



Yorix (Brides of the Mylos #7)

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Category: Fantasy

Description: The honeymoon of a lifetime becomes their worst nightmare...

Lynn

For as long as I can remember, the stars have held my fascination. I drank up all the old tales from around the world that told the stories of the various constellations, avidly watched every documentary I could find that was about the secrets of the cosmos, and decided from the first moment that my grandfather showed me how I could see them for myself through the telescope he gave me that I was going to be an astronomer.

Then the Mylos came, and that dream became even bigger. I was no longer content at the idea of peeking at the universe from our remote corner. I wanted the chance to see the constellations of other worlds, to learn their stories, and see the far flung reaches in person. With their presence, all seemed possible. The idea that I could have an alien Prince Charming who could be by my side as I did so? Even better! I just had to wish upon a star, take that test, and I just knew all my wildest dreams would come true.

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Chapter 1

Lynn

“A re you sure about this, Linnie?” Mom asked me as she added milk to her coffee and began stirring it.

“It’s the only way,” I replied emphatically. “I can study regular astronomy at a state school and take out loans, or I can apply for the scholarship while applying to the Exo-Astronomy course that the Mylos themselves are offering.”

“But there’s a chance you’ll be matched to one of them,” she pointed out. She took a breath, exhaling slowly before continuing. “It’s not that I don’t think they are fine people. It’s just that you won’t have met your future husband beforehand.”

“That’s right, honey,” Daddy said. “They have you take that test, run your DNA sample, and if you’re matched, that’s it. They call the fella on down, and then you meet him. And it’s forever.”

“I want what you two have,” I told them both. “And you two moved in together the week after you met, then got married what, three months later?”

“Yeah, Dad,” my brother Sam said with a snort. “You and Mom are always all, ‘It was love at first sight’, and ‘As soon as I saw him I knew he was the one’.”

“And I’ll definitely know he’s the right one,” I added, “because he’ll be my scientifically proven perfect match. No nasty surprises, because if we weren’t perfect

for each other, we'd not have been matched."

Mom bit her lower lip, throwing a look at Daddy that said "bail me out here".

He cleared his throat, looking and sounding resigned. "They've not had anyone ask to be separated."

Mom threw him a look of betrayal.

"You'll be so far away!" she wailed.

Sam rolled his eyes. "She'll be in orbit, and it's what? A two or three hour ride at most, free of charge, on one of their shuttles?"

"And when we do class trips to observe stars and planetary systems up close, it'll almost be like I'm in Europe or something," I reassured her. "Super fast to get back, as if I were riding on the QE2 instead of flying. And we'll be able to talk using their comms."

She sniffed. "You'd better. And if he treats you wrong, you better tell us."

"I don't care if he's a seven foot alien who thinks he's some kind of hot shit warrior," Daddy declared. "I'll make him regret ever upsetting my baby girl."

This time, I rolled my eyes. "Thanks, but I'm not a little girl anymore. I'm an adult with an Associate's Degree in Physics."

"You'll always be our baby," Mama replied.

"Gee, what am I, chopped liver?" Sam muttered.

Daddy reached over and ruffled his hair. “You’re our star roller hockey player!” he announced proudly.

Sam snorted. “Yeah, okay. Not the same, but yeah.”

Mama turned her gaze to him with laser focus. “My last baby at home,” she said, and now Sam’s eyes widened comically as he realized the position he’d just put himself in. “You should come with me and Marietta to the plant nursery.”

“I’ve got practice,” Sam hurriedly said.

“I didn’t say when,” Mama replied archly. “And I’m positive your other sister would love to see you. You’re always out.” She glanced over at me. “You can come as well. One last outing with all my ducklings before another one swims away to make her own nest.”

God, my mother was terribly dramatic. That didn’t stop me from loving both her and the rest of my family like crazy, though.

“Sure. How about we stop at that cat cafe on the way home? I hear they make killer scones.”

Mama beamed at me. “That sounds wonderful! I’ll call Marietta and make the arrangements.”

Daddy watched as Mama hurried back towards their bedroom, her slippers making a soft slapping sound as she walked across the tiled floor. We all knew what she was going to do, sit down in front of her vanity and start unrolling the heated curlers she’d put in before starting breakfast, while she asked Siri to call our older sister Marietta. Then the two of them would have a chin wag while Mama teased, brushed, and sprayed her hair, then cleaned her face with her beloved Ponds cold cream, then

moisturized with Oil of Olay, before starting on her makeup.

Mama was old school like that. She used what her own Mama used, and her mama before her. She kept buying Sam and me Noxema to use as we had ‘young skin that might get the breakouts’. It worked fine and I rather liked the tingly feeling, so I was fine with it. Apparently, you didn’t get to graduate to Ponds until you reached twenty-six, which Marietta was about to do. I happened to know that Mama already had both a Ponds and Oil of Olay gift set she got in an after Christmas clearance sale stashed for Marietta’s birthday.

Which was why Daddy waited until Mama was out of earshot to ask me what he really wanted to know.

“You aren’t going to take that test before Marietta’s birthday, are you?”

“No, Daddy. I’m going to go the day after the party.”

He nodded. “That sounds good. Marietta and your Mama will be out spending the gift cards your granny, aunts, and uncle sent. Are you telling her before they go?”

I shook my head no. “I figured it was best to confirm I was going to do it, which I’ve just done as she brought it up. Then go while she’s out having a good time shopping and looking at baby stuff with Marietta.”

He grunted, taking another slice of toast and buttering it. “You’re probably right. Just, if you do happen to get matched, please have them call me on my cell. That way, we aren’t waiting for you to come home and then find out when you don’t.”

I stood up, leaning over to kiss him on his cheek.

“I will, Daddy. Either way, I’m planning to head straight on up if I can. I want to get

used to life within the Fleet before classes start.

He nodded as he chewed. “Mmhmm.” he swallowed. “Sounds sensible. Always told you, get the lay of the land before moving forward.”

“Can I have your old telescope?” Sam asked me.

“No,” I said, looking at him askance.

“Not the one Granddaddy gave you. The other one.”

“You mean the one I look out from the backyard with?”

“Yeah. You’ll have something even better as a new one, so that’s your new old one.”

I laughed. “Yeah, okay. You can have that one. I’m taking the other one.”

“Your granddaddy would be so proud of you.”

I smiled. “Yeah, I think so too.”

He’d discovered a comet back when he worked at William Thaw. I hoped I made a mark like he did. Maybe even a planet! Or a moon, even. Thanks to the arrival of the Mylos and their new Exo Astronomy and Astrophysics course, the possibilities felt endless.

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Chapter 2

Yorix

Concord grape. This was the flavor and texture profile I was trying to enter into the food replicator database. If only it were as simple as having the food scanned and the molecular structure copied! Instead, that was part of the process, but the end result lacked finesse. And if that wasn't enough, I had to have it match different flavor and texture profiles as jam, jelly, and juice by different manufacturers, as we had signed contracts with them at the request of several of our human residents. At the moment, I was working on 'Goober Grape', which was a two part product giving me twice the headache, as I not only had to get the grape jelly just so, but the peanut butter component as well. At least someone else was responsible for recreating the jarred presentation so the Space Force human contingent aboard Ichthos Station could purchase it from their Commissary without it having to travel halfway across the Galaxy.

I loved my job, I really did, but reiterations of the same basic foodstuffs quickly became tedious. Perhaps if I had not just finished recreating Skippy, Jif, and Peter Pan peanut butters in all their variations, I'd not be quite so frazzled. This Goober Grape's peanut butter had a completely different consistency and taste from all the others, as did the grape jelly portion, which my coworker Zebulaw could attest to.

"It's the same fruit source," he said, "but the levels of sugar and the consistency are different from the Welch's grape jelly on file." His shoulders slumped. "There's a Goober strawberry next in the queue, but at least once I have the peanut butter portion cracked, we just need to deal with the strawberry jelly portion. Okay, I've sent my

current set of refinements to you to add your changes to.”

“You think that’s bad?” Hazzlehop called out from his own station. “I’m having to determine the minute differences between Robert’s brand bread and every other white bread we already have on file! Several of the Space Force wives are from the UK and want their favorite brand of bread. And after this, I have to figure out something called Kingsmill 50/50, which is yet another bread, only half wholemeal flour.”

Procil growled from the corner where he was hunched over a tray of samples. “Dinty Moore beef stew!” he added simply, picking up the tray. “Now, excuse me, please, while I see if human taste test consensus is that one of these matches the product exactly.”

“Good luck!” I called out to him. Poor Procil had been working on that particular project for the past two weeks. Each and every time, the humans who tried the samples found minor faults.

“Hopefully this is it,” I said, adding my file update to the one Zbulaw sent me for the peanut butter half of the food, then instructing the replicator manually to produce a set of samples in the form of Goober Grape spread on Wonder bread.

“Yeah?” Zebulaw asked, his expression brightening. “We’re ready to test again now as well?”

“As soon as we hand make a sandwich using the originals from Earth,” I confirmed just as my kunnarskyn vibrated and chirped to let me know I had an urgent message. Puzzled, I checked to see what it was. My eyes widened, and I stood up, thrusting my chair behind me so hard that it toppled, crashing loudly onto the floor.

“What is it?” Zebulaw asked, startled.

“I bet I know!” Hazzelhop called out.

“I’ve been matched!” I shouted.

“Go!” Zebulaw told me. “I’ll make the control samples. You go meet your mate!”

I gave him a terse nod before hurrying out the door of the lab. I had a mate! One that I was supposed to ride down to meet with another who had also been matched at the same time, at the same Scholarship center. Were they siblings, or perhaps best friends? I didn’t know, but I knew the attached file would soon tell me. I was halfway to the shuttle bay when I noticed that I still had on my lab coat and hair covering. Laughing at myself, I made a quick detour to my quarters. I quickly divested myself of the food lab gear and tidied my hair. I had to look my best after all, in order to give my mate the very best of first impressions. I picked up my personal data pad, wishing to use it to better read the attached information file.

“Okay, what is it Bosworth always says?” Bosworth was one of the humans in my weapons training class. “Ah, yes, keep calm and whatever.” I stood tall, squaring my shoulders. “Keep calm and go meet my destiny.” Surprisingly enough, that did help steady my nerves, at least enough that my hearts weren’t hammering against my ribs anymore. “Time to go,” I told myself, wondering if my mate would find me sometimes talking to myself out loud odd or endearing. I was about to find out, I realized, and with hearts overflowing with joy, left to go to the shuttle bay. I found my pilot waiting for me, all ready to go.

“As soon as you’re strapped in, we can go,” he said. “It’s just you as it turned out the other two were already on planet.”

I nodded, striding up the ramp. I sat down in the first passenger seat I came to and began the process of buckling myself into the harness. I grinned to myself, knowing that the next time I did this, my mate would be by my side.

“Alright, looks like we’re ready to go,” my pilot said, as the door to the shuttle closed and he clicked the last of his own harness buckles together. He began conversing with Xeranos, getting final permission to lift off and the flight path we were to follow to clear the Fleet. I felt the engines come on, and the small bump from beneath our craft as the air cushion it rested on dispersed, and we achieved vertical ascension. Then we were off, flying through the open hangar doors.

“It’ll take us about an hour,” he informed me.

I swallowed. It seemed both far too soon and far too long. I turned on my data pad to read my mate’s profile. I gazed down at her face. Lynn. A melodic name for such a divine looking being. I stared at her image for several minutes before reminding myself that I needed to read the rest of the information and not simply drink her in. There'd be plenty of time for me to take in her beauty once I was there with her. I began to read her bio, wishing to know all that I could about the stunning Lynn before we met. Down on the blue and white planet with bits of green and brown, I hoped she was doing the same for me.

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Chapter 3

Lynn

Marietta's party is actually lunch at Red Lobster. Marietta's husband, George, had gone into work earlier for some minor emergency or another, so they'd arrived in separate cars. Thus, none of us was surprised when Marietta opted for a mocktail instead of her usual boozy treat. That didn't stop Mama, however, from giving her a wink and saying, "You know when you finally get around to giving me a grandbaby, that's all you'll drink until it's weaned."

Marietta gave a funny sort of laugh, her eyes seeking out George's in supplication.

"We know, Mama. If Marietta's ever pregnant, she won't be drinking."

"If?" Mama pounced onto his word choice hard. "Surely it's more of a when! She's twenty-six now, so if she gets pregnant right away, she'll be nearly twenty-seven before that baby's born! Then a year in between like they recommend, so she'd be twenty nine the next time or thereabouts, meaning she'd be over thirty when their next baby's born if you decide to have three."

"Mama," Marietta interjected. "Did I tell you about my new manager? She's awfully nice, but when she said my name, I almost didn't realize she was talking to me. She called me 'Mary-etta' and I had to explain to her that it's said 'Marie-ta'. She apologized and laughed and said she'd remember because it kinda sounded like her favorite drink, a margarita. All this talk about cocktails made me think of it." Marietta gave a shaky laugh.

Mama was like a dog with a new bone - she was not to be deterred. “Oh! Is that what’s happening? Is that why you were saying how absolutely cute those little dresses were that we bought for your cousin Nicole? You can go ahead and tell us if you are. You don’t need to wait until they say it’s safe or whatever.”

George let out a deep, suffering sigh, and I felt for him, I really did. Mama was a lovely woman, but she could be relentless. He picked his phone up off the table and brought up a photo, which he held out for Mama to see.

“What is that?” Mama asked, her voice sharp.

“That’s our new furbaby, Mama, Penny. We pick her up tomorrow.”

“A puppy? What does that have to do with baby clothes?”

Sam burst out laughing. “For putting on the dog, Mama!”

Marietta’s cheeks reddened. “Yep.”

“Marietta, it would be better to get a puppy after you’ve had your baby.”

“Mama, you know I love you very much. But you need to stop and remember that when the other girls were all babysitting for spending money, I was working weekends at Miss Bessie’s yarn store. Do you remember why?”

“Roberta,” Daddy’s voice called her name gently. “She never played with any of them dolls you bought her, except for those Barbies. I think they’re trying to let us down gently.”

“Let us down gently?” Mama stared wild-eyed at Marietta. “Are you telling me,” her chin wobbled, “that dog is the only grandbaby I’m ever going to have?”

“From me, yes,” Marietta replied, also tearing up. “I’ve tried telling you for years, Mama. I’m not a kid sort of person. I just want a couple of dogs and maybe a cat to spoil, and I’m good.”

Mama looked as if tears were going to spill down her cheeks for a second before a calculating expression crossed her face, and she turned her attention to me.

“You played with all her old baby dolls,” she reminded me, her voice now syrupy sweet.

“Oh, shit,” Sam muttered.

“No swearing, young man!” she barked at him without breaking stride before her tone reverted back to sweetness and light. “You’re going to the Scholarship Center real soon, aren’t you?”

“Yes,” I admitted. “I was hoping to go this afternoon, but the soonest I could get was tomorrow morning.” I gave a nervous laugh. “I’m just wanting to get it over with, you know. Not that I’m trying to escape or anything.”

Mama's smile turned absolutely predatory. “You know, that’s fine,” she said, turning to Marietta. “I love dogs! And those Mylos are all about family. They certainly adore children. It has to be fate.” She beamed. “Be sure to bring my sweet grandpuppy to see me as soon as you can.”

“After her second parvo booster,” George promised. “We’ll stop by on our way home from the vet’s.”

“Please pass me the biscuits. I can never get enough of them,” she replied as we’d all been discussing our meal this entire time.

Sam leaned over to whisper in my ear. “She’s decided you’re going to get matched and knocked up.”

I swallowed. Oh, boy. I wanted to be a mama someday, I really did. Just not too soon. I wanted to finish my degree and settle into a job first. Besides, having a baby after thirty wasn’t the end of the world, thanks to advances in medicine. The risks were even lower now, thanks to the Mylos.

“Least if you do get matched, it’ll be easier to not deal with her being baby crazy while you’re all the way up there,” Sam muttered, and I nodded as he was right.

“Are you really going to apply for a Bride Scholarship?” Marietta asked me, cracking open a crab leg.

“I am.”

“Wow. A girl at work did that, but she didn’t get matched. She was able to quit, though, as they pay for everything while you’re at school, not just tuition and books. She’s studying now in Berlin, can you imagine? They have classes in English too! She said she always wanted to study abroad, and now she is. I couldn’t do it. I’d be too scared of getting matched and having to go live in outer space.”

“Yes, well, Lynn has always loved the stars, hasn’t she?”

“And she was always watching those space shows,” Mama added. “She’ll be fine.”

“I don’t think watching Farscape, Babylon 5, and Battlestar Galactica is the same thing as living on a ship with all those Mylos,” Marietta replied.

“What will you do if you get matched?” George asked me, looking solemn. “Will you really be okay with that? You’re instantly married for all legal intents and purposes if

that happens.”

Mama decided to answer for me. “She’s always wanted to find her soul mate, just like me and Daddy have in each other. If she’s matched, it’ll be because they are perfectly suited, two halves of one whole.”

“Boy, she’s suddenly changed her tune,” Sam whispered, and I bit my lower lip to keep from laughing.

“I did say that, didn’t I, Mama?” I finally got out. “So, yeah, I’ll be fine if it happens. A hunky alien warrior mate and to get to live among the stars while studying them? Yeah, buddy!” I laughed.

Mama made a small, satisfied humming noise before saying, “I was looking for a new book to read last night, and did you know there’s a whole lot of alien romance books? Not just ones with Mylos in, either. Like, made up aliens. I bought one where they crash landed on a prison planet!”

We were saved from having to reply by our server returning. “Is everything alright?” she asked. “Can I get you anything else?”

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Chapter 4

Yorix

Every word I read made her come to life within my mind, my hearts already aching to reach her, to touch her face, stare into her eyes, and to bring her home to claim. Brown hair, brown eyes, and those little dots known as freckles across her nose and a few on her cheeks. The image of her showed her in a short sleeve top, with more of the skin markings scattered on her forearms. I would kiss each and every one of them, as representations of the very stars that had led her to me. Quite literally, it seemed, as she was wishing to enroll in the Fleet's Xeno-Astronomy and Astrophysics course. I felt a surge of pride. My mate was a highly intelligent woman with a thirst to see and understand our vast universe.

Two siblings, one juvenile male, one adult mated female. I found myself wondering if we too would have three. Or if she wanted more, or fewer. We were each other's perfect match, so I knew she wished to have at least one young, as I too very much wished for this.

I filed those thoughts away. We would have plenty of time to discuss having young. No doubt she would wish to wait until we were more settled, perhaps even complete her degree first. I skipped down to the next section- favorite foods. Her favorite breakfast was smoked salmon on a sesame bagel with garlic and herb cream cheese. I beamed. We could already accommodate that. Not only with the replicator and fresh food stores, but there was a delicatessen aboard one of the ships. I resolved to find out which one and take her out for breakfast one morning. She listed grilled cheese with Campbell's tomato soup as her favorite meal with a sandwich. For a light lunch, she

had chosen Campbell's chicken noodle soup and plain saltine crackers. She did not specify a brand for the crackers, which I found interesting as she hadn't for the bagels or bread the sandwich was made with, but was very specific as to the brand of soup. I took careful note, deciding to experiment until I found which flavor profiles she preferred. As my mate, I felt driven to feed her only the best, just as I wished for her to have only the finest of everything. Within reason, of course, but given we were ideally suited, I intrinsically knew she wouldn't be asking for sheets embroidered with threads made of rare metals and hand painted ceiling frescoes and such. Not that any of the mates had so far, and news of any such would have quickly travelled throughout the Fleet.

I decided to wait to read the rest of her preferred food choices for now, and moved onto her favorite color (teal, which was a sort of blue-green), vid series (Picard), stand alone vid (The Fifth Element), and pet animal (Tribble, which Xeranos marked as an imaginary creature from a sci fi vid series called Star Trek). I immediately tabbed off to add all the mentioned vids to my watch list.

I'd just finished adding those along with a few other vids Xeranos suggested when an incoming vid comm came in for me.

"Yorix here," I answered, answering it with my tablet.

"Klohn from the Quartermaster's office here. I wanted to know if you would accept a uniquely modified unit for occupation, or if you wanted one of the more standard ones. "

"Uniquely modified?"

"Yes. The previous occupants moved out yesterday, and it's been cleaned, but the modifications have not yet been removed. I'm sending you images of the space now."

I stared at the pictures. The kitchen sold it to me on the spot. There was a human style cooking apparatus and chiller unit, in her favorite color, no less! And teal and white checkerboard flooring! Surely she would love it, and if not, we could change it ourselves. The eating and lounge areas sported an off white floor with colored flecks in it. Klohn had appended a note that it was simulated to look like something known as terrazzo. The bedrooms and hall had earthen tile, while the bathrooms had a patterned floor, the predominant color being a golden yellow, which matched square tiles on the wall. The fixtures were Mylos standard.

“It’s ready to move in now?” I queried him.

“Yes. It’s aboard the ship the Fleet decided to let the humans rename.” He grimaced.

I laughed. “Spacely Sprocket?”

“Yes,” he replied sourly. “Otherwise you’ll have to take a two bedroom instead of a three, and it’ll be aboard Blade of Rickon, which has fewer onboard facilities.”

I nodded. That was due to the fact that Rickon was a freighter, used mainly to house the ship’s stores.

“We’ll take the modified one.”

He looked relieved. “Thank you. I hated the idea of ripping all of that out after so much effort had gone into it.”

Curious, I asked, “Why did they not take the cooking apparatus and chiller?”

“They were reassigned to Tethys Station, where cooking facilities are disallowed by the station administrator, and she did not wish to store it.”

“I see. That is too bad.”

“The instructions state your bride is not bringing furnishings. Any preferences?”

“Her favorite color is teal. Perhaps ask Xeranos to choose from what we have in ship’s stores that he thinks she will like?”

“Done. I’ll do that now so it will all be ready for you in about three hours.”

I nodded. “Noted. It will be lunchtime when I arrive, so I will treat us to a meal before we go to our quarters.”

“Sounds like a plan.” He ended the comm.

“We’re coming in for a landing,” my pilot called back.

My hearts thumped erratically, and I felt a flush creep along my skin as an itch started along the side of my neck. I was mere moments away from meeting her, and already I burned for her, my plumage coming to the fore.

