



Love Uncaged (Cosmic Kissed #1)

Author: *Alana Khan*

Category: Fantasy

Description: Sold, caged, and expected to mate, Zorn is furious at his captors. He certainly has no intention of falling in love.

Annora

Most men on Earth died ninety years ago. To preserve our population, authorities now allow aliens to mate with humans. Driven by a misguided need to provide me a mate, my mother buys a black market Draalian and locks me in with him hoping our chemistry will ignite. Didn't she know I find his reptilian species repulsive? I don't expect to enjoy his company. I definitely never dreamed I'd yearn for his touch.

Zorn

When Annora helps me escape, I have no idea our lives will be in danger on our desperate cross-country chase. I can't help being more hopelessly attracted with every mile we travel. It's too bad I can't stay.

Publisher's Note: There are sensual, graphic sex scenes throughout the book. Intended for readers 18+.

Total Pages (Source): 38

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Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 4:01 pm

With no more viable human sperm for artificial insemination, the human race was doomed to extinction. Five years ago, the one-world government invited three alien species to Earth to save our race.

Some species are reproductively compatible, some are compatible with help. The Draalians are, to date, considered a non-breeding companion species, although doctors across the globe are racing to rectify the problem.

Earth females must pay fees and take physical and emotional tests to apply for mates who come here voluntarily.

The vetting process is rigorous for Earth females and the alien males who wish to relocate here.

Both governmental and private agencies have organized to help alien males and Earth females find compatible matches, meet, and become mates.

But, like most things, nothing ever goes as planned.

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Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 4:01 pm

Place: Entering Earth's atmosphere

Zorn

“Wake up, assholes.”

What? As I swim up from deep sleep, my thoughts are cloudy and my head is screaming in pain.

“Wake the fuck up. You've slept long enough!”

When my eyes open with effort I realize I'm in a stasis pod. Looking through the clear cover, it's obvious from the filthy ceiling and close proximity of the pod next to me that I'm not on a Draalian military transport. By the length of my fingernails I realize I've been in here for months.

Although my body's stiff and I'm still groggy, the first emotion to come hurtling at me is fear. I shouldn't be here! Although I have no idea where here is.

After allowing myself a moment of panicked confusion, I slow my thoughts and move into fact-finding mode.

Have I been in a battle I don't remember?

Was I captured and transported with my military cohort?

Last I recall, my brother and I had just returned to our home planet of Draal for a

long-awaited furlough.

“You’ve been brought to a planet called Earth courtesy of our little pirate operation.

” The voice is piped into my stasis pod.

“Earth can’t produce males anymore and the women there are desperate for your cocks and your sperm.

We brought you here on a little off-the-books expedition.

We get paid. You get mates. They call it pussy.

You get all the pussy you want.” He laughs crudely.

His harsh, grating voice was speaking Draalian.

The muscles in my face harden as I realize one of my own species abducted me and brought me here against my will. They were brash enough to do it to a captain in the planetary army!

“While in stasis we updated your translator chips and downloaded lessons in their customs into your cerebral cortex. We’ve already held auctions. You’re all bought and paid for.”

Unkempt and disorganized armed males bristle through the cabin.

From what I see through the clear dome of my pod, it’s obvious these males hold no regard for common decency, much less cleanliness and order.

They’re not even carrying their weapons properly.

I wonder how I might escape. There are at least ten of them, and who knows how many of us lie captive in pods.

My hand-to-hand skills are good, but I'm no match for ten armed males.

One male slams his fist on top of a pod to my left.

"Fuck! One slipped out."

The pirates mobilize, running toward my left. Laser weapons can't be discharged in a space vessel. One errant blast would pierce the hull and kill all on board. They have to reach the escapee on foot to get close enough to use their stunners.

I watch every step of the drama as the male who woke me shouts and blusters, his microphone still live from his contemptuous welcome speech. Pressing against the top of my pod, it's obvious mine hasn't unlatched yet. The pods must be opening in sequence so we all don't get out at the same moment.

"Fuck! The asshole ejected in an escape pod!"

I can't help but mentally cheer the fellow who was lucky enough to bolt.

"Which stasis pod was he in? Let me check the manifest. Zoriss Krine, a captain in the Draalian planetary army. I wonder where the fuck he thinks he's going.

We cannibalized the nav system on our last trip to Earth—that capsule can't be piloted.

Wherever he lands—if he survives the landing—he'll still be stranded on this shithole planet. "

Zoriss! My clutchmate. My brother. My heart pounds in fear. He escaped in a capsule he can't fly!

One Day Later

Annora

"Mom, I can't remember the last time you were this excited about anything."

"This has consumed me lately. I've had workers renovating the guest house for months and it's finally ready for the big unveiling. I want you to move back here, honey. It's lovely, and as I age it will be nice to have you so close."

"Age my ass, Mom. You're only about to turn sixty. Admit it, you want me close so you can micromanage me."

"You wound me, Annora. I'm the furthest thing from a meddlesome mother. Here we are. Go in first. I want you to see it in all its glory."

"I liked it the way it was, old-fashioned and cozy, but let's see—"

I'm barely over the threshold when the door slams behind me with Mom on the outside and me inside.

"I love you, honey," she says over my wrist-comm.

"What the fuck?" I try to open the front door and can't even turn the doorknob.

"You'll thank me for this later." She's too chickenshit to even have her vid-comm on. I can't see her, only hear her.

“For what?”

I turn from the metal door to inspect the cottage.

“Holy shit, Mom. What have you done?” my voice is low and full of dread. This looks like the beginning of a tragedy of epic proportions.

There’s an alien male in the main room. Well, he’s not exactly in the main room, he’s in a cage in the main room.

Human men began dying off ninety years ago and there isn’t a man under that age on the planet.

Five years ago, human women began an active campaign to repopulate with alien species.

Three of which have been approved and are now moving here to mate with a select few women.

This male is from Draal. If I can read his snakelike features correctly, he doesn’t look any happier about this than I am.

There’s a muscle leaping on his scale-covered jaw. Eww.

“Mom,” I say into my wrist-comm, using my serious-as-a-heart-attack voice, “slavery is illegal. These guys come of their own free will. Why is he in a cage?”

“Your application was going so slowly. I just wanted to hurry things along. I used my contacts to buy him on the black market,” she says in the singsong voice she uses when she’s anxious.

I try the front door again, then skirt the cage to jiggle the handle of the French doors that open onto the back gardens, then I pound on the door in the kitchen that exits to the side yard.

All locked from the outside. My heart is thumping hard against the wall of my chest, my palms are sweating, and my mind is racing as I search for a way out of this fiasco.

“I hear you rattling the knobs. Go ahead, get it out of your system. You’ll notice I not only updated the cottage, I installed every conceivable mechanism to keep you inside until you and your Draal decide to mate.”

I scrub my face with my hand, then start opening kitchen drawers. No knives, although I don’t know what I’d do with one other than hurt my mom if I could get my hands on her.

“Is this about your desire for grandkids, mom? Because as I recall they’re not even sure his species is compatible with ours.”

“No dear. I watched my parents have a loving relationship my entire childhood. When I was of childbearing age there was no way to have children except through artificial insemination. That’s how I got you.

And we had a good life. It’s just that I want you to have what my parents had, and what I desperately desired my entire life. I want you to have a loving mate.”

“This is insane! I’d already applied with Heavenly Mates. I—”

“Why don’t you get to know Zorn? The testing says you’re 98% compatible.”

“Mom, have you lost your mind? You think buying him on the black market and caging him will result in a loving relationship? Plus, I didn’t want a reptile!

I didn't apply for one." I whisper, "They're so repulsive!

" Then recall I read somewhere their hearing is amazing.

Crap. His blue eyes are staring lasers through me with eat-shit-and-die looks.

I wish I hadn't said that. I imagine this isn't his best day, either.

"Maybe I was a little impulsive, but he's here now. Give him time. If you don't like him, I was given a thirty-day money-back guarantee."

Did she really say that? Like he's a new piece of exercise equipment? I've never seen this side of my mother. Connections with the black market? What has she gotten herself into?

When I lift my wrist to continue my discussion with my mom, I see she's turned off her receiver. Shit.

When it comes to business, my mom is a titan of industry. She's thorough and honest and doesn't back down. And she's scrupulous about rules. Why . . . Then it hits me. She's been crying lately and watching one old romance movie after another.

Damn her. She's so fucking misguided, but she did this for me.

Every time we talk lately, she tells me how much she wants me to find love.

But does she really expect me to find love with this disgusting blue reptile?

And did she think this sentient being was going to forget he's been jailed in our guest house living room?

During our whole shouting match, I've looked around for avenues of escape, searched for implements of destruction, and studiously avoided looking at the male in the cage. Now I inspect him.

He's wearing a thick velvet-like crimson uniform with gold piping. It looks military. I'm carefully avoiding his eyes, though, afraid to see the blazing anger in his glare.

Finally lifting my gaze from his clothes to his face, I'm struck by how extremely alien he is. I put in my application for both of the other two available species and was prepared to wait years for one to become available. I couldn't imagine myself with a Draal—they give me the skeeves.

His skin is reptilian, his patterning an interesting variegation of sky blue and royal blue. His lips are thin, his nose is flatter than a human's, and I don't see any ears at all. They must be internal.

The only thing vaguely human about his face are his piercing blue eyes. They seem to have humanity. I decide to focus on them, but can't sustain it for more than a second. Assuming Draals have the same body language as humans, if looks could kill I'd be dead.

He's standing in a military 'at ease' pose, his arms crossed behind his back, his legs wide. I think he's been standing like that a while.

"Um, hi?" I say. This is awkward.

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He gives me the slightest nod, seems to try to stare a hole right through me, presses his lips more tightly together, and flares his little slit-like nostrils.

I haven't been in the guest house in years. I used to play here all the time as a kid. It had old furniture and I used it as a playhouse. In addition to the renovations, the furniture is new.

The front door opens into the main room, which is a cozy den. It's flanked by the kitchen on one side and the bedroom with an ensuite bathroom on the other.

The alien's cage, maybe five by five, is near the half-wall that separates the kitchen from the den.

"I'm Annora," I say as I look past him to the gardens outside the French doors. I'm still avoiding the accusation in his gaze.

"Zorn," his voice has the slightest hiss. Not as bad as I would have expected.

Returning to the kitchen, I aimlessly open cabinets, not really looking for anything, just not knowing what to do with myself while a caged Draalian male watches my every move.

The reptile's gaze is on me as I rummage.

It would be rude to go hide in the bedroom, although I'd really like to throw myself on the bed and have a good cry.

Mom stocked the kitchen with all my favorite comfort foods, so I pull out a box of brownie mix and start cooking. I know I could use the 3-D food printer, but every step of the baking process soothes me.

Once my fingers are busy, my jumbled thoughts begin to take shape.

At the top of my awareness is anger. It's hot and spikes through me, then quickly morphs into sadness that pricks tears behind my eyes.

I have to swallow a few times, my back to my guest, to get that under control. I don't do 'powerless' well.

I stop in the middle of brownie-making to check all the doors again, being careful to skirt Zorn's cage—God, I'd hate me if I were him—then slide the brownies into the oven.

"I need to piss," he says, his tone firm and direct.

He's in a cage with nothing, not even a chair, and certainly no toilet.

"How long have you been here?"

"I don't understand this planet's passage of time, but I slept here last night. On the floor. We entered your atmosphere yesterday. I was allowed to clean up, then not-so-gently forced into a cage a fourth this size and transported here in the back of a surface vehicle."

Although his voice is matter-of-fact, it suddenly dawns on me that this is a sentient being, far from his home, and he's just standing there. He needs to pee and is probably hungry.

“I’m afraid to open your cage,” I admit.

“Do you want me to piss on your floor?” he asks, tilting his head slightly. I don’t think this is sarcasm, just a sincere question.

“No! Um, wait.”

I grab a pot, bring it to him, then realize it won’t fit through the bars.

Scurrying back to the kitchen, I grab a tall glass and set it through the bars while safely remaining as far from him as I can.

Wanting to give him privacy, I head toward the bedroom, but before I get there, I hear his soft, “I’ll need another. ”

On my way to the kitchen to get him another glass, he says, “Do you have a facility for this? Wouldn’t that be more . . . hygienic?”

I’m no more than five feet from his cage when I look at him. His body’s stiff, his face is stoic, but his eyes spear me with this request. His tight jaw tells me how much this exchange is costing him. It’s almost as if I can feel the hot blaze of his humiliation.

Closing my eyes, I have a long debate with myself. I can’t keep this guy in a cage for thirty days. I’m going to have to let him out sometime.

“I’d like to let you out, but I’m afraid.”

He nods. “You probably should be. Most sentient beings don’t take kindly to being stolen from their planet, shipped across the galaxy, and imprisoned without a sleeping platform or even a pot to piss in.”

“Really? You don’t want to be on Earth? You were stolen from your home? I thought only volunteers were brought here.”

“Your mother used the phrases ‘black market’ and ‘cages’. What about that didn’t you understand?”

“Shit! I’m so sorry. Zorn, I’d like to let you out of your cage.

Promise you won’t kill me.” I need to get over my own feelings of shock, anger and betrayal and somehow try to make this right with this poor guy.

I thought I didn’t do powerless well? What about him?

He’s obviously military and doesn’t look used to asking for anything, much less having to beg for a glass to pee in.

“I will tolerate this situation without harming you for the thirty days your mother promised. My planet venerates women and aggressing upon one is prohibited. After thirty days, however, I will follow my military training and try to escape by any means necessary.”

“Okay. That’s more than I deserve.”

“Actually, it’s more than your mother deserves. I have no quarrel with you.”

There was a note on the kitchen counter saying the cage was locked to my biometrics, so I press my fingertip to the lock, and the door springs open.

For a swift moment I consider running and hiding behind the half-wall to the kitchen, but decide I have to trust him or I’ll have to keep him locked up for the entire month.

After I point to the bathroom which is through the bedroom door, he picks up the glass full of his urine and goes to do his business.

I hadn't realized I was crying until a tear slides near the corner of my mouth. This is the worst situation I've ever been in. Worse than when I was little and got picked last for every sport, or got made fun of because of my weight.

"Your eyes are leaking," he says as he stands in the bedroom doorway, his broad shoulder leaning against the frame, empty glass in hand.

Dashing my tears with my knuckle, I admit, "I'm crying."

"They taught me about that while in stasis on the trip here. It's a human expression of sadness."

"Yes."

"What are you sad about?"

Incredulous, my eyes widen as both hands raise to indicate everything around me.
"This."

"The situation? I don't find it sad. My feeling is closer to rage."

I step back, several paces. "Are you threatening me?"

"Unless you're a good actress, I think you're a victim here, too. I already said I won't harm you in any way. I'm a male of my word."

Nodding, I say, "So you're willing to make the best of this situation for the next thirty days?"

“Yes.”

Look at him, he’s practically vibrating with anger, but he’s keeping a tight lid on it and promises he won’t harm me. If he can handle this situation with aplomb, so can I.

“Hungry?” I ask.

Zorn

Right before my abduction, I saw advertisements on my planet inviting us to come to Earth. I considered it for a moment, then my duty to my planet overrode my desire for a mate. That and the fact I found Earth females unappealing.

I assess my ‘host’. To me, hair seems like an evolutionary throwback, kind of primitive.

Her skin is . . . bland. And what are the ears for?

They seem superfluous, although I learned about sunglasses and I guess they have to rest somewhere to stay on the face.

Draalians have nictitating eyelids, a filmy membrane that sweeps from side to side in addition to the eyelid.

I’m certain they work better than something you have to carry with you.

I’ll keep my promise not to hurt her. Staying thirty days? That won’t happen. As soon as I feel my clutchmate Zoriss through my psychic connection, I’ll break out of here and find him. I worry he might be in trouble—I haven’t felt him since the moment after he escaped.

“Want a brownie?” she asks.

Is that what I smell? It’s sickening, like overripe fruit.

I’m hungry. I’ve been out of stasis over a day and haven’t been fed.

I could normally go longer, but all I’ve had during the three prior months on the vessel was chemical nutrition.

I don’t know what type of animals they eat on Earth, but it doesn’t smell promising.

I open my mouth for my forked tongue to scent the air, but the better I smell it, the less appetizing it seems.

“Brownie? Is this a . . . pet?”

So many things about this planet are shocking.

The fact they abduct males for their cocks and sperm as we were informed on the space vessel.

The fact they expect me to befriend and want to mate the person who kept me in a cell.

And now, eating a family pet? Even the most primitive societies don’t eat the animals they give names to.

“Pet? No. This is a dessert. Normally we eat it after a meal, but I . . .” She shakes her head, then looks up at me, cheeks pinkening. “I stress-eat.”

I don’t understand stress-eating, but I do understand shame, which she seems to be

experiencing.

After I take one bite of brownie, I put my utensil down and wonder what's the proper thing to do with food you have to spit out of your mouth.

I stalk to the sink and spit, then put my mouth under the nozzle and rinse for a long time.

"You consider that food?" I ask when I return to the table, noting Annora has finished her brownie and is scraping her plate with the tines of her utensil.

"Yes. You don't eat sweets?"

"No." Could that possibly provide nutrients? "Do you have protein in this dwelling? Preferably live although I'll eat it cooked. No household pets, though." That's a line I cannot cross.

She cocks her head and I watch as many emotions sail across her face.

The blandness of her features allows me to read her more easily than those of my species.

She looks surprised, then offended, then, after a moment of thought, she's amused.

Her gaze touches mine for the swiftest moment as she laughs.

She jumps up and programs the food synthesizer. A minute later she pulls out a large plate with what looks like a cooked piece of animal muscle. She sets it in front of me with a dull, round-ended knife. I guess her mother didn't want anything sharp in the house.

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“This calls for another brownie while they’re still warm,” she announces as I attack the first non-liquid nourishment I’ve had in months. After she rises to slide another brownie from the pan, she cocks her head and asks, “From your hasty trip to the sink, I assume you don’t want seconds?”

“I’ll pass. The meat is delicious, thank you.” I don’t mention that anything would taste heavenly after going this long without solid food, well, except for the brownie.

I was too busy spitting out my brownie to see her eat her first one.

Now I watch as she takes her first bite.

She looks at the brown food—I understand the name now—as if it’s a lover, then fills her fork with a perfect square and moves it to her mouth.

The tip of her little pink tongue flicks out to touch it, then the whole bite slides into her mouth.

Her eyes drift closed as she chews, like it’s the most delicious thing she’s ever tasted. Her head cants back an inch as she makes the quietest moan of enjoyment.

What is she doing? I don’t understand this female.

One minute she is terrified I’ll attack her and now she’s .

. . moaning in the presence of a male? I’ve never been with a female, but this is not the behavior I would expect from someone who finds me repulsive.

Perhaps this is normal behavior on Earth.

She dishes up her next bite, opens her mouth, and nibbles a piece off the end of the brown square.

My half-eaten meat is forgotten. I can't tear my eyes from the action.

Now that I'm over my initial shock, I decide this is better than the best vid I've ever watched.

Compelling. I can't wait to see her next move.

My cocks are hard. I don't quite understand why, moments after being freed from a cage subsequent to being abducted and hauled across the galaxy like livestock, my body is preparing to mount my captor, but that seems to be my response.

At her next nibble, when that delightful tongue which is so different from mine licks her fork, I actually squirm in my chair and can't contain the quiet hiss that escapes my throat.

Her eyes dart to me, then race away. She seems startled, like she forgot I was here. A moment later, they drift back to me. Her awareness is heightened. She might not have been conscious of how her actions affected me before, but I'm pretty sure she knows I'm aroused now.

"This brownie is delicious." Her words are innocent as she over-enunciates the last three syllables, but her voice is deep, low, rough.

"It looks delicious." I'm not looking at the brownie, though. I'm looking at those plump, pink alien lips.

Now that she knows she's caught my attention, she's eating differently than before. Her bites are smaller, and her enjoyment is more dramatic—accompanied by frequent moans.

I grunt, unable to contain it. My cocks are straining against the fly of my pants. If I was alone, I'd be rubbing myself to completion right this moment, but I sit glued to the spot, watching the sexiest vid of my life. Only this is real. And it's taking place three feet away from me.

She takes the last bite, swirling it around in her mouth as if it were a sip of expensive wine.

After she swallows, the tip of her tongue peeks out and licks first her top lip, then the bottom.

Then she spears me with a look so sensual, so full of heat it's as if her hand is gripping my primary cock.

Then I feel it, the telltale twinge of my internal testicles signaling my imminent release. I rise from my seat and run to the bathroom. Barely getting there in time to spurt into the toilet with a hiss loud enough to be heard back on Draal.

Leaning one hand against the wall over the toilet, every muscle in my body goes limp as I wonder how that just happened. I don't recall ever coming without touching myself before.

I'm a captain in the Draalian army. Discipline and self-control define who I am and who I've been for fifteen years. The human doesn't even appeal to me. She finds me repulsive.

It makes sense, though, that my cocks would be hard for her; I've never been around

a female who wasn't a relative. The few females who are still being born on Draal are cloistered and protected.

Any normal male who'd never been within ten feet of a female before would be ready to rut their worst enemy under these circumstances.

Add to it the way she slipped her delicate pink tongue over her full lips, the flirty smile, the heated glances?

And don't even mention her sounds of pleasure.

My behavior makes perfect sense. I'm just a normal Draalian male.

Although she was spawned by the devil incarnate, Annora seems like a nice female.

She's never been around a male—ever. The download I received said the few elderly males still living on her planet are in armed barracks for their own protection from the virus.

Perhaps she, just like me, is reacting to being within ten feet of someone of the opposite sex for the first time in her life. Even one she doesn't find attractive.

I have to admit that whatever caused it, I wouldn't mind if it happened again. Only next time perhaps she could participate more fully. As I imagine her hand with its soft pink fingers gripping one, or both, of my blue cocks, they respond to my fantasy.

"Don't forget she's the enemy," I whisper to myself in the mirror, then jam my cocks in my pants and stride back into the kitchen.

She's still sitting at the table, looking interested. Her brow is cocked in question. I don't respond. We both know what just happened. I have no need to talk about it, nor

to cover it up.

“It looks like maybe you like brownies after all,” she tosses her head and smiles.

“I think I’m developing a taste for them. Yes.”

“Zorn,” she says as she holds my gaze for the first time since she was pushed through the front door. “Carpe diem!”

Her face is alive with happiness, although I have no idea what she just said.

“That means seize the day in an antique, dusty language. Let’s do it, Zorn.

This whole situation sucks. Neither of us can leave, but we can choose to make it better.

I don’t want to worry you’re going to kill me in my sleep.

And I don’t want you to worry that I’ll feed you my dog or take away your bathroom privileges or lock you in a cage.

“Let’s figure out a way to do this without killing each other. No. Better than that, let’s figure out a way to have fun for thirty days. When was the last time you had a vacation?”

“I’d just returned to Draal the day I was stolen. Prior to that, it was five years.”

“It’s been a while for me, too. How about this?

You teach me Draalian games, I’ll teach you some from Earth.

You teach me how to cook some foods you like to eat, and I'll show you some of mine.

I promise not even one dish will contain a family pet.

” She smiles and winks at me. “We'll have a staycation. ”

Although I don't know what a staycation is, I do know that her features aren't pinched anymore, and she seems excited about it. If she's happy, perhaps she'll be distracted enough for me to escape.

“Staycation it is!”

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Zorn

The last few days have been interesting. We did as Annora suggested. We've cooked together and taught each other games.

She's made no more pans of brownies though, much to both my relief and disappointment. Although she seemed to enjoy her arousing display when she ate them that first day, I think she might be embarrassed about both her response and mine.

She skillfully used the emotion of guilt to get her mother to provide the food I need, as well as some materials that allowed me to make rough versions of some of my favorite Draalian games.

"Zorn and I are getting along famously," she gushes to her mother through her wrist-comm. "You should let us out. Trust me, we just want to hold hands and take a walk in the sunshine. If you'd done a whit of research, you'd know the poor guy needs to bask."

"I may be pushing sixty, dear, but I'm not stupid," is her mother's reply.

"Zorn," she raises her voice so I can hear her, "I do apologize about the basking rock. I ordered it the moment I won you in the auction. They said it would be here before you arrived. It's electric, the best I can do other than real sunshine.

Did you like the buffalo meat I had delivered? "

“That was the best Earth food yet, Ma’am.”

“Good. I’m glad to hear you two kids are getting along well.”

“Mom, I’ve done a deep dive on the Internet. He needs real sunshine to thrive.” She turns away from her comm and winks at me.

“Yes, Ma’am,” I chorus from the background as I shuffle the cards, waiting for Annora to get off the phone so I can beat her again at gin rummy.

“And real sunshine he shall have. On day thirty-one, one way or the other. I hope it’s when you two emerge from that cottage and announce your desire to have a mating ceremony. I can only hope.”

I get the impression Annora’s mother has no malice in her heart.

She probably went out of her comfort zone to obtain me on the black market hoping to obtain a loving mate for her daughter.

She’s provided food and is working on getting me a basking rock.

She’s certainly misguided, though. What good could possibly come from a beginning as disturbing as this?

“Bye you two. Oh, Annora, do you have enough brownie mix?”

Is that a coded method of asking her daughter if she’s stress-eating, or does she have hidden cameras placed around the house? Did she watch her daughter’s performance that first day? Did she see my response?

“A girl can never have too many brownie mixes in her pantry,” Annora blushes in a

silent admission of guilt.

She terminates the comm, slumps in her chair, and blows out through her lips. “With a mom like her, it’s amazing I turned out so well-adjusted.”

I lift my browridge in a mocking response and she peels with laughter.

“Who knew you’d have a sense of humor?”

“Who knew you wouldn’t be able to discern between a sense of humor and biting sarcasm?” I respond. “Want me to make her swim with the fishes?” I ask in a funny accent like a vid we watched earlier.

“Yeah,” she says in the same accent. “We can put her in cement shoes and throw her in the river.”

As I joke with her, it strikes me that we’ve come to a nice truce. It was a good idea to try to have fun in our enforced isolation.

I rise and stand at the locked sliding door that opens to the backyard. Putting my hands and cheek directly on the glass, I try to capture the healing warmth of the sun. Annora may have thought she was joking, but I really do need to feel the rays of the sun on me in order to thrive.

Annora’s mother bought me a lot of clothes in various sizes since she didn’t know exactly what I’d need. I’m wearing most of them in layers. I’m reptilian and can’t regulate my body temperature.

“I’m sorry, Zorn. If I could get you out of here, I would. Mom disabled my comm’s ability to do anything but use the Internet and contact her. Otherwise, I would have reached the authorities and reported alien abuse. We both know what my mom is

doing isn't right.

"I love her but I don't condone what she's doing to you. She's driven, kind of a control freak. I have to say she's never done anything this outlandish in her life."

She steps next to me and puts her hand on my lower back as she peers out the window. She must sense my body stiffening, because she moves back to the table where we were playing cards as she murmurs, "Sorry."

It strikes me that I've never before been touched by a female who wasn't a family member. My planet is in trouble. We're too advanced for our own good. We've developed enough technology to improve our lives, and yet we've befouled our land, sea, and air.

It's caused our climate to warm, which has affected our male to female gender ratio. All offspring in a clutch are always the same gender, which is determined by the temperature of the eggs. As the planet warms, each year a higher percentage of males are born.

At this point, only very rich or very powerful males can acquire a female mate.

Our species continues to reproduce by using increasingly scientific interventions.

Even with that, female clutches are rare and smaller than the average male clutch.

Many believe we've passed the tipping point and will never return to the thriving race we once were.

Although I've been starved for warmth since I arrived on this planet, that doesn't explain the reason the exact location of Annora's handprint is burned into my flesh.

I close my eyes, trying to soak up the warmth of the sun on my face as I put all of my attention on that tiny swath of scales her hand grazed through five layers of cloth.

Initially, I thought I was immune to her. Maybe because I was furious, I found her plain at best, unattractive at worst. After watching her eat that brownie, I've been consumed with not only her feminine body, but her shiny brown hair, full pink lips, and intelligent green eyes.

And then I feel it. Zoriss!

The connection is faint. Closing my eyes, I press myself against the glass and close my thoughts to everything but the part of my brain that's connected to him.

I reach out my thoughts almost like a person would stretch to reach their fingers toward something.

I try for long minutes, but the dim connection fades to nothing.

It's unclear whether this is a factor of physical distance, or if something is wrong.

I've always had the stronger psychic ability, perhaps because I was the first to hatch.

He obviously didn't know I was on the same pirate vessel or he would have never left without me.

I sense he's ill or hurt. He would be trying to reach me if he didn't believe I'm light years away back on Draal.

At least he's alive. I've been worried his pod crashed since our captors said they'd removed the nav system.

Breathing in deeply, I reign in my anger. It's not Annora's fault. If I don't control myself, I'll take it out on her, and I don't want to do that.

Annora

How many games of gin rummy can two people play? We've played games and watched vids and he's observed me eat my six meals a day because at this point I can't control my stress-eating.

We're only a few days into a four-week ordeal.

At first, I couldn't figure out why I'm so provocative when I eat.

Now I've narrowed it down to the fact that not only does his blatant interest zero out the shame I have around stress-eating, it also feels like flirtation.

Even though I may not be interested in the Draalian, it feels amazing that for once in my life a male is interested in me.

I tried to hide my shock when he ran to the bathroom that first day. Maybe I'm just imagining it, but I'm pretty sure he orgasmed in there. My insides quiver when I remember the deep groan he made. Perhaps my mom isn't the only one in the family who has lost her mind.

It's hard to reconcile his stiff, standoffish behavior with the fact that he also watches me like he's an apex predator and I'm the prey.

You'd think after a lifetime of working with sexuality of all types I'd be confident in my assessment that half the time we're together he has a hard-on—well, two hard-ons because Draalians are well-endowed in that area—but I'm not certain.

If I'm not mistaken, when he's aroused his scales turn a bit darker blue. I have to admit the color looks amazing on him. It's in stark contrast to what I see now. I'm no expert on big blue reptiles, but I think he's turning gray.

Look at the poor guy, he's far more miserable than I am. He hasn't just been abducted and taken from his life, but I think he's sick.

"Annora!" Mom calls me over my comm. "Annora, the basking rock has finally arrived. I need you two to stand back so they can get it into your house."

When my eyes flash to Zorn, I see his interest. I doubt the excitement he shows when his eyes focus on the door is due solely to the rock itself.

This is his first opportunity to escape.

After taking only a few steps, though, he has to hold himself up with one hand on the back of the couch. He's weak.

"I'd help you escape if I could, Zorn. On day thirty-one I'll help you contact the authorities. They'll get you back home."

"Help me now," he rasps.

Shit. He's really not doing well.

"Okay," I speak into my comm. "We're in the bedroom," I lie.

Zorn walks to the front door, ready to rush out, but when it opens, it's not a delivery person. It's two guards who have worked for my mom for decades. They both have stunners at their sides.

Zorn makes a move to overpower them, I've read his race is more than twice as strong as ours, but he's slow and obviously weak.

"Back off!" one of them commands as she brandishes her weapon at him. He takes a step toward the door and she stuns him.

"Jackie! How could you?" I yell when Zorn drops to his knees, then falls to the floor.

At least she has the good sense not to meet my gaze as she and her partner set the rock on our side of the threshold and leave.

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“It was set to the lowest setting. He’ll recover in a few minutes” she says before closing the door. The sound of the bolt locking makes the hair on the back of my neck stand up.

“Shit,” I say when he hasn’t moved after ten minutes. Zorn’s far sicker than I had realized.

I realize Zorn is in torpor after pulling the three-by-six-foot radiant heating bed to sit in front of the French doors.

I looked it up on the Internet yesterday when he started moving slower.

I was going to ask him about it today. It’s documented that Draals will go into torpor to conserve energy when they can’t regulate their body temperature.

Their movement and thinking slow way down. Well, he’s certainly in torpor now.

The rock has begun to heat, now all I have to do is get him onto it—he’s out cold. Cold being the operative word.

When I searched the Internet, the pictures all showed naked males on their heated rocks. Okay, I can do this.

Kneeling behind his head, I scoop under his armpits, then drag him toward the rock.

“Holy crap, big guy. You should be on wheels too.” He weighs a ton.

Now that he's lying next to the artfully-painted plastic creation meant to look like moss-covered granite, I need to pull him onto its surface—naked.

I unbutton the crimson military coat he arrived in. It's thick and warm and has honorific bands ringing both sleeves. One day during a pause from our gin rummy game he proudly explained each and every one to me. I needed the break—I couldn't bear for him to beat me one more time.

