

Termanian Lovers

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Amira Press, LLC
Baltimore, MD 21216
www.amirapress.com

Jadeer

Chapter One

Jadeer, Commanding Officer of Prince Torque's elite force, marched with purpose along the palace hall toward his majesty's meeting room. His back ramrod straight, his bearing indicating no time for anyone who would waylay him, he compressed his lips still further in anticipation of the eminent audience with the prince. Even without being told the purpose of the summons, he knew it had to do with Lydian. If the empire survived, it would be no thanks to that infuriating woman.

As he approached, the meeting room doors swung open, and he entered. The prince sat regally among overstuffed pillows at his elbows, adorned as usual in vibrant colors and flowing robes of the priciest silks. Jadeer bowed slightly, "My lord. You wished to see me?"

A plump hand, losing its ability to hold humanoid form, waved through the air. "Yes, Jadeer. Come in, come in. I'm sure you know why I sent for you?"

Of course he knew. Who else would the prince send to recover Lydian? No one else was qualified, as only Jadeer matched—and he liked to think—exceeded her warring abilities. Should the aging monarch send any other officer, Lydian would make short work of him, leaving him dead or severely wounded. No, this was a job for him. Only he would bring her in to justice. Her recent actions were not to be overlooked, no matter what her status in the guard or—

"Jadeer?" The prince interrupted his thoughts, a flagging frown tugging at his features. The fact that most Tormanians lost their shape-shifting abilities after the age of four hundred and fifty did not make the process less revolting.

"Yes, my prince. You wish me to locate Lydian and bring her back to be tried for treason and murder." He sniffed and cleared his throat. "You've made a wise choice as my skills exceed her own in battle. Not many men can match her."

The prince rolled his eyes. Jadeer dropped his gaze to the ornate carpet beneath his feet, preferring its vibrant patterns to ensure the settling of his stomach. The prince spoke before him. "Spare me the stroking of your ego, Jadeer. We all know what a great warrior you are. You are my number one man. And Lydian is my second—or was. Therefore, I'm sending you after her. Her actions are not to be born. Do you understand?"

Jadeer nodded, remaining silent.

"My question to you is, can you do this? Will you be able to handle it, given the circumstances? I don't want to see your emotions get in the way of doing your duty. You and Lydian have a long history together."

"Two hundred twenty, my lord," Jadeer muttered.

"Exactly."

“I assure you, your majesty, my...relationship with Lydian, as it was, is no longer a factor. When she murdered the prime minister, she became public enemy number one. She will pay for her treachery. I can promise you that.” Feeling a need of fresher air, Jadeer strode to the window and waved a hand along the pane. The glass shimmered and dissolved. Fresh air blew in, cooling his heated face. His words had been brave, determined. But could he follow through with it? Lydian was not just anyone. Just as the prince said, they had a long history. Perhaps too long given her recent activity. He breathed deep, resolve washing over him. He knew his duty. “Your majesty, if you will give me a squadron of my own choosing, then I will leave immediately. Intelligence tells me that Lydian has been spotted on Arlong Four. We can head there within the next twenty-four hours.”

“Negative.” The prince leaned forward to tap a bell shaped object resting on a small table at his side. No tone rang out, yet a servant appeared immediately. The prince issued a clipped order, “Send word to the Gate. The Commander and his troops will convene there to pass through to Arlong Four, in three hours.”

Jadeer gasped, “Sir, I need—”

“What you need, Commander, is to follow orders and nothing more.” He slammed a hand down on the arm of his chair. The skin melted and poured over the sides instead. Jadeer turned away. “Listen, Commander. Lydian is on the run. We have no time for all the planning you do, dragging your feet. For all I know, you’re just giving her more time to get away. You and I know that the Gate is the fastest way to Arlong Four, not flying a ship through space several light years. Now, you will have your troops ready in three hours or I will haul you in for high-treason along side Lydian. Is that clear?”

Jadeer bowed again. “Crystal, my prince.”

* * * *

“Do you really want to break that off?” Cordren, Jadeer’s best friend and second in command, chuckled.

Jadeer released his death grip on the arm of his chair. He didn’t like to admit that the prince’s words bothered him as much as they did. The man had very nearly accused him of being in league with Lydian. Forget the fact that he’d worked most of his life in the palace, starting out as a simple servant, not unlike the one who’d answered the prince’s call. He’d worked his way up from the bottom, after many nights learning to fight defensively and offensively at the hands of the greatest teacher on Torman. Some had even said his master was the greatest in the galaxy. Yet, the prince had had the nerve to accuse him, like he’d toss away all of that to fight alongside those who cared nothing for the old ways, of preserving their world’s power. He was offended and angry.

Knowing Jadeer’s thoughts, Cordren patted his shoulder. “Don’t worry about it, my friend. It was the ramblings of an old and dying Tormanian. He could barely hold his form, let alone realize just who it is he was accusing. Everyone knows your loyalty to our world.

Nothing can change that, not even a Tormanian who's sexy in any form she chooses to take."

Jadeer cast him a warning glance. Cordren was easy going, said whatever came to mind, not caring who was offended. But no matter what Lydian had done, she would not be spoken about as if she was a common Drac Whore. "I suggest you watch your mouth, Cordren."

His friend chuckled again, not at all offended. "Just saying. Just saying. So what's our plan?"

Before Jadeer could answer, a servant informed them that the Gate was ready for their transport to Arlong Four. Jadeer swiveled to face his idling troops and stood. "Attention. The Gate is ready. We will pass through and reconvene on the other side. Then you will await my orders. Is that clear?"

"Sir!"

He nodded. "Move out."

As Jadeer approached the Gate with his men, every muscle in his body tensed. The effect of the gelled surface around the square entrance to other worlds, near and far, was such an odd sensation. The Tormanian shape-shifter's molecules were always in a state of instability naturally. The gel's effect caused that unrest to increase, breaking down the individual and putting him back together on the other side. The whole experience left him feeling torn apart, so he used the transport as little as possible. The portal held no such trepidation for Lydian. That's why he wondered about her choice to use a ship, unless of course she was planning to jump to galaxies not yet mapped by the Gate. It was possible, and he had to capture her before that happened. The best way was to overtake her group on Arlong Four. If that meant having his insides shifted around without his control, so be it.

Nearing the gateway, Jadeer almost held back. The organic substance that made up the gel, reached out for him as if inviting him into itself. He wanted to turn it down, but hid his trepidation before his men. The creature engulfed him, bonded to his skin, and as it did, he was immediately thrown back mentally to the first time he met Lydian...

"Master, you can't be serious. Training a female? It's not done," Jadeer complained bitterly. "She'll only get in the way. She won't be any good, and frankly I'll be afraid to hurt her."

"Hurt me?" The fire in the wide topaz eyes, admittedly bewitching though he wouldn't be telling her that, was apparent. "I challenge you, Jadeer, to a match. I guarantee I will win, that I'm better than you."

Jadeer, who was more than confident that he could bring her down, accepted. He readied himself, in a defensive stance, alert, hands at his sides, feet shoulder width apart. Now, if he could stop being so aware of the fact that her rear was rounder than the girls he'd encountered up until now, that her full breasts strained at the elastic material of her workout uniform and that her waist-length mahogany hair, braided and bound with gold hoops at intervals, was not as alluring as it was. All of the females from the west side of the planet tended toward leanness, long slender bodies, beautiful but not nearly as appealing as Lydian.

Her voluptuous figure had him straining his own uniform, between his legs. He hoped she didn't notice, but the drop of her gaze to his crotch told him she did.

He gave a silent groan before attempting to distract her from his swollen appendage. "Will you fight or admire me?"

She sneered and leapt immediately into the air, shape-shifting as she soared, to an Earth tiger. Stripes lined her soft skin, teeth sharpened and her nose thickened and formed to that of the beast she imitated. In seconds, she was on him, fully changed and digging claws into him. Damn, she was fast. Jadeer pushed backward and landed on the floor, before using his feet to kick away the large cat. With a twist and a roll, he was behind her, wrapping the limbs of a hybender tree around her upper torso. Native to the hybender were dishabilitating thorns that rendered those they pieced, inactive for an hour. But before the thorns broke through the flesh, she changed again to a steel pire. His maneuver failed, but he wasn't giving up so easily.

For hours they fought, the master on the sidelines, calling encouragement and direction to both. Jadeer gave it his all, but soon had to admit she was as good as he was, maybe better. It was a grudging admission, one he kept to himself. The master called the match, and the fighting ceased. Both were panting with exhaustion, bleeding and stood with torn clothing. Jadeer fought to avert his gaze from the fact that Lydian's tight uniform was now torn right along the line between her gorgeous breasts. Again his arousal was ignited. He found himself wishing the material had torn further, so he could get a good look at the erect nipples that were clearly defined.

He licked his lips and ran a hand through his hair. "Well, you didn't 'best' me as you claimed. I knew that you wouldn't, being female."

The topaz deepened, "I may not have bested you, but you have to admit that I am good, as good as any man." She sauntered up to him, the curved hips swaying side to side, almost mesmerizing him. She was so beautiful, so sexy. "So what do you think women are for, Mr. Wanna-Be-General? Mating? Yes, that's what you think. I can see it in your eyes."

Jadeer took a step back. He was actually seeing a woman from his sector. Well, they'd gone out once or twice. They were not committed, but he had no wish to get involved with this female. She was trouble and that was clear by her bold stance and her bold words. Still, he couldn't deny wanting her. Now that she was within inches of him, he could see clear down the front of her torn uniform. Her luminescent skin with its light blue undertone, native to the women of their species, was doing things to his molecules. They jumped and raced about as he grew harder, extending against his pants. "Not interested, thanks."

Lydian looked down and grinned. She stepped closer until her soft body brushed his, "Would you look at that? Doesn't look at all like you're not interested. In fact, I think you want to bury yourself inside me right now, right in front of the master."

Her whispered words set him on fire. He threw caution to the wind and grabbed her close, covering her mouth in a punishing kiss. His tongue extended into her mouth, stroking the underside of hers until the tone of pleasure females emitted began to rise in her throat.

Jadeer ran his hands down her arms and slid them around to her rear, lifting her to meet his thick erection. The tone increased, almost drowning out the cleared throat of the master.

Jadeer broke away, pushing her from him. “You’re little more than a Drac Whore,” he growled.

Sharp nails tore along his face, before she turned on her heels and walked out. Jadeer put a hand to his cheek, knowing he was already done in. Lydian was a force to be reckoned with, a danger to his mental stability. Nevertheless, before the week was out, he was determined to have her in his bed.

Chapter Two

Jadeer stood on a hill overlooking the Valley of Darkness on Arlong Four. In that valley was most likely where Lydian was hidden, along with the other traitors of their laws. He would track them down if it was the last thing he did. Then Lydian would give an explanation of her actions, before he hauled her in. It wasn't likely that she would come without a fight, but contrary to how it had been at their first meeting, he did develop his skill beyond hers. It came of determination and pushing his body day and night to be the best. That had always been his dream, so that he could obtain the position he held today. It was what his parents would have wanted for him. He did it in honor of their memory.

Cordren moved up alongside him, "Like always? I lead a team and you?"

Jadeer nodded, "Yes, but four. One head north, one south and so on. They're out there." He lifted his nose to the air, having taken on the form of an Earth bear. He could smell for miles. "I have her scent, but it's coming from several directions. A trick to confuse us."

"Well you can be sure if you have her scent, she has yours. They'll be waiting for us, planning an ambush probably," Cordren warned as he transformed to an animal native to their world, one that not only had a strong sense of smell, but was fast on its feet.

Jadeer followed suit. "Let them plan all they want. I will bring her in, one way or another."

"You don't mean dead or alive?" Cordren's voice was thick, his vocal cords not working as easily as in humanoid form. "Did you forget who she is?"

"I know who she is, and no I didn't mean dead or alive. I meant I'll bring her down, and arrest every one of the people who were foolish enough to follow her. She will stand trial, maybe even be killed for her crimes."

"You can't tell me that doesn't bother you, that none of this is getting to you. The two of you have gone through a lot over the last hundred years. What with Kitten and everything. Can you honestly say you're not questioning your position on all this, Jadeer? Your duty?"

