and had come running to see for themselves.

She was awake; she was just under the influence of a muscle relaxer and painkiller. Every now and then, she felt a kiss on her temple or forehead, but it was a tremendous distance away.

When she was carried up to Kekoa's room, the housekeeper part of her fretted that someone needed to clean up.

She was stripped and tucked between them then all sound ceased except for their breathing.

She closed her eyes and remembered Kekoa getting changed and felt a surge of slick inside her. Her eyes opened, and she stared into the darkness.

“Haravin. Rest. Everything is normal, or our other forms would not be a match. Right?”

She blinked and whispered, “Oh, light sleeper. Right.”

He stroked her cheek and cuddled her.

Alohi had his arms around her waist and planted on her thigh.

“Relax, Haravin. You’re home.”

She nodded and slept.

She got through the last rounds of medication and was introduced to several of the locals and people around the house. Kira wasn’t actually too bad once she understood why Haravin was there.

On day three, she woke up and was able just to take a shower and get dressed. Alohi was responsible for making sure she was properly dressed. When she got out of the shower, he unwrapped her and tied everything so it was nice and supportive.

“There you are.” He smiled. “So, did you want to take a walk through the village today?”

She held up one hand and did a pli  . No pain, no tugging, no worry. Her grin was wide. “Yes, I can take a walk through the village.”

“Wait, you can do ballet?”

“I got to my toe shoes, but shortly after that, I went for the surgery, and after that, stretching like that on a daily basis was out of the equation.”

“How did they explain that?”

“They said that I had internal stitches that restricted my motion. They weren’t wrong. I had to work my way back to the splits slowly.”

He smiled. “Remind me to let you demonstrate while we are naked.”

She laughed.

He closed his eyes. “Shush. I am getting a mental image.”

His hip wrap rose, and she darted forward and put her hand over it to push it down for some reason.

Haravin realized what she had done when he opened his eyes and grinned.

He tilted his head. “Feel free to explore.”

She looked at him. “Over or under?”

He grinned. “Under. By whatever means you choose.”

She shrugged and dropped to her knees, sliding her palms up his thighs, and she got his rich gold length free. “C’mere, rabbit.”

He laughed, and she wrapped her hand around the fat length of him. It looked like any cock in a medical textbook, but the skin was so soft and resilient that she didn’t think she would ever mistake it for anything or anyone else. At least he didn’t have a knot.

She used both hands to stroke him slowly, and he balanced with a grip on her hair.

She leaned forward to lick the dripping purplish tip, and there was a scuffle behind them. A gasp and then the whisper of footfalls.

She looked up at him, and he wrinkled his nose. “Housekeeping?”

He shook his head. “Kira.”

“Ah, well, in for a penny, and it isn’t like she doesn’t know about this anyway.” She leaned in and sucked Alohi’s cock into her mouth and slowly backed away while keeping the suction. When she flicked her gaze up to meet his, there was a throb, and he drowned her.

She coughed and spluttered, and he quickly knelt at her side. “Aw, Hara. Sorry. Hang on.”

He was back in a moment with a face cloth and helped her clean up. When she had swallowed and cleared her face, she saw his grin.

She sighed. “Noted. The rabbit spits.”

Alohi laughed and gathered her in a hug. “Sorry, it’s been a few days.”

“No offence, but I am going to wash my face again. And I now know not to play with the omega.”

He frowned. “What?”

“—when I’m dressed.” She looked down, and there was a stream of cum that had made its way across all of her clothes. “Do I have spare clothing?”

Alohi chuckled. “You go and scrub up, and I will be ready to get you dry and

dressed.”

The shower was quick, and she washed the hair around her face before trying to remove Alohi from her skin. Kekoa might not care, but a lot of the alphas were watching and sniffing. Her scent was getting stronger, so she didn’t want visitors to have any more excuses to lean in and inhale. An omega’s scent on her would do it.

When she was out of the shower and dried off, Alohi dressed her again and whispered, “I am definitely going to return the favour.”

“I don’t slick by the litre.”

He giggled. “Come on, time for breakfast.”

“I’m full.”

He laughed and wrapped his arm around her waist. “Come on. Kekoa’s on the fine edge of control.”

“Uh, maybe I should just organize the drawers or something.”

She was hauled bodily down to the hall where they had breakfast. Kekoa was seated and talking with a few of the business owners of the village. His gaze glowed as he looked at them.

“Good morning. My sister is upset, Haravin. You are abusing poor Alohi?”

She inclined her head gracefully and curtsied. “No, Your Majesty, I was demonstrating a split, and he helped me up. It took a while.”

Alohi rubbed her back. “That was very pretty. I am here to confirm that I am fine, my

alpha.”

Kekoa beckoned to Haravin, and she eased into his range. He touched her chin. “You don’t address me as your alpha?”

“Technicalities, Your Majesty. I do try and remain correct on this sort of thing.” She looked at him and smiled politely as the merchants were watching curiously.

“Ah. So, you are feeling better?”

“Yes, Your Majesty.” She kept her head down and tried to guess his mood, but without a link, she could only go by body language.

He beckoned her closer, and she stepped toward him. He tapped his lips, and she glanced at the alphas and betas watching but kissed him. His hands snagged her and pulled her onto his lap.

The alphas snickered, and the betas stared.

The kiss was deep, and she felt the amusement when he tasted Alohi. Damn, she had forgotten to brush her teeth.

He chuckled, and as he kissed her, she felt his fingers dragging her skirt up. That was the point where she started to struggle. Having her bits on display to strangers wasn’t on the agenda.

Kekoa’s fingers touched her and slipped and slid. She started panicking at being watched and struggled.

Alohi stepped forward. “Kek. There are people here she doesn’t know.”

The kiss that had been pulling at her soul eased, and he lifted his head. “Is that the problem?”

She blinked and nodded.

He lifted his head and simply said, “Out.”

There was laughter from the alphas, and they ushered the betas out. Haravin listened to the humiliating conversations about betas who radiated heat.

She looked up at Kek warily. “I don’t like being watched by strangers.”

He smiled. “I understand, Hara. So, playing with Alohi was fun?”

He slipped a finger into her, and she blinked as her body tried to drown him out. He laughed. He slid a second finger inside, and she gasped.

“Well, that is promising. You are holding tight, but no pain?”

“No pain.”

He grinned. “Good.” He slid in a third finger, and that was when she remembered how large his hands were.

The breath whooshed out of her, but there was still no pain.

His hand moved, and there was a distinctly squelching sound.

Alohi came over and was watching Kek’s hand. “Wow. She’s really wet.”

Hara squirmed against Kek’s hand. “I am trying to figure out if this feels good or

not.”

Alohi reached forward and stroked her clit for a moment and then licked his fingers. “Oh, wow. I should have tried something this morning. She tastes like she smells.”

Kek continued to move his hand inside her, and with the extra fingers on her clit, she tensed, trembled, and clenched hard around his fingers as a slow pulsing orgasm moved through her... and out of her. Her thighs and Kek’s hand were soaked.

Alohi whined, and Kek held his hand to him.

Hara hid her face against Kek. Their expressions were a little too intense.

Kek chuckled and said, “I think he is taking the meat off the bone.”

She slammed her thighs together.

He laughed and kissed her again. She tasted herself on him and slowly responded. He gave her enough care that she started rubbing her thighs together.

When he raised his head, he asked, “So, what do you call me?”

“Kek?”

He nipped her lip, and she felt the graze of his canine.

“Your Majesty?”

He leaned back and narrowed his eyes. “Are you kidding?”

“Dude?”

He sighed. “So, not until you wear the mark, huh?”

“Well, it isn’t accurate until then. If you find a beta who suits you better, it will be their title to use.”

Kek lifted her higher and looked at her eye to eye. “Why are you so stubborn?”

“Because the last time I thought an alpha was mine, he wasn’t. So, until you confirm it, I am just going to keep to myself, Your Majesty.” She shrugged apologetically.

He sighed. “Right.”

Alohi paused, “Hara, did you want to go surfing today? It will take your mind off... things.”

“Yeah, I doubt I will be able to get specific things out of my mind. Sure, I wouldn’t mind learning to surf.”

Kek nodded. “In that case, have breakfast and head down to the beach. I will join you.”

She blinked. “You will?”

“Of course. Alohi never goes too far from my sight. The tourists occasionally stray and think time with an omega would be fun.”

“Okay.” She squirmed off his lap and ended up at his side. Alohi grinned and headed to the kitchen to tell them that they were ready to eat.