He served in his military since he and his clutchmate Zoriss turned nineteen. As an only child, I envy the stories he told me about how closely bonded he and his brother are.

After I remove his thick coat, I peel off two hoodies, a sweatshirt, and a t-shirt.

I've never seen much of his scales other than his face and hands because he's always cold and covered from neck to toes.

Clothing alone, no matter how thick, isn't enough.

They need radiant heat, from either the sun or an artificial source, on a regular basis.

Swallowing, my gaze sweeps down his body from hairless head to waist. It's obvious now why some of my fellow Earth women are standing in line for his kind. His body is . . . amazing.

Wide shoulders narrow to a trim waist and flat stomach.

Rather than his muscles being obscured by the pattern of his scales, they seem to be enhanced by them.

There's an armband circling his right bicep that looks like it might declare his

military ranking.

It's intricately engraved with a ruby in the middle.

There's something fascinating and sexy about this adornment that declares his accomplishments.

I pull off his black knee-high boots. They remind me of something you'd see on a medieval pirate.

My fingers get stumped for a moment at his waistband, then I figure out the closure and pull his pants down.

I get the answer to a question that's been niggling at the back of my mind. He does, indeed, go commando.

Don't look , I admonish myself, although it takes every ounce of willpower I possess to drag my gaze back to his face.

There isn't a person alive on the planet who doesn't know Draals have two penises. Two penises! I live on a planet with only women. I've never even seen one .

Well, that's not true. My mom owns one of the biggest sex toy manufacturing and distributing operations in the world. I grew up helping in every facet of the business from injection molding to hand painting pale bluish veins to assembly to inventory management.

I've probably seen more cocks, human and otherwise, than almost any other female on the planet—just not live ones.

I use the same technique as before to push, pull, and drag him onto his basking rock,

which I've turned up as high as it will go.

After hurrying to the bedroom and grabbing the bedspread, I'm just about to cover him when I allow myself one minute.

One measly minute to visually inspect my alien roommate.

Did I call him repulsive? Really? Then why is my mouth dry? I can't even swallow or lick my lips, although I'd like to.

Dipping to my knees, thick blue bedspread still in hand, I delay just a few more seconds to drink him in. This time, I allow myself to look at his flaccid penises, or is it penii? Why am I using these precious seconds to wonder about grammar?

Because of my precocious childhood introduction to the nude male form and the fact that I'm a manager in the sex toy factory, I believe it's fair to call myself a connoisseur of penii.

As penii go, these are beauties, although I can mostly only see one.

If I'd designed this pattern and configuration, it would win an award.

They stack on top of each other and call their top one their secondary, the one that's farther between their legs is their primary.

The research I conducted indicated they match each other in size.

In addition to some interesting bumps, there's a bulge about halfway down the shaft, at least the one I can see, that looks like it would feel amazing during sex.

"Enough!" I scold myself when I realize hot bolts of arousal are surging through my

body. I demurely place the spread over him and tuck it around his sides.

After jumping on the Internet, I try to figure out how long his torpor will last. An hour later, I've learned there are many factors involved in determining how long a Draal stays in torpor. I decide to just carry on and wait.

At bedtime, it suddenly dawns on me that sleeping with him would keep him warm. Why I didn't think of this days ago is beyond me. Well, no it's not. Days ago I hadn't gotten a glimpse of his body which is quickly overpowering my aversion to his reptilian face.

Scolding myself, I head to the bedroom. I'm pretty certain that crawling into bed with a comatose person would violate a hundred consent rules, although it's not like abduction and false imprisonment haven't already stepped over that line a teensy bit.

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The next morning, I wake to the smell of bacon.

At one point in my teens, having grown up with an entrepreneur, I actually drew up a business plan and pitched it to my mother requesting seed money.

My plan was to create a company that made the smell of bacon into a perfume.

I received a flat refusal from my mother.

I guess the seeds of my stress-eating were already firmly planted by then.

After washing up, I pad to the kitchen to see Zorn in the kitchen making bacon and eggs. Draals don't have to eat every day, but I imagine coming out of torpor gave him an appetite.

“Good morning. Feeling better?” I ask cheerfully.

“Yes.”

That rock must have done a great job warming him because he’s wearing only low-slung jeans and a smile. His shoulders look even wider than when he was crumpled on his faux rock yesterday. Somehow, he’s morphed from an alien into a masculine alien. An arousing one.

Sexuality is an open thing in our society, especially in a household where my mother made a very good living because the populace openly embraced the acceptance of sensuality and self-pleasuring.

Mom brought home my first sex toy before I had an urge to use it.

The fact that I think of sex often, have a healthy sexual response system, and masturbate with a veritable cornucopia of well-designed toys is neither unusual nor surprising.

What is unusual and surprising though, is that the desire slicing through me is more compelling than anything I’ve ever felt.

And even more shocking? It’s directed at the reptilian cooking bacon not ten feet away from me.

“I don’t think I’ve ever seen you so chipper,” I say, surprised I can sound casual as my eyes rivet on the masculine ‘v’ of his shoulders narrowing to his hips.

“I hadn’t basked since you met me,” he says, an easy smile turning up his almost nonexistent lips. Nonexistent lips, I might add, that I wonder what it would feel like to kiss.

“Have you eaten already?” I ask as I spy a greasy plate at his place at the table.

“A whole pan of bacon,” he says with an unabashed grin. “Maybe you’ll let me share this next pan with you. How many eggs?” he asks, holding one up.

“I thought we determined you hate these.”

“But you don’t. Now that I know how to use your stove, I don’t mind cooking for you.”

“Two eggs, thanks.” He really is a nice guy. He could have made the last few days miserable. I have to give him credit.

We’re both finishing our last bites when he cocks his head and looks around. It’s almost like a dog who just heard a dog whistle.

He walks to the sliding glass door, splays his hands on it, presses the side of his head to the surface, and freezes as if he’s paralyzed. Although I don’t know what’s going on, I know enough to be quiet.

Five, maybe ten minutes later, he stands straighter and stalks into the bathroom. An hour after that, I work up the nerve to check on him.

“Um, Zorn,” I call from the bedroom doorway. “Zorn? You okay in there?”

When there’s no answer I add, “I’m getting worried.”

He clears his throat, opens the door, and joins me. Gone is his open, happy face. Gone is the eye contact we’ve shared freely for the last few days.

“Zorn, I was worried you might die yesterday. You know, the torpor. And now I

don't know what to think. Are you okay?"

"I need to leave, Annora. I need to leave right now. I've been trapped here too long already.

I was in there alone, thinking, weighing all my choices.

I understand enough to know your mother will be punished for what she's done.

You might also be in trouble. I haven't tried too hard to escape because I didn't want either of you punished.

That's over now. I must find my brother.

"I will find a way out of this house. My decision on how much to tell the authorities will depend on how difficult you make this." He tips his chin defiantly.

"There's no way out, Zorn. I have no desire to keep you here against your will. If you know of a way, I'll help you."

He tips his head, "You will?"

"Absolutely. But why is it so important now?"

"Draals are born in clutches. Usually two to four at a time. All clutchmates have a telepathic link—some are stronger than others. Zoriss and I have a strong link. We were the only two in our clutch and our bond is powerful.

"I've only felt a wisp of our connection since they separated us on the ship. It's more powerful now, likely because I'm stronger now that I've basked. He's in trouble and I need to find him."

“He was on the same ship with you?”

He nods tightly.

“Let me help.”

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Annora

We've both inspected the house before. I did it several times that first day, and I imagine he's done it while I'm sleeping.

We have no sharp knives, the doors are all metal, and the windows were all replaced with inch-thick bulletproof glass.

We both gave up trying. Now, though, we search together.

With our search intensified, we inspect floorboards, try to pull windowsills out to circumvent the thick glass, and Zorn batters himself against the sliding glass door until he grabs his shoulder in pain.

It's only now that I remember when I was little I heard animals above my head and went running to tell my mom, fearing an alien invasion. It's funny that I've now joined forces with one.

"The attic!" I tell him as I grab his hand and lead him into the bathroom.

After I use the toilet as a stepping stool, Zorn lifts me onto his shoulders like I weigh nothing. I pause for a moment and savor the experience. I'm sitting on him, one leg draped over each shoulder. Shoulders that are so heavily muscled they could be made of iron.

His slightly cool, large hands are gently clasped around my ankles. The back of his smooth head presses against my lady parts while I open the door before he boosts me

up from the soles of my feet. I memorize this moment, promising myself I'll relive it later.

"I see daylight!" I announce with excitement, having trouble admitting even to myself that some of my enthusiasm is from the residual thrill of being so close to Zorn.

There are only about three feet of clearance at the tallest point of the attic, so I crawl to the side of the house and peer out the gable vent to the outside. It's maybe three feet by two feet and looks firmly attached, but Draalians are strong. Somehow we're going to escape.

"Can you get up here?" I yell.

"I see it," his deep voice rumbles behind me. He must have pulled himself through the hole with his upper body strength. He's now crawling toward me.

"Can you kick this open?"

"Let me try."

A minute later, we're both looking out at the prettiest blue sky I've ever seen.

Luckily, the vent faces the woods away from my mom's house.

She won't see that we've opened it. My shoulder brushes his and for a moment I'm less aware of the sky and more aware of the muscular body next to me.

I passed my initial repulsion days ago, moved into interest territory, and am about to round the bend into lust if I'm not careful. I shake myself back to the present.

“You did it, Zorn. Now what?”

“I’ll wait until nightfall, jump down, and follow my mental link to find Zoriss.”

His hip nestles next to mine as he leans out the opening, closes his eyes, and tries to soak up the sun.

His forked tongue slips between his lips as he scents the air.

If someone had asked me a week ago what I’d think of that, I would have shivered in disgust. Right this moment, though, the shiver slicing through me is pure sexual interest.

“You really missed the sun, huh?” I try to sound nonchalant.

“Primitive people on my planet worshipped it. It’s the giver of life.”

“So, this link you have with Zoriss, how far does it reach?”

“Even though I was injured when we were deployed on Pythian, I still felt him miles away, although the link was weak, as it is now. I don’t know how far our range is.”

“So, how are you going to find him if he’s a thousand miles away?”

“I don’t know,” he spears me with a worried look, “I just know I have to try.”

My mind races as I parse through the facts. He’s a stranger in a strange land, knows little of our ways, has no money, no transportation, and is off the books. If the authorities find him, they’ll welcome him into a Newcomer facility, but they won’t help him find his brother.

“You need me,” I inform him levelly. “I’m going with you.”

“I’m a captain in the military. I’ll be fine,” he says, lifting his chin defiantly.

“You’re going to march through cities and the countryside in your inconspicuous crimson coat with no money, basking naked out in the open and wandering aimlessly?” I cock my eyebrow.

“I’ll figure it out.”

“We’ll figure it out together.”

His blue eyes focus on me as if I’m a puzzle he’s trying to put together. I’ll make it easy for him. I explain all the ways I’m going to help him, and how we’ll both be safe.

“Although this isn’t my fault, I feel responsible that you’re here, Zorn. I want to assist you, and I think I can help you navigate Earth’s geography and customs you know nothing about.”

He nods slowly as he considers my motives and his options.

“Thanks. At the first sign of trouble, though, I’m sending you back home. This isn’t your mission, it’s mine.”

The captain advises a good sleep, so we plan our time for departure for just before dawn.

Anticipating freedom, the day feels like it will never end.

After a night of tossing and turning, we get up, grab a quick shower, and swallow a

cold breakfast. We pack what we think we'll need into some pillowcases, and he leaps to the ground like he was a cat instead of a reptile.

"I'll catch you," he urges in a loud whisper, his arms open.

"Have you met me? I'm not a small woman."

Zorn

"You're perfect," I say, then instantly regret it. She thinks I'm repulsive. If I compliment her, it will scare her, at least that's what I understand from the information they downloaded into my brain on the trip here. She'll take it as a sexual overture from a hideous alien male.

I don't think I scared her, though. She snorts at my comment and says, "Total bullshit, Draalian. You sure you're ready?"

"Just jump into my arms." My open arms beckon to her.

"Don't drop me and let me die," she says as she lets herself fall right into my arms. I catch her and hold her to my chest, amazed at her warmth, then aware of how close her face is to mine.

My self-preservation instincts buzz in the back of my mind, scolding me to put her down, but I don't.

Instead, I tip my head to get a better look at her.

I can smell her better in this position, which only makes me want to open my mouth and use my forked tongue to better imprint her scent. I know intuitively that this will, as she would say, 'scare the shit' out of her. So I just sniff her in while I look into her

sparkling green eyes.

Although I'm waiting for her to demand I put her down, what I get instead is a look I can only imagine is . . . interest?

Mere days ago, I believed hair on humanoids was a throwback to primitive cave dwellers. Now my hands itch to comb through it. I wonder if it feels as silky as it looks.

"We should get going," she says, sounding like it's more of a question than a demand.

She's right.

"You said you have a vehicle?" I ask as I set her down.

"Yep. I know it's still in the driveway because I saw it out the front window. This is going to be tricky. And, um, this vehicle isn't exactly inconspicuous."

We each grab our pillowcases, and I follow her to the front of the structure. I see a van with a picture of a naked Earth male on the side. She slides into the front, and I mimic her on the opposite side. After she engages the drive, we hover off so quickly I'm pressed into the back of my seat.

"You're so tight," a male voice drawls from the back of the van.

I turn, every muscle ready for a fight, but don't see anyone there. Is there something in Earth's atmosphere that's affected my thinking?

"First stop, the underground," she says as the van careens around a corner, thrusting me against the door.

“Can you talk and drive at the same time?” I ask, lifting my browridge skeptically.

“Sure.”

She makes a sharp turn, this time thrusting me toward her. I breathe in her scent, which is different than it was. Sharper somehow.

From the back of the van, I hear, “I want to taste you.” It’s a different male voice this time, his tone is almost a growl.

Despite Annora’s erratic driving, I unbuckle myself to investigate.

“Buckle up, Zorn. I’m driving like a maniac. I don’t want you to get hurt.”

At least she knows she’s driving like a crazy person. I didn’t want to mention it.

“Do you not hear someone else in this van?” I ask.

“Oh, those are broken bots. Sexbots.”

“Sexbots?”

“It’s not so weird, really. One of the first uses of every new technology is sex.

At least on Earth it is. Still photographs?

Some of the first were shockingly risqué.

Moving pictures? Sexy women undressing. In-home video entertainment?

Porn. In fact, when two different types of technologies were battling for the lion’s

share of the market, the winner of the battle was the one that the porn industry used.

Online videos? Porn again. With no other way to get heterosexual intercourse?

Sexbots. What you hear in the back are a couple of malfunctioning returns.

The team at the factory should have powered them down.

All this movement is making them respond. ”

As if they’re listening, one of them says, “I just want to make you feel good,” while another says, “With you, baby, I want to last all night.”

I see two human males lying on their sides in the darkness.

I can’t see their faces and will have to give them a closer look when there’s time, although I guess I know what I’ll see—smooth skin, a full head of hair, a nose that can be seen in profile, and ears that can support glasses.

Not someone repulsive like she finds me.

“What’s the underground?” I respond to her last statement as I refasten the safety harness and turn my attention out the front window.

“It’s in the bowels of the city. The government wants everyone to believe our society is neat and clean and free from want and hunger. In reality, there is still an underclass. The underground is where people go to hide as well as buy and sell black market goods and services.”

A jolt of anger slices through me as I say, “Like buying Draalians?”

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“No. I hate to tell you, but buying black market Draalians is more of an open secret than having to sneak to the underground. You can do that on the Internet. Sorry.”

Inspecting her face, I think she actually is sorry.

“What are we going to do in this underground?”

“First, we’re going to find a mech to remove the tracker and the governor from this hover-van.

While she’s working on that, we’re going to forge you some credentials, convert my money into stealth-credits, and get new wristbands for both of us so no one can track us.”

“What’s a governor?” Nothing she said made any sense, but somehow that’s the first question I think to ask.

“It keeps the van from going really fast—company policy. Got to get rid of that.” She winks at me.

“You weren’t already going fast?” I ask, rubbing the shoulder that got jammed against the door.

“We might need to go faster.”

I didn’t get a good look at anything on the planet on my way here. I was in a small cage in the back of a paneled hover-van similar to this one.

We're in a city with clean streets and sleek buildings. Large signs dispensing news and information line the roads and walkways. Many of the screens are filled with colorful charts and graphs.

"Birthrate," Annora says.

"Is it getting better now that you've brought other species here?"

"Yes. Not by much, though. It's a huge concern for everyone on the planet, although most of us don't talk about it very often. What is there to say? Our species is dying? Yeah, in private we talk about anything but our lack of population growth."

"Can humans and Draalians procreate?" I ask, then wish I could snatch my words back. Why would I even wonder such a thing?

"Not naturally, but the scientists are working on it."

"Why kidnap us and bring us here, then?" I mumble under my breath. It makes no sense.

"The plan was for males to come of their own free will. Some are for procreation, yeah, but others are called companion males. Don't most people of any species, male or female want someone to love?

Someone who cares how their day went? Someone to hold us when we're feeling blue?

No pun intended." A bubble of laughter escapes her.

"We don't condone kidnapping, Zorn. My mom is a good person. I have no idea how she lost her moral compass and bought you in some sleazy auction.

“Earth has a lot to offer. Although many women want babies, and our species desperately needs them, most people I know want . . . love, companionship, and to be honest—sex. Isn’t that what we all desire?”

Is it? I have two out of three. Or at least I did.

“I have most of that already. Zoriss and I have love and companionship.”

“You’re lucky.”

I have to admit, though, spending time with Annora is different than being with my brother. Brotherly love and companionship are vastly different than what Annora’s talking about. Especially the sex.

My attention returns to the activity on the streets we’re whizzing by.

Seeing sidewalks full of mostly women is odd.

It is heartening to see an occasional male of one of the three species they’ve brought to Earth.

I even see one or two male hybrid children on the sidewalks holding their mother or father’s hand.

“So many females,” I murmur.

“Yeah. No males except otheraliens. Our women can have children through artificial insemination, but all the children are female. We just aren’t able to have male babies without the alien males. The few human males that are left are old and in armed compounds for their own safety.”

“If you came to Draal, you’d probably see only males. The few females we have are usually hidden away by their families or mates—too dangerous to be out alone.”

“I imagine it would be as odd for me to see a lot of males as it is for you to see all these women.” She pauses for a moment.

“You could stay if you want. We would welcome you. You’d be introduced to as many women as you desire until you find someone you’re compatible with.

You could meet them and court them. We have a whole program to integrate you into society, find you a job, help you in every way.

Just because you hate me, doesn’t mean all Earth women are bad. ”

“I don’t hate you.”

She glances at me, whispers, “You have every right to,” and almost runs over a small brown canine.

Before I have a chance to respond to her statement, she drags her gaze back to where she’s going and informs me, “We’re almost there.”

She pulls into a structure and keeps circling lower and lower. I wonder if it was used for parking vehicles a long time ago. When we get to the bottom level, things look very different from the surface streets.

The pavement empties into an enormous underground area teeming with people. These women aren’t dressed in clean, colorful clothing like up above. Everything here seems grimy. It’s dark down here, and the females I see aren’t hurrying anywhere. Their eyes all seem either angry or suspicious.

I'm evidently not the only one who's cold.

I see barrels at odd intervals that seem to contain small fires.

Women are congregating around them, warming their hands and talking.

Over to my right, three younglings are playing with a partially deflated ball.

Up ahead, two women are having a push-and-shove match over something.

No one seems to be paying any attention to them, though, as if such behavior is commonplace.

After we exit the van, a female with slitted eyes and turned-down mouth approaches us. She's wearing a long black coat. I wonder if she's hiding a weapon under there. I stand between her and Annora. Her stance tells me she's ready to fight.

"Draalian," she remarks, but she's not talking to me, she's talking to Annora. "You here to sell him on the black market?" She assesses me the way someone would look at a bovine they wanted to buy.

"Fuck off. I need a mech." Annora slides from behind me and stands tall, her chin thrust out defiantly.

"If both his cocks work, I can get you ten thousand credits," the female with matted black hair says in a conspiratorial tone. "Maybe more, depending on size."

"Shut the fuck up. He's a sentient being with free will. Back off."

"Fine specimen. Maybe twelve grand. Do both cocks work?" she leers.

“My fists work,” I tell her as I approach, placing my body between her and Annora.

“Fuck you, newt,” she says as she walks away.

“Newt?” I whisper to Annora.

“There’s always a faction that doesn’t want change. People love to hate, especially people who don’t feel good about themselves.

“There are those who would rather humans die off completely than mix with other species. Haters love to call other people names. Some call Draalians newts. It’s not a nice term.”

“Look at the wog!” A dirty little girl with unkempt blonde hair says as she points at me.

“I guess there are other descriptive names for Draalians?” I ask, lifting a browridge as I stand taller.

“Yeah. I imagine we’re going to hear them all before we get out of here. Wog for pollywog. I think it’s an amphibian.

“You stand out enough, what with your maleness, and your six-and-a-half-foot tall self, and your blue scales. I must admit, the crimson coat was an interesting choice,” she says as she glances at me with a sarcastic lopsided smile.

“I’m a captain. I’ve served over fifteen years in the planetary army, Annora. I’m proud of that.”

“I understand. Don’t get me wrong, the coat makes you look amazing.”

Amazing? Too bad now isn't the time to ask her to enlighten me.

The woman who wanted to buy me is shadowing us to my right. She's grumbling to herself, and her eyes keep darting toward us—toward me, actually.

"Can we get these tasks done somewhere else?" I ask. "It might not be easy to keep you safe down here."

"Walk faster," she urges. "Perhaps we need to buy a weapon."

I put my hand on the small of her back. I've never felt these protective urges before. It feels oddly like . . . coming home.

It's a dark maze of pathways and people, but Annora finds a mech, brings her to the hover, then leads me deeper into the bowels of this place as we seek a forger.

At the end of a dark alley, we locate the wizened older female with a shock of white hair who the mech told us to find.

She's standing in front of a metal box almost as tall as me and about the same length.

It's emblazoned with a faded picture of what I think is food.

It looks about as healthy as Annora's brownies, and about as appetizing.

I believe it's a tube of meat in a bun. My stomach churns.

"Nothing like a hundred-and-fifty-year-old woman in a two-hundred-year-old hot dog truck to inspire confidence," Annora says under her breath.

"He needs papers," Annora tells her. "Clean papers. Alex the mech told us to find

you.”

“Cost ya,” she replies. The few teeth she has left are dark yellow, although the one in front is almost as dark as Annora’s brownies. Does this planet not have dentists?

“I also need credit bands that can’t be traced. One for each of us.”

The female gazes at us through her scattered nest of hair, the skin on her face has so many lines it looks like it was folded haphazardly.

“Expensive.” By the looks of her teeth, I’m glad she’s a female of few words.

“Can you do it?” Annora moves as if she’s about to look for another forger.

“For ten thousand.”

Annora’s mouth drops open as her eyes widen.

“I don’t have that kind of money!” her voice is a surprised squeak. I’m trying to figure out if this is a dramatic act to bring the price down, or if that’s a shocking amount of money.

“Can’t help ya.” The woman wipes the hair away from her face as if she only now realizes it’s obstructing her view.

I watch intently, admiring Annora’s skill now that I realize she’s creating this little drama.

“It’s a good thing we don’t need to be there in a hurry,” she tells me while she shrugs her shoulders and shakes her head.

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As we walk away, the female calls, “Five. I’ll do it for five thou.”

“Five thousand for two untraceable wristbands and legal papers for him?” Annora asks over her shoulder as we trudge away.

“You two mated?” she asks.

“No.”

“Okay. If you was mated I wouldn’t do it even for ten thou. Those hisserers shouldn’t even be on this planet. Human women is too good for ‘em.”

Before the female sits down at her battered desk to get to work, Annora says, “And I’ll need a stunner. No. Two of them.”

She doesn’t look at me, but must feel every muscle in my body stiffen.

I don’t want to provide the old crone with a show to demonstrate just how aggressive and argumentative Draalians can be, but I want to pull Annora aside and question her decision. It has been my experience that weapons escalate aggression rather than keep the peace.

“A thou for each stunnah,” is her reply.

Although the female’s clothing, ancient metal box in which she works, and her hygiene indicate poverty, she pulls out what looks like an expensive wrist-comm and puts the word out for someone to bring the weapons.

“Want a trackah?” she asks.

“What?” Annora leans forward, face pinched as she tries to understand the female’s dialect.

“Put a trackah in so you can trace him if someone takes him.”

“Yes,” Annora replies.

Well over an Earth hour later, we have untraceable comms on our wrists, I have what I’ve been assured are perfectly forged documents hidden in one of my coat’s inside pockets, and we both have stunners wedged in the waistbands of our pants.

I’ve also been called ‘newt’ six times, ‘hisser’ twice, ‘froggy’, ‘snake’, and ‘asshole’. The only bright side of the experience, other than the papers lying flat against my heart, is that the words appeared to bother Annora more than they bothered me. She’s truly a good female.

“I don’t know why you were worried about bringing me down here,” I tell her as we make our way back to our hover, “no one’s called me repulsive once.” I flash her a smile, hoping it doesn’t look repulsive on me. She stops walking.

“I don’t believe I apologized for that, Zorn. I am sorry. It wasn’t my best day, certainly not my best moment.”

Just as I’m about to forgive her, I see something dart toward us. It’s the female dressed in black who wanted to buy me. Only now she’s accompanied by three nefarious-looking companions.

“Ten thousand was a fair price,” she snarls as she jabs the barrel of a weapon into the small of my back. “Now I’m going to take him, and you’ll get nothing.”

The female's three associates all have their laser barrels pointed at Annora's chest. My heart accelerates, not for my own safety, but for Annora.

"Crap," Annora says. "He's brand new. I just wanted to have a little fun with him before I put him up for sale. How was I to answer your question about whether both cocks worked before I gave them a try?"

Her eyes dart to mine. It's obvious that other than stalling she has no idea what to do.

I stand taller, my shoulders back. We had just discussed my fifteen years in my planet's army.

I have a stunner in my waistband, but am certain I won't need to use it.

My face is a mask of calm as my eyes flick in the direction I want her to go.

She needs to move toward the van and get out of range of the three laser pistols pointed at her heart.

"Fucker!" she spits. "I paid too much for you. Fucking newt! Have at him, ladies. He's dumb as a stump, uncooperative, and I'm not sure he even likes women."

To my relief, she saunters in the van's direction.

"Hands up," one of the women orders me.

I do as I'm told as I watch Annora out of the corner of my eye. When she's far enough from the fray and all four pairs of eyes are focused on me, I easily turn on one heel, disarm the leader, whose gun was at the small of my back, and pull her in front of me to dissuade the other three from firing.

I'm more than a head taller than each of them, and from the download I received on the trip here, I'm two to three times stronger than their strongest. I don't need to overpower them, however. I just order them to hand over their weapons while I press the muzzle of the leader's gun into her back.

With their weapons nestled in the deep pockets of the crimson coat Annora scoffed at, I order them all to walk ahead of me to the parking area.

Annora must have watched the whole scuffle, because she's scurried to my side and is trying to keep up with my long strides.

"Nice job, Newt! Impressive." She's unable to hide her smile as her gaze darts to mine.

"How fast can you run to the hover-van, and get it started? We're not out of danger yet." I don't expect the females to give up without another fight. Our skirmish was almost too easy, I'm not even out of breath. It's Annora I'm worried about.

"I can be speedy."

"Run ahead, pay the mech, and start the van. Make sure she's not a newt-hater and didn't disable the thing. I'll slide in and we'll take off the moment my ass is in the seat. Okay?"

"Got it."

Within moments I arrive at the waiting van, toss the weapons far away, and slide into my seat. As we hover up the spiral ramp, we've barely rounded the first bend before I hear weapon fire behind us. They retrieved their weapons faster than I thought they would.

“I guess you were right. We did need the governor removed,” I tell her as I see laser sparks blaze against the structure’s walls, barely missing us. We emerge into the daylight unscathed as Annora aims the hover’s nose out of town.

“The mech told me the van’s clean. Untraceable. Although . . . she pointed out that we’re not exactly inconspicuous.”

I can’t read her language, so I ask, “What does it say?” The picture on the side is a naked male Earther.

One leg is out flat, the other is bent at the knee so it hides his members .

. . member. I forget they only have one.

When I examined him earlier I noticed he’s looking at the viewer with an expression that, on a Draalian, would signal sexual interest.

“No Shame Sex Toys,” Annora says. “My grandmother started the company shortly after males began to die. Back in those days, embracing female sexuality wasn’t the fashion.”

“No shame,” I echo. On Draal, openly discussing masturbation is not accepted. Things are evidently different here.

She seems to be making random turns, assuming someone might be following us, but in a few moments she asks, “Where to?”

“Your house.”

“What?”

“This is too dangerous. You need to go back to your house where you’ll be safe. I’ll figure out how to find my bro—”

“Which direction, Draalian? This is the most fun I’ve had in years. I’m all-in.”

I argue for long minutes, but there’s no convincing her. She keeps asking, “Which way?” until I finally point.

She consults something on her dash, then asks, “Northwest?”

“I don’t have my bearings regarding Earth directions, but you should make a route that way.” I point again.

“We’re off.”

She has a sophisticated nav system, but occasionally pulls over to consult it, trying to find roads that are less traveled.

“My heart is still pounding,” she says as she presses her hand over her chest.

While half of my thoughts are concerned with her physical and emotional safety, the other half of my brain is wondering what it would feel like if it were my hand so close to her breasts.

Is that little bump I see her nipple? And why are my cocks throbbing when I should be far more focused on the fact that four people just held us at gunpoint and we narrowly escaped injury?

“Want me to drive?”

“I’ll be fine. You were magnificent back there by the way. Disarming four people

without pulling your own weapon. Your army trained you well.”

“Thanks.” My cocks are tucked up toward my waist, and my primary is pressing against the front of my pants, wanting to show its heartfelt appreciation for her praise.

I lean on my hip, feign intense interest out my side window, and reach into my pants to rearrange myself before my circulation gets cut off.

Zorn

Once we leave the city, I enjoy watching the scenery as we tour the countryside. This part of Earth is different from my homeworld—richer, greener.

“I don’t get away from the city often enough. It feels like we’re exploring together,” she says. When she swerves to avoid hitting a four-legged mammal crossing the road, one of the sexbots in the back says, “I’m so hard for you I can hardly wait.”

“Their statements are . . . sexually exciting to you?” I ask.

“Some find it sexy. Having no males around, and knowing you’ll never have access to one, you take what you can get. Because I grew up seeing the inner workings of these things, I find it hard to ignore that they’re just made of plastic and computer circuits.”

“You’re so wet for me,” one of them says, although the last word sounds like a belch.

“These phrases?” I ask. “They’re what females want to hear?”

“Absolutely,” she answers, nodding. “We did research on that. These phrases are golden.”

I decide to commit these to memory. If I ever get the opportunity to use them with an Earth female, I want to get it right. Although the only Earth female I’m spending time with will know where I got my script.

Even though I'm certain we're going in the right direction, my connection with Zoriss doesn't seem to be getting stronger. It confirms my suspicions that he's hurt or sick.

"I'm worried," I admit, then wonder why I'm sharing these feelings with her.

"I'm sorry to hear that."

We're in rural country, with rolling hills and big four-legged mammals roaming in fenced pastures. Annora hovers to a wooded area and sets down between trees in a sunny spot.

"I thought you'd like to bask, and we can talk," she says as she turns off the hover and flashes me an interested smile.

Really? She wants to hear my thoughts? My worries? Is she actually interested in me, or is she just guilty because her mother bought me and threw me in a cage?

"Thanks. That's thoughtful." I figured we were just tolerating each other as we played games all day and waited for our thirty days to expire. I examine her lifted brows and shining green eyes. I believe she really wants to hear what I have to say.

After a quick trip to the edge of the woods to take care of personal business, Annora pulls out the sandwiches we made before leaving and a couple bottles of water.

We chat between mouthfuls about the minutia of our lives.

Our discussion slows and then halts, perhaps because I'm focused on every little movement of her mouth as she eats her food.

I never would have believed how sexy such a mundane action could be.

“The roof is flat. Let’s bask,” she says, smiling.

A moment later, we’ve laid out blankets on the roof of the hover. I pull off my clothes and climb up.