Jadeer growled, and moved back from his friend. "Don't dare question my loyalty to the prince and our world. I am not the one who has murdered in cold blood. Lydian has always been impulsive, lead around by emotions rather than logic. I won't lie and say I'm not affected. I wouldn't be Torman if I wasn't affected. But I *do* know my duty if no one else does! Now move out."

He searched for what seemed like hours. Arlong Four was one of the biggest planets in the galaxy, situated on the outskirts of the protected planets. The terrain was rough and dangerous, rife with poisonous plants, Tormanian-eating creatures, and who knows what other undiscovered hazards. The valley itself covered two-thirds of the planet, yet was named a valley because of its deep recess into the surface of the world. Lydian hiding there was a good strategy, both in the risk her hunters took to run her to ground and the fact that if she fled the galaxy, it was only a short space ride to the only stable worm hole in the area.

With that thought, Jadeer quickened his speed, and fought to isolate her scent. He preferred not to examine the feelings churning regarding Lydian's possible plans.

Coming to a fork where her scent went off in three different directions, Jadeer paused and looked over his shoulder. He wondered at what point he'd become separated from his group. It was a breach in protocol. Everyone stays by someone else. No one goes it alone. "If anything happens to them...," he muttered.

"You should worry more about yourself," a voice called before a black creature leapt down on him from above.

Jadeer rolled left and flipped to face the creature. It was a black panther, large, maybe five hundred pounds at least. Its scent was easily recognizable, the only man who had been a rival for Lydian. A man who'd continued to sniff around her even as recent as a week ago. "Lam, what are you doing here?"

The man transformed and stood humanoid. "Don't you know? Lydian and I are together now. In fact, last night was incredible. I took her as soon as we arrived. We didn't get much sleep at all."

"Bastard!" Jadeer leapt toward Lam, claws readied to rip him to shreds. Lam leapt straight up to the tree he'd fallen from, at the same time transforming. He dropped down again, and the two tangled in fur, teeth and claws, each determined to destroy the other.

"Stop it now, you fools!"

At Lydian's voice, Jadeer kicked hard at Lam, sending him flying against a tree. He stood to face her and his breath caught. Always before she'd affected him this way, with her long shapely legs, her large breasts and hips a man could hang on to as he road deep and hard. Desire nearly dropped him back down to his knees.

"Hello, Lydian," he finally said, though not without a catch in his throat.

She smiled that cocky smile, one that told him often that she knew her affect on his senses. "Hello, my husband. Have you come to arrest me?"

"That's the plan." He took a firmer stance, brushing away leaves and dirt from his uniform. "I see you brought Lam in on your activities. So he has you after all, after pursuing you for so many years, despite the fact that you belonged to me."

She sighed, her gaze flicking to Lam and back to Jadeer. "We're fighting for the same cause, darling. It's as simple as that."

"You used to fight alongside me, Lydian. What happened? Why did you become a murderess, killing the prime minister?" Jadeer struggled to understand the woman whom he'd lived with for years, the woman who'd cried—the only time he'd ever seen her do so—when they lost their daughter in the ship explosion last year. Kitten had been their only child. It had nearly destroyed him. Knowing Lydian needed him to be strong while she

grieved was the only thing that brought him through, especially with her parents away on a five year mission. It would take them years to get back. By then, hopefully, the pain that still pulsed inside him would lessen. How could she now fight on the side against her government when all they wanted to do was to protect the people of Torman? He just couldn't comprehend it.

Lydian turned to Lam, "Get out of here. I wish to speak with my husband alone."

"What? No, he'll try to take you back, make you stand trial. That's not a part of the plan, Lydian. You and I—"

"Go!" she demanded. Jadeer didn't think he could feel less respect for Lam having just been commanded like he was a boy. He should have held a leading role, but it was obvious he didn't in this band of criminals. It hurt to know his wife was capable of leading the rebels. Lydian turned back to him. "Jadeer, come with me. I plan to leave this galaxy for a while. We can still fight side by side, as always."

She advanced on him, and he watched her closely for a sign that she would transform to attack. Instead his lust for his wife escalated. It had been days since he'd made love to her. The ache to do so was strong, and he saw it reflected in her eyes. But how could he be sure she wasn't trying to seduce him to get her way? To trap him in order to make it to the worm hole. For the first time, since falling in love with her, Jadeer didn't trust the woman he loved with all his heart. And what if what Lam said was true, that she was now his lover. Lydian hadn't denied it when he said Lam had her now. It hurt and angered him in one stretch.

When she was close, he closed rough fingers around her arms, dragging her against him. She cried out, but he forced away the pain of having hurt her. Bringing down his mouth on hers, Jadeer punished her for leaving him, for being with a man she knew he hated, for making him still crave every inch of her lush figure. Soon the anger melted completely into desire. His senses reeled with her sweetness, and the kiss gentled. He released her arms, to encircle his hands around her narrow waist.

Lydian curved against him, moving in a way to make him grow. She knew how to please him, and it was making him lose control. Duty told him to arrest her and be done with it. The voice of his desires screamed "take her now". He listened to his body. Pushing her down on the ground, careful not to hurt her again, he tugged at her clothing. Before long, she was completely naked beneath him. Her skin glowed brighter as he fondled her firm breasts, pinching her nipples before sucking first one then the other between his lips.

Lydian began to vibrate in that musical tone when she was turned on. Jadeer had every intention of driving it as high as it went, creating a cloud of harmony around them which enhanced both their pleasure. He pulled her legs apart with a brief glance at her face. Her eyes were closed, her lips parted. Her breaths were shallow and rapid. He looked down between her legs at her center. She was already wet for him, so he slid two fingers inside her, stroking deep and then out again. Feeling a need to taste her, he followed the path his fingers took with his tongue. A dip of it inside her delicious mound and he was lost. He lapped and fed for long moments while his wife squirmed and whimpered.

She pleaded for him not to stop, which he had no plans to do. When she'd released in his mouth several times, satisfying only the first level of his lust, he removed his own clothes and positioned himself above her. She stopped him.

“Not yet, Jadeer. I want to taste you as you've tasted me.” Her eyes were dark and clouded with hunger and desire. She hooked hands on his hips, guiding him higher, so that he now knelt with a knee on either side of her head. He knew he was erect enough and long enough to extend down to her lovely mouth as she lay flat, but she was eager to have all of him. Lydian lifted her head and began to swallow inch by inch into her tight mouth and down to her throat.

Jadeer's head began to spin with how good it felt. Always Lydian had been able to please him sexually. He watched with fascination as she slid his shaft in and out of her mouth, all the way to the hilt and out again. He wrapped fingers in her hair, which had come loose from its customary braid, and began to pump his hips so that he made love to her mouth. The build up came quickly. He was ready to release his seed in her mouth. Lydian loved to drink from him.

Instead, she pulled back. “No darling. I'm aching for you inside me. Put it in me now.”

He complied, moving down her body and lifting her legs. He plunged full inside her, her insides fitting against his shaft like a glove. Jadeer groaned, ready to burst. Torman women were the best in the universe, he declared mentally. Their sweet sex was tight with muscles that made a man lose himself inside them. And as far as he was concerned, Lydian was better than every one of them.

With each stroke, Lydian sang louder and higher. The pleasure base increased until every nerve ending in Jadeer's body vibrated with the harmony. He bounced against her bottom when he lifted her higher. He caressed her long smooth legs, pinched her nipples and drove in deeper still, just as he exploded inside her. He threw back his head and cried out his satisfaction, Lydian calling with him.

A few hours later, Jadeer lay still, with Lydian tucked against him. They'd moved to the higher branches of a tree where the leaves were as thick and soft as a bed. He'd taken her many more times, men and women of their species able to make love as long and longer than their battles. Soon enough he'd have to arrest her, put her in shackles to lead her back, but for now, he only desired to lay with himself still buried between her folds. Who knew, this might be the last time he could lay with her, and it was destroying him.

Chapter Three

Jadeer had been careless. He'd fallen asleep to regenerate. He should have realized that Lydian would have a plan. Now he was the one shackled, to a hybender tree—naked. One false move and he'd pierce his shaft, which would not be enjoyable at all. She'd kissed him, professed her love for him always. The most humiliating of all was that Lam had stood there watching, laughing at him. How had he let his wife get the upper hand? He was a disgrace to his uniform. Yet, despite his predicament, something inside was relieved. She would have longer to be free, maybe even come to her senses. Then he'd work something out. Yes, he'd changed his mind. He'd figure out a way to save his wife's life. Maybe she would have to spend the rest of her life in jail, but the prince would allow him to visit often. That might work.

"Well, well, well. Looks like someone is in a real predicament." Cordren laughed from somewhere behind him.

"Cut it, Cordren, and get me loose," Jadeer ordered. "If we hurry, we can catch up to them before they get to the worm hole."

Cordren moved to comply, producing a small red key to release the shackles. "Just how do you plan to do that? We came through the Gate, remember?"

Jadeer snatched up his clothes and dressed quickly, his eyes scanning the surrounding area. He didn't doubt that Cordren had told the other men to stay back, saving their commander the embarrassment of being seen the way he was. "I took the liberty of having one travel here just in case we didn't catch up to them. It should be waiting on high ground by now. Let's go."

The ship was just where Jadeer expected, and as he strapped himself in, the pilot booted the engine and shot up to the planet's orbit within moments. The ship was the latest in their borrowed technology, able to go from zero to light speed in seven point eight seconds. There wasn't much Jadeer enjoyed more than flying in one.

When they reached space, an alert sounded almost immediately. "Sir, Commander Lydian's ship has been spotted, just ahead. Shall we pursue?"

He nodded. "Yes, of course. That's what we're out here to do. Catch her."

The words sparked a memory of Lydian running along the shore of the Sadian Sea where they'd spent their honeymoon. He clearly saw in his mind's eye, her long flowing hair bouncing against her back as she ran, tossing over her shoulder, "catch me if you can, Jadeer."

He had vowed then to catch her, every time, to hold her in his arms and never let her go. But simple times like that had turned into heated arguments over politics, the state of affairs and how the prince chose to run the world. Lydian had claimed that there were more things happening than he saw, if only he would get his head out of the stratosphere and open his eyes.

“Jadeer, I can’t believe you don’t know these things. The battle with the people of Earth is over. They don’t pose a threat anymore. They don’t want our planet for expansion from their own polluted home. Can’t you see that?”

Frustration and annoyance battled within him, at his wife’s constant need to belittle the prince’s caution against a people that had only meant war. “No, I don’t see that. Just because they’ve backed off means nothing. We barely overcame that last time. They have weapons we haven’t begun to develop, technology we can only dream of. We were fooled once, being invited there to increase amicable relations. Look how that turned out. And the treaty? A joke!”

She stroked his back then, “I know. I know, darling. The death of your parents in the first attack was a terrible loss, along with thousands of other Tormans, but the Earthlings have left our galaxy and are on to find others. And you must admit it was generous of them to share a little of their inventions to help us in the path to perfecting space travel.” She grinned and climbed onto his lap, wiggling to make him hard. “Before Earthlings came along, we were stuck in our own galaxy, never experiencing the thrill of extensive space travel or being able to transform to their interesting creatures.”

“I’ll give you that.” He paused, then continued. “And how will we resolve this argument if you keep doing that. You’re making me hard.”

“That’s the whole point, genius,” she giggled. Then she grew serious. “I love you, Jadeer. Promise we’ll always stand by each other.”

He frowned, “What? Where did that come from?”

“Promise.”

He sighed, “Okay, my wife. I promise.”

He saw turmoil in her eyes even then. She battled with her own beliefs about the prince’s wasted resources. Sure many Tormans had a hard time feeding themselves, and maybe jobs were getting scarcer in order to pay for defense systems, but it was for their protection and for research. They had to make progress, if not to advance beyond Earth’s technology at least to match it. They may be gearing up to attack again. The prince believed it was only a matter of time. Tormanians had to be ready whether they liked it or not.

Jadeer shook the thoughts from his mind, as he enjoyed the feel of his wife on his lap. “Let’s talk of other things, darling. Like how quickly I can get my fingers inside your sweet wetness.”

“Mmm, Jadeer.”