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Chapter 5

Lynn

I woke up, excitement buzzing in my veins. I jumped out of bed, eager to get on my way. This was it! The day I got started on the rest of my life. I couldn't wait to see if Door Number One opened for me or Door Number Two. Admittedly, the chances of me having a Mylos soul mate were slim, but there was always a chance. I grimaced, thinking of Mama's comments the night before. If I found out I had a Mylos mate, she'd be insufferable. She'd want a lavish wedding and start pressuring me into having a baby, no doubt insisting I put off starting my course until the baby could go to daycare. Hell, she'd probably insist on shuttling up on my class days to babysit. Not that I'd dislike that, but it needed to be my choice. Mine, with input from my mate.

I sighed, going into the bathroom to quickly empty my bladder before heading into the kitchen for breakfast. Entering the kitchen, I stopped and stared. Mama was not bustling around as she usually did. Instead, my brother was standing at the toaster, waiting for the bread to pop up.

"Hey, sis," Sam greeted me. "I heard you get up, so I put in four pieces. You want peanut butter toast or cinnamon?"

"Uh, whichever is fine. Whatever you're having."

I looked over at Daddy, who was busy eating a banana while reading his latest copy of Popular Mechanics, while Mama sat at the table, sipping coffee as she scrolled on

her phone.

“Good morning, Mama, Daddy,” I said, a little louder than I’d spoken to Sam.

Daddy glanced up, looking abashed. “Sorry, I was reading, so I didn’t notice you come in.”

I laughed. “When you're reading, you never notice anything,” I teased.

He grinned back at me. “Yeah, that’s true.”

The toast popped, and Sam began buttering the slices. Mama raised her eyes up.

“Oh! I meant to get you up in a few minutes. Can’t have you late to your appointment or you’ll miss your chance at finding your mate.”

“She’s going for the chance to study,” Daddy reminded her, his tone firm.

Mama sniffed, waving one hand dismissively. She forgot she had her coffee in her hand, which fortunately wasn’t full. Despite this, it still caused some of the beverage to slosh over the brim and drip onto the table.

“Oh, shoot!” she said, putting both the cup and her phone down onto the table.

“Sam! Pass me a paper towel!”

Sam paused what he was doing and tore a sheet off, pressing it into her outstretched hand.

“There you go,” he said as her fingers closed over it.

“Thank you,” she said, mopping up the small spill. I took my usual seat at the table, my eyes straying nosily to her phone screen. I blinked. Was that a dog on a tiny sofa?

“Right, as I was about to say,” Mama began, “I know she’s going to enroll in her course and have them pay for it. That’s guaranteed, but what if she misses this appointment and her soul mate decides he’s waited long enough and, believing no one is here for him, transfers somewhere else?”

“Did that happen in your book, Mama?” Sam asked, sprinkling sugar over the buttered toast.

“No! Well, not exactly. Sarkarn waited ten years, and the matchmaking agency found him no one, so he signed up for a different dating service, but it was a trap to lure in strong males. He was then press ganged into a pirate’s crew, and they were all captured by the authorities, and he ended up on a prison planet where he has to play in gladiator games.”

Daddy stared at her, one eyebrow raised. “You know that won’t happen, right?” he asked her.

Mama flushed. “I know! But he could still ask to be transferred, and then their paths would never cross.”

“They keep the DNA on file, Mama,” I told her. “So, we’d still meet.”

She sniffed. “It’s still not polite to be late.” She handed me her phone. “What do you think about this? Should I get it in the solid blue or go for the brown one?”

“Did you ask Marietta about this?” I asked. “What if she doesn’t have space for it?”

Mama looked at me guiltily. “It’s not for Marietta’s. You’re leaving, and I get to

babysit my grandpuppy once she's had her booster, so--"

"You're giving my room to Penny," I finished for her.

"Yes. It's not like you'll be using the room anymore," she replied defensively.

I sighed. She'd done the same thing to Marietta, admittedly. The day Marietta moved out, she began converting her bedroom into a craft room. It was now chock full of stuff she'd started and never finished as she flitted from one craft to another - cardmaking, macrame, quilting, you name it, she's either tried it or would shortly.

"It's fine," I told her. "Just don't get rid of my stuff, okay?"

"It's going into the basement. You can go through it when you come home for Christmas."

"If you've taken her room, where will she sleep?" Sam asked, setting a plate with two pieces of cinnamon toast in front of me before putting a second one down in front of his empty seat.

"Thanks," I murmured and was rewarded with one of my brother's brilliant smiles.

"I've thought of that," Mama replied. "We're going sofa shopping. I'm sure Burkley's has a decent quality sofa bed. We'll need at least a queen as the Mylos are quite big."

We all looked at each other helplessly. If I didn't get matched, Mama was going to be even more disappointed than I would. I'm not ashamed to admit that when I fingered myself, it was usually a Mylos I pretended was about to claim me as his mate, more often than not. But unlike Mama, while I wanted to find someone who was my perfect other half, I knew the odds were, well, astronomical that it would be a Mylos.

Or that if it was, that he'd be sitting in orbit right this very second. I mean, come on, a girl has to be realistic!

Daddy cleared his throat. "Why don't we finish breakfast and then I'll take you to go look, honey?" he asked Mama. "And then we can go to lunch, and after that, stop at the bougie Pet Superstore. I bet they'll have some fantastic stuff. Maybe Marietta and George would like to meet us there."

Mama's face brightened. "That's a fabulous idea! It'll take my mind off Lynn's appointment. Oh! But when you're matched, call us right away! We'll want to see a picture before he flies you away. They don't let you come home until you're fully claimed, you know."

Sam snorted as he poured the first of two glasses of orange juice. Mama pretended not to hear him.

"I'll stay home," he said, pouring the second one. "I have to finish my paper anyway." He put the orange juice back in the fridge before carrying both glasses over to the table. Passing me one, he set the other down in front of the place he'd set for himself.

I smiled in appreciation, picking it up to drink, loving the slight sourness of it. I set my glass down.

"I guess I'd better finish up and go grab my shower, so I can get going."

"You'll always have a place here," Daddy said. "If you need it. Just putting that out there."

"I know." And I did. Mama wasn't kicking me out. I was already going, and she was doing her best to fill the hole she'd have from not having me here for her to fuss over.

It was her way of coping, and the sting was taken out of it by her going to buy a sofa for me and the mate she'd decided I absolutely was going to end up with to sleep on when we came to spend Christmas.

* * *

I hummed softly to myself as I drove to the Center.

Imagine that! I thought to myself. For Mama to have gotten that as a book rec on her Kindle, she'd have to have been reading some steamy romances. Not alien ones, unless she had been trying to distract us from that. Shifter ones, at the very least. I wonder if she'd be interested in trying one of the reverse harem ones I've read?

I giggled to myself. Yeah, I wasn't brave enough to suggest that. Not to my own mama, at any rate. Though if she liked those prison planet, gladiator-y ones, I bet she'd love the Sadie Smythe series I'd plowed through recently. Those Tryne... Hoo boy! Talk about sexy beast bad boys!

Not that the Mylos weren't sexy as sin, and I didn't want to be a prize to a damaged, almost feral alien sentenced to fight and die in a death arena. I also liked reading stories where the warriors were fighting pirates or invaders or whatever, and found their mates among the cargo, having been kidnapped from an unknown world. I didn't want to live it, though. It was fun to read about, that's all.

Nope, getting to go live out my dream of studying the cosmos and living on a spaceship and maybe even a few space stations and an alien planet or two along the way was exciting enough for me. With a Mylos mate, who would be devoted to me and our children as they came along? It would be paradise.

By the time I was turning into the parking lot of the Center, I was hoping with all my might that Mama was right, and that I'd find my soul mate as well as get to attend my

course. Maybe a little bit of the reason why was that I was a little afraid, just a teensy bit, of being out in the vast universe without the family I'd always been surrounded by, but the rest? Okay, I'd gotten a little horny thinking about those books and then the ripped abs and tight asses of the Mylos I'd seen on TV and on the posters. That, and I really did want to find love, because who didn't? I'd dreamed often of finding what both my parents and Marietta and George had.

I pulled in next to a pick up truck that was already sitting there, idling, and a middle aged man glanced over at me, a nasty look on his face. I swallowed, having taken note of the bumper stickers on his vehicle. What the hell was a Humans First supporter doing here? I didn't have time to ponder it any further before he bared his teeth in a nasty smirk, threw it into reverse, and backed out before driving away.

I let out the breath I'd been unwittingly holding.

"Okay, then." I drew in a deep breath, needing to recover that sense of firm conviction I'd felt before seeing the truck and that horrible man. I left it out, then took in a few more until my heart stopped racing. "It'll be alright," I reminded myself aloud, placing my hand firmly on the door handle. "They've got security cameras, and on the off chance that they haven't noticed him yet, I'll mention him when I go in. He was probably just casing the place, anyway."

I opened my door, getting out. I took care to lock my door, just in case the asshat came back with friends. Though if he did, locking my door wouldn't stop them from smashing it up with a bat or something.

"Nope, don't even go there," I scolded myself as I walked towards the entrance. "The Mylos will handle it, so he and any buddies he might have can't do anything."

I felt reassured immediately when I saw the Mylos office already waiting for me at the door.

“Here you are! Welcome, Lynn Jacobs.”

“There was a man in a truck when I got here,” I rushed out. “It had Humans First bumper stickers on it, and he looked mean.”

“Yes, I know.” He pursed his lips. “I was about to call the local authorities to ask them to remove him, but then you came and he drove off, so all’s well.” He smiled at me brightly. “I’m Officer Tylip, and it’s so good to meet you.”

I smiled back, relief swamping me at knowing that Tylip had been watching the suspicious looking man.

I came in, and to my surprise, I saw a young man already sitting inside, crying.

“Just take a seat next to Chris there and we can get started,” Tylip said as he closed and locked the door behind me.

“Are you okay?” I asked Chris, reaching into my purse for the pack of tissues I usually carried in there.

“Yeah. No. I don’t know!” he sobbed. “My dad and step mom threw me out, and my dad drove me here and said if I love Mylos so much, I could just go be with them!”

I settled down next to him, reaching a hand out to rub his arm comfortingly as my mind filled with a sudden, terrible suspicion.

“You poor thing. Your dad was the guy out there in the truck? Because he drove off right after I got here.”

Chris turned a hopeful gaze towards me. “Really? He left?”

“He’s gone,” Tylip confirmed. “Would either of you like tea or coffee?”

“Coffee would be lovely, thanks. Do you have regular drip coffee? I don’t like the fancier kinds.” I smiled ruefully. “Makes me a bit weird these days, I guess.”

“No, it doesn’t!” Chris replied instantly and I wanted to wrap him up in a big old hug, because really, he was such a sweetheart! I wanted to go outside, find his father, and give him a sock in the nose. Okay, maybe I wasn’t actually brave enough to do any such thing, but the sentiment was there.

“We do. It’ll be a few minutes, though, as I have to put a pot on,” Tylip answered me.

“I’ll take one too,” Chris added.

Tylip went back to the small kitchen area and began measuring out ground coffee from a can he took out from an overhead cupboard. It was a brand I’d seen on occasion in a supermarket, but had never tried before, Chase and Sanborn.

“What would you like to do, Chris? Now that your father has left, you can leave safely after your coffee if you do wish,” Tylip said, turning on the drip coffee machine. “Or I can give you a tablet and you can fill out the pre appointment questionnaire.”

“The appointment one,” Chris replied, looking relieved. Had he been worried he’d get kicked out of here too? Not on my watch!

“Can we share my appointment slot if there’s not one free after mine?” I asked Tylip, grinning.

“You can,” he replied as he walked back towards us, stopping at his desk first to pick up two tablets. He turned them both on, tapping them to bring up two different

screens. He handed us each one and I looked to see it already had my personal information filled in, complete with the photo booth picture I'd had to send in with my pre-appointment application. Below all that was a series of questions it asked me to answer as thoroughly as possible, without reservations. This was it. This was the part where the Mylos's mysterious mate matching program figured out if I was the missing piece to a waiting warrior. Mentally crossing my fingers, I began.

I became vaguely aware of Tylip bringing us our coffees, along with a plate of donuts.

"Here you are," he said brightly, causing me to look up. "You can fix it however you like it. We have vanilla and hazelnut syrups as well if you'd like."

We both thanked him, assuring him it was fine as we added milk and sugar to our drinks. He nodded just as the kunnarskin embedded in his wrist chimed. "Ah, excellent. You can begin the main questionnaire now." He picked up Chris's tablet, tapping the screen before handing it back to him. "Once you're done, I'll take a DNA sample using a cheek swab, and then Xeranos will give us the result a few minutes later."

We both drank our coffees and the refills Tylip brought us, and somehow, between us, the donuts also disappeared. At last, I came to the last question, feeling emotionally wrung out from having bared my soul.

"All done, I see," Tylip said, already at my side, and I felt my cheeks flush as I realized that the tablets were obviously monitored. Then I mentally smacked myself, because, duh! Of course, they were, as the program analyzed our answers in real time as we answered them. That was why once the DNA sample was processed, you got a yes or a no about a match so fast.

Tylip held out a swab he'd unwrapped.

“Now I just need to take a sample from inside your cheek,” he said softly, and I opened my mouth obligingly, extra glad I’d made sure to use both mouth rinse and my portable knock off Waterpik this morning. Tylip walked over to a machine in the back of the office space and placed my sample inside. He turned to find Chris holding out his tablet, having now also finished the questionnaire. Tylip was still walking over to take it when a chiming sound rang out insistently.

“Lynn! You’ve got a match!” Tylip said, his voice vibrating with unconcealed excitement.

I couldn’t believe it. Oh my god! Mama had been right! I’d dared to hope but - “I get a hunky hubby and get to study astronomy in space?” I finished my thought out loud, excitedly.

“Indeed,” Tulip answered me, looking amused. He tapped on the computer display sitting on his desk. “You’ve been matched to Yorix, a food replication technician. He’s been notified and will be here in an hour or so.”

“Wow. I don’t believe it. I hoped, you know, because hello, you are all so dreamy, and then there’s the whole perfect for each other thing.” I looked over at Chris. “Now we need to do you!”

He gave me a knowing smile that said it all; he was happy for me, but thought he wasn’t getting a match. “You already beat the odds. Maybe you can help me decide where to apply to college,” his words confirmed.

“Don’t be such a downer! I just know we’re meant to be besties, so you’ll be matched too.”

He shook his head at me as he handed the tablet over to Tylip, who took it before quickly producing a second swab. He quickly collected the necessary sample and put

it in the machine to be analyzed.

To my complete and utter satisfaction, and his and Tylip's shock, the chiming sounded once more.

"See?" I said, not bothering to keep the smug out of my voice.

"Xeranos, am I seeing this correctly?" Tylip asked the Mylos AI, staring down at his computer display.. "Both of them?"

"Both of them. They will be here in an hour and a half as they are currently on-world."

Chris and I looked at Tylip, puzzled. Was there a problem that we'd both been matched?

Tulip glanced up at Chris with a smile, one more cautious than previously. "This is highly unusual, but you've been matched to not one but two warriors," he informed him.

You could have knocked me over with a feather. That had been a possibility? Oh, wow!

Chris gaped at him for a second before asking, "Do I have to choose between them after I meet them both?"

Tylip shook his head. "No. Their mothers are Brides from Sanguine. The Sanguinii live in clans and often have mating units of three if not more."

I couldn't help it. "They're poly! Oh my God!" I shouted. "You lucky duck!"

Chris sat there, looking stunned.

“Tylip, I’m afraid I need to correct the arrival estimate time of Chris’s matches. They are in fact already here in Cincinnati and have just replied to say they are on their way. Estimated time of arrival is in ten minutes,” Xeranos announced.

Chris’s face paled.

“Oh no! He’s gone a funny color!” I warned Tylip, unsure of quite what to do about it, as Chris was already sitting down.

“Everything will be alright, Chris,” Tylip said, hurrying over to check on him. “Please remember to breathe.”

To our immense relief, Chris sucked in a deep breath.

“I have two mates,” he managed to gasp out. “Ten minutes. Here.”

“Well, nine now actually,” I supplied, then winced. Yeah, that probably had not been helpful just now, given how shaken up he was.

“If you check the tablet, there’s a bio on each of them for you to read,” Tylip said, returning our tablets.

“Yes, that sounds like a good idea,” Chris agreed faintly.

I nodded in agreement, already skimming the information on my own.

The surprises just kept coming for Chris, though, and, well, to me as well because, dang- who knew the Mylos came in a vampire flavor? Chris was one lucky duck and I, for one, was glad that I’d thought to offer to share my appointment slot.

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Chapter 6

Yorix

The landing pad was on the roof of the Center and upon exiting the shuttle, I quickly spotted the door that led to the inside. I approached it and pressed my palm against the scanner, pleased to note my hands were no longer trembling.

“Hi, Yorix!” Xeranos cheerfully greeted me.

“Hello, Xeranos. Let me in, please?” I asked, my voice tinged with an edge of desperation.

“Certainly!”

I heard the lock disengage and I tried the handle. It turned easily and I pulled it open, revealing a set of stairs leading down. Followed them and found myself facing another door at the bottom.

“It’s not locked,” Xeranos helpfully announced, so I opened that one too.

“Here’s Yorix now!” the Center officer said to the loveliest being ever to walk the cosmos.

The vision of beauty stood up, blushing sweetly as she crossed the floor towards me. We met halfway across the expanse.

“Hi,” she said softly, looking up at me.

“Hello.” I cleared my throat. “Are you ready to go?”

“Yes. Tylip went out and brought my suitcases in. I didn’t know I could bring my cat, so I left him at home.” Her hands flew to her cheeks. “I told Chris she was with my roommates! Do you think he’s going to hate me when he finds out I still live at home with my parents and brother? His parents were just so awful that it felt like rubbing his nose in it if I mentioned I did, because he’d figure out mine are pretty great.” She bit her lower lip. “I don’t usually lie. In fact, practically never...I just didn’t want to kick him while he was down, you know?”

I had absolutely no idea what my mate was talking about, so I looked to the officer for an explanation.

“I’m Tylip,” he introduced himself. “There was a bit of an incident, you see.” He quickly explained the unexpected extra applicant and subsequent matching. The entire time, I held her trembling frame against me, offering reassurance by rubbing the small of her back as she peered up anxiously at me.

“My darling, sweet one,” I rumbled, brushing my lips against hers. “He will forgive you, but I think perhaps that you should tell him yourself and explain.”

She blinked tearful eyes up at me, her expression one of defeat as she sighed and nodded. “You’re right.”

“I have no doubt that we will be invited to their wedding. You can tell him then.”

Her expression brightened. “Yes, we did promise to see each other often. He will be feeling much better then. I told him I just knew we’d be besties and a bestie would truly understand as it wasn’t a cruel fib!”

I growled. No male other than me should be her best.

She giggled, smacking my chest playfully. "Stop that! I'm allowed to have a best friend! Plus, he's mated, remember? Two big, tough vampire Mylos with a cute dog and a couple of kitties and everything!"

I sighed. "I'm sorry. I'm feeling a bit..."

"Grrr grr, me alpha male, must claim my mate?" she suggested, looking up at me now with an expression that spoke of mischief.

"Yes." I wasn't going to deny it, because how could I? The sight, scent, and feel of her was sending me into overdrive. My skin felt too tight, the itching was at insane levels.

"Oh dear," Tylip said. "It looks as if your mating display is coming on rather aggressively. Your skin looks rather red, and I can clearly see your scale pattern beneath it. Hold on, I have something Xeranos found which helps. "

He bustled over to the food prep area, opening a cabinet, and took out a small box, taking a capsule out and bringing it to me with a small cup of water.

"Benadryl. It will help reduce the itching. When was the last time you did a partial shift?"

"It's been quite a while, I admitted, taking the capsule from him eagerly. Anything to stop this drednar itching! "And it always itches more than most, but never anything like this."

"Will you be alright?" My sweet Lynn was looking at me now with such tender concern that my hearts panged for the anguish my reaction to my scale eruption was

causing her.

“Yes. Once my plumage is out, it will stop.”

“The medication will take effect in a very few minutes,” Tylip reassured us both. “Just be aware that on occasion, Mylos have been known to get a bit, ah, loopy, I believe the human term is, from it.”

Lynn giggled. “Okay, well, in that case, maybe we should get going before that happens. Um, what is it you gave him, anyway?”

“Benadryl,” came the reply. “And if he is still this itchy once the medication wears off, let Xeranos know and he’ll have the Sickbay dispense something. We have salves and bath soaks that work without the side effects.”

“Okay. Thank you, Tylip, for everything.” She pushed against my chest. “Come on, big guy. Take me to the shuttle so you can claim me.”

My cock was already hard and her words made my pants tighten even more. I felt a damp patch begin to form as precum welled from my tip.

“Not the shuttle,” I rasped, “our quarters.”

“Yes, well, we need to get to the shuttle so it can take us there.”

I closed my eyes and took a step back, handing Tylip the now empty cup. I needed to clear my head so I didn't embarrass myself. Once I was certain I had a grip on my reactions, I reopened them to find Lynn holding the handles to two rolling cases in her hands.

“I’ll take those,” I said, and she handed them over without a word.

“Fine by me. I’m guessing there’s stairs since you landed on the roof. Not my idea of fun with two suitcases.”

“I’ll arrange for your cat to be collected and sent up,” Tylip informed her.

She smiled. “Thanks. Um, if they are going today, it’s really only my brother at home. I kinda forgot my parents said they were going sofa shopping and out for lunch.” She stood stock still. “Oh! I promised to call if I got matched! Mama said she wanted a picture!”

“Please, allow me. I’ll take your picture and have Xeranos send it to them. I presume the family contact numbers you provided are accurate?”

“Yes,” she nodded, and we posed, her looking up at me with a smile, while I gazed down at her. I knew I probably had the stupidest expression on my face, the same one I’d seen other mated Mylos wear when looking at their mates, but I didn’t care.

“There. Sent.”

“Thank you so much!”

“Your phone will work after your mating is completed and Xeranos adds it to the Mylos network,” Tylip said.