“Need a hand?” I ask reaching down to help her.

“Um . . . you’re naked.”

“For basking. Basking requires sunlight on skin.” I flash her the Draalian equivalent of a smile—lips closed to hide my fangs—and reach my hand toward her again.

Remembering the pose of the male on the side of the van, I sit back and offer, “Here. I’ll sit like this.” I mimic him, pointing the knee nearest her to the sky. “Will that work?”

She hesitates as a flush creeps from the top of her shirt up her throat to pinken her cheeks.

“Just basking,” she scolds, “no hanky panky.” Then she reaches out and I lean forward and pull her up.

I’ve basked thousands of times in my life, it’s what my species does. I’ve done it alone and in front of my family and in unison with countless comrades in the planetary army. I’ve never done it in front of a single female before, and never one so close.

It never occurred to me that my cocks would stand at attention. I flip onto my stomach and wonder if she noticed.

Annora

How do I unsee that? Two hard cocks.

I've seen thousands of hard cocks. Made of plastic. Usually of the solo variety. We even developed a couple of alien lines. We have cocks and bots of the three species who've been approved to come to the planet to mate.

I was part of the design team for the Draalian thrusting machine. That one was hard to get right. The spacing between the members had to be perfect or the machine provided more pain than pleasure.

Although I've held, carved, and painted plastic cocks, I've never been two feet away from a real one. A real, hard, erect, pulsing—shit! I need to redirect my thoughts and remind myself that I find Draalians revolting.

He turns onto his stomach and says, "Perhaps because you're an only child you don't know what it's like to have a connection with a sibling. Zoriss and I have been together our whole lives. We love each other. We enlisted together and protected each other in battle.

"The psychic connection? I can't exactly read his thoughts, but his emotions bleed into me, and mine to him.

Distance and state of mind effects our ability to connect.

Something's wrong. Terribly wrong. He's far away, but I know he's sick or hurt.

And his emotions are uneasy. I've never felt this from him before, but if I had to put a name on it, I'd call it rage. "

His gaze flicks to mine. "I'm worried."

Before I'm aware of what I'm doing, I'm patting his shoulder. It's what you do to a friend who's in turmoil, right? I've done it dozens of times with my girlfriends. Never with a male.

My mouth goes dry and although I want to swallow, I can't. Nor can I break the connection as our gazes are tethered to each other.

Time seems to slow down. I'm aware of every single thing in my world right now as if it's in slow motion. The crisp smell of the autumn air and the warm sunlight caressing my face. Those things hover at the edge of my awareness.

But front and center, I'm aware of Zorn's scales underneath my palm. I didn't notice them the last time we touched when I pulled him onto the basking rock. I certainly notice now. They're softer than I would have expected, and not slimy like I imagined.

No, they're firm and smooth and the scales are textured in the most interesting and unique way. I was hoping he'd look away, break the connection, but we both seem caught in the same web.

"No, I can't imagine being that connected to another living being," I say as I address the surface conversation, the pretense of the reason our lips are moving.

Under all that, though, I'm committing to memory the exact cadence of his heartbeat, because I know with certainty that it's beating in time to the pulsing of the cocks I glimpsed a moment ago.

In my frantic efforts to unsee the majestic beauty of two blue cocks, my mind bombards me with a picture from my memory banks of how he scented the air when we stuck our heads out the attic window and I got a glimpse of his forked tongue.

At the time, it didn't repulse me, but it did scare me.

Now, though, I have the most compelling desire to know what it would feel like for that tongue to stroke mine.

I've grown up watching movies with excellent CGI.

I've seen men and women falling in love and making love and living the type of lives people used to live all the time before AD-90.

I'm imagining all of that now. To hell with the plastic Draalian thruster I designed.

My mind is throwing me much more detailed images than that.

I picture him leaning close to me, scenting the air next to me, then flicking that sexy forked tongue at the entrance to my mouth until I open to him. I imagine his fingers combing through my hair, his lips stroking mine, his mouth telling me all the sexy, dirty things he wants to do to me.

I shove those thoughts out of my head and focus on him. He feels it the pull, too. I know he does. He doesn't want to talk any more than I do.

"I got a long bask in yesterday," he says as he shakes his head to break our connection. "We should probably keep moving."

"Right."

He jumps down and points his tush toward me as he shimmies into jeans that fit him like a second skin. Although No Shame has created hundreds of models of sexbots over the years, I can't think of one that has such a perfectly shaped ass.

I've seen pictures, all chalked up to 'doing research' for the company. I've looked at old pics of men when they roamed the Earth, prior to their extinction event. I've

trolled old porn sites and still pictures.

I've committed to memory the sexy divots on either side of the tailbone, and the indentations on the side of their haunches.

Some of the sexbot models I've helped design have those very qualities.

But none of those asses are as gorgeous as the one that just wagged at me as Zorn wiggled into his jeans.

And none were several luscious shades of blue.

I freeze for a moment, almost paralyzed, as I memorize the picture.

He reaches up to help me off the roof and I reluctantly accept his help, unable to get down without it. I've read a hundred romance novels about electric sparks arcing between men and women. I could only imagine what it was like—until today as I experience it firsthand.

It's like a low-voltage live wire, reminding me I'm alive. The energy zings to the hardening tips of my breasts and pools between my legs.

"You should teach me how to pilot this vehicle," he says as if nothing just happened on the roof of the hover. "I can function on little sleep. It was part of my military training. I can drive while you get some rest."

"Sure."

The hover's easy to fly. It's designed to do everything without any input other than giving the destination. What we're doing, though, avoiding well-traveled routes, skirting cities and towns, and using backroads, requires my full attention.

He's a quick study, and it's him in the driver's seat when we pull away from our rest stop.

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There's something about our little vehicle and the urgency of our mission, as well as the fact that I was never quite certain my mom didn't have a hidden camera trained on us at the cottage, that allows me to finally let my guard down with him. This feels intimate.

Up to now, we mostly played games and avoided talking. Now I want to know everything about him.

"There were so few women on Draal you never thought you'd marry . . . I mean mate?"

"It wasn't an option. That was a big reason Zoriss and I went into the military. We'd have no family to interfere with our careers. Poor kids like us could excel and rise through the ranks—and we did.

"And you?" he asks. "You're happy in the family business?"

"It provides a good living. We perform a service, helping women meet their own needs. There was never any other career that sang to me."

"Sang?"

"Called to me. Seemed exciting."

I doze for a while after it gets dark, but wake around two in the morning.

It's probably a hundred degrees in here.

Poor guy has three layers on including his thick military coat.

It must be a bitch not to be able to self-regulate his temperature.

When it's my turn to drive, I won't be able to keep my eyes open for ten minutes with the thermostat set this high.

"I'm too tired to fly right now, Zorn, and I think you are, too. Let's stop for a bit."

We park off a dirt road under some trees and bed down in the back of the van.

As I push the broken bots into a corner, one of them says, "I want to taste you," in a deep voice research indicated was exactly what women in the Andryla district want.

At the same time, another says, "I can't get enough of you.

Just sit back and let me make you feel good. "

Poor Zorn can't maintain eye contact, nor can he contain his nervous grin.

"Nothing like this back on your planet?" I ask as we lay out two blankets as a bed.

"If males on Draal wanted cock, there were a million at the ready."

"Very funny. I mean female sexbots."

"We have similar things, perhaps not so technical. In the military, our sex toys were small and portable."

Why did I ask? Why? Now I'm envisioning a design of a lush pussy toy to accommodate not one but two cocks. And in my mind, those cocks are patterned

blue, just like the ones I saw a few hours ago on the roof. I shake my head, wishing my brain had an off switch.

We lie down next to each other, and moonlight streams through the glass top of the cargo area. Lying on my side, I examine Zorn. He's no longer repellent. In fact, he's the opposite of that. What word fits? Attractive, my inner voice supplies. This male is attractive, she coaches.

She's right.

"So, you've never had a girlfriend?" Such a stupid question.

I know the answer. I'm such an idiot. I try to justify my ignorance.

I've never been this physically close to a male before, I've certainly never flirted.

Well, except with one of my junior high teachers when I thought I was attracted to women.

"No. And you, no boyfriends?" he asks with a smile.

How cute. Two people who've never been with the opposite sex trying to flirt. Lame! And adorable.

"Imaginary boyfriends," I admit.

His gaze flicks to the damaged bots at the foot of the van. "What did you like about your imaginary boyfriends?"

Is it my imagination or did his voice just drop an octave? And is it also my imagination, or did I just feel the most arousing twitch in the territory between my

legs?

He wants to play sexy, dirty-talk games? Okay. This might be fun. Even though it's a hundred degrees in here, I'm no longer sleepy.

"They complimented me. They told me they liked me and said they missed me when we'd been separated for only a few hours.

They laughed at my jokes. They said some of the things the bots say, but made up some others that were very .

. . personal. They figured out how to kiss me in a special way that made me moan.

They never made fun of me, and always made sure I wanted to do whatever we did. "

I never thought I'd have a male to tell these things to. And here we are, Zorn's blue eyes are laser-focused on me. I may have pretended that was a flippant answer to his question, but he was hanging on every word.

This no-longer-repellent-now-definitely-attractive male was not only listening, but by the look on his face, he was taking mental notes.

"It's too bad you find Draalians repulsive," his voice is soft and serious, "because I could do those things."

My heart seizes in my chest. Maybe it's the sweetness of his words, or their sincerity. Maybe it's the look of yearning on his face that can't be imitated or faked.

"Isn't that ironic, Zorn? Because I no longer find you repulsive. Recently I've been trying to determine which is more attractive, your wit or your ass." Don't you dare let your gaze run from his , I order myself.

I thought he'd laugh at my comment, at least a little, but he doesn't. No, there is no amusement on his face. His eyes flared with desire when I spoke. Now they're riveted on my lips.

"My ass?" his question is low and ripe with every sexy, unspoken question and observation and desire two words can hold.

You've waited your whole life for a moment like this Annora. Don't let us down, the bleacher section of my mind cheers.

"I, um, happened to, without wanting to, mind you, catch a glimpse of your ass earlier. And maybe there was a moment when I was hefting your unconscious, torporous body onto your basking rock that I might have . . . taken a peek."

"Really?"

One of his browridges quirks in question. A few days ago, I thought a hairless eyebrow was an unattractive travesty. Now I think it just might be one of the sexiest things I've ever seen.

"Hall of Fame ass right there, Zorn. Hall. Of. Fame." For some reason, this flirting thing is becoming easier. I smile at him, and for extra emphasis, I spear him with a shamelessly sexy look.

"Hall of Fame?"

"Best of the best," I explain with a nod.

"Like the way your green eyes catch the sunlight and actually sparkle like gemstones? That kind of Hall of Fame?" he asks, then licks his lips with the forked tongue I've been fantasizing about.

“Maybe,” I tease, dying to hear more.

“Like the perfect curve of those lips, unlike anything I’ve ever seen on Draal?”

“Perhaps.” I dredge up the gumption to toss my head a bit—not easy when you’re lying down.

“Like Hall of Fame worthy . . . breasts?” that last word squeaked out, but he didn’t let that stop him, “that would seem to a novice like me to be the ideal shape and weight to fit perfectly into a Draalian male’s palm?”

He’s working as hard at this as I am, and is just as much of a natural. What might junior high have been like for both of us if it had been co-ed?

“You tell me, Zorn. Hall of Fame worthy?”

“Yes, Annora. The download they gave me on the trip here was quite extensive. I believe your attributes are A-number-one, numero uno, top of the class. But of course, that’s just my humble opinion.”

“Tell me more of your humble opinions,” I coax.

“Should I tell you that you’re good at everything you do? Well, everything I’ve seen you do. Well, except for gin rummy.” He shakes his handsome head. “You’re definitely not good at that.”

“More,” I order shamelessly. I’m firmly in the pro-flirting camp now.

“And the way you handled your mother when she pushed you through the front door. I was not happy that day, perhaps you remember, but I had to give you credit for not calling her names.”

“Yes, I guess I do deserve a medal for that.”

“And I never told you, Annora . . .” he stops cold here and touches my shoulder so lightly, so respectfully I can barely feel it, but it sends shockwaves throughout my body radiating from the point of impact to peak at my nipples then zing to my sex.

“How much I admired how you decided you weren’t going to stomp to your room, or take it out on me, but you laughed—laughed!

And then decided we should have fun. That was the moment I decided I liked you. ”

“You . . . like me?” I ask, my voice soft like a little girl’s. I know that by this moment in the conversation I should know the answer to this question, but dear God in heaven, I want to hear him say it.

His voice is so deep it rumbles as he says, “Oh yes. I like you. And I’d like to—” He stops abruptly. The sentence doesn’t just drift off, it’s as if someone threatened him with death if he spoke one more syllable.

His eyes flare open and a hundred emotions flit across his face. I can’t read most of them on his alien features, but whatever it is, it’s like a hover going a hundred miles an hour abruptly switching into reverse.

He shakes his head, his mouth still open as if it wants to keep talking. “Get some sleep,” he says with less feeling than the Jason 23 lying in the corner of the van. To make certain his meaning wasn’t lost on me, he adds, “We should . . . sleep.”

Zorn

What am I thinking? Flirting with Annora is bound to end in disaster.

Conflicting thoughts war in my head.

One side of me replays her initial statement that I'm a repulsive Draalian male and reminds me of my initial assessment that she's a pale, bland Earth female with the bushy remnants of primitive cave-dwelling ancestors sprouting from her head. She insists we have nothing in common.

But another side of me replays the conversation I just terminated so abruptly. She was flirting with me, complimenting me. Not only does she find my ass attractive—that thought makes my already-hard cocks turn to steel—but she likes my wit.

Why did I shut things down? The answer slams through me with the power of the gale force winds I experienced on Agnon II. Fear. Zorn Krine, a captain in the Draalian planetary army, is afraid of what might happen if I express my attraction.

Might she reject me? Almost more frightening? What if she doesn't?

She's been helpful, which is very nice of her. But I'll be leaving this forsaken planet the moment I find Zoriss.

I'm thinking with my cocks. Ignorant. In fact, I'm barely thinking at all. The only thought drumming through my head is that it would feel like heaven to sheathe myself in her right this moment.

We're both starved people. Starved of sex. Starved of companionship of the other gender. We've been thrust together for days. Of course, we'd be interested and aroused. Under similar circumstances, the only people who wouldn't react this way would either be comatose or dead.

She made it clear she's not interested in me. I'm the first male she's ever known. I wonder if she's desperate enough to be attracted to any male.

There's nothing substantive here. Nothing real. Nothing that could possibly last. We should sleep. The sooner I find Zoriss, the better. And then I'll go back to Draal.

Just as I drift off to sleep, though, my mind teases at the edges of my awareness that I wish things could be different. What would it be like if the emotions we just felt were real?

Annora

I'm going to kill us both. It's a miracle I haven't crashed already. It's so hot in here I'm suffocating, and I can barely keep my eyes open. Mostly, though, the problem is that I didn't get much sleep last night. Like none.

I stayed up after our fabulous flirting session terminated as swiftly as someone stepping off a cliff. Bang. There wasn't a lot of sleeping that occurred after that. I was too busy chastising myself for allowing myself to have any feelings for him at all.

"Can you drive?" I ask stiffly. We've barely said ten words to each other today. Whatever switch flipped in his mind last night—the switch that turned from the shameless flirting position to the securely off position—has not been turned back on today.

"Yes."

Oh yeah. The warm, cuddly "I could do those things" Draalian must have been abducted by aliens, because he's not been around all day.

After we stop and switch places, I spend an inordinate amount of time pouring over my wrist comm and the nav system. We're about to cross districts.

"Sooo, I was looking for a safe, hidden, back way to travel from the Hyacinth district to the Trillium district, but there's no way around this. You're sure we have to keep traveling northwest?"

“Yes.”

Monosyllable man. Hmmm, sexy. Not.

“The Trillium district has stepped up their border patrol for some incomprehensible reason. Everything I’m reading on the Internet says they’re searching every vehicle.”

“Is there going to be a problem? You seemed pleased with my forged papers.”

“Yeah. Not that I’ve ever seen forged papers before, or legit papers for that matter. Only aliens need them. As long as they weren’t printed on an old cereal box, they would have looked legit to me. But it’s not just the papers. I assume my mom put out an APB on us.”

“APB?”

“All points bulletin. The No Shame van with the naked man on it? The big, blue Draalian? You’re going to be hard to miss.”

“They’re going to kill me?” he asks, his eyes wide. He’s afraid for the first time since I met him.

“Absolutely not. I’ve told you you’re not the one who’s going to be in trouble here. They’ll put you in one of the dormitories, offer you the Earth female of your choice, or give you a ride back to Draal if you’d like.”

“But they won’t let me find Zoriss,” he says, his tone sad and resigned, his gaze avoiding mine.

“Doubt it.”

“You’d better drive,” he says. After we change places, he asks, “What would a search be like?”

“I seldom leave the city. I’ve never crossed districts before. I have no idea—” Blue and red lights flash up ahead. “Shit. A checkpoint. I’m so sorry Zorn, I . . .”

He hits the button that closes the shade on the skylight and slides off his seat as I hover to a complete stop and ease to the pavement.

I gaze out the window, my mind searching at warp speed trying to come up with anything other than the lamest excuse as to why I’m eight hundred miles from home with a black-market Draalian in a hover-van emblazoned with a naked man.

I have no mental bandwidth to pay attention to what the big, blue reptilian is doing in the back of the van.

“Out of the vehicle,” one of the guards orders. She’s wearing a khaki military uniform.

As I slide out of my seat, I surreptitiously glance into the dark interior of the van. Can Draalians dematerialize? I don’t see him.

“Come with me, ma’am. We need your permission to conduct a search.”

Great. What would happen if I refused? I have a feeling I know, and the answer would include an all-expense-paid tour of the inside of the local jail.

I stand at the rear of the van as two of the three guards open the doors and peer in with laser flashlights illuminating every nook and cranny. My insides are quaking at what they’ll do when they find him.

There's the Jason 23, naked as a jaybird, 'just-fucked' hair, and left leg missing, which was the reason for the return.

Lying next to him, almost as if they were performing sixty-nine, is the Eric C-12. I always thought this model looked particularly lifelike. Both are Earth males with larger than lifelike cocks hard and at the ready.

Jackknifed behind Eric's head is a third model I've never seen before. No Shame's newest offering, the Draalian Doubleheader. He's completely nude, lying on his side with his head almost in the C-12's ass. Good thing Draal's don't have noses or it would be up Eric's butt.

His head is at an odd angle, his eyes look dead just like his buddies Eric and Jason, and he's showing off not one but two enormous erect cocks.

"Really? This is what you do for a living?" one of the guards, a petite blond, asks, breathless. "Tell me how to get a job like this."

"No shit." A dark-skinned beauty pipes up from behind her, her laser light lovingly playing over all that naked skin, especially of the blue, scaled variety. "We get to stand out here in the cold pulling over law-abiding citizens and you get to . . . what is it you do with these guys all day?"

"Oh, you know . . . inventory." I shrug.

"Looks like you only need to be able to count to two. You know..." She flashes her light on Eric's penis and says, "One." Then flashes her light on Jason's penis, "One." And then the Draalian model. "One." Her flashlight moves, then, "Two. I bet you get a lot of job satisfaction."

I briefly consider offering each of them their own sexbot to keep them warm over

long winter nights in the future, but there would probably be squabbling back at the office, and I think whoever wound up with the Newt model might spill the beans to her superiors that he's alive and fully functional.

"I do. Job satisfaction is my middle name. I've got a lot of miles to travel. Anything else you ladies need?" I'm so full of phony smiles I feel like my cheeks will crack.

"You're free to go."

"Have a nice night officers," I call as I open my door.

"Keep on counting," the blond replies. "I think two is my new favorite number."

I climb in, start the vehicle and hover up as smoothly as I've ever done. Double-checking the speed limit, I safely fly two miles under the limit until the little crossing station is no longer on any of my screens.

"I think it's safe. Want to sit up front?" I ask into the quiet gloom of the backseat.

"Give me a moment," he calls, his voice strained. A minute later he asks, "Could you play some music?"

That's odd.

"What kind of music?" We've been listening to all kinds of music over the last few days, and he's developed some preferences. I even ordered some Draalian stuff for him that he said he liked. Most of it had a deep, pounding bass beat I found fascinating.

"Draalian drums. Loud."

I may not be the smartest woman on the planet, but my feeble brain finally puts two and two together.

He had a hard-on back there. Well, not one hard-on but two. Those women were right—two's a very good number. Is he going to lie in the darkness back there and . . . take care of himself?

An almost-electric jolt sears through my body at the thought. My very cooperative brain provides me with a catalog of pictures of what that would look like even as my more logical brain distractedly wonders if he does it one-handed or two.

“Zorn?” Now what? Am I really going to ask to join him? Before I have a long internal debate complete with facts and figures and a pie chart of all the possible reasons this is a terrible idea, I blurt, “Want some company?”

Silence. Shit. I'm such an ass. The poor guy just wanted to live his life on Draal, fight alongside his platoon, have a psychic connection with his brother, and use his ‘small and portable’ sex toy on deployments.

Now here he is hiding on the cold, dark floor in the back of his abductor's van being deprived of the ability to masturbate in peace.

“I'm sorry. Please strike that from your mind. That was an awful—”

“Yes.”

I playback his answer in my mind. Was that a ‘yes’ to my observation that my request was awful or a ‘yes’ to ‘want some company’? Replaying it again I try to discern the nuances of his voice. It was a bit strained, wasn't it? Sharp?

“Yesss,” he repeats quietly. The extra hiss sounds so sexy my thighs clench in desire.

Now what have I gotten myself into? Does he think I just asked him to have sex? Did I just offer to have sex? Do I even want to have sex?

He put himself out there with his ‘yesss’. I need to show up.

I pull over and park, hit the button to re-open the shade on the skylight, then slip between the seats and enter the dark cocoon of the van’s cargo area.

Moonlight streams in through the glass roof.

He’s sitting up stark naked in the back corner, Eric and Jason lying at his feet.

It’s like a tableau out of the world’s strangest movie.

“Can I . . .?” I run out of fuel, so I lick my lips and start again. “Can I watch?” The last word came out as a squeak but was definitely intelligible.

“Watch what?” he asks, his voice an unusual combination of a sexy husk and the all-business captain in the planetary army who got an earful of admonitions about consent during the entire trip from Draal to Earth.

My mouth is dry and my core is wet as I gather my nerve, then blurt, “I’d like to watch you . . . take care of yourself.”

He kicks Jason and Eric to the other back corner of the van indicating as long as he’s going to do this, he wants to have center stage. Then he spears me with a look so piercing it’s as if he’s looking right into my soul.

There’s something about the deep blue of his eyes, reflecting the scant moonlight drifting in from the roof that makes my nipples tingle.

I back against the metal wall that separates the front compartment from the rear cabin, and slide against it until I'm sitting.

We're as far apart as two people can be in this small, enclosed space.

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He keeps his eyes on me as he lays both palms on his legs, then glides them slowly up his inner thighs. After rearranging himself so he's sitting cross-legged, giving me a bird's-eye view of everything in all its masculine glory, he grabs his secondary cock, the one closest to his abdomen.

He palms it. It's been hard for a long time—we pulled away from the checkpoint at least fifteen minutes ago. It bobs in appreciation as he strokes it from base to tip and back again.

My mouth is dry—like desert dry. I swallow thickly as my gaze flicks from where it was trapped in his to the show he's putting on below his waist.

He's pulling on his cock now, gently by the look of it.

“My whole life,” he says as he changes his grip from underhand to overhand as he skims lightly along his flesh, “I thought of a pretty azure-blue Draalian female when I did this.”

He closes his eyes for a moment, savoring the little twist he gives himself right under the crown.

When he opens his eyes, his gaze seeks mine immediately, watching my response as he circles the head of his cock with his open palm. What he's doing must feel so good he can't control a quick upthrust of his hips accompanied by the tiniest moan.

My core is dripping wet, my nipples are so hard you could read them like Braille through ten layers of clothes. In my wildest and dirtiest sexual fantasies, I never came

close to anything this arousing.

“A few nights ago, I couldn’t conjure that Draalian female’s image anymore.”

I’m beginning to regret my decision to be way over here. Part of me would like to be up close and personal to watch the action. Who am I kidding? Part of me would like to be in on the action.

“A few nights ago, all I could think about as I stroked myself were pictures of you , Annora.”

A little sound escapes my mouth—a cross between a moan and a sigh. Maybe Draalians are capable of magic, because it’s as if I can actually feel his palms on my nipples and a gentle pluck on my clit. Moisture has soaked through my panties.

I should stand up right now, climb into the driver’s seat, and hover away. I scold myself even as I urge, “Tell me more,” with a deep, breathy voice.

He answers one of my questions by grabbing his primary cock, the bottom one, with his other hand. It’s just as long and thick as the other. I’m spellbound as he wrings it with a twist of his wrist.

Two-fisted it is. Tipping his head back, he watches me through slitted eyes, his hips thrusting in a cadence with the imaginary drum music I never put on.

“More? You want me to tell you I imagine your hands doing this?” To illustrate, he slides both palms slowly to the base of his hard cocks and sensually draws them up with, I’m imagining, a light touch.

I can see his grip loosen as he gets to the pronounced ridges on the middle of the shafts, then tighten again toward the tip.

“Should I tell you that last night as we slept together in this vehicle I imagined your pretty pink tongue licking me?”

I’m beyond speech, almost beyond thought, but I nod my head earnestly. My blood is pulsing in my clit to the beat of the imaginary drums.

“Just like your sexbots, in my fantasy you told me you liked my taste.”

A little grunt escapes me and my eyes shutter closed to better appreciate the swirling, tightening need that flashes through me starting deep in my pelvis and creating a vortex of desire in my chest cavity as it arcs to my hardened nipples.

Through my lust-fueled haze, I debate whether I should approach him.

As intimate as this is, once I touch him, I’ll cross a line that can’t be uncrossed.

As much as I ache to have him in my mouth, to discover what he tastes like, I’m afraid it will change things between us so fundamentally we’ll never be able to go back to what we were.

I can’t keep my lids shut for long, I have to see the rest of the show.

His head tips back farther, making his Adam’s apple more prominent.

He lets loose a long, deep groan as his hands speed up.

I’ve watched porn since my teens—both for fun and research—and I’ve never seen anything as deeply sensual as this blue reptile pleasuring himself as much for my enjoyment as his own.

Sliding his feet up so his soles are flat on the floor, he uses this new position to thrust

into his hands, harder now. He's holding nothing back. The shy, respectful Draalian is gone. He's left this living breathing sex machine in his place.

Hips thrusting, groin lifting, thighs and forearms straining, he quickens his pace as he tightens both grips. His face constricts in pleasure, a grimace of ecstasy, as he comes. A thick ropery jet of pearly blue luminescent come spurts onto his chest as he groans in fulfillment.

My channel clenches, quivering in desire and perhaps the tiniest orgasm of my own. Surprising me in the best way.

He pants as he sets his ass back on the floor and allows his head to tip forward until his chin rests on his chest.

I've never been in a position like this before, not anywhere close, but I intuit that if I don't do something right this second everything between us is going to change. He's going to wake from his own lust-crazed cloud and regret what he just shared with me. I don't want that to happen.

I toss him a rag I find lying in the corner and watch, amazed, as I find myself aroused at even his act of wiping himself off. Grabbing the blankets, I crawl to sit next to him. I cover us, first with one blanket, then another, then pull the ends, one over his shoulder, one over mine.

We're cocooned together, hips and shoulders touching. I wish I were naked so I could feel his soft scales slide against my skin. Instead, I place his arm around my shoulders and nestle my head onto his hard-muscled pec.

He's quiet. Too quiet. I imagine self-recriminations are echoing in his head. To shut them up, I talk.

“That was brave of you, Zorn. Brave and the sexiest thing I’ve ever seen.” I decide against disclosing how many thousands of hours of porn I’ve watched that give my statement substance.

His palm drifts up and down my arm from shoulder to wrist.

“I’m going to apologize one more time,” I tell him from where I’m hiding. “The ‘repulsive’ comment was hurtful and out of line and I’m sorry I said it. I like you, Zorn,” I tell him as I move away enough to look him in the eye. “I find you the opposite of repulsive.”

He grips my chin and strokes my face with the backs of his fingers as he bestows me with the tenderest gaze I’ve ever received.

He just took a huge risk with me, I’m going to return the favor.

“Part of me wants to rip my clothes off and do those things with my mouth. Those things you imagined me doing. But,” I shake my head, “I’m not ready for that.”

He settles my head back on his chest and combs his fingers through my hair.

“I knew it would feel soft,” he husks, his voice filled with awe. “I never dreamed it would be this soft.” Bending lower, he presses his lips to the top of my head, making a quiet kissing sound.

I melt, filled with an affectionate appreciation for his gentle soul. A different person, shanghaied from their home planet and imprisoned in a small cell, deprived of a chair or food or water or even a toilet, would have had every right to be angry and cruel. Zorn never went there.

“I forgive you.” He kisses my head again as I listen to the reassuring thump of his

heart.

Zorn

I allow myself to bask in the afterglow of my release and the quiet, peaceful joy of stroking her hair and kissing her head. For a male who grew up knowing I would probably never get close to a female, never experience her touch, I let myself appreciate this for what it is, a small miracle.

Having this soft female body nestling against me, her hand gently resting on my thigh is more than I ever thought I'd have.

Do I want more? Yes. She just admitted she wished she were naked. I wish for even more than that. But I'll settle for this.

I rise, pulling the blankets off her, then build a little pallet on the floor. After lifting her sleepy form, I place her on it.

"You're a good female, Annora. You're beautiful and smart and sexy and forgiven. Get some sleep."

Zorn

At first, I thought my lack of connection to Zoriss was because my attention was focused on Annora's plush body wrapped around mine when I awoke. Now, though, as I relieve myself outside the van, I can't convince myself of that.

I step farther away, walking on soft, silent grasses as I lift my head, scenting the air with my tongue. Our connection is dead.

I freeze, not wanting that word to even float through my head. My chest feels heavy, as if it turned to stone.

I reach out to him with my mind. I'm not sure how it works, it's something I've done naturally since we were hatchlings. The fingers of my mind stretch out to him, and he grips onto the connection. But now—nothing.

I have no idea how to control the zing of panic that rips through me. Could my clutchmate be dead?

Annora steps out of the van and approaches me. Her gaze doesn't meet mine. She's shy, embarrassed after what happened last night. I would be, too, except I'm too worried about my brother to be able to think of anything but our lack of connection.

I know I should reassure her, but the first thing that blurts out of my mouth is, "I can't feel Zoriss."

She immediately recognizes the seriousness of my fears.

“How long? How long since you’ve felt him?”

“It was faint yesterday, but I felt him. This morning? Nothing.”

“Let’s get in the hover and go,” she urges. “I’ll keep heading northwest. We’ll get closer. You’ll pick up the . . . signal again.”

“No. What if he’s gone somewhere else?” I ask when what I want to say is, “what if he’s dead?” “There’s no sense wasting time when we might be traveling in the wrong direction.”

She looks at me and shakes her head, her eyes large in her face. “We can’t just sit here. We have to do something.”

“We need to wait where we are.”

She twirls her finger, indicating she wants me to turn around so she can have privacy. When she’s done, she says, “I’ve got an idea,” as she strides to the van.

“See this map?” she asks as she shows me a computer pad when we’re sitting in the van. “This area here is called Yellowstone Park. I’ve always wanted to see it. It’s not that far away. Want to explore today? It might keep you busy. You’ll worry less.”

I examine the map. It’s close to our original course. She’s right, just sitting in the van all day, waiting to connect to my brother is not a good plan. Keeping my mind occupied is a smart idea.

“All right,” I tell her. When we hover from our spot, I ask her to tell me about it.

“Before the one-world government, we had different countries. I believe Yellowstone was called a nationwide park. The government set aside all that land for the use of its

citizens. It still retains a similar designation. Never to be used for profit, it will forever remain a wilderness.”

“What’s there?”

“Remember the buffalo you ate the other day? We’ll see those. And the park has a lot of geothermal activity. Maybe you’ll enjoy all the hot stuff there.”

Annora

Zorn’s quiet. And sad. And worried. I thought today he’d be preoccupied with what happened between us last night. Instead, he thinks his brother is dead, or sick at the very least.

I want to keep his mind busy. I prattle on about things he’ll see in the park, but he’s not listening. I don’t blame him.