He came to himself, as hard as a Tormanian boulder. He’d spent hours the night before, making love to his wife, yet he could do it all over again. How he wanted her, soft and supple. They could immerse themselves in the baths of Torman mountain, making love in

the warm bubbles. More than once, he'd been late to duty because he'd been busy taking his wife from behind in those waters. *Just once more*, he pleaded mentally.

Suddenly, a hard jolt nearly unseated him, jarring him from his imaginings. Jadeer looked up through the front window panel of the ship to see three other Tormanian vessels circling his wife's ship. "What in Drac is going on, Cordren?"

Cordren's chair spun out across the floor, levitating above the powerful magnet that repelled their seats just enough to allow them to maneuver all around the bridge, unhindered. "Lydian's under attack. Two, no three Tormanian ships came out of nowhere and began to hit her with pulses set to disable her craft. The idiots don't know what they're doing. They're not in proper position. The shock waves are rocking us and threatening to damage our ship as well."

Jadeer waved his hand above a button in his arm chair and zoomed forward, better to see the activity ahead of him. "Ensign, open a channel," he bellowed.

"Sir."

"Tormanian vessels, this is Commander Jadeer of the Torman Prince's elite force. I order you to cease and desist attacking that craft. Why have you interfered with my mission?"

The answer came immediately, though the attack did not lessen. "Negative, Commander. We have orders from the prince. Should Commander Lydian head toward the worm hole, we are to destroy her vessel, no questions asked."

A knot closed Jadeer's throat. He started for a moment, unable to comprehend that his fellow countrymen had been ordered to kill his wife. Lydian, whom he loved to distraction. Lydian, who had born his daughter and who he had hoped to one day convince to have more children with him, when she was stronger from the loss of their little one. This was not, could not be happening.

Before Jadeer could issue his next command, Cordron flew past toward a silver panel, punching buttons fiercely. He brought up a two by two screen littered with glowing lines, Jadeer knew was navigational. No one was a better pilot or shooter than Cordron. The pulse was readied. Jadeer noticed the green flashing light indicating that it was primed. His friend turned to look at him, ready to punch it when he gave the order.

Jadeer turned back to the screen as fire ignited the back of his wife's ship. Though she and her people fought hard, they were no match for three other vessels with trained gunmen aboard. At best, he imagined she had no one more qualified than Lam. It was common knowledge that Lam couldn't hit the broadside of a Tormon mountain at fifty meters out. He had to make a decision.

Unexpectedly, the black screen of their window transformed to the face of his wife. The connection was weak. Lines threaded through the picture, distorting her lovely face. Tears ran down her cheeks, a spot of dirt smudged her face. In the background, her comrades

were running about attempting to put out fires. As he'd just been thinking earlier, Jadeer marveled that she was crying. It tore at his insides.

"Jadeer please," she begged, clutching her stomach. Had she been injured? He stood, leaving the stability of his chair. The rocking of the ship tossed him about with each shockwave from the attack only meters away. He gripped the dash in front of him for stability, his eyes drinking her in. For a moment she closed her eyes and then spoke again. "I know what it means to walk away from all you stood for, Jadeer. And it's not an easy choice. You promised to stand by me through anything. I love you, my husband. I would not ask you now, if it was only for myself."

His eyes widened. He leaned closer still, aching to touch her, to let her know everything would be okay. But how could he promise that in a time like this?

"Jadeer," she whimpered. "I'm pregnant. I'm having another baby. Please, Jadeer. If not for me, please save our baby. I don't want to lose another one, not like this. Please, not like this again."

Duty. It had been everything to him. His position as the number one commander beneath the prince had been a dream come true. He had a wife that Torman men—and even males from other planets—had desired. The world was his. But maybe it was too much. Maybe a man wasn't meant to have it all. He became too proud. Something needed to happen to humble him, let him know he was still insignificant in the grand scheme of things.

"Jadeer!" Cordron and Lydian called out to him simultaneously.

He spun around, nodding to Cordron. "Do it. Save Lydian. Save my wife."

Cordron immediately let loose a volley of shots that peppered the three Torman crafts. Being skilled in flight and fighting ability beyond his opponents, he spun the craft, dislodging Jadeer from his perch and dumping him on the floor. Jadeer sprung up, to strap himself in his seat again. When his gaze met the place his wife's ship should have been, only debris was in its place.

"No." Tears pooled in his eyes and fell from his cheeks, to stain his uniform. His wife, his baby? Gone? How could he possibly live through it or with the guilt, knowing if he'd acted sooner she'd be okay? "Lydian," he gasped.

"Don't worry, my friend," Cordron laughed. He spun the craft and angled it so that Jadeer could see his wife's vessel making a hard and fast descent into the worm hole. "She might be bouncing off the sides of that snake, but she'll make it through, I don't doubt."

Relief flooded Jadeer. He swiped away the tears before anyone could take notice. He cleared his throat and sat up straighter. "Cordron, send those vessels back to Torman, ready all pods to send back the crew and yourself. I will pilot this ship through the worm hole after my wife. From this moment on, I'll be in exile, but at least I'll be at her side."

Cordron, obviously having enjoyed himself to Jadeer's annoyance, laughed again. "Negative, my friend. I've been wanting to see the universe. This is as good a time as any."

Chapter Four

Waving a hand over the door panel of his ship, Jadeer rushed down the stairs, even as they extended. His only thought was getting to Lydian to be sure she was okay. Getting all of his men launched in pods before he and Cordron headed inside the worm hole, took longer than he anticipated. Later they'd followed Lydian's trail to a small satellite planet three hundred thousand miles from Earth. He could only hope she and the baby were fine.

The wreckage was extensive; parts of the fuselage littered the grounds. He had to climb over seats torn from their magnetic guidance. When he rounded the hull, still seeking survivors, he paused at coming upon Lam with his arm around Lydian's waist, supporting her. Rage and jealousy battled in his mind. Doubts assailed him. Was the baby Lydian carried truly his, or was it Lam's? He could not help thinking that the two of them were using him, making him a fool. While there had been no mistaking the love that always shined from Lydian's eyes when she watched him, it could have been manufactured.

He surged ahead, allowing his anger to strengthen him. Without a thought, he used one hand to lift Lam off his feet and toss him away. The planet's lesser gravity egged on the thrust by causing Lam to hurtle backward, head over feet for several yards. Jadeer turned to face his wife, taking her into his arms and holding her close. "Are you okay, Lydian? And the baby?"

She nodded, nuzzling closer to him, "Yes, Jadeer. I know how hard it was for you to throw away your dreams to save...our child."

Why had she hesitated? He lifted her chin to stare down into her eyes. He could read no guilt. "Not just the baby, but you also. I don't know what I would have done if I lost you. Losing Kitten was more than I thought I'd have to bear in this lifetime."

She agreed, "As did I, darling. But now we can start again. I had hoped to travel to Earth and convince its leaders to travel back to Torman with me. Somehow I thought they could convince the prince that they had no ulterior motives. The fighting is actually over."

"Oh my sweet Lydian," he sighed into her hair, which smelled of smoke and honeysuckle. "Had you returned with Earth's leader, he would bring a whole entourage of protectors with him. Imagine what that would look like to our forces? Hmm? An invasion maybe? Without trying to, you would have caused a war. You are more intelligent than this. Your plan is not well thought out."

He knew he shouldn't have said it a second after it left his lips. She shoved away from him. "How dare you, Jadeer? Why must you always belittle me as a warrior? I am as good a fighter as you are. And I want what's best for our people."

She was even more beautiful when she was angry. The golden flecks in her eyes danced about, lighting a fire that bewitched him. "First of all, my dear wife, yes. You are indeed a fine warrior, *almost* as good as I am. However, you have never been the strongest strategist. You are impulsive, quick to act on whatever has your dander up at the time. Which brings me to the prime minister. I don't believe my wife is a murderess, so I have to wonder what

happened. And why you felt you could confide in Lam, but not me, the man who has loved you completely and without fail.”

“Oh, Jadeer. I’m so sorry. I—” she began.

“Hey, did somebody drop this?” Cordron strolled up, a grin spread across his face, with Lam clutched in one fist, arms crossed and angry at being man-handled. Cordron, not only Jadeer’s best friend, but also the biggest Tormanian in existence. With his shoulder width and height, let alone the rippling muscle he expertly manipulated into air creatures, it was a good thing that he was so good-natured. “Just thought I’d return your pet.”

Jadeer chuckled, “Hm, no, don’t want it. Should have let him float until he left orbit.”

“Oh Jadeer,” Lydian chastised.

Jadeer flashed her a look that told her she wasn’t off the hook. He’d get to the bottom of why she’d done all the things she did soon enough. The sooner the better. He did not like feeling as he did, and he was a man who would rather have the truth and be done with it—even if it was something he didn’t want to hear. If Lydian wanted Lam, she had only to say so and he would travel to some dark corner and live his life until his molecules were as random as the prince’s.

“Your orders?” Cordron inquired.

He turned on his heel, “Gather all survivors. Everyone in the ship. We don’t want to use more of the breathing tube reserves than necessary. No telling if there’ll be more trouble before we reach Earth, or even after we reach it.”

Lydian gasped, “So we are going there? You’ll go with my plan? Thank you, Jadeer. I only want to clear my name. We can discuss later all the details.”

He took her arm, not allowing his body to touch hers or let his gaze rest on her figure. Nevertheless, his flesh nearly hummed with longing, being so close to her. A resolve to keep her at arms length until the truth could be uncovered, wasn’t very likely. In fact, he didn’t doubt she’d be in his bed that night if she was physically up to it. However, she did not need to know that. Lydian had held the upper hand emotionally too many times. A peek at her now, told him she was worried. Her powder blue lower lip was caught between her teeth. His groin tightened, but he forced himself to look away.

* * * *

“Talk to me, Lydian. What’s going on?” Despite himself, his voice cracked. They were finally on a course to Earth again, though slowly since their warp speed thrusters were offline from the battle. Cordron’s engineers were working on it, but he hadn’t promised anything. Especially since the engineers made up only two men. Lydian’s group of followers turned out to be smaller than he’d thought. Seemed many rebellious Tormanians were more talk than action. Quite a few refused to go on what they feared was a suicide mission to Earth.

Or at the least a one way ticket to exile. It was common knowledge in their galaxy that the men of Torman loved their planet just as much as they loved a good woman.

Now they sat together in his cabin, drinking hot liqueur. There would be no more putting this off. He wanted the truth from her sweet lips, and if their marriage wasn't destroyed after the fact, then he would taste her too. Watching her cupping her drink, eyes downcast, he had to resist pulling her up into his arms. Instead, he folded his arms across his chest and waited.

She glanced up, "Well you needn't look so forbidding, Jadeer."

"I wasn't aware that I was." He dropped his hands against the side of his writing desk in attempt to look less intimidating. Lydian was not normally so...soft and feminine acting. He guessed it was the child inside her. His medical officer had already confirmed that she was indeed pregnant. Jadeer had been hesitant to allow it to get out that he doubted the baby's paternity. The thought angered him again, that his wife of so many years had gone off with Lam. "Explain yourself, Lydian. Why did you leave me?"

She sat down her mug. "I didn't leave you, darling. I ran. I was afraid."

"You're never afraid, or you don't give in to it. Why now?"

With a sigh, she stood and moved to a window overlooking deep space. He thought she wouldn't speak when the silence went on for so long, but then she continued. "Jadeer, I was investigating a possible plot to embezzle funds by the prime minister. I spoke to Lam about it and he agreed to help me."

He growled angrily, his fingers becoming claws that ripped into the hard surface of the desk without effort. "You would dare go to him instead of me. You didn't share your suspicions with me."

"How could I?" she railed. "Every time I even hinted that our government was not the perfect entity that you believed it was, we ended in argument. Just like we are now. I was sick of it, Jadeer." She gave him her back. "You wouldn't listen to me, so I went to someone who would."

"The worse someone, a man who wants nothing more than to get between your legs. And it appears he finally has. Tell me, whose baby is it that you're carrying—mine or his?"

She gasped and paled, swaying dangerously. He steeled himself to keep from reaching for her. She noticed. "I can't believe you said that. I can't believe you would accuse me of infidelity."

