

Discovery

A Spartan's War Chronicles: Book 3

By Michael J. Cropo
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PROLOGUE

MEGEWA III

THE WILDS

TWO MONTHS AFTER THE EVENTS ON ENURRUA

Megewa III, one of the seedier planets in the Wilds.

Like its larger cousins spread across the Wilds, Megewa III was a haven for mercenaries and smugglers like herself. She sat in the corner of the medium sized tavern and watched as each individual or group entered. Her back was against the rear wall of the establishment, and she was near the only other entrance. An entrance that led into a disgusting, garbage filled alley in the rear that usually had a body or two in it at any given time, attesting to the lawlessness that reigned supreme on Megewa III.

The tavern, Star's Ghost, was one of the more popular spots on Megewa III because it actually had decent food and strong ale to drink. The owner of the establishment was a huge Unsaar, and former Bounty Hunter who went by the name Cyngi. His seven and a half foot height and six hundred pounds of muscle was enough to tame most of the trouble makers the moment they came into the place. His gray skin and long fangs took care of what his other physical dimensions did not. He took no lip from anyone, and he offered decent food and drink for a reasonable price as long as you stayed out of trouble. He was known to have squashed several Erogani Assassins who thought they would come in one evening and make trouble. Two of their bodies rotted in the alley behind his establishment for a month after that. She always maintained a good relationship with him, and he sometimes was able to obtain excellent paying jobs for her. She had her own table, for which she paid a tidy sum every season, and was always given first dibs on any new food his cooks were able to throw together. He had a way of obtaining many things that other such establishments couldn't get, because he was discrete and trustworthy and did not make waves.

There were some items he no longer carried, mainly because the new King from the Lycavorian Union had laid waste to Chetak's ridiculous Republic; and due to this he no longer carried any dragon based items on the menu. He knew he was far too close to the Union border, and it was said that the new King had taken quite a liking to the dragons and even flew on one's back. It was said he had incredible Mindvoice powers and could throw glimmering spikes of energy at you. It was said he destroyed Chetak's empire just for taking a simple woman from him that he considered his Queen. She must have been some woman if that rumor was true she thought to herself. Rumors about this new King were filtering all over the Wilds, many of them made up and crazy enough to have been concocted in the mind of a mercenary on mind drugs. He had four Queens, and five concubines, among them the new Hadarian and Elfin Queens; he had glowing yellow eyes and was as big as an Unsaar. There was one rumor that was accurate she knew, and that was the fact that he had shattered the High Coven garrison of Ukwav into oblivion with only a single Fleet Group and primarily twenty thousand Spartans.

The fact alone made him someone she probably did not want to be angry with her. She was no fool, and she had not survived alone for all these years in the Wilds by being stupid. She stood only five foot five and a hundred and twenty pounds, but it was lean muscle she had toned over the years. She was Hadarian by birth, but she had never known her birth parents, both of them killed in a transport accident only a few days after she was born. All she could remember of her early childhood were the Phacca man and women who had raised her until she was seven. They had been butchered in a raid by mercenaries one night and she was taken prisoner and sold into slavery. That had begun her long period of pain.

Pain and despair had become part of her life then, the brutal rapes and beatings suffered at the hands of the first and second of her three owners while a slave, and then the mental and physical anguish her third owner, an Elgebar Priest, had made her suffer. Cyngi had been the one to pull her from that life after she had snapped and killed her third owner in a fit of rage, along with his entire family, including his three children, who took great pleasure in tormenting her whenever they could. She was a hundred and thirty two years old when she found her way onto his ship and stowed away. When she was discovered, she had so impressed him with her abilities to bypass the security measures of his ship that he had kept her on. It wasn't an easy life, as Cyngi was a taskmaster, and there were many a times when she had scrubbed the disgusting decks of his ship with only a brush as punishment for screwing up. She discovered that she had a knack for electronics and building things, and that she was a decent pilot in her own right. He never treated her as anything more than a possession, and he

could get violent at times, but he never beat her unnecessarily and he never attempted to force himself upon her. It would not have been easy regardless, male Unsaurs were known to be extremely well endowed and could only mate with females of their own race because of their size.

She began making a name for herself while under his tutelage in repairing things that couldn't be repaired, and he even taught her to fly and to fight as the years passed. Soon he was sending her on operations all by herself, and using his name as contact, she rapidly gained small fame in the Wilds as a smuggler and pilot who could out fly almost anyone. Pain remained in her life however, for that is what kept her alive and that is what made her know she was alive. She was quick tempered, and had received her fair share of beatings over the years due to an off hand comment she made to a potential customer or such. She was not helpless, and more often than not could get away or win the fight, but she always relished those moments. She had tattooed her body as well, as a reminder that pain was a constant in her life, and the feel of the tattoo needle sometimes drove away the pain in her heart and soul. Cyngi had taught her never to trust anyone but yourself, and never to let anyone close to you. He had taught her always to be prepared and when faced with a situation, always shoot first and ask questions afterwards.

There were half a dozen Lycavorian mercenaries sitting at a single table laughing and slopping food into their mouths. Most of the Lycavorians she had met over the years were no different than these. Mindless idiots who thought they were tough and deadly because they were big and could shift forms to a wolf. Many had either been drummed out of the Union, or could not follow its laws and had left to become mercenaries. Three Kochab Bounty Hunters sat at another table, while an assortment of others occupied the remaining tables and stood at the bar. No one of any importance or threat as far as she was concerned.

That was until they walked in.

The dark haired female who led them was obviously a vampire. That in and of itself was nothing special, many vampires prowled the Wilds seeking their own brand of violence and blood. She had no use for vampires; to her they were nothing more than conquering animals that killed without regard. This dark haired female was different though. She moved with extreme confidence, secure in herself and her abilities.

The two that entered behind her wore long cloaks, which covered their bodies and their heads, and the first of the hairs on the back of her neck began to sound an alarm. The first cloaked figure was female, that much was obvious, as her shapely curves were very evident even under the cloak. She also moved with confidence and was very light footed when she stepped, her cloaked head moving from side to side searching the dim tavern as if she could see everything easily.

The tall figure behind the cloaked female is what drew her attention most of all. The head moved slowly back and forth, similar to the female in front of him, but whoever he was, he was measuring the threats in the room, categorizing them and filing them away. She estimated he was at or just below two meters in height and though the cloak made it hard to tell, probably near a hundred and twenty-five kilograms in weight. This made him very large, and none of it appeared to be fat in any way. His movements were smooth and measured with confidence and grace and power. His persona projected that he had killed many times, could kill again without hesitation and knew more ways to kill you than the next person. This caused the hair on the back of her neck to become instantly alert and on guard.

She watched them moved to the bar, and she watched as the bar maid, one of three female Temkinian bar maids Cyngi employed began speaking to the vampire female. All of the Temkinian species were feline in nature and the woman were unusually seductive and graceful. She watched as Trelola directed them to a table and the vampire female nodded. The three of them moved to the table and settled in, and the second Temkinian female came over instantly to take their order. She saw the second Temkinian female waitress's nose crinkle slightly at something she smelled as she looked at the smaller cloaked figure, and then she looked to the larger male. They must have refused anything to drink for she moved away without taking an order and she moved on and went to the bar and spoke with Trelola in soft whispers.

"Who have you angered within the Lycavorian Union Sangria?" The deep voice spoke from the shadows to her right.

She turned casually, her long black hair tinted red tied into a tight braid, unsurprised to see Cyngi lean slightly back in the chair and the shadows released him. Her sea green eyes fell on the Unsaurs owner. "I haven't been inside the Union in over a decade." She answered. "Why?"

“The two cloaked figures are Spartans.” He said immediately. “Only Spartans move like that. Precise and methodic. And the female vampire’s posture suggests more skill than she outwardly projects.”

“Spartans traveling with a female vampire?” Sangria asked. “Isn’t that a bit odd?”

“They are looking for you.” Cyngi said calmly. “They got your name from Hunal.”

“Hunal? The Kochab Bounty Hunter?”

Cyngi nodded. “Yes... the one who is now dead unsurprisingly. I believe we are looking at his killers.”

Sangria let her eyes drift back to the table with the strangers at it. “A lot of people have tried to take out Hunal over the years.” She said softly.

“Yes... and all of them have failed.” Cyngi spoke again, “Which leads me to believe these three are not someone you want on your six.”

“Why would Spartans be looking for me and traveling with a vampire Cyngi?” Sangria asked.

“I was going to ask you that very question.” Cyngi spoke.

“I would not lie to you Cyngi.” Sangria spoke. “I haven’t been within Union space in over a decade. Not even near the border. I don’t know what they want.”

“Which then suggests they are after something other than your hide Sangria,” Cyngi spoke. “I would advise you leave quietly before...”

The loud male voice cut him off and they both turned to see four of the Lycavorian mercenaries standing around the table with the strangers at it.

“This should be interesting.” Cyngi spoke. “I haven’t seen a good thrashing in almost three years.”

One of the Lycavorians reached up to yank back the hood of the cloaked female, and Sangria’s eyes went a little wider when she saw the rust colored red hair, and the obviously pointed elfin ears. She watched the man reach up then and draw back his hood, exposing a bald ebony head, with neatly trimmed mustache and goatee and an expression of savage anger on his face.

“I do believe the elf female is his mate.” Cyngi spoke in amusement. “And you know how protective Spartans are of their mates. Yes... this should be very good.”

The Lycavorian who was doing the talking was obviously very drunk, and standing behind the vampire female. Another stood behind the elf female, and the remaining two stood behind the black skinned male. The vampire female was trying to be calm and talk with the Lycavorian, but it was obvious the man was either too drunk or too stupid to take the hint and not mess with these individuals.

The Lycavorian behind the elf female then made the last mistake of his life as he reached over and grabbed the elf female’s ample breast. His eyes flew open in surprise when the razor like spearhead of the extending Nehtes burst through his back between his shoulder blades. There were two flashes of silver white light and two Shi Viskas appeared on the arms of the elf female and the hulking male. Sangria watched as they came out of their chairs in smooth elegant motions, exploding into action. The male rammed his Shi Viska into the face of the male on his left, extending his Nehtes in the same motion and stabbing forward into the neck of the Lycavorian on his right. The female elf had bounded up on top of the table, tore her Nehtes free and snapped out a vicious front kick that sent the Lycavorian who had felt her up flying back several meters to smash into an empty table.

The vampire female had leaped straight up into the air, executed a back flip and landed behind the Lycavorian to her rear. Using her vampire speed and strength, she grasped the man’s jaw and the nape of his neck and twisted violently. His neck snapping in the confines of the room was very audible and he slumped to the floor. She stood there calmly, her now cobalt blue eyes scanning the room for any other attacks, while the hulking black Spartan turned in circles, his Shi Viska ready to launch. The elf female had spun on top of the table and her Shi Viska was leveled at the two remaining Lycavorians at the table.

Sangria watched as those cobalt blue eyes settled on her, and the sense of unease increased ten fold as the yellow eyes of the male Spartan also fell on her.

“Cyngi?” She spoke quickly.

“Use the ally entrance Sangria. Quickly.” He replied. “I will delay them. Remember to purchase scent masker at your next stop. They will have your scent now... and they can track you by that alone. Go!”

Sangria wasted no more time and she came out of her chair in a flash moving for the entrance.

This night would begin a ten month flight from those tracking her, a flight that would ultimately change her life and everything about her.

CHAPTER ONE

GELA-MAGO 2

LYCAVORIAN UNION SPACE

THIRTEEN MONTHS AFTER THE EVENTS ON ENURRUA

LEONIDAS II-CLASS STRIKE CRUISER

MJOLNIR'S HAND

MJOLNIR'S HAND

Three thousand four hundred and six meters of armor, speed and awesome destructive power. The largest and most advanced warship ever built by Union shipyards. Newly christened only six months before, after undergoing several structural changes that had come up before its final stage of completion, changes that would accommodate the two dragons that were now the constant companions of King Leonidas and Queen Aricia.

It was the first of nine ships of its class that were now in service; *MJOLNIR'S HAND* being the flagship of both the King and Queen. With another forty-three *LEONIDAS II*-Class Strike Cruisers slated for construction over the next five years, it would gradually become the command and control platform for the entire Union Fleet. It was equipped with one hundred and fourteen of the new MK9 Plasma Beam arrays dotting the superstructure, eight forward TH57 Proton torpedo launchers and six aft launchers, along with thirty-two of the newest Mark 19 Anti-ship missile launchers, sixteen per side. *MJOLNIR'S HAND* had a complement of five squadrons of T9 *TEMPEST*-Class Interceptors and four squadrons of M4 *DEVASTATOR*-Class heavy fighters, along with twenty-four *STRIKER ATs*.

The single new class *STRIKER DT* was normally parked within the bay as well.

Ten meters longer, four meters higher and thirty metric tons heavier than its smaller cousin, this Dragon Transport, as it was now called, was the personal *DT* of King Leonidas, Queen Aricia and the two dragons that had become their shadows. It could carry Torma and Isheeni as well as an additional squad of Spartans, with Commander Endith and Star Commander For'mya flying it. It was equipped with a new design but very powerful High Coven Shroud generator, the advanced Talracian Ore armor, which quite ironically had become known by its fleet name of dragon armor, as well as the usual *STRIKER ATs* weapons complement. Three hundred and fifty of these *STRIKER DTs* had been built to exacting detail to be the transport craft of the members of *Mjolnir's Hand* as they traveled to wherever they were needed. They were flown by a single female elf pilot that personality wise, matched up most to the Spartan and dragon she would fly around.

Commander Komirri had almost lost command of this ship and the fleet group as soon as the *LEONIDAS II*-Class Strike Cruiser had come into operation. It was standard practice that senior officers got command of new class ships, and Komirri was very junior to many. When Martin heard of this, he advanced Komirri one rank to Captain and gave him command of the 1st Spartan Fleet Group, as well as *MJOLNIR'S HAND* for as long as he desired. To avoid any issues, he met personally with each officer senior in rank to Komirri and explained to them each why he had done what he did. Those officers, perhaps miffed at the opportunity to serve the King directly, left their meeting with the King in perhaps a better mood than when they arrived. No one knew what he and they talked about, and no one ever asked.

They did know that the two most senior officers due for the new class ships were named commanders of *THE SPIRIT OF HADARIA* and *NORMYA'S LIGHT*, the personal *LEONIDAS II*-Class Strike Cruisers that belonged to Queen Anja and Queen Dysea respectively. With command of those two ships came command also of the fourteen *NOVA*-Class Attack Cruisers that followed each command ship wherever they went. These two men were now very happy, as both Anja and Dysea were never in spot for too long, always traveling within the Union, and the Commander of the *SPIRIT OF HADARIA* was especially pleased because Anja was almost as well known for getting into situations as Martin and Aricia were. And the fiery Persian red haired Queen could have a very short temper if pushed too far, attested to the fact that during a recent visit on one of the Union's developing worlds, the medical supplies were not reaching the masses of people due to slow government

movement in distributing them. To show her unhappiness Anja had pulled every Hadarian Healer on the planet into one central location and began using her ship's capabilities to shuttle the citizens of the planet directly. This is angered the ruling government and Anja had basically told him to go fuck himself when he demanded she stop undermining his government's authority. A transmission to Martin to complain had resulted in the King telling him the same thing in less than stellar terms.

It had all worked out in the end, and Anja had even praised that leader's government as one who was progressing quickly in helping its citizens, eventually earning an ally when all was said and done. Admiral Riall had told the ship Captains that things would be very interesting with their new King and Queens, and so far no one had been disappointed. *NORMYA'S LIGHT* had remained at Apo Prime to finish a small dragon armor refit while Dysea and Isabella accompanied Deia to Elear. Isabella had so far refused being assigned one of the new ships, but Martin kept one held out just in case. She had Dysea had become nearly inseparable over the course of the last year, exploring the boundaries of the relationship they shared, and rarely being seen apart.

Captain Komirri now watched on the monitor from the bridge as *Spartan 01* offloaded the civilians that they were pulling from the planet below, five other *STRIKERS* doing the same thing, all of them covered in a fine layer of soot. They were returning from a diplomatic mission to Elear, bringing Queen Dysea and Queen Isabella back from the elf home world after taking part in negotiations between the rulers of the Folcani people and Prime Minister Deia over their petition to join the Lycavorian Union. Deia had requested that Dysea and Isabella accompany her for the negotiations because the Folcani people were notoriously anti-violent in nature and Martin and Aricia had rapidly garnered a reputation since Enurrua of not mincing words and telling someone where to go and how to get there in the most straightforward of ways. Dysea had spent several months with Deia and L'tian taking part in Senate meetings and minor negotiations and was becoming quite the politician, much to her surprise. The talks had been completed and Martin and Aricia had returned to Elear to pick up and return the delegations back to Apo Prime.

The distress call from the mining colony on Gala-Mega 2 had come in just as they were about to exit the system. The five kilometer long asteroid had struck the small world on its main continent and instantly created massive earthquakes and seismic instability all across the planet. The five major volcanoes had erupted within hours of each other, spewing deadly suffocating ash into the atmosphere, adding to that already spreading across the planet from the asteroid strike on the main continent. Martin had immediately ordered them to return to the planet to render aide even with the political delegation on his ship. The last nineteen hours had been a whirlwind of activity as *STRIKERS* had been shuttling the members of the colony off the planet continuously, bringing them to *MJOLNIR'S HAND* as well as other ships within the fourteen ship *NOVA*-Class Attack Cruiser element that always escorted the King and Queen wherever they went.

Deia had the Folcani delegation in a small enclave off the main bridge, watching as Komirri directed the rescue operation from *MJOLNIR'S HAND* and explaining as much of what was happening as she could, while the King and his two Queens were on the surface. The political talks had not gone well, primarily because of the Folcani concerns that King Leonidas was a "loose cannon" so to speak. They had no desire to be embroiled in a war with anyone, and it appeared to them, no matter how much Deia and Dysea told them otherwise that Martin would prefer conflict over reason.

Komirri had all communications on the intercom to better be able to direct action and they could hear the voices of Endith and For'mya in the cockpit of *Spartan 01*.

"Four more minutes." For'mya spoke.

"C'mon... c'mon..." Endith muttered. "Marty and Aricia are still down there with Dysea."

"Captain Komirri... if you would please give us a direct clearance once the civilians are out of the landing bay." For'mya's voice announced over the COM.

Komirri turned to his operations officer and nodded. "Done For'mya! How long?"

"Some of this last group was injured." For'mya replied. "Isabella is moving them to the med center as quickly as she can, but we can't rush them. Many of them have flash burns and broken bones from the first eruption."

"I have all the medical teams standing by." Komirri spoke. "Stand by... we're getting the feed back from King Leonidas's COM."

"... *Min*, what is your location?" Martin's deep voice filled the bridge now, the background sound of Torma's wings whipping and the gusts of wind from the advancing dust cloud could be heard easily.

“I am back at the collection point with Iriral *Nauta Melme*.” Dysea’s voice answered. “We have completed our last flyover of the encampment and it is completely empty now. Bella has already returned to *MJOLNIR’S HAND* with the last *STRIKER* and the wounded she was able to collect.”

“Board your *DT* and leave now with whomever you have left there *Melda Min*.” Martin told her. “The cloud is moving faster because of the winds now. Aricia and I are moving back to your location now, and we’re only staying just ahead of it.”

“*Nauta Melme*... For’mya isn’t back yet!” Dysea complained. “You would have no transport waiting for you.”

“For’mya will be here!” Aricia’s voice filled the COM. “You and Iriral are still bonding Dysea, and she is not strong enough yet despite her size, to withstand the winds we are flying in right now.”

There was a pause and Martin’s voice answered. “No Iriral you can’t! You haven’t flown with her long enough!” He said sternly. “Your place is to safeguard Dysea and that is what we want you to do. You will be ready soon enough Iriral... do not rush it! Take those left at the collection point and leave now!”

The senior Folcani Ambassador looked at Deia. “He and his Queens talk to the dragons with their minds?” She asked.

Deia nodded. “They speak on a Mindvoice level most of us can’t hear. Dysea and Iriral have only been together for four months and they are still learning about each other. Anja and her dragon even less time as it was harder to find a compatible dragon for her, and she doesn’t really like to fly that much. King Leonidas and Queen Aricia have been with Torma and Isheeni for over a year now, and their Mindvoice abilities far exceed any known to exist between dragon and Spartan. I doubt that will ever change either, but they want Dysea and her dragon to leave now to be safe.”

“Very well *Nauta Melme*... but Iriral and I will be very upset with you should anything happen.” Dysea spoke.

Martin chuckled. “My hair will be a little wild thanks to Torma’s flying... but we’ll be fine. Now go! Komirri are you monitoring?”

“Yes sire!”

“Did we get the rest of the colony off?” Martin asked.

“We did Milord.”

“What about the wounded that Isheeni and I found on the northern slope.” Aricia’s voice interjected.

“For’mya and Endith are finishing unloading them now Milady.” Komirri spoke. “They will depart in under two minutes. Queen Isabella is already aboard and directing the injured to the Med Bay as we speak.”

“We’ll be back at the collection point by then.” Martin said. “Tell For’mya to hurry... the winds are picking up quickly and the ash cloud will be here in less than fifteen minutes.”

“We will be there for you Martin Leonidas!” For’mya’s voice broke in.

“What? Where?” Martin barked out.

“Sire...” Komirri asked, his eyes narrowing. “What is wrong?”

“Beloved you can’t!” Aricia’s voice snapped. “The winds are too strong!”

“Torma is heavier than Isheeni... and I’m heavier than you!” Martin spoke. “We have to try! It is a child Aricia!”

“Milord... what is going on?” Komirri asked.

“Torma and I have spotted a child!” Martin spoke. “He’s running towards the collection point but the ash is so thick he’ll miss it completely. We’re going down for him! Aricia... you and Isheeni remain above the cloud and radiate so that we have a beacon!”

“Martin...”

“I won’t let him die!” Martin barked. “Torma... go!”

“Komirri... seal the section we are in and vent the bay! We are leaving now!” For’mya snapped from the cockpit of *Spartan 01*. “Endith... power up the drive coils! Tina, on my mark I want you to engage the maneuvering thrusters!”

“For’mya... we will lose five fighters and a *STRIKER* to the vacuum!” Komirri snarled.

“They are not worth the life of our King and Queen Komirri! Endith and I are more than capable of this maneuver and we can recover our ships after!” For’mya barked. “Now do as I ask or I will order you to do it Captain!”

Komirri turned quickly. As Bound Concubine to the King, technically For'mya was outranked by only the King and Queens, and she *could* give him orders, yet she had never exercised this authority, not since Ukwav, and he knew however that she would do it.

“Seal the section they are in and vent the bay now!” He ordered.

“Captain...”

“I want it done now damn it, or she will blast a hole in the landing bay!” Komirri barked. “For'mya we're sealing it now! Good luck!”

“Thank you Komirri.” For'mya answered.

The Folcani representative looked at Deia, her eyes blinking, the inner cover acting like normal eyelids for humanoid species. “He risks his life for a child he does not know?” She spoke. “He is the King.” Her voice held surprise in it.

Deia clenched her jaw. “Yes I know. We have been trying to get that message across to him for over a year now, and he still takes these ridiculous risks. Excuse me for a moment.”

The Folcani turned to the other two members of her party as Deia moved over to stand beside Komirri.

GELA-MAGO 2

Martin leaned over Torma's broad shoulders, attempting to make himself less of a drag against the hundred knot winds that were tearing at them. The dragon armor built into the saddle secured his legs against Torma's sides and anchored him firmly to Torma's back between his shoulders and just in front of where his huge wings connected to his body.

Torma my brother... are you thinking the same thing as I am? Martin spoke to him, the wind tearing at his helmet and threatening to rip it off. Combined with the hundred knot wind they were flying in and Torma's own three hundred knot speed, without their psychic shield, the skin on Martin's body would have been peeling away.

They had been together now for just over a year and for the both of them it was as if they had always been bonded in the way they were. They flew everyday unless they were onboard a ship, sometimes spending hours doing acrobatic maneuvers, testing the limits of what they could do, or just exploring Apo Prime. Their connection and sharing of psychic power had become second nature; the shield surrounding them when they flew and were together was now nearly impregnable. Aricia and Isheeni had become much the same way, and almost always joined them in flying or exploring unless her duties as Queen kept Aricia busy. Torma's telekinetic power had increased to the point now where he could be half a planet away from his bonded brother and still use this gift. It would always be stronger when they were together, but the depth of their connection was such that they could draw on each other from hundreds of kilometers away and not lose any strength.

They were kindred spirits Martin and Torma, brought together by the painful actions of the past but remaining together out of the closeness they now felt. Martin and Aricia had been present when Isheeni had laid her eggs seven months before. They had been present when those three eggs hatched a month later, giving them three very healthy young hatchlings, two females and a male, who because of the psychic nature of the bond their parents shared with Martin and Aricia the hatchlings were instantly aware and able to speak with both of them as well. Torma and Isheeni had crammed into the restructured villa in Sparta when Aricia gave birth to Androcles only five months earlier, watching as the black hair, azure blue eyed healthy baby boy joined them in their world. The four of them had been together, shared Androcles birth, the seven months that Aricia carried him, Isheeni's eggs hatching, all of these moments together, and it had only made their bond grow stronger and clearer by the day.

That perhaps this was not such a good idea Martin? Yes... it was a bad idea on our part. Torma's voice in his head was strained as he fought the buffeting winds he was flying against, as well as attempting to watch where they were going.

On my part. Martin spoke.

We make decisions like this together brother, you know that. Torma replied. *Can you see anything?*

You mean besides all the nubous ash? Not an anse thing!

We must be close! I have dropped nearly two thousand meters and... there! Torma exclaimed.

Martin's wolf eyes looked up and he could just barely make out the flat of the land below them and the rocky terrain. However he was able to now see the child huddling between several huge rocks, sobbing uncontrollably. Martin turned and saw the massive cloud front almost upon them. Once engulfed in that cloud of ash and heat it would be only seconds before both he and Torma would die. They would not be able to fly and sustain their shield against such a force of nature.

Torma... snatch him and turn! The cloud!

I know!

Man it's almost on us!

I know!

Martin felt Torma's muscles clench and unclench as his wings beat furiously fighting the wind and the blinding ash and soot. He tilted his body, reached out with his mind and grabbed the small child in a telekinetic grasp. The child's eyes went wide as he was ripped upward directly at the monstrosity that was Torma's body. Using pinpoint control and skills they had refined over the months, Martin grabbed the child as soon as Torma lifted him clear of his wings and wrapped him within his arms, the psychic shield surrounding him now as well.

Torma... turn and burn brother! Let the wind take us! Straight up! Follow the beacon Aricia and Isheeni have left for us! Go! Martin shouted.

Torma didn't hesitate, turned sharply to fly with the wind and pointed his snout skyward just as the edges of the cloud engulfed them.

Isheeni banked hard her azure eyes scanning the dark ugly cloud below them, her heart pounding madly within her chest, matching the pounding of the heart of her bond mate who sat between her shoulders.

Two pairs of azure blue eyes scanned the cloud beneath them, waiting for the ones that meant more to them than anything in the universe. Like Torma and Martin, Aricia and Isheeni's bond had only grown stronger over the last year, until they could think and fight as one mind. When the first of Isheeni's eggs had hatched, Aricia had been the one to hold the female baby hatchling first. When Androcles had been born, Isheeni had gently touched the small baby with her snout before even Martin got to hold him.

When on Apo Prime, Isheeni took Aricia everywhere, flying high above the hoverlift traffic lanes. They truly enjoyed flying together, and due to their bond, Isheeni was even faster and more maneuverable than she had ever been, the power of their Mindvoice connection making it easier for her to execute aerial maneuvers that she would never have attempted before. Her telepathic abilities had reached almost that of her dragon mate, and now she could extend and direct the stream of fire she spit from her maw with even more control and focus.

Aricia... Isheeni's worried voice reached out as they slowly circled the ugly dark cloud below them.

Aricia placed her hand flat on Isheeni's neck. They are stronger than us Isheeni, more so than even we will admit. We must have faith in their skills.

I know... that does not mean I can not worry. Isheeni answered.

No it does not. Aricia spoke her eyes sweeping the sky beneath her. She saw a flash of some sort behind and to their right and shifted in her saddle, her eyes growing wide. *Behind us to the right! Isheeni look!*

Isheeni banked hard right and her own eyes grew wide as she saw the massive obsidian shape of her mate come tearing from the darkness below her, the shield around him and Martin almost glowing with heat.

Beloved! Aricia screamed out as Isheeni flattened her wings and dove.

The moment Torma cleared the blackness and saw the sun he bellowed out a loud roar of triumph, snapped his wings straight out and rolled over twice in quick succession, while Martin was yelling in joy.

Yeah baby! What a ride! Yeah baby!

As Torma righted them and continued to climb they both saw Isheeni loop around and spin with relief as she took up a spot slightly above him.

Are you hurt? Aricia barked her eyes wide.

A little cooked that's all. Martin replied with a chuckle, feeling her love and concern wash over him.

Man that was fun!

Can we do it again Martin? Torma asked turning his head back with a dragon grin.

Torma that was the most foolish thing you have ever done! Are you totally losing your senses? Isheeni snapped at her mate. *If you ever do that...*

Martin sat back and they both saw the wide eyed young boy sitting in front of Martin and holding a death grip on the smaller spikes in Torma's shoulders. Aricia gasped.

You saved him! She spoke. *Oh Beloved...*

He was hiding in some rocks... but we got him. Martin said looking across the expanse of air at Aricia as she and Isheeni flew beside them. *We're ok Little Wolf.*

Aricia met his eyes and felt his love fill her. He rarely called her that anymore, after what they had been through and experienced together in the last year, it seemed silly. She was not a little girl anymore, but a beautiful woman who filled his very soul, and the mother to his young son, and now when he did use that name for her they were usually alone and it was spoken with a deep abiding love and feeling and it was his way to tell her she was always first to him. Aricia smiled brightly and nodded. *Then let us meet with For'mya and get off this planet before the ash rises up here. It will block out everything very soon.* She reached up and touched the COM on her armor.

"For'mya?"

"We have your position!" For'mya's voice answered immediately. "We'll be to you in under a minute! Did you..."

"We got him For'mya!" Martin spoke now. "We'll have to execute a mid air landing. I don't see anything within range where you can set down safely."

"Understood!" For'mya said. "Can you see us? Dropping from above on your nine."

Aricia turned and saw the small speck coming down fast. "We have you!"

"Initiating Mid Air landing sequence! We'll hold here!" For'mya spoke. "Ramp coming open!"

Beauty before age Aricia my love. Martin spoke smiling at her.

You are so in trouble when we get back to MJOLNIR'S HAND. Aricia stated before nudging Isheeni with her knee towards the *STRIKER DT*.

You as well husband. Isheeni echoed. *You fool.*

Torma turned to look at Martin as he turned to follow. [Mindvoice Shielded] *I thought we just saved a young child's life Martin. Why are they angry at us?*

Martin shrugged. [Mindvoice Shielded] *I don't try to understand them Torma. Usually no matter what we do it isn't right.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *You have that trouble too sire, with Aricia Blue Eyes?*

Martin grinned. [Mindvoice Shielded] *All the time.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *What do you do?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Agree with whatever they say. It's safer.*

Torma laughed and turned his head as he saw Isheeni flare her wings and touch down on the wide open rear ramp of the *STRIKER DT*. The ramp had been lowered, and the top three meters of the *DT* had folded back giving them plenty of room for a flared stop landing. It had taken a number of times for them to perfect this maneuver, but both of them had it down now, as did many of Mjolnir's Hand, and they had done it dozens of times before.

Torma lined up with the *DT's* ramp and headed in.

Deia released the breath she had been holding on the bridge and reached out to squeeze Komirri's thick arm. He nodded and grinned at her.

"Prime Minister Deia."

Deia turned to see the Folcani Ambassador standing behind her with the other two members of her delegation. "I must apologize for this Ambassador." Deia began. "We don't..."

"Prime Minister... I believe we would like to rethink our decision and perhaps meet with you and Queen Dysea again when we reach Apo Prime." The Folcani Ambassador spoke. "Can that be arranged?"

Deia looked taken aback but quickly nodded. "Of course Ambassador."

"Would it... would it be possible to meet King Leonidas in person?" The Ambassador asked.

Deia looked surprised. "I thought... I thought you said you did not want to meet with him."

"I did." She replied. "Perhaps I acted too rashly on that. I was acting only on what I had heard in regards to him and Queen Aricia. After what we just witnessed, I believe we may have been mistaken."

Deia smiled. "I'd be happy to introduce you Ambassador. I can arrange something for when we return to Apo Prime if you like. The day after tomorrow perhaps."

"That would be excellent."

RESORT MOON NONUS IV THE WILDS

Danny opened his eyes slowly, feeling the weight on both Anuk and Nayeca against his body. The loose sheet covered all of them from the waist down, Anuk's head resting on his shoulder, her face turned towards his, her firm breasts pressed tightly to his rib cage. Nayeca's head rested on his abdomen, her shimmering white hair splayed across his lower body, her left arm draped across Anuk's tanned satiny thigh. He looked around the quarters they occupied sniffing the air gently. Anuk's cinnamon scent and Nayeca's sweet apple scent were already burned into his brain, and he dismissed them quickly as he smelled the coffee. He looked down briefly at Anuk's sleeping face, and smiled to himself when he thought of what he had in his life now.

After so many years of not knowing truly who or what he was, and having Marty as the only true anchor to hold onto, what he had now was paradise. He was a werewolf, descended from Spartan heritage. The man he considered to be his one true brother was a werewolf and a King, a King of not only the same species as Danny, but of hundreds of other alien races that two years ago Dan had never imagine could exist. Of course, two years ago Danny would never have believed he'd have two of the finest female specimens he'd ever seen sharing his bed and his life so completely. Or the fact that both of them would be elf females that at one point he thought only existed in fairytales and myths. They looked no different physically than any other woman with the exception of the four inch long pointed ears they both had. Ears that were a delicately curved and major erogenous zone for them. He could turn both of them to putty just by nuzzling and teasing their ears.

He had discovered Anuk first, rescued her from a life of slavery and rape, and fallen in love with her the moment he'd smelled her scent. In order to save her life he had bitten her, turning her into a werewolf as well. It had been the only way to keep the poison racing through her body at the time, from taking her out of his life so soon after discovering her. He had agonized over the decision briefly until Marty had told him it was the only way to save her life. She hadn't hated him after the fact, quite the opposite in fact, realizing that she herself was in love with the hulking ebony giant of a man who had cared for her so tenderly. Anuk had been at his side ever since. They were mates in the Lycavorian culture, and husband and wife in elfin culture, Danny marrying her in a very traditional elfin wedding ceremony and nothing would ever change that now.

When Nayeca had come into their lives it had been mainly Anuk she was interested in to start with, and she had brought out a part of his gorgeous wife and mate that Anuk had not known she had within her. The Drow assassin was perhaps one of the most skilled warriors Danny had ever fought beside, and she was Mistress to Anuk. She was the dominant female in their relationship, with Anuk happily taking the role as submissive slave. Danny hadn't liked that idea at first; that his Anuk was considered a slave by another, but when he saw the depth of their relationship he realized the words "slave" and "Mistress" were more terms of affection that Anuk and Nayeca used for each other than anything else. They had no real meaning in the true definitions of the words to Anuk and Nayeca, as they loved each other almost as deeply as they loved him. They had often said in playful terms that he was their master, the one who owned their hearts, yet Danny knew it was they who owned his.

He also knew without question that the three of them were a fighting team unrivaled. After over fourteen months fighting together, they could predict what the other would do in almost any situation, and that sixth sense made them exceedingly lethal. All of them could Mindvoice with each other, Anja having established a connection between Anuk and Nayeca initially while they were on earth and they had gradually built it between the three of them. Nayeca had never asked for Danny to change her as he had Anuk, and he had never offered. Perhaps in the future it would be something to consider, but all three of them were very happy in the way things were now.

They were together, meeting new species and new challenges with two others who had become their closest friends. And they had been on the trail of one young Hadarian woman for the last ten months as she led

them across the Wilds from place to place. Danny had to admit, she was good at what she did, and man she could fly a ship. She always seemed to be one step, ahead of them, sometimes two steps, but with Yuriko's contacts and Danny and Anuk's ability to track scents while on the ground, they always seemed to catch up with her. The last clue had brought them here to this resort planet, and as Danny slowly extracted himself from between his two mates, he wanted to get some coffee in him and see what they were up against.

He turned and watched as Anuk and Nayeca, now deprived of the warmth of his body between them, moved easily into each other's arms, Nayeca pressing her head tightly to Anuk's breasts as her lightly tanned arms circled Nayeca's coco colored skin and pulled her close.

Danny grinned and got up, throwing on a pair of black fatigue pants and his combat boots before heading out of their quarters. They had started this mission in what was called a High Coven Runner, basically a long range transport. It was readily available for purchase in any of a thousand places within the Wilds, only he doubted those ships were as heavily modified as theirs was. Their HCR had more powerful sub light engines and the LSD drive from an *AUTUMN MOON* frigate, giving the ship five times the normal Runner speed. The computers and control surfaces had been practically ripped out and replaced with advanced Union military equipment, though it still kept its same weapons. Their shields were twice the normal shields found on this class ship and they were now equipped with the advanced dragon armor from their last stop in Union space. Yuriko was also able to change their transponder code to any one of hundreds in their data banks now. The interior had been changed to accommodate two medium sized staterooms and four smaller single sets of quarters, a cargo hold directly off the engine room and a main lounge area directly in the center of the ship.

Danny made his way out of the first of the medium staterooms and turned towards the main lounge area, heading down the short corridor and allowing his nose to guide him to where the coffee was. He saw Yuriko sitting in one of the comfortable high backed chairs around the small map chart. She had changed quite a bit in the last year, loosening up and becoming very open with all of them. Modesty was not one of her strong points, and she wore a thin shirt that barely fell to the tops of her thighs and did nothing to hide her full breasts. Anuk and Nayeca had also lost whatever modesty they may have had beginning this mission. They had all seen each other in every way at some point in the last year together, and they all knew where the line was drawn and to attempt to hide and be modest on so small a ship was a losing battle.

Dan went to the dispenser and grabbed a mug of the strong but excellent coffee that Yuriko always made. He carried it over to the map chart and let his eyes wander over their position and status before settling into the second of the three chairs.

"She still there?" He asked.

Yuriko nodded as she sipped her tea. "Filrian checked in an hour ago. I believe she thinks she has lost us."

Dan chuckled. "Well in the ten months we've been chasing her, she's done a damn fine job of being one or two steps ahead of us."

Yuriko nodded. "Yes she has." She agreed. "However she is running out of places to go. She's been here for three weeks now, which tells me she believes she has lost us. She has never seen Filrian... and he does a masterful job of blending in. She has never seen Nayeca, which is another advantage in our favor this time. And she has almost used up her credit chip here."

"Nayeca is probably the only Drow elf in the Wilds. We don't risk her unless we need to. She won't be easily forgotten." Dan said.

Yuriko nodded. "I agree." She said. "This Sangria... has developed quite a reputation in the Wilds as a smuggler and pilot. I was able to get some information on her from the Union data banks on our last visit two weeks ago. I've put together a profile of sorts." Yuriko handed him the data pad. "We know she is Hadarian, which in and of itself is quite rare. They are not known to be proficient in this type of lifestyle. She is very proficient. Most of the information is less than two hundred years old, so we can probably assume she was a slave of some sort for that time period before she first became known. That is why no records exist."

Dan looked at the data pad. "I can't get over how familiar she looks, but I can't place her." He spoke. "How old is she anyway?" Dan asked.

"Filrian says she is between four hundred and fifty and five hundred and fifty years old." Yuriko replied. "He thinks closer to five hundred though."

"Man... she doesn't look a day over twenty-four or twenty-five." Dan spoke with a smile.

“It is difficult to adjust to the ages I know.” Yuriko said with a smile of her own. “You should have seen Prime Minister Deia look at us when I called Martin father in front of her for the first time.”

Dan laughed. “Well... you have to admit... he doesn’t look much older than you.”

“Looks wise I know... but he is over three thousand years old. Lisisa will not look much younger than him, but she is still his daughter by blood.” Yuriko spoke. “It is the way of things now Daniel. At least for our two species and half a dozen more like the Hadarians.”

“Why doesn’t Filrian have to go back to Hadaria like the rest?” Dan asked. “Even Anja has to return every six months for the ceremony thingie.”

“Lady Anja returns because it is her choice. Seanna has told her she can go as long as two years without returning due to her ability to pull her healing craft from the life around her as she does.” Yuriko answered. “Filrian uses very minute portions of his powers, and for the most part sticks with normal medicines and such. He has gone back on several occasions, but he is not really welcome there because of me.”

“Because you are a vampire?” Dan asked.

Yuriko nodded. “He refuses to leave me and let me travel alone. Perhaps he feels he owes a debt he can not repay because I rescued him. I do not tell him often enough, but I value his company and his friendship.”

Dan leaned forward. “Yuriko are we sure she knows where Lisisa is?”

“The Kochab Bounty Hunter Hunal is the one who sold Lisisa last. His own records indicate that. And this Sangria is the one he contracted with to deliver her to the buyer.” Yuriko spoke. “She knows where the buyer is.”

“Man I sure hope so. If we’ve chased her all this way, and for this long and she doesn’t know, I’ll kill her myself.” Dan said sipping his coffee.

They looked up when Anuk and Nayeca came out of the corridor from the quarter’s area dressed only in Danny’s spare shirts and both of them yawning. Anuk went immediately to the dispenser and pulled two mugs of coffee while Nayeca leaned over close to Danny and nuzzled his neck. “Good morning.” She spoke sleepily.

“Sleep well?” Dan asked.

You are evil Daniel Simpson. Nayeca told him as she settled into the chair. *But I do so love it when you are evil.*

Anuk walked up to the table, leaned over and kissed Danny softly, then moved to hand one of the mugs to Nayeca. *He enjoys it when he makes love to us until we can no longer move Mistress.* Anuk spoke as she settled into the chair next to her.

Danny grinned. *It is very fun.*

Nayeca sipped the coffee gratefully and then placed her head on Anuk’s shoulder. *Perhaps I will have to think about having you change me so that I last at least as long as my slave.*

Anuk laughed softly and kissed her cheek. *I like you just the way you are Mistress.* She spoke. *Of course... if Daniel changed you, that would extend our times together as well, which I wouldn’t mind in the least.*

Dan smiled and turned back to Yuriko. “We were discussing our fugitive Hadarian.” He spoke for their benefit. “Yuriko thinks we may have got lucky finding her here, as it appears she was going to pull up roots again. Her credits are almost gone.”

Nayeca perked up at this information. “Really?”

Yuriko nodded. “I believe whatever credits she has had set aside secretly, she is almost out of. This is the third credit chip she has used in six months... and it is almost gone.”

“Do we take her then?” Anuk asked.

“Filrian is watching her now. I believe our best opportunity to conduct an operation like this would be this evening. We...” Yuriko turned to the console when the soft beeping started. She adjusted the star map and they saw a ship approaching on the chart.

Danny had seen enough of them to know what he was looking at. “Yuriko...”

“Yes... it is a High Coven ship. A long range transport similar to our Runner, but much more advanced and quite newer.” She answered quickly. “The sensors are always tuned to detect Coven ships and warn us.”

“That isn’t a good thing.” Dan spoke.

“We have always known that Yuri would be looking for Lisisa too.” Yuriko spoke though her own heart was beginning to beat a little faster. “Then again, Nonus IV is a resort world that is much closer to the Coven border than it is the Union border. It may very well be coincidence.”

“I don’t believe in coincidences. There’s no such thing.” Dan spoke shaking his head.

Yuriko nodded. “Yes... I tend to agree. Especially since Coven military ships rarely enter the Wilds unless needed. This ship may not be a frigate or a cruiser but it still bears the standard of the High Coven Fleet.”

“How many can that ship hold Yuriko?” Anuk asked her cerulean blue eyes looking at the holographic image of the star map and the image of the High Coven ship as it drew closer to Nonus IV.

Yuriko shook her head. “Not a large complement.” She answered. “No more than twenty crew members and perhaps ten passengers.”

“The better question is why they are here?” Dan asked.

Yuriko nodded. “An opening for our size ship came available this morning and I reserved it. I believe its time we finally took this Sangria into our custody. I grow tired of chasing her across the stars. If we lose her now, she may go so far underground we will not discover her for years. We might actually be doing her a favor if those are Covens agents. They will simply interrogate her for what she knows, probably rape and brutalize her in the process and then kill her.”

Dan nodded. “They are such wonderful people aren’t they?” He spoke getting to his feet. “Let’s do this.” He said.

USU’OZEIB 7

VAMPIRE HIGH COVEN HOMEWORLD

COMMAND AND POLITICAL HEADQUARTERS OF THE VHC

VHC FLEET TRAINING ACADEMY

POPULATION: FOUR HUNDRED THIRTY BILLION

CAPITAL CITY: DWURI

Usu’Ozeib 7.

The home planet of the Vampire High Coven.

Well protected and fortified deep inside High Coven territory, and the only planet in the known universe that had never been attacked directly by an enemy force. It was a dark planet when compared to Apo Prime, over half its thirty hour day spent in darkness, but it suited the majority of the population of vampires because while they were purebloods, fully half of the population was not old enough to stand the sunlight for more than a few hours at a time.

Sunlight was the least of Yuri’s concerns at the moment; her only worry was reaching for the pinnacle of her rapidly building climax as Robert’s thick, ten inch cock pounded into her from behind with long strokes and incredible power. She hadn’t seen him for over a week until last night, as he had been away from Usu’Ozeib 7 with Cha’talla, her father’s Immortal Captain of the Guard, but he had obviously missed her as much as she had missed him for he had been making her see stars for hours. The sheets of his bed were soaked in sweat and their combined juices, but he had not stopped his ministrations of her body, taking her in every way he knew she enjoyed the most.

It was a misconception among the many thousands of races throughout the universe that vampires did not love. That they had no feeling and warmth within their bodies. Yes they were a brutal conquering race, and that was what they were intended for, Yuri believed that deeply. They were the perfect beings, meant to dominate and control all around them. They killed without mercy or hesitation, something Yuri had done often enough in her nearly four thousand years of life, but they were not mindless machines. Her father was the High Lord of the Vampire Coven, the oldest and strongest of all their people, and also the most vicious and cruel. He tolerated no failure, no insubordination, and Yuri had seen him kill with barely a thought over something so minor as to not even register in the grander scheme of things. Yuri herself had killed in such a manner, without the slightest hesitation, and killed with her own hands, unlike her now dead brother Xerxes.

It was one of the reasons she was the Vampire High Guard Commander.

Thousands of warships and millions of soldiers would live, die and act on her orders. She had been away from her home here for two long, and she had spent the majority of the year they had been back learning about the advancements her people had accomplished while she had been on Earth, and in the bed of the man now above her and making her feel so utterly wonderful.

Earth.

The very mention of the planet caused anger to flare inside her and she gripped the bed sheets tighter, slamming her hips back against Robert's pile driving cock, shivers of agonizing pleasure rippling through her. The only good thing to have come from her stay on that infernal planet was the man above her, driving her to heights of pleasure she had not known could exist until he had come into her life. All she had built on Earth had been tossed away when the descendant of Leonidas discovered who he truly was and basically kicked the shit out of her. She now regretted not having ripped his throat from him when she had the chance. Almost two years she had played the part of his love interest, allowing him to fuck her as often as he wanted, having to endure his foul touch upon her royal vampire body. He may have been the largest cock she had ever had inside her, but Robert's cock was the one that made her groan for more.

They had lost Earth, Leonidas killing Xerxes in a particularly savage way, which didn't surprise her since they were after all only animals. She had hoped that fool Chetak and his son would be able to accomplish something against him, yet even with her father's direct help, all they had succeeded in doing is making him angry, and making him stronger in the end. Not much was known of the dragons that now called the Union home, but two now went wherever Leonidas and his slut whore of a young Queen went, and this made them even more dangerous. It had angered her father that he could not find a way to gain control of the dragons on Chetak's world, as they would have made a fine addition to the High Coven's arsenal of war, and having a dragon bonded to her father as one was now bonded to Leonidas, that would have made him even more feared than he was now. Information was now very hard to come by from within the Union as Prime Minister Deia had purged many of their best vampire agents from within their ranks, to include some of their best clone spies. Information on this dragon unit that Leonidas had created was even more difficult to get, as the members were very secretive and combined with their dragon bond mates, more than a match for any of the lesser Mindvoice Mages within the vampire ranks. Her father was not about to risk one of the stronger, more powerful mages against these dragon pairs until they learned more.

The moment she had turned the genome turned vampire soldier, Yuri had known they would be together for all time. That first night he had fucked her senseless to the point that she had almost forgotten to sink her fangs into him and drain him of his blood. As she thought about it afterwards, sitting on that small bed in her cell watching as he was reborn, part of her wanted to say that he had somehow sensed what she was, and that he welcomed the change she brought about in him. Their relationship had been rocky at first, as he was very possessive of her, and it had taken her many years to see that she was just as possessive of him. Yuri was a pureblood vampire, one of the most powerful outside of her father, and this fact coupled with what Robert was before she turned him made him an extremely powerful vampire now as well. He was not physically imposing like Leonidas, but he was lethal in combat, very strong and exceptionally intelligent, and he was cruelly methodic in his manner. A trait that surprisingly endeared him to her father. It was also the reason that her father allowed them to be together as they were. Officially Yuri was married to the pure blood son of her father's oldest and most strident supporter, but after having received Cha'talla's report on Robert's actions on earth and his own observations of him during his first month here, her father had named him her official consort. Though she attended official functions and events with her pure blood husband, who she hated, it was well known that she spent more time with her consort. Her father's only condition was that she must bear her husband a pureblood child to seal that bond of support. Yuri was still trying to find a way around that, but her thoughts became jumbled when Robert's fingers dug painfully into her hips and he sped up his thrusting.

Yuri groaned as the fires within her began to rapidly burn out of control. She felt his large balls slap against her firm ass cheeks over and over now, and a smile split her lips as she knew he was going to fill her with his come. Yuri felt him reach forward, his large hands filling with her firm breasts and he pulled her up towards him. She practically screamed out her pleasure as his thick cock hit the most sensitive g-spot within her tight pussy and her eyes opened wide, now fully change to vampire cobalt blue. She felt his cock swell inside her, and just as his come began erupting into her depths, his long fangs pierced her neck and he fed on her blood. Yuri reached back and grabbed his head, holding his lips and fangs tightly in place as rapture ripped

through her from his feeding and her own orgasm. She could feel his hot come filling her deeply, and he pushed her forward onto the bed, his weight collapsing on top of her as he fed on her warm blood and she shivered in orgasmic delight.

Yuri's eyes closed lazily as he withdrew his fangs slowly, drawing out the pleasure and the pain for as long as he could, and then he tenderly licked the two puncture wounds and covered them with a soft kiss as the last of his come leaked into her clenching pussy. These were the moments she craved most of all. He knew just when to be tender and when not to be. They hadn't seen each other in just over a week and it was not a moment for fast and furious sex. He took his time spreading kisses across her shoulders and the back of her neck, holding himself tightly within her until she had absorbed all he had. When she felt him roll to the side of her on the bed and she immediately turned and dropped her head to his softening cock, easily wrapping his juice coated cock within the warmth of her lips and taking him as deep as she could, which after a year of practice was all of him. She heard him gasp and his hands filled with her silky black hair as she licked and nibbled, thoroughly cleaning him with her tongue and getting every last drop of his come and her own off his length. This was something she had never done before Robert had walked into her life, pleasing a man with her mouth, but she enjoyed it now almost as much as he did. She lavished his lower abdomen with long licks as she made her way back up his rippled body and spread herself out on top of him.

"You missed me I take it." She spoke finally as she stared into his handsome face.

Moran smiled. "You have no idea."

"You should go away more often if this is what I have to look forward to when you return." Yuri said with a grin.

Moran chuckled and pushed himself up, sliding back on the bed until his back was against the wall. As Yuri's consort, his quarters were large and comfortable, and he had done some decorating, but left most of it up to her. She spent more time here than at her own home anyway.

"Cha'talla thought it would be a good experience for me to see how the real fleet worked." Moran spoke. "We've been here now over a year and up until last week I have done nothing but go to school and retrain myself."

"And done quite well for yourself based on what my father's advisors have told him." Yuri said as she leaned over to the bedside table and poured two glasses of blood for them. She sat up then, handing the glasses to him while she reached for his shirt and pulled it on, not bothering to button it closed. He gave one of the glasses back and they both sipped the warm blood.

"He's keeping tabs on me huh?" Moran said finally.

Yuri looked at him. "Not for any nefarious purposes Robert." She spoke quickly. "My father is not the type to sneak around in that regard. If he thought you were not loyal to me, or inferior in some way, you would already be dead."

Moran chuckled. "Well that's nice to know."

Yuri grabbed the fingers on his hand and shook her head as she squeezed his hand tightly. "Don't misunderstand my words Robert." She said quickly. "I would not let that happen... you know that. He watches you because no matter what you do, you continue to impress him. You continue to impress me, and in the process make me so very happy I have fallen in love with you."

Moran smiled. "Well... I ain't unhappy about that arrangement either." He said. "Though I don't like having to share you with pretty boy."

Yuri leaned forward and kissed him. "It is only twice a month Robert and other than that he knows where his place is, and it isn't in my bed."

"That's twice a month I don't get you." Moran spoke.

"Robert... you told me you would..."

"I know what I told you Yuri." He said quickly. "That doesn't mean I have to like it. I want to slit his throat every time I see him touch you in public. He treats you like a trophy and it drives me nuts."

Yuri smiled. "I like it when you are possessive of me Robert." She said.

"Well it ain't gonna change, so get used to it." Moran spoke. "Your father is going to expect you to have a child by him soon Yuri."

"The only child that I will carry inside me is yours Robert." She spoke softly. "Do not question that. I am working on the details... but I have to be careful. My father must not find out about that."

“I know.” Moran said softly. “Your father made you carry Leonidas’s child... I’m just hoping he doesn’t pay as much attention when you get pregnant again.”

“My father and I agreed on that course of action. He allowed me to make the decision on that.” Yuri told him. “The chance to study a child with the blood of both vampire and Lycavorian was too good an opportunity to pass up and we both knew it. Especially considering it should never have happened in the first place. Apparently the pureness of our blood was able to get past the obvious differences.”

“Is that why you got people out looking for her now?” He asked.

Yuri nodded. “If not for that vermin child Yuriko, the abomination that I carried would still be a lab experiment. We could have made clones with the strengths of both our species, and none our weaknesses. The natural brute strength and cunning of an animal combined with the skill and intelligence of a vampire? That would be incredible.”

“Can you still get the information from her now?” Moran asked.

“Oh yes... but we need to find her first.” Yuri replied leaning up against him as his arm pulled her close. “The Hadarian witch that delivered her to the last of her known owners has been found. She has been running all over the Wilds for the past ten months. Apparently there are some individuals after her.”

“Leonidas’s men?” Moran asked.

Yuri nodded. “More than likely. I dispatched some troops to detain and interrogate her. When they have the information they will kill her.”

“How did that happen anyway? How did she get away from you?”

“Yuriko was still young when she took her. She was not wise to the way of things, and she smuggled both of them onto the first transport leaving Earth. You know how the Wilds are, Cha’talla has told you. The moment she set foot on that first planet they both became targets. Yuriko escaped. Lisisa did not. Whoever has her knows what she is and is keeping it very quiet for fear of us discovering them. There have been a few sightings of her over the years, and I understand she has grown into an exceptionally beautiful young woman. Unfortunately for her, once she is back in our control, she will not live for very long.”

“When was the last sighting?” Moran asked.

“Two decades ago.” Yuri answered immediately.

“Jesus Yuri... do we even know if she is still alive?” Moran asked her.

“We have spies everywhere within the Wilds.” Yuri answered. “If she was to turn up dead somewhere, it would have gotten back to us by now. She was purchased as a pleasure slave at an auction twenty years ago and this Hadarian smuggler is the one who delivered her to the new owner.”

“You sent skilled troops I hope.” Moran said.

Yuri nodded. “They are from our *Venorik Elghinn* Division.” Yuri answered. (Silent Death) “I sent eight of them. No Hadarian smuggler is a match for even one of them, let alone eight. They will get the information.” She looked at him. “Where did you go? I inquired of Fleet Operations, but they only told me you headed into Sector Nine.”

“A place called Imigoso.” Moran replied seeing Yuri’s eyes go a little wider. “You know it?”

“I know of it yes.” She replied now very interested. “You went there with Cha’talla?”

Moran nodded. “Yeah... nice place if you don’t mind the three meter long *dosib* bugs that can carry you away and eat you.” (Fucking)

“What... what did you do?” Yuri asked tentatively.

Moran shrugged. “Nothing really... went to a few ceremonies, went on a hunt. We ran some fleet exercises. There are a lot of Cha’talla’s people there.”

Yuri nodded slowly. “Yes there are.”

“Why are you looking at me like that?” He asked.

“Robert... Imigoso is a sacred planet to Cha’talla’s people. Only my father has ever been invited there.” Yuri spoke.

“Really? Cha’talla didn’t say anything to me about that.” Moran said.

Yuri shook her head. “And he won’t. Don’t tell him I told you either.” She said quickly. “It is an honor that he took you there, and it may be something we can use for our future.”

Moran nodded slowly. “Ok.” He set the glass of blood down on the table. “Can you stay the rest of the night? I haven’t tasted you in over a week.”

Yuri smiled. "I will if you wish me too. And you know how much I enjoy when you do that." She said. "Besides... I haven't slept in your arms for a week... and I have missed that feeling."

Moran took her glass from her hand and set that on the table as well. "Well I wish it." He said, enveloping her in his arms and pulling her tightly to him. "There's a fleet training exercise that starts tomorrow, and we might not get the chance again for a few days."

Yuri settled to the bed pressed tightly against him, her mind carefully plotting the path of the future she intended. If she lived long enough to see it fulfilled was another story altogether.

EARTH EDEN CITY

Tarifa stood on the balcony of hers and Aihola's home on the outskirts of Eden City. It was a full moon tonight, and it cast a beautiful glow over the now practically rebuilt city that was capital of Earth. She sipped the mug of tea as she tucked her raven black hair behind one four inch long elfin ear. An entire year had gone by now, and Eden City had grown even larger than before, the engineers and builders working every day to rebuild not only Eden City, but to modernize many of the settlements that surrounded the capital. Tarifa smiled as she realized she could no longer call them settlements. Many of them were almost as large as Eden City had become.

After the events of a year ago, she and Aihola had done what Martin had asked them to do. They had returned here to Earth, said their final goodbyes to the man they both had loved after learning that he truly had been the hero he died as, and they had gone on.

They threw themselves into the rebuilding of Earth, establishing new trade agreements and even the more mundane aspects of being the leaders of an entire planet. Along with Selene they entertained visiting alien species, some of them so bizarre that they could not help but laugh and joke when they were alone together. They were the recognized leaders of the newest member of the United Lycavorian Union of Planets, and that alone brought a small amount of fame. The events of a year ago brought Tarifa and Aihola even more fame, and the fact that all three of them had been hand picked by the King to lead Earth afforded them an extra amount of political clout that they were using wisely.

The King of the Lycavorian Union.

At one point in her life they had been lovers, she and Martin, and now they were as close as any blood brother or sister could be even though they were from two very different species. Tarifa, Aihola and Selene had been in Sparta when Martin's son was born, and they had celebrated with the entire city of Sparta for three days and three nights. He trusted them completely and without question. He did not second guess what they did, or how they ruled, even though Earth was more his planet than theirs. After hundreds of years of vampire High Coven rule, Earth was now free, and no one wanted for anything. Many of the old High Coven cities were now teeming centers of commerce and peace. Humans and elves walked the streets freely, and while many were still trying to come to grips with being together, there had not been a hate related incident in over six months, and that all by itself told Tarifa things were changing.

Tarifa's mother Palina and Dysea's mother Normya were in charge of the education system for all children on the planet, and no part of human or elf history was left out. They had few laws... but they were strictly enforced and acted upon equally among all races. Earth was now a very heavily fortified world as well, with two entire Lycavorian Union Fleet Groups that called it home, a teeming base on the moon under the command of Admiral Wallace, and huge shipyards in orbit. The most advanced defensive platforms built now surrounded their planet, protecting her along with the roughly four hundred ships. Many of the people who had begun the journey with Martin when they first returned to Earth remained and they were building lives together. Leland and his human wife Cathy were working on their second child already, many of Aihola's people having taken wives and husbands.

Tarifa felt warmth course through her when she thought of her Drow Mistress and lover. They had been together for two full years now, and Tarifa knew without question they would be together always. They were so synonymous with each other, that most people knew whatever answer they got from one, the other would parrot almost certainly. They had been through so much together and only come out stronger for it in every way. They

had thrown themselves into their work and into each other upon their return a year ago, building the foundation and strength of their relationship more than even they had thought was possible. They could speak with each other using what Martin and the others referred to as Mindvoicing, giving them an advantage many did not know they possessed. They could make love to each other for hours due to Tarifa's Lycavorian werewolf genes and Aihola's hybrid vampire/wolf genes, and this they did on many occasions. They were not shy about their love for each other and it was not uncommon to see them walking the streets or in the parks holding hands or sharing loving kisses. They never went anywhere without a detachment of Dragoon and Spartan guards, but they had grown accustomed to this now, and did not think anything of it.

Tarifa and Aihola both knew that they only missed one thing in their lives, and it was something neither of them had expected to feel so strongly or so deeply. They had spent many nights in the arms of Selene and Lynwe, but no matter how large her Drow cock was, or how well she made love to them with it, neither of them could shake what began in Tarifa's blood and now raced through both of them unchecked.

Isra.

The violet eyed Lycavorian that had protected Tarifa, guarded her, and then claimed her as his mate in order to save her. The man who Tarifa had willingly surrendered all she was too, and the man who had loved her more intensely than Dekton ever had. Dekton had changed her completely with his bite, but it was Isra who burned in Tarifa's wolf blood now. It had taken her many months to come to terms with that, feeling she betrayed Dekton in some way by her desire to be wrapped within Isra's aura once more. It wasn't until after her time in Sparta, when Helen had been there as well for the birth of Androcles that Tarifa truly came to understand why she felt like she did. And it was Helen who told her it was the natural order of life among Lycavorians and Spartans. It was not something she should feel bad for, or feel like she betrayed Dekton in some manner. Because of what they now knew happened to Dekton, it was natural for Isra's pure Lycavorian wolf blood to burn within her so.

It was also Helen who had told her how Isra was, and what he was doing. He was a member of *Mjolnir's Hand* now Tarifa knew. The unit of Spartans and dragons that had been formed by Martin. He was also a leader of that unit, his bond with Aelnala his dragon among the strongest there was. He had become a full Spartan many months ago, earning his Shi Viska. Tarifa had asked Helen to give him her best and to have him contact her, but she and Aihola had heard nothing from him in the five months since Helen had left.

Due to their deep Mindvoice and emotional connection, Aihola had come to see and feel exactly what Tarifa did for Isra, even though she had never shared his bed. Their bond did not allow them to hold back from each other, and everything Tarifa felt for him Aihola felt for him now. They had accepted their bond a long time ago, and the more Tarifa's thoughts fell on Isra, the more Aihola fell in love with him as well. They checked their transmissions every day, hoping to hear from him, something from him to let them know they were still in his thoughts. No matter what she did, Tarifa could not stop thinking about him. Had he found a new mate, had he forgotten her and Aihola? She had contacted Admiral Riall on two different occasions attempting to get information about him, but his response was the same both times. He was not privy to what *Mjolnir's Hand* did or where they went, only that some of them were on Apo Prime, and the rest were scattered throughout the Union. The only thing that kept coming into her head was Martin's words to them a year ago.

If you do nothing you will lose him.

If you do nothing you will lose him.

That was something Tarifa did not want to contemplate.

She turned slightly as Aihola came out dressed in the thin robe and holding her own mug of tea. Aihola came up next to her and kissed her shoulder softly.

"You are thinking of him again?" She said softly.

Tarifa smiled and nodded. "I can't help it *Nya Istel*." She said.

Aihola nodded as she sipped her tea. "I know my love. I feel it too."

"I'm sorry *Nya Istel*." Tarifa spoke.

Aihola shook her head quickly and stepped closer to her. "There is nothing to be sorry for Tarifa." She said. "I have seen him in your thoughts remember. I have felt what you felt my love. Seen what you shared with him. I can feel his pull on you as surely as if it was me, which it now is."

"Have we lost him *Nya Istel*?" Tarifa asked softly. "Did we wait too long to realize what he meant to me? To us?"

“I don’t know... but I do know that Aelnala told us if it was meant to be that our paths would cross again.” Aihola spoke. “That is what I cling to now. For you... for me. As surely as it burns in your blood my love it burns too in mine.” Aihola took her hand. “Come to bed Tarifa. Lynwe wanted us to meet with her tomorrow very early.”

Tarifa looked at her. “What for?”

Aihola shrugged. “She didn’t say. Only that it was important.” She pulled Tarifa closer to her, pressing her near naked body up against Tarifa’s own. “Come to bed my slave. I need to feel your lips upon me tonight.”

Tarifa grinned. “You need to feel my lips upon you every night Mistress.” She spoke seductively.

“Perhaps it is because you do it so well.” Aihola spoke, dropping her hands to cup Tarifa’s firm ass and leaning forward to nuzzle her throat and her sensitive elf ear. She took Tarifa’s tea from her hands and put both their cups on the small table before pulling her back into their bedroom. Aihola unfastened her robe and let it drop to the floor exposing her dark ebony colored skin as she settled to the bed and faced Tarifa. She gazed at Tarifa with her amber eyes and slowly spread her thighs apart exposing her already moist center, and her fully engorged and erect clit. “I think you should assume your place slave.” Aihola spoke in a low commanding voice as she traced her fingertips along the inside of her thigh.

Dekton’s bite upon her had made her partially wolf in some manner, with a wolf’s keen sense of smell and sight and hearing, augmenting her vampire genes even more. They would never be as strong as Tarifa’s or a pure blooded Lycavorian, but they were skills she had used and mastered in the last year. One of those skills was a much less powerful aura that she was able to project. It would not work on anyone who was not at least partly wolf, but it worked very well on her lover and she projected her need and desire directly at Tarifa. She grinned when Tarifa stiffened ever so slightly, her nipples becoming hard points pressing against the thin robe, and her sapphire eyes going just a tad bit wider as the smile spread across her beautiful elfin features. And she felt Tarifa project her own aura back, much stronger and focused, Aihola’s body instantly becoming aroused fully, her own nipples erect and begging for attention.

Tarifa moved slowly up to the bed and looked down at her Drow Mistress for only a few seconds before dropping to her knees in between Aihola’s thighs. Her hands came up and rested on the dark colored skin of her lover’s inner thighs and she smiled seductively.

“As you order me Mistress.” She whispered before lowering her lips to Aihola’s stiff clit and enveloping the bud completely.

Aihola’s head flew back on the bed and her cries of blissful passion filled the moon lit night skies, and would soon be joined by Tarifa’s as they pleased each other in ways only they could.

APO PRIME SECURE MILITARY SPACEPORT THREE KILOMETERS OUTSIDE TUYA

“Told them tomorrow afternoon sire.” Deia spoke as she walked down the ramp of the STRIKER DT beside Martin.

Martin nodded as Torma walked just behind him. “As long as it doesn’t conflict with the Defense meeting with Riall.” He told her. “I’ve avoided that for three months and I need to start going back to them.”

Deia smiled. “I will make sure I have them at the palace early enough sire.” She turned as Dysea and Isabella walked down the ramp behind her. “Bella... have you finished moving everything to the palace?”

Isabella turned, holding Dysea’s hand while the gray/brown dragon waited for them a short distance away. “I finished moving last month Deia.” She said with a smile. “There is no sense in maintaining an apartment in Tuya when we always stay at the palace anyway.”

Deia smiled. “Of course.” She said turning back to Martin. “They have grown close sire.”

Martin nodded. “They have quite a bit in common.” He spoke. “They return to Elear next week don’t they? The Hundred Year Ceremony?”

“Milord you impress me.” Deia spoke with a laugh. “I have never been able to remember exactly when that ceremony is!”

Martin laughed with her. "It's kind of hard to forget when she and Isabella remind me every week." He replied.

Aricia was already on Isheeni's back and she turned to look at him. *Hurry Beloved... Androcles calls for us! And I still have soot in my ears that you must clean off!*

For'mya sat in front of her on Isheeni's back and she nodded. *As do I. It is everywhere. Three showers and I am still trying to get it off of me.*

Aricia leaned forward and nuzzled For'mya's elfin ear and bit the tip of it ever so gently. *Do not worry Concubine; I intend to clean you For'mya, with nothing but my tongue.* She growled seductively. *I will insure you are immaculate.*

For'mya smiled and leaned into Aricia's nuzzle. It was a game they played with each other, and fourteen months ago For'mya would never have imagined herself in this role.

For'mya was the Bound Elf Concubine to the Lycavorian King and by default the Bound Concubine to the Queen as well. She had seen a part of Martin Leonidas that even his Queens had never seen, never would see. He had rescued her from a fate far worse than death in For'mya's opinion, as imprisonment and sexual torment and enslavement to High Coven Immortals had broken more female elves than anything in the universe. She had accepted his proposition to become concubine, at first as a political means to nullify a political threat, but as time passed, For'mya had fallen in love with him, just as her ancestor had fallen in love with King Resumar. And just as her ancestor had discovered, For'mya discovered that in loving him, she also loved his pureblood Lycavorian Queen without question.

For'mya had shared a relationship with another woman many years ago, a female elf pilot like herself. It had begun by accident really, and it had burned brightly for several weeks, but no where near what she felt for Aricia. They were always together it seemed, whether here on Apo Prime or on *MJOLNIR'S HAND*. They shared everything with each other, and upon returning to Apo Prime after the events on Enurrua a year ago, it had taken only two weeks for For'mya to move completely into the palace with her and Martin. She slept in the same bed as they did, shared them sexually, as they shared her when it was just the three of them, and those moments were some of the most intensely pleasurable experiences of For'mya's life. She shared in their lives more closely than anyone outside of Dysea, Anja and Isabella, and now after more than a year of this life, For'mya wondered sometimes how she had ever lived without it. They had not changed her, in large part because they loved her for whom she was, and to make her wolf might change that in some way. Her Mindvoice abilities were on a par with Anja and Dysea, though she had told them she did not want a dragon bonded to her, and they honored her wishes. She had flown on Isheeni and Torma enough times to know and feel what it was like, but being bonded to a dragon as closely as Martin and Aricia were, frightened her in a fashion.

For'mya pressed back against Aricia with a sigh. Whenever Aricia called her that in a formal and demanding tone as she had just used, it caused her pleasure receptors to charge up because she knew pleasure was what she would receive. *I believe I shall enjoy that immensely my Queen, but only if I can clean you as well.*

Martin smiled at their antics. *Go you two... I will be along shortly.*

Isheeni go! Aricia spoke immediately. She turned in the saddle as Isheeni sprang into the air. *Do not be too long my Beloved. You have three you need to please this night. And Anja returns in the morning. You need to eat and rest!*

Martin sent a pulse of his aura at her, and he felt Aricia shudder through their connection. *I will have you first my Little Wolf.*

Aricia's musical laughter sounded in his head as Isheeni quickly propelled them out of sight heading toward the palace. He turned and looked at Dysea, feeling her aura trembling gently for him and her emerald eyes smoldering.

"Bella... are you going to ride with *Melda Min*?" He asked turning to look at her.

Isabella shook her head quickly and patted Iriral's muscular side. "No." She spoke quickly. "I trust Iriral completely, as does Dysea, but I do not trust myself when it comes to tearing over the landscape at five hundred kilometers an hour with only two small pieces of armor holding me in place." Isabella spoke. "I will ride with Deia to the main estate and then take the Lake Lifter to the island." She leaned close to Dysea and kissed her passionately for a long moment before stepping back. "Come Deia... we should let these crazy fools get going. They are itching to get into the air and tempt fate."

Martin took her hand quickly and leaned in to kiss her softly on the cheek. “We’ll see you on the island Bella.” He said softly.

Isabella’s hazel/green eyes sparkled and she nodded with a small smile. There was no denying the growing attraction she felt for this Lycavorian King, but he had been true to his word that she would not be pressured by him in any way. They were fated to be together, Isabella had long ago accepted that, and the more time she spent in Dysea’s arms, the more she realized that her life had indeed changed. The platinum haired elf Queen had introduced her to a whole new world, and Isabella found herself surrendering to things she would never have considered not so long ago. Among them was the incredible passion she and Dysea shared together.

“I will bring some supplies for the morning and we can have breakfast together.” Isabella spoke with a sly smile. “If they don’t wear you out that is.”

Dysea chuckled as she took Martin’s arm. “We won’t wear him out completely Bella.” She said pressing close to him and looking up into his face. “We will try our best though!”

Torma! Martin nearly shouted. Time to go brother!

Dysea laughed as she turned quickly and climbed onto Iriral’s back, squeezing Isabella’s hand one last time as Martin scampered to Torma’s obsidian body.

I will race you Torma! Iriral spoke now, spreading her wings in preparation of taking off.

Torma’s golden eyes flared as he spread his much larger wings and tensed his muscular legs. *You must be kidding!*

Isheeni says you are big and fat and that even I could outrun you!

Then catch me Iriral. If you can!

Deia watched as first Torma and then Iriral leaped into the air and with powerful sweeps of their wings they rapidly pulled away. She shook her head as her dark eyes fell to Isabella and she smiled. “How much longer will you deny it Isabella?” She asked gently.

Isabella looked at her. “What do you mean?”

Deia laughed softly and she took her hand as they headed for the Lifter that would take them into Tuya. “You may not have any wolf in you Isabella... but your body calls for him as surely as any of the Queens. And it’s obvious in the way he looks at you as well.”

“I have... I have only just discovered what Dysea and I share Deia.” Isabella spoke. “I wish to explore that more deeply before allowing myself to feel Martin’s embrace. It has... it has been so long since I have been able to actually feel emotions Deia... and part of me still holds back. It is getting better... Dysea has helped me more than you know. I...”

Deia squeezed her hand. “You do not need to explain to me Isabella. You are different... and everyone sees it. Now let’s get you back to the estate so you can join those you love.”

CHAPTER TWO

NONUS IV

“...should not have contacted me Sangria.” Cyngi spoke.

“I need a job or something.” Sangria spoke urgently. She was using one of the public transmission terminals so that her own personal set would not be traced. The sun was going down on Nonus IV, lights coming on all over the resort, the sounds of gambling and music heavy in the air. “I’m almost out of funds Cyngi.”

“The Star’s Ghost is being watched girl!” The Unsaar barked. “Since you left I have had Spartans and High Coven agents in here asking questions. A lot of questions. All about you.”

“High Coven?” Sangria gasped. “Why would they be looking for me?”

Cyngi shook his head. “I do not know. The stinking Coven started coming in here about two weeks ago. That is what started all this. Somehow they are linking you to me, and I don’t like the attention. They are asking about my dealings with Chetak and his son, not to mention the fact that I used to sell dragon products. It’s bad for my business.”

“Cyngi... I don’t know what they want... I swear to you!”

“So you have said for the last ten months, yet the same group that found you here first, they still pursue you Sangria. Why is that?”

“I don’t know damn it!” She snapped. “And I lost them over a month ago!”

“You’ve lost them several times in the past months and they always seem to find you again Sangria. It appears you are losing your touch at remaining hidden.” Cyngi spoke. “I warned you they had your scent girl. I made some inquires of my own Sangria... do you know who you have chasing you?”

“I never stopped long enough to ask them their names!” Sangria popped. “What difference does it make?”

“The black skinned Spartan is considered by many to be a brother to the new Lycavorian King Sangria.” Cyngi spoke his voice holding no emotion in it. “His name is Daniel Simpson. The red haired female elf is his mate... and the vampire female appears to be the King’s adopted daughter! Sangria you are being chased by some exceptionally powerful people who represent the new Lycavorian King. Based on how he handled Chetak and his Republic... he is most definitely not someone I want making inquires about my activities.”

“Cyngi I...”

“No girl... now you will listen to me.” He snapped. “You have become a liability to me and many others that have done business with you in the past Sangria. It has been decided by the Five Overseers to terminate your contracts and employment.”

“You’re cutting me loose?” She almost shouted, looking around quickly to see if she had been heard. “Now... when I need you the most?”

“What you need to do girl, is start looking over your shoulder.” Cyngi’s voice was now tinged with hardness to it. “I did not favor this action but I was outvoted.”

“What are you saying Cyngi?” Sangria felt a cold pit begin forming in her stomach.

“A contract has been taken out on you Sangria.” Cyngi spoke calmly. “Terminate with extreme prejudice and it has been given a high priority. I suggest you remember all I taught you girl, for you will need it now.”

“Cyngi this is all...”

The Unsaar shook his head. “The time for explanations is long over Sangria. If you have anywhere left to go, I suggest you do so quickly.”

“You support this?” She asked astonished. “After what... after all I have done for you?”

“This is business Sangria.” Cyngi told her. “You have put all of us at risk with whatever it is you have done to anger the new Lycavorian King, and you know far more than any of us are comfortable with. I did not vote for it but I supported the decision yes, I’m sorry. This new King is far too unpredictable to risk all we have built in protecting you, and this involves him in some manner or the ones chasing you would not be so involved. I have my interests to think about Sangria.”

“I helped you build those interests!” She barked.

“And now you will help to protect them with your death.” Cyngi spoke evenly unfazed by her attempts at pleading and pointing out she helped him to build what he had. “I’m sorry Sangria but you knew this is the type of business we were in when you entered it.”

“You bastard! You’re just abandoning me then?” She exclaimed.

“I have transferred ten thousand credits into your personal account.” He spoke. “It is the only act of mercy you will receive Sangria.”

“Ten thousand credits won’t do me any good out here on my own!” She spat. “And you can trace wherever I am through that account!”

“I know you have others, I taught you better than that. Transfer the funds out... but that is all you will receive and that is only because of the friendship we once had.” Cyngi spoke. “This conversation is over.” He moved to end the transmission but stopped and looked at her. “One warning Sangria... the contract goes into effect today, but no one will pick it up for at least another day or so due to your reputation, but the amount that is being offered for your head is quite large and not easily dismissed. A High Covenant ship is now in orbit of Nonus IV and they are there for you. I’m sorry... that is all I can do for you. Goodbye Sangria.”

“No Cyngi wait!” Sangria shouted as she reached for the transmitter, but it was too late and the signal was cut from the other end. Sangria cursed under her breath and looked around the terminal. Only two others were using the public terminals and both men appeared to be deep in conversation and had not heard anything.

They were abandoning her. Hanging her out to dry and that pissed her off. She had worked long and hard to gather the reputation she had and now it was all going down the tubes for something she had no idea she did. Cyngi said that there was a High Covenant ship in orbit and that they were there for her. She had no desire to be taken captive by the High Covenant for any reason. Most people who disappeared in their custody were never heard from again. She needed to get back to her room and gather her gear and then get off this planet quickly.

Filrian turned from the terminal he was at as Sangria moved away quickly. He watched casually for a moment, his eyes detecting the three individuals who fell in behind her from different directions and he lifted his wrist, activating his COM.

“Yuriko?”

“Go ahead.” The response was immediate, telling him they must already be on the planet.

“Yuriko she’s heading back to her room.” He spoke softly. “It appears her business partners have taken out a contract on her. They do not like the attention they are getting from both us and now the High Covenant it appears.”

“That makes sense.” Yuriko answered. “It stands to reason they will want to protect whatever assets they have built.”

“It appears she was held in rather high regard and that is why it has taken the decision this long to come about. They did not want to liquidate her.” Filrian spoke. “Yuriko I have detected three men following her. Definitely High Covenant vampires. Killers too if I had to guess. Most likely from their *Venorik Elghinn* Division.”

“We saw their ship arrive, though I am surprised it took Yuri and the Covenant this long to finally begin to move.” Yuriko replied.

“We have been searching for Lisisa far longer Yuriko.” Filrian spoke. “We have established contacts and clues as to her location. It took the vampire Princess longer to establish these when she got back to her planet.”

“Yes... but now they are on the same trail we are, which tells me their sources are much better.” Yuriko spoke. “We will need to be extra careful from now on.”

“I agree. What about this Sangria?”

“Daniel, Anuk and Nayeca are waiting for her in her room. I just got finished installing the remote system for our ship and I am moving to meet them.” Yuriko answered.

“There could be more than three.” Filrian spoke. “I will make my way to her room as well. Better we all stand together than get caught singly. The *Venorik Elghinn* Division and anyone associated with them is not something to simply dismiss, and they undoubtedly have more than just the three I saw already on the surface.”

“I agree Filrian... but we have never had Daniel and Anuk with us either.” Yuriko spoke calmly. “They would be difficult to defeat as a pair, and that is without Nayeca backing them up.”

“Perhaps... but better to be safe than sorry. I didn’t think we were going to risk Nayeca coming to the surface of any planet we were on?” He asked.

“Daniel and I both are tired of chasing this Sangria, and if what you say is true, and her own cohorts are targeting her, if she eludes us again, she will go so far underground we may never find her again.” Yuriko spoke. “She is very good at disappearing and that is not a risk I wish to take. And neither does Daniel.”

“I’m just saying we should be cautious.” Filrian spoke. “We are not the only ones searching for her it appears, and we could get caught in the middle.”

He could hear Yuriko chuckle. “Indeed my friend. I will meet you near the elevator lift to her floor.”

Filrian nodded. “I’m moving now.”

EARTH EDEN CITY MEDICAL CENTER

Tarifa and Aihola greeted Lynwe, Selene and her father with hugs and soft kisses, both of them feeling refreshed and charged after their evening together. It had been one of their most intense nights alone together since returning to Earth, and they had enjoyed it until early in the morning hours. Their times with Selene and

Lynwe were also extremely pleasurable, but what they had felt last night was between only them and they cherished that.

They stood outside in the corridor and both knew right away when they saw Tareif there something was wrong.

Tarifa was the first to speak. "Ok... now will you tell us why we had to sneak into the medical center the back way, and come down here to the morgue?"

"What's going on Lynwe?" Aihola asked.

"One of Colonel Nestor's scout teams discovered this three days ago while they were patrolling the beach along New Miami." Lynwe explained. "It was flown here and Olyne just finished his autopsy last night. We felt you and Aihola should be made aware of it."

"Aware of what?" Aihola asked not liking the tone of voice Lynwe was using.

"It could very well be an isolated incident." Selene spoke now. "But after speaking with your father... we thought it best to advise you both."

Tarifa looked at them. "If you are looking to pique our interest you have. Now what is it we are talking about?"

Lynwe passed her hand over the panel on the wall and the door to the morgue opened. "This way." She said.

Tarifa looked at Aihola quickly and they followed her into the small viewing room. It was encased in pressurized glass all around and the lights from the actual body holding room were bright and blazing. Tarifa and Aihola stopped in front of the glass their eyes on the body of the male elf stretched out on the table just on the other side of the glass partition. They could see the Doctor Olyne standing in the room wearing a clean suit. Tarifa looked at Lynwe quickly.

"Why is he wearing a Clean Suit?" She asked quickly.

"Oh forgive me." Olyne's voice sounded through the intercom. They watched as he removed the rubberized helmet portion of the suit. "There is no danger of contamination... I just forgot to remove the helmet."

"Selene... what is going on?" Aihola asked.

"Olyne... would you remove the sheet." Selene spoke.

Tarifa and Aihola watched as the elf doctor did as Selene instructed and both of them winced slightly at the mass of swollen and puffy welts that were all over the man's body. That he had been submerged in water for a long period of time was obvious, as was the cause of death. The left portion of his chest was burst outward as if from some sharp knife.

"This is not exactly the way I wanted to start my day." Tarifa said. "Why exactly are we here?"

"The cause of death was a Nehtes thrust through his back, exiting out just below his left nipple." Olyne spoke from inside the room.

"A Nehtes?" Aihola gasped. "Are you sure?"

"Positive." Olyne replied. "We confirmed it with Admiral Jamerl. Death would have been instantly as the thrust severed the spinal column completely as if passed through his body, cutting the heart in two and tearing apart the lungs. The Admiral said it was a precise thrust, very accurate and done with extreme strength."

"Was he killed during the war?" Tarifa asked.

"He's been dead for just under a week." Lynwe answered. "Whoever killed him dumped him in the ocean."

"The welts you see are from jelly fish." Olyne spoke. "Specifically a Portuguese Man-of-War which are common in the waters around New Miami at this time of the year."

"I'm still not seeing the reason we are here." Aihola spoke. "This was obviously a murder committed by a Spartan. Why aren't the normal authorities handling it?"

"They are investigating but there is something else. Olyne?" Selene spoke.

"Yes... of course." Olyne spoke. Tarifa and Aihola watched him lift the body off the table exposing his back and the words carved into the now dead flesh were obvious extending from the base of his neck to the small of his back.

Death to Tarifa and her Drow whore

Tarifa looked at her father. "Who is this man?" She asked.

Tareif shrugged. “No one special.” He answered. “Not in terms of political statements. He was an elf collaborator in New Miami before your attack with FAEs during the war. He ran one of the more popular slave centers. No family that we know of. He’s been running a small fruit stand on the outskirts of the city while they have been rebuilding it.”

“Papa... it does not surprise me that *Nya Istel* and I... that we are not well liked by some.” Tarifa spoke. “Especially after what I did to New Miami. Why show me this? Why show us this? It is not going to change how we live our lives.”

“I have been hated before Tareif.” Aihola spoke looking at him.

Tareif nodded slowly. He had been stunned to learn of the relationship his oldest daughter had with the Queen of the Drow, but now, after two years of them being together and seeing what his daughter meant to Aihola, the fact she was a woman did not even cause him to blink. And she was a masterful warrior as well.

“As have we all Aihola.” Tareif spoke. “This is different however. This act of violence directly mentions you and Tarifa. That does not give me happy thoughts.”

“What do the local authorities say?” Tarifa asked.

“They seem to think that this man cheated a Spartan in some way. Enough to make him angry and kill him in this fashion. The carving of the words was done after the man was already dead, and may well not even have been done by whoever killed him.” Olyne spoke.

“And again I ask as Tarifa did... why show this to us?” Aihola asked now. “This body came from thousands of miles away. And you have no proof of anything directly related against us besides some words. We will not change our lives for this.”

“Let the local authorities handle it.” Tarifa spoke. “And tell Olyne to dispose of the body if no one has claimed it.” Lynwe nodded and moved to open the adjoining door to step into the morgue room itself. She started speaking with Olyne immediately. “If the local authorities need assistance, have Admiral Jamerl give them a Spartan as an advisor. We have a meeting with Dilios and Arete in an hour and I want to eat breakfast before we see them.” She stopped next to Selene and took her hand. “Are we still on for dinner this evening? It is Lynwe’s birthing day.”

Selene’s steel blue eyes twinkled at her. “Of course.” She answered with a smile. “I’ve made her favorite. She thinks everyone has forgotten.”

Tarifa glanced at Aihola quickly and smiled as her Mistress’s own eyes glittered in anticipation. They waited as Tareif exited the room into the outer corridor, and then Tarifa looked at Selene. “What shall we bring for desert?” She asked.

Selene grinned. “Tarifa... you and Aihola are desert silly.” She said confidently.

Tarifa let out a small laugh and hugged Selene quickly. “Well I look forward to that.” She spoke taking Aihola’s hand.

“As do I.” Aihola said.

“Lynwe and I are looking forward to it as well.” Selene answered.

Selene watched as they walked out after her father. She and Lynwe truly enjoyed their nights with Tarifa and Aihola. They were the only two who could actually keep up with them because of their genes, and like Tarifa, Selene thought it exceptionally erotic and intensely pleasurable to serve her Drow Mistress Lynwe. And when there were two of them, the pleasure for Tarifa and herself doubled.

She turned as the two meter tall female Drow came back out of the morgue and looked at her. “I told you and Tareif they would not care.” Selene said softly as she took Lynwe’s hand. “They have become far stronger Lynwe, in both body and mind. And far closer.”

“I know... but it was worth a shot.” Lynwe spoke. “They are still coming tonight yes?”

Selene nodded. “Oh yes.” She answered. “We should enjoy them as much as we can in the time we have left Mistress.”

Lynwe looked at her. “What do you mean?”

“You may let Tareif know I have done this... but I did it late last night and did not have a chance to tell him.” Selene spoke. “I contacted Martin before I left the office. They were just arriving in orbit from a diplomatic trip to the elf home world so I left a message. I asked Martin to send one of his *Mjolnir’s Hand* here to investigate this. I asked Martin in the message to send him, the one they both so desire and so need. His name is Isra I believe.”

Lynwe laughed softly. "I did the same thing early this morning." She said pulling her half elf lover close to her.

Lynwe was a Drow... Selene half elf and half human... and both were now full vampires because of events that propelled them forward during the war. They had found each other over a year ago, in the midst of the chaos of that war, and they had not looked back since. They were as close as two lovers could be, almost as synonymous with one another as Tarifa and Aihola were. It had been Tarifa and Aihola that had shown Lynwe she could feel love and be loved after the High Coven experiments had made her into something she thought less of. Lynwe was better endowed than most men in that department, a curse from the High Coven experiments, and until Tarifa and Aihola and then Selene had come into her life, she regarded it as a curse. The three of them were the ones who taught her it was a gift. It was a gift that kept Selene from even looking at other men, though there were dozens who would do anything to get one of Eden City's Chief Administrator's in bed, especially because Selene was also drop dead beautiful. Selene paid them no mind in the least because she had the best of both worlds in her opinion.

"We should probably speak to one another more often my love. We'll drive Martin crazy with all these separate requests of ours." Lynwe spoke. "If he gets our messages today, I would think he will dispatch this Isra immediately. You know how he views the both of them. He will not delay. Perhaps a week for this Isra to get here."

"I hope he has not..." Selene asked quickly.

Lynwe shook her head just as fast. "When I spoke with Martin last month and asked about this man, Martin told me he does not even go out with the others of his unit. And there have been several females interested in him. I understand his eyes are quite fantastic." She said. "He trains day in and day out with his dragon, many times with Martin and Aricia together. This Isra and Andreus have been to the palace often, and not just because they are the section leaders of *Mjolnir's Hand*."

"It will be good to see them happy once more. They deserve it most after all they have been through." Selene said softly. "After tonight we should start looking for someone who can help me please you Mistress." Selene said snuggling her body close to Lynwe.

"I do not need someone else Selene. I am quite content and extremely happy with only you." Lynwe spoke.

"And I with you Mistress." Selene spoke submissively. "But an extra set of soft lips is always welcome. You are wonderfully gifted you know. Perhaps Layna from my office?"

Lynwe looked at her with those beautiful amber eyes and shook her head. "You are so bad my slave." She said with a smile.

"But you love me don't you?"

Lynwe nodded. "That I do. With all my heart." She bent over and kissed her tenderly. "Now tell me... who is this Layna? You have mentioned her several times."

Selene laughed and took her hand. "She is a Lycavorian Spartan that Prime Minister Deia assigned to me as sort of a liaison slash protector. She is not interested in men in the least, which makes her just like us. Of course she doesn't know about your special gift." Selene squeezed Lynwe's waist and seductively ran a delicate hand down the front of her pants. "And she does not know of the Drow disposition of dominance."

"And what makes you think she would even be interested?" Lynwe spoke with a grin.

"Because I have heard her say you could feed on her anytime you wanted." Selene answered with a glint in her eyes. "And she already made it obvious to me that she finds me attractive."

Lynwe shook her head and they began walking out of the small room. "Only Tarifa and Aihola have shared our bed for a reason Selene. They know us... and we trust them. They have been through everything with us. Bringing another into our bed..."

Selene smiled. "It is only a thought Lynwe. I am quite content having you all to myself. Never doubt that. Think about it later my love; it is not important right now. For now let us join Tarifa and Aihola for breakfast, and then we will have them for desert tonight. You can inform Tareif when you return to the airfield."

Sangria was stuffing items into her two bags, silently running over the options in her head as she moved between rooms in her suite. There was really only one place she could run. A place that the Coven wouldn't

come looking for her and the Union wouldn't think to search. She could blend in there due to the large number of her people on the planet. The only problem would be getting there. The border patrols had increased significantly over the last year, and almost every ship was now checked. She entered the bedroom area of the suite and went to the bed, reaching for her spare hand blaster from the bed where she had left it before leaving this morning and she froze.

It was gone.

"Looking for this?" The female voice asked from the shadow by the window.