She washed her hands in the bowl, and Alohi and Kek reached for food. “For the love of... wash your hands!”

They both laughed at her but washed their fingertips before eating. She settled in on a few bites of bread and fruit.

Kek rolled together some meat and a steamed vegetable. He held it out. "Open."

She nodded and ate the offering.

He fed both her and Alohi in turn, and she smiled. They were groaning, and they had to take a household guard with them first until Kek could catch up with them.

People didn't bother with clothing, and Alohi just had to speak to someone with surfboards, and they had two boards ready for use.

Alohi asked her, "Are you a strong swimmer?"

"No, but if I get in trouble, I will drop to the ocean floor and walk in."

Alohi smiled. "Right. Nice backup."

"I think so."

They waited for forty minutes, and she met a few more locals with Alohi making the delighted introductions.

When Kekoa appeared, he had a shorter wrap on and was carrying a surfboard as tall as he was.

The sound of the surf was steady, and it was the sound she heard when she slept. That, and Kek and Alohi breathing.

The instruction began, and a woman came over and offered her a shorter wrap that

tied over one thigh and a band that didn't have much support but would help her out. She smiled. "Thank you."

"No problem. It's easier for them to be naked, but walking out of the water with all eyes aimed at you needs to be something you work up to." The woman set her original clothing aside and smiled. "Not everyone has the confidence of the king's omega."

"Yeah, I am pretty distant from that level of confidence."

"Are you visiting?"

"Um, sort of? Maybe? I hope to stay."

The woman smiled. "Good."

Kek called her and frowned. "Where did you get the clothing?"

"A woman gave it to me."

He whispered in her ear, and she dropped the clothing in the sand.

He went over instructions, and she picked up the board and followed them into the water. She lay on her board and paddled out, smiling at the turtle that swam under them in about fourteen feet of water.

The first time she met the water here, she was expected to do it unclothed. Alohi was naked, so she wouldn't feel uncomfortable. They paddled far out and turned.

Kek grinned. "It's coming, can you feel it?"

Haravin felt the humming beneath her. “Yes, I can feel it.”

Alohi chuckled. “And so we add to a long list of things that will be at home between your thighs.”

She splashed him, but Kek quickly told her to balance, stand up, and position herself from there. It was move with the water and then swim for the shore.

She nodded, and when the back of the board tilted upward, she hopped up and crouched. And as Kek led the way, Alohi followed, and she brought up the rear.

Haravin used a decade of dance and balance, experimenting with the waves, and then she saw a curl forming around her, so she bent and raced the collapse of the water. She was grinning, her hair was plastered to her, and she saw the blur of her alpha and omega go by as she kept to the edge of the wave as it shallowed out and pushed her toward shore.

She glided in and stepped off the board, smiling at her astonished companions. “Again?”

Kek chuckled. “You go, we will watch.”

“Delightful.”

She took the board and paddled out again, heading at a right angle to the current. She got out about as far as she had been the first time, and then she sat on her board, feeling the waves through the board, and when she felt the large swell under her, she waited until the push started and got onto the board. She was up and balancing and saw a pod of dolphins under her. She grinned, and then she saw grey launching out of the wave and straight at her. She went gold and dropped as the dolphin struck her. She was deeper than she had thought, aimed herself at the shore, and started walking.

She found a few watches and several phones and came out of the water with Kek silvered and waiting for her. She dropped her haul to the sand and looked at him as she shifted back to soft skin with the crowd watching.

“Fucking dolphins.” She grimaced and stomped toward him and Alohi. The hug that she got from the omega was intense.

He whispered frantically. “He was really worried, but he wanted to show everybody what you are, but he had to shift so that he could feel if you were okay. You are definitely getting a mark tonight. He was really worried.”

She nodded. “I understand. Does anyone have some fish I can have?”

The crowd muttered, and one guy came forward with a basket. “Why do you want them, Miss?”

“Oh, I have to punch a dolphin.”

The crowd started giggling, and then it was a roar of laughter as her words were repeated. Kek wrapped an arm around her, and it went from silver to his normal bronze. “No dolphin punching.”

She sighed. “Fine, but if I see him again, we are going to have words.”

“Of course, you will, treasure.”

She suddenly realized. “Oh, no. The board!”

He chuckled. “It came in without you. It was much more buoyant.”

“Speaking of buoyant, can I get dressed now?”

He nodded.

Alohi came over and got her dressed in under a minute. She sighed and said, “So, we have surfed. What’s next?”

Kek chuckled. “Lunch. My treasure has started to turn bright pink.”

She scowled and then realized he meant she had started to burn. “Dang it.”

Alohi grabbed her hand and tugged. “Come on, treasure.”

They started back to the palace, and she laughed. “You aren’t going to put anything on?”

“Not until I get the salt off my skin.”

“Oh. Right.”

They got back to the house, and he hauled her up to the bedroom. “Wash my back?”

She snorted. “Fine. I will. I am enthused by the idea of getting the salt out of my hair.”

“There is going to be a toll for joining me in the shower.” He hauled her through the bedroom.

She snorted. “What? Drowning on dry land?” She paused, “Again?”

“Not exactly. If you use your hands, the result will be the same.”

Haravin laughed. “You are that easy?”

“Only for you and Kek. Technically, I shouldn’t be hot for you, but I can’t resist.”

“Deal. Get the water on.” She chuckled and stripped. She was rapidly getting used to the lack of clothing.

He started the shower, and she got a soft, clean cloth, covered it with soap, and lathered his back with slow, circular strokes. She pressed up against him, and her hand and the soft cloth moved around to stroke his very erect cock. She stroked him slowly, wrapping her arms around him and discarding the cloth to jerk him off with soft kisses on his shoulders and neck.

He whispered, “Faster, please.”

She moved her hands faster, he groaned, and his hips jerked as his cum hit the wall and then washed down the drain.

She kissed his neck and sighed, moving her hand slowly as he trembled in her grip. She pulled away, and he slumped. He pulled her around him and kissed her. She returned the kiss and then caught the motion behind him. She squeaked, “Oh, hi, Kek.”

Alohi kissed her again, holding her head and moving his lips against her ravenously. “You didn’t know he would come when we played?”

She blinked. “I knew you would.”

He laughed and said, “Okay, you washed my back. Now you can get the salt off.”

He stepped away, and the spray had taken the suds away. Kek came into the shower, and Hara quickly rinsed off before trying to get past him. “Uh, it’s all yours.”

He was extremely aroused, and the band of his knot was wide and taut.

She muttered, "That looks painful."

"Oh, it is. Very. Can you help me with it like you assisted Alo?"

"Sure, but I am not sure I can reach around you."

"Oh, you can face me for it."

She stepped forward and wrapped her hands around his cock, and she began a slow stroking that had him narrowing his eyes.

He murmured, "I don't think this will do."

She blinked. "Harder? Faster?"

He smiled. "Softer, wetter."

Hara looked at him and swallowed. "Oh."

He chuckled and lifted her, turning the water off and lining his body up with hers. To her shock, the wide head slipped in without much issue. She felt the pressure, but no pain came with it.

She looked up at him in surprise.

"I knew that playing with Alo would get you started." He smiled. "He's insidious."

He was supporting her and slowly eased her down. Her lids fluttered as he went deeper. It felt so nice. Better than nice.

“How are you doing?”

She bit her lip and nodded, “Uh-huh.”

He chuckled, lifted her, and lowered her. Her eyes opened wide as that set off a whole new set of sensations.

A soft whine left her throat, and he moved her faster, harder until the building tension told her she was going to fly apart again. She clutched at him and softly whimpered as he continued the thrusts until she gasped and groaned as her body pulsed around him. That was when he pushed hard, and she shrieked as the knot fully corked her, and heat rushed into her. She shuddered while her muscles clasped and squeezed him, and he shoved in deeper.

She panted, and then he licked her neck before biting down, and she howled in surprise.

He kept his teeth buried under her skin, and her heart pounding had a slower echo suddenly, followed by a twisting of a sort of a ribbon of emotion between them in a thick silver with the ripple of a thinner gold strand. Satisfaction came through the silver strand, and happy excitement came through the gold.

She was limp, pinned in two places.

When the link was thick enough, Kek released his bite and licked at her gently. She softly whined again, and he surged into her further. She was stretched and uncomfortable, but there was no pain.

She asked, “How much further can you go?”

“Invitation or query?”

“Query. An invitation would look like this.” She brought her legs up and widened herself to one hundred and eighty degrees.

He shoved her against the tile wall and pressed into her.

She gasped and squirmed, but he got all the way in. She couldn’t close her legs if she wanted to.