"And I can't believe you've not yet denied it," he muttered. "Get out, Lydian. You have what you wanted, to be free of Torman. Now I cannot return, even with proof of what you say. I attacked my own men, defied the prince. My life is less than worthless. From now on, whatever happened to cause the death of the prime minister is your business. Now get the hell out of my room. I'm sure Cordron can have another assigned to you."

For a moment, he thought she would say something to defend herself. He hoped she would, but Lydian was as prideful as he was. She would expect him to have trusted her, even in the face of her being with the man he hated, who made no secret of the fact that he fully intended to have Lydian one way or another. She had been foolish to choose Lam. The whole thing was too wearying for him to continue to think on. And eventually when he turned his back on her, she left the room. Jadeer let his body go soft as he flowed across the floor and lay on his bed, willing darkness to overtake him.

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“You realize you’re being an idiot, right?” Cordron scolded. “You’re pushing her right into Lam’s arms.”

“So be it,” Jadeer muttered. He rolled away from his friend to face the wall of his cabin. He hadn’t left his quarters for a day, putting Cordron in charge.

“Come on, Jadeer. This is Lydian. She’s only had eyes for you ever since she met you. You can’t believe she’d give you up for that freak Lam. He’s less than a man, can’t even shift to anything interesting.”

Jadeer’s laugh was dry. “He did a convincing panther the other day.”

“You’re defending him?” Cordron moved to perch on the edge of the desk, propping a foot on the top while biting into a piece of fruit. “She told me what happened with the prime minister. No answer? Okay, I’ll tell you. The guy was embezzling, taking the food right out little Torman babies’ mouths, so to speak. He was glad to push the prince into believing the Earthlings would strike at any moment. Gave the control of it to him. A good portion of it did go to arms, but a large amount went to his pocket. More?”

Jadeer remained silent.

“Okay, I’ll tell you. Our foolish Lydian, warrior queen that she is, confronted him. Told him she was going to report her evidence to the prince. She can kick your butt better than the best of men, but not too good at negotiations.”

A growl rumbled up in Jadeer’s throat. He clamped down on it.

“Ha, all right my friend. I will not insult your sweetheart. Suffice it to say the prime minister took exception to being reported to the prince. They fought. He never had a chance. When he would have shot perdorvon rays into her, killing her instantly, our little jackal jumped high in the air, transformed into a bear and sliced his throat open. As I said, he never had a chance.

With the prime minister dead, Lydian’s snitch disappeared into the starlight. He was suddenly too afraid to present his evidence. Lydian was left high and dry. What could a woman who would be accused of murder and treason do, especially when her beloved husband abandoned her?”

Jadeer jumped to his feet, anger nearly blinding him. "I never abandoned Lydian. She was my life."

Cordron stood to his full height, towering even above Jadeer, who was quite tall. "You abandoned her when you thought less of what she thought compared to what you 'knew'. I care for both of you, but you can be an arrogant Drac sometimes."

Jadeer sneered, turned away. "You don't understand, Cordron. She went to him. I saw him touching her. I can't...live with that."

"Then kill him and get it over with. We still live by Torman laws. He touches your wife, you destroy him. Simple. But get your butt out of this room and stop feeling sorry for yourself. There's three other women on this ship. Get one and satisfy your desires." Cordron grinned mischievously. "That always helps me."

"Loser," Jadeer accused with a laugh.

But Cordron was right. Why should he hide in his rooms when Lam was probably hanging all over his wife, feeling he'd won? Jadeer had his own plans. One of the Tormanian women might be just the thing.

Chapter Five

Reaching Earth took less time than initially thought. Still, the wait was white hot torment, as far as Jadeer was concerned. He had followed Cordron's advice and began escorting one of the female ensigns to meals. She had been more than flattered, making it clear she was willing to jump right into his bed, but he held back.

Watching Lydian escorted by Lam was impossible to his sanity. At least she was looking pale and sad. Jadeer wasn't sure whether it was due to the changes in her body or to not having him. More than once he'd found her watching him, but always those full lips tightened in determination. She was as unwilling as he to speak. It looked like his marriage was truly over. And he was stuck with the ensign, though pretty, not nearly as fiery and challenging as his beloved wife.

"Jadeer?" The ensign waved a small hand before his eyes. He turned to face her. "Isn't it exciting that we'll be docking on Earth tomorrow? A whole new adventure. I can't wait. I was too young to go when our people visited years ago at the signing of the treaty. If only my mother could see me now."

A shadow crossed her face. He knew she was remembering the fact that she would likely never see her loved ones again. They were homeless, planetless. If the Earthlings didn't accept them, where would they go? Travel outside their galaxy was still limited. It would be years before they were fully ready and with a small crew, it would be near impossible.

"Yes," he smiled kindly. "It is exciting. You will see things you've never imagined. They have animals with odd shaped heads and bodies, thick fur and sharp teeth. It will be a challenge to imitate them. What they call cities are full of people, cramped together. Not like our open plains and fresh air. Well some places are similar, but it will be interesting to explore."

Her face lit up. He knew being as young as she was, almost like a child, her sense of adventure would be high. While his mind would be filled with plans on securing his people's safety, she would be doing that thing that human women did. Shopping.

The ensign grasped his hand, almost bouncing in her excitement. Her tone vibrated in her throat.

He grimaced, "Don't do that. This is a public place. Anyone would think we were being intimate."

She stepped closer, pressing her breasts against his arm. He wouldn't be a man if it didn't stir something in him, and she knew it. "Well, we could be in a private place, like your chambers." Leaning closer still, she whispered in his ear. "And I can do all kinds of interesting things with my tongue."

Like a snake, her tongue slid into his ear, twirling along the edges of the lobe. Before he could determine whether this particular 'trick' was appealing, she was wrenched away from him, to go flying across the room, landing on her backside against the far wall. Jadeer spun around to see his wife's face so pale of late, now violet with anger.

She growled, “You will not treat me this way, Jadeer. I will not stand for it.”

All eyes were on them and he found himself angering at her attitude. How dare she rage at his behavior when hers was just as guilty? She had not admitted it, and he told himself he didn’t care anymore. But he would not be disrespected before his men, not by his wife, not by a subordinate. “You forget yourself, Lydian. You will address me as Commander Jadeer. You will not rail at me in this public place. If you want to speak with me, then set an appointment.”

His body tensed. He expected her to claw his face, to hit him, attack him or yell at him. Anything except what she did. For the third time in over a hundred years, his wife cried and tore his heart to shreds.

“Jadeer,” she whispered. “Please.”

Without a word, he lifted her in his arms. As he strolled toward the exit, Cordron waved a hand over the door panel and Jadeer passed through with a nod. He headed straight for his quarters. Perhaps now they would work things out. He hoped so. He prayed so.

Placing her gently on her feet, he resisted crossing his arms and stood before her waiting for her to speak. He still didn’t feel inclined to beg her to return to him, to set his mind at ease.

She trembled before him, then stepped into his arms. He dragged her soft form against him, sliding hands over her arms, before finding her lips with his own. Minutes passed as they kissed. Finally Jadeer leaned back, found the clasp of her uniform and unhooked it. He pulled until her breasts were bare before him. Stroking the tight little buds, he moaned in need. He covered them with his mouth, teased them with the tip of his tongue as he cupped them to gain better access.

Lydian arched into him, her head thrown back, her moist blue lips parted. Jadeer, seeing it when he released her nipples, covered her mouth again. His erection grew and grew until it was painful inside his pants. His wife clawed a finger and cut out a patch from the material. He chuckled seeing the results. He had popped free and stood ready to take her. But he pulled back.

“No. Not yet, Lydian. There are things between us. I’m not sure we can get past it.”

He thought he heard her cry again, but he didn’t want to look and give in to her. But when she spoke, though her voice was soft, it was clear. “I understand that, Jadeer. All our married life and even while we were courting, I insisted you follow me. If I wanted to go on a trip to the mountains, that’s where we went. When I wanted to transfer to Gablane for six months, you came without too much complaint. Though it had been your dream to work at the palace. I was selfish. I’ve taken more than I gave to this marriage.”

“That’s not true.” He rushed to defend her. She had been a wonderful wife.

“It is true. You spoiled me, and when I couldn’t get you to listen to my theories, when I had no proof at all, I should have tried something else. I should have found some other ally and not Lam. But I wanted to get back at you for not paying attention to me. It was childish and foolish. I never meant to lose my husband.” She moved closer to him, though their bodies didn’t touch. “Jadeer, I’ve never slept with Lam. I had no wish to. And frankly, he is not so well endowed as you.”

He frowned, “How do you know that?”

She laughed, “Because on the first night we arrived at Arlong Four, he got me away from the others only to remove all his clothes. He thought that would entice me to sleep with him. I had to fight to keep from laughing at him. But he never touched me, darling. Never. This baby in my belly is yours. I have no doubt of that. I have not been with another man since our first time together. Jadeer, I cannot live without you. I love you so much. Please, won’t you forgive my stupid pride and foolish choices?”

Jadeer didn’t need to be asked twice. Lydian had always been the one, from the time he fought her in his master’s training class, when he wanted to make love to her even while she dragged painful claws down his face and across his body. He still wanted her as much now, maybe more. He stood tall above her, looking down on her. Her eyes were wide and pleading, her lips trembling slightly. As vulnerable as the look in her eyes and the expression on her face was, it was amusing to see that she still held the warrior’s stance, with back straight, legs spread and feet planted firmly on the floor. She was still his warrior queen, just as Cordron had called her.

“Lydian, you will not see Lam again. He will never be your confidant. If you need to discuss something, you will come to me. Is that clear?”

“Crystal,” she murmured.

“Good!” With that he reached out, lifted her and carried her across the room to his bed. Unable to wait another second, he parted her legs, lifted them high and plunged himself as deep inside her as he could get. With a vengeance born of being denied of what was his as her husband, he stroked in and out of Lydian’s gripping mound until he could hold himself no longer. With a cry that matched the song in her throat, he exploded inside her, shooting his warm seed out until he was completely sated.

When he’d repeated the movements several times, and brought his wife to climax many more times, he climbed higher on the bed to lay at her side. Tucking her in closer to his body, he curled an arm protectively around her middle. Finally, he was where he belonged and so was Lydian.

* * * *

Cordron cut the thrusters and set the craft down gently in an open field, on Earth. If Jadeer had hoped they’d make a quiet entrance, his hopes were dashed. Peering out the window, he took in the crowd and the officials in their dark glasses and identical suits. Several of them, had guns trained on the craft. He turned to look at his wife and her slightly swollen stomach.

Had she been wrong about the Earthings? Was this another trial he'd have to face, possibly losing her and the baby? He prayed it wasn't. They were just getting back on track. Lam had been assigned to kitchen duty and commanded never to come near Lydian again, unless he wanted to be killed. Cordron had begun to speak to him about a plan to get back into the graces of the prince or at least his successor. Now was not the time to battle Earthlings.

Then Lydian turned to him, her smile radiant and confident. The love she always showed openly to him was apparent in her eyes, fortifying him. "Don't worry, my darling. It's just as I said it is. And most of all, we're together again. I will stay by your side. I promise."

Cordron

Chapter One

Cordron stepped off the ship to face the Earthlings holding guns on himself and his few comrades. Scanning the crowd of humans—both male and female—he began to question his decision to follow his friend into this foolhardy venture. After all, he wouldn't have been in exile. Only the top ranking officer, the one giving the orders, would be held accountable for attacking his own men. Cordron had been following Jadeer's orders in shooting down the ships attacking Lydian's ship. The fact that Cordron had enjoyed the battle completely had no bearing at all. He chuckled inwardly at the thought.

But this was different. Like every Torman man, he nearly worshipped a good Torman woman. Her body was made to pleasure him in every way. Besides that he reveled in watching her powdery blue skin shimmer when she was sexually excited. It was so unlike the bland one tone navy-colored skin of the males. Watching a Torman woman writhe beneath his expert loving was the epitome of sexual activity. Well that and how she fit him like a glove when he was buried inside her.

But the few Torman women among their group were already mated with other Torman men, even the vixen who'd attempted to seduce Jadeer. He, Cordron, had no one and it was making him cranky with just the thought. His normal good nature was sorely tried. How could he find a woman for his bed among these tiny human ladies? He desired a plump woman, like Jadeer, with a round bottom, big breasts and a mouth ready to swallow all of his large erection. Being that he was one of the biggest among Torman men, it wasn't likely a human woman could accommodate him.