Sangria's eyes snapped up and she saw the rust colored hair of the female elf from the Star's Ghost, her cerulean blue eyes outlined in black, and the tips of her fangs extending from below her full lips. Sangria was a blinding draw when it came to getting her weapon out. It was mainly instincts anyway, and the moment Anuk moved to take her third step Sangria's hand was dropping to her thigh holster. Her hand froze as it closed around the hilt of her custom made H24 Hand blaster, and she saw the red haired female smile wider, revealing almost completely her long set of wolf fangs. Sangria had never met an elf female that had been changed by a Lycavorian, but this female seemed to fit the mold perfectly, whatever that may be. She was of medium height and had curves on top of curves, all of them lean muscle. Sangria had stopped her motion when she felt the steel of the blade touch her cheek and her peripheral vision told her the blade of a Nehtes spear head was touching her skin.

"That would not be the most intelligent decision you've made in the last year." Dan's voice filled the room.

Sangria's sea green eyes closed slowly, knowing her luck had run out. She lifted her hands slowly, and Anuk moved forward, her Nehtes in her hand and ready. She quickly disarmed Sangria of her weapon while Daniel reached forward to pat her down. Sangria looked at Anuk as Dan's hand ran over her body in a very intimate fashion. He obviously knew what he was doing as he pulled an additional two blades from the collar of her shirt and from her right boot top. A thought flashed into her mind.

"You know... I could take care of you much better than this elf if you let me go." Sangria spoke. "You can have me anyway you want."

Danny rolled his eyes causing Anuk to grin. She pulled the Shakur fighting knife from her belt and held it up so Sangria could see it. She stepped up to Sangria and gently prodded her under her jaw with the point. Sangria's eyes went wide when the Shakur slashed down in an instant and sliced open the shirt she was wearing, exposing the support she wore and bare skin.

"Hold still." Anuk spoke softly. "If you move... I might accidentally cut you." She said before slicing through the support and exposing Sangria's firm breasts to the cool dusk air. "Then no one will want you."

Sangria sucked in her breath when Danny's hand passed between her thighs, purposely brushing tightly against her crotch, checking for weapons or unusual bumps. His hand stopped at the front of her pants and Sangria turned her head slightly. "Don't...!" She growled. "If you do... I'll kill you!"

Dan nodded. "Sure." He moved his hand back up and plunged it down the front of her pants taking hold of the small metal hand laser. He yanked it back out and tossed it onto the bed before looking at her. "I'll give you one chance to tell me the truth." He spoke, his voice hard. "Do you have any weapons stashed in more private areas? I can have Anuk check, but I will give you the benefit of the doubt since all we want to do is ask some questions."

"If I lie." Sangria asked.

"You die very painfully... after we get the information we want." Dan replied. "Tell me the truth and you will be set free after we have asked our questions."

"Who are you people?" Sangria asked quickly.

"My question first lady." Dan spoke. "Does Anuk have to bend you over and search you? She wouldn't like that you know."

Sangria met his dark eyes for a long moment before shaking her head. "No." She said.

Anuk chuckled. "A pity Daniel... she does smell good."

Dan grinned. "Yeah... sort of like a perfume I used to like. What was it called? Oh... man what it was... Rose Musk! That was it! Good stuff... expensive too."

“Tie your shirt together.” Anuk spoke returning her Shakur to its sheath. “Do not attempt to run, you can not outrun us... do not attempt to fight us... for while you may get one of us... by some slim margin both of us... you will not get the third.”

Sangria looked at her. “Third?” She spoke. “I only see two of you.”

“Then you are not looking very well.” Anuk spoke.

Sangria’s eyes went wide when the shadow by the glass door onto her patio moved and took shape. Nayeca slipped into full view, the K12 clutched in her fist, her shimmering white hair and amber eyes very evident.

“By all that is...”

Nayeca smiled and lowered her K12. “We truly mean you no harm.” She spoke softly. “We only wish to ask some questions. You’ve led us on quite the chase for ten months, and now we will have our answers.”

“What is this all about?” Sangria barked. “I haven’t been in the Lycavorian Union in over a decade! I haven’t done anything wrong.”

“Daniel?” Yuriko’s voice filled the room over Danny’s COM channel.

“Go!”

“Do you have her?” Yuriko asked.

“We have her.” Dan replied detecting the change in her voice. “What’s wrong?”

“There are at least three Vampire High Coven agents moving on her room right now.” Yuriko spoke. “We will not get there in time to intercept them. It is as we discussed this morning Daniel. They will interrogate her and then kill her.”

Dan looked at Sangria’s sea green eyes as they grew wider. They reminded him of another pair of eyes and he couldn’t quite place them. As a matter of fact she looked very familiar in some way and that gnawed at his brain as it had this morning. “Yeah I’m thinking maybe she is seeing that now.” He spoke finally. “Will they blow the door?”

“Doubtful.” Yuriko answered. “They apparently are trying to keep this as low profile as we are.”

Dan nodded. “So we dance. Works for me.” He pushed Sangria toward Nayeca who caught her arm and stuck the barrel of the K12 into her ribcage. “Stay with her and don’t make a sound. She is what is called a Drow elf... and they ain’t known for their forgiving nature if you know what I mean. Don’t do anything stupid.” He looked at Anuk. “Shall we baby?”

Anuk grinned. “By all means.”

The edges of the door into Sangria’s suite sparked for a few seconds and then the door slid open, four High Coven vampires bursting into the room in a very professional manner, their hand weapons covering every portion of the room sweeping left to right. As the first two entered they ignored the sides by the door, moving straight into the suite for four meters. As the last two entered and split left and right they ran into Daniel and Anuk.

Danny impaled one onto his Nehtes, the vampire’s eyes going wide as the spearhead sliced completely through his spine and exited between his shoulder blades. His weapon dropped from suddenly limp fingers just as Dan was spinning away from him, his Shi Viska flashing into existence as Dan brought his left arm around. The blades extended instantly and the full shield collided with the first vampire to enter the suite just below his right ear. Dan ripped his Nehtes free as he completed the spin, the first vampire’s head landing on the floor at his feet.

Anuk swept her Nehtes under the fourth vampire to enter the room, taking out his legs. As he lifted into the air, his weapon flying from his hands, Anuk stepped into a forward thrust. The second vampire watched with wide eyes as the spearhead of the Nehtes burst from his chest in a spray of blood as his heart was shredded instantly. Anuk turned back as the last vampire landed hard on his back. She whirled and brought her Shi Viska down onto the chest of the vampire on the ground, the blades also extended on her shield. The air left his lungs and blood flew from his lips as her shield nearly cleaved his body in half.

Danny dragged the last vampire completely into the room and pounded the door panel, watching as it slid closed quickly. Nayeca dragged Sangria into the main room now, and her eyes flew open at the carnage. Blood was quickly pooling on the floor and she nearly lost her breakfast.

“Yuriko... I do believe it's time we left.” Dan spoke touching his COM.

“I do believe you are right.” Yuriko spoke in reply. “We are twenty seconds from you. We'll gather and then move to our ship. Our guest?”

Dan looked at Sangria. “Looking a little green... but very much alive.”

“We must move quickly Daniel.” Yuriko spoke. “When the Coven team does not report in, they will descend on her room in greater numbers.”

“I'm not going anywhere with you people!” Sangria screamed her eyes wide. Death was not something she was unaccustomed too, she had just never seen it so up close and personal. She could almost smell the blood in the air and she felt bile rising in her throat.

Nayeca took action immediately and brought her K12 down on Sangria's head sharply. Her sea green eyes rolled up into her head and she fell to the floor in a heap. She holstered the K12 and un-slung the P190 from her back. “Daniel... if you would be so kind.” She spoke.

Dan couldn't help but grin as he hauled Sangria to his shoulder just as Yuriko and Filrian entered the room. Yuriko's eyes swept the room quickly and saw them ready to leave. “You didn't hurt her too badly did you?” She asked.

Nayeca shook her head. “Not at all. She's lucky considering the year we have spent chasing her.”

Yuriko knelt next to one of the bodies and nodded. “Just as Filrian and I feared. They are assassins from the Vampire's Silent Death Division. Very well trained.”

“They don't know how to clear a room.” Anuk spoke.

Yuriko nodded. “Yes well... most of their skills reside in torture and interrogation.” She spoke getting to her feet.

Filrian nodded. “Quickly... let's get back to the ship and depart as fast as we are able.” He spoke. “When the Coven discovers this, they will be all over us.”

“So let's not stand here and talk about it.” Dan spoke. “Let's get gone.”

APO PRIME

Anja couldn't help but smile at what she saw on the bed in front of her. She had arrived on the *SPIRIT OF HADARIA* only an hour before, taken her *STRIKER DT* to the private landing field and then she and Seanna had flown on Miath to the palace.

She had not wanted to be bonded to a dragon at first, but on her last trip to Elear with Dysea the green scaled male dragon had caught her eye immediately. He was young, only a few years younger than Isheeni, and he was a hybrid like Torma. He was larger than Isheeni but not by very much, but what caught her eye was his brashness. He strutted around like he owned the island that many of the dragons now called home. Anja had watched an older dragon put him in his place twice in the same visit but he kept coming back for more. Arzoal told Anja it was because he was fearless and foolish and young. She had warned against choosing him, but true to her rebellious nature, Anja fearlessly walked right up to him. In the first five minutes Anja knew he was the one.

They had spent the last six weeks together, learning about each other while they learned to fly. Their natures, both rebellious and restless, had tempered when they came together in the Mindvoice connection, and it seemed to calm them both. This had surprised Arzoal and she had been working furiously with them the last few weeks to get them to share everything, and not hold back. It was working... and the first thing that Arzoal noticed is that they had become very protective of each other. When they came to the palace here on Apo Prime, Miath spent most of the time with Torma... learning all he could about flying and fighting so that he could better protect his Queen. Miath had never expected to be chosen to serve any in Mjolnir's Hand, he knew he was arrogant and brash, but when the red haired Queen choose him from the hundreds of others, he had vowed to himself never to let her down. He knew that Torma and Isheeni were the first and most powerful of the Bonded Pairs as they were now called, and he spent hours with Torma and Isheeni both, Iriral among them, learning to temper his brash nature and put Anja above all others. It wasn't easy due to his age, but having the confidence and strength of Torma and Isheeni and by default Martin and Aricia, Miath was learning well.

Anja had been the busiest of Martin's Queens in the last year, visiting more planets than even Martin. She had returned to Hadaria a month before her Ascension to complete her training and learn more of her people and her abilities. This had pleased Eurin greatly, and when it came time for her Ascension, Martin had been there on Hadaria. In a move that surprised even Zaniai, Martin had kissed Anja deeply and told her he needed to honor what his grandfather had begun. Anja had tears in her eyes at his words, for he sounded wiser and more confident than at any other time since she had known him, and at that moment she loved him even more than she already did. Anja had wanted him there to experience it all with her, but she understood his decision and nodded her head in agreement as pride swept through her.

Eurin and Zaniai had been touched by Martin's gesture and his words, that gesture telling Eurin all she really needed to know about the young King who now led the Union. Eurin had stepped up to him and took his arm with a smile. Anja remembered her words like it had happened yesterday.

"Many have said you remind them of your grandfather King Leonidas. I can not make that comparison since I did not know King Resumar. I can say that what I have seen over these last months leads me to believe that if there is one person outside of our people who can keep this most sacred secret of our people, it is you. I would be honored if you and Queen Aricia would stand beside me as Anja Ascends."

Anja shook her head. An entire year experiencing things and seeing places that her imagination could not begin to invent. She was a Queen of not only her own species, but of hundreds of species. One of four Queens that all loved the same man, a man who loved them all back in return, though Aricia would always be closest to him and his most favored. Anja didn't care... nor did Dysea or Isabella. Surprisingly there was no competition between them in the least, as all of them knew their roles and their places in the greater scheme of things. And when they were all together, there was nothing but love for each other between them.

Anja's jade green eyes fell on the figures in the bed and she felt desire and passion flame her body. Martin had made her what she was now, part wolf, and the wolf in her would always crave attention. The wolf in her would always crave attention from those she loved.

Aricia, Dysea, and For'mya lay on the bed, the large sheet barely covering them. For'mya was sandwiched between the other two women, her face peaceful as she slept with her golden blond head against Aricia's chest. Dysea was spooned against her from behind, also deep in sleep, her face buried in For'mya's neck. Anja stepped closer, quietly setting down her gear and leaning over Aricia. Her azure blue eyes opened dreamily and she smiled, turning her head slightly.

You are late. She spoke softly within Mindvoice.

Anja smiled and kissed her softly. *I'm sorry. Where is he?*

He's such a beast. Aricia said with a loving smile. *He's waiting for you Anja.*

Anja kissed her again. *I'll see you in the morning.*

Seanna?

She's in her room. Anja answered.

Aricia turned her head more and looked at her. *She does not have to sleep alone Anja.*

Anja nodded with a smile. *We are still discovering each other Little Wolf.* She said her jade green eyes sparkling. *Perhaps one day she will know she is welcome to share our warmth if not our love.*

Go on. Aricia said her arms pulling For'mya tighter. *He has worn us out.*

Anja kissed her once more and headed out onto the balcony of the island palace. She could see the large estate three kilometers in the distance across the glass like lake. That was meant to originally be their home, but once Torma and Isheeni became part of their lives, Martin and Aricia had moved the entire private section and all sleeping quarters to this island.

It was originally intended as only a vacation home really, but once Martin had made his decision, and they all agreed with him, within a week it had become what it was now. It still retained its modest appearance from the outside, unlike the palace on the main estate which was more opulent than any of them were used too. That had been turned into a place to have gatherings and where many of the staff now worked and stayed. Helen lived with them here on the estate in a small apartment when she was not on Earth in Sparta. The island itself was larger than it looked from the mainland, nearly twenty square kilometers in size, and they had everything they could want here.

Here Isheeni and Torma and their hatchlings had free reign to fly as they pleased, and it also provided all of them considerable privacy since no Lifter was allowed within the defensive perimeter of the palace itself, and flying over the palace was a sure way to get shot down. The only way to the private quarters was by Hover Lifter across the lake or by Dragon. Martin had destroyed the long pier that led to the main estate almost immediately after moving here. Very few people were allowed to come and go as they pleased, Gorgo obviously, and Aricia's mother occupied a permanent apartment within the palace to look after Androcles and the hatchlings when they were away. Deia came and went when she needed, but she very rarely bothered them once they came to the island. All of *Mjolnir's Hand* was allowed to come and go, but like Deia, unless it was necessary they kept to the estate on the mainland.

Because of this Anja had no qualms about stripping out of her uniform as she walked, dropping clothes along the way as she moved along the patio. She hadn't seen any of them in nearly six weeks, and right now she wanted to feel only one wrapped around her body. She was about to reach for the hand rail taking her up to the roof of the palace when her feet left the ground and she shot skyward with a yelp of surprise. She was almost completely naked and moving through the night air entirely under someone else's control, and she crossed her arms over her breasts when she saw him lying on the thick blanket on the roof staring at the moon.

Are you having fun? She demanded.

Martin used his telekinetic power to slowly bring Anja until she was suspended over the top of him. All she had left on were her white cotton panties and a very stern look on her face.

Yes actually I am. Martin answered. *You're late.*

I am not late. I'm never late. I'm exactly on time. I... Anja's jade eyes closed in bliss when Martin hit her with his aura while holding her over the top of him and slowly lowering her closer towards him.

Martin couldn't unleash his full aura on anyone except Aricia. Due to the pureness of her blood, she was the only one who could actually still function when enveloped within that aura. Martin knew just how much of his aura to use to excite all of his Queens and to show them how much he desired and loved them. Aricia could take the full unshielded radiance of his aura, while Dysea needed very little nudging before she was melting into his arms. Anja was somewhere in the middle, and because of her Hadarian genes it varied how much she could take depending on how long it had been since she had been to her home world.

I missed you. And you won't need these. He Mindvoice while an invisible hand caressed her taut thighs pulling her very moist panties from her body while she was suspended in mid air.

You... you are so bad. Who do you think you are that you can just undress me whenever you like? Anja gasped as he lowered her even more, keeping her suspended above him by only inches as he reached up and caressed her large firm breasts, tracing small circles around her nipples watching as they grew harder.

Your mate. The wolf who loves you.

God... god Marty please don't fucking tease me! I've wanted you for days!

Martin sat up slowly, moving her body with him as he did, positioning her above him, as she extended her satiny legs to either side on his body. He could smell her pungent honey scent pouring from her in her excitement. *It's so much fun though.*

You bas...

Martin covered her lips with his own, kissing her hard as he kept her suspended above him, his raging cock now at full mast. Anja groaned against his lips, reaching up to wrap her arms around his shoulders as he lowered her onto him, his powerful arms wrapping around her small waist. She tore her lips from his as he entered her and she screamed out her long denied pleasure as he speared her completely, dropping her onto him in one breath stealing twelve inch plunge.

Isheeni circled above the island at twenty thousand feet, her keen eyes scanning the moon lit night for her mate.

Where are you husband? Why do you tease me? Do you grow tired of me?

Isheeni and Torma were not unaffected by the passions racing through their bond mates. The connection between the four of them was so deep that they could feel Martin and Aricia's passion as surely as if it was their own because they too were mated. The night for them had been filled with much the same as Martin and Aricia. Their hatchlings were sleeping soundly, and they had taken to the air to satisfy their own needs. Four times

Isheeni had ascended to this height, and four times Torma had found her by her scent and they had plunged towards the ground in a frantic mating session.

Aricia had long since exhausted herself, but Isheeni had enjoyed the sensations her pleasure had given her as Torma took her in their aerial plunges. Martin could last much longer, and this usually meant Torma could as well, adding to Isheeni's delight. She could feel her King on the roof with Queen Anja, and she could sense her husband nearby.

Husband you disappoint me. Isheeni spoke playfully. *The King continues still. Perhaps you do need to take lessons from him.*

I need no lessons to desire you. Torma's voice filled her head. *And I already know what makes my mate sing my name.*

Isheeni felt the minor turbulence in the air above her and immediately rolled onto her back. Her azure blue eyes were wide with delight as she saw the plunging obsidian body block out the moonlight. Torma was holding nothing back and he barreled into her quickly, his claws pulling her body to his as his wings held both of them up as he glided along. Isheeni felt him probing urgently, and she threw back her dragon head and trumpeted her pleasure to the stars as he found her moistness and plunged his huge organ deeply into her. She wrapped her talons around him as he folded his wings around her and they began their plummet to the ground below, Torma's immense size driving into her with power and need, sending her to heights of pleasure that only he could.

And their trumpeting roars filled the night sky once more.

Anja's screams filled the night air as well, as Martin sped up his strokes into her and she simply held onto him for dear life. He thrust upward with power, filling her with his dominating cock, stretching her as only he ever could. His lips were wrapped around her nipple, his hands never stopping, always gripping her, always moving against her tone tanned skin. Her pussy gripped him tightly, milking him for everything he had to offer her. She wanted it all and she let him know that by beginning to meet his powerful thrusts into her with strong downwards lunges of her hips. He smiled and rolled over quickly on the thick blanket, Anja still wrapped around him and he began to thrust into her with heart stopping, pile driving twelve inch strokes. Strokes that were quickly causing her to see stars and dig her nails into his shoulders. The pleasure ripped through her in waves, reaching every part of her body. She tried to hold back, but it had been too long since he had taken her last, and Anja's need was burning.

Martin for his part was rapidly losing all pretense of the controlled seduction he wanted to give Anja. When it came to his Queens, only Aricia brought out the true wildness in him. There were no boundaries between them in their bed, and they had even got For'mya to become less reserved and more vocal. Dysea he preferred to seduce and take his time with, driving her crazy by nuzzling her ears and throat. Anja, because of her Hadarian genes and the healing properties of her body, and the exquisite physical shape she was in, he enjoyed teasing her until he broke her considerable self control. Tonight it hadn't taken much, and now they both were just reaching for the pinnacle of pleasure.

He felt his lower stomach clench in preparation and he thrust into her one final time and his own head tossed back as he roared into the night sky. Anja's cries peaked as she felt his huge cock swell in size within her and erupt. A kaleidoscope of colors flashed in her mind as Martin's jet like blasts of come smashed into her womb and increased her own orgasm three fold in intensity. The veins on her neck bulged out and her fangs burst through her gums and she joined his voice.

And their cries joined the trumpets of two others in the sky.

Inside their bedroom Aricia smiled as she felt their pleasure within her mind. They were finally all together, albeit for only a short time, but they had reaffirmed their love for each other. Soon it would be just her and For'mya again, sleeping beside him, and that thought made her pull For'mya tighter as sleep finally took her into its embrace.

They were just stepping through the entrance into the resort's maintenance area when alarms began to go off all around them. It caused them to duck into the small storage room, and Danny to drop Sangria to the floor. The moment he did, she snapped up, kicking out with a vicious side kick to his head.

Sangria was a skilled fighter, the years of slavery and being raped and beaten forcing her to hone her skills as much as she was able. Yet Sangria had never faced off against a truly well trained individual however, and her eyes went wide as Danny caught her slim ankle in an iron like grip just before her foot connected with his jaw. She stood there for what seemed like an eternity, her left leg held high up in the air, until Yuriko kicked out her right leg and sent her crashing to the ground beneath her. Anuk and Nayeca simply smiled as their eyes kept watch on the door. Yuriko snatched Sangria by her thick head of reddish black hair, her eyes changing to cobalt blue and her fangs fully extending.

"Let me advise you of something quickly." Yuriko spoke. "You have two choices. You either come with us willingly and you live, for we have no desire to kill you. Or we throw you out into the hallway here and you attempt to escape the High Coven assassins that are right now scouring this resort for you. When they find you, and they will find you, they will rape you with Immortal cock until you are begging them for death. Then they will kill you." Yuriko brought her face close to Sangria's. "Tell me wench... which do you prefer?"

Sangria glared at the vampire female, the pain of her pulling on her hair fresh in her mind and making her senses alive. "Who are you people?" Sangria finally hissed out. "And what have I done to you to make you hunt me for so long?"

Yuriko laughed. "Hunt?" She said. "We are not hunting you woman! If we were hunting you, make no mistake you would be dead already. We have saved your life three times already in your ten month long jaunt through the Wilds running from us. On Ruwo who do you think stopped the Kochab Bounty Hunters from taking your ship? On Decimus we are the ones that eliminated the clan of Myiej Hunters that you so brazenly angered with your words. They took up an Oath of Retribution in case you didn't know. And just last month on Tertius we were the ones that stopped that pirate vessel from blasting you out of the stars! You are no good to us dead!"

"What do you want?" Sangria demanded.

"A name." Yuriko answered as she pulled the data pad from her belt. She activated it and held it up for Sangria to see. "The name and location of the bastard who bought this girl! We know Hunal was the one who sold her. We know you delivered her to the buyer. What we do not know is the buyer's name and location."

"Hunal? You killed Hunal!" Sangria said.

"Yes, well he was being less than cooperative, and he made the mistake of trying to force himself on Nayeca there. My Spartan friend is very fond and very possessive of his mates, and he took exception to Hunal's actions." Yuriko explained. "All Hunal would tell us is that you delivered her to the buyer. I want that information."

"Who is she?" Sangria asked.

"Who she is does not matter to you." Yuriko spoke.

"It does if you want to find her." Sangria retorted.

Danny knelt down next to her quickly. "Listen bitch!" Danny snapped. "We've spent the last ten months chasing you around from planet to planet, keeping you alive in some cases. Your buddies all want you dead. They've taken a hit out on you, and between the High Coven and them, you go out there, you're dead in an hour!"

"You've destroyed my life over a slave whore and I want to know..." Sangria's head rocked back as Yuriko slapped her viciously.

"Lisisa is no slave whore!" She barked savagely, baring her fangs as if she was going to tear Sangria's throat out.

"You call smuggling slaves a life?" Anuk spoke from the door where she stood. "I was a slave once, and in my opinion that makes you no better than those who traffic in slaves."

"I have done what I needed to do to stay alive!" Sangria spat. "Who the hell are you to judge me?"

Filrian shook his head. "We don't have time for this." He hissed. He moved up next to Sangria and his hand was filled with an injector which he stabbed into her neck. She felt the bite of pain and pulled away quickly, reaching for her neck and glaring at him.

“What did you do?” She screamed.

“That was a single dose of Nonlor Venom.” Filrian told her seeing her eyes go wide. “We have the antidote on our ship. You have perhaps an hour before the venom seizes your nervous system. You will then bite through your tongue during the ensuing convulsions, more than likely break a few bones as well, and when the venom reaches your heart you will die an excruciatingly painful death. We will continue our search, and no one will have the information you hold in your head.”

Sangria’s eyes were wide and she looked at Yuriko and Daniel as if they were insane. “You’re crazy! All of you!”

“You have a decision to make.” Dan said calmly. “Come with us and live. Tell us what we want to know and we’ll put you down wherever you want to go with enough credits to live out your years.”

Yuriko looked at him. “Daniel no!”

Dan held up his hand silencing anymore words from her. “Or don’t tell us, and either the poison kills you or the bloodsuckers kill you. Your choice. Decide now! We’re leaving.” He got to his feet and headed for the door.

It was really quite simple for Sangria. She was a survivor and she had no desire to die. “Wait!” She snapped getting to her feet rubbing her neck and glaring at Filrian. “Anywhere I want to go?”

Daniel nodded. “That’s what I said.”

“I need to get to my ship.” She spoke. “There are some things I need there.”

Yuriko shook her head. “Not possible.”

“Look! You gave me this poison and I have no desire to die! I need some things from my ship! Nav charts, LSD routes!”

“We have all that!” Yuriko snapped.

“Not these you don’t!” Sangria barked.

“Her ship is only two pads down from ours.” Filrian spoke. “If we move quickly we can be back to the Runner before the Coven finishes their search here.”

“Will the docking authorities let us leave with the lock down?” Anuk asked.

Yuriko smiled. “I have something that will convince them.”

APO PRIME

It’s a mission! A real mission! Aelnala announced through their Mindvoice connection as she tore through the air towards the palace as fast as her wings would carry her and her Bond Mate.

Isra laughed within their minds and hunkered lowered in the saddle as they sped across the cityscape below them from the main Mjolnir’s Hand barracks. His dirty blond hair was shorter now, just above his shoulders, his skin more weathered and deeply tanned, but his violet eyes were even brighter than they had been a year ago, and it was due to the new life he had found.

The moment Aelnala had come into his life it had changed.

The female Heavyhorn dragon and he had stood side-by-side defending dragon eggs that did not belong to either of them, and in doing so Isra had entered into a world quite unlike anything he had ever dreamt of.

His father was long dead, killed by a strip mining transport as it was landing on Enurrua, a passing that Isra did not even blink twice at. His brother Rommna had died by his hand and his brother Joric had died under Spartan law for what he had done to Queen Aricia. Joric had died at the King’s hand. None of that mattered to Isra then, or now. All that mattered was that he was now what he had only dreamed of as a boy. He was a Spartan. His Shi Viska branded to his arm, his Nehtes strapped to his right leg. And he was not just any Spartan... he was a member of Mjolnir’s Hand. The elite Spartans that rode dragons into combat. There were only three hundred of them, never one less, never one more. He was a section leader of Mjolnir’s Hand, the bond he had with Aelnala stronger than any except for the King and Queens with their dragons and that of his fellow section leader Andreus.

His mother and sister were here on Apo Prime, and finally living the life that was denied them, his sister with three Lycavorian males chasing after her scent while she studied at the University. His mother had opened a vendor stand in the main merchant square of Tuya and discovered that her old way of cooking became an

instant hit, so much so that she had to purchase a small shop and turn it into an eatery to cope with the hundreds who were visiting her every day for true Lycavorian dishes from the old days. Among her many and most frequent customers were most of Mjolnir's Hand as well as the King whenever he was on the planet.

Isra could not complain about his life now. He was stronger, faster and wiser after a year with Aelnala. They could do things that only the King and Torma would even attempt, though it was well known that Queen Aricia and Isheeni were a little wild on occasion when flying over the city. Their Mindvoice bond had grown to the point that they were one mind in almost everything they did. Their Psychokinesis powers when together made them one of the strongest of the Bonded Pairs, and even when they were apart it still set them far above others. There was only one thing that Isra lacked that would make his life complete, two things actually. One had eyes of sapphire, the other eyes of amber. He felt a momentary lapse of sadness when he thought of them. He hadn't seen or talked to them in a year, most of his time filled with his training and Aelnala. However... the nights were filled with thoughts of them, his moments of pleasure with Tarifa while she was in his arms, and the moments he could have had with the Drow Queen Aihola. Isra had no interest in courting or dating, though many young Lycavorian females had expressed interest in him over the months. He wanted only two; they were all his blood and heart called for. There were times when he wondered if they had found another to replace them. He had inquired of Admiral Jamerl about them, found out that they too had gone on with their lives and now appeared happy. A part of Isra was saddened by that, yet a larger part was happy that they had found someone else to give them the happiness they deserved.

Stop thinking like that! Aelnala's voice interrupted his deeper thoughts. *You do not know that Isra! You do not know what they feel.*

Aelnala they are both beautiful and refined and accomplished. Everything I am not. Isra answered. *It does not surprise me that they have found someone who fills their hearts.*

You are beautiful to me. Aelnala spoke cheerfully. *And you become more refined and accomplished every day! We have a mission now Isra! You should be happy!*

We do not know what it is Aelnala. Why do you assume it is a mission?

It came from the King's office, the summons did. What else could it be?

Isra saw the palace loom in the distance and he grinned. *They will be at the estate on the island this early! Let us find out what it is my Bond Mate. Go!*

Aelnala let out a roar of approval and increased her speed as she dove for the ground far below.

Aelnala flared her wings over the wide expanse behind the private palace that was now the dragon landing zone and she saw Torma and Isheeni coming out to greet them as they landed on the soft, packed earth.

Isra jumped off Aelnala's back and looked at Torma and Isheeni. He bowed his head slightly out of respect for their positions as Bond Mates to the King and Queen.

Torma. Isheeni. It's very good to see you again.

Isheeni moved up next to Aelnala and they nudged each other in greeting as Torma moved his massive body up to Torma. *You are looking well Isra.* He spoke. *What brings you here?*

We received a summons from the King's office. Aelnala interjected quickly before Isra could answer the excitement in her voice very noticeable.

Isra looked at her with a smile. *We are hoping it is a mission.* He said. *We...*

Look out below! The child's voice, no more than four or five years old, sounded in their heads. None of them moved, Isra and Aelnala having experienced it before. There was a radical disturbance in the wind above them and then the small bluish black dragon Hatchling plowed into Aelnala's muscular side followed by the sound of rushing air from lungs.

Jeth! Isheeni's voice exclaimed.

Isra smiled as he leaned over and gently scooped up the forty-five pound dragon hatchling by his belly. All of them had begun to learn to fly, but only Jeth ventured out of the dragon cavern.

Jeth I have told you about diving from the top of the palace at guests! Torma's stern voice sounded out.

Isra laughed and looked at the blue eyes of the male dragon hatchling. He was the middle of Isheeni's eggs to have hatched and it appeared he was also the most fearless. *You are getting better Jeth.* Isra spoke.

The young dragon snapped his wings out, even now an impressive meter and a half long. *King Martin says I will be as big as my father someday!*

Isra nodded. *Perhaps little one. However diving from the top of the palace into full grown dragons like Aelnala will stunt your growth.*

It will? The hatchling blinked rapidly.

Isra nodded. *Try it from the balcony instead. You won't fall as far.*

Isra! Isheeni and Aelnala both echoed at once in indignation. Aelnala swung her tail forward and tapped her Bond Mate on the back gently, giving him a little shove forward while Torma's laughter echoed in their minds.

Come Aelnala. Isheeni said. *Aurith and Elynth are much better behaved than their brother. I will leave you to discipline your son Torma.*

Of course my mate.

Huh uh.

Isra and Torma laughed as the two female dragons turned and headed for the specially built facility that was their home. The dragon cavern as it was called. The domed building was enormous, built with steel and concrete and looked like any other facility from the outside with the exception of the massive hole in the ceiling that opened to the sky, but inside it was exactly as Arzoal's massive cavern had been on Enurrua. The cavern both Isheeni and Torma had grown up in. It was large enough for even Torma to fly in circles on the inside.

Torma looked at his son. *Climb up on my back boy! And Isra is right! Start small and then go big! Now trumpet Isra and Aelnala's arrival boy and make it loud!*

Torma felt Isheeni gently admonish him in their private connection, but she did it with love. Neither of them would deny their hatchlings anything and they both knew it. And secretly Isheeni adored that Jeth was so personable and fearless. And hearing her hatchling squeak out the terribly irritating noise at the direction of his father caused even Aelnala to chuckle.

Martin cringed as he walked down the winding staircase from the bedrooms, the mug of coffee in one hand, the data pad in the other. He wore only his usual loose fitting black pants and no shirt, the flame tattoos spreading out from his abdomen and looping up his chest under his armpits and up the back of his shoulders. Jeth's attempt at trumpeting the call was hideous but it caused him to smile as he cringed regardless. The hatchling was fearless, and Martin had no doubts he would match or exceed his father in size, something Arzoal agreed with him on. As he reached the bottom of the stairs he saw Torma walking in through the back entrance with Jeth perched happily on his back and Isra walking beside him.

We have company. Torma spoke.

"Isra!" Martin spoke, shifting the data pad into his other hand where he balanced the mug of coffee and he grasped Isra's forearm tightly, as Isra did the same. It was something that Andreus started, a symbol of the bond uniting them all, and now it came naturally to all the members of Mjolnir's Hand. "How are you? I haven't..."

"Martin Leonidas!" The female voice bellowed from above. It was Aricia's voice and it caused Martin to cringe once again.

Martin looked up slowly and saw Aricia looking down at him with an angry expression, her hands on her hips. He wore the guiltiest expression on his face that Isra had ever seen from the King and he glanced at Torma quickly. Torma's gold eyes blinked and his humorous voice spoke within a private connection.

Watch this. He always gets caught doing this. It's almost as if Aricia Blue Eyes sees through walls.

"I'm so busted." Martin muttered and he looked up fully and forced a smile as he looked at Aricia. "I didn't do it." He exclaimed.

"Martin... where is our son?" Aricia demanded. "Where is Androcles?"

"Ummm..."

Aricia shook her head. "Give me our son Martin." She spoke holding out her hands. "You have to stop doing that."

Isra forced himself to keep from laughing as the five month old Androcles lowered from far up towards the top of the cathedral type foyer, cooing happily as his arms and legs kicked back and forth almost as if he

was flying. With exacting control Martin lowered his son into his mother's arms while she watched carefully, prepared to reach out and snatch him if Martin dropped him. Aricia knew that would never happen, but she was a mother after all, and she would always be protective of her children now. Once Aricia had full control of her son, who cooed ever more happily in his mother's arms, she glared at him as For'mya walked behind her and headed down the stairs.

"He likes it." Martin said with a shrug.

"He is still a baby Beloved." Aricia spoke. "You can't do this every morning. It makes me crazy when I wake and he is gone from his bed! Promise me!"

"Ok. Ok." Martin said sheepishly. "I won't do it anymore."

"Liar! I will punish you if you do it again!" Aricia snapped turning to head back to the bedrooms.

Promise! Martin called out to her in Mindvoice.

He didn't see Aricia smile as she walked, and he didn't see Androcles lift into the air next to her shoulder as Aricia used her own power and heard her son giggle in happiness.

Martin glanced at For'mya as she reached the bottom of the stairs clad only in the long floor length robe and she leaned up to kiss him, her hand slapping his washboard hard abdomen.

"She's always going to catch you Martin Leonidas, you do know that don't you?" She spoke with a smile.

Martin grinned. "You could help me run interference you know."

For'mya laughed. "And risk losing her attentions to me? You must be joking!" She spoke with a laugh as she headed into the large room where they always ate. There was a massive table in the room that could seat twelve, and another portion of the room near the front windows held four long comfortable couches and chairs with several shin high tables.

"Ok... I think she's done yelling at me." He said with a smile as he turned back to Isra. He looked at Jeth. *Excellent work Jeth. A little deeper next time.*

Torma's son bounced on his father's back, his chest swelling out as he flapped his wings. *Thank you King Martin.*

Martin chuckled and looked at Isra. "You got the summons I take it?"

Isra nodded. "Yes sire, first thing this morning. Aelnala is very excited. She is hoping it is a mission."

Martin held out the data pad. "It is." He said. "Walk with me."

Isra began reading as he fell in beside his King, and the more he read the more his heart began to race. He tried to keep his pulse rate even so Aelnala wouldn't come running to him, but just thinking about them caused that to happen. He looked up at Martin finally and found they were on the rear patio balcony overlooking the lake and the main estate in the distance.

"Milord... I... am I the right member of Mjolnir's Hand for this mission?" He asked finally.

Martin looked at him. "You tell me." Martin said as he sipped his coffee.

"I can still smell her sometimes on calm nights." Isra spoke softly.

"She's in your blood Isra, and by virtue of that so is Aihola." Martin told him. "You know there is not one without the other."

Isra nodded. "I do." He said.

"Selene requested you personally." Martin spoke. "Of the three of them, Selene is the more reflective Isra. Tarifa and Aihola are the two most head strong and obstinate woman I have ever come across. With the exception of two of my Queens." He added with a smile thinking of Anja and Aricia. "But for Selene to request this... and then Lynwe... that tells me two things. Selene and Lynwe are full vampires now, and if they think it is important, I will usually listen to them without question. That they both requested you specifically also tells me that Tarifa and Aihola have not gone on with their lives. That won't happen until you are with them."

"But why?" Isra asked. "They are both beautiful beyond measure. They could have any man they wanted."

Martin nodded. "Yep! But there are very few who could tame them as you have." He said with a smile. "I did some checking this morning on my own before you came. Together they have nineteen invitations to dinner or lunch or some other event. They've turned them all down. You got an ally already Isra... and you don't know it."

Isra's eyes narrowed. "An ally?"

Martin nodded. “Tarifa’s mother and I have grown very close. We talk to each other once a month when my schedule permits. Tarifa doesn’t know that, so don’t let it slip out. She asked me why her daughter still seemed distant and unhappy even after all this time. I told her about you. They inquired of you when Helen was in Sparta for the birth of Androcles. It was our decision not to tell you for fear you might abandon your training before it was complete. Before you truly found your calling. Which you now have. I apologize for that.”

Isra shook his head after a moment. “It was the right thing to do sire. I probably would have gone to them at that point.”

“You and Aelnala, Andreus and Doranthe, you are the strongest behind Aricia and I. That is why you are the section leaders of Mjolnir’s Hand. Helen knew that almost immediately and so did Arzoal. I saw it after the battle on Enurrua.” Martin finished downing his coffee. “That is why we have had the two of you here so often to train with us. That is why only the two of you come and go here in our home freely. Earth will always be home to us, Tarifa and Aihola, Selene, Lynwe, they are all my extended family. I will not tolerate any threat to them or the existence of such a threat. You love them Isra... I can still smell that in your blood. That is why you are perfect for this mission. Like Dekton... you can love them and still protect them without question.”

“Sire... I am not like Dekton.” Isra spoke quickly. “He was... he was so much more than...”

Martin shook his head. “Dekton was a Spartan first! They don’t love you because you are a Spartan Isra... Tarifa didn’t fall in love with a Spartan; she fell in love with the wildness in you. The part of our people that only me, you, and a few others still allow to roam free inside our hearts. Our people are getting that back, but to us it was always natural. That is what she fell in love with Isra, and Aihola as well because of what she and Tarifa share.” Martin smiled. “That is why the bonds we share with our dragons are so strong Isra. That wildness in us, it is naturally tempered by our Bond Mates and their benevolent nature, but as they temper our wildness, they take part of it as well. You have felt it with Aelnala, just as I have with Torma, as Aricia has with Isheeni. The sense of being one completely.”

Isra nodded quickly. “She senses my emotions... as I sense hers.”

Martin nodded. “I’m sending Mjolnir’s Hand out all over beginning today.” He said. “It is time we started letting people know we really do exist Isra. You will actually be the only one so far that has a definitive mission. Andreus will remain here on Apo Prime to coordinate. Kmyla is pregnant again if you can believe it, so he doesn’t want to leave.”

Isra nodded with a laugh. “He told me.” He said. “He is working fast sire. Kmyla is strong and his son was strong too.”

Martin nodded. “Coordinate with him. Have your pilot load up your *DT* with whatever you think you will need, but I want you leaving before nightfall.”

Isra took a deep breath and they both turned as Aelnala’s bulk moved around the corner with a burst of speed. She had felt Isra’s exuberance and pride and knew that they had been given a mission. She dug her talons into the earth to stop when she saw Martin and walked over to them more sedately.

Milord. She spoke bowing her head, which was something considering her neck was so long.

Martin smiled and scratched her scales. *Take care of him Aelnala.*

I will sire.

“Isra... send me weekly reports until you find out what is happening and deal with it. If you need anything... you have my personal channel.” Martin said.

“As you order Milord.” Isra answered. All of Mjolnir’s Hand had a personal and direct communications link to the King.

Martin nodded. “I get to go meet with the Folcani ambassador now.” He said with a smile. “Joy... joy.” They grasped forearms and then Isra watched him walk back into the private palace.

I told you! Aelnala spoke. I told you!

Isra stepped closer to her and put his hand on her head. *Yes you did.*

We will go to Earth. We will find out what is happening. And you will fill the hole in your heart that only they can fill. Aelnala said. *Then we will be complete my Bond Mate.*

Isra moved around and climbed onto her back. *Then let’s get started.*

CHAPTER THREE

HIGH COVEN RUNNER ONE LIGHT YEAR FROM NONUS IV

“I believe we have lost them.” Yuriko spoke as she sat back in the pilot’s chair of the Runner. The cockpit was one of the smallest spaces in the Runner, and one of the few that had not been refitted in any way for extended comfort. Yuriko was used to the controls and set up of the cockpit, so the only things that were changed were the computer data cores and having a food dispenser added to the cockpit.

“You engaged the Shroud?” Dan asked sitting back as well.

Yuriko nodded. “Yes... but I did not expect them to be able to lock onto us as they did when we left orbit. Their ship tracked us almost immediately after lifting off, before we engaged the Shroud.”

Dan nodded, “Which tells me they knew she was onboard.” He spoke.

Yuriko looked at him. “A transmitter or beacon of some sort?”

Dan nodded. “More than likely. And we need to find it and deep six it before we finish the jump. If it is still active it won’t matter a wit that they can’t see us. They’ll just lock onto the transmitter.” He said getting to his feet.

Yuriko got to her feet as well as she followed him. “None of the Coven touched her on the surface Daniel! How could they put a tracker on her?”

“Not the Coven. I’m betting it was her mercenary buddies.” Dan said as they moved down the short corridor. “They want her dead bad... and if this Cyngi guy was able to tag her from the beginning, all he had to do was give the information to the Coven. Or she brought something over from her ship and doesn’t know it. Either way we need to find it and fast.”

They entered the main area of the Runner to see Sangria sitting in one of the couches, holding the two bags she had managed to throw together from her ship. She got to her feet slowly as she saw the looks on the Spartan and vampire female’s faces. And it wasn’t friendly in the least.

Yuriko drew her hand blaster far faster than Sangria could have ever managed and the barrel was immediately pointed at her head. “Remove your clothes now!” She demanded.

“What! What the hell for!” Sangria demanded. “I came with you damn it! What more do you want?”

“You are either wearing a tracking beacon or one is in your body somewhere.” Dan spoke. “We need to find it before we alter course in our jump. Do as she asks you, or I will force you!”

“There is no way...”

Danny’s Shi Viska appeared in a flash of silver/white light and he lifted his arm to level it at her wide eyes. Sangria had heard of Shi Viskas before, seen them in action earlier with this very man and his elf mate. That was before he had it leveled at her head. His dark eyes and face told her he was in no mood for any arguments from her.

“I am in no mood for you to play word games with us lady.” Dan growled softly. “It’s been a long day, and having to fight bloodsuckers is not my favorite past time. Take off your clothes or I will have Anuk and Nayeca do it for you, and they won’t be gentle.”

Sangria glanced over to where the two elf females sat on the opposite couch and they both just looked at her with evil grins, Nayeca’s chin resting on Anuk’s shoulder.

“All of you are crazy!” She retorted. “I am not bugged!”

Yuriko stepped forward and snatched the bags from her hands tossing them to Filrian. “We shall see.” She spoke tossing the bags to him. “Scan it all.”

Filrian began emptying the bags onto the table while Sangria began to pull off her clothes. Her sea green eyes glared at Danny as she did. “Getting your thrills I see.” She snarled at him as she striped off her jacket and then began unzipping the jumpsuit she wore.

Dan’s dark eyes didn’t change and he only shook his head. “Sister... you don’t begin to compare to what I have.” He spoke coldly. “Don’t flatter yourself.” He reached forward and jerked the jacket from her hands and tossed it back to Filrian. “All of it!” He growled.

Sangria wore nothing under the jumpsuit and soon she was standing there naked, as Yuriko took the jumpsuit from her and holstered her hand blaster. She moved to the table as well and began inspecting the clothes by hand for any obvious transmitter while Filrian ran the portable hand scanner over the equipment she

had stuffed into the two bags. Sangria brought her arms over her chest as Danny turned to the table and watched them. Anuk acted next, going to a locker and pulling out a thick blanket and carrying it over to her.

“We are not your enemy.” Anuk spoke softly. “No matter what you may think.”

Sangria took the blanket and quickly wrapped herself in it ignoring the comment as Anuk settled back onto the couch next to Nayeca. “Who are you people?” She demanded. “You aren’t mercenaries! They couldn’t afford to be in a High Coven Runner. And they wouldn’t have this high tech equipment either. You aren’t Coven if you killed those vampire troops back there, so you are either Lycavorian Union or some other free lance outfit!”

Filrian held the portable scanner up over the data pad in his hand. “Here is something.” He spoke quickly. “It’s sending out a low frequency tracking beam.”

Yuriko tore the zipper from Sangria’s jumpsuit and held it up. “Here is something else.” She looked at Daniel. “I have seen this before. It is a standard Coven data tracker. It sees and hears everything.”

“*Nubou!*” Dan swore in the ancient Lycavorian language. “That means whoever was receiving the signal heard everything we were talking about! That ain’t good.”

Yuriko nodded. “Undoubtedly.” She looked at Sangria. “Where did you get this jumpsuit?”

“It was a present.” Sangria answered.

“From who?”

“What does it matter?”

Yuriko shook her head. “Whoever gave this to you is working for the Coven directly or indirectly. Now who gave it to you?”

“Cyngi.” Sangria replied her eyes wide.

Dan looked at her. “Your big dinosaur lizard looking pal?”

Sangria nodded. “Yeah. What’s a dinosaur?”

“How long ago?” Yuriko asked.

“I don’t know. A couple of years ago maybe.” She answered. “Why?”

Yuriko looked at Daniel quickly. “Have you been close to where you took Lisisa since you got this?” She asked getting to her feet.

“What? Who is Lisisa? Will someone care to tell me what is going on?” Sangria asked. “Why are you after me? Why is the Coven after me? And why has the man who helped raise me suddenly put a contract on my head?”

“Answer my question!” Yuriko snapped.

Sangria shook her head. “No damn it! I haven’t been anywhere near that place! It’s not even in the Wilds!”

Filrian set the scanner aside and flipped the data pad over, picking up the tool. He began to unfasten the back of the data pad but froze when Danny touched his arm. Dan canted his head further, the extremely faint whining noise barely audible over the sound of the Runner’s engines.

“Toss it now!” Danny said.

“What?”

“Something inside that pad just activated. Toss it now!” Dan almost shouted.

Filrian didn’t hesitate and moved quickly to the side of the Runner, stuffing the data pad into the garbage disposal hatch. He slammed his hand down on the control panel and there was a hiss of air as the garbage in the tank was expelled into space. Five seconds later they felt the shock wave of the small explosion and Filrian turned to look at him.

“That was too close.” He spoke softly.

“Toss it all!” Dan spoke. “We can’t risk it!”

“No!” Sangria barked moving forward to the table and trying to put items back into her bags. “It’s mine! It’s all I have left!”

Filrian spotted something that looked familiar and he picked it up from the table. The small, flat crystal was dark green in color and no thicker than a tree leaf really. He held it in his fingers and looked at Sangria. “Where did you get this?” He asked her.

Sangria went to grab it out of his hand and he drew it away from her. “It’s mine!” She barked at him.

“This is a Hadarian slave data card.” Filrian spoke. “Why would you have a slave data card? You own no slaves!”

Sangria again attempted to grab it from him, but he stepped away from the table this time. “Give it to me or I will kill you!” She snarled at him.

“Where did you get it?” Filrian demanded once more, more forcefully.

“Why? It’s mine! Give it to me?” Sangria shouted.

Yuriko looked at Filrian oddly, never having seen him so incited before. “Filrian what is wrong?”

He looked at her. “This is a Hadarian slave data card!” He barked. “This is what the owners of slaves carried over five centuries ago! The cards were colored by species. Green was for Hadarian!” He looked back to Sangria. “Now where did you get it?”

“It’s mine you bastard!” She screamed. “Ok! It’s mine! I was a slave! I…” Sangria’s eyes rolled into the back of her head and she collapsed onto the deck of the Runner, her body beginning to go into convulsions.

“Filrian!” Yuriko shouted as she dropped to the deck next to her.

Filrian snatched the injector from the table and was next to her in four steps stabbing it into her neck once more and depressing the trigger. “The venom!” He gasped. “Forgive me I forgot.”

Yuriko looked at him. “Is she?”

“She will be fine now.” Filrian spoke shaking his head. “I suggest we go through her things thoroughly and discard anything that we can not even remotely decide its purpose. To include her clothes.”

Yuriko nodded quickly. “You…”

Filrian nodded slowly. “She is of my people. I will care for her Yuriko.”

Yuriko stood back up and looked at Daniel. “I know some maneuvers that will throw off any ships that might be following us. You and Anuk finish going through her things and discard everything we can’t identify.”

Dan nodded. “Done!” He spoke.

Yuriko looked at Nayeca. “Nayeca will you assist me? I need a good set of eyes for what I intend.”

Nayeca was up and following her into the cockpit without a second’s pause.

USU’OZEIB 7

“…not sure how they made it off the planet Princess.” The High Coven officer spoke within the transmission channel in Yuri’s office. “We had our net spread pretty wide however, and she had at least two Spartans and a vampire female helping her.”

“It was that wench Yuriko.” She spoke in a low voice. “It has to be.”

“I agree.” Veldruk spoke from the chair he occupied across from her desk.

“The data miner and tracking beacon have been destroyed, but I’m having my agents go through the last three years of recorded conversations in regards to this Sangria. She has an extensive history and background, and I believe you will find this information very interesting.” He could be seen working the controls on his console and the data pad on Yuri’s desk beeped. “We don’t have the equipment to make a final determination, but I thought it interesting enough to bring to your attention. Their jump course put them on a heading back towards Union space, and I have signaled the fleet you assigned to me to take up blocking positions along the entire front of the Runner’s effective range.”

“Assume the Runner has been highly modified with the best the Union capabilities allow Commander,” Yuri spoke as she pulled the data pad from the desktop. “Engine power, shields, range, everything. Adjust your positioning and deploy the fleet accordingly.”

“As you order Princess.” The man spoke.

Yuri’s dark eyes grew wider as she read the pad and after a long moment she looked up. “Is this accurate?” She demanded.

“Our transport is not equipped with more advanced medical facilities to determine that Princess. It was separate from where our men were killed. Several drops were on the bed and a larger stain on the pillows as if a face had been pushed into it.” The officer replied. “I only thought it interesting enough to inform you.”

Yuri handed the data pad to her father as she nodded. “Well done Commander.” She spoke.

“My apologies for not detaining her when we had the opportunity Princess.”

Yuri looked at the man and shook her head. “She had the help of two Spartans and a vampire. This information was not known and therefore you did the best with the intelligence you had. Do not make the same mistake again however. I will not be so forgiving next time.”

The man nodded quickly. “I will not fail Princess.”

“I want to be contacted the moment the Runner is sighted or tracked.” Yuri spoke.

“It will be done.”

Yuri ended the transmission and looked at her father as she went to table and poured them two long stemmed crystal glass of blood. She turned and held one out for her father and then moved to the chair not behind her desk, but next to him.

Veldruk looked at her and took the glass as she sat down. “I would have killed the man for his failure.” He spoke.

Yuri smiled and nodded her head. “I know father but I have learned much being away from here so long. Robert is the one who taught me not to overreact to an initial failure, only warn against future ones. Fear of what I will do is a much better motivator. If he fails again then I will kill him, and if they know I will not kill them for a mistake, there will be less of them from stupidity.”

Veldruk met her eyes. “Yes... I’ve noticed that from the High Guard just in the last year since you have returned.” He held up the data pad. “This is interesting and I will have our own scientists determine if it could be accurate, however after what happened last year I do not wish to do anything quickly. What he did to Chetak was not something I predicted he would do, however it could be something we could exploit in the future.”

“You never told me the First Oracle was imprisoned on Ukwav father.” Yuri spoke.

Veldruk shook his head. “I told no one.” He answered. “Three times they tried to take that planet and three times we smashed them. And they had no idea what it held. It matters not now. Canth has passed on that knowledge to this Helen and she is now the First Oracle they have lacked for so long. Unless we have very clear and completely accurate data, we will try nothing against her Yuri. She would sense it immediately.”

Yuri nodded. “I will make sure of it.”

“What have we learned of these dragons Yuri?” Veldruk asked. “For me not to have sensed this potential says quite a bit of the potential.”

“We sent in teams to scour Enurrua after Leonidas left.” Yuri spoke. “He was true to his word. He left nothing standing. We found many traces of bones and old eggs and brought them back for examination, but nothing close to any live dragons. The scans we have done of the eggs and bones indicate many uses for dragons and dragon parts. He has moved the majority of them to Elear, the elfin home world. They reside now on an island approximately fifteen million kilometers in size near the southern continent. The ones that live off of Elear reside mainly on Apo Prime. They are this *Mjolnir’s Hand*. Three hundred of them, not including Leonidas and his child queen.”

Veldruk laughed at her expression. “You don’t approve of his choices for Queens?”

Yuri snorted back at him. “She is barely over a hundred years old, while he is technically over three thousand years old. All of his Queens are young. Yet they wield a power that took me three thousand years to obtain and control. It angers me. Especially this Aricia.”

“Well... she has given him a son, and if the reports are correct, she and the elf pilot that he rescued are never far from his side. The elf and Hadarian Queens move about freely, albeit under heavy security, but this Aricia remains near him all the time.” Veldruk spoke.

Yuri looked at him. “Do you think he doesn’t trust her?”

“I believe it might be worth testing the limits of that relationship.” Veldruk said. “At the very least it will cause friction between them.”

“I’m not so sure.” Yuri spoke. “Since Deia purged most of our deep agents from within their capital and many areas of their government, we have had to rely on smaller sources of intelligence. They have not indicated there is anything to signal a trust issue between them.”

“Test it anyway.” Veldruk spoke firmly. “She strayed once. Perhaps he will stray this time. We have many Lycavorian females who are considered beautiful in our employ. Use one.”

Yuri nodded slowly. “I will make the arrangements. As for these dragons, it appears they are able to enhance the Mindvoice powers of whoever rides them. It is my understanding he intends to use them as a special unit of some sort.”

Veldruk nodded. "Yes... similar in fashion to our Silent Death Division. Interesting." He looked at her. "What are the possibilities of obtaining either a dragon itself or eggs from Elear?"

"Since they have been on Elear, the security there has doubled." Yuri spoke. "Our contacts within the elf government are maintaining a low profile due to the incidents of a year ago, and the talk that there might be an uprising of some sort brewing."

"Really?" Veldruk said. "That is interesting indeed."

"I'm trying to learn more, but since the dragons arrived on Elear, we must tread very carefully in our attempts to gather intelligence." Yuri spoke. "Apparently he has given them a seat on the Union Senate due to their intelligence and sentient status."

"They are animals!" Veldruk popped. "What fool gives them sentient status?"

"Leonidas did." Yuri spoke.

"If it is possible... find me one of these dragons. Alive if possible Yuri." Veldruk spoke. "I wish to see what they can do."

Yuri nodded. "I'll make inquiries father, but no guarantees."

"The clones?" Veldruk asked nodding his head at her words.

Yuri smiled. "They are progressing amazingly well." She replied. "Our scientists here have augmented them even further in some respects, making them less dependant on blood on the battlefield, slightly stronger and faster, but the core is essentially the same."

"When can we field the first units?" Veldruk asked.

"Without the DNA of the abomination, I have been told two years for the first million." Yuri spoke. "If we were able to obtain her DNA, half that time. It is why I have been searching for her so diligently since my return."

Veldruk looked at her. "I will not apologize to you for making you carry that creature Yuri."

Yuri looked at him surprised. "I don't expect you too father. That is a decision we made together. I agreed with you did I not? We both determined carrying her to full term naturally was the best way to insure no mistakes or errors were made. I agreed with that decision remember."

"You want to kill this child don't you?" Veldruk asked.

Yuri nodded slowly. "Not only is she an abomination, but when she is dead, all ties that link me to that savage Leonidas will finally be severed. And when I kill him it will be that much sweeter."

Veldruk laughed as he got to his feet, setting his glass down untouched. Yuri noticed it and looked at him questioningly. "You did not touch your blood father." She spoke. "It has been aged perfectly, just as you always liked."

"Yes I noticed." He spoke.

Yuri met his eyes briefly before stepping over and picking up his glass, downing half of it before looking at him again. "Father... I am not Xerxes. If I was going to attempt to assassinate you, do you honestly believe I would do it this way?"

Veldruk met her eyes for a long moment and then took the glass from her. He downed the remaining blood in one gulp. "Old habits daughter." He spoke.

"I have so much I still want to learn from you," She spoke softly. "And you did not raise me to be foolish father. Assassinating you would remove from Vonis and I the one source that will teach us everything. And I would not take you from the daughter you have only known for two months either."

"It is the way of our people Yuri." He spoke.

Yuri nodded. "Perhaps... but it is not your way... and it is not mine. I do not wish to kill you father. I never have. It is the reason I never held back anything from you while I was on Earth. It is also the reason you never killed Xerxes and you know you should have."

Veldruk nodded slowly. "You may be right. He was a fool... but he was my son. But you... I have forced you to marry a pureblood you hate." Veldruk spoke. "Demanded that you have his child to seal the bond between our families for political reasons. I have done this knowing that your heart belongs to someone else. You should hate me."

"And I have told you I will endure this for the good of us all." Yuri spoke. "Having a child with that fool seals their support for all time, but that does not mean I will ever desire his touch on me. He is vile and disgusting... no different than Xerxes in my opinion. And he can't get it up more than half the time! You are

right that my heart belongs to someone else, and Robert understands I must do this. I do not hate you father. I do not agree with what you wish at times, but assassinating you? We may be vampires father, but we are still family.”

“Some would say that attitude is dangerous.” Veldruk spoke. “But you are right.”

Yuri smiled. “I did not endure all that I have to do something as stupid as trying to assassinate you. You taught me better. You have never done anything to hurt me. I will never do anything to hurt you. Not that I ever could.”

“And this Moran?”

“He loves me. He will never do anything that harms me.”

“Your consort continues to impress me Yuri.” Veldruk said softly. “Yet you have asked nothing for him. Why?”

“He wants to show you he is capable without my help.” Yuri said with a smile. “And he is father. You will see this in due time, and until you do, he will continue to impress you.”

“We shall see.” Veldruk spoke. “We shall see. I must return to the palace. I have a meeting with the Zaleisian Ambassador.”

Yuri’s eyes grew a little wider. “Really? Why?”

“He says he has a proposition for me that I won’t be able to refuse.” Veldruk spoke.

Yuri looked thoughtful. “To have them as an ally, so close to the Union border as they are?”

Veldruk nodded. “My thoughts exactly.” He held up the data pad. “I will deliver this to our scientists and have them contact you directly if they believe it to be accurate.”

“And if it is?”

“Then we will decide what to do with that information.” Veldruk spoke. “You have meetings to attend as well?”

Yuri nodded. “Yes I do.”

“Then I suggest we get to it.” Veldruk said.

He squeezed her hand and then headed out of her office, Cha’talla appearing from the shadows and falling in behind him as he walked. Veldruk waited until he was out of ear shot and then glanced at Cha’talla.

“I value your opinion over most Cha’talla.” Veldruk spoke as he walked. “Is this man... this Moran... is he worthy of my daughter even though he is not pureblood?”

“Give him a fleet and let him show you Milord. You want to know if he is capable Milord. Give him a fleet and send him to Pontal. Give him what he needs and he will defeat Pontal.” Cha’talla answered. “Then you can make that determination for yourself.”

“You speak highly of him.” Veldruk said. “No High Coven Commander has ever defeated Pontal.”

Cha’talla nodded. “I do Milord. And if you give Robert Moran what he needs to do the job, he will defeat Pontal.”

Veldruk nodded. “Would you die beside him in battle Cha’talla?”

Cha’talla nodded quickly. “As I would die beside you Milord. Yes.”

“Then I have my answer.” He spoke. He looked at the Immortal. “Does she know?”

Cha’talla shook his head. “Unlikely Milord. If she did... she would be different towards you.”

Veldruk nodded. “Good. She must never discover that it was I who told Xerxes to rape her like he did. Now that the fool is dead, only you and I know this, and it must stay that way. She is a fine Commander and will make an excellent High Lord one day, but she must never discover that.”

“And she never will discover it Milord.” Cha’talla spoke.

HIGH COVEN RUNNER

Filrian left Sangria lying on the one medical bed they had and headed out into the main area of their ship. Daniel had carried her here after she had collapsed and he had run a detailed medical scan on her while she slept, as well as reviewing all of the data on the history card. He found Danny and Yuriko sitting with Nayeca as Anuk slept on the couch. He moved to the dispenser and took a mug of Hadarian tea to the small table. Yuriko watched him the entire time and she leaned forward when he sat down.

“You look like you have something to say.” She spoke calmly. They had been together long enough for her to know that he wanted to speak. “Speak your mind Filrian.”

“I gave our guest a complete medical scan while she was unconscious. Did some basic tests that I have perfected over the years. Some of the things I discovered... well...” Filrian spoke. He held up the dark green slave card. “This card is indeed hers.” He said. “She calls herself Sangria, but her real name... her given name is Sivana, at least according to this card. Based on the samples I have taken, she’s five hundred and twelve years old, in excellent physical condition, no abnormalities that I can find. The card’s history begins when she is seven, and continues for roughly a hundred and twenty-five years.”

“Jesus!” Danny muttered.

Nayeca placed her hand over the top of his. “Lisisa has been a slave for much longer Daniel.” She said softly.

Dan nodded. “I know... but I thought slavery... I’m still not used to slavery being accepted.” He stated. “It turns my stomach.”

Yuriko nodded. “As it does many Daniel.” She said. “What else have you discovered Filrian?”

“The exam revealed old injuries. Fractures. Scars. Lacerations. Some of it appears self inflicted.” Filrian said. “Definite signs of sexual abuse in the past... and what we would no doubt consider sexual abuse now I suppose, but there are no defensive wounds on her, so I can only assume she didn’t fight it for whatever reason.”

“Wait... you mean she was with someone on Nonus IV?” Dan asked.

Filrian nodded. “Long enough to have sex with her a few times. Whoever it was, they weren’t gentle. Fresh bite marks and scratches on the backs of her shoulders and her neck. Bruises on her buttocks. No more than twelve hours old, I’d say. I can’t get a definitive time because her power has already started healing her.”

“A slave and smuggler.” Yuriko spoke softly shaking her head. “Not easy lives to lead in the best of circumstances.” Yuriko looked at him. “Wait... her power?” She said. “She is a smuggler, a former slave. How could her power be active if she has never returned to Hadaria and Ascended?”

Filrian shook his head. “I don’t know. She appears to be drawing miniscule portions of life from all around her. It’s very weak, but it is active, and it gives Sangria the uncanny ability to store and use the power when needed.” He shook his head. “I tried to make an inquiry of the Hadarian Ministry in regards to this phenomenon, but they basically told me to go away. I ran a detailed scan of her blood and DNA, but without the proper comparisons, I can’t be sure.”

“Sure of what?” Yuriko looked at Daniel than backed to Filrian.

Filrian turned to Danny. “You must have sensed it even just a little. In her scent perhaps? Lycavorians can detect family relations among scents. You would be able to tell Daniel.”

Danny met his eyes. “She’s familiar somehow yes. A little detail in her scent, but more the way she carries herself. I’ve been racking my brains but I can’t place it.”

Filrian tapped the control panel on the table. “Maybe this will help.” The screen below the center of the table changed to a Union database of pictures and profiles. It was speeding along computing faster than the eye could follow. “I uploaded her blood and DNA into the Union database and asked the computer to search for possible matches. I got a match it seems... but this is what I get.” The screen froze beneath them, blinking red and black letters...

ACCESS DENIED

RESTRICTED DATABASE FILE

SPARTAN LEVEL NINE CLEARANCE REQUIRED

“That is what I’m getting.” Filrian spoke. “Daniel... you are like a brother to the King. Do you have this Level Nine clearance it is asking for? Yuriko and I have been granted only Level Six. I did not know Level Nine even existed.”

Yuriko looked at him. “Neither did I.” She said softly.

Dan met his eyes for only a moment before Nayeca squeezed his hand and nodded her head. Dan leaned forward quickly and began typing a code into the computer terminal on the table.

ACCESS GRANTED
SIMPSON, STAR COLONEL DANIEL A.
ENTER VOICE AUTHORIZATION

“Simpson, Star Colonel Daniel A. Spartan Four One. Anuk activate all.” Danny spoke evenly. “Nayeca Execute all.”

FULL ACCESS GRANTED
THANK YOU COLONEL SIMPSON

The screen went blank for a few seconds and then the picture appeared, as well as several pages of information, but all any of them were interested in was the picture of the persian red haired female.

“You have got to be fucking kidding me.” Dan muttered.

Filrian sat back in his chair. “That does explain a few things.” He spoke softly. “While the Ministry may not hold me in high regard, I do have the respect of fellow Healers, including the Mage Warrior Seanna. The Queen’s Handmaiden. She told me Queen Anja was showing signs of this same skill before we left Apo Prime to begin this journey. It did not come back to me until just now. She used it on Enurrua to heal Queen Aricia’s Dragon. She had not yet ascended at that point. The age is identical, even some of the facial features. Their eyes are very close, build and such.”

Dan got to his feet quickly. “Are you telling me we’ve come all this way to find the Skipper’s daughter and we find Anja’s sister instead!”

“Not just her sister,” Filrian spoke. “If this data is correct... her twin. Her fraternal twin to be more precise.”

Dan looked at him. “Wait... how is that possible? She was taken at birth wasn’t she? When the Coven began the assassinations of her family? How could they miss Sangria here?”

Filrian looked at him. “There is usually anywhere from fifteen minutes to almost an hour between the birth of twins. Queen Anja came out first yes... but her mother was obviously still in labor with Sivana when Anja was taken away. That is one of the reasons I wanted to speak with someone in the Ministry; to find out how long her mother was alive after she gave birth to Anja.”

Yuriko looked at him. “Regardless of whether she is the Queen’s sister, she still knows where Lisisa is Daniel.”

“Oh man, Anja is going to flip!” Dan spoke turning around and moving to the bulkhead wall. “Marty is going to flip!” He looked at Filrian. “The Hadarian Ministry wouldn’t talk to you?”

Filrian shook his head. “I tried Prefect Zaniai, and he refused to speak with me. A number of other Ministers also. I even... I even tried the Divine One. It is very possible they know nothing of her existence Daniel. I do not have the most stellar reputation on Hadaria, for any number of reasons, and it would not be uncommon for them to refuse to speak with me.”

Dan turned back around and looked at Yuriko. “How far are we from the border?” He asked.

“Four days to the safest border crossing.” She answered immediately. “The Coven knows we will head to where we feel safe. They will deploy as many ships as they can between us and the border. Pirate ships mostly, mercenaries in their employ.”

“We can’t sneak by them with the Shroud?” Danny asked.

Yuriko adjusted the star map. “There is only one safe border crossing in this sector and that is here, on the edges of this gas nebula. The nebula will bring down the Shroud immediately, that is why the Union put the crossing there. The rest of the border is saturated with minefields and defensive platforms that I specifically asked be left out of our databanks in case we were captured or our ship taken. We do not have the maps or codes to traverse them. One slip by us, one hit on us by a plasma cannon, one explosion off our hull by a mine, and whoever is in the area will see us when the Shroud drops.”

“Can’t we get them? The codes and maps?” Nayeca asked. “Surely we have secured enough communications to receive this information?”

Yuriko nodded. “Without a doubt. But that will also send a signal to whoever is watching that what we have is very important. Important enough for them to transmit codes and maps over secured military channels.”

Yuriko spoke. She shook her head. "Father would not want us to compromise our security or our anonymity for this, no matter who we carried. The only reason we have been able to survive this long is because of that anonymity. That is the way he wanted it."

Nayeca met her eyes. "You think there are still Coven spies within the Union don't you Yuriko?"

Yuriko nodded. "Prime Minister Deia may have put a very large dent in their intelligence network with her sweeps, but they are still there."

Danny nodded. "You're right about the COMs though. That's not something you can just send out on a whim." He spoke. "What other options do we have?"

Yuriko pointed to another point on the star chart. "The Gellen Asteroid Belt." She said. "Filrian and I have been through it before. It is a haven for smugglers, but it is on the very edge of the Union border, and since the Gellen Belt stretches into Union territory, they could not pursue us. We go to Gellen Station and wait for father to send us a ship that can take us through the minefields and defensive platforms."

"You said it was a haven for smugglers." Dan spoke.

Yuriko nodded. "It is... but neither of us will have an advantage." Yuriko spoke. "Gellen Station is considered protected territory. No smuggler or mercenary will break the no fire zone imposed here. If they do, they will be marked forever."

"How long before Marty could get someone there from Apo Prime?" Danny asked.

"Three days maximum at top speed." Filrian answered.

"How fast can we get there?"

"Eighteen hours." Yuriko spoke.

Dan nodded quickly. "Do it!" He spoke. He turned to look at Filrian. "We got some of the best COM gear in the universe on this crate. Let's you and me start making some waves on Hadaria. I want to be sure of what we're talking about before we tell Anja." Danny looked at Nayeca. "Watch our guest closely Nubian, she may not be in the best of moods when she wakes up."

Nayeca smiled and got to her feet. Daniel called her his Nubian Princess or Nubian for short, in a show of affection and devotion to her. It was no different than Anuk calling her Mistress, or Daniel calling Anuk his Snow White. They were terms that reflected what the three of them shared with each other.

"I will watch her." She said.

Yuriko looked at Daniel. "I do not want to stop searching for Lisisa Daniel." She spoke softly.

Danny moved up to her and took her hand. "We're not going too." He said. "We've been out here too long, been through too much to stop looking now. We'll get what information we need from this Sangria and then Anja can take her back and we'll keep looking. We've never been this close and I have no intentions of quitting now. We'll find her Yuriko. I promise you we'll find her."

Yuriko nodded at his words and smiled. "Yes we will." She spoke. She turned and headed for the cockpit. "I will adjust our course."

HADARIA

Zaniai looked up when the door to his office slid aside and his eyes flew open when he saw Eurin strode in, anger written all over her face. Since the events on Enurrua, The Divine One had taken a much more active role in the government of Hadaria. She left most of the normal decisions to the Ministers, having no real political power, but she now voiced her opinion on many of the larger decisions. And almost always her voice echoed that of the young Queen she had taken under her wing.

When Queen Anja was on Hadaria, Eurin was most always with her. Zaniai had never seen her spend so much time with anyone of the royal family. Not even the Queen's parents had her attention as much as Anja did. Always at their side was Seanna, the dark haired Mage Warrior who was not only the Queen's shadow along with her Spartan Captain, but she was also the Queen's lover. And since Anja had chosen a dragon to become bonded with, Eurin was always at the royal residence and no where else. Zaniai had never seen her angry or disturbed before, and her expression and body language told him that was exactly what she was.

Eurin looked at the two Ministers in Zaniai's office. "Leave us now!" She barked out.

The two men scrambled to comply with her directive having no desire to incur the wrath of the Divine One. As they hurried from the room Zaniai came to his feet. "Eurin... what is wrong?"

Eurin held out the data pad. "I received this transmission this morning."
Zaniai took the pad and activated it.

"...whatever else I may be, I have never strayed from the path of Healer Divine One. And I have never relinquished our secret. No one will even take my transmissions so that I may ask a question that could very well be related to the Queen. I..."

Zaniai nodded. "I received a message from him this morning as well. His name is Filrian. He was captured by the High Coven many years ago and then rescued by this vampire child that the King considers a daughter. He refused to return to Hadaria for retraining and he was exiled."

"Retraining? You mean he refused to return and allow us to roam around inside his head to make sure he did in fact keep the secret of the Ascension Ceremony." Eurin spoke.

Zaniai looked at her and cringed a little. "Yes." He said. "He has managed on several occasions to return here anyway and Ascend once more, keeping his abilities active. How he is able to remain away for so long and still use his powers is a mystery. We..."

"Have we ever stopped being so paranoid long enough to ask him?" Eurin spoke.

Zaniai looked at her sheepishly. "Apparently not." He spoke.

"Perhaps we should." Eurin said. "It is obviously something that could help us to operate better Zaniai."

"Eurin he wanted information on Queen Anja's ability to draw her gift from the life around her." Zaniai spoke. "That is not information we want just handed out to anyone. The King may trust him enough to give him and the vampire child Level Six Clearance, but obviously not enough to give him Level Nine."

Eurin moved to the monitor in Zaniai's office and touched the panel. "The transmission on secure hold, transfer it to Prefect Zaniai's office now."

"Yes Divine One." The voice answered.

Eurin looked at him sternly. "I took the transmission because it came with the encrypted command code of Colonel Simpson. Something you and the other Ministers failed to see."

Zaniai looked at her. "The man who..."

Eurin nodded. "The man who is about as close to the King as many will ever get. And one of only twenty-two people out of the trillions in the Union that hold a Level Nine Security Clearance. If this Filrian travels with Colonel Simpson, I believe it is safe to assume it is important enough to speak with him." She turned to the holo projection disc on Zaniai's desk and the image shimmered to life. They saw Daniel pacing in the background and the picture of Filrian sitting calmly at the table. "Daniel... I apologize for the delay."

Dan shook his head and moved closer to the table. "Eurin we need some answers." He spoke quickly. "Is Anja there?"

"Queen Anja is on Apo Prime with the King." Zaniai spoke. "She returned two days ago. They are having a Union Dinner tomorrow evening and Queen Aricia wanted her and Seanna to attend."

Danny nodded. "That's just as well. Better you find out before she does."

Eurin moved closer to the desk. "Find out what?"

"This is Filrian," Danny spoke. "He is the..."

"Yes we are aware who he is Daniel." Eurin spoke.

"It is... it is an honor to speak with you Divine One." Filrian broke in.

Eurin smiled and nodded her head. "What is this all about Daniel?" She asked.

"Divine One we need to know about the night Queen Anja was born and taken to Earth." Filrian spoke. "Specifically we need to know if the Queen's mother was carrying twins."

Eurin and Zaniai both settled into the chairs quickly. "Twins?" Eurin asked. "No... not that I am aware of. Zaniai and I both were rushed to secure bunkers when the attack began. We did not see the King and Queen... we did not come out until after Admiral Riall arrived the next day with a Fleet Group. What have you discovered Filrian?"

"As you know we are currently in the Wilds trying to track down the King's daughter Lisisa. The hybrid child with the High Coven Princess Yuri." Filrian began.

Eurin nodded. "Yes... Zaniai and I are aware of this."

"We have been tracking a Hadarian smuggler for the last ten months. We know she was the one contracted to deliver the King's daughter to her last known location." Filrian spoke. "She's led us on a very wide ranging chase, but yesterday we were able to catch up with her. We have her now here on our ship. I gave her a full medical exam and ran some tests... the results of which were astounding."

"Go on."

"Divine One this female has a ninety-nine point six percent DNA match ratio to Queen Anja." Filrian spoke. "She shows all the same signs as Queen Anja in being able to draw from the life around her to heal. Divine One we have the Queen's sister, her fraternal twin, on our ship right now."

"Impossible!" Zaniai exclaimed. "She has no brothers or sisters!"

"Would you like to check my figures and data Prefect?" Filrian asked with a heated voice.

Eurin reached out and touched Zaniai's arm. "Filrian... are you sure?" She asked.

"Positive." Filrian spoke. "I re-ran my calculations and data four times Divine One. Once Daniel allowed me to access Level Nine Security Protocols, it matched every time with Queen Anja."

"And this Hadarian... she isn't a clone of some kind?" Eurin asked.

Daniel shook his head now. "I had him run all the tests we are using now to eliminate that possibility. She's no clone Eurin."

"Filrian... do you have remote access capability on your ship?" Eurin asked.

Filrian nodded. "The Runner we are using has been heavily modified Divine One. It is state-of-the-art now."

Eurin looked at Zaniai. "Zaniai can we...?"

Zaniai nodded quickly. "A remote hook up? Yes." He spoke. "Filrian can you compress all your data into a single stream?"

"I already have Prefect." He replied. "It is highly encrypted and ready."

Zaniai looked at the transmission briefly before nodding. He moved to his computer terminal, his hands playing across the panel. "Send it now."

Eurin watched Filrian touched two buttons on the table he sat at, and she heard Zaniai's computer acknowledge the stream. "I'm sending it on an old, unused pirate channel Prefect. You should be receiving it now. It will look like a Pirate data core breach but it is not."

"I have it... adjusting the..." Zaniai looked up. "Where... where did you learn this level of encryption?"

Filrian smiled. "I'm a smuggler and a mercenary Prefect... you pick things up here and there."

Zaniai looked back to the screen as it beeped. "Eurin... Eurin... look at this." He gasped.

Eurin moved to the screen and her own eyes grew wide. "The... the enzymes and Endochromes are within point zero three. That indicates..."

Filrian nodded. "Fraternal twins." He spoke.

Eurin touched Zaniai's arm. "Find Fuleos." She said quickly. "If anyone knows how this has happened it will be him."

"We need to find out how and quickly. We're heading for Gellen Station right now, but the Coven are after her, as well as all the really bad people she used to work for, all of whom want her dead. The Coven had a data tracker on her up until we destroyed it, but there is a possibility they know what we know. If they do..." Dan spoke.

Eurin nodded. Yes... life for you will get very busy." Eurin directed her gaze to Filrian. "Where is she now?"

"She's in the small medical bay we have on board. I gave her a sedative to help her sleep, something it appears she does not do very well." Filrian answered.

"Can you keep her sedated Filrian? Safely?"

Filrian nodded. "Daniel has already made that decision Divine One. She was not happy that we found her, and she is very edgy and unpredictable. Daniel thought it best to avoid any unpleasantness."

"Zaniai has gone to find Anja's great grandfather Daniel. He was with them for part of that night." Eurin spoke.

Danny nodded. “We have about nine hours before we get to Gellen Station. Yuriko knows where we can hide out there. We’ll need a ship to meet us and guide us through the Border Defensives however. And then someone needs to tell Anja and Marty.”

APO PRIME

“Don’t know what these rumors or reports indicate *Melda Min*, so you need to be careful.” Martin was speaking as they walked hand in hand towards the *STRIKER DT* on the private Royal landing pad.

They walked five abreast, Aricia on his right holding hands with Anja, Dysea on his left Isabella gripping her hand. They were not together very often the five of them, and when they were it was unspoken that they would be touching in some manner, if only to show how they felt. For’mya and Seanna stayed with the Hover Lifter, and both of them were playing with Androcles, who was ecstatic with the attention he was getting, his little arms and legs kicking and waving in joy.

“*Nauta Melme* I have learned much working with Deia and from your mother, and they are only rumors.” Dysea said with a smile. “Alocgeid thought it might be good for me to return and spend some additional time on Elear anyway. There is much Bella and I have not explored there.”

Isabella nodded. “That is very true.” She spoke. “I understand some of the ruins date back twenty thousand years.”

Martin nodded. “Just stay in touch.” He told her. “Aricia and I always have our COMs open.”

“Jeez Marty... you’re such an old worry wart.” Anja spoke with a smile.

Dysea laughed. “He is that *Melyanna*.” She spoke as they stopped walking next to the ramp of the *STRIKER DT*. Iriral was already inside and securing herself into the harness for lift off. Dysea looked at him and caressed his face. “I will be fine.”

Martin grinned. “Ok... ok.”

[Mindvoice Shielded] *You were very good to me last night Nauta Melme.* Dysea spoke pressing against him.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I had this strong craving for this particular female elf that smells like wildflowers. Go figure that one just happen to be in my bed already. And she was unoccupied at the time, which was equally amazing.* He answered.

Dysea laughed softly within their connection. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Nauta Melme... you don’t...*

Martin shook his head as Anja and Aricia began to say goodbye to Isabella. [Mindvoice Shielded] *She makes you happy Melda Min. And you make her very happy. I will never deny that happiness to you. I know you love me. I know Bella loves me.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *She will come around soon Nauta Melme. She still fears you in some ways.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I know. I don’t intend to rush anything with her. She is already a Queen to me and others, regardless of what she thinks. She looked to be having a good time with Anja and Aricia last night.*

Dysea’s musical laugh filled their connection again. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Yes she did. They didn’t seem too unhappy about the situation either.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *No they didn’t.* He answered with a laugh.

Martin hugged her tightly and Dysea closed her eyes in bliss as his arms wrapped around her. She loved Isabella, of that she had little doubt, and what they shared together she never wanted to change, but it was Martin who could make her blood burn brighter than any sun.

“Be mindful of everything around you *Melda Min*.” Martin spoke.

Dysea nodded. “We will be.”

Martin turned and looked at Isabella as Dysea went to hug Anja and Aricia. He took her hands and surprised her by leaning over and kissing her tenderly on the lips. Isabella didn’t pull away as she had done in the past and actually squeezed his hands tighter and let the sensations flow through her now. She knew Martin wanted her, and it was becoming increasingly difficult to fight her own desires for him. He had not pressured her in any way, and until right now was content to simply show his affection by kissing her cheeks or hugging her.

Now... Isabella felt desire sweep through her from his kiss and she knew their time together was coming soon.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Watch yourselves Bella.* He spoke in a private connection to her alone. *I have a feeling all is not as it seems there.*

Isabella gazed at him with her hazel/green eyes intently. [Mindvoice Shielded] *I will protect her Martin.*

Martin shook his head. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Watch out for each other Bella. You mean just as much to me as she does. And you have a better sense of your surroundings because of your experience.*

Isabella nodded slowly. [Mindvoice Shielded] *You fear something?*

Martin shrugged. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Just a feeling really. An instinct. I've come to trust them more this last year.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *As you should.* She reached up and touched his face. *I am not good with... with words Martin.*

Martin drew her tightly to him and covered her lips with his. Isabella whimpered softly as she surrendered once more, her arms going around his shoulders and responding to his kiss with as much passion as she now did with Dysea. It was a brief kiss, but it was a taste of things to come Isabella knew, and as they drew away she smiled.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I look forward to the day I share your bed Martin Leonidas. I didn't before... it frightened me... but now... now I can't wait for it to happen.* She spoke.

Martin released her from his embrace and brought her fingers to his lips. [Mindvoice Shielded] *So do I Bella.*

He turned quickly. "Ok... enough with the mushy stuff! You two need to get going... and the three of us need to get ready for tomorrow night's grand event."

Anja stepped close to Aricia. "Oh... you mean that State Dinner that you intend to display us at?"

"Yes Beloved. I think we need to discuss that." Aricia spoke now. "Have you seen the dresses we are expected to wear? They are... they..."

"They aren't there. There's nothing to them!" Anja said.

"Yes! We may as well go without clothes!" Aricia agreed.

Martin grinned evilly. "Ok I'm not seeing a problem with that. It's less for me to take off when we get back home." He replied.

Dysea and Isabella laughed as they watched Anja and Aricia begin to chase him back to the Hover Lifter.

EARTH EDEN CITY

Aihola fell in beside Lynwe as she walked down the corridor of the Eden City Central Command.

"So how does it feel to be another year older?" Aihola asked sweetly, her hands behind her back as she walked.

Lynwe looked at her Queen and her closest friend, taking her amber eyes from the report she was reading and narrowing her eyelids. "The three of you planned that." Lynwe hissed.

Aihola laughed. "Of course we planned it Lynwe." She said. "We wanted to surprise you. Have you fully recovered now? Selene said you took yesterday off."

Lynwe narrowed her eyes even more. "You and Tarifa used me for nine hours Aihola!" She spoke with a sly grin. "Tarifa was especially wild. When you left... then Selene assaulted me!"

Aihola bumped into Lynwe with her shoulder affectionately. "I didn't exactly hear you complaining when you were filling us with your gift." She said with her own grin. "Tarifa is wolf now; it is the time when she becomes the most fertile. It also increases her sexual drive quite a bit. It passes in another day or so, but for the time it is upon her it is especially fun. Tell me you didn't enjoy two slaves servicing your gift at the same time?"

Lynwe couldn't help the smile that crossed her soft lips. Watching as both Tarifa and Selene knelt before her, watching as her huge Drow cock was swallowed completely by one and then the other over and over

until the ebony shaft was slick with salvia had driven her insane. “Well... it was even better when you lowered yourself onto my face so I couldn’t scream and wake the neighbors.”

Aihola laughed and took her arm squeezing it affectionately. “Lynwe... I am so happy we have become so close. You are a true friend in every sense of the word, to both Tarifa and I.” Aihola said. “We can not thank you enough.”

Lynwe smiled. “It is I who should be thanking the two of you. I would not be here without the two of you and what you showed me. I would not have found Selene if not for the life you gave to me. She is my world now Aihola.”

“And you are hers.” Aihola spoke. “We should get together again soon.”

Lynwe looked at her quickly, knowing that she and Selene had already plotted to bring back into their lives what both of them so desired. She nodded. “I will talk with Selene. I have no doubts she would be very interested.” Lynwe lied. Selene and she both knew that once Isra returned to Earth, their trysts with Aihola and Tarifa would be over. The love they felt for the violet eyed Spartan was almost a palpable thing that could be felt by everyone around them even though they would not openly admit it to anyone.

At least not yet.

“Why are you here?” Lynwe asked finally. “Don’t you and Tareif have to go to Mountain City for the Dragoon graduation?”

Aihola nodded. “We are leaving in an hour, and then we will meet Tarifa in Sparta for the new class of Spartans who are graduating the day after tomorrow. I felt I should touch base with you as Chief of Earth Security before I left.”

Lynwe looked at her, amber eyes wide. “What?”

Aihola smiled and handed her the data pad. “We became preoccupied with your gift and forgot to tell you of your promotion.”

Lynwe looked at the pad, reading the orders. “Aihola... you and Tarifa mustn’t do this. Selene and I are lovers, mates, and everyone knows we are close to you. This will look like...”

“It will look like an order from the King of the United Lycavorian Union.” Aihola spoke. “Which it was. Look who signed the order Lynwe.”

Lynwe paged down to the bottom. “Aricia?”

Aihola nodded. “We all know that they are never apart now. She, Anja, Dysea, all of them are involved in almost every decision he makes concerning Earth. He asked for and received recommendations from Dilios, from Panos, from Admiral Jamerl, and from Admiral Riall. He already knew what Tarifa and I would say. They all agreed that you are best suited for the position.”

“But Admiral Wallace?”

“Admiral Wallace recommended you.” Aihola said. “He is perfectly happy commanding EDEN, and with Anisa carrying their second child, he does not want the added responsibility.”

Lynwe had stopped walking and was looking at her now. “This... this is a great honor Aihola.”

“It’s also a great responsibility Lynwe.” Aihola spoke. “If you feel for any reason that you are not up to the task, we will chose a temporary replacement until you feel you are. Jamerl has already volunteered to be your advisor on fleet operations, and he will assign you a Spartan officer as your liaison.”

“This is...” Lynwe was doing her best to not let the tears fall and Aihola gripped her hand tightly.

“Martin knows what you are capable of Lynwe. He would not have made the decision if he didn’t think you were ready.” Aihola said. “And Aricia would not have signed the order. This will be their home for part of every year... and they know their security will be in no better hands than yours.”

“Does Selene know?” Lynwe asked.

Aihola nodded. “I asked her to let me tell you.” She said softly. “It is another step for the Drow Lynwe. For our people. We are as accepted now on Earth as any other elf clan or tribe. They do not question our skill, our skin color... they only see that we want the same things as everyone else.” Aihola leaned close to her. “They trust us Lynwe. And that is due in large part to you and no one else.” Aihola smiled. “Of course... it does help having two of the Chief Administrators as our slaves doesn’t it?”

Lynwe burst out laughing and hugged Aihola tightly. “I will not fail in my duties my Queen. My friend.”

Aihola squeezed her back. "I know you won't Lynwe." She leaned up and kissed her softly on the lips. "I need to go and get ready to leave. We will see you when we get back from Sparta."

Lynwe nodded and watched as she turned and headed back down the corridor. She smiled to herself. "We will see you my Queen." She said softly. "But I'm guessing you will only see one other."

"General Lynwe?" The voice interrupted her thoughts and she turned to look at the Dragoon.

"Yes Captain?"

The elf Dragoon Captain held out the transmission pad. "General... another body has been found with a similar message to the last one."

Lynwe's eyes sobered quickly. "Where?" She gasped.

"Same location as the last one General. The beach front of New Miami."

"Is Kenneth or Pablo back from Sparta?" Lynwe asked.

The Dragoon nodded. "Kenneth returned yesterday morning. He is quite pleased with the upgraded RAPTORS and their capabilities."

Lynwe nodded. "Good. Call him... tell him to kiss his mate goodbye and prep a new RAPTOR for immediate departure. I'm going to New Miami myself."

The Dragoon nodded and moved off quickly while Lynwe turned and made a direct line for Selene's office on this floor. She blew past the human assistant, which didn't faze the young woman as Lynwe was always coming and going as she pleased. She passed her hand over the panel on the wall and was reading the pad as she walked in. Selene looked up from behind her desk, Treblar and two other Ministers turning in the chairs they occupied. Lynwe glanced at the female Spartan standing along the wall and did a double take.

This must have been the Layna that Selene had been talking about. Lynwe had to admit... this Spartan from Apo Prime looked very stern and business like, but she definitely filled out her uniform with ample curves. Her long blond hair was pulled into a braided pony tail, her sky blue eyes alert and intelligent. She had regal cheekbones and the fullest and softest lips Lynwe had seen for some time.

Selene knew that look and she stood up. "Lynwe... what is it?"

Lynwe held out the pad to her as she came forward. "I'm going to New Miami. They've discovered another body. Same condition as the last one. I wanted to let you know I was leaving."

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Be careful Mistress.* Selene spoke using their Mindvoice connection.

Lynwe nodded. [Mindvoice Shielded] I shall be, don't worry. I will return as soon as I can.

Lynwe turned when the female Spartan stepped away from the wall. "If you don't mind General Lynwe, I would like to accompany you. I have some experience in investigations of this nature."

Lynwe met her blue eyes for a moment before looking at Selene. Her lover nodded. "I've seen her record." She said. "She is right my love. She helped to discover a large black market smuggling ring on Apo Prime several years ago."

[Mindvoice Shielded] This is the Layna you were speaking of?

[Mindvoice Shielded] Yes... but she is a competent Spartan Lynwe. You know that would not interfere in our duties Mistress.

[Mindvoice Shielded] You are right. Forgive me.

Selene took her hands and kissed her. "Travel safely my love."

Lynwe nodded. "I will call you tonight at home." She looked at the young woman. "I have a RAPTOR prepping for take off now. Gather what you need for a few days and meet me at the airfield."

The young blond Spartan nodded and darted away. Lynwe turned back to Selene and kissed her again. "I'll call you tonight."

Selene nodded and watched as she turned and headed out of her office. Selene turned back to the three Ministers. "Alright gentlemen... where were we?"

APO PRIME

The fire reached out for him and he threw himself to the ground, his Shi Viska flaring to life. The explosion to his right caused the ground to shudder and he was lifted off the earth and tossed through the air,

directly into the path of the fire. He felt the pain and the heat and opened his mouth to scream, inhaling the flames deep into his lungs searing them shut.

Martin jerked upright in bed, sweat beading on his forehead. He looked around quickly seeing For'mya next to him, but snuggled up against Aricia and Anja. Seanna had finally become trusting enough to at least sleep in their room with them, and though she wore a light shirt while the rest of them were naked, at least she was finally opening up to all of them now. Martin knew she loved Anja, and was not ready to broaden that relationship, and Martin had told Anja to not push her. He had no desire to sleep with more women that he already did he told her, and while Seanna was breathtaking, she was someone that Anja should not share with anyone. Martin shook his head and pulled back the thin sheet, slowly sliding his legs out of the bed. He grabbed his pants and pulled them on before moving out onto the balcony and into the night air.

