

# A SPARTAN'S WAR

*A Spartan's War Chronicles: Book 2*



By Michael J. Cropo  
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Earth is now free of the Vampire High Coven rule.

The cost of life was high, terribly high.

As ships from the Lycavorian Union begin to arrive and explore this young new planet, can tarifa and aihola begin to rebuild the planet while their own ghosts and demons threaten to drive a wedge between them forever.

As Martin struggles with the duties as king, fighting with his decision to allow yuri to escape, he faces his first real challenge. A challenge that could mean the end of them all.

A female elf, last in the lineage of elfin royal blood, has been captured. It was Martin's decision that allowed her captors to escape, and while her elfin family applies political pressure to the already heated events due to the position she was meant to take, Martin must find a way to rescue or kill her because of the secrets she carries within her.

And an enemy from an age long past will come forward, enforcing a blood oath sworn against his grandfather nearly ten thousand years ago.

It is a blood oath that will take from him the queen he treasures and loves most of all.

In an act of betrayal she cannot fight, she will become the mate to a bitter enemy that is every bit as evil as the high coven and even more ruthless.

An enemy of his own kind.

As his queen struggles with the consequences of her betrayal and contemplates taking her own life, Martin must risk everything, love, injury, war and even death in an attempt to insure his new empire does not crumble from within.

It has become personal.

It has become A Spartan's War.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **EDEN CITY ONE WEEK AFTER *THE BATTLE OF FREEDOM'S PLAIN***

There was not much left that wasn't touched by destruction in some manner. The High Coven frigate had laid waste to Eden City in a way their ground artillery couldn't. His home was destroyed, one of the thousands across the landscape of the city, the buildings and skyscrapers they had built in the past year now nothing but rubble, broken glass and twisted steel. He felt a pang of regret touch him as he gazed on the city below him.

His city.

It had been slightly more than a year since he had returned to earth after the passing of the comet. That hunk of ice and gas that had passed between earth and the moon had set in motion a chain of events that had brought him five hundred years into the future, into a world he could never have imagined, and it had irreparably altered the course of his life forever. That comet had brought him the answers to the questions that had plagued him throughout his thirty-three years of life. Well... the thirty-three years he knew about anyway he mused.

The questions he had asked his whole life about who he was and more importantly what he was.

A year ago if someone would have told him he was actually three thousand and twenty-five years old and he was actually a wolf that could take the form of a man he would have attempted to have that person committed, if he hadn't shot the person for being insane first. Martin Leonidas couldn't contain the small chuckle that escaped his lips at that thought.

He was a werewolf.

The mythical creature from ancient earth history meant to terrorize small children in stories and movies and nightmares. And not just any common horror story werewolf, but a werewolf that wasn't even from this planet. Martin Leonidas shook his head gently as he sipped the mug of strong coffee he held in his hand.

He had begun life under the impression he was a man genetically created to be a superior soldier, crossbred with animal DNA to make him stronger, faster and harder to kill. If he had known the truth then, he had no doubts he *would have* gone insane. He discovered at a young age that he had the ability to focus his mind and shift his physical form into that of a very large, raven black wolf. There were two others that discovered this ability the same time he did, and they were told by the man who supposedly created them it was due to their animal DNA. Even then part of him didn't believe that.

When the Genome genetic program begun by the United States began to unravel and their super soldiers began to mentally snap at an alarming rate, Martin and the two others like him acted. By now he was leading a team of elite Navy SEALs, all genetically enhanced soldiers, and when they saw what was afflicting the other genomes, Martin and the others took it upon themselves to bite their team mates and make them something different, passing on their genes through their saliva and blood. In essence he created the first full fledged werewolf unit in the world.

Or so he thought.

The comet had changed all that, as well as his perceptions on everything he had ever believed.

They had been assigned as the security force for an International Base on the moon. EDEN it had been called. When the comet had passed between the earth and the moon, gravitational forces generated by the comet began their history altering events. The moon's rotation came to a halt, while the earth's rotation increased. Martin didn't pretend to understand it, but when all was said and done, they had come four hundred and seventy-eight years into the future, and the world as they once knew it no longer existed.

Those first few hours were the worse, everyone and everything they had known was now gone with no way to get it back. Their first mission back to earth resulted in the discovery of things that had once only existed in their legends and minds. A hundred new species of elves now inhabited the earth, not to mention many not so nice creatures and genetically engineered beasts that had been created to serve the High Coven.

The Vampire High Coven or The Alliance as it was called on earth. More creatures that had once existed only in movies and books, and they were far more sinister and vile than he had ever known. Martin had never believed that earth was the center of the universe or that life existed only on this planet. Yet what he had discovered in the last year went far beyond the breadth of that belief.

He was a Lycavorian... a werewolf... and his people were not from this world. They had come to earth as early as 950 B.C. earth time, to hide and escape the persecution and slavery that the High Coven had inflicted on them. In 519 B.C., in an act to save their last hope, the Lycavorian King had ordered his unborn son and ten thousand other fetuses spirited away to earth to hide and perhaps one day return and save their people. That unborn son and those with him were implanted into the wombs of ten thousand women of the Greek City State of Sparta, and so began the true history of Sparta, and not the one told in ancient earth history books.

That unborn son became King of Sparta, the most militaristic state in the area, and also the most brutally efficient and deadly. The Spartan mystique was advanced even more with the countless victories they had over the years, even before the rise of that King. When he took power they were elevated to the status of legend.

The history books still considered it one of the most brilliant displays of courage and fighting skill even to this day, The Battle of Thermopylae and the stand of the 300 Spartans. King Leonidas had led three hundred of his Spartans and several thousand allies to stand against the invading Persian army. They held out for three days, slaughtering close to fifty thousand Persian soldiers, nearly half of them vampires. King Leonidas knew what he was... who he was, and he knew who the Persian leader was as well. Xerxes was the son of the Vampire High Lord. When Leonidas refused to bow to the Vampire Prince, a rebellion that still waged across

the stars to this day began. Leonidas had two sons, one who was but a child when he died, the other still within his mother's womb.

Martin was that unborn son. He was the son of the Spartan King and a Lycavorian. And now he had taken his father's place as the King of Sparta, and of the Lycavorian people.

"Talk about out of this world." Martin muttered to himself as he let his eyes wander back to the landscape of the city below him.

He wore only a loose fitting pair of black pants, his upper body bare. The sculpted muscle was reminiscent of the sculptures of the Greek Gods Achilles and Hercules. His six foot two frame was deeply tanned, the muscles lean and ripped to perfection. His black hair hung almost to his shoulders now, his goatee neatly trimmed and evenly layered. His eyes were deep dark brown pools of liquid that could pierce your soul if he so desired. Black flame tattoos extended up his arms and across his shoulders as well as across his rippled abdomen. The result of a drinking binge in Taiwan so many years ago that it seemed like forever. He now had half a dozen scars in the last year along to add to the collection that adorned his body.

*Nauta Melme?* (Bounded Love) The soft female voice slipped into his thoughts with ease, like soft wind chimes coming together in the breeze and Martin Leonidas turned slowly.

Did elves exist? All Martin had to do to answer that question was to look at the five foot seven frame of the female that stepped onto the patio with him. Her platinum hair hung to the middle of her back, long since washed of the blood and grime from a week ago. Her deeply tanned skin was flawless like soft satin, and the sheet wrapped around her did nothing to hide the lean muscular figure that spoke of pleasures Martin had explored many times since she had come into his life. He watched her step out fully onto the patio, one hand gripping the mug of coffee like him, the other going up to tuck her silky hair behind the one thing that made her so very different. Her ears were elegantly rounded and almost three inches in length, curving gently to a point.

This delicious woman was an elf. And not just any elf female, but she was his Queen, his lover and one of the deadliest females walking the planet right now.

*Melda Min.* (Beloved One) He told her as she stepped up to him on his left side and snuggled her lush body up against him.

*We wondered where you went.* Dysea spoke softly as she sipped her coffee.

Martin turned as the two remaining women who shared his life and his bed stepped onto the patio, both with coffee in their hands.

Anja... her Persian red hair shining in the rising sun wore only one of his old buttoned down shirts, the tails of the shirt falling to her firm tanned thighs. He had known Anja the longest of any of his Queens... their relationship progressing through many natural and unnatural obstacles before they both realized they were meant to be together. She was the shortest of the three at only five foot three, but she was all muscle and curves, her large breasts straining against the confines of his old shirt. Her soft jade green eyes bespoke of great intelligence and compassion, and it suited her since she was the most skilled doctor and genetics engineer Martin had ever met. Many took her short stature as an advantage for them and tried to intimidate her because of this. They soon realized that Anja had the shortest temper of all of them when it came to arrogant and pompous men and women, and she was also one of the most lethal women walking the planet at this time.

Then there was Aricia.

Martin inhaled her lavender coco scent deeply as she moved around in front of him while Anja took much the same position as Dysea on his opposite side. Aricia was wrapped in a similar sheet as Dysea and she pressed back against him holding her coffee with both hands. She was the youngest of his Queens, but she was also a Pureblood Lycavorian like himself, and it was Aricia who could make his wolf blood sizzle like no one else. Her five foot seven height was all muscle and firm lush flesh, having been born in the city of Sparta. Even today the men and the women still trained intensely, forging their bodies into temples. Aricia's hair match Martin's in its blackness and it fell even longer than Dysea's to the middle of her perfectly shaped buttocks. Her skin was tanned to almost a bronze color, her cheekbones high and regal. Yet it was her eyes that caused Martin's heart to do little flips every time he looked into them. A sparkling azure blue color that never ceased to look upon him with love and the promise of pleasures unlike he would ever experience.

As she pressed back against him Martin dropped his head lower and gently nuzzled Aricia's neck, hearing her sigh in blissful contentment. He did the same with Anja and then Dysea, nuzzling her sensitive elf ears and watching as her eyes closed in warmth and love.

Martin loved them all with every fiber of his being, but as his free arm draped over Aricia's shoulder and she nuzzled his forearm, pulling his arm closer across her firm breasts, he knew that Aricia was the one he could not survive without. She was of his kind, a Lycavorian and a Pureblood, and she held a part of him that Anja and Dysea would never have. They knew this fact of course and it mattered not to them. They all loved Martin with everything that they were, and that love was returned to them by him, and it also extended to each other as well. They shared the same bed, the same man and each other, and were not in the least bit shy or ashamed of that fact. All of them knew it was meant to be. All of them knew they would add one more before they were fully complete, but that would come about of its own accord.

*I wanted to watch the sun come up.* Martin told them.

This is how they spoke when it was just the four of them. Lycavorians were all telepathic, some more powerful than others, and it allowed them to communicate with their minds. When Martin had turned Dysea and Anja they too had absorbed this ability, and now they were the four most powerful telepaths on earth and with few exceptions, anywhere in the universe. Their people called it Mindvoice and it is how they had chosen to speak with each other when they were alone. It brought them closer together.

*Would you like to try again?* Anja asked with a small laugh.

*Tell others that my love...* Aricia spoke now. *Do not try and tell us the same thing. What are you thinking about? Share it with us.*

*I'm thinking about...* *I'm thinking about all that we have lost to get to this point.* Martin replied knowing he could never lie to them.

*Yes.* Dysea spoke evenly. She had been a Queen before, and would be again, of far more people and worlds, but she was also the most politically astute of them. *We have lost much, but we have gained so much more Nauta Melme.*

*Have we?* Martin asked gently, *Anari; Dekton; Julie; Tari; Eden City in ruins, almost four hundred thousand dead, equal that wounded.* He shook his head. *That does not include the thirteen thousand Spartans and twenty odd ships that were destroyed. I've never... I've never been responsible for the loss of so many who follow me.*

*Nauta Melme... you did not force this upon anyone. Do you think we did not feel the pride that swept the field that day? Those who fought beside you, Spartan and elf and man, they wanted to be there. It was their choice. Just as it is their choice to remain here within this city we have built and return it to what it was. And even more.*

*We have waited so long for you to come to us my love.* Aricia spoke softly, pulling his arm tighter around her, *Our own people... the elves. You are our King and we would die for you.*

*What if I don't want people willing to die for me Aricia?*

Aricia didn't turn her head to look at him. *What if the sun did not come up in the morning? Or set in the afternoon? There are some things that we can not change Martin. You are the son of King Leonidas. You are the King our people have waited over three thousand years for. You are the King the elves have waited five hundred years for.*

*They don't follow you because of who you are Marty.* Anja spoke now, pressing her body tighter to him. *They follow you because of what you represent.*

*What do I represent?*

*Hope.* Aricia said. *Just as your father represented hope. Your aura projects hope my love, hope for the future, for the present. It inspires everyone around you to do more than they thought they could. You... you make them better. That is why they follow you, and that is why they will die for you.*

Martin leaned over and nuzzled the back of her neck. *How exactly did I manage to come across you three again?*

*We were asking ourselves that same question last night.* Anja spoke. *We were wondering whether we should trade up for a better model maybe. The one we have has been decidedly lacking in attention giving the last couple of days.*

Martin turned his head to look at her, and Anja smiled when she saw his eyes change to those yellow/gold orbs they all adored so much. Martin lowered his psychic shields and hit them with the full force of his Alpha wolf aura. He saw Anja's eyes close in instant arousal and felt both Aricia and Dysea push back against him as it swept through them with love, hunger and desire.

*I'll show you attention!* Martin snapped.

Aricia let out a small yelp of surprise when he lifted her into his arms and tossed her over his shoulder as he turned. Anja and Dysea were already scrambling back into their borrowed home giggling like school girls.

*Melyanna what have you done?* Dysea teased as they saw him following them quickly. *You've created a beast!*

Anja chuckled. *I guess we'll have to surrender to this beast and tame him then.*

They turned to watch him enter the small room and slam his hand against the panel on the side closing the door. He and Aricia were already locked in a blistering kiss that was sending heated waves of passion and hunger through both their auras and passing it to Anja and Dysea. They looked at one another with hunger in their eyes now.

*I like the beast.* Dysea spoke.

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## **LYCAVORIAN LEONIDAS-CLASS ATTACK CRUISER LEONIDAS I ORBITING EARTH**

Martin still could not believe he was walking on a starship.

And not just any starship; but a starship that bore his father's name, and a starship that was nearly two thousand meters long. He had almost hyperventilated when he first came up to this ship three days ago, and his mind was still attempting to grasp the sheer size of it. Not to mention the hundred and thirteen other ships of equal or slightly smaller size. The remainder of the Lycavorian Home Guard Fleet had broken all engineering protocols in reaching earth when they did, burning out what Martin now knew were the LSD coils of their ships. The Light Speed Drive coils that allowed them to move through the stars at faster than light velocity. Riall had told him what they had done to reach earth as they had, breaking all known speed records not to mention dozens of engineering violations.

Martin watched his mother's mate as he led them through the long corridors, ignoring the looks of shock and awe he got from the crewmen they passed. Andreus found it quite amusing as he walked beside his King. He had developed a unique relationship with the King he would die so willingly for. Martin held nothing back from him, and in some respects Andreus was his single most important confidant. Part of that Andreus knew was due to his sister being one of Martin's Queens, but the largest part was that he and his King had been together for almost a full year now, and in that time they had survived enough to last ten years and they had formed a bond that would never be broken.

Riall waved his hand over the small panel on the bulkhead and the doors slid open to reveal a small greeting room that connected to the larger conference room with earth as its backdrop. Martin wasn't staring at the blue green planet below as he entered the room; he was gazing at the dark haired beauty that was his mother.

Riall watched with a smile as his young King strode across the room and lifted his mother into his arms, hugging her tightly and breathing of her warm spice scent. Gorgo for her part could not contain the smile that split her face as she embraced the broad shoulders of the son she had thought lost nearly three thousand years ago. They had hardly been apart the last few days, attempting to regain what the Coven had taken from them. Gorgo was no longer afraid to speak of her love of Leonidas or Martin's older brother who was murdered by the High Coven. Her love for Riall was strong enough to withstand anything now as they had been mated for over two thousand years, and she had regaled her lost son for hours with the answers to all of the questions he had longed to have answered.

Martin set his mother down and looked at her. "It's been a long time mother." He said.

Gorgo laughed and squeezed his arm. "It was only eight hours my son. Even we wolves must sleep." She replied.

Martin nodded slowly. "Yeah... well sleep's overrated right now."

"We will have many more hours together Martin. There is so much I want to show you. And you must meet your brothers and sisters when we return to Apo Prime." Gorgo said sniffing the air around him. "And you need to stop pestering your Queens and get some sleep. You have bags under your eyes and..."

“Gorgo... he is a grown man.” Riall stepped forward now. “And I don’t see the Queens beating him away with sticks either.”

Martin turned to look at Riall. “They did this morning.” He spoke with a grin.

Gorgo rolled her eyes and shoved him away, “Men!” She exclaimed. “You Alphas are all the same! Where is Aricia? I would rather spend time with her than listen to you to speak of your conquests.”

Martin chuckled. “She’s helping Anja and Dysea in the main hospital.” He answered.

“Good... then I get to spend time with all of my son’s Queens.” Gorgo spoke as she headed for the door.

Martin looked at Riall as she left the conference room. “I don’t know whether that’s a good thing or a bad thing.” He said.

Riall smiled at his comment. “After two thousand three hundred years I still ask myself that same question sire when she tells me that.”

Martin looked at him for a long moment. “I can feel the happiness and love in her for you Riall. Please don’t think that my returning from the dead has changed that.”

Riall shook his head and moved closer. “Your mother loved your father sire. With all that she was. We traveled on that ship for nearly two hundred years together and not a day went by after you were placed in the sleep chamber that she was not beside you for at least part of the day. When she lost you... I did not think she would survive. She is far stronger than I sire, and I count myself blessed to have her love now.” He smiled and motioned with his arm into the larger conference room. “Perhaps if you’ll allow me sometime I will tell you of our early time together, but for now the others are waiting sire.”

Martin took a deep breath and walked into the larger conference room where he saw Daniel speaking with Walter at one end of the table. General Vistr who he had met on the surface and Admiral Ceneu were present, as were two other men.

Legsim got to his feet as the son of Leonidas entered the room and he was struck by the incredible similarities between father and son. There were many images of the senior Leonidas, and with the exception of the length of his hair, this young man could have been him. He stepped into the middle of the floor and watched as Martin went to where Daniel and Walter were getting to their feet. He and the giant black man embraced like brothers Legsim saw, and he saw that the rumors and stories that had been circulating were true. These two men were like brothers of the blood, and nothing would keep them apart. Legsim was fascinated with Daniel, as he had not one, but two female elves as mates. The stunningly beautiful red haired female that he had turned and the enticing dark skinned Drow. And if the rumor was true, Daniel’s two mates were similar to Martin’s three Queens in that they were not shy about the affection they shared for each other.

The Drow elves had become something of a treasure to those elves within the fleet. The Lycavorian Union did not have elves with such unique coloring, especially of their shimmering white hair. That they were as lethal as they were unique made them very popular among the elves in the fleet, and they could be found among these Drow whenever he saw them on the surface.

“Sire this is Ambassador Legsim... the elfin representative to the Union Senate.” Riall spoke as he motioned to Legsim.

Martin looked at the tall male elf and held out his hand. “Ambassador... it’s a pleasure to make your acquaintance. I understand I have you to thank for landing your ship where you did and ordering your gunners to provide us support.”

Legsim bowed his head slightly. “It seemed like the right thing to do sire.”

Martin nodded. “It helped save our asses.” He said.

Legsim looked at him, “Milord?” He asked.

Riall smiled. “I have discovered Legsim that the King has a unique vocabulary we will have to grow accustomed to over time. His comment was a show of thanks and respect.”

Legsim smiled and nodded, “Thank you sire.”

Martin looked at him and nodded. “I got a lot to learn I guess uhu?” He spoke.

Legsim looked at Martin somewhat startled, “Sire...” He said after a moment. “Perhaps not so much as you might believe.”

Riall squeezed Martin’s arm pulling him away from Legsim. “Sire... this is First Commander Ranati. I took the liberty of assigning him to your personal team. Your Royal Captain tells me you have your own

personal group of seven that you prefer to work with. Ranati will be able to answer most questions you might have.”

Martin nodded to the Lycavorian man. “Welcome aboard.”

“Thank you sire,” The young man asked, looking a little shell shocked to be in such a position. He was a junior First Commander of Intelligence, and had been stunned when Riall came to him to fill this position until they returned to Apo Prime.

Martin nodded and went to the table where he settled into the chair between Walter and Daniel, surprising those in the room. Ceneu looked at him.

“Sire... you... you should sit at the head of the table.” He spoke.

Martin looked at him. He knew who the reptilian looking Admiral was now, he was kind of hard to forget, but Martin had taken a liking to him for his blunt nature and straight talking mannerisms. “Why?”

“You are King.” Ceneu spoke as if this was obvious to anyone. “It is your... it is your right and your station.”

Martin leaned forward across the shiny steel grey marble top of the table. “Ok... let’s get something straight right now.” Martin spoke calmly. “I’m King... I get that part... really I do. Helen... The Oracle... she made me realize that, but I am not a fucking god, so please stop tap dancing around me concerning all things! We got business, so let’s get to it!”

This shocked everyone in the room except Walter and Daniel, who had smiles on their faces. Legsim settled into his chair with his own smile forming on his face. This was going to be an experience he would remember for quite some time.

Ceneu got to his feet quickly and went to the map chart on the wall. “Milord... we have completed repairs to all ships damaged in the battle. The rest of the Home Guard Fleet has arrived in system and I have deployed them in a standard planetary defensive grid. Two additional Fleet Groups have departed Apo Prime and will arrive in four days, following our route.”

“So fast?” Walter asked from his chair.

“They left three days after we did Senior Polemarch.” Ceneu replied. “Prime Minister Deia felt that you would want to secure earth permanently sire.”

Martin nodded. “I do.”

Ceneu nodded. “The two Fleet Groups will be accompanied by a hundred Class Six cargo ships bringing food, medical supplies, and building materials. Four of the six major Engineering Corporations in the Union are sending large work forces to begin building defensive platforms and a Jump Gate to connect with the corridors already established. They will also lend their skill to the skilled men and women you already have here sire. What you built here Milord, the city below, in only a year? It was truly a work of genius. The Prime Minister also sent the three most qualified individuals she could find that you can consider for Earth’s Governor. She...”

“Wait... what was that?” Martin asked quickly. “Earth’s Governor?”

Legsim nodded. “Every planet within the Union is allowed to choose a Governor to oversee the disposition of forces and trade routes and such Milord. It’s a fairly mundane position, but it carries some prestige to it.”

Martin shook his head. “Earth already has a Governor, if that’s what you are calling it, three of them in fact.”

Riall leaned forward sensing he was about to tread very thin ice with his King over this. He had noticed over the last few days that the son of Leonidas abhorred any type of political posturing and favors. “The Prime Minister felt it would be prudent to have someone... more experienced to handle things sire.”

Martin shook his head again. “Tarifa, Aihola and Selene have my full and complete trust. They will be the ones in charge when I leave.”

Ceneu looked at him, pressing further. “Sire... one... one of the female elves you speak of...” This news caused Legsim to look at Martin surprised. He had talked briefly with the female elf Tarifa and found her to be competent, but he hadn’t known the King was going to eave them in charge. “She is a...”

Martin nodded. “Yep... she’s a vampire. And her Drow lover is a vampire. And Aihola is half vampire and Tarifa is now one of us. I get that entirely Admiral. Tarifa was and is a Queen in her own right, as is Aihola. Selene is one of the finest administrators I’ve ever seen, and between the three of them I have no doubt they can handle whatever might come up.”



Legsim leaned forward now. "Sire... these... these positions also have some political importance."

"I thought you said it was a mundane job." Martin said looking at him.

"It is sire... but it does give the individual certain..."

"Certain what... Ambassador Legsim?" Martin asked his eyes steely.

"Certain political clout sire," Legsim replied unfazed.

Martin sat back in his chair and nodded his head. "So they are positions of favor really?" He said, "Rewards for being good little boys and girls."

Legsim nodded, "Harshly put sire, but technically accurate." He answered. "The three individuals Deia is sending were next in line for such a position."

"Tough!" Martin spoke. "They can suck it up and drive on. Tarifa, Aihola and Selene will govern Earth, period. There will be no discussion there and the Oracle is already making plans to have homes built for them in Sparta. They will be going back and forth between Eden City and Sparta. Sparta will hold all the Senate meetings and Council deliberations, while Eden City will be the actual seat of power. They will decide what is in Earth's best interests, and no one else. What's next?"

"We must discuss what to do about Commander For'mya." Vistr spoke up quickly, unable to contain himself any longer.

Martin looked at him, "Who?"

Ceneu looked at him. "We are still gathering information on that Vistr!" He hissed through his reptilian lips.

"He needs to know." Vistr snapped right back.

"What do I need to know?" Martin asked looking at Riall. "Who is this For'mya?"

"Sire... we are still collecting the facts and..." Riall answered.

"Who is he?" Martin snapped now, losing his patience because everyone was still trying to protect him.

Legsim leaned forward. "Who is she Milord." He corrected him. His hand went to the panel on the table and typed quickly. He motioned to the screen that lifted from the table in front of Martin. "Star Commander For'mya. She is the most senior *STRIKER AT* pilot in the Union. The very best, though I do understand your personal pilot is unbelievably skilled as well. She is one thousand three hundred nineteen years old, single..."

"Not surprising with her attitude." Vistr muttered.

Legsim ignored him and continued. "She speaks four languages, has a degree in both Singularity Physics and Hyperspatial Engineering and a Level Nine Clearance."

Martin looked at the image of the incredibly beautiful female elf, with her golden blond hair and dark eyes. The dark gray uniform she wore hugged her figure like a glove in all the right places and Martin found himself admiring her assets. She was every bit as beautiful as Dysea, but she was not his *Melda Min*. He nodded and looked up. "Ok... what about her."

"She is the daughter of Minister L'tian, the great grandson of the elfin King that Veldruk assassinated when he conquered my home world." Legsim replied. "L'tian is a very powerful Minister with our hierarchy, and he has many friends in high places."

Martin leaned forward. "Ok... drop the other bomb. Why do we need to talk about this woman?"

"She helped design the *STRIKERS* sire, so she has an intimate knowledge of how we use them, and how to fight and defeat them. They are one of our biggest ground weapons against the Coven, as they have not been able to field a ship anywhere near as close to the *STRIKER* in capability." Riall spoke now, feeling no need to hold back. "She is also privy to quite a few new weapons systems that are not yet common knowledge, as well as some very sensitive intelligence information."

Martin nodded. "I got that part... she's important. What do I need to know?"

"She... she was captured sire." Riall finally spoke. "She was captured while helping to repair the shield tower near the airfield. Apparently one of their cloned vampire troops was able to surprise her, feed on her enough to heal her wounds and then steal one of the vehicles nearby. We tracked the vehicle to a point fifty-six kilometers west of Eden City where we found the trooper's body and detected signs of one of these Raptors landing. We lost the trail there. However we detected an abnormal lifesign reading on Yuri's ship as we escorted her out of the system. We didn't think anything of it until Vistr informed us she had been taken."

Martin sat back in his chair holding up his hand. "And I let Yuri just walk right out of the system." He spoke disgust with himself in his voice.

“It... it would appear so Milord.” Riall spoke evenly. “Sire you didn’t know... you couldn’t have known.”

“The better question is what do we do?” Legsim spoke quickly. “I don’t particularly like L’tian but he has many friends and For’mya is his only remaining child. And you all know what else she represents.”

“That is not important at the moment.” Riall spoke only Walter catching the look Riall passed to Legsim. “Sire... she is the last in the royal bloodline of the elfin family. Her father is powerful and he will not be happy in the least about this. He will demand that we find her and bring her back.”

“She’s one person.” Daniel spoke now as Martin sat back in his chair. “As much as I find the idea reprehensible, she is only one person and you don’t risk everything for one soldier, no matter how important.”

“We can not scour the universe for her!” Ceneu spoke in agreement. “Yes she is a fine pilot... yes she is important... but she is not invaluable! We can change mission codes and plans, everything she was involved in we can alter safely, and I have already started doing that. They will get nothing from her that they can use.”

“If it appears we are doing nothing to either find or rescue her,” Legsim spoke. “L’tian could make some very large political waves for the King and the Prime Minister.”

Martin looked at him, “Because I let Yuri go.” He said.

Legsim nodded. “If it is discovered you let the High Lord’s daughter escape, after you had already killed Xerxes and had her trapped, questions will be asked. We had her within our grasp sire, and you let her go. That does not look good.”

Martin nodded. “No shit!” He spoke.

Legsim looked at him, “Sire... why did you let her escape?”

“That is not for us to know!” Riall snapped. “He is King and he...”

“She let me live.” Martin spoke bringing silence to the room.

Legsim looked at him, “Sire?”

“She knew who I was for a long time.” Martin spoke softly. “She was with me on EDEN for almost two years before the comet, knowing who and what I was even when I did not. We had a... a relationship. She had two years to kill me and she let me live.”

Legsim was silent for a long moment before nodding his head. “I would suggest that information stay within this room. I understand now why you did this sire, and in your position, I might have done the same thing. Others will not be as understanding.”

“So what can we do?” Martin asked quickly. “I got her into this. It’s my fault she was taken. What can I do to fix it?”

Vistr looked at Riall. “The vampire spy we captured.” He spoke. “We should interrogate her.”

“What spy?” Martin asked.

Vistr looked at him. “When your Major O’Connell returned to Eden City he had a vampire spy with him. We have looked for her for some time, and surprisingly she surrendered to us without a fight. She was in the company of a Hadarian as well, a member of her gang so to speak.”

“When did you capture her?” Martin asked.

“The same day that Major O’Connell returned.” Vistr spoke. “She was with him as I said.”

“We don’t know what she might be involved in.” Riall spoke. “She has been known to us for a number of years, but it seems she is as much wanted by the Coven as she is by us. It is hard to really tell where her allegiances are. She has been very calm since we captured her... surprisingly so as I said... stating only that she wished to speak with the King. With you sire. She says she knows you from long ago. What did she say her name was Vistr?”

“Yuko... Yuriko or something like that?”

Martin’s eyes grew very wide at this and he came to his feet, as did Walter right next to him, “Yuriko?” Walter gasped.

Vistr nodded. “Yes I believe that is what she is calling herself now. Why? Is this of importance?”

Martin looked at Walter. “Walter?”

“You must remember Martin... I did not see her for ten years after the comet passed.” He spoke. “When I did and inquired of Yuriko she told me only that she had died.”

Martin looked at Riall. “Where is she?”

“Sire she is... what is wrong?”

“Where is she?” Martin demanded.  
“In the brig Milord,” Riall answered.  
Martin bolted for the door.

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Yuriko sat up quickly when she heard the deep voice echo down the corridor.

“I said open the damn security grid!”

Yuriko got slowly to her feet as the shimmering blue field barring her cell disappeared. She recognized that voice. She would recognize that voice until the day she died. It was the voice of the only man to ever show her an ounce of kindness.

“Yuriko!” The voice echoed urgently in the corridor and she moved forward tentatively. She stepped into the brig corridor and saw him looking into empty cells, the Spartan she now knew as the Queen’s brother his constant shadow.

“I... I am here father.” Yuriko let the words out softly, knowing he would hear them with his acute wolf ears.

Martin froze as he was stepping into the empty cell when he heard her speak those words. He turned quickly and saw the attractive young woman standing in the center of the corridor. He took several steps forward and stopped, gazing at her intently.

“Yuriko?” He asked softly.

She smiled slowly feeling the emotions she had held in all these years bubbling to the surface. “I have... I have grown since you last saw me.” She managed to speak as he grew closer.

“Sire!” Andreus barked moving to come between him and the vampire female.

Martin held up his hand stopping him. “No Andreus.” He said. “She is not an enemy. Are you Yuriko?”

“I have waited a very long time to hear my name pass from your lips again.” Yuriko spoke softly. “I did not think it would ever happen.” She stepped closer wary of his Spartan Guard. “You are the only person I have ever known who showed... who showed me kindness without question, without regard.”

Martin was in front of her now and she looked up into his face, almost no different than she remembered it. “Yuri was not your mother was she?”

Yuriko shook her head slowly. “She killed my parents and took me. I am... I am a vampire, a Pureblood... I will not deny that. She needed me to get close to you, to play a part. I was so young... I did not... I did not even know what I was. I... she never showed me kindness unless you were there, never one word. She...”

Martin reached up and put his fingers to her lips stopping her, “Stop Yuriko.” He said softly.

“I... you...”

Martin wrapped his arms around Yuriko and pulled her into the embrace she had wanted for so long, and she finally let the tears she had held back for five centuries come forth as she felt those arms envelope her in their protective shield.

“You took the place of her father Martin Leonidas.” Isabella’s voice echoed from behind them.

Martin turned and saw her approach. He had seen her very briefly after the battle and the next day, but she had remained on the ship since then not showing herself. He watched her walk forward confidently.

Isabella.

Princess of the Vampire High Coven and daughter to his mortal enemy, Isabella stood five foot eight without the two inch heeled combat boots she wore. The matte black body armor conformed to her extremely shapely figure like a glove, accenting her long lean legs and large breasts. Her black hair fell around her porcelain like beauty, cascading past her shoulders in flowing waves. Martin saw the twin knives she wore on her thighs, and then looked into her hazel/green eyes.

“I was only just made aware that she was here.” Isabella spoke looking at Yuriko as she sobbed gently in Martin’s embrace. “I was coming to see her.”

Yuriko pushed away from him the tears streaking her face. “There... there is something you must know.” She gasped.

“Yuriko you don’t have to...” Martin began.

“NO... I must tell you.” Yuriko said urgently. “I have been looking for... for my sister while I waited for the moon to finally return to its normal rotation and allow you to come back to Earth. That is why your people know me.”

Martin shook his head. “I don’t understand.” He said.

“She is not *truly* my sister... father... but I helped to raise her because Yuri would not.” Yuriko spoke seeing that he did not flinch when she called him that again. “When... when she began to show the signs, Yuri was enraged and sent her away! She sold her into slavery Martin! I could not protect her because I was too young and not strong enough. I... I have been searching for her ever since.”

“Show what signs Yuriko? What are you talking about?” Martin asked.

Isabella gasped and reached out to put her hand on Yuriko’s shoulder. “Yuriko... are you saying what I think you are saying?”

Yuriko nodded quickly. “She is Yuri’s child.” She turned to look up into Martin’s face. “A child of Yuri’s blood Martin.”

“And this is important why?” Martin asked. “I don’t really care that the bitch had a child! I...”

“The blood of the wolf burns in her veins as well Martin.” Yuriko spoke seeing him look at her with wide eyes, “Your blood. You... you are her father. Her name is Lisisa.”

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## **PLANET ENURRUA THREE LIGHT YEARS OUTSIDE LYCAVORIAN UNION SPACE BORDER OF *THE WILDS***

The planet was reddish/blue in color from space, mainly due to the fact that a quarter of the planet had been bombarded from orbit hundreds of years ago. Great craters could be seen from space, the positioning of these craters signaling an intentional systematic bombardment of the surface for some reason. The remainder of the planet was filled with lush forests and mountains and two large oceans that stretched thousands of kilometers across.

There were nine main cities and dozens of villages dotting the landscape, all very modern and state of the art with skyscrapers reaching into the sky and thousands of hover car lanes at every level. Trees grew hundreds of feet high and the mountains reached into the clouds far in the distance, giving the cities a breathtaking view of the surrounding area.

The estate sat apart from the main city of Atlatus ten kilometers in the distance. It was a beautiful combination of ancient rocks and modern steel and glass, much like the buildings in the distant city. There was a large wall surrounding the estate with what appeared to be some sort of anti-aircraft batteries on it, though they looked to have not been used in many years. The massive gates slid aside easily, recessing into the thick wall as the Runecutter drove easily into the wide opening followed by the large truck like hover vehicle called a Scytherover. It was a heavy duty vehicle built to carry thousands of metric tons on cargo, but this night it carried only one thing.

The creature was easily fourteen feet long from the end of its large oval nostrils to the tip of its bony mallet like tail. Its body was thick and muscular with four limbs and three digits on each clawed foot that ended in long curved talons. Its translucent scales were the color of obsidian, the membranous crest running from the base of its skull down its back to the tip of its tail. The long muzzle was open revealing dozens of razor like teeth, the thick tongue flopped onto the rear deck of the Scytherover; its two sand colored eyes open in death. The wide-set wings on its back ran from its shoulders to its hips though now they were ripped and torn asunder. Two long bony horns extended from the back of the creature’s head curving slightly upward. There were also two large holes in its broad muscular chest that still seeped pinkish colored blood.

As the vehicles stopped in front of the entrance to the estate’s main home, three men pulled themselves from the Runecutter while the fourth joined them as he exited the house and walked down the stairs.

“They said the hunt was successful father.” The tall man who had come from the house spoke as he closed on the other three.

The most muscular of the three men nodded and moved his armored form to the rear of the Scytherover. “Indeed Joric.”

The younger man peered into the lighted rear portion of the Scytherover, his dark eyes going wide. “You got him?”

The older man grunted, the moon reflecting off the gray in his dark hair. “An Obsidian Heavyhorn, the same one that has been terrorizing the western settlements. It took me two rounds to kill him after I shredded his wings.”

“Impressive father,” The young man spoke studying the dead animal carefully. “He’s young, barely three seasons old it looks like, but he will make a fine trophy.”

“Yes he will. He was protecting a nest, but we saw no eggs. Inform the Tafa families to have their warriors begin searching the valleys near the settlement.” The man ordered. “If his mate was nearby she has either already laid the eggs or is very close. We can catch her easily either way. The eggs of a Heavyhorn will bring a tidy profit once they are boiled and polished.”

“I’ll let them know in the morning father. You should come inside... Minister Difeh is here and he has some interesting information that you will want to hear.” He spoke.

“Joric... I am tired and sore. I have no time for the Minister and his petty interests.” The man growled.

“You will want to hear this father.” Joric spoke. “It concerns what our people on Apo Prime reported several weeks ago.”

The older man sighed heavily and nodded his head. “Very well I will change and join you in the Western Hall.” He replied. “But let him know he better not be wasting my time again or I will skin him and feed him to the reptiles.”

Joric chuckled. “I will let him know father.”

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“My Liege Chetak... it is an honor to see you again.” The thin gray haired man spoke as he bowed his head.

The man had changed from his heavy armor into a light gray top and pants with black boots. His graying dark hair was almost to his shoulders, his skin deeply tanned and lined from years in the sun. His brilliant grey eyes swept over the Minister with a look of disgust and he looked at his oldest son who was almost identical in appearance as him, but much younger.

“This dog can not even dress appropriately enough to greet me Joric?” The man growled.

Joric stepped up to his father matching him in height but not in girth. He was muscular, but not with the bulk and definition of his father. He handed his father the crystal goblet. “I requested the Minister come right over after hearing only a little of what he told me father. His appearance was not my concern.”

“Lepha you wench, where are you keeping yourself you Lycavorian cow?” Chetak bellowed turning his head to look around the large room.

The stunning young female scurried across the room from the shadows dressed in a skimpy dress that barely covered her supple body. “I am here Milord.” She spoke in a very subservient voice.

“Prepare my dinner wench! And make it quick!” He bellowed at her.

The blond haired female bowed her head even deeper, “As you order Milord.” She spoke before scurrying away.

Chetak moved to the large velvet red chair in front of the raging fireplace and settled his large frame into it. “Very well Minister Difeh... you may amuse me while my mate prepares my dinner.”

The thin man moved to the long couch across from where Chetak sat and settled down to the soft couch. “I have received word from our people within the Lycavorian Home Guard Fleet my Liege. It appears... it has been confirmed that Prince Xerxes has been killed in battle.”

“It’s about time... he was a bumbling fool for too long.” Chetak replied. “Why should this interest me?”

“What should interest you is not that Xerxes is dead my Liege... it is who has killed him.” Difeh spoke, “Rather brutally if my contacts are correct.” He held out the data pad he removed from under his tan jacket.

Chetak snatched the pad from Difeh’s hand and held it up as he drank from the goblet of strong wine. His face slowly changed as he read, taking on a very sinister look and he set the goblet on the small table next to the chair. After another moment he looked at Difeh.

“This information is accurate?” He asked.

Difeh nodded. "Yes my Liege." He answered. "I have been communicating with him regularly since they have been orbiting this new planet. Xerxes was killed late last week and since that time Prime Minister Deia has been working every channel she has. Four of the six major corporations in the Union have already sent workers and ships to this planet. Two additional Fleet Groups were dispatched only days after the Home Guard Fleet left. Our contacts within the High Coven have spoken sparingly of a shake up within their leadership."

Chetak looked at his oldest son. "You have seen this Joric?"

Joric nodded. "I have father; that is why I felt you should see it without delay."

"Resumar's grandson..." Chetak spoke softly as he continued to read. "He has been on this planet the entire time?"

Difeh nodded. "Yes my Liege. Apparently with no knowledge of whom he was up until a few weeks ago. It says they will be returning within the month and making arrangements for the Acceptance Ceremony as soon as possible. I thought you might find the last part there interesting my Liege."

Chetak thumbed through the information on the pad quickly until he reached the last part. His eyes grew wider as he read. "They had no idea what they were until he triggered the neurobooster? That is amazing. Almost half a million Lycavorians and they had no idea what they were. I want a ship on its way there tomorrow Joric, with the usual offerings. Let's see how many of these Spartans are willing to join us. The families need new blood."

"He is leaving several elf females in charge when he leaves." Difeh spoke.

Chetak waved his hand. "I haven't met an elf female yet that wasn't willing to part her legs for a price. Resumar was a fool to include them in the Union when he really should have conquered them. Their females are whores and their men are windbags." He said. "It is no matter; it says these elves have not been exposed to the elements off their safe little planet. It just might be possible to use that to our advantage."

"Speaking of blood father," Joric spoke reaching out to touch the pad and adjust the page. "Read this."

Chetak let his eyes drift over the page and he slowly got to his feet. "Your man is certain of this Minister?" He asked looking back to Difeh.

"She is showing all the outward signs my Liege." He replied.

"Joric... this is like a gift from the gods!" Chetak spoke. "Do you know what this means?"

"I do father." Joric replied. "It will allow us to honor the Blood Oath you swore all those years ago."

"Almost ten thousand years I have had to endure the shame of his actions." Chetak spoke, his voice cold. "This is truly a gift my son." Chetak looked at Difeh. "Tomorrow you will contact the Union representative you are familiar with. Open a dialogue. Tell him we have finally decided to join the Union. Tell him anything, but get us an invitation to the Acceptance Ceremony."

Difeh came to his feet. "We have paid him great deals of Riyal and Ducat, I'm sure he will be open to the idea. Deia has been trying to get us to merge with the Union for centuries anyways, and the other members of the Senate should not find anything wrong with that."

"I don't care how you do it, just do it Difeh." Chetak spoke. "After all this time I will finally have my revenge against the family of Resumar. I will regain my honor in the ancient way!" He looked at Joric. "And you my son will gain a new mate. One that I want you to treat as the whore she will be."

Joric smiled. "I can do that father."

"I have lost my appetite Joric." Chetak spoke. "Let us go and see the Chief Mage. I have some questions for her."

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## **EDEN CITY TEMPORARY QUARTERS FOR TARIFA AND AIHOLA**

*You killed me! Dekton screamed at her. You took me away from her!*

His body was covered in blood, the smoke thick and arid in her nostrils. She shook her head quickly. *No Dekton. I love... I loved you.*

*I could have survived! You took my last blood and killed me!*

*You told me too Dekton!*

*You killed my mate Drow bitch! Tarifa's beautiful face came into view now. You killed my mate and now I will kill you!*

Tarifa's face turned in that of a black wolf with sapphire eyes and it lunged forward with gleaming white razor like fangs.

Aihola gasped and bolted upright in the bed, the sheet falling away to reveal her naked and sweaty skin and her firm breasts. She heaved in large gulps of air, fear coursing through her, and she heard the gasp from her left and turned.

Tarifa was just exiting the shower area of the bedroom and she saw Aihola sitting up obviously terrified at the nightmare she had just experienced. She was wrapped in the large robe, the fabric clinging to her wet skin, her shiny black hair falling to the middle of her back, while it was tucked behind her elf ears out of her face.

She was the former Queen of the High Elves, abolishing her status and title when she merged all of her people and cities with Eden City not three days ago. Standing five foot nine with a luscious and firm elfin body, the robe did nothing to hide her full breasts and long legs, nor the deep tan of her skin. She tossed aside the towel she was using to dry her hair and rushed to the edge of the bed.

*"Nya Istel what is it?"* She gasped, sitting on the bed and taking Aihola's hands in hers.

Aihola, Queen of the Drow Elves and now half vampire with wolf blood mixed in looked at Tarifa's sapphire eyes briefly before shaking her head. They had been together for almost a year now, as friends, as Queens and as the deepest of lovers. They had taken a Spartan mate only a month before, a man they both had loved, but a man not fated to survive. He had been killed while saving the shield generator that protected Eden City, and in the process saved Aihola's life. Her vampire genes allowed her to feed on blood to heal wounds sustained in combat, it was a benefit of the vampire experiments on her and her people, but it had made them half vampire. She and Dekton had been seriously wounded, Dekton mortally so, and he had begged her to feed on the last of his blood to heal what she could and not leave Tarifa behind. That moment came rushing back to her now.

*Dekton smiled gently, blood seeping from between his lips. "You... you and she... you are one Little Drow. One... one can not go on without the other. You need each other more... more than you ever needed me."*

*"That's... that's not true!"* Aihola barked.

*"You... you loved me... yes."* He gasped. *"You love... you love each other more."*

*"Dekton... please... you can't leave us."*

*"If... if you love me Little Drow. If you love... love me... do as I ask you."* Dekton spoke. *"Take... my blood... before there is nothing left. Heal... heal yourself. You... you and Tarifa... great things you must still do. Together."*

Aihola looked quickly at Tarifa and shook her head slowly. "It was a dream Tarifa, nothing more." She spoke.

"The same dream you have had for three days now Nya Istel." Tarifa spoke. "You wake up in a cold sweat with fear in your eyes."

"I will be fine." Aihola said as she threw back the sheet and got out of the bed.

Tarifa watched as she walked across the room towards the shower, and she felt a powerful stirring inside her looking at Aihola's naked body. She smiled seductively and untied the top of the robe.

"Mistress...?" She spoke in an alluring tone of voice, falling willingly into the role as slave to her Drow Mistress. It was a role Tarifa played with her, for her, always being submissive in their bed. Aihola was a Drow and they were dominant in almost all that they did, and Tarifa had taken on this role as a show of her love for Aihola. And while Aihola might play the role of Mistress, she would never deny Tarifa anything in or out of their bed. She loved her too much. "Do you wish me to help you wash Mistress?"

Aihola's amber eyes flicked briefly at Tarifa before shaking her head. "We have to meet with Martin soon. I will bath and we can eat before the meeting."

Tarifa looked at her stunned as the door closed behind her. She had not even elicited a response from Aihola, and that had never happened. She reached out telepathically to touch the mind of her lover and found

she had dropped some very powerful mental shield in place around her mind. They had never closed each other off like this, and now Aihola was shielding even Tarifa from her thoughts. Aihola had taken Tarifa's blood twice to save her life, and many times during their moments of exquisite pleasure together. It afforded them a stronger connection than most, but now Aihola was blocking her and that worried Tarifa.

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## THE KING'S TEMPORARY RESIDENCE

The emotion was thick in the room, and the only ones who seemed to sense it were Gorgo and Isabella. Gorgo had returned to their home with her son's three Queens at his urgent Mindvoice message to them. She had spent many hours with them since the first day, and found all of them to be extremely intelligent and astoundingly beautiful and all of them were completely devoted to Martin. Gorgo knew of the relationship the three of them shared, as they were not shy in the least about the fact they enjoyed each other as well as Martin, and surprisingly Gorgo did not find that strange. Each of them was independently powerful, more powerful than Gorgo had sensed in Alpha females, even herself, and that was one of the reasons they were drawn so to each other.

Gorgo found Anja to be a brilliant physician and had watched her save countless lives even without the knowledge of what she had within her power to control. She would need to go to her home world soon and discover that talent, for when she did Gorgo had no doubts Anja would become the most powerful healer within the Union.

Dysea was not the typical elf female, and Gorgo found her refreshing and above all honest. She did not possess many of the arrogant traits as elves that Gorgo were accustomed to, and what her beauty would not change Gorgo had no doubts Dysea's strong will would.

Aricia was the youngest and most interesting, as she was of pure Lycavorian blood and had the boundless energy of the young, yet conducted herself in the manner of a Queen so naturally. Her lavender coco scent was strong and pure, and Gorgo had seen her in action on the field of battle beside her son. Gorgo's keen nose detected something else on Aricia but it was a lingering scent, faint and barely in the background, and she dismissed it right away after discovering the keen mind and excited questions from Aricia about the world they had entered into without fear.

Now however, Gorgo could detect the scent of anger wafting from all of them, and all of it was directed at her son. They had listened to the vampire child tell them everything she had already told Martin in the stars above, their anger simmering as the story progressed. Their anger incensed even more so by Isabella, who sat beside this Yuriko and provided her support and comfort as she spoke, her son standing behind her, his hands resting on the shoulders of Isabella as well as this Yuriko. Walter Carson who Gorgo knew as Dymas and Guardian of the Line, was also present and also being hit with the anger of the three Queens in their auras. Riall had joined them and now stood beside her, attempting to stay out of the conversation, while feeling the anger building in the room.

"...so I have been traveling off Earth whenever I could, using forged documents and travel papers to search for Lisisa whenever given the opportunity. My funds were limited and I was not able to search as thoroughly as I wanted, but I have never stopped looking. I know she is out there somewhere. And she is alone." Yuriko finished, taking a deep breath as she felt Martin squeeze her shoulder.

"This is my fault." Walter spoke suddenly.

All eyes went to him. "What do you mean Holy One?" Dysea asked.

"Just before the comet Yuri came to me for a physical." Walter spoke looking at Martin. "We discovered she was pregnant then."

Martin's eyes went wide. "You knew! You knew and you didn't tell me!"

"The comet came only hours after we discovered this." Walter spoke. "We were separated afterwards as I told you. When we saw each other again, she became my assistant. I have told you this. I asked her what had happened to the baby and as with Yuriko she told me the child had died."

"Lisisa did not die!" Yuriko snapped.

"Why didn't you tell me this Walter?" Martin asked.



“What was the point Martin?” He spoke. “As far as I knew Yuriko and your child were dead. I did not see the purpose in bringing it up when we rediscovered each other, or at any other time afterwards. You had found Dysea and Anja, and then Aricia. There would have been no point.”

“No point?” Martin snapped. “You didn’t think I should know I got Yuri Pregnant? I didn’t think that was possible. Is it?”

Isabella nodded slowly. “Normally it is not possible for our two species to interbreed because of the differences, but considering the pureness and strength of your blood and that of Yuri’s, it is strong enough to overcome these differences. And it apparently has. When Lisisa started to show signs of being able to shift, Yuri knew she could never let our father find out. That is why she sent the child away.”

Martin turned to Anja, “Anja?”

“What do you want me to tell you?” She spoke with obvious anger in her voice. “That it’s possible? Obviously we already know the answer too that now don’t we?”

Martin looked at her confusion in his eyes at her hostility.

“This information must not leave this room.” Riall spoke quickly. “If this were to get out and become public knowledge it could very well ruin the King before he even takes the throne in The Acceptance Ceremony.”

“Riall that is unimportant!” Gorgo snapped. “This is not the time to be thinking of such things.”

“Gorgo you know this to be true.” Riall spoke.

“I know we are talking about a child of my son’s!” Gorgo barked.

“A half breed child!” Aricia’s voice entered the conversation now, cold and uninviting, her azure blue eyes locked on Martin. “You knew this.” She spoke.

“Aricia this is the first I have heard about it.” Martin defended himself.

“How could you not know you made a child with that vile monster of a woman?” Aricia snapped. “The moment she conceived you would have felt the child’s aura, especially given your own power. Do you expect us to believe you did not?”

“Little Wolf is right Martin.” Dysea spoke firmly, her anger under better control than Aricia and Anja who were showing outward signs in their scowls.

“I did not even know what I was!” Martin snapped back at her, his own eyes narrowing now. “How could I know that?”

“It is instinct in the males of our species!” Aricia barked out. “Ask the Guardian! He will tell you! Dysea told Anja and I your father told you this very thing at Thermopylae. He felt you in your mother’s womb when you were conceived!”

“My father knew what he was when he realized that!” Martin told her. “I did not know what I was when I was sleeping with Yuri.”

“Is that why you let her go Martin?” Anja asked softly. “You let her go because she gave you a child?”

Gorgo knew instantly what was happening. They were angry with the knowledge that none of them would bear Martin’s first born child. It was typical Alpha female behavior, possessive and territorial, and she needed to squash this before it went any further. She leaned forward to speak but Martin beat her to it.

In a flash of silver light his Shi Viska appeared on his arm and came crashing down on the thick metal table with such force it cleaved completely through it, everyone scattering back from their chairs and coming to their feet gazing at him in shock. His eyes had fully changed and his fangs were out in anger as he glared at his mates. He was an angry Alpha male upset with his mates for some action they had conducted, in this instance... basically accusing him of lying to them.

Martin glared at them for a long moment, the three of them standing close to one another by instinct. When he spoke his words were not filled with anger but with hurt. “I have never lied to you, any of you. About anything I have ever done. You have free reign within my thoughts to go where you wish, and I have never stopped you. I would keep nothing from you. We are more than the sum of our instincts and genes, and that is why we are better than the very animals that we can change into. That you would question me, accuse me of lying to you, any of you, after what we have shared? When you have seen the part of me that no one else ever will? The part I don’t even show my own mother? Perhaps I made a mistake turning you Anja; turning you *Melda Min*. And perhaps I made a mistake ever going to Sparta in the first place.”

Martin took a deep breath and looked at Riall. “Admiral... we’ll continue this conversation with Bella and Yuriko on the LEONIDAS. I’ve suddenly become unwelcome in my own home.”

Martin turned and without a second glance back he walked out of the house with Yuriko on his heels. Isabella glanced at a wide eyed Dysea quickly before turning and moving to the door. She stopped and looked back at them standing there. “It is very unlikely, as powerful as my sister is, given the fact that awareness of his power and history had not been given to him, it is very unlikely that had he even sensed something like that, he would have known what it was.” Isabella spoke softly. “I just thought you should know that.”

Isabella turned and left the house quickly. Riall looked at Walter and then to Gorgo. She smiled and placed a hand on his cheek. “Go Riall. I believe there is some history of our people that I must relate to the Queens before events begin to overtake us.”

Riall didn’t question her and he turned to follow Walter out of the house. Gorgo went to the door and touched the panel closing and locking the door before turning back to look at the three of them.

Aricia stepped forward first. “Gorgo... Gorgo... what just happened?”

Gorgo smiled and bent down to retrieve a toppled chair. “What just took place child is that the three of you challenged your Alpha mate. And you lost.” Gorgo righted the chair. “Since my son has deprived us of the table in his anger, pull up a chair ladies and allow me to relate to you some of the history of our people.”

Gorgo sat in the chair and watched as they retrieved more of the toppled chairs and faced her. “I teach at the main University of Apo Prime during the day and the times Riall is away playing his fleet games as a soldier of the Union. I have had the opportunity to read quite a bit on the history of the Lycavorian people, much of which even I did not know.

“Our people... Lycavorians... we have not always been as we are now. There was a time... before the High Coven came where we were very much like the animals that we can become. We were ruled by instinct alone. What the three of you just did, challenging Martin as you did? Ten thousand years ago you would have been killed for such action, without question, without hesitation. Lycavorian females were not allowed to choose their mates as they are now. We were primitive then, and once the young females came of age, they were taken by whatever Alpha got to her first, often times quite brutally in fact. Our females were so consumed by lust it mattered not to them as long as they curbed that lust to mate. Often times they regretted it once the lust had past, but by then it was too late. Every year they would go through this, and if their mate was late or absent, then any male could claim them at the peak.” Gorgo let her dark eyes drift to Aricia. “Only you would understand this Aricia, as you just recently came of age, into estrus or “heat” as some would barbarically call it. You felt it did you not; the overwhelming desire, the need to mate and find your soul mate?”

Aricia blushed deeply even under her tan. “It was... it was overpowering at times.” She said, “Especially after... after Martin came into my life.”

Gorgo nodded. “Your body told you he was the one, but your mind had not fully comprehended it. Now you know why you affected my son as you did. He could smell it on you... and it burned his blood just as much as it did yours. The only difference is that you were able to control it until the Alpha came that you desired above all others, the strongest and most likely to be your match in not only body but love as well, and then you surrendered to it.”

“Martin... he told me... he told me he would not force me to do something if I was not ready.” Aricia said softly. “He fought it... controlled it until I... until I was ready.”

Gorgo nodded. “He fought the urge to take you whether or not you wanted him too. You will have to deal with it every year, the desire and lust due to your pure blood, but it will be considerably muted now that Martin has claimed you and you him, mainly because you are so much in love. That is what Martin’s grandfather started. He gave our woman the choice, and he brought our people out of the dark ages. Had you gone through the same cycle ten thousand years ago, you would not have had the strength or choice that our females do now. You would have been taken regardless of your desires, and your wishes, and in the grips of this lust, you would not have cared. It is what Martin’s grandfather did when he chose his grandmother. She had just come into estrus, and they were very much in love. Instead of surrendering her to whatever Alpha got to her first Resumar took her away until the Centennial of the Moon. It was her decision as well, and when her time came they mated under that moon. Needless to say... the other Alpha wolves were not happy because Eliana was exceptionally beautiful and strong, and they knew she would have bred strong children. Eliana however loved Resumar and she knew the only way to keep herself for him was to do what they did.

“Resumar was challenged afterwards... and he fought and killed three Alphas that were foolish enough to challenge what he did. A fourth he injured severely, and that is when the schism among our people happened. As a young King, Resumar was loved and worshiped by the vast majority of our people, yet when this happened, the older wolves rebelled against him. He banished them to another part of our original home world, intent on bringing our people forward, and these families escaped when the Coven came, leaving many of our people to die. There are nine families of them left and they have developed their own small collection of planets, but they are no where near as large as the Union. And they have stubbornly remained true to the traditions of our past which was so violent and unfair. They keep slaves... they treat their mates as possessions and not even real people... I shudder to think of what they still continue to do.” Gorgo leaned forward in her chair. “It was not uncommon for an Alpha back then to claim two, three even four mates, so it does not surprise me that my son has done this with you. What you need to understand is this... my son is an Alpha male. And if I am to understand correctly what I have been told, he is the most powerful Alpha male to have lived since his grandfather. You are his mates... and he loves you with all that he is. He will not take any others without your approval. He will never lie to you; he will never stray on you no matter how much he is enticed or drawn; he will die for you without question or hesitation; and he will always trust the three of you above all others, no matter what it relates too. The three of you, and perhaps in the future Isabella as well, you will be his power, his strength. Never forget that, never doubt that.”

Gorgo could see the shame of their actions taking hold in their faces and she shook her head quickly. “I am not scolding you... far from it. You were reacting as any other female Alpha wolf would if suddenly it was discovered your mate had a child not of your blood. It is instinct in all of you now, for though you may be elf and Hadarian,” She looked at Anja and Dysea. “You are now wolf as well. You are territorial and possessive, that is your instinct now. What you need to do is not let that instinct override what you know in your mind is not true. Isabella is very correct in what she said, and you should listen to her in all matters concerning the Coven.” Gorgo sat back. “Martin is wolf, and if this Lisisa is his daughter, he will not abandon her for anything regardless of what she may be. That will be in his blood as well, in anyone’s blood, the instinct to protect your children. All of you are exceptionally intelligent and I have no doubts you will do what is right. Just remember so will Martin.”

Gorgo got to her feet. “I will leave you now to reflect on what I have told you my Queens, and I would be happy to relate to you anything of our history that you may have questions about in the future.”

Gorgo turned and moved to the door. She glanced back at the three of them as she opened the door and she thought she saw a tear rolling down Aricia’s cheek as she walked out.

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## **ENURRUA CITY OF ATLATUS**

The shop was in one of the seedier portions of Atlatus, but then again, with the exception of the families and those they chose to support, there were not many sections of the city that were considered relatively safe. A city of seventeen million, Atlatus was the largest city on Enurrua and the capital. It is where the heads of the families always met when needed, and where most of the financial decisions were made. The criminal element was very much active, though Chetak allowed them to exist as long as he got his cut. The city was filled with a wide variety of species, though Lycavorians were the most prominent, and they were the only species that was not subject to the harsh rules and laws governing activity. If you were not Lycavorian, were not considered useful in the least, you could not obtain a job, nor could you eat in any of the establishments across the city. Most of the non-Lycavorian residents were those who had been able to set up small vendor stands and made enough credits to buy off the local secret police. The ride into the city to this small shop had taken close to an hour, and now Chetak sat across from the ancient looking woman, Joric at his side.

“I don’t like being told I have to wait woman!” Chetak snapped at her.

The woman lifted her veiled face as she poured the tea into the mugs, her auburn hair touched with gray now but her obsidian eyes still very bright. “I have no doubt.” She replied in a gravelly voice. “However... I am not one of your lackey’s Chetak... and I will not be treated as such.”

“This is important!” Joric told her.

“Yes I gathered that.” She replied. “Yet nothing is so important that it can not wait until a reasonable hour to discuss.” She finished pouring the tea and sat back in the chair across from Chetak and his son. She lifted her mug to her lips and sipped the tea, noticing that neither Chetak nor his son reached for theirs. She laughed softly and shook her head. “Your paranoia will kill you one day Chetak.” She spoke.

“It has kept me alive all this time.” Chetak replied holding up his hand and stopping Joric from replying. “Why should I change?”

“I have not poisoned your beverage Chetak.” She spoke. “If I had wanted you dead, you would be dead, many times over by now.”

“Do not be so sure woman.” Chetak spoke leaning forward and taking the tea.

“Times are changing Chetak.”

“Did you receive the information or not Tablina?” Chetak asked impatiently.

“Oh I received it, yes.”

“Can you do it?” Chetak asked.

“The better question I believe is why would I want too?” Tablina spoke. “What you are suggesting is... questionable at best.”

“Don’t toy with me Tablina!” Chetak growled. “Will it work or not?”

“Oh it will work.” Tablina spoke. “I have reviewed the data you sent to me, and she is indeed showing the first outwards signs. I would estimate seven weeks before she comes into full estrus, give or take a day or so, if your data is accurate. If you were able to get a more detailed medical scan I could be sure.”

“So it is The Lunmai?” Chetak asked.

Tablina nodded, “The second estrus after coming of age. At first glance I would say yes. As I said a more detail medical profile would insure this. It affects only one in a hundred billion Lycavorian females so we would need to be sure. Your Eliana was the last if I am not mistaken.”

Chetak leaned forward. “Don’t test me Tablina.” He said obvious rage in his voice.

“Your threats will not work with me Chetak.” Tablina spoke. “I am the only one with the skill to do this and you know it. Making the serum is difficult, not to mention it is against our most sacred laws, dating back long before you.”

“What do you want?” Chetak asked her bluntly.

“I want Anemoa.” Tablina replied without hesitation.

Joric’s eyes nearly erupted from his head and he came to his feet. “You want a planet?” He demanded. “That is insane!”

“Is it?” Tablina spoke getting to her feet. “Sit down boy, before I make you!”

“You can not...”

“Joric,” Chetak barked. “Do as she says.”

“Father she wants a planet!” Joric spoke still in shock.

“Sit down!” Chetak nearly shouted glaring at his son.

Tablina smiled and moved gracefully to the small table in the room where she picked up the data pad. “I had my own sources do some checking after I got your message Chetak.” She spoke turning back around and tossing the data pad to him.

“Your own sources?” Joric gasped.

“You don’t live as long as I have and not develop sources Joric. Someday... if you reach my age... which I doubt... you will understand that.” Tablina spoke. “You are going after the mate of the son of Leonidas and the grandson of Resumar.”

“You said the serum would work.” Chetak spoke.

“And it will. Once in her blood it will do what it’s supposed too. It will overwhelm even her control and with the right manipulation, which I’m sure Joric will provide... she will bed even your buffoon of a son.” Tablina spoke.

“Then why should I give you Anemoa?” Chetak asked putting his hand on Joric’s arm and stopping him from replying.

“Do you think I don’t know what this is about Chetak?” Tablina spoke. “This is about the Blood Oath you have sworn. You may have a death wish Chetak, but I do not. When you do this, and you will succeed don’t doubt that, I do not want to be anywhere near Enurrua when he comes for you.”

“He wouldn’t dare!” Chetak spoke. “Once she is mated to Joric he will be able to do nothing! And his handlers will not allow him to do anything! I have thought this out quite thoroughly.”

“And when this female comes out of phase and realizes what has happened?” Tablina asked. “My sources tell me their Mindvoice powers are beyond measuring. And if what they share with each other and these other two females is even half of what I am being told, there will not be a place in this universe that you will be able to hide. That means I want to be as far away from you and your son as possible.”

“If she does not act like the mate of my son then she can be a whore for my men!” Chetak roared coming to his feet, “Enough of this! I will get you the medical profile you need. Just make sure you have the serum ready!”

“And what about Anemoa?” Tablina asked.

“If the serum works and Joric returns with her as his mate I will give you Anemoa!” Chetak snapped.

Tablina nodded. “Then I will be expecting the profile. I believe that completes our business.” Chetak glared at her and pushed Joric towards the door. Tablina’s voice stopped him. “Chetak... do not make the mistake of betraying me. You won’t live long enough to enjoy it if you do.”

Chetak didn’t answer and pushed Joric ahead of him out of the door. Tablina walked slowly to her window and watched the street below until she saw them come out five floors down and climb into the Runecutter. She didn’t turn at the shuffling of something large behind her, and the click of talons on the floor.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Is this the only way?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I truly wish it wasn’t Isheeni. What choice do we have? It is the only way to save your people and mine. Once Chetak discovered Martin Leonidas lived he was set on this path. His hate knows no bounds, even after all this time. At least in this way... in this way we can at least protect her as much as we are able. As distasteful as I find this to be, had I refused him, he would have gone to another who would not care. And just possibly it will allow us to finally achieve what we both have sought for so long.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Will she be strong enough? Will they be strong enough?*

Tablina turned slowly and looked at the hulking shadow in the center of her room. She stepped forward as the shadow did and then she was standing in front of the Azure scaled beast.

The beast had an elegant elongated body, its azure colored scales becoming finer and less thick on its underbelly. It had four limbs with powerful four digit feet that ended in sharp razor like claws that could rend flesh from bone in seconds. The head was wedged shaped with small nostrils on its blunt snout and two large fangs extending down from its large mouth. Its thick wings were folded gracefully along its shoulders. Four long bony spikes extended from the back of its neck. Tablina reached up to the eighteen foot long and twelve foot high creature and placed her hand on the head as it lowered on the long neck.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *He has much of his father and grandfather in him.* Tablina spoke. *We must pray that is enough.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *And if it is not Milady?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Then your people will die. As will mine, and countless others across the Universe.*

The creature closed its azure blue eyes and lowered its head further brushing against Tablina’s shoulder. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Then we will do what we must to succeed.*

Tablina nodded. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Insure the serum is properly mixed Isheeni. I may not be able to protect her from him in that way, but I can insure she does not have to bear the added shame of having that pig’s child defile her body.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I will make sure.*

The creature turned slowly and began moving back out of the large main room. It stopped before its body was completely gone from sight. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Will they forgive us for this Milady? Or will they hate us?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *The Lycavorian Union is the only thing standing between hope and the abyss. By doing this we can help both our causes Isheeni. By doing this we help the Union survive.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *But will their love survive Milady?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I do not know Isheeni.* Tablina replied. *I do not know.*

## THREE DAYS LATER

### SPARTA

“It is truly beautiful here Martin.” Tarifa spoke softly.

They walked along the garden path within the walls of Martin’s villa above Sparta. The day was warm but a cool breeze blowing through the mountains from the east was lazily blowing across the land. Tarifa wore a loose fitting ankle length gown of light blue with a seductive cut down the middle of her abdomen that highlighted her tanned skin and firm breasts. Walter had created the elves here on Earth to not be shy about their sexuality, especially the female elves, and it showed in their dress and their actions. Many of them tended to be very open about their desires and wants, and they were not afraid of trying new things. However, when they fell in love and married, they were very much like the Lycavorian people and they stayed with that person for the rest of their lives, no matter how long that was.

She had come to Sparta for the first time two days ago to begin a round of meetings and conferences with the leaders of almost every elf clan across the planet, as well as the vast majority of the human settlements that had not been cowed by the High Coven while they were in power. When she wasn’t meeting with different leaders, she was touring the city with Martin or Kmyla, the elf mate of Martin’s Captain. She had gone with Martin to pay her respects and honor to Julie’s family and then to the small service they held for her. Sparta was not as she had imagined it to be. It was larger than she thought, and much more slowly paced than Eden City or the settlements in North America. Of course Sparta had been spared during the Battle for Earth as it was now referred to by many, while Eden City had been nearly destroyed despite their best attempts to the contrary. Tarifa had to admit though; things were rapidly coming together as more of the smaller elf clans from across the globe were asking to be moved lock, stock and barrel to Eden City or one of the closer High Elf cities. Governor Kadeem in Salina was happily reporting his population had nearly doubled with the influx of elves and men, and construction there was ramping up nicely.

Since their first times together she and Martin had drifted apart in a sexual way and grown far closer in another way. Tarifa was the oldest of her parent’s six children, and Martin was now the big brother she had never had. Tarifa knew he would never refuse to see her, never deny her advice, and no matter what, if she called him for help he would come.

“Did you love him Tarifa?” Martin asked softly as they walked.

Tarifa looked at him as she stopped by the large patch of yellow and white lilies. “Yes.” She answered without hesitation.

“But?” Martin said.

“Not as much as I love *Nya Istel*.” Tarifa told him. “Does that make me a bad person Martin?”

“No... it makes you an honest person.” Martin replied. “Do you think he didn’t know that? Do you think that mattered to him?”

“I’m sure he suspected.” Tarifa answered. “Nessia and Narcissa were overjoyed to see me, and they told me they wished *Nya Istel* had come as well. Nessia said we would always be welcome in their home.”

“And you will be.” Martin said. “Tarifa... Dekton was not a stupid man. He knew full well that he would never be able to separate you and Aihola. Hell... everyone knew that within the first two months of you being together. He didn’t want to do that. He loved you both equally but he knew you loved each other more. That is not something to be ashamed of.”

“If only I can convince *Nya Istel* of that.” Tarifa spoke. “She still believes she is responsible for his death.”

“I saw the report from the field medic.” Martin spoke surprising Tarifa. “Anja confirmed it only two days later.”

“How did he die Martin?”

“He was hit by five of those plasma bolts.” Martin said. “All of them center mass of his body. One severed his spine and fused the wound open. It nicked his heart so badly that he was bleeding out inside. There was nothing anyone could have done for him. The medic said Aihola got less than a pint of blood from him based on the condition of her wounds when they got her to the hospital. There was no more blood left in his body for her to take. She didn’t kill him Tarifa.”

“I knew that Martin.” Tarifa spoke waving her hand dismissively. “How do I get her to realize that and let it go? She has nightmares, terrible nightmares. And she pulls away from my embraces now. She thinks I hate her for taking Dekton from us. I could never hate her. I could do nothing but love her more.”

“I would talk to her for you but I think that may only do more damage than good.” He said.

Tarifa nodded. “Thank you for that, but I think this is something she needs to work out on her own. I... I don’t want to lose her Martin. I couldn’t live without her in my life.”

Martin pulled her into his embrace and she hugged him tightly; a sister hugging her big brother. “Give her time Tarifa. Give her time and love. She will come around. You have to believe in her love for you.” He felt Tarifa nod her head against his chest and then she pulled back and looked at him.

“I haven’t seen Aricia, or Anja or Dysea. Why aren’t they here with you?” She asked.

Martin forced a smile as his own problems came to him. “This thing with Yuri has them all very upset with me.” He said.

“Martin... what she did? It is really no different than rape.” Tarifa spoke. “She used you! Lied to you and misled you. Would they prefer she had killed you and then it would not be an issue?”

Martin chuckled. “I don’t think they want that. They are upset because I have a child out there somewhere, and it is not a child of theirs. I think it bothers Aricia most of all.”

“You did not know what you were Martin.” Tarifa said. “I have spoken to others at length about your time on EDEN with Yuri; Admiral Wallace most of all. She did nothing out of the ordinary, nothing that would have given you a hint as to your true nature.”

“I can’t really use the “she raped me” defense.” Martin said with a smile. “That probably wouldn’t fly.”

“You know what I mean.” Tarifa spoke poking him in the ribs.

“I think it will work out.” He said finally. “I’m flying back in the morning. I’ll pull them aside one at a time and try to explain myself. I’m not going to abandon a child of mine. I don’t care if she is half of the woman I most want to string up by her entrails. They will either understand it or they won’t.”

Tarifa laughed now herself. “String her up by her entrails?”

Martin shrugged. “First thing that came to mind.”

Tarifa smiled feeling emotionally better than she had since the end of the war. Her time here had been so soothing and peaceful. And Martin could always put her at ease with his manner. “The ships start arriving tomorrow.” She spoke. “Ambassador Legsim has offered to take me up in a *STRIKER* so that I can watch. It will truly be awe inspiring.”

“I’m sure it will.” He said.

“When do you leave for your new home?” Tarifa asked the question she had avoided until now.

“About a week, but I want you to know this Tarifa. Sparta is my home.” Martin said. “It will always be my home. As will Eden City. That will not change no matter what I am. If there are people who don’t like that they can line up and kiss my ass!”

Tarifa burst out the first real laughter she had experienced in the days since Dekton’s death. “Will you walk me to my *STRIKER*?” Tarifa asked with a smile. “I sort of like having one of those machines all to myself.”

Martin laughed and they began walking again, her arm around his waist and his arm over her shoulders. Brother and sister.

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Martin waved at the *STRIKER* as it lifted into the blue sky and he waited until it was gone before he turned to head back to the villa. Walter’s father Panos had taken it upon himself to have a landing pad built just outside the villa’s main defensive wall for ease of use and the comings and goings of the King and Queens. Outside the main defensive wall that surrounded the villa’s estate was a huge ring of ground sensors that were constantly monitored by a Spartan Royal Guard from the new single story building that sat adjacent to the guest quarters south of the main building. The sensors swept around the villa for a mile in every direction as Panos knew of the propensity for his King and Queens to get out and run in the early morning hours in their wolf forms. Since their victory, the Spartan Senate led by Dilios had been very active in their doings, almost immediately naming Panos as the Governor of Sparta. Their second motion had been to grant honorary Senate seats to Tarifa, Aihola and even Selene for their times here during meetings and gatherings. It was a first in

Sparta's history, non-Spartan individuals sitting on the Senate, but it was the biggest indication to Martin that old prejudices, while still felt and burning under the surface, those prejudices were slowly being removed.

Twenty thousand elves and humans had come to Sparta at the end of the war to help protect and shape it. Panos had sent nearly fifty thousand Spartan Centurions out across what used to be Europe and Middle Asia to help elves and humans to throw off the remnants of the High Cover rule, destroying the small vampire outposts that dotted the lands.

Martin had remained on the *LEONIDAS I* in orbit that first night, mainly because he knew his Queens wanted nothing to do with him after hearing he had a child, especially a half vampire child with the witch Yuri. He walked along the corridors of the ship marveling in its power and size, talking with dozens of crewmen, asking dozens of questions, and absorbing everything he could about the ship that bore his father's name. He didn't know that his mother had remained and given them a somewhat abbreviated course in Lycavorian history. He had kept his psychic shields locked down very tightly, denying even their gentlest of tapping against his shields since then. And they were tapping constantly. More than anything he had felt hurt that they would treat him in such a way. He knew and understood how angry they had to be, but to act as they had when they knew he could not have known any of the information they had heard that day hurt him.

*They are young and very powerful Alpha females,* His mother had told him that night on the ship. *They acted possessively and as any female wolf would act when confronted with the same situation. Give them time my son, like you this is all very new to them as well. Even Aricia who has been wolf all of her life.*

How much time, Martin mused as he walked. He had not been near them in three days and he was beginning to show the signs of that. His blood burned to be with them, especially Aricia, and he wanted to lose himself within their auras and their scents. It was almost maddening.

Martin's keen eyes caught the movement in the timber to his right and he stopped walking and turned. It was a flash really, a flash of hind quarters with dark fur. The wind was blowing into the timber, carrying his smell into the trees away from him so he could not detect any type of scent from whatever it was. But he had seen it.

There! Deeper into the timber this time, and it was definitely a wolf with black fur, and much closer than he first thought. Martin knew there was no way just any wolf could stroll onto the villa's estate and move around without a hundred Spartans descending upon them, and even though he could not smell her, given the color of her coat it could only be one person. Martin squatted on the path looked into the timber and lowered his shields to her alone.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Why are you skulking about the timber Aricia? Are you waiting for a good spot to attack me?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I could never attack you my love. You would not answer us when we called. We could not stand it anymore and we came here.*

Martin closed his eyes when her soft voice filled his head and he felt the surge of desire for her sweep through him. When he opened them again they had changed to the yellow/gold color of the wolf within him.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I was under the impression you did not want my company.*

Martin saw her clearly then, the muzzle of her snout poking out from behind the wide tree. Her black fur was every bit as dark as his own, and it rustled softly in the wind. Her azure blue eyes were two glowing points of light that pierced his soul.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I will always want your company. We will always want your company. You are our mate. Come to me Martin Leonidas.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Aricia... this...*

Martin saw her turn her body slightly and flip her luscious tail up in his direction making her intentions known in the universal wolf language and then she broke for the trees.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Anja and Dysea knew they did not have the experience and skill to get this close to you in wolf form. They asked me to find you. Come to me Martin my love. I burn for you.*

In a flash of silver/white light Martin had changed. His fur was raven black, the muscles tightly bunched like cords of steel rippling along his back and haunches and chest. He was almost four feet tall at the shoulders and only five pounds shy of three hundred when in his wolf form. Yet for his massive size, the largest wolf to have lived since his father, Martin was blindingly fast. His huge paws, equipped with black razor like claws dug into the earth of the path and he exploded towards the timber as if shot from a gun.



[Mindvoice Shielded] *Catch me if you can!* Aricia's musical voice sounded in his head with a laugh.

Martin growled in his chest and dug his paws harder into the ground, propelling his body forward and quickly reaching the treeline. He could smell her now, where she had stood, and it caused a swell of desire to shudder through him as he continued to run. He had forgotten the joys of running in his wolf form, the scents that swarmed around him. It was something he had discovered when he was still very young, and there were times when he wished he could remain a wolf forever. He darted quickly through the trees, a blur of motion, using his tail to make blinding cuts and turns, his huge paws kicking up leaves and dirt as he planted them into the soft earth. His chest rumbled like a finely tuned engine as he moved, sensing the terrain all around him, the scents of several small animals scurrying to get away from the black monster that moved with such speed and agility. Martin could smell their fear in the air, but he ignored them. There was only one scent he wanted now. Aricia appeared to be following the small stream that ran through the villa's estate toward the ten foot high waterfall that sat in a shallow depression and Martin cut sharply east to try and beat her to where he knew she was going. He breathed evenly, and could feel her probing his mind trying to find out where he was and what he was doing.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *That's cheating.* He told her with a laugh, her scent still filling his flared nostrils and making happiness course through him.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *No fair!* She exclaimed though Martin could hear her playfulness in her words.

Martin realized she had stopped moving and must have lost his scent when he changed direction. He slowed to a stop and lifted his large head sniffing the air and her lavender coco scent washed over him like a blanket. There was something else too, faint and sweet, but barely there on the edge of his perception. He stepped around the large boulder and saw the natural waterfall to his right, the clear mountain water pouring over the edge ten feet above him. He saw her by the tree, crouched low to the clean mossy ground, her paws gathered under her ready to pounce at a moments notice. Her own corded muscles rose and fell beneath her black fur, and her flanks looked especially delicious since she had started using a Spartan training regime several months ago. There was not an ounce of fat remaining on her lithe body, all of it was firm lush flesh, and that made her leaner and more beautiful in her wolf form as well.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Where are you my love? Have you lost interest in me so soon?*

Martin stepped up behind her silently and allowed his eyes to wander over her body and he felt the familiar urge tug in his belly and loins. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Not lost interest.* He told her. *Found my prey.*

Aricia's body tensed at his words and she spun around quickly, her azure blue eyes going wide as she saw how close he was. She shifted quickly, the silver/white light shimmering quickly and then disappearing, leaving her back in her human form and gloriously naked. Martin stood there somewhat in shock and surprise, but also because he loved the view.

Her skin was perfect in every way, tanned to a light bronze color. Her legs were long and muscular, ending in the most perfectly shaped ass Martin had ever seen. Her raven black hair hung down to the middle of those gorgeous ass cheeks, surrounding her beautiful face and eyes. Her breasts were full and firm, and to his decidedly male estimation at least a 34B in size, topped by small but delicious nipples and quarter sized areolas. His eyes drifted down to her center and he saw the thin strip of black hair above her obviously excited opening and he could smell her arousal as it hung in the air heavily.

Aricia had grown more confident and sure of herself these last months and she looked at him with lust in her eyes. He was the largest wolf she had ever seen in her hundred and eleven years of life, as black as night and so powerful. Looking at him, even in his wolf form caused her body to become heated with desire. He had possessed her that night so long ago, made her feel things she had never thought possible, making her his for eternity. He could be gentle and caring or he could be dominating and powerful, and that is what she so loved about him.

Not to mention that he was simply gorgeous and could make her body sing to the moon with his size and stamina. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Is my mate going to change so that he can have me? Or will you simply stare and leave me to shiver in the chill?*

Aricia smiled when the silver/white flash signified his change and then he was there in front of her equally naked and so very aroused. She gazed at him hungrily; his engorged cock the largest she had ever seen, though *he was* the only one she had ever seen. The only one she ever wanted to see now. Desire and need flamed her body even more than normal. She had been more aroused than usual their last time together, and had

prodded him for more even after they had been together twice. He had been more than willing to fulfill her needs as Anja and Dysea had lain there utterly exhausted in their bed.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I like staring at you.* He told her.

Aricia couldn't contain herself any longer and she stepped up to him and crushed her lips upon his. They had been such fools to think he would deceive them. His thoughts were always open for them to explore, something she, Anja and Dysea had done on many occasions as they lay in their bed together. They knew each other's thoughts and desires and even their deepest secrets. They held nothing back from each other, yet they had allowed instinct to overrule their minds as Gorgo had said. When he had shut them from his mind for these last three days and nights, it had been the loneliest and most empty feeling any of them had experienced, and even lying wrapped together in their bed without him had not eased the ache.

Aricia groaned in passion when his arms crushed her to him and they were suddenly rolling on the soft mossy ground at their feet. His hands wandered her body, igniting small fires wherever they touched, increasing the burning desire for him to a fevered level. She needed him, and Aricia was not about to be denied.

She shifted her hips on top of him, feeling his enormous thickness between her thighs and she gasped when his hands grasped her firm ass cheeks and lifted her quickly. Aricia tore her lips from his and cried out in delight when she realized his need for her matched her own for him, and he lifted her hips, shifted under her and impaled her completely in a single powerful stroke that sent her over the edge. Her head fell to the crook of his shoulder as her orgasm erupted throughout her heated body and every wonderfully thick portion of his twelve inch cock throbbed deeply within her belly. Aricia gasped again when he rolled over on top of her and looked into her gorgeous eyes. She only smiled with passion clouded eyes as he poised to possess her, her arms going around his broad shoulders, her long legs curling up along his hips, her fangs extended in passion.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Take me my love! Take me now!* She shouted into his mind.

Aricia tilted her head back and screamed as he began to plunge into her with dominating power and overwhelming need. Her orgasms came fast and furious and so very powerfully. Her belly clenched as each wave hit, her muscles threatening to rip through her skin, his mint scent filling her nostrils, enveloping her.

He had never taken her like this before, and it was sending her into a world of breath stealing bliss she never wanted to leave. Her hands clutched at his powerful back as he stroked deeply into her, reaching places as yet untouched, her azure blue eyes open wide in wondrous sensations, her mouth open and fangs fully extended in breathless gasps. She could feel every throbbing vein on his cock, pulsing within her with burning heat, stretching her in a way only he could with his size. The muscles of his shoulders and back flexed and released in exertion, possessing her very essence. Her hands went to his clenching ass, gripping his cheeks tightly, urging him onward. And Martin answered her urgings with steady, unrelenting power. A power of love and passion and desire unlike anything he had yet shown her, his aura flowing out through every pore of his body and flowing into her.

She gasped when he rolled over again and sat up quickly, causing her to sink even further on his thick shaft. When she felt his throbbing balls press against her pussy lips, searing her with their heat and fullness and anchoring her to him Aricia howled in lustful abandon. She pulled his head to her firm sweaty breasts, her cried increasing when he took her painfully hard nipple within his soft mouth, his tongue teasing the bud madly. Overcome by the lust and desire Aricia did something she had never done before; never even thought about before, but it was almost as if her very soul guided her in her actions.

She bent her head and sank her wolf fangs deeply into his shoulder.

Martin's yellow/gold eyes burst open in an exquisite combination of pain and unyielding pleasure and quite instinctively like Aricia, as if some hidden force was guiding him, he bit down as well, his fangs piercing Aricia's firm supple breast just as deeply as hers bit into him. The moment they tasted each other's blood, it was as if the volcano within each of them erupted violently.

Martin grew impossibly huge inside her and their bodies went almost painfully rigid. Aricia felt his essence rushing through the length of his deeply buried cock, her pussy muscles clamping down on his shaft as her orgasm hit her like a meteor striking the surface of the planet. Their heads came away from each other, their lips stained with each other's blood and they howled to the clouds above as his essence exploded into her depths, and her sweet liquids flooded from her like a bursting dam. Four times he convulsed... five... six times he erupted into her, each time more powerful than the last, until finally he was spent and he pulled her back to

the soft earth on top of him their hearts hammering so loudly they could hear them even without their wolf acute senses.

They dropped all their psychic shields then, and they felt the heated auras of both Anja and Dysea wash over them like a warm blanket chasing the chill away. Anja's musical voice entered their minds and they smiled.

*God you two... what are you doing to each other?* She spoke, the thick passion in her voice obvious to both of them. *Dysea and I are going crazy here! Bring him back quickly Little Wolf! He still has two mates who need him just as badly.*

Aricia chuckled and lifted her head from his chest, staring into Martin's face. *I will Anja. He still has much to do tonight, to all of us.*

*Nauta Melme... we burn for you.* Dysea's soft passion filled voice spoke now.

Martin opened his eyes and looked into Aricia's face. He growled within their minds, a hungry passionate growl. *I am going to nibble your elf ears until you are screaming Melda Min.*

They felt Anja and Dysea pulse their auras to them strongly, reaching for them.

*Hurry! We want both of you!* Anja exclaimed.

Martin looked at Aricia and sat back up easily, even with her perched on his chest as she was. He traced the now healing puncture holes from his teeth on her perfect breast and licked the remaining blood from his fingertip.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Never with anyone else Aricia. This... this only we will share.*

Aricia took his face in her hands. [Mindvoice Shielded] *I love you Martin Leonidas. With all that I am. I will never betray you, never hurt you. Nothing will ever come between us as long as I have your love.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *You will always have my love Aricia. Nothing could ever change that.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Our mates wait for us my love.* She said feeling Anja's aura tugging at her insistently. She and Anja had a very special relationship and it grew deeper as more time past and they shared each other with blissful abandon. *And I for one will enjoy the flavor of Anja's essence tonight as excited as she is.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *You'll have to beat me there.*

Martin gently moved her off his hips and slid her to the ground and in a silver/white flash of light he was racing through timber towards the villa.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *That is not fair!* Aricia exclaimed as she too shifted and began sprinting after him.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Don't worry Little Wolf. I intend to have you again tonight, many times if you'll allow me.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I'll always allow you.* Aricia spoke happily as she raced after his huge black wolf form. *But I want Anja first my love.*

Aricia heard Martin chuckle in her head as he cut through the timber with graceful ease, slowing his loping gallop to allow her to catch up and run beside him.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *And you shall have her first. I have a taste for platinum colored elf ears right now and the flavor of wildflowers.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *You are so good to us my love.*

Martin nipped at her flank playfully as they ran, his yellow/gold eyes glittering with delight and passion. [Mindvoice Shielded] *You will always be first Aricia.*

Aricia yipped back in a wolf voice as she cut for the villa wall. [Mindvoice Shielded] *I know my love. But Anja and Dysea are in our blood as well. And I will beat you to them both this night.*

Martin chuckled. [Mindvoice Shielded] *I'm faster than you Aricia.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Perhaps Martin,* She announced cheerfully. *But you are also not watching where you are going either my love.*

Martin turned his head quickly, slamming his paws into the dirt as the briar bush reared up in front of him. His yellow/gold eyes flared in surprise.

Too late he knew.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Oh shit... this is going to hurt.*

Aricia laughed hysterically as she leaped the villa's six foot wall easily, hearing the crashing sounds of a large body into the briar bush, and Martin's cussing reached her ears.

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“I had forgotten how beautiful Sparta was.” Gorgo said softly as she walked beside Riall towards the villa’s entrance. She held his hand tightly and felt him squeeze her fingers gently, passing his love and warmth to her with a small portion of his aura. Gorgo looked at him with smiling dark eyes and gripped his hand tighter.

“We will make it a point to return here often if that is what you wish.” Riall said. “This was the place of your birth Gorgo, and many years of happiness. Hopefully our victory here has washed away the pain of what you lost here.”

Gorgo smiled. “It has Riall, of that I am sure. And I would love to come back with you and the children. They should know where I came from, and if they come here perhaps they will have a better understanding of who I am.”

“You are their mother, and that is all that matters to them Gorgo.” Riall spoke.

Gorgo squeezed his hand even tighter and leaned over to nuzzle her mate. She had once thought she would never find love again, yet he had been there from the beginning right in front of her. When she had finally discovered that, Gorgo had embraced it and never looked back. Their six children only reinforced that love to her.

Riall nuzzled her back showing his mate his love as any Alpha male would. He looked up and saw that they were approaching the main door, Andreus leading them by several meters. He stopped and turned to the others that accompanied them this day gazing, on them as they continued up to where he stood. There were six of them, the four men and two women. Three of the men and one of the women were the representatives of the four building corporations that had left Apo Prime to come here. They were dressed meticulously and very formally to greet their new King, and Riall had no doubt they were in for a large shock. None of them were Lycavorian and therefore could not Mindvoice. Two of the men were Acamarian political appointees to their respective Corporations. Coren was a senior executive for Acamarian Engineering, the second Acamarian was also a senior executive for Dynamic Systems, an Acamarian held company. The third man was a Terraijiin, and the President of the largest ship building corporation in the Union, Nodon Engineering Systems. The woman was the senior Haulta officer of the small but powerful Haulta Resource Management Corporation that dabbled in ship building but was mainly interested in resource gathering.

The Acamarian were the seventh species to join the Union in the beginning. They were a rodent species with long snouts and very small eyes that could be any multitude of colors. Physically they were not very impressive in size; really no larger than the average elf, but they were extremely agile and able to move their bodies into many impossible positions. This made them ideal for crawling around the bowels of most ship’s engines.

The Terraijiin were a bulbous purple skinned race, many of the senior government officials were extremely obese, while the lower caste was similar to the man in front of them. They had been building the Union’s starships for almost two thousand years, each class of warship better than the last, and the latest ship was only months away from coming out of their massive shipyards. They had joined the Union very early on, and like the Acamarian people, had built a better life for their people. While Riall hated all types of political theatrics and posturing, the Terraijiin were one of the few races he actually trusted enough to believe. The woman was the only other race that Riall trusted enough when the going got terrible at different times throughout the Union’s life.

The Haulta were a bird like species, humanoid in nature, but covered in fine white feathers. They were extremely respected politicians and organizers and their Haulta Resource Management Division was second to none when it came to discovering valuable planetary resources and helping the governments get to the point where they could use them and sell them.

Riall had dealt with Coren before and detested the man. He was a pompous arrogant rat as far as the Admiral was concerned. He had never met the other two men, but he knew the Haulta female Sette as level headed and intelligent. The fourth man and the second female were Hadarian and had left with the second group of ships to depart Apo Prime after the Home Guard Fleet. The man he knew was one of the representatives to the Union Senate in the capital, the female he had never met before. She was young for a Hadarian, perhaps four hundred years old; the royal blue dress she wore wrapped around her lithe frame fit her with elegance and grace. She looked leaner and more muscular than most of the young Hadarian females she had seen, her dark

brown almost black hair falling past her shoulders framing a tanned angular face with soft thin lips and stunning dark green eyes.

The Hadarians were one of the four founding members of the Union, and fifth in terms of population behind the Lycavorians, Elves, Terraijiin and the Algolians. They were the healers of the Union, almost all the doctors and nurses and medics Hadarian by birth. The metaphysical radiation that bombarded their planet every six months gave them amazing healing properties just by their very touch. The Battle for Hadaria still stood as the most violent of the war with the Coven. The retaking of the elf home world had cost the Union three hundred ships and close to six million lives, but that had been a picnic compared to the Hadarian home world. The planet was half rocky terrain and half lush green forests and oceans, and the Coven had used this to their advantage, forcing the Union to land huge amounts of troops and equipment in the open rocky terrain. Riall was a junior officer of a Spartan ground unit then, and he had seen first hand the incredible violence and bloodshed that had been spilled over those four months. The Hadarians had fought shoulder to shoulder with the Lycavorians and Elves. Because of their medical abilities, the Coven wanted to retain control of Hadaria and its people at all costs.

The cost had been high in the end. Forty million Lycavorian, Elf and Hadarian dead, a quarter of their new fleet decimated. But they had won, and now the Hadarians were like brothers to the elves, Lycavorians and Algolians.

They were four founding members of the Lycavorian Union.

Since none of the others were able to Mindvoice Riall and Gorgo did not bother to shield their conversation.

*Who is she?* Riall asked Gorgo.

*When the Hadarians discovered the daughter to their King and Queen still survived and was now a mate to my son, they immediately dispatched one of their Mage Warriors.*

Riall looked at her. *Mage Warriors?*

Gorgo nodded. *It is a small group within their Mages that has mastered the healing arts at a young age and then they are trained as soldiers. They have Lycavorian Spartans as instructors and I understand they are quite skilled. I have never met one before now, as their numbers are small and they are very secretive. She will apparently become Anja's Handmaiden. She will begin to teach her the arts so she is prepared for when she returns to Hadaria for her Ascension Ceremony, and she will protect her as well.*

Riall looked at his mate. *She looks very young don't you think?*

Gorgo nudged him with a smile. *You are just old Riall.*

*I'll show you old tonight woman.* He growled into her mind.

*I'll look forward to that. I was surprised by her age yes, as she is considered still very young among the Hadarians. She is only a few years younger than Anja if I am correct.* Gorgo looked at them as they approached. *Why did the administrators come with you? They are supposed to be meeting with Tarifa and Selene in Eden City.*

*I told them that.* He answered shaking his head. *They insisted they needed to discuss arrangements with the King. At least Coren did.*

*He will not be happy about that. Tarifa and the other two are who he has appointed to govern Earth and it is them who these fools should be meeting with.*

Riall nodded. *I tried to explain that to them. Tarifa laughed and suggested I let them do what they wished. She would prepare a meeting with them for this afternoon after "Martin showed them their place" is how she put it.*

Gorgo laughed. *She is a strong one that new female elf-wolf. The more I speak with her and Selene the more I see my son's wisdom in leaving them in charge.*

Riall nodded. *As do I.*

Riall held her gaze for several more seconds before turning as the others came up to him. He took a deep breath. "I want to advise you on two things I have learned of our King and Queens since we have been here." He told them. "They are not what you will expect, and they do not play favorites."

"Admiral... we have all met many times with government officials." One of the men spoke. "I believe we do know how to act."

Riall looked at Gorgo quickly and saw her roll her dark eyes. He turned back to them and nodded. "Very well Administrator Coren. I will say no more."

Andreas opened the door for them and stepped to the side exchanging knowing glances with Gorgo and Riall. Gorgo smiled as Helen walked up to greet them, wiping her hands on the towel.

They had not seen each other in thousands of years until only a few days ago, and Helen was afraid Gorgo might harbor some anger for her due to her actions and the advice she had given that sent Leonidas to his death. Gorgo had in fact been overjoyed to see her, thanking her profusely for safeguarding her son, and being the reason they had reunited.

"Dustha..." Gorgo spoke as they embraced.

"Lady Gorgo." Helen answered. "And please... I go by Helen now. I have had to change my name so many times over the years it feels good to finally be able to stick with just one."

Gorgo laughed softly and nodded, "Of course Helen." She said looking at the older woman. "You are the Oracle of our people, the only one that still lives. Why do you remain here doing this?" She asked softly.

Helen smiled. "I have spent many years doing this very thing waiting for your son to come back to us. I have grown to like it. And it allows me to be near Martin and his Queens and provide them council whenever they need an objective view. He is very inspiring to be around Gorgo, so much like Leonidas, but so different."

Gorgo nodded with a smile. "I... we... have you to thank for that." She stepped closer.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Did they work out their differences?* She asked.

Helen nodded with a grin. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Kept us up half the night they did, working out those differences.* Her head turned and Helen looked at the larger group of men and women than she had expected.

"Martin was not aware of this many guests." She spoke.

Riall stepped up to her and Gorgo as the others filtered into the large main room of the villa, their eyes taking everything in. "They are the senior Administrators of the four largest Engineering Corporations and they insisted." He spoke.

Helen looked at him. "Aren't they supposed to be meeting with Tarifa and Selene in Eden City?" Helen knew almost everything that was happening everywhere, and what she didn't know, Martin told her without hesitation.

Riall nodded. "Yes." He answered softly.

Helen looked at Gorgo and then back to Riall. "They wish to flex their clout do they?" She spoke with a knowing smile. "This should be amusing to watch. I have prepared coffee and some Danishes. Anja and Aricia will be out shortly. Martin and Dysea are out running but they should return shortly."

"He is not here?" Coren spoke turning to look at Riall where he stood with Gorgo and Helen.

Helen stepped away from them and looked at the man. "The King was not expecting this many guests." She spoke. "He did not change his normal routine for the mornings. He and Queen Dysea go running in the mornings, but they should be returning shortly."

"We shall surprise him then. He won't be disappointed." Coren spoke arrogantly. "We would like tea and biscuits; warm biscuits so hurry along."

Helen looked at Riall and Gorgo her smile even wider now. "Oh yes... this should be very amusing." She spoke before moving towards the kitchen.

"Do you often come into the home of your King and begin ordering around those who the King regards as family Administrator?" The voice spoke from behind them.

The six of them turned and saw Aricia and Anja step fully into the main room, their hands and fingers clasped together. They wore identical floor length white robes and no shoes, their bare feet padding on the floor as they walked up to where Gorgo stood. The robes did little to hide their tanned skin and figures, but they usually wore even less in the morning, only putting on the robes when the scents of so many people they didn't know reached them in their bedroom.

Gorgo smiled and greeted each of them with a hug and kiss on the cheek. [Mindvoice Shielded] *I take it that things are back to normal.*

Aricia and Anja smiled at her slightly embarrassed. [Mindvoice Shielded] *We acted stupidly.* Anja spoke.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *You acted like the alpha females you are. Judging by your appearances I would say things went well.*

They both smiled brilliantly at that. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Oh they went very well.* Anja said as Aricia nodded quickly and leaned up against her.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Very well indeed.* Aricia spoke.

*I need coffee.* Anja exclaimed.

“Have coffee with us?” Aricia said openly as Anja pulled her towards the table that Helen had set everything on.

The Hadarian female was silent as she let her eyes gaze on the Persian red haired female who was now her Queen.

Her name was Seanna and she had been pulled quickly from her training to leave Hadaria and come here when word came to them that the daughter of their long dead King and Queen still lived. She was four hundred and sixteen years old, still considered very young by Hadarian and Lycavorian standards, but she had shown exceptional ability in the healing arts at a very young age and was quickly accepted into the Hadarian Academy where she mastered the arts in half the time that normal students did. She had been chosen for the Mage Warriors a decade ago, and had spent the last ten years studying under the Spartan instructor and absorbing all the fighting skills she could master. She had not yet finished her training and had been surprised that she had been chosen for such an important position.

Of course she wished she knew what that mission was.

The Queen was shorter than Seanna expected, barely over five feet tall, but she had an exceptionally well defined body and musculature. Her Persian red hair fell well below her shoulders and framed tanned skin and full lips. Her eyes were an amazing shade of Jade green and Seanna could sense the enormous potential in her. She had read what little information they had been able to obtain from disseminated memories of the King given to them by the Prime Minister. Though she was very young herself, it appeared she had far more experience than Seanna. The Hadarian King and Queen had been assassinated by the Coven nearly six hundred years ago, Anja pulled from her mother’s womb before she died and spirited away to what they thought was safety here on Earth. The Hadarian Old Ones had hoped she would somehow find her way to the son of Leonidas here on earth, but Seanna doubted they could foresee how she would actually turn out. She was already considered the finest physician on this world and in the recent battle to free this world, it was reported that she saved over a hundred lives herself. The elf and human doctors she had trained saving thousands more. Seanna noticed something different about her that she could not place, it was something familiar but she couldn’t get her fingers around it just yet.

Anja sipped her coffee, brewed just as she liked and flavored perfectly. She held the mug with both hands and turned to the six men and women. Her jade eyes took in their mannerisms and body language and she suppressed the urge to snort in disgust.

“Administrator Coren... you did not answer Anja’s question.” Aricia spoke now, moving up behind Anja and nuzzling the back of her neck. She saw her lover’s eyes close briefly in delight and push back against her own body, and then she continued around to stand beside her.

“I did not realize asking your paid servants for something to eat and drink was wrong Milady.” Coren spoke.

“Helen is no servant!” Anja hissed not liking the man immediately. “And you would do well to remember that Administrator, or the Lycavorian Oracle might begin to take offense at your arrogant words.”

All of them looked at where Helen stood smiling in the kitchen, the aroma of sizzling steaks cooking on the stove and filling the room. She stepped back from the stove and looked at them. “What did you expect me to look like?” She quipped. “Wrapped in the ancient purple robes and waddling around with ten pounds of headdress like in the old times?”

“Forgive... forgive me Oracle.” Coren spoke quickly bowing his head.

“Ah... I’m not the one you should be begging forgiveness from.” Helen spoke.

“Please...” Aricia spoke now. “Sit down all of you.” She motioned them to the couches and chairs in the main room and waited for them to pick and choose seats before settling on the couch next to where Anja had moved. “I was under the impression that the four of you were meeting with Tarifa in Eden City this morning.” Aricia spoke. “Why have you come here?”

“We thought it would be prudent to meet the King ourselves and give him our proposals for the work here on earth.” Coren spoke quickly.

“Martin has named Tarifa, Aihola and Selene as the Triad of Governors for Earth.” Anja spoke again, her left hand reaching out to absently stroke Aricia’s calf as she pulled her legs up under her. “They are who you should be dealing with.”

“Yes I know... however we felt it more important to present them to the King first.” Coren continued.

“Tarifa and Martin are like brother and sister,” Aricia said evenly, “Aihola and Selene among his closest friends. It is they who will govern Earth.”

“We assumed since this is the King’s planet he would have the final say in the matter.” Coren spoke and both Anja and Aricia detected the arrogance in his words.

“In simpler terms you do not trust Tarifa to deal with you fairly.” Anja said. “Isn’t that correct Administrator?”

“Your distrust of elves reeks from your pores Administrator Coren.” Aricia spoke, her own voice carrying dislike. “A pity really.”

“I have my reasons Milady, which I will not go into at this time.” Coren spoke. “And why would it be a pity?”

“You do not know who will sit with us as Queen do you?” Anja asked.

“I was dispatched here rather quickly Milady Anja. I did not have the time to review all the information given to me in regards to the events that have occurred.” Coren replied.

“Yes... only the information on how you could profit from the resources Earth has I’m sure.” Anja spoke.

“May... may I ask where the King is?” Coren asked.

Anja looked at Aricia quickly. They could see that the other Administrators were not at all comfortable with how Coren was proceeding, and none of the other three were Lycavorian either and therefore did not have the ability to detect the differences in Coren’s scent as he talked and postured.

*I do not like this man.* Anja said.

*Nor do I.* Aricia said.

*Coren and Regarl are political appointees Milady.* Riall broke in. *Arrogant and pompous he may be, but he and the others are very powerful within the technological field and earth will benefit from them.*

Aricia smelled them first and she allowed the smile to flow across her face. “The King is just arriving.” Aricia spoke softly motioning with her head.

They all turned to look out the clear double doors that led onto the patio and none of them could contain the gasps of shock at what they saw. Regarl and Sette came to their feet quickly, as did Seanna who sat closest to the doors, a look of astonishment and even fear on her beautiful face. They watched as the enormous raven black wolf strolled in front of the doors almost casually, the platinum blond wolf, clearly half his size beside him. With two silver/white flashes Martin and Dysea changed back to human form and stepped slowly into the pool of clear running mountain water that was constantly in motion. They appeared to be talking quietly, Dysea laughing at something Martin said as she stepped out of the pool first after ducking beneath the cool water and they watched her pull on the light blue robe similar to Anja and Aricia. She fastened it tightly around her waist, the water making it cling to her tanned skin in some places. Anja saw Coren flinch when Dysea reached up and used her fingers to curl her platinum hair behind her elfin ears and squat next to the pool waiting for Martin to come out.

Seanna was impressed with the she-elf. Not only was she very beautiful as all elves were, she carried herself with a regal air and looked to be extremely fit and capable. She guessed that a large part of that was due to the fact she was now Lycavorian as well. Seanna’s dark green eyes grew wider as she watched the Lycavorian King climb from the pool of water and step into the open. Dysea’s body blocked most of him from view, but Seanna took in the thick muscles and the rippled shoulders and back, as well as the strange flame tattoos that decorated his body. She watched him take the loose black pants from Dysea and pull them on. Seanna quickly averted her eyes when he bent over to put his feet through the legs and exposing much more than she had ever seen on a man. And that was not even a clear view.

Her reaction did not go unnoticed and Anja and Aricia looked at one another knowingly as they appraised her.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *She is very delicious looking my love.* Aricia spoke.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Yes she is, but I have you Little Wolf.*



Aricia sent a small pulse of her aura through their connection to Anja. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Yes... and I have you. Something that makes me giddy with happiness. That does not mean we can't admire someone that we both want to nibble on.*

Anja chuckled within their conversation. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Little Wolf... you are becoming a little vixen. Not that I mind.*

Aricia smiled. [Mindvoice Shielded] *I don't know what it is Anja. She spoke. Lately I have been so full of lustful thoughts and desires.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Well I'm not going to complain! And I don't think Martin will either.*

Aricia matched her laughter. [Mindvoice Shielded] *He had better not.*

Martin pulled his hair back shaking his head like a shaggy wolf and Dysea scrambled away from him with a cry of joyful surprise as water drops splashed all around her. She spoke something to him before ducking through the doors first and coming to an abrupt halt when she saw everyone in the main room. That quickly passed as her eyes saw Gorgo and a smile returned as she headed for her.

Martin came in next his eyes going to the Administrators. Anja and Aricia both saw the fresh scrapes on his neck and shoulder and they chuckled.

*Martin did you tangle with the briar bush again.* Anja asked an amused tone in her voice.

Martin noticed immediately that she did not shield her thoughts and that meant that those in the room couldn't Mindvoice.

*Briar bush?* Gorgo questioned.

*We need to have those damn things cut down.* Martin said. *They're overgrown and they are all over the place.*

*Perhaps if you weren't chasing my tail Nauta Melme, you would not have hit the bush.* Dysea said with a great deal of feigned seriousness.

*I can't help it.* Martin said smiling. *It's such a nice tail Melda Min.*

Helen dropped the pan she was holding as she laughed, and Riall almost spit out the coffee in his mouth as he fought down the laughter. Dysea smiled as she walked back to him and placed her hand on his chest kissing his shoulder before moving into the kitchen to get a mug of tea. Helen walked out of the kitchen passing a knowing look to Dysea as they passed and she handed Martin the mug of steaming hot coffee, smiling at him as she did.

*I'll have someone get right on removing those bushes sire.* She told him with a chortle.

Martin grinned and walked quickly to where Gorgo stood, embracing his mother with one arm.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *You were right mother.*

[Mindvoice shielded] *I know.*

Martin kissed her cheek lightly and looked at Riall. "Admiral... I didn't know you were bringing guests."

"Sire please allow me to introduce..." Riall started forward.

"King Leonidas... I am Administrator Coren of Acamarian Engineering and we are the premier Engineering Corporation within the Union." Coren spoke cutting off Riall without even an apology. "My colleagues and I wanted to meet with you to..."

"To discuss Earth's future," Martin spoke as he moved around and sat on the couch between Anja and Aricia. They immediately shifted their positions to move closer to him, touching his skin. "Yes... I figured that much out all by myself."

"Sire... Earth is your planet and I only thought to..."

Martin lifted his hand silencing him. "Why are you here Administrator? You are supposed to be meeting with Tarifa and Selene right now."

"I thought it best to come directly to you sire." Coren spoke. "My proposals and those of my colleagues should be reviewed by you personally so that we may obtain your approval to begin work."

"Administrator... why don't you like elves?" Martin asked suddenly.

Coren was taken aback and his face showed it. He stammered for a moment, his beady reddish brown eyes darting back and forth. "Excuse me sire?"

"You come to my home unannounced," Martin spoke leaning forward. "I was supposed to be meeting with my mother and Admiral Riall and our two Hadarian guests for breakfast you see... and we didn't make

enough food. You come to my home unannounced... you insult someone who I consider a dear sister, who just happens to be an elf. Then you insult the Oracle of my people... and by your very nature you insult my elf Queen. What exactly am I suppose to deduce from your actions?"

Dysea chose that time to walk back into the room and move up behind Martin where she perched on the back of the low couch and dropped her hand to his shoulder. Everyone saw Aricia and Anja place their hands on her.

"Sire it was not my intent to..."

"Let me be very clear... and then my Captain will escort you to the landing pad and you can go to Eden City and meet with Tarifa. Or you can return to your ship, either way I don't particularly care. When it comes to Earth, and anything having to do with Earth, Tarifa speaks with my voice. I appointed her, Aihola and Selene to govern this planet. That is who you will deal with in regards to everything." Martin stood back up. "Andreus will escort you back to the landing pad now, and you'll have to excuse me."

Sette got to her feet quickly, her feathers ruffled. "King Leonidas... forgive our actions." She spoke quickly. "We... not all of us were in complete agreement about conducting ourselves in this manner." She bowed her head slightly. "Please accept my sincere apologies."

Martin glanced at her and nodded before turning and heading for the kitchen. Gorgo was beaming as she followed her son into the kitchen. It was no secret she hated any type of pompous display, much like her son's Queens, and to see her son react in such a way to Coren and the others had made her quite proud.

The two Hadarians got up and began making their way towards the large kitchen as well. Seanna stopped and looked at Coren.

"Congratulations Administrator Coren," She spoke softly. "He has been King for what... two weeks now? And you have not only managed to insult the Oracle of our King's people, but his Queen as well. I'd quit while I was ahead if I were you."

Seanna turned when the older Hadarian took her arm and drew her away from Coren. He leaned close as they walked toward the kitchen.

"That was uncalled for Seanna, and completely not within your realm to do." He spoke.

Seanna pulled her arm away quickly, glaring at the older man. "Do not touch me again Tezu!" She hissed quietly at him. "It is forbidden... you know that!"

"Why you were chosen for this mission is beyond me." He argued right back in a low voice.

"I would like to know that as well since I have not even finished my training." Seanna spoke. "Would you care to enlighten me?"

Tezu looked at her. "No! And per your orders you will do exactly as I tell you when I tell you." He spoke. "There can be no mistakes here."

"What do you mean?" Seanna asked.

"If you had been paying attention Seanna, you would have noticed that Queen Anja is now wolf." Tezu spoke seeing her dark green eyes go a little wider. "This makes our mission infinitely harder, and much more dangerous."

"How do you know this?" Seanna asked.

Tezu looked at her and slowed his gait considerably. "Listen to me carefully. Did you notice how her eyes closed and her expression changed when the Queen Aricia nuzzled her?"

Seanna shook her head. "No... does this mean something?"

"You need to be more observant Seanna. Do they teach you nothing in those schools you attended?" Tezu spoke. "In Lycavorian society only those who are mated can produce this type of reaction from another, whether it is female or male."

Seanna's eyes grew wide. "Are you saying... she shares a bed with her?"

Tezu nodded "Yes... and most likely with the female elf as well as the King, or so it appears." He replied softly. "I will have to speak with the Old Ones in regards to this, but there has never been a Hybrid Queen. Not once in our history of association with the Lycavorian people. This may... this may cause problems."

"Why?" Seanna asked. "She is still the daughter of King Yelu."

Tezu looked at her. “Yes she is... and your mission is simple. Teach her the basic arts, no more. And protect and watch over her until we tell you.” He smiled as he began entering the kitchen. “That is all you need to know now.”

Seanna looked at him for another moment as they entered the kitchen, then she turned to greet everyone.

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## **HIGH COVEN *DARKBROOD*-CLASS FRIGATE EDGE OF HIGH COVEN SPACE**

She was cold, so very cold.

She huddled against the wall of the cell, her naked flesh marked with dozens of bruises from where they had beaten her. Her arms were crossed over her chest trying to draw what warmth that she could, as well as hide the hardness of her nipples because of the cold. Two weeks she estimated that she had been their prisoner.

For'mya had woken in this cell, stripped naked, her jaw and head aching. She remembered the vampire leader Moran speaking to the Coven Princess about her and then his large fist slamming into her face breaking her jaw. She was barely conscious when he smashed her head in to the unyielding deck plates of the craft they were on, and that was all she remembered until waking up in this cell, naked and in pain. Her natural elfin healing factor had taken care of her inner wounds, healing her broken bones and cuts. They had beaten her daily, breaking more bones and causing large welts and cuts. They mocked her endlessly, calling her cow and pig, elf whore; those were some of the most popular. They mocked her body as they beat her, roughly pawing her breasts, squeezing or twisting them so hard that she would cry out in pain. They called her thin, and laughed at the size of her breasts. They pawed her privates, their vile fingers violating her, probing her openings, inflicting more pain. When it became too much she would mercilessly pass out.

The vilest act was when they would feed on her like a pack of animals. At one time she had five of the dogs drinking her blood down until she was near dead. She could feel her life leaving her, and each time they stopped before they finished her. There were bite marks all over her once flawless skin. They would heal eventually, but it would take a long time, and right now the teeth marks made her look like a Dapciar addict. The most addictive drug in the universe was injected into the body with an instrument that looked very much like vampire fangs. The Coven Princess bitch and her bastard husband had fed on her as well, many more times, usually either just before or just after they had sex in their quarters.

For'mya closed her dark brown eyes and let her mind wander. Her Spartan instructors had attempted to make their training as realistic as possible in case she or any of her pilots were shot down and not destroyed with their *STRIKERS*. She hadn't understood it at the time, but she had endured the training, intent on being the very best *STRIKER AT* pilot in the Union.

She had decided at the relatively young age of three hundred and six that she would enter the Union Fleet Academy. Her father had forbidden her to do this, having lost all of her older brothers and sisters to the continuing war with the High Coven. He had a male elf picked out for her to settle down with, marry and have children. For'mya shunned this, angering her father to the point he had disowned her for nearly a hundred years. For'mya had no intention of allowing a man to have her unless it was her choice. She had taken half a dozen lovers in her life, none for more than a few pleasant times, but nothing that would cause her to want to take them as a mate certainly. It had not deterred her training or her desire. Her father had come around and finally accepted her for who she was. She was an Elfin Warrior and nothing he did was going to change that.

For'mya was the last in the bloodline of the elf King killed by the Coven High Lord. This blood in her veins had given her somewhat of an arrogant and superior attitude towards others. Most just dismissed this as her personality, but it was obvious the Princess and others knew what she was, and the significance it carried among the elf people.

When the Elfin King was butchered by the Coven, the remaining elf leaders chose the Lycavorian King Resumar as their leader. He alone had been willing to help them in whatever way was possible. Even though both their peoples were slaves to the Coven, they had allowed Resumar to live and control his people due to their wild nature. The remaining elf leaders decided to cement this pact with a concubine of royal blood given to the King. Resumar had refused saying it was not necessary for them to relinquish their honor and dignity in such a way, and he loved only his Mate Eliana. The elf leaders had insisted and for nearly six thousand years

Resumar always had an elf concubine. She was killed along with Resumar and Eliana but not before the three of three together had slaughtered nearly a hundred vampires during the assassination attempt.

For'mya knew now that the grandson of Resumar had surfaced and would become King, she would be forced to become his concubine. That was not something that sat well with her in the least.

Almost seven hundred years she had served, thousands of missions she had taken part in, working her way up to her current rank and status, and never once had she been shot down or captured. Never once had she set foot on the surface of a planet in the midst of a bloody battle as she had on that rock Earth. She cursed the flame haired female elf who could fly a *STRIKER* almost as well as her, she cursed the Lycavorian King who had returned, and she cursed herself most of all for ever volunteering to go on the advance mission.

Elves were very resilient to a vampire's bite, and only a Pureblood could change her. These dogs were not purebloods of that she was almost certain. That Princess however was a Pureblood, and if she drained her completely, the next thing For'mya would recall is waking up a vampire scum. That was something she did not want to happen.

For'mya closed her eyes once more and focused on the image of the elf Queen that had circulated through the fleet as they headed for Earth, an image of long platinum blond hair, stunning emerald eyes. Her image alone had smitten hundreds of elf pilots, many of them carrying pictures of her into their cockpits. It was said that the son of Leonidas had turned her into a wolf, and that her beauty had doubled after that. She had seen his fleeting image, black hair and incredible brown eyes. He looked so much like the pictures of his father and grandfather in the Academy halls. He looked...

For'mya heard the cell's force field come down and she looked up into the face of three Vampire guards. All of them had scowls on their faces, and cruel glints in their cobalt eyes.

"It's time again she-elf!" The senior guard spoke. He had beaten her more than the others. And he fed on her like a slobbering fool, "Time for pain."

The guard used his vampire speed, blurring in motion until he was next to her. For'mya never felt the blow to her head that split her scalp and knocked her out cold in one fell swoop. When she woke up she would be happy that she didn't feel what they did to her.

"Her resistance is impressive." The Coven senior doctor spoke standing next to Yuri and Moran and watching the three guards use batons on the unconscious elf pilot raining blow after blow on her arms and legs. "I have heard rumors of the Lycavorian Spartan training for pilots Princess. How they inflict as much pain as possible without actually injuring the candidate. They go through almost a year of simulated prisoner treatment from beatings to mind assaults. It appears those rumors are true."

"I did not expect this to be easy." Yuri spoke calmly.

"She has strong mental shields for an elf, some of them just recently put in place. My skills are limited so I did not probe deeply, but there are traps within her mind that I would not recommend attempting to bypass without a senior Mage to support you Princess, if only to be safer for you." The doctor spoke.

Yuri looked at him. "They were put there recently you say?" She asked.

The doctor nodded. "I tried to probe but came upon a gray wall of nothing. I skirted along the edges but it was seamless and unbroken. I sensed the lingering presence of someone who helped her to improve her own psychic shields. Someone very powerful, someone who knew exactly what they were doing when they added to her defenses."

"Was it Leonidas?" Yuri asked.

The doctor shook his head. "If the reports I have read are accurate..."

"They're accurate doctor." Yuri snapped.

"Then no it wasn't him. He is strong enough to do this... but it wasn't him. The imprint he would have left would not have dissipated this quickly. Whoever it was, they were nearly as strong as him. I would say a female, one of the whores he calls Queen perhaps?"

Yuri shook her head. "No. This had to have been done after we left the system, and they are not that powerful. The Lycavorian wench may get there someday... but she is not at that level just yet. If I had to guess I would say he got the Oracle to touch her."

The doctor looked at her surprised. "A Lycavorian Oracle? I thought they were all dead."

Yuri nodded. "Yes so did I. However based on how quickly events happened, only an Oracle would have known how to contact the Union and get them to respond so quickly."

"That would explain this." The doctor spoke. "An Oracle would be strong enough to do this easily."

"There will be a senior Mage at Laxnis II." Yuri spoke. "It is our most secure prison at the moment. It is deep enough into our space that the Union will not attempt a rescue, and close enough to the border of The Wilds to be relatively safe."

The doctor nodded. "Laxnis II also has a contingent of Immortals there Princess." He spoke. "I understand they have a taste for female elves."

Yuri grinned savagely. "Good. If she does not break before we reach Laxnis II, I will give her to them for a few hours. We'll see how long she lasts when they are raping every orifice she has before she breaks and gives me what I want."

"Let's make sure we get that *STRIKER* information before they kill her though." Moran spoke. "We could do quite a bit with that intelligence."

"Oh they won't kill her." The doctor spoke, shaking his head and looking at this hybrid vampire. He had seen him often in the last two weeks, usually with the Immortal Cha'talla either in the ship's training rooms or in the small archives they had. He was not a normal vampire soldier, the doctor was certain of that. His strength was far greater than a normal Coven soldier, and his mind was like a steel trap. And the doctor had learned long ago, if one walked in the company of Immortals as this man did, then you could be assured he was something very different and very important. "As prime an elf female as she is, they'll turn her into their play thing. When her mind is destroyed they'll use her for entertainment until they tire of her."

"Good." Yuri spoke. "Once the fools in there are done, have her brought to my quarters. I have a taste for her blood again."

"I would recommend we not allow them to feed on her anymore." The doctor spoke. "The combination of them beating her into unconsciousness and then feeding on her blood could very well kill her before we arrive at Laxnis II. Five of them fed on her at the same time four days ago and it almost killed her. Beat her if you will... but limit those who feed on her blood to only you and Commander Moran here."

"Very well, I don't wish her to die just yet as I said." Yuri spoke. "We should arrive on Laxnis II in two weeks. By that time my entire fleet will have joined with us and we can return to Usu'Ozeib."

"Then I'll meet your father?" Moran asked.

Yuri looked at him. "Yes."

Moran nodded. "I'm looking forward to that."

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## EDEN CITY

"Take it Lynwe." Selene told her, holding out the solid colored glass as she stood beside the small couch in Selene's apartment. "You need it my love."

Their building had been one of only a handful that had sustained minor damage during the Coven bombardment, mainly because it was tucked into a secluded corner of the city. Selene had first chosen it for that purpose so that others would not have to see her after returning from the base EDEN on the moon and her self torture. The demeaning years spent under the whim of Deval, having to hide her half elf heritage, and the rape she had to endure at Graham's order. All of it had been too much for her and she fell into a cycle of self pity and torture, allowing men to debase her at their leisure and enduring it stoically.

That was until Lynwe had come into her life.

The tall, muscular Drow warrior was herself a product of the High Coven's cruel and sadistic experiments and tortures, and like Selene, Lynwe had responded in a similar fashion. She had allowed her hatred of the Coven to rule her actions, never allowing her true self to come out. It was Tarifa and Aihola who had saved Lynwe, showing her that she could still love and be loved, even after what they had made her into. The Coven experiments on Lynwe; done more for perverse pleasure than scientific research had turned her into something more than a woman. She looked female, and in that regards a very beautiful female with her long shimmering white hair, her dazzling amber colored eyes, and her soft chocolate colored skin. Her five foot eleven height was all lean muscle, her very large breasts extremely firm and proudly displayed. What made

Lynwe so very different was the decidedly male organ that she carried between her legs. The rage at what they had done to her in this way caused Lynwe to treat others as inferior, and even the few lovers she had over the years soon moved on due to her anger and the pain she could cause them with the size of the tool the Coven had given her. She had been unable to show any type of affection or caring, her mind always taking over and screaming at her to grip her anger tightly and work for revenge. Until Tarifa and Aihola showed her that if she continued on her path, she would ultimately destroy herself.

Lynwe had shared Tarifa's and Aihola's lives and bed for close to three months, rediscovering her true self, and allowing the anger to slowly drift from her until it no longer controlled what she did or how she thought. When she had gotten to the point of being able to let her anger pass from her, Lynwe had discovered Selene. The auburn haired half elf thanked the heavens every day for bringing Lynwe into her life. Without this Drow woman in her life, Selene would never have survived the events that threatened to overtake her life, or her transformation into a full blooded vampire. That inbred Drow strength that she possessed was what allowed Lynwe to survive her own transformation into a full vampire because of Selene, and to never look back again.

"I don't like doing it!" Lynwe spoke looking at her lover's steel blue eyes.

"I don't either... but we need to every month. You know this Lynwe." Selene spoke. "And you need to do this to fully complete your healing."

"I am completely healed." Lynwe protested.

Selene smiled seductively and took the data pad Lynwe had been reading from her hand before slowly straddling her hips on the couch. "Then why is it you are no longer able to take me more than twice in a single night Mistress?" She asked in a soft voice. "I remember when my Mistress could make me scream her name and have me many times, for hours on end without tiring."

"Selene..." Lynwe spoke shyly.

Selene lifted her finger and placed it on Lynwe's soft pink lips, lips that had given her just as much joyful pleasure as her other gift, and lips Selene found she could not live without. "Lynwe... the Grizz beast hurt you badly. Your wounds were grievous my love. You are still weak at times, and though we may be fully vampires now, wounds like yours still need time to heal. Anja has said we only need to take this cloned blood monthly. She even was able to chemically flavor it. I don't like it any more than you do, but it is what we must do. We are not invulnerable."

Lynwe took the glass from her hands and lifted it to her lips. Selene had been right, and it no longer tasted like the processed clone blood with a coppery flavor. It tasted sweet like fruit juice and she drank the entire glass down, feeling her vampire genes soak up the nutrients. She looked at Selene when she finished. "You were right." She spoke feigning defeat.

Selene smiled and leaned over to kiss her softly. "I will always take care of you Mistress. In every way you desire." She said.

"Selene... I have told you..."

"I know... you are not my Mistress, I am not your slave," Selene spoke. "But what if it is I who enjoys that role? Tarifa finds it most pleasing with Aihola, even more so when you shared their bed."

Lynwe looked shocked. "She... she told you that?"

Selene laughed. "We have grown close these last weeks; remember while you and Vengal and Aihola and the others fought, we ran this city. And we did a fine job of it until the Coven scum came. We have talked of many things. She enjoyed it immensely when she served both you and Aihola. Part of it was because you are Drow, and we both know of your culture and dominance, but mostly she said it was because you never attempted to carry that role outside of your bed. And there was always trust and respect even in the midst of your passion. That is what I so love about you. And that is why I like playing that role for you."

Lynwe shook her head slowly and leaned forward to press her head to Selene's breasts as her arms drew her tight. "When I found you Selene, it was I who was blessed." She could almost feel Selene smile at her words and pull her head tighter to her chest. "Wait... how did your meeting with Administrators go today?"

Selene let out a small laugh as Lynwe sat back, and she shifted her slim hips slightly becoming more comfortable in Lynwe's lap, her ebony hands resting on her hips possessively.

"To say it was interesting would be a huge understatement." She spoke. "Even as a child I never believed in life off this world, though working for the Coven as I did, the signs were all there. It is strange really, none of us... we don't act as I thought we would. Seeing them today, two looked like overgrown rats, one had purple skin

and a tube running from his neck and the woman was covered in white feathers. Yet still... neither Tarifa nor I batted an eye at this. It was almost as if it was commonplace to see it.”

Lynwe nodded slowly. “I spoke with the Holy One today. He was helping Daniel to prepare some sort of ship for a special mission. I asked him this very thing and he told me that perhaps it was due to the way he created us in the beginning. He said the knowledge was within him somehow, and that knowledge had to have been put there in some way. Once he and the King discovered what they really were he said it came to him. There are trillions of elves off this planet, and they interact with these different species all the time. It would be in their nature to not think differently about it. When the knowledge to create us was passed to him, he believes this was ingrained in that knowledge.”

Selene nodded. “That does seem very possible.” She spoke. “Perhaps I will speak with him at length about it.” She shook her head. “Anyway... the one rat man did not like us. I believe he has a distrust of elves. The others seemed more open and all of them are very intelligent, the bird woman especially so. She is interested in only the resources she can obtain from Earth.”

“What do they offer in return?” Lynwe asked.

“The elf Ambassador Legsim has been a godsend to us for that.” Selene spoke excitedly. “These people can make Earth strong again Lynwe. We will never have to bow to anyone. He says the resources we have here are very rare in many parts of the universe and they will bring a tidy sum of credits... well Riyal now since we are changing to the Union form of money. We can build defense platforms to protect us, and cities. They can help us clean and recover the land in the Wastes. It is incredible. And Legsim has told us Martin is permanently assigning almost four hundred of those huge space warships to Earth. They will expand the base on the moon; Admiral Wallace will be in command there. It is all so overwhelming at times. We are meeting with them again tomorrow, and I have heard that there is a representative from a different sect of Martin’s people coming to Earth as well to meet with us.”

“A different sect how?” Lynwe asked.

“Apparently they follow different laws and rules than the Lycavorian Union, and they don’t get along from what Ambassador Legsim tells us.” Selene answered. “It has something to do with an event from thousands of years ago. We asked him if we should consult with Martin before agreeing to meet them, but he told us even the King can not deny free trade. Tarifa is shrewd however, and she is no fool. She will always get Martin’s council if she feels she needs it. And they know that she and Martin are very close, and they are treading carefully after having the Administrators already displeased him this morning by showing up at his home in Sparta unannounced.”

Lynwe laughed. “I heard about that from Vengal and Tareif. They thought it hysterical.” She said.

Selene nodded. “Well... I think they are already learning that Martin will not play games. Legsim tells me he has already angered some by appointing the three of us to govern Earth and not choose one of those that were sent here for that purpose.” She told her. “He told us that we will have to go to this Apo Prime, their home world, at the start of their new Senate next year and be officially sworn in. That will be amazing.”

“You have not mentioned Aihola very much Selene. Why is that?” Lynwe asked.

Selene looked at her and sighed heavily. “She has not attended many meetings since she recovered.” She answered. “Something is wrong and I think she is in great pain Lynwe. Great pain inside.”

“What do you mean?” Lynwe asked, sitting up straighter on the couch.

“Tarifa has not spoken of it, hardly at all really, but you can see the strain on her face at times.” Selene explained.

“Do you think she mourns Dekton that much?” Lynwe asked.

Selene shook her head quickly. “No... I don’t believe it is that. She loved Dekton... as did Tarifa... but there is something more to it. I know she does not meet Tarifa for lunch anymore, and it was almost impossible to *not* find them together at this time before Dekton died.”

“You don’t think she blames Tarifa for his death do you?” Lynwe asked.

Selene shook her head. “I believe it is the opposite.” She spoke.

“Opposite?” Lynwe asked confused.

“Dekton told her to feed on his blood before he died Lynwe, to heal her own wounds.” Selene spoke. “I discovered that from Anja. I think Aihola blames herself for his death, and I think she believes Tarifa blames her as well.”

“Tarifa would never choose Dekton over Aihola, and she would never blame her for Dekton dying.” Lynwe spoke firmly. “She may have loved him in a different fashion, but Aihola was her soul. I saw it... so many others saw it. Dekton knew that. He loved them both... but he knew he could never separate them. He accepted that and even encouraged them to spend more time together. He wanted both of them because they are like one.”

Selene nodded. “I know... but that is what I think.”

“Maybe I should speak with her.” Lynwe said.

Selene shook her head. “No... aside from Tarifa, she trusts no one as completely as she trusts Martin. He offered Tarifa the same thing but he thought it would do more harm than good. She needs to work through this on her own with Tarifa.”

“You seem to know quite a bit more than most when it comes to the King.” Lynwe asked teasingly. “Is it because you find Queen Anja so attractive?”

“Lynwe stop.” Selene said with a smile. “She is beautiful yes... and I would not mind sharing her with you in our bed... but that will never happen. She is very intelligent... and very friendly, and genuinely concerned for all those she considers friend.”

Lynwe chuckled and kissed her neck. “I was only teasing you Selene.” She spoke.

“I will never need more than you Mistress.” Selene spoke seductively, squirming her hips on top of Lynwe and feeling her thick cock spring to life.

Lynwe gasped as she felt herself become aroused and begin to grow in length and thickness. “Selene... you... you told me I needed to rest.” Lynwe spoke.

Selene only grinned as she slid off Lynwe’s lap to the side and drew apart the folds of the robe she wore, exposing her powerful dark skinned thighs and Lynwe’s huge *gift* that she had grown to desire so much. Her eyes changed to cobalt blue as her own desire increased quickly. “Who said anything about you having to exert yourself Mistress?” Selene spoke as her small hand wrapped around the now very hard thirteen inch ebony cock.

“Selene...” Lynwe gasped as her own eyes changed to vampire cobalt blue and her hips shifted on the couch, pleasure building low in her belly.

“I’m going to worship you this night Mistress, in more ways than one.” Selene spoke softly as she stroked Lynwe’s maddeningly hard and powerful tool. “And you won’t have to do a thing.”

Lynwe gasped as Selene lowered her head and her soft lips encased the large ebony head of her Drow cock.

Selene was right... Lynwe had to do nothing.

And worship Selene did. In spades.

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## ***LEONIDAS I***

Isabella stood in the medium sized officer’s lounge, her hazel/green eyes gazing at the ships all around them, as well as the blue/green planet below. In her seventeen hundred years of life, Isabella never imagined she would be at this point, admitting to herself that she fit in with these people far more than her own kind.

When her father had killed her mother in a fit of rage at her helping Isabella to escape the putrid man she was given to, Isabella swore she would kill him. The pig, the man her father forced her to wed, he had treated her like a possession. He had not been handsome or kind in any way, and just remembering what it felt like being under that slob as he grunted and groaned made her shudder in revulsion. She had not intended to find her way to the Lycavorian Union, for the simple fact that they were her hated enemies.

At least that is what her father and others had always told her. They were no better than animals in the street, and they needed to be exterminated. As Isabella had learned over the years in their company, exterminating the Union was turning out to be harder and harder to do.

They had captured her that first day, and she saw the first hint of the bravery she would witness throughout her thousand years fighting by their side. She had watched an entire company of these Lycavorian Spartans throw themselves against a fortified position that was killing their comrades by the dozens as it attempted to defend the High Lord from harm.



Six out of a hundred and twenty had survived.

Their purpose that day had been the same as hers. Kill her father.

They were braver than she was, for when they came across her huddled in a corner trying to heal the wounds her father had inflicted on her they didn't kill her outright. They didn't mistreat her, as so many reports she had seen from her father had seemed to suggest. They had in fact healed her wounds when they got her back to their ship. They knew of what she was doing, word had spread quickly that the daughter of Veldruk was out for his blood, and they made her an offer. Fight with them and perhaps she might get her opportunity. Isabella had taken the offer without a second thought.

As Isabella stood on the LEONIDAS I and stared out at the stars and ships around her, she found herself thanking the gods she prayed to she had accepted the offer. Over the next thousand years these men and women had not only accepted her, but millions more of her people that rebelled against her father's tyrannical rule, and they considered her a valuable asset and friend. Twice in the last five hundred years Isabella had gone off on her own in an attempt to kill her father. Twice they had come for her when she failed, hundreds of Lycavorians and Elves dying in the process of rescuing her. First it had been Riall, and then Ceneu. When she recovered after the second time, Isabella vowed never to do it again. These people had risked everything twice to save her without question, and she realized her anger was destroying her from the inside.

She remained aloof for reasons she couldn't explain, but she was always there to help and fight with them whenever they asked, and even when they did not.

Isabella looked down as she lifted her arm and pulled up the sleeve of the leather jacket she wore, exposing the bridle of the Shi Viska on her left arm. The night this had been branded to her everything had changed. It was as if a light of understanding had gone off in her head. As much as she rebelled against the thought, Isabella realized this is why she had come here. She and Gorgo had talked for hours during the trip to this planet, and she was now one of only three people that Isabella wanted to share everything with.

Gorgo had told Isabella her son had not chose her, she had chosen her son. Isabella had laughed at that saying she would never chose to share a bed with a Lycavorian no matter how much she considered them friends. Her blood and her mind rebelled against that very thought when Gorgo had first told her that.

Now Isabella was not so sure.

He was without a doubt far more handsome than most of the Lycavorian males who had shown an interest in the vampire Princess, and he definitely surpassed any vampire male that she had ever known in just physical proportions alone. Yet there was something about this man that sent the entire Lycavorian Union into an uproar of activity, that sent them hurtling across the stars using untried methods of travel, and sent them into battle with a superior force without even a single blink of their eyes. Spartans, Elves, Hadarian, Algolian, every race within the Union had responded. Isabella had not understood it. Until that day two weeks ago on that plain below when he had stood unbowed and unafraid; facing almost forty thousand of her father's Immortals. The wave of emotion that swept through the Spartans that day even Isabella had felt and been swept up in. Seeing him bloody and his armor dented while he killed her brother Xerxes, not for himself, but for his people, for his mother and for his father, Isabella knew then why she had come.

This man, who up until recently had not even known what he was, he had fought without question or regard for freedom and the right of the elves and humans on this planet to live free and in peace. He had brought them hope, and that was *before* they knew what he was. When it was discovered who and what he was, the resolve had only grown.

He appeared unflappable, shocked to discover he had a half breed daughter with Yuri, but quickly putting that aside to discover where she was and bring her back to him. He had worried over his decision to let Yuri escape because it allowed her to take For'mya, one of the most important elves within the Union military prisoner. He had worried for all of twenty minutes, before he began making plans to find and rescue her. His adaptability astounded Isabella, not to mention that being in the same room with him had caused butterflies to flutter in her stomach.

She wanted him.

This knowledge was almost too much for Isabella to absorb. She actually wanted this man... this King. A man not even of her own blood, and she wanted him to have her in ways she had only dreamed of.

And then there was the She-elf Dysea. She was one of his mates, one of his Queens along with the Lycavorian female Aricia and the Hadarian female Anja. It hadn't shocked her to learn that not only did they

share a bed with him, but also with each other. Such relationships were not uncommon in the Union. What had shocked her, right down to her booted feet was the fact that they wanted her as well. He wanted her. An exiled Pureblood Vampire Princess and they wanted her. The she-elf almost as bad as he did and Isabella didn't know what to make of the way that made her feel.

Isabella had never entertained the thought of sharing a bed with another woman. Yet when Dysea had said those things to her just before they had gone into battle side-by-side, it had ignited a small burning within her that she had never felt before. And she did not know how to respond to it.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *What are you thinking Bella?* The soft musical female voice entered her thoughts easily.

Dysea.

Isabella turned and saw her standing behind her. It was unusual for anyone to get this close to her, even a Lycavorian, yet Dysea had done it with ease. She wore the standard Lycavorian uniform with body armor and the crimson cape that brushed the floor of the deck under her feet. Her platinum hair was shiny and pulled to one side of her face and then draped over one shoulder, tied in four places with crimson silk ribbon. Isabella found herself gazing at this She-elf in earnest. She was only an inch shorter than herself, and her lush elfin body was outlined quite nicely under the armor. Isabella wondered what it would be like to taste her blood in the height of passion, this thought surprising her and causing her to turn back to the window, her pale cheeks flushing at the thought.

“Do you always invade on another's thoughts She-elf?” Isabella finally asked.

She felt Dysea walk up behind her. “I don't need to touch your mind to see that you are deep in thought Bella. That is easily discernible from your body language.” She came up next to her. “And I will never invade on your thoughts, or anyone else's. That is a vow all of us have made.”

Isabella looked at her. “You mean the King and your co-Queens?”

Dysea met her gaze with her emerald eyes and Isabella felt a clenching in her stomach. “Yes... I mean *Nauta Melme*, Anja and Aricia.”

“I've heard you call him that before. It means Bounded Love doesn't it?” Isabella asked.

Dysea's emerald eyes glittered in delight. “You speak the elfin language Bella. I am very pleased about that.”

“I felt I should learn all the languages of my allies and my enemies. I speak twenty-four languages fluently and another eleven enough to get by if needed.” Isabella spoke.

“I wonder which one I am.” Dysea asked gently, “An enemy or an ally; though I would much prefer the term lover myself.”

“You persist in your attempts to entice me into something I have no desire for.” Isabella spoke. “I have never shared a bed with a woman, and I don't intend to start regardless of what I may...” Isabella stopped when she realized that she was going to say regardless of what she may desire.

Dysea smiled almost shyly. She turned and looked out at the stars and ships. “I am very persistent Bella. Ask *Nauta Melme*.”

Isabella needed to change the subject and quickly. “Why do you call him Bounded Love?”

“I am bound to him, and he to me.” Dysea answered, “In more ways than one.”

“And it does not bother you that you are only one of three that share his bed?” Isabella asked.

Dysea chuckled. “Trust me there is more than enough of Martin to go around. And we have room for one more as well.” She spoke with a twinkle in her eye, “Perhaps more in the future, who can tell, but you have sensed it just as I have. One can never predict emotions of the heart can we?”

“What do you mean?” Isabella spoke. “Sensed what?”

“A conversation for another time perhaps?” Dysea said, not understanding it very much herself. “Why do you remain on this ship when you could be on the surface?”

“I abhor politics in every form.” Isabella replied. “And I think my being on the planet makes some of Martin's friends uneasy.”

“Not uneasy Bella.” Dysea spoke. “Confused perhaps, but not uneasy.”

“Why are you here?” Isabella asked.

“I may have been a Queen of elves, and now so much more, but *Nauta Melme* knows that like you... I much prefer action to words. I was never very good at politics. It is what I had so many advisors for, as my mother told me so often.”

“Does she still live? Your mother I mean?” Isabella asked softly.

Dysea nodded. “Yes. She will remain here when we leave. She does not want to leave the world of her birth.” Dysea smiled waving her hand. “Anyway... *Nauta Melme* asked that I come up here to this wondrous ship and begin to learn as much as I can about it and others. I’m meeting with Admiral Riall in a short while, but I detected your scent first and thought I would say hello. And invite you to dinner.”

“You detected my scent? Dysea... my kind... vampires... we don’t have scents that you can follow.” Isabella said.

Dysea looked at her with a smile. “Oh but you do Bella. And it is the sweetest scent... like the flower... like lilacs. It smells almost as good as *Nauta Melme*. That is what you smell like Bella. And it makes my blood boil.”

Isabella again found herself wondering what it was about this She-elf that was having this affect on her. “Where... where are your other lovers?” Isabella asked, more harshly than she had intended for some reason.

Dysea smiled as the unintentional tone of the question bounced off her. “Anja and Aricia have a special bond that I do not share. You will most often find them together. I believe they are still in Sparta finishing up a list of personnel that will leave with us.”

“And the King?” Isabella asked.

“*Nauta Melme* is meeting with General Vistr, General Vengal and War Master Tareif in Eden City to best determine how to use the several Spartan divisions that came with the second wave of Lycavorian forces.” Dysea replied. She stepped closer to Isabella. “We could always skip dinner and enjoy each other?”

“Do you never give up She-elf?” Isabella asked surprised at the sensations having her so close sent coursing through her.

Dysea smiled. “No. It’s what *Nauta Melme* loves so much about me.” She said.

“I have never seen an elf female that is so... so forward.” Isabella spoke honestly.

Dysea smiled gently once more and stepped further back, sensing her discomfort. “I knew someone like you once Bella. Not truly knowing where she fit in, afraid to look beyond what she knew and could feel and taste. It was a very lonely existence to say the least.” Dysea looked into Isabella’s eyes. “My meeting with Admiral Riall will last a few hours, and I would like very much to spend some time with you.”

“To what end?” Isabella asked softly.

Dysea shrugged. “To learn more about the woman I wish to wrap myself around for starters.” She said matter of factly. “You forget Bella... I am wolf and I can smell your desire for me, and for *Nauta Melme*. You can fight it all you want but if you expect me or Martin to deny what we feel you will be disappointed. *Nauta Melme* may not pressure you... that is not his way... but I certainly will, at least until I win you over, or you tell me in much more forceful terms to never bother you again. I must go now Bella. I truly hope to see you again.”

Isabella watched her turn and began to walk away confidently and with a sense of command and grace about her.

“She-elf?” Isabella asked loudly causing Dysea to stop and look at her. “That person you knew... what happen to her?”

Dysea chuckled. “She met and fell in love with a werewolf Bella. And she has not looked back since.”

Isabella’s eyes grew a little wider as Dysea continued walking and turned the corner disappearing from sight.

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“We will build twenty of these P12 Planetary Defensive Platforms circling Earth at two hundred kilometers standard orbit. Another twenty will be positioned at choke points in this system, all of them connected back to your Command Center here. Each platform will have a crew of sixty technicians and military personnel.” Coren spoke. “They are the newest PDPs and we are replacing the older ones around Apo Prime with them as well.”

“And what is the cost?” Selene asked.

The Administrators had returned for this round of talks and they appeared ready to begin serious negotiations. Coren especially was docile this morning, but that could be due to the fact that Lynwe sat between her and Tarifa and had stared at Coren for the better part of the last hour during his presentation. Tareif had sent her here as his military representative and her presence alone seemed to intimidate the Administrators. Since they had never seen a Drow elf before, Lynwe was using it to her advantage.

“Four billion Riyal each to build the platforms and an additional two billion Riyal each year to maintain.” Coren spoke. “The standard maintenance contract is for ten years in length for a total contract of nine hundred and sixty billion Riyal; half payable in advance.” Coren returned to his chair and set his data pads down.

Tarifa lowered the pad she held and looked at him. “Your company charges Apo Prime one billion each year for maintenance.” She said evenly, “Why the difference?”

“There are considerably more P12 PDPs surrounding Apo Prime Lady Tarifa.” Coren spoke. “And our technicians only have to go back and forth from the surface. For Earth we would need to transport the technicians back and forth when work needs to be done. That would mean paying them to stay on a ship for three weeks in order to get here, and then fix the issue, and then another three weeks to return.”

“Ambassador Legsim has told me that you have no contracts this far out.” Tarifa spoke. “And since this entire system will fall under our jurisdiction, then whatever minerals exist in this system technically belong to us correct?”

Coren nodded not knowing where she was going on this. “Yes Milady. Since Earth is the only habitable planet in the system, the other planets therefore will fall under your domain and control.”

“We reached an agreement with Administrator Rozilet of Dynamic Systems for the exact same thing at half the cost,” Tarifa spoke. “We will no longer need those things.”

Coren looked surprised and angry and he got to his feet quickly. “Then our business here is done!” He snapped.

“Administrator Coren wait!” Tarifa barked stopping him in his movements. She got to her feet and moved over in front of him. “I understand that you have a dislike for my species Administrator...” Tarifa held up her hand to stop his retort. “I don’t care about what has happened in your past with elves. My only concern right now is the elves on this planet. That will probably change in the future as we grow more modern and hopefully more people come here, but that is my focus now.”

Coren looked at her, his anger slowly ebbing away. “You have already chosen to go with Dynamic Systems for the PDPs Milady. I’m not sure what other services you might need.” He spoke evenly.

“I have a proposition for you.” Tarifa said, “If you would like to hear it.”

Coren nodded noncommittally. “Very well I’m listening.”

“We no longer need the defense platforms because of Administrator Rozilet; however we do need something else.” Tarifa spoke. “Ambassador Legsim has told me your company has recently completed a major rebuilding project on the planet Nu-Feja 8 I believe it is?”

Coren nodded slowly. “Yes. We assisted in remodeling their capital and building their newest buildings.”

Tarifa nodded and picked up the data pad. “Your company in fact modernized their entire city, tearing down and rebuilding, it says here five thousand structures. And you did it in two years.”

“That is true. It is a new division of our company and we are trying to expand into other areas.” Coren spoke suddenly very interested. “What are you suggesting?”

“Selene, Aihola and I would like your company to rebuild Earth Administrator.” Tarifa spoke. “Starting with Eden City,” She held out the data pad for him. “This is what we want.”

Coren’s beady eyes grew wide as he began to read, his two hearts slamming into his chest. He looked at her after a long moment. “This... you do realize what you are asking? The cost would be astronomical just in labor alone!”

Tarifa nodded. “We have millions of men and elves who are willing to work Administrator. All you would need to do is train them. We will provide your labor force, your facilities to train them, whatever accommodations you need. All you need do is provide those employees an average wage comparable to your normal employees. We would even accept that you be allowed to work the wages upward on a scale equal to what your other employees earn as our workers gain experience.”

“Milady... that still would not cover the cost of what you are suggesting.” Coren spoke. “As enticing as it sounds.”

Selene got up and moved around the table. “Then perhaps this will.” She spoke giving him the pad. “Administrators Rozilet and Sette have told us that Uranus in this system has an abundance of the minerals you need to forge the metal that you use across the universe, more so than any other of your mining sites by a factor of twenty. We are willing to offer your company a ten year lease on that planet, and exclusive mining rights to be used at your discretion once the work on earth is complete. We will not regulate your mining, as Rozilet tells us you have a very strict policy in place now that protects your workers in every way. We will offer your crews and ships docking rights and accommodations at a reduced price once they begin arriving, and since the Jump Gate will be in our system and under our control, unlimited use of the Gate for the duration of the contract. All we want in return is for you to rebuild our planet Administrator.”

Coren looked at them wide eyed. “You are serious?” He asked.

Tarifa smiled at his expression. “Administrator... our first priority is to the people of this planet. We are going to make a substantial profit in Riyal from the deal we have signed with Administrator Sette, very substantial in fact. We are not greedy, and we want to show you that whatever may have happened in the past, we were not part of it. All of us will walk away from our talks very happy. Whether you choose to agree to this is up to you.”