His spirits plummeted further as he, Jadeer and the others were approached by a group of officials. The only woman among them was indeed plump, causing his crotch to jump with interest, but she was petite and very much human. That small throat could never take him. He sighed inwardly. Just how long would it take for him to lose his mind from lack of satisfaction?

“Greetings, friends. I apologize for the reception; however, one can't be too careful now that we are intergalactic. We've come across quite a few species in our space travel who are not as friendly.” The wide smile was insincere if ever Cordron saw one. The man continued. “If you'll come with me, we'll find a place for you to rest while you're here for a visit.”

Jadeer stepped forward, “Actually, sir, myself and my group would like to request temporary sanctuary on your planet. Ah, for the moment, we cannot return home.”

Cordron snickered, and then remained silent. Jadeer was still in charge. He'd voice his own opinions in private. He followed the others in the direction the human led them. Riding in the odd land vehicles had never appealed to him. But he'd been told years ago when he visited, it would be better for the peace of the Earthlings if his people did not shape-shift to travel. So instead, he was forced to stuff his large form inside what was called a Jeep.

The contraption creaked as he eased in his bulk, ducking his head beneath the roof. Instantly, the entire vehicle leaned to his side, straining the tires. Apologetically, he turned to the driver, who judging by the grunt of frustration, was struggling to stay in his own seat rather than slide across to Cordron. Surprise must have registered on his face to find that his driver was none other than the female whose rear he'd been admiring a minute ago.

"Ah, sorry. I'm very big," he laughed.

"No, really? I hadn't noticed." The twinkle in her eyes warmed him. He found himself interested, despite her own size.

He attempted a shrug, "Well, I would fly but was told it frightens you humans the last time I was here. Also, the last time, I was stuffed into a bigger vehicle."

She laughed outright. "Poor thing. So cruel, aren't we? I would think after much more interaction with the species of other worlds, many of whom have visited Earth in the last twenty years, they'd be less frightened. But that will have to be determined by my superiors when we get to your hotel."

"Hotel?" He watched her lips move as she spoke. They were full and pink. The bottom, unlike Torman women, was fuller than the top. Her skin was smooth and tanned, not unappealing at all. At least, he thought, her eyes were blue like the Earth's sky, and her hair a short curly bob of blond. His fingers itched to touch her, to fondle the large breasts. Despite her being human, her sweet scent reminded him of home.

She winked at him, as if she knew his thoughts. Maybe she'd studied Torman men. It wasn't a secret that he, like his countrymen, had a strong appetite for sexual pleasure. But no. He shook his head. Even if he wanted to take this woman to his bed, there was still the problem that she was just too small. His shaft when erect was two sizes larger than the biggest human male. A human woman could not take him without being injured. He would not allow himself to hurt her.

"Yes," she answered his question, while watching the road. "We now have a beautiful site, erected just for our intergalactic guests. It has all the amenities of a top of the line resort, pools, a beach, daily activities. You name it."

He frowned, glancing around at the surrounding area. "All of those things sound like what would appeal to humans, well those that I understand the meaning of. What is a pools?"

She laughed, making a spark of joy shoot across his mind. "Oh, I'm sorry. You're right. What was I thinking? The last aliens to visit were much closer to humans than you are. They can enjoy a pool. A pool is a small body of water to play in, like a lake but more contained. You wouldn't be able to get inside. The chemicals that keep it clean are poisonous to your skin."

His eyes widened, "Yet, this is the place you're taking us. Maybe we should worry about your people attacking us."

Her eyebrows arched, “What do you mean? No, that’s not where we’re taking you. The hotel has various buildings, all specialized to the visitor. You will be taken to the one with a forest behind it, to allow for feeding. What do you mean when you say you should be worried that we will attack you?”

Cordron thought fast. He didn’t know how much he should share with this woman. If Jadeer’s and the prince’s fears that the Earthlings were gearing for attack on Torman was correct, then letting them know that he and his groups suspected it would not be a good move. They’d be locked away in some forsaken place until the war began. If it was not true, then voicing such thoughts would only cause a strain on the relationship.

“I meant that when you showed with weapons, we were concerned. Now you take us to a place hazardous to us, what is a guy to think?” He held up his hands and shrugged.

She nodded her understanding, and then cursed as a loud pop sounded and the car began to swerve across the road. Cordron scanned the road ahead and behind looking for what must be attacking. The only thing visible was the other vehicles in their party, the sheer cliff on the left side of them and the wall heading straight up on the other.

He watched impressed as the woman yanked the vehicle to the narrow shoulder of the road and stopped. She turned to him. “Sorry, um...shoot, I just realized we never introduced ourselves. But I am Morgan and you and I are stuck until another vehicle can come for us.”

“Cordron,” he introduced himself. “And frankly I’m relieved. Had I embarrassed myself by becoming sick in that can, my friend would never have let me live it down.” Wrenching open the door, he forced himself free of the vehicle, already feeling better. “Tell me, Morgan, how far is it to this hotel of yours.”

She joined him at the side of the Jeep, running a hand through her curls. Cordron clasped his hands behind his back to keep from doing the same. An image of himself with his fingers tangled in her curls, while driving deep inside her, flashed through his mind. “Stop it,” he muttered.

“Sorry?” Blue eyes questioned him, and he shook his head. She turned as her comrades filed out of the other vehicles. “It’s not far. Just another ten miles straight ahead. No worries.”

He wondered at the strange expression. When she turned to face her superior, Cordron allowed his gaze to drop to her rear. He wondered what she’d say to him stroking it or squeezing. With a thought to finding out, he took a step closer behind her.

“Cordron!” Jadeer’s call interrupted his thoughts.

He turned to face his friend and commanding officer. “Jadeer?”

Jadeer’s look was stern. “Get that thought out of your mind, my friend. She’s human. You’d rip her open, and we really would have a war on our hands.”

Cordron grunted. “Am I to have no pleasure then? Damn it, Jadeer. I have no woman. You can imagine how I crave a Torman woman. Believe me, there’s none better, but I have to have some satisfaction. Of course, you couldn’t understand that, having Lydian in your bed each night.” He raised an eyebrow. “I don’t suppose you’d consider sharing that hot body of hers?”

Jadeer laughed, “Not unless you want me to stuff your manhood with hybender thorns.”

“Ouch.”

The beautiful Morgan turned back to them after speaking with the other human. Mentally, Cordron transformed his sense of smell to that of a Torman creature’s, in order to enjoy her aroma all the more. It was heady, almost bringing him to climax right there in front of everyone. It was a good thing his uniform was built with a little something extra to hold him in place. Her parted lips and gasp let him know that she had again guessed his thoughts, was not adverse to it. She was enticing.

“Okay, it’s arranged, Cordron.” He loved how she spoke his name. “I’ll wait here with you until another, larger, vehicle arrives. Commander, you can go with the others.”

Jadeer tossed Cordron a warning look, then took his leave. Cordron waited until the other vehicles pulled out before leaning cross armed against the Jeep. “So do you have a lover, Morgan?”

She chuckled, gaze toward the ground. “You don’t mince words do you, Cordron?”

“No need to. I say exactly what’s on my mind. Always have, always will.” He reached out a hand to her small chin and lifted her head. “Tell me you don’t find me attractive.”

Hands on hips, she struck a sassy pose. “We are not allowed to mingle in that way with aliens. I’m sure somewhere, somehow tests are being done to find out just how we can mate so that humans can advance to some of your exciting abilities. But until it’s determined safe, no human can have sexual relations with an alien. Hefty fine and imprisonment for violation of the law.”

Cordron snorted, “Determined safe? I can guarantee you it’s not safe to share my bed. Though I’ve been told that I have a natural knack for pleasing a woman.”

“A human woman?” She cocked her head to the side, teasing in her tone. He let his attention wander to the cleavage displayed for his pleasure. What would her nipples look like? He could guess by the taut imprint through her silk white blouse, but he wanted to see them bared.

He waved a hand, “A woman is a woman, no matter the species. You all want to sing. Maybe a human woman doesn’t have the tone that a Torman one does, but I have no doubt you’d cry out for joy should I enter you.”

Cordron was excited to note the increase of her pulse. The subtle tattoo at the side of her throat was a giveaway. Her breaths were clipped and rapid. He moved closer to her. Just one taste of her mouth was all he required. She wanted it, just as he did. And surely he wouldn't hurt her.

Hands at her waist, he lifted her onto the hood of the car so that she was high enough for him, and he bent forward while sliding his hands beneath her skirt. The impact was immediate and earth-moving. With his tongue, he parted her lips to invade her sweet soft mouth. The flavor was not unlike his home world women, and Cordron found himself drowning from the pleasure of having her. He wanted more.

Trailing kisses down across her cheek and onto her throat, he pushed her skirt higher. The moisture already having soaked through the thin cotton material at her core had him panting. He tugged the material aside and would have pushed fingers inside her had she not held on to his wrist to stop him. He pulled back.

“Are you afraid?” Disappointment laced his words.

“I’ve just met you,” she breathed shakily. “I’m not having sex with any man I’ve known five minutes, even if he is a hot alien. And like I told you, that’s illegal. I work for the government.”

Cordron dropped his hands to his sides. “So no roadside excitement, huh?”

“Nope.” She slid down to the ground, rearranging her clothing.

He suddenly flipped her around so that her back was to him, then whispered in her ear. “Well, how about some excitement in the air?”

Before she could respond, Cordron had caught sight of a bird circling high in the sky. His enhanced vision took in all the details of the falcon, and he transformed his body into the biggest of the feathered creature ever seen. Muscles contorted, bones realigned and feathers grew from his skin. A flap of wings with a span of fifteen feet sent him into the air, as he grasped Morgan around the waist to take her with him.

Her small scream held more delight than fear, and Cordron’s heart was warmed all the more to her. He knew he’d spotted a woman with the boldness to meet his drive. After he took her on their unusual joy ride, he’d wait no time in convincing her to experience the best adventure of all—that of making love with him.

Chapter Two

“Just what do you think you’re doing, Cordron?” Jadeer admonished. “We are in exile from our home world. Who knows when the prince will send out troops to hunt for us and bring us to justice. I’m not altogether certain that regardless of our reception here, the Earthlings mean no harm to us. And here you are breaking their laws by transforming to a falcon, flying one of their top employees over the city. It’s no wonder we don’t find ourselves in jail already.”

Cordron grinned, dropping into a chair to prop up his feet. “Don’t be an old woman, Jadeer. I swear, since you have a little one on the way, you’ve gone soft. I remember a time when you ran right along with me into adventure. And I know it’s still in you, or you wouldn’t be in exile right now.”

His friend scowled, “I am in exile because I would not let my wife and baby be killed. Maybe some day you will understand that you would give up your life for someone you love, to keep them safe. Lydian and the baby are everything. As my friend, I expect you to take that into consideration.”

Cordron found himself checked. Jadeer was correct. He’d always longed for what the man had. Lydian was fiery and beautiful, one of the sexiest women he’d ever laid eyes on. If he didn’t care about Jadeer so much, he would have gone after her himself. It had always been an enjoyable challenge to make a woman crave him. He was good at it, the best in fact. But watching them over the years had caused him to secretly long for something more. He wanted a woman who stood by him, who watched him with love in her beautiful eyes, never once straying. Surprisingly, he wanted to feel the exact same way for her. It didn’t seem possible though. All of his adult life, there could not be enough women to satisfy his lust.

“Fine,” he sighed. “I’ll take it easy. But I will not turn Morgan away if she pursues me. Have you seen her rear? As soft and round as a Torman woman. And I do like taking a woman from behind. Damn, I’m hard just thinking about it.”

“Are you crazy, Cordron?” Jadeer demanded. “She is human. We are much bigger than human men. Her opening cannot even begin to accept *your* size. You’d rip her apart.”

“Then I’ll allow her to suck me, while I eat her,” Cordron teased.

Cordron thought Jadeer would explode. His dark skin was almost as light as a woman’s. He chuckled at the obvious distress on the man’s face, knitted eyebrows, eyes shooting thorns at him. It was some moments before speech returned to his friend’s mouth. “You’ve studied them just as I have. Their anatomy. Her throat will never expand as our women’s does to allow you to get all of yourself inside her mouth. And before you start denying anything, I know you. You’d want to shove it all in there in the middle of your ecstasy.”