She huffed and looked at him. “Guess we didn’t need those toys.”

“They are all flanged. We can use them for anal training.”

Her eyes snapped wide. “What?”

“Don’t you think it would be fun to be between Alo and myself in his heat or my rut?”

“You have a weird idea of fun. It sounds sweaty to me.”

“But with you able to do the splits, we can both get all the way to the hilt.”

“He doesn’t have a hilt.”

Kek pushed against her rhythmically, and she noticed that something inside her was causing a different sort of excitement.

He kept up the lazy rocking, and the tension built and built, and then she screamed softly as raw pleasure spilled through her. She felt the surge inside her and suddenly felt that Kek might slip loose.

He rocked into her again, and this time, he slipped back a little. Kek laughed. “I am

not ready to let you go. Not quite yet, but you know you will have to be close to me for the rest of the day and possibly the week.”

“Why?”

“Because I need to tend the bite, and sex with you feels amazing. Both of those are excellent reasons.”

She felt the lazy ripple of the ribbon in her mind. “So, you can find me now.”

“Yes, without shifting forms.”

She nodded. “Yes. That.”

Kek rubbed his cheek against hers, and when she lifted her head to his, he kissed her. She could feel his pleasure, and he could feel hers. It took the guesswork out of it but was very gratifying.

They clung together for another four minutes, and the swell of his knot gave way, and he pulled out of her.

She looked down. “Glad we are in the shower.”

He grinned. “Sex is messy if you do it right. We did it very right.”

She squirmed, and he released her legs, though he didn’t drop her. The shower went on, and when the spray was warm, he pivoted and washed them both off.

Her sex was hot and achy, but it was otherwise fine. When washed, rinsed, and washed again, she was wrapped in a drying cloth and carefully walked into the bedroom. Alohi was smiling, and he looked at her mark, grinned, and said, “It looks

nice and clean.”

She nodded. “Um, thank you.” She found the gold strand and showed how dazed she was.

“Oh, treasure. Have a seat. I will get you something to wear, and then we can go down for some food.”

“Food will be sent up in the next thirty minutes.”

Alohi blinked. “Really? We never eat up here.”

“I am not sated yet, so it is best for all of us to remain here for the day.”

Alo blinked. “Right.”

Kek smiled and lay on the wide platform. “Alo? Would you and Hara join me?”

Hara paused until Alo was snuggled in, and then she settled near them. Arms reached out and pulled her into their pile, holding her against Alo.

Alo rolled and snuggled her in between them.

“You had a busy morning, Hara. Get some rest. Mating day is rough on betas.” Kek was crooning. “You have done so well, treasure. I am so proud of you.”

She thought about it. Rough? No, he had been careful right until his knot wedged in.

She snuggled against the omega with her lips pressed to his collarbone. She nuzzled his neck and sighed. Now that her body was awake, it was humming slightly. She squirmed against him, and he helped her get his erection between her thighs. She

rocked her hips on him and felt Kek's hand on her hip.

She moaned as she got him slick, and he returned the favour. Hara conveyed what had become urgency, and Alo smiled, kissed her, and pulled her under him. He pressed into her slowly and undulated until her opening took him in.

She rocked with him, wrapping her legs around his waist, and hung on. She focused on the sensations coming back to her until he rotated his hips and started pressing on that spot that the knot had found.

Hara started whining, and he grinned and pressed his teeth over Kek's mark. A whirling mix of happiness, lust, satisfaction, irritation, and urgency broke through to her. She came hard when Kek loomed behind Alo and bit the back of his neck slowly. There was a hot rush inside, and she felt the pleasure waves in her start again.

Alo grunted and got heavier, and to her astonishment, Kek settled on him, moving slowly. Alo got hard again, and she felt the slow and careful thrusts that he was getting from Kek.

She felt the movements and tried to listen through the link to figure out what they felt like, but theirs was a long-standing relationship, and despite him moving inside her, she didn't feel like she was involved.

Kek groaned, and Alo whined and shuddered, spilling into her once more.

She had had her fun, so it was only right they had theirs.

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When they moved away from Haravin, she got up and went to clean up. Her legs wobbled, but she made it. She cleaned up and sighed before going back to the bedroom where Kek and Alo were curled together and napping.

Poor boys were tired.

She got dressed and brushed her hair, lifting her head as she heard a slight polite scratch at the door.

She opened the door and retrieved the tray that had been left.

She put it on a low table, and despite being hungry, she didn't eat.

Hara wanted to join the pile of bodies, but she wasn't sure where to fit in.

She looked around in the cupboards and found spare sheets. It was twenty minutes before Kek opened his eyes, and Alo groaned under him. She smiled. "You two shower. I will change the bedding, and then food is waiting."

Kek got up, lifted Alo, and carried him to the bathroom.

She changed the sheets efficiently and pulled the previous ones into a wadded ball.

They returned from the shower and fell on the food with good appetites.

She pushed down her hunger and just sat silently nearby when they both sat back. "Is there any left?"

Kek chuckled. “As usual, they sent just the right amount. It was special. Did you like it?”

She cocked her head. “I didn’t get any. You eat, then Alo eats, and then I eat. There isn’t anything left. I will take the tray to the kitchen and see if I can get something there.”

She smiled, got the tray arranged, and lifted it. There was a stunned effect on her senses right now, and she didn’t know why.

She carried it out, walked to the kitchen, and delivered the tray. She stood in the doorway, and finally, a woman smiled. “Oh, thank you. So, did they like it?”

“They did. They pronounced it perfect for them.” She inclined her head. “Is there some fruit or cold meat around? My appetite is a little larger than I anticipated.”

The woman nodded. “Of course. Alo’s portion had some of the royal birds from Emerald Island. They started sending them as gifts this morning.”

“That is very nice for him.”

“It is said that if they are eaten, they will help with alpha pregnancies.”

“I am sure they will be helpful. May I have some fruit, please?”

An apple was pressed into her hands, and she tore it apart in seconds. Her stomach eased, and she found the compost bin and deposited the core. She washed her hands, but it seemed there wasn’t any meat available. She would have to wait until dinner. Maybe she could go into the lagoon and catch some fish.

She tried to use the link, but it was muffled. She had done something wrong. Hara

sighed and headed upstairs and found Kek and Alo cuddled together and napping again.

She moved around and found her phone and her new phone. She transferred a number from her old phone and crept out of the palace to make a call.

She smiled at the familiar cheetah-spotted features. “Hey, Ven!”

“Haravin! You are looking... not great. Have you gotten the fowl? It’s really important.”

“Fowl? The royal birds? Oh, no. They aren’t for me. They are for the omega, Alohi.”

“Great. The housekeeper and cook are playing games. I will be there tomorrow to officially greet you, and I will straighten things out. Don’t worry, sweetie. We will get it straightened out, but we are foreigners in very tight communities.”

Hearing that made things better. A little better. “Well, that makes it less horrible.”

“Yeah, Syar tried to get me a makeover that turned into a torture session. His housekeeper was in charge of that as well. She got her brains blown out during a kidnapping. Of me. I was the one kidnapped.” Ven smiled. “But in my case, the omega was in charge and the local, and his alpha was foreign, like me. Everyone was trying to find Reynaldo a breeder.”

“Oh. Well, I was just the match for the other side of the alpha. He’s metal. I am metal. Oh, hey, I can surf!” She laughed. “Naked.”

“Oh, you met the ocean. Nice.”

“Yeah, and then I got bodychecked by a dolphin and walked back to the shore.”

Ven giggled, and they chatted for a while, and when they were done, Haravin felt better. She also felt hot. “Oh, damn. How long have we been talking?”

“Two hours. Why?”

“I scorched myself. Gotta go. Talk soon.”

She hung up and headed upstairs. They had changed position but were still tangled. She got under the cool shower spray for a few minutes and then relaxed. She would get through the adjustment period, and things would be fine.

She headed back to the kitchen and found the housekeeper. “Hello, do you have anything for sunburns?”

The woman frowned. “No. I am afraid we don’t have anything on site.”

“Really? That isn’t very smart. Even locals can suffer from sun exposure.” She turned on her heel and went to the garden, snapping off an aloe leaf and squeezing out the gel.

The housekeeper came toward her. “Assaulting the royal gardens is a criminal offence.”

“Great.”

She got another leaf and put the aloe on her shoulders.

The housekeeper grabbed her arm. “That’s it. You are out of here.”

Amused, Haravin walked with her. There were men in loose uniforms waiting, which meant that they had to have been called earlier.

“Miss, who are you?”