“I... I will need to get my Senior Administrator’s approval for... for something this large.” He stammered.

Tarifa nodded. “You are not scheduled to return for a few more days. We do have interstellar communications now. You are free to use our system to contact who you wish. May I suggest we meet again tomorrow afternoon for lunch? You can give us your answer then.”

Coren nodded quickly. “Yes... yes that is more than enough time.” He spoke.

“Good.” Tarifa spoke. “Then I believe that concludes everything that we needed to cover.”

They waited as the four of them were escorted out and then Lynwe got to her feet walking around towards them. “That was brilliant!” She exclaimed as Tarifa and Selene embraced tightly.

Lynwe hugged her tightly and then took Selene into her arms. “We have taken the first steps.” Lynwe said.

Tarifa nodded and squeezed their hands. “Yes we have. The first steps into Earth’s future; our future my friends.” The only thing that would make this day perfect would be to fall into the arms of her Mistress, Tarifa thought.

“I would be able to travel easily with the papers I have, but I don’t have a ship. I was using regular transports from the spaceport before.” Yuriko spoke as they sat at the table in the restored and rebuilt hanger on Eden City’s airfield. The sounds of Raptors and *STRIKER ATs* landing and taking off were constant and they had tuned them out by now.

“How did you manage that?” Vengal asked.

“General... I am a woman. It is easy enough to use my skills to coerce a decadent guard or some other fool who has not had the company of female companionship for some time.” Yuriko replied. Yuriko saw Martin wince at this knowledge and she looked at him quickly. “She is my sister father.”

“Yuriko you need to stop calling me that.” Martin spoke.

“I will not.” Yuriko spoke firmly. “You are the only father I have ever known regardless of how long it lasted. Simply because I have grown up does not change that fact.”

“She’s got a point Marty.” Dan spoke from his chair.

Martin shot him a nasty glare which bounced off his thick Spartan hide.

“We’ll have the spaceport cleaned out and operational in two days. Our larger ships can land then. But we discovered something that might help you in this plan.” Vistr spoke. He slid the data pad over to her on the table.

Yuriko activated it and her dark eyes grew wide, “A Coven Long Range Runner!” She gasped.

Vistr nodded with a smile. “We discovered it in one of the secure hangers. It had been damaged in our assault the next day, but our engineers have repaired it completely.”

“This is perfect!” Yuriko spoke. “Its own LSD drive... capable shields and it is extremely maneuverable and fast at sublight speeds.”

“I thought you might like that.” Vistr said with a smile.

Yuriko looked at Martin once more. “This is truly a godsend.” She said. “I can go practically anywhere in Coven space with this ship.”

“You’re going to have company.” Martin told her.

Yuriko’s eyes narrowed. “You don’t trust me?”

Martin shook his head quickly. “You I trust. The Coven I don’t. I’m guessing your friend Filrian will go with you. I want you to take three others.”

“Who do you intend to send with me?”

“That would be us.” Daniel spoke sitting between Anuk and Nayeca.

“You are sending the man you consider to be your brother.” Yuriko spoke. “So then you don’t trust me.”

Martin leaned forward in his chair. “Can everyone give us a minute please?” He spoke. Martin and Yuriko waited until the others had gotten up and moved out of the hanger. Martin looked at her. “Yuriko... if I didn’t trust you completely would I send someone I consider my brother?”

Her dark eyes regarded him for a long moment and she shook her head. “No.” She said softly.

“You will be in charge.” Martin spoke. “This is all new to them Yuriko, they will need to rely on you. But they are very skilled in their own right as I’m sure you know.”

“It... it would be helpful in a way to have his mates with us. They are elves... and...” Yuriko looked at him. “When will you allow me to continue looking for Lisisa?”

Martin took the small chip from his pocket and held it out to her. “My mother tells me I have access to an account that is outside the normal channels. Very few people have knowledge of it, and it is run by someone in The Wilds I believe it is called. It is my understanding that this area, this Wilds is made up of black marketers and pirates and all sorts of unsavory and crooked individuals.”

Yuriko nodded. “That is true.” She said. “I have been there on many occasions to try and obtain information on her. I never had the funds to do so.”

Martin placed the chip in her hand. “Now you do.”

Yuriko looked at the chip activating it and seeing the numbers flash across the small screen. Her eyes went back to his face. “This... this is...”

Martin nodded. “I’m guessing it’s a lot of money, or whatever it’s called huh?”

Yuriko shook her head. “It is... it is a fortune. I could buy three planets with this amount! How did they...?”

Martin shook his head. “I don’t know and I didn’t ask. She told me funds are put into that account on a monthly basis by some unknown person. They’ve been doing it for close to two thousand years now. She doesn’t know who or why... only that they send her a new chip every year with the correct access codes. The codes on that one are good for another six months. I don’t care if you have to spend every penny. Use it to find where they have taken For’mya, and use it to find where my daughter is.”

“And if I discover this information?” Yuriko asked. “I have a good idea on where they will take the female Commander but it will mean a trip to The Wilds to confirm it, at least three months time. You will be back on Apo Prime by then preparing for the Acceptance Ceremony. You will not be able to leave.”

“If you find out where either of them are Yuriko, you contact me and I promise you I will come.” Martin spoke.

“And if I find the Commander first which is more than likely?” Yuriko spoke. “Will you let me continue to look for Lisisa after you have rescued this female elf? Will you give me the same assets as you do now? I can find her father... with what you have given me now I can find her.”

“She is my daughter Yuriko.” Martin spoke softly. “I will not abandon her regardless of what anyone says. You have been out there before. You know where to go... where to look. I can’t think of anyone more qualified for the job than you. Our goal is the same in that regard. Never doubt that.”

Yuriko nodded. “Then I will find your Commander for you.” She said. “And then I will find Lisisa.”

“Tell me Unta.” Tablina spoke softly as the man settled onto the chair across from her. “Tell me everything.”

“Whoever his sources are... they were correct.” The Lycavorian man replied. “I had our contact double check everything Tablina. Chetak’s people even had her undergo a medical examination under the auspice of making sure the diseases that were prevalent off Earth did not affect her. It was all very well crafted and put together. She *is* showing the first outward signs of Lunmai.”

Tablina felt her heart sink. She had hoped they were wrong and that what they were trying to do would not work, “What else? She asked finally.

Unta looked at his data pad. “She is supposedly quite skilled for one so young, and she fought beside the King in the Battle for Earth. Aside from that information is very hard to obtain.”

“Do we know who Chetak’s people are?”

Unta shook his head. “Not as of yet, but to get this type of information they would have to be as highly placed as ours. Our contact is still searching, but he is being extra cautious. Martin Leonidas is a very private man it appears, and he guards that privacy jealously. We do know that Chetak also went to another Mage to ask about the possibility of the serum.”

“Who else did Chetak go to?” Tablina asked.

“Sumarka,” Unta answered.

Tablina didn’t hide her look of disgust, “That petty witch!”

Unta nodded. “Unfortunately she does have the necessary skill and tools to create the serum Tablina. And it is possible he may attempt to get it from her as well.”

“Then remove her.” Tablina spoke without hesitation. “And destroy whatever it is she may be using.”

“If only it were that easy.” Unta spoke. “She is very isolated and...”

*We will deal with her.* The voice spoke as the click of talons on the floor made them both turn.

Unta didn’t bat an eye at the appearance of the creature. *It would put your kind at greater risk Isheeni.* He spoke. *As it does speaking openly like this and you coming here even at this hour.*

Isheeni’s azure scales rippled in the light. *No one is near that can Mindvoice on our level. And I have been here many times at this hour. I am not afraid. Tablina is correct... we may not be able to stop him from doing what he plans... but we can certainly keep this child Aricia from enduring more than necessary. You know of course what he has planned for her when she returns here with Joric.*

Tablina nodded slowly. *Yes.*

*I consulted our Elder One when I left you last Tablina.* Isheeni spoke. *She has agreed to make the serum and it will be ready in a few days, exactly as we discussed. She knows why we do this and she agrees. She will authorize any assistance we can provide.*

Tablina looked at her surprised. *Why? She has never done that before.*

*She asks that I bring you to her so that she may talk with you when we are finished here.* Isheeni said. *Within a few days Sumarka will be dead and Chetak will have no choice but to use what we give him, even though he does not trust you completely.*

*He will when the serum works.* Tablina spoke. *And when Joric returns with her we must make arrangements to contact her somehow. Once the Lunmai passes and she realizes what has happened she will be devastated.*

*You know of course she will hate us for what we have done.* Isheeni spoke softly.

*We will have saved her life.* Unta spoke.

*You do not understand Unta... for you are a man. We will have helped our enemy to coerce her into her betrayal of the man she loves.* Isheeni spoke. *Regardless of what our intent was, she will hate us for helping Chetak in any way. And that hate may very well destroy us all.*

*How do we make her see that we did it to save her? To save ourselves.* Unta asked. *We did not put Chetak on this path; King Resumar did by his own actions!*

Tablina’s head came up quickly. *Do not speak of what you do not know Unta!* She snapped. *You were not even born when Resumar did what he did!*

*After what we have endured all these centuries I do not care why he did it! We have an opportunity to change it now. Chetak's Blood Oath will ultimately lead our people and Isheeni's kind to freedom. If we have to do this... regardless of how vile it is... she will have to endure.*

*That is easy for you to say Unta. You are not the one who has to endure.*

*Six thousand years of our daughters being forced against their will! Six thousand years of Isheeni's kind being hunted and killed until there are barely a few hundred left. She will live... and she will not have to bear Joric's child. That is far more than I can say for many of our daughters. The King will find a new mate of Pureblood. She will be alive and we will finally be free.*

*Will we? Tablina replied softly. Or will we have become exactly what we have reviled all these years?*

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## CHAPTER THREE

### SPARTA

“Handmaiden?” Anja snapped. “I don’t need a babysitter! I’ve gotten along quite well these last few years without a nursemaid. I’m not going to stop now! You didn’t say anything about this at breakfast two days Tezu!”

Tezu nodded his head slowly. “Given what was happening it didn’t seem appropriate.”

“I’m sorry... what was happening? We were having breakfast!” Anja spoke as she leaned forward on the couch. “Everyone has breakfast!”

This morning had not begun well and it was getting even worse. She had spent the previous two days tied to the hospital in Eden City, breaking away only to go with Aricia to the *LEONIDAS I* for some sort of medical checkup. The rest of her time had been spent organizing things for when she left. The young Hadarian woman had accompanied her wherever she went, and though she was very pleasant and friendly, extremely curious and very easy on the eyes to look at, Anja had hoped to get one full day of being with Martin, Aricia and Dysea before they left.

She had awoken this morning to find all three of them gone, Martin to the *LEONIDAS I*, Aricia into the market in Sparta, and Dysea to say her goodbyes to Tarifa and Aihola. Tezu and Seanna had arrived only thirty minutes ago while she was talking with Helen and feeling lonely, and now they were telling her she had to have a Hadarian babysitter. Anja was finding out that Seanna was going to be her constant shadow now, more so than she had even in the last two days.

“I had hoped to pull you away from the others before we left but it did not work out as I would have liked.” Tezu spoke.

“Pull me away why? Whatever you have to tell me I will share with Martin and the others anyway.” Anja spoke. “So why waste the time?”

Seanna looked at her, her stunning dark green eyes widening just a bit. “You tell them everything?” She asked.

“Of course I tell them everything,” Anja spoke. “I don’t keep secrets from them, and they don’t keep secrets from me. That surprises you?”

“Milady... you are... you are the daughter of King Yelu. You *are* the Hadarian Queen.” Tezu spoke.

Anja nodded. “Yes... so you and Seanna have told me continuously for the last two days. I understand that.” Anja had about as much patience as Martin when it came to being pampered and fawned over because of her new found status. “I don’t see why you needed to see me alone? Whatever you tell me I *will* tell Martin and the others.”

“You can not My Queen.” Tezu spoke.

Anja’s jade green eyes flared at this information and she got slowly to her feet. Helen had been sitting in the kitchen listening in the background. It was something Martin and his Queens expected her from her. Not many knew who she really was, and her position gave her a unique opportunity to be able to give them objective information and advice at a later time. They had agreed that whenever they were in Sparta Helen was going to share in their lives. When Helen heard Tezu say, that she looked up quickly knowing Anja was about



to “blow a gasket” as Martin had once described to her. When it came to secrecy and things of this nature Anja had the shortest patience and fuse in dealing with it than either Aricia or Dysea.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Your people have always been secretive in regards to your talents Anja. Helen told her quickly. The Metaphysical radiation that allows your people to have their healing skills they do is a sacred thing to them. No outsider to my knowledge is even allowed to attend the ceremonies.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I do not like keeping secrets from the others Helen, most especially from Martin, Aricia and Dysea.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I know, and so do they. In this circumstance I believe they would understand. Approach it differently and perhaps Tezu will tell you what you can say. He is almost as old as I am, and knowing the older Hadarians as I used too, they tend to become set in their ways. Seanna seems to be more open minded and rebellious if her posture and comments are any indication. Tezu may have handed you an ally my Queen, without even realizing it.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I won't use someone that way Helen.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I know Anja. All I'm saying is hear what he has to tell you and adjust your tactics to get the information you want.*

Anja looked at Tezu then, and returned to her spot on the couch. “I will listen to what you have to say Ambassador.” Anja told him. “But let's get something straight... unless it is a matter of grave importance, I will hold nothing back from those that I love. Are we clear on that?”

Tezu nodded. “Yes Milady... I understand perfectly.” He looked at Seanna. “Perhaps it would be better if I showed you so that you have a better understanding.”

Anja watched him reach down and pick up the thin tea saucer he had been using. It was empty now and he held it in the palm of his hand and closed his fingers around it, exerting his full strength and crushing the saucer in his fist. It popped loudly and the large pieces sliced into his skin deeply, his blood beginning to leak around his closed fist.

“Ambassador!” Anja exclaimed reaching for the cloth napkins on the table between them. “What are you doing?”

“No!” Tezu spoke looking at her. He turned to Seanna and held out his hand nodding.

Anja watched in amazement as Seanna covered Tezu's rough hand with her delicate ones. She closed her eyes briefly and Anja watched the soft white green illuminate his injured palm. Seanna drew her hands back and Tezu turned to Anja again, opening his hand to reveal the broken pieces of the tea saucer and his completely healed hand.

Anja's bright eyes were wide in wonderment and she reached out to touch his skin and palm. “How... what... how did you do that?” She finally managed to stammer.

“My Queen... my intentions are not in any way devious or ill mannered. Our people have been with the Lycavorians, side-by-side since King Resumar first started the inklings of a rebellion. We have only grown closer as those years passed.” Tezu spoke. “This is our gift my Queen... your gift. Our planet is surrounded by a nebula that emits a metaphysical radiation. This radiation bombards a certain part of our planet every six months. It enhances our molecular structure and allows us to retain the healing properties of this nebula. It allows us to do what Seanna has just done with my hand. It allows us to do so much more. It is one of the reasons why the rebellion and now the Lycavorian Union that we both now serve have survived for so long. King Resumar... the King's grandfather... he knew what we represented and he honored us in many ways. The largest way was to allow our people to keep secret how this process occurs within our bodies. Only our people possess this skill, only our people can manipulate the nebula's healing properties.”

“Wait... you mean I have this skill as well?” Anja asked.

Tezu nodded. “It is within your body's molecular structure yes. You have simply not been exposed to the nebula's radiation for the process to fully become active within you. King Resumar allowed us to keep this secret... it is our most sacred ritual to have this gift bestowed on us. It is a week long ceremony, culminating with the zenith of the nebula's radiation bombardment. We have built a temple of sorts on this spot, and all of our healers go there when their time is called. You will notice that most of the healers within the ranks of the Union are female. That is because the Hadarian female absorbs more of the radiation and is a better conduit. That is why most of our females have varying shades of green eyes, such as you and Seanna. There are males who have been able to absorb the properties and use them almost as well, but our females are the strongest

healers. It is why the Coven so desired to conquer our world. Our skills work on all species... and we... we do not like taking life. There have been some that... that chose to go over to the Coven, but even they have not revealed our secrets.”

“I don’t think anyone *likes* taking a life Ambassador.” Anja spoke. “Sometimes however it must be done to protect yourself and others.”

Tezu nodded. “That is where Seanna comes in. We have a small sect of our people, again mainly females, which are trained as Healers and fighters. Our Mage warriors we call them. Seanna has not yet completed all of her training, but she is one of the more accomplished at both tasks.” Tezu spoke. “She was assigned to help you discover this part of yourself, using her own powers as a conduit of sorts. Seanna is one of the more powerful Healers as she began her training very early. She can teach you the basic principles of using this gift; allow you to practice and grow using her as the conduit, until you return to Hadaria and take part in your own Ascension Ceremony.”

“I sense a *“but”* coming.” Anja spoke.

“In all our time with the Union, there has never been... there has never been a Hadarian King or Queen that is also wolf.” Tezu spoke. “Your Mindvoice connection with the King and the others is not something we have ever had to deal with. What you know he will know. What he knows you will know.”

Anja nodded as understanding came over her. “And Martin will witness my Ascension Ceremony regardless of whether he is there or not.”

Tezu nodded slowly. “He will also become knowledgeable of the principles of the nebula and its properties. As King of the Union... this is knowledge that would be inappropriate for him to know.”

Seanna looked at her. “We assume you have a similar connection with Queen Aricia and Queen Dysea Milady. Is this true?”

Anja nodded without hesitation. “Yes. More so with Aricia... but all of us are joined in this manner.”

“Now you see our dilemma Milady.” Tezu spoke.

“And you don’t trust Martin to honor what his grandfather started?” Anja asked him somewhat defensively.

Tezu looked at her. “He is young and passionate Milady. And from what we have seen... a warrior unequalled, even more so than his grandfather and father were. He is taking power, as King, of a vast empire in the grips of a war that has been going on since long before he was born. Our Older Ones are... concerned.”

“Concerned about what?” Anja asked.

“That perhaps because you are now wolf and mated to him, he will not be as open to the secrecy surrounding this that you will... that you must adhere to in this. And neither will you.” Tezu spoke evenly. “It is a difficult situation as you can no doubt understand.”

Anja got up and went to the table where Helen always laid out breakfast items. Seanna watched her with great interest and something else she had never felt before. Anja wore a similar robe to two days ago, but that one was not as sheer in its fabric as the one she wore today. They could see the outline of the white panties she wore, as well as the bra that held her large firm breasts, but this robe did very little to hide anything else on her body. Seanna found herself wanting to see Anja wearing this robe much more instead of the other one and that thought surprised her greatly.

Anja added more of her coffee and the flavored creamer and turned back to look at them as she sipped the hot brew. “I want to know about my father and mother.” Anja asked them.

“What would you like to know Milady?” Tezu asked sitting back further on the couch.

“What were they like?” Anja asked softly. “How did I end up here on earth?”

“You already know most of the background information Milady, because your history is so interwoven with that of the King. We are one of four founding members of the Union. We had fought and lived beside the Lycavorians for thousands of years before that. The year 2036, the year you were brought here, the year King Leonidas was given to the Guardian of the Line, the High Coven sought to destabilize the Union by assassinating the Hadarian Royal Family. They succeeded in assassinating your parents, and most of your family, but not before you were taken from your mother’s womb and brought here to earth. We knew only that the descendant of Leonidas had been brought to the Guardian; we did not know it would turn out to be his unborn son. It was determined that you would be safer here on earth than any other location because he was here and you might one day come together as comrades. It was arranged for you to be switched at birth with a

child of similar age and physical proportions and similar background to the King. We... we did not foresee that you would..."

"That Martin would make me a wolf and take me as his mate?" Anja finished as she returned to her seat on the couch.

Tezu nodded. Yes." He spoke. "That did not factor into our equations."

"You said most of my family?" Anja spoke her jade green eyes glittering in the light.

Tezu nodded with a smile. "Your great grandfather still lives, as well as two of your father's siblings; a brother and a sister. They are extremely happy that you are found once more Milady, your grandfather most of all."

Anja was quiet as she sipped her coffee. "I... I have family." She spoke softly.

"How did you meet him Milady? Meet her?" Seanna asked excitement in her voice. "The King I mean and Queen Aricia?"

"That is not important" Tezu spoke before Anja could reply, killing the smile that was forming on her face.

Anja looked at him perturbed once more with this man and his attitude. "It *is* important to me Ambassador." She spoke. "I waited a long time to find Martin Leonidas... I almost lost him... I do not intend to lose him again. Nor do I intend to lose Aricia or Dysea for that matter. Especially Aricia."

"I understand that Milady but..." Tezu spoke.

"No... there is no but." Anja spoke firmly. "I will do as you ask and not tell Martin or the others about everything we have talked about. I will need to share with them why... but I won't go into details. I will not leave them in the dark. Martin might surprise you Ambassador... wild and passionate he may be... reckless even... but he is not a fool." Anja got to her feet. "If you are moving this along to the point where you will eventually ask me to leave Martin and Aricia... I can tell you flat out right now that is not something I will ever do. Ever! I don't care what I will miss out on!"

"My Queen you..." Tezu spoke, rising to his feet as well.

"No... you will listen to me now!" Anja barked. "Seanna is welcome here... she can teach me what you want her to teach me... but you better get back to these Old Ones you spoke of and tell them I will not be forced down a road not of my choosing." Anja said. "I love Martin Leonidas... and I *will* have his children one day. And they will play with Aricia's children and Dysea's children, all of his children together. Nothing you can promise me or give to me will ever come close to replacing that. If things can be worked out... fine... if not... I'm not at all unhappy about the way they are now." Anja placed her mug of coffee on the table. "I'm going to go running now and we are done here. Seanna there is a spare room down the corridor to the right. Feel free to make yourself at home. I will return in about an hour."

They watched as in a silver/white flash of light Anja was gone and the wolf with Persian red hair stood before them in the room. She glanced at them with jade green eyes and then they watched her pad out of the room silently before beginning to run and leaping the villa wall gracefully.

Tezu and Seanna turned when Helen walked slowly into the room.

"I believe you will find Tezu... this Queen as well as Aricia and Dysea... are quite different from any you have ever known." Helen spoke softly.

Tezu nodded. "I'm beginning to see that Oracle." He spoke in reply. "The Old Ones... they worry for the hatred the young King has in his heart."

Helen smiled gently. "I know that is what they worried about. Tell them something for me Tezu..."

He turned to face her fully and bowed his head, "Always Oracle."

"Tell the Old Ones that the hatred in Martin Leonidas's heart... that hatred died when he destroyed the man who killed his father, and took his mother from him." Helen spoke. "All that remains now is a young man with the heart of his grandfather, and the skills of his father. He has already been forged and shaped in the "Fires of Combat" as we Spartans say here. Now all that remains is for those like you and I to guide his heart. He has a pretty good start with those he has chosen to share his life don't you think?"

Tezu nodded his head. "That I do Oracle."

"Have no worries Tezu... Martin Leonidas will honor what his grandfather started. You may tell the Old Ones the Oracle guarantees that." Helen spoke.

Tezu met her dark eyes and smiled. "And that is what I will tell them Oracle. They will be most pleased hearing those answers come from you."

"Not from me Tezu. I just happen to know what me King will say." Helen spoke.

"I'm sure they will invite you to Hadaria soon. Can I tell them you will entertain a visit with them?" Tezu asked.

Helen nodded with a smile, "A visit perhaps. But like my King... and his father before him... Sparta has become my home in more than just name. I have bonded with these people, and after so many years of having to hide who I was, it is very refreshing to just be myself." She walked up to him and touched her hand to his chest. "I would like them to come here as well, if for nothing else, then to see where Martin's heart truly is."

Tezu bowed his head and turned to Seanna. "I will leave you to your duties Seanna." He spoke looking at her. "After seeing our Queen and speaking with her; perhaps it is a good thing that you were chosen for her and not another. I will relay this to the Old Ones as well."

Seanna bowed her head as Tezu walked around her and headed for the front door. She waited until the door had closed behind him before turning back to Helen.

"I have found in my old age," Helen spoke with a smile. "That there are far too many who cling to old traditions and cultures. I believe our young King and Queens will begin to change that."

"So do I Oracle." Seanna said.

Helen took her arm. "Come child... let me tell you what your mind craves. Let me tell you of the King and Queens you now serve."

Seanna smiled and gripped her hand tightly. "I would like that very much."

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## *LEONIDAS I*

Danny settled into the chair next to where Yuriko sat as she was prepping the Coven Runner. He looked at the controls and shook his head.

"You sure you know what all these things mean and do right?" Dan asked.

Yuriko looked at him and smiled. "Yes Daniel I do." She spoke. "I am an accomplished pilot."

Dan nodded. "Ok... guess I'll have to take your word on that."

Yuriko turned and saw Anuk and Nayeca sitting on the short couch in the rear of the ship, Filrian opposite them going over the list of medical supplies Anja had given to him. When he had seen what she authorized him to take, his eyes had lit up like a child in a store full of Hadarian Sweet Drops. He had spent the better part of the last day compiling as much as he thought they would ever need. Not to mention some equipment he didn't think they would need at all. Her eyes moved back to Anuk and Nayeca and she saw them laughing softly and then they shared a kiss.

"May I ask you something Daniel Simpson?" Yuriko asked.

"Sure... as long as you just call me Dan or Danny. Only Nayeca calls me Daniel... and it kind of sounds better coming from her if you know what I mean." Dan said looking at her smiling.

Yuriko smiled in understanding. "Very well Danny." She spoke.

"So what's the question?" Dan asked.

"Did... did he ever asked about me?" Yuriko asked softly.

Dan met her eyes for a long moment. "There was a moment before we attack Cedar City." Dan said. "It was just the two of us... before we knew what we know now. He remembered that you liked the mountains and the smell of fresh fallen pine needles. He said you would have liked to see that area."

"Then he... he didn't forget me?" Yuriko spoke looking out at the landing bay outside the cockpit window.

"There's very little that the Skipper forgets Yuriko." Dan replied.

"Then that makes what I am about to do even more important." She said softly. "I do not remember my childhood, and Lisisa had hers torn from her by that vile witch Yuri." Yuriko spoke. "Now that I know... with him behind me... I will not fail now."

"How old will she be?" Dan asked.

“She is four hundred and eighty years old, but she will appear very young, perhaps twenty or twenty-one in human years. The combination of her blood has given her amazing regeneration power. If she has not changed her appearance then she will have long dark hair. Yuri sent her away when she was only a hundred and two years old, and I have only gotten close enough to actually see her twice, twenty years ago and just last year before father returned to earth.” Yuriko explained. “She looked more like father... deeply tanned skin and very shapely, but her eyes are what set her apart from others.”

“How so?”

“They... they are dark brown like father’s, but when she shifted... they were the most beautiful shade of brownish green.” Yuriko said with a smile.

“That description could be any millions of people Yuriko, you know that.” Dan spoke.

Yuriko nodded. “Yes... but I will know her when I see her. The planet we will go to first is called Uryias Two. It is on the border of the Wilds, a haven for pirates and smugglers and unsavory individuals of every species. Some of the finest pilots work out of that planet. I will spread some Riyal and Ducat around as I ask questions. Someone will have the answers to where this Commander For’mya is, and possibly my sister as well.”

“Sounds like a rough place.” Dan said.

Yuriko looked back at Nayeca and Anuk. “Will they... will they be up to it?” She asked.

Dan grinned. “Oh I wouldn’t worry about them. They’re more vicious than I am.” He said as he leaned back in the chair.

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## ENURRUA

Tablina followed Isheeni’s huge bulk as they moved down the cave’s tunnel. The light was very dim down here, though her wolf eyes had no trouble adjusting. The mountains of this part of the planet were honeycombed with deep tunnels and caves, and were in part responsible for Isheeni and her kind surviving this long.

To say she had been frightened when she first came here would have been the single biggest gross misstatement anyone could make. Tablina had been terrified. Not for what she was walking into, but for the small creature she had held in her arms that day. Tablina was nearly as old as Chetak and had come here shortly after the High Coven had killed her mate. She deduced that the High Coven would not come to this planet because Chetak had worked for them in the past. It was she who had discovered the history of the species that Chetak and the other families had been hunting ever since they came to this world. That small creature in her arms that day was now walking in front of her, and that act alone had started the pact they now shared.

It was something she had heard as a child, but it was something she had never believed until she came here.

Isheeni’s kind was called *EonuaEquz* in their native tongue. They were known by everyone else across the stars as something else.

Dragons.

Tablina rescuing Isheeni from one of Chetak’s hunting parties when she was only four days old had forged an unbreakable pact between her and the Dragons. And over the centuries they had worked at cultivating this relationship to the point of complete and utter trust. That was the reason Tablina followed Isheeni without question deep in to the mountain. Isheeni had flown her here in only an hour and they had remained silent, content to enjoy the company of each other. Isheeni had been her constant companion and friend since that day, never very far from her and always with wise advice and council.

As they entered the massive cave Tablina’s eyes searched for who she knew occupied this liar. The cave was enormous... easily five hundred meters across and four hundred meters high at its peak. It would easily allow the smaller youngling dragons to test their wings and flying skills without exposing them to Chetak’s hunting parties. Dragon eggs of any kind were worth a fortune on dozens of worlds in the area because of their youthful properties and intoxicating effects. The juices inside the eggs were used for lotions and liquids to slow aging, while the lining was used to create one of the most addictive drugs in the universe. Dragon bones were next to invulnerable, and prized for the making of bladed weapons, while their skin could be made into any

number of expensive items. Chetak had become rich beyond his dreams by slaughtering another race of beings, and he showed no signs of slowing down until the Dragons were extinct.

The massive Dragon appeared under the thin ray of sunlight that shone from the top of the mountain four hundred meters above and Tablina reverently dropped to one knee and bowed her head.

*Arzoal; it is good to see you once more Elder One.* She spoke.

This dragon's plate-like scales were crimson red shading to lighter red towards the front of its body. She was the oldest of the Dragons in terms of years and it showed with the number of scars and gouges on her body. Her scales were like plates of armor and could not be penetrated by most small hand weapons, but it could be penetrated by larger weapons as her age old wounds showed. She had broad body with a long, thick tail and neck. Her limbs had four digits on each foot that ended in very sharp razor like claws. Her wings were elegantly folded along her shoulders running all the way to her hips. Arzoal's head was almost wedged shaped with tiny slit nostrils and wide eyes that were the color of burning flames. Her ears were large, and pointed with a series of tendrils extending hair-like, down the back of her head. Two horns extended backwards from her forehead adding a fearsome visage to her twenty five foot length and twelve foot high Height when she stood tall.

*Tablina child, you do not need to bow to me. You have always been a friend of my people and protected us when you could. For that we will always be in your debt.* The dragon moved closer lowering her body to the floor of the cave and staring at her with her flame colored eyes.

Tablina reached up and allowed her hand to rest on the dragon's snout. *I have not done enough.* She spoke. *Chetak still hunts your kind Arzoal, with increasing violence and with tools we can not match.*

Arzoal nodded her massive head. *The day you rescued my daughter Isheeni, you and I became tied together Tablina of the Wolf Tribe. Never doubt our complete trust in you and those that follow you.* Arzoal brought her head closer and with a gentleness that always surprised Tablina she touched her snout to her warm skin. *I have done as you asked of me.*

Tablina looked at her, dark eyes wide, "Truly?" She asked in her own voice now.

Arzoal nodded. *I have touched the she-elf as you asked. The one captured by the Coven as your people reported. The distance was great but I was able to enhance her mental shields to a degree that the Vampire witch will need help to breach them. Why did you have me do this?*

"She will play a role in the future of things Arzoal." Tablina replied. "I'm sure of it. She is the last in the elfin royal bloodline and if we can do anything to help her we must."

*As the distance grows shorter I may be able to do more for her and I will attempt to do so at a later time. We can not leave this planet physically just yet, but we can do other things.* Arzoal told her. *Tablina I was able to sense him.* Arzoal's voice held awe in it and she saw Tablina look at her. *I probed into the system they are in, where this planet is. It taxed my abilities, but I was able to reach that far. I wanted to see for myself what you feel is happening.*

"What... what did you sense? Tell me please." Tablina asked.

*I sensed power like I haven't tasted since King Resumar.* Arzoal spoke softly. *He has touched that power already, though he has not learned how to use it as the High Lord does. He felt remorse Tablina... something that I have felt from none of your people save those that follow you. It is remorse for this she-elf that was captured. He feels responsible. I did not probe far as he would have undoubtedly detected me.*

Tablina got to her feet slowly. "Arzoal... you are the most powerful of Mindvoicers that I have ever encountered. Your skill surpasses mine by a hundred fold. He is that skilled already?"

*As I said... he has tasted his full potential already. He simply lacks the proper training to use it. He will need this training to reach that potential.*

"Who could give him this training?" Tablina asked. "If he is truly as powerful as you say, who could teach him what he needs to know?"

*There is one who still lives.* Arzoal spoke. *Now is not the time however. His Queens are powerful in their own right, especially the child Queen with eyes like Isheeni's scales. Their love is like a burning star in the night sky. He loves them all without question, without regret, but she is his power.*

"You speak of Aricia." Tablina spoke.

Arzoal nodded slowly. *The one we must make suffer yes. I fought with my feelings in regards to this Tablina, as did you. And like you I came to the same conclusion. That is why I have authorized any help we can provide. I have sent two Heavyhorn Hunters and a Firespitter to deal with Sumarka. She will be dead before the*

*sun falls this day. And anything she was working on destroyed. We can not stop Chetak from fulfilling his task, but we can help the child Queen as much as we are able. You realize when the serum wears off she will never submit to her station.*

Tablina nodded. "Yes I know."

*Joric will tire of her quickly. He will undoubtedly resort to her death if she does not submit to him when he demands it.*

"She will not submit to him." Tablina spoke. "Of that I can assure you."

*Then we must do something else.*

"I have thought of this. My plan is not fully formed but I will inform you when it is." Tablina spoke. "I can only hope we can make her see what is going on."

*And perhaps make her see that there is a much larger world than what she is aware of. I will not let my kind die, just as you will not.*

"And if she isn't strong enough?" Tablina asked.

Arzoal closed her eyes. *It is not her I am concerned about Tablina. He is a passionate one, this Wolf King of yours. And I sense forces working against him in every corner. Some that remains hidden even still. It is he we must hope is strong enough. His Queen will have us to help her heal. He will drive everyone away in his grief and have no one. That is the abyss we must not let come to pass. If he falls Tablina, my people, your people, the entire Union, we will fall with him.*

"How do we stop that?"

Arzoal shook her large head gently. *That is an answer that eludes me still.*

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## EDEN CITY

"What do you mean gone?" Dysea asked Tarifa as they stood in the Command Center Conference room.

Tarifa looked at the two Spartan Centurions that had become her constant shadow since her time in Sparta. Tarifa had thought Martin had assigned them to her, and when she inquired of the two guards they said Panos had ordered it. Tarifa had immediately contacted him and complained. She had fumed for twenty minutes listening to him answer questions with questions just like his son and finally Tarifa had relented.

"Would you leave us for a moment please?" She asked them. Tarifa waited until they had exited before turning back to Dysea and the tall vampire Princess. "She left me a note last night telling me she was going to spend some time with Hwia in Ash Fork where most of the Drow have settled. No warning... just the note. She left most of her clothes and things as well. I don't know what to do Dysea."

Dysea glanced at Isabella.

Isabella had surprised her the other day when she left her meeting with Riall. She had been waiting for her in the small officer's lounge and Dysea was very happy when she had seen her. They had spent the next four hours together, returning to Eden City and going to one of the eateries that had been less damaged and had reopened. Dysea had watched Isabella consume two complete venison steaks and several batches of fresh salad. She had watched her intently that entire time, how her lips moved, the curve of her face and her eyes. With the exception of Martin's eyes when they were changed, Dysea had never seen a more captivating pair of eyes before.

She had been right she knew. Isabella was not the arrogant Princess that many made her out to be. She was just very reserved and private about her life before coming to the Union. Something terrible must have happened to her Dysea knew, and after dinner with her, she found herself desperately wanting to discover what it was. Isabella was proud... and confident in every way and she reminded Dysea of Martin so much. It was that pride and confidence that Dysea found so desirable in her. She may have been a pureblooded vampire but she was the most delicious female that Dysea had laid her elf eyes on in that way. She loved Aricia and Anja of that she was sure, but they would always gravitate to each other. No... this was the woman that Dysea wanted. When she and Anja had spoken those months earlier they knew getting Isabella to open up would be difficult if not impossible. They knew that Isabella would sit with them as a Queen. Dysea was committed to trying. Isabella knew that Dysea wanted her... and though she had said she was not interested... Dysea knew from her scent that was not entirely true. So during their dinner Dysea shifted tactics, and decided she would discover all

there was to know about this woman as well as pursuing what she truly wanted. And that was to have Isabella's body wrapped around her own.

Isabella calling her the next morning to invite her to a training session on the *LEONIDAS I* was all the answer Dysea needed to know she had made the right choice. When she said she had to say goodbye to Tarifa and Aihola, Isabella offered to accompany her.

Dysea turned back to Tarifa after a split second. "*Nauta Melme* told me... told us what has you worried Tarifa." She spoke softly.

"The Holy One's father assigning me two Spartan Guards was not the best of moves." Tarifa spoke. "I understand he feels I should be protected..."

Isabella stepped forward. "He is right." She said. "Colonel Nestor reports there are many of the Cloned vampire troops that escaped. They are out there even now and he hunts them efficiently, but until Earth is fully secured, your life will be in danger Tarifa. As will this Aihola you speak of."

Tarifa nodded. "I know. I tried to explain that to her yesterday morning. She snapped at me... saying that she didn't need another Spartan bodyguard, but if I wanted one of my own kind that was fine with her!"

Dysea stepped forward quickly and took Tarifa's hands. "Tarifa... it has been only two weeks." She spoke softly. "And while you have mourned by throwing yourself into your work, Aihola is different. She may need space and to be away from this city for a time."

"But away from me?" Tarifa asked.

Dysea nodded. "If what you suspect is indeed true, then yes. She may need time to come to realize that you loved her more than Dekton, and that you don't blame her for what happen."

Tarifa took a deep breath and allowed it to leave her body slowly as she nodded her head. She squeezed Dysea's hands tightly. "I will always value your friendship Dysea of the Wood Elves, far more than others."

Dysea smiled and embraced her, Tarifa returning the hug. They parted and Tarifa looked at Isabella as she moved in front of the large window gazing into the command center.

"Is she the one?" Tarifa asked in a whisper.

Dysea smiled shyly. "That is my hope." She answered. "We are very much alike and I wish to share with her what Anja and Aricia have."

Tarifa smiled again. "Well I have no doubts you will accomplish this goal." She said. "When will you be returning?" She asked in a more normal voice, seeing Isabella turn around then.

"*Nauta Melme* wishes to return here at least twice a year." Dysea spoke. "With any luck we will be able to do that. Pass on my friendship and caring to Aihola."

Tarifa nodded. "I will." She said. "I must go now... I have only an hour before Selene and I meet with Dilios and some others who have come from Sparta."

Dysea nodded and she watched Tarifa turn and left the command center. Isabella came up behind her. "You... you shared something with her once?" She asked.

Dysea nodded, "A long time ago." She turned and looked into hazel/green eyes. "Nothing like what I want to share with you though Bella." She spoke softly.

"She-elf..." Isabella started.

Dysea shook her head and reached up to put a finger to her soft lips. "Your life has not been easy Isabella, this much I understand. As I think... I hope you are coming to realize... you and I are not so different. We have only just begun to know each other... but since I am now wolf... I will live almost as long as you Bella, and if I have to work for the next thousand years to get what I want... I will do just that. And what I want more than anything outside of *Nauta Melme's* love and touch upon me... what I want is you. And you won't have to do a thing."

Dysea smiled and took her hand. "Come... Martin is calling us back to Sparta with his aura. Join us for dinner there before you return to the *LEONIDAS*."

Isabella nodded slowly. "If that is what you wish."

Dysea nodded. "It is what we all wish." She spoke.



For'mya hugged her knees to her chest as she sat on the floor of the cell her back to the bulkhead. They had left her alone for two days now, coming into the cell only to give her some horrible tasting slop which they called food. The bruises from her beatings were almost healed and her natural elf strength had nearly returned since they had not fed on her blood in that time.

For'mya looked up slowly when she felt the tingling inside her head, her dark brown eyes clear and alert.

*Who are you?*

*You must shield your thoughts she-elf or they will hear us. Let me show you.*

For'mya closed her eyes again as she felt the voice, a female voice whispering in her head.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *There. Now they will not know we are talking.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Who... who are you? How can you touch my mind? I am not able to Mindvoice.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I have given you this gift she-elf. It was I who strengthened your natural psychic shields against the poorly skilled Coven Mages.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *This is a trick. Some sort of torture. I will not listen to you. For'mya heard the soft chuckle within her mind.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *You are strong child. That is good, for you will need all that strength in the days to come.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Who are you? What do you want?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *My name is Arzoal and I am a friend.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *So you say.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Yes so I say. I have enhanced your mental shields as I said. The vampire Princess will not be able to breach them without proper support and training from a senior Mage. I am limited in what I can do because the distance between us is so great, but I am doing what a friend has asked of me.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I will reveal nothing to you. For'mya spoke firmly in her head. I will not fall victim to your tricks.*

For'mya heard the chucking in her mind. [Mindvoice Shielded] *My you are a stubborn one. You do your bloodline proud she-elf.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *What do you know of my bloodline? That information is free knowledge. My captors know who and what I am. This is a trick, an attempt to get me to tell you secrets. I will not betray my people or the Union! I will not!*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I ask not of this. Yes... your bloodline is well known, as are you throughout the Union. Your skills are unmatched so it is spoken. But very few know what you are meant for she-elf. Only a handful knows that you are to be the bound concubine to the new King. For'mya's eyes widened.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *How... how could you know that?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *The same way that I know that thought causes you to rebel from it as you have all your life. Striving to be more than what is intended of you due to your station.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I will not be the plaything of some animal King! For'mya snapped.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *That animal King as you say... even now he searches the stars for you; his sole intention to return you to your people.*

For'mya shook her head slightly. [Mindvoice Shielded] *The Union would not do that. I am a pilot... they would not search for me, regardless of my station or bloodline. I am lost to them.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *You do not know your new King very well she-elf. Nor do you know the two Queens who will join him in his search for you. He is not what you expect, nor are they. He follows his own path.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *You play with me. These thoughts of rescue you put in my head. I do not believe you.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I know child... but you will, for I am not your enemy.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Who are you?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I am something you have only seen in your childhood books and scrolls. And I am far older than even those close to me know. I am becoming weak she-elf. The distance between us is very great and it strains even my abilities. You need to remain strong For'mya of the family L'tian. Your King is coming for you. He will not abandon you.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Wait... don't go!*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I will return soon child and we will talk more. For now... conserve your strength, and no matter what the Coven monsters do... hold on to the knowledge that they will come for you.*

For'mya looked up quickly as the tingling in her head stopped and the voice was gone.

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## ENURRUA

Chetak stepped out of the Runecutter to survey the destruction in front of him. He saw Joric turn towards him and begin walking. The small stone home was still smoldering from the many windows, the land around the building scorched and charred. The roof of the home was destroyed, thick logs from hundred year old trees protruding from the ceiling. The modern door made of steel and alloy was crushed inward, as if smashed by a giant.

Joric stopped in front of his father, "Father."

"What happen here Joric?" Chetak asked. "This is Sumarka's residence."

Joric nodded. "It was." He spoke. "At least one Firespitter and a Heavyhorn Hunter struck here." He spoke. "We discovered the tracks of the Heavyhorn behind the structure. Based on the scorch pattern they came out of the east and swept in."

"Why?" Chetak spoke. "She is isolated up here, and they have been concentrating their hunting in the south."

Joric motioned with his head and began walking. "This is why?" He led him to a small depression in the ground near the still smoking structure and Chetak saw the ruby colored egg, now cracked open and split into two pieces as if it had hatched.

"She had the egg of a Firespitter here?" Chetak hissed as he squatted by the empty shell. "Was she a fool? Firespitter females can smell their eggs for hundreds of kilometers! Sumarka had to have known they would track it here!"

"Apparently she was more concerned with supplying what we asked of her father," Joric spoke. "It is odd that the Heavyhorn was here as well though."

Chetak stood back up looking around. "They are beginning to cross breed Joric." He spoke. "We saw this when we took down the Obsidian last week. The nest looked to have had at least two eggs in it, and only Firespitters lay more than one egg at a time."

Joric looked at him, "A Heavyhorn and a Firespitter breeding together?" He asked. "Think of the wealth just one of their offspring could bring father."

Chetak nodded slowly his eyes searching the area around the structure reaching into the mountains several kilometers away. "Did you find her body?"

Joric nodded. "What remained of it anyway. She was bitten in half and her arms were cleaved off." He answered casually.

Chetak nodded. "Just what an angry Firespitter would do." He spoke. He cursed under his breath. "Now I must use Tablina's serum, and give her what she wants."

Joric looked at him. "Why can't we just kill her when we have it father?" He asked.

Chetak looked at his oldest son. "You are my oldest Joric, and I have given you the most training and guidance of all my children. I intend for you to lead when I am gone, but you still have much to learn son." He started back for the Runecutter. "Walk with me." Joric fell in beside him as they walked. "Tablina is almost as old as I am son, and you will need to kill far more Dragons before you reach her in skill and power."

Joric looked at his father, his face showing his surprise. "You are joking father. That old bag has killed Dragons!"

Joric never saw the vicious back hand that smashed into his face staggering him back and splitting his lips open. He looked quickly at his father, fear in his eyes, for while he may have matched his father in height, he was no where near as muscular or strong.

"Listen to me when I speak fool!" Chetak snapped as their men scurried about, trying to remain out of their House leader's wraith. "I would rather face down a legion of High Coven Immortals or a score of Dragons before I faced an angry Lycavorian female! Our women are the most brutally vicious of any kind when truly in

bloodlust. They will slit your throat and cut off your cock, all the while smiling and looking into your eyes with love. You must never trust them... that is why I have told you when any of your mates begin to show any independence, or resist you in any way, gut them and take another. And you have learned this lesson well.” Chetak took a deep breath and calmed his anger. “I do not trust Tablina... and I tolerate her because I fear her.”

Joric looked at him wide eyed now. “You fear her?”

Chetak nodded. “Oh yes... and you should as well. When she arrived here over three thousand years ago she was in bloodlust. The Coven had killed her mate and it took her only three months to kill almost a hundred dragons. Our best warriors had only managed half that in the six thousand years prior to her coming here.”

“Perhaps you should have taken her then father.” Joric ventured. “She looks like she would have been prime flesh.”

Chetak smiled. “Yes she was. But I had no desire to lose my balls to her knife. And her powers far exceeded my own. No... I do not trust her son... but to kill her...” Chetak shook his head. “Only someone far more skilled than you or I will ever kill that one. She will do what she says she will do. She has never failed me. I was hoping to use Sumarka instead to keep only from having to give away a planet. It seems my greed got the better of me this time. No... we will give Tablina what she wants... and we will allow her to inspect the wench when you return with her as she has requested. She contacted me this morning and said the serum will be ready when we need it.”

“Why does she wish to inspect her?” Joric asked.

Chetak grinned. “Who knows... perhaps she wishes to taste the flesh of a child Queen as well.” He laughed.

“You do realize father that when the serum wears off, this Aricia will not be submissive to me.” Joric spoke. “If I have to kill her will you be angry?”

Chetak looked at his son. “Angry? My Blood Oath will have been fulfilled Joric. If she does not submit to you willingly as will be her station, then I recommend you take her in every orifice she has against her will, as many times as you like, listen to her howl and then give her to our men. Then she will know the true meaning of pain. Let them *nubou* her to death, while you find a more submissive female.” **(Ancient Lycavorian language, basically fuck. And yes... I've decided to make my own language. That should be fun.)**

Joric smiled as his eyes glittered in cruel intent.

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## LYCAVORIAN HOME GUARD FLEET

### *LEONIDAS I*

Martin stood in the large crew lounge on the *LEONIDAS I* staring out the observation window as the planet he had called home for so long slowly dwindled in size. He was entering a whole new world now, and he would need to be on his toes. He already had a schedule for the next three weeks put together by his mother to learn as much as he could about governing an Empire that up until two months ago he had not known existed. The goodbyes were the hardest part for him. So many friends he had made in the last year, and now he was leaving them. Tarifa could not stop crying and even Tareif was holding back the emotions. Selene, Lynwe, Helen, Panos, so many.

Two Lycavorian Fleet Groups were now assigned to earth, and the Engineering corporations already had their ships and people heading here to this new world. He had no doubts that Tarifa and the others would govern wisely, but was he abandoning them to their fates?

General Vengal and fully two complete divisions of elves from Earth had opted to remain with him and leave Earth to explore the unknowns and see new worlds. Now with the entire Fleet Group back together Vengal and Vistr had established a coordinated training regime to combine the two forces into two full strength divisions. The two of them had been getting along famously. Vengal and his wife had almost been as excited to leave as Anuk and Nayeca had been before they left with Danny.

Martin was an imposing figure in the black body armor and crimson cape, which was now edged in gold trim all around. No one in the lounge wanted to approach him, and they kept quiet, speaking in whispered words, their eyes darting back and forth to where he stood. Martin preferred this lounge as opposed to the smaller officer's lounge reserved for him. He preferred to be around others of his kind and not alone.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Am I abandoning them?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *That is not something you are capable of Nauta Melme.* Dysea's voice filled his thoughts.

Martin turned and saw them enter the lounge. All of them were dressed in the black body armor and crimson capes, though only three had the gold trimming as he did. Isabella had not yet accepted her place within their circle, and Martin wanted her too badly to pressure her in any way.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *We are leaving Earth stronger than it has ever been Martin.* Anja spoke as she came up to his left side. *You know that.*

Dysea stepped up to his right side and pressed close. [Mindvoice Shielded] *And they will be stronger when we return under Tarifa's leadership and wisdom.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *You have accomplished much here Martin Leonidas, never doubt that.* Isabella spoke softly.

Martin looked at her standing behind Dysea. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Bella... your control is improving in leaps and bounds.*

Isabella smiled. [Mindvoice Shielded] *I have been practicing. If I am to assume the role that is intended for me, whatever it is...*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Bella... it will always be your decision.* Aricia told her as she leaned back against Martin's chest. *Whatever power has drawn us all together it is for a reason. We may not have all the answers just yet... but one day we will. Until that time we should continue to explore and build what the five of us have found.*

Martin leaned over and nuzzled the back of her neck. [Mindvoice Shielded] *When did you get all philosophical on me?*

Aricia chuckled and closed her eyes enjoying his warmth and aura. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Perhaps it was what you did to me last night.*

Anja laughed. [Mindvoice Shielded] *It was very fun.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Stop it... we are embarrassing Bella.* Dysea barked in a playful tone.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *It will take much more than your banter to embarrass me.*

Martin looked at her. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Ok... I guess we'll have to work on that then.*

Aricia turned and lifted the woven silk necklace up to his neck and her fingers tied the ends together. [Mindvoice Shielded] *I made one of these for each of us last night after your stamina gave out my love.*

Martin looked at her with a crooked grin. [Mindvoice Shielded] *What is it?* He asked picking up the glittering coral red stone about the size of a quarter. He noticed that all of them wore one as well.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I purchased it from one of the vendors in Eden City. She said it came from someone on one of the ships and was considered very valuable. It was much larger until I had her break it into five pieces. The man who sold it to her said it was the heart of Dragon.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Little Wolf Dragons don't exist.* Anja said.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I know that, but it sounded nice and I bought it anyway. Now we each have a piece and we will always be together. No matter where we are.*

Martin kissed her softly and pulled her close to him. He looked out into the stars once more and smiled.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *You know how I've always said we shouldn't fear the unknown?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Yes.*

Martin chuckled. "Man... I'm so fucking scared right now I could shit!"

The crew members in the lounge would never know what caused the Queens to shove the King away and practically run from the lounge that day. All they knew was that it must have been humorous because all of them were laughing.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### ENURRUA

The sea crashed into the rocky shores on the west side of his estate sending mountains of spray spilling over the huge boulders. The day had been exceptionally hot, a premonition of what was to come perhaps, but as the twin moons cast their glow on the horizon and began their climb into the star filled sky the coolness of the ocean breeze swept over him. His dark eyes gazed at the raging white caps of the ocean, and he thought back on the nearly eleven thousand years he had waited for this moment to come.

The events of that day so long ago were etched into Chetak's memories as well as his body. As he fingered the long jagged scars under his velvet shirt he could still feel the tear of those black claws and the shredding of those white fangs. He could still see her billowing black hair and those deep dark eyes that had so captivated him as she was led away. She did not even look back on him as she held tightly to the arm of his attacker who was now her mate and the pain of that wound burned more than any of the physical ones. He could have offered her so much more; thousands of years of life and dozens of strong children with wealth beyond her dreams. She had taken that foolish concept of love over what he had offered her, and now she was reaping the awards of her decision. She was dead and buried with the wolf who had taken her from him in an act of betrayal of the old ways, their very culture and traditions. And she had allowed it.

That single event had caused the schism among their people, old versus new, future versus past, emotion versus instinct. Everything they had to endured, the hardships and pain, the deaths and the battles, everything had led them to this point. And now he would take his revenge. The grandson of his vilest enemy was returning to take his place as King of their people, and more than anything he wanted to inflict upon him the pain that he had felt all those years ago. He had grown rich and powerful beyond imagination using his families' skills and those of the nine families that had followed his father that day, to build what they had here. He had taken over the family nearly ten thousand years ago with the death of his father at the hands of the High Coven. He and those that followed him escaped the slave ships to wander the stars selling their skills to the highest bidder. He had avoided the Vampire Coven at times, and had even worked for them through the years to safeguard what they were building. Many of their people had died at his hand, or due to his actions and betrayal. That mattered not to him.

They had come to this planet and began rebuilding, once more snatching slaves from across the universe in daring raids to work their lands. They had grown powerful and rich, mainly due to the abundance of Dragons on this world. Creatures never known to exist before he and his people arrived and began hunting them and selling their bodies and bones and eggs. They began opening trade routes with dozens of worlds, and as they grew in power they began building their own Empire.

It was an Empire which he now controlled with an iron grasp.

It was no where near as vast as the Lycavorian Union that the traitors to their own kind had built. They had a dozen worlds, while the Union had reign over thousands. They had their own military, powerful ships they had purchased from any who would sell to them, yet it did not match the thousands of ships of the Lycavorian Union. They had thousands of slaves, while the Union abhorred slavery, and they had a Secret Police that was even more savage and brutal than the Vampire's High Guard. They had all this, and the revenge still burned in him brighter than any sun.

He turned as he caught the scent and watched as his oldest son moved confidently along the pier towards him. He watched him walk purposefully, tall and proud. Standing nearly six feet three inches tall, his dark brown hair billowing in the wind, he was the mirror image of his father, and every ounce as cruel and brutal. He was a large wolf, almost as large as his father now and very powerfully built. He was the oldest of the nineteen children he had sired with four different females over the years, and he would follow his father to the ends of the universe if he asked him too. His son was their people's military commander and had seen almost as much death and agony as he had, and he had lived to go on.

Their dark eyes met as his son stopped in front of him and gazed evenly at his father.

"All is ready father." He spoke quickly yet confidently.

"Our Intelligence is accurate then Joric? There can be no mistakes in this plan." He asked.

Joric nodded his head, "Completely father. His ship will arrive on Apo Prime within the week. Our people were able to bury this within some routine transmissions. She is showing more and more the signs of the Lunmai, and no one seems the wiser." He spoke holding up the small data pad. "The other information was easy enough to confirm."

“And they will not become any wiser because they have long forgotten the old ways and signs.” Chetak spoke. “I would be surprised if any were old enough that recognize what she is now going through. Let the grandson of Resumar enjoy it while he can, for when she reaches full phase she will become yours.”

“You are sure they will not protest this father?” Joric spoke.

Chetak shook his head. “They will do nothing. They have given choice to their females... and this wench will have chosen you Joric. Even they can not debate that with what they will see with their own eyes. Within two weeks you say?”

Joric nodded again. “If our contacts are correct she will come into full phase within two weeks of arriving on Apo Prime. He has been busy with the trappings of state attempting to learn all he can before arriving, and the fever burns in her now. Even her trysts with the Hadarian *upae* Queen are not curbing the fever.” (Bitch)

“And it will not curb the fever because she needs a male of her species to do that.” Chetak spoke with a sadistic grin. “Tablina delivered the serum to you?”

Joric nodded. “She told me what to do and when; at the greeting of dignitaries two days before the Acceptance Ceremony. Within hours the fever will burn so badly she will take any male that mounts her. And I intend to be that male. The three days prior to that, I will be giving her *tukanna lorev* on a number of things that we have discovered about her loyal King and lover. All the while conveniently being where she is scheduled to be.”

“And it will be gone from her system in hours?” Chetak spoke. “So I can offer them a sample of her blood before we take her back with us as further proof of her “choice” of mates.”

Joric nodded, “Completely undetectable and untraceable. It will do what it's designed to do and be gone from her system within hours, Tablina assured me of that. I am ready father.” He spoke calmly. “And I am not afraid.”

“You should be son.” He spoke softly. “You are going into the heart of our enemies' lands and realm of control. Do not take this lightly; I have waited far too long for my revenge.”

“Have I ever failed you father?” Joric asked.

He looked at his son. “No you have not.”

“Then trust in me now.” Joric said.

He turned and they began to walk back along the pier towards their massive home. “What of our petition for entry into the Union? That will be your cover.”

“It is on schedule father. Our contact within the Union Senate assures us it will be reviewed and passed within the next day or so. Well before I arrive. There will be an official ceremony welcoming us to the Union with a dozen other worlds the day after the King's Acceptance Ceremony. Here is where you would have been welcomed personally if we were still there.” Joric answered.

Chetak grinned. “They won't be welcoming me after what we intend, but by then it will be too late. All of our assets in the Union are secured correct?” Chetak asked. “We can not afford to lose them when we are finished. We will need them in the months ahead. They provide a great deal of the wealth we have now, especially for the other families. Everything must be in order.”

“Our people have covered our tracks well father.” Joric spoke. “I know these things concern you, but we have handled it. Will you tell the other families what we are doing?”

Chetak shook his head. “They will know only that she came in to Lunmai, and chose you as her mate. How we *helped* that *decision* to come to pass is not their concern.”

“We must keep that from them.” Joric spoke nodding his head. “They might become restless if they discover we are violating the very laws we profess to follow.”

Chetak laughed and squeezed his son's arm. “Good my son, you are learning what it takes to be a leader.” He said. “Contact our man within the Union Senate once more and insure everything is in place. I want no mistakes.”

“He assures us because of our petition we will be more than welcome father, but I will speak with him this night to confirm it to your satisfaction.” Joric replied. “An invitation will be waiting for me when I arrive. Do you think they will go through with it after what we do?”

“What choice do they have?” Chetak spoke. “They will lose face if it is not done soon after he returns. And once it is done, his hands will be further tied against any actions his revenge may push him towards,

especially because we will be part of their precious Union, at least for a time. And with the other things we have learned... they will not risk that information getting out.”

“You do still intend to release it don’t you father?” Joric asked.

“Of course I do. I plan to insure that he is brought to his knees in every way.” Chetak spoke.

“And the ultimate prize will be when we announce I have impregnated his precious former Queen with my offspring.”

“Excellent. You have done me proud my son. Make sure our ship is ready for departure the moment I see the look on his face and tell him we are taking his mate.” Chetak said. “I don’t want to spend anymore time on that foul planet than necessary.”

“There is one other thing father.” Joric spoke holding out the small holo imager. He activated it to reveal the image of the middle aged woman. “It has been confirmed she is alive and living on this planet Earth. Sparta... I believe the city is called. We already have a ship there. They arrived only two days ago to begin talks of trade and such. This world and system has a huge abundance of Talracian Ore. If we could somehow work a deal for this ore we can create near impervious armor for our ships with the forging method we have discovered. Rommna is handling the negotiations with the she-elfs the fool left in charge.”

Chetak nodded. “Now that *is* a find.” He spoke. “Make sure Rommna knows he is to acquire this ore no matter what. Pay what they ask... I don’t care. And if added persuasion is needed he is authorized to do so. Let us make our plans for the woman as well, but she can not be targeted until after our business on Apo Prime. Make that clear to Rommna as well.” He replied evenly. “Come... we will enjoy some entertainment before you have to depart to claim your new mate.”

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## ***LEONIDAS I***

“TWO WEEKS!” Martin snapped throwing the data pad across the private officer’s lounge and letting it smash against the bulkhead, “Two *nubou* weeks! I feel like I’m back in the Naval War College! My eyeballs are starting to hurt from reading!”

“Oh I remember those days.” Anja spoke softly looking at Seanna who was sitting along the wall near the food dispenser. Seanna matched her smile.

“Martin Leonidas... you will watch your language!” Gorgo snapped sternly from across the table.

Martin looked at her as Anja and Riall sat there and grinned. “What? What did I say?”

Gorgo looked at him oddly. “That... that word you just used. You don’t know what it means?”

Martin looked confused. “What word?”

Gorgo looked at Riall quickly. “You... you just used a word from our language.” She spoke, “Our people’s language. It hasn’t been spoken regularly in nearly six thousand years. The only people who can speak it now are the scholars and professors at the universities on Apo Prime and assorted other worlds, perhaps a few hundred Lycavorians at most.”

Martin looked at her. “So? You obviously speak it mother.”

Gorgo rolled her eyes. “I am a teacher at the main university Martin, when I’m not chasing you across the stars.”

“I said what I thought.” Martin told her. “And my opinion still stands! I want a break... I want to walk around the ship... meet the crew... talk to the crew... anyone besides these damn data pads! And I’d like to have the energy to do more than flop on my bed between my Queens and pass out if you get my drift!”

Riall nearly dropped the mug of coffee he was holding and Anja turned a bright shade of red. Gorgo glared at her mate as she got to her feet and moved to where her son stood. She reached up to touch his face.

“Martin this is all information you need to know.” She spoke.

“I realize that... but if my brain gets any more of this information I’m going to start walking around this ship singing twinkle twinkle little star.” Martin said.

Gorgo looked at him oddly. “What is that, a song of some kind?”

Martin opened his mouth to explain and then closed it, “Never mind.” He spoke. He moved back to the chair and slumped into it.

“There is much more to being a King than killing the enemy.” Gorgo spoke calmly. “You must be diplomatic and confident in what you say and do. There are over nine hundred species within the Union, all of them with their own traditions, their own cultures...”

“Yeah I know.” Martin spoke picking up the data pad and looking at Anja; her honey scent in the room was driving him mad. “We have the Tehi species... they live primarily underwater, their diet consists of mostly large kelp plants and they need an oxygen/nitrogen mixture to breath on land. Then we have the Rodnali species... who actually look like the dinosaurs from Earth’s past except they walk on two legs, which is scary to say the least if you have seen some of the dinosaurs they discovered after you left mother. They walk around with heat lamps over their bodies most of the time. Then we have the amphibian species the Icthyo... who are basically a less evolved race of reptilians who carry small rodents in their pockets to munch on at meetings!” Martin looked at Gorgo who was wearing an extremely stern expression on her face, her arms folded across her chest. “And last but certainly not least...” He looked back to Anja. “We have the bird race called the Ick... ickta... ah fuck it... the bird people! They don’t have any eyes, and they speak through their damn noses!” Martin tossed the pad to the desk and looked at his mother. “How the hell do you talk to someone who speaks through their nose? You ever talk to someone who speaks through their nose mother, cause I sure as hell haven’t.”

Anja couldn’t help herself now and burst out into a roaring laughter that soon had everyone in the room, including the usually very stoic Seanna laughing uproariously. Gorgo tried to keep a straight face and found she could not and she had to sit down on the edge of the desk and join the laughter as Martin slumped back into the chair a pouty expression on his face.

It took several moments for Gorgo to bring her laughter under control and regain her composure. She looked at her son in the chair and couldn’t help but notice the similarities to his father.

“You are so much like your father.” She said softly.

“Did you badger him endlessly with this kind of stuff?” Martin asked.

Gorgo smiled and nodded her head, “Every day.” She replied.

Martin got up and moved to the large window and gazed at the passing stars. They had just completed the jump through the gate and were now moving at a leisurely speed of three times the speed of light towards the new Gate.

Two weeks he had nothing to do but study diplomatic procedures and traditions; learning the financial status of the Union, the strength of their currency, treaties and alliances. The only times he had any interest were when he and Admiral Ceneu would go over the deployments of High Coven forces. They hadn’t tried to take any ground while the Union forces remained in their staging areas, and with only a few skirmishes along the borders and on several planets, there was no major combat going on. The Coven was probing, Ceneu had said.

Dysea spent almost all her time with Legsim and when she wasn’t with him, she was training with Isabella. Anja worked every day in the medical center with Seanna, normally reviewing medical files and new discoveries. Aricia was the only one who had relatively nothing to do, and even she was acting strange. All she wanted to do lately was jump his bones, and while Martin didn’t find that in any way wrong, it was becoming taxing. She was always prodding for more, even when she knew he had been knee deep in work throughout the day and part of the evening. He hadn’t been able to steal any time with any of them in the last week, usually not returning to their quarters until they were already asleep, and then leaving before they were up in the morning.

Martin felt his mother come up behind him and put her hand on his shoulder.

“Your father hated this as well Martin.” She said softly. “As did your grandfather if history is correct. That is what made them such good politicians.”

Martin looked at her. “What do you mean?”

“Your father always said something to your brother when he was preparing him for his Agoge.” Gorgo spoke. “Fight with your head...”

“Lead with your heart.” Martin finished. Gorgo nodded and smiled. [Mindvoice Shielded] I am terrified mother.

Gorgo glanced quickly at Anja. She immediately understood and got to her feet, motioning Riall and Seanna out of the room. Gorgo waited until the door closed behind them.

“What terrifies you Martin?” She asked.



“I’ve never been responsible for this many people.” He spoke, “So much balancing on my word, my actions. I’m not real sure I like that kind of power.”

“You have others who make decisions as well Martin. They will help you. Guide you.” Gorgo spoke. Martin nodded quickly. “And they will look to me too correct?”

Gorgo nodded. “Yes.”

“You see.” He spoke moving away from the window. “I can adapt and change without thinking; I’ve done it all my life. But this... I don’t want this power. I don’t want the futures of so many people teetering on my words. It’s too much power for one man.”

Gorgo smiled gently and stepped up to him. She took his face in her hands and kissed his forehead, “And that my son... that is why you will make a wonderful King.”

Martin looked at her. “Is that supposed to make me feel better?”

Gorgo shook her head. “No. But it is the truth.” She took his hand in hers. “This is important my son, but I have badgered you endlessly for two weeks now. I apologize for that. Go... do what you want today... spend time with your Queens. We will continue tomorrow.”

Gorgo couldn’t help but chuckle at the look in his eye as he bolted for the door.

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Anja laid on the bed, her naked flesh pressed against Martin’s, the sheet barely covering their cooling skin. Her Persian red hair was wildly askew, lying across her shoulder and part of his abdomen. The soft sheet covered only his waist and draped across her lower body halfway. She could feel the weight of Dysea’s body pressed up against her back, sleeping blissfully, while Aricia’s sleeping form was spread across half of Martin’s legs, his left hand stroking the skin of her shoulder.

She looked up into his face as her fingers traced the numerous scars on his abdomen and chest, his eyes closed but the rise and fall of his broad chest indicating to her that he was very much awake. His face was more relaxed than she had seen it in the past two weeks and he knew he was relaxing in the aftermath of what they had experienced the last three hours. Anja smiled as she inhaled deeply, her wolf nose picking up the scents of all of them mingled in the room, and the smell of sex lay heavy in the air. And incredible sex it had been.

The moment he had called to them after escaping his mother, they had responded as if the hounds of hell were on their heels. Their mate was calling them, and while they had been doing other things, they needed him just as much as he needed them. The last two weeks had been hard on all of them, and the moment they felt his aura sweep over them with its warmth, love and desire, they responded in kind. It had been hot and furious the past three hours, a tangle of bodies, lips and tongues, kisses and hands. He had taken all of them more than once, and they had taken him as well as each other. Anja smiled as the memories caused slight swells of pleasure to course through her still heated body. She knew it was due to her Hadarian genes that she wasn’t passed out in blissful contentment like Aricia and Dysea around them. The Hadarian part of her allowed her to recover almost as fast as Martin from physical exertion, even the sexual kind.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *What are you smiling at?* His deep voice filled her thoughts as he spoke only to her so as not to wake Aricia and Dysea.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I’m just thinking of how my life has turned out.* Anja answered. *Discovering all that we have discovered these past months, it’s kind of overwhelming. I do know what you are going through Marty. Feeling what I feel for you, for Aricia and Dysea. It drives me batty at times too, especially now with Seanna teaching me about what I can do?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *She seems competent.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Oh she is... no doubt about that. She looks at me... she looks at me like I’m some sort of godly person though. Her Queen... ultimate healer... sometimes she makes me uncomfortable. Not in a bad way... just strange.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Can you ask for another of these Mage Warriors?*

Anja shook her head. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Oh it’s not that Marty; she knows what she is about, don’t get me wrong. It’s just that... she’s almost childlike in her questions. How we met... what are you like... tell her about the battles on earth, stuff like that?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Why does she want to know about me?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *She wants to know about you because of me. I'm her Queen... and according to her she needs to know everything about me, and those I have around me.*

Martin rolled his eyes. [Mindvoice Shielded] *A baby Andreus I take it, until he grew out of it.*

Anja nodded. [Mindvoice Shielded] *A little yeah; I never had someone willing to die for me following me around everywhere I go until all of this happened. Now I have Seanna and Atropos.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Do you regret all of this Anja?*

Anja shook her head quickly. [Mindvoice Shielded] *I will never regret anything Martin, not one bit of anything that has happened.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I've always thought that I would be fighting all of my life until someone got lucky and took me out. Now I find out all of this and realize that I have to act like what I so came to hate working in the Navy.*

Anja nodded. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Seanna is no politician really. And she has told me far more than that Hadarian Ambassador I'll tell you that.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Anja...*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *They want me to keep secrets from you and the others Martin. Something to do with following what your grandfather did. Apparently there has never been a Hadarian King or Queen who is part wolf. They don't like the fact you and I are connected in that way.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Has Seanna done anything to...?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Oh it's not her.* Anja answered quickly. *I get the sense from her she is only interested in serving me in any way. She's never lied to me, that much I know... and...*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *What?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Aricia and I find her deliciously tasty.* She told him with a smile.

Martin looked at her his eyes going wide and then a smile played across his lips as well. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Man I've turned you two into a couple of sex hounds.*

Anja laughed within their connection and kissed his bare chest softly. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Maybe... or maybe you just unlocked something that was inside us all along.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Well... I'm not going to tell you how to go about that. That's way too far out of my realm.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *C'mon... tell me you don't find her in the least bit attractive.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I didn't say that.* He spoke with a smile. *She smells nice and I'd be lying if I didn't say taking a bite out of her isn't appealing, but that is something I'll never do. I don't need too. I have the three of you.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *You'll have Isabella too. I know Dysea has been spending a lot of time with her. She seems to be warming up to us.*

Martin nodded. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Something happened to her when she was still under her father's influence I think. Part of me wants to know what...part of me doesn't.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *So you don't have a problem if Little Wolf and I want to pursue Seanna in that way?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Why would I? You two are adults.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *We just wanted to be sure and didn't know how to approach you about that.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I'd have a problem if you wanted to jump Tezu's bones...*

Anja pinched his left nipple hard and saw him wince. [Mindvoice Shielded] *That's not even funny.* She spoke. *None of us would ever do that Martin. We love you too much. And you are our mate. I don't think we could.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I know... I was kidding.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *It wasn't funny.* She told him sternly.

Martin looked at her. [Mindvoice Shielded] *I'm sorry.* He spoke kissing her head. *Have you noticed anything different about her? Aricia I mean?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *You mean that she has been highly oversexed these last couple of weeks? Yeah... I noticed. Can't say I minded though.* Anja answered with a smile.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Her scent is different though.* Martin spoke. *It's sweeter lately, stronger.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I noticed that too. She had a medical check up before we left.*

Martin looked at her. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Medical checkup... what do you mean?*

Anja nodded. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Someone from the ship here called down and wanted to give her an exam. I went with her; there was nothing unusual about it. Just a Standard exam*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I didn't know that.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *It was standard stuff Marty, don't worry. She's fine.*

Martin looked at her. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Anja... they are your people. I will not tell you how to deal with them or treat them. If they ask you for something you are not comfortable doing... then don't do it. I will never break an agreement made by my grandfather, regardless of what it was. It appears he was far more politically astute than I will ever be.*

Anja nodded. [Mindvoice Shielded] *I'll see what they say when I talk to Tezu on Apo Prime. She told him. I understand that elf female pilot's father is rendezvousing with us tomorrow. For'mya is her name.*

Martin nodded. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Yeah... I don't know how well that's going to go over. Dysea is going to be with me for that one. It ought to be interesting.*

Anja's hand slid lower over his abdomen. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Then maybe we should make sure you are very relaxed.*

*What are you doing?*

*Oh... this and that.*

Martin closed his eyes as her soft hand began to stroke his hardening cock. *You have turned into a sex hound!*

Anja gasped herself as she felt the warmth of lips caress the inside of her leg. She glanced down quickly and saw Dysea's emerald green eyes gazing up at her from between her thighs with hunger in them.

*Yes she has!*

*We all have!* Aricia's voice sounded as her hand joined Anja's on Martin's now very hard shaft, and her body pressed up against his other side. *You do this to us!*

*Three on one! That's not fair odds!* Martin protested.

*You'll survive. You will be spent... but you will survive Nauta Melme.* Dysea spoke just before plunging her tongue into Anja's depths and seeing Anja and Aricia wrap their lips around Martin's cock.

Martin's eyes flew open at the first touch of their lips on his pulsing shaft and his hands dropped to their heads entwining his fingers in their silky hair.

Dysea was right. He was spent when they were done... five hours later... but he did survive.

## ASH FORK SETTLEMENT

### EARTH

"I don't know why you won't take my transmissions *Nya Istel*." Tarifa's voice filled her ears. "It's been almost three weeks since you left and I haven't received one reply from you. When I call they tell me you are out in the field. What have I done Aihola? Something is wrong and you need to tell me. I miss you Mistress." Aihola's eyes closed as Tarifa said that and she took a deep breath to ease the ache in her heart.

"We... we have begun the rebuilding projects my love. More and more new people arrive almost every day. Selene and I are meeting with Lycavorians today. Martin's people... but they aren't part of the Union. I wish you were here, you are better at reading people than I am. They seem friendly enough... but I..." Tarifa turned her head in the transmission and spoke to someone. She nodded and turned back. "I must go *Nya Istel*... please... if you care for me Aihola... please tell me what I have done wrong."

Aihola clicked off the disc and sat back on the bed, "Nothing my Tarifa." She whispered. "You have done nothing wrong."

"Why are you here Aihola?" The voice spoke.

Aihola turned her amber eyes toward the open door of the small apartment and she saw Hwia standing in the doorway. It had taken her this long to get the Drow Elder to call her by her name when they were alone, and now it seemed the woman wouldn't leave her alone.

"What do you mean?" Aihola asked as she tucked the transmission disc into her bag.

“What do I mean?” Hwia spoke as she entered the room. “You know very well what I mean.”

“This is where I belong Hwia.” Aihola spoke, “With my people.”

“Our people have always been called to challenge Aihola, and when the King offered them the opportunity for that in the stars, fully half our people took it. They saw him on that field that day and knew everything you had told us was true. Those of us that remain here are doing what we have always wanted to do. Live in peace and raise our children. There are almost no Drow warriors here; they are now in the stars above us in some distant place. You do not belong here child. You *belong* with her.” Hwia came fully into the room.

“I thought you didn’t approve of my relationship with Tarifa.” Aihola spoke getting to her feet.

“I didn’t... until I saw how much that woman loves you Aihola. Not as her Mistress... which you are, and she makes no bones about that... but as her soul mate. The two of you were meant to be together.” Hwia spoke. “What is holding you back from going to her? She needs you child; can you not hear it in her voice?”

“I hear it!” Aihola snapped. “And it rips my heart from me every time I hear her voice!”

“Then why?”

“Why?” Aihola said viciously. “I’ll tell you why. How do you tell the woman that you love more than your own life... your own breath that you took from her the man she loved?” Aihola screamed. “That you killed him! That you took the blood from his body that could have saved him. That I took it to save myself! So I would not... so I would not lose her!”

“You sound so sure that she loved this man Aihola.” Hwia spoke. “How do you know that?”

“He made her like him!” Aihola said. “He made her a wolf. I could see the joy in her eyes when she ran with him. The way she acted with him. I am not blind!”

“Then why does she send you two messages a day Aihola?” Hwia asked. “If she loved this man so... why are you the first thing she thinks of in the morning and the last thing she thinks of at night? I know that is when her transmissions to you come in, every day since you have been gone. And yet you do nothing.”

“I can’t face her!” Aihola said. “I can’t!”

“I have spoken with Lynwe in Eden City.” Hwia said. “I have also spoken with the senior medic under War Master Tareif.”

Aihola looked at her, “For what purpose?”

“You did not kill Dekton Aihola.” Hwia spoke.

“What do you know? You weren’t there!”

Hwia shook her head. “No I wasn’t. But I believe the reports filed by the medics that treated you and Tarifa, and the one that interned Dekton’s body. You took three pints of her blood Aihola, three. That’s how close to death you were. If she wasn’t an elf it’s very possible she would not have survived. When Dekton’s body was recovered it was discovered that one of the rounds that hit him took with it a large piece of his heart, and it fused open the wound so that his wolf healing system could not repair it. When you bit him Aihola, when he told you to take his blood, there was hardly any left in him for you to take.”

“That’s not true!” Aihola snapped.

Hwia held up the data pad. “Isn’t it? Here is the report, signed by Queen Anja herself. You know her better than I, would she have signed off on this if it was not the truth?” Aihola stood there silently. “Would she have?” Hwia snapped now.

“No!” Aihola answered. “Ok... no she wouldn’t have!”

Hwia held up the second data pad. “This is from Lynwe.” She said. “It is a request for me to talk with you and tell you that Tarifa isn’t eating, isn’t sleeping and is beginning to snap at people for no reason. The two of you are at your strongest when you are together child. You...”

“I am the Queen of the Drow!” Aihola snapped.

Hwia shook her head. “The Queen of the Drow would not act as you are acting. She would be strong and she would return to Eden City and claim what she knows is hers. She would not let this woman grieve to the point that it will kill her.” Hwia walked up to Aihola and took her hands. “Do you love this woman Aihola?”

Aihola nodded slowly her amber eyes moist. “Then act like the Queen you are and go to her. When you are together you are strongest, and that is what we need now. We need you, Tarifa and Selene at your very strongest so that we can rebuild this world how it was meant to be.” Hwia smiled to herself. “Never once in all my years would I have imagined the Drow would play such a large role in our future. Yet Selene is the submissive to Lynwe, and willingly so... not forced and without love, something that has been missing from

our people for centuries, but willingly and *with* love. It is no different than Tarifa is with you child. She needs you Aihola, just as you need her.”

“Will... will she forgive me Hwia?”

“If there was anything to forgive Aihola... she would do this in a heartbeat. But you carry a guilt that is not yours to carry. Tarifa knows that... you just need to realize that for yourself, and the only way you will realize that is to go to her and let her show you.”

“I will... I will need a Raptor.” Aihola spoke. “There... I sent mine back.”

Hwia smiled. “I know... that is why I recalled it.”

Aihola turned and saw Cathy appear in her doorway, beginning to show the first signs of her pregnancy, and looking radiant. Cathy smiled and waved, “One way service to Eden City sitting on the pad.” She spoke with a smile.

Aihola looked at Hwia. “You...”

“Go claim what is yours my Queen. Bring her back here... just the two of you so that you both can heal and we can move forward. Or better yet... go to Sparta. I understand it is beautiful there and you need time for just the two of you, if only a few days.” Hwia spoke. “All you need do; is follow what is in your heart.”

Aihola nodded. “I have been such a fool.”

“Three minutes after you say the word Aihola, we’ll be airborne!” Cathy spoke.

“Wait... you... you can still fly?” Aihola spoke looking at her.

Cathy laughed. “What... this?” She asked putting her hand on her slightly swollen belly. “If I stopped flying because of this I would drive Leland absolutely crazy at home; its twins by the way... boys. Leland practically fell out of his chair he was so happy. They will be the first children born in Eden City from an elf and a human. Endith and Tina have started helping Ben to get our air power back up training new pilots and he figured I could use the training time on Raptor since I’ve been flying transports for so long. Go figure.”

Aihola looked at Hwia. “Thank you Hwia.”

Hwia smiled. “Go! Go claim your mate Aihola, Queen of the Drow.” She spoke.

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## LEONIDAS I

“Do not bring up what role For’mya is fated to play in his life in the future.” Gorgo told L’tian.

L’tian looked at her, his dark eyes hard.

He was the senior elfin ambassador and politician in the Union at nearly five thousand years old. He was a average height, his sandy blond hair cut short, the immaculately trimmed beard and mustache giving him a distinguished look. He was also very angry at the moment.

“He has a need to know!”

Gorgo looked at him quickly. “He does not need to know that right now!” She snapped. “He is struggling with trying to learn so much more that he will need to know as King, and that is a burden he does not need to bear now!”

“It is not a burden! It is something that was started by Resumar and the remaining elf leaders long before you ever returned to our people Gorgo and...”

Gorgo stepped forward quickly and was in his face in a moment. “Do not attempt to relate our history to me L’tian!” She barked angrily. “I spend days teaching our history to our children. Elf children as well... and I know it far better than you. It is well known your daughter has no desire to take the position you feel she must. It is you who pushes this forward, not her!”

“It is her station!” L’tian hissed.

“No! It is a station you are forcing her into. A station your people forced Resumar to take for some reason which I can not fathom.” Gorgo spat. “Resumar did not want it... but he accepted it because it was what your people wanted and it was a way for him to honor the Royal family that the Coven took from you. Now... now you use it as a means to garner favor among the Senate, using the position your daughter does not want to influence decisions and policy.”

“How dare you...”

“I dare because it is the truth!” Gorgo spoke.

Riall stepped forward quickly. "Gorgo perhaps this is not..."

"No Riall... this is exactly the time." Gorgo spoke. "Your insistence on this ridiculous position has turned your daughter into an arrogant spoiled child L'tian. She is the finest *STRIKER AT* pilot we have, of that there is no doubt, but she is pompous and has no care for others feelings or position."

"You should speak with care of my daughter Gorgo." L'tian spoke his voice low, and angry.

"I will speak of your daughter however I wish!" Gorgo spat, "Because it is the truth. Do you want to know of her actions in the Battle for Earth L'tian? We discovered another female elf pilot, an elf pilot that happened to *teach herself* how to fly one of the *STRIKERS* we left on Earth. And not just any pilot, but the pilot of the King. And she could not only fly it, but make it do things your daughter could not imagine. She watched the man she loved shot down in front of her very eyes. He was later recovered and found alive, but your daughter's first action was not to console this fellow elf, but to berate her for flying her *STRIKER* better than her! That is what your ambitions have turned your daughter into!"

"And now she is a prisoner of the Coven for being forced to take part in a wild mission thought up by one of Isabella's vampire soldiers! A mission that she should not have been involved in! She's a pilot, not a ground soldier." L'tian replied heatedly. "I came here to deliver a message from the elfin delegation, and I will deliver that message."

"So let's hear this message." Martin's voice echoed from behind them, causing all of them to turn quickly and see him standing there. Dysea stood beside him, her platinum blond hair shiny in the light and holding tightly to his hand.

L'tian did a double take when he saw Martin, not only because of his resemblance to King Resumar, but because of his sheer size. Dysea looked tiny compared to him. Gorgo stepped around him quickly.

"Martin this is something that..." She started.

"No mother." Martin spoke slowly. "I want to hear what the ambassador has to say. He seems to be very passionate about it."

L'tian took a deep breath and glanced at Gorgo before speaking, ignoring her look of warning. "I have come here to advise you my King that that the elfin delegation to the Union will attend your Acceptance Ceremony with great pleasure and honor."

"But?" Dysea spoke now, her anger visible.

L'tian ignored her as well, not taking his eyes from Martin. "However... we will not recognize the female elf you have made a wolf as Queen until my daughter is returned to the Union alive and unharmed. If she is killed... we will hold you responsible for this and further action will be taken in regards to that determination at a later time."

Gorgo's eyes were wide, as were Riall's, "L'tian how dare you come here and threaten him in this way!" Gorgo gasped. "This is totally improper and uncalled for!"

L'tian looked at Gorgo. "Is it?" He snarled. "My daughter has been captured by the High Coven because she was on the ship that he let escape. He gave them permission to leave in fact! He let them leave because the High Coven Princess he once shared a bed with was on that ship!"

"That is not true!" Dysea snapped coming forward.

"How did you discover that?" Riall demanded coming forward as well.

"How I discovered it is of no matter." L'tian replied. "That I have discovered it is what is important. You were going to keep this fact from everyone weren't you? Hide the fact that our King once shared a bed with the Vampire High Lord's oldest daughter Yuri? How do you think that will look?"

"I will have you arrested for..." Gorgo started.

"Thank you Ambassador!" Martin spoke firmly, his voice carrying over everyone.

"*Nauta Melme* he..."

L'tian looked at Dysea when she spoke and his eyes darted to Martin. "Bounded love?" He said turning to Gorgo. "She does not know either does she?"

"Know what?" Dysea spoke.

"You..."

Martin stepped up close to L'tian stopping him from speaking. "Ambassador... you have delivered your message. Thank you. I'm sure we'll discover exactly what this is all about when you leave."

"I wish to be here for that." L'tian spoke.

“What you will do is leave now Ambassador L’tian.” Martin said. “I’m not giving you a choice.”

Dysea pulled on his arm. “*Nauta Melme...*”

“I’m fine *Melda Min.*” He replied his eyes never leaving L’tian. “Good day Ambassador L’tian. It’s been a pleasure to meet you.”

L’tian held his gaze with Martin for a moment longer and then bowed his head. “Very well sire. I will take my leave of you now. I will contact you when you arrived on Apo Prime.”

Martin took a deep breath as L’tian walked out of the room, calming his anger and feeling Dysea’s aura sweep over him soothing him as well. He opened his eyes as the door slid shut and he looked at his mother.

“Perhaps you had better explain to me what exactly is going on here mother.” Martin spoke. “That way... when I lose my temper... I’ll know whose ass to take a big old bite out of.”

Gorgo and Riall could both sense the simmering anger under the surface and the fact that Martin was keeping it very tightly controlled. Dysea however was not.

“Yes.” Dysea spoke now. “I would like to know what is going on as well and quickly... for my patience is much shorter than *Nauta Melme’s.*”

Gorgo looked at them and pointed into the conference room. “You had better sit down.”

“Why do I get the feeling we ain’t gonna like what you are going to tell us?” Martin spoke.

Gorgo met his eyes, “Because you won’t.”

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[Mindvoice Shielded] *For’mya child?*

For’mya groaned on the small metal bench cot she was curled up on. Her entire body ached, and she was weak from loss of blood. Dried blood dotted her skin around her nostrils and the corners of her lips where they had broken her nose and she had bitten into her own lips to keep from crying out when she tried to move too soon after her body had healed itself.

This time it had been the Princess and her vampire lover. Moran had beaten her before, but this was different. With the Yuri watching, he had taken great joy in landing blow after blow to her bruised body. She still retained the bruises over her dark eyes because they wouldn’t let her fully heal before beating her again. Then they had both fed on her, their vile faces on either side of her slim neck, their fangs biting deep until For’mya was near death. They had rutted like two savages in front of her as she lay there on the floor so close to the edge. It felt like hours had passed, her body healing the broken bones and cuts inflicted on her by his large fists, but the bruising remained.

These last two weeks the only peace For’mya had gotten was talking with Arzoal. Twice the High Coven Princess had tried to delve into her mind and twice she was repulsed, the last time causing her to have a splitting headache for two days. For’mya had paid for that, but it did two things for her. It gave her satisfaction and it proved to her that Arzoal was indeed a friend and helping in however she could.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *They... they beat me again Arzoal. I... I hurt all over.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Child... I am so sorry I could not do more for you.*

For’mya groaned as she shifted on the metal cot. [Mindvoice Shielded] *You are helping... helping to protect my mind.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I wish I could do more my child.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *You... you are here with me now. Is... is he coming Arzoal?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I can not penetrate his psychic shields For’mya. They are far too powerful for me to do that. I can detect only his surface thoughts, and even those are closely guarded. I am sorry child... I can not reveal myself to him until the time is right, and that is many months from now.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I don’t... I don’t know if I will be able to stand much more of this Arzoal.* For’mya spoke. *Soon my... my body will not be able to heal. They... they are taking me to Laxnis II Arzoal. I can’t remember. I think that is what I overheard them say.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *This is not good I take it.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *It... it is a prison planet. High Coven Immortals run it Arzoal. Do you know...*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I know what the Immortals are child.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Arzoal... they will... they will rape me, over and over. It is how they... how they break female elf prisoners. Arzoal... I don’t think I can stand that. I am strong... but... but not that strong.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Those... those who follow him draw close For'mya. You must be strong child. He will not... he will not abandon you.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Arzoal... I don't... I don't want to be his plaything. He has... he has an elf Queen. He does... he does not need me.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *But he does child. As will the two Queens that accompany him in finding you. One you have met... the second you will meet. You and they have drawn closer to where my physical body is child and I am not as strained when I reach out now. I may not be able to touch him, but I have touched others close to him and those who would be his Queens. Would you like to see the man whose destiny you will be a part of?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *It... it won't change my mind Arzoal.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Perhaps not... perhaps it will. It is something you should know however.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I'll do anything to forget the pain Arzoal.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Let your mind be free For'mya. Let me show you the King as others see him.*

---

“What kind of political fallout can we expect if the elf delegation does this Deia?” Gorgo asked.

They sat in the conference room, Anja, Aricia and Isabella now with them as well as Gorgo and Riall. Gorgo had contacted Deia to get some sort of feel for what was happening on Apo Prime.

Deia shook her head. “I truly don’t know.” She replied. “The elf delegation has never done something like this before. L’tian has them in an uproar. He played on their connection to the past, their sense of honor, and he did a damn fine job of it. If they do not recognize Dysea as Queen, people will want to know why... demand to know why... and then everything will come out.”

Aricia sat to Martin’s right, the place it appeared that all of them had decided she would sit whether consciously or unconsciously. Anja sat to her right while Dysea sat to Martin’s left and Isabella to her left. The picture of the four of them there like that struck Gorgo for some reason.

Aricia and Anja wore angry expressions, obviously because they were the two more emotional of her son’s mates, while Dysea and Isabella were gazing at the data pad that sat on the table between them. It was For’mya’s military background and history.

“I don’t understand why it matters?” Aricia asked the question. “Why should anything Martin did before he discovered who he truly was matter to anyone? It does not matter to us.”

“Respectively Lady Aricia... all of you... including Isabella would now be considered biased.” Deia answered. “There are many species within the Union... many powerful species that were very nearly wiped out by the Coven. Many that suffered horribly under their thumb. Those species are not as forgiving or understanding as those of us in this room. To be honest... all of us are entering uncharted waters here.”

Martin looked at her. “Why?”

“Sire... there has never been an elf Queen, or a Hadarian Queen... or for that matter ... more than one Queen. You must remember... your grandfather King Resumar was the one and only official and recognized King of the Union. Eliana was his Queen and For’mya’s ancestor was the King’s concubine.”

“Is this a ploy by the elves to replace Dysea?” Riall spoke.

“That will never happen.” Martin growled, “Never! I don’t care what anyone says or does. They can all have a *nubou gai lozen* for all I care!” (Fucking heart attack)

Deia’s eyes went wide as Martin got to his feet in anger, and Dysea felt a surge of love through her. Not from Martin himself, but from the feeling that his words caused in her.

“Sire... you can speak... Milord... please it was not my intent to...” Deia stammered along before Gorgo shook her head.

“Deia... I will explain that later... but he is not angry with you.” She spoke. “This is all overwhelming for him.”

“Overwhelming?” Martin spoke calmly. “No... this isn’t overwhelming to me. It’s a big *anse tegra rie daanth* if you ask me.” (Damn waste of time)

“Milord...” Deia started.

“No... no one will dictate to me!” Martin spat. “I was going to find his daughter anyway. Preferably alive since I’m the one who got her there in the first place, but if I need to make sure she is eliminated to protect what secrets we have you can damn well bet that is what I will do! You can tell L’tian and the elfin delegation



that! Let them suck on that for a while! With the exception of the people in this room with me now, and a very few others, everyone I have ever come across in my life has manipulated me in some fashion! It stops now! I don't want or need a concubine, period."

"Sire... it is written into our constitution. There will always be a female elf bound to the Lycavorian King in this manner." Deia spoke softly. "You have no choice. To attempt to not honor this would be the most devastating loss of face and honor to the elves that our people could ever do. Not to mention the ripples it will cause across the Union."

"*Sibfla!*" Martin swore again and turned to look out the observation window. "And I'm not even King yet."

"That... that is not entirely true either sire," Deia spoke as all eyes turned to her image. "I had nothing to do with this, and I was out voted, but the moment word was received that you killed Xerxes, the full Union Senate voted and unanimously swore you in as King in absentia of your presence on Apo Prime." She told them. "The Acceptance Ceremony... while an official function that is required... is only a formality now sire."

"*Nauta Melme* do you love me?" Dysea asked turning to look up at him.

"Dysea!" All the other women in the room gasped at once.

Martin turned and looked into her emerald eyes. "Don't even go there." Martin said. "I know that look and I won't allow it."

"Neither will I." Aricia snapped.

"Nor will I." Isabella spoke quickly.

Dysea smiled and got to her feet. "I was not going to say what you think." She spoke with a smile. "I would never let that happen either."

"Then what were you going to say?" Martin asked cautiously.

"When we reach Apo Prime..." She said, "After the Acceptance Ceremony. Allow Bella and I to join Yuriko in the search for For'mya."

"Why?" Martin asked.

"As much as your heart yearns to go... you can not. Your duties will not permit it. I am not so limited however. The Recognition Ceremony for Queens is not for at least six months Prime Minister, is that not correct?"

Deia nodded slowly, surprised that she knew that. "Yes Milady."

Dysea nodded. "Then we have the time we need. When we find her... we call you... we rescue her and the problem is solved."

"The problem is not solved." Martin spoke. "I don't want a concubine! That's a big problem."

Dysea stepped closer to him, placing her hands on his chest while he looked around the room.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Nauta Melme look at me.*

Martin did and Dysea smiled. [Mindvoice Shielded] *There is something about this she-elf that draws at you, as it draws at me and Bella. We have talked of it between us. And it is not just because you feel responsible for her capture.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I don't know what it is.* He spoke softly. *It's... it's a feeling nothing more. Like something is floating on the edge of my shields, just out of reach.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *The same feeling that Bella and I have Nauta Melme and we don't know why. I am not afraid Nauta Melme. I have your love... we have your love. That is all the strength we need. I sense For'mya needs all the strength she has and more. We can give it to her.*

Martin looked at Isabella and she nodded her head almost as if knowing what Dysea was talking with him about. [Mindvoice Shielded] *We will do it your way for now Melda Min. But I will not guarantee anything. And I will allow no one to separate us. Aricia and Anja would never allow it and I don't believe Bella would either.*

Dysea nodded slowly and reached up to kiss his lips softly. "That is all we ask."

"Would someone care to let us know what you two were just talking about?" Gorgo asked slightly stunned at the ease with which they were able to block even her strongest of probes. It was as if they just casually disregarded her. It was the case with all of them, and that now included Isabella. She had tried on dozens of occasions to see if she could breach the psychic shields they put up when they spoke privately among

each other, if only to try and measure their power. None of her attempts had succeeded, and she could almost feel the humor they felt at her attempts now. That above all else surprised and frightened her.

“No.” Martin and Dysea spoke at the same time as Anja, Aricia and even Isabella rose and moved around them.

Martin looked at Deia. “Prime Minister, please continue with your preparations as normal. We will be arriving in three days. We will talk more then.”

Deia nodded, “As you wish sire.”

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Isabella swept her finger across the small map chart on the wall in her quarters. “Yuriko reports they are two weeks from Uryias Two. She is limiting their LSD jumps so as not to draw attention to her that they do not need.”

Dysea nodded slowly. “How long will she need to be on the surface of this world before she knows something?”

Isabella shrugged gently. “With the amount of Riyal or Ducat she can spread around now, I would estimate a few hours at most before she has a solid lead. If that information leads to Laxnis II, which I believe it will, we can rendezvous easily within two days of her message along the border here. Then it would just a matter of crossing this small portion of the Wilds and three days in Coven territory to the planet.”

“Why this world?” Dysea asked. “It seems awful close to Lycavorian territory.”

“Three reasons actually. Laxnis II is one of the most secure prisons that the Coven has.” She replied. “Defensive platforms and a full legion of my father’s Immortals to provide security. That does not include the prison staff. It is also the oldest of their prisons... and if it were to fall... my father would not be overly upset. We have not taken it before now because the cost did not outweigh what we would get out of it.” Isabella looked at her. “It is also the closest prison that specializes in breaking elves, specifically female elf pilots that are captured during battles.”

Dysea met her eyes evenly. “So it is not a vacation spot then?” She spoke with a smile.

Isabella chuckled softly. “No... it is not.” She said.

Dysea stood up and looked around her quarters slowly. They were immaculate and well kept; several holo images of Apo Prime and another planet on the walls and small tables. “In the almost three weeks since we have been on this ship Bella... you have never invited me to your quarters.”

“I did not think that Martin would want what we are planning to be public knowledge.” Isabella spoke. “I have full access to map charts and intelligence. It is better if we plan this outside the normal channels.”

“Yes I know.” Dysea spoke looking at her. “I just like getting another view of you Bella, and your quarters offer that view.”

Isabella stood up fully now away from the table. “They are Spartan in nature.” She spoke.

“Actually... I was going to say cozy.” Dysea said.

“My home on Apo Prime I have furnished with many items I purchased at the markets.” Isabella offered quickly. Hopefully... she realized with a startling revelation.

“I would like to see them Bella.” Dysea spoke moving closer to her. “But you won’t need them. You will live with us.”

“Dysea...” Isabella spoke. “I...”

“Why do you resist what your heart tells you?” Dysea asked softly. “I know you want too Bella. I can smell it all over you, but you fight it with every ounce of your being. Why? Does the thought of being with me... with Martin... is that so repulsive to you?”

Isabella met her emerald green eyes and found they were bringing down the last of her fading resistance quite easily. This elf female had made Isabella feel things she had never wanted to feel before now. Dysea accepted her completely for who she was, with no distaste in her beautiful eyes, no revulsion, and certainly no distrust. They had spent every waking minute when she wasn’t with Martin together, whether it be training or just eating and talking. She had discovered much about Dysea... and even more about herself. What she found most shocking about all of it was that she no longer found the idea of having this elf female in her bed disgusting. In fact... the previous night she had even dreamed of them together and it had been the most incredibly erotic dream of her life, especially after Martin had joined them in that same bed. Isabella knew there

was no way Dysea's wolf aura could affect her as it did Martin and Aricia and Anja. She was a vampire and immune to the effects that they could produce in a chosen mate of the Lycavorian species, yet standing so close to Dysea now she had no doubts the she-elf was affecting her, in the desire that gripped her belly for this platinum blond beauty.

"Dysea I..."

Isabella's eyes flew open when she felt Dysea's soft lips close over her own. They grew even wider when she felt Dysea's tongue probing against her teeth and she relented without thinking. The moment Dysea's warm tongue touched her own, Isabella's vampire Princess Façade melted away in a blink. Her hands gripped Dysea's arms and pulled her tighter, kissing her back hungrily, desperately, and she deepened the kiss when she heard Dysea moan in delight and press her body closer.

Isabella drank in the taste of Dysea's sweet lips, feeling the crush of her breasts against her own, the lithe firmness of her legs as they wrapped slowly around her hip. Sensations like she had never known surged through her, wrapped around her.

And then they were gone.

Dysea stepped back quickly, her face flushed and her heart racing, that much Isabella could hear, even without her vampire hearing. "Bella... Bella I'm so sorry." She gasped. "I didn't... I didn't want to pressure you! Not... not this way!"

Isabella gripped the side of the chart table as she looked at Dysea with wide hazel/green eyes, fighting to bring the surging pleasure in her body under control. She saw Dysea curse under her breath and begin to turn to leave her quarters.

"Dy... Dysea... wait?" She spoke quickly, not wanting her to leave.

Dysea stopped and Isabella could see her exhale heavily. "I'm sorry Bella." She said finally. "I let my desire for you overrule my brain. It was foolish of me. I will leave you now and not bother you again."

Isabella blurred in motion, using her vampire speed to move around in front of Dysea, and taking her hand, stopping her from touching the panel by the door. Dysea looked at her and Isabella saw the small tears in her eyes.

"You... you are crying Dysea. Why?"

Dysea chuckled and wiped her eyes. "*Nauta Melme* told me not to rush how I feel with you. That you... that you needed time to weigh in your mind what I wanted from you... and what you were able to give." Dysea looked at her. "I should have listened to him."

"Martin... Martin told you that?" Isabella asked incredulously.

Dysea nodded. "You'd be surprised how philosophical he can be sometimes. But only when he is in a very serious mood." She said with a smile.

"When... when did he tell you that?" Isabella asked.

"The day after you came into our lives," Dysea replied immediately.

"Dysea... you had only... you had only known me for a day." Isabella spoke.

"No... we've known you for far longer than that Bella." Dysea answered softly. "Since the moment *Nauta Melme* discovered who he truly was we've known. All of us have."

"Known what?"

"That you would be with us," Dysea spoke, "That you would share our lives with us."

"Dysea... I am a... I am a vampire." Isabella said.

Dysea's eyes narrowed in confusion. "What the hell does that have to do with anything?" She asked. "We can not explain what we feel for each other Bella. We have stopped trying. It just is. *Nauta Melme* loves all of us Bella... all of us... even you, though Little Wolf holds a part of him we can not because she is full wolf like him. That has not stopped her from loving us. It has not stopped *Melyanna* and I from loving her. You became part of that when you received this." Dysea touched the Shi Viska bridle under the thick sleeve of the body armor she wore. "And I knew that I would be with you, just as *Melyanna* and Little wolf share something special together, I hoped so would we. I ruined that with my actions just now, and I am so very sorry."

"Dysea... I don't know if... I don't know if I can open my heart like that." Isabella spoke. "I have never... I have never allowed anyone into my heart. Not since... not since my father killed my mother in front of me."

Dysea smiled and reached up to stroke her cheek. "I know Bella. I understand, truly I do."

“Dysea... I don’t want you to go.” Isabella spoke the words that felt so right. “Stay with me. Let me show you... let me show you who I am, if only a little at a time.”

Dysea’s smile was bright as she took Isabella’s hand and brought it to her cheek. “Oh you don’t know how happy that makes me Bella.”

“I will... I will make us some tea.” Isabella spoke. “Then perhaps I can show you who I am. And we can go from there.”

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### EDEN CITY

*Come to me Tarifa my slave; my love.*

Tarifa’s head came up from the data pad she was reading, looking around the table at the others who sat with her. They had just completed a meeting with Administrator Coren, who was now walking around like a man who had won a great prize. He had cause to be happy, as he had gained approval from his company for what Tarifa and Selene had offered to them for the rebuilding of Earth, and even now, hundreds of ships were moving to Earth to begin the construction. As a side bonus for him, and to show him that whatever had happened in the past with elves, he would be treated fairly and more importantly first as far as Tarifa was concerned, and to prove that to him she had obtained Panos’s permission to use a *STRIKER* to transport Coren to Sparta for a two day stay in one of the more refined hotels Sparta had. Coren had stayed in much better facilities, but the gesture had the desired effect, and Coren was now very pleased with himself.

*I have... I have been such a fool Tarifa.*

Tarifa looked at Selene who was talking animatedly with Treblar and Senator Dilios who had come in for the official signings of the contracts. Selene detected her agitated state and looked up.

“Tarifa... are you all right?” She asked.

Tarifa met her eyes. “Yes... I must be hearing things that’s all.”

*Can you find it in your heart to forgive me?*

Tarifa turned her head. *Nya Istel?*

“Tarifa... the Lycavorians are still requesting a meeting.” Selene spoke holding out the pad to her. “Do you want to schedule them for tomorrow? Tarifa...?” Selene turned her head again.

*Can you forgive me for Dekton Tarifa? I do not wish... I do not want to lose you.*

*Nya Istel... I... I never blamed you for Dekton’s death! Why would you think such a thing? Is that... is that why you have been gone from me? Is that why you have stayed away?*

*I took the man you loved away from you Tarifa. Aihola’s voice spoke. I could see the joy in your... in your eyes... when you would run with him, when you would look at him. It broke my heart to know I took that from you.*

*Nya Istel... Nya Istel I have never blamed you for Dekton’s death. We loved him... you loved him and he loved us. With all that he was. What we shared was wonderful... but there is no blame to place here. He died protecting what he loved. He died protecting us. He would not want us apart Aihola. He knew we were strongest together.*

*He made you like him Tarifa.*

*And the half of you that is not vampire is now wolf because of him. Nya Istel you are carrying something you should not carry. He... he was a Spartan Aihola. He would have given everything of himself to see us succeed. You know this as well as I.*

Selene turned and saw Tarifa sitting there at the table, as if lost in thought. She turned her eyes onto the large glass partition that separated them from the Command Center itself. Slowly, she let the smile wash across her face slowly and she held out her hand to cover Dilios’s rough palm. As he looked up at her he saw her eyes began to look out the conference room window, searching the command center through the massive glass partition. Then she saw her, blending into the shadows of the corner near the door.

*I miss him Tarifa. And you are the one person in my life who understands and I have pushed you away. I don’t want this hole in my... in my heart when you are not with me.* Aihola spoke.

Tarifa got to her feet slowly. *Nya Istel... please... come back to me. I need you Aihola, just as much as you need me. We can not go on without each other. Dekton would not want us apart.*

“Tarifa...?” Selene spoke softly, seeing Tarifa’s head turn quickly to look at her. She motioned into the Command Center with her head and Tarifa followed her gaze through the large glass partition. Her sapphire eyes blossomed to bright orbs when she saw Aihola step fully from the shadows.

“Mistress!” Tarifa gasped tossing aside the data pads in her hands and knocking her chair over to get out of the room.

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That had been four hours ago, and now Tarifa lay in the arms she had so wanted to feel around her body. Her raven hair was splayed across Aihola’s chest, her head resting on her firm breasts, their bodies pressing together in all the right places. It had felt like eternity without Aihola beside her, her sweet cherry blossom scent filling her nostrils. They had barely made it back into their temporary apartment before they were disrobing each other. There would be no Mistress/Slave roles tonight, Aihola had told her. It was simply two souls who had been injured and needed to heal. They had made each other scream for hours, the combination of Tarifa’s wolf genes and Aihola’s vampire and wolf hybrid genes allowing them to recover faster and continue to enjoy each other.

Tarifa traced Aihola’s firm abdomen with her finger, smiling as she saw Aihola inhaled a gentle breath and shudder in desire at her touch. “There was nothing anyone could have done *Nya Istel.*” She spoke softly now. “You were near dead when I find you. What little blood you took from Dekton would not have mattered had we not gotten to you when we did.” Tarifa lifted her head and turned to look into Aihola’s amber eyes. Eyes she had wanted to see looking on her for over a month. “He took one of those blasts through his chest. It destroyed his heart. When... when he told you save yourself... there was hardly anything left within him to give you my love. What you took from him... it... it allowed you to live until I reached you.”

Aihola nodded. “I know... Hwia told me. I didn’t want to believe it... my mind was playing tricks on me.” She reached out and brushed some strands of raven hair from Tarifa’s face. “Perhaps he knew that Tarifa.” She spoke. “And that is why he did it. He knew... he knew it was enough to last until you came for me.”

“When I was running and you saw me smiling and happy... it was because I knew you were beside us Aihola.” Tarifa spoke. “I loved him *Nya Istel...* just as you did... and it was so very special... but... but we need to go on now. I will miss him... terribly... but I will have you to reach for and help me to heal.”

Aihola slid her body lower on the bed and took Tarifa’s hands in her face, tears rolling down her cheeks. “I know that now... I do. And I will have you as well... to help me. Will you forgive me for...?”

“There is nothing to forgive Mistress.” Tarifa spoke placing her finger to Aihola’s lips.

Aihola shook her head, “No... not tonight my love. I just want it to be us, No roles... no games... just us. I just want to sleep and feel you in my arms when I roll over, and when I wake in the morning, I want us to go forward together. Dekton... Dekton would have wanted that I think. That is what I have so desired for weeks Tarifa; I just have not had the strength to face it until now.”

“You carried a blame you had no right to carry.” Tarifa spoke. “Dekton would have been very upset with you Mistress for being so... so stubbornly Drowish.”

Aihola laughed for the first time in weeks and as she did she could feel the guilt and pain begin to slowly ebb from her heart and her mind. This is what she had needed all this time, to lay in Tarifa’s arms and allow them to heal.

Together.

Tarifa’s smile was wide and beautiful and she snuggled her taller body against her Drow Mistress and pushed her face into the shimmering white hair nodding her head. “Don’t let go *Nya Istel.* Don’t ever let go of me again.”

As Aihola wrapped her arms around Tarifa’s shoulders she closed her eyes. “That is something I will never do. Never.”

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Martin leaned close to Aricia and nuzzled her neck gently, her lavender coco scent saturating his nostrils. She smelled so much sweeter the last few days, and he had feasted on her many times in that period. It was almost as if she had an endless supply of sexual energy driving her. He gazed down the front of the pale blue gown that adorned her body, and felt a tug in his belly.

The dress was identical in every way to what Anja and Dysea wore except for the color. Aricia's was a pale blue that stood out in contrast to her deep tan and raven black hair. It also brought out the brightness in her eyes, not to mention the luscious soft red of her lips. The dress was cut in such a way that it wrapped around her throat and fastened in the back on her neck, sweeping under her arms and across her firm breasts. It then cut downward, leaving much of her abdomen bare before coming back together and sweeping to the floor. The coral red necklace she had made for all of them fell between the wrapped valleys of her breasts and made her that much more enticing to look at. He inhaled deeply of her scent, bent close to her ear and felt her smile and lean into him, fidgeting on the balls of her feet.

"What's wrong Little Wolf? You seem anxious." He spoke softly. "And you smell sweeter than you have the last few days."

"I am." She replied with a smile "Anxious to have you get me back to our room and take me." Aricia replied with a seductive grin.

Martin's eyes grew a little wider. "We had six hours last night Aricia." He spoke.

"All we had was six hours my love," She spoke. "Your stamina is sorely lacking wolf if that was enough for you."

Martin looked at her as she said that his eyes confused. The ramp to the *STRIKER AT* lowered as they stood in the landing bay of the *LEONIDAS I* and he watched as Aricia started for it almost immediately. Anja came up next to him wearing an identical dress, only pure white in color. Martin noticed Seanna standing directly behind her with a dress of similar design and light green in color.

"Anja... have you... have you noticed anything strange about Aricia the last day or two?" Martin asked softly.

"You mean that all she wants to do is have sex?" Anja answered just as softly. "Yes I have noticed it. She almost bit my head off early last evening when I told her I was too tired and needed to get ready for today."

Martin looked at her. "You're kidding right?"

Anja shook her head. "Maybe she's just excited and has nothing to do." Anja spoke. "I mean we weren't complaining for the whole trip when she got like this, and it was very fun."

"I know... but her scent is a lot sweeter and much more pungent than any other time since I've known her, except for that first night with her in Eden City. I could smell it then too, but no where near as strong." Martin spoke.

"Sire... we have to go." Andreus's voice spoke from behind them.

Anja looked at him and squeezed his hand. "We'll figure it out later Martin, don't worry." She spoke leaning up to kiss him softly.

Martin nodded. "I guess."

They headed for the ramp of the *STRIKER AT*.

## **TWO HOURS LATER**

That conversation was now long forgotten.

They had stood there on the military landing pad near the main spaceport and listened to the clapping and cheers for nearly an hour. It was very nearly overwhelming as close to four million people had crammed into the immediate area to catch a glimpse of the Covenslayer; the son of Leonidas, the grandson of Resumar.

Their King.

Martin had lost count of the number of humanoid and non-humanoid species he had shaken hands, paws, tails or whatever they had with. When they had finally reached the hover lift transport that would take them to the Apo Prime Senate Gardens Martin thought his arm was going to fall off.

Aricia sat across from Martin for that ride, as Gorgo had taken the seat to his right while Prime Minister Deia had sat on his left. Anja and Dysea were talking excitedly with Isabella about everyone they had met so far

and were ignoring her. Martin had hardly said anything to her the whole time since leaving the ship above. The entire ride down had been in silence for her while he had sat next to Dysea and his mother, once more locked in conversation. Even though it was a very comfortable temperature outside, she had been warm the whole time while shaking hands with untold number of alien species, like a fire was simmering just below her skin. Once in the hover lift transport, she had quickly drank two glasses of water offered to her, while ignoring the occasional odd glances from Deia.

Now she stood on the balcony above the stunning garden below that stretched for hundreds of meters in every direction. She could see thousands of humanoid and non-humanoid species walking and chatting away, and she could not even pick out the scent of her mate because she couldn't focus clearly enough to sort through the myriad of scents that were overwhelming her. Her body still burned... ached for Martin to have her, but no matter where she searched within the garden's many walkways she couldn't see him.

"It's beautiful isn't it?" The male voice spoke from behind her.

Aricia turned quickly a smile on her face thinking it was Martin. "Martin..." She spoke quickly before stopping her words upon seeing the tall, muscled and handsome man in front of her.

Joric stared at Aricia and felt his heart begin to pound even faster. She was even more beautiful than the holo image they had been provided and he smiled cruelly inside as he realized he would enjoy bedding this *upae*, in every way possible. She was much further along than they had suspected, her scent strongly sweet and powerful, and he estimated no more than two days before she reached full phase. Joric couldn't believe that no Lycavorian had approached her yet, and then his father's words came to him. They have removed instinct from their lives, and they will not know what the scent is, and they will control their urges knowing who she is. Perhaps he would not have to wait so long after all to have this wench.

"I'm... I'm sorry what?" Aricia stammered.

"I said it is beautiful isn't it?" Joric spoke again, smiling inward at her confused look. He could smell the sweetness of the *Lunmai* all over her and it was getting stronger by the hour.

"Who... who are you?" Aricia asked.

"My name is Joric." He spoke bowing his head slightly and pulsing Aricia with his aura.

Aricia's eyes grew wide as she felt the decidedly male aura sweep over her and fan the fire that was building. He was a powerful male too... with a strong scent. He was an Alpha and he would be a fine... Aricia shook her head quickly, pushing back his aura with her own and looking at him, her azure eyes narrowing.

"You are a... a Lycavorian male?" Aricia spoke stepping back from him.

"Yes... yes I am. My name is Joric as I said. I am from the Lycavorian People's Republic." He answered. "We are a small gathering of planets, two dozen perhaps, but very wealthy and powerful. I am here because we have petitioned to join the Union."

"You... you forget your place sir." Aricia stammered, fighting the waves of desire that were sweeping through her.

Joric allowed a small smile to play across his face. "Forgive me... your scent..."

"My scent what?" Aricia asked quickly, her nostrils flaring as the lingering effects of Joric's powerful aura pulse tickled her senses.

"Forgive me again. I only thought... but my apologies." He bowed his head. "So you are... Queen Aricia is it?"

Aricia nodded quickly, wanting to get away from this man who stirred her hormones so. "Yes... what of it?"

"I was curious Majesty... there has been quite a bit of information circulating throughout the capital here while you traveled from Earth." Joric spoke. "Is it true... is it true your father was executed by the King himself for treason?"

Aricia's azure blue eyes went wide at this. "Where did you hear such nonsense?" She gasped.

"It is being spoken of throughout Tuya Milady." He replied casually.

"No... you are mistaken. That is not true!" Aricia snapped.

"I am certain I heard that." Joric spoke casually once more, using as friendly a tone of voice as he knew how. "Perhaps I was mistaken."

Joric moved closer to her, watching her react awkwardly, backing up to get away from his scent and aura. She was fighting the *Lunmai*, fighting what her body was telling her... demanding her to do with his aura

washing around her as it was. He would need to act quickly. He looked over the crowd and saw the traitor's grandson just below them standing beside the red haired female. Another of his mates the information they had obtained said.

"Ah... there is the King." Joric spoke. "And who is... who is the luscious looking female wolf beside him?"

Aricia turned slightly and saw Martin and Anja standing below her. Her heart and mind told her to go to them... run to them as quickly as she possibly could... but her body was saying something else entirely. "It... it is Anja." She replied, the desire for her honey tasting female lover singing in her mind.

"He... he prefers her over you?" Joric questioned softly leaning close to her once more and hitting her again with his aura. "I would never do that Majesty."

Aricia gripped the railing tightly in her hands and closed her eyes as his powerful aura caused her to shudder in lust and need. "No... no, he doesn't." She finally gasped. "We... we love each other. All... all of us!"

Joric smiled. "Then why are you not at his side as well?" He whispered into her ear, leaning close to her. "You should be beside him. You..."

"Aricia!" The female voice called.

Joric stepped back quickly and turned as the platinum blond haired female elf walked up to them. Joric had to admit... this grandson of the traitor had excellent taste in females. The female elf looked just as stunning as his target. Aricia turned quickly as well and saw her, relief sweeping her features.

"Dysea!" She pushed away from the railing and moved to her side in five steps as Dysea walked up looking oddly at Joric.

Dysea took Aricia's hands in hers pulling her close against her.

"Ah... Lady Dysea, the elf Queen to our new King. It is truly an honor." Joric spoke bowing deeply at the waist.

"And you are?" Dysea asked, smelling this wolf's aura in the air.

"I am Joric, Lady Dysea." He replied, burying his distaste deeply, "Of the Lycavorian People's Republic."

"Lycavorian People's Republic... you are not part of the Union?" Dysea asked.

Joric shook his head. "Our petition is pending as we speak. It should be complete by tomorrow."

Dysea stared at him for a long moment, almost making Joric begin to have worries that his intentions had been discovered with the intensity of her gaze. Dysea finally nodded her head. "I wish you well." She spoke turning to Aricia. "*Nauta Melme* has asked that I find you. He wanted us to stand with him Little Wolf."

Aricia nodded eagerly and gripped Dysea's hands tightly, her eyes going to Joric as Dysea led them away. Joric smiled and bowed his head to her. He moved to an isolated spot on the balcony and pulled the communicator from his jacket activating it and seeing his father's image appear.

"Father?"

"Joric my son. How did your first contact go?" Chetak asked.

Joric smiled. "Much better than I had expected father. Our information was not accurate, she is much further along in the *Lunmai* than we expected father. She is teetering on the edge even with the serum."

Chetak paused in the holo transmission. "It's just as well. The Senate has apparently already confirmed him as King. The Acceptance Ceremony has been moved forward. It is now the day after tomorrow. You will have to act within a few hours Joric."

Joric thought quickly. "I will introduce the serum into her tomorrow morning father. There is a gathering for new diplomats then, a breakfast of sorts. I can do it while I am entering, she is doing the greetings. By tomorrow evening I'll have her riding me."

"And no one is aware?" Chetak asked.

Joric shook his head. "You were right father. They have given over of themselves to choice and love so much that they wouldn't detect what I was doing even if they saw me doing it. I pulsed her twice with my aura and she nearly lost all control. And I succeeded in putting the seeds of doubt in her mind as well."

Chetak chuckled. "Excellent. Remain there for now, mingle and allow people to see you. That way it will not appear abnormal for you to arrive in the morning."

Joric nodded. "Very well, I will see you this evening in the residence they have given us."



Joric ended the transmission and allowed his eyes to sweep around the expanse of the garden feeling very pleased with himself.

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“And you are certain?” Chetak asked as he poured his son a glass of old Lycavorian ale.

Joric nodded. “Yes father. As I said, I hit her with my aura twice and both times she reacted physically. I could smell the sweetness of the *Lunmai* wafting from her. The traitor’s grandson had to have noticed this.”

Chetak handed the ale to him and walked to the balcony of the suite they had been given when arriving. The lights of celebration still dotted the city as many were entertaining long into the night. He hadn’t realized how large Tuya was until just now.

“I’m sure he has noticed it.” Chetak spoke as Joric came up beside him. “Like the others however, he has no knowledge of the old ways. They have forgotten everything our instincts taught us. And it will be their ruination.” Chetak swept his hand over the expansive backdrop of the city. “Look at this Joric! Look at what they have built! Hundreds of cities like this across this planet alone.”

“They have grown decadent and weak.” Joric said in agreement. “They have forgotten the old ways.”

“If I had been King instead of that fool Resumar, the High Coven would never have destroyed our original home world.” Chetak spoke. “Those they call allies would be our slaves and it is we who would rule this universe. Not the High Coven.” Chetak waved his hand dismissively. “It is no matter... the seeds of doubt have already been laid within the Senate. Soon we will take his Queen... and the Union will fracture from within. When it does... it is we who will pick up the pieces.”

“I spoke with Rommna father.” Joric said. “He got there quicker than we thought as he was only a few systems over from where this planet is located.”

“And what does your younger brother say?” Chetak asked.

“Their meeting with the female elves was delayed until the morning where they are.” Joric spoke. “He has his instructions... about the negotiations and the woman. He wanted to know if you wish any of these Lycavorian females from earth. He says some of them are quite pleasing to the eyes, and all of them are ignorant of the old ways.”

Chetak was thoughtful for a moment. “That would be pleasing. I grow tired of Lepha. She is beginning to resist when I *nubou* her unnaturally. She complains it hurts too much.”

Joric smiled. “Yes... I’m looking forward to that with the traitor’s *upaee*. So kill her father... and have Rommna bring you a young wench that you can train.”

Chetak nodded. “Contact him in the morning before you leave. You say the leaders of this planet are elf females?”

Joric shook his head. “Not completely.” He spoke.

Chetak looked at him. “What do you mean?”

“There are three of them it seems. The one who is considered senior is wolf.” Joric spoke. “It appears she was turned by a Pureblood. One is a full vampire with a vampire lover... and the other is half vampire and half wolf. A dark skinned elf, with white hair and odd colored eyes. There are many of those elves on this planet.”

“A dark skinned elf?” Chetak spoke. “That is interesting. Are they similar to the dark elves we capture on Rdooz every winter fest?”

Joric shook his head. “No father... their skin is like coal. Their eyes are amber points.”

Chetak smiled. “Really... they might make tantalizing house slaves. Have Rommna take several of them. Preferably female so that we can *nubou* them, as well as make them work. Not too many though... six or seven disappearances can be explained. Several dozen can not. And if they work out, perhaps it might be profitable to go back to this rock.”

Joric nodded. “I’ll let him know.”

“He leaves vampires in charge of a planet he frees, and he allows the High Coven Princess to escape because he shared a bed with her.” Chetak spoke with an evil smile. “Now that is very interesting.”

Joric grinned. “I thought you would find that interesting.”

“Indeed I do.” Chetak spoke. “Indeed I do.”

Joric finished the ale he held. "I am going to bed father. I will need all my strength so that I can take his Queen all night tomorrow, as many times as I am able."

Chetak laughed and nodded his head. "I am proud of you son. And I will be even prouder tomorrow evening."

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She and Aihola had arrived late in the morning to the knowing glances of just about everyone who knew them. They all noticed the spring in Tarifa's step and the glow of her face and eyes, not to mention the way she and Aihola clung tightly to each other. Selene and Lynwe were waiting for them and they enjoyed a brief coffee and Danish together, catching up on things that had happened while they waited for their first meeting. It had been the most peaceful rest either of them had gotten in nearly six weeks, but that had not kept them from enjoying each other when they awoke this morning.

"You are meeting with Lycavorians now?" Aihola asked, "From Martin's Union?"

Tarifa shook her head. "No... they are different." She answered. "They've been above us in the stars for several days now, calling every day to see when we could meet. This is the first time Selene and I could fit them in."

Aihola looked at her. "Do you want me to come with you?"

Tarifa shook her head once more and kissed her softly. "Now that you are back I'm sure my father and Lynwe would much rather have you helping him. And you know how much you hate these boorish meetings. Remember the meetings in Mountain City?"

Aihola groaned and rolled her eyes, "All too well." She spoke. "I will meet you here for lunch though."

Tarifa smiled and got to her feet. "I know you will." She said softly, squeezing her hand.

"*Dos ph' ussta dro lu' xukuth Tarifa.*" Aihola spoke to her. (You are my life and heart Tarifa.)

Tarifa's sapphire eyes twinkled at her, "*'Zil dos ph' usst Jabbress.*" Tarifa answered softly. (As you are mine Mistress.)

Aihola watched her walk away with Selene, passing the data pads between them and speaking in whispers like school girls. Lynwe smiled from where she sat. "It is so very good to have you back my friend." She spoke finally.

Aihola looked at her and smiled. "It is very good to *be* back Lynwe."

"She loves you Aihola. More than you could possibly know." Lynwe spoke.

"It appears Selene feels the same for you Lynwe. And that makes me very happy." Aihola took her hand across the table. "Thank you for contacting Hwia Lynwe."

"After what you and Tarifa did for me?" Lynwe spoke. "I would have been remiss in my duties as a friend if I had done nothing. Tareif is going to be very happy to see you."

"How go defensives?"

Lynwe nodded. "Tareif can give you a full briefing, but Colonel Nestor is sweeping southwest with his division across the path the Alliance forces took to attack us. Any cloned vampires he finds, he kills them immediately. The King... he made the right choice in trusting him. Colonel Nestor and his men have become some of the most strident supporters of what we are rebuilding."

Aihola nodded. "I have discovered that Martin is an excellent judge of character." She looked at her friend. "What of these Lycavorians that are not within his Union?"

Lynwe's amber eyes narrowed slightly. "I have not spoken with them long enough to form an opinion... they were very crude when here making their appointment with Dilios's staff. And they looked at the King's people as if they were..."

"As if they were what?" Aihola asked.

"Beneath them is the best word I can use to describe it." Lynwe spoke.

Aihola sat back in her chair slowly, her mind racing. "All the visitors must come in through the west entrance still correct?"

Lynwe nodded. "It is manned by Dragoons and Spartans. Everyone is also imaged when they enter and it's fed to the security station. Why?"

Aihola looked at her. "I spent a week in Sparta recently, when I *should* have been beside the woman I love."

Lynwe leaned forward now, her own instincts lighting off. Lynwe had learned that Tari and Aihola had an almost innate danger sensor, and they were almost never wrong. “And...?”

“The Lycavorians I saw in Sparta, regardless of whether they knew each other to not, were treated with the utmost of respect. You would think that would apply across the board.” Aihola spoke.

“Perhaps not.” Lynwe said.

Aihola nodded slowly. “Perhaps not, but why don’t we review the security tapes before meeting with Tareif.”

Lynwe nodded and got to her feet. “Come... I’ll take you there. We moved the location since the bombardment.”

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Tarifa didn’t like them from the moment they walked into the room. And neither did Selene.

True... they had been waiting for three days to see her and Selene, calling at least three times a day to confirm their meeting, and each time she and Selene had been so overwhelmed they had to postpone the meeting.

Their scent was not the calm, sincere smell of the majority of the Spartans she had met while in Sparta.

They were gruff and impolite to her Spartan Guards who showed them into the room, and actually gazing at the two Spartans with distaste and hatred. She felt Selene tense right away as the three of them took seats across the table from them, and apprised both of them as if they were pieces of meat. This got Tarifa’s wolf heckles to sounding an alarm right away. Something told her she did not want to deal with these men and to get rid of them right away.

The man in the middle was large and not in the least bit good looking. In fact, all of them were very large, but more bulk than actual muscle, nothing like the Lycavorian Spartans she knew.

“So gentlemen... what... what can we do for you?” Selene finally asked.

Tarifa held out her hand placed it over Selene’s. “Thank you for coming gentlemen, but something has come up and we must postpone this meeting once more. Forgive us.”

“I am Rommna of the Lycavorian People’s Republic! We had an appointment and we are here!” The man bellowed. “Let us discuss trade.”

Tarifa stood up slowly, Selene following her lead without question. “Yes... but now we have something else to do and must postpone this meeting. I’m sorry.”

“You are wolf she-elf.” Rommna spoke. “I can smell you. A pureblood turned you, yet you are unmated? Why is that?”

“I *am* mated thank very much.” Tarifa spoke as she gathered up her data pads. “We must go really.”

“We are interested in the resource you call coal. To us it is called Talracian Ore.” Rommna spoke getting to his feet. “Our scans indicate you have quite an abundance of it here. We wish to purchase three hundred thousand metric tons of this Ore.” He tossed the pad onto the table. “We will pay handsomely for it.”

Tarifa stopped and looked at him, picking up the pad he tossed across the table. Her sapphire eyes grew a little wider when she saw the figures. She looked back up to him, holding the pad so that Selene could see it. Her steel blue eyes narrowed when she did. “I have only been using your currency for a few weeks... Rommna... but even I know this is an exorbitant amount for what you want. We may be elves... but we are not fools. What do you want the coal for?”

“That is our business.” Rommna spoke quickly.

“On the contrary... it is also our business.” Tarifa spoke looking at Selene who shook her head. “The answer is no... good day gentlemen... we won’t have any need to reschedule this appointment.”

Rommna stepped forward as Tarifa and Selene moved for the door. “Where is your mate she-elf?” He spoke. “A pureblood turned you... you should be under him... serving him.”

Tarifa stopped and looked at the man, her sapphire eyes changing to her wolf eyes in a heartbeat. “You are no longer welcome in this city, I suggest you leave immediately.”

“Are you threatening me She-wolf?” Rommna spoke, his eyes narrowing and his voice growing darker.

Tarifa shook her head. “Not at all Rommna, I’m just allowing you to leave without injury to you or your men.”

Rommna laughed heartily. “Are you going to injury me she-elf? You have been turned... I am a pureblood!”

“What you are is an odiferous buffoon Rommna.” Tarifa snapped. “Good day sir.”

Rommna moved closer. “You should have taken the deal She-wolf.” He growled. “It would have been less painful.”

Tarifa looked at Selene quickly and then back to Rommna. “You can’t possibly be as ignorant as you smell.” She spoke. “We are done with you fool! Return to your ship immediately and do not come back to the surface of this planet again. If you or any of your men are seen here or anywhere on earth you will be arrested and confined, your ship impounded and you will be charged. Am I making myself clear?”

Rommna began walking towards her but stopped remembering his father’s words. “Very well she-wolf. I will do as you say... for now.” He spoke.

“It had better be for good.” Tarifa spoke. “Now... good day gentlemen.”

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## APO PRIME

Martin smelled her long before she came out onto the balcony with him. The night sky was alive with the lights from the city, Anja and Dysea already passed out from exhaustion of the day. He lowered the pad he was holding as her incredibly aroused scent washed over him and he smiled.

“I didn’t think you were still awake Aricia.” He spoke.

Aricia walked up behind him, wrapping her arms tightly around his waist and pressing her heated body against his back. She smiled when he reacted to her touch and she could feel the burning ignite inside him as well. “I need you my love.” She spoke huskily. “My blood burns for your touch.”

Martin smiled. “Aricia I need to get this speech thing ready for tomorrow.” He spoke pulling her around in front of him, feeling her aroused aura wash over him, coursing through him powerfully. Aricia nuzzled his bare chest, licking his skin, and pulling open her thin robe to press her flesh against his.

“Do you want me my love?” She spoke seductively. “Does not your blood burn for me as mine burns for you?”

Martin nuzzled the top of her head, fighting back the raging hormones that she was igniting within him. Her lavender coco scent was as sweet as he had ever smelled, and he felt his blood begin to burn just like hers. “Yes.” He gasped.

Aricia smiled as she dropped her hand lower; sliding it inside the loose pants he wore. “Then take me now! Take me! I am your mate!”

Martin groaned loudly as the seething hot skin of her hand gripped his cock and it immediately surged to instant hardness, almost painfully so. He took a deep breath, clenching his teeth and gathered all of his will power behind him, taking her hand gently and pulling it from his pants with great reluctance.

“Aricia... I can’t!” He hissed, holding back his own aura which was threatening to burst out around her and send them both into a raging lust.

Aricia looked at him, her azure blue eyes narrowed in anger. “Would you prefer Anja then Martin; or perhaps Dysea? Would you prefer one of your *other* Queens?” She snapped viciously.

Martin’s eyes grew a little wider at her outburst. “Aricia what is wrong?” he asked, trying to keep his voice controlled, the passion still surging through him.

“Nothing is wrong!” Aricia almost shouted. “I want my mate! And he is refusing me!”

“I am not refusing you Little Wolf! I need to...”

“Don’t call me that!” Aricia snapped her face twisting into a snarl. “I am not a child and you will not treat me as one!”

Martin stepped back from her two steps and looked at her, gaining complete control of his raging hormones now. “Ok... I’m confused. I’ve never treated you as a child, what is going on Aricia?”

Aricia glared at him, the fire in her blood almost beyond control. She glanced quickly at the coral red pendant she had given him and it flashed in the recesses of her dazed mind that he had not removed it since that day. Not even when he was training or sleeping. He had always worn it. “Martin... how did my father die?” She asked.

Martin did a double take, shaking his head quickly at the sudden change in tact and direction. “What?”  
“My father? How did he die?”

“I... I don’t know.” He stammered.

Azure blue eyes flared in real anger. “You are King! You expect me to believe you don’t know what happened to my father?”

“Aricia... why... why does it matter now? It’s been so long.” Martin asked. “You... you hated your father.”

“Did you order my father’s execution Martin?” Aricia snapped out the question. “Did you order his execution so that you could take me?”

“What?” Martin gasped totally and irreparably confused. “Where the hell is this coming from?”

Aricia’s eyes went wide as lust borne false realization blossomed in her eyes. “You did!” She gasped. “You ordered him executed didn’t you? So he wouldn’t challenge you when you took me!”

Martin’s eyes narrowed in anger now. “I did no such thing!” He shouted. “And I resent that you would even suggest that!”

“You are a liar!” Aricia screamed. “I can smell you lying to me!” She spoke the words even though his mint scent gave no such indication.

“We are done here!” Martin snapped turning to go into the large main room of the apartment. They were not scheduled to move into the Royal palace until it had been fully completed and that would take two more days.

“Yes! Go and play with Anja and Dysea!” Aricia barked. “You seem to prefer those who are not even pureblood!”

Aricia turned away quickly, the tears pouring from her eyes.

What had she just done? She needed him and she had forced him away. Her blood burned like she had never known in her life and it was driving her mad. She needed her mate and he was not there for her. Something was wrong with her and it frightened her so. So many lustful thoughts... she wanted to lose herself in the power of his aura and his manhood. She wanted to feel him stretching her as only he could. It was all she could think about lately, and it frightened her terribly.

What was happening to her?

Aricia didn’t see Anja and Dysea standing inside the room, holding the sheets over their bodies, looks of astonishment on their faces, as Martin marched past them in a rage. He didn’t even pause to look at them.

“You are looking rather tired this morning Majesty.” The voice spoke through the fog.

Aricia looked up and saw him. She vaguely remembered him from yesterday. A male. An Alpha male.

It had been a horrible night. Martin had clamped his psychic shields down tighter than she had ever known him too, and even when she tried to nudge Anja into just soothing her, just holding her, she had been rejected. Dysea would not speak with her and both of them had pushed her out of their minds, erecting very strong barriers.

She felt so alone and unwanted.

Aricia looked at Joric, the fever burning in her veins almost unbearable. Her azure colored eyes were red with lack of sleep.

“You... you are...”

“Joric... yes Milady.” He answered. “We met yesterday.”

He had waited for the right time, standing off to the side watching her. She looked distraught, her face drawn and beads of sweat were pooling on the tops of her lips. He smiled to himself, knowing the signs well from the Lycavorian woman on his planet when they first came of age. They turned into mindless females wanting only to mate for hours to chase away the burning in their veins of their Coming of Age.

Now it was his time as the line had slowed considerably, everyone rushing into the function on time, hoping to catch a glimpse of the new King. He saw the elf Queen and Hadarian Queen at the other entrances not paying attention. Joric held out his hand and without thinking Aricia took it for the welcome she had been mindlessly doing for the last hour. She felt the prick in the palm of her hand, barely noticeable as his strong

hand gripped hers. Joric smiled as he held her hand, seeing the reaction as the serum Tablina had made acted almost instantly upon entering Aricia's blood stream.

Aricia's eyes flared as the fever raged out of control overwhelming everything else in her mind. What little control she had been clinging to was instantly shattered, and her body became a heated maelstrom of passion and lust. Joric smiled as her hand gripped his tightly, her entire body shuddering. It was amazing, without the serum she would have been able to maintain some semblance of control no matter how bad the fever burned. The moment the enhancing serum mingled with her blood, those lone strands of control and ability to resist what her body demanded were torn asunder.

Joric took a breath and hit her with every ounce of his full aura, lust, desire and passion, all of it directed at her completely. Aricia's eyes closed in clouded, devastated passion, relishing in the sensations screaming in her body. Her azure eyes opened as the hand pulled away from her, and she saw the Alpha walking away quickly, his aura calling to her. Aricia dropped the cards she had been holding and tore after the alpha wolf who was calling to her in an almost dreamlike state, ignoring all else. Several visitors arriving late watched as she moved quickly down the stairs of the center, following only what she could smell. The burning fever was increasing... surging out of control through her body. Her nipples were lava hot nubs, as hard as steel, her breasts swollen almost painfully. The burning in her pussy was to the point she could not stand it anymore, her juices leaking from her to drip lazily down her thighs.

Aricia followed that brown haired Alpha, her body calling to him as he called to hers. She was growing frustrated as he kept moving, not turning to claim her. Her body was beyond her control now, instinctively releasing her sweet nectar, calling to the wolf.

She followed him on the hunt, his aura strong and clear. Directly back to the suite he was staying at. Her azure blue eyes locked on him as he entered the elevator, and she nearly sprinted to reach him, just as the doors closed.

Joric grinned savagely and leaned next to her ear. "Do you want me she-wolf?" He asked her in a cruel voice.

Aricia clenched her fists together as the last remnants of her love for Martin surfaced at that instant. "I..."

Joric hit her again with his aura, nuzzling her neck. Aricia gasped in undisguised delight, her eyes fluttering. "Tell me you want me she-wolf."

The doors opened on Joric's floor and he snatched her hand from her side dragging her down the corridor to his door. He slammed his passcard in and waited impatiently for the two second delay as the door opened. He turned back to her.

"If you want me she-wolf, if you want me to ease the burning in your blood, step into this room of your own choice and become my mate." Joric growled loudly, his voice carrying as if making a show.

Aricia stood there in the hallway shaking uncontrollably. "I... I..."

Joric hit her again, and whatever was left inside her that said this was so very wrong crumbled and Aricia stepped through the door. Joric snatched her hand and spun her around as the door slid shut.

"Kiss me!" Aricia screamed reaching out with her arms. "Kiss me I beg you!"

Joric looked at her and laughed as he reached up and shredded her dress in one powerful downward rip, pulling her further into the main room of the suite. Aricia almost screamed in joy as her burning body was exposed to the air. Joric grabbed her raven black hair in his fist and yanked her head back almost savagely, licking her throat like a dog. "I'll kiss you *upae!*" He growled.

Aricia screamed out again as he turned her around quickly and pushed her over the back of the couch, the sensual line of her back and ass now facing Joric as he struggled with his pants. "Please... please... now!" Aricia wept... her knuckles white on the back of the couch and digging into the expensive fabric as she thrust her exposed hips back at him.

Joric gazed hungrily at the curves and supple flesh in front of him as he got his pants down, exposing his blood engorged cock, the flared head burning in his own need now. He grabbed Aricia's ass cheeks squeezing them hard and hearing her whimper in pain and fever induced pleasure. He leaned over her exposed back, dragging his slobbering tongue up her skin until his lips were behind her ear.

"Do you want me to be your mate she-wolf?" He growled in her ear. "Tell me you choose me as your mate! Tell me you choose me and I will conquer the burning of your blood."

“Yes... yes...” Aricia’s voice was a whimper, barely discernable, her head buried in the top of the couch.

Joric reached out and pulled her back by her lustrous mane of black hair, her neck bulging at the strain, her face lifting up to look at him. “Louder Aricia! Tell me you choose me as your mate Aricia. Isn’t that what you want more than anything! More than the King! Tell me you want me more than your precious King Aricia!”

The fever had control now, and Aricia’s azure blue eyes were wide in defeat. There was nothing she could do... she needed it now.

“YES!” She screamed. “YES! I choose you! Claim me! Take me as your mate!”

Joric wasted no time and grabbed her hips. “You are mine now Aricia! And I intend to have you in every way possible! Scream for me bitch!”

Joric thrust his hips forward driving his entire cock into Aricia’s burning velvet warmth and her mouth opened in a breathless scream as the pleasure surged to white light and she surrender completely.

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## ENURRUA

Tablina looked up at Arzoal as she saw the female Elder One lurch gently, her flame colored eyes widening ever so slightly before closing as if in great pain.

*Oh she fought so. Never have I seen such power in one so young. She didn’t want to surrender... no. Arzoal’s head dropped low to the floor until it rested on Tablina’s shoulder. Oh Tablina, what have we done? To... to have fallen so far...*

Tablina lowered her head as tears dropped to the stone under her. *We... we had to do it Arzoal. With what... with what we have done this night... we have given our people... yours and mine a means to survive.*

Arzoal opened her eyes once more and moved around in front of her Lycavorian friend. *Have we my friend? Or have we doomed ourselves for all time.*

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“I don’t give a rat fuck what you have to do!” Martin growled at the Lycavorian guards that had been searching the area surrounding the center all day and night. “I want her found! Tear down the fucking city for all I care! She’s been gone all fucking night! Fuck I should have never refused her! I didn’t want to... but this fucking speech...”

No one had changed from the previous day. It was discovered Aricia was missing mid way through the speech that Martin was giving. Anja, Dysea, Seanna and Isabella had searched frantically for two hours before calling to Martin within their connection. He had stopped in mid sentence and immediately left the podium. Hundreds of Lycavorian Spartans had spread out immediately in search of their lost Queen. Martin had spent the entire night out searching with Andreus, getting lost half a dozen times, both of them in a fit of rage by the time they found their way back to the center. They had been led into this large conference room where Martin was not acting out.

Now they stood watching as he ripped off the military jacket his mother and Isabella had fashion for him, colorful ribbons flying in every direction. Anja and Dysea were sitting at the table side-by-side, dried tears in their eyes, their dresses stained with a full night and half day of searching through streets and buildings.

Gorgo reached out for her son. “Martin you must calm down.” She spoke in as soothing a voice as she could muster at the moment.

Martin snatched his arm away from her grasp. “I will not settle down! Not till I have my mate back! Not till I have our mate back!”

Martin watched as a Lycavorian Guard rushed into the room and went straight to where Riall stood. He whispered in his Admiral’s ear and Martin saw Riall’s eyes go wide.

“Here?” He gasped.

Martin looked at him, moving forward. “What is it?” He asked. “Did they find Aricia?”

Riall looked at Martin, his eyes wide in shock. “Yes... yes Milord.”

Anja and Dysea came to their feet at this. "Where?" Anja almost shouted. "Where is she?"

"She... she is in... she is in the anteroom sire." Riall spoke softly. He turned quickly as Martin and the other's bolted from the room. "Gorgo... quickly call for more security! Do it now! Hurry!"

"Riall what is happening?" Gorgo asked as fear gripped her heart and she moved to her mate.

"Gorgo... another... another Alpha has claimed Aricia as his mate!" Riall gasped to her.

Gorgo's dark eyes flew open and she burst into a sprint after her son. The trail was easy to follow as pieces of corridor decoration dotted the way. When she rushed into the room Andreus and Atropos were holding their King back in a rage. Gorgo's eyes grew even wider when she saw Chetak and his oldest son beside him. And standing with her arms loosely around Joric's waste was Aricia, her azure blue eyes looking glassy. She wore a rather skimpy one piece wrap that left little to the imagination. Gorgo stopped when she saw the Union Senator just behind Chetak, looking extremely unhappy.

"Ah... Lady Gorgo!" Chetak spoke. "We finally meet! I have heard quite a bit about you I must say!"

"What is going on here?" Gorgo gasped. "Who are you? And remove your hands from my son's Queen!"

Chetak shook his head. "No... I'm afraid that I will not do that!"

Seanna looked at Aricia carefully, seeing the glassy look in her eyes and the sweat still beading on her forehead and lips. Her dark green eyes went wide.

"Tell that sorry looking motherfucker to get his hands off her!" Martin screamed struggling mightily against his two Spartans and they were having trouble holding him back. "Aricia!"

Aricia's eyes looked up at her name from the voice. It sounded so familiar, but the fever was fully in phase now, and the only thing that mattered to her was having her mate take her again and again.

Prime Minister Deia ran into the room now, Riall on her hands. She spied Chetak and the heckles on the back of her neck began screaming. "Chetak!" She snapped.

"Ah... everyone is here... excellent." Chetak spoke.

"What is this man doing here?" Deia demanded the anger in her voice very real as she glared at him. "Who allowed him into this building?"

"I was under the impression that the recognized leader of a member of the Lycavorian Union was allowed to come here, whenever they pleased." Chetak spoke calmly.

"You are NOT a member of this Union Chetak!" Deia barked. "You and your people will never be welcome here!"

"I beg to differ Prime Minister. Perhaps Senator Olalla can explain better than I." Chetak spoke motioning to the obviously very frightened Lycavorian politician.

Deia looked at the man. "Olalla... explain what is happening here!"

"Deia... I did not know this was going to happen! You must believe me!" The man spoke.

Chetak looked at the man disgust on his face. "Coward." He spat. He turned quickly back to Deia. "The Lycavorian People's Republic became a member of the Union only twelve hours ago when our petition was approved by majority vote in your Senate."

"Impossible!" Deia snapped. "I have to approve all petitions by hand signature. I would not have approved yours Chetak!"

"I know... that is why I had Olalla bury it in the small print of the Lycavorian Union Defense Appropriations bill you signed only yesterday morning." Chetak spoke calmly. "So you see... we are very much a member of this Union... and therefore your new King can not break his own laws."

"What are you talking about?" Gorgo barked moving up next to her. "Deia what is this fool talking about? Who is he?"

Deia didn't take her glaring eyes from Chetak. "His name is Chetak... and he is the leader of the Lycavorian People's Republic." She spoke. "The branch of our people that stayed true to our old ways when Resumar brought us out of the darkness."

"The Old Ways," Chetak growled. "They are the law woman!"

"They were the law you fool!" Deia yelled. "And they were killing our people from within! That is why Resumar brought us out of the darkness! So we didn't destroy ourselves!"



“Resumar was a fool!” Chetak shouted. He took a deep breath to calm his growing anger. “But that is not what we are all here about is it?” He reached into his jacket only to stop when six Spartans lifted their arms and their Shi Viskas flared to life, all of them leveled at him.

Chetak laughed at this show. “The Union and their toys.” He spoke moving his hand slowly to bring out the holo imager. “I have come here to fulfill my Blood Oath against Resumar.” He tossed the imager onto the table in front of him. “As Resumar took my mate... I now take the mate of your new King for my son.”

“What?” Martin screamed so loudly the room vibrated. “I’ll kill you right here old man if you so much as lay a finger on Aricia!” He resumed his struggles against Andreus and Atropos. “Let me go god damn it!”

Gorgo stepped forward. “What lies are these!” Gorgo spat. “Resumar took no one’s mate! He hid her from others until she came of age and then he took her. He and Eliana loved each other.”

Chetak looked at Deia with this news. “Is that what you teach in your schools Deia?” He asked. “You teach lies!”

“They are not lies!” Gorgo snarled.

“They are lies!” Chetak matched her voice causing her eyes to go wide. He looked at Deia once more. “You never told anyone the truth did you Deia?”

“Your version of the truth is wrong Chetak!” Deia snapped.

“He stole my mate from me!” Chetak roared. “She was my mate! Mine! And Resumar stole her from me!”

“She loved Resumar and not you fool!” Deia roared right back. “You took her even after she told you not too!”

“We followed the old ways!” Chetak snapped. “I got to her first! I took her and she was mine! Resumar stole her from me using deceit and trickery! Don’t you remember how he did it Deia?”

Deia’s eyes flared and she looked at Aricia her hand going to her throat. “No!” She gasped.

Chetak smiled. “Yes!”

“*The Lunmai!*” Seanna spoke softly, causing Anja and Dysea to look at her.

“Seanna... what is he talking about?” Anja gasped. “Little Wolf would never choose that... that man over Martin! Never!”

Seanna looked at her. “She would... she would if she was in the grips of the *Lunmai!*”

Chetak laughed. “This is wonderful! The Hadarian witch knows more of our people than the fools in this room. Yes... the *Lunmai!* The Coming of Age.”

Gorgo’s eyes darted to Martin. “You took her before she came of age?” She asked angrily.

“No Lady Gorgo!” Chetak spoke. “The *Lunmai* is the Second Coming of Age. It occurs in one of only five hundred billion of our females. Within the first year of her actual coming of age, a second, even more powerful fever burns in her. The Second Coming of Age. The *Lunmai.*” Chetak looked at Martin, who now wore an expression of horror on his face. “You must have detected the change in her scent. The sweetness as she got closer to this time?”