Aricia's azure blue eyes opened, as she was already awake and she watched him as he walked outside. With deliberate ease she extracted herself from For'mya's embrace and eased out of the bed. She grabbed the thin robe and pulled it on before following him out onto the balcony. He was no longer there on the balcony and Aricia looked down to see his pants on the ground near where the timber came close to the palace estate. Aricia smiled and spread her hands out, while closing her eyes. She lifted herself telepathically and lowered her body the twenty meters to the ground below with perfect control and concentration. She striped off the robe and shifted immediately into her wolf form and darted after Martin into the timber.

Aricia was a large female in wolf form, easily a hundred and forty pounds of muscle and teeth. She had worked hard to develop her body and her mind over the past year and her reward was the time her Beloved spent worshiping her body. Her raven black coat of hair matched his in color and feel, making both of them shadows in the night when they wanted to be. They had hunted together on this island in their wolf forms, honing their wilder instincts as well as their skills in wolf form. As she bounded through the timber, her wolf eyes saw everything in a grayish/blue color, allowing her to move as if it was daytime. Martin's scent was burned into her very soul and she had no trouble following him. There were times when she marveled at him in wolf form. He stood easily over a meter tall at his shoulders, and was three hundred pounds of raw muscle and bone, but for his size he moved with a speed and grace that defied imagination. And he reeked of the aura of an Alpha male. Not just any Alpha male, but her Alpha male. He had made that very clear to her during the three days on Enurrua when he had reclaimed her as his. Aricia had told him he never lost her, that she had always been his mate, no matter what had occurred. Martin had shown her over that three day period just exactly what she meant to him.

Aricia was his first Queen, his pureblood Lycavorian Queen, and the Queen he would always turn to first. The pureness of their blood had brought them together, and the Centennial of the Moon Ceremony had sealed them together forever. He loved Anja, Dysea and Isabella equally, he loved For'mya just as intensely, yet Aricia held sway over him like none of the others. She may have been the youngest of them all, but he loved her that little bit more, and even though she never thought in those terms; never treated Anja, For'mya, Dysea or Isabella in any other way except with love, a small part of her reveled in the fact that she had a part of Martin Leonidas that no one else did. That only she could sooth his restless spirit in a way none of them could.

Aricia ran now, feeling free and happy. She knew where he was going, and she bounded after him easily, turning quickly with her tail and feeling the power of the muscles rippling under her black coat. His mint scent was a beacon for her to follow in the depth of the timber and she didn't hesitate in the least, plunging ahead and quickly pulling away from the palace grounds. Her wolf ears could just barely pick up his massive paws hitting the earth beneath him, and she knew he was letting her catch up to him as he ran. It took her only another twenty seconds and then she was beside him, her azure eyes gazing with love and desire upon his massive black wolf shape as they ran. Her eyes wandered over the steel bands of muscle that rippled beneath his black coat, his paws barely touching as they sprinted along at perhaps twenty kilometers an hour. His yellow/gold eyes were like a beacon and when they gazed at her, she felt nothing but warmth and love and desire that threatened to overwhelm her. She yelped softly in the night air and butted her head into his side as they ran, and he yipped happily in reply as they neared their destination.

As they broke into the clearing he slowed considerably allowing Aricia to move in front of him. She shuddered in anticipation and let him know she was ready by lifting her tail and unleashing her full female aura

directly at him. Instantly she shifted back to human form, hearing the growl of approval and in an identical flash of silver/white light he was upon her.

Aricia whined in enchantment as his powerful arms wrapped around her and he crushed her lips with his own, unleashing his own aura, completely unshielded and entirely focused on her. Aricia became immediately wet and ready as his aura swarmed around her like a thick cloud. Her body sang out for him and her mind elated as he lowered her slowly to the soft mossy ground his lips never leaving hers. His tongue plundered and explored, her tongue dancing with his, her arms wrapped around his shoulders tightly. She could feel his engorged cock pressing against her soft thigh, but he continued to kiss her, his fingers dancing over her supple flesh like the touches of a butterfly, igniting small fires wherever they landed. His lips pulled from her mouth and descended to her throat nibbling and biting gently while her chest heaved in fervor and need. Her large, firm breasts, still slightly swollen from having Androcles only a few months before, were mashed against his powerful chest, her nipples burning hard points pressed into his skin.

“Take... take me Beloved!” She gasped out as his hands and lips danced nonstop over her body.

Martin didn't disappoint her and she felt him gently open her thighs and he pressed the wide head of his huge cock at her slick opening and he pushed. Aricia cried out her rapture for the entire twelve inch thrust into her, and when she felt his large balls press against her ass cheeks she erupted in an orgasm so severe it caused white spots to skip across her vision, and the veins along her neck to bulge out in exertion. Her whole body went rigid, the muscles threatening to rip through her skin as her sweet juices burst from her like a dam, coating his pulsing hot cock as he remained still within her.

When Martin began to move within her, the world around Aricia disappeared and all that mattered was the rapidly building pressure in her lower stomach as another climax began its climb out of her. Martin held nothing back from her now, not since Enurrua. They were both wolves and only Aricia could take the full force of his aura and his driving power. When he made love to her now, he held nothing back, pouring all of his love and heart and soul into his actions. He pummeled her tight body with powerful twelve inch strokes, her pussy wrapped around him so tightly, he could feel every glorious, velvety clasp of her pussy and she could feel every thick pulsing centimeter of his cock. There was pain because of his size and power, but the throb of pain was almost sweet and it was quickly dulled by the rising swell of pleasure in her belly. He didn't make love to her like this often; both of them preferring to explore and take their time, but they both needed this now.

Aricia dropped her hands down his powerful back and grasped his clenching ass cheeks, curling her legs around the backs of his thighs, meeting his dominating strokes with small upwards thrusts of her hips. She felt the shift of his pulse, heard the rapid increase of his heart and then his cock was swelling in size within her. Aricia's fangs burst from her gums and she bit down into his shoulder at almost the exact same time as he sank his fangs into her breast. Her azure eyes rolled into the back of her head as she felt his molten hot come blasting into her depths and the volcano like eruption of her own orgasm raged through her.

Martin lifted his blood stained lips to the night air and he howled out his pleasure, joined a second later by Aricia as they sang to the stars in unison. And echoing across the tops of the timber were the trumpets of two others.

After a moment he dropped his head to the crook of her neck and shoulder, his arms pulling her closer to him if that was possible, making no move to pull his cock from within her. Aricia licked his blood from her soft lips and reached up with shaking hands to clasp his head.

You... you had the dream again didn't you Beloved. She gasped out in Mindvoice.

The only possible exception being Torma and Isheeni, no one could Mindvoice on their level together, and they felt no need to shield their conversations, at least not from their bonded dragon mates.

Martin nodded slowly as her fingers stroked his damp black hair. *Clearer this time. Like I was there. I could almost taste the fire and smoke.*

What does it mean?

Martin lifted his head and looked into her beautiful face. *I don't know.*

Talk with the Oracle Beloved. If anyone will know what our dreams mean, Helen will. Aricia spoke.

You are having them too? He asked.

Aricia nodded. *It is why I joined you so quickly tonight. I don't know if what I have seen is fleeting images carried over from you, or whether they are my own dreams. I see fire and explosions as well, but tonight I saw people too. Two women and a man. They looked no older than me.*

Martin nodded. *She returns from Etlon Five tomorrow. I will speak with her after the dinner tomorrow evening.*

Aricia caressed his tanned weathered face and smiled. *We want more children my love.* She spoke.

Martin grinned. *Well so do I.*

All of us Martin. Anja and Dysea have fully changed now. Anja comes into cycle in three weeks; it must be because of her Hadarian genes. Dysea in two months. I know you have smelled it on Anja. For'mya wants children as well. Aricia spoke.

I... I wanted to have another with you first Little Wolf. He said honestly seeing the glimmer in her eyes at his words.

You don't need to continue to prove your love for me Martin Leonidas. Aricia spoke softly relishing in his use of her private name. *I knew what you felt for me the moment Androcles was conceived in my womb. You show me every day where I am in your heart and soul. Every time you kiss me, or hold me tight. You have other Queens who love you, which you love in return. A concubine who loves you and that you love in return.*

Aricia you will always be first in...

Aricia placed a finger to his lips. *It has been over a year now Martin. When Androcles was born, we were bound together for all time. That is the biggest sign to me of where you hold me in your life. I am first in your heart and soul. I know this Beloved. Now show your other Queens and your concubine that they also have a place in your life, and in your heart. I alone will have your soul. We will have many more children you and I Martin Leonidas. And I want all of our children together, always. We have talked when you have not heard us Beloved. Anja, Dysea, For'mya, and even Isabella... we will raise all of our children together, here in this palace we call home and in Sparta. A communal home so to speak. All of them will be born in Sparta, all of them... we have already agreed on that because of the significance it holds for you. We...*

Martin chuckled. *You guys got this all worked out don't you?*

Aricia laughed and squeezed him. *They know that you listen to me and if you don't, I do not let you have my ass.*

Hey... that's not fair! You started that not me. You told them? Martin looked at her stunned.

Of course I told them silly wolf! Aricia exclaimed. *We share everything Martin Leonidas. I thought you knew that.*

Yeah... well... I didn't think... He looked at her. *I can't help it if I like it!*

Anja might be interested... but she said you would have to do a lot of worshiping. Aricia said.

I can't believe you told them. He said stilled stunned.

Aricia kissed him hard, chuckling as she did. *Are you listening to me silly wolf?*

Yes I'm listening to you. He spoke to her his voice soft and silky as he nuzzled the hollow of her throat.

Martin we all love each other. Aricia spoke. *We don't understand it... and all of us have stopped trying to understand it. Even you. It just is. We all love each other and that will not change. They are as much a part of your life as they are mine. Show them that you love them like I know you do, and stop trying to show me that I am first in your heart. I already know that. I knew that the moment I saw you perched upon Torma's back on Enurrua poised to go to war over me.*

Martin brought a hand up and brushed some raven strands of hair from her face. *I guess I have my work cut out for me huh?*

Well first you must finish with me tonight. Aricia spoke. *The sun does not come up for another six hours. I believe five hours of worshiping me is appropriate.*

Martin grinned now. *How bout I cram ten hours into that five.*

Aricia's eyes narrowed and grew seductive. *Well if you can do that Beloved, I just might need to be extra nice to you tomorrow night.*

You asked for it woman.

Martin's lips came down on hers and stole her breath away.

And he was certainly up to the challenge, as he did cram ten hours of worship into five. Quite effectively in fact.

**APO PRIME
UNITED LYCAVORIAN UNION
FOLCANI DELEGATION PETITION ACCEPTANCE DINNER**

“Man I’ve always hated uniforms!” Martin spoke as he stood in the receiving line outside the main Senate Dining Hall, greeting visitors. He ran his finger along the inside of the collar of his crimson jacket.

Aricia, Anja and Gorgo all stood between him and Riall, who also wore the standard Lycavorian Union Fleet Forces formal dress uniform, or LUFF for short. The black pants were trimmed in crimson, the crimson jacket outlined in black. While Riall’s shoulder boards were silver, Martin’s were gold and topped with five silver colored star clusters on each shoulder board. The buttons were black, and the cuffs of the arms were wrapped in five thick gold stripes. The left side of his chest was dotted with nine rows of vertical colored ribbons, while Riall’s bore fourteen rows. Martin had refused to wear anything that he had not earned by action, and it was only Deia’s and Gorgo’s prompting and finally Aricia who got him to wear the nine rows of ribbons which were equivalent to what he had worn as a Navy SEAL on Earth.

Aricia looked up at him now with a dazzling smile and hunger in her eyes. “You look very handsome Beloved.” She said.

Martin looked at her with that same hunger and desire in his eyes that he had whenever he gazed at her or any of the women in his life.

Aricia, Anja and For’mya wore matching colored dresses, or what “passed for clothing” according to Anja. They were the only three with dresses like they were wearing. Each dress was a deep Crimson red in color, which actually highlighted Aricia’s and For’mya’s hair color enormously. Anja’s Persian red hair was tied back into a long, braided and pinned pony tail, the act of putting in the stunning white and pink orchids in her hair done by Seanna. Aricia’s raven colored hair she wore down, as she almost always did now, cascading elegantly around her face and past her shoulders, ending just above her buttocks. For’mya had also opted to keep her hair down and the golden blond color of her hair caressed her face and fell just past her shoulders. The bronzed tans on all of them made their skin almost glisten in the light of the hall. The dress’s v-neck plunged widely down the front of their chests, exposing more deep cleavage than they would normally have shown; the neckline fastening just underneath their breasts on their upper abdomens with a glittering gold leaf cluster. The dress was bare in the back, dropping all the way to their lower backs and only half wrapping around the front, exposing one side of their abdomens, including their belly buttons, and then becoming tube like as it drifted down over their hips and legs until the slit on their left legs began at their upper thigh and went to the bottom of the frilly dress.

The three of you look positively delicious. Martin mindvoiced to Aricia and Anja next to him and reaching out to For’mya, who stood at the second entrance with Deia and her father.

Down big boy. Anja spoke looking at him with a seductive smile and a hunger similar to Aricia’s in her jade green eyes. *It will take a lot more than sweet words and a nice smile to get us out of these dresses tonight. It took too long to get into them.*

I was thinking perhaps a hot, luxuriating bath and a massage with scented oils given by the man we all so adore. For’mya spoke from across the room.

Damn... now that’s a woman who knows what she wants! Anja exclaimed. *We want to be pampered and taken care of tonight Martin. Especially after having to wear our underwear in front of all these people!*

They heard For’mya burst out with a short laugh at Anja’s words and they turned to see L’tian and Deia look at her oddly. For’mya lowered her eyes quickly, attempting to hide the smile on her face.

Martin smiled as well. *I think I can handle that.* He spoke confidently.

Anja looked at him. *Ok... sure. Do you even know what scented oils we like? And no asking Isheeni either! She and Aricia are bonded and she would know by virtue of that alone. You want us tonight oh mighty King... you figure it out for yourself. Now is that a challenge you are up for?*

I’m game. Martin said confidently.

Aricia leaned closer to Anja. [Mindvoice Shielded] *I don’t want to make it too hard for him Anja.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Nor do I.* For’mya spoke from across the room. *He was very good to us this morning.*

Anja smiled. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Trust me ladies... if he wants us tonight, Martin will find a way.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I don't think wanting us is a problem.* Aricia said with a grin. *His aura has been leaking ever since he saw us in these dresses.*

Anja grinned. [Mindvoice Shielded] *I know... and I'm so hot for him right now I'd jump him in the closest if there were any around to use.*

Aricia laughed again within their private connection with For'mya and squeezed her hand tightly.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I think we all would.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Oh yes... there is no doubt about that.* For'mya chimed in.

Both their heads turned when they heard the female voice gushing with seductive tones. "King Leonidas... it is a distinct honor and a wonderful privilege to meet you sire."

Aricia and Anja looked at the young, blond Lycavorian woman who stood beside the older distinguished looking man. She wore a pink gown that plunged to the bottom of her abdomen in the front and to the top of her buttocks in the back, leaving two very thin strips of cloth to cover the nipples of her large and very firm breasts. Breasts which she was purposely jutting out at Martin. Her strawberry blond hair fell elegantly past her shoulders to the middle of her back, her pale blue eyes focused on his face, her soft full lips coated with crimson lipstick and slightly parted.

"Sire..." The man spoke. "Allow me to introduce my daughter Sadi. Forgive her obvious exuberance, but she has wanted to meet you since you first arrived on Apo Prime last year."

Martin smiled and nodded looking into the pale blue eyes of the woman. "It's a pleasure to meet you." He spoke evenly, shaking the man's hand and then looking at him, taking his eyes from the young woman. "I'm still not good with names and faces yet, I'm sorry. You are...?"

"Governor Vorilas of the Menkla District." The man replied.

Martin's eyes went wider. "Ah... Governor Vorilas... you just opened that new factory in your province that makes our *TEMPEST* Interceptor."

Vorilas smiled and nodded, pleased that his King recalled him now out of the hundreds he had seen already this night. He had worked hard to get that contract brought into his province, as it meant an influx of Riyal into the area of Apo Prime that was still growing and developing. "Yes Milord."

Martin shook the man's hand. "That was an impressive bid you presented Governor, very impressive. How is the construction coming?"

Vorilas nodded. "We are ahead of schedule Milord. The factory is almost complete and we should be bale to start turning out fighters in three months."

Martin smiled genuinely happy with that news. "You impress me again." He said with a smile.

"Governor, perhaps you would like to join us at our table? We have the room don't we Aricia?"

Aricia nodded quickly with a small smile. "Yes we do."

"Milord... we would be most honored." Vorilas said.

Martin smiled. "Good. We can talk more once this party gets rolling. Admiral Riall and I would like to hear about your ideas and how you got the factory up so quickly."

The older man nodded. "It would be my honor to tell you sire."

"Good... well... it's a pleasure to meet you and your daughter Governor. You and... I'm sorry... Sadi is it?"

The blond woman bowed her head slightly. "It is Milord... and I am overwhelmed at your invitation." She said submissively as she hit Martin with her female aura, letting him know she was available and willing.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Little Wolf...* Anja said her eyes wide. *Tell me she isn't actually hitting our man with her aura in front of us.*

Aricia's eye remained fixed on the young woman. [Mindvoice Shielded] *That is exactly what she is doing Anja. She is an Alpha female after all.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *With us standing here?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Apparently she believes her aura is superior to ours, regardless of our station. She is a strong Alpha female but you and I are shielding most of our auras Anja, and it is something we do without thinking, so she does not know she is making a fool of herself.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Would it be appropriate to rip her face off right now?* Anja asked with a hint of savage anger in her tone.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Look at Martin's face Anja.*

Anja did and saw that Martin was doing a very good impression of impersonating a tree stump as the young woman amped up the strength of her aura, obviously not believing that Anja or Aricia were strong enough to detect it, given that her Alpha female aura was stronger than theirs from what she could tell. It was having absolutely no affect on Martin in the least as he continued to talk with the woman's father. Anja couldn't help but smile and she gripped Aricia's hand by their legs.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Ok... for that display, I'll forgo the scented oils. But I still want the massage.*

Aricia also smiled as she looked at her. It was true that she and Anja were shielding much of their auras' strength. Gorgo had told them they and Dysea were the three strongest Alpha females she had ever felt, and given Gorgo's experience and age, this young woman flaunting herself in Martin's face did not even compare. It was something she and Anja did out of habit after being on Earth for so long, and there were times when they forgot they were Queens and did not have to shield the power of their auras. If there was any display of total and complete commitment and love a male wolf could make to the females who were his mates, it was to completely ignore the advances of a female that was *not* his mate. Martin had not only ignored this Sadi hitting him with her aura, he had basically thrown her to the floor and stomped her by not even batting an eye at the advances she was making, advances so obvious that even Martin's mother had turned to look at her. Aricia and Anja were all smiles as Vorilas bowed and shook their hands, and Sadi merely glared at them with those blue eyes while having a false smile plastered onto her face the whole time until she was drawn away by her father.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I agree. Aricia said. She will try again however. Now that Martin has invited them to our table, she will take it as a sign he is interested in her.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *You're kidding right?* Anja said. *After he just shot her down so badly.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I saw this when I was growing up in Sparta. Aricia told her. There was a female who wanted Andreus badly, but he was only interested in Kmyla. She blasted him with her aura the entire night at a gathering until finally he had to verbally tell her he was not interested in the least. She just didn't get it. It was a very humorous show really.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *On second thought... I need a good laugh. Let her keep doing what she is doing. For'mya do you agree?* Anja spoke.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I do not possess the ability to detect this aura you speak of... but it was quite obvious from here what she was trying to do. For'mya spoke. Yes... I say let her make a fool of herself. I may be an elf... and only the King's concubine...*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *For'mya... you are far more than a concubine to Martin and I. To all of us. You know that. Aricia told her immediately. Do not speak of yourself in such a way. Martin won't allow it and neither will we.*

For'mya smiled brilliantly at them from across the room. [Mindvoice Shielded] *He belongs to us and I will fight for what belongs to us.* For'mya spoke firmly.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *If we get a good show I'll forgo everything and he can have me before I even take the dress off.* Anja spoke with a chuckle.

Aricia laughed. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Then be prepared Anja... I think we will have a good show.*

GELLEN STATION

Sivana looked around the small she occupied with the others. Yuriko sat in the room's only chair her arms crossed over her chest, her eyes closed in a restive pose. Daniel sat on the floor with Anuk between his legs, and leaning back against him as she manipulated the spoon and ration can of fruit she was both eating herself and feeding to Danny. She sat on the only bed in the run down room, wearing a standard LU dark gray fleet jumpsuit and jacket. She had awoken only two hours before on the small Coven Runner to find them docking at the largest smuggler and pirate haven on this side of the Wilds.

Sivana knew right away the Hadarian had given her a sedative for she woke feeling refreshed and rested; something she hadn't felt in the last ten months. The bruises and bite marks from her tryst with the Kochab Bounty Hunter were long healed now, though she was still somewhat sore from his battering of her pussy. Though humanoid in form and shape, Kochab were still a lizard like species with rough scaly skin, and unless

she was extremely wet, the friction rapidly turned to pain as they were humping into her frantically. It was a pain she welcomed in her life, since all she had ever known was pain. Pain told her she was still alive, still able to feel. She still did not completely know why these men and women had kidnapped her, why they had chased her across half the known Wilds, but for the moment they were the least of her concerns.

Cyngi had betrayed her.

Her mentor had tossed her to the wolves so to speak. He had taken out a contract on her, and that all by itself told Sivana that he was far more than he had led her to believe all these years. He had given her the flight suit that had been tampered with. He had given her the majority of her equipment, and now she knew why. It gave him access to all that she had ever done for the most part. Where she had been, who she had seen. The criminal element within the Wilds was broken down by Overseers, and there were thought to be only five, however Cyngi's actions now made it clear he was a sixth Overseer, or at the very least one of the five. No one who had ever had a contract taken out on them by the Overseers still lived. They were hunted until they were dead. Without remorse, without question.

Then again... none of them had ever had Spartan and Vampire protection.

Sivana looked at Danny sitting with his back against the wall facing the only door. At over two meters tall, he was one of the largest men Sivana had ever seen, Unsaar notwithstanding of course. From what she could tell by just a casual glance she knew he was thickly muscled, and if the Spartans she had seen over the years were any indication, he must have been very well defined. His bald head was shiny in the dim light of the room, but his dark eyes were always alert and held an intelligence she had not seen often in the killers here in the Wilds. The female elf with the rust colored hair was obviously his mate from the way they acted together, and not his only one so it seemed. Anuk was her name Sivana had learned, and she was also now a wolf with a Shi Viska to boot. Her five foot eight frame was packed with muscle of its own, with long lean legs and an ass that her dark gray fatigues hugged tightly. She had an ample chest Sivana noticed, her rust colored hair falling well past her shoulders and her blue eyes bright and alert. Sivana was no stranger to Lycavorian men from the Union, as she had seen and met many of the smugglers and mercenaries that had been thrown out of the Spartan ranks for some reason. None of them treated any female as she saw this hulking black skinned Spartan treat the diminutive elf female. It was easy enough for Sivana to determine that they were speaking within mindvoice, as they would look at one another and smile, but no words would escape their lips. The dark skinned elf female with the unique eyes was not in the room with them, but he acted the same with her as well, and the two elf females acted as if they too had a relationship going.

The vampire female Sivana had no desire to speak with or get to know. She hated vampires, even those who traveled the Wilds and were not part of the Coven. All of them were mindless killers of innocents, and Sivana had seen far too many victims of vampire feedings than she cared to recall.

She turned her eyes back to Daniel. "I can't believe you brought me here!" Sivana spoke shaking her head as she sat on the bed. "Whose bright idea was it to come to one of the largest gathering points of pirates and Bounty Hunters? All looking for me."

Yuriko's eyes opened slowly and she gazed at Sivana. "It was my idea." She said softly. "You don't approve I take it?"

"Did it occur to you that half the people on this station know who I am?" Sivana snapped.

"Yes the thought did cross my mind." Yuriko spoke.

"And it didn't occur to you that bringing me here would be a singularly stupid thing to do?" Sivana spoke.

"It is a tactically sound decision." Yuriko replied calmly. "It is only a quarter of a parsec from the actual LU border, which the belt itself extends into. Half a parsec beyond that begins the LU Minefield and Platform Strip. The nearby nebula renders all shroud capable vessels visible, and basically puts us all on even footing."

"Even footing?" Sivana exclaimed. "There are probably hundreds of Bounty Hunters out there right now waiting to take a shot at me!"

"You and I both know that no Bounty Hunter, pirate or mercenary will violate the neutrality of this station." Yuriko spoke. "I am not a fool Hadarian. We did not chase you for ten months just to bring you here and have you killed by some scum of a Bounty Hunter. I imagine there is already a ship on its way here now that will escort us into Lycavorian Union space and then on to Apo Prime."

“Wait a minute! Apo Prime! I have no desire to go anywhere near Apo Prime!” Sivana snapped. “You said I was going to help you find some girl!”

Yuriko nodded. “And you will. We must stop on Apo Prime first.”

“Why?”

“You will discover that in due time.” Yuriko spoke. “No one saw us bring you in here. No one knows you are here.”

“It’s bound to have gotten out that a vampire female and a big Lycavorian lug like him took me off of Nonus IV!” Sivana said. “And the Overseers know what all of you look like! They may be pirates and mercenaries, but some of them do have brains.”

“Tell me...” Anuk spoke now as she leaned against Danny’s chest and looked at her. “Do you like being alive?”

Sivana looked at her. “What kind of question is that?”

Anuk shrugged. “Do you like the life you lead as a smuggler and transporter of slaves and other items?”

“I only did that once and I didn’t know what the cargo really was until after it was done!” Sivana snapped.

“So you enjoy the life you lead?” Anuk asked again.

“It has its moments!” Sivana answered. “It’s exciting and makes my blood begin to pump, especially if there is a good looking man involved! I like...” She stopped and looked at Anuk. “Why are you asking me this?”

Anuk shrugged. “It’s simple really. Without us you would be dead and you would no longer be able to enjoy these things you claim to enjoy.” She said evenly. “If you like... we can have Filrian give you some drugs, we will discover the information we want, and then we can turn you loose in the corridor outside. You will have plenty of reason for your blood to pump then, and then you can watch as it pumps out of your body onto the deck beneath you. I grow tired of listening to you rant... so please... keep your disparaging remarks about me and my comrades to yourself. We have a great deal of patience, however it is not unlimited.”

“I’m not afraid of you elf bitch! Any of you!” Sivana snapped.

“We have given you no reason to be afraid of us.” Anuk continued. “Would you like one?”

“You... you people ruined my life when you came into the Star’s Ghost!” Sivana barked. “I had it good! I was the best at what I do!”

“So you hate us for taking you away from a life that would eventually lead you to what undoubtedly, would be a painful and lonely death?” Anuk asked. “What we offer you in return you could not...”

“Anuk...” Yuriko spoke softly, quickly shaking her head when Anuk looked at her.

Anuk sighed and shook her head, snuggling back tighter against Daniel and feeling his arms encircle her waist. “It is a shame really.” She spoke. “My Mistress said this as well.”

“You condemn me for transporting slaves, but you yourself speak like a slave!” Sivana spoke.

Anuk’s cerulean blue eyes looked at her and she shook her head slowly. “You are wrong Sivana.” She spoke. “I am Daniel’s mate, his wife. And a Spartan. Nayeca is a female Drow elf, also Daniel’s mate, and I will not bore you with the traditions and culture of the Drow since it appears you would not care. I call Nayeca my Mistress because I choose to. In our bed, in Daniel’s bed, I willingly do whatever she desires of me, as does Daniel, because it is what we choose. And she does whatever we desire of her because it is what she chooses. I have been a slave... just like you Sivana. And while it was not for as long as you, slavery is the same no matter what form it takes.” Anuk took a breath. “We search for the King’s daughter. Our friend’s daughter. You have information we require. We have helped you stay alive these last months, rescued you from a High Coven killing squad, and now you have the nerve to tell us we have ruined your life?”

“This would not have happened if you hadn’t started looking for me!” Sivana said.

“You are a bigger fool than you appear to be if you believe that.” Anuk spoke. “If we had not started looking for you, the Coven would have already found you Sivana. And right now you would be either dead; or the plaything for dozens of Immortals as they raped you endlessly in some prison.” Anuk turned within Daniel’s arms, positioning her body so that she could rest her cheek against his chest. “If you are so eager for death... then go. We will find Lisisa without you, but I have no desire to listen to your moans of complaint any longer.”

Danny smiled and pulled her tighter, closing his eyes and putting his cheek against her hair. Sivana looked at Yuriko, who merely crossed her arms over her chest in the chair and closed her eyes once more.

Sivana leaned back against the wall of the bed in a huff, knowing she had no where to go if she wanted to live. She vowed that once she was out of immediate danger she would find a good ship and just disappear. No matter what that took.

EARTH NEW MIAMI

Lynwe squatted in the moist sand as the waves from the Atlantic Ocean splashed lazily onto the beach. Lynwe was a beautiful woman by any standard, her shimmering white hair falling well past her shoulders, though it was now pulled into a long pony tail and braided as Selene liked to do with her hair. She was very tall, almost two meters in height, and a hundred and forty pounds of lean muscled ebony body. She had large breasts, though they were unbelievably firm and topped with small pert nipples, her waist thin and her legs long and powerful. Selene had always complimented Lynwe on her legs and the sleek powerful curves of her ass. There had been countless times when Selene had been squirming beneath her, clutching those powerful ass cheeks as her Mistress drove that thirteen inch Drow cock into her belly, urging her on. Her ebony skin shone in the bright sunlight with healthy tones, her soft pink lips full and moist. Lynwe's amber eyes gazed across the ocean's surface and she thought briefly of the weeks she had spent here in New Miami, before Tari had led them to freedom from the Coven, when she still clutched her intense hatred close to her heart at what they had made her.

It had been one of hundreds of sexually deviant experiments the Coven scientists had conducted, not for research, but for fun. Upon awaking from the surgery and seeing the log that now sprouted from between her thighs, Lynwe had gone a little insane right there. It had taken the defeat of the Coven, the deaths of friends and those she consider family, the kind and sensual touch of two woman, it had taken all this to finally show Lynwe that she was still a beautiful woman inside as well as out. They told her to think of herself as gifted not cursed, and when Selene had come into her life, all the pieces had come together.

Lynwe was a Drow yes, and their history of dominance and subjugation was well known and documented. Yet it was Aihola and Lynwe who had begun to pull their people from that ancient custom, bringing them forward into a new world of freedom, choice and love. Selene was the very center of Lynwe's universe, the most important and precious item in her life. The love they shared was almost fated to have been, considering the way they had come together. They were both now fully vampires, but due to the pureness of the blood of the vampire who had turned Selene, and by virtue Lynwe, both of them were able to tolerate long hours in the sunlight, attributing to Selene's luscious tan. There were very few who knew of Lynwe's *gift*, Tarifa and Aihola because they had often shared that *gift*, and only three others outside of them to include the King and Queen Anja. Lynwe had shared many passionate nights with Tarifa and Aihola, but Selene was truly the only woman who she desired, and Lynwe was all Selene desired, as she so often showed Lynwe in her actions out of their bed as well as in it.

What lay before her now however, in Lynwe's opinion, was just as much a threat to her Selene as it was to Tarifa and Aihola.

The female's body was an elf, the three inch pointed ears the most recognizable feature she had left really. Her face, at one time most likely quite beautiful, had been ripped away. Her body was swollen by time in the ocean water, but the large piercing wound above her left breast was obvious, as were the words carved into her chest and abdomen.

Tarifa must die!
Death to the Drow whore!

The letters were similar in size to the previous body, and what they originally thought may have been an isolated incident had now become so much more.

Lynwe's amber eyes cut to the left as the lithe figure of the Spartan Layna came into view and squatted next to the body's feet. Lynwe took stock of the Spartan female that had caught Selene's eye.

Layna was not tall, only a tad over a meter and a half in height, but she had long legs for her height, and they ended in a firm and delightfully tantalizing ass that was second only to Selene's as far as Lynwe was concerned. Her breasts were not overly large, the same size as her Selene's wonderful globes, but they were firm and pushed against her dark gray fatigues and the body armor she wore. Her golden blond hair, the color of fresh wheat in the fields, glistened in the sunlight, highlighting her deep tan. What set her apart as far as Lynwe was concerned, and what probably caught her slave's eye first were Layna's eyes. What Lynwe thought were blue in the dim light of the command center turned out to be a dazzling shade of light green flecked with gold, and that made her eyes cast a brilliance all their own. Layna wore her long blond hair similar to Lynwe's in a long pony tail, but she moved with the confident grace of a skilled warrior. Lynwe had read the bio provided by Admiral Jamerl and it was impressive. Layna was actually eight hundred and twenty-four years old, and the single mother of a four year old daughter. Her Lycavorian mate had been killed in a transport accident on Apo Prime three months after their child had been born, and Layna had never shown interest in taking another mate. They had apparently had problems when they were together, her mate cheating on her among them, which was very uncommon among Lycavorians once they took a mate. When she wasn't at home, Layna's mother stayed with her daughter, and they had both moved into a modest three bedroom home within Eden City when she had been assigned here. Her parents had accompanied her to Earth and now had a house not far from her.

Surprisingly almost the same thoughts were going through Layna's mind as she inspected the body of the dead and mutilated elf female in front of her.

She had been born and raised on Apo Prime, the only daughter to parents with five sons already. Between her father and her brothers she had led a sheltered and protected life, so much so, that it forced her to become rebellious and go against her parent's wishes and become a Spartan Centurion. She discovered she excelled at it, and was now considered an exceptionally skilled Spartan with both her *Nehtes* and her Shi Viska. She had chosen not to advance her Mindvoice abilities much past the third tier because she did not feel the need for them. She had met a handsome Lycavorian man, fallen in love and become his mate. Unfortunately for her, it turned out to be the worse thing she had ever done. Even the child she bore him was not enough to keep him home and keep him from cheating on her. They were not living together when he had been killed, and no matter how hard she tried, Layna could not bring herself to feel sorry for him or miss him in any way. After his death she shied away from men, many of whom had no desire to take on the child of another wolf, and had turned to women. She had two relationships with female Spartans, both of them intense and passionate, but not relationships that had lasted. Layna had requested a transfer for her and her daughter Teala, and Earth had been the logical choice. It was far enough away for her to make a new start, and when her parents jumped at the chance to come with her, the decision was made. They secured homes within the city limits, her parent's home only three houses away from where she and Teala lived, and Layna had thrown herself into her new position as advisor and protector of one of Earth's Chief Administrators, the vampire half elf female Selene.

Layna had learned all she could of Earth and its new leaders, all of them having been chosen by King Leonidas himself, which to Layna was impressive indeed. She had never met the King personally, but he was said to be a dominating presence that radiated confidence and power. She found Selene to be exceptionally intelligent, very methodic in almost everything she did, analyzing every angle before making a decision about something. She was extremely friendly, and always had a smile on her face, no matter the time of day. The longer she worked with Selene and heard people talk, the more she heard that this tall Drow was the reason behind that infectious smile she always wore. The first time Layna had seen her, she had almost been overwhelmed. Lynwe's presence was dominating to say the least, as tall and as powerfully built as she was, and her amber colored eyes never ceased to amaze Layna. It was also very obvious, even to the casual observer that she had no eyes for anyone but Selene. Layna learned they had been together for almost eighteen months now, enduring the Battle for Earth together, Lynwe being horribly wounded. She learned that Lynwe had saved Selene's life, which had led to both of them becoming full vampires. She didn't know the full story, and both of them were notorious for being tight lipped about their past. They were both very friendly with Tarifa and Aihola, the other female elf administrators of Earth, and it was said the four of them had shared a bed on many occasions, especially in the last year.

Layna found herself very attracted to the towering Drow female, more so than she had first suspected, considering she found Selene to be absolutely delicious. Layna knew in part it was because they were elves, and the elves of Earth were gaining a reputation of being much more open in regards to their sexuality than their

brothers and sisters from Elear. They were not loose by any means Layna had discovered, but the elves here on earth did not hesitate when they were attracted to someone, be it man or woman, and there were hundreds of such relationships on Earth that Layna herself had seen.

Layna now inspected the wounds on the elf female's body, Lynwe squatting beside her. Layna could smell the rich spicy scent of General Lynwe so close to her, her scent laced with the delicate flowery scent of Selene. That was surprising to Layna, as the scents of two women should not be so intertwined as they were. Even with their vampire genes their scents were prominent and noticeable.

"The killing thrust was definitely made by a *Nehtes*." Layna finally spoke. "The carving of the words was done with something smaller, but very sharp to have left such clean edges."

Lynwe nodded slowly. "It is the same as the male body we saw." She spoke. "The words were carved into her flesh after she was dead."

"Based on her scent and the condition of the body, I'd say she's been dead for at least three days, and in the water most of that time." Layna spoke.

Lynwe motioned to the welts on her entire body. "And in the same location as the man that was found. Those are the stings of a Portuguese Man of War jellyfish."

Layna looked at her. "A what?"

"It is a creature that lives in Earth's oceans. A jelly like bulbous top and hundreds of tentacles that extend for sometimes great distances under the surface of the water. They are barbed stingers and can kill quickly or paralyze prey. They are common in these waters at this time of year." Lynwe replied.

"You... you know this from memory?" Layna asked surprised.

Lynwe looked at her with those amber eyes and laughed. "I learned that from Doctor Olyne when we discovered the first body." She exclaimed. "I stay as far away from water as I can."

"You don't swim?"

Lynwe shook her head. "I swim fine. The water I don't fear... the creatures under the water, now that is another story. I much prefer ponds or lakes where the animals you can't see won't look at you like a meal."

Layna chuckled. "Yes... I see your point."

Lynwe motioned at the surface of the ocean in front of them. "There are many creatures in Earth's oceans that would consider you and me a tasty snack." Lynwe said. "None of which I have the desire to see face to face."

Lynwe got back to her feet stretching to her full height and turned to the Spartan and elf soldiers that were off to the side. "Have the body wrapped and transported back to Doctor Olyne for autopsy. Have you questioned those in the immediate area?"

The Spartan nodded. "No one saw anything or heard anything until the body was discovered."

"Why isn't that surprising?" Layna spoke. "This is the city that Administrator Tarifa ordered destroyed during the Battle for Earth correct?"

Lynwe nodded slowly. "Two FAEs were dropped. One in the northern part of the city, one in the southern."

"How many did it kill General?"

"Just over two million." Lynwe replied softly.

"Well whoever has killed these two elves, they are definitely a Spartan and Lycavorian. The power of the thrusts, the precise area of contact, only a Spartan can do that." Layna spoke.

"Someone like yourself?" Lynwe said looking at her.

Surprisingly Layna nodded. "Yes... but it is more than likely a male. Based on the angle I'd say a large male, two meters tall at least, and exceptionally powerful considering the strength needed to sever the spinal column in mid thrust. A thrust from me would only skip off the bone, it would be just as fatal, but I don't have the natural strength to drive the spear head through the bone of the spine and both back and front rib cages as was done here."

"Why would a Lycavorian want to kill elves?" Lynwe asked. "And why target Tarifa and Aihola in this way?"

"I would imagine whoever is doing this is leaving the bodies here in New Miami for a reason." Layna spoke. "To make a statement of some sort."

Lynwe looked at her. “Yes they are, and we need to discover what statement they are making, and then we need to find out who it is.”

**LEONIDAS II-CLASS STRIKE CRUISER
NORMYA'S LIGHT
THREE DAYS FROM ELEAR**

Dysea stepped from the shower stall drying off her long platinum hair with the thick towel. She walked into the bedroom area of hers and Isabella's quarters and stopped when she detected the faint lilac scent of her vampire lover's excitement.

It had taken Dysea only a week to finally have the time with Isabella that she so desired. After the events on Enurrua, as things began to return to normal, she and Isabella had slipped away for three days when they returned to Apo Prime and began an exploration that had not yet ended. An exploration both of them hoped never would. Their first night together had lasted hours as both of them had spent more moments exploring than anything else. They kissed, they nibbled, and they licked, all very slowly and quite erotically. They were in no rush as they both knew Martin would make sure they were not disturbed.

It was quickly determined that Isabella was the more dominant of them, the more demanding, and Dysea happily allowed her to take what she wanted. She couldn't remember how many hours she had spent between Bella's long legs, lapping away at her sweet bald pussy, tickling her pierced clit until Isabella was gripping her head in passion as her juices ran from her like a river. A river that Dysea had drunk from non-stop since that first night.

Isabella knew that Dysea had been with Aricia and Anja both in the last year, and with the exception of this last time in the palace, Bella had never joined them in the huge bed they shared. Dysea had never pressured her, never pushed her. Isabella knew she needed to share herself with Martin and the others, the wolf in her craved their attention, but every night not spent in that bed, Dysea spent in their bed, wrapped in her arms. This last time on Apo Prime, Isabella had finally opened enough of herself to join them, and she couldn't deny the pleasure that she had encountered as Aricia, Anja and even For'mya explored her for hours as if they had found a new toy, right next to where Martin and Dysea were howling out their own pleasure. Isabella also knew that the next time they were together she would surrender to the desire for Martin that grew stronger every time they saw each other. Now Isabella was quite content to immerse herself in the pleasures that Dysea gave her so willingly and that surprisingly, even to herself, she returned every bit as equally.

NORMYA'S LIGHT was their ship since Isabella had refused a flagship of her own, and Dysea had made sure it was as much Bella's home away from home as it was hers. Their quarters were massive, two complete staterooms combined together. They were not lavishly furnished, as this was a warship, and neither of them wanted to forget that fact, but they had added comfortable furniture and decorations that were pleasing to both of them, spending hours on Apo Prime and Elear picking out items to put into their quarters. Their crew was one of the finest in the LU Fleet, most of them handpicked by Admiral Ceneu himself. The Commander of *NORMYA'S LIGHT* Martin had chosen, and he was a Lycavorian Admiral that knew his business and took every chance to teach them everything he could. Dysea and Isabella both spent as much time as possible with him, learning from him all that he wanted to share. As with Tarifa and Aihola, Dysea and Isabella had become almost synonymous with each other and with Martin. They spoke with one voice and no one had ever seen them disagree on anything so far.

Isabella's time with Dysea had brought light into a world she thought would be dark forever, and she had begun climbing out of that darkness, Dysea beside her every step of the way. Only Dysea now knew everything there was to know of her, only Dysea shared her most intimate secrets and nightmares, and only Dysea knew what her desires and passions for the future were.

Isabella wore a simple robe with nothing underneath it and she used her vampire speed to blur from the side of the room, scooping Dysea into her arms as she passed her and carrying them both to the bed in the blink of an eye. Dysea laughed happily as Isabella settled on top of her naked form on the sheets and gazed at her with those hazel/green orbs she came to adore almost as much as Martin's eyes.

“Bella... you should know by now, that all you need do is ask me and I will jump into bed with you at any time.” Dysea spoke with a smile of passion and desire.

Isabella smiled at her words and lowered her lips to Dysea’s throat, stretching out her tongue to trace the hollow of her delicious tanned skin.

“I like you when you are fresh from the shower.” She said huskily. “And I have waited all day to do this!”

Isabella brought her full lips up and covered Dysea’s with them, kissing her deeply, plunging her warm tongue into Dysea’s mouth to do battle with her tongue. It was a battle Dysea quickly lost, as her blood began to heat up and her arms wrapped around her vampire lover tightly. She felt Isabella press her knee between her thighs and Dysea spread her legs quickly, feeling Isabella’s dripping center come to rest on her thigh as her knee press gently against Dysea’s now extremely wet pussy. Dysea’s eyes closed dreamily as Isabella’s lips and tongue danced across her throat and shoulders.

“Ohhhh... don’t tease me vampire witch!” Dysea hissed.

Isabella chuckled. “Your blood is sweeter when I tease you *ussta* she-elf!” Isabella gasped out, dropping her fingers to tease Dysea’s taut tattooed flesh. She had been stunned their first time together to see the intricate tattoos adorning Dysea’s body, and the emerald piercing that glimmered on her erect clit, but her shock quickly gave way to unadulterated passion as she traced every tattoo with her tongue, and teased Dysea’s pierced clit for hours, keeping her she-elf lover on the verge of climax almost cruelly before allowing her release to come. Isabella had drunk that flowing essence like it was the sweetest blood she had ever tasted. At the same time she had bit down gently with her fangs, sinking them into the smooth flesh above Dysea’s raging clit and as her come filled her lips and parched throat, so did Dysea’s blood. It was the first time she had tasted her she-elf lover’s blood, and it had not been the last. Dysea’s blood was like the finest wine, sweet and pure, and almost as if knowing instinctively that Isabella would only take enough to prolong their pleasure until that last exquisite moment, Dysea held her head in place.

Isabella would never hurt her, and when she fed on Dysea’s blood, it was only enough to seal them together and make their pleasure last those few seconds longer, and make it that little bit more pleasurable.

Dysea would not be denied however, as she desired Isabella as much as Isabella desired her. She gripped the thin robe in her hands and tore it away with one powerful pull, twisting Isabella’s body on top of hers until the prize she sought was directly over her face. She gazed longingly at Bella’s pierced clit, now adorned with a sparkling emerald identical to her own. It was Dysea’s way of marking her, making Isabella’s hers. Her pussy lips were swollen with passion, already dripping her sweet nectar and Dysea wasted no time. She grabbed Bella’s strong firm ass cheeks in her hands and brought that beautiful pussy down to her lips to suck on that engorged bud.

Isabella’s head came up, her dark brown, almost black hair flying wildly over her shoulders and back, her hands curled under Dysea’s ass cheeks. “*Siyo ussta she-elf! Cal uns'aa! Ssrigg'tul uns'aa! Siyo!*” Isabella cried out in the ancient vampire tongue, grinding her burning hot pussy down on Dysea’s face. (Yes my she-elf! Eat me! Pleasure me! Yes!)

Dysea did not disappoint her as she flicked her strong tongue madly across Bella’s clit, each stab of her warm tongue sending ripples of agonizing pleasure shooting through Isabella’s entire body. Never had she known such pleasure as what Dysea gave to her so eagerly, and it had taken Isabella only moments to lower her head and return that pleasure. Dysea’s ass cheeks clenched tightly, and she heard a muffled cry of delight when she encased Dysea’s own clit between her warm lips and suckled hard. Their breasts were crushed against each other’s abdomens, their flat bellies heaving in building pleasure, but Isabella did not want to wait.

There were two places she would bit her elf lover, just above her engorged clit, her teeth marks hidden in the soft silky platinum line of hair and at the very bottom of her slick tunnel near her puckered anus. Both bite locations were position in such a way so that she could feed on Dysea’s blood and still manipulate her clit with her tongue, something she did now.

Dysea’s come covered lips tore away from Bella’s pussy as she felt her sink her fangs into her flesh. Her emerald eyes flew open as colors flashed in her eyes and pleasure seared her veins.

“Bella... Bella... ahhhhhhh... no... not... fair!” Dysea’s neck muscles strained and her eyes grew even wider. “Bella... I’m cumming!”

Isabella rejoiced as both her lover's blood and her come flooded into her mouth at almost the same time, and she drank the combined juices down liked a starved kitten. Dysea's body went rigid as her orgasm seared through her body, her strong hands gripping Isabella's ass cheeks. Then it was Isabella's turn, as her eyes grew wide in sensual delight and her lips came away from Dysea's still spurting pussy as her elf lover pulled her ass down, plunging two fingers into Isabella's tight asshole while stabbing her tongue as far up her pussy as she could. Isabella screamed out her own passion now. Dysea's tongue may not have reached as far into her tight pussy as Anja's had the other night, but it was plenty far enough combined with the two fingers in her ass to send Isabella careening over the edge of the pleasure abyss. Her pussy convulsed on Dysea's tongue and she rewarded her she-elf's attention by flooding her mouth with come. As her body was racked with its own waves of pleasure she lowered her head back down to continue feasting on the platinum blond pussy of the woman who now held her essence in the palm of her hands.

Isabella settled back onto the bed holding the two glasses in her hands as she adjusted her position next to Dysea. They had enjoyed a long hot shower after their passionate tryst and were now going over what little information they had concerning the rumors of a dark conspiracy of elves on Elear. They both wore small shirts to ward off the chill of the air in their quarters that always seemed to accompany space travel no matter how high they adjusted the heat.

Isabella held out the glass for her. "Dysea?"

Those emerald eyes turned to look at her. "Bella... I don't like it, it tastes bitter." She said pouting her lips.

Isabella grinned. "I know... but it is the only fruit juice that will replenish what I took from you completely *ussta* she-elf. Now drink it; I will kiss you afterwards to chase away the bitterness."

Dysea took the glass from her and downed the bitter tasting fruit juice in a single gulp and then turned to accept the kiss that followed immediately after. It was a soft, tender kiss of feeling and love.

Isabella smiled as they pulled apart. "Now you can finish your tea." She said with a grin. Isabella no longer was ashamed that she was a vampire and she was no longer ashamed that she did need to feed on blood every few months, at least not in front of Dysea. She sipped the chilled blood that was always in the dispenser in their quarters, and silently thanked Anja that she had been able to develop a cloned blood that tasted like cherries and provided the same exact nutrients to her system as normal blood did.

Dysea handed her the data pad. "All this information provides is unsubstantiated rumor and innuendo." She spoke reaching for the hot tea on the table next to their bed.

Isabella took the pad and scanned it slowly. "There must be some truth to it or High Minister Alocgeid would not have brought it to your attention."

Dysea nodded. "That is the only reason I put any weight into it." She spoke. "That and because when we thought all of the Drow elves on Earth had been destroyed, we were proven wrong."

We should move carefully Dysea. Iriral spoke from her lair in the landing bay. *There are still some on Elear who resent that you are now Queen.*

Dysea and Isabella smiled when Iriral interrupted their thoughts.

Dysea's bond with Iriral was growing stronger as the days went by, and because of that it was also growing stronger with Isabella. She was large enough to carry both of them now, but only Dysea had the true Mindvoice ability to allow them to fully achieve what they could truly do together. Iriral's light gray scales were smooth and she was stocky and powerful, able to sustain a direct flame for nearly thirty minutes now, which was average for Firespitter Dragons. Iriral knew of their relationship, and while it was something she was not used to in the very beginning, she rapidly found the vampire Princess to be intelligent and extremely protective of Dysea. And also very much in love with her and King Leonidas. Because of this bond between the three of them, Iriral had also learned very quickly how to communicate in the ancient vampire language and it gave them an added advantage since very few individuals outside of Coven space could speak the language.

We will Iriral. Dysea answered. *I can not hold it against some who do not approve of me being Queen or wolf. I am however, and they will need to find a way to deal with it. We need to find a starting point first however.*

I suggest this city on the northern continent. Isabella said. Anything close to the capital or remotely near where Arzoal and her kind have settled would not be conducive to establishing a secret society of elves. Arzoal's Mindvoice abilities would pick it up almost immediately.

Dysea nodded. It is also where the elfin scrolls were stolen from the temple. And you are probably right Bella, none of these events have occurred near Dragon Land as it is now called.

We should meet with the High Minister when we arrive and question him thoroughly. Iriral spoke.

You and I will do that Iriral. Dysea spoke. Bella... you have more experience in this type of operation, will you arrange whatever equipment we might need to travel this distance.

Isabella nodded. We may need to move outside the city into the mountains as well, so I will secure transportation and supplies. How many Spartans should we take?

Just the three of us and Lexi I think. And we will take Miai as well. It will be good experience for her and her organizational skills may come in handy. Dysea replied. I do not want to raise too many alarms by descending on the city with an entire Mora of Spartans. If we find ourselves in a situation where we will need help we can contact Arzoal for assistance.

Isabella nodded. I do think we should follow Martin's advice and be cautious.

Dysea nodded. I have never not listened to Nauta Melme's instincts and I will not do so now, so yes we will be cautious. However, if there is any truth to these rumors, then we must stop it now, in its infancy, before it becomes a larger issue.

I suggest you two forgo what you both are thinking and get some rest. Iriral said sternly as a motherly figure would. We will arrive in three days and you will be useless to everyone if you have tired yourselves out by then.

Dysea and Isabella both laughed within their connection. Do not worry Iriral. Dysea spoke. We won't tire each other out too much.

APO PRIME

The king's table for dinner was extravagantly set with the finest pieces of cutlery and crystal place settings available on Apo Prime. Over the last year the men and women who were employed with the Senate Dining Hall and the main Palace Estate had grown to love cooking and working for Martin and his Queens. It was discovered they were perhaps the most realistic individuals on Apo Prime, as far as the workers were concerned. The new King and Queens gave these men and women chances to develop new methods of cooking and many of them had gone to Earth at the King's expense and learned of the thousands of dishes Earth offered for many species. The men and women who tended the gardens and flower beds on the main Palace estate had at first been stunned when the King and Queens would actually stop and talk with them early in the mornings after arriving from their island. Six months after being among them, just before departing for Sparta and the birth of their son, Martin had thrown a party of sorts just for the staff of the two buildings. He wanted those around him to know that he valued their work and their time, and he showed it to them almost every day. Queen Dysea was especially liked when she was on Apo Prime, for she would come into the flower beds with the men and women who tended them and work side by side, caring for the thousands of species of flowers within the garden. On many mornings after feeding Prince Androcles, Aricia would join them. It was a pleasure working for and around their new King and Queens, and none of them would trade that experience for anything.

Whenever a State Dinner like this was held, everything was perfect, and they saw to it that nothing was out of place and insured nothing would go wrong. The meal had been prepared easily with the staff, the meals cooked and readied to each species' liking. It was something that Dysea had suggested many months ago, and even though the work involved doubled for the staff, they were happy to conduct themselves like this.

The Folcani ambassador sat between Deia and Helen, who had returned from her own trip in time for the State Dinner. Governor Vorilas sat between Gorgo and Riall and the two men had been animatedly involved in conversations for most of the evening. Gorgo had busied herself talking with For'mya's father L'tian and her mother Far'nyel, who was now playing a major part in her daughter's life, and they were rediscovering each other as mother and daughter once more. Sadi sat between Gorgo and For'mya, and it was obvious to all the women at the table she was not at all happy about that arrangement. Martin sat at the head of the table, Aricia

next to him on the right, Anja immediately to his left. They had originally intended for both ends of the table to be used, but Martin had nixed that idea quickly. He didn't care if it was a State function, his mates and Queens sat beside him period. For'mya sat to Aricia's immediate right, once more throwing out millennia old tradition, as the Bound Elf Concubine to the King was never meant to sit at the same table as the King. It had been a point of contention for Deia in the very beginning, until Martin had refused to go to a State dinner, and tossed the data pad with proper protocols she had been waving in front of him into Torma's gaping mouth, which he had promptly melted into slag.

Deia never mentioned it again.

Two chairs for Dysea and Isabella on Anja's left were unoccupied, though the plates and glasses were full. It was Aricia's way of telling everyone they were missing Dysea and Isabella, and she had done it on several occasions when Anja had been unable to attend a State function.

It was not that Sadi didn't care for elves; it was the fact that she, a strong Alpha female, had to sit next to the King's concubine instead of next to him or one of his Queens as protocol dictated. Queens which did not rival her in any regard when it came to the power of her aura. She was a beautiful young woman who had many suitors, and she had lobbied with her father hard to be able to accompany him tonight in the hopes of perhaps winning the King's affection. It was not turning out the way she had hoped it would turn out and making an impression on the King as she wanted was quickly falling to the wayside. Carrying on small talk with L'tian and the King's mother was not the way to get close to him as she wanted. Sadi decided a new tact was needed. She turned to For'mya as the elf female lifted the goblet of wine to her lips.

"Tell me Star Commander... what was it like being a prisoner of the Coven?" Sadi asked looking at her and using a level of voice that reached just above everyone else's conversations.

All conversation at the table ceased and Vorilas leaned forward, a look of horror on his face. "Sadi! That is not a question to ask!"

Sadi looked at her father, innocence written all over her face. "I'm sorry; I didn't... forgive me I didn't know it was a sensitive subject." She gasped out turning back to For'mya, who was calmly returning her goblet to the table. "It's just it has been talked about quite a bit in the circles of my friends."

For'mya turned her dark brown eyes to Sadi and forced a smile onto her face. "It is alright." She replied quickly but softly. "I have left that portion of my life behind me Sadi. It was not pleasant I assure you." She answered softly. "At least until King Leonidas rescued me."

"Is that why you decided to accept the position of concubine?" Sadi asked still acting very innocent. "To thank him in some way? It was well known that you never wanted the position."

"Sadi how dare you?" Vorilas asked even more aghast.

"Father it is not uncommon knowledge." Sadi spoke quickly. "And I did not realize it was not to be spoken of in casual conversation."

"Casual conversation perhaps." Gorgo practically growled at her. "Certainly not here at a State function among men and women you have only just met child and certainly do not deserve to be among. Have you no sense of protocol young lady?"

"Forgive me Lady Gorgo, but protocol would dictate I sit next to the King as a guest, or at the very least one of his Queens." Sadi said evenly.

Vorilas came to his feet. "Milord I beg a thousand pardons for my daughter's actions!" He stated quickly. "I..."

Martin had sat back in his chair, his face and eyes unreadable. He lifted his hand quickly. "No... let her finish."

Sadi looked at him. "That is what protocol states sire, I did check before we came." She spoke. "As guests at your table, my father should sit to your right and as his daughter and as a superior, available Alpha female I should sit to your left."

Aricia looked at her while lifting her own wine glass. "Superior to whom?" She asked casually.

"With all respects Milady, my aura is stronger than both you and Queen Anja." Sadi spoke confidently.

Helen nearly spit out a mouthful of wine and she coughed loudly at Sadi's words, trying to keep from laughing. She gathered her cloth napkin and dabbed at her lips while looking at Sadi.

"This is all about your station?" Helen asked incredulous. "Child... you disrespect everyone at this table with your words. Your father stands there beside himself at your actions, and your only thought is your station?"

Your aura is stronger than the Queens?" Helen laughed. "Aricia... Anja... would you be so kind as to show this young upstart how very wrong she is."

Aricia and Anja immediately dropped any pretense of psychic shielding of their auras. The effect was instantaneous on Sadi as her eyes went wide when she felt the staggering power of Aricia's pureblood aura alone. Aricia's aura dwarfed hers by a huge margin, and when added to the intensity of Anja's, Sadie suddenly felt herself become very small in stature. Minuscule in fact.

Helen laughed once more as she leaned across the table. "Child... Aricia and Anja, as well as Queen Dysea have an inbred habit of shielding their auras. It is a trait they picked up from their time on earth when it was necessary because we were fighting a war. We have been trying to get them to break this habit... but as you can see, it has not worked. As you can no doubt feel... you are very far from Queen Anja in stature young lady... and not even in the same category as Queen Aricia." Helen smiled as she sipped her wine casually again before setting it down.

"You must hold yourself in very high regard to think you can come here and present yourself to King Leonidas in such a way. He has been deliberately swatting aside your pathetic aura all night to keep from becoming angry. Something you have achieved now in another way by insulting his beloved concubine."

Martin got to his feet and everyone watched him as he walked slowly around to stand behind For'mya. The music continued in the background, and many people were already dancing. Martin leaned over quickly and firmly nuzzled the back of For'mya's elfin ear, sending jolts of seething delightful pleasure shooting through her. She reached up to grasp his head as his arms snaked around her slim body and he began to pull her from her chair. For'mya looked at Sadi... her dark brown eyes awash in enchantment.

"To answer... to answer your question... no that is not why I accepted the position of concubine to the King." For'mya gasped out as Martin leaned over to the other side of her head and firmly nuzzled her opposite ear, sending more jolts of electric pleasure surging through her. "This... this is why I accepted... accepted the position of concubine." She gasped again. "This... this is something... something you will never experience... the King's... the King's touch upon you... *upae!*" For'mya swore in the ancient Lycavorian language.

For'mya's words caused Aricia and Anja to burst out laughing, while For'mya's mother Far'nyel grabbed L'tian's arm and squeezed it for all she was worth as she too could not contain her laughter. L'tian and Riall simply sat there stupefied while Gorgo and Helen had huge smiles on their faces.

Martin pressed his body tightly up against For'mya's back and nibbled the silky skin on her neck. "Would you care to dance my beautiful elf concubine For'mya?" He growled into her ear in a husky voice.

For'mya's smile of passion and happiness swept across her face and she nodded. "Oh... I would be most honored to dance with you, my handsome and so very well endowed King of my heart." She answered.

Helen and Gorgo could no longer contain their laughter and they too burst out at the look of pure horror and shame that filled Sadi's face at For'mya's words. Martin smiled and began to walk towards the center of the hall, For'mya grasping tightly to his arm. He stopped and looked at Vorilas.

"Governor... I in no way hold you responsible for these events, and I would be honored if you joined me at the main palace estate for breakfast one morning soon, so that we can discuss other matters." Martin spoke.

Vorilas looked at the young King with astonishment in his eyes. He nodded quickly. "Of course sire."

Martin nodded. "Good... now if you'll forgive me... I'm going to dance a song or two with my concubine here, and then I'm going to take her back to my bed and ravage her body."

Aricia looked at Anja and they both smiled at each other. *Ok... he gets all of us with no conditions tonight and for however long he wants.* Anja said quickly.

I agree. Aricia spoke.

None of them saw the dark haired young Spartan enter the Senate Dining Hall, Seanna close on his heels.

Belen.

The youngest son of Atropos and Lilika and second in command of Queen Anja's Spartan Security Detachment. He was tall and muscular like his father, but his dashing good looks he got from his mother. Belen was an Alpha wolf, but even though he was four hundred and fourteen years old, he had not taken a mate yet. There were five females in Sparta who were actively letting him know they were very available and three more

here on Apo Prime, but Belen had committed his life to Sparta and now the security of the Queen his father so willingly served.

Atropos had returned to Earth to be with Lilika his mate as she brought their first daughter into the world. Belen and his older brother Banyt had truly wanted to be there for the birth of their sister, but both knew they had duties to perform as well. Their father and mother had spent enough years apart already, and they were still discovering the joys of being able to openly call themselves mates, after hiding their love for so long. Belen had agreed to assume command while his father was gone, and now he was having second thoughts as he led Seanna quickly through the mass of dancing bodies towards where his King and For'mya were dancing in the center of the floor. Aricia and Anja stood to the side of the mass of bodies all around them, both of them with smiles on their faces as they watched Martin spin For'mya around gracefully.

Belen was different from his older brother, in that he tended to rely more on his instincts and was wilder in many respects than his older brother, closer to the feral nature of their people much like his father. This fact was sensed by the female wolves and it attracted them to him in droves.

Belen did not hesitate in the least and stepped right up to Martin while Seanna moved towards Anja. There were very few who would just walk up to Martin and grab him, Belen was among those few due to his position and the respect that he and his father had earned over the last year in protecting Anja. Martin had made it very clear to those Spartans of the Royal Guard they were not to hesitate when it came to their duties, and if it meant they had to grab or manhandle Martin or any of his Queens and concubine they were to do just that. Martin stopped dancing instantly and looked at Belen.

“Sire something has come up that needs your attention immediately.” Belen spoke quickly.

Martin held For'mya with one arm and saw Seanna leading Anja and Aricia up to them. “What’s going on Belen?” He asked.

“I’ve routed a transmission from the Hadarian Divine One to the conference room here in the Senate Dining Hall.” Belen spoke looking at Anja. “It is something you both need to hear.”

Martin didn’t hesitate. “Anja, Aricia go with him and Seanna.” He spoke waiting for Belen to nod and head in another direction with them right behind him. He turned to For'mya. “For'mya if you would please give my regrets to everyone at our table and have Helen, my mother, Riall and Deia join us in the conference room.”

For'mya nodded and gazed at him. “Thank you Martin Leonidas.” She spoke softly reaching up to caress his face.

Martin smiled warmly and kissed her hard, not caring about the wide eyes that watched them. “Bring everyone to the conference room quickly. Belen would not have interrupted us here unless it was important.”

For'mya nodded and squeezed his hand before heading for his table. Martin turned to follow the others.

“Is this some sort of joke?” Aricia demanded.

Anja sat between her and Seanna at the table, tightly holding their hands as her heart was racing almost out of control.

“It is no joke I assure you.” Eurin replied within the secure transmission from Hadaria. “My people here have checked and rechecked Filrian’s findings, and they come out exactly as he discovered.”

“How... how is that possible?” Deia spoke from her chair.

“Apparently Anja’s mother was carrying twins.” Fuleos spoke now leaning into the transmission. “When the assassination attempt began, I was with them for Anja’s birth, but I left with the Handmaidens that rushed Anja to the ship that brought her to earth. By the time I returned, it was already too late. Anja... your Aunt was there for the birth of your sister, she was born twenty-seven minutes after you were. We have already confirmed this with her. They were the ones who took her before the assassins reached your parents. She was given to a husband and wife in your Aunt’s employ and told to keep the child safe. Your mother told her sister to never say anything until she knew it was safe for a child of the Royal family to be exposed again. They stayed in contact with this couple, sending them funds whenever they needed, but seven years after they left Hadaria they were attacked and killed by pirates. Your Aunt was distraught thinking Sivana had died as well.”

Anja looked up quickly. “Sivana...?”

Fuleos nodded slowly. "That was the name your mother gave to her. It is also the reason your Aunt and Uncle have been so distant from you child. They felt responsible for the death of your sister, and they could not bring themselves to tell you or anyone why."

"Where... where are they?" Anja asked.

"Your aunt is sedated Milady." Zaniai replied. "She broke down when Fuleos demanded to know what she knew. Your Uncle is... he sits by her bed quietly saying nothing. They... they feel responsible for what has happened to her."

"Where has this Sivana been?" Martin asked. He stood near the end of the table but moved slowly to stand behind Anja's chair and place his hand on her shoulder. Anja tilted her head quickly, closing her eyes as the skin of her cheek touched his knuckles.

"She... she has..." Fuleos started to speak but became choked up in the transmission.

Eurin took it up again once more. "She has led a very difficult life sire." Eurin said. "It appears she was sold into slavery for the first part of her life. If what Filrian and Daniel have told me, it was... it was very harsh. She has been a smuggler and pirate for the last three centuries or so, living in the Wilds. She has earned quite the reputation, but once it was discovered she was the key to finding your daughter and that Daniel and his team were tracking her, the business partners she worked with decided to eliminate her. Daniel says the High Coven also knows who she is now, and he said to tell you things have become "sticky", using his words. He said you would understand and that I was to tell you that exactly as he said."

Martin nodded quickly at the use of their old SEAL team phrase to mean that they were in a very tight spot and needed back up in the worst way.

"Where are they?" Martin asked.

"Gellen Station sire." Zaniai replied. "It is a neutral location for the scum of the Wilds to gather and not kill each other as is so often their life. I doubt however, that the pirates and scum working with the Coven will adhere to this unwritten rule very long."

"Nor will the Coven when they discover what Sivana holds in her head." Eurin spoke.

"And that is?" Martin asked.

"Sire... your daughter... Lisisa... she is the product of a Lycavorian and a Vampire. If Yuri's blood is anywhere near as pure as yours is, the combination of those two bloodlines could prove a turning point in this war." Eurin explained.

"How so?"

"I ran some simulations in regards to your daughter when Filrian first told us about finding Sivana." Eurin spoke evenly and looking directly at him. "It is conceivable that she would be equal to you in Mindvoice abilities sire, if not more powerful. The pureness of your Lycavorian blood is beyond even that of your grandfather Milord. Many of our scholars have met discretely and it is our conclusion that you and Aricia have yet to reach your full potential. The way you have bonded so deeply with your dragons is the first and most telling sign. It is also our conclusion that Queen Anja and Queen Dysea will begin to discover new abilities as time passes, because it was you who turned them, and your blood now runs freely in their veins. It is all very technical Milord, I can have everything sent to Anja and Seanna, and they can put it into more manageable terms if you wish."

"Why are you meeting about my son without...?" Gorgo began to speak.

"Mother it's alright." Martin said quickly. "They are researchers and it is what they do. Eurin why would this have anything to do with my daughter?"

"If the Coven were to obtain your daughter Milord, it is very conceivable that they could somehow use her DNA to enhance their cloned soldiers to a point that would make them nearly impossible to kill without a great deal of effort." Eurin spoke.

"You're kidding me right?" Martin asked.

"She's right sire." Deia spoke now. "We have always held the advantage when it came to ground forces. It is the primary reason we have lasted this long. If the Coven is somehow able to enhance their soldiers to a point that they can match us Spartan for Spartan, their numbers would eventually overwhelm us no matter what we did."

"Oh this is just nubous beautiful!" Martin snapped. "Why the hell didn't someone tell me this before?"

“I don’t think... I don’t think any of us realized that finding your daughter was that big of a possibility Martin.” Deia spoke softly.

Martin looked at her and sighed heavily. She almost never called him Martin, and that she did so now told him she felt shame at not believing. “Eurin... I want you and Zaniai here on Apo Prime... no... you give Deia a list of men and women you think might be able to help you and I’ll send them to you. I want a worst case scenario on what it means if the Coven finds Lisisa before we do.”

“I’m going after my sister!” Anja spoke suddenly coming to her feet.

“My Queen you can’t!” Deia barked.

“She is my sister!” Anja nearly screamed. “My blood! Grandfather...”

Fuleos looked at her in the transmission. “I will not tell you to not go after her Anja.” He spoke. “She is our blood in that you are correct.”

“Fuleos this does not help!” Eurin barked.

The older man looked at her. “Sivana is my granddaughter! Anja’s sister! Don’t you dare tell me to side with you and not go after her?”

“I’ll take the *SPIRIT OF HADARIA* and go get her!” Anja spoke firmly. “I’ll bring her back!”

“No!” Martin snapped silencing everyone in the room.

Anja whirled on him, anger flashing in her eyes. “Martin... don’t tell me not to go after her! I won’t...”

Martin stepped up to her quickly, taking her face in his hands and gazing into her green eyes. “Do you honestly think I would tell you that?”

“No.” Anja said quickly.

“You can’t take the *SPIRIT*.” He said. “It would look suspicious if both the *SPIRIT* and *MJOLNIR’S HAND* left orbit within hours of each other.”

Anja’s eyes narrowed. “What are you suggesting?”

“Take Aricia’s and my *STRIKER DT*.” He said. “Take Miath with you, Belen and a small strike force. Meet Danny and the others and get back across the border.”

Anja smiled and hugged him tightly. “Count on it.”

For’mya stood up. “Our *DT* comes and goes on a regular basis from the surface and it will not draw attention.” For’mya spoke. “I will contact Endith and Tina and we will meet you at the island pad.” She was moving out of the room before anyone could stop her. She and Endith loved their *DT* and no one flew it but them.

“I will meet you with *MJOLNIR’S HAND* on the other side of the defensive border in two days. No heroics, nothing stupid Firecracker. In and out!” Martin said.

Anja nodded. “I promise.”

Martin kissed her softly, their eyes closing as they did and then he pulled away. “Go! I’ll have Komirri transmit the fastest route via secure COM.”

Anja didn’t hesitate and headed out the door. Martin stopped Seanna by taking her arm. “Watch her Seanna.”

Seanna smiled her dark green eyes alive and bright. “That will never be an issue Martin Leonidas. I love her just as much as you and Aricia do.”

Martin nodded and leaned over to kiss her cheek. “Go! And if it is a threat to her or her sister, kill it! No hesitation.”

Seanna’s smile was vicious for one so beautiful. “As Anja has said sire, you can count on that as well.”

CHAPTER FIVE

EARTH

Isra watched as they approached the blue green planet quickly, his heart beginning to pound in his chest the closer he got to the world. Down there somewhere was the sapphire eyed female she-elf wolf, the one who had stolen all he was. And because she was so deeply bonded with the amber eyed Drow, all that he was now included her. The trip had been long and arduous for him, each day bringing him closer to what he had gained

in one moment and lost in the next. He had claimed her that day on the ship, claimed her as his mate, and by virtue of that he had claimed the Drow who also ruled her heart. The weeks they had spent together had been the most perilous of his life, and the most joyous. She smelled so sweet and pure, her very essence filling his being, bringing him the peace he had sought for so long. Their times together had been his first with a woman, and Tarifa had fit him like the proverbial glove. Her body was perfection, at least in his eyes, and he had taken the time to explore and discover every portion of it in intimate detail. Isra knew he was large in that department, but Tarifa had accepted all of him into her, and if her cries of passion were anything to go by, Isra had done pretty good.

He had known that her Drow lover and she were of one mind really, and after the initial shock of discovering she was also part vampire, Isra had looked beyond that and discovered an equally intriguing and beautiful woman who also had wolf in her blood. He had not spent as much time with her as he should have, and for that he berated himself. But they were also plagued with a lingering love for a man long dead, a man who they could not put to rest. Given what else Isra had discovered in those last weeks on his planet, that lingering love for a dead man would keep them from ever being fully his as he so desired. Unlike his father and brothers, Isra didn't want them just for sex, he also wanted their hearts.

The moment Aelnala had come into his life, everything had changed. The moment he had climbed onto her back, the moment their minds became one that first day, that first hour, his path was laid out in front of him. He had discovered where he belonged, he discovered who he truly could be and the answers he had always sought had come to him. He had felt no fear that day on Enurrua, no remorse against those he had grown up with. He felt nothing but rage when he had struck down his brother for trying to kill the women he loved. The King had made a decision that day, a decision that had altered the course of Isra's life and finally given him a future.

A future he had embraced with open arms.

He and Aelnala were one of the five strongest Bonded Pairs now. Only King Leonidas and Queen Aricia surpassed what he and Andreus could do, and the gap between them and Queen Dysea was rapidly being closed by Dysea and Iriral as they progressed in skill. He was a Section Leader of Mjolnir's Hand. Three hundred Bonded Pairs as they were now referred to as. A Spartan and a Dragon. Two minds trained to fight and fly and bring peace as one. His Spartan training had gone much easier than he had expected, perhaps because of the skills being bonded with Aelnala brought to him, but he earned his Shi Viska in only three months time, when most took an entire year. Of course it helped that the King's Captain had taken him under his wing as well.

The day after having his Shi Viska branded to him, it was then he had thrown himself into his training with Aelnala. Under the tutelage of the First Oracle and the Dragon Elder Mother, he and Aelnala had leaped forward in bounds in their training and the bonding of their minds. To be bonded in such a way with another mind had taken some getting used to, but it came naturally to them both. They were both outcasts in a way which went further than anything else in bonding them as it had.

Isra's aura was wild and untamed, much like his King. He relied on his instincts and his nature more times than actual science or investigation, though he had blended those skills together very well into his persona. He was the youngest son of the man who had kidnapped Queen Aricia, and then watched as his son raped her. Isra had watched the King exact his vengeance on both of them, and he had felt the surge of pride and power when he flew into battle next to the man he now called friend. Aelnala was also an outcast, not by any action of hers, but by an action of men who followed Isra's father. She had sustained an injury many years ago that robbed her of the ability to carry eggs, and for that reason no Dragon male would choose her as his mate. The desire to breed and have hatchlings was stronger in dragons that it was even in Lycavorians, and Aelnala could not fulfill this desire with a male. Like soulmates among his people, Dragons mated for life, and Aelnala would forever be alone because of men like him.

Not like you my Bonded Isra. Aelnala's soft voice interrupted his thoughts. You are not like those men, and you never were. What happened was also partly my fault as well. I was young and stupid at the time. Never think for an instant you are at fault.

Isra smiled and turned to look at her honey colored eyes. Aelnala was a Heavyhorn Dragon, and though no where near as large as Torma, she was above average for her breed. Her dirty yellow scales were smooth and could be very soft as Isra had found on many nights sleeping propped up against her side. She was perhaps a shade over six meters in length and four meters tall at her highest. She weighed in excess of two metric tons, but

with constant training and practice with Isheeni over the King's Island, she had become one of the most maneuverable dragons of Mjolnir's Hand, and one of the strongest physically. Her body was thickly muscled, the bone spikes on her large head sharp and solid. The two hand hold spikes on her shoulders were like giant anchors, her wing span twelve meters across from tip to tip. In Isra's eyes she was the most beautiful dragon he had ever seen.

Thank you Bonded One. Aelnala said with a dragon smile, a bearing of her vicious looking fangs and a gentle nudge of his shoulder with her snout. *You worry that they will not desire you Isra. That they have found someone else?*

Isra looked at the female elf that was their pilot and then back out to look at Earth as it got closer. *Yes. She still burns in your blood?*

They both do Aelnala. He answered. *There is not one without the other.*

The King told you that he kept them from contacting you Isra. That should tell you what you want to know. Aelnala spoke.

That was five months ago Aelnala. A lot can happen in five months.

You think too little of what you meant to Tarifa Isra. What you meant to Tarifa and by default to Aihola. Aelnala spoke softly. *You are in her blood as deeply as she is in yours. If it was meant to be Isra, it will be. Do not try to change something that is out of your realm to change. You are a Spartan now, and we are a Bonded Pair of Mjolnir's Hand. We are the word and the hand of King Leonidas.*

We are. Isra nodded.

He is wise for someone so young in terms of years Isra. Trust in his judgment now. He would not have sent you here if he knew that those he considers sisters did not still carry love in their hearts for you. Aelnala spoke. *They are threatened and he knows that only someone who loves them can protect them. He has trusted their care and their hearts to you.*

Isra turned and looked at her. *And if he is wrong?*

Then they are fools and there are seven females on Apo Prime who would be happy to have you claim them. Aelnala spoke quickly and with a little bit of arrogance.

Isra laughed inwardly. *You have counted them?* He asked.

You are my Bond Mate. Of course I counted them. Aelnala replied. *Three are worthy of your attentions... the others only want to play with you because of your status within Mjolnir's Hand.*

Isra reached up and scratched her under her mouthful of razor like teeth. *I have no worries with you looking out for me do I?*

What affects you affects me. Who you love, I will love. Aelnala spoke. *I much prefer Tarifa and Aihola, as do you. They are... worthy of you.* Aelnala's words were spoken with a heavy bias she knew, but she also knew she was right.

"We have a communication coming in from Sparta Commander." Their elf pilot looked up from her controls as she addressed Isra by his rank. "It's from a Senator Dilios."

Her name was Lohana, and she had been chosen as their pilot for two reasons. She was very experienced, and she had a wild streak in her that fit with the natures of Isra and Aelnala, but also tempered them to a point.

Isra nodded. "Put it through Lohana." He said.

Isra turned slightly and watched the holo image of Dilios appear on the console in front of him. He smiled and nodded his head. "Senator Dilios... King Leonidas sends his regards and well wishes."

The man in the image smiled brightly. "He contacted me yesterday to inform me of your arrival Commander. I must say this is an honored event. The first visit by a member of Mjolnir's Hand."

"I'm looking forward to see Earth during my mission here Senator." Isra spoke.

"I have a request if I may." Dilios asked.

"Of course."

"We are graduating a class of Spartans today at Thermopylae Commander." Dilios spoke. "Many have heard of Mjolnir's Hand, but even still some still doubt that dragons exist. There are many here who think it is nothing more than a child's story."

Isra looked oddly at the transmission. "The King and Queen were here for three months Senator, for the birth of Androcles. Torma and Isheeni were with them."

Dilios nodded. "Yes... but they only flew at night with Torma and Isheeni, and for the most part they stayed within the grounds of the villa. King Leonidas thought it might be too much for others to see."

"I see. What can I do for you Senator?" Isra asked.

"I would like... I would like for you to put on a display of sorts to the class of Spartans and those that will be gathered." Dilios replied. "I want our Spartans to know there is much they can aspire too, and that you are the perfect example of that. You and Aelnala."

Isra turned to look at Aelnala. *What do you think?*

I think I want to fly so bad I am ready to rip open the back of this DT at any moment. Of course we will do this. She replied eagerly.

Isra chuckled and turned back to Dilios's image. "Send me the coordinates of where you would like us Senator. I believe we are ready to depart this ship after six days in space. Lohana will continue on ahead to Sparta. There are quarters for her yes?"

Dilios smiled and nodded. "Yes... I have arranged everything. There are quarters already set aside for both of you here and in Eden City. I'm sending you the information on that now Commander. I look forward to greeting you on the ground."

Isra nodded. "I look forward to meeting you sir." He spoke as Dilios's image faded.

Lohana nodded. "I have the coordinates." Lohana spoke. She turned to Isra. "You want to execute a Mid Air Launch I take it?"

Isra nodded. "He wanted a show. We'll give him a show."

Lohana nodded. "Fly safe Commander."

Isra squeezed her shoulder as he got up from the seat next to her. "And you Lohana. We'll see you in Sparta."

THERMOPYLAE

Tarifa and Aihola had broad smiles on their faces as they clapped and cheered at the incredible display before them. A full Mora of newly christened Spartans stood before the crowd of four hundred family and friends and even some of Earth's new trading partners, alien species mixed in with the human, elf and Lycavorian men and women in the comfortable bleachers overlooking the field before them. The monument to King Leonidas was the backdrop for the Spartans in perfect ranks of forty across. Several had spoken over the course of the last three hours, and there had been several displays of *Nehtes* skill and Shi Viskas in use. It was the first such event that Tarifa and Aihola had been to and they were enthralled with the skill and poise of the Spartans.

Tarifa and Aihola sat in the front row, and as two of the three Chief Administrators of Earth, they were treated like visiting royalty. Tareif sat to Aihola's left, while Panos sat to Tarifa's right. They were almost regular figures in Sparta now, always welcome and most often staying at the King's villa in the mountains above Sparta. They always had several young Spartans at their beck and call, all Alpha males and all single. Their beauty was renowned in Sparta and they always attracted unmated Alpha wolves, Tarifa especially. All of these males were falling over themselves for a chance to feel the female auras of Tarifa, or the much more sedate aura of Aihola announcing they were available. To the surprise of many, this never came about. Though Tarifa was completely wolf now, and Aihola half wolf, neither of them had even batted an eye at any male that attempted to court them. One of the wiser Alphas remarked how he had detected a unique scent of an Alpha male permeating Tarifa's blood. It was faint, barely discernable, but he had remarked to Panos that for the scent to still linger, the male must be a powerful Alpha.

Panos had done some investigating and finally discovered what had occurred on Enurrua from Tarifa's mother. Over the last year he had come to think of Tarifa and Aihola as adopted daughters because of the time they spent in Sparta, and his mate had remarked how they never returned any look or flash of an aura. She had told him whoever had stolen their hearts must be strong indeed. Panos had gone so far as to speak with Andreus his nephew on Apo Prime, discovering much about the young Alpha whose scent still drifted in Tarifa's blood, and now even in Aihola's blood. He sat with a smile on his face as Dilios got to his feet and moved for the podium that had been set up. He shifted his eyes upward and could just detect the dark spot far above them.

They had refused additional protection, even after Selene had informed them of the second body being discovered, and would not change their schedules for anyone or anything. Panos smiled. Perhaps they would change their tune when they saw who was about to drop out of the clear blue sky.

Dilios looked out over the assembled Spartans, pride always filling him at this moment and he smiled widely.

“You have been through much Spartans!” He spoke into the microphone his deep voice carrying across the large parade field. “You stand here this day because you have passed your Agoge and finally achieved what it is all of you coveted. The title of Spartan. It has been a little more than a year since all of us discovered who and what we were. And now under the superb leadership of three women, Earth is once more on the road to recovery. I would like to recognize two of them who are present today for this honored ceremony. Chief Administrator Tarifa and Chief Administrator Aihola.” Dilios turned to look at them and bowed his head. Tarifa and Aihola, clearly embarrassed returned the head bow and Dilios turned back to the podium. “You hold the title of Spartan now, yet some of you have not reached the pinnacle of what you could become. Many rumors have spread across Earth and the Lycavorian Union in regards to this mystery unit that King Leonidas is said to have formed. This Mjolnir’s Hand.” Dilios let his eyes wandered over the assembled Spartans. “A unit of Spartans and Dragons bonded together so deeply that they fight with one mind. Think with one mind. Many of you say that dragons do not exist! It is a myth we tell our children. You say that the King himself was here with Queen Aricia for the birth of his son and dragons were never seen. Everyone says it is just a rumor. A story of fiction.” Dilios smiled. “It is true Spartans and honored guests. It is all very true. There are two who sit with us today that can confirm that for they have seen it with their own eyes.” He motioned back to Tarifa and Aihola. “Still you say it is impossible. Well I tell you now it is not! We have been honored today Spartans and guests! Honored with the presence of one of the hammers of Mjolnir’s Hand! Reach your eyes skyward Spartans and guests and allow me to introduce the Bonded Pair and Section leaders of Mjolnir’s Hand, Commander Isra and his dragon Aelnala!”

Tarifa and Aihola had come to their feet as if shot out of a gun, both of them grabbing at each other as they looked up. A thousand pairs of eyes found the small black dot in the sky above them, obviously a ship. Then they saw the smaller black dot separate from the larger one and plummet towards the earth at an incredible speed. As it took shape they could detect the dirty yellow color of the shape and the almost indiscernible figure hunched low. The murmurs grew louder as the smaller black dot grew and took shape. Took the shape that none of them had ever seen before, and as their eyes grew wide, none were wider than the sapphire and amber eyes of the two female elves in the front row.

A thousand pairs of eyes watched as suddenly not a hundred meters from smashing into the earth a massive set of wings snapped out to the sides of the plummeting object, and with a flick of the huge tail, the amazing dive was ended and that huge object was barreling at them only sixty meters off the ground. With a deafening, deep throated trumpet that she unleashed, Aelnala and Isra ripped over the top of the field at nearly two hundred kilometers an hour, causing screams of excitement and terror followed by a riotous scream of approval from the eight hundred graduating Spartans that drowned out all else.

Aelnala banked hard to her right and felt Isra sit a little higher in the saddle as they turned.

Now that was fun! Do you think any of them wet their pants?

Isra laughed feeling the surge of power between them as he always did when they flew. The plummet from eight thousand feet had charged them both, happy to finally be free of the confines of their *STRIKER DT*. His legs were firmly seated under the Dragon armor of the saddle, and Isra hardly ever used the twin shoulder spikes as hand holds anymore. He wore his full armor, the helmet covering all of his head except for his eyes and part of his mouth and lips. Many of Mjolnir’s Hand had decorated their helmets in different styles with crimson colored paint, and Isra’s helmet bore crimson flame reaching back from his eyes to circle his helmet.

Why don’t we find out? Isra spoke. He placed the barrels as we asked. Shall we?

Oh yes we shall! Aelnala barked. She let out another trumpeting roar before tipping her wings once more and diving back towards the parade ground.

Tarifa gripped Aihola's arms tightly, both of them visibly shaking as they watched Aelnala bank back towards the parade ground.

Nya Istel... can you... Tarifa spoke to her within their Mindvoice connection. Her voice quivered in anticipation, desire and passion all woven into one. It had started the first time Aihola had taken Tarifa's blood to heal wounds suffered during the battle for Mountain City. That action had formed the bond they now shared, a bond that had grown more powerful as the months went by, and a bond that was now the reason the two of them were consider one.

I feel it my love. Aihola replied quickly, her voice also quivering, but still held back with Aihola's Drow like emotional control.

He... he is here Mistress! Tarifa exclaimed her sapphire eyes wide.

They watched Aelnala sweep in low over the parade ground once more, her huge wings flaring as they neared the ground.

Dilios had placed several empty barrels all along the parade grounds and with gasps of disbelief, those barrels now launched into the air straight at Isra and Aelnala thanks to her very strong telekinesis powers. Everyone saw Isra's Shi Viska burst into existence with a flash of golden light, and they watched in awe as he lifted his arm and launched it while extending his Nehtes in his right hand.

It was a standard battle drill for them, one of the first they had learned, yet to those who had never seen such a display, it was spectacular. Isra looked as if he had forgotten his Shi Viska was zipping through the air as Aelnala turned sharply to the left, and hundreds of pairs of eyes watched in awe as the Shi Viska struck the first two barrels and severed them completely in half. The four pieces fell harmlessly to the earth, guided by Aelnala's command of her own power.

This is when they felt the most alive, the most together. Their bond allowed their Mindvoice powers to mingle and become one, Aelnala able to draw from Isra's power the ability to maintain their psychic shield when they flew, and to use her newfound telekinetic powers with barely any effort. Isra provided the defense to them, able to use both his Shi Viska and Nehtes in ways that only the King and Aricia had perfected. Their minds were aware of everything around them, every wind current or shift in a breeze, every bird that was in the area, and everything that could be construed as a threat. When they were together their Mindvoice abilities tripled in strength, and even if separated by half a planet, they could still draw form each other easily. Their psychic shield was only needed when they flew and were within sight of each other on the ground, beyond that it was too taxing to leave it up and still use their other abilities. And while they had trained using their Mindvoice talents, they had also trained on the ground fighting. Aelnala was a pure Heavyhorn and could not spit fire or molten breath, but she was still a devastating force on the battle field with her teeth, her talons and her lethal tail. With a mace like bony protrusion on the tip of her tail she could whip and snap her muscled appendage in almost any direction at lightning like speed and do extreme amounts of damage.

Isra threw his Nehtes with all his strength impaling the third barrel cleanly through the middle, the Nehtes carrying the barrel to the ground and stabbing deeply to the earth. He reached out with his control of telekinesis, TK as the Bonded Pairs called it and grasped the last barrel with his grip, flinging it directly at him and Aelnala as she turned. He heard the squeals of delight from the gathered crowd and Aelnala roared again, whipping her tail around with blinding speed and smashing the barrel away with a resounding thump. It disappeared quickly over the top of the monument and into the timber beyond.

Land in front of the monument show off! Isra called to her.

Aelnala laughed within their connection as she rolled over a full 360 degrees in her turn, bringing even more gasps of awe from the crowd. She flared her massive wings and easily came to rest on the soft ground before the statue of Martin Leonidas's father, the Spartan King. Isra gazed at the monument for a long moment, taking in the bronze figure of the spear wielding man. Aelnala moved closer, each step as if she was on holy ground.

This... this is the King's father? She asked softly.

Isra nodded slowly. *I have seen pictures of it. I never thought I would actually see it in person.* Isra lifted his hand and called his Nehtes to him. Eyes went wide as the spear wrenched from the ground nearly a hundred meters away and flew back to him in an instant.

Isra then climbed slowly from the saddle, settling next to the ground beside Aelnala, and in a show of fealty and honor he dropped to one knee. Aelnala lowered her body to the ground as well, bowing her head as the cheering in the background continued.

We will serve your son well sire. Isra spoke softly. *I swear this to you on my blood as a Lycavorian and a Spartan.*

The strong breeze picked up momentarily and whipped over the top of the monument swirling around Isra and Aelnala for only a split second, but it was seen by everyone gathered and it was all the answer Isra needed.

The wind is his blessing to us my Bonded Brother. Aelnala's voice echoed softly. *Let his gaze guide our actions for all time.*

The wind shifted again and Isra's head came up instantly at the two scents he detected. The pure, unmistakable scent of peaches and the fresh, clean scent of cherry blossoms in full bloom. He stood up quickly and turned to look at the bleachers beyond where the *Mora* of Spartans stood.

Aelnala they are here! He exclaimed.

Tarifa! Aihola! Are you sure?

Positive! I can smell them as easily as I smell you next to me! Isra answered.

This is not the place to rush to them Isra! Aelnala counseled. *They are here in an official capacity and we must recognize that and not embarrass them or ourselves.*

Isra looked at her with his violet eyes and gave her a crooked grin. *You have taught me a little of protocol Aelnala!* He spoke almost indignantly.

I have taught you much of protocol, all of which you continuously dismiss. She told him sternly.

Are you referring to the incident with the Veltronian officer? He asked as they began to walk towards the bleachers.

He was an officer of their fleet. Aelnala said.

He was an officer stealing from an elfin family their very livelihood when he removed those crystals from their shop. They needed those crystals to power their ovens and stoves. Isra said.

You should not have struck him so hard. Aelnala spoke.

The King would have done worse. Isra spoke confidently. *He got what was coming to him for his actions. I was merely the instrument.*

Aelnala laughed. *It does not hurt that we gained free food for the rest of our lifetimes with our actions does it.*

Isra chuckled. *I like elfin food.*

As do I. I would think between them and your mother's tavern, we will never have to cook a meal again. Aelnala spoke. She leaned over and butted her head into his shoulder gently as they walked. *Your cooking leaves much to be desired my Bonded Brother.*

Isra looked at her. *It was never my strong point.*

No one approached them as they walked among the ranks of Spartans towards the bleachers. Aelnala looked large when flying, but to men and women who had never seen a dragon before, on the ground she was enormous and no one wanted to be the first to get close to her. And now that the rumors and stories had indeed been proven true, Isra was looked at as something of mythical warrior.