“The king’s beta. Haravin Dillard.”

“There are no registries for the royal house.”

“Of course, there aren’t. If I get deported, where do I go?”

“Emerald Island and then the mainland.”

“Cool. Cool. Let me grab my passport, and you can kick me off the island.”

The housekeeper held it up.

The officer took it, verified it, and nodded. “Come with us, Miss Dillard.”

She walked down the hill with them, and they took her to the docks. “So, as no charges have been laid and nothing is official, I am guessing one of you is related to the housekeeper?”

The one who had spoken to her said, “She is my mother-in-law.”

“Well, when the king and his omega don’t rise from their sleep, please charge her with poisoning. She fed them royal fowl from Emerald Island, and the hormone bomb she just gave them has knocked them out.”

“If it was a gift, I am sure it was fine.”

“It was marked like this.” She showed the image that Ven had sent her. For King Kekoa’s Beta. Betas only. Toxic to Alphas. Complete with a skull and crossbones on it.

“Make sure you go in person and tell him that you have ejected me from the island.”

The ferry was pulling in, and a group of folks who looked eager to begin their holidays poured in.

The officers thankfully stayed with her until the ferry was clear. One of the officers spoke to the captain, and they settled her near the front of the vessel, loaded up, and then were on their way back to Emerald Island.

She called Alo, but there was no answer. His body was dealing with the high dose of estrogen and progesterone that the birds contained.

She called Ven and told her what was going on, so everything was in place two hours later when the ferry arrived. The phones out here really did have a solid signal.

King Syar and his alpha, Reynaldo, were waiting for her. Ven was in the helicopter, and she had two kittens with her as well as some care packages. Greetings were made, and they loaded into the helicopter, where the pilot took off, and they headed back to the Wonder Islands.

She had to wake up her sleeping beauties before the nap turned into a coma.

The helicopter lowered them into the open green space next to the palace. Reynaldo brought the med kit, and Ven took a royal fowl and brought the kittens.

Syar was stalking forward and said to the housekeeper, “Where is King Kekoa?”

The woman spluttered, “He’s resting with his omega.” She leaned forward and whispered, “I think he may be going into heat soon.”

“He isn’t. He’s going to start kidney failure in a few hours if we don’t start treatment.

When something comes in addressed for a beta. Read the fucking page!” He roared. It was impressive from an omega.

Haravin walked toward the house.

The housekeeper stretched her arms out. “What is she doing here? She was deported.”

Reynaldo pushed past the housekeeper. “She is an attaché of Emerald Islands and has diplomatic immunity. Stand aside.”

The housekeeper stumbled to the side, and they walked quickly through the house and up to the second floor. The two were still there and breathing shallowly.

“How heavy do you think Kek is?” Reynaldo was measuring something in a syringe.

“Two eighty?”

“Close enough. Alohi?”

“One seventy-five.”

“Low guess?”

“Low guess.”

“Good. If it takes an extra day, it takes an extra day.”

He rubbed alcohol on Kek’s butt and jabbed the larger load of the two needles. He did the same to Alohi. “They will come up in a few minutes. Do you want to be here?”

“Uh, I don’t know?”

“Why aren’t you out?”

“Didn’t eat it. There was only enough for two, and I eat last. Protocol.”

“No, the link should have had an effect on you. They got sleepy, so you should have gotten sleepy.”

She sighed. “I wasn’t sure where to go, so to keep from waking them up, I blocked the link.”

“You can do that?”

“Apparently.” She looked at the guys who were getting more colour. “I will wait with them.”

She knelt on the mat near the bed and rubbed the ankles of both.

Reynaldo shook his head and exited. “Ven is going to sic the kittens on you. Just a warning.”

She nodded and kept rubbing as they started to move. “Yup. I am warned.”

Alohi groaned, and she moved behind him, rubbing his shoulder. “Come on. Fight it. Come on, omega, your alpha is naked, and you are neglecting him.”

Alohi grunted and started moving. “Hara?”

“Oh, there’s my big, brave boy.” She got him some water and held his head while she helped him hydrate.

“What happened?”

“Well, the delicious lunch had food in it meant for me. Royal fowl from Emerald Island. The wild cat there hunted it and told Ven it was for me.” She chuckled. “Ven nearly had heart failure. She was supposed to be having a year off.”

“The cat told her?”

“Have you seen Ven? Talking to cats is the least surprising thing.” She got him to take more water and then tried to wake Kek up.

“Come on, Kek. Get up.”

He wasn’t moving. She shoved him, and there was no response.

She forced open the link between them and held it wide open. She knew this would work with an omega, but well, she could only try.

She sprinted down to the kitchen and got a bowl of ice. Then she returned upstairs and noted that Alohi seemed to be doing better, but he was sitting and holding his head.

She tried to wake Kek one more time, and when he didn’t move, she grabbed handfuls of ice and inserted them into her.

She felt the pain of the ice inside her, and she gave it to him. He jerked, and his eyelids twitched, and the whole time she just had to focus on pain. She grabbed a chunk of ice and pressed it to her mark.

Kek inhaled hard and jerked up to sit.

She leaned over and got his cup of water. “Drink.”

His hands flapped, so she moved behind his head and held the cup to his mouth. “There we go. How are you doing?”

He finished the cup. “You are in pain.”

“Sort of. Not really. I gave myself frostbite.” She chuckled. “Alohi is fine. He got the same dose you did, but his body already responds to estrogen. Yours... doesn’t.”

He looked at her. “What happened?”

“Royal fowl from Syar and Ven. It was marked for me. A warning had been put on it, and they still gave you two just enough for the two of you. You ate a hormone bomb.”

He grunted. “I am going to have a chat with housekeeping.”

“Don’t bother. I am going to challenge her for the title.”

Alohi shook his head. “Don’t. It’s a ton of work.”

“I know. I took care of four alphas, two omegas, and two babies, with five to thirty-seven visitors per day.”

Kek murmured, “It will tether you to the household?”

“So? I need an anchor point.”

Alohi sat up. “Kek is your anchor point.”

“He really isn’t.” She shrugged. “A baby might, but that is a long way away if I keep avoiding poultry.”

She tidied up and got more water for them. “You should be up and around in a few minutes. The water will speed recovery. Kek probably won’t be in the mood for sex for a day or two. Sorry, Alohi.”

She stood up. “King Syar is here, along with Ven and Reynaldo. She brought some kittens for here.”

Kek swallowed. “They brought kittens?”

“Yes. Baby black cats. They are cute with really big paws.”

Alohi blinked. “Wait. How did they get here? Did you call them?”

“No, they met me at the ferry on their island and flew me back here.”

Kek blinked. “Wait. What? Why were you on a ferry?”

“The housekeeper had me deported because I don’t have a visitor’s visa. Or any kind of visa.” She chuckled. “Seems I go halfway around the world, and alphas are the same.”

She got up and felt roaring and twisting in her mark. There was a lot of outrage in the reaction. She returned to the kitchen with the ice bowl and dumped it.

“They are going to need something moisture heavy to flush their systems. A soup or a stew alongside their meal.”

The staff had been eyeing her warily, and she said softly, “Get started, or I will, and

then you will be out of work.”

They started moving.

She sighed and left to join her guests in the throne room. “Thank you, guys, so much for coming to the rescue. Kek and Alo are both up and getting back to themselves. Each has had a litre of fluids, and I got Kek mad, so that should speed his recovery.”

Reynaldo was playing with the kittens. His hands were occupied with black fur. “That will work, but how does your mark feel?”

“Like someone is cursing me out from half a block away.”

He blinked. “Oh. But you can still hear him, right?”

“I can feel him, not hear. It’s getting quieter now.” She smiled. “It’s getting further away.”

Ven nodded. “It’s okay. What do you need?”

“Food? I am super hangry right now.”

Ven smiled. “Is there anything in the kitchen that you want?”

“No. I had the apple they gave me earlier. It was green and gave me reflux.”

“Right. Why don’t you go out and get some street food from the main street?”

“No money.”

Reynaldo handed the kittens to Ven and Syar. “I will take her, and I will get you guys

something.”

Reynaldo offered his hand, and she took it. They walked out of the palace and down the hill toward the town.

“Hara, this is a rough start.”

“That is a fair assessment.”

“Are you sure that this is the place for you?”

“Our other selves match. We don’t have to be best friends. I just want to set up shelter and food. Anything else can be negotiated. Hey, a dance studio.” She smiled.

He snorted. “Every town, village, and city out here has dance studios. You dance?”