“This is bullshit!” Anja snapped stepping forward. “She would never do this! She loves Martin more than her own life!”

“Love has nothing to do with it Lady Anja.” Chetak spoke. “This is all about instinct... something Resumar bred out of our people.”

“She would not choose this!” Dysea shouted.

“Oh... but I’m afraid she did.” Chetak leaned forward and activated the holo imager.

*“Do you want me to be your mate she-wolf?” He growled in her ear. “Tell me you choose me as your mate! Tell me you choose me and I will conquer the burning of your blood.”*

*“Yes... yes...” Aricia’s voice was a whimper, barely discernable, her head buried in the top of the couch.*

*Joric reached out and pulled her back by her lustrous mane of black hair, her neck bulging at the strain, her face lifting up to look at him. “Louder Aricia! Tell me you choose me as your mate Aricia. Isn’t that what you want more than anything! More than the King! Tell me you want me more than your precious King Aricia!”*

*The fever had control now, and Aricia’s azure blue eyes were wide in defeat. There was nothing she could do... she needed it now.*

*“YES!” She screamed. “YES! I choose you! Claim me! Take me as your mate!”*

*Joric wasted no time and grabbed her hips. “You are mine now Aricia! And I intend to have you in every way possible! Scream for me bitch!”*

“NO!” Anja screamed.

Chetak laughed as he let the imager continue to play. The grunts of Joric and the cries of Aricia could be clearly heard. The slapping of flesh, her cries of delightful abandon, and each sound seared through Martin’s soul. Each sound ripped a piece out of his heart.

“She is really quite talented.” Joric spoke leaning over to nuzzle Aricia’s neck, her azure eyes closing in fever induced sensual delight. “I must thank you for breaking her in so well sire. She rode me for hours begging for more. And she has such a talented mouth. She...”

“MOTHERFUCKER!”

It happened in the blink of an eye. Two silver/white flashes of light and the huge black wolf was leaping at Joric, both his eyes and Chetak’s eyes horrified at the size of the monster coming across the table. The smaller black wolf intervened before Martin reached Joric, lashing out viciously with her front paw and raking her claws across the large wolf’s chest deeply. Martin yelped in agonizing pain, losing his balance and slamming into the wall, all three hundred pounds of him crashing to the floor.

Two flashes of silver/white light and Aricia was standing in front of Joric, her eyes changed and her fangs fully extended protecting him. Martin could only stare at her in disbelief, the pain ripping through his chest as blood soaked through the white shirt not even close to the pain that was shattering his soul.

Chetak quickly got himself under control. “As... as you can see King Leonidas... a female... a female in the grips of the *Lunmai* will savagely protect the one she has chosen as her mate.”

Anja and Dysea were next to him in a moment, tears streaking their eyes. Only Isabella remained where she was, her eyes now fully changed to vampire cobalt blue and anger unlike anything she had ever felt surging through her.

Gorgo stood unbelieving her hands over her mouth. “Deia!”

Deia stepped forward. “Leave Chetak!” Deia almost screamed. “Leave while you still can!”

“Do not threaten me wench!” Chetak growled. “My Blood Oath is fulfilled! I warn you though, if any action is taken against my Republic or the seat we now hold on the Senate, I will release all the information I have obtained on our new King and his vampire allies! Most especially, I am quite sure the Senate would like to know he fathered a child with the High Coven Princess Yuri! And why he let her escape after he killed her brother.”

Deia glared at Chetak with murder in her dark eyes. “I will only tell one more time you foul excuse for a Lycavorian! Take her and go! Never set foot on this Planet again Chetak, for if you do I will spill your blood myself!”

“He can’t take her!” Anja screamed standing back up. “I won’t allow it!”

“Nor will I!” Dysea snapped from where she knelt next to Martin holding pieces of her torn dress over the four ragged slashes across his chest, which was still bleeding profusely.

“You must!” Deia snapped at them. “Aricia has made her decision! She chose Joric!”

“She did not! She’s sick! Can’t you see that?” Anja screamed. “Aricia would never have done this freely! Never!”

“It is what Resumar first broke our people apart for!” Deia spoke. “The right of our females to choose! Aricia has chosen Joric!”

“NO!” Anja spoke moving forward.

Atropos grabbed Anja now, pulling her back even though every pore in his body was telling him to begin ripping flesh from bone and not stop until they were all dead.

“ARICIA!”

Her azure blue eyes turned to Anja then. “He... he killed my father!” Aricia screamed now.

Atropos glared at his sister with hatred in his eyes. “No sister... I killed our father!” He spat at her seeing her turn to him. “The King had no knowledge of this! It is I who killed our father... for the King would have let him live because of his love for you. I could not allow that! Not after what he had done!” Atropos

pulled Anja back further, struggling to hold her in his arms. “He has a place of honor in Sparta Aricia, because of Martin. All his sins have been forgiven! But you sister... your sins will never be forgiven.”

“Take her Chetak!” Deia shouted. “Take her now, before I have the lot of you killed for what you have done this day! Riall?”

A thoroughly shocked and baffled Riall stepped forward slowly. “Prime Minister?”

“You will see to it that these people are escorted to their ship and then given an escort off our planet and out of our system. Please do so now before I truly lose what little control I am holding on to.”

Riall nodded slowly as Chetak made his way around the table quickly. Joric followed him, pulling Aricia along by her arm. Her azure blue eyes looked focused for a few seconds and filled with horror, and then it was gone.

The howl from Martin’s throat that followed Aricia’s exit from the room sent an ominous chill through everyone in the room, piercing their very souls in its woeful intensity and mournful sound.

A howl that none of them would ever forget.

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## CHAPTER SIX

### APO PRIME NEXT DAY

“We smelled it.” Gorgo spoke softly. “All of us, we smelled it on her and we did not know what it was. We did nothing.”

The meeting room was adjacent to the main foyer of the Royal estate just outside Tuya’s limits. The front of the massive property faced the capital city three kilometers distant, while the rear of the property backed up to the kilometers spanning glass surfaced lake that stretched into the horizon. Martin and the others had protested when they first saw it from the air, saying they didn’t need something so large and it wasn’t fair. Deia had shaken her head and explained to them that the Royal Estate acted much like an alternate command center for the government, and that the people of Apo Prime had voted unanimously to build it hundreds of years ago. There was a four story barracks on the property for the Spartan Royal Guard, large guest quarters for visiting dignitaries, and a huge winding walkway through a garden with flowers from every planet in the Union.

The Royal property itself spanned five square kilometers, with thick towering trees, and a beautiful lush forest. The beach along the lake was all white sand and lined up exactly with the expansive patio and two level balconies that opened into the rear of the walled compound. There was a long steel pier decorated with flowers that extended out into the lake and ended two kilometers distance from the Compound on the massive island that filled the view from the main bedroom.

Now however, no one was interested in studying the beauty of the place. Quite the opposite in fact.

Deia was standing near the large window and speaking with the older Lycavorian male on the wide monitor. She hadn’t changed from her dress the previous day, coming with Gorgo and the others as Martin was brought here immediately after Chetak had departed the planet.

“I don’t care what you need to do Aspon,” Deia spoke to her most trusted and senior aide. “You find out how this happened. Find out how that vile scum was offered a position in the Union and you find out who buried their petition in a totally unrelated Appropriations Bill. Olalla didn’t work alone on this of that you can be sure.”

The man nodded quickly. “I will see to it Prime Minister. The Senators and Delegations are demanding to know why the Acceptance Ceremony is not taking place Deia. What should I tell them?”

“Tell them the King has fallen ill and needs to rest after his long journey here.” Deia answered evenly.

“Deia... they all saw him these last two days.” Aspon replied. “Almost all of them commented on how healthy he appeared... so young and vigorous”

“*Pen arne nubou sebball atle hnes sey menn!*” Deia hissed at the monitor, causing her aide’s eyes to go wide. (I don’t fucking care what they have seen) Deia looked at him and exhaled heavily regaining control of her emotions. “Forgive me Aspon...”

“Given what has occurred Prime Minister... please... do not apologize. However vent to me or your mate and not someone else.” The man spoke.

Deia nodded. “*Cyn Forn, amlian.*” She spoke. (Thank you my friend.)

The man nodded, “*Innyne.*” He spoke. (Always) “I will contact you as soon as I know something.”

“And Aspon... insure Senator Olalla is comfortable, well fed, then bring him to me here. I am going to stay here at the palace until such time as we can get a handle on what to do.” Deia spoke. “I want to interrogate that worm myself, before I have him executed for High Treason.”

“I wish to be there when you do Deia.” Aspon said. “Good luck.”

Deia turned as the monitor went dark and the door slid open into the meeting room. Anja and Dysea walked in with Isabella and the Hadarian handmaiden directly behind them. They both had changed into Spartan body armor and carried their Nehtes. She saw Gorgo go to them quickly as Deia moved back to the table.

Anja squeezed Gorgo’s hand. “He’s sleeping finally.” She said softly. “He wouldn’t let me or Seanna heal him so I had to slip him a sedative. It wasn’t easy... the gouges she gave him were very deep, and he is going to be very upset that I knocked him out.”

“*Harna ye Enda.*” Dysea spoke in barely a whisper, (Wounds of the Heart.) Isabella stepped up closer to her and slipped her hand into Dysea’s.

Gorgo shook her head. “And in my ignorance I accused him of taking her before the Age of Consent.” She spoke. “I am a fool.”

Anja shook her head. “No Gorgo.” She said. “He will need all of us now.” Anja took a deep breath and then turned her jade green eyes on Deia. “But first... I want to know when we are going after her.”

Deia looked surprised. “After her? We can not go after her.”

“You don’t honestly believe we are going to just let them take her from us do you?” Anja said.

“Forgive me my Queen, but neither you nor the King has a choice in this matter.” Deia said. “Aricia made her decision.” Deia moved to the table and picked up the data pad with the tubular object connected at the bottom. There was a dark red substance in the tube. “This was delivered to my office immediately after Chetak left. It is a sample of Aricia’s blood. I’ve already had it checked in every possible way against what we had on file from her physical on the *LEONIDAS I*. It is her blood and there is absolutely no trace of any known mind altering drug in her blood. She made her choice freely.”

Anja moved closer to her, her face stoic and unreadable. “Let me tell you something Prime Minister Deia. Since the moment she came into our lives, even before we met her physically, she has been a part of our minds, our very conscious. For the last year we have been together, slept together, and pleased each other in ways you can not begin to imagine; we have fought together and shared the one thing dearest to all of us. That was Martin Leonidas. Dysea and I have known since the beginning she was Martin’s favorite the moment she entered his life, not for any simple reason either, but because she was the one thing we would never be; Lycavorian.” Anja moved closer to her. “This fact never deterred us from loving him or her any less, and Aricia returned that love with all that she was. We know her... you do not... if you ever speak to me again that she chose this freely...” Anja was in front of her, her eyes now changed and her fangs coming out. “*Pen gur fecla dur terit gai for fele un forn.*” (I will rip out your heart and feed it to you.) Deia’s eyes went wide. “Am I being clear enough for you?”

Seanna moved up next to her quickly. “My Queen... this... this does not help.” She spoke softly taking her hand and drawing her back.

“Seanna is right *Melyanna.*” Dysea spoke. “We... we must remain calm and in control.”

“I am in control.” Anja snapped her eyes never leaving Deia’s face. “You don’t want to see me when I’m out of control!”

Deia turned to Gorgo as Seanna drew Anja back slowly, pulling her close and whispering to her. “Gorgo what...?”

“I was going to talk to you about it later.” Gorgo spoke. “It is happening with Martin as well. Somehow... somehow he is learning the ancient language. I can’t explain it... and I was going to explore it more with him when we got here, but it is obviously bleeding over to the Queens because of the connection they share.”

Deia looked at Anja's back. "I did not mean to imply she would choose this consciously Lady Anja." She spoke quickly. "This is something the *Lunmai* did to her. She could not refuse the fever. Joric... Joric simply got to her first." Deia finished with disgust in her voice.

"Deia... what did Chetak mean?" Gorgo asked. "Our history is not the truth? There is no mention of this *Lunmai* in the scrolls of our history, and I should know, I teach our history at the University."

Deia motioned to the chairs around the table. "Please... sit down everyone. I will explain what has happened here. Perhaps then we can decide how best to proceed." Deia waited until they reluctantly moved to the chairs and settled into them. "The *Lunmai* is an ancient part of our history. A part many of us my age do not want to remember. It is the part of our history that Resumar brought us out of, for he found it just as distasteful and barbaric, more so since this same thing happened with Eliana, the only wolf he ever truly loved."

"What?" Gorgo gasped.

Deia nodded slowly. "Chetak was right." She said. "Eliana was Chetak's mate. He was the first to reach her when she Came of Age." Deia walked around the table slowly, her hands now clasped behind her back. "Eliana fought Chetak... she was deeply in love with Resumar as well. They had grown up together from childhood, sworn their eternal love before Eliana was a hundred years old. When Eliana Came of Age; Resumar was in another province of Lyca, our original Home World. Chetak reached her first and took her violently, claiming her as his own. This did not sit well with either Eliana's family or many of our people. Resumar was trying to bring our people forward, and most supported his efforts. There were a few families, like Chetak's, powerful families that did not want this. They reveled in the old ways, the violence and bloodshed and dominance." Deia took a deep breath. "Eliana's sister detected the *Lunmai* blossoming in Eliana first. She was the only one Chetak would allow to visit her, as she was the youngest, and he had hoped to claim her as well when *she* Came of Age. Eliana's sister took this information to her mother, and then to Resumar. The King was despondent, and had been for months after Eliana was taken from him." Deia moved back to her chair and settled into it with a heavy sigh. "It was arranged for Eliana to be in one of our markets and to be kidnapped. Chetak knew who had done this immediately, and he went crazy. Resumar took Eliana high into the mountains, and together they waited until the *Lunmai* was upon her. When the fever was at its peak, he claimed her as his, and the joy in their singing howls echoed through the mountains for what seemed like forever."

"He stole her back?" Gorgo spoke.

Deia nodded. "It was wrong yes; and completely against the old laws and all of our traditions. Resumar did not care and neither did Eliana. When they returned mated... Chetak challenged Resumar in a blind rage. With hundreds looking on, Resumar killed Chetak's father and two of his brothers, quite handily mind you. He was every bit as large as Martin is in wolf form, though Martin appears to be a little broader and more muscular, and Resumar was even more vicious. When Chetak attempted to strike Resumar from behind, Eliana leaped between them and laid open Chetak's chest and abdomen with her own claws. She was in the tail end of the *Lunmai*, and still being ruled by the fever, it was instinct within her to protect her chosen mate, and that was increased by the fact that she loved him so."

"That is why Aricia attacked *Nauta Melme* when he went after this pig Joric?" Dysea asked. "But she doesn't love Joric! She loves *Nauta Melme*!"

Deia nodded. "As deeply in fever as I witnessed that she was, as I said, all rational thought was gone from her. Chetak was also right that the *Lunmai* only affects one in five hundred billion of our females. I would say now that those odds are not even accurate because our people have evolved out of our natural instinctual reactions to such things. It is also why no one detected it in Aricia. The *Lunmai* removes all rational thought, and brings out the most primal basic instinct of our females. That is the need to mate, to reproduce. At it's peak... Aricia would have been operating at the instinctual level, all rational thought gone from her. I surmise because she was raised among the Spartans... with no contact whatsoever with her true people, with us, she did not know what was happening to her. The Spartans were far closer in instinct and traditions to our original people Gorgo, you know this. Leonidas followed the rule of law the humans had established for the most part when he became King in Sparta, and humans have, for the most part always given their females choice. But without the knowledge we had here on Apo Prime, no one in Sparta would even know what to look for in relation to the *Lunmai*. I would suggest contacting whoever is in charge on Earth and have every Lycavorian female, mated or not, have them examined to insure this is not happening in any other females."

"But what he is done is no better than rape!" Anja protested.

Deia nodded. "Yes Milady... I would agree. As would many others... except for the part where he demanded from Aricia to speak what she did. He was very careful to insure she announced most clearly she was choosing him as her mate. Given the information they were able to obtain, there was no doubt they knew Aricia would never do this willingly, so they waited until the fever was at its peak and Joric hit her with his aura. He is a powerful Alpha in his own right."

"More powerful than Martin?" Anja gasped. "I doubt that."

Deia shook her head. "Let me explain." She spoke. "Our males... Lycavorian males... their aura is like a... it is like an energy field of sorts. I was never very good in school physiology, but essentially the male aura is a weapon of sorts. They can control it, direct it, I'm sure you have felt it with the King, as Gorgo and I have felt it with our mates. When he nuzzles you, caresses you and touches you with his aura, what do you feel?"

Anja looked at her. "It... it is like an aphrodisiac." She answered softly, remembering how she felt when he touched her with that part of him.

Deia nodded. "The King... any Lycavorian male you come across on this planet or across the Union, they have instinctually and with the help of their fathers and grandfathers, they have learned how to harness their auras. How much they release, who they direct it too." Deia explained. "Resumar began this, and it has continued to this day. I have sensed the King's aura, in the hover lift going to the Greeting Center. I have not felt one so powerful since Resumar himself. I would dare say with the force of the aura that the King keeps shielded, if Martin ever hit you or Dysea with his full aura, complete and unprotected, you would both become utterly helpless before him. You would refuse him nothing; do anything for him, anything at all. He could turn you into babbling fools in a heartbeat, and you would want nothing more than to surrender to him in every way. That he has learned to control it as he has without guidance or direction of any sort," Deia sat back in her chair. "That bespeaks of a power unlike any I have ever seen. His Mindvoice powers are already immeasurable, and I have had our most powerful Mages probing him since he set foot on this planet attempting to break through his shields, men and women who do this for a living."

"What?" Dysea yelled. "You are not right?"

"I had every right, and he knew of it. He allowed it. He acts like a King and doesn't even know it." Deia said quickly. "It does not matter now... none of them came even remotely close to penetrating his Mindvoice Shields. They stopped within the first few hours of trying for fear of setting off some sort of psychic trap." Deia looked at Anja. "Chetak... Joric... those who follow them... they use their auras as weapons, against our females primarily. In the grips of the *Lunmai* as she was, Joric most likely hit her with his unshielded aura, and that was all it took to send her over the edge."

Gorgo looked at Deia intently something still bothering her. "Deia... how do you know all this? How do you know Chetak? You two... it seemed like he knew who you were and..."

Deia met her eyes. "I am Eliana's sister Gorgo. That is how I know all this. That is how Chetak knows who I am. I am the one who first discovered the *Lunmai* in Eliana." Deia spoke softly.

Gorgo simply stared at her in unabashed shock and astonishment. "I... I thought... I thought the Coven butchered everyone even remotely related to them."

"They did." Deia spoke. "My mate... my mate saved me. I have hidden this from everyone all of these years and that is how it must stay. I am not that young woman anymore. This is who I am."

Anja shook her head. "She was controlling it." She spoke up attempting anything to not believe this. "She was fighting this... this *Lunmai*. Aricia is nearly as powerful as Martin in terms of her Mindvoice powers. Surely she could have fought Joric."

Deia looked at Gorgo. "She is that strong?"

Gorgo nodded, "Surprisingly so yes."

Deia was silent for a moment before shaking her head. "Regardless of how strong she is," Deia spoke finally. "The combination of the *Lunmai* and Joric's aura, there is no way she could have withstood both."

"That is no different than rape as *Melyanna* has said!" Dysea snapped.

"And I would agree again Milady." Deia spoke. "However because they were careful enough to have her verbally choose Joric as she did in the images we saw, as distasteful as they were, we can do nothing. It would be a violation of our laws in every way. No politician or Enforcer of the Laws would touch this. And believe me when I tell you, I would like nothing better than to take the whole of the Union military and go to Enurrua and rip Chetak's face from him myself. I can not... because it goes against everything that King Resumar began

here.” Deia sat back. “And because he has threatened to release this information publicly in regards to Martin and Yuri, not to mention the fact he has a child by her. That would be more ruinous, for it would send the Union into a tailspin from which we might never recover. To know the King we have waited so long for, the grandson of Resumar, to know he has fathered a child with our most hated enemy? That would be far more perilous and damaging.”

“That is easy for you to say Deia.” Isabella spoke now. “This does not affect you in the way it affects Martin and Dysea and Anja. They have had... they have had a part of themselves ripped from them in a particularly cruel way.”

Deia looked at her surprised at the emotion that was now in her voice when she spoke. “Isabella... I... I would have thought you would look at this more objectively than the others.”

“And I do.” Isabella answered. “I understand why we can not go after her, or move against this pig Chetak. I have seen what Aricia means to Dysea and Anja, and what she means to Martin even more so. This wound... it is not something that we can just wish away.”

Deia looked at her for a long moment. “Forgive me for being so callous, but there are other Lycavorian Pureblood females out there, beautiful young women who would give anything to take Aricia’s place. He is King... and you are his Queens. You must get past this. Once... once Aricia has his child she will be tied to Joric forever.”

“His child!” Anja gasped.

Deia nodded. “Part of the *Lunmai*... the vilest part, is that it makes her extremely fertile. She will mate with Joric endlessly until the fever passes, as many times as possible, wherever and whenever the fever surges. When it does... she will undoubtedly be with child. I’m sorry... but that is not something we can change. If her feelings for the King are what you suggest, given her actions and the fact that she will be carrying Joric’s child when the *Lunmai* passes, this knowledge will destroy her. If she does not submit to Joric whenever he demands, and you believe she will not, then he will eventually tire of her resistance and kill her outright.”

“They are part of the Union now!” Gorgo barked. “Is there nothing we can do about that? Surely that barbaric practice can not be allowed!”

Deia shook her head. “Part of our constitution states we can not intervene or interfere in the traditions and cultures of a member state no matter how vile and barbaric we deem them to be.”

“Will we be allowed to see her?” Anja spoke. “Once this... this fever passes I know she will...”

“It is very unlikely that Chetak or Joric will allow that, especially you or Dysea. He knows the connection you have with her. Nor will I allow it.” Deia spoke cutting her off. “The two of you are now too valuable to risk in going to Enurrua. Though you are not at risk of the *Lunmai*... there are many things that could happen to you there, none of them good.”

Anja opened her mouth with a come back but Dysea took her hand in hers and shook her head.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *No Melyanna.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Dysea... we can't just abandon her. You know as well as I that she would not betray Martin... betray us willingly. I refuse to believe that.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I do not wish to believe it either Melyanna. I will not believe it. But what are we to do? The... the bond of a child is not something broken easily if at all.*

Deia’s voice interrupted them. “The bigger problem we have now is to discover how Chetak got the information he has. We have a traitor among our people, and I intend to find out who it is.” The chime on the table had started before Deia finished speaking, and she reached out to touch the small panel. “Yes?”

“Prime Minster... the Elfin delegation is here. Ambassador L’tian is with them.” The voice spoke. Dysea’s head came up at that.

Deia nodded. “Very well... show them in.” She said getting to her feet.

The doors slid open and they watched L’tian smugly lead the group of three elf males and two women into the large meeting room.

Dysea saw his smug face and she lost all pretense of the elfin self control she prided herself on, and she leaped from her chair. Dysea had grown in muscle and power since her life with Martin began, and she was the largest of them next to Aricia in wolf form. Her hundred and thirty-five pound body was all muscle and strength, and before L’tian had gotten halfway into the room she was upon him.

She lifted him clean off the floor and smashed him into the wall of the meeting room, shattering a light fixture on the wall with the force of the impact, the Shukur fighting knife appearing in her hand, the blade pressed tightly to his throat.

He gasped loudly, his eyes open in fear as Dysea glared at him. "What... what is the meaning of this?" He demanded.

Deia was the only one who had come to her feet in shock. Neither Anja nor Isabella had moved, both of them with slight curls of satisfaction on their faces, while Gorgo simply glared at the elfin ambassador. Seanna looked on quite impassively, her dark green eyes unreadable, and no one saw her deftly move along the table and remove the data pad with the blood sample, the item disappearing into her uniform.

"Lady Dysea! Release him immediately!" Deia snapped.

Dysea glared at L'tian, her emerald eyes now fully changed, her wolf fangs extended and looking decidedly angry.

"Mark my words carefully Ambassador," Dysea growled in a low menacing voice. "If I find you are in any way involved with what has taken place here, I swear upon my love for *Nauta Melme* that I will see you rot for eternity in the pits of the darkest hole I can find in this universe. Then... then you will know the pain we are enduring at this moment."

"Are... are you threatening me?" L'tian demanded, reaching up to grasp her vice like grip on his shirt.

That was when Isabella rose and got to her feet, moving quickly to stand beside Dysea. Her eyes were also changed to cobalt blue and she glared at him.

"She is not threatening you, L'tian you fool!" Isabella spoke heatedly. "She is merely stating a fact."

"Deia what is the meaning of this?" One of the other elves demanded now. "Spartans of the Royal Guard, to include the King's very own Captain, barged into our meeting hall and ordered us to come here. Ordered us!" He exclaimed. "Who are they to think they can order us about? They are not even from this planet!"

Anja rose to her feet now, as did Gorgo. "Who are they?" Anja spoke softly. "Right now they are the only people we can trust completely. Martin was right... ever since he discovered who he was... ever since we started this journey; with few exceptions, everyone has tried to manipulate him in some fashion. I can tell you with the utmost certainty; soon he will grow tired of it. And when he does... he will strike back. And I guarantee you will not want to be on the same planet as him when he does." Anja spoke these words while looking directly at Deia.

"Lady Anja... please you must..." Deia started.

"We are done talking here today." Anja spoke. "We're going to be with Martin if you need us." Anja said. "It seems we are the only ones who are concerned for anything more than political folly."

Anja spun around and marched out of the room, Seanna directly behind her, followed quickly by Isabella and Dysea.

L'tian turned and looked at Deia. "You had better explain to me what is going on right this minute Deia!"

It was then Deia let her anger overruled her own control, and all of them saw her dark eyes change and her fangs extend.

"Ambassador L'tian, why don't you explain to me in the simplest of terms possible, how you came across the information regarding the King that you did?" Deia spoke striding towards him. "If you do not choose to reveal this information to me here and now, I will have you arrested for treason and every member of the elf delegation will be expelled from Apo Prime until I do find out."

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## DAY ONE

### *Betrayal*

*I love you Martin Leonidas. With all that I am. I will never betray you, never hurt you. Nothing will ever come between us as long as I have your love.*

His dreams were chaotic and random, and so very cruel. Always centering on her, always her, and nothing else.



### *Betrayal*

Her lavender coco scent filling his being; her female aura wrapping around him; the feel of her lush body against his. Anja and Dysea he loved without shame, without remorse. They were beautiful and strong and he reveled in their embrace.

He loved her without reason, without question, and without knowing why.

*I will never betray you.*

She was in his blood, around his blood, she *was* his blood.

*Never hurt you.*

Azure blue sparkling in the light, her smile so inviting, so free that it had set him free as well.

Discovering who he was... what he was. She was the catalyst. The beginning of it all. And now the ending.

*I love you Martin Leonidas.*

Her skin like soft satin, deeply tanned and deliciously tasteful. Her sweet essence the flavor of her scent, like nectar from a fruit he could not live without, a drug that he was addicted too.

*With all that I am.*

The curve of her firm breasts, the sensual line of her legs and the perfection of her center. Her wolf coat so like his, as black as the darkest night, yet like touching the softness of feathers. Her flanks finely shaped and so maidenly enticing. Her muzzle perfect in its shape and size.

*I will never betray you.*

The violent slap of flesh. Her cries of pleasure for someone else.

*YES! I choose you! Claim me! Take me as your mate!*

**BETRAYAL!**

Martin's yellow/gold wolf eyes sprang open, the silver/white flash of light bathing the bedroom and then the black wolf howled.

## **LYCAVORIAN PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC CORVETTE DAY THREE**

Chetak watched as the stars flew by as they made the next LSD jump that would put them into their home system. He had ordered the captain to not waste any time in leaving the capital system as quickly as possible. He relaxed after the first day and the first two Gates, finally coming to realize she wouldn't chase him. He couldn't help but smile.

He could hear the lighter sounds of Joric rutting with the wench in the rear cabin. He had to admit she was a fine piece of flesh, and even with the fever beginning to burn off, she was still willing to submit to him with a simply burst of his son's aura. He had no doubts that she would conceive within a week of returning to Enurrua. Joric must have emptied himself into her forty or more times by now. The one thing he had noticed was that no matter how hard he screwed her tight body into the bed or chair or even the floor, driving her insane with pleasure, he could never get her to scream his name. That was his son, always feeling full of himself when they screamed his out his name.

It mattered not to him. He had his revenge. After over ten thousand years he finally had his revenge, and it felt so sweet. And now with the information he had in his possession, he could begin to take even more revenge. His seat on the Lycavorian Senate would now allow him to change things. Slowly for sure... but ultimately he dreamed himself being crowned King.

He turned as the door to the rear cabin opened and Joric came out tucking his cock back into his pants and smiling. Chetak caught a glimpse of the tanned leg on the bed and the swell of the perfect breasts before the door slid shut. He watched as Joric went to the dispenser and keyed in the code for ale. When he drew it out he turned to his father and moved to the chair slumping into it exhausted.

"So tell me Joric... was it worth it?"

Joric looked at him and smiled, showing perfect white teeth. "Unbelievable father." He spoke lifting the ale and downing half of it, some of the dark liquid dribbling down the front of his unbuttoned shirt. "My only regret is I wish it would have been me who had her first. This traitor King must be built like a bull dragon to have stretched her so."

Chetak laughed. "Perhaps my son, but she is yours now. Stretch her other openings."

Joric grinned. "Something I have already done father. She did not seem to like it at first, but she warmed up to it after the third time." He spoke with a cruel laugh.

Chetak turned when the COM Panel beeped. He touched the console. "What is it?"

"Lord Chetak," The pilot spoke. "Your son Rommna is hailing us from this planet Earth on a secure channel."

"Very well, put it through here."

Chetak watched as the brutish face of his next oldest son appeared. "Rommna... what have you to report?"

"Father... we have conducted extensive scans as you ordered. The deposits here are richer than anything we have ever seen. I made an offer to the elf-*upae* in charge and she threw it back at me and told me never to return to her planet." He laughed. "We have been orbiting just outside their planetary sensor range, making covert forays to the surface. This city of Sparta... the one this new King comes from... it is a windfall of young females father. All prime and fresh."

"Have you taken any?" Chetak asked.

"Only two from Sparta father, several elf females from settlements however; including one of those dark skinned elf females that I told you about. They are called Drow it seems; a new breed indigenous to this planet. They are quite protective of their virtue here, but they have been entertaining my men for the last several days. This Drow elf even cut Hekla, and bit his ear off."

"I hope you disposed of the body after you killed her for such an action." Chetak spoke.

Rommna nodded. "Of course father."

Chetak looked at Joric and shook his head. "He's a brute Joric... but he is efficient."

Joric laughed in agreement. "Yes he is."

"Do not get caught with any of these females on your ship Rommna. We may be members of the Union now, but we can not get sloppy and give them reason to act against us."

Rommna nodded. "Do you wish to have me make another attempt at negotiating for the Ore father?"

Chetak nodded after a moment. "Attempt it. If you are unable to get the elf wench to agree let me know and I will handle it with our new Senate seat. It will be an excellent attempt to see how much they are willing to protect this traitor King they have found. We are only hours from home... contact me after you have made a second attempt."

"Father the she-elf *upae* here. She is wolf... turned by a pureblood it seems by her scent." Rommna spoke. "She smells very good father."

"Are the plans set for the target?" Chetak asked.

Rommna nodded. "Yes father, exactly as you ordered. The assassin is ready. She will be dead within hours of your command."

"He is good I take it?"

Rommna nodded. "He has been used by the High Coven father. I obtained his name from sources on Uryias II. Imagine my surprise when I discovered he was already here on this planet."

Chetak's eyes widened, "Really?"

Rommna nodded. "He was in the employ of the Coven Princess while she was here." He answered. "Word has it, he has never failed."

Chetak nodded after along moment, "Very good. Remove her then. I don't need her around to discover what we have done. If I understand correctly, she is trusted completely by Leonidas, and with her dead... he will lose another pillar of his support."

"As you order father," Rommna spoke, "And the she-elf?"

Chetak chuckled, "If you can steal her without exposing us fine. If not... just *nubou* her and be done with it. If you kill her, leave no trace."

Rommna smiled, "Thank you father."

Chetak shook his head as the transmission ended and he looked at Joric. "He's more a brute than I ever was." He spoke with a smile. "I raised my boys well."

Joric set the glass of ale down and got comfortable. "I am going to sleep for a few hours father. I wish to enjoy my new mate a few times more before the fever passes and I need to beat her to get her to submit to me."

Chetak laughed as Joric closed his eyes and let sleep take him.

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## APO PRIME DAY FIVE

“Do we alert the fleets?” Ceneu asked looking at Deia. “The ground troops are ready to move, and the King’s personal Fleet Group has been formed and is standing by.”

“The King’s Fleet Group?” Deia asked.

Ceneu nodded. “I have taken the best of the Home Guard Fleets and formed them into the 1<sup>st</sup> Spartan Fleet Attack Group.” He answered proudly, not mentioning the other things Martin had asked him to do. “One hundred and sixty ships crewed by our finest. Not to mention Vistr’s Ninth Spartan Expeditionary Division, and the unit of General Vengal’s Drow and elfin scouts. The captain of the LEONIDAS I is my own son, and a fine commander he is. He is ready to...”

“No.” Deia spoke firmly.

Ceneu, Vengal and Vistr, as well as the other military leaders that had been allowed here for the meeting and now knew what happened looked at her as if she had gone mad. Vistr leaned forward in his chair.

“You expect us to just let this pass Deia?” Vistr barked. “This is an act of war at most, and a violation of our most sacred and revered laws at the least. She was to be Queen!”

Deia nodded. “I know... but she chose Chetak’s son freely.”

“Freely?” Riall could not contain his anger any longer. He had held it in for the last three days, allowing it to simmer beneath the surface, and now he could not hold back. “The Lunmai is not freely choosing anything!” He screamed, shocking even Deia with the forcefulness of his words. “How can you just stand there as you have for the last four days and say the same *anse* thing over and over?”

“What would you have me do Riall?” Deia screamed back. “Obliterate Chetak simply to take back one female! Our laws have stood firm for thousands of years because they apply to everyone! I can not go after Chetak for this as much as I want too. And I have more reason to hate that man than any of you in this room.”

“So we do nothing?” Vistr demanded.

“Aricia was to be Queen; I know this damn you all! The *Lunmai* changed all that! The moment Chetak’s Republic became part of the Union and he forced her to choose Joric, our hands were tied. He knew this, and that is why he did it!” Deia shouted to all of them. “We have other problems! I want to know who the traitor is. Chetak got that information somehow, and I want to know how!”

“The request for her medical exam came from the LEONIDAS I.” Ceneu spoke. “That has been confirmed. It was made from a terminal in the medical bay, but the code used was forged. When she arrived for the exam with Queen Anja... it was in the system. No one questioned it. That is undoubtedly found out about her condition, or at the very least confirmed it.”

“The events surrounding Aricia are secondary to how he got the information about Yuri and they child they have together.” Deia snapped. “That is what I am interested in.”

“First Commander Ranati?” Ceneu asked looking at Riall.

Riall shook his head. “No... I questioned him myself. He has been distraught over this entire episode, and has not left the computer terminal on the LEONIDAS since I questioned him. He met the King once and was completely enthralled. He was in the room with us when we discovered about the child, but he does not have the command codes to send a message from the medical bay.”

“Are you sure Riall?” Vistr asked. “The only person besides you and Gorgo in that room were this Ranati and the Guardian of the Line. You did not betray us... nor did the Guardian of the Line and to question Gorgo after what she has been through in her lifetime would be *wayn malda*.”

Riall met Vistr’s eyes. “I will question him again my friend.” He spoke his voice hard. “Perhaps you and Vengal would like to accompany me. And Vengal... bring several of your Drow elves if you would. They have earned a reputation among my people that elicits a distinct amount of fear.”

Vengal nodded. “If it helps Martin Leonidas... I will do whatever I can.”

Deia looked at them. “I know all of you want to hit back. I do as well.”

“Our only saving grace is the High Coven is doing nothing as well.” Ceneu spoke. “Since we pulled our forces back into staging areas they have launched no new attacks or tried to press their advantages.”

“What about the search for For’mya?” Deia asked.

“We have feelers out with our people in the Wilds, but nothing has come up yet.” Ceneu replied. “It is very likely she is already dead.”

Deia nodded slowly, “Which adds another problem to our list. How did L’tian get the information he has said he will use against the King if his daughter is not found.”

“Nubou L’tian!” Vistr snapped. “I have never liked him. His daughter is a military officer and she knew the risks. Threatening to do what he has said is paramount to treason as well.”

Deia nodded. “Yes... I know. And I made sure he knew that when he was here the other day, in the strongest possible terms.”

“Did he buy it?” Riall asked.

Deia shook his head. “No. In fact... he gave us a deadline of two weeks.”

All of them looked at her stunned. “Two weeks! There is no possible way we could cover all of Coven space in two decades, let alone two weeks.” Riall said.

“I told him that as well.” Deia spoke. “Someone else is pulling his strings and I intend to find out. In the mean time... we must direct all of our resources into finding For’mya. It appears gentlemen, that someone out there among our own people does not want the King to return to power and they will stop at nothing to see he is disgraced in the process.”

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## EARTH SPARTA

Aihola sat on the edge of the bed and gazed down at Tarifa’s sleeping face. Her amber eyes were alive with love and life. She reached out slowly and brushed back some hair from her face, seeing her stir slightly and then leaned over to kiss her forehead. She got up from the bed and pulled the long robe over her naked body. She and Tarifa never wore clothes when they slept, preferring the touch of each other’s skin. She tied the robe tightly around her waist and made her way to the door, waiting for it to slide open and then she stepped into the hall.

Nessia had been overjoyed when they had contacted her to come for a visit, both of them needing the time away together after so long apart. As Aihola heard the sounds of children playing in the streets and the smell of delicious Spartan bread baking Aihola knew it had been the right decision. Nessia’s mate was still in Europe and making arrangements to return within the week with his Mora, and she had insisted they stay with her at her home. Aihola walked down the short flight of stairs following her nose, her stomach rumbling as her hunger took her. She walked into the kitchen and saw Dekton’s oldest daughter pulling the bread from the old fashion oven. Nessia was two minutes older than her sister, but acted years older. She had immediately made them welcome beyond even Tarifa’s estimates, and it filled Aihola with warmth and love.

They had spent the first night remembering Dekton and alternating laughing and crying, but since that first night it was as if the pain was almost completely gone. There would always be an ache for her and Tarifa, but with the support of those who loved him as much as they did, that ache would fade over time.

Nessia looked up when she smelled Aihola and her face lit up brightly. “Good morning Aihola.” She exclaimed, setting the bread on the counter. “I was wondering when you two were going to find your way out of the bedroom. Long night I take it?” Nessia asked with a knowing smile.

Aihola laughed and went to the dispenser to get tea. Nessia looked upon their relationship as one that was blessed by the old Greek Gods, and she was not shy about telling everyone they ran in to in the markets, that she and Tarifa were her father’s mates.

“You could say that.” Aihola spoke as she finished pouring the tea. In fact it had been a *very* long night. With Nessia’s children staying with her mate’s parents and Nessia going to her friend’s house, Aihola had Tarifa all to herself. They had quickly fallen back into their Mistress/slave roles and Tarifa had made her explode more times than she could remember. Of course Aihola thought with a smile, she had returned the

pleasure just as intensely, and with equal vigor. She settled onto the bench and watched as Nessia transferred the bread loaves onto cooling racks.

“Do you cook?” Nessia asked with the European accent she had inherited from her mother.

Aihola laughed. “Cook...oh no? I tried once... Tarifa never let me back in the small kitchen that we have in Eden City.”

Nessia cut one of the smaller loaves and put it on a plate, sliding it over to her. “I will teach you. It’s actually quite fun.”

Aihola smiled as she bit into the warm bread, savoring the flavor and texture. She had found her taste buds to much more sensitive since Dekton had bitten her, and altered her genes even more by making her half vampire and half wolf. “It’s delicious.” Aihola spoke with a mouthful of bread.

Nessia looked at her intently. “You and Tarifa are meant for one another Aihola of the Drow. Never doubt that... never question it again. My father was right when he said you are strongest together.”

Aihola nodded. “I know. And I will never do something that foolish again.”

“That’s good to hear?” Tarifa’s voice said from behind her. Aihola smiled when Tarifa’s arms encircled her waist and she nuzzled the back of her neck. “Good morning Mistress.” She said softly.

“Good morning slave.” Aihola answered with a smile leaning back against her.

Nessia laughed at their antics and shook her head. “My father said you two were crazy.” She said. “I see he was right.”

Tarifa lifted the mug in Aihola’s hand and sipped from it. “What shall we do today?” She asked. “It’s our last day.”

Aihola looked at her. “I’d like to go to Thermopylae and see where Martin’s father rests.” She spoke. “We... Dekton was our mate... and we should know as much of his history as we can. Thermopylae is important to Spartan history isn’t it Nessia.”

“It is our past, our present and our future.” Nessia spoke.

“What do you think my love?” Aihola asked.

Tarifa nodded. “I think that would be nice.”

The chime on the door sounded and Tarifa handed the tea back to Aihola. “I’m closest. It’s probably the children anyway.”

Aihola turned back to Nessia to ask her something while Tarifa walked through the house to the front door. She touched the panel on the side and turned just as it opened, seeing the small monitor on the wall showing a burning building in the background. She turned back and looked into the savage face of the Lycavorian Rommna, wearing a Spartan uniform.

“Hello she-wolf, time to come with me.” He spoke lifting the P190 and smashing it into her face.

Aihola walked into the living area just as Rommna caught Tarifa’s limp body and her amber eyes flared. “Put her down!” Aihola screamed launching herself across the room at the huge Lycavorian.

Rommna stepped to the side just as his soldier swung the P190 and smashed it into Aihola’s face. She dropped like she had hit a wall and fell to the floor.

“Leave the bitch! We already have several of her kind.” Rommna hissed. “Quickly... before they find the bodies of those we killed. We must get back to the ship.”

Aihola’s amber eyes fluttered open as she tried to clear away the haze and pain in her head.

Ship. He had said ship.

Aihola’s eyes closed as blackness took her.

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## URYIAS

“Yuriko?” The female voice spoke.

She turned and saw Anuk moving up behind her, both hands filled with mugs. She watched the incredibly attractive half elf, half wolf female begin to settle next to her on the ramp of the Coven Runner and hold out the mug. “You need nourishment Yuriko, you haven’t fed the entire time we’ve been out here, and I know you must feel it.”

Yuriko had been stunned at the causal acceptance she received from Daniel and these two elf females. They had shown her nothing but friendship throughout the entire trip here to Uryias, always answering her questions, always asking hundreds of their own. She expected this from Filrian, as he had been the closest thing to a friend to her in her life, but from these three strange people, it had been unexpected. Anuk seemed especially concerned for her, and was always asking how she was, how everyone was. Filrian had been working with her to pass the time these last weeks, and she had learned so much in regards to medical advances and such that she had never expected. Filrian had commented one night how she seemed naturally adept at putting people at ease and treating them.

Yuriko smiled and took it from her as Anuk settled on the ramp. “Thank you...” She spoke. “This... this is not a part of my heritage that I...”

Anuk shook her head slowly with a smile. “Don’t.” She said. “You have nothing to be ashamed about or explain to me. Lady Anja made this for Selene and Lynwe... to sustain them monthly. I ask Filrian and he told me you normally fed on the same monthly schedule.”

Yuriko lifted the mug of cloned blood to her lips and sipped it, feeling it wash through and energize her vampire genes. “I... I did not want to do this in front of others.” She spoke finally. “I did not know how Daniel would react.”

Anuk smiled and sipped her tea. “Why do it now, in front of me?”

Yuriko looked at her. “You... you are different.” She said. “My father... Martin... he considers you part of his family.”

Anuk nodded, “As he does Daniel and now Nayeca.”

Yuriko nodded. “But you are a woman.” Yuriko spoke. “And Nayeca... with her eyes you can never tell what is going through her mind.”

Anuk smiled and squeezed Yuriko’s arm. “You might be surprised what goes through Nayeca’s eyes.”

“If they are on you slave... they are always good thoughts.” Nayeca’s voice sounded from behind them.

Anuk chuckled as her Drow Mistress settled to the ramp behind her and pressed her body tightly to Anuk’s back. “Good morning.” Anuk spoke softly.

Nayeca chuckled and nuzzled the back of Anuk’s neck as she had seen Daniel do so many times, and as with him she smiled and leaned back against her, especially when she nuzzled her elfin ears. All of them had sensitive ears, and in moments of passion, it was one of an elf female’s most erogenous areas.

Yuriko smiled and made to get up. Nayeca’s hand stopped her. “Don’t go Yuriko.”

“I don’t want to interfere.” Yuriko replied.

“We’ve been on this stinking ship for over three weeks.” Nayeca spoke. “And we have exhausted Daniel. He will not be getting up any time soon. We have time.”

Yuriko looked at her. “But there was no sound last night.” She said.

Anuk smiled and lifted her mug. “That’s the wonderful thing about it. No sound because we’re too busy doing other things.”

Yuriko’s dark eyes grew wide and then she broke out laughing as the implication of what Anuk was saying struck her. She shook her head. “Truly I have never met elf females such as you. You are... you are so free.”

“Well there are advantages to...” Nayeca started to speak but felt Anuk tense against her body. “My love?” She whispered now. “What is it?”

Anuk’s nose twitched slightly. “We aren’t alone anymore.” She replied just as softly. “Three... four... five new scents just entered the bay.”

Yuriko reached out with her vampire hearing, her eyes changing to cobalt blue. Yes... she could detect their heartbeats. “I only... I only sense four.” She whispered.

“There is five, I’m sure of it. One is very frightened. The others... the others are chasing the first.” Anuk spoke softly.

*And here I didn’t think my teaching was for shit.* Daniel’s strong voice filled Anuk and Nayeca’s minds like a warm breeze. Aricia and Dysea had helped them establish a Mindvoice link before they left earth, and considering what the three of them now shared together, it was not unwelcome in any way. *Which direction baby?*

*West entrance Daniel.* Anuk answered. *The frightened one is moving faster now, coming straight for the ramp.*

*I'll grab Filrian and we'll go out the emergency hatch and come up on the side of the ramp. Tell Yuriko to cover the back of the ramp. Her vampire speed is better used in the open. You and Nayeca let them come up the ramp and then we'll greet them.* Daniel spoke.

Anuk nodded and turned to Yuriko quickly whispering what Daniel had told her. Yuriko nodded immediately and using her vampire speed she blurred down the ramp out of sight while Anuk and Nayeca rolled backwards in the same motion and disappeared up the ramp.

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“I told you they weren’t here!” The first figure spoke, pulling back the hood from his simian like face. Their skin was light brown in color and ringed with black and white. The first flexed his muscular arm and lowered the small hand blaster he carried.

“He couldn’t have gone far!” The second simian hissed.

“He didn’t.” Dan’s voice spoke from behind them.

They whirled around to see the spear head of the Nehtes burst through the chest of their comrade at the bottom of the ramp on the right. They saw a flash of black and the gurgling sound and the throat of their second companion exploded outward like a geyser, yellowish blood showering them from the side.

“Look out!” The first one to have spoken yelled.

“Too late assassin.” Nayeca hissed from behind him.

They whirled in time to see Nayeca’s hands flash forward and then back, the second Simian’s head lolling to the side as Nayeca decapitated him. The first assassin saw the black outlined cerulean blue eyes glaring at him and then the extended fangs.

“Spartans!” He gasped before her Nehtes impaled his thick throat.

Danny stepped from the side of the ramp kicking the body of the assassin he had speared, just as the blurring black figure appeared at his side. Yuriko squatted next to the body on the ramp and nodded her head. “Ophidians.” She said, “Assassins. Very poor assassins it appears. Most of their kind is thieves and beggars.” She was checking the body as she talked. “It is odd they would have attacked us after what Anuk did the first day we arrived.”

Anuk wiped off her Nehtes on the Ophidians cloak. “No one but my mate and my Mistress touch me in such a spot.” She hissed.

Yuriko looked at her with a smile. “Yes... I’ll be sure to spread that word of warning.”

Danny squatted next to her at the base of the ramp. “Ok... what were they after. There were five of them.”

“They were after this one.” Filrian’s voice echoed from inside the Coven Runner at the top of the ramp. He dragged the fifth Simian down by the scruff of his collar. He was smaller than the others they had just killed and his grey eyes were wide in terror.

Yuriko rose to her feet and looked at him. “If you wish to save yourself from their fate you will tell me why you are here.”

The Simian looked at her, and Danny could smell the fear wafting from him. He wrinkled his nose. “He could use a bat that is for sure.” He said rising back to his full height of six foot five.

Anuk snorted as she walked past him to stand next to Dan. “A long bath.” She spoke.

“I’ve... I’ve never seen... I’ve never seen vampires and... and Spartans working together.” The young Simian spoke.

Nayeca’s gleaming yellow stained blood pressed to his throat as Filrian held him. “And you will never see it again unless you speak quickly.”

“No wait! I... I have the answers you seek!” He nearly shouted.

“Why... why should we believe you?” Yuriko spoke moving towards him slowly; bringing up the wickedly curved blade in her hand.

“The Spartan elf female, the famous pilot. Everyone knows of her!” The Simian announced quickly. “There was a Coven officer here only two days ago. He spoke of this female. He said they were heading for Laxnis II, the prison planet.”

Yuriko looked at Daniel. "It is as I expected." She spoke.

Dan nodded. "What about Lisisa?"

"I don't know where she is!" The Simian exclaimed. "But I know who does!"

Yuriko stepped close to the Simian, her eyes changing once more. "If you lie to me Simian assassin, you will not live long enough to spend the Riyal you will get in return for this information."

"I don't want money!" The Simian spoke.

Dan stepped closer now. "Then what do you want?"

"I want off this planet." The Simian spoke. "And I want help."

"Help with what?" Yuriko asked.

"I'll only tell that to the Lycavorian King." He spoke.

Yuriko pressed her blade up to his throat, joining the one held by Nayeca. "And why would the King want to hear anything you have to say?"

"I wish... I wish to beg for his help."

"I ask again. Help with what?" Yuriko demanded.

"I want... I want to save my... my family." The Simian spoke quickly.

Yuriko turned her head to where Daniel and Anuk stood. Daniel nodded his head. "He's not lying." He spoke. "Of course... my sense of smell could be all screwed up too. It's this cinnamon smell see... it's kind of mixed with apples and..." Anuk elbowed him hard in the gut shutting him up.

Yuriko couldn't help the smile that split her face wide. "Why do I not find that hard to believe?" She spoke. She turned back to Filrian. "Give this fool a bath. I must contact my father."

Filrian grabbed the Simian by the collar once more. "Gladly." He spoke. "He's beginning to stink up my ship with his stench." He started dragging the Simian up into the runner while Yuriko turned to Danny.

"Daniel?"

"Go... we'll get rid of the dead weight." Dan spoke reaching down to grab the dead assassin.

Yuriko wasted no more time.

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## APO PRIME

Anja walked into their bedroom and immediately saw the huge bed was empty. It had been built for all of them, and only one had slept in it so far, and that was not by choice. Her jade eyes darted back and forth as she walked into the room and she inhaled deeply, finding his mint scent. She followed that out onto the balcony and saw him standing there looking up at the three moons of Apo Prime. He wore his Spartan body armor and she saw his multi-colored crested helmet on the railing.

"Martin?" She said her voice no more than a whisper.

He didn't turn and she walked up behind him slowly. "Martin..."

"You need to go to Hadaria with Seanna." He spoke softly. "You need to learn what they want to teach you Anja."

"Martin... Aricia... she..."

He turned and looked at her, his dark eyes unreadable. "She betrayed me. She betrayed us." He said softly.

"She didn't Martin! You can't believe that!" Anja protested. "Not after what we had! This... this *Lunmai* bullshit... I don't believe it! She was stronger than that! Stronger than me!"

He stepped forward and pulled her into his embrace and Anja let the tears come then. Everything she had been holding back for days came spilling out of her as she wrapped her arms around the only man she had ever loved. The only man they had ever loved. He bathed her in the embrace of his arms and his aura sweeping it around her like a warm blanket.

"Apparently... she was not strong enough Anja." He said softly.

"What... what are you going to do?" Anja asked, pulling her tear stained face away from his chest.

Martin took her face in his hands and kissed her tenderly. "Something has happened to Tarifa and Helen. I... I can't sense it completely... but it's there." He spoke. "*Melda Min* and *Bella* are already enroute there. They left an hour ago. You need to go to Hadaria Anja. You need to learn what your people can teach you."



“I want to go with you.” Anja spoke.

Martin smiled and kissed her again. “I know. But where I am going you can not come. I need to do this alone.” He said. “Go to Hadaria and learn. When you return we’ll be together.”

“Martin... they want you to take another Queen, another Queen of Lycavorian blood.” Anja spoke quickly. “Deia says it is the only way to attempt to stop what is happening.”

Martin shook his head slowly. “No. I had one Queen of Lycavorian blood. Aricia was the only Queen of my people that I wanted. I will not take another, ever. I have you Anja... I have *Melda Min* and I will have Bella someday.”

Anja reached up and touched his face with a shaking hand. “You... you do not deserve all the pain you have endured in this life Martin Leonidas. So much loss.” She said softly.

Martin tilted his head. “Life is pain.” He said. “I lost you once... I found you again. I will make do.”

“When will I see you again?” Anja spoke.

“Seanna tells me the zenith of the Nebula is in four months. I will be there for that regardless of what your people want. I am done being told what I can do and what I can’t do. I promise you.” Martin spoke. “I will break no more promises, and my word is now my vow Anja. I will love you for eternity as I will love Dysea and Bella.”

“Aricia... Aricia was your heart Martin; your soul.” Anja spoke, “My heart.”

“No one has ever died from a broken heart my love.” He spoke with a small smile. “Atropos and Seanna are waiting. Talk to no one, stop for nothing. There is a ship waiting for you.”

“Four months?” Anja spoke.

Martin nodded, “My promise to you.”

“I will hold you to that.”

Martin smiled. “I’m sure you will.”

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“Prime Minister!” The communications tech burst into the meeting room where Deia sat with Riall, Gorgo and Ceneu.

Deia looked up. “What is it now?”

“Prime Minister I have a priority secure message for you and Admiral Riall.”

“From who?”

“It’s... it’s the King!” The tech spoke surprised.

Deia came to her feet in an instant. “Where is he?”

“Prime Minister... he is in orbit. On the LEONIDAS I Prime Minister!”

Deia’s face sank. “By the gods he’s going after her.”

Gorgo remained seated in her chair staring ahead as Deia went to the monitor. She slammed her hand on the panel and watched as Martin’s face appeared.

“Sire... Martin... may I ask what...” Deia started.

“Prime Minister Deia... I want you to listen to me very carefully; I am only going to say this once.” Martin spoke looking at her on the screen.

“Sire...”

“Silence!” Martin shouted, stunning her enough that she stepped back from the screen. “I am done being used and prodded and told what to do. It is over. It ends now. Is my mother there?”

“I’m here Martin.” Gorgo spoke softly.

“Very well. Deia... Dysea and Isabella are returning to earth. Something has happened with Tarifa and the Oracle. Once they discover what that is Dysea will contact you and let you know what they are doing. You will not attempt to make her do anything. She wouldn’t listen to you anyway. Anja is on her way to Hadaria to learn what her people want so badly to teach her. She will not be interfered with, coerced in any way to return until she is ready. I have given instructions to Atropos and her Royal Guard detachment that they are to answer only to her and no one else. I have authorized them to use force if necessary. Do not test them.”

“Sire... my King... I know what you... what you must be feeling... you can not go after her.” Deia spoke.

“Prime Minister... you can not begin to imagine what I am feeling at this moment. It would shatter all that you have come to understand and know. Trust me on that.” Martin spoke.

“Tell Ambassador L’tian I will personally contact him within the next three days. If he attempts to release any information without talking to me first, he is to be executed immediately and without regard, is that clear?”

“Sire that is...”

“Admiral Riall; according to our constitution who is control of the Union military?” Martin asked.

“You are sire?” He replied instantly.

“If the Prime Minister does not fulfill that order you will declare martial law and execute my orders. Is that clear?”

“Perfectly sire.” Riall spoke firmly.

Gorgo smiled from her seat and sent her aura of love and support to her mate instantly upon hearing his words.

“Prime Minister... I respect you... and I truly like you.” Martin spoke. “But my orders will be followed. I told you I’m done being manipulated. I meant it. You may resign now if you wish.”

Deia stood up and inhaled deeply. “I will do as you say sire. I give you my word.”

Martin nodded. “Thank you. I believe I may need your council in the future. If I have one.”

“What does that mean sire?” Deia asked, her eyes narrowing.

“If anything happens to me... you will immediately push through the Senate the order confirming Anja, Dysea and Isabella as ruling Queens.” Martin spoke.

“Sire... what are you planning on doing?” Deia asked.

“Admiral Ceneu... my thanks. Your son is an excellent officer and I will enjoy his company. Everything went well I take it?” Martin asked.

Ceneu nodded. “Just as you instructed sire.”

“Good. Mother?”

Gorgo looked up at the screen. “Yes my son.”

“Do you remember what you told father that day mother?” Martin asked.

Gorgo stood up slowly. “Like it was yesterday Martin.”

Martin nodded in the connection. “I’ll come back with my shield mother. Or I will come back on it.”

Gorgo nodded slowly as she felt the tear rolling down her cheek. “I know you will.”

Deia saw him smile and then the connection was broken.

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## ***LEONIDAS I***

Martin looked at Ceneu’s son. The Algolian Captain was just as massive as his father.

“Komirri... what is the most desolate and inhospitable planet with a High Coven garrison on it?” Martin asked.

The Algolian looked at his King. “That is easy sire.” He spoke going to the wall star chart, “The High Cove planet Ukwav Milord. It is nothing but desert and rock; fifty degrees Celsius in the day and seven degrees Celsius at night. We’ve tried a number of times over the years to crack the garrison there.”

“What do you say to you and I giving it another crack.” Martin spoke.

Komirri grinned, revealing sharp reptilian fangs. “I’d say they’d better watch out sire.”

Martin held out the pad to him. “We have a stop to make first.”

Komirri looked at the coordinates his red eyes glittering in delight. “I never did like this place sire.” He spoke looking up at Martin, “Too much pollution for my sensitive skin.”

Martin chuckled. “Well let’s see if we can stop some of that pollution before we go to Ukwav.”

“Yes sire.”

“Where are they going?” Deia snapped. “Track them!”

“I can’t.” The sensor operator spoke.

“What? What do you mean you can’t?” Deia barked.

Ceneu stepped forward. “The King had me equip every ship in his fleet with Coven Shroud Generators.” He spoke. “He gave me the order as we were returning from Earth. We will not be able to pick them up unless he wants us to pick them up.”

Deia turned to the sensor operator. “What was their course?”

“Four nine three six mark nine.” The man spoke.

“Where does that take them?” Deia asked. “Please tell me not towards Enurrua.”

The man looked up at her. “No Prime Minister.” He said quietly.

“Then where?”

“He’s heading into High Coven space.” Riall spoke.

Deia looked at him. “What? Why?” She turned to Gorgo, who had stood silently the entire time, “Gorgo... where is he going?”

Gorgo met her eyes. “He is a Spartan Deia.” Gorgo answered. “He is going to dine in hell.”

Deia watched her turn and walk out of the command center.

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## CHAPTER SEVEN

### ENURRUA DAY EIGHT

She ached badly.

Her whole body ached like it had never ached before; like she had fallen down the side of a very tall mountain, rolling the entire way, gaining bruises and bumps as she went. The insides of her thighs felt raw and battered the most, and her sensitive ass stung badly.

What was wrong with her?

She reached out with her mind in search of the warmth and the staggering aura of the one she so loved. He could always sooth her just by embracing her with his aura. Aricia could always feel his aura behind those psychic shields, so utterly powerful, yearning to be released. She had always wondered what it would feel like to be hit with the full force of his aura and love. Her mother had told her just before Coming of Age that when a wolf loved her, truly cherished her, he would hold nothing back, that she would experience the most heavenly understanding she had ever felt. When her mate wrapped the full power of his aura around her, nothing else would matter to her except to love him back just as utterly.

Aricia had felt it with Martin the moment she had met him. The inconceivable power lying hidden, just beneath the surface, wavering against the shields he held in place by force of will alone. She always wondered what it be like if he had hit her with that full power, to be submerged in his very essence. The fever no longer burned in her blood and she smiled dreamily as she realized he must have had her over and over again and that was why she was so sore. That’s why the fever was gone from her, no longer causing her blood to burn for him.

She reached out to her love, calling to him and Aricia’s azure blue eyes snapped open when she felt nothing.

Aricia felt nothing but an empty void.

An infinite black wall unlike anything she had experienced before. It was seamless and never ending. She reached out to her beautiful Persian red haired lover Anja, the closest to her heart, next to the wolf that had claimed her soul. Anja was always open to her due to the pleasures and closeness they had shared in the last year together. Many nights of blissful enjoyment they had shared, when her beloved was so far away from them. Again she found nothing except that empty black void.

Dysea... gone.

Isabella... gone.

All she felt from anyone was an infinite black void.

Aricia sat up quickly in the bed, groaning in soreness, the rough sheets under her skin causing her to look down. She wore a skimpy light tan dress that barely covered her body and then she saw the many bruises dotting her legs and thighs. Her arms held many of the same bruises, like the grip from strong hands holding her. Her azure blue eyes darted further up and she took in her dreary surroundings. The room was large with an open patio door that led out to a balcony. The colors were dark, not bright like the palace on Apo Prime. There were several pieces of furniture that looked neither comfortable nor inviting. Even the bed she lay on was simple and definitely not built for comfort.

Where was she?

Aricia slid off the bed slowly, clenching her teeth together, suppressing the groan that threatened to escape her lips due to the soreness between her thighs. What had her beloved done to her to make her so sore? Martin was large... so very large. She, Anja and Dysea had measured him once while he had slept, joking like school girls as he snored away while they stroked him to full hardness with feathered caresses. A full half inch past a dozen he was, and Aricia had been amazed she had taken him entirely into her body. Amazed and so very happily fulfilled. When she told her mother this news, after Dasha came to stay with them in the villa in Sparta, her mother didn't believe her at first, until Anja and Dysea had finally relented with knowing smiles and confirmed it. Dasha had said then it was a gift for a gifted man who needed to take care of her daughter.

Martin had been her first. Aricia was only eighteen months past the Coming of Age at a hundred and eleven years old. Martin had been her first, and they had claimed each other under the Centennial of the moon that wonderful night in Eden City. He had done so many things to her that night, and many nights after, that caused even her wildest imaginations to pale in comparison.

Yet for all his enormous size, and the consecutive hours they had spent continuously making love, her beloved had never left her this sore. Throbbing with desire and the delightful aches of the utterly fulfilled yes, but never painfully sore as she was now. It was almost as if he didn't care about her needs and simply pounded her into the bed. Almost as if he was a callous brute and unconcerned about her, something she knew he was not. Something he could never be. Aricia moved slowly, biting her bottom lip once more against the soreness, and went to the doorway, feeling the cool breeze caress her. She inhaled deeply, a myriad of scents she didn't recognize floating to her. The air smelled of ocean, and Aricia could see the dark rocky beach far below her, and then the whitecaps of the ocean in the distance. The palace was not near an ocean, of that she was sure.

She turned and made her way back into the bedroom, going to the simple looking door. She passed her hand over the panel to unlock it, but it didn't move. She did it again and still nothing. Aricia turned once more, allowing her eyes to take in more of the room. As at first glance it was dreary and not at all designed for comfort in any way, not even remotely. There were no computer consoles, no dispensers for food, and just the two simple couches.

That was when Aricia noticed the scent.

It was definitely male; a musky bitter scent that crinkled her nose and it permeated her entire body somehow. Concern began to creep into her senses and she looked around the room further, desperately trying to find something that would tell her where she was and why she could not touch her beloved's thoughts to ease her concern.

She spied the lone dresser on the far wall and moved to it. It was an ancient piece of furniture and ornately carved with dragon heads like from the books she had seen as a child. There were several drawers in the long dresser and she began opening them hurriedly, finding nothing more than the simple thing she was wearing now.

Fear began to creep through her now, a fear that was starting in her belly and slowly moving outward. Her azure eyes were growing wider and she scanned the room once more seeing the small table by the rough bed she had awoken on. She had climbed off the other side of the bed and missed it before. She saw the simple looking holoimager on the table and moved back to the bed quickly picking up the imager. She drew her legs underneath her on the bed and activated it, her eyes going even wider.

"Hello sweet Aricia." Joric's image and voice filled her head and the fear that had been growing inside her belly suddenly became overpowering. "I'd like to welcome you to your new home my newest mate. I thought I would give you a day or so to grow accustomed to your new station, serving me. Serving me in any way I chose you to serve me as my new mate. What you have on is all you will need to wear so don't look for anything else. Our females wear as little as possible. And you will not be able to use that wonderful weapon

branded to your arm Aricia. The entire room has power inhibitors in it and you won't be able to call it no matter how hard you try. You are wondering perhaps why you can not Mindvoice your pathetic old mate; that is because he is a fool who did not know what you going through. It is called the *Lunmai*, and it is the Second Coming of Age Aricia. Remember the fever sweet Aricia, the burning in your blood to mate? I satisfied that for you Aricia. I cured the fever in you, and I had a wonderful time doing it. You were so receptive to my advances sweet Aricia. I must have had you a dozen times in the first three hours alone, oh yes; and easily another thirty or more on the return trip to your new home."

Aricia's hands were shaking brutally now, barely able to hold the imager in her fingers. She shook her head slowly back and forth. "No!" She spoke softly. "No."

"You are probably saying to yourself that I am lying to you." Joric's smug voice continued. "Allow me to show you sweet Aricia."

Aricia's azure blue eyes went as wide, as the image changed to her bent over some sort of chair almost completely naked, Joric behind her gripping her hips. She watched as he leaned over her naked body and pulled back on her long lustrous hair.

*"Louder Aricia! Tell me you choose me as your mate Aricia. Isn't that what you want more than anything! More than the King! Tell me you want me more than your precious King Aricia!"*

*"YES!" She screamed. "YES! I choose you! Claim me! Take me as your mate!"*

Aricia dropped the holoimager on the bed as if it was a hot plasma iron as she saw Joric grunt and thrust himself inside her body in the image. A pain unlike anything she had ever imagined could exist ripped through her as the full color pictures flashed on the holoimager now sitting on the bed. Joric's foul body grunting and groaning, him taking her in every conceivable position, and she was squirming underneath him whimpering in delight like some common street whore. The images flashed back and forth across her eyes, each picture driving the knife deeper into her chest, her hand going to between her breasts, pulling the skimpy dress tighter and tighter, trying to shield her from some imagined pain.

Then the image changed and she saw Martin, her beloved Martin, her beautiful wolf and soulmate. His eyes were wide in horror; Anja and Dysea with looks of unbelievable pain on their faces as they stood within a room in the palace. She didn't hear the words the strange man was speaking but she saw herself pressed up against Joric far too intimately, and then she heard Martin scream out his rage and change before he leaped at Joric.

And then the knife punctured her heart, as she saw herself instantly change into her wolf form; she saw her very own claws slash deeply across the chest of the wolf who had stolen her soul as she protected the man who had raped her.

As Aricia watched herself being led away, the sound of the mournful wolf howl shred her heart and what remained of her soul into pieces and Aricia screamed.

Aricia screamed in hideous pain of the heart and spirit, a scream that carried out the window and across the landscape of the oceans and land below her, piercing everyone who heard it and making them turn towards the large mansion. It was a shriek many of them knew, and after a moment they simply lowered their heads in disgrace and continued what they were doing.

Joric stood in the main antechamber beneath the room where her wail of shame and unfaithfulness echoed through the walls and he smiled maliciously as he drank the ale.

---

*Mother! Come quickly! It is Tablina! Something is wrong! Terribly wrong!*

Isheeni's cry of alarm surged through Arzoal and she raced through the tunnels of their mountain home, scattering rocks and brushing past others of her kind in her maddened dash to her daughter and friend. She burst into the smaller cavern and saw Tablina withering on the stone floor clutching her head in some unseen agony. Her daughter's azure scaled face turned to her panic stricken.

*It began moments ago mother! I don't know what it is? I tried... I tried to enter her mind but I was smashed aside but some unseen force! She is in such pain mother! Such horrible pain!*

*Be still Isheeni! Arzoal spoke as calmly as she could and moving forward quickly. I will help her.*

Arzoal calmed herself and reached out with her mind. She and Tablina had a unique connection and she grabbed onto that and allowed Tablina to pull her in. Arzoal's flame colored eyes went wide and her huge wings sprang outward from her shoulders and back as the most indescribable pain Arzoal ever felt ruptured into thoughts. She saw wolves, two black wolves; she saw blood and suffering, and the wrenching betrayal that ripped through her being. It was the child... and her agony over what had happened was a hundred fold what she and Tablina thought it would be. Arzoal shuddered in agony herself now, reaching past the pain to reach for the thread of thought that was Tablina. She found her, Tablina's mind awash in the same agony but without the strength to even partially shield it as Arzoal was. With a deep outward breath Arzoal grabbed on to that thread of Tablina and began pulling her back. She saw a forest, towering pine trees and bright sunlight. She saw the face of the child now, so amazingly beautiful, her azure colored eyes changed to wolf eyes, her long wolf fangs out. She saw the face of the handsome man, his yellow/gold orbs points of light unlike anything Arzoal had ever seen His fangs were out as well, both of their lips stained with blood, each other's blood.

*Never with anyone else Aricia. This... this only we will share.*

*I love you Martin Leonidas. With all that I am. I will never betray you, never hurt you. Nothing will ever come between us as long as I have your love.*

She saw them together again, the downward slash of the child Queen's claws against the monstrous black wolf's chest, four streaks of red erupting from the black fur. She saw the child Queen standing in front of the butcher's son Joric, protecting him in some fashion. The sorrowful howl of the huge black wolf staggered Arzoal almost to the point she lost her connection to Tablina. She needed to leave this pain quickly before it overwhelmed even her in its intensity.

Arzoal gave a last heave with her powerful mind and pulled her friend with her, slamming her psychic shields back down before she had to experience more of the agony. She staggered back as Tablina gasped for breath, the sound a cry of relief in the cave.

*Mother! Tablina!* Isheeni's voice filled Arzoal's thoughts, allowing her to refocus.

Arzoal leaned her head over, taking a deep breath with a swell of her large chest, her wings slowly folding back onto themselves slowly as she calmed. *I... I am fine Isheeni. It... it was the child Queen. It was a pain... a pain unlike any I have felt in all my long years of life daughter.*

Isheeni's azure eyes grew wide. *The child Queen? How... how is that possible mother?*

Tablina groaned loudly as she struggled to sit up. "Arzoal?" Her voice was soft and barely discernable. *Be at peace Tablina. I have enhanced your mental shields my friend. You are safe now.* Arzoal told her. "Oh Arzoal, what have we done?" Tablina gasped out.

*Tablina what... what do you mean? We did what... we did what we had to.*

Tablina's eyes looked up at her wide in shock and amazement. "They... they have shared blood!" She gasped. "By the gods what have we done?"

*Tablina what are you saying?* Arzoal demanded. *What do you mean?*

Tablina slumped to the cave floor unconscious.

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## **SPARTA DAY TEN**

"Damn you Aihola shut up and calm down for a moment!" Dysea's voice snapped in the transmission, causing Aihola's amber eyes to close.

She had regained consciousness to find Tarifa missing from Sparta and right now there was a planet wide search underway. Aihola was incensed at the moment. Not that they were caught unaware, she knew they could never plan for everything. She was incensed because she had seen the Lycavorian who had taken her Tarifa. He had been in Eden City days ago, and Tarifa and Selene had told him and his cohorts to leave Earth and never return.

Aihola took a deep breath and opened her eyes slowly. "Forgive me my Queen." She spoke softly.

“And don’t call me that!” Dysea barked. “I may be a Queen... but after what we shared I am always your friend first.”

Aihola nodded her head. “Thank you Dysea. That means a great deal to me.”

“Bella and I are on our way to earth now. We will arrive in two weeks. What has there happened Aihola? And hold nothing back from me!” Dysea spoke.

“They took my beloved Dysea.” Aihola spoke. “They took my Tarifa. And if they harm her in any way, I will skin the flesh from their bones and laugh as I do it.”

“Who took her?” Isabella demanded as she moved into the transmission next to Dysea.

“Martin’s people took her.” Aihola spoke. “They said something about a ship.”

“*Nauta Melme*’s people? Aihola... you know as well as I that Lycavorians would never do something like this.” Dysea spoke. “It is not in their nature.”

“They were Lycavorians Dysea. I saw them with my own eyes; the same ones who came here to trade almost two weeks ago. Tarifa and Selene turned down their offer for whatever reason and told them to leave.” Aihola continued.

“Turned them down why?” Dysea asked.

“She said... she said she felt something evil from them.” Aihola spoke. “She is full wolf now Dysea and her senses are more acute than mine in that regard. Because of my vampire genes I am only half wolf thanks to Dekton.” Aihola saw Isabella whisper something to Dysea in the transmission. “Dysea... what is going on? Where is Martin?”

“Aihola... what of the Oracle? What of Helen?”

Aihola looked at Walter who was sitting across from her but out of the transmission. Dysea picked up on this right away.

“Who is there with you Aihola?” Dysea demanded.

Walter moved around to Aihola’s side of the table and squatted next to her. “It is I my Queen.” He spoke.

“Walter... Holy One... what is wrong with Helen?” Dysea demanded once more, forcefully this time.

“She is gravely injured my Queen.” Walter answered. “Dilios is with her now. It was another bomb my Queen. This time targeted only on her. She caught the full blast of it. She is clinging to life, and the doctors from the fleet above do not have much hope for her I’m afraid.” He spoke his voice grave. “They say if she makes it through the next day or so... she may survive. They do not want to predict.”

Dysea closed her eyes within the transmission and shook her head. Isabella leaned closer, “Senior Polemarch Dymas do you know who I am?”

Walter nodded. “I do Lady Isabella.” He replied.

“Will you take my orders?”

“Without question Milady; you are to be the fourth Queen to my King. That is not in question.” Walter told her.

“Have you locked Sparta down Senior Polemarch?” Isabella asked.

“Tighter than we did when the bomb almost claimed the King and Queen Dysea.” He answered.

“Keep it that way Senior Polemarch.” Isabella spoke. “I don’t care what you have to do, but know this. The assassin you are searching for is undoubtedly Lycavorian, and posing as a Spartan that you trust.” She saw his eyes grow larger. “I know it is hard for you to believe, but it is true. There have been events here...” Aihola and Walter saw her pause as well. Aihola leaned forward.

“Dysea... what is going on?” Aihola spoke.

Dysea looked up once more. “There is a group of Lycavorians outside the Union a large group Aihola. No where near as strong as the Union, but it appears they are considerably more ruthless. They have... they have succeeded in taking Aricia from *Nauta Melme* in the most hideous of ways.” Dysea saw Walter’s eyes widen.

“Taken her how?” Walter demanded.

“She had a condition called *Lunmai*. It is... it is basically a second Coming of Age. It is exceptionally rare in your females Holy One. She goes into lust again... the need to mate becomes overwhelming... and these... these vile men used that against her to betray *Nauta Melme* and allow another male to claim her as his mate. It was all done very deviously but well within the Union law it appears.”

“*NOT SPARTAN LAW!*” Walter bellowed coming to his feet. “*NOT OUR LAW!*”

Dysea nodded slowly. “I know... unfortunately... Earth is now part of the Union and we must adhere to the law. They have... they have also discovered that Martin fathered a child with the High Coven Princess Yuri, before he became aware of whom he was, before the Great Fire.”

“Blood and thunder,” Walter spoke.

Dysea nodded. “Yes... it is quite shocking I know. This different sect of Lycavorians has threatened to release the information if *Nauta Melme* attempts anything in regards to Aricia. Another group within the Union’s own government... the elves...” Dysea spat contemptuously. “They have made a similar threat if this Ambassador L’tian’s daughter is not returned to him.

“Yuriko as well Dysea?” Walter asked.

Dysea nodded. “They know of her as well.” She replied. “Whatever happened before the Great Fire, before *Nauta Melme* discovered his true ancestry, his true calling, we do not hold this against him. We love him too much. And he has never lied to any of us Walter, least of all to the three of us. He had no idea this was the case until only a few weeks ago, you know that as well as I. It is a very long story that I will relay to you when I arrive.”

“Has he gone after Aricia?” Walter asked. Dysea was silent as she stared at him in the image. “Dysea... has he gone after Aricia?”

Walter and Aihola watched Dysea break into tears and leave the transmission. This was difficult for Walter as he had never seen Dysea cry in all of her lifetime. Isabella watched her for a long moment before turning back to the screen. “Senior Polemarch... they... this fever, this *Lunmai*... they recorded it. They showed it to all of us, to Martin. It... it shows her screaming for this other male, while he was taking her from behind, begging him to take her as his mate.” Isabella lowered her head and looked at the deck where she was. “We... we watched her beg this pig of a man to fuck her and make her his mate!” Isabella screamed looking back up. “When... when Martin flew into a rage, Aricia attacked him while protecting this vile man who had claimed her. She injured him deeply.”

Aihola’s amber eyes were wide, “*A jal nindel udos mir orthae nau!*” (By all that we hold sacred no!)

Isabella took a deep breath and nodded. “Indeed Aihola of the Drow.” She spoke softly. “Martin... he... he has withdrawn. He will not allow us to penetrate his Mindvoice shields and none of us is anywhere near powerful enough to force our way in. Of us all, only Aricia could have done that. And while the physical wounds she inflicted on him have healed, I don’t believe the emotionally wound will. I fear... you know how he holds his emotions in. He is a Spartan. I fear he will destroy himself, especially now that he can not turn to the Oracle. I fear for what he will do to himself in his grief.”

“Isabella... what... what can we do?” Walter asked.

“Is there an officer from the Lycavorian fleet with you?” Isabella asked.

“Just outside,” Walter replied. “My father has gone to Eden City to sit beside Selene as she negotiates the last of the contracts Earth has received.”

“Please have him come in, he will know what I will tell him.” Isabella told him, looking at Aihola while Walter moved. “Aihola of the Drow... you said a ship?”

Aihola nodded. “I heard them say they needed to get back to their ship. I’m sure of it.”

Isabella nodded. “Then more than likely they are not even on Earth any longer.” She spoke.

“No!” Aihola gasped.

Isabella met her eyes. “They will not kill her Aihola.” She spoke quickly. “Your lover Tarifa is far too beautiful for them to just kill her. I have studied your species of elves while I have been gone Aihola of the Drow. Walter... he created the Drow to be the most like Spartans in every way did he not?”

Aihola nodded slowly. “So he has told me and others.”

“Martin has told me of the strength of this woman who is your lover... this Tarifa.” Isabella spoke. “Your people... the Drow... it is instinct for you to chose the strongest of mates is it not. Like the Spartans.”

“It is?” Aihola spoke.

“Your Tarifa... is she a strong woman?”

“She is stronger than I, as she has proved many times.” Aihola replied instantly.

“Can she... can she survive being taken against her will Aihola?” Isabella asked.



“She has been raped and taken against her will before and only grown stronger for it.” Aihola answered immediately. “That is why I love her so.”

Isabella nodded. “Then she will survive Aihola of the Drow. And you must remain strong so you can help us get her back.”

Walter returned with the young Lycavorian Captain then and he looked at the monitor. “Lady Isabella?” He spoke. “Command me.”

“Queen Dysea and I will arrive in two weeks, if not faster Captain. I am sending you a transmission now that is unique to this clan of Lycavorians. They use a Phased Flux Converter in their fusion cores. Realign your sensors to scan for this signature. Track it... by any means. Have one of our Frigates follow it Shrouded if you have too. I don’t care.”

The Captain nodded, “As you order Lady Isabella. And when you arrive?”

Isabella looked at him and they saw her eyes change to vampire cobalt blue. “When we arrive Spartan... Dysea and I are going to find this assassin. When we do... he or she will die a very painful death. And whether we have to intern the Oracle, or she will recover, we’re going to load every Spartan Centurion in your city Walter. Then we are going to go after Tarifa, no matter where those dogs have taken her, and show them that it is very unwise and unhealthy to injure or attack friends of Martin Leonidas. That is what we are going to do.”

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## LYCAVORIAN PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC CRUISER

“Open your eyes she-elf wolf.” The male voice spoke to her. “I know you are awake.”

Tarifa allowed her eyes to open slowly so she could focus. When she did, she found herself staring into incredible violet orbs that were gazing back at her intently, violet colored eyes that held no malice, no lust, no hostility, just intense interest.

The face of the blond haired man focused even more, and she saw the strong solid jaw, the thick eyebrows and thin lips, and the neatly trimmed blond mustache and beard. The face was deeply tanned and weathered, but it was extremely handsome. The dirty blond hair fell to his shoulders, which Tarifa saw were very broad, but it was clean and she detected the soft wild aroma of the deep timber that she remembered from her childhood.

“Do not try to move too quickly.” He spoke to her again. “My brutish brother hit you rather hard and you took quite a knock on the head.” He reached up with a large hand towards her face and Tarifa moved quickly to get away, only to feel a wave of nausea sweep over her and she froze, closing her sapphire eyes once more to fight it. She heard him chuckled softly. “I told you not to move too quickly Tarifa.”

Her eyes opened again and she looked at him. “You...”

“Yes I know who you are.” He told her before touching the side of her head and probing with gentle fingers. “Does this hurt?” Tarifa shook her head slowly. “Good... that means he didn’t crack your head, which is decidedly thick from what I can see.”

“Where... where am I?” Tarifa asked.

“You are on board a Lycavorian People’s Republic cruiser.” He answered her question. “You are safe... though I wouldn’t recommend going out for a stroll among the masses any time soon.”

“You... you have kidnapped me?” She snapped.

The man, a young man if Tarifa was correct, shook his head. “No. My brother Rommna kidnapped you, against my advice. But then he was never very smart.”

“Your brother? That... that pig is...” Tarifa hissed now.

He nodded. “Yes he is my older brother.”

Tarifa’s eyes went wide and she struggled to sit up. “*Nya Istel?*” She gasped, the last thing she remembered was Aihola falling to a similar crushing blow from a P190.

The young man got up and moved to the small sink and mirror where he started to disrobe. Fear gripped Tarifa as she saw him pull the shirt off his very broad shoulders, revealing three long red gouges in his back and shoulder. Tarifa couldn’t help herself as she watched the very well defined muscles of his back and shoulders flex as he moved, in obvious pain, but holding in the sound.

“If you are referring to your Drow elf lover, she is very much alive, and decidedly quite angry at the moment. With good reason no doubt.” He spoke turning around. Tarifa winced when she saw the jagged gouges across the front of his steel hard abdomen and powerful chest. They were even deeper than those on his back. Tarifa watched him as he moved to a cabinet and began looking for something.

“With good reason?” Tarifa asked, keeping the relief in her voice hidden.

He turned those violet eyes on her again and nodded. “Oh yes, with very good reason.” He said. “My brother took you from her, something I would be extremely upset with as well were I her.” He obviously found what he was looking for as he pulled down the small can. “She is different your lover; *very* beautiful in her own right, but different. I can see the attraction she has to you though.”

“She is a Drow elf, and she will come for me.” Tarifa spoke confidently, “As will my friends, including the King.”

He looked at her smiling “That is why I told my fool brother not to attempt anything with you.” He said.

“Who are you?” Tarifa asked sitting up on the bed and suddenly realizing she was naked beneath the sheet. She gasped and clutched it tighter to her chest.

“Forgive me!” His voice spoke as he rushed to another cabinet and removed a similar uniform to what he had been wearing. He placed it on the bed near her feet and quickly averted his gaze. “You... you were not appropriately dressed when he brought you on board. I brought you here, cleaned you and put you to bed. I forgot you were without clothes, my apologies.”

Tarifa watched him turn back around quickly. “You... you cleaned me?” She asked her voice holding contempt in it. “Was that before or after you raped me?”

He whirled around and she saw a flash of anger in those violet eyes before it was quickly gone and he took a deep breath. He turned back to the small mirror quickly. “I washed you because, as you so astutely put it in the meeting you had with him some time ago, my brother is an odoriferous buffoon and you reeked of him. You did not need to wake to his stench, not to mention you had blood on you.”

“Blood?” Tarifa asked, checking herself for injuries.

“Aside from the dent in your wolf thick head, you are not injured Tarifa.” He spoke with some humor. “It was my blood.”

Tarifa looked at him, “Your blood?” She spoke arrogantly. “Did you tangle with a Spartan as you were kidnapping me? Is that where you got those wounds?”

“No.” He answered. “Thankfully we did not have to contend with the Spartans you speak of. I am not stupid, and I have no desire to meet death at the hands of a Shi Viska. And I was not a member of the party that foolishly kidnapped you. I saw you for the first time when Rommna brought you on board.”

“Then where did you get those wounds?” Tarifa asked. “They look like wolf injuries. Did you win me in some sort of fight to see who gets to rape me first?”

“If you think these are bad, you should see my brother Rommna.” He spoke as he was spraying whatever it was he held in his hand on his chest and abdomen. “No... the injuries on my back are from Rommna. He and his cohorts were attempting to decide who gets you first, as you say. We fought... he lost... I’m much larger than he is in wolf form, and he is fat and slow. He got lucky... but only once.”

“Why... why would you fight over me?” Tarifa asked sarcastically, “Why not all of you rape me and get it over with?”

She saw that flash of anger in those eyes, but just as quickly it was gone again. His scent was prickling her nose now, teasing her senses as he walked over to the bed and sat down. Tarifa inched over as far as she could before banging against the cold bulkhead of the ship.

“We fought because my brother and his friends were going to rape you Tarifa.” He spoke matter of factly. “If I had not stepped in, they would more than likely be using you still.”

“I would have fought them!” Tarifa hissed. “I’ve been raped before and I’m not weak!” She didn’t understand the small smile that played across his face.

“Yes... I’m sure you would have fought them.” He said calmly, his voice holding respect that Tarifa didn’t believe she was hearing. “You are a strong she-elf and wolf. However... you would not have survived what my brother and his animal friends are capable of, and I would much prefer to see you returned to your... Drow... lover unharmed.”

“Why?” Tarifa asked quickly.

“Unlike my brother and his friends... indeed unlike my entire male family... I do not force myself on women of any race, but doing it to a female of my own species, turned or Pureblood is particularly distasteful to me. I have never done it and I will never do it. It is something my mother taught me.”

“Maybe she should have taught you to not do these things in the first place.” Tarifa snapped.

“She probably would have... if my father had not killed her for not submitting to him one night.” He spoke softly, and there was no doubt to Tarifa that the pain in his eyes was not faked. Dekton had taught her and Aihola many things in their short time together; one of the first was how to detect the scent of a lie from their own species very quickly. Tarifa smelled no lie. She saw him gazing at her intently. “Your former mate taught you well Tarifa, I am impressed. He must have been a great man to have you and your Drow as mates. I would have liked to meet him. Like him I find forcing myself on a female to be a vile thing. I’ve been around when it has happened yes, even in the same room. If I had tried to interfere, I would have been killed on the spot. I would prefer to live and try to bring my people out of the barbaric grip of my father, for all the good that has done me in the last five hundred years.” Tarifa looked surprised and it showed on her face. He smiled. “Yes... I’m five hundred and seven years old. A small child in the life span of my people, but you already know that since you will now live almost as long as me. At least until someone kills me.” He got back up and returned to the front of the small mirror.

Tarifa stared at his back as he once more sprayed the ointment or something on his skin. “How did you stop them?” She asked softly, “If... if they would have killed you for interfering, how did you stop them from raping me? Why would you even attempt to?”

“The why of it is easy?” He replied. “You are exceptionally beautiful, and you have the most incredible eyes I have ever seen. Eyes I would like to look into for the duration of your stay with us. At least until I get you to my planet and into safer hands.” He turned back around and looked at her, the wounds on his abdomen starting to fade somewhat. “The how of it, well that is a little more difficult to explain.”

“Why?”

“I am the youngest of my father’s ten sons Tarifa, really no more than an afterthought. I did the only thing I could think of at the time that would make them stop and have to listen to me for a change. Rommna didn’t want to honor it... but after I chewed off his ear he changed his tune.”

“What did you do?” Tarifa asked.

“I claimed you as my mate Tarifa.” He replied. “The wounds on my back are from my brother during our fight. The slashes on my stomach here, which were much worse mind you, came from you. In the haze from Rommna hitting your thick head you changed into a wolf as I was carrying you to my quarters here. You attacked me before you passed out. Gave everyone a good laugh too I might add. You really should trim your nails, they’re quite long.”

Tarifa lay there in shock as he went to the same cabinet and drew out the dark blankets, which he promptly stretched out on the floor. He plucked a duffel bag of some sort from the nearby chair and tossed it down before stretching out on the blanket.

“You are quite safe Tarifa. No one will harm you, and when we return to Enurrua, I will place you in someone’s charge that will help you to make your way back to your friends. I suggest getting some sleep now, as that blow to your head took quite a bit out of you.” He leaned back on the duffel bag and closed his violet eyes. “My name is Isra by the way, and it’s very nice to meet you.”

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## **HIGH COVEN *DARKBROOD*-CLASS FRIGATE YURI’S TEMPORARY FLAGSHIP THREE HOURS AFTER LEAVING LAXNIS II**

“They came out of no where!” The Coven tech screamed. “They’re everywhere! There’re hundreds of them!”

Yuri stood on the bridge of her frigate, Moran beside her. “Calm down you fool!” Yuri snapped. “Who came out of no where?”

“That... that new *dosib* Lycavorian King!” The Coven tech screamed. (Fucking) “His ships just appeared inside our defensive perimeter! No warning! No *dosib* warning and they launched missiles! They had

our Shroud generators on all their ships! Over a hundred ships! They destroyed all the defensive platforms in the first wave! Wiped them out completely! At least fifty *STRIKER ATs* have landed and there are Spartans all over the base!”

“They are after the elf *STRIKER* pilot!” Yuri screamed. “Kill her now!”

“No contact with the lower levels Princess! The Immortals responded but were wiped out within minutes! I’m sending you the feed! Something went through them like they weren’t even there! I think... I think there were five... three Spartans for sure... all with silver Shi Viskas! They blitzed right through the Immortals; all fifty of them!”

Yuri looked at the junior vampire officer. “Are you mad? Three Spartans do not defeat fifty Immortals!”

“Watch it yourself you bitch!” The tech screamed in a total panic.

Yuri’s eyes went to cobalt blue and she lifted her hand to send a paralyzing Mindvoice surge back at the insubordinate coward when a shadow flashed behind him. Yuri flinched even from a full light year away when the bloody spear head of the Spartan Nehtes burst through the officer’s chest, splattering blood on the monitor as well as bits of flesh. Blood erupted from between his lips as his body fell out of sight. Yuri blinked and then he was there.

The yellow/gold eyes blazed like she had never seen before, his face splattered with blood.

“Martin.” She gasped.

“Hello Yuri. Long time no see.”

Yuri got control of herself when she felt Robert’s hand grip hers out of sight of the screen. “Martin... you are looking positively feral. More like your sick species every day that goes by.”

She saw him smile and expose the gleaming white fangs. “You got old Robbie there holding your hand Yuri.” He spoke. “Yuri... do you remember Yuriko? Do you remember Lisisa?”

Yuri’s eyes went wide and Moran felt her squeeze his hand tighter.

Martin’s smile was evil in nature. “Yes Yuri... you do remember. Good I’m glad. I’ve found Yuriko now. Yuri when I find *her* and I *will* find her first; she’ll be where she belongs. She’ll be among her kind. Remember I said to tell your father to start looking over his shoulder Yuri. I’ve changed my mind. She changed my mind. Start looking over your shoulder Yuri, because I’m not hunting for the old man first anymore. I’m hunting for you. Then we’ll see just how high a tolerance for pain you have for what you’ve done Yuri. Before I do the same thing to you that I did to Xerxes.” Martin smiled again. “I’m going to go get my pilot now Yuri. You should know better by now Yuri, don’t fuck with people I care about. I’ll always come get them.”

Yuri blinked twice when he reached up and shattered the monitor on his end with the silver Shi Viska on his arm.

“Captain I want an immediate LSD jump out of this system right now!” Yuri snapped.

The Coven Captain came out of his chair. “I concur Princess! Power the LSD drive now! Immediate jump prep! You have thirty seconds!”

Yuri looked at Robert. “Something has happened on Apo Prime.” She spoke. “He’s different, crueller somehow, like he doesn’t care if he lives or dies. To attack Laxnis II like this, with such overwhelming force, inside our space, that is not like him.” Yuri took a deep breath. “Have Cha’talla use his contacts to try and discover what is happening. I have to talk to my father Robert, and then I have some things to tell you husband.”

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## LAXNIS II

Yuriko couldn’t help but stare in unabashed glee as she watched her adopted father in front of the monitor. Part of her had fought against what her genes told her. She was a vampire, he was wolf. Yet for all that, he had never blinked once when embracing her on the ship outside the brig that day. He had been the only one to show her kindness as a child. Yuri certainly did not, using her only as a tool to keep her false cover in place. Yuriko’s vampire genes had fought against telling him, going to him. She was after all a vampire, and he was the son of Leonidas, the purest of purebloods, and he was who they were taught to fear the most.

Once those arms had closed around her, all her doubts had been washed away. And then words he had just spoken now filled her with emotions she had never felt before. And it was good.

“...You should know better by now Yuri, don’t fuck with people I care about. I’ll always come get them.”

Martin lifted his left arm and drove his Shi Viska into the monitor, smashing it into pieces. Yuriko felt like shouting for joy at the words she had just heard him say. It only confirmed she had made the right decision so many years ago.

Martin turned to look at her standing between Anuk and Nayeca. Danny and Andreus stood holding the door of the smoking control room, their P190s leveled down opposite corridors. He looked right at Yuriko, his yellow/gold eyes gleaming. “Think she got the point?” He asked.

Yuriko nodded her head quickly. “Oh I believe so.”

“Good... just want to make sure I’m understood.” Martin spoke moving up to her and the others. His hand gripped her shoulder tightly, and Yuriko closed her eyes at the sensation.

“No offense Skipper.” Dan spoke. “You don’t know what this elf chick smells like do you?” Danny asked his dark eyes alertly angled down the corridor. “Nothing major mind you, but I’m picking up a whole lot of elf scents in this stink pile. And a whole lot of scents I don’t really want to see what they belong to.”

Andreus couldn’t help but snort in the affirmative as the only means of communicating. Like his King, he was not truly in the mood for much more than killing any vampire he could find.

Martin lifted his Shi Viska and Dan saw something in Martin’s eyes he hadn’t seen in nearly a decade. A killing lust.

“Let’s go this way. This place ain’t that big, and we’ll run into her eventually.” Martin spoke leaving the control room and moving down the corridor.

Dan looked quickly at Anuk and then to Andreus. “What’s wrong Andreus?” He asked. “Something is eating at him.”

Andreus met Danny’s eyes and nodded. “Now... now is not the time.” He replied. “I will tell you when we have returned to the *LEONIDAS I*. If we return.”

Dan’s eyes were wide as Andreus turned and followed his King.

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*Arzoal where are you? For’mya shouted with her mind.*

*For’mya you are unshielded! Her reply was instant.*

*Arzoal something is happening! They brought me here three hours ago! I’m in a cell Arzoal. They were... they were about to start... Arzoal... someone is attacking the planet! I can hear the missiles hitting points across the city here! Screaming and weapons fire! Arzoal who would attack this planet! It’s suicide!*

*For’mya... something terrible has happened. I can not explain right now. Arzoal spoke. You must be strong and help him child.*

*Arzoal what are you talking about? Help who?*

*The man who will be the father to your children For’mya, many years from now. Your King. He is coming for you and he is in pain unlike any you can imagine For’mya. I beg you... after what I have shown you. Do not turn him away.*

*Arzoal what do you mean?*

*I am being called child. Be strong. I will contact you when I am able.*

---

Dan could do nothing but follow behind and make sure none got behind them. Whatever gripped his brother was not a killing lust.

It was a bloodlust. Anything that crossed their paths, it died. He, Anuk, Nayeca and Yuriko could only move along behind them and protect the flanks.

Martin and Andreus moved like one person, their Shi Viskas and Nehtes bringing down a Coven Immortal or trooper with every launch or swipe. They moved with one mind and one purpose, and they didn’t care what was in front of them. Bodies fell beside them and they didn’t pause.

Arms.

Legs

Heads

Blood splattered almost every portion of their armor, occasionally a lucky shot from a weapon slamming into their armor, staggering them, but not knocking them down. Andreus had long forgotten his P190 as he followed his King. It was almost as if they didn't care anymore.

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*Betrayal*

Martin thrust forward with his Nehtes stabbing it through the neck of an Immortal, ripping sideways, and tearing it free of the flesh with barely a pause.

*I love you Martin Leonidas*

He spun, launching his Shi Viska down the corridor, the razors extending as the shield almost whistled with glee as it flew straight and decapitated a Coven trooper who had come out of the room.

*I will never betray you*

The Nehtes ripped free and splashed more blood on his face, Martin spinning it with grace and power before plunging it through the metal door next to him and hearing the scream of a mortal wound.

*I will never hurt you*

Once more the Shi Viska took flight, sailing over Andreus as he spun to cover his King's rear. Martin felt the two small caliber rounds slam into his body armor in the back above his shoulder. He ignored the pain as his shoulder screamed in protest. It couldn't come close to the pain he felt already.

*I will never betray you.*

Andreus ducked under Martin's wild swing, impaling the Immortal stupid enough to charge into the hallway. His King struck out with his head, the black metal of his crested helmet smashing into the face of the Immortal and crushing his already flat nose, blood spurting all over both of them.

*I will never hurt you*

He ripped the Nehtes from the metal door and turned down the corridor, his yellow/gold eyes blazing in the smoky corridor. He felt no pain, no remorse, and no guilt. Only betrayal and that betrayal fueled his rage.

His rage was powerful.

Martin turned the corner and saw the two injured Immortals holding the golden haired female elf between them. He felt Andreus take up position on his right, Nehtes prepared. The one Immortal held a weapon to For'mya's head, her bruised body barely able to stand on her own. This fueled his rage more and he felt the power swell within him.

"You have something that belongs to me Immortals!" He growled his voice sounding like a call beckoning from hell. "I want it back."

"I will kill her Lycavorian dog!" The Immortal with the weapon screamed.

"That is not the answer I wanted!" Martin spoke coldly.

The power swelled and surged and Martin lifted his hands, the rage in his mind fresh and pure. Fueling him beyond anything he had ever known.

*Betrayal.*

*I love you Martin Leonidas.*

*I will never betray you.*

Martin released it.

The two pulses of psychic energy had solid form when they left his fingertips, silver in color and shaped like diamonds. For'mya, Danny, Anuk, all of them could only stare in awe as those diamonds ripped through the space between Martin and the two Immortals in two eye blinks, smashing into their chests. There was a loud, wet thumping sound and both of their bodies were blown backwards, two fist sized holes completely penetrating their bodies, leaving gaping holes you could actually look through, and blood saturating the wall they were behind.

For'mya dropped without the support of the two vampires, unable to control her legs, but strong hands caught her before she crashed onto the deck. They lifted her easily into powerful arms and she brought her head up slowly to look into the stunning yellow/gold eyes that gazed on her intently.

"Star Commander For'mya I presume." The voice spoke, so strong and calm in the midst of so much death and destruction.

For'mya managed a slight nod, "My... my King." She spoke between dry swollen lips.

Martin nodded to himself and began walking back the way they had come, directly past where Daniel and the others stood. Andreus met his eyes as he passed him, following his King like the shadow he had become. Danny moved to the two bodies of the Immortals and looked at the massive wounds in their chests. The holes were perfectly shaped like someone had rammed a pipe through them. He looked at Anuk as she settled beside him, his eyes wide.

"He's... he's never done this before." Dan spoke.

Anuk took his arm. "We must go Daniel." She spoke.

Martin didn't speak as he walked; the echo of his booted feet in the corridor tapping in rhythm with the betrayal that still echoed in his mind. For the moment at least it had eased. He had done something right, and the satisfaction in that had driven the betrayal back, cooling his burning blood and aching heart.

At least for now.

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## ENURRUA DAY TWELVE

Tablina sipped the cup of water slowly as she regained control of her trembling emotions. The pain she had felt was unlike anything she had known for some time, and it had caught her completely by surprise dropping her to the cave floor in agony as Aricia had screamed out not only physically, but with her mind as well.

*Tablina? Arzoal's voice broke into her thoughts and she looked up into her flame colored eyes. I... I did as you asked Tablina. I scanned the young King. He rescued the elf female For'mya from Laxnis II. He left no one living Tablina. You have been sleeping for two days now, but if I am to understand... he ordered a bombardment that shattered the planetary crust of this world. It has rendered it uninhabitable.*

"It has begun." Tablina spoke softly. "What did you find Arzoal?" Tablina asked her voice carrying some hope that things were not as bad as she thought. Arzoal's next words shattered that into pieces.

*Blackness. I was able to sense surface thoughts before Tablina, but now nothing. It is the most powerful Mindvoice Shield I have ever seen erected Tablina. I could be next to him and not breach the shields he has up. There have never been Mindvoice shields I could not breach. Why?*

Tablina looked at her. "They... they have shared blood Arzoal."

*You... you said that before Tablina. Isheeni spoke now, moving closer. What do you mean? Shared blood? Like vampires?*

Tablina shook her head slowly. "Arzoal I have spoken to you before of the Ceremony of the Centennial of the Moon. *Vada Assirina Cormunn* in the ancient Lycavorian language, our most sacred rite? Blessed and started by the very first Oracle, soon after Resumar and Eliana began to bring our people out of the abyss twelve thousand years ago."

Arzoal nodded her massive head. *It is sacred to your people and has been for over ten thousand years, instinctual and eternally binding in every way; much like the oath that my kind swears to our mates. It is why I have never taken another mate in my lifetime.* Her flame colored eyes grew wider. *The King and the child Queen Aricia...*

Tablina nodded slowly. "He claimed Aricia, and she claimed him, under the Centennial of the Moon, the *Vada Assirina Cormunn*. I saw this in the midst of the pain of betrayal in her mind. We were curious and shocked that she could be so powerful and still be so young, and now we know why. When they sang their love for each other under that moon they became tied together for eternity, and Aricia became tied to the line of Resumar and Leonidas, therefore slowly able to draw her power from him, her eternal soulmate, until she was his equal in every way. This was increased a hundred fold when they shared blood."

*What does that mean?* Isheeni asked.

"When they shared each other's blood at the peak of their coupling, what we saw through the pain of Aricia's despair Arzoal, when they did that, what they swore under the *Vada Assirina Cormunn* was consecrated in blood." Tablina spoke softly, "Much more so because it was done instinctually and not rehearsed or guided by an Oracle."

Arzoal's eyes grew a little wider as realization filtered to her. *If her power was drawing from him than she... she could have fought it and won, she could have resisted the Lunmai. She **was** resisting the Lunmai because of her love for the King! What they shared!*

Tablina nodded. "We did not foresee Chetak's cruel sadistic purpose in all this. We thought he would only take her and return to Enurrua fulfilling his Blood Oath. Instead... we gave him the means to not only increase the *Lunmai* to the point that even Aricia could not fight it, but he then hideously flaunted that in front of the King. Chetak forced him to watch the most beloved and precious of his Queens beg another male to take her and make her his mate. It was the ultimate act of betrayal she could have committed in her mind as well as his."

*That is why her scream reached you so deeply in Mindvoice. We did not realize how powerful she was and when... when she realized what she had done, what we forced upon her, it... it broke her heart.*

Tablina nodded tears in her eyes. "That is why you sense nothing but blackness from the King. There is nothing but blackness remaining in his life. He may love his other Queens, but when we helped Chetak take Aricia from him, we... we robbed him of his soul. He... he will do the only thing he knows how to do now."

*What do you mean?*

Tablina looked at him. "He is the son of Leonidas Arzoal, a Lycavorian *and* a Spartan. Aricia was his soulmate. He will not take another Queen of Lycavorian blood after having a soulmate. Without Aricia at his side... when Martin Leonidas dies... the line of Resumar will die with him. The child Queen Aricia will never submit to Joric again, his aura will make her want to laugh when compared to the King's."

Arzoal's head came up quickly. *He will kill her. Or she will take her own life.*

Tablina nodded. "Yes... he will. The King will feel her die, even behind the shields he has erected and then he will no longer care about anything but having death take him as well."

*Tablina... can we fix this? Can we undo what we have done? It has already started. What you speak of Tablina. I can sense it from For'mya. He is already starting to let the rage consume him.*

"Arzoal my friend... do we dare try?" Tablina spoke, the pain very evident in her voice. "The damage we have already unwittingly done is beyond even my worse nightmares. We did not even stop to think of the connection they may have had. Our only concern was to use this poor child to our own means. I would not know even where to begin."

*We must bring her here. Let her see everything as we have seen it. We must go beyond what we had originally intended and somehow make her understand!* Arzoal spoke.

"Unless Chetak thinks she is dead, Joric will hunt her endlessly. Hunt us endlessly." Tablina spoke.

*Then we must make Chetak think her dead.*

Arzoal spun quickly for a dragon of her massive size and bolted from the chamber.

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## LYCAVORIAN PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC CRUISER

He was upset, that much was very obvious. That he was not able to hide it very well surprised Tarifa even more.

Martin, Dekton, all of those who she now knew were Lycavorian had always contained their emotions, held them in. Isra on the other hand was not like that. He had not touched her, hurt her or questioned her in the two days she had been in his quarters. He slept on the floor, brought her food, which was actually quite good and she had eaten voraciously, and he even left the room when she wanted to bath. Though his uniforms were the only clothes he had, she had made do, the dark green top more than enough to cover most of her body, and she had tied it tightly with strips she had torn from the bed. He had looked at her in an amused fashion when he saw that but simply shrugged and went about his business. He said she wasn't a prisoner, but she could not go out into the corridors of the ship either. It wasn't safe.

Tarifa decided to see if she could get more information out of him as he sat staring at the small computer console.

"Want to talk about it?" She blurted.

He didn't turn around. "Talk about what?"

"Whatever it is that seems to have you so upset." Tarifa asked.



“Why would you care?” Isra asked.

“You haven’t hurt me.” Tarifa spoke. “The only thing you won’t let me do is go outside this room.”

He turned in the chair. “There is a good reason for that.” He told her.

“I can handle myself.” Tarifa spoke.

Isra shook his head. “Not out there you can’t.” He said softly.

“I’m a wolf now too you know!” Tarifa snapped. “I can fight! I got you pretty good!”

His violet eyes measured her and then he got up and moved to sit on the edge of the bed. “Do you want to know what is out in the corridors of this ship Tarifa?” He asked.

Tarifa nodded. “Yes.”

Isra looked at her intently then, and Tarifa’s eyes flew open wide when she felt the burning sweep through her body. Her nipples became instantly erect, hard nubs of flesh pressing against the fabric of the shirt she wore. Her blood surged hotly, and she felt herself become moist between her thighs. She felt the need to...

Then it was gone and she let out the loud gasp of air that had been in her lungs. She glared at him and pushed back against the bulkhead in fear, her sapphire eyes wide. “What did you just do to me?” She hissed.

Isra didn’t flinch at the vehemence of her words. “That is what Tarifa, is out there.” He spoke, “In the corridors of this ship.”

“What... what was that? What did you do?”

“You are wolf now... so your mate must have told you about his aura.” Isra said. “He was a powerful pureblood if the scent of him that still lingers on you is any indication. Surely you must have felt his aura.”

“Yes... yes... but nothing like what you just did to me!” Tarifa snapped.

Isra nodded. “And that is the difference between my people and those that follow the King.” He spoke softly. “The King’s grandfather, King Resumar, he broke the majority of our people away from the violence and instinctual nature of our past. He and the others that followed him, ruling in his stead until his descendant returned, they have schooled and guided their children to not surrender to the basic instinct that my people have always embraced. What you just felt was my complete unshielded aura, for all of three seconds. If I had allowed it to envelope you anymore, you would have been helpless before me. Not as completely as a full wolf for you have been turned, but enough that you would not have resisted me. I could have taken you now, or at any point since you have been here Tarifa, and you would have welcomed it.”

“Liar!” Tarifa snapped.

“I am not lying to you Tarifa. It is instinct in you now.” Isra spoke. “Your mate, Dekton I believe you have told me his name was; he was able to direct his aura, control it and allow it to caress you in ways my people can not do. You can do the same thing in a much smaller way, to attract males. My people are violent and unbending. The majority of the males of my people, Lycavorian though we may be, they use their auras against female wolves as a weapon, even turned ones, such as yourself. They do not know what it is to be tender and caring, nor do they treat our women with respect. My father did not treat my mother in this way.” Isra lowered his head. “If you go out there, without me to protect you, your scent will attract every male on this ship, and they will use that aura against you. And Tarifa... you have a most delicious scent.”

“Why haven’t you done this?” Tarifa spoke.

He looked at her with those violet eyes. “I am not like them.” He spoke coldly.

“You seem to be able to control it.” Tarifa asked. “Why can’t they?”

“Because unlike them... I have been inside the Union, primarily on Apo Prime, their home world. I have seen what they are, what they do. How they treat their women.” Isra spoke. “There is a small group of my people on Enurrua, my planet that feels as I do. We have been slowly working towards this same goal, and to bring all of our people together finally after ten thousand years. These people on my world and those I interacted with on Apo Prime, they taught me to shield my aura, direct it. No where near as controlled as some one like King Leonidas, but enough.”

“Martin... Martin has this aura?” Tarifa asked.

Isra looked at her. “Tarifa... if the King hit you with his full, unshielded aura, especially if he is as strong as they say he is, you would be nothing but a babbling fool before him, even as strong as you are. He is of the line of Resumar, and his blood is purest of all of us. He is closest to our instinctual nature, and that is his power. I have seen images of his Queens and...” He stopped speaking and got up quickly.

“What...” Tarifa asked moving closer to him.

“My father and brother have done something particularly immoral Tarifa. That is why I am upset and you can sense my anger. They have violated even the laws that my people follow. They have taken one of his Queens, the Queen of Lycavorian blood. Taken her in the most vile and contemptible way. They...”

Tarifa scrambled to her knees. “Aricia! They have taken Aricia from him! How?”

Isra looked at her wide eyed. “You know her?” He asked.

Tarifa nodded quickly. “We are friends. Close friends.” She replied. “What have they done Isra?”

His violet eyes grew wider. “They will discover what connection you have to her... and to the King. My father may be a vile disgusting man, Joric even more so but they are not stupid as stupid as Rommna. They will discover your connection to the King and to his Queen and they will kill you the moment you set foot on my planet. And then they will kill me as well. I must make arrangements to keep you safe.”

Tarifa leaned back. “Why?”

Isra looked at her. “What do you mean why? They will kill you that is why.”

“No... why do *you* want to keep me safe?” Tarifa asked.

His violet eyes descended on her and Tarifa felt a rush of blood through her once more. This was very natural though, not induced by his aura, but by the way those eyes looked at her. Eyes that looked at her hungrily... filled with desire and heat.

Isra shook his head. “You should get some sleep.” He spoke quickly, turning to go back to his computer console.

Tarifa wouldn't sleep this night. Her dreams were filled with violet and amber colored eyes and what that meant for her future she didn't know.

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## ENURRUA

Joric waited for the door to slide closed before fully entering the bed chamber and turning. He caught the full force of the broken couch leg in his jaw, and pain ripped through him as he staggered to the side.

“*YOU NUBOU!*” Aricia screamed lifting the leg of the couch she had destroyed and bringing it smashing down on Joric's shoulder with all of her strength. “I will *nubou* kill you now for what you have done!” As Joric lifted his head to look at her he saw blazing azure blue orbs with murder in them, “*Pen gur fecla terit gai!*” (I will rip out your heart)

Aricia smashed the couch leg across his face and saw blood blossom from his broken and shattered nose. Joric staggered away flailing his arms in front of him to protect himself. She was strong to begin with he knew that, but her rage made her insane. And she was speaking the ancient language. How could she know the ancient language?

Aricia stepped into her next blow, her azure eyes alive with a killing fever. She smiled wickedly as she felt and heard his shoulder pop, and he howled in pain. She lifted the leg once more, advancing on Joric as he staggered towards the balcony.

Joric did the only thing he could think of and he unleashed his unshielded aura at her, his eyes going wide when he saw it had no effect on her in the least. Aricia laughed insanely.

“You could not hope to come close to the power of the aura that the man who claimed me has Joric you fool!” Aricia growled. She swung again, feeling the leg smash into flesh, break bone. “Did you truly believe I would submit to you after I have tasted him?”

Aricia brought the splintering leg down again, crushing it across his face, splinters embedding in his flesh, blood soaking the end of the wooden weapon.

“I am not your mate! I will never be your mate! He does not need a fever in my blood to claim me!” Aricia was out of control now. “Martin Leonidas is the fever in my blood! He does not need to claim me! I am already his!”

Tears streaked her eyes as the betrayal of what she had done, been forced to do, hit harder than ever before. Just speaking his name wrenched at her heart, but it gave her strength, and with that strength she would beat this man to death for stealing from her the one thing most precious of all.

Her grief also made her careless and she did not smell or detect Chetak come barreling into the room. Her legs buckled as he smashed his fist into the back of her head, and she staggered to the side, the couch leg falling from her grasp.

“*Upae!*” Chetak shouted as he hit her again as she turned drunkenly.

The blow split her lips and sent her flying across the floor, landing through the open doors of the balcony and into the night air. Chetak’s eyes flew open as he grabbed his son, “The power inhibitors Joric! There are none on the balcony! She can use her weapon! Get up!”

Aricia staggered to her feet, her azure eyes glazed over as she lifted her left arm, the flash of silver/white evident on the balcony as her Shi Viska appeared. She laughed once more, an insane laugh, her lips bloody.

Chetak and Joric were no longer looking at her however. They were staring in horror at something above her. Aricia turned and her eyes grew wide as she saw the gaping maw of the flying monstrosity as it came right at her. She saw powerful wings, azure blue scales rippling in the moonlight. She saw flashing razor sharp teeth, glaring azure blue eyes like her own, and then the mouth became full of flame, and the flame reached out for her. Something slammed brutally into the balcony she stood on, launching her into the air as the flame engulfed her.

And Aricia screamed.

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## CHAPTER EIGHT

### HADARIA CAPITAL CITY OF UNOPA DAY FOURTEEN

“It is truly a blessing to finally meet you my Queen.” The tall Hadarian spoke as he leaned over deeply at the waist.

Anja forced a small smile and nodded. “I... ok... I guess so.” Anja spoke.

Prefect Zaniai straightened up and looked at her.

This woman before him was the image of her mother in every way possible. The jade green eyes highlighted a deeply tanned skin tone, more so than the average Hadarian, but with her shimmering Persian red hair it fit very well. Anja was her mother’s height Zaniai saw, however unlike her mother, whose figure was very shapely in its own right; Anja’s figure was not only shapely but packed with muscle and exceptionally well defined even under the black and crimson Spartan armor she wore. She carried the helmet under her arm, the soft red hair of the crest moving in the slight breeze, and he saw her nose twitch every so slightly. Zaniai smiled inwardly at this. He had seen enough Lycavorians in new surroundings to know that she was sniffing the wind, attempting to categorize scents and file them to her memory. Zaniai had always found this skill amazing in his Lycavorian friends, how they were able to file away scents like they did and remember and detect those same scents even centuries later. Perhaps he would ask the Queen this when they got to know one another better.

Her jade green eyes never stopped moving as she took in everything around her. Hadaria was not Apo Prime with its towering cities and kilometers of hover lift traffic. Hadaria was much more sedate and slower paced. The city all around them was built from centuries old stone and marble and had stood completed for four thousand years. There were few hover lift lanes in Unopa, the capital of Hadaria, though some of the outlying cities had larger traffic lanes due to their trading centers. Unopa was considered their most religious site, and traffic was kept to either small personal hover discs, or the six person Liftdarts.

Zaniai studied Anja for a few seconds longer and then glanced at her Handmaiden Seanna quickly.

“How was your trip Milady?” He asked finally.

Anja turned to look at him and nodded. “It was fine.” She replied, “A little long... but fine. I... didn’t realize Hadaria was so deep into Union territory.”

Zaniai nodded. “With the exception of the small Lycavorian Fleet corvettes you saw as you were arriving, we try to maintain calm scenery as much as possible. It allows those who come here to find some semblance of peace. We actually have four dedicated Fleets assigned to protecting Hadaria, but they maintain a

discrete distance. You will find many of their crewmembers come here to relax when they have down time. I know the commanders of these fleets personally and will introduce you at some later time if you wish.”

Anja nodded. “That would be fine. Where will I be staying?”

Zaniai motioned to the right in the distance, “The home of your parents if you choose Milady.” Anja followed his motion and her eyes went a little wider when she saw the huge cathedral like home.

Anja looked back at him. “You’re kidding right?”

Zaniai shook his head with a smile. “I realize the pageantry and opulence you see is overwhelming, especially on Apo Prime.”

Anja nodded, “Just a bit.” She said. “Martin and I... Dysea... Aricia... we...” She stopped talking for a moment and closed her eyes.

Zaniai may not have been able to Mindvoice but he was a very good reader of emotions, and the wave of sadness and pain that swept from his Queen was staggering. He watched her take a deep breath and with a great deal of inner strength she opened her eyes again. “We aren’t used to it.” She said simply.

“Trust me Milady... you will not find a place of poverty or decline in the Union. While we are very wealthy, everyone gives back, even the largest of our corporations donate billions of Riyal to insure that no one wants for nothing. We have had too many years of slavery under the High Coven to neglect others.” Zaniai spoke.

Anja nodded. “That’s good to know.” She spoke. “I was told my... my grandfather was waiting?”

Zaniai nodded. “He is most pleased Milady. I have not seen Fuleos so animated in nearly eight hundred years.”

“How... how old is he?” Anja asked.

“Fuleos... he is almost six thousand years old, one of the oldest of our people.” Zaniai spoke. “We live long full lives... but not nearly as long as you will now live Milady, thanks to the Lycavorian blood swirling through you.”

“I understand that caused some issues.” Anja spoke as politically as she could.

Zaniai nodded. “It did Milady, but it is not something we can not see worked out. All of us are quite happy you are among us, and whatever comes to past we will see it through together.”

Anja nodded slowly. “Very well... I’d like to go to see him now.”

Zaniai nodded waving to several Hadarian men in light blue uniforms. “Your liftdart is not far. These two officers will see you to it.”

Anja nodded and looked at Seanna, “Seanna?”

“I will be along very shortly my Queen. I just need to ask the Prefect some questions.” Seanna answered.

Anja nodded and turned to follow the two men. Zaniai watched her walk away as he stepped close to Seanna.

“She carries a heavy heart with her Seanna.” Zaniai spoke softly.

Seanna nodded. “The situation with Queen Aricia has taken a toll on everyone Prefect. Anja and Aricia were... closer than most realize. They... share of each other as well as the King.”

Zaniai looked at her his eyes showing his surprise. “That was not in anyone’s reports to me.”

“I chose to leave it out of my reports Prefect, until I could tell you in person.” Seanna spoke looking at him.

“You have seen this?”

“I have seen them touch each other in ways reserved for lovers, yes Prefect. All of them actually to include Queen Dysea.” Seanna answered. “It comes almost naturally to them. They are all tied to the King in this way.”

“What is your opinion of her?” Zaniai asked after a moment.

Seanna looked at him. “You received Ambassador Tezu’s report Prefect.” She spoke. “He told you what he saw.”

Zaniai nodded. “Yes... and it was a typical politicians report; intelligence quotient, probabilities, causes and affects.” He replied. “Now I want to know who our Queen is Seanna. And only you will know that.”

“She is one of the most compassionate women I have ever met Prefect.” Seanna told him honestly. “She is highly intelligent, exceptionally so; in superb physical condition as you can see. She is considered among the

Spartans to be extremely lethal in combat. I have not seen this personally, but I have seen her training, and I suspect that information is very accurate. Yet she is also the first one they will go too in times of need.” Seanna looked at him. “And without question she is behind only the King and Queen Aricia in terms of Mindvoice powers. I would say that she and Dysea are equal in skill and knowledge... but Anja has the more sheer strength and willpower to project her Mindvoice powers. The King has blocked all contact with Anja and Queen Dysea. He normally allows part of himself to travel within each of them, but now...” She shook her head.

“He is that powerful?” Zaniai asked.

Seanna nodded, “Without question.” She replied.

“What else Seanna, tell me everything.” Zaniai spoke.

“I would recommend we inform the keepers of the estate to remain off the property until mid morning.” Seanna looked at him. “She dearly enjoys running in her wolf form, and it would be safer if she wasn’t frightening everyone. She mentioned this to me this morning on the way here. It helps her to focus her thoughts and mind.” Seanna spoke.

Zaniai nodded. “I will make it so.” He said. “Your message said you have something for me?”

Seanna pulled the small data pad and blood sample from inside her jacket. “Chetak left this with Prime Minister Deia. It is a sample of Queen Aricia’s blood...”

“You still refer to her as Queen Seanna. Why is that?” Zaniai asked.

“Until I am told by the King himself or Milady Anja Prefect, she will remain Queen. The blood sample shows no known signs of mind altering substances. I checked it for that myself with my own kit Prefect.”

Zaniai looked at it as she handed it to him. “Then why give it to me now?” He asked. “You realize what this represents is a crime? You took this from Prime Minister Deia.”

“I do Prefect. I also know that while advanced and intelligent, Prime Minister Deia is more concerned with holding the Union together than anything. Incensed she may be that this travesty occurred, it is not her priority to discover anything in regards to this. I doubt she will even miss it.” Seanna answered. “I was hoping Prefect that you would see fit to have the Oldest Ones review it?” Seanna spoke.

“I don’t understand for what purpose Seanna? It is my understanding that she chose this man Joric freely due to the *Lunmai* Fever. It is contemptible that this branch of Lycavorians could even still exist, let alone do something like this, but the Prime Minister’s office told me everything was very much within the law.” Zaniai spoke.

Seanna met his dark eyes. “Prefect... I have traveled with them for almost a month now.” She spoke evenly. “I realize I still have several years of training to fulfill, and I am not as experienced as most but I am also a woman Prefect. Fever or not... Aricia would not have chosen that man freely.”

“Why do you say this?”

“I saw the way they looked at each other Prefect, she and the King.” Seanna spoke. “That is why. Please Prefect. I have never asked for anything before. I ask for this now.”

Zaniai held her gaze for several moments before nodding slowly. “I will deliver it to them when I see them next week. I doubt they will find anything Seanna.”

“Probably not Prefect. I may not believe this is the case, I know Queen Anja doesn’t, but there is always hope Prefect.” She replied. “At least I will know I have tried everything. And I would like to stay on as her Handmaiden permanently Prefect. I can finish my training in the time she will be required to return to Hadaria every year, but I want to stay with her, to serve her, to... to be there for her.” Seanna wasn’t about to tell him that she found the Queen refreshingly truthful and blunt, a woman who was loyal and strong, and a woman that stirred feelings and thoughts in Seanna that she would never have contemplated before this day.

Zaniai nodded. “I don’t believe your instructors will have a problem with that.” He said. “I will bring it to Mage Council myself with my recommendation to make it so. Now the King Seanna, tell me of him.”

Seanna looked to where she could see Anja in the distance. “He will not give her up. Nor will she give up him, that I can tell you with precise accuracy. Anything else Prefect, you can ask him yourself. He promised her he would be here in four months for the Zenith of the Nebula, regardless of what anyone wants and to my knowledge the King has never broken a promise to anyone.”

Seanna began walking towards her Queen as Zaniai looked on in shock at her words.

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## LEONIDAS I

Martin looked at her on the edge of the bed, studying the lines of her face and shape of her lips. She had been brought to his quarters on the *LEONIDAS I* at his order and Kmyla had attended to her here. The bruises had all but faded to nothing now, with almost three days of rest and full meals to aide her elf healing system in repairing the damage the Coven had done. Another hour or two and the Immortals on that planet would have been raping her continuously to destroy whatever resistance she had left. She was strong to have survived the beatings they had given her, constantly being fed on like an animal by the vampires. The dozens of vampire teeth marks had disappeared by now, but Martin had seen them dotting her body when he and Kmyla had brought her here, and that only served to fuel the rage that was building once more within him.

He didn't know where this power had come from within him. He had felt the anger, the uncontrolled rage when he had seen the two Immortals holding her like that. Everything had come together then, and when he had lifted his hand it was as if they reached out with all the fury that burned in his thoughts. The two silver diamond like pieces of psychic energy had punched through the armor of the Immortals as if it was tissue paper. When he released it, Martin had sent all of his fury focused in those two points, and it had been devastating.

And it had felt very good.

The sheet covered her naked form, and Martin found his dark eyes traveling down the contour of her hips and legs under the thin sheet. She was Dysea's height, in excellent physical condition with a healthy glow to her slim, defined body. She was no where near as muscular as Dysea or Anja, her breasts small and firm, with small pert nipples pressing against the fabric of the sheet that covered her, but as he gazed at her sleeping form, he found that this one would have enticed him above all others to taste her with his Queens permission. And he didn't know why.

As with many elves, with the exception of her longer than shoulder length golden hair, she had no other hair on her body and even though she was a pilot, she had a very healthy tan to her skin. Martin had allowed no one but Kmyla to enter and see her until after he had helped her wash her body of the filth she had been forced to endure for almost a month. He shifted on the bed pulling his leg up as he continued reading the data pad. As usual when in his quarters he wore just his loose black pants and no shirt, the black flame tattoos covering his chest, swirling out from his abdomen, shoulders and back and almost alive in the glow of the dimmed light in his bedchambers. He didn't need it bright to read with his wolf eyes and he kept the level low so as not to shock For'mya when she woke.

For'mya stirred awake but didn't move, enjoying the feel of the soft, cool sheets against her naked flesh and the fact that pain no more lanced through her body at even the slightest movement. She opened her dark brown eyes slowly, noticing the room was lit but dimly so, and she turned her head to the spot he would be, as she had done every time she woke since she had been here. He was there again, as he had been for the last three days, never far from her side. When she had first awakened, the female elf had been in the room with her, studying her with the medical sensor. He had stood beside her the whole time, his unreadable dark eyes never wavering, never wandering over her body, which was fully exposed for his eyes to view. Those eyes had remained focused on her face and no where else.

Arzoal had not touched her since he had rescued her from the Immortals in quite a shocking fashion, but what she had shown her was unlike anything she had experienced before. And those were just the surface thoughts of others and their feelings in regards to the King who they all worshiped to the point of near fanaticism, the King who now sat on the bed and safeguarded her. She had seen battles, countless battles unlike anything she had seen, before the comet had affected Earth and altered the future for all of them. Combat on the ground in a way that For'mya would never forget; images of bloody, broken and shattered bodies. She had seen how he had discovered who he was. How he had never known his father, his true nature, yet somehow he had gone through his life exactly how his father and grandfather had conducted themselves, and he did it without thought. She had seen how he had met all of his Queens and the deep abiding love he had for all of them, most especially the youngest Queen, Aricia.

*I hope you are feeling better.* His voice filled her thoughts and she turned her head to see him looking at her, his dark eyes still bright and very unreadable. *You've been sleeping for nearly three days.*

For'mya sat up slowly, pushing her body back against the head of the bed and wall, holding the sheet over her naked body and wondering why she didn't feel odd about that. Perhaps because he has already seen

what you had to offer and found it not to his liking, she thought to herself. As she sat back she noticed the glittering coral red pendant her wore around his throat, tied with a simple leather and satin strap.

“How long have I been here?” She asked.

Martin reached up and tapped his head. *Mindvoice please, I know you can, and I don't want anyone listening to what we speak of. I don't trust many and with very few exceptions none are on this ship, at least not yet. As I said... you have been sleeping for three days.*

For'mya looked at him strangely. *I am... I am not very good at Mindvoicing sire. Arzoal... she only gave this skill to me recently.*

Martin looked at her oddly. *So we'll have to work on that, no problem. Who is Arzoal?*

For'mya nodded. *She was talking to me while I was a prisoner. I don't know how she found me or why. Or even what or who she is. She is very powerful however, to have found me like she did. It was Arzoal who helped to enhance my natural Mindvoice shields.*

*I will have to thank her when I see her. She gave you a very solid start it appears. May I touch you?* Martin asked.

*My... my King...* For'mya's eyes went wide.

Martin's smile held no humor in it, of that she was sure. *I want to touch your head For'mya.*

For'mya felt the heat of embarrassment rush through her and she lowered her eyes. *Forgive me sire.*

Martin set the data pad down and reached out with his two fingers of either hand to rub her temples briefly, closing his eyes as he did so. For'mya felt his Mindvoice touch within her thoughts, sensing and then seeing so many doors, but only one other was open at the moment. Everything else was an empty black void. The dull throb that had always been there with Arzoal began to fade away to nothing, until finally it was gone completely. He pulled his hands back after a moment, one hand picking up the pad again. *That should help.* He spoke.

For'mya looked at him quickly, amazed that the connection with him had become so much clearer and there was no strain on her thoughts. No dull throbbing in the back of her forehead. *You did that.*

He gave her that humorless smile again. *Go figure... I have a gift with this Mindvoice thing, so I'm told. The door I have opened is for us only. The only other door open right now, so to speak, is to Andreus my Captain. He is the only one I trust completely at this moment. He will not interrupt unless it is important.*

*Then why have you given this to me?*

*I trust you.* He told her.

*You don't... you don't know me.* For'mya said softly. *Why would you trust me?*

*I know that you are to be my concubine.* Martin spoke holding up his hand before she could retort to him. *I also know it is not a position you want or desire. I am in the same position. You don't want to be my concubine, but are being pushed into it. I don't want a concubine, and I'm being pushed into it. We're in the same situation Commander.*

*Sire you...*

*My name is Martin, For'mya. I hate formalities more than anyone you will ever meet. I tolerate them because I have too. Considering that we now can communicate this way it seems silly to be formal. Don't you agree?*

For'mya nodded slowly. *I do.*

*So I can call you For'mya then? It means Scent of the Flower in Elfin doesn't it?*

For'mya looked at him surprised that he knew the meaning of her name in the elfin language. *Yes... sire... Martin. How did you know that? There are not many who know the elfin language well enough to know the meaning of our names.*

Martin looked at her and shrugged. *I don't honestly know to tell you the truth. Your scent... it is like a sweet Orchid. It seemed to fit.*

For'mya felt a small surge of heat through her when he said that. *Thank... thank you sire.*

*You're very welcome. You've fought this station that your father and people have expected you to take whenever the King returned; the station of Bounded Concubine to the King. You were brought up for this position from a small child. Whether you like it or not For'mya... it is in your blood for some reason. And you hate that, am I correct?*

For'mya looked at him before nodding after a moment. *Yes. It is not the position so much as the fact it... it takes away my choice.*

Martin nodded as well setting the data pad aside and pulling his other leg onto the bed, sitting lotus style facing her. *As it does mine.*

*Sire you... Martin...* She spoke when she saw his head cant to the side. *You are a man. It is not the same thing.*

*Isn't it? I don't want anyone else to share my bed For'mya. I never have and at this point in my life, I don't want to even think about that. What I do not like is people telling me I must have you because it is part of some honorable pact made by your people to mine.* Martin told her.

*You... you don't find me attractive Martin?* For'mya surprised herself when she blurted that question out, for she didn't know why she asked it. Fully half of the men, almost all of the Lycavorian men she knew, had tried at one point or another to bed her.

Martin shook his head. *Quite the contrary, I think you are the most beautiful female elf I have ever seen next to Dysea, and I mean that. Given different circumstances, with their permission and yours, I would have taken you in a heartbeat. I've known quite a few female elves in the last year or so, none of which smell as good as you or Melda Min. she too smells like flowers, Wildflowers in full blood if you're wondering.*

*You have known other elf females sire? Besides your Queen?* For'mya eyes were wide.

*Not in that way no. The three women I left in charge on Earth are elves. I had a relationship with one in the very beginning, but our lives drew us in separate directions and now we are like brother and sister.* Martin spoke. *She's in trouble... someone has tried to kill my Oracle... and apparently a Blood Oath sworn against my grandfather, whatever the hell that is, from someone I don't know has taken...* For'mya saw the flash of great pain across his face and behind his eyes. She held back the gasp of breath at the force of that pain she saw in those few seconds and then it was gone and his eyes became unreadable dark orbs again. *Someone has taken the woman who holds a part of me that I will now never get back. Or ever give again. A part of me Anja and Dysea will never have. And she did it by her own choice, for whatever the reason, which hurts most of all.*

For'mya could not hold back the horror in her eyes no matter how hard she tried and she saw him nod slowly.

*Now you see what is happening. Someone else has discovered I fathered a child with the bitch of a woman who held you prisoner for so long. A child I did not even know about until just before I left Earth. Well... someone has been spreading that information out pretty liberally, and if it ever becomes public knowledge... it could very well tear apart all that my grandfather built. Your father is among the ones who have threatened to release that information.*

*My...my father does this?* For'mya hissed her outrage.

Martin nodded. *He is your father and he loves you. He used the only thing he had in his possession to make me come find you sooner than I had intended. I'm actually glad I did though; the thought of what would have happened to you is not something I want to imagine.*

For'mya looked at him stunned, Arzoal's words coming back to her. {He will come for you child} *You were always coming for me?*

Martin nodded. *I let Yuri go. I should have killed her, but had I done that you would now be dead. I let her go, and she had you, which I didn't find out until later. I've never left anyone behind before and I won't start now. I've had people looking for you from the time I discovered you were taken. I need an ally For'mya, someone I can trust to find out who is trying to destroy what my grandfather built. Anja is on Hadaria learning what her people want her to learn in regards to the gift she has within her. Dysea and Isabella are heading to earth to find the fucker that hurt Helen... the Oracle. I need help.*

*Why me?*

*Because we both don't want what is being forced on us. I hate being manipulated by others, as I'm sure you do.*

*And when you find this person or persons? What will you do?*

*Are you sure you really want to know?* Martin asked her.

For'mya saw the image of the two Immortals and the way they had died in her mind and she shook her head slowly. *No I do not.*

The humorless smile again. *Good girl.*



*What do you want of me?*

*Accept the position of concubine to me. Martin said simply.*

*For'mya looked at him horrified. I thought... what you just said.*

*It's the easiest way for me to eliminate a potential disaster For'mya. If you accept the position openly, it takes your father out of the equation, and right now he is the bigger threat politically. I'm not a politician For'mya; I can't play this game as well as others. And I don't want to learn to either. This is my simple solution to the problem and it will give Deia and the others time to find out who has betrayed us. If you accept the position willingly Deia might be able to get your father to tell us where he got the information from to begin with. Martin spoke.*

*But I will be tied to you Martin. In the eyes of my people I will be tied to you in every way. I will need to eat with you, stay with you... I will...*

*You get the bed. I'll sleep on the couch For'mya. He answered before she formed the question. My quarters become yours. Yes I know all this. When this is all done I'll release you from whatever binding thing this will be. You are also the finest STRIKER AT pilot in the Union For'mya. Where we are going, I'll need your skills.*

*And what if I don't agree to this?*

*Martin shrugged. Your father is waiting for you on Apo Prime. You can fly a STRIKER back from our current location in two days. Once we cross the border again it might get iffy. I'm not going to force you if that is what you are asking; you've already been through too much because of me. He got to his feet. I'm going to change. I had your things brought up from Apo Prime. I'll meet you in the corridor outside the lounge in thirty minutes, and you can give me your answer.*

*Wait... cross the border? Where are we going Martin?*

*Martin's smile was now full of evil. We are going to Ukwav. He replied.*

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## **ENURRUA DAY FIFTEEN**

Joric ran his fingers along the scars on his face from the splinters the couch leg had left. The blast from the Firespitter had engulfed not only the balcony but the curtains and bed as well. Their servants had put the fire out quickly enough, and now he sat on one of the couches rubbing the soreness of his face and jaw. Even after three days it still hurt.

The bitch had hurt him badly, beaten him in a way that had not occurred since his father had beat him as a child. The four inch long sliver of wood had ripped open his perfect face, and deeply enough where he would carry the scar for the rest of his life. He looked up as his father walked into the room.

"The Firespitter was the female's daughter, I'm sure of it." Chetak spoke as he walked up to his son and held out the glass of ale. "The damage from below says a very large Heavyhorn was with her, probably her mate. They must have smelled you all over the wench and thought they were grabbing you."

"They've never been this bold father." Joric spoke.

"They were most likely circling over the ocean and when the breeze carried your scent to them they went into attack mode." Chetak said. "The Heavyhorn went after the balcony as the Firespitter targeted you. When he hit the balcony his weight tossed Aricia into the air directly into the path of the flame." Chetak laughed at that. "She saved your life and hated your guts! How poetic is that?"

"So she's dead?" Joric asked rising to his feet.

"If the Firespitter didn't incinerate her in the blast, they most likely ate her remains. They rarely let free food go to waste, you know that." Chetak said with a smile. "A pity really. A female of that strength would have sired strong children Joric."

"My... my aura didn't affect her father." He spoke. "I hit her fully unshielded and it didn't faze her in the least."

Chetak looked at him, "Truly?" Joric nodded. "It's just as well. She would have been trouble." He walked to where Aricia's Shi Viska was imbedded in the wall nearly halfway. "We could not have kept her

locked in here all the time with the power inhibitors on. And with this weapon she could have taken out the lot of us easily. Have you told anyone to remove this?"

Joric nodded. "They tried for several hours. Short of cutting into the wall and replacing the section, it won't budge."

Chetak nodded. "Leave it for now. It will be a reminder for you to be more careful."

"Won't her death make the Union suspicious?" Joric spoke.

"Let it make them suspicious." Chetak answered. "They can do nothing. Their own constitution states they can not interfere in the internal policies of a member state. I will make sure they stick to that, all the while making us rich beyond imagination."

"Father we already are rich." Joric spoke.

Chetak nodded. "We could always use more."

"I will miss her." Joric said with a tight smile. "For the short time I had her, she was without a doubt the best."

Chetak laughed once more. "Come Joric... your youngest brother Isra is bringing home an elf mate that he has claimed from this new planet. Fight him for her. He has never beaten you before. Rommna says she is quite tasty and smells very nice."

Joric grinned. "I just might do that." He spoke.

"We need to go over the options for the company we have purchased in the Union. An engineering company that has several defense contracts we might be able to use to our advantage." Chetak spoke.

Joric took a last look around the room and followed his father.

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*How could you betray me Little Wolf? I loved you with all that I am.*

*I didn't betray you my love! I didn't!*

*You betrayed us Aricia! Anja's voice barked. How could you do that?*

*Anja please listen! I didn't! I love you! Please don't leave me! Please!*

*Betrayer! Betrayer! Betrayer!*

"Martin my love, please don't leave me!" Aricia's voice cried out in her sleep, carrying over to where Arzoal stood with Isheeni and the obsidian black Heavyhorn dragon.

The Heavyhorn was large, almost as large as Arzoal in size and weight, but he moved with grace and power. He had been one of the most sought after young dragons when he came old enough to mate, yet he had never discovered the one meant for him, the one he wanted to tie himself to for eternity. In an act unheard of among their kind he had shunned all advances by female dragons, many of them quite beautiful as dragons go. That was until Isheeni had been hatched two hundred years after him.

When she first learned to fly, Torma as her instructor because of his size and agility, he knew he had found his mate. Her azure colored scales tickled his fancy and her scent made his wings tingle at the tips. She had a strong, muscled body and her tail had driven him insane. He had followed their rituals to the exacting letter, and as soon as Isheeni came to mating age, he had appeared in front of Arzoal begging for her daughter. He was young for a dragon, barely seven hundred years old compared to Isheeni's four hundred and twenty years, but age mattered not to dragons, and they had been mated for over two hundred years now. It would be another thirty years before Isheeni was old enough to carry her own eggs, but Torma had not wanted to wait that long, and told Arzoal that very thing on the day he took her. To Arzoal, the oldest of her kind, to have a dragon only three hundred years old wish to bound himself to a female that could not even bear children until she was four hundred and fifty had been the ultimate show of love. Arzoal had given her permission without question, to her daughter's boundless delight.

The three dragons turned back away as Aricia rolled over onto her side within the dream.

*It has been three days mother.* Isheeni spoke softly. *She hasn't woken yet.*

*Elder Mother... did I injured her?* Torma asked.

Isheeni leaned her head over and butted her mate in the side of his powerful chest. *Of course you hurt her you brute.* She said, her soft voice causing Torma's scale to ripple as they always did when her voice touched his mind. *You almost crushed her ribs when you caught her. It was not I you were gripping husband; even Tablina's people are fragile in human form.*

*And you saw Joric and Chetak together on the balcony and spit fire before you were supposed to my azure colored mate.* The Heavyhorn defended himself.

Arzoal chuckled softly. *Hush both of you.* She spoke. *She has already healed the physical wounds Torma. What she has now is a wound of the soul.*

Three huge heads turned as Tablina came into the massive cavern with them and walked over slowly to stand among them. "Chetak does not suspect me." She spoke. She looked at the Heavyhorn with a stern gaze. "However next time Torma, if there is a next time, please try to remember she is not food."

Isheeni looked at her mate of two hundred and nine years and nudged him again in the side with her forehead. *I told you.*

The brown Heavyhorn lowered his head, his nostrils flaring open in what could only be described as a sheepish grin for a dragon.

*Will she wake up soon Tablina?* Isheeni asked. *I have never met one of your kind with eyes like mine.*

Tablina turned her head as her nose caught the lavender coco scent spike. "She is awake now, listening to us. Aren't you Aricia?"

Arzoal's flame colored eyes grew wide. *I did not sense her!*

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Aricia heard voices and remained still. They were very close, and she kept her Mindvoice shields locked just enough to not give away that she had woken.

*Will she wake up soon Tablina?* The soft feminine voice spoke in Mindvoice. *I have never met one of your kind with eyes like mine.*

"She is awake now, listening to us. Aren't you Aricia?" The woman who had just entered spoke now. *I did not sense her!* The older female voice, an octave lower than the others spoke.

Aricia turned her tear stained eyes slowly onto the three dragons and the female of her kind that they dwarfed in size. She sat up with infinite slowness, preparing to spring and change into wolf form so that she could run. She wanted to run as far and as long as her legs would carry her to take the pain away. She only needed to get past them.

Standing before her were creatures of myth where she came from.

Dragons!

They were creatures of legend that had terrorized humans in ancient times, according to the myths, breathing fire and eating the flesh from their bones.

*Only my daughter can spit fire Aricia.* Arzoal spoke moving closer to her.

*Work on her aim is something she needs however.* Torma spoke looking at his mate with that dragon grin.

Isheeni flipped up her long, thick tail at him and moved with her mother. *She wants to run mother. She wants to change into a wolf and run until there is no more pain.*

Arzoal looked at her. *She told you this? I heard nothing.*

Isheeni shook her large head slowly as her azure eyes fell on Aricia, who was staring at her. *I feel it within her.*

Arzoal turned back to look at Aricia. *You have no fears here Aricia of the Spartans. We will not hurt you. We have brought you here.*

Aricia shifted her eyes and looked at the largest of the dragons with bright flame colored eyes. *This is a dream.* Aricia spoke. *This is part of my punishment for betraying my beloved. I will now have to be chased by creatures like you in my dreams.*

*This is no dream Aricia.* Arzoal spoke lowering her head to the level of the floor and extending it out to within inches of Aricia's wide eyes. *Can you touch dreams child?*

Aricia didn't know what possessed her to reach out, but she did. And she felt the cool, smooth and scaly skin of reality pulsing with life. Her eyes grew even wider and she felt awareness unlike any other surge through her. She drew her hand back quickly, looking at it.

*The unknown should not be feared dear Aricia. It should be embraced.*

Arzoal drew back quickly when her words brought forth a new flood of tears from Aricia and she slumped once more to the floor of the cave curling into a ball of emotional pain and letting the waves wash over her unrelenting in their brutality. Arzoal turned to Tablina.

*What have I done Tablina?* She asked quickly.

*It is not you Arzoal my friend,* Tablina mindvoiced now. *It is similar to what her mate has said in the past.*

Aricia's head snapped up at that, tears splashing to the ground. *I have no mate! I have betrayed my mate in the most horrible of ways. Betrayed him while he watched me beg another to claim me!* Her mind screamed out, Isheeni's azure eyes filling with tears as suddenly she too felt the waves of pain and sorrow sweep through her. *I have betrayed the only man I will ever love.*

Torma saw this in his mate and he moved close to her, brushing against her firmly, feeling her lean into him.

Tablina took a deep breath and shook her head. *You have betrayed no one Aricia. It is I who has betrayed you, and all I have ever tried to do these past years.*

Arzoal moved next to her slowly. *We have betrayed you Queen Aricia. It is by our actions that you are here. Not by your own.*

Aricia lifted her arm and wiped the tears from her eyes. *What... what do you mean?*

*You were experiencing the Lunmai Aricia, The Second Coming of Age. It is similar to your first Coming of Age, but stronger in its base lusts and needs. You felt it... the burning in your blood to have your mate take you over and over.*

*Martin... Martin claimed me almost a year ago! We claimed each other! What are you speaking of woman?* Aricia snapped. *My love claimed me under the Centennial of the Moon! No fever, no matter how strong, would have made me betray him in the way I have! I allowed another male to claim me! I screamed for his touch, begged him to take me as his! And my beloved saw it all!*

Tablina closed her eyes slowly at this, Aricia's pain and shame washing over all of them. She nodded her head slowly, no longer having the energy to project with her mind due to the massive wall of agony she felt surrounding her. A wall Aricia was rapidly building. *You are right child.*" She spoke looking back at her. "No fever would have made you betray your mate, you were fighting it, and you were winning, until I intervened"

*We Tablina.* Arzoal spoke softly. *This is as much my fault as it is yours my friend. I will not allow you to take the blame for actions that we took together.*

Tablina let out a heavy sigh. "You would have beaten the fever child, and when Joric took you from your mate, the king would have burned a path across the stars like a comet to get you back. He would have come here, and the goal we have so long sought would have been accomplished when he discovered what was happening on this wretched world. You would have beaten the fever Aricia, unless it was altered in a way that made it strong enough to overwhelm even your considerable control and power. We... we did not foresee the strength you have in you Aricia, the power that you could wield. We also did not foresee the sadistic manner in which Chetak would flaunt what we gave him the power to do.

Aricia's tears were gone now as a slow burning anger began to build within her chest. "What are you saying?"

"We gave Chetak and Joric the means to increase the potency of the Lunmai to an extent it overwhelmed your control. Joric introduced a serum into your blood stream at some point, a serum that we made, that increased the power of the Lunmai fever to staggering proportions. All you would have wanted to do is mate with the first male to take you. Joric made sure he was the male. He and his father were fulfilling a Blood Oath sworn against your mate's grandfather King Resumar. No matter your feelings or love for the King, no matter if you knew it was wrong, you could not deny the burning in your blood. When Joric projected his unshielded aura on you that was all it took for you to surrender to the burning. We forced you to betray your beloved Aricia. This is not something of your doing child, this is of our doing."

Isheeni had never seen a fury the likes of which burned in the azure eyes in front of her. Those eyes had become cold, merciless orbs of death as Aricia slowly got to her feet. Isheeni caught the glint of coral red under the skimpy dress she wore, and her own azure eyes grew wider as she felt the power building within the cavern they stood in.

“You have done this to me!” Aricia growled in a voice conjured from the darkest depths of the abyss. “You turned me into some whimpering fool before a man I would not have even glanced at! You allowed this man to take me in every way imaginable. You have ripped from me all that I have ever desired in my life. You have taken from me the one man who made me his in the most sacred of ways to our people. You forced me to betray him, betray him like a whore in the street, while those putrid men forced him to watch me scream for another to take me!”

“We have kept you from having to carry that pig’s child!” Tablina shouted. “Part of the Lunmai is that it makes our females extremely fertile! Joric had you a dozen times in the first few hours and if not for me you would be carrying that pig’s unborn child.”

Aricia’s eyes snapped open wide and without thinking she lifted her left arm calling her Shi Viska.

“I will kill you now! And then I will kill myself for the agony you have brought upon me. Martin... my beloved... he will never forgive me. And I will never forgive you!” Aricia screamed out her rage, her betrayal, and all the emotions within her very being. Tablina’s eyes grew wide in horror.

*Mother the necklace!* Isheeni called out.

*She’s calling her weapon!* Arzoal snapped stepping in front of Tablina to protect her. *Torma!*

Torma didn’t hesitate and leaped forward, flipping his tail with amazing dexterity. The tip of a Heavyhorn’s tail was encased in thick bone and a small knob like formation. It was their primary weapon along with their thickly spiked head and incredibly powerful and muscular forelimbs. The tip of this tail slapped heavily into Aricia’s side, snapping three ribs and tossing her towards the opening of the cavern they were in, propelling her through the air with electrifying speed. Isheeni watched with horror as Aricia disappeared out of the mouth of the cavern and over the edge from her mate’s powerful tail whack.

*NO!* Isheeni screamed in Mindvoice and before her mother could stop her she extended her wings and raced out of the cavern after Aricia.

*Isheeni no!* Arzoal Mindvoiced in a scream. *She is crazed now! Beyond saving! Beyond hope!*

Isheeni ignored her mother and leaped from the edge of the cavern straight down into the blackness of night.