“Oh! I didn’t think about it being deactivated as soon as I matched. Yikes. You guys work fast.”

“Not fast enough,” I grumbled. I scratched absently at one arm before taking hold of the suitcase handle once more.

She laughed. “And that’s our signal to go.” She turned to face me, her smile

widening. “I think your skin looks a bit less red already!”

I nodded. The medication was working very quickly, thanks to the way we Mylos metabolized things. “I feel less itchy, too.”

I turned to go through the door ahead of her, leading the way. The sooner we got back to the ship, the better, especially since she seemed to want me to claim her thoroughly as soon as possible, as much as I did.

“Damn,” I heard her whisper, probably unaware she’d even spoken aloud. “Dat ass.”

Yes, she definitely did,

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Chapter 7

Lynn

I 'd thought Chris's guys and Tyliap were hotter than the super sexy actors who portrayed Mylos on TV and in films. They didn't hold a patch on my mate. I was probably biased as he was mine, and oh boy, the way he'd looked at me drenched my panties. I needed to either get them off or change them as soon as possible, as I'd unwisely worn jeans, so I was starting to chafe.

I nearly forgot how uncomfortable I was, though, once we reached the roof. Holy shit. I'd seen the saucer shaped shuttles in the sky a few times as they zipped by, and of course, movies had CGI ones, but the reality of one right there was much, much different. I could see the marks on its hull from use and the low hum of its engine.

"Good, he's ready to take off as soon as we're aboard and strapped in," Yorix said, turning to grin at me. He stood beside the ramp where another Mylos poked his head out.

"Yes, Xeranos let me know you were on your way up," he said, grinning. "I figured you'd be wanting to head back as soon as possible."

"Yes," Yorix rasped, then swore softly under his breath. "Though we will have at least another hour and a half before we can go to our new quarters."

"Why?" I asked, going past him to take a seat inside. "Did they not have anything available?"

He followed me inside, the pilot closing the door behind him and taking my suitcases from him to place them in a storage closet in part of the bulkhead.

“They did if I accepted a heavily modified unit, but we have to allow time for the furniture to be placed.”

“Oh! That makes sense,” I said, trying to figure out the harness system.

Yorix loomed over me. “Allow me,” he said gallantly.

“Be my guest,” I said, moving my hands out of the way. As his hands deftly worked the buckles, I asked, “What did you mean by heavily modified?”

“The previous occupant installed a colorful human style kitchen,” he replied.

“Colorful?”

“The cooking and chilling apparatuses are blue green,” he clarified. “And the flooring in the unit is not the standard gray flooring.”

Blue green?

“It’s one of those cute retro themed ones?” I asked, thinking of those Big Chill appliances I’d seen on social media.

“I believe he said it was vintage.”

“Oh.”

He looked chagrined. “If I made a mistake accepting this, it is possible to have the flooring and units replaced.”

He straightened up, stepping back as he finished. “There.”

“I’m ready when you are,” the pilot called out from his own seat. “We have clearance to take off.”

He hurriedly took the seat next to me, his nimble fingers making quick work of his own harness. My core clenched thinking of how he’d use those to pluck pleasure from me later.

“Ready,” he called out, and there was a slight bump.

“Air cushion disengaged,” the pilot said, obviously for my benefit, which I was truly grateful for. “And we have lift off. Would you like an outside view?”

“Yes!” I replied excitedly, and the walls around us shimmered and became transparent, except for the lockers. My jaw dropped as I swiveled my head, the panoramic view of the city shrinking down below us. Then we were in the clouds, zipping along.

“Beginning vertical ascent,” the pilot informed us. “Do not be alarmed at the flames.”

I swallowed. I knew that was a thing, as film footage of human spacecraft from time immemorial showed the friction flames. I only had a moment to think about this, though, as the next thing I knew, fire danced along the hull for several moments, only to disappear as we broke free of the atmosphere. So many stars! I stared, open mouthed, twisting in my seat to see the rapidly shrinking planet behind us.

“Slowing down now. The view will stay the same until we’re close enough to give you a visual of the Fleet.”

My stomach rumbled at that point.

Yorix turned a concerned look my way. “I will take us to lunch once we land, as soon as I have someone take your baggage to our new quarters.”

“Ah, okay. Is it true about the restaurants and parks, or will we have to eat at a mess hall?”

“We can do either,” he informed me.

“Really? Um, whichever is fine.”

“How about I take you for a stroll through the entertainment promenade and we see what there is? My bachelor quarters were aboard another ship.”

“Oh!” I hadn’t realized that. “So, will you have to commute to work every day?”

He inclined his head. “It is but a short journey. It will not be an inconvenience.”

“Ah, okay. So, food tech, you tweak the computer code for the replicators?”

“Yes. It is something computers cannot do as they are unable to taste.”

“I suppose that’s true. I’d never really thought about that.”

“Right now, my team is working on products that can then be replicated so the ones sold on shelves or reproduced via ordering through a replicator will be identical to ones made at the factory on Earth.”

I smile. “You mean like grocery store items?”

“Yes. Currently, we are working on something called Goober Grape. The Space Force commissary wishes to stock it for the members on Icthus Station.”

“Goober Grape! Oh, gosh! I haven't had that in years! My grandmother used to buy it when we were kids, so we'd have it at her house. I gotta say, I'm more of a Peter Pan and Welch's grape jelly kinda girl myself. “

“We've successfully created those already. You can replicate the jarred items individually, or as a sandwich on various brands of bread.”

“That is so cool!” I gave his arm a squeeze. “You provide such an important service, you know. The taste of home for those far away.”

He looked pleased at my praise. “Being able to eat foods from our homeworlds provides comfort for us as well. Also, it is an excellent trade agreement, as exotic food stores will be able to purchase licenses for replication and sell to those eager to try things from Earth.”

“It's kind of mind boggling to think about. I suppose once food replicators are allowed on Earth, the trade will also flow in reverse.”

“There are traders applying to be allowed to operate ships filled with replicators to do just that.”

“Really? So, they'd like what, replicate various food stuffs and shuttle them down?”

“Yes, exactly that. But negotiating the right to import is a complicated process on your planet.”

I laughed. “You're not kidding. You have to do it country by country.” My eyes grew round. “Wow, look how huge your ships are!” I exclaimed as we came in close to some of the ships of the Fleet.

“We'll be docking in five,” the pilot informed us as he executed a gentle banking

maneuver that caused us to come even closer to one of the behemoths.

“I’d almost forgotten those were battle cruisers,” I murmured, taking in the sight of what looked like large guns bristling from the hull.

“Pulsar cannons,” Yorix informed me. “If ever invaders come, we are well prepared to defend your world and our ships.”

“There are several fighter battalions as well,” the pilot told me gleefully. “I’m combat trained for them myself.”

And then the ship was swallowing us as we flew in ever so slowly through an opening, entering a bay where our pilot found the spot he’d been directed to, and settled back down on the cushion of air with a gentle bump. The engines stopped, and both men began unfastening their harnesses, so I hurried to do the same. It turned out that getting it off was a helluva lot easier than on, so I managed to do it without tangling it up too badly. Then the door opened, lowering the ramp, and it was time. I’d flown into space to my new home, and it was time to settle in.

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Chapter 8

Yorix

I proudly guided my Bride down the ramp, basking in the admiring and often envious glances from my fellow warriors. A casual worker strode up, asking if there was cargo to be unloaded and I directed him to the pilot who was bringing down the two rolling cases, giving him our new quarters designation.

“Ah! Yes, a load just came through for there from ships’ stores,” he said. “I’ll head on over and see if they need any extra help getting everything ready faster.”

“That would be much appreciated.”

“Welcome to the Fleet,” he said, glancing at Lynn before hurrying off to claim her two cases.

“Thank you!” Lynn called after him and I frowned, disliking her attention to him, even though I knew my irritability was hormone based. Once she was thoroughly claimed, this would settle. I looked forward to this, not only because she would then be one hundred percent mine as far as Mylos biological imperative drives were concerned, but because I hated being irrational like this. These warriors were my brothers in arms and had no intention of trying to take her from me, and in fact, could not, as she wasn’t their match. This irrationality no doubt was a blip handed down from one of my non Mylos ancestors, possibly my grandmother’s as she came from a species who, like the humans, could choose their mates at will and produce offspring with them. Males would compete for female attention, which is what I was trying to

squash the feeling of right now. Her people, the Mirit, were also why my physique was less bulky musculature wise. I had a leaner build, but I was no less strong than my brothers, which I would demonstrate one day, soon after I invited Lynn to come watch me spar during hand to hand combat training.

“How do you tell the corridors and rooms apart?” she asked me, glancing around as we left the shuttle bay.

“In addition to the signs, the doors are color coded,” I explained, “as are the different decks.”

She laughed. “Like parking at the mall or in a multi-story car park. Gotcha. Are there lessons where I can learn to read Mylos?”

“Yes. I’m certain that the first part of your course will have you learning that and Galactic Standard before advancing further.”

“Oh! I guess I hadn’t thought about that, but I suppose you’re right. I’ll need to be able to read instructions and warnings and such on scientific equipment and what have you.”

I stopped in front of an elevator and palmed the call sensor. It lit up as the doors slid open, a transport pod already waiting there.

“Xeranos, the entertainment deck, please.”

“Got it,” he replied, the doors closing. The pod began to move sideways.

“That feels weird,” Lynn giggled softly. “Elevators on Earth do not move from side to side.”

As if her words reminded it how elevators were supposed to act, it paused, then began traveling downward for two floors before stopping.

“Have fun!” Xeranos said cheerfully before opening the doors to let us out.

Unlike the largest ships among the Fleet, this one was midsize. This meant there wasn't a central green space here, with grass and large trees. There were potted flowers and vines growing up supports, however, adding vibrancy to the area while adding to the ship's oxygen. Small shops and eateries dotted the space. One caught Lynn's eye, and she came to a stop.

“Can we eat there?” she asked me, pointing to a place called Poutine-a-tics. “I've always wanted to try poutine.”

I smile down at her. “If that is what you wish, then that is what you shall have.”

With my hand on her lower back, we entered the small eatery.

We both ordered traditional poutine and decided we liked it. It was simple but hearty fare and soon gone.

“I hadn't realized how famished I was,” she confessed, blushing.

“A hearty appetite is a sign of good health,” I told her. “And we will need the fuel for later.” My eyes raked her form, settling on her ample bosom.

She blushed an even deeper shade of pink, looking so cute as she did so that I resolved to make her blush a lot more often.

“Our quarters are not yet ready,” I observed. “Shall we go see what leisure activities they have available?”

Her face lit up, her blush fading as she radiated pure joy. I quickly decided this was an even better look, and one I should see about causing even more often than those blushes.

“Yes, let’s!”

I stood up, moving to pull her chair back for her to stand. As we left to go see what we could find to distract us for a time, I hoped that we’d be able to go to our new home soon. Walking with her smelling and looking so delectable was not helping my raging hard on.

“Do you think we can find a bathroom?” she asked me.

“You wish to bathe?” The thought of her naked and wet set my blood aflame once more, and the itching along my jaw flared up.

I scratch it idly as she blushed adorably once more. “No,” she whispered. “I need to pee. You know, um, empty my bladder.”

“Ah!” I tapped my kunnarskyn to activate it. “Xeranos, where is the nearest elimination chamber?”

“Two shops in front of you, there is a small walkway, do you see it?” came the Ai’s response.

“I do.”

“Turn down there. It’s behind Panda-monium.”

“Ohhh, I know where I want to eat at for supper!” she said, eyes glued to what the patrons were eating as we turned to go past Panda-monium. “The Chinese food there

looks amazing!”

“Then that is where we shall go.” It was an easy request to grant, and if it made her happy, one worth giving.

“Okay, um, wait here, will you?” she asked, stopping in front of the elimination facility door.

“I find I must pee as well,” I informed her.

“But it’s the ladies’ room!”

I pointed to the door, which merely had a symbol depicting water drops. “The elimination and hand washing facilities are for everyone.”

“I hope there are stalls,” she murmured, as I pushed open the door. “Oh goody! There are!”

I chuckled. Surely she did not think we would all eliminate in front of each other? Only prisoners were allowed no privacy, for safety reasons.

“Don’t laugh at me,” she said, swatting my arm before ducking into a cubicle. “This is all new to me! We don’t have unisex bathrooms like this where I live. I’ve heard of them but never actually seen one.”

I took the next cubicle, two doors down. My mate was correct. She had a lot to learn about life within Galactic society in general and within the Fleet in particular, but I also had much to learn. She was a puzzle I got to solve until I knew her inside and out.

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Chapter 9

Lynn

The unisex bathroom thing shouldn't have thrown me for such a loop, but I was already feeling flustered. Every smoldering look he gave me, every syllable he spoke in that gravelly voice of his, every swallow of his drink, all of them were obviously designed by Mother Nature to get my engine revving and keep gunning the motor. Truthfully, I was amazed that the crotch of my jeans didn't show a huge wet spot, making me look like I'd peed my pants at least a little, as I felt absolutely drenched now.

My stall had a dispenser of free sanitary items, though, so I took a panty liner out, only to find that, duh, it wouldn't stick to the damp fabric. I was not about to go spend another hour or more walking around chafing in wet panties, thank you very much, so while I took the pee I'd used as an excuse to try to figure out a way to ease the discomfort temporarily, I hit upon an idea. I disposed of the unfortunately now useless liner in the slot in the wall marked for it with a pictogram, then carefully wrapped the crotch of my panties in toilet paper, winding it through the legs to get it to go all the way around. After tucking the end under itself, I carefully stuck on a fresh pantyliner. Pulling up my jeans, I decided it felt a bit diaperish, maybe, but it didn't show through the fabric, I felt dry, and the pad would absorb any more fluids he was bound to make me leak before we finally got to go home.

I exited the cubicle to find him standing by the row of sinks, talking to another Mylos.

“The negotiations will probably wrap up in the next week or so, and their food technicians will get in touch with your team a month after that once their bosses decide which flavors they wish to start off with. Do you think you’ll be back by then?”

Yorix was nodding. “I doubt my Bride will wish to wait for our wedding and honeymoon, so I should be back at the lab at least a week or two before that, at minimum.”

“What if they wish a big wedding and to do all the planning themselves?”

“I don’t,” I replied sweetly, joining them. I turned the sink next to Yorix on and began washing my hands. “But if I did, that sort of planning takes several months, so he’d be taking time off much later. Why, what’s up?”

The other Mylos looked taken aback at my interruption, but quickly recovered. “I was explaining to Yorix that a large new commercial food replication deal was about to send him a lot more work.”

I smiled. “I’m sure the Space Force families on Icthus Station will be thrilled to hear that!”

“Err, yes.” He puffed his chest up. “We strive to provide what home comforts we can. I believe these products will also prove to be popular across the entire quadrant.”

I turned the water off. “Oh? May I ask what it is, or is that a secret until it’s formally announced?”

“It’s Duncan Hines cake mix,” the Mylos said proudly. “We are simply waiting on them to decide whether or not to also license us the frostings as well as their retired flavors.”

“Wow!” I moved to place my hand in the dryer. “That is quite the coup. Congrats!”

He nodded, pleased. “Thank you. Sorry to interrupt your day. I saw your mate here and thought to tell him, unaware he was here because he’d matched and met his Bride.”

“That’s perfectly fine. I’m sure he appreciated the heads up as that sounds like a lot of work headed his way.”

Both Mylos stared at me blankly. “Um, heads up, it means getting advance warning.”

Understanding crossed their faces, and with a quick nod to Yorix, the other Mylos hurried out.

“If you guys ink a deal for Duncan Hines, I bet Betty Crocker won’t be far behind.”

Yorix groaned, following me out the door. “Probably not. It was the way with all the peanut butter we’ve been doing.”

I laughed. “Well, I’m sure you’ll get plenty of volunteers for taste testing!”

He gave me a small smile, taking my hand in his, lacing our fingers together as we walked down the small alley to reach the main walkway. “You are no doubt correct. Now, let’s see what there is to do, shall we?”

We strolled through the offerings, coming to a stop at a door which proclaimed that Zilly’s Goofy Golf was one deck down.

“I think that is all for this ship,” Yorix observed.

“That gives us the choice of the movie theater, an escape room adventure, or mini

golf.”

“Or more food,” he agreed. “We could go back to the shuttle bay and go to one of the larger ships.”

I shook my head. “Let’s go to the Goofy Golf place. It sounds fun. I haven’t played that since I was a kid!” I grinned at him. “It’ll feel like a date! You’ll have taken me out for something fun, fed me, and then back to yours for some afternoon delight afterwards.” I wagged my eyebrows.

“Date. This is a thing humans do,” he nodded.

“It is, if it's with someone we really like. Otherwise, no going inside for coffee.”

“I should prepare coffee?”

I leaned up my tiptoes to kiss him on the cheek.”

“Sweetheart, you can make me some coffee anytime.”

He pressed his hand on the scanner by the elevator door. “You are talking about more than just coffee, aren’t you?”

“You bet.” And if I was perfectly honest, having a date with my new husband before we fucked each others brains out made this whole thing feel more normal - well, human normal, anyway. Not that I’d ever put out after a first date, but we were legally mated, so this was different. An ice-breaker and time to get our bearings before ripping each other’s clothes off.

The door slid open, and he ushered me inside. “Then let us finish our date, and then we can go home and make each other coffee.”

Damn, that sounded dirty when he said it like that.

Chapter 10

Yorix

D ating, an activity where humans do platonic things for enjoyment to foster a bond. Yes, that is what I was told during my in-processing. It's much like what mated couples do after joining, only humans also do it before with a person they believe they may wish to form a mate bond with.

I am elated. My Bride wishes to date with me before engaging in drinking coffee and then mating. I do not recall learning anything about a coffee ritual, but I do know that I often see humans going to the cafes together to "have a coffee," as they put it. I have observed the deep delight such an invitation elicited, so it must be an important thing friends do that borders on ceremony. This must mean that when we drink the coffee before our mating, she will be accepting that I am not only her mate, but her closest friend. I wish for this very much, and so I pay close attention as she explains this "Goofy Golf".

"Shoot!" she exclaims as the small, white, dimpled ball bounces against the slowly turning blade of what she called a "windmill". "I thought I'd timed that right!"

Mine, of course, goes in easily.

She laughs. "Of course, a warrior with superior reflexes will not miss his shot," she teases.

"You simply need more practice," I replied. "We should date here again."

“Yeah? You like coming here?”

“It is not a terrible way to pass the time when it is with you. I wish to date you again and again, just as I wish to bury my face in your sweet cunt and eat you out until scream, before impaling you on my cock.”

She stares at me in shock, glancing around.

“You really have no filter, do you?”

I shrugged. “There is no one around who should be spared hearing what I said, and I believe in being honest with you, always.”

She sobered immediately. “Me too,” she said quickly. “That fib I told Chris, I’m not usually like that, and I already regret it.”

“You saw a male in immense pain and wished to spare him further harm. Your lie was the same as when a medic says, ‘You will only feel a cool mist,’ only to find the drug he has given you only feels cool as it goes into your skin.”

She giggles. “Oh, yeah. They do that on Earth, too. “Just a little pinch!” then your arm is sore for days!” She lets out a small sigh. “Still, I shouldn’t have done it. He’s an adult and already knows other people have good parents and nice families. I could have just said something about having my cat back home and not mentioned anyone else at all unless he asked. You know, avoiding the parents thing still, but not lying.”

I nodded.

“I won’t ever lie to you,” she promised.

“Nor I to you,” I vowed back.

She smiled happily at that, as if a weight had been lifted off her shoulders. Then she moved to line up her shot, and this time, her ball went in.

“Yeah!” she shouted, raising the club in the air. “Booyah! Take that, you stupid windmill!”

I laughed at her silliness, and she joined in. The rest of the game passed quickly, and we were both honestly surprised when my kunnarskyn chimed.

“Our quarters are ready?” she guessed as I read the message.

“Yes,” I replied.

“Okay, well, the attendant said we could come back anytime to play the three games and still get the fridge magnet.”

She really wanted that magnet, I could tell. A romantic memento of our first date - I wished for that too. She’d explained how it would adhere to the chiller unit and be a daily reminder every time we saw it. I like that idea and thought it was a great concept worth exporting.

We walked to the exit, hand in hand, and gave the attendant our clubs back.

“Please come again!” the human female said as we took our leave.

“We will! We need to claim our magnet!” I called back, and both she and my mate laughed.

“Come on, you big lug. Take me home and show me just how much you want to eat me out,” she said once the elevator doors closed.

“We can skip the drinking of the coffee?”

“The drinking-oh, sugar!” Peals of laughter filled the small space. The doors opened, and she looked up at me mischievously. “Baby doll, saying come in for a night cap or a coffee is a euphemism for come in and,” she lowered her voice as we reached the main promenade area full of people, “sex each other up.”

My skin itched unbearably once more, and my cock strained painfully against my pants. I needed to free myself of my clothing, and she of hers.

“Then I need to drink some coffee very much,” I told her, hurrying my steps, pulling her along.

I could smell her own desire on her.

“Me too, baby, me too.”

Our quarters were only two decks away, which was entirely too far.

Chapter 11

Lynn

I've always been a sex positive person, and I've done the deed with boyfriends in the past. Once in high school, as I'd convinced myself it was true love, only for Frank Holden to dump me the week before prom and start dating Cindy Markham, his lab partner in Biology. The other two times were with a guy where I hoped the spark we both felt would turn into a flame. News flash: it fizzled, but we parted as friends. Now that I one hundred and fifty percent knew I was with my soul mate? I wanted all of him. I wanted to fall into his arms and have him ravish me like there was no tomorrow. I wanted us so close that there was no end and beginning between us, for us to become one so much that even a stranger could see us and know that he was mine and I was his, even twenty years later, like my parents and grandparents - only I hoped the ship had better soundproofing because, yikes, the sounds we heard from our parents' bedroom while growing up had me and my siblings playing music in our bedrooms at night. 'Nuff said.

We reached our quarters and, as he activated the biometric lock which apparently was already keyed to us, tumbled inside the doorway. We made it as far as the living room, leaving a trail of clothes behind us. I jumped up, and he caught me, hands under my ass, my legs around his waist and arms around his neck.