“Not like what is probably custom here. I used to do ballroom, and occasionally, it comes in handy.”

He chuckled and then sighed. “So, Kekoa is devoted to Alohi.”

“Right. I know that.”

“But, together, they can’t have kids.”

“Right. Can’t one of them just get another of the other designation?”

“It isn’t that simple. They are linked.”

“So? It doesn’t seem inconvenient to me. Mine is just a soft hum now. Easy to ignore.”

“It isn’t supposed to be. It is supposed to be binding between psyches and life forces.”

“I am sure it isn’t that way for everyone.”

They got to the food stalls, and she let her nose lead her around. Reynaldo produced a bag, and they started to collect food that was wrapped in different leaves in different styles. The bag was full when Reynaldo finished the last payment, and they headed back.

He pulled out one of her latest picks and handed it to her. “Eat this on the walk back.”

She nodded and ate.

“Ven tells me that you met at something called Book Club?”

“Yes. I didn’t know if I qualified for the club, but it turns out a collision with Kek and Alo in the city spurred my issue. I just bumped into them. Nothing major. Betas did the assault portion of my origin story.”

“What?”

“They had me sewn so no alpha would possibly fit.” She kept eating. “So, a narrow speculum was about all that would fit. The stitches were so well done, they were nearly invisible.”

“Oh.”

“Yeah. Oh sums it up. So, now I am here. Kek and Alo know what happened. I seem to be turning into a delightfully frisky beta, but I think that stopped.”

“Stopped?” They entered the shadowed building.

“It was there, and then it wasn’t. Poof. All gone. Oh, and I got tackled by a dolphin this morning, so all in all, not a stellar day.”

They walked over to where low tables were set, and Kek and Alo were seated with their prepared meals. She got some more of the takeout packets and went in with ravenous intent.

She was hunched over her third packet when Kek’s legs were next to her.

“You are not in your place, treasure.”

She shrugged. “I don’t like my place. Here, I get to eat when I am hungry, and no one smacks my fingers.”

“You are to sit with your alpha.”

She looked up at him. “You aren’t there anymore. Isn’t that weird? This morning, it was strong, and now, it’s gone. Poof.”

She started the fourth packet, and he crouched next to her. “That is one of my favourites.”

“They are down in the main square.”

“Can I have some?”

She paused. “No, I have given enough today. This is for me. I need to make more things for me.”

He put his hand on her mark, but she kept eating. The wrapped pastry was really good and deserved more attention than she was giving it.

His fingers rubbed her mark, and there was nothing. Just pressure and friction.

His fingers trailed away.

“Did you want something, Your Majesty?”

“Alo wanted you to sit with us.”

“He has you, Your Majesty. I am sure you are all he needs.”

Her words were coming out weird, and she knew it wasn't right, but she looked up at him and smiled. “I have been an intrusion into your life, and I am aware of it. I am attempting to reduce my impact on your life. If there is some kind of guesthouse or something where I can reside, I will figure out a way to support myself if I can get some sort of resident status. If not, Ven has offered me a place in her household on Emerald, and you can just call me when you need me.”

Kek stepped back in shock.

Syar slipped in with a strange expression on his face. He lifted his phone and used the light on her mark. “Well, that explains a lot.”

She kept eating.

Kek scowled. “What?”

“Look at the mark. Actually, look at it.”

Kek leaned forward and saw the light. “There is my bite, and... what the fuck is that?”

Syar turned the light off. “Which person with human dentition could have placed a mark over yours and stopped the progress of the link?”

Alohi was sitting with his fingers laced together. “The mark looked so good, I just had to bite it.”

Kek thudded to his knees. “Alo, do you know what you did?”

“Something bad?”

Reynaldo said, “He didn’t know. They don’t really educate them, even if they have a centre in town. An interrupted mark is rare. Few bite directly on top of each other, even if they share a bond partner. If the mark isn’t set yet, it shorts it out. So, she was linked, and then she wasn’t.”

Hara looked at him and cocked her head. “Oh, that would explain it.”

Ven looked at Kek. “But she still took care of you, made sure your vitals were stable, and then she goaded the person who would get her kicked off the island. I had already been talking to her a little, but an hour after we spoke, she was on the ferry and coming for help. This is also the first food she has had since she had breakfast.”

The kittens wandered over to Hara and investigated the leaf wrappings from the food.

She chuckled and played with them, opening the final fish stew in a pastry shell, and she offered them some food.

Alohi spoke, “What do we do? How do we fix her?”

Reynaldo sighed. “We need to start the connection again, but it takes another alpha to get it started.”

Ven frowned. “I am gonna ask Ford if he has any candidates.” She typed frantically.

Her phone started going berserk with incoming files. She laughed and raised her brows. “Oh, wow. Yeah, he’s got one. It’s a dance partner from a video, and wow, they are good together.”

Syar walked up behind her and watched then grinned. “They are amazing together.”

Syar turned to Kekoa. “Are you willing to take on another alpha in your pack?”

“Yes. She’s my counterpart. Whatever it takes, I will do it.”

Ven moved around to face Haravin. “Hara?”

“Yes, Ven?”

“Would you like it if Narro were one of your alphas?”

Hara shivered at the thought. “Only if he wants to. He was very popular with the other betas on set. If he doesn’t want me, I can just hang out at the bottom of the lagoon until I am needed for something. I don’t want to be in the way.”

Kek crouched in front of her. “Would having him make you happy?”

“I don’t know.” She stared at him, and Alohi made a sound like a sob. “Are you unwell?”

Ven muttered, “I am fucking ordering an alpha... and send.”

Alohi swallowed. “What happened?”

Reynaldo said quietly, “Her emotions were stretching and linking to Kekoa’s. That process takes place while the mark heals. With the extra bite exactly over the alpha’s mark, it severed the link before it had a chance to develop, so her mind is scrambling around trying to find a connection, and it can’t find anything. Basically, she has been emotionally blinded. She’s good at self-soothing, so she has gone cold. The other option recorded is for her to go mad. I think she made the right choice.”

Syar sat next to Haravin and took her hand. The kittens tumbled toward her, and she scratched under their chins mechanically.

Now, she had to wait to find out what happened next.

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The dark, swirling vortex got Kekoa's attention, and he moved forward to block the energy coming through. Instead of energy, Narro walked through, his gaze taking in the situation.

He walked to Haravin's side and knelt. "Hello, Hara."

"Hello, Narro."

"I hear you are not feeling well."

"I am not feeling anything."

"But you still worked to save your alpha and omega."

She shrugged. "They were supposed to be mine, and now... aren't. If I remember my course on links, this means that I will either go nuts or slowly die because my life force is draining away. Which do you think I should choose?"

He smiled and stroked her cheek. "I think you should choose me. I am the third option."

"I don't want to be a burden."

"I know. You wouldn't be a burden. You would be my precious jewel."

"But I am Kekoa's counterpart."

“When I link with you, his mark will open again, and we will all be stronger.”

She nodded. “Okay.”

Narro smiled at her, his red-purple eyes sparkling. He glanced at Kekoa. “Where can I take her?” He picked her up.

“Come with me.”

Kek walked through the house and brought them to a room that was separate from the royal quarters.

“Oh. I guess I am not your beta anymore.” She mumbled it, and Kek looked stricken.

“I will explain it to her. Don’t worry. She’ll be back soon.”

Narro moved into the room and shut the door in Kekoa’s face.

“It isn’t his fault.” She stated as he set her on the bed.

“It is. He is supposed to guard you while you are in an open state. You can’t do it. Yes, his omega is cute, but you should not have been left alone with him. His instincts are to keep his alpha available to him. That may mean cutting off your connection before it is solid.”

“That is unpleasant.”

He chuckled. “It is. Are you in agreement that I have sex with you?”

She looked at him. “We dance well together.”

He nodded. "We certainly do."

She opened her clothing while he undressed. When he came to her arms, it was warm and secure. He didn't let her drop, and he didn't let her down. When he bit her, he was firmly inside her, and she shivered as his body wrapped around hers from behind.

The third time she came, she felt the connection between them thicken, and then, like it had been popped loose, the connection with Kekoa was back in place.

He had his arm under her body and across her breast while the other arm held her hips. Narro moved slowly with her, and she felt pleasure build and then burst into a thousand tiny shards.

The door opened, and she turned her head to kiss Narro. They continued to move lazily together.

Kek knelt near them. "You are back."

Narro smiled and lifted his head. "She certainly is."

She shivered and looked back at Kek. "It's embarrassing, but I feel better. I am actually feeling right now."

Hara let the warmth and security lap across the links in waves.