Four thousand meters straight down.

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## **APO PRIME DAY SIXTEEN**

“What can you tell me of Chetak’s man?” Deia asked from across her desk in the Tuya Capital Center, “This Pualtar?”

The center of the Lycavorian Union government was a modest building, only two hundred stories high when compared to the towers that reached into the sky around them, but this was the center of power. Deia’s office was surrounded on three sides by transparent alloy, allowing her a spectacular view of the city both day and night. Right now she was less concerned with the view and more concerned with what was happening in her Union.

Olalla looked at her. He was a Lycavorian of medium height, not particularly standing out, but he had a sharp mind and had been a Senator in the Union for almost fourteen hundred years. He was also a strong proponent of bringing Chetak’s sect of their people back within the Union and uniting their entire race. This is what Deia had discovered talking with him. There was a strong group, not very large, but strong in importance, that had been advocating reaching out to Chetak, trying to convince him to renounce the old ways and bring all their people together. Up until a month ago, he had adamantly resisted.

Now they all knew why.

“What do you want me to tell you that you don’t already know Deia?” Olalla spoke.

Deia leaned back in her chair. “Olalla I already apologized for what I said. I spoke in anger you know that. It was not one of my better moments. Nothing like I said would have ever come about, it is against our laws and you know I have always followed our laws.”

“No it wasn’t.” Olalla spoke. “And I wasn’t concerned about what you said Deia. I was concerned about what our new King told you. Threatening to declare martial law if his instructions were not followed; Riall agreeing to follow his orders without question? It is disconcerting to say the least.”

“Riall is and always will be a military officer, whose best interests are the Union and our security.” Deia answered.

“Then why won’t the King just chose another Queen of Lycavorian blood and be done with this folly?” Olalla asked. “There are thousands of our young women, beautiful young women who would give anything to be taken as his mate. They would line up at his doorstep for this, especially as young and vigorous as it appears he is.”

“I don’t know Olalla.” Deia spoke softly. “He won’t respond to my transmissions. That is if we knew where he was. Three times in the last two weeks his fleet has appeared out of no where and obliterated a High Coven garrison. Not just destroyed the bases mind you, but actually butchered every High Coven soldier and Immortal discovered there. They were not large garrisons, and considered very old by High Coven standards, but it is almost as if he is building them up for something larger. They are making their way somewhere, but at the moment we can not determine where that is. It’s almost as if he is acting out his rage.”

Olalla shook his head. “Pualtar is shrewd.” He spoke finally. “He is insinuating himself into the strongest committees at every turn. We can not refuse him entry because he is following the letter of policy. The only committees that have denied him entry are those controlled by L’tian and the Elfin Delegation.”

Deia nodded. “And that is only because in an exceptionally shrewd political move for an amateur, the King got For’mya to openly accept the station of Bound Elf Concubine to the King.”

Olalla looked at her, eyes wide. “Truly... I thought she had no intention of holding such a position. She made it clear on more than one occasion, quite publicly if I recall.”

Deia nodded. “I don’t know how he did it. I only know that it occurred after he rescued her from Laxnis II.”

“Laxnis II?” Olalla spoke. “Deia what are you talking about? Why would For’mya be on Laxnis II? It is a High Coven prison planet. There is more going on here than you have been telling me Deia.”

Deia looked at him and decided now was the time for him to know everything. “Not anymore Olalla. Laxnis II is a graveyard. The King’s 1<sup>st</sup> Spartan Fleet Attack Group decimated it when they rescued For’mya. The prison is gone, and the two Coven cities around it are smoking ruin.”

Olalla leaned forward. “We have tried to take that prison four times over the last three hundred years Deia.” He spoke. “He did it with one Fleet Group?”

Deia nodded. “In eight hours.” She told him. “His entire Group is equipped with Coven Shroud Generators. We don’t know where they are, or what their ultimate destination is. I’m guessing it isn’t going to be pretty.” She got up and went to the small cabinet and unlocked it, drawing out the data pad. She re-locked the cabinet and turned back to him, holding out the pad. “What you are about to read Olalla does not leave your lips.”

Olalla took the pad and sat back in the chair as he began to read. Deia busied herself with pouring two mugs of steaming hot tea. She despised the dispensers and always made her own special blend of tea. She made both mugs with the exact proportions that she and Olalla liked and then returned to her chair, placing the mug for him on the edge of her desk. After another few minutes he looked up at her.

“Deia... Deia this is incredible. And I have only hit the high points as you have them marked here.” He spoke softly.

“I know.” She said softly. “He has quite the interesting history our young King.”

“Interesting?” Olalla spoke. “*Nubou* unbelievable is more like it! He gave this to you freely?”

Deia nodded. “He passed it to us in his memories when he first contacted us.” She spoke. “He wasn’t aware of the child at the time; that did not become known to him until just before he left Earth to come here, but everything else he has done is an open book for us to study; his decisions, his reasoning, the whys and wherefores. He is methodical Olalla, brilliantly so. Does it remind you of anyone?”

“King Resumar.” Olalla answered without hesitation. “It... it parallels King Resumar’s history almost exactly, at least according to the history archives.”

Deia nodded. “And he does it without thinking.” Deia got to her feet and looked out the large window. “His latest move is with For’mya. He has now locked the support of the Elves for all time. They will not betray

him, or do anything against him in any manner. L'tian even brought to me the source for the information he received within an hour of For'mya contacting him. He made no copies he swore to me, and offered every resource the Elfin Delegation can muster to find who the traitor is."

"Who was his source?" Olalla asked.

Deia looked back to him. "He was contacted by a very junior member of the Union Foreign Relations Committee. We have that young man in custody, but all he seems to know is that he was instructed to take the information presented to him and courier it to L'tian." Deia returned to her chair. "L'tian is having every surveillance system within the Elfin Delegation headquarters reviewed going back two years to determine if anything was afoot then. I have recommended that all the other Delegations do the same in a routine security purge now that the King has returned. They are to report any unusual instances immediately."

Olalla nodded. "Well Chetak's man Pualtar is wasting no time. The Lycavorian People's Republic has just completed the purchase of a medium sized engineering corporation with Union defense contracts, done completely with secured Riyal."

"Secured?" Deia asked.

Olalla nodded. "They paid fifty-nine billion Riyal, out of an account here on Apo Prime." He spoke.

"Pull the Defense Contracts." Deia said immediately.

"We can't... not without violating the contracts we signed." Olalla spoke.

"What are they for?" Deia asked.

Olalla shrugged. "Experimental shielding and advanced ship armor using new design research. Nothing that is really workable right now."

"This is not Chetak's doing." Deia spoke getting to her feet. "He is not smart enough to do this on his own. He is a brute and he will always be a brute, as are his sons. Something else is involved here. Someone else is behind this. Someone much more powerful and driven."

They turned when the door to her office slid open and Riall strode in quickly, a strained look on his face. Deia became much more alert. "Riall what is wrong?"

"The Oracle Dustha," He spoke. "She has been gravely injured Deia."

"What? When?" Deia gasped.

"Eleven days ago." Riall spoke.

"ELEVEN days ago!" Deia screamed. "And we are just getting this information now? How is that possible? We have interstellar communications! Why are we just hearing about this now?"

"We wouldn't have if I had not contacted the 23<sup>rd</sup> Fleet Group Commander on Earth." Riall spoke. "I had to pry it out of him and finally I threatened to have him thrown in the brig if he didn't tell me what was going on. He was ordered not to say anything; to anyone."

"Ordered by whom?" Deia demanded.

"Queen Dysea." Riall answered. "Deia... I have spent the last few nights with my mate trying to learn from Gorgo why her son is acting like this. It baffled me as well Deia."

"Was she able to tell you anything?" Deia asked.

Riall turned and watched as Gorgo walked into the office. She came up to him and took Riall's hand within hers. "Deia... how are you?"

Deia looked at her oddly. She seemed so serene and peaceful. "Gorgo what is wrong? What is Martin doing?"

"My son feels betrayed Deia." Gorgo spoke. "Ever since he first discovered who he truly was, he has been manipulated in some fashion. Why do you think he gave you the orders he did? If anything should happen to him, Anja, Dysea, Isabella... they are to be named Queens without delay. What purpose would he give that order for?"

"Gorgo..."

"No... stop and think for a moment Deia. Until he discovered who he was... none of what was happening was his problem. He didn't even know we existed. He had built his own world with the women he loved. He had built his own city. Now... because of who he is... all that he cares about is being torn from him. And we have done nothing but push him forward faster. He told me on the *LEONIDAS* he did not want to be King Deia. He did not want the weight of what we were pushing on him. Dustha is injured and may not survive; the elf female he considers to be his dearest sister is missing, captured or kidnapped, perhaps even dead. He has

enemies at every turn... and the woman who held his very essence in her grasp betrayed him in the most heinous of ways. How would that make you feel Deia?"

"Gorgo what are you telling me?"

"It's simple really." Gorgo spoke. "He's circling his wagons I believe the old human term is. The only people he trusts completely now are Anja, Dysea and Isabella. And when he is gone he will insure they will be in charge."

"Gone? What do you mean gone?"

"Deia... when Aricia was taken from him, my son lost the will to live. He loves Anja and Dysea, yes... but Aricia was his soul, his *Ano*." Gorgo spoke. "What he is doing now is what any Spartan would do. He is going to insure those he loves and trusts are protected and safe, from everyone who would do them harm."

"And then?"

"Then he is going into battle Deia." Gorgo spoke. "He will go into battle and he will not stop fighting until he is dead."

Riall held out the data pad to her. "We just confirmed this with a long range sensor outpost in the Yaln Sector Deia. The King's fleet has reappeared."

Deia snatched the pad. "Reappeared where?"

Riall looked at her, "Orbiting Ukwav."

Deia's dark eyes went wide. "Ukwav! By the gods no!"

Olalla rose to his feet. "What is Ukwav?" He asked.

Riall looked at him. "We've tried to take the planet three times in a thousand years." He spoke softly. "Each time we have lost, badly."

Olalla stepped forward, "How badly Riall?"

"It is the most heavily fortified High Coven garrison on the border. They've launched dozens of attacks into our space from it." Riall spoke softly. "It's called *Samarna rie Jorbhe Ceiga Ano*."

"Riall I don't speak the ancient tongue." Olalla said.

Deia looked at him. "It means The Planet of Hell's Forgotten Souls." She said softly.

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## CHAPTER NINE

### ENURRUA DAY TWENTY

Joric grunted his release into the whimpering female beneath him, tears streaking her face, her hands clutching the twisted sheets of the bed. His upper body was soaked in sweat as he had been raping her for several hours, and between the exertion of that and having to beat her twice to submit to him he was tired and worn out. He finished emptying himself into her warm depths and then shoved her forward on the bed and let her curl up in a fetal ball clutching her stomach.

She was youngest daughter of one Atlatus's most prominent wolf families. Barely a day past coming of age and he had been her first. Even though the fever burned in her, she had refused him and he had beaten her into submission, laughing the entire time. After taking her the seventh time, he could feel the barely detectable aura of new life within her womb. The fever had made her very fertile and now she would have his eleventh child. She was his now, and she would make a satisfactory mate. At least until his brother brought home this blue eyed elf he had claimed. Rommna had said she was quite a catch, with sapphire colored eyes and very sweet smelling. Joric wasn't surprised Isra had beaten Rommna to claim her. Isra was a large wolf for his age, nearly as big as Joric and their father, but he lacked the killing instinct, and when Joric fought him for the elf wench, he had no doubts he would win.

He still regretted Aricia's death. She had smelled the sweetest of all, and she seemed to actually begin to enjoy when he took her unnaturally. She had the softest lips he had ever felt around his...

Joric's eyes narrowed as he lifted the ale to his lips and stood from the bed. He had emptied himself into Aricia twice as much than this wench beneath him, in the first few hours alone, her scent and firm body driving him to new heights of endurance before he was spent and he had felt nothing inside her womb. The *Lunmai* was



even stronger than the first coming of age and she should have conceived within the first few hours, yet as he thought back on it, he had felt nothing. So wrapped up in the pleasure he was taking from her he hadn't thought to...

Joric's eyes darted to the darkened wall and grew wider. He tossed the ale to the side and grabbed the heavy robe he had been wearing when he brought the wench up here. He hadn't been in this room since that night and as he grew closer to the dark wall he reached up to rub the scar on his face. He slapped the table light the servants had put in and it bathed the wall in its unearthly glow, Joric's eyes going wide.

The wall where her Shi Viska had been buried was now empty, only the deep three foot long gouge where the shield had been now visible. Joric spun around and rushed from the room, a cold knot forming in the pit of his stomach. He moved like a man possessed, down four flights of long stairs and through three drafty corridors before bursting into the room where his father was meeting with three other family heads.

Chetak laughed when he saw his son's clothing state. "Forgive my son," He spoke to the three men. "He has been breaking in a new mate."

The three men smiled knowingly and continued drinking their ale. Chetak stood and moved quickly to Joric, grabbing his arm and pulling him to the side.

"What are you trying to do fool?" Chetak growled. "These three men are our most avid supporters! They are going to help purchase more companies in the Union. Soon we will be even more powerful than we are now."

"It's gone!" Joric hissed in a whisper.

Chetak did a double take. "What? What is gone? You are speaking non-sense."

"The bitch's weapon!" Joric snapped, "Her Shi Viska! Aricia's Shi Viska is no longer embedded in the wall upstairs father!"

Chetak's eyes grew a little wider at this news. "No one removed it?" He asked quickly.

Joric shook his head. "They stopped trying after the blades sliced open three workers! I told you the only way to remove it was to remove the section of wall and replace it. You said to leave it!"

"You did not order this?" Chetak asked.

"Father the gouge is still there, but the weapon is gone." Joric spoke heatedly. "You know as well as I, a Shi Viska will not respond to another user except the one it is branded too. The only one who could have pulled it from the wall is her. She's still alive father!"

"Impossible! The Firespitter caught her full blast in the stream of flame!" Chetak spoke. "You saw this!"

"I also remember that Tablina told us the serum would amplify the effects of the *Lunmai* in her father. It didn't come to me until just now after finishing with the wench upstairs. I must have emptied into her body a dozen times in the first few hours. I never once felt a flicker of life in her womb." Joric spoke.

Chetak looked at him his eyes narrowing. "You are sure of this?"

Joric nodded. "I've bedded enough females to know what to look for father." He answered. "Aricia should have conceived within those first few hours. She didn't. And that can only mean Tablina lied to us."

Chetak looked at him. "We must not be too hasty." He spoke. "The serum she gave us worked Joric, or else you would never have been able to take her, even with the fever. I will contact her in the morning. Remain clam Joric. I want you to double check with the house servants that none of them removed the shield to sell it in the market. I need to finish with our guests and then we will decide what to do."

Joric nodded. "Father... if she is alive..." Chetak looked at him. "I want her back for doing this to me." He spoke rubbing the scar on his face.

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"Why are you staring at me?" Aricia snapped loudly. She was leaning against the rock wall, her arms wrapped around her shoulders huddled in as small a ball as she could to keep from shaking.

She had lifted her arm to call her Shi Viska, only remembering she had lost it during the dragon's attack on Joric and his father. Then the huge black dragon had whipped out its tail and struck her. The pain from three breaking ribs had been severe, but as she sailed through the air out of the cave and began to fall, Aricia surrendered to what awaited her at the bottom of the four thousand meter drop. She would die instantly, and the pain and shame she felt would never matter again.

That was until this azure colored dragon had swooped from the dark sky and snatched her in those flesh tearing claws as gently as a newborn, quickly spiriting her away from the mountain. She had cradled Aricia in her forelimbs as they flew. Flew for what seemed like hours until the splash of fresh cold water had jarred her awake and then Isheeni was gently putting her down on the cool rock beneath her. Aricia had scrambled to get away from her, the pain of her broken ribs making her mind sharp and clear. She moved until she found a corner in the cave and tucked herself into it.

Isheeni had taken Aricia to a part of the Enurrua that very few came to anymore. The bombardments from above thousands of years ago had turned this area into a wasteland and it was only just now starting to return to its former beauty. This is where the dragons had lived before Chetak's people had come. This cave was where others of her kind had been hatched. The twenty meter wide waterfall no longer carried soiled brown water, but fresh mountain water from the streams above. The trees had become towering green points again, and the land below was once more growing green. This was where Torma had taken her that first time after their bonding. He had discovered this cave on one of his solo sorties hundreds of years ago as a hatchling, and it had been their sanctuary since that time. Isheeni had brought a fresh stag from below that she had killed, and it was laid on the ground between them.

*You... you have not eaten or healed your wounds, Isheeni spoke softly. You must shift to heal. Tablina told me this of your kind. It is quite amazing to have this skill.*

"I'm not hungry!" Aricia snapped.

*Only food will keep your strength from faltering. You must live.*

Aricia leaned her head back against the rock wall. "I don't want to live." Aricia spoke softly. "You should have let me fall and die. I would have been happier."

*I could not do that Aricia of the Bluest Eyes.*

"All I have ever wanted has been torn from me." Aricia spoke her voice still just above a whisper. Isheeni moved a little closer to her, feeling the waves of emotion flow from Aricia into her. Mournful emotions, a pain of the heart Isheeni had never felt before. "You and your friends helped in that action. I can not fight you; at the very least you could just let me die. Then I will no longer need to carry the pain in my heart."

Isheeni watched as the tears rolled down Aricia's cheeks, tears of sorrow, of shame, of betrayal. She moved closer still, lowering her large head to brush against Aricia's raven mane of hair. *If... if you will not heal yourself Aricia of the bluest eyes... for my shame of what we have done to you... let me at least give you warmth.*

Aricia was so tired.

Days without sleep, having to endure agony like she didn't know could exist. It was too much for her. She allowed the change to take her, Isheeni watching with wide eyes as the silver/white light shimmered and then the black hair, blue eyed wolf was in front of her, moving towards her. She felt a moment of fear, the directions of her mother when she was young to fear the wolves of the night, but Isheeni didn't move, not this time. She felt a momentary flash of physical pain in Aricia's eyes as the change knitted her broken bones back together, and then another shimmering flash of that silver/white light and the supple figure of Aricia pressed against her azure scales drawing from the cool warmth. Isheeni extended one of her wings and wrapped it around the small Lycavorian Queen and she realized then that Aricia had dropped all of her psychic shields in exhaustion.

The power of Aricia's female aura burned brighter than even Tablina, and the old Lycavorian female was perhaps the most powerful Mindvoicer next to her own mother. Yet the power Isheeni felt trembling within this small female was staggering. Isheeni reached out tentatively, her mother's words when she was still a hatchling coming back to her.

*Among the stars there will be few who can Mindvoice as we do daughter. Among them the race that hunts us now. They are called Lycavorians, able to take the shape of wolves. Those out there among the stars are not like those on this planet. Those Lycavorians are just and fair and compassionate. And among them there are powerful Mindvoicers, some even more powerful than I.*

*No one is more powerful than you mother.* Isheeni had said.

Arzoal had chuckled softly. *I am strong daughter yes, but when you see the Dragon's Heart, then you will know power. And that power will either condemn us all, or save us all.*

Isheeni's own azure blue eyes glanced down at the glittering coral red necklace that rested between Aricia's breasts over her heart. She lowered her Mindvoice shields and reached out with her mind to touch the young Queen, to learn and experience the pain they had brought upon her. As Aricia's life flashed through Isheeni's mind, she shared the ups and downs, the highs and lows. She was still very young for a Lycavorian, Aricia was, but she possessed within her a power that Isheeni had never felt before. It churned beneath her being, behind psychic shields of such magnitude that Isheeni dare not attempt to penetrate, but that Aricia could tap into without thought.

The Isheeni saw him.

The man who had claimed her very heart and soul and she had done his. She saw the red haired female and the blond elf, even the black haired vampire princess, all of their psychic auras interwoven in such a way as to make them nearly one in love and thought. A union of beings that Isheeni was stunned to see so completely joined. And within that fabric of auras was that of this young Queen and the King. Their two auras were not only interwoven, they were joined completely. You could not tell where one started and the other ended. It was as if the others swirled around these two together, but Aricia and the King were still separate, if only a tiny fraction. She saw the long black hair and dark brown eyes, the physical proportions of this King, and her eyes grew a little wider when she saw him as a wolf. The yellow/gold eyes and his immense size; larger than even Chetak and Joric. He...

*Isheeni.*

She turned her head and saw Torma move slowly forward. So engrossed within Aricia's unshielded mind, Isheeni had failed to sense her mate splash through the waterfall and land meters away from them.

*Torma... my mother...*

*I told no one my mate.* Torma spoke quickly as he saw Aricia's now sleeping form tucked under Isheeni's wing. *Our sanctuary is ours alone. She is concerned because you won't answer her. Isheeni I was...*

*You were protecting me Torma... you need not explain your love for me husband. I... I could not let her die.* Isheeni spoke.

Torma moved close to her, gently rubbing his obsidian colored scales against hers and seeing her wings flutter in delight. He brushed his snout against her scales behind her head, tracing the curve of her powerful neck, down her back and shoulders and to the tip of her tail, checking for injuries and displaying his commitment to her in dragon fashion. He finished by drawing in a deep breath of her female scent and allowing it to course through him. Isheeni turned her head when he was done, her azure eyes bright and clear, and she gazed at him as he settled to the floor next to her.

*Why have you brought her here?*

*I have touched her mind Torma.*

Torma's yellow eyes flared. *Isheeni why? Your mother would be very angry. It is not allowed!*

*She is in such pain my husband, so tired. Her shields came down and I could not help myself. Torma... remember how much you... how much you told me you cherished me, the day you took me as your mate. Why?*

*You know why Isheeni.* He spoke softly.

*You could have had any female Torma. Many courted you. You waited until I came of age and still you bonded with me knowing I could not give you children for two hundred and fifty years. You could be a father now husband.*

*Isheeni when I first saw you that day in the main cavern. I knew it was you and only you that I wanted. No others. I would have waited a lifetime for you. We are fated for each other.*

Isheeni nodded and brushed her snout against his chest. *That is what Aricia shared with this King Torma. They were fated to be together. And we have torn them apart. Our actions have torn them apart husband. I have seen him Torma, in her mind.*

*Show me.*

And Isheeni did. All that she had seen and felt she passed to her mate. She saw his larger black wings ruffle as he too felt the enormous power and love, and now the pain.

Torma looked at her. *Isheeni... he... he is the most powerful Mindvoicer I have ever felt. He dwarfs even your mother.*

*I know.*

*This child has it within her. She trembles with power Isheeni.*

*And where he once stood within her mind is now nothing but a black abyss husband, an empty void that we put there with our thoughtless actions. Isheeni spoke.*

*We are trying to save our people Isheeni, you know this. Tablina is trying to save her people. They are Aricia's people. Torma spoke.*

Isheeni nodded slowly. *Who gave us permission to act as the changers of fate husband? Who gave us permission to act in such a way? In doing what we have done, instead of saving ourselves husband, we may have doomed ourselves as my mother said.*

Torma was silent for a long moment staring into her beautiful eyes. *Is there nothing we can do?* He asked finally.

Isheeni looked down to where Aricia slept in the embrace of her wing. *I will bind myself to her Torma. I will help her in any way I am able. We have altered the path of fate husband, and now we can only hope it is not destroyed for all time.*

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## LYCAVORIAN PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC CRUISER

Tarifa staggered against the bed as Isra nearly tossed her through the door of his quarters. "I told you woman!" He hissed at her in a pain and anger filled voice. "I told you to not go out there!"

Tarifa whirled around, her sapphire eyes wide. "I only wanted to see this ship! What it looks like! You have kept me locked up in here for almost two weeks!"

"And I told you why Tarifa!" He groaned loudly as he engaged the lock on his door. His left arm was shredded, blood pouring out onto the floor. His leg burned with pain and he moved quickly to the cabinet, Tarifa seeing for the first time the injuries he had sustained and gasping in horror.

She had ventured into the corridor after the boredom of remaining in these quarters for so long. Isra had duties to perform she knew that, but he seemed to be spending more and more time away from the quarters as opposed to in them as when they had first started this journey. They were only a day from his planet he had told her, and then things would begin to move rather quickly. Instead of doing as he asked and reading the information on the computer he had brought up for her, Tarifa had decided to go for a walk.

It had very nearly been the end of her.

The moment she stepped into the corridor she could smell the heavy male scent, and it had immediately caused her own wolf scent to react. Within moments there were two very large men moving for her, lust and desire in their eyes, and not the pleasant kind. Tarifa had no doubts about what would have happened if Isra hadn't intervened. She saw the dirty blond wolf sail past her shoulder and attack the two men viciously. Isra was large in wolf form, bigger than Dekton, but no where near as large as she now knew Martin to be. The battle had been short and vicious, and before she knew what was happening he had grabbed her arm and rushed her back to the quarters.

Now she saw the results of her actions.

Isra peeled off the jacket he wore to reveal the shirt sleeve that was torn open, the flesh of his arm with three long tears in it.

"Give... give me the spray in the cabinet!" He spoke through clenched teeth.

"Isra you're injured!"

"What did you expect?" He snapped. "I told you to not go into the corridors of the ship Tarifa. Did you think I was lying to you woman! That is what will happen to you Tarifa! That is why I only give you my clothes to wear! To keep some small portion of my scent on you so that they don't break into my quarters while I am gone! You saw them Tarifa, *anse forn!* They will detect I have not mated with you and think you are free game regardless of what I have claimed!" He moved from the chair to the cabinet himself and took out the spray.

"I only wanted to see the stars Isra!" Tarifa spoke.

He glared at her. "Then you should have asked me!" He growled. He turned quickly a small panel on the desk, typed in a command and stabbed his finger down on the panel.

Tarifa jumped back at the sound, and she watched as an eight foot portion of the wall next to the bed lifted and recessed into the ceiling, exposing a stunning view of billions and billions of stars, trillions of stars. Her eyes were wide in wonderment as she looked out the large view port.

Isra groaned and drew her attention back to him as he used the spray on his arm. “Isra... I’m sorry!”  
“Help me and remove my boots!” He hissed. “I must shift to stop the bleeding in my leg and I can’t bend over.”

Tarifa rushed forward, her fingers working madly on the straps and buckles of the heavy combat boots, fumbling with the final buckle before finally pulling them off his feet. She looked at him as he was treating his arm. “What else?”

Isra used his uninjured arm to unbuckle the top of his pants quickly. “Pull my pants off!” He spoke.

Tarifa looked up into his face frozen in her spot. “Isra...”

“*Anse forn* woman! If I had wanted to force myself on you I would have by now! I am losing blood and I can’t bend over! I would prefer not to shred my clothes! Pull off my pants *upae!*” Isra barked.

The decision was easy for Tarifa because she knew he was absolutely right. He had shown her what his aura could do to her, how it made her wolf blood burn, and yet he had never once even looked at her in such a way. She gripped the legs of his pants and began pulling as gently as she could, wincing as his face grimaced in pain. As she pulled the pants down she saw the wound and almost cried out. It was deep, so deep she could see the bone of his thigh, the tear in his flesh ragged and torn. She could see the pulsing of the main artery of his leg, and the torn muscle and tissue.

“By the gods!” She muttered softly.

“Hurry Tarifa.” He gasped.

Tarifa did as he told her, finally pulling the pants completely off his legs and turning to look at him as he forced himself up to his feet. Tarifa noticed two things right away that she had not taken notice of before. His body was even more defined and sculpted with muscle than even Dekton had been, and he had the largest cock she had ever seen in her life. As she staggered back, she saw the yellow/gold shimmering light and then he was before her once more in his wolf form, dirty blond in color, muscles rippling beneath the shoulders and haunches. Yes... he was much larger than Dekton had been, more packed with muscle, but still smaller than Martin.

He shifted back and forth three times before the wound in his leg had sealed enough to stop bleeding, and on the third time he shifted back, all that remained was a large ugly pink scar.

Isra settled back onto the chair once more, his body coated in a fine sheen of sweat from shifting so many times in succession. Tarifa felt something inside she hadn’t felt before now, and it stunned her to feel it sweep through her.

She felt desire for him.

“Tarifa!” His voice brought her eyes back to his face from where they had been lingering on his crotch, and she looked at him, her face red with embarrassment.

“Yes.”

“The dispenser! Get me an *abeld goda!*” He spoke.

Tarifa looked at him, “A what?”

Isra shook his head. “Did your mate teach you nothing of the ancient language? *Abeld Goda!* Fruit juice!” He snapped.

Anger flared in her eyes as she went to the dispenser and tapped in the code for what he asked for as he had shown her. When it opened she took the glass and returned to him, thrusting it out to him.

“Dekton was a Spartan!” She snapped. “He was a great man and would not have done any of what you have done! He had too much honor for that!”

The pain in Isra’s violet eyes was very real and Tarifa immediately regretted having said what she did. Whatever may have happened to bring her to this spot, if not for the man in front of her now she would have been raped far more times than had ever occurred in her lifetime, or she would be dead.

“Isra... I’m... I’m sorry.” She spoke quickly.

He finished the juice in the glass and set it on the table. “You are right.” He spoke softly. “Forgive me for mentioning him.” Tarifa saw the flash of shame in his eyes and a pang of hurt touched her.

“Isra... I’m sorry.” Tarifa spoke.

“Give me my pants.” He said quickly. “You do not need to see me like this any longer.”

Tarifa picked them up and held them out to him, this time avoiding where her eyes wanted to go, and she rose to her feet as he pulled his pants up. She watched as he pulled his boots over and began returning them to his feet. "Isra... what... what did you mean before?"

He didn't look up at her, "About what?"

"You said they... they could smell that you hadn't..." Tarifa couldn't complete the sentence but Isra stood up and looked at her.

"Tarifa... my people are not far removed from the instinctual nature of our forefathers. We did not follow King Resumar when he pulled us out of that part of our lives and put us on the path to freedom and choice and honor." Isra spoke. "I have claimed you as my mate, but I have not forced myself on you. They can detect that by just your scent. It is why I can still smell this Dekton in your blood. You have not taken another after him have you?"

Tarifa shook her head. "Not... not a man. No. *Nya Istel*..."

Isra nodded. "Yes I know of your lover Tarifa. You call her *My Light*; that is very fitting for one with eyes such as hers." He looked at her. "My scent is not in your blood Tarifa. My people can detect that. It is why I have made you wear my older uniforms... to protect you in some fashion. It is why I told you to remain in here and not come out. It is why we will need to move quickly when we reach my planet. I will not be able to protect you long. We will have to move..."

"Where do you go when you leave me here at night?" Tarifa asked. "After that first night... you haven't spent any others here. Why?"

Isra took a deep breath. "I have a friend several doors down this corridor. I have remained in his quarters and returned before the change of shift. He believes as I do, that we need to change our peoples' ways. I can not stay in here with you."

"Why?" Tarifa asked.

"It does not matter why. You..."

"It matters to me." Tarifa spoke. "Why can't you stay in here Isra? I would think I am much safer with you in this room with me."

Isra stared at her with those violet eyes and Tarifa felt a shudder of desire at what she saw in them. For her.

"I... I have never been with a woman Tarifa." He spoke finally. "I can not stay in here with you because your scent drives me mad! It swarms around me all the time. It fills the room!" He exclaimed. "I am strong enough to resist it, I have learned that much, but the part of me that desires you still pulls against my control and it is better to remain away from you."

"So... so you don't take me against my will?" Tarifa asked him with a neutral voice.

Isra shook his head. "That is something I will never do! I have told you that!" He spat. "I stay away because... because I don't want... I don't want to feel what I'm beginning to feel for you. And it grows stronger every hour."

Tarifa didn't know what she expected to hear, but she was sure it wasn't that. She could feel this man, his scent filling the air around her. The wildness that he kept controlled. She had felt it in Martin and Dekton both. That was part of what she found so attractive in them, how they harnessed that wildness. He had never been with a woman, and yet his very society demanded he force himself on women, something he would not do. She stared at his face, examining the lines of his lips and chin, the depth of those violet eyes. Tarifa took a deep breath.

"Then take me." She said.

Isra's eyes went wide. "What?"

"Take me Isra. Make love to me. Right here. Right now."

"Are you *malda* woman? I told you I would not do that!" Isra snapped. "Are all elf females as *malda* as you?" He saw her confusion. "Crazy! Are you all crazy?"

"You said it was the best way to protect me." Tarifa spoke trying to keep the desire she felt out of her voice.

Isra nodded. "It protects you, yes Tarifa, but it is not foolproof!" He spoke. "I've told you how cruel my people are. If another male wants you, he will challenge me. I can't beat them all. I'm a large wolf, but I am not the King."

Tarifa suddenly wanted to feel just how large he was too.

“I don’t want to be raped Isra.” Tarifa spoke.

“I will not take what is not offered to me regardless of the circumstances!” He growled. “I will protect you until my dying breath, you need not worry about that, but I will not do this as a means of protecting you. It is wrong.”

“What if it *is* what I want?” Tarifa asked.

Isra shook his head. “You are *malda*.” He spoke. “You no more want to be with me than you want to be with Rommna. If you did... it would be leaking through your aura. It is not.”

“You forget Isra... my former mate was a Spartan. He did teach me many things. One of them was how to shield my aura.” Tarifa spoke. “So I would not distract him.” And then Tarifa lowered her shields.

The reaction on Isra’s face was immediate and predictable. His violet eyes went wide and he took several steps back. The desire from her was very real, very strong and directed at him. He shook his head.

“Don’t.” He spoke quickly. “You should not... you should not desire me like this?”

Tarifa stepped closer to him. “You have been nothing but kind and protective to me Isra.” Tarifa spoke. “Were we in any other situation, you would have sensed that I do consider you very handsome and desirable.” She said softly, feeling the burning of her wolf blood in her now. Tarifa projected her aura at him as Dekton had taught her and she saw him shake his head again.

“Don’t do that!” He hissed.

“If you want me so Isra then take me.” Tarifa spoke softly, reaching out to touch his rough face.

“Not this way!” He said.

“I’m offering myself to you Isra.” She said softly, her own need now beginning to become a fire. “I know you can feel it. I’m not being forced Isra. I want you just as badly as you want me.”

“Tarifa you...”

She leaned her body against his and covered his lips were her own. Isra’s eyes went wide and his body stiffened, but he felt her need now, her desire for him. And Tarifa did desire him now of that she was quite sure.

She groaned against his lips, as his arms crushed her to him, her hands going to his face to guide his inexperienced tongue and lips. She kissed him deeply, darting her tongue back and forth across his teeth, teasing and tasting. And then he lowered his shields and she felt his aura embrace her, and ignite her body with flame that she hadn’t felt ever before. It was wild and untamed, everything Dekton’s aura hadn’t been, and it swept through her like a raging firestorm, her nipples becoming instantly erect, and aroused wetness pouring from her like a faucet.

She felt him lift her easily in his arms, carrying her back to the bed and lowering her to it without delay. He struggled to get his pants off while Tarifa used shaking hands to practically rip his uniform top from her own body. When his eyes turned back and he saw her exposed for him, his violet eyes grew wide and lustful. Tarifa nearly cried out in orgasm when his warm lips engulfed her painfully hard nipple and he suckled hard. She felt him between her thighs, her eyes opening wide in fear at his size. Lynwe had been the largest cock she had ever had inside her, and Isra outstripped her by a very wide margin. He was so long and thick and so incredibly hot. Tarifa’s body called to him, her aura pulsing madly now, and she felt his returning the sensations ten fold. His arms slid under her shoulders and she gasped when he pressed into her urgently, spreading her tightness.

Tarifa grabbed his handsome face in her hands, her body yearning for more of what he offered her. Wanting more, needing more, but wanting him to be gentle with her.

“So... you are... so big.” She gasped, looking at his hungry violet eyes. “Please... Isra... slowly.”

Tarifa saw the light of understanding in him and he covered her lips with his own, plunging his tongue into her mouth like an eager child with a new toy as his cock began to slide into her with deliciously exquisite slowness.

Tarifa’s sapphire eyes were wide in wonderment, her arms going around his broad shoulders as he stretched her in a way unlike anything she had ever felt. She could feel him wanting to plunge completely in, take her with dominance and power, yet he controlled his animal lust and continued on his path. His body shuddered under her clutching fingers as her warmth encased him in her velvet like center. Tarifa was lost now, covering his face and shoulders with delicate kisses and nibbles from her fully extended fangs, and her head smashed back on the pillow when he bottomed out inside her depths, the scream of release escaping her lips as her orgasm rushed through her like a rolling field of molten lava.

Isra began to move, gently at first then more fiercely, urgently as his need to possess her became overpowering. Tarifa could only smile in bliss as she was there with him, her hands clutching his powerful back, urging him on. When her hands grabbed his powerful ass, Isra's head came up from between her neck and shoulder and he howled in release, Tarifa joining him a second later in her own orgasm when she felt the first eruption of his essence deep in her belly. She shuddered in continual, stomach clenching orgasms as his juices filled her, her eyes clamped shut, clutching him tighter than she had held anyone before in her life, her long legs locked at the ankles around the small of his back. As each blast of his juices into her triggered another staggering orgasm within her, Tarifa felt the tears begin to roll from her eyes. They were tears of joy and relief and happiness, her lips opened and split in a soft fulfilled smile.

Tarifa felt his head drop back to her neck, his arms pulling her closer to him, his breathing coming in deep gasps, her breasts crushed against his powerful chest. She suddenly felt safe and loved and secure and it made her nuzzle his neck. She gasped when he lifted his face enough to nuzzle her sensitive elf ears, softly nibbling on them, and tracing his tongue along the edge. Somehow he knew their ears were erogenous zones, and it sent tiny shivers of delight through her.

"Forgive... forgive me." He whispered out of breath into her ear.

Tarifa smiled at his words. Impaled as she was on his enormous cock, there was nothing to forgive as far as she was concerned. "Isra... that was unbelievable." She whispered into his ear. "There is nothing to forgive."

He lifted his face to look at her. "It... it was my... my first time. I... I was not prepared for your..." He spoke softly the exertion in his voice evident. "I will do better."

Tarifa smiled dreamily and took his sweaty face in her hands kissing him softly, the force of his aura lessened somewhat, but still coursing through her with intensity she hadn't felt even from Dekton. "There's... it gets better?" She asked.

Isra grinned like a teenager. "Much better!" He spoke happily, brushing his lips across her ears, "If you will allow me to show you."

Tarifa felt desire flitter through her at his words and she bit her bottom lip gently. "I think... I think you should show me." She said.

Isra grinned and covered her lips again for a breath stealing kiss.

He showed her alright.

He would show her for the next six hours what better was.

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## **EARTH SPARTA**

Dysea looked at Helen's peaceful face through the glass of the medical room. Aihola had ordered her moved to a single floor of the hospital in Sparta and now that entire floor was filled with armed and angry looking Spartan Centurions. The grounds of the hospital were patrolled by no less than a full Mora at all times and Walter and Panos had locked down the city so tightly that even a dog could not get through the security grid.

They had made it to Earth three days before planned, the captain of the *NOVA*-Class Attack Cruiser that was their flagship and their twelve ship escort, pushing his ships and crews faster and harder than he had ever pushed them before. They had burned out their LSDs right after exiting the newly built Jump Gate in Earth's sector, and were currently having those cores replaced in orbit above.

Dysea turned and looked at the senior doctor from the hospital walk up with Aihola and Isabella, Walter and his father right behind them.

Dysea had not cried in a very long time, but speaking about what had happened to Martin and Aricia had made her lose every ounce of self control she had. Isabella had found her in the lounge afterwards, no longer crying but trying to come to grips with what was going on around them.

She remembered that conversation now as Isabella walked directly up to her and took her hand within hers, ignoring the surprised looks of Walter and Panos. It appeared the steely Vampire Ice Princess was no longer shy about showing others what she considered to be hers.



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“Why are they doing this Bella?” She asked. “Who is doing this?”

“There are many who do not want to see any in the line of Resumar return to power Dysea.” Isabella spoke. “Not all of them are vampires. That Martin is the son of Leonidas, the grandson that so many thought dead... they fear what he will do. What he can do.”

Dysea turned to look into those hazel/green eyes. “He is only one man Bella.”

Isabella shook her head. “He is a symbol *ussta* she-elf, a symbol that can galvanize a Union that has grown weak and complacent in many respects.”

“But... what we saw on Apo Prime.” Dysea spoke. “It... it was wondrous.”

Isabella nodded. “Yes it was.” She replied. “However, that does not mean there is not something sinister that leaks beneath the surface. I have seen some flashes of it, the corruption, and the infighting among politicians. Any free society, as the Union is, any free society will have it. Deia has kept the Lycavorian Union free of it for the most part, she is a powerful, willful woman and not many will test her patience. Now that Martin... now that the king has returned, and knowing that he is the line of Resumar, there are those who don’t want him back. They know whatever corruption that boils underneath he will extinguish instantly. That is in his blood. He will not tolerate it, and any who go against him will be destroyed.”

“I thought there were just the Union and the Coven?” Dysea spoke.

Isabella shook her head. “They are the largest and most powerful; the most influential. But they are not the only organizations out there in the universe.” Isabella spoke. “There are dozens of smaller groups of planets, empires if you will, some friendly some not. It is those empires we must bring into the fold if we are ever to defeat my father. I have thought about this a great deal since realizing my role in all this.” Isabella lifted her arm and rubbed the Shi Viska bridle that she wore. “We are destined to be together, the five of us, with Martin at the center. Anja is his healer, you and I, we are his... his ambassadors so to speak, able to negotiate and fight if need be. Aricia...”

“Aricia was his soul.” Dysea said softly.

Isabella looked at her and nodded slowly. “He loves us *ussta* she-elf. He loves us all even... even me. But Aricia was his power. I do not know what will happen now, but I do know we must remain strong for him. He will need us in the future. All of us.”

Dysea smiled and reached up to touch her flawless porcelain like face. “Bella... you keep referring to me as *your* she-elf.” She spoke.

Isabella nodded and without a second thought stepped close and pulled Dysea into a blistering kiss that stole her breath away. Her hands went around her back, clasping Dysea’s firm, powerful ass and holding her as she took what her body so wanted. It was over quickly, but it left Dysea burning with delight and need.

“I have come to realize something else as well. You will be mine Dysea, regardless of how events work out; I will have you in my bed she-elf. You will be mine in every way your mind can imagine, in every way Martin does not possess you, I will.” Isabella spoke.

Dysea looked at her dreamily, their bodies still pressed tightly against one another. “Oh... I will so look forward to that day Bella.” She said. “I am going to make you scream you know.”

Isabella smiled at her and ran a finger over her lips. “I expect you will.” She said.

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“Tell me everything, and do not hold back.” Dysea spoke looking at the doctor.

“The explosion shattered every bone on the right side of her body.” The doctor spoke. “I understand the bomb was planted under her communications console in the cave so she must have been walking by it going to the fireplace. A large piece of the console penetrated just under her armpit and punched through her lungs and nicked her heart. Another embedded it self into the right rear portion of her skull. I don’t know how, but she was able to shift at least once, enough to stem the bleeding anyway.”

“Who found her?” Dysea asked.

“Thr’won.” He replied. “She was going to say goodbye because she was departing for Apo Prime to enroll in the University there. She was granted a Mage position, which to my understanding is quite an honor for an elf.”

“Where is Thr’won now?” Dysea asked.

“She’s downstairs in the eatery. She hasn’t left the hospital since the bombing, and refuses to leave her side for more than an hour or so.” The doctor replied. “I have the Oracle in a medical coma for right now, and Thr’won has been reinforcing her psychic shields to keep her Lycavorian system from reacting to the drugs and waking her up. We didn’t think she was going to make it for the first few days, but physically... I believe she’ll make a full recovery.”

“And mentally?” Isabella asked.

The doctor shook his head. “We don’t know. The chunk that embedded in her skull didn’t rupture or shred anything, which is good, but it did lodge far enough into her brain to cause some swelling and bleeding. We treated that quickly enough, but until she is recovered enough physically to wake her up, we won’t know if there is any damage to her brain. Our scans show complete healing, but she is such a strong psychic... only one person is powerful enough to see if there is damage our instruments can’t pick up.”

“*Nauta Melme*?” Dysea spoke.

The doctor nodded. “He’s the only one who has the necessary strength and connection with her to determine that.”

“And right now he is not even answering our calls to him.” Dysea spoke looking at Isabella.

Walter looked at her. “What?” He asked.

Dysea nodded. “He has withdrawn Holy One.” She said. “Having Little Wolf taken from him in such a vile way, her betrayal, it has changed him. He has sent *Melyanna* to her home world to learn her healing arts, and we have come here. Aside from two very brief transmissions from him, one saying they had rescued For’mya, the other giving Deia some instructions, we have had no contact with him. He refuses even our strongest probes,” Dysea spoke. “And only Little Wolf would have been able to crack his shields, she had grown nearly as powerful as him over the last few weeks, we could all sense it.”

“Dysea... you don’t actually believe that Aricia did what she did willingly do you?” Walter asked.

Dysea took a deep breath. “I don’t know what to believe anymore.” She said softly. “All I know right now is that Helen lingers near death, the man we all love feels betrayed by almost everyone around him, and he is quite possibly doing what he is doing in an attempt to kill himself to escape the pain. I know there is an assassin in this city, and Tarifa has been taken. I am growing angry with being manipulated and controlled, and soon I will no longer stand for it and I will begin hitting back! And when I hit back, like *Nauta Melme* it will be neither subtle nor pleasant!”

Dysea finished her rant with a long exhaled breath and felt Isabella squeeze her hand and look at her with a huge smile.

“Now... I want a meeting with the senior Lycavorian Commander, Dilios and Selene. Aihola you will be there as well. Senior Polemarch Dymas...” Walter’s eyes looked at her with a gleam. For Dysea to call him by his Spartan name it meant she was truly beginning to get angry. “This city will stay locked down until I or Bella says otherwise. I don’t care who it inconveniences or how much they scream. I want to know about these Lycavorians that took Tarifa, for I have a feeling they are tied somehow with this brute Chetak. Has her cave been sealed?”

Walter nodded, “No one but technicians from the ships above. They have been combing the entire cavern.”

“Aihola will you gather everyone in the Senate Hall?” Dysea spoke. “All the senators please.”

Aihola nodded quickly, “Dysea... what about Tarifa? I can not lose her.”

Dysea looked at her with those emerald green eyes. “Aihola... we will find Tarifa. And I promise you... if she has been harmed in any way whatsoever, I will personally drag this person to you and watch as you deal out Drow justice.”

Aihola’s amber eyes were hard points of light and she nodded. “That is what I wanted to hear you say.” She spoke. “I will gather the others.”

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## LYCAVORIAN PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC CRUISER

Tarifa lay on the bed staring out at the stars beyond the viewport, her body still singing in the afterglow of what she had experienced in the last six hours. Her naked flesh was pressed back against his, his arm curled around her with his hand cupping her full breast as he held her tightly to his warm body. His enormous cock was now sated and soft, nestled between her firm ass cheeks and feeling like it belonged there.

He had taken her in every way Tarifa had thought possible, her body singing out every time he touched or kissed her in any way. And it seemed like his hands and lips never ceased moving. She had lost count of the times he had taken her up to and over the edge of pleasure or the number of time he had filled her with his juices, but as far as Tarifa was concerned it hadn't been nearly enough. He had only stopped at her behest so that she could calm her racing heart as it had never been so out of control before. Aihola had done this to her when she fed on her blood in the midst of passion, but never without that. And it shamed her to think that the last six hours with Isra had been beyond anything she had experienced with Dekton or even Martin for that matter. And that had surprised her.

Isra nuzzled the back of her neck and her sensitive elf ears, causing her to push back against him in sensual bliss.

"Isra... Isra..." She started to speak.

His face appeared next to hers, tucked in close to her ear, her raven hair spilling over her naked shoulder. "Do not speak it Tarifa." He said softly.

She turned her face slightly. "Are you probing my thoughts?" She asked.

Isra shook his head. "No... though now we should establish a Mindvoice connection just for us in case it is needed."

"That does sound prudent." Tarifa replied and smiled happily as he kissed her shoulder.

"You are thinking that you are ashamed because of what you have shared with me." Isra spoke. "That you have in some way betrayed the memory of your mate and the trust of your *Nya Istel*?"

Tarifa turned in his arms and looked into his violet eyes. "How could you possibly know that?"

Isra smiled gently. "You may be the first woman I have shared a bed with Tarifa, but I have been raised by my mother and sisters. I know enough to read your body language and expression."

Tarifa smiled and brushed some of his blond hair from his eyes. "Are you sure you're not just acting the part of a good Lycavorian soldier to get information from me?"

"What information would that be?" He asked.

"Information on Martin... on Earth and what we are going to build there. Stuff like that." She told him. "Rommna did offer us a ridiculous amount of Riyal for what you call Talracian Ore."

Isra nodded. "Talracian Ore is a substance our scientists have discovered that will provide our ships with a specialized armor; very tough and very durable. It appears your planet is an excellent source for it, and one of the largest to be found in six hundred years."

Tarifa smiled and snuggled closer to him. "Well... if they would have sent you to discuss it with me, after six hours of what you just got done making me feel, I might have given it to you for free."

Isra laughed softly and looked into her eyes. "Tarifa... do you love your *Nya Istel*?"

"Yes." She answered without a moment's hesitation. "More than what I can put into words."

"And did you love your mate... this Dekton?"

Tarifa nodded. "Yes." She answered immediately.

"You are part wolf now Tarifa." He told her. "You will have many of our females' strengths, and some they do not because of your elf half. You will have few of their weaknesses from what I've already seen, but that is what I and others have been trying to change about my planet. And though we have had little success with the brutality my father rules with, we are trying."

"Isra..."

"Let me finish woman!" He demanded playfully, seeing her face scrunch up. "You are my mate now Tarifa... and in the way that King Resumar taught our people, I will protect you and help you to escape my world. I promise you that. The choice you will have to make is this. You are part wolf now... and it is in your blood to have a wolf mate. It is not something that will go away. You can fight it and ignore it... but it will always be there. I *will* let you go Tarifa... because I know your heart belongs elsewhere. I am not afraid of that

moment, because forcing you to remain with me would be no better than what my father has done these last centuries. I will not be like him in any way. Your wolf blood will always call for a wolf mate, whether it be me; or someone of yours and your *Nya Istel's* choosing is for you to decide.”

“Isra... how is it you have survived so long among your people when you think like this?” Tarifa asked. “It just seems very odd.”

Isra nodded. “I have survived because I have witnessed acts of brutality and done nothing. I have survived because I have kept my muth shut and done nothing. It is not something I am not proud of... but it is the truth.”

“So why now? Why do this now? Help me?” Tarifa asked.

“Because from the first moment I saw your eyes I knew I had to have you.” He answered, “No matter what I had to do.”

Tarifa smiled. “And now that you’ve had me for six hours? Now what?” She asked him.

Isra smiled and pulled her closer. “I was hoping for another six hours, or perhaps more.”

Tarifa chuckled and pushed her hips against his. “Isra...” She spoke after a moment. “Will you... will you allow me to think about all of this?”

“I have no desire to anger your Drow lover Tarifa. We will have enough trouble with my father and brother and the dragons to contend with.” Isra said in reply.

“Dragons... wait real dragons? On your planet?” Tarifa gasped not believing. “You’re joking right?”

Isra shook his head with a smile. “Welcome to the universe Tarifa, she-elf wolf from Earth.”

Their heads turned when the door chimed softly. Isra’s face became an unreadable mask once more as he quickly climbed from the small bed. Tarifa found her eyes wandering over his body with a great deal of hunger, especially what he had done with his... she smiled to herself at that and looked up as he pulled his pants on and went to the door.

He blocked her from view with his body as the door opened, and Tarifa could see the large figure in the corridor as they spoke in hushed whispers. She pulled the sheet tighter around her naked body as he nodded and let the figure into the room. He closed the door and turned to her quickly.

“Isra...?” She spoke.

“This is the friend I have told you about. The one I have been staying with. His name is Boreal.” He told her. “He has just received word from friends that my brother intends to meet me at the spaceport and challenge me for you.”

Tarifa sat up holding the sheet over her nakedness and seeing the other man turn his back to them. “So what are we doing?” She asked.

“Tarifa... I am large in wolf form, but my brother is larger.” He said seeing her eyes grow a little wider and glance down. He chuckled. “No...” He said softly. “That is unique to me. However he has five thousand years of combat experience behind him and is not above trickery and deception. I will not lose you to him. We are thirty minutes from my planet. We are leaving now.”

“Leaving!” Tarifa gasped.

Isra nodded. “There is a short range transport bringing docking codes and other information out to us. It is flown by one of those who feel as Boreal and I do. We will leave with that transport.”

Tarifa looked at him, fear beginning to creep into her eyes. He took her face in his hands upon seeing this and kissed her hard and long. When they parted her face was flush.

“I will not allow harm to come to you Tarifa. You are my mate now, in more than just name.” He spoke. “Boreal will not turn around until you are fully dressed. He has brought more efficient clothes that will fit you better, and boots. Dress quickly.”

Tarifa tossed back the sheet and climbed to her feet.

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**UKWAV**

**HIGH COVEN OBSERVATION POST**

**Background Music: *Era; Ameno***

At first glance one would wonder why the Union had fought for this desolate planet three times, each time suffering hundreds of thousands of casualties. It was exactly as it had been described to Martin, desert rock and sand, mountains of razor sharp rock, brutally hot during the day and bitterly cold at night and pretty much nothing else.

There were four major garrisons on Ukwav, all of them fully stocked and manned, with a hundred thousand troops per garrison, to include kilometers of underground tunnels and heavily fortified bunkers and positions that were impervious to planetary bombardment. All of the tunnels were interconnected in some fashion, and even with almost eight divisions of troops and air support during the last attack some three hundred years ago, the Union had been unable to crack into any of the tunnels or positions.

The OP commander was a bored Vampire Coven Lieutenant. Their post consisted of eight troops plus himself; with a bunk room, heavy weapons platform and several hundred plasma grenades and mines. The tunnel leading back to the interconnecting system sat behind six meters of the metal and rock. He lowered the macrobinoculars from his strained eyes and shook his head. The observation slits were twelve inches wide and wrapped around the entire concrete and steel structure, covering a 360 degree range of the darkness around them.

“Still nothing.” He spoke exasperated. “They’ve been in orbit for three days already and have not attacked. No troops have come to the surface... and no preparatory bombardment, nothing. This new King is a fool; I don’t care if he is the grandson of that animal Resumar.”

The two troopers in the actual OP building with him chuckled. They sat at their consoles, studying the sensors showing the Lycavorian fleet in orbit above them.

“None of the other OPs report anything either?” He asked turning his head.

“No sir, same as us. Nothing but what there always is out there on this stinking planet. Lots of sand and rock.”

“They’ve tried to take this rock three times and each time we’ve killed them by the thousands!” The Lieutenant spoke. “He shows up with one Fleet Group and a few thousand troops and expects us to shake in our boots. I wish we had planetary cannons. Then we could show these Lycavorian dogs who has the better troopers.” He spoke moving back to the chair he had been occupying.

“Think they have any nice looking females we can play with before we feed on them?” One of the troopers spoke.

The lieutenant looked at his chair and decided against sitting down. “I’m going below.” He spoke. “There is no reason for me to be here.”

The two troopers nodded their heads and watched him as he began to enter the code to open the thick tunnel door. They did not see the blur outside the OP structure, and it moved too fast for the ground sensors to track as it barely touched the ground. Nor did they notice the shimmering white hair that was mixed in with the blur.

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Vengal lay across the ridge some twenty thousand meters from the OP and smiled as his keen eyes, adjusted for the night, lowered his own set of binoculars. His face was blackened to the color of the night, wearing the black Spartan armor without the cape. The P190 dangled from quick release straps on his combat harness. The matte black helmet hid most of his features except for his glittering eyes. He turned to look at the dozen Drow and Wood Elf scouts that crouched behind him, alert to the sounds all around them.

“Acolo... send the transmission.” Vengal spoke. “Package has been delivered. It’s time to start this dance, as the King would say.”

The Drow elf’s amber eyes gleamed in the night and he smiled. “It’s about time.”

He pointed the small transmitter at the stars and pressed the button on the tiny control panel.

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## *LEONIDAS I*

Komirri came to his feet the moment the transmission was confirmed. “Fleet wide now!” He exclaimed.

“Channel is open Captain!”

“To all ships this is the *LEONIDAS I*. The door to hell has been opened! The door to hell has been opened! Commence attack! Commence attack!”

Komirri whirled around. “Weapons officer! All batteries! All missile tubes! Everything we have! Mark that position and fire!”

It wasn't a sight that others had not seen before serving in the fleet. One hundred and sixty seven ships all opened up at the same time. Hundreds of missiles and plasma batteries, proton torpedoes and whatever else they could throw at the Coven forces lit up the stars in brilliance.

There was a difference in this attack however.

Every weapon, every missile, every plasma battery, every torpedo, all of it was aimed at one location on the surface. A location that had just been targeted with a remote sensor dropped on top of the Coven Observation post where the Coven lieutenant had begun opening the tunnel hatch.

Dropped there by a Drow elf warrior who was himself half vampire.

---

Vengal and his scout team could only hunker down and clench their teeth as the ground all around them trembled with the preparatory bombardment the Coven vampire lieutenant had inquired about. None of them dared look up for fear of what they would see. Vengal looked at his men through clenched teeth and squinting eyes, seeing his Drow warriors laughing. He lifted his head slightly.

“What the hell are you laughing at?” He screamed at the top of his lungs.

The Drow looked at him that smile still on his face. “The door to hell is open! And we're about to step through it! How smart does that make us General?” He screamed back.

Vengal couldn't help but allow himself to be drawn up into the battlefield humor of the moment. He had come to adore his Drow scouts, not only were they the most lethal elves he had ever seen, they had a dry, witty humor that was second to none.

“Would you rather be them?” Vengal shouted.

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[Mindvoice Shielded] *For'mya?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Martin Leonidas?*

For'mya looked out the cockpit of her *STRIKER* at the forty-two other *STRIKER ATs* that flanked her command ship on either side. To say the last nearly three weeks had been an adventure she would not soon forget was an understatement For'mya would never make. True to his word, she had shared his quarters, but he had never even entered the bedchambers after that night they had talked. He was always there for her however, strengthening their Mindvoice connection, even beginning to train her in hand-to-hand combat. For'mya could feel it however, whether it was because she a woman, or due to the fact that she was very much, and against her better judgment, developing very strong feelings for him, Martin Leonidas was losing whatever battle he was raging inside of himself. She first saw the crack in his armor when they had utterly destroyed the second Coven garrison on Naglor Five. There had been no celebration of victory for him, his yellow/gold wolf eyes void of any emotion, dead to everything around him, he had simply returned to his quarters to begin planning the attack here.

He always answered her questions, never once denying her answers, about anything. When she had contacted her father and told him of her decision he asked if she was returning to Apo Prime. He was surprised when she had said no, though she thought she detected a flicker of understanding in his eyes. Arzoal had not touched her since Laxnis II; For'mya doubted she would be able to now. Martin had helped her to create shields almost as powerful as Anja and Dysea, and she worked hard to maintain them, swearing to never allow herself to be caught unaware. Arzoal's last words to her kept returning. *Help him to heal*. For'mya was failing in that task, simply because Martin did not want to be healed. He almost never ate anymore, and all he did was train for hours, returning only when he could no longer lift his Nehtes.

For'mya had come out of the bedchambers at one point and watched him as he slept. Even in sleep he was tormented, the pain on his face etched deeply, his hand always wrapped around the red pendant he wore.

For'mya had simply shaken her head in awe. To have so loved a woman as he had loved this Aricia, For'mya thought. She would never have that now, bound to him as she was as his concubine. Part of her wanted to embrace him and hold him, have him take her and make her scream out his name, yet part of her wanted to hold him and just tell him everything would be alright. That he would go on.

For'mya knew that was not the case.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Are you ready For'mya?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *We are ready Martin Leonidas.* She answered.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Stand by.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Do not die Martin Leonidas.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Do not die For'mya.*

It was a something they had started at the first garrison, and had continued to this day, whenever they separated.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *For'mya! Go!*

For'mya's head came up and she became the flight leader once more. "*STRIKER* Flight! We have a go, weapons are released! Ripple fire all missiles! Now!"

The air around the forty-two *STRIKERs* became nothing more than a huge cloud of smoke as they launched with one mind. All their missiles target on one location.

---

Martin turned his head and looked at the eight thousand Spartans behind him waiting. Forty kilometers away another ten thousand stood ready with General Vistr five thousand meters behind General Vengal's scouts. They saw the missiles from For'mya's *STRIKER* Flight zoom over their heads, Martin's yellow/gold eyes looking up to see them streak by in the night sky.

Andreas was the only one who stood close enough to his King to hear the words he spoke, and those words made him close his eyes.

"I will always love you Aricia."

Martin brought his eyes down and looked at the Spartans behind him. He lifted his *Nehtes* into the air.

"Spartans! Through the door!"

The roar from the eight thousand of them could only be described as deafening, and they surged forward, following their King.

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## CHAPTER TEN

### ENURRUA

#### DAY TWENTY-TWO

"Where have you been?" Chetak demanded. "I've been trying to reach you for days!"

Tablina looked at him as she sipped the tea at her home in Atlatus. "I was not aware I had to report my comings and goings to you Chetak." She spoke calmly. "If you must know I was visiting recent friends I have made in the northern city of Arnoma. Now why have you barged into my home Chetak?"

"The serum you provided did not work." Chetak spoke plainly.

Tablina laughed, "Nonsense Chetak. You brought the child Queen back with you mated to Joric. Do you think I am a fool?"

Chetak leaned forward across the table. "He did not impregnate her Tablina." He spoke. "You said she would become with child."

"I said no such thing." Tablina spoke watching his eyes. "I told you I would make it so even she surrendered to your foul son, by increasing the potency of the *Lunmai*. I said nothing about making her with child. That is your son's duty."

"As many times as Joric had her before returning, she should have been with child when she arrived on Enurrua." Chetak spoke. "She was not!"

“And this is my problem why?” Tablina spoke. “And what does it matter now? It is well known Joric allowed her to be killed by two dragons that attacked your palace.”

Chetak leaned back on the couch. “Tablina what do you know of Shi Viskas?”

“The Lycavorian Spartan weapon?” Tablina asked. Chetak nodded slowly watching her. “Not very much I’m afraid. I know it’s quite deadly in the hands of someone who knows how to use it. Bladed edges, unbelievable speed and control. The child Queen had one did she not?”

Chetak nodded. “Yes she did. We were using power inhibitors to contain it and keep her from using it.”

Tablina made an interested face. “Fascinating really, but what does that have to do with me?”

“It was a simple question.” Chetak spoke.

“Then I have a simple question for you?” Tablina asked in a friendly voice. “When do I get my planet?”

“I am having the paperwork drawn up this week. The documents will be yours within five days.” Chetak spoke getting to his feet. “Could she have been unable to have children?”

Tablina shrugged. “Without examining her remains I could not tell you that.”

“There are no remains.” Chetak replied.

“Ah yes... she caught the full blast from a Firespitter at point blank range. A pity for Joric, I understand he fancied her.” Tablina spoke smiling.

Chetak’s eyes narrowed slightly. “Yes indeed.” He moved to the door and turned back. “I will have the documents to you by the end of this week Tablina.”

Tablina nodded to him and watched as he turned and left her home. She got up and moved quickly into her smaller kitchen.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Arzoal... Chetak suspects that Aricia may be alive. Can you send Isheeni for me?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Isheeni refuses to answer me Tablina, you know this.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I did not think she was still being childish about this.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *She has bound herself to the child Queen Tablina. My kind does not take that as childish. I understand why we did what we did, Tablina my friend, but we have made it much worse with our actions. We have torn from Aricia all that she ever wanted or hoped for. The man who claimed her under your most sacred ritual we have turned against her with our actions. She did not want to be Queen Tablina. Isheeni told me this. All she wanted was to have Martin Leonidas’s children and live in Sparta. I do not blame her for the hatred she carries for us within her. I would hate me as well.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Forgive me Arzoal, you are right. That is why I am trying to make it right. She spoke softly. Chetak has me worried and we must talk. Can you send Torma?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Torma is doing what he should by remaining with his mate. I will come for you.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Arzoal are you sure?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *It is safe. Meet me in the place that Isheeni usually picks you up.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I’ll be there at dusk. Be careful.*

Joric looked at his father as he got into the covered Runecutter. “Well?”

Chetak looked at him. “She’s lying.” He said flatly. “We never released how she was killed. Only that it was done by dragons. She knew it was a Firespitter, and that Aricia caught the full blast.”

Joric looked at him wide eyed. “She’s working with the dragons?” He gasped.

Chetak nodded. “There have been rumors of a few over the centuries who befriended the dragons, either by protecting their eggs or saving hatchlings from our hunting parties. It appears Tablina is not what she has appeared to be all of these years. Now I understand how she was able to achieve what she did. She wasn’t killing the dragons; they were giving her the remains of dragons we had killed. What I can’t understand is why help us do this?”

“Then Aricia is alive!” Joric spoke.

Chetak looked at him. “If I had to guess I’d say yes.”

Joric smiled cruelly as he thought about the agony he would put her through for what she did to him. “Good.” He spoke finally.

“Not good Joric. She is no longer under the influence of the *Lunmai*. She will no more submit to you than a female dragon will. The fact she laughed off your aura that night is proof enough. And if what she did the



other night is any indication, she is considerably more dangerous than we first thought.” Chetak spoke. “She has become a liability.”

Joric looked at him. “You want to kill her after what she has done to me?”

Chetak shook his head. “Listen to me son. If she is alive, which I’m beginning to believe more and more, she has become a very large threat to what we have succeeded in doing with the Union. We’ve already purchased one company, and we are poised to purchase three more which would give us majority control of four companies with defense contracts. Our Senator within the Union is about to submit Bills for voting that will allow our people to serve in the Union military, and become diplomats because we are Lycavorian citizens that have finally come home.” Chetak laughed at this. “Within ten years time we will have a firm grip on control of the Union from many different angles. He was right Joric.” Chetak said. “He was right.”

“Let me kill Tablina father.” Joric spoke.

Chetak shook his head. “No. You have to meet your brother’s ship and take this elf female from him. She is one of the leaders of this planet Earth, and the Talracian Ore. Fight him, kill him if you have too, but take her as your mate. With her under our thumb, we can use it for leverage to get as much of this ore as we want. I’ll send Wilgar to take care of Tablina.”

“Very well father.” Joric spoke not at all pleased.

“Think of it this way son. I understand she looks very similar to Aricia. She is an elf that was turned by a pureblood. She will have two weaknesses that you can use, your aura and her ears. Elf ears on a female are very sensitive, and rub them the right way and they’ll be begging you to have them.” Chetak laughed. “You will have your day son. For right now I want you to send a transmission to our Union Senator. Inform him to announce that Aricia has been accidentally killed by our dragon problem and that we are currently hunting the beast that took her dear life.”

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## ATLATUS CITY

“Isra!” The older blond woman gasped as she saw his violet eyes in the door slot. In three seconds the door was unlocked and she was pulling him into her arms for a firm embrace.

Isra smiled and hugged her back tightly. “It is very good to see you as well Alliuame.” He spoke gently.

The woman held him at arms length as two other figures walked into the home, the tall one in the rear closing the door and re-locking it. “What’s it been boy? Ten months?” She asked.

“Just over eleven and you know why.” He answered. “Is mother here?”

The blond haired woman nodded. “Downstairs. I know that tall one by the door is Boreal.” She spoke as Isra’s tall friend pulled back the hood and smiled. He stepped around the third figure and gave the woman a hug.

“You are looking delicious as always Alliuame.” He spoke.

The woman laughed and hugged him tighter, “Always the charmer.” She said before turning to the third hooded figure. “Isra... this female has your scent all over her. Tell me you finally found someone to tame that restless heart of yours? You ain’t getting any younger little brother.”

Isra smiled warmly. “Sister... this is Tarifa, my mate.”

Alliuame’s eyes grew wide when Tarifa pulled back the hood bathing her beautiful elfin features in the warm light of the home. Her hands went to her mouth as she saw Tarifa’s long black hair fall free and her sapphire colored eyes.

“Isra!” The deep woman’s voice snapped out of the silence.

Isra turned and looked at the even older woman who stood in the doorway. He smiled and starting moving towards her. “Mother... you are...”

Tarifa’s eyes flew open in horror when the older woman slapped Isra across the face as hard as she could. Isra’s head snapped around and he lowered his head, reaching for his mouth as the blow carried enough power to knock him back several steps.

“How dare you bring her here?” The old woman snapped viciously. “I did not raise my only son to be a butcher like his father and half brothers! You dishonor your sisters and me after all we have taught you!”

“Mother I...”

“You dare force yourself on this she-elf wolf and bring her here, claiming she is your mate!” The old woman barked.

Tarifa stepped forward quickly, moving up next to him and grasping his hand in both of hers. “Milady please... your son did nothing of the sort!” Tarifa gasped.

“Do not defend him she elf!” She spoke angrily.

“His actions defend himself Milady.” Tarifa spoke calmly. “Your son... your son protected me after I was kidnapped from my planet.”

“Forcing you to become his mate is not protection!” She barked. “It is a vile crime as far as I am concerned. And he knows this!”

“I stopped Rommna from raping Tarifa when he kidnapped her from Earth!” Isra snapped now, glaring at his mother. “I claimed her as my mate to keep her from being passed among the crew for the two weeks it took us to return home! I stayed with Boreal the entire time until last night!” Isra glared at his mother with anger in his eyes. “I will gather my things and leave you mother!”

Tarifa watched him brush past the older woman and move down the stairs out of sight. “He is telling the truth Milady.” Tarifa spoke. “He had two weeks to force himself on me. He allowed me to wear his clothes and stay in his quarters so that my scent did not attract attention I did not want. He was injured severely when I did not listen to what he told me.”

She leaned close to Tarifa inhaling deeply. “His scent is in your blood she-elf.” She spoke. “You expect me to believe this?”

Tarifa met her eyes defiantly. “His scent is in my blood because I chose him and not the other way around! And if you were half the woman Isra said his mother was, you would not question your son in such a way until you knew all the facts!” She spat angrily, before moving past her and rushing down the stairs after Isra.

The older woman looked at her daughter stunned and then turned her dark eyes to Boreal. “Boreal... tell me I have not made a fool of myself before my son’s mate?”

The broad shouldered man stepped forward a pained expression on his face. “Lady Gallais, I will love you as my own mother always, but Isra speaks the truth. He would make sure she was safely locked in his quarters and then he would spend the nights in my quarters.”

“Her scent... she smells like peaches... it wafts from him strongly.” Gallais spoke softly. “And she reeks of him as if...”

Boreal’s face turned red. “Lady Gallais, they were together last night. Again he did not lie to you. He fought it the entire trip Lady Gallais. Tarifa went unprotected into the corridors of the ship. If not for Isra, she would not be here with us. I am no expert Milady, but the six hours of the cries I heard from four doors down were not forced in any way.”

Alliame burst out laughing her eyes wide. “Six hours!” She exclaimed. “No wonder they reek of each other mother! I always knew he was *jothas*, I just never knew how much! And she is spirited too mama! Look how she stood up to you! No fear in those eyes at all!”

Gallais closed her eyes tightly. “May the gods forgive me.” She spoke softly. She turned quickly and headed down the stairs.

---

Tarifa found him after looking into three different rooms. He was bent over a dresser of some sort stuffing clothing into a large bag.

“Isra?” She spoke softly.

“I should not have brought you here Tarifa.” He spoke taking a deep breath. “We should have just gone into the mountains.”

Tarifa came up behind him as he stood up. “This is not your fault.” She said.

He turned and looked at her, Tarifa’s five foot nine height almost even with him. He took her face in his hands. “I will protect you Tarifa my mate. I promise you.”

Tarifa smiled and wrapped her arms around him tightly, releasing enough of her own aura to get him to wrap her within his more powerful one. Her eyes closed and she breathed deeply when he leaned over and nuzzled her elfin ears. “I know you will.” She said finally.

Gallais stood there silently watching them and she fought back the tears as she stepped into the room.

“Isra my son...”

He looked up, not releasing Tarifa from his embrace. “I will gather my things and be gone mother.” He spoke softly. “I told you this! Can you not leave me in peace?”

“I’m sorry Isra. I should have trusted in you my son.” She spoke looking at him.

Isra shook his head and he released Tarifa, going to his mother. “Yes, you should have mother. I would never betray what you have taught me. Not even with my dying breath.”

Tarifa smiled as son embraced mother.

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## EARTH SPARTA

“Ordering you to return to Apo Prime.” Deia voice spoke within the transmission.

The Senate chamber in Sparta was completely full; Dysea sitting in the chair that Martin would have sat in had he been there. Aihola and Isabella sat at the small table in front of her, all eyes on the large monitor that had been installed in the chamber for just this sort of interstellar communication.

“I’m sorry Prime Minister Deia... I don’t believe I heard you correctly.” Dysea spoke.

“I said I’m afraid I have to order you and Isabella to return to Apo Prime immediately.” Deia spoke.

“The King was not within his authority to send you back to earth to investigate this incident.”

Dysea’s eyes narrowed and she stood up slowly. Dilios couldn’t help but contain the smile as he and a dozen others closest to her detected the spike in her anger. Of their King’s three chosen mates and all of them knew Isabella would join them in the future, Dysea was known as being the most diplomatic and long to anger. They all knew she was also the one that, when she did get angry, you did not want to be around her. All of them had witnessed her handling of Midlan that day in this very chamber.

“Incident?” Dysea spat the word. “You call the attempted assassination of the Oracle of the Lycavorian people a simple incident?”

“Queen Dysea... I fully understand what you must be going through, but we do have organizations for taking care of investigations like this.” Deia spoke politically.

“I’m sure you do Prime Minister... but forgive me for not having much faith in them.” Dysea spoke.

“The only men and women I see working on this incident as you call it, are men and women I have directed too.”

“Queen Dysea...” Deia began.

“Enough!” Dysea barked. “We are done speaking Prime Minister.” She turned to Aihola, who reached forward on the table and cut the transmission from Sparta’s end. She spun back around and looked at the Lycavorian Admiral in charge of the ships above them. “Will you follow my orders Admiral?”

“I am afraid, Milady, my hands have been tied.” He spoke. “I have been ordered by Admiral Riall not to leave Earth unprotected in any way, for any reason.”

Dysea’s eyes narrowed. “Does no one care what happens to the Oracle and *Nauta Melme* but those of us in this room?” She bellowed.

The Admiral stepped forward. “Milady... I was also given strict orders from Admiral Riall that a full tactical unit of *AUTUMN MOON* Frigates is to stand ready for special instructions.” He spoke. “Special Instructions from you my Queen, or Lady Isabella, whoever had the most, I believe the Admiral’s word was, the most *nor*.”

Isabella looked at him and laughed, Dysea’s face beaming as well. “And how many ships is this full tactical unit Admiral?”

The man grinned, “Ummm... all of them Lady Isabella. Sixty-four total.”

Isabella looked at Dysea with that smile and nodded her head. “Fifty thousand Spartans if we need them, and Coven Shroud Generators.” She said. “Admiral Riall is no fool, he will allow us to do what we want as long as we stay low profile.”

Dysea nodded with a smile as well. “Admiral what were you able to determine about the ship that took Tarifa?”

“It was a standard medium cruiser My Queen.” He answered. “It had strange hull plating and additional armor, but nothing that would stop our weapons for the most part. We were able to track it until it went through Jump Gate fourteen. The ionized particles in that system rendered our sensors inoperative and I ordered the ship back.”

“Where is this Jump Gate Fourteen?” Dysea asked.

“Near the border of the Wilds Milady,” He answered. “They could be anywhere by now. We were able to confirm Chief Administrator Aihola’s information that it was Lycavorians who kidnapped her.”

“Is that significant?” Dilios asked.

The Admiral shrugged. “There are many of our people who have chosen the life of a smuggler or mercenary Senator Dilios. Personally I have never heard of them kidnapping a ruling planetary official, but there is a first time for everything I suppose. However that they were Lycavorians means we can make plenty of inquiries.”

“Inquires?” Dysea snapped. “I’m tired of asking questions!”

The Admiral chuckled. “Queen Dysea... the Fleet guideline for inquiries is usually done at the blade of a Shi Viska.”

Dysea chuckled for the first time in days. She liked this man, “Very well. Admiral, would you now like to share with everyone what your people found in the Oracle’s cave?”

The man stepped forward even further, the data pad in his hand. “The moment the Oracle was moved to the Medical Facility I had people on site at her residence. They’ve been going over the entire scene from the entrance to the cave all the way back to where she had installed an emergency exit. We’ve covered every square centimeter of the site and they come to three conclusions.”

“Continue Admiral.” Dysea spoke.

“Well... the first conclusion is actually not surprising to me.” The man explained. “The explosive used was Luminoaccretion. It’s a fairly common explosive but one that is not indigenous to this planet, which means it, was brought here. The second conclusion is that the trigger for this device and the bomb that was detonated in the attempt on the King and Queen Dysea are identical, so this assassin is responsible for both attempts.”

“And the third?” Dilios asked.

“The third is a little harder to figure out, but we will eventually.” The Admiral spoke confidently. “My techs found traces of what we call Ranisem. It’s a metallic coating used on our explosive devices. It’s only found on Apo Prime.”

“What exactly does this mean?” Arete asked now, leaning forward in her chair.

“The trigger devices came from Apo Prime somewhere, out of our own military stocks.” The Admiral spoke. “That tells me a few things. One... the assassin is a Lycavorian, or someone who has sources in the Union military, more than likely both of these. A non-Lycavorian would be hard pressed to get this type of equipment. Two... only a Lycavorian or someone with knowledge of our communications systems could have placed the device that injured the Oracle. It was positioned in a way to cause maximum damage, while destroying the equipment itself.”

“And the third thing this tells you Admiral?” Dysea asked.

“That’s the most disturbing Milady. The timing of the bomb that targeted you and the King was within a week of our discovery he even existed.” He answered. “That means the assassin was already here, and since that information initially was known only to those close to Prime Minister Deia, that fact suggests strongly that we have a High Coven spy somewhere very high up in the ranks of our government, perhaps inside the Prime Minister’s office itself.”

Isabella got to her feet slowly, her eyes glittering cobalt blue points of hardness. “Then I suggest we find this assassin, for I would like a few moments with him or her myself.”

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## ENURRUA

“Where is he Rommna?” Joric growled as he looked at his obese younger brother standing in the large landing bay of the spaceport.

“He took her aboard the advance transport Joric.” Rommna replied. “He and Boreal took her with them. I didn’t know until the ship had already entered the atmosphere.”

“This she-elf was with him?” Joric demanded.

Rommna nodded. “She is one of the leaders of this Earth. We captured her in this city Sparta, snatched her right out of her home and the arms of her female lover. I was going to have my way with her but Isra intervened first and claimed her.”

Joric cursed under his breath. “Father is not going to be happy!” He snapped.

“She will stick out like a pale flower Joric.” Rommna spoke. “Joric didn’t take her.”

Joric looked at him. “What?”

“He said he was taking her as his mate, but when she walked in the corridors yesterday Isra’s scent wasn’t upon her. She smells like ripe sweet fruit, and she will stick out easily among our people.” Rommna spoke.

Joric thought quickly. “Send a detachment of Craven Guards to Isra’s bitch of a mother’s home. He will go there first. It is where he feels safest. Father may not wish to harm her, but I have no qualms about it. Find her Rommna, no matter what you need to do. And kill Isra the fool.”

Rommna nodded with a smile and moved off rather quickly for a man his size, leaving Joric to ponder why things were suddenly not going his way anymore. He didn’t see the young Lycavorian who had heard every word make for the exit of the spaceport.

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Tarifa sat in the warmth of the small room, holding the hot and very delicious tea in both her hands, her sapphire eyes lingering on Isra as he stood next to Boreal at the table looking over the small map chart. Tarifa couldn’t wrap her hands around her feelings; and looking at Isra now wasn’t helping. She so wanted to be wrapped within his embrace once more. She wanted to feel him naked against her, feel him deep inside her. When she had without hesitation projected her own small aura on him in the room and he had enveloped her with his, she had felt instantly safe. She had experienced what his full aura could do to her, but it appeared he was getting better at controlling it, and what she had felt from him was an unquestioning love and commitment to her. Tarifa didn’t know what to do about that. She didn’t know if she wanted to do anything about that. Dekton had loved her and Aihola, there was no doubt, and she had loved him. Isra however was different than him. He was not reserved and stoic, his emotions flittered in those violet eyes always. He was wilder and untamed, his deep timber scent powerful and soothing, and whenever she inhaled it, she felt energized and calm.

Their dash from the spaceport had been very quick and secret. He had led her confidently through the streets, his hand always within hers, always reassuring. It was...

“He did not hurt you did he child?” The soft voice asked beside her.

Tarifa turned her head and saw Gallais settling to the couch next to her. “I’m sorry?”

“My son... he is *jothas* in that way.” Gallais spoke softly, “Larger than most. I’ve always told him to be careful.”

Tarifa smiled shyly when she realized what his mother was saying. She shook her head. “No Milady... he did not hurt me.” She replied. “It was the most wonderful experience of my life in that way to be honest.” And that was no lie Tarifa told herself.

Gallais nodded and squeezed Tarifa’s arm. “I will speak things like this no more child. I just wanted to make sure he did not hurt you.” She said. “You are not like the elves I have met in the past. There have not been many, as we are not allowed to leave this cursed planet, but I have seen a few. You are... passionate. You don’t hold back what you feel.”

“I did not mean to imply earlier that you were a bad mother Milady... I...” Tarifa started.

Gallais shook her head. “You were defending your mate.” She spoke quickly. “There is no need to apologize when you are correct.”

“When the Holy One... I believe he is better known as the Guardian of the line... when he created us on Earth he...” Tarifa looked at her wide eyes, “Milady?”

“You know the Guardian of the line of Leonidas?” She gasped.

Tarifa nodded, “Quite well, yes. On earth I would meet with him perhaps every other day.”

“Have you ever met the new King Child, the grandson of Resumar? The Covenkiller they call him you know. He stood on the field of battle with his men and they destroyed the High Coven Immortals. And then he slaughtered that monster Xerxes like the dog he was. It is said he is huge in wolf form, four foot at the shoulder and four hundred pounds of black hair and teeth. I understand he is seven feet tall with hair as black as night, his eyes like gold.” Gallais spoke her voice animated.

Tarifa chuckled. “Martin is not seven feet tall.” She spoke with humor. “Though I’m sure there are times he wishes he was. And yes... he is huge in wolf form... almost double Isra’s size.”

Gallais gazed at her amazed. “You... you know the King?”

Tarifa sipped her tea as she nodded her head, Alliuame now coming over to sit beside her mother enraptured. “We are like brother and sister.” Tarifa said. “We fought together on Earth and defeated the High Coven, throwing them off my planet. I am surprised he does not know of what you and your people suffer here Milady. He would never allow this to continue if he did.”

“The King... the King will never come here. Not after what Chetak has done.” Gallais spoke softly shaking her head.

Tarifa looked at her oddly. “What... what do you mean? Martin would not leave your people like this if he knew this was happening.”

Gallais looked at Isra as he and Boreal walked up slowly. “She does not know?”

Isra shook his head slowly. “Not completely no.”

Tarifa looked at him remembering his words on the ship. “What has happened Isra. You started to say something on the ship. Your father and brother... they took Aricia from Martin.” She got to her feet. “Why hasn’t he come to get her back?”

“Chetak and Joric used a very old means to take the King’s youngest Queen. She had a condition... you would not know it because you are elf. Lycavorian woman of pureblood sometimes go through it. A fever called the *Lunmai*. It is the Second Coming of Age, when the female resorts almost entirely to instinct. It is very, very rare and happens only in females with the purest of blood. Chetak... Joric... they used this fever against the King. When Resumar broke our people apart, he took us away from our instinctual natures, and the women in the Union do not experience this anymore.”

Tarifa nodded. “Isra explained this to me in detail.” She said.

Gallais looked at her son with approval and respect in her eyes, before turning back to Tarifa. “Chetak and Joric used this fever to force the Queen to choose Joric as her mate.” She saw Tarifa’s eyes go wide. “In the grips of the fever she would not have known what she was doing. She would have mated with the strongest male, it would have been instinct in her, overpowering, overwhelming.”

“But... Aricia... she was strong Gallais! Very strong! When this fever... when this fever passed, surely she would not have chosen to remain with this Joric. She loved Martin... loved him like I have never seen someone love.” Tarifa gasped.

“Chetak conducted himself in a most heinous manner child.” Gallais spoke. “In the grips of the fever Joric made her scream out that she chose him as her mate. And then he took her. They... they showed this to the King.”

Tarifa dropped her tea from her hands as they went to her mouth in horror, her eyes wide, shaking her head. “No!”

Gallais nodded slowly. “They returned with her here to Enurrua. She was here only three days before...”

“Before what?” Tarifa demanded.

“It was announced yesterday that she was killed by an attack of dragons on Chetak’s home outside the city.” Gallais spoke. “They were after that foul man and his son, this Aricia got in the way.”

“We don’t get much news from the Union here,” Alliuame spoke now. “We are able to steal some transmissions... but it is said the King has gone mad with grief and feelings of betrayal. The last word we got was that he had appeared by *Samarna rie Jorbhe Ceiga Ano*.”

Isra squatted down next to Tarifa, his mirroring his shock. “Sister are you sure?”

Alliuame nodded. “The report came from the Union’s own service.”

Tarifa looked at Isra. “Isra... what is this place?”

Isra looked at her slowly, “*Samarna rie Jorbhe Ceiga Ano*. It means Planet of Hell’s Forgotten Souls.” He said softly.

Tarifa's eyes were wide at this, the horror very evident. "We must do something!" She spoke finally. "We have too!"

"Tarifa there is nothing we can do." Isra told her taking her slim hands in his. "My father and those that follow him control the only spaceport. The only ships we have. We are a small group... barely any weapons... they stay in..."

All of their heads whipped around when the pounding on the door from above broke into Isra's words. Alliuame moved quickly out of the room, only to return a moment later with a young boy, barely a hundred years old.

"Craven Guards are coming here!" Alliuame spoke. "They want Tarifa, and they want you dead brother."

Isra came to his feet immediately. "We need to go! Now!"

Gallais pulled Tarifa up as well. "Use the hidden tunnel! Into the mountains with you! Go! Quickly!"

Isra looked at her. "Mother... they will kill you. Joric was going to challenge me for Tarifa. Boreal and I took the transport off the ship before we docked." He snapped. "I will not leave you behind now!"

"Isra... I'm an old woman! I will not be able to keep up!"

"Then I will carry you!" Isra demanded.

"You can not do this my son!" Gallais spoke softly. "I don't..."

Tarifa took her hands, her decision coming easier than she thought possible. "Isra is right!" She spoke quickly. "They will kill you! And I will not have the mother of my mate die to save me! We must travel light, gather only what you need!"

"I will not..."

"You will do as I ask!" Tarifa snapped in her command voice, surprising herself and Isra. "Please Gallais... I will... I will need someone to... to help me grow accustomed to the position I now seem to have." Tarifa leaned closer to her and whispered. "Things Isra can not teach me."

Gallais stared at Tarifa for a long moment before she smiled. "Alliuame... gather our things daughter! We are leaving with your brother."

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## UKWAV

### *"Planet of Hell's Forgotten Souls"*

#### DAY TWENTY-THREE

The High Coven garrisons on Ukwav were designed in such a way that the tunnels connecting the four installations were buried deep in the planet's crust and would seal automatically if one of the garrisons was breached in any way. During the three previous attacks, the Lycavorian Union had tried assaulting and breaching one at a time, and all four at the same time. Since the garrisons were never breached during these attacks, they could provide each other continuous support in men and material hence the reason the Union took so many casualties. In three attacks against this planet, they had lost a total of close to five hundred thousand dead and nearly twice that wounded. The observation and fortified bunker positions had been able to provide withering weapons fire and excellent fire support for the defending troops. The High Coven plasma artillery and plasma mortar batteries located at the center of the four garrisons were able to rain down unhindered heavy fire on the attacking Lycavorian troops. The bombardments from orbit had no effect due to the depth of the fortified positions and heavy shielding.

That was until Martin Leonidas discovered vacuum.

One hundred and sixty warships, firing all they had at one marked spot on the surface. The moment the Coven lieutenant had begun the sequence to open the hatch into the lower tunnel, the Union ships fired. Just as the door released with a hiss and began to open, every weapon, missile, plasma beam, and proton torpedo arrived on top of that bunker at precisely the same instant. The effects were instant and catastrophic.

The bunker was obliterated from existence just as the door was opening. The concussive force of the entire 1<sup>st</sup> Spartan Fleet Attack Group firing at the same time, at the same spot, and having their weapons arrive within microseconds of each other equaled the destructive power of a small planet's gravity field run amok. The massive twelve foot thick door was torn from its three foot hinges and sent twisting down the long tunnel at

nearly the speed of light. The concussive wave gathered fire, rock, dirt and sand, and as if in one great big exhaled breath, sent it hurtling down the tunnel, feeding into connecting tunnels, erupting out the fronts of bunkers thousands of meters from the point of impact. The vacuum of the tunnel sucked all this into the deepest recesses of the tunnel, shredding, burning to a crisp and suffocating over sixty thousand High Coven Immortals and troops in the first twenty-two seconds. The secondary explosions from ruptured vent lines, fuel lines and power cores gouged great chunks of the ground above into the air, killing or maiming another twenty thousand Immortals and troops in the next minute and a half.

The Coven emergency system acted exactly as it was supposed to.

Two massive doors, each twelve meters thick dropped into place in a matter of seconds, effectively sealing each garrison off from the other. Massive locking braces fell into place, and internal power generators came on in the other garrisons. The commanders of the three untouched garrisons were on their communications arrays in minutes, each reporting the same thing.

The one thing that could not happen; had not happened in a thousand years and three different attacks had taken place.

The door to the Planet of Hell's Forgotten Souls had opened. It had opened and thousands of Lycavorian Spartans led by their King were pouring through the gaping hundred meter hole in the tunnel.

And they were not happy to say the least.

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## *LEONIDAS I*

General Vistr stood to the side of the starboard landing bay as STRIKER AT aircraft were being unloaded of the wounded. He could see Star Commander For'mya, her golden hair matted with sweat, as she helped unload the lift stretchers and barked out orders to the ground crews in the same breath. She had changed in her time with the King.

The news had spread rapidly through the fleet that For'mya had accepted the position of Bound Concubine to the King. Many viewed this skeptically for most of them knew she had not wanted the position before she had been captured and was vehement about it. They viewed it as her attempting to replace the Queen that Martin Leonidas had loved the most.

Vistr knew better.

Since her rescue she had rarely been out of the King's presence, which seemed too many as validating what they all thought. Vistr knew it for what it was; a political attempt to stop her father from releasing information that would have been extremely harmful so soon into his reign as King. And while it had succeeded, it had also allowed him a window into his King's mind. For'mya was not the same woman she was before being captured; she was much more reserved and contemplating. He would notice them together, sitting close, almost touching, and speaking with shielded Mindvoice. She shared the King's quarters, but Vistr was sure not his bed and he believed that while For'mya may have taken the position for political reasons, she acted now out of care for him.

Vistr knew his King was dying inside.

The part of him he had first shown everyone on Earth, it seemed like so long ago now, and it was that part of his King that was gone now. Vistr knew he loved his other Queens; that was something that could be seen easily, but the petite Lycavorian Queen with azure blue eyes was his anchor and pillar. That was now gone, especially in the fashion that she had betrayed him so. His King was acting out in the only way he knew how, acting out in the way of their ancestors.

Acting out in great violence against their enemies.

For'mya had become that anchor for him now. For'mya was the one thing keeping his King from snapping completely, and that is why she was never far from him, always touching him and reaching for him, physically and with her thoughts.

Vistr reached up and wiped the blood and dirt from his face and watched proudly as his Spartans were practically begging the Hadarian healers and other medics to patch up what their shifting couldn't heal and send them back. The landing bay was littered with men and women being treated and then grabbing their blood



stained gear and moving for the nearest *STRIKER* heading back to the surface. None of them wanted to abandon what they had begun and leave their King.

“General!” The tech spoke coming up to him from the side.

Vistr turned and looked at the man. He looked a wreck, his uniform grimly and his face covered in soot and dirt from the engine intakes of the *STRIKERS*. The crews had been working around the clock even here on this ship, cleaning, repairing and getting *STRIKERS* and heavy fighters back in the air to continue the fight.

“Speak boy, I’m in hurry!” Vistr snapped out, maintaining his strict image of tacturian *dicir*. (Bastard)

“Transmission General. Captain Komirri thought you might be better equipped to handle this because in his words sir, ‘I have no time for foolishness’” The tech spoke.

Vistr turned to the large wall monitor behind him. “Transfer it here.”

“General... it’s from the Prime Minister. Secure sir.”

“I don’t care! Put it here! I’m leaving in a few minutes and have no time for this anyway!” Vistr bellowed.

The tech wasn’t about to argue and he touched his data pad several times and turned to go back to his work as Deia’s face appeared on the large screen.

“Deia,” Vistr spoke. “I’m in a hurry, make this quick please.”

“General Vistr... by order of the power of my office, I’m ordering you to take command of the fleet and return to Apo Prime immediately.” Deia’s voice boomed from the monitor across the area, bringing everything in the starboard landing bay to an immediate halt, the silence so deafening it was thunderous.

No one saw Captain Komirri step from the lift and go to the alternate communications panel and begin configuring the controls.

## APO PRIME

Deia sat in her office, Ceneu and Riall with her, as well as Olalla and L’tian. All of them could see the activity behind Vistr on the deck of the *LEONIDAS I* when the screen had come up, and now they all saw it come to a screeching halt at Deia’s words.

“I’m sorry Deia,” Vistr spoke. “I don’t think I heard you correctly.”

“*Anse un* Vistr, you heard me just fine!” Deia snapped.

“What I heard is you telling me to take command of the fleet and return to Apo Prime.” Vistr spoke.

“Those are my orders!” Deia spoke, her hands gripping the side of the chair.

“So you want me to betray my King and follow your orders instead of his?” Vistr spoke.

“Your oath is to the Union General Vistr! Not to its King!” Deia barked, knowing immediately it was the wrong thing to say.

Vistr’s eyes nearly bugged from his helmeted head. “Martin Leonidas is King! HE IS THE UNION!” Vistr bellowed, “How dare you ask me to betray my King woman! How dare you! You’ve become an *anse Quelma* Deia. Never did I think I would hear myself call you that!”

“Vistr... he is trying to get himself killed because he lost a woman!” Deia spoke quickly, once more letting her anger over events get the best of her. “She chose her fate Vistr, do you hear me! She chose Joric and her fate!”

“Then she is just as big a fool as you are Deia!” Vistr growled. “Let me show you something woman!” They watched Vistr move to a massive metal hanger door and slam his hand down on the control panel. As they door rose slowly, the force field drew up as well, keeping the vacuum of space out. When it was fully up, the large yellow orange planet was below them. On the surface they could see a long glowing line that appeared to be fire of some sort, glowing against the darker surface color. Riall and Ceneu slowly came to their feet, their eyes wide.

“*Son vada carian!*” Riall gasped. “Vistr... is that... is that what I think it is?”

Vistr nodded his head. “It is my friend.”

“He... he did it!” Ceneu hissed. “You... you cracked it!”

Deia looked at them. “What are you talking about?” She barked.

“Not only did we crack it Riall... we split it open like a *nubous werlice!*” Vistr spoke with a great deal of laughter, “A thousand years and how many dead Riall? Three times we tried to do this very thing, and we failed. Two days! Two *nubous* days and he did it! His Spartans are even now sweeping through the first garrison with him in the front of them and Komirri is preparing to initiate a second attack now!”

“Casualties?” Riall nearly shouted.

Vistr sobered for a moment, “Three hundred dead.” He replied his eyes going back to Deia. “Two days he has led us down there Deia! Never stopping, always in the front! Do you know how many lives he has saved Deia? I stopped counting after a hundred! I can’t keep *vada nubous* injured on the ship! They are fighting each other to get back to the surface! For’mya has to cram her *STRIKERS* with not only weapons and ammunition, but men and women returning to the battle! They mass on the surface and plunge into the abyss after their King like it is nothing! This is the man you want me to leave Deia! This is the man you want me to betray?”

“Vistr... he is acting out!” Deia spoke, trying to keep her voice neutral.

“And he has every right to act out!” Vistr screamed as For’mya came up next to him, holding her flight helmet under her arm. “I talked with Gorgo Deia! We have pushed him, prodded him, do this sire, do that Milord, and have we ever once stopped to ask him what he would do? What he would do as our King. I haven’t... have you Deia?”

“I...” Deia say there

“You haven’t have you?” Vistr spoke. “He returns here, where he belongs, and what happens? Some *nubous* Lycavorian living in the past takes the woman who was his heart above all others. It was her choice. It was her choice. That is all I hear? She was in the grips of the *Lunmai* Deia. Has anyone stopped to ask her if it truly was *her* choice? No! We must follow the law! King Resumar put our people on this path, and I bless the day he did, but have we grown so blinded by choice we ignore all of our instincts?”

“Vistr...” Deia got to her feet.

“Enough! If you want to help me, help our King, then send me troops and ships! If not... stay *vada nubou* out of our way! We’ll take this *nubous* rock without you and the politicians.” Vistr spoke.

“And if he dies Vistr?” Deia spoke softly, “Then what?”

“Then I will die beside my King for *that* is my choice! My instinct!” Vistr roared.

The scream from the Spartans and crew members behind him caused Deia to cringe it was so loud.

For’mya stepped forward and saw her father in the transmission. “It is my choice as well father.” She spoke. “A choice I make freely.” She looked at Vistr as she put her helmet on. “General we are ready to depart.”

Deia was silent as the transmission ended and she turned slowly as the doors burst open into her office, “Prime Minister... that... that transmission Prime Minister!”

“What about it?” Deia asked.

“It was routed to every ship in the fleet Madam Prime Minister.” The young aide spoke. “Orbital Command is reporting ships are beginning to jump out of the system.”

Deia closed her eyes. “Jump to where?”

“Their coordinates put them on a direct course for Ukwav, Prime Minister.” The aide spoke walking forward to stand beside her. “And this came in secure for you from Queen Dysea on Earth, your eyes only.”

Deia sighed heavily as she entered in her personal code and read the message, her dark eyes going wide. She saw movement near the doors and saw Riall and Ceneu turning to go.

“Riall, Admiral Ceneu, where are you going?” She demanded holding up the pad. “Dysea is telling me I have a traitor in my office and you two are leaving? Where are you going?”

Riall motioned Ceneu to continue and turned back to her, “Where we should have gone in the first place Deia.” He spoke. “It appears you have your work cut out for you. We’ll bring you back a victory and our King Deia. I hope.”

Deia looked at L’tian and Olalla as they got to their feet and came to stand next to her. “Could one of you just tell me what happened?”

“I believe it is relatively simple Deia.” L’tian spoke. “The Union military is going to protect their King. Let us make sure they have a Union to return to.”

“How do we do that?” Deia asked.

L’tian took the pad from her hand. “Given my experiences with Queen Dysea... and who by the way... the Elfin Delegation officially recognized this morning as such, I find it hard to believe she would say

something like this if it were not true. I suggest we start there, and start listening to people who seem to have more of a grasp on how things should be. Vistr is right Deia... you... me... all of us. We have lost our way. And now we need to find it before it is too late.”

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## ENURRUA

*It was all I could find.* Torma spoke dropping the canvas bag from his jaws to the ground near Aricia’s feet. *I don’t know if it is what you seek, but I did not want to be seen as the sun was coming up.*

Aricia moved from Isheeni’s side and went to the bag.

Aricia could no longer cry tears, for there were none left inside her to shed. The life that was hers, was now gone and nothing would ever replace it. The man she loved more than anything hated her more than their enemies the vampires because of her betrayal, and that pain is what kept her from letting go. That pain kept her from just slipping away into nothing. She would make Joric pay for the pain he had brought on her. She would hunt him until she killed him, in the vilest of ways she could imagine. He would not die quickly or painlessly. Aricia was planning his demise in her mind, categorizing every cut she was going to inflict, every scrap of her blade on his flesh. That is why she would go on.

Aricia had vowed to kill him, and until that vow was fulfilled, she would keep herself alive. She would train as her beloved had shown her, honing her body and her skills even more than she had already done. She would become the angel of death that was spoken of in so many of the childhood stories her mother had read to her. She would forge herself into a weapon with which to exact the vengeance that now fueled her empty heart, for vengeance was all she had left.

When Joric was dead then Aricia would take her own life.

*Thank you Torma.* She answered as she unzipped the bag and began to sort through what he had brought her.

Torma cast his yellow eyes on his mate and moved around where Aricia squatted to settle to the cave floor beside her. She reached out with her head and brushed against his obsidian scales gently, showing him affection and love.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *She no longer cries tears Isheeni.* He spoke to Isheeni.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *You have been gone for almost three days husband. She has no more tears to cry. She has been eating and resting, but there is blackness in her heart now.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Your mother worries for you.* Torma spoke. *You should Mindvoice her Isheeni. She thinks you are angry with her.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Part... part of me is angry for what we have done Torma. I am angry at mother; angry at myself; savagely angry at Chetak and his fool son. My anger burns within me Torma, I want to hurt them, Chetak and those who have done this to her.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *You have bound yourself to her Isheeni, and her emotions will course through you as well, however faint. Are you angry with me?*

Isheeni looked at her mate. [Mindvoice Shielded] *You have done nothing wrong Torma. You did not even know what was happening until you went with me to save her.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Thank you, Isheeni.* Aricia’s voice filled both their heads and their heads snapped around to stare at her in shock.

Aricia had changed quickly and now wore the dark gray jumpsuit. It was very tight on her lithe figure, but the fabric stretched around her supple body like a glove. The boots appeared to fit her almost perfectly, and she had pulled her long black hair into a tight pony tail and draped it over one shoulder. Isheeni saw the coral red pendant half hidden behind the fasteners of the jumpsuit, which did little to hide her ample chest size.

*You... you heard us?* Isheeni gasped. *How?*

Aricia shook her head slowly. *I don’t know. I...* Aricia couldn’t bring herself to say his name without shame filling her. *I was told I was growing in skill. Perhaps this is a sign.*

*Aricia of the bluest eyes... you have penetrated the Mindvoice shields of a dragon.* Isheeni spoke awe in her voice. *No one has ever been able to do this.*

*I will not do so again Isheeni, I give you my word. What you and your... mate speak with one another is not my business. Forgive me.* Aricia spoke.

Isheeni got to her feet quickly and moved forward to allow her twelve foot long neck to stretch out and bring her head to Aricia's. *I can not begin to express my sorrow for what we have brought upon you.* She spoke staring into Aricia's matching azure eyes. *I can only pray to my gods... that you will one day forgive us.*

Torma moved forward now and brought his head close to Isheeni's looking at Aricia now as well. *Forgive us.* He spoke. *As my mate has bound herself to you Aricia of the bluest eyes, I bound myself to your mate, the King.*

Aricia's eyes dropped to the cave floor. *I... I have no mate.* She said softly. *Not any longer.*

*Then allow me to serve you in place of him.* Torma spoke.

Aricia looked at them, still not believing she was actually looking at and talking to dragons. This universe had so many wonders in it, and once her vow was fulfilled she would never see them.

*Why Isheeni?* Aricia asked softly casting her eyes back to the female dragon with identical colored eyes. *It is the only question I have no answer for. Why have your kind done this to me?*

*Would you... would you allow me to touch your mind Aricia and show you what our reasons, as wrong as they were, let me show you why.* Isheeni spoke. *It will never correct the wrong we have done you... but perhaps it will allow you to forgive us in the future.*

Aricia nodded slowly and reached up with her hand, placing it gently beside Isheeni's eyes, still somewhat wary of the razor like teeth in her jaws.

It was spectacular really. She saw beautiful rivers, lush green forests, and high proud mountains with snow capped peaks. She saw hundreds of thousands of Isheeni's kind, ranging in size from no bigger than a bird from Earth, to the size of Arzoal and even four or five that were even larger. She saw and felt the happiness, the love for the hundreds of eggs that dotted the nests on this planet.

Then they came.

Chetak and his people.

They came and they destroyed and took what did not bow to them. Dragon eggs by the thousands were destroyed or taken for other purposes. Adult dragons and even those hatchlings only weeks old were slaughtered in groups of a dozen or more at a time. She could see laughing as the killing went on. Laughing as the homes of her people were ripped up and tossed aside as Chetak and Joric and those with them expanded and kept hunting them. The Dragons began to fight back however, the Firespitters and Heavyhorns being the most numerous, they began to burn and smash Chetak and his people. They evolved, hatching with tougher scales and longer teeth and stronger wings so they could fight better. They began to cross breed, making bigger and stronger offspring to stand up to Chetak's advancing weaponry, but still they were killed. Isheeni was a full Firespitter, retaining the innate ability to fly maddening loops through the sky with powerful wings and immense shoulder muscles.

Torma was a cross breed. He had the color and massive size of a Heavyhorn, but his mother had been a Firespitter. He was an excellent flyer, but lacked Isheeni's incredible speed and maneuverability. He was a terror on the ground, his armored hide able to withstand even concentrated small arms fire. Only Chetak's advanced rail guns could hurt him. He did not breathe fire, but a molten breath that could melt the flesh from bones in seconds. He preferred to rely on his strength and power rather than his flying and molten breath, but the few times he had called on that breath, Lycavorians had fell by the groups.

Aricia saw the vicious lifestyle her own people were forced to live. The females forced to take mates they did not want or desire, taken even before coming of age to some brute of a male wolf. There was no love... no caring... and no warmth. The more she saw... the angrier Aricia became, until finally she could take it no more and brought her psychic shields down with a gasp, shutting Isheeni out.

*Isheeni! Aricia!* Torma's worried voice sounded in their minds.

Isheeni whipped her head around seeing Torma standing on all fours his wings extended, his handsome scales rippling as he looked at them with a worried dragon expression. *We are right beside you husband! Why do you shout!*

*You would not answer me! It has been six hours!*

Aricia's head whirled and she saw that it was dark beyond the waterfall, confirming what Torma was saying. She turned back to a wide eyed Isheeni, who was also now standing.

*Isheeni? Aricia spoke softly, watching as she lowered her head close until their eyes met. Isheeni... I do not know if I can forgive, even after what you have shown me. Aricia let the two tears slid down her cheeks. It... it was horrible. It is horrible. But I was not part of this... and had we known it was happening we would have stopped it. Tablina... your mother... I can not forgive them. They helped to take from me everything that was beloved. I am nothing without Martin. He was my... he was my light... my reason for living. He will never forgive me for what has happened; never forgive me for what I did. I did not betray his trust Isheeni. I... I betrayed his soul.*

*Aricia... that was not you, you did not do those things.*

*That is something he will never discover Isheeni, for I will be dead.*

*What do you mean? Isheeni asked.*

*I want to kill him Isheeni. I want Joric to suffer pain for every false cry of desire that escaped my lips. For every false profession of pleasure that left my body, I want to revisit that upon him ten fold, in pain. Pain that will last him as long as the pain he has caused me will last. Aricia spoke. Will you help me Isheeni, you and Torma? Will you help me to take my vengeance on this man? For ultimately it will lead to freedom for your people. And that will be my forgiveness to you. My death will mean Joric is dead, his father with him, and your people will be free once more.*

*Isheeni stared into Aricia's eyes for a long moment before nodding her large head gently. I will serve you Aricia. I will help you to achieve your goal and mine. At the very least it may give you some peace.*

*Torma lowered his head next to his mate. As will I.*

*Aricia smiled a humorless smile. Peace? She said. Peace left my life the moment my claws raked across my beloved's chest. His love for me died then. I will never have peace. I can only have revenge.*

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## **APO PRIME DAY TWENTY-FIVE**

“It is my regret to inform you that Aricia, the former Queen you inquired about, has been killed by the predators of my planet.” The People’s Republic Senator spoke to Deia in her office.

Deia’s jaw twitched imperceptibly and she leaned forward in her chair, conscious that L’tian and Olalla sat quietly along the wall of her office. “May I inquire as to when this took place Senator Dalkor?”

“Shortly after she arrived I believe.” The Senator spoke calmly. He was a skilled statesman and had convinced Chetak not to reveal that the wench was dead until the Union inquired of her. He had come to this meeting with the Nonvore Senator as support. The Nonvores were a humanoid species that were known to be avid statesman. Even though Dalkor hated being next to them disgusting non-Lycavorian politician, he needed his support for their plans.

“And you are just informing me now?” Deia asked. “I made the request on her condition within days after she was removed from Apo Prime.”

“Prime Minister... she was not *removed* as you say. You know full well that she chose Chetak’s son during the peak of the *Lunmai*. There was nothing sinister about it, unless of course you wish to accuse my government of perpetrating some unlawful act.” Dalkor spoke calmly.

Deia smiled evenly. “Not at all Senator Dalkor and I will inform the interested parties, namely the young woman’s mother and brothers.”

“Excellent... I would like to move on if I may, to the real purpose of this meeting.” He removed some data pads from the small pouch he wore at his side. He handed them across the desk to Deia. “I have here the completed purchase contracts of two engineering corporations and one Research Corporation. The People’s Republic would like to have them entered into record.”

“Certainly,” Deia spoke. “I’ll have my staff review them and make the appropriate notations before returning them to you for consideration.”

Dalkor shook his head. “They are already finalized Prime Minister, your staff does not need to waste the time. All they need do is to enter them into the official record.”

Deia looked at him. “Senator... I’m sure you are aware such purchases need to be reviewed by me personally.” Deia spoke calmly. “I’m not aware of these purchases.”

“Actually Prime Minister... such contracts only need to be reviewed by you if the companies they concern have more than two defense contracts at one time. If I’m not mistaken... none of these companies meet those criteria. Two only have one contract apiece, one has two, and the fourth has none.”

Deia made looked at the pads briefly, her anger beginning to simmer. “I see that you are correct.” She said. “I’ll make it so Senator Dalkor. Is there anything else?”

“The People’s Republic would like to know the status of our petition to allow our citizens into the military and to freely travel among the Union’s planets.” Dalkor spoke. “We have not received any notification that this was taking place.”

“It’s being worked on Senator, I assure you.” Deia spoke.

“You’ll forgive me Prime Minister, but given the reluctance of the King to retreat from his rampage across the stars and your inability to control the Union’s military, I have taken it upon myself to consult with Senator Etsan from the Nonvorian Delegation. I am worried that my petition will be held up until you are able to gain some sort of control, and there is no indication of when that will occur. I must look out for my people you see.” Dalkor was enjoying slapping this inferior woman around. “We have decided to call for a vote in the Senate in two weeks about whether you should be allowed to continue in your current position. I just thought you should know our intentions. It is time the Lycavorian military got some fresh leadership in it, and I’m sure my people can provide that.” Dalkor had a smug look on his face the entire time he spoke and Deia had to bit her tongue inside her mouth to keep from retorting to him.

“That is your right Senator.” Deia spoke sweetly. “Will there be anything else? I’m afraid I have a very full schedule.”

Dalkor got to his feet. “Yes Prime Minister... I’m sure you do.” He spoke sarcastically.

Deia looked at Etsan and smiled. “Senator Etsan, always a pleasure.” She spoke.

The Nonvore bowed his head in respect and turned to follow Dalkor. L’tian and Olalla waited until they had left and the door was closed before they moved to take the seats just occupied by the two men.

Deia looked at them. “Well I’m open to opinions.” She looked first to the elf Delegation leader. “L’tian?”

“It will most definitely depend on one thing Deia.” He spoke.

“And that is?”

“What you are prepared to do?”

Deia sat back in her chair. “I don’t follow.”

“It is obvious this Dalkor is acting on instructions from Chetak.” L’tian spoke evenly and with great care. “I think we can all agree he is not the one pulling the strings. The Lycavorian People’s Republic is neither wealthy enough nor strong enough to do this entirely on their own. As you have so eloquently stated in the past Deia, Chetak is nothing more than a brute.”

Deia nodded slowly. “Yes.”

“Dalkor’s actions, in my opinion anyway, tell me that we do have a traitor among us Deia. Someone very high up, someone that we trust completely.” L’tian spoke. “He is pulling Chetak’s strings.”

“What are you suggesting L’tian?” Olalla asked.

“I’m not suggesting anything. I’m merely wondering how far Deia is prepared to go to save our Union, before the King’s grief kills him.” L’tian said softly.

Deia leaned forward. “You don’t think she’s dead do you?”

“Let’s just say that I have a hard time believing Senator Dalkor for a number of reasons.” L’tian spoke.

“And what are they?” Olalla asked, now leaning forward very interested.

“Let’s put that aside for a moment.” L’tian spoke. “This is what we do know... no one even remotely close to the King trusts us. Queen Anja, Queen Dysea and now Isabella, who we all know will one day be the fourth Queen, none of them will even tell us if it is night or day. With one exception, no one has Mindvoice powers anywhere near what the King can project, so attempting to crack his shields would be suicidal in every respect, especially given his current mental state.”

“Who is the one exception?” Deia asked.

“Again... let us set that aside for the moment.” L’tian spoke. “What we do know is our current options are very limited.”

“L’tian... this is not accomplishing anything.” Deia spoke. “We need answers... not more of your elfin analytical skills.”

“Deia... who did you go to with all of your secrets as a child?” L’tian asked. “The secrets you did not want anyone else to know?”

“That is easy, Eliana.” Deia answered. “She was my best friend in every respect. I could talk to her about anything.”

L’tian nodded. “If we want answers to our questions, I suggest we start there.”

“I’m lost.” Olalla spoke.

Deia was staring at L’tian a bright glint in her eyes. She slowly got to her feet and turned to look out the window of her office. “And if one doesn’t have sisters, who would they go to?”

“Deia?” Olalla asked. “What’s wrong?”

“Olalla... I want you to begin an immediate investigation into the People’s Republic financial records. I want to know everything Olalla... how they get their money, what they have bought, and from whom... I even want to know what color they purchased for Chetak’s bedroom curtains.” Deia spoke without turning, her eyes gazing out the window.

“Deia... that would require an authorization signed by...” Olalla started to speak.

“No authorization.” Deia spoke. “They would detect it in a heartbeat.”

“What... who would detect it?”

“Whoever is behind all that is happening right now?” Deia spoke turning to look at him. “No authorization Olalla. I don’t care how you do it... just get it done.”

Olalla got to his feet. “And you won’t ask how?”

“I’m sorry... what?” Deia said sweetly.

Olalla nodded. “I’ll see to it.”

“Olalla... protect yourself my friend. We have enemies at every turn.” Deia spoke softly.

Olalla nodded. “I will.”

L’tian got to his feet, looking at Deia with that same calm, stoic face. “How *far* are you willing to go for the truth Deia? How *far*?”

Deia watched him turn and walk out of her office and not look back.

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## EARTH SPARTA

Dasha made her way to the communications console, pulling her night robe around her shoulders tighter. The last few weeks for her had been hell on earth literally. She had been spending as much time as possible with Dysea and the beautiful vampire Princess that was her shadow now it seemed. Dasha had been put off at first by Isabella and her attitude, but as they spent more time together, Dasha was beginning to learn more about her and found her quite fascinating.

Dasha sat down in front of the monitor and activated it. “What is it?” She snapped rubbing her eyes. “It is very late and I...” Her eyes narrowed when she saw the face on the monitor, “You!”

“I am very sorry to disturb you at this hour, but I have some questions I’d like to ask.” Deia spoke on the monitor.

“I have nothing to say to you.” Dasha spat.

“Lady Dasha... please... I know this is hard on you.” Deia spoke.

“Do you?” Dasha snapped. “My daughter has been taken. The man who loves her believes she betrayed him and it is killing him, and you and those with you do nothing! Martin Leonidas I will forgive, but you... why by the gods should listen to anything you have to say?”

“Lady Dasha... I must... I need you to answer this question please.” Deia spoke. “Your daughter has no sisters... she must have told you things.”

“My daughter tells me everything!” Dasha spoke. “Why should that matter in the least to you?”

“Is your daughter capable of betraying the King?” Deia asked. “Is it at all possible she could have done this of her own free will?”

“Why?” Dasha asked.

“I must know. Could she have done this of her own free will?” Deia asked again.

“Impossible.” Dasha spoke.

“Please tell me why?” Deia asked.

“Martin Leonidas claimed my daughter under the Centennial of the Moon, as he claimed all his Queens!” Dasha spoke, her voice still harsh. “Aricia and Martin claimed each other eternally before they left this world by sharing blood, as only two Purebloods can, at the pinnacle of an act of love!” Dasha saw Deia sit back in her chair quickly as if struck by a hard slap. “Why do you think he acts as he does now Prime Minister? They are bound to each other in the most sacred ways of our people, you should know that. There isn’t a fever in all the heavens that would make them betray each other freely. I don’t care what you and your people say!”

“They are telling us your daughter has passed into the next life.” Deia said softly. She saw a quick face of pain cross Dasha’s face and then it was gone.

“My daughter is not dead.” Dasha spoke. “I would know if she was. And so would you.”

Deia looked at her oddly. “What do you mean?”

Dasha shook her head slowly. “The Guardian of the Line was right.” She said softly. “You are of my people Prime Minister that is true, but you have forgotten even the simplest of the old ways. Martin Leonidas and Aricia are Soulmates, bound together during the Centennial of the Moon and consecrated by the sharing of blood during an act of love. The moment one of them dies... within a week the other will follow them into death. Perhaps your great Union should begin to rediscover the old ways before all is lost.”

“Lady Dasha I am sending a ship down from orbit for you!” Deia spoke quickly. “Be on that ship! It will return you here to Apo Prime.”

“Why would I want to do that?” Dasha asked.

Deia met her gaze. “Because now Lady Dasha, now I believe that this was forced on not only your daughter and the King, but forced on us all. And I don’t like that. Be on that ship!”

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## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### HADARIA

#### DAY TWENTY-SEVEN

Seanna sat to one side of the room in the palace and watched as Anja practiced calling for the healing pulses within her. She was practicing on the broken pieces of fruit and repairing the cellular damage made by knives and dropping the separate fruits onto the floor. She had a habit of lifting the pieces of fruit off the floor with her Mindvoice talents, frustrating her instructors who were telling her to focus on the healing pulses and try not to use both gifts she possessed. Seanna smiled as she realized Anja was ignoring them on purpose.

“She is advancing at a rate that far exceeds any of our hopes isn’t she Seanna.” The low voice spoke.

Seanna turned and saw Fuleos standing beside her as she got to her feet. He was a frail looking man, due in part to his age, as he was among the oldest of their people. Yet there was something within him that was injured, had been injured long ago. He above all the Healers among the Hadarian people had seen more combat with their comrades the Lycavorians and elves than any other. It was as if those battles had taken something from him.

Something that Seanna could see returning to him more and more as each day passed now that Anja had returned. They had spent every moment together, when she wasn’t training with her instructors or Seanna, deep in conversation and enjoying the bond of family that they had rediscovered.

Seanna nodded turning her dark green eyes back to Anja, “Unbelievably so sir.” She said softly. “She no longer needs to pull from me. It’s almost as if she is pulling from the residual metaphysical radiation in the atmosphere and directing it, shaping it to her will. She is doing things now that even five year students should not be able to do.”

“I saw this in her mother as well.” Fuleos nodded slowly, his dark eyes going to where Anja knelt on the training floor.



When word had reached him that his great granddaughter still lived, that a grandchild of his blood had survived the purges, Fuleos had felt like a weight of a thousand years had lifted from him. To learn she had become mate to the King and part wolf only made it that much sweeter as far as he was concerned. He had listened to the Old Ones blather about her connection to the King and these other two females and how their secret would be at risk. Fuleos had not believed a word of it.

When he looked at Anja he saw his grandson's wife. She, like Anja, had been of stunning and sensuous beauty. Her eyes could draw you in like children's candy, and though she was of the same build and hair color, Anja was incredibly more physically defined and her hair was much longer. Fuleos doubted if there was an ounce of fat on her, and the curves and shape of her body had male heads turning from every direction whenever they walked among the city streets.

"Her Mindvoice powers increase as well as her healing gifts." Fuleos said.

Seanna looked at him. "I did not think anyone else noticed." She said.

"She is tied to the King quite strongly Mage Warrior, do not discount that." Fuleos said.

"But the King... in his grief, he has blocked all communication with Anja and Dysea." Seanna spoke.

Fuleos nodded, "Perhaps and perhaps not. If he is as powerful as rumors are making him out to be... it would not surprise me if she was still drawing some small fraction of her Mindvoice powers from him. Or he is allowing her to. He may have actively closed their connection for whatever reason, but he is a Lycavorian male, and he will always touch them in some manner. It is their way... the way they protect those they love."

"Do you believe he is as powerful as they say sir?" Seanna asked.

Fuleos smiled. "I will tell you my opinion, from what I have seen and read and from what my granddaughter has told me of him. He is a man of deep conviction and morals, like his grandfather. He is also closer to the instinctual nature of his people, closer than anyone has been in thousands of years, much like his father. My granddaughter has told me of the wildness he keeps trapped inside, trapped behind shields that no one will ever breach. For all his power, he is still just a man, and that is what *makes* him so powerful. He knows this and he has never wanted what is thrust upon him, much like Resumar did not. And that is why her connection to him is so pure, much like his elf Queen."

Seanna looked at him. "Their connection does run very deep sir." She spoke.

"I'm sure it does." Fuleos said. "Far deeper than many would like it to run, of that I'm quite sure."

"Are they still belaboring that point sir?" Seanna hissed turning to him. "She has already told them she will never sever her ties with Martin. She would not allow it, and nor would the others, nor would he. Why will they push her on this?"

"Because for all their words and posturing Seanna, they are still politicians," Fuleos said with a grin. "They will push her until she pushes back, and then it will stop. Probably quite abruptly if what I see in her is accurate."

"I have seen her angry." Seanna spoke with a smile. "It is not pretty to witness."

Fuleos chuckled. "I have no doubts of that." Fuleos looked at her intently. "You care for her Seanna."

"She is my Queen, sir." Seanna replied softly, her eyes going back to where Anja knelt. "How could I not?"

"You care for her in a way a Hadarian Mage Warrior should not care for her Queen Seanna." Fuleos spoke.

Seanna met his eyes without fear or surprise. "I do sir. There is something about her that calls to me in a way I have never felt before. Being here... learning of us, of her people, it has helped her more than you know. She still has a heavy heart, she hides it well, but it is still there. She shared something special with Aricia... something that she misses and does not know if she can replace."

"Then show her she can, if that is what you and she desire." Fuleos spoke softly.

"I don't believe she wants to replace it sir." Seanna spoke.

"My granddaughter and I have shared many hours together since she has returned Seanna, you know this. And she has spoken to me of many things that others will not know. Surprisingly I have become her confidant. She does not care for her aunt and uncle, not that I blame her; they are judgmental people who resent that she has returned to us half wolf and very much having her own mind. They don't like that they can not influence her or control her. I have been blessed that she has confided so much in me, in the little time we have

had together.” Fuleos looked at Seanna. “It is a relationship that will make me live a few more years so that I can see it grow and become stronger.”

Seanna chuckled. “That would be very good sir. I believe... I believe Anja would like that.” She spoke.

“Remember Seanna... she is also part wolf.” Fuleos spoke. “The Lycavorian people, by their very nature, they require physical contact, a touch or caress, whether it be for pleasure or for comfort or for friendship.” He told her. “She finds you “yummy” I believe the word was that she used to describe you, and whether you know it or not, your very presence for her these last weeks have been what she needed.” He smiled when he saw Seanna’s eyes go a little wider. “Her vocabulary will take some getting used to I know, but I am assuming “yummy” is a very good thing in relation to you. She may not wish to replace what she had with Aricia, that is true, but the wolf in her craves attention from someone who cares for her just as strongly as the King does.”

Seanna looked at him. “You... you do not seem to care that I desire my Queen in this way sir.” She said.

“She is my granddaughter Seanna.” Fuleos spoke with a gentle smile. “I lost her once... and I will not lose her again. If you are what makes her happy Seanna, and it is your wish as well... so be it. The stronger she is, the stronger our King will be, and in the end, the stronger our Union will be.”

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## ENURRUA

Tablina moved to the entrance of Arzoal’s huge cavern home, holding the light wrap around her shoulders against the morning chill. The entrance opened up into a wide expanse of ledge that overlooked the valley four thousand meters below. The sun was just rising in the distance, and it cast a glow of life across the tree tops and dewy land as far as the eye could see.

*What troubles you Tablina?* Arzoal asked softly as she settled her huge twenty-five foot long, three thousand kilo body next to her on the open ledge.

*I am still trying to figure out how Chetak discovered Aricia is still alive. Tablina spoke turning to look at her. We were so careful. And then he has me followed me to our rendezvous that same night? It is too much of a coincidence.*

*The better question is what he intended if you had not lost the men who were following you that night.* Arzoal spoke. *You said he was upset because Aricia did not conceive?*

Tablina nodded. *I’m beginning to wonder if they had the serum examined somehow, and detected what we did.*

*That is impossible Tablina. Very few have the knowledge or equipment to detect what I added to the serum to prevent that from happening. Chetak is not one of them, nor are any of those he employs.*

*Then why does he suspect Arzoal?* Tablina asked. *Those who help me have told me my home in Atlatus is being watched all the time now. He is waiting for me to return. He knows.*

*Whatever he knows... he will not find her. Isheeni and Torma have taken her somewhere they will never think to look. She is safe.* Arzoal replied. *And you will now remain here with us to keep you safe.*

*Have you spoken with her?* Tablina asked.

Arzoal shook her massive head. *Isheeni is strong willed and stubborn Tablina, you know this. It is why Torma is so devoted to her. Isheeni has bound herself to Aricia and Torma to the King. In his place he will serve Aricia now.*

*She won’t speak with you directly?*

*Her time with Aricia has made her resentful of what we did.* Arzoal spoke. *I sense it in Torma as well. They are angry we... angry we have resorted to the same tactics that the people we hate have used. Torma told me that.*

*Isheeni knew what we intended by our actions Arzoal.* Tablina spoke. *I am not trying to make excuses, but...*

*Tablina... my daughter is young. She has touched Aricia’s mind in a way I believe only the King has. What she saw in there... the love and happiness... she is angry that we took that away from her.*

*Even for the greater good Arzoal?* Tablina asked.

Arzoal sighed heavily. *That is why we did it Tablina my friend. That does not make it right.*

Tablina nodded quickly. *I'm not trying to justify it Arzoal, truly.*

*I know... but we must whatever attempt we can to...*

*Elder Mother!* The excited male voice exclaimed outward in their minds.

Arzoal turned as Tablina leaned over the edge further, gazing down at the land before them. It always amazed her at how high they truly were, and she scanned the side of the huge mountain. Her sharp eyes detected something reflecting off the morning sun and she leaned further out.

*What is it Alon?* Arzoal turned to look at the much smaller dragon burst out onto the ledge. He was only a hundred years old, his yellow scales just starting to change the brownish red of his Heavyhorn mother and father.

*Elder Mother one of our southern hunting parties has been attacked by Chetak's men in the next valley! They were caught attempting to bring down a stag. Kremal is injured and attempting to carry his mate Ramala back to safety! She caught the blast from a rail weapon in her side!*

*Ramala is carrying eggs!* Arzoal barked. *Why was she hunting? Tablina I must go!*

*Arzoal!* Tablina snapped turning from the ledge.

*Tablina I must go to Ramala! I can not let her die and lose her eggs!*

*Arzoal... I know why Chetak suspects Aricia is alive!*

*What? How!*

*Isheeni said she launched her Shi Viska at Joric as she was falling!*

*Tablina please I must go!*

*Isheeni said this correct!* Tablina snapped.

*Yes! Torma said he caught a glimpse of it embedding in the wall! Why?*

*You'd better look for yourself!* Tablina spoke motioning with her head over the edge.

Arzoal grunted in frustration and moved next to her, leaning her head over the edge, extending her neck out. *What am I looking for Tablina!*

Arzoal heard the cracking and snap of breaking rock and the noise of slivers of dirt and stone falling. She saw the flash of silver in the climbing sun, and then her flame colored eyes went wide as the Shi Viska shield blazed past her heading south. Arzoal's head snapped back up and she looked at Tablina. *By the gods!*

Tablina nodded slowly. "That is what you were looking for Arzoal. That is how Chetak knows she still lives. And now it's conveniently on its way south where your dragons are being chased."

*She... she called it from half a planet away?* Arzoal gasped in shock. *Tablina... the power to do this is...*

Tablina nodded. "Yes I know." Tablina turned to the south. "I believe Chetak's men are not going to like the welcome she is going to give them."

It was unlike anything she had ever experienced.

Her strong legs were squeezing tightly to the base of Isheeni's powerful neck, her hands clamped tightly to the curved eight inch long spikes on her shoulders. It had been Isheeni's idea to actually let Aricia ride on her back between her wings so that she could bath in the cool stream below their cave. It had happened almost naturally, as they were flying back to the waterfall cave, that Aricia had grasped the curved spikes on Isheeni's shoulders and squeezed her thighs tightly to the smooth scales beneath her.

*Show me your world Isheeni.* Aricia had spoken softly within her mind.

Isheeni had turned her head slightly as her powerful wings beat rhythmically and she climbed for altitude to return to the cave. *You are not afraid?* She had asked surprised. *I can fly very high.*

*What is there to be afraid of?* Aricia had answered. *If I fall and die, it will be no different than if I fall in battle.*

Isheeni had turned to look at Torma, who flew gracefully next to her. In the dragon version of a shrug he beat his wings harder and reached for more height. Isheeni quickly followed, and it had started what they had continued now for the last three days.

Aricia would more often ride Isheeni as she was slimmer around the neck, but she had ridden Torma several times as well. Isheeni was far faster, as she was a natural flyer, built for power and speed, while Torma was larger physically by a good margin and took longer to make the breakneck turns that Isheeni could execute in the blink of an eye. At first Aricia thought she would fall off easily, but experimentation allowed her to train

herself in hours. She would keep her long legs tight to Isheeni's muscular neck where the joint and muscles connecting her wings provided a natural air brake, while gripping the two naturally curved spikes that made excellent hand holds. Aricia had ridden horses as a child in Sparta, and the practice was similar, though riding a dragon that could turn upside down and do full twists, while plunging towards the earth like a speeding Shi Viska in a heartbeat, was considerably more dangerous.

Isheeni quickly took notice that it was when they were flying that Aricia let herself go, and on the second day as they dove for the surface at nearly three hundred kilometers per hour, the wind whipping into Aricia's face pulling at her skin, Isheeni felt Aricia smile. Perhaps it was a smile of release; or the pleasure of flying so high and so fast, for Isheeni it was a sign that perhaps the child Queen she had bound herself too was not completely dead inside.

They were hunting this early in the morning, bringing Aricia so that she could scout the terrain all around them. Isheeni had blocked herself to all but Aricia and Torma, not allowing the voices of her mother or others of her people cloud her thoughts. Torma however, allowed the link to remain open and he heard the call for help.

Isheeni's head snapped around as she banked toward where Torma flew half a kilometer away, Aricia sensing her sudden worry as her mate's emotions spiked.

*Torma what is it husband?* Isheeni called.

Aricia followed Isheeni's head, their connection always open.

*Isheeni... Kremal and Ramala have been attacked by Chetak's men. Ramala is badly injured and Kremal is wounded and can barely carry her!*

*Ramala carries eggs!* Isheeni exclaimed, swooping lower to come up next to her husband. *Why is she out hunting?*

*They are only two kilometers south of us!* Torma exclaimed. *We must go to their aide!*

*Torma we have Aricia with us!* Isheeni exclaimed. She has no weapons!

*Ramala carried eggs Isheeni! Kremal's children.* Torma snapped at her. To someone who could not Mindvoice it appeared as if he had tried to bite her. *We can not let them kill her!*

Aricia had listened to the exchange and suddenly sat up on Isheeni's back when she heard the name Chetak mentioned. She smiled a grim smile and closed her eyes. She held up her left arm and willed her shield to her. It took only ten seconds for the Shi Viska to cover the five kilometers to the one master alone who could control it. Aricia opened her eyes when the Shi Viska settled like a feather to her arm and then in a silver/white flash it was gone.

*Now I have a weapon.* She spoke matter of factly. She turned her head to Torma. *How far Torma?*

*Kremal is flying in our direction! Low to the ground! Chetak's men are chasing him in a Runecutter.*

Torma spoke, his dragon eyesight easily reaching out to see his people. The Gray colored male was carrying the smaller tan colored dragon in his forelimbs as he beat his wings madly. Torma could see the blood on the female dragon, as well as the blood that was showering the ground and trees below Kremal.

*Isheeni... get behind the vehicle! Stay very low and when I tell you, roll completely over!* Aricia spoke. *Torma... help your friend. Go Isheeni! Go!*

Isheeni didn't hesitate and dove for the surface.

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There were four of them in the open backed Runecutter, two of them carrying the massive rail gun weapons. The driver was whisking them madly along the ground following the huge trail of blood the male dragon was leaving as he skimmed the tree tops.

"He's bleeding like a stuck *gostin!*" One man in the rear exclaimed. "We'll be upon him in minutes! Two dragons' heads today boys! And the *toveni* is carrying eggs! We'll be rich this day!" (Boar, female)

"You'll be dead this day!" The female voice spoke from above them.

All four men looked straight up, their eyes going wide in unabashed astonishment. Above them was a blue scaled Firespitter flying upside down, and riding between her inverted shoulders was a female Lycavorian with hair like night and burning azure blue eyes.

Aricia was not a military officer, and she would now never be a queen, but her beloved had taught her more than enough to deal with these disgusting fools. She lifted her arm and the Shi Viska flared into existence,

the men's eyes going even wider. With a single thought the shield launched straight down between the men and sliced through the metal of the Runecutter's floor as if it was paper. The effects were instantaneous and devastating.

The severed rear of the Runecutter came to an abrupt and smashing halt as it dug into the ground beneath them, the four men being propelled into the air as the vehicle they were riding in was cut cleanly in half. The front of the vehicle continued forward, the driver fighting madly for control as he plowed through the trees. His face had an instant of relief as he sprang into a clearing, relief that was quickly washed away when he saw the two dragons they had been hunting now on the ground, and the much larger obsidian Heavyhorn that turned to face his speeding, out of control vehicle.

Torma was the one who acted first, spinning his body around at an incredible speed for his size, his tail whipping around behind him and crashing into the front section of the Runecutter, tossing the vehicle filling through the sky as if he hit a children's toy. Torma was not a full Firespitter, but in that regard he was not helpless. He opened his maw and with an immense roar of anger and power he released his own version of fire spitting. The shot of superheated air was over three thousand degrees in temperature, and the moment it came into contact with the wildly spinning front half of the Runecutter, his molten breath melted the vehicle into slag, and the Lycavorian driver screaming the entire way until his body joined the melted heap on the ground, now nothing but ash and crisp flesh.

He turned back to his fellow dragon. *Kremal?*

*She lives Torma my friend. Thank you. She is injured badly but she will survive. She is a stubborn female.* The gray Heavyhorn replied, nudging the tan female lying on the ground.

*Aren't they all stubborn my friend? You are injured. I will carry Ramala, and we must go help Isheeni.*

*Torma she faces four Lycavorians alone! She is mad!*

Torma shook his dragon head as he gently lifted Ramala into his forelimbs. *She is not alone my friend.*

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The instant the vehicle was cut in half Isheeni righted herself and flared her wings, slowing instantly from matching the Runecutter's speed to gliding along easily, and then she cut sharply back. Aricia leaped from between her shoulders and tucked her body into a neat roll as she hit the surface of the ground ten meters below.

The short flying lesson hadn't hurt the four Lycavorians that bad, only scraps and lacerations from flying meters through the air into the small tress and unyielding ground all around them, but it had scattered their weapons into the wind. The first soldier saw Isheeni settle to the ground not twenty meters from him, feeling the vibration as her two thousand kilos of weight came to rest and he screamed as she cut loose with a full power breath of flame. The Lycavorian soldier screamed insanely as he was cooked alive, his flesh and heavy clothes curling and melting upon his skin, until no sound came from his lipless face.

His lungs were no more than cinders.

Aricia strode along the ground like an avenging angel just as Torma and Kremal burst through the trees. Her Shi Viska was humming on her arm, and she released it immediately upon her azure blue eyes seeing the second Lycavorian scrambling to pull his weapon from his belt.

*I will kill you Joric!*

The silver Shi Viska reached the Lycavorian in the time it took him to blink and his head flopped to the earth, rolling a few meters before coming to a stop eyes open in death, his body still sitting upright, blood spurting from his neck stump.

Aricia was upon the third Lycavorian before he could even scream in alarm. Aricia raised her right hand as if to throw a punch and the psychic knife appeared in front of her knuckles, shimmering in its silver colored solid form. Aricia didn't hesitate in her crazed state and she drove her fist forward, driving the psychic knife deeply into the Lycavorian's forehead. It cut deeply like a blade, yet no blood came spilling out, Aricia staring at it in stunned awe at what she had just done. She withdrew her hand quickly, staring at the shimmering psychic knife of energy extending from her knuckles and then at the tea cup size hole it had left completely through the Lycavorian's brain.

*I will kill you Joric!*

Aricia lifted her eyes to the now terrified Lycavorian that remained. He was struggling to get to his feet, not to fight, but to run. Aricia leaped at him, her azure blue wolf eyes now easily discernible and her fangs

extending out completely. She covered the twenty meters in a single heartbeat and two short leaps, her boots crashing down on the man and driving him into the ground with a loud grunt and whoosh of air. He was a large man and he rolled over quickly, swinging his beefy hand in front of him intending to strike the she demon attacking him. The air rushed from his lungs and he screamed as his arm came in contact with the still humming Shi Viska shield and was instantly severed from his body. Aricia kicked him savagely in the side, silencing his scream and hearing ribs snap like dry kindling. He continued to roll blindly, agony lancing through him as he tucked his severed arm against his body and pieces of his shattered ribs stabbed into his muscle and flesh.

The massive Heavyhorn tail smashing to the earth stop his rolling and he froze, flipping over to see the black haired angel of death walking towards him, the psychic knife shimmering in her right hand, the Shi Viska shield twitching on her left forearm.

Aricia stepped up to the man and rammed her foot down on his chest, listening to him howl in pain for several seconds before she pointed the Shi Viska at his head.

“Do not worry little man; you will live this day unlike your friends.” Aricia spoke coldly.

“I’m... I’m sorry! Don’t kill me... please! It was their idea!” He pleaded lifting his good arm to protect himself, his eyes riveted on her blue eyes with undisguised fear.

“I need you to deliver a message for me butcher!” Aricia snapped. “Tell Joric... tell Joric I’m coming for him! Tell Joric when I find him; he will feel pain for hours before he dies in the most hideous of ways!” Aricia slammed her right hand down into the man’s shoulder, his eyes going wide in agony. Aricia’s azure blue wolf eyes were wide as she leaned close to the whimpering Lycavorian troop. “Feel the burn of the dragon lives you have taken in your foul life man.” She growled twisting her fist sideways. The man’s eyes were wide in silent agonizing pain and a silent tortured scream. “And know that for every dragon you kill beyond this day, I will come for you and remove another portion of your sickening body, until there is only your head, which I will mount on a pole outside Chetak’s home, next to his son’s head.” His eyes closed quickly as she yanked back the psychic knife from his flesh, his upper body beginning to burn with fever unlike anything he had ever felt. Aricia drew back her right foot and kicked him savagely in the mouth, teeth flying across the ground as she dropped him mercifully into unconsciousness.

“Now it has begun Joric.” She spoke in a low voice filled with malice and death. “And I will have your head and the head of your father before I leave this life.”

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## **EARTH SPARTA**

“We must have missed something.” Dysea spoke softly as she rubbed her temples. “I can not believe that we are unable to find anything. Not with what is available to us.”

The Royal villa was being used as a command post for all involved. Spartan Royals Guards covered every square meter of the villa, the wall of sensors that Panos had had installed constantly monitored and watched. Spartans in wolf form patrolled the grounds of the villas, as well as those in human form. An *AUTUMN MOON*-Class Frigate was in low orbit using its station keeping thrusters to remain directly above the villa at a hundred and fifty thousand meters in altitude. No one was going to take chances with the lives of Dysea or Isabella.

They were dressed casually for the most part with the exception of the two Lycavorian officers from the fleet orbiting Earth. Selene and Lynwe occupied one couch, while Aihola and Isabella sat on the same couch as Dysea. Walter sat on one of the kitchen stools and Dilios stood with Panos near the sliding glass door that opened onto the wide patio beyond.

“Everyone must make themselves known when they enter Sparta my Queen.” Dilios spoke. “We may not have a wall per say, but we do have a fine security apparatus in place. I’ve had my people reviewing all visitors to Sparta in the last eighteen months. With very few exceptions, all of them are citizens who have been here at least five decades. The exceptions we did find were mainly travelers from Athens or other parts of Europe that came for trading and we were able to trace them back to their original starting points. None of them were from North America, and none came anywhere close to the High Coven spaceport that we all now know is on that island.”

Isabella turned to the Admiral by the patio door. “Admiral you are positive that this assassin is a Lycavorian?” She asked.

The Admiral nodded quickly, “Undoubtedly Lady Isabella. You have seen our security arrangements on Apo Prime for yourself. Non-Lycavorians... even those in the Union Fleet are not allowed near the explosive bunkers, where these trigger devices would have been kept. Prime Minister Deia has certainly brought enough trouble on herself for that obviously prejudice action, but that is the way it’s been for centuries and it usually goes away quickly.”

“How is the Oracle my Queen?” Dilios asked. “Several Senators made inquiries of me today in regards to her condition.”

Dysea nodded. “Her condition is stable, but the doctors are keeping her in this coma to continue healing. We still can not tell if she will fully recover her abilities or if she will even wake up on her own. Her physical wounds are going to take longer to heal without shifting, but the doctors can’t allow her to use her mind to shift for fear of damaging her brain.” Her voice was stressed and worn out and Isabella reached over taking her hand within hers and squeezed.

Aihola turned her amber eyes to the Lycavorian officer. “Admiral Jamerl could there be a connection between the men who took Tarifa and the assassin?”

“It is a possibility Chief Administrator.” He spoke. “I continue to get daily reports from Fleet Headquarters on Apo Prime, and there appears to be some sort of push to usurp Deia that is being led by the Senator from this Lycavorian Republic. As I have told you earlier, there are many of our people who are smugglers and mercenaries, but this People’s Republic is large, and they are followers of the old ways that King Resumar brought our people out of. Many of the old ways from ten thousand years ago and beyond are very violent and brutal, especially to females of our species.”

Aihola looked at him, worry on her face blossoming, “Tarifa?” She gasped.

Jamerl looked at her. “I do not believe they will injure your mate Chief Administrator. She may have been turned by a Pureblood and now is fully wolf, but she is also a beautiful young woman who is also part elf. Whoever these people are, they will not want to anger my people *and* the elves. While the elves of the Union are much more stoic and not nearly as open as the elves created by the Guardian of the Line here on earth, but they are proud and strong warriors, and if it is discovered that Tarifa is being held by these same people, they will provide any assistance we ask. And Tarifa is very strong from what I have seen in my dealings with her.”

“Admiral what is Talracian Ore used for?” Selene asked now leaning forward.

He looked at her, his dark eyes surprised. “Excuse me... what did you say?”

“Talracian Ore? What is it used for?”

“Chief Secretary... may I ask where you heard that term?” The Admiral asked.

Selene held up the data pad. “This is the transcript of the meeting Tarifa and I had with those Lycavorian buffoons the day before she and Aihola came here to Sparta.” She smiled. “No offence intended my friends.”

All of them laughed lightly at her words and the Admiral’s eyes scanned the pad quickly after he took it from her hand, “Three hundred thousand metric tons?”

Selene nodded. “That is what they said they wanted... and from the way they spoke... they were very serious about wanting it.” She spoke.

Dysea looked at the man from her seat. “Admiral what is wrong?” The Lycavorian Admiral looked at her for a long moment, long enough for the wolf heckles on the back of Dysea’s neck to start tingling. “Admiral Jamerl... I asked if there was something wrong.”

“Milady... Talracian Ore is a relatively new discovery.” He spoke slowly. “It has not even come out of the research phase to my knowledge.”

“Research phase for what purpose Jamerl?” Isabella asked.

“It is said that with the correct forging and mixture of alloys in Talracian Ore, we could develop very lightweight but extremely durable armor for our ships that could be deployed upon order before a battle. A much more advanced form of ablative armor basically.” Jamerl spoke.

“How much more advanced?” Dysea asked.

“I was never involved with the engineering and design team... they reported directly to Prime Minister Deia, but it was my understanding that this new armor would allow our ships to withstand multiple direct hits from even the most powerful Coven weapons without draining or damaging the shield grid.” Jamerl replied.

“This is significant?” Dysea asked.

Isabella sat back in her chair. “The High Coven ships have always had longer ranged missiles Dysea.” She spoke. “The only reason why my father’s fleets have been unable to completely overpower the Union is that our ships are built to withstand more punishment, so they could close with the Coven fleets and engage them at close range. With armor like this on our ships... the Union could turn to developing more and better long range weapons and put them on a more even footing with High Coven fleets.”

Jamerl nodded. “Talracian Ore is the main component of this new armor.”

“Yet these Lycavorians knew of it?” Selene asked. “Isn’t that odd?”

Jamerl nodded, “Very odd.” He replied, “And not at all to my liking. As much as I did not want to believe it before, this information can only lead me to one conclusion.” He looked at Dysea.

Dysea nodded. “Yes I’m beginning to agree.” She answered. “However it still does not explain why they would kidnap Tarifa. They must have known that we would not allow that action to stand. *Nauta Melme* considers her a sister.”

Jamerl looked at her. “Perhaps they thought what has happened in the last month would negate whatever the King might try to do.”

“Could these men have been simple mercenaries?” Panos asked moving forward. “We have discovered that several young females from Sparta have been declared missing in the last few days.”

Aihola nodded, “And three Drow from the outlying settlements as well.” She echoed. “And you do not take a Drow willingly anywhere they do not want to go.”

Jamerl looked at them. “Why was I not told this?” He asked.

“It was an internal matter Admiral. It is not the first time men or women have gone missing from Sparta over the centuries.” Panos spoke. “Even some of our own Centurions have disappeared over the years. Some have returned... with no knowledge of what occurred, some have not. Aihola... I believe Dekton was one of these. He was missing for three years before staggering back into the surrounding mountains.”

Aihola looked at him. “Tarifa and I did not know that.” She spoke quickly.

Panos nodded. “It was many years ago. We finally decided he must have struck his head while on a mission patrol, perhaps a misstep somewhere and hit his head hard enough to not remember anything of his life. It has happened before in medical terms.”

Walter nodded. “I have seen it myself in my study of medicine.”

Jamerl nodded. “Well I would say they are not mercenaries for two reasons, they wore uniforms when they met with Administrator Selene and Tarifa, and with Lady Isabella’s help we have confirmed their ship’s Plasma Fusion Generating Core matches the known PFGC for the People’s Republic ships.”

“So it was the same people who took Aricia.” Dysea asked.

“The cruiser bore no open markings Lady Dysea... so we could not say positively one way or the other. However I would have to say the chances are very good.” Jamerl told her.

“Admiral... how fast can we get an *AUTUMN MOON*-Class Frigate to this Lycavorian People’s Republic home world?” Dysea asked, “Undetected and unannounced.”

Jamerl looked at her. “That would be a violation of Union law Queen Dysea... I can not *technically* be part of this conversation as a member of the Union Defense Forces, as this is *technically* an official meeting. We are not allowed to spy on member worlds.”

“Admiral... I...” Dysea started to speak but stopped when she saw him removing his uniform jacket and draping it over the back of the chair neatly.

Jamerl turned back around and very casually pulled out the chair and sat down. “I would like to thank you for inviting me to this fine causal gathering of men and women Milady.” He spoke with a smile. “It has been some time since I enjoyed the company of friends. We were talking hypothetical situations were we not? I believe given two extra LSD coils and a bold enough captain... the answer to your question would be six days, if they cut through just a little bit of High Coven territory.”

Dysea didn’t take her eyes from the man as she smiled. “Senior Polemarch, please prepare a *Mora* of Spartan Centurions, with Lander commanding them. I want them ready to leave six hours ago.” She spoke.

“Dysea...” Aihola began.

“Aihola... select a dozen of the best Drow troops you have left here on Earth to act as scouts for Lander’s *Mora*. You will command them.” Dysea continued while still holding Jamerl’s gaze. Aihola smiled



and came to her feet. “*Hypothetically* I want them to go to this People’s Republic Home World and poke around to discover if Tarifa is there.”

“And *hypothetically* if she is indeed there?” Aihola spoke.

Dysea turned to meet her amber eyes. “The hypothetically I’m sure you could devise a plan or two to get her back.”

Aihola nodded her head. “If you’ll excuse me... I would like to return to my quarters and lament my Tarifa being taken from me. I may be unresponsive for several days.”

Dysea nodded. “I will understand completely.”

Jamerl couldn’t help but smile at this. He was beginning to truly enjoy what these people were made of. He got to his feet and went to Panos. “Governor... would it be possible for you to provide me as much information as you can on those that have been taken from Sparta over the years?”

Panos looked at Dilios and then back to him. “I can show you their records if you like.” He spoke. “We keep them all in the same computer storage disc.”

Jamerl nodded. “That would be fine.”

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## ENURRUA

### DAY TWENTY-NINE

Tarifa was tired. Bone tired.