They are afraid of me. Aelnala spoke.

That will change as soon as they learn all they need do is toss a thick slab of beef in front of you and they make a friend forever. Isra spoke.

I can not help it if I like to eat. Aelnala said as they stopped in front of the bleachers, the eyes and faces of hundred showing their disbelief at what stood before the. Isra reached up and removed his Spartan helmet slowly, his violet eyes staring directly at where Tarifa and Aihola stood staring back at him. He fought down his desire to scoop them both up within his TK power and pull them to him and ravage them in front of everyone, announcing his claim to them to the four winds and all who would listen. He took a deep breath and finally tore his gaze away from them and looked at Dilios.

Dilios motioned for them to come up to the podium that had been erected.

Go my Bonded Brother. Aelnala spoke. *They can only hear your words and we speak with one voice.*

And what will you be doing? Isra asked.

Aelnala laughed heartily. *I said you should not rush to them in greeting. I never said I could not!*

Isra watched wide eyed as Aelnala maneuvered her huge frame deftly past him with a burst of speed and headed directly for where Tarifa and Aihola stood. Many people scrambled back from Tarifa and Aihola as the massive dirty yellow dragon walked right up to them and lowered its head. Tareif's eyes were wide as were Panos's, but they remained in their places as Aelnala brought her face within centimeters of Tarifa and Aihola.

You are just as beautiful as I remember you both from that field of battle. She spoke to them.

Tarifa and Aihola reached up with no fear and placed their hands on her huge head. Her honey colored eyes closed and her mouth opened in what amounted to a smile for a dragon.

"Aelnala." Tarifa said softly, small tears coming to her eyes as well as Aihola's.

I told you that day if it was meant to be, our paths would cross once more. Aelnala said as she opened her eyes again. *It seems destiny and fate has spoken. I sense you are both free of the demons that clouded your minds back then. I am so very happy for you. You are strong enough to Mindvoice; please... allow me to hear your thoughts in my mind.*

Aelnala... we... we tried to contact you so many times. Tarifa spoke quickly.

We thought he had... we thought he had forgotten us. Aihola said.

Forgotten you? Aelnala laughed softly. *Not a day has gone by that you have not filled our thoughts Tarifa and Aihola of the Drow. Filled his thoughts. Your messages were received by the King, as all messages to Mjolnir's Hand pass to him first. He did not tell Isra because he knew Isra would have dropped everything to come here to you. To be with you. He has grown so much... we have grown so much.*

You did not come here for this ceremony did you? Tarifa spoke.

Aelnala shook her massive head, her honey colored eyes sparkling. *No. As I said... destiny and fate have spoken. We have come for you. Both of you.*

"Senator Dilios... honored guests... I bring greetings on behalf of Mjolnir's Hand and King Leonidas!"

Isra's voice boomed over the loudspeaker system and both Tarifa and Aihola closed their eyes as that sound drifted through them. So closely bonded together as they were, Aihola felt everything Tarifa felt, and vice versa. The touch of his hands upon her, the feel of him buried deep within her, Aihola now felt all these things as well. And as with Tarifa, these sensations swept through her with a force unlike any she had ever felt with Dekton, and she opened herself to them completely.

"To my fellow Spartans! I too have just recently passed my training. I am not good with words but I will leave you with the immortal words spoken by our King's father... written on the very monument that we so honor with our presence this day. *Mon Labe!*"

The roar that followed caused many to cringe and Isra basked in the feelings of pride and honor he felt on this field. Dilios stepped up to him and pounded him on the back, grasping his arm and pulling him back towards where Aelnala stood with Tarifa and Aihola. Dilios hid the smile when he felt Isra's heart begin to pound in his chest, and his breathing became shallow. He could smell the wildness in this young Spartan, and the power, and foremost among that was the desire bubbling from him for the two women which Dilios knew he wanted. Isra was shielding it well, but no doubt his bond with his dragon was keeping it from leaking more than it was or he had no doubts Tarifa and Aihola would already be within his embrace. Panos had told him of this young violet eyed Spartan and what had happened between him and Tarifa and Dilios felt some pride at the control Isra was using to keep from doing what his blood no doubt was craving him to do.

Dilios stopped in front of Aihola, Tarifa and her father, tightly gripping Isra's arm to provide him even more support.

"Commander Isra... I'm sure you are already familiar with Chief Administrator Tarifa and Chief Administrator Aihola." Dilios spoke.

Isra took a deep breath. "Yes Senator... I am." Isra bowed his head to them. "It is a pleasure to see you both again." He spoke with a quivering tone that only Dilios and Panos understood. "I am... I am very happy to see you well." He reached out slowly with a shaking hand.

Tarifa and Aihola were having a harder time maintaining their emotions, but they both bowed their heads slightly and Tarifa reached out tentatively and slipped her hand into his. She fought down the surge of

emotion that threatened to sweep her and Aihola away at the touch of his skin on hers and quickly pulled her hand back, a response that Isra did not expect and it sent a shudder of fear through his chest.

“You... you are looking well Isr... Commander Isra.” Tarifa managed to stammer out formally. “We... we welcome you to Sparta and to Earth.” Tarifa, drawing from her own strength and that of Aihola managed to bring her politicians’ face down into place and she took a deep breath. “Allow me to present Governor Panos and my father, War Master Tareif.”

Isra looked at Panos and nodded. “Governor... I have heard great things about you from Andreus. He... he wanted me to send his regards to you.”

Panos smiled and reached out to squeeze Isra’s shoulders. “And he has spoken well of you as well Commander. Welcome to Earth.”

Isra turned to Tarifa’s father and bowed his head a little deeper in a show of respect for him. He had not realized Tarifa’s father would be here, and looking at the elf General Isra could not help but be impressed. He now knew where Tarifa got her stubbornness and sense of purpose as he looked at the stern face of Tareif.

“There are not many who have not heard the name War Master Tareif sir. Your name is spoken even on Apo Prime with honor and respect because of your actions during the Battle for Earth and your stand beside the Guardian of the Line.” Isra spoke as calmly as he could. “It is truly an honor to meet you.”

Tareif was taken aback. Palina had told him some of what had occurred between his daughter and this Spartan. While he tried very hard, he could not get past the part where this man had practically forced himself on his daughter. Perhaps it saved her life, but it was wrong no matter how Tareif looked at it. He had thought highly of Dekton, and respected the man and Spartan he was. It was Dekton who had come to him and asked that he be allowed to take Tarifa as his mate in the elfin tradition. It was very hard to let go of that, and no matter what his daughter felt for this man, Tareif could not bring himself to forgive this man for putting his Tarifa through such torment so soon after the death of her husband.

Tareif nodded his head stiffly. “Commander.” He spoke.

Isra was no fool and he detected the restrained way that Tareif spoke to him. He turned quickly to Dilios. “Senator... we have had a long trip and Aelnala and I would like to stretch our wings so to speak. Lohana has taken our *STRIKER DT* on to Sparta, and she will fly us to Eden City tomorrow. Right now... I think it best if we just get the kinks out. We’ll fly to Sparta from here.”

“Of course Commander.” Dilios began. “I’m sure...”

“Lohana?” Tarifa and Aihola spoke together, causing Isra’s violet eyes to turn to them.

“She is the pilot of our *STRIKER DT*.” He answered.

“An elf?” Aihola asked quickly.

Isra nodded. “The majority of *STRIKER* pilots are female elves.” He replied confused by the question. “They make the finest pilots, and all Mjolnir’s Hand pilots are female elves.”

Dilios stepped in quickly sensing the tension in the air. “We will meet you back in Sparta Commander.” He said.

“Why are you here Commander?” Tareif asked the question moving closer behind his daughter.

Isra looked surprised. “I... I thought you all knew.” He said. “The King sent me here to assist in investigating these murders of elves, and to find out who is threatening Tarifa and Aihola.”

“That is Chief Administrator Tarifa and Chief Administrator Aihola to you Commander.” Tareif spoke in a low angry voice. “Whatever history you think you may have with my daughter and Aihola... it certainly does not extend to now. And while others may consider you a Spartan, you do not deserve to hold that title in my opinion!”

“Papa!” Tarifa snapped angrily, turning to look at him. “This is not the place!”

Isra’s eyes cut to Aelnala, her own honey eyes wide in surprise.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Tarifa... Aihola... what is wrong?* Aelnala asked quickly looking back to where Tarifa stood.

Tarifa looked at her as Aelnala kept the shielding up and not allowing Isra to hear. [Mindvoice Shielded] *My father loved Dekton like a son Aelnala. She spoke softly. He... he does not feel the same for Isra. He... he still believes Isra forced himself on me, no matter that he was protecting me from harm.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *You have allowed your father to cultivate this ideal within his mind when you know it is not true Tarifa?* Aelnala asked. *Why?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Aelnala... we... we never thought we would see Isra again. He did not answer any inquiries from us of his well being. He sent us no messages. It has been over a year.* Aihola spoke.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *And this gives you the right to allow lies to be cultivated in the minds of others when you know them to not be true.* Aelnala said. She looked quickly to Isra, who was standing there stone faced. He could sense her building anger, and from the reaction of her father Aelnala knew Isra had a pretty good idea of what they were discussing. She shifted her body closer to him, tapping him with her tail gently in a sign for him to climb onto her back. She watched as he did so and then turned back to Tarifa and Aihola.

Two hundred and twenty-seven messages he sent to you. Aelnala spoke openly now, so that Isra could hear her. *Two hundred and twenty-seven messages telling you what he was doing and how you were always in his heart and thoughts. Both of you. This is how you repay that devotion, by allowing lies to remain when they are not true? Perhaps fate has played a cruel joke on us for bringing us back here.*

Isra stared at them with his violet eyes, and all Tarifa and Aihola saw was pain. No anger, no hate, just pain. He turned to Dilios. "Senator I will meet with you in Sparta before traveling to Eden City. I wish to solve this mystery of ours and then return to where I am more welcome."

Aelnala snapped out a growl and then leaped for the sky before anyone could utter a word. They did not see first Aihola and then Tarifa whirl on her father with venom in their eyes.

HIGH COVEN SPACE TWENTY TWO LIGHT YEARS FROM USU'OZEIB 7 HIGH COVEN FLEET TRAINING AREA

Moran studied the star map intently, attempting to put together a plan that would save their bacon. He had been given command of an entire Fleet Group of the best High Coven ships around and for the last two days he had been getting his ass handed to him by the Vampire Admiral Pontal. The man was famous for never having been defeated in a training exercise or actual combat. Every year each VHC Fleet had to take on the members he had assembled as his aggressor force, and each year every one of them got their asses kicked. It was a similar to the operation set up on Earth centuries in their past, for the ground forces of what was once known as the United States. No matter what they did, the unit that went against them got their heads handed to them by the OPFOR as they were known.

Moran stared at the chart now, wondering how he was going to pull himself out of this mess. He thought he had been ready, Cha'talla thought he had been ready, and now he was just making a fool of himself. And in the process making a fool of Yuri.

He turned as Cha'talla and the man who had befriended him came up to the small star chart. The vampire Captain Luceler was two thousand years old and had been working with Moran since he had returned with Yuri. They had grown in what you would call a friendship for vampires and Moran at least trusted him.

"What are you thinking Robert Moran?" Cha'talla asked.

"I'm thinking that maybe I wasn't as ready as I thought I was Cha'talla. As much as that burns me to admit." Moran answered honestly.

Cha'talla and Luceler smiled. "Then you would be the first to come here and admit they were not ready." Cha'talla spoke. "Admiral Pontal had been doing this for three centuries. You do not need to feel humbled by this experience."

"He's using tactics I've never seen before." Moran spoke. "Feints and pushes! No matter what I do, he seems to predict my movements."

"And you are using standard fleet doctrine correct?" Cha'talla asked.

"I thought that was the purpose of this?" Moran spoke.

Cha'talla nodded. "It is. However I also know this is not how *you* fight. You do not use standard doctrine to fight and win. That is not your way."

Luceler looked at Moran. "Cha'talla was kind enough to allow me to view the tactics and strategies you employed on Earth Commander."

"We lost on Earth." Moran spoke.

“Perhaps sir. But it was not because of your tactics. It was because of Prince Xerxes. True these fuel air weapons decimated your ranks and were unknown, but even with the casualties you took, if the Union had not landed an additional fifty thousand Spartans and the elves had not mobilized as they had, you would have won.” Luceler spoke.

“Close only counts in hand grenades and horseshoes.” Moran spoke with a smile. He saw the confused looks on their faces. “It’s an old Earth saying. It means you don’t get any points for second place.”

“So do not be second place now, Robert Moran.” Cha’talla spoke. “Fight this battle as *you* would fight this battle. Not as some book tells you. You and I both know no books can predict war and battle.”

Moran stared into his dark eyes for a long moment and a smile began to spread across his face. “Luceler... order all ships to stand too and engage their shrouds!”

“Even those that are *damaged*?” Luceler asked with a smile.

“Hell yes! This Admiral wants a battle... I’m going to give him a battle. One he won’t forget!” Moran snapped.

VHC REVERENCE-CLASS DREADNOUGHT ADMIRAL PONTAL’S FLAGSHIP

“Admiral!” The young Captain spoke from his station.

The ten thousand year old vampire looked up from the pad he was reading. Pontal was a vampire yes, but he was a military officer above all else, and everything about him radiated confidence and experience. He was unlike other senior officers in that he actually cared about the men and women under his command. There were no rogue vampires in his command. They had slaves and they were allowed to feed, but there was no butchery among his command, no blood drained corpses littering the decks of his ships or his base. He maintained an iron hand of discipline and his men and women knew it.

“Speak Captain!” Pontal spoke. “Have they begun maneuvering again? I wish to put this hybrid vampire in his place and return to the fine young slave I purchased last week. Her blood is very sweet and she squeals delightfully when I am taking her.”

“Admiral... Commander Moran’s ships have dropped off the grid sir! They’ve engaged their shrouds! All of them!”

Pontal came to his feet quickly, tossing the pad aside quickly. “He breaks the exercise rules.” Pontal said. “Oh I like this hybrid. He has more balls than a pureblood! The ships that were deemed too damaged to continue the exercise?”

“Shrouded as well Admiral!”

A wide smile crossed Pontal’s face. “Captain... sound General Quarters and go to Shroud! We have a battle on our hands!”

The three members of the High Coven Governing and Grading Council stepped forward quickly. They were the men who would grade the exercise and determine who was dead and not. “Admiral... this hybrid breaks the rules of the exercise! He must be disqualified immediately!”

Pontal looked at the three men disgust in his eyes. “Disqualified my *t'zarreth*!” Pontal almost yelled. (ass) “This hybrid vampire is smarter than the lot of officers that have come through here in the last century. He knows he can not win using standard fleet doctrine and he is tossing that right out the window as he would do in battle!”

“What is he going to do?”

Pontal laughed. “He’s is going to try and win!”

“Commander Moran Admiral Pontal’s fleet has shrouded!” Luceler barked out.

Robert nodded as he stood at the star chart, his fingers typing quickly on the pad. “Order the Second and Third Wings to break off and move to 56792.2! Prepare to disengage shroud and engage! Move us to point five

seven, First Wing z minus twenty degrees! Fourth Wing z minus ten degrees! As soon as they de-shroud to engage we do the same!”

Luceler looked at him. “How do you know he will attack the two Wings with his entire force?”

“Because ship for ship he can’t stand against our numbers! He’s been eating us up because he knows where we have to go and how we will maneuver!” Moran snapped out. “Not this time! And be prepared for evasive maneuvers on my mark! He knows we’re hunting him and he won’t hold anything back!”

“Two wings de-shrouding off our port side!” Pontal’s operations officer barked.

Pontal smiled. “Oh this one is smart! He’s baiting us!” He said. “Sensors!”

“No thermatronic waves detected Admiral!”

One of the graders stepped up to Pontal’s chair. “What is a thermatronic wave?” He asked.

“It is a very low frequency wave released by the Shroud when our ships move at an extremely slow speed. Like a harmonic of sorts!” Pontal replied. “If used properly it can pin point the exact location of a shrouded ship!”

“This is not known in the regular fleet!” The man gasped.

“Of course it is!” Pontal snapped. “Our commanders are just too stupid to use it properly, and they usually end up giving themselves away!” Pontal came to his feet. “Give me a slow thermatronic passive sweep. All corridors and blind spots as well. Maneuver as needed to execute.”

“He’s not taking the bait.” Cha’talla spoke from next to Moran.

“Neither would I.” Moran spoke. “Better to lose part of your command than all of it.”

“We are at z minus twenty degrees!”

Moran nodded and looked at Luceler. “Use the belly array. A full thermatronic passive scan beneath us. They’ll be moving just as slow as we will. Very slow and subtle. Get me outlines on all ships and then transmit those target bearings to our ships.”

Luceler nodded. “Aye sir.”

Moran looked at Cha’talla with a predator’s smile. “Now the fun begins.”

“Fun?” Cha’talla asked.

Moran nodded. “You can damn well bet he’s doing the same thing, and it’s going to come down to who hits first and hardest.”

“Admiral we are detecting at minimum two complete wings!” Pontal’s sensor operator declared.

“Where?”

“Z plus twenty degrees and z plus ten degrees!”

Pontal couldn’t help but laugh! “Oh but this hybrid is good! Target downward with his belly missiles since they are the largest! Put his capital ships between his cruisers and frigates where they can provide fire support and bring their heavier weapons to bear. Brilliant! He who shoots first is usually the winner.” Pontal looked at the man. “Transmit firing solutions to all ships and stand by! All ships on our axis rotate one hundred and sixty degrees and prepare to fire!”

“Ships rotating to position! We... Admiral they are de-shrouding! They are firing!”

“Damn he is good!” Pontal smiled as he said that and moved causally to his command chair and sat down.

The undersides of seventy-seven cruisers and nineteen frigates lit up like a fireworks show as every missile tube and plasma array fired off small electronic burst of energy. It was quite a light show as Pontal’s ships began to de-shroud all around them, the bursts of energy causing the shrouds to de-sync and phase out.

And then the bursts of energy began to dance across the hulls of every one of Pontal's ships as he roared his approval from the bridge of his ship.

"Commander we are receiving a transmission from Admiral Pontal's flagship!" Luceler spoke.

Moran turned to Cha'talla quickly before nodding. "Put it up."

Pontal's face appeared in the holo transmission and the smile was unmistakable. "I never thought I would say this of a hybrid Commander, but I am impressed! So very impressed. Join me for dinner if you would. You and all your command officers! You've earned it!"

Moran glanced at Cha'talla once more. "I violated the rules of the engagement Admiral." Moran spoke.

"Yes you did." Pontal nearly shouted. "And you won! You are the first officer to come here on my terms and beat me in nearly three hundred years boy! Pureblood have not performed as you have! You recognized what you needed to do and you did it! That deserves recognition!"

Moran smiled. "I would be honored Admiral!"

"Bah! Let us enjoy some good food, some good blood and then some fine female slaves!" Pontal echoed. "I will see you on the surface of our moon Commander Moran, and rest assured, the High Lord Veldruk will hear of your feats here this day!"

"Thank you sir!"

"I will see you at sundown Commander!" Pontal spoke before ending the transmission.

Moran turned to a beaming Cha'talla who only nodded his head in approval. As Luceler and Moran's other officers moved to congratulate him, Cha'talla knew he had found the man he was looking for. Yes... with Moran on his side and by default Princess Yuri, perhaps what he had been plotting for nearly a millennia would now be able to come to pass. Cha'talla smiled.

Yes... just maybe he could accomplish his goals now.

USU'OZEIB 7

"...definitely this Yuriko you described Princess." The Coven officer spoke within the transmission. "There is also a big black Spartan, two female elves and a Hadarian Healer. A male."

"A male Hadarian Healer." Yuri spoke. "That is interesting."

"We were able to get a good solid lock on his face and it appears this Yuriko helped him to escape a prison ship approximately two hundred and fifty years ago. It appears he's been with her ever since." The man said.

"And they have done nothing for the entire time since arriving on the station?" Yuri asked.

"Aside from take regular shifts in the room no. She hasn't come out at all. The room they are in is better defensible than the Runner they arrived in and that is my guess why they are using the room as their base. One way in and one way out. Yuriko and this Hadarian have obviously been here before. Right now she is with the two elf females and the Hadarian in the room. Yuriko and the Spartan left a while ago. For a big bastard he disappears pretty well."

Yuri nodded. "Daniel Simpson." She spoke looking at her father who sat across from her desk. "The two elf females are his mates."

"Is he dangerous?" Veldruk asked.

"All Spartans are dangerous father, but in answer to your question yes. Skill wise he is second only to Leonidas. They consider each other brothers." Yuri answered. "And if I understand correctly, the red haired elf is also a trained Spartan. The Drow... well her skill speaks for itself. If she travels with him... then you can be certain she is just as lethal as the rest of them."

Veldruk shook his head. "Captain I want you to avoid a direct confrontation with him that includes any of our troops." He spoke. "Given the set up I have seen of this station, our vampire speed would be nullified by the narrow corridors. Use our skills in the shadows and have the pirate scum in our employ attack them while

our troops can sneak in behind them and take the female. I want that female Hadarian in our hands, or dead. Those are the only two options.”

“Milord... the Overseers here in the Wilds have taken a contract out on her.” The man reported. “Kill upon sight. If I understand correctly, the contract is opened ended, and it states that no other contracts supercede this one.”

Yuri looked at her father. “All of them have done business with her. She probably knows too much father. They want her dead, even at the expense of business with us.”

Veldruk nodded. “They fear what she can reveal to us about their operations, yes I know.” He said. “You have men in your employ Captain?”

“I do Milord. A dozen of the best Bounty Hunters in the Wilds, however Gellen Station is a neutral site and everyone is forbidden to violate the inviolability of that.” The Captain said.

“Offer them double their rate!” Veldruk snapped.

The Captain paused. “Milord... we could offer them triple the rate and they would not accept the job. Anyone who violates Gellen Station neutrality will immediately become hunted themselves. They will be able to go no where in the Wilds without being hunted.”

“Then offer them a position within the Coven, and when the job is complete kill them!” Veldruk said. “They are at that station for a reason, and the only reason that comes to mind is that they are waiting for someone to come and collect them from inside the Union and guide them through the defensive perimeter.”

“If she gets across the border into Union space it will become next to impossible to target her then!” Yuri echoed her father. “We need to take them while they are on that station! Captain if you fail this time... do yourself a favor and take your own life! It will involve less pain than what I will show you.”

Yuri’s hand passed over the panel and the transmission ended. She sat back in her chair and looked at her father. “We should have used our own ships and personnel.” She said.

Veldruk shook his head. “It would have raised too much suspicion.” He said. “Since the events on Enurrua, Leonidas has established a very well funded and experienced Intelligence Network within the Wilds. Much the same as we have. Within a few hours of a fleet of our ships entering the Wilds, the Union would know about it and respond in kind. The Wilds serve a purpose to us, and to start a full scale war within its borders is neither wise nor feasible right now. What were you able to obtain from the trackers that were placed on her?”

“We tore apart her ship and were able to obtain the last thirty-seven locations she has been too in the past five decades. I have people moving to each location now. There were two locations that we have been unable to crack the encryption codes on, and my guess is one of them is where we will find Lisisa.” Yuri answered.

“Do we know when this child was last sold?” Veldruk spoke.

“The Bounty Hunter Hunal sold her thirty-eight years ago to an anonymous buyer.” Yuri replied. “Sangria delivered her as I told you before.”

“Anonymous buyer? That is odd in slave purchases isn’t it?” Veldruk spoke.

“There are many who wish to remain anonymous.” Yuri replied. “I would imagine the only reason to encrypt a location however, is because it is somewhere she wasn’t supposed to be in the first place.”

“Inside the Union?” Veldruk said.

Yuri nodded. “The Union would be my first guess yes, or perhaps within the Kavala Empire. They have been known to purchase slaves in the Wilds, and their activity appears to be increasing.”

Veldruk looked at her surprised. “What would the Kavala want with a hybrid child, even if they did realize what she is?” He asked.

“I do not begin to understand the Kavalians father. They are shape shifters.” Yuri answered. “And they are even more savage than the Lycavorians in my opinion.”

Veldruk nodded. “That may be so, but they are also the only species we were not able to conquer completely Yuri, and they started the war with us. That by itself makes them a threat.”

“They have always hated their Lycavorian wolf cousins, ever since the Union smashed them down over two millennia ago. Then they chose to go to war with us and we basically wiped them from existence.” Yuri said meeting his gaze. “Do you think they have recovered enough to play a role in the greater scheme of things so soon?”

“They were masters of subterfuge Yuri. You were on Earth when our conflict with them began, but they were able to insinuate themselves into the Coven in many places. They are excellent shape shifters.” Veldruk spoke. “And they were known in the past to kidnap young Lycavorian women to be used as pre-breeding slaves. The Lycavorian women were the only ones who could survive the savageness of their mating frenzy before Kavalians finally mated with another of their own race.”

“If it turns out she is in Kavalian space father, do we pursue her?” Yuri asked.

Veldruk nodded. “Yes. She may be a mindless sex slave by now, but her blood will retain what we need for our clones. If it is the Kavala, make sure it is an experienced Assassin Team Yuri. Our very best. Better yet... send a team in now to scout the area. Have them remain very low profile and avoid all contact, but have them chart planets and settlements.”

“What do you make of the reports of some sort of religious conspiracy on Elear?” Yuri asked.

“Religious conspiracies are nothing more than fanatics trying to make a stab at power.” Veldruk spoke. I do not put much stock in their ability to be a hindrance.”

“Deia and the Elf High Minister thought enough of it to have the Elf Queen Dysea and Isabella head to Elear to investigate it.” Yuri spoke.

Veldruk looked at her. “Isabella?” He spoke his face showing his shock. “She travels with this elf Queen of Leonidas?”

Yuri nodded. “That is what I said as well father.” Yuri told him. “If the reports that we are receiving from our lower placed agents are true, they have developed a...”

Veldruk looked at her. “Developed what?” He snapped.

“They are lovers.” Yuri spoke looking at her father’s face with great satisfaction. She knew her father hated any type of same sex relationships, and that is why he detested the elves so much.

Veldruk got to his feet in a huff. “I knew I should have killed that wench the moment she was born!” He snapped. “Not only has she betrayed me, now she takes an elf into her bed and further disgraces me!”

Yuri smiled behind his back. “Mother did warn you about taking Isabella’s mother into your bed father.” She said.

Veldruk waved his hand at her. “Don’t remind me Yuri!” He snapped shaking his head. “Will I never be rid of that wretched creature?”

“I could issue a Kill Order on her father.” Yuri said without fear. “We have assets that can accomplish the mission.”

Veldruk looked at her for a long moment. “Send your brother.” He spoke finally.

Yuri looked surprised. “Vonis? Why? He’s... he’s not...”

“He has to learn Yuri.” Veldruk spoke.

“Father I hate Isabella as much as you.” Yuri spoke. “But sending Vonis after her? And to Elear no less? As much as it makes me want to vomit, I have to give her credit where it’s due. She... she would...”

“Say it Yuri?” Veldruk spoke.

“She would eat Vonis for lunch and not blink an eye. She was a capable warrior before she defected to the Union.” Yuri spoke. “Now that she’s been fighting with them for a thousand years, her skills will have doubled. Add to that the fact that she is the lover of Leonidas’s elf Queen.” Yuri shook her head. “Dysea may be an elf, but she is also a wolf, and I may consider Leonidas a savage and a fool, but none of the whores who share his bed are helpless. All of them, especially this Aricia now, they are all exceptional warriors. Vonis would... he is not skilled enough.”

“There is only one way to gain that skill Yuri.” Veldruk said. “That is by doing. You know that.”

“Yes but...”

“Send a senior assassin with him then.” Veldruk spoke. “I will not coddle him because he is my only son. If he lives he will have proven himself, if he dies, your mother and I will have to have another son.”

Yuri nodded slowly. “If that is what you wish father.” She spoke softly.

“You don’t approve do you?”

“You are the High Lord father. I will never question an order you give to me.” Yuri told him. “If you are asking me as your daughter, no... I think it is a bad idea and could very well get him killed. In fact, I think there is a good possibility of this. It is not because I am soft... it is because he is not ready. If he had the skills and

training I would send him in a heartbeat. He does not have these skills however. If this is what you wish... at least allow me to send him with two senior assassins. It will improve his odds considerably.”

Veldruk nodded. “Very well.” He said. “Make it so then. I am returning to the palace. Contact me with any word on this Hadarian wench and that operation.”

Yuri nodded. “As you wish father.”

Veldruk smiled. “Have faith Yuri. Vonis is not as weak as you might think.”

“Perhaps... but I don’t consider him weak. I consider him inexperienced.” Yuri spoke. “I will issue the orders before I depart this evening.” Yuri got to her feet and held out the pad for him. “I have been meaning to give this to you.”

“What is this?” Veldruk asked taking the pad.

Yuri shrugged with a smile. “My “insurance policy” as that pig Leonidas likes to call them.”

Veldruk began reading and a smile spread across his face as he began to laugh. He looked at her and shook his head. “Oh daughter... you can be so ruthless when you want to be.”

Yuri chuckled. “I learned from you father.” She said.

“Good.” Veldruk stepped over to her and kissed her forehead. “I will tell your mother you wish her well, but you need to come over for a visit soon.”

“And you father.” Yuri spoke. “And you.”

EARTH SPARTA

“Have you read the reports Andreus?” Isra asked.

He and Aelnala sat in the back of their *STRIKER DT* while Lohana had gone ahead to the meeting hall that had been erected near the King’s villa on the edge of the city. It had been built with dragons in mind and was large enough for even Torma to enter and exit easily.

Andreus looked at him in the image from Apo Prime. “Is this accurate?”

“It was compiled by General Lynwe.” Isra answered. “The Drow that King Leonidas speaks highly of.”

Andreus nodded. “Then you can be assured it is accurate. She is meticulous in her work. This is definitely a Spartan, and judging by the entry wounds a large Spartan. Easily as large as Daniel.”

Isra sat back in the chair. “That big?”

Andreus nodded. “The downward angle of the thrust suggests someone well over two meters tall.” He looked at Isra. “This was done out of rage Isra. It is a clean thrust, no jagged edges, which suggests great strength. These two elves did not die immediately. It took perhaps a minute for both of them to pass based on the damage and resilience of elves. I double checked this with Kmyla. Even though the spine was severed and the heart and lungs destroyed, she said they would have lain there and bled out, but still been very much alive.”

“So whoever he was, he watched them die.” Isra spoke.

Andreus nodded. “It would appear so. Chief Mage Thr’won and the Oracle, I showed them these reports as well. They believe Tarifa and Aihola are the ultimate targets and these others are just ways to instill fear and doubt. Whoever this is, he carries great rage for Tarifa and Aihola for some reason.”

“They have done much to anger many if recent history is accurate.” Isra spoke. “But why leave the bodies on the beaches of the city she destroyed and not in Eden City?”

“Thr’won is having someone at the main University here look over this information in the next day or so.” Andreus spoke. “A doctor of the mind. She is going to try and help figure this out. I gave her your COM channel in case she wants to communicate directly with you.”

Isra nodded slowly. “Very well.”

Andreus leaned closer in the transmission. “How did the reunion go?” He asked.

Isra looked at him. “Not well Andreus.” He answered softly. “Not as I would have liked.”

“I’m truly sorry my friend.” Andreus said.

“I will travel to this New Miami tomorrow and meet with Lynwe before moving to Eden City.” Isra spoke.

“Use whatever assets you need to.” Andreus told him.

Isra nodded. "I will contact you when I know something." He ended the transmission and sat back in the chair.

Aelnala moved up behind him, the inside of the DT giving her plenty of room to be able to move around freely.

I am sorry as well Isra. She spoke softly, gently nudging his shoulder with her head.

Isra nodded slowly. *I should have known it could never be.* He said. *Her father hates me doesn't he?*

Yes... but for false reasons... reasons that Tarifa and Aihola did nothing to refute. I don't know why they would do this. Aelnala spoke.

Isra turned in his chair and looked at her. *It does not matter. I am a Spartan now and a member of Mjolnir's Hand, regardless of what this Tareif thinks or says. I will do my duty... we will do our duty and then continue on with this path we now walk.*

Aelnala's honey eyes sparkled. *You have grown much my Bond Mate, and it does my heart proud.*

We have grown Aelnala. Isra spoke. *Now let's get to this meeting before they overwhelm Lohana.*

Lohana had been a pilot for going on six hundred of her nine hundred years, but she was also a female, and she knew when she was being sized up. And sized up with unfriendly eyes. Lohana was beautiful by anyone's standard with long dark hair and light brown eyes. She had gone on ahead of Isra and Aelnala to the meeting hall, and now she was regretting it.

"Where is he Commander?" Tareif demanded of her. "I thought Spartans were supposed to be prompt!"

Lohana looked at Tareif. "He was speaking to Captain Andreus when I left War Master. He will be along shortly. Isra is very thorough."

"How long have you been his personal pilot?" Tarifa asked from her chair at the table next to Aihola. She attempted to keep her voice neutral, but the jealous nature and tone of the question leaked out.

Dilios and Panos rolled their eyes as Lohana smiled gently. "I was selected eight months ago to be their pilot." She answered Tarifa's question. "We have been together ever since he completed his Spartan training and was awarded his Shi Viska."

"He is not needed here!" Tareif snapped out.

Lohana looked at him. "The King does not share your opinion War Master."

"Why send him after what he has done." Tareif barked.

"Papa!" Tarifa spoke scolding him. "I asked you to stop that!"

"King Leonidas considers the Chief Administrators to be like sisters to him War Master, you know that." Lohana spoke ignoring the obvious implied insult. "And as a Bonded Pair, Commander Isra and Aelnala are considered second only to the King and Queen in terms of skill and power." Lohana saw the looks of surprise from both Tarifa and Aihola. "You didn't know that did you?"

"No." Aihola replied softly shaking her head and looking at Tarifa who met her eyes.

"I surmise there is much you don't know." Lohana spoke softly looking at them. "And much you will now never learn."

"What I know is that he is late!" Tareif barked. "And I for one..."

"I am not late." Isra's voice carried from the front of the room and they turned to see him walk into the hall, Aelnala beside him. "Unless you consider two minutes after the hour this meeting began as late. In that case then I suppose I am."

"Commander Isra!" Dilios spoke, happy that they could begin the meeting and get it over with before a fight between Isra's pilot and Tarifa and Aihola began. The plot hatched between him, Panos and Selene was not taking shape as they had wanted, and he could only hope it didn't get worse. "I have the information you requested."

"What information?" Tarifa asked looking at Dilios.

"All data pertaining to Spartans who fell during the Battle for Earth." Isra answered her question. "Their histories and family names."

"What? Why?"

"These killings were not random as you and Administrator Aihola deem them." Isra spoke moving closer to the table. "I have spoken with Andreus and Chief Mage Thr'won is also now involved. They believe,

as I do, that the two of you are being targeted for some reason. The killer of these two elves is, without question, a Lycavorian with Spartan training. Based on the wounds and the strength needed to inflict them in such a manner, he is a very large Spartan. He is using the beaches of New Miami as a dumping ground, sending you a message.”

“What message?” Tarifa demanded.

“That he is coming for you.” Isra answered. He turned to Dilios. “I will assume command of the investigation Senator. I’ve already spoken with General Lynwe and Admiral Jamerl and they are in agreement. Governor Panos if you will dispatch three *Lochi* to Eden City in the morning when the Administrators return. They will now be blanketed with Spartan security until I have had time to meet the Dragoons that currently provide security for them.”

“Those are my men!” Tareif bellowed. “You can’t just remove my men!”

“It is already done.” Isra spoke setting the data pad on the table. “I have reassigned your Dragoons to external security until I have talked with all of them personally. Please see to it that this is expedited quickly or I will do it myself. Whichever you prefer.”

“Isra... what are you doing?” Tarifa asked.

His violet eyes fell on her and they caused shivers to course through both her and Aihola in their intensity. “I am doing what I was sent here to do.” He spoke.

“You think you can come here and just start ordering us about!” Tareif barked.

Isra turned to look at him. “Yes... actually I do.” He said firmly. “Regardless of what your personal feelings toward me may be War Master Tareif, or the lies that may have been allowed to ferment in regards to me, I am still a Spartan Commander in Mjolnir’s Hand. I speak with the King’s voice in all matters, and I act with his will and blessing in those same matters. It is the reason he formed Mjolnir’s Hand, and it is the reason we are now spreading out among the Union. You will do as I order you War Master, or I will relieve you of your command until this is over.” Isra stepped closer to Tareif, staring into his angry eyes. “You may contact the King if you wish; to confirm what I tell you. That is his personal channel. He is currently involved with Queen Anja and Queen Aricia in retrieving some valuable information to the Union, but I’m sure he would not mind taking a transmission from you. He holds you in very high regard.” Isra held out the COM unit. “And then you will follow my orders.”

Panos couldn’t help but grin at the forceful and commanding presence this young Spartan Commander was displaying. “I will have the three *Lochi* moving first thing in the morning Commander.” He spoke.

Isra looked at him. “Thank you Governor.” He turned to look at Tarifa and Aihola. “Until we discover what is going on, the two of you will travel in my *STRIKER DT*. It is much more advanced than the *STRIKER ATs* now assigned to Earth. Lohana will take you where you need to go once she drops Aelnala and I in New Miami tomorrow.”

“This is ridiculous!” Aihola spoke. “Everyone is overreacting!”

“Perhaps... but it is a necessary precaution.” Isra spoke. “There is not much else we can do until we return to the North American continent. Senator Dilios, I thank you for the offer of the room at the King’s villa, but under the circumstances, Aelnala and I will stay on our ship tonight.”

“The King’s villa is meant for members of Mjolnir’s Hand to stay at Commander Isra.” Dilios said. “That is why the extra rooms were built.”

Isra nodded. “I know. It’s best however, if we stay on our ship. I’ve already arranged for my own lodgings while in Eden City as well. Administrator Selene was going to have me take the upper suite of the visiting dignitaries center so that Aelnala and I could come and go as we pleased. I’ve arranged for something similar, though not as extravagant on the outskirts of the city.”

Dilios nodded. “I understand Commander.” He spoke.

“I understand there was a school full of children wanting to meet the yellow dragon.” Isra said with a smile. “Could you point me in that direction? Aelnala likes the attention she receives from children, as they do not make conclusions on only what they are told.”

Dilios smiled and motioned with his hand. “Right this way.”

Isra and Aelnala turned and started for the doorway following Dilios as Tarifa and Aihola looked at each other and then got to their feet. Tarifa had an angry look on her face and she started to follow them just as her father grabbed her arm. “Tarifa... let it go! I will talk to Martin and...”

Tarifa wrenched her arm free and moved quickly to the outside of the building where she saw Isra climbing onto Aelnala's back as Dilios pointed across the city. She moved quickly up to stand beside Aelnala and looked up at him as Dilios moved away rapidly.

"Isra what... what are you doing?" She demanded.

Isra looked down at her. "As I said, I'm doing what I was sent here to do. Protect you and Aihola." He answered.

"You know what I mean." Tarifa snapped.

Isra looked at her with those violet eyes and she felt a shiver of delight wash through her as the flicker of love and passion and desire caressed her for the briefest of moments. Then it was gone just as quickly.

"What I know Chief Administrator Tarifa..." Isra spoke, his words cold and unfeeling now. "What I know is that whatever hopes I had clung to these last thirteen months, you have quickly shown me were a fool's hope. I will do my duty now, and then Aelnala and I will leave so that you and Aihola may continue on with your lives, and whoever you are already sharing it with. If you will excuse us... we have some children we would like to surround ourselves with right now. They are free of lies and untruths."

"Isra I... we didn't hear from you for so long! We thought... we thought you had gone on with your life. Were... were we supposed to wait for you? You say you sent these messages... we never received them. Not one!"

"So you have found someone else?" He said.

"I didn't say that!" Tarifa snapped. "But it appears you have found someone so the nights aren't cold! Do you expect us to believe Lohana is just your pilot? We are not fools Isra."

Isra's smile was sad. "No Tarifa... you are not. Neither of you are fools. You have figured it out Tarifa. I applaud you. I should have expected I could not get that past you. You are too smart for that."

Aelnala's head turned. *What are you doing Isra?*

Making this easier for them. And me.

You have done nothing wrong Isra. Why would you make it appear as if you have? Aelnala asked.

I can never be what they need and deserve Aelnala. I know that now. It's better this way really. Isra spoke.

"Isra?" Tarifa spoke.

"Do not worry Tarifa. I will cause no problems for you and Aihola. When this threat to you is over I will leave and you will have no worries. You and Aihola may return to your lives with whoever it is you have chosen to live it with. Aelnala go!" Isra barked.

With a single leap Aelnala took to the sky and in three powerful flaps of her wings was gone just as Aihola came up beside her.

"Tarifa?" She asked softly taking her hand.

Tarifa looked at Aihola her sapphire eyes moist. "I have this dark pit opening again in my heart *Nya Istel.*"

"I know my love... I feel it too." Aihola said softly. "We... we should have told your father everything Tarifa. Like we told your mother. This is our fault... and what we have wanted for so long is now on the verge of being lost. These feelings coursing through you my love, I feel them just as strongly as you. I've come to welcome them and cherish them as my own. They are my own now. We can not let this stand. We have to fix this."

"How? He thinks we allowed my father to think these things about him for a reason." Tarifa spoke. "He thinks there is someone else in our lives. And he is not telling us something."

"Why?"

"Isra is not Dekton *Nya Istel.*" Tarifa spoke. "I know you can sense that. He is wilder... so much more passionate and free with his emotions. But he is also... he is also still a child with those emotions. We have hurt him... and I don't know how to fix that now."

"We will Tarifa." Aihola spoke. "We will."

“Never seen this type of ship signature before.” The tech spoke looking at his sensor screen. “It looks like a Union *STRIKER*, but it’s too big for that, it’s wider and longer. I’m not reading anything unusual however.”

“Did they have codes?” The second tech asked.

“Older codes, but that’s not surprising if they haven’t been here in a while and they’re coming out of Union space.”

“Let them dock. Station rules apply to them as well. If they have codes, they’ll know that. It’s probably a bunch of mercs hoping to collect the Bounty on that Hadarian wench. Everyone seems to think she’s here on this station for some reason.” The man spoke. “Let them dock. More business for us.”

The first tech shrugged. “DT4938 you are cleared for entry into bay thirty-four. Standard rules apply.”

“Affirmative.” The female replied.

The tech looked at his partner. “Sounds like an elf.” He said.

“In the Wilds? Not a chance.”

For’mya turned in her chair and looked at where Anja sat in the second engineering chair next to Tina. “We have received clearance Anja.” She spoke.

“Send a coded message to Danny’s COM. Have him meet us in the landing bay.” Anja spoke as she got up and moved into the rear of the *STRIKER DT*. She strode past the dozen Spartans that sat with Belen, all of them wearing civilian clothes, and went right to where Miath was secured in his harness.

Anja placed her hands on either side of his huge head as he lowered it down in front of her. *I need you to remain on the ship and protect For’mya and the others Miath.* She said looking into his deep gray eyes.

I will do this Anja.

I will keep our link open and I have a feeling we’ll be returning quickly, so I need you to be prepared.

Anja said.

All will be ready.

Anja smiled as she gazed at him. *I am so very happy I found you Miath.* She said.

Not as happy as I that you found me, my Bonded Queen. Miath spoke nudging her shoulder gently with his snout. *Remember what the King and Elder Mother have taught us.*

Anja nodded. *I will. Please don’t do anything reckless.*

Me? Reckless?

Anja laughed. *Yes you.*

Miath chuckled within their connection. *You are far more reckless than I will ever be Anja.* He said indignantly. *I am the epitome of calm and reserved.*

You’ve been hanging around Isheeni too long. Anja joked.

Is it working?

No. Anja said. She leaned over and kissed his cool snout softly. *Just be careful.*

Miath nodded his huge head. *And you.*

Anja turned and moved over to where Seanna stood up and held out the P190 to her. “All is ready.” Seanna spoke.

Anja stepped close to her, pressing her body tightly to Seanna’s firm, supple figure and not caring that there were Spartans present. Seanna was only an inch taller than Anja, and their bodies touched in all the right places as far as she was concerned. Miath watched with smiling gray eyes from his harness, while the others simply ignored what was happening. Most of them had seen it all before. What had started as something small after Aricia had been taken from them a year ago, had blossomed into what it was now, and that was a full blown love affair that was not going to go anywhere soon.

Where Anja went, Seanna was with her. And Seanna was simply delighted by that.

Seanna had discovered herself completely when Anja had come into her life. The wild and sometimes reckless, Persian red haired Queen had opened a door into a world that Seanna had never experienced before, and it was a world she had no intention of leaving. Since their first night together, their love making had only grown more intense and passionate as they discovered the little things that made each other tremble with desire and passion. Seanna knew that Martin Leonidas would always have a place in Anja’s heart and her bed, and that

would never change. Seanna also knew that Anja would never deny Aricia or Dysea and now even Isabella attention of any sort when they were all together, but she also knew that Anja was beginning to curtail those liaisons and spending more and more time in their bed with her. Perhaps one day Seanna would willingly share a bed with Anja and the King, but for now she was very content having Anja all to herself whenever the opportunity arose.

Anja looked into Seanna's dark green eyes. "And I am very happy I found you as well." Anja whispered.

Seanna smiled and leaned forward to kiss her softly. "Not as happy as I am that you found me." She said. "We should proceed with caution my love. Pirates and mercenary scum can be very unpredictable."

Anja nodded. "We will." She said. "If... if she truly is my sister, we will be very cautious. I have no desire to lose her just when we have found her."

"Anja... you do realize that she... she will be very different than what you might think." Seanna said. "She will not trust us... trust you. She will only be thinking of herself."

Anja nodded. "I know. I'm ready for that. I know the life she has led has been a nightmare... but we have to try and fix it. At least as much as we can."

"And we will." Seanna spoke. "Just so you are not disappointed if it does not happen as quickly as you might like. We must be... we must be patient with her."

"I will be." Anja said with a nod. "I will be."

CHAPTER SIX

GELLEN STATION

Sangria was going crazy, of that she had no doubts.

Almost three days trapped in this room with men and women who neither liked her nor wanted to be around her. Of course, Sangria had made no effort to reach out to them either. She let her eyes wander over the two female elves who sat facing her across the room, and the lone Hadarian male who occupied the chair by the door. Since Anuk had told her two days ago to stop complaining, none of them had made much conversation with her at all, unless it was necessary. Nayeca, the beautiful dark skinned elf had been the kindest, trying several times to strike up a conversation, but Sangria hadn't allowed it to progress much past the first few questions. It was obvious to her from the way Anuk and Nayeca acted together that they were just as much in love with each other as they were in love with the hulking black skinned Spartan who had left with the vampire witch thirty minutes ago.

Sangria had no desire to go to Apo Prime with these people, no matter what or who they were looking for. She remembered vividly the contract they were interested in, and Sangria had done her best over the last nearly forty years to try and forget that particular job. The buyer and the men who he had surrounded himself with were some of the most vicious looking and evil men she had ever seen. She also remembered vividly *who* they were apparently after it seemed. Seanna could still see the dazzling light brown eyes with generous green flecks in them, and the long raven black hair of the young woman who had been taken from her ship that day. The sorrow and anger she had felt having to drop her in that place was not enough to override her own sense of survival however, and Sangria had gotten away as fast as she was able. What Sangria couldn't figure out was why they wanted to get her to Apo Prime so quickly now. This was no longer just about that contract she had taken, this had now become about her as well and she didn't know why. Her last visit to Apo Prime had ended with a harrowing escape nearly fifty years ago. An escape that had almost cost her not only her ship but her life as well and she had no desire to go back to that planet any time soon.

Sangria had no doubts that Gellen Station was now full of Bounty Hunters just waiting for a chance to collect on the contract that Cyngi and the other Overseers had taken out on her, and she had no illusions that it was a minor one at that. The only advantage she had going for her now was that they apparently were not aware that she was here on the station; or at least they weren't completely sure. She had to admit, whoever these men and women were, they were very professional and very careful. She was never alone, and as skilled as she was, Sangria was smart enough to know that there was no way she could defeat even one of the elf females, let alone

both of them and the Hadarian male. She knew she would have to play along until she had the right opportunity to escape, hijack whatever ship she could, and find a place to hide where no one would ever discover her.

The dark skinned Spartan and the female vampire had left a few minutes before to supposedly meet with others who were here to help them get off the station, but if Sangria knew Cyngi as well as she thought she did, that was not going to be as easy as they hoped.

Anja squeezed Danny around the waist in greeting, as he planted a soft kiss on top of her head, his hand reaching out to squeeze Seanna's hand in greeting as well as he hugged Anja back with the other arm.

"It's good to see you Red." He spoke softly as they stood just inside the landing bay door.

Anja smiled as she looked up at him. "I see Anuk and Nayeca are feeding you well enough." She told him with a grin. "I truly don't know what you would do without those two looking out for you."

Danny chuckled. "They feed me too good sometimes, and without them I wouldn't be standing here either. Pretty much the same situation if Marty didn't have you, Aricia and Dysea watching out for his skinny ass." He replied and Anja stepped up to Yuriko and kissed her cheek in greeting.

"Martin's ass may be many things, but it isn't skinny!" Anja answered with a laugh. She looked at his dark eyes. "Thank you Danny." She said softly. "Thank you so very much."

Dan smiled as he became serious and squeezed her again. They had shared something once long ago, and while it was not meant to be as they both knew, it made them as close as any brother and sister could be. "For you and Marty Red, anything. You know that."

Anja smiled as she turned to Yuriko, stepping up to her. "Yuriko..." Anja said softly. "What you have done for..."

Yuriko smiled and shook her head. "I am a firm believer in things happening for a reason Anja." Yuriko spoke with a nod this time. "Having this Sangria turn out to be your sister as well as our only connection to Lisisa was meant to be."

Danny looked at Belen and the other Spartans that were dressed in civilian clothes. "You're Atropos's son?" Dan asked.

Belen nodded quickly. "Yes sir."

Danny grinned. "I ain't no sir." He spoke. "But I do have a feeling we'll have to fight our way out of here. I hope you're ready?"

Belen grinned savagely. "I'm always ready." He spoke.

Danny turned back to Anja. "It's gonna be a shootout." He spoke. "They have a pretty good idea of where we have her stashed. Yuriko and I believe that they'll try and hit us the moment we move for the ship."

"I thought this station was neutral ground?" Seanna spoke moving up next to Anja. "A safe haven that no one was allowed to violate?"

Yuriko nodded. "It is." She spoke in reply. "Daniel and I have marked at least a dozen mercenaries who seem to have a different agenda however, and we believe they are working for the Coven." She said. "They are undoubtedly looking for Sangria as well, and they will not care the station is neutral. They'll pay whatever they need to in order to get these men to either capture or kill her."

Dan looked at Anja. "Marty is coming I hope." He said.

Anja nodded. "He'll meet us on the other side of the defensive perimeter." She answered. "He can't bring *MJOLNIR'S HAND* across the border as it will violate treaties we have with other established governments. For'mya and Endith are waiting with the *STRIKER DT* we came on. You'll need to leave your ship."

Dan nodded. "We figured as much. That ship has seen about all the action it's going to get now. It's almost as well known as we are. You bring your dragon?"

Anja looked at him with a grin. "What do you think? Miath is just as much my shadow as Seanna is."

Dan shook his head. "I don't know how you do it?" He spoke. "Just being close to one of those dragons is scary enough to me."

Anja chuckled. "Danny... I didn't know you were scared of anything."

"Hell yes woman!" Dan spoke. "I keep telling people that's why I have Anuk and Nayeca to protect me at night."

Yuriko chuckled as well. "We should get back to the room as soon as we can." She spoke.

"Does she know who I am?" Anja asked.

Danny shook his head. "She's got a serious attitude that one, and we haven't really spoken to her a whole lot. She pissed off Anuk the first day here." He said.

Anja and Seanna looked surprised. "I though Anuk was the more level headed of your mates Daniel?" Seanna asked finally.

"She is... which is saying a lot when it comes to our girl." Dan replied.

"You didn't adjust her attitude Danny?" Anja asked. "That's a little bit surprising for me to hear."

"Believe me... Anuk came close a couple times." Dan replied with a smile. "She's got skill, but she's arrogant and has a serious chip on her shoulder. Sort of reminds me of you when you first showed up on EDEN."

Anja slugged him in the arm as hard as she could. "Bite your tongue!" She snapped.

Dan laughed. "Well... I'm sure it will be quite the bomb when you do drop it on her." He said. "But right now, let's get off this station and into friendly territory first."

Anja nodded. "I agree." She said.

"We should return to the room in smaller groups." Yuriko spoke. "Belen... can you drop off and follow our scents two or three at a time?"

Belen nodded. "Easily." He answered. "I'll have my men make their way to your location over a period of thirty minutes so as not to draw too much attention."

Yuriko nodded. "Then we should head back now, and have the next group leave in fifteen minutes."

Belen nodded. "I'll see to it."

"You never do anything the easy way do you Danny?" Anja asked.

"Now where's the fun in that?" Danny answered with a grin.

Sangria didn't know what to make of the diminutive woman who came into the room. She was familiar to her somehow, as if she had seen her before. Her Persian red hair was tied and braided into a long pony tail, and the civilian clothes she wore hugged an obviously very firm and physically fit body with large breasts and a shapely set of legs and ass. She greeted the two elf females with embraces and soft kisses on their cheeks as if they were old friends, while the Hadarian male was greeted with a causal handshake and a deep bow from the man to her. Then those jade green eyes fell on her as the young woman came across the room to stand in front of her. Sangria felt an odd sensation staring at the young woman, like she should know who this was, but Sangria was excellent with faces and she was quite sure she'd never seen her before. She may have been short, but that did not detract from the firmness of her body. Now that she was closer, Sangria could make out the lean muscles hidden under her sleeves and her pants. This was no ordinary woman, and the fact that she was Hadarian did not escape Sangria either.

Anja's hands were shaking as she stared at Sangria and she reached out tentatively with one hand. "I'm... I'm Anja." She spoke softly.

Sangria looked at her sternly. "And that means what to me?" She snapped, keeping her rude demeanor in full force and not taking the offered hand. She had no desire to become friendly with these men and women after what they had done.

Anja's eyes narrowed a little and she took a deep breath. She didn't particularly care for arrogant and rude people, and even though Danny had warned her, Anja was unprepared for the vehemence with which Sangria's words came out.

"I apologize for what has happened the last few days, and I will explain it to you more in detail when we are off this station, I promise you. Right now however, we need to work together if we are to survive." Anja spoke.

"You apologize for destroying my life? Gee... that's pleasant of you!" Sangria snapped.

"If I understand correctly, your life was that of a smuggler and pirate." Anja spoke, still maintaining her composure. "Not exactly the most respectful of occupations wouldn't you say?"

"I was doing just fine until you and your friends showed up!" Sangria snapped. "And who the hell are you to tell me what my life is like? You don't know anything about me."

Anja nodded. "That is true... however I was speaking in general terms." Anja replied. "The life of a smuggler and pirate does not strike me as the most benevolent occupation and certainly not the most rewarding, considering that you are Hadarian and what you could become is so much more."

"You mean become a Healer like him?" Sangria snapped. "Like you?"

Anja's eyes twinkled and she canted her head. "You can tell that from just a glance can you?" She said. "That is certainly impressive, as that is a skill not many of our people have been able to master."

"I am not *your* people!" She barked. "I don't want to be *your* people! You suckered me into this with threats and intimidation and now I don't have any option but to go with you!"

"I find trouble believing anyone intimidated you, but would you prefer the option of falling into the Coven's hands?" Anja spoke calmly. "Or being killed by Bounty Hunters perhaps?"

"Those Bounty Hunters wouldn't be coming after me if it wasn't for you people!" Sangria said. "And the Coven didn't know I existed until you people showed up at the Star's Ghost!"

"Do you really believe that?" Anja asked still maintaining her calm. "They eventually would have found their way to you Sivana. We and the Coven... we are searching for the same thing."

"My name is not Sivana!" Sangria snapped.

"That is your given name." Anja spoke forcefully. She had never been known for having much patience, and even though Sangria was the sister she had never known, she was rapidly beginning to rub Anja the wrong way. "The name given to you at birth."

"How would you know what was given to me at birth?" She almost screamed. "You weren't there! My name is Sangria... that has always been my name!"

"That is the smuggler's name you gave to yourself." Anja stated firmly, never losing eye contact with her. "You are Hadarian by birth, and your given name is Sivana. That is not something you can escape. Nor is it something I will allow you to escape!"

Sangria stepped closer to Anja, using the three inch height advantage her boots gave her to try and impose herself as greater than she was. "Listen lady... I don't know who you are, or what you think you are... but you are not my friend, and I don't want you as a friend! I'm also not stupid... and the only way for me to stay alive now is to remain with you and your jerk friends that got me into this in the first place!"

Anja did not bat an eye as Sangria tried to intimidate her with the slight height advantage. "My friends have saved your life three times to date, and they have been protecting you for the last week." Anja stated. "You could be a little more respectful towards them."

"Why? Because you say so?" Sangria asked contemptuously. "You don't look like much sister. Are you telling me I should be scared of little old you?"

"No." Anja spoke with a smile. "I don't suppose I do. No... you shouldn't be scared of me, I would never do anything to harm you, but you should be respectful towards my friends because without them, you would already be dead." She stated very confidently.

"Yeah... as all of you keep reminding me." Sangria barked.

"Perhaps because you need to be reminded of that fact occasionally. The truth does sometimes hurt." Anja said.

The sound of the door opening and three more individuals entering caused them both to turn and Anja saw the look in Belen's eye. She turned away from Sangria and faced him. She had come to know Atropos and Belen well enough over the last few months as her primary Spartan guards to recognize when their faces held alarm or danger in them.

Belen's face and eyes told her of big problems.

"What is it Belen?" She asked quickly.

"It appears our arrival has spurred these mercenary scums into action." Belen spoke confidently and calmly. "They are beginning to mass down the corridor, though they are trying to be discrete about it. Ridiculously so."

"How many?" Danny asked.

Sangria looked at the Spartan soldier and couldn't help but find him attractive. He was not your pretty boy type handsome; he was ruggedly good looking in every sense of the word, with a deep tan, and a lean muscular build under the civilian clothes that he wore. His dark hair was cut short, his face sporting a two or three day old growth of whiskers that only added to his appeal in her eyes. And his dark eyes were bright and

alert. He moved with the confidence of a predator, and the hint of wildness in his eyes caught Sangria's attention more than anything else.

"At least a dozen, perhaps more." Belen replied. "We should begin moving back to the ship now my Queen." He said stepping closer and looking at Anja intently. His father had taught him that Anja could be extremely stubborn at times, and there were moments when you had to make your voice heard with her. "There could be more massing in other locations and the more time we delay here, the more time they will have to lay traps along the way."

Sangria's sea green eyes went a little wider when she heard him call Anja 'Queen' and her eyes darted to Anja. She watched Anja nod quickly. "I agree Belen. I have no desire to remain here any longer than necessary." Anja spoke just as calmly.

Who were these people? Who was this woman that seemed so very familiar and was called Queen? What exactly had she gotten herself into here? All these thoughts were zipping through Sangria's head.

"The King should not be far from the rendezvous coordinates Milady." Belen spoke. "He and my father would not be happy if I allowed something to happen to you now when we are so close."

Anja smiled and reached up to squeeze his thick arm. "Don't worry. When it comes to situations like this Belen, I will listen to your council without question."

Belen smiled and nodded slowly. "Good. I did not want to have to resort to what my father told me I might have to do."

Anja laughed at him. "I don't even want to know." She replied. "Belen... I want you to stay with Siv... Sangria."

"Milady... my duty is to you." Belen stated quickly.

Anja nodded once more and placed her hand on his arm above his Shi Viska. "I know... but I trust you more than anyone to keep her safe Spartan. You know what she is to me Belen?" She spoke softly so that only he could hear her words.

"Yes Milady I do." Belen answered quickly. He glanced at Sangria and then back to Anja. "I will do as you wish Anja."

Anja touched his arm gently. "Thank you Belen." She said softly.

Danny stepped up to the door. "Ok... Anuk, Nayeca and I will lead out. Yuriko, Anja and Filrian next, Belen with Sangria and then the others fall in behind us as we move. We make no stops people. If they looked threatening then they probably are, so take them down. This station is about to bust wide open, and we need to get off quick."

Danny saw heads nod in agreement and he looked at Anuk and Nayeca standing next to him. "Ok... let's do this!"

MJOLNIR'S HAND

Martin snapped awake this time, even the cool air of their quarters on *MJOLNIR'S HAND* not removing the cold sweat that poured from his chest and forehead. His eyes were wide and fully changed; his fangs extended to their full length. He could hear the alarm of the communications chime on the table next to their bed but he ignored it completely as his senses reached out for Aricia.

"Beloved!" Aricia's voice gasped from beside him and his head snapped around instantly at the tone of her voice. She huddled on the bed, the sheets wrapped around her, the remnants of the cold sweat still in sight as drops of sweat rolled down her face, and between the deep valley formed by her breasts. Her azure blue eyes were also changed and her fangs fully extended.

Martin didn't pause and shifted on the bed, pulling her into his arms and crushing her to him. Aricia let out an almost contented sigh as she felt his arms envelope her, and she wrapped her own arms around his head, pulling his face to her breasts as her legs stretched out alongside his waist and curled around his lower back. As his aura wrapped around her Aricia began to regain control of her racing heart.

"Martin! It... it was so real!" She gasped out, her cheek pressed tightly against his black hair.

"I know..." He spoke softly, his arms tightening around her. "I felt the fire and heat! I felt it as it burned me."

“Something is happening Beloved.” She spoke taking his face in her hands and pulling his head away from her breasts to look into his eyes.

“I’ve never seen them before.” Martin spoke softly. “Most of them looked like children Aricia. I...”
Martin! Aricia Blue eyes! Isheeni’s frantic voice filled their minds.

Aricia’s head came up instantly. *Isheeni what is it? What’s wrong?*

You... you and Martin were screaming in our thoughts! Torma exclaimed. *We saw fire and death and pain!*

You... you saw it too? Martin asked stunned.

As deeply as we have bonded my King, your thoughts and those of Aricia have become our thoughts, especially when they are vivid and unshielded. Isheeni replied. *We tried reaching out to you... but it was as if something had a hold of you and would not let you go. Torma and I finally joined our thoughts and sent a psychic pulse screaming through our bond.*

Martin looked at Aricia in his arms. *We should have spoken with Helen before we left.* He said.

Aricia nodded. *We must speak to her when we return. We can not let this go any longer beloved. The four of us... if something was able to grip us like that... hold us... it speaks of great Mindvoice power.*

Martin nodded slowly. *As soon as we collect Anja and her sister we will return to Apo Prime and speak with Helen.* He finally noticed the annoying chime coming from the COM table and he leaned back to slap the panel. “Go ahead!” He barked.

“Milord... are you and Queen Aricia alright?” Komirri’s voice echoed on the COM.

“We are fine Captain.” Martin spoke leaning his head forward to touch Aricia’s breasts as her hands stroked his head. There was nothing sexual to their touch, not this time. As with Anja and Dysea and Isabella, just the feel of each others flesh could sooth them in almost any circumstance, and with Aricia it was almost instantly that Martin was able to regain his focus and calmness. The two of them were more deeply connected in many ways, though that deep connection never got in the way of them showing their love for Anja, Dysea, Isabella and most especially For’mya. “How soon until we reach the rendezvous coordinates?”

“I was actually calling to let you know Milord.” Komirri answered. “We are thirty minutes from the edge of the Gellen Asteroid Field. We reactivated the Defensive perimeter as soon as we were across.”

“How long to Gellen Station?” Martin asked.

“We should arrive in just under forty minutes sire. Queen Anja and the others should be waiting for us there.”

Martin nodded and looked up to gaze into Aricia’s eyes. “Captain we’ll meet you on the bridge in thirty minutes.” He spoke. “Make sure we maintain Shroud until Anja contacts us directly.”

“Understood sire.” Komirri spoke.

Martin kissed her softly, a kiss of great feeling and emotion, and Aricia responded instantly by returning the kiss. After a long moment they parted, and though both could feel the beginnings of sexual arousal fluttering in their bodies, they both knew they had more important things to take care of.

Did you hear the name they were calling Beloved? She asked.

Martin nodded. *Lyca.* He said softly.

What does it mean?

Martin looked at her. *I don’t know... but we will find out; that I promise you.*

EARTH NEW MIAMI

“We will remain until Commander Isra arrives in the morning to review the site.” Lynwe spoke to the monitor; Selene’s face was very clear and she was obviously at home in their quarters as darkness rose over the beach. The RAPTOR II was still parked on the sand of the beach, the area where the body had been discovered still roped off from prying eyes and over-interested individuals.

“Things did not go well in Sparta today my love.” Selene told her. “Our plan is falling apart around us.”

“What do you mean?”

Selene shrugged. "It appears that Tarifa and Aihola did not inform Tareif of the role Isra played in saving Tarifa's life, or the fact that she willingly accepted him as her mate."

Lynwe looked at the screen, her amber eyes confused. "Why would they not tell her father?" She asked confused. "Her mother knows and Isra is what they have wanted all this time. It wafts from them openly; even you and I as vampires can smell that. They have turned down every request for even drinks by any male who has asked them since they returned."

Selene nodded. "Yes I know, and there have been quite a few." She spoke. "I was not able to get all the details from Dilios, but Tareif made a scene initially upon meeting him, and it apparently went down hill from there." She said. "It got worse when Isra pulled all the Dragoon security off of Tarifa and Aihola and replaced it with Spartan security until he has time to interview each Dragoon himself."

"He does act with the King's will Selene." Lynwe said the military officer in her coming out now. "That is one of the reasons why Martin formed Mjolnir's Hand. They are to be an extension of his will, his purpose as we go forward."

Selene nodded as she brushed some of her auburn hair behind her elf ear. Though Selene had started this life as the daughter of a human and elf, her ears, though still very elfin in nature, were not as large as most elves, reaching to an elegant point after only two inches as opposed to the normal three to four inches on others. "I know... and it appears this Commander Isra knows that as well. According to Dilios he threatened to relieve Tareif if he did not comply with his orders."

Lynwe chuckled. "Good... Tareif may be a masterful soldier, but at times he does lack tactful ways of expressing what he feels. He needs to take more lessons from his wife and daughter in that regard."

Selene smiled, her steel blue eyes gazing at Lynwe with devotion. "Were you and Layna able to discover anything?"

Lynwe shook her head. "We must have interviewed a hundred men and women apiece, and none of them saw or heard anything which is not surprising really. Layna is positive it is a male Spartan, but we can not determine why a Spartan would be involved in a plot to kill Tarifa and Aihola."

"I will send the results of Olyne's autopsy to you in the morning Mistress." Selene spoke. "Olyne says the cause of death is identical to the first body, and the body was dropped in the same location as the female. He ran some tests and he has pinpointed the area roughly six miles off the coast. The island of Key Biscayne. The currents brought the bodies to where we found them on the beach."

Lynwe looked at the screen quickly. "That location is close to where Martin destroyed the vampire school with his nuclear weapon."

Selene nodded. "Less than fifty miles." She said.

"Perhaps we will fly there tomorrow and see what we can see. It will give Commander Isra another location to search." Lynwe spoke thoughtfully.

"So what do you think of her Mistress?" Selene asked shyly.

Lynwe looked at the monitor and smiled as she sat back. "This Spartan female stirs you doesn't she Selene?"

Selene couldn't help but blush on the screen as she nodded. "She does my love. I can't explain it... but she is..."

"She is wild and untamed, just like us." Lynwe finished her sentence. "Yes... I feel it too."

Selene's steel blue eyes looked at Lynwe sudden worry in them. "Mistress you do not think I would..."

Lynwe shook her head quickly. "No Selene... I do not think that. I would never think that. You and I were meant to be together my love; I have no doubts of that. Like you, she stirs me in that way as well. Her eyes are... they are incredible."

"Lynwe... forget I mentioned it." Selene spoke quickly. "I love you... you are my Mistress, you are my life. You are all I will ever want or need... and I am perfectly content to live out the remainder of my years in your arms."

Lynwe smiled as Selene's heartfelt words warmed her deeply and she leaned forward in her chair. "Why don't we see where this thing with Layna takes us my slave?" Lynwe spoke softly. "Perhaps it could lead to something... perhaps not... but we are secure in our love for each other and perhaps... perhaps it is time to allow someone else to share in that love, as Tarifa and Aihola allowed us to share in theirs."

Selene smiled in the transmission. "I will leave it to you my Mistress." She said. "I so wish you were here with me. I am lonely when you are gone."

"I will see you tomorrow evening my love." Lynwe spoke seductively. "Then we will see how much you missed me."

Selene canted her head alluringly to the side and pursed her lips. "I look forward to that my love." She said. "Be safe Mistress and I will see you tomorrow."

"I love you Selene." Lynwe spoke softly.

Selene smiled coyly. "And I love you Lynwe, so very much."

Lynwe smiled as the transmission ended and she detected the heartbeat a millisecond later as Layna walked into the Raptor. She turned in her chair and watched the stunningly beautiful Spartan female walk up the ramp, the cut of her fatigues hugging her legs and firm, perfectly shaped ass. Her long blond hair was still pulled into a tight wrap, but even in the man made light of the inside of the Raptor, the golden wheat color was stunning.

Layna looked at her as she came into the main area of the Raptor. "The perimeter is secure." She spoke.

Lynwe nodded. "We will close the ramp before we retire for the evening. No one will attempt to board the ship."

Layna nodded and moved to one of the webbed benches, her blue/green eyes looking at Lynwe as she sat down.

"You look to have questions Layna." Lynwe spoke.

Layna nodded. "I do." She said.

Lynwe reached into her cargo pocket and pulled out the chocolate nutrition bar she always carried with her. She had a weakness for chocolate that everyone knew about, and they knew Selene always made Lynwe take an entire box of the nutrition bars with her wherever she went. "Ask your questions Layna." Lynwe spoke. "I will answer if I can."

"I have read quite a bit on your culture since coming to Earth, General." Layna said. "On the Drow elves I mean. The... the relationship you have with Chief Administrator Selene is not... it is not like what is written in the history scrolls that are in Eden City's Archives."

Lynwe shook her head as she finished chewing the piece of chocolate nutrition bar. She dug out another and held it out to Layna. "Selene knows of my weakness for chocolate and she insists I take these bars with me wherever I go." She said with a smile. "They are quite good actually."

Layna took the bar and tore open the wrapper as Lynwe sat back in the chair.

"Hwia, our Drow Elder and Aihola should be finished within several months of writing the revised history of our people, and then that will replace what is in the archives." Lynwe said finally.

"You're changing your history?" Layna asked surprised.

Lynwe shook her head. "Not at all. Everything you have read up until now will still remain in the archives, what Hwia and Aihola are doing is finishing up the rebirth of our people. The Drow. How events led us to what we are now. It began with Aihola and Tarifa really. The moment they met each other and fell in love over those months together, it altered the history of every remaining Drow on the planet."

"I've noticed that you in particular are very close to them." Layna said.

Lynwe nodded. "If not for their love and the feeling they allowed me to share with them, I would most likely be dead right now. I carried a deep abiding hatred for the Coven and what they had done to me while their prisoner, more so than many of the others. Aihola and Tarifa helped me to see past that hate and showed me that... they showed me I was still capable of emotion and feeling. When I met Selene... well when I met Selene I knew my healing was complete."

"What did... what did they do to you that made you hate them so?" Layna asked.

Lynwe smiled as she looked at the Spartan. Selene was right, this Spartan female was delicious looking, though no one would come close to Selene beauty-wise in Lynwe's eyes, Layna was not that far behind, and for a brief moment she wondered what it would be like to break this Spartan female.

Lynwe smiled. "That is not something I care to relate. Perhaps one day you will discover the answer to that question, but not tonight I'm sorry."

Layna changed tact quickly. She finally had gotten this beautiful Drow warrior to speak and she was not going to pass up an opportunity to discover all that she could. "Chief Administrator Selene refers to you as

Mistress though. I have heard it slip out. And you call her slave. Is that not conducive with the old ways that you and Administrator Aihola say you have left behind.”

Layna’s blue/green eyes went a little wider as she detected Lynwe blush even under her dark ebony skin.

“I have tried to get Selene to stop that, as Aihola has Tarifa.” Lynwe spoke softly with a small smile and twinkle in her amber eyes. “For both of us, and for many among my people who still use the terms, they are now more terms of endearment than anything else.”

“So then... you are not...” Layna blushed herself now even under her deep tan.

Lynwe chuckled. “Layna... you are no stranger to relationships like Selene and I have. Well... almost like what we have.” She said with a smile. “You yourself have experienced two haven’t you?”

Layna looked at her surprised. “You... you know of that?”

“It is in your file.” Lynwe spoke. “As you no doubt have discovered since you have been here on Earth, we are not as sheltered when it comes to displaying what we feel for someone, regardless of their race or sex. And you should not be either.” She leaned back in her seat. “Yes... in our bed I am the more dominant... if that is what you were trying to ask. As Aihola is with Tarifa, but that in no way reflects the relationship we or they have, and you know that. I love Selene with all that I am... and she loves me... and it is usually a game we play. Though she is very good at playing the role.” Lynwe added with a smile and another glint in her eye. “You were the dominant one in your relationships weren’t you?”

“How... how would you know that?” Layna asked.

“It is in your Spartan nature.” Lynwe stated evenly. “You are an exceptionally skilled warrior Layna. And after your experiences, I would think you would want to be in control of everything in your life, especially now that you have a child.”

“My mother says it is a flaw I now have.” Layna said suddenly feeling very comfortable talking with this Drow elf.

Lynwe shook her head. “That is not a flaw.” She stated. “It is strength. And it is something that you instill in your daughter. Selene and I have both seen it. She is beautiful by the way... Teala. She looks just like you.”

Layna nodded with a smile. “She’s the most important thing in my life right now.” She said. “Everything else comes second.”

“Just do not forget that you have needs as well Layna.” Lynwe spoke. “And whatever they may be... you are still wolf... and those needs are part of who you are.”

“You seem to know a lot of my people General.” Layna said.

“You forget... Tarifa is now full wolf... and one of our closest friends. I lived and fought beside Martin Leonidas and many of those closest to him. I do know the signs.” Lynwe replied.

“I’m not interested in men at the moment.” Layna spoke honestly. “You... you and Selene have been together far longer than any of my relationships with... with other women. Administrators Aihola and Tarifa even longer. How do you do that?”

Lynwe laughed. “Well aside from the fact that we are the only full blooded vampires on Earth at the moment, and outside of Aihola and Tarifa, not many can keep up with us sexually, there are reasons that are private to only us.”

“Administrators Tarifa and Aihola know these reasons I take it?” Layna asked.

Lynwe nodded as she opened the container of water. “Yes... there is not much we keep from them. They are part of the reason Selene and I found each other. But they have a love for this Commander Isra who we will meet tomorrow, and I believe that once they overcome the rough road ahead they will no longer be available to play with so to speak.” Lynwe chuckled.

Layna looked at her quickly, her blue/green eyes now very direct. “I am Lycavorian.” Layna spoke. “Your bite would have no effect on me.” She spoke quickly.

Lynwe looked at her, keeping the surprise from her face at Layna’s words. “Our bite?”

“I... I have asked around... discretely.” Layna added quickly. “Your bite... during... it increases the pleasure you feel by several times. That... that is why you and Selene have the bite marks on your necks when you come in on some mornings.” She said. “I have seen them on Tarifa and Aihola as well.”

And once more Layna saw Lynwe go through the motions of blushing even though the color of her skin did not allow her skin to flush red. Lynwe smiled crookedly. “Yes... well sometimes we get carried away.” She said.

“Administrator Selene goes out of her way to expose this General.” Layna spoke. “Almost as if she wants everyone to know you have... that you have marked her so to speak.”

Lynwe nodded. “I know... and I scold her about it all the time as well. She can be very obstinate when she wants to be.” Lynwe looked at her. “Why would you say our bite would have no effect on you Commander?”

Now it was Layna’s turn to blush and once more Lynwe detected the rise in her body temperature and even under her tan, the slight darkening of the skin on her cheeks. Layna finally looked up and met Lynwe’s gaze. “Perhaps because I find both of you very attractive and I would not shy from sharing your bed, or Selene’s.” She said finally.

Lynwe stared at her for a long moment before getting to her feet slowly. “I would not take another into my bed without Selene participating Layna. Nor would she. We love each other too much for that.”

“That... that isn’t what I was suggesting General.” Layna said quickly getting to her feet as well. “I know there is not one of you without the other. It is the same with Tarifa and Aihola. That does not frighten me.”

“There is much you don’t know about us Layna.” Lynwe said softly. “Much that would surprise you and much that you might find... repulsive.”

“Isn’t that something I should discover for myself Lynwe, and then I would make that decision?” Layna asked.

“Perhaps.” Lynwe spoke softly. “But you should also know Layna... that Selene and I do not enter into frivolous relationships. What we share with Aihola and Tarifa is much more than some might read into that relationship. If we were to begin a relationship with you... or anyone for that matter... it would not be for the purpose of strictly pleasure and physical enjoyment. We have that already with each other, enough to last our lifetime together. If we were to... if we were to include someone else in our lives... that person would need to be committed and opened minded as to what that would mean.”

Layna looked at her. “I don’t... I don’t think I follow.” She said. “Are you saying I would have to be submissive to you in bed in some way? Submissive is not something I do well.”

Lynwe laughed softly. “Spoken like a true Spartan.” Lynwe spoke. She shook her head. “No...that is not what I meant, but the thought of the challenge of breaking you in my bed is delightful.” She stepped closer to Layna, looking down into her blue/green eyes. “Why don’t we move along slowly,” She said. “When we return to Eden City why don’t you bring Teala and your parents to our home for dinner and conversation? At the very least, it will allow us to develop friendships, and those are much harder to create and keep.”

Layna smiled and nodded her head. “You are right about that.” She said warmly. “And I think I would like that very much.”

Lynwe nodded. “Good. I will secure the ramp and we can retire for the evening. I imagine this Commander Isra will be on time in the morning, so we will need to be prepared.”

Layna nodded. “I agree.” Layna watched Lynwe move for the rear ramp controls and found her eyes following the movements of her long legs and her firm ass, Lynwe’s powerful pine like scent filling her nostrils. It was almost as pleasant as Selene’s softer but just as distinctive musky tulip scent. She also found herself filled with a nearly overwhelming desire to be wrapped in the taller Drow elf’s arms, something she had not felt with her two previous female lovers in their relationships.

Perhaps coming to Earth had been the best thing for her in more ways than one.

GELLEN STATION

The handsome young Spartan called Belen had saved her life twice in just the last two minutes alone. The first time when he jerked her down just as weapons fire ripped down the corridor they were moving, the second time when he jerked her back as she tried to see what was going on. The second time had him catching a projectile weapon in the upper shoulder, which jerked his body back, but only served to piss him off. Four of

the Spartans in civilian clothes that had come with them were already down, the big black Spartan and his two women laying down a murderous barrage of fire from their weapons while the new female called Anja sat between the vampire woman and the Hadarian male behind some solid metal crates.

“We’re pinned down!” Danny screamed back to them as he lifted his P190 and let loose with another sustained burst while Nayeca reloaded.

Sangria tried to scramble back the way they had come but Belen grabbed her by the seat of her pants and yanked her back easily.

“Are you a fool woman?” He screamed at her. “You have no body armor!”

“Let me go!” Sangria shouted trying to pound at his hand.

Belen jerked her around and snatched a handful of her hair in his large hand bringing her face close to his. “My Queen has directed I protect you!” He barked. “If I have to knock you out to do that I will! Now stay behind me!” He shoved her down as he lifted his P190 one handed and cut loose a six round burst down the corridor. Projectiles ricocheted off the walls above them and Belen shoved her back as he turned instantly and lifted his P190 to let loose a long burst back the way they had come.

“They’re behind us!” He screamed as two more Spartans turned back in the direction they had come and began firing.

They could all hear alarms raging in the background now as at least two dozen Bounty Hunters and mercenaries were now in the process of attacking them. Anja gripped her *Nehtes* in her hand, watching as Yuriko and Filrian were firing from around the corners of their cover, and she was growing angrier by the moment. Anja felt a tingle throughout her body as the psychic shield she shared with Miath suddenly engaged, bathing her body in a light blue color.

“*Nubou allon!*” Anja barked as she flinched once more as projectiles slammed into the metal crates in front of them. *Miath!*

I am almost there! Miath answered immediately.

What? How?

Why do you think the alarms are going off Anja! His voice carried.

Anja grinned as she got to her feet even with bullets zipping by her all over. Belen’s eyes widened as he saw her stand and Sangria looked at her as if she was insane.

“My Queen! No!” Belen screamed starting to move towards her.

Anja lifted her hand and held him in place using a TK push and she lifted her left arm, her Shi Viska flaring into existence with a silver/white flash of light. Sangria’s eyes were wide as she watched Anja launch the shield down the corridor, bullets slamming into the psychic shield and falling harmlessly to the metal deck beneath her.

There was a deafening roar that preceded the bodies of two mercenaries being psychically lifted and tossed through the air as if they were nothing more than rag dolls. As Danny, Anuk and Nayeca watched in fascination, a billowing wave of superheated air blasted down the corridor from which the mercenaries were hiding and firing their weapons. Seven bodies were instantly incinerated where they stood, massive black scorch marks appearing on the gray metal of the corridor walls and the sounds of weapons fire dropped off nearly in half. Danny whipped his head around only to see Anja’s diminutive form in the middle of a dazzling somersault, her Persian red pony tail flying this way and that as she landed in the middle of a group of five mercenaries before they had time to blink. Two were suddenly decapitated as her Shi Viska appeared from around the corner, easily lopping off their heads before going back to her arm. Her *Nehtes* impaled a third mercenary through his sternum, perforating his chest cavity and bringing him to an abrupt halt in whatever motion he had started. Seanna stepped up behind the last two mercenaries who were facing Anja, appearing like a ghost out of the smoke. Her right hand came up, and with a flash of metal Seanna buried the knife into one man’s misshapen skull up to the hilt. Her left hand grasp the second by his jaw and as she released her grip on the knife with her right hand she brought it over to grasp the graying skin of the side of his head and she twisted savagely. The mercenary’s neck snapped with an audible pop and he slumped to the floor.

The corridor suddenly became silent as all weapons fire stopped immediately. Belen scrambled to his feet, dragging Sangria with him as he glared at Anja.

“That was foolish and ill-advised Anja!” He barked at her angrily.

Anja turned and met his gaze, seeing the look on his face. It was the same look his father wore whenever she had managed to piss off Atropos, which was usually often. "It worked!" Anja declared. "Go! Miath has cleared us a path! Seanna and I will cover our flank! Go!"

Belen knew the command tone in her voice would brook no argument and he turned, pulling Sangria along with him as they began to follow Yuriko and Filrian. Their injured comrades were gathered up quickly, and no one hesitated as they followed Daniel, Anuk and Nayeca around the corner.

Cleared them a path was quite the understatement of the hour as Danny and the others soon discovered. For'mya and Endith stood on the ramp of the DT; weapons out and at the ready as Miath came hurtling back into the landing bay after his sprint to help his bonded mate. Behind him he had left scorched walls and melted bulkheads, not to mention over two dozen piles of ash and crushed bodies of those who would have done his bonded one harm. The moment he had felt her anger and fear at what was happening, Miath turned to For'mya and told her within Mindvoice what was happening. She had not even hesitated and reached for her weapon while he had left the ship and sprinted through the corridors towards Anja. He crushed six mercenaries fool enough to step in front of him under his three thousand pounds of muscle and teeth, his tail whipping back and forth while he tore others open with his talons or crushed them in his jaws. He had melted eight bulkhead doors in his sprint to where Anja was, making the openings big enough for him to barrel through, setting off decompression alarms over the entire station and sealing air tight doors. This action served only to help Anja and the others as it blocked reinforcements from reaching those mercenaries engaged with her and Danny already.

Though they had to avoid the still red hot metal of the melted portions of the doors, it was much easier moving through the corridors that had already been cleared out by an angry three thousand pound dragon. Miath waited by the landing bay entrance as first Daniel, and then the others began arriving in the bay. Daniel glanced at him as he ushered Anuk and Nayeca towards the ramp of the *STRIKER DT*. Once they had taken up positions on the ramp, For'mya and Endith darted back for the cockpit.

Sangria really had no choice in which direction to go as Belen had a grip on her arm and was practically dragging her along the corridors, sometimes physically picking her up and keeping her from stumbling at the pace he was keeping. She was not a large woman, but she was muscular and lifting her with one arm didn't make Belen pause in the least as he wrestled with her. As he spun her around through the landing bay entrance he brought her close to him, his face a mask of anger. Sangria couldn't help but feel the hard muscles flexing under his clothes, and despite the situation, she found herself strangely attracted to this stern and wild looking Lycavorian.

"You have placed my Queen's life in danger!" He growled at her, his eyes changing quickly and his fangs bursting forth. "Your actions have put her safety and the safety of those with her in danger! I will deal with you later Hadarian wench, and I do not care that you are her sister!"

Sangria's eyes nearly flew from her head. "Sister?" She gasped.

"Why do you think you still stand here able to speak *upae*?" Belen barked at her. "No one speaks to her as you have and still has the ability to walk! I should just feed you to Miath! He is not in the least bit happy you have placed his Bonded Mate in danger with your foolish attempts at escape!"

"I am not her sister!" Sangria barked. "That... that arrogant bitch is not my sister!"

Belen grabbed her face in a large hand and squeezed her jaw. "That arrogant bitch, as you call her is one of three Queens of the United Lycavorian Union wench! She is also Queen of the Hadarian people... your people! And she is worth more than a hundred of you!" Belen rumbled, tiny bits of spittle flying from his face and landing on Sangria's cheeks. "If harm comes to her because of you woman... you will rue the day we found you before the Coven! They would have given you a quick death! Miath and I will not!"

Sangria heard the deep growl very close to her and she turned her head slightly to see the dark gray eyes attached to the massive head and tooth filled maw glaring at her with murder in them.

"The winds... preserve me." Sangria stammered as Miath lowered his head even closer and made a show of exhaling through his large nostrils and blowing small puffs of smoke out.

"You will remain beside Miath!" Belen barked. "If you move so much as two meters away from him you will die! Do you understand me?"

Sangria's head bobbed up and down quickly, her eyes never leaving the snout of the huge dragon in front of her. Belen released Sangria's jaw and turned back to see Danny grinning at him as they waited for Anja to bring up the rear of their escape column.

"Nicely done." Danny said. "I've wanted to do that for almost a week!"

Anja sent the two hundred kilo metal crate hurtling down the corridor with a powerful TK push and watched as the six foot long container smashed into the bodies of three Bounty Hunters making their way through the melted hatchway. Seanna stood shoulder to shoulder with her lover and Queen, the P190 dealing out lethal projectiles and death every time she pulled the trigger. They moved back orderly, not panicking. They had been together for over a year now, Seanna and Anja, and not just as lovers. They had trained together as a pair under two of the toughest Spartan instructors either of them had ever met, and now they moved with a single purpose and thought. They had a strong Mindvoice connection, something that Anja had established with Seanna almost from the time they began sharing a bed together. That connection was stronger now, as they practiced with that almost daily, and nearly as much as they trained now, both together and with Miath. As Iriral had done with Isabella, Miath had worked hard to establish and maintain his connection with both his Bonded Mate and Queen, and with Seanna. He knew, like Iriral knew with Dysea and Isabella, that Seanna and Anja were a pair, and though he would always do his best to protect them both, Anja was his Bonded Mate and she would always come first. He sensed Seanna knew that, and he could almost feel the peace that knowledge gave to her should anything happen to her.

Anja stopped as they came to the intersection, her jade green eyes darting down the corridor. She could see roughly half a dozen men moving through the parallel tunnel, rushing for the only door that was holding back the tide of mercenaries after them. Anja didn't hesitate and lifted her Shi Viska, launching it at the control panel of the door. Just as the first mercenary reached it, the Shi Viska slammed into the control panel showering the smoking corridor with white sparks. Anja turned and looked at Seanna, just as she expertly finished dropping the only two mercenaries that were still trailing them down the corridor, with two well placed and deadly accurate bursts of the 190.

"That won't hold them for long!" Anja barked.

"The landing bay is not far!" Seanna exclaimed taking her hand. "This way!"

Seanna led them in a mad sprint down the scorched corridor, skidding to a halt at another intersection a hundred meters away. Anja turned back just as the mercenaries burned through the control panel at the far end of the corridor they had just come out of. She was about to open her mouth to shout a warning when she was lifted from her feet beside Seanna and both of them went hurtling down the shorter corridor to their left.

Miath! They both screamed out within Mindvoice as doors and crates whistled by beneath them. Within seconds they were gently lowered to the floor just inside the landing bay entrance in front of the green scaled dragon who glared at them with dark gray eyes.

I should tell the King of both your foolish actions! Miath snapped.

Anja smiled as she straightened her clothes and looked at him with a mischievous twinkle in her jade green eyes, Seanna matching that smile with her dark green orbs.

You won't though! Anja said stepping up to him and placing her palm on his powerful neck. *You had just as much fun as we did!*

You are becoming just as reckless as King Leonidas and Queen Aricia! Miath scolded, but he was unable to keep the humor out of his voice.

Where is...?

Miath moved sideways several feet and Anja's eyes fell on Sangria who was huddled against the bulkhead of the landing bay, her eyes wide in shock and fear. Anja's head snapped back around when Danny and Belen's P190s announced they had company coming by burning half a magazine each down the corridor.

"Belen?" She shouted.

"Three are down! The rest dove for cover! We have everyone and I'm closing the entrance!" Belen yelled back stepping into the bay and slamming his hand down on the control panel for the large landing bay doors.

Six pairs of eyes watched as the massive doors came down and sealed the bay. Danny withdrew his *Nehtes* without question and plunged the spear into the wall panel, sending sparks and a small flicker of flame spurting from the control panel.

“Time to go!” Danny announced ripping his *Nehtes* free.

Belen didn’t question this and turned immediately, reaching for Sangria’s arm without hesitation and pulling her to her feet following Anja and Seanna as they sprinted across the bay. Miath and Danny covered them the entire way, alertly sweeping the other entrances as they backed towards the edge of the ramp. Anuk was standing by the controls and the moment Miath’s huge head cleared the edge of the ramp she slammed her palm down on the button and the ramp began to rise. Belen pushed Sangria onto one of the long webbed benches.

“We are not out of this yet!” He spoke firmly to her as he pulled the straps down over her shoulders and set them in her lap. “Buckle yourself in and do not get in anyone’s way woman!”

“They’ll never open the bay doors to let us out!” Sangria barked.

Nayeca plopped onto the bench next to her with a smile. “You have not seen For’mya and Endith’s negotiation skills.” She said as she rapidly buckled in.

Anuk chuckled as she settled on Sangria’s other side and buckled in as well. “Yes... they are very persuasive.”

Anja moved into the cockpit and came up behind For’mya’s right hand chair. Endith almost always flew *Spartan 01* now. She was the more instinctive pilot of the two of them, and they had developed their skills accordingly. They had learned to trust each other completely in their cockpit, all three of them having a voice and that is what made them such an amazing flight crew. Anja reached for the back of For’mya’s chair as Endith lifted *Spartan 01* off the deck two meters and began rotating the *STRIKER DT* to face the landing bay doors. Anja leaned forward and nuzzled the back of For’mya’s elfin ear and she turned with a bright smile, the gentle nuzzle not having the same effect on her as if it had been Martin or Aricia.

They had shared a bed with each other yes, and it had been pleasurable yes, but unless they were all together, For’mya much preferred Aricia’s arms and lips upon hers, just as Anja preferred Seanna’s arms and lips upon her. That they preferred other women and the same man did not make them enemies in any way. It made them closer to each other as friends and above all else as far as they were concerned, it made them family.

“They are demanding that we shut down our engines and prepare to be boarded!” Tina’s voice carried from the engineer’s station.

Endith and For’mya chuckled from their pilot’s seats. “In a pig’s eye!” Endith muttered.

“They say they won’t release the lock on the landing bay doors!” Tina spoke with a rogue like smile. “I’ve asked them twice. Nicely.”

For’mya’s hands flew over her controls. “Let us hear it.” She stated simply.

“On speakers!” Tina declared as the angry male voice filled the cockpit.