Kek looked a little sad, but he smiled. "I am glad. Narro, we will discuss why you are black with pointed ears when you two have finished here."

Narro chuckled. "I suppose you don't have many dark Elite out here."

Hara yawned and patted his arm. "There are a bunch of them back where I came

from, and they are very good mates for the women who have them. They are also fairly fertile.”

Narro chuckled. “More like extremely attuned to our mates.”

Hara felt fear and embarrassment, and she looked toward the door. “Come on in, Alo. It’s fine.”

Alo rushed in and lay next to her, pressing against her and whimpering softly. He was apologizing through the link, and their connection was now no longer a thin ribbon, it was a wide cable half the size of Kek’s. The link to Narro was long and straight.

Hara sighed and stroked Alo’s cheek.

Narro chuckled. “So, that was slow and careful. I look forward to your heat.”

Kek paused. “Heat?”

“Oh, yes, this kind of beta goes through a heat.”

Alo swallowed. “That is why the fowl showed up from Emerald Island.”

“Yeah. Ven told me it takes about a week to go from nothing to a heat when consuming those birds. Weird. Good thing they only show up on Emerald.”

Kek shook his head. “They are here; they just remain in the deep jungle.”

Hara’s eyes widened. “The cats. That’s why the cats.”

Kek chuckled. “Panthers. They were trying to get up here.”

Hara smiled softly. “Cute babies.”

Narro kissed her shoulder. “I am working on it.”

She snorted, reached back, and threaded her fingers through his hair. She made a fist. “Don’t try too hard.”

He laughed and nipped her shoulder. “We will practice all the time to get you used to the idea.”

Kek watched them, and his eyes burned.

Hara got it. “Oh, separate rooms for alphas. Got it.”

Kek muttered, “Free her.”

Narro chuckled. “The point has been made.”

She knew what the point was. Narro slid out of her, and when she shifted forward, Alo hugged her and sobbed. The cascade of fluids out of her was distracting, but Alo’s hug demanded attention.

Narro muttered, “Don’t worry, Hara, your marks are sealed this time.”

She smiled and hugged Alo hard. “It’s okay, baby bunny. Bite me again, and I break your nose.”

He laughed and hiccupped.

Kek sighed and relaxed. Hara smiled that it had been Alo’s guilt causing so much of the issue. Kek had felt it immediately, of course. She hadn’t felt anything, not even

her own emotions.

Now, she felt warm and pretty. Narro was stroking her back. He had told her she was gorgeous, intelligent, and the thing that made her feel twelve feet tall. He said she was strong and a survivor. She was pretty sure that it had caused her to cum on the spot. She had her alpha and didn't have to share him unless Alohi made a move.

She let Alo go and wiped his tears. "Feeling better?"

He sniffled and nodded.

"Bunny, can you get me some more clothes?"

"Yes, my beta." He wrinkled his nose.

She snorted and then was facing Kek. She inclined her head. "My alpha."

He smiled, but it was a sad smile. "Nothing happens easily for you."

"Nope. No straight lines in my destiny." She shrugged.

Narro got up behind her and wrapped his arms around her. "We will be on the lookout for speed wobbles."

"Thanks. Oh, are Ven and the guys still here?"

Kek nodded. "Yes. They said it was time for the babies to get used to being overnight with the dragon, shark, and dragon?"

She smiled. "Good."

Alo came back in with an alpha-sized wrap for Narro and her normal clothes. Narro smiled and sent a flare of cold fire over them both to take care of biologicals.

She quickly got dressed, and he accepted Kek's assistance with the wrap, and soon, they were all dressed. Hara straightened her legs and wobbled a little as she left the room and headed for the main floor.

Ven and Reynaldo were cuddling while Syar played with the kittens. The household staff was serving them with deference.

Ven grinned. "You look better. Exhausted but better."

"Thanks. Really. Thank you." She shoved Reynaldo aside, and he laughed as she hugged Ven.

Ven felt super silky soft, and her panther spots and dark fingers were an obvious clue to Reynaldo.

"You are welcome, Hara. Can you show your adaptation to my guys? They can't really see why it had to be Kekoa."

Kek huffed.

Syar shrugged. "She and Narro get along so well. There has to be a reason that it can't just be him."

Hara shrugged and said, "Follow me."

She loosened her clothing a little, and when she was on full stone under her feet, she shifted. She shifted in the bright light where her glossy metal skin caused light to spark and reflect all the way down the hill. She was a glittering beacon and turned to

Narro. They were the same size.

He grinned and shrugged, getting taller until he was taller by six inches, and his eyes glowed red. “You are beautiful, Hara.”

Ven came up and tapped her arm. It rang with the solid sound of metal. “Oh, wow. I didn’t think it was all the way through.”

Kek walked toward her in his own metal skin.

Ven nodded. “Got it. Makes sense now. We can’t pick our adaptations; we can just deal with it and find alphas who complement us or omegas who want to get into our pants.”

Hara shook her head. “It wasn’t like that. We just matched, like cards in a deck. No lust, no interest beyond that.”

Kekoa frowned. “That is not the truth.”

She looked at him. “It is the truth as I know it. Alohi and I shared an ice cream cone, and that was the hottest thing that happened until we were here.”

She shrugged. “A few more wrong turns, and here we are. If we have children, they will be very powerful and rather tall. If Alohi has children, I will help him raise them.”

Alohi paused and said, “I can’t have kids.”

“What?”

“When I was really young and was running wild, I got a disease and ended up

sterile.”

“And you figured this out just over five years ago.”

Alohi nodded. “Yes. This is also why Kek insisted on the testing that hurt you.”

Hara winced, remembering the burning and tearing. Kek rubbed her metal arms and said, “However we got together, we are still a match. Affection will grow.”

She looked to Narro. “Affection is already here.”

Narro smiled and held his arms out. “I am content to join your pack. Shall we work out the documents and make plans for her first heat?”

She frowned. “That is a pretty far way off.”

Narro smiled. “Is it? The guardians of Emerald want you consuming the royal fowl, and they get their way.”

Kek smiled. “One of the new guardians has made their way into the sand garden out back.”

Hara shrugged. “Everybody’s got to go somewhere.”

Kek sighed. “We have the fowl here, but no one eats them for obvious reasons. If you eat them at the wrong time, in the wrong quantity, you will have side effects.”

Alohi nodded. “I can confirm that.”

Hara sighed. “So, I have a practical alpha and a fun one.”

Narro nodded. "You do, and this alpha would like to dance with you. Two alphas for two aspects of you."

She stepped firmly into his arms, and he started to sway. He leaned down slightly. "So, can you dance in gold form?"

"I don't know."

"Would you like to find out?"

She looked at him. "Are you willing to endanger your feet?"

"I heal quickly."

She took stock of her body. "Perhaps not right now."

He wrapped an arm around her waist and pulled her against him.

"Oh, Ford has finished a few of the overlays. The pixies and trolls are looking great."

She smiled. "Good. That was a rough day."

"It had its bright points."

She returned to her normal skin, and Narro held her close. She shuddered in relief as he stroked her back and gave her the comfort she had never had. From the age of thirteen until now, she had never had someone just hold her to let her know someone was there for her.

Narro explained it to the others. "From the time of the surgery, she had no physical contact with others for comfort. Dance practice and performance were her entire

human experience. She's unsure about contact and has to learn."

Kek frowned. "She was fairly direct with contact."

"She touched you. You didn't touch her the way you touch an omega, and that's what she needs."

Ven sighed. "He's not wrong. If Syar hadn't been climbing all over me, I never would have relaxed enough for Reynaldo. That took some heavy relaxing and a lot of hormones. I was treated like an omega from the get-go, and it made a very large difference."

Alohi blushed. "I looked at her as another person to coddle me. She didn't object."

"It was the first contact I have had in over a decade that wasn't done to a soundtrack." She shrugged. "Kek was cold to me except as a match to his own peculiarity, so a bit of me was relieved when the mark went silent." She turned, and Narro kept his arms around her. "I hadn't realized that you could have sex with someone and be completely alone at the same time. If I am to stay here, you need to finish that paperwork so I can show my residency when they try to kick me off the island again. I need access to my accounts somehow. I haven't seen bank machines in the village. If I want to go out and buy a snack, I don't want to disturb anyone."

Syar snorted. "I forgot that one as well, but I got her residency stamped right away."

Kek looked a little relieved by that. "I will get on it as soon as we get back to the office."

Alohi turned to him. "Do it now."

Kekoa nodded and returned to skin as he walked inside. "I will do it now."