They had been traveling for a week now, through some of the toughest terrain she had ever seen, mountains and timber higher than anything she’d seen on Earth. The days were hot, the nights cool. They hadn’t seen a single one of Chetak’s men after the third day, not a single person outside of the seven in their group. Two other men had joined them as they left the city, hulking men with bulging muscles that did not speak much at all. They traveled in wolf form during the day for the most part, and changed to human for just after dusk moving for another few hours before stopping for the night.

Tarifa lifted her sapphire colored eyes to where Isra was squatting next to the small fire waiting for the meat that was being cooked by one of the new men to finish. Isra had taught her more about being in wolf form and what she was capable of in seven days, than Dekton had taught her in the entire time after changing her completely, and that stuck in the back of her mind for some reason. With the exception of the few times he had ranged ahead with Boreal and one of the other men, he had never been far from her side. His deep timber smell was so much more potent in wolf form, and every time she caught it on the wind, she felt her wolf blood surge with passion and desire. At night when they stopped she would curl into his arms and nudge him with her aura until he reciprocated and surrounded her with his male aura, wrapping it around her before sleep claimed her. He was so unlike Dekton in every conceivable way, and the more time she spent around him, the more time she found herself comparing him to Dekton.

They both had bodies sculpted with muscle, yet Isra’s was without a doubt more defined. The scars on his body, which she had willingly explored with her delicate fingers that night, were jagged and savage, attesting to his hard life growing up among his people, while Dekton’s were fewer and the result of fighting with any number of vampires or other enemies. He was larger in wolf form than Dekton, more feral and instinctive. She had watched him drag down a large boar with Boreal their third night into their journey, and though it had been a savage thing, Tarifa had been mesmerized by his power and utter control. His emotions were an open book for her to see, never hidden from her behind psychic shields she could not penetrate. They had established a connection for just the two of them, and his voice in her head was like a soothing balm across her mind.

Tarifa watched him cut a piece of meat from the carcass and move back towards her. He settled into a squatting position behind her, leaning over and nuzzling the back of her neck and her elfin ears. Whether he had discovered it by accident or somehow knew it before hand, he never ceased to nuzzle her sensitive ears whenever he had the chance. And to be honest, Tarifa hoped he never did. The nuzzle this night was as it always was, a firm caress with his nose that traced the back ridge of her elf ear from bottom to top, and if nothing else, it told her just how much she meant to him. He had done that so many times while buried deep within her that night, and as she did then, she did now, her eyes closing with a soft smile as she leaned back into

his caress. He was larger than Lynwe by several inches, yet after growing accustomed to his enormous size, Tarifa had dropped into a world of blissful pleasure that she had never visited. And she found herself aching for that feeling more and more.

He reached around and offered her the small plate and fork. "It will be a little tough to chew, but it will replace the nutrients in your body that you have been using, so eat." He told her.

Tarifa smiled as she snuggled back against him and picked up the fork, "How much further?" She asked.

Isra swallowed what he had in his mouth before answering. "We will break into the southern mountain range within an hour of starting again in the morning. This part of our planet is under the control of a family that follows my father, but they are much smaller in size. We should not have any trouble reaching the mountain range we seek by two days from now."

Tarifa swallowed the piece of meat, finding it a little tough as he had said, but not bad tasting. "I hope they have someplace I can take a bath where we are going." She spoke with a smile. "I must smell terrible."

Isra leaned over her shoulder and smiled, "Never to me." He whispered in her ear.

"Well you are biased in your opinion sir." She spoke playfully.

"The rebels are not large... but they will have more modern amenities." He told her. "They have built an intricate network of caves and tunnels in the mountains. They might even have a transmitter that would allow you to contact your *Nya Istel*. Let her know you are safe."

Tarifa turned slightly and looked into his violet eyes. "Isra..."

He shook his head slowly and placed a finger on her lips. "I told you Tarifa... no words or explanations are needed. I meant that. I know where your heart lies." He told her. "I would like however, one complete night to explore every delicious portion of your body, from your toes to your ears and taste you in every way possible. I have no doubts you taste as good as you smell."

Tarifa's eyes lit up at his words and she pressed closer. "That sounds very promising." She spoke.

"It will be." He said leaning over to kiss her softly.

Tarifa accepted his kiss without question and she felt the surge of his aura through her blood once more, causing her to deepen the kiss and pull his face closer to hers.

Alliame settled next to her mother and handed the plate to her as Gallais watched them kissing in the dim light of the fire. "Mother you don't have to gawk at them." She spoke with a smile.

Gallais smiled and stabbed a piece of meat. "I have never seen him so happy Alliame, so committed." Gallais spoke softly. "This she-elf is changing him before my very eyes, and it makes me so very happy."

"She has been mated before you know?" Alliame spoke seeing her mother look at her. "The Pureblood that turned her... she was his mate. He was a Spartan on this planet Earth she is from."

"No Pureblood turned this she-elf." Gallais spoke softly.

Alliame nodded. "That is what she says."

"Alliame I have been around enough years and seen enough Purebloods to know that Tarifa was not turned by a Pureblood wolf." Gallais spoke. "You see how she reacts to Isra's aura... how completely she accepts him, leans into him when he nuzzles her, how her skin flushes and her eyes fill with desire? How quickly the attraction grows between them? The pull of a Pureblood male is too strong... too potent for her to have accepted Isra as her mate like this so soon after the death of her first. And she has accepted him Alliame... make no mistake about that... for every time he is near, her scent peaks and it becomes pure and strong, calling to him, and she does not even know that. That is another strong sign she was not turned by a Pureblood, for he would have taught her these things." Gallais shook her head. "None of what Tarifa displays are the usual signs of a female who has lost a Pureblood mate in the last year. No..." Gallais shook her head slowly. "No Pureblood wolf turned or claimed Tarifa, of that I am sure. The only Pureblood who has ever claimed Tarifa is my son. And if my five thousand year old nose is right, and it has never been wrong mind you, each day that passes, that claim on each other grows stronger and stronger for both of them."

Anja stepped from the pulsing hot shower feeling fresher and relaxed as she reached for the towel on the rack. It had been a long yesterday and she was still a little sore from her training with Seanna in the gym after training in the healing arts all day.

It was a miraculous thing this gift of healing that was within her body, and that was something Anja did not doubt for an instant. To be able to heal with a touch of her hand, the very thought of it still stunned her, even after almost a month of being here and learning all that she could do. Even during medical school on Earth, she found herself drawn to medicine much more so than her fellow classmates, and the need to heal drove her to join the Navy, and then the SEALs. To discover all she had in the last year was mind boggling to say the least, but to feel it come so naturally, the adjusting to this new life, it only made it that much more easily to believe.

She was a werewolf, in love with a werewolf. The moment Martin had changed her she had become his for all time. It did not matter that he loved Aricia just that little bit more than he loved her and Dysea, and the growing love he felt for Isabella and the elf pilot who had become his concubine. No... the only thing that mattered to Anja was that when she was with him, he loved her more than any man ever had in her life, and that was what mattered. The events with Aricia had shocked her right down to her toes, but Anja refused to believe that Aricia would choose any man over Martin, no matter what anyone said. The pain of losing her was fading slowly, her time here on her home world helping her to fill the empty moments when she would think of Aricia. She loved her... still loved her... and would always love her in her heart. They had shared something Anja never thought she could share with another woman. The physical attraction between them was overpowering and they had spent many nights pleasuring each other in ways only they could, sharing secrets and girl talk. Anja didn't know what it would be called on her world, but she was pretty sure that she was the first Bi-sexual Queen in Hadarian history. Anja smiled to herself at that... just before her thoughts turned to Seanna.

Seanna had started it on the ship, allowing her to draw from her own healing power to practice on small injuries and cuts from everyday life on a starship. They had grown close, and Anja could feel a definite attraction there. She and Aricia had commented on how tasty Seanna looked, and they had hoped to introduce themselves to her in this way at some point soon. Now all that was gone... but Seanna remained. And no matter how much Anja wanted to fight it, the attraction was growing and the wolf in her needed attention. She wasn't ready to let go of her feelings for Aricia... or if she ever would... but there was no denying Seanna was causing her wolf blood to burn.

Seanna had a sweet light coconut scent and it wafted around her all the time now. Her body was perfection in its curves and build, and the more Anja saw of her, and spent time with her, the more Anja wanted to explore and taste that flesh in every way. Her dark green eyes could send ripples of delight through Anja with barely any effort, just as Aricia's eyes had been able to do.

Anja chuckled to herself as she toweled off and pulled the thin robe on over her petite frame. She had not really determined how open minded her people were, but walking around naked in her home like she did in Sparta was not something she wanted to do unless she knew it was ok.

"I have turned into such a slut." She spoke to herself with a grin.

Anja turned and moved into the bedroom portion of the master suite that was her sanctuary and the first thing she detected was Seanna's scent, very strong and close by. She looked around the large room and saw the floor length curtains flapping in the breeze and began moving towards them.

"Seanna," She called out. "What are you doing here this late?"

Anja stopped when Seanna stepped into view, her jade green eyes going a little wider, and her wolf blood beginning a slow simmer at what she saw. Seanna wore a very thin, almost transparent robe that was white in color, and it did absolutely nothing to hide the swell of her firm breasts, the inviting valley between those globes, or the hard nipples that pressed against the transparent fabric. It did absolutely nothing to hide her long legs, the curve of her hips, or the thin line of dark brown almost black hair that rested just above her center. Her face was perfect in every way, her lips quivering in the dimly lit room, her dark green eyes ablaze with a fire Anja longed to grab onto.

Seanna for her part could barely keep her heart from racing out of control. The desire she felt sweeping through her was unlike anything she had experienced before. No man had ever touched her; it was against the strict rules of her people for a Mage Warrior to have relations with a man. The moment Seanna had seen her Queen, the impossibly luscious body and the long Persian red hair, the desire and begun building in her belly...

begun building slowly until now, after speaking with Fuleos, she had gained the courage to see if her desire could be fulfilled or if she would be turned away.

“My... my Queen... I...”

Anja walked up to Seanna slowly, her coconut scent spilling from her and laced with desire and need, a scent that was causing Anja to no longer fight her own rising wants and desires.

Anja stopped in front of her, looking up into her dark green eyes. Seanna was at least five inches taller than her, but than Anja had met few people she was taller than.

“Seanna... does anyone know you are here?” Anja asked.

Seanna shook her head quickly. “No... I came in through the hidden path that I showed you after...”

“That’s good.” Anja spoke huskily.

Seanna’s eyes exploded open as she felt her Queen press her lush body tightly against her and lean up to cover her lips with her own. She felt Anja’s hands snake around her waist and gently grasp her firm ass cheeks, pulling her even closer as she teased her lips and teeth with her incredible four inch long tongue. The desire was overwhelming... the heat now more than she could bear and she surrendered to what she wanted so badly.

It was Anja’s turn to be surprised as Seanna’s arms went around her, pulled her tight and eagerly plunged her own four inch long tongue between Anja’s lips to do battle with her own. The kiss was a signal of things to come, teasing, tasting and so filled with desire. It lasted for only a few moments before Anja pulled away quickly, her blood now totally heated and burning for this woman. Seanna looked at her, suddenly ashamed at what she had done.

“My Queen... I’m sorry... I...”

Anja looked at her with those smoldering jade green eyes while pulling her towards the large bed without words. It took only seconds before she was flat out on her back and Anja was kneeling above her on all fours, her deliciously hot, long tongue causing Seanna to gasp in delight as it dragged gloriously through the valley of her firm breasts and up the inside curve to tease across her erect nipple. Anja’s warm hands expertly slid the robe from her body, her long fingers dancing across her abdomen delicately until they found their way into the softness of the line of hair above her center.

“My Queen!” Seanna gasped, her hands gripping Anja’s hand as it began to move lower, the tip of her finger pressing gently to her painfully erect clit.

Anja looked up slowly, her jade green eyes now transformed to her wolf persona, the fangs extended as her lips grazed Seanna’s flesh and her body moved lower. “Seanna... I have... I have wanted to do this for so long.” Anja gasped.

Seanna pushed herself up on her elbows as her Queen descended even lower, moving between her tanned satiny thighs. “My Queen... you... I...”

“Do you want me to do this Seanna?” Anja asked softly, planting a fluttering kiss on the inside of her thigh, the aroma of her fully aroused pussy so close and inviting and filling Anja’s senses.

Seanna’s eyes were wide, her belly clenched tightly. “I... I want you... my Queen.” She gasped out, her fingers curling, pulling at the sheets as her teeth clenched in pleasure as Anja brushed her soft lips across her opening.

“There will plenty of time for that.” Anja spoke from between her thighs. “And after tonight... I sincerely hope you will stop calling me my Queen.”

Anja’s face lowered, and Seanna’s body fell back on the bed, her back arching away from the coolness of the sheets as her Queen’s four inch long tongue plunged forward, parting her velvet folds and sending her over the abyss into an entirely new world. Anja’s soft lips covered her entire burning pussy, her tongue reaching places that sent shooting colors through her eyes, her body stretched wonderfully as pleasure surged through her limbs. It was a world of happiness and delight that Seanna embraced completely when she reached down, curled her fingers in Anja’s soft damp hair, held on for dear life against her Queen’s plundering tongue, and screamed her pleasure to the night sky, never wanting it to end.

And it didn’t end. Not for several hours at least.

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Seanna stared into her Queen’s beautiful bright jade eyes, reaching up to brush her wild, tangled hair from her face, before tracing the curve of her cheek and jaw.

They sat alongside the edge of the calm inside swimming area that was lined with trees and sweet smelling orchids. Neither of them wore any clothes, their robes tossed to the ground beside the pool, and after last night, it seemed silly to hide from each other.

The memories came rushing back to Seanna, and they made her body swell with new found pleasure. They sat facing each other, their legs draped seductively over each others, their breasts touching teasingly as they laughed and giggled. Her Queen... Anja... she had made her senses and body dance to delights Seanna had never imagined, showing her the pleasures a woman could have with another woman. Pleasures Seanna had eagerly learned and practiced for nearly five hours last night on Anja. Her body was a tight combination of power and curves, her breasts much larger than her own and her nipples enticingly perk. Seanna had spent quite a bit of time exploring every crevice of Anja's body, marveling and tasting all the way. And Anja had returned the pleasure to her without question and without shame.

Anja looked at her, smiling as she took a bite out of the fruit they had stolen from the kitchen before coming here to let their passions cool with a swim and simple caring caresses.

"Seanna... you are not Aricia." Anja spoke, seeing that question in her eyes. "Don't think that. Don't ever think that."

"I would... I would understand." Seanna spoke softly. "You... you and she had something special Anja."

"Yes we did..." Anja nodded. "And part of me still hopes that we will have that again." She said smiling shyly. "We... we had hoped we could entice you together."

Seanna looked at her surprised. "Aricia..."

Anja chuckled. "We both wanted you." She said. "We were trying to devise a plan to see if you might be interested in that when everything happened. That in no way indicates how I feel about you Seanna." Anja took her hand within hers. "You have been here for me since this trip all started, and I have desired you that whole time Seanna. Not because of Aricia... but because of you."

"Did the two of you seduce many women?" Seanna asked playfully.

Anja laughed. "You were the only one hot enough to get us both interested!"

Seanna looked confused. "Hot enough?"

"Yummy enough?" Anja spoke.

Seanna laughed then, understanding what she was saying. "There was something about you from the moment I first saw you." Seanna said softly, "Something that pulled at me. Now I know what it was."

"I will never stop loving Martin Seanna." Anja spoke looking at her. "He will always have me... whenever he or I desires. But I do so much want to explore what we have discovered. You know that right?"

Seanna nodded quickly. "I would expect no less." She said. "The connection between you and the King is very deep, and nothing could come between that I know. I would hope though that I get to have you when he does not, for I want to explore what we share as well. You are yummy yourself you know!"

Anja laughed once more and it felt good to her, her voice echoing across the swimming area. "I think we can arrange that!" She said leaning over to steal a kiss.

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Zaniai moved along the corridor of the palace the next morning early. He had a meeting of some Ministers and he wanted to speak with the Queen before that meeting. The palace was, for the most part; open for senior Hadarian officials like himself to just enter, as all of them had offices nearby. The Queen's private residence was the only one guarded and secure from entry. No one was in the palace this early in the morning, though he knew that the Queen liked to be out and running in her wolf form by now.

The soft feminine laughter brought him up short, his eyes lifting from the pad. The voices were coming from the inside swimming area and he made his way there slowly. He didn't notice that the slight breeze was blowing against him, enabling him to get this close to begin with. He stopped, his eyes getting larger when he saw them by the edge of the swimming area.

They were both naked, and currently sharing quite a passionate kiss, their bodies entangled. Zaniai stepped back quickly and shook his head, ashamed at what he had just seen of his Queen that he should not have seen, ashamed that he had seen the Mage Warrior who was her handmaiden and body guard as he had. He took

a deep breath and pushed off the wall moving back to the main palace. He burst back into the main corridor and stopped, taking deep breaths.

“What will you do now my friend?” The voice spoke from the side. Zaniai turned and saw Fuleos walk up to him slowly. “What will you do now Zaniai, after seeing what you have seen?”

“You knew this Fuleos?” Zaniai asked.

“I discovered last night when I returned to pick up something I had forgotten.” Fuleos replied. “She is part wolf now Zaniai, no matter how much you and the others wish it wasn’t so. She has been craving attention since she arrived. Attention that she could not get from the man she loves because of what is happening to them and the distance between them. When she discovered someone who craved the same attention it was a natural thing.”

“Seanna?” Zaniai spoke softly.

“She is a beautiful young woman Zaniai, and I told you when you and the others made her a Mage Warrior that you would not change who she was at her core.” Fuleos spoke.

Zaniai nodded. “Yes you did.”

“She is more powerful than we first thought Zaniai, my granddaughter.” Fuleos spoke. “She draws instinctively from the residual nebula radiation in the atmosphere to use her power, and she doesn’t even know she does. She has learned in less than a month what it takes five years for us to teach Healers. She will become more powerful a healer than her mother, if only you and the others will allow her to grow into who she is supposed to be, and not who you want her to be.”

“She is Queen Fuleos.” Zaniai spoke.

Fuleos nodded. “Yes she is. And I can tell you with all certainty that if you make her choose between being Queen of our people and Martin Leonidas, we will lose. If you force her to choose between being Queen and now Seanna, we will lose again. She is part wolf Zaniai, and she will never relinquish what she has found willingly with these men and women.”

“You speak of changing the way things have been for millennia my friend.” Zaniai spoke.

Fuleos nodded. “We all must go through our growing pains Zaniai. Even now we see our Lycavorian brothers realizing they have forsaken some very important elements of their very nature and instinct. Something Resumar never intended when he started them on this path. Martin Leonidas brings that back to them... and it frightens them. They will change... they adapt much better than others in our Union. The question is old friend... do we get left behind when that change happens... or do we change with them. They have been and always will be brothers and friends to us... what do you think we should do?”

Zaniai was about to respond when the small communicator on his belt chimed. He reached under his outer robe and retrieved it. “Yes.” He spoke as the holo image of the much older woman shimmered into focus in his palm, “Divine Healer!” He gasped.

“Prefect Zaniai... how are you today?”

“I... I am well Divine One.” He answered. “What... how may I serve you this day?”

“The blood sample you had delivered to the Old Ones a few weeks ago, where do you obtain it?” The woman asked.

“It was given to me by Mage Warrior Seanna Divine One, the Queen’s handmaiden.”

“It is a sample of a female Lycavorian’s blood Zaniai.” She spoke.

“I was aware of this Divine One yes. She asked that the Old ones review it for any abnormalities that she might not have detected.” Zaniai answered not understanding where this was going. “Is... is there some problem Divine One.”

“Where did Mage Warrior Seanna obtain this blood sample Zaniai?” She asked.

Zaniai looked at Fuleos briefly before looking at the image of the woman again. “Forgive me Divine One; she removed it from Prime Minister Deia’s office just before departing to bring the Queen here.”

“She stole it?” The woman asked.

“It... it would appear so Divine One.” Zaniai spoke. “Divine One is there some issue I should be made aware of?”

“Zaniai... gather this Seanna and come to see me right away please.” The woman spoke. “Do not delay Zaniai. Cancel whatever you have scheduled and come to see me with Seanna. Is that understood?”

“Perfectly Divine One, I will be there in two hours.”

The image of the woman nodded and then it was gone.

“What was that about?” Fuleos spoke.

Zaniai shook his head. “I don’t know... but you can be assured whatever it is, if the Divine One is calling me... it isn’t good.”

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## CHAPTER TWELVE

### UKWAV

#### DAY THIRTY-ONE

“How did he do this Vistr?” Riall asked in awe.

It was his first time down to the surface of this planet, after twice being above it and firing every weapon on the ships he had commanded to no avail. They stood in the gaping maw of where the observation post had once stood. Hundreds of metric tons of equipment were spread out before them, *STRIKER ATs* at rest in the distance, Spartans by the thousands moving back and forth.

“Amazing isn’t it?” Vistr spoke.

“Three full blown attacks Vistr! Hundreds of ships in orbit blasting away with everything we had. You do *this* in days. How Vistr?” Riall spoke turning to look at him.

Vistr grinned. “One of his Drow vampire scouts.” He answered calmly.

Riall looked at him as if he was crazy. “What?”

Vistr nodded, that grin still locked on his face. “We have always known the tunnels were vacuum sealed Riall. We always tried to punch a hole in the tunnels randomly. What we were never able to do is get anyone close enough to one of these observations posts to observe when they opened the tunnel. He parked one of his invisible Drow vampire scouts on every one of these posts for three days until they had down exactly the schedule for opening and closing the doors. When one of these fools finally chose to open the door to the tunnel below and the King decided it was time to attack... we did.” Vistr explained. “As soon as that scout reported this, Komirri unleashed every weapon we had, targeted on this bunker. Komirri let them have it with every missile, every torpedo, everything on this one point! The door was unlocking and swinging open when our weapons hit! The vacuum did the rest. It sucked all the debris and concussive force from the weapons’ explosions right down the *nubous* tunnel and did three quarters of our work for us!” Vistr laughed. “For’mya could explain it better to you old friend. She has done nothing but ramble on about the tactic for days now.”

“And you did the same with the second garrison?” Riall asked.

Vistr nodded quickly. “We are finishing that as we speak. Casualties are somewhat higher, but far below what we predicted Riall. What I told you and Deia from the *LEONIDAS I* was true my friend. I can’t keep the wounded on the ships to be treated Riall. Many are refusing even to return to the ships. I’m forced to have the Hadarian Healers come here to them. When they are healed... back they go!”

“Deia was not happy Vistr.” Riall spoke. “Fully one third of the entire fleet and ground forces answered your call for more men and ships. I had to order the rest to remain in place or face summary court martial.”

“He didn’t know about that Riall.” Vistr spoke softly. “I got emotional. It’s the first time I have done that in twenty four centuries Riall.”

Riall chuckled. “Yes old friend you certainly did. And that is why I am here now.”

“What?” Vistr spoke. “Why?”

Riall met Vistr’s eyes. “Because my friend, I feel as you do.” He spoke softly. “You were right Vistr, and as you spoke the words it all became so very clear to me. It is the reason I fell in love with my mate. Gorgo was the mate to King Leonidas, she was a Spartan, and all of our people who lived on Earth as Spartans; they were... they are so much closer to our past than we are, and they didn’t even know it. Yes they have had an Oracle with them all of these years, but they have remained true to many of the instincts of our people and not tried to bury those instincts as we have done. That is why he favors Earth so. The Spartans... the people there... they are more like us then we are. The more I thought about it on the way here, the more I knew this was right. King Resumar pulled us out of our dark history Vistr... showing us we could be more, that we could be better than what our wolf and animal instincts told us. He set on us this path, but I don’t believe he intended for us to

forget completely who we are as a people. He died before he could fully show us what we could become, and to honor his memory we have done nothing but push our instincts, our very nature, we have done nothing but push that back. To show that we were better than the animals we can become.”

“Martin Leonidas is changing that Riall.” Vistr spoke.

Riall nodded slowly. “Yes he is. He is showing us that we can be close to our instincts, to our nature, and still be better. He showed us that the entire way here Vistr and we never took notice. That day in the conference room with L’tian... his instincts told him to rip the Ambassador’s face off for insulting his Queen in such a way. I could see it in his eyes... and he held himself in check. He showed us this in the way he treats his Queens... constantly nuzzling them, prodding them for affection in the old way, showing them affection in the old way. How often have you nuzzled your mate in such a way Vistr?”

Vistr shook his head. “Not often enough.”

Riall nodded. “Gorgo has done this with me since we became mated, and I returned the affection without hesitation, but until your words I never understood why. I never even thought about it when I returned the attention to Gorgo, didn’t realize it until I told her goodbye before leaving to come here.”

“What do you mean?” Vistr asked.

“We have been mated for over two thousand years Vistr, and it wasn’t until six days ago, when I said good bye to her that I noticed it. She has known all of these years and tried to get me to see it, but *aulved* that I am, I never noticed it. Not once. Gorgo is all instinct and passion behind her calm demeanor my friend... it is her nature. When she reaches for that part of herself, in a simple nuzzle or in our bed... her scent spikes Vistr. It becomes sweeter and pure. It’s like... when we allow ourselves to let our instincts come forth... the purpose is suddenly there for us just to reach out and take. The love is not gone... the control does not disappear... but the clarity shines through like a sun.”

Vistr nodded slowly. “That is what we have discovered here on this stinking planet my friend.” Vistr spoke. “We are re-discovering ourselves Riall... and that is why no one wants to leave. He is showing us the way back to what we have lost. His pain... his despair... it is showing our people the way back to what we have lost!”

“No... not lost Vistr.” Riall spoke softly, looking at his friend. “Not lost... but what we have forgotten. How is he Vistr? How is he really?”

Vistr’s face became serious and somber. “He leads rushes blindly and without regard. He saves lives by the dozen with his actions. He and his Captain are never apart and they have over three hundred kills between the two of them alone. The bravery is astounding... never have I seen such actions. It is inspiring the men to be the same way. I have done it... foolish old *ronnus* that I am. I almost got my *mida* and my *nor* handed to me at once.”

Riall smiled. “The King did not bring this out in you old friend. You were always like that.”

Vistr looked at him. “Riall... he fights *malda*. Like he has no cares... as if he doesn’t care whether he lives or dies.” Vistr spoke. “He speaks with only his Captain and For’mya now, very few others. And they speak only within Mindvoice.”

“For’mya?” Riall asked surprised. “I did not realize she had this skill.”

Vistr nodded. “I do not know the entire story, but she has spoken of a woman I guess, Arzoal was the name. This woman established a Mindvoice connection with her while she was a prisoner. She bestowed the gift of Mindvoice to her and spoke with her during her captivity, telling For’mya not to give up, that the King was coming for her. That is the story she tells. Once he did find her, she has not been far from his side. She stays with him in his quarters on the *LEONIDAS I*. She trains with him, eats with him. I had one of our stronger mindvoicers do a probe into her head just before we began our attack here. Riall... her Mindvoice skills are beyond anything I have ever seen in an elf. She slammed shields up on my people stronger than Deia’s.” He saw Riall’s eyes go wide at this and Vistr nodded. “Anyway... For’mya and Andreus are the only two he will speak with now, at least more than to give instructions or orders as I said. Andreus is like speaking to a wall. I believe he feels ashamed for what his sister has done. He would follow the King into the very pit of Hades if he thought it would bring him forgiveness for her actions. As for Commander For’mya, she is a different person since her capture and rescue.”

“I thought For’mya taking the position of concubine was only a political move on his part.” Riall spoke thoughtfully, “A shrewd one no doubt... but a political move nonetheless.”



Vistr shook his head. “No... there is much more there than any of us will ever know. Personally I believe he has grasped onto her to keep from losing his sanity completely Riall. He is using her as an anchor until he can somehow burn through the pain he feels inside him. I’ve never seen emotion burn so deep for one woman as the King’s burned for this Aricia. What she did... it hurt him far more than he will ever tell anyone. However it is that pain that has given him focus and clarity in battle Riall, unlike any I have seen in my life. For’mya as I said, is never far from him now, only leaving to fly *STRIKERS* back to the ship if I am on them.”

Riall shook his head. “We should have never let that *nubous ronnus* Chetak take her!” He said. “At least not until the fever had passed so that we would know for sure it was truly her choice.”

Vistr shook his head. “It would not have mattered Riall, you know that. Once she called out for him to take her, make her his mate, it was over. No politician or Enforcer of the Law would make any effort to fight his claim to her.”

Riall nodded. “I know... but perhaps that is part of our problem Vistr. Perhaps if we actually listened to our instincts and not suppressed them we would not be in this position.”

“We can worry about that later my friend.” Vistr spoke taking his arm. “Right now we have a battle to win!”

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The four Immortals cringed as the thick door of their room burst open under the force of six pounds of explosives, sending the metal hatch whistling through the room, slamming into the Immortal standing on the other side of the door and crushing his body to pulp as it smashed into against the far wall. The remaining three whirled around just as the room filled with three burly Spartans, their P190s at chest level and holding back the triggers. Three long goutts of flame preceded the Spartans into the room, the caseless projectiles searching for flesh to destroy.

Martin continued into the room as he held back the trigger on the P190, his face set in a mask of rage, sending round after round of the pulverizing caseless ammunition into the chest of the Immortal that appeared through the smoke, his body dancing backwards from side to side, blood erupting wildly out of the dozens of wounds. Martin stopped when he was close enough to step into the butt stroke, bringing up the solid steel butt of the P190 into the jaw of the dead on his feet vampire and hearing the crunch of bone as he lifted the body up into the air before watching it fall onto its back. He spun around at the soft wheezing sound and saw the Immortal trying to crawl out from beneath the rubble reaching for his weapon. Martin’s right hand snapped up, a diamond shaped surge of psychic energy forming instantly at his fingertips. The psychic diamond turned once and then he thrust his hand out and it sizzled across the space between him and the Immortal. It struck just below the base of the large grayish skull of the Immortal and punched out the front of his forehead between his eyes, leaving a fist sized bloodless hole through his entire skull. His body twitched twice and then was still.

“Done!” He barked his eyes sweeping the large room.

“Clear!” Andreus called out.

“Good!” Daniel’s voice spoke.

Martin lowered the P190 and took a deep breath, his eyes returning to normal and his fangs slowly disappearing. He looked around the room through the smoke, seeing that it was much larger than they had first thought. The door was now imbedded into the wall forty meters away, the crushed Immortal’s arm still twitching from under the three meter thick door.

“*Anse*... we should go easy on the explosives next time.” Martin spoke softly as more Spartans began to pour into the room.

Danny stepped up to him, his eyes on where Martin was looking. “It didn’t improve his looks any.” Dan spoke as he slammed a fresh magazine into the P190, his eyes sweeping the room. “What the hell is this place?”

“It is a power control room Daniel Simpson.” The Spartan officer who had appointed himself in pseudo command of the King’s personnel detachment on the surface spoke now, as he walked along the bank of ceiling high power generators and computer consoles.

“I didn’t see one of these in the first garrison.” Martin spoke as he stepped up to the control panel.

“It was there sire; the lowest level in the northern quadrant.” The Spartan Lieutenant replied, his fingers running down the power level bars and conduit blue prints.

“Does it control the garrison here?” Martin asked.

The Lieutenant shook his head slowly. "No sire... it appears to power some sort of grid beneath us." Martin looked at him, "Beneath us?" He spoke. "I thought this was the lowest level."

"As did I," The Lieutenant replied. "However the conduit map in the first control room was burned beyond recognition due to our rather excited attempt at taking the room. This one is intact however. And it is showing a large grid beneath us."

"How far beneath us?" Andreus asked walking over. "We have seen no lifts or stairwells going down."

"If this map is correct, one hundred and fifty meters deeper than what we are now." The Lieutenant spoke. "It is very odd sire. It appears as if each garrison supplies power to this grid below us."

"Did you shut down the first one?" Martin asked.

The Lieutenant nodded. "Yes Milord. We thought it might be powering weapons systems in the other garrisons."

Martin nodded. "Well shut this one down too." He spoke. "Have the engineers conducted a sweep of the entire garrison?"

"They were waiting until we cleared out the last level here sire."

"Have them get down here and see if they can find a way down to this level." Martin spoke. "And blanket them with security from all sides I don't want some lucky *ronnus* we skipped to get lucky."

*You have come to me son of Leonidas!*

Martin spun around quickly his eyes flaring, searching for the source of the sentence in his head.

"What?"

Daniel and the others looked at him oddly. "Skipper... you ok?" Dan asked.

*Come to me Martin Leonidas!*

Martin looked at Danny. "Did you hear that?"

"Hear what Marty?" Dan spoke. "You ok?"

Martin shook his head quickly. "I thought... I thought I heard something." He said after a moment.

"Skipper... why don't you and Andreus head back to the command post we set up in the first garrison."

Danny spoke. "We got this covered boss... you and Andreus have been going at it now for thirteen straight hours. Let us take it from here."

Martin looked at him. "Dan..."

Daniel stepped up to the man he had called brother for so many years, pushing his shoulder into Martin's, stepping closer than most would ever dare. "Marty... I know why you are doing this man!" Dan spoke in a hushed whisper so that only he could hear. "I do Martin... I really do. I don't know how you have lasted this long with what you must be feeling. I know how much she meant to you. This is your way of dealing with it boss... I didn't... I didn't understand at first... but I do now. We have been like brothers all these years Marty... have we ever lied to each other?"

Martin met his eyes and shook his head immediately. "No."

"Then damn it Martin, listen to me now. You have to take a break! You're running on pure adrenalin, all of us can smell it." Dan spoke. "What we have done up to now is incredible, but if you continue at this pace... you'll start getting people killed for no reason."

"Danny..."

"No! I mean it. I don't know what I would do if I lost Anuk in the way Aricia was taken from you." Dan spoke softly. "When are you going to start to go on again Martin? You can't do this forever?"

"Danny... I don't... I don't know if I can." Martin said softly. "I don't know if I want too."

Dan reached up with his hand and grasped the back of Martin's helmet, pulling him close to him until their helmets clanked together. "You have too!" Dan spoke. "This is what you were born for man!"

Martin laughed harshly. "You have no idea how much I have come to hate that *nubous* phrase Dan."

"Maybe so," Danny spoke, "But damned if it ain't the fucking truth Skipper!" He spoke.

"Head back to the CP Marty, better yet go back to the ship. Take a few hours off... get between the sheets with that fine female elf that looks at you like she wants to lick you all over."

"For'mya... it's not like that with her." Martin spoke.

"Whatever Skipper," Dan spoke. "I'll follow you anywhere boss... you know that. All of us would... we've been through too much to turn our backs on you. Anuk wouldn't let me, and Nayeca would cut my balls off if I did. But seriously Martin... you are starting to scare the shit out of me. Go back to the ship for some

down time. Vistr and I can get things settled here.” Martin looked into his eyes for a long silent moment and Dan thought he was going to tell him no, but finally Martin nodded slowly. Dan felt a wave of relief flood through him and he pounded Martin on the shoulder. “Get topside man... I’ll radio ahead and have...”

“I’m on it.” He said. “Sweep everything Danny... even the toilets.”

“You got it boss.”

[Mindvoice Shielded] *For’mya?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Martin Leonidas?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Meet me at the second breach point For’mya. We’re going to head back to the LEONIDAS I for a few hours.*

Martin could almost hear the sigh of relief in her voice. [Mindvoice Shielded] *I will be there in ten minutes Martin.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I’ll be waiting.*

Martin lowered his psychic shields. *General Vistr?*

*Yes Milord.*

*We have secured the last level of the second garrison. Once we have established a secure perimeter, stand them down General. Twelve hours of rest and food. Full security levels, no exceptions, but stand them down General.*

Martin didn’t see Vistr’s eyes close and his head nod slowly. *I will make it so sire.*

*And have Admiral Riall join me on the LEONIDAS I when he is done down here.*

*Yes Milord.*

Dan watched his friend and brother leave the room, his face as stoic and unreadable as it had been for the last three weeks. He had done what he wanted though. He had spoken with Anuk and Nayeca the night before, and they both told him he needed to get him to stop, if only for a few hours. No one else would be able to do it Anuk had told him. They had seen it over the past weeks, the reckless behavior far beyond what he had done in past years, but now it was becoming dangerous, and needed to be curbed. Only Danny could do that.

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## HADARIA SOUTHERN POLE ISLAND

Seanna had never been to the Divine One’s home on the Southern Pole Island. She had trained here as a child, but never had the opportunity to see her home. It was the only island within three hundred kilometers of the southern continent and was called Pole Island due to the enormous mountain tower that reached into the clouds behind the very large and well maintained cathedral like buildings below them. Seanna remembered them well. They were smaller than the palace itself in the capital, as if used by a much smaller number of people, but she could see the men and women training in the courtyards of the grounds as well as the two men who were guiding their Ocean Lifter into the appropriate position in the small harbored section of the island.

Seanna had fought with her questions and worry the entire trip. The Prefect had not said anything to her other than to summon her via the palace’s internal communications grid. Her worry that she and Anja had been discovered increased as the minutes wove by. It was strictly forbidden for a Hadarian Mage to ever have a husband, forbidden for men to even touch them really. Their Order was founded to protect the Royal Line... not to marry and have normal lives. Seanna knew the moment she saw her Queen she had wanted her in that way. Something inside her had stirred awake and their hours together last night had only proven to her it was meant to be. Immediately after hearing Zaniai’s summon Seanna had panicked, thinking they had been discovered somehow. Anja had simply pulled her tighter against her naked flesh, refusing to let her go and told Seanna that she was hers now, and that nothing would part them.

Those words now coursed through her, and Seanna was determined not to fear whatever they might do to her. She had found something with her Queen, something that was beyond pleasure, beyond commitment, and something that promised even more of all those things, and Seanna was not about to lose the opportunity to explore that.

Zaniai didn’t speak as they climbed into the small hoverlift car and were whisked through the training grounds to the large white marble building at the end of the island. The stones looked ancient and she could

only gasp in awe as she followed the prefect into the main foyer of the home. The ceiling rose nearly a hundred meters inside, with a winding staircase on either side of the main hall.

Seanna was not paying attention to her forward motion, awestruck by the beauty and serenity of the home and she slammed into Zaniai's back when he came to an abrupt halt. He turned quickly and glared at her for an instant before turning and watching as the smiling old woman walked towards them.

Seanna's eyes grew wide when she saw her, the shimmering bright red hair, and the incredibly deep dark green eyes very similar in color to her own. The ivory dress she wore wrapped around her frail looking body, but the woman moved with grace and elegance. Seanna immediately dropped to one knee next to Zaniai, who was bowed at the waist.

"Divine One!" Zaniai gasped. "You do not normally greet visitors in this way." He spoke.

The woman stopped in front of Seanna, looking down at her with those stunning green eyes. "How are you Seanna?" She asked softly.

"It... it is an honor Divine One." Seanna replied without looking up.

"Stand up child. Let me see you." Seanna got to her feet quickly, keeping her eyes averted however and she heard the woman laugh softly. "I am not a god child, as much as others like to think so. Look at me, let me see your eyes."

Seanna lifted her face slowly until she was looking directly at her. "Divine One... I..."

"Hush Seanna, and be still." The woman spoke staring at her intently. "Exceptionally skilled... extremely intelligent... one of the most powerful Mage Warriors we have, if the report I have received recently from your Spartan training officer is accurate. You are all of these things and stunningly beautiful as well. I have a position open here within these walls Seanna... a researcher of sorts, working for me. Would you like it?"

"Divine One... I... I have not even finished my training." Seanna gasped.

Zaniai leaned forward. "Divine One there is something you should know." He began to speak.

The woman nodded. "Not now Zaniai." She spoke quickly, "Seanna... the position? I will only offer it once."

Seanna's mind raced with the incredible opportunity it would be to return here and study with the Divine One herself. It was a gift that only a handful of her people had ever received. Yet Anja filled her thoughts immediately, and accepting the position here would rob her of ever exploring what she now shared with her. What she wanted to share with her.

Seanna looked into the woman's eyes, the decision coming easier than she expected. "Divine One... I can not."

Zaniai looked like his eyes were going to roll across the floor and he looked at her as if she was mad. "Seanna... this is the opportunity of a lifetime! No one has ever been offered this at your age!"

Seanna nodded slowly. "I know. I... it would be an honor above all else Divine One. I... I can not accept."

The woman smiled and reached up to place her hands on Seanna's shoulders. "That is the answer I expected, and it makes me very happy." She spoke softly. She turned to Zaniai. "Seanna is to be named the Queen's permanent handmaiden. She is not to be removed from her service for any reason other than death Zaniai."

"Divine One... you must know that..."

The woman smiled. "I already know what you are about to speak of Zaniai." She spoke. "And you will not reveal this to anyone unless it is their decision to do so, is that clear?"

"Divine One... I don't understand."

"I'm sure you don't Zaniai." She answered looking at Seanna's wide green eyes. "Know that Seanna and our Queen now share a special relationship and that connection is for no law or rule to break." She looked at Zaniai, "Unless you would prefer to face the wrath of our very headstrong young wolf Queen? I know I certainly would not, as I understand she has quite the temper. Destiny has brought Anja back to us Zaniai; destiny has chosen her to be part wolf, tying us to our Lycavorian brothers and allies for all time. It is time our people began to change with the shape of destiny."

Zaniai's eyes went back and forth between the two quickly before he nodded his head slowly. "Perhaps it is as Fuleos said Divine One."

“Yes it is.” The woman spoke. “And enough of this Divine One nonsense Zaniai, I have told you to use my name when within my home. Please do so.”

Zaniai stood up straight and nodded, “As you wish Eurin.” He replied. “May I ask why you summoned us? I assume it was in relation to the blood sample I sent for review.”

Seanna’s eyes grew wider. “You found something?” She gasped.

“You said this sample was obtained from Prime Minister Deia’s possession?” Eurin asked.

Seanna blushed deeply against her dark tan. “I removed it Divine One.” She spoke. “The Lycavorian medical people are very skilled, but I thought perhaps the Oldest Ones could possibly discover something they might have missed.”

“Where did Deia obtain it?” Eurin asked.

“It is a blood sample of the Lycavorian female who the King had chosen as his mate.” Zaniai spoke. “When she arrived on Apo Prime she was apparently in the grips of what is called the *Lunmai*... a...”

“The Second Coming of Age for Lycavorian females, yes I know of this.” Eurin spoke. “Walk with me both of you please.” She said turning to move down the corridor. “It is an extremely rare condition, almost non-existent in Lycavorians today. The last recorded case was with Queen Eliana over ten thousand years ago. Are you sure it was the *Lunmai*?”

Seanna nodded. “I detected the signs when we saw her Divine One.” She replied. “Fever, heightened instinctual tendencies, drops of sweat pooling above the lips, and the need... the need to...”

“The need to mate,” Eurin finished. “Yes... the overpowering need to mate. And this Aricia was suffering from the *Lunmai*?”

“I remembered the symptoms from my study of Lycavorian physiology.” Seanna spoke. “There was no mistaking it.”

“I gather then this has something to do with why the young King of the Lycavorian Union is currently shattering the defenses on Ukwav in the grips of a blind rage I have not seen the likes of in all my years.” Eurin spoke.

“Ukwav?” Seanna gasped her eyes wide in apprehension. “The King... the King is there?”

Eurin nodded slowly. “He is not only there... he is taking the planet by brute force, quite spectacularly too if all the reports are accurate. They are attempting to keep it very low key... but information is leaking out. He has already taken two of the four garrisons, and done so in quite the brutal fashion. He is acting in rage as I said and I assume this female Aricia is why?”

Seanna nodded as they walked towards the elevator lifts. “There is a sect of Lycavorians Divine One. They called themselves the Lycavorian People’s Republic. They follow the ways of their people before King Resumar brought them forward if my understanding is correct. The King and Aricia were mates... but these men... they used the *Lunmai* as a means to take her from him. At the peak of the fever one of them took her... took her as she cried out for him to claim her as his mate, then they showed this to the King.”

Eurin looked at her those dark green eyes showing her repulsion at such an act. “They did that?”

Seanna nodded. “I was there Divine One. I witnessed it all. When the King lost what little control he had been holding onto and attacked this man, Aricia struck him with her claws. She defended the man who had taken her, and injured the King greatly. I believe... I believe that betrayal is why he acts as he does now. But to attack... to attack Ukwav?”

“It’s suicidal.” Zaniai spoke.

Eurin nodded. “I would tend to agree... except that he is winning. I’ve seen the reports sent by our Healers within his fleet. His troops are refusing to leave the planet even when injured. Our own Healers have been swept up in the wave of emotion he is producing. Many of them are wading into battle beside their Lycavorian Spartan brothers like the days of old.”

They stepped into the elevator and felt it begin to move downward and waited while Eurin contemplated what she had heard. The ride was very fast and within moments they were in what appeared to be very sterile laboratories with equipment that Seanna had never even seen before. Her eyes were wide as she looked at the yellow garbed technicians moving between the sealed rooms.

Eurin saw this and she smiled. “This is what I was offering you Seanna.” She spoke, “An opportunity to work here.”

“Divine One... what is this place?” Seanna gasped.

“This is where we harness the nebula’s radiation and use it to conduct research and experiments to better harness it’s healing properties and how it effects different diseases and such that are active within the Union.” Eurin spoke.

Seanna looked at her. “But... why offer me a position here? I have no experience in such things.”

Eurin nodded. “No you don’t. The experience would have come however. What you do have is intuition... and that is what I want here.”

“I don’t understand?”

“Seanna what possessed you to take this sample from Deia’s office?” Eurin asked.

Seanna looked at her for a long moment. “Something did not feel right about everything.” She spoke simply. “I traveled with them for nearly a month in returning here. I saw how they reacted to each other, what they shared, especially the King and Aricia. What happened did not seem...”

“Rational.” Eurin said.

Seanna looked at her. “Yes! It wasn’t rational Divine One.”

Eurin led them to a console with a medium sized viewing screen built into the wall. Her hands moved delicately over the controls and then they were looking at two different screens side-by-side. Each screen held blue and red crisscrossing lines down the center and numbers and data along both sides.

“The blood and DNA sample on the right is from the King.” Eurin spoke. “We received it shortly after he left Apo Prime to begin his current rampage. It was part of the routine medical exams done on everyone the day they arrived, to include our own Queen. The sample on the left is from a random Lycavorian soldier of pure blood, one of the finest Lycavorian Spartans of the time. He provided these base samples for us many years ago. What do you see?”

Seanna and Zaniai looked at the screen. Zaniai shook his head slowly. “It appears to be a standard sample Eurin.”

“No it is not!” Seanna spoke quickly. She reached out and pointed to the dark blue strands of lines. “Look how much more closely knit the Isopocal proteins are Prefect. They are impossible to distinguish between. It would be impossible to count them as tightly woven as they are.”

“Molecular DNA was not my strong point.” Zaniai spoke with a grin. “And I am primarily a politician Eurin, not a Healer as you and Seanna.”

Eurin chuckled. “We will not hold that against you my friend.” She said and turned to look at Seanna with a smile. “Our Queen is very lucky she has you Seanna, and we will miss your developing skills here.” Eurin spoke before turning back to the screen. “And you are correct as well. Isopocal Proteins are what we have used for millennia to determine pureness of blood and levels of Mindvoice abilities that could be reached. The more Isopocal proteins, the darker the color blue, the darker the color blue, the more tightly they are woven together. The more tightly they are woven together, the more powerful the Mindvoice ability of the person. Based on this sample... our King is more powerful than even the senior Mages on Apo Prime by a factor of twenty, and he has yet to tap the potential of what he could do, at least that is what this blood sample tells me. Resumar had the ability to project psychic energy in pseudo physical form due to the pureness of his blood, and use it as a weapon, according to Deia and the ancient history scrolls I have read.”

“How would Deia know that?” Zaniai asked.

Eurin smiled. “Deia is Eliana’s sister Zaniai, and you did not hear that from me, is that understood?”

“Eurin that would make Deia... that would make her over ten thousand years old,” Zaniai spoke his eyes wide.

Eurin nodded. “Fourteen thousand three hundred and nine I believe. At least that is what she told me the last time I spoke with her. It is not common knowledge so please keep that knowledge to you and you alone Zaniai.”

“Of course Eurin.” Zaniai spoke.

“Divine One... you said King Resumar was able to use his abilities as a weapon?” Seanna asked.

Eurin nodded. “A very lethal weapon and he had begun manifesting other abilities as well. Medically and scientifically it is referred to as Psychokinesis, which could entail any number of abilities. Resumar had Mindvoice shields impenetrable even to Veldruk, who right now is the most powerful Mindvoicer that we know of. According to Deia he had begun using this Psychokinesis or PK as it is known in shorter form, as a weapon,

forming small projectiles that would travel at incredible speeds and do devastating damage.” Eurin looked at Seanna. “Do we know if the King has discovered this yet?”

Seanna shook her head. “He did not display these talents while we traveled together, but it has been a month since I have seen him and he has been fighting since he left Apo Prime.”

“Well given that he spent the better part of three millennia in suspended animation, it would stand to reason it would take his abilities some time to manifest themselves.” Eurin spoke.

Zaniai looked at Eurin. “What does this have to do with the sample that Seanna gave to you?”

Eurin adjusted the screen and the random sample disappeared to be replaced by another sample, only this one was different. Where the random sample was many shades lighter in blue than the King’s, this new sample matched almost perfectly.

Seanna’s eyes went wide and she looked at Eurin, “Aricia’s blood?” She gasped.

Eurin nodded slowly. “What we are looking at here are the two purest samples of Lycavorian blood that I have seen in over seven thousand years of measuring.” She spoke. “This sample here tells me that this Aricia’s own Mindvoice powers are beyond measuring and quite possibly she is nearly as strong as the King. And it is quite possible she will begin to manifest these skills as well.”

“Forgive me for being overly callous Eurin... but what does this matter? You have found nothing in her blood to indicate she was forced into this choice she made, am I correct?” Zaniai asked.

Eurin looked at him, her eyes darkening. “No you are not correct.” Eurin spoke firmly. “And your tone of voice indicates to me you don’t particularly care about this do you?”

“I have much more important things to do Eurin.” He spoke respectfully. “I am Prefect and discussing why the Union King is running around acting like a child because he let his mate choose another male that she preferred over him, is not something that ranks at the top of my list, I’m sorry.”

“What if this had happen to you Zaniai?” Eurin spoke. “What if your wife had been taken from you in this way?”

“That could never happen Eurin.” He spoke. “Thayla loves me too much, just as I love her. She would never choose someone over me after what we have shared together.”

“Are you so sure Zaniai?” Eurin asked looking at him.

“Positive?” Zaniai replied.

“I did some research on the Lycavorian *Lunmai* fever before you came here.” Eurin spoke.

“Divine One you knew what it was?” Seanna asked.

Eurin nodded, “The moment I first reviewed the sample. Eador brought it to me several days after I gave it to him to review. He had found something he had never seen before and brought it to my attention.”

Seanna’s heart began to race and her dark green eyes focused. “You found something then Divine One? Please tell me?”

“The *Lunmai* fever is basically the second Coming of Age for a Lycavorian female, you know this.” Eurin spoke. “It is stronger than the first coming of age and it courses through the female’s blood twice as powerful. If Aricia was a normal Lycavorian female then I would say it is simply a matter of nature and instincts in their species. Brutal perhaps and unacceptable to us, but ten or even fifteen millennia ago, when this was much more prevalent, it was natural. Two items have come to light that make me question.

Eurin looked at her. “The pureness of Aricia’s blood and the Mindvoice potential that pureness implies; in my opinion, even at the peak of the *Lunmai*, when the fever burned brightest of all, if their history together is accurate, I find it extremely unlikely she would have done what she did willingly. The *Lunmai* is strong, don’t get me wrong, but this child’s abilities, like the King’s, are not even measurable. Their relationship was strong yes?”

Seanna nodded quickly. “Both Queen Dysea and Anja knew that Aricia was closer to him in almost every way. They didn’t care, none of them did, and he loved them all without question. Aricia may have been the youngest and most inexperienced of them, but she was without a doubt the one he always turned too.”

Eurin nodded thoughtfully. “Given how pure their blood is... it is not surprising in the least that they were drawn so strongly to each other. That is the way it has been for millennia among the Lycavorian people, the purer the blood, the stronger the attraction. Even in the midst of the *Lunmai*, when she was acting on nothing but instinct, she would not have willingly chosen someone of lesser stature than the King. Her blood would not have let her. Do we know who this Lycavorian man was?”

“Her heart would not have let her Divine One.” Seanna said softly. “I saw the way she looked at him, caressed him, the way he nuzzled her and touched her back. Their blood may have brought them together... but their love for each other... you could almost touch it.”

Eurin nodded. “Is it possible to obtain a sample of this man’s blood? The one who took her? That would be the easiest way to determine things.”

Zaniai shook his head. “But you found no signs of mind altering drugs did you Eurin?”

Eurin shook her head quickly. “No.”

“I understand why Seanna is so interested in this Eurin... I do. But we can not present this information in an open forum. We would be laughed out of the room. No politician will touch this. And given what you have just said in relation to her Mindvoice powers, it is more than likely she *did* make the choice she made of her *own free will*.”

Eurin looked at him. “I said we found no mind altering components that are common to the Union. We did find something... and because of that I am having a different type of test run as we speak. We will have the results in a few days.”

“What did you find then Divine One?” Seanna asked.

Eurin’s hand worked the console again and the screen changed to the image of small orange circles. “This is Aricia’s blood magnified by a factor of ten million. You see these small orange molecules. Do they look familiar?”

Seanna shook her head. “I’ve never seen anything like them.” She stepped closer to the screen. “They appear to be some sort of enzyme.”

“It is called Sirtin,” Eurin spoke. “It is a very powerful form of contraceptive. It was found that when combined with the Lycavorian healing system, it made perhaps the most effective barrier against fertilization ever known.”

Seanna looked at her, “A contraceptive?” She asked.

Eurin nodded. “The *Lunmai* makes the Lycavorian females even more fertile than their initial Coming of Age phase. If you were trying to take the mate of another Alpha male, using the *Lunmai* as the catalyst, why would you give the female a contraceptive? You would want her to conceive, thereby binding her to you forever. Once a union bears a child, in the old ways of the Lycavorian people the female is tied to that male eternally. Only death could separate them.”

“Why is this significant?” Zaniai asked.

“It is significant for two reasons.” Eurin spoke turning around completely to look at them. “Sirtin was designed and produced by elfin healers to keep captured female elf pilots from becoming impregnated by Alcyone Rim Mercenaries twenty thousand years ago. They would carry a small tablet in a hidden flap of inner cheek tissue and in the event they were captured they could take the tablet to keep from becoming with child. The Elfin language called them Sorrow’s Tears; or something to that effect. My language skills have diminished of late and I do not know the full translation.”

“And...?” Zaniai asked.

“Well... Sirtin has not been produced by the elves in over ten thousand years, I checked before having you come here. The chief elfin physician says he could not even find the formula in their data banks anymore. It was purged by the High Coven when they conquered their Home World. The only reason he knew of it is from a graduate class during his training. Whoever had the knowledge to make this is at least twenty thousand years old Zaniai. And they are an elf. Now... do you know any elves this old, which are running around helping to steal the King’s Queen, because I most certainly don’t?”

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## ENURRUA

Lucvaun stood looking into the back of the Runecutter at the bodies of five of his men as the sun began its climb into the morning sky. Forty of his family’s soldiers were covering the area alertly, their senses on fully alive in an attempt to find danger. They had received the call only ninety minutes earlier, and they had rushed to this location only to find the hunting party already decimated. They had found five of the eight man hunting party scattered about the area, some missing limbs, one missing his head. All of them had been savaged by



something very strong, with very sharp teeth. Two of the bodies had been incinerated where the Firespitter had caught them and the driver of the Runecutter had been melted into the frame of the now destroyed vehicle.

He turned as his middle aged son came up to him. “We’ve found the prints of the same Firespitter and Heavyhorn father.” The young man spoke. “The Firespitter is slightly above normal sized, but the Heavyhorn’s prints are larger than I’ve seen.”

Lucvaun nodded slowly, his eyes searching the sky around them. “He’s one of the cross breeds.” He spoke. “That explains the melted Runecutter. His breath is not fire, but molten heat. And he is very large.” He looked at his son. “Now tell me about this wolf.”

“It’s definitely a female father. Sixty six kilos in wolf form judging by the prints, above average size for a female wolf on Enurrua. She must pack a lot of muscle. She is fifty-two kilos in human form judging by her prints again.” The son answered. “This was not a random encounter father. Our hunting party was ambushed. We found where she laid in wait for her dragon allies to attack, and then she hit the men in the back of the Runecutter from behind.”

Lucvaun nodded and pulled back the tarp covering the bodies of his men. “Epohus... what weapon have you seen that makes cuts like that? So precise and instantly fatal?”

“I haven’t father.” His son asked.

“Well I have.” Lucvaun spoke. “It’s a Shi Viska.”

Epohus looked at his father with large eyes. “There... there is a Lycavorian Spartan female hunting us? But why?”

Lucvaun shook his head. “Whatever the reason... this female is in bloodlust. She’s not doing this out of defense of her or these dragons. She’s hunting our men for a reason. Any one of these wounds would have been fatal to our men, yet she hit them each at least three times, and then tore out the throats of two of them with her teeth.”

“Father why would a Lycavorian Spartan female be hunting our men,” Epohus asked. “What could we have done to elicit this type of brutality?”

Lucvaun looked at him. “I don’t know... but I think I know who does.” He replied looking at his son, “Chetak.”

“What are your orders?”

“Pull our men in Epohus.” Lucvaun spoke. “This is the seventh attack in just a week and I will not lose anymore of our men to this *upae*! She has had some training, and she is in bloodlust. I will not give her open targets.”

“We have a seven man patrol in the lower mountains father.” Epohus spoke. “They are going after the rebels that Chetak says were moving this way.”

Lucvaun looked to the mountains, kilometers in the distance and shook his head. “I would not count on their return.” He spoke. “Recover the weapons and equipment. Leave the bodies for the animals. I am going to contact Chetak and find out what he has done to incite this.”

Aricia knew that scent.

Why would she be here? How could she be here? And why was her scent mingled so tightly with the musky deep timber scent of the Lycavorian male currently holding her close as they lay on the ground. Aricia squatted near the base of the tree, watching the sleeping figures, her every sense alert and aware of all around her. Tarifa’s heart was even and at peace, not frightened and beating fast. She had easily scented the two men who were obviously guards; ridiculously they were looking north when they should have been looking south.

Tarifa here!

A friend!

Aricia moved like a ghost in the early morning hours. Her beloved had taught her much, her training with Lexi in Sparta honing her body to perfection. While she would never be as lethal and silent as him, she could easily move undetected by these fools who held Tarifa. They were careless, sleeping this late into the morning. Lucvaun and his men were even now departing from where she, Isheeni and Torma had slaughtered the hunting party only three hours before. There were two females, and they would live, but the three men would die and she would take Tarifa and return to their waterfall cave.

Aricia slowly withdrew the wicked looking curved blade from the sheath on her right thigh. She had taken it from a dead Lycavorian. The pommel was forged from the thigh bone of a dragon Isheeni had told her. It was intricately chiseled and carved, the matte black blade honed and sharpened by lasers until it could cut through a handful of her hair in a single swipe, not that she had any intention of trying that. They had attacked and destroyed seven hunting parties across the southern and western portions of the planet over the last days, never the same place once, and never more than eight in a party. Aricia was in bloodlust, wanting nothing more than to kill every connection to Chetak and Joric that she could find, but she was far from stupid. She had used the same trick last night as she had with the very first hunting party, using her Shi Viska to sever the Runecutter in half, scattering the men in the back. Torma dealt with the remainder of the vehicle and its driver, Isheeni had torched two of the party in the back, while Aricia spent thirty minutes hunting the other five with slow, methodic precision, until they were all dead.

Aricia crept forward with the patience of a deadly disease, closing the distance, her ears and nose ever alert for the slightest shift in the wind or noise. Her booted feet moved almost painfully slow, careful not to step where she might snap a branch or twig.

*Aricia what are you doing? You are so close to them! Isheeni's worried voice sounded in her head. I know this she-elf Isheeni. I know her from Earth! I am going to take her back from these butchers! How did she get here?*

*I don't know, but I will not let her suffer them one more day! You and Torma stand ready!*

*Call and we shall come to you Aricia. Always.*

Aricia was now in reaching range of Tarifa, and as luck would have it, one of the other women woke and looked up, her eyes centering directly on Aricia who was poised to strike with a lethal downward plunge of her blade into the male's heart. Her dark eyes flew open and she pushed herself up.

"Isra!" She screamed.

Aricia was impressed, the man moved much faster than she thought, but it was still far too slow. Her right hand reached down and snatched Tarifa's arm, yanking her out of Isra's grasp, while her left arm lifted and the Shi Viska flared to life, the blades extending and the edge of one touching to Isra's cheek, his eyes wide. He froze in mid motion.

"Blink man... and you will die!" Aricia growled.

Tarifa's eyes looked up as she struggled against the death grip on her arm. The hand had come down on her elbow and wrenched her from Isra's protective embrace and she instinctively began to roll until she heard that voice. She stopped her movement and snapped her head around.

"Aricia!" She gasped seeing the familiar long black hair and azure blue eyes.

"I don't know how you came to be here Tarifa, but you are safe now." Aricia spoke.

"I don't think so she-wolf." The voice spoke from behind her.

Aricia's arm didn't move as she slowly turned her head, her azure wolf eyes filled with death's cold finger, her fangs extended. She saw the two men who had been on guard ten meters behind her, holding rail guns leveled at her back. "Oh I know so."

The two men froze when they saw the faces of Boreal and Isra's mother and sister blossom with horror. They turned their heads slowly and saw Isheeni directly to their rear, her snarl one of vicious hunger, all of her teeth exposed to view. Torma was holding the same pose only ten meters to their right, and his massive body blocked light from coming between the trees. Alliuame cowered next to her mother as Gallais pulled her close and held her daughter's head.

"Aricia... no!" Tarifa spoke quickly. "Please Aricia... these are my friends!"

"Friends!" Aricia almost shouted glaring at Isra. "I can smell your father's blood in you man! I will not let a son of Chetak live once I have crossed their path!"

"Aricia look at me!" Tarifa spoke pulling on her arm, her eyes darting to where the azure blue dragon eyed her like a tasty snack. "Look at me!"

Aricia turned her eyes slowly settling on Tarifa's elfin face. "Tarifa we must go! You can come with me away from here! We can fight them together!"

"I will not leave my mate Aricia." Tarifa spoke softly. "Isra has claimed me Aricia, and I accepted very willingly. He is not like his father Aricia... please listen to me."

"He is of Chetak's blood!" Aricia hissed. "He must die!"

Tarifa moved slowly around in front of her, seeing the vile hatred in Aricia's wolf eyes, the desire to kill Isra without thinking, without remorse. What had they done to her? She stopped moving when her head was next to the Shi Viska humming on Aricia's forearm. Tarifa had never been this close to one of these weapons, and she could almost feel the weapon pulsing with a life of its own, waiting for its master to release it. "I swear to you Aricia... as your friend; as Martin's friend... Isra is not the enemy here. He is my mate!"

Aricia's eyes darted to Tarifa's face at the mention of her beloved's name and the tears threatened to come out then. Tarifa's scent was not lying, that was obvious, and the man made no move to defend himself; quite unlike the others she had killed. She watched Tarifa reach out with her right arm and grip Isra's shoulder, her left hand coming up slowly to touch her right arm.

"Aricia... do you trust me?" Tarifa asked softly.

Trust? Aricia stared at her beautiful elfin features and she saw then what her beloved saw in Tarifa. What he saw that made him think of her as a sister, and leave her in charge of all he had built. She was without fear.

Aricia lowered her arm, the Shi Viska disappearing in a flash of silver/white. She watched Tarifa finally let out the breath she was holding and turn to grab Isra's dirty blond head and pull him tightly to her chest, his arms wrapping around her like a vise. Gallais cried out in relief and hugged Alliuame tightly as she smiled. Aricia stood up and turned to Isheeni and Torma.

*Torma make sure the hunters are heading back for their city. Aricia told him. Then return to Arzoal and let her know what we have done. Isheeni and I will meet you back at Waterfall Cave later.*

Torma didn't hesitate, nodding his large head and Isra and Tarifa watched as he leaped for the sky, extending his wings and climbing into the cloudless horizon that was slowly getting lighter.

Boreal watched until Torma was out of sight and then looked at the raven haired female. "You command dragons?" He asked in awe. He had not heard their exchange in Mindvoice, but it was easy enough to understand what had happened.

Aricia turned back to Tarifa and saw her looking up at her, still holding Chetak's son's head against her chest. "We attacked a Lycavorian Hunting party a few hours ago. They were gathering their dead when I smelled you Tarifa. I sent Torma to insure they are heading back to their city."

"Aricia... what... how? How did you get here? We... Boreal detected transmissions that went across the planet saying you... had been killed by Dragons." Tarifa asked her.

"Where are you heading?" Aricia asked.

"There is a rebel stronghold in the mountains here." Isra spoke, slowly rising to his feet and pulling Tarifa with him. "We are going there."

Aricia looked at him. "Rebels?"

"Isra say no more!" One of the burly men that had left spoke quickly.

"Yelna... what did we just see?" Isra barked. "She commands dragons! Do you think she works for my father?"

Aricia turned slightly as Isheeni moved gracefully up next to her and lowered her head next to Aricia's shoulder, her azure blue eyes studying Tarifa carefully.

*Aricia... she is an elf?* Isheeni asked.

Aricia nodded. *Yes. She is one of the leaders of the planet I am from.*

*I have never seen an elf.* Isheeni spoke softly. *She is... she is a vision. Will you tell her hello for me?*

Tarifa looked at Aricia, still holding Isra's hand tightly. "You are talking with him?" Tarifa asked.

Aricia shook her head. "He is a she Tarifa. Her name is Isheeni... and she has never seen an elf before. And she says hello."

Tarifa stepped forward cautiously but Isra grabbed her arm instinctively, holding her back, "Tarifa no!" He spoke quickly. "It is dangerous!"

Isheeni let out a dragon version of a snort and bared her teeth at him. *Typical male! Can I eat him Aricia?*

Aricia looked at Isra with a crooked grin, feeling humor fill her for the first time in weeks, chasing away the killing fever if only for a few moments. "She wants to know if she can eat you for being so typically male." Aricia spoke to him seeing Isra back up quickly. "Neither Isheeni nor I will harm anyone unless they try to hurt us first."

*Aricia they have left the valley!* Torma's voice filled her mind causing her to look skyward. *I will go high until I reach the Elder Mother and do as you ask.*

*Be careful husband... you are black against the daytime sky and you are not exactly easy to miss.* Isheeni spoke.

*Go as high as you can tolerate Torma.* Aricia spoke. *And be careful.* Aricia turned to Tarifa. "Do you know where these so called rebels are?"

"We do not subscribe to Chetak's view of things!" One man hissed at her, causing Isheeni's scales to ripple in agitation and her lips to curl back slightly, revealing her long and very sharp teeth. The man stopped before he said anymore.

Aricia looked at him. "You'll forgive us if we are not entirely convinced. If not for Tarifa, all of you would be smoking piles of ash right now. Do not test my patience, or Isheeni's."

The second man stepped forward quickly. "We are no enemy of the dragons." He said quickly. "The entrance to their tunnel complex is six kilometers on the other side of this ridge. We can be there in three hours if we leave now."

Aricia looked at Isheeni. *Can you scout it Isheeni?*

*I will be back soon.* Isheeni nodded before turning and leaping into the sky.

Tarifa stepped up to her and embraced her tightly now. "Aricia... it is so good to see you alive. When we heard you had been killed... I..."

"Tarifa... I am dead." Aricia spoke with no emotion in her voice. "I am dead inside... and I am dead to all that I ever loved. All I have now is vengeance." She pushed Tarifa away from her gently. "Come... we must reach your so-called rebels before another hunting party returns."

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## **UKWAV LEONIDAS I**

For'mya walked down the corridor leading away from the landing bay and heading for the quarters she had come to consider hers as well as his. She was tired and ached all over from constant action and flying. She didn't see the arm snake out from the access corridor and snatch her by the arm pulling her into the deserted corridor.

For'mya's instincts, fueled by her almost daily training regime with Martin Leonidas made her react instantly. She slammed her forearm upward, reaching for the slim bladed knife on her flight suit in the same motion with her other arm.

Her dark brown eyes flew open when she saw who had grabbed her, and the rage she had felt passed immediately, "Tudrin!" She snapped. "What are you doing?"

The male elf stepped back from her, shock in his eyes at the way she had reacted and he reached up to touch the now sore spot on his jaw where her forearm had connected quite viciously.

"I... I wanted to talk to you." He spoke. "I didn't know you would assault me."

"What do you expect grabbing me like that?" For'mya demanded.

"I would think that after what we shared you would not mind me grabbing you." He spoke.

For'mya looked at him sternly. "What we shared?" She spoke. "We didn't share anything Tudrin."

"We spent many nights together For'mya? Surely that must imply sharing of something." He answered.

"It implies nothing!" For'mya snapped. "Regardless of what you would like it to. I am busy Tudrin... what is it that you want?"

"I want to know what you think you are doing." He asked.

"What do you mean?"

"You know exactly what I mean." He spoke. "I thought we had something For'mya. Then you decide to do this? You decide to take on the role of concubine to the King. For'mya you never wanted that position. You hated the very thought of it. Why are you doing this?"

For'mya glared at him. "That is none of your business Tudrin."

"It is my business!" He snapped. "I... we were... are lovers! I care about you."

“We are not... and never have been lovers Tudrin!” For’mya spoke. “We shared the warmth of a bed half a dozen times. That is all. It does not make us lovers. There was no talk of commitment... no talk of caring. It was simply physical pleasure. The only thing you were concerned about was your career and how closely you could tie yourself to my father.”

“That is not true!”

“Isn’t it?” For’mya snapped. “How long have I been back on this ship Tudrin?”

“What?”

“How long have I been back on this ship?”

“Four... almost four weeks,” He answered. “Why? What does that have to do with anything?”

“You are coming to me now, after four weeks.” For’mya spoke. “Where were you when I was first brought on board? Where were you then Tudrin?”

“I... I was giving you time.” He stammered, “Time to heal.”

For’mya laughed harshly. “You are such a *jukketen* liar Tudrin!” She barked at him. “Do you take me for a fool? You were waiting to see if I had been raped by the Immortals weren’t you. I would no longer be desirable to you to pursue if I had been raped by them isn’t that right?”

“For’mya you were taken directly to his quarters.” Tudrin spoke. “He would not allow anyone to see you.”

“*Mundo traako!*” For’mya shouted. “*Amin feuya ten’ lle* Tudrin! You were waiting to find out if the Immortals had violated me! You act so pure and arrogant, but if they had taken me against my will you wouldn’t be here now would you!” (Bullshit. You disgust me)

“Then... then they didn’t...” Tudrin spoke stepping closer to her.

“No Tudrin! The only one I’ve given myself to since the last time we were together is him.” For’mya smiled when she saw the look of horror cross his face. “I *am* his concubine Tudrin. He has had me in more ways than you could ever imagine, and I have loved every single time!”

“For’mya... he is crazy! He’s lost his mind bringing us here! Why would you do this?” Tudrin asked.

For’mya looked at him for a moment, her anger suddenly bleeding away. “He... he needs me.” She said softly.

“For’mya he is getting people, our people killed because he lost his woman to some other disgusting Lycavorian male and he is angry!” Tudrin spoke. “They are animals For’mya... it is in their nature to do things like this! There are others among the elves who feel as I do.”

For’mya’s dark brown eyes flared wide in the overwhelming surge of anger that ripped through her. She snapped out with her open palm of her hand and slapped Tudrin viciously across the face, rocking his head back, and blood spilling from his split lips. “Martin Leonidas is more a man that you will ever be!” She screamed at him. “You are finished Tudrin! Your career is over!”

He stood up quickly. “You do not have the authority to have me removed from this ship of the service.” She growled at her.

“Not as Star Commander Tudrin, you are right.” For’mya spoke. “However as Bound Concubine to the King I will send you to the most unused and far reaching post we have in the Union and those orders will not be questioned in the least!”

“You wouldn’t dare!” He hissed.

For’mya shoved him aside and marched the three steps to the com panel on the wall. She stabbed her finger down on the panel, “Commander For’mya to Admiral Komirri.”

“Komirri here For’mya, what is wrong?” His reptilian voice replied immediately.

“Captain... out of curiosity, does my position as Concubine to the King allow me any say in assigning personnel to assorted positions in the fleet?” For’mya asked.

“Is there something wrong For’mya?” He asked.

“No sir... I’m assembling a message to my father for recommendations on the heroics of the pilots in the fleet.” For’mya replied. “I wanted to see how much leeway I had with awards.” She did not see Komirri on the bridge motioning to his executive officer at the console.

“Stand by For’mya...” Komirri spoke. There was a few seconds pause. “For’mya... according to the way the constitution is written; you are now eighth in terms of authority in the Union.” For’mya’s eyes went

wide at this information. “Recommend whatever you feel is appropriate Commander, and it will be passed. I’d like to see your recommendation list before you submit it however Star Commander.”

For’mya looked at Tudrin. “I will have it for you in the morning Captain. Thank you.” She stepped away from the panel, her eyes slit in anger. “Do not press me Tudrin! And tell the others who feel as you do the same thing. Now I have more important work to do... so don’t come near me ever again or I will act on what I have said.”

For’mya whirled around and left him standing there in the deserted corridor.

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## DAY THIRTY-TWO

For’mya’s eyes fluttered open slowly, feeling the press of hard warm flesh against her cheek and upper body, and the comforting weight of an arm around her shoulders. As her eyes opened and came more in focus they grew wider as she realized where she was and who her body was pressed so intimately against. Her dark eyes were staring down the rippled and magnificently defined abdomen, looking at the long legs clad in his usual loose black pants. One of his legs was bent at the knee, her arm draped across his waist casually. The sheet still covered her lower body, but from her waist up she was completely naked. Her small firm breasts pressed tightly against the skin of his side and lower abdomen. He was on top of the bed covers, his back against the head board and not under the sheet with her and relief flooded through her at this. And it was not for the reasons she would have thought. She had never been out of his presence for more than a few hours in the last weeks, and when she was gone, For’mya found herself wanting to be back with him. He had spent so much time with her, teaching her how to use their Mindvoice connection, helping her to grow stronger within the connection they shared now. They had spent hours training in the gym on the *LEONIDAS I*, and he had helped to hone her body into muscle and strength, teaching her to use hand-to-hand combat skills no Spartan Instructor had ever shown her. He had always been patient, always answered her questions, no matter how mindless they appeared or sounded.

For’mya knew she was looked at differently now that she had accepted the position of concubine to the King, especially after her confrontation with Tudrin in the corridor. There had been many men who had shown an interest in her, many of them Lycavorian men, but For’mya had shunned them all. She had no desire to bed with a Lycavorian male, and even the few relationships she had experienced with other elves were short lived. There had been three of them, two with male elves, Tudrin among them, who ended up being even more arrogant and spiteful than she was, and the brief but intense relationship she had shared with a fellow female pilot. It was not a secret that she had spent years denying any interest in the position she had been born to assume because of her blood, and there were many times when she cursed her mother for not being able to have more children and relieve her of this burden. Yet now many thought she had done it as a way to advance her career further. They did not know the political aspect of her decision, the attempt to neutralize her father as an opponent by her actions, which had indeed worked.

For’mya wondered if they still found her attractive. If they still found her desirable. She didn’t know if that was possible as word of what the Coven had done to her leaked out. Tudrin had appeared only after discovering she had not been raped, which told her all she needed to know really. Yet now there was something else that even For’mya could not explain. She felt safe in Martin’s presence, like nothing could hurt her ever again, and that meant more to her than anything else.

He had gone to the bridge immediately upon returning to the *LEONIDAS I*, and For’mya had walked back to his quarters after dealing with the fool Tudrin. The tiredness and ache of the last few days had been more than she realized and she had showered under the stream of hot water before collapsing onto the bed in exhaustion. She had stirred only when she felt his body collapse next to her in exhaustion several hours later, obviously too worn out to reach the couch, but at that point she hadn’t cared and was quite sure neither had he.

Now as she awakened and found herself in this position, For’mya did not react as she thought she would have. She reveled in the warmth of his hard body against her, and now she took the time to actually let her gaze wander over what she could see. As she stared now at his chiseled body For’mya felt desire creep into her thoughts. He was huge in every respect, over six feet tall and well over two hundred pounds, and compared to him her five foot seven, hundred and eight pound body was miniscule. Yet For’mya had seen him move with

speed and grace unlike anything she'd seen in her life, the power and strength to fight the way he did was something every Lycavorian had she knew, but he took it to a whole new level. It seemed the only ones able to keep up with him were his Captain Andreus and the giant black man that he called brother. For'mya had witnessed the immense power channeled within him in the way he had killed the two Immortals when he rescued her, and that power only seemed to be growing in control and deadliness.

For'mya's eyes widened when she saw and felt his hand drop to the knee of the leg that was bent, and she realized he was awake when she cut her eyes and saw the steaming mug in his hand.

"Martin Leonidas?" She said softly.

"For'mya... I would never hurt you." His voice answered.

For'mya lifted her head up from his abdomen and turned it to see his eyes gazing at her. His eyes, dark brown unreadable orbs of limitless depth his eyes were, and so very beautiful to her. He had pulled his black hair back and tied it into a pony tail, and she let her eyes wander over his broad chest and the flame tattoos that swirled all over his upper body. She also saw the coral red pendant he never took off, and the four angry pink scars that ran diagonally across the pectoral muscles. Other scars dotted his body in numerous places, each one had caused For'mya to wince when she saw them for the first time, but now she knew they added to the man he was.

"I know that." She spoke softly. The warmth of his body chased away any chill from the coolness in the bedchamber and she didn't move because she enjoyed that warmth. And at this moment she didn't care that the nipples of her breasts were hard points of stiffness and pressed tightly into his powerful abdomen. He had psychic deadeners installed in his quarters just before beginning their attack on Ukwav and they no longer needed to shield their Mindvoice conversations, at least in his quarters, and they talked normally now. "How long did we sleep?" She asked.

Martin turned and looked at the wall clock on the small table next to the bed. "You really want to know?" He asked with a small smile.

"Yes."

"Nineteen hours." He replied looking back at her.

For'mya's eyes flew open and she sat up quickly, oblivious to the fact that she was completely naked. "Nineteen hours!" She exclaimed.

The cool air hit her then and her nipples became even harder causing her to gasp and reach across her chest to cover herself with her arms. Martin chuckled and leaned over to the side of the bed, pulling the night shirt she usually wore from the floor and holding it out to her. For'mya took it, her cheeks red with embarrassment as she pulled it on, very conscious of the fact that his eyes were on her. For'mya looked at him and felt desire sweep through her once more, and that kept her fingers from buttoning the shirt. He held out the mug in his hand to her.

"I've already talked with Riall and Vistr." He spoke as she took the mug from him and sipped the rich dark coffee. She had never tasted liquid like this until being with him, always preferring tea, but the flavor was smooth and delicious and she quickly grew to prefer it over tea. "We have secured the second garrison and the troops are just resting and regrouping. I don't like being up here with them down there, but Danny threatened to have me put in the brig if I came down before morning. They were able to rig some portable units and flush the hot air from the tunnels and bring the temperature down to a more sedate level. Vistr and Riall got them hot food and cold water, and they are kicking back according to Danny."

"The High Coven?" For'mya asked.

Martin shrugged. "They've tried a few probing actions, but nothing major. I think we have thrown them for a loop with our victories."

"Three attacks in a thousand years Martin Leonidas... and all of them failed miserably until you came along. They do not call you the Covenkiller for nothing you know." For'mya said.

Martin looked at her narrowing his eyes. "Don't you buy into that to?" He said. "What we have done here... it was a total effort."

"It was your plan." For'mya spoke. "You devised it... you will get the credit for it."

"I would have got the credit if it failed too." He said.

"Yes... but it didn't fail." For'mya spoke. "And once word begins to spread among the Union, you will find it very hard to hide from it."

“I didn’t come here for fame.” Martin said softly.

For’mya nodded. “I know.” She said.

“You are very desirable For’mya.” His voice spoke causing her to look at him. “The Coven didn’t take that from you, no matter what Tudrin or anyone says.”

“Were you reading my thoughts?” She gasped at him.

Martin smiled a crooked smile. “All this time I have spent teaching you to shield your Mindvoice abilities from others, and I forgot to teach you to shield them from me. I apologize for that.”

“Then you know what happened yesterday.” She said.

“Komirri told me you called the bridge just before I got there.” He replied. “I knew you hadn’t made it to our quarters yet and when you slammed up your shields I called up the security monitor to find you. I thought you handled it extremely well.” He replied. He turned and took the data pad from the table and held it out to her. “I’ve been awake for a couple hours and I put this together for you.”

“What is it?” She asked sipping the coffee as she read. Her eyes grew wider and she looked at him.

“Martin Leonidas... you can not...”

He nodded. “When this is over with, regardless of how things turn out, you will be released from your role as concubine and allowed to pursue your own life For’mya. I did it in such a way so that the honor of the elves will remain intact, and no one will be the wiser.” He took the coffee from her hand. “I transmitted a copy to Deia, the Elf High Minister and to your father. You will have Dysea and Isabella on your side and Anja when she receives it.” He got off the bed and looked at her. “No one will argue the point. We have a briefing in an hour, why don’t you get dressed and we can get some food. I’m starving.” He headed into the living chamber of the quarters.

“Am I desirable to you Martin Leonidas?” She asked softly, not turning around on the bed, her heart racing madly.

For’mya gasped in delight when his powerful arms encircled her from behind and his face nuzzled the back of her elfin ear. His hands covered her breasts and pulled her tightly against his hard body. Raging desire swept through her and she turned in his arms quickly, wrapping her arms around his broad shoulders and covering his lips with her own. She groaned when he did not deny her, her tongue plunging into his mouth tasting his own, and dancing across his strong teeth. She kissed him with more passion and need than she had ever kissed anyone, his powerful arms crushing her to him, the nipples on her small breasts burning into his naked skin.

It was a breathless moment when she finally pulled away, biting his lower lip gently as she place one hand on his rough face and looked at him. “Make love to me Martin Leonidas.” She spoke softly.

“For’mya that...” He started to speak.

For’mya shook her head and placed her fingers on his moist lips. “No. Listen to me.” She said softly. “All of my life... all of my life I have fought what my station in life was meant to be. I didn’t want it! It made me arrogant and pompous. When the Coven captured me, all that was striped away from me Martin; I was lost, naked, beaten and fed upon like a piece of meat. All that I was... it died then.”

“For’mya you don’t have to tell me this.” He spoke.

“Yes I do.” She told him quickly. “I need you to show me I am still desirable Martin. You have shown me so much already, even in the midst of the pain that wracks your body and your soul, you have shown me so much. I need you to show me that I am still desirable and that the Coven did not take that from me.”

“They didn’t take that from you For’mya.” He said softly.

“I do not wish to replace anyone in your heart Martin Leonidas.” She spoke softly, tears filling her eyes. “But only you can do this for me, for only you have shown me that all of me did not die during that time. Only you can do this Martin. I want no one else to...”

Martin stopped her words with his kiss, and For’mya’s eyes grew wide as she felt the engorged head of his huge cock press against her moist opening. His hands moved to her perfect ass and he pulled her down onto him. For’mya’s head tore away from his lips, her hands locking behind his neck as he stretched her in a way no one ever had. She screamed as the orgasm blindsided her with such ferocity, her head whipped back and forth as he lowered her gently to the bed, her juices coating his massive length and spilling onto the sheets below them. Never had pleasure like what she was feeling ripped through her petite body, her muscles screaming out in agonizing bliss.



You will always be desirable For'mya. He spoke into her mind just before plunging completely into her in one stroke.

For'mya's dark brown eyes surged open, her lips parted in a breathless scream as she felt every hot, thick inch of him fill her completely. The orgasms rippled through her body, his lips dropping to engulf one of her lava hot nipples between his lips and he began to stroke into her. The pleasure spiraled through For'mya, stealing her breath away, her body convulsing as one raging orgasm followed another. His thrusts became urgent and For'mya gripped his back tightly. This was pure physical need, she knew. This was what she needed. What he needed. To know that they could still feel even after all the pain they had suffered.

Her scream came out in a strangled sound as she felt his huge cock balloon inside her and then he was filling her with blast after powerful blast of his essence, each eruption sending her further into a world she had never visited. A world she did not want to come back from.

Just before her eyes closed and she allowed this new world to envelope her For'mya felt him bury his face between her neck and shoulder. She felt his body convulse against her, felt warm wetness on her skin, and her arms instinctively went around his back even tighter. She knew without a doubt what was happening and For'mya smiled a contented smile, knowing she would be the only one to ever experience this. The only one he would ever show this side of himself too.

Martin Leonidas was crying.

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## ENURRUA

*Has it begun?*

*Events are being set in motion Arzoal and everything will be revealed. You must remain strong.*

*We did... we did not expect the depth of the love they share Val'istar. Have we destroyed any hope with our actions? (Archmage)*

*There is always hope Arzoal.*

*Veldruk and the Coven converge on him and you. I did not want it to be this way! My actions have put both of you at great risk.*

*Your actions were done out of love Arzoal. Love for your people. Love for them. They were not well thought out, and you should have observed more, but they were not done out of malice my old friend. And that is why hope stills breaths.*

*And what about you Val'istar?*

*He has freed me partially with his rage. I have touched him once already and it will be up to me to show him. That is now my duty. It has always been my duty. Dustha set him correctly on this course and now I must finish what she began.*

*Dustha?*

*She is strong. Keep her in your thoughts.*

*Will... will he choose the path Val'istar?*

*If his love for her is not already burned away, and he is strong enough, the events set in motion by those who love him will provide the path for him. Only he can make that decision Arzoal. We will not be able to communicate over this distance again my friend, but it fills me with peace to have spoken with you once more.*

*Val'istar? How will we know if he chooses the right path?*

*You will know because you will see the lighting of the path he burns across the stars. Have faith and keep hope close to your heart. It is all we have left now.*

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## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### SPARTA

### DAY THIRTY-FIVE

Admiral Jamerl sat with Dilios and Panos in the Senate library, the stacks of data pads and scrolls piled high on the table around them. They had been here for thirty six hours now, going through the mounds of information pertaining to disappearances of individuals from Sparta over the years. Several pitchers of water, tea and coffee dotted the table as well as half empty mugs and empty plates of food.

Jamerl leaned back in his chair and rubbed his tanned face with both hands and let out a huge exhale. Dilios and Panos both looked at him.

“We have been at this a long time Jamerl.” Dilios spoke. “You are an Admiral... do you not have others who could do this with us?”

Jamerl nodded. “I do.”

“Then why do it yourself?” Panos asked.

“I’ve been here for over a month now, and I have never felt so at home.” Jamerl spoke leaning forward, “Your people... my people... here in Sparta. You are so much closer to your instincts here. You follow laws, strict laws, but you do not push aside what we are inside. What we can become. It is refreshing to not have to subdue completely what my natural instincts tell me to do.”

“You have done this away from Sparta?” Dilios asked.

Jamerl nodded. “King Resumar... when he first brought us out of the darkness, he taught us to harness and control our natural instincts like you have here. After his death and in our haste to continue along the path he laid for us we have forgotten what it means to be us.”

“You do not think King Resumar would have wanted this I take it?” Dilios spoke.

Jamerl shook his head. “Not to the extent that we have buried our past. We are the same species, all of us, but here on earth in Sparta you chose to remain true to the nature of our people.”

Panos nodded. “That is true... but we also did not know who and what we truly were until King Leonidas discovered himself last year.”

“Yes... but you had the Oracle with you, and you grew out of a brutal past, the Spartan way of life was brutal wasn’t it?” Jamerl asked.

Dilios and Panos both nodded. “Extremely so.” Dilios spoke. “Yet over time we came to change and see that we needed to adapt or become extinct.”

“You decided to change your ways just as we did.” Jamerl said. “But in many ways you remained closer to our true nature than we did. The mating ritual, the Ceremony of the Centennial of the Moon for instance, we have not practiced that ritual in over seven thousand years! I doubt there are many who even know the significance of it anymore with the exception of Gorgo and some other scholars. How you deal justice is another; they are simple things that we have forgotten over the thousands of years.”

“All things that can be relearned with time and patience,” The female voice spoke.

They turned to see Thr’won standing behind them in the doorway holding a large tray and bag of food. All of them got to their feet and Dilios moved up to her.

“Thr’won... it is good to see you.” He spoke taking the bag from her.

Thr’won looked tired and disheveled, but her eyes were bright and alert. “They told me you were here so I stopped at Demetrius’s café and got food and stronger drinks. He is rebuilding quickly with all the new technology and items we have discovered so far.”

“The Oracle?” Panos asked.

“She is resting.” Thr’won spoke. “I reinforced her psychic shields for the evening, but they want to try and begin to bring her out of the coma tomorrow. I decided I could do more here than waiting at her bedside with Lunta and the others.”

Jamerl cleared a chair for her to sit down and motioned her over to the table. “Have a seat Chief Mage... I am Admiral Jamerl. We’ve only met briefly.”

Thr’won smiled as she settled into the chair. “Yes I know Admiral. Dysea speaks very highly of you. She seems to think that you are one of very few who has the ‘balls’ as she put it, to actually do something more than give mindless orders.”

Jamerl looked taken aback. “I hope that is a good thing?” He asked as he took the chair next to her.

Thr’won chuckled as did Dilios and Panos. “You have not known Queen Dysea long Admiral, but you should know that while she is the most level headed of the King’s Queens due to her elf heritage, once she reaches her point of explosion, it is best to be out of her line of sight. She is quite good with her *Nehtes*.”

Jamerl smiled. "Why do I not find that hard to believe?" He spoke. "I'm coming to see why the King is so comfortable with those he calls friends. The elves I have met are much more passionate about things than those in the Union, something that is rubbing off on those within my fleet thankfully. This Colonel Nestor, the cloned Vampire colonel, he is as dedicated to his profession as any I have seen, and Chief Administrator Selene trusts him implicitly. The King certainly has chosen to surround himself with a diverse group of men and women of like mind, and that is the best thing of all."

Thr'won smiled. "We couldn't agree more with that Admiral," She said. "Now what exactly are we doing here?"

Panos handed her several data pads. "We are cross referencing those who have been in Sparta in the last five years and comparing them to a list of Lycavorians provided to us by Jamerl; Lycavorians that are smugglers, mercenaries and such and that would have access to Sparta and Apo Prime."

Thr'won looked at Jamerl. "But they would need access to a ship wouldn't they Admiral? A ship and a place to store that ship; land that ship, all without being detected?"

Jamerl nodded. "Whoever they are, we have determined at least that they were working for the High Coven." He spoke. "Many of the names you see on that list are Lycavorians that chose to work with the Coven in the years during our time as slaves. We have extensive files on many of them, and that is what we have been studying."

Thr'won looked at the pads and scrolls, "So many?" She asked.

Jamerl nodded. "There were thousands of our people who, for whatever reason, began working with the Coven. Veldruk was not above bribery. We..." The chime on his utility belt communicator echoed softly in the room. "Excuse me." He said. "This is Jamerl."

"Admiral it is Second Officer Bathias."

"Go ahead."

"Admiral... I was running the requests that you asked for sir." The young voice spoke. "On planned travel routes that took ships close enough to Earth to launch small transports."

"It is finished already?" Jamerl asked.

"No Admiral... something came through on the secondary searches that you asked me to conduct, sir, on the names and profiles of all those related to Talracian Ore research project."

Jamerl came forward in his chair. "You found something?" He asked surprised.

"Admiral may I transmit it to your secure data pad?"

"You can't transmit it openly?" Jamerl asked the alarms going off in his head now.

"It's probably better if I don't Admiral." The voice spoke.

Jamerl nodded and removed the data pad from the inside pocket of his jacket which was slung across the back of the chair. "Go ahead Bathias."

"Transmitting now Admiral,"

Dilios, Panos and Thr'won sat there quietly as they watched Jamerl's face start out impassive as ever and rapidly grow to one of astonishment.

"Jamerl... what is wrong?" Dilios asked. "What have you found?"

Jamerl came to his feet. "Bathias... has anyone detected this search on Apo Prime yet?"

"I don't believe so Admiral. I routed it through a lesser used security terminal in Fleet Headquarters." The man replied.

"Erase it Bathias!" Jamerl snapped. "Erase that this was ever done! And do it quickly!"

"Understood Admiral, I'm erasing the request and all backup files now." They could hear the young officer's hands working at his console.

"Bathias... you make three copies of what you just sent me and then erase it from our databanks as well. Leave no trace that it was ever done. Then get on the first *STRIKER* coming to earth with your copies and meet me in Eden City." Jamerl ordered.

"As you order Admiral."

"Speak with no one Bathias; you are under direct orders from me now. Move son!" Jamerl spoke.

Dilios had come to his feet now, his face showing his confusion. "Jamerl what is going on? What have you discovered?"

Jamerl leaned over the table and began sifting through the data pads and scrolls, “The casualty list from the Battle of Eden City!” He exclaimed. “Where is it?”

Panos snatched the pad from the corner of the table near him and held it out. “Here!”

Jamerl took it from him and began sifting through the profiles and names. His face froze and he stopped. He thrust it back out to Dilios. “This man died in Eden City?” He demanded.

Dilios took the pad and looked at it. “Yes... why?”

Jamerl held up his personal pad. “We must speak with Queen Dysea right now! This man reported for work this morning on Apo Prime, in the Talracian Research Project Headquarters!”

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## ENURRUA

“We supported you Chetak!” Lucvaun spoke in the transmission holoprojection. “When you told us you wished to fulfill your Blood Oath against the line of Resumar we supported you. We supported your plan to insinuate ourselves within the Union Chetak, using this female. You took the traitor King’s woman, she chose Joric as her mate during the *Lunmai*, and now she is running around with dragons killing my men! And you have taken three days to return my call! Why?”

“I have been busy insuring our future Lucvaun.” Chetak spoke as he poured himself a large glass of ale. “Even now... the Republic has acquired an additional three companies within the Union to expand our influence. Our Senator is preparing to have a bill passed that will give us access to their military and even more of their secrets! You must be patient.” He said returning to the chair behind the large desk.

“What about my men?”

“Lucvaun you have thousands of soldiers in your family.” Chetak said.

“The Firespitter cooked my youngest son alive!” Lucvaun screamed.

“Then have another son!” Chetak hissed at him angrily. “There are thousands of our women coming of age every week! Pick one and claim her and make her give you another son! We are Alphas... that is what we do! Now start acting like it!”

Lucvaun was silent for a long moment. “And what of the *upae* mate to your son?” Lucvaun asked.

“I have had our Senator informed Deia that she is dead so that we can hunt her without fear of Union interference.” Chetak spoke. “We did not know she would have the skills she does Lucvaun. I also did not expect her to be so unreceptive to Joric’s advances. Our information told us that she and those from this city of Sparta followed the old ways. That would apparently not be the case. I have tasted some of the young things my son Rommna was able to take from Sparta Lucvaun. They are not like our women. They are sweeter and much more compliant to us once you beat them two or three times, not like this Aricia. I will send you one.”

Lucvaun looked at him in the transmission. “When I find this *upae* I will *nubous* her until she begs me for death!”

Chetak nodded. “That is your right my friend. What of Isra and the she-elf wolf?”

“That was one of the hunting parties the *upae* destroyed.” Lucvaun spoke. “We detected them by chance really, moving into the leading edges of the southern mountain range. My men trailed them for a day, but Isra is no fool, regardless of what you and Joric think of him. They eluded us and disappeared once more. The group I had looking for them was destroyed the second day of the wench’s rampage. We have not seen them since.”

“Why the southern mountain ranges?” Chetak asked. “There is nothing there but barren wastes.”

Lucvaun shook his head. “I don’t know. I was preparing a larger force to move into the mountains themselves by the end of the week.”

Chetak nodded. “Do that. I will send you a force of my men to assist.”

“Chetak... the Firespitter is mine!” Lucvaun spoke. “I will stuff its head and mount it on my wall!”

Chetak nodded. “I will look forward to seeing that. We will speak again in a few days Lucvaun. Good luck.” Chetak ended the transmission and sat back in the chair looking at Joric who had seen it all sitting on the couch along the wall, “*Igord!*” (Fool)

“Father you promised I would have Aricia.” Joric spoke.

Chetak looked at him. "Lucvaun is neither smart enough nor skilled enough to take her down. She will continue to torment him in the south while we grow stronger up here." He spoke. "She is *malda* Joric, in bloodlust, useless now for anything. You need to concentrate on discovering where your brother is and getting this she-elf under our control. She controls this planet Earth, and if she is mated to you then we control this planet. It is the richest Talracian Ore find in the universe in the last thousand years. With our connections now becoming firmer within the Union community and our spy in the government, we can begin to take control of many more things, as well as make ourselves rich."

"You want me to lead this contingent to the south and search for her?" Joric asked.

Chetak nodded. "Take some experienced men, perhaps thirty or forty and find her Joric." He said.

"You realize they have not officially announced that she is dead within the Union." Joric spoke getting to his feet.

Chetak nodded. "I know. It is something I am going to remedy soon. Our Senator is holding a conference in today and he will announce it to the Senate and the Union. It will make this traitor King even more *malda* than he is now. Then we can petition to have him removed, according to the constitution."

"And Deia?"

Chetak sat back. "Deia is stronger than I thought and has powerful friends. We may not be able to get her removed, but our actions have limited her options considerably. She is neutralized for the time being."

Joric nodded and began heading for the door. "I will prepare the men."

"Joric..." Chetak waited until his son turned back to him. "Do not face her alone Joric. You are strong son, but her rage has made her unpredictable and dangerous, especially if she has found some way to tame the dragons. Be mindful of what we are trying to do. They will eventually corner her and take her back. She is like any wild animal. They will make a mistake and condemn themselves."

Joric nodded. "Don't worry father, after seeing the images of this she-elf, I have found I have developed a taste for elf flesh."

Chetak smiled as Joric turned and walked out. He got up and went to pour himself ale, not flinching when the faint scent filtered across his nostrils. He didn't turn as he lifted the mug to his lips and drank deeply.

"Joric is ruled by his hormones Chetak. You should not trust him with your plans." The shadow spoke in a deep male voice.

Chetak smiled. "He has his uses and he is loyal to me as my son Veldruk." He replied turning slowly to gaze at the Vampire High Lord. "Something Xerxes was not, in regards to you."

"Xerxes was a fool." Veldruk spoke moving further into the light to reveal his gaunt features and alert eyes. "He allowed his emotions to overrule his head, not that it would have mattered against the son of Leonidas."

"You think highly of this fool son of a dead King Veldruk." Chetak spoke. "He is still a man... and now he is in the grips of a rampage that is laying waste to your once invincible fortress on Ukwav."

Veldruk smiled. "He will not win on Ukwav. As we speak I have a dozen High Coven Fleet Groups moving towards Ukwav. I will not allow him to crack the seal. Pray he does not discover what you have done Chetak."

"I do not fear him." Chetak spoke. "And as long as your people do their jobs he will never learn of it."

Veldruk nodded. "Yuri has returned home with the plans and formulas of our clones. They will not discover the extent of the infiltration until it is too late. You have fulfilled your Blood Oath against Resumar, and you will have your victory."

Chetak nodded. "And you will have the formula and resources to build your new ships, just as we agreed."

Veldruk nodded. He stepped forward and placed the pad on the desk. "I recommend these two acquisitions next." He spoke moving to the side slowly.

Chetak went to the desk and lifted the pad, scanning it with his eyes, and "Interesting." He said turning to look at Veldruk. "Why?"

Veldruk's smile revealed his fangs, "A personal request."

"So now you wish to invest in Apo Prime Veldruk? You..." Chetak's eyes went wide when Veldruk wrapped himself in shadows and disappeared.

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## EARTH SPARTA

Isabella walked back out of the small kitchen the tea in her hands and she stopped, her hazel/green eyes falling on Dysea. She watched her as she sat on the couch in the villa, her platinum blond hair cascading to the small of her back and shining in the light of the room. Isabella took in the deepness of her satiny tanned skin, the swell of her firm breasts under the thin robe she wore. Data pads and scrolls were scattered about her on the couch and the floor as she sat lotus style on the couch, her hazel/green eyes always drifting to the shadows that hid Dysea's center between her thighs.

Seventeen hundred years of life and Isabella had never once even entertained the thought of bedding another woman, let alone a woman of elf and now wolf blood. Now after meeting this she-elf who was now wolf, it was all she could think about. Isabella knew Lycavorians were much more open in regards to their sexuality, and it appeared the elves that Dymas had created here on earth were much the same way. Dysea had made it very clear that she wanted Isabella, the blistering kiss they had shared on the *LEONIDAS I* and then when they were returning here to Earth was testament to that. She knew Dysea shared a similar relationship with Anja and Aricia, and again she was not shy about admitting that or describing the pleasures the three of them had given and taken to and from each other. Isabella had no doubts that had none of this happened, she would have already surrendered to Dysea in that way. What astonished her most of all was that Dysea didn't care that she was a vampire. She didn't care that Isabella was from the same species that was currently oppressing over half the universe with an iron grip. And Dysea didn't care that Isabella needed blood to sustain her life.

Isabella was a pureblood vampire, and therefore her need to feed on blood was never a danger unless she denied it for too long. She could go two months without taking blood before the trembling got to be too much. Normal food and liquid could sustain her for that long. Isabella's life was one violent experience after another. She may have been the daughter of the High Vampire Lord, but Isabella inherited her mother's love of the arts and music and entertainment. She went to the finest schools and played the part of arrogant Vampire Princess to perfection. Until they day her father gave her to that vile excuse of a Vampire Overlord in a ploy to garner unyielding support. The man had been a putrid pretext for a vampire, and he had raped and brutalized her for nearly two years before Isabella could no longer take it and with her mother's help she escaped.

Her mother paid the ultimate price for that, and Isabella had watched her die in the street like an animal at her father's hand. That had begun the cycle of violence that until recently had become the center of her life.

The day she had been branded with the Shi Viska, her life had taken a dramatic and quite abrupt turn in the opposite direction. Her discussions with Gorgo had revealed so much to her, Gorgo's immediate acceptance of her, and her desire to show her that not all life was violence and death. Gorgo had told her it wasn't her son who had chosen Isabella; it was Isabella who had chosen her son when she was branded with the Shi Viska. The day that weapon had become part of her, her once singular life became so much larger. She now had no doubts that one day she would sit as one of four Queens of the Lycavorian Union; she had no doubts that despite her misgivings and trepidations she would share Martin Leonidas's bed. She would share the bed of a pureblood wolf and break every tie to her vampire heritage and past. And despite her fear of that moment, Isabella strangely found herself wondering what it would be like, and hoping it was everything Dysea said sharing Martin's bed was like.

Then there was Dysea.

The platinum blond haired she-elf stirred her in a way that no one ever had. She made her feel things she could not explain, things that felt so very wonderful; the racing of her heart when Dysea was so close to her, the smell of her sweet blood in her veins; and the almost completely uncontrollable urge to have this she-elf taste her in a way no one ever had, and for Isabella to return that. She found herself wondering what Dysea tasted like more and more now, especially since she would watch Dysea return from her morning runs in wolf form and sink into the cool water of the pool outside the villa. Seeing the water glisten off her naked body and mingle with that thin strip of platinum hair above her pierced clit drove Isabella mad. Her body would become heated in a way she'd never felt, her own pierced clit and nipples becoming instantly aroused and begging to be fed upon.

Isabella knew she could no longer suppress the desire within her for this woman, and her heart raced as she moved towards her on the couch.

Dysea smelled her come into the room but didn't look up. "Bella... I have found three transmissions of a kind I have never seen before." She spoke looking at the scroll in her hand. "One soon after *Nauta Melme* came here to Sparta, one just after we went to Thermopylae, and then just hours before the bombing at the café." She felt Isabella settle to the couch next to her and turned, "Bella?"

Isabella's eyes had changed to vampire cobalt blue in her rising desire and she stared at Dysea. "Dysea..."

Dysea lowered the scroll upon seeing her eyes and she caught the heavy scent of lilacs fill the air from Isabella's arousal. "Bella..." She spoke in a husky voice.

"I do not wish to wait any longer Dysea." Isabella spoke. "I... I want to make you *ussta* she-elf now!"

Though they were only inches apart Isabella blurred for a second, using her vampire speed and then her lips were on Dysea's, grabbing for what she so desired. Dysea practically tossed the scroll to the floor, her hands going to Isabella's face and pulling her down on top of her as she returned the wildly erotic kiss from her vampire Princess, their tongues mingling and tasting new territory and new sensations. Her hands dropped from Isabella's porcelain face and tugged insistently at the shirt she wore, before finally in frustration she used her elfin wolf strength to simply tear open the front of the shirt. Isabella gasped as Dysea pulled their lips apart, her delicate hands coming up to knead Isabella's much larger breasts firmly yet lovingly. Dysea's emerald eyes grew in lust when she saw the nipples pierced and standing oh so very stiff.

Isabella's cobalt blue eyes grew wide and she reached up with a hand, filling her fingers with Dysea's platinum hair as her soft warm lips engulfed her nipple and nibbled on the silver stud piercing. Isabella had done the piercings as a means to remind her of pain, yet she never imagined the exquisite pleasure they would bring as Dysea's tongue flicked madly over her nipple. Dysea's hands dropped to Isabella's powerful ass and pulled her closer while she fed on Isabella's breasts like a starved puppy.

"Ohhhh... Dysea!" Isabella gasped, pleasuring surging through her body like a slow burning fire.

The chime on the door interrupted their heated passion, Isabella's eyes coming up quickly to look at the hallway to the door. "*A l' phraktos ele nin?*" Isabella gasped in the ancient tongue of the vampire language. (By the gods why now?)

Dysea had her face pressed tightly to Isabella's breasts, her hands holding possessively to her firm ass, and she took deep breaths to cool the heated passion that was raging through her. She whispered unintelligible words, hoping that they would go away, but it wasn't to be as the chime rang once more.

Dysea tossed her head back on the couch, "*Nubou!*" She swore in the ancient Lycavorian language.

Isabella looked down at her beautiful face, Dysea's saliva rapidly drying on her breast. She stared at her with her cobalt blue eyes and smiled. "I see your relationship with Martin has granted you knowledge of the ancient Lycavorian tongue Dysea." She said with a seductive smile. "We... we will continue this later *ussta* she-elf." She spoke her words dripping with desire and need.

Dysea pulled her face down for a breath stealing kiss, curling her legs up along Isabella's hips and feeling her large breasts pressing tightly against her own. After a long moment she pulled away and smiled up at her.

"I am so very glad you did not wait Bella." She spoke softly. "I was beside myself trying to control my desire."

"It takes longer for my blood to cool Dysea. Perhaps you should go get rid of them, whoever they are." Isabella spoke tracing her long finger up between Dysea's breasts.

Dysea moved quickly, springing from the couch and wrapping the robe around her tighter while moving for the door. She slammed her hand down on the panel in frustration and started to speak until she saw who was behind the door. Jamerl, Dilios and Panos stood three abreast, Thr'won in front of them. Dysea turned and looked at her Spartan Captain.

"Lexi?" She asked.

The woman shrugged. "They said it was urgent Milady." She spoke.

Jamerl stepped forward quickly, detecting the heightened scent of the Queen but disregarding it as the military officer he was. "Queen Dysea... we must speak with you now!" He almost demanded.

Dysea smoothed back her hair and nodded. "Come in." She spoke motioning them into the villa.

Thr'won looked at her sheepishly as she came up. "Forgive the interruption Dysea... but..."

Dysea shook her head quickly. "You would not have come here unless it was important." She spoke ushering her inside.

Dysea walked behind them, taking deep breaths to calm her still racing heart and the heat in her blood. She silently cursed her wolf blood at times like these because it took so long for the ache to leave once it was aroused. Her eyes found Isabella quickly; seeing her sitting on the couch holding the tea. She had refastened her shirt as much as possible considering Dysea and torn most of the buttons off when she ripped it open.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Bella I am so sorry.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Do not be sorry Dysea ussta she-elf. Knowing what I felt from just a graze of your touch will keep me wanting more and more. I am a vampire. I can be very patient.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *It will be worth every moment I promise you.*

Dysea turned to Jamerl. "Very well Admiral... what is it that you have found." She spoke. "Actually I believe I may have found something as well, but since you are here now, go ahead."

Jamerl held up the data pad. "Our problem may be bigger than we thought." He spoke holding it out to her.

Dysea took the pad as Isabella got to her feet, detecting the tone of his voice and she moved to stand next to Dysea as they read the pad. It took only a few seconds before Dysea looked up at him. "This isn't possible." She spoke. "I saw the body."

Jamerl nodded. "Many saw the body my Queen. However... the security footage does not lie."

"But how?" Dysea gasped.

Isabella's eyes grew wide as it came to her and she gripped Dysea's hand, "Cloning." She spoke.

Dysea looked at her. "Cloning? I thought Colonel Nestor and those like him were the first clones."

Isabella took the pad from her hand and paged through the information. "Does Deia know about this?" She asked quickly.

Jamerl shook his head. "Not yet." He answered. "I have my young lieutenant meeting us in Eden City. I've called Colonel Nestor as well, and he will meet us there. It is the only way to confirm this Lady Isabella, my Queen. I wish there was another way but there isn't. I... I will need your permission."

Dysea turned away from them and moved to look out the glass doors onto the patio, her keen mind racing through hundreds of scenarios. "If this is true... then it would mean there is another clone." She spoke turning to look at them. "Helen was targeted after the Battle of Eden City, after we left earth."

Panos stepped forward. "It all has to be tied together somehow Dysea." He spoke, "The events with the King, Aricia, this. It can not all be random."

"Dysea... you said you found something?" Thr'won spoke.

Dysea nodded and moved to snatch the scroll she had been studying from the floor. "I was searching transmissions to and from Sparta on a carrier wave your communications officer gave to me Admiral. He said it would pick up residual iso... iso..."

"Isochron fragments from the sub space courier transmissions." Isabella spoke.

Dysea nodded quickly. "Yes that was it! Thank you Bella." She spoke. "He said it would pick these up in the atmosphere going back years. I found three transmissions, all unexplained and definitely not the background fragments he said I might detect. There were concentrated amounts of these fragments. And all of them originated within three miles of Sparta."

"They were communicating with someone off world." Jamerl spoke nodding his head. "It is the only conclusion."

"I agree." Isabella spoke. "Dysea... you must issue the order to exhume the body so that we can be sure."

Dysea looked at them. "He was... he was a clone?" She spoke. "Do you have any idea what this will do to them when they find out?"

"I'm more concerned with finding out if this is accurate and if it is, stopping the clone that is still here in Sparta from striking again." Dilios spoke. "Milady Dysea... please..."

Dysea held up her hand for silence and turned to look out the patio doors again. "Panos... I want you to very discreetly assign another *Mora* to the hospital to protect the Oracle. No one is to be allowed access to her without expressed permission from one of us in this room. Colonel Nestor will meet us in Eden City?"



Jamerl nodded. "He's already on his way."

"I want Selene and Lynwe there as well." Dysea spoke. "Lynwe knew him, worked with him as did Selene. Contact the landing pad and have my *STRIKER* prepared for lift off in thirty minutes." She turned to face them once more.

"And have Dekton's body exhumed immediately."

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## ENURRUA

The rebel's mountain hide out was immense in every sense of the word. Miles upon miles of caverns and tunnels, some massive in size, others no more than the small cave she had Isra shared. They had welcomed her and the others in their group and Tarifa got her first glance at the hundreds of men and women who made up the rebels. They ranged in all age groups, even with dozens of children. They were small... but they were very well organized and they had some excellent equipment for what she had seen so far on this planet. Of course, having this cool running mountain pool to bath in for the last three mornings had made almost like heaven, as Tarifa was finally able to wash the dirt and grime from her body and feel clean once more.

At the moment though, the only thing occupying Tarifa's mind as she bit down on Isra's shoulder was the second orgasm that was hitting her like a runaway Hopper. Isra held her body close to him in the water, her breasts flattened against his powerful chest, her arms wrapped around his head as he stroked into her with urgency and passion. Tarifa had initiated this tryst, surprising both herself and Isra with the need and desire that pulsed through her for him. He had quickly gotten over his shock and responded to her as Tarifa wanted him too. The first few moments had been fast and furious as he pinned her facing away from him against the smooth edges of the pool, worn away by centuries of the current moving through the water, and he had filled her with his enormous cock in one soulful plunge. Tarifa had never felt so aroused and hot, and this pulsed in her aura to him and he had taken her with fast, powerful, deep strokes, reaching inside her to places he had not been to during their night on the ship. Tarifa's blissful cries had echoed across the empty cavern, and she urged him deeper and faster with her pussy muscles and her hands by grabbing his hips and digging her nails into his skin, pulling him closer. His large balls slapping against her ass under the water only served to increase her pleasure as she knew she had every single inch of his massive cock filling her with each stroke.

As they cried out in climax together and Tarifa felt his juices erupt deep inside her, it felt so natural and wonderful to her. She had groaned in blissful delight when he turned her in his arms, his enormous pole slipping out of her for only a second before quickly spearing her completely once more. And once more he pounded into her urgently and possessively, her hands clutching his arms and adorning his face with soft kisses. The wildness in him was overtaking her as well as she rode his thick shaft with every ounce of strength in her elfin body, thrusting her hips in hard tight circles on him as he thrust into her tight warmth. She wanted to feel him erupt inside her, she wanted him to claim her again and again, and for the first time since that night on the ship, as her orgasm hit her and he flooded her once more with his seed, Tarifa felt no shame at what she was feeling. This was what she wanted.

Isra's hands dropped in the water, holding her firm ass and pulling her close to him as their breathing slowed and the last of his juices filled her. He turned and put his back to the edge of the pool for what little support it offered as Tarifa lifted her face from his shoulder and gazed into his violet eyes, putting her forehead gently against his.

He smiled gently. "You... you are unbelievable." He spoke, his chest still heaving as he took in gulps of air.

"No one... no one has ever done what you do to me Isra." She spoke softly with a small smile of her own.

"I will do it as often as you... as often as you like, for as long as you want me too." He answered reaching up to press his hand to her cheek.

"Isra... Isra I think you should know... I think I am..."

The echo of the two gunshots caused both of them to nearly jump out of their skin as they turned toward the tunnel. They heard the yells of several men and one more gunshot.

"The main cave!" Isra gasped. "Something is happening!"

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The young alpha male's eyes were wide as he stared at the blades of the Shi Viska only a millimeter's breath from slicing into the flesh of his face. The second alpha male was on his stomach on the ground at Aricia's side, the glimmering psychic knife extended from her fist and poised to slam into the back of his skull.

The remaining seven men and women in the main cave were frozen in their spots, the defacto leader of the rebels holding his arm out at the others, while aiming the sidearm at Aricia's head.

This is the way Tarifa and Isra found everyone as they burst into the main cave, pulling on the rest of their clothes.

"Golna what is going on?" Isra demanded.

"She attacked them!" Golna spat. "Put them both down so fast no one could move! Their weapons went off by accident! Those are the shots you heard. And you will hear one more if she does not let them up."

"Golna wait!" Tarifa spoke coming forward.

The burly Lycavorian looked at Isra's mate. Since she had gotten here there was something about her that exuded command and authority, and even he could not deny that. "You are Isra's mate Tarifa of the elves, and I understand she is your friend... but..."

"I have asked both of them twice now to not pulse me with their auras!" Aricia snapped out. "They did not listen to me. I have a mate! And though he will no longer have me for what I have done, what I was forced to do, I want no other mate! And I will never take another in his place! Never!"

"We do not recognize Joric as your mate she-wolf!" Golna spoke. "You are..."

Aricia whirled faster than they could follow and the Shi Viska was leveled at Golna in the next heartbeat. Golna's eyes went wide and he lifted his hands up, not wanting to feel the Shi Viska tear into his body, and most assuredly not wanting to feel whatever that glimmering psychic could do to him. "Joric was never my mate!" Aricia screamed. "And you would do well to remember that Golna! Tell your males do not make this mistake again, or you will find yourself short of breeders!"

In a silver/white flash of light the Shi Viska was gone, the psychic knife fading into nothing and Aricia turned to storm out of the cave.

Golna looked at Tarifa quickly, his weapon coming down as the others began to help the two males to their feet. "Tarifa of the elves... what does she mean?" Golna asked. "In our eyes Joric is not her mate! She is a free woman. It is instinct for our males to do this when a female attracts them and she is not mated. Why... why has this offended her? We are not like Joric! He will..."

Tarifa put her hand on Golna's arm. "You only know part of the story Golna. Perhaps Isra can tell you more, but there is much more going on here than you know. I need to speak with Aricia."

Golna turned to Isra as Tarifa darted out the mouth of the main cave allowing her nose to guide her after Aricia. She found her squatting on the ledge looking down over the valley, twilight beginning to settle upon the land.

"Aricia?" Tarifa asked softly coming up behind her.

"Tarifa... no words you speak can replace what has been taken from me." Aricia spoke. "The gesture is appreciated however..." She turned and looked at her as she stood up. "And I thank you for caring."

Tarifa stepped up to her. "Aricia... you know Martin is not like that. He would never believe what you have done."

Aricia's smile was thin lipped and held no humor. "But I did do it Tarifa." She said. "Regardless of how it happened, I cried out for another man to make me his mate, to claim me. Martin... my beloved Martin... he saw this. And then I struck him Tarifa. I struck him defending the very man who I now despise with every breath I take. I was not strong enough to resist it Tarifa. I should have been stronger."

Tarifa took her hands. "I know what that woman and the dragons did to you Aricia. That was not you acting that way. They forced you to act that way, drugged you. Isheeni told me everything Aricia."

Aricia nodded and took a deep breath. "She finds you fascinating you know. I don't know why, but there is something more in her thoughts when she speaks about you, perhaps because you are an elf."

"Yet you stay with them." Tarifa spoke. "You fight with them? Why Aricia? It just keeps that hatred you have inside you at the surface."

Aricia shook her head. “No. Not for Isheeni. Not for Torma. They have befriended me, cared for me earlier and they at least showed me why Arzoal did what she did. I... I think I forgave them a long time ago; but never Arzoal or Tablina. I will never forgive them. They fight with me now because we have the same purpose. Kill Chetak and Joric and the dragons will be free; and I will have my vengeance, my revenge.”

“And then what will you do Aricia?” Tarifa spoke. “You can carry this with you for the rest of your life.”

“Then I will kill myself Tarifa. And I will wait in the heavens for Martin to come, hoping that he will forgive me and allow me to love him again.” Aricia said. “It is all I have left.” Tarifa watched her look to the sky. *Isheeni I am ready.*

Tarifa heard the heavy swoosh and *thud* of Isheeni’s wings as she swooped in from above them and landed gently on the ledge. Aricia nimbly leaped up to her spot between Isheeni’s shoulders as the dragon reached out with her head and nudged Tarifa’s shoulder gently.

“There are reports of a large group led by Joric heading south.” Aricia told her as she settled into her spot. “We will confirm this tonight and I will be back in the morning to let you know. Stand ready Tarifa... you and they... they may have to fight now. And they will need a leader who can lead them.”

Tarifa looked at her wide eyed. “Me? I am an elf Aricia. They will never follow me.”

“You are a wolf now Tarifa, no matter how much you try to deny it.” Aricia said. “You were right. He is not like his father and brothers. Strangely his scent flows through you more than Dekton’s ever did Tarifa. Embrace that... and don’t let go. I will see you in the morning.”

Tarifa watched as Isheeni leaped into the darkening sky with a powerful burst of her legs and then she was gone. *His scent flows through you more than Dekton’s ever did.*

“Tarifa?” Isra’s voice filled her ears and she felt his arms encircle her waist pulling her close against his body. “Are you ok?”

Tarifa nodded as she pushed back against him, relishing in the warmth and love his embrace showered her with. “Yes... now that you are here.” She spoke softly.

“Golna activated the transmitter we have. We got some brief bursts from the Union.” Isra spoke. “The man my father appointed as Senator is announcing she has been killed by dragons. He is complaining that the Prime Minister didn’t see fit to announce this when he told her many days ago.”

Tarifa nodded slowly. “She is dead Isra, dead inside.” She spoke softly.

“Come... Golna needs you to put together the message you wish to send.” Isra spoke.

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## APO PRIME

Gorgo wiped the tears from her eyes as she moved for the door of her home. She was alone this night, her two sons on embassy duty on Hadaria and her two youngest daughters off with their friends for the evening. Her older two daughters lived with their mates, her oldest Jora always being quick to respond to her mother, as they had a special bond. Gorgo had told her to stay with her mate this night, and now she wasn’t so sure it had been a good idea. The son she had thought lost so many years ago was doing everything within his power to kill himself, and her mate of over two thousand years was with him fighting on a planet that had claimed more Lycavorian lives than any single battle in their history. With the exception of her sons, all four of her daughters thought it the best thing in the world to be sisters of the King, and they were telling all their friends they would get them in to see the king their brother. Her two sons had immediately requested transfers back to Apo Prime so that they could serve in their half brother’s Royal Guard, or at the very least among those who protected him and his Queens. Those transfer were still pending, but would ore than likely be approved.

Their home was attached to the huge University as were all the Professors and teachers who were employed there. It was a large three story home of red marble and immaculate gardens. They had lived her now for close to a thousand years, and neither she nor Riall intended to leave it.

Gorgo touched the panel on the side of her main door and looked up as it slid open. Her eyes narrowed quickly when she saw Deia. Everything that had happened in the last month had strained their relationship, and it seemed neither of them was intending to repair it anytime soon.

“Deia...” Gorgo spoke. “I am very busy right now. What is it you need?”

“We need to talk Gorgo.” Deia spoke.

“Talk about what Deia?” Gorgo snapped. “The Net Channels are reporting Aricia is dead. Killed by these dragons on this foul world she was taken to! And then the People’s Republic Ambassador gets of the Net Channel and says you knew about her death seven days ago!”

Deia nodded slowly. “He came to me yes.” She spoke.

“And you did not think to tell me!” Gorgo snapped. “You did not think to tell my son! You do not tell your own King!”

“The King has ordered an entire transmission block outgoing and incoming from his fleet unless specifically approved by him.” Deia spoke. “You know that. I am not exactly at the top of his list.”

“Do you blame him Deia?” Gorgo spoke.

“Gorgo *anse un!* I did not come here to argue! I came because I need your help!” Deia snapped.

“For what purpose?” Gorgo asked.

“Gorgo I did not report Aricia’s death because I don’t believe she is dead.” Deia spoke. “Furthermore... some new information has come to me that lead me to the conclusion that not only was Aricia forced into doing what she did, but everything that is happening is a part of a larger ploy of some sort to bring us all down.”

Gorgo’s face relaxed somewhat, “What leads you to this conclusion Deia?”

Deia looked to the side quickly before stepping out of the way and allowing Dasha to step fully into view. Gorgo’s eyes went wide when she saw Aricia’s mother. She had met the woman while in Sparta and found her very pleasant and very intelligent. She and Dasha had spent many hours together speaking of old times and what the future could bring for all of them. She was a woman much like herself who loved her children, especially her only daughter, and a woman who simply adored the man who had claimed her daughter’s heart, and not because he was King.

“Dasha!” Gorgo exclaimed opening her arms and pulling the woman into her embrace, both of them allowing tears to come forth once more.

They held one another for a long moment, taking comfort from each other before Gorgo drew her back and looked at her. “When did you arrive? I had no idea you were coming to Apo Prime.”

“It was the Prime Minister’s doing Gorgo.” Dasha spoke.

Gorgo looked at her. “What? Why?”

“It appears you were not the only one who saw that I was ignoring everything happening around us that wasn’t political.” Deia spoke. “Someone asked me how far I was prepared to go to find what is happening.” Deia looked at Dasha. “I went to Earth, to the best possible source of information in the universe, a young woman’s mother.”

“I don’t follow.” Gorgo spoke, drawing Dasha into the warmth of her house. “Come in both of you please.” When the door slid shut Gorgo watched as Dasha removed the long cape and hood she had worn since getting off the frigate that had brought her here. “What are you talking about?”

Deia looked at Dasha. “I believe Aricia’s mother can best answer that question.”

Dasha looked at Gorgo. “Aricia could never have done what they say she did Gorgo. Not in this life or any other. Not willingly. She would never have betrayed her Martin so.”

“How can you be so sure Dasha? As much as even I don’t want to believe it, I saw it with my own eyes!” Gorgo spoke.

Dasha nodded. “That was not my daughter. Not my Aricia. Gorgo your son claimed Aricia under the Centennial of the Moon.” Dasha saw Gorgo’s eyes go wide. “They consecrated this even further by sharing blood during an act of love before they left earth. When the Oracle revealed to them the significance of this, they came to me and told me this later. Aricia was giddy with happiness, and your son was so embarrassed he could not meet my eyes, even if they were filled with tears. They... they are Soulmates Gorgo. Fated to be together, to always love one another, never betray one another... this is not something Aricia would have done! She would have taken her own life first. Without question.”

Gorgo backed up against the wall and felt for the chair to sit down. As she settled into it she looked at Deia. “Deia do you... do you know what this means?”

Deia stepped forward her face set in a mask of stern determination that Gorgo hadn’t seen in decades. “It means that I’m tired of being *barik wen!*” Deia snapped. “I’m tired of people telling me we have forgotten the

old ways! We need access to the University's vaults Gorgo. You are the only one who can grant unrestricted access."

Gorgo looked at her. "Why?"

"I want us to learn everything there is to learn on the *Lunmai* and everything associated with the ancient mating rites. I want to know everything that Dasha and Aricia and even your son seem to know only by instinct. I want to know this... because when I take a bite out of Chetak's *gostin mida* for what he has done, I want it to hurt really badly."

Gorgo got to her feet. "Give me five minutes to change." She spoke. "We'll go through the underground connecting tunnels so no one sees us."

"Gorgo... this must remain quiet, between only us." Deia cautioned. "Do you know anyone who can do things for us if we request them?"

"Jora my oldest," Gorgo spoke without hesitation. "Whenever Riall is gone she is like my rock. She will do whatever I ask of her."

Deia nodded. "Then I know who I can contact." She said. "I must return to my office, and Dasha's presence on Apo Prime must not become common knowledge. Not yet."

"The vault archives have several comfortable rooms where she will be safe." Gorgo spoke looking at Dasha. "It is very barren, but functional."

Dasha smiled. "Like you Lady Gorgo... I am a Spartan woman. Barren but functional is second nature to us."

Gorgo smiled and nodded. "Yes it is. Stay here I will return in minutes."

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## EARTH

### EDEN CITY

They stood in the conference room of the main hospital in Eden City, Selene and Lynwe now joining them. They watched as the senior elf doctor walked into the room carrying the medical scroll pad, Colonel Nestor right behind him. This was the man who had fought as a counterweight to Anja throughout the entire battle for Eden City. They had communicated almost every thirty minutes during the battle and the respect they now had for each other was without question.

"So tell us Olyne." Dysea spoke as she stood next to Isabella.

The elf moved to the small view screen and attached his scroll pad to the terminal. "I've done every test I know how to do, and even some I thought up as we went along. I wish Queen Anja were here, she is far more skilled at this portion of medical science than I."

"Just tell us Olyne." Selene snapped.

Olyne flipped on the screen and they all saw the two samples come up side-by-side. "I cross referenced the sample that Colonel Nestor supplied to us in twenty different ways. I even checked the locations on the body that the Colonel said small internal tracking beacons were implanted by the Coven."

"Doctor Olyne... please spare me all of the medical mumbo jumbo," Dysea growled. "Just tell me if he was a clone or not damn it!"

Olyne looked at her and nodded. "Yes." He replied. "There is no mistaking that. The trace preservation compounds in Dekton's skin tissue match almost perfectly the preservation compounds in Colonel Nestor's skin cells. My tests also indicate he is one of three clones."

"Three!" Jamerl exclaimed. "Are you absolutely sure!"

Olyne nodded. "Nestor actually confirmed that for me. Each clone had a series and letter identifier. The higher the number the more clones made in the series. I found Dekton's series number tattooed on the inside of his left nostril; series 74C; which means there are two clones that were made before him if what Nestor says is accurate."

Dysea looked at Nestor, "Colonel?"

"On the life of my new son Queen Dysea... this is all true." Nestor spoke.

Isabella stepped forward. “Your loyalty is not in question Colonel. You know what you are and you make no attempts to hide it. Your actions have only proven your sincerity. The question remains, did Dekton know what he was?”

“How could they clone a pureblood wolf and not have us be able to detect it?” Jamerl asked.

“Oh Dekton was a wolf... but he wasn’t a pureblood.” Olyne spoke. They all looked at him. “With the help of the medical facilities on your ships Admiral, I have spent much of my off time studying and researching. The senior medic in Colonel Nestor’s division assisted me in discovering this. He knew what to look for.”

Olyne switched the view on his screen to several different images of tissue samples. “They used cloned blood taken from a pureblood. As I said, I am not Queen Anja in this field, she could explain it much better than I, but essentially they took a sample of blood from a pureblood wolf, perhaps one they killed or injured in combat, and then they cloned it. It would keep the same distinguishing compounds such as scent and viability, but during the cloning process the pureness of the blood, the...” He lifted the second pad. “The Isopocal proteins they are called, they were washed away, leaving just bare wolf protein remnants.”

Lynwe stepped forward. “That is why he told Tarifa and Aihola they could not give donate blood to Selene and I. He knew he would be discovered?”

Olyne nodded. “We do not do extensive testing of blood in healing battle field injuries and that is how he was able to stay hidden. He would shift quickly to heal any injuries, and he would let no one treat his minor wounds.” He spoke calmly. “But any donated blood is tested completely, and this would have shown up undoubtedly.”

“But he told Aihola to take his blood before he died.” Lynwe objected.

“More than likely this was a move to garner an honored hero status and effectively hide his true nature. If he acted the way he did, he knew the King would not allow any sort of autopsy or testing.”

“So he knew what he was.” Dysea asked. “And he has been among us all this time! He had *Nauta Melme*’s trust! He was sleeping with two of my closest friends! He made Tarifa a wolf!”

Olyne nodded slowly. “I would... have to say yes Milady. The pureness of the blood wasn’t there, but the actual virus that could change a person was.”

Dysea looked at Nestor. “Did he love them?” She asked.

“Lady Dysea I...” Nestor began.

“Answer the question Colonel!” She snapped.

“The clones in my series were given the most advanced... we were made to be almost human in every regard.” Nestor spoke. “It is why Rebecca affected me as much as she did. Earlier clones... I... I do not know. They were designed to... to basically follow orders. Did he love them?” Nestor took a deep breath. “I would have to say earlier clones were incapable of such complex emotions. Without knowing him better, the only answer I can honestly give you is no.”

Dysea turned around quickly and moved to the opposite side of the room more angry than she had ever been in her life. “So he was doing what he was instructed?” Dysea said finally.

“That is what I believe Milady yes.” Nestor spoke.

Isabella turned to Jamerl. “But if Dekton was one of three, is this man on Apo Prime another clone or the original donor? And who is he working for?”

“It stands to reason not for us.” Jamerl spoke.

“He works in the department that is researching the Talracian Ore refining process. The only way those who kidnapped Tarifa would know to come here and attempt to purchase so much of this ore was if he told them.” Selene spoke now. “They want to use Tarifa to get the ore!”

“I want his home in Sparta quarantined immediately.” Dysea snapped. “Arrest his daughters and their mates. I want the same tests conducted on them as well. Dilios have every home searched thoroughly, there is another Dekton clone in Sparta and I want...”

They turned as another fleet officer came in and went to Jamerl, handing him the pad. They watched as Jamerl read it, his face hardening.

“Admiral?” Dysea asked.

Jamerl looked at her. “It is being reported by all the Net Channels... all our news services...”

“What are they reporting?” Isabella asked.

“They are saying that Queen Aricia chose another mate in the fever of the *Lunmai*, dismissing the King out of hand.” Jamerl spoke. “They are saying the King did nothing to challenge this, and they are now reporting Aricia has been killed by predators on her new planet.” He looked up at Dysea, as all eyes went to her.

Dysea shook her head quickly. “Little Wolf is not dead.” She spoke softly. “I don’t care what those reports say. I would feel it if she was, and so would *Nauta Melme* and *Melyanna*.”

“We need to contact Deia and let her know what is going on Dysea.” Isabella spoke. “We need to discover who this man is and how deeply this goes before this begins to spiral out of our means to control it.”

Dysea nodded. “I agree Bella.” She said softly.

Selene stepped forward quickly. “Olyne can you do this test on everyone?” She asked.

Olyne nodded. “Yes... I already have devised something that would be able to detect cloned genes, why?”

“How accurate would it be?” Selene asked.

Olyne shrugged, “Using Colonel Nestor’s base sample... nearly a hundred percent.”

Selene nodded her eyes now cobalt blue in anger. “Go get your test Olyne and then return here.” She spoke. “I have lost too much of my life, gained back far more...” She looked at Lynwe. “...and invested too much time to see all that we have fought and won to be thrown away. All of us will be tested before we leave this facility tonight.”

There wasn’t a single hesitation as everyone in the room began rolling up their sleeves.

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## HADARIA

Eurin looked over when the door to the classroom burst open and the young researcher rushed in. There were gasps dozens of scantily clad young Hadarian females who were sitting on the benches.

“Edor what is the meaning of this?” Eurin demanded harshly. “You have violated the Rules of Study with the female Healers!”

The young researcher bowed his head quickly as the eyes of a hundred and ten young women gawked at him in stunned silence, but moved directly up to Eurin. He held out the data pad. “Divine One please I beg your forgiveness, but I thought it best you saw this immediately.”

“It could not wait Edor?” Eurin bellowed.

“No Divine One, it could not!” He almost snapped at her.

Eurin’s dark green eyes flared at his tone of voice with her and she snatched the pad from his hand. “What is this?”

“Divine One... the results of the test you asked me to conduct.” He replied.

Eurin did not hear him speak as her eyes grew wide and her hand went to her mouth. “Healers we are done for the day!” She spoke. “Leave us quickly!”

The young women scrambled to get out of the room as one of them had ever seen the Divine One in such a state. Eurin waited until the door closed behind the last female before turning to Edor.

“This is accurate?” She asked.

“I did the test three times myself Divine One.” Edor answered. “There is no mistake.”

“Edor... this... this type of compound has not existed for over twenty thousand years, and then only in the oldest of their kind.” Eurin spoke.

Edor nodded. “I know Divine One.” He replied. “I had to... I had to access our archived data banks to confirm it.”

“They do not exist anymore Edor. Only the remains scattered across any number of planets.” Eurin spoke.

He held out the other pad. “They exist Divine One, look.”

Eurin read the new information, her eyes growing even larger. “Why have we not heard of this before?”

“They just were accepted into the Union Divine One. Information is only now beginning to come out about their society. They have been very insular in regards to what was released.” Edor replied.

Eurin looked at him. “Prepare a sealifter for me Edor. You will drive it. We must go to the Queen now, without delay!”

“Divine One you are leaving the Island?” Edor asked stunned.

“I have a feeling Edor, I will be leaving more than this island soon!” Eurin spoke. “Now go! We must hurry before it is too late.”

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## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### DAY THIRTY-SIX

#### *LEONIDAS I*

Martin looked down on For'mya's sleeping face as she lay on the bed, the sheet covering her lower body, leaving her back and shoulders bare. Her golden colored blond hair was spread across the pillows, her soft lips open slightly. He stood next to the bed in full armor, his *Nehtes* secured to his right leg. The matte black body armor was new and clean, replacing the one he had been wearing for the last two days which had been torn open by a Coven Immortal and his sword. The wound had cut into the flesh of his back almost an inch, and extended for four inches along his side ending just below his armpit. He had refused to be evacuated at first, until Riall had told him in very plain language he would order the King forcibly returned to the ship if he did not get on the *STRIKER* For'mya was flying.

Staring at her body on the bed, the image became that of Aricia, her satiny black hair spread across his sheets, how it felt slipping through his fingers and against his skin, the wonderful length of it, falling to her firm ass. The wondrous curves of her body and the many times he would have been happy to just take up residence between her thighs and never come up for air. Martin inhaled deeply, and he thought for a moment he detected her sweet lavender coco scent, and his blood surged in response.

Then that image was gone and For'mya was there.

They had cracked the third garrison two days ago, split it open like a melon, the vacuum sealed tunnels sucking in all of the concentrated firepower from now double the ships they had started with. There was really nothing the High Coven defenders could do against such a precise and concentrated volley of fire. The fires and explosions that had swept through the tunnel were devastating to watch, as gouts of flame and smoke erupted from the observation posts all around the third garrison perimeter. The awesome destructive power of the vacuum wave of fire and superheated gas and debris had killed or mortally wounded over three quarters of the garrison strength. Martin had led the charge on the breach with nearly forty thousand Spartans on his heels and they had swept through the tunnels and extensions like a wave of molten lava sweeping down from an erupting volcano. That was until the Immortal had hit him from behind. He still felt the twinge of pain in his lower back, but it would be gone in a day or so Kmyla had told him, her dark eyes looking at him in an accusatory way.

Martin couldn't blame her.

Andreus hadn't left his side unless he was in his quarters, even though Kmyla pleaded with him to not go to the surface on a number of occasions, worried over the safety of her mate and his reckless actions mirroring Martin's own.

Danny had been right. He was losing his control, taking larger risks, more dangerous risks, and if he continued, he would be responsible for the deaths of men and women who followed him out of loyalty and pride, even though all he wished for was to die. He hadn't come here for glory or fame... he had picked the most secure Coven facility in range with the simple thought of fighting until someone killed him. He had left instructions to be passed on when he died, Dysea, Anja and Isabella to be named Queens immediately, For'mya to be released from her role as concubine.

The only problem was Martin couldn't even get himself killed the right way.

A dozen times High Coven Immortals or troops had the drop on him, could have killed him easily, and his instincts hadn't allowed it. He had called on the power that coursed through him instinctively, sending diamond shaped bolts of psychic power ripping into flesh and bone like it was second nature. It wasn't a conscious decision on his part, but like something was directing him to do it, and thereby saving his life in the process.

Not anymore though. Not after today.



Martin set the data pad on the table beside the bed and looked at For'mya once more. She had been an anchor for him, and in being that anchor she had realized just how strong she truly was. They had made love half a dozen times since that first morning, but For'mya knew there was no true feeling from him. She had tried everything she could think of in their bed to get him to respond to her with emotion, to attempt to show him what he had shown her. That he could feel once more, and though he had gripped her tightly to him last night in the aftermath, hearing her coo in contentment, he still felt hollow and empty. The ache would not go away, and he could not bring himself to open his shields and allow Dysea, Isabella and Anja to feel that, for it wasn't their pain to bear.

Martin reached up and took hold of the coral red pendant he had worn since the day his Soulmate had given it to him. He squeezed it tightly in his hand before tucking it back under his body armor and leaving the bed chambers, allowing For'mya to sleep. He moved across the large quarters and stepped into the corridor where Komirri and Riall waited.

"How far away are they?" Martin asked.

"Their present speed will put them here in six days." Komirri replied quickly as they began to walk.

"Numbers?"

"That is the strange thing sire." Riall spoke, "Twelve High Coven Fleet Groups. Even when we assaulted this planet in the past, Veldruk has never committed this many fleets to its defense. It's almost as if suddenly he can not afford to lose this retched planet."

"This isn't their only forward planet is it?" Martin asked.

"No sire. They have five others with more modern facilities. They are just as heavily fortified, though not as close to the border." Riall answered.

Martin shook his head. "That doesn't matter. We'll be gone in five days one way or the other." He spoke.

They looked at him, "My Lord?" Komirri and Riall echoed each other as Martin stepped into the lift elevator. "Riall I left orders for you with For'mya. She'll know what to do."

"Sire you..." The doors closed on Martin's body and he was gone. Riall looked at Komirri. "What is that suppose to mean?"

Komirri shook his head. "I know nothing of leaving until we win." He said.

"Get For'mya up to the bridge!" Riall spoke. "I don't like the sounds of this."

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## HADARIA

"She's not dead Seanna." Anja spoke looking at her as they lay in the bed together.

Seanna reached out and touched her face. "If that is what you believe Anja... then that is what I believe." She said.

"I would feel it Seanna." Anja continued. "Aricia and I were as close as you and I have become. I would feel if she was dead."

Seanna stared into her Queen and new found lover's jade green eyes. She had not mentioned anything to Anja about her meeting with the Divine One, and she wouldn't until she knew something more concrete. They had shared each other more times than Seanna could count since their first night, and each time it was more pleasurable and more intense, and they grew closer and closer. Seanna knew without a doubt she had made the right choice.

Late this afternoon when the Net Channels had reported Aricia's death, Anja had fallen into a deep funk and canceled all of her training for the rest of the day. It wasn't until Seanna had crawled into bed with her now that she knew why.

"Anja... you still love her." Seanna spoke softly. "You will always love her. There is nothing wrong with what you feel."

"She's not dead!" Anja snapped, throwing back the sheet and climbing from the bed angrily. She went to the chair and took the soft robe and pulled it on over her naked body.

Seanna sat up on the bed, holding the sheet across her own naked body. "Anja... I am not... I am not trying to replace her in your heart."

Anja looked at her, her eyes going wide and she moved quickly back to the bed. “No!” She gasped kissing her deeply, Seanna melting into her arms for the kiss as their naked flesh pressed tight to each other. Anja pulled away after the sizzling kiss and looked at her. “No! I know that Seanna! I love what we have found... I do! And it grows stronger every moment we are together! It’s... it’s hard to explain... but I feel it inside me. I know she’s not dead.”

Seanna reached up and stroked her cheek, smiling. “Then let us find out a way to confirm that.” She spoke.

“What do you mean?”

Seanna moved quickly, holding the sheet around her as she stood up. She fastened it above her breasts and took Anja’s hand. “Let us call Deia.” She said pulling her along towards the door.

“She won’t tell us anything.” Anja barked. “And I don’t like her. She’s a politician! I hate politicians!”

Seanna pulled her along as they left the bedroom and moved down the massive corridor toward the wide staircase. They both stopped when they saw Eurin entering the great foyer below them. Seanna’s eyes went wide.

“Divine One!” She gasped, pulling Anja along behind her as they moved down the stairs. She bowed her head when they stopped in front of her at the base of the stairs. “Divine One I... I have never heard of you leaving the island!”

Eurin looked at her and smiled. “It has been some time child. And my sealifter is so old it needed repair before I could depart.” She turned to Anja. “My Queen it is very pleasant to see you again.”

Anja nodded, “Eurin.” She said still somewhat skeptical of the older woman. They had met shortly after Anja arrived, and though she found her to be polite and extremely intelligent, something did not sit right with her. “Why are you here at this hour?”

“You have heard then Divine One?” Seanna asked.

Eurin looked at her. “Heard what? I have been traveling all day.”

“It is all over the Net Channels Divine One. It is being reported that Aricia was killed by predators native to Enurrua, killed by dragons.” Seanna spoke.

Eurin’s eyes narrowed, “Dragons!” She exclaimed. “Then there is not doubt.” She said softly. “That is very interesting because Aricia is why I have come here so late.” She spoke.

Anja perked up immediately, “About Aricia?” She asked moving closer. “What about Little Wolf?”

Eurin looked at her. “Seanna gave me a sample of Aricia’s blood when she arrived here with you Lady Anja. The sample these Lycavorian men gave to Deia.”

Anja stepped even closer, nodding her head. “They... they said it would prove she made her choice freely.”

Eurin nodded. “Yes I’m sure that’s what they said.” She spoke sternly. “It is simply another reason to detest men in every form. The fact of the matter is... she did not make the choice freely. She was under the influence of an incredibly powerful compound that was filtering through her blood.”

“What?” Anja almost yelled her eyes wide. “Deia’s... Deia said she had it tested and nothing came of that!”

Eurin nodded. “And Deia was right. However Deia’s medical people do not have the knowledge my people do, and they would not have detected this substance. Is there someplace where we can talk my Queen?”

Anja motioned her to the side where there was a small sitting room. *ATROPOS!*

It took only ten seconds for the burly Spartan to come barreling from his adjoining room, clad only in pants and brandishing his *Nehtes*. Seanna and Eurin looked stunned at his almost feral expression and demeanor.

“My Queen!” Atropos exclaimed, his eyes searching for targets and threats.

Anja moved to him quickly and placed her hand on his arm, calming him. “There is no danger Atropos... but you need to hear this as well.” She told him.

“Hear what my Queen?”

“Come with us.” Anja spoke as she led them into the sitting room.

It took only moments before all of them except Eurin were sitting in the room. Eurin plugged her scroll pad into the small monitor screen.

“Seanna brought this to me almost immediately after arriving My Queen.” Eurin began. “It took my researchers some time but we first found this.” The orange colored spots appeared on the screen and Anja got up and moved to the monitor.

“A contraceptive enzyme?” Anja spoke confused.

Eurin looked surprised. “You know what this is?”

Anja shook her head. “Not this particular one no, but most contraceptive enzymes are basically all formed the same way.”

Eurin couldn’t help but smile. “My Queen, as each day passes you give me more pause to thank the gods.” She said. “You are correct... it is a contraceptive. It is called Sirtin, a very old elfin contraceptive my Queen, in Aricia’s blood.”

Anja shook her head. “Aricia and Martin... they are Soulmates Eurin.” Seeing her eyes go a little wider Anja continued. “Once they became Soulmates, she would never have willingly taken any form of contraceptive! None!”

Eurin nodded. “I see.”

Seanna looked at Anja. “What does this mean Anja?”

Atropos stepped forward as he got to his feet, his stern face filled with questions. “Once they became Soulmates, neither of them would have taken another mate of pure Lycavorian blood. Not unless one or the other died by natural causes or in combat.” He spoke sternly. “My... my sister betrayed that sacred oath when she did what she did. And now you tell me this? My Queen... Anja... I serve you willingly and without question but I...”

“Your sister did no such thing Atropos of Sparta!” Eurin spoke quickly and firmly.

Anja’s head snapped around to look at Eurin. “What are you talking about?”

“My Queen...” Eurin spoke. “Did you ever have chance to take a sample of Aricia’s blood?”

Anja shook her head. “I never saw a reason to.” She said. “Why? What is going on?”

“So you did not know that Aricia and the King have the purest samples of Lycavorian blood that have existed in nearly eight thousand years.” Eurin said. “The King’s blood is even stronger than his father’s.”

“No... I did not know that.” Anja spoke softly, her jade green eyes wide.

“We measure Mindvoice abilities based on the pureness of ones blood Anja.” Eurin spoke. “After seeing this sample with the contraceptive and viewing the sample of Aricia’s blood, it made me come to the conclusion that even in the midst of the *Lunmai* fever; Aricia would never have betrayed the King in that way. Her blood would not have allowed it. The purer the blood the deeper the attraction between Lycavorian males and females, and from what I have seen and heard, the connection between the King and Aricia could not have been stronger.”

Anja nodded. “Yes.” She said softly. She saw Atropos stopped by the door, now listening intently.

Eurin adjusted the screen once more and Anja looked at the sample, her eyes growing darker. She stepped up to the screen and touched her index finger to the dark red splotches against the dark blue. “What... what are these?”

“These are what Deia’s equipment and people would never have detected. They would never have detected them because they no longer exist.” Eurin spoke. “They are the degrading molecules of what is called Urezoban. It is a potency enhancer, made from the inner shell of a dragon’s egg.” Eurin saw Anja’s head come around and look at her. “It is the most powerful drug of its kind ever produced. It increases the effects of any natural occurring disease or condition by a factor of a hundred, and in this case, Aricia and the *Lunmai*... the Coming of Age Fever. This drug administered directly into her blood stream by say, a pin prick or scratch, would have immediately increased the potency of the *Lunmai* phase she was currently experiencing by a hundred times. When she arrived on Apo Prime, if her blood sample is accurate, she was at the peak of the *Lunmai*. The very height of the fever it produces within her. Amazingly... and this goes to her incredible Mindvoice abilities, she was fighting it off due to the pureness of her blood and her love for the King.

“Whoever gave her this drug; they knew exactly what they were doing. No one... not even Aricia... who has the Mindvoice potential second only to the King... not even she could have kept it from overwhelming her, and making her surrender to the *Lunmai*.” Eurin looked at Atropos who stood in the doorway, his dark eyes wide and unbelievably filling with tears. Eurin was stunned, as she had never seen a Spartan cry in her entire

life. “Making her surrender to Chetak’s son in the fashion she did. This was forced on your sister Atropos. She did not do this by choice.”

Who were these Lycavorians from Sparta that they would openly show emotion in front of others, when so many of their kind did not Eurin thought to herself.

Eurin turned her head and looked at Anja, her jade green eyes ablaze with a fury that Eurin had never seen before in any living being. The scream came from Atropos however, and it caused shivers of fear to course down Eurin’s spine when she heard it, for it pierced her very soul. She watched Atropos extend his *Nehtes* in the blink of an eye and send it hurtling across the room, the eight foot long spear burying itself in the marble and steel of the wall over halfway in length due to the strength of the throw.

“BLOOD!” Atropos screamed, the tears coming freely now. “I will have someone’s blood for this!”

Anja moved to Atropos quickly and grasped her Captain in her arms, the huge man falling to his knees, his face buried in the abdomen of his considerably smaller Queen. “I cursed her! I condemned my sister and she was innocent!”

Anja grasped his head tightly to her, tears flowing down her own cheeks now. “Does Martin know this?” She snapped.

Eurin was still in shock from Atropos’s display. “I... I only just discovered this, my Queen.” She stammered. “He... he can’t know.”

Atropos looked up quickly and scrambled to his feet. “We must tell him immediately!” He barked squeezing Anja’s arms before wiping his eyes and moving to where his *Nehtes* was imbedded in the wall. “He must know now!”