“...Power down your engines and surrender yourself to station authorities!” The man spoke. “You have violated the neutrality of Gellen Station and have done extensive damage to its personal and property!”

“Gellen Station Control...” For’mya spoke calmly. “This is *Spartan 01* of the United Lycavorian Union. I will only make the request once more, please release the lock on the landing bays doors.”

“I don’t care if you are that bastard Union King himself!” The voice screamed. “You sound like a couple of stuck up elf bitches and someone needs to pay for all the damages and then they need to answer for breaking the neutrality of this station!”

Tina shook her head. “That wasn’t a very nice thing to say.” She spoke with a grin.

“Gellen Station is a recognized depot of scum and miscreants from every corner of the universe.” For’mya spoke. “I have asked three times politely. I will not ask again. And my King is no bastard! Thank you for clearance Gellen Control. I will now make my own door!” Her hands flew over her controls and she pulled her helmet on as did Endith. “Missile pods one and two extended and locked. All D14 *ECLIPSE* missiles are live and hot! Kinetic Cannon is charged!” For’mya looked at Endith. “Commander Endith... would you be so kind, as one stuck up elf bitch to another, to express our displeasure at our woefully meager accommodations here on Gellen Station.”

Endith couldn’t contain her laughter as her index finger mashed down on the firing button of her control stick.

Four of the thirty-two, eight foot long missiles rippled off the two extended missile pods on either side of *Spartan 01*. All of them could see technicians with wide eyes start to run down the adjoining corridors to escape the destruction about to be wrought.

It wouldn't save them.

EARTH

STRIKER DT SPARTAN 214

OVER THE ATLANTIC

Lohana settled them into a steady course over the Mediterranean Ocean, five thousand feet above the water, at the sedate speed of three thousand kilometers per hour. This course would speed them along to North America and directly into New Miami. She turned in her seat and looked at Tarifa, Aihola and Tareif.

“We should arrive in New Miami in roughly ninety minutes.” She spoke.

“It's nearly 0900 hours!” Tareif spoke sternly to her. “Shouldn't you be waking him up since it appears he slept in?”

Lohana smiled. “When the bulkhead slides open you can move into the rear of the ship.” Lohana told them. “His quarters and much of the living space for long flights are in the rear.”

“So why is he back there and we are up here?” Tareif snapped.

Lohana met his eyes. “You are up here War Master, because should anything happen while we are in flight, the entire forward section of the *STRIKER DT* detaches into an escape pod. The rear does not. You are safer up here.”

Tarifa looked at her. “What happens to them?” She asked.

“If we are in an atmosphere they will attempt to escape out of the rear ramp.” Lohana spoke. “With their psychic shielding they can survive against many different types of atmospheres for short periods of time. With luck, long enough for a rescue team to get to them.”

“And if they aren't lucky enough?” Aihola asked.

Lohana met her amber eyes. “Then they will die.” She answered almost matter of factly.

“If the main living quarters are back there, you share them with the Commander then?” Tareif spoke.

Lohana shook her head and motioned to the small door. “My quarters are through that door.” She said. “Isra's quarters are in the rear, though most nights he sleeps next to Aelnala in her pen. They enjoy each other's company.”

“Why don't you share quarters?” Tareif asked.

“Papa!” Tarifa hissed angrily.

“He travels with a female elf and expects us to believe they do not share a bed!” Tareif snapped.

“Tareif that is inappropriate to ask!” Aihola snapped now.

Lohana only sat in her chair staring at Tareif, her dark eyes unreadable and most would say definitely not friendly. “For a man who is spoken of in such high regard on Apo Prime and in particular among Mjolnir's Hand, War Master Tareif... you have to be the largest fool I have ever met.”

“So what I say is true?” Tareif demanded.

Lohana turned in her chair and pulled a small framed still photo from the corner of the consoles. She held it out to Tarifa. Tarifa's sapphire eyes went wide when she saw the photo of Aelnala and the two small elf children on her back smiling widely. She saw Lohana in the picture kneeling next to Aelnala's front forelimb holding what appeared to be a new born child, while Isra stood next to the elf male who wore the flight engineer suit. Both Isra and the elf male were holding large tankards of some liquid and looked quite intoxicated.

“That picture was taken four months ago on Apo Prime. It was my daughter Yolina's Welcoming Ceremony. My sons are on Aelnala's back. They adore her really. As I'm sure my daughter will grown to adore her, though she's only eleven months old right now. Isra is her Bonded Guardian should anything happen to me or to my elf mate Tridin. That's the man who happens to be standing next to Isra in the photo, both of them looking rather intoxicated. You should have seen the two of them and my father falling down at the celebration afterwards. It was among the most entertaining things anyone in my family has ever seen. Isra's mother Gallais,

I believe you know her Administrator Tarifa, put together all the food, and it was a wonderful day. King Leonidas and Queen Aricia came with Torma and Isheeni. It was a truly wonderful day.

Lohana looked at Tareif. "I have been with my elf mate for over three hundred years now War Master Tareif, almost as long as you have been with your mate Lady Palina. And for you to insinuate that there is something between us when there is not is insulting and disrespectful to me, to my mate and most especially to Commander Isra."

"He forced himself on..." Tareif began to speak. The sound of the bulkheads doors opening cut off his words and they turned as the pressurized doors receded into their positions within the hull of the *STRIKER DT* and the back of the ship opened up to them.

All of them came to their feet now as they saw Aelnala's bulk in the far rear portion of the DT on the right in her specialized pen. She was gnawing on a large bone of some sort, obviously filing her already razor like teeth. Of all of them, she was the most protected should anything happen. Her pen could be sealed completely with force fields and was completely independent of the ship's life support. The rear of the *STRIKER* was enormous so as to allow her the freedom to come and go as she pleased into the main portions of the ship. There was a small star map chart table near one side of the main living area, surrounded by five chairs and an enormous computer data bank along the wall. There were two couches and a large monitor against the opposite wall, as well as a large table in the center that was used for eating and gathering. Past Aelnala's pen and the harness mechanism that kept her safe in turbulent air, was the large ramp and hatchway into the tail section of the ship where they could drop the ramp to either take off or land if needed as they had done over the parade grounds.

Most of the Bonded Dragon Pairs and their pilots had decorated the insides of their Dragon Transports to suit their individual tastes, and Isra was no different. With Aelnala at his side he had picked out several interesting pieces of art that he liked, as well as three holo collages that decorated the walls. Many of the holo images were of his mother and sister, as well as moments on Apo Prime and training with the King and Queen. Surprisingly it was not as barren as Tarifa and Aihola had expected. The rear of the DT was not stark battle gray, but a soothing darker ivory color.

Isra stood near the map chart, his dirty blond hair tied back in a pony tail, the dark gray t-shirt fitting him like a glove. The muscles in his arms and chest and shoulders were very evident, rippling under the thin material of the shirt. It was not just a t-shirt, but an inner layer of added protection against the buffeting winds they sometimes encountered when flying at very high altitudes or in cold climates. Aihola grasped Tarifa's hand this time, squeezing it as she let her amber eyes fall upon this Spartan that had stolen Tarifa's heart, and by virtue of the bond they shared, stolen hers as well. Her amber eyes turned to Tarifa's sapphire ones.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Tarifa... he is...*

Tarifa could not contain the small smile that escaped her lips. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Yes I know Mistress.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *But I am more vampire than wolf my love.* Aihola spoke. *I should not... I should not be affected like this.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I am Nya Istel... and therefore you are. I have tasted his aura already, remember? Tasted it and wanted more.* Tarifa spoke turning back to look at him.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *But as a wolf Tarifa... or as a woman?*

Tarifa turned back to look at her. [Mindvoice Shielded] *After seeing him again Mistress... I want him as both this time.*

Aihola squeezed her hand even tighter. [Mindvoice Shielded] *I do as well. The question remains... after what we have done... does he want us?*

"I spent the better part of the night with Senator Dilius and Governor Panos in the Senate chambers." Isra began speaking as they drew closer. "We have narrowed our list of potential suspects to nine Lycavorian Spartans." His fingers danced across the table top console and nine red spots appeared on the table chart. "All but two are in North America. One is currently assigned to the moon base EDEN, the second is a Spartan working with Senior Instructor Lander. These men are both much older and have been honored Spartans living in Sparta for centuries. They are suspects only because of several off hand comments made in regards to Administrator Tarifa during her stays in Sparta."

"What comments?" Tareif asked quickly.

Isra looked at him. "They are not important."

"They are to me boy." Tareif demanded.

"They were discussing what Administrator Tarifa would be like in bed War Master, in comparison to their own mates." Isra told him with some exasperation in his voice. He was obviously still tired from little sleep. "As I'm sure many young Elves have wondered over the years. And now that she is wolf, many young Spartans will no doubt think these same thoughts." Tarifa blushed and pressed tighter to Aihola who was smiling. Isra turned back to the map chart. "Of the remaining seven, only three are of sufficient size to cause the types of wounds on the two elves. Two are in Eden City... one resides in New Salem at the moment. We have placed them under discrete surveillance. Two of these men lost brothers in the Battle for Earth; the third lost his father and a brother."

"So why come after me if they are Lycavorian?" Tarifa asked moving up next to the table. "I was only in command of Eden City. Martin commanded the Spartans who came to assist us."

Isra looked at her. "That is what we will need to find out." He said. "Lohana will drop me and Aelnala in New Miami and then continue on to Eden City. Lynwe may have a lead that we will follow once we join together. Governor Panos has informed me the three Lochi have already arrived and are establishing new security protocols that must be followed until this threat is dealt with."

"How do we know it is a threat? What lead are you talking about? So far the only ones taking this serious are you and Lynwe. Two murders with foul words carved into the bodies that vaguely mention Tarifa and I, do not constitute a real threat to me." Aihola asked in a neutral voice. "It could be the work of any number of groups that have hated us since before the war even ended. Hated us for being lovers, hated me for being Drow, hated Tarifa for being a High Elf. Why do you insist it is a Spartan and why do you insist on trying to frighten us?"

Isra stood up straight and took the data pad from the table. He walked slowly around the table until he stood in front of her, looking down into her amber colored eyes. Her cherry blossom scent was powerful and sweet, and mingled in just as strongly with that was Tarifa's pure and vibrant peach scent. Aihola met his violet eyes, forcefully willing away the shudder of desire that swept through both her and Tarifa. He turned and looked at Tarifa for a long moment, gazing into her sapphire eyes before turning back to Aihola.

"How many bodies will it take?" Isra asked.

"What?"

"How many bodies will it take to convince you this is a targeted campaign against the both of you?" He spoke evenly. He held up the data pad. "I will kill the Drow whore. I will feast upon Tarifa's entrails. I will gouge out her devil eyes. I will spread her body to the four winds." Isra looked at her. "Two more bodies were discovered overnight with those phrases carved into their dead flesh. Both found on the beaches of New Miami, right under the noses of Lynwe and another Spartan not six kilometers away. I surmise that if Lynwe is as skilled as King Leonidas boasts that she is, than whoever is doing this can only be one thing... and that is a Spartan. He may have help in those that you speak of, but whoever this fool is, he will continue on the path he is on until he kills the two of you. That is not something I will allow."

Aihola took the data pad from his grip slowly, her finger tips brushing the skin of his hand, her eyes never leaving his.

"I will protect you both with my dying breath if need be." Isra spoke softly. "I..."

"Will stay away from my daughter and Aihola or face my wrath! My daughter and Aihola don't need your type around them." Tareif spoke angrily, stepping over in front of Isra, placing himself between Tarifa and Aihola and the wild looking Spartan.

Tareif was not a cowardly man, and he stood facing Isra with the same courage he had faced every threat in his life, with his eyes wide open. Only he knew he did it for reasons that were not entirely true.

Isra's face lost the softness it had a moment before, and the words that he had wanted to speak to both Tarifa and Aihola died on his lips as he glared at Tareif.

"My type?" Isra asked.

Tareif nodded. "I've seen Spartans like you before boy! There are many who are not like the King. Like Dekton! There are many Spartans who just wish to bed as many females as they can to add them to their conquests. You are no Dekton!"

"Papa you will stop it right now!" Tarifa hissed.

“Tareif you are out of line now!” Aihola echoed.

“Am I?” Tareif snapped. “You told me he says he contacted you over two hundred times! Where are these messages? I have never seen one! They don’t exist because he never sent them! Maybe in your twisted mind you forced yourself on my daughter as a means to protect her, but I know better! I see right through you Commander. I see what you are.”

“Tareif you will stop this immediately!” Aihola shouted. “You do not know what you are saying!”

“Don’t I?” Tareif barked once more. “I’ve waited over a year to do this!”

Tareif was an elf after all, born and engineered with increased speed and reflexes. He was also large for an elf, and stronger than most. His punch landed on Isra’s chin with lightning like speed, but the only reason it connected was because Isra allowed it to connect. His head rocked back slightly, his bottom lip splitting open slightly. Tareif was about to hit him again when he heard the roar and suddenly found himself staring into the terrifying maw of Aelnala, her jaws open wide and her teeth razor points.

Tell your father to step back Tarifa or I will remove his arm from his body for striking my Bond Mate. Aelnala’s voice held nothing but murderous contempt in it. *I will not give a second warning.*

Tarifa grabbed her father’s arm and yanked him back viciously, glaring at him. “Papa you fool!” She shouted at him. “What have you done?”

“I did what should have been done long ago!” Tareif yelled back.

“You are a fool!” She barked at him. Tarifa turned away from him and both she and Aihola moved closer to Isra, reaching for him. He held up his hand as Aelnala let out a low growl. Isra wiped the trickle of blood from his lips, his violet eyes on Tarifa and Aihola.

“I... I did not realize you... you hated me that much for what happened.” He said softly, looking at them.

“Isra... we... please...”

“Don’t apologize to him!” Tareif yelled.

Tarifa whirled on her father. “You will speak no more on this trip Papa, for if you do I will personally see just how thick your head truly is.” She hissed at him, seeing his eyes go wide at her words. She turned quickly back to look at Isra and reached out to try and touch his face. He drew back, Aelnala growling even louder.

“I will contact the King when I reach Eden City and have him send another member of Mjolnir’s Hand to complete this mission.” Isra spoke calmly. Far too calmly. “Then you will be rid of me and never have to tolerate my presence again. Lohana... take them into the cockpit and let them remain there. I will not have Aelnala exposed to such hate.”

“Isra wait...” Tarifa spoke quickly.

“No... now it *is* too late.” He spoke.

CHAPTER SEVEN

GELLEN ASTEROID FIELD

Endith threw Spartan 01 into a gut wrenching turn around the mass of the asteroid in their path, the belly of the *STRIKER DT* barely a thousand meters from the surface of the moon sized chunk of rock.

“Still behind us!” For’mya called out.

“Shit... who they got flying those crates!” Endith shouted yanking them into a rolling turn.

“Those are High Coven Interceptors! They must have come from the cruisers!” For’mya declared in a yell. “Five of them, bearing six four one nine mark three! Endith... bank right... now!”

Endith didn’t hesitate and *Spartan 01* responded as if it was reading her mind. Though much larger than the normal *STRIKER AT* ships, the *DTs* had been painstakingly designed to retain the superior maneuverability and speed of their sister ships, and this was possible with the advent of the Dragon Armor. Lighter and able to withstand a hundred times more punishment due to the new Dragon Armor, the *DTs* were able to carry a Bonded Pair and a full squad of Spartans if necessary. *Spartan 01* was even larger to accommodate Torma and

Isheeni at the same time, as well as being much more heavily armed and armored. *Spartan 01* was also far from being the normal transport as these High Coven fighters were about to find out.

“Locking!” Tina shouted. “Got them! I got them!”

“Firing!” Endith didn’t pause as she squeezed the thumb trigger on her control stick and ripple fired five anti-air missiles.

“Climb Endith! We must clear the debris zone! Full power climb!” For’mya shouted reaching forward and shoving the engine throttles to max power.

“Hold on!” Endith yanked back on her control stick without question once more, as her hand covered For’mya’s on the throttle control of *Spartan 01*, pushing her powerful engines to maximum power.

Anja could only sit behind the two pilots and watch in awe at the teamwork they showed. For’mya was the brain of *Spartan 01*, Tina the engines and the eyes and Endith was the heart and the muscles. They operated in perfect unison regardless of the situation. There were no hurried words or excited moments; they knew exactly what they were doing at any given moment.

Five anti-air missiles collided with three Coven fighters, forming bright blossoms of light within the asteroid field and claiming the fourth ship in the massive explosion as it slammed into the smaller asteroid at full speed. The fifth continued on, chasing the ship it had been following for close to thirty minutes now.

They had blasted their way clear of Gellen Station and dove headlong and recklessly into the heart of the massive asteroid field. Six mercenary corvettes had followed, their multi-array plasma turrets blasting away smaller asteroids as they tried to hit the *STRIKER DT* to no avail. Even with the computers targeting the ship, not one mercenary corvette scored even a near miss. What they did get was twelve anti-ship missiles shoved back at them, missiles that obliterated one corvette and set the other one adrift in the asteroid field with massive structural damage. The four remaining corvettes had broke off at the orders from the three High Coven light cruisers that were following *Spartan 01*, eradicating any asteroids within range, and filling space with deadly shrapnel and debris. The commanders of these ships were taking a big chance in entering the field, as one learned when he could not dodge the moon sized rock in time and plowed bow first into the much larger piece of rock.

The asteroid field had lit up with the destruction of that cruiser, but now the last two were being more cautious, and sending fighters after them as they moved slower.

“One million kilometers to the edge of the field!” Tina yelled out.

For’mya and Endith eased back on the throttles of *Spartan 01* and then For’mya dropped her head into the scopes in front of her. “Endith... ease in close to the big one on the left.”

Endith chuckled. “For’mya... there are a lot of big ones on the left.”

For’mya looked up and smiled as well. She pointed out their cockpit window. “That one. Hurry!”

Endith’s hands were moving before the order finished leaving her lips and *Spartan 01* dipped lower to the massive brown rock off their starboard side. “You thinking hide now?” Endith asked.

For’mya nodded. “They will be more cautious now as close to the edge of the border as we are. The field may end in one million kilometers, but the ULU border begins before that. There will be a marker on one of the asteroids. A beacon of sorts.”

“Can we detect it?” Tina asked.

“I’m adjusting scanners for it now.” For’mya spoke. “Get us real close Endith. Close enough to kiss the rock.”

“We get any closer and we’ll be the rock.” Endith answered.

For’mya looked up and her dark brown eyes flared as she saw that she could probably reach out and touch the asteroid if she wanted. She grinned. “Oh this is cozy.” She spoke turning to look at Anja. “I can feel Martin Anja.”

Anja nodded her head. “He’s waiting for us. He can’t reveal himself though! We’re still on the wrong side of the border and if he hasn’t de-shrouded by now there is another reason.”

For’mya’s eyes widened. “More Coven ships?”

Anja nodded. “They are waiting for us on our side of the border, they have to be. Sneaky fuckers!” Anja declared. “They probably can’t detect him, but he doesn’t know how many of them there are. And he won’t communicate with us because of what happened at Leptan Three; no matter how powerful he knows we both are.”

For'mya nodded. They were in a similar situation back then, Martin and Aricia on the surface, Anja in orbit on the SPIRIT. The Coven had somehow moved an extremely powerful Mindvoicer into the area and when Martin began to issue orders to the ships from the surface, the Coven Mindvoicer blocked them. It had taken Martin, Aricia, Anja and For'mya as the four most powerful Mindvoice capable people present within the fleet almost three hours to discover what was wrong and then another two hours to hunt down and kill the vampire Mindvoicer. Using Torma, Isheeni and Miath as conduits and focusers, they were able to centralize his location and then all seven of them combined to shred his mind to nothing. It was the first time they had done something like that, and Helen had told them to continue to practice the skill, for it may play a part in the future.

To attempt it now however was too great a risk.

Sangria sat in the back of the *DT* with a smile on her face. It had been the wildest ride she had ever been on, and she had decided those female elf pilots didn't look like much, but they could sure fly this ship. She let her eyes glance at the others, Anuk and Nayeca sitting almost calmly on either side of her, while Daniel and Filrian sat calmly but with their eyes closed. The vampire witch Yuriko also had a small smile on her face, and Sangria decided she must be the pilot of the bunch. The Spartans were secured in their seats and her eyes fell on the Spartan named Belen. He had threatened to kill her in an instant over that small female who claimed she was her sister and Sangria had no doubts he probably would have. He had the same look as the black Spartan everyone called Danny. He had the look of a seasoned killer who would just as soon break you in half as talk to you. A man who had killed, a man who would kill again, and a man who was exceptionally good at it. Of course, Sangria thought to herself, if what she had seen in the last few hours was worth anything, the Lycavorian Spartans the Union was turning out now were decidedly more dangerous than the fools she had seen within the Wilds.

His dark eyes were focused on her like small beams of light, clear and bright and while Sangria knew she should feel fear at that gaze, she felt something entirely different. She felt desire. Her head snapped around when the lights went dark in the cockpit and in the rear where they were sitting. She tried to gaze forward and look into the cockpit, and her eyes grew wide when she saw how close they were sitting next to the asteroid. She may have been Hadarian, but she wasn't still alive by being slow. She had popped her straps and was moving for the cockpit before the movement registered to anyone else. As Belen scrambled to follow her, Sangria took the three steps up into the cockpit of *Spartan 01* in a single bound.

"What are you doing?" Sangria gasped as Anja looked up surprised to see her.

"Get her out of here!" Tina snapped.

Sangria's eyes were wide as she looked at the cockpit of *Spartan 01* like she had just entered a store with every piece of candy she had ever wanted. "Oh wow!" She gasped.

"Belen!" Anja hissed as she saw her Captain bounding up into the cockpit.

"No one move!" For'mya barked. "Freeze!"

Her words froze everyone in their spots as For'mya and Endith leaned towards the cockpit window looking at something only they could see. For'mya's left hand rested on the throttle control, her right hand on the launcher control for their countermeasures. Endith's right hand rested on top of For'mya's over the throttles, while her left hand caressed the control like a feather.

"They can see us!" Sangria barked. "You have us too close to the asteroid!"

"Shut up fool!" For'mya announced. "They are using a narrow motion sensor array to scan the rocks!"

"They'll see us!" Sangria popped.

"Not if you don't move!" For'mya growled. "Now shut up!"

"That's a Coven Light Cruiser!" Sangria almost shouted now. "You can't outrun it! You can't outfight it!"

Endith didn't turn her head as she watched the shadow grow closer. "You don't know us very well." She muttered. "We got a surprise waiting."

"Endith?" For'mya asked calmly.

"Stand by." Endith's voice was soft like a whisper. "Almost there!"

Sangria moved towards the back of Endith's seat. "You'll get us all killed!"

"Fuck! She blew us!" Endith swore. "They're tracking!"

"Go! Go!" For'mya barked as they slammed the throttles forward and she began smashing her finger down on the panel near her head.

Spartan 01 leaped from the surface of the asteroid directly under the High Coven light cruiser, rocketing away from the rock so fast that the Coven gunners couldn't track the ship. Anja and Belen moved at the same instant, Belen wrapping his arms around Sangria and Anja snatching a handful of her hair. Belen's movements threw them into the seat next to Anja, and they both rapidly made to secure the straps around him and Sangria both. The moment his arms had closed around her Sangria had rammed her head back against him. She didn't anticipate his height and the back of her head impacted his jaw harder than she had factored because of their sudden movement and blackness washed over her before Belen had even fallen to the seat.

He looked at Anja as he held her tightly to him. "Forgive me my Queen." He said quickly.

Anja looked at him with those bright jade green eyes and flashed him a smile. "Does she remind you of me?" She asked almost playfully.

Belen couldn't help but laugh at Anja's expression. His father had told him once that she was wild and reckless, at times more so than even Queen Aricia, but she was easily the most compassionate and precious individual he had ever served, and Anja never got angry with the men who so willingly laid down their lives for her.

"Yes she does my Queen." Belen answered. "Only without the refinement."

Anja smiled and turned to look at the back of Endith and For'mya. "Ladies... I think Martin has had enough time! Would you be so kind as to tell him we are coming home with some unwelcome guests right on our asses!"

For'mya laughed at Endith. "Oh he won't like that!" She echoed loudly. "He hates it when others look at our asses."

Endith matched the laughter and yanked her control stick over hard. "We be coming home boss man!" She screamed.

The deep voice filled the internal COM.

"It's about *nubous* time you stopped playing with these fools!" Martin's voice spoke. "Bring it in Endy! I got something special planned!"

"Oh I love his special plans!" Tina spoke from her station. "They usually mean some really bad fucking things are going to happen to the bad guys!"

"Here we go!" Endith cranked *Spartan 01* one over and headed right for the edge of the asteroid field with every ounce of speed she could coax out of *Spartan 01*'s engines, which was considerable to say the least.

MJOLNIR'S HAND

"Weapons free!" Komirri shouted from his command chair, his reptilian features twisted into a vicious snarl. "Execute plan Leonidas four one!"

Martin stood on the bridge next to the command chair with a savage smile on his face as well. He had spent every moment he was able learning of ship combat with Komirri, Ceneu, and Riall which consisted of the deployment of fleets, maneuvering, pretty much everything that cadets learned in the academy. Martin would admit he would much rather be on the ground or fighting from Torma's back given a choice, but after seeing what his ships could do, standing on the bridge of *MJOLNIR'S HAND* now gave him a sense of power. Martin knew he was not experienced enough to command even the small detachment that traveled with his flagship, so whenever they were on the bridge together, Komirri gave the orders. The Algolian Captain had refused at first, more out of respect towards his King, but he quickly learned that Martin Leonidas wasn't afraid to admit he couldn't do something. He had told Komirri that he was Captain for a reason, and that was to command the flagship, not be careful of injuring his King's ego.

The display board on *MJOLNIR'S HAND* was the most advanced ever designed, and they watched as the holo picture filtered into view on the screen in front of them. They could see *Spartan 01* jinxing back and forth, always narrowly dodging small and large asteroids, while avoiding the plasma beams that were lancing out from the two light cruisers that were smashing through the field behind them trying to destroy the small ship.

Komirri shook his head and looked at Martin. "I questioned the decision to put them together sire." Komirri spoke. "I thought their personalities would conflict so badly they wouldn't be able to fly with each

other. I have to admit, I don't believe I have ever seen half the maneuvers they have managed to pull off together."

Martin grinned. "I'll let you look at my stomach next time I fly with them." He spoke. "It takes me and Torma hours to get our stomachs back into proper position."

Komirri began to laugh but was interrupted by the blaring alarm.

"Captain! High Coven *BLOODLETTER*-Class Medium Cruiser de-shrouding close to port! Six *BLOODRUNNER*-Class Heavy Frigates de-shrouding as well!"

Komirri looked at Martin. "Just as you suspected sire." He said.

Martin nodded. "They want her as much as we do. It stands to reason they wouldn't let something like a border stand in their way." He spoke. "Let's spring the surprise."

Komirri smiled and got to his feet. "Order the rest of the Wing to de-shroud! Execute Attack Plan Komirri Three Five! Enemy suppression barrage on the field! Leave the Coven ships for our escorts! Engage!"

The High Coven *BLOODLETTER*-Class cruiser was one of their finest ships and it was heavily armed and armored. As the *BLOODLETTER* turned to engage *MJOLNIR'S HAND*, the six Coven frigates were darting towards the asteroid field. They did not expect more than one ULU ship to appear, knowing the border treaties that the ULU were adamant about not breaking. They did not however, plan for a King who did not care for borders when it concerned his friends and two of the women he loved dearly.

MJOLNIR'S HAND's entire Wing of escort ships de-shrouded within seconds of each other and tore into the High Coven frigates like wolves in a feeding frenzy. Before many of the ships had even completely come out of Shroud, anti-ship missiles and plasma beam arrays were sending out greetings of death, filling the stars with destruction and chaos.

The *LEONIDAS II*-Class Strike Cruisers were the most advanced and powerful of any ULU ship, built for the expressed purpose of going toe-to-toe with the High Coven *REVERENCE*-Class Dreadnoughts. The much smaller *BLOODLETTER*-Class Medium Cruiser barely stood a chance.

The Coven cruiser was able to fire first, the side of the ship lighting up with missile launches and beam weapons against the side of *MJOLNIR'S HAND*, and the distance should have guaranteed at least several hits to the side of the immense Strike Cruiser. As the captain of the *BLOODLETTER* watched in horror, the entire side of *MJOLNIR'S HAND* came alive with anti-missile turrets, the plasma based beams lancing out to first, obliterate all the missiles he had launched, but then they began slamming into his cruiser as well. His shields were quickly overwhelmed by the sheer volume of plasma based turrets targeted on him, and he could only stand on his bridge as his ship came apart around him in little pieces.

The opposite side of *MJOLNIR'S HAND* was also alive with active turrets, but these were targeting the asteroid field, and the level of concentrated plasma fire from the Strike Cruiser was so thick it appeared as if you could walk on one beam to the next. The entire line of the Gellen Asteroid field came apart as if a great wave of energy had smashed through it. Asteroids from the size of a man to the size of star cruisers were targeted and blasted into oblivion. There was no hesitation, no missed shots, and through that massive wave of destruction, *Spartan 01* squirted out and made directly for the docking bay in the belly of *MJOLNIR'S HAND*. The two Coven Light cruisers were not as lucky, as their shields were quickly overwhelmed by the enormous amount of shattered rock slamming against them. One of the cruisers began to turn and try to run back the way it had come, only to turn directly into the path of another moon sized asteroid that had just been blasted in half. The two pieces of rock slammed the turning ship between them, instantly crushing the hull of the ship and setting off internal explosions.

The second light cruiser was just reaching the end of the field, its captain angry and hurt but glad to be alive. Alarms were blaring all over his ship from multiply hits they had taken, but they were alive. Until he looked up at his monitor and saw the six huge missiles just fired directly at him from the bow of *MJOLNIR'S HAND*.

His last action was to curse the Vampire High Lord and thank whatever gods he prayed to that he no longer had to face Princess Yuri because he had failed.

Martin looked at Komirri. "Get us back across the border quickly Komirri." He ordered. "No sense in pissing off more people than we need to."

Komirri nodded. "Understood sire."

For'mya looked at Endith as she powered down the engines and Tina moved forward from her station to kneel between their seats. They both smiled and took each other's hand as Tina rested her own on top of theirs. They brought their helmeted heads together.

"*Innarr en gothrim glinuva nuin I'anor.*" For'mya spoke softly in elfin. (The bones of our foes will gleam under the sun.)

"*Lye nuquernuva sen e dagor.*" Endith echoed. (We will defeat them in battle.)

"*Lissenen ar' maska'lalaith tenna' lye omentuva.*" (Sweet water and light laughter until next we meet.) Tina spoke in fluent elfin, finishing the ritual they had begun many months ago at the end of each time they flew. Endith and For'mya had schooled her hard, at her request, to learn their language, and Tina was now one of a few hundred humans within the Union who could actually communicate in the elfin tongue with no difficulty in the least.

Anja was helping Belen to release the straps that held him in the seat with Sangria in his lap. She was conscious once more, her sea green eyes looking meekly at Anja. She knew she had almost gotten them killed, and she knew they were not happy with her. Anja didn't say anything at all, releasing the last clamp and then moving into the rear of the *STRIKER DT*. Sangria froze when she felt Belen lean forward, his arms tightening around her body and his hard chest pressing against her back. His lips moved up to her ear.

"Be thankful I am not my father." He spoke in barely a whisper. "He usually commands Anja's detail. For the danger you put her this day, he would have killed you already." Sangria listened intently, noting that there was no anger in his words now. "We have taken... we have taken you from the world you knew, and you are angry at this. I understand your reactions. What you must now do is tread very carefully when you walk Sangria. Try to think before you speak, and try to keep that moon sized chip on your shoulder from overruling your brain. You have made no friends this day."

"I don't want any friends!" Sangria hissed back softly, turning her head slightly. "They are only friends as long as they get something from you!"

Belen prodded her to stand up and then he followed her motion, turning her around to look at him. "She is your sister." He spoke. "You may deny it all you like, but you will soon see the proof of this. She risked much coming after you. As did the King, and I guarantee you, the one person in the entire Union you do not want angry at you is the King."

"I'm not afraid of some man!" Sangria spat softly.

Belen smiled gently, which surprised her. "And that is why I have not already killed you." He spoke honestly. "You have a strength within you that is admirable; just remember that your strength is also your greatest weakness right now."

"I'm stronger than she will ever be!" Sangria snapped quietly. "I'm not afraid of you, or some fool King! She probably wears the pants in their relationship anyway! I can deal with any man! Including you."

Belen's eyes narrowed. "Confidence is one thing woman. Stupidity is quite another matter. She has not presumed to know the life you have led; I would suggest you do not presume to know what life she has led. You might find that yours pales in comparison." Belen made a show of looking her up and down. "As for handling me...?" He chuckled. "Do not flatter yourself." He took her arm tightly. "Let us go now!"

For'mya waited until they had left the cockpit before looking at Endith as they began to climb from their seats.

"I have a feeling she is in for a big surprise." For'mya spoke.

Endith nodded as she stepped up to Tina, kissing her deeply, pressing her body up against Tina tightly. After a moment they pulled away and Endith looked at For'mya. "The question is... will she be able to handle it?"

For'mya nodded. "Yes. That is the question."

Sangria walked down the ramp next to Belen into the cavernous landing bay that was larger than anything she had ever seen in her life. She could see *TEMPTTEST* Interceptors and *DEVASTATOR* Heavy

Fighters scattered about the bay, to include numerous *STRIKER ATs*. Hundreds of technicians and ground crew were moving back and forth among the ships and doing whatever it was they did. Her eyes sought out and found Anja embracing the raven haired young woman tightly, the enormous black dragon behind her, standing beside the azure blue dragon. Anja's green scaled monster walked up to the other two dragons and he butted heads with the black one while the smaller bluish dragon looked on. Belen pulled her towards the group and came up next to Seanna at the tail end of the conversation they were having.

"...very upset with you for being so reckless." Aricia told Anja, still holding her hands tightly. "You and Seanna. And then you got Miath involved?"

Anja let out a small laugh and to Sangria's surprise kissed the raven haired woman full on the lips. A kiss the woman didn't draw away from, but actually seemed to relish. "It needed to be done! They had us pinned down." Anja said after pulling away slowly. "Marty would understand the tactic."

"Understand, yes!" The deep voice boomed. "Approve of, no!"

Anja's body suddenly shot upwards in the grip of some unseen force. Sangria's eyes darted back and forth for some attacker, her mind registering the fact that no one else was moving and they had smiles on their faces. She noticed the golden haired female elf step up next to the raven haired Lycavorian woman and she watched as they shared an even steamier kiss than Anja and the woman had.

"Marty put me down!" Anja's voice carried to her from above. "You know I hate when you do this just because you can!"

"Then you know I don't like you taking foolish risks!" The deep voice echoed.

"We needed a way to break out and Miath and I gave us one!" Anja snapped, crossing her arms over her ample chest, a stern look on her face as she was suspended ten meters in the air. "You would have done the same damn thing!"

Aricia laughed now. "She has a point Beloved." She said loudly.

Sangria blinked quickly three times as she watched the large Lycavorian male break from the group of technicians who had been surrounding him. His black hair was the color of night, and even from this distance she could see the yellow/gold eyes and the brightness of them. He looked like he had been sculpted from rock; his body muscled and ripped in a way Sangria had never seen. He walked up to the group and stopped only a meter from her, his yellow/gold eyes never leaving Anja's suspended figure above them. The dark gray and black uniform, with added body armor covering every exposed portion of his skin except for the joints, conformed to his body like a glove. He was over two meters tall, Sangria estimated, though not as tall as the black Spartan Danny. The crimson cape that the raven haired female also wore billowed behind him in the slight breeze from the air circulators.

Sangria watched as Anja lowered from above until she was directly in front of him. Her sea green eyes grew wide when she saw Anja's eyes change quickly, and wolf fangs burst from her gums and she glared at him. No one could help but smile at the situation.

Martin stepped right up to Anja and stared into her eyes unafraid and un-intimidated by her glare as he held her there.

Anja stared right back, but as always, she couldn't stare into those yellow/gold eyes for very long without feeling the love that pulsed from his aura for her, surrounding her with warmth and delicious sensations. Her eyes changed back first, and then her fangs receded until finally she was staring at him with love and desire in her jade green eyes.

"It's nice to know I'm so well thought of." She spoke finally.

Martin smiled as he released his TK hold on her, but not before pulling her body close to his. Anja's arms went around his neck as he pulled her close.

"That was damn impressive." He said softly.

Anja's eyes twinkled. "I thought you might like that." She said.

Sangria watched as the big Lycavorian male covered Anja's lips with his and they shared an incredibly passionate kiss right there on the flight deck with hundreds of men and women milling about. She had to admit to herself, whoever this Lycavorian was, he was surely impressive. She watched as he nuzzled Anja's throat after breaking their kiss, and her eyes practically rolled up into her head as she sighed heavily in delight, clutching tightly to his shoulders as he lowered her gently to the deck. She watched Anja take a couple of deep breaths and then open her eyes again.

“Are we backing across the border Martin?” She asked quickly.

Martin nodded. “Already done.” He answered. “We’re on course for Apo Prime and should get there in a couple of days.”

“No one...”

Martin shook his head. “We made a clean getaway.” He said. “Relax Firecracker, we’re good. You did a heck of a job there. All of you did. Especially that big black bastard.”

Sangria heard the laughter from behind them and turned to see the Spartan Danny standing with his two mates.

“Just make sure you remember that!” Dan spoke up, causing Anuk and Nayeca both to elbow him in the ribs.

Sangria watched as the raven haired female stepped up to the big Lycavorian, the elf pilot holding her waist. His eyes had returned to their normal dark brown now, his fangs gone, and those eyes settled on her.

Anja had her arm around his waist as Belen moved forward a few steps and then suddenly Sangria was right in front of him. “Martin... this is Sivana.” Anja spoke softly.

Martin stared at her for a long moment, so long that Sangria thought for sure he was undressing her right down to her soul. “So this is the lady we’ve been chasing for almost a year huh?”

“My name... my name is Sangria.” She stammered.

Martin tilted his head slightly as he looked at her. “Belen?”

“Milord King?”

“Sangria is to be afforded every comfort. There is a guest stateroom waiting for her on deck twelve.” Martin spoke. “The ship’s tailor can make her some new clothes if she prefers. Help her to get settled in and then bring her to the forward lounge for dinner tonight.”

Belen nodded quickly. “As you order sire.”

“So I’m a prisoner again?” Sangria asked. “Just now I’m your prisoner? The King’s prisoner? I feel so special.”

Anja exhaled heavily and rolled her eyes.

Martin’s eyes narrowed and he stepped forward quickly, Aricia and Anja’s arms falling away from around his waist. Sangria attempted to back up but Belen’s body stopped her and she had no choice but to look up into those dark unreadable eyes.

“If you were anyone else, you would be dead for the danger you put my mates and my friends in.” Martin growled. “I can arrange for a cell in the brig to be made available for you with no trouble, but I thought I might try showing you that we are not your enemies.”

“You haven’t done a real convincing job so far.” Sangria stated flatly.

Martin chuckled. “I’ll give you this... you got guts. Anja?”

“Belen if you would please escort her to the Medical Bay. I’ll be along shortly to do a complete examine.” Anja spoke.

“I don’t need an exam!” Sangria snapped.

“Perhaps... but you will get one regardless.” Anja stated calmly. “Whether you want one or not.”

Belen shook his head as he gripped Sangria’s arm tighter and began ushering her out of the landing bay before she could say anything else.

Martin turned to look at Anja fully and she shook her head. “I’m sorry Martin.” She spoke softly.

“You have nothing to be sorry for Anja.” Aricia spoke quickly reaching out to take her hand. “Nothing.”

Martin moved up next to her and brought his hand up to caress her cheek. “Never apologize to me Anja. For anything.” He said softly. “And Aricia is right. You have nothing to be sorry for.”

Anja met his eyes. “Ever since... ever since I found out I had a sister... the more information we got about her, the more I felt responsible for her Martin. What if she had been born first and not me. She would have met you... not me. I truly don’t know if I could have lived the life she has lived and survived.”

Martin shook his head slowly and took her face in his hands, drawing his thumbs across her cheeks. “No... do not question yourself Anja, or the path that brought you to this point. I won’t let you. There are no ‘what ifs’ in our world now. Only the decisions we have made to this point. Do not second guess yourself or what you have done. She is strong, but you are stronger, and now she will need you the most. Bite your tongue if you have to Firecracker, I know you hate arrogant and rude people, but she is your sister.”

“And her attitude pisses me off!” Anja growled.

“She has known only one thing her entire life.” Aricia said gently. “To be taken out of that and thrust into our world, where things are so different, it is a massive change.”

“But we need the information from her on how to find Lisisa.” Anja said looking at him.

Martin nodded. “Yes we do. She’ll give it to us... but I will not resort to measures that make us no better than those who took Lisisa from me in the first place.”

“Nor will I.” Yuriko spoke coming forward to stand next to the man she considered her father. “She is my sister... I love her Anja... but father is right. We can not become like those we fight. If we do... all will be lost. I believe she wants to tell us everything we want to know, but I sense she is also very frightened right now. The toughness may be partly an act to keep from allowing others too close. It is a condition I know well. She needs time. She is the link we have sought for so long, and we have kept her from falling into Coven Hands. That is the most important thing right now.”

Anja turned back to Martin and saw him smile. “Go on. Give her a medical exam and then bring her to dinner if she chooses to come.”

Anja smiled and kissed him quickly before moving to follow Belen and Sangria out of the landing bay.

ELEAR

ELF HOME WORLD

CAPITAL CITY OF AETIA

The Royal Palace on Elear was not as extravagant or old as main palace on Apo Prime. It was more like their island home really; comfortable and peaceful. A small stream ran through the property, the four story structure filled with large hallways and rooms. Most of them were never used, as everyone knew whenever the King, Dysea, or Aricia came to Elear, they all slept in the same room. Many people knew that there would soon be more than just Androcles running through the halls as well. Those close to the King and Royal family knew that Anja was only two weeks from full phase, and Dysea was only two months from phase herself. Many among the palace staff were excited, hoping that soon their own Elfin Queen would be carrying a child.

Things were much slower paced on Elear, due mainly to the calm nature of the elves themselves. Dysea only enhanced that nature when it was realized she was no different from them in any way. Dysea’s ancestors may have been genetically created, but she was born from a mother and father, and the calm, cool nature of the elves poured from her in waves, putting almost everyone she came across at ease immediately. Isabella had become a welcome fixture at the palace, never far from Dysea’s side, and now Iriral occupied a small portion of the palace all to herself. A special pen had been constructed for her on the top of the palace so that she could come and go as she pleased, and it wasn’t uncommon to see her leap into the sky from the streets and markets all around the palace grounds.

Dysea walked now among the flower gardens surrounding the palace, the Elf High Minister Alocgeid and Delegation Leader L’tian on either side of her. Iriral watched them as they walked, never trusting anyone but Isabella to be alone with her Bonded Mate without her watchful gaze. L’tian and Dysea had come a long way from that day on Martin’s ship over a year ago. In L’tian, Dysea had found a voice of reason and great intelligence, and a man she trusted completely, and who would also give her straight forward answers to any of her questions. Alocgeid had taken some time to get used to Dysea’s easy going and benevolent persona, and at the way she could, at the flip of a switch inside her, become the wolf that Martin Leonidas had turned her into with his bite. A day that Dysea would cherish until she died.

“...So what have we learned about this secret elf society since I last spoke with you gentlemen?” Dysea asked. “And you both should know by now to hold nothing back from me.”

Dysea wore a simple white jumpsuit that caused her platinum colored hair to stand out even more. Her skin was deeply tanned; her emerald green eyes the talk of many young male elves in the cafés and markets around the palace. She and Isabella were the tallest of Martin’s Queens, both of them standing close to five foot eight, with Bella being just slightly over that height. The jumpsuit also did little to hide the shapely and muscular figure Dysea had. She had long legs, slim and firm, an incredibly shaped ass, a slim waist, and high full breasts. She was not afraid to wear clothes that highlighted her figure, and even now many of the younger

elf females were discarding their own centuries old inhibitions and dressing more like the elves that lived on Earth.

“It is still mainly rumors My Queen.” Alocgeid spoke.

“You seemed concerned because of the significance of these scrolls Alocgeid. And you would not have brought it to my attention or requested my presence unless you thought it was important.” Dysea spoke looking at him. “Bella tends to agree with you in that, why steal ancient scrolls unless they were to be used for something? What was on these scrolls?”

“They were ancient incantations used by our people thousands of years ago.” L’tian answered. “They are said to be able to raise the dead.”

Dysea looked at him. “Raise the dead?” She asked. “You are joking aren’t you?”

L’tian smiled. “No one believed them to be useful, but they were part of the ancient texts, so they were committed into the temple with the other scrolls.”

“And none of the other scrolls were taken?” Dysea asked.

Alocgeid shook his head. “Just those three.” He answered. “That is what concerns me. Whoever initiated the crime did so for a reason, and that was to build on these rumors of a secret society that claims to be founded from the First Elfin King.”

Dysea looked at him. “The first Elfin King?”

Alocgeid nodded. “It is only a myth really. The first Elfin King, Artre, was said to have led our people to a utopia of sorts. No war... no poverty... some people even believe he took them to immortal life on a far away planet. This pilgrimage event supposedly took place dozens of millennia ago.”

“I thought our people have always lived on Elear.” Dysea said. “The only other place that elves truly call home is Earth. At least that is what I was led to believe.”

L’tian nodded. “We have always lived on Elear... all of our scrolls and texts tell us this, but there are some who believe this First Elfin King left this world in search of something better. It is all rumor and legend, nothing substantial in the least Dysea. Yet there are those who believe this, primarily a small holy order that denies taking the scrolls and lives in the southern region.”

“Have they been questioned?” Dysea asked.

L’tian nodded. “As I said, they deny taking the scrolls, but one of the villages that has many of their followers is within a hundred kilometers of the temple, and they do have their own militia so to speak.”

“Militia?” Dysea asked.

“They have soldiers among their number.” Alocgeid spoke now. “And those soldiers have trained others.”

“The temple was on the northern continent, and this order is in the southern region?” Dysea spoke. “How large is this Order?” She asked finally.

“At last count several hundred strong.” L’tian replied. “Up until now... we have never felt the need to bring any type of scrutiny on them. They have always been peaceful, and have never tried to force their views on others.”

“They have started this now?” Dysea asked as she stopped walking and looked at them. “Have they started this now?” She demanded again.

L’tian nodded. “In a manner of speaking.”

“L’tian what exactly does in a manner of speaking mean?” Dysea snapped. “Either they have or they have not. Which is it?”

“There have been three confrontations in the past year at gatherings in Wainn. It is the largest city in the south and many of our old customs are still practiced in some of the outlying villages.” Alocgeid answered. “The followers of this Order have made accusations... comments in regards to you and your relationship with Isabella and also the type of government the King presides over.”

“Type of government?” Dysea said. “It is the same government that has been in place for three thousand years, and they are just now starting to complain about it? As for my relationship with Bella, that will not change in the least no matter what some religious group thinks or says.”

“The members of this order supposedly preach peace and unity.” L’tian spoke. “The three confrontations ended up with fourteen injured elves, none of them from this Order. All the civilian men and women, who were

at the gatherings, were there only to worship in their own way. As you know we do not have an established religion. When they refused to listen to the representatives of this Order they were beaten.”

“So what you basically are telling me is we have a cult group in the south that is starting to make waves about their so-called religion.” Dysea said.

Alocgeid nodded. “It would appear so... but the theft of the scrolls is somewhat more troubling since it indicates a wider network. Something this order is not supposed to have.”

Realization hit Dysea then. “You believe an outside influence is injecting itself onto Elear?”

“I believe there is an outside chance.” Alocgeid answered. “That is why L’tian and I have maintained that it is some sort of conspiracy or secret society. It tells the truth but also leaves open all of our options.”

“Why didn’t you bring this to Nauta Melme’s attention?” Dysea asked sternly, looking first to Alocgeid and then to L’tian. “Either of you?”

“Bring what to his attention my Queen?” Alocgeid asked. “We have nothing to present to him but rumor and innuendo as you yourself have said.”

L’tian chuckled now. “And as For’mya and you have stated in the past, King Leonidas has a tendency to be rather over protective at times, especially to those people and things he cares a great deal for. You are Queen of the Elves, and we decided it was better if we brought this to you first. You and Isabella have a way of keeping the King reigned in so to speak.”

Dysea smiled at his words and nodded her head in agreement. “I see your point in regards to that.” She said. “But you must know that I will tell Nauta Melme everything you have told me.”

Alocgeid nodded. “Oh we know that Milady.” He said. “You however can keep him from coming here with a division of Spartans and destroying this so-called religious order before we are able to learn anything. He is still learning the intricacies of politics my Queen, and more often than not, he will react with his instinct before anything else.”

Dysea smiled. “This is true.” She said. “Very well. Bella is finishing up purchasing what we need and then we will go to the temple first. It has been closed since the theft correct?”

“Yes.”

Dysea nodded. “From there we will go to Wainn and see if we can determine what is happening.”

Alocgeid nodded. “L’tian and I will make the proper arrangements for a visit by the Queens so it does not look out of place.”

“Irral and I are going to visit Arzoal this afternoon and I will contact Nauta Melme tonight.” Dysea spoke. “In the meantime whatever information you are able to gather on any member of this order, get it and have it delivered here before day’s end.”

“We’ll get it to you by mid-day my Queen.” L’tian spoke.

Dysea nodded to them as they bowed and headed for the path that would take them out of the palace grounds. She waited for a moment and then looked up to see Irral’s light gray scales block out the sunlight for an instant until she landed lightly beside her despite her enormous size.

What do you think?

I think a conversation with the Elder Mother is better than sitting here. Irral spoke in reply. *With respects to the High Minister and Ambassador L’tian, she has had more experience in dealing with situations like this having lived on Enurrua for so long.*

Dysea nodded thoughtfully. *I agree. We should take Miai with us since Lexi is with Bella.*

Irral nodded. *Her memory skills are fascinating Dysea.*

Dysea nodded as she stepped up to her and vaulted into the saddle easily. Her *Nehtes* was her only weapon aside from her Shi Viska. When it came to unarmed combat skill, Dysea was widely considered second to only Martin and Aricia now. Aricia had improved to the point of being able to hold her own against Martin longer than anyone, and that was due to the deepness of the bond she now shared with him. Dysea and Anja were not far behind them, and Isabella was considered in a class all her own because of her vampire blood and being able to blend all of those skills together so fluidly. She had trained Dysea as much as she was able, but being vampire allowed Bella to blend into the shadows like a phantom and simply disappear. That combined with her speed and natural vampire strength made her an opponent that most did not want to test.

Dysea turned to yell for Miai and stopped when she saw the young Lycavorian aide waiting by the wide double doors. Her strawberry blond hair had grown in the last year, and she looked far wiser than when she had

discovered the man she was sleeping with was actually a clone and an agent for the Coven. Dysea had taken her on as the primary aide for both her and Isabella and the young girl was a godsend. Her photographic memory alone was unequalled, as were her organizational skills. She was a beautiful young woman, with the type of full bodied curves that would turn the heads of any male Spartan, but since that day a year ago, Miai had shown no interest in having another relationship, especially not with a man. Four had shown an interest in her while she finished her studies at the University, three of which Gorgo had quickly sent packing, as she too had taken the young girl under her protective wing. The fourth had been more persistent, and it had taken a late night visit by Isabella to convince him that Miai was not interested in him at the time and he should look in other directions. He had wisely taken the advice. It wasn't wise to disregard advice from Isabella, especially when she was now a Queen.

"You have your pad Miai?" Dysea called.

"I always have my pad Milady." She called back.

Dysea smiled. "Then come."

Miai darted over to where Iriral waited and climbed into the saddle in front of Dysea with no fear. She had flown on Iriral before, and she thought it was the most exciting thing she had ever done before.

"Iriral! Go!" Dysea barked out and with a powerful lunge of her hind legs Iriral reached into Elear's cloudless blue sky. *Bella?*

Yes ussta She-Elf? Isabella answered immediately.

We are going to speak with Arzoal Bella. I will fill you in on what we discussed when we return. I will see you back at the palace for dinner Nya Féa. Dysea Mindvoiced to her. (My Soul)

We will be a few more hours, but I look forward to tonight. Isabella answered.

Of course you do Bella. You are desert!

Of course you do Bella. You are desert!

Isabella looked towards the palace with a smile and her vampire eyes could just make out Iriral taking flight. Isabella felt warmth spread through her at Dysea's words, and the almost musical tone of her voice sent shivers rippling through her. And once more Isabella could not help but look back on the life she now had, compared to a year ago. Dysea was the strongest and most compassionate woman Isabella had ever met. In some ways Dysea reminded her of her own mother. She could be the most compassionate individual you ever encountered, but cross her once and she would rip out your heart.

Once Isabella surrendered to the desire of wanting Dysea in her bed, she thought for sure the she-elf would not be up to the task, but Dysea had surprised her time and again. Not only did her blood taste sweeter than any she had ever tasted, Dysea could make Isabella squirm in unabashed delight just by using her fingers. And when her lips and tongue descended to her flesh, Isabella knew then what rapture felt like. How many times had Dysea left her shivering in post orgasmic bliss? The times were too numerous to count, and Isabella had found herself craving a taste for not only Dysea's blood, but her passion as well, as sweet and inviting as it was. The pleasure they had shared was unequalled in Isabella's eyes; all the relationships she had had before Dysea were now nothing but very distant memories. Dysea had explored every centimeter of her body with exquisite detail, and Isabella had happily done the same in return. Dysea was the only woman to have shared her bed up until a week ago, and while that night with Anja and Aricia had been glorious, especially the length of Anja's incredible tongue, Dysea was still the only one who could stir the emotions within her that she did.

Isabella now looked forward to the night she knew was coming. The night where she would willingly wrap her arms around Martin Leonidas and give herself to him completely. The night where she would truly and completely become part of a family.

Isabella's eyes dropped back to the street when she sensed it.

The days on Elear were cloudless and bright for the most part, and during the summer months, as it was now, the heat could sometimes grow unbearable. Many of its citizens had taken to wearing long thin cloaks and cowls to hide from the sun while they went about their business in the markets. Isabella and Lexi were no different, and both wore the long tan cloaks. Isabella's hood was up over her black hair, hiding her face. She was well known now among the elves of Elear, known as the Queen's lover and dearest friend and confidant. Dysea made no attempt to hide her feelings for Isabella, even within the many markets, always holding her hand

and pressing close to her to share a kiss of affection. Isabella hadn't been comfortable at first with these displays of affection, but now she relished them.

Isabella swept her eyes over the crowds without moving her head, all of her combat senses triggering at the same time. She was being watched by unfriendly eyes. Being the well trained Spartan that she was, Lexi detected the tiniest change in Isabella's heart, and she turned slowly, making a show of looking at the long blankets she held in her arms. She didn't even look at Isabella, passing her eyes over her as if she was looking at something else, but that fraction of a moment told her all she needed to know.

"Bella." Lexi spoke softly so that only Isabella could hear her as she turned and made a show of holding out the blankets to Isabella.

"We are being watched." Isabella answered just as softly as she began lifting the edges of the blankets and inspecting them. "They are not friendly, and I believe them to be mercenaries of some sort."

Lexi kept her face neutral and nodded as if Isabella asked her something. "Numbers?"

"At least two, but there could be a vampire or two wrapped in the shadows directing them." Bella answered. "Are you trained enough to detect the beats of odd hearts Lexi?"

"Only within a few meters." Lexi answered. "Once I became Dysea's Captain, I did not pursue the training further. I will correct that when we return to Apo Prime."

Bella nodded. "I believe I will join you, for my skills in detection have diminished as well it seems. I should have detected them the moment they entered the square, but I did not, which means they are either very old or very well trained, or both."

"Should I activate the beacon?" Lexi asked. "You and I can take two mercenary scums Bella."

"You and I can yes, but I am more concerned for the innocents that may be hurt." Isabella spoke. "And if there are vampires wrapped in the shadows, they might intervene."

Lexi flipped one of the blankets over to inspect the back side. "I truly hate that skill your people have." She spoke.

Isabella looked at her and couldn't help the slight lifting of the corner of her lips at the humor Lexi was trying to impose. It only served to show her just how accepted she truly was. "We should begin to move to the edge of the market. Less innocents if we need to engage in a fight."

"Do we call Dysea?" Lexi asked.

"She is on her way to see Arzoal." Isabella answered. Her eyes narrowed and she nodded. "The two I sense do indeed intend to attack. We should move quickly, and once near the edge of the market the elf security will know how to handle any that may try to intercede on their friend's behalf. I am going to wrap myself in the shadows and see if I can detect any others. I will meet you in the market square Lexi. Stop for nothing and remember; if there are purebloods in the market and they attack, they will be faster than you. Use you reflexes and power to fight them."

Lexi nodded. "Ready?"

Isabella nodded. "Indeed!"

Lexi broke away from Isabella in a heartbeat, and moved with wolf quickness through the crowd. Isabella spun away from her at the same time, wrapping the shadows of the stand they were next to around her like a blanket, and effectively disappearing from sight. It was a skill all vampires had, and the older and more powerful they were, the better this skill was. It was almost as if they could bend the light within the shadows to hide their bodies and make themselves appear like nothing more than wisps of black smoke. It was easy to manipulate the vision of most races with quick movements and slight of hand, and though many had tried this skill, only vampires could actually make it work to perfection. Isabella was nearly two thousand years old, and of all her skills, this is the one she had used more than any other. As she stood against the wall of the stand, the woman proprietor suddenly wondering where her customers were, Isabella let her cobalt blue eyes scan the area around where she was.

The shadows were plentiful, considering the number of market stands and the small distances between them, and Isabella detected the three vampires almost immediately due to the white veins against their black bodies. They were standing between two stands across the large courtyard. The youngish looking vampire standing between the two older ones who were obviously assassins. None of them were close to her age or skill or they would have detected her by now, and Isabella simply watched them for a moment. The two older assassins were stoic and very professional, the younger man between them looking confident yet still a little

frightened. She watched as they began to move to follow their hired thugs, and Isabella decided it was time to join Lexi. She had the information she needed now, and she needed to help Lexi in case these three decided to attack as well. Keeping the shadows wrapped around her, Isabella blurred in motion to follow Lexi.

Lexi reached the edge of the market center and slowed to a sedate walk as the crowds had thinned considerably. She casually dropped her hand down and removed her Nehtes from her thigh and slowed even more as she saw the two hunters who had followed her slow as well. She had never seen their species before, but they moved confidently and with practiced ease, and they were heading right for her.

“Kochab Bounty Hunters.” Bella’s voice echoed from behind her. Lexi didn’t turn as Isabella appeared next to her. She had gotten over the shock and surprise at her speed and ability to appear from anywhere long ago. She had however on many occasions thanked the gods of Sparta that Isabella was on their side. “There are three vampires following us as well, but I don’t believe they will expose themselves. They have wrapped the shadows around them tightly. They are going to see if these Bounty Hunters can match us.”

Lexi nodded as her dark blue eyes followed the two lizard looking men. At least she thought they were men. “Anything I should know about these two? I’ve never seen their kind before.”

Isabella stood next to her, casually sliding her dual knives out of her sleeves and into her palms. “They are anatomically like humans. They have two hearts however, and if you use a chest thrust, make sure you hit them twice. They are fast, but not as fast as you or I. Martin Leonidas has showed you how to use your ability to shift as a tool of attack?”

Lexi nodded. “He showed all of us, to include Mjolnir’s Hand.” Lexi replied. It was a skill that Martin had developed and was now being implemented throughout training across the Union. They would use their ability to shift as a speed increaser, leaping at an enemy in wolf form, and shifting just before they struck, using a small knife imbedded in the Shi Viska harnesses.

“I will take the one on the right. The one on the left I will leave to you.” Isabella spoke. “I have already signaled Elfin Security and they have deployed, but these two we must take down. Just beneath their jaw line is the thinnest portion of their skin Lexi. Aim there. Do not let them fire their weapons Lexi, as they are scatter weapons and will injure many innocent civilians.”

Lexi nodded slowly as she replaced her Nehtes in the thigh holster. “I’m ready.”

“Now!” Isabella barked and she blurred in motion.

The Kochab Bounty Hunters were skilled and well trained, but neither of them had gone up against a vampire of Isabella’s age and skill. As their weapons came up in defense, Isabella’s form flashed past the Kochab Hunter on the right. There was a glint of metal and a gurgling sound and then a fountain of purplish blood erupted from the Bounty Hunter’s throat as his hands dropped his rifle and reached for the gaping wound in his thick neck that began just below his jaw.

The second Bounty Hunter saw the flash of yellow/gold light as Lexi shifted to wolf form and leaped at him. His fanged grinned announced victory as he tracked her with his weapon, until three seconds later another yellow/gold flash announced her returning to human form, her left arm already completing the lethal swipe. The Bounty Hunter felt a moment of searing pain and then his blood began spitting from the now gaping wound in his neck.

Lexi and Isabella stepped together back to back, her Shi Viska now flaring into life, and her hand bringing the extended Nehtes up in a defensive posture as the screams of frightened civilians running for cover spread across the market. Isabella held her twin knives, one blade folded back against her forearm and crossing her chest, the other extended out and down low to her hip.

“Nicely done!” Isabella spoke quickly. “Excellent form!”

“The loose dirt threw me off at the last second.” Lexi replied, her eyes sweeping the area around them. “Can you detect them?”

“No.” Isabella answered. “It was a test. My test.”

“What... what do you mean?” Lexi asked.

“They are hunting me.” Isabella answered calmly as the elfin security troops began arriving in the square. “Someone within the High Coven has issued a Kill Order on me. And if they are hunting me, it stands to reason they will be hunting Dysea. And that makes me very angry.”

“A Kill Order?” Lexi spoke. “That doesn’t sound like a good thing.”

Isabella lowered her knives as she looked around one last time. “If they were here they are gone now.” She spoke turning to look at Lexi. “Contact the Admiral on *NORMYA’S LIGHT* Lexi. I want extra security on the palace and Ambassador L’tian as well as the High Elf Minister.”

“That’s it?” Lexi asked. “They tried to take us in broad daylight Bella?”

Isabella nodded. “Yes I know. I also know that once word of this attack gets out, Elf security will become very tight around everything. Mention nothing of vampires Lexi. That is something we need to discuss with Dysea and Martin first. Let us just say this is a random attack for now.”

Lexi looked at her. “Do we cancel our mission?”

Isabella shook her head. “On the contrary... if I know Dysea and Martin... this attack will only make them want to continue it more. They hit us for a reason... and we need to find out why. Have Marci join us for dinner tonight as well.”

Lexi smiled knowing why Isabella wanted that. She had trained with the vampire female for three months now, and in Lexi’s eyes, she was even deadlier than Isabella.

EARTH NEW MIAMI

Isra looked at the tall Drow General and could not help but be impressed. The sight of him and Aelnala descending out of the sky only moments before had not startled her in the least, even as the blond Spartan standing next to her had backpedaled quickly. Isra found himself liking her before she even began speaking and he motioned to Aelnala to look around the area as he moved up next to her.

“General Lynwe... it is a distinct honor.” Isra spoke holding out his hand.

Lynwe smiled and gripped the offered handshake. “I must say the same.” She replied, her amber eyes going to where Aelnala was moving slowly along the sand in the surf. “I... never in my wildest dreams did I ever expect to see a real dragon.”

Isra laughed lightly. “We get that quite a bit.” He said.

Tell her I am honored to meet her Isra. Aelnala spoke looking up and settling her eyes on Lynwe.

“Her name is Aelnala... and she says she is honored to meet you.” Isra spoke. “Your exploits during the Battle for Earth are well known. Your holding actions against the High Coven were... well according to King Leonidas, and using his words, your actions saved his ass.”

Lynwe smiled and bowed her head slightly. “There were many others involved in that action, but without him, Earth would not be free.” Lynwe turned and looked at the two covered bodies in the sand. “We left them as they were discovered.”

Isra nodded and looked at the bodies. “Two males?”

Lynwe nodded and looked at Layna. “Layna has the details.”

Isra watched the young female Spartan step forward and bow her head. “It is an honor to meet a Section Leader of Mjolnir’s Hand Commander.” She spoke still somewhat in awe of this violet eyed Spartan who flew on a dragon.

Isra nodded. “I am still a Spartan like you Layna.” He spoke. “No more, no less. I just happen to ride a dragon. We are of the same rank as well, so my name is Isra please.”

Layna glanced at Lynwe quickly and saw her amber eyes twinkle, and then she smiled and held out the pad to Isra. “The wounds are identical to the first two victims. Precise thrusts through their chests, cleaving the heart and lungs. The words were carved into their flesh after they bled out.”

“No blood?” Isra asked taking the pad.

Lynwe shook her head. “It appears they are being killed elsewhere and then dumped here.”

“Has anyone reported them missing?” Isra asked.

“All of them are single.” Lynwe spoke. “The census records for New Miami are still being compiled, and some are not rushing to be registered. Layna and I have been here for two days and two nights now, and it appears there are many who survived the attacks that are not at all unhappy that Tarifa is being singled out.”

Isra looked at her. “How did they find out Tarifa was involved?”

“The bodies are discovered by civilians walking the beach Isra.” Layna spoke. “They have the opportunity to see the phrases before security elements arrive.”

“Who has found the bodies?”

“A couple found the first body.” Lynwe answered. “A fisherman found the second, and then this morning these bodies were found by someone out running their dog on the beach.”

“Elves or human?” Isra asked.

Lynwe met his eyes. “All of them were human.” She answered slowly.

“What is the ratio of human to elf in this area?” Isra asked.

“Before Tarifa destroyed most of the city, it was almost all human. The only elves here were slaves.” Lynwe replied. “Now it is equally elf and human.”

Isra nodded. “I am no true investigator... but that seems to be rather convenient don’t you think? All the victims are elves, and they were all found by humans.”

“Couldn’t it just as easily be the work of elves?” Layna asked. “Playing devil’s advocate for a moment... family and friends of those who lost their lives here when Tarifa did attack.”

Lynwe nodded. “That is very possible too.” She spoke not taking offense in the least. “Records before the Battle for Earth will be spotty at best in regards to slaves they may have been in the city. We can trace some through their surnames... but to discover who exactly was here before...” She shook her head. “That would be impossible. I know from personal experience the Coven did not keep very good records on slaves within the cities. It is why Selene’s father and mother were so successful in...” Lynwe stopped talking, her amber eyes growing a little wider. “Of course!”

Layna looked at her. “General... what is it?”

“Selene’s parents, her father in particular. They kept meticulous records of requests for assistance in regards to escaping elves. They very well could have a list of hundreds of names of elves that were here in the city.”

Isra nodded. “See if you can obtain such a list.” Isra said. “Whoever the killer is... they are dumping the bodies here on the beach of New Miami to make a statement in regards to that attack. So let’s take that option away from them. Contact Eden City and Sparta and have them deploy enough Spartans to cover the entire beach front twenty kilometers north and twenty kilometers south of New Miami. These two came ashore without the bites of these jellyfish correct?”

Lynwe nodded. “They had to have been dumped into the ocean further north and then they washed ashore when the tide came in.”

“Perhaps they decided to begin dumping the bodies further from their lair.” Isra spoke. “This place you wanted to visit... you said it was an old vampire school?”

Lynwe nodded. “The King destroyed it with a clean suitcase nuclear weapon. I have had two flyovers done, and they detected heat signatures, but no signs of movement. It is also less than fifty miles from where the first two bodies were dumped, and they had to have known the currents for the area to know the bodies would have come ashore where they did.”

“When my ship returns we will take it to this place.” Isra spoke. “We should...”

Isra? Aelnala’s voice interrupted him and he turned to look at where she was looking closely at the sand twenty meters away.

What is it?

Isra... look at this.

Isra handed the pad back to Layna and moved toward Aelnala without hesitation. Her voice in his head held surprise and suspicion, two things he had never heard from her in such a way. *What is it Aelnala? What’s wrong?*

Here Isra. What do you see?

Sand.

Beneath the sand my Dragon Brother.

Isra looked at where her snout was and he bent over close to her head, reaching into the sand. He felt something scaly and soft just under the surface and wrapped his fingers around it, pulling it up from the under the sand as Lynwe and Layna squatted next to him. They watched as his violet eyes looked at the hooked object and then turn to look at his dragon.

Is this what I think it is? He asked.

Aelnala nodded her large head slowly. *It is.*

“Commander... what are we looking at?” Lynwe asked as her amber eyes gazed at the scaly hooked object between his fingers.

Isra turned to her. “What we are looking at has just altered the very essence of this investigation.” He answered. “This is the molted skin of a dragon’s talon Lynwe.”

A Firespitter it looks like. Aelnala spoke. Roughly the same size as me, if the molt shed is any indication. A female by the scent and thickness of the talon. A very old female, well... old in relation to me.

How old?

Aelnala blinked her honey colored eyes. *I’d say over three thousand years old at least, but it’s hard to tell because of the decay of the shed.*

Isra looked back at the molt in his hand, turning it over in his fingers. “How would the molted skin of a female Firespitter get to Earth?” He asked out loud.

“Are you saying... are you saying that a member of Mjolnir’s Hand is killing these people?” Layna asked stunned.

Isra shook his head. “That’s not possible. These murders began before King Leonidas ever released us to leave Apo Prime. No... this is something else. And we don’t know if there is a rider associated with this dragon. I must run some tests when my ship returns to be more certain. And then I must talk to the King.” Isra tapped the built in COM on his armor. “*Lochi* Commander Pretus?”

“I am here Commander Isra!” The male voice replied.

“Are you standing by at the airfield?” Isra asked.

“We are sir. Your ship is landing now.”

“The moment my ship lands, you will divide your *Lochi* and have a *Demi-phyle* board her and have the *Demiphylarch* tell Commander Lohana to return to my location with everyone aboard without delay. Is that understood?”

“Clearly sir.”

EDEN CITY

Lohana powered down the engines of her DT, and removed her helmet, setting it on the console. She reached over to a different console while turning her head to look back as Tareif got to his feet.

“My only intent was to protect my daughter!” He snapped.

Tarifa turned her sapphire eyes on him. The trip to Eden City had been quiet, neither Tarifa nor Aihola speaking with Tareif after his actions. Lohana knew Tarifa and Aihola were Mindvoicing back and forth as they had the same stony faces as Isra and Aelnala when they Mindvoiced.

“You had no right Papa!” Tarifa spoke, not getting out of her chair.

“I had every right!” Tareif barked. “What do you see in this man Tarifa? Aihola... he is nothing like Dekton.”

Aihola looked at him, her own eyes unhappy. “No he is not like Dekton.” Aihola spoke. “And that is why we are so drawn to him.”

“He forced himself on you Tarifa!” He snapped. “He... for all intents he raped you!”

Tarifa leaped to her feet, her beautiful face now drawn back in a snarl as her eyes changed and her wolf fangs burst forth as she faced her father. “Isra saved my life!” She screamed at him. “He did not rape me... he did not force me! I... if anything I forced him to take me!”

Tareif’s eyes went wide and he looked at her. “You expect me to believe that? Why are you protecting him?”

“Isra does not need protecting father!” Tarifa snapped. “Least of all from you! If he had not made me his mate I would be dead! Dead do you hear me! He gave me his clothes to wear! And he slept in another’s quarters until the last night on that ship when I gave myself to him. Dekton was dead Papa! He was never coming back! Dekton made me a full wolf papa, with the needs and desires of any female wolf! Isra... Isra is the most powerful Alpha male that I have ever met next to Martin. He drew me to him like a magnet! I gave myself to

him because I wanted too! Because I wanted him just as much as he wanted me! And it was glorious! He left us on Enurrua because he knew Nya Istel and I still struggled with our feelings over Dekton. We returned here after Martin told us the truth. We buried Dekton finally once and for all as our mate. We started our lives again. Isra is who we want! He is who we have always wanted, and if you have destroyed that for us I will never speak to you again! Ever!”

Aihola got to her feet slowly and came up beside Tarifa. “Nor will I. It is our decision to make Tareif, not yours. We loved Dekton too... but we have buried him and moved on. You have not. Do not force us to feel as you do, because you will only hurt yourself. Isra is our future. We have left the past behind... and we want our future to include Isra. We need our future to include him. I can only hope we can fix what you have so callously torn asunder in your misguided actions.”

Tareif stood there wide eyed and opened his mouth to speak when they heard the side hatch of the DT and not the ramp open. They watched as seven fully armed Spartans piled quickly into the ship, one of them making directly for the cockpit.

The helmeted Spartan ignored Tareif and looked directly at Lohana. “We are to return immediately to Commander Isra’s location.” He spoke.

“What?” Tareif bellowed.

The COM panel on Lohana’s console began to chime and she reached over quickly. “Go ahead Commander.” She spoke.

“Lohana has the *Demiphylarch* reported to you?” Isra’s voice filled the intercom.

“He’s here now!” She answered. “What is wrong?”

“The situation has changed.” Isra spoke. “Return to my location with Tarifa and Aihola immediately.”

Lohana nodded. “We’ll be airborne in twenty seconds.”

“We will not!” Tareif bellowed. “I will not allow this! You will not take my daughter from me again! We are getting off this ship right now!”

“*Demiphylarch!*” Isra snapped.

“Commander!”

“If War Master Tareif so much as makes a step toward removing Tarifa and Aihola from that ship, you will personally shoot him in the chest!” Isra barked. “Is that understood?”

Tareif froze when he felt the barrel of the P190 press against his chest. “Perfectly sir!”

Tarifa and Aihola were shocked into silence, and they watched for a moment as Lohana returned to her seat and began the pre-flight sequence.

“Isra?” Tarifa stammered finally. “Isra... what is going on? Why are you doing this?”

“This is kidnapping!” Tareif roared.

“I will explain when you return here.” Isra’s voice told them. “For now... let Lohana fly the ship please. I must contact the King.”

Tarifa and Aihola returned quickly to their chairs and began to buckle into the seats.

CHAPTER EIGHT

MJOLNIR’S HAND

“A Firespitter? Are you sure Isra?” Martin asked from the chair in his large office off the bridge of *MJOLNIR’S HAND*.

The stars filled the large view window, the desk against the wall with two couches across from it. The small credenza was pushed up against the opposite wall with several holoimages of Androcles and Aricia, as well as Anja, Dysea and Isabella resting on top of it. The wall was adorned with framed still pictures of Torma and Isheeni, as well as Arzoal and two photos of their island palace on Apo Prime. Martin had left the decorating to Aricia and his other Queens, having no desire to attempt something with which he had no taste.

Martin walked around the large, life sized holoimage of Isra and went to the dispenser where he entered the code for a large mug of coffee.

“Aelnala is certain sire.” Isra replied. “Judging by the molt of skin, she estimates the age at nearly three thousand years, and a size roughly as large, perhaps larger than her. Now that Lohana has returned with our *DT*, I’m having her run additional tests, but I trust Aelnala completely.”

Martin nodded. “As do I.” He answered. “And you believe this Spartan is riding the dragon?”

“It would explain why there have not been any indications of the killer dropping the bodies.” Isra spoke. “I have reviewed the sensor logs for the entire eastern seaboard, specifically the southern portion, and there is no sign of any sort of water craft or aircraft approaching the areas we have determined where the first bodies were dropped. I am having the locations further north checked for the second two bodies, but I expect to find the same thing. We, as Bonded Pairs, do not show up on any type of sensor scan sire, you know this, especially if we are under psychic shielding as we are when we fly.”

“And it would explain how the bodies were dumped without detection.” Martin said with a nod of agreement.

Isra nodded as well. “Sire... I have to ask... is it... is it possible that it is a member of *Mjolnir’s Hand*?”

Martin shook his head immediately. “Impossible. I didn’t authorize any of them to leave Apo Prime for this entire past year while we were training. You and Andreus would have detected anyone who did not appear for training. Arzoal, The Oracle and I thoroughly vetted those chosen Isra, you know that.”

Isra nodded. “I know sire but I had to ask. That question will most certainly come up from others here on Earth.”

“We are sure there is a rider?” Martin asked.

“It is too much of a coincidence Milord. To discover this so close to where two of the bodies were discovered? Aelnala agrees with me on that. We are going to move down the beach in the morning and search the first two areas tomorrow, and then we are going to inspect the old vampire school you destroy.” Isra answered.

“Tarifa and Aihola?” Martin asked.

Isra paused for a moment. “I will keep them with me Milord.” He answered finally. “Their home in Eden City is too exposed... and I... I feel better knowing they are closer to Aelnala and I, where we can protect them.”

“And this request you submitted early this morning? I received it from Deia an hour ago? What do I make of this?” Martin asked.

Isra looked up quickly. “You may ignore it sire. I will not leave my duty unfulfilled now. I may not be able to win their hearts back, but I will do what you sent me here to do. I am the only one... I am the only one they will listen too, as crazy as that sounds.”

Martin nodded with a smile. “Let it play out my brother.” Martin spoke. “I told you they were two of the most obstinate women I’ve ever met. And Tareif is a bear. He hits pretty hard for an elf doesn’t he?”

Isra smiled and rubbed his jaw line. “Yes... I’m finding that out.”

“You think there might be something worth investigating at this school? I thought the nuke destroyed all the structures?” Martin asked.

“It is possible. Over flights have detected heat signatures, and that is why we will search it tomorrow. There are some smaller structures that remain that were not near the epi-center of the blast you initiated. What I can’t determine about this dragon and its rider, is why come to the beach where the bodies would eventually land, once he had already dropped the bodies offshore for the currents and tide to take care of?” Isra said.

Martin leaned against the bulkhead of the ship, staring out at the stars. “One of two reasons.” He answered. “Either he is mocking us by being so bold, or he does not yet know you and Aelnala are on Earth.”

“Word has already spread to North America that we have arrived.” Isra spoke shaking his head.

“Yes... but had it gone out by the time the bodies were dropped last night?” Martin asked. “It would have had to spread by word of mouth, since the graduation ceremonies are not allowed to be recorded or transmitted. Have Jamerl check all outgoing transmissions from Sparta over the last two nights Isra. Record and review all of them. It’s a violation of privacy I know, but at this moment it is needed.”

Isra nodded. “I will inform him. Tarifa and Aihola will not like it.”

“Tough!” Martin snapped. “You tell them to contact me if they have a problem with that. And tell Lynwe to blanket Selene with security if she hasn’t already done so. I want triple the security on everyone of

importance, to include anyone in Tarifa's family. Hwia is the closest to family that Aihola has now, so cover her as well. Have Panos or Lander arrange it."

Isra nodded. "I will arrange that first thing in the morning."

"We'll be returning to Apo Prime by tomorrow mid day." Martin spoke. "I will contact Arzoal and have her come to Apo Prime so that we can talk about this. Did you ever hear of your father or brothers ever getting a Firespitter egg off Enurrua?"

Isra shook his head. "Not that was mentioned openly sire. The eggs were more valuable than the bones I understand, and if they were able to obtain a Firespitter egg, they never told anyone. The other question... how did a Spartan come to be riding this dragon? And how did this dragon get to Earth. Only someone highly skilled with the *Nehtes* could inflict the damage we have seen on the elves. Commander Layna concurs with me on that, the strikes are too precise and exact to be an amateur. And you know well the level of Mindvoice ability required to bond with a dragon deeply enough to allow such interaction."

Martin nodded. "I'll have Vistr and Vengal begin searching through records of all Spartans who either failed their last trial or were expelled near the end of their training. That would at least explain the level of training required for the *Nehtes*." Martin said. "Send me the names of the Spartans you have listed as potential suspects, but keep your surveillance very discrete. If they are bonded to a dragon, they will be able to detect anyone watching them if we are not careful."

Isra nodded. "I have already pulled back the surveillance on those individuals to a wider area. Our agents will not be detected; I have used the Drow after conferring with Lynwe and Hwia. She is..." Isra shook his head trying to find the word. "I would not want this Lynwe for an enemy Milord." He said finally.

Martin grinned. "Neither would I my friend, neither would I. You are learning quickly Isra, using the Drow in that manner." He said.

Isra smiled and he was silent for a moment before looking at his King in the transmission. "Martin... I..."

"Does your blood still burn for them Isra?" Martin asked him.

"Brighter now than it did a year ago Milord." Isra answered without hesitation.

"You are a Lycavorian Alpha male Isra and if you let Tareif get in your way, I will kick your *mida* when I see you again, especially if you let him stand between you and them. Their blood still burns for you Isra, which I'm pretty sure you can smell, don't let Tareif come between what all of you desire. I'll beat you silly if you do, and that will be *after* Aricia, Anja and Dysea stomp on you for letting them get away." Martin spoke. "Do you want me to speak with Tareif?"

Isra looked at him, his violet eyes sparkling even in the transmission, and he smiled. "No Milord... he is Tarifa's father, and he has become a surrogate father to Aihola. I will do what I must to win over their father, as is our way, but I have decided right now to not let him stop me from finding out if I am what they want. I will contact you after we have searched the ruins of this school tomorrow." He spoke.

"You and Aelnala stay alert for everything." Martin spoke.

Isra nodded. "We will."

Martin nodded as the transmission ended and he stood looking at the stars for a long moment before setting his coffee down and moving for the door. He was hungry and everyone was waiting in the forward lounge for him.

Sangria did not know what to make of everything so far, and the not knowing was driving her crazy more than anything else. She sat on the large comfortable couch and looked around the stateroom she was in. The Spartan Belen had escorted her here after leaving the medical center. Her 'sister' had definitely been thorough, subjecting her to a dozen different tests and giving her four injections. Sangria had endured it, allowing the injections because she knew they would do nothing to harm her if they wanted the information in her head. Anja had been correct in that Sangria had the ability to detect the level of healing power within Hadarians, and though she had run across a few in her travels in the Wild, Anja surpassed all of those few combined together.

Anja had tried to draw her into conversation several times, but each time Sangria had grown quiet and refused to be baited into talking. When the exam was finally over, Anja had looked disappointed and saddened,

and as she left the center she had glanced back over her shoulder to see Anja settle at the desk and drop her head into her hands, almost in tears. Belen had led her to this stateroom and told her there were clothes that should fit her and he would return in an hour to collect her to go to the lounge and eat. Once in the room alone, Sangria had set about trying to detect any listening or recording devices set up, and after twenty minutes of searching and discovering none, she gave up. Twice she had opened the door to her stateroom to see one guard, and each time he had simply asked if she was ready to go to the lounge to eat. She had gone to the computer console in the room and found that it was not locked out, and the only information she could not access was in regards to weapons and defenses among other things of that nature. She quickly copied a schematic of the ship onto a black pad and tucked that into her sleeve after studying the lay out of the landing bays and where they were. If she could get her hands on one of those *STRIKERs*, she could go anywhere she wanted in the universe, or sell the ship on the black market for a fortune. The *STRIKERs* were one of the most closely guarded secrets within the Union, mainly because they were programmed to self destruct if their pilots were captured or killed. She had no doubts she could bypass that little system and steal one easily.

Something nagged at her though. Something in the pit of her stomach told her these men and women were not going to hurt her. They weren't going to use her as everyone in her life had used her. Sangria had stopped trusting so many years ago, she no longer remembered what it felt like to trust someone else. And something told her that this Anja was her sister, and it screamed inside her chest for her to take that chance and discover if perhaps all of this was true. Could she leave behind the only life she had ever known, regardless of the pain it had caused her, and still caused her? Could she leave behind that...?

Pain.

Sangria lifted her right arm and looked at her hand. It didn't shake anymore. She quickly rolled up the sleeve of her shirt and the ugly eight inch scar that had glared back at her for more years than she could remember, was now nothing more than a faint white line that almost disappeared against the tan of her skin. The Kochab Bounty Hunter, who had given her that scar for not letting him stick his lizard cock in her ass, was now dead, but his blade had cut deep, and damaged some nerves in her arm that caused her hand to vibrate ever so slightly. That vibration was gone now, and she made a fist with her fingers, feeling the strength that had returned with the repairing of the nerves.

Anja had done this... ever so discretely... ever so normally, so casually in fact, that Sangria had not taken notice of it until now. The best doctors in the Wilds had told her she would always have that scar, and now it was all but gone, blending into the skin of her arm almost perfectly.

The chime from the door startled her and she jumped from the couch, reaching for where she normally wore her hand blaster. It was gone obviously, and this fact brought Sangria out of her moment of thoughtful reflection. They had taken her weapon, which meant they considered her a threat, which meant that she was still a prisoner no matter how they sugarcoated it.

She moved to the door and touched the panel, watching as it slid aside to reveal Belen. He was dressed in a new uniform, without the added body armor she noted, and she could now see even more of his muscular build. Yes... he was very pleasing to the eyes.

"I came to see if you would like to go to the lounge for dinner." Belen spoke. "Everyone has gathered and I was told to tell say you would be welcome."

"Everyone?" Sangria asked confused.

"The King. The Queens. Some of the officers and crew who are not on duty." Belen nodded. "Everyone."

"Wait... officers and crew?"

"You will find that King Leonidas does not stand for pompous displays of rank and power." Belen said. "He may be King, but he eats the same food as we do, his stateroom is larger, but no more comfortably furnished than yours. MJOLNIR'S HAND is a warship after all. And when Queen Anja or Queen Dysea is with him and Queen Aricia, they always eat together."

"He has more than one Queen?" Sangria asked shocked.

Belen nodded. "He has four Queens and the elf pilot who flew the STRIKER DT we were in, is his Bound Elf Concubine."

"Wow... he must strut around like a big man then." Sangria spoke thinking she was making a joke. Belen's eyes showed nothing but confusion.

“A big man? I don’t understand.”

“He gets to have five women whenever he wants.” Sangria stated. “Isn’t that a little arrogant in the scheme of things?”

“You think the love he shares with them is arrogance?” Belen stated.

“Love?” Sangria laughed. “How do you love five different women? They must hate each other.”

Belen’s eyes narrowed slightly. “Your time in the Wilds has blinded you to many things Sangria.” He spoke.

“No... it’s just given me a hard dose of reality.” Sangria replied. “Something you people don’t seem to have much of around here.”

Belen stared at her for a long moment before holding out the holster to her. “The King asked that I return this to you.” He spoke seeing Sangria stare at the hand blaster with wide eyes. “Your old weapon’s power cell was nearly depleted, not to mention it was an ancient design. This is one of the newest hand weapons our Armorer has developed. It is called a K19 Pulse Laser. The King likes to name things. He says it keeps him from becoming confused.” He finished with a small smile.

Sangria looked at him oddly. “I’m supposed to believe he’s letting me have a weapon?” She spoke.

“You will find everyone on this ship is armed in some fashion or the other.” Belen told her. “I have used one of these myself and they are quite efficient.”

“Why don’t you carry one then?” She asked.

Belen held up his left arm, his loose sleeve falling back to expose the bridle of the Shi Viska. “Why do I need too?”

Sangria took the weapon and looked at it briefly before buckling the holster around her waist and positioning the small hand weapon high on her hip where she usually wore her weapon. It fit snugly in just the right spot and she drew it quickly, spinning it in her hand several times. She nodded in approval. “It’s weighted perfectly.” She said looking at Belen. “Your Armorer must be very good to get that by just looking at me.”

Belen smiled. “I said our Armorer developed them. He didn’t make any modifications to that weapon. I did.” He motioned down the corridor. “They are waiting in the forward lounge, or would you prefer to eat alone in your quarters. It is your choice but I am hungry so please make it quickly.”

“You won’t eat with me?” Sangria asked quickly before she could stop herself.

Belen looked at her stunned but that look went away quickly. “You are the Queen’s sister. That would not be appropriate, I’m sorry.”

Sangria bit back the reply she wanted to make. “Where is this lounge?”

“One deck up and forward.” Belen answered.

“And the landing bays from here?” She asked.

Belen’s eyes narrowed again but he answered. “Deck eighteen. Seven decks down and aft of us.”

Sangria smiled. “So what’s on the menu?” She asked stepping into the corridor.

ELEAR DRAGON ISLAND

“So you have detected nothing unusual these past months?” Dysea asked.

She sat in the mammoth cavern that was now Arzoal’s home, her emerald eyes watching with a smile as dozens of dragon hatchlings attempted to fly in the training circles that older dragon trainers had them herded into. Dysea could just make out Iriral attempting to help as much as she could.

I’m sorry Dysea... but no. Arzoal’s voice replied and Dysea turned back to look at the largest dragon known to exist right now.

Arzoal’s reddish scales were bright, her flame colored eyes alert and intelligent. She was over twenty thousand years old, but no one knew exactly her age except her. Only three knew what had finally returned the dragons to their home world of Elear, and only three knew the secret that must never be revealed. Dysea was not one of them, and truth be told, she had no desire to know.

“Arzoal... you have far more years than I.” Dysea asked. “Is there anything that exists that could bring the dead back to life?”

The massive red scaled head tilted slightly and Arzoal lowered her bulk completely to the ground, inching her head closer to the elf Queen who was not only beautiful, but incredibly intelligent and intuitive.

We have spoken many times over this last year Dysea. Arzoal said gently. *Why do you choose now to not be direct?*

Dysea looked into those flame colored eyes. "I do not wish to ask you questions that you can not give me the answers to Arzoal."

That I can not answer, or that I may not answer. Arzoal spoke.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *The answers I seek, I believe only you can provide. I hesitate to ask them because they delve into a realm that only you, Nauta Melme and Alocgeid have ever discussed. A realm that I do not know if I wish to be part of for many reasons.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *So you have put together our secret have you?*

Dysea shook her head. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Not all of it no. There is a place inside his mind that not even Aricia can enter. It is guarded by shields I can not begin to describe. I have sensed this in Alocgeid as well, though his shields have been placed there, they are not natural as with you and Nauta Melme.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *You are the most intuitive of his Queens Dysea of the Earth elves, and you are a fine Queen of our people.*

Dysea looked at her, emerald green eyes going a little wider. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Then what I suspect is true?*

Arzoal nodded slowly. [Mindvoice Shielded] *It is. You... Alocgeid... all the elves... no matter where they call home, you are all descended from my kind. From Dragons. It is why Martin knew to bring us home here.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I will never breathe a word of this to anyone Arzoal.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *It will become common knowledge in the future, and I am no longer afraid for us. Martin has removed that fear I carried for so long. He removed it the day he came to Enurrua and freed my kind. When we grow too large for Elear... my kind will go out among the stars. They do not fear the future anymore, for they know they have a home to return too. That is what Martin Leonidas gave back to us. Our past.* Arzoal leaned closer and brushed her snout against Dysea's shoulder. *Now ask me your questions Dysea.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *There is a group in the Southern Region. A religious group. They are beginning to stir trouble among the places that our people go to worship. And there was a theft of Ancient Elfin Scrolls. Scrolls that supposedly detailed how to bring someone back from the dead.*

Arzoal chuckled. [Mindvoice Shielded] *We are as mystic as the elves Dysea, but even we know that is simply not possible.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *They say they are following the teachings of the first Elfin King. An Artre.* Dysea saw Arzoal's eyes go wide and her head drew back quickly. *Arzoal what is wrong?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *The name. You are sure it was Artre?*

Dysea nodded. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Alocgeid sounded rather certain, why? Do you know this name?*

Arzoal nodded her massive head slowly. [Mindvoice Shielded] *First tell me what you have heard.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Alocgeid and L'tian told me that this first Elfin King supposedly led a group of elves to a utopia of sorts. Even to immortality. This group has never caused a problem before, so we do not know what else they may believe, mainly because no one has looked into their organization.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *That is why you have returned to Elear?*

Dysea nodded. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Alocgeid and L'tian both thought it would be better if I came as opposed to Nauta Melme. He is not known for his forgiving manner when it comes to danger to those he loves and holds dear.*

Arzoal nodded once more. [Mindvoice Shielded] *And it is well known he holds my kind and the elves very close to his heart.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Yes he does.* Dysea agreed.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *You must tread carefully Dysea. You and Isabella both.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Who is this Artre Arzoal?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Legend has it that he was among the first who evolved into elf form. It happened on the far side of the planet from where I was, so I never saw any evidence for myself. Only whispered rumors and such. He is said to have had a following of several hundred who also evolved.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *So it is true?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *He was never a King Dysea my child. Even as a dragon he was evil incarnate. Cruel and abusive. Always seeking more than he could have. When it was revealed he had departed Elear with those who followed him, his name was expunged from our mind records. Only the Elders retained that knowledge. When I became an Elder it passed to me, just before those of us who were still dragon were chased from Elear and settled on Enurrua.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *So you have no idea where he may have gone?*

Arzoal shook her head. [Mindvoice Shielded] *No... but he preached hate and violence. And if this group is formed from those who worship him, they must be dealt with quickly.*

Dysea got to her feet slowly. [Mindvoice Shielded] *May I contact you if I have any questions about what we might discover?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Child... you should know you need not ask that question. You and Isabella are powerful together Dysea. Your love for her dwarfs all but your love for the King. As does her love for you. Let that be your strength, but do not rely on it completely. When the time comes, and you will know when it does, reach out to your Nauta Melme. You are one of his Queens, and you should have no doubts about acting in his stead.*

Dysea smiled and nodded, reaching up to place her hand on Arzoal's massive head. [Mindvoice Shielded] *I will do just that.* She replied.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Contact me if you need me Dysea. Do not hesitate.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I won't... don't worry.*

Dysea smiled once more and turned to walk into the main cavern to call Iriral to her. Arzoal watched as Iriral landed and then Dysea and Miai climbed onto her back and leaped into the sky. Once they were gone from the cavern Arzoal turned to the smaller Heavyhorn.