"Finally!" I gasped and he hummed in agreement, before claiming my mouth with his in a plundering kiss. I ground my pelvis shamelessly, my slick folds sliding over his engorged shaft, leaving trails of slick behind.

“I need to be inside you,” he husked, breaking our kiss,

I nodded mutely as he set me down.

“Like this?” I asked, turning away to bend over the arm of the sofa, feet spread apart and head down on the soft seat cushion.

He groaned in response.

“Too low,” he said after a moment.

I moved to get on my hands and knees on the plush rug that extended from underneath the coffee table.

“Now?”

“We could go find our bed,” he suggested.

“Next time,” I promised him.

That was all he needed to hear apparently, as the next thing I knew, he was behind me, lapping at my cunt from behind, his finger playing with my clit. He played me like a fine instrument and it didn’t take long before I finally saw those fireworks I’d always longed for as he sent me careening over the edge.

“That’s one,” he said, flipping me over, and placing my heels onto his shoulders, bending my legs back to my chest. “Let’s make this two before I spill my seed onto the floor.” He thrust in and I wailed as he stretched me around his girth and I felt the nascent scales scrape against my walls deliciously.

He paused, letting me adjust to his size, dropping his head to capture one of my

nipples in his mouth. My back arched in pleasure as he sucked and rolled the aching bud in his mouth, while he used his thumb to stroke my clit.

“Ah!” I cried out, and he hummed in approval, pulling part way out before slamming back in as he freed my nipple.

“I cannot hold back,” he gritted through his teeth, and I nodded.

“Fuck me!” I demanded and he did, setting a frenzied pace that had me seeing stars as he grazed my G-spot. I crested again, my walls clamping down on him. I felt his hips stutter, and became aware of a sharp sting on my neck and a gush of wet heat filling me as I regained my senses. The claiming bite as he climaxed, I realized, floating on a haze of contentment as he lapped against the wound.

“You’re mine now,” he said, lifting his head to look at me tenderly.

“And you’re mine.”

He pulled out gently, moving to scoop me up as he stood.

“I think we should continue this in bed. It’s usually this way,” he said, choosing a direction to go.

I nodded mutely, hoping he didn’t mean right away because I was feeling far too languid and really wanted a nap first. It turned out we were on the same wavelength here as well, for he deposited me on the bed and disappeared into what had to be an ensuite bathroom. My eyes drooped closed as I listened to him moving about, popping open briefly when he returned, and I felt the warm wetness of a cloth as he gently cleaned me. He tossed the cloth onto the floor and clambered up to lie down beside me, pulling me against his chest as he tugged a soft blanket over us, which he found folded up at the bottom of the bed.

I closed my eyes, listening to the double thuds of his twin hearts, thinking idly how they now beat for me and mine for him, then there was nothing.

I woke up sore and absolutely starving, my stomach complaining loudly.

I blushed as I felt Yorix stir.

“You need feeding,” he said, sitting up. “Do you still wish to go to Panda-monium?”

“I don’t suppose they do home delivery?” I asked wistfully.

He nodded. “It can be done.”

“Really?”

“Yes, if you know what you wish to order.”

Ah. I had not read their menu. Still, they quite likely had most of the popular dishes, right?

“If they have shrimp fried rice, duck pancakes, and egg rolls, I’d love that. Oh, and banana fritters and egg drop soup.”

He tapped on his kunnarskyn and began speaking to someone on the other end, who confirmed they did indeed have that. He ordered a double portion as well as a large flask of jasmine tea, and they promised it would be here within the next half hour. He disconnected the call and turned a triumphant look on his face. “Now I shall run you a bath and you can soak while we wait.”

I knew if I could see myself in a mirror right now, I’d probably have cartoon hearts in my eyes.

“Yes, please!”

He pressed a kiss to my forehead, and I watched with enjoyment as my still very naked mate walked to our bathroom, his tight glutes flexing enticingly as he walked. Damn. I’d certainly hit the lottery, alright.

Chapter 12

Yorix

I went into the bathroom, filled with pride at how thoroughly I had claimed my very eager mate, watched over her even in my own slumber, and was now providing her with food and the comfort of a healing bath. I turned the water on, and addressing the bathroom's Sickbay affiliated AI, asked, "Healing salts for my mate, please. She is sore after our initial coupling."

"Hello, Yorix," a female's voice replied. "I am Ulalily, and it is my pleasure to congratulate you both on your mating. I have selected the appropriate salts and cleansers added to the water mixture, which I have adjusted to what should be an optimal temperature." As she spoke, the water turned a pale shade of purple, and a faintly medicinal yet floral scent began to fill the air.

"Thank you," I replied, scratching at my neck. My mating display was still emerging despite my claiming her, and I knew this meant we needed to deepen our bond more emotionally as well as sexually. I grinned at the thought. Sexing up my beautiful Lynn was no hardship, and the prospect of more dates together made my hearts sing. Time with Lynn, no matter how mundane what we might be doing, was something to treasure.

I returned to the bedroom. "It will be ready in a few moments. Ulalily added some things to the water to make it smell pleasant while aiding in cleansing and healing, as I told her about your soreness."

She blushed. “You noticed that, huh?”

I smiled gently. “It is to be expected. I am a much larger male than your average human.”

She laughed, that lovely tinkling sound that had so entranced me earlier. “That you are and you’re certainly not shy about it, huh?”

I shrugged. “Why be shy when it is merely a fact? Though I will go fetch our clothing and redress. I do not wish to share myself with all and sundry.” I cupped my balls. “All this is only yours.”

She laughed as I turned away from her, calling out, “Lucky me!”

I quickly pulled my pants back on, picking up my boots and her clothing to take back to our room.

“Um,” she began, biting her lower lip. “Just who is this Ulalilly?”

“The bathroom AI. She works under Xeranos, and is affiliated with Sickbay, analyzing our waste and body temperature and so on to ensure we are in optimal health and to advise of changes, such as pregnancy.”

“Another sentient AI?” she asked, eyes wide.

“There are several,” I admitted. “Mostly ones working for Sickbay, two to three for each ship, as well as a few who assist with scanning your system and just beyond.”

“Wow, that’s a lot.” She shivered. “As long as they all don’t go Skynet.”

I knew this reference, as it was part of our induction to human culture.

“They are friendly and their framework revolves around doing no harm to us or our allies.”

“Like the Laws of Robotics.”

I knew this reference as well. “Very similar,” I agreed.

She looked relieved. “Okay. I mean, on the one hand, it’s very cool, but on the other, it’s also scary because of what they could do if they went rogue.”

“We have technical officers who regularly check their coding to ensure there are no abnormalities presenting that would allow such a thing.”

“Good to know. So, um, think my bath is ready?”

“If not, very close to it. Ulalilly will turn the water off so it will not overflow.”

“Cool. I’ll go in. She, ah, won’t peek, will she?”

“Cameras are off unless either requested by us to always be on, or if her sensors indicate an emergency, or if you ask her to look at something specifically.”

“Like if I think I found a weird mole?”

I nodded. “Exactly like that.”

She slid out from under the blanket. “Alrighty then, I guess I’ll go in and say hi to her and get in the bath. You should probably go wait in the living room for our food to arrive.”

I watched reluctantly as she strode past with those tantalizing twin globes giving tiny

little jiggles. I shook myself out of the daydream I found myself sliding into, one where I first sucked on each peak, then squashed the pillowy bounty together and rutted between them while she stuck her tongue out to lap at my weeping slit. Later, I promised myself. First, she needed to bathe, and we both needed to eat to recover the energy we'd expended. With that in mind, I heeded her words and went out to wait in the living room.

This time, during my walk through, I took a better look at how they'd chosen to furnish our home for us. The small wooden table with four chairs and a matching long side table seemed nice enough to me, and I hoped she liked it. There were four matching bar stools at the counter as well, and the living room sported not only the fluffy black rug we'd rutted against, but a low wooden coffee table, two armchairs, and a sofa, all of which were wood framed and had cushions in blue green with black throw pillows. I hoped she liked them. If not, I'd show her how to select new things from ship stores and send these back.

I sat down, relaxing against the firm cushions, and asked Xeranos to update me on the arrival of Lynn's cat.

"He is currently waiting to be examined by the Fleet's veterinary team and will shuttle over once he's finished," Xeranos replied. "Estimated time of arrival: forty-five minutes to one hour."

"Thank you. "

"You are most welcome. An automated litter tray was plumbed into the secondary bathroom already, as I requested it as soon as I was informed about him. He will be delivered along with his previous tray, bowls, cat tree, and other items."

That was also good to know. No doubt these supplies would include food, so I would know what to replicate, and if it was not a brand yet in our database, to request

shipped up until someone in my division could complete a priority request for replication conversion. I was mulling this over when our front door chimed, alerting me to the arrival of our food. I answered the door quickly, thanking the teenaged human youth who brought it.

“Xeranos, please add an appropriate amount to...” I looked at the youth expectantly.

“Jeremy, sir, and thank you. I hate having to ask my mom and dad for cash when we go down on vacation.”

“To Jeremy’s funding account.”

“Greetings, Jeremy. I’ve added thirty-five dollars to your prepaid Visa on file. I see it’s your mother’s birthday next week. While we have some privacy, would you like me to place an order for her gift from you?”

“Um, yeah!”

I watched in amusement as the young male walked back to the elevator, chatting away to Xeranos. As I closed the door it struck me, someday, that it could be our young arranging for a gift from ship’s stores and collecting tips for private spending money on some planet we orbited around or were stationed upon. Yes, someday, I promised myself as I stepped back the rest of the way inside, and closed the door. I had more pressing things to do at the moment than daydream about future younglings. My mate was hungry, the food was here, and I needed to find the plates, cups, and eating utensils, as well as a serving tray perhaps.

Chapter 13

Lynn

The bath was amazing, and the AI sounded like a real person and not a bot, just like Xeranos had. It would take some getting used to, though, having a virtual bathroom assistant. I'd had to adjust the water temperature a tiny bit as I preferred my baths a bit hotter than she'd selected, but she promised me she'd use that setting every time I came in for a bath or shower, as long as I asked her to. The real clincher for me liking her? After climbing out of the bath, I let her know the salts were amazing, as I was no longer sore at all, and she asked me if I was finished. I'd said yes and the drain popped up. Then a blue light played over the surface, cleaning the tub!

"Thank you so much, Ulalily!" Man, I could not wait to tell Mama that we had a self cleaning bathtub!

"You're welcome," she replied cheerfully.

"Do you get bored waiting for people to need you?" I asked her, curious.

"Sometimes," she admitted. "But while waiting to be called, recently, I've been reading fantasy novels from your planet."

"Really? Which ones?"

"I've read the ones by Tolkien, and C.S. Lewis, and I'm currently reading His Dark Materials. I've set my reading speed to an average human level to further my

experience.”

“Those are all great books. After you finish your current series, you should check out The Wheel of Time, Dragonheart, and um, A Wrinkle in Time, although that’s more sci-fi.”

“Thank you for the recommendations. I have added them to my Tbr list.”

I smiled at how cute she was, pronouncing it as letters.

“Okay, well, see you later,” I replied.

I came into the bedroom and decided I would look for something else to wear. I found my suitcase easily and quickly put on a clean pair of panties. I opted to put on a pair of soft jersey lounge pants and a t-shirt, figuring we weren’t going anywhere and I might as well let him see me as I usually was.

I came out of the bedroom to find him putting plates onto the counter.

“Oh goody! The food’s here!” I took a deep appreciative sniff. “And it smells good, too!”

He turned at the sound of my voice. “Do you wish to eat in here or shall I continue to look for a tray?”

I looked around. We had a cute little wooden dining table in a separate dining room area, plus a breakfast bar, and a small dinette in the kitchen itself, a retro Formica topped one that could double as worktop space. And now that I was paying attention to my surroundings, wow.

“Do you like it?” Yorix asked me, sounding nervous.

“Yeah, let’s eat in here. It’s so cute!” I replied. “Not what I would have thought to do, but now that I have it, I love it!”

His shoulders relaxed.

“It has your favorite color,” he offered.

I beamed at him. It certainly did. The big Chill appliances were all a lovely shade of light turquoise. And was that a vintage stove? “Practically made to order,” I agreed. “I bet the Bride who did all this was gutted to have to leave it.”

“I am certain she will be happy to discover it is being enjoyed,” he offered. “Xeranos can let her know.”

“He can? Yes, please!”

“Xeranos-”

“I heard,” the AI interrupted him. “Sorry, I wasn’t eavesdropping. I was just popping in to let you know that Chris has invited you both over for the day after tomorrow.”

“Yes! I mean, Yorix, we can go, right?” I turned pleading puppy dog eyes over to him.

“But of course. We have no prior engagements. Xeranos, please ask him to send us the time as we’ll be there.”

“Noted!” Xranos chirped. “Later, gators!”

I giggled at his antics. “Did you know Ulalily is spending her time between tasks reading fantasy novels at human reading speed?”

Yorix shook his head as he began opening the cardboard food containers. “No, but it doesn’t surprise me. Jurto, the one we had for our bachelor quarters on my old ship, binge watched old TV vids. Really old ones, from the dawn of TV broadcasting. He was watching shows from all over the world, at human speed. My favorite was his “I Love Lucy” phase. You’d come into the common area, and he’d have the shows playing.”

I covered my mouth with my hands, smothering back a laugh.

“They really are like people, huh? More Commander Data and less Hal.”

He stared blankly for a split second. “Ah, yes,” he replied, as he seemed to figure out my meaning. “Definitely more Data, and yes, they are definitely people. Simply nonorganic ones.”

“Wait- he was your bathroom assistant?”

“Yes.”

“How’d he get to watch in the common room?”

“Since they are affiliated with Sickbay, in case of medical or psychiatric emergency, they can access the cameras Xeranos usually uses in our quarters and public spaces.”

That made sense. I smiled to myself, wondering if I could convince my new friend to watch Charmed with me in our living room. Which, now that I looked, was also sporting my favorite color, tempered with black soft furnishings and the white terrazzo look flooring. I decided I liked it. It wasn’t as if we were stuck with it forever anyway, right? So if our feelings changed, so could the furniture.

“Give me a little bit of everything, please,” I asked him, as he scooped food onto the

plates.

“I forgot the bowls. Could you get them, please? It’s the cabinet to the left of the top oven there.”

I came to his aid, finding the bowls easily. As I passed them to him, I reflected just how easy and right this all felt. As if we’d been doing this for months, not hours. The Mylos certainly knew their matching skills, alright.

“I’ll pour the tea,” I told him, pausing on my way past him to kiss the underside of his jaw. “Sugar?”

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Chapter 14

Lynn

Over the course of the next two days, Yorix's plumage fully appeared. And with it, his frenzied need to claim me again and again. Thank goodness for Ullalilly and her practically magic bath salts. On the third day, after we'd made love twice before taking a nap, Yorix woke up seeming more focused on everything else. We took a shower together, and for once, he didn't end up fucking me against the tiles.

"You alright?" I asked. "You seem less itchy," I said diplomatically, which was true, as he'd stopped scratching at least.

"I've reached the peak, and while I will always hunger for you, the need to couple is not overriding everything else," he admitted. "My plumage will start fading back, though not all will disappear completely."

I nodded. "So that's why some Mylos always have scales and some do not?"

"It is one of the ways to tell a mated male, yes. Though some unmated also always have scales, depending on the non Mylos part of the bloodline."

"You mean like in the same way Korah and Oshar always have fangs, right?"

"The Drani? Yes. Their female parents hail from Sanguine."

I laughed. "That sounds so, I dunno, like a world a human named, because sanguine

is a word we have that means blood red, though it can also mean happy and cheerful.”

“Interesting confluence,” he replied gravely, shutting the water off.

We quickly dried off thanks to Ulalilly blowing us gently dry while she cleaned the bathtub from our shower.

“I can’t wait to see Chris again!” I confessed. “Though I’m not looking forward to telling him about my fib.”

Yorix gave my arm a gentle squeeze as he passed me to return to our bedroom.

“I am certain he will forgive you.”

“Yeah, I just have to find the right moment and tell him in the right way, I guess,” I replied, following him. I quickly chose a denim skirt with a scoop neck cotton top and slid on my favorite pair of flat sandals. By the time I’d finished my make up and hair, Yorix was in the living room playing with Charlie, my cat. Well, more Yorix’s cat, seeing as Charlie fell in love with my mate as soon as he clapped his little kitty eyes on him and quickly made the decision that his new favorite person was Yorix. Oh, he still loved me, but if Yorix was there, he made a beeline for him.

“Okay, I’m as ready as I’ll ever be!” I said brightly, and Yorix put down the feather teaser.

“We’ll play more later,” he promised Charlie, who glared at me, before turning his back to me entirely in true feline dramatic fashion, and began washing his back leg. Yorix stood up, walking towards me with a look of appreciation upon his face.

“I hate to think of all the other males seeing your great beauty,” he growled softly.

“Stop it,” I laughed. “I know I’m far from looking like a troll, but I’m no supermodel.”

“To me, you are the most beautiful female in all the universe. And it is not only because I love you.”

My heart skipped a beat. “You love me?” I asked softly, placing my hand over my heart as if to urge it to keep beating.

He inclined his head. “Before you, I was half a male. You have completed me.”

I crossed the short distance to him, turning my face up to his so I could kiss him.

“I know it’s early, but...yeah. I feel it too. It’s more than the absolutely fantastic sex. It’s all the in-between times we’ve shared so far, too. It’s like we’re on the same wavelength and everything is as it should be. It feels new, yet also as if it’s the way we always were.”

Yorix nodded. “It is because we are perfectly suited, and the stars themselves always meant for us to be together.”

“Like fated mates,” I whispered.

“Exactly that,” he agreed, taking my hand and leading me to the front door. “I already fed Charlie his Tiki Cat, and he has his Meow Mix in his bowl.”

“Guess we’re all set then,” I replied as the front door opened to let us out. It was two short walks and an elevator ride to reach the small shuttle bay on the opposite side of the ship from where we’d arrived. Since Chris lived on another ship, we had to shuttle over, which was a fifteen minute ride.

“This time last week, public transport to me was taking the subway or catching a bus, or calling an Uber,” I chuckled as we disembarked. “Look at me now! Elevators that move in almost all directions and flying saucer shuttle buses!”

Once we reached the closest elevator at our destination, Yorix consulted the directions Xeranos had provided us for reaching Chris’s new place.

“Deck seven,” he requested, and the elevator began to move. “Hello Yorix!” Xeranos greeted him. “Going to visit Chris, Oshar, and Korah?”

“Yes,” Yorix replied. “This is the time we agreed upon.”

“I’ll take you to the nearest exit point this transport unit can reach. You’ll have to take a right when you get out. This is the fourth unit on the opposite wall.”

“Thank you,” I piped up.

“You’re most welcome, Lynn. Enjoy your evening!”

The elevator changed direction twice before coming to a stop. As promised, Yorix found the quarters marked as theirs just where Xeranos had told him. Yorix placed his palm on the scanner, which, since we were guests, caused a doorbell to chime rather than open the door to admit us.

We stood waiting expectantly, only for no one to answer the door, though we could hear Daisy barking. Yorix frowned slightly.

“Let me try. Maybe they didn’t hear it the first time for some reason,” I said, reaching across and pressing my own hand against the scanner.

“Hi, guys!” Xeranos called out. “They asked me to let you know they are on their

way. They're running a tad behind."

Mere moments later, the door opened, revealing Chris.

"Hi!" he said, sounding out of breath.

I eyed him suspiciously, taking in his flushed appearance and the very fresh hickey mark I could see peeking out, plus the state of his dress, I decided to play it cool.

"Hi!" I replied enthusiastically. "Um, did we interrupt something?"

He turned as red as a ripe tomato.

"Huh? No, no, why would you ask that?"

"Um, because your shirt is on inside out and backward?"

He grew an almost impossibly deeper shade of red at this, glancing down to see that I was right. "Oops. I wasn't wearing a shirt, like these guys, haha. Just grabbed it to answer the door and didn't notice," I babbled. "Um, why don't you come inside?"

We stepped in just as Korah emerged from what must be their bedroom, calling out for Daisy, admonishing her for her barking. Oshar soon made an appearance and after we'd completed our greetings and agreed upon drinks, I was racking my brain figuring out what to say next. Glancing around the space, I said, "Your place looks different than ours. We have a big eat in kitchen separated from the living room by a wall. It's just as nice, though. I like your furniture!"

"Thanks," Chris replied, taking one of the caramel lattes that appeared on a small tray as Korah held it out. "None of us knew what to get, really, so Xero showed us some room ideas and we just got that."

I laughed, thinking how grateful I'd been to find our place furnished already in a style we both like. "I used to go to Ikea and imagine making only little changes and setting my house up the way they had their room displays set up," I admitted. "My aunt works at the one in West Chester, so I felt disloyal to buy stuff from anywhere else." Shit! I should have added that it was when I went to shop for new bedroom furniture my freshman year of high school and Mama took me shopping, because then I could have gone on to explain that my roommates were actually my parents and brother and that I'd paid a nominal rent after graduation to them. I took a sip of my coffee, trying to figure out if my pause had made it too late to do so, only for Chris to gesture towards the dining room table.

"Shall we sit there, or would you prefer the living room? Seeing as we have couches and chairs and the nice things we've just been talking about."

I giggled nervously. Yep, I'd missed the boat. I'd have to try to find a way to broach the subject again. "The table's fine," I assured him, and we all quickly took our seats there.

We bantered about how gentlemanly our mates were for holding our chairs out and Chris joked about nearly passing out when he'd found he had not one, but two mates. So what did I do next? Did I say, "Look, I feel like I need to clear something up. I told you I was living on Earth with roommates. That's sort of true, as I paid a bit of rent, but my roommates were my parents and brother." No, I did not. Instead, my big mouth brought up our wedding plans, which, so far, we did not have any of. Nothing concrete, yet anyway.

"So, we were at Gyros without Capes, this cute little Greek place on the main rec deck over on the flagship, and that's a total pun by the way! It's gyros like the food, g-y-r-o-s." I giggled, nerves jangling. "Anyway, we were talking about our wedding plans and then I came up with the greatest idea!"