Anja looked at him detecting the urgency in his voice. “Atropos what is wrong?”

Eurin gasped when Atropos wrenched his *Nehtes* free of the marble and turned. “They are Soulmates Anja.” He spoke. “He will allow no one through his Mindvoice shields. Only... only my sister could have penetrated them. If he sees this information... what they have reported...”

“You mean that she is dead?” Seanna asked quickly.

Atropos nodded. “If he sees this... he will do what any Soulmate partner would do if this happened to them in the fashion it has happened to the King and my sister, torn apart as they have been by false betrayal... and the actions of others.”

Anja shook her head, recognition over what her Captain was saying washing over her face, “Atropos no!”

Atropos nodded. “He will take his own life my Queen.”

“By the gods no!” Eurin spoke.

“No!” Anja barked. “I won’t allow it! I won’t!” She moved to the com panel in the room and slammed her hand down on it.

“Planetary Communications Center!” The voice echoed immediately.

“I want to speak to the Admiral in charge of the Union Fleet Group in charge of the defense of Hadaria! I want to talk to him like yesterday!”

“Stand... stand by... Milady Anja!”

Anja turned to Seanna. “Seanna...”

Seanna shook her head. “I will pack our things!” She spoke quickly before heading out of the room. “I will be back in five minutes!”

Eurin stepped forward. “My Queen... what do you intend to do?”

Anja looked at her. “I intend to keep the man I love from killing himself, and then I intend to go to this planet and get Aricia back! And I will kill whoever gets in my way!”

“Alone?” Eurin gasped.

Anja looked at Atropos. “I won’t be alone.” She said.

Atropos took a deep breath. “I will be ready in three minutes.”

“My Queen... Admiral Daglan here! My Queen... what is wrong?”

“Admiral... your fastest ship? What is it?”

“An *AUTUMN MOON*-Class Attack Frigate Milady.” He answered immediately. “It is Coven Shroud generator equipped and the fastest ship we have in any of our fleets next to the *LEONIDAS I*.”

“I want one here at the Hadarian spaceport as fast as it will get here!” Anja snapped.

“Nineteen minutes my Queen! I will order it there now!” Daglan answered.

“Admiral?”

“Yes My Queen?”

“I want it carrying every Spartan you are able to cram onto it. Is that understood?”

The Admiral allowed the toothy smile to split his lips. “I will see to it my Queen.”

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## APO PRIME

“Dysea... are you absolutely sure?” Deia asked still in shock over what she had just been told.

“Without question.” Dysea replied from the holoinage transmission. “Jamerl led the raid here in Sparta himself five hours ago. We have arrested both of his daughters, Nessia and Narcissa, but they are not clones Deia. We have also uncovered some very sophisticated communications equipment in a sealed room within the floor of their house here. Nessia and Narcissa claim to have no knowledge of this room. Lander and Panos are currently going through every bit of data involving anything Dekton did or was involved in, even before *Nauta Melme* returned to earth.”

Deia looked at L'tian and Olalla who sat with her in the office. “Dysea... how... how is this possible?”

“It appears the Coven was much further along in the cloning process than anyone knew. It did not begin on Earth as Yuri made us believe; they were merely using Earth as the last testing ground for the entire procedure.” Dysea spoke. “His daughters Nessia and Narcissa are in fact half vampire, half Lycavorian, which would fit with their mother being a turned vampire as Dekton told Aihola and Tarifa.”

Isabella leaned forward in the transmission. “You can see for yourself he insinuated himself into the Royal Guard to get near Martin... yet when Martin made him bodyguard to Tarifa and Aihola... we assume he was given instructions to maintain that cover and provide information on what they were building in Eden City. He had access to everything that Tarifa and Aihola were working on. We are almost sure he is the one that leaked information on their mission to the Drow city, and planted the bomb that almost killed Martin and Dysea.”

“There was an uncharted flight from a *STRIKER* the night before the attack on us.” Dysea picked it up again. “That same *STRIKER* returned to Eden City two hours later. Two hours after that, the Raptors with the personnel for the Drow mission took off. We have already questioned the pilot... he assumed Dekton was doing something private for Tarifa or Aihola and thought nothing of it.”

“So he was using your friends?” Olalla asked now from his chair.

Dysea nodded quickly, “In every possible way it seems.” She answered. “Doctor Olyne has determined the body we exhumed here is one of three Dekton Clones. They all have the same preservation tissue compound. We can not even confirm if the real Dekton was even the real Dekton. The man working in your special projects division could very well be the real one Deia, or one of the two remaining clones.”

Deia moved back to her chair. “Who else knows this?”

“Here in Sparta, myself, Bella, Jamerl, Dilios and four others.” Dysea answered her immediately. “You, L'tian and Olalla on Apo Prime.”

“Milady Dysea... you know what this Talracian Ore could be used for?” L'tian asked now.

Dysea nodded. “A very specialized armor for the Union starships, yes. And if Tarifa and Selene had not sensed something ill about what these men were offering, we would have given it to them.”

“If the Coven got their hands on this formula, it would give them an incredible military advantage over us.” Olalla spoke. “More so then the slim one they have already.”

“I understand this.” Dysea spoke. “You know of course that Tarifa has been kidnapped?”

Deia nodded. “Yes... as of yet we do not know by whom however.”

“I do. It was the very same men who took Little Wolf from us Deia,” Dysea told her without any hesitation in her voice.

“How do you know this?” Deia asked quickly.

“I gave the engine coil signature to our fleet officers here.” Isabella answered. “Dysea sent a frigate to track it. That frigate is now eight hours from Enurrua. The trail leads directly there.”

“Aihola was incensed when I contacted her about this.” Dysea spoke. “She already had reason to hate these men for taking Tarifa. Now... now she is beside herself. She and Tarifa... they loved Dekton... and to discover it was all a lie.” Dysea shook her head.

“Then you haven’t heard about Aricia?” Deia spoke.

Dysea met her gaze in the transmission. “If you are referring to the transmission by that fool Senator claiming she is dead, yes I heard that. And Little Wolf is no more dead than you or I.” She spoke, “This Joric stronger than *Nauta Melme*? That is so laughable it isn’t even funny. I am not a proper politician for a Queen Deia, I freely admit that. I was created to be more of a warrior than a Queen... but I do know when someone is lying, and that man was lying through his teeth.”

L’tian chuckled and shook his head looking at Deia. “I told you.” He spoke. He turned back to Dysea. “Lady Dysea... I wish to apologize once more for my actions when we first met. I can assure you right now, whatever you wish myself and the Elf Delegation to do, we will do, without hesitation. We have not had an elfin Queen in many millennia, but I can tell you we will be proud to call you our Queen.”

Dysea nodded her head to him in the transmission. “Deia... we have not seen eye to eye on all that has happened recently, but we are moving out of the realm I have knowledge to understand or operate within. I am not a politician. Someone has been using us to tear each other apart and we have gladly done it for them at every turn. It needs to stop. Little Wolf did not...”

“Dysea... I have Aricia’s mother here on Apo Prime.” Deia spoke. “I discovered some things on my own that have led me to the same conclusion. She is right now working with Gorgo researching the *Lunmai* and every ancient Lycavorian mating ritual known to exist.”

Dysea was quiet for a moment. “I had thought she had gone into hiding out of shame.” She said softly.

“We’ve been fighting amongst ourselves for so long; we have allowed Chetak and his followers to grab more power than they should be allowed. I intend to stop that... but I need to do it politically as well as militarily.” Deia spoke. “I must follow our laws or we are no better than the men who have perpetrated this.”

Dysea nodded. “I know.” She said softly. “I can not touch *Nauta Melme* Deia. His Mindvoice shields are more powerful than I could hope to penetrate. Only Little Wolf would have a chance to do that as she was almost as powerful as him. I know what he is doing right now, but we must contact him some way.”

Deia shook her head. “He has instituted a complete blackout of all incoming and outgoing fleet communications.” She said. “And I no longer rate very high on his list or that of Riall or Ceneu. They will not answer me.”

“We must pray he does not discover that these fools are reporting Aricia is dead.” Dysea spoke. “There is no telling what he may do. And if he discovers they in some way forced her to do what she did, there is nothing in this universe that will keep him from annihilating anything in his path to get her back.”

Deia nodded quickly. “If I have learned anything of our King... it is that he will do what he says he will do.” She looked at the holo image of the elfin Queen she was rapidly gaining a great deal of respect for. “You said there were three clones. If one is here on Apo Prime, then the other is still out there. The attack on the Oracle took place while you were here. Have you been able to find any trace of the assassin?”

Isabella shook her head. “He has either left the planet or is very aware that we are now looking for him. No transmissions are allowed off world without Jamerl’s or our permission, but so far we have detected nothing. The only ships that have left Earth are Union warships, the rest are commercial transports that still remain in orbit loading and unloading supplies and equipment to begin rebuilding this planet.”

“If he knows that you are on to him, he will be very dangerous based on what we know he has done.” Olalla spoke again.

“We have increased security on the Oracle. I believe she was attacked because they knew *Nauta Melme* would go to her in just this type of crisis. Helen and he became very close over the time we spent here in Sparta.” Dysea spoke.

“Deia... the High Coven wanted to exterminate the Oracles because of the influence they had over your people.” L’tian spoke. “Is it possible... because these clones are obviously produced by the Coven, that not only have they infiltrated our own government, but they are also targeting her as well?”

“Let them try.” Dysea spoke. “I have two complete *Mora* guarding her now. They will not succeed in another attempt. If she survives... she will be better protected than anyone in the Union.”

“Will she survive Dysea?” Deia asked.

“They will bring her out of the medical coma tomorrow, but it will be up to her own powers of will and mind to determine that.” Dysea spoke.

“What are you going to do?” Deia asked.

“What can I do?” Dysea replied. “We will remain here. It will take us too long to travel back to Apo Prime, or even to *Nauta Melme*’s position. Bella and I will make sure Earth is secure once more, and we will clean out whatever infestation of traitors there are. I guarantee that.”

“Milady... you must come back.” L’tian spoke. “You and Isabella have become a source of strength and inspiration for everyone, you, Isabella and Queen Anja, all of you. With you here, on Apo Prime supporting us, we may find our tasks less difficult.”

Isabella nodded. “He’s right Dysea.” She said. “With Jamerl here, Dilios and Panos... there is nothing more we can do. We would be better to return to Apo Prime and been seen by others. Show them that we... that we are not forsaking the Union and all it stands for.”

Dysea looked at her for a long moment. “Very well Bella.” She said. “Deia... I will bring the Oracle with us. Until she recovers fully, it may be wise to have her off Earth, where we can protect her better.”

Deia nodded. “Have her transferred to a ship in secret Milady, a frigate so that you may travel fast and invisible.”

Dysea nodded. “We can leave in the morning.”

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## UKWAV *LEONIDAS I*

For’mya rolled over on the bed, a groan of pleasant aches filling her as she stretched. He always left her deliciously tender, and this morning was no different. He was the largest man For’mya had even seen, never mind taken into her bed, into her body. He stretched her, molded her to him in a way that left her withering and gasping in unabashed pleasure. Last night he had held her with her back to his powerful chest, pounding into her depths from behind until she was screaming out in staggering flashes of delight. He had pulled her tightly to him as he filled her with his seed and For’mya had moaned in happiness when she felt him pull her close to him, holding her.

Her dark brown eyes opened slowly and she reached out for him, her arm finding nothing by empty bed. She sat up slowly knowing he usually rose early and was probably in the shower. She held the sheet around her body, and for the first time heard the insistent buzzing of the door chime. Holding the sheet around her she slid off the bed and moved through the living area to the door. She jerked back when Komirri was there.

“Captain!” She exclaimed.

“Where has the King gone For’mya?” He demanded.

She looked at him confused. “What do you mean... he is in the shower?”

“For’mya the King has left the ship!” Komirri snapped. “He said he left orders with you.”

“What?” She snapped now fully awake. She moved quickly back in to the bed chambers, calling out to him within their Mindvoice connection they had established and received nothing in return. She saw the data pad on the small table and snatched it up activating it, her eyes growing wider as she read and listened.

*“...do not know why the Prime Minister has chosen to not reveal this information, but she has. My President only felt it necessary to show that the People’s Republic is open for all to discover and we have nothing to hide. The young woman Aricia, who only weeks ago freely chose to disregard our new King and chose a stronger mate in Joric, the son of the President of the People’s Republic, was tragically killed three days after arriving at her new home by the savage predators of my planet. The Dragons have been a bane of our existence on Enurrua for many years and as Aricia was enjoying the night air with her new mate Joric, two Dragons attacked and brutally killed her...”*

For’mya whirled around as she heard Komirri come up behind her. “How did this get past the communications lockdown?” She almost screamed. “Who let this through damn it!”

“I... I don’t know!” He answered taking the pad.

“Did Martin Leonidas ask you for the codes to release the communications array?” For’mya asked.

“No! Only those who work in communications would have those, and the logs this morning indicated no request was made!” Komirri said, “For’mya where has he gone?”

For’mya met his eyes, “To the surface!” She snapped. “Our engineers were able to laser a tunnel down to this hidden level yesterday! I saw him getting the report that it was finished last night!”

“He’s going there alone?” Komirri gasped.

For’mya shoved past him. “He’s going there to do what he has always wanted to do since we got here!” She moved to the low metal dresser. “Find out who allowed the access to the communications array Komirri! Find out quickly!”

Komirri turned, not even realizing he had just experienced For’mya exercise her first formal orders as the Bound Concubine to the King. And she had done so with firm authority and conviction. She had found her station now.

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## UKWAV

The first garrison was primarily deserted, only a few Spartans remained to guard it. Most of their ground forces had moved to the third garrison by now. Martin stood looking at the four meter wide hole in the ground that the Lycavorian engineers had lasered into the granite and rock base of the sub level room. They had burned a tunnel all the way down to the secret level below and finished late last evening. Martin’s dark brown eyes gazed into the darkness in front of him.

*Come to me Martin Leonidas. It is time.*

Andreas and Kmyla walked into the room, Kmyla carrying the portable field medical kit.

“This is not wise Andreas.” She was speaking in whispers to him. “Why are you doing this?”

“We must do this.” He told her. “I... I must do this.”

“Andreas... what happened with Aricia is not your fault!” Kmyla told him grabbing his arm. “Why must you follow him down this path? I am your mate Andreas! I love you more than my own life! If you follow him, you will die! I don’t want to lose you as I lost my first mate!”

“Kmyla I need...” Andreas began to speak.

“Andreas I carry your child inside me!” She said quickly, “Our child my mate! A child that will bind us together forever! I do not wish to have our child grow up without his father!”

Andreas looked at her wide eyed. “When... when did you find out?” He exclaimed.

Kmyla shook her head, “Several days ago! I tried to tell you... but you would not leave his side. I know he is our King... and I love him just as much as you do... but you do not need to endure his pain over your sister’s shame!”

“Yes I do!” Andreas said. “It is my station! I am his Captain Kmyla! I am...”

“My friend,” Martin’s voice carried to them.

Kmyla saw her mate’s eyes roll up into the back of his head and she caught his body as he fell. Her own eyes darted to where her King stood behind them, the shimmering psychic knife projection from his knuckles rippling in the light.

“Sire!” Kmyla gasped as Andreas’s weight pull her to her knees.

*You must come down the tunnel. Come into the unknown Martin.*

Martin squatted down in front of her as she cradled the body of her mate and husband in her arms. “I have no intention of taking your mate from you Kmyla.” Martin spoke softly. “Whatever I do now... I must do alone. Take good care of him... and your son. Tell him I loved him.”

“My King you don’t...” Kmyla’s eyes went wide when he snatched the medical bag from her shoulder and stood back up.

“Take him and go Kmyla.” Martin spoke. He stuffed a data pad into her uniform pocket. “These are my last orders Kmyla... make sure you get them to Riall. Go!”

“Sire please!” Kmyla pleaded.

“Go Kmyla! Go now!”

Kmyla dragged her husband’s dead weight with her out of the room, tears rolling from her eyes. She got him into the corridor and slumped to the floor looking up as she saw For’mya and a dozen others rushing down



the corridor towards her. Kmyla turned her head back in time to see her king lift his hand and the psychic knife projection disappeared to form two diamond shaped projectiles. They shot from his fingertips and slammed into the ceiling and doorway, blasting huge chunks of concrete and steel free all around him.

*Now son of Leonidas. Join me!*

Kmyla watched in horror as he stepped to the edge of the tunnel and unleashed two more of the psychic diamonds into the ceiling, huge chunks of steel and stone cracking and beginning to fall. Kmyla watched as she saw him look at her and smile before stepping off into the darkness of the unknown and disappearing just as the interior of the room came crashing down around him.

For'mya skidded to a halt next to her along with Riall and Vistr as well as a dozen Spartans.

“Kmyla!” For'mya screamed as dust and debris showered all of them.

“He jumped into the tunnel!” Kmyla screamed. “He brought the room down around him and jumped into the tunnel! I couldn't stop him! He wouldn't listen!”

For'mya turned to look at the cloud of dust coming from the room; tears pouring from her own eyes.

*Martin Leonidas no!* She screamed out within their connection, but finding nothing but blackness in return.

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## LYCAVORIAN UNION

### *AUTUMN MOON-CLASS FRIGATE SHADOW'S HAND*

### THREE HOURS FROM ENURRUA

Aihola sat at the same small communications station she had been sitting at for the last three hours. The station was in the conference room of the frigate, only able to fit perhaps six people. She was still trying to wrap her mind around everything Dysea had told her, and she wasn't being very successful.

Dekton was a clone.

A clone engineered by the High Coven, and a traitor. A traitor that had used her and Tarifa in the most disgusting manner that Aihola had ever been used. He had wormed his way into their hearts... into their souls... and for the entire time... he had been a traitor. He had tried to kill Martin and Dysea. He had fooled them all completely. How could she... they have been so stupid, so foolish. Why didn't they see something... anything that might have told him what he was?

Aihola turned when Walter came into the room and looked at her. He pulled the chair from the table and placed it down in front of her, moving around to settle into it.

“Aihola... you can not remain in here forever child.” He spoke.

“Holy One... what do I do?” Aihola asked. “I... for the first time in my life I don't know what to do.”

“You mean about Dekton?”

Aihola nodded slowly. “He was... he was a clone! I... Tarifa and I were in love with a clone Holy One. He wasn't even a man!”

Walter nodded. “It is... it is hard to fully grasp I know. There is so much we still don't understand about this universe we have entered Aihola.” He spoke softly. “We have lost so much... even I ask if all we have discovered is worth it.”

Aihola looked at him. “Aricia's death has hit you hard Holy One.”

Walter nodded. “I am still trying to understand what would have driven her to act in such a way. I hardly knew her really... but she was my blood. Now she is gone... and the man who loved her has shut everyone who holds him dear out of his mind in grief.”

“How do I tell Tarifa this Holy One?” Aihola asked. “How do I tell her the man we loved was a traitor and not even a man. How do I tell her the one she considers her older brother is lost in grief? How do I...”

The internal Com panel chimed. “Chief Administrator Aihola please report to the bridge immediately.” The voice echoed.

Aihola reached over and touched the panel. “What is it Commander?” She asked.

“Chief Administrator... we are close enough now to pick up low power signals from Enurrua.” The voice spoke. “We've detected a narrow beam transmission on a very old Union military channel.”

“And this is important why Commander?” Aihola asked.

“It... it appears to be from Chief Administrator Tarifa.”

Aihola looked at Walter, her amber eyes wide. “We’re on our way!”

They made it to the bridge in four minutes after having to detour twice because they got lost on the lower decks. The Lycavorian Commander turned as she and Walter came onto the bridge and he came to his feet.

“Whoever it is... they are using our old equipment and transmitting on a channel we don’t use anymore. The only reason we picked it up is because I told my sensor chief to scan for any unusual Com chatter on all channels. They’re basically transmitting in the blind hoping someone hears them.” He told them. “It’s very unlikely anyone is picking them up on the planet so they are safe for now. She has mentioned her name twice and keeps asking for someone to contact Nya Istel. Do you know someone of this name Administrator?”

“It’s Tarifa.” Aihola spoke quickly feeling her spirits soar for the first time in what seemed like forever. “She’s calling me.” She said with a bright smile. “Can I hear her? Reply to her?”

The Commander turned to another officer. “Lock the transmission and encrypt it. Then open a reply band.”

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## ENURRUA

Tarifa leaned back from the small transmitter balanced on the thick fallen log and shook her head in frustration. They had moved seven miles from the caves the last two nights to transmit this message and still nothing. Golna had told her not to expect anything as they had been trying for years.

Tarifa felt Isra come up behind her and he nuzzled the side of her neck and behind her ear in a show of love and support. Her head naturally leaned into his nuzzle and she smiled despite the failure.

“Do not lose hope Tarifa.” He spoke. “It is only the second day. With all the activity in the Union in the last few weeks and the way Aricia was taken from the King, there could very well be a ship up there hidden.”

“I know... it’s just so...” The small console attached to the monitor beeped loudly causing her to jump slightly. It also caused the heads of the five rebels with her to turn towards the sound, Golna’s eyes wide as he rushed over. “Golna... I did not do anything!” Tarifa spoke quickly. “I did it just like you said!” Tarifa saw Isra moved up alongside her, his eyes on the monitor.

“Golna... is that what I think it is?” Isra asked.

Golna nodded. “Someone is locking the transmission... and they appear to be encrypting it as well.”

“Is that good?” Tarifa asked.

“It depends on who answers.” Golna spoke.

The screen flickered for a moment and then the young looking face appeared in a cloud of white fuzz.

“...Administrator Tarifa please respond! This is... LU Frigate... *HAND*.” The young man turned to someone they couldn’t see and then the screen cleared quickly. “Chief Administrator Tarifa please respond. This is Commander Rajon of the LU Frigate *SHADOW’S HAND*.”

“By the gods!” Golna exclaimed. “They have heard us. Tarifa quickly... they ask for you.”

Tarifa leaned forward and touched the panel. “Commander this is Administrator Tarifa.” She spoke quickly.

Rajon’s face turned once more. “Clean that up and boost the signal strength!” He turned back and his face broke into a smile. “Chief Administrator... that is much better!”

“Tarifa?” The female voice echoed.

Tarifa’s eyes grew wide and she felt warmth surge through her. “*Nya Istel*... please tell me that is you!”

When Aihola’s beautiful face appeared on the small monitor Tarifa nearly broke into tears. “*Nya Istel!*” She exclaimed, turning quickly and hugging Isra tightly in happiness.

“Oh Tarifa... you have no idea how it makes me feel to see you safe.” Aihola spoke her amber eyes bright and full of love.

Tarifa couldn’t hold back the tears and nodded. “For me as well *Nya Istel*,” She spoke.

“Tarifa... so much has happened in your absence.” Aihola spoke. “It’s like everything is falling apart! Where are you? We need to come and get you.”

Tarifa shook her head quickly. "I am not alone *Nya Istel*." Tarifa spoke, pulling Isra's hand into hers as he knelt next to her. "There are others, many others here. Men and women rebelling against the rulers here and we must help them."

"Tarifa... the political situation is tenuous at best." Aihola explained. "Martin... he has... he has become despondent since Aricia's betrayal. He..."

"Aricia did not betray him Aihola." Tarifa exclaimed. "It was all a lie. She was drugged *Nya Istel*! She never did this willingly."

"It does not matter now my love. It is being reported she has been killed by dragons." Aihola spoke. "The news spreads across the Union."

Tarifa's eyes went wide. "She's alive Aihola! I have seen her! Just this morning we were together! She's not dead." Tarifa saw Walter's face appear in the communication.

"Tarifa what are you saying?" Walter demanded.

Tarifa smiled at seeing his face. "Holy One she is here on this planet and very much alive." Tarifa answered, "If you can call her emotional state alive."

"What do you mean?"

Golna held something out to her and she looked at it. "They can land there Tarifa."

"*Nya Istel*... they have given me coordinates where you can land." Tarifa spoke. "Can you come to the surface... we need..."

Rajon's face appeared once more. "Lady Tarifa I can't do that." He spoke. "I need permission far above yours to conduct an action like that. It is an act of war."

"They have kidnapped her!" Aihola snapped. "What is that considered?"

"I'm sorry... I can't do that!" Rajon spoke. "I can return to Apo Prime and speak with the Prime Minister... I can be back in six days with a much larger force."

Isra pushed his face close to Tarifa's, "Medical supplies then? Can you send medical supplies and weapons?"

"Who are you?" Aihola asked looking oddly at the dirty blond hair and strange violet eyes of the man. Most noticeably to her, the way he was pressed so close to Tarifa, and she not making any move to escape that contact.

"I am Tarifa's... friend." He caught himself quickly, but not quick enough for it to slip by Aihola. "If you can't send us troops, then we could use medical supplies and equipment, what... whatever you can spare."

"What you are asking me to do, violate Union laws, whoever you are." Rajon spoke. "I can't..."

"My *nubous* father rules this planet with an iron hand. Our women are used as no more than common slaves, and my people suffer at his whim and the whim of those he controls!" Isra hissed at the monitor. "If you will not help us with some small supplies and weapons... then come down here and retrieve Tarifa and leave us to die in peace!"

"Isra..." Tarifa spoke softly, drawing him back gently taking his rough face in her hands gently, surprising Aihola with the tenderness she displayed towards this man. "I will not leave you here, any of you." She spoke looking at him intently. Aihola saw him close his eyes and nod his head slowly. "*Nya Istel*?"

"The Commander is right Tarifa." Aihola spoke. "The Holy One and I will take a small ship and load it with whatever we can carry while the Commander returns to Apo Prime."

They saw the man Isra look out of the screen quickly, they heard several voices speak hurriedly, and then Isra's arm curled around Tarifa's waist. "We must go Tarifa my mate." He spoke urgently to her ear. Aihola's eyes grew wide at this pronouncement, and the way Tarifa simply grasped his arm tighter.

Tarifa nodded. "*Nya Istel*... use the coordinates I transmitted. Stay there until we come."

"Tarifa wait!" Aihola pleaded.

Isra looked at the screen quickly as he pulled Tarifa to her feet, Aihola noticing she did not fight him in any way and seemed to lean into his body in an almost affectionate way. "I will keep her safe Aihola of the Drow. But we need to go now!"

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"...need to go now!" The man with the violet eyes spoke.

Aihola opened her mouth to speak but the transmission went dark. She turned quickly to Rajon. “Commander?”

“They severed the connection on their end.” He spoke quickly. “Administrator Aihola... you know I am breaking our laws if I allow you to take a ship with weapons to the surface.”

“You aren’t allowing us Commander.” Walter spoke taking Aihola’s hand. “We are stealing them. Aihola... come.”

Rajon grinned and shook his head. “Of course you are.” He spoke moving to his chair. “Operations officer, transfer all tactical data and maps to the *SHADOW’S HAND* four person shuttle. Make sure no one interferes with Senior Polemarch Dymas or Administrator Aihola until they have left the ship. They are allowed to take whatever they can load.”

The man nodded with a smile. “Yes sir!”

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## UKWAV

Tudrin’s body slammed hard into the side of the Coven granite and steel wall, his lips split and bloody. The blow had snapped his head back hard and fast, as unexpected as it was.

His eyes flared in anger and he whirled around to face his assailant.

Two Spartans had their P190s leveled at his head. For’mya stood between them, Riall and Ceneu behind her.

“You have done this.” For’mya snapped.

“What are you speaking about woman?” Tudrin barked at her.

For’mya snapped out viciously once more, slapping his face on the other cheek and rocking his head back again. When Tudrin moved to strike her back the two Spartans jammed their weapons into his chest. “Did you think we wouldn’t find out you violated orders on the communications black out?” She hissed at him. “Did you think we would not find out that you copied this broadcast to a data pad and put it in with the King’s morning reports?”

“Admiral Riall... will you call this woman off me before I file official charges against her for assault?” He barked out.

Riall laughed. “Go ahead!” He spoke. “For’mya is not acting as Star Commander Tudrin; she’s acting right now as Bound Concubine to the King. And you have seriously *reza* her off.”

“Your career is over Tudrin.” For’mya spoke, her words chipped with ice as they came out of her mouth. “I will see to it you are sent back to Elear in disgrace. You will never serve in the Union fleet again in any capacity for what you have done today. And if Martin Leonidas dies Tudrin, I will see you rot in the darkest cell Prime Minister Deia can find for being complicit in the King’s death.” For’mya saw Tudrin’s eyes grow wide in horror. “Take him and put him in the brig!”

The two Spartans grasp one arm each and began pulling Tudrin out of the room. For’mya turned to look at Riall.

“Admiral...”

Riall shook his head. “Don’t say it For’mya.” He spoke. “You are well within your authority to do what you have just done. Personally I would have shot him... at least that was what my instincts told me to do.”

“How much longer before they clear away the debris into the room?” For’mya asked.

“I have three engineering crews on it right now. At least twelve hours just to get into the room.” Riall spoke. “He brought down several tons of granite, steel and rock on top of him For’mya. I had no idea he had grown that powerful.”

For’mya nodded slowly. “Yes. Unfortunately if he believes Aricia is dead... no power can save him from himself.”

Seanna came up behind Anja in the small lounge of what she discovered was her personal starship until her *LEONIDAS II* Class Heavy Attack Cruiser was completed. Anja had been stunned to learn she had her own ship just finishing construction, but that had quickly passed as the reality of what had happened and the information they had discovered began to hit her fully. Seanna ignored those that were in the lounge as well and pressed her taller body against Anja's back, feeling her sigh and lean back against her.

"Anja?" She spoke softly.

Anja shook her head. "Don't say it Seanna, because you have nothing to fear. You are all mine Seanna, and I don't intend to share you with anyone unless that is your wish." Anja spoke without turning and reaching down to take her hand and wrap it around her.

Seanna smiled gently. "Perhaps in the future... but I would much prefer to discover what we share completely before anything like that might happen."

Anja nodded. "So would I." She said.

"The Divine One is in her quarters." Seanna spoke. "We will drop her off on Apo Prime before continuing to Enurrua. Do you think it is wise to go there with only this small contingent of Spartans we have on board?"

Anja chuckled. "Martin doesn't call me his "Firecracker" for nothing." She said. "And I will not leave her alone for one day more than is necessary from those who love her. Something has happen with Martin... it was black before... but I could at least feel him still... now I can not sense anything."

"He is strong Anja." Seanna said. "Deia just received word from a Commander Rajon that the Guardian of the Line and the Drow Queen took a small transport and have already moved to the surface of Enurrua. They apparently tracked Tarifa from Earth to this planet of Dragons. Queen Dysea and Isabella are moving to Apo Prime with the Oracle. It appears only one piece is missing. You were right Anja... she is alive."

Anja nodded and turned to look up into Seanna's face, gazing into her dark green eyes. Dark green eyes Anja was becoming more and more accustom to waking up next to in the morning. "One piece is missing yes... but he is somewhere now that we can not help him. He will either defeat his demons, or they will destroy him." Anja chuckled softly. "Listen to me; I'm beginning to sound more like Dysea every day. The she-elf vixen is rubbing off on me."

"Anja... what if he can't defeat his demons?" Seanna asked.

Anja looked at her. "Then Seanna... then Seanna my new love... you will see just how fucking nasty mean I can get!" Anja leaned up and kissed her softly, allowing her fingers to stroke across her cheeks. "We have plans to make. And I don't want Atropos to get too crazy with planning to kill the fools who hurt his sister." Anja waggled her eyebrows, "At least not yet."

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## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### DAY THIRTY-SEVEN

#### APO PRIME

#### OFFICE OF PRIME MINISTER DEIA

Deia insured the door was locked behind her and then turned to look at the men who had just entered her office. They had come in through a little used entrance of the main government building, further deserted by the hour of the evening. She had just spent the last five hours with Gorgo and Dasha in the sub-basement of the University sifting through mountains of scrolls and data pads and even some hand written documents dating as far back as twelve thousand years. Olalla had contacted her on their private channel to request this meeting, and Deia had informed her closest aide Aspon she would be returning home for the evening. After insuring she had been seen by half a dozen security monitors and people leaving for her home on the outskirts of the city, Deia moved through the back allies and side streets to return to her office.

Deia was nearly fourteen thousand years old now, and up until this past month had never felt the years as she did now. She had seen far more war and death than most, the brutal murders of her beloved sister Eliana and the man she had adored, King Resumar. The wiping out of all their children except for the embryo of

Leonidas, which was spirited away from her sister's womb in a last ditch effort to save their bloodline from extinction. Deia still remembered that night like it was yesterday.

The Hadarian healer had removed Leonidas's two week old embryo from Eliana's womb and placed it in a specialized transportation container. Resumar's elfin concubine and Eliana's closest and dearest friend and lover then carried the embryo through a raging battle with the Immortals and High Coven Troops sent to assassinate Resumar and Eliana and every one of their seven children. Assassinate them for Resumar's declaration that they would no longer be slaves to the High Coven. The elfin concubine, who had been a fixture of Resumar and Eliana's life for almost a thousand years, since the remaining Elf leaders had created her position to show their commitment to Resumar, succeeded in her mission in getting the embryo to a ship that would escape the planet they were on. And then she disobeyed Eliana's instructions to remain with the embryo and save herself, and instead she fought her way back to the King and Queen who she had fallen in love with so devotedly. Together the three of them had killed nearly a hundred Immortals before they fell.

Deia remembered the years of fighting after that night, the constant bickering and indecision among the rebel leaders as they met and tried to plan assaults and tactics. They grew in number, but their organization lacked cohesion and dedication. The elfin home world Elear was still occupied by the Coven, the Hadarian homeworld as well. The Hadarian elders had gone into hiding, suspending the ritual of the Ascension until such time as their planet was once more free. They fought together but were not a Union.

Leonidas's stand on Earth changed all that. It rallied them together like no time in their past, and within a year they had established a government and military and began shaping what they had today. Now the son of Leonidas... the infant King they had long thought dead, he had returned. In their overwhelming joy at his return and his stunning defeat of Xerxes and the High Coven Princess Yuri on earth, Deia now realized Vistr had been so very correct in his statement from the *LEONDIAS I*. Deia had never once stopped to ask Martin what he would do; she had never asked her King what he would do. They had been in such a rush to honor Resumar's memory and what he had started, that they had forgotten the very nature of their people. Lycavorians were by instinct a passionate species, violent in many respects but tender in others. Resumar had stopped the barbaric instinctual practice that took choice and emotion away from their females, and that had started them on the path to the future. Deia remembered that she had never seen him in the same room with Eliana and not touch her in some affectionate way. He was always pulsing her with his aura, allowing it to caress her just enough to let her know he was devoted to her. Remembering that as she now did, Deia knew Resumar never intended for their people to be stripped of all their instincts. He was going to teach them how to harness those instincts and make them better than Chetak and those who followed him. His death altered that, and Lycavorians ended up denying their inbred instincts for millennia. That pompous arrogance may very well have doomed them all if they could not stop what was happening now.

Deia moved to the long counter bar in her office and began pouring drinks for them three men. L'tian and Olalla she knew and trusted implicitly, the third man was an associate of Olalla and she would need to tread carefully until she knew more. She moved over in front of the desk and handed L'tian the Aspin Brandy he enjoyed so much and handed Olalla his usual dark colored Lycavorian ale.

"I don't believe we have met, so I don't know what you drink." Deia spoke as she moved back to the counter. "Can I offer you something?" The man was definitely Lycavorian, but his scent was more pungent and wild.

"Ale would be fine Prime Minister." He replied. His voice was deep and even, and Deia could tell he was calm and very much in control. Deia considered herself to be an excellent judge of age, and if she was right, this man was relatively young, barely a thousand years old.

Deia nodded and poured another glass of ale, moving back to the front of her desk and handing it to him before going to the chair across from the three men and sitting down. She looked at the man. His hair was dark brown and long, almost wild, his gold flecked green eyes also wild and they twinkled in the light of her office.

Deia finally turned to Olalla. "Olalla... would you care to introduce your associate?"

"Deia this is Asomus." Olalla replied. "He is a representative of..."

The man leaned forward quickly and met her eyes. "I work within Senator Dalkor's office Prime Minister." He said.

"Deia this is Dalkor's youngest son." Olalla spoke.

Deia's eyes never left his face and she sipped her strong tea. "And what exactly can I do for the son of the esteemed Senator Dalkor of the People's Republic?"

The young man removed three data pads from inside his jacket. He began placing them on the table in front of her. "This is the complete financial history of the Lycavorian People's Republic, to include our most recent acquisitions here in the Union." He spoke tapping the first pad. "This is the list of two more acquisitions my father has been instructed to make." He said tapping the second. He let his finger linger on the third pad. "This is the list of every agent Chetak has buried within the Union, to include their duties and responsibilities, as well as their covers. I believe you are most interested in the Talracian Ore project, since two of the men working within that project report to my father, one of which is a clone created by the High Coven. And my father obviously reports to Chetak as you know."

Deia could feel her heart beginning to race as she leaned forward in her chair. She looked at Olalla and then L'tian, who sat elfishly impassive as always. She made no move to pick up any of the data pads and simply let her eyes linger on Asomus.

"What exactly would Senator Dalkor's son be doing with this information?" Deia asked, "If it is accurate at all. And why would he be here offering it to me?"

"You are trying to keep the Union from falling apart from the inside Prime Minister." Asomus spoke. "I want to help."

"The Union is not falling apart from the inside young man." Deia spoke.

"But it is Prime Minister." Asomus spoke. "Chetak fulfilling his Blood Oath against the King was only the beginning. He wishes to ultimately control the Union."

Deia snorted. "That will never happen!" She spoke.

"It's already begun Prime Minister. The King is so distraught over his pureblood Queen being taken from him; he throws himself against the Planet of Hell's Forgotten Souls." Asomus spoke. "Yes he is winning... but will he survive? The High Coven descends on that planet now with more firepower than at any other time you have tried to take it. My father intends to announce in one week that the King has fathered a half breed child with the Vampire High Coven Princess Yuri. How well do you think that will be received? And my father intends to use every innuendo and rumor he can to make that fact worst than it really is."

"And what do you want in return?" Deia asked.

"I want to be named Regent of the People's Republic. I want full status as a member of the Union with all its privileges and bonuses." Asomus spoke evenly. "Once this crisis is passed... I will wait five years."

Deia looked at him. "Five years for what?"

"You will step down and name me as your successor." Asomus spoke.

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## ENURRUA

"Holy One it has been hours!" Aihola spoke softly.

"Be patient Aihola," Walter spoke as he opened the ration packet and pulled out the protein bar. "This location was many kilometers from where she was transmitting. They will find us."

"Could we have been detected as we were landing?" Aihola asked.

"That isn't possible Lady Aihola." The female elf spoke from further inside the small transport. She wore a Union flight suit that hugged her elfin curves as she walked slowly down the small ramp to where they were sitting holding a ration packet as well. Her dark hair was short and pulled back tightly. "This area of the planet appeared to have no sensor coverage on it at all for some reason, and I mimicked the trajectory of a small meteorite on approach just in case. That is why our initial entry into the atmosphere was so rough. I apologize for that."

"So we were unseen Tibyana?" Walter asked.

The female elf nodded, "Unless someone walks up on us yes." She replied.

Walter chuckled softly as he popped part of the protein bar into his mouth. "You mean like the nine men and five women who are currently watching us, and have been for the last hour, Tarifa among them if my nose is accurate."

Aihola sprang to her feet. "What? Where?" She started to look around frantically.

“They are a hundred meters west of us in that stand of rocks!” Walter spoke.

Aihola turned and glared at the jumble of boulders and dirt to their west, using her elfin vision to focus and try to see something. “I don’t see anything Holy One.” She said softly.

“They are there.” Walter spoke. “They are staying downwind of us, but I was able to catch their scents when the wind shifted slightly an hour ago. Tarifa’s scent was particularly pure, more so than I have ever known it to be.”

*Thud*

Walter looked up quickly as he felt the reverberation in the air. Aihola turned when she felt it to, her amber eyes going to the sky as it grew lighter.

*Thud*

*Thud*

Walter got to his feet slowly as did Tibyana.

“Holy One what is that?” Aihola asked wincing at the concussion of air so close.

“I don’t know...” Walter spoke softly, his own eyes searching the sky.

“She is our friend.” The new voice spoke, and they all whirled to see the fourteen men and women now only meters away their weapons out, but not directed at them completely.

Tibyana backed up defensively. “By the gods!” She gasped amazed they had gotten so close.

Walter smiled. “Well done my friends. Well done indeed!”

“*Nya Istel?*” Tarifa’s voice carried from behind the large man with dirty blond hair, and Aihola recognized those violet eyes. They would be hard to forget.

“Tarifa?” Aihola gasped moving closer.

Isra brought his rifle up and leveled it at her, freezing her in her spot as Tarifa stepped up beside him. “Tarifa... she is... she has the scent of a vampire.” He gasped looking at her.

Tarifa nodded with a small smile as she put her hand on Isra’s arm and gently pushed the rifle down. “Yes she does Isra.” Tarifa spoke. “She is a Drow. And she is my Mistress.”

Tarifa broke into a short sprint and Isra watched as his mate embraced the dark skinned white haired elf with all the passion she had embraced him with at night and in his arms. He knew Tarifa had a Drow lover, and the images of her he had seen did not do her justice. She was every bit as beautiful as Tarifa, though her body was shorter by several inches and she wasn’t as amply endowed in the chest area. The uniform she wore hugged very sensuous curves yet Isra did not realize that she was also vampire. He could smell the wolf in her faintly, telling him she was at least partially wolf, but the rest of her was vampire and Isra didn’t know what to make of that.

Isra certainly did not know what to make of the extremely passionate kiss Tarifa was currently sharing with the Drow either. Their bodies were pressed tightly together in the embrace, and it was obvious that they knew each other very well.

“I am Golna.” The beefy Lycavorian spoke as he walked up in front of Walter. “I must apologize for not revealing ourselves before now, but we are a hunted people and I needed to be sure.”

“No apologies are needed.” Walter spoke with a smile. “I understand completely.”

“May I know your name sir?” Golna asked.

“His name is Dymas, Golna.” The female voice spoke from the side, causing heads to turn. “He is the Guardian of the Line of Leonidas.”

Walter turned and his eyes flew open when he saw Aricia.

This was not the Aricia who he had last seen in Sparta. This was a different Aricia, a more feral Aricia. She was leaner now, the dark brown uniform she wore clinging to her body, her black hair hanging even longer than he remembered and wrapped tightly in a long pony tail. This Aricia radiated anger and hatred, and pure unadulterated power. Her face was the same, flawless and satiny but her azure blue eyes were void of any emotion.

“Aricia?” He spoke softly.

“Hello Uncle.” Aricia spoke moving towards him tentatively, as if she didn’t know she would be accepted.

Walter solved that indecision for her by stepping up to her and enveloping her within his arms. He felt her tense for a long moment and then she relaxed and allowed her head to rest against his chest, his cheek



pressed to her head as he held her tightly. He pulled her back after a moment and looked at her, noticing that no tears fell down her cheeks, and no emotion flickered in her eyes.

“I told them it was safe to approach you after Isheeni and I checked the surrounding area.” Aricia spoke to him.

Walter shook his head. “Isheeni?”

Aricia nodded turning and looking up into the sky. *Isheeni... it is safe. You and Torma can land now.*

*Thud*

*Thud*

Walter turned quickly as the deep boom of air swept over them again. His eyes grew even wider and he heard Aihola let out a very unnatural scream of fear as the two monsters appeared from over the ridge and were upon them instantly, massive wings flaring as they landed behind Aricia as gently as butterflies, their massive clawed talons digging into the hard earth beneath them. Walter backed up instinctively as Isheeni moved quickly to stand beside Aricia, her massive head centimeters from Aricia’s shoulder. The even larger obsidian colored dragon simply settled to the ground as Tarifa let out a soft gasp of glee and without fear moved directly over to him.

“Uncle... this is Isheeni.” Aricia spoke, reaching up to rub the back of her hand under Isheeni’s razor sharp tooth filled mouth. “She is a dragon.”

“May the gods preserve me, so that my eyes are not playing tricks on me?” Walter muttered.

*He is the Guardian Aricia?* Walter heard the female voice fill his thoughts and his eyes grew even wider.

*Yes... and he is powerful enough to hear us Isheeni.* Aricia answered. *You can speak with him.*

Isheeni turned her own azure blue eyes to Walter. *It is an honor to meet the Guardian of the Line.* She spoke. *I am Isheeni of the EonuaEquz, dragons in any other tongue.*

*And I am Torma.* The deep male voice spoke.

Walter’s eyes darted to the massive black dragon only a few meters away and then back to Aricia. He bowed his head slightly. *I... I am Dymas of Sparta.*

*Guardian... are there others coming?* Isheeni asked.

Tarifa looked at Aihola from where she stood next to Torma. “*Nya Istel* come here! Don’t be such a coward. Torma won’t hurt you.” Tarifa spoke almost playfully as she reached for Aihola’s hand and drew her close to the huge bodied obsidian dragon.

Aihola took in the thick nearly eight meter long body. She could see the obsidian scales rising and falling easily with the breaths the dragons was taking, his head watching her from that long neck, his yellow eyes almost twinkling in delight. She reached out slowly, and before she could react, Torma had lowered his head enough so that her hand fell flat upon the top of his head and Aihola gasped.

Aihola looked at Tarifa. “It... it is amazing my love.” She gasped.

Tarifa nodded quickly. “Aricia tells me that there are hundreds of them all over the planet! Hundreds *Nya Istel!*”

Golna and Isra stepped from the back of the transport with Tibyana and looked at Walter. “Guardian... we can carry much of what you have brought with you. We have a hidden landing field where your pilot may fly your ship so it is not detected. It is well guarded and it will be safe there.”

Isra looked into the sky. “We should leave soon Tarifa, before the sun reaches too high. Especially with the extra equipment we’ll be carrying.”

Tarifa nodded, still holding Aihola’s hand, “Golna how long until we can get back?”

“Isra is right.” Golna replied. “If we leave within thirty minutes I know a shortcut that will put us in the tunnels within five hours where we can travel in the coolness.”

“Where is your base?” Walter asked.

Golna motioned to the mountains in the distance. “There.” He answered. “It looks further than it is.”

Aricia looked at Isheeni. *You and Torma should return to our cave. I will call if I need you.*

Isheeni nodded and leaned her head forward, brushing up against Aricia’s shoulder gently. *Be safe*

*Aricia.*

*You as well Isheeni.*

Walter and Aihola watched in awe as Isheeni and Torma leaped into the early morning sky and were gone with four powerful flaps of their wings. Walter looked at his niece. "You have acquired some rather interesting friends Aricia."

Aricia met his eyes for a long moment and once more Walter so no emotion in them. No life as he had once seen.

"We should go quickly! Golna is right."

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## **LU AUTUMN MOON-CLASS FRIGATE VISIONARY**

Anja looked up quickly, her jade green eyes expectant as Atropos settled to the table where she and Seanna sat.

"Anything?" She asked.

Atropos shook his head slowly. "I was able to speak with Andreus briefly. It appears they found a deeper level underneath the garrisons they were attacking. An engineering crew finished burning a tunnel to it with lasers. The King... he knocked Andreus out using some sort of silver knife that protruded from his knuckles, then he told Kmyla to remove him from the room. Then leaped into this tunnel as he destroyed the room around him with what Andreus describes as diamond shaped projections of his mind that he has been using as weapons. He throws them from his fingers and they are brutally fatal to anything they touch. I was able to tell him my Queen... about our sister and everything that has happened."

Anja nodded. "I... we must remain strong." She said softly.

"His powers are manifesting themselves." Eurin's voice spoke from behind Seanna. They turned and Seanna began to rise to her feet, Eurin's hand stopping her. "I think given your position now Seanna, we can dispense with customary protocol. I do so find it rather boorish myself. May I join you?"

Anja nodded. "Please Eurin."

Eurin settled at the small table with them. "The King... as I explained... due to the pureness of his blood, his Mindvoice powers will begin to manifest themselves in pseudo physical form. He will be able to use it as a weapon, forming small psychic shapes of varying degree and power. What your friend described is referred to as a psychic knife. It would be one of his most powerful weapons, able to use it to interrupt brain function as he did with your friend, putting them to sleep, or actually using it as a knife, causing massive damage to any part of the body it touches. If he has learned to adjust the level of the power he projects as what you say suggests, then he has learned instinctively what it took Resumar years of training and practice." Eurin sipped the mug of tea she had brought with her.

"And Aricia would have these abilities too?" Anja asked.

Eurin nodded. "Her blood was nearly as pure as the King's, and just from the sample I saw, her Mindvoice abilities, like his, could not be measured."

"Queen Dysea and Isabella are on their way back to Apo Prime with the Oracle." Atropos spoke. "They are using a ship similar to this and extras of these engine coils so that they can arrive within hours of when we do."

Anja shook her head slowly as she sat back. "All of this and now we learn that Dekton was a clone as well."

"The clones are surprising." Eurin spoke. "We did not know the Coven had advanced so much technologically in that regard. We never pursued it because many of us in the Union consider it immoral."

"The Coven is not so limited Divine One." Seanna spoke.

"Dekton... our Dekton was one of three clones." Atropos spoke. "They believe one; if not both of the other two are on Apo Prime. It is stunning to me that we could not detect this in him."

Seanna shook her head. "Do not question yourself Atropos. Given the information Queen Dysea sent to Anja... there is no way anyone would have discovered it. He was exceptionally careful."

Atropos looked at her. "Is it possible to duplicate someone's scent though? Everyone is unique. It is how we have lived all of our lives, how we have raised our children, found our mates. It is so much a part of us."

Anja nodded slowly. "They did it." She spoke.

“The real Dekton... he was a pureblood.” Atropos spoke. “Surely someone must have detected his scent was different, his daughters... anyone who knew him?”

“His daughters were half vampire Atropos, and according to Dilios’s report, both of them are falling apart with grief. It appears they now have lost their father twice, and have been calling a clone their father for years.” Anja spoke softly. “Due to their vampire genes, their sense of smell would not be acute enough to detect that. Panos and Dilios both say the difference was so slight that even they thought nothing of it. They merely assumed it was something he had ingested during the time he disappeared from Sparta.”

“One of these clones works for this special projects division on Apo Prime.” Seanna said. “What makes them think the second one that still lives, has left Earth?”

“Deia believes it was this clone that falsified the medical request on Aricia that essentially confirmed what was happening to her as this *Lunmai* fever.” Anja spoke. “Once her physical was completed, he transferred that information back to either the clone on Apo Prime, or someone else who got the information to this Chetak person.”

“And he used that knowledge to fulfill a Blood Oath over ten thousand years old.” Eurin spoke shaking her head.

Anja nodded. “They believe it was Tarifa and Aihola’s Dekton who planted the bomb that almost killed Martin and Dysea. There was some unusual flight traffic between Eden City and Sparta by this clone just before the bomb was triggered. Dysea and Isabella are of the mind that once one of the two remaining clones conducted his attack on Helen, he would have departed on one of the warships that were coming and going until Jamerl shut that down. They are tracking the seven ships that left before Admiral Jamerl froze outgoing travel, but two of the ships show one additional crew member than normal.”

“They are checking this now as we return to Apo Prime.” Atropos spoke getting to his feet. “We should arrive by the end of the day tomorrow. My Queen... I will return to my quarters and make further preparations.”

Anja nodded and touched his arm. Since Martin had permanently assigned Atropos to her, they had established a personal Mindvoice connection in the event it was needed.

*We will make this right Atropos.* Anja told him.

*It will be right when I can hold my sister in my arms and beg for her forgiveness.* He replied. *Then it will be right.*

Anja squeezed his arm and watched him move from the table before turning back to listen to Eurin who was still talking with Seanna.

“The Coven was advanced enough to either transfuse or duplicate enough of the real Dekton’s blood to keep some of its pureness.” Eurin spoke looking at Anja now as well. “The virus both Lycavorians and the vampires carry in their blood is unique to your particular species, but it is not hard to create from a medical sense. It would be no where near as potent, but it would allow him to change completely someone who was already in one regard half wolf, as this young female elf Tarifa was.” She looked at Anja closely. “It is no different with you my Queen. You already had the King’s DNA in you from your previous relationship many years ago if the history you haven given us is accurate.”

“It is.” Anja replied sipping the coffee in front of her.

“It was not enough to bring about the slight changes that you experienced with Daniel Simpson because it was only one night, but because of its pureness, it left enough of a remnant that it called to you when you were reunited. I surmise it is one of the biggest reasons you did not stay with this Daniel Simpson. The Lycavorian genes that had taken hold in your system had tasted the pureness of the King’s blood and wanted no other to fully claim them. It is a cruder explanation than I would like to provide but essentially it is accurate.”

“So in some small sense I have done the same thing as Aricia?” Anja spoke softly.

Eurin nodded. “Both you and Queen Dysea have his blood in you now. He changed you, and because of that pureness... only he will be able to affect you in the way your blood will want. It is also the reason that neither you nor Queen Dysea has become pregnant yet.”

Anja’s eyes grew wide. “What?” She gasped. “Are... are you saying we won’t be able to have children?”

“Oh no...” Eurin spoke quickly seeing her alarm. “No at all, my Queen. You are Hadarian... Dysea is elf... both of you have been turned less than a year. It takes at least eighteen months for your body to fully complete the change down to the molecular level. Right now you can shift and you have all the senses and

strengths of a wolf... but the change will not be fully complete for a few more months. Then you will be as strong as you will become. You will know when that happens, because in essence your blood will tell you to seek out your mate because you are at your most fertile period. That occurs twice each year in pureblood Lycavorian females who are mated. Usually once a year in those who have been turned. In unmated females... it stimulates the urge to... explore options shall we say.”

“Why hasn’t Aricia become pregnant then?” Anja asked. “Once she came into our lives, she and Martin shared far more moments together. Mainly because they are both pure wolf and have the stamina of a damn machine.”

“I can offer a theory,” Eurin spoke. “I would need more information to confirm it, but I believe it would explain it.”

Anja nodded. “Please go ahead.”

“You have said she connected with you before you actually physically met her correct?” Eurin spoke.

Anja nodded. “Yes... we saw her first in our minds at a moment of great stress. It was actually Martin’s mind... but yes... so...”

“Even then they reached for each other.” Eurin spoke. “Even though the King claimed her as he did, they only came together emotionally. Her body would have recognized the *Lunmai* was approaching, and would have kept her from becoming with child until during the actual fever itself when she would have been the most fertile.” Eurin stopped as her eyes grew wider. “That... that would mean...”

Anja’s eyes also grew wider at the same instant that Seanna’s did.

“That would mean whoever made this Urezoban drug purposely kept her from becoming pregnant by using the Sirtin.” Anja gasped out.

Eurin looked at her. “Yes... and Urezoban is made from the inner lining of a dragon egg. And we are currently heading for the only planet in the universe that I know of that has dragons on it.” Eurin sat back. “I do believe there is quite a bit more going on here than we first realized my Queen.”

Anja nodded. “I agree.”

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## UKWAV

*Yes! Good! To your right now, quickly!*

Martin dropped into a combat crouch and snapped out with his *Nehtes*, impaling the Immortal through the midsection, the spear head erupting out his back from the power of the thrust. He wrenched it out and lifted his Shi Viska, slamming it forward into the face of the Immortal, the razors slashing deeply into the gray colored skin and lifting the Immortal into the air.

*Behind you son of Leonidas!*

Martin whirled around, swinging the Shi Viska back with all his strength, the edge of the shield smashing into the head of the Immortal rushing him, the snapping of his neck audible in the sterile confines of the corridor.

The one hundred and fifty meter drop had been bad enough, the landing even worse as he smashed into the half melted computer console, a jagged edge slicing deeply into his leg as he bounced over the top of the console and landed hard on his back, the air leaving his lungs in a rush. He groaned as pain surged through his veins, igniting his anger at his own foolishness. Of all the things he had done up until now, this had to take the cake as being the most fucked up and stupidly ignorant thing yet. Aricia had chosen her path; she had discarded him, what he thought they had together, discarded him as if he was nothing.

How many dead?

How many had he killed for not being able to accept that? How many had he led into oblivion on this foul planet because he could not bear the betrayal?

*Yes! Feel the rage! Use it! Now! To your right!*

The words had sprung into his mind as if someone was shouting next to his ear. He surged off the floor, springing to his right to see the two Immortals charging him. In a flash of silver/white light the Shi Viska appeared and his *Nehtes* extended and he attacked.

He had attacked again and again, the voice in his mind directing him in every direction, stumbling down the corridors of the strange facility, his leg trailing blood wherever he went. How many had he killed so far?

Twenty.

Thirty.

Forty.

So lost in his cloud of rage he didn't keep count. None of them came close to matching his speed and utter strength warrior to warrior. He became incensed that none of them could strike him, hurt him. His Shi Viska was like a bullet, leaping from his arm, cutting Immortals in half, loping off limbs and heads. He was covered in blood, the dark color coating his black armor. The pain in his leg was forgotten as he slashed and sliced his way forward.

*Good!*

*Above you now!*

*You are fast boy!*

*To your left! Behind the door!*

Martin plunged his *Nehtes* through the solid metal door, hearing the howl of pain as the spear head burst out through the Immortal's chest in the small room.

*Two more coming around the corridor! Go right!*

Martin dove forward releasing his Shi Viska and watching as it sped away, turning in a blink down the next corridor. He heard the stifled screams as it tore into flesh and then came back to his arm dripping blood.

*Wonderful control! Incredible! Behind you once more Spartan!*

He was on automatic now, beyond feeling any pain as he rolled and swung his *Nehtes* like a club, the razor sharp spear head impacting the shin of the Immortal and taking his leg off below the knee. As he fell screaming in agony Martin drove the *Nehtes* down through his back, the eight foot spear impaling the squalling vampire soldier and pinning him to the floor. Martin started to yank it out but it snagged on something in the floor and no matter how much pressure he applied it would not budge.

*It's stuck fool! Reach for it! Inside you! Use it! Look up before you lose your head!*

Martin's head came up, his eyes now in full wolf mode, yellow/gold in color. His fangs burst from his gums in a shower of blood and saliva. He saw the Immortal raise the sword and Martin lifted his hand, the diamond shaped projection of his psychic power forming instantly. Martin flicked his hand forward and that silvery diamond shaped projection punched through the Immortal's chest like a cannon going off, tossing the body back five meters, blood and tissue showering the corridor behind him.

*Yes! Reach for it! Use the rage! Use the betrayal! Use it or die! Here they come! Six on your right!*

Martin spun around to the right, his Shi Viska forgotten and lifted both of his hands, more diamond shaped projections forming. He released the blood curdling scream and began throwing them down the corridor faster than the eye could follow. The bodies of the Immortals kept piling up then, huge gaping wounds in their bodies, their blood splattering across the corridor, showering the walls, becoming a fine mist of red that bathed Martin in it. He could taste the blood and its power fueled him, made him stronger. It caressed his face, his hands forming and tossing the psychic energy diamonds almost without aiming.

*Such control! Such power! Feel it! Control it! It's consuming you! Burning you! Beneath your skin! It's pulling at you now!*

Martin began walking towards the Immortals, his Shi Viska launching from his arm with barely any thought, screaming down the corridor, washing it with blood and body parts.

*Betrayal!*

*Betrayal!*

*She betrayed you!*

*Yes! Martin's mind screamed.*

*She betrayed you!*

*Yes! He screamed even louder.*

*She betrayed you!*

*She betrayed me! Martin screamed, his hands coming together and forming the softball sized psychic projection. I loved her! I would have died for her! I would have destroyed worlds for her and she betrayed me!*

*NO! YOU BETRAYED HER, SON OF LEONIDAS! YOU BETRAYED HER!*

Martin's wolf eyes flared wide. "NO!" Martin screamed raising his hands.

*You betrayed your mate!*

"No!" Martin screamed as he saw the Immortal rush around the corner. He shoved his arms forward and the psychic projection leaped forward, obliterating the body of the Immortal in a spray of blood and bone.

*She needed you and you betrayed her!*

"Fuck you!" Martin screamed forming another ball in his hands and sending it down the corridor. "I loved her! I loved her!" The granite and rock showered Martin, slicing into his skin slamming into his body armor and tearing through it.

The Immortal appeared in front of the glowing board on the wall.

*You betrayed your Soulmate and now you can't forgive yourself fool!*

Martin shook his head back and forth, tearing his helmet from his head, cutting open his cheek as he did. "No!" He shouted.

*Yes fool!*

"I didn't... I... I love her." Martin gasped... his voice. "I love her! I... I won't let you take her from me!"

The Immortal stood there shaking his head. *I have already taken her son of Leonidas! She is mine now!*

The shroud of rage that filled Martin was unlike anything he had ever experienced. A huge black wave descended over him and he lifted his hands. "You will never take her from me! Never!" The psychic energy ball sped down the corridor annihilating the Immortal. "I won't let you! She is mine!" The second ball of psychic energy erupted from his hands and slammed into the glowing board on the wall, sparks showering forth.

"Never! She is my mate! Mine!"

Martin lifted his hands and focused all his concentration and released the last ball of psychic energy. It ripped into the glowing board surrounded by sparks and the concussive wave rippled out with flame and debris, surging down the corridor and engulfing Martin completely. He felt the wave of heat and the burning of his lungs as he was tossed through the air like a ragdoll, grunting as pieces of rock and steel smashed against him endlessly. He slammed into the unyielding wall and heard several of his ribs break like dry timber, the pain lancing through his battered body as he slumped to the floor.

Martin's yellow/gold wolf eyes grew wide as the wall of flame reached for him.

"I'm... I'm sorry Little Wolf. I wasn't strong enough." The words slipped from his lips as he started to close his eyes.

A brilliant white light flashed in front of him and he was there. He stretched out his arms and amazingly the flames split left and right down the adjoining corridors. Martin slumped lower to the floor, the pain and exhaustion wracking his body. He could no longer lift his arms, he no longer wanted to.

He had betrayed the only woman who would ever hold his soul; betrayed her by not following his instincts; betrayed her by not being who he should have been.

His half closed eyes watched out of focus as the figure turned towards him slowly and looked down. Martin groaned in agony as he lifted his arm, pulling at the top of his body armor. His fingers barely followed the instructions from his brain as he pulled on the simple leather tie around his neck until the coral red pendant came out. Martin wrapped his hand around it tightly and looked through blurry eyes as the figure squatted down.

*Now the healing can begin my King.* The voice said.

Martin Leonidas closed his eyes and allowed the blackness to claim him.

For'mya grabbed for the support of Riall's larger body as the very ground beneath them felt as if it was rearing up, her eyes opening wide. The engineering crews were working as fast as possible trying to extract the debris from the entrance to the tunnel. For'mya and Riall were in the next room going over maps of the garrison trying to find some other way in when the ground heaved beneath them.

"Admiral Riall! Admiral Riall!" The voice was shouting from the gaping entrance into the first garrison they had captured.

Riall grabbed For'mya's hand, steadying her as he pulled her into the corridor moving for the entrance.

"What is happening? Riall snapped. "Is it an earthquake?"

“Admiral look!” The Spartan motioned with his hand to the south while handing him the macrobinoculars. “The fourth garrison has been breached!”

Riall snatched up the macrobinoculars and directed them to where the Spartans were massing for their assault on the fourth and last garrison. Past them in the distance he could see goutts of flame and black smoke reaching for the clear sky, huge chunks of rock and concrete lifting into the air before falling back down. Riall slammed his hand down on the communicator built into his body armor.

“Ceneu... Komirri! Have you begun your attack?” He asked.

“Riall... sensors are detecting massive explosions within the garrison!” Ceneu’s voice echoed. “There was some sort of massive power feedback surge an instant before the explosions began. It came from the below the garrison! There are breaches in the tunnels all over Riall! The King... he must have done something beneath the surface!”

“Move a wing of *AUTUMN MOON* Frigates into low orbit to provide support! Vistr... attack now! Do not wait! Attack now!” Riall barked.

“Understood!” Vistr’s voice echoed.

“For’mya... your *STRIKERS*! Get them to provide low altitude support! They...” Riall turned and saw her looking down the corridor to where the engineers were working. He reached out quickly and took her arm. “For’mya!”

Her dark eyes turned to look at him wide and moist from tears. “Martin...”

“For’mya... he chose you as his concubine because he knew you were strong, stronger than most of us!” Riall spoke. “You have proven that over the last weeks Star Commander. He has given us an opportunity now, and he would expect us to take it For’mya! He would expect you to take it!”

For’mya stared into his face for a moment before reaching up and touching the communicator on her armor, “All *STRIKER* flights! The fourth garrison has been breached! Launch immediately with full payloads and move to cover the advance of our Spartans! Individual Flight leaders report to General Vistr when on site! I’m returning to the *LEONIDAS I* and will join you shortly!”

Riall squeezed her arm. “I will contact you immediately For’mya! I swear to you!”

“Do not let him die Admiral!” For’mya told him.

Riall nodded and watched her march off her face set in determination. He turned as Daniel and Anuk came running up the tunnel from where they had been helping the engineers. Dan saw the flames and smoke in the background.

“Holy shit!” He exclaimed. “I’ll get back to...”

Riall shook his head. “No Daniel Simpson! Andreus has spoken with his brother Atropos who guards Queen Anja.” He turned to look at Danny. “Queen Aricia was taken from the King against her will. She was drugged Daniel... she did not betray him in any way.”

Danny and Anuk’s eyes went wide at this information, Anuk reaching up to grab her mate’s arm. “You aren’t shitting me are you Admiral?”

Riall shook his head. “No. There is much going on that we have not heard about while we have been here. I need you to remain with Andreus. When we pull the King from that tunnel Daniel... when he hears what Chetak has done to his Queen...”

Dan nodded. “Yeah... this is all going to look like a picnic compared to what he will do.”

Riall nodded. “Exactly, and only you and Andreus together will be able to subdue him.”

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## ENURRUA

Isra sat next to Walter and Golna, his violet eyes watching where Aihola and Tarifa were in the small cave off to the side of where the rest of them sat. It had been a relatively quick six hour trip back from the landing site, Walter and Aihola keeping up easily in the mountains due to their excellent conditioning. Whenever they stopped to rest, Tarifa was never apart from her, always holding her hand in hers, their bodies touching in some fashion. It was easy enough for Isra to see the love between the two of them as he was no fool.

Isra knew Tarifa had a Drow female lover, yet he had not known they were so closely entwined or that Aihola was half vampire. He had also not expected to feel this way seeing them together. He had hoped perhaps

Tarifa would remain with him. What he felt for her was beyond anything instinctual he knew that. She had touched him in a way he hadn't expected, and now seeing her interact with the half vampire Drow female in much the same manner as she had with him in the last few weeks caused his heart to ache in a way he had never felt before. When he saw Tarifa's eyes go wide and her head fall into the Drow's lap and began to sob uncontrollably he came to his feet quickly, feeling his mate's pain within their Mindvoice connection. His head snapped around when he felt the strong hand curl around his arm.

"Sit down Isra." Walter spoke softly.

"She is my mate!" Isra snapped. "She is in pain!"

Walter nodded slowly. "Aihola is also her mate. And she has just been told that the man they both loved was in fact not who they thought he was."

Isra settled back to the rock he had been sitting on. "What do you mean Guardian?"

"The Spartan... Dekton... the one who they thought was their mate until he died in the Battle for Eden City on Earth. He was a clone. A High Coven clone who was using them to gather information." Walter explained. "He is also responsible, so we believe, for an attempted assassination attempt of the King and Queen Dysea in Sparta."

They looked up as Isra's mother knelt beside them holding the tray of small bread and meat pieces. She looked at Walter with an almost affectionate gleam in her eye. "I knew my nose was right." She spoke softly. "She wasn't turned by a Pureblood."

Walter shook his head. "No."

"Why does she turn to... to the Drow instead of me," Isra hissed. "I am her mate!"

Walter looked at him. "Tarifa and Aihola have been together for over a year now." He said. "They have endured more in that year than most do in their lifetimes, and they have endured it together. They are synonymous with each other. There can not be Tarifa without Aihola, and there can not be Aihola without Tarifa. That is how deeply the love they have for each other goes."

"She is not full vampire is she Guardian." Gallais spoke.

"No. She has many of their strengths, but she does not need blood to sustain her. It will heal her if she is injured, but she does not need it to survive." Walter spoke. "Her mother was the Drow Queen on Earth, and Aihola and her brother were the result of the Coven forcing her mother to breed with her mate who they had turned into a full vampire. They wanted to breed killers... what they got were Aihola and many like her, half vampires who do not lust for blood, and who still have their morals and values. Aihola came into Tarifa's life at a time when she needed an anchor... Aihola gave her that anchor... and they fell in love. Dekton... the clone... he wormed his way into their lives, became part of it, and now they found out it was all a lie."

"They loved him?" Gallais asked.

Walter nodded. "Yes." He looked at Isra. "I can smell you within her Isra, smell her all over you. You have permeated her being just as deeply as Aihola has young man. Give them time Isra... be patient... she is wolf now... and she will live just as long as you. Let them heal each other. If my nose is right, forcing her to choose between you and Aihola, regardless of what she feels or may not feel for you, it will only end up hurting you. You are in her blood now Isra and that is not something she can deny for long, as Dekton never affected her as you have because he was a clone. Allow that to stand for now and provide her the strength she needs."

"I... I do not want to lose her." Isra said softly. "She is... she has become the only purpose in this life for me now."

Walter nodded. "I know... just understand that they are a package deal so to speak. Be patient young Spartan."

Isra looked at him. "Guardian... I am no Spartan."

Walter looked at him. "No... then perhaps we will have to change that based on what I have seen." His eyes cut sharply to the right at the movement and he saw Aricia enter the cave at the far end, the azure blue scaled dragon squeezing down to follow her. They settled near that entrance away from the others and Aricia leaned back against Isheeni's side as she nibbled sparingly at the food on her plate. "How long has she been like that?" He asked softly, "Empty of all emotion."

"As long as we have known her Guardian," Gallais replied softly. "How long has it been now Isra?"



“Nearly three weeks.” Isra answered glancing back quickly to where Tarifa and Aihola were. “She hardly speaks except to the dragons. The blue one there, Isheeni, they are almost never apart. I think the black Heavyhorn is the blue one’s mate.”

“All she craves now is to get Joric within her hands so that she can kill him.” Gallais said. “What they did to her... I don’t know how she can stand being near them? She is stronger than I.”

Walter looked at her. “What do you mean?”

Gallais met his eyes surprised. “You don’t know?” She asked.

“Know what?”

“The dragons helped to bring her here.” Gallais spoke. “Tarifa discovered what they did to her and told me one night. They gave her some potion that they had made. It caused the *Lunmai* fever in her to overcome her to the point where she was unable to resist that pig Joric. In essence they did to her what they do to all our females. They forced her to submit to him, and the dragons helped Chetak to do this.”

Walter’s face twitched in growing anger. “She... she did not betray the King?”

Gallais looked at him as if he had gone mad. “Betray the King? Guardian... that poor child is dying inside because she believes the King hates her for betraying him when she did not. We know what Chetak did, forcing the King to watch as Aricia screamed for Joric to claim her. That was not her Guardian. They forced that upon her with the drug they used to increase the power of the *Lunmai*.”

“Gallais you are speaking the truth to me?” Walter gasped.

Gallais nodded. “There would be no point in lying to you Guardian. She is filled now with nothing but hatred and rage. I... I watched her kill an entire Hunting Party of Chetak’s men, her and the dragons with her. There was no emotion in her eyes. No pity, no remorse, only death. All she desires now is to kill Joric so that death can claim her. If only there was a way to show the King this so that he could save her.”

Walter turned and looked at Aricia. The azure colored dragon had lowered its head close to her face and Aricia reached up to rub the huge head under the maw of teeth. Aricia turned to look at him from across the cave before leaning her head back against Isheeni’s muscular side and closing her eyes.

Walter shook his head slowly. “The King... the King may be lost to us as well.” He spoke softly.

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## ***LEONIDAS I***

“What do you mean stopped?” Komirri spoke coming to his feet. “All of them?”

The sensor operator nodded his head. “Yes sir, all of them. The entire High Coven fleet that was coming here has just stopped.”

Komirri moved to the long range sensor station. “But why?”

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## **VAMPIRE HIGH COVEN REVERENCE CLASS-DREADNOUGHT BLOODFEAST**

Veldruk stepped onto the bridge of his flagship, slowly striding down the long platform until he was standing in front of the view window and staring out at the mass of ships all around him. His face was unreadable, and no one dared approach him.

“Admiral... the sensor scans are accurate?” Veldruk finally asked.

The white haired vampire nodded as he stepped closer to his High Lord. “I checked them myself Milord. There is no mistake.”

Veldruk nodded slowly. “This son of a dead King is much stronger than I first thought.” He spoke softly.

“Milord Veldruk...” The Admiral asked. “Do I order our Fleet Groups to continue on course Ukwav? We stopped at your order Milord.”

Veldruk stared at the stars in front of him. “No.” He whispered to himself. “I will take my own advice and pick my battles.”

“Milord excuse me, I did not hear your order?” The Admiral spoke.

“Admiral how long will it take before my daughter’s ship rendezvous’ with us at this location?” Veldruk asked.

“Her frigate should be joining with us within the hour Milord.” The man answered.

Veldruk nodded, “Very well.” He turned and looked at the man, walking up to him slowly and placing his bony hand on the man’s shoulder. There were few that the Vampire High Lord called friend. This man was one. “Drdron... you are nearly as old as I... and one of only three I call friend. That is why you command my flagship.”

“You honor me Milord.” Drdron spoke.

“Ukwav was a prison Drdron, a prison for one man. The Union dogs never knew what we hid under the surface beneath our garrisons. Even when they attacked us three times they never knew.” Veldruk spoke. “He will not live long in a physical state, but long enough to decimate our ships and men if we approach now that the son of Leonidas has freed him.”

“Milord... you don’t mean...”

Veldruk nodded, “The Lycavorian First Oracle. The first and most powerful of them, the one who guided that dog Resumar.”

“I thought... I thought you had defeated him Milord.” Drdron spoke.

“I imprisoned his conscious Drdron. And I buried it on Ukwav under the four strongest garrisons we have ever built on a planet.” Veldruk spoke. “The son of Leonidas was able to do something I thought impossible. He has breached those garrisons and freed him. This is a battle we will not win, not with both of them there. No... as soon as Yuri joins with us, set course for home.” Veldruk smiled. “He won’t live long... but long enough to save the son. We are vampires my friend. We are born patient. There will be another time.”

Drdron nodded confidently, “As you order Lord Veldruk.”

“There will be another time.” Veldruk spoke softly.

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## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### ENURRUA

### DAY THIRTY-EIGHT

“Tarifa?” Aihola’s voice was soft in the early morning, as the sun began to filter into the many natural holes in the top of the mountain cave.

Tarifa moved her head slightly from where it rested on Aihola’s firm chest, her Drow Mistress’s arms holding her tightly. Their bodies were pressed close together, sharing warmth and sensation even through their clothes, but while it felt glorious to be in her arms again, Tarifa felt like something was missing.

“Yes my love?”

“What are you thinking?” Aihola asked pulling her body closer, relishing in the feel of her heat against her.

“I’m... I feel betrayed *Nya Istel*.” Tarifa spoke softly, “Angry and stupid. I have no tears left in me to cry.” She lifted her head and turned to look at Aihola. “What do you feel?”

“All of those things.” Aihola spoke. “We... you and I... Martin left us in charge of so many people. He trusted us with Earth. I... how could we not have seen it? He could have...”

Tarifa shook her head quickly. “No *Nya Istel*! We must not do that! We must not think like that!” She sat up slowly looking at her. “I refuse to second guess what we have done. Martin would berate us for such a thing Aihola you know this. Martin trusts us because of who we are... because of what we share and because of the experiences we have had. He would be the first one to tell us this is not our fault. Dekton... whoever he was... he fooled us... he used us for his own purposes. How he did it is not important now. We must not let what he did change us my love.”

Aihola sat up as well now looking at her. “It was... it was no different than rape Tarifa.”

Tarifa nodded. "I don't disagree with you Aihola. But you and I have been raped before. We have survived and we have gone forward. We have come to this point in our lives better for it. We have found each other... we have found Is..." Tarifa stopped when she realized what she was going to say and her eyes went wide, "Isra?" She said softly.

"Who is this man who calls you mate Tarifa." Aihola spoke taking her hand. "He is one of those who kidnapped you from Earth... yet he treats you as his mate. You..."

"He protected me Aihola." Tarifa spoke meeting her gaze. "He saved me from a fate I do not want to contemplate."

"He forced himself on you Tarifa." Aihola spoke.

Tarifa shook her head quickly, squeezing Aihola's hand, "No my love, he would never do that." She said realization filling her eyes. "I understand now. That... that is why he affected me so."

"What do you mean?"

"This... Dekton... he was a clone. He may... he may have been able to change me but... that is why I feel what I do when I am near Isra. That is why I am so drawn to him." Tarifa spoke.

"You lay with this man willingly Tarifa?" Aihola asked surprised.

Tarifa nodded slowly. "I am part wolf now *Nya Istel*, half Lycavorian." Tarifa spoke. "Isra... Isra is pureblood Lycavorian, wild and untamed... yet so gentle and caring. He calls to me in a way Dekton never did. Aihola he would not even stay in the same room with me as we came here. He would lock me into his quarters and make sure I was safe and then he stayed with a friend. He saved my life twice and was grievously wounded both times, once by me." Tarifa spoke almost wistfully as the memories of their nights together filled her thoughts; the feel of his arms around her, how they made her feel. How his aura pulsed through her, filling her with love and warmth and desire. How she so willingly returned it to him with barely a thought. Dekton never even entered her mind when Isra was filling her so completely, and she should have felt guilt or something so soon after his death. She had felt only desire and love for Isra. "I can not explain it Aihola... it is like my body calls to him. He resisted... he fought it Aihola. I fought it. His aura... it is nothing like Dekton's was, and now I know why. Dekton wasn't even real. Isra... he is alive and strong and..." Tarifa looked at her. "I wanted him to take me as his mate *Nya Istel*. I wanted it so much. And it was unbelievable when he made me his, my love. He smells like the deep timber, so fresh and pure."

Aihola nodded slowly. "Yes... even I can smell that, and I am only part wolf." Her tone of voice was one of worry and not jealousy.

Tarifa looked at her. "Don't you dare do that Aihola of the Drow? I am yours... I will forever be yours and you will be mine. No one will come between us ever. Isra knew of us *Nya Istel*... he said he would not come between us. I will not let him come between us."

"But... but you have feelings for him?" Aihola spoke softly.

Tarifa looked at her. "Do you expect me to lie to you Mistress?" Tarifa said lifting her eyebrows. "I will always tell you what is in my heart."

Aihola brought Tarifa's hands to her lips and kissed them softly, "*Usstan zhaun vel'bol zhah wun dosst xukuth ussta ssinsrigg.*" (I know, my love, what is in your heart.) She spoke in the ancient vampire language.

"*Dos ph' mal'rak wun ussta xukuth Nya Istel, neitar guu'lac nindel,*" (You are forever in my heart *Nya Istel*. Never doubt that.)

"And this Isra... what of him? I know you Tarifa and for you to give yourself to him freely my love, that must imply feeling." Aihola asked.

Tarifa nodded. "It does *Nya Istel*. But I don't know if it is because I am wolf... or because there might actually be something there. And even with what we know now of Dekton... part of me still feels I have betrayed him somehow. Betrayed what we shared so willingly with him."

"Tarifa... he used us. He took from us what we gave to him willingly and he abused that. I can not bring myself to feel as if I have betrayed him. It makes my vampire blood burn... my wolf blood burn." Aihola spoke.

Tarifa nodded. "It makes my wolf blood burn as well Mistress."

"It should not surprise us Tarifa." Aihola said shaking her head. "You, me, Selene, Lynwe, we have all seen what the Coven is capable of first hand."

Tarifa nodded. "I know but I can't bring myself to the point where I feel nothing Aihola. We have spoken of this often my love. What we wanted in our future together, a home *Nya Istel*, and our own children to

rear.” Tarifa took Aihola’s face in her hands. “I will not give up on that dream *Nya Istel*. We can not give up on that dream. It is our dream together no matter what happens.”

Aihola kissed her then, kissed her hard, pulling her close and feeling Tarifa’s arms encircle her head as she returned the kiss. After a long moment they parted and Tarifa looked into her amber eyes and gently caressed her finger across Aihola’s moist lips.

“I so want to strip you naked and feast on you Mistress, every delicious portion of you.” She said huskily.

Aihola grinned seductively. “Well I can’t argue that with you my slave, for I want to do the same thing.” She spoke. “I don’t think here is the proper place however.”

Tarifa grinned and kissed her quickly. “You are such a curmudgeon Mistress.” She chuckled. Tarifa got to her feet and pulled Aihola up with her. “Come... Isra’s mother makes the most wonderful biscuits.”

Tarifa pulled her along out into the main cave tunnel and they saw it was mainly deserted of men. This caused Tarifa to stop and her sapphire eyes to narrow. When Tarifa turned and looked to the spot where Aricia and Isheeni slept when they were here and saw nothing, alarm bells began to go off in her head.

“Tarifa... what’s wrong?” Aihola asked feeling her tense, and smelling the spike in her scent even with her weaker wolf sense of smell.

“It is never deserted like this in the morning.” Tarifa replied looking at her. “There are dozens of men and women who are always here.”

“They have gone.” Gallais’s voice spoke from behind them.

Tarifa turned quickly and looked at her as she came up carrying the basket of biscuits. “Gone... where have they gone?”

“The black Heavyhorn returned early this morning.” Gallais told her. “Joric is leading a large force south and he had entered the tip of the mountain range late last night. Isra, the Guardian, Aricia, Golna and the others went to attack him. He... he did not want to wake you.”

“Wake me?” Tarifa snapped angrily. “I am his mate Gallais!”

Gallais nodded slowly. “Who did not share his embrace last night, as you have for these last weeks?” She spoke with no malice in her voice. She moved closer and looked at Aihola. “I am much older than my son Tarifa... Lady Aihola. He is still very young... do not think ill of him for emotions he can not explain.”

“He is older than me Gallais!” Tarifa exclaimed, “Older than Aihola.”

Gallais nodded. “In wolf years yes he is older; in matters of the heart... no he is not. He has been fighting all of his life Tarifa... and he will face any enemy, any foe that would do you harm. He thought perhaps he could accept it... but seeing you in Aihola’s arms last night... he is afraid he will lose you. It is a battle he knows he can not fight... and he will not force you to choose between him and Aihola... so he has decided to remain away from you.”

“Away from me... Gallais... I...” Tarifa started to speak; suddenly feeling like a part of her was being chipped away once more, like so many times in the past.

Gallais shook her head. “Speak with him when he returns Tarifa. He will attempt to come between you and Aihola... he will honor his word to you.” She said softly. “Speak with him when he returns and tell him what you feel. That is all I ask.” She took a deep breath. “Golna has asked that you and Aihola form the others. Hundreds are coming here over the next few days, and he has instructed them that you are the ones they should seek.”

“Me?” Tarifa gasped.

Gallais nodded. “Word spread quickly that The Guardian of the Line and the Queen of the Drow warrior elves arrived here. They already knew of your presence Tarifa. Many say...”

Aihola looked surprised. “Wait... I am known among your people here? How is that possible?”

“Word has begun to leak out about the King’s battle on Ukwav. It is being said that elves with white hair and amber eyes are the ones responsible for the initial attacks being so successful. It is said they are half vampire. Isra told me you are their Queen.”

Aihola nodded slowly. “Yes.”

Gallais nodded. “My son thinks highly of your skills Aihola of the Drow, regardless of what he might say and do. They will come here and seek the two of you out so that we can finally begin to fight this barbaric life we have been prisoners too. Many say it is a sign that others will come soon and finally help us to be free.”

Gallais held up the basket. "I have made biscuits and there is strong tea nearby. Come... the first ones will be arriving soon."

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## UKWAV

"Wake up boy!" The voice carried to his ears.

Martin's eyes sprang open and he quickly closed them against the harsh light above him, his arm instinctively coming up to block the light. He groaned in pain, biting his bottom lip as the pain lanced through the entire left side of his body. He grabbed for his ribs with his right hand and nearly doubled over and lost whatever food he had in his stomach as the pain of the rib bones grinding together caused him to see stars.

"You need to shift to heal boy! Do you know nothing?"

Martin looked up, blinking his eyes rapidly to clear his vision. As his dark brown eyes focused he saw what appeared to be a medical bay of some sort. There were half a dozen empty beds, and banks of medical equipment lining the walls. Martin looked down and saw that the upper portion of his armor had been cut away, leaving just the armored and padded legs and combat boots. He tried not to breathe too deeply, clenching his teeth against the waves of pain as he sat up.

"Are you *piegn* boy? You need to shift to heal your wounds!" The voice sounded out again.

"*Nubou forn!*" Martin growled as he sat up, the voice sounding familiar to him somehow.

The laughter was genuine and hearty, "*Alda, forn puli vada nimerd rie terit cafna.*" The voice spoke, "*Lon coi svan.*" (Good, you know the language of your people. That is a start.)

Martin concentrated and shifted quickly, letting out a small yelp as the bones of his ribs knitted back together during the change. He remained in wolf form for a few seconds catching his breath and then shifted back, dropping to his knees as his body rebelled against the exertion.

"Impressive!" The voice spoke and Martin turned to see the man walked around the corner of the large computer. "I have not seen a wolf of your size since Resumar himself. You are larger than him boy, though not by much. More muscles to impress the female wolves no doubt. Ah... but you don't need to do that do you... you have four of the finest young female specimens I have ever seen already, and the stamina to keep them all extremely happy. That is very impressive indeed!"

The man looked to be seventy human years of age, with a full head of graying hair, the beard and mustache neatly trimmed. His ice blue eyes were alive and bright, and he looked in good shape despite his advanced age.

"I know your voice!" Martin spoke as he kept his hand on his rib cage as he staggered to his feet slowly, leaning against the bed. "You... you were in my head!"

The man nodded and came up to slowly stand next to him. "Yes... and I must say... it was not an easy task. You are even more *gostin con* than your grandfather!" (Pig headed)

"Am... am I dead?" Martin asked as he eased himself back onto the bed.

"I don't know... do you feel dead?" The man asked with a grin.

"I... I feel like someone shot me a hundred times and then tossed me off a mountain." Martin replied leaning back on the edge of the bed.

"Thirty-one times actually." The man answered, "If the bruises are any indication. That is an amazing piece of clothing you have there. Not one of them penetrated the armor you wore, even from point blank range, incredible. Of course the Immortal's swords were a different story, and the computer console you hit after sliding down that tunnel like a fool did not appear to agree with you either."

Martin watched him as he pulled the chair closer to the bed and sat down. "Who... who are you? Where is this place? And how were you able to penetrate my shields?"

"The where is easy son of Leonidas," The man spoke. "This... all around us... this is my prison. And it has been for nine millennia... that is of course until you popped in and promptly brought everything down around you. You really must learn to harness that temper you have. How was I able to penetrate those incredible shields? That is a bit more complicated to explain Martin Leonidas... but I used what is called a *Hatan Relluir*... a psychic projection of the one thing that has the power to crack that marvelous black wall you have around your mind. When your shields detected that projection... I was able to slip in because they lowered."

“Who are you?” Martin groaned out.

“My name is Canth son of Leonidas.” The man replied.

Martin looked around the room once more. “It doesn’t look like much of a prison.” He spoke.

“No... but it is.” Canth replied. “It is a psychic prison, though the facilities you are using were built for the sixty three Immortals tasked to guarding me. They were expecting an attack after your laser burned through into this facility. However the manner in which you arrived I believe confused them. Did you not think about what you were doing before you stepped into the abyss young King?”

“No... I suppose I didn’t.” Martin spoke.

Canth nodded. “Given your mental state I am not surprised.” He said.

“Are they...”

“Are they dead? Oh yes son of Leonidas. Let’s just say you went through them like *sibfla* through a Norebonian plains weasel. It has been over nine thousand years since I have seen someone move like you.”

Canth spoke, “The combination of speed and power and grace. It was quite the spectacle.”

“I saw fire... explosions.” Martin spoke.

“I directed you to the power control panel Martin. I had you destroy it and that severed the power grid from the fourth garrison that held the final lock in place on my prison. Your Spartans are even now sweeping through that garrison. You have fine leaders that follow you boy... use them well in the future. You have achieved a great victory here Martin Leonidas... in your misguided attempt at killing yourself.”

“Stop calling me boy!” Martin snapped.

Canth laughed. “Compared to me you are a boy!” He spoke shaking his head.

Martin looked at him, his eyes narrowing. “Who are you?” He asked again.

“I told you my name is...”

“Canth... yes you said that.” Martin spoke. “Now who are you really?”

Canth looked at him a twinkle in his ice blue eyes. “Insightful... that is a good quality in a King.”

“I am no King.” Martin said softly. “I don’t want to be anyone’s King.”

“And that Martin Leonidas, as your mother has already told you, that is why you will one day surpass your grandfather in greatness.” Canth spoke. “You are more like him than you even know Martin... instinctual and passionate... strong willed and stubborn as a rock.”

Martin glared at him. “How do you know that?” He demanded. “You weren’t there!”

“I said this was a psychic prison Martin Leonidas... I did not say it was foolproof.” Canth spoke. “Come... let me show you something.”

Canth got up and began walking towards the door, and after a moment Martin shrugged and got to his feet to follow. Things couldn’t get any worse than they already were he thought. Martin followed him slowly out of the medical bay and down several corridors. He took notice of the large drying puddles of blood on the decking under his feet, the ruptured and twisted metal from small explosions and several points where he had plunged his Nehtes into the steel of a door or wall.

“I used this physical manifestation to remove the bodies into one room. They were beginning to stink more in death than they ever smelled in life.” Canth spoke from in front of him as he walked. “And they smell foul in life.”

Martin followed him into the large room with what appeared to be a central core of some sort. “What is this place?”

Canth moved to the large computer console and pressed several times on the multicolored console. There was a low rumbling and the large circular metal container began to lift up. Martin watched as the table was revealed, and on it was the body.

Canth’s frail body.

“As I told you... it is a prison... my prison.” Canth spoke.

“Who the hell are you?” Martin snapped.

“What you see standing before you Martin Leonidas is the psychic projection of my body from inside that chamber. Much the same as those wonderful diamonds you toss from your hands, it is a physical manifestation of my mind.” Canth spoke turning to look at him. “Veldruk imprisoned me here nine thousand seven hundred and nineteen years ago... exactly three days after he killed Resumar and Eliana. He is a powerful Mindvoicer Martin... just as you are, with thousands more years of experience and control to call upon. He

placed me here, and then built the garrisons above to keep anyone from ever freeing me. Until you arrived that is.”

Martin looked at him, his eyes wide. “You are... you’re...”

Canth nodded, “The First Oracle. The one Dustha mentioned to you briefly in Sparta many months ago.”

“How...”

“I fell next to my King and Queen and their concubine.” Canth explained. “But Veldruk in his arrogance did not kill me. He brought me here and imprisoned me, thinking he could use me to help him over the years to complete his goals of conquest and domination. When he realized I would not do that, he left me here, and built the garrisons above in such a way that no one would be able to free me without destroying this entire complex. The previous attacks against this fortress were ill thought out and hastily put together. And none of them were able to determine the one weakness of these garrisons until you came along. A fine guess that was by the way.”

Martin gave him a lopsided grin. “It was just a guess.” He said.

Canth smiled. “Yes I know.” He spoke. “The garrisons above were designed to be interconnecting in every way... each garrison designed to channel power down here to maintain my prison. When you conducted your first attack and ruptured the outer tunnel, the vacuum of the sealed air sucked everything into the tunnels as you know. If the tunnels were ever breached each garrison would send a concentrated surge of power down here effectively destroying my cell and killing what remained of my physical body. When the vacuum your tactic created sucked death through the tunnels above, it also killed the only Immortal officer with the codes to activate that surge. All four codes were needed, and when he was killed, the others were rendered useless. You saved my life without even knowing it. At least for the short while I will be able to maintain this body that you see.”

“What do you mean?” Martin asked moving closer.

“My physical body is dying Martin Leonidas. Veldruk introduced an antigen into my body that does not allow me to shift and heal my wounds. The Immortals here injected me with just enough serum every day to keep my body alive. Now... now that they are all dead... I will die within three days.” Canth spoke.

“I... I killed you?” Martin gasped.

Canth looked at him with a smile. “Killed me? No my King... you have freed me. Now that the psychic deadening fields no longer exist I will be able to pass on my knowledge to my successor, and our people will not be without an Oracle with the knowledge to guide them, to guide you.”

“Helen?” Martin asked.

Canth nodded with a smile. “She is young and strong and has atoned for the mistakes of her past concerning your father many times over. She is also the only one strong enough, outside of you of course.”

“She... she is injured.” Martin spoke. “She was injured badly on Earth. Someone tried to kill her.”

“Yes I know.” Canth answered. “Her physical wounds have healed thanks to your friends and the support they gave to her. Her mind is in a state of rest right now, a period of psychic regeneration that she taught herself many centuries ago and she will come out of that soon enough. It is enough time for me.”

Martin looked at him. “Enough time for what?”

Canth looked at him, “Time to teach... and time for you to learn. You have a power within you Martin Leonidas. A power that many have... but a power on a level only one other besides you can reach. I must teach you to harness that power so that you can pass on what you have learned.”

“Pass on to whom?” Martin asked.

“You are a rock head... just like your grandfather boy!” Canth spoke, “To your Queen fool, your Queen of pureblood.”

“I... I have no... I have no Queen of pureblood.” Martin said softly.

“That pendant around your neck says otherwise.” Canth spoke. He watched Martin reach up and wrap his fingers around the coral red pendant.

“I... I betrayed her.” Martin said. “I... I didn’t follow my instincts... I didn’t do what she called for me to do. She chose someone who would. Aricia is no longer my Queen, by her own choice. A choice I forced on her with my inaction.”

Canth stepped closer to him and nodded. “That you are now able to admit that my King tells me you are ready to learn.”

“I don’t want another Queen Canth.” Martin spoke softly. “We were... we were Soulmates.”

Canth nodded, "Bound together in the most sacred fashion of our people. Something the two of you did completely by instinct, which makes the bond even stronger. The pureness of her blood nearly matches your own Martin Leonidas. You need to get her back. You were destined to be together Martin, all of you... including For'mya. All of you are tied to each other, and you will not be complete without each other."

Martin looked at him. "How do I do that?" He asked pushing off the side of the console. "She has chosen another mate! She followed what her instincts told her to do! She was right in what she did. I was wrong. For me to force her to come back... that would go against everything my grandfather taught our people. That is something I can never do! Something I would never do!"

"He taught our people much Martin." Canth spoke nodding his head. "But after he died and in the years that have passed, they have lost their connection to our past, to our very instincts. That is not what Resumar intended. There is a balance that can be nurtured Martin... and you alone have walked that balance every day. You have struggled against your instincts all of your life, not knowing who and what you are. You have surrendered to them at times and you have not. That is what you must pass on to those who follow you."

"I have to get back up top." Martin spoke now. "They'll be wondering if I am dead or alive now."

Canth reached out and put his hand on Martin's shoulder. "Everything is not always as it appears my King. Now you feel empty and your soul aches for Aricia. When the time comes... you will know what you must do. For now... I must teach you what I can Martin Leonidas... and then you must remove my body from this foul place and insure no one ever uses this planet ever again." Canth pulled him along. "Come son of Leonidas... let me show you a little of what I have seen in my life."

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## APO PRIME

"Will not allow some pup to dictate to me what I will and will not do!" Deia snapped from behind her desk. "I have seen and done more in a thousand years than that fool has done in all four thousand of his years!"

L'tian and Olalla sat quietly letting her rant. Olalla had offered that they part after Asomus had made his declaration and allow both parties to absorb the information. Olalla knew Deia well enough to know she was very close to ripping the face from the smug young wolf and while Asomus did not see the signs, he did and had acted accordingly.

"Deia... no one is suggesting that we allow him to do what he proposes." Olalla spoke calmly.

"Step down and name him my successor!" Deia continued. "I'll string him by his ankles before I allow that to happen."

"Deia... you must remain calm." L'tian spoke.

"I will not remain calm!" Deia barked as she rose from her chair like a shot. "I want to tear his smug face to pieces! And his father with him! My mate was so frightened of me last night he wouldn't even sleep in the same bed with me. My instincts are telling me too..." Deia stopped speaking and stood up straight, her eyes opening like a she had just seen something wondrous.

L'tian leaned forward. "Deia?"

"He... he was right." Deia spoke softly.

"Who was right?" Olalla asked.

"Vistr... he was right!" Deia exclaimed turning to look out her window. "By the gods I am such a fool!"

"What do you mean?" L'tian asked in his calm impassionate voice, yet inside he felt a thrill deep down as he saw something in Deia he had not seen in millennia.

"The King... Martin?" Deia spoke, "All... all of these years he has acted on instinct, controlling it... making decisions based on what his instincts told him. He is not an animal... he is not barbaric. That is what Vistr meant L'tian. We have forgotten what it means to be Lycavorian. We have forgotten what it means to be ourselves."

L'tian smiled gently and got to his feet, "And the light of recognition blossoms." He spoke softly. "This is why my people have followed yours Deia. This is why we took Resumar as our King, and this is why an elf concubine was chosen to be bound to your King. The Lycavorian people are the first, best hope for all that is good in this universe. You have gathered hundreds of species together, many by will alone. Not by political posturing or alliances, but by following your instincts. That is what King Leonidas had brought back to your



people, and *that* is why I so pushed my daughter to take her station at his side. Not for some political gain, or to gain favor... but because I knew the circle needed to be complete once more.” L’tian stepped closer to her. “Queen Anja is his compassion, Isabella the extension of his force of will, Dysea... Queen Dysea...” L’tian shook his head. “Not only is she the most beautiful elfin Queen to have ever lived... she is his sense of justice and *she* will be his political hammer. Aricia... Aricia was his warrior soul... is his warrior soul. She will be just as powerful as him Deia... and together they will be devastating to our enemies. We just have to find a way through all of this that blinds us.”

“Then perhaps this will help.” Anja’s voice echoed from behind them.

Deia and the others turned to see her standing in the doorway, Dysea on one side of her, Isabella on the other.

“Lady Anja!” Deia spoke moving quickly around her desk. “Lady Dysea... Bella... I ... I was not aware you had all arrived on Apo Prime.”

“I asked the commander of my ship to not speak of it.” Anja replied. “It appears that was a good idea.”

“Has anyone seen you?” Deia asked.

Anja shook her head. “And no one will... because I’m leaving again in less than an hour. I just needed to bring you this.” Anja held out the data pad with Aricia’s blood sample on it. “You wanted proof that Aricia would never betray Martin willingly Deia. I give you your proof.”

Deia took the pad. “This is...”

Eurin chose that moment to step around Anja and stand next to her Queen. “It is the Queen’s blood sample Deia.”

Three pairs of eyes widened as they saw the Hadarian Divine One in the office. None of them had ever heard of her leaving her island home let alone the planet itself.

“Eurin!” Deia gasped. “You... you never leave Hadaria! Ever!”

Eurin nodded. “Perhaps that is a mistake I have made in the past.” She said. “It is a mistake I will now rectify. You will find within this information pad that Queen Aricia was given an extremely rare and powerful potency enhancer drug.”

Deia looked at her. “My... my people ran every test they know on this sample Eurin. They found nothing.”

Eurin nodded. “Your people are not mine Deia.” She answered. “Another fault that I intend to correct as time passes. We have been separated far too long from the way Resumar intended us to be, and that needs to stop. The drug she was given took away all choice by Aricia. Even as powerful as she is... it is not something she would have been able to fight. And the drug used would not have shown up with your people or their equipment because it had practically left her system by the time that sample was taken. To my knowledge it has not been used in nearly seventeen thousand years, and it is also a drug that only one species that I am aware of knows how to engineer.”

Deia looked at her, “Who?”

“Dragons Deia,” Eurin spoke. “Dragons like those found on Chetak’s planet.”

“Dragons... that’s not possible?” Olalla spoke. “They... they are just animals.”

“Is that not what we all were at one point?” Dysea asked softly.

“I have spoken with Gorgo.” Anja said. “And Aricia’s mother Dasha. I know you have both of them researching ancient scrolls and texts. That also tells me you now believe Aricia did not do this willingly.”

“How did you know that?” Deia asked.

Dysea smiled. “Deia... do you honestly believe that the mother of the man we love would keep anything from us? That Aricia’s mother would hide from us?”

Deia met her eyes for a long moment. “I... I didn’t think of that.” She said almost sheepishly.

“We are not fool enough to think that what *Melyanna* has discovered will hold up to the politician’s approval, or even the approval of public opinion. It would look like a biased action on our part.” Dysea spoke. “It will only give added weight to your arguments when you find something, as Eurin herself will present it.”

Deia looked at them. “You... you seem to think we will find something that can help us.” She said.

Isabella smiled. “You will find something Deia. We have faith in you. Dysea and I will remain here on Apo Prime to insure the Oracle’s safety and assist however we can.”

Deia looked at Anja. “You are going to Enurrua I assume?”

Anja nodded. "I hope you will not try to stop me." She said softly. "It would not be pleasant Deia."

"Stop you?" Deia said. "I would not think of it Lady Anja. Your temper is second only to the King it appears. I will tell you that I spoke with a Commander Rajon last night. He just recently left Enurrua after leaving Administrator Aihola and Senior Polemarch Dymas on the planet's surface. It appears this is where they have taken Tarifa, and if Rajon's report is accurate she is working with a group of local resistance fighters. I ordered him to turn around and return to Enurrua and remain in orbit until such time as I told him otherwise. You can be there late tomorrow if you leave within the hour."

"What will you do?" Anja asked.

Deia smiled. "I have five days to figure something out before Dalkor decides he will announce his little coup." She spoke. "Have... have you heard from the King? Komirri sent an encrypted secure report that he had gone into a lower level alone... and that shortly after that several explosions ruptured the fourth garrison. No one has heard from him since."

Anja shook her head, her eyes showing their sadness. "He is not dead... that much we agree on. But he is in a place we can not reach him."

"He would not want us to be idle." Dysea spoke squeezing Anja's hand within her own. "His concubine fights for him above... and his Queens will do the same." She spoke looking right at L'tian when she spoke. "Something that we forgot for a time and your daughter's actions has reminded us Ambassador."

L'tian bowed his head to her, "Milady." He spoke in respect.

"You Deia... you will be Martin's voice!" Isabella spoke. "It is time for us to stop working against each other and begin working to put an end to what is happening. Deia... Dysea and I will need access codes to every major computer core on the planet."

"I can arrange that." She answered. "Gorgo and Dasha are in the sub level of the main University. Go to her office there and she can direct you down to her location."

"The *Mora* assigned to Helen remains with her at all times." Dysea spoke. "And I believe Deia... it is time for this clone in your Special Projects Division to meet his unfortunate end in an accident, an accident of our choosing."

L'tian could not contain his laughter. "Oh... it will be a joy serving with you my Queen." He spoke Deia smiled. "Yes... Dysea... I believe you are right. And I know just the person to pull it off."

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## ENURRUA

Joric looked up through the mountain pass he and his men were currently scaling. He wasn't happy to begin with that they had to walk the last kilometer in the heat because their Runecutters could not traverse the mountainous terrain. Joric had decided to travel light, forty of his best men, but no heavy weapons to slow them down. They had vehicle mounted Rail cannons to protect against dragon attack while they traveled in the Runecutters, but nothing but their small caliber personal weapons. Now he was glad of that, seeing what they had to traverse.

Joric was a competent military commander, having fought hundreds of times. He was considered to be a skilled fighter among his father's men and had shown that on several occasions in the past. His only drawback was that Joric had never faced organized resistance before, most of his experience dealt with dragon hunting parties and fighting small groups of villagers who opposed his father's rule. He was considered a lethal wolf in personal combat, due in part to his size as a wolf and his strength, which almost rivaled his father. Isra was the only one of his father's other sons to come close to him in size, but Isra lacked the killer instinct of Joric.

Knowing that Isra had the she-elf they wanted, and the opportunity to capture Aricia back, regardless of the threat she posed made Joric sure of himself in a manner he should not have been. Aricia would still carry his male scent upon her, and soon the she-elf wolf would be screaming his name beneath him as he took her. He could almost taste them both, and he had allowed his thoughts to wander.

It very nearly cost him his life.

He didn't realize what was going on when the man in front of him stood up straight suddenly and his head blossomed into a fine mist of red as blood and bits of bone splattered Joric and the three men behind him. Wilgar's giant hand pulling him down was all that saved his life as he screamed.

“Ambush! Above us!”

The area erupted into a cacophony of staccato weapons fire, all of it aimed down the mountain at them. Joric saw five more men fall within seconds as the rest scrambled for cover behind rocks and trees. The telltale sound of a Firespitter’s flame breath reached his ears west of where Wilgar held him down, and the echoing roar of a very large Heavyhorn and his tail smashing into bodies. Joric’s head jerked up as the dark shaped sailed over his head, trailing smoke and flopping like a ragdoll in the wind. It took him only a second to realize it was one of his men; now blackened to a crisp and sent crashing through the timber by the tail strike of the Heavyhorn.

“They have dragons!” Joric screamed, flipping over onto his stomach, clutching his rifle tightly as something he had never felt before gripped his stomach.

“The she wolf and the dragons are attacking the flank!” Wilgar screamed out over the sounds of weapons fire. “There must be at least thirty of them above us! One of our men reports he has seen a Shi Viska take down two near him!”

Joric looked at him, “A Shi Viska?” He shouted. “Only Aricia has this weapon and she is to our west!”

“It appears she is no longer the only Spartan on the planet Joric!” Wilgar shouted back, looking up briefly to fire a sustained burst over the log they were behind. “We must pull back!” Wilgar screamed as he dropped back down. “We have lost at least half our force already!”

“We can not pull back!” Joric screamed. “My father wants the she-elf!”

“We don’t even know if she is up there Joric!” Wilgar barked. “We are pinned down by a force with a superior position on us Joric. The mad she-wolf attacks us from the west with her dragons! If we do not pull back they will kill all of us!”

As if to punctuate that sentence they heard the unmistakable roar of the Heavyhorn followed by what could only be a blast of molten breath and several tall trees to their west burst into orange flame, followed by the screams of more men as the Firespitter spoke as well, the brightness of her stream of flame visible even from their location two hundred meters away.

“We must go, now!” Wilgar screamed grabbing Joric’s uniform and yanking him down the hill.

“Hello Joric!” The female voice echoed from the timber.

Joric stumbled down the hillside now, his eyes wide in fear. He heard the unmistakable humming of a Shi Viska and he dove forward to the ground, the silver shield whizzing over his head and missing his fingers by centimeters.

“I’m coming for you Joric! You will die!” Aricia’s voice filled the timber once more as he struggled to his feet and launched himself down the hill even faster, shifting to wolf form and sprinting after Wilgar who had already changed.

His dark wolf eyes darted from side to side, filled with terror, and he pushed his legs harder, digging his paws in to the firm earth propelling himself down the hill. He saw flashes of brown and dirty blond, realizing his men were doing exactly the same thing. He watched as one of his older soldiers leaped over the fallen tree, only to have the Shi Viska careen into view and sever his front legs in the blink of an eye. The wolf howled in agony as his body began to tumble through the air. The howl didn’t end until its skull smashed head long into the massive rock, crushing the bone like so much paper. Joric turned his head to the other side as he heard the roar of the Heavyhorn once more and he watched as one of his men cut around a large tree trunk making directly for him, only to be hit by the molten breath as he pounced from ground to rock. Joric watched as the body of the brown wolf disintegrated before his wide eyes.

Joric spied the Runecutters in the distance and the men that were already shifting back and piling into the vehicles. He covered the distance quickly, shifting back just as Wilgar shifted and leaped into the driver’s station of the Runecutter. Joric leaped into the back of the Runecutter.

“Go Wilgar go!” He shouted, settling into the gunner’s position behind the rail gun.

“There must be others!” Wilgar screamed seeing only sixteen of the original forty in their party.

“We can not wait Wilgar!” Joric screamed. “Move back ten kilometers and we will call my father for reinforcements!”

Wilgar knew he was right and engaged the drive on the Runecutter slewing it around a hundred and eighty degrees and speeding away with three of their eight vehicles following close behind.

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Walter yanked his *Nehtes* out of the chest of the man on the ground before him and turned as Isra and Golna moved nimbly over to them.

“We took twenty-four of their number!” Golna spoke excitedly and pumped up at the victory they had just achieved.

“Joric escaped.” Isra spoke taking a knee beside where Walter settled calmly to the soft earth beneath him and began to use the man’s shirt to clean his *Nehtes* spear.

“They’ll return.” Walter spoke calmly, “In larger numbers too. Isra... how many can your father fully field?”

Isra settled to one knee and did some fast figuring in his head. “If he sends for assistance from all the families... and they send troops...” He looked at Walter, “Three hundred thousand easily.” He answered. “That does not include the ships he could put in orbit above us and pound the mountains with plasma weapons.”

Walter nodded. “Golna... total how many across the planet can we use as fighters?”

Golna’s face had sunk when Isra spoke and he too settled to the ground beneath him. He shook his head. “I... I don’t know... perhaps two... maybe three thousand at most. Many of us are not soldiers, but women and children Guardian.”

Walter lifted the now cleaned *Nehtes* and collapsed the spear before returning it to its place on his leg. “How soon before he could get them here?”

“Three days... four at most.” Isra answered quickly.

“We need to follow Joric.” Aricia’s voice came to them as she walked up, Isheeni and Torma behind her. “We need to kill him.”

“I agree.” Golna spoke.

“He will be contacting his father by now.” Walter spoke looking at her as he got to his feet.

“We still need to find out where he goes.” Isra spoke quickly. “If we can obtain any information from him we should at least try. Aricia... Isheeni and Torma would be at too great a risk if they attempt this. I have an idea where he will go and I will take Boreal and follow him.”

Walter looked at Isra closely. “Be swift and careful. Take no chances Isra.”

Isra nodded. “I will be back within two days.” He looked at Golna. “You must begin preparing defenses in the mountains when the others begin to arrive. Tarifa and Aihola will know what to do. They have extensive knowledge in guerilla tactics and defenses.”

Golna looked surprised. “Tarifa?” He asked stunned.

Walter chuckled and nodded his head. “She led her people on earth for over a hundred years Golna; in their battle against the Coven. Isra is right... she and Aihola will know what to do.”

Golna nodded. “I knew a little of their history from listening to you talk Guardian, and from her demeanor but I never imagined she was that experienced. I will see to it.”

“I will talk with Tibyana when we return and see if there is some way she can get in contact with the Union to send us help.” Walter spoke. “Aricia... I would like to speak with you.”

Walter watched as Isra motioned with his arm for Boreal to follow him and they headed down the side of the mountain. Golna scrambled back up and headed to where they had placed most of their ambush party.

Walter turned to Aricia as she stepped up to him. “I have been here only a day Aricia... and I have seen the death in your eyes. This is no longer about just you.”

“Uncle... he... Joric took from me all that I ever desired in my life. He took me endlessly for days and I whimpered beneath him like some common strumpet!” Aricia snapped. “I will... I will never forgive that! He took my beloved from me!” She screamed, “All that I ever dreamed for he took it from me!”

“Are you so sure Aricia?” Walter asked softly.

Aricia looked at him tears in her azure blue eyes now. “Martin will... Martin will never want me back after what I have done. He will never look upon me with eyes of love again.” Isheeni and Torma had moved closer and were listening to the exchange.

“You must put aside your hatred for this man Aricia or it will destroy you.” Walter spoke.

“Then it will destroy me.” Aricia spoke coldly. “But not before I strip the flesh from his bones for what he has done to me.”

“These people need us. They need our help. You are the most powerful Mindvoice user on this planet Aricia. Isra and the others have told me what they have seen you do.” Walter said, trying to remain reasonable. “You can talk to these dragons Aricia; can you not get them to help us?”

“I only care about one thing!” Aricia snapped.

“You would allow your hatred and anger to make you turn your back on them, even at the expense of the lives of innocent women and children?” Walter asked her.

“There are no innocents anymore.” Aricia said softly.

Walter snatched her arm in his hand roughly. “You would let them all die for your selfish desires? You are not the Aricia that my sister brought into this world... you...”

Aricia’s eyes flared and she lifted her hand quickly. Walter felt himself flung through the air at incredible velocity, his own eyes wide, until he smashed into the unmoving tree several meters away with a loud grunt.

“I’m not Aricia anymore!” She screamed as she walked up to him, the psychic diamond glimmering at the edge of her fingers. “Aricia died the moment I betrayed my beloved! It has been over a month Uncle and I can’t rid myself of Joric’s foul stench from my body! I can still feel him grunting above me! Still hear his vile words in my ear. My skin still crawls at the memory of his touch on me! I am nothing Uncle, do you hear me! I am nothing! I have descended into a darkness from which there is no escape for me! Only Martin Leonidas could save me from the nothing I have become! Only...” Aricia stopped and took a deep breath as she stood up straight. “Only Martin can save me from the nothing I’ve become Uncle. Only my beloved holds the light of what I am. Only he could save me from this darkness.”

Aricia turned and walked to where Isheeni stood, easily vaulting up into the spot between her shoulders. She looked at Walter as he got to his feet and she settled between Isheeni’s shoulders.

“Only Martin could save me Uncle and he will not; for whatever love he held for me died when he heard me scream for another man to claim me, no matter the cause or purpose.” Aricia spoke. “My power means nothing to me... it is now only a means to an end. And this nightmare that I am living will end when I kill Joric and his father. Not before. Isheeni!”

Walter watched as the azure blue scaled dragon leaped into the sky above instantly and with four powerful flaps of her wings was gone from sight. Walter groaned as he reached up and tweaked his neck around. He heard Torma move up to him.

*I have felt such raw power in only one other person Torma.* Walter spoke.

*The King?* Walter nodded in reply and Torma moved closer. *The Elder mother did not mean for this to happen as it has Guardian of the Line. Her actions have driven even Isheeni away from her in anger, and Isheeni is her own daughter. I understand why she felt she needed to do this... but it was wrong Guardian. I can not bring myself to agree with her actions no matter how many of our people it saves, if any at all. It is why I have bound myself to the King... and to Aricia in his stead. Is there nothing we can do?*

Walter shook his head. *He has blocked everyone from him. You know where he went?*

Torma nodded. *The Planet of Hell’s Forgotten Souls.*

*Those with him will not respond to anyone.* Walter said looking at Torma. *They trust no one but him.*

Torma’s head came up quickly and his yellow eyes grew a little wider. *Perhaps there is another way Guardian.*

Walter looked at the dragon. *What do you mean?*

*Are you afraid to fly Guardian of the Line?*

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## APO PRIME

Dysea hugged Aricia’s mother tightly as Isabella and Gorgo embraced. Dysea held Dasha’s hands and squeezed them.

“We will bring them back together Dasha.” She spoke. “I swear to you.”

Dasha nodded. “Deia told us what Anja discovered Dysea, and it made my heart sing. I can only hope it is not too late Dysea.” She said.

“Then we must hold on to that hope.” Dysea said. She turned as Gorgo moved to her and they shared a quick embrace and kiss on the cheek. “Anja and Seanna are on their way to Enurrua now with a full Mora of Spartans. And that does not include the Mora that already waits for them in orbit. They should arrive sometime tomorrow evening.”

Dasha smiled in relief at this news. Aricia and Anja shared something special, and if anyone could get her daughter to stay alive and safe it was her.

Isabella looked at Gorgo. “Deia told us what you were doing.” She spoke. “What can we do to help?”

Gorgo looked at her puzzled. “Doesn’t the information that Anja discovered prove what they have done?”

“It will in some eyes,” Dysea spoke evenly. “But Chetak need only say it was something we plotted since *Melyanna* is Queen of the Hadarian people as well as the Union. It will not be enough. I agree with Deia in that we must find something within the history of the Lycavorian people itself that shows Chetak was wrong in what he did even without the use of drugs.”

“Dysea... you are talking about thousands of volumes of scrolls.” Gorgo spoke. “Dasha and I have been at this for three days and only been able to review perhaps a hundred data pads and scrolls. Only an Oracle could possibly find the information we need in five days.”

Dysea nodded and smiled. “That is why I brought help.” She spoke turning to entrance of the sub level.

Gorgo turned and saw L’tian and half a dozen elves enter the sub level followed by a dozen Lycavorian male and females. Gorgo smiled and nodded her head. “The help will be much appreciated.” Gorgo spoke. “We will need to...” Gorgo stopped when she saw the slight woman slowly make her way down the stairs into the sub level holding the arm of the elf Mage she knew as Thr’won and her eyes grew wide, “Dustha!” She gasped, moving quickly to stand before the woman, taking her arms. “You... you are...”

Helen looked at Gorgo and forced a smile to her face, holding back the soreness and pain of the injuries she had suffered. “I’m alive yes.”

“We did not...”

“No one knows.” Helen spoke softly. “Not even Deia. That is the way I want it for now. Dysea and Isabella have explained to me what we need to do. I failed one King Leonidas Gorgo... I failed your mate. I will not fail this King Leonidas.”

“Dustha I have never...” Gorgo began.

Helen shook her head. “I am Helen now Gorgo. And yes... you have never blamed me for the death of your mate. I have blamed myself however, and this is how I will redeem myself. I... I will need tea... and then bring me volumes seven through nineteen of *The Chronicles of Lycavorian Law!*” She looked at Gorgo. “You do have them correct?”

Gorgo smiled, “In pristine condition.” She answered.

Helen nodded. “Good. What we need will be in there. And be mindful that they are over twelve thousand years old!” Helen snapped. “I do not wish to damage them in any way!”

Gorgo smiled and looked at Dysea. “I will need to thank Deia for this.” She said.

“Not now. She is rather busy at the moment.” Dysea spoke, with what for her amounted to a positively evil smile.

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## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### APO PRIME DAY THIRTY-NINE

“They hit us yesterday with at least twenty... possibly thirty rebels father.” Joric reported from the back of the Runecutter. “The wind was in their favor and they had dragons helping them. The southern mountain range is huge and there is no way we’ll be able to search it completely without support.”

Chetak’s face remained calm in the holoidage. “You are uninjured?” He asked.

Joric nodded. "We lost twenty-four of our men father. Sixteen made it back with me to the vehicles and we have pulled back a hundred and thirty kilometers from the mountains, and that is why I waited until now to contact you. Wilgar is with us as well. The rebels... they have never been this bold before father."

Chetak nodded. "Yes I know Joric. I've gotten several reports in the last two days that indicate they are beginning to move south to your location somewhere." He spoke. "Were you able to spot the she-elf?"

Joric shook his head. "We never got close enough to see who was in their group." He answered. "Aricia was there with her dragons that much I know, and at least one other Spartan."

Chetak leaned forward, "Another Spartan?" He asked. "Are you sure Joric?"

Joric nodded slowly. "Wilgar took notice of someone else using a Shi Viska father, and it was coming from a different direction than where Aricia was. We both know only the Union Spartans can use those weapons."

Chetak's eyes darkened. "The only reason another Spartan would be on Enurrua is if they don't believe Aricia to be dead as we have reported? It makes all that much more important for you to insure she is one of the main targets Joric. Could they know that we are the ones who took the she-elf Joric?"

"I don't know father. Our operational security was foolproof, at least as much as we were able to make it." Joric said. "Rommna left no traces when he took the she-elf. The ship was sterile, no insignia on the uniforms. He and the others appeared as mercenaries, which might explain why we didn't get the ore in the first place. There are thousands of Lycavorian mercenaries in the Wilds. As for Aricia... we were very careful with that, you know this. And it won't matter anyway. She is still my mate regardless of what she wants. She chose me freely, and there is no way they could know about the serum."

Chetak nodded. "Yes... but Tablina has been missing since that night I sent Wilgar to kill her." He spoke carefully. "And these two dragons... Aricia seems to be able to bend them to her will. Tablina is no fool Joric, and she is not someone to be taken lightly. We control the spaceport and communications arrays, so she has not gotten off the planet or sent a message to anyone. Unless Isra was able to put together a short range transmitter, they can't speak with anyone off world."

"Does he have the skill for that father?" Joric asked.

"Isra is no fool Joric, as much as you like to think so." Chetak snapped. "He may be a sentimental and compassionate fool but he is an excellent engineer. And if he has developed feelings for this she-elf, he will fight to defend her. That much is in his blood anyway. You can bet he will have modern communications, at least the best he can steal or make. I will put out requests to see if anyone has been purchasing boards or others such gear to make a transmitter. Right now no transmissions are allowed off world without our permission, and we have detected nothing unusual recently."

"Father... has there been any information from Ukwav?" Joric asked.

Chetak shook his head. "No. The Union fleet is still fighting on the planet. Why do you ask this?"

"I just want to insure that is where they stay father." Joric spoke. "If you cross the portion of the Wilds that is near Ukwav, those forces could be here in three days, their *AUTUMN MOON* Frigates in less time due to their advanced speed."

Chetak shook his head. "Our sources within the Union fleet say that the traitor King went underground alone and has not been heard from since. There is talk that he may even be dead. They will not be leaving Ukwav anytime soon."

"Our bigger problem now father is how many rebels occupy these mountains?" Joric spoke. "They had modern weapons... and they were using military tactics. If they have this equipment... they might have communications that can reach off world. I need men father. Lots of men so that I can sweep through the mountains here and overwhelm whatever rebel forces may be using them as refuge."

Chetak nodded. "And you will have them son. I will mobilize the entire Western Garrison and have all the other families send their best Hunters. That will give you two hundred thousand at least Joric. Can you lead that many?"

"With that many men father I will have the she-elf in my grasp in a matter of days. How soon can you have them here to my location?" Joric asked confidently.

“Pull back to the nearest village Joric... Otiem I believe it closest to your location. I will issue the order now and they will begin arriving by tomorrow. Then I will contact Dalkor and have him demand from Deia why there are Spartans on our planet killing our men.” Chetak spoke.

“She will never admit such a thing father.” Joric said.

“Oh I know. But it will give her pause.” Chetak said. “Until the forces begin arriving Joric you need to remain under cover. They were waiting for you son. The dragons are their eyes and ears it seems. Move to Otiem, put your plan together and wait for the reinforcements to begin arriving. When you have all of them... move on the entire mountain range. I will provide orbital support from several low altitude ship platforms. Their sensors will not be able to detect anything through the mountains and valleys in the immediate area due to the background neutrino radiation emitting from the mountain’s reflective Neutrino ore, but you can use them as gun platforms and call in targets for them. Contact me when you reach Otiem.”

Joric nodded. “Yes father.” The image faded and he turned to Wilgar, “Otiem!” He barked. “We’ll set up there and wait for the reinforcements to arrive! He is sending two hundred thousand plus orbital support! We’ll take those mountains.”

Wilgar nodded as he engaged the engines on the Runecutter.

None of them saw the dirty blond coat of the large wolf hidden in the small thicket not ten meters away. Next to that wolf lay the dark brown wolf. The wind was blowing into their faces and away from the vehicles, and given the stench of the leaking engine compartments, Isra doubted anyone would have detected them regardless. Isra’s dirty blond muzzle turned to look at Boreal and then the two wolves darted off through the trees heading back the way they had come.

Isra had no intention of allowing Joric to get anywhere close to Tarifa. She may love the Drow elf more than she cared for him, but she was his mate, he wanted no other, and he would protect her until the breath left his body.

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*Why have you come here Guardian of the Line? Arzoal asked as she looked at Walter. I will not risk my people in open warfare against Chetak and his weapons.*

Walter leaned against the rock wall of the cave still trying to get his legs back under him from the harrowing flight on Torma’s back. They had flown low over the trees for part of the way and then Torma had soared high into the air, and it was then Walter nearly lost his stomach contents. A massive Heavyhorn he may have been, but you don’t have the best dragon flyer as your mate and not pick up a few more daring skills. His legs were weak when he climbed off Torma’s shoulders onto the ledge four thousand meters above the valley below. After flying like that, and then coming to face to face with a dragon that was even larger than Torma’s immense size really tossed him for a loop and he had to sit down. His eyes wandered over what he could see, and that was dozens of dragons, some small, some large, but none near the size of Torma and the reddish dragon in front of him.

Walter took a deep breath and finally looked up at her as he saw the Lycavorian female move from the shadows and stand beside her.

“That is what you risked when you brought Aricia here isn’t it.” Walter spoke now as he got to his feet. “It was the two of you wasn’t it?”

Tablina nodded slowly. “We... we did not know our actions would have such an adverse effect.” She spoke softly. “It was not our intention.”

“Not your intention?” Walter spoke moving closer, his tone of voice not happy. “You have destroyed the lives of not one person but two with your actions. They were ill thought out and they make you no better than the ones who hunt and oppress you.”

*We were without other options. Arzoal spoke. We have endured Chetak and his ilk for thousands of years! He was going to act with us or without us Guardian. He had already decided he was going to take Aricia. We decided to act in this fashion in the hopes it would bring the King here to see our plight. We did not foresee what Chetak would do... or how it would affect Aricia and the king.*

“That’s *nubous* obvious!” Walter snapped. “And you decided to make it easier for him by taking away Aricia’s will? How does that help anything?”



Arzoal stepped forward. *Guardian of the Line you may be... but do not come here and pass judgment on us for our actions. He would have acted regardless and without our actions she could very well be dead now! Do not forget that.* She said, her face taking on a small snarl.

“You do not frighten me dragon!” Walter snapped stepping forward. “I have faced down High Coven Immortals and countless others in my lifetime, and I am beyond the fear of death or its instrument. And before you slay me, I guarantee you will feel pain.”

Arzoal’s demeanor changed quickly. She was used to Chetak’s Lycavorian hunters and soldiers and others being intimidated by her size and visage, and she realized that this man, the Guardian of the Line was a Spartan of King Leonidas’s age. He would go down fighting no matter the odds or the enemy.

“Do you wish us to say we are ashamed of our actions?” Tablina spoke now stepping forward. “If that is what you came here for... then yes, we are ashamed! We have hidden ourselves here for weeks agonizing over our actions! Arzoal’s own daughter will not speak with her because of what we have done! She has bound herself to Aricia and will not return! Torma has bound himself to the King... all because of our actions. It is their way of trying to make amends for *our* actions!”

Walter looked at Torma, a new respect in his eyes for the obsidian colored dragon. “Torma... this is true?”

Torma nodded his huge head. *It is why Isheeni is never far from Aricia. It is why I follow her in the King’s stead. She is my mate... I will go where she goes, both we both feel the same.*

Walter shook his head as he turned back to Arzoal. “As my King is fond of saying... you have really screwed the pooch on this one.” He spoke.

*I have been told that by another... in similar terms.* Arzoal spoke softly in reply. *You are here Guardian. Does that mean others are coming as well?*

Walter shook his head. “I don’t know. The word has gone out that Aricia was killed by your kind shortly after coming here. You know of Tarifa... from earth?”

Tablina nodded, “The she-elf wolf, the mate of the son of Chetak? Yes, Torma has told us about her. We had hoped she could rally those who oppose Chetak’s rule.”

Walter nodded. “She has begun doing that even now!” He said.

*Truly?* Arzoal asked.

Walter nodded again. “They will need help! They can not do this alone. I’ve seen what Isheeni and Torma can do. If you side with us... we have a chance.”

*I can not.* Arzoal spoke quickly. *Many of my females are carrying eggs now. It is our time to have our children. I can not ask them to fight beside Lycavorians now. It would put the future of my kind at risk.*

“Why not... it’s already at risk isn’t it?” Walter asked. “This is your world too.”

*This is not our world Guardian.* Arzoal spoke, causing even Tablina to look at her. *Our world... where we come from is far from here. There is no way for us to return there now. The differences are too great.*

“So you will allow Chetak and his minions to hunt you like animals!” Walter snapped. “Destroy you?”

*Here we have the space to raise our children.* Arzoal told him. *My kind has been here for thousands of years. I can not ask them to leave. Where would we go? How would we get there?*

“Then you need to fight!” Walter spoke. “It is the reason you began all this! I have led men before Arzoal and I can understand that dire circumstances need dire deeds... I do understand that. It is not a decision I would have made... but I know why you have done it! But now your actions have brought us to where we now stand.”

*I can not... I will not risk my kind.* Arzoal spoke.

“You can’t... or you won’t?” Walter asked.

*Why... both of course.*

“So you haven’t put it to your kind?” Walter asked. “You haven’t asked your own kind... the dragons... you haven’t asked them what they want to do. You haven’t told them what you and she have done? You haven’t let them make their own decisions?”

*I am Elder Mother. It is my duty to make these decisions.* Arzoal spoke.

Walter shook his head slowly. “I did not come here to argue with you. Torma has told me you may have a way to communicate with the King. Is this true?”

Arzoal looked at Torma briefly before turning back to Walter. *I am able to touch the elf female he has taken as his concubine.*

“Can you contact her now? For me?” Walter asked.

“For what purpose?” Tablina asked.

Walter looked at them as if they were crazy. “Are you both so arrogant that you did not think to have this elf female tell Martin what you have done?”

“If she were to do that... he would... he would not come here to free us.” Tablina spoke quickly.

Walter stepped closer. “Allow me to give you some insight into Martin Leonidas.” He spoke in a low menacing voice. “You know of course he and Aricia are Soulmates?”

Arzoal nodded. *Yes... we realized that after... after we saw the results of our actions.*

“Aricia is my niece... the only daughter to my sister.” Walter spoke. “She wants to kill herself now... I’m sure you know that. Her only goal in this life now is to kill Joric and his father. Kill them... thereby freeing your kind from persecution. When she accomplishes that goal... and make no mistake she has the power to do just that. When she accomplishes that task she will kill herself, and when that takes place Martin will feel her die because they are Soulmates. If you do not somehow tell him why you have done this... before he follows his Soulmate into that long goodbye... he *will* come here. And if you thought the past few millennia under Chetak have been hell... you will see hell when he arrives. I’ve seen him pissed off. It’s not a pretty sight.”

*He... he would do this?* Arzoal gasped in horror. *He would act with vengeance on my kind? He is the grandson of Resumar!*

Walter nodded slowly. “He is also a man who will have had his Soulmate taken from him by you. He’ll come here alright. And nothing you will do or say will stop him then.”

*Val’istar... he said...*

“I don’t know who this Val’istar person is, but he obviously doesn’t know Martin Leonidas very well.” Walter spoke.

*Elder Mother you must.* Torma spoke now. *Now is the time to atone for our mistakes before darkness descends on all of us.*

Arzoal looked at him for a long moment and then back to Walter. *Remain here for a moment.* She spoke. *I will see what I can find out from For’mya.*

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## APO PRIME

His name was Brean.

He was perhaps the most important intelligence source for the Vampire High Coven that they had ever had. At least that is how he arrogantly considered himself, as he walked through the corridors of the most compartmentalized Union facility on Apo Prime, or anywhere in the Lycavorian Union for that matter.

His name was Brean and he was a clone.

He began life over thirty years ago on a small desert rock of a planet. He was one of three clones in his series, and the only one to be trained as an intelligence gatherer and not a warrior. He was Lycavorian, but the pureness of his donor’s blood had been diluted in the cloning process. He could change a non-Lycavorian with the mild power of the virus in his blood, but he would never be able to stand up to a pureblood in terms of power or endurance and skill. His scent was not as strong, something he afforded to others by the fact that his scent glands were damaged in a radiation experiment many years earlier.

He was living the good life on Apo Prime. He had money and influence, having worked his way up to third in charge of the Talracian Ore Research project. His home was large and very comfortably furnished, and he had many female wolves as companions who would share his bed regularly. He was careful and meticulous about his actions, never doing anything out of the ordinary that might draw attention to himself or his past. His papers and history were all created and maintained by the finest High Coven forgers and document makers in the Empire. The Coven had given him life, given him what he had now, and unlike that third clone in his series he was completely and utterly loyal. His instructions were clear, his purpose defined. Every bit of research that he obtained on Talracian Ore and the armor it could be used to make, he passed on to the Lycavorian People’s

Republic monthly. He didn't know why the Coven chose to work with Lycavorians who were more savage and brutal than the ones he lived among daily, but he had been taught to never ask questions, and that is what he did.

As Brean waved to the stern faced Spartan Guard at the entrance to the secure facility, flashing his security pass and walking through the sensor, he thought of the sweet young Lycavorian female that was joining him for dinner this night. Miai was a young thing, barely past the Coming of Age, but he had been able to easily sway her attention from her studies at the University with his feigned importance, and entice her into his bed. Three glasses of ale was all it had taken, and she had been whimpering in delight beneath him that same night. She was a sexy young thing, and whenever she called him he answered quickly. She was beautiful with long reddish blond hair and the sexiest royal blue eyes he'd ever seen. She was smart and completely without inhibitions in their bed, her delicious body firm and lean with medium sized breasts and long slender legs. He was mindful to be gentle and caring with her, so as not to cause problems with her family that would lead to actions he did not want.

As Brean walked the short distance to where his older model Bladedart Lifter was parked he could see her long legs wrapped around his waist and urging him on as he pounded into her lush young body. He set his case in the rear seat of the Bladedart and settled behind the controls. This Bladedart was an older model, not too flashy, but just enough to say he had some wealth and importance. He powered up the engines and decided he would stop to pick up a moderately expensive Venoltian Brandy to give to Miai tonight during their dinner before he took her to bed. It was only a small hop from the University where she waited for him. She could go for hours due to her youth and he prided himself on being able to keep up with her.

Brean set the Bladedart's controls on automatic to take him to the small store near his apartment to buy the Venoltian Brandy he wanted. He sat back in the seat as the Bladedart smoothly edged into the massive lifter lane and began to move. Brean didn't notice the thousands of other lifters of every size and description, his thoughts mainly on Miai and her tight young body as his autopilot moved the Bladedart where it needed to go.

Brean didn't know how long the small blinking red light had been on, but as his eyes focused on it and recognition came to him, they grew wide. His control thrusters had lost power and he was drifting. He leaned forward quickly as the nose of his Bladedart eased into the main thoroughfare of Lifter traffic. He saw the flash of light and his head snapped around just in time to see the huge Lifter Bus, unable to slow in time, plow into the side of his Bladedart. He felt a momentary flash of intense pain as his head cracked against the windshield and then his Bladedart was spinning madly out of control.

Brean's last thought before blackness took him was that he would not be able to make his usual report.

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## UKWAV

For'mya sat with her back to the landing strut of her *STRIKER*, trying to stay out of the sun and drink fluids. The explosions underground that had breached the fourth garrison had also sent minor tremors through the other facilities and almost two days work was lost as more debris and rubble had piled on top of the tunnel Martin had leaped into.

For'mya closed her eyes and prayed to her gods as she had done for the last two days. She had not come this far in her life, discovered all that she discovered about herself and the man who now held her so tightly within his grasp, she did not come all this way to see it all disappear. She had been flying almost non-stop, keeping the fear that he could be dead at bay. They had heard nothing from him, and even the powerful sensors on the *LEONIDAS I* could not penetrate the mysterious shield that had gone up around this underground facility the moment the fourth garrison had fallen.

For'mya felt a strong tingle against the Mindvoice shields Martin had helped her to erect and maintain. It was not Martin that much she knew and she lowered her shields a small portion.

*For'mya! Arzoal's voice burst into her mind.*

*Arzoal you don't have to shout! For'mya spoke wincing at the echo in her head.*

*For'mya... I could not... I could not penetrate your shields! How is that possible?* Arzoal asked obviously stunned.

*Martin Leonidas helped me Arzoal. He helped me to establish shields almost as strong as his Queens.*  
For'mya answered. *I... I have called for you before now Arzoal. You have not answered.*

*Forgive me child! Arzoal spoke. I have... I have failed For'mya.*

*What do you mean? Arzoal what's wrong? I don't need worse news right now Arzoal.* For'mya spoke with a sigh.

*What do you mean... what is happening For'mya, tell me please.*

*We have crushed Ukwav Arzoal.* For'mya spoke hearing her gasp within her mind in disbelief. *There was an underground facility, deeper than the garrisons. We discovered it two days ago. Martin Leonidas... he saw a broadcast from a Lycavorian Senator that reported Aricia was killed. He...*

*For'mya what? Arzoal demanded.*

*He leaped down a tunnel we had drilled to this facility, caving in the room around him as he jumped. He went alone Arzoal.* For'mya spoke slowly, *Soon after we broke the fourth garrison. We have... we have not heard from him in two days. There is some sort of field blocking all our sensors. We don't know if he is alive or dead. I fear... I fear the worse.*

*For'mya... I must tell you something.* Arzoal spoke. *Aricia... Queen Aricia never betrayed him. It is... it is true that Chetak was moving against her because of the Lunmai... but she is far more powerful than anyone knew. She would have beaten the fever For'mya, if I had not interfered. It is my fault For'mya.*

*Arzoal... we know this already. Queen Anja found something in her blood that revealed this. Martin's Captain spoke with her directly.* For'mya spoke. *We can't contact Martin Leonidas to tell him this!*

*The Hadarian Queen discovered this? How? There is no way...* Arzoal stopped for a moment and then continued. *For'mya what they discovered in Aricia's blood I made to be put there.* Arzoal spoke.

*What do you mean?* For'mya listened as Arzoal continued to explain everything, and her anger grew by the second. She climbed to her feet slowly, gripping the landing strut, her knuckles pure white now. Finally she could take no more.

"By what right did you do this?" For'mya screamed aloud, causing heads to turn towards her. "Do you know what you have done? You may have condemned us all!"

Vistr watched this carefully, realizing that she was Mindvoicing with someone, and when he tried to probed, he discovered a barrier around her conversation, of a power unlike any he had felt before. He got to his feet slowly motioning to Riall.

For'mya stormed out of the shade of her *STRIKER*, her face drawn back in a vicious snarl. "Do you know the pain you have caused Arzoal?" For'mya barked. "Do you know the pain you have put him through? He is a shell of who he was because of you! Because of your actions! He went down there to kill himself!"

*Can you feel him For'mya, however faintly? You must be able to feel something? You are his concubine. You share his life now, as do his Queens.*

For'mya shook his head. *I saw nothing Arzoal! Nothing! It was faint before... what he allowed us to sense, but I have spoken with Queen Anja and Queen Dysea both. All they sense now is blackness. It is no different then what I feel, a black void even emptier that it was before.*

*Then he still lives.* Arzoal spoke her voice filled with relief.

*How do you know that?*

*If the King was dead anyone connected to him would feel him die.* Arzoal spoke quickly. *For'mya tell me... does he... does he still have love for Aricia?*

*What?*

*Has what we have done... has it burned the love for her from his heart?* Arzoal asked.

*Arzoal... I am not that strong. I can't see his mind like that.* For'mya spoke.

*Is there anything you can tell me For'mya? Anything at all that could allow me to try and repair the damage I have done.*

For'mya shook her head slowly. *I don't know. He never speaks of her... and his mind is shut in a way that blocks me from that portion of his thoughts. He... he holds the pendant when he sleeps, whenever he reads his reports...*

*Pendant? Arzoal barked. What pendant?*

*I don't know where he got it. I've never seen it off him. He never removes it. He is always holding it.*  
For'mya spoke.

*Describe it to me.*

*Arzoal I don't...*

*Describe it to me!* Arzoal snapped angrily.

*It's red... like underwater coral.* For'mya answered quickly surprised at her tone of voice. *It never stops shining.*

*Torma!* Arzoal screamed out, For'mya hearing her.

*Elder Mother.* The deep male voice answered urgently.

*Aricia... does she wear a pendant?* Arzoal asked.

*Yes Elder Mother. She never removes it, not even when she bathes. It has the color of the Heart of a Dragon Elder Mother, but it is too small to be such.*

*Heart of a Dragon?* Arzoal gasped. *For'mya you must get him out of that tunnel!*

*We are trying Arzoal! The work is long and slow. We can't simply melt the rock and we can't laser another tunnel because it might make the facility unstable and we don't know where Martin is inside the facility!*

*Melt the rock.* Arzoal spoke softly. *For'mya please tell me, what is the composition of the ground there?*

*What?*

*What is the ground made out of? Rock, granite... bedrock... limestone... what is it made out of?*

*Mostly bedrock and limestone once you are past the surface layers.* For'mya replied. *Why?*

*Someone is entering the system here,* Arzoal spoke once more, urgency in her voice now. *Someone strong; Do you know of anyone coming to Enurrua For'mya?*

*"Enurrua?"* For'mya spoke out loud now. *"No! Why would anyone go there?"*

*For'mya I must go quickly but I will return. Please child, do not block me.*

Arzoal ended the connection abruptly and For'mya looked at Vistr and Riall confused as she turned.

*"For'mya... is there something we should know about?"* Riall asked. *"Who is going to Enurrua?"*

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## ENURRUA

Arzoal moved quickly back into the main cavern to see Walter sitting patiently on the slab of a bench while Torma had moved outside to the ledge. Tablina sat several meters away, seemingly afraid to speak with him. Walter looked up as she came back in.

*"Well?"*

*There is a strong presence entering the system Guardian. It is a female... much stronger than normal Mindvoicers, fiery and willful.*

Walter smiled and the relief on his face was very evident. *"That could only be Anja."* He spoke. *"And if she is here... she has brought help."* He looked at Arzoal. *"Did you speak to this For'mya?"*

Arzoal nodded. *The King...*

Walter stepped closer to her. *"What?"*

*He is alone in a place the others are unable to get to him at the moment. There was some sort of facility deeper in the bowels of Ukwav. He went there almost two days ago by himself and they have not heard from him since.*

Walter's eyes closed slowly. *"Then it's too late."* He spoke softly.

*No.* Arzoal spoke. *There is a way; a way to show him what I have done; that I intended no malice with my actions.* Arzoal moved closer to him, *A way to show him that only he can save the woman who holds his heart from the path she has chosen.*

*"How?"* Walter asked. *"No one has heard from him in two days! He could very well be dead already!"*

*You would feel that Guardian as would I.* Arzoal spoke. *You know this.*

Walter looked at her. *"Your first plan began the mess we are now in Arzoal."* He spoke.

*Then let me attempt to make amends Guardian, so that all is not lost.*

*"What do you propose?"* Walter asked.

*Torma... the pendant Aricia wears. Go to her... take it from her anyway you can.* Arzoal spoke.

*Elder Mother... she never removes it. She will not just give it to me.*

*Then take it from her Torma. And meet the Guardian at the site he directs his friends to. Go quickly Torma... we don't have much time.*

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Anja reached out carefully with her mind from the bridge as they established a high, rigid orbit above Enurrua. She did not want to risk anyone on the surface being strong enough to sense her probes, so she lowered her psychic shields gently, probing outward searching for someone she knew. Her heart leaped when she felt Tarifa, Aihola and Walter. She could sense the presence of others who could Mindvoice on her level, but none of them were Lycavorian, of that she was certain.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Walter?* Anja reached out tentatively.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Milady Anja... you do not know how good it is to hear your thoughts?* The reply was immediate and Anja smiled with relief herself.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Walter, I am in orbit above the planet, and I have two full strength Mora with me, but we need a secure place to set down so that this Chetak bastard does not detect us.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *We have such a place Milady. It is large enough for both the frigates to land. My Queen... can you ask your captain how long it will take him to reach Ukwav?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Why? What has happened Walter?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Please Milady... it is important.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Hold on.* Anja turned quickly to the commanding officer of the *VISIONARY*, “Commander how long will it take you to reach Ukwav from here?”

“My Queen I don’t understand why would I want too?” He asked. “We have taken the planet.”

“Humor me.” Anja spoke.

The man turned and looked at his Executive Officer. “Plot the fastest, most direct route.”

The executive officer turned and worked his navigation console quickly before turning back around. “It would mean cutting through the edge of the Wilds Commander, but at maximum speed we can be there in thirteen hours and seven minutes.”

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Walter it would take just over thirteen hours.* Anja told him. *Perhaps you can tell me what is going on?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I would be happy to Milady, as soon as you land. We will need to empty your ship of men and equipment as quickly as possible so that we may reload it.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Reload it? Reload it with what?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I’ll tell you when you get to the surface.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Walter... Little Wolf... have you... is she...*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I have seen her yes. She is very much alive my Queen. I am hoping that when she senses it is you that some small part of her will return.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Why does that statement make me uneasy Walter?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *How soon can you land my Queen?*

Anja looked at the Commander again, “How soon?”

“Less than an hour after I have the coordinates my Queen,” He answered. “Our sensors can pick up nothing that can see us. Once we have the coordinates I can take us directly in.”

[Mindvoice Shielded] *One hour Walter.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I will see you then my Queen.*

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## **APO PRIME**

Deia looked at the man in the bed behind the partition. “The operation went off with no trouble?” She asked.

The Lycavorian man standing next to her nodded his head. “We used a slow activating virus in the control console of his lifter.” He answered. “It disabled the control thrusters and when he turned to pull into the

main thoroughfare they simulated a burn out. It was timed perfectly and he was broadsided by a lifter bus driven by one of our people. His lifter was an older model prone to such actions, and we insured that nothing would be detected even by our own investigators. He was rushed to the nearest medical facility, again by our people. The senior doctor there declared him killed in a lifter accident within minutes. We brought him here as per your orders. He has minor injuries and we are keeping him sedated.”

“He is a clone then?” She asked.

The man nodded and motioned for her to sit down at the table. “Yes... we confirmed it with the information that Queen Dysea provided to us.”

Deia nodded and moved to the small table in the room lowering herself into the chair as the man produced several data pads and handed one to her. “If the marking structure that the elf Doctor on Earth discovered is accurate, then yes he is the second in the series.”

“What name is he using?” Deia asked.

“Brean,” The man answered. “We ran the name through all known databases and it came back negative up until ten years ago.”

Deia looked at him. “That is the same time I gave the formal go ahead for the Talracian Ore Research to begin.” She said.

The man nodded. “You have a traitor in your office Deia. It is the only explanation.”

Deia sat back in the chair. “Have Aspon tailed. I want to know where he goes and who he sees. He is the only one who worked in my office at the time.”

“I’ve already taken care of that.” He told her.

“The question remains... who is or who was the original subject, Dekton... or someone else?” Deia asked.

“Our technicians seem to think they have figured that out.” The man spoke. “They have been doing testing on the blood samples of the one from earth... Dekton... and now this clone here.” He settled into the chair. “We would need to find the third clone to be one hundred percent sure, but the two samples we have now show high concentration of nitrogen in the blood.” He pressed the small panel on the data pad and handed it to her. “Earth’s atmosphere is made up of the exact same concentration of nitrogen. The original donor... right now it’s looking like he was from Sparta.”

Deia nodded. “They lacked the security measures we have in place and it is more than probable he was a Spartan.” She said.

“I reviewed the data Queen Dysea supplied from the data banks in Sparta. There is nothing out of the ordinary in this Dekton’s life until he disappeared for that three year period.” The man spoke. “He was an honorable Spartan Centurion in every way. His mate was a half vampire female that he rescued on his very first mission, his daughters’ half vampire/half wolf. The mate was much respected within the Spartan community until she was killed by the Coven. All in all very uneventful... until he disappeared.”

“You said you picked up a female as well?” Deia asked.

The man nodded. “She is the main contact he has had in the last few months. Her name is Miai. She’s a University student... she even has several classes with Gorgo. Very attractive... very young and it appears as if she is only a means of pleasure for him.”

“Does she show any signs of attraction?” Deia asked.

The man shook his head. “We’ve been interviewing her for over an hour. She’s terrified Deia. She says all he is interested in is sex... he has asked about Gorgo recently, but nothing too intrusive. She says he is not even very good in bed, but he treats her nice and is not too kinky.” He spoke with a smile.

Deia sighed. “At her age she should be more interested in her schooling!”

“She is only just past the Age of Consent Deia, no male showed interest surprisingly because she is quite attractive, so she is experimenting. Her grades are perfect and have been for five years, and that might explain some of it. She may be considered somewhat of a bookworm by the young men.” The man spoke. “She received an outstanding grade from Gorgo last season, five out of five stars. I understand Gorgo does not give out five stars very often, and that is like a ticket into the field of history if I’m correct.”

“That is true. I think she’s given out three in the last two thousand years. And all three of those students are senior apprentices in the History Archives Building.” Deia spoke.

“Her family is influential on the eastern continent, but not overtly so. They are active in their local community, and her oldest brother was just accepted into the Fleet Academy.” The man spoke. “The more we discover... the more I believe she is just a toy for him.”

“Call Gorgo,” Deia spoke. “Have someone pick her up and bring her here to speak with this Miai. Place her in Gorgo’s charge.”

“Deia that would...” The man began to speak.

Deia held up her hand. “The existence of you and your team is something I will need to tell the King. You know this. I don’t think you have to worry my friend. His history from Earth indicates he has already done much of what you and your people do now. He understands the nature of things and he is not afraid to do what is necessary. I trust Gorgo like I trust you and your people. If Gorgo says this Miai is legitimate... and she’s not a clone...” The man shook his head. “Then because of what she has seen already... she just became an unofficial employee of your organization.”

The man nodded. “Attractive young female operatives are always helpful. I will have Gorgo talk with her, and if she chooses not to assist in that manner?”

“Then find her a job in administration.” Deia spoke. “Allow her to finish school... she should only have a month or so left. Have her protected... a young Spartan that can act as her boyfriend if need be. If we know about her then you can be assured our enemies know about her, and once they realize this Brean character is gone, they’ll want to clean up any loose ends. Miai is a loose end. I will sacrifice no more men and women to these fools my friend, and I want to start hitting back. Interrogate him... wring him for every bit of information you can get, most especially where this third clone might be and whatever history he has on the original Dekton. Find out Chetak’s connection, Veldruk’s connection if any... whoever else might be involved. I want to know it all, and I want it in the next two days. Can you do that?”