“It’s a government park?” he asks the moment I take a long breath. “Will we be in danger?”

“I doubt it. Park rangers aren’t military. I think women who go into that line of work are usually laid back and friendly. Your papers are first-rate. I think we can just take this as a vacation day and have some fun.”

“I don’t think I’ve heard a word you’ve said about the park,” he admits shyly. “I’ve been trying to find Zoriss.”

“No problem. You’ll just be surprised when we get there.”

Growing up in Windy City, I’ve never been to this part of the district. I read a series of books about Yellowstone when I was a kid, though, and I can’t wait to explore.

“Maybe I should take off my clothes and use my camouflage to hide in the back. I tried to use it the other night at the roadside stop. I took my clothes off and couldn’t fade. I don’t think I had recovered from my torpor. I’m glad I came up with the idea of becoming a sexbot. How’d I do?”

“You heard those women, right? Two’s their new favorite number.”

“And you, Annora?” his voice dipped into bass territory. “What’s your favorite number?”

“Two’s good with me,” I keep my voice chipper and try to give him a flirty look, but my eyes skitter away at the last moment. Trying to change the subject, I ask, “Camouflage? I don’t remember reading that you guys could do that.”

“We’re a very talented species.”

When he tosses me that devilish look, I could melt.

“If I can’t fade, I could pretend I’m a sexbot when we go through the gate,” he says as we approach the entry. Poor guy still doesn’t believe that it’s me who’ll be in trouble if the shit hits the fan.

“I just don’t want you to get in trouble,” he explains. Maybe he does believe me and this is his way of protecting me. That brings my first smile of the day.

“You’re sweet. Trying to protect me? Or did you just want to get naked with Jason and Eric again?” I cock a naughty eyebrow at him.

“It’s not Jason and Eric I want to get naked with,” he says so softly I’m not sure he wanted me to hear him.

I don't have time to give that too much thought because I've pulled up to the ranger station.

"Oh, first time to one of our national parks, Sir?" the ranger asks. She's quite excited to see the Draalian. Most of the first wave of aliens went to the larger cities. Perhaps they haven't taken the time to explore the park system yet.

She leaves her little station, walks around the hover, and motions for him to open his window. Am I hallucinating, or did she unbutton the top button of her drab, sexless camo outfit on that short walk? She hands him a pad with a map of the park.

"You'll see here where the herds are at any given time.

All the animals are chipped and show up on these interactive maps.

For example . . ." she leans in, giving us both a lovely view of her cleavage, "these blue dots are a big herd of buffalo, the red are elk." As if she wasn't being helpful enough, she reaches in and points to things on the pad.

"These yellow dots," she presses the pad onto his lap and indicates a few yellow dots with her finger as if perhaps the big blue reptile hadn't learned his primary colors yet, "are wolves. You'll be lucky if you see any of those."

"Thank you, Ma'am," he drawls as he lifts the pad toward her to give her less excuse to invade the van.

"I'm sure," she simpers, "I don't have to warn you not to eat any of our animals." She tosses her pretty blond head as she wags her finger at him flirtatiously.

"No," he says firmly, "that won't be necessary. Thank you."

“That will be twenty credits for you,” she spears me with a hard look. “Newcomers get in free.”

Zorn nods, a tight smile pasted on his face, and we hover to a place where we can pore over the map.

“She was flirting with you,” I announce, trying to sound light and breezy as if little pieces of my soul aren’t shattering inside me like glass. Really? Why would I care if pretty, thin, blond ranger-woman, tossed her hair and thrust her breasts at Zorn?

Because you like him , my inner voice informs me as if she’s scolding a toddler.

Because you passed from repulsion to attraction days ago, and now you really like the guy.

You contemplated getting naked with him last night.

Your mouth was watering— watering —wondering what he would taste like.

Play games with him all you like, but don’t lie to yourself.

I don’t like you very much right now , I tell her.

Tough! The truth hurts.

“Flirting? Is that what she was doing? I didn’t like it.” He’s scowling.

I glance at him, notice his stiff, military posture and the tight way he holds his mouth. He’s telling the truth; he didn’t like it. I try not to psychoanalyze myself as I realize this makes me want to kiss him.

Was I jealous? This is a new emotion. I've experienced envy before—wanting what others have. I think it's part of the human condition. But jealousy? Nope, I've never felt this. I'm not proud of it. It's almost like I feel I own him and don't want anyone else to have him.

Well , that snarky inner voice says, isn't that true?

She's right. I didn't want that brazen blonde to have my Draalian. Holy shit! I just called him mine. This isn't good. He'll be leaving after he finds his brother. I hope Zoriss is alive.

Noticing that he's shivering, I slip out of my seat and grab his crimson coat from the back. "Cold?" I ask as I hand it to him.

"Need to bask," he answers, "but I didn't want to waste the time."

Cupping his cheek, I squat to be at eye level with him. "Taking care of you is never a waste of time, Zorn." Why are my eyes leaking, I wonder.

I slide into my seat and hover off before I do what I'd really like to do, which is kiss him. "Let's warm you up."

Instead of going to Old Faithful, the famous geyser that has erupted about every ninety minutes as long as people have been making note of such things, we go to one of the lesser-known areas I remember from the books I used to read.

As we approach the mud pot trail, Zorn perks up, his blue eyes flicking from steam plume to steam plume.

"That will warm you up," I assure him.

The mile-long trail has what they call ‘pots’, small steamy geysers that look like they’re just what the doctor ordered. There are a few hovers at the trailhead, but this isn’t the most well-attended area of the 2.2 million acre park.

“Ohh,” he manages to make the sound into a moan. “This is going to feel so good.”

I don’t know how he tolerates wearing the heavy coat, but he’s hell-bent on getting even warmer. After passing several steaming areas, Zorn finds one to his liking.

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It's set into a rock depression maybe twenty feet in diameter. Thick smoke billows out of the pot, and unlike some of the others in the area, this one is constant.

Zorn points to a flat basalt rock near the lip of the pot and says, "Perfect."

I'm wondering exactly what I was expecting him to do.

Maybe watch it or sneak close to it and inhale the steamy warmth?

What I did not expect him to do was shuck the coat and leave it on the rocky ground near my feet.

What I definitely did not expect was for him to keep peeling off layer after layer until he was buck ass naked. In public. On government land.

"Ohh," he moans, sounding even more sexual than last time.

He strides over to the flat rock he had his eye on and lies on it. Not, mind you, on his tummy, not even on his side, but he lies face up, worshipping the sun and the warmth like his ancestors must have.

Occasionally, the hot, smoky steam billows over him and he hisses in bliss. At other times, he just lies there, basking.

A couple approaches us, the women holding hands, a one-year-old in a carrier on the shorter one's back.

“I thought the best thing we’d see today was going to be the geological sites,” the taller one says.

“Who knew we’d see a naked Draalian breaking two or three indecent exposure laws?” her partner exclaims.

“Oh, please don’t.” I plead. “Please don’t call the authorities on him. He’s a good male. He’s new here. He received a faulty social customs download.”

He stirs, moving into the same pose that’s on my van, trying to cover himself with the bent-leg trick. He must hear our conversation, but now doesn’t know how to return without exposing himself more.

“Oh, honey,” the brunette says as she takes pictures with her comm bracelet, “this is going to be the highlight of our trip.”

“Turning in my Draalian?” I ask on an offended gasp.

“Turn him in? No. Why would we do that? It’s such a treat to see him responding to his natural instincts here in nature.

If I didn’t know better, I’d think this park was created for Draalians instead of humans.

” She takes a few more pictures, then says, “What do you say, honey? Think we’ve got enough? ”

After they amble away laughing spiritedly, Zorn calls, “How badly did I fuck up?”

“Luckily, they thought you were adorable. Why don’t you bask a bit more? You’ve got great hearing, right? Have you recovered enough to fade?”

He nods.

“If you hear anyone else approach, just use your camouflage magic.”

I follow the trail of discarded clothing he left and wind up about a hundred feet from the Draalian.

How did I ever think Draals weren't the sexiest of the three alien species we've invited to Earth? Beautiful markings, gorgeous muscles, and the most charming personality, a combination of dutiful, loyal and protective.

Watching him rise up out of the steam, almost as if he dematerialized and is now materializing before my eyes, I notice how every thick, ropey muscle plays under the scales of his strong arms and thick thighs.

How will I be able to watch him walk out of my life when we find his brother?

How will it feel to drop him off at the Newcomer Center and hover away knowing he'll fly back to Draal and I'll never see him again?

“Ready?” he asks when he's less than a foot from me. He shrugs into his knee-length coat and carries his clothes.

“Done basking?” I ask as I scoot into my seat.

“Basked out, at least for today. What's Old Faithful?”

“Where'd you . . .” His hearing is so much better than mine he must have heard that couple talking about it.

“That's next.”

The park is huge, as big as some districts back east, but it's not too long a hover to the Old Faithful geyser. The lot is packed, but I convince Zorn no one wants to inspect his papers. Everyone will be too busy looking at the eruption.

We assemble on a boardwalk along with hundreds of other people, waiting for the eruptions that always seem to come about ninety minutes apart.

Basking warmed him up, so he's wearing black jeans and a t-shirt that hugs him like a second skin. There are few other males here, some Saveet and some Zresta, but like everywhere on Earth, it's ninety-nine percent women.

And ninety-eight percent of that ninety-nine percent are checking him out. Granted, most are surreptitious about it—sidelong looks that last too long, subtle second glances.

Some of them though, aren't shy about their appreciative perusal. They look him up and down and up again. Some make no secret of their interest as they check out his package or the way the jeans hug his buns.

"Two minutes," one of the women at the railing shouts. She must have something on her wrist-comm that alerts her of the time of the next eruption.

"So, steam," he clears his throat, "just shoots out of the ground?" He's trying to focus on my face rather than the hundred pairs of eyes that are ogling him.

"One to two hundred feet." I'm getting better at reading his alien features. He's nervous. "As soon as it's over, we'll leave. Then two more sites—"

"It's not natural," a mother with her five-year-old daughter in tow says as she approaches me.

I don't need ESP to know where this conversation is going.

"I think we can see from a better angle over here," I say as I grab Zorn's hand and pull him down the boardwalk toward the van.

"The freak must be seven feet tall," she says. "He can see from anywhere."

"Leave us alone," I say as more heads are turned toward us than the natural wonder that's getting ready to make its display.

"It's a travesty. A crime against God." The last word thundered out of her mouth.

"Want to go, Annora?" Zorn dips his head to whisper in my ear. "I don't know if I can keep you safe without hurting people if things get out of control."

"Snake," the little girl accuses, pointing her finger at the perfectly polite male at my side and then hissing.

Every cell of my body wants to charge at this woman and possibly take a swipe at her little spawn.

"Don't want to mate an alien?" I ask. "Then don't. But leave those who do alone."

My adrenaline is pumping, my thoughts are whirling in my head so fast I can't think. I'm not sure I can control myself. My body is on fire with a fight-or-flight response, so it's baffling when my crazed thoughts decide to do neither of those things.

Instead, I reach my arms to touch the swath of smooth scales above his shirt's neckline. Pulling him down toward me, I brush my lips against his. What started as an attack, a visible display of affection to shock and dismay the evil bitch, instantly morphs into lust.

I'm no longer even aware of the anti-alien woman or her child who even now is making derisive hissing noises. Nor am I wondering what the two-hundred onlookers might be thinking. Right this moment I'm consumed by my warm lips on his cool ones.

He kisses me back, leaning down to me, his arms surrounding me and tugging me even closer.

He makes an intimate sound, for my ears only.

It's a combination of a hiss and a growl full of all the lust and longing that's been growing between us since he watched me eat that brownie as if I were licking his cocks.

The shouts of people around me bring me back to my senses as I wonder if they're organizing a posse to arrest us both. When my eyes fly open, though, I see Old Faithful is shooting over one-hundred feet into the air.

The horrible woman is taking pictures of us as if kissing in public is illegal. I allow my anger to slip away as I assure myself that she probably came a long way to see this and now she's too consumed with me and my sweet Draalian to be able to enjoy nature's show.

It only lasts a few minutes, during which I split my attention between watching the geyser and assessing exactly how I feel about the incontrovertible fact that I think of Zorn as my sweet Draalian now.

I think I like it.

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Zorn

The geyser is interesting, a display of nature's power, but I'm far more interested in my powerful attraction to the female at my side. She's more than I ever could have hoped for—pretty, smart, and her fierce protectiveness reveals so much of her character.

Not to mention the interest she displayed to my rock-hard cocks.

I may be leaving in a few days, but if I ever have another opportunity to touch her, I'm not going to stop like I did last night.

That is, if she'll have me. By the heat of the kiss we just shared in front of all these people, perhaps she will.

"Newt-lover," the evil female hisses at us as she and her child walk toward us the moment the geyser stops gushing.

"Hover. Now," I say as I slip my arm around Annora's waist and move us toward the parking area.

"Against the laws of God!" she repeats, as she practically steps on our heels. "If God doesn't strike you down, the people should rise up and put you in your place."

Annora stops mid-stride, turns, and approaches the female.

"Listen, bitch, leave him alone. I don't know what scripture you read, but if there is a

God, she just wants us to be happy. And nice to each other.”

The female pulls out a pamphlet and presses it into Annora’s hand. “Read this. Repent and God will forgive you.”

Annora splutters, then turns, slides her arm around my waist and we speed-walk to our hover.

After I sit in the passenger seat and she slips behind the wheel, she holds her head in her hands and mutters, “I hate when people pervert the scriptures to justify their hatred, bigotry, and prejudice.

“I’m going to find a private place for us to decompress for a moment,” she says as she hovers from the parking area.

When we land in a shady wooded area near a small lake and a grove of trees, I grab a package of food and a bottle of water from the back of the vehicle and hand them to her. We went into a store when we refueled our first day and she’s been eating from our cache since then.

“I know I’m stress-eating,” she says around a mouthful of food, “but that was awful.” She takes the last bite of her packaged brownie and licks her fingers.

As unpleasant as the last hour has been with the horrid female and child, it’s relegated to ancient history as I focus acutely on the way she eats.

There’s something about the almost imperceptible noises she makes that must arouse my primal instincts.

Or maybe it’s the pink tongue. Or perhaps the fact that she knows I’m getting hard for her.

Slowing her motions down, she exaggerates each lick and bite.

She's stopped eating altogether and is sweeping her tongue at the corners of her mouth to wipe away imaginary crumbs that might be clinging there.

To avoid leaping across the van and finishing the job her tongue started, I tell her, "You were impressive back there. Brave to stand up for me. But you don't need to.

I don't care what strangers think of me.

"I reach to grip her fingers in mine. My attention is caught, fascinated, as I observe our differences.

Her hand is pale pink, mine is painted in bold blues. Her flesh is soft, my scales are textured. Her small hand is swallowed by mine.

"Are we really so different?" she asks, also looking at her hand in mine. "We live, we learn, we long, we . . . love, isn't that more important than the things that separate us?" Her green gaze reaches for mine.

"I think so and you think so. Isn't that all that matters?"

It's suddenly so quiet in this hover. We could be the only two people on the planet—or the universe. Her gaze spears into me as the corners of her mouth tip into the tiniest smile.

"That kiss back there. What was that?" I ask as I replay it in my mind. Was it just her way of shutting down that evil female? Was it a physical expression to show her support of the newt her mother saddled her with? Or was it more?

"That kiss?" Her smile widens and her eyes flash with what? Desire? "A prelude. An

appetizer. A beginning.”

My cocks pulse against my jeans. “Prelude to what?” I ask, not wanting to jump to any conclusions.

“More kissing.” She turns toward me and grasps both my hands in hers. “Maybe more than that. But right now I’m dying to have my first real kiss, not in public like a moment ago. I’m dying to feel your forked tongue stroking mine.”

“Obscure,” she says to the hover. Every window in the van darkens except for the sunlight drifting in through the roof.

“Privacy,” she tells me.

“You’d feel good in my lap,” I say as I exert the slightest pressure on her hand to pull her toward me.

She sits crosswise, with her hip snugged against my cocks. It’s shockingly intimate, yet innocent at the same time. Bending toward her, I kiss her softly.

This time I’m fully aware, not off-balance like I was with all those people watching at the geyser. No, now I get to savor.

Within moments I wonder how I ever settled for fantasies about Draalian females, with their thin lips like my own. Not like this, with Annora. Her lips are plump and ripe like juicy fruit. And soft. Soft as androvian fur.

I ply her with close-lipped kisses, getting the lay of the land as if this was a military operation.

Just as I do with an enemy, I discover her vulnerabilities.

With Annora, the weaknesses I explore are revealed when she responds with a deep breath, or gasp, or, better still, a soft moan from the back of her throat.

One of her small hands sneaks behind my neck, stroking the sensitive skin there. The soft touch is oddly stimulating. Her other palm cups my cheek in the tenderest expression of affection.

The next step on this military mission is invasion. My lips slide along the seam of her lips, gathering more of her scent and a sample of her taste.

“Annora,” I breathe against her lips. As close as we are in this embrace, as swiftly as we’ve been hurtling toward this, it pleases me that we’re in no rush. Pulling back, I resume kissing her.

The quiet, wet noises our mouths make are as arousing as the feeling of her lips on mine.

She pulls away for the briefest moment, touches one of the screens and returns to the exact place she’d just vacated.

Now Draalian drumbeats pulse through the air.

It’s what I’d asked her to play last night. It pleases me that she remembered.

The rhythm of the drums is primitive and beckons to something deep within me. By her reaction, it tempts her as well. She pulls me even closer, brushing her chest against me. The hard points of her nipples graze my chest through the thin black shirt I’m wearing.

Her tongue slips out between her lush, pink lips and licks my mouth. “Your tongue,” she says, more breath than sound.

I flick her tongue with mine. When she gasps, I pull back, worried I scared her, or worse, repulsed her.

“More,” she demands, both palms now on the back of my head to keep me in place if I’m foolish enough to pull away again.

My tongue is thinner than hers, narrower, too. The end of the forked sky-blue tongue is almost delicate. I flick it swiftly against her lips, then against the edges of her tongue. This elicits a deep groan of pleasure.

Her chest trembles against me, but I realize that’s not a bad thing when she moves to straddle me.

“I think your tongue is the sexiest thing on this or any other planet,” she says with an alluring smile, then sinks against me. Although her tongue invades my mouth, I have no desire to fight off the marauding army.

I taste the scent of her arousal on my tongue. A schematic of the female genitalia flies unbidden into my mind. This must be one of the hundreds of appendices they equipped us with on the journey here.

The little lump of flesh at the top of the seam between her legs is her pleasure center. The manual likened it to the head of my cocks. She’s rubbing it against me.

“Do you need release?” I whisper into the shell of her ear.

“What I need . . .” she says as she places my palms against her hardened nipples, “is for you to do every single thing you want to do to me until I say ‘no’ . . . or ‘no more’. Stop following the protocols they implanted in your brain and getting my consent at every turn. I promise I’ll let you know if I’m not happy. ”

Her message was clear. She doesn't want a sexbot to perform as programmed. She wants a Draalian warrior. A Draalian warrior she shall get.

Gathering her against me, I stand and carry her to our little pallet in the rear. It's still mussed from last night.

"Thanks for the clear direction," I tell her as I pull her shoes and socks from her feet. "I'm not stopping until I hear 'no' or 'no more'."

Annora

The kisses were sexy, sweet, and arousing, but this, this is what I've dreamed of my whole life. No simpering sexbot saying the words designed to get me off. This is a real male who's hell-bent on taking what he wants—and what he wants is to pleasure me.

He lays me down then straddles me, his knees outside mine as he pulls my t-shirt over my head, tossing it to the corner where it lands on top of one of the Jasons.

He pulls my sports bra over my head, then sits back on his heels and drinks me in. If his hooded eyes weren't eloquent enough, the hiss from the back of his throat would clearly convey his meaning.

And, of course, I can't forget to mention the massive erections straining at his crotch. I'm glad the jeans manufacturer is known for their sturdy fabric and double stitching, or his cocks would be staging a breakout.

"Beautiful," he breathes, his voice rough. "Teach me everything I need to know," he says as he dips his head and flicks my nipple with that forked blue tongue of his.

"Fuck," I say, drawing out the word as if it was a sentence or a paragraph or a

complete eloquent soliloquy.

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Dear God, this is so good. I order the back of my brain to stand down.

It's trying to design a sex toy that can recreate this.

I don't want to be an engineer right this moment, and even if I did, I could make it my life's work and never get this right.

Nothing manufactured could compare with what this male is doing to me right now.

He's flicking with precision, softer and then harder. One side, then the other. And when both halves of his tongue work in tandem as they surround my nipple, I can't control the helpless whimper that escapes my lips.

I have to praise him, so I eke out one word in a breathy whisper. "Good."

My greedy brain gets ahead of itself, flashing me pictures of that tongue going down on me. I moan just thinking about it.

I'm fully back in the present now as my gaze flashes to his. He's looking at me, somehow managing to maintain a naughty smile even as his mouth is busy performing magic on my nipple.

His hand gets into the act on my other nipple. First palming it, then tweaking. We're discovering together what feels good and what becomes incendiary.

"Yeah, that. Teeth," I tell him when he discovers scraping my nipples makes me insane with need.

His knee slides between my legs and lodges at the apex of my thighs. I immediately realize the brilliance of this maneuver, then slide against it hard, able to take my own pleasure.

Moving his knee back, he shakes his head, my nipple held between his lip-covered teeth. “No,” he says around my flesh. Then he removes his mouth long enough to order, “Don’t come until I tell you.”

My muscles all loosen as I relax into the blankets. Zorn’s completely in charge. I couldn’t be happier.

My hands force their way under his tight, black t-shirt. “Ahhh.” His muscles are magical. Like polished textured marble.

“Off!” I order.

He slips the tee over his head and is flicking my nipples again—first one and then the other—before I’m even aware he left for a moment.

“Gorgeous,” I tell him as I drink in the sight of his light and dark blue scales. Fuck! How did I ever think this wasn’t the sexiest sight I’d ever see?

My hands claim every inch of his skin—every inch above his waistband—and now I want more.

“Off!” I order again as I tug the jeans down.

“Are you . . .” He was about to gather my consent again, but thought better of it, leaned back to kick off his boots, then tug off his jeans.

His cocks looked big last night as I watched him pleasure himself from across the

van. Now, though, up close and personal, they're even larger . . . and harder. I reach to grab one but he just shakes his head slowly, lifting one side of his browridge in a scold.

"I have to take my fill of you first," he taunts as if delaying my gratification is going to please him.

His hands slide down my body, slowly, his palms seeming to memorize every dip and curve. His head bows to my belly as his tongue flicks my belly button. Then his head slides lower, his tongue leaving a glistening trail of saliva from my navel to my mound.

In one smooth move, his knees force their way between mine, then push them apart.

"Pink!" he exclaims when I'm fully exposed to him. I don't know what, exactly, he expected, but this color seems to delight him.

"I'm going to taste you," he announces roughly, "then I'm going to make you come."

He shoulders his way between my open legs, nips the sensitive seam where my thigh meets my torso, then burrows that talented tongue into my channel as far as it will go.

In response, I gasp in surprise, then moan with pleasure.

We created many sex toys capable of doing this, the tongue longer than a real human male's, capable of performing for hours if necessary, but how do you create the sheer exuberant gusto of a real sentient being penetrating you for the utter joy of sharing this singular intimacy with you?

The fact that it's the first time for both of us makes the experience out of this world.

“Zorn!”

Two emotions war inside me. Arousal and passion certainly have center stage, but the affection I feel for him overrides it.

“Sweet,” is all I can say when the truth is I want to say so much more. I want to tell him how important he’s become to me in just this short amount of time.

Zorn has been such a wonderful surprise.

With his biting sense of humor, his inordinate patience with the untenable situation we were thrust into, his abiding love for his brother, and his tenderness for me, I’m falling for him.

We’ve spent every waking hour together for days and I haven’t even wanted a moment alone.

I just want more of him. I can’t get enough.

“Sweet,” he repeats what I just said as he lifts up to look at me. I’m not certain whether he’s talking about my taste, my cream still glistening on his lips, or if he feels it too.

He usually takes care to hide his short fangs, fearing, I suppose, he’ll repulse me even more. Now, though, he shows them off. And damned if they don’t turn me on. I picture them scraping along my skin, the path where they’ve traveled bursting into flames of arousal.

He returns to my channel, slipping his tongue in to the hilt again, then sliding it along the slit until he arrives at my clit.

That talented tongue, having learned on my nipples, splits in two and licks hard, fast, and relentlessly until my legs quiver in need.

“Zorn?” The feelings he’s pulling from me are so overwhelming I need to feel tethered.

One of his hands reaches up to lace his fingers with mine, just what I need to be reminded of our emotional connection. His other hand slides between my legs, one finger and then two piercing into me in rhythm with his tongue.

He pulls away from me long enough to urge, “Come!” then returns to my body like a male on a mission.

His gentle order is all I need to tumble over the edge. My cry is a high, piercing whine as I spasm around him. Every muscle in my body tightens as I quit breathing for a moment, then gasp for breath. My orgasm swirls through me, bestowing boundless pleasure.

For a woman who’s tested every new product my factory’s ever produced, who’s experienced clitoral orgasms and vaginal orgasms and blended orgasms and whatever orgasm flavor of the day my advertising team has devised, I decide to call this the Zorngasm.

It’s a tsunami of delight, a hurricane of pleasure. A rollercoaster of twists and turns and changes of rhythms and tempos as it takes me to the heights of bliss and then slides to a stop back on Earth in the quiet rear compartment of my hover-van.

My thighs are still quivering when I tell him, “The best ever,” although I’m certain he has no idea what I’m blathering about.

“Can we do it again?” he asks, cocking his head as if he awaits the answer to the most

important question he's ever asked.

"If you insist." I can't wipe my goofy smile off my face.

"I do. I do insist." His voice was hard, almost harsh, but it's tempered by the tender look in his masculine blue eyes.

His first attempt at delighting my body was capable and competent.

But this? This time he introduces subtleties and nuances and new skills he didn't have time to perfect before.

His tongue does acrobatics. Swirling, diving, double-teaming my hungry little clit which is happily enchanted that I volunteered her to be used as a Draalian tutorial.

My next orgasm comes barreling at me like a force of nature. When Zorn discovers the come-hither motion, I can't hold back, nor do I want to. I release in pulses of ecstasy that swirl and gather and double, then double again until I release, arching my back and screaming his name.

Little quivery aftershocks slice through my body as he lies down and snuggles next to me, nuzzling me sweetly.

Zorn

A week ago, I felt as if being abducted from Draal was the worst fate that had ever befallen me. Right this moment, I think it was a stroke of luck.

I never would have believed I'd be lying with a beautiful female, still tasting her cream on my lips, having her cuddle happily against me as if there's nowhere else she'd rather be.

Is she happy? A spike of fear slides through me. Perhaps I read her wrong. Before I can inspect her face for subtle clues or ask her outright, she says, “Zorn. That was . . . better than I ever dreamed it could be.”

I kiss the top of her head, glad I didn’t have to ask.

“One minute. Okay, maybe two. Give me just a moment and then I want to return the favor.” She turns on her side, throws her arm across my chest, and kisses my throat and face. This is better than I ever thought it could be—the connection, the intimacy.

“I think this is how Earth girls bask,” she teases. “I’m basking in what just happened. I’m basking in you.”

“So, what exactly,” I nip her lips with mine, “did you mean by ‘return the favor?’” My cocks are pulsing at the thought. They’ve been demanding release since we returned to the van.

“You’re a military male,” she says with a flirty smile, “you might appreciate that I have a two-pronged offensive in mind. Ha! Two-pronged. Get it?”

I nod, hoping she’ll get to the good part.

“First,” she slides her hand up the inside of my thigh. I had no idea that part of my body could be an erogenous zone—but it is. “I’m going to do a reconnaissance mission with my mouth.” She nips my collar bone. “Then, we’re going to move on to the full enemy invasion.”

“Invasion,” I repeat as if it’s the magic word in a fairy tale.

“Yep, big guy. I was hoping by the end of today there would be no more virgins riding in this hovercraft.”

She rearranges herself, kneeling between my legs. Just her position makes my cocks bob in impatience. Her gaze connects with mine as she flashes me a sexy grin, then she lowers her head slowly to right above my knee.

I got the anatomical downloads, perhaps she doesn't . . . ah, she nips me, then works her way up my leg.

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“Annora!” I don’t know what to do with my hands. What they want to do is feather through her hair and then press that lush mouth down onto me. What I force them to do is grip the blanket near my hips and focus on the pleasure she’s bestowing—and she hasn’t even gotten to the good parts yet.

She’s teasing me, trying to intensify arousal when none is needed. If she prolongs this too long, I’m going to release before she gets her mouth on me.

She nips up my leg, grabs my primary, and opens her mouth, all the while holding my gaze.

“There!” we hear a strident voice outside our private cocoon.

“Look at that indecent picture on the van. Of course, that has to be the newt-lover.”

“Shit!” Annora says as she searches for her clothes.

I yank on my jeans and move to the front of the van looking for the stunners.

“We are armed with deadly force. There are over ten of us. Come out with your hands up or we will destroy the van with both of you in it.”

“End obscure,” Annora orders the van so we can look out the windows, then, “Zorn?” Annora asks, her green eyes wide in fear, her voice laced with panic when we see the female told the truth. At least ten angry females are surrounding us.

“We have no quarrel with the female. She’s a heathen, but at least she belongs on

Earth. It's the wog we want."

As a captain in the Draalian planetary army, I've studied military strategy since my first day as an enlisted male. I've analyzed every major battle my race has ever fought.

My mind races to assess the probabilities and outcomes of every possible strategy.

Two stunners against ten people armed with lasers is not good odds.

If it were Zoriss and me, there's no question we'd come out shooting and possibly overpower the ragtag bunch of females I see out the windows of the hover.

I'm not with Zoriss, though. I'm with Annora. Although she was brave in the underground the other day when those females wanted to take me, and she stood up to that mother and her wretched child a few hours ago, she's not prepared for a fight like this.

"Send the snake out!" The female's voice has lost all pretense of being pleasant.

"Zorn, we can take them. I'll fight."

"They said they'll let you go free. Do as they say."

We argue for a minute, she insists we can take the mob gathered outside our hover. I argue even more vehemently that we're no match for them. With every passing second, I'm aware that the time for making a decision is running out.

A shot is fired, and must have pierced the hover, striking one of the bots who says, "I have to be inside you nowwww." Glancing over, I see he's been struck in the chest.

“I insist, Annora. Leave.”

“No.” She shakes her head adamantly.

“I’m the captain. You’re the private. This is an order.”

She keeps shaking her head. “I’m with you, Zorn.”

I know we have mere seconds left before they shoot at us again. Next time it won’t be just one shot, and it won’t be aimed at the floorboard. I have to get her out of the hover right this moment!

“You may be with me, but I’m not with you, Annora.

Are you stupid?” I say with a sneer. “Do you really think I have feelings for you? Do you think a captain in the Draalian army would give up everything he holds dear for you ? Do you think I could forgive being captured and dragged across the galaxy and thrown in a cage? Do you think I was interested in anything other than an easy fuck ? A virgin at my age, I’d stick my cocks in anything with a hole. ”

I don’t just say the venomous words, I spit them at her. I pierce her with a look of sheer disgust. When she doesn’t start moving immediately, I dredge up more spiteful things to say.

“I’m surprised you couldn’t tell how disgusting I find you.

You think I’m repulsive? Look at you, with all that pink skin and flab.

” I choose my next words carefully. Even as I say them, I know the painful impact they will cause.

“Did you think a male like me would find your soft, rounded belly attractive? What would make you think for a moment I would want you after our thirty days are up? Although I would have loved to fuck your cunt. I would have told all my friends about how I tricked you and used you—”

She’s crying now, her eyes so full of tears I no longer have to keep up the appearance of disgust. She blindly stumbles to the driver’s door and spills into the sunlight.

I fully expect to be killed by laser fire within the next ten seconds. My only regret will be how I just decimated the self-esteem of the only female I’ve ever loved.

I watch helplessly out the windshield as three females push Annora to the ground and tie her up. They’re not gentle, but I don’t believe they mean her any lasting harm.

Now that she’s safely out of the way, I consider breaking out of the van and fighting even though the only weapon in my possession is a stunner. When I see two women pointing their guns at Annora, their message is clear. If I don’t do what they say, they’ll hurt my female.

I stand, waiting for their next order. I can’t risk Annora.