“You decided my mates and I should go,” Chris concluded.

“Not just that, silly! We should have a double wedding!” I replied excitedly. Oh, shit. He was staring at me now. He hated the idea. “Don’t say no just yet. Promise me you’ll think about it. I mean, it’s kismet, really. You ended up at my appointment, and then we got matched at the same exact time!” I pleaded.

He kept staring at me for another long moment. “What did you have in mind?” he asked finally. “White dress, tuxedos, on the beach in Hawaii, and all that?”

Oh, thank God! He didn’t think I was a loon for suggesting this.

“Well, yes. Xero showed us this package with the Hilton in Waikiki. We can have an archway facing the water and say our vows with all our family and friends - I know you probably don’t want to invite your family,” I hurried to cut him off before he could do more than open his mouth to interrupt me, “but I’m only having my roommates and my parents and sister and aunt and uncle.”

Shit. Now I’d gone and added in new roommates he’d think I’d lived with, when what I really meant was kids I’d roomed with at Astronomy Camp. Now I’d dug myself into an even deeper hole! My mouth didn’t pay any heed to my inner turmoil, though, as it just kept going, almost of its own volition.

“You could maybe invite your longest dog walking customers? They might like to come, see that you’re okay, and it won’t cost them anything. Be like a mini vacay for them, all paid for by the Mylos.” I placed my hands together in a pleading gesture. “Please think about it.”

He glanced over at Oshar and Korah, seeking their opinion.

“Whatever you want is fine by me,” Oshar said, holding his hands up in surrender.

“Whatever makes you happy, makes me happy,” Koshar added.

Chris breathed out a breath, turning to look back at me. “And Yorix is okay with that?” he asked.

“Oh, I think it’s a wonderful idea, given the situation,” Yorix replied.

“And we can get tickets to the big luau there later in the week and have some of Duke’s famous hula pie, and go sightseeing together when we’re not in our rooms doing other things.” I wiggled my eyebrows suggestively.

He took another deep breath, and I was sure he was about to say no, only for him to come out with. “Okay, then.”

“Really?” I squealed.

“Really.”

I almost knocked my coffee over as I jumped up to run around the table to give him a big old hug. “Thank you! And when you guys are our kids’ guncles, we can tell them the cute story about how we all met and got mated and then married all at the same time!”

“Guncle?”

“Gay uncle, silly. And don’t look at me like that. He’s not knocked me up yet. At least I don’t think so.” I hoped not, as I wanted to go to school first, but then we’d had a lot of sex and I wasn’t sure if Mylos had super sperm, and I needed to be on alien birth control instead of human. I really needed to check that out ASAP. Ulalily could probably tell me. Wait - if I were preggers, she’d have told me. Whew. Now to sort out the birth control and talk to Yorix about it. But first -

“Okay, I guess we’d better nail down some details so we can ask Xero to wedding plan it for us!” I eyed his shirt pointedly. “It’s not like you can even put your shirt on correctly these days, so good thing I’ll be around!”

“Yay,” he replied in a barely audible voice, earning him another giggle from me. He smiled at me wryly.

“Um, where’s the little girl’s room?” I asked, and Chris stood up to show me the way.

“You okay?” he asked me. “You seem stressed. Were you that worried how I’d react to your suggestion?” he asked me quietly.

We reached the bathroom door, and I knew this was it. I had to come clean, even if it meant losing the plans we’d just made and his friendship forever.

“I’m sorry!” I choked out, big fat tears rolling down my face. “I lied! I didn’t mean to!”

He stared at me, dumbfounded, pulling me into the bathroom and shutting the door behind us. “What? When?” he asked.

“Back at the Center and kind of just now,” I hiccupped. “I told you I lived with roommates. That was only kinda true.”

“Okay? Explain,” he said, his voice still gentle.

“When I graduated high school and decided to take a gap year, I got a job and started paying a small amount of ‘rent’ to my folks. My roommates are my mom and dad. Um, and my brother.”

He laughed. “Is that all? Wait, so what roommates were you talking about inviting,

because you'd named your parents too?"

"The ones from astronomy camp. We shared the same room since we started going in seventh grade. Do you forgive me? I swear, I'll never lie to you ever again!"

He laughed. "I know you won't, if that one bothered you so much. So the furniture from Ikea?"

"Mama took me shopping my freshman year to get a more grown up looking bedroom."

"Aha." He booped my nose. "Just be completely honest from now on, okay?"

"I just didn't want to mention my parents that day," I said softly, nodding.

"Oh..." He pulled me in for a hug. "Your heart was in the right place, honey, but don't do it again. Also, you need to wash your face. You kinda look like a raccoon now."

I turned to look in the mirror and laughed shakily despite myself. He was right, I totally did.

"I'll leave you to it. All is forgiven, but never again, no matter what, yeah?"

"No matter what," I agreed, taking his proffered pinky, hooking it with my own.

"Pinky swear," we said in unison, shaking.

Then he left me to clean my face up and do my business.

"Waterproof mascara and eyeliner from here on out," I vowed as I desperately tried

not to make it worse. At least my conscience was now clear, and I hadn't lost my new best friend, who apparently still wanted to have a double wedding with me.

It was all good, I decided, and then remembered all the bathrooms had an assistant. One who could help me with some makeup remover, perhaps.

“Hello, bathroom assistant?” I called out.

Chapter 15

Yorix

My Lynn was overjoyed that her friend had not only forgiven her, but still wished to share a wedding ceremony with us and asked her to take a cookery class with him.

“Because I know how to use a stove, a human one, even if the one we've got has a bit of a learning curve because of all the extra features it's got compared to a normal one, but someday, I might have to use a Mylos one, right? I mean the Bride who designed our current kitchen had to leave this behind, after all, when her hubby got reassigned.”

I nodded sagely. “That is somewhat true,” I replied. “We are allowed a certain amount of personal goods when we transfer out. It is most likely that the cooking apparatus and chiller unit”

“And the dishwasher,” my mate added.

“And the dishwasher,” I continued, “would have caused them to exceed the allotted capacity. When the quartermaster showed me the pictures of this place, it was devoid of all other furnishings.”

“Oh! I bet you're right. If they had kids, they'd have all their toys and stuff to take as well as clothes and furniture, and whatever.”

My kunnarskyn and her tablet pinged, alerting us to a message. She hurried over to

pick it up, a look of pure excitement on her face.

“Is yours from Xero? About the wedding?” she asked.

“It is,” I replied, still reading. It was good news indeed, though the timeline was perilously close.

“Xero!”

“Hello, Lynn! Is the proposed booking to your liking?”

“Yes!” she shouted, bouncing up and down on her toes. “Please tell me it’s not just proposed, that you’ve actually booked all of it.”

“Confirming booking now.”

“Did you message Chris and the guys?”

“Since you appeared to be in charge of making decisions, I was waiting for your feedback.”

“Okay, um, I think this would be best as a phone call.” She looked over at me, wishing for my assistance as she’d still not gotten her integrated cell phone and had never used our interfleet comms to initiate a call, only receive them.

“Xeranos, please vid call Chris,” I asked.

“Requesting vid call.”

I pointed behind her as the wall closest to her was already resolving into an image of Chris.

She spun around immediately, waving excitedly at her bestie.

“Did you see?” she squealed loudly. “Oh Em Gee! We’ve got to figure out a way to get our clothes tomorrow and send out our invites and arrange the flights for the day after that!”

A look of profound surprise crossed his face. He sat down, his expression one of a male trying to process what was happening to him unexpectedly.

Xeranos decided to enter the conversation then.

“Might I suggest the pair of you meet for lunch and go visit Bride Right over on The Star Blade ? Lucille there has patterns for all the top designers and can scan your measurements and have everything replicated for you to pick up tomorrow.”

“Oh! That sounds like a fab idea! What do you think, Chris?”

Chris looked relieved that someone had answers to the dilemma of appropriate clothing, at least. Still, he asked, “Um, yeah, but what about the guys? Our grooms will need tuxes too.”

Fortunately, Xeranos had an answer to that as well, and within moments, Lynn and Chris were deciding what to eat and where. Then they ended the comm, and Lynn went rushing out the door, only to turn right back around.

“Aren’t you coming?”

I laughed. “I was wondering if I was included. You took off so fast, I hadn’t had time to pull on my boots!” I pointed down at my bare feet, and her cheeks reddened.

“Oops! But you need to hurry. We don’t have long before the next shuttle leaves.”

I chuckled again, going to the alcove next to the door where we'd placed a small cubby for our footwear, not wishing to mark up our floors unnecessarily. I plucked my boots from it and quickly slid my feet inside. I took a step forward, and the boots adjusted to fit me snugly enough that they would not allow my foot to slide about.

“All done, see?”

She laughed.

“Sorry, I know I'm being a bit ridiculous, but it's the dress! Every girl dreams about what she will wear to her wedding, you know? And now it's my turn to actually go choose for real!”

I slid her smaller hand in mine, lifting it to my lips for a kiss. “Then let us go forth, milady,” I said in the manner that we'd seen on the medieval fantasy vid she'd chosen for us to watch yesterday.

Her cheeks pinkened again to my pleasure, and she giggled. “Oh, you,” she said, but she didn't pull her hand away from mine, and hand in hand, we went through the door.

We arrived just in time for final boarding, and so a very short while later, arrived on The Star Blade.

“Hey!” Chris called out to us from where he was waiting nearby. “Are we ready to do this or what?”

“I definitely am! I've had a picture in my head since I was like six of what I wanted for a dress, so the first one even close to it is mine!” Lynn told him, and he laughed.

“Why does that not surprise me?” he teased her.

“Food first,” I reminded the pair, and Lynn nodded while Chris looked worried.

“Okay, but I’m not sure if I can eat a whole lot. My anxiety is a bit much at the moment.”

Happily enough, a cup of hot jasmine tea seemed to settle most of his nerves enough to eat, and he put away an impressive amount of food from the buffet. So did my Bride and I, and I made a mental note to make sure we had Chinese at least once a week as she really enjoyed it. It was with full bellies that we walked slowly over to the wedding attire shop.

“Well, with a food baby this size, at last we know my dress won’t be too tight on the day!” Lynn laughed.

“It’s only a couple of days away,” I pointed out.

She patted my arm. “You haven’t seen how much I can pack away when I’m stress eating.”

“Hello!” a petite dark haired female approached us. “I’m Lucille! You must be Lynn, Chris, and Yorix. Xero told me to expect you.”

“Great!” Lynn said.

My kunnarskyn went off, the tone indicating it was urgent. I frowned down at it.

“Excuse me,” I said, stepping off to the side to find I had an urgent voice comm from my lab.”

“Yorix,” I said, answering it.

“Sorry to bother you, but it’s Hormel! They insist as you’re the senior technician on this project, they will only speak with you,” Zebulaw replied, looking harassed. “H says if you don’t come to the product launch discussion, they’ll pull the plug and all our work will have gone to waste.”

“Hormel? But the Spam licensing was before my time and we’ve had that available for over three years now.”

He grimaced. “They own Skippy as well.”

Hazzlehop’s head popped into view. “It’s Mark Judd. He owns a large number of their shares and he wants to discuss the science behind it. Something about commercials playing up the replicator angle down on Earth.”

“Why would they- nevermind, I suppose I’ll have to find out on my own.”

“They’re meeting with Commander Gundar and Milarti from Public Relations right now. Sorry, but he asked if I was senior and I stupidly said I was in your absence and that was that,” Zebulaw said with a contrite expression.”

“It is what it is. Hopefully it will not take long. Inform them I will be there shortly. I’ll get a shuttle to take me directly.”

I ended the comm and turned to find my bride and the others looking at me sympathetically.

“I’m sorry, but I have to go.” I raked my hand through my hair. “I promise this will not happen once we are at our wedding and honeymoon trips. I will request the Commander formally assign Zebulaw as head of the Hormel peanut butter project while I am away.

“He's a billionaire media mogul married to a tech giant in her own right. He probably wants to make sure they are depicting the science right and thinks the best way to make sure is to talk to the guy in charge,” Chris said sympathetically.

“It's okay, honey,” Lynn said, placing her hand on my arm. “It can't be helped this time.”

“If you'll allow me to quickly scan you for your measurements, it should be fine, if you trust your Bride to choose your suit for you,” Lucille added.

“I do,” I replied, bending down to capture her lips in a chaste kiss.

Lynn pulled back, laughing. “And remember to do it just like that at the wedding,” she quipped, causing the other two humans to laugh along with her.

“This way.” She had me stand in a spot marked with two boot prints. “Xeranos, please scan him for fitting.”

“Scanning. Adjusting for clothing.”

“He's removing the added bulk from what he's wearing,” Lucille explained to Lynn and Chris.

“Clever,” Chris answered, looking impressed.

“All done,” Xeranos told me cheerfully.

“Okay, you best get going!” Lynn said.

“See you back home.” I bent down to give her another kiss, not wishing to leave her.

“Go on, git,” she said, a tiny smile on her face as she gently swatted my butt.

I did as she said, resentment growing every step of the way.

“

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Chapter 16

Lynn

“O ky, can you show me what you’ve got in dresses?” I said, turning around to face Lucille. We were leaving tomorrow and while doing this without Yorix wasn’t what I’d hoped for, it was what it was. Though, it did mean I could keep the dress a surprise from him as was traditional, which I rather liked the thought of.

“Did you have anything in particular in mind?”

“Well, we’re getting married on a beach, so I’m thinking it should be available in a soft blush pink, kinda like the inside of a seashell.”

“If you’re on a beach, you probably do not wish for a train,” Lucille said thoughtfully.

“No. In fact, I’m thinking mid calf.” I then described to her the dress I’d envisioned since childhood. “No veil,” I added. “Xero’s arranged for me to wear a plumeria crown.”

“I believe I have something that will suit. Not usually worn as a wedding dress, more the mother of the bride or even a bridesmaid, but there’s no reason it can’t be.” She motioned me over to show me something on her tablet.

I gasped. It was perfect!

“Yes, that’s it! Oh, it’s so Aubrey Hepburn! I can wear it to the luau later in the week with my hair up like hers!”

Chris crowded in. “Oh, that’s stunning. You’ll need the shoes too.”

“We can replicate both the dress and the shoes. “If you’ll take your shoes off and stand on the scanner marks, please.”

I did as she asked and Xero made quick work of measuring me. Lucille gestured for Chris to follow her into a small room in the back, where he could look at pictures of suits on the wall turned computer display when the door opened, admitting Oshar and Korah.

“Are we too late?” Korah asked.

I laughed as he looked too cute with the way his face was scrunched up all worried. “Did Xero not tell you that all he needed was to scan you to get your current measurements?”

Korah grinned back at me. “He did but this afternoon was hand-to-hand unarmed sparring, so we left it to a couple of the other instructors to supervise.”

“We’ll do the same for them another day so they can have a free afternoon,” Oshar explained.

“Oh. Well, that’s nice of them. It’s just a shame Yorix can’t be here too.” I couldn’t keep the tone of disappointment out of my voice and they looked at me sympathetically.

“Would it be better if we just left after providing a quick scan?” Oshar asked.

“What? No! I’m really glad you’re here, actually. He’s back there looking at pics of himself in about a million different suits.” I rolled my eyes. “He finds one he likes, then freaks out when he notices the brand. Please go help him decide and calm him down. It’s a tux for a once in a lifetime wedding,” Oshar growled possessively. I ignored his alpha male display and continued, “And he can wear it over and over again to different black tie things. But he just kept saying, ‘More black tie events? What other black tie events?’ and ‘That’s Dolce and Gabbana! Do you know how much that probably costs?’ and ‘Tom Ford! Are we Tom Ford kind of people? I don’t think I’m fancy enough to wear Hugo Boss or Tom Ford!’. And if that’s not enough, he’s having trouble deciding between gray or blue. I had to come out here to get some fresh air before I decided to pick for him. I’ve already chosen my dress and I can’t pick out Yorix’s tux until I can make sure they won’t be wearing the same one! If he’s wearing blue, Yorix will be in gray. If he’s in gray, Yorix will be in black. And if he’s in black, Yorix will be white. My dress is blush, so that’ll be fine.”

They both stared at me dazedly.

“And what colors will we be wearing?” Korah asked, sounding hesitant.

“That depends on what he chooses. Don’t worry, I’ll help you sort that out.”

“So, in that room there?” Oshar asked, pointing..

“Yep. He’s dressed so just go on in.” I snorted. “Everyone thinks bridezilla but no one ever mentions groomzilla.” Now the poor dears were looking very alarmed, so I reached over to pat their arms. “No, he’s not really that bad. I’m just venting. Please go convince him on a tux and then help him choose the color. Then call me in and I’ll decide on Yorix and yours.”

Oshar nodded as they both slowly walked towards the indicated door as if it held their doom.

“I don’t know, maybe we should pretend we didn’t come and go back,” Korah whispered, seemingly unaware that it carried quite well across the small space so I heard every single word.

“And leave him upset and undecided? It’s our wedding, too, and he’s our mate. We can’t do that.”

“But she said zilla at the end of those words and I think that means he’s all ‘rawr’ like that thing in the vids he made us watch.”

“I never thought I’d ever see the day you’d act like a coward.”

I pursed my lips, desperately trying not to giggle at their antics. Mylos might be big, muscly warriors but they were also adorable as hell.

Korah stiffened in offense. “Not a coward! How could you even suggest such a thing?” They stopped in front of the door.. “I’m thinking strategic retreat. After an hour, we could call, and if he’s not decided, have him come home, make him a nice meal, offer him a glass of wine, give him a massage, and once he’s nice and relaxed, we can offer to help him.”

“And by relaxed, you mean loose from all the wine and a massage that is foreplay to a hot and heavy bout of sex,” Oshar scoffed.

I shook with silent laughter. This was pure gold. I couldn’t wait to tell Chris this story later.

“Well, yeah, but what does that have to do with anything?”

The door opened, revealing Chris with Lucille behind him. “We could hear you out there talking! Thank goodness you’re here. I don’t know what to do. Everything

looks great but it's so expensive!"

Korah and Oshar exchanged looked at each other. "Okay, well, let's pretend these don't cost anything, okay? And look at the top three you liked best," Oshar finally suggested.

"Because it's free to us and the Fleet is the one paying for it?" Chris asked. "I thought of that, but I don't want anyone to spend unnecessary money on me. It feels wrong!"

Korah stepped closer to him and placed his hands on his shoulders. "Shh. Calm down."

Oops. Wrong thing to say. He knocked Korah's hands off his shoulders and took a step backward.

"Don't you shush me and tell me to calm down," he replied, indignant.

Oshar glanced back at me. I held up both of my hands in a "See what I mean?" gesture. He sighed in response before turning back to face Chris. "You know we don't have actual money in bank accounts like humans do, right?"

Chris stared at him "Yeah?"

"So while serving in the Fleet, we work in exchange for all we need and whatever we want within reason. This includes living expenses and medical care for extended family if we so choose, and paying for guests to attend significant events, and so on."

Chris deflated, the tension leaving his body. "So what you're saying is while you're not paying cash, you are bartering and have banked or will bank enough work to pay the Fleet back for all of this."

Oshar nodded in silent agreement.

“And when I start selling books or whatever, it’ll go into the kitty to help pay it back too?”

Korah stepped forward, giving him a quick peck on the lips. “Yes, so to speak. That’s all I was trying to say as well.”

“Alright,” he sighed. “That I can live with. Just don’t ever try to calm people down by telling them to calm down and definitely don’t shush anyone but a child or a dog,” he scolded Korah, who had the good sense to look abashed.

“I’m sorry, honey.”

“Right, um, so there’s actually four I really, really like,” Chris said, turning and gesturing for his mates to follow him inside, closing the door.

Several minutes later, Oshar poked his head out.

“You’re done already?” I asked, feeling optimistic.

“Yep. Now we need to know what colors to order for the rest of us, and a few other things.”

“Yes!” I shouted, jumping up from the seat I’d settled down to wait in, clapping my hands as I did so. Now we could get down to the final nitty gritty: choosing the suits for our grooms. They simply needed to be the right colors, preferably in the same style as Chris’s. Easy peasy, right?

Chapter 17

Yorix

“N ow if you’ll excuse me, I need to get back to my Bride. We’re leaving for our wedding tomorrow.”

Mark Judd blinks at me. “Please don’t tell me I pulled you away from your wedding preparations!”

“I was at the shop to select my suit,” I confirmed.

He looked contrite. “I had no idea! I am sorry! That feller simply said he was in charge while you were away. I thought you’d just popped out to lunch or something.” he stood up. “Please accept my profound apologies. I do appreciate you taking the time to explain the tech and agree to be videoed working, after you get back from your honeymoon, naturally.”

“Naturally,” I replied drily.

“It’ll make a huge difference, you’ll see,” he carried on. “Folks will see that even when it’s converted into a replicator recipe, it’s people who make Skippy peanut butter what it is. Human or Mylos, it’s all about people creating good things to eat, from farmer to factory or replicator.” He reached a hand out and I stared at it blankly for a moment before I remembered humans shook hands by way of greeting or sealing a deal, or in thanks. I took it and he gave it a hearty shake. “You’re a very good looking guy, so I’m sure the housewives will all be busting to buy some space

made peanut butter when we export some down from here as a limited edition during product kick off. Anyways, please pass my congratulations along to your lady.” He glanced back at Commander Gundar. “Please have your guy contact my office with details so I can send a food hamper to each of their wedding guests.”

“It’s in Hawaii,” Gundar replied.

“Hawaii! I’ll have to make sure it includes some limited edition cans of Spam from our Hawaiian campaign!” With that, he sailed out the door.

“Sorry, we did try to tell him, but he kept talking over us,” Commandr Gundar explained. “We thought you’d refuse and we could remind him of the financial penalties of backing out.”

I hadn’t realized they could do that, but what was done was done.

“I’ll give you an extra two weeks, so you can honeymoon for a full twenty-eight days,” he added.

Now that was a worthwhile offer I was more than happy to take him up on. I decided I would keep the extra two weeks under my hat, an idea already forming on just how to spend them on a worthy surprise gift to my beloved Lynn.

“Could I possibly borrow a long range Scout craft for those two weeks?” I asked.