The man nodded. “I believe so yes. His psychic shields are strong... but he is a clone and we can bypass them easily enough.”

“No torture!” Deia spoke. “We will not fall to the level of our enemies.”

The man smiled. “Deia I have not used torture in over three thousand years. We have drugs for this... drugs that will make him sing to us like a bird and he will wake up knowing nothing of what he has told us.”

“Good.” Deia spoke.

“Then what do we do with him when we have this information?” The man asked.

Deia got to her feet. “Do I need to tell you?” She spoke coldly.

The man stood and nodded his head. “No. I will take care of it. He is already dead after all.”

Deia nodded. “You have my authorization to give Gorgo full access... she probably won’t ask for it... but if she does... give it to her. She is the King’s mother... and her words will carry weight with him in the future.”

“Your way of pulling his strings Deia.” The man said with a smile.

Deia grinned. “He will not plunge a *Nehtes* through his mother’s heart after all.”

“Do we... will we have a future Deia?” The man asked.

Deia looked at him. “We’ll have a future my friend.” She answered. “Now I have to go meet this pig Dalkor’s son and agree to his ridiculous terms. I will send the information to you when I have it and you can cross reference it with whatever you get from the clone.”

“Consider it done.” He spoke.

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## ENURRUA

It wasn’t possible.

How could she be here?

Why would she be here?

All these things were running through her mind as Aricia scrambled down the side of the hill as fast as her four legs could propel her. She and Isheeni had sped after Torma after he had acted insanely by asking her to see her pendant and then tearing it from around her neck with a forelimb and leaping into the sky. It took her



and Isheeni several minutes to get over the shock, calling to him to return and thinking he was simply playing a joke on Aricia to get her out of her self imposed funk. When they finally got around to going after him, Aricia had begun to grow nervous and upset. The pendant was the last link to her beloved. The last item that she clung to with memories of him, and even Isheeni was becoming angry with her mate's actions.

They sped after him across the landscape and quickly noticed he was heading for the same spot where they had met with Walter and Aihola. They knew why only minutes after cresting the ridge of the mountains and seeing the huge bulk of the AUTUMN MOON Frigate parked on the ground and the hundreds of black and crimson clad Spartans forming quickly and efficiently with the large group that had already landed. Aricia had Isheeni land on the ridge so that they could watch, Isheeni calling out to her mate in anger, only to have him tell them it was something that needed to be done.

Aricia squatted on the ridge while they watched one of the AUTUMN MOON Frigates engage its Coven Shroud shield as it lifted back into the sky and disappeared. Tears filled her eyes and she cursed everything that had happened to her in bringing her to this point. Now the one thing that had held her together was gone and she was lost.

Until the sweet smell of honey drifted across her nostrils and she looked up, shifting into wolf form and breaking into a run in almost the same instant. Aricia locked in on her scent, ignoring all others as she sped across the open area, only shifting back when she began to mingle in with the Spartans. Most bowed their heads to her as she passed, as if she was still their Queen, yet Aricia ignored all of them until she came to a stop when she saw the petite armored form with Persian red hair talking with the Hadarian she knew as Seanna and her brother Atropos.

"Anja?" She whispered in a voice that no one should have heard, yet Anja's head came around like someone had slapped her hard and her jade green eyes flew open.

Whatever she had been talking of was forgotten and with every step Anja took towards her, Aricia felt a tiny portion of who she once was suddenly sparking back to life.

Though only five foot three, it took Anja only twenty steps to cover the distance and then she was in front of her and staring into the azure blue eyes she had dreamed of so many times over the last weeks. Tears sprang to her eyes and she stepped closer.

"Little Wolf?" She gasped softly seeing the almost feral nature burning in the young woman who she had shared so much with during the last year, so much happiness and so much pleasure. Her beauty was still there... even more so now with the length of her hair and the lean muscular body that she had forged. Yet her eyes were not the bright orbs of delight she had once known. They were almost empty now... devoid of emotion and feeling. Anja would never know that what she saw had come back in the last minute when Aricia had seen her.

Anja reached up slowly and put her hand on Aricia's cheek, seeing her eyes close as sensations washed through her, and then Anja stepped forward and embraced her with every ounce of strength she had.

Aricia nearly fell when she felt Anja's arms encircle her and without conscious thought she returned the embrace as the first tears she had shed in over a month came rushing forth. Anja's aura was bright, clear and powerful and it filled her with warmth and love. There was no indecision, no question in that aura and Aricia felt herself grow weak and lean into Anja even more.

Anja pulled her head back and kissed her hard, holding Aricia's face in her hands. She stopped after a second when Aricia did not respond and she looked at her surprised.

"Anja... I..."

Anja shook her head quickly. "No Aricia! You have to explain nothing to me! Nothing! Little Wolf I have... I have so missed you." She said tears streaming down her face.

"How... how did you..." Aricia stammered her own tears coming forth now.

Anja shook her head. "It is not important Aricia. None of it is, not now. You... you are safe now... back with me. With us."

Atropos was not able to hold back any longer and he stepped closer, towering over both his Queen and his sister. Aricia stepped back from Anja when she saw him so close, not knowing what he would do. What to expect. He was her eldest brother... the symbol of their family now and...

Atropos dropped to his knees in front of her, the tears bursting forth from his dark eyes, causing Aricia to look at him in stunned shock.

“I... I have no words Aricia.” He sobbed looking up at her. “I have wronged you sister... in... in a way that shames me to my core. I can... I can only hope you can bestow upon me the forgiveness I denied you.”

Aricia felt his arms curl slowly around her waist as he pressed his sobbing face into her abdomen. Her hands shaking uncontrollably, Aricia placed them on his head slowly, feeling his hair and the rough skin of his stubble face as her palm wandered over his cheek. She looked at Anja, her azure blue eyes blurry with tears, and Aricia realized for the first time that perhaps she was not as dead inside as she had wished for. Her arms suddenly crushed her brother’s head to her and she lowered her cheek to his hair as his arms crushed her almost painfully to him.

“Atropos... my... my brother!” She gasped out the words as his arms squeezed her. Aricia reached out and took Anja’s hand, feeling her warmth as she pulled her close and she felt Anja’s arms wrap around her as well.

Aricia let the tears come freely now as she was engulfed in emotions she had thought purged from her. They were not the emotions she wanted to feel sweeping her away... they were not from the one she so wanted to feel wrapped around her body and her soul. They were not the arms that would chase away the nothingness of what she was now. Yet...

They were emotions telling her that she was not completely dead inside, and right now, she reveled in that and allowed it to take her away.

Isheeni stood to the side of the gathering, ignoring the hundreds of eyes that watched her warily, or in outright awe. She could feel the emotions pouring from Aricia, and if a dragon could cry Isheeni would be in tears.

*Isheeni my mate. Torma’s words filled her head and she looked around quickly.*

*Torma... Torma where are you husband? Aricia... Torma it is...*

*I am leaving Isheeni. I am bound to the King as you are bound to his Queen. The Guardian of the Line and I are going to help the King. Isheeni... if... if only you could see what I am seeing. The... the stars my mate...*

*Isheeni looked up into the sky. Torma... you are on that ship that took off? Torma!*

*I will return with the King Isheeni. I will return with the King or I will not return at all. This is my station now as Aricia has become yours. I needed her pendant Isheeni. Tell her I am sorry for taking it in such a way.*

*Torma... you... my... my love!*

*I will return to you Isheeni. And I will bring freedom to our kind. Do not fear for me. Protect her until we return Isheeni. And we will return my mate. I promise you that.*

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

### APO PRIME DAY FORTY

Helen tossed down the data scroll in disgust and leaned back in the chair. Her head hurt and her eyes were sore from so much reading. Dysea looked up from the pad she was reading with one hand, alternating between sips of very strong tea and rubbing the bridge of her nose. L’tian and the others were spread out in the sub level archives at small tables going through the volumes that Helen had told them to find. All of the tables were littered with coffee and tea mugs and foil that held half eaten food scraps.

“Helen... you need to rest.” Dysea spoke leaning back as she did. “You are still not fully recovered from your physical wounds.”

“I am strong enough for this Dysea.” Helen replied looking at her. “What I need is to close my teeth around this man’s *nor* and bite with all my strength.”

Dysea chuckled softly seeing the expression on Helen’s face. “I’d much rather use my claws.” She spoke with a grin. “I prefer *Nauta Melme’s nor*. They taste better.”

Helen looked at her and burst into a fit of laughing that was contagious, as soon Dysea was laughing with her, both of them with tears rolling down their cheeks. The laughing strained her ribs but renewed her energy and resolve and she reached over and squeezed Dysea's hand as she wiped her eyes. "Oh thank you child... I needed that."

Dysea nodded as she too wiped away the tears in her eyes from the laughter. "I believe I did too Helen."

They turned as the door to the sub level opened and Lexi stepped inside to admit Gorgo, Isabella and the young female Lycavorian with reddish blond hair and large blue eyes. They had left little more than an hour ago, Isabella with Gorgo because Dysea trusted no one to provide better protection to *Nauta Melme's* mother, and because Isabella had been growing restless and uneasy staring at the mounds of data pads. Dysea had known what it was troubling her almost immediately, sensing it in the woman she had grown so close too. She had pulled Isabella aside then and told her to return to her home here on Apo Prime and do what she must.

*"I can tolerate it Dysea really." Isabella had said. "I have endured worse."*

*"I do not want you to endure worse Bella... you need to feed. The others may not notice but I do. I..." Dysea had looked her dead in the eye then. "You do not need to suppress who you are for me Bella. I know what you are and I have accepted you for that. I... I would offer you my blood Bella... but I fear that is not prudent right now. We both need to be sharp and ready."*

*Isabella had reached up and stroked Dysea's cheek then her hazel/green eyes bright and focused on her. "You would let me feed on you Dysea?"*

*"I intend for you to do quite a bit more Bella... but..."*

*Isabella had kissed her then, silencing her words with the heated kiss, pressing her body up against Dysea's in the corner they had retreated to. She pressed her strong thigh between Dysea's legs, her knee pushed snugly against Dysea's always hot center so tightly that she could feel the outline of Dysea's labia against her clothes.*

*They were both breathing heavy when Isabella broke the kiss and delicately ran her moist tongue along Dysea's elf ear, her hands going to Isabella's arms as passions began to ignite inside her.*

*Isabella stepped back though, squeezing Dysea's hands, watching her eyes close and then open again as she calmed herself. "I will taste your blood Dysea ussta she-elf. But it will be in the midst of passion and not need. No non-vampire has ever seen the signs so early Dysea, and you don't know how much that means to me."*

*"It is because I care for you Bella, more deeply than you might know." Dysea spoke softly. "You... you do things to me that no one but Nauta Melme does... and my blood burns for you almost as brightly as it does for him."*

*Isabella nodded slowly. "I think perhaps I'm beginning to see that."*

*"Good... then go with Gorgo Bella. Stop at your home and quench your need. Then continue with what Deia asks of us, and return her to me."*

Dysea noticed with a smile, as Isabella walked up to her and circled behind that she had been right. Isabella's eyes were clear and focused and she was back to her calm demeanor. Isabella leaned over and nuzzled the back of Dysea's neck as she had seen Martin do, and she was rewarded with Dysea reaching back discretely and squeezing her thigh with strong fingers, which was enough for Isabella to know she had been missed. It was a sign to Isabella since she was not wolf and could not do what Martin could do to her, and Isabella would not nuzzle her elfin ears in front of all these people.

Gorgo squeezed the shoulders of the young woman and smiled. "Everyone this is Miai. She is a very gifted student of mine and Deia has approved her to be here with us. Hold nothing back from her... as she now knows why we are here."

Miai stared at the elf Queen and Vampire Princess in front of her and could not move. She had never been this close to royalty, and she could not deny the tanned lush beauty of the elf Queen, or the porcelain like alabaster skin of Isabella. She was shaking gently as Dysea walked up to her and gently took her hands while looking at Gorgo.

"It is done then?" She asked directly.

Gorgo nodded. "They were interrogating him as Miai and I were leaving. Deia will let us know what they discover."

"My... my Queen... I did not know what he was!" Miai exclaimed. "I was only... he was nice to me. I only..."

Dysea shook her head and put her fingers to Miai's lips. "You have nothing to apologize for." Dysea spoke. "Your family... your parents... they know you are safe?"

Miai nodded quickly. "My... my brother will be so angry with me." She said with a shy embarrassed smile. "He... he said you were... he said you were beautiful and he wanted to meet you in person."

Dysea chuckled. "Well... when you see him again you can tell him you now work for me and I would be happy to meet him."

"Lady Gorgo told me... she told me what you are doing Milady Dysea." Miai spoke. "I... I am more modern than my mother and I never believed what Queen Aricia did... what she..."

Gorgo smiled. "Miai... you need to relax child. You will find that all of us here are not what you might have expected." She said. "Go to the table and I will introduce you to the Oracle Dustha and then we can get you right into this pile of work that is making us all go blind. A fresh pair of eyes is always welcome." Gorgo smiled and watched her as did Dysea and Isabella. "She is a gifted student Dysea."

Dysea nodded. "I will trust your judgment where she is concerned Gorgo, you know that."

"Deia is attempting to get the Senate meeting called by Dalkor pushed back several more days." Gorgo spoke. "She doesn't know how successful she will be, half the Senate is thrilled with Martin's victory, half of them want to hang him for conducting military operations without their approval."

"He is the King!" Isabella spat. "He does not need their approval to conduct military operations! That has always been the purview of the King."

Gorgo nodded. "Yes well I think this Dalkor is trying to get much more changed than he told Deia initially."

"Gorgo... is she strong enough to withstand..." Dysea began to speak.

Gorgo held up her hand and shook her head. "We do not have to worry about Deia." She said. "She has been a politician all of her life, the last eight hundred years as Prime Minister. She will weather the storm long enough for us to find what we need." She looked at Dysea. "Any... any word from...?"

Dysea shook her head slowly. "There is something there... but all I see is an empty black void. He lives Gorgo and we must have faith."

Gorgo nodded. "I know... but he is so much like his father... sometimes I fear for what he will do to himself."

"We must continue on the path we have started." Isabella spoke. "Anja is where she will do the most good and that is with Aricia. It is all we can do."

Gorgo nodded. "Then I will get back to it." She spoke.

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## UKWAV

Martin looked at the shimmering psychic knife that protruded from the knuckles of his right hand as he sat on the bed lotus style, his left hand wrapped around the coral red pendant. His Shi Viska hovered in the air next to the bed, completely still and with the low hum that accompanied any Shi Viska when it was activated and deployed.

"It grows easier as each day passes doesn't it?" Canth spoke as he walked slowly up to the bed.

Martin released the psychic knife and opened his palm, a shimmering diamond of psychic energy now forming and holding completely still. "It's so much easier to form things." Martin spoke.

Canth nodded as he settled onto the chair next to the bed. "The exercises I have taught you would normally take years to learn, and you have mastered them in days. You will one day pass your grandfather in your control Martin Leonidas, as long as you continue with your training and do not neglect it."

"Will Anja and Dysea have this power within them as well?" Martin asked turning to look at him.

Canth shook his head. "They are not pureblood as you. Since you have turned them they will undoubtedly one day be the equal in power to Dustha as she is now, but they will not have this ability. Only one with the pureness of blood that you and Aricia possess will be able to do this. Be mindful what I have taught you Martin... the more power you expend, the weaker you will be to psychic attack by Veldruk and those with this ability."

"There are those in the Coven who have this talent?" Martin asked.

Canth nodded. "The last I knew... there were just under a hundred that he had trained in such a fashion. They are strong... not on his level of course... but they could prove a challenge to you until you have reached your full potential. I do not know how many there might be now."

"Can I beat him?" Martin asked bluntly.

"As you are now... no," Canth spoke. "Once I pass from this life into the next, I will pass on what I know to Dustha, and your teachings can continue. She will know all that I know."

"Why did you bring me down here?" Martin asked softly.

"You were destroying yourself my King." Canth answered. "Your sense of honor and morality was waging a battle with your natural instincts. Your feelings of betrayal, who you believe you betrayed, would have been your undoing and you needed to admit finally to yourself who you are."

Martin looked at him. "Who am I Canth?"

"Do any of us know who we truly are my King?" He replied. "You have finally accepted who you are now though. Your grandfather was no different than you. He always fought with what he knew was right and just, even when it went against his instincts, what our very nature was telling him."

"Did he succeed?"

Canth smiled. "Resumar... if not for him Martin, none of us would be here now." He said. "What he started... you now have to finish. You have to complete the circle son of Leonidas. That is your destiny now, as a Lycavorian and King."

"And if I choose not too." Martin asked.

Canth smiled. "Then all we know will be lost." He said. "But you have already made that decision boy. If you had not... you would not have spent the last three days listening to me rattle on about this and that while your people above us do everything within their power to break through the psychic/energy barrier I erected."

"What is it?" Martin asked.

Canth smiled. "It is a combination of normal psychic energy, and the residual power left within the cells of the core of this facility. They are close to figuring it out, but in a few hours it won't exist any longer." He looked at Martin and watched as his left hand caressed the coral red pendant. "She calls to you my King?"

Martin looked at him and nodded slowly. "The longer... the longer I am away from her in this fashion... the more I feel her slipping away from me."

"Resumar and Eliana were Soulmates you know." Canth spoke softly. "Your blood calls for each other Martin, just as their blood did for them. You can no more deny it then they could. It is why your grandfather used the *Lunmai* to take her back from Chetak."

"Canth... how do I know she doesn't hate me for not doing what I should have done as her Soulmate?" Martin asked. "She knew... her instincts told her what to do. I pushed mine back... I ignored them! And because of that... she followed her instincts and found another mate. You keep telling me I need to get her back, but that would be wrong by the very standards and laws my grandfather established."

"Not everything is at it seems Martin Leonidas." Canth spoke. "You have learned more in these few days than I could have hoped for. You have an insatiable desire for knowledge of our people and our history... unlike any historian I have ever known." Canth moved closer to him, leaning forward on the chair. "Look at your Shi Viska... what you do with it... holding it stationary like that... the Mindvoice power required for that is beyond what anyone will achieve except for Aricia. Yet you do it as if it is the most natural thing, with no effort whatsoever. You have a power within you Martin Leonidas, a potential to be so much more than what you are now. You need to step beyond the power that you wield... step beyond the boundaries of what your eyes and your senses tell you. Everything is not always as it seems son of Leonidas."

"What are you saying?"

“I’m saying for every action there is a consequence. But not every action is born of evil, even if the consequence of that action is evil. Would you conduct an evil action if you knew ultimately, in the end, the consequences of that evil action would be good?” Canth asked him.

Martin met his eyes. “I have done that before.” He replied.

Canth nodded. “Did you regret it Martin?”

“I allowed hundreds to die in order to save thousands more. In my opinion there was no other way to act. Yes... I regretted it... part of me still does to this day.” He answered honestly.

“So one evil action of yours resulted in consequences of good?”

Martin nodded slowly. “That’s one way of looking at it I suppose.”

“Was this action of your evil, was it done out of malice or anger or hate?” Canth asked.

“No.” Martin replied instantly.

“You must remember that over the next few days!” Canth spoke.

“Why?” Martin asked.

“You can not change who you are Martin Leonidas, no matter what you desire. There are many who are lost Martin, and you will need to find them, the paths to some will be simple, the paths to others not so simple and laden with dangers. But know this... only you can choose that path, and once on it, you must see it through, no matter the result. Like your grandfather, only you have mastered the balance of our natural instincts and the values we now hold as a people. Your grandfather gave that to our people, and now only you can give that back to them so that we can move into the future as one people. You have already started that by taking For’mya as your concubine. You did it out of political necessity at first, like your grandfather, but now she has seen a part of you that even your queens will never see. And like your grandfather’s elf concubine, For’mya will hold a place within you for all time.”

Martin held out his left arm and his Shi Viska snapped into place on his forearm and then vanished in a flash of silver/white. “Man... this is all some heavy shit.” He spoke.

Canth laughed at his words. “Indeed it is. I have always wondered why I survived when so many did not. Now I have that answer.” He spoke. “You are that answer Martin Leonidas. I was meant to survive so that we could spend these days together. I will only be able to sustain this physical form a few more hours and then you will have to return to those who follow you above. I will pass on my knowledge to Dustha... and you will always have a voice to listen and guide you. As the Guardian of the Line does now, Dustha will never deny you council. She is strong willed that one and she will be important in the future of things to come. As will the ones you will discover soon.”

Martin looked at him. “What do you mean?”

“Even now... destiny barrels toward you Martin. What you do with that destiny will decide the fate of millions.” Canth spoke. “Will you disregard it... or will you look beyond what your instincts tell you? You wish answers Martin Leonidas... your answers and your sign of what to do will be upon you shortly after I am gone. Do not deny your instincts Martin Leonidas... but do not let them rule you either.” Canth stood up and looked at him. “Take my body from this place Martin, return with it to Apo Prime. You will know what to do with it when it is time for you to take that particular path.”

“You’re leaving?” Martin asked.

Canth nodded. “I must prepare to pass on what I know to Dustha. And you must prepare to return to your friends above and become the King you are meant to be.” He held out the data pad. “I would like you to do something for me.”

Martin got to his feet and took the pad. He activated it and began to read, his eyes growing wider the more he read. He looked up quickly. “Canth... this... this is...”

Canth nodded. “Amazing... yes I know. And once I pass from this world... only you and one other will have this knowledge. I can only hope you see fit to do what you know must be done. Deia has something that belongs to you. I suggest you ask her for it.”

“How do I get out of here?” Martin asked. “There aren’t exactly doors with an exit sign above them.”

Canth snorted. “You are King! I can’t do everything for you! I’m quite sure you will figure it out on your own. Remember... everything is not as it seems.”

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## ENURRUA DAY FORTY-ONE

“Establish a defensive line here.” Tarifa spoke as Golna and half a dozen others stood around the table with her, Aihola, Anja and Aricia. “We have seven hundred here now; another five hundred will be here by tomorrow evening.”

Aihola nodded. “I will take those five hundred and move to this line of ridges here,” She spoke tracing the small map chart with her finger. “We will dig as fast and as hard as we can.”

“I have three main medical teams and I will position them like a triangle.” Anja spoke pointing at the map where she was going to put them. “They will be inside tunnels that Golna has pointed out to me.”

It had been a long night of tears and words for Anja and Aricia. Isheeni had sat quietly, listening to Aricia speak with this red haired woman more than she had spoken with anyone in all her time here. They sat close to one another, the green eyed Hadarian and Aricia’s brother sitting by the small fire a few meters away giving them privacy. Only Isheeni could hear their words, as only Isheeni and Torma were allowed to be this close to her. Isheeni could feel the hatred and vengeance burning off of Aricia as she allowed the words to come forth, tears once more pouring down her face, the red haired Queen Anja holding her hands tightly as Aricia relayed every sordid detail. They had been lovers, Isheeni could tell that in the manner and way they spoke to one another, and the gates had opened for Aricia as she told Anja everything, holding nothing back. Her aura still pulsed with vengeance and hatred, but it no longer consumed her as it did before. It no longer controlled her actions, and that as far as Isheeni was concerned was what mattered most.

“We do not know if Chetak will release orbital platforms to bombard us from orbit,” Golna said. “But we must assume he will. He will want to crush us in every way.”

Tarifa turned. “Commander Rajon?”

The Lycavorian fleet officer stepped forward. “I have a full payload of missiles and torpedoes.” He spoke. “Prime Minister Deia has authorized me to use whatever means necessary to assist. If he puts orbital platforms over this mountain range, I guarantee they won’t be there for long.”

“Is she sending more troops?” Golna asked.

“Two more *Mora* will arrive tomorrow.” Anja spoke. “The political aspect of what is going on will come to a bursting point soon, and that is all she can send without raising suspicion more than it already is.”

“We... if only we knew how many men he is going to send.” Golna spoke. “We could prepare a more detailed attack and defensive plan.”

“Two hundred thousand,” Isra’s voice spoke from the entrance of the cavern, causing Tarifa to spin around quickly, her eyes wide as her mate’s scent filled her nostrils. It was a reaction that did not go unnoticed by one. Aihola watched as the violet eyed man moved closer to the table, purposely avoiding eye contact with Tarifa. She had to admit, Tarifa had been right, he was very different from Dekton. The scent she could detect with her wolf sense of smell, even diluted as it was, was that of deep timber in the morning, fresh and pure. There was wildness to him, vivid and strong, his dirty blond hair wild and unkempt. Muscles rippled beneath the clothes he wore, and even Aihola could detect the strong aura he projected, “Two hundred thousand, plus orbital platforms.” Isra told them. “Joric is going to lead them. They will have begun arriving today, and once all of them are massed, perhaps a week, they will strike us here.”

“Two hundred thousand soldiers,” Golna gasped.

Isra stepped up to the map between Anja and Aricia, Tarifa’s eyes never leaving his face. “They are forming in Otiem a hundred and thirty kilometers north of us. My father is going to release orbital platforms into low stationary positions to bombard the entire mountain range. I would imagine that he will do that soon.”

“Even in low orbit they will be ineffective against the thickness of the mountains.” Golna spoke. “They will wait until we begin to move from the protective of the hills before they attack.”

“To do that they will need spotters.” Isra spoke. “The Neutrino radiation that wafts from these mountains will degrade their sensors to the point where they will need to visually have someone target for them. We will be safe from the platforms as long as we are careful.”

Aricia leaned forward, "Send small teams to these locations Golna, two perhaps three men." She spoke pointing to five spots on the map. "They are far enough away to give us advanced warning if Joric tries to put scouts into the mountains, but close enough that they can pull back quickly if need be."

"I will rest tonight." Isra said. "Boreal and I will take this point here and try to maintain some line of sight on what is happening in Otiem."

Golna nodded. "No crazy stuff Isra." He spoke. "You and Boreal are not exactly known for being subtle."

Isra chuckled feeling Tarifa's eyes boring into him. "Do not worry; I have no desire to die by my brother's hand."

Tarifa felt Aihola squeeze her thigh under the table and she shook her head quickly. "These mountains are much like Eden City on Earth." Tarifa spoke. "We can hold out... and I intend on going to Commander Rajon's ship later today and speaking with whoever I can to get us more help. Once Martin discovers what is happening here he will not let it continue."

Anja nodded. "Tarifa is right. We need to hold out. We need to give him time. The Guardian is already on his way to him to tell him what is happening. He will know what is going on in a few days. We need to be ready."

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**APO PRIME  
LYCAVORIAN SENATE OFFICE BUILDING  
OFFICIAL PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE**

"Perhaps you could explain to me why there is at least one Spartan on my planet Prime minister." Dalkor spoke.

Deia sat in the high backed chair behind the long wide desk and looked at him. Her official office here in the Senate Building was a huge expanse of a room with a large conference table in the center and several very comfortable couches and chairs situated near the massive room length window that looked out over Tuya's majestic sights a hundred stories below.

Deia had been waiting for this and she returned her tea to the desk top and sat back in the chair. "What do you mean?" She asked with a questioning tone and adding a touch of confusion to her eyes.

"I have been informed by my government that at least one Spartan is on Enurrua and he has taken the lives of at least ten of our soldiers." Dalkor snapped, "Men who were conducting their duties by hunting the dragons who are responsible for the deaths of so many of my people."

"Senator... I truly have no idea what you are talking about." Deia spoke. "I have no knowledge of any of our men being on your planet. What would be the purpose in this?"

"You tell me Prime Minister." Dalkor spoke sternly. "The King defies the Senate by continuing his childish rampage on Ukwav, costing us lives and material each day." Dalkor saw a pained expression cross her face and he leaned forward. "What are you hiding Prime Minister?"

Deia let out a long sigh of frustration and sorrow. "I... I was going to announce it at the usual meeting tomorrow, but I do not have all the details. I would like your support in postponing the meeting for three, possibly four days."

"Postpone the meeting for what reason?" Dalkor barked. "Is this some ploy by you to keep me from submitting my proposals and my Reorganization Bill?"

Deia shook her head, "Hardly." She spoke reaching to the side and picking up the scroll pad. "I received this information this morning." She told him holding it out.

Dalkor reached up tentatively and took the scroll pad from her and began reading, his eyes growing wider as he did. "Prime Minister this..." He looked up. "The King has fallen?"

Deia nodded slowly, reaching up to wipe away the single tear that threatened to fall from the corner of her eye. "They were able to pull his body from this underground facility late last night. He went down fighting, killing over forty Immortals... but they finally were able to overwhelm him. Riall requested they be allowed to conduct a small service with those that began the attack with him before they prepared his body to bring home."



Deia leaned forward. "I was... I was hoping to gain support for postponing the meeting for those few days so that we can prepare a State Service for him. I would understand if you would not support me... it hardly matters now really... your Bill will pass almost without protest now that the King is dead."

Dalkor sat back quickly in his chair. "No Prime Minister... considering the circumstances I do not believe three or four more days will matter in the least. I will fully support your request for the extension."

"Thank you Dalkor." Deia spoke getting to her feet. "Perhaps... perhaps it is time for me to step down and allow others to begin anew."

"There is no shame in this Prime Minister." Dalkor answered wanting to scream out in excitement at this news. "I do believe you should make an announcement about the king however, if for nothing else, to prepare our people for this."

Deia turned and looked at him. "That would be prudent. I would much appreciate if you would make this announcement Senator. I must begin putting together the arrangements for his interment."

Dalkor stood up and nodded. "I would be humbled Prime Minister... and of course I will do this." He said.

"Aspon can give you access to all the Net Channels and their services." Deia spoke. "I must take this news to his mother Gorgo." Deia looked at him. "I will support any actions you put forth Senator... let us just get through these next few days."

Dalkor nodded quickly, "Of course Prime Minister."

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*"... With my extreme sorrow that I must now convey to the people at Prime Minister Deia's request," The image of Dalkor took a deep breath and he appeared to be fighting back tears. "King Leonidas has fallen while bravely leading his soldiers in battle on Ukwav. He..."*

Dysea, Gorgo and Isabella stared at the monitor in the archive sublevel with no emotion, while several gasps came from the elves and Lycavorian men and women who were in the archives helping them.

"King Leonidas is no more dead than you or I!" Helen bellowed from her spot at the table, causing everyone to look at her. "Do you see his Queens sobbing madly despair? Do you see his mother beating her chest in sorrow?" She got to her feet slowly.

"You have to admit..." Deia's voice spoke from the entrance. "He is quite convincing for a moron." She moved further into the room and bowed her head to Helen. "Oracle... while I was perturbed that Queen Dysea did not tell me you were here, it is a distinct honor to finally meet you."

Helen smiled and bowed her head in return. "Your doing?" She asked motioning to the monitor.

Deia nodded. "It gives us what we need the most. Time. And announcing it gives Dalkor great pleasure undoubtedly."

"He did not press you on the issue?" Dysea asked.

Deia shook her head. "Once I told him the King was dead, any interest in a Spartan that was on Enurrua vanished from his mind." She replied. "I have been able to send two additional *AUTUMN MOON* frigates Lady Dysea. Any more than that and people will start to ask questions."

Dysea nodded. "I know. You won't need to send anymore Deia." She spoke.

Deia looked at her puzzled. "The tone of your voice suggests that there is a reason for that my Queen."

Dysea nodded. "There is."

"May I ask what that reason is?" Deia spoke alarm bells going off in her head.

Isabella smiled and looked at Dysea. "I told you so." She spoke.

Dysea met Isabella's hazel/green eyes with a twinkle of fire and pleasures that were sure to come. "Then I will have to fulfill my bargain when this is all over Bella." She said with a smile of her own. She turned back to Deia. "You won't need to send anymore right now Deia, because in approximately nine hours, fifty thousand Spartans from Earth will begin landing on Enurrua. Chetak made a mistake kidnapping Tarifa Deia. And Selene is going to make sure he pays for that mistake in spades."

Deia's eyes were wide and she was about to say something when Maii got to her feet at the table holding what appeared to be a hand written scroll of some sort. "Oracle?" She spoke softly.

Helen looked at her and Miai leaned over to show her the scroll. They read the scroll together, almost head to head, Miai pointing out something and Helen's eyes growing larger. "This... this is it!" She exclaimed loudly, causing everyone to look at her.

Dysea's emerald eyes grew larger. "Helen... what is it?"

Helen looked at her. "Miai has found it! This is what we need! It wasn't in the Chronicles of Law! It was in the First Oracle's Declaration."

"What was?" Deia asked.

Miai looked up. "*Macin Gravinolfgrek, hador Vada Assirina Cormunn fand hote dissa.*" She spoke in the ancient Lycavorian language. "*Anomes, magar un tur shahlekke son raanath jossas.*"

Dysea shook her head. "What... what does that mean Miai?"

"*Once consecrated in blood, honor The Centennial of the Moon above all others.*" Helen answered. "*Soulmates, never to be parted by worldly means.*" Helen smiled gently as she held the scroll. "Now my King..." She whispered. "Now you may get back your soul!"

*You have done well Dustha.* The deep voice echoed in her mind.

*First... First Oracle!* Helen gasped.

*It is I Dustha.*

*But... but how is that possible?*

*It is possible Dustha. I have chosen you to continue my role among our people Dustha. The title and role of First Oracle now falls to you.*

*First Oracle... I am not... I am not worthy.*

*The King disagrees with you Helen. The voice spoke with a small dash of humor. He is unique our King... and he will need you in the journeys ahead.*

*Martin Leonidas... he is with you now?*

*He has discovered much about himself these last days... about who he is and what he can do. You will need to continue his education Dustha... as well as that of his Queens.*

*First Oracle I...*

*Do not fear Dustha... I should call you Helen now since that is the name you prefer. You are strong and you have long since redeemed yourself. You no longer need to seek redemption. I bestow on you all that I know... all that I am. Guide and support him well Dustha.*

Helen's eyes went wide and the scroll fell from her grasp to clatter on the table. Her hands gripped the side of the table, her wolf strength bending the thin metal inward as her body convulsed.

"Helen!" Dysea screamed rushing around the table to grab her and lower her twitching body to the floor of the archive. "Call for medical!" Dysea shouted. "Quickly!"

"NO!" Deia snapped out.

"Deia she's going into convulsions! We must do something! She was not fully recovered. From her injuries!" Isabella yelled as she lowered herself by Helen's head and held it off the floor.

"No... she's going through the *Tuarvobba!*" Deia gasped in disbelief. "The Change of the Oracles!"

"What is that?" Isabella asked.

"It is when one Oracle passes all that he knows to the one he has chosen as his or her successor." Deia spoke.

Dysea looked at her. "Deia... I thought Helen was the only Oracle left alive!"

Deia lowered herself to the ground at Helen's feet. "So did I." She spoke softly. "So did I."

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## ENURRUA

Isra climbed from the pool of cool refreshing water and sat briefly on the edge, his mind going back to only a few nights before when he had Tarifa in here and they were mating like they would not have a tomorrow. Her peach scent still lingered in his head, as it always would he knew. As he pulled on the thick combat pants the water dripped down his ripped abdomen and his broad shoulders. He glanced at the scars Tarifa's claws had given him, his fingers caressing the healed skin. She was worth the pain her claws had caused; she was worth

dying for without a second thought. They would have had strong children together, with her beauty and intelligence and his raw strength and purity. He bent down to pull on and speed lace his combat boots. He and Boreal were leaving in a few hours, and though his heart ached to have her in his arms again, it was better if he stayed away.

“What are you doing?” Tarifa’s musical like voice drifted to him.

Isra got to his feet slowly and turned to look at her. There was hardly anyone awake within the tunnels and caves and that is why he had chosen to come here now. He had seen her wrapped within the embrace of Aihola when he past by quickly, and that made his decision all the more important.

“I was taking a bath.” He replied calmly, even though her scent was maddeningly close and filling every pore within him.

“You know what I mean Isra.” Tarifa spoke. “You are staying away from me. Avoiding me. Why?”

“To make it easier on me.” He answered softly. “On you.”

Tarifa moved closer to him. “Make what easier Isra? I am... I am your mate. You claimed me Isra! Now you are leaving again and you could be killed.”

Isra chuckled softly. “If that happened there would not be a problem.” He spoke.

Tarifa stepped up and slapped him across the face. “Do not say that! My... my blood burns for you!” She hissed at him. “And you... you are just leaving me again!”

“I have too.” He spoke softly again, her slap still stinging.

“Why?” She shouted the question.

Isra stepped up to her and grabbed her arms tightly pulling her close to him. “This is why... this is why I did not stay with you on the ship Tarifa! You are wolf now! Your blood will burn for me as your mate, just as mine scorches my veins for you! That is part of being what we are! But you can’t give me what I want most of all!”

“What?” She gasped. “Tell me Isra.”

Isra pulled her tightly to him, and Tarifa moaned in delight as he kissed her hard, his tongue plundering, searching and exploring. Her arms wrapped around his waist and she pressed her body against his, surrendering to the need burning in her. Isra tightened his grip on her arms and gently pried her away from him.

He looked at her, his violet eyes full of desire and passion, so wild and free. “I would fight any man or monster for you Tarifa of the elves. I would even do this for the chance to claim your Drow as my own if that pleased you...” He looked into her sapphire eyes. “The wolf in you may burn for me Tarifa... but you can not make your heart burn for me, and that is what I want. Your heart is ruled by Aihola and the memory of a man who betrayed and used you. Your Drow is part wolf and I like to think I could win her over even with her vampire genes, which do not in any way frighten me Tarifa. I can not fight a memory however. You have shut that part of your heart Tarifa... you and Aihola both and all that is left is what you feel for each other. I can not fight that either.”

Isra pushed her away from him gently and bent to pick up his equipment. “If I stay away from you... then I will not feel the hurt as much when you leave. And neither will you.” He walked around her heading for the entrance of the bathing cave and stopped. Tarifa hadn’t moved her eyes wide. “My blood and my heart will always burn for you Tarifa, she-elf wolf. If you remember nothing else of me when you leave, remember that.”

Isra began walking down the tunnel away from her. He went perhaps fifty meters before he detected her scent and he stopped, turning to see Aihola step from the shadows. Her amber eyes were fixed on him and he saw her deftly slide the exposed blade back into its sheath on her side. “Do you fear me so much Aihola of the Drow, that you meet me with a blade in your hand?” He asked softly. “I love her just as intensely as you do.”

“We... we have heard that before.” Aihola spoke.

Isra nodded. “Yes... I know.” He said. “That is part of the problem.” He looked at her. “Take care of her Aihola of the Drow.”

“What will you do?” Aihola asked.

“I will fight to free my people.” Isra spoke. “If I am lucky... someone will kill me and I won’t feel the pain of her departure. If I’m not... then I will endure. Pain is something I have grown used too in my life.”

Aihola watched him turn and continue to walk down the tunnel. She waited until he was out of sight before moving to find Tarifa.

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“Have you tasted her Anja?” Aricia asked softly, her azure blue eyes resting on where Seanna slept a few meters away.

Anja lowered the brush she was using with long strokes through Aricia’s lustrous raven black hair. Anja sat with her back against Isheeni’s powerful midsection, the dragon’s head resting on the ground, her eyes closed. She hadn’t feared the dragon from the start and found her to be intelligent and witty, and very protective of Aricia.

Anja slipped her arms around Aricia’s waist and placed her chin on her shoulder. Aricia sighed in contentment and leaned back against her, reveling in the sensations of love and warmth coming from Anja for her, feelings she hadn’t felt in so long.

“Yes.” Anja answered. “I was... I was lost Aricia. Martin sent me to Hadaria to learn from my people. Dysea was gone with Isabella and I was alone. Seanna was there for me at a time when I needed her. It didn’t...”

Aricia turned her head slightly. “Does she taste as good as we thought?” She asked interrupting her.

Anja chuckled softly into her ear. “Much better actually.” She answered. “She has not replaced you in my heart Aricia... no one could do that. Please don’t think...”

Aricia shook her head. “I don’t Anja. Truly I don’t.” She spoke. “I... I have dreamed of being in your arms again Anja. Having you hold me, tasting you and having you taste me.”

“I will do whatever you want of me Aricia.” Anja asked pulling her closer, pressing her face into Aricia’s hair. “Anything.”

Aricia nodded slowly. “I know...”

“Then what Little Wolf?”

“Only one person can make the nothingness I feel go away Anja.” Aricia spoke softly. “I want him so badly it is killing me. I want him to have me in every way Joric took me; every way he defiled me, no matter the pain his size would cause! I need him to have me like that because I loved it when Joric did it Anja!” Aricia’s voice was filled with desperation, anguish and excitement. “Whether it was the fever or some part of me that the fever caused to surface, I don’t know, but when he took me like that I loved it. All I know is, I need Martin to have me, and I want to scream his name to the heavens while he does.” There were tears in her eyes now and she turned her head even more to look at Anja. “And my heart and mind are telling me it will never be. That he could never look upon me as he once did.”

“Aricia... when he discovers that it was not you... that others used you, forced you to do those things. When he realizes that you were taken from him... he is going to come for you. You have to believe that.” Anja spoke. “I believe it, Dysea, Isabella... we all believe it.”

“I am so afraid he will not be able to look past that Anja.” Aricia spoke.

“Is that why you won’t open your mind to me Aricia?” Anja asked. “You have grown almost as strong as Martin, Little Wolf... you must have felt me nudging you these last two days.”

Aricia nodded. “I can’t.” She spoke. “I love you Anja... but only Martin can heal me. Only he can give back to me what has been taken. And it terrifies me to think that he may not want me anymore.”

Anja pulled her closer, Aricia burying her face into Anja’s chest. “Do not think like that Aricia!” She said. “Martin will come for you! You have to believe in him! If we don’t believe in him... in his love for all of us then there is nothing.”

“Which is all I have now,” Aricia spoke softly. “I will kill Joric Anja my love. I will kill him for what he has done to me. I... I don’t have the strength to take my own life... and if Martin does not want me, I will remain on this retched planet and wait until he can forgive me. Even if it takes an eternity, I will wait for him, for I want no other.”

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Riall, Vistr and For'mya could only stare at the creature in front of them. They had received word that the Guardian of the Line was entering the system in a frigate and needed an immediate meeting with them on the surface. The AUTUMN MOON frigate had landed on the hard packed sand, the rear cargo hold ramp taking only a few moments to lower completely. They approached as Walter came down the ramp quickly, Riall demanding what it was he needed that was so important. Torma's appearance behind Walter ceased all words and movement. Pilots and Spartans alike were anchored into their spots when Torma's huge obsidian body came fully into view. He let his yellow eyes gaze across the sun baked landscape until they settled on For'mya. He stretched out his head to stare at her, For'mya unable to move.

Walter chuckled to himself. "This is Torma. He's a dragon in case no one has noticed. And he is on our side." He spoke with humor as Torma inspected For'mya carefully, his huge head only centimeters from her face.

*You are For'mya?* He asked.

For'mya's eyes grew wide as she heard the dragon speaking in her head. "You... you can Mindvoice?" For'mya asked stunned. She heard the gentle laughter in her head.

*You... you are the King's elf concubine For'mya are you not?* Torma spoke.

"Yes... yes." She replied haltingly, not knowing what to do, and trying very hard to control her fear.

*Only the King, the Guardian and you can hear my thoughts For'mya. No one else is strong enough. I am Torma. The Elder Mother Arzoal sent me.*

"Arzoal is... Arzoal is a dragon?" For'mya gasped aloud.

*You seem surprised. You should not be.*

For'mya looked at Walter quickly, saw him standing there quietly. She turned back to the massive dragon.

"For'mya what is going on?" Riall asked. "Guardian... you..."

*Tell Admiral Riall I am bound to the King For'mya. As my mate is bound to his Queen. I have come here to deliver a message to him.*

For'mya turned to Riall. "Admiral... this is... this is Torma." She spoke. "He is a... he's a dragon."

"I can see that!" Riall barked out.

"He has come to deliver a message to Martin Leonidas." For'mya spoke quickly. "He... he says he is bound to him in some way."

"He's talking to you?" Vistr asked. "We can detect nothing in Mindvoice."

"And you won't." Walter spoke. "Only someone on a Mindvoice level such as mine or higher can communicate with him and the other dragons."

Riall looked at him. "Others?" He asked.

Walter laughed. "Quite a few others." He said. "Has Martin come up from his hole yet?"

"Guardian... we have not had contact with him in three days!" Riall spoke. "Our engineering crew has only just realigned the lasers to blast another tunnel into the ground. We had to make sure another tunnel would not collapse the facility. It will take us several hours to burn our way through, but we don't know if he is alive or dead. He won't even touch For'mya."

"You know about Aricia?" Walter asked.

Riall nodded quickly. "Yes... Andreus was able to speak with Queen Anja. She was on her way to Enurrua."

"That's where we just came from." Walter said. "The dragon's Elder Mother... their leader... thought Torma might be able to help. We..."

"Admiral Riall!" Komirri's voice erupted from Riall's com unit.

Riall reached up and touched the small COM pad. "Go ahead Komirri."

"Admiral... the shield surrounding the facility has come down sir." Komirri spoke.

Riall smiled. "Excellent work Komirri!" He exclaimed.

"Admiral... we didn't do it." Komirri spoke. "Whatever was sustaining the shield from inside the facility just stopped? We are detecting the King's life readings clearly now."

"Contact him!" Riall gasped.

"We have no communication with him Admiral. His armor COM unit must have sustained damage of some sort." Komirri spoke. "We..."

For'mya looked down quickly when Danny's voice echoed from her armor's COM set. "For'mya?" "Go ahead Daniel Simpson." She spoke.

"For'mya... you guys better get back here." Dan said. "Something... something is happening here."

For'mya looked at Riall. "Admiral it is two kilometers back to the garrison!" She exclaimed. "We need to leave now!"

Torma didn't hesitate and snatched For'mya into his forelimb claws and leaped for the sky. Her scream of surprise echoed across the landscape while Riall and Vistr simply gazed on in shock as the massive black dragon quickly faded into the distance, his huge wing span the only thing they could follow.

Walter smiled and stepped forward. "He'll get there a lot quicker than us I imagine." He spoke. "I think the King has decided it's time to stop hiding and come out."

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Danny braced himself against the wall as another shudder shook the room and caused the laser drills to rattle. Anuk gripped his side tightly, Nayeca holding onto her, amber eyes wide. He looked up as For'mya burst into the room looking paler than usual and stumbled against the wall.

"What is happening?" She screamed still trying to get her feet under her after the terrifying flight. The dragon had snatched her into his claws and leaped into the sky, his wings beating the air with an almost painful thud of vibration. She had clutched tightly to the three talons that held her, afraid to even look down at the ground beneath her. Those massive claws had held her gently but firmly, and Torma had ignored her repeated pleas to put her down as he sped through the air at speeds For'mya could not imagine a creature could fly. Her golden hair had come untied from its ponytail and whipped her in the face within the first few moments of the flight.

Torma had landed outside the breached entrance to the garrison and set her down as softly as a butterfly. The engineers had blown or cut their way with lasers through the planet's surface directly to the room easily enough and while For'mya struggled to clam her racing pulse and move her legs as she staggered through the corridors, Torma had moved immediately to the much larger tunnel and began the descendant into the tunnel, ignoring the screaming engineers and Spartans who were moving towards the surface and gawking at him. Riall had wisely radioed ahead and informed everyone that a black dragon was bringing For'mya to the garrison and was not to be interfered with.

"I don't know!" Dan yelled. "The moment the shield came down the pounding started! And it's getting closer! Like someone is blasting their way up the tunnel!"

"That's impossible!" For'mya shouted back as she staggered over next to him.

"I'm telling you that's what... holy fucking shit!" Danny's eyes grew wide and his Shi Viska burst into existence when Torma's massive body appeared in the entrance to the larger tunnel that had been drilled to this level.

"Daniel no!" For'mya screamed reaching up and grabbing his arm.

"That's a... that's a fucking dragon!" Dan screamed as Anuk and Nayeca both moved quickly to the other side of where Daniel stood their eyes wide in fear.

"He is... he is a friend!" For'mya barked.

"A friend?" Dan spoke lowering his arm and willing his Shi Viska to disappear. "Who... is he gonna try and eat us?"

The room shuddered almost violently now, and the laser drilling equipment that was still standing collapsed upon itself and fell to the debris covered floor.

"No!" For'mya screamed. "It took us six hours to get it into position!"

Torma looked quickly at the hole that his King had apparently leaped into. It was covered by two large slabs of jagged steel and concrete and an assortment of other debris. He moved forward quickly, his body low to the ground and because of his nearly three metric tons of weight, the vibrations did not affect him as much.

*For'mya... the King is using his power to pulverize the debris above him into dust!* Torma exclaimed. *I have felt similar vibrations when my brethren have done the same thing. He is rising through the tunnel.*

*Torma how is that possible?* For'mya asked. *How can he...* For'mya's eyes widen as she felt warmth like she had never experienced fill her being and then she felt him.

So clear... so pure and so powerful his mind was that it made her stagger in its clarity. It was like the sun on a windswept day on Apo Prime, just enough to warm you gently, and caress you with its touch, yet the omnipresent power of what its potential was reverberated in the background.

*Martin Leonidas?* For'mya reached out tentatively with her thoughts, and it was as if someone bathed the darkness in blinding light when she heard his voice in her mind once more.

*Hello there!*

For'mya almost broke into tears right then, her dark brown eyes wide in relief and love and a myriad of emotions she could not wrap herself around all at the same time. *My King!* She exclaimed finally. *You... you are unhurt my King?*

For'mya heard something then she had never heard Martin do. He chuckled softly in her head. *Nothing to write home about, and stop calling me your King!*

*Martin... we are in the room where you...*

*I know... I'm right below the top For'mya. Have everyone move to the next room please.* Martin said.

*Why? We are trying to clear away the debris. There are two very large...*

*For'mya... get out of the room please.*

For'mya looked at Daniel. "Martin says get into the next room!" She said quickly. "Hurry into the tunnel!"

*Behind me everyone!* Torma spoke.

"Get behind Torma!" For'mya exclaimed. "Quickly!"

The four of them moved behind Torma's massive bulk, Danny physically hauling Nayeca into his arms as she stumbled against the debris riddled floor. Torma watched with wide gold dragon eyes as the first slab of concrete and steel lifted a meter off the floor and with a massive reverberation it shattered into dust particles and slivers of steel that pelted his hide but bounced harmlessly off. For'mya and the others watched with stunned eyes as the second slab lifted off the floor a meter and they ducked back behind Torma just before the slab shattered exactly like the first, filling the room with a thick cloud of dust and dirt.

Danny looked at For'mya. "Did I see what I just think I saw?" He asked.

"Get your ass over here Simpson!" Martin's voice boomed in the confines of the room.

Danny didn't pause and burst from around Torma's body into the dust cloud without hesitation, the others right on his heels. Danny saw the symmetrical hole in the floor from the original tunnel and he could just make out Martin's head and shoulders. He appeared to be trying to pull something up.

"Marty!" He barked out moving to the edge of the now cleared tunnel. "Fuck me Skipper... where'd you learn how to do that?"

Martin looked up at him. "Reach down Dan. Help me pull him up."

Dan's face showed his confusion but he reached into the tunnel even though he couldn't see through the dust and dirt cloud. His hands bumped into the body halfway down Martin's six foot two frame and Dan could tell the body was wrapped in something. He felt around quickly and got his hand under the armpit. "Got him!"

"Easy Danny." Martin spoke. "His body is over ten thousand years old brother. Easy when you pull him up."

"I got him boss." Dan spoke softly, detecting the concern and care in which his brother handled the body. He slid his other hand down to grip the opposite side of the wrapped body and gingerly began to lift.

The room filled with Riall, Vistr and Walter as well as three other Spartans just as Danny started to pull the body from the hole. Riall and Vistr immediately went to the edge of the tunnel, heedless of the dust.

"King Leonidas!" Riall nearly screamed.

Martin looked up from where he was holding the lower portion of Canth's body. "Riall... it's the body of the First Oracle. Help Danny... but be careful!"

"The First Oracle!" Vistr exclaimed as he reached out instinctively.

"Easy!" Danny called. "Easy!"

Riall slammed his hand down on his COM unit. "I want a hover bed in here now!" He screamed, before reaching out to gingerly help Daniel and Vistr.

The four of them were able to inch the body out of the tunnel and Riall and Vistr reverently lowered the sheet wrapped body to the floor their eyes wide in wonderment. Danny moved his body closer, planting his legs on either side of the tunnel and holding his hand out to Martin.

“Welcome back brother!” He spoke.

Martin smiled and grasped the hand, allowing Danny to pull him up, where he promptly fell onto his stomach and rolled over onto his back exhausted. “Danny... please remind me not to do something that stupid ever again.” Martin spoke.

Dan could sense the change in Martin immediately and he smiled his eyes bright. “Do I get to hit you?”

Martin laughed. “Hell yes!”

Dan joined in his laughter. “Then you got a deal!”

Martin turned as he was laughing and felt the small fist strike his chest. For'mya fell upon him then hitting his chest with every ounce of her elf strength and causing him to groan.

“You fool!” She screamed at him, her eyes wide in anger and relief. “You *nubous* fool! Don't ever do that again! Ever! You will never share my bed again if you do! You...!” For'mya stopped when she realized everyone was looking at her and her face turned bright red.

“It's nice to see you too.” Martin spoke just before he crushed her to him in an embrace of feeling and emotion that he had not allowed himself in weeks and For'mya began weeping openly as those emotions swept through her as well.

“Sire?” Riall gasped. “How... how could this be the body of the First Oracle? He was... he was lost the day King Resumar fell.”

Martin sat up slowly, not an easy feat because For'mya clung to his abdomen tightly. “Veldruk brought him here Riall. Ukwav was never a garrison... it was a prison. The First Oracle's prison. That is why they defended it so tenaciously.” Martin spoke. “His body has been imprisoned here since the day my grandfather died.”

“Sire... how do you know that?” Vistr asked.

“Canth told me.” Martin spoke.

Their eyes couldn't get any wider and both seasoned warriors fell back on their butts at this pronouncement.

“Sire... you... you spoke with the First Oracle?” Riall asked.

Martin nodded as he got further up, holding For'mya tightly to him. “He... he taught me a few things as well.” He said. “We need to get engineers down into the facility Riall. I want it picked clean of everything and then we are going to glass this planet right to its core. I want to...” Martin stopped speaking as if noticing something for the first time and he slowly got to his feet, pulling For'mya with him.

“Milord... what is wrong?” Riall asked.

For'mya looked up into his face, seeing the confusion. “Martin Leonidas... what is it? What do you sense?”

Martin turned slowly towards the tunnel that had been drilled to the room and he saw Torma's huge head appear out of the clearing could of dust.

What happened next was something those in the room would never forget.

Martin's face changed immediately to one of complete unadulterated rage and he lifted his hand towards Torma. Torma's gold eyes flew open when he felt his nearly three metric tons of weight tossed aside to slam into the side of the tunnel with a force like he had just plunged a thousand feet into the unyielding earth. The air left his lungs and he bellowed in pain as his muscular side screamed from the impact against the tunnel wall. His eyes flared once more in savage anger but he froze his motion of retaliation when the Shi Viska appeared only a centimeter from his snout and the point of the *Nehtes* touched his side just above his heart.

Torma glanced into Martin's face and saw yellow/gold wolf eyes not so different from his own, and large fangs now extended and attached to a face of chilling death that caused him to shudder in horror.

*MY KING!* Torma exclaimed. *I come from Aricia!*

Martin's downward push with the *Nehtes* ceased immediately and he looked at Torma. *What do you know of my Queen?*

*She lives sire! She lives every day with the hope that you have not lost the love you have for her.*

*Lost my love for her? I would die for her gladly, with no hesitation!*

*Her actions... they were not her own Milord! They were forced upon her! Forced upon her by a serum given to her by Chetak's son Joric. A serum... a serum made by my kind's Elder Mother.* Torma knew he would either live or die this day with the words he spoke now. *We... we did this my King! We have brought all this*



*upon you and her! My kind! The Elder Mother's misguided attempt to save our people has done this. Your Queen never betrayed you sire. She could never betray you. I have seen the love she has for you in the pendant she never removes. She... she fears you will never look upon her with love again because of what we did sire. What we forced her to succumb to with our actions. My... my mate even now has bound herself to Aricia due to her shame. As I have bound myself to you my King.*

Martin's eyes darted back and forth as rage coursed through his veins at what he was hearing. Torma shook his head gently, moving his tongue inside his mouth and opening the gaping maw of razor sharp teeth. He used his tongue to flick at the hidden pouch within the roof of his mouth where he would take Isheeni's egg the moment it was hatched. He would hold it within this pouch until it grew too large and then Isheeni would place it in the nest she would build.

Martin's eyes grew wide at what he saw drop from inside this pouch, Torma's jaws closing on the simple leather tie and allowing the coral red pendant to dangle free. The Shi Viska vanished in a silver/white flash of light and Martin reached for the pendant folding his hand around it.

*She never took it off my King. Never once. She fears not death, nor injury Milord. All... all she fears now, is that she has lost the love you held for her.*

The *Nehtes* collapsed in the next instant as Martin staggered back a few steps staring at the pendant in his hand. Torma watched as a swarm of emotion flashed across Martin's eyes and then he lifted his face upward and howled.

*It is done... and now it is time for you to return my King.*

Canth's voice filled Martin's head as he finished wrapping the fragile old body tightly in the white sheet. He placed his hand on Canth's chest for a short moment and then stood up. He walked to the computer control board that gave a diagram of the facility on the monitor and touched the console tracing his finger along the path he had decided to take.

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## CHAPTER NINETEEN

### DAY FORTY-TWO APO PRIME

"I am fine child... truly." Helen spoke as she sat up in the bed in Gorgo and Riall's home. Deia, Isabella and Gorgo stood in the room as Dysea sat next to the bed, holding Helen's hand gently within hers. She had taken quite a liking to the Oracle as if she was a mother figure to her while Dysea was away from Earth and her own mother. Or perhaps that Helen reminded Dysea so much of the grandmother she hardly ever knew.

"You gave us quite a scare Helen" Gorgo spoke.

"Yes I imagine I did." Helen said looking at Deia. "Thank you for recognizing what it was and doing nothing Deia."

Deia stepped forward. "Helen... we thought you were the last of the Oracles." She spoke. "How could... how could another Oracle pass on to you. You would be the most powerful as the last."

Helen shook her head as she smiled at Dysea and squeezed her hand. "I was not the most powerful." Helen spoke slowly. "The... the First Oracle has passed to me Deia."

Deia's eyes grew wide in disbelief. "The First Oracle? But... that's not possible Helen. He... how could that be?"

Dysea turned to Gorgo, whose own eyes were wide at this information. "Gorgo... who is this First Oracle?"

"He was... he was the strongest of all the Oracles. The very first Oracle, advisor to King Resumar and my sister Eliana." Deia spoke softly. "I met him once or twice... he is the one who forged our laws with Resumar. No one knows where he came from... he just suddenly appeared one day shortly after Resumar took power. But... Helen he fell with him that day, fighting at his side."

Helen shook her head. "He was not killed." She spoke quickly. "He was wounded and taken prisoner by the High Lord Veldruk. His body has been kept alive in a secret facility all of these years, his consciousness trapped there as well. Veldruk sought to use his power to help control and advance his own, but the Oracle refused to help him and they left him there on that planet trapped for all time."

"Ukwav?" Deia asked astonished. "That is why... that is why they have defended it so savagely all of these years? The first Oracle's prison was there?"

Helen nodded. "When Martin... when Martin breached the first two garrisons the restraints against Canth's psychic abilities were lessened, and when he destroyed the final garrison he was freed. Martin..." Helen smiled. "He has been studying with Canth these last days."

"King Leonidas has studied with the First Oracle?" Deia gasped.

Helen smiled. "I see it as clearly as if I had been there Deia. All of him... all that he was; it is now within me. And it is amazing."

"Helen... *Nauta Melme*... is he?" Dysea asked.

Helen put her hand to Dysea's face. "He is fine child." She spoke. "Better than fine now really. He misses all of you. So much has been revealed to him Dysea. He has seen things that we... that we can not begin to imagine. Canth showed him so much in so short a time. His power... his Mindvoice powers have tripled, moving into a realm that we have never seen before. Aricia's will as well."

Deia and Gorgo gasped at this news. "Tripled?" Deia spoke moving closer. "Helen... he was more powerful than... he is..."

Helen nodded. "He will one day surpass all that his grandfather was Deia... all that Resumar could have been. As will Aricia. His blood... his blood and that of Aricia's, it is as pure as Resumar and Eliana's ever was, as pure as any Lycavorian's blood has ever been. What Resumar started, his grandson will now take up."

"What... what must we do Oracle?" Deia asked softly.

"We must guide him Deia." Helen spoke softly. "You above all others know how *aulved* Resumar was. We will not control Martin, we will not manipulate him. His will is too strong for that. We can only guide him..." Helen looked at Dysea. "And guide his Queens."

"Helen... Aricia..." Dysea began.

Helen drew back the blankets that were covering her and threw her legs over the side of the bed, feeling energized and filled with power and resolve like nothing she had ever know. All of her doubts and worries of her actions with Martin's father were purged from her. She now had purpose and meaning back... and she would not waste one moment of that.

"Even now... he is learning why all of this has happened. He is learning why his Queen of pure blood was taken from him." Helen looked at them. "And she *was* taken my friends... in the vilest way of anyone's imagination. What he will do... I shudder to think of it... but we must be ready to stand with him."

"Helen..." Deia spoke quickly. "He can not... he can not just throw away thousands of years of law for revenge. Resumar would not have forsaken the laws he helped to establish, and we can not allow Martin to do so."

Helen looked at her as Dysea got to her feet, her emerald eyes burning in anger. "How can you say that Deia?" She spat. "Knowing what we have discovered, what we now know to be true, how can you just dismiss it?"

"I have no intention of dismissing it!" Deia shot back. "But there is far more at stake here than just Aricia. We have traitors in our midst, and they want to bring down all that we have built! We can not allow that to happen! I won't allow that to happen!"

Dysea's eyes flared for a second and then she took a deep breath. "You are right Deia." She spoke softly. "Of course you are right! Little Wolf was only part of it."

Helen smiled. "And that is why he has so much faith in you Deia." She said. "Why he has so much faith in all of us. He knows what he can and can not do on his own. He knows what his limits are... and that is part of what makes him so strong."

Deia looked at him. "I will be getting the report from my people this morning on what this clone knew, and the information that Asomus so willingly gave to us for his opportunity at power. Once I have that... with what we have discovered concerning Aricia... we can act. And we can act in such a way that this will never happen again."

Dysea took Isabella's hand in hers and looked at Deia. "Then tell us what we need to do Deia." She spoke. "I am tired of reacting to what others are doing to us."

"Deia it is time." Gorgo spoke. "Anja is already there. Dysea and Isabella... me... we stand ready here with you."

Helen nodded. "It falls to you Deia... the political aspect of what we must do. Martin..." Helen smiled. "King Leonidas has grown much these last few weeks... and he will not move until you are ready. That I can guarantee you Deia. But know this... when he moves Deia... he will not stop... and any who stand between him and his Queen will be swept aside like so much *nothin*. He leaves you to the political maneuvering that he knows must be done, but every day away from Aricia and his other Queens makes him restless. We must move quickly."

Deia looked at her. "What will he do Helen?" She asked.

Helen looked at her. "He will do what his instincts tell him to do." She said. "And woe unto any who stand in his way. Beyond that I will not say... for it would turn your blood cold to even hear it."

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## UKWAV

"They have not moved from that spot in hours!" Vistr spoke softly, his eyes gazing across the flat sandy terrain to look at where his King sat three hundred meters away, the obsidian colored dragon resting on the sand next to him. "He should have just killed the creature for what they have done!"

For'mya sat between Danny and Walter, Anuk and Nayeca on Dan's opposite side, all of them patient and waiting. Nayeca turned to look at Vistr.

"We do not know why they did what they did General." She spoke calmly. "For us to pass judgment on them without this knowledge is just as wrong as what they have done."

They turned as Vengal walked up quietly, Yuriko beside him and they settled to the ground in the small circle, Vengal passing out the armful of protein bars and water he had secured before coming over. "We just came up from that facility." Vengal spoke. "The Admiral thought Yuriko could make some sense of what remained on the computers."

"What did you see father?" Anuk asked.

Vengal looked at them. "There were over sixty bodies down there." He said softly shaking his head. "None of them died painlessly. I did not see the entire facility, but the engineers said many of the corridors and walls near the power core were painted in blood, as if it had been running in rivers, splashing against the sides."

"Whatever destroyed the power core and began the chain reaction in the fourth garrison was not done with explosives." Yuriko spoke. "They said it looked as if someone had simply smashed it into pieces with something."

Walter nodded slowly. "He's becoming what he was meant to become." He spoke softly.

"Several ships from earth have joined with us." Vengal said. "Benjamin and Endith among them."

For'mya looked at him. "Martin Leonidas's pilot?" She asked.

Vengal nodded. "They apparently were on their way to this Enurrua planet where Aricia is. Benjamin decided to come here instead."

"She is on the *LEONIDAS I*?" For'mya asked getting other feet.

"Yes."

For'mya took a deep breath. "If everyone will excuse me... there is something I must do."

They watched as she headed purposefully towards where the *STRIKERS* were sitting on the hard packed sand and only Vistr nodded to himself knowing why.

"How much longer do you think they will stay like that?" Anuk asked looking at Danny.

Dan shook his head. "I don't know baby?"

Walter turned his head. "Torma is bound to Martin, his mate Isheeni bound to Aricia." He spoke softly. "I can only hope that Martin's anger over what has happened doesn't cause him to throw away that oath."

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The large golden eyes gazed upon Martin with respect and a little awe. They had not spoken after that piercing howl his King had released in the tunnel while clutching the pendant in his hand. He must have spoken to For'mya after that, for the she-elf had directed the others to remove the body of the First Oracle and soon they were alone. Torma thought for sure he would die then, but Martin had simply held the pendant in his hand tightly and told Torma to follow him.

So Torma had followed the King to this spot, as was his duty now. He said nothing as Martin settled to the ground, simply standing there watching him. Finally he too settled to the sand beside his King, facing him, watching him. Others gathered in the distance to watch or simply to glimpse the King and the dragon facing each other. Torma neither cared nor bothered himself with their presence. He could feel the power radiating from him in waves, tightly controlled, and yet pulsing to be released. He had felt it before within Aricia, but it was so much stronger in the King he had bound himself too. He would wait with him Torma decided, wait with him in silence for the remainder of his years if need be. He watched those eyes, now back to their normal dark brown color, as they scanned the landscape around him, searching the cloudless sky as if seeking answers to questions Torma could not hear.

*I'm sorry Torma.*

He had not expected his King's words, and certainly not an apology and he looked at Martin with what amounted to a stunned expression for a dragon.

*Sire... it is I who should be apologizing to you, though no apology, no matter how heartfelt, can erase the shame we have brought on ourselves with our actions.*

*Why Torma?* Martin asked meeting his gold eyes. *Was there no other way than this?*

*I can not answer what I do not know sire. The Elder Mother has many more years than I. By some I am still considered a child despite my size. No one truly knows the thoughts that go through her mind Milord.* Torma replied canting his head towards Martin. *She has seen our kind slaughtered for millennia by Chetak and his people. I have seen the mindless brutality myself on many occasions. When Tablina came to our world... it was she who showed us not all of your people were like him.*

*But to help him take Aricia from me in such a way?* Martin said looking at him. *If she was strong enough to touch For'mya as she did, help her as she did, why not just contact me?*

*I do not know sire. I was not fully aware of everything until the Elder Mother sent me with Isheeni my mate, to take her from Joric.* Torma answered. *Isheeni and I did not agree with her actions sire... and that is why we bound ourselves to you and to Aricia. Out of shame. Out of regret. Isheeni and I have protected her sire... tried to keep her from harm. I know it is small consolation sire, after what we had done. Chetak would have acted in spite of us Milord and perhaps the Elder Mother felt that in some way... in some way this was the lesser of two evils.*

*Evil.* Martin spoke softly.

*Milord?*

*That word.* Martin spoke. *Evil. A year ago Torma... a year ago I would have come to your world and killed the lot of you for what you have done to me. To my... my Soulmate. The pain and shame she must have endured.* Martin shook his head. *I can not imagine it.*

*I believe... I believe sire that in your position I would do the same thing.* Torma told him. *I waited two hundred years for Isheeni to be old enough for me to take as my mate. She can not even bear me children for another thirty years because of our metabolisms. I do not care about that. When she came into my life... I knew she was the one I would spend eternity with. She is... she is my Soulmate... if dragons have such a name.*

*I can't do that Torma.* Martin said.

Torma looked at him. *I don't understand sire. What can't you do?*

*Evil.* Martin spoke again. *I have committed evil similar to Arzoal Torma. Many years ago I allowed a village of almost four thousand men, women and children die so that I could save a much larger town of over fifty thousand. As a man I can hate Arzoal for what she has done... I can curse her very name for helping to take Aricia from me.*

*Sire...?*

*As a King... I can not condemn her for doing that which I myself have done on far greater a scale.* Martin spoke softly. *Someone recently told me that not all acts of evil are born from malice and hate, even if that action results in evil. He told me everything is not always as it seems; that I needed to step beyond what I*

could see and smell with my senses. As I have sat here with you Torma, I have finally realized what he meant. Martin pushed himself up into a squatting position, moving to within centimeters of Torma's face.

Torma didn't move as his King settled in front of him.

*I can't hate you Torma. I can't hate your kind. You have protected what I consider most precious in my life, and for whatever reason you have done this, I thank you. It is a debt I can not repay.* Martin spoke.

Torma's gold eyes were wide as he stared at Martin, unable to comprehend what he was hearing. *Then... then you do still hold love in your heart for her my King?* Torma asked.

Martin smiled gently and lifted his hands, placing them on either side of Torma's huge muzzle. *All I have in my heart for Aricia is love Torma. It's all I have ever had in my heart for her, even when I thought she had betrayed me. I hated myself for betraying her. I hated myself for failing to do what my very instincts... what my nature was telling me to do. I will not make that mistake ever again. I must act now as a King as well as a man and a mate.*

*I will stand with you my King.* Torma declared immediately. *If you will allow me. I am bound to your service sire, as my mate is to Aricia.*

*I am going to bring fire to the world your kind live on Torma. Not against your people, but against those that hurt us both. Part of it will be my form of retribution for what they have made us endure, and part of it will be a signal to others that I will not allow what has happen to your kind, and when I discover it I will stamp it from existence.* Martin spoke. *It seems Torma my friend, that in freeing your kind, freeing the dragons, I will also be bringing those left behind by my grandfather... I will be bringing them home as well. Will you help me?*

*That is not a question you need to ask me my King.* Torma spoke.

Martin shook his head. *I don't want your help because you are bound to me Torma. I release you from that service. I want you to help me because whatever evil this action has brought forth, we can insure that the consequences of this evil are for the good of us all.*

*Milord... once a dragon has sworn service to another... it can not be released without death. It is one of our most sacred pledges. I will stand with you my King... and perhaps in time you will come to regard me as a friend. You intend to retrieve your Queen sire?*

Martin nodded. *Oh yes... and so much more.*

*And I wish to return to my mate. I will stand with you sire, freely and without fear.* Torma spoke. *I bound myself to you Milord King Leonidas, now and in the future before us.*

*I want to share something with you Torma. It is something that you must never reveal to anyone, for it is what Arzoal... what the Elder Mother protects above all else. If you are bound to me as you say... will you keep this secret, as I must now?*

*On the lives of my hatchlings in the future sire, I swear this to you.*

Martin smiled. *You and I are very much alike Torma.*

Torma nodded his huge head. *I... I sense that as well sire. Even in the tunnel... when your anger washed over you... I... I could feel you.*

*I say we explore that my friend. How bout you?*

*I would be honored sire.*

*Then let us begin.*

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## APO PRIME

“Identified nineteen clone agents Deia.” The man spoke from the chair he sat in next to L'tian. “They work at seven different government facilities with varying clearances. All of them report to one central hub officer.”

Deia turned from the window and looked at him. L'tian's impassive face was on his left; Olalla's animated one on his right. “Aspon?” She asked.

The man nodded slowly. “If the information we have obtained is correct, and there is so far no reason to doubt it, he is one of the original groups of our people that chose to work with the Coven during our period of slavery. He controls all the clones on Apo Prime, as well as several dozen on other worlds.”

“Elear?” L’tian asked quickly.

The man shook his head. “The Coven isn’t able to clone elves for some reason. Your genetic makeup is too complicated. And they have never been able to turn an elf into a traitor.”

“Until now.” Deia spoke. “This Tudrin on the King’s ship. He is the middle man. He is the one that gave Chetak the information on Aricia. However, when it came to your daughter L’tian... he overplayed his hand. He didn’t realize that For’mya had fallen in love with the King.”

“And by approaching her as he did, he did reveal himself to her.” L’tian said nodding his head.

“You’ve spoken with For’mya then?” Deia asked surprised.

L’tian nodded. “My... my daughter has changed Deia.” He looked at her. “And changed for the better. Her association with the King has made her stronger, more compassionate and able to express what she truly feels inside. She asked me how her mother was feeling Deia. For’mya has not asked me that question in nearly four hundred years. When I told my wife she broke into tears. It appears he is making us all see just how far we have gotten away from the simple things.”

“Tudrin?” Deia asked.

L’tian’s face hardened. “Tudrin will face our justice Deia. Elfin justice from the days of old, if you will allow it. Alocgeid has already approved the action, and if you agree we simply need to have Queen Dysea sign the document.”

Deia nodded slowly. “I will not interfere in that L’tian.”

“It is a matter of honor for us Deia, thank you.” L’tian replied.

“Now... what do we do about...?” Deia started just as the COM on her desk chimed. She reached over and touched the panel. “Yes.”

“Prime Minister... I have an incoming message from Admiral Riall. Highly secure and encrypted.” The voice spoke. This was the secondary assistant to Deia and a Spartan military officer.

“Where is Aspon?” Deia asked quickly.

“He chose to go the small gateway park for his eating period Prime Minister.”

“Very well. Route the transmission here and then delete that it ever came in. Is that understood Senior Enomotarch?” Deia spoke calling him by his complete and full rank, which was a code they had devised many years ago to indicate they had been infiltrated and everything was to now be routed and encrypted directly to her.

“I understand completely Prime Minister.” The officer spoke. “Transferring contact now!”

Deia turned to the wall monitor and her eyes grew wide when she saw Martin in the transmission, the head of the massive dragon near his right shoulder, his Spartan Captain just to the dragon’s right. “Milord!” She gasped.

“Hello Deia.” Martin said with a smile.

“Sire... they said the call was from Riall.” Deia spoke.

Martin nodded with a smile. “Well it appears I am dead... so I thought it might be best to let it remain that way until we are ready to act.”

Deia couldn’t help the embarrassing smile that crossed her face. “Sire... it seemed like the best course of action at the time.”

“You’ll get no argument from me there Deia.” Martin spoke. “Has it smoked out any bad guys?”

Deia’s eyes narrowed. “Smoked out Milord... I... I don’t understand?”

“He’s asking if it has revealed any of our enemies Prime Minister.” The unknown man spoke with a knowing grin as he stood up. “Indeed it has sire.”

“And you are?” Martin asked him calmly.

“King Leonidas I am called Armetus. I...”

“Sire... he works for me.” Deia spoke quickly. “He is...”

“Deia... I believe he can answer my question.” Martin told her.

The man stepped closer to the monitor. “I am what you would call a problem solver Milord. I have worked with the Prime Minister closely for the last five hundred years.” Armetus answered.

“In what capacity?”

“My people and I solve problems Milord.” He stated flatly. “We gather intelligence in... in ways that are not entirely legal by our laws, but they help to protect the Union. We do not operate on Apo Prime or any

other Union world sire..." He added quickly. "At least not until now. The Prime Minister thought it best to bring us in on what was happening here as a way to provide..."

"Intelligence?" Martin asked.

Armetus nodded. "Yes sire... Intelligence."

"Deia am I to understand we do not have a civilian Intelligence gathering apparatus?" Martin asked.

"Something not related to the military in any way?"

Deia nodded. "That is correct sire. The Senate voted on a resolution that King Resumar drafted before he was killed. They worded it differently than he had intended I believe, but essentially it forbids us from forming an Intelligence gathering organization within the government."

"Who drafts new resolutions Deia?" Martin asked.

"You... you do sire."

"Does this man do good work?" Martin asked.

Deia nodded. "Yes Milord... he does excellent work."

Martin nodded. "Then draft me a new resolution," He ordered. "I'll sign it. Now tell me what I want to hear."

Deia looked at Armetus with a smile. "Armetus." She spoke moving to her chair.

"Milord we have confirmed the identities of nineteen clone agents here on Apo Prime and another thirty at least on other worlds, including several core worlds Milord. Hadaria among them." Armetus spoke.

"How accurate is this information?" Martin asked.

"We faked an accident for the clone that was here working in the Talracian Ore Research project sire. He was declared dead and we have been interrogating him for the last two days." Armetus spoke. "Combined with the information Deia was able to obtain from this Senator Dalkor's fool son Asomus, it all checks out quite nicely."

"How many people does Chetak have infiltrated into the Union?" Martin spoke.

"Twenty-seven total sire." Armetus replied. "Three more in the Ore Project to include one of the senior scientists. The other twenty-four are scattered among government facilities in various positions of importance. The same for the clones. This man... this clone Brean was the highest placed according to him. With the exception of Aspon."

Martin's eyes cut to Deia. "Your aide?" He asked.

Deia nodded. "Yes Milord. I will tender my resignation when you have returned to Apo Prime Milord. All I ask is that you allow me to see this through."

"Oh shut up!" Martin exclaimed with a disgusted look. "I may be as dense as a titanium alloy tank gun Deia... but I'm not *nubous* stupid! Why would I cut off my right arm to swat an insect on my left shoulder? Resign? Please... Deia... can we dispense with the political *rensibfla* and get some work done?"

Deia laughed out loud and nodded her head. "Very well sire."

"Is this Talracian Ore Research viable? Will it work?" Martin asked.

"Veldruk seemed to think so Milord." Armetus spoke. "Why else would he plant clones into the project and then financially support Chetak's bid to take over so many Union companies?"

"Veldruk? That vampire fucker is involved in all this?" Marin barked.

"One of the advantages of working outside the military Milord is that we can go places your Spartans can not. I have people in several relatively high positions within the Wilds. The majority of Chetak's financial support comes from two companies within the free trade zone of the Wilds. Both of these institutions have a dozen front companies, and we traced the converted Riyal Chetak used to purchase the Union Engineering plants back to two of these front companies." Armetus spoke.

Martin grinned. "Oh that is sweet." He spoke.

"We thought so Milord." Armetus said liking this young King more and more as each minute passed.

"So we can make armor for our ships out of this stuff?" Martin asked.

"The preliminary tests have already been completed sire." Deia spoke. "Our trade people have worked out a very lucrative deal with Chief Administrator Selene and the first load of ore from Earth just arrived late this morning. I believe they were going to refine it and plate their first test ship beginning tomorrow."

"Tell me about this armor?" Martin asked. "Can it stop rail weapons? Small projectile weapons?"

L'tian leaned forward in his chair. "I was present for the initial tests sire. It has been tested against frigate based plasma arrays sire." He spoke. "Rail and projectile weapons would not even dent it."

"How much does it weigh?" Martin asked. "How thick is it?"

L'tian looked confused. "If I'm not mistaken they intend to spray it onto the outer hull of the ship sire. The thickness would be miniscule."

"And it's malleable?" Martin asked.

"One of the intended future test projects was to spray coat our body armor sire, to see if that was an option we could use it for." Deia spoke. "Milord... what are you getting at?"

"And it will not add additional weight to a ship; say like something the size of a *STRIKER AT*?" Martin spoke.

"The effects would be minimal Milord." Deia spoke. "Why?"

"Chetak and Veldruk want this armor so bad, well I'm going to give it to them. Just not in the way they thought." Martin spoke. "When do you meet with the Senate Deia?"

"Three days from today Milord." Deia spoke.

Martin nodded. "I'll be returning to Apo Prime tomorrow on an *AUTUMN MOON* frigate Deia. Riall will be with me and we'll be staying at an older military installation until your meeting. I'm sending you some instructions that I need carried out and arranged for."

Deia nodded. "Of course sire." She watched as he typed into the console he was at and she inserted a data pad into the slot on her desk. It beeped almost immediately indicating the transmission had been received.

"Have all of them meet me there tomorrow afternoon Deia." Martin spoke. "All of them... you included. And bring the Financial Minister as well. I will remain one day before I depart. Long enough to meet with them."

Deia nodded her head puzzled as she extracted the pad and began reading. She looked up after a moment. "Yes Milord."

"King Leonidas... we have discovered something that you should see." Armetus spoke. "The second Dekton clone told us about it during our interrogation and I had Admiral Jamerl on Earth confirm it."

"Is it important?" Martin asked.

"I believe it is sire."

Martin nodded. "I'll review it when I see you in person. Armetus... did you find the *nubous* clone who targeted Helen?"

"We have Milord. Brean was a very helpful source of information." Armetus spoke.

"You save him for me Armetus." Martin growled. "He is mine."

"As you order Milord. And the other agents and clones?"

"I want all of them taken before the Senate meeting in three days Armetus." Martin spoke coldly. "I want them wrung for every bit of information they have in their minds."

"Rules sire?"

"None... none whatsoever. Use whatever means you have short of torture." Martin spoke. "I won't resort to that."

"And then Milord?" Armetus asked.

"Then Armetus... feed them... give them some fine clothes and execute every *nubous* one of them for treason!" Martin growled. "I'll see you all tomorrow."

The transmission ended and Armetus looked at Deia with a smile. "I do believe our young King's reign will be long and interesting." He said.

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## UKWAV

Martin turned as the transmission with Deia ended and he looked at Riall, Komirri, Vengal and Vistr. Torma and Andreus stood within arms reach of him, Torma's massive bulk an intimidating sight to say the least. He and Andreus had hit it off almost immediately, primarily because Torma had sensed almost instantly that the female elf healer Kmyla was Andreus's mate and she was also carrying Andreus's child. While the



dragon made Riall and Vistr nervous, Vengal found him strangely fascinating, and had reached up to touch him on several occasions.

“Have Ceneu start re-deploying everyone back to their ships Riall.” Martin ordered his mother’s mate. “Get everyone off this stinking rock of a planet.”

Riall smiled. “No one will be unhappy about that sire, I can assure you.”

“Walter, Endith, For’mya and Ben are going with me.” Martin spoke looking at Komirri. “Komirri... once everyone is cleared off the planet move to the coordinates I gave up at your best possible speed.”

“We will be waiting sire.” Komirri told him. “If I have to get out and push.”

Martin chuckled. “Well hopefully that won’t be the case. Vistr... you and General Vengal have three days to come up with a plan that executes the objectives I want to accomplish and complete. Have the men rest and recuperate. We’re trading one rock for another. At least temporarily.”

Vistr nodded. “Between the two of us sire... we’ll come up with something.”

“Riall... I’ll need you and Ceneu back on Apo Prime as soon as possible. We need to get our forces re-deployed to their original corridors of patrol, and I want it done in an orderly fashion.” Martin said firmly. “No *sibfla* from any commanders. We started this together... Komirri and the others and I. They stuck by me through it all and they sure as hell didn’t have too. I want to finish it with them. Torma and I need to do this; this is not anything against them Riall... it’s just now... now it has become personal Riall.”

Riall nodded slowly. “I will make them understand sire.” He spoke. “I believe most of them already do.”

Martin nodded. “Good. Gentlemen I’ll see you in three days on Enurrua. Good luck to all of us.”

Riall laughed. “You will need the luck Milord.” He spoke. “It is you that have to descend into the political hell of the Senate building not us.”

Martin nodded. “Yeah well believe me; I ain’t looking forward to that. That’s why I’m having Deia do it.” He spoke with a grin.

Martin chuckled as Riall roared his laughter while he walked away.

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## ENURRUA

### DAY FORTY-THREE

The roar was the first thing Isra heard, and he knew immediately what it was. He and Boreal were in wolf form, and had spent the last day slowly circling the village of Otiem at a ten kilometer range, as they watched vehicles and ships approach almost hourly. They had pulled back towards the cave they were staying in, roughly thirty kilometers west of the village. It was set in a small mountain range and gave them excellent visual coverage of the village from even that distance. As they near the place where they could change and move up into the mountains the roar reached them. A savage roar of a dragon.

Isra moved to the edge of the ridge and looked down into the small valley. His violet wolf eyes grew a little wider when he saw the dirty yellow Heavyhorn release another decidedly pissed off roar at the four Lycavorian men who were slowly moving closer firing their small projectile weapons at the dragon while two more men were unlimbering the heavy rail weapons from their Runecutter. Isra didn’t understand why the dragon didn’t just leap into the sky and fly off before the two men got their rail weapons together and loaded. His eyes darted around the clearing, the dirty yellow Heavyhorn slashing out with its deadly tail once more.

Then Isra saw why the dragon hadn’t flown off. Three gleaming red reasons why in the form of the Firespitter eggs on the ground behind the dragon resting within the confines of the heavy grass and twigs. He twisted his head around, searching for the mother to the eggs, his wolf eyes scanning the skies above but seeing nothing.

Isra had seen enough death and violence in his five hundred and seven years to last a lifetime as far as he was concerned. He had never participated in hunts against the dragons of his world, mainly because he thought it was wrong to hunt them, no matter the reason. He also considered them to somewhat majestic creatures in his own way, and similar to his people in the way they defended their young. The pain of knowing he would never see Tarifa again... never feel her in his arms... and knowing that he would never have the chance to taste her

Drow elf lover, who smelled almost as good as she looked... all these things had been making Isra fight down the simmering anger at how his life had been so far.

Now it was too much however, seeing the brutality of his people below him, and feeling the loss of his heart to a she-elf who was now wolf, Isra lost control. Boreal's stunned wolf eyes lifted when he heard the berserker howl that escaped Isra's muzzle, and he watched as the dirty blond wolf he called friend snapped to the stress he had felt all of his life, but none more heavily than now. The large muscular dirty blond body of the wolf next to him leaped forward with a speed born of rage and hatred. And he was not about to be denied.

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Her name was Aelnala and she was four hundred nineteen years of age. Still very young in dragon terms, she was nonetheless one of the stronger females of her kind. Standing eighteen feet long and twelve feet high, her yellowish body was lean and muscular, with long talons on the end of her forelimbs. She was one of the fastest of her kind, though Aelnala knew that Isheeni would always have that distinction. No dragon could match the sheer speed and maneuverability of the Elder Mother's youngest hatchling. Aelnala had always used her size and excellent speed for a Heavyhorn to her advantage, but now she found it to be her undoing. She had spotted the abandoned eggs from high up and swooped down quickly, not really knowing what she intended. Aelnala could smell the death of the Firespitter mother of the eggs on the wind and not knowing what to do; she had attempted to gather the eggs into her forelimbs quickly so as to get away from the mass of men that was forming so nearby.

She had failed in that regard and Aelnala knew the moment the six men appeared she could not leave the eggs for them to take. She knew she would die here this day defending the future eggs of her people. An injury when she was small would never allow her to have hatchlings of her own, and because of that, no male dragon would ever want to mate with her. Aelnala had accepted this long ago and now it no longer mattered to her. She would die here now as any mother would; defending her eggs to the death.

That was until she heard the savage and feral howl from the side saw the large dirty blond wolf flash from the top of the small ridge in a burst of speed she had not seen from any Lycavorian before. That it was a male wolf was easy enough to discern due to the wolf's size, and Aelnala's honey colored eyes grew wide when that wolf descended upon the two men readying their rail weapons to kill her. There was a savage tearing sound and Aelnala watched as the dirty blond wolf's front paw slashed across the neck of the first wide eyed Lycavorian, opening his throat to the air, blood fountaining into the air around them as the man fell. The crazed wolf barely paused, and as the second man was bringing the rail weapon to bear on her, the blond wolf fell upon him, his jaws snapping shut like a steel trap around the side of the man's neck and biting through blood, bone and tissue. The Hunter's finger triggered the rail weapon in its death throes, and the heavy caliber projectile tore through one of the men circling Aelnala, ripping his body completely in half.

Aelnala was no fool and she reacted quickly, whipping her tail around, throwing her body into the whipping motion and watching as the bony, sledgehammer like end swept into the remaining three hunters with a sickening crunch as the anger and desperation fueled the crushing blow. Their bodies were tossed through the air like pieces of dead meat to land unmoving thirty meters away.

Aelnala turned back quickly to see the dirty blond wolf back in human form, his violet eyes nearly burning with emotion and pent up release. He was staring at the bodies of the men he had just killed and Aelnala took a tentative step toward him.

*Thank you Hunter.* She reached out with her thoughts knowing he could not hear her.

*I am no Hunter!* Isra's voice filled her head as he turned to look at her with a shocked expression.

*You... you heard my thoughts?* Aelnala gasped.

Isra's face had gone from a savage snarl to one of amazement and wonder as he stepped forward toward the dragon, now fearless in her presence. *You heard mine?* He asked.

Aelnala nodded her huge head, stepping closer to this rogue Lycavorian wolf that had just saved three of her kind's eggs from death. *How... how is that possible? The Elder Mother said... she told us very few of your kind have the Mindvoice power to speak with dragons. In four hundred years I have never heard one of you speak.*

Isra's hands were shaking as he moved closer to this dirty yellow dragon. He saw Boreal begin moving from the ridge toward him and he held up his hand to stop him. He had never been this close to a dragon, and he admired the fine eloquent musculature of her body and the gleaming of her honey colored eyes. *I am not like my people... please believe me.* He spoke finally.

*You have proved that this day. What is your name man?*

*I am called Isra.*

Aelnala stepped closer to him, closer than she had ever been to a Lycavorian before, and like Isra she was shaking, her tail twitching ever so slightly. *I am... I am Aelnala.*

*You should have taken the eggs and flown away.* Isra spoke. *Why didn't you?*

Aelnala held up her right forelimb and Isra saw that two of the long fingers were bent at odd angles, not conducive to carrying such smooth objects as an egg. *I would have only been able to take two. I could not leave the third with these animals.*

Isra looked at the three eggs and made his decision instantly. There was something about what was happening that was making more sense to him than anything he had yet encountered in his life. *I will help you.*

*You will help me?* Aelnala exclaimed. *How?*

*Are you strong enough to carry me?*

*Carry you?*

*You have seen how one of your kind carries Queen Aricia?* Isra spoke.

*You speak of Isheeni and the child Queen.*

*Yes. Can you carry me like that?*

*Carrying you would be a simple matter Isra of the Lycavorian. The better question is why would I want too?* Aelnala spoke.

Isra shrugged off the fatigue top he wore and bent down quickly, gently scooping two of the eggs into the fatigue top and tying the ends together in four corners. He stood back up. *I will be carrying these for you.* Isra spoke as something inside him tugged at him in his chest. *If there is to be... if there is to be peace among our kind... we can start it here, Aelnala of the dragons.*

Aelnala leaned even closer to him, placing the end of her muzzle against Isra's forehead, her two six inch long fangs protruding from her upper lips. Her scales did not feel as Isra expected, rough and cold against his skin. Her dirty yellow scales were smooth and warm as she pushed against him, her nostrils flaring as she inhaled deeply.

*You carry much pain for one so young in years Isra of the Lycavorian. Your spirit is sad and in despair. Why is that?* Aelnala asked. This Lycavorian was strong Aelnala thought to herself, stronger than he thought, and something inside her dragon heart pulled at him.

*My pain is my own Aelnala. I am hoping that helping you will give me some measure of peace from that pain.* Isra replied honestly.

Her honey colored eyes studied him for a long moment and then Aelnala made her decision and lowered herself to the ground. *We must move quickly.*

Isra turned to Boreal. "Return to the camp Boreal. Tell them what we have seen! Go now!"

Isra didn't wait another moment and he climbed up onto Aelnala's back as he had seen Aricia do with Isheeni. He gripped the two eight inch long horns jutting her shoulder blades.

*I am ready.*

"You left him?" Tarifa barked hotly.

Boreal stepped back from the she-elf wolf, seeing her sapphire eyes wide with anger. "He told me to return with the intelligence we had Tarifa." He said. "You should have seen it! It was amazing; they fought almost side-by-side and went through six Hunters like they weren't even there!"

"You left him to fly off with a dragon!" Tarifa snapped again.

Aricia and Anja stood slightly behind Tarifa Golna and Aihola watching from beside them. Even Isheeni had a surprised dragon expression on her face.

“The dragon was protecting eggs!” Boreal spoke quickly. “Three of them! Isra helped her to defend them! It was a female I think. He attacked before I could stop him.”

Aricia looked at Isheeni quickly. Isheeni?

If what the man says is true, this Isra will not be harmed Little One. Isheeni answered quickly. He has helped to preserve three dragon hatchlings... and I would not be surprised if their mother bound herself to him for his actions.

Aricia stepped up to Tarifa, taking her arm. “Tarifa... Isheeni says Isra will not be harmed. He helped to save dragon eggs and this is an act that will bring friendship from her kind.”

“So he’s alone!” Tarifa exclaimed. “Alone with dragons!” She glared at Boreal. “If he dies Boreal I will hold you responsible do you hear me? You!”

Boreal was wide eyed as Aihola stepped up quickly and took Tarifa’s hand. “Tarifa... we must talk my love. Come.”

Aihola pulled her down a connecting tunnel and when they were out of earshot she looked at her.

“Tarifa... what is going on?”

“What do you mean?” She said quickly. Too quickly.

“Tarifa... do you love me?” Aihola asked.

Tarifa’s eyes went wide and she looked at her. “What? *Nya Istel* why do you ask me that again? You know I love you. Always?”

“Then why does... why does this Isra call to you so Tarifa?” Aihola spoke.

Tarifa shook her head. “*Nya Istel*... I don’t know.” She said. “My blood calls for him, it calls for him stronger than anything I have ever felt. I don’t know what it is?”

“It... it is better this way Tarifa.” Aihola spoke. “I found him... I found him to be nearly overwhelming as well my love. Perhaps it is because you and I are so closely tied together... but I felt it too.”

Tarifa looked at her. “*Nya Istel*... was it... was it like what you felt with Dekton?”

Aihola shook her head quickly. “No. Much stronger. Wilder. Even my limited sense of wolf smell because of my vampire genes, I could still smell it from him. It... it felt very good Tarifa.”

Tarifa nodded. “It was his aura. His will... his mind... his power... his wildness... all wrapped into one. He touched me with the full power of his aura on the ship Aihola... the first time I... I nearly... from only a few seconds exposure. He said it was the wolf in my blood. When he wrapped me in it afterwards, when he was making love to me, it was ten times as strong as it had been with Dekton.”

“Dekton was a clone my love.” Aihola spoke firmly.

“Then why do I feel like I am betraying him in some way because of what Isra makes me feel?” Tarifa demanded. “I shouldn’t feel like that *Nya Istel*. I barely know him!”

“Matters of the heart are not something I can begin to explain Tarifa. I have enough trouble of my own you know this.” Aihola spoke with a small smile.

“He wanted you too *Nya Istel*.” Tarifa spoke seeing her amber eyes go wide at this information. “At least the opportunity to win you over.” Tarifa shook her head and wiped the small tears from her eyes. “No... I am stronger than this damn it. We need to win this fight so I can go home with you *Nya Istel*. I just want to be with you in our own bed... our own home. Just us.”

Aihola drew her close and hugged her tightly. “I would like that very much as well my love.” She said. “Our Spartans are all down on the surface Tarifa, moving into their positions. We can win this my love... and then we will have our time.”

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“I estimate no more than four days before they begin to move on us.” Boreal spoke to Golna and the others. “Once we saw the plasma artillery begin to move into the village, Isra decided we couldn’t risk a burst transmission and we headed back.”

“How much artillery?” Tarifa’s voice asked and they all turned as she and Aihola walked back into the central cave and up to the table. “I’m sorry Boreal. I shouldn’t have snapped at you.”

Boreal nodded. "We are all under great stress Lady Tarifa. I understand. Isra..." He saw the flash of pain in her eyes and continued quickly. "He estimated at least two hundred pieces of plasma artillery. It is short range however, and they will need to set it up within ten kilometers of the targets they wish to shell."

Aricia looked at him. "I'm not versused in large force movements Boreal. What does that mean?" She asked.

"It means that we will be able to hit them with the limited mortars we have." Golna answered. "We have several of these weapons in our inventory, and your Spartans brought more Lady Aricia. Tarifa... with your permission I will establish them along this ridge here. If we are lucky we may be able to hit them before they even move into position."

Tarifa nodded. "Do that Golna." She answered. "Anja can you add anything?"

Anja looked at her and shook her head. "Tarifa I was a Navy SEAL before all this began with Martin." She spoke. "Small unit operations I can tell you about. Moving large forces like we have... I couldn't begin to give you solid information." She replied. "You are the only one who can do this. Martin knew your father taught you much of what he knows... that is why he left you in charge of Eden City to direct forces from a central location."

Tarifa nodded. "Yes... but many of those fighting with us now do not have the training of my father's Dragoons or the Spartans." She said. "And anyway you cut it, fifty-five thousand Spartans will not be enough against two hundred thousand of Chetak's men."

"It will have to be." Aricia spoke. "We have no choice now. This... this started with me... and I am... I am sorry. I did not..."

Golna reached out and just touched her arm briefly, having no desire to keep his hands on her person for longer than necessary. "This is not your fault Lady Aricia." He spoke. "This has been coming for decades. More and more have joined our ranks, those who no longer wish to live under Chetak and his foul ways. Your presence here merely moved us to finally act. When first you and then Lady Tarifa arrived, many of us knew the sign to act had come." Rajon came into the room quickly holding the data pad. "We may all die... but at least we will have died free men and women."

Tarifa saw the look on Rajon's face and stood up straight. "Commander... what is it?" She asked.

"I have... I have just received a delayed transmission encrypted from Admiral Riall. All Lycavorian Union forces from Ukwav are ordered to return to Union space immediately and without delay." Rajon looked up. "The King is not dead as that dog Dalkor reported... but that information is not being released to the public yet."

"We all knew that." Anja spoke quickly. "We would feel it if Martin died." She said.

"Why does Deia continue with the ruse?" Tarifa asked. "What purpose does it serve?"

Rajon moved closer. "There has been no mention of Enurrua in any broadcasts in the last week." He spoke. "Nothing."

"That is strange?" Golna asked.

Rajon nodded, "Military transmissions among fleet ships; while secure among ships, is notoriously chatty. The communications people like to create rumors. The entire last week was filled with chatter among ships about what could be going on here. Two days ago it stopped completely. And I do mean stopped."

"What does that mean?" Tarifa asked.

"The 1<sup>st</sup> Spartan Fleet Attack Group, the King's Fleet Group, it is the only Fleet Group where every ship is equipped with the Shroud Generators we have on our frigates." Rajon spoke.

"Why does that matter?" Anja asked.

Rajon looked at her. "The 1<sup>st</sup> Spartan Fleet Attack Group went dark six hours ago." He said. "They went off the grid; no sensors will pick them up until they reappear." He set the pad down on the small table in front of them. "No one knows where they went, but it appears they were headed deeper into High Coven space."

Aricia let out a long mournful sigh and turned slowly to look at Anja. "He is not coming here my love. He is going deeper into the heart of the enemy territory Anja. He does not hold any love me in his heart Anja. How could he after what I have done to him?"

Anja was silent as she watched Aricia reach out and run her hand gently over Isheeni's scales as she walked by her, moving deeper into the tunnels.

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**APO PRIME  
ISOLATED MILITARY BASE  
WESTERN CONTINENT**

The base was rarely used anymore, and only the skeleton crew had been active to see the *AUTUMN MOON* frigate come screaming in over the expanse of the base and make the early morning landing two hours before the sun broke the horizon. Now... as the sun reached into the late morning sky, Deia got out of the military Saberwing Lifter, her eyes watching the large gathering of men and women on the field. There appeared to be several carts of equipment, and an assortment of weapons scattered on the ground. She could make out the figures of the King's Captain and the Guardian of the Line, as well as For'mya and another red haired elf female standing with Helen. There was a human man standing near one of the tool carts, gray just touching his dark hair. Deia turned as the five others disembarked from the Saberwing, all of them looking at her. There were two Acamarian, a Terraijiin, and two Haulta females. The five most powerful corporations in the Union and the King had asked to see them in private.

*Thud*

Deia looked around when the reverberations in the air caused the hair on the back of her neck to stand up.

*Thud*

Two dull popping noises caught her attention and she and the others saw two streaks leave the ground near the group of men and women. Andreus and the Guardian lowered the portable missiles launchers as the missiles streaked skyward and then they saw what was causing the air around them to shudder.

The massive black dragon dove out of sky at incredible speed, and it was easy enough to discern that there was a man perched on its back directly between his shoulders. All of them saw the flash of silver/white as the Shi Viska appeared. The missiles closed on the dragon and man quickly and Deia could only watch wide eyed as the obsidian colored dragon snapped its wings straight out and turned ninety degrees to its right. The man launched the Shi Viska and they all watched as it sped directly at the two missiles, cleaving both of them in two barely a hundred meters away from them. The explosions peppered the sky with plasma shrapnel which incredibly bounced away from the dragon and the man as the dragon executed a complete roll over and flared for a landing directly in front of the group of men and women.

The Corporation heads followed Deia in amazement as she ran towards the group, instantly recognizing her King on the back of the dragon.

Martin smiled and patted Torma's thick neck as they walked slowly towards the group. *Torma... you have taught me how to enjoy flying.* Martin spoke as he removed his helmet from his head. *That was a rush.*

*The... the Oracle was right Milord.* Torma stammered. *I felt your power surging through me!*

Martin nodded. *It was like we... like we were one body and two minds.* He shifted in the new saddle that rested between Torma's shoulders and wrapped underneath his massive chest with heavily padded straps. It was something Ben had designed as they were returning to Apo Prime from what he had found on the frigate. The saddle rested comfortably between Torma's shoulder blades, with a thin shield of metal that extended up over the top of each leg effectively holding Martin in position while providing protection. *The saddle?* He asked.

*It needs to be tighter sire.* Torma spoke. *If you had not been squeezing my sides when we made that last turn, it would have come loose. And the shields for your legs could be smaller. They are acting as a natural air brake during descent and it slows my diving speed.*

*That new armor I told you about. Would that be better for the leg protectors?* Martin asked.

Torma looked over his shoulder at Martin. *Much better sire... if it actually does what you said.*

Martin chuckled and nodded. *I guess we'll find out.*

Torma nodded as they drew close to the group of men and women. These past two days together with his King had been incredible. Learning what they could do together in the air and on the ground had been inspiring to him. Torma could almost feel his people becoming free with the power they wielded when working

together. He lowered himself to the ground in front of Andreus and the Oracle and Martin leaned forward next to his head.

*Thank you my friend.* Martin said softly his hand running down Torma's neck and patting him once more.

Torma looked at him and bowed his head. *Thank you my King.*

Martin slid out of the saddle, stepped on the forearm Torma lifted and then to the ground to look at Helen. He hadn't seen her since before leaving earth and had almost crushed her in his embrace this morning when she arrived. He did so again, pulling her hard to him.

"It's amazing Helen." He gasped. "It's like we can see each others thoughts. What we are going to do, separately and merged."

Helen smiled and held his arms as she looked at his animated face. "It is a gift Martin Leonidas... a gift you should not waste. You and Torma have forged a bond that can not be broken now. Your natural abilities will complement each others. From what Torma has said, Aricia and Isheeni have formed much the same thing, they only have not done as you and Torma now have."

"Their Mindvoice powers are much greater than I first thought." Martin spoke. "He can project a psychic shield around himself when he is flying, but there was some sort of barrier that prevented him from using it completely. That's why they aren't injured when they fly so fast." Martin looked at For'mya. "How fast?"

She shook her head. "Four hundred and sixty five kilometers per hour straight line Martin." She answered. "Faster if he is diving."

Isheeni is much faster than me. Torma spoke excitedly, all of them except Ben, Deia and the others hearing Torma's words.

Helen nodded. "You removed the barrier?"

Martin nodded quickly, his face showing the excitement and energy he had just experienced. "We... we could see with each other's minds Helen. It was the shit!" Martin spoke, causing Ben and Endith to burst out laughing.

"He sounds like a kid with a new toy." Ben muttered, Endith slugging him in the arm for it.

Helen nodded again. "Canth suspected this." She spoke. "Individually... they were only capable of protecting themselves in flight with this barrier. With a powerful mind such as yours or Aricia's... or any Tier Six Mindvoicer for that matter, their focus and concentration increases ten fold. You and Torma, Aricia and Isheeni, you will always be more powerful because of your own natural abilities, but bonded to them as you are... the possibilities are enormous."

"Arzoal put the barrier there didn't she?" Martin asked softly. "Torma says she has been there for the hatching of every egg for eight millennia, and it stands to reason she is the only one capable enough to do that."

Helen nodded. "I would agree." She said. "I believe it was because she did not want them to try and do too much Martin. She wanted them to be able to fly and fight... but if they attempted what it appears you and Torma can do... and did so without a rider assisting them, they would have lost concentration and been injured or killed more easily."

"He has telekinetic abilities as well." Martin spoke.

"Do not attempt too much, too soon Martin." Helen spoke. "You have only just formed this bond with him. You must refine what you learn together now and over the next day. Make it so it is second nature to both of you, then you can expand into other things. With two powerful minds sharing the burden sire... the possibilities are quite enormous as I said."

Martin nodded slowly as the excitement bled off of him. "We will." He spoke. "Where are Dysea and Isabella?"

"They are finishing up the tasks Deia gave them." Helen answered. "They have grown quite close the two of them, and they know what you are going to do. Neither of them wanted to distract you from this task. Dysea said you can make it up to her when you return." Helen told him with an elbow in the gut. "Now go... Deia awaits and I need to find you three or four hundred Tier Six Mindvoicers that are experienced Spartans." She looked at him. "Andreus has grown powerful with his connection to you Martin."

Martin nodded. "Kmyla is carrying his child. If he accepts then yes, but he promised her they would have the child in Sparta, and I do not want him breaking that promise to her because of me."

Helen nodded. "I will talk with him." She said. "Now go... there is much you need to do."

Martin leaned over and kissed her cheek softly, causing her to cringe at this show of affection in front of others, but she had grown accustomed to it from him, and now it was something she had grown to expect and even to need.

"Ben... Torma says the saddle needs to be tighter." Martin spoke. "And let's see if we can't get some of that new armor for the leg protectors."

Ben nodded as he and Endith finished taking the saddle from Torma's back while For'mya walked up to him, slipping her hand into his.

"I'll take care of it boss!" Ben spoke. "Now that you made me an Admiral... I might be able to get some real work done! Tina is already finishing the specs on the final product and seeing that they get produced quickly. Gorgo and some other guy went with her."

Martin nodded and looked at For'mya. "Ready?" He asked.

For'mya's eyes grew wide. "Martin Leonidas... you want me to accompany you? That... Martin I am your concubine. It would not be..."

Martin stopped her words by taking her face in his hands and kissing her deeply, his thumbs softly stroking the front ridge of her elfin ears and causing her hands to come up to his arms quickly. He broke the kiss after a long moment and looked at her until her eyes opened slowly. *For'mya... you are far more than my Concubine... and don't ever forget that.*

For'mya smiled shyly. *Martin Leonidas... I do not want to cause problems with your Queens. I know my place in your life and...*

*For'mya shut up.* Martin told her with a smile. *If I treated you any different than I treat them they would hang me. You underestimate what Dysea and Anja are For'mya. And you might be surprised at how Aricia treats you. I will have you at my side For'mya, not in the shadows or behind the scenes. Never that.*

For'mya smiled at him reaching up to touch his face and stroke his cheek. *I will look forward to when you make love to me with the feeling that has come back to you Martin Leonidas. That will be all I will need.*

Martin smiled and kissed her softly once more. *Let's go.*

They both turned to see Torma's head not a foot away, and if a dragon could smile, Torma would have been grinning like a Cheshire cat Martin thought to himself.

*Do you mind?* Martin barked.

*No Milord. I am learning much.* Torma replied innocently.

For'mya laughed and reached out to stroke Torma's head. His golden eyes closed in contentment as she touched him.

Martin shook his head as Deia led the five men and women up to where they stood. Torma's head rose quickly at these new individuals and he moved quickly for his massive size, ready to impose himself in front of his King at the first inkling of a threat. The man and women stopped upon seeing this, their eyes wide, to include Deia.

"Mi... Milord." Deia stammered. "I have done as you asked."

Martin smiled at their reaction and reached out to lay a hand on Torma's thick neck. "He will not hurt anyone unless he needs too." Martin spoke. "I want to thank you all for coming at such sort notice."

"My King... it has... it has been announced that you... that you are..."

"Dead... yes I know." Martin spoke. "It's kind of cool actually. Makes it easier to do things like this."

The oldest of the group of five, one of the Haulta females stepped forward, her feathers mildly ruffled at seeing the immense dragon only a meter away from her. "Sire... Prime Minister Deia explained some of what you wanted to see us for... as much as you allowed her too."

Martin nodded. "I apologize for that... but we've had a bit of a traitor problem going around and I need this kept between us."

"I don't understand sire. What do we need to keep between us?" She asked.

Martin looked at Deia and saw her smiling and he couldn't keep the smile from his own face.

"I understand that as King I have access to what would be considered a fortune in Riyal, tucked away with investments and such among your five corporations." Martin spoke.

"Yes sire... the Lycavorian Union constitution states that the King is sole owner of twenty percent of our companies." She replied. "We keep those funds separate from our other financials sire."



Martin nodded. “Good... because I want all of you to take the list that Deia is going to give you, sit down and divide it up, and then use those funds you have in holding to make some purchases for me.”

“Milord... you want us to make purchases for you?” The woman asked.

Martin nodded. “And the great thing about that... you get to keep fifty percent of what you buy for me. I get the other fifty percent.” Martin took the pad For’mya held out and he gave it to the Haulta woman. “Out of your fifty percent... I want this done.”

One of the Terraijiin men looked at him with astonishment. “Milord... are you serious?”

Martin nodded. “Very serious.”

“Sire, may I ask why you are doing this?” The Haulta woman asked.

Deia stepped forward. “That is not your concern. You...”

“Deia it’s ok.” Martin said. “Why am I doing this? It’s simple really... he took something from me that I value more than any amount of Riyal that could be offered to me. I want it back... and in doing so... I want him to feel it.”

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## CHAPTER TWENTY

### DAY FORTY-FOUR

#### APO PRIME

Deia sat in her office alone, calmly sitting in the chair, gazing out the large wall sized window as the sun was coming up. As she sipped her tea, and saw the sun begin to break the horizon and spread its warming hand across the city below, she knew it could also be the rising of a new era for the Lycavorian Union. She heard the door slide open behind her but didn’t turn. Only one person would enter her office unannounced this early in the morning, as he had for the last seven hundred years as senior aide to the Prime Minister, and the two thousand years prior to that as aide to Senator Deia of the Lycavorian Union. He had been beside her when the news that King Leonidas had been killed on earth by Xerxes reached them. So many moments of crisis and so many moments of joy. The birth of her last four children, next to her during the three years of her mate’s imprisonment by the Coven, and the decade it took her to help him recover from that ordeal and return to the man she so loved. He had shared so much of her life, and Deia had never seen it. Perhaps this was Resumar’s way of punishing her for allowing their people to drift so far away from what he had originally intended.

Deia saw it now, as clearly as the sun that was rising in front of her. Resumar had never intended for their people to forget so much of their past in moving towards their future. A balance between their natural violent instincts and their capacity for good could be drawn. Resumar knew that, as did her sister Eliana. It had taken Resumar’s grandson and nearly nine thousand years for her to finally see the truth of it all. A young man who had spent the better part of nearly three thousand years in some sort of suspended animation. A young man who had listened and followed the feral instincts of their people, while still maintaining the capacity for compassion and emotion. A young man who was following the path of his grandfather without even knowing it. That was Martin Leonidas. He had defeated the High Coven, killed Prince Xerxes and freed an entire planet, all the while finding the time to claim not one, not two, but three Queens, and love them all with equal passion. Well... perhaps not equal passion, as Deia now knew that the raven haired Aricia held a part of him that none of the others would. He was a man that had a half vampire daughter somewhere out there, and instead of dismissing that, he was doing everything within his power to find her and bring her home. It didn’t matter to him what she was; only that she was part of him, and that was all that mattered.

Deia had seen it all so clearly yesterday, watching him as he rode that monstrous obsidian colored dragon. She could feel the power within him, feel it coursing through his veins and his blood. The connection he shared with the dragon was proof of that, as they moved with one mind, thought with one mind. She had remained after the corporation heads had left to do his bidding, watching as he and the dragon went through more exercises, stretching the limits of Mindvoice abilities that Deia could never hope to achieve in her lifetime. The return of the First Oracle was another sign. The very First Oracle, a man who had served Resumar and her sister, a man with Mindvoice skills unquestioned, he had passed all this knowledge to Dustha, an Oracle

who had been the one to send Martin's father to his death. Now she alone held the knowledge and power of the First Oracle, and for all her life experiences it suited her. She was as close to Martin Leonidas as Canth had been to Resumar, perhaps even closer if what she had seen was any indication.

Yes things were changing, and Deia could see the freshness of a new dawn over the horizon as the sun came up. Things were going to change, and Martin Leonidas wanted her beside him for those changes, helping him to bring them forth, even after it was discovered that the deepest penetration of an enemy agent had been her closest advisor for all of these years. He had refused her offer to resign, thrown it back at her with an almost disgusted look on his face, and that above all else had cemented Deia's complete loyalty to him. She had spoken with him early this morning before he had departed and his words came back to her clearly.

*"I am not a politician Deia. I don't want to be a politician. If I am to be a King, if I am to complete what my grandfather started, I will need all the help I can get. I can not do it alone; I can't even do it with my Queens beside me. I need you Deia. The experience you bring to me is priceless... and I need to be able to draw on that experience... not throw it away. You have brought our people this far Deia... you and no one else... I want you to help me to finish what my grandfather started. I have fully accepted who and what I am now, and once I get my soul back Deia, we can move forward. That is why I need you. You will be the balance to my more abrasive nature... my voice of reason Deia. When I step in a load of sibfla, I need someone to tell me I stink. When I'm about to put my size eleven foot in my mouth, I need someone to smile and tell me I'm being an mida, and then help me pull that foot out. That's what I need Deia... and I can think of no one more qualified than you. And you Deia... you are the closest connection I have to my grandfather and I don't want to lose that. Ever."*

Deia smiled as she remembered his words, knowing it had been the last statement that sealed her path for her. It was also the reason she would now do what she needed to do.

"Deia?" Aspon's voice broke into her thoughts.

Deia turned slowly in her chair and looked at the craggy faced traitor in front of her. "I'm sorry Aspon what did you say?"

"The notes you requested from the Elfin Delegation's meeting yesterday." Aspon spoke. "I had them processed."

Deia nodded slowly. "Thank you Aspon." She spoke evenly. She looked up at him as she leaned back in her chair. "Tell me Aspon... how long have we been together?"

Aspon met her eyes. "Going on three thousand years now." He replied with his usual tight lipped smile.

"Did you fully decide to sell out your people when you joined the Coven during the rebellion, or was it after when you came to work for me?" Deia asked as she took a sip of tea.

The reaction was as predictable as the rising of the sun behind her. Aspon's face froze in its expression; his eyes grew just a tad bit wider and his face impassive. It was the longest few seconds of Deia's life, and his next words sealed his fate.

"Is that a joke Deia?" He asked. "Because if it is, it is not funny."

Deia shook her head. "Oh no Aspon... it's no joke. I should have seen it really. So many years ago. The signs were there, but I didn't pay any attention to them."

Aspon shifted his feet slightly. "Deia... what are you talking about?" He exclaimed. "Everything that is happening is stressing you out. You really should take a few days off Deia. These events with the King are taxing I know."

Deia nodded. "You're right... I'm sorry." She spoke. "I will take a few days off when this is all over with." Deia met his gaze. "So I can watch the trial on the Net Channel."

"Trial?"

Deia nodded. "Your trial Aspon. Your trial for committing High Treason. That will be quite interesting don't you think?" She asked leaning forward now, one hand falling under her large desk and the other setting her tea down on the desktop. "We have Brean's confession Aspon. He told us everything you know. Veldruk should think about making his clones more resistant to chemicals. Armetus got him to sing like a bird for us. We know all about you substantial assets in the Wilds, assets that we are even now buying up through our own front companies. We know all about your control measures and reporting procedures. The reason you didn't get

your regular reports last night is because all of your clones are now in our custody.” Deia smiled. “We’ll interrogate them like we did Brean. And Chetak’s agents are all now under the watchful eye of Armetus and his people, with a little help from some Spartan Centurions who don’t particularly care for you very much considering what you have done.”

“Deia this is crazy!” Aspon spoke quickly. “I have no idea what you are talking about!”

Deia’s eyes became hard points of darkness. “Don’t you?” She asked just before she pulled the trigger.

The small hand blaster was secured under her desk and it ripped out the thin laser energy bolt. The bolt blaster through the front of her desk and struck Aspon directly on the knee of his left leg. Blood blossomed as the blast removed his leg from the knee down, sending the limb skittering across her carpeted floor. Aspon fell forward quickly, trying to block out the pain and maintain his balance. He didn’t succeed and his face smashed into the edge of the desk, snapping his head back with enough force to actually bounce his body to the floor as Deia got to her feet and her office filled with Armetus and half a dozen Spartans.

Deia moved around the edge of her desk, holding the smoking blaster in her right hand and she gazed down at his bloody face. His nose was broken and blood was pouring from the break in his skin from where the cartilage and torn through. Armetus stepped up to her quickly.

“Deia?” He spoke respectfully.

“I’m fine Armetus.” Deia spoke calmly. “I’m not going to do this pig any favors. I want to watch the trial...” Deia looked at Aspon, his eyes beginning to close from shock and loss of blood, the pain wracking his body preventing him from changing to heal the loss of his leg. “And I will be the one who orders your execution Aspon.”

“Take him!” Armetus barked. “And stop the bleeding! We want him alive enough to interrogate!”

Deia looked at Armetus and held out the small blaster. “I like this weapon.” She spoke.

Armetus smiled. “Then by all means keep it.” He answered.

“The others?” Deia asked.

“We’ve got them all.” Armetus nodded. “We’re moving them to the facility the King was at yesterday. It’s isolated enough to keep them alive once it is revealed who they are.”

“The Dekton clone?”

“Queen Dysea and Isabella are taking care of that as we speak.” Armetus answered.

“Good. Keep the Dekton clone separate.” Deia spoke. “After what you showed the King... I’m sure he’ll want to talk with him when this is all over. In fact... I guarantee it.”

“Already done.” Armetus spoke.

“I drafted the resolution the King wanted.” Deia spoke with a smile. “You’ll maintain your autonomy Armetus. You’ll report directly to me. L’tian and Olalla will appoint four others as a Senatorial review Committee. Once this is over with, unless specifically directed by that committee or the King, operations within Union space will not be authorized. He won’t tell you how to do your job Armetus... but he will ask that you remain within the laws we have in place. Basically no more than what you have done in the past.”

“I have had unlimited resources in the past Deia.” Armetus spoke. “A civilian Committee will want to know everything about how we do business.”

Deia looked at him. “In the King’s own words Armetus, ‘Not if they don’t know about it to begin with.’”

Armetus smiled. “I like our King Deia.” He said.

Deia nodded. “Yes... so do I.” She tucked the small hand blaster into the folds of her cloak. “I have to get ready for the Senate meeting tomorrow. The King should be arriving on Enurrua within the next three hours. I believe he may have broken several speed records in doing so.”

Armetus chuckled. “I have a feeling he’s going to break quite a bit more than speed records over the next few days.”

Deia nodded. “I tend to agree. It appears I will need a new aide.” Deia spoke. “Do you have any recommendations?”

Armetus smiled. “Actually I do.” He answered as he held out the data pad. “A message from the Hadarian Healer Eurin.”

Deia looked at the pad and a smile spread across her face as she shook her head. “The Hadarian Divine One is leading two thousand Healers to Enurrua. The first time in history that the Divine One has gone out into the field.”

Armetus nodded his head impressed. “It seems our young King as the propensity to motivate even the oldest among us. That will be the largest contingent of Hadarian Healers to go into a combat situation at one time since the retaking of their home world.”

Deia nodded. “Eurin says it is high time we finally became one people again. And she is asking that we send her all the data we have on dragon anatomy.” Deia smiled. “I couldn’t agree more now.” She looked at him. “Who did you have in mind Armetus?”

Armetus motioned with his arm towards the door. “Allow me to show you.”

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His dark blue eyes opened when he felt the weight on his bed and they went wide when he found himself staring into the platinum blond muzzle of a very angry female wolf, her long razor like fangs exposed; her lips drawn back in a snarl. She was a large female, easily a hundred and forty pounds of rippling muscle under the blond fur, with large evil looking emerald green eyes.

“Please do not try and move.” The female voice spoke softly next to his ear. “She is quite angry at the moment, and if my knowledge of wolves is accurate, poised to relieve you of your ability to breath.”

He turned his head slowly and his eyes grew even wider when he saw the cobalt blue vampire eyes framed by the jet black hair and porcelain like skin.

Isabella canted her head slightly, allowing her fangs to show as she smiled and parted her lips. “You may shift if you like, perhaps attempt to fight her in wolf form. I will not stop you...” Isabella spoke smiling sweetly. “You see... you and your fellow clones have brought a great deal of pain to those she calls friend, and she is quite protective of those she cares for.”

“Who... who are you?” He demanded. “What is the meaning of this?”

Isabella smiled. “Ah... your heartbeat is increasing ever so slightly.” She said softly. “I can hear it you know. You are well trained. A tribute to my father and his minions no doubt.”

“You will learn nothing from me!” He growled.

Dysea’s muzzle moved within several centimeters of his cheek and he froze as her breath touched his cheek, her large paw, razor like black claws digging into the skin of his chest.

Isabella looked at him. “Oh we don’t want anything from you friend.” Isabella said. “We have already learned all we needed to learn from your fellow clone Brean. He was very helpful you know. And your controller Aspon... he will not be able to come to your aide either.” Isabella ran her finger down the man’s shoulder, her long nail dragging across his skin. “No friend... we don’t need anything from you. We are only here for one purpose.” Isabella’s eyes narrowed to slits and her face became a cruel visage of hate and anger. “We are here for your blood.”

He felt a momentary prick of pain in his arm, turned his head to the side and saw the flash of reddish blond hair and then darkness took him into its embrace.

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## ENURRUA

“We’ll be in position by the end of tomorrow father.” Joric spoke. “The artillery is finished getting to their firing locations and they will commence shelling the mountains this evening.”

“They fired on you Joric?” Chetak asked.

Joric nodded. “Several dozen long range mortars.” He replied. “They were able to get three of our guns, but that is all. They do not have the targeting capabilities of our artillery pieces and they are firing blindly now.”

Chetak nodded. “Excellent. Dalkor will be announcing at the Senate meeting tomorrow the purchase of our new companies and the two Bills I had him draft. One demanding the immediate naming of a new King now that the traitor’s grandson is dead because of his mindless rampage, the other demanding the removal of

Deia for failing to properly lead the Union. It should be a lively debate, and it will give us the time we need to put down this petty rebellion.”

Joric smiled. “And I will put it down father.”

“Contact me when it is done Joric. And try to insure the she-elf is among the survivors.” Chetak spoke.

Joric nodded. “I will father.”

Chetak nodded and lifted the mug of ale to his lips as the transmission ended. “Soon Deia. Soon I will have my complete revenge.” He muttered.

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He watched as the Firespitter came in low over the trees, the female perched between her shoulders. It had taken him a full day and night to move close enough to take the shot he had wanted, and as he eased the Rail rifle up to his cheek, he was happy he had been so patient. They followed the same routine every morning, starting out high to scan the area of the mountains on the other side of where his troops and thousands of others were now moving into position. They would swoop lower until eventually they would land a hundred meters from where he now lay hidden in the bushes.

He watched the Firespitter’s wings flare fifty meters from the ground and his finger tightened on the trigger slowly as he exhaled.

The blast from the Rail rifle made him flinch ever so slightly, and that flinch is what saved Isheeni’s life.

The huge slug from the Rail rifle tore through her left wing, and with a roar of pain and agony, Isheeni spun to the side, throwing Aricia out from between her shoulders and she plowed into the ground below. Aricia went sailing through the air crashing into several small trees before coming to a halt and dropping the last fifteen meters to the earth with a loud grunt and yell of pain. Isheeni rolled down the hill several times, bellowing in pain, smashing small trees and bushes with her bulk until she came to a stop against a hugely thick tree, slamming into it, and knocking the air from her lungs.

“Isheeni!” Aricia screamed as she scrambled painfully to her feet, blood leaking from several cuts on her cheek and neck and her left arm hanging useless at her side. She started sprinting down the hill towards the only friend she had truly had these last weeks. Isheeni had been there with her through all of her pain, all of her tears, sitting silently and providing what comfort she could. Her voice was a soothing balm in Aricia’s mind, and even in the midst of her killing sprees on Chetak’s hunting parties, Isheeni’s voice had been the one to calm her enough so that they escaped unscathed.

Lucvaun got to his feet slowly, a savage grin on his face as he lifted the Rail rifle for a killing shot on the dragon. And then he would take the female as well.

“I don’t think so scum bag!” The female voice screamed from the side.

Lucvaun spun quickly and saw the Persian red haired female sprinting down the hill from above lifting her left arm and seeing the silver/white flash of light. Lucvaun’s eyes grew wider and he dove to the side, the Shi Viska Anja had launched at him carving a deep slice along his back. He grunted in pain as he allowed himself to roll down the hill in an attempt to get away from her, the Rail rifle spinning from his grasp. He shifted quickly and continued to run, knowing his chance was gone now. There were two females with Shi Viskas on the planet now, and he needed to get back and tell Joric that something was not right.

Anja called her Shi Viska back as her eyes watched the wolf scamper through the trees. When it settled to her arm, she quickly turned and sprinted for where Aricia was sitting next to Isheeni, frantically pulling away the branches and small trees that she had torn up in her roll down the hill.

“Anja...” Aricia screamed. “Isheeni is hurt!”

The sound of the gunshot had brought others running as well and Atropos and several Spartans were hauling ass down the hill at breakneck speed, not caring about the harm they might be running into. Seanna was close on his heels and they all arrived where Aricia knelt next to Isheeni on the ground.

“Little Wolf!” Anja gasped, skidding to a stop next to her.

“My Queen! Sister!” Atropos barked.

“That way!” Anja pointed. “I only saw one! Search the area Atropos... if he got close enough to shoot Isheeni, there could be others!”

“Isheeni?” Aricia spoke, tears in her eyes as she rested her hands on Isheeni’s heaving chest.

*It... it hurts Aricia!* Isheeni answered, wincing against the pain. *My wing.*

“Anja!” Aricia snapped. “Do something!”

Seanna was there then and she took one look at the area and knew immediately who was the more seriously injured. Anja moved next to Aricia.

“No... take care of Isheeni first!” Aricia demanded.

Seanna looked at the huge dragon in front of her, and any fear that might have lingered over her species and size vanished. She could see Isheeni’s chest heaving in exertion from the pain, and the hole that had been blasted in the top of her wing.

Anja moved next to her quickly. “Her wing?”

Seanna nodded. “The wound is large Anja... we must heal it together.”

Anja looked at her. “Seanna... I have not ascended yet. I have no...”

“You have always had it in you Anja.” Seanna spoke looking at her. “It is what drew me to you so completely. I sensed it even on Earth. You have carried the power within you for years, building it, storing it. Returning to Hadaria only allowed you to harness it. When you Ascend Anja, it will be glorious, but you have the power within you now. The Divine One says you will be the greatest of all Hadarian Healers Anja my love, for you alone can draw from the life all around you!”

“What... what do I do?” Anja gasped.

“Only what you have been taught Anja.” Seanna spoke softly. “The rest will come naturally. The projectile missed the bone but struck an artery! She is losing blood quickly and we need to stop it.”

Anja nodded quickly and looked at the pain filled eyes of Isheeni. “Isheeni... we... we need to treat you.”

Aricia crawled over to where Isheeni’s head lay on the leaves and dirt, and she put her face close to hers, tears dropping onto Isheeni’s smooth scales. *Don’t you leave me Isheeni! I... I have lost so much... I don’t want to lose you as well. I forgive you Isheeni... all of you! After... after all you have done for me without question... I have taken you from your kind... from your mother... from your mate. I can not bear to lose you now. Please Isheeni. Fight! Fight!*

Anja and Seanna knelt side-by-side, their hands extended over Isheeni’s wing and muscle, the soft white glow of the healing radiation bathing her torn and shredded wing. Atropos and the other Spartans came rushing back to the small area, their eyes wide as they witnessed Anja and Seanna healing the dragon his sister coveted more than her own life now.

Isheeni’s azure blue eyes opened and she looked at Aricia. *I will not leave you Aricia Blue Eyes. I am bound to you... and... and we have not fulfilled our destiny yet my Queen.*

Aricia rubbed her snout, wiping her tears away from Isheeni’s face. *I am... I am not a Queen anymore Isheeni. I... I never was.*

*No... you will always be Queen. You have always been Queen. Torma... he took your pendant for a reason Aricia. And when... when he returns my Queen... he will have with him what your soul cries for.*

Aricia shook her head slowly, rubbing her smooth scales. *How... how can you be... how can you be so sure Isheeni?*

*Because as Torma loves me... the King loves you Aricia Blue Eyes. And love like ours my Queen... .. it will never die.*

Aricia rested her cheek against Isheeni’s skin. *I... I wish I could believe that Isheeni.*

Isheeni smiled gently. *You will my Queen. You will.*

Anja and Seanna sat back slowly... the soft white light drifting away from Isheeni’s wing. As Anja’s hand slid slowly down Isheeni’s abdomen, her jade green eyes opened slightly wider and she placed her palm flatter against Isheeni’s abdomen. Seanna caught the surge of life as well, her hand still grasped with Anja’s. They looked at each other and then Anja smiled and moved to where Isheeni’s head rested.

“You won’t be flying for a few days Isheeni.” She spoke gently, reaching out to place her hand on Isheeni’s snout. “But you will be fine, and as good as new. And your children are fine as well.”

Isheeni’s head came up off the ground, her eyes wide, and mirroring Aricia’s look of astonishment. *I can not bear hatchlings for another thirty years Queen Anja.* She spoke easily knowing Anja could hear her well enough.

Anja chuckled. "Really? Well I guess someone forgot to tell your body that Isheeni. You are carrying three eggs, all of them very strong and healthy."

*I do not... I do not sense them.* Isheeni spoke shocked. *How can this be?*

"They have only formed in the last day or two from what I can tell." Anja spoke softly. "Give it another day."

Atropos moved forward. "My Queen... sister... we need to get back within the cover of the caves."

Anja nodded. "Move carefully Isheeni, but you can get up. Atropos is right."

Atropos moved up next to Aricia as she got to her feet and held out the strip of cloth. "We found this Aricia."

Aricia took the cloth and brought it to her nose sniffing gently. She drew it away quickly. "Lucvaun!" She hissed.

"You know this scum?" Atropos asked.

"I killed his son several weeks ago." Aricia nodded. "They were the first hunting party I targeted."

Atropos smiled. "Well done sister. Well done! When we are finished here, and we are lucky, we can kill him too."

Aricia turned and watched as Isheeni got slowly to her feet, staggering slightly, but keeping her balance. *Isheeni?* She spoke worry in her voice.

*I am fine.* Isheeni replied quickly. She looked at Aricia, her azure blue eyes wide in joy. *Aricia... I carry eggs! Torma's eggs!*

Aricia stepped up to her and smiled, bringing her huge head down to lay her cheek against her scales once more. *Let us get you inside out of danger then Isheeni.*

*Aricia... I am...*

Aricia shook her head. *Don't you dare tell me you are sorry! This is a time of happiness for you, and I want to share it with you.*

*But you...*

Aricia shook her head. *I will remember what you have told me Isheeni. For as long as I live... I will remember what you have told me.*

"We need to get back to the caves!" Atropos spoke. "Now everyone. We need to move."

*Are they talking about how best to get rid of me Aelnala?* Isra asked turning to look at the dirty yellow Heavyhorn dragon that sat next to him.

Aelnala turned her honey colored eyes on him. *You have helped me to save our eggs Isra. No harm will come to you. That is our law.*

Isra looked around from where he sat. He was directly underneath the entrance to the massive mountain cavern four thousand meters above the valley below. The wide expanse of flat ledge extended for one hundred meters past him, leading to the direct drop straight down. They had returned here with the eggs, and Isra had finally met the dragon he had heard his father talk so much about. She was called the Elder Mother by Aelnala and the other dragons, but the Lycavorian female Tablina had called her Arzoal. Isra was surprised to find another Lycavorian hiding here, and even more surprised to see the way the dragons treated her.

*This place... these caverns. It is incredible Aelnala. No wonder my father could never discover where she was.* Isra spoke. *Of course... he isn't the brightest individual either.*

*You do not like the man who sired you Isra.*

Isra shook his head. *I hate him. I hate him and everything he stands for. I wish I had the strength to...*

*Isra... son of Chetak.* Arzoal's voice filled his head and he looked up to see the massive reddish dragon walk up to him, Tablina next to her. He got to his feet and stood in front of her without fear.

*Yes.*

*You have shown us a kindness that can not be repaid Isra. By helping to save the dragon eggs as you have, you have earned our trust and friendship for eternity.* Arzoal spoke.

*Then you will help us to defeat my father?*

Arzoal shook her head. *That I can not do Isra.*

“What? Why?” Isra exclaimed.

*To do this would put my kind at far greater risk than they already are.*

Isra shook his head. “We have fifty thousand Spartans down there! Plus two thousand men and women just like me! Without help even we can’t beat my father and those who follow him. If they beat us... you’ll be hunted like before! You have to help!”

“The risk to Arzoal’s people is too great.” Tablina spoke now. “It would be a slaughter if they fought now.”

*Sometimes risks must be taken in order to achieve what we all want!*

The deep male voice boomed within all their minds. Arzoal spun around quickly, her eyes searching.

*Tablina...*

*I heard it Arzoal! The power... it was staggering.*

*Where did it come from? Aelnala gasped.*

*From closer than you might think!*

*THUD!*

All of them gasped and staggered back away from the ledge of the cliff as the massive black dragon lifted into view before them; they watched as he flared his wings and landed gently in front of them. Arzoal knew there was only one dragon among her kind that came close to her in size and she had no doubts as to who it was that landed before them.

*Torma! Arzoal gasped moving closer to him. Torma... you followed the King deeper into High Coven territory! How can you be here?*

Torma folded his wings alongside his body, the golden color of his eyes bright in the shade of the ledge.

He wore a strange saddle that wrapped underneath his muscular chest, and shielded the legs of the man who was sitting in that saddle. And sitting in that saddle was a man with an aura of power that Arzoal had not felt in all her long lifetime. He was garbed in matte black body armor, the helmet bearing a crest of multicolor hair that blew in the light breeze, the crimson cloak billowing behind him. His yellow/gold eyes were bright and clear as he held his head high.

Tablina’s eyes flew open when she saw him and she immediately dropped to the ground and bowed her head deeply. There could be no mistake she knew. This was the King they had taken Aricia from. And now he was here for his revenge. “King Leonidas!” She gasped.

Arzoal’s eyes grew wide as she looked at the Lycavorian Spartan King climb easily from the saddle on Torma’s back and step to the ledge in front of her. Martin looked at her and reached up to remove his helmet. She bowed her head quickly in subservience.

*Milord King... I... I am at your mercy! All I ask is you spare my kind your wrath at our actions. It was never... it was never our intent to cause you and Aricia such pain and suffering. I... I can not express the shame of my actions... I... I thought of only myself.* Arzoal exclaimed.

Martin walked up to her slowly and looked up into her face, Arzoal avoiding the gaze of his eyes, feeling the power within him eclipsing hers by a margin she could not even begin to measure. The same type of power she felt in Aricia yet more refined and tightly controlled.

*You thought of your kind in doing what you did.* Martin spoke softly. *Look at me Arzoal.*

*I can not sire.* Arzoal spoke. *I can feel your power within you. I can feel your anger at me for what I have done.*

Martin sighed heavily. “Look at me both of you!” He snapped. His commanding voice caused both Tablina and Arzoal to instantly look up directly at him. “You both seek something I can not give you.” Martin said softly. “You seek forgiveness for your actions, however well intentioned they were meant to be. I can not grant you that forgiveness... not now. Perhaps in time forgiveness may come... or it may not. I can tell you as I told Torma... I can not hate you for trying to save your kind and your people. I will not share with you what Torma and I talked of; in the future you may ask him, and it will be his decision if he tells you. We are bonded now, Torma and I.”

Arzoal nodded slowly. *I... I can feel that sire. It is unlike anything I have ever felt before. I can not begin to see the depth of that bond.*

“I am not here for vengeance or retribution against either of you.” Martin said gently. “I can not hate you for doing something I may have well considered myself in your position. I have come for my Queen



Arzoal. And I have come for vengeance on the man who started it all. In the process... I will save the people my grandfather left behind by his absence.”

Tablina let the tears flow now at Martin’s words, everything she had worked for just over the horizon. *And in my actions Arzoal... I intend to take your kind off this vile planet and return you to your home. Milord... this is our home.* Arzoal stammered.

Martin smiled and stepped closer to her. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Did you think that Val’istar would not tell me the secret you hold so close to your heart Arzoal? He made me promise to take you home. It is a promise I intend to keep.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Sire... we... we can never go home. So much is different now. We would never be accepted.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Do you think so little of your kind that you believe they would dismiss you Arzoal? They are descended from you. They are part of you.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *It is too much too hope for sire.*

*I want to show you something.* Martin lifted his hand towards Isra. “Give me your weapon son of Chetak.” He growled.

Aelnala moved to imposed herself in front of Isra. *You will not harm him!* She snapped.

Torma roared and slammed his head into her side, knocking her over onto her back. *Be silent!* He screamed.

Arzoal was wide eyed at this. *Torma how dare you!*

Martin crossed to Isra in five steps and snatched his hand blaster from the belt holster. He spun around and aimed at Torma, firing five times in quick succession.

*No!* Arzoal screamed out.

All of them watched as the five shots bounced harmlessly away from Torma, ricocheting off into the air all around them. Arzoal’s eyes were wide in stunned disbelief, and Aelnala pulled her legs back under her as Martin walked up to Torma and patted his neck affectionately.

“You see Arzoal.” Martin spoke. “This is the gift our people have. Yours and mine. I removed the barrier within Torma’s mind. The one you placed there at his birth, as you placed in every egg over the last several millennia. You left them enough to protect themselves when they are flying, and enough to effectively fight with their physical tools, but you purposely blocked everything else they could have become. Why?”

“Arzoal what does he mean?” Tablina asked.

*You ask me a question you already know the answer to sire.* Arzoal spoke softly.

Martin nodded. “Yes... I know. It was your way of protecting them so that they did not hurt themselves as well as others.”

*I did not want Chetak and his vile monsters to discover what you and Torma have discovered!* Arzoal spoke. *What my daughter and Aricia have only just begun to discover.*

“Arzoal what does the King mean?” Tablina asked again.

Martin looked at Torma. “Torma show them.”

Torma turned his massive body to a pile of rocks and they watched as one of the large boulders lifted into the air with almost no effort. Torma tossed his head to the side and the boulder went sailing out into nothing far below them. The gasp from Tablina, Isra and even Aelnala was very audible.

“We are connected.” Martin spoke. “When we are close by, Torma and I, we can draw from each other’s Mindvoice powers, and together we are something far more than what we would be individually.” He moved back to stand in front of Arzoal. “It has started already Arzoal. Torma and I, Isheeni and Aricia, and now Isra and Aelnala. You can feel the connection between the two of them, and it grows deeper by the hour, as it does with Torma and me. As it does with Aricia and Isheeni.”

Isra stepped forward. “Wait... I have this power.”

Martin ignored him. “It is time to release them Arzoal.” He spoke. “You can not protect them forever.”

*I did what I did to protect them from Chetak!* Arzoal snapped. *He and his kind would have corrupted them. They would have become instruments of evil. They would have become bound to the High Coven and that monster Veldruk! I can not allow that Milord!*

“The First Oracle... Val’istar as you know him Arzoal... he has passed on now.” Martin spoke seeing her look down at him. “He has passed all of his knowledge and skill to my Oracle. To Helen. Do you believe Val’istar would choose corrupt men and women to learn and use this gift Arzoal? And it is a gift.”

Arzoal shook her head quickly. *No sire. He was pure of heart. Just as... just as you and Aricia are. Just as Isra is.*

Martin nodded. “Helen has chosen three hundred... the number has significance to me and I chose that... she chose three hundred Spartans with the Mindvoice power and potential to learn to use this gift Arzoal.”

*They will never be on a level with you or your Queen sire! Arzoal spoke. They will never be incorruptible!*

Martin shook his head. “No they will not. Do you think I am so incorruptible?”

*You... You would never act out of malice in your actions sire. You have proven that by not killing me where I stand. Even though you could very easily.* Arzoal spoke.

“I am not without malice in my heart Arzoal.” Martin spoke. “Joric will die by my hand, I promise you that. Is that not malice?”

“That is justice!” Tablina spoke.

“Whose justice? I will make him suffer for what he has done to my Queen, and I will be the instrument of his death, but is that justice, or is it vengeance?” Martin asked.

“You are not evil by nature Milord.” Tablina spoke. “We can all feel that. What you speak of would be justice in the eyes of our people.”

*And the eyes of my people as well.* Martin had not broken eye contact with Arzoal, and she stared at him deeply. *Val’istar said I would know the road you have chosen because I would see a lighting of the path you would burn across the stars. He told me to have faith and keep hope close to my heart. He said it was all we have left now.*

Martin nodded. “Those are wise words Arzoal.”

*Can you promise to keep them safe and on the path of good sire? Arzoal asked.*

“I can promise that no Spartan will bond with a dragon without my approval and that of the First Oracle. I can promise you I will do my best to train them to be the finest they can be. I can promise you none of them will ever fall to the Coven alive and be turned into something they are not by nature. Beyond that Arzoal... I can not promise to rule what is their hearts. Your teachings fill them now. Your love and guidance.” Martin spoke. “We must hope that is enough.”

*You speak with words you should not have for one so young sire.* Arzoal said gently. She nodded her head slowly. *Together my King.*

Martin nodded, reaching up to touch her head. “Together.” He said. [Mindvoice Shielded] *And I will keep my promise to Canth and the one I make to you now. You will see your home world again Arzoal of the dragons. And you will see what your descendants have become.*

*I must gather those you need Milord. One is already here.* Arzoal spoke before leaping into the sky and speeding away.

Martin turned slowly to look at Isra. “Tarifa is the closest I will ever have to a sister Isra.” Martin spoke softly. “Make sure the decision you make in regards to her is the right one.”

“I... I don’t believe the decision is mine to make sire.” Isra said. “She loves Aihola... and she is haunted by a man I can not replace. They both are.”

Martin nodded. “Perhaps... but time does heal wounds Isra. And if you truly love her as your scent tells me you do, if you have these feelings for Aihola as your scent tells me you do, you will do what you must to be with them. And make them forget.”

“How sire?” Isra asked moving closer. “How do I do that?”

“Only you can answer that Isra.” Martin spoke. “Bring Aelnala and meet me and the others on the plains a hundred kilometers west of here. That is where we will muster.” Martin moved to where Torma settled closer to the ground and he climbed up onto his back. As Torma got back to his feet, Martin looked at Tablina. “You seek redemption Tablina... you can start by joining openly with those who will fight and use your skills at healing and council.”

Tablina nodded. “Yes sire.”

Martin rested his hand on Torma's neck. *We must hide our presence for a while longer my friend. Then... then you and I can retrieve what both of us so desire.*

Torma turned his head and looked at Martin. *We have waited this long sire... a few more hours will only make the reunion that much sweeter.*

Martin smiled. *Yes it will.* He looked at Isra. "If you are coming Isra... let's go." Martin watched him climb onto Aelnala's back and he nudged Torma in the side with his knee. *Let's get this thing started my friend.*

Torma leaped into the air as Tablina watched, Isra and Aelnala following.  
Then they were gone.

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Komirri came to his feet as the *LEONIDAS I* came out of its LSD jump and the planet blossomed in front of him. "Report!"

"Enurrua dead ahead Captain!"

"Give me a full passive sensor sweep! Lock up all targets!"

"Captain the rest of the Group reports all green across the board!"

Komirri moved to the nearest sensor station. "The King's frigate?"

"Radiating passively from the surface sir. Just like he said they would be."

"Deploy the fleet! Standard orbital formation! *AUTUMN MOONS* on the flanks! Move all *NOVA*-Class Attack cruisers to the point. Targets?"

"Sensors are picking up a hundred and nineteen medium cruisers in and around Enurrua Captain! Looks like nine recon pickets on the edge of the system. Another three hundred and forty positioned around the other two habitable planets."

"Long range?" Komirri asked.

"They have what amounts to a Fleet Group on the very edge of the sector Captain. Light cruisers and frigates only."

Komirri nodded. "Very well. Maintain Shroud until the agreed upon time. Target four missiles apiece on the ships closest to us. When will Admiral Riall arrive with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Fleet Group?"

"Sixteen hours if we stick with the timetable established by the King Captain." The man replied.

"The King needs a full day... and he will have it. Sixteen hours people. The moment Admiral Riall enters the system we attack and we do not stop shooting until the Lycavorian People's Republic Fleet no longer exists." Komirri spoke. He placed his hand on the sensor operator's shoulder. "Send an encrypted burst to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Group and let them know what we are seeing. Knowing Admiral Riall he will want to come in firing, so we need to keep them updated on position and status."

"Yes sir."

"No mistakes people. Pass the word. This scum raped and kidnapped our Queen and I for one will not hold back!" Komirri spoke. "Have *STRIKER* Flight prepared to launch as soon as For'mya orders it from the surface. She will be flying *Spartan 01* with Commander Endith, and they will link up in the atmosphere. Our fighters will target any and all ground installations these fools might have. Start me a strike package and get it to our fighter pilots. I want them in their cockpits starting ten hours from now. As soon as they launch, operational control will move to Admiral O'Connell on the surface."

"Yes sir!"

Komirri stood up and looked at the planet in front of him on the monitor. "Sixteen hours people."

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## **APO PRIME DAY FORTY-FIVE SENATE MEETING CHAMBERS**

There were one thousand eight hundred and seven worlds that claimed membership in the Lycavorian Union, each one of them having a Senior Senator sitting in this very chamber. The comfortable chairs were arranged in a half moon shape, fifty across in the first row and then expanding upwards and outwards with each

consecutive row. A long table was in front of the half moon gallery with five chairs placed at it signifying the five permanent members of the Senate Chair, one each from the Lycavorian, Hadarian, Algolian, Elfin and the Haulta race. These were the very first five members of the Union, and with the exception of the Haulta, the other four were the founders of the Union. The ones who Resumar had approached first and foremost about the idea. As Prime Minister, Deia sat to the right of the table in her own high backed chair, four chairs behind her along the wall of the chamber for whatever aides she chose to bring to these meetings. Currently two of those chairs were occupied by Dysea and Isabella, Miai sitting to Dysea's left as her new personal aide and Isabella sitting to her right. On Isabella's right hand sat an immaculately dressed Lycavorian female. This was the new aide Armetus had suggested to Deia. She had been one of his operatives; a former student of Gorgo's who was very fluent in several forms of different languages, and who was also a very skilled warrior. She was extremely intelligent and witty, and Deia would always have an open line of communication with Armetus.

The Elfin Master of Ceremony stood up from the table and pressed the button on the panel sending a resounding chime through the room bringing everyone's attention to him. He paused for several moments to insure they were all attentive and then nodded.

"I would first like to thank you all for coming to this Emergency Senate Meeting. I know many of you were off world when you received the summons." The Elf Master of Ceremony spoke. "It has been asked that these proceedings be broadcast by the Net Channels of the Union so that our people can view what takes place first hand here today, and the Senate Chairs have agreed." He shifted some data pads on the table and looked at the gathered male and female Senators from every species in the Union. "We had originally been called here to determine the future of our Union, the continued leadership of Prime Minister Deia, and the direction in which we wanted to proceed. The death of King Leonidas postponed that meeting until today. With the Prime Minister's permission, I will allow Senator Dalkor of the Lycavorian People's Republic to make his short presentation to this body before allowing her to conduct her opening statements, after which we will adjourn to attend the King's Interment."

Deia looked at him and nodded with a smile. "Of course Norlian." Deia said sweetly.

Norlian looked at Dalkor who sat in the first row. "Senator you may proceed."

Dalkor got to his feet smugly and moved to the elaborate podium that was set up facing the chamber seats. "It is with great humility and sorrow that I stand before you all today. It was I that our esteemed Prime Minister asked to deliver the message in regards to King Leonidas's fate on the planet Ukwav. However... despite the sadness we all must feel in our hearts over the loss of our King, we must face the reality that our Union has become weak. My government, after joining this Union took the time to conduct an extensive review of the Union and all its assets and principles. We freely showed our willingness to abide by the rule of the Lycavorian Union law by signing the Official Petition of Acceptance all of our people have signed. After much deliberation, President Chetak determined that a new direction in the Union was needed, and he authorized me to bring two bills to this Senate floor. The first bill is a request that the rule of King Leonidas be suspended pending his actions after his supposed mate and future Queen took it upon herself to freely choose a stronger Lycavorian male as her mate, during the midst of the Lunmai. Her new mate happened to be Joric, the son of President Chetak. I have distributed an information packet to all of you in regards to this, explaining the Lunmai and the significance it holds with the Lycavorian people. It also includes the untimely death of this young woman at the hands of our planet's most dangerous predator, the dragon infestation. In his anger and grief over this incident King Leonidas decided to hijack an entire Fleet Group of Union ships and go on a rampage across the stars that..."