“You’re going to come out of that hover, newt, and lie flat on the ground with your hands behind your back. Nude.”

I pull off my pants, slowly open the door, and jump down. As I lie on the ground, I hear “Abomination” before I’m pulsed with a stunner until I lose consciousness.

Zorn

I'm lying on cold stone. Every muscle in my body hurts. I instantly remember what happened in Yellowstone and don't open my eyes as I try to give every indication that I'm still unconscious.

"What does Mary plan to do with this thing?" a female voice says as if she's talking about a soiled rag no one wants to dispose of.

"She says she has plans."

I don't know what the plans are, but the fact that there are plans sounds like a good thing. I'm still alive. If they had wanted to kill me, I'd already be dead.

"He's so gross," one of them says. She sounds younger.

"An abomination," the other agrees.

"I'd sure like to see what's between his legs, though."

"Billy!"

"What could it hurt, Teeg? He's out cold. There will never be another pureblood man on the planet. I'll never see a man's cock. I'd like to—"

"Stop it, Billy. You sound as bad as the whore he was with."

I keep myself still even though I'd like to shut them both up by any means possible. Annora is a wonderful person. They shouldn't judge her like that.

"He's still out?" This is a third voice. She's more forceful; I think she's the one who barked the orders back at the van. I hear her stride to my cell. "Go get me a broom from upstairs," she orders. "I'm going to wake him up."

"Okay, Mary."

It's chilly and musty here. And dark. I'll examine things more thoroughly when I open my eyes, but I don't think there's a source of sunlight.

I'm naked and cold. The cold stone has already leached heat from my body.

I'm going to get weak quickly under these conditions.

The last thing I need is for them to further abuse my body.

I groan and open my eyes as if I'm just waking up.

"Never mind. It looks like our guest has decided to join us."

I assess everything I see, storing it in my military mind, assessing for their weaknesses as well as possible avenues of escape.

I'm in a cell in a dark, dank basement. This place is old with a cracked, gray stone-like floor.

There are two cells down here that look like recent additions.

The round metal bars that surround me are new.

I'll check when I don't have an audience, but I assume they're set deep into the stone and are sturdy.

There's a clean mattress on the floor against the rear of the cell.

The wall is made of the same smooth, grey stone as the floor.

I'm not sure it's stone at all. It looks fabricated.

There's a bucket for waste, I assume. My mind flashes me a picture of the cell at Annora's cottage.

Even from our first meeting, she tried to be nice to me.

I don't think I'll be treated nearly as well down here.

There's one small window at the end of the hallway that allows weak light to bleed through the dirty pane of glass. My system will need a great deal more than that to keep me alive.

"Name?" Mary asks.

"Zorn Krine, captain in the Draalian army," I tell her these basics, just as I've been instructed since my first day as a private.

She laughs derisively and the two other women join in, even though it appears to me they have no idea what the joke is.

"I will not be using any honorifics with you, wog. I don't give two shits if you're a captain in your alien army.

” She’s older than Annora. If I had to guess, she’s close to my mother’s age.

Her brown hair hangs limply to her shoulders and her eyes, though they’re green, aren’t lovely and luminescent like Annora’s.

Her mouth is pulled into an angry pucker.

I stand and peer down at her, not allowing myself to grimace as every muscle in my body squeals in pain. They must have held that stunner on me long after I faded into unconsciousness.

“What do you want with me?” I demand. I’ve decided to use whatever strength I possess now, as I imagine my body will start failing within days, perhaps hours, from abuse and lack of warmth.

“He wants to know what we want with him?” she sneers to her friends. “I guess there’s no harm in telling you. We’re going to be filming vids, sending them out over the Internet. We’re not the only newt-haters in the world.

“There are groups of us on every continent. Some are law-abiding. They sponsor marches and sit-ins and write letters to their governmental representatives. Some, like us, are tired of not being heard. We’re committed to forcing you heathens off the planet by any means necessary.”

“Any means necessary,” the one called Teeg chimes in as the black-haired female nods her head in agreement.

The female in charge seems happy to talk. I might as well ask her more questions.

“You plan to kill me? What will that accomplish?”

“That’s for us to know and you to find out, wog.” She’s halfway to the steps at the end of the hallway when she orders, “Billy, bring him water. We’ve developed a bug problem down here. Maybe if he gets hungry enough he’ll help us solve it.” She snort-laughs as she stomps up the stairs.

Billy returns a few minutes later with a paper cup of water. I was hoping for something larger so she’d have to open the door to pass it to me.

“Sit on the mattress against the back wall,” she orders as she waves a stunner at me.

When I do as she says, she puts the cup through the bars and sets it on the floor.

This is the one who wanted to see me naked. She’s younger than the other two. Her hair is cut straight across her nape in a most unbecoming style. She’s shorter than the others, and younger. She’s the weakest link here. Perhaps I could curry her favor.

“Thank you. That was very generous.”

“You’re . . . you’re welcome.” She firms her jaw and glances away as if she broke a rule by treating me civilly.

“Perhaps you could find me something to wear when you go upstairs again. Or a blanket? It’s cold down here.”

“Um. Mary didn’t tell me to.”

“Yes, I understand. I wouldn’t want to get you in any trouble.” Guilt might work. I’ll try that next time we’re alone. Right now, I’ll stick with being nice and non-threatening. These people talk about God. Perhaps somewhere in their scriptures it preaches kindness and compassion.

I sit at an angle, my posture mimicking the male on the side of Annora's van, hiding my sex from her. Her frank interest in me is unsettling.

"I'll make you a trade," she says as her open expression turns hard. When I cock my head in question she continues, "I'll get you a blanket for a peek at your cocks."

I hear a flash of what the slaver said when I first woke up on the vessel orbiting Earth. "All they want are your cocks and your sperm." Except for Annora, he was right.

Annora. Did I really say those horrible things to her? The last words she ever heard me say were mean and spiteful and demeaning. I know she feels shame about her stress-eating, and I derided her body. My stomach squeezes in anguish when I think of that.

I had to do it, though. I needed her off that hover-van before a stray laser burst hurt her. I did her a favor. Not only did I save her life, I made it easy for her to forget me. It was for the best.

"What do you say, wog? Blanket for a peek?" Billy cocks her head boldly, but her gaze runs from mine.

Draalians have no prohibition on nudity—we have to bask.

There have been hundreds, maybe thousands of times in my life when basking in public was a necessity.

It carries no stigma. I discovered firsthand how different Earthers treat it when those two females at the mud pots in Yellowstone mentioned there were laws against such things.

“Pants and a blanket and you’ll get your peek and . . .” I raise a browridge meaningfully, “my silence about the peek.”

As she thinks it over, I see the exact moment when it dawns on her that she’ll need my silence to maintain her status in her group. Reminding her of that fact was a good strategy. She’ll think I’ve got her best interests at heart and I’m on her side.

“I won’t find anything that fits. You’re taller than anyone in a hundred-mile radius,” she turns to leave, then returns, her face close enough to the bars that I could grab her and knock her unconscious. I’ll bide my time, though. I don’t know if her biometrics will open the lock.

“Quick peek now, to prove you’re telling the truth, then the clothes.”

I lower the leg that’s hiding my cocks and put my foot on the floor, giving her a moment’s glance of two blue Draalian cocks in all their woggish glory.

“Clothes and a blanket,” I say. “Two blankets if you want a closer look.” It’s cold in here already and bound to get colder when the sun goes down.

I’ve read about prostitution. Zoriss and I have been on planets where they have it.

It’s always been females for sale, not males.

I never availed myself of it. First, it was against army policy.

Second, it seemed vulgar. Yes. Vulgar. That’s what this is.

But I need to escape, and Billy seems like the most promising avenue.

Annora

I did nothing as those awful women hovered off with Zorn. I was powerless as I watched him go, my eyes still filled with tears from the cruel words he lobbed at me as if I were nothing to him—less than nothing—something repulsive.

I walk around back as I check the hole they shot with the laser. It didn't damage anything vital; the hover-van will fly fine.

After climbing back into the van, I lock the doors, then grab the stunner and put it in my pocket. I like the weight and heft of it as it lodges against my body. It makes me feel safer. I slide into the passenger seat, set my heels on the edge of it and hug my legs, my head on my knees.

"I need to think," I say out loud to the empty vehicle.

My heart is clenching, my eyes get hot as if I'm going to cry again. Now I know how much it must have hurt him when I called him repulsive. It certainly broke my heart when he said it to me.

And calling me fat! My Achilles heel! And he knew it. Well, he didn't call me fat, just said I was flabby and my rounded belly was unattractive. As if I didn't know.

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Then I play the whole scene back, rewinding even farther than I needed.

I watch the magic we shared in bed. Well, it obviously wasn't magic for him.

But it was for me. He was such an attentive lover.

Although I've never had an actual lover, I've had bot lovers for years who had only one goal in their programming—to be attentive to me.

And yet, they couldn't hold a candle to Zorn.

Then I replay that moment where he asked to do it again, and the way his eyes looked when he said, "I do. I do insist." I pause my mental replay and zoom in on his handsome blue eyes.

He's a lot of things—a proud captain, a patient male who could have been an asshole that first day when I discovered him in a cage in the cottage. But he's not a liar. Or an actor.

I inspect his face in my mind's eye for long moments, then a slow smile stretches across my face as I watch what played out after that.

The alien-haters, their demands, their offer that I could go free, and my insistence that I stay.

After the shot was fired, it was clear those crazy women weren't playing.

So, he got rid of me the only way he could in the heat of the moment.

He said despicable things to me because there was no time to argue, and he wanted to keep me safe. Those eyes are what was telling the truth. His lying lips were just trying to keep me alive.

He saved me. Now I have to save him.

What a stroke of luck that the female we bought our wristbands from offered to put trackers on them.

I consult mine and see his GPS far from my own. Yes! He's still wearing it. Now all I have to do is follow the signal and figure out how to break him loose.

I can't call the authorities. At least not right away. As much as I've hated what my mom did over the past week, I love her. I don't want her to get in trouble, and I'm pretty sure she could wind up in jail for buying him from her high-placed friend and then imprisoning him in our cottage.

If the anti-woggers wanted to kill him, they would have already done so. I've got time to figure something out. I give myself two days. In two days he could already be slipping into torpor. I can't risk his life and health longer than that. At that point, I'll have to call the authorities.

I slide behind the wheel and hover as fast as I can toward Zorn's tracker.

Hours later, the sky is lit in shades of tangerine and violet as the sun sets. Although it's been a long day, I'm full of energy. I'm close now, really close. I crossed into what used to be called Idaho and is now called Amity, then left the park and am still traveling west.

The district has lost population over the last eighty years.

But the areas I'm traveling through were never heavily populated.

At least that's what I'd guess by the lack of .

. . anything. No fuel stations, hundred-year-old abandoned buildings by the side of the road.

I've passed very few hovers or people. But up ahead I see some lights. It must be a small town.

Zorn's tracker has been stopped there for over an hour. I think I need to do reconnaissance on foot because my hover would stick out like a sore thumb. The naked man and No Shame logo would be certain to attract attention.

Parking in a wooded area by the side of the road, I make certain my stunner is on full charge and approach the lighted area.

When I finally get to town, I see one store and four abandoned buildings. The store looks like something out of an old zombie apocalypse movie, but the lights are on.

Zorn's tracker light is flashing from right around here, but I don't see him. Perhaps he's in one of the old cinder block buildings emblazoned with the faded name of the town—Rhyolite. I double-check my wrist-comm, then backtrack a bit.

By the readout on my GPS, I should be standing right on top of it. I use the light feature on my wrist to examine the ground and find his tracker in a clump of grass in the gravel. My stomach squeezes in panic and my chest tightens in pain.

Picking it up, I see the clasp was ripped off him. They evidently got smart and

realized they needed to dispose of it. I hope they didn't dispose of him, too.

My face heats and tears threaten to spill from my eyes. I'm lost. I can't do this. Two things strike me with the power of a thunderbolt. First, I'll never be able to find him. Second, dear God, I have feelings for the Draalian.

Yes, the male I initially thought was repulsive passed into attractive territory days ago.

But it's more than that. So much more. I really like him.

My pussy clenches as I think of him fisting his cocks the other night.

My clit quivers when I picture what we were doing right before those bitches surrounded my van.

But it's more than sexual attraction—far more.

Scrubbing my face with both hands, I take a deep breath and try to decide which branch of government would be the ones to call. The Department of Extraterrestrial Protection Services, I guess. What would that conversation be like, I wonder.

Hello, can I speak with the person in charge? I have a kidnapping to report. Oh, no, not the initial kidnapping tacitly sanctioned by my mother who bought him from despicable aliens who traveled the galaxy to bring him here for the entertainment of selfish Earth girls like myself.

And no, not the second kidnapping where I helped him escape his initial imprisonment and traveled across country without benefit of legal papers in an unsanctioned search and rescue mission for his equally mistreated brother.

But the third kidnapping where he was taken by women calling him a wog and who I think want to hurt him. Probably kill him. Yeah. I want help with that.

I'd better warn mom first.

I retrace my steps back to the van. "I want to come inside you," one of the Jasons croons.

My gaze darts to the back where the bots are piled.

"I wish you guys could help me," I say as I sit up straighter and prepare to call my mom.

I've read books where the heroine described the world as if it slowed down, but always thought it was the author's poetic license. It's not poetic license, because I feel it now.

All thoughts stop swirling in my head. My dread at having to call my mom and the authorities is a distant memory. My vision zeroes in on the bots in the back of the van.

"I'm going to find you, Zorn," I say with confidence into the quiet van. "And we're going to rescue you."

Moments later, I'm on the phone with mom.

"Oh my God, Annora. Thank goodness. I've been so worried ever since you disappeared. Are you okay? I messed up so badly. Now that I think about it, I can't believe I bought him, much less put him in a cage and locked you in with him."

This is the woman I grew up with. She was the most loving mother on the planet.

She didn't exactly spoil me . . . well, who am I kidding?

Of course, she spoiled me. She went to great lengths and expense for in vitro.

That was when there were still males on the planet with functioning sperm.

But it was hella expensive, and she had some problems that required a lot of treatments.

Yes, this is my real mom. Not the one who shoved me into the guest cottage and locked the door, but the loving one who would do anything for me. She'll come through for me. I know she will.

"I'm okay, but Zorn isn't."

"Oh. I bought him on the spur of the moment. I was just looking you know, just to see what was out there. I was daydreaming about what it would have been like if I'd had the opportunity to have someone like that to talk to and love me.

I think I was half in my imagination when I chose him and called my friend to see if she could pull strings.

You know how it is to suddenly hit the 'buy now' button when you had no intention to do so.

I should have never done this. I'm so sorry. What's wrong?"

After I explain, she asks, "How can I help, sweetie? What can I do?"

"You've got a security team that has been battling cyber-theft of our designs. They're top-notch people. They've been ferreting out industrial espionage for years. They

have ways of finding out information. I'll need their help."

I explain everything, trying to give all the facts in the shortest download possible so she can have the team start working immediately. I know, though, that my feelings for him have snuck through. She has to know I have a crush on him by the time I've told her everything.

"Share everything with your team, mom. I've given you all the information: the time the anti-woggers left my van in Yellowstone, and how long his wrist-comm has been lying in the same spot in Rhyolite.

"They have to be at a home base, and it has to have been close enough that the woman at the geyser got her gang to join her after Old Faithful went off. The geyser went off shortly after eleven this morning. They accosted us around three. They have to be within a four-hour radius of the geyser, and they've passed this way.

"There can only be so many places they can hide him. Get your team on it. Maybe they can intercept communications."

"I'll contact my security team and call you right back."

Ten minutes later, I'm on a call with my mom and Drennan, the head of No Shame security. She's a beautiful woman, and the strongest, savviest one I know. She was in the military and retired to work at No Shame. If anyone can get the job done, she can.

"I'm mobilizing a team now. We're putting everything we need on a hover-truck and will be on our way in half an hour.

We'll take turns driving as we continue to use every resource we have to try to find him.

Nav says it's a little over a twenty-hour drive.

We'll get there sooner. Don't do anything.

Let me repeat. I know you Annora. Don't do anything until we get there. ”

“Okay.” No way .

Zorn

“These were the best I could do,” Billy says as she holds up a pair of stretchy turquoise exercise pants. She makes a show of setting the pants and blankets on the floor out of my reach. “Show me.” Her eyes focus on my thigh as she waits silently for the unveiling.

She’s not acting like the weakest of her group now. She’s bold, ordering me around. I sit on my bunk against the back wall, both feet on the floor, and open my legs until they’re shoulder-width apart.

She steps as close as possible, both feet slipping between the bars, her hands gripping the metal tubes as she presses as tightly against them as possible.

“A real cock,” she sighs dreamily. “Two of ‘em.” Her eyes glaze over as she takes them in. I can’t entirely blame her. Although I controlled myself better, I felt just like that when Annora and I began our explorations.

“Make them hard,” she orders.

“That wasn’t the deal,” I tell her firmly.

“I don’t have to keep my end of the deal,” she threatens as she tosses her head, then steps away and grabs the bundle of blankets and pants.

“Nor do I, Billy. I already gave you the peek, but I can rescind my promise to keep this a secret.”

Her eyes widen in fright for a moment, then narrow. “I’ll deny it. They’d never believe you.”

“You’re probably right, but they’d never fully believe you again, either. You’ll never have their trust. You’ll never rise in the organization.” I spear her with a hard gaze.

I conduct a quick debate with myself before I say, “I have more to offer, Billy. I can make myself hard, just like you asked. I can let you touch them. We can do . . . more. But nothing comes for free.”

I feel dirty. Filthy actually. What I just said makes me sick to my stomach, but I want to see Annora and my brother again. I won’t be able to see Annora or help Zoriss if I die in this cell.

“You would? Do . . . more?”

“That would cost you.” Every muscle on my face goes into lockdown as I stare at her. “I need to get out. My brother’s dying. I need to save him. Do you have sisters, Billy? Can you imagine how awful it would be to know one of them was dying and not be able to help?”

Every ounce of training I’ve had, and every iota of cunning I possess is active in this conversation.

I’m playing on her guilt, increasing her empathy for me as well as my species, and appealing to something she wants so much it overrides her hatred of wogs.

She wants to find out what sex with a male would be like.

“What’s the cost?”

I need warmth more than anything. I need the blankets that are just out of my reach in the hallway.

“First, give me what I’ve earned.” My eyes flick to the pile.

When she hesitates, I add, “You won’t get in trouble for helping me.

If Mary or any of the others complains, tell them you searched the Internet and found that wogs can die if they get cold.

Tell them I’m of no use to them if I’m dead.

They’ll think you’re brilliant. You won’t get in trouble, they’ll thank you. ”

Brilliant? I force myself not to snort in derision.

She feeds a blanket and the pair of pants through the bars and lets them land on the floor. She held one blanket in reserve to bargain for more.

“Now, what’s the cost?” she demands.

“Let me out, Billy. You know what you’re doing is wrong.” I pause for a moment, hoping my hunch is right. Aren’t all Gods loving and merciful, at least in theory? “Your God really doesn’t want you to hurt other sentient beings, does he?”

Instead of her face softening as I thought it would, her eyes narrow and her mouth puckers.

“No. My God says you’re an abomination, hisser.

” She turns on her heel and storms toward the steps before I can lure her back by

fisting myself.

Fuck. That miscalculation might cost Zoriss his life. As well as my own.

I pull on the pants that come halfway up my calves, but at least the stretchy turquoise fabric hugs the waist and they'll stay up. My nose twitches as I wrap the blanket around my shoulders. It's musty smelling and threadbare but better than nothing.

Turning my attention to the small window, I see it's now just a pane of black reflective glass. The sun has already set. I cast my mind out through it for Zoriss, my clutchmate, my brother.

I search for the male who saved my life when I was separated from my team and felled by an enemy sniper on the ice fields of planet Pythian.

He left after sunset to find me, going against direct orders because our superior officer wisely decided it was too cold for Draals to survive.

I was hours away from bleeding out from a wound that nicked my carotid artery.

The cold put me into torpor which actually saved my life by slowing the bleeding and my body functions.

After finding me, he carried me over the ice to get me back to our platoon.

He can't be dead. I love him too much. I swallow several times to stem the feeling of sadness that threatens to overwhelm me.

It's different here than it was near all the cities.

The scarcity of humans leaves my thoughts open to travel over the countryside.

And then I feel it. Zoriss's thought signature.

I can't read him, not like I did at first when he was faint but I sensed rage.

I don't know what's going on with him, only that he's alive.

Good. At least one of us will make it off this forsaken planet.

I send him my love, then sit back on my bed wondering if I can convince Billy to take me up on my next offer, and wondering if I will have the nerve to go through with it.

Annora

I'm not counting on anyone to come save me. Who knows, my friends could get stopped at the checkpoint or run out of fuel. I'm going to get Zorn out and I know just the way to do it. All I need are his coordinates and I'll be able to do this myself.

"Okay, boys, welcome to the army."

The reason I wound up driving this work van to my mother's house instead of my sleek new Transcend-90 was that our No Shame tech guru is on mating leave. She just got a new mate and the company gave her ninety days off.

I was taking some returned bots to one of our work-from-home employees who was going to see if she could repair any of them. The van was full of bots and repair equipment. I'm going to make them work—at least some of them.

The first thing I need to do is take inventory.

There is a pile of bots in boxes and the Jason and Eric that aren't boxed whose sexual commentary supplied Zorn with a script.

A few minutes later, I've opened all the boxes and sorted the guys into two piles.

On my right are the too-damaged-to-save bots.

On the left are ones that hold more promise.

Sometimes these things are really messed up when they leave the factory, which pisses me off because we should have better quality control, but it happens.

Sometimes they're damaged in shipping. Some, though, are returned because the owner got cold feet about the expense, got a better deal elsewhere, or just didn't like the size of the man's genitals. I'm going to start with this pile.

Less than an hour from when I hung up with my mom, I have four working bots. Three hours later, I have eight bots with complete mobility. I think that's all I have time for. Now all I have to do is reprogram them.

"All you have to do, Annora?" Shit.

I've never been good at the nitty gritty of programming, much less reprogramming. I love the engineering phase. I'm a big picture woman. Designing the Draalian thruster was thrilling. The concept was obvious—two cocks, not exactly rocket science.

However, getting just the right material that wasn't too soft and wasn't too hard was just the first step. Getting the distance between primary and secondary cocks was a nightmare. Except for our most expensive personalized model, this was a one-size-fits-all product.

Women are not one-size-fits-all. The distance from one hole to another can vary by over an inch. I stop myself. My mind definitely went down a rabbit hole. I bring myself back to the present.

I'm great at designing and problem-solving. Not so much at writing code. But I can do it.

I find all the drinks in the stash we bought and pick the ones that have the greatest punch of caffeine.

"We're gonna be up all night boys, and we're gonna get up-close-and-personal."

First, I have to figure out what these guys need to do.

"Think, Annora," I scold myself, then I start on the list.

Finding weapons in the short amount of time I have is not feasible, not to mention I'm a thousand miles from home and have no idea where to find a black-market underground in the wilds of Amity.

What I'll have to do is enhance my bots' strength and hope their sheer number can compensate for the fact I only possess two stunners.

I pull the bots out of the van and make sure they all have the balance to walk. I imagine what it will look like when these guys come attacking the anti-woggers looking like the Zombie Apocalypse.

Do I remember from school that Caesar described the Celts painting themselves blue before battle?

As I recall, the shock of their appearance helped them win.

One thing is guaranteed, my little army is going to shock them.

A few are wearing clothes, I'm definitely going to strip them.

Those mean, prudey ladies being confronted with all that naked cock? Definitely a shocker.

Zorn

“I’ll bring him some more water. We wouldn’t want him to die, would we? That would defeat the purpose.” Billy’s voice drifts down the stairs toward me.

I tried to get the second blanket she threw against the wall across from my cell. Neither my arm nor leg could reach. She’s manipulated her way back down here, though, which means she’s ready for round two of negotiations.

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I learned several things from round one. The first? I overestimated what Earthers call their 'humanity'. She evidently has less than I thought. I won't make that mistake twice.

The second? She wants me. She doesn't just want to see me or watch me, she wants . . . more.

For long moments I'm convinced I can't give her that, then I think of what my brother risked, the price he was prepared to pay when he went into the freezing cold on the ice planet to retrieve what everyone told him would be my dead body.

Am I so selfish I'm not willing to perform a distasteful act to save him?

"Want more water?" Billy asks when she's in front of my cell.

Her demeanor is different now. She's not the fearful, compliant youngest in her cohort. She's prepared for battle. And I'm her enemy.

"Of course I do, Billy. All living beings need water to stay alive."

"What are you willing to pay for it?"

It's freezing down here now that the sun has set. My first goal, before seeing Annora, before rescuing my brother, is to live until morning. The blanket would help. I had a cup of water earlier, I can get by until morning without it.

"Earlier you not only wanted to see my cocks, you wanted to see them from up close.

I'll give you that for the blanket behind you. It wouldn't even cost you a trip back up the stairs."

I force myself to look at her. I don't want her to see the longing in my eyes as I glance at the blanket.

"No. The blanket for a touch."

I have very little I really want. I don't need food, I can go for days without it. I can live without water for another day. What I do need is warmth, and I need to be released. That's it. And to get her to let me go will cost me big. I can't afford to give anything away cheaply.

"I understand all the males on your planet have been locked away since before you were born. You'll never see one. You'll never be around a male again, Billy. Never. I'm it. No other alien males are going to show up in your little town." She scowls as her gaze darts to the other cell.

"And if you and your friends manage to capture another, do you think you'll be left alone with them? Be able to bargain with them? What are the odds that they'll be down here alone with you, or be as motivated as I am?"

"I'm it, Billy. This is it. Your one chance. I'm a wog, an abomination, however I have not one but two cocks. The only ones you'll ever see. Certainly, the only ones you'll ever touch. Let me out and I'll give you . . . more."

My gaze spears hers. I'm too proud to verbalize the specifics of the deal, but I allow my gaze to slide down her body and lodge at the space between her legs.

"Everything?" her harsh, demanding voice has become breathless.

“We have to trust each other. I won’t give this away only to have you cheat me. You figure out a way to make the trade, to really let me go, and I’ll give you everything.”

Does she have any idea what everything is? I’ll certainly give her nothing of what I gave Annora. I will not give her kisses. My mouth will not bring her release. She’ll get what she wants—the raw act. She’ll never get me, not like I gave myself to Annora.

Am I truly in love with Annora? Is that what the warm feeling in my chest is telling me?

Could I possibly love someone after knowing them this brief span of time?

I picture her coming apart underneath me, the soft luminous look in her eyes, and know it’s true.

I love her, and unless I convince Billy to let me run, I’ll never see her again.

“Show me your cocks up close and I’ll give you the blanket. Then I’ll think about it.” She retrieves the blanket and holds it to her chest, then nods her head, signaling me to do her bidding.

I’m standing in the middle of the cell, the turquoise pants pulled to my waist, the blanket wrapped around my shoulders like a cape.

After tossing my blanket onto the mattress, it strikes me that this is my audition.

I need to make her mouth water for more.

As long as the bars remain between us, I can afford to do this.

I face the back of the cell and pull the tight pants down, one slow inch at a time.

“Like what you see?” I ask, my voice low and deliberate.

“More,” she orders.

I continue to leisurely pull the pants down, then bend to pull them off my ankles.

“Mmm,” comes out of her mouth almost like a little grunt.

I don’t know where the idea comes from, but I devise a way to turn the tables, to become the one giving the orders rather than the one taking them.

“Tell me what you want,” I command, still jackknifed in front of her, my ass on full display, my legs tight together, keeping my cocks hidden.

“M-more.”

“Tell me, Billy,” I use the seductive voice the sexbots used in the van. The voice Annora assured me they’d spent a lot of money to research. The one Earth females want.

“Turn around,” she says. This time it’s as far from an order as it could be. It’s a request.

“I want to make you feel good,” I tell her in that sexy bot voice, just like one of the Jasons did that first day in the van.

I stand, still facing away from her, and place my palms on the back of my head. Flexing for her, I say, “When we finally get together, I’m going to have you sit back. I’ll do all the work.” I’m working off the script I learned from the sexbots.

“Please,” she says. It’s almost a whimper.

I turn as slowly as possible, girding myself for the look I’m afraid I’ll see on her face. I don’t know whether I’m more afraid of seeing her repulsion at viewing the disgusting wog’s cocks, or the unrestrained desire written on her abhorrent features.

“Oh,” is all she can say as she looks me up and down. She slides into a crouch to be at eye level with them. “I can’t see the other one.”

I’m in a position to be very compliant. After this, she’s going to go upstairs and have second thoughts. She’s also going to realize how difficult it will be to open my cell and sneak me out of here. I want to motivate her.

I palm my secondary cock, trying with all my might to get myself hard in the least sexy circumstances possible.

“Are you wet for me?” I croon, just like Jason.

Her mouth has popped open, and her eyes haven’t left the action. I’m not sure she even understood my words.

Was it just a day or two ago I did this for Annora?

It was certainly one of the most erotic moments of my life.

She was so beautiful in the moonlight as it drifted in through the skylight.

My actions had transported her out of the confines of the hover.

We were both fulfilling lifelong fantasies in a magical way.

It wasn't tawdry and demeaning like this. This is a travesty compared to that.

Now working my cocks with both hands, I make certain she sees what she came here for.

I can't control my urge to ask, "Like what you see, Billy?" Under different circumstances, it would be cruel to make someone admit they liked something they've professed to loathe, but I press, "Like my cocks, Billy? Want more?"

She nods.

Perhaps I'm heartless because I say, "I didn't hear you," in my most persuasive tone.

"Yes. I do want more."

I lunge toward her and pluck the blanket from between her fingers before her eyes focus. Stalking to the mattress, I wrap myself in it and sit down, most of my skin hidden from her view.

"I'll give you everything, Billy. Figure out how to get me out of here," my tone is harsh as I glare at her so she knows there won't be any more negotiations.

Annora

I haven't programmed in years because it's not only my least favorite part of the job, there are others so much better suited to it than me. It comes back to me, though.

I'm going to use one stunner, and I'll use the Advanced Hugh model to work the other. In our catalog we advertise that he's the most dexterous with his hands and fingers, so he's the obvious choice to hold the gun and work the trigger.

I'm barely hidden in this stand of trees and can't afford to fire one laser shot. I don't want anyone alerted to our whereabouts. I'll just have to be satisfied that I've properly programmed him to point and shoot.

I give zero fucks and have no pangs of guilt about what my army and I are about to do—the guns are just stunners and the women who did this deserve far worse than I or my army can possibly dish out.

Knowing my enemies have real guns and aren't afraid to use them, I program the other bots to form a human—or not so human—shield in front of me. I do some other programming, then herd the guys back into the van and wait.

“Any luck, Mom?” I ask when I hail her.

“We're almost in Sioux Falls. Making record time, honey.”

“We? I thought Drennan was coming with her team and you were staying in Windy City.”

“Of course, I'm coming. I feel responsible. I'm certainly not going to let you go through this alone.”

“I'm not alone. Drennan's on her way.” And I've got my sexbot army. “Drennan!” I scream over my comm. “Put my mom out at the closest all-night diner. She shouldn't come anywhere near this shitshow. These women have guns with live ammunition and they have every intention of firing them.”

“Sorry, honey. Your comm cut out,” my mom says, “see you in a bit.”

Zorn

By the next morning, the lack of actual clothing, the threadbare blankets, and a few hours of standing on the freezing floor in the damp cold has sapped my energy and taken its toll. Whatever the reason, I'm close to torpor.

My thoughts are sluggish, my movements are slow, and I can't feel Zoriss anymore.

I huddle into a ball, trying to retain my body heat, but without the internal mechanism to increase my own temperature, it's a losing battle.

Soft footfalls coming down the steps catch my attention. It's not Billy's usual heavy tread, but perhaps she's being stealthy.

"They're leaving me in charge when they go into the next town to get supplies. They need a better vid cam to send our manifesto out to the world. You eat worms and shit, right? I can ask them to get you some at the bait and tackle store."

"I've grown partial to hamburgers and buffalo steaks," I say through rubbery lips.

"Huh," she laughs, "that's a good one."

I don't have the energy to argue. I won't eat this close to torpor, anyway.

"They're going to key the lock to my biometrics before they go. I had to argue with them, but I convinced them they didn't want you to burn up if tragedy struck."

“Good thinking.”