“Ah, yes, your Lynn is the recent addition to our new Exo Astronomy and Astrophysics studies program, is she not?” he asked, understanding lighting his eyes.

“I’ll leave you two to iron this out,” Milarti said, making his escape.

“Yes. I was thinking I could take her to see one of the newest nebulas, perhaps one

with an uninhabited nearby planet or moon with a breathable atmosphere.”

“One without dangerous fauna as well,” Gundar replied, eyes twinkling. “XR-492, perhaps? It’s on the edge of explored space, but fairly quiet. I believe it has a moon with proto vegetation and no animal life as of yet really, beyond some small amphibians and extremely primitive fish. Very large fish at that, so I wouldn’t advise swimming or venturing too near a shoreline or embankment. I know about it as Darla spotted a news article about it and had me watch the vid about it.”

“Is there a research station?”

“Not yet, though in the next few cycles, there probably will be. Who knows, perhaps your Lynn will get to be on it and you can go as their food replicator tech.” He smiled. “There is a communications array there though, as well as a satellite recording conditions on the surface, so if you go and require it, assistance will be available.”

I nodded. That sounded perfect. “XR-492 it is then.”

“I’ll have one held for you, prepared for a two week journey. Be aware, even at maximum hyperspeed, it will take you five days each way.”

That was four days we could spend there, more than enough to enjoy the view of the nebula and spend a day or two on the moon.

“Thank you, sir. I will let them know when to send it down in place of the shuttle. I’d like to fly there straight from where we’ll be staying.”

He nodded and I gave him a smart salute before turning on my heel. I felt much better about not being there to help choose my suit, already imagining Lynn’s expression when she realized she was on a solo destination cruise to a newly discovered system

in a prettily colored nebula with me. Surely, she would see the romance in that and be extremely happy. Happy enough to want to have us reclaim each other again and again. My cock twitched in response to my thoughts and once in the elevator, I rearranged myself for comfort.

Chapter 18

Lynn

I decided to board Charlie rather than have him make another long trip to yet another strange place so soon. Besides, Chris was bringing their cats, and I wasn't sure how Charlie would react to suddenly being thrust into a hotel room with them, seeing as we were sharing a room tonight. The ride down was as thrilling as the one we'd taken up, but felt even shorter. Probably because I was so excited, drinking everything in, not wanting to forget a single moment. We broke through the clouds, skimming above the ocean and soon, Honolulu came into view, the ship slowing down to what felt like a normal car speed as it approached the beachside hotel's parking lot. We settled into an area marked off for small Mylos craft, the engines barely cutting out before the pilot was up, bustling about in the cabin.

We all managed to quickly unbuckle ourselves and stand up to accept our garment bags.

"We used to have to land at the Scholarship Center," the pilot said conversationally as he handed me mine, containing my dress. My shoes were packed neatly inside my brand new suitcase as Yorix decided we should get matching hardshell luggage. "Then with so many residents and Fleet families returning so frequently, many of the larger businesses started providing dedicated landing sites. We can also now land at the airports, but since we can do so at the Hilton and only have to walk a very short distance to get inside, I didn't see the point."

"Good call," I said in full agreement.

“Aloha!” a woman called out from outside.

She and the two men with her wore colorful local clothing, she in a floral print muumuu and the men in Hawaiian shirts paired with dark blue cargo shorts. All of them wore slide-on sandals and held leis.

“There’s a gentleman here to help you with your luggage,” she informed us as we came down the ramp. Sure enough, there was a hotel employee with a brass luggage cart who took our bags from us, carefully hanging up our wedding attire so the bottoms weren’t crushed between the suitcases. He offered to also take the cat carriers from Chris but he declined.

Once we were sorted, the woman said, “Again, aloha! And welcome to Hawaii! My cousin Kimo told us you were arriving today and we wished to meet you personally and give you a proper island greeting,” as she and her companions placed a colorful lei around each of our necks. “I’m Leilani, and this is my cousin Keanu, and our friend Roberto.”

“Aloha! I’m Lynn and wow, this is so nice! Did you make these yourselves?”

“No, our auntie did. We helped pick the plumeria and ti leaves for these and your crowns for the wedding, though. Kimo said you were going to the Hilton’s luau on Wednesday, but we’d like to invite you to a smaller one for just our ohana on Saturday. Kimo will be there so you’ll have someone you already know - well, other than just us,” she laughed.

“We would be honored to come,” Korah replied. “We have known Kimo many years and consider him part of our ohana.”

“As you are also ours,” Keanu said.

“Kimo is one of the main hula instructors,” Yorix explained to me softly.

“Once one of the Akanas decides you are part of their ohana, that’s it. All of them claim you,” Roberto chuckled as they followed along behind the luggage cart with us. “I have to watch what I do or I end up with one of the aunties or uncles blowing up my phone. But there’s a lot of love behind it, and you get plenty of good things to eat, and any help you need.”

“That’s what family should do for one another,” Yorix replied approvingly, joining in the conversation.

Korah tugged Chris into his side, pressing a kiss to the side of his head.

“Kimo and his wife have been eager to meet you, but wanted to give us this time uninterrupted to bond and for you to settle into life aboard ship,” he told him gently.

“Oh.” My heart panged as I saw Chris's eyes fill with emotion. “That’s so nice. I’ve never had family who did anything like this for me before or thought about what I might need.”

“Well, you do now,” Keanu informed him staunchly.

I nodded firmly. “Found family is still family. You’re not just a regular old bestie, you silly muggins! You’re the brother I never knew I had.”

Chris swallowed, averting his eyes as he tried to get ahold of his feelings once more.

“That’s today? I didn’t realize it was quite so soon,” he gasped, gesturing towards a sign by the front lobby doors, advertising local Friendship Day activities for guests.

“It is,” Korah replied, a dark expression crossing his face and disappearing so fast

that if I hadn't been looking right at him just then, I'd have missed it. I looked at Yorix who now had a firm set to his mouth.

"Spit it out," Chris said, pulling Korah aside as we entered the lobby, the rest of us following suit.. "I can tell there's something I should know but you would rather not tell me. Just do it and get it over with. If it's my Dad and Brenda, I'd rather hear it now so I can set it aside. I'm not letting them ruin this for me any more than they already have by having Jimmy."

"Humans First is protesting many of the Friendship Day events. Busloads from around the country arrived at Central Park where the flagship picnic is to take place later today. There are also large protests in other major cities, including Cincinnati."

"My father," Chris said, sounding resigned.

My heart hurt for him. Couldn't his asshole family and their friends let him have even one good day?

Korah nodded curtly. "Everything he and Brenda do at the protest is being recorded to be used in court. And if Jimmy is there, we have grounds under the treaty to remove him immediately pending the outcome of a hearing. Indoctrination, cultural alienation of a Mylos young, there's a list of things that breach the terms of the treaty regarding family, young, and treatment of Mylos and Mylos affiliated persons."

Chris's face brightened. "And they'll just swoop in and get him? Then bring him here to us?"

Korah nodded once more, a slow smile spreading across his face as he simply replied, "Yes."

"Great. Here's hoping my dad and Brenda are their usual stupid selves, then." Chris

grinned and I found myself smiling too. I gave him two thumbs up, letting him know I was here for him and that it was all going to go great. I just knew he'd get his fondest wish and Jimmy would find his way home to him.

“Come on. The desk clerk is staring at us and that guy is standing there waiting with all our luggage,” Chris said, grinning back at me.

“Ohana means no one is left behind,” I heard him whisper as he moved closer. “Hang on, Jimmy. We’re coming for you.”

I reached out, giving his hand a quick squeeze as he went past. “It’ll work out,” I said, and he nodded. As we trailed along to the check in desk, my thoughts turned to our spa treatments scheduled for today. Not too long from now, I realized, spotting the clock behind the check in desk. Perfect! We could settle into our room, have something to eat, and go to them. They would help take Chris’s mind off that stupid protest thing and refocus on the wedding, surely.

“Here you are,” the desk clerk said, handing over two door keys. Korah accepted them, passing one over to Yorix. A quick trip up the elevator and within moments we were in the exquisitely appointed double room.

“Thank you, sirs, ma’am. I’ll return to move you to your individual suites once they’re ready,” he said as Oshar thanked the attendant, handing him a cash tip. He left, taking the cart with him. Our garment bags were already hanging in the closet thanks to his attention.

“They’ve already got a litter box and dishes set up here with their usual brand of food and water,” Chris said, sounding impressed.

“I think we should just change out of the suitcases since we’re only in this room for tonight,” I suggested, taking my brush out of my purse, along with a scrunchie. I

pulled my hair up into a ponytail, then replaced my brush, taking out my reef safe SPF infused lip gloss to add a fresh coat.

“Good idea,” Korah agreed, everyone voicing murmurs of agreement along with him.

“I’ll just introduce them to where the boxes are,” Chris said, fussing about the carriers.

My stomach growled, and all eyes turned to look at me. I blushed.

I shrugged it off. “Come on! I’m starving! I looked up the place we’re going to, and it’s rated super high on Trip Advisor, so it’ll probably have a long line!”

“Alright already,” Chris pretended to grump at me, as he fed his furbabies treats. “I’m done. We can go now.”

“About time!” I snarked.

“Wow, hangry much?” he teased.

I giggled. “Maybe a little,” I admitted, putting my lip gloss back into my purse.

“Are you sure it’s safe for us to leave the hotel right now?” Chris asked, biting his lip. “I didn’t see any picketers here, but what if we run into some out there?”

“The manager said that ahead of the events, all known members of Humans First and other hate groups of record had legal orders forbidding them to go anywhere near places that’d registered they were hosting Friendship Day events. The general public was also warned that anyone interfering with a Mylos or their party, or any other tourist, would face immediate arrest. They aren’t playing around,” Korah informed us.

That made me feel better. I did not want those yahoos messing up our trip, not one bit. His words reassured Chris too, as he nodded, his shoulders relaxing as he said, “Okay.”

“Only the spirit of aloha is allowed to prevail,” Korah said, opening the door to allow us all out, then firmly closing it.

Chris’s mood improved as we found our way to the diner, courtesy of Uber. We pointed sights out excitedly to each other, our mates joining in all of us making plans on places to go poke around in later in our trip. Then we were there, hurriedly piling out. Korah paid, adding a nice tip.

“Mahalo nui,” the driver said before rolling his window up and driving away.

There was only a short line as it happened, and I took it as a sign that the stars were smiling down on us still.

“Here you are,” the hostess said, leading us to a table.

“Everything looks so good!” Chris said, once we were seated and had a look at the menus kept on the table. “What do you recommend?” he asked, as our waitress approached.

“Well, the pancakes are delicious, but my personal fave is the loco moco,” she replied. “You can’t get any more Hawaiian than that or a plate lunch.”

“Oh!” he glanced down at the menu, looking to see what a loco moco was. “I’ll have that then, the loco moco, I mean.” He glanced at Korah. “I’ll have to try one of the plate lunches another day.”

I was in full agreement with him on that, because, damn, they looked amazing!

We all decided to have a loco moco and she hurried off to fetch our sodas, the order having been sent directly to the kitchen thanks to her electronic order tablet. As if her walking off had been some sort of signal, phones all around the diner began to ping, as well as Yorix and my kunnarskyns to chime.

“What’s going on?” Chris asked, looking alarmed.

Korah placed his hand over his, stopping him from grabbing his phone, the both of us having received our Mylos compatible phones just before we left the Fleet this morning.

“Let me look. I’ll have better intel than any journalist or vlogger,” Korah replied and I put my own down without looking as Chris replied with his agreement..

Korah glanced at his kunnarskyn, his eyes widening. “What time is your spa thing?” he asked..

“In an hour and a half, why?” I replied, seeing the time on a clock on the wall by the door..

“Okay. You guys go do that and I’ll wait in the lobby for Oshar.”

Chris gasped. “He’s coming now? But he’s to meet the guests and take them to dinner and -”

“The L.T.C.’s mate, Richie, is going to do that with Kimo, and ride down with them all tomorrow as planned.” I grinned at him broadly. “A judge just ordered social services to do a handover. Oshar and Daisy are on their way to pick Jimmy up and bring him here.”

Chris let out a whoop while I fist pumped the air, uncaring that other diners had now

turned to look at us and stare. I'd been right! And now Jimmy was on his way!

"They did? Why? Had they taken him to the protest?" Chris asked excitedly.

"I'll let Oshar explain, but yes and no. It's a bit more than that but nothing that endangered Jimmy personally, okay? So just focus on Jimmy and not anything else you might hear about."

Well, that sounded ominous.

"It's bad, isn't it? What the fuck did they do?" Chris scowled..

Korah sighed. "A teacher and a kid were kidnapped while leaving the picnic in Central Park. Jimmy had overheard your dad talk about a kid from New York being brought to Cincinnati, so he snuck away from the girl they left babysitting him and some other young at the motel they checked into, and went to a nearby Waffle House where he convinced the waitress to call 911."

"Go, Jimmy!" Chris and I chorused.

Korah smiled. "Oshar and Jimmy can tell us the whole story when they get here in a few hours. He's on his way down from the ship now, he has to pick him up and sign papers, then fly to the hotel."

"Maybe I should skip the spa treatment," Chris said.

"Don't you dare!" I told him, jabbing him with my nail. "When he gets here, Korah can let the spa staff know and bring him to us. You can say hello but then he's probably going to need to eat and he won't have many clothes with him or anything! Let Korah and Oshar bond with him by seeing to that, and then after he has a nap, we can go to dinner at the bar and grill."

“I’ll make sure he only has a light meal while we’re out, then,” Korah promised him.

“Okay,” Chris replied sulkily..

“We need to look our best for tomorrow,” I reminded him. “He’ll be excited to see you and be part of the Mylos ohana and have a whale of a time, no matter what.”

“Yeah. You’re right.” His face brightened. “And he won’t ever have to go back! Right?”

“Right. No judge will give him back after this,” Korah agreed as Yorix and Oshar nodded in agreement.

“Okay, who had the Diet Coke?” our waitress asked, reappearing.

I raised my hand, and she placed my drink in front of me. She then handed out the rest of our drinks, left, returning minutes later with our plates of food.

“Oh my gosh!” Chris moaned around his first mouthful. “This is delicious. We totally have to come back tomorrow so Oshar and Jimmy can try this.”

“This is like the ultimate comfort food level. But I don’t think I could eat it every day. All this gravy would go straight to my hips and ass,” I replied.

Yorix pressed a kiss to my cheek. “You’d be beautiful no matter what you ate or where the calories went.”

“Aw!” Chris cooed. “Someone is definitely smitten.”

“Well, he is my perfect match, just like Oshar and Korah are yours,” I pointed out. I sure hoped Jimmy knew how lucky he was to have a brother like Chris, and how

fortunate he was to have Oshar and Korah there for them both.

Chapter 19

Lynn

I needn't have worried. Jimmy turned out to be a complete sweetie pie, enough so that my ovaries were in danger of exploding so my birth control could be overwhelmed enough for Yorix to knock me up. There hadn't been time to find him a suit, but the guys had found him a super cute pink and turquoise Hawaiian shirt from one of the nearby shops, along with shorts and matching swim shoes.

I smoothed a hand down my dress.

"This is it," I said to Chris, who was checking himself one last time in the mirror.

"It is," he agreed as Israel Kamakawiwo'ole's version of "Over the Rainbow" began to play on a ukelele and the singer Xero had arranged for began to croon the song. It was like a dream come true, though reality thus far was much, much better than anything I'd ever imagined.

Chris and I stepped out, watching as our friends and new and old members of our ohana all stood as Jimmy skipped down the aisle towards the arch, clutching his new stuffed honu, Aloha, under one arm. Daddy held out his arms and we each took one as he walked both Chris and I down the aisle. Chris had been touched when he'd offered, and accepted as he and Mama and my siblings became immediate family the moment they all met him, just as I'd known they would. Once at the arch, he stepped to the side, standing next to Jimmy, who smiled up at his new 'Grandpa Tony'. Now our three grooms strode up the aisle, resplendent in matching tuxedos. Yorix stopped

to stand beside me while across from us, Korah and Oshar flanked Chris.

The officiant smiled and everyone sat down.

“It is with extreme joy that I find myself called upon to witness the blissful union of true soul mates. We all have heard the story of how the Mylos came and Ambassador Tellan found his soulmate in Laurel. Many more have found their happily ever after since, and today we are here to celebrate with these two families as they make their vows to each other for all to witness.”

He turned to me. “Do you, Lynn, promise to always be honest and true with your mate? To give him your whole heart and celebrate all of the high points of your life together and to weather any storms as troubles may find you along the way?”

“Oh, I certainly do.” I held my hand out so Yorix could slide my ring on..

Daddy then passed me Yorix’s ring and he held his hand out in turn. “And do you, Yorix -”

“Yes,” he replied eagerly, cutting him off. “She is my everything and always will be.”

I could hear several awws and someone softly crying from among our guests. I smiled at him with what I knew had to be a goofy grin, clumsily sliding his ring onto his finger.

The officiant chuckled, turning his attention to the guys. Daddy reached around me, holding a set of rings out to Korah and Oshar.

Chris and I both stared in surprise, noticing one of the rings was child sized.

“Oshar and Korah have prepared their own vows,” the officiant said.

Both of them looked deep into Chris's eyes with a tender look I recognized well. It was the same way Yorix looked at me, and I him, the one that said "You are my entire universe".

"Since the day our parents knew we'd been conceived, it was always Oshar and Korah this, and Korah and Oshar that. We have been inseparable, twin souls bound in a spiritual brotherhood," Oshar said. "And so the Universe decreed that we were to have a third, to become Oshar, Korah, and Christopher."

"And then the stars smiled down, and saw Jimmy, knowing that he was the young of your heart. You have been more like a father to him than a brother, and so we became Korah, Oshar, Christopher, and James."

"Jimmy!" came the indignant rebuke from the little boy and we all smothered a laugh as chuckles broke out all around us from our guests and the officiant.

Oshar cleared his throat. "I, Oshar, promise to be the mate you deserve. To be the lover who holds you close always, and the friend you can always rely on. I also vow to be the father who will cherish our young and help teach him the way of both of our peoples, not only for Jimmy, but any that destiny may bring our way."

He slid the ring partway onto Chris's finger as Korah spoke. "As always, Oshar and I are united in this. I won't repeat everything he said, but know this: My hearts beat for you."

Chris blinked back tears as Korah reached out to cover Oshar's hand with his own and together, they slid the ring the rest of the way on. Then Tony urged a wide-eyed Jimmy forward as I blinked back my own happy tears.

"Jimmy, you have honored us by joining our ohana, embracing not only your human side but showing a willingness to become Mylos as well. You have bestowed the title

of Papa to me, and so, today I am here with Oshar to give you this token to show the world that you are indeed now our son.”

Jimmy turned to look at the ring Oshar held as Korah took his hand, urging him to offer it to Oshar.

“I gets my own ring?” he whispered in awe.

“You do, because, I, Oshar, swear to love you as a father always should. To accept you always and to guide you as you navigate your way through the path the stars have laid out before you.”

“Yes! I have new daddies!” he shouted excitedly, and my vision blurred as tears ran down my cheeks unchecked now. I’d learned my lesson from before, though, and Max Factor was doing its job at being waterproof.

“I now pronounce you husbands and husband and wife, and all of you ohana!” the officiant cried out, his voice equally choked with emotion.

Chris flung his arms around his mates and Jimmy, who was now in Oshar’s arms,

“Stop it,” I sobbed, joining in on the group hug. “My mascara’s waterproof but I don’t think my blush is.”

Yorix tugged me away, pulling out a hanky to dab at my cheeks.

“It appears it is, honey,” he reassured me as Daddy stepped out between us and the crowd who watched. “And thh...thh...that’s all folks!” he ad libbed. “We’ll meet you all at Duke’s in an hour!”

I threw my head back and laughed. Trust Daddy to find a way to lighten the moment.

The ukulele started up once more and we walked back down the aisle, lined with Mylos warriors holding their ceremonial swords aloft in the perfect fairytale beginning for our happily ever after as one big, happy family.

Chapter 20

Yorix

The week sped by, filled with multiple reclaimings, late breakfasts, sightseeing during the day, and longing and splashing in the pool the couple of evenings we opted to not go out for dinner. The luau was a hit with everyone, especially young Jimmy who wanted to learn to “dance like a warrior and gets to do fire” as he put it.

“I can’t believe we have a wedding to go to,” Lynn laughed as she clipped a sprig of plumeria into her hair. “Especially one that’s Hawaii Five-O themed.”

“By all accounts, Kloria is quite eccentric when it comes to his human crime shows,” I replied.

She giggled. “Okay, having met the guy, I’ll agree with that assessment. Really lovely, but definitely different, albeit in a nice way. I think this will be fun, for sure.”

I thought she was right, but we needed to get moving or we’d be late. “Ready?” I asked her.

“Yep,” she said, patting her hair one last time. “Let’s go.”

We found our friends waiting for us in the hall.

“Where’s Jimmy?” Lynn asked.

“Grandpa Tony is taking him for a ‘boy’s day out’,” Chris replied, using air quotes.

“They are going to the zoo, then to the beach,” Oshar clarified.

“He is looking forward to getting his grandfather to feed him as many shave ices as he can,” Korah grinned.

Lynn laughed. “Knowing Daddy, they got one at the very first stand they got to before getting very far.”

“Probably,” Chris agreed.”But he gets to deal with him all hyped on sugar. I’m sure by the time we get home, he’ll be crashing and be ready for bed.

We all chuckled at that, knowing just how true it was.

“Your mom took your sister out souvenir shopping,” Korah added.

“Nice,” Lynn said.

We reached the elevator and pressed the button.

“I wonder what the wedding is going to be like,” Chris said as we trooped inside the car once the door slid open. “How do you even do a Hawaii Five-O wedding?”

It turned out that how one did this, was to hire a small band who could plug into the food truck’s outlets using long cords in order to reach the close-by section of the beach that the ceremony was being held at. They played the theme tune, which had nearby beach goers and patrons of the food truck as well as its employees loudly singing along, “Bah bah bah bah bah...”

Then the officiant, who was dressed up as a police officer, spoke.

“Do you, Adrian, revoke your right to remain silent, to reveal anything that may be held as proof in the court of love?”