He walked inside, and Alohi walked up to her. “I didn’t think about it. You really haven’t been able to enjoy attention from other people?”

“I have not. I know you tried, but it is all very sudden, and trusting people is difficult for me.”

He glanced at the elf holding her. “And you trust him?”

“We danced together for hours, starting by discussing what we could and couldn’t manage together. We communicated, laughed, sweated, and all with only mild flirting as I had already expressed that I wasn’t comfortable with it.”

Narro chuckled. “My people are only compatible with this type of beta. The transformed omegas.”

Alohi jolted. “Really? Oh. Oh, no.”

All of the implications were there. Alohi started crying.

Hara shrugged. “It’s happening a lot in the city. That’s how Ven became fuzzy.”

Reynaldo chuckled. “And she is a very tall omega.”

Alohi smiled. “She is, and I guess Hara is, too.”

Narro chuckled. “If you doubt, how much difficulty did Kek have getting inside her?”

“Oh. Uh, none. She was slick as... oh my.”

Hara shrugged. “You didn’t know what you were looking for, and I only transformed to get that one particular alpha. After he has his heir, I am going to be free and clear

to spend the rest of my eggs the way I want.” She frowned. “I am wondering why the fowl have shown up.”

Syar smiled. “You may not be in heat, but Kek is pretty close to his rut. The guardians are trying to get you up to speed to have your body ready to catch and carry.”

“Oh. I thought it was just some food I didn’t have to beg for.”

Narro whispered, “Did you want to go home?”

“Where is home? Ford probably has a new housekeeper from the book club. My apartment is still there, so that is that. I have enough savings to keep me comfortable for ten months.”

“You don’t want to stay here?”

She met Alohi’s gaze. “I don’t have to if I will be in the way. Having a second alpha has set me free.”

Syar cleared his throat. “You will always be welcome on Emerald. We can set you up with a nice cottage. You can start a dance studio.”

“That sounds like fun.” She looked at Narro. “Are you up for that?”

“Well, learn local dances first and then open an all-varieties dance studio.”

“Cool. I can learn flamenco.” She smiled.

Narro asked, “You couldn’t before?”

“No, the hard steps hurt a lot.”

Understanding flared in his gaze. “Oh, right.”

She wanted to discuss possible studio names but needed to learn local dances first. Maybe now that she could move her pelvis freely, she could manage a lot more.

Alohi smiled. “I can teach you local dances. I don’t think Kekoa was allowed to learn.”

Syar chuckled. “He was. He’s a bit awkward.”

Alohi chuckled. “It’s cute.”

Kekoa returned and nodded. “Haravin Dillard of the Treasure Pack, you are legally a citizen of these islands.” He knelt and snapped a gold cuff around her ankle.

“What’s that?”

He looked up at her and stroked her thigh. “It is an identifier. Everybody knows Alohi; everyone will stay away from Narro, but you look like a charming beta, so you get a cuff in addition to the mark. We don’t want anyone thinking you are a tourist.”

“What happens to tourists?”

“Well, it is a very relaxed society around the ferries. The lower city is a lot of fun for adults, but things get out of control.”

Ven sighed. “Well, it seems like things are under control here. If you want to come over for a visit, just take the ferry and come on over. I have taken dance classes, and they are rather fun. Syar and Reynaldo are amazing, but I am biased.”

Hara looked at them and sighed. “What do the new babies eat?”

“Oh, they are catching their own meals already. Be prepared to be vermin-free in short order, and then they will hunt in the wilds.” Syar smiled. “They are natural to these islands, so they are good with whatever they find in the wild. They will come to you for cuddles.”

Ven smiled. “When they are grown, we can get them a male partner or two.”

Hara gasped. “The rescue.”

“Correct. They have two males who are a year and two years older than these ladies.” She smiled. “They will have a stable population back here in two decades.”

Kekoa smiled. “It’s good. It’s nice to have other predators on the island. We will do a photo shoot with them and put them in our tourism campaigns.”

Hara looked at him. “What will the price be for stealing or poaching them?”

“Two million for being caught with any trace of them.”

Ven nodded. “Good. They are chipped and trackable. If they leave this island, we go on the hunt.”

Narro nodded. “I will find them. Hunting is what I do. Well, that and dancing.”

Hara could think of something else that he did well, but Syar gave her a knowing look.

One of the little beasties in question tumbled out of the house and stumbled up to Hara. The tiny squeak made her smile, and she picked the little one up, filling both

arms. It was a teen, but the feet were huge, and the teeth were going to be very dangerous when the jaws finished matching.

“Aw, Precious, you are going to be huge, baby.” She rocked the kitten from side to side slowly.

Ven chuckled. “The instinct is weird, huh?”

Hara paused and then rocked the huge kitten again. “Some things can’t be subdued. Isn’t that right, Precious?”

The kitten headbutted her, and her sister wandered out with a large something in her mouth. “What do you have there, Princess?”

The item was dropped at Hara’s feet. It was one of the fowl. “Oh.”

Princess headbutted her and let out a plaintive meow.

Ven chuckled. “Do you need to learn how to gut a bird?”

“Yeah. That would be great.”

“Put down your buddy, and come with me. The kitchen is going to hate this.”

Precious protested as she was set down, and Ven led the way to show her how to treat one of the royal fowl. Hara had smelled feet at competitions that were worse than the scent of a fresh kill, so she got going, and Hara showed her how to prepare it in the easiest way. Frying. Roasting was also explained, but having the fowl dredged in seasoned flour made it more fun somehow.

They finished, and Hara eyed the platter.

The housekeeper was looking at Hara warily. Hara had been using her gold hand to move the fowl around in the pan.

“Anyway, the whole bird tastes like drumsticks. You will get used to it quickly, and if the kitchen stops cringing in the corner, they can prepare it with appropriate gloves during prep. I mean, they might not be able to manage it. They can barely make enough food for two, let alone three. If they ever skimp on your meals once you are pregnant, come to us. Our housekeeper knows how to treat those who live under our roof.” Ven looked around and sneered at the staff, who kept their gazes down.

Narro was leaning in the doorway and smiled. “I will make sure that you are attended to, Hara. That is what alphas are good for.”

Hara carried her platter past him and went up on her toes. He came down for a kiss. “That and other things, Narro.”

He chuckled and waited until Ven was headed toward her mates before he said, “I will be right back.”

Hara sat down, washed her hands in one of the wide bowls, and dried her hands on a towel. She started eating and groaned happily. It was the first solid food she had had in a few days. Breakfast didn’t count, and neither did snacks.

She tore through the bird in under five minutes. The cats came up behind her and purred.

Ven laughed. “Well, this is synching your system to one of your pack. No idea which one. For me, it was Reynaldo, but the next time was Syar. The next time, it was me, but I did that on my own.” She chuckled. “Thankfully, no babies on that one. Was a lot of fun, though.”

Hara chuckled. “To be frank, I am looking forward to having sex without an agenda. No marks, no fixing mistakes, and no re-dos. I haven’t tried sex just for fun yet.”

Narro tutted. “That’s a shame. It should be corrected rapidly.”

Kekoa blinked and smiled slowly. “It should, but I think tonight she needs her sleep. Today has been hard on her, mated, blocked, and mated again.”

“And then eating hormone-packed birds.” Hara muttered, “Yeah, I am due for a nap.”

She looked to the group from Emerald. “Thanks so much for coming to help.”

Ven smiled. “It’s nice to have someone else in the neighbourhood. Or accessible by helicopter. Whatever.”

Narro said, “Would you like me to transport you home?”

“Thank you, but the helicopter is waiting.” Syar smiled. “Mort wants to get back to his lady, so he has to head home.”

Ven got up and hugged them all. “Thanks again.”

They ruffled her hair, stroked her cheek, and said their farewells to everyone else. When they were gone, the kittens pushed against her legs, and she smiled at the feeling of being full again.

“Right. I am going to sleep. You all enjoy dinner. I am going to have my own private coma.”

Narro murmured, “I will come with you.”

“Despite me tiring you out, you have to be signed into the pack as well. I don’t want any more ambiguity.”

He nodded and smiled. “Yes, my treasure.”

Kek got up and hugged her, and Alohi hugged her and kissed her softly. She headed up the steps and left her dishes behind. She was trying to break her housekeeper habits.

Tomorrow, she was going to start learning local dances, and then she would look into opening a studio in the tourist area. Some people liked to pick up new skills with new partners on vacation. It made things more memorable.