“I haven’t slept. I’ve been watching porn. I’ve made a list.”

“Mmm?”

Bodily functions begin to shut down in torpor. Evolution got one thing right, the least essential systems go first. I doubt I’ll be able to get an erection. It would be stupid for my blood to go there when there are so many more important places for it to flow.

“Billy, we have a problem,” that came out as a whisper.

“What?”

Now she sounds interested. Wouldn’t want to cut short exploring all the activities on her list, would we?

“I’m going into torpor.”

No reply.

“Look it up if you need to.” I take a long slow breath, then continue, “I won’t be able to get hard unless I’m warmer.”

“Fucker. Don’t fuck with me, snake.”

“Look it up.”

She stomps upstairs and comes back quickly. Or maybe I fell asleep.

“Here. I took it off my own fucking bed. All I know is you’d better be able to get it

up.” She shoves a thick comforter through the bars. It’s through sheer force of will that I heave myself off the bed and grab it before it touches the cold floor.

I drop onto the mattress and cover myself with not only the two thin blankets, but this heavy comforter folded over on itself. Its warmth penetrates me immediately.

“Wog?”

My eyes dart to her. She’s holding up a glinting knife.

“Don’t fuck with me. A deal’s a deal,” she threatens.

“As long as we’re talking specifics, let’s agree that I’ll be out of this cell when we begin our . . . trade agreement.”

“No. If I let you out you’ll run.”

“Did you just see me? I’m not running anywhere. You were very smart, Billy. By withholding the blanket you forced me into torpor which means I’m too weak to harm you. But we can’t begin our . . . exchange until I’m on the other side of those bars. Or the deal’s off.”

“Don’t do the deal with me and you’ll be dead before they get back.”

I see that her young and innocent face, the one I saw when I met her, is a disguise. What lurks underneath is one greedy, demanding, self-indulgent female. I need to respond with just as much compassion as she’s shown me.

“No deal and my cocks will be as much use to you as a sock.”

She stomps back up the stairs and I pull the covers over my head and breathe into the

dark warmth of my cocoon.

This will never work. I don't know what I was thinking.

Let's say that Billy keeps up her end of the bargain.

And let's say that I get through her porn-driven list before her gun-toting friends return from their mission to retrieve a working vid camera so they can upload their barely intelligible manifesto to the Internet. Then what?

I run miles barefoot in the cold trying to find a friendly face? There don't seem to be many of those on this planet.

If Mary hadn't realized my wrist-comm held a tracker, Annora could have found me, but it's lying in a ditch somewhere. Did I just assume Annora is coming to find me? That's a mighty bold assumption considering my last words to her were disrespectful. No, they were downright hateful.

I'm alone. No one could possibly be coming for me, none of these females is going to show me the slightest compassion, and I'm too close to torpor to fight.

There were long moments on Pythian when I knew I was dead. It was freezing and I was bleeding badly. But Zoriss was out there and I could feel his determination to find me. I always had the tiniest hope of rescue. I have none now.

Annora

"We found him!" Drennan crows over my comm.

"I'm pretty sure we know his coordinates.

We used satellite footage to get the license plates from their vehicle in Yellowstone.

After some more high-level sleuth work and pouring over additional satellite images, I think we've found him in a house near Prosperity, Amity. "

"Great. Oh my God. That's so great. Give me the coordinates and I'll meet you there." I'm so full of adrenaline my hands are fluttering.

"I'm not stupid, Annora. Nor do I want to be fired from this job. We'll tell you how it went after we've retrieved him."

"I'm on my way to Prosperity even as we speak, Drennan. You might as well tell me which house."

"We'll be there in less than two hours." She terminates the comm.

I drive toward Prosperity, gathering information from my computer and nav system as soon as I set my coordinates. I know what the hover-van involved in the kidnapping looks like. If I have to drive by every doghouse, outhouse, and henhouse in the county, I will find my male.

"Yeah!" I exclaim to the inside of my van. "My male! Wanna make something of it? Jason? Eric? Hugh? You want to argue about it?"

A picture of Zorn in torpor flashes through my mind.

It was cold last night when I was assembling my bots on the grass surrounding my van.

The idea that those bitches could have already killed him flies through my brain, but I chase that thought away.

Pictures of him being tortured are dispatched just as quickly.

“I’m coming, Zorn. Hold on.”

Zorn

“Okay, wog. It’s time,” Billy announces less than a minute after I hear a van hover away.

I try to think of anything I’ve ever wanted to do less than this.

Even when the pirates dropped me at Annora’s cottage and escorted me inside, I never had this much dread.

Perhaps if I hadn’t just experienced the sublime connection I shared with Annora, I could convince myself that this was a disgusting adventure.

Now I know it’s nothing of the sort. It’s purely disgusting.

“You hard yet, Newt? Better be.”

The dim light glinting off her eyes hints of some dark emotion. Glee? Is she taking some sort of sinister glee from forcing an abomination to thrust himself inside her? Could she possibly think this will fulfill her?

Perhaps the males died out on this planet for a reason. Perhaps it has something to do with females like Billy.

She sashays down the steps in her undergarments.

Again, my mind throws comparison pictures at me.

Lovely Annora tearing off her clothes for me, an expectant look of desire in her eyes, a smile playing on her luscious lips.

We were two equals planning on doing something beautiful together. It wasn't sordid like this.

We both stand straighter when we hear a hover approach. Her friends couldn't be back already, could they?

"Shit! Give me your blanket," she demands.

I sag onto the mattress, sitting on all three blankets, my ass giving her the answer.

"Give me a fucking blanket!"

I don't know why the females have returned, but I know my deal with Billy is off. Since I'll receive nothing from her, I have no desire to give her anything in return.

"I'll tell them you were about to rape me," she threatens.

I just cock my browridge at her and lean back against the wall.

After she runs up the stairs, I hear rapid-fire talking. Over the past day I've heard eight distinct voices speaking up there. Right now, I hear five.

Snatches of conversation drift down to me.

"Why are you half nekid?"

"Mary had a funny feeling . . ."

“Didn’t think you should be left alone with a desperate male.”

And, of course, the ubiquitous, “Wog.”

I imagine I won’t see anyone until Mary gets back from the store and the crazy bunch of them come down to film whatever it is they have in mind. I assume they’re going to kill me on camera. It would be a dramatic statement and get them lots of publicity.

I breathe deeply and try to settle my mind. I reach out to Zoriss one more time. Although I can’t feel him, perhaps he can feel me. I send him all my love and gratitude. I warm myself with memories of my convalescence after he rescued me on Pythian.

He later described my rescue in such detail that even though I was already in torpor I can imagine the faint crunch of footsteps on the snow and his fatigue as he carried me back to safety.

I don’t know if I ever felt his love as strongly as when we laid side by side after my rescue as he huddled next to me sharing his warmth as I was being doctored.

I send that to him now. All that love and gratitude. I pray he’s still alive.

I send my love to Annora, too. Although we have no psychic link, perhaps she’ll feel it. Even if she doesn’t, it warms me to send it her way. I love her. Of that, I have no doubt.

Annora

Did I promise to inspect every doghouse in the county?

Well, I’m being true to my word. I’ve got my Artificial Intelligence scouring satellite

and drone footage for the van, but until that investigation comes through for me, I'm looking for Zorn the old-fashioned way—hovering up and down every street.

I almost don't believe it when I find it. There's the same red van that spirited Zorn away from me in Yellowstone. I drive by the house, praying no one was looking out the window. They'd certainly know I'd found them.

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I can't be too bitter about the transportation I'm driving, though. If I wasn't in this van, I wouldn't have my army.

The town has maybe a hundred houses. It's out in the middle of nowhere, so land must be cheap. Each house is on a large plot taking up a city block, so the dwellings are far apart.

I park at the end of the street on the other side of a stand of trees. I consider for a moment if I should wait for the security team. It would certainly be the safest thing to do. It's at this moment I see a hovercar approach and four females disgorge onto the gravel drive.

It's as if I can feel their rage and hostility shimmering off them in waves. Something's happening. I don't know how I know it, but I do. Whatever their endgame is, it's going to be soon.

By the look on their determined faces, I don't think I have time to wait for Drennan's team.

Once they've entered the house, I practically throw out my back as I lift my sexbots onto the grass.

Luckily, there's a copse of trees on the street corner doing an effective job of hiding my truck and the bots from anyone in the house.

After turning the bots on, I grab the two stunners, giving one to Hugh and keeping the other.

I programmed them all for voice command as well as being able to receive orders from the pad I carry on a makeshift sling over my neck.

I'm about to charge toward the house when I decide I should do some additional recon. I hurry to the too-damaged-to-save bots and find the legless Eric model I tossed on the bottom. He'll be perfect.

It doesn't take me long to program him and add a cam to the top of his head attached as if it were an old-time miner's light.

This house is out in the middle of nowhere and sits on at least an acre of land.

I'm parked at a nearby crossroads. I watch Eric from the end of the street as he uses his elbows to crawl toward the house, then skirts around back.

After punching in directions, I watch through the camera feed as he slides up two steps to the deck in the back and peeks into the sliding glass window.

He's also equipped with a microphone, and although it's hard to hear through the glass, between what I see and what I hear, I believe there are five of them in there. It seems there's trouble in paradise. They're arguing.

It doesn't take more than half a minute to confirm I'm in the right place.

I've heard the word 'wog' at least ten times already.

Fear slithers up my spine as I wonder where my favorite wog is.

I don't see him and haven't heard him. Have they killed him already?

There's a pang in my heart that's so sharp I wonder if I'm having a heart attack.

I have legless Eric retreat and wait with his back against the wall.

“Okay boys, let’s do this.” I breathe deeply, nod my head to encourage myself, and then step forward.

The five women have lasers, I saw them at Yellowstone.

All I have are two stunners, I know the odds are terrible, but I saw the anger on their faces.

Something was brewing in there and my gut instinct says I don’t have time to wait for Drennan’s team.

The bots form a protective phalanx around me, and we march to the side of the house where there’s only one window.

It’s a stroke of luck they didn’t see us coming and maybe an even bigger piece of luck that a nosey neighbor from down the street didn’t comm them about the small army in their yard, or the risqué van parked on the street.

I tell three bots to go around back and have the five others assemble at the front door. On my order, they all attack at once. Perhaps I’m chickenshit, but I wait, loaded stunner in my hand at the side of the house while I watch all eight feeds on my computer pad.

Shrieks and gunfire erupt. We took them completely by surprise.

It sounds like only one had a gun in hand.

The otherworldly snick of the laser fire makes my blood run cold.

Searching through their feeds, I don't see Zorn.

My gaze flicks to the backyard as I look for a shallow grave. Thank God there is none.

Hugh stuns the one with the gun, but another picks it up and hits him with a long laser burst. His feed glitches for a moment, but he's now holding the laser in his left hand and shooting the stunner with his right.

He disarmed the bitch somehow. The woman who held the gun is on the floor.

If I'm not mistaken, she's screaming bloody murder.

In moments my guys have all the women detained in a corner of the living room. I run in through the front door, stunner clutched in my hands as if I were the heroine in one of the police procedurals I watch on vids.

Satisfied the bots have things under control, I run to a bedroom and grab a huge handful of t-shirts from the closet. I have the Bronson model tear them into cloth strips and in a few minutes, we have all five women tied up in the corner with wrists and ankles bound.

"Where is he?" I demand.

"Your wog is dead," one of them tells me, a triumphant smirk on her face.

I feel as if I was shot through my heart as a hot ball of lead sinks from there to my stomach.

My eyes fill with tears and I almost fall to my knees.

I never believed in love at first sight or any of that bullshit.

And I guess that isn't what happened with Zorn and me.

It was repulsion at first sight. To hear him tell it, he felt that way, too.

But I grew to care for him so deeply in such a short amount of time. How will I be able to go on?

“Help!”

That's Zorn's voice. My Zorn.

“Bitch!” I spit at the woman who told me he was dead.

“He should be dead,” she tells me as she spears me with a hard gaze. “You should be too, for harboring him.”

I point my stunner at her and shoot. My eyes widen in surprise. I didn't know I had that in me. I guess my protective instincts have never been sufficiently activated before.

“Zorn, where are you?”

“Annora? You . . . you came for me?” he sounds incredulous. Didn't he think I'd try to rescue him? Oh, he's thinking about the awful words he spat at me right before I fled our hover-van.

“Of course, I came for you. My flabby self and my sexbots rescued your sexy ass,” my voice is happy as I find the steps to the basement and practically trip rushing down the stairs. Funny, for some reason the “f” word has lost the power to hurt me.

I'm swamped with happiness, so why am I crying? I run to his cell at the end of the narrow hallway.

He's standing at the bars wrapped in a thick comforter. Before I reach him, I notice the obvious change in his skin color. He's got that gray look I saw back at the cottage. He's going into torpor.

No matter his physical state, though, he's reaching his hand through the bars to me as though I'm a lifeline. And his eyes, those beautiful blue eyes are shining as he looks at me.

"I never thought you'd come. I thought I . . ."

"You thought you thoroughly pissed me off and I'd just go back to Windy City with my tail between my legs because you were mean?"

"I'll admit, it crossed my mind for about a minute. Then I remembered this," I say as I press my palm to his cheek—his cold cheek. "It didn't take long before I remembered who you are. The best male I've ever met."

"High praise indeed considering I'm the only male you've ever met."

Somehow, we manage to hug each other through the bars. We even kiss. It's not a sexual kiss, though, it speaks to how much we care about each other. It's intimacy, not lust.

"My mom's security team is on their way," I tell him. "How do I get you out of there?"

"It's keyed to Billy's biometrics."

“Which one’s Billy?”

“The youngest. Don’t be fooled, she’s mean. Keep your stunner on her at all times.”

I kiss him again, hard, then notice he’s holding onto the bars for dear life. He’s quickly descending into torpor.

“Sit down. That’s an order. You may be a captain in the Draalian army, but I have my own army upstairs. I have ways to make you comply.” Oh, did that sound dirty? Good.

He sinks onto the mattress and pulls the covers around him. I was right about one thing, he was in trouble. I arrived in the nick of time.

As I march upstairs, I hear one of them say, “You couldn’t have the decency to put clothes on these things? We have to look at all these disgusting naked penises?”

“Sexbots, erections!” I order. On command, all eight penises go from flaccid to hard in the span of a few seconds. I don’t know, maybe all nine did. Since legless Eric is lying on his stomach, it’s hard to tell. He must have come in with the three who broke in the back door.

“Better?” I purse my lips and cock my head. Fuck them. Not only don’t they like aliens, I guess they don’t like men. “Which one of you is Billy?”

One of them gets real busy looking innocent as a choirgirl, the others all cast their eyes in her direction. I guess I know who Billy is.

“Jason One, escort her downstairs with me.”

She tries to yank away from him, but although these guys were built for sex and only

sex, they're strong. He unties her ankles and forces her to the kitchen and down the steps as I follow, stunner clutched tightly in my hand.

Of course, she refuses to place her hand on the biometric pad at the cell door, but Jason just forces her, and the cell door pops open.

I need to get Zorn to the van pronto. He's not standing at the cell door, waiting to rush out of captivity, or into my arms for that matter. He's lying on the bed. Unless he was very close to passing out, he'd be holding me right now.

I help him stand, putting my arm around his waist, and am about to walk with him out of the cell when Billy says, "Your male couldn't wait to have sex with me. He agreed to my whole list. Oral, vaginal, anal, two at once, from behind. Everything I've been dreaming of since I started watching porn."

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“He showed me both his cocks. So excited to get with me he fisted himself in front of me. Begged me to open the door so he could have his way with me.”

“I’ll believe the part about begging you to open the door, Billy. Other than that, I’m not buying it.”

“I’m not lying.”

“Psychosis will do that. You believe all the crazy shit your mind makes up.”

Zorn is so out of it, I consider calling one of the bots to carry him up the steps, but we manage. He leans heavily on my arm as we mount the steps behind Jason One who has a death grip on Billy’s upper arm.

When we get back upstairs, Jason ties her up as I settle Zorn onto a kitchen chair. I run to the closet and find a random assortment of clothing, then return to the kitchen and start layering him. Any legging that won’t cut off the circulation to my favorite blue cocks goes onto his lower half.

T-shirts, sweaters, and sweatshirts get pulled over his head. The pièce de résistance is a huge old woolen coat I found in the front hall closet. I do believe it’s leftover since the last male lived here over eighty years ago.

“Better?”

He nods.

I comm mom. “How far away are you?” I ask.

“Less than half an hour, honey. We’ll rescue your male. Well, I won’t, but Drennan’s team is amazing. Most of them were in her squad in the military. As soon as we have him, we’ll give you the coordinates and you’ll see him. I knew you’d like him.”

“Yes, mom. I do like him.” I hear grunts of disgust from the corner. “But you won’t have to give me the coordinates. I’m already here.”

“What?”

“What?” Drennan asks. She’s speaking directly into my mom’s comm. “You’ve located the house? Do not go in. That’s an order, Annora.”

“I’ve got the house secured,” I say, feeling so proud of myself for having watched so many hours of cop shows. “There are five women here, two have been stunned, all are tied up. I’m about to make Zorn some tea, he’s sliding into torpor.”

“Damn it, Annora! What part of ‘don’t go in there’ did you not understand?”

“The part of ‘I care about him and couldn’t stand by while assholes were hurting him’, that’s what. Why don’t you get it in gear and hurry?”

“You care about me, Annora? Really?” He may be weak as a kitten, but he reaches over and pulls me onto his lap. “I have feelings for you, too. I’m so sorry about the things I said to you. I didn’t want them to hurt you.”

“I know that. I figured it out almost immediately. No need to apologize.”

I’m sitting crosswise on his lap, my hip snugged against his flat belly. “I was so worried about you,” I whisper.

We hear a hover parking outside. I glance out the kitchen window and fear slams through me as I realize it's not the No Shame security team, it's more anti-woggers. Shit.

"There were eight of them. Three went to get a better vid camera. I think they needed it to record my execution."

He says that so matter-of-factly it takes an extra moment to register. Every muscle in my body tightens as my eyes fly wide in panic.

Jumping to my feet, I try to pull him toward the pantry. He's in no position to be part of the fight. I just want him safe.

"That's right, get in the pantry," he orders, his voice no longer weak. Somehow, he's pulled strength from deep inside himself and has transformed into Captain Krine.

The stunner I'd laid on the table is already in his hand.

I may not be able to force him into the pantry, but I'm not going in there either.

"Zorn, the Hugh model has a real laser. Take it. There have to be more lasers in the house, we just don't have time to find them.

Give me the stunner. Sexbots, use any means necessary to keep anyone from entering the house. "

Six of them stand at the front door, two guard the rear. Legless Eric is still poised on the floor, watching the captives.

By the time the three women exit the Riptide Sprint they're driving, Zorn has the laser and I have the stunner.

“Annora, I’m begging you, please hide while I take care of this.”

“Not on your life, babe.”

We’re flanking the kitchen window, peeking out at the women as they approach the house, one of them carrying a box. They’re laughing happily, no doubt excited about killing a wog in a few minutes.

“Fuck you, bitches,” I swear under my breath.

The one carrying the package walks in first. Two Jason models grab her, cover her mouth, and begin tying her up before she can warn the others.

Something must have alerted the second woman. She’s pulling her laser as she mounts the steps. The third woman grabs hers as well.

These women must have been practicing with their weapons in some militia-style bunker somewhere. They’re not acting like the people in the vids I’m copying, they’re acting like they know what they’re doing.

“Bobbie, we’ll breach together. Once inside, you go right; I’ll go left.”

“Okay, Mary.”

When the door bursts open, Zorn clamps his arms around Bobbie. His superior strength, even in his debilitated condition, overpowers her immediately. Mary peeks around the doorframe and shoots me before she steps through the door.

Zorn

Annora’s hit! It’s as if my own body received the shot. Pain sears my shoulder. I pass

the female I subdued to two of the bots who were at the ready with strips of cloth to bind her, then run to Annora's side. She's hit in the shoulder, right where I felt the pain.

I've been a soldier my entire adult life. I've never made as big of a tactical error as I am right now by squatting on the floor next to the female I love, my back to my enemy. I could blame it on the near torpor, but all I can focus on is Annora.

"Hands behind your head, hisser. If you don't, I'll finish the job on your little wog-loving friend there."

I was in and out of consciousness on the ride from Yellowstone the day they brought me here. But I'm certain this is their leader, and she is as ruthless as the enemies of our planet, the Vren.

I put my palms on the back of my head, complying instantly, not wanting her to kill Annora.

"She's human. Your government would punish you if you kill her," I say, fighting not for my life, but for Annora's.

"We all knew this fight could end in a death sentence when we signed on," she sneers. Motioning her gun toward the stairs, she says, "Carry your girlfriend down there. You just doubled the fun of our little video."

A legless male sexbot has crawled next to Mary.

It hurls itself at her on a roll, crashing against her lower legs.

It's not enough force to topple her but it pushes her off balance.

As she tears her gaze from Annora and me to shoot the bot, I launch to my feet and push her toward the bot so she loses her balance and falls over him.

My adrenaline takes over and that burst of energy allows me to shimmer enough to confuse Mary.

I launch myself backward, across the doorway, shooting my laser, hitting her in her shoulder.

Although I know better than to kill her, I wish I had a vaporize setting on my laser gun because I don't just want her dead, I want her dust. How dare she touch my woman?

It's the work of a moment to disarm and bind her hands and feet. Then I pick up the stunner and take great satisfaction in rendering Mary unconscious. Did I hold the trigger a little longer than necessary? I don't care what she did to me, but she hurt my female.

After checking the other women to make certain they're tightly bound. I station one bot in the front and one in the rear of the house as lookouts, then hurry to Annora. I pull off my coat, yank off a sweatshirt and press it against the wound to stem the flow of blood.

"I'll find a way to get help, sweet," I tell her as she coughs weakly. If only she would have hidden in the pantry, she'd be unharmed. I don't have the heart to scold her, though. Without her bravery, I'd be locked in a cell in the basement about to be killed as a spectacle for all of Earth to see.

My head whips toward the window when I hear a hover approach. Annora's weak, but she looks, then confirms, "Stand down, big guy. It's my mother and the No Shame security force."

Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 4:01 pm

Zorn

It's hard to believe it's only been an hour since the security team arrived.

One of the women had been a medic in the military; with her experience and the household medtube we used, Annora's shoulder is patched.

They've given her painkillers, but for the oddest reason, my shoulder still hurts.

It's almost like that time in military training when Zoriss fell from two stories during a ropes exercise and I felt his injuries for days.

There was a well-stocked kitchen and larder in the house, so with four cups of hot tea and three bowls of what Annora called stew, I'm feeling warm and strong again.

I still need to bask, but I should be fine for another day or two.

The tea and stew also did wonders for restoring Annora's color and energy.

The eight terrorists, that's what we've decided to call them, are securely tied, and being watched by one team member and an army of sexbots. Annora found it amusing to make them keep their erections because it offended the women she refers to as female canines—fitting.

“We've got some hard decisions to make,” Drennan says as she encourages everyone to grab a seat in the No Shame security truck.

I have no decisions to make. I have my female on my lap, a working hover, and a mission to find my brother. Nothing else matters.

“These women should be reported to the authorities. We should notify the Department of Extraterrestrial Protection Services so these women can be punished to the full extent of the law. I’m sure your hunch is right, Zorn.

From what you told me, I have no doubt they planned on killing you and Annora. ”

“But . . . mom will get in trouble if Protective Services discovers the shady way she bought him,” Annora protests.

“All this,” Annora’s mom says as she motions around her, “is my fault. All of it.” She moves closer to me and spears me with a compassionate look.

“First, let me apologize. I’m deeply sorry for my actions.

I’ve asked myself a thousand times why I became obsessed with buying you, caging you, and trapping Annora.

I have a lot of excuses, but no good reasons.

Well, they felt like good reasons at the time, but in hindsight, it was horribly wrong.

“I just wanted Annora to have what I was denied—a male to love and protect her. I’ve been so impulsive lately, I didn’t give any thought to how it would affect you or my own daughter.

“I won’t be bold enough to ever ask your forgiveness, but I’ll apologize again. I think you’ve all paid the price for my actions long enough. Let’s bring these women to justice. That means we quit protecting me.”

She looks so contrite I find it within myself to forgive her. Annora's muscles are tight as she leans heavily against me. This is breaking her heart.

"I'd be willing to tell the authorities I escaped from the males who abducted me," I say.

"I can testify to the fact that I made my way to your guest cottage and broke in. When Annora discovered me, I talked her into helping me find my brother and begged her not to tell the authorities I was here, fearing they would lock me up and not let me search for Zoriss. Annora's mom doesn't need to be mentioned. "

"You'd do that?" Annora's mother whispers. The shocked look on her face immediately changes to relief as tears stream down her cheeks. Annora looks up at me through luminous green eyes and gently presses her hand over my heart. To earn that adoring look from her? Yes, I'd do that all day long.

"Great," Drennan says. "I'll comm the authorities and let them know. With that story it should be a done deal as soon as they interview y—"

"No! I'll testify in writing, but I can't stay here. I must find my clutchmate. He needs me. I know something's wrong. I don't have time to waste."

"Let me write my statement then you can say I stole the van. That leaves Annora's mom—"

"Call me Grace," she insists as she dries her eyes and gives me a warm look. Is it really possible she's remorseful for her actions?

"That leaves Grace an innocent female and relieves everyone here of any responsibility."

Drennan nods, her lips in a thin line. “Okay. Sounds like the best option.”

Drennan hands me a datapad. “You don’t have to write it; I’ve set it to record.

After you’re done, I’ll need Annora to testify that she went with you of her own volition without any coercion.

That way it’s your voices. There can be no contesting the testimony, especially with me as witness to the recording. ”

When we’re both finished, I stand and bow to each of them. “I’ve met some unpleasant Earthers—many of them. It’s been a pleasure to meet all of you. It balances the scales. And Grace, I forgive you. What you did allowed me to meet your amazing daughter.”

“And you, Annora. It’s been a privilege to get to know you.

Let me apologize one more time for the hurtful things I said.

You know why I had to say them. There was no other way to keep you safe.

Thank you for coming with me on this journey.

You were right, I never would have gotten very far without you. ”

I’ve heard the term heartbreak many times, but never knew it was an actual physical reaction. Right now, my heart is shattering inside my chest. My voice cracks as I say, “I’ll contact you once I find Zor—”

“What the fuck, Zorn? Are you planning on going the rest of the way without me?”

Her eyes are filled with anger and pain, tears threatening to spill down her cheeks.

“I just . . . assumed you’d want to stay with your mom. You’re injured. All because of me. Now that I know how to drive and have untraceable credits . . .” I let my statement trail off because with every word I say her face gets angrier.

She grabs my hand and stands. Her little wince of pain with just that small movement tells me volumes about how much she hurts.

“Outside,” she orders as she pulls me out of the security truck.

“You don’t want me with you?” she asks in a harsh whisper when we’re a few steps away.

“I . . .” I wanted to keep her safe and didn’t want to presume she’d choose to be with me, but by the angry gleam in her eyes, I’m not sure I should say that.

“What we shared on the trip here, that meant nothing to you?” Her voice is ragged and filled with pain.

“No, I . . .” I’ve faced enemy armies, fought in hand-to-hand combat after being captured by a lone Vren on Atomé, and almost bled out on Pythian. I don’t believe I’ve ever felt the fearful paralysis I feel right now.

“Say it, Zorn. This time I want the truth.” She takes a step closer until the tips of her breasts almost touch my chest. As she looks up at me, the anger bleeds out of her and leaves the most beautiful, vulnerable female I’ve ever seen.

“Tell me why you don’t want to be with me.

” Her plump, pink lips quiver with emotion.

I lean so my face is even with hers. For a moment I allow our breathing to sync so I breathe in on every one of her outbreaths just so I can inhale her essence.

“I want to be with you, Annora. More than anything . . . anything.” After cupping her cheeks, I close my eyes and simply allow myself to bask in the electric zing that flies through my body when we touch. “I didn’t want to put you in harm’s way.”

“Okay. We’re going to get into the hover-van and find your brother.

Together.” After that forceful statement, her lids shutter closed, and she melts into my embrace.

All the anger and sadness fade away and she leans so close her lips almost touch mine.

She waits, though, for me to breach the final distance.

She wants that physical commitment from me.

“You kids should get going!” Grace says as she sticks her head out of the truck’s metal sliding door.

I guess she figured our leaving together in the No Shame hover was a foregone conclusion.

“You can move into the guest cottage the minute you get back. Don’t you think it would be a cozy place to start your life together?

Better than your condo in the heart of the city?

Don’t worry, I’ll have the cage removed and the locks fixed. ”

“Mom!” Annora scolds.

“Just planning ahead, dear. I brought Zorn’s basking rock. I’ll have the girls put it in the van. And how many bots do you want to take with you? In case you get into trouble and need an army when you rescue Zoriss?”

I have to give her credit. This woman thinks ahead. I like that.

“Four would be good, Grace,” I tell her.

A few minutes later, the cargo area of the van is filled with the rock and four fully functioning sexbots who have been deactivated, their engorged penises finally flaccid. We have the two stunners and three lasers since Hugh is still with us.

“Where to?” Annora asks from the driver’s seat.

“Southeast,” I say.

“He’s moved? You’ve been in communication?”

“I’ve felt him a few times. He’s right where he’s been since I picked up his signal.”

“Then he would be to the west, right?”

“I don’t trust Drennan or your mom. We’re headed southeast until we’re out of sight, then we double back.”

“Yeah,” she laughs, “you didn’t need to know my mom long to pick up on her controlling vibe.”

“You’re in no condition to drive,” I tell her, concern in my voice.

“And you, my friend, desperately need to bask. Get your ass back there and warm up. As soon as I program the coordinates I’ll just sit in the nav chair and not move. And now that we’re alone together, I’m feeling better already.”

When I start pulling off the layers of clothes she piled onto me earlier, I catch her staring at me, blatant appreciation on her face as her gaze flicks up and down my body.

“You like what you see?” my voice has never sounded this raspy.

She nods.

Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 4:01 pm

“Draalian drums,” I command, and the pounding music plays immediately. I pull off layers until I’m down to a t-shirt and those ridiculous turquoise pants. Funny, Annora doesn’t seem to mind them. Perhaps it’s because they’re so tight they hug my ass and cocks.

I reach up, lifting my palms to rest on the ceiling, then sway my hips to the hypnotic beat of the drums as I pierce her with the sexiest stare I can muster.

“Freeze!” she says as she makes adjustments on the nav screen. “We’re on autopilot now, big boy.” She turns and gives me her full attention. The scent of her arousal wafts toward me.

I’m tired and the basking rock looks inviting, but right now, the look on Annora’s face is much more enthralling. There’s a tiny smile playing at the corners of her lips, and her gaze scans my body, but always lingers on my cocks.

“I’m going to make you feel good,” I tell her, hoping I don’t sound too much like a sexbot. “I’m going to taste your cream and then fill you, Annora.”

I tear off the t-shirt, then slide my thumbs inside the pants’ skin-tight waistband and work it down slowly.

“You’re killing me here, Zorn,” she says, her voice husky.

“I wouldn’t want to do that,” I tell her as I turn toward the back of the van and swing my ass from side to side.

She groans. I may be new to planet Earth, but I'm pretty sure that's a good groan.

Facing her again, I thrust my hips toward her as I watch her eyes glaze over.

Then I pull the pants down just a small increment at a time until my cocks spring free.

That evolutionary failsafe? The one that keeps blood flow where it needs to be for the survival of the species?

It has decided it's imperative to keep my cocks engorged with blood.

They're full and hard and needy. But I refuse for our first time to be like this. Not now. Not worrying if the hover will manage well on autopilot. Not with me ready to fall over from exhaustion. And definitely not now, with my sweet Annora fatigued and still wincing from the pain of her injury.

After sliding in between the two front seats, I lean to give her a quick kiss, just lip to lip.

"We'll finish this tomorrow after we've had a good night's rest." I kiss her again. "Can you land in a hundred miles and get some sleep? As soon as I'm done basking, I'll join you in the blankets. I think we're getting close to Zoriss. In the morning, if you feel better, we'll finish this."

Annora

If I hadn't seen his skin the color of the cement in that basement only a few hours ago, I would be out of this seat and attacking him right now.

But he was about to slip into full-on torpor.

Since then, he's only held it together through sheer force of will.

Well, that and the tea and stew he practically inhaled.