“I do,” Adrian said clearly. “I, Adrian, hereby proclaim my love and adoration for Klora.” He laughed. “Honestly, I wouldn’t have agreed to this if I didn’t.”

We all laughed, because truly, he was being nice about Klora’s unusual wedding plans. I was grateful that my Lynn had not wished to do this. It was fun, but ours had felt spiritual. To each their own, though. No doubt this held deep meaning for them both, especially given how they met.

Adrian continued. “From the moment you appeared, red and blue lights flashing everywhere, ready to investigate the crime and see the perps brought to justice, I knew there was something special about you.”

“Book ‘em, Danno!” someone called out and another laugh rippled through the crowd.

Adrian shook his head chuckling. “I’m trying, give me a minute!”

More laughter. Lynn couldn’t seem to stop giggling and I felt my own face nearly split in two from the huge grin I was sporting myself.

“This is hilarious,” Chris choked out.

“I’m glad we didn’t miss this,” Oshar agreed, chuckling as Korah’s shoulders shook with mirth.

“We shall have to watch this so we can understand the jokes more fully,” he said.

“Right, as I was saying,” Adrian said, grabbing Klora’s hand. “I knew I wanted you,

even if you thought I might be a criminal. But the joke's on us both, as I'm the one cuffing you with this ring to me for eternity, as I vow to love and cherish you forever."

Klora grinned at him, a fang showing.

"I might have taken a while to figure out that the reason my senses were tingling was because you were my mate." He held up a matching band, and Adrian lifted his other hand up for him to slide it on. "I, Klora, not only an astounding investigator for the Mylos fleet, but a fully paid up member of the official Jack Lord Appreciation Society as well as an active member of the Hawaii Five-O Fan Club established in 1968 and now for both the original as well as th reboot, do solemnly affirm these as your rights. You have the right to remain silent as well as tell me off when I mess up. Everything I say or do, you have the right to hold against me if I do mess up. You also have the right to reward me if I don't." He waggled his eyebrows.

I choked back another laugh at his ribald comment. Lynn was doubled over by now.

"I can't," she wheezed.

I patted her back. She wasn't the only one, and he wasn't done yet.

"You have the right to counsel, should you need advice on setting me straight if I mess things up at home. If you cannot find one amongst your friends and our family, you have the right to seek counsel from among mine." he slid the ring on. "I hereby charge you with the crime of stealing my hearts, and declare them lost to you forever."

"I hereby declare you husband and husband," the officiant said, laughing and the band began playing the theme song once more, stopping as the couple reached the shrimp truck.

“Alright, let’s eat!” Kloria yelled.

“This is definitely a wedding to remember,” Lynn laughed as we hurried to get in line.

“Yeah, but you gotta admit, pretty cool to have the guy who played Kamekona in the reboot running a shrimp truck just like the one on the show,” Chris replied. “Same name and all.”

“Yeah, and it certainly looks and smells good.” she agreed.

I stepped over to join Korah and Oshar who were standing by the grooms, adding our congratulations to theirs before we rejoined our mates in line. Reading the menu, I said, “I’m going to order the shoyu.”

“The jambalaya for me,” Lynn decided.

“How about we order one of everything and share so we can taste everything?” Chris suggested and we all readily agreed.

It turned out to be a wise decision. Kamekona’s got five star ratings from each of us before we even finished clearing our plates.

Chapter 21

Lynn

A week in Hawaii with Chris and the guys was great, but the week following was even better as we booked short flights to each of the other islands for what we called our “Island Taster Tour”. On Maui, we visited Halekala National Park where we rented a Wilderness Cabin and hiked one day through a volcanic landscape and the next through lush rainforest, as well as did some stargazing from the peak. The Big Island, we stayed in a hotel by Hilo Bay and enjoyed visiting the Imiloa Astronomy Center as well as more star and nebula gazing, this time from Mauna Ulu Lookout, before returning to our hotel. We also squeezed in some fun time trying out paddleboarding at the Hilo Bayfront Beach Park. Kauai saw us booking a boat tour with Captain Andy for a stunning view of the Na Pali Coast, followed by a lovely dinner back at our hotel and stargazing on the beach. On Lanai, we visited the cultural center and went horseback riding the first day, squeezing in some beach time where we were lucky enough to see some honu on the shore and breaching whales in the sea.

“I wish we could stay longer or come back as there are so many things we didn’t get to see or do,” I sighed as we waited for the shuttle to land at Lanai airport to take us back to the Fleet.

“We can return, though perhaps it would be best to do so multiple times, selecting a different island for a two week visit each time,” Yorix suggested.

I stood up on my tiptoes to kiss him. “You have the best ideas.”

“I hope you still think so tomorrow,” he replied cryptically, just as our ride arrived.

“It’s all yours,” the pilot said, coming out of a much larger saucer than I’d expected, appearing as if it was a double decker.

“What’s this?” I asked him.

“Our ride,” Yorix replied simply.

“Enjoy your flight,” the pilot said, walking into the airport building, pulling a suitcase.

“What’s going on?”

“Oh, he's here on vacation so I’m flying us.”

“Right.”

Yorix wasn’t up to answering any more questions at the moment, it seemed, as he walked up the ramp and went inside, pulling our suitcases behind him. I followed him in and stared. Since when did a saucer come with bunks and a seating area with a replicator?

“Oh!” I said aloud as the answer occurred to me. “He flew a long range shuttle here, didn’t he?”

“It is a longer range craft, yes” he called from the cockpit area.”Stow our cases in some of the lockers under the bunks, then strap in.”

I left him to it, as he was busy doing preflight checks and talking to the tower. When I returned a few minutes later, he helped me with my harness as I still hadn’t quite

caught the hang of it, then spoke to the tower once more. They gave him clearance to take off. Unlike the smaller shuttles I'd ridden in before, I couldn't feel the air cushion disengage but the engines? There was a definite low rumble to be heard and not simply felt.

"Do you think Charlie will be super mad at me? He used to ignore me for a couple days when I returned from Astronomy Camp."

"He'll probably be angry with both of us and demand a lot of belly rubs, ear scratches, and catnip treats, as well as extra Tiki Cat servings in place of some of his kibble," he replied.

Not only was this ship bigger, it was also faster, as evidenced by the fact that we'd shot out over the water and began a vertical climb already. I could see the flames already starting to lick the hull.

How much sooner will this get us to the Flet?"

"We'll reach them in about fifteen minutes."

"Are you serious?"

"Very."

We broke through the atmosphere as he spoke, and then we were surrounded by the stars, with the earth behind and beneath us.

"Holy shit balls, this thing has some get up and go," I marveled.

"It is not as fast nor as agile as a scout ship, but yes, compared to a shuttle, it is much quicker and more responsive."

I sat there, looking at the view in front of me, spellbound.

“Wait a minute, isn’t that the Fleet?” I asked as I spied the ships in the distance, which was growing large instead of smaller.

“It is. We have a side trip to take first.”

I grew excited. Was he taking me on a cruise around the solar system before we headed back?

“You can unbuckle yourself now,” he said, removing his own harness, “and if you go upstairs, you can let Charlie out of the pen.”

“He’s here?”

“He is.”

I quickly divested myself of the straps holding me in, and hurried to climb the ladder that led to the upper deck.

“Hello, baby,” I cooed, pressing a button on the wall to release the clear floor to ceiling door of the pen.

Charlie wasn’t angry at all, or at least, had not yet remembered he was supposed to be. Instead, he meowed at me excitedly, rubbing up against my ankles until I bent down to pick him up. As I did so, I took a good look around the room. The ceiling was domed, the material set to seem as if it were transparent. In fact, the room looked as if it was made to be an observation point, with a pen to keep animal specimens where Charlie had been.

“They need seats up there,” I said, climbing down with a Charlie perched on my hip.

“The view while traveling would be fantastic.

“”It’s customizable,” Yorix replied. “The space is designed to be adaptable.”

“Ah, I see. So, a multipurpose vehicle, huh?”

“Indeed. In this case, it’s a small research vessel, with scientific equipment not installed.”

I felt as if he was being evasive.

“Yorix, what’s really going on?”

“Surprise!” he replied. “Commander Gundar loaned me this so I could take you on a two week trip to the newly discovered system known as XR-492. It’s a pretty nebula with a system in it that has a habitable moon we can spend a day on if you wish, or we can spend the few days we are there admiring the nebula. Only a few days, I’m afraid, as it’s a five day trip each way.”

“You got the Fleet Commander to loan us this as a private space yacht to go see a newly discovered nebula and the system they found within it?” I surely had not heard him right.

“Yes,” he nodded and I squealed. Charlie jumped out of my arms, annoyed, but that was perfectly fine as this big, slightly scaly, cat eyed warrior had just arranged the sweetest, best thing ever for a space nerd like myself so I had to hug the ever loving hell out of him.

“So, you like it then?”

“Oh, me likey. Me likey very, very much.”

“That’s good,” he replied hoarsely, his cock now rock hard against my stomach through his pants. “Um, I need to get back to the cockpit. I am not comfortable relying on manual autopilot in-system.”

“Xeranos can’t pilot this?”

“There’s no AI here on board, save basic computer functions.”

“I see. You best get back then.” And while he was up there? I was going to see if I could find some spare blankets or pull some off some of the bunk mattresses and drag them upstairs to make a place we could lay under the stars. Among other things.

He kissed the tip of my nose. “As soon as I can, I’ll engage it on the course I had programmed in.” He hurried back to the cockpit and I watched as his tight leather pants flexed deliciously with every step he took. Mm...his ass. And his abs...

“I can smell your desire, my Bride. I will tend to you once the autopilot is on!”

Damn it, I needed to get moving then, hadn’t I? Single sleeper bunks, even if Mylos sized, were not going to cut it.

Chapter 22

Yorix

My Mylos drive to claim my mate might have been satisfied in that my hormones had leveled out and my display response calmed. But only somewhat, which many would say was to be expected given that all mated Mylos males always retained some of their scales forever after. Add in the contribution from my mother's species and I was left with not only the initial claiming drive kicked into even higher gear than was average, but an enhanced libido that said every time I could, I must fill my sweet Bride, over and over again, stuffing her full of my cock and seeding her. Rationally, I knew that the choice of when to have a youngling was ultimately up to her, and was a decision to be made with our personal circumstances to be considered. I was fine with waiting if that's what she wanted, but however accepting and positive I felt about waiting, it did not reduce my hormonal response to her. It was fortunate indeed that as an advanced species, there was such a thing as birth control. I'd even gone so far as to ask the medkit aboard to be stocked with injections for myself should she wish to wait, as I thought she would.

I could hear her going up and down the ladder, dragging mattresses which she tried to heave up.

"There's a small turnkey under a flap on one side," I called out to her, navigating carefully through the asteroids.

"What?" she called back.

“On the mattress. Look for an extra bit of fabric that forms a concealed flap.

“Ah, okay, oh! Found it. And if I lift and turn the little handle?”

“It has the nanites compress into something smaller and easier to carry. Then turn the other way and fold back until it clicks. That will have it return to full size.”

“Wow, okay, that is really handy. Also, much better than a blow up mattress because it won’t get a leak and collapse.”

Several minutes later she came down one last time, scooping Charlie off of the co-pilot’s seat and placing him in her lap as she sat.

“Wow, the asteroid belt! Somehow, they're even bigger than I expected.”

“And some are absolutely tiny,” I replied.

“It’s amazing and you’re so skilled, avoiding them all.”

“They have plenty of space between them and have been mapped well.”

I tap the navigational console. “I am following this, making tiny manual corrections as necessary.”

“So, half autopilot, half you.”

“Essentially.”

I took a deep breath, scenting the musk of her.

“You look all sexy, sitting there shirtless, flying us through the debris.” She shifted in

her seat. “Giving off a Han Solo on a Kessel run vibe, to be honest, only a lot more ripped and with fewer clothes.”

I had no idea what she was talking about, but I could scent the arousal her imagination had triggered over my appearance and competence. It was a heady feeling and made it hard to concentrate on anything but her..

“You are beautiful, my starshine, sitting radiant as always beside me. Knowing you are mine is everything. You are my universe.”

She sucked in a breath. “Keep talking like that mister, and you’ll definitely get laid.”

We broke free of the last of the belt and were fast approaching the body they called Neptune.

I sniffed the air delicately, her desire now sitting heavier on it.

“Only if I keep talking?”

“Well, I made us a sort of bed on the floor upstairs,” she replied coyly.

I growled. “Let me enter the full course once we are a little closer to Neptune, and I shall come see this bed.”

“Okay, well, I’m just going to go up there and look at the sights while I wait. The view from the dome is amazing.”

She put the cat down and sauntered off, her hips swaying in a way I knew was meant to be tantalizing. It worked, causing my cock to press painfully against my pants. I could feel myself leaking. The things she did to me!

It was several agonizing minutes before I deemed we were far enough out to engage the autopilot on the preprogrammed course provided to me. I set it up and stalked towards the ladder, climbing up to find Lynn spread upon the bed she'd created, naked and toying with a nipple as she watched Neptune grow larger during our flyby.

"Beautiful," I said, my brain short circuiting. "Mine."

She turned to look at me, her eyes crinkling up at the corners as she smiled. "Yours, and you're mine," she agreed, slipping her other hand down to toy with her clit.

I stalked towards her. I needed to taste her, to slide my fingers up into her hot cunt and feel the honey, smell it, taste it. Something important niggled at the back of my mind. There was something we needed to discuss, something important that we should have talked about before I'd even claimed her the first time. What was it?

"Baby."

"Yes?"

"Want wait for baby?" I could barely get the words out, never mind string a full sentence together, my focus entirely on her fingers slipping inside her tight sheath.

"Oh! It's okay. I'm on birth control."

I knelt between her legs, batting her hand away.

"That's okay, isn't it? Waiting to have a baby?"

"Yes," I replied simply because now I'd gotten my answer and found she'd already thought ahead, there was only one thing to do. I batted her hand away, cupped her ass in my hands and lifted her to meet my descending mouth.

I sucked her sweet, hard little button into my mouth. Lynn mewled, her hands scrubbing at the blankets beneath her. I rubbed my tongue on the underneath of it, increasing my suction.

“Yorix!”

I lapped the tender morsel now.

“So wet for me. Come on, starshine. Come on my tongue for me, then I shall fill you up.”

“Yorix,” she panted but I wasn’t done yet. Not until she screamed my name to the very heavens around us, coating us both in her sweet ambrosia. I sucked her back into my mouth and slid a finger inside her slick folds.

“Yor-ix!”

She arched her back and her eyes wide and unseeing, her pussy clamping down on my fingers, she bucked her hips and a warm gush of her cunt’s honey coated my tongue, lips, and chin as she screamed my name. She was perfection.

Chapter 23

Lynn

Five days of fucking in her our private observatory, interrupted only by trips to the replicator, bathroom, and to change the litter as Charlie's box is not an automated one here, unfortunately. I was deliciously sore in all the right places by the time we were at the nebula.

"It was gorgeous when it was far away, but in it? It's magical," I breathe.

He stands a little taller, shoulders back as he mentally preens.

"This is the best honeymoon," he boasted.

I laughed. "Yes, it is. So, that's the planet we're visiting?" I said, pointing.

"Moon," he corrected, pointing to a larger planet looming near it. It too, was green and blue with swirls of white and touches of brown."

"And we're not visiting there because?"

"Heavy gravity we're not equipped for and hostile life."

"There are people?"

He shook his head. "The scan indicated sauropods."

“Dinosaurs?!”

“I suppose you could call them that.”

“Yeah, I've seen Jurassic Park, so no thanks. The nice friendly little moon it is.”

Something flashed out of the corner of my eye.

“Did you see that?”

“See what?” he asked me, scanning the viewscreen before checking to see if the instruments detected anything.

“I thought I saw something.”

“The scans are all clear. Setting us up in orbit. We can go down tomorrow to have a look around.”

“Okay.”

I leaned forward to lick his bottom lip.

“I bet you can guess what I'm hungry for.”

“Did you not have enough of my cock this morning?”

“Let me see...no. You didn't let me suck it and only gave me two orgasms.”

“I will remedy that right now,” he growled, punching in whatever he needed to do to put us into a stable orbit.

“Oh, will you?” I teased, taking off my top and stepping away before turning on one foot to run to the ladder.

I heard him growl.

“Catch me!” I sang, kicking my loose lounge pants off as I scrambled up the ladder. They landed on his face and I laughed, bolting over to the bed which I dived onto.

“Got you!” he said, bracketing my body with his own.

“So you have. So what are you going to do now?”

“My mate said she was hungry for my cock, so I shall feed her.” He stood, pulling his waistband down, shucking them down his legs before kicking himself free. He knelt down once more, this time positioning himself so his cock hovered over my lips. ”Open.”

I stuck my tongue out, licking the bead of precum I found on his slit. As always, he was salty, slightly musky, and a vague taste of something almost fruity. I sucked his crown in, needing to taste him even more.

“Fuck!” he shouted, throwing his head back. ”Too good,” he panted.

I bobbed my head, needing to drive him as wild as he made me feel.

“Enough!” he cried out suddenly, pulling his cock free. “Need to be in you.”

“Yes, fuck me, Yorix!”

He scooted back, one hand on his shaft, sliding up and down slowly to spread the

moisture seeping around the fine scales. Scales which i knew would rub me in all the right ways as he fucked me.

“I’m going to stuff your hot, wet pussy full of my cock and ride you until you scream.”

“Yes, please,” I whimpered as he lined himself up and with a single thrust, filled and stretched me.

“Always so tight,” he panted, pulling back and thrusting back in, setting a fast, hard pace that left me gasping. He leaned down, capturing a nipple in his mouth and began sucking and nipping and licking.

“Yorix!”

He lifted his head. “My starshine.” He captured my lips, slipping his tongue inside, mimicking how he was plundering me below. I wrapped my arms around his shoulders, trying to anchor myself, to savor the sensations that coursed through me. He knew how to play my body like a fine instrument and it sang for him, reaching a crescendo that sent me tumbling into an abyss that exploded into a white nova.

I came to cuddled against his chest, his hand stroking my hair.

“Still hungry?” he asked with a naughty quirk of his lips when he caught me looking up at him.

I didn’t get a chance to answer as the ship suddenly lurched.

“Warning: unknown vessel attacking. Shields up and at eighty-five percent.”

He rolled away from me, scrambling down the ladder before my mind could finish

processing the computer's announcement.

I swallowed down a lump of fear as the words permeated my brain. We were under attack by someone not even the Mylos knew.

“Shit!”

I grabbed some clothes, hurriedly putting them on before snatching a pair of Yorix's pants to take with me.

“Strap in!” he shouted at me as I reached him. I dropped his pants onto the floor and grabbed a cowering Charlie, stuffing him into one of the passenger seats and making a muddled mess as I buckled him in the best I could.

“Rowrrr! Pffft!”

“Sorry, buddy, but I don't want you flying about and getting hurt,” I said, stumbling as I tried to keep my balance as our craft shuddered and lurched.

“Shields at forty-three percent.”

I didn't want to know what would happen if they failed. I had a sneaking suspicion already that involved a kaboom.

“I'm going to try to set us down on the moon,” he said. “I've already sent a data packet with the distress call. If we can manage to hide from them until help can arrive, we should be okay.”

“But won't it take five days?” I asked, sitting down and doing my best to fasten my harness properly.

“We’re on the edge of our explored space, but not beyond it. There will be an outpost or patrol closer than that. A day or two at most, with any luck. It’s going to be a rough landing, however, as they’ve damaged our landing stabilizers.”

That still sounded like shitty odds but getting exploded into atoms sounded even worse.

“Okay, do it,” I said, clicking the last buckle together. Amazingly it all looks correct. Maybe I’d survive what sounded like a crash landing, after all.

Chapter 24

Yorix

S chordo! The weapons on a research vessel are basic, an obvious oversight by the Galactic Council that we're now paying for. This nebula did not show any inhabited systems for parsecs, so who were these hrecksers? Had we unwittingly crossed paths with a military patrol checking their furthest borders? Whoever they were, they did not appear to understand Galactic Standard as the computer had, upon detection, automatically sent out a greeting explaining we were peaceful explorers. Either that, or they understood just fine and decided to respond with force anyway.

It was obvious they wished to cripple our vessel, as first they targeted our defensive weapons array, after pounding our shields hard enough to break through here and there. They did not aim to destroy, and that chilled me as I did not want those hrescksrs to get their hands on my Bride, nor on myself.

"I'm going to try to set us down on the moon. I've already sent a data packet with the distress call. If we can manage to hide from them until help can arrive, we should be okay."

"But won't it take five days?" she asked, taking her seat and hurriedly fastening herself in.

"We're on the edge of our explored space, but not beyond it. There will be an outpost or patrol closer than that. A day or two at most, with any luck. It's going to be a rough landing, however, as they've damaged our landing stabilizers."

Rough landing was putting it mildly. I had to hope they didn't keep firing at us, and if they did, that they didn't hit our engines so I could at least attempt to guide us to a more or less level spot.

"Okay, do it."

I spared her a glance, making sure she was secured properly before jinking right and beginning a rapid descent towards the moon.

"Ahhh!" she screamed, watching the ground rush towards us far too fast. We had just kissed the upper atmosphere when it happened. A strong jolt and we stopped dead.

No...no...no!

"Tractor beam engaged."

"Schordo!" I scream, slamming my fists on the console in rage.

"Second unknown vessel decloaking."

"What's happening?" Lynn asked, her voice trembling as we began to move backwards.

"They're tractoring us in. We'll have one chance to get away."

We still had engines, so if I set it up right, I could hyperdrive us out here. Something that in hindsight I should have done as soon as they began firing, instead of firing back trying to disable their weapons.

"Once they've got us in their landing bay, they'll turn the beam off. If I manually fly us straight out, I can hit the hyperdrive and get us out of here."

“What about their shields?”

I’ll have to time it before the shield goes back up,” I admitted.

She turned fearful eyes on me. “Do you think they’ll kill us?”

“They haven’t been friendly so far,” I pointed out.

“If we fail, will we explode?”

“We’ll crash into the shields and violently rebound. Strapped in, we’ll probably be injured but survive, but their ship will be hrecked and anyone in that section will probably be dead.