“Well, I still say there’s a way. But as my leader, I’ll keep a tight reign on my lust.” Cordron stood. “Now if you’ll excuse me, Morgan has promised to show me around this place.”

“Cordron!”

“Relax, Jadeer. I’m not likely to possess her body in the middle of a tour of the grounds.” With a laugh, he proceeded to the exit of their suite. Waving his hand over the panel, he waited for it to open. Nothing happened.

“You have to push the button,” Jadeer informed him.

Cordron frowned, “They design ships that travel the universe but no hi-tech doors? Get me home quick!”

* * * *

Cordron watched her. For two weeks they’d been seeing each other every day. He had found it hard to concentrate on anything other than Morgan. Each day, when she was free of her duties, she met him at his suite. Then they’d walk through the forest together behind the Torman housing. It had been a thrill to find she found the trees and wildlife preferable to the city, just as he did. She seemed so natural among its untamed beauty.

Today, she wore another dress, more casual though, with sunflower patterns amid a white background. The buttons at the throat were undone, something that he liked and insisted on the moment he laid eyes on them. Her cleavage was a work of art, and he suspected so was her entire naked body. Now, he wondered if she’d consider taking it off if he asked her to. Just to look, nothing more. He chuckled silently.

“I have the feeling your laughing at me, Cordron,” she said from her position of laying her head on his lap.

“Never. What is there to laugh at? You are perfection of womanhood.” He meant it. Again, the question he wanted to ask her popped into his head. She’d probably think he had a one track mind.

She smiled up at him, tempting him further. “I’m not perfect. My breasts are too big.”

“Crazy!” He nearly yelled. “A woman’s breasts can never be too big. And yours make me want to nibble them every waking moment. Even through your dress, I can see those nipples are long, just right for suckling.”

“Cordron!”

He grinned like a boy of sixty years. “Well they are, aren’t they? Would you consider taking off your dress so I can see for myself?”

She rolled away, then sat up. “Cordron, you think of nothing else, but sex. I hear that there are great political concerns on your planet, issues that need to be resolved. Yet, here you are only wanting to make love to me. Aren’t you the least interested in what Jadeer has said about the welfare of your people? The report doesn’t seem good.”

“You should worry less about Jadeer and more about me. Don’t tell me you’re attracted to him. He’s married, with a baby on the way.” Suddenly, he felt depressed. He didn’t quite understand it. Normally, he could care less if his women wanted other men. He’d dated more than one woman at a time, never spiting his female bedmate to do the same. It was most likely the fact that she’d not allowed him to do more than stroke her lovely breasts and kiss her sweet lips. Not once so far had she allowed him to finger her, or enjoy the taste of the cream between her legs. It was driving him insane.

He stood and moved away from her, still fighting his anger. The emotion was not something that usually tormented him. Cordron was known far and wide as the happy go lucky guy. Nothing got him down or upset. Morgan was screwing up that harmony, and he didn’t like it. “For your information, human, I do care about my people. I’ve met regularly with your people and Jadeer and Lydian. It is *your* people who refuse to help us. I fear because the prince is getting so old, ready to pass on, he is getting delusional, seeing threats where there are none.”

“The prince?” Her voice wavered. He turned to catch confusion and something else in her eyes. “Is he dying then?”

“Yes.” Cordron turned away again. Looking at her without touching her, even discussing the seriousness of his world’s state was not keeping him from aching for her. What the hell had gotten into him? Always, he’d separated business from pleasure. “He is already fading, having more and more trouble holding his form. Soon he will liquefy and return to the Torman from whence we all come. But that could be years or only months. Meanwhile, our people suffer. No rebellion has been strong enough to dethrone him. We are a proud and honorable people. It’s not an easy thing for anyone to rise against the ruler of our land.”

“I-I understand,” she whispered. “So you chose exile instead.”

He nodded, “Yes. I guess you would consider it running away.”

“No. You did what you felt was right, and you still seek to go back when you’ve found a solution. I admire that.” She moved to his side, resting a small hand on his arm. His shaft stiffened and grew out, pressing painfully against its restraints.

He groaned, “I suppose we should go back.”

“Not just yet.”

He faced her again, to find her unbuttoning her dress further, until she was able to slide it down over her shoulders and drop it on the ground. She wore what he’d learned previously were lacy panties and a matching bra. He had unashamedly encouraged her to go without both. A Torman woman never wore such hindering garments. With a sniff, he knew she was already wet. The pungent aroma was intoxicating.

“You shouldn’t do that, Morgan. I have been ordered not to take you, but a man can only stand so much,” he warned.

Her only response was to kiss her fingertips and blow him a kiss. His crotch jumped to life; he was ready to howl like a wolf in anticipation. Next, she removed the panties and bra. Just as he suspected, her breasts were incredible. Tight nipples stood at attention, just calling out to him to nibble on them. Her wide hips were a sharp contrast to her narrow waist, and the pouch of hair at her apex was intriguing since his world's women had no hair there. He wanted to tangle his fingers in it while licking deep between her legs.

“Morgan,” he panted. “What are you doing to me?”

She strolled toward him, “Poor Cordron. That uniform must be so uncomfortable. You’re the only one who’s not taken to wearing Earth’s clothing.”

He gave a sheepish grin. “The material is too light for me. I need extra reinforcement too. Ah, you will probably be afraid once you see what I mean.”

“I’m a brave girl. Let me take a look.”

Nervous fingers fumbled with the catch on his clothing. He didn’t think he could stand it if she rejected him. There was only so much a man could yank off in the woods after rubbing against a round bottom such as Morgan’s. He had desperately wanted her to drink from him. He had no doubt he could fill her belly with his juices. When the last article of clothing was dropped to the ground, he waited for her reaction, watching her expression intently.

He could have released right there, when he saw the desperate lust in her eyes, eyes that if he was not dreaming had sparked topaz for a second. He blinked and looked again, but the sky blue was in place. She licked her lips, then dropped to her knees. Realizing her intension, he leaned against the tree behind him and squatted enough so that his shaft was level with her mouth.

I won’t pump into her mouth, he promised himself repeatedly. Just a little licking of his head and that was all. She wouldn’t get hurt.

All bets were off! As soon as her lips closed around his shaft, Cordron forgot his promise to Jadeer and himself. He tangled fingers in her short curls and yanked her forward. His head held back and eyes closed, he could not imagine how she took all of him without gagging and screaming in pain. Every aching inch of his thick manhood slid down her luscious throat. The warm, wet tunnel massaged him until he was ready to explode. Cordron pulled at her head and pumped his hips so that he slid in and out. Seconds later, he howled to Earth’s moon as she drained him, drinking every last drop of his juices. He leaned slumped against the tree, amazed that he had finally had the beginnings of his lust satisfied. And then he came to his senses. She should be dead.

He looked down to discover the cute and sassy human he’d been lusting after for the past two weeks, had transformed to a Torman woman, with shimmering light blue skin. Her blond hair turned dark as charcoal and the lips on the mouth was as pleasing to his eyes as could be. “How? What?”

Explanations weren't important when she stood. He grew hard again, his shaft dancing in the moonlight in synch it seemed with her shimmering skin. A Tormanian. He would never have expected it, but should have. His people found joy in transforming to all kinds of creatures and plant life. But they'd always been prejudiced to feel that nothing was better than being Tormanian. No one to his knowledge had desired to look like any other humanoid.

"Do you really want me to explain myself now, Cordron? Or would you like to pierce me with that beautiful piece you have there? Perhaps taste what I have all wet and ready for you?"

A growl of sheer lust escaped him. "I will have you now, Morgan. Explanations later. Yes, I think I will fill you with myself now, and then eat you!"

He rushed forward, taking her into his arms and kissing her once. "Sing for me, my darling," he pleaded.

"I know I will," she murmured.

He lifted her high to bring her down on his erection. Nothing up until now had been as good as sinking deep inside the sweet sex of a woman who was his perfect match. Cordron, drove in and out of Morgan until her sensual tone rang out into the night. He could only hope no one was nearby, for he intended to slide inside and out of her until morning. Being Tormanian, he knew she could take every inch of him. Her moist box, conformed to his thrust, latching on and massaging him until he felt ready to release yet again.

"Morgan," he groaned into her ears. He drew her closer, pressing as tightly to her as he could. He ran his hands over her body, fondled her firm breasts and pinched the taut nipples before bending to suckle them. "I just can't seem to get enough of you."

"Don't get enough my love. Never enough," she told him.

When he heard the words, Cordron was terrified. Yet, he knew it was too late. Morgan was that woman, the one he'd been searching for all this time. Even had he tried, it wasn't possible to get enough of her. She was his and his alone.

Chapter Three

“There’s something different about you, Cordron,” Lydian announced at the table when they were preparing to meet with Earth leaders yet again. I can’t put my finger on it.”

“I can,” Jadeer interrupted. “He has the look of a man who has had his lust satiated. Isn’t that right, Cordron? If, however, it was not a Torman woman, you will answer to me. If anything has happened to Morgan, then—”

Cordron rolled his eyes, “Now, now, Jadeer. Calm down. Nothing has happened to Morgan. In fact, when she left my bed this morning, she seemed quite healthy.” He chuckled, knowing his friends were eaten up with curiosity at his announcement. “Anything decent to drink around here?”

Jadeer ignored his request, “What do you mean, when she left your bed? She is not physically built to withstand your love making, Cordron. Even by Tormanian standards, you are oversized.”

A guffaw nearly choked Cordron as he downed a concoction the humans made to imitate their favorite drink. “Thank you for the compliment, my friend. I don’t think you should let Lydian hear that though. She may become interested in me and I wouldn’t want to cause trouble in your marriage.”

“Don’t be silly,” Lydian chastised. “I am only interested in my husband. And frankly with this baby refusing to show up, I’m not in the mood for anything.”

Cordron choked again, “So that’s why he’s so cranky of late.”

“Lydian!”

“Sorry, Jadeer. I didn’t mean to say that.” Her eyes were full of amusement.

Cordron loved them both, was happier still that maybe, just maybe he might have what they had. If he could convince Morgan to be his wife. He hadn’t told the truth when he announced how she was in leaving his bed. In fact, she’d left before he was fully recharged from their night’s activities. There still remained the explanation as to why she was masquerading as a human, and how long she had been doing it. He didn’t recognize her in her true form at all. He could only speculate that *Morgan* was not her real name.

Cordron found that his sexual cravings could be triggered by just the act of his luscious beauty entering the room, for as soon as she appeared, his clothing became tighter around the crotch. He followed her with his eyes, taking in every sway of her amazing hips. When she took the seat at his side, he immediately slid a hand between her legs to stroke her sweet spot. The low tone emitting from her throat made him pull away just as quickly, and he feigned ignorance at the look of reproach from his superior.

“Am I going crazy or did I just hear you sing, Morgan?” Lydian’s topaz eyes narrowed in suspicion.

Before their secret could be revealed, the door opened again and the human officials filed in. No further discussion of Morgan's sexual emittance could be discussed, which was a relief to Cordron. He liked keeping Jadeer wondering about how he was able to make love to Morgan. And he wasn't so sure he wanted to know just what it was she'd done to have herself exiled. No Tormanian would leave willingly, at least not meaning to stay away. She didn't appear to want to return. Or could she not?

Jadeer stood, as did Cordron and the rest of the party, to greet the officials. "Mr. Rowan. Thank you for meeting with us again, sir," Jadeer began. "We cannot press upon you enough the importance of speaking with our prince. Our people are the main concern here. I'm sure you can appreciate that."

Rowan nodded, but Cordron wondered if the man gave a damn. The age spots, wrinkled skin and gnarled twisted fingers, made him think the leader had his own worries to contend with. He couldn't be overly concerned about their dying prince, or their people. Cordron suspected had their request been beneficial to Earth, they'd already be on the way back home by now. He watched Morgan from the corner of his eye. And she'd be at his side.

Not able to be so close to her and not touch her, he reached out a hand again to slide it between her legs. But this time, she caught his hand and held it back. She leaned toward him to whisper, "You know I'll sing, Cordron. Why do you tempt me?"