L'tian rose to his feet quickly. "That rampage you refer to resulted in a victory against a High Coven garrison planet that we failed to accomplish in three attempts over the years!" He bellowed.

Dalkor nodded quickly. "Yes it did." He spoke. "And it cost the lives of over a thousand of our finest Spartan soldiers! A thousand lives because our new King was angry and upset that the female he chose as his mate, found another, stronger male more desirable and chose him. Is this the sort of action we want from a King? Our King? I think not!"

L'tian sat back down in his chair acting properly chastised and Dalkor took this as a sign he was on a roll.

"During our investigations we have discovered many things about our late King that my President and I found troubling. I will relate only the most important one in my opinion, and the one that should matter most to

all of us.” Dalkor spoke. “We discovered that our late King fathered a child with the High Coven Princess Yuri, and because of that child, he allowed her to escape Earth, and in the process take your own daughter prisoner Ambassador L’tian. Star Commander For’mya was held for nearly a month by the High Coven, enduring beatings and who knows what else. All because our late King has a child with the daughter of our greatest enemy, and Prime Minister Deia knew this and attempted to hide it! Is this whom we look to for leadership in these times? With the King’s passing leadership of the Union has now fallen to his remaining two Queens, a genetically created elf female who he turned, and the daughter of the Hadarian King who was thought lost many centuries ago, who he also turned. I see one here, but where is the other? Among his closest advisors was Princess Isabella, a former High Coven Princess. A princess who supposedly defected to our Union a thousand years ago, an event I have a hard time believing.”

“Is this who we wish to follow now that the King is dead? They all knew of his child with Yuri. They did nothing!” Dalkor spoke turning to look at where Dysea sat. “Look at them... even in this chamber the she-elf holds the hand of the vampire without regard.”

Dysea and Isabella sat there stoically, but made no move to unclasp their hands from each other.

“Through this all... Prime Minister Deia knew of everything and tried to hide it from the esteemed members of this Senate.” Dalkor spoke. “What does that say of her leadership abilities my friends? Is this the type of leadership we need right now?” Dalkor reached down and picked up the data pad. “You have before you two Bills for review... the first is a bill for this Senate to act and remove the Queens from their duties, and the second is to remove Prime Minister Deia from her office and elect a new Prime Minister to guide us into the future. I would be happy to provide any and all the information on what we have obtained and how we obtained it in regards to everything I have brought forth before you today. That is all I have... and I thank you for your time.”

The chamber was abuzz with conversation as Dalkor went back to his seat with a smug expression on his face of victory. Deia simply sat in her chair watching him with her dark eyes, an almost amused expression on her face. Many of the gathered Senators appeared outraged, and Deia knew this was from Dalkor’s efforts over the past weeks to garner support. Some even began to openly question the members of the Senate Chair out loud.

Norlian turned to look at Deia and he touched the panel on the table once more, the loud chime sounding in the room for silence. It took longer this time... but Deia waited patiently until the chamber was quiet once more before getting to her feet slowly, and taking her time to cross to the podium.

“A very elegant speech and plea Senator Dalkor,” Deia spoke confidently. “I commend you.” She let her eyes wander over the chamber for a long moment and took a deep breath. “I am not going to stand here and relate to you who King Leonidas was. His history from the time he was born until the time we discovered he still lived is an open book. There is no history... because we thought he was dead. What I entered into the data banks of this chamber and it is now available to all of you on your screens, is the history of this man before he even knew who and what he was. As you can all see for yourselves... the humans of Earth were meticulous record keepers up until the time of what they call The Comet Event.” Deia watched as many of the Senators bent to look at their screens. “This information you are reviewing now is, quite frankly, astounding. I had not seen some of it until this very morning. This was the son of Leonidas... this is what he did before he knew who and what he was. All of you now know what he did after he discovered his bloodline and his heritage. Killing Xerxes, freeing Earth of the High Coven rule. That has been played out for weeks on the very Net Channels that are here now. King Leonidas was not aware of any child of his blood until after Earth was free, and when he discovered this information, his first thought was not how could this have happened. His first thought on discovering he had a child, regardless of her blood, his first thought was to begin searching for her. She was of his blood... and he did not care that the woman who bore this child was his hated enemy... he cared only that it was his child as well and he wanted to find her. Is that not what any parent would do?” Deia looked at Dalkor. “The good Senator is demonizing something that has evil in it. This was not a plot by the King. When he had this relationship with the Princess Yuri, he had no idea who he was. What he was. He had no idea who she was! Do we stand here now and judge him because of his actions as a man? I will not presume to do such a thing. How many of you are so arrogant to presume you will?” Deia shook her head slowly. “How many of you have illegitimate children that you quite possibly might not be aware of? This is not some single source of blinding

light that shows our King was wrong or that he was secretly serving the High Coven, as Senator Dalkor seems to want you to believe.” Deia smiled. “This is merely a father wanting to find his daughter.”

Deia nodded. “Yes he allowed Yuri to escape Earth. He had just killed her brother Xerxes, and wiped out four times his number of vampire soldiers and High Coven Immortals. Perhaps he was tired of the killing? Perhaps because he had just finished freeing the only planet he has ever called home... and lost many friends in doing so... perhaps he was tired of fighting and wanted only to put his planet back together. Perhaps that is why he allowed her to escape. Was it the right decision? No. And he was the first to admit that when he discovered what Yuri had done. A novel idea isn’t it... admitting you are wrong. It was a mistake he quickly rectified as you all know. It was he himself who rescued Star Commander For’mya, and she is now the Bound Concubine to the King.” Deia noticed with an inward smile that several heads came up at her statement. “Now... for you Senator Dalkor, a member of this Union and this Senate for forty-five days, to question the honor and integrity of Princess Isabella, who has been among us for a thousand years, that in my opinion that is unconscionable.”

“Is there truth in what I say?” Dalkor demanded getting to his feet. “Is that why you act so defensively now?”

Deia smiled. “Truth Dalkor? Do you truly wish to speak of truth now?” Deia stepped away from the podium after pressing several buttons on the small control panel. “Let us talk about truth then Senator. Is it not true that the Lycavorian People’s Republic hunts dragons as a means of very generous income? Dragon bones and other parts of these magnificent and sentient creatures bring a tidy sum in the Wilds... is that not true Senator?”

“They are predators on my planet!” Dalkor exclaimed. “They kill hundreds of my people every year!”

“They kill hundreds of the men hunting them Dalkor.” Deia spoke. “Or is the fact that your own records indicate that not one innocent civilian has been killed by a dragon in over seven centuries not the truth?”

Dalkor’s eyes narrowed. “How did you acquire access to that?” He demanded.

“Is it not true Senator Dalkor... that your government allows the practice of forcing young Lycavorian females, who have reached their Coming of Age to submit to the first and most brutal Alpha male that takes them. Whether they want it or not? Is that not true?”

“That is our way!” He snapped. “The Union’s own charter states they can not interfere with the internal workings of a member government.”

Deia nodded. “Yes it does.” She stated plainly. “The truth is the Lycavorian Union still follows the Lycavorian Chronicles of Law, and the First Oracle’s Declaration. Is that not true Master of Ceremony?” Deia asked Norlian as she turned to face him.

Norlian nodded his head. “Yes Prime Minister... that has always been true. It is the rules of law that King Resumar and the First Oracle established while we were still slaves to the High Coven. It has always been the foundation for our Union.”

Deia nodded and turned to Miai, holding out her hand. Dysea’s new aide sprang quickly to her feet as if waiting for this moment and rushed to her side with the three data pads. Deia took one quickly.

“Lycavorian Chronicles of Law, Volume Three, Paragraph fourteen states that rape of any female, no matter the species, whether it is of the body or the mind, is strictly forbidden and punishable by death.” Deia stated loudly.

“What does that have to do with anything we are discussing?” Dalkor demanded.

“Senator Dalkor... would you agree that the Hadarians are the finest medical minds in the universe? That without them our great Union would not be where we are now. Many diseases eradicated and destroyed, many injuries we are now able to treat and fully recover from due to their training and skill and medical knowledge. Is that not true?”

Dalkor nodded tentatively. “Yes... it is well known they are the foremost researchers and the most knowledgeable in the field of medical science.”

Deia nodded. “Good... I’m glad we agree on that truth.” Deia turned to look at where Zaniai sat in the front row of the chamber. “Prefect Zaniai it is a great honor to have you with us here today.” She said walking up to him and taking the scroll pad he held out to her. She held it up. “What I have here is a complete and thorough report on a blood sample of Queen Aricia. This report indicates that Queen Aricia was given a drug to increase the potency of the Lunmai fever to a point where she was not even aware what she was doing at the time that President Chetak’s son Joric decided he would rape her and force her to claim him as her mate.”

Dalkor came to his feet with a shot. “How dare you!” he shouted. “What lies do you bring to this sacred chamber?”

“Lies?” Deia spoke calmly. “Did you just not say the Hadarians were the foremost researchers in the universe? That they are the most knowledgeable in medical science? Did you not just say that?”

“Yes!”

“Are you saying now that what they have found is a lie?” Deia snapped.

“One of... one of his Queens leads the Hadarian people!” Dalkor barked. “This... this information you have obtained is contrived to make what happen appear to be criminal!”

“Really?” Deia spoke. “In seven hundred years as Prime Minister and an additional thousand plus years as a member of this very Senate, I have never known Prefect Zaniai to lie about anything. If anyone else can recall such an occasion please speak up now.”

No one did.

Deia nodded. “Yes... I didn’t think so.” She moved back to where Miai stood and took the second data pad. “Senator Dalkor... is it not true that the Lycavorian People’s Republic has recently purchased six engineering companies here in the Union, in fact right here on Apo Prime?”

“Yes... it is our right of free trade.” Dalkor spoke.

Deia nodded. “Is it not true that the majority of the funds you used for these transactions were routed through a financial institution in the Wilds that is in actuality a front company for the High Coven? I have the proof here in my hand if you would like to review it.”

“I...” Dalkor remained quiet as Deia began to roll up to her finale.

“Senator... is it not true that the Lycavorian People’s Republic had a total of just under thirty men and women acting as intelligence agents within these companies and within this very government?” Deia looked at him. “Something that is against the Union Charter I might add.” Deia tossed the data pad at him. “No answer? I thought not.” Deia took the third data pad offered to her by Miai. “Allow me to read you something from the First Oracle’s Declaration Dalkor, since it is what we consider to be law in the Union. *Macin Gravinolfgrek, hador Vada Assirina Cormunn fand hote dissa.*” She spoke in the ancient Lycavorian language. “*Anomes, magari un tur shahlekké son raanath jossas.*” Deia looked at him. “Does that ring a bell Senator Dalkor? Allow me to translate for our esteemed colleagues in this Senate chamber. Once consecrated in blood, honor The Centennial of the Moon above all others. Soulmates, never to be parted by worldly means.

“The Centennial of the Moon for those who are not aware is the most sacred ritual by which male Lycavorians claim willing females to be their mates. The King claimed Aricia in this manner, and further cemented this ritual when they shared each others blood.”

“How do you know this to be true?” Dalkor demanded.

“I can produce Aricia’s mother and a hundred other men and women who know this to be true Senator Dalkor. Men and women from the city of Sparta, who have followed more closely our old ways than any who sit in this chamber. Including myself! Would you like me to call them in?” Deia snapped.

Dalkor looked at her. “These accusations are baseless and unfounded!” He exclaimed. “They are only a means for you to attempt to keep power!”

Deia smiled. “I’m glad you mentioned that Senator.” She spoke. “You can thank your son for the information I obtained on the People’s Republic and the crimes you have committed. He’s under arrest by the way, for attempting to bribe me into naming him as my successor for the information he gave to me.”

The doors to the Senate Chamber opened and a dozen Spartans entered from the four entrances, taking up positions at each door.

“Now... as to truth.” Deia continued with a smile. “The truth of the matter is this. Your petition for acceptance into this Union was signed and certified eleven hours before Joric violated the laws of this Union. While his father, dear President Chetak, watched and recorded it all. Your knowledge of this event also makes you guilty Senator.”

Dalkor looked at her wide eyed. “Guilty of what? I have done nothing wrong?”

Deia stepped up to him, her eyes changing and her fangs extending in anger. “It makes you an accomplice in the drugging and rape of a sitting Queen of the Lycavorian Union you foul excuse for a man!” Deia shouted. “Seize him!” Two Spartans were beside him instantly and gripped his arms between them.

The Chamber became filled with angry shouts and curses... all of them directed at Dalkor as the realization of what was occurring was finally sinking in.

Deia stared at Dalkor. "The truth of the matter is Dalkor... the King is not dead! And neither is Aricia his Queen. The truth of the matter is, at this very moment... King Leonidas is about to unleash his brand of Spartan justice on Chetak and his vile son, and he will get his Queen back Dalkor, no matter who he has to kill. And make no mistake, when King Leonidas is done, the Lycavorian People's Republic will no longer exist in any way shape or form. Chetak made a mistake Dalkor. He took the pureblood Queen of the Spartan born son of King Leonidas the First. He opened the door into hell's fiery abyss, and he left himself no way out. He left you no way out, and you will suffer far easier a fate than Chetak or his fool son. You will just be executed for your crimes. Chetak and Joric..." Deia smiled.

"... Their suffering is only just beginning."

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## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

### ENURRUA DAY FORTY-FIVE

Isheeni looked up slowly as she felt Anja approach. The cave was silent, everyone getting the last bit of sleep they could before the battles began. The Spartans were confident and ready, waiting in their positions all around the mountain strong hold. The men and women rebels were less confident, most believing they would not live through the next day or so. Though Isheeni could not see the first fingers of dawn stretching across the sky, she could feel it as the sun rose. She glanced down quickly to where Aricia was curled up next to her, Isheeni's now healed wing draped gently over her sleeping form.

*Isheeni... how do you feel?* Anja asked as she settled silently to the cave floor in front of her.

Isheeni nodded gently. *For a healer Queen Anja, you move with the grace and skill of a shadow.* Anja smiled and reached up to touch Isheeni's head. She glanced down at Aricia quickly, her face showing her concern. *It is the first deep sleep she has had in several days. Her heart is so heavy Milady. The word that the King headed deeper into High Coven territory and not here to get her struck her hard.*

Anja nodded. *He loved her most of all of us Isheeni.*

*You knew this?* Isheeni spoke genuinely curious. *And still you love him?*

Anja nodded. *Dysea and I both knew it the moment she came into our lives. It never stopped us from loving him as much as we do. And it never stopped Martin or Little Wolf from loving us in return. It's very hard to explain. You might understand better if you ever meet him.*

*Emotions of destiny and the heart usually are.* Isheeni replied nodding her head. *My mother taught me that. She said it was an emotion of destiny when Torma came to her and asked for her permission to take me as his mate, knowing that I could not bear him children for so many years. And I will only meet the king if he returns for her. I will not leave her side Anja. I am bound to her now, and our bond is growing stronger. It's almost as if sometimes we can see each others thoughts.*

*Aricia was always the more powerful. She may be the youngest of us, but only she can compare to the power that Martin wields. I think that is why their connection is so strong.* Anja spoke.

*Then why does he not come for her Anja?* Isheeni asked. *If he loved her so much... he must be just as sick at heart as she is? She will never be whole without him, and the longer they remain apart the harder it will be for her to go on.*

*I know Isheeni. And he will never be whole without her.* Anja said softly. *I don't know what goes through his head Isheeni. He is a very complex man.*

*He either loves her or he does not.* Isheeni snorted in very un-dragon like fashion. *There is no complexity to that.*

*I can feel nothing from him Isheeni. It's almost as if Martin... really everyone has suddenly stopped talking. I can hear no one Mindvoicing.* Anja said.

Isheeni nodded in agreement. *I felt this as well. What do you think it means?*



Anja shook her head. *I don't know. Can any of Chetak's men Mindvoice on our level Isheeni?*

*I have seen none in my almost five hundred years with the exception of Isra. They do not advance this skill past the first few levels.* Isheeni spoke. *Only you and Aricia have greater Mindvoice skills than the normal dragon, and we are far more advanced in this skill than Chetak's men. I can not even hear my own kind.*

*Could they sense that the battle is coming and they are hiding somewhere?* Anja asked.

*They would go into the wastes, to my mother's caverns.* Isheeni answered. *Even still I should feel them... hear them... and I do not.*

*I don't know if that is a good thing or a bad thing.* Anja spoke. *You can't fly Isheeni, not with you wing. You need to remain on the ground or you risk damaging your wing more before it fully heals.*

*I will remain here with Aricia.* Isheeni spoke. *The entrance is only a few meters away if we need to leave quickly.*

Anja turned and looked at the wide ledge she was referring too and she nodded. *We'll be set up there as well.*

*Thank... thank you for what you have done Milady.* Isheeni asked.

Anja smiled. *I did nothing. You have been her life line Isheeni and for that I thank you. I don't think I could have dealt with losing both of them, even with Seanna in my life now.*

Isheeni turned and looked at where the dark haired Hadarian female was just beginning to stir. *The connection you have with her is even deeper than what you share with Aricia. It is because she is your kind.*

Anja nodded. *Yes.*

*And still you came for Aricia?*

Anja smiled. *I will always come for Aricia. She is as much a part of my life as Seanna now is. As Martin has always been.*

*She has many that care for her.* Isheeni spoke. *Perhaps this can sustain her.*

*We'll give it our best shot Isheeni.* Anja spoke. *I have to check our positions with Atropos. Remember what I told you. No flying or you risk further injury and you could possibly hurt your eggs.*

Isheeni nodded. *I will not fly just yet. I can feel them now Queen Anja. My hatchlings grow inside me. I should not be able to carry eggs for another thirty years, yet I can feel them growing inside me! It is wondrous!* She spoke with what amounted to a twinkle in her eye and a smile on her dragon face.

*Now you must protect them as well.*

*I will Milady. I will.*

Anja chuckled and patted her head before moving back to where Seanna was rolling up their sleeping mats. Isheeni watched them share a soft kiss before the hulking Spartan that was Aricia's brother moved quietly into view. It still stunned Isheeni how the Spartans of his size could move with such softness and grace. She watched as they exchanged words and then Anja nodded and she and Seanna followed him toward the entrance of the caves.

Martin also watched the first fingers of dawn as they stretched across the horizon. He was sitting on the boulder, Torma resting on the ground next to him, his eyes watching the scene as well. Martin's left hand rested on the huge obsidian colored head and he absently scratched Torma's scales. Helen watched as at times he would nod, or Torma would look at him, as if they were talking to one another. Helen knew this to be true, for while she could not hear their thoughts, she could feel the tremors of their Mindvoice powers.

Walter stepped up next to where Helen stood watching him. "Can you see his thoughts Helen?" He asked.

Helen shook her head slowly. "No Dymas. I may have the First Oracle's memories and knowledge and even some of his power, but the only one who could crack those shields resides not a hundred kilometers from here."

"He has grown more than you first thought hasn't he?"

"It is this connection with Torma." Helen replied softly. "With all of them really. They took the best from each other. Dragons by their nature are benevolent, our people wild and untamed. They have shared the best parts of each other, and they are better for it."

“You know why he chose three hundred?” Walter said.

“To honor his father.” Helen replied with a nod. “I saw that coming when he first discovered these skills with Torma. He is going to make them an honor guard of sorts. A unit of Spartans and Dragons. Never in my life have I seen such a thing. And the way he intends to utilize them? If they succeed today Dymas, their very name will strike fear into those who would harm the Union.”

Walter nodded. “I believe that is what he intends them to do.” He said. “He surpasses his father in military genius by so wide a margin I can’t begin to compare them. You know what he intends to call them don’t you?” Helen looked at him, shaking her head. “*Mjolnir’s Hand*.” He said softly.

Helen smiled. “After the mythical hammer of the Norse god Thor.” She spoke. She nodded. “It is appropriate Dymas. They will help when they can and smash if they must. You realize there is not an ounce of arrogance in his body.” Helen spoke. “And that is what makes him so very dangerous.”

Walter nodded. “What does he plan to do with this Chetak and his son Joric Helen?” Walter asked.

Helen turned and looked at him. “Chetak... I do not know what he intends for Chetak. I will tell you that this Joric, his death will be neither painless nor quick for what he has done to Aricia.”

“Spartan justice.” Walter whispered nodding his head. “As it should be.”

Martin looked at the timepiece on his wrist and then back to the brightening sky.

*It is almost time Torma my friend.* He spoke.

*Will we teach Isheeni and Aricia what we have learned sire?*

Martin nodded. *We must. Their bond is nearly as strong as ours, and as ours grows so does theirs.*

*I touched her last night Milord if only briefly. I was able to block her like you taught me Martin. She was injured yesterday.* Martin turned to look at him.

*Badly?*

*Queen Anja and another Hadarian healed her quickly. She was shot by one of Chetak’s men. One of his leaders. Queen Anja chased him away.* Torma looked at Martin with his golden eyes and Martin could see the simmering anger. *I now feel what you do my King. The anger at what they have done to my mate. I want to...*

*If he lives Torma... he is yours.* Martin spoke.

Torma nodded slowly. *When I saw... when I saw her flying that first day sire. I knew I had to have her. To my eyes she was the most beautiful creature that the gods have ever created. I did not care that she could not give me children for so many years. I knew when we had hatchlings they would be strong and proud because of her. Is... is that what you feel for Aricia sire?*

Martin nodded slowly. *From the moment she first touched my thoughts Torma. I love them all... but Aricia... when we became soulmates Torma... it was the best day of my life. I intend to get that back my friend. Joric will suffer pain for every touch upon her body that she did not want. And if I am what she still desires, I will make love to her for as long as she needs me too. As long as I need to, to show her that I have always loved her. If... if she allows me.*

*That could be a long time Milord. You and she will have the endurance of my kind now, bonded as we are, as she is with Isheeni. Isheeni and I can couple for days without tiring.*

Martin chuckled and looked at him, putting his hand on Torma’s head. *I don’t find that prospect bad at all Torma.*

Martin turned when he heard the shuffling behind him and he saw the three hundred Spartans and dragons moving slowly to where he sat. *It’s time Torma.*

Martin stood up as Torma gathered his powerful body under him and they both turned to face those moving closer to them.

*Remember what the Oracle has taught you! What Torma and I have showed you!* Martin reached out touching all of them by Mindvoice, dragons included. *You are strongest when you are together, so when you land; do not stray far from each other. Your dragons can fly, and drawing off of you, they can shield you both. Let them fly and use whatever other tools they have while you fight from their backs. They will protect you without question and you must honor them in this way as well. We are not just three hundred Spartans and three hundred dragons... but six hundred minds! You will not be invincible... so watch your brother next to you*

*and in front of you and behind you. The weapons they have will not penetrate our shields, but do not grow overconfident and sloppy. Use what you have been trained to use, Nehtes, Shi Viskas, your 190s. You will be broken into three groups of one hundred. Andreus will command one, I will command one and Isra will command one.*

Isra looked at Martin on the rock from the second rank of men and dragons with wide eyes. That he was even standing here right now was a feeling he had never experienced before. So many years of being alone and not fitting in with his father and brothers, and all those around him. Now... now Isra felt like he belonged. He could hear the minds of these men and dragons easily now, a skill he had never had before meeting Aelnala. Their connection had grown stronger by the hour and after losing Tarifa and Aihola, he threw himself into his moments with her. This was what he was meant for.

*Sire... I am... I am not a Spartan. I do not have the right to lead these men.*

Martin looked at Andreus and nodded. Andreus turned and took the bundle from the Spartan next to him and tossed it to Isra.

*You stand among Spartans by order of King Leonidas Isra, son of Chetak. Therefore you are now a Spartan. We will see to your training when the battle is over, but I doubt much will be needed. Andreus spoke. Wear the uniform with pride and never dishonor it, for you will face us if you do. We are Mjolnir's Hand now, and we will be far more an enemy to those who wish to do us harm than any seen before!*

*We use only Mindvoice from here on out!* Martin continued. *You were chosen because of your strength with this skill, and with your dragon at your side it doubles. It allows us to be much sneakier as well!*

This brought laughter from the Spartans, and even the dragons, that were rapidly picking up on the mannerisms and emotions of their flying partners.

Martin smiled and climbed onto Torma's back as the roar of dragons and men filled the plains around them. He lifted his matte black helmet, the four colored crest waving gracefully. He touched the raven color in the front, running his fingers back through all of them before he lowered the helmet onto his head. *Eight minutes Mjolnir's hand. In eight minutes they will know that we have come. No retreat! No surrender! No Mercy! Do not stop until our enemies are all dead or cowed before us! That is my order!*

Ben stood on the ramp of the *AUTUMN MOON* Frigate two hundred meters away and smiled. "Oh man this is about to get good!" He spoke to Endith and For'mya. "Get to your ship ladies... the shit is about to come a crashing down!"

For'mya looked across the plains until her keen elf eyes fell on Martin. He was looking at her she could see that.

*Retrieve your soul Martin Leonidas. Retrieve our soul.* She reached out with her mind. It was so easy now, so natural. The Oracle Helen had told her she had grown stronger than all but Martin and the Queens, and she now joined the very few who could communicate on this level. *I belong to both of you now, and I do not fear that arrangement in the least.*

*As we belong to you For'mya.* He answered warmly. *Do not die on us For'mya, for we have much to explore.*

*Do not die Martin Leonidas, for I look forward to that exploration. Every wonderful portion of it.*

For'mya turned then to Endith as they began walking to the *STRIKER* that was already starting to warm up with Tina in the engineer's seat. "Endith... what does Benjamin mean... the shit is about to come crashing down. It is a clear sky Endith."

Endith looked at her and laughed as she took her arm. "Tina and I need to educate you For'mya." She said.

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## CHETAK'S RESIDENCE

Chetak climbed from the shower in his bathing room and began to towel off his naked body as he walked into the main portion of his bedroom. The large monitor on his wall, always attuned to the single Net Channel he allowed to set up in Republic space, was showing nothing but white fuzz. His eyes narrowed and he

moved to the screen, adjusting the controls to no avail. He banged on the table panel activating the Com channel.

“I have lost the Net Channel signal!” He exclaimed. “I had to wait a full day for this delayed transmission from the Union Senate meeting and now I am missing it!”

“Milord... transmissions are down.” The voice replied. “There is nothing getting through! We are checking the transmission towers... but it appears all communications planet wide is down as well!”

Chetak looked at the monitor. “How is that possible? We have dedicated systems for all military traffic! Are you telling me I can’t communicate with my son in the south?”

“All communications is down sir! It just started. It’s almost as if someone is jamming us! Jamming everything we have!”

“No one would dare jam us!” Chetak barked. “Find out what is going on *anse* you! I’ll be down in a few moments!” Chetak caught the faint scent of cinnamon and sweet apples mixed in with nutmeg and he turned slowly, his survival instincts kicking in. He froze when he saw the barrel of the Spartan P190 exactly three centimeters from his nose. Behind the sights of the weapon was a huge black skinned Spartan with dark eyes, and his hands were rock steady.

“Hi there motherfucker.” Dan spoke softly.

Chetak had faced many men in his life, men even bigger than himself, he didn’t fear Danny’s size, but he didn’t like what he saw in those dark eyes. “You are well trained to get into my home Spartan.” Chetak spoke confidently. “You are alone and you will not leave here alive. You must be a young wolf to be brave enough to think you can best me by yourself. I have nearly fourteen thousand years of experience.”

Dan smiled. “That just goes to show how fucking stupid you really are old man.” Dan spoke. “Look out the corner of your eyes Chetak.”

Chetak moved his head slightly and saw the point of the *Nehtes* only a few centimeters from the side of his neck. Holding that seven and a half foot spear was a female elf with rust colored red hair and stunning cerulean blue eyes. He watched as her eyes changed becoming outlined in black and her wolf fangs slowly extended to three quarters of an inch. He turned his head slowly the other way and saw the dark skinned female elf with shimmering white hair on his other side, the blade of the razor sharp knife pressing to his exposed skin. Her amber eyes were gleaming points of cold beauty. Behind the hulking Spartan he saw two other shadows move into view. He smelled the vampire blood in her before he even saw Yuriko’s cobalt blue eyes, and the Hadarian male looked extremely capable.

Slowly Chetak turned back to look at Danny. “You need elf females and vampires to do your work for you Spartan?” He growled.

Danny chuckled. “They are my mates Chetak... and they are Spartans too. Yuriko is Marty’s adopted daughter, and she ain’t real happy with you for what you have done. King Leonidas wanted me to make sure nothing happened to your wrinkled ass before he had a chance to properly say hello.”

Anuk leaned forward, her right forearm never wavering as the *Nehtes* maintained its killing position. She only needed to push it forwards an inch and Chetak’s head would be impaled. Anuk snorted when she glanced between his legs and saw his limp cock dangling.

She looked back up and her eyes went to where Nayeca stood.

“There doesn’t seem to be much there to work with Mistress,” Anuk spoke calmly. “Perhaps that is why they have to force themselves on the females of their kind. Who would want that? It is so small.”

Nayeca smiled and looked at her. “We are simply spoiled Anuk.” She said.

Chetak growled and started to make a move forward. Dan pressed the barrel of the P190 against his forehead, while both the *Nehtes* and Nayeca’s blades touched his skin, the tip of Anuk’s *Nehtes* drawing a drop of blood from his ear lobe as the razor edge cut it lightly.

“The King wanted us to keep you company while he destroys all that you have amassed here old man!” Nayeca spoke in a low menacing voice. “He did not say what your condition had to be. If you wish to test us... please do.”

Danny grinned, his eyes never leaving Chetak’s. “You think you can beat all five of us old man?” He asked softly. “Go ahead, give it a whirl.”

Anuk smiled and tapped the COM unit built into her body armor. “Father... we have him.” She spoke.

“Insure Daniel and Yuriko do not hurt him too badly Anuk.” Vengal’s voice filled the room. “The King has plans for him.”

“I will make sure father.” Anuk answered.

“We are in position.” Vengal spoke. “As soon as Komirri gives the signal, we will strike. Vistr is impatient to bring this foul regime to an end, as am I. Tell this fool Chetak I will enjoy destroying his lone spaceport. He will no longer have use for it.”

Anuk saw Chetak’s eyes go a little wider. “I’ll make sure he knows papa.” She replied. “We will see you when this over.”

Yuriko stepped up next to Daniel, her cobalt blue vampire eyes simmering with barely controlled anger. “We disposed of the guards Daniel.” She spoke. “It was a simple matter. They are no better trained than this fat fool with no cock.”

Filrian couldn’t help but laugh from where he stood.

Danny lowered the P190 several inches and looked at Chetak with a smile. “Don’t worry Chetak. In about three minutes... the jamming will stop... and you can watch your wannabe violent empire come to a rather inglorious end.” Dan stepped close to him, close enough to smell Chetak’s blossoming fear. “You made one mistake old man.” Dan growled. “You didn’t kill him.”

Yuriko laughed heartily. “This fool kill father?” She said. “What a joke that is.”

Filrian pulled over the chair and grabbed Chetak none too kindly by his long graying hair, yanking him over and slamming him down into the chair. “Take a seat. I don’t want to have to exercise my healing skills on you because you fall down over what you will see.” He said. “I might suddenly forget what I have learned over the years.”

Chetak glared at Danny with evil in his eyes as his mind raced with scenarios on how to get out of here and warn his men and Joric that there were Spartans and elves on the planet and preparing to attack.

It wouldn’t be in time. Not by a long shot.

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## ***LEONIDAS I***

“Give me a channel Fleet Wide!” Komirri barked as he came onto the bridge, walking briskly to his command chair.

“Channel is open Captain.”

“This is Captain Komirri of the *LEONIDAS I*. We have ninety seconds before we initiate our attack! Listen to me now, all of you. We have seen the type of man our King is. We have fought with him, suffered with him these last weeks over something he thought was his fault. These scum... people of his own race... they took his Queen from him in the most disgusting of ways. You all know what has happened while we have been showing the High Coven we have bigger teeth by smashing Ukwav! We are many species in the Union, many species within this fleet, but we are all here because we are the very best at what we do. We are the King’s fleet.” Komirri walked slowly around the bridge. “What has occurred is vile to all of us, but more so to our Lycavorian brothers. They consider rape to be the most heinous of crimes because of the roots of their past that they left behind. And these fools committed that act on our Queen! Do we let that go unpunished?

“They commit it even now on the women of this world below us, and those others in the sector. Every day, every night! I am not Lycavorian... many of us are not... but this day we are all the same species. This day we are our King’s species... this day we are all Lycavorian. We will leave nothing undone! We outnumber them, yes. We outgun them, yes. I do not care! For what they have done, what they continue to do, they will suffer the wrath of the Lycavorian Union! Leave no ship, no fighter, and no transport, leave nothing! All ships will prepare their heavy transports, whether it is one or ten. Once our fighters and *STRIKERS* have launched, these ships will then launch and move to designated points on the surface of Enurrua. All of you remember we are the best at what we do. And we are here for a reason! Good luck to you all!”

Komirri moved to his command chair. “Time?”

“Twenty-seven seconds Captain!”

He nodded. "Lock all targets within our radius! Four missiles per ship, I don't care what size they are. What the missiles do not destroy take apart with the plasma arrays! Our fighters?"

"All squadrons report green across the board! All *STRIKERS* are ready for launch! Star Commander For'mya is already airborne and maintaining a low orbit! Our jamming has blinded them completely Captain. They won't know what hit them until we attack."

Komirri nodded with an evil grin on his reptilian features. "Once we begin the attack, stop the jamming and contact Commander Rajon on the ground. The King was clear. Chetak is to watch the fall of his empire."

"Captain! Admiral Riall and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Group have entered the system firing!" The sensor operator barked out with a smile, the excitement in his voice infectious. "They are blasting the Republic ships to atoms!"

Komirri came to his feet. "Good... what is a few more seconds anyway?" He stabbed the button on the arm of his chair. "Komirri to 1<sup>st</sup> Spartan Attack Group! De-shroud and begin our attack! Now! Execute! Execute!"

As if guided by a single mind, two hundred and thirty-nine ships phased back into visual existence and with blinding flashes of light, missiles launches and plasma beam arrays turned the star filled space into a fireworks display.

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Arzoal heard the gasps among the dozens of dragons that were crowding onto the ledge of the main cavern. She moved to quickly to see what was causing the stir and she followed their gaze skyward. Brilliant points of light were exploding in the brightening sky above them, lances of multicolored lines crisscrossing in a myriad of patterns.

*You will know the road he has chosen when you see the burning of the path he lights across the stars.*

Arzoal remembered Val'istar's words to her well and she felt millennia of anguish and heartache slipping away.

*Elder mother what is it? The young dragon asked from next to her. What is happening among the stars?*

Arzoal looked down at the dragon. Her flame colored eyes shone in the morning light and if a dragon could cry and smile at the same time Arzoal would be doing both.

*A King is keeping his promise to me little one. Arzoal answered softly. We will be free this day. Go now... spread the word little one. All those who do not carry eggs, young and old, gather here as fast as their wings will carry them!*

*Elder mother why?*

Arzoal took a deep breath. *We are going to war little one.*

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Commander Rajon was running through the caverns as fast as his two legs would carry him, two fingers pressed against the ear piece he wore connecting him to his Frigate and their sensors. He could see dozens of people moving for the many entrances and openings in the tunnels and caves, but he had only one destination.

He burst onto the wide expanse of ledge that was only thirty meters from the top of this ridgeline. They had decided to use it as their observation post, at least until the artillery began to rain down on them. The ledge, plateau really was wide and flat, and a natural rock wall formed along the edge to keep others from falling down the steep mountain side below. They had thought it would be happening already, but only minutes before the stars above them had begun lighting up. Golna, Tarifa, the Drow, Anja, Atropos, they were all gathered here, and his eyes detected the large azure blue dragon and Queen Aricia as well. All of them were looking skyward as if mesmerized.

Anja turned when he burst onto the plateau. "Rajon what is going on? Something is going on in orbit." Anja snapped.

Rajon's face was animated and his eyes wide. "He's here!" He said.

"What? Who's here?" Golna demanded.

"The King is here! The 1<sup>st</sup> Spartan Attack Group appeared out of nowhere only two minutes ago! They are in orbit right now blowing the *sibfla* out of Chetak's fleet! That is what we are seeing! Admiral Riall's 3<sup>rd</sup> Group is destroying Chetak's shipyards and his measly force of cruisers and corvettes!" Rajon spoke.

Anja's eyes were wide. "Martin is here!" She gasped.

Aricia stepped closer to him, her eyes wide and her heart racing uncontrollably. Her beloved was here. "You... you said he went deeper into High Coven territory!"

Rajon nodded. "Those were the reports we got Milady Aricia! It was a ruse! The moment they went dark, they altered course and headed here! I'm getting reports directly from the *LEONIDAS I* now! We are engaging ground targets all over the planet. Every planet! They are telling me the King has been on the surface for two days! They said he would be contacting us soon!"

Aricia looked at him wide eyed. "Two days!" She gasped as Anja stepped up to her quickly, her eyes moist. "He has... he has been here for two days! Here... on this planet? How? Why?"

Rajon nodded. "That's what they are telling me Milady! They..."

His voice was drowned out by the inescapable roar of powerful engines, and they looked skyward once more as the *STRIKER ATs* began appearing above them, only a hundred meters above the mountain. Not one or two, but by the dozen.

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### *Spartan 01*

"*STRIKER* Flight from *Spartan 01*." For'mya spoke from the right seat as Endith eased them forward slowly. Her helmeted head looked back up from peering out the window and seeing the dozen or so individuals and one dragon on the plateau below them. "Lock up your targets people! Artillery pieces are radiating as green! You will follow Commander Endith and I in, and I don't want one stinking piece of artillery left standing when we pull up! We are weapons free per the King! The primary targets are the artillery batteries but if it does not wear the black and crimson of a Spartan... kill it anyway! With extreme prejudice!"

Endith looked at her from the pilot's seat, a gleam in her blue eyes and a smile on her face. "I think you and I are going to get along just fine For'mya."

For'mya looked at her and there was a twinkle in her own eyes. She turned her head and looked at Tina quickly, then back to Endith. "The King's Flight Crew should get along Endith, since I imagine we will spend quite a bit of time together if I know Martin Leonidas."

"Now that's the best news I've heard in months." Tina interjected. "It's always busy where Marty goes, and I'm tired of just sitting around."

Endith smiled and nodded her head. "Give the order For'mya, and let's get this party started."

For'mya turned back to the front. "*STRIKER* Flight from *Spartan 01*! Launch and follow us in!"

Endith let out a whoop of pleasure and shoved her throttles to full attack power, dipping her nose down as all forty-four *STRIKER ATs* launched at the same time and the morning sky on Enurrua filled with retribution.

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If Joric thought he knew warfare, that misconception became readily apparent the moment he lost all communication with his father and anyone else on the planet. He shouted at the communications operator for a full four minutes before they heard the engines. He and Wilgar rushed from the command Runecutter and looked towards the mountain they were to begin assaulting in only a few more minutes.

"By all the gods!" Wilgar muttered as they saw the wall of missiles speeding towards them, followed closely by the several dozen *STRIKER* Attack Transports. Wilgar was not a fool. He had lived for several thousand years because he knew where the power was. He had raped and taken females against their will, he had killed on a command from Chetak and others. He was bigger and better than everyone he had faced up until today.

As his wide eyes followed the missiles as they streaked overhead above Joric and himself, he came to the realization that they were not going to win this battle. They had angered someone much bigger, and considerably more powerful. And they had angered him in a way that left them only one option.

Death.

Wilgar grabbed Joric's arm as the first missiles began to impact the artillery batteries two kilometers behind them, massive explosions and flame blossoming into the morning air. Wilgar even swore he could see the body parts of hundreds of wolves as they were tossed casually into the air in their death throes.

"Joric... we need to go!" He spoke.

Joric looked at him wide eyed. "Go! Go where?"

"The Spartans are taking away our artillery Joric!" Wilgar snapped. "We can not call for reinforcements, and even if we could none would be here in time!"

"We have two hundred thousand troops!" Joric barked. "That is more than enough to take those mountains!"

"Don't be a fool Joric!" Wilgar screamed as the ground shuddered violently. "Did you truly believe he would not come for her? This is not a military attack! His fleet is in the stars even now destroying everything! He intends to destroy and kill everything for what you and your father have done!"

"We fulfilled my father's Blood Oath!" Joric snapped.

Wilgar nodded. "Yes... and now you will suffer under the Spartan King's Blood Oath." He spoke. "And you will do so alone! I have no desire to die!"

"You will run?" Joric shouted.

"Better to run than to die!"

Joric pulled the small hand blaster out in a blink, leveled it at Wilgar's chest and pulled the trigger. At such close range the bolt blasted a huge hole in Wilgar's chest and sent him flying back several meters to land twitching on the ground, his blood rapidly pooling around him.

"I made the wench mine! I made her mine and I will take her back!" Joric screamed his eyes bright crazy. "Bring on this Spartan King! I will crush him like the bug he is!"

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Tarifa stood next to Aihola, their hands gripping each others tightly as they watched in the distance as flames and explosions announced the obliteration of the artillery arrayed against them. They could hear the cheering of the Spartans below, as well as the few thousand rebels that dotted the mountainside in defensive positions.

"Where?" Anja screamed at Rajon, Aricia holding her hand as they stood next to Isheeni. "Where is he Rajon? He..."

Tarifa's wide sapphire eyes caught the movement below and she turned, her face showing her shocked surprise. "The Spartans! They're leaving their positions!" She barked out.

All of them looked down the side of the mountain and they could see the black and crimson clad Spartans high tailing it up the side of the mountain as fast as they could go, many of them shifting to wolf form with flashes of light as they ran.

"What are they doing?" Golna screamed. "Who gave them orders to abandon their positions? They are leaving us defenseless! Lady Aricia? Lady Anja? Who ordered this! We will die up here without them! Who ordered this?"

Anja staggered slightly as the presence of the mind she hadn't felt in over a month swept through her with a rush, bringing with it love, commitment and completeness. She grabbed Aricia's arm for support, causing Aricia to look at her worry in her eyes, Seanna taking her other arm.

"Anja?" Seanna asked quickly, slipping her arm around Anja's waist.

"Little Wolf... he is here!" Anja spoke, her eyes filling with tears. "He is... he is so close."

"Martin?" Aricia gasped unable to feel anything from him. Isheeni moved closer to her as well, sensing the sudden despair in Aricia immediately.

Anja nodded quickly. "He's... he's different." Anja said her eyebrows furrowing in confusion. "So... so much more powerful! So... controlled."

Golna was scrambling around at the edge looking down and seeing the Spartans moving. "Who ordered this? They are sentencing us to death! Who..."

Tarifa was also more concerned with the departing Spartan Centurions as she could not feel Martin's aura. "Rajon! What's going on?" Tarifa barked. "Why are they leaving? Who ordered them to...?"



The roar that drowned out Tarifa's next words was unlike anything any of them had ever heard. It was a long, deep throated roar and it drew everyone's heads around to look up above and behind them. They all saw the massive black dragon, perched on the top of the ridge thirty meters above them, its savage teeth exposed for all to see as it trumpeted its defiance to the thousands of soldiers lining the valley floor. Isheeni's eyes opened wide as she instantly recognized her beloved Torma.

*Torma!* She gasped Aricia looking at her in shock.

The dragon's roar continued once more, bellowing out the warning of the fury the men below had roused, and a call to all those who hated them. As the dragon moved closer to the edge, the gasps were unmistakable as Martin's form came into view perched on Torma's back. The black body armor and helmet, the multicolored crested blowing lightly in the wind, the *Nehtes* extended to its full nine foot length, one end propped on his thigh. He sat in some sort of saddle, his legs secured behind metal armor of some sort.

They saw him reach up and tap the COM unit on his armor and his voice burst from Anja's and Rajon's body armor.

"Anja... why don't you and the others sit this one out." Martin spoke calmly.

Torma turned his head and looked down at his azure blue dragon mate. *I told you I would return with the King my mate!*

"Martin... there has to be two hundred thousand men down there!" Anja proclaimed.

"You can't fight them alone Martin!" Tarifa shouted after touching the COM unit on her borrowed armor.

They all heard him laugh at Tarifa's words. "Alone?" He spoke. "Who said anything about doing this alone?"

They saw him lean close to Torma's head, and without hesitation Torma let loose with another unearthly roar that caused prickles to race across everyone's scalps and down their spines. Almost on cue, more dragons began appearing on the edge of the ridge, dragons bearing Spartans perched between their shoulders. There was nothing but wide eyes as they scanned the ridgeline and saw dragons and Spartans. Dragons of every color and size, Heavyhorns and Firespitters mostly, though there were hybrids like Torma among the three hundred. Off spring of both a Firespitter and a Heavyhorn. There were several dozen Spiketailed Longwing dragons among them with glittering ruby like scales, and though very rare, their different breed of dragon was making a comeback. Even still, none were as dominating as Torma when it came to sheer size and strength.

Torma unleashed another chilling roar, and this time three hundred other dragons joined in and the sound echoed across the valley below them, rolling over where the Lycavorians were massed to begin their assault. It was so deafening that no one went without cringing at the sound.

Aihola clutched Tarifa's arms as her amber eyes scanned the row of Dragons and men stretching for over a hundred meters on either side of Martin. It was a sight she never in her wildest imagination ever dreamed she would see. She saw the single rider slightly in front of the others on Martin's right side and noticed the wild dirty blond hair sticking out from under the helmet. She gripped Tarifa's hand tighter.

"Tarifa!" She gasped pointing. "Tarifa... there! Is that..."

Tarifa followed Aihola's motioned and her eyes settled on the dirty yellow dragon, a Heavyhorn as she now knew them to be called. The rider sat tall in that saddle and his head turned to look at her. Even from this distance Tarifa saw those violet eyes easily and her hands went to her mouth in stunned surprise.

"Isra." Tarifa gasped softly.

Martin looked out over the valley and reached out to his now much loved elf concubine. *For'mya... if you would clear the air space please!*

Anja looked down when the unknown female voice echoed on the open COM channel.

"*Spartan 01* to all *STRIKERS!* You are ordered to clear the valley and take up holding positions at designated points! Execute now!"

Martin watched as the *STRIKERS* screamed for altitude, leaving nothing but shattered metal and bodies in their wake. Not a single piece of Joric's artillery had survived the extremely lethal and concentrated assault. Joric, with no real military training to speak of, had foolishly placed his guns only meters from each other, and what the missiles did not destroy, the kinetic cannons of the *STRIKERS* did as they swept low and sometimes, as Endith did, even hovered as their pilots methodically butchered the enemy with their cannons.

Aricia's eyes had never left him as he sat on Torma. She didn't bother to look at the hundreds of other dragons and men that lined the ridge. The only one that truly mattered to her had not even looked at her once. All of her fears were coming true. Anja could feel him once more in her mind, yet he had not included her within his aura. He had returned for Anja and Tarifa, not for her. She didn't stop the tears that came to her eyes as reality began to sink in.

Martin waited for the last *STRIKER* to lift into the sky and he looked down the line of men and dragons on either side of him and then turned in his saddle and smiled. *Torma... look behind us my friend.*

Torma tore his eyes away from Isheeni and turned, his golden orbs growing wide at what he saw. Stretching as far as the eye could see, against the still rising sun behind them, the sky was filled with dragons.

*Arzoal... what are you doing?* Martin reached out to her. *You don't have riders to augment your abilities.*

*I will not allow my King to go into battle without at least supporting him sire!* Arzoal's voice echoed in his head. *You and Mjolnir's Hand will do battle with dragons circling the field and burning any who attempt to escape. I am done running Milord, it is time we fought for our freedom.*

Martin smiled. *Then so be it. Eurin's Healers should even now be entering the tunnels and caves below us. Two thousand in all. They will tend to the wounded Arzoal. Make sure your riderless dragons know where they are.*

*I will sire. May you slaughter them all!*

Martin turned back to face the valley. He glanced down once more and this time his yellow/gold eyes found Aricia, and for an instant gazing into those azure blue orbs that took his breath away, the urge to sweep her into his arms and love her until she filled every pore of his being was all consuming. The wind shifted ever so slightly, and her sweet lavender/coco scent drifted up to him, and Martin inhaled deeply. Her scent charged him, filled him with love and power. He couldn't lower his shields... for if he did he would forsake everything else to lose himself within her scent and her arms, but... when this day was done, and if it was Aricia's wish, she would be his once more. And this time it would be for all eternity.

*For what they have done Arzoal... I intend to do just that. Torma... let them know we are coming!*

Torma leaped into sky while unleashing another savage roar. One by one Mjolnir's Hand followed their King with similar battle cries, and in seconds, Anja and the others could only watch in awe as three hundred dragons, their wings fully extended for maximum lift, rocketed by their position in a suicidal dive straight for the valley floor below.

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### ***Background Music; ERA, The Mass***

Martin rode bent low on Torma's back as he propelled them forward with powerful sweeps of his wings. The small orange tinted clear plates had dropped down over his eyes and Martin was seeing everything that was taking place with his forces planet wide. He would not interfere, they all had their orders and they would carry them out. The psychic shield that Torma generated around them protected him from the skin peeling speed at which they were traveling over the terrain. He didn't question Torma's skill, nor did he try to direct him. He and Torma had joined with each other's minds to an extent now that they could almost think and act as one entity. It was utterly amazing Martin thought to be joined so closely with another mind like they were. They could feel the love both carried for their mates, all powerful and without question. They could feel each other's strengths and weaknesses, and they complimented each other in a way nothing ever could.

Martin could see the others of Mjolnir's Hand speeding along slightly behind him and Torma, Andreus and Isra slightly in front of their sections as leaders should be.

*Andreus left flank! Isra right flank! Break now!*

In that instant three hundred broke ranks with hair splitting speed and maneuverability, sweeping out to become three different attack waves. They had only a full day and part of a night to train together, to bond with the dragons that Arzoal brought forward. They were the bravest of her kind, and some would say the most foolish, yet she had to agree, the bonds were formed with amazing clarity with the Spartan riders. All of them, to include Isra, were obviously skilled Mindvoicers, and when that power was added to that of the dragons,

Arzoal had been stunned to watch them execute flying maneuvers and stunts that made her dizzy. In the few hours watching them train on the ground, seeing two minds move as one, Arzoal had no doubts her decision had been the right one.

*Torma?*

Torma didn't turn his head. *Almost sire.*

*Torma we are almost on top of them!*

*Patience my lord!*

Martin saw the front rank of Joric's men rise to their feet and lift up their Rail weapons. *Torma... I know we are shielded... but now would be a good time!*

*NOW!* Torma's mind screamed out.

That single word sent two hundred streams of flame and molten breath reaching across the divide to slam into the front ranks of Joric's troops without mercy or hesitation. Entire platoons of men were engulfed by the ravenous flame and molten breath, cooking them where they stood and turning their bodies into charred or melted remains. As one half of the line of two hundred thousand men began screaming in agony, Isra and his section were landing among the Lycavorian hunters and troops, bellows of rage and hatred sounding as the dragons crushed handfuls of men beneath them when they landed. As jets of flame and molten breath erupted outward, flashes of Shi Viskas filled the air and the clear sunny sky turned red with blood.

These Dragons and Spartans were now of one mind. The Spartans could see all that their bonded dragon brothers had endured; the death at the hands of Chetak and his monsters. The destruction of dragon hatchlings and even unborn eggs. The dragons could see the horror in the Spartans at what their Queen had endured. The shame and dishonor that she had been forced to endure; that shame and dishonor transferring to the Spartans themselves. They could see and feel the shame that coursed through them at what their women had endured for thousands of years. The endless cycle of violence and death, while they had lived ignorant of all that happened. It fueled them both, Spartan and dragon brother and instantly they all knew, no quarter would be given this day, and none would be accepted.

Regardless of their King's order.

Chetak's men were not cowards. No man who has ever faced a dragon in battle could be called a coward, yet these men were hunters for the most part, part time soldiers really. They had never been involved in such a battle action as this before. They had never fought highly motivated and extremely pissed off men and women trained as the Spartans were. Many had seen their heavy Rail weapons bounce harmlessly away from psychic shielded pairs of dragons and Spartans as they landed all around them, dragon tails taking out entire squads of men with single, powerful and crushing blows. Bones could be heard splintering, the screaming of broken bodies of both men and wolves being flung through the air. The wisest among them knew that their reign was over. They knew they would die this day on this field, and they somehow knew no prisoners would be taken.

Torma banked hard over, heedless of the Rail slugs that bounced harmlessly away. With Martin's awesome Mindvoice power merged with his own, their psychic shield was practically impregnable. It allowed Torma to control his turns and loops to a greater degree than any other time in his life, and it also allowed him to use the blossoming psychokinetic power that being bonded with Martin allowed. Three times already he had used his mind to scoop up the body of a Lycavorian soldier and use him to batter more to the ground like a hammer. He could hear the King's Shi Viska launching and returning every few seconds. He could feel the drops of warm Lycavorian blood as they struck his cool skin.

*Torma down!* Martin screamed into his mind.

Torma didn't blink and dove for the earth as another dragon and Spartan team passed above them, missing by only centimeters.

Martin spun in his saddle and watched as the second rider gripped his saddle tightly and his dragon banked over, allowing them both time to settle from the near miss before plunging back into the battle below.

Torma bellowed another long line of near invisible molten breath, scorching a line of Lycavorian troops into charred bone and cloth before turning sharply once more.

*Torma we need to...*

*On the ground! Yes Martin... my thought exactly! Hold on!*

Torma flipped to his right and dove for the ground below in a maneuver that Isheeni would be proud of, Martin holding tightly to the two bone spikes protruding from his shoulders. Fifty meters above the ground Torma flared his wings, blotting out the sun for the dozen Lycavorian troops he was dropping on. They had a moment of sunless sky before Torma's near three metric tons crushed them to the ground like so much dust.

Martin leaped from Torma's back, extending his *Nehtes* as he executed the flip and landed on his feet facing twenty Lycavorian troops within ten meters. His eyes had changed to yellow/gold, his fangs fully extended now. Martin lifted his left arm; his red stained Shi Viska already anticipating more blood as it pulsed on his arm, waiting to be released once more.

"This is for my Queen motherfuckers!" Martin screamed out his rage and launched his Shi Viska.

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Golna and many of those that stood on the plateau were speechless at what was taking place before them. The three hundred Spartans and Dragons had slammed into the ranks of Chetak's troops like a tidal wave of death, mowing down hundreds, thousands of Chetak's men in the first minute alone. Now they had all descended to the ground, and they were slashing through the ranks like voracious predators, which in reality they were.

Aricia stepped up next to Isheeni and put her hand on her blue scaled side. Isheeni turned to look at her tear filled eyes. *Isheeni... I need to go to him. Can you get me to the bottom of the mountain at least?*

The dragon roar cut off Isheeni's reply as Arzoal flared and landed beside her daughter. She turned her flame red eyes on Aricia. *No Aricia blue eyes. I will carry you.*

*Mother... Isheeni began to speak. I can fly.*

*Not with Aricia's added weight.* Arzoal spoke. *Your wing would not be able to fully support her, it needs to heal fully before you strain it with your flying daughter.*

*I will not have my hatchlings born into this world only to tell them I watched their father die fighting for their freedom!* Isheeni barked angrily.

*Hatchlings?* Arzoal asked stunned, looking at her daughter. *You... Isheeni you can not carry eggs yet?*

*I carry three eggs mother. Torma's children... and if I am to die... I will die beside my mate!* Isheeni spoke stubbornly.

Arzoal gazed at her youngest child with awe in her eyes. She should not be able to carry eggs for at least another thirty years, yet Arzoal could feel the spark of life within her. It was her connection to Aricia, Arzoal knew then, as with Torma, they were bonded so completely with Aricia and Martin that their abilities had developed far faster. It was really nothing short of a miracle and Arzoal took a deep breath and nodded. *I will carry Aricia Isheeni. If... if she will allow me.*

Aricia stepped up to Arzoal and reached up to touch her massive head. *I... I have forgiven myself Arzoal. In time I will forgive you as well. Even if my beloved no longer wants me I will...*

*Wants you?* Arzoal exclaimed, her flame eyes wide. *Child why do you think the King is here? He rains fire on this world to get you back. To take vengeance on Joric and his vile father for what they took from him. What they did to you. He is here for you Aricia Blue Eyes! No one else!*

Aricia looked at her confused. *He... he hasn't touched me Arzoal. He... he touched Anja earlier, but he won't open himself to me.*

*Aricia... he is afraid you don't want him. He has... he has burned a path across the stars because he hated himself for betraying you!*

*Me? He... he never....*

*He told me if he had followed his instincts instead of trying to be King... if he had followed what his soul was telling him to do... he would never have pushed you away. Never denied you. Never lost you. He has blamed himself this whole time because he feels he betrayed you! He has always loved you Aricia Blue Eyes. He has never stopped loving you Aricia. He wears two Dragon Heart pendants under his armor. His heart and yours. You are his soul child... and he is here to get you back. If you will have him.* Arzoal's words were spoken with firm resolve and Aricia knew without even asking that she spoke the truth.

Aricia stared at her flame colored eyes for a long moment, the reality of what Arzoal had just spoken spreading across her mind like someone opening a dark set of curtains. She turned to see Anja staring at her with a bright smile and moist eyes.

“Go to him Little Wolf.” Anja spoke pulling her *Nehtes* from the sheath on her leg and tossing it to her. “I want that back though.”

Aricia caught the *Nehtes* easily and looked at it in her hand. She turned her head slowly to look at Arzoal. *Take me to him Arzoal.*

*And me.* Isheeni spoke. *I may not be strong enough to fly again just yet, but I can still spit fire farther than any other, and my talons ache for revenge.*

Arzoal nodded. *Quickly then Aricia.*

Anja watched her young lover climb up onto the back of the reddish colored dragon, and then she and Isheeni leaped into the sky. She turned to speak with Tarifa but she was gone. Her eyes fell to Rajon. “Where is Tarifa?”

“She and the Drow left with Boreal.” Rajon replied. “They were heading out there.” He said pointing to the battle.

Anja swore under her breath. She was a small unit operator, not a large commander. She looked down the side of the mountain at the nearly fifty thousand Spartans that waited impatiently for someone to give them orders.

“Fuck it!” She swore her jade green eyes examining the terrain around them. “Rajon... order them to stop standing around and go attack something. Use the tree line and move up on their far left flank. Roll them up from there!”

Rajon’s smile was huge. “Yes Milady! I’ll give the order...” He turned his head as they saw the Spartans begin shifting and sprinting off to the northeast. It was an amazing sight to watch actually, and Rajon shrugged. “I must have left my COM open Milady.”

Anja smiled. “Yeah right! How soon before Eurin and the others get here?”

“They are within the tunnels now Milady. Seanna is leading them through the shortest tunnels. The Divine One will be joining you here in minutes.” Rajon replied.

“Have the civilians begin to make ready to receive wounded.” Anja ordered. “They’ll be plenty I can guarantee that.”

“Do we treat the wounded troops who are not Spartans?” Rajon asked.

Anja looked at him. It went against everything she had been trained for as a doctor to deny treatment to injured men and women.

“Sure... we’ll treat them.” She spoke. “As soon as all of our people are treated first.”

Rajon looked at her. “And if they die?”

Anja met his eyes. “Fuck them! They started this dance not us!”

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Isra sat astride Aelnala’s back, the P190 sending out burst after burst of death every time he pulled the trigger. Her tail whipped back and forth with powerful slashes, the weighted end crushing bone and bodies wherever it struck. Aelnala was a pure Heavyhorn, and did not have molten breath to spray at the enemy, but she had practiced endlessly through the previous night, using the telekinesis power. Her bond with Isra had grown stronger by the hour after their initial meeting, and both of them had found reserves of Mindvoice abilities and power they hadn’t had before. Drawing from Isra, Aelnala was picking up Lycavorian hunters and using them to smash others to the ground, or throw them towards her so she could shred them with her massive talons. Twice Isra had gunned down two hunters who had shifted into wolf form and made to leap onto her back, and three times Aelnala had crushed a hunter who attempted to fire on Isra. She had seen his entire life within his mind, the pain and shame he had endured, the brilliant love he felt for the she-elf wolf with sapphire eyes, and the growing love for the white haired she-elf wolf/vampire hybrid. She felt the sorrow in him because he feared he would never have them again, and this fueled her anger, made her want to protect him more, shield him more.

Isra, for his part, now knew everything Aelnala had experienced as well. And the single thing that fueled his anger and abilities was the fact no dragon would take her as a mate because of the injuries she sustained when younger because of his people. Aelnala could not bear eggs due to a Rail rifle bullet that had destroyed her ability to carry the eggs, and for that no male dragon would mate with her. It wasn't done out of disgust or malice, it was simply instinctual in her kind to reproduce.

Isra spun in his saddle lifting the 190 and pulling the trigger.

The weapon chugged out two rounds and went dry just as the hunter below him shifted to wolf form and leaped at Isra in the saddle. The Hunter slammed into Isra's chest, his jaws snapping shut, trying to close around flesh, but Isra was too quick. He leaned back, allowing the forward motion of the Hunter to knock him from the saddle. As they fell to the earth below them, Aelnala spun in a blink.

*Isra!* Her voice carried to him.

Isra shifted to wolf form instantly as he was falling, and as he landed on his back, he ignored the brief pain and thud of impact, his armor absorbing most of the force, and he raked his talons along the Hunter's belly, opening him up with the grace of a surgeon. As the Hunter rolled off him to the side, Isra got his four legs under him and then shifted back to human form instantly.

*I am fine!* Isra spoke turning to look at her. His head tilted upwards among the death and gore all around him as he caught the familiar scent mixed in with the death and scents of so many thousands of bodies. His violet eyes grew wide. "Tarifa!" He gasped. The fact that he had detected her scent in the midst of so many only served to confirm for him that they were meant for each other.

*Spartan!* The strange voice sounded in his head causing Isra to turn. *Use it well Spartan!*

Isra caught the *Nehtes* that was thrown to him by the older Spartan soldier, and he watched him as he turned back to the battle, his Shi Viska leaping off his arm once more, the 190 dealing out death all around. Isra extended the *Nehtes* to its full length of nearly nine feet and he smiled.

Aelnala had seen his thoughts, felt what he was feeling and she stepped closer to him among the maelstrom and sounds of combat and death. She swatted three Hunters away with her powerful tail before turning to him. *Isra!* She watched his violet eyes turn to her. *You are a Spartan now! A leader among Spartans!*

*Aelnala... she is still a young wolf... she will not stand long in this type of combat. She has not fully reached her potential, no matter what she believes! She will die out here, even with Aihola next to her.* Isra told her.

*Then we will fight like true Spartans until we reach her Isra my Bond Brother. Which direction?*

Isra smiled and pointed. *Remember... we stay as close together as we can.* He spoke. *We are stronger the closer we are to one another.*

*Then let us kill more of our enemies!*

And once more they plunged into the fires of combat.

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It had begun like any battle they had ever fought, these Spartans from Earth. Controlled and precise. They had hit the far left flank of the ranks of Lycavorian troops loyal to Chetak as one body of black and crimson with Shi Viska and *Nehtes*. Many had chosen to leave their 190s strapped to their backs in the only display of honor they would show this day.

The battle quickly descended to not man against man, but wolf against wolf, as flashes began to pop all across the field and wolves met wolves with fangs and claws. Chetak's men were close to the savage and feral nature of their species, much closer than any Lycavorian within the Union. To fight in wolf form was not something uncommon to them. They thought it would be their only advantage.

They were wrong.

The Spartans from Earth were not like those in the Union. Thanks to the actions of their King's father, they still maintained closeness to their past and their history. They still kept in touch with their feral natures; they had simply learned to harness that nature. They were not simply wild and untamed in wolf form like Chetak's men. They were cold, calculating and superbly trained killers. As Chetak's men attacked, thinking they were going to find flesh and bone for their claws and teeth to rend, they found claws and teeth instead. Claws and teeth that was much more methodic and ultimately... much crueler.

Soon the cries of wolves echoed among the cries of men, flashes of shifting filling the area all around, the sounds of Shi Viskas and P190s replaced by the sound of the snapping of jaws and the tearing of flesh. Wolves of every color and size came together, blood and fur arcing through the air now as bodies of wolves flipped and spun, smashing against one another. Black and crimson armor encased many wolves, and in this instance, Chetak's men soon discovered these Spartans did not die easily and for every Spartan that fell, twenty bloody bodies of men and wolves were stacked around him or her where they fell.

Chetak's men also did not take into account that Spartans, whether from Earth or the Union itself never fought alone.

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## *Spartan 01*

Endith had the *STRIKER* in a slow lazy turn over the battle field below them, her hands gently caressing the controls. Her helmeted head gazed out of the side window, Tina's head next to hers as For'mya watched the monitors between her legs and on the HUD in front of her. What they were witnessing was unlike anything they had ever seen, and For'mya had seen more combat in more places than Tina and Endith combined.

"By all that I hold holy..." Endith whispered to herself as her blue eyes took in the battlefield below her.

This was no longer a battle of victory, if it ever had been. This was now a personal battle. A battle of young versus old, future versus past, and ideals that Endith and Tina could not even begin to understand.

"They're reforming on the west!" For'mya declared adjusting her scopes. "Arzoal's dragons are burning any who attempt to escape!"

"Martin?" Tina asked quickly. "Where is Marty?"

For'mya looked up. "Martin Leonidas is capable of handling himself, especially now that he has Torma! Endith... we must keep this group in the west from hitting the Spartans from the flank. It will break their line!"

"What line!" Endith snapped. "All I see is wolves and dragons!"

"They may be in wolf form, but they are still Spartans!" For'mya declared loudly. "Their training is perfect and they think like Spartans even in the shape of wolves! We must keep this group of Chetak's men from hitting them!"

Endith looked at her. "How For'mya? We can't use missiles... we'll hurt our people as well!"

For'mya looked at her. "Do you remember the maneuver you performed in Eden City?"

"If I recall... you said I was insane for doing something so stupid." Endith told her.

For'mya smiled. "Perhaps then... because you had no weapons. But now... now we still have three quarters of a load of Kinetic rounds for the cannon."

Endith's blue eyes turned decidedly evil when she realized what For'mya was saying and the smile slowly moved across her lips. "Oh you are so bad!" Endith exclaimed as her hands moved across the control consoles for the *STRIKER*.

For'mya smiled as well as she turned to power up the cannon. "It must be the company I'm keeping these days." She spoke.

Tina laughed as she moved quickly back to the engineering council. "Oh Endith we are going to have some good times with For'mya, I can see that. She's nearly as crazy as the Skipper."

Endith smiled as she banked *Spartan 01* over hard. "That works for me!"

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It was a sight that not many would never forget.

The obsidian black Heavyhorn, the twelfth born of a Heavyhorn Dragon father and Firespitter Dragon mother, unleashing great gouts of molten breath that engulfed entire squads of Chetak's men, leaving nothing but ash and charred bone. His massive claws cleaving bodies with blood drenched talons, or his vicious fangs which had torn the heads from a dozen soldiers so far. His tail was soaked with the blood of those he had pounded into the hard ground beneath him. Beside him the tall, heavily muscle Spartan King, his silver Shi Viska continuously circling the pair, loping off heads and arms of those too stupid to get close to them. The red stained *Nehtes* in his right hand, the psychic diamond forming and reforming in the palm of his left hand as he

sent the psychic energy weapon slinging out to punch gaping holes in bodies. His yellow/gold eyes were wide in feral frenzy, his fangs extended to full length. He would rush forward, the *Nehtes* swinging with power and speed no one soldier could match. The long shaft had impaled a hundred already this day, his aim perfect, his form impeccably superb.

They moved as one mind, one soul and no one could stand against them.

When Chetak's men began shifting and attacking as wolves, Torma simply snatched one up in the grips of his telekinetic grip and began tossing the wolf through the air, bashing him against others that attempted to leap at him and attack with claws and teeth. Torma didn't hesitate or stop when two were able to land on his back, for the massive black wolf leaped up and swatted both away with huge paws of black razor like claws.

Martin shifted back in a blink.

*Joric!* He yelled. *I want Joric! Can you see him?*

Torma's eyes swept through the mass of men and dragons and he saw not who his King was seeking, but the azure blue dragon unleashing a blast of fiery breath engulfing half a dozen of Chetak's men while the raven haired female spun the *Nehtes* above her head at her side, the Shi Viska leaping from her arm to claim another.

*Isheeni!*

Martin's head snapped around. *What? Where? Is Aricia with her?*

*Yes!*

*Go Torma! Go! I will not lose her again! And you will not lose Isheeni!*

*Hold on!*

Torma leaped into the air, smashing aside two wolves as Martin grabbed the spiked hand hold on his shoulder. He could no longer hold back; he could no longer deny himself her aura. He would not lose her again. Martin dropped all his psychic shields and reached for the one who held his soul.

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They had massed on the western edge, watching as the Spartans and Dragons swept through their ranks from the south and the mass of Spartans attack from the north. Lucvaun had screamed and shouted and pummeled to get them all gathered for the push against the flank of the Spartans. He knew if they could roll up that side, they could break the Spartan advance and then they would have the upper hand.

That was until the heated blast of a STRIKER AT's engines swept over them and dropped to hover only ten meters off the ground. Lucvaun's eyes went wide when he actually saw the faces of the two elf females behind the cockpit windshield.

"Too late!" Lucvaun screamed.

He saw the red haired elf mouthed the words he could not hear and then the nose of that craft became that of a flame spewing dragon as the devastating cannon erupted with a noise of a buzz saw. Lucvaun threw himself to the side at the rear of the formation of men, desperately scrambling behind the three large rocks as the men he had formed died.

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"Perhaps this was not such a good idea Tarifa!" Aihola exclaimed loudly as she spun around, her P190 sending out death with every pull of the trigger.

At the moment Tarifa was inclined to agree with her. With Boreal leading them, they had raced across the distance to where Isra had landed among Chetak's men. Tarifa didn't know why she had done it, only that she had, and Aihola had agreed without question. Perhaps she too felt drawn to Isra in a way that Dekton had never drawn them. All that Tarifa knew was that she craved his arms around her, holding her just as intensely as she craved Aihola's arms around her. Dekton had been right about one thing anyway... she and Aihola were no longer single individuals. They had grown so close in body and mind that for all intents and purposes they were one person. The moment Tarifa had turned to her after seeing Isra descend on his dragon into the melee of combat, Aihola had only nodded and said yes.

This was death and destruction on a scale that Tarifa and Aihola had never seen up close and personal like this before. Both of them were experienced soldiers, and both of them had seen death in many ways and forms, but this battle, this battle had descended into a savage war of the strongest would survive.



Tarifa lowered her 190 as Boreal shifted into wolf form and threw himself into battle against two opponents trying to draw them away from the two female elves, leaving Tarifa and Aihola alone near the fallen tree to fend for themselves.

“I think you may be right *Nya Istel!*” Tarifa yelled back. “I’m... I’m sorry my love!” Tarifa turned to look at her. “I should have known we would never find him in all this!”

Aihola’s amber eyes went wide. “Tarifa look out!” She screamed bringing up the P190 as fast as she could. She was able to chop out three rounds before the large brown wolf leaped over the fallen tree, one paw swatting Tarifa’s own 190 away as it leaped, and then landing upon her with its jaws snapping madly. Aihola’s hands dug into the wolf’s thick neck, trying to hold it away from her neck and face. The beast’s foul breath bathed her face, making her fight back the bile that rose in her throat. She heard a low pitched growl and the beast howled as the black haired female wolf ripped her claws down its exposed side with enough force to knock him off Aihola. Tarifa shifted back quickly, pulling Aihola closer to her, away from the beast as it too shifted back to human form.

Tarifa recognized the beast immediately. “Rommna!” She gasped.

Rommna laughed as he rose to his full height and looked at her, his eyes wild and cruel. “I will have you after all she-elf! And I will take great pleasure in taking my brother’s mate from him. I...” Rommna’s face twisted into a visage of intense pain and agony, and then the spear head of the *Nehtes* burst through the cavity that had been his chest.

Isra’s helmeted face appeared next to his and he twisted the *Nehtes* within Rommna’s chest. “No brother!” Isra snarled. “You will never have my mate! Either of them!”

Isra tore the *Nehtes* free and shoved Rommna’s body to the side just as Aelnala roared from behind him and brought her weighted tail smashing down. The blow crushed any life from him instantly and pulverized Rommna’s body into a mass of pulp.

Aelnala can you carry two! Isra asked.

They are elf females and light! Yes!

Isra rushed forward and grabbed Tarifa and Aihola by their hands. “It was foolish to come out here!” He snapped. “You should have remained where it was safe!”

“We can fight!” Tarifa snapped.

“Not like this you can’t.” He spoke pulling them over next to Aelnala. “This is no longer about right and wrong Tarifa. This is about the past and the future. This is about our people and their very nature. Savagery and instincts against compassion and reason. The King knows this... and it is why you can not stay here.”

Isra scooped Aihola up into his arms like a feather and placed her in the saddle upon Aelnala’s back. He turned back to Tarifa and took her face in his hands. “You are my mate Tarifa of the elves. I love you! I will always love you! Remember that always!” Isra kissed her hard on the lips, drawing her close to him for the briefest of moments before lifting her and placing her behind Aihola in the saddle. He put his hand on her thigh and looked up at her. “You and Aihola... you must seek out the King and what he has to show you when this is over. Only then will you be able to let go of the past and go into the future. Only then will there be any hope for us. If there ever was.”

“Isra...”

He turned his violet eyes on Aihola. “I would have enjoyed winning your heart as well Aihola of the Drow. It may be too late for that now. Take care of her.” Isra stepped back. *Aelnala go! I will find Boreal and meet you on the field!*

*Do nothing foolish until I return Isra!* She barked at him.

Isra nodded. *Go!*

Aelnala roared as she leaped into the sky.

Tarifa didn’t know how far they flew as she clutched Aihola’s waist, only that it was not as long a trip as she thought until Aelnala was landing among hundreds of Spartans in a small clearing, Hadarian Healers moving among the wounded. Aelnala waited until they had climbed from her back before turning to face them. Tarifa’s eyes were teary, and she could tell Aihola was holding back her own emotions.

*Never do this again!*

They both gasped as Aelnala used her new Mindvoice abilities to reach out and touch them gently.

*I have seen Isra's heart of hearts. The bond we now share does not allow us to hide much from each other. He loves you Tarifa of the elves... with all that he is. And given time Aihola of the Drow... he would have loved you just as intensely.* Aelnala spoke softly, seeing both of them staring at her honey colored eyes. *You can not do this again. You can not distract him like this for it puts both of us in danger. This bond is new to us, and it grows stronger as time passes, but we need to develop it slowly and his love for both you is not a distraction we can afford. Not now. Not until he is stronger. We have chosen this path willingly and we must learn all that we can. He is wise for one so young, and he is right. You need to defeat the demon that plagues both of you before you can be whole once more. The past is the past... and no matter what... we are leaving the past behind us this day.*

“Will... will we ever see him again?” Tarifa asked softly. “He is... he is my mate.”

Aelnala looked at her. *He is the mate your blood calls for, but he has told you Tarifa, he does not want only your blood to call for him. Nor yours Aihola of the Drow. His blood will sing for no others, of that you can be assured. He is like the King in that regard. When you and Aihola come to terms with what haunts you... and if it is meant to be... your paths may cross once again. When that time comes... if it does... you must be sure of what you want. As sure as Isra is of what he wants. Her head canted upwards. I must go! He calls to me! Remember my words to you Tarifa and Aihola. Leave the past behind and reach for the future, for you can not have one if you cling to the other.*

Aelnala turned and leaped into the sky once more, and with three beats of her wings she was gone from view.

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As with Torma and Martin, it was hard to determine who slew more enemies that day, Isheeni or Aricia. They moved as one mind like never before, opening themselves to each other in a way they hadn't before until this day. Though her wing was not fully healed enough to carry Aricia in flight, Arzoal had left them together on the edge of the battle so she could rally the others that were flying high above. And on the ground, Isheeni was almost as devastating as her mate.

Every time she belched flame from her maw, handfuls of Chetak's men were cooked alive. Her tail was in constant motion, smashing bodies and whipping back and forth. Aricia was never more than four meters from her, the shield Isheeni used to protect them when flying, now even active on the ground as closely joined as they had become. Aricia's Shi Viska smelt out death every time she launched it from her arm, Anja's *Nehtes* gripped tightly in her hand, impaling those who came close, leaving tufts of fur from wolves or pieces of flesh from men as they swept across the battlefield moving towards the two who meant most to them.

Aricia suddenly staggered and dropped to one knee as she felt the power of the aura she had so longed for sweep through her and envelope her like a blanket. She gasped out in delight as Martin's essence filled her; showered her with strength and love so powerful it caused every nerve in her body to ignite and come alive. Isheeni saw this and moved to her quickly.

*Aricia what is wrong?* Isheeni gasped.

Aricia couldn't answer as she felt everything from him fill her. His desire, his passion, his lust, his need. All of it for her. Without a conscious thought Aricia let go of everything she had been holding in, and she dropped every shield she had built over the past weeks. She smashed them aside, and reached out for the man who had claimed her so completely.

*MARTIN!*

Isheeni felt the shield they had dropped away, leaving them defenseless as Aricia was no longer concentrating. *Aricia our shield!* She cried.

Isheeni spun around as they were suddenly surrounded by Chetak's men, all of them holding weapons on her and Aricia. And in the middle of them was a very bloody Joric.

“Go ahead Firespitter!” Joric shouted. “Burn away! Your shield is gone... and the moment you open that mouth of yours I will put a Rail slug right through her pretty face.”

Aricia's head came up, her eyes changed and her wolf teeth extended. She got slowly to her feet, her eyes on Joric. “Joric.” She stated calmly.

“Well Aricia my mate!” Joric spoke. “You’ve been quite the bad girl these past weeks. Have you missed me? I have missed you. I’ve missed your tight body beneath me, whimpering in delight as I was *nubous* you in every orifice you have!”

“I said I would kill you Joric.” Aricia spoke in a low voice. “I was mistaken in that.”

Joric laughed. “Of course you were you stupid wench!”

“I won’t need to kill you!” Aricia stated as a smile swept across her face. “My mate will have that pleasure.”

*THUD*

Joric’s face changed then and he spun around, his eyes going wide as he saw the huge black wolf leaping from the back of the equally massive dragon that was dropping right on top of them.

Martin slammed into his chest at the exact moment that Torma’s weight crushed four of the men with Joric into the ground beneath him. With a roar of rage, Torma unleashed a blast of molten breath at the exact instant Isheeni released a jet of fire from her maw and the combined streams of death melted five more men before their brains had the opportunity to pull the triggers on their weapons. Aricia’s Shi Viska leaped off her arm, curved through the air and decapitated the remaining two men in that same blink before returning to her arm.

Joric scrambled to his feet, his chest screaming in pain from being driven to the ground under Martin’s three hundred pounds of muscle and teeth. As he shifted to face the huge black wolf in front of him it flashed across his mind that Martin was larger than even his father by a good margin, and his yellow/gold eyes held not an ounce of compassion in them now. Joric was a large wolf, but he did not compare to the raven black wolf in front of him. His only chance was to get Martin angry and have him do something stupid.

*You should have heard her squeal when I took her!* Joric shouted with his mind as he circled Martin. *Even in the midst of the fever she loved it when I had her mida! She begged me to do it more! She...*

Martin leaped forward faster than Joric could follow and his huge paw smashed into the side of his muzzle, tearing skin and flesh away as easily as ripping through paper. *She is my mate! She has always been my mate! She will always be my mate! And now you will die for what you have done to her!*

Joric knew he was outclassed in the first five seconds as Martin hit him three times in quick succession. So fast that Joric was unable to even stagger backwards as Martin’s claws tore great gouges out of his side and neck. Even for his immense size, he was faster than any wolf Joric had ever fought. When Joric snapped out with a front paw riposte, Martin simply snatched it between his jaws and bit down, crunching through bone and flesh. Joric brought his rear legs up in agony and dragged them across Martin’s side, his claws raking through the body armor and tearing through flesh right down to Martin’s ribcage. As he howled in pain and released Joric’s leg, the smaller raven black wolf that was Aricia darted in, raking her talons across Joric’s muzzle, nearly tearing his ear from its roots. She spun away as Joric scrambled to his feet, balancing on three legs as he dragged the one Martin’s jaws had shattered and lashed out at her.

This action caused Martin to become incensed even more and he drove forward, smashing his head into Joric’s side, knocking him back to the ground as he brought up his huge paw and slashed it downward across Joric’s face, his talons cleaving through Joric’s right eye. He howled in agony unlike any he had felt before; kicking his three good legs around in a circle, blood pouring from his eye socket.

Martin stepped back and shifted back to human form, holding his arm over his side where blood seeped out. He stepped forward to finish Joric as he too shifted back to human form, stemming the bleeding of his wounds. Aricia imposed herself in front of Martin protectively, this time her back to him, pressing up against him, her hands on his hips and facing Joric as he wheezed in pain on the ground before them.

She saw him lift his hand and call a diamond of psychic energy and Aricia quickly reached up and took his arm, covering his palm with hers and causing the energy to dissipate as she turned to look up into his face.

“No my Beloved.” She spoke softly gazing into those yellow/gold orbs she so adored. She could feel his aura pulsing through her, filling her, wrapping it self around her. Aricia closed her eyes as she returned the sensations with all that she was, stepping closer to him, inhaling his mint scent deeply.

The sounds of battle were moving further and further away from them, the Spartans and dragons winning handily now, despite being outnumbered.

Aricia opened her eyes and stared at him, tears coming now as she reached up to touch his lips under the helmet. Her hands were shaking as she lifted the helmet from his head, revealing to her the most handsome face

in the entire universe. His eyes never left hers as she did this, tracing her fingers back down his face, watching his eyes close slowly as she caressed his cheeks and his lips, letting his helmet drop to the ground.

*You... you came for me.* She stammered even using Mindvoice. *You came for me... even after I betrayed you Martin.*

*I betrayed you Aricia.* Martin replied his eyes quickly returning to normal. *I did not follow what my instincts burned for me to do. I will... I will never do that again Little Wolf. Please... please tell me you still love me. Please tell me you will still... still be mine.*

*I... I was always yours Martin Leonidas.* Aricia spoke. *I was always yours my love. I will always be yours. I could never love anyone as I love you.*

Martin lifted her into his arms, burying his face into the crook of her neck and shoulder and inhaling deeply, her lavender/coco scent burning once more into his mind as it did the first night they were together. Aricia let the tears come freely, all the pain and shame she had felt for what seemed like forever, quickly washed away in the embrace she had dreamed of for so long. She pulled his head from her neck and covered his lips with her own, heedless of the blood and sweat that she tasted. All that mattered to her were the feelings of passion, love and desire she felt emanating from Martin, all of them focused entirely on her alone. She felt the veil of nothingness she had become lifting rapidly as every moment in his arms, breathing of his scent caused the light to return to her soul.

“She is... she is my mate!” Joric’s voice screamed from the ground in front of them.

Martin broke their kiss quickly, putting Aricia down, his anger returning and he lifted his hand once more. Aricia stopped him again and shook her head as Torma stepped up to Joric and flicked him in the head with a talon, effectively knocking him into unconsciousness.

“No Beloved. Not yet.” She said turning to look at Joric. “I want him to live to see you have me Martin. In every way he forced himself upon me. I want him to hear me scream your name to the stars as you do to me what he never could. I want him to smell you in every pore of my body, and I want him to know that you do not need a fever clouding my mind for me to surrender to you all that I am. Once... once he has seen that... he will know he is nothing.” Aricia looked at him. “Then you can kill him for what he has done.”

Martin pulled her to him again and kissed her hard, pure passion and desire now, his tongue plundering and exploring. Aricia surrendered to his kiss, his need and met his tongue with her own, her hands gripping his face.

It was Andreus who finally brought an end to that as he landed on his brownish red dragon, a Firespitter male called Doranthe. The smile he wore as he saw his sister once more in the arms of his King you couldn’t have removed with an anti-ship missile.

Andreus quickly climbed from Doranthe who moved to stand next to Torma and Isheeni. He snorted at them, seeing Isheeni leaning heavily against her mate in a very loving fashion.

“My King!” Andreus announced, going to one knee in front of them.

Martin and Aricia broke their kiss, but their eyes never left one another, and Martin pulled her closer to him. “Captain?”

“Sire... we have routed them!” Andreus spoke. “For’mya and Endith broke their only attempt at a counterattack, and Arzoal and her flyers are burning those who attempt to escape into the mountains. Our men are sweeping this field again to look for wounded.”

Martin looked at him quickly. “Did we...?”

Andreus shook his head. “Aside from a few bruises and bumps sire, Mjolnir’s Hand is intact.”

Martin reached down and lifted Aricia into his arms. “Andreus... make sure this scum still lives when I return.” He spoke indicating Joric.

Andreus got to his feet as well. “Sire... where are you going?”

Martin looked at Aricia. “I’m going to reclaim what I should never have lost to begin with.” He spoke. “Have everyone assemble in the valley by Arzoal’s lair in... three days. We will finish what we came here to do then.”

“Three days sire?” Andreus asked with a knowing grin.

Martin smiled. “Yes Captain... I plan on taking my time.”

“I will make it so sire.” Andreus spoke looking at the happiness on his sister’s face and knowing all he needed to know.

*Torma!* Martin turned. *Can you carry both of us? I don't want Isheeni injuring her wing.*

*Easily sire.* Torma spoke gathering his feet under him.

Martin reached up as Torma lowered himself to the ground next to him and placed Aricia in the saddle. He turned quickly to look at Andreus's dragon. *His mate is an elf Doranthe, guard him well. He will soon be a father.*

The Firespitter nodded his head. *I just recently became a father myself sire. I will watch out for him. My King... is it true? Are you taking us... are you taking us off this vile world?*

Martin smiled as he climbed into the saddle behind Aricia, pulling her close to him and feeling her push back against him. He inhaled deeply of her scent, burying his face into the back of her neck. *All of you Doranthe. All of you.*

Torma roared loudly and leaped into the air, Isheeni beside him. Andreus watched for a moment before the sun became too bright and then he looked at Doranthe. *The dawn of a new age my dragon brother?*

Doranthe moved up to him, brushing his large head against Andreus's shoulder. *For us my Spartan brother yes. For all of us.*

Andreus patted his head with a smile and then turned to look at where Joric lay on the ground. "Let's wrap up this piece of *sibfla* then. We have much to do."

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## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

### ENURRUA

### DAY FORTY-EIGHT

The valley below Arzoal's lair was, for the most part, made up of plains and small stands and patches of towering trees. That land in the valley was now taken up by hundreds of portable buildings used by the Spartans.

They had turned it quickly into a major command post, the 1<sup>st</sup> Elf Engineering Corp assigned to Martin's fleet throwing up dozens of portable buildings in only a few hours. There was a large ringed area on the edge of this encampment that held several hundred prisoners, among them Chetak and a now at least partially recovered Joric. It was surrounded by blazing lights and several strands of high strung and unbreakable steel cable. The prisoners had their own separate portable quarters, but they were prisoners after all and were afforded little other comforts. There had been some discussion on whether to give those quarters at all, but Anja and Riall had settled that quickly. Chetak and the others may have been hated for what they had done, but the Spartans were better than they were and would not treat them any different than they would other prisoners. Dozens of Spartans walked among the groups of prisoners, always in pairs, and usually under the watchful eyes of at least three dragons at any given time. The ringed outer area was guarded night and day by Spartans with huge spotlights and heavy weapons. Any attempt to escape by one and they all would be slaughtered. That had been made very clear to all of them.

Several larger portable buildings were set up along the back of the massive camp, just before the huge airfield where four dozen *STRIKER ATs* were parked. Along the back of that airfield was a massive domed transport that no one had ever seen before. It were ringed by three dozen Spartans, and the only ones to have gone anywhere near the ship were For'mya, Endith and Ben. No one else was allowed close to it. The sun was coming up on the third day after their victory, and Riall stood next to Gorgo outside one of the command buildings sipping tea. Gorgo, Dysea and Isabella had all arrived the day before with Deia and three dozen other Lycavorian Union Senators, many of them not even Lycavorian. L'tian and the entire elfin delegation had accompanied them as well, if only to show their support and to see the dragons that flew and walked among the encampment freely. The members of Mjolnir's Hand kept to themselves for the most part, only so that the new Spartan and Dragon Bond Brothers could further their connections with each other. Some of them had even already left the planet to return to Apo Prime and establish a training area on one of the more desolate islands among the huge oceans.

Riall and Komirri had totally obliterated the Lycavorian People's Republic, as Chetak called it, its single fleet group and all of its ship building capabilities. Every data core had been copied and then wiped. Everything taken from the many shipyard command facilities, every scrap of information and anything that could be used, before the facilities themselves were blown into atoms. Nothing remained of Chetak's six hundred ship fleet, many of the ships being destroyed in the first hour of the attack beginning. The 1<sup>st</sup> Spartan Attack Group and Riall's 3<sup>rd</sup> Fleet Group were among the finest fleets in the entire Union, and they bestowed no mercy upon the enemy, especially after they discovered the treachery and horrors Chetak and his men had submitted not only on their Queen, but the Lycavorian people and dragons that inhabited this world and others.

Across the nine other worlds of the Republic, military installations of any kind were razed to the ground, and if the forces chose to fight they were slaughtered. After the first day, many decided it would be better to surrender and take their chances, for all the good it would ultimately do them. Word had already begun spreading that any soldier captured and held would be placed on trial for any crimes they may have committed, and if they were found guilty they would face Union justice. Hundreds of heavy transport ships were continuously moving back and forth between the planets and the fleets orbiting them bringing supplies and food and medicines to all those oppressed by Chetak and his family heads. Thousands of men and women were greeting the Spartans as heroes, and many of the younger Spartans were discovering just how beautiful some of the young females were.

Deia and many of the other Senators had set up in their own building and were rapidly putting plans together to direct any refugees to any number of planets where they would be welcomed and helped to fit in. Most had already chosen to go to Apo Prime where there was room for all due to the size of the planet, and it was the main planet that the majority of Lycavorians now called home.

Riall and Gorgo looked up towards the face of the massive mountain their camp was based around when the soft screams echoed down from four thousand meters above them. No non Lycavorian could hear the cries as dissipated by the wind as they were when they finally reached the valley floor, but they caused Riall to grin.

"When he told Andreus three days... he meant it." Riall spoke softly.

Gorgo chuckled and moved closer to her mate of over two thousand years. "Would you not do the same thing Riall?" She asked sweetly.

Riall looked at her. "Gorgo... I would take a week to reacquaint myself with your body my mate."

Gorgo grinned. "Perhaps we could arrange that in the future then." She said pressing herself up against him, his arm snaking around her waist. "You know how cranky I get without your attentions."

"I think we should." Riall spoke.

"They are young... and if what Torma told us is true when he came to retrieve their uniforms and such, they will have considerably more endurance due to their Mindvoice bonds with their dragons." Gorgo spoke.

Riall nodded slowly. "Never in all my years did I imagine something like this Gorgo. Lycavorians and Spartans fighting beside dragons. We knew they existed yes... but never in the numbers seen so far. And we never considered that they could be so intelligent. We should be ashamed of ourselves for not seeing what he was doing here earlier. Ashamed for ignoring it for so long."

Gorgo nodded. "We should Riall... but now we must move forward and make things right."

"We will." Deia's voice spoke from the side as she walked up slowly, holding her own mug of tea. "We have started already... and we will continue forward."

Gorgo looked at her. "They are here I take it?" She asked.

Deia smiled. "Oh yes... and they are quite happy at what they have accomplished on the King's orders. So happy with the profits they made in fact, that they built what the King asked them too for nothing. And they have already agreed to maintain and establish similar items as needed."

"Good." Gorgo spoke. "I had a feeling they would come around in the end. They may be businessmen and women but they are loyal to the Union."

Deia smiled and looked up towards the mountain. "When he and his Queen have finally rediscovered each other to their satisfaction... we'll deal with Chetak and his ilk. Deal with them for all time."

"Deia... you know what he is going to do don't you?" Riall asked.

Deia nodded slowly. "He told me before coming here." She answered. "I have already filed all the proper documents and the Senate has processed all of it in record time. There will be no discussion anymore... it has been agreed upon by unanimous vote already. In this instance only... the King has been granted

emergency powers and his will shall be done. He didn't want emergency powers, but I convinced him that it was the best way. And once he saw that the entire Senate supported what he wanted to do, he acquiesced."

"What will he do Deia?" Gorgo asked.

Deia smiled. "You will see soon enough."

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Andreas squatted in front of Joric as he sat next to his father on the ground with several other family leaders. His eye was destroyed, and now was nothing but an empty socket. The Hadarian healer Andreas had dragged him too had refused to treat him at first, until she was ordered to by Eurin in a gentle but firm way, but he still bore the scars of his fight with Martin in their wolf forms. Atropos stood behind his younger brother, a stern look of pure hatred on his face.

Andreas smiled when Joric looked at him with his remaining good eye. "Do you hear that Joric?" Andreas asked in a mocking tone. "My sister singing out her pleasure as she has for three days now. Does it burn your blood to know that you could not do to her what the King does to her? Does it burn your blood to know that she will never be yours? Was never yours to begin with?"

"She is my mate! She begged me to claim her. You saw it yourself" Joric hissed. "Your scum King breaks his own laws!"

Andreas laughed in his face and stood back up looking at his brother. "He has no idea Atropos." He said. He turned back to Joric. "What I saw you fool... what I saw is you signing your own death order the moment you placed your hands upon my sister. Did you know that they are Soulmates Joric? Martin claimed my sister under the Centennial of the Moon, which they later consecrated by sharing blood. You do remember that sacred ritual of our people don't you? Oh... but that is right... you do not know what love is." Andreas saw Joric's single eye look at him quickly. Atropos saw this and grinned.

"Now you are beginning to see what you have done." Atropos spoke softly. "Now you are beginning to realize the crime you have committed. And I for one will be supremely happy to watch you reap the rewards for your actions."

"You lie!" Chetak barked.

"Careful old man..." Atropos spoke. "You will get yours soon enough."

Andreas turned as another soft whispering cry of rapture drifted down to them on the wind and he smiled. He turned back to Joric.

"That sound is something you will never hear." He spoke. "How many times has she called out his name now? Thirty... forty... fifty... remember that sound as you die Joric." Andreas laughed at Joric as he and Atropos turned to walk away.

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At that particular moment, how many times she had screamed out Martin's name in blissful abandon was completely lost to Aricia. She neither remembered nor cared due to the shivers of indescribable pleasure that were lancing through her right now.

They had returned to this small cave off of the massive main cavern where the hatchlings learned to fly, only to discover that For'mya had been here before them. In her wake she had left what amounted to a complete bedroom, with dozens of large soft blankets and pillows, several large bowls of fruit and dozens of candles. A small fire burned in the pit, casting a soft glow across the cave, shadows dancing against the wall. There was a large hole in the cave wall that allowed the sunlight to penetrate from the outside adding to the seductive nature of the small cave.

It was here that, for the first time since falling in love with Martin and having him claim her that night in Eden City, Aricia felt the full, unshielded power of his aura radiate over her. It had literally set her entire body aflame with passion and desire. This is what he had meant when he told her he should have followed his instincts during the *Lunmai*. This is what he should have done. What she felt racing through her had ignited fires within her veins that would have turned someone without her Mindvoice abilities and love for Martin, to a whimpering pile of flesh before him. As her Soulmate, Martin's aura made every nerve ending in her body cry out for him, desiring him in every way, and her aura had much the same effect on him. This was what Aricia

had wanted to feel for so long, even in the grips of the *Lunmai* as she had been, his was the only aura she wanted to taste, and unshielded as it was now, her blood burned for him ten times more than it ever had during the *Lunmai* fever. The serum given to her by Joric may have contorted her mind, but her body still sang for only one man. And he stood before her.

He had taken forever to undress her, his lips and tongue rediscovering every centimeter of her flesh as he uncovered it. Her own aura wrapped around him, signaling to him that she was his, all of her was his and no others'. When his lips found her center and his tongue tasted her once more, Aricia cried out his name to the heavens, beginning what had only stopped for them to fuel themselves with the fruit For'mya had left. Aricia had forgotten his enormous size, and the first time he plunged into her, she descended into a world of rapture she had not yet climbed out of. He had taken her in every way imaginable the past three days, feasted on her more times than she could remember. His hands, his fingers, his lips and his tongue, they never ceased or stopped dancing across her skin, touching her, caressing her in ways that made her shiver in unabashed delight.

Aricia had not been idle either.

Aricia burned in Martin's blood just as brightly as Martin burned in hers, and she had spent hours rediscovering every portion of his chiseled, muscular body with only her tongue and lips. How many times had she swallowed him completely in her throat, his fingers wrapped tightly in her silky raven black hair as she drank his essence eagerly, tears in her eyes from his size and thickness as she held him this way. Aricia didn't care, for he tasted sweeter than any fruit she had ever had. Her pleasure tripled when they were mutually joined in this fashion, his lips and tongue licking and nibbling, plunging into her, until their muffled cries of release were all that filled the small cave.

Aricia had become more demanding in his arms, wilder in nature, surer of what she wanted from him. It was due in part to his natural instincts bringing out her wilder, base nature and both of them were covered in spots where they had nibbled each other too hard or too long with their extended fangs, but Aricia also knew what Martin now knew. They could no more deny the animal inside them than they could deny the sun rising in the sky. Their lovemaking had not been gentle all of the time because of this. They had taken each other furiously as well, slamming into each other, demanding forcible sometime, reaching for the pinnacle of their love making with all the strength their wolf genes gave them, both of them howling out their pleasure as they came together. Aricia could feel every wonderfully thick inch of his massive cock inside her, stretching her as only he could. Loving her as only he was able to love her.

They had joined their minds almost from the start, shedding any pretense of psychic shielding from each other and becoming almost one person. Martin had resisted what she wanted from him for three days. He could feel what she desired from him, what he knew would finally make her feel purged of all the vile things Joric had done to her. He resisted because he had not wanted to hurt her with his size.

*You will never hurt me Beloved.* Her soft musical voice had filled his mind then. Her back was too him as they lay together, his arms wrapped tightly around her, his hands filled with her firm breasts. *Nothing you do to me could ever hurt me. I want this Martin my love. It is the only way I will ever be free of the vile memories of his touch upon me.*

*Little Wolf I...*

*No my love.* She had wrapped her small hand around his thickening cock then. *You must have me in every way that pig did! Even... even as small as he was... it was pleasant Martin. I am ashamed of that... but it was. With you my love I know it will be glorious.*

Martin took her face in his hand then, turning her head to look into her azure blue eyes. *You have nothing to be ashamed of Aricia!*

*Then do as I ask you Martin.* Aricia placed the engorged head of his cock at the entrance she wanted and waited. *Now my love!* She demanded.

Martin was not one to refuse a demand of his mate and he pushed slowly and firmly. As the heat and friction lanced throughout his already heated cock, they both howled in agonizing pleasure as he slowly sank completely into Aricia's most private of places until his large balls pressed against her firm ass cheeks. Their eyes were wide, part of the blanket clenched tightly in her teeth, as an odd pleasure unlike anything either of them had ever experienced ripped through them. It was so different from being inside her velvet like depths, so new and thrilling. And the pleasure had rapidly built, faster than they had expected, hitting them like an exploding volcano at the same time, dropping them into an abyss neither wanted to recover from.



Now as Aricia sat astride him, her back to his chest, his hands gripping her breasts tightly as his lips and tongue nibbled her shoulders and spine, that pleasure was surging through them once again. Joric may have been the first to ever take her in this way, but as the kaleidoscope of pleasure danced across her eyes now, Aricia knew no one could ever compare to what her Beloved now did to her, had done to her more time than Joric ever had. She would always prefer to have him filling her naturally, as nothing could compare to that, but this way felt so very good as well. As the pleasure built quickly, Aricia felt his hand drop from her breast and slide down her firm muscular abdomen. Her azure blue eyes grew wider when she felt his strong fingers caress the thin line of dark hair above her center, her breathing now coming in gasps. The moment his finger brushed her engorged clit Aricia lost control. Her head flew back and she screamed louder than she had ever screamed before. She felt him swell inside her and just as his warmth blasted into her depths, Aricia's own orgasm nearly caused her to black out with the sheer power of the ecstasy that shattered her lithe young body.

It was then... at the very peak of their moment of pleasure when they both felt it.

They would never know exactly when it came to be, as often as they had coupled in the last three days, but tears clouded Aricia's eyes as their minds felt it, and she whimpered in joy as Martin's arms crushed her to him, his mind singing out in happiness within her thoughts as he rolled to his side, pulling her with him and holding her as tightly as he could. His hand moved away from her slick center and spread flat across her lower abdomen, her hands coming to rest on top of his as they wrapped their auras around the first flickers of life within in her womb. So tightly bound to Torma and Isheeni as they were, they could hear the Mindvoice trumpets of joy from both of their dragon family in their minds.

It was a flicker of life that would bind them together for all time as Soulmates, something that Aricia and Martin vibrated with pleasure from.

It would also bind them as parents.

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Martin stood looking at her as she fastened the crimson cloak on her shoulders. Her raven hair was shiny and soft, and she allowed it to flow around her face and cascade past her shoulders as she knew Martin preferred it. She looked up at him then and saw him staring at her with adoration and love in those dark brown orbs. She had changed in Martin's eyes, becoming more feral and more prone to follow her instincts. It also made her that much more beautiful to him. Her hair was longer and he would always relish running his fingers through its thickness and silky strands. Her body had become firmer and more muscular, and that only added to his desire for her. Her lavender/coco scent now filled every portion of his mind and his body, and he could smell himself just as deeply imprinted on her.

"What?" She asked with a gentle smile.

"I'm just wondering how I ever got so lucky." Martin spoke.

Aricia grinned and stepped up to him, wrapping her arms around his waist. "You mean having five beautiful women who fawn over you?" She asked.

Martin reached up and brushed some hair behind her ear, looking down into her azure blue eyes. "Right now the only one who matters to me, the only one who fills my senses and my soul is you." He told her softly.

"As you will fill my senses and my soul Martin Leonidas. You have two other beautiful Queens however Beloved." Aricia said gently. "And while Isabella may never wish that title... she will be a queen in our hearts and yours."

"Aricia... For'mya is..." Martin asked.

Aricia smiled warmly and placed a finger to his lips. "For'mya and I have much to talk about and experience together. I look forward to that with relish. I have seen what you have experienced with her. What she has experienced. We were meant for each other Martin. I know that now and I do not fear the future my love. She and I will become very close."

"What about Anja?" Martin asked.

"Anja and I will always love each other Martin." Aricia spoke easily. She had grown much these last weeks, experienced more than she should have at such a young age, but she was better for it and Aricia knew it. She had her life back, her Beloved, and nothing would ever take him from her again. She spoke with the intelligence and confidence of a woman twice her age, in part because of Isheeni's influence, but more because

she had finally become a complete woman now, and she had come to terms with all that had happened. “Yet as our hearts call for you, they call for others as well. Anja’s heart calls for Seanna now, as mine calls for For’mya. You already know that Dysea and Isabella grow closer by the hour. You will always be the center of our lives Beloved, the one who owns us all body and mind, and perhaps we will not always be together in body, but our minds and our hearts will always be one. Always together, and we will never deny each other attention of any form.”

“You will always be first in my heart Aricia, by the pureness of our blood and by my love for you.” Martin said.

Aricia flushed all over at his words pressing her body closer against his as she nodded. “I know Martin.” She said softly. “You will always be first in mine. I saw it in your mind Beloved. We follow the path of your grandparents so closely you and I. It is uncanny.”

Martin nodded. “I know... and we need to complete what they started.”

“Can we complete it?” Aricia asked.

Martin drew her into his arms further and hugged her tightly. “We’re damn sure gonna give it our best shot.” He said.

*And we will be beside you always.* Isheeni’s voice filled their heads.

They turned and saw her head in the opening of the cave, followed quickly by Torma’s larger one. *I told her to wait until you came out sire, but she never listens to me.* Torma spoke.

Isheeni nudged her dragon mate with her head. *Perhaps you should take lessons from the King husband. We never coupled for three days straight. Your stamina is sorely lacking.*

Torma’s gold eyes grew wider and her snorted at Isheeni. *I will show you stamina when you birth our eggs Isheeni. You will trumpet my name to the heavens.*

Isheeni’s azure blue eyes did an excellent impression of rolling in her head. *I already do that husband. Perhaps something more creative is now called for.* She teased him; running her snout under his sensitive jaw and seeing his wings twitch in response.

Martin and Aricia laughed from where they stood. *Careful Isheeni...* Martin said. *I can give him some secret tips.*

Isheeni laughed within their connection. *He needs no tips sire. He already makes me sing louder than any other female of my kind. They are so jealous of me that I have him and they do not.* Isheeni looked at Torma. *Something I bless the winds for every day.*

Torma butted her gently with his head in a show of affection. *As do I.* He turned to look at Martin. *Everyone is gathered sire, as you ordered.*

Aricia looked at him quickly. “What is happening Martin? Why is everyone gathered?”

Martin bent down and picked up the two helmets. “They are gathered because now I have to act as King.” He spoke lowering his helmet to his head. “And you my Queen... you have to act as Queen.” Aricia let him lower her helmet onto her head, the raven crest soft and shiny in the light of the cave. “We have a few things to do before all this is over with and we can begin our future with our child.”

*You should ride down together sire.* Torma spoke turning so they could climb into the saddle. *Isheeni will trumpet your coming.*

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It was a majestic sight really.

Isheeni stood on the edge of the ledge and let loose with a deafening roar, followed by two long blasts of fire from her maw, each extending out nearly a hundred meters. This was enough to draw the attention of every dragon on the ground nearly four thousand meters below, and they all looked skyward and bellowed out their answer to her call. As all other eyes looked up, only the Lycavorians and elves had keen enough eyesight to see the next two blasts of fire erupt from the ledge just before Torma’s enormous obsidian colored body burst out of the cavern like a shot, his massive wings fully extended, and a roar coming from his own throat. Isheeni’s azure blue body burst from the ledge far overhead following her mate and roaring into the clear sky. The roaring continued from the dragons on the ground and soon was joined by the Spartans of Mjолnir’s Hand as the message was passed among their minds.

Gorgo and Deia stood with Helen and Riall and several others as Anja, Dysea and Isabella walked up to them quickly, their faces beaming. Arzoal trailed along behind them, feeling younger than she had in centuries and loving every moment of it.

Gorgo took Dysea's hand as they came up beside her. "Dysea... what is going on?" She had to shout over the roaring of the dragons and Spartans. "Why are they roaring like this?" She saw For'mya come running around the corner of a portable building practically dragging Aricia's mother with her.

"They are celebrating Gorgo." Helen spoke as she looked at Arzoal, both Gorgo and Deia turning to look at her. "Celebrating a wonderful moment to say the least. Torma and Isheeni have told them the news and they have passed it to their Spartan brothers. That is why they are screaming. They have just found out their King is going to be a father."

Gorgo's eyes grew wide and she looked at Anja and Dysea. "Aricia?" She gasped her face animated.

Anja smiled and nodded her head. "It will be a boy." She said squeezing Dysea's hand tightly.

Dysea nodded. "And he will have his mother's eyes." She said her face just as joyful as Anja's.

Dasha came up next to Gorgo, For'mya holding her hand. "Gorgo... what is going on? I did not want to be here for this. To see the man who defiled my daughter is not someone I..."

Gorgo took her hand from For'mya as she stepped back to stand beside Isabella. "You should be present to see what his punishment will be for what he has done to your daughter Dasha. To our Queen... and Aricia should tell you first of all of us."

Dasha looked at her with a twinkle in her eye. "Tell me that she carries the King's son?" Dasha said. "Gorgo... she is my daughter. Who do you think knew minutes after she and the King? Did not your Jora tell you first?"

Gorgo laughed and hugged her tightly. "Yes she did." She said. "Yes she did."

Dasha caught sight of Joric and Chetak kneeling with a dozen others apart from where they stood. "I already know what the King intends. He made me that promise soon after he claimed my daughter." She spoke softly. "He is his father's son, and he will act as a Spartan."

Gorgo looked at her evenly. "Yes... yes he will."

The cheering and bellows from the dragons grew louder as Torma's bulk cruised lower in a wide looping, lazy circle, Isheeni just off his right wing, matching his every maneuver. They could see Martin and Aricia in the saddle, the crests on their helmets blowing in the wind.

A spot had been cleared for Torma to land and he flared his huge wings a hundred meters from the surface, bellowing out a roar that caused the Spartans to drop to one knee and lower their heads, their Dragon brothers lowering their heads as well. He touched down with barely any effort and waited for Isheeni to land beside him before he began walking forward. Gorgo watched her son, his arm wrapped protectively around Aricia's waist, his hand spread out over her abdomen, both her hands on top of his and Gorgo smiled, small tears coming to her eyes.

Arzoal leaned close to Anja, knowing that only she, Dysea, Isabella and Helen could hear her Mindvoice words as she directed them. *Now she looks like a Queen. So alive... so vibrant... so beautiful. It... it shames me to think of what I put her through.*

*What we put her through.* Tablina's voice entered the connection as she walked up to stand next to Arzoal. *You will not bear that shame alone.*

Helen looked at the both of them. *You will find your actions over the last few days will go a long way to earning forgiveness. Do not dwell on what you can not change... what you both have dreamed of is only minutes from reality. It is time to move into the future now, a future you will have in building.*

Arzoal nodded her massive head. *You are right Val'istar.*

Anja reached up and touched her long neck. *You will find Arzoal neither Martin nor Aricia have a vindictive bone in their bodies. It is not in their nature. And Martin has never broken a promise.*

They all turned to watch as Torma settled to the ground in front of where Vengal stood with Daniel and his team. Martin slid from Torma's back first, turning to Aricia as she brought her leg forward. He put his hands on her waist and leaned forward, kissing her abdomen. Aricia squeezed his shoulders with a loving smile as he lowered her off of Torma's back and to the ground. They placed their foreheads together briefly, Aricia touching his lips with her hand.

*For eternity my Beloved.*

*For more than eternity Aricia. Now go... your mother is waiting and so are quite a few ladies who wish to congratulate you as well.*

*I have something I want to do first my love.* Aricia said. *My... my final cleansing if you will.*

Martin nodded slowly, leaning forward to kiss her softly.

Aricia turned and looked at where Joric knelt. She took a deep breath and began walking towards him as Martin removed his helmet. He saw the looks of shock on Dasha's face and many of the others. Andreus and Atropos began moving towards their sister.

"No!" Martin barked freezing them in their spots. "Let her be!"

The only one to ignore that order was Isheeni, who moved closer to where Aricia stopped in front of Joric, until she was directly behind her. She gazed at Joric's battered face for a long moment before reaching up and removing her helmet slowly, shaking her head to allow her exceptionally long black hair to fall back into place all around her face and shoulders.

"Tell me Joric... what do you smell?" Aricia spoke calmly as she began walking around where he knelt.

"Nothing to say Joric..." Aricia spoke lifting her hand and running her index finger over Joric's shoulders.

"You were so talkative the other day before Martin beat you into the ground. Nothing to say today?"

Chetak opened his mouth to answer but suddenly found he was staring into Isheeni's glaring azure blue eyes. Aricia let out a small laugh.

"Speak one word Chetak and she will burn your face from your body." Aricia spoke coldly as she finished walking around Joric and returned in front of him and squatted down.

"So Joric... tell me... what do you smell all over me? It's a musky mint scent isn't it Joric? That Joric... that is the scent of *my* mate. Something you never were... something you will never be." Aricia held up her hand, her index finger and thumb a few inches apart. "This is you Joric..." Watching as his good eye glared at her. Aricia then held the palms of her hand inward about twelve inches apart. "This is *my* mate Joric. As you can see... there is no comparison."

Aricia's words caused those within hearing distance to snicker and laugh; the eyes of her mother, Gorgo and Deia wide in shock.

"In every way you forced yourself upon me Joric, *my* mate has had me. Many more times than you ever did." Aricia continued. "Did you not hear me screaming his name in bliss Joric? Did you count them in your head as he took back what was always his? I lost count after the first time... but I was too pleurably busy to count after that. Can you smell him Joric? He permeates my very soul." Aricia stood back up and looked down at him. She lifted her right hand and formed a fist, the psychic knife projection bursting into existence, drawing gasps from many who saw it. "I told you once Joric that Martin Leonidas needed no fever to have my blood burn for him. I told you Martin Leonidas *was* the fever in my blood." Aricia's eyes changed then and her fangs extended to their full length. "Let me show you little man, what that fever feels like, and you will know that you are nothing compared to him!"

Aricia snatched the back of Joric's head and grabbed his long hair tightly, holding his head firmly while stabbing forward with the psychic knife. This psychic knife did not damage his body externally, but the moment it sank into his head Joric's good eye burst open and he began to scream. He felt the agonizing burning sensation ripping through his veins, his limbs beginning to twitch and convulse as Aricia held her knuckles to his forehead.

"This is the power you will never wield Joric!" Aricia hissed at him. "This is the love you will never feel. His love for me, and mine for him. It burns like a sun doesn't it little man?"

Aricia held her knuckles to his forehead for a few seconds longer before pulling her hand back quickly and watching him fall to the ground. His body still shuddered and twitched in minor convulsions, his eye tightly shut as he tried to fight the pain in his veins. He had bitten his tongue brutally and blood leaked from his mouth. Aricia willed away the psychic knife and as quickly as it had appeared it was gone.

"Poor Joric... you can't deal with a little pain." Aricia spoke. "More is coming little man. Prepare yourself... for what I have shown you is nothing compared to what you will feel this day." Aricia let out a snarl and spat on Joric's face, the spittle striking his cheek and rolling slowly down his face as he lay on the ground.

Aricia felt him come up behind her and she turned to look into his handsome face. Martin pulled her tightly to him and kissed her hard on the lips, Aricia melting into his arms and returning the kiss with all the passion and desire in her. It was a kiss that anyone who was in the immediate vicinity could feel. After a long

moment they parted and he motioned with his head for her to go to the others. Aricia squeezed his hand, moved past Joric and saw her mother. Her face lit up and she broke into a run, Dasha wrapping her arms around her as Anja, Dysea and Isabella crowded around them.

Martin watched her for a long moment before turning his eyes on Chetak. "Chetak my friend... how you doing old man!" Martin barked.

"You violate your own laws with your actions!" Chetak screamed. "The wench is my son's mate and..."

Martin's fist snapped out and smashed into Chetak's face, splitting his lips viciously and rocking his head back enough to knock him over onto the ground. Martin quickly snatched him by his graying hair and yanked him back up. "Watch your mouth when you speak of my Queen old man... or I will rip out your tongue."

Torma came up behind Martin, his golden eyes focused on Lucvaun. Martin turned when he sensed Torma's anger and he looked at his dragon brother.

Which one?

Third one back Martin, behind Chetak. With the red sash.

Martin turned back around, his eyes now changed and his fangs extended. All those in the area around them could feel his anger, and Isheeni and Aricia turned from where they were feeling his emotions. Martin stepped past Chetak and another family leader and grabbed Lucvaun by his collar, dragging the man into the front of the group. "You are Lucvaun?" Martin asked him as he knelt and stared up at Martin defiantly.

"I am Lucvaun, the head of my family! The family of Lucvaun!" He replied with venom in his words. "I do not recognize you as King!"

Martin shrugged. "I don't really care if you do or you don't." Martin spoke. "What I do care about is the fact that you shot Isheeni through the wing. Not only was she carrying my Queen, but she is carrying three eggs Lucvaun. So not only did you piss me off, you pissed off her mate." Martin reached up and patted Torma's front foreleg. "Who just happens to be this rather pissed off looking dragon right here next to me." Martin saw Lucvaun's eyes go wide. "See... Torma and I have bonded in a way your little mind couldn't understand. Hell... I don't understand it most of the time. Basically... we've taken on a little of each other's personalities. In this case... the Spartan fashion of dealing with someone who hurts a Spartan mate." Martin stepped to the side. "Torma... he's yours."

Torma let out a roar of vengeance and as Lucvaun began to scream and everyone watched with wide eyes, Torma snatched Lucvaun up in his massive jaws, engulfing his entire upper body in the ravenous maw. He smashed Lucvaun's legs upon the hard ground three times in quick succession, the sound of bones cracking and shattering very audible in the morning air. Finally Torma reached up with both his forelegs, sank his talons into Lucvaun's torso and ripped him in half, flinging the bloody portions of the body in two different directions. Before the pieces of Lucvaun had even touched the ground Torma unleashed two quick blasts of molten breath, turning both pieces of Lucvaun's shredded body to charred remains.

Torma snapped his head back to glare at Chetak, his nostrils flaring, heat still filtering off his muzzle. Slowly he turned to look at Martin and brushed his massive snout against Martin's shoulder. *Thank you Martin my brother.*

Martin nodded and watched as Torma guided his massive body through the throngs of men and women and moved next to where Isheeni rested. He was almost as large as Arzoal who made room for him next to her daughter and he settled to the ground beside Isheeni, his head reaching out to stroke the scales on top of her neck. Isheeni's wings twitched in delight, and she gazed at him with eyes of dragon love and devotion.

"Is this how the supposed King of the Lycavorian Union acts?" Chetak snapped out. "By conquering a lesser member of the Union. Butchering its men at arms, all over some woman? I will lodge a protest among the Senate for your actions! I will..."

"Shut up Chetak!" Deia barked out as she stepped forward now. She saw Martin nod to her and she moved closer to stand beside him and look at Chetak. She held several data pads in her hand. "For someone even older than me Chetak, you are the epitome of a fool. You should have been more careful in your actions. Instead you let your hatred of Resumar blind you to all but revenge!"

"Resumar took my mate!" Chetak screamed.

"Eliana was never your mate!" Deia shouted back. "As Aricia was never your son's mate! She loved Resumar with all that she was. She told you to leave her be! She told you not to touch her! You took her against

her will Chetak! That is why Resumar used the Lunmai to get her back! They were Soulmates you fool, just as Martin and Aricia are!” Deia lashed out with all her strength and slapped him hard across the face, once more the impact rocking his head back. “You swore a Blood Oath against the line of Resumar... against Martin Leonidas... his grandson. And now you will pay for your folly, as you paid then.”

Deia held up the data pad and tossed it in the dirt in front of him with a flick of her wrist. “That is the First Oracle’s Declaration Chetak! The law by which the Lycavorian Union was founded! A law you and your son, and everyone who supports you, broke when you raped Queen Aricia seven hours after signing the Union Acceptance Petition!”

“She was in the grips of the Lunmai!” Chetak screamed. “She was...”

“She would never have surrendered to your foul son Joric you fool! She and the King are Soulmates... they were Soulmates before they ever left Earth to come here!” Deia screamed at him. *Macin Gravinolfgrek, hador Vada Assirina Cormunn fand hote dissa.* She spoke in the ancient Lycavorian language. “*Anomes, magari un tur shahlekké son raanath jossas.*”

Chetak’s eyes grew wide at this and Deia smiled.

“*Once consecrated in blood, honor The Centennial of the Moon above all others.*” Deia spoke. “*Soulmates, never to be parted by worldly means.*” Deia nodded. “You remember the old language and the old ways so much Chetak, and you violated the oldest law of all. Aricia may have been in the grips of the Lunmai, but her blood called for only one male... and it wasn’t your son. You used a serum,” Deia held up the second data pad before throwing it at his feet. “A serum made from the inner lining of a dragon egg to increase the potency of the Lunmai to a point that Aricia had no control of her mind or her emotions. You drugged her because you knew she would not willingly submit to your son. Joric raped her... while you stood there and watched and recorded it all. That’s two laws you broke within hours of joining the Union!” Deia hit him again, harder this time. “My Union you dog! The Union I swore to see grow into what Resumar wanted for all of our people!”

Martin reached out and took Deia’s arm gently. Her fiery eyes turned to him and she immediately regained control of her emotions and handed him the rest of the data pads. “King Leonidas... I believe you should be the one to relate to Chetak everything else. If I stand here much longer I will gut him where he kneels.”

Martin stepped closer to her. “Thank you Deia.” He said softly. “Thank you for all you have done.” Deia nodded with a small smile and moved back to stand next to Gorgo. Martin squatted in front of Chetak and held up the data pad. “This is a list of every agent you had within the Union. They are all in our custody now. They will be tried for espionage and then executed.” Martin tossed the pad down. “This is a list of the companies you had your people purchase on Apo Prime. Because you were using a High Coven front company in the Wilds to move your funds, the purchases have been negated, and the sales of these companies have gone to the five major engineering Corporations within the Union, purchased with my holdings in these companies. I didn’t realize this until only a little while ago, but I’m one rich bastard!” Martin spoke with a grin. “So rich in fact, that I have bought major controlling portions in every industry you have on Enurrua and the other nine planets in the Republic. Actually... I bought all ten planets!”

Chetak’s eyes were wide at this. “Impossible! You can not do that! I am the President of this Republic!”

Martin shook his head. “No... the moment you broke our law... you became a criminal, and by Union law... whatever you held became public property. And everything you have built here... in this dark evil empire... it now belongs to me!” Martin said with a smile. “I own it Chetak! It’s mine... all of it!”

“You lie!” Chetak screamed. “You can not do that!”

“I already have.” Martin spoke tossing the data pads down in front of him. “All done according to Union law of Trade and Commerce. As of this very moment... every Lycavorian female is now free. They are free of your brutal regime. Any of them claimed by you and your cohorts by force are now free to seek new lives. All of your children will be removed from the Republic with their mothers and new homes will be found for them. New mates hopefully... men who will treat them with the respect and honor that they deserve as the ones who bear Spartan children. Any children. All of the younger females... and those who are reaching their Coming of Age will be free to choose or not choose a mate; all the while they are being educated and cared for as the future mates and mothers they will become... if they choose it.” Martin got to his feet.

“Any you held as slaves are now free... free to return to their homes and families at my expense, or make new homes for themselves within the Union, again at my expense. I will undo all you have done Chetak. I’ve already sold the rights to all ten planets of the Republic. Made a tidy profit in doing that too. They will be used for strip mining, every city you have built razed to the ground. I have ships coming even now from every corner of the Union to load every citizen of the Republic and transport them wherever they choose to go within the Union. I believe most have already expressed an interest in coming to Apo Prime since that is where the majority of our people now call home. And they will be welcome... given jobs and a means to make new lives for themselves. A means to become what my grandfather meant for all our people. And in time perhaps they will come to forgive him... and forgive me... for allowing you to live and spread your vile filth and oppress them for so long.” Martin looked at him before allowing his eyes to fall on Joric. “As for you Joric...?” Martin’s voice became dark and cold as he moved back close to Joric, his eyes changing and his fangs extending.

“Now you will break your own laws!” Chetak barked. “By killing my son you will violate the Union’s own laws of murder and revenge.”

“Actually no he won’t.” Deia spoke. “As of three minutes ago emergency powers have been granted to the King and the Lycavorian Union is now under complete Spartan law.”

Chetak looked at her quickly and then back to Martin. “What is this Spartan law? What does it mean?”

Martin’s eyes never left Joric as he began speaking. “It means Chetak... I already beat your son in wolf form, according to the old ways of our people. Now I’m going to follow my father’s law... Spartan law... and for what he has done to my Queen... I’m going to beat him to death as a Spartan!”

It happened more quickly than anyone could follow.

Joric gave out a yelp of surprise as Martin grabbed him by his shirt and lifted him into the air, body slamming him to the ground with all the power he had at his command. Joric’s ribs could be heard snapping as Martin reached down and grabbed him once more.

“That was for my Queen!” He shouted as he hauled a stunned Joric to his feet. Holding his arm straight out, Martin executed a front side kick into Joric’s face that crushed his nose and cheekbone, flipping him three hundred and sixty degrees around and smashing him to the ground again. “That was for my Queen!”

Martin kicked him savagely in the side, more ribs breaking from the force of the blow. The kick lifted him to his knees and Martin snatched him by his hair, dragging him to his feet. “This is for my Queen!” Martin raged as he hit Joric with a ridge hand directly in the throat, crushing his larynx and windpipe in the same blow. Joric gagged as he tried to draw in a breath.

Aricia stood looking on with satisfaction, Anja and Dysea pressed close to her on either side, Isabella behind her and For’mya standing in front of her. All of them had looks of satisfaction on their faces and when Riall stepped forward to attempt to stop the beating Martin was giving to Joric, For’mya was the one who spoke.

“Do nothing!” For’mya snapped at him. “No one will interfere! No one!”

It wouldn’t have mattered in the least anyway. Joric was already choking on his own blood as Martin grabbed him by his clothes once more and with his face locked in a rage he heaved Joric up above his head.

“And this is for me you sorry sack of shit! No one touches my mates! No one! Ever!” Martin screamed, bringing Joric down with all of his strength and dropping to one knee. Joric’s body impacted on that extended knee, covered in body armor, and the sound of his spine snapping echoed like a gunshot through the air.

Martin shoved his body away from him, stood up and extended his hand, a diamond of psychic energy forming quickly. Martin sent it rocketing out and it blew open Joric’s chest like an explosive’s charge would a door. Joric’s body went flying several meters to land near where Torma had landed, his one eye open in death as they were never open in life, leaving Martin standing there alone.

Danny was the only one brave enough to move forward, even with the rage and power they all felt rolling off of Martin in waves. He moved up to him quickly and gripped his arm. Only Danny had seen him in such a rage before, and the moment he gripped his arm, Martin looked at him.

*It is done brother.* Danny spoke to him. *Let it go now. It is done.*

Martin nodded slowly and gripped Dan’s arm tightly as he took two deep breaths and let the anger leave him. “Deia?” He called out.

Deia stepped forward hesitantly. “My... my King.”

“You may rescind the Emergency Powers now.” Martin spoke evenly.

Deia nodded. “As you order sire.” She spoke.

Martin turned back to Chetak, who wore a stunned expression on his face, his eyes on the mangled body of his oldest son. When he turned back to look at Martin, he was staring into yellow/gold eyes and extended fangs.

“This is my Blood Oath to you Chetak!” Martin hissed lifting his hand and the psychic knife exploding into view. “For all the misery you have brought Arzoal and her kind... for all the dragons you have so happily butchered over the years... for all of our women you allowed to be raped and beaten... this is my Blood Oath!” Martin plunged the psychic knife into Chetak’s head similar to what Aricia had done. “You will suffer pain for everything you have done, all the young female lives you have taken and destroyed among our people. You will suffer pain for every dragon life you have snuffed out in your attempt at greatness. And that pain will always be with you, and it will continue until the day you die! Unfortunately for you Chetak, that will not be this day.”

Chetak’s body went rigid, his eyes wide in silent pain as fire raced through his limbs, a icy burning that would not go away. A burning that surged through him greater than any pain he had ever felt before. His veins began to pulse in his neck and along his head as the fire grew in intensity until it was unbearable, but he could not scream out his agony, for the pain had seized his throat as well.

Martin jerked back his hand and let Chetak’s body slump to the ground, his arms swatting at his body as if attempting to put out a flame that only he saw. He scrambled to his feet, staggered drunkenly and then began running away from gathering of people, no one attempting to stop him as he dashed past his dead son’s body and headed out into the wilderness still swatting at the unseen fires.

“He wanted the old ways, well now he has the old ways. And they will kill him as surely as if I had done so myself.” Martin whispered as he watched Chetak run. “Riall?” Martin called.

“Sire?”

“Remove the rest of these prisoners for transport back to Apo Prime.” Martin spoke. “They will stand trial like all the others, and suffer the same fate as those that followed their orders.”

Riall motioned a dozen Spartans forward. “As you order Milord.”

Martin looked at the still glimmering psychic knife extending from his knuckles, and then off into the distance where Chetak was still running. He willed the psychic knife away and looked up to find Aricia’s eyes and the eyes of his Queens on him, smiling at him with love and support. And Aricia’s eyes burned the brightest of all of them.

As if a great weight was lifting from his shoulders, Martin moved forward to them.

And into the future.

“My holdings?” Martin asked the five Corporations heads as they sat in the comfortable portable building. Aricia sat next to him, taking a spot she would always have now. A spot no one would take from her.

“In excess of eight hundred million Riyal Milord, annually until the length of the contract runs out. The Prime Minister did not say you were such a shrewd businessman.” The Haulta spokeswomen answered. “That does not include the shares of our companies that you still hold. We ask that you keep these shares sire... as a token of our faith in you and the Union. It will total roughly the same amount each year.”

“The ships I asked for?” Martin asked.

“The first group will be arriving later today sire.” The ship builder replied. “Followed every six hours by another until all two hundred are here. The three hundred and fifty additional special orders you made will be completed within a month’s time, including the one for yourself and Queen Aricia.”

Martin nodded. “Excellent. And you followed the specifications from Admiral O’Connell exactly as he laid them out?”

“We did sire. I must say... for a human he has a mind like a steel trap. With your permission Milord I would like to come to him in the future for ideas and guidance.”

Martin smiled. “I’m sure he’d like that.” Martin replied. “He’s a pilot yes, but he loves building things.”

“We will leave the particulars for you to review at your leisure Milord.” The Haulta spokeswomen said. “I know there is much you need to do sire, and we will not take up anymore of your time.”



Martin nodded and stood up as they did, following them to the door of the building and watching them file out. He turned back to Aricia with a grin.

“Is that a lot of money Beloved?” She asked getting to her feet.

Martin shrugged. “Beats the hell out of me, but they seem to think so.” He replied with a grin, moving over to her and drawing her into his embrace. “I need to meet with Danny and Yuriko before they leave.”

Aricia nodded. “There is something I must do as well.” She told him. “I will meet you by the landing field in an hour.”

Martin kissed her softly and nodded. *My heart.*

Aricia caressed her fingers over his cheek. *My soul.*

Martin squeezed her one last time and then headed out of the building. Aricia took a moment to compose herself and then moved for the other door into the building. It opened just as she reached it and For'mya came in holding the data pad in her hand.

She came up short when she saw Aricia. “My Queen... please forgive me I was looking for...”

Aricia looked at the female elf in front of her. This was her Beloved's concubine. A role For'mya hadn't wanted at first... but a role she had accepted and grown into quickly. “For'mya... I was... I was just coming to see you.” She spoke.

For'mya's dark brown eyes showed her surprise and she relaxed somewhat. She knew what her role was to be, she had accepted it knowing that she had Martin Leonidas's love, at least a small part of it anyway. And that was more than enough for her. She had to admit to herself, Aricia was an incredibly beautiful young woman, and perhaps having to share her bed as well would not be so bad and... her eyes flew open when Aricia stepped close to her and kissed her. They were the same height, though she was much more muscular in nature, but For'mya's eyes quickly closed as she surrendered to the sensations Aricia's kiss caused within her. Her tongue sprang out to meet hers, and Aricia pulled her closer, deepening the kiss when For'mya melted into her embrace.

It lasted for a long moment, before Aricia finally pulled away, her breath racing and her azure blue eyes bright. She stepped back quickly, and For'mya instantly regretted the lack of contact with her.

“Forgive me For'mya.” Aricia spoke quickly. “I did not mean to be...”

For'mya shook her head quickly and stepped closer to her. “No... you will never have to apologize to me.” She said. “I am Martin Leonidas's concubine Milady... and by default I am yours as well. I don't regret that decision.”

Aricia reached up and stroked her cheek, allowing her fingers to caress For'mya's sensitive elf ears. She saw her close her dark eyes in soft pleasure and smile. “You saved him you know.” Aricia spoke softly. “You gave him purpose to go on For'mya, and that saved him. I can never thank you for that. Without that purpose, we would not be here today and I would not have my Soulmate back. You have saved me as well For'mya.”

For'mya smiled. “I know what I have entered into here my Queen.” She said. “I will...”

“No... For'mya. I don't want you bound to something you do not want or wish for.” She said. “Martin and I have talked about you. If this is not what you wish For'mya, he will release you from...”

For'mya boldly stepped forward and silenced her words with a soft kiss, and now it was Aricia's eyes that grew wide. “But it is what I wish.” She said softly. “I can think of nowhere else I would rather be. I have seen inside Martin Leonidas as well my Queen, almost as deeply as you. I have seen what he feels for you, and for me. And whether it is because of what we share or because of something else, I can not deny what I feel for you is growing stronger. I am not as... as experienced in that regard but...”

“For'mya... I'm not as experienced as you might think.” Aricia spoke with a shy smile.

For'mya looked surprised. “I thought... Queen Anja... Queen Dysea... I thought...”

Aricia laughed. “We were fighting a war on Earth For'mya.” Aricia said. “It's not like we had time together everyday for more pleasurable explorations.” Aricia smiled and reached up again. “But I would surely enjoy what we could discover together.”

For'mya matched her smile. “I believe I would enjoy that as well.” She said. “Very much so.”

“Then I think we should start by having you call me Aricia and not Milady, or Queen or some other silly name.” Aricia spoke reaching out and pulling For'mya close. “That seems rather informal for two who will become so close don't you think?”

“I do.” For'mya replied with a smile as she pressed her body tighter to Aricia's. “I do indeed.”

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“You’re sure you got enough gear?” Martin asked Yuriko outside the ramp of the High Coven Runner. Yuriko smiled and nodded. “We have enough Martin truly.” She spoke. “Daniel, Anuk and Nayeca have been loading new equipment for an hour. Filrian is giddy with all the medical equipment he was given by Queen Anja once again. If we load anymore we will not be able to take off.”

Martin smiled. “You have the credit chip?”

Yuriko nodded as they began walking up into the ship. “As before I will use it only when I need to. We have a new crew member in this would be assassin. He was more than happy to provide us with information when you told him if it was accurate you would save his family.”

“I will.” Martin spoke. “If it is accurate and I will let you and Danny judge that.”

Yuriko nodded. “I have grown fond of them father.” Yuriko spoke looking at him with her dark eyes. “Filrian has always been there for me... but Daniel and Anuk and Nayeca especially... they have accepted me completely for what I am. And they trust me. That is not something I am used too.”

“They are good people Yuriko. Rely on them and they will rely on you.” Martin spoke just as Dan came up.

“Ok... we’re loaded and ready to rock.” He said as Anuk came up behind him and pressed her petite form against his side, while Nayeca did the same to her.

Martin looked at him. “Dan... you don’t have to keep doing this.” Martin told him.

“What... and leave Yuriko high and dry somewhere! Not a chance!” Dan spoke quickly. “We’re getting used to her company. And she smells a whole lot better than you Skipper. Besides... where can a guy be alone in a ship for weeks on end with two beautiful women and show them the universe with the best guide out there? This is heaven for me.”

Anuk punched him hard in the abdomen. “She is not our guide Daniel!” Anuk barked. “She is our friend!”

Martin stepped up to them and hugged all three of them at the same time. “Remember... no heroics... find out whatever you can and I’ll bring the cavalry.”

Dan nodded. “We got ya Skipper. Don’t worry!”

Martin looked at Anuk. “Anuk...”

She laughed and squeezed Danny’s waist. “Do not fear Martin... Nayeca and I will make sure he does not get into any trouble.”

Martin nodded. “Good. Them I trust... with you it’s kind of iffy.” He said looking at Dan.

Martin laughed at the expression on Dan’s face and turned to Yuriko, wrapping his arms around her tightly. “Nothing reckless Yuriko.”

Yuriko nodded and squeezed him tighter. The man she called father. They were from two races that were bitter enemies and still at war, yet only he was who she called father. “She is my sister father. You need not worry about that.”

Martin kissed her forehead. “Good. Check in on our private channel on the same schedule and once you figure a route and course, transmit it to me so that I have it.”

Yuriko nodded. “I will.”

“Take care of yourself Yuriko. I will see you soon.” Martin spoke.

“And you father.” Yuriko watched him walk down the ramp and turn to watch it rise up. She waved once with a warm genuine smile and then headed for the cockpit.

Martin moved out of the landing pad area and turned to watch the Runner lift into the sky. He felt Dysea and Anja come up behind him and he turned, scooping Dysea into his arms and pulling her close for a blistering kiss. She groaned in delight feeling his arms around her for the first time in over a month. His kiss however, left Dysea no doubts as to his feelings and love for her. His hands gripped her ass and ground her against him as his tongue plundered within her lips, causing her toes to curl in bliss.

*Thank you Melda Min.* He Mindvoiced to her as he broke their kiss.

*I will do whatever you ask of me Nauta Melme, you know that.* Dysea answered him with a smile as he set her down.

*I know... that is why I love you both so much.* He answered pulling Anja to him then and repeating the same action.

Anja's body grew heated quickly when his hand dropped to her firm ass and pulled her closer to him. Their kiss was just as passionate and sensual as the one he had shared with Dysea, and it left both of them craving more, and Martin felt that in their auras.

*We have a few more things to do.* He spoke pulling them both to him. *Then I promise you both I'll make it up to you. In spades.*

Dysea smiled. *We will hold you to that Nauta Melme. And if you don't... we'll tell Little Wolf. She won't like you neglecting the other women in your life.*

Martin laughed. *Oh boy... I better save up my strength then.* He said as he started walking towards the huge domed ship in the distance.

It took them a few minutes to cross the distance to the large ship, but they spotted Aricia, For'mya and the three dragons easily enough. Arzoal looked at Martin as he walked up, and she watched as Torma moved to greet his bond brother. Martin pounded Torma on his muscular side in affection and then ran his hand down his shoulder scales. Torma basked in the attention as both Dysea and Anja did the same.

Arzoal looked at him as he walked up to her. *Sire... I do not understand why you have asked for me to be here.* She spoke. *I know nothing about flying ships.*

*You need to learn about this one, and ones like these Arzoal.* Martin told her as he walked up to stand on the edge of the lowered ramp. *Have you been inside yet?*

*Aricia told us we needed to wait for you.* Isheeni said.

*Arzoal... how many dragons are left on Enurrua?* Martin asked.

*Four thousand six hundred and seventy-three sire.* She answered immediately.

Martin nodded. *Each one of these ships holds fifty full grown dragons, of Torma's size. I had them designed and built to be adjustable however for the smaller full grown of your kind.*

Isheeni nudged her mate in his side. *He is saying you are fat husband.* She spoke with a mischievous tone in her voice.

*Or perhaps he is saying I am superior.* Torma said, puffing out his chest, and causing the others to laugh.

Martin shook his head with a smile. *Ten of these ships will be equipped to carry four hundred eggs apiece, plus twenty dragons as nurses. These are you chariots Arzoal. I had them built especially for dragons. You will never be limited to just the planet you are on anymore. You will have a contingent of Spartans to fly you where you wish to go, and you will take a seat within the Union's Senate as the representative of your people. I offered the same thing to Tablina, and she is even now returning to Apo Prime with Golna and some others to oversee the refugees getting settled in as quickly and orderly as possible.*

Arzoal's eyes were wide. *You built these ships for us sire?* She gasped.

Martin nodded. *Each Spartan dragon pair OF Mjolnir's Hand will have a smaller ship with essentially the same set up inside. It will be more heavily armed and armored of course, and equipped with a Coven Shroud Generator, but that is what they will use to transport themselves. We have talked how we will use them Arzoal. Are you still in agreement?*

Arzoal nodded. *Oh yes sire.*

Martin nodded as well. *Good.* He looked at Torma and Isheeni. *Aricia and I will be splitting our time on Apo Prime and on Earth. We are bonded to both of you, but we do not want to take you away from all you have ever known. We...*

Isheeni stepped forward and nudged Aricia's shoulder in a show of affection. *Martin... we will remain with you and Aricia Blue Eyes always. Where you go... Torma and I will go. As will our hatchlings. We will see my mother and our kind often enough now with these wonderful flying ships, but our lives now are bound to yours and we can not turn from that.*

Martin looked at Torma. *Torma?*

*Isheeni has always been better with words than I Martin.* Torma answered. *I can not imagine you not upon my back now. Isheeni is right. Where you go... we go.*

Martin nodded as Aricia moved up next to him and took his hand. *Let us show them Beloved.* She said looking up at him.

Martin smiled. *I think that is a good idea.*

*Show us what?* Arzoal spoke.

*Everyone get on board if you would.* Martin said reaching for Anja's hand while For'mya scampered forward towards the cockpit.

The inside of the ship was lined with strange looking contraptions that looked like metal harnesses. Martin looked at Torma. Walk underneath one. He said.

Torma didn't hesitate and as soon as his massive bulk was under one of the contraptions, two arms came down from overhead with bars attached to them. They were covered in soft cushions and cloth and they effectively locked Torma snugly in place.

Martin looked at him. *These are just for rough flying. The inertia dampers on these ships have been beefed up to allow you to move around freely. The controls are easily enough to reach with your developing skills in telekinesis, and you can lock and unlock yourselves from these harnesses.* Martin felt the engines on the ship begin to power up and he saw Endith wave to him from the pilot's seat next to For'mya. *Hold on.*

The trip was surprisingly smooth and fast and they arrived on the opposite side of Arzoal's lair the valley stretching below them. Martin went to the rear of the ship and touched some controls on the panel near the ramp and they all watched as it began to lower and retract. Martin turned and motioned Arzoal closer.

*Take a look.* He told her.

Slowly Arzoal moved to the edge and her eyes grew wide as the scene below her took shape. There easily almost a hundred of these ships on the ground already, all of them being attended to by ground crewmen and hundreds of dragons. She could see eggs being gingerly moved onto the ships, often being carried by Spartan hands as if they were precious commodities. They were unborn life and in reality they were just that, precious.

*There are a hundred more holding in orbit right now while these fill up. Once they take off the others will land and load the rest. I promised you I would take you and the dragons home, and that is what I intend to do Arzoal.* Martin told her. He rested a hand on her thick neck and she turned to look at him, and for the first time in her nearly thirty thousand years of life, Arzoal felt the tears falling from her eyes.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *The Elf High Minister has already assigned fifteen million square kilometers to your kind. You are the ancestors of elves Arzoal, and when he discovered that, he took it upon himself to work out the details to your homecoming. The elves are descended from dragons, and that is why there is such an affinity to any elf that a dragon sees. They can sense it in their blood can't they?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Yes sire. You told him... the Elf High Minister sire?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *He had a right to know that I'm bringing his ancestors back to their world. Alocgeid will tell no one if that is your fear. When he realized what I was telling him he began to cry. You yourself are the great grandmother of my grandfather's concubine Arzoal. That is why you were able to contact For'mya so easily. She is of your blood. That is why you pushed her so to accept her station.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *When... when I realized that a descendant of Resumar still lived... that you still lived sire... I knew it was a sign. I knew For'mya resisted her bloodline... and when she was captured I knew it would be you who saved her. It is just as it was before Milord King. It is just how it always should have been until the High Coven took your grandfather away from us.*

Aricia, Torma and Isheeni watched as Martin and Arzoal spoke within Mindvoice. They could not hear what they were saying because Martin had thrown up a shield unlike any of them had ever felt. Aricia already knew what they were discussing, as she had seen her Beloved's mind and it filled her with joy.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *With what you have done here Martin Leonidas... you have truly become a King.*

Martin smiled and patted her thick neck. [Mindvoice Shielded] *That's debatable by some.* He spoke. *This secret is known by five of us Arzoal, and that is how it will stay.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Aricia Blue Eyes?* Arzoal asked.

Martin nodded. [Mindvoice Shielded] *She is the Queen of my soul and my heart Arzoal. She knows all that I know... and I know all she knows. She will never be far from my side now, nor will For'mya. You are partially responsible for that... and I thank you for that gift. I would like you to take what I have offered Arzoal... in that way both of us can be assured that Mjolnir's Hand never veers from the path we have put them on. You and Helen will see to that.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *And you sire? What will you do?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Before Canth passed his knowledge to Helen he told me I needed to find all who have been lost. There are others out there, other paths I must take, but for now I want to enjoy this moment with you and the dragons that have become part of my family.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I would truly like that sire. What of Chetak? He wanders aimlessly among the wilderness now, shifting and not knowing why. His mind is... you destroyed his mind Martin Leonidas.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Yes I did. I have no regrets about that. Killing him would not have been justice. Having him suffer the pain of what he has done to your kind and mine for the remainder of his years. That is much more fitting.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I agree.*

Martin nodded. *Good... I have one more task to perform. One more loose end to tie up, one more memory to put to rest and then we can depart his planet and start anew. I will see you again on Elear Arzoal. Torma... we need to go.*

Torma immediately moved forward as Martin turned first to Aricia and kissed her. Anja and Dysea were next and then he climbed onto Torma's back.

*Think you can get out of the ramp without banging your head my dragon brother?* Martin asked with a smile.

*It will be your head that hits the top sire, not mine.* Torma roared and leaped from the open ramp of the ship as Aricia and Isheeni moved up close to Arzoal. She turned her flame colored eyes to her daughter and Aricia.

*I have waited many years for a King to return and start us back on the path.* Arzoal spoke. *He is here now... and I will allow nothing to harm him.*

Isheeni brushed up against her mother and nodded. *We will allow no harm to come to him mother.* She said. *We will allow no harm to come to him.*

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## **LEONIDAS I**

*"Been here two months now... I don't know where here is really." Dekton's image was on the monitor in the private conference room on the LEONIDAS I. "They are vampires... I know that. They have taken my blood... don't know what..."*

*"...made copies of me! Three that I know of. They thought I was unconscious and..."*

*"...killed one of the copies. He looked identical to me... it was uncanny. I have discovered..."*

*"Clones they are called... They think the original... they think I am dead..."*

*"Had to inject myself with something... to dilute my blood... pass the screeners..."*

*"They believe I was the third clone. I don't feel the same since they have taken so much of my blood... I will try and return somehow to Sparta, to my mate... my daughters... I am weak... I heard them talking at one time..."*

*"Discovered I am being returned to Sparta to... act like me. No one.... Never tell anyone... believe me. I will.... secret in case of my death..."*

*"Two others out there... where I don't know. I... return to Sparta... something about a descendant of Leonidas. I must be... defending..."*

Martin touched the panel on the table and watched as the screen went dark. He looked at Tarifa and Aihola who were the only ones in the room with him.

“This was found in an abandoned cave on the outskirts of Sparta. Near where Helen’s cave was.” Martin spoke. “It confirms what information we got from the other two Dekton clones. I questioned the second one myself. He was captured by the High Coven... by Yuri’s people and taken off earth to use as a clone donor. It was during the initial phases of when they were developing their clones. Apparently he discovered what they were doing to him and injected himself with some sort of fluid that basically diluted his pure blood to the point he could pass as one of the clones they created. He killed the third clone, tattooed himself and then passed off the clone as the real Dekton.” Martin got to his feet and moved around the table to sit on the edge and look at Tarifa and Aihola. Both of them had tears in their eyes and were holding tightly to each other’s hands. “He was able to escape whatever facility they had him at and return to Earth... to Sparta. He was a changed man... a different man because of what they put him through... but he was Dekton. He was the real Dekton. The man you both fell in love with. The man who loved you both back. And that is the way I intend to have him remembered. He was never a traitor to Sparta... he was loyal to Sparta and to both of you until the day he died. And he died as a Spartan should... by defending those he loves. I don’t want to hear about this shit anymore Little Drow. You did not kill Dekton... and whatever guilt you still have about that you need to get rid of. You both have the blood of wolves in you now thanks to Dekton, and you will always be like sisters to me. You are two women but one mind; remember that, because that is your strength. There can not be one of you without the other.

Martin moved once more, kneeling between their two chairs and putting his hands on top of theirs. “Grieve for him if you must... but honor him by doing what he would want you to do. He would want you to go on... to live full lives of love with each other... and whoever you both choose. He would want you to have children and go on! That is what I want you to do! Isra is in your blood now Tarifa... and he is a fine man.”

Tarifa met his eyes. “You... you know of him? Of course you do... he... he is one of your Mjolnir’s Hand now.”

Martin nodded. “I spoke with him at length. I showed him this information because I only felt it fair to him. Your blood will always burn for him Tarifa... he is a pureblood... like me and it will burn for him until you decide what to do. I know that Isra will never take another mate besides you and Aihola. He knows there is not one of you without the other... and that does not frighten him in the least. I believe he told you that didn’t he?”

Aihola nodded slowly. “Before... before he put us on his dragon and sent us away.”

“And he was right to do so. You were involved in something that was between my people and the dragons. A battle you could not stay in. A battle of the past versus the future. We won... but now you must decide what your future holds. Will you cling to the memory of a man you both loved, or will you honor him and go on with your lives with a man who I know you both care about, because I can smell it all over you.” Martin brought their hands to his lips and he kissed them gently. “Take some time... both of you. Discover each other once more... remember Dekton and the love he had for you... but a man like Isra will not wait forever. If you do nothing you will lose him and the happiness that you could have with him. That is not something I want to see happen. You are both sisters to me... you even more Tarifa. Go back to Earth, rebuild her... and rebuild your lives by burying Dekton once and for all. Only then can you move into the future.”

Martin stood up still holding their hands. “I will always come to Earth if you need me. Aricia and I have decided to have our son in Sparta, so I hope to see you in a few months anyway. Be strong... both of you.”

Martin turned and walked slowly out of the private conference room. He stood in the corridor for a long moment before Andreus walked up to him.

“Are the ships loaded with our dragon brothers Andreus?” Martin asked.

“The last one is leaving the surface now sire.” Andreus spoke. “It will be interesting to see Isheeni and Torma try and make their way through these corridors Milord.”

Martin grinned. “That would be a sight. Admiral Ceneu has told me the new class of *LEONIDAS IIs* is exceptionally larger and there will be plenty of room.” Martin put his arm over Andreus’s shoulder. “What say we drop these Dragon Brothers of ours off on their world, come back to Apo Prime and have a party? I could use a party right about now.”

Andreus laughed. “I like the sound of that sire.”

Martin nodded. “Me too.”