“And if we get out and you activate the hyperdrive that close to their ship?”

“We may tear part of their ship away and it will follow in our wake.”

“So, us or them or bust.” She closed her eyes. “Tell me when it's over. I can’t look.”

My sweet, brave mate had had enough. She was intrepid enough to traipse through the universe to observe its wonders, but this senseless violence was, as the human saying went, doing a number on her.

I could see the landing bay. What was that around the opening? A bunch of holes angled towards the opening? Why?

A light pulsed from them, bathing our vessel, and I had my answer as all our systems died, and with them, any hope we had of escape.

“Starshine, they just shot an EM at us. I am going to have to fight our way out while

we make a run for it. There should be escape pods somewhere, hopefully nearby.”

She opened her beautiful eyes.

“Okay.”

“Get Charlie. There is a carrier somewhere.”

“I saw it and put it with our suitcases.”

She undid her harness and raced to go fetch it while I did the same, only heading for the weapons locker. We settled down with a thump.

“Got it. Stop it, Charlie! Mama is trying to help you, Baby Paws!”

I pulled out two blasters, a sword, and a dagger I tucked into my belt.

“Get behind me,” I said. “I couldn’t see how many there were, as our viewscreens and cameras are dead.”

I stood to one side of the door, with her huddled behind me. A cutting sound let me know they were attempting to cut the door free. We had very little time. Then the mechanism groaned and i saw hands yanking the ramp down. As soon as it was low enough, I yelled, flinging myself out, firing both blasters as I came.

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Source Creation Date: July 21, 2025, 2:30 am

Chapter 25

Lynn

I watched as Yorix went full berserker, leaping out into the midst of a bunch of alien soldiers, his dick literally swinging. I'd grabbed a blaster for myself as I passed the weapons locker, not wanting to be completely useless.

"Mrowww!" Charlie wailed from his kitty backpack as I jumped out after my husband.

"Not today, Satan!" I screamed, finding courage from goodness knows where. I pulled the trigger, aiming it at some fully armored guy who was trying to burn a hole through my man. Nothing happened and I glanced down at it, realizing there must be some sort of safety.

The guy I was aiming for turned his attention to me, dashing towards me.

"I said not today!" and tried again after flicking some switch. A beam of bright red light shot out.

"Oh shit! I'd just burnt a hole through whoever that was. He dropped like the proverbial stone.

"Lynn!" my mate shouted from way too far away. I pumped my legs to reach him. Whoever these guys were, they hadn't had the sense to realize that even a small research vessel might have someone onboard who had battle skills and would respond

to violence with lethal force. They'd only sent about six or seven dudes.

Yorix punched a control by a door and it opened, revealing a corridor with more assholes coming our way.

"This way," Yorix hissed at me, turning the opposite direction. Whoever these guys were, they weren't using energy weapons now, no doubt not wanting to punch a hole here where it would be harder to seal than say, a hangar.

"When did you put on your boots?"

On the way to the navigation console," he replied.

"But you didn't think to put on pants?"

He shrugged, handing me one of the two blasters and unsheathing the sword he'd slung across his back.

"Run ahead and look for escape pods."

I didn't have to be told twice. Luck was on our side, as about ten feet away, I saw what we were after.

"Here!" I called out as he began a deadly dance with one of the aliens. He sliced off its arm and it fell in a shower of sparks before the body crumpled down alongside it.

The others stopped as if sizing him up and he used it as an opportunity to spin my direction and leg it. I smashed a button next to the nearest one, hoping that opened the door instead of shooting it into space. The door swished open, thank God. Unfortunately, so did a door behind us and as the armored soldier came out, he shoved Yorix hard, forcing him into the pod, while with his other hand, he smashed

the button a second time.

“No!” I screamed as I watched in horror as the door closed and the pod ejected. I reached for the button to the next pod, but didn’t make it. The soldier pinned my arms against me, dragging me back through the door he’d come out of.

I flailed against him, trying to point the blasters I held somewhere like a leg, but another soldier came up and easily plucked them out of my hands. I’d thought he’d taken me into a room at first, but now I saw we were in an interior corridor and that the door we’d come through had a seal on this side, I guessed to act as an emergency seal in case of catastrophe. Now I was shoved against the wall and the other soldier was cutting the backpack straps from me.

“No! Don’t hurt Charlie! He’s just a baby!”

Charlie hissed and spat at them. The second soldier held the backpack up, examining him silently. Without a word, he held it out in front of him while the one who had me cuffed my arms behind me and began marching me deeper into the ship. We took a few turns and it rapidly became apparent that their ship was a veritable warren. There were ramps and stairways instead of access ladders and elevators, as well, making it apparent that I was going up. I had a nasty suspicion that I was being taken deep into the bowels of the ship. Another door this time guarded by two more armored assholes and my destination became clear as cell after cell greeted my gaze.

Most of them empty, the occupied ones holding a being of no species I’d ever seen. One looked like a komodo dragon wearing a loincloth, while the other had a vulpine looking man with no pants. I glanced away, not wanting to look at anyone’s dick except for Yorix. Yorix, who they’d ejected into space in an escape pod. I hoped they hadn’t then shot it down. A tear slipped from the corner of my eye. If only one of us got out of this, I was glad it was him. Surely the Mylos would find him and bring him home. He’d be safe and my family would at least get to know what happened to me.

My captor unlocked an empty cell and shoved me inside, closing the door behind me. He then gestured for me to turn around, then put his wrists together and pulled them apart. Hoping he meant that he was going to undo the cuffs, I obliged and sure enough, he removed my shackles. I turned back around in time to see the second jerk put the backpack in another empty cell, close the door, then unzip it to let Charlie out. Charlie dashed off into a far corner, hissing.

Yeah, me too, buddy. Me too.

Chapter 26

Yorix

I 'd failed, both as a mate and a warrior. If I ever got back to the Fleet, I'd have to resign. I could see that now. I'd preferred my work in the lab and while I continued my fight training, I'd made some glaring mistakes and it had cost me my whole reason for breathing.

I watched as the pod headed towards the moon I had planned to explore, turning my head to glare at the two ships who'd refused to even try to talk with us. If we were in their space, they could have simply told us to leave! My hearts stuttered, my body going cold as they streaked away into hyperspace.

"Lynn!" I howled, beating my fists uselessly against the clear window. I raged until exhaustion overtook me, losing consciousness as my pod entered the atmosphere. When I came to, I found my pod had, miraculously, landed in a natural clearing and was in one piece. I looked for the catch to release me from the pod, finally locating it but ending up frustrated as it appeared to be stuck. After some not so gentle persuasion, the door hissed open and I took in a lungful of the humid air, It smelled of wet dirt and vegetation, some of it rotting. It wasn't an entirely pleasant smell, but neither was it the worst thing to have ever assaulted my nose. I stepped out, taking note of the odd springy ground covering, and walked around the edge of the clearing to check it out while stretching my limbs.

It definitely appeared as if they had jettisoned me down here and not followed, which was odd. In fact, none of their behavior made any kind of sense to me at all, from the

way they suddenly appeared and began firing to disable my ship, to the way they tried shooting at us after capture, and then there was the weird thing with the warrior's arm I'd cut off. No blood and he'd simply fallen down after which the rest of his cohort simply stood there.

Still, they had my Bride, and I needed to get her back. Once she was safe, I could grovel before her, begging her for forgiveness for not having kept her safe the way a warrior should. I also needed to get word back to the Fleet about the attack so they would know this region was probably already claimed. Hopefully our little visit hadn't inadvertently sparked a war. Though those hrecksers deserved everything they got for how they reacted to finding our craft here. It was obvious we were no war craft!

I stalked over to the pod, checking the console to see if anything resembled a distress signal array. I tapped my kunnarskyn, not surprised to find no connection to Xeranos or any other of our sentient AIs used throughout our part of the galaxy. I quickly opened the diagnostic subroutine we used for analyzing tech, knowing it would tell me if the pod was emitting any kind of a signal. It was and I quickly zeroed in on the component I was looking for. It was broadcasting on the wrong frequency, but after a lot of painstaking effort, I figured out how to change it to broadcast on ours.

By now the sun was low in the sky and several hours had to have passed. I hoped I was correct and that help was only a day or two away. If I wasn't and we had to wait five or more days, the trail would go cold. The hyperdrive signature would dissipate and my Lynn would be gone forever.

No! The universe would not have brought my starshine to me only to tear her away now. I had to trust in the same fate that brought us together. My stomach rumbled and I sighed, knowing I had to eat but mentally, wanting not to as I felt undeserving. During my rummaging, I'd come across some very dusty looking packs of some kind of ration bars, so I pulled one out and opened it. It was as dry and flavorless as the

packet had alluded to and I found myself wondering just how long these had been in there. The way they crumbled made me think they were well past their best by date though still edible. Then I thought of my starshine and wondered what they were doing to her. Were they hurting her? Had they fed her? Why had they kept her but jettisoned me?

A bright light streaks through the darkening sky and I stiffened. It had slowed and was now moving in a slow zigzagging search pattern.

I reached for my sword, looking for a place to hide and found it beneath a giant fern. The strange craft must have locked onto my beacon despite me changing the frequency. I needed to use the element of surprise and catch them off guard. Perhaps I could take the ship and fly it back, find my beloved, and use it to escape. If not, I prayed that they would lock me up alongside her for I would rather be with her than without, no matter our circumstances.

The ship slowed, spotting my escape pod and instead of landing, hovered above it while a door opened in the side and a tall being jumped out. He was not armoured like the others were and his holstered weapon was not of the same design. He had ears, a nose, and whiskers which reminded me of Charlie, though other than that, his skin was smooth as a human's, though a pale shade of blue, with his braided hair a darker shade of blue.

“Ho!” he called out, looking about, looking concerned rather than hostile.

I decided to chance that he was another alien species who happened to be in close proximity for whatever reason. When I got back, I was going to let the Commandeer know that the surveyors had done a schordo job of checking for sentient traffic in the area.

I came out, hands held wide. A look of relief crossed the male's face, and he copied

my gesture. He looked me up and down, assessing, then took a box off of the utility belt he wore. He mimed me speaking, pointing at it an. Ah, a translation device. It needed enough vocabulary for it to decode my speech. I began by telling him my name, rank, and position within the Fleet, and the story of how I came to be marooned here. That apparently wasn't enough, so I then described our wedding, followed by a description of Kloria and Adrian's. I'd just gotten to the part where we were ordering from the shrimp truck when the device beeped. He held a hand up to stop me and spoke. "I am Hreskuk of the Narldu Cohort. We patrol this area seeking the Ghost Fleet and noticed your beacon. Though it was difficult to pinpoint as it suddenly stopped."

"I changed the frequency in hopes that my people would find me. I am Yoric, of the Mylos Fleet. I was here with my bride celebrating our recent mating with a view of the beautiful nebula."

He looked most alarmed. "Your mate? Where is she now?"

"They pushed me into the pod and kept her," I bit out.

He nodded. "They do that sometimes."

"You know who they are?"

"Ships with an invisibility cloak, armored bots?"

"Bots...that makes sense," I muttered.

"Uh huh. You met the Ghost Fleet. This area used to be overrun by them, but my Cohort and our allies the Grikgr have been hunting them down, destroying them as we come across them. We will send a message out, telling our people they have prisoners and to not destroy any ships they may come across until they've offloaded

them.”

“Offloaded them? Do you know where they are going? And do they leave them unharmed?” He nodded. “There’s a ruined system two days’ journey from here. There’s a decrepit space station that’s still in orbit and atmosphere thanks to maintenance droids who keep it in repair by cannibalizing parts of the interior and ships the bots capture and leave there, presumably for salvage. They offload prisoners there and leave. They are unharmed, though complaining of the horrible rations and stale water they were given aboard the Ghost Fleet’s ships.”

”“What? They leave them there? How do they eat? Do they leave them rations?”

“They don’t, so we routinely visit there once a week to sweep.” he grimaced. “We had to provide space burials for those we found there before we knew what they were doing.”

“How often do they leave people?”

“It varies, but we’ve rescued various species there at least two, maybe three times a month. And in case you’re wondering, they are called the Ghost Fleet because they are the sole surviving remnants from an ancient war. We think they were patrol ships and if they don’t recognize your ship’s transponder as being one of theirs, they move to capture. We believe the space station was where prisoners were processed before sending them to the planet below. It’s hard to tell, as some kind of weapon appears to have been used that decimated everything on it.”

“So they are leaving them there for people who will never come to process them.”

“Yes. it’s blind programming, though occasionally we run across someone like you who gets away. Neverheard of them jettisoning anyone in one of their escape pods though.”

“I’m not even sure now why they have those, if they are all bots.”

“Presumably once upon a time, they had someone overseeing them, a small crew of organics.”

I nodded. That made sense. “Perhaps it was a glitch, but I think perhaps it was the stars smiling fortune down upon me and my Bride. If they’d taken us both, you might never have known they had prisoners and blown up their ships.”

“True. This area is uninhabited for several parsecs so we would not have expected them to have grabbed anyone.”

I bared my teeth in a smile. “See?”

He gestured up at his ship.

“Mind if we land? If you come aboard, we’ll take you to the station to rescue your mate.”

I nodded. If it was a trick, I had my sword and hidden dagger. Something told me I wouldn’t need them, though, and that perhaps, I’d just found my people a new ally.

Chapter 27

Lynn

Being imprisoned was more boring than actually frightening. After locking me and Charlie up in here, no one except a tiny robot on wheels came in, and that only did so to spit out small packets of crap that turned out to be food, along with a small bulb of very plasticky, stale tasting water. The other two prisoners ate the disgustingly dry wafers inside and didn't keel over and die, so I chanced it. They tasted gross and made me fart, which was embarrassing, but that was all. Poor Charlie couldn't open the packets however nor use the bulb, a fact I tried to tell the little robot, only to be ignored.

They'd fed and watered us with far too little eight times when eight of the armored soldiers came back, this time three of them holding sticks with a glowing end. The fox-like man leapt at them, flashing sharp teeth and claws, only to have the stick pound into him. I heard a crackle and the sight of electricity dancing from where it made contact, then the smell of singed flesh and he fell, clutching his side with a barking cry.

"It's going to be alright," I whispered to myself. "Either the Fleet or someone from the alliance will have heard the distress signal, come looking, located the pod, and will soon be coming for me." I knew this deep within my soul. Yorix would not leave me willingly and would do whatever it took to rescue me. I simply had to be patient.

They hauled Fox Man to his feet, cuffing his hands and slinging him between two of them, before unlocking the other prisoner. He came out willingly, hands out and they

cuffed him, moving him to stand next to Fox Man. Next they did me, and I mimicked the second guy, holding my hands out like a good little prisoner. Now they went for Charlie, who was not a happy camper, but also obviously not feeling so good after what must be going on three days without any food or water. One of the soldiers managed to grab him by his tail and I winced as he held poor Charlie by it before stuffing him into the backpack and carrying it out by the ruined straps.

We were then marched back through the strangely laid out ship, exiting into what had to have been a hangar bay. It was not a very good one, however, as I could see interior wall panels had been removed for goodness knows what reason, exposing wiring, pipes, and insulation.

More robots zipped about, but the soldiers paid them no mind. They took us through a door into a corridor with lights that flickered with uncertainty. The entire place was devoid of people, it seemed, except for our party. It was us, the zippy robots of various sizes, and a lot of dust. Wherever we were, it appeared to have been abandoned long ago, so why were we here? We came to what looked like an office and they pushed us onto some chairs, cuffing us to them, then left.

After what had to have been several minutes passed, I called out a tentative, “Hello? Anyone here?”

I didn't get an answer, but surely despite the fine layer of dust filming everything, someone had to be here, right? I mean, they left us here as if expecting someone to be here in the office, or who would arrive. I took a deep breath and tried again.

“Helllloooooo!” I shouted.

“Hellooo!” I heard a familiar voice bellow back.

Was I imagining things?

The door flung open and there stood a sight for sore eyes.

“Yorix!”

He rushed over to me, looking me over. “Are you okay?”

“I’m fine, but Fox Man there isn’t so good. They zapped him pretty bad right before they took us off their ship. Where are we, anyway?”

“On a long abandoned space station,” he replied, pulling a dagger out of his boot and using them to try to pry off my cuffs.

“You got pants,” I observed, feeling oddly pleased about that..

“Yes, my new friends gave me a pair. I think they were intimidated by the size of my cock and it’s fine showing of scales.”

“You had scales all over you,” a cat looking male said from the open doorway, his voice saying one thing, with the translation coming through a box he wore on a utility belt.

“My battle form emerged,” he told me, looking shyly proud.

“I know. By the time we were halfway to the escape pods, you were practically a dragon.”

“I should have defended you better.”

“Shh, just get these off me and let’s go home.” I was done with exploring for a while. I wanted to get back to the Fleet and enroll in my course after taking a few weeks off to decompress. Hopefully we didn’t go anywhere remote for quite some time. After I

graduated, I wanted to study stars and planets well inside Galactic Alliance space, thank you very much.

“His extra scales all but disappeared once he knew we’d find you here and that you’d be fine,” cat dude said.

“I see. Um, and you are?”

“I am Hreskuk of the Narldu Cohort,” he replied, examining Fox Man. “His wound needs tending to, but he should be fine. Their programming must be really starting to go awry. They’ve never done anything like this before.”

“They don’t usually hold burning sticks of electricity on people?”

“They’ve shocked people, yes, but usually it’s a quick poke to simply jolt them.”

“Like a taser then. Wait - did you just say programming?”

“They are bots,” Yorix explained just as my cuffs pinged open. “Remnants of a people who all died in a long forgotten war.”

Fuck. We’d been left waiting for people who would never have come. That was a truly horrifying thought.

“Like how long dead?”

“Help me carry him,” Hreskuk said to our third prisoner buddy, the one I’d taken to mentally calling Mr. Komodo, using a tool off his belt to cut through the cuffs. The male nodded, and together, they carried out Fox Man.

They hadn’t fastened Charlie’s backpack to the chair so I picked it up, following

them out, Yorix's hand a reassuring presence on the small of my back.

"How long dead?" I repeated insistently.

"Millennia. Those little droids scavenge parts from the station and ships the droids capture and leave here to keep this place running, and presumably to repair the Ghost Fleet's ships."

I shivered, hurrying my steps. Millenia? This place was basically a tomb! Ghost Fleet sounded about right.

"What if they come back?"

"We have friends who came along to blast them into eternity," Yorix replied.

We reached the docking bay and there in all its glory was the ship Yorix and I honeymooned in, droids already advancing upon it. Yorix growled, running towards them, sword swinging. They squealed, skittering off. Yorix grinned at me in manic satisfaction, opening the hatch, which was damaged.

"Let's see if that compromised integrity," he said, going in. I ran in behind him and the hatch closed slowly behind us. Far too slowly, so in obvious need of repair.

"If it wasn't for the fried systems, I'd have risked it," he said, walking over to a panel beside the door, opening it, and pulling down a handle that turned out to be some sort of emergency door release.

"It's still dead," he told his new friend.

"We can tow it and wait by the buoy you mentioned," Hreskuk replied, striding over to another vessel. "Come on, let's go. This place always feels like someone is

watching.”

I shivered, not liking it either. I followed Yorix down the ramp and boarded the other vessel behind Hreskuk and Mr. Komodo as they carried in Fox Man.

“Let me drop him off in the medi-bay and then we can go. Strap yourselves in, in case it gets bumpy,” Hreskuk said.

I didn’t have to be told twice. Yorix led me to a seating area behind a cockpit where another of Hreskuk’s Cohort sat at the controls.

“I see you found Lynn,” the male said, surprising me. “I am happy for you, my friend.”

“Yes. Hreskuk and another prisoner are putting a wounded male in the medi-bay.”

“Well, I’m not hanging around any longer. Those blasted droids have already approached our ship twice now.” He began flicking switches and touching screens. Engines rumbled to life. Thankfully their harness system worked more like the five point ones we had back on Earth, so I’d easily done mine up.

Hreskuk and Mr. Komodo returned, quickly sitting down, Hreskuk in the seat next to our friendly pilot.

“Alright, let’s get the Jurtiop out of here!” our pilot shroud.

“Tractor beam locked, so punch it!” Hreskuk replied gleefully.

I was never so glad to leave a place as I was that station, though the Ghost Fleet ship was a close second.

Chapter 28

Yorix

“Exploration protocols have been updated after this,” Commander Gundar informed me. He scowled. “Not that they should have had to have been. That was pure negligence. They accepted the silence of five probes as being malfunctions without checking to see if there might have been another reason.” He pinched the bridge of his nose. “At least the bureaucrat in charge of that fiasco is being replaced and the division responsible being retrained.”

He came around the side of his desk.

“Which brings me to you. You are being given a medal for engaging the enemy and rescuing prisoners of war,”

“But we weren’t at war,” I protested.

“No, but those bots were still fighting a war that ended long ago and thought their prisoners were enemy combatants. The ambassador will be arriving next week to present it to you on behalf of the Elders on the Galactic Council. Who, by the way, are entering talks with the Narldu Cohort, with a look to sign a treaty and help them and the Grikgr hunt down the remaining bot ships, and then destroy the space station. On a personal note, your extra two weeks leave was interrupted by events, so I’ve restarted the clock on that. Take Lynn somewhere to try and forget all of this.

I knew she didn’t want to leave the relative safety of the Fleet right now, and I didn’t

blame her. The Ghost Fleet was out there, somewhere pretty far away, but still, sitting in the midst of a fleet of battle cruisers was pretty comforting. Though I did know a place where she wouldn't mind spending the better part of two weeks - our bed, in my arms, under me, riding me... My cock stiffened in my pants.

"Yes, Commander!" I said, saluting him.

"Dismissed."

I spun on my heel, making my way as fast as I could. I had a mate to ravish as we celebrated our reunification and the good news that Council was going to join the fight to rid the galaxy of the threat of the Ghost Fleet, again and again. And then some more. And next week, after I received my medal, perhaps I'd put it around her neck and watch her pretty tits bounce with it as she rode me. I couldn't think of anything better. After all, she'd earned the thing as much as I did. My brave starshine...

The End (for now!)