Sorth fly to the other side of the island and ask Uldin and Palia to join me here for a meeting of the Elders. Arzoal spoke.

The brown Heavyhorn was similar to an aide for Arzoal, now that she had obtained Senatorial rank within the Union. *Do you suspect something Elder Mother? They will ask why.*

Arzoal looked at him. *Tell them it is possible the followers of Artre have returned to our world. They will know what I speak of and they will come.*

Sorth nodded and moved for the cavern mouth, springing into the air quickly.

MJOLNIR'S HAND PORTSIDE LANDING BAY

Sangria watched him from the shadows of the weapons crates as he walked casually along the rows of fighters, the massive black dragon beside him.

Watching them eat and laugh and interact had been something she would never forget. Belen had been right when he told her there was no pompous superiority within the lounge. There were an equal number of normal crewmen as there were officers, and they were all mixed together at the tables, easily talking and joking as they ate. The largest table was filled with people, Anja, Martin and the black Spartan among them. They did not discuss missions, or weapons or the trappings of power as Sangria had expected. They spoke of childhood mishaps and the laughter it brought forth was genuine and warm, especially when Danny spoke of growing up with Martin. He teased him mercilessly, and the whole while, Anja, the raven haired female Aricia and the elf female For'mya as she was called, hung on his every word.

Sangria stared at Anja through most of it, seeing the playfulness in her jade green eyes. Looking at her, you would never know that she was capable of changing into a wolf. Her laughter was genuine with a slight cackle when she laughed too hard. The clothes they wore were casual for the most part, and relatively revealing by Sangria's standards. She could detect the edges of the tattoos that obviously adorned Martin's body, the points of the flames poking out from under the collar of his shirt. The shirts worn by the other females, though different in style, did not shy from exposing the deep valleys between breasts. Yuriko the vampire female was even bolder, the shirt not even hiding her firm, muscular abdomen.

Sangria had stolen glances at Belen through most of the night as well, and almost every time his dark eyes were on her in such a way that it made her tingle. Sangria knew interest when she saw it, and this young Spartan was very interested in her. Perhaps she could use that in the future, but then again she did not intend to be here any longer than necessary. He had escorted her back to her quarters after dinner, where Sangria had slipped into more comfortable clothes and stuffed some of the newer things they had given to her into a shoulder bag. She had studied the schematic for the ship extensively over the last two hours, and felt she could easily make her way to the landing bay and steal one of those ships. Using the air ventilation system, she had made her way down one deck without detection and then found a service lift that brought her to the proper deck. No one challenged her in the least, and Sangria couldn't believe how lax the security was, or that she had made it this far.

She was halfway to the *STRIKER* when she saw him and the dragon walking towards her. He was dressed now only in loose fitting black pants and no shirt, and Sangria did a double take at the definition of his body. Every muscle stood out as if it had been carved from stone. The black flame tattoos covered his entire chest and back, wrapping up his shoulders and arms. She saw the bridle of the Shi Viska, but he didn't wear anything else. Not even shoes on his feet against the cold deck of the landing bay. She ducked behind the crates as he grew closer, closing her eyes and trying to empty her mind so that he would not detect her.

This was a habit for them whenever they were out on the ship. Martin and Torma would walk, sometimes for hours, in great circles around the landing bay, talking of whatever came to their minds. Aricia and Isheeni would simply move to the huge domed observation pod that had been constructed for them on the deck above, which was where they were now with Anja and Miath. It was a way for them to deepen their bond and their friendship, the only difference from Apo Prime is that they had an entire island to walk and fly, where here they had to walk in circles.

This news from Isra is troubling sire. Torma spoke.

Martin nodded. *I agree.*

I have never heard of Chetak being able to steal a Firespitter egg, and nor has Isheeni. They managed to take several dozen Heavyhorn eggs over the years, but the Elder Mother was always extra careful about Firespitters and Hybrid eggs. Torma said his golden eyes looking down on Martin.

Even more troubling is if there is a rider. They would have had to learn everything instinctually as you and I did. As Aricia and Isheeni did. Martin said. *That fact by itself speaks of great abilities.*

Isra has not seen this dragon yet sire. Perhaps they haven't been able to bond as deeply as we think. Torma spoke with humor in his voice, knowing his dragon mate could hear him. They never kept anything from each other, as Martin never kept anything from his Queens or For'mya. *Firespitters are notoriously stubborn; all you have to do is look at Isheeni for proof of this.*

I heard that my mate! Isheeni's playfully stern voice echoed within their heads and Martin chuckled.

Perhaps. Martin said. *I would prefer he did not have to do battle with some crazed Spartan and dragon pair on his first trip out however.*

Beloved... you have said so yourself... Isra and Aelnala are the strongest Bonded Pair within Mjolnir's Hand outside of the three of us and Dysea and Iriral. Aricia's voice entered their thoughts.

Martin you're concerned because we don't know how this dragon got to Earth aren't you? Anja spoke.

And we don't know how long they have been there. Martin continued.

A female of that age would be easy for a male to scent out. Torma spoke. *Since Aelnala is female I am unsure of how else Aelnala could track her. Isheeni?*

I have only just begun to molt, but I have heard my mother speak of it. When it is done, our scales gleam with new life. And it does give off a unique scent that perhaps Isra could track if he was able to scent it. Isheeni spoke.

I didn't think we could track you that way? Martin asked.

Normally you couldn't. Isheeni answered. *Even with your people's wondrous sense of smell our scent is not unique enough. Unless we are molting. When you are speaking with Isra again tell him to linger and see if he can detect a bitter scent in the wind or on the sand. That will be what he needs. Depending on what stage of the molt she is in, that will determine how strong the smell. Torma is correct though, he could track me across thousands of unknown kilometers just by my scent. Can we not send a male Bonded Pair Martin?*

And a sweeter scent there is none. Torma spoke quickly.

Isheeni snorted within their connection. *Pervert*. She choked out as the soft laughter filled the connection they all shared.

Well we don't have time to send a male pair to Earth, so Isra will have to make do. Martin spoke smiling. *I'll pass along your information Isheeni. We...*

Martin and Torma both looked up and stopped walking.

Martin? Aricia called out, sensing his distraction.

I will walk with Torma back to the pens and then see you in our quarters. Martin told them quickly, shutting off the connection. He looked at Torma. *Do you smell her?*

Torma nodded. *It is not hard, even for my nose.*

Martin smiled. *Go on... she will be no trouble. We will fly when we return to Apo Prime tomorrow.*

Torma nodded and turned his huge body back to the pens at the end of the landing bay. Martin looked at the stacks of weapons crates and smiled before leaping into the air.

Sangria looked around the corner of the crate and saw the dragon lumbering quickly down the landing bay. She leaned out a little further to try and spot Martin.

“Looking for me?” Martin’s voice carried from above.

Sangria yelped in fear and surprise, scrambling away from the crates and bringing up the K19 Pulse Laser and leveling it at Martin who was squatting on the top crate.

“Stay away!” She barked.

Martin looked at her, holding out his hands. “Are you going to shoot me now?” He asked calmly. “Or just try and steal one of my ships? Which by the way, you would not be able to do.”

“Want to bet?” Sangria boasted as she kept the K19 leveled at him.

Martin chuckled. “You remind me so much of your sister.” He said as he lowered himself into a sitting position on top of the crate.

“That... that woman is not my sister!” Sangria snarled out.

“No?” Martin asked. “So you don’t believe the mounds of evidence that say you are wrong? The DNA and blood comparisons she did this afternoon right in front of you? You don’t believe any of those things.”

“All of that can be faked!” Sangria barked. “I am not a fool!”

“Sivana... if all we wanted was what you have in your head... we’d already have it.” Martin spoke.

“My name is not Sivana!” She screamed her eyes darting to where several ground crewmen were running in their direction. “Tell them to stop!”

Martin held up his hand instantly and they stopped. “Your name is Sivana, not Sangria.” He said softly. “And you are a Princess of the Hadarian people! If all I cared about was the information you have, I would have taken it already and put you in a shuttle and launched you back into space.”

“I have stronger mental shields than you think mister big man King!” She barked.

Martin smiled. “Your overconfidence will be your undoing someday Sivana.” He spoke. She didn’t see him move, so fast was the short leap and take down. One millisecond he was on top of the crate, the next he had slapped the K19 out of her hand like a child and his thick arm was around her throat, dragging her down to the deck on her butt. She gasped for air... her nails digging into his skin to no avail. She watched him bring his right hand in front of her face and her sea green eyes bugged out of her head when she saw the glimmering psychic knife burst into view from his knuckles as he clenched his hand into a fist.

And he stopped.

Martin brought his lips close to her ear. “I could have taken what I wanted the moment you set foot on my ship.” He spoke in a low tone of voice, not angry and not friendly, but completely neutral. “And your feeble mental shields would not have saved you Sivana. I am not however, the monster I am made out to be by many. The woman we are looking for is my daughter Sivana. She is half vampire and half werewolf. A hybrid. Her mother is Yuri, Princess of the High Coven. She wants to kill her. I simply want my daughter back. You have the location of the last person who saw her, and that is what I want. I will not take that information from you Sivana, for I am not like the High Coven butchers. I would like you to give it to me freely. If you do not... you will be allowed to leave Apo Prime with a new ship and enough credits to find yourself a nice cozy place to hide for the rest of your life, because they will never stop hunting you. I will find my daughter; it just may take

me longer than I had hoped.” Martin pushed her away from him, watching her scamper a meter away staring at him as she rubbed her throat. “Help me Sivana... help me and I promise you they will never hunt you again. You will finally be free of them and that life. Anja is your sister, no matter how much you try and deny it. I do not know the entire story of what happened that night, I don’t even know the entire story of my life, but she is your sister. She is also my mate and my Queen... and if you hurt her in any way, the pain you have felt in your life up until now will be a *nubous* picnic compared to what I will do to you. That is my deal Sivana. I will only offer it to you once.”

“You can’t stop the Overseers!” Sivana snapped, tears coming to her eyes. “They are everywhere! They’ll never remove the Bounty on my head! Never! No matter how many promises you make!”

Martin lifted his hand, showing her the psychic knife. “I can be very persuasive.” He said with a smile. “You have an opportunity right now Sivana. The only one I will offer to you. Discover the sister you did not know you had. Let her discover you. Take as long as you like. Just tell me what I want to know. Stay in the Union for as long as you like. Get a taste of the life you could have. If you decide that is not what you want, then I will strip a STRIKER AT of all its sensitive military equipment. I will leave the engines, weapons and shroud. I will give you enough Riyal to go anywhere you want and build your own life. And I promise you there will be no bounty on your head. All I ask is the location of whoever knows where my daughter is.” Martin tilted his head slightly as he caught the scent of sweet orchids in the wind. He looked at Sivana and willed the psychic knife away. “Think on it Sivana, and give me your answer in the morning.” He said with a smile. “I assume you can find your way back to your quarters since you found your way down here.” Martin reached up and tapped his nose. “Next time remember that your hosts can smell you coming from four decks up.” Martin got to his feet and held out his hand for her to take.

Sivana stared at him for a long moment before taking that hand.

“Give me a chance Sivana.” Martin spoke. “Give Anja a chance. You might find the peace you have sought for so long. Now if you’ll excuse me, I have suddenly developed a taste for orchids.”

Sangria watched him move quickly around the crates and begin to walk down the bay. She turned around and saw the ground crewmen slowly going back to their work. She turned for the landing bay door and stopped when she saw Belen standing there calmly, his hands folded behind his back. She walked up to him slowly. “I’m...” She started to say.

Belen motioned through the doors. “I’ll escort you back to your quarters.” He said cutting her off. “It will be faster.”

For’mya adjusted the flow of the power conduit under the middle console and then cranked down the seal before reaching her hand out into the open.

“Give me the plasma adjustor tool Endith.” She spoke. “I sealed the conduit and I want to increase the flow now.”

For’mya laid there on the blanket she had stretched out on the deck in the cockpit with her hand open. She glanced back down the side of her body into the open area of the *STRIKER DTs* cockpit but didn’t see any feet or legs.

“Endith have you gone to get coffee again?” For’mya declared with exasperation. “Why do you drink so...” Her voice stopped when she felt the very masculine hands touch her thighs and slide intimately down her legs to grasp her ankles. For’mya smiled under the control console, knowing the feel of those hands anywhere, and also knowing that no man except one would dare touch her in such a way. She let out a small scream as she was yanked from under the console and then was staring into Martin’s dark brown eyes. Eyes that were filled with desire and passion.

For her.

He was sitting on the floor of the cockpit, and a quick glance around told her Endith and Tina had left, probably at a wordless command from Martin. For’mya got to her feet and straightened out her shirt, looking down at his smirking face.

“You have sent my flight crew away!” She demanded, trying to keep her voice stern.

Martin nodded slowly, reaching out with his hands to place them on her calves, his fingers caressing the thin fabric. “Yes I did.” He said.

“We were working on our ship Martin Leonidas.” For’mya scolded him. “There was a...” She inhaled sharply when his fingers moved up slowly along the back of her thighs. “We needed to adjust the...” Martin leaned his head forward and nuzzled the front of her thighs now.

“You smell very good.” He spoke in a whisper.

“I... I smell like a plasma conduit and insulation!” For’mya hissed as his nose and lips grazed across the front of her center, the thin fabric of her pants doing nothing to stem the tide of delicious shivers that coursed through her.

“You have no undergarments on my concubine.” Martin spoke softly again, his fingers rising along the back of her legs to caress her firm ass and ease under the waistband of her pants. “What exactly am I to understand by this action?”

“Martin... Martin we are in our... our ship!” For’mya gasped out. “Others... others will see us! Take... at least take me back to our quarters and have your way with me!”

“Let them watch, I want you now!” Martin growled as he yanked down her pants with one strong pull.

For’mya dropped the tool she was holding in her hand and grasped his shoulders quickly, the cool air fanning her body, doing nothing to hold back the rising heat from her moist pussy, or the flash fires his fingers ignited as they danced across the backs of her legs.

As with all elves not born on Earth, For’mya was completely hairless except for her golden blond locks. She had tried for centuries to get more than the smattering of peach fuzz between her thighs to grow, but finally decided it was pointless and simply removed even that. Looking back now, it was the best thing she could have done. She dug her nails into Martin’s shoulders, as he brought his face close to her center and inhaled deeply of her aroma, his lips and the tip of his nose just lightly brushing her inflamed labia. For’mya was no different than Aricia, Anja or Dysea, and whenever he did this to them, none of them could fight the sensations shuddering through them for long, and she was even weaker in that regard. Aricia’s touch on her body ignited fires all over her as well, her lips so very soft and inviting as they pleased her. As they pleased each other. They could make each other scream in delight, and For’mya adored having Aricia’s sweet pussy spasming on her tongue, her body rigid in ecstasy.

Yet it was Martin that could turn them all to putty.

As his powerful hands gripped her ass, For’mya spread her legs to give him better access to what he wanted. And what she wanted him to have. She no longer cared if anyone saw them either. For’mya had no fears of falling in this awkward position, for she had seen Martin’s strength many time before. She quickly draped one long, tanned leg over his shoulder as he extended his tongue as far as he could and dragged it painfully slow across her opening, careful to press hard against her erect clit as he licked. For’mya gasped and saw stars flash in her eyes as she almost lost it right there, her hips hunching forward, pressing her now soaked pussy tighter to his face. Her head dropped as her hands grasped his shoulders tightly, one hand curling behind his head and her fingers entwining in his thick black hair. She gripped his hair tightly, holding his head in place, more for her own support than anything else as the burning ache in her belly began to surge through her quickly, building power as his lips and tongue continued to tease and taste her, dancing madly over her clit to a tune only he could hear.

“Martin... my... my love... stop. Stop,” For’mya murmured. “I... I can’t hold... it’s so soon...”

Martin ignored her pleas and continued to tantalize and tease his beautiful elf concubine with his tongue, driving it hard into her velvet tightness, relishing in the sweet orchid taste of her dripping passion, and the shudders he felt in her belly and thighs. He held her easily in his hands, his fingers spread out across her firm ass cheeks. For’mya was like holding a feather, even suspended off the cockpit floor as she was now. He felt drops of sweat fall from her brow and strike his shoulders, and he smiled to himself, knowing she was so close.

For’mya’s dark brown eyes flew open as his powerful tongue smashed into her supersensitive clit one last time, and the walls of her control shattered.

“Martin... ahhhhhhh!” For’mya screamed out as her body bucked in delight. She clenched her teeth as her explosion careened through her, lances of pleasure streaking through her limbs as he drank her passion juices like a starving puppy.

The strength left her body as the trembling eased somewhat and slowly he lowered her into his lap where she felt his massive cock pulsing with life. She grabbed his face and kissed him then, tasting the lust and desire for her. The love he had for her, and tasting herself on his lips and tongue as he kissed her back hard.

For'mya truly no longer cared who saw them and she reached between their bodies with one slender hand to grip his thick, twelve inch cock. She placed the flared head against her already drenched opening and hissed in gleeful pleasure as she sank herself down on him slowly. For'mya felt every impossibly thick inch of his cock fill her as she lowered herself onto him, until finally, after what seemed like a gloriously longer than usual plunge, she felt his large, searing hot balls press against her pussy lips. She felt his body tense as he held back, his hands gripping her ass tightly, and she squirmed against him just enough to let him know he had all of her.

She lifted her head slowly, crushing her small but firm breasts to his rock hard chest, his own tanned skin now slick with sweat, and met his beautiful brown eyes. Having him buried so completely inside her had always amazed For'mya. Yet even that first time, she had felt only an indescribable pleasure and utter fulfillment. Not even a twinge of pain had ever escaped her lips when he made love to her, only sensations and cries of rapture. He had never made her feel like anything less than a Queen. The old rules and traditions for concubines had been reinvented with Martin Leonidas. She slept in his bed always, and many times it resulted in nights of pleasure with both him and Aricia. She shared in every aspect of his life, of Aricia's life. She was not a concubine to them, she was a Queen.

"I... I want to change you For'mya." He told her, his voice trembling with desire and lust and love. "I want you to feel all of me. I want you to feel what Aricia, and Anja and Dysea feel."

For'mya's smile was heavy lidded and drunk with pleasure. "I... I already feel that." She spoke, moving her hips atop him ever so slightly.

"You... you know what I mean." He hissed out the words at her actions.

For'mya traced her fingers along his jaw. "It... it will change so much Martin." She spoke.

"It will change nothing. You are concubine in name and title only, and if not for some fool tradition and law you would be a Queen as well." Martin spoke softly. "Everyone knows that. Aricia, Anja, Dysea... even Isabella, we all want that."

For'mya stared into his eyes, seeing the love for her in them. She reached up and took his face in her hands. "Then... then we will talk of this when we return to the palace." She gasped. "Perhaps... perhaps it is time. It... it is something I have thought of Martin Leonidas. Not here... not like this. Tonight just take me as you always do... with everything you are. Our future we can discuss in more comfortable surroundings."

Martin's eyes narrowed with lust. "I'm going to make you howl my name For'mya." He groaned.

"I... I already do that." She gasped in reply.

Martin took hold of her ass cheeks and began to stroke into her then, lifting her almost completely off him and then pulling her back down. For'mya locked her fingers behind his neck and surrendered completely to her King's power, allowing him to have her in whatever way he desired. As she leaned back, his lips engulfed one of her protruding nipples and he suckled hard, drawing a gasp of delight from her. Every powerful, twelve inch downward plunge caused her to whimper out her pleasure as he stretched her, molded her to him in every way. His movements became more urgent now, as he took her passionately. He was holding back his true power because she was not wolf, yet the pleasure singing through her was unlike anything she had ever experienced before. It was as if every nerve ending in her lithe frame had come alive at his words, and they were all screaming out for her to accept what he offered her, and the pleasure it could bring. Aricia had told her once of the mind twisting pleasure he gave her, and now as her body responded to him like it never had before, For'mya's mind told her that perhaps it was time.

"Mine For'mya!" He gasped out his eyes open wide in agonizing pleasure. "I'm going to make you mine one day!"

As his words filtered through her desire clouded mind, For'mya felt his cock swell inside her and then her orgasm erupted from her like the explosion of a star.

"*ERU...* Martin!" (Oh God) For'mya screamed as the first blast of his molten passion erupted deep in her belly, and his powerful arms crushed her to him. His body slammed into her so hard, For'mya thought for sure the entire ship moved. Her eyes rolled up into her head and all she could do was swim in the abyss of pleasure as it rushed through her, claiming her and sealing the decision she had made unconsciously long ago.

DESTROYED VAMPIRE SCHOOL

Lohana's hands flew over the console in front of her as she powered down the *STRIKER DT*'s engines, her keen eyes fixed on the terrain outside of her cockpit window. This was unknown territory, no one having been here since the King had destroyed it over a year ago. Her radiation counter was silent, as it should be since the King had used what was referred to as a 'clean nuke'. Her eyes skimmed briefly over her scopes, seeing nothing out of the ordinary, and she turned back into the rear of the *DT*.

"It appears clear Isra." She spoke as she got to her feet and headed into the rear.

In the rear of the *STRIKER*, Isra came out of the small closet like structure, squeezing his hands into fists as he flexed in the new body armor issued to all Mjolnir's Hand. It was matte black, and appeared to be fashioned from thick leather padding. It was actually two thin layers of the same impact resistant material the old body armor was formed from, only between the two layers now was an equally thin layer of Dragon Armor. It was the thinnest layer they could smelt the armor into, and it had taken them almost eight months to design a machine that could press it into the body armor. It was also hideously expensive to smelt into body armor at the moment because it had to be specially formed and fitted to each individual, so only Mjolnir's Hand was issued the first thousand sets. Each member was issued three sets of the new armor, Martin and the Queens each getting three sets, For'mya getting three sets, the other eighty-two sets of the armor no one knows where Martin sent it.

Isra looked at Lohana as she moved into the rear, Tareif, Tarifa and Aihola watching from the side, all of them now wearing the standard Spartan armor Isra had on board the *DT* in case of emergencies. "Every time I wear it, it feels looser." He spoke.

Lohana nodded as she stepped up to him and adjusted a strap in the back. "The King said to break one set in completely and wear the others sparingly to get the feel for them." She spoke. "I will take a position on top with the MK21 Cannon."

Isra met her eyes and nodded. "Use Plasma ammunition until we know what we are dealing with." He spoke.

"Isra... that will kill anything it hits." Lohana spoke.

"Given our circumstances, I'm not going to blink an eye at that." He said nodding his head.

Lohana nodded and headed back towards the front of the *DT* while Lynwe and Layna appeared from near Aelnala's pen. Isra moved to the side of the ship and touched a panel, entering a code into the console and watching as the panel slid up to reveal an assortment of weapons. He began pulling off P190s and turned back as Lynwe and the others got close to him.

"We don't know what we will face, if anything, out here." He spoke turning to look directly at Tareif. "I can tell you that the dragon is a Firespitter, and a very mature one. She will have the means to use her flame at distances of a hundred meters at least. Her flame will burn at nearly 3500 degrees, so if she makes an appearance, do not leave the safety of the *DT*'s outer shield that Lohana has erected. You will not survive outside that shield against her." He looked at Tarifa and Aihola now. "I am not saying that to frighten you, I'm only telling you the truth."

"What about you and Aelnala Isra?" Tarifa asked softly, stepping closer to him.

"The psychic shield that Aelnala and I project can protect us long enough to get back to the *DT*." He answered. He held out one of the 190s to Tarifa and one to Aihola. "These are loaded with special plasma projectile rounds. They will kill anything they hit, so make sure what you shoot at is an enemy." He took another two 190s from the rack and held one out to Tareif. "I trust you will protect them."

"Do not tell me how to protect my own daughter!" Tareif snapped. "I will..."

Isra stepped right up to him now, his fangs bursting forth in a snarl, his violet eyes taking on the persona of his wolf form. "You will do exactly as I tell you War Master Tareif!" He snarled. "We operate in my realm now, and no matter how much you may hate me, I will not allow what you feel towards me, however untrue it may be, to put what I love most in this universe at risk!" Tarifa and Aihola's eyes went wide at his words, and they watched him stepped even closer to Tareif. "Do I make myself very clear War Master, or do I have to repeat myself? And I hate to repeat myself."

Tareif stared into Isra's changed violet eyes for a long moment before he grudgingly nodded his head slowly. "I will... I will speak to the King about this." He stated.

Isra nodded his head. "Speak to whoever you like." He replied. He turned to Lynwe and held out the final 190 he held. "General... I would like you and Layna to cover the nose of the *DT* so that Lohana can operate the sniper cannon on top."

Lynwe couldn't contain the smile on her face and she took the 190 with a nod. "I can take care of that." She said.

"We can take care of that." Layna spoke stepping closer to her.

Isra nodded and moved into the rear by the ramp where Aelnala stood waiting for him. She dropped her honey colored eyes onto him and gave him what amounted to a dragon grin.

You are going to fight for their affection Bonded Brother?

Isra met her eyes. *I will not let her father take from me what I desire more than anything without a fight Aelnala. I know you don't approve, but I must do this. If nothing else, it will give me closure or what I truly want.*

On the contrary Isra, I have always approved of Tarifa and Aihola. As the King has said, they are stubborn and obstinate, and perhaps they need to be shown that they do in fact love you in return.

Will you help me Aelnala? Isra asked.

That is not a question you need to ask my Bonded Brother. She replied quickly, lowering her head to touch her snout lightly to Isra's forehead. *Now come... let us go search this vampire pit before the smell overloads even my nose. And it is no where near as sensitive as yours.*

Isra nodded and turned to look at the others as he stepped over to the ramp controls. "Do not stray from the ship for any reason." He said, his eyes focusing on Tarifa and Aihola. "No matter what it is." Isra saw them nod as the ramp began to lower, bathing the *DT* in the light of the Key West day.

Isra squatted in the middle of the cracked and gouged pavement and concrete of what used to be a main thoroughfare or walkway it appeared. The rain clouds overhead were not very high off the ground, having dumped a massive amount of rain on the area just before they arrived. The remaining clouds and the mist rising from the heated earth gave off a very eerier and unnatural sensation. The destroyed remains of dozens of buildings surrounded him on either side, the remains of palm trees torn from the ground because of the force of the blast, and tossed through the air into the sides of buildings lay scattered all over. The ground layout of this place certainly conformed to that of some sort of school, with buildings placed about in a pseudo circular pattern. The portable hand sensor he carried was not registering any heat sources or life signs nearby, but the hairs on the back of his neck were standing up, and he had learned long ago to trust his instincts more than anything he saw or could smell.

Do you feel it Isra? Aelnala asked as she moved closer to him.

Isra looked up from the scanner and nodded. *Yes.*

Death. Aelnala spoke. *It feels like death all around here.*

The weapon the King used here, it killed nearly six thousand vampire clones in this one area alone. Isra spoke. *Yet there are no bodies. No skeletal remains.*

The Drow General says no one has been here since the Battle for Earth, yet someone cleared them away. Aelnala spoke as her large head also swept the area around them warily. *I do not like this place Isra. Something is not right here.*

Isra got to his feet slowly. *Nor do I Aelnala, but we must search it. The scans from RAPTOR over flights and even from orbit detected heat signatures here.*

Your instruments tell you nothing? Aelnala asked.

Isra shook his head. *No... but my nose tells me there is heat nearby. It smells tangy, coppery. Like...* Isra looked at her.

Like what?

Like the smell and heat of fresh blood. Isra told her.

You did not have to tell me that. Aelnala said as her wings fluttered, itching to be in the air, where she felt more comfortable.

Isra looked back to where the *DT* was lying silent. He could see Lohana on the top of the nose, secure in the Dragon Armor extendable pod, her keen elfin eyes scouring the area for targets as she maneuvered the huge

MK21 Sniper Cannon back and forth slowly. He could see Lynwe and Layna kneeling near the front of the DT, and he could see Tarifa and Aihola squatting by the end of the ramp, Tareif between them, ready to jerk them back into the DT if needed. He turned to face the one building that had not been destroyed by the blast. It was two hundred meters from his current location and he lifted the portable sensor scanner to face it. The sensor beeped faintly.

Very faint life signs. Nothing definitive. Isra spoke.

Human, elf or Lycavorian? Aelnala asked.

Isra shook his head. *The signal is faint... but if I had to guess... it appears human, but I can't get an accurate scan. This way.* He spoke moving for the building in the distance.

Aelnala followed her Bonded Brother, doing exactly as she was trained to do in covering his back and his sides. Ground combat skills were something that she and Isra excelled at, only Andreus and Doranthe and a few other Pairs surpassing them, but their true skill was in the air. Through all of their training, only the King could defeat them every time when they fought in the air. Part of that was due to the deepness of the bond he shared with Torma and what it allowed the two of them to accomplish together; part was because Martin and Torma were known to sometimes drive themselves to exhaustion in training. It was also in part because the King spent so much time training with Isra and herself and Andreus and Doranthe, wanting his section leaders to be the most skilled, so that they could lead from the front and pass on to others what they discovered training with him.

"Isra." Lohana's soft voice carried only inches from the COM set built in his armor, but it was enough to bring him up short fifty meters shy of the building.

"What is it Lohana?"

"Isra... I can't... I can't be sure... but I want to say I just detected movement between the two piles of rubble to the right of your location. A hundred meters out moving left to right, getting closer to you." Lohana spoke softly. "My scope is clear now, but there are an awful lot of shadows and the infra red isn't picking anything up."

Isra let his violet eyes scan the area in front of him that Lohana had pointed out, allowing his violet wolf eyes to slowly sweep over that dark area. He reached out with his wolf hearing, filtering past the noise caused by the small breeze, and anything that he could determine was a natural sound of this area. The bird sounds and drops of water from the rain that had covered the ground only an hour ago he filtered out. The rain clouds still hung low to the earth, but they had dropped enough moisture to change the color and texture of the dirt and cracked pavement all around him and cause the steamy mist to continue to rise.

"Which means nothing really," Isra spoke. "There are species that do not give off infra red signals Lohana, you know this."

"Yes... but the over flights and scans from our ships in orbit picked up heat signatures Isra." Lohana spoke. "Tarifa and Aihola do not strike me as careless. They would know what species were on their planet Isra, and they are very active in everything that happens on their world. And if they did not know, then this Administrator Selene or the Drow General would know."

Lohana either didn't know or didn't care that they were speaking on a channel that everyone could hear since all of them were now wearing the Spartan armor. She didn't see Tarifa and Aihola look at each other when she spoke the obvious compliment about them.

"I agree with you Lohana. Yet I'm also considering the fact that the planetary defensive grid is only half complete, and regardless of the fact they are involved as they are, even with the ships in orbit and the base on the moon, a shrouded ship could still manage to land if it wanted too." Isra answered.

"So you believe the High Coven is involved Commander Isra?" Lynwe's voice joined the conversation now through the COM unit in her armor.

"It is the only way to have gotten a dragon to earth without detection General." Isra answered. "All ships that enter into Earth orbit are thoroughly searched by yours and Tareif's orders Lynwe. I find it hard to believe the two of you would have missed one of your search teams reporting a dragon hidden on a ship somewhere."

"Is the High Coven the only ones with access to these Shrouded ships?" Lynwe asked.

"Outside of the Union stealing the technology for our uses, I am not aware of any others that have this ability." Isra replied. "However, it is not something we can dismiss."

Isra... look. Aelnala spoke.

He turned his violet eyes and saw the movement from the shadows, his hand dropping to where his Nehtes rested on his leg. There were two figures, one a pasty white color with what appeared to be only a loin cloth hiding its private parts from sight. Its limbs were long and thin, its head totally bald, though its eyes were large and a deep red color. The second figure was obviously human, and the man held a rifle that was leveled at him and Aelnala.

“Are you a friend of Ferdron?” The human man asked, his loud voice carrying over the distance.

Isra got to his feet very slowly, extending both his hands out to show he held no weapon. He felt several probes against the psychic shields he and Aelnala always kept at high levels to dissuade anyone from attempting to enter their minds. “Ferdron?” He asked. “Is he the rider of the dragon? Is he nearby?”

“Your ship is strange.” The man spoke. “Who are you?”

Isra... the... that thing is trying to probe us. Aelnala spoke. I can feel his attempts.

Yes so can I. He replied. We may need to make a fast exit my Bonded Sister.

I am ready.

“My name is Isra.” He answered stepping forward slowly. “I am a member of Mjolnir’s Hand! We are...”

The long arm of the pasty white creature snapped up with blazing speed. “Deceiver!” The creature barked. “He serves Black Hair! He serves Black Hair!”

The human didn’t hesitate and the rifle he held began spitting out death in the form of large caliber bullets. Isra didn’t pause and allowed Aelnala to TK pull him back and toss him onto her back directly into the saddle.

Ok... I guess that means we aren’t going to be friends. Isra declared calmly as his Shi Viska flared into existence and he yanked his P190 from its spot on his back. The man’s bullets were deflecting off of their psychic shield with little difficulty.

“ISRA!” Lohana’s voice erupted from the COM unit on his armor. “I have multiply targets appearing all over! They are coming out of the ground!”

Isra’s violet eyes remained calm as Aelnala turned and they saw humans and more of the pasty white creatures pulling themselves from manhole and sewer covers all around them. The humans also began appearing from behind many of the destroyed buildings. He brought his 190 up and let loose with controlled accurate bursts, bringing down four men and one of the white skinned creatures in six seconds.

“Lohana! Pull everyone back in and get airborne!” Isra ordered. “We will cover you until you are airborne!”

“Affirmative!”

“Isra no!” Tarifa’s voice echoed on the COM now. His head snapped around when he heard weapons fire coming from the direction of the *DT*. He could see Tarifa, Aihola and Tareif laying down a withering field of fire as Lynwe and Layna were scrambling back towards the ramp.

“Do not argue with me woman!” Isra barked. “Once you are airborne we will take to the air ourselves! Do not worry about me!”

His keen eyes saw Aihola grab her arm. “We do worry about you!” Aihola’s voice echoed now. “We love you, you fool!”

“Then do as I ask now! I will meet you in the sky!”

Too late! Aelnala barked out. We must go now! Above us!

Isra’s head turned and he saw the flame leaping for them even before he felt the heat. *Go Aelnala! Go!*

Aelnala didn’t hesitate and leaped for the sky as the burst of flame from the brownish tan dragon scorched the ground they had been occupying milliseconds before. As bullets crashed into their psychic shield Isra turned in his saddle, looking down and watching as the ramp on the *DT* was just closing, its engines already screaming in power as it began to lift off. Isra silently thanked Queen Dysea and Arzoal for choosing Lohana as his pilot. She could get the *STRIKER DT* from a cold start to airborne in seconds, as she had just proven. He watched as Lohana ignited her thrusters and rotated the *DT* around burning a dozen humans and several of the white creatures into cinders as she engaged the *DT*’s drive unit and accelerated away from the area.

Isra heard the trumpeting roar and turned his attention back to the more immediate problem. The brownish dragon was larger than Aelnala and he had thought, and the huge figure on her back was obviously a

Lycavorian, but he wore armor that Isra had never seen before. Aelnala's wings beat furiously as she executed a steep climb, rapidly gaining the altitude they needed to survive.

She is larger than we thought! Isra declared.

And she is faster! She gains on me despite her size, even as I climb!

Isra ducked instinctively as the dragon unleashed another long stream of flame at them. *Bank right!* He screamed as the line of flame shot over their heads, close enough for them to feel the intense heat.

Aelnala didn't hesitate at the command, her wing snapping down into the sharp turn. *We didn't sense them!* She cried out. *They blocked us somehow! That is not good Isra!*

Isra turned back quickly in his saddle. *No it is not! Perhaps we were not searching for the proper tremors! We are more maneuverable! They are faster Aelnala, but we can turn tighter!*

We must avoid a full shot of her flame Brother! Aelnala barked. *And use our speed in turning to our advantage!*

TK her wings Aelnala! See if you can cause her to lose balance somehow!

Aelnala turned her head as she continued to climb and sent a blast of TK power back at the brown dragon as she climbed towards them. The glimmering TK field impacted her wing and its effect was immediate and telling as her right wing folded as if it had been hit with something and she careened out of control for a few seconds. This act only seemed to incense the brown dragon more, and she trumpeted out her rage and began climbing once more.

They have a shield like ours but it is not as powerful! Aelnala spoke. *And they did not sense my attack!*

Loop her!

Isra why?

Loop her and we will pass over the top of them, use your tail and I will hit him with my Nehtes! We are moving too fast to use my Shield.

Aelnala quickly understood. *Yes! He does not have the Dragon Armor holding him in his saddle! Knock him off of her! Excellent! Hold on!*

Aelnala lowered her tail and flared her wings for a brief second, sending herself into a short looping climb. Her speed bled off quickly, allowing the unknown dragon and rider to close the distance rapidly, but it was a maneuver that the brown dragon and rider did not expect. They were suddenly closing on each other at impossible speeds and Isra extended his Nehtes at the last possible moment, swinging the unbreakable spear like a club as the two dragons roared, preparing to slam into one another.

Aelnala turned slightly at the last possible second, bringing her weighted tail forward with barely any effort, exposing her underside to harm. The maneuver had the effect they wanted, even as they exposed themselves to enormous danger. Isra's Nehtes connected with the huge Lycavorian riding the dragon squarely in the chest, his own Nehtes preparing for a killing blow. Isra's Nehtes was torn from his hands as the enemy rider was smashed backwards from his saddle. Just as the brown Firespitter was about to lift her talons and rend Aelnala's exposed belly open, the weighted tip of her tail smashed into the brown dragon's shoulder. The force of the blow, combined with the speed they had been traveling at caused the brown dragon to howl in agony and immediately drop towards the earth below, all feeling in her wing momentarily lost.

I will kill you! I will kill you! The strange female voice filled their minds as Aelnala righted them and banked in a sharp turn, both of their eyes following the falling figures of the dragon and man.

The dragon recovered first, her wings spreading out quickly to curve around as she dove for the falling man. Isra and Aelnala watched as she finally reached the falling figure, snatching him out of the sky with a talon and tossing him onto her back. She didn't pause in flight and they watched as she immediately began climbing towards them again with anger and pain now fueling her normal strength. They had fallen perhaps five thousand feet, but were now headed right back at them.

Climb Aelnala! Isra ordered. *Their shield is not as great as ours. Climb and we will outlast them!*

Aelnala didn't hesitate and turned upwards and with powerful sweeps of her wings she began to climb.

"Is there nothing you can do?" Tarifa exclaimed as she settled into the chair next to Lohana in the cockpit of the *DT*, Aihola right behind her.

Lohana looked at her as her gloved hands flew over the controls. “They are trained for this!” She snapped out. “It is what they have done for the last year! And I have told you and Aihola both, they are second in power only to the King and Queen! You must have faith!”

“Aelnala can not breathe fire!” Aihola barked.

“And this other dragon is bigger!” Tarifa complained.

Lohana looked at them, her dark eyes bright. “Is what you said true?” She asked. “Do not think about it! Answer the question now! Do you love him?”

“Yes!” Tarifa and Aihola responded simultaneously in one voice and without hesitation.

Lohana nodded. “Then know that the two of you are all that has occupied his thoughts for the last year when he wasn’t training. I have been his pilot for nine months now... he has never gone out... never accepted offers from other females, and there *have* been many.” Lohana spoke ignoring Tareif as he came into the cockpit as well now. “His eyes alone draw females like flies. He has not even so much as scented them in any way. The two of you are all he desires... all he has ever desired.” She reached over and took a data pad, tossing it at Tareif. “Two hundred and twenty seven messages War Master. All of them sent here to Earth. All of them received by one communications officer in Eden City Command. All of them destroyed by this man or woman before Tarifa and Aihola ever saw them. Administrator Selene sent me that early this morning after I inquired about them. They arrested this man, and I’m sure Isra will want to have a long chat with him when we return.”

Tareif’s eyes were wide as he stared at the pad. Lohana turned back to her controls.

“He must take pain medication every day for the wounds he received defending you Tarifa.” Lohana continued as she adjusted their course. “The wound in his leg... from the ship?”

Tarifa nodded slowly, vividly remembering the savage wound in his upper leg that she had seen in his quarters. “Yes.”

“The wound knitted back together wrong when he shifted to stop the bleeding. He had to have two operations on it before Queen Anja was able to fully correct the damage done. The pain will always be with him now.” Lohana spoke. “He does not complain, never a word, and I have seen him when he refuses to take the pain medicine for a few mornings. That pain only makes him love the two of you more.”

Lohana looked at them; saw the beginnings of tears in their eyes and she nodded. “You should be ashamed of yourselves. Both of you. He thought himself beneath you both and he has spent the last thirteen months being the finest Spartan and member of Mjolnir’s Hand for you! To prove to you he was worthy of your love!” Lohana hissed out the words. She turned to look at Tareif. “And you! He spent three days and nights on our trip here doing nothing but reading about you! Your history! Your victories! He hoped to impress you with his knowledge and you treat him like he is dirt under your boot! If not for him, your daughter would be dead, and you treat him like some common thug! Do you know how many elves on Apo Prime would carve out your eyes for the way you have treated him?” Lohana turned back, her eyes finding the two dragons once more in the distance and she adjusted her course.

“He is a Section Leader of Mjolnir’s Hand not because he is friends with the King, or because he carries a love for the both of you. He is who he is, because he has earned that title and role. And he is the epitome of a Spartan in the mold of the King, more so than any I have known in my nine hundred years of life. We must trust in his and Aelnala’s wisdom, and their skill together, for right now that is all we can do.”

Thirteen kilometers Isra! Aelnala called as they passed through thirteen thousand meters above the ground.

Almost forty-five thousand feet.

Isra was leaning over close to her neck, his violet eyes locked on the brown dragon and rider below them. They had once tested their psychic shield to almost sixty thousand feet on Apo Prime, and this altitude was not oppressive to them in the least. Isra saw the rider’s arm twitch, even ten thousand feet beneath them, and his head came up.

They’ve stopped climbing! He called out.

Aelnala looked downward as she immediately leveled out, her dragon vision easily seeing the rider, frost appearing on the dark armor he wore. *He can’t withstand the cold at these altitudes without proper shielding.*

It is what we suspected. They are not as deeply bonded as you thought. Isra said.

Aelnala nodded her large head. *She would know to have him peel her molted skin off so as not to give them away.*

I believe we forced them to reveal themselves before they were ready. Isra said. *Martin was right... they did not expect us to be here.*

Aelnala turned her head back to look at him quickly. *We are stronger than most because we know our limits Isra my Bonded Brother. We can not defeat them in open combat; she is bigger and faster than I, and our psychic shielding will not hold forever against her flame.*

We do have the advantage in experience and maneuverability Aelnala. Isra spoke thoughtfully. *We must use that to our advantage.*

For what purpose?

We must discover who these humans are. These creatures I have seen somewhere before. And we must stall this dragon and rider, and not engage them in open combat until the time is right. Ira spoke.

What time is right Isra? I fear only the King and Torma could defeat this pair. Aelnala spoke. *And even if they could leave today, they would not be here for days. And we know they are involved in and close to finding and returning his daughter.*

Isra nodded. *Then we will discover what else is going on, and bring a stop to this plot against Tarifa and Aihola. In doing that, we stall this dragon and rider until the King and Torma can come here and deal with them.*

How do we do that? Aelnala asked.

Isra smiled. *We are a Bonded Pair Aelnala. We know what they will do remember. We simply take away those opportunities.*

Aelnala laughed within their connection. *And here I thought I was the more devious of us.*

Isra smiled as he touched the COM on his armor. "Lohana?"

"We are here Isra."

"Tarifa, Aihola and the others?" He asked first.

"They are fine." Lohana replied immediately. "We are reading the second dragon as falling off and heading back towards Key West."

"Now that they know they are no longer safe there, they will move." Isra spoke. "Tell Tarifa and Aihola I strongly recommend they order an attack on Key West immediately to eliminate any who may be there still."

"I have already ordered it Isra." Tarifa's voice filled the COM. "Cathy is putting out a full strike alert as we speak. Within an hour there will be nothing left of Key West but ash."

"Lohana... move to the location I am sending you now. Prepare for an In-flight landing. We must return to Eden City quickly and do some research. I believe the King may have run across these monsters before. They said something about us serving Black Hair, but I do not believe they meant Tarifa." Isra spoke.

"What about the humans we saw?" Lohana's voice asked.

"Those humans I believe are more than likely survivors of Tarifa's attack on New Miami, and they have joined this group freely out of their hatred for her." Isra said. "The Spartan... he is the mystery."

"Dropping from above into the pipe." Lohana spoke. "Do you have us?"

Isra looked above them and saw the *DT* slowly moving in front and above them. "Yes... I see you. Drop to ten thousand feet and we will approach from behind you."

"Are we sure that friend of yours is gone?" Lohana asked trying to inject light humor into her words.

"Now that he knows they can not climb as high as us, they will not attempt to chase us." Isra spoke. "It would be pointless when you are far faster, and we can climb higher than they can."

"Ramp coming down!" Lohana spoke.

"So are we!" Isra spoke. "We will be aboard in a few minutes."

Tarifa and Aihola stood to one side of the interior of the *STRIKER* as they stared into the gaping hole in the rear of the *DT* with wide eyes. Both of them were strapped to the side by five foot long tethers, the non skid ramp now fully extended outward with no sides and no top over it. They could see Aelnala's huge form as she approached the rear of the *DT* with unerring confidence. Lohana held them as steady as a rock, her hands

caressing her controls like a skilled surgeon. Wind surged through the back of the STRIKER, whipping hair and pieces of uniforms about.

Watching them in combat with another dragon had filled them both with terror, especially when they had passed so close to the other dragon, knocking away the unknown rider and stunning the larger dragon. Seeing Aelnala approach the rear of the DT now, she looked huge to Tareif Lynwe and Layna, but Tarifa and Aihola alone knew that there were several dragons larger than her, to include Martin's obsidian colored beast Torma, and the Dragon Elder Mother Arzoal.

Aelnala flared her wings only a few meters from the back of the DT, Isra leaning low in the saddle. As her talons came down on the non skid floor, she leaned forward into the wind immediately, bringing herself lower than the rear of the DT. Lohana had been watching on the monitor in the cockpit, and the moment Aelnala's head dipped lower than the ceiling Lohana activated the ramp, bringing them forward even as she moved gracefully into the back under her own power. Isra sat up slightly in the saddle as the sides and top of the DT began to hum and close. He waited until the three pieces had fully sealed behind him before reaching up and removing his helmet.

"Well... now that was an invigorating morning exercise!" He exclaimed as he slowly slid from the saddle, and moved under Aelnala's thick muscular chest to rub her lower neck vigorously.

Aelnala's wings twitched in delight and she let out a tiny roar of dragon laughter. It did get our blood pumping did it not Bond Brother.

Isra touched his forehead to her chest and they watched as Aelnala lowered her snout and touched the top of Isra's head. It must have been some sort of ritual they performed, Tarifa thought to herself as she quickly unhooked her tether, Aihola already unhooked and turning back to face Isra and Aelnala.

Tarifa's head snapped around when she heard Aihola yelp in surprise, and she felt her heart sing as she saw Isra scoop her lithe Drow body into his arms and cover her soft lips with his own. Tarifa couldn't help the tears then. She had always feared that he would not accept Aihola for what she was, that somehow her being half vampire would dissuade him from loving Aihola as he loved her. She watched as Aihola whimpered in response, her arms unsure of what to do for the first few seconds, and then she succumb to the physical sensations that were coursing through her now. Sensations that up until this very moment she had only felt through Tarifa.

Aihola's felt fire unlike anything she had ever experienced race through her entire frame. This was not merely the sensation of a memory as Tarifa had shared with her so often over the past months. These were the real lips that belonged to those memories, and Aihola's body was responding to them in a way she had never responded before. Tarifa had been right, she could smell the wildness in him, feel it in his kiss, the passion and desire unchained and barely held in check. And half vampire or not, at this moment Aihola's blood burned as hot as any female wolf. She suddenly felt empty when his lips left hers, and she stared into those violet eyes, so very much like her own amber orbs, as he gazed at her with a passion that smoldered behind those eyes, a passion that threatened to sweep her away. A passion she wanted to feel for real. He lowered her slowly to the deck of the DT, his violet eyes lingering on her for a long moment before her hands squeezed his arms and nudged him to turn.

The sapphire eyes he had seen that first moment so long ago were even brighter if that was possible and then Tarifa was in his arms, tears striking down her cheeks as she kissed him with thirteen months of pent up emotions. Months of emotions she had restrained, pushed away and then finally embraced. Emotions that rippled through her now with a power that no one had ever elicited from her in the past. His fingers sank into her silky black hair and he held her head tightly, kissing her hard, alternating between biting her lips softly and teasing her tongue with his own. It had driven her mad with desire in their time together, and now it was even stronger. When his fingers danced across the back of her elfin ear, she groaned and leaned into him heavily. Finally it was too much for Isra and he simply lifted her into his right arm, his left arm reaching out to pull Aihola close to him and he squeezed them tighter than either had been held before. His face dipped to the sides of their necks, and he nuzzled Tarifa's ear first, her hands grasping him tightly. He barely paused before turning his head and nuzzling Aihola's elfin ear just as hard, and she too melted against him even more. They knew what he was doing, even if her father and the others did not. He was marking them, laying claim to them until he was able to take them in his bed, and as he did this, Tarifa and Aihola looked at each other and both of them hoped it happened sooner rather than later.

Isra finally set them both down on the deck slowly, drawing their scents into his lungs deeply, before standing up straight and looking at them. *I... I have dreamed of this day for so long.* He spoke to them with Mindvoice. *I... I did not...*

Tarifa shook her head quickly and reached up with long delicate fingers, placing them on his lips. *No Isra. No more. There has been too much confusion. Too many questions. We... we want you Isra. You and only you.*

Now more than ever. Aihola echoed.

And I want both of you. No doubts. No questions. No matter what the future brings. If... if you will have me. He said as his heart leaped into his throat at the words he had waited for so long to hear.

They gave him his answer as they stepped without hesitation as one entity into his arms, each one folding against a side of his body, their heads against his chest. This was not what they had felt for Dekton. They loved him, of that they had no doubts. But Isra was not Dekton, and what they felt for this wild and passionate Spartan surpassed anything they had felt towards Dekton. This was on a plane of emotion neither of them had even been before, and it felt so wonderfully glorious.

Tareif stood back against the side of the chart map table watching events unfold; the pad Lohana had given him in his hand. He needed to understand what was happening here, and he knew only one person could give him those answers. He started making plans to contact that person as soon as they returned.

Isra looked up at the others, his arms still holding Tarifa and Aihola. "Lohana... we must get to Eden City as quickly as possible. I need to speak with the King before he goes off the grid. And we must make plans."

"Plans?" Lynwe asked, her own amber eyes perking up.

Isra nodded. "They know Aelnala and I are here now. This will undoubtedly accelerate whatever plans they may have. And we need to discover what those plans are. Quickly."

CHAPTER NINE

USU'OZEIB 7

VAMPIRE HIGH COVEN

COVEN HIGH GUARD COMMANDER'S OFFICE

"I told you to not expose yourself Vonis!" Yuri barked at the image of her younger brother on the monitor in her office.

"I didn't Yuri." The young man replied confidently.

Yuri nodded. "No you didn't, but your actions also let Isabella know someone is after her." Yuri stated leaning back in her chair.

"You told me not to underestimate her and I didn't. I contracted two Kochab Bounty Hunters to test her." Vonis spoke.

"They were slaughtered Vonis." Yuri spoke.

"They served their purpose sister." Vonis said respectfully. "You and father both have taught me the value of putting fear into the hearts of your enemies. That is what I wanted to do."

Yuri studied her younger brother for a long moment. She hadn't known he even existed little more than a year ago, but when she met him for the first time she found not a pompous fool, but a confident and cerebral young man who measured everything. A young man who was methodic and precise in all that he did and a younger brother who idolized her. It was not something Yuri was used too; the idolization part and it took her three months to realize that he wanted her approval of all that he did more than anything. He had been working for decades to show that he was not a clone of Xerxes, and learning all he could from his older sister was his ticket to that knowledge.

Yuri couldn't help but smile now. "She is on Elear Vonis, and you must take that into account. Bounty Hunters and other scum know well the penalty for doing business on the elf homeworld if they are caught. They would rather be killed before being taken captive by the elves. Do not overestimate what your actions have done."

Vonis nodded. "They did not come cheap, I'll grant you that, but they did serve their purpose. I wanted her to react as she did, so that I may judge her reaction to other things as well."

"What can you tell me about her?" Yuri asked.

"She has not forgotten she is a vampire Yuri." Vonis spoke. "She uses the shadows almost better than I have seen you use them. And she is lethally fast, much more so than I had first thought."

Yuri nodded. "Your actions will make her much more cautious now Vonis." Yuri spoke as her mind thoughtfully went over options in her own head. "The elf Queen Dysea was not with her?"

Vonis shook his head. "A Spartan guard only. If our information is correct, she is the Spartan Captain of the elf Queen. She was skilled, but not radically so." Vonis said. "Should I assume the elf Queen will be similar Yuri?" He asked.

Yuri shook her head quickly. "No. You will prepare for Dysea to be better, because she will be. And now that she has bonded with that dragon, even more so. I will send you the file I compiled on her while I was on earth. She may not seem like a threat Vonis, but she is. Dysea is like an Ozeibian Rock Spider. You have seen them here in the northern mountain range yes?"

Vonis nodded with a shudder. "Yes. I saw one take down a full grown Rettla. It was not pretty."

An Ozeibian Rock Spider was considered one of the four deadliest creatures known to exist in the High Coven Empire. No larger than a normal dinner plate, the venom within its body was so toxic that it could bring down prey ten times its size with a single bite. Yuri had seen several vampire troops bitten by this spider during training, and they were all dead within seconds of being bitten.

"Think of Dysea as this spider Vonis." Yuri spoke.

"She is that skilled?"

Yuri met his gaze. "Personally I would consider her more dangerous than Isabella. Not for any glaring physical skill, but because her mind is linked with not only Leonidas, but this dragon as well. She is much more cunning than Isabella, and skill wise I would rank her second only to Leonidas, though we have not seen the young Aricia in action yet since the events on Enurrua."

"I have heard many of the elves and others here on Elear refer to our half sister as Queen Isabella Yuri." Vonis spoke.

Yuri nodded slowly. "There is rumor that she will accept the role Leonidas wants her to assume and become his fourth Queen." She stated. "That is not something we can allow to happen. It would undermine our father in the most mocking of ways, and we don't need to inflame our own internal situation any more than necessary."

"Then the talk I have heard among the troops is true?" Vonis said softly. "We have dissidents within our ranks?"

"Every Empire has dissidents Vonis, and that is something that will never change. It is something you will come to learn as you grow in years and experience." Yuri answered. "How you deal with them is what is important. Right now that faction is miniscule. A few hundred at most, against billions and trillions who agree with and support our father's rule."

"I sincerely hope we crush the life from them when we find them." Vonis spoke.

Yuri laughed at his words and nodded. "We do brother, but that is why father agreed to the Kill Order on Isabella now. If she were to assume a major role within the Lycavorian Union, a role as Queen for instance, it would only spur further unrest and make those dissidents bolder. That is why she must die."

"I have had Jonas make some discrete inquiries of those we can trust here, and we have discovered they are about to undertake an investigation of some sort of religious cult in the southern region." Vonis said.

"Religious cult?" Yuri asked. "On Elear? That is odd."

Vonis nodded. "They apparently deem them a threat of some sort, but their investigation is proceeding very quietly right now."

"Are you able to find out anything more on it? Who leads it? Numbers and such. It might give us a means to nurture unrest within the Union." Yuri asked keenly interested in this now.

Vonis nodded. "I have several inquiries out right now with our contacts, but as you know ever since Deia's Intelligence purge, many of our major assets are no more. We have to rely on secondary contacts who consider themselves more important than they actually are."

Yuri smirked. “Yes... that is popping up all over.” She said in agreement. “The few deep agents we have left in the Union are laying back and not making any moves or unusual requests to maintain their cover. They will not be used until the time is right.”

“I will discover what I can Yuri.” Vonis spoke. “But since last year security has gone up across the board here in the Union.”

“Do what you can, but remember your main mission is to eliminate Isabella.” Yuri said. “Your safe house is secure?”

Vonis nodded with a smile. “Yes. I must say I was surprised. I wasn’t aware we were so well established within the Union Yuri.”

“Do not become overconfident Vonis.” Yuri scolded him. “Yes... we are well established inside the Union, but it has taken us millennia to achieve that. You must be careful in whatever you do. Now that Leonidas has established this new Intelligence unit, it will be their job to seek out and destroy our networks. We must not do anything to give them pause.”

“I will not fail you and father Yuri.” Vonis spoke.

“Do not worry about failing us Vonis.” Yuri told him quickly. “You must worry about your mission and remember to cover everything that you do. No matter how small it seems. The slightest mistake will bring Leonidas and his people down on you, and that is something you do not want. It will also expose us and lead to full scale war. That is not something we are prepared to risk right now while we are still building the clone vampire troops. I may hate his very being, but father is correct, we must respect his skills and what he commands. They are being far more cautious in their dealings, as you no doubt have noted, since that fool Chetak made the mistake of taking his youngest Queen. He knows we were involved offhandedly in supporting Chetak, but politically there is nothing he can do. Be mindful of all that you do Vonis, and cover your tracks well as I have said.”

“What of the search for the half breed?” Vonis asked.

Yuri shook her head. “The fools allowed the Hadarian wench to escape into Leonidas’s hands, but we have been able to determine she is in fact this Anja’s sister. Her ship revealed logs and charts for the last fifty years, with two locations that we have been unable to crack the encryption codes on.”

“Pirate codes?” Vonis asked curious now.

Yuri nodded. “It would appear so, though I’m surprised they have developed something so sophisticated that we can not crack it.”

Vonis shook his head. “It is too simple.” He said with a smile.

Yuri looked at him. “What?”

“It was something I read while in the academy.” Vonis spoke evenly. “The pirates and mercenaries are successful because they have developed a system of communication and encryption that is the opposite of what we expect. It is not too advanced for us Yuri... it’s too simple for us.”

“Too simple?” Yuri asked incredulously.

Vonis nodded with a smile. “I thought it was outrageous too, when I first heard it Yuri.” He spoke. “What you need to do is capture one of the Overseers. They will have the answers you seek.”

Yuri leaned back in her chair. “We do quite a bit of business with pirates and mercenaries Vonis, you know that. To violate that arrangement could very well do us more harm than good, not to mention turn all of the Wilds against us.”

“Then offer one something for him to break the code.” Vonis said calmly. “They are always looking for ways to enrich themselves. To give themselves an advantage over the other Overseers. We know who the six are yes?”

Yuri nodded. “We do.”

“Then pick the weakest and make him an offer to break the code. Credits, slaves, ships, weapons, whatever it takes.” Vonis said.

“If it is discovered we did this, it would turn the others against us and we would no longer be able to do business in the Wilds.” Yuri spoke. “All the assets we have there would be compromised.”

Vonis laughed. “If there is one thing I have learned sister, when father doesn’t want something to be discovered, it usually isn’t.”

Yuri's eyes narrowed slightly at his words. "You sound as if you speak from experience Vonis." She said. "That could be dangerous."

"He is our father Yuri." Vonis spoke.

Yuri nodded. "Yes he is. And he is also the High Lord of the Vampire Coven. Do not forget that. Xerxes did... and he is now dead because he thought himself better than our father."

"I do not think of myself as better than him Yuri. Quite the contrary in fact." Vonis said. "I have learned much from him, and there is much I still want to learn from him. And from you. But he has said himself... he will not live forever... and we must be prepared to step into his shoes when that day comes."

"Yes we must." Yuri replied. "But I have no intention of allowing anyone to hasten that day in coming Vonis."

"Nor do I." Vonis spoke in agreement.

"Good." Yuri said. "I would hate to have to tell our father that I issued a Kill Order on you as well."

"Don't take my words for something they are not Yuri." Vonis said quickly, seeing the look on Yuri's face. He had come to realize she was very protective of their father for some reason, but he knew that Yuri could be just as utterly ruthless as she needed to be.

"Then be more careful of your words brother." Yuri spoke to him. "Someone else might have mistaken them for something they were not."

Vonis bowed his head slightly. "My apologies." He replied.

Yuri waved her hand. "Enough of that... you are still very young Vonis... and I was also young and headstrong like you. You are our father's only son now, and I do not want to see you fall into the trap Xerxes did. He thought himself a god, better than our father, more powerful than him and unfortunately for Xerxes, Leonidas proved to him just how wrong he was. You must use your head first, be cunning, and be thoughtful in all that you do. Leonidas does not use brute force unless he needs too. He is far more cunning and ruthless than his father and grandfather ever were, and you must never underestimate those who follow him. They day you do that; you will end up like Xerxes. I only tell you this because it is the truth Vonis. It is why we have not already launched a full scale invasion. While it may not seem like Leonidas is preparing, rest assured he is. And he will not hesitate to use any means, any tactic or any weapon to defeat us."

"I will heed your words Yuri and I will take them to heart." Vonis told her.

"And make sure no one associated with you takes any elf to feed on!" Yuri spoke sternly. "That fool mistake has cost us more agents in the past than I can begin to tell you. Elves are far more resistant to us, and that increases with each generation. Unless you drain them completely, you will leave them alive and still able to identify you when they recover. If your supplies run low, as distasteful as it is, find an animal or two that will not be missed and then destroy the carcass."

Vonis nodded. "I will be careful."

"Your idea about the Overseer does have merit Vonis and I will see what father thinks." Yuri said. "He has always been careful when it comes to operating freely within the Wilds, and this is a decision he must make." She looked at her younger brother with a smile. "But I will support it because no matter the risks, it is a sound idea and I believe it is a risk we must take as well."

Vonis's face wanted to break into a smile, but he maintained his vampire composure and simply nodded. "I will keep our regular contacts as scheduled unless something comes up that force us to change them."

"I have another task for you while you are there Vonis, in addition to killing our half sister of course." Yuri spoke.

Vonis detected the change in her tone of voice and leaned closer. "Yes?"

"Find out how difficult it would be to steal one of these dragon eggs or a young dragon itself." Yuri told him. "You have seen them I take it?"

Vonis nodded once more. "Many times. They have free reign in the skies to go where they wish. They are a common sight over the capital now. It is strange really; I have noticed an odd affinity between the elves and dragons now that we are speaking of them."

"Strange how?" Yuri asked.

Vonis shook his head. "I can't really explain it. Just odd tremors within Mindvoice." He replied. "I am not as skilled in this area yet as you and father but I will try to be more attentive to this and give you a more complete description when I am able. Stealing an egg is more than likely out of the question however. They are

guarded by three layers of security, to include elves and Spartans, and all of the females who carry eggs I have learned rarely leave the main island that they call home now. Once the eggs hatch, most of them go to the main caravan that the dragon leader uses.”

“How did you find all this out?” Yuri asked.

Vonis smiled. “I purchased an information brochure.” He answered. “Apparently the dragon leader, they call her The Elder Mother, has allowed very limited public access to their main island. Abducting one of the smaller dragons might be possible. I will look into it and let you know.”

Yuri nodded. “Very well. Watch yourself Vonis, I do not wish to have to tell father you are dead because you did something foolish. And continue your reports as usual.” Yuri said.

Vonis smiled. “That is not something I wish you to tell him either Yuri. I will be careful, have no doubts of that. Always.”

“Your next scheduled report is for two days. Discover what you can about what we discussed and then contact me. Robert and I will be at my mountain retreat then, but I will leave our personal transmission channel open.”

Vonis nodded. “I will speak to you in a few days then.”

ELEAR ELF HOMEWORLD ROYAL PALACE

“You should have contacted me Bella!” Dysea complained as she watched Isabella walk into the main living area of the palace carrying two mugs of tea. “If they have issued this Kill Order on you as you suspect, it was foolish to take them alone.”

They were both dressed very casually, having shared a full dinner already with Mai, and discussing the events of the day with each other. Dysea didn’t blink when the female vampire stepped in off the patio entrance from outside. She was dressed in a loose fitting dark tan shirt and pants, with a lighter tan jacket over that. Her dark brown hair fell just past her shoulders, framing very stunning features and lightly tanned skin. Her dark eyes glowed with intelligence and she almost glided across the room with controlled confidence and grace.

“I have to agree Lady Isabella.” The young woman replied.

Dysea looked at her and nodded. “See... even Marci agrees with me.”

Isabella laughed and handed the tea to Dysea before settling onto the couch next to her as Marci took the smaller couch across from them.

Marci had the distinction of being one of only three pureblood vampires that were even more skilled than Isabella, and not just in the fighting arts. She was still a relatively young nine hundred and forty years old, but her ability to blend in and not be seen was unrivaled. Isabella had brought her and the three others, all male vampires, to Martin’s attention just before the birth of Androcles. Marci alone had the distinction of getting closer to Martin Leonidas without him sensing her than any other outside of Aricia. This skill he rapidly recognized and was now using. Marci traveled with Isabella and Dysea wherever they went, free to roam around at will and use her skills in however she deemed appropriate in order to gather intelligence and protect Dysea and Isabella. Though Isabella had protested at first, Martin had been adamant that Marci and the three males report only to him and take their instructions only from him. It took any semblance of responsibility for actions he might order away from them, and kept them free of suspicion.

“I was not alone. I had Lexi with me, who I might add, I feel completely comfortable with.” Isabella answered. “Once I determined the three vampires I saw were not going to intervene, I knew Lexi and I could handle a pair of Kochab Bounty Hunters.”

“But to be able to afford them is another matter.” Marci spoke. “I believe it is safe to assume that your father now deems you too dangerous to live. And by virtue of that, Dysea as well.”

Isabella nodded. “Oh I don’t doubt that.” She spoke. “Especially now that I have decided to officially take on a more active role as Queen.”

Dysea looked at her, emerald eyes growing wide. “You have decided?” She gasped.

Isabella nodded with a smile. “Yes. Today’s events made me see that this is where I truly belong. With you Dysea... with Martin. This is where destiny has brought me, and I intend to fully embrace that.”

Dysea leaned over quickly, oblivious to the fact that Marci was watching, and laid a searing kiss of pleasures to come on Isabella right there on the couch. A kiss that Isabella did not hesitate to return to her with equal feeling. Dysea gazed at her with passion filled eyes as they parted, and Isabella stroked her cheek lovingly.

“First however, we need to deal with what we have discovered today from Arzoal, and determine the best course of action.” Isabella spoke.

Dysea leaned back reluctantly but nodded. “Yes we do.”

They all heard the heavy thump outside, and then Iriral’s body was filling the doorway as she entered the room from her pen atop the palace. The elves had enlarged the doors into the palace enough for Torma’s bulk to enter when he was here, and Iriral was no where as large as he was. She walked in casually and settled her bulk to the floor near the couch her intelligent green eyes waiting.

“Iriral and I talked of this development on the return flight from Dragon Island. And she was able to share with me quite a bit of the history she learned from Arzoal as a child on this Artre.” Dysea said. “We determined that if this is indeed a cult that worships him and they have returned to Elear, we must discover what it is they intend and stop them. Among the foremost reasons why, is to keep the secret of the elves and dragons for as long as we can. At least until Arzoal and Nauta Melme deem it no longer feasible to do. I can tell you he will not be happy about this Kill Order.”

Isabella looked at the massive head of the dragon that she now considered a friend and confidant. “I think Iriral will agree with me when I say that is secondary to this possible cult we have forming.”

Iriral nodded. *As much as it pains me to say... yes.* She answered. *I believe that Isabella is in no real danger when she is among us... and we can limit her exposure if need be, but the possibility of what this cult could do is potentially more devastating.*

Dysea nodded slowly, though it left a bad taste in her mouth to agree. She knew what Bella was capable of, and though she loved her almost as much as she loved Martin, Iriral was right. “I agree.” She spoke slowly. “I don’t have to like it... but I agree.”

“Then I suggest we do not tell King Leonidas of this development until we have positive proof of the Coven’s intent.” Marci spoke. “I will not report to him what has happened because like you, I know what he will do.”

Isabella nodded. “He will descend on this world with thousands of Spartans until every assassin or Bounty Hunter that may be here is dead.”

Marci chuckled softly. “He is brutally efficient in that regard when he is protecting what he loves.” She said with some pride in her voice.

Iriral nodded. *Subtlety is a skill he allows to slip away when it concerns matters of the heart. As does Aricia and Anja, and you know they will be with him.*

Dysea smiled. “Very well... the Kill Order issue will remain with us then.” She spoke. “Marci I know you take your instructions from *Nauta Melme*... but I will need you to use your skills to find out how many vampire agents may be hiding on Elear.”

Marci nodded quickly. “I will tell him I am simply following up my primary objective which is to safeguard the two of you. He will not question how I do that. He never does.”

“I still believe we should visit this temple sight first.” Dysea said. “Speak with the Holy Ones who maintain it, see if we can discover anything before we move to Wainn for this official visit.”

“I have arranged with Lexi to have an entire *Mora* on standby alert from the moment we enter Wainn.” Isabella spoke. “Religious cults are notoriously unpredictable, and I want to be able to respond quickly should anything happen.”

Dysea nodded. “I have sent Miai back to *NORMYA’S LIGHT* for the evening to immerse herself in the history pads Alocgeid and L’tian gave us, as well as what Arzoal relayed to us here after we left her home. Her gift of her memory could well come in handy during this visit.” She looked at Marci. “I want her protected Marci. Can you arrange that?”

“That would depend on how much you want her protected Milady.” Marci answered.

“What do you mean?” Dysea asked. “She is my aide... and she is becoming like a surrogate child to Bella and I in many ways.”

Marci nodded. “Yes... I have noticed that both of you tend to be protective of her.”

“She was instrumental in helping us discover what we did during the debacle with Chetak.” Isabella spoke. “She is also very naïve in many respects as well. She was used by the Coven just as many were, only in a different way.”

“Then I will tell you she has shown an interest in someone on *NORMYA’S LIGHT*.” Marci spoke. “Two someone’s actually. They are twins.”

Dysea and Isabella both leaned forward. “Twins?” Dysea asked.

Marci nodded. “They are transfers from General Vengal’s unit of Drow scouts. They are part of the original group of half Drow half Vampire elves that first joined King Leonidas on Earth. They requested a transfer to an Intelligence posting, and to be perfectly honest, in my experience they could well turn out to be two of the best agents we have.”

“We did not know this.” Isabella stated.

Marci smiled. “And you probably would not have known had I not told you. Miai is aware of how you regard her, no matter how much the two of you try to hide it. And she is an exceptionally intelligent young woman. She has not told you about them for fear you will chase them away.”

“What of these Drow?” Dysea asked quickly.

“They are unique.” Marci spoke. “The Coven experiments on them forged a unique bond between them, and they speak with one voice. If one feels pain, the other feels pain, and vice versa. They are attracted to her... as most young men are... but not just because she is beautiful. They know how you regard her... and they have actually spent many hours with her in the library on *NORMYA’S LIGHT* helping her to enhance this memory skill she has. I believe they would be an excellent choice for Miai if you wish to protect her. Their interest in her is more than just physical from what I have witnessed and heard.”

Dysea looked at Isabella for a long moment. *We can’t protect her forever Bella.* She spoke within Mindvoice.

I trust Marci Dysea. If she believes these two will provide her the protection she needs than I say we let them and see where their relationship takes them. If anywhere. Isabella spoke.

Dysea nodded and turned back to Marci. “Make it so Marci.” She said. “As long as they know, Miai’s safety is their first priority.”

Marci got to her feet. “I will advise them as soon as I return to the ship. I will meet with you both before you depart for the temple site tomorrow afternoon.” She spoke before bowing her head and moving through the balcony doors Iriral had come through.

Dysea turned to Iriral. “Why don’t you fill us in on everything Arzoal told you and then the three of us will come up with a way to discover what this cult is up too.”

APO PRIME ISLAND PALACE

Her last trip to this planet had nearly resulted in her being captured and tossed into a very dark prison cell. She had been smuggling black market weapons at that time, and the Spartan authorities had discovered her contact and point of sale. She had only escaped due to her piloting skills, which allowed her to shadow a larger Lycavorian cruiser as it took to orbit. Once past the defensive platforms she had been able to make her way free, but it had been a very nerve wracking six hours.

They had returned yesterday afternoon, coming directly here to this large lake island that was two kilometers from the actual main estate. The island itself was huge in its own right, but the home they had come to was in no way what Sangria had expected of a royal palace. Yes it was massive, three floors of massive, with the towering hundred meter high cathedral main entrance accenting who lived here. The room she had been given was huge, with a balcony that overlooked the glass like surface of the lake, and as she stood now with the mug of coffee letting her sea green eyes take in the terrain all around, she noticed what appeared to be a huge rock cave not too far away. There were worn paths heading off in every direction through the thick timber, and

it took her only a moment to figure out that this was a palace of Lycavorians. They most likely ran through the forests surrounding the palace as wolves.

As if to punctuate that thought she turned as movement below her caught her keen eye and she looked down, her eyes opening wider as she saw the giant black wolf appear from the edge of the timber. It was the first time she had seen Martin in wolf form, and to say he was impressive was an understatement Sangria did not want to make. Looking at him, his overall size, which was massive, and the muscles that rippled beneath that night black fur, he was down right frightening. Playfully nipping on his heels was the Persian red haired wolf that was much smaller than him, but still muscular and a good sized wolf as the Spartans she had seen so far in her life were. Sangria knew right away who it was, and she watched fascinated as Anja moved up next to Martin and nuzzled his throat with her head, her tongue flicking out to lick the shiny black hair under his muzzle. He was twice her size, and much more thickly muscled, and he lowered his head to return the licks, his long wolf tongue bathing her muzzle in gentle caresses and going to lick the back of her neck and her flanks. Even from this distance and height above them Sangria could see Anja's long tail twitching in delight at Martin's attentions to her.

Anja had left with him the evening before, Sangria watching as they shifted into wolf form and disappeared into the timber, and she wondered if they were just returning. She remembered his words to her on the ship, and she was torn between what she should do. She had never trusted anyone in her life, and that is why she had lived as long as she had, yet these people trusted each other completely. They were so relaxed with each other, so completely open. Anja had given her a tour of the palace and the grounds when they had arrived yesterday, the Spartan Belen always coming into sight and disappearing again just when you thought he had left them alone. Anja had shown her the inside of the immense dragon cave where she had seen three dragon hatchlings under the tutelage of their newly returned parents as they learned how to fly. She found it odd initially that the only way to the island was by flying on a dragon, something she had refused to do upon arriving. She had taken a water Lifter from the small pier with the second Hadarian that always seemed to be in her sister's company. The dark haired Seanna was quiet and did not speak to her other than to answer a few questions. Sangria had seen Anja and Seanna holding hands on the ship, even sharing a passionate kiss when the two of them thought they were alone, and it was then that she realized this was her sister's lover. It was difficult to get her mind wrapped around everything, and even three days later, she was still shocked at what she had so far discovered.

This King Leonidas was the center of it all Sangria knew. Her sister, the elf female and this Aricia all shared the same room and the same bed in the palace and on the ship. Seanna also stayed in the room with them, but she didn't know if the reserved Hadarian actually shared a bed with the others. This was common knowledge among everyone it seemed, and when she had gone to their double stateroom on the ship the morning before to meet them for breakfast, she found everyone moving around in various states of dress without the slightest sign of embarrassment. Sangria discovered that the King and Aricia had a child, a very active young boy who everyone regarded as their child, and at dinner the night before she had watched as Anja, For'mya and Aricia had passed the baby back and forth as the evening progress, almost as if they were all his mother.

The palace itself was well defended she knew, even if the majority of the defenses could not be seen. There was a smaller building hidden by trees several hundred meters from the main house, and she discovered this is where the contingent of Spartans stayed. Aricia's mother had a small apartment connected to the palace and had free reign to go anywhere, since it was she who happily cared for her grandson and the dragon hatchlings while Aricia and Martin were gone with Torma and Isheeni. Dasha was furiously protective of both her grandson and the hatchlings, and if you came to the island while the King and Queen were gone and she did not know you, the Spartan security force was quickly descending upon whoever dared show up.

"They like to run in the mornings." The female voice spoke softly from behind her. "Aricia goes with them if Androcles has not yet woken up."

Sangria turned quickly, almost spilling her coffee, and she saw the female elf behind her dressed in a thin, practically see through robe, her golden hair wild and flowing around her shoulders, a mug of steaming tea in her delicate hands. "How did you...?"

For'mya motioned with her eyes. "You left your door open when you returned with your coffee." She said. "I thought perhaps you needed something."

“Do... do all your guests get free reign when they are here?” Sangria asked.

For'mya smiled. “No... guests stay at the main palace estate on the main land, not here on the island. You are not a guest however, you are family. That is different.” She answered. “All of our family stays here on the island.”

Sangria looked at her. “All of them?”

For'mya laughed softly. “We've only had everyone here once before, and that was when we returned from Earth after Androcles was born. It was quite the event, everyone at the breakfast table in the morning. There had to be forty of us, including my father and mother, and all but one of Martin's half brothers and sisters. The laughter of children filled the grounds.”

“Does she always stay here?” Sangria asked.

“She splits time between here and Hadaria, but she spends most of her time here yes.” For'mya answered. “As does Dysea and Isabella. They are on Elear right now conducting business. There are palaces on each of these worlds, and we spend as much time together as schedules and such permit, but this place is where we are truly at peace. Here and in Sparta on Earth. Sparta is our retreat, our safe haven from reality in a way.”

“And you?”

“I am the Bound Concubine to the King and Queen. This is my home. Wherever they are is my home.” For'mya replied easily. “This is where I belong, where I was always meant to be. I couldn't imagine myself anywhere else now.”

Sangria turned quickly at the two soft popping sounds and the flashes of silver/white light and she saw Martin and Anja pulling on the clothes they had left by the edge of the timber before moving into the palace below them. “I've... I've never had a family.” She said softly.

“You do now Sivana.” For'mya spoke.

She turned and looked at her. “Why do all of you insist on calling me that?” She asked.

“That is your name.” For'mya spoke holding up her hand quickly before Sangria could make a retort. “Let me finish.” She said softly. “Your life as a smuggler is over Sivana, you must realize that. Martin Leonidas will keep his promise to you; he has never broken a promise to anyone in his life.”

“You... you know about that?” Sivana asked surprised.

For'mya nodded. “There is precious little Martin keeps from us.” She said. “You must understand that your life as a smuggler or whatever you referred to yourself as, that life is over no matter how you look at it.” She continued. “You can not go into the Wilds anymore. After our actions at Gellen Station there are very few places you will be welcome. And the High Coven would pick you up the moment they discovered you had come back into the Wilds and unfortunately you would be dead within hours if that happened.”

“Why is finding this girl so important?” Sivana asked.

“Lisisa is Martin's daughter. He told you that.” For'mya said. “Would you not want to do anything you could do to find a lost child?”

“He said she's a hybrid.”

For'mya nodded. “Yes... the perfect merging of vampire and wolf.” She said. “The Coven wants to use her DNA and genes to improve their clone troops; at least that is what we believe. They will get what they need from her and then kill her.”

“What does he want with her?”

“She is his daughter, no matter the blood.” For'mya said. “You will find that Martin Leonidas is very family oriented. I believe it stems from having his childhood ripped from him, his father and grandfather killed, his mother lost to him for three millennia. There are few he considers family, those you met originally, Daniel Simpson and his mates. Yuriko. They are part of his family, as Martin sees it. And he is obsessively protective of his family.”

“What does that make me?”

For'mya stepped closer. “You Sivana, you are the twin sister to one of his Queens. The Queen who has known him longer than anyone and perhaps secretly the one he cherishes most of all after Aricia.”

“That doesn't seem to bother you.” Sivana spoke.

For'mya shook her head. “Why should it? He loves us all... and we all love him and hold pieces of his heart.”

“It's just... it's just hard to imagine.” Sivana spoke.

“You are a Princess of Hadaria by the same birth right that makes Anja Queen. The moment your existence became known to us you became part of his family. Why do you think we went to such risk to retrieve you? He violated seven Galactic Commerce Laws, established with the nine other free empires not under High Coven control or influence by sending a warship into the Wilds. Our *DTs*... we call them Dragon Transports... they *are* considered warships. His actions also violated three treaty stipulations with the Bontawillian Alliance which he will now have to smooth over by his actions.”

Sivana looked at her. “The Bontawillian aren’t going to be happy about that.” She said. “They do a lot of business in the Wilds.”

For’mya nodded. “No they will not... but now you are becoming aware of just what he risked, what Anja risked by coming to get you. Anja brought you here to Apo Prime first, to avoid having you exposed to what family you do have that remains on Hadaria. I believe your great grandfather Fuleos will be arriving today, but she is shielding you as best as she can from the others to give you time to adjust. The Hadarian Ministry is screaming to see you, because only you and Anja have the unique ability to draw from life all around you to power your healing gift. She is protecting you from a world you are not accustomed too, and trying to give you the time you need to make a decision.”

“What decision?” Sivana asked.

“She has cried herself to sleep in Martin, Aricia and my arms the last two nights over the life that fate forced you to endure. She blames herself in some fashion for this. She is angry that she was born first and not you.” For’mya spoke softly. “Angry that she had a sister she never knew, angry because of what has been lost between you and her. What you could have had. She is a hard individual outwardly Sivana, when she needs to be. She can be just as utterly obstinate and violent as Martin at times, but she is one of the most compassionate people I have ever met in my lifetime. Most of all she is angry because fate may take you away from her once again because of the life you have endured.”

“Because of what he offered me?” Sivana asked surprised.

For’mya nodded. “Yes. She understands and agrees with what Martin offered you, but she is terrified you will accept that offer and she will never see you again. Never have the chance to truly know her sister.”

“He won’t do what he said he would do.” Sivana dismissed For’mya. “I may be many things, but I am not stupid. He’s not going to just give me one of those ships no matter what he says.”

For’mya didn’t take offense and simply smiled. “Come with me for a moment.” She said.

Sivana followed her into the large stateroom and watched as she went straight to the holo imaging transmission disc. She keyed in several buttons on the panel on the wall and the disc on the floor came alive with the figure of an older Lycavorian in coveralls.

“Commander For’mya!” The Lycavorian exclaimed with a friendly smile. “I was going to contact you this afternoon. I was able to finish that plasma reroute that you started. I’m having all the other *DTs* tweaked in the same manner. It provides you an additional eighteen percent of power.”

For’mya smiled and nodded. “I trust you will do your usual outstanding work Chief. I’m contacting you to inquire about the ship that the King ordered.”

The Chief nodded in the transmission. “He changed the instructions from an *AT* to a *DT*, but we are almost done. We’ve striped all the sensitive military data cores and codes from it, and replaced them with the most advanced civilian style with updated charts and Jump Gate coordinates. The weapons, shields and engines are all brand spanking new, and the Shroud is in perfect condition. I uploaded over a thousand transponder codes, just as he asked, and it has three months worth of rations loaded on it now. She’s carrying a full weapons load as well. We have some minor things left to do, but I’ll deliver it to the island tomorrow as he wanted.”

For’mya nodded. “Thank you Chief.” She said. “Do not worry about delivering it. I will come tomorrow and pick it up myself.”

The man nodded. “She’ll be ready.” He spoke.

For’mya turned to Sivana as the transmission faded and she smiled at the expression on her face. “I told you... he does not make promises unless he intends to keep them. Yuriko has told me of your advanced piloting skills and you will have no trouble flying the *DT*. They are really no different than our *STRIKER ATs*, only constructed a little bigger to carry a dragon, rider and pilot.”

“This is all quite a lot to take in.” Sivana spoke.

For'mya nodded. "I'm sure it is." She said. "Perhaps you should try letting someone inside that wall you have built. You might be surprised." For'mya sipped her tea. "We usually eat breakfast in an hour, and then he will be in his office for most of the day getting reports and playing with his son. Aricia and I are going into the city to do some shopping. It is her mother's birthing day next week and she wants to get her something different. Anja will be in her office at the main estate with Martin I'm sure. They will complain endlessly about politics and having to deal with anything diplomatic. It's actually quite humorous to listen too, the two of them together when they complain."

"He'll just let me go?" Sivana asked stunned.

For'mya smiled and nodded her head. "If that is your wish, yes." She said. "Join us for breakfast... the Oracle Helen is an incredible cook, and when Martin helps her they actually sing in the kitchen. That is the fun part."

Sivana couldn't help but laugh at the picture in her head of the big bad Lycavorian King singing in the kitchen. "That might be something I need to see." She said.

For'mya nodded. "Good. I'll see you there."

MAIN PALACE ESTATE ON MAINLAND

"She is bigger than Aelnala sire, but as a pair they are inexperienced together. She's faster but we have a tighter turn radius and our ceiling is much higher than theirs." Isra was speaking in the transmission. "Of course we don't know how long they have been together or how far they can advance either."

Martin sat on the couch in his office, Andreus in one of the chairs next to the couch, General Vistr and Admiral Riall also sitting on one of the other couches, Deia between them. Thr'won occupied the couch next to Martin. The transmission disc was centered between the pieces of furniture so that everyone could see it easily.

"You've secured the Administrators Commander?" Deia asked quickly.

Isra nodded. "Tarifa and Aihola are with me and General Lynwe has Administrator Selene covered like a blanket. She is already complaining she is bumping into security no matter where she turns."

Martin grinned. "I bet I know what Lynwe told her." He said.

Isra smiled within the transmission. "I won't repeat it Milord." He said. "Tarifa and Aihola are not happy either, but they were with me when we encountered this strange dragon and rider and they saw what we faced. They understand."

"And you are sure about these creatures?" Martin asked.

Isra nodded again. "I double checked the data banks. These are the same creatures that you fought in the tunnel Martin. I thought I recognized them from the memory pads you entered into the archives, and after checking the files and conferring with Cody in Sparta, I knew I was right. He was with you that day, and he is even now coming from Sparta with an entire *Mora* of Centurions. They will enter the tunnel where you exited with Daniel and Anuk fourteen months ago and begin sweeping the entire system."

"How many did you see?" Martin asked.

"I saw only three personally, but Lohana is certain she saw at least a dozen more." Isra answered. "They call you Black Hair sire."

"Yeah well I'm sure that's not all they call me." Martin spoke getting to his feet. "They were controlling Androcles with their minds somehow, forcing him to kill and maim for them. He was not a weak Mindvoicer was he Thr'won?"

The Elf Mage from Sparta who had been turned so long ago shook her head, her sky blue eyes alert. "I inquired of Panos last evening when we spoke. Androcles was considered a Tier Three Mindvoicer sire. Since the Oracle has returned to us she has reclassified everyone into the Tier Levels used in Sparta." Thr'won answered. "Panos also said Androcles was very strong willed to begin with. I did not have direct contact with him except for a few short moments, but for them to have controlled him in such a manner...?" Thr'won shook her head. "It implies Mindvoice abilities above average."

"Isra... Walter is preparing a ship for return to Earth with Thr'won." Martin spoke. "She has learned a lot in a year here with Helen, and she was also working with others on these murders for you correct?"

Isra nodded. "Yes sire."

“She’s returning to Sparta with everything she has learned up until now, which is considerable to say the least.” Martin spoke. “Androcles was Walter’s brother, and once he found out these creatures that defiled his brother were involved he demanded I send him as well. What else do you need brother?”

“Sire... Aelnala and I agree we can not match this pair head to head. We will have to resort to more unorthodox methods. We have the advantage in our ceiling height and turning radius, and our experience together should be enough to avoid a full confrontation. We have devised a way to use this effectively, at least for a time.” Isra looked at him in the transmission. “Another Bonded Pair if one is available sire, preferably a Firespitter or Hybrid. That is what we need.”

Martin returned to his seat and leaned back on the couch and gazed at the transmission, his mind going over all of his options, and not really liking any of them. He smelled her before anyone because she was his soulmate, and with her was the scent of sweet orchids. Aricia and For’mya were returning from their shopping trip. Martin turned and looked at Andreus.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *You are her brother Andreus.*

Andreus nodded. [Mindvoice Shielded] *And you are her soulmate Martin. Behind you, there are none more powerful than she and Isheeni. The drop in skill level after you and my sister is dramatic to Isra and me.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Not as much as you might think Andreus.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Do you still fear for her Martin? Even now, knowing what the two of you mean to each other? What you have been through together.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *No.* Martin answered without question. *We are strongest when we are together, but I know there are times when we will need to be apart. At least for short periods of time.*

Andreus nodded. [Mindvoice Shielded] *And so does Aricia. She has become so much like you sire, even our mother sees this. And if she discovered this opportunity arose and you refused to allow her and Isheeni to go, she would be very angry with you. Both of them would. You once told me all of you swore to each other never to put any of them above the whole.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *We did.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Aricia and Isheeni can be there in days. If we had to turn another Bonded Pair around it would take weeks. They can do this and you know it.* Andreus said.

Martin turned when he felt Aricia enter the room quietly. They could always tell when the other was having a private conversation, and her azure blue eyes went right to where he sat, full of questions. For’mya stood beside her, their arms empty of the gifts they had bought. Martin turned back to Isra in the transmission.

“Isra... I have no Bonded Pairs that can turn around and make it to Earth to be with you in less than three weeks, more than likely four or five. They have spread to the edges of the Union, and only report back weekly.” Martin said quickly, seeing Isra’s head drop knowingly. “Aricia and Isheeni can be to Earth in four, possibly five days if they leave tonight with Walter and Thr’won.”

Martin saw Isra’s head come up beaming in a smile, and Aricia’s azure blue eyes shone with love and devotion as she looked at him.

“Sire... that would be... that would be outstanding!” Isra spoke quickly. “With Isheeni’s speed and her ability to control her flame, and Queen Aricia’s Mindvoice powers, that would more than level the playing field.”

Martin nodded and got to his feet. “Then until they arrive find out what you can about these creatures and the humans helping them.” He said. “If they were able to control Androcles in such a way, they are not to be taken lightly. And neither are the humans who work with them.”

Isra nodded. “I understand sire.”

“And Isra...” Martin looked at the transmission. “Do not deal with them kindly.” He spoke in a cold tone of voice. “They are targeting those I consider family, and I don’t like that.”

“No Milord... neither do I.” Isra spoke.

“Aricia will make contact with you when they are enroute to Earth later tonight.” Martin spoke. “*Tur anzen aur Rotona Fervan.*” (Be safe my Bounded Brother)

Isra bowed his head. “*Mornar forn aur Revik.*” He answered. (And you my King)

The transmission faded from view and Martin looked at those gathered in the room with him. “We’ve been at it for four hours folks. I need to speak with Aricia and then Anja and I need to make the next contact alone. Can we finish this tomorrow?”

There were no questions as they got to their feet. Deia stepped up to Martin and met his gaze. "It is a good choice sire." She said softly so only he could hear. "She is more than capable and you should have no fears."

Martin nodded and leaned over to kiss Deia on the cheek. "We will need to meet with the Bontawillian Ambassador tomorrow morning." He said. "I don't want to let that go too long before we smooth things over with them."

Deia nodded. "I'll arrange it." She spoke. "Be careful when you and Anja are making that last transmission. It will probably be monitored on the other end."

Martin nodded. "That's why I had you tell Armetus to stand by with his jammers."

Deia nodded and touched his arm. "I'll see you in the morning."

Martin waited until Deia had walked out before turning to look at Aricia. She stepped up to him quickly and embraced him tightly, stretching up on her toes to kiss him while For'mya watched with a smile.

"Isheeni and I were beginning to think you and Torma were shielding us." Aricia said playfully.

Martin shook his head and ran his fingers over her cheek, watching her eyes close for a moment. "No... that is not something we will ever do." He said softly. "Besides... the two of you would find a way around it anyway."

Aricia laughed and squeezed him. "Yes we would." She spoke.

"The four of you have trained together before, and Aelnala and Isheeni were a good pairing. You and Isra work in tandem, and don't try and take on this dragon alone." Martin spoke. "Your primary mission is to find out all you can while protecting Tarifa and the others."