I stop in a hundred miles, as instructed, and make sure we're hidden in a stand of trees. Tired to the bone myself, I take another painkiller, move to the back, lie as close to him as the rock will allow, and fall asleep almost immediately.

When I wake a few hours later, the sun is rising pink in the east and the hover is swaying with Zorn at the controls.

"He's close, Annora. I can feel Zoriss," he looks over his shoulder at me as he accelerates.

I slip into the passenger seat and watch the rural countryside fly by. I can feel Zorn's anxiety, and reach to pat his thigh, hoping my proximity will calm him.

"Thanks, Love." He glances at me with those sexy blue eyes and smiles.

He just called me his love! As if it was no big deal! I have such a wide smile on my face it feels like it's going to split open. I'm about to say something when he makes a u-turn at a high rate of speed, almost slinging me onto the floor.

"Mind how fast you're driving, Love," I tell him and enjoy his double take as he grants me a devilishly happy smile at my use of the word.

Less than an hour later, he makes another abrupt u-turn, then scrubs the back of his neck with his palm.

"Care to tell me what the erratic u-turns are all about?" I ask.

“He’s close. And he’s moving. Do you think he could be trying to find us, too?”

“Should we find a place to stop? A hotel? And just let him find us?”

“Good idea, sweet.”

“I like the endearments,” I say.

“I’m trying to figure out which one I like best.”

“You don’t have to pick,” I tell him, feeling like a femme fatale, “you can use them all.”

“Great! How about brownie?”he asks.

His lusty glance ricochets between my mouth and fingers so long and so expressively it’s a wonder we don’t crash.

“Maybe that one should just be for private, big guy. Look! There’s a place up ahead.”

We hover to a stop, I get us a room braving lots of winky-winky eyebrow wagging from the woman behind the desk. I couldn’t tell if she was more scandalized by my traveling companion or the picture and wording on my van.

“The name of your company is Shameless?” she asks for the third time as she hands me the receipt.

“No Shame. It’s a great concept,” I snip. “We considered naming it No Judgments, but it didn’t have the same ring,” I tell her pointedly.

“To each their own,” she says. “Room seventeen.”

“Hey, babe, a bed,” I say when we’re in the room and the door is closed. I throw the pillowcase full of my belongings I’ve been dragging with me since Windy City onto the little table in the corner. “Have you ever thought of things we might be able to do in a bed ?”

“You mean instead of in front of hundreds of onlookers at a national monument? Or on top of a hover? Or on the floor as we fought for space with an army of sexbots? No, can’t say that I have.”

“Well, I have. Wanna join me?” I pat the bed and lift an eyebrow in blatant invitation.

“Shower first?” he asks as he lifts a sexy browridge of his own.

The room is old-fashioned and no-frills, but it’s not gross, and it’s clean. What more do we need?

All of a sudden, though, this femme-fatale is feeling kind of shy.

“So, now would be the time to call you brownie?” he asks, his voice husky, his blue eyes full of liquid warmth. “Or to tell you I can’t wait to fulfill every fantasy you’ve ever had? Or to . . . ask you to be my mate, Love?”

I squeal. If that wasn’t a happy enough noise, as if that didn’t express my sheer joy at his proposal, I squeal again.

“Mate? Really?”

He nods slowly, a serious look on his handsome face. “I know we have a lot of details to work out, but as soon as we find Zoriss, I promise we will find a way to stay together and be happy.”

He grabs my hand and pulls me off the bed to stand next to him.

“I’ll never be able to talk sexy to you without sounding like a sexbot, Annora. I want to tell you I can’t wait to taste you, but I think that one’s already taken.”

“Tell me whatever you want, big guy. Out of your mouth it sounds loving and sincere.”

We’re both filthy. He smells of damp cement. I’m still wearing the t-shirt I was shot in. But it doesn’t matter as we bridge the distance between us.

While he makes short work of stripping our clothes off and tossing them haphazardly wherever they land, the back of my mind is wondering what ‘mated’ really means to a Draalian.

The front of my mind is preoccupied with wondering just how fabulous it’s going to feel to make love in a bed, and how exquisite it will be to have a real, live Draalian ease himself inside me.

But right now, I try to stay in the moment, because his kisses are divine. That tongue, so capable and attentive, is pressing against the seam of my lips and a little hiss of enjoyment escapes him. When it flicks, fast and hard against me, I moan in the back of my throat and open to him.

“You want me already, Love? I smell your desire. They should bottle that as a fragrance. You’d be rich.”

Yeah, Zorn , I think. A much better idea than bottling the smell of bacon . . . or brownies for that matter.

My fingers curl around his muscular shoulders as I tip my head back, hoping he’ll

flick his talented blue tongue down the column of my neck and forge toward a nipple or two.

As if he could read my mind, he does just that, zigzagging his way south, then stopping at the pulsebeat of my throat as if he's absorbing some of my life essence. Later, I want to do that to him, it's supremely sexy.

He drags one of his fangs across my collarbone and I suck in a surprised breath. It's one of the sexiest things I've ever felt. It makes my knees weak.

Okay, Zorn, you're on the homestretch. You're mere inches from my nipple, big guy.

Suddenly he's completely off his game. He stands tall and stares at the door as if he knows there's a posse of zombies on the other side just waiting to eat our brains.

"Zoriss," he announces one second before the knock sounds on the door.

It's only my heretofore hidden catlike reflexes that allow me to wrap the bedspread around me before Zorn's brother crosses the threshold, a human woman in tow.

Zorn

I should have noticed Zoriss's proximity sooner. Maybe it was what Annora and I were engaged in, or maybe that I've been so focused on him for days I failed to notice I wasn't just thinking about him, I was feeling his energy.

Either way, he's here, bombarding me with love and relief and the exuberance of being reunited. We clasp each other by the shoulders, then hug each other in a powerful embrace. The act of touching, our chests crushed together, reactivates our bond.

I squeeze him even tighter for a moment, then pull away to look at him. It's only now I see there's a human female an inch from his right shoulder.

"Zorn, this is my . . ." he pauses as if he's wondering how to introduce her, "Lumina. She's agreed to return to Draal with me."

I guess Annora and I weren't the only couple to take things a bit fast.

"This is my love, Annora. She's agreed to be my mate," I reply without having to ponder for a second—I know exactly what my relationship is with my female. Glancing at her, by the shy smile on her face, it's apparent she didn't miss my proud announcement that we're going to be mated.

Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 4:01 pm

“So nice to meet you. I’ll be out in a minute,” she says as she grabs her pillowcase full of clean clothes and hurries to the bathroom.

She returns in a moment, fully dressed, and exchanges quiet introductions with Lumina while Zoriss and I remark to each other how worried we were that the other was dead. I haven’t released my hold on him. It’s good to have my clutchmate back.

Lumina ran to her van to get snacks, which are now causing me to split my attention between telling my brother how much I missed him and watching Annora lick her fingers. I’m sitting on one of the two rickety chairs in the room, with her on my lap. My cocks harden underneath her ass.

It would be the sexiest of secrets . . . if it were a secret, but by Lumina’s embarrassed smile, I think she has her suspicions. Perhaps the fact that I can’t tear my gaze from Annora’s provocative mouth gave it away.

“Give us an update about your time on Earth,” Zoriss says as he looks from me to Annora and back again.

We give the two a rundown of our time together, and she reluctantly confesses she found Draalians repulsive.

Zoriss is nice enough not to even look ruffled at her admission.

A few minutes later, I understand why he was so tolerant.

He admits, “I was completely despicable to Lumina the whole time we were stuck at

the bottom of a steep canyon together.

She saved my life more than once and gave me her body heat, and I called her despicable and mocked her.

“Luckily, she didn’t understand most of what I said. I think the Earth saying about my behavior would be temporary insanity.” He gives Lumina a smoldering look best bestowed when two people are alone.

He says he was despicable? That certainly seems to be behind them now. He’s having trouble looking at Annora or me, preferring instead to gaze at her.

“Well, in his defense,” Lumina chimes in, “my translator didn’t work, so I didn’t know what he was saying, and he thought I just wanted him for his cock and his sperm.”

“Don’t you though?” Annora laughs, then gives me a long kiss full of appreciative tongue.

“Umm . . . yeah?” Lumina admits. “Although, regarding the sperm, the scientists haven’t figured out how to help human/Draalian embryos carry to term. I did a deep Internet search. They’re close, though.”

Annora

Kids? Of course, I thought of kids when I signed up for the alien mate program. It’s the point of the whole Repopulation Initiative thing. That was all great in theory, but now it’s real. What would a human/Draalian look like?

I get a liquid gooey feeling inside when I think of having a baby that looks like Zorn. By the unconcealed grin on his face, it looks like he’d be happy to be a dad.

“So,” I peer at Zoriss, “something must have happened to change you from thinking she’s despicable to looking at her like you can’t wait to get to your own room so you can get it on.”

They tell us how Lumina saved his ass after he crash-landed in an escape pod he stole from the pirate ship the males were abducted on.

The two were holed up in a cave because he was too injured to climb out of the deep canyon they were in.

By the way she keeps rubbing his back and how close his palm is to her crotch, it sounds like they shared more than body heat down there.

“I saw the error of my ways,” Zoriss explains.

“At first, I had amnesia, then when my memories returned, it took me a few days to get over my rage at being abducted and lying paralyzed but conscious for the three months we were in stasis. It was only then I could admit to myself how amazing this female is.”

“Did I hear that right?” Zorn asks, his whole body stiffening. “Paralyzed but conscious?”

“Yes, brother. Three months without the ability to scratch my nose or swallow. Three months of listening to those motherfuckers talk about the abhorrent Earth females who wanted us as fuck toys. Three months with nothing for my brain to do but marinate in anger about my circumstances. Three months to pin my hopes on revenge.”

I get bored in the shower. I can’t bear to be without entertainment or work. I can’t imagine being paralyzed with nothing to think about for three long months. Poor guy.

I guess I'd wake up a bit pissed, too. Then to have amnesia. No wonder Zorn couldn't sense him for several days.

"Not to bring a crashing end to the party," Lumina says, "but the facts are clear. These guys are here illegally. We've looked into it.

Unless we were in line already, they can't be matched with us.

They'd have to meet someone new who had already paid her fee and been vetted.

I guess the only choice we have is for them to choose another Earth female or for all of us to go back to their home planet.

I already agreed to go back to Draal with Zoriss as soon as we found you. "

"Uh . . . I am in line," I admit.

Zorn's head whips in my direction.

"Yeah, the day my mom shoved me into our guest cottage, I'd just received word that I could begin attending mixers at the agency I'd applied to.

I'll admit, Draalians weren't on my list, but I think Zorn and I meet the criteria you just described.

Once we get him registered at the Windy City facility, it will just be a formality for us to become mated. "

After a moment, it dawns on me that my mom has lots of contacts and lots of clout.

After a call to her, she contacted the CEO of Heavenly Matches, the company that

helped her switch Zorn from illicit to licit in a dark off-the-books operation.

With a little encouragement and a few promises of favors, mom cleared the way for Lumina and Zoriss to legally mate.

The only problem is the one-hundred thousand credit fee.

Mom generously donated half the amount. I think her guilt is still eating at her for what she did to Zorn and me.

I immediately offered all my bank account would allow, which was twenty-five thousand.

Buying the off-the-books stunners and getting papers for Zorn put a serious dent in my savings.

One thing everyone in the room agrees on is that the clutchmates can't be separated. So, if Zoriss can't stay, the four of us have to emigrate to Draal. So, yeah, I donate twenty-five grand. My contribution is less out of generosity than out of self-defense.

Lumina has an exciting idea of how to get the rest of the credits she needs, so we agree to meet back in Windy City in a few days' time.

Zorn

After Zoriss and Lumina leave, ready to put Lumina's plan into action, Annora turns in my lap so her hip brushes my abdomen. Her palm skims my cheek as her gaze pierces mine.

"Worried, Love?" I ask.

"I'll admit I'd rather stay here than go back to Draal with you. That's terrible to admit, isn't it, because I'm asking you to give up everything you've ever known to stay here with me."

"Not terrible. I'm not giving up a lot. The only important things in my life are you and Zoriss.

My mother and father are both dead. I haven't lived on Draal in over a decade.

The military? I did well there, rose in the ranks, but I'll find something here on Earth.

There are worse things than starting over, especially when I'll be starting over with you. "

I smile at her. Dread had been swirling in my belly since I realized I loved her and wondered if I'd be able to keep her. That fear can now be laid to rest.

"The download they put into my brain explained your marriage ceremonies to me. What do you know about Draalian mating ceremonies?"

“Nothing.”

“Yours are public. Ours are private. Very private.”

“Ohhh. Sounds good,” she says with a naughty smile as she quirks an eyebrow.

“When do you think you’ll be ready to fully commit? To have the ceremony? I love you and know I want to cherish you and be with you forever, but I’ll understand if you’re not ready.”

“I’m ready, Zorn. After I stormed that house in Prosperity, breached the door, asked where you were, and that bitch said you were dead? The loss and pain that swamped me told me everything I needed to know about the depth and breadth of my love for you.”

I tuck her against my chest, set my chin on top of her head, and rock her.

It’s not sexual at all, it’s meant to convey a cascade of my heartfelt emotion.

After kissing her soft brown hair, I pull away so I can look into her eyes as I tell her, “Annora, I will love and cherish you forever. If you’ll have me, I’d like to mate soon, but,” I glance around the shabby room, “not here.”

“Okay.”

“I love that you trust me on this. Let’s take showers, catch a few more hours of sleep, and get on the road.

Those days in your guest cottage, when I slept on the couch and you were in your bed, even then I lost countless hours of sleep as I imagined joining you there.

Let's hover back, lock the doors from the inside this time, and conduct our sacred mating ritual there. ”

“Sounds wonderful.”

~.~

We're back in the cottage outside Windy City.

Grace was true to her word. The cage is gone and the locks respond to Annora's fingerprint.

Although I found it claustrophobic and confining a week ago, I find it cozy and charming now.

We've dined on a ritual meal. Well, it was a ritual meal for me, consisting of raw bovine steak and a new delicacy Annora bought for me—oysters.

She had cooked bovine and joined me in slurping the raw oysters.

Things got purposely messy and we wound up licking the juices off each other's chins.

Luckily, the ritual requires a bath, so now we're clean and dressed in white clothes we bought on the trip.

She's in a filmy dress, I'm in a white thigh-length tunic and slacks.

“You're beautiful, Love,” I tell her, unable to hide my smile.

“You're handsome.”

She looks shy.

I've turned on Draalian drum music in the background, and marvel at how well our two cultures can blend as we create a new family together. We'll pick and choose the best of both worlds. I certainly hope what happens next in this room will please my new mate.

"You'll be wearing your white gown for only a short moment, love. I'll soon be peeling it off you. But for now . . ." I bring us both to the foot of the bed and hold her hands in mine, "let me pledge my love to you."

Her eyes are large and luminous as she looks up at me with complete trust. I guess that's where I should start.

"I promise to always be worthy of your love and the trust you place in me. I will protect you to the best of my ability, support you in all endeavors, and love you with all my heart."

Mated Draalians don't ever stray from their mating vows, but I know enough from the download I received on the trip here to say, "I will be forever faithful to you, always be mindful of your needs, and strive to make you endlessly happy."

I search deep inside myself and know I could write her a book about all the love I have for her and all the ways I want to care for her, but I think I just said everything I need.

"I vow," she says, "to help you in all ways possible, to make you glad every day that you gave up your life on Draal to stay here with me, to ease your burdens, soothe your soul, and love you with all my heart."

She reaches to kiss me. Cupping my palm to the back of her neck, I return the kiss.

Soft and close-mouthed at first, we then fully dive into each other.

I stroke her tongue with mine. This beautifully highlights our contrasts.

Her tongue, thick and pink, mine thin and facile and blue.

I enjoy our differences as much as she does.

I feel the moment her shyness disappears. She leans closer, dragging the hard points of her nipples against my chest and pulling me against her, her hands gripping my shoulders.

The thin weave of my trousers does nothing to hide the evidence of my arousal, both cocks pulsing in anticipation.

I've pleased myself hundreds of times since I reached adolescence.

I've never salivated like this before, never felt my jaw tighten in anticipation of the final act that will make her mine.

I'm torn between racing to complete the mating ceremony and wanting to draw out the pleasure of finally having the woman I love, naked and ready, in my arms.

Annora

A moment ago, I was transported by his beautiful words and the warm look of love in his gorgeous blue eyes. Now, though, my body is on fire for him. My nipples are hard pebbles, and I already feel the tight clench of desire between my legs.

The entire ride from Amity I asked in a dozen different ways what the mating ceremony entailed. He kept mum and requested I not look it up just as I was cueing

up the Internet to do just that. It made me a bit anxious as I wondered what it entailed, but I'm not worried right now. I'm impatient.

He pulls my dress over my head as if I'm made of delicate glass and he doesn't want to break me.

I'm completely naked, as he instructed. The way his gaze flicks from my head to my toes and back again, as if he can't wait to pounce on me, tells me everything I need to know about how much he appreciates my body just the way it is.

After lifting me up and setting me down on the middle of the bed, he prowls between my legs and attacks one breast with his mouth, the other with his deft fingers.

Between the two halves of his tongue twining around one hardened bud and his fingers plucking the other, my arousal ratchets up another ten notches.

Gripping the hem of his tunic, I manage to pull it over his head, but can't make headway on pulling down his trousers because he's dragging his fangs across my skin from one breast to the other and I simply can't pay attention to anything other than the dangerous pleasure as his teeth rasp against my flesh.

I want to tell him not to forget that move, but by the way I suck in my breath and writhe beneath him, I have a feeling he might have noticed.

He works his way down my body, his knees lodged between my thighs. After painting a line with his tongue to my clit, he sucks my little bundle of nerves into his mouth and hisses with pleasure. The noise creates a vibration that would rival some of my best toys.

He enters me with one finger and then two as he sucks and licks and uses the two halves of his tongue to pluck my clit until I fly over the edge into an appetizer orgasm

that was delicious, but just makes me hungry for more.

And this guy delivers, mouthing me to two more increasingly intense releases that make me ravenous for the main course.

“Ready for me, Annora?” he husks from his position between my legs, his eyes peering up at me across the length of my body.

“I’ve been ready since Yellowstone, babe.”

He rises onto his knees, moving forward until he is as close as he can get.

Then he lifts my feet so they rest on his pecs, and places his hands under my thighs to keep me there.

He places his secondary at my entrance then holds me in his gaze as he pulses into me in little presses.

He makes a noise, a cross between a moan and a hiss as our eyes flicker closed.

This is nothing, absolutely nothing like any toy in my factory. It’s sweet and tight and the tiniest bit painful and less about the physical and completely emotional. My eyes well with tears as the importance of this moment bowls over me.

“My Zorn,” I whisper. This is all about him and me and our amazing connection that surmounted a million miles and abduction and repulsion and wound up here bathing us in an ocean of love.

He’s entering me so slowly I can memorize every inch of him. I give myself over to the emotions cascading through me. The sheer joy of finding love, of finding him should be the highlight of my life. But this? Our joining? It’s overwhelmingly

beautiful and more than I'd ever hoped for.

He stops when he's all the way inside me, then gives an extra thrust to make certain he can't go any farther. He cocks his head in question when he looks at me. I'm sure he noticed my eyes are shining too brightly.

"It's all good, Zorn. My love is just . . . too big to be contained." I smile at him, then dive into the sensual yearnings swirling through me. The love? The love will be there later. This? This physical joining, I want to be fully present. "Mate me, big guy."

"That's next, Love. This? This is for fun."

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He wastes no time showing me just how much fun we can have as he starts a slow cadence in time with every two beats of the Draalian drums. My hands reach to connect with him, clutching behind his knees and using them as an anchor to keep me grounded to the here and now and to him.

Feeling him inside me, feeling the stretch and fullness, I lay my head back and float on the physical bliss that carries me away.

He quickens his rhythm, now slamming into me with every beat of the drums. The primitive rhythm fuels my passion and with every thrust I feel a jolt of pleasure as he presses against my eager clit.

His primary slides toward my pucker, nudging the sensitized area and catapulting my desire even higher.

I can't hold back any longer as I moan in delight and feel myself spasm around his secondary, the one closest to his belly. After every muscle in my body clenches in pleasure, I drop my head back on the bed and groan as I allow myself a moment to catch my breath.

Zorn doesn't give me time, though. I glance through my lashes to see a proud smile on his face as he soldiers on, just pounding away, assuming I'll join him for another round of bliss.

It doesn't take long before I'm back in the game, the beginnings of my next orgasm swirling in my pelvis until I find release.

It's only on the next orgasm that he allows himself to join me as we both groan through our orgasms, our gazes locked, eyes open as we share our bliss.

I'm almost too tired to reach for him and try to pull him toward the head of the bed to join me.

"We still have to perform the mating ceremony," he scolds sweetly.

What? I have to look at him to make sure he's not joking.

"You can refresh with a glass of water if you'd like."

Water? After that I need a nap. No, I need a bottle of wine, a three-course meal and a full night's sleep. But I'll figure out how to keep going if that's what's expected.

Oh, the things we do for love.

He leans to whisper in my ear. "You okay, Love? Ready for more?" His voice is hoarse, gritty from the deep groan/growl/hiss he released when he came.

"Bring it on, babe."

He kisses a sweet path from my mouth, between my breasts, past my navel, and then lifts my legs over his shoulders and places his primary at the entrance to my core.

He whispers the softest prayer, not meant for my ears, but for the ears of his God. The ineffable sweetness is in clear contrast to what he does next, which is to slide his primary into me in one long, hard drive culminating in a grunt of sublime pleasure.

His primary is as long and thick as his secondary and has the same ridges and wide bulge halfway down the shaft. I'm ready for this after our previous lovemaking, so

his quick entrance all the way to the hilt feels divine.

“Don’t come until I tell you, Love. It’s part of the ceremony.”

Those are the last words I hear for long minutes. He learned how to make my body sing a moment ago with his secondary. I’m already right on the precipice of release, but I hold back, wanting to honor the ceremony, to honor him.

With every moment that passes, though, my urge to let go increases.

With his primary pressing into me in time with the drums, I feel wild and primitive.

His secondary sliding against my clit, ramming against it on every thrust has taken me close to the peak of pleasure.

I won’t be able to hold out much longer.

“Hurry, Love,” I urge.

But he shakes his head and keeps pistoning, keeps massaging my internal walls, his secondary, slick with my juices, bumps my clit with every pounding lunge that moves in time with the music.

“Please,” I say on a gasp, squeezing my eyes in an effort not to release into bliss.

He opens his mouth, showing me the full length of his fangs for the first time.

Dipping his head to my left shoulder, he bites the flesh there.

A zing of pain jolts through my body. It feels as if rivers of fire are flying along every nerve and synapse.

And then the pain disappears and is replaced by pleasure.

No, is there a word stronger than pleasure? Stronger than bliss? Because those words don't describe the sheer nirvana of what's ripping through my body right now. Whatever is in his venom was indeed bestowed by the Gods because I'm flying in the heavens.

"Now, Love. Come now," he husks into my ear. His teeth snap together as he hisses and releases into me. I feel his hot essence jet inside me and only now realize that was missing when he came with his secondary.

My release is incendiary as I let go and join him. As aroused as I was a moment ago, it's only equaled by the joy I feel now as wave upon wave of pleasure fly through my body.

The intimacy of our connection is compounded by the happiness on his face and his tight grip on my upper arms.

We're mated, Love.

I heard that loud and clear but his lips didn't move.

I wasn't sure it would work with a human mate, so I didn't tell you. I'm thrilled we have this connection. This isn't a dream come true because I didn't even dream I would have a mate. You are the greatest surprise.

"What?"

This is the Draalian mating bond, Brownie. We'll share this psychic connection forever. Stronger even than that of clutchmates.

“You should have warned me,” I scold, although I have no idea why I’m complaining.

Talk to me inside your head.

This is amazing. You can hear me?

Loud and clear, Love. We’re mated. Now and forever.

So, you can hear me when I tell you how much I love you and how happy we’re going to be whether it’s here or on Draal? All I need is you, cupcake.

Cupcake? Is that a confection? Do I get to watch you eat it? Does it involve the licking of fingers?

Oh yeah, babe. Maybe I should call you Lollipop. Because in a little while, you’re going to see a lot of licking, although no fingers will be involved.

Two years later . . .

Zorn

“Promise me, Lollipop,” my mate says as I head to the garage to get into my hover.

“I always do, Brownie. You don’t need to remind me,” I scold.

I love our little game. When she reminds me to wear my bullet-proof vest, it’s another of the million ways she tells me she loves me. I only scold her because it prolongs my departure so I can be with her an extra second before I go off on a mission.

“I worry about you, babe.”

“You know I’ll be careful so I can come back to you. And now,” my voice softens as I return inside the house to place my palm on her growing belly, “I’m doubly cautious so I can return to you both.”

Two years ago, I was on furlough from the army with no plans for the rest of my life except to keep fighting Draal’s enemy the Vren until I died.

I had long before given up any hope of a mate or family, or anything more than the meager happiness I eked out of being an honored soldier in the Draalian army and having a strong bond with my clutchmate.

Today I have a spectacular wife, a youngling on the way, and a more fulfilling job

than I could have ever hoped for.

Glancing past Annora into the living room we share with Lumina and Zoriss, I smile at my new family. Although Lumina's belly is bigger than my mate's, I'm told they're both due around the same time.

How lucky the scientists discovered a way for us to procreate even though our reproductive systems are so different.

The females tell me one of them is likely going to be the first Draalhuman mother on Earth.

I think both Annora and Lumina are hoping the other goes into labor first. They have no idea what it will be like and want to see how it works for the other.

Grace is here too and gives me a little wave. Any anger I held toward her is long gone, and the fact that she moved into the guest cottage so Zoriss, Lumina, Annora and I could be in the mansion only makes me like her more.

We put in a few walls, and now have two separate living spaces, but mostly we hang out in the living room as one big family.

Every time I glance out the large front window, I remember our double wedding when the four of us stood right in that spot amid the flowers and said our vows, making us legally mated here on Earth.

Annora and I both agree that our private Draalian ceremony was more meaningful, but I'd never tell that to Grace.

The three females like cooking together in the large kitchen. They never chide my brother and I for not cooking, though, because Zoriss and I would just offer to serve

them raw meat.

I'll comm you when the raid is over , I tell Annora after I kiss her one more time. "I love you."

Annora

Sometimes I feel like bursting with happiness. Not necessarily at times like this, because I worry for Zorn's safety, but he's so delighted with his job I'd never want to take that away from him.

It's hard to understand my initial repulsion to him because all I see when I look at him now is how handsome he is. His scales are sexy, and those little fangs? Don't even get me started. I love when he runs them along my flesh during our bedplay.

The past two years have flown by as we explored the area in ways I never did when I lived alone. We've learned things about each other that make us love each other more. He's more than my mate, he's the finest person I've ever known.

Our first year together, before he was hired for the job he's doing now, he and Zoriss were part of a task force empowered to hunt pirates and bring them to justice.

An elite cadre comprised of Earth women and all three species of aliens located and dismantled three separate rings of abductors who had sunk their tentacles into some of the highest echelons of the government.

They located many males who were brought here illegally. Many, like Zorn and Zoriss, had already found love but were living in hiding without proper documentation.

The Earth Repopulation organization, in collaboration with the Draalian authorities,

amended their laws and will allow black market males to stay with the females of their choice if both parties are willing.

Once a month, the two clutchmates lead a group for males just like them who were stolen and brought here on the black market.

They testify to the fact that there are other options than rushing back to their home planet.

Their ability to help others makes them feel even more like they belong here on Earth.

For the past year, he's been on the District's Anti-alien Task Force, hunting women like the ones we encountered in Amity. There are pockets of them throughout the world, and most goodhearted people on Earth want to eradicate them and bring theradicals to justice.

I press my palm to my belly, knowing that our youngling will be safer because of the important work his or her father is doing.

Usually, I quell my urge to do this, but tonight I just feel like giving in to it. I run through the open garage door and hurry to the hover just as it's about to take off.

One more kiss, love of my life. I'll wait up for you.

I would tell you not to, but I know you'll do what you want, Love. See you soon.

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Annora

“Really? We’re not supposed to leave this room for five days?” I’m not sure if it sounds like a blessing or a curse. Then I scold myself for even wondering if it’s a curse. When we were locked in here before, it wasn’t of our own choosing. Now, we’re here by choice. Definitely a blessing.

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I hope you enjoyed Zorn and Annora's story. This was my attempt at a lighter, funnier book than my usual. C'mon, "Sexbots! Erections!" Ya gotta admit there were some lighthearted moments!

Inspiration is a weird thing. The ideas for both Zorn's story and that of his brother Zoriss came barreling at me at the same moment.

I couldn't write just one of their stories.

It was a fun challenge to write two very different books along the same timeline.

Check out Zoriss and Lumina's story [here](#).

Scroll down for a SNEAK PEEK OF THEIR FIRST CHAPTER.

Don't forget to check out the other Cosmic Kissed books written in the same world from kickass authors.

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Place: Entering Earth's atmosphere

Zoriss

I thought I'd learned how to turn off my mind when I was in mandatory sniper training in the Draalian planetary army.

I routinely had to bide my time for hours, once for over a day, while waiting for my target.

It was hard at first, my mind tends to race, but I thought I'd mastered the ability to tolerate hours with nothing floating through my mind but my own thoughts.

Nothing prepared me for this.

I've been in stasis for, by my count, three months. Ninety days of lying here in a stasis pod without the ability to move. I can't even scratch my nose.

As a captain in the Draalian military, I've been in stasis while being transported all over the sector.

You take off your clothes, climb into your pod, strap in, and a needle jabs you, putting you to sleep until the journey is complete.

During that time, your nails grow, you're fed intravenously, your bodily fluids are excreted through tubing, and you awaken rested and ready for duty.

Not only was I knocked out and thrown onto this pirate vessel within hours of returning to my home planet after a five-year tour of duty, but their stasis protocol malfunctioned. Instead of putting me to sleep, I've been paralyzed but awake for this endless voyage.

My body can't move, my eyelids can't open, and I can't swallow. But it's not the physical discomfort that's been the worst part of the last ninety days, it's the mental anguish. Granted, I've forced myself to sleep longer each day, but the waking hours are still interminable.

I've played and replayed every major event of my life just to give my mind something to do.

After watching those things a thousand times, I cast my mind to smaller events, trying to recall even the most mundane moments, like listening to a lecture or even walking to the refresher in the middle of the night.

After I exhausted that, I began to watch replays of the halchuck games I used to be addicted to. I tried to recreate every game I've ever watched, viewing them quarter by quarter, trying to remember where I was sitting when I watched them as well as who was with me and what they talked about.

By day thirty, I'd exhausted all those memories as well. For the last sixty days, I've played and replayed it all a hundred times. If I were an author, I'd have plotted a dozen books. But I'm not. The mind-numbing boredom has convinced me I've completely lost my mind.

We're evidently on our way to a planet called Earth.

The assholes who abducted me have thoughtfully provided an intensive course on their customs. Not that I give a shit, but I've listened well and learned everything they

taught me.

I didn't need it repeated on an endless loop.

I got it the first time. At least it gave my mind something to pay attention to.

There's only one thing that keeps me going. Revenge. I want to kill every fucking male on this pirate ship. This mind-torture is far worse than anything they could have inflicted upon my body. I vow with every fiber of my being that I will kill them all when they release me from stasis.

This Earth that we're bound for, I wonder what type of culture would authorize this?

I've asked myself this question endlessly.

If I somehow don't manage to escape, don't manage to kill my captors, if I end up on this forsaken planet, I vow I will take my wrath out on anyone who blocks my path from returning home to Draal and to my brother, my clutchmate, Zorn.

Zorn. All clutchmates are close and share a psychic link, but he and I are especially bonded, even by Draalian standards. It's like losing a limb to not feel his thoughts, his presence.

He's calmer than me, not as quick to anger. He's the strategist, I'm the one who jumps into the fray. We make a great team. If one of us had to be abducted, I'm glad it's me. Over the last three months it's given me comfort that I'm the one enduring this torture.

"Wake up, assholes," this announcement comes over the tinny speaker in my pod.

I try to open my eyes for what must be the ten millionth time since I boarded this

vessel. This time my muscles respond!

Looking from side to side, I see pods on either side of me. I wonder if we've all been tortured for the last three months, or if it was just me who was the lucky one whose sleeping medication didn't work.

If they were properly drugged, the minds of the males in the pods will be slowly coming back online.