He shrugged with an impish grin. The first moment he got her alone, he'd demand she switch back, so he could enjoy the sight of her blue skin tone. He was nearly on fire in anticipation. Shaking himself, he attempted to pay attention to the conversation.

"Rowan, you know as well as I do, if this benefited you in any way, you'd jump on the next transport out of here." Cordron was tired of pussyfooting around these people. Jadeer was the diplomat, not him. He was a pilot and a warrior. This political debate, light stepping didn't hold his interest.

"Cordron, hold your tongue," Jadeer commanded. "Sir, this does not just concern a small group of exiled Tormanians. This concerns millions of others. You have told us that you are generally peace-loving people, that it was the war-minded leaders before you which took it upon themselves to invade our planet. Why not demonstrate your good will to all our people. We would not fail to back up your claim with accounts of how well you've received us here. Surely, you can see our position."

"I do see your position. And I'm grateful for Mr. Cordron's directness. That's not often the case in our line of work."

Cordron gave Jadeer a wink.

The argument continued, neither side wanting to give an inch. Cordron leaned back to let it all flow over him. His thoughts were full of wondering what Morgan would say to joining him on a trip to other worlds. He had interest in exploring the universe as far as he could.

And maybe one day they could return to their home world, to raise a family. The joy that rose inside him at being with her was overwhelming. He never expected to feel this way.

“If I may say something.”

Cordron glanced up from his reverie to focus on Lam. The man had kept a low profile since trying to destroy Jadeer’s marriage. He couldn’t believe the fool would have the gall to speak in these proceedings now. It would be interesting to hear what had to say.

“With all due respect to you, Mr. Rowan, and to you Commander, I think that you are both missing an important factor in all of these negotiations.”

Cordron stiffened at the cat in the cream expression on Lam’s face. The man was up to something yet again. No doubt about it. Something told him that he was looking at more upset in the next few seconds. Instinctively, he reached beneath the table for Morgan’s hand. She curled her fingers around his, giving him a squeeze. It reminded him of how she’d gripped him so firmly when she drank from him. Would he ever get his mind from between her legs?

“Just what is it that you feel we’re overlooking, Lam?” Jadeer demanded. Cordron knew he still didn’t like the man, and who could blame him? “Speak quickly, and let us get on with our discussion.”

Lam paled at Jadeer’s tone, but continued. “Many years ago, our prince did have family who could have stepped in to see that this whole thing was resolved. But that person ran away from responsibility like a coward.”

Cordron felt himself grow cold.

“That person was the prince’s daughter. Little was known about her since the prince was not married to her mother. He had sent them away to Drac, where her mother was born and raised.” Lam paused. “We all know what that world is famous for producing.”

Drac Whores. It was a common expression that Cordron had tossed around in jest himself. No one wanted to think of their next leader as a Drac Whore. It was disgraceful, and would possibly cause more unrest than resolve it. So, if Lam spoke the truth, where was this princess, and why hadn’t she come forward when she must have heard about the state of her people and her father?

“Do you have evidence to prove what you’re saying, Lam?” Lydian’s eyes were not on the man she spoke with, but on Morgan. Cordron refused to consider what was obviously already churning in her mind. *No*.

None of them—he hoped, not even Lam—would betray their own people. They would not reveal Morgan before the humans if she was indeed the princess. But he refused to believe it. His wife to be was not a Drac Whore’s daughter. He’d been too happy, too content in his life, more so of late. It couldn’t be.

The conversation swirled once again around him. He didn't hear whether Lam admitted to evidence. Eventually, the officials took their leave while Cordron remained seated. Only half attending, he heard Morgan say she'd be back shortly. Jadeer, Lydian and Lam remained at the table. No one spoke.

Soon Morgan returned, but she didn't take the seat beside him this time. She sat at the head of the table, almost as regal as any monarch could be. His heart sank.

"What Lam has said is true." She transformed before their eyes, in all her *half* Tormanian glory. Cordron's heart skipped a beat. Damn, he still wanted her with everything inside him. She continued, "I was born Mornain, first and only child of the Prince of Torman. It's also true that my mother was a Drac Whore. My father sent her away when he found out about me as a young child. Mother had kept me a secret. To save his own face, we were banished to Drac, but soon after my mother died of a broken heart."

Lam grunted, "Spare me."

"Shut up, Lam," Lydian commanded. The man grew silent.

Mornain sat straighter, her topaz eyes flashing. "I did what I had to do to survive until I reached my majority. And then I went back to Torman to confront my father. He wanted nothing to do with me. Said he wanted me off his planet. When the humans attacked, I saw it as my opportunity to get away. I held no loyalty to the Tormanian people. Their leader had tossed away my mother as if she was garbage and did not view me as much more."

Cordron slumped in his chair, his mind a whirl of confusion. All of his foolish dreams were just that—foolish. What had made him think she would come to live on Torman with him? And why would he ever marry a woman who would turn her back so willingly on her people, no matter what her father had done? When her gaze met his, he turned away. His body wept if not his eyes.

Her voice cracked at her next words. "I was not raised a warrior. I do not fight. I do my duty and I survive. That's all. I am not a leader and have no wish to return to Torman, for the prince or anyone else. I'm sorry that he's dying, but I can do nothing about it."

"Then you're the coward that Lam accused you to be," Cordron blurted. He stood, shoving his chair back until it smashed against the wall behind him. "How foolish of me to think that you were good enough to be my wife."

"Cordron!" Lydian gasped at his cruelty.

He turned without another word and left the room.

Chapter Four

“Never in a million years would I think you of all people would behave this way, Cordron.” Lydian’s words held censure and disappointment.

Cordron steeled himself against it. He knew they all looked at him that way, including Jadeer. But he didn’t see any of *them* stepping forward either. None condoned the prince’s treatment of Mornain and her mother, but everyone understood it. Drac women had been bred to please men. It was as natural as breathing. It also explained why Mornain had been beyond wonderful in his bed. He remembered all too well how she’d insisted he lay on his back while she pleased him for hours, in ways he’d only fantasized about. How many other men had she done the same to? She’d already admitted to doing what she had to, to survive. The thought tormented him.

“So you want her for your leader then, Lydian? Hm, you’re all ready to accept a whore?” He didn’t mince words and got a scratch down his face for his pains.

“You loved her before you knew her background,” Lydian said. “Everyone could see it all over your face, even from the moment you saw her. Couldn’t get you to concentrate on anything else. And now suddenly she’s not good enough for you because her *mother* was a whore.”

“You heard her say she did anything to survive.” He didn’t need her to pile guilt on him.

“And you’ve slept with more women than any man I know, Cordron. You did it for pleasure. She, to keep from starving to death when her only family rejected her. What would you have done?”

“Not that!”

“You arrogant, son of—”

“That’s enough, Lydian. Leave us.” Jadeer stepped up from a path leading back to their rooms. Lydian had tracked Cordron down in his favorite spot, where he’d first taken Mornain. It had only tormented him further being there. Jadeer kissed his wife and sent her waddling along, then turned back to him. “We need to talk.”

Cordron sighed, “If you’ve come to beat me over the head regarding my treatment of the princess, you can save your breath. I will not take it back.”

“I haven’t.” Jadeer took a seat on a fallen log, brows creased. “I would discuss it with Lydian, her being second in command, but her emotional state over the delay of the baby is driving me crazy. She is not always rational in this state. So it’s you and I. Not that you’re too rational yourself. But, we’re in a bind. If it gets back to Torman that the princess is on Earth, the prince may take it into his aging mind that she’s being held captive. I wouldn’t put it past him not to begin to believe that we are the reigning power, and that we can successfully wage war on Earth. Before all the confusion died down, we’d have much bloodshed on our hands.”

Despite not wanting to discuss the situation regarding Mornain, Cordron had to admit Jadeer was right. War was almost eminent. They didn't know yet how Lam gathered his information, but it was sure as anything, he'd use it as leverage to get himself back on Torman. "I agree. I think that Lam should be watched, too. To make sure he doesn't find a way to contact home. If he does, we're sunk. Meanwhile, we need to get her off this planet."

"Agreed." Jadeer stood. "My first order is that you convince her to leave. We'll meet again tomorrow evening."

"Jadeer!"

His friend was already strolling away, fully expecting that his command would be followed. Cordron cursed.

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"What do you want?" Mornain's eyes blazed. Cordron expected her to attack any second. He had cornered her in her quarters, since she'd been avoiding him all day. Disguising his voice had gotten him through the door, now what?

"I'm here on orders," he told her. "To tell you that you must leave the planet."

She burst out laughing. "Oh yes, very convincing. I'll get my things together right now. Get out, Cordron. You've said all I'm going to listen to, at the meeting."

A part of him had expected tears, pleading. She had lived as a human a long time after all. But their women weren't criers. They were as strong as many men, even leaders in battle. So why did he ache for her to curl against him, begging for his forgiveness? Looking into the stormy eyes told him not to bank his life on getting that demonstration.

"You know, as well as I do, that it's dangerous for you to be here. You should have protectors, be in a more secure location. Earth was not Torman's only enemy. We've signed a treaty here, but at any time the regime could change, or other enemies could recognize you. Someone else could discover the same information that Lam did."

She put her hands on her hips and turned to face him, "Don't act like you give a damn about me, Cordron. It's all about your precious planet, your precious people. They turned their backs on me. As far as I'm concerned, I'm Drac and proud of it."

"Don't be foolish. Dracs are Torman too, just...outcasts."

She tossed him a look of disdain.

He growled. Pacing back and forth across the floor, he ran fingers through his hair. "Is there anything you care about? Anyone you can put before your own desires? How about Lydian? Huh? She's never done anything to hurt you. What about the baby she's carrying? An innocent like you were, who doesn't deserve to have her hope snatched away. What kind of

life do you suppose she'll lead on the run, or worse imprisoned? Perhaps she'll be forced to do things to survive."

He knew before he said it that it was a low blow. But all he said was true. Jadeer and his family were Cordron's family too. He loved them and would see them safe. As things were, they were homeless. As accommodating as Earth was, it wasn't home. Being homesick from a country other than one's own was one thing. Being homesick from another galaxy was a whole other issue entirely.

"Alright."

"What?"

She dropped down on her bed, shoulders slumped. "I'll leave. You can take me wherever. I don't care."

Without a word, Cordron sat down beside her. He was so aware of her body, her scent. Sniffing the air, he knew though she was down about her decision to leave, she was as aware of him sexually as he was of her. He could smell it. He craved a taste. But making love to her now would give the impression that he did indeed think of her as a whore, or that he could look beyond her background. Neither was a message he wanted to relay right then.

"You should go," she whispered.

"Yes."

* * * *

"Would you speak to her already, Cordron?" Jadeer demanded. "Watching you eye Princess Mornain like she was your next meal is wearing thin. Just forgive her and get it over with."

Cordron forced his gaze away from the auburn-haired beauty. Her movements had called to him, every wave of her hand, every sashay of her generous hips. She was a meal, and he a man dying of hunger. "No, I cannot. I *will* not."

"Then ask for her forgiveness. Shall I make it an order?"

"You wouldn't do that." Cordron leaned back against the rail running along the observation windows in the community room. They'd been on the ship for two weeks now, and still he hadn't been able to get Mornain out of his mind or his sight. A ship that had seemed so expansive when he first had the pleasure of boarding it, was now closing in on him. There was not a spot he could go to that she was not already there or soon to come to. An idea struck him. "I can get her out of my system by replacing her with another woman. You know that ensign is between men right now. A little slender for my taste, but still very sexy. Yes, I think that is my answer."

Cordron winked at the disapproval fairly radiating from Jadeer, then took his leave. As he strolled near Mornain, his mind filled with thoughts of locating the ensign, he nearly toppled

at his princess' feet. Her scent was heightened with sexual awareness. The strength of it stopped him in his tracks to find out why she was so turned on. Anger burned out all other thoughts when his glance fell on Lam.

He pivoted on his heel and bore down on the two. Not pausing for a second thought, he hooked fingers in Lam's chest and lifted him off his feet. "Just what the hell do you think you're doing?"

"Cordron, put him down. Put him down!" Mornain tugged at his arm, but he ignored her plea. "You will not come near her. You will not speak to her. Ever. Do I make myself clear?"