Aricia nodded. "I know." She said. "You have taught me much Beloved. I will not be reckless. We will not be reckless, at least not to the point of ignorance."

Martin laughed and lifted her into his arms kissing her hard. Aricia pressed her body tightly against his and relished in the feel of his arms around her. After a long moment they parted and stared at each other.

"For'mya... I want you to pick our second best DT flight crew to go with her and Isheeni." Martin spoke. "You and Endith will be needed with Anja and I."

For'mya nodded quickly and turned to exit the office quickly. Martin set Aricia down and took her face in his hands.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I love you Aricia. You are my soul.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *And you are my heart.* She reached up and took his face in her hands as well. *We will only do what we need to do until you and Torma arrive. I am not foolish enough to think we can defeat this dragon alone if what Isra says is true. And we have many more children to have Beloved.*

Martin chuckled. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Yes we do. And I will enjoy making those children.*

Aricia kissed him. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Not more than I will.* She spoke before turning quickly and heading out of the office. *I will contact you tonight Beloved.*

Martin watched her walk out and he smiled to himself. He moved across his office to the single door and passed his hand over it. It slid open and he moved the three meters between doors, his hand wave opening the second door and he entered Anja's office. Each of them had offices on the main floor here, and all of them were connected in this fashion. Anja looked over from the small transmission disc she was speaking to and Martin saw the image of her Aunt. He remained silent as he went to the small counter and poured himself a fresh cup of coffee before taking the couch across from her desk.

Anja turned back to the transmission after flashing him a stunning smile and twinkle in her jade colored eyes. "I understand Aunt Ambra... truly I do... however I will not expose her to everything at once."

"She is our family too Anja." The woman spoke.

Anja nodded and Martin could see she was keeping a tight lid on her temper. "Yes she is, but she has experienced more than you know, and thrusting her into our world so quickly is a shock I do not want her to experience first."

"She is a Hadarian Healer Anja, and like you, only she has the ability to draw from the very life around her to augment her power. We..."

"She is my sister!" Anja snapped now. "And like me, she is not some test subject! I did not allow myself to be poked and prodded to discover how that part of our DNA works, and I will not allow Sivana to be subjected to it either! And that is final! Why is it that only Eurin seems to understand this, and not even my own

family will listen to me? She remains with me until Sivana deems it the right time to enter into the life she has waiting for her. You can come here to see her if you wish, but that is all I will allow. She will not return with me to Hadaria until she is ready.”

“All you will allow?” Ambra demanded. “You have no right to do that!”

“I have every right!” Anja barked.

“You spend more time there than you do here!” Ambra snapped. “Our people have accepted you are part wolf Anja, but that does not mean...”

Anja leaned forward in her chair. “Stop what you are going to say right there Aunt Ambra!” She growled. “You are about to cross the line into the area you don’t want to go. I already know what you think of me being mated to Martin, as well as my relationship with Seanna and Aricia and the others. And I’ve told you before; your opinion does not matter to me. You seem to be the only one who holds that opinion.”

“I am your mother’s sister!” Ambra snapped.

“Yes you are... but that does not give you the right to criticize me or my chosen path.” Anja said. “We have already been through this Ambra, why do you insist on making your opinions known to me when the Hadarian Council put all of these concerns to rest the last time I was there for my Ascension.”

“I did not agree with their decision.” Ambra spoke.

“You didn’t then and you don’t now have any say in the matter!” Anja snapped.

“I am still a member of the Royal family!” Ambra almost shouted.

“Yes you are... something you remind me of every time I speak with you.” Anja stated. “This conversation is over Aunt Ambra. You are welcome to come here and see Sivana, spend as much time with her as you wish, but I will not allow you to exercise any authority over her life. She will be given enough time to make her own decisions about her future! Not you.”

“And what if she decides to leave Apo Prime and continue the life of a smuggler and criminal?” Ambra demanded.

“It will be her decision!” Anja barked. “Enough... we are done. I have other matters that need my attention, and Martin is waiting for me!”

“He can wait!” Ambra hissed. “Your association with him... your relationship with him has changed you Anja.”

Anja shook her head. “No it hasn’t.” She answered. “You just haven’t taken the time to get to know me as you should have, before beginning to exert whatever illusion of control you think you have. Please make arrangements with my office here at the main Palace Estate if you decide to come here to see Sivana. Have a nice day Aunt Ambra.”

Anja touched the panel and the transmission vanished before her Aunt could continue the conversation. “Oh I so hate that woman!” Anja snapped. “She’s a controlling bitch! Even our grandfather can’t stand her, and he likes everyone.”

Martin smiled from his chair. “She always gets you worked up Anja, you know that. Why do you let her get you angry?” He said.

Anja looked at him as he sat there gazing at her. “She just gets under my skin.”

Martin set aside his mug and got up to walk around her desk and lean against the edge looking at her in the chair. “Now tell me what’s really bothering you Anja.”

Anja got up out of her chair and moved to the large window that offered a view of one half of the multicolored flower gardens and the lake beyond them. “I have only just discovered her Marty, and I fear I will lose her again.”

Martin stepped up behind her and pulled her back against him, wrapping his arms around her upper body. She leaned into him without pause, relishing in the sensations his arms caused, as he released enough of his aura to surround her and he nuzzled the back of her neck lovingly. Anja’s eyes closed and she smiled as she pressed back against him.

“I don’t think she will make that decision Anja.” He spoke softly. “I truly think she is discovering for the first time that she is not locked into the life she was leading. That she can have more.”

“I hope so.” Anja said softly.

Martin leaned over even more and inhaled deeply of her honey like scent, feeling it fill him and detecting the sweetness of it even more now. Anja leaned back against him harder as he nuzzled her neck and

brushed his lips across the back of her ear. "I am going to love you senseless tonight Anja." He spoke softly in her ear.

Anja smiled at his words. "You always love me senseless Marty." She said. "You're just saying that now because I've come into phase so much sooner than anyone thought and you think you can have your way with me." She turned quickly in his arms and looked up at him.

"I will have my way with you." He told her confidently.

Anja grinned. "Me so horny!" She imitated the age old saying from their days as Navy SEALs on Earth, while she ground her hips against his.

Martin burst out laughing at her antics and pulled her close to him, feeling her arms wrap around his waist as she joined him in the laughter. Anja pushed her head against his chest as his arms tightened around her.

"God I love you so much Martin." She said softly.

"I love you just as much Anja." He told her as his fingers stroked her thick Persian red hair. "Never doubt that."

Anja smiled and leaned back to look at him, her eyes smoldering with passion. "I think we should get this damn transmission over with so you can take me back to the island and show me just how much you love me."

Martin smiled. "I like the sound of that!" He said.

EARTH EDEN CITY AIRFIELD

"Is all this really necessary Isra?" Tarifa asked.

Isra turned to look at her and Aihola as he shifted something on the small map chart table he was leaning over.

The *STRIKER DT* was now parked on the tarmac at the airfield, with an outer ring of Spartans and Dragoons patrolling a large circle of half a kilometer around the ship. They were only three hundred meters from the large secondary command bunker that was protected by heavy turrets and razor wire. The ramp of the *DT* was down, but Aelnala's bulk rested at the bottom of the ramp, gnawing on another of the large bones that she always seemed to have a supply of. Isra had made it a point to purchase as many of the monstrous leg and thigh bones as he could before leaving Apo Prime. They came from a gigantic animal he had seen only once in his lifetime. A mammal similar to pictures he had seen in the history archives of the Woolly Mammoth from Earth's long ago past. They were plentiful on one of the six frozen worlds within the Union, and had become a delicacy for all of the dragons of Mjolnir's Hand.

"Yes." He replied instantly. "Your apartment suite is too exposed. Even if Aelnala stayed on the top, this dragon and rider could hit us before we knew he was there."

"You are so sure he will try?" Aihola asked.

Isra met her gaze. "I would." He answered. "Now that we have discovered them, it would be pointless I think for him to keep killing unknown elves and leaving these messages carved into their flesh. We know they exist, and we know they are after the both of you. Aelnala and I can protect you better if we limit the exposure that you do have to danger."

"We will not be frightened into hiding like rats Isra!" Tarifa snapped stiffly.

"And I do not intend to let you go into hiding Tarifa. You and Aihola need to be seen, to show you are not afraid, but that does not mean we have to be foolish in our actions. You will conduct yourselves as you always do, we will just assume a more pro-active role in your security." Isra explained to them.

"Staying here on your ship is hiding." Aihola spoke sternly.

Isra shook his head. "No... it is smart. Lynwe has done the same with Selene. I have told you everything Martin and I discussed. These are the same creatures that took control of a strong minded Spartan and forced him to kill for them. They are not to be taken lightly, and it is obvious they hold a grudge against the King for his actions that day. The humans obviously do not appreciate your actions a year ago Tarifa. It is understandable they have forged an alliance of sorts. The question remains... who is this dragon and rider... how did they get here to earth... and are they under the control of these creatures. In order to discover all this I need you as well

protected as is possible, and unfortunately now that a dragon is involved, that means you both remain within shouting distance of either myself or Aelnala. That means sleeping here on my ship, and limiting your exposure outside of your duties as Administrators of Earth. At least until Aricia arrives with Isheeni. Then we will be on more even footing.”

“I thought you said that this dragon is bigger than Aelnala.” Tarifa spoke. “We’ve seen Isheeni Isra, granted she is not much smaller than Aelnala, but how does that improve our chances? You said yourself that one on one only Martin and Torma could beat them.”

Isra nodded and smiled. “Isheeni and Aricia have been together longer than any Bonded Pair.” He spoke. “She is also the fastest dragon living right now. Aelnala is sure that this unknown Firespitter won’t be able to touch Isheeni in speed or maneuverability. She also holds the distinction of having the hottest and longest fire breathing ability of any Firespitter, not to mention she can project it much further than our unknown dragon. And next to Martin, you both know that Aricia is the most powerful Mindvoicer alive.”

“Your quarters are tiny Isra and there is only one bed.” Tarifa spoke softly. “We... we don’t want to...”

“Sleep without you.” Aihola finished the statement.

Isra looked at them both for a long moment, struggling to maintain his control. Even after an entire year of training and control, having both of them so close, and knowing that they desired him as much as he wanted them, it was testing the limits of his willpower. Tarifa had touched him five times since yesterday with her female aura, and though Aihola’s was considerably weaker due to her vampire blood, her own aura had hit him even more than that. His blood was burning for them badly, stronger even than when he and Tarifa were on the ship. The difference now was that he could sense it, feel it pulsing from the both of them for him. As strong an Alpha male as he was, even he would not be able to resist their auras for long.

Isra turned fully to face them, pulling them both into his embrace. He nuzzled their elfin ears quickly and firmly, and released just a tiny portion of his aura on them, feeling them clutch him tighter.

“I have waited over a year to feel you both in my arms.” Isra spoke softly. “I have dreamed of the night I make you mine Aihola. The night I have you both all to myself. As much... as much as I would like nothing better than to take you both right now, and make you sing my name to the stars, it would be foolish when there is such danger to you.” He looked at them, his violet eyes bright in the lighting inside the *DT*. “And your father would not approve.”

Tarifa and Aihola snorted. “To blazes with my father Isra! We... we love you! We want only you! I don’t care what my father thinks!” Tarifa spat.

Isra shook his head slowly. “No... you misunderstand. Your father will not keep me from making you both mine when that time comes, but your father is a great man Tarifa, and he has every right to feel as he does. He would not approve of me putting you in danger by... by dropping our guard right now.”

“Isra... he does not know what happened between you and I. He doesn’t know you nearly died protecting me.” Tarifa said. “Nya Istel and I... we never told him as we told my mother. I don’t...”

“We didn’t think it mattered.” Aihola finished squeezing Tarifa’s hand within hers in a show of love and support. “Until we were able to bury Dekton, it was not the first thing that we felt we needed to share with everyone. Once... once we finally let go of our past... it was too late. At least we thought it was.”

“He is doing what any father would do.” Isra spoke. “And I will not hold that against him in any way. Whether it is tomorrow, the next day, or next week, when the time is right we will be together. I have waited this long, I can wait a few more days.”

“What if we can’t?” Tarifa asked. “My... my blood burns for you Isra. And now... now all that I am burns for you, including my heart!”

“As does mine.” Aihola stated. “I should not... I should not feel it as I do. What I feel is not because Tarifa and I are so tightly bound together... this is different. This is stronger than anything I have ever felt, and it tells me I want you.”

“Why are you two making this so hard?” Isra asked with a grin, taking a deep breath and allowing their combined scents to flow through him. “I will not endanger my future with you... our future together, by surrendering to what my blood wants me to do. As does the King, I need to control my instincts at times. This is one of those times.”

Isra is right. Aelnala’s voice echoed in their heads and they turned to see her looking at them from the bottom of the ramp. *You must restrain what you all want so passionately. At the very least until Aricia and*

Isheeni arrive to help us. Then... then I will personally smash all those who try to interrupt you. Now... now we must remain on our guard.

We... we are sorry Aelnala. Aihola spoke.

Aelnala shook her large head. *What has happened was not done with malice, as I first thought Little One. It is I who should apologize to you and Tarifa. You are together now, as it should be. To insure that you are never separated again we must be vigilant for the time being. If you must... the grass in my pen is soft and warm. Sleep there and this way you can at least share each other's warmth. I will stand guard this night.*

Aelnala... Isra began to speak.

You have been away from each other for too long my Bonded Brother. Sleep with them in your arms, let the peace that brings you all ease the ache for each other, if only for a time. Aelnala spoke. *I will be at this bone for at least five more hours, and then I will take to the sky for an hour or so. All of you need sleep... now go, and leave me to my snack.*

Isra looked back at Tarifa and Aihola and smiled. *I have learned not to argue with her over these last months.* He spoke to them. He took their hands. *And she is right. Come... we do need the sleep. You have meetings to attend tomorrow.*

So wrapped up in themselves, and with the wind blowing up towards the cockpit, they didn't see or hear Tareif on the short flight of steps that opened into the cockpit and was the secondary entrance to the DT. He had heard every word, and he slowly eased back from entering the cockpit and lowered himself back to the tarmac. He needed to speak with his friend now, to help him understand all that was happening.

APO PRIME

30,000 FEET OVER THE ISLAND PALACE

How high have you gone Torma? Miath asked as he cruised above the huge body of Torma only five meters beneath him.

With the new armor Martin wore, we achieved seventy-three thousand feet. Torma answered, his golden eyes scanning the sky all around them. It was habit, even though no Lifter or flying craft was allowed within ten kilometers of the Island Palace.

We have only gone to thirty-nine thousand feet. Miath spoke his gray eyes falling on Torma and he admired the older dragon. Though he was only seven hundred and fifty odd years old, Torma was now considered the elder statesmen of Mjolnir's Hand when it came to the dragons. He had finally stopped growing this past year, and he was now nearly sixteen meters in length and easily ten meters tall when he stretched upright. Miath felt miniscule compared to Torma.

Torma rolled over onto his back easily, gliding along his eyes settling on Miath. *You have only been with Anja for a few months Miath. Do not forget that my friend. You will only continue to grow in strength and abilities as long as you are together. Do not rush what will come naturally Miath. Patience makes you wiser and stronger.*

Miath nodded slowly. *I will do nothing to endanger Anja.* He spoke. *She is the only one who has accepted me for who I am.*

Disregard what others say Miath. Torma told him. *Isheeni and I have been with you, trained with you. You grow by leaps and bounds young one, and it only makes the others jealous. You are the perfect match for Anja or the Elder Mother and Martin would never have approved your selection. You know this. Take pride in that.*

Patience. Miath said.

Torma rolled back over and nodded his head, sweeping his wings several times before returning to glide. *Patience Miath. You did well tonight. Very well. Your reach is growing, as is your firing time. You should be proud.*

Miath snorted suddenly and Torma chuckled. *You are still not able to block out her thoughts when she is gripped in passion?*

Miath shook his head. *Not when she drops her shields like this.*

Martin tends to do that when he takes them. Torma spoke. It is stronger when he and Aricia are together, but with any of them I feel it. Anja is in her fertile phase now too, and it will always be stronger then. When we land I will teach you what I do to block it. Especially since Isheeni is not here.

And if she was here?

We would not be having this conversation Miath, and I would be with my mate soaring through the clouds. Torma answered with a laugh. *No offense my friend.*

Miath laughed as well. None taken. I look forward to when I am able to take a mate.

That day is not far off Miath. Choose wisely and insure she wants you just as badly as you want her. It is all the sweeter. Torma answered.

Do you worry for Isheeni?

Not as much as you might think. She has been bonded with Aricia even longer than I have been with the King. Torma answered. *Like Martin and I, they think and act as one. She is fast and powerful. No... I have faith in her abilities and those of Aricia. They will look out for one another. And they will have Aelnala with them as well.*

Miath's wings fluttered slightly, a soft sound in the wind, but a sound Torma detected regardless. He smiled inwardly. *So it is Aelnala you favor?*

Her... her eyes are amazing. Miath spoke.

She is older than you and she is unable to carry eggs Miath. Torma spoke his voice neutral. *She knows this. Why would you pursue her?*

Do you not think she is worthy of a mate Torma? Miath asked in a somewhat defensive tone.

Torma shook his massive head quickly. *You mistake my words for what they are not Miath. She is strong and proud, and she would be an excellent mate for any male. None have pursued her because of the fact she can not carry eggs. She has accepted this.*

The Elder Mother says we should never give up on hope. She says hope is what brought the King and Aricia to Enurrua and saved us all. Miath spoke. *She says there is hope in all that we do and wish for.*

Torma lifted his wings a fraction and swooped up next to Miath, his golden eyes gazing at the younger dragon. *Those are wise words Miath from one as young as you. Wise words indeed. When the time is right... and that is your decision my dragon brother, I will stand with you.*

Miath's gray eyes beamed at this knowledge and he bowed his head quickly. As he did, he spotted the tiny dot on the surface of the lake below them easily, even though they were flying at six kilometers above it.

Torma... I was not aware of any visitors to the island tonight. Miath spoke.

There were none scheduled. Dasha took Androcles into her apartment, For'mya and Sivana were still inspecting the STRIKER and Seanna is still at the main estate preparing for when we depart. Torma answered.

Then why is there...

Yes... I see it as well. The dark dot was closing on the island quickly.

It is not an official Water Lifter Torma, and they are heading for the opposite side of the estate's harbor to land. Miath spoke.

Assassins! Torma gasped. *It's the only thing it could be!*

Here! Now!

It must be!

Anja! Miath called out loudly.

My King! Torma echoed as both dragons folded their wings and dove for the lake like plunging meteors.

Whatever moments they had shared in the last two years were quickly eclipsed by the intensity of their lovemaking on this night Anja decided.

They had escaped earlier in the evening, changing into wolf form and running through the dark timber to this point. Martin told her Aricia had insisted that he bring her here, and Anja now knew why. It was beautiful scenery, the cliffs overlooking the glass like surface of the lake. Anja had waited a long time for this moment to come. She had sensed when her body had fully completed the change to wolf, right down to the molecular level, for she could feel the new and improved sharpness of all of her wolf senses. As this week grew closer Anja could feel her blood calling out for Martin in a way it never had before, his mint scent more pungent in her

nose, his presence alone enough to make her weak kneed. She had a similar effect on him as well, his nuzzles and kisses more alive and passionate, his aura wrapping around her tighter. Aricia and Dysea were the same, and with Dysea not far from coming into full phase they were affecting each other as well whenever they were together. Even Seanna had commented on how much more affectionate and sexual Anja had become, and she had basked in the attention Anja had given her in their times together.

The moment they had arrived here Anja was ready, her blood burning brightly for the man who held her heart. He had not wasted any time either, quickly lowering her to the soft grass beneath their feet, and lavishing kisses and licks across every portion of her heated body. The intensity of her first orgasm, only moments after coming here, had stolen her breath from her, and she knew it was only a preamble of things to come.

Anja was also an Alpha female wolf, and customary to taking what she desired. At that moment she desired her mate, and after regaining control of her breathing, she had forced Martin to his back and using her own lips and tongue, nibbled and licked her way down to what she craved more than anything. As she wrapped her small hand around that thick, pulsing cock Anja displayed the nature of a female wolf.

The love of fresh meat.

She used only her lips, tongue and teeth to tantalize and tease Martin. As she licked his twelve inch cock with long laborious strokes of her tongue, nibbling the flared head gently, she could feel his aura pulsing outward, his chest heaving in exertion. She relished the power she had over his flesh at this point, and when his fingers entwined tightly in her thick red hair, Anja enveloped the large head of his cock and inhaled him completely. Martin's eyes changed quickly, becoming yellow outlined in black, his fangs bursting forth from his gums as his thighs tightened and his legs went rigid. Anja hummed out her delight when her lips anchored securely around the base of his thick cock and she felt him swell in her velvety throat. And then she was savoring him as he erupted, his rippled abdomen clenching almost painfully as she drank down his passion with greedy abandon.

Her eyes were teary when she finally released him, surprised that he had not softened within the grasp of her throat and lips, and he quickly rolled her over. Anja had no time to really think about what happened next as his lips covered hers, and she screamed out her pleasure as he impaled her with one breath stealing twelve inch plunge. She felt his male aura wrap around her completely, igniting small fires of passion throughout her entire body. It was hitting her stronger than it ever had before, rushing through her with molten waves of ecstasy, and as each powerful thrust into her plunged deep, she could do nothing but grip his shoulders and scream out her delight as one raging orgasm followed another, cascading upon themselves, leaving her seeing colors of every spectrum in her eyes at the complete rapture that ripped through her.

Tears burst from her eyes as she felt him explode within her, his seed like liquid heat flooding deep inside her, and he didn't stop. He didn't let her come down. Aricia had shared with her once what it had felt like to experience his unshielded aura, and now Anja was experiencing it for herself as he possessed her in a way she never thought possible. Every touch of his fingers, every pulse of his heart Anja could feel. She would never take Aricia's place as his soulmate and most cherished Queen, but Martin was making sure he let her know just how much he loved her nonetheless.

He was boundless energy this night, claiming her in so many different positions and ways that Anja barely had time to register what they were before she was crying out in pleasure once more. It wasn't long before they were both covered in a fine sheen of sweat, and amazingly Anja was not tired. She wanted more, desired more, and needed more.

And Martin gave her more.

Anja clutched his powerful back, her muscular legs wrapped around his driving hips, meeting his dominating thrusts with equal power and need. His lips had descended to her breasts, engulfing one of her steel hard nipples within their warmth, and Anja's head tossed back, the veins in her neck bulging out as she screamed louder still. The titanic orgasm began in her belly and quickly overwhelmed all her senses, her toes curling and her nails digging into his back as she screamed. A scream that quickly became a howl, and was joined by the deeper howl as Martin threw his head back, his cock swelling inside her once more as he erupted in to her depths.

Anja thought for sure her heart would explode as he slowly lowered himself on top of her, his powerful chest crushing her firm breasts, his arms wrapping around her slowly. His head went to crook between her neck and shoulder, and he nibbled her skin gently, as her arms clutched his head tighter. She could feel his come still

flooding her, his huge cock flexing deep inside her as it spilled into her depths. She felt completely sated, utterly fulfilled, just as Aricia had told her she would feel. The touch of his skin on hers caused little flutters of delight to course through her. Her black outlined jade green eyes gazed up and she finally noticed the moon had shifted considerably in the clear night sky. Surprise filtered through her as she realized he had been making love to her for three hours without pause, and this knowledge made her gasp and clutch him tighter.

Martin lifted his head and looked at her, making no move to extract himself from her embrace or release her from his. He reached up with his hand and brushed some sweat and stray strands of her hair from her cheek and he kissed her softly.

“Still with me?” He asked with a crooked grin.

“God... you are such a bad man.” Anja said blinking her eyes and looking at him with a loving smile.

“And you are incredible.” He said softly.

“Can we stay like this the rest of the night?” Anja asked. “With you wrapped inside me?”

“I like the sound of that.” He answered.

Anja moved a hand around and drew her thumb across his lips. “I so want to have your baby Martin.” She said. “I...”

Martin put his finger on her lips. “And you will Anja. Whether tonight, next week or next year. You will. And not just one.”

Anja grinned. “Is that a promise of more good times to come?”

“We are going to have a very long life together, all of us.” He said.

Anja squeezed her muscles, holding him tighter within her and he groaned in response. “We’d better Martin Leonidas.”

“You taste sweeter now that you are completely wolf.” He said with a smile, nuzzling her cheek.

“You’ve always tasted good to me.” Anja said in reply.

“We’ve come a long way from EDEN haven’t we?” He spoke softly.

Anja nodded. “Yes we have. And I don’t regret one single moment of it.” She answered quickly. “I would not be complete without those in my life now. You, Aricia, Dysea...”

“And Seanna.” He spoke.

Anja met his dark eyes as they had returned to normal now. “If it is possible to love someone as much as I love you, Seanna comes closest Marty. I still love Little Wolf and Dysea, and I do so enjoy my time with them... but Seanna is... I could not live without you or her in my life, as selfish as that may sound.”

Martin smiled. “You don’t think we know that Anja.” He said. “What you share and feel for Seanna; Aricia and For’mya now share with each other. Dysea and Isabella now share with each other. Let her know that Anja. You are wolf, and if anything she has shown she is strong enough to know that your affection with Aricia and Dysea is deep, and that you will share each other at times. But let Seanna know she is first in your heart among them. Let her know that it is she that holds you in her hand.”

“She feels that you will expect something of her that she is not ready to give.” Anja said tracing her finger along his lips. “I can smell it within her you know, the desire she has for you.”

Martin shook his head. “I will not lie to you... she is a desirable woman. But you know me Anja, and nothing will ever go in that direction unless it is something we all agree on. Do you wish me to talk with her?”

“It might make her feel more comfortable coming from you.” Anja said. “I know part of her is still very frightened of you.”

“And that I do not want.” Martin said. “You are mine Anja... you will always be mine. I will make Seanna understand that you belong to her as well. We are all pieces of a larger whole and there must be no doubts or questions between us.”

Anja smiled. “And to think I ever let you get away from me to begin with.” She said happily. “Man I must have really been brainless back then.”

Martin smiled. “I don’t have to say anything to that do I?”

Anja laughed. “You’d better not.” She exclaimed.

“We still have half the night left.” He spoke flexing his semi hard cock inside her. “Any thoughts on what we should do?”

Anja groaned at this and her eyes smoldered with passion once more. “Well... I can think of several...”

Anja!

My King!

The voices of their dragons erupted into their minds loudly and clearly, and the tones of their voices made it clear something was wrong.

Torma! What is it?

Martin there are hired assassins on the island! Torma answered immediately. *They have landed on the opposite side of the harbor and are moving towards the palace.*

I count ten of them! Miath echoed within the Mindvoice connection.

Martin and Anja were quickly extracting themselves from each others grasp.

I will destroy the Lifter they arrived on! Torma spoke.

They are after Sivana! Anja exclaimed. *It has to be her!*

Torma leave the Lifter! Martin ordered. *Head for the palace! Sivana is with For'mya near the landing pad! We will meet you there! Go my friends!*

In two silver/white flashes of light, Martin and Anja had changed into wolf form and were racing through the timber as fast as four legs could carry them. They didn't need to look up to see the two black shadows alter course above them and dive for the palace lights.

"You seem very capable with the controls." For'mya asked as they walked through the rear of the DT.

"I've been flying for a lot of years." Sivana replied. "It sort of came naturally I guess."

"Well... you will find this ship will do everything but fly itself for you." For'mya spoke. "I can give you the clearances and codes to have it repaired at any number of facilities throughout the Union should the need arise."

Sivana looked at her. "You make it sound like I have made my decision already."

For'mya met her gaze. "Have you?"

Sivana liked this elf female. She was blunt and honest, and she honestly seemed to care about what Sivana did. "I don't know. This is all so new, so strange to me. And I find it hard to trust others after so long of not trusting anyone but myself."

For'mya nodded and was about to say something when Martin's voice exploded in her head.

For'mya! There are assassins on the island moving towards your location! Lock up the ship if you are still inside!

For'mya reached out and stopped Sivana as they reached the bottom of the ramp, her keen elf eyes, and the senses her relationship with Martin had enhanced over the last year suddenly screaming out in alarm.

"Too late!" She screamed shoving Sivana aside just as three Kochab Bounty Hunters burst from the nearby treeline and lifted their weapons to begin firing.

For'mya dove in the direction she had shoved Sivana, but even with her elfin reflexes it wasn't fast enough as two projectile bullets punched into her side, and the short range blaster beam scorched her left shoulder. She cried out in pain and slumped to the deck of the DT, her blood rapidly pooling onto the metal decking.

Sivana looked up from where For'mya had shoved her body, her sea green eyes wide as she saw For'mya withering in pain on the ramp only a few meters away. Her eyes darted back and forth trying to remember where For'mya had said the weapons locker was. She winced as more rounds splattered against the armor of the DT, and she scrambled past For'mya up the ramp to the small locker. Her fingers were shaking so badly it took her three tries to enter the three digit code, and she practically tore the door open, her hand closing around the P190 just as her eyes detected movement at the end of the ramp.

Sivana whirled, tearing the 190 free of its clamps and dropping to one knee as she brought it up. There were two Bounty Hunters at the end of the ramp, both of them bringing their weapons to bear on For'mya who was trying to drag herself up the ramp. Sivana didn't hesitate and triggered one five round burst. Her aim was precise and the Kochab Bounty Hunter's chest blew apart as all five rounds struck him center mass, his body dancing backwards from the force of the energy of the rounds. As Sivana shifted aim to the second Hunter she saw his weapon already leveled at her and his finger tightening on the trigger. She was too slow Sivana thought, and the one thing that flashed in her mind at that point was not whether she should trust anyone, the thought that crossed her mind was whether she would ever see her sister again.

Sivana saw the spear head of the *Nehtes* burst from the Hunter's neck in a shower of blood and flesh and her eyes grew wide as Belen's muscular form ripped the *Nehtes* free and shoved the Hunter aside. He dropped into a crouch just as five other Hunter's appeared in the small clearing of the landing pad, bringing his 190 up with lightning like reflexes, his eyes changed and his wolf fangs fully extended.

Belen never got the chance to pull the trigger on his weapon as the huge flash of black hair crossed into his view and with a savage growl of hatred and a silver/white flash of light Martin's naked form slammed into the bodies of three Hunters. Another growl of utter rage made his eyes snap to the right and the Persian red fur suddenly became the naked body of Anja as her right foot slammed into the neck of the closest Hunter next to her.

Kochab Bounty Hunters were well trained and more than capable of taking care of themselves. Most of them were built like stocky Spartans with muscles and brains, and their natural skills at disappearing and subversion made them ideal assassins and Bounty Hunters. Their entire species lived and were bred for almost this one purpose. Trained from young ages at secret facilities to be assassins. They were also the most expensive to hire because they almost never failed to get their targets.

Anja's kick staggered the Hunter, his weapon falling from suddenly limp hands as the force of the blow had temporarily deadened the nerves in his arms. He looked up, his eyes going wide as Anja's hand was snapping forward, her fingers extended like a blade. He couldn't dodge the blow, bent over as he was, and he felt almost no pain as the ridge hand chop crushed all the bones and tendons in his throat. As his hands reached for his ruined throat, he dropped to the cool earth, gagging and choking on his own blood. Anja barely paused in her movement, every one of her senses working in perfect unison and coordination. She snatched the second Hunter by his arm and shoulder, flipping him over with strength he didn't think she possessed, his weapon flying from his hands. As he landed on his back, the air rushing out of his lungs, Anja brought all of her weight down on his chest in a knee drop that snapped his chest bones like paper. His eyes went wide in agony, pain lancing through his head as he brought his hands up to grab the female and throw her off him.

Anja was no longer on top of his chest.

Sivana watched from the ramp as she slid closer to where For'mya had stopped moving, only her dark brown eyes opening and closing. She watched as her sister rolled off the Hunter's chest as he tried to sit up, moved behind him with blinding speed, and with a vicious snarl on her face grabbed his jaw and the back of his ritual locks of hair. Anja twisted with all of her strength and the Hunter's neck could be heard snapping in the night air. She kicked the body away from her, and oblivious to her nakedness made directly for the ramp.

Sivana watched her as she gingerly rolled For'mya over and inspected her wounds with a trained eye, placing her hands on her chest and side. Sivana was wide eyed as the soft white glow engulfed Anja's hands and sent healing pulses throughout For'mya's injured body. The sounds of physical combat drew her attention outside once more and her eyes went wide.

Martin stood naked in the center of three Hunters he had knocked over with his body tackle. He had one Hunter in front of him as a shield; his arm twisted cruelly behind his back, obviously broken in at least three places, and was using the Hunter's own body as a battering ram. He shoved the Hunter forward into one of his comrades and followed the motion. His right arm whipped forward with eye popping speed and the thick forearm smashed into the face of the third Hunter who was just getting to his feet. The power of the blow snapped the Hunter's neck like a dry wood, causing his body to flip three hundred and sixty degrees before coming to rest back on the ground with his head folded under his shoulders. With another silver flash of light Martin's Shi Viska appeared and he rammed it forward in the blink of an eye, driving it deeply into the chest of the second Hunter, nearly cleaving the Kochab in two with the force of the blow. As he wrenched the shield free of the Hunter's body, blood splashed onto Martin's naked form, but he ignored it. He immediately leaped into a spinning front kick, his foot crunching into the square jaw of the Kochab Hunter, snapping his head around with incredible force. As the kick rotated him in mid air, Martin whipped his Shi Viska around with the speed of a striking pit viper and Sivana watched as the shield decapitated the Hunter like it was passing through butter.

Sivana watched in horrified shock as two glimmering silver diamonds formed at his fingertips and he rolled on the dirt coming to his feet and sending those diamond shaped projections of his mind sizzling into the night. Sivana heard two distinct thuds, and then the trumpeting roar of dragons.

Martin lifted his hand up, and she watched as a Kochab Hunter appeared above the treetops trapped in the grips of a TK projection. He was already missing one leg from where the psychic diamond had removed it from his body, his eyes wide in pain and shock.

“Torma! Miath! Now!” He screamed.

Sivana watched as a thin roaring gout of flame stabbed out of the night sky above, and along with it a molten blast of superheated breath, and she watched in stunned silence as the Hunter’s body incinerated before her eyes. The smell of charred flesh filled the area quickly as Martin turned back to the DT ramp, breaking into a run.

He skidded to a halt next to For’mya, ignoring the fact that he was completely naked as he gathered her into his arms, Anja’s hands still on her chest. They could hear the alarms sounding all over the compound and estate grounds, and the shouts of Spartans as they began filling the palace itself and the area all around.

“Belen... the last one is alive!” Martin snapped looking at him. “Keep him that way!”

Belen scrambled to his feet. “Yes Milord.”

Martin looked at Anja. “Anja?”

“I’ve stopped the bleeding,” Anja spoke. “And knitted the wounds back together, but it hit an artery Martin. She lost so much blood internally before I got to her.”

“For’mya?” Martin spoke softly, his hands brushing her hair free of her eyes.

Martin looked into For’mya’s pale face, her eyes barely open, her lips stained with blood. She reached up slowly, her fingers touching his cheek. “I... I don’t want to... to leave you Martin Leonidas.” Her words came out weak and barely discernable. “Don’t... don’t let me... don’t let me die Martin.”

“Martin you have to bite her!” Anja snapped her eyes moist with tears now. “It’s the only thing that will make her system regenerate the blood faster than normal. Even her elf system can’t do that!”

Martin reached up and stroked For’mya’s cheek. “For’mya?”

“I am... I am not afraid anymore Martin.” For’mya whispered to him.

Martin didn’t hesitate then, lowering his face to her neck and extending his fangs to their full length. “I love you For’mya.” He whispered in her ear.

For’mya smiled and gripped his arms with what strength she had left. “I... I know.” She gasped. “I... I love... ahhhhhhh!”

Martin bite down into the flesh of her neck, pulling her body tightly to his, holding her head in place with his hand as his fangs sank deeply into her skin. The virus carried in his saliva injected itself directly into For’mya’s blood stream from his bite and began to race through her system. Her eyes flew open wide as her blood burned in her veins, the sensations causing her to groan and grip Martin tighter, before blackness claimed her and she went limp in her arms.

Sivana watched as he withdrew his fangs from her neck, her blood staining his lips. His tongue caressed the two puncture marks like a vampire would do, and he watched as the wounds began to slowly heal, much slower than normal.

Anja reached out and touched his arm. “Martin... she lost a lot of blood. We won’t know if the change will take effect for some time. Take her upstairs to our room.”

Martin gathered her easily into his arms and got to his feet, moving for the palace as Spartans began to swarm the area. Anja got up and looked at Sivana, moving to her now, taking her hands and pulling her up.

“Sivana... are you alright?” Anja asked urgently.

Sivana nodded quickly. “She... she saved me.” She gasped. “She pushed me out of the way.”

Anja looked at Sivana intently, her jade eyes inspecting her sister’s body for any injuries. Sivana saw this and nodded her head again. “I am not hurt.” She said. “Anja... I’m not hurt sister!”

Anja’s eyes grew wide at Sivana’s words. “You... you called me... you called me sister.” She gasped.

Sivana met her eyes. “Do you always stand naked in the night after someone has tried to kill us and want to carry on a conversation?” Sivana exclaimed.

She turned quickly and went to the cabinet where she had gotten the P190 and grabbed the blanket. She shook it open and draped it over Anja’s shoulders just as two senior Spartans came up the ramp, looking at the blood.

“My Queen... we have secured the compound! Belen has taken the surviving Hunter into custody. We will...”

“There were ten!” Anja told him. “Torma and Miath saw ten! We only fought nine! Where is the tenth?”
The Spartan’s eyes went wide. “Are you sure Milady?”

“Torma and Miath are sure!” Anja snapped. “Sweep the entire island! Do not leave any stone or rock unturned. And place a Lochi at both entrances to the Dragon Cavern. Find that tenth assassin Commander!”

The man nodded and broke into a run shouting into his armor COM unit. Anja looked at Sivana. “Let’s get inside.” She spoke. “You were the target and I don’t want you exposed for any longer. Keep the weapon if you desire.”

“They risked an awful lot coming here after me Anja.” Sivana spoke.

Anja met her sea green eyes and nodded. “After the transmission Martin and I had today, you have no idea what they risked.” She spoke coldly. “And now what they will lose because of it.”

Sivana looked at her puzzled as they began walking towards the palace.

CHAPTER TEN

APO PRIME ISLAND PALACE

The palace was locked down tight and had been for two complete days now. The full *Mora* of Spartans, who called the Island Palace home, was spread out from one end of the island to the other finishing their security sweeps. Torma, Miath and now Doranthe were alternating flying in looping circles above the island, their keen eyes helping the Spartans on the ground. Deia had arrived within an hour of the attack with Gorgo and Riall, Andreus and Kmyla flying out to the island on Doranthe almost directly after them. Dasha was keeping Androcles in her apartment, partly to avoid the chaos outside and partly to keep the child calm.

Fuleos was in the main living room sitting next to a still rattled Sivana on one of the comfortable couches. Sivana was used to being on edge but even two days had not helped to calm her nerves after the attempt on her life. She was not used to being a target of Bounty Hunters and assassins. The ancient Hadarian Fuleos had been there for three days now, and like he had been when he discovered his great daughter Anja was alive, he had been the same upon discovering he had twin great granddaughters, and he had tried to spend as much time with Sivana as he could. Of course he had not expected the excitement that time would bring, but he had come to discover that his granddaughter’s lives were anything but normal, and it thrilled him to be part of it in a perverse sort of way. Unlike their Aunt and Uncle, who wanted both Anja and Sivana to return to Hadaria and remain there, Fuleos was simply happy to be around them, connected to the future of his family in this way.

Riall was speaking to someone in Martin’s office when Sivana and Fuleos looked up as Anja walked in with Deia and Andreus on either side of her. She had changed now, and wore the newer armor that conformed to her muscular but very succulent figure like a glove.

“The administrator for Tuya spaceport is screaming that he is losing business because of the lock down.” Deia was speaking. “I told him in rather harsh terms to “suck it up and drive on” as the King is so fond of saying.”

Anja looked at her and smiled. “Thank you Deia. Thank you for all you have done these last two days.” She said.

“He is your mate Anja... but he is also my King.” Deia said with a smile. “I’ve changed Martin’s appointment with the Bontawillian Ambassador.” Deia continued. “He was very understanding and told me that this crisis takes priority over something as petty as what they were going to meet about and he offered any assistance they could provide.”

“I thought they were highly pissed off over our actions.” Anja spoke.

“I think that was more for public knowledge than anything else.” Deia spoke. “They are firmly behind the King and his actions, no matter what their public face may be. Their Prime Minister has already contacted my office privately to inform me that, any incursion into the Wilds as a result of this attack would simply not exist as far as he was concerned.”

“Politics?” Anja asked.

Deia nodded. “Politics.”

Anja nodded. "Let him know his words are greatly appreciated and will not be forgotten in the future Deia."

Deia smiled and squeezed her arm. "Coming from you Anja that statement will make him very happy."

"Our people found the Water Lifter abandoned on the edge of the lake not far from the northern district of Tuya." Andreus spoke now. "Whoever was operating it must have started going back as soon as the Hunters began their attack, and they realized that Torma and Miath were still here. It's the only way they could have made it back before Torma or Miath were able to respond."

"Armetus and his people are already working on it." Deia spoke.

"I thought they were forbidden to work within Union space?" Anja said looking at her. "That is part of their charter Deia. Make sure they do not violate that charter for their own sakes. They are too valuable a tool for us to lose."

Deia nodded. "I spoke with Olalla and several other senators last night on the way back here. They have issued a temporary amendment to their charter to allow Armetus to participate. This was obviously an outside act. Kochab Bounty Hunters are not common here on Apo Prime, and whoever got them onto the planet undetected has some influence off world and in the Wilds. They saw this and deemed it to be an external action, allowing Armetus and his people to investigate. Anything they discover will be acted upon by Royal Spartan Security with Armetus and his people as advisors only. He knows this and agreed with it completely."

"I've already informed Dysea and Isabella of what has happened." Andreus said. "They were preparing to leave for another region of Elear, but they wanted us to contact both of them immediately as soon as For'mya's condition is known. My sister wanted to turn back for Apo Prime immediately, but Martin convinced her For'mya was going to be alright and to remain on course for Earth."

"Kmyla is with her then?" Anja asked him.

Andreus nodded. "Since we arrived. She wasn't too happy, having to ride on Doranthe as pregnant as she is, but she knew it was important and she trusts him."

"And your son?" Anja asked knowing that Andreus's first born was still less than a year old and needed almost constant attention.

"He is staying with Isra's mother Gallais. She adores him... and between my mother and Gallais, he will be forever spoiled." Andreus replied with a grin. "She came immediately when Kmyla called her. Given what has happen, we did not want my mother to have more than Androcles to care for right now."

Sivana sat on the couch and watched Anja as she spoke with Deia and Andreus. She may have been much shorter than either of them, but it was obvious who was giving the orders here. She spoke confidently and without hesitation, appearing calm and in complete control. She felt the strong hand wrap around hers and she looked at Fuleos.

"She is so commanding." Sivana said softly looking at him. "So sure of herself. Like nothing could faze her."

Fuleos nodded with a smile. "That is not always the case, but it is something that drives your Aunt and Uncle mad." He said with a grin. "She has been keeping you here, away from them to shield you."

"Why?"

"The gift you share with your sister is unique among our people." Fuleos explained. "To be able to draw from the life around you to heal? Only the two of you have this gift. It allows you to go longer periods of time without returning to Ascend on Hadaria, and it allows you to heal injuries that would drain an experienced Healer like Seanna for hours."

"And they want to use that?" Sivana spoke.

"They want to study it." Fuleos corrected her. "Anja has refused to allow herself to be poked and prodded and examined to discover why she is so different. She is Queen of our people and the United Lycavorian Union and she is also part wolf. The fact that she is part wolf angers some of the older Healers, and they think she will not put the interests of Hadaria first." Fuleos smiled. "She has proven them right to a degree, by staying here on Apo Prime more than on Hadaria, and helping to push through policies that actually benefit other worlds more. They seem to forget she rules not just one world, but hundreds."

"They can't change the fact that she and the King are..." Sivana started to speak.

Fuleos nodded. "Something that annoys them endlessly, yes I know." He said with a smile. "She is very much her own woman, and fiercely independent. You are much like her Sivana, and you are also different. It is

also why she will not allow them to treat you in this manner. You are her sister, the sister none of us knew about until recently. She has no intention of allowing you to be subjected to that drivel, at least not until you know enough to make that decision for yourself. And Anja wants you to have the time you need to make your decision without outside influence.”

Sivana looked at him. “Ah yes... my decision.” She said softly. “What do you think I should do? You are my... my great grandfather. You don’t have any advice for me?”

Fuleos grinned. “I have loads of advice, but what I think is irrelevant.” He answered surprising her. “This is a decision that you have to make. I believe you already know how Anja and I feel, and to belabor that point with you would only serve to push you away, and that is something neither of us want. No matter the decision you make, you will still be her sister, and my granddaughter. That will not change, and we will do all that we can to help you, no matter where you are.”

Sivana looked back to where Anja was conferring with Deia. “I think after the last two nights, and what I have experienced, I have made my decision. I just don’t know how to tell her.” She said.

Fuleos nodded slowly. “I sensed you had come to a decision. You are her sister Sivana, and no matter what may have happen in the past, she loves you no matter what you do. She wants you to be part of her future, and she wants to be part of your future, no matter what that future may bring to both of you. Just tell her, she might surprise you.”

Sivana glanced at him quickly and saw him smile at her. She nodded and took a deep breath. “When the time is right.” She said. “Right now things are a bit hectic.”

Fuleos nodded. “Yes... I do agree on that.”

For’mya’s dark brown eyes opened slowly, trying to focus as she blinked rapidly. She noticed the colors were different somehow, as they were clearer and more detailed. She blinked several times again and fear gripped her suddenly as her vision shifted between several different spectrums of color and detail rapidly.

Rest easy. It is normal. The female voice spoke within her head. Do not be frightened For’mya.

For’mya turned her head and saw Kmyla sitting on the edge of the bed she was in. She could feel the soft, satin like sheets and For’mya realized she was in their bedroom in the island palace. She took a deep breath, the smells and scents of so many different things assailing her nostrils.

Kmyla?

Andreas’s pregnant mate smiled and nodded her head. Her abdomen was swollen with the child she carried, but she looked just as bright and beautiful as when For’mya had first met her over a year ago.

The changes you are experiencing in your vision and sense of smell will clear in a few moments as your brain begins to cycle through the changes and learns them. You have entered a whole new world For’mya, and I am very happy to welcome you to it. Kmyla spoke.

Martin?

Kmyla motioned with her head and For’mya followed her gaze to see the massive black wolf lying next to her on the bed, the huge head resting next to her abdomen, her hand on top of the soft black fur. She hadn’t even felt the soft fur beneath her fingers and she closed them gently now feeling the texture and softness.

He has been beside you since he brought you here. He finally fell asleep two hours ago and I doubt a bomb could wake him now. He wanted to be in wolf form next to you so that you do not fear what you have become when you woke. Kmyla said.

For’mya gently let her fingers stroke Martin’s midnight black fur, feeling the thick softness between her long fingers for what was literally the first time. She had seen him in wolf form many times, but never this close to her. He had thought she feared him in wolf form, when in fact For’mya wanted to be like him more than anything and only her fear at the change she would undergo held her back. She turned back to Kmyla. *How long have I been here?*

Two days. Kmyla answered. You lost quite a bit of blood before Anja was able to heal your wounds. We... we didn’t know if Martin biting you did more damage than he intended. The virus is exceedingly powerful in purebloods, and Martin’s blood is purest of all. The virus is stronger and acts more quickly, and we didn’t know if your body would be able to handle it initially. It was touch and go for the first few hours until your body started to react and change. You are going to be fine now however.

I... I am...

Kmyla nodded. *Yes. You are now wolf.* She watched as For'mya closed her eyes and breathed deeply, a single tear rolling down her cheek. *For'mya... it saved your life. Don't...*

For'mya looked at her quickly. *No Kmyla... I'm not crying because I'm saddened. I'm crying because I finally have become what I've wanted to become since Martin first came into my life. I just never had the courage to go through with it.*

Kmyla smiled then and squeezed her other hand. *He wanted me here because Dysea is on Elear and I am elf like you. The change will be different for you than it was for Anja in many ways because of our elfin metabolism. When you are in wolf form you will be larger than most Lycavorian females because the combination of the two genes brings more muscle tissue and body mass out when you change. Like Dysea and me, you will soon discover that you are considerably faster and stronger now, even in your normal elfin form. And our natural elfin abilities will be increased by a factor of four.*

Sivana? For'mya asked thinking of Anja's sister.

She is fine. She has visited you a dozen times since Martin brought you here. Kmyla said with a smile. *You have earned a friend in her with your actions For'mya.*

And Androcles? For'mya asked thinking of the child they all thought of as their son.

Dasha has him. He is safe. Kmyla spoke quickly. *The island is secure now, and they are investigating. Armetus has been brought in and I'm quite sure we will discover what happened and how they were able to get to the island undetected. Your mother is arriving within the hour if I understand, and your father will be here later this evening. He is working with Dysea on something that has come up on Elear and he took a later ship.*

Do... do they know?

Kmyla shook her head. *That is something you should tell them. You and Martin. You will be weak for about a week until the changes fully take effect, and then as Anja discovered another year or so down to the molecular level before they are fully complete.*

I will be able to shift?

Kmyla nodded. *Oh yes... and so much more. I wouldn't recommend it until your body has fully recovered from the trauma of your wounds, but I will leave Martin and Aricia to explore that with you. Right now... you need to stay in bed for a few more hours. Become accustomed to your new vision and begin to file the sights and smells away within your mind. Reach out to Anja or myself if you need help with this until Martin is awake. It can be taxing at times, but it will quickly become second nature. You already had your Mindvoice abilities, so that will not be new to you as it was to us, though now that you are fully wolf, you might find them slightly stronger than before.*

Thank you Kmyla. For'mya said squeezing her hand. *For everything.*

There is nothing to thank me for. I would do anything for Martin and the others. Kmyla spoke. *And besides, I was becoming bored at home. Don't tell Andreus this, but the ride here on Doranthe was exhilarating. And speaking of rides... I believe you have a visitor as well, someone who has been watching over you since yesterday.*

Kmyla motioned to the open balcony door and For'mya watched as the meter long dragon hatchling eased into view slowly.

Aurith! For'mya spoke looking at the sapphire scaled dragon with smiling eyes. She was the first of Isheeni's eggs to have hatched, and everyone agreed she was going to be the spitting image of her mother with the exception of her breathtaking gold eyes. For'mya had been the third person to hold her after she had hatched, but when Aurith's eyes had opened while For'mya was cradling her, that moment had forged a small connection between them. A connection that would grow stronger over the years. *Your father would not be happy you have left the safety of the cave during this time.*

I... I wanted to see how you were. The hatchling replied as she scampered to the edge of the bed. She flapped her wings quickly, almost a meter long wing span now, and leaped up onto the soft mattress. She saw Martin's sleeping wolf form and stopped cold.

He is sleeping Aurith, do not worry. For'mya said. *You and Jeth and Elynth are ok?*

Jeth is making a nuisance of himself as he always does. Aurith replied as she settled on the bed next to For'mya. *Elynth is with Androcles and grandmother Dasha. Mother and father think they are bonding even now.*

I will leave you three alone. Kmyla spoke. Make sure she rests Aurith.

I will. The light blue hatchling replied with a dragon grin.

For'mya watched as Kmyla left the room, and then she turned back to the young dragon next to her on the bed. *So tell me what has happened Aurith.*

EARTH

EDEN CITY

HOME OF WAR MASTER TAREIF

Tareif stared at the transmission of Vengal on Apo Prime, the data pad in his hand, his eyes wide in disbelief.

“I’m sorry it took so long for me to get back to you Tareif, but there was an attempt on the sister of Queen Anja at the Island Palace two nights ago, and things have been pretty busy here.” Vengal spoke. “You have the data I sent you. It’s all I was able to put together with what is available in the archives and people I have talked to about him.”

The last two years had seen Tareif and Vengal, once bitter enemies, become the best of friends in all regards. Saving the lives of your children as Vengal had done for Tareif’s sons usually did that. Tareif had found a kindred spirit in Vengal, a man fiercely devoted to what he believed and even more so to his family and the King. Tareif knew Vengal’s only daughter Anuk was husband and mate to Daniel Simpson, a man that Tareif also owed the lives of his sons. When the history of Martin and Daniel had been discovered, Anuk was already a wolf changed by Daniel to save her life. She embraced that entire part of her life then, as well as her growing love for the huge black Spartan everyone called Danny. When it came time to leave Earth, it had been an easy decision for Vengal and his wife to make. They had left with Daniel and Anuk, and their three sons to go off into the stars, but he and Vengal spoke at least once a week now.

“This is all true Vengal?” Tareif asked.

Vengal nodded as he lit the large pipe he had taken to smoking in the last year. “All of their training took place on Apo Prime. I supervised a small portion of it, mainly in regards to Earth history and the battles we fought against the Coven. I know of three female offers of companionship made to him myself. Two Lycavorians and an elf. He never showed one iota of interest in them.”

“An elf female?” Tareif asked. “I was under the impression the elves not born here on earth are even more stunning in looks.”

Vengal nodded. “They are in many respects. Most have not seen the battles that those who were born or created on Earth have seen. What makes it worse is that his mother owns an eatery in a section of Tuya that has many elves living in it. She makes some of the best elfin food I have ever tasted outside of my wife’s, and she is Lycavorian. Her clientele has grown in leaps and bounds and now includes almost as many elves as Lycavorian Spartans. This man Isra... he commands an entire section of Mjolnir’s Hand Tareif. He comes and goes to the island palace when he pleases. He calls the King and Queens by their *first* names Tareif. You know Martin Leonidas as well, if not better than me, and I tell you now, in Martin’s eyes, Isra holds the same respect and love that Andreus and Daniel Simpson do.”

“Why would they not tell me Vengal?” Tareif asked.

“When they first returned they were still trying to come to grips with Dekton’s death Tareif.” Vengal spoke. “All of you were. I know how you regarded Dekton my friend, he was like a son to you, and his devotion to Tarifa and Aihola was absolute. Isra’s devotion to them is equal to that, if not more Tareif. He underwent two surgeries to repair wounds he received protecting Tarifa, did you know that? Never once has anyone ever heard a single word of regret or doubt in that decision from him. He bears those scars proudly because they were received defending his mate.”

Tareif nodded. “His pilot told us about those surgeries.”

“Lohana?” Vengal spoke nodding his head. “I was invited to the Welcoming Ceremony for Lohana’s daughter. They make a good team Tareif, and her husband and Isra are close friends. You should have seen them get stinking drunk together at the celebration with Martin and Andreus. I thought Lohana was going to shoot them all.” Vengal spoke with a laugh. “His mother and sister still speak of Tarifa and Aihola on a regular

basis Tareif.” Vengal continued. “You would like them. Gallais reminds me of Palina in many ways. Do not let the history of his father and brothers cloud your judgment of him Tareif. He is not and was never like them. He is as honorable as Dekton ever was, and after our mission to retrieve the Drow, you know how well I regarded Dekton.”

Tareif nodded. “Would you... would you allow Anuk to be with this man if she was not the wife and mate to Daniel?”

“Yes.” Vengal replied with no hesitation. “Without question. Give him a chance Tareif. Allow him to show you that he is every bit the Spartan that Dekton was, and so much more. You will not be disappointed my friend.”

Tareif looked at Vengal in the transmission. “Your words mean more to me than you know Vengal. And coming from you, the praise you give him is truthful and from the heart.”

“Do not blame Tarifa and Aihola Tareif. In their defense, they must have thought Isra did not want them since this man intercepted all the transmissions he sent.” Vengal spoke.

Tareif nodded. “It appears to be unrelated to our current problem.” Tareif spoke. “This man apparently wanted their affection for himself. When Isra confronted him this morning, I thought the man would shit in his pants he was so frightened. This dragon of his, standing over his shoulder, it does tend to intimidate many people.” He couldn’t help but grin at the memory of that this morning.

“Do you trust our King Tareif?” Vengal asked.

Tareif met his gaze. “Without question, you know that well enough Vengal.” He answered instantly.

Vengal nodded. “Do you believe he would assign a man that he did not trust completely to guard who he considers his only true sisters, regardless of their blood?”

“No.” Tareif said.

Vengal nodded. “Then trust in his wisdom now.” He spoke. “Isra will allow nothing to happen to them if it is within his power to stop. He loves them that much my friend. And if what you tell me is true, that love is returned by them.”

Tareif nodded. “It is.”

“Then step aside and watch what he can do Tareif.” Vengal spoke. “You might find he is every bit the Spartan Dekton was. And more... like I said.”

“Thank you Vengal.” Tareif told him.

Vengal nodded. “I must go now. You have my personal channel if you need anything.”

“And you have mine.” Tareif spoke.

“Until we see each other again my friend.” Vengal spoke before the transmission ended.

Tareif sat back in the chair and shook his head. “I have been a fool Palina.” He said softly.

His wife and mate of over three hundred and fifty years came up behind him and placed her hands on his shoulders.

“No my husband. You have been a protective father.” Palina told him. “Now all that remains is for you to make things right between you and Isra, and do not let that young man who so loves our daughters, go a minute into the future thinking you hate him.”

Tareif looked at her. She had long ago taken to calling Aihola their daughter because of the bond she shared so deeply with Tarifa. “You are right.” He said.

Palina nodded. “Good. Then you must come to grips with the fact that Zaala has also caught the eye of a young Spartan soldier.” She said with a smile.

Tareif rolled his eyes. “Will none of my daughters choose men who are normal?” He spoke loudly.

Palina laughed. “I believe they take after their mother in that regard. You are by no means normal husband.”

Tareif laughed and pulled her close. “No... I guess I am not.” He said. “Does that mean you regret your decision to become my bride?”

Palina kissed him. “That was the happiest day of my life Tareif. Nothing will ever change that.”

“Good.” Tareif spoke lifting her into his arms. “I believe I should show you once more why I love you so.”

Palina grinned. “Now that sounds like a good idea.”

“I have security inside and outside all of the entrances.” Lynwe was speaking as she stood near the wall map of the Eden City Command Center. “They are a combination of Spartans and Tareif’s Dragoons that you re-assigned Isra.”

Isra nodded from where he leaned against the table looking at the map. “They are the most experienced of Tareif’s Dragoons in terms of combat seen. Their instincts will be sharper and much keener to things that may be out of the ordinary.”

Lynwe looked at him. “That is why you re-assigned them?” She asked. “Not because you didn’t trust them?”

Isra shook his head. “I may be many things Lynwe, but I am not a fool. These are the finest Dragoons Tarifa’s father has ever trained. They fought with him for decades, to include your Battle for Earth. I re-assigned them because of this fact, not because I didn’t trust them. Trusting them was never an issue, knowing that Tareif thought so highly of them.” He moved closer to the wall map. “We should also place anti-air positions on the roof of the Command Center.”

Lynwe nodded. “I have men seeing to that even as we speak. Four corner positions, each with a portable 20mm chain cannon and portable missiles. Will they hurt this dragon and rider if they show up here?”

Isra shook his head. “I don’t know. We are not aware of how deeply they are bonded so it is hard to predict. The psychic shield Aelnala and I project would protect us from the missiles, and for a time against the force of concentrated 20mm cannon shells directed at us, but with this rider and dragon...?” Isra shrugged. “I would say based on what we saw, we would probably be safe, but the more time that passes, I just don’t know.” He looked at Lynwe. “Where is Commander Layna?”

“Wherever they go in this building Layna goes with them.” Lynwe spoke. “They did not want to flood their meeting rooms with security; in fact they demanded that we didn’t. The only concession I allowed them was that it would only be Layna in the actual meetings with them.”

Isra smiled and shook his head. “They are three of the most stubborn women I have ever met. And I thought my mother had that prize.”

Lynwe smiled and nodded. “You will get no argument from me on that.”

“Where are the two of you staying at night?” Isra asked.

“The three of us you mean?” Lynwe spoke. “Layna goes where we go now, and I have to say I am not in the least bit unhappy about that. She is a superior Spartan in skill as far as I am concerned, and she is exceptionally intelligent.”

“She has no problems that you and Selene are both vampires?” Isra asked surprised.

Lynwe shook her head. “Quite the opposite in fact.” She said. “I don’t believe Selene is as big a target as Tarifa and Aihola, so I have only increased the security at our home, and Layna now stays with us. Her daughter stays with her parents for the moment until we can solve this problem.”

Isra nodded his head. “You know this city better than I, as well as whom you can trust.” Isra spoke. “Make a list of which homes you will go to if the need arises, and I will trust in your security arrangements because I hear Selene complaining about them all the time.”

Lynwe smiled. “She thinks I am overreacting.”

“There is no overreaction right now.” Isra spoke.

“Having Layna with us makes it easier to tolerate.” Lynwe spoke.

Isra sensed she did not wish to elaborate and he nodded his head. “There have been no murders since our encounter so we have to assume they have forgone killing because we know they exist. Any word from Cody?”

“He swept through the tunnel completely.” Lynwe replied. “There were signs of them being there, but it appears they evacuated rather quickly.”

“That tells us they have a communications system available to them.” Isra spoke. “And it is sophisticated enough that we have not detected it as of yet.”

“I will transfer more people to the communications division this evening and have them to begin scanning and monitoring any channels that we know of, as well as the open frequencies.” Lynwe spoke. “Admiral Wallace is having his people on EDEN do still image sweeps along the entire eastern seaboard every six hours, and scans of the portions of the Wastes that we have no people in yet.”

“I assume our attack on Key West left nothing.” Isra asked.

Lynwe turned to face him completely. “Nothing but ruin.” She answered. “The air attack and bombardment collapsed all of the tunnels they were using, and flattened any building that was even remotely still intact. Admiral Jamerl sent three Mora in after the attack, and they have found no survivors as of yet.”

“They had to have seen us coming Lynwe.” Isra spoke looking at the map intently. “To be waiting for us as they were, they had to know we were coming. And if they knew we were coming, then they had transport waiting to leave Key West the moment we landed. I am almost positive they began leaving the moment we touched down.”

“Leaving to where?” Lynwe asked. “The number of people you suggest would be hard pressed to remain unseen anywhere they landed along the southern seaboard in the Gulf. And they would have been detected traveling further west. The island that was once known as Cuba was utterly destroyed by underwater earthquakes and two Tsunamis that hit it after the Great Fire. I can have Admiral Jamerl and Admiral Wallace both begin to include more detailed scans of the ocean in that area, but I doubt they will find anything.”

Isra nodded. “Better to be safe than sorry.” He spoke. “I am taking Tarifa and Aihola to their home after they leave here to retrieve more items that they want. I can not ask them to remain on my *DT* for much longer without allowing them to at least feel more comfortable.”

“I take it these Spartans we were watching in the beginning are no longer suspects in what is happening?” Lynwe asked.

Isra shook his head. “No. None of them have the Mindvoice capability to bond with a dragon.” He said in reply. “I have asked Panos and Dilios to gather all the records of any Spartan to disappear from Sparta in the last century or two and not return. The Coven pulled Dekton from this world; it is possible they pulled this rider from Earth in a similar fashion.”

Lynwe looked at him. “You don’t believe that?” She said. “You don’t believe the Coven is involved in this at all do you?”

Isra met her eyes and shook his head slowly. “No. Not as many seem to think.”

“What do you feel Isra?” She asked leaning up against the table and folding her arms under her large breasts.

“It is a feeling really. Nothing more than that.” He told her.

“Your feelings are part of the reason you are here now.” Lynwe spoke softly. “I may be a vampire, but I am still a Drow and I have a sense of things. You know something that you aren’t telling anyone yet. At least no one but Martin perhaps.”

Isra looked at her. “I do not believe this Spartan is from Earth, nor do I believe he is from Apo Prime either.” Isra spoke.

“What do you believe?” Lynwe asked.

“I will tell you as soon as I have had the opportunity to discuss it with Aricia and Isheeni.” Isra spoke. “It is not because I don’t trust you Lynwe; it is because it is so far out there in terms of viability that even I can’t believe I thought of it.”

“Is it an immediate risk?” Lynwe asked.

Isra shook his head. “If it was I would share it with you right now. When I am able to speak with Aricia and Isheeni and I determine that I am indeed not crazy, then I will share it with you first.”

Lynwe nodded quickly. “Then I will be patient.” She spoke. “We have much to do in the meantime and I suggest we get to it.”

Isra nodded. “I agree.”

Isra looked around their home slowly, his eyes taking in everything. Their apartment was large and filled with comfortable furniture, well decorated with pictures and plants that were healthy and vibrant. The apartment was neat, though not so neat as to suggest they were driven by it. He saw several pieces of clothing that was draped over the back of one of the couches, and a robe that lay across one of the stools that occupied the kitchen counter. The balcony doors were open, a cool breeze blowing in from their thirty story height. Aelnala rested on the top of the building, her keen dragon eyes keeping watch on the bustling city and the skies all around it.

Tarifa and Aihola had scampered into their bedroom, and were stuffing items of clothing into the two bags as quickly as they could. Tarifa stopped and looked at Aihola for a long moment, long enough for Aihola to notice and return her gaze.

“Tarifa?” She asked softly.

“I am sorry *Nya Istel*.” Tarifa said gently.

“Sorry? Sorry for what?” Aihola asked setting the items of clothing on the bed and moving around to stand in front of her.

“I... I never thought our love for each other would be so strong.” Tarifa said. “I never thought that what I feel for Isra would pass to you in such a way. I’m sorry... I’m sorry for taking choice away from you.”

Aihola shook her head with a smile and pressed her body close to Tarifa’s taking her hands in hers. “Did you ever stop to consider my love that perhaps this is what was meant to be? How old are you Tarifa? Almost a hundred and twenty-six years old, and I am a hundred and thirty-one. In all your years how many men have shared your bed? Shared mine? As close as we have become, I have learned to trust in your instincts more than anything. I knew when I first saw you on Enurrua, that if this man had affected you in such a way, he was a good man. I may have started out with these feelings for Isra because of the bond we share, but not anymore. I want him every bit as intensely as you do, and it is not because of the bond we share. It is because I desire him as well as you, of my own accord. And it is so much stronger than what we shared with Dekton.”

“Do you ever wonder what your life would have been like if I had not...” Tarifa gazed into her amber eyes.

Aihola shook her head quickly and placed a slender finger on Tarifa’s lips. “My life began that night you came into it Tarifa.” She said softly. “My future began the moment you came into my life that night. I would not change anything that has happened since then. Each event has brought us closer together, and made us stronger. Each event has brought us to this point in our lives and made us who we are today. Each event has pushed us to right now, and right now our future waits for us in the next room.”

Tarifa leaned over and kissed Aihola hard, drawing her body tightly against her own. Tarifa was taller than Aihola by nearly five inches, but Aihola was her Drow Mistress, and since their first night together Tarifa had always been submissive to her. She bent her knees slightly, playing her submissive role to Aihola willingly and without regret, allowing Aihola to be dominant in their kiss and take what she wanted. And Aihola always took what she wanted from her with great pleasure.

They parted after a long moment, both their lips moist and their passion beginning to heat. Tarifa looked at her with those sapphire colored eyes and Aihola could detect the intense desire in them.

“I don’t want to wait any longer Mistress.” Tarifa said softly, squeezing her hands.

Aihola smiled at her words. “Nor do I.” She said.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Then do not wait.* Aelnala’s voice burst into their heads.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Aelnala!* They said together.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I have blocked him and he can not hear us. You have waited for each other for over a year. As each hour passes it is harder for all of you to resist each other now that you are together. Even as a dragon I can see that.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *He says it is not safe!* Aihola exclaimed.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *What is not safe is the three of you being distracted as you are now. His aura burns and trembles for you both against his shields. He wants you so badly he has to work harder to shield himself, so as not to affect the two of you to the point you feel it. And it is becoming increasingly harder for you two to hold back what you want. Even you Aihola of the Drow, the portion of you that is wolf, it is now singing out loudly for him.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *What of the danger?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I will stand watch from here. There are Spartans and Dragoons all over the city, and guarding your building below. Surrender to each other tonight, there in the comfort of your home, and then we can go forward with a little more semblance of control.* Aelnala’s voice was tinged with female humor at her last words and Tarifa and Aihola couldn’t help but blush.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Thank you Aelnala.* Tarifa said.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Do not thank me. Your love for him has made him stronger in many respects. And when he is stronger, I am stronger and we are stronger as a Bonded Pair. Now go... enjoy yourselves, and enjoy him, for he will surely enjoy you both.* Aelnala finished with a chuckle in their connection.

Tarifa and Aihola looked at one another and began stripping out of their clothes.

Isra walked casually to the door out onto the balcony, his violet eyes looking skyward at the visage of the full moon rising and filling the cloudless night. He leaned against the door frame, folding his arms across his chest, looking out over Eden City as lights began to come on all over. The wind shifted slightly and carried to him the scent of peaches and cherry blossoms, and female excitement. His violet eyes grew wide, knowing those scents anywhere, and his body stiffened slightly as he felt the full unshielded female auras of both Tarifa and Aihola hit him like a truck from their room.

Every day having them near him and not being able to bed them, as they all wanted, had become harder to deal with. Sleeping with them in his arms did appease some of that desire, but the press of their bodies so close to his, especially in the mornings was maddening. Each day his control was slipping, and he had to focus more energy and concentration on keeping his aura in check, so as not to take away their ability to do their work. He wanted to claim them, to make Aihola his, and to reclaim Tarifa in the way of his people. To make them so utterly his that no other male wolf would even blink at them when they passed.

Isra turned quickly to the door they had gone through, feeling their auras pulsing for him strongly. He shook his head to try and focus his thoughts, but the Alpha wolf in him was yearning to go to them and take what they were offering.

Tarifa? He gasped out within Mindvoice. *Aihola? What... what are you doing? You... your auras... Come to us Isra!* Tarifa's voice echoed within the connection.

We don't want to wait anymore! Aihola exclaimed.

Isra clenched his fists. *It... it is too dangerous!*

We have enough security and time for our mate to make us sing his name. Tarifa's voice was like a soothing mountain stream in his mind and he felt his control begin to crumble.

This is not...

It is a full moon Isra! Aihola spoke sweetly. *Surely our Alpha can find time to please his mates. Or are you not up to the task?*

Isra allowed the growl to escape his throat and he lowered his psychic shields, releasing his unshielded aura without thought. He heard them gasp in delight within his mind as he bathed them in his aura and as he stepped towards the door, he began pulling off his uniform. His hand slammed onto the wall panel and he was pulling the armor down to his waist as it slid open. His violet eyes grew wider as he saw them on the bed. They wore only thin white robes against their skin, both of them shuddering on the bed as they soaked in the passion of his aura. Their nipples protruded proudly from their breasts, the strength of his male aura causing them to become immediately excited. The smell of their passion mingled heavily in the air and Isra breathed deeply of their scents, enflaming his own powerful need. He stared at them for a long moment, the deep dark color of Aihola's ebony skin, her firm breasts begging for attention, her taut thighs already quivering and her shimmering white hair splayed across the bed. Tarifa was higher on the sheets; her tanned skin exposed for his eyes, her larger breasts and equally hard nipples calling out for his lips.

Isra nearly fell over pulling off his boots and getting his uniform completely off, and as he stumbled to his knees, his eyes came level with Aihola's glistening slit, the thin line of pure white hair just above her clit moist with her juices. It wasn't for any other reason except that Aihola was closest to him, and before he even had his pants all the way off, he buried his face between her thighs, his warm tongue delving between her engorged pussy lips and driving deep inside her before she realized what was happening.

Aihola's amber eyes flew open and she felt fire ignite within her as the first orgasm hit here completely out of the blue. She was unprepared for the intensity of it, and her chest heaved with gasps of air as Isra drank her passion without hesitation. The part of her that was wolf had never reacted so, never surged with such incredible power. She barely had time to recover from that staggering climax before she felt Isra sliding between her thighs. She met the burning gaze of his violet eyes, felt his aura surround her in a way Dekton's

never had. Her amber eyes blinked rapidly as she felt the engorged head of his enormous cock press against her opening seeking entrance. Her eyes snapped to his and she saw him smile.

“Now Aihola... like Tarifa... you are mine.” His voice growled at her.

Aihola’s head flew back as the first nine inches of his incredible cock plunged inside her with barely any resistance.

“Tarifa!” Aihola screamed as her hands reached for her lover.

Tarifa was well on her way into a world of desire and passion as she lowered her head next to Aihola’s, kissing her deeply while her hands pinched her dark nipples. “I told you he was wonderfully large Mistress!” Tarifa exclaimed after breaking their kiss.

“So... so big!” Aihola gasped as her hands grabbed Isra’s shoulders, her nails digging into his skin.

Isra’s head lowered to the opposite of her face and he nuzzled her elfin ear firmly, trailing his tongue along the outer edge of her ear. This action caused Aihola to practically melt within his arms and the tightness in her belly started building once more as she hissed in rapture at the wondrous sensations ripping through her. He was holding himself above her, his powerful arms lifting her lean ebony legs slightly, his lips dropping to her calves and placing fluttering kisses on her skin as he maneuvered her legs along his hips. He looked down at her and smiled.

“You... you will sing for me Aihola of the Drow!” He gasped out; the tightness of her clenching pussy wrapped around his pulsing cock almost more than he could bear. “Neither you nor Tarifa will ever sing for another!”

Aihola could only nod her head in agreement, her body giving him all the answer he would ever need. Isra brought his face close to her, staring into her eyes and with one final thrust buried the remaining six inches of his cock into her. As Aihola’s lips parted to scream out in delirious abandon, his lips came down on hers and he kissed her with passion and desire she had felt only with Tarifa. Aihola’s orgasm raced through every fiber of her body, and all she could do is clutch his shoulders as stars raced through her mind, chasing everything but the pleasure that was tearing through her away. Her body shuddered again as he stroked into her deeply with long thrusts, filling her unlike anything she ever thought could exist. The length and thickness of his cock quickly obliterating any memory of Lynwe’s impressive tool in her mind. She could feel nothing but his driving power, his powerful Alpha male aura wrapped around her in a way unlike anything she had ever experienced. Tarifa’s lips and tongue danced along her shoulders and neck, lavishing her elfin ears with attention, driving the pleasure she was experiencing to heights Aihola thought unattainable. She couldn’t stop coming, her belly clenching and unclenching with each driving, powerful stroke of his wonderful cock into her depths.

Aihola’s hands dropped from his shoulders to clutch his strong driving ass, gripping those flexing, muscular cheeks in her hands and using all of her vampire and elf strength to hold on for dear life as his strokes into her increased in speed and power, stealing her breath away. Her wolf sense of smell was overwhelmed with the scent of wild deep timber, his dirty blond hair drenched in sweat. His powerful back muscles moved in concert like a finely tuned machine, and she felt his breathing increase rapidly next to her ear.

“Yours...” Aihola gasped into his ear. “Yours... we... are yours!” Aihola wrapped her arms around his shoulders, her amber eyes wide. “*Xuat vrine ’winith! Yah... qualla xuat vrine ’winith!*” (Don’t stop! God... Please don’t stop!)

Isra couldn’t contain himself any longer. The tightness and velvet warmth was so much like he remembered with Tarifa. The color of Aihola’s skin, her hair, her scent, it was all driving him wild, and with one final, pile driving stroke he buried himself completely inside her and howled out his own pleasure as he erupted. As he looked down and saw her face frozen in a mask of unadulterated pleasure, her neck muscles bulging, Isra felt his fangs burst forth and with no thought whatsoever he sank them into Aihola’s succulent flesh. Her body went rigid in his grasp, the power of her orgasm tripling, as the pureness of the virus in his blood coursed through her veins, washing away the diluted wolf blood within her and charging her lush body with the pureness of his own.

Aihola could barely keep her amber eyes open as she felt the searing heat of his seed flooding her deep within. Tears sprang to her eyes as his fangs slowly withdrew from her neck, the tender caress of his tongue sealing the wound instantly, chasing away the small pain. His cock remained steel hard within her, and she could only smile as she finally felt what her lover and slave had felt all those months ago. Clarity of mind and the utter sense of complete rapture. She had no strength left in her limbs as his kisses left a soft trail down her

shoulder; his nuzzle of her throat causing sweet ripples of delight to shudder through her, before his tongue tickled the sensitive lobes of her elfin ears.

Isra's head came up slowly and his violet eyes found those sapphire orbs staring at him expectantly. His smile was wolfish in nature, and he slowly began to withdraw his cock from Aihola's depths, his blood still burning brightly for the second elfin female who would be his mate. Tarifa smiled herself in expectation and she quickly turned away from him, assuming a seductive position on the bed that he had taken her in that first night on the ship together. A position that had caused her to howl her pleasure to the window of stars. She wiggled her firm, shapely ass as his lips found the curve of her cheeks and his tongue traced a long moist line up the small of her back sending shivers through her blood. Little flash fires were igniting throughout her body, and she felt him move over the top of her on the bed. His rock hard cock nestled between her ass cheeks and she groaned in anticipation as his lips came down on the back of her shoulder and he nuzzled the back of her neck.

"Hello my mate." He gasped into her ear before his lips nibbled the sensitive portion of her elfin ear.

Tarifa groaned louder, lifting her hips off the bed, pressing back against his lava hot cock against her skin. Her bald pussy was drenched from his wild and powerful aura, his musky deep timber scent, and watching him claim Aihola as he was about to re-claim her.

"Please... please Isra!" She gasped. "I... I have... don't tease me! I want you! It... it has been too long! I... I need... ahhhhhhh!"

Tarifa's words became unintelligible as his still swollen, fifteen inch cock impaled her with one single, pile driving stroke. Stars burst into her vision as his burning hot balls pressed against her engorged pussy lips, anchoring her to him completely and sending Tarifa back into a world of pleasure she had not visited for over a year. Her sapphire eyes changed quickly, her own fangs bursting forth as his lips and nose nuzzled the backs of her elfin ears and sent her blissfully over the edge within seconds. She howled out her delight now as the orgasm smashed aside all that remained of her clam elfin demeanor, claiming her in the same way his touch had that first night. Now Tarifa of the elves was wolf, and she thrust her hips back against her Alpha mate as he would expect her too, her juices splashing wetly against his thighs, and Isra not caring in the least.

He turned his head, feeling movement on the bed beside them, and saw Aihola inching closer to them, her amber eyes bright with renewed energy and passion. Isra grabbed her head gently, his fingers wrapping within the lush softness of her white hair and he pulled her lips to his, kissing her passionately, his tongue fighting with hers for dominance. A fight he won easily as he pulled Aihola into his embrace, crushing her ebony body against his, even as his hips were driving his thick cock into Tarifa with increasing power. He released Aihola quickly, her amber eyes staring at him in lust and passion, reaching down and grabbing Tarifa by her firm breasts. He pulled her up against him, hearing her cry out in ecstasy as his fifteen inch cock sank even deeper inside her satiny warmth.

"Your... your slave needs... needs a kiss!" Isra gasped.

Aihola didn't hesitate and moved quickly in front of Tarifa, looking at her half closed eyes, clouded with passion and desire. Her breasts were standing out, her eraser hard nipples begging for attention. Aihola eagerly gave them that attention, taking one of her protruding nipples into her mouth and sucking hard. Tarifa's hands left Isra's hips and grabbed Aihola's head.

"Oh... Mistress!" She gasped.

Aihola moved completely in front of her and pressed her still scorching body against Tarifa's, their breasts mashing together. She reached up and took Tarifa's head in her hands and smiled lovingly. "You... you were so right slave!" She gasped before covering Tarifa's lips in a toe curling kiss that sent her elf slave and lover over the edge.

Isra's violet eyes were wide as he saw their sweaty bodies pressed so tightly together, the contrast in the color of their skin driving him crazy with lust. When their lips sealed together in that blistering hot kiss, he could no longer hold back. He grabbed Tarifa's hips and rammed into her one last time, his cock once more was swelling in size within her depths and his scorching seed erupted forth. And once more he did not hesitate and lowered his fangs to Tarifa's equally succulent neck and he bit down deeply. He felt her body stiffen in reaction, as once more the pureness of the virus within his salvia raced through her body, overriding the diluted portions of wolf blood within her and replacing it with his own. She was screaming out her rapture within the kiss with Aihola and Isra leaned forward, suddenly completely drained. His weight pushed all three of them down to the bed, and his head dropped between their shoulders, his huge cock still spilling come into Tarifa.

He didn't allow his full weight to fall on them, but his dirty blond hair was plastered to his skin and he wasted no time in nuzzling first Tarifa's neck, and then Aihola's. Their moans of delightful contentment told him all he would ever need to know and he could feel his heart singing out in happiness, even as it pounded in his chest from exertion.

Isra extracted himself from Tarifa's velvety depths with a great deal of reluctance as his lips caressed the skin of her neck where he had bitten her, kissing away any lingering pain that may have remained. She groaned both in disappointment and contentment as he lowered himself to the bed between them, unconcerned that the sheets were soaked in their sweat and combined passion.

Aihola pressed her body against his on one side, Tarifa on the other.

"We... we aren't finished are we?" She asked with a sultry smile.

"Finished?" Isra spoke with a smile. "We are far from finished. Neither of you has sung my name into the night sky."

"What... what you just did to us might be hard to beat Isra." Tarifa said softly.

Isra grinned like a child left in a candy store. "Let's find out." He spoke.

Their giggles of girlish delight were quickly replaced by womanly moans of desire. He did outperformed what he had done to them already and he continued to do it for the better part of the evening.

And they did sing his name into the night. Each of them. Many times as a matter of fact.

APO PRIME ISLAND PALACE

"It was definitely a Lycavorian female." The young man spoke as he looked at Martin across the desk holding out the data pad to him. Armetus sat in the chair next to the young man, Anja sitting on the edge of Martin's desk her arms folded under her breasts.

She and Martin had spent the night in bed with For'mya, cuddled around her, giving her support and helping her to learn how to handle the new senses she now had. Seanna had been with them this time, willingly sharing the bed with them, and falling to sleep spooned against Anja's back, oblivious to the fact that her King was on the other side of her lover very much naked and holding the equally naked For'mya in his arms, as Anja slept pressed against his opposite side.

Martin and Seanna had gone for a long walk that afternoon once he had woken, Anja worrying the entire time they were gone about how Seanna would react. They had returned much to her surprise, laughing and talking freely with each other, all of the hesitation she had once had with Martin seemingly gone from her being. Seanna had greeted her with a blistering kiss, a kiss that left Anja breathless for a few moments, but a kiss she had eagerly returned. As Martin left them alone Anja had looked at Seanna, her jade green eyes full of love and passion.

Anja remembered that conversation.

"What... what did he tell you?" Anja had asked her.

Seanna had squeezed her hands tightly and drew her into a loving embrace. "He told me that you loved me, and that I should not fear the relationship you have with Aricia and Dysea because after him, I am first in your heart always. He told me he would never expect something of me that I was not ready to give, nor would he expect it to be him."

"Seanna I..."

Seanna smiled. "I did not tell him I would never allow anyone but him to have me Anja." She had told her. "There was no reason to tell him that."

They had laughed then, and that one act had forever earned Seanna's loyalty and love for Martin as well as Anja. She may never want to share his embrace, but she would never fear sleeping in the same bed as him any longer.

"A Lycavorian female?" Anja asked in a shocked voice as she took the data pad from Armetus's assistant before Martin could reach it.

Armetus nodded. "I was surprised as well, but the tests confirm it. Average height and weight, at least as far as the security video from the harbor cams were able to determine. We found one strand of blond hair, which confirmed she was Lycavorian, but it had been dyed blond, and with the multitude of products out there today, impossible to track or discover her natural color. She was also using the strongest civilian scent masker available for purchase so our ability to track her was lost as soon as she entered the market area and blended in."

"Sivana was their target I take it?" Martin asked lifting the mug of coffee to his lips and taking a long sip.

Armetus nodded and smiled as Anja took the mug from him almost immediately and also took a sip. He saw the small look of mild annoyance that Martin gave her, and watched as Anja stuck out her tongue at him. "Yes Milord. Their *primary* target was Sivana."

Martin was getting to his feet when Armetus spoke and he stopped to look at him. "They had more than one target?"

"They Kochab fool you injured was very talkative when I told him he would not be executed." Armetus said. "I didn't tell him the wounds you inflicted on him would kill him in a few hours, and it was only the drugs we gave him why he didn't feel anything."

Anja shook her head with a small smile. "I'm glad you are on our side Armetus." She spoke.

Armetus smiled at her. "After seeing what you and the King did to the others my Queen, I feel the same about you." He spoke.

"Who were the other targets?" Martin asked moving to the counter and retrieving the pitcher of hot coffee. He poured himself a fresh mug and carried it over to the desk to add more to the mug Anja had taken from him.

"For'mya was the secondary target sire." Armetus replied. "They had instructions to also target Queen Anja if the opportunity arose, but they came here for Sivana and For'mya."

Martin's dark eyes looked at him with dozens of questions in them. "For'mya?" He spoke. "Why the hell would they be after For'mya? What is she to them?"

Armetus shook his head. "I had my people press as hard as they could, but the Kochab Hunter knew nothing else of importance. They were hired through an intermediary that works out of Megewa III in the Wilds."

"Megewa III?" The new female voice asked.

They turned to see Sivana standing in the doorway to Martin's office. Anja immediately got up and moved for the door. "Sivana this is..."

"Come in Sivana." Martin spoke quickly. "This concerns you just as much as the rest of us."

Sivana looked at Anja quickly, who only nodded and held out her hand, beckoning her into the office. Sivana stepped forward and took her hand, allowing Anja to draw her into the room. She directed her to the lone chair beside Martin's desk where Sivana sat down.

"You know Megewa III, I take it?" Armetus asked.

Sivana nodded. "It's where I was based out of most of the time." She replied. "That is Cyngi's planet. He's an Unsaar and controls all activity on the planet, illicit or otherwise. More than even I first thought. I think he is one of the Five Overseers, or at least that is the feeling I got the last time I spoke to him. It was shortly before your people came and got me." She said looking at Martin.

Armetus leaned forward in his chair. "An Overseer? Now that is interesting." He spoke. "We've never been able to ascertain who the Overseers are. They are extremely careful in what they do and hiding their true identities."

Sivana's eyes narrowed and she nodded. "They have always been like that." She said. "No one knows who they are. Their directives come down through middlemen they trust for the most part."

Armetus nodded. "I have people on Megewa III sire." He spoke. "I will have them do some very discrete looking around."

Martin nodded. "I want to speak with the gentleman Anja and I talked too the other day again." He spoke calmly, even though everyone but Sivana could detect the chilling anger in his words. "This attempt here on Apo Prime, on my island and in my home pisses me off in a way they don't want me pissed off."

Armetus got to his feet. "I will arrange it sire." He motioned his aide up and out of the door. "We will continue to investigate the attack here, and begin questioning those in the market square in case anyone by chance saw something."

Martin nodded. "Keep me advised." He said.

Armetus nodded and then moved quickly out of the office leaving the three of them alone. Sivana looked at Martin.

"Cyngi is not someone we want to anger." She spoke. "He's got pull everywhere in the Wilds."

"We?" Martin asked with a smile.

Sivana took the data disc out of the pocket in her jacket and held it out to him. "I've decided I don't want to be alone the rest of my life, and I certainly don't want to be on the run, no matter what type of ship I have." She stood up as Martin took the disc, Anja's face registering her shock. "For'mya saved my life the other night, while showing me the ship you ordered for me to take if I left. One of the most secret ships you have ever built. Why?"

"You are Anja's sister, and I love her." Martin told her honestly. "You are part of my family now, whether you want to be or not. I had no intention of sending you off into the unknown without being able to defend yourself fully."

"Who did you and Anja talk to the other day?" Sivana asked.

"He was supposedly an intermediary for one of the Overseers." Anja answered softly, still stunned by Sivana's decision to remain with them into the future.

"And what did that conversation regard?"

Martin returned to his chair and sat down. "I asked politely that the contract on your head be rescinded immediately. In return I told them I would take full responsibility for whatever knowledge you have of operations within the Wilds, and that information would never be used against them in any way, nor would it be shared with anyone to gain an advantage of any sort. I offered them access to Union Jump Gates as long as whatever they carried was not illegal in any way within Union territory, and they submitted to random searches at my discretion. Which would not be often mind you, I have bigger fish to fry."

Sivana's eyes were wide as she listened to him, and she turned to Anja. "You... you offered all that to them just to have them lift the contract on me?"

Anja nodded. "It wasn't a hard decision to make. And Deia agreed we could probably get away with it."

Sivana turned back to Martin. "What would happen if they didn't agree to this?" She asked.

Martin Leonidas, my father is here. For'mya's voice echoed within his head.

I'll be right there. He answered as he got to his feet and looked at Sivana. "For'mya's father is here. I need to go greet him. We need to sit down and go over what you have given me on this disc Sivana. Will you join us later tonight for dinner?"

Sivana nodded quickly. "Of course. You didn't answer my question." She said.

Martin smiled. "No I didn't." He said moving next to Anja and kissing her softly. "I'll see you both later."

Sivana watched him walk out of the office and then she turned to look at Anja. "Anja?"

"Yes Sivana?" She said her face beaming with the smile on it.

"Answer my question please." She spoke.

Anja took her hands. "If they did not agree to Martin's terms he told them he would unleash *Mjolnir's Hand* on the Wilds and personally take the 1st Spartan Fleet Group into the Wilds and hunt them all down until they were dead and everything they had worked to build destroyed." Sivana's jaw almost hit the floor and Anja laughed. "He doesn't believe in doing things halfway." She said giddy that she would be able to discover the sister she never knew she had. "Come... Grandfather is going to join us for lunch, and we have much to talk about if you have decided to stay with us."

"This is not the way I wanted to express this news to you." Martin spoke as he and L'tian walked along one of the many garden paths around the island palace. "I have wanted her to allow it, and if she someday agreed, I was going to come to you on Elear and tell you myself. I love her L'tian, just as strongly as I love Aricia and Anja and Dysea and even Isabella. I can't explain it, and to be honest I've given up trying. I did not

want to lose her, and even though Anja had healed her wounds, she had lost so much blood we didn't know if she would survive. I reacted out of instinct, as an Alpha wolf."

L'tian stopped walking and looked at the man who had taken his only remaining daughter as concubine and made her more a part of his life than L'tian and his wife had ever dreamed. For'mya was not just a concubine to Martin and Aricia; she had become an essential part in their lives, as well as the lives of Dysea, Anja and Isabella. She wielded more authority and power than any concubine would have ever been seen commanding, and very few across the Union doubted her words any more than they would doubt the King himself. She had become the second most popular elf on Elear behind only Dysea, and they had appeared together several times for meetings and such, always drawing crowds of children and younger elfin females who looked up to them.

"You were expecting me to react angrily to this news Milord?" He asked Martin. "We have always known that one day this would come up, For'mya has spoken of it before. This is the second time you have saved the life of my daughter Martin Leonidas; how you have done it is of no matter to me, or to my wife."

Martin looked at him somewhat surprised. "I... I always believed you would... resist For'mya becoming like me." He said. "Having me... having me change her."

"You have elevated For'mya to a position far above her status as Concubine sire." L'tian said. "Queen Aricia, Queen Dysea, they consider her to be an equal in every way. All of your Queens do." L'tian smiled. "Several months ago I had the pleasure of watching Queen Dysea thoroughly demoralize a Senatorial aide who referred to For'mya as 'Only the King's Elf Concubine' I believe his words were. She tore into him with the ferocity of a Lycavorian she-wolf protecting her children over his words, in full view of the entire Elfin Parliament I might add."

"I didn't know that." Martin said.

"There is no reason you would have been made aware of it." L'tian spoke. "Dysea made it very clear where For'mya stands in the scheme of things, and it is not that of a concubine. You saved her life Martin Leonidas... and you did it without question or thought. That by itself tells me where my daughter resides in your heart. I could care not that she is now wolf. That only means she will live longer and be more vibrant in all that she does. That makes me happier than you will ever know. How is she doing?"

Martin smiled. "She is in the west garden with your wife. She is still a little weak... but her strength is returning quickly."

"And the assassins who did this?" L'tian asked.

"They have been dealt with." Martin answered firmly and with finality in his voice that L'tian nodded too. "For'mya was a secondary target L'tian."

L'tian looked at him quickly. "For'mya? But why?"

Martin shook his head. "I don't know. Armetus is continuing the investigation, but we do know a Lycavorian female is the one that brought these assassins to the island and when the attack went bad, she is the only one to have escaped."

"Why would a Lycavorian female be contracting Kochab Hunters to kill my daughter?" L'tian asked still surprised.