Not me. My thoughts are clear. The moment after I feel the tubes retract from my body and I hear the quiet, almost imperceptible click of the pod's clear top unlatching, I'm going to break free, grab a gun from the male closest to me, and kill every motherfucking pirate on board.

I'm toward the end of a row. Looking to my left, I see an escape capsule. Although I've been planning my revenge all this time, the possibility of escape is even more appealing. I don't know how to pilot an escape capsule, but by their very nature, they have to be easy to maneuver, right?

"Wake the fuck up, you've slept long enough," assaults my ears over the speaker.

While I wait for my pod hood to open, I blissfully scratch the thousand spots I've wanted to itch for ninety days. Before the ship automatically unhooks me, I yank the hose from my primary cock, and the one that has been feeding me from my arm, ready to bolt the moment I can.

"We brought you to a planet called Earth courtesy of our little pirate operation. Earth can't produce males anymore and the women there are desperate for your cocks and your sperm.

We brought you here on a little off-the-books expedition.

We get paid. You get mates. They call it pussy.

You get all the pussy you want.” He laughs coarsely as if this wasn’t a disgusting commentary on both him and the low-class females who inhabit this planet.

“While in stasis, your translator was updated with the Earth language and you’ve received lessons in their customs. Earth females have also wear translators. We’ve already held auctions. You’re all bought and paid for.”

Bought and paid for? What, are we now sex slaves?

How do they intend to control us? The insane rage and resentment I’ve been harboring toward the pirates just shifted to these Earth females.

They have no honor. I have no intention of ever meeting my owner.

Lucky for her, because if I do, I believe she’ll have a terrible, tragic accident.

The faint click of the hatch release indicates I can flee. Perfect timing. There are no guards between me and the escape capsule. I push up the clear hood of my stasis pod and leap out on feet that lost feeling months ago.

I stumble to the capsule, my muscles feeling weak as a babe’s. It’s hard to walk in a straight line like it always is after a long stint in stasis, but at this point, my life depends on my ability to get to that capsule.

I half walk, half lurch my way there, then pound my palm on the red button. The hiss of air accompanies the release door opening. I slide into the seat, press the red button on the dash, and the door slams shut behind me just as every guard on the vessel runs in my direction.

The whine of metal grinding on metal pierces my ears, the capsule separates from the pirate vessel, and I'm hurtling toward the green and blue ball beneath me. Earth.

If I'd just escaped a Draalian army vessel, this capsule would be programmed to home in on the safest place to touch down, then coast to a soft landing. The way this vessel is plummeting through the atmosphere, I don't think the words 'soft landing' are in my future.

Although I'm not trained in maneuvering this thing, when I try the manual controls, I realize the wires go nowhere. This capsule has been sabotaged or cannibalized for parts. Either way, I'm at the mercy of this little metal ball which is rushing to meet landfall.

My heart is thumping wildly in my chest. Even though I can finally swallow, my mouth is now too dry from fear to do so.

It's an optical illusion that makes me feel the planet is rising up to meet me.

I know it's just the opposite. I'm plunging, hurtling toward it at an insane rate of speed.

I try to reach out to Zorn, knowing there's no way we could connect with each other over the vastness of space all the way to Draal.

"I swear by all that's holy," I bite out through gritted teeth, "if I live, I will exact vengeance."

Lumina

I normally love the steep hike down into the River of No Return Wilderness. This particular trail is so long and challenging I like to take my time. But I'm hurrying

today—for good reason.

It's interesting being a vet out in the hinterlands of what used to be called Idaho. Had I followed in the footsteps of most of the other women in my veterinary class, I'd be sitting in a nicely furnished office, practicing in a large city. I've never been like most other women.

Yes, I treat dogs and cats, sometimes birds, and the occasional reptile, but I also go on house calls to treat horses and cows. All in a day's work. Today, though, I'm on my way to a rescue.

Marybeth Elkin's daughter was playing with her drone and spied a moose calf floundering in the river.

When she sent me the footage via comms, it looked like the poor thing had gotten tangled in some antique barbed wire.

The pictures were grainy, but it looked like it had struggled its forelegs into a tight, possibly deadly binding, then couldn't gain traction to climb up the steep sides of the canyon.

To traverse this inhospitable wilderness, I'm wearing sturdy gloves and knee-high leather gaiters over my jeans. If I hadn't been smart enough to come prepared, my palms and legs would be sliced to bits by the sharp brambles by now.

I work my way down the craggy hill on the lookout for the calf. I'm trying to get as many miles under my belt as possible before nightfall.

Source Creation Date: July 24, 2025, 4:01 pm

I shouldn't be here. I know that. It's the twenty-first of October, far too late in the year to risk traveling here, especially alone. Mine was the only car in the parking lot for good reason—wise people don't explore here for pleasure this late in the season.

Thick, heavy snows have been known to blanket this canyon as early as mid-September, and although snow that early is unusual, it's not remarkable at all for blizzards to hit this time of year.

I just couldn't watch that footage of the desperate calf struggling against its bonds and not try to save it. I could almost hear its forlorn bleats over the silent pictures as I watched them. As the area's only vet, I figured the little guy's choice was either rescue by me or death.

Finally, my hiking boots touch the gravel at the bottom of the cliff and I strike off toward the east where the animal was last seen.

After the long hike down, my backpack feels like it weighs a hundred pounds.

Although it was foolish to come this late in the season, I'm not dumb.

I came prepared to stay awhile in case the animal needed treatment and I had to spend a few nights.

Why I'm still carrying the dead weight of my comm bracelet, though, is another question altogether.

Despite the fact that every square inch of Earth has supposedly been covered by

satellites for the last century or more, no signal penetrates between the rocky walls of the River of No Return's steepest canyon.

Since I have a comm unit that's no more helpful than a brick, I use the old-fashioned compass my mom taught me to use. I walk with confidence, knowing I'm heading in the right direction.

Holy shit! What is that noise? It's straight out of one of the sci-fi movies I love to watch.

The fiery whoosh of something big plummeting to earth draws my attention toward the heavens.

A moment later, the impact of a crash rumbles beneath my feet.

The fireball leaves no question as to where the explosion occurred.

Running now, I tear my backpack off and toss it to the side so I can make better time.

There's a pillar of black smoke billowing near the water ahead of me.

I don't know why I'm running. This has to be an old satellite whose orbit has finally decayed, causing the thing to crash to Earth.

Those relics, leftover from a previous century, have been falling to Earth so often they rarely make headlines anymore.

But for some reason, I do run. I'm driven by a sense of urgency I don't understand.

When I'm a hundred yards away, I see a silver metal ball, maybe six feet in diameter. I have no idea what those old satellites looked like, but that has to be what I'm

seeing, right?

It's in shallow water which is sizzling from the intense heat of the metal ball lying in its wet embrace.

I stand, paralyzed, as I debate whether I should approach or run.

Has it had its final concussive explosion, or will it burst into a fireball as soon as I'm close enough to be snuffed out by the flames?

Curiosity gets the better of me and I inch closer.

Although I know nothing about centuries-old satellites, I don't think that's what I'm seeing.

It's round, or it used to be round before it crashed.

It looks like a space-age parachute tried to slow its fall and it's completely absent the big dohickeys that were designed to send or receive signals.

With a whoosh, a round door opens. I edge closer to peer in, then slog through ankle-deep water to glimpse into the opening. All of a sudden, every awful old sci-fi movie I've ever seen flashes through my mind. Is this a spaceship? Am I safe? Are we being invaded?

Finally close enough to see into the dark confines of the tiny sphere, I take a peek. Holy shit. Is that an alien inside?

I mean, I'm not naive. I know there are aliens. We've been visited by several species starting over a hundred years ago. But they don't usually arrive in one-person fireballs from outer space.

I approach like the frightened doe I made friends with once.

In fact, she was the driving reason I wanted to become a vet.

As a preteen, I was reading a book out in the woods.

I waited hours for her to come to me, one step at a time, always careful to keep my gaze from becoming too personal.

Her velvet nose nudging my hand was a seminal moment in my life.

I sneak close enough to peer in and gasp when it's clear I'm not only seeing an alien—it's a Draalian. A naked one.

Is this an early Christmas present? Everyone in town knows I've been saving up for a Draalian mate. Hell, every time I go to the grocery store, the women at the check-out ask how my Draalian savings account is coming.

There are so few males on our planet. Not only do we have to find compatible species and do ad campaigns to encourage them to come, but the government or private agencies have to test them for mental and physical health.

The agencies then house and feed them and perform all the matchmaking tests as well. Because of the law of supply and demand, it's expensive to apply to the mating services.

Every spare penny I get goes into that fund. The extra money I make by putting calligraphic addresses on birthday and Christmas cards goes there. When I'm not busy enough at my practice, I call clients to see if I can groom their dogs for extra credits.

My mom jokes I ‘drool over Draalians’, and she’s right.

“Stop drooling, Lumina, and get to work,” I scold myself.

I reach inside the capsule in trepidation. Who knows, this guy might be playing possum and reach out and grab me. Once I get a good look at him, though, it’s obvious he’s not conscious. I’m not even certain he’s alive.

Two fingers on his carotid answer that question. He has a pulse, but it’s thready. He’s going to need medical attention. I tamp down my fear and excitement and switch into professional mode. This guy doesn’t have a lot of time to wait around for treatment.

There’s a cave about half-a-mile back near where I dropped my backpack. I made a mental note that it would work as shelter in case I had to stay here overnight to tend the calf.

Although I can’t read Draalian, I see pictograms that even an idiot could interpret on how to detach the round capsule door from the rest of the sphere. I manage to release the lock, then rock it back and forth to remove it. It bent upon impact and didn’t exactly slip off as intended.

Now that the disk is curved side down in the shallows at the water’s edge, I release the harness that has the male secured to the seat.

After struggling to pull the Draalian out and lay him on it, I tuck his knees to his chest so the over-six-foot alien will be able to ride on the five-foot round door.

There’s blood, lots of it—and it’s blue. I don’t want to take the time to inspect him. I’ve watched enough vids to be plenty worried about the craft exploding. I want to leave now, but I take an extra minute to poke around in the cabin, looking for anything that might prove helpful.

There's a box that might be a first aid kit. I grab it and toss it gently on the door. There are two thick blue blankets under the seat. I definitely want those. Draals are reptilian. They're cold-blooded and can't self-regulate their body temperature.

If I'm not mistaken, the little packages I find in a cubby are freeze-dried food. They're covered with pictures of little insects. Gross.

"Okay, big guy, let's bounce."

The door handle has a thick webbed pull attached. It's a couple of yards long, so I'll be able to more easily lug my cargo toward the cave. I'd better hustle, the sun drops like a rock out here. Once it passes over the slim opening of the deep chasm, the light fades fast. So does the heat.

I feel the chill in the air already, so once I'm far enough from the crash site that I'm out of the explosion zone, I stop for a moment to cover him with the blankets.

I take one teeny tiny moment to inspect him.

I tell myself it's to see if I need to do a field dressing on him, but I was never good at lying to myself.

I'm looking at his wounds, yeah, that's what medical professionals do, but I'm also looking at him .

Five years ago, long after it was clear humans weren't going to birth any more male babies, the women of Earth decided to allow other species to emigrate here. We agreed upon three species to start with. The Saveet, the Zresta, and the Draal.

For some reason, it was the Draal and only the Draal that turned me on.

Literally. I have a scrolling Draalian screensaver, keep daily track of the number of immigrants from that planet, and finally gave in to temptation and used some of my savings to buy a Draalian sexbot.

My mouth is dry just looking at the male in front of me, and I haven't even allowed my gaze to dip below his waist.

His face is perfectly symmetrical, carrying the hallmarks of his race: flat nose, thin lips, little fangs that protrude from the upper jaw, and high cheekbones. Just as I suspected, his lack of hair makes his features even more handsome.

I tell myself I need to inspect all of him for injuries.

Since he's curled on his side, I have to move his top leg to get a better look at him.

My eyes spend an inordinate amount of time inspecting his genitals—the two blue cocks these males are famous for.

When flaccid it's hard to see past the secondary cock resting on the primary cock which is hidden in shadows.

The sight before my eyes is enough to fuel my fantasies for the rest of my lifetime.

"Lumina, you're a pervert," I scold myself even as I allow myself to drink in the sight of him for one more second.

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I flip him onto his other side and see the gash. The profusely bleeding gash. Right near his cocks and dangerously close to his femoral artery. If the crash had severed his femoral artery he'd already be dead, so it's not that serious, but it's clearly been nicked.

I pull off my t-shirt and use my teeth to make enough of a hole in it to tear a three-inch wide strip along the bottom.

I have a knife somewhere in my backpack, but I dropped it on the run to the crash and don't want to waste time backtracking.

It's dark out now, the landscape only lit by the gleam of the three-quarter moon.

After pulling my shirt back on and kneeling at his hip, I hesitate a moment as I wonder how to attack the problem.

There's no way around it, I'm going to have to touch his cocks.

Swallowing hard, I slip my hand between his legs, brush both penises out of the way, and tie a quick tourniquet.

I'll do a more thorough job after I get him to the cave.

After tucking both blankets around him, I grab the webbed pull and trudge forward.

Because the river is shallow this time of year, I can't float him toward the cave. Mostly I pull him forward, but when my arms and shoulders ache from that position,

I turn around and walk backward just to give my screaming muscles a rest.

There's enough moonlight for me to see a moose calf across the river at the water's edge. He dips his ungainly head as he takes a drink. By the dark patches on his legs which I can only assume are blood, I know with certainty this is the one I came here to save.

I'm relieved to see he escaped the restraining barbed wire on his own and his injuries don't appear serious. He takes one look at me and lopez away. I guess all the medical supplies in my backpack can be put to a different purpose. My gaze flicks to the comatose male on the metal disc.

Walking backward, I inspect the Draalian.

Such a pretty male. I don't know why I find this species so handsome, but I do.

There's something about their blue scales that calls to me.

This one has an interesting pattern of light and dark blue.

I wonder what color his eyes are, then I imagine those eyes looking at me like he can't wait to remove my clothes and have his way with me.

The thin lips his race is known for grace his face. I've always wondered about their forked tongues, not sure if it would be sexy or have a high 'ick factor'. That remains to be seen.

He has broad shoulders sculpted by powerful, ropey muscles. There's an armband around his right bicep. The silver metal is filigreed and has a round ruby in the middle of the design. It's the only thing he's wearing.

Turning forward, it's as if all of my awareness is focused on three fingers of my right hand.

The three fingers that brushed his penises when I moved them to apply the tourniquet.

I know it's not right to be so focused on those two gorgeous cocks.

As a doctor, I shouldn't be intrigued by a patient's genitals.

Even though I'm just a vet, I should still be more professional.

I finally see the cave up ahead, my hastily tossed backpack waiting a few steps from the opening. I pull him inside, grab the small flashlight from my pack, and look for predators who might be lurking there, especially bears. I don't see anything.

I pick a spot near the rear of the cave to open the small sleeping bag I brought with me, then ease him onto it as gently as I can lug a two-hundred-pound male. Once he's settled, I drag the door outside to collect firewood.

"I'll be back," I call to my comatose Draal.

While I'm gathering firewood and tossing it on the door, I can't help but wonder why the male is here.

Alien mates choose to come to Earth at our request. They come on ships and wind up in tidy barracks where they learn our customs and choose women to date.

Although this isn't the way it's done, I'm closer to a Draalian than I ever thought I'd be.

He's so handsome. And he's hurt. I need to hurry back and tend to him.

I return with kindling and at least a day's worth of firewood, then use the lighter from my pack to make a roaring fire.

With that source of heat and light, I pull the blankets off him and perform a complete inspection. Scales, of course, are thicker than skin, so he's not as banged up as I thought he'd be. He has cuts and scrapes all over, especially his chest.

There's a slash of blue blood on his temple, which must be why he hasn't regained consciousness. I wonder if he has brain damage, but don't have the equipment to run any tests. I'll look at that later since the leg wound is more urgent.

I open his legs wide to get good access to the deep gash near his groin, then peel off the blood-soaked t-shirt fabric I used when I field-dressed him. It's caked to his scales, but with a slight bit of pressure, I lift it off him.

Grabbing a collapsible pot from my backpack, I hurry to the rushing river outside the cave and return with enough water to clean the wound. It's deep enough to worry me. It's a wonder his artery wasn't sliced.

Draalian anatomy is probably different from ours. Well, duh, the two cocks are a dead giveaway. I'll just have to keep a close eye on this.

After another trip for clean water, I finish irrigating the wound as thoroughly as possible.

Grabbing the disinfectant spray, I give him a generous dusting, then rummage in my pack for the self-adhering gauze.

I consider using medi-seal to close the wound, but fear I may have to go back in to clean and disinfect again.

I decide to bandage it and reassess in the morning.

If we weren't a three-hour hike down a canyon, I'd take him to a hospital where he'd be properly treated. I certainly can't carry him out, nor can I use my comm because it gets no signal.

I bend his knee so his sole is flat on the floor, which allows me to more easily wrap his upper thigh. As I do this, I wonder if he can tolerate the antibiotic I brought for the moose calf. Although I know nothing about Draalian physiology, I assume he can tolerate our medicines.

The scientists who picked the first three species to join us on Earth were looking for genetic matches so we could procreate. I heard this vast experiment referred to as Project Ark when it was in its infancy.

The other two species have produced some adorable human hybrid babies, but the jury is still out on Draalians.

They haven't been able to procreate with humans yet, but there is hope for that.

I'll just have to assume we have a lot of genetic similarities or they wouldn't have been among the first to emigrate to our planet.

It's an interesting irony that my planet isn't producing males anymore and Draal's population is now ninety percent male because of their global warming.

What was this guy doing here, anyway? This male was obviously traveling alone.

Could he possibly have come all the way from Draal on his own in his efforts to find a female?

Was he so desperate for a mate he risked life and limb in that tiny capsule?

He must really want an Earth woman. How romantic.

My nostrils flare and my head tips back as I wonder about that.

We have a rigorous screening process before we allow males to board transport vessels to come here.

We don't want unstable, sick, or criminal mates.

Could that be what this male is? Some reject who couldn't pass inspection?

One who was so desperate for a mate he traveled across the galaxy on his own to find one?

"I wonder who you are," I whisper into the cave as my fingers itch to stroke him. I'm sitting cross-legged at his hip and allow myself to visually inventory every hill and valley of his body.

"Why were you naked?" I wonder as I watch the firelight play across his skin, or rather, his scales.

Gently touching his wrist, I smooth my fingers along his scales, enjoying the texture. It's not slimy like some people think. It's dry and slightly pebbled—interesting to touch.

My gaze travels to his hairless head. I won't lie, ever since we discovered their race and their interest in a mating compact between our species, I imagined what it would feel like to trace my fingers along the patterns I would find there.

This Draal's markings, the appealing dark and light blue stipples, are so interesting compared to my pale tan skin. I wonder if he'll find the smattering of freckles on my cheeks as interesting as I find his colored variations.

His lips are thin. I've imagined kissing lips like that almost every night since the first pictures of Draalians filled my newsfeed.

And his nose, almost non-existent, intrigues me as well. As my eyes sweep down his body, I decide this male is a perfect specimen.

I've tried to keep things professional, but I can't control myself from inspecting more closely. Down wide, powerful shoulders to perfect washboard abs, to trim hips, to slightly jutting hip bones that make my mouth dry. But my gaze dips lower to the main attraction. Or attractions as it were.

I realize my hand is still braced on his shin, keeping his knee bent from when I was applying a clean bandage. I guess the back of my mind had this visual inspection in mind all along. His cocks are on full display.

I'm no expert on cocks. There hasn't been a male born on this planet in ninety years—not one that lived, anyway. When I look at porn, it's certainly not flaccid cocks I'm interested in. So what I see is more interesting than arousing.

They call the top one their secondary, the bottom one is primary. I can only imagine what they'd look like erect. Well, I can do more than imagine. Although I've only had it a short time, I'm well acquainted with my Draalian sexbot.

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I wish I could say it was a waste of money, but it wasn't. It was worth every penny. I don't know if I'll ever be able to afford a real mate, and the automated one has given me a lot of pleasure.

In addition to the two cocks they're noted for, I see the bumps and ridges described in the literature as well. Although it's state of the art, whoever designed my sexbot didn't do this race justice—these masculine shafts beckon me.

I force myself to quit staring and tear my gaze back up his body toward his face, but can't contain myself from saying, "I wonder what you'll look like when you're awake. I bet you'll be magnificent."

Blood is already seeping through the bandage. Shit! I need to take it off and treat his wound again.

Zoriss

Searing pain in my thigh. Warm hands on my shin and wrist.

I lie quietly, eyes closed, keeping my breathing still and calm. Where am I, what is going on, and why does it feel like the flames of hell are licking at my groin?

It's quiet and smells musty. The hands on me are small and warm. Her scent is female. I can't detect if anyone else is in the room, but I'll bide my time until I figure out what is going on.

"I wonder what you'll look like when you're awake. I bet you'll be magnificent."

My translator works. I understand her perfectly, but the language doesn't sound familiar.

Zorn and I have been fighting . . . where were we stationed last?

I can't recall. Weren't we due for furlough?

The last thing I remember is . . . the last clear memory I have is saving Zorn's life on planet Pythian. Somehow, that doesn't seem right.

The female's hands move to my groin. I have to force myself to keep my eyes closed in order to maintain the element of surprise, but is she about to harm me? To inflict more pain?

Are we alone here? I can't sense anyone but her, and I need to find out if she is friend or foe. Her touch is gentle, but the pain is severe.

I don't care how many others might be in this room, I'm a lieutenant in the Draalian planetary army, I can't lie here helplessly forever.

My eyes snap open and I grip both her wrists so tightly she gasps in pain as her blue eyes pop open wide, looking at me for what, mercy? Sitting up, I wince as every muscle in my body protests, but I focus on my task—subdue the female and conduct recon on my situation.

She's a warmblood—a mammal. Humanoid. No species I've seen before. Are we in a cave? I keep a tight hold on her while I glance around. I see no others.

What planet is this where they live in caves lit by fire?

"Where am I?" my voice sounds gravelly as if I haven't spoken in weeks. I sound like

this when I wake from a long stasis.

“Crap,” she says. “My translator must be malfunctioning.”

Perhaps the populated areas are advanced and there are rural areas with cave dwellers. What else would explain a female in a cave mentioning a translator?

“Who else is here?” I continue to scan the environment, looking for others of her kind.

She looks up at me with pleading eyes. “I don’t understand you.”

“Who else?” I shake her, my eyes blazing so she knows I’m not playing.

“I . . . my translator doesn’t work. I don’t have much use for it out here. I had no idea it was broken.” Her blue gaze is full of fear and holds no aggression.

Tightening my grip, I look around. We’re definitely in a cave, and by the look of things, we’re alone.

“What do you want with me?” I bite out.

She looks at me helplessly and shakes her head, obviously having no idea what I want.

I inspect her now, taking her measure. I haven’t known many females, just family—my mother and aunts. Our female population had been declining for a century, but the disparity between males and females spiked in the last generation. I’ve never known a female my age.

This one is soft. And scared. Her pulse is hammering under my fingertips.

In one sweeping glance, I inventory her bland, colorless face, the symmetry of her nose, and the blonde hair on her head and browridges.

Although she's not an attractive species, her face is interesting.

Perhaps over time she would appear pleasing to the eye.

"What were you doing to me?" I ask in Draalian, knowing she can't comprehend a word of it. Looking down at my lap I see a gash high on my right thigh. I'm no medic, but it's close to my femoral artery. I want to accuse her of doing this, but it's jagged and obviously wasn't performed with a knife.

I examine the cave. "Are there others of my kind? Like me?" I ask. "Where's my brother? My platoon?" I gesture to my chest, although with no translator there's little chance she could possibly understand me.

"Draals?" she asks.

She knows my race.

"Draals." I nod.

"Just one," she says, indicating one finger, then pointing it at me.

I point behind my right ear and tell her, "I understand you."

"You understand me?"

"Yes." She's smart; she catches on quickly.

My head throbs. I release one of her wrists and explore a spot above my brow that's

pulsing in pain. It's swollen, tender, and when I pull my fingers back they're specked with dried blood. I have a head injury. That explains both the loss of consciousness and memory problems.

"Y-you're hurt. I was tending to you," her voice is a whisper, her eyes luminous and terrified. "Your head has already stopped bleeding, but I need to close your wound." She glances at my lap.

I nod at her, giving her permission to do so.

"Lie back?"

I shake my head, I'm not putting myself in a vulnerable position. I still don't know who she is, what she wants, or if more of her tribe will be joining us soon.

She tries to pull away, but I shake my head.

"I need supplies. In the pack." She motions with her head toward the pack to her left. I nod, releasing her left wrist and tightening my grip on her right.

"See?" she says as she shows me supplies. "I was going to wait to close your wound until I was certain it wasn't infected, but it won't quit bleeding. Here." She lifts a small tube and shows it to me. "This will close the wound."

"Go ahead." I nod.

She's sitting on the cold stone at my side, but because I won't lie down, she has to scoot back, bending low to get access to the injured area. I release her wrist, but grab the waistband of her pants to keep her from escaping, although she seems to have no desire to run as she works on me.

“I’m a vet. A veterinarian. Oh,” she glances nervously at me, then back to her task, “not that I was implying you’re an animal. Sorry. It’s just that I don’t want you to worry about your medical care. I know how to use medi-seal.”

Her fingers are warm. I’ve never had occasion to touch a warmblood before. Her touch is light, I’d almost call it tender, as she works on me.

“You’re on Earth, of course you must know that, in the River of No Return Wilderness.

It’s a two-hour hike almost straight down to get here.

More like three or four hours to climb up.

That’s when you’re in good condition. Which, of course, you’re not.

” She pulls on both sides of the wound, readying it for the sealant.

In that position, her hands and head are inches from my cocks. I’d have to be dead not to respond. Both cocks are now straining for attention, vying for space in the crowded area of my lap.

“Um . . .” She looks up at me, embarrassed. “Maybe with your other hand you could . . .” her gaze flicks toward them.

For a moment, I consider not complying as I wonder what it would be like to have a feminine hand touch me there at least once in my life.

I may not have known any females my age, but I was raised by a mother who taught Zorn and me how to be decent Draals.

I push my cocks out of her way and try to focus on her efforts instead of her proximity.

Her breath caresses me as her face turns in that direction. One hand keeps the wound pressed together as she works with the medi-glue.

“I hiked down to save a moose, a calf, even though it’s not a good time to be down here. There are no guarantees a blizzard won’t hit us and then we’d have a hell of a time climbing out. I just felt compelled to save the little fellow.

“I was looking for him when I heard this high, whooshing noise. Your one-person vessel was a fireball when it came down, and then there was the most spectacular crash.”

I’d wondered if perhaps my platoon was nearby, but she’s describing a one-person vessel. What would I be doing in that? Is it an escape capsule? What was my unit doing here? Why was I in an escape capsule? Is my brother Zorn okay? Why am I here?

Her nimble fingers are trying to close the wound, which is a job that would be difficult under the best circumstances. Now, in the firelight, with me sitting instead of lying down, and my cocks happily bobbing inches from her face, it is not the best of circumstances.

A lock of her hair brushes against my primary. Why this gentle brush of silk feels more sensual than when I fist myself, I have no idea.

“I thought it was an old satellite crashing to Earth. It happens sometimes. These things are relics. Who knows why they’re held up in the sky one moment and fall the next? But I ran toward it anyway for some unknown reason.”

Aunt Madreen does this same thing. When she's nervous or uncomfortable she talks too much—a constant stream of meaningless chatter.

If this female's planet has satellites and medi-glue, what is she doing in a cave? Did they have some cataclysm and revert back to prehistoric ways?

“So I came running, and the capsule door popped open and there you were. I knew immediately you were a Draalian. Well, yeah, that was obvious.”

Her hair brushes my primary again and it returns the favor by pulsing toward her.

“Uh . . .” She clears her throat, bends closer to her task, and applies the medi-glue to one side of my scales, then closes the wound and holds it for a minute.

“I think that will do it,” her voice is deeper, obviously relieved as she sits up and tries to back away.

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I'm still holding her by her waistband, so I just shake my head and spear her with a burning look. I don't know why I won't allow her to scoot away, it's not that I fear she'll hurt me. Actually, I do know why I'm keeping her close. I like her proximity.

I inhale deeply and ignore the musty damp smell of the cave, focusing instead on the flowery scent of her hair.

The hair that a moment ago caressed my primary.

In my lifetime, this is the closest I've been to a female my age.

Now that I don't fear interruption by her tribe, all I can focus on is wondering what her breasts would feel like cupped in my hands.

No, not just that. My brain pounds with the even more urgent question of what she might taste like.

Perhaps I can't read her species' nonverbal cues, but I don't believe she's interested in me.

She's stuffing her medical supplies into her bag.

With each precise movement, I can feel her trying to inch away.

Her fear of me is palpable, so I release her.

She immediately scoots back and eyes me as if she's afraid I'm going to pounce on

her.

I'm about to ask where the rest of her people are, but she won't understand the question.

My eyes can answer it anyway. She's obviously alone here.

Other than rocks, the only things I see are her two blankets, the sleeping bag I'm sitting on, one pack, and a metal disk holding firewood.

I don't think I have to worry about her tribe returning to harm me.

"So . . . it's pitch dark and well past my bedtime." She laughs nervously as she leans away from me. "I'll just steal one of these blankets and bed down over there." She points across the fire.

I shake my head and grab her ankle, not wanting her to leave me helpless and unattended.

If I let her go, will she leave me alone in this cave?

Although I try to lie to myself about her possibly wanting to abandon or harm me, I can't deny she just willingly patched me up as efficiently as a Draalian field medic.

Through trembling lips she says, "You understand me, right? On Earth we have an old saying . . . no means no. You probably have that on your world, too. I mean, that's just the civilized way to do things.

So, uh, I'm saying no. Perhaps you're wondering what I mean, like no to what.

Well, no to anything but me taking one of your blankets, going to the other side of the fire, and sleeping without being molested. "

We're alone together and she's terrified.

"I won't hurt you," I say, trying to look non-threatening, although I don't know how a large reptilian male can appear non-threatening to a small mammalian female. I take special care to cover my fangs with my lips.

Now that I don't think the males of her tribe are on their way to kill me and I believe I'll live through the night, I pay attention to other urgent matters. Like the fact that it's cold here.

I test the air with my tongue and believe even with the fire, the temperature is dangerously cold. We have two blankets for two people. How can she live in a cave with no fur pelts?

I don't know how to explain it to her, but I won't make it through the night with only one blanket. I'll need to share them both. And I'll need her body heat.

The sleeping bag I'm on is short but at least most of my body is partially protected from the cold stone.

I pull her toward me, share the unzipped open sleeping bag with her, place her between me and the stone wall of the cave with the fire at our feet, and cover us both with the blankets.

I grab the disc with the wood and yank it closer, then toss a few more logs on the fire.

"Too bad you can't understand me, Earther. You'd know I mean you no harm." I tried to say it softly, with as few 's' sounds as I could, so my hissing didn't scare her.

Since I can't communicate with words, I pull her down and nestle my front to her back.

Despite the fact that I'm trying to reassure the female I'm not going to harm her, my cocks haven't received the message yet.

They're rock hard and get even harder when they're pressed against the back of her thighs.

"Please don't. You have to know this isn't right." Her tone is half command, half plea.

If this was my frightened little nephew back on Draal, I would stroke his head to reassure him, but it's a terrified Earth female and I don't think my touch will comfort her in any way.

She's trembling. It must be from fear because she's at least twenty degrees warmer than me. I'm freezing. I pull her even closer, trying to share her body heat. She struggles to pull away, but I croon to her, trying to calm her.

"It's okay, little Earther. I mean you no harm," I say in the lilting singsong that Draalians use to lull their babes to sleep. "You'll be fine. We'll just go to sleep and wake up, Tomorrow will be a good day."

I'm in an interesting position, being with a female is fascinating in and of itself, but being able to say anything, knowing she doesn't understand a word is a unique opportunity. I decide to take advantage of it.

Lifting up on an elbow, I peer over her blonde hair to see her face. "Your flat face is interesting."

Her eyes flare wide, showing white all around the blue.

I'm not calming her. After tightening my arm around her waist, which pulls a startled "Oh" from her, I give in to my impulse to sing a few of the songs my aunt sang to my

nephew when he was in her arms. This soothes her, and finally she settles down.