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Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 3:23 am

Six weeks after those few riotous days, Hara was standing with her hands on her hips, and she watched the beach crew finish the last of the polishing. She had local instructors, an incoming travel blogger, and several vacationers who recognized her from her national wins and wanted to learn.

Hara looked at Narro and Kek. They looked great mopping the floor, but she had sworn never to share the picture. It was currently Alohi's lock screen.

A soft knock got her attention, and Hara walked over. "I'm sorry. We aren't quite open yet; I haven't buffed the alphas." She squinted into the light of the late morning, and a familiar voice spoke.

"That is a critical point to the process. You should get on that, Hara." The chuckle was the dealbreaker.

Hara rushed out and felt concern in her links. "Amby?"

"You've got it, cuz." Ambermarle Dillard stood there with a backpack, sunburn on her nose, and a cheeky grin. Amby was tall and curvy, and alphas in the distance were locked onto the presentation of her seriously impressive ass in leggings.

"Amby, what are you doing here?"

"Vlogging around the islands. It's a project that Ford got in his ear, and apparently, Emerald, Wonder, and the other islands in this chain have very specific festivals and attractions, so I am here experiencing life for the first time ever." She smiled. "I am not going to partake of these offerings, but I can advertise the parties and such."

“Wait, what do you mean experiencing life.”

Amby shrugged. “You weren’t the only one they did it to. I can actually walk with a full stride now. It’s amazing what we begin to feel is normal when we are told it is.”

Hara’s eyes watered, and she hugged her cousin. “I am so sorry.”

“I would say it’s fine, but I had to give a deposition. Anyway, that is how your friend Ford found me. He tortured me into giving him some tracks, and when that was done, he asked me if I wanted to travel. I said sure, and he mentioned that this is where you were, so of course, I came. I have gotten some great footage during my layover on Emerald. Wanna see?”

Hara gasped. “Of course. Wait. Why are you here?”

“I am doing the vlog on your new dance studio. Treasure Dance. Your instructors have to teach me to dance, island style. They have five days, which is the average time that folks spend here on the island, and while that is going on, I have to climb a cliff, go to a butterfly garden, and swim in the ocean.”

Hara felt the curiosity of her mates, and she kept Amby outside. “That is quite the itinerary.”

“I think Ford designed it because of my tattoo. Or whatever it is.”

Hara paused. “You have a tattoo?”

“Yeah, it’s really weird. Butterflies, a manta ray, and a waterfall. It’s like someone was drunk and put it together.”

Hara blinked. “Oh, right. Well, don’t mention this to the guys. They might know the ray and try and hook you up.” She paused. “Unless that’s what you want.”

“Well, I am a crappy swimmer, so unlikely to be the focus. Now, how are you doing?”

“Honestly, it was a rocky start, but now we work together pretty well. My mates are... well, the darkest one is Narro, the burnished bronze tall one is Kekoa, and the omega is Alohi. Kekoa and Alohi are the royal couple.”

“What are you, chopped liver?”

“No, I work for a living.”

They laughed together, and Amby came inside to meet the rest of the Treasure Pack. When that was done, the camera was set up, and interviews started. Amby was great and very natural in front of the camera.

After Kekoa had talked lovingly about his islands and the possibilities therein, the dance instructor came in, and Amby was off to her first lesson. She had an itinerary, and no one would stop her.

Hara watched as Amby stood barefoot and mimicked Illu, the master instructor, as they moved around to island music. Illu taught the stories with the movements and urged Amby to remove a layer or two of clothing.

Amby sighed and pulled off her tee and then her tank top. The rigid sports bra was all that was left on her top, and Hara held her breath as the dance instruction resumed and Amby slowly turned.

Hara held in her gasp. The butterflies were vivid and flying diagonally from hip to shoulder. The manta rose from her hips, and from right shoulder to mid-back, there was a tumbling waterfall with a glittering cascade. It was vibrancy and colour, and you would have to be blind to miss it.

Illu said, "That is quite the tattoo."

"Isn't it? I am still getting used to it."

"What do the motifs mean?"

Amby looked at Hara. "I am sure I will find out eventually. All right, back to the torture."

Amby's arms moved with incredible grace, her bare feet slid, and her hips rocked.

Illu said, "You have to move your hips. Come on, a pretty girl like you must have had her hips rocked a time or two."

Amby shook her head. "No, but I am working on it."

Hara watched her learn to dance as the first challenge for her time on the island. When Illu called an end to the hour, Amby stretched and got her camouflage back on.

Hara asked, "Can you come to the palace for dinner?"

"No. I am here to have five days in the tourist area, but after that, I can come for a day or so until you get tired of me. Then, it is off to the next islands." Amby turned off her equipment and got things back into her pack. "Tonight, it is quick food and then some night market and then bed. Tomorrow, I climb that waterfall."

"Seriously? We can do that here?"

Illu smiled as she made notes. "We were adventure tourism before folks realized that we were sex-positive. Then, all bets were off, and more folks showed up here to get their backs blown out than you could imagine. We have a ridiculously high alpha population. I am not complaining. I have a set of my own that I tried out first."

Hara covered her mouth.

Illu winked. “I am old, not dead. But frankly, alphas are good at making money, defense, and sex. May as well let them feel useful.”

Amby chuckled. “Well said. I am on my way to my assigned quarters.”

Illu asked, “Where are you sleeping?”

“The ocean-facing manor?”

“I will take you. My brother-in-law runs it, and he has been mentioning an interview.”

“That would be me.” Amby chuckled.

She heaved her pack up and grabbed her pack. “Lead away, Illu. Hara, call me if you have time.”

Hara smiled. “Your number is in my new phone. So, yes. I am very curious about the night market.”

Amby grinned. “Perhaps I will see you there.”

Amby hugged Hara and headed off with Illu.

Kek came around from the back and said, “You are not going to the night market. It’s full of drinking and horny alphas.”

“It’s where you met Alohi.”

He sighed. “That is true, but it is still dangerous.”

“Why?”

“Because one drunk grabs you in the ass, and you are going to turn to gold and deck them.” He grinned.

“It happened once. And when I found and punched that dolphin, he survived.”

“He now has a gold monocle around his eye.”

“Yes, and now I don’t have to punch all the dolphins in the area. He knows what he did.” Hara shrugged.

Kek laughed and hugged her. “Maybe the night market if you are up for it by then.”

“What are you planning?”

“A distraction.”

She prodded him in the chest. “I haven’t seen my cousin in a decade, and she finally washed up on the island where I am now living. I am not going to miss an opportunity to hang out with her just because you have suddenly gone prudish.”

“You know why I am wary.”

“And you know I am refusing to take a test until eight weeks after your rut. I can’t believe you bit Narro.”

“He had Alohi to console him.”

“Yeah, and you rutted me raw, and then I had Narro to console me.”

He blushed. “I should have been gentler.”

“Yes, you should, but we all know you save that for Alohi.”

He sighed. “Instinct is instinct. He may be my omega, but you are my treasure.”

She tapped his lips. “If I am the treasure, stop banging the box around, or we’ll see if the monocle effect extends to alphas.”

He winced. “I get a little... enthusiastic around you lately.”

“Yeah, and if you are worried that my uterus is occupied, you should behave, not try to put a dent in the occupant.”

He had been super attentive since his heat, but he got very excited, which caused aches, which got Narro to cuddle and soothe her, which led to other things.

Every morning, they woke up four in a bed with Narro, Hara, Alohi, and Kek. He was always reaching for her in his sleep, and gentle suggestions didn’t work. Alohi still wormed between them, and she suspected it fuelled the desperation.

* * * *

Narro sat with Alohi and asked, “So if a baby comes, are you going to stand between it and Kek?”

“No. Of course not. That is ridiculous. Why are you asking?”

“Because you are keeping Kek and Hara from finding balance, and as a result, he’s hurting her.”

Alohi frowned. “I am not being too... I don’t get... am I really that bad?”

“It isn’t bad, but you have had him to yourself for a long time. Sharing does not come

naturally to some omegas. You are feeling a lack in some areas, so you are insecure. It is unfortunate, but you must give Hara a chance because when she does eventually carry for Kek, she will need a lot of contact from him. If it hasn't come naturally by then, it will be dangerous for mother and baby."

"What should I do?"

"Let them have a date night. Just them. Twice a week. And you and I will stay away until the following morning."

Alohi frowned and then nodded. "That is doable."

Narro grinned.

When Kek and Hara came in and said, "Hara wants to go to the night market," Alohi laughed and looked at Narro. "Sounds like the first date night to me."

They explained the concept, and Hara and Kek agreed. Date night would begin that very day. Night. Whatever.