All conversation in the room had stopped. Cordron didn't have to look around the room to know everyone present was watching him make a fool of himself. Yet, seeing Lam teasing his wife—no, not his wife—teasing Mornain, wasn't something he would allow. Not now. Not ever.

Lam attempted a chuckle. "Come on, Cordron. You don't want her. She's a beautiful woman. Why shouldn't I give it a go? There aren't many women on board, after all."

Cordron shook the man in the air. His legs and arms flopped about, and he choked with Cordron's knuckles pressing into his wind pipe. "Let me say it once again, so that a simpleton like you will get it. Touch her, come near her or speak to her...and I kill you. Period."

When he dropped Lam on the floor and swung back to face Mornain, he was prepared for her protest. She was a strong-minded woman. Allowing his interference in her love life was not something she was going to take lightly. But he had his own mind set. She could sign Lam's death certificate or she could find another lover—preferably out of his sight and sense of smell.

Lovely topaz eyes very nearly made him forget his anger. "You have no right to interfere, Cordron. I will see whoever I want to see. You already tossed me aside as garbage. I don't have to take more of your abuse."

He crossed his arms, his sense of humor returning. There hadn't been abuse involved at all in her riding on his shaft, or drinking from it. The memory had him hardening. "Well, my darling. You have two choices. You can choose another man or you can attend Lam's last rites when we eject him into space. Your choice."

No one murmured or interfered. Cordron had always been known as the good-natured one, the man ready for a laugh at any time—day or night. To witness his intense anger meant he'd been pushed further than any of them imagined was possible. No one, including Jadeer, standing at his wife's side, dared cross the giant Tormanian.

Cordron waited for Mornain's response. "Well, princess? What will it be?"

Her eyes flashed anger of her own. At first he thought she wouldn't speak. Her hands melted, then became that of an animal's claw. He tensed for her to drag the four inch weapons across his face. But she stood still. "Fine, Cordron. Have it your way. I won't see him. But don't you talk to me or come near me either. I don't know what I saw in you. You're nothing but a hypocrite."

She turned on her heel and strode out the door. Cordron felt his heart rip out of his chest and follow along with her. Before he could think what to do next, the floor dipped and the entire company was dumped against the observation windows. Shouts of outrage filled the room, along with flashes of light from explosions just off the port bow. They were under attack.

Cordron righted himself as quickly as possible and made for the exit. His man at the controls would not be skilled enough to dodge the attacks. And someone had certainly screwed up because they should have known before now that another ship was approaching. Jadeer would be reprimanding the staff after they were in the clear.

It was like the attack on Lydian's ship all over again, when they'd been following her escape of their home world. Three Torman vessels surrounded them, each taking turns in firing. Cordron rushed to take the controls, immediately maneuvered the ship to avoid the worst of the hits.

"Status," Jadeer bellowed.

"Shields holding, sir, but only eighty percent. They came out of nowhere. We weren't prepared," an officer answered nervously.

"You can explain yourself in a full report after we're clear." Jadeer's face was a mask of disbelief. "Cordron, get us out of this. Ensign, ready weapons."

"Sir!"

It was no use. After nearly an hour, even with Cordron's skills and his ensign firing back on their attackers, the ship was battered and the shields were down to only twenty percent. Cordron knew Jadeer would signal surrender soon rather than risk the lives of his family and crew. His guess was proved correct when Jadeer commanded the lead ship be hailed.

"We have an open channel, Commander."

"This is Commander Jadeer of Torman. Why are you attacking us and who gave you that order?"

Cordron could have laughed. Surely they were wanted fugitives after shooting down three of the prince's spacecrafts, and aiding a suspected murderess to escape the law. It was no wonder the order wasn't shoot to kill on site. But how had the prince known where to find them, and when? Somehow, he didn't think he'd be surprised to find that Lam was behind all this. He should have killed the man when he had the chance earlier.

The officer of the leading ship spoke up. “This is First Commander Teek, of the prince’s elite force.” Cordron gasped. It meant Jadeer had been relieved of duty. He knew it was a heavy blow. Suddenly, they all were no more than private citizens of no country. The new commander continued. “I have an order from the prince to take you and your crew in. You will release the princess to us immediately. Stand down. We will board your ship to recover her.”

Cordron met Jadeer’s eyes. Only one person could have gotten that information out. At Jadeer’s nod, Cordron left the bridge to locate the traitor. He found Lam in the corridor leading to Mornain’s room. Without explanation, he hauled him along to return to the bridge. “Well, that’s it, Lam. You’re as good as dead. If not at my hands, at least at Jadeer’s. You’ve put us all in danger. For what? To get back to Torman? You know as well as I do the prince isn’t thinking clearly. He’d just as soon turn on you as he would anyone of us.”

Lam sneered, struggling to free himself. “Yes, well I’ll take my chances with him.”

“Suit yourself.”

When Cordron had dropped Lam with Jadeer, he excused himself quickly to find the princess. He wasn’t sure if she’d be willing to return to the prince, but he did know she was their bargaining chip. Handing her over was not an option.

Chapter Five

“So you just want to turn me over to save your own neck, is that it, Cordron?” Mornain shouted. “I don’t believe this. How stupid of me to think you were an honorable man. I’m not going back there. I said I would get off Earth. I did. But I’m not going to Torman.”

He clasped his hands to keep from wringing her lovely blue neck. “Mornain, we are not just going to hand you over. We will negotiate. The prince will see reason. No matter what he thinks, he knows he’s dying and you are next in line to rule.”

“You stuck up people don’t want a Drac Whore as your leader. That’s why you broke up with me.”

“This isn’t about us.”

“Isn’t it?” she demanded. “It’s all about us. I know you were the one to suggest the plan to Jadeer. You probably suggested to turn me over and hightail it to the next galaxy. Never mind that my father will have me killed to save his own face.”

“Don’t be so dramatic.” He stomped over to her bed and sat down, immediately regretting the move since her scent wafted up from the covers. Damn, couldn’t his body calm itself for one minute while he figured out what to do? “We have convinced the officers to allow us to escort you to the prince. In essence, we’re all under arrest. Jadeer and I have a plan.”

She watched him with distrustful eyes. He was shocked to see her lip tremble before she turned away. The pain in his chest was a heavy weight. He took a step toward her and ran his hands along her arms, then pulled her back against him. With a kiss to her shoulder, he growled her name.

When she pushed her bottom against him, he hardened, wrapped an arm around her waist and lifted her against his erection. For an instant, he considered the amount of time it would take to have her before they landed on Torman. Remembering their situation, he released her and stepped toward the door. “I have to get back to the bridge.”

“Cordron?”

He paused with his hand over the panel. “Yes?”

“I...”

He turned back to look at her. The ache in his chest increased. A knot in his throat swelled until he felt it hard to drag in his next breath. Why didn’t he just admit it to himself? She was fated to be his companion. Just as sure as anything, he could never leave her and be happy. If he didn’t deceive himself, he’d accept that Mornain held his heart. No, she owned it. He...He would die for her.

“Mornain.” His voice was a tormented whisper.

She stood alone and so small. Right then, her past didn't matter. Who her mother and father were was irrelevant. Cordron had a burning ache to hold her again, to make her his own. Suddenly, not for honor, not for Torman or any of its suffering people, could he ever walk away from Mornain again. He almost smiled at the closing gates, sealing in his fate. Ridicule from others was sure to come. But it didn't matter. Only her, and their future children. Now, he knew what Jadeer meant. He'd leave all—even his dreams—to follow the one he loved.

“Come here,” he commanded gently. She came without argument, and he enveloped her into his embrace. He found her lips, covering them with his own for a kiss that was sweeter than any he'd ever experienced. When he pulled back long moments later, he look down at her. “This may be a beginning or an ending. Either way, my wife, we will be together.”

He felt her tremble as she nuzzled closer to him, seemingly attempting to become one physically as their spirits were already one. “Never leave me, Cordron. I couldn't face that.”

“Never. I promise.”

* * * *

Home. They were finally home again. Cordron paused in exiting the ship with Mornain at his side. He closed his eyes to breathe in the fresh scent of a land eighty percent covered in foliage. Tormanians were primarily hunters. It was why they took on the forms of animals. All the more pleasure in seeking their meals in the wild. He'd missed the majestic mountains stretching high over their city. Earth had been too tame, what he saw of it. Now, hopefully, this all wouldn't be snatched away again before he could renew his acquaintance with the land.

They were herded like cattle into a holding room in the palace, the doors locked. Mornain had been torn from his side, and it was only Jadeer and Lydian's calming words that helped him to hold it together. Right then, it was fortunate that Lam had requested he be held somewhere else until all things were cleared. Cordron would have ended his life without hesitation.

“Oh dear,” Lydian murmured. All eyes turned to her. “This is not the time. Jadeer, we're about to be parents.”

Cordron stared. Jadeer paled, and someone was running along the halls outside their room shouting. Before Cordron could move to press his ear to the panel, a scream rent the air. Lydian was most certainly having the baby now. He pounded against the door, “Open up. We need a birthing woman.”

After pounding for several more minutes, the door unlocked but no one entered. Cordron waved his hand, and the door slid wide. He stepped into a hall filled with running officers, all speaking at once. Stepping out further, he hooked one of them, unintentionally yanking the man from his feet. He righted him before demanding to know what was happening.

“It's the prince,” the man exclaimed. “He's passed. They're absorbing his remains now. The advisors are determining the authenticity of the next in line. When they're sure, she will take

the throne. We have no choice.” The man frowned. “It’s too bad. I hear she’s a Drac Whore.”

Cordron lifted the man by his neck and tossed him away. The officer crashed against the far wall and slid down unconscious. He turned to find Jadeer carrying his wife toward the medical wing, and Cordron moved in the opposite direction to find his love.

* * * *

She was beautiful. Her hair piled upon her head, dressed in her royal robes. He’d have to speak to her about changing the official palace attire. Something revealing her long sexy legs would be good, and as much cleavage as was decent. He grew tight considering it. The sparkle in her eyes when she turned to him let him know she’d read his mind yet again. He clasped his hands behind his back, with an attempted look of innocence.

“Everyone leave me, please,” she announced. “Except you, Commander Cordron.”

He bowed slightly, “Your wish, my princess.”

Jadeer, Lydian and their new baby boy exited the room, along with the princess’ advisors and servants. Cordron tried to contain himself until the door clicked in place. When it did, irreverently, he jumped up on the platform she occupied, pulled her from her seat and then sat down. He lifted her onto his lap to capture her lips in a hungry kiss. “Mm, Mornain. I’ve wanted that all morning. These swearing in ceremonies are very tedious.”

“I agree, darling.” She tucked into him. “But necessary. In the end, with all my big ideas, I had no choice but to accept my fate. Though I found it infinitely more tolerable knowing we will be married next week.”

“So long,” he complained.

She laughed, “What are you complaining about. You haven’t left my bed the entire time we’ve been back here.”

He slid a hand down between the gap in her robe, to stroke between her legs. Maybe the outfit wasn’t a total loss. “Are you complaining? Maybe I’m too much for you?”

“Hah,” she declared. “I can take you every day, all day. You’ve not had a woman as good as I am, Commander Cordron.”

A gleam entered his eye, “Is that so?”

She nodded, “Yes, that’s so.”

“Prove it!”

He put her from him only long enough to unstrap his clothing and extract his thick shaft. It stood at attention, ready and pulsating for her soft lips. His wife-to-be, princess of Torman,

slid to her knees and wrapped slender fingers about his erection. When her moist mouth closed over his head and eased down sensuously until he was buried inside her tight throat, Cordron could only thank the late prince for Mornain's colorful past.

THE END

About the Author

Yvette A. Lynn is the mother of two boys and lives in Baltimore, Maryland. She's loved reading since before she knew how. She finds that writing gives voice to all the stories just floating around in her head, demanding an outlet. She's loved to write since middle school, and though she gave it up for many years, the heroes and heroines never stopped pushing her to come back.

Yvette's favorite types of books to read are fantasy, paranormal, and vampire/werewolf. She's a softy for a romance and loves when it's both sensual and action-packed.

To learn more about the author, you may visit her website at www.yvettelynn.com. She loves hearing from both readers and authors.