"Sivana was the primary target." Martin replied.

"Queen Anja's sister?" L'tian asked.

Martin nodded. "They got lucky because For'mya and Sivana were together when they attacked. Sivana was able to kill one before Belen, Anja and I got there. I don't believe For'mya was targeted because of Sivana. You are one of the few that are outside my inner circle so to speak that knows almost all that I do L'tian. That is why I trust you with this knowledge now."

"And you honor me with that trust." L'tian said. "Something you will never have reason to regret." L'tian looked at him oddly. "A personal vendetta against For'mya?"

Martin nodded. "Trying to kill Sivana I understand, but the only reason a Lycavorian female would try to have For'mya killed as well, is because she has done something in her past to piss one off. And this one is obviously better connected than most, which in and of itself is a problem. It means we still have spies within the ranks of those close to me."

"Do you think they will attempt again?" L'tian asked.

“I thought I had eliminated one potential threat to Sivana and I’m trying to confirm that now.” Martin spoke. “If I did... then this attempt on her was ordered and supported by the High Coven. They would have no real interest in going after For’mya, which leads me to believe that this female, this High Coven agent, has a grudge against her for some reason.”

L’tian nodded. “She is over a thousand years old Martin, and I’m sure there are many Lycavorian females she has angered in that time.”

Martin nodded. “I wanted you to know that is one of the ways I’m having investigated so you might be getting contacted by one of Armetus’s people.”

L’tian nodded. “I will assist in whatever way I can.”

“You can assist me right now, by telling me what Dysea and Isabella are doing on Elear.” Martin spoke. “Arzoal is arriving today, but she is only staying for a few hours to meet with me in regards to another matter, and then she is returning to Elear. She has always stayed at least a full day to see and spend time with her grandchildren, and she is not doing that this time. Why is that L’tian? Why is it so important that she needs to return to Elear immediately?”

L’tian looked at him and smiled. “There is not much that escapes your notice is there?”

Martin shrugged. “Walter always told me I was too curious for my own good.” He said. “What’s going on L’tian? If Dysea and Isabella haven’t told me, then it’s because they don’t want me coming to Elear ready to raise hell. And if they don’t want that... then there is something that someone is not telling me. I may be as dense as a rock... but I know when my Queens are not telling me something.”

“An issue has come up with a cult of sorts in the southern region on Elear.” L’tian spoke.

“And why is Arzoal involved in an elf matter?” Martin asked.

L’tian met his eyes. “It relates to the first Elfin King and I do not honestly know why Arzoal would be involved.”

“What sort of cult?” Martin asked.

“A religious cult.” L’tian replied.

Martin looked surprised. “A religious cult? On Elear?”

L’tian nodded and he decided then that Martin needed to know everything. “I will tell you everything I know sire, but you must promise me that you will not head off to Elear to squash this cult before allowing Dysea and Isabella the time they need to discover what is truly happening.”

“I have no intention of doing that.” Martin spoke. “The two of them together are more formidable than anyone gives them credit for, and if they believe they can handle it, than I will not interfere. For now.”

L’tian nodded. “Perhaps we should go to your office and discuss this while sitting down. It will take some time.”

Martin nodded and ushered him towards the palace.

EARTH EDEN CITY COMMAND CENTER

“We are almost positive they did not come ashore anywhere along the shore line for at least three hundred kilometers.” Jamerl spoke. “I’ve had my people go back through all the sensor logs for the last month and with the exception of civilian Water Lifters, nothing large enough to carry mass numbers of troops and equipment has come anywhere near the coastline.”

They stood around the huge wall map monitor gazing at the eastern and southern coastlines of North America. The monitor to the left of the map chart was filled with Admiral Wallace’s face from EDEN Base on the moon. Jamerl, Lynwe and Tareif standing with Isra near the center of the room.

“Our people found only thirty seven bodies after sweeping through Key West.” Lynwe spoke. “We dropped that many in our withdrawal from there. I know I took down seven, and Layna... she dropped at least nine. It’s impossible that our aerial bombardment only killed thirty-seven.”

“I agree.” Wallace spoke from EDEN. “I had my people here do deep thermal and seismic scans of Key West. The tunnels we detected were not deep enough to withstand the pasting we gave them. We’ve excavated one of the tunnels almost completely and found no bodies. None. They went somewhere.”

“The question is where.” Tareif spoke waving his hand at the map. “There are no land masses anywhere close to Key West. What is left of the island known as Cuba is barely large enough to support a hundred people let alone several thousand.”

“Were there no land masses near Key West before this Great Fire that you have spoken of? The passing of the comet I believe others call it.” Isra asked.

“There were several dozen.” Wallace answered. “None of them large enough to have survived the comet. All of our charts have been updated to remove them after repeated scans of the areas.”

Isra looked at Jamerl. “Is there anyway to disguise sensor scans from ships in orbit or from EDEN’s sweeps?”

“Disguise?” Jamerl asked.

Isra nodded slowly. “Reflect the scans back so they show nothing but ocean water. It has happened to Aelnala and me on several occasions when we crossed large bodies of water on Apo Prime. The sun was so bright it distorted the optic nerves in our eyes and gave back false information to our brains. The same thing can happen to sensors if what For’mya has told me is true.”

Jamerl was silent for a moment as his mind tossed the idea around, Tareif looking at Isra the whole time.

“Mirrors.” Admiral Wallace finally spoke.

Jamerl looked at the screen. “I was just thinking that very thing my friend.” He spoke.

Isra’s eyes went back and forth between the two men. “Perhaps you could explain it for those of us with no clue on how those things work.” He said with a grin.

Lynwe chuckled and even Tareif grinned as Jamerl looked embarrassed. “Mirrors.” Jamerl spoke.

“Large mirrors angled in such a way to reflect back sunlight would cause gaps in a sensor image. They would be passed over as nothing more than sensor spots in the overall image and thus ignored.”

“How long to conduct a full scan of this area,” Isra’s hand swept over the entire Gulf of Mexico area. “And find these so called blind spots.”

“Two hours. Perhaps three for more detail.” Jamerl spoke.

“And if we find any of these spots Isra?” Lynwe asked.

“Then War Master Tareif and I take several of the new Raptors and check each and every one of them in case they are land masses.” Isra answered.

“Why not your ship?” Lynwe asked.

Isra shook his head. “It is the only ship on the surface right now that can be airborne and headed into orbit in under a minute. There are no *AUTUMN MOON* Frigates in system are there Admiral?”

Jamerl shook his head. “No... all of them are on patrol missions out of the system.”

Isra nodded. “Then I will leave it here in case Tarifa, Aihola and Selene need to make a quick exit from Earth while we are gone.” He turned to look at Tareif. “You know the pilots better than me War Master, and I will leave it to you to choose the ships and men we will use.”

Tareif opened his mouth to reply, but Isra had already turned away. Tareif said nothing, knowing that Isra’s reaction to him was his own fault and no one else’s. He had to admit though the young, violet eyed Spartan seemed much more relaxed today, more focused and clear headed, and he didn’t know why. Admiral Jamerl knew why as he could smell Tarifa and Aihola saturating Isra’s very essence.

“You will have to remain below three hundred meters.” He spoke. “Going based on this assumption, if they are sophisticated enough to establish a jammer like this, than they will undoubtedly have the ability to scan any incoming craft towards their island or islands. Wouldn’t it be better to use Aelnala? She would not be picked up on known sensor arrays.”

Isra shook his head. “Aelnala will be with Tarifa and Aihola.” He said. “I want one of us to remain with them at all times. It is not because I do not trust the Spartans or Dragoons guarding them, it is simply because either of us have quite a few more abilities to draw on in their protection if need be.”

“Jamerl... I’m going to realign three of my sensor arrays to cover the area.” Wallace spoke. “Moving any of your ships in orbit might tip them off that we are doing something else. And we can do it here with much less fan fare, so that no ones know.”

Jamerl nodded. “I will assign three cruisers to your direction but tell them not to move unless ordered by EDEN.”

Isra nodded. "Lynwe and I will be with the Administrators for lunch. If these scans pick up anything contact us immediately."

Tareif watched as Isra and Lynwe turned and headed out of the Command Center. He felt Jamerl step up next to him. "You should speak with him Tareif." Jamerl spoke. "That Spartan would burn this city to the ground if it protected Tarifa and Aihola. And Lynwe would be beside him every step of the way."

"I was wrong about him Jamerl." Tareif spoke. "Now I don't know how to tell him that."

"Call your mate and meet them for lunch." Jamerl spoke. "You are Tarifa's father and the closest thing to a father that Aihola has ever known. He won't turn you away."

Tareif looked at him. "It's not him I'm worried about."

To any who knew it was as obvious as night and day. Tarifa and Aihola had arrived at the offices in the Eden City Command Center on Aelnala's back, landing on the roof of the building under tight security. All of the Spartan troops stationed on the roof, the same male wolves that had greeted them over the last few months and had hopes of claiming them, were quickly disappointed when they stepped from Aelnala's back and positively reeked of Isra's Alpha male aura. They walked into the building holding hands tightly and talking animatedly with each other, their faces bright and their eyes clear, focused and very much shining with rediscovered love and passion.

They had awoken this morning to a bed empty of Isra, but there were two large bouquets of stunning red roses on the foot of the bed, along with a note apologizing for not being there when they woke, but to join him for lunch when they came to work. It had taken a long hot shower, with both of them massaging each other's muscles to relieve the delight soreness of the night before. They both could detect the changes in their bodies almost upon waking. Tarifa's wolf senses had nearly doubled, while the part of Aihola that was wolf was now surging through her with a fervor she hadn't felt ever before and almost reaching the point where her wolf senses rivaled her vampire genes.

Selene had been the first to take notice simply by looking at the smiles on their faces and in the way their eyes sparkled. Layna, who had become her constant shadow no matter she went detected it next, easily scenting Isra's aura pulsing through their blood. Their day had gone smoother than normal due to the fact nothing could dampen the moods and spirits of the two women, and others began to feed off that as well. When it came time to meet Isra and Lynwe for lunch, Tarifa and Aihola were practically racing through the corridors to get to the small café they were meeting at, and when they saw the violet eyed Spartan Selene could only laugh as they ran to him like love struck school girls. He scooped them both into his arms, laying blistering kisses on first Tarifa and then Aihola, oblivious to the fact that others were watching. Selene stepped up to Lynwe and embraced her Drow Mistress and they shared a tender kiss.

"They have been fidgeting all morning to get here." Selene told her.

Lynwe smiled. "I have noticed that Isra kept looking at his time piece." She said as they moved to the table they normally sat at.

The human proprietor of the café was an older woman who adored all three of Earth's administrators, not to mention the business they brought to her establishment. It didn't matter to her in the least that they were elves, werewolves or vampires, only that they were the most gracious and personable women she had ever had the pleasure of knowing. It didn't even matter to her that the security around her establishment had become so heavy that some of her business was chased away. These three women had done more for her than she could ever repay, and nothing would shake her faith in them.

She looked at Selene as she and Lynwe moved to the large table they always occupied. "So this is the young man they have been waiting so long for?" She asked.

Selene nodded as she settled into the chair, Lynwe on one side of her, Layna on the other. "This is him Gianna."

"He is quite the catch. He has a touch of wildness in him that I haven't seen in many of the Spartans that come here and his eyes are simply amazing. I hope he didn't bring his dragon to lunch." The woman spoke with a laugh as she was placing menus in front of them. "I have a feeling the three of them just broke some hearts with that display as well."

Lynwe laughed at Gianna's comments and shook her head. "I believe Aelnala will be joining us, but you won't have to feed her."

"Well... space I can make for her. She would eat me out of business if I had to feed her." Gianna spoke motioning to several of her employees to move tables and chairs out of the way as Isra, Tarifa and Aihola walked up, their hands grasped tightly together.

Tarifa and Aihola both moved to where the older woman stood and they kissed her cheeks as Isra looked on. "Isra... this is Gianna... and she has the finest food anywhere in Eden City." Tarifa spoke.

"And the thickest steaks!" Gianna exclaimed. "I know you Spartans like your meat."

Isra smiled his violet eyes twinkling. "I will take the largest one you have." He told her.

"As will I." The voice carried causing all of them to turn and see Tareif walk up with Palina on his arm.

Tarifa's smile faded quickly and she stepped forward. "Papa... mama... what are you doing here?"

"We thought we would join you for lunch." Palina spoke coming up to her and kissing her cheek.

Tarifa looked at her mother. "Mama?" She said softly.

Palina squeezed her hands quickly. "Have faith in your father Tarifa." She whispered in reply. "He is trying to fix something he did wrong."

Tarifa watched her father step up to Isra slowly, Aihola moving up next to her and taking her hand tightly.

"I like to consider myself an excellent judge of character." Tareif spoke looking at Isra, who to his credit had not backed down from him in the least. "In your case Commander... my judgment of your character was terribly wrong. You hold a distinction of honor in the eyes of a man I would trust with my very soul. I owe you the life of my daughter, and I have done nothing but berate and dishonor you with my words and actions. Looking at her now, I have not seen her face so full of joy since she was a child racing me through the groves near Mountain City. And Aihola, her eyes have never been so bright and full of life in the entire time I have known her. I have you to thank for this. I..."

Isra stepped closer to him. "Your devotion to your daughter and to the woman you consider to be your daughter is beyond question War Master. I will one day match your actions in my devotion to my daughter or daughters' sir, in honor of your words this day." Isra motioned to the table. "I would be very happy if you and your mate joined us."

Tarifa looked at Aihola, both of them with huge smiles on their faces. Despite all that was happening in their lives right now, the man they loved most of all, and the man they both called father had made peace, and they could go forward.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

ELEAR NORTHERN TEMPLE SITE

"They gained access to the Temple through a rear delivery door my Queen." The Elfin Holy man spoke as he watched Dysea and Isabella move around the small vault like room. There were over a dozen scrolls encased in the clear glass containers and spaced at even intervals throughout the vault. Three of them were now smashed and empty, but the others remained untouched. "They made their way down here and entered the vault. Only a bio-signature password can open the actual containers themselves, so they smashed them and took what they wanted."

"Who has access to the vault?" Dysea asked. "It does not appear to have been forced open." The elfin Holy man couldn't meet her eyes. Dysea looked at Isabella briefly and then back to him. "*Amandil* Easan, please answer my question." (Cleric)

"Only I and the other two clerics who stay here have access to the vault area my Queen." Easan replied.

"And where are the other two *Amandil*?" Isabella asked.

"*Amandil* K'tas is currently in the market purchasing supplies for us." Easan spoke. "*Amandil* Forgain has... he has disappeared Lady Isabella."

"Disappeared?" Dysea spoke.

“This was not something that was revealed to us!” Isabella snapped.

“K’tas and I believe it was Forgain who allowed these people, whoever they are, entry into the Temple and then here into the vault.” Easan answered. “It... it is an embarrassing proposition my Queen. Forgain is part of the younger generation of *Amandil* that we have been trying to recruit. We did not suspect that he was...”

“You did not suspect that he had already been corrupted by this cult?” Dysea finished his sentence for him.

The middle aged elf nodded slowly. “It... it would appear so my Queen.”

Dysea looked at Isabella for a long moment this time. *It appears this cult has a greater base than we first thought Bella.*

Isabella nodded. *The question remains how much greater. Iriral?*

I have found nothing to indicate which direction they took when they departed. Iriral replied immediately. She was circling the temple in the clear sky above, using her dragon vision to try and determine if there was a trail they could follow. Many people could see her bulk circling above the temple and were commenting about her presence. *There is far too much Lifter traffic in this area, and the city does sit on two major transportation portals. There are Water Ferries departing every few minutes from the docks, and interplanetary shuttles from the spaceport just as frequently.*

Which means they more than likely left within moments of stealing these scrolls? Dysea spoke from inside the temple.

I would say yes. Iriral spoke.

Dysea turned to Miai who stood by the entrance of the vault. “Miai... go to the Port authorities for both the docks and the spaceport and retrieve all passenger lists for both the ferries and shuttles that departed for other cities the same night as this theft took place.”

The Lycavorian aide for Dysea nodded quickly. She looked bright and alert and her long strawberry blond hair was now tied into a pony tail and wrapped in two sets of fine, dark blue and light blue Drow silk. Dysea had seen such wrappings before and knew what they were, and she only hoped Miai knew what they signified as well.

Miai stepped forward slightly. “Should I focus on a destination?”

“Specifically Wainn.” Dysea said with a nod. “Or anywhere close enough to Wainn that gives them easy access to that city. Get the description of this *Amandil* Forgain from Easan and see if anyone matches that description leaving the same night as the theft. Take the Twins with you in case you need to exercise your authority.”

Miai nodded quickly and her blue eyes sparkled when Dysea mentioned the half vampire Drow elf twins that had become her protectors and so very much more in her eyes. “Yes Milady.” She said before heading for the door.

Isabella looked at Easan. “Why are you buying supplies?”

Easan looked at her. “I was under the assumption one or both of us would be going with you Lady Isabella.” He answered.

Isabella looked at Dysea. *Personally I don’t think we need either one of them Dysea ussta she-elf. However... Miai was not able to read what was on these scrolls and only this fool or his friend knows what they say. It might be advisable to give ourselves every advantage, especially if what Arzoal has told you turns out to be true.*

Dysea nodded. *I agree.*

Isabella turned back to Easan. “You will accompany us Easan.” She spoke. “When your partner arrives gather your things. Do not pack heavily for we will be traveling fast at times. Please head upstairs and give Miai a description of this Forgain character.” Easan nodded and quickly exited the vault. Isabella walked up to where Dysea stood, her hazel/green eyes focused on the door as she pressed close against Dysea. *Can we trust him?*

Dysea looked at her for a long moment. *What choice do we have? Like you, I wish there were copies that Miai could read and memorize, but there are not. And we may need his knowledge in the future.*

That they have stretched this far north from their base is not good Dysea. Iriral’s voice filled their minds.

Iriral... how many individuals in our vicinity can Mindvoice on our level? Dysea asked the question, her emerald green eyes focused on Isabella’s questioning hazel/green orbs.

None that I have been able to detect so far. Iriral replied instantly. That does not mean they do not exist however. If they are advanced enough that they can shield their presence from us, than they will undoubtedly be limited by that as well and not be able to hear us as we speak.

The three vampires you detected in the capital Bella. Are they able to Mindvoice? Dysea asked.

Isabella shook her head. I did not detect any trembling within my head indicating that to me when I saw them. My people all have this capability as I've told you before, but my father discourages the use of it strongly, except for select few that he chooses. At least he did when I was among them.

He does not wish others to possibly become a threat to him in this way. Dysea said.

Isabella nodded. Like the Lycavorian people, not many vampires advance this skill to the level we have achieved. Unlike the Lycavorian people however, vampires are not encouraged to pursue this skill outside of my father's control without considerable risk. There are even fewer who can commune at the level of dragons. We are in very elite company Dysea. Outside of Mjolnir's Hand and those of us close to Martin, your Oracle has yet to declare any Tier Six Mindvoicers with the exception of Thr'won, as she reconstitutes the Order of Oracles.

That does not mean they don't exist like Iriral has said. Dysea spoke. I recommend we communicate Shielded, in your language Bella, at least when we discuss anything of true importance.

I agree Bella. Iriral spoke.

Isabella nodded. Very well. I have learned to trust yours and Iriral's intuition, and if you think that is prudent, by all means let us stay prudent. We have not yet linked this religious cult to this Artre...

Bella... Iriral began.

That does not mean I discount it Iriral, quite the contrary in fact. Isabella added quickly. I have enough years to know that there are many things we do not have the wisdom or experience to explain. The relationship between dragons and elves is one of them. Like Arzoal said... we need to discover if this cult is just a group of fanatics reaching for something, or if it is indeed some of the original followers of this Artre. I will not begin to worry until we make that distinction.

And if they are connected? Dysea asked.

Isabella grinned. Then I believe we will have a bigger problem than we first thought, and we will need to remove these vampire fools who think they are being so inventive in following us, so that we can concentrate entirely on this cult.

Dysea shook her head as she stared at Isabella. Does anything make you shiver and doubt yourself? She asked.

Isabella leaned over and kissed her. Your lips upon my body make me shiver all the time ussta she-elf and I doubt my ability to keep from screaming. Does that count?

Dysea and Iriral could not help but laugh within their connection. Dysea kissed her back, her emerald eyes sultry and alive. You are such a harlot. She spoke.

Will I have to act as chaperone for this mission so that the two of you maintain some semblance of seriousness? Iriral asked with humor in her tone.

Isabella joined in their laughter. I will behave Iriral. She said squeezing Dysea's hand. At least until we have returned to the ship and we are in more comfortable surroundings.

Thank you. Iriral answered. I'm landing outside.

We'll join you shortly. Dysea spoke.

**APO PRIME
SECURE DRAGON MILITARY FACILITY
MJOLNIR'S HAND HOME BASE
SIX KILOMETERS OUTSIDE TUYA**

Do we know nothing more about this Firespitter? Arzoal asked.

The facility had been built within the last year, only six kilometers from Tuya, but three kilometers away from the Island Palace in the opposite direction of the city. It was used as the primary training facility for Mjolnir's Hand, with barracks and large pens for all three hundred dragons should they ever occupy the base at

one time. Since Apo Prime was such an enormous world, only half the planet was actually used for the billions who lived on the world. *Mjolnir's Hand's* base was massive all by itself, like a small city really, with the majority of the families of the members of the unit occupying the housing and schools.

Arzoal was the largest known dragon to exist, primarily because of her age, and her eighteen meters of length and twelve meters of height surpassed even Torma in size. Walking between Arzoal and Torma as Martin did now, he looked tiny in comparison and it would have been comical if not for what they were discussing.

Isra and Aelnala have confronted them only once so far. Martin answered. *As I told you when we spoke through your aide, she is nearly as large as Torma. Isra says between thirteen and fifteen meters long and Aelnala estimates her age at roughly three thousand years old based on the skin molts they discovered.*

Arzoal nodded her massive head. *Torma will not grow in size now for a millennia at least, but I suspect he will become as large as me one day based on his size now.*

Martin chuckled and looked at his dragon brother. *Don't worry. I'll keep him on a strict diet so he does not become fat.*

Fat? Torma exclaimed. *I am stronger, faster and leaner now than I have ever been I will have you know.*

Arzoal chuckled as well. When Torma had come to her asking for her permission to take Isheeni as his mate, even though it would be two hundred and fifty years before she would be able to have children, Arzoal had inwardly questioned his commitment to her daughter. It wasn't until she had seen him interact with Isheeni that Arzoal knew Torma truly loved her daughter.

I have spoken to the other Elders Martin. She said her voice becoming serious now. *You must remember that we occupied different parts of Enurrua so that we were not all together in one location.*

Martin nodded. *A wise move considering what Chetak and his people were doing.*

Arzoal nodded. *There is only one incident that either of them can remember where eggs may have been... where eggs were lost to us. We had thought the situation solved, and until now we have never revisited this incident.*

Martin looked at her. *I'm listening.*

This occurred before the Union was formed here on Apo Prime. Arzoal spoke. *Many of your people were still under the thumb of the Coven and had not broken free of that control completely yet.*

I'm not going to like what you're going to tell me am I Arzoal? Martin spoke.

There was a confrontation on Enurrua four thousand six hundred and nineteen years ago. Arzoal continued. *It was the last Great War between Chetak's people and dragons. Thousands were lost on both sides over the course of this war. When this war ended is when I began blocking the hatchlings abilities to utilize their full skills.*

Why? Martin asked.

Arzoal's flame colored eyes rested on him. *You, Aricia and the others of Mjolnir's Hand are not the first to have ridden dragons Martin.* She said softly seeing his eyes go wide. *There were a handful of Chetak's people who discovered this skill during this war.*

How long did this war last?

It continued for ten years. Arzoal answered. *In the third year, after a particularly savage battle, it was discovered that among the dragon casualties were four females, who at the time were carrying eggs.*

I thought you didn't allow egg carrying females to hunt much less go into battle. Martin asked.

It was a different era my King. Arzoal spoke starting to walk again, Martin and Torma following her without question. *We were far greater in number then and all of us were warriors at that time. We had not even begun interspecies breeding yet. That only began a thousand years later when our numbers had diminished to dangerous levels.* Arzoal took a mighty breath as she continued talking. *It was in the third year of this war that Chetak's people discovered our largest combined nest. They attacked and destroyed over ten thousand dragon eggs over a three day period.*

Martin and Torma's eyes went even wider at this information. *Elder Mother... this is not... this is not common knowledge.* Torma gasped out.

Arzoal shook her huge head. *No it is not. And it must not become common knowledge. We have come so far in our relations with other species now that this information, if it became public, I fear it would be very damaging. We... we took drastic measures to insure he did not take any of the eggs, by collapsing the main*

cavern where the eggs were stored crushing them and any of his men who made it inside. In essence... we are just as responsible as Chetak and his men for the deaths of ten thousand of our own kind.

Martin shook his head quickly. *We've had this discussion before Arzoal. The three of us, because of what I have shared with Torma that only he and you know.*

Arzoal looked at him. *An act of evil to stop an even greater act of evil.* She spoke.

You did what needed to be done. Torma spoke. *Now is not the time to question what you did Elder Mother.*

Arzoal looked at the obsidian black dragon who was mate to her youngest daughter and her eyes shone with pride. She took a deep breath once more and continued. *The four females I spoke of earlier were casualties of this battle. Exactly two years later eleven dragons appeared with riders who were working for Chetak. Their skills were no where near as advanced as any of Mjolnir's Hand is now. We battled them over the course of several months, five of them turning against their riders when confronted with their remaining parent. We discovered that the riders were Lycavorians who had worked for the Coven and had brought in by Chetak. Their Mindvoice skills were superior to any among Chetak's people, and they were able to control their dragons in a fashion, brainwashing them from the time they hatched into believing we were the bad ones.*

You said five returned. Martin spoke.

Arzoal nodded. *Five returned to us yes. Four we had to kill outright; and the last two disappeared and were presumed dead because they were never seen again. A male and a female.* Arzoal looked at Martin. *Both of them were Firespitters and the rider of the female was a male Lycavorian.*

That isn't good. Martin spoke as he stopped walking now.

The timeline of events on Enurrua and the history of Earth myth about dragons match almost perfectly sire. Arzoal said looking at him. *Somehow they must have found their way to Earth.*

But the Firespitter Aelnala and Isra faced is barely three thousand years old. Aelnala was almost certain. And the skin molts confirmed it. Torma spoke. *It can not be this same dragon.*

Arzoal shook her head. *No. More than likely it is a child or grandchild of the original pair.*

And almost five thousand years have passed since they disappeared from Enurrua. Martin spoke. *Arzoal how many children did you bear before your mate was killed?*

Nineteen. Isheeni was the last to hatch and she is the youngest of that batch of eggs. She answered immediately.

And if he had not died, how many eggs could you have produced as a healthy female dragon in the same time period that has passed since they disappeared? Martin asked.

Arzoal met his gaze, understanding his question. *If my mate still lived and we began birthing at the same time as these two dragons may have? If you include the thirteen times my cycle passed and my mate and I chose not to have eggs, five times that number calculating two eggs per batch average. And as a Firespitter myself, I never had less than three eggs.*

So we're talking potentially almost a hundred dragon eggs. Martin said.

Arzoal nodded slowly. *Yes. But you must remember Martin, dragon eggs, especially Firespitter eggs, will not hatch unless conditions are absolutely perfect. Climate, temperature, humidity, all of these things must be perfect sire. It took Isheeni almost seven years to hatch after I laid her egg.*

The chance still remains though correct? Martin asked.

Arzoal nodded slowly, her eyes growing larger. *Which means we may have sent Aelnala and Isheeni into a situation they can not win?*

Martin took a deep breath and shook his head. *We will not panic.* He spoke calmly. *I will speak with Aricia as soon as you leave Arzoal, and I will order Mjolnir's Hand to hold where they are until we know for sure. We have only seen the one dragon and rider, and that could very well mean that is all there is. Arzoal could this be tied somehow to what Dysea and Isabella are investigating on Elear?*

You have spoken with L'tian? She said surprised.

About the elf angle of this whole religious cult thing yes. Martin nodded. *Not why you are involved. Or why you feel the need to return to Elear so quickly. You have always spent time with your grandchildren when you come here, but this time your DT is remaining hot on the landing pad to take you back up to your ship and return to Elear. Why?*

It is a very long story sire. Arzoal spoke meeting his eyes.

Give me the short version. Martin told her. And we told each other we would never hold back anything from each other, no matter how bad it was Arzoal. We made the agreement and you are very near crossing the line we established. I can not protect you and the dragons if you don't tell me everything. And this information could potentially put Aricia and Isheeni in great danger, not to mention others that I care about. That you care about. You have to trust me Arzoal. Our fates are intertwined now!

Arzoal stared at him for a long silent moment, her flame colored eyes focused on only his dark brown orbs. She lowered herself to the ground and inched her huge head closer to him, never breaking eye contact. *It is a dark part of our history Martin.*

We all have dark parts of our history Arzoal. Look at my people. We treated our own females as nothing better than animals! Martin spoke. We almost committed genocide on dragons! I'm pulling us out of our past Arzoal, sometimes kicking and screaming in the process, but I am doing it. And so are you with the dragons! My people and dragons have become synonymous with each other because of what you and I have built with Mjolnir's Hand. I will never hold anything back from you, and that is how you must be with me. Without that level of trust Arzoal, what we have done will never last. And I know you want it to work just as deeply as I do. As Torma and Isheeni do. As every member of Mjolnir's Hand wants it to work. You know this.

No non dragon has ever known this part of our history sire. Not even Tablina, who is considered family to so many of us. And no dragon younger than five thousand years has this knowledge. Arzoal spoke as her eyes fell on Torma.

You know as well as I that Torma and I speak with one voice and think with one mind. He is considered the senior dragon among Mjolnir's Hand even though half of them are older than he is. Like Aricia and Isheeni, our experiences have become shared Arzoal, as if we have led each other's lives. Martin spoke. If you can not trust us, who can you trust?

Then I suggest we go someplace far away from prying eyes and ears, of which there are still many here on Apo Prime. Arzoal spoke.

Martin nodded. *I know a place. Torma and I discovered it several months ago. We haven't even told Aricia and Isheeni of it.*

Then let us go there. Arzoal spoke. And I will tell you all that I know, but I don't believe the two events are tied together. We can discuss it more, but I think you will agree. And then I will visit my grandchildren before returning to Elear.

Martin leaped nimbly up onto Torma's back. *Follow us.*

EARTH EDEN CITY AIRFIELD

“Aelnala can carry you both easily now.” Isra spoke as he knelt near the couch where Tarifa and Aihola sat, and placed items into the small pack in the rear of the *DT*. Aelnala rested her bulk on the deck while Tarifa and Aihola sat on the couch. “She is much stronger than she was on Enurrua, and if anything happens while we are gone, she is who you must get to. She will bring you here, where Lohana will take you into orbit to the station. Do not question what she does, either of you. Your protection is priority over all else, by Martin's orders.”

“Isra... we will not question her.” Tarifa spoke.

Isra looked at her and his violet eyes sparkled with love and passion as they moved back and forth between Tarifa and Aihola. He reached out and took their hands within his. Had anyone he had known told him even two years ago that he would have not just one, but two breathtakingly beautiful elf females as mates, he would have laughed endlessly. They had spent a second night in their home with Aelnala watching over them, as they pleased each other in ways none of them had ever thought of before. Isra just did not tire of them, their scents filling his head until all he wanted to do was possess them. And possess them he did on many occasions, both Tarifa and Aihola happily crying out his name in blissful abandon. He had also learned just what the two of them could do to each other as well. He had watched them pleasure each other at the same time as they pleased him, until the very sight of them together would almost be enough to send him over the edge. And when they turned their combined attention on him, it was over very quickly for he couldn't and didn't last long.

“I know you both better than you think.” He spoke with a gentle smile. “I have not waited this long to finally claim you both, only to lose you both because you do something utterly foolish.”

“Nor have we.” Aihola spoke softly. “I will watch out for us.”

Tarifa laughed softly as she leaned into Aihola. “*Nya Istel*... you are more reckless than I.” Tarifa exclaimed with false indignation.

Isra shook his head with a grin remembering Martin’s words to him about them. “We have strengthened our Mindvoice connection so that both of you can now reach me or Aelnala anywhere on the planet. While I am gone I want you to practice with her in maintaining a shielded connection and conversation. She will never be far from you, but if you wish to ask her something and not have others hear your voices, use a shielded connection.”

“Isra do you think there are others within Eden City that can hear our conversations within Mindvoice?” Tarifa asked somewhat surprised.

Isra nodded. “It is always a possibility.” He answered gently. “Aelnala established her connection with you on Enurrua, and the ease with which she did it suggests you both have potential you have not touched. It is something we can work on in the future, but to connect with a dragon within Mindvoice as you both have to such a degree is not normal and not easily done. You should not need to be concerned, but we also do not know the extent to which these creatures can extend their own abilities and it is better to be safe.”

Mindvoicing is not natural to elves. Aelnala told them, explaining further. *You have learned much the two of you, just by exploring your bond with each other. I will begin to show you what is natural to my kind and to Lycavorians, and soon it will become like second nature to you. We should include Lynwe, Selene and Layna my Bonded Brother. They all have this potential, and it would not hurt to be able to speak with others as well.*

Isra nodded. “I will trust in your wisdom.” He answered. “No more than that, until we discover more about our enemies. Until Aricia, Isheeni and Thr’won arrive with the Guardian of the Line, we are the most powerful Mindvoicers on Earth, and we should guard ourselves accordingly.”

Aelnala nodded her large head. *Agreed.*

Aihola looked at him. “Isra... can Aricia... can she really throw... psychic projections... psychic weapons from her hands?”

Isra nodded. “Martin and Aricia both yes. They are the only ones who have reached that level of power because of the pureness of their blood. A Lycavorian’s blood is what dictates the power of our Mindvoice abilities, the pureness of it, and the two of them have the purest blood ever recorded according to Senior Hadarian Healer Eurin.”

“How long will you be gone?” Tarifa asked leaning closer to him.

“We have detected half a dozen of these sensor spots along the Gulf. Your father suspects no more than two days to investigate them all. Aricia and Isheeni should be here by then.” He answered.

“We have not waited this long to finally have you claim us,” Aihola spoke with a brilliant smile as she too leaned closer to him. “Only to have *you* do something utterly stupid and foolish.”

“*Nya Istel* is right.” Tarifa echoed.

Isra grinned. “Me? Do something foolish?” He exclaimed with indignation as well.

Oh please Brother! Aelnala snorted.

Tarifa and Aihola laughed and they pressed close to him, their eyes closing in contented bliss as he nuzzled their ears and held them both tightly. They heard Tareif come stomping up the ramp on purpose and they turned to look at him. He wore a gentle smile on his face.

“We are ready.” He spoke.

Isra nodded and kissed them both deeply before getting to his feet and picking up his bag. Tarifa and Aihola got up as well and went to her father, hugging him.

Tareif looked at them. “I will bring him back to you both.” He said softly.

“Be careful Papa.” Tarifa told him. “We want you both to return.”

“That means you don’t do anything stupid either War Master.” Aihola spoke as she kissed his rough cheek.

Tareif smiled and nodded. “We will see you in two days.”

Tarifa and Aihola grasped hands, their fingers entwining as they watched them start walking across the airfield toward the waiting RAPTOR II. Aelnala came up directly behind them.

My father has a habit of finding trouble wherever he goes. Tarifa said.

Then they should get along famously. Aelnala replied. *For Isra has this same trait.* She nudged them both in the shoulder gently with her huge head. *Come. You have very important meetings to attend today. The Representatives of the Zaleisian Empire are shrewd and if my schooling while on Apo Prime is accurate, not to be entirely trusted either.*

Aihola looked at her. *What did you learn of them?* She asked as they moved down the ramp.

Tarifa climbed into the saddle first, and then Aihola settled in front of her. *Yes Aelnala, whatever insight you can give us would be helpful.* Tarifa said.

Then we shall loop around the city several times while I tell you what I learned. Aelnala spoke just before she leaped easily into the clear sky.

FORT JEFFERSON DRY TORTUGAS NATIONAL PARK ISLAND OF GARDEN KEY FLORIDA KEYS

The island was much larger now than the hundred and seventy thousand square meters it had been centuries before. The Tsunamis and underwater earthquakes caused by the Comet had washed over the island, submerging it for over four hundred years before several earthquakes within the last fifty years had caused it to resurface and enlarge itself by five kilometers square now. The other six islands within the Dry Tortugas chain had also resurfaced because of the earthquakes and become larger, though Garden Key was still the largest.

The old Fort Jefferson was a structure built entirely by red brick in the 1800s, and though two of the six walls had been destroyed throughout the years, the fort had drained and become useable once more when the islands resurfaced. It was here that they called home.

Fort Jefferson was no longer a decrepit structure; the walls were reinforced with steel and concrete, and now defended by heavy chain gun turrets. The entire interior of the fort had been modernized and built up, though the moat around the exterior of the fort was still in place and filled once more with the green waters of the Florida Keys. There were huge mirrors measuring a hundred meters square anchored deeply in the four corners of the coral reefs that encircled the island. It was these mirrors and the passive sensor deflecting generators that allowed the seven island chain to go undetected in any sensor sweep of the area. More buildings had been constructed on Garden Key now, to house the hundreds of humans that were now their allies, and a single structure near the end of Loggerhead Key, the next largest island only half a kilometer away.

They resided within the walls of Fort Jefferson, and humans were only allowed within the fort under heavy security. Though there were only six hundred humans living on the island, there were several thousand living still on the mainland in and around what they were rebuilding as New Miami. All of them had lost friends or family, as well as their status and positions within the High Coven Alliance in Tarifa's attack on the city. They had been building their base of power throughout the last eighteen months and were now ready to put in motion their bid to retake control of Earth from the three female elves that now controlled it. They kept their hate for elves buried deep so as not to expose themselves to others and risk detection.

They had approached the human leaders after the Black haired one had left Earth and offered an alliance with them to regain control. They had the weapons and technology the humans lacked, and they had the one thing they had thought would make the difference in their takeover attempt.

At least they had thought that until several days ago when the Spartan and Dragon had appeared at their base in the old Coven school. They were the failed attempt by the High Coven at DNA cross breeding of Lycavorians and another race, and they held an intense hatred for everything the Lycavorians stood for, as well as the High Coven that had created and then discarded them as failed experiments.

They called themselves the True People.

"What have we discovered?" The True People's leader asked as they sat in the large meeting room of the bowels of Fort Jefferson.

He called himself The One, and he was the largest of his people at nearly seven feet in height, and unlike the almost stick thin like appearance of the majority of his people, his body was rippling with muscles. His

pastly white body was covered in the tan leather jumpsuit as almost all the high ranking members of their people were. His blood red eyes were emotionless and cold, his protruding fangs gleaming white.

“It has become almost impossible to obtain information the usual way since this new Spartan and his dragon arrived.” Another of the True People spoke, leaning across the table and waving his hand across the photos and documents lay out across the table. “They have increased their internal security by ten fold. Public tours of the Command Center have been stopped, and they are no longer publishing the schedules for the three witches.”

“We had no reason to suspect dragons existed outside of those on Earth.” Another spoke from further down the table. “We were told lies in this regard.”

“I never told you that.” The deep voice spoke as the tall, heavily muscled Lycavorian male pushed away from the shadows of the wall. “I told you I did not know what the final outcome of that conflict was, and in my opinion the dragons were losing. It appears I was wrong.”

“Maruad has never misled us.” The One spoke. “He left his world over four millennia ago, and came to Earth. He has not left this planet since. He was just as surprised as we were when this dragon and its rider appeared.”

“Could there be more Maruad?” Another of the True People asked.

“If we have seen one, I would have to say there are more.” The dark haired Lycavorian replied moving further out of the shadows. His dark brown hair was easily shoulder length, his skin weathered and deeply tanned. His face was scarred by several long slashes, one that had sliced through part of his upper lip. His dark eyes were cold and cruel. “What we do not know is how many, if anymore are on their way here, and how many of them have riders as the one we have seen does.”

“Can you not defeat this dragon and its rider?” The One asked. “Syrilth is larger and faster, many of us saw that and this other dragon can not breathe flame as she does.”

Maruad nodded. “That is all true. However... this dragon and rider have a far more powerful psychic shield protecting them. This dragon can go much higher than Syrilth and I, and their maneuverability is superior to ours. All this means they have far superior training than our own.”

“What does that tell you Maruad?” The One asked.

“We can defeat them.” Maruad spoke. “I have no doubts of that. The question remains where did they get this training, and are there anymore like them? This female dragon is not a Firespitter like Syrilth; she is a pure Heavyhorn dragon. Their breed was much more aggressive and physically stronger than the others from what I remember.”

“Why do I detect a hint of worry in your voice Maruad?” The first True People male to have spoken questioned him.

“Only a fool does not worry.” Maruad replied. “Syrilth is not like her mother. I have control of her, but that control is not as absolute as what I had with her mother. The main reason she serves me is because I have what she wants, and to disobey me means I take that from her.”

“I can have our Mind Priests further augment your control of her again if that is necessary Maruad.” The One told him.

“Further tampering with the balance we have now could only result in her going mad.” Maruad spoke. “And an insane Firespitter is not something we want on our hands now. I have told you what happened when it occurred with her father.”

“We also do not want the might of the fleet in orbit to descend on us either.” Another spoke now for the first time. “They have already sent Spartans into our tunnels, and forced us to retreat here. Our stronghold on the European continent had to be abandoned because they spread from Sparta like ants.”

“We are safe in the southern hemisphere.” The One spoke.

“Why do we rely on these humans One?” The next question came. “They are our food source. Is it wise to ally ourselves with them?”

“We must for now.” The One replied. “That is why they are not allowed into the fort without escort, and it is why those we capture have their tongues removed before they are brought here.”

“We have a course of action.” Maruad spoke once more. “It is a solid plan, and we should not deviate from it unless necessary. The appearance of this dragon and rider has only ceased the killings we were conducting to hide our true intentions.”

“You are suggesting we conduct the next phase?” The One asked.

“Why not?” Maruad asked. “We have the assets in place. Now we’re just waiting for the word.”

“This dragon and rider will undoubtedly move to protect them.” The One spoke. “And the Spartans will begin to actively search for us.”

Maruad nodded. “Yes they will. And when they do I will kill them, and then that problem will be gone.” He answered. “As for the Spartans... we chose this time because most of their fleet is out on the rims of the galaxy conducting patrols. There is perhaps a division on the station that they can call upon. Tareif has the remainder of his dragoons and Spartans spread out across North America helping to rebuild the cities. The forces in Sparta can mobilize against us, but not before we kill the elf bitches, and destroy their base of power.”

“You have still not told us what you gain out of all this?” One of the True People asked.

“Your kind is also considered a food source for our people.”

Maruad laughed. “Anytime you would like to attempt to take a piece of me fool, be my guest.” He growled. “I have lived on this world and survived far longer than you. Syrilth serves me and only me. Kill me and she will come for all of you for killing two of her siblings. I could care less that you feed on the flesh of the humans and elves on this planet. As long as I get what I want, that is all that matters.”

“Have you made your decisions in regards to that?” The One asked.

“Almost certainly. I will give them to you in another day or so.” He spoke.

“And the other dragons are secured?” The One asked.

Maruad nodded. “Syrilth is the oldest, and as long as she serves me, they will listen to her.”

“I question your ability to handle all of them.” Another spoke.

“Question it all you want, I don’t care. I control Syrilth... and she controls them. If that control ever goes away, all of you will die. Remember that.” Maruad spoke.

“Enough!” The One snapped. “We all have the same goals! Destroying the she-elves and taking back what Black Hair took from us!” He turned in the chair. “Begin phases two and three of our plan immediately.”

APO PRIME

MAIN PALACE ESTATE ON MAINLAND

“We have been having dreams Helen.” Martin spoke moving to the couch in his office and holding out the mug of specially blended teas that Isra’s mother had become famous for on Apo Prime.

Helen took the mug and she watched him intently as he sipped the mug of coffee and settled on the couch next to her. Helen had spent the better part of the last year schooling Thr’won mercilessly, passing on as much knowledge and skill as the elf mage could possibly absorb. Once she returned to Earth, she would be the most skilled and powerful Mindvoicer on the planet if Martin and Aricia were not there. She had an insatiable desire for knowledge, and Helen was more than happy to provide that to her. Between their studies, she had helped Helen re-establish the School of the Oracles and the academy for children that showed exceptional promise in Mindvoice abilities. She now had eleven students enrolled at the school from billions of children across Apo Prime, and she was very pleased with the progress they were making.

Helen was also one of the few individuals that needed no invitation to come and go as she pleased from the Island Palace. She spent most of her time on the island regardless, wanting and needing to be next to Martin and Aricia as they grew in power and skill, and to help Dasha as Androcles grew. She also assisted in the schooling of the hatchlings with Dasha, and the three small dragons, all quickly on their way to two meters long and a meter high, were just as insatiable learners as Thr’won had been.

“You’ve been having dreams? I assume when you say we, you are referring to Aricia and yourself. She is your Soulmate and the only one with a level of power and skill to share dreams with you Martin.”

Martin nodded. “They’ve been happening for a few weeks.” He said. “We have been meaning to come to you and discuss them, but events recently have kept us from doing that.”

“Understandably.” Helen said with a smile. “Why come to me now, with the attack on Anja’s sister and For’mya? Not to mention the problems on Earth and Elear both? Your time would be better used dealing with them wouldn’t they?”

Martin nodded slowly. "I would tend to agree." He spoke evenly. "Helen the dreams were more vivid than anything I have experienced since seeing my father's visions in my head. Just before you revealed to me who I truly was."

Helen's eyes grew a little wider. "Aricia's were just as vivid?" She asked.

Martin nodded. "Same dream too. Fire, smoke, and what appeared to be Lycavorian children. It was almost as if we were seeing it through someone else's eyes. We could smell the fire; hear the explosions, their voices shouting."

"What do you think it is?" Helen asked.

Martin grinned. "That's why I came to you." He replied. "There is also a word that we hear. The only word that is clear and focused enough for us to understand."

"What is this word?"

"Lyca." Martin told her.

"Lyca!" Helen gasped rising to her feet in an instant, her hands tightening around the mug of tea.

"Martin you are sure about the word? It was Lyca?"

Martin nodded and sat back on the couch. "I assume from your reaction you know what this word means." He said. "What is Lyca Helen? My vocabulary of our ancient language has improved considerably in the last year, but I can not find a meaning for this word in the scrolls. Aricia and I can't even *find* this word in the scrolls."

"And you won't." Helen spoke.

Martin's eyes narrowed. "Why?"

"It was stricken from our history after the Black Day." Helen replied softly. "And it is not a proper name. It is a nickname."

Martin got to his feet and looked at her, setting his mug of coffee on the desk. "It is a nickname for what Helen?"

"Lycavore." She answered immediately. "The original homeworld of our people. The planet the Coven destroyed when they conquered us over ten thousand years ago."

"It's Lisisa Helen." Martin said softly his gaze never wavering. "She's reaching out to me in my dreams unconsciously. She is reaching out and connecting to the two people strong enough to detect it. Aricia and I."

"Impossible Martin!" She snapped shaking her head. "That would imply a level of power that only you and Aricia have achieved. And the two of you have the purest blood known to have existed since Resumar and Eliana."

"She is my daughter." Martin said.

"She is also Yuri's daughter! She has vampire blood in her!" Helen spoke.

"And Veldruk is even stronger than I am when it comes to Mindvoice abilities." Martin spoke. "And as you have pounded into my head this entire last year at every opportunity, Yuri is no slouch in the Mindvoice department. And he has hundreds of men and women on a level with Anja and Dysea. That implies they take this ability almost as seriously as we do."

Helen shook her head. "They don't use it as we do Martin, you know that. It is a weapon for them first. It is a means of communication for us first, and only you and Aricia have the power to use it as a weapon."

"Well... obviously Lisisa does as well." He spoke. "It is her sending me these dreams Helen. I know it is. I spoke with Little Wolf before coming to speak with you. She agrees with me. It is the only explanation. She knows I am looking for her and she is trying to tell me where she is."

"How can you be so sure?" Helen asked him.

Martin held up the small disc that Sivana had given to him earlier. "This is how." He spoke handing her the disc. "Sivana gave me this when she decided to remain with us and leave her past behind. Look where the coordinates are Helen."

"Star coordinates are not a strong point of mine Martin." Helen said looking at him.

"Lycavore Helen." Martin spoke. "She delivered her to Lycavore."

"But how? The planet was... they used poison missiles all across the surface Martin. The orbital bombardment lasted for five months! Billions of our people died. They told those that survived that the planet was utterly obliterated." Helen spoke. "That nothing could survive on the surface for more than a few minutes."

"They lied." Martin said softly. "Lisisa is there."

Helen looked at him. “Martin Leonidas... I know that look in your eye! Even... even if this is all true... even if she is there, Lycavore is on the very edge of High Coven space, on the other side of the galaxy! You can not go after her!”

“Yes we can.” Anja’s voice spoke softly.

Helen turned and saw Anja step into the room, Sivana right behind her. She turned back to Martin. “This is insanity! You are the King of the United Lycavorian Union! Anja... you are one of the Queens of the Union! The Queen of Hadaria! Your sister is Princess of Hadaria! This is insanity I tell you! I won’t allow it!” Helen saw Belen enter the room, and right behind him Atropos, who had just returned to Apo Prime the day before.

“I’m going alone.” Martin said.

No my Bonded Brother. Torma’s voice filled his head. Martin turned to see the double doors push open and Torma’s head and shoulders pushed through them. *You most certainly are not.*

“Like hell you are!” Anja declared moving closer. “Miath and I will go with you.”

“She is my daughter and I will not risk anyone but myself!” Martin barked.

“She is your daughter yes, which makes her my daughter as well. This makes her Aricia’s daughter, and Dysea’s and Isabella’s and For’mya’s!” Anja snapped. “You will not do this by yourself Martin! We forbid it!”

“I took her there.” Sivana spoke, moving up beside her sister. “I can start... I can start this chance at a new life you have given me... I can start by helping you get her back.” She said. “I know all the pirate Jump Gates and I can navigate.”

Martin looked at her. “They have Jump Gates too?” he asked stunned.

Sivana smiled. “You didn’t actually think your Jump Gate technology would remain secret did you? The Overseers had it two months after it was developed. They stole it from Elear.”

“I will not allow this!” Helen exclaimed once more. “This is the craziest stunt you have ever thought of. This is just as asinine as what your father did at Thermopylae! You are both completely insane!”

Martin looked at her with a smile. “That’s why you are coming with me.” He said.

“Coming with *us*.” Anja corrected.

Helen looked at him her eyes wide. She looked at Anja and then back to him quickly. “Why would I do such a thing?” She demanded.

“Helen you have Canth’s spirit inside you. And no matter how much you scream that this is an insane idea... Canth lived on Lycavore, and he will know the planet. And therefore you will know the planet. He was the First Oracle yes, but he was also a Spartan and this is exactly what he would have done, and you know it.” Martin spoke.

Helen met his eyes for a long moment before shaking her head. “I must be losing my mind.” She spoke. “When do we leave?”

Martin grinned. “The rest of you ghosts can stick your heads out from around the corner.” He said while not breaking eye contact. “You’re busted.”

Wearing sheepish grins for being caught, Yuriko, Daniel, Anuk, Nayeca and Filrian moved from the hallway into the office.

ELEAR WAINN

Dysea stood near the open window, studying the crowded streets below as men and women began to break up into smaller groups and return to their normal routines. Wainn’s city governor had insisted on a small parade and gathering to honor Dysea’s first trip to their city, and thousands had turned out to greet her. It was definitely not what she had expected, Lexi and the Drow Twins scurrying about like ants in their attempt to provide as much security as they were able as Isabella and Dysea rode on Iriral’s back down one of the main city streets on their way to the suite made ready for her. She could see the sun dropping on the horizon now, and she and Isabella had finally made it to their room. Lexi was in the process of scolding the head of Wainn’s security detachment in a firm and very unhappy tone in the lobby of the hotel.

Isabella stepped up next to her in the window. “We were led to believe that this was a more conservative elfin city.” She spoke softly. “When was the last time Alocgeid or any of his aides were here?”

“He told me at least a decade.” She replied. “The reports he received were not accurate.”

“Or they were meant to be that way.” Isabella spoke.

Dysea nodded slowly as she sipped the clear crystal glass of mild wine. The wine tasted of apples from Earth and she had grown to like it for that reason as well as its limited alcohol content. Dysea handed her the glass and watched as Bella sipped it. “I feel like we are being watched even now Bella.”

Isabella nodded. “Yes... I’ve felt eyes on us since we got within a few streets of this hotel.” She said in agreement.

“Our vampire shadows?” Dysea asked.

“Part of it yes.” Bella replied. “But their eyes aren’t the only ones on us *ussta* she-elf. Where is Iriral?”

“She’s flying circles around the city and marking safe routes in case we need to depart on foot quickly.” Dysea answered. “I asked her to do this.”

Isabella’s head canted to the side slightly and she gazed intently at her elf lover, and the holder of half her emotional heart. Isabella had never considered herself emotional, always practical. Now having Dysea sharing her bed and her life, she was allowing emotion to have a more direct say in what she did, and it felt wonderful. What she felt for Dysea she could not put into words. This female elf with platinum colored hair had opened so many doors that Isabella had thought forever closed; doors that were the portals to emotion and feelings that Isabella had denied herself for far too long. And among the strongest of those feelings was her rapidly deepening love for Dysea as well as Martin Leonidas.

“What do you feel Dysea?” She asked softly. “I believe I have come to know you well enough to say that you do not plan for retreat unless there is a good reason. Why have Iriral do this?”

“It is something Arzoal said to me.” Dysea spoke softly looking at Isabella. “She said this Artre was evil incarnate. Since we entered this city Bella... since we entered this city I have felt the presence of evil all around us.”

“How do you mean?” Bella asked.

“It’s almost as if I sense the hatred of us.” Dysea said. “I sensed it from within the crowd most of all. And it was directed at us.”

“How long have you been having these feelings Dysea?” Isabella asked reaching out to stroke Dysea’s tanned cheek.

“Several months now.” She replied evenly. “Ever since the changes within me finished and I became completely like *Nauta Melme*. Ever since I realized that I loved you just as intensely as I love *Nauta Melme*. It’s almost as if I can feel things are going to happen. I spoke briefly with Helen about it several weeks ago, and she said it was because the bond I share with Iriral is becoming stronger and deeper. It’s causing my Mindvoice abilities to somehow mutate into what she called Precognition.”

Isabella nodded. “I have heard this term before. You are able to sense things... see things before they happen.” She moved closer to her. “Have you seen something Dysea? Something that frightens you?”

Dysea looked at her and shook her head quickly. “No.” She spoke. “It frightens me that I might, and I will be powerless to stop it from happening.”

“You must not think of it this way *ussta* she-elf.” Isabella spoke softly. “Think of it as a gift, like with what Miai has. Her gift of memory is something not even Helen has seen, and she bears the memories and experiences of the Lycavorian First Oracle. A man who lived longer than even Deia. Martin would tell you the same thing. You should nurture this gift Dysea. Use it.”

“And if I see something that is horrible Bella. *Nauta Melme*... Aricia, Anja... even you my love. If I see your death in some fashion? What then?” Dysea asked her.

“Then we take precautions Dysea.” Isabella spoke. “What more can we do? You know as well as I that death can not be cheated if it is truly your time. And you don’t know if this gift will even show you something of that nature. Do not be frightened of it Dysea. In all the time I have known you, nothing has ever frightened you. It is one of the reasons that I have come to love you so much. I never frightened you. What we now share... that never frightened you. It terrified me Dysea.”

“Why Bella?” Dysea asked moving closer to her, pressing her body against hers.

“It forced me to feel things I thought I had burned from myself. It made me realize that I was not as dead to the universe as I thought.” Isabella spoke. “And it made me see that I desired you just as much as you desired me.”

Dysea smiled coyly. “Bella... you taste too good to be frightened of.” She said with a hint of desire in her voice.

“The same can be said for you *ussta* she-elf.” Isabella told her with similar desire in her voice. “You and I... destiny and fate brought us together for a reason. I never believed in such things until I came to live with the Lycavorian people. Now... now I don’t think I could live without them. And I know I could not live without you and Martin in my life now. Whatever the future holds for us Dysea, we will meet it together without the fear of the unknown. Just as Martin would expect us to. Just as he meets the unknown.”

Dysea leaned closer and pressed her lips against Isabella’s and they shared a warm and passionate kiss that was more a show of their love for one another than anything else. Dysea’s elfin ear twitched almost minutely and Isabella saw her delicate nose tremble as she pulled back slowly just a little.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *How many do you smell?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I don’t smell individual scents. I am detecting a scent masker, and it is getting stronger. Whoever it is they are moving silently down the outside corridor, or trying to at least.*

Isabella closed her eyes for a brief second and then opened them again as she focused and concentrated her vampire hearing to the tune of the heartbeats around them. Her eyes changed quickly to vampire cobalt blue and she canted her head ever so slightly and then she could make out the steady drum beats of five hearts.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I hear five heartbeats. She spoke. Steady and even.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Professionals again?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Apparently there are more on Elear than we first suspected.* Bella replied.

Dysea squeezed Isabella’s hands as she caught a scent carried from the balcony on the soft breeze.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Two more climbing up the building outside.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Then these were not sent by our vampire pursuers.* Bella spoke. *They would never allow them to...*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Bella they attacked you and Lexi in the main square of the capital in broad daylight.* Dysea spoke.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Point taken.* Isabella spoke with a grin. *How many do we take alive?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *One will suffice I should think. Iriral?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I see them on the outside of the building my Bonded Sister. I will burn them off.*

Iriral replied.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Wait for our signal Iriral.* Dysea spoke as her hand dropped to where her *Nehtes* rested in her thigh sheath. *Can they see inside the room yet?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *They are still twenty meters below your balcony. These are not like the ones who attacked you and Lexi in the square Bella. They are different.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Different how?* Isabella asked.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *They are using only their hands and feet to climb. Almost as if they have adhesive on their skin.* Iriral answered. *They appear almost amphibian in nature.*

Isabella nodded quickly. [Mindvoice Shielded] *They are Evolli. Almost as experienced and well trained as Kochab Bounty Hunters. And nearly as expensive. Their finger tips and feet have sucker pads built into them, allowing them to scale sheer walls and cliffs.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *And buildings it seems.* Dysea said.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *So it would appear. They are stronger and faster than they look, and do not let them grasp your skin with their hands. Those suckers can peel the flesh from your body with ease.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *That’s a wonderful thought.* Dysea spoke casually, her emerald eyes never leaving Isabella’s face. *Iriral?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *They will reach the balcony ledge in six meters Dysea!* Iriral answered.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Burn them off Iriral.* Dysea’s hand closed around her *Nehtes* as Isabella’s knives dropped from within the sleeves of her armor. *Bella and I will handle the others. Meet us on the roof.*

The Evolli were indeed an amphibious species, able to use their agility and reflexes to survive their harsh homeworld. It had been discovered some millennia ago that the suckers pads on their hands and feet, used

to survive on their planet, provided them a very useful means of income off their world as spies and assassins. They could go where many others could not because of their ability to climb and adhere to almost any surface.

Of course... that was before the recent discovery of dragons, which like Iriral, could fly quite well and basically neutralize the advantage they had had for centuries.

The two assassins felt the gust of wind before they heard or saw anything. They looked questionably at each other before shifting their heads around to stare outward from the sixty story height they were currently at. Darkness was falling quickly as it always did on Elear, and their yellow eyes could detect nothing.

Thud.

The pressure wave of air hurt their sensitive ears and they flinched slightly.

Thud.

They looked at one another once more, puzzlement showing on their amphibian features. They both detected the movement behind them and whipped their heads around to see the huge grayish/brown dragon beating its powerful wings barely a hundred meters from where they clung to the side of the building. Its glittering emerald eyes were locked on them and they held nothing but death in their gaze.

It was the last thing they saw as Iriral opened her razor tooth filled maw and expelled a stream of flame that crossed the eighty-three meters between them in a heartbeat, instantly frying their skin and searing their amphibian lungs before they even had a chance to scream.

Firespitters were considered the most lethal of dragons until the cross breeding began and the Hybrids like Torma began to hatch. They were the fastest of the dragons without question, and nearly equal to the Heavyhorns in strength, but flying had always been and would always be the mainstay of their abilities. Due to his lifelong commitment and mating with Isheeni, as well as his Firespitter mother, Torma was one of the few Hybrids who had actually learned many of the Firespitter aerial tricks, and for his enormous size, Torma was extremely fast and very maneuverable.

Iriral watched as the two flaming figures plummeted to the ground below and she dove quickly, reaching the falling bodies with barely three swipes of her twenty meter wing span. She easily snatched both assassins in her talons several hundred meters before they impacted the ground below and with a quick flip of her tail, was once more headed up into the dark sky.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *It is done.* She spoke. *I will see you on the roof.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *It is done.* Iriral's voice filled their heads. *I will see you on the roof.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *What has Martin taught you when you are outnumbered?* Isabella asked as she lifted her dual knives and folded them back along her arms.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Attack first.* Dysea responded immediately.

Isabella smiled and slid her hand in front of the door control panel. [Mindvoice Shielded] *They let us attack.*

Dysea watched with a smile as Isabella blurred in motion, using every bit of her vampire speed and dashed into the corridor of their private floor. Dysea followed an instant later, her *Nehtes* extending to its full seven foot length even as she took three steps into the corridor and came face to face with the first of the five assassins.

The outcome was not in question, as the Evolli assassins were all surprised, and Dysea was lethally accurate with her *Nehtes*.

Three steps and attack. The first rule of fighting with the *Nehtes*. A rule that had become second nature to Dysea. The spear head of her *Nehtes* sliced through greenish colored flesh like a hot knife through butter as she impaled the Evolli assassin through his mid section. His lidless eyes bugged open wide as his yellowish blood splashed wetly on the floor of the corridor. Dysea released her *Nehtes* after shoving the Evolli back, spinning around with the grace of a ballet dancer, and lashing out with her booted right foot. The second Evolli couldn't evade the foot and it struck the barrel of his projectile weapon driving it sideways. The silver/white flash of light flared and Dysea's Shi Viska appeared on her forearm. The edge of the shield, its razor edges extending immediately upon appearing, smashed into the side of the Evolli's head. Dysea did not call upon her Shi Viska very often, preferring instead to use her other considerable hand-to-hand skills and her *Nehtes* to do battle if she had to. When her Shi Viska did flash into existence however, the razor edges of the just over half

meter diameter shield were already extended, almost as if the shield somehow knew that other means had already failed and it was being used to end a fight. The shield opened up a six inch long gash along his hairless skull, as the power from the blow cracked his thick skull wide open. His body slammed sideways in the corridor, crunching into the wall, his rifle now falling from limp hands as yellow blood and gray matter began to seep from the wound in his head.

Isabella had used her vampire speed to burst into the corridor and run along the side of the wall until she came to the last assassin in the file. As she came back into focus, the last assassin was turning towards her, having seen the blur of her physical body exiting the room. It didn't save him as Isabella snapped up with her dual knives, the razor sharp blades slicing across the greenish skin on both sides of his thick neck. Unlike normal humanoid creatures Evolli didn't have main arteries in their necks, only large bundles of nerves, and so the deep slashes into his flesh only served to cause immense pain as the nerve endings were severed instantly. Unfortunately for the Evolli assassin, these nerves also controlled the motor functions of his arms and hands, and they suddenly had no feeling left in them. As his lidless yellow eyes grew wide in stunned surprise, Isabella spun sideways with the same graceful movements as Dysea, kicking back with her left leg as she buried the blades of both knives between the shoulder blades of the Evolli who was fourth in the file and still trying to determine what was happening.

Isabella was a superior warrior before Dysea had come into her life, using her vampire speed and natural vampire strength to simply overpower opponents. Her relationship with Dysea had extended well beyond them sharing a bed together. They trained together almost daily, and Isabella quickly began to learn and master many of the elegant and more graceful movements of Dysea's unarmed combat skills. They were built very similar in terms of muscle mass and body type, neither of them having any measurable amount of fat on their slender figures. Their bodies were packed with muscle; Dysea's body taking on more mass and muscle when she changed into her wolf form. Isabella had been amazed at her speed and gracefulness when they first started training together, and Dysea eagerly showed her the exercises and different types of training she did to hone her body into what it was. What Isabella discovered during this time was simply amazing. The elegance of Dysea's movements were deceptively powerful, the grace and speed unmatched, and it was this type of fighting that often threw others into confusion. When combined with her natural strength and speed, the skills she was still mastering with Dysea forged her into a decidedly more lethal combatant than she had ever been.

The kick she snapped back at the stunned assassin struck him square in the back of his malformed greenish skull. The crunch of bone was very audible in the corridor as his skull shattered in several places. The force of the kick propelled him forward at deadly velocity, Isabella not turning to watch as his body lifted into the air and slammed into the wall at the end twenty meters away. The Evolli struck the door at the end of the corridor with enough force to actually leave a large dent where his body smashed before he slumped to the floor, most of the bones in his upper body broken due to the force of the impact.

Isabella twisted the handles of her two knives viciously, the blades buried hilt deep between his shoulders, his hands reaching back instinctively to try and pull out the invading sources of terrible pain within his flesh. Isabella did not give him the chance to recover and using her vampire strength, she tore the blades sideways and then back, effectively severing whatever cartilage and tendons he had in his upper body and rendering him helpless. She watched as his body fell to the floor of the corridor and then she was facing the last Evolli assassin. One of her blades snapped up just as the edge of Dysea's Shi Viska pressed against the Evolli's throat.

The assassin froze, terror gripping him as his head moved from one set of killing eyes to the other. His projectile rifle dropped slowly to the carpeted floor.

"Today was not your day assassin." Dysea spoke coldly, staring over the surface of her Shi Viska at the lidless yellow eyes.

"I will give you a choice." Isabella spoke slowly. "Tell us what we want to know and you may live to see another sunrise. Deny us and I guarantee you will experience more pain than your feeble mind could ever imagine."

"I... I will talk!" The Evolli rasped, his voice coming out in a croaking tone.

"Who hired you?" Dysea demanded quickly.

"A vampire!" The Evolli exclaimed. "A young vampire! He paid us a fortune!"

Isabella's eyes became interested. "Tell me of this vampire." She said.

The Evolli's yellow eyes gazed at her questioningly. "Tell... tell you of him?" He gasped. "You... you don't know him?"

"Why would I know him?" Isabella demanded pressing the blade of her knife closer to his greenish skin. "He... he said he was your brother." The assassin spoke.

APO PRIME MJOLNIR'S HAND SECURE AIRFIELD

The ship's official designation was a Terragen Coalition VP Alpha Nine long range Transport/Freighter, or VP9s for short. The Terragenian species were well known scavengers and freight haulers, their Coalition consisting of thirty-five planets on the furthest border of Union space. Their design and construction methods for their freight haulers were respected and duplicated across the galaxy, and it was very common to see Terragen freighters across every empire or Alliance as well as in the Wilds. The ships were extremely durable and considered by many to be the finest freight hauling ships ever made.

The difference in this particular ship was not its outer appearance, but rather its inner make up. This long range transport and freighter was two hundred meters long and a hundred meters tall at its highest point, roughly fifty meters less in length than the *AUTUMN MOON* Frigates. The ramp leading into the vast cargo interior was situated under the octagon shaped main engines. It could carry a crew of a hundred, but right now only the sixty Spartans that had been chosen for this mission were moving back and forth between the ship and the half dozen equipment platforms. Torma and Miath were helping to TK the larger crates right from the platforms into the ships, where Spartans were moving and securing them into locations for transit.

This particular VP9's engines were one class shy of the *AUTUMN MOON* engine class, making it perhaps the fastest heavy freighter ever known to exist. The computers and navigation equipment were all military grade now, and it was even equipped with two recessed missile pods, not to mention the strongest shield generators that could fit on a ship this size and still be powered comfortably. It was also equipped with a Shroud generator that could hide them for twelve hours before the power drain became too much on the ship's LSD coils. The exterior of the ship looked worn down and old, while the interior was anything but, with fresh paint and the new Dragon Armor lining the corridors and rooms, as well as the layer interior of the hull. It would not win any prizes for looks, but the ship had been built for covert missions and not for aesthetic appearances.

Martin, Sivana and Yuriko stood on the small bridge with Komirri and For'mya as they reviewed the charts and maps.

"...cut through this section of the Wilds." Sivana was speaking as her fingers danced across the star chart. "Since my face is so well known now, Yuriko and Filrian will need to be the faces of communication with the pirate gate controls."

"These Gates are useable?" Komirri asked.

Sivana nodded. "They are maintained as well as the Overseers are able. Each Overseer is required to keep the Gate in their sector operating or they lose the profits from them, which are quite substantial." She spoke. "I have used them all in the last three years since the technology was stolen and the Overseers established them."

"How did they get this technology?" Komirri asked.

Sivana shrugged. "That I don't know." She replied honestly. "I do know that if you have enough credits, anyone can be bought." Her sea green eyes went to where Martin was watching her. "Well... almost anyone."

"How many jumps?" Martin asked.

"Three LSD jumps to the first Gate. I've marked the routes in blue. Thirty-six hours to the first Gate. Five jumps between Gates six hours apart as per the pirate rule." Sivana spoke.

"Why six hours?" Martin asked.

"It is how they determine if we are who we say we are." Yuriko answered. "If you wait six hours between jumps then chances are you are pirates and not in any hurry to be discovered. If you don't wait... then it is assumed you are not a pirate or smuggler and word goes out to destroy your ship on sight."

Martin nodded. "Simple but effective." He said. "What about people like us, who factor the time into their operation?"

"There are random searches by the Overseers' henchmen in small warships." Sivana spoke. "No one knows when the searches are coming until they happen. If we refuse to be searched, they will destroy us."

"And we have enough elicited material in the hold to let us pass muster?" Martin asked.

Sivana nodded. "More than enough." She looked at the chart. "I estimate four days until we arrive in the Lycavore system, another day to move to the planet."

Komirri leaned forward and adjusted the controls on the chart. "According to what Queen Anja's sister has given us, there are minimal defensive platforms in orbit, but they are of the newest High Coven variety, and we would not last long against them. Lucky for us their planetary sensor array is weak and does not extend beyond the moons. The platforms provide the only means of long range sensor coverage in the system, and those we can defeat long enough to activate the Shroud and close with the planet." He adjusted the chart once more. "We will assume a medium polar orbit at this point. King Leonidas and Queen Anja will be released into the upper atmosphere with Torma and Miath. We will then withdraw to a location behind the fourth moon where we can lower the Shroud and conserve its power supply. We can remain hidden from the platforms using the moon's irregular gravitational pull to mask our signature."

"We won't be picked up on any kind of sensor array," Martin said leaning over. "Sivana wasn't absolutely sure of the exact location of the compound where she landed, but she knew it was on the northern continent. That is where Anja and I will begin our search."

"Martin... Miath and Anja are not able to withstand an upper atmosphere release." For'mya spoke. "They have only tested out to twelve point two kilometers altitude. You and Torma have a ceiling ten kilometers higher than them."

"That's why Helen is riding with Anja and Miath. Helen can augment their natural psychic shield enough to allow them to drop to their ceiling with no problems." Martin spoke. "And she is quite capable of handling herself when we need to land."

"Endith and I will pick you up when you call." For'mya spoke looking at the chart.

Martin shook his head. "No... Endith and Sivana will pick us up." He spoke. "You aren't going."

For'mya's head snapped up and her dark brown eyes were wide. "What do you mean not going? Of course I'm going!"

Martin looked around. "We'll finish this later folks. I need to speak with For'mya."

No one questioned the order and in less than a minute they were alone. Martin moved around to stand in front of her.

"Martin Leonidas... what is going on?" For'mya demanded.

"You aren't coming with me." Martin said. "You are not fully recovered yet For'mya. I will not put you in anymore danger than you are already in."

"I am fine Martin!" She exclaimed.

"No you are not." Martin said. "You need to remain here on Apo Prime. I want you to help Dasha with Androcles and the hatchlings. And I want you to learn from her and my mother."

"Martin I am..."

Martin pulled her into his arms, pulling her body hard against his. "Look at me." He spoke softly.

For'mya lifted her head and stared at his face with her dark brown eyes. *Martin I can...*

I will not risk you on this mission For'mya. He told her gently, his hand coming up to caress her cheek and jaw. *Your injuries and the change have left you drained and still adapting to what I did to you.*

You saved my life! For'mya spoke reaching up now to place her hands on either side of his face.

I almost killed you! He exclaimed. *I put your life at even greater risk because I did not want to lose you. I will not do that again. Someone was able to get assassins on our island For'mya. You may be weak and still adapting to the changes, but you still have your keen mind and your other abilities. I want you to use those skills to help Dasha protect Androcles and the hatchlings. My mother and Dasha have already offered to remain at the palace with you and teach you all they know about being wolf. These assassins were after you too For'mya, and for whatever reason this Lycavorian female has targeted you. They almost succeeded, and I want you ready for the next time they try.*

You think they will try again? For'mya asked him slightly surprised.

Martin nodded slowly. *The Island Palace is the safest place on the planet and yes I think they will try again. They won't know Sivana is gone, but to attempt it in the first place as they did, that tells me this female has a very deep hatred for you. They will think we are keeping Sivana locked down within the palace, and the reports said you were injured but were recovering. There will be an announcement that I have left with Anja to attend a summit on the Algolian home world. They'll try again when they hear that and this time I think they'll come after my son and the hatchlings as well.*

For'mya stared at him for a long moment. *You don't think these events on Elear and Earth are unrelated do you?*

Martin shook his head. *They may be unrelated... they probably are unrelated... but it's just too damn convenient that it is all happening now.* He lifted her in his arms and moved her until her butt was resting on the map table. *I spoke with Aricia early this morning For'mya and she agreed with me. Until you have fully recovered and adapted to the changes, we don't want to lose you on this type of mission. It could go bad very quickly.*

That is why I should be with you. For'mya spoke.

Martin shook his head. *If anything happens to me For'mya. If anything happens to Aricia while she is on Earth, then Androcles' guardianship and care pass to you.* For'mya's eyes went wide at this information.

Dasha...

Dasha already knows and she agrees with it. Martin spoke. *It will only be a few more days before you become fully adapted to the changes, but unfortunately I can not wait. I've placed Andreus and the Palace Spartans under your direct command. Armetus will now report directly to you and to Deia. When you discover who is doing this, you speak with my voice and your actions are mine. You know that.*

For'mya nodded slowly. *There are others who will not like that Martin Leonidas. There are those who say I have too much power as Concubine to begin with.*

Martin nodded. *I know... but there are not as many as you might think. You have the complete support of Deia, Riall, my mother, almost all of the Senate, not to mention your father and the Elf High Minister. Those that don't like that... well many of them are beginning to see that things will be different in the future, and they are changing, they may not like it, but they are changing.*

And those that aren't? For'mya asked.

Martin shrugged. *As Aricia is so fond of saying Nubou them. They will accept it, or be left behind.*

I will be very upset if you do not return Martin Leonidas. She spoke softly, pressing her lithe figure harder against his body. For'mya could not remember a time since he had come into her life when she *did not* want this man. Even before he had changed her, the emotions and sensations he made her feel were glorious.

Yeah... me too. I'm looking forward to claiming you now that you are wolf. Martin said pulling her tighter to him and kissing her deeply. He released a small portion of his Alpha male aura and let it tease her senses, and he felt her body stiffen slightly in his arms. He broke their kiss quickly and nuzzled her super sensitive elfin ears as the small tremor of his aura swept through her. He inhaled deeply of her sweet orchid aroma, reveling in the sharper taste of her scent now that she was wolf. He drew back slowly and looked into her beautiful elfin face, watching as her dark brown eyes slowly opened. *I love you For'mya.*

She wrapped her arms around his waist and smiled as she pressed her face to his chest and squeezed him as hard as she could. *And I love you Martin Leonidas.*

Arzoal said she believes you and Aurith have already begun bonding. Martin told her as he held her head against his chest, his cheek pressed to her golden colored hair. *She was very surprised at this, but she detected it immediately when she saw the two of you yesterday. We want you to explore that For'mya. For Aurith to begin bonding with you so young, it could very well mean you will soon have your own dragon, whether you wanted one or not.*

For'mya smiled as she inhaled his mint scent and nodded.

Isra looked up from the data pad as Tareif settled to the webbed seating next to him.

“We will proceed to the next location.” Tareif spoke louder than usual to be heard over the roar of the wind sweeping in through the open ramp. “The pilot says roughly thirty minutes to get there.”

This was the second day of their scouting trip investigating the dozen blind sensor spots they had detected in this area. All of them were indeed land masses that had resurfaced due to earthquakes in the last hundred years, and all of them had huge mirrors that were now established and hiding them from orbit. None of the islands were inhabited, though many of them were much larger than they were once known to be. Tareif had discovered several maps of the area that were centuries old, and all of the islands they were discovering were at least double the size of the old maps and charts.

Isra held out the data pad to him. “Another sixty-three of these sensor blind spots have been located across the world’s oceans. I have ordered Admiral Jamerl to begin investigating them.”

Tareif looked at him after glancing at the pad quickly. “You think this is much larger than we first thought don’t you?” He spoke.

“There are millions of humans who now live quite happily here on Earth War Master.” Isra said. “Most of them are happy to finally have peace and be free of the High Coven, and they are very pleased with how Tarifa, Aihola and Selene have handled things politically.”

Tareif nodded. “There are several humans on the ruling Council.” Tareif spoke. “I have not talked to them, but Tarifa seems to trust them.”

Isra nodded. “She is an excellent judge of character.” He said. “And with Aihola beside her, they will rarely miss anything. But as we are discovering, there appear to be many humans who hate them just as deeply. We know that this elf Anlain, the father of Telan has disappeared, and has not been heard from for several months.”

“When I find him... I will kill him this time!” Tareif growled remembering what Anlain had put not only himself through, but his two sons and Tarifa. His sons were beaten and tortured for months, while Telan raped Tarifa under the guise of a marriage in their families’ bid to take power from her as High Elf Queen.

Isra nodded. “Considering that he was willing to work with the High Coven before, I would not put it past him to be siding with these creatures now as well. Especially since Tarifa and Aihola are indirectly responsible for the death of his son.”

“Telan would have been executed for his crimes if Nayeca had not killed him first.” Tareif spoke. “Her actions only eliminated the need for a trial and firing squad.”

“It also gave this Anlain more ammunition to use against them.” Isra spoke. “Colonel Nestor and his men are still searching for vampire clones troops that may have survived the battles here.” Isra continued. “These creatures seem to have a grudge against the King and by default against Tarifa and Aihola, because of their close relationship with him. They still have many enemies, and if what I think is happening is indeed happening, then their enemies are all beginning to come together against her, Aihola and Selene.”

“You think they will move soon?” Tareif asked.

“I think that the murders were prelude to bolder acts yes.” Isra answered.

“Why did we not destroy these mirrors Isra?” Tareif asked.

“If we can now detect them, it stands to reason that our enemies can monitor them as well.” Isra answered. “We need to find their main base of operations before we begin destroying what they have built.”

Tareif was silent for a moment. “They are willing to do these things now, knowing that my daughters and Selene have the backing of every Spartan on Earth, as well as the fleet in orbit around us? That tells me their numbers are larger than we suspect.”

Isra nodded. “And most of the fleet is spread out within the system.” He said. “There are really only half a dozen cruisers in orbit, not including the station itself. Subtract those Spartans from Sparta that are off world conducting training missions, and we actually have only a quarter million troops, including your Dragoons, to bring to bear against an uprising or coup attempt in North America.”

Tareif nodded. “And we are spread very thin throughout North America.” He spoke. “If they know this, and there is every reason to suspect they do, then they have a source or sources close to Tarifa and the others in Eden City.”

Isra nodded in agreement. “Eden City is considered the base of power for Earth now.” Isra said. “Take control of Eden City and several of the surrounding cities; kill Tarifa and Aihola and Selene, and you gain

control of Earth. Add to that this dragon and rider supporting them, and at the moment we are at a distinct disadvantage. You reviewed what Martin sent to us last night?"

Tareif nodded. "Yes. It was not a very heartening report to say the least."

Isra shook his head. "No it wasn't." He said. "Aricia's arrival will improve our position, but this dragon is nearly three thousand years old, and the rider perhaps twice that if what Martin says is true. Aelnala and Isheeni with Aricia and I, we will only be able to delay them. To meet them head on would not be wise, for while we have the advantage in experience and training, these two have been together far longer, and we do not know what their abilities are."

"That is why you believe only Martin and his dragon can defeat them?" Tareif asked.

Isra nodded. "You were not able to see Martin and Torma when they were here in Sparta for Androcles birth. I believe you were off world with Jamerl learning about the use of the fleet."

Tareif nodded. "That was very exciting."

"You have to see them together to truly appreciate what they can do War Master." Isra spoke. "You will see some of it with Aricia and Isheeni, but Martin and Torma..." Isra shook his head. "What they can do together is utterly amazing. They..."

"Commander Isra... would you and War Master Tareif move forward please." The voice of the pilot came over the intercom. "We're getting some strange readings on our next destination."

Isra looked at Tareif for a brief moment before they both got up and made their way up the small flight of stairs into the cockpit. The pilot was a human male, which had surprised Isra at first. He had been trained by Admiral O'Connor, but until coming to Earth Isra had never met a human pilot. This young man had been Tareif's personal pilot since shortly after the end of the Battle for Earth, and no matter where Tareif went this young man flew him. They had an excellent working relationship, and Tareif could not heap enough praise on his pilot to anyone who would listen. Surprisingly enough, this is the young man who he had hoped his daughter Zaala would favor. He was extremely intelligent, and an insatiable learner. Ben had once said that he would be almost as good a pilot as Endith one day. Coming from Benjamin, and being compared to Endith, that had been the finest compliment Tareif needed to chose him as his pilot.

"What is it Steven Randall?" Tareif asked coming up behind the pilot's seat and using his full name, which he did only when things were considered serious.

The pilot turned his helmeted head and Isra saw his brown eyes and tanned face. "We're picking up some low yield power readings on the passive sensor array."

"Low yield?" Isra asked.

Steve nodded. "It's a low band power source." He answered. "Like a generator, but it's muted somehow."

"What do you mean muted?" Tareif asked.

"Like it's being masked." Steve replied. "Or it's underground. Possibly even under the water."

"Why do you say it is masked?" Isra asked him moving closer.

"Ben told us about how they would pick up generators on their low band sensors during the Central American War here on earth." Steve replied. "They were using them to power radar sets."

"You remembered this?" Isra asked amazed.

Steve nodded. "Shit Commander... if remembering your birthday kept me from getting shot down I would remember it." He said with a grin.

"An excellent practice." Isra replied with a matching smile.

"Steven can you broaden your scan?" Tareif asked with his own smile on his face.

Steve looked at his co-pilot. "Korat..." He spoke to his elf co-pilot. "Can we increased the power by like ten percent and still maintain our stealthy profile?"

"I suggest we bring it up slowly." The elf answered.

Steve nodded. "Do it. I'll reduce speed so it gives us a larger window to play with."

Tareif and Isra felt the RAPTOR II slow dramatically as the elf co-pilot adjusted his controls. Steve dipped them even lower to the surface of the ocean beneath them, leveling out at only two hundred meters height.

The elf co-pilot nodded his head. "That's working." He spoke. "The readings are firming up. Passive scans are picking up... shit! Missile inbound, missile inbound! Bank left! Bank left!"

Steve didn't hesitate and slammed his control stick completely over to the left, standing the RAPTOR on its side just as the streak of smoke sailed by on their right. Isra's head snapped around to look out the rear of the RAPTOR as the missile sped by.

"Fuck!" Steve exclaimed. "Looks like we found our bad guy base! What the hell was that? A stealth missile of some sort!"

Korat shook his head vigorously. "We're too low for our own systems to detect incoming missiles when they are set in a passive mode! That was a short range Skipper Missile!"

"Well they know we're here!" Steve nearly shouted. "Buckle in both of you!" He yelled looking at Tareif and Isra. "We're sitting ducks! Light up our radar and find the bastard shooting at us!"

Korat didn't hesitate and his hands flew over his controls. "Another one!" He shouted immediately. "Nine o'clock! Firing chafe and flares! Hard over right! Hard over right!"

His fingers were stabbing on his control panel insanely, and both Isra and Tareif could feel the bundles of flares and chafe erupting from the sides of the RAPTOR as Steve slammed them over into another gut wrenching turn, this time to the right.

"Where?" Steve screamed. "Where?"

"Three miles! I'm picking up a small boat three miles east! Shit... they just launched another missile at us!" Korat shouted.

"Going vertical!" Steve snapped as he calmly jerked back his controls and shoved his throttles to maximum. The RAPTOR nearly stood on its wasp like tail and shot straight up at almost seven hundred kilometers an hour.

"It's locked!" Korat screamed. "Roll! Roll!"

"Which way?"

"Any fucking way!"

Steve yanked his control stick to the left once more, putting the RAPTOR into a rolling turn as it dove back for the surface. His eyes caught the flash of the missile as it raced by underneath the ship trailing flame and smoke.

"Lock that bastard up and kill him!" Steve yelled bringing the RAPTOR back level.

"Tracking! Tracking! Got him! Firing!" Korat barked as his hand came down on the panel to his left.

Two missiles rippled away from RAPTOR 47's right wing, quickly dropping to just above the surface of the clear, calm green ocean water.

"They're locked! Impact in eight seconds!" Korat shouted. "Eat those dogs you bastard!"

Tareif and Isra watched the flare in the distance on the surface of the ocean indicating the death of the boat just as alarms began sounding once more.

"Shit they got one away!" Korat screamed. "It's locked! Bank hard right! Turn right! Turn right!"

Steve's clenched his teeth as he once more threw the RAPTOR into a sadistic and radical turn, the g-forces punishing all of them. They felt more than heard the explosion and the flash of heat and then the RAPTOR lurched violently and the cockpit filled with black smoke and flame.

"We're hit! We're hit!" Steve's voice screamed. "Korat! Give me power! Power! We need to get some altitude! Korat!"

He turned his head, his eyes going wide as he was looking into the gaping maw of the ocean beneath him. The missile hadn't struck the RAPTOR, only blown up two meters underneath the co-pilot's seat, the shrapnel and force of the warhead tearing through the belly armor and ripping all the way through the top of the ship. The entire co-pilot's seat and right side consoles had been ripped away from the RAPTOR with that single blast. Steve's eyes were wide as he noticed that his right arm was bleeding profusely, and his cockpit was now half torn away.

"Steven!" Tareif shouted as he tore at the straps from his seat, finally getting them off and barreling forward.

"We're losing fuel and altitude fast!" Steve snapped. "We're going in and there is nothing I can do to stop it!"

Tareif's face was red from a flash burn, but he was otherwise unhurt and he looked at Isra, who was pulling himself off the deck near the engineer's station. He drew his Shukur fighting knife in a practiced motion

and sliced away part of the straps surrounding his former seat. He dropped the knife and began to tie a tourniquet on Steve's upper arm.

Isra scrambled up behind Steve's seat and saw what Tareif was doing. His own face was slightly red from the flash of heat, but he quickly reached over and helped Tareif finish tying the strap. His violet eyes were wide and he looked out in front of them as he saw the horizon pitch one way and then the next. He could just make out a small land mass in the distance.

"Steven... can you make that small island?" He screamed above the roar of the wind.

"Take my helmet off!" Steve shouted.

Tareif and Isra both worked on un-strapping the bulky helmet and Steve shook his head to clear his vision, his dark hair slick with sweat. He struggled with the controls, the muscles in his wounded arm screaming in pain, but he nodded his head. "I think so!" He barked. "We're going in belly first and we're going to sink like a rock! The engineer's station! How deep is the water? The tail sensor should still be working!"

Isra scrambled back to the undamaged console, half the screens filled with white static, his violet eyes searching for what he needed. "Where?"

"Top right corner!" Steve yelled over his shoulder.

Isra's eyes lifted and he saw the read out. "Sixty meters and getting shallower!" He shouted.

"That's lucky for us!" Steve reached forward and throttled back on the controls, the whine of the engines drowning out almost everything.

"Twenty meters!" Isra screamed as the small island loomed in front of them now.

"We're at a hundred meters above the water!" Tareif shouted looking at the altimeter.

"I'm cutting power!" Steve yelled. "War Master... help me keep her as level as we can! We're going to nose into the sand!"

Tareif leaned over the seat as far as he dared and closed his hands over Steve's on the controls.

"Ten meters!" Isra screamed.

"Fuck! Here we go!" Steve shouted.

Isra had no time to think as the force of the impact sent him hurtling into the back of Tareif's legs. His head snapped around and he saw the rush of ocean water shatter what remained of the cockpit windshield and then it was upon them with the force of a tidal wave.

EDEN CITY

Tarifa looked across the table at the five representatives from the Zaleisian Empire. All of them were dressed in what would amount to outrageously expensive satin and silk clothes, with velvet like robes completing their attire. The Zaleisian people had brownish colored skin, all of them with a single strip of dark brown skin along the crown of their almost oval shaped heads. They had large lips, with essentially holes where the ears on a human would be. There were bony ridges on their necks that extended up to their jaw lines, and they had gill like openings on either side of their faces high on their cheeks, which looked positively hideous with their pale orange eyes. The fifth member of their delegation looked nothing like them, as he was meticulously groomed, with long dark blond hair that covered every portion of his exposed body. His face was almost feline in nature, with eyes that reminded Tarifa of a Mountain Lion she had seen once as a child. The yellow diamond shaped pupils did nothing to alleviate the feeling of unease she got from him either. He was a male that much was obvious, as he was heavily muscled and his clothes fit him perfectly, conforming to the contours of his powerful body. He was handsome in an odd sort of way, and carried himself with the air of someone who was used to getting his way. However, Tarifa sensed something about him that was not entirely right. He sniffed the air on several occasions, almost as if checking scents, his eyes focusing on her and Aihola intently several times through the meeting. Both of them were too good at concealing their emotions to let on that they saw this discrete action, but they both concurred that this man made them uneasy.

Selene knew her friends well enough to know when something made them nervous and throughout the entire meeting, the three of them communicated within Mindvoice, leaving Charles Turner and the human female to handle the majority of the negotiations. Charles Turner had been one of the co-leaders of the Ash Fork settlement and a staunch supporter of what they had begun and were still building. The woman beside him was

the leader of the third largest city state of New Richmond Elaine Kessler, and while Tarifa didn't know her that well, Charles Turner regarded her quite well.

The meeting had been going on for over three hours now, going back and forth over offers and negotiations. The Zaleisian Empire was far smaller than the Union, with only two hundred known habitable planets, but their part of known space was vast, with many planets being dozens of light years apart. The trip from their section of space to Earth was considerably shorter because they could cut through the Wilds, but something about their attitude and the way they carried themselves hung in the air to everyone from Earth.

The Zaleisian Minister finally held out the data pad to Tarifa across the table. "I must insist this is the final offer we will make." He hissed out the words.

Tarifa took the pad with a forced smile and allowed her sapphire eyes to glance at it quickly. It was a fair offer no doubt, the rights to fourteen square kilometers of the Atlantic Ocean's southern boundary. The purpose of the treaty agreement was for the Zaleisian Empire to harvest the vast amounts of fish and plankton that had made an amazing comeback through the last few centuries. She passed the pad to Selene on her left just as a small window on her computer monitor opened and she saw four words.

*They are lying.
Charles*

[Mindvoice Shielded] Nya Istel would you look at my screen casually. Tarifa spoke.

Aihola took the pad from Selene and casually allowed her amber eyes to pass over the computer screen. She dropped her eyes to the pad in the same motion as if it was entirely natural and began reading the pad.

[Mindvoice Shielded] Lying about what? Aihola asked.

Selene's steel blue eyes passed over the screen as well, as she made a show of pouring more water for her and Tarifa. [Mindvoice Shielded] I suggest we find out.

Tarifa looked at the Minister. "Minister Cho'ta, would you excuse us for a moment to confer?"

The Zaleisian Minister almost rolled his eyes and finally nodded his head. "As you wish." He spoke.

Tarifa smiled and began getting up out of her chair. The one non-Zaleisian member of the delegation leaned forward in his chair. "Is there a problem?" He asked sweetly.

Tarifa met those yellow eyes evenly. "I don't know." She replied calmly. "Is there?"

"In my experience, the elves we have dealt with in the past were much more decisive in their decision making." The man spoke.

Tarifa smiled back at him just as sweetly. "I think you will find that we are not like the elves you have dealt with in the past." She said. "Excuse us for just a moment."

The five of them got up and moved through the door directly behind them into a small anti-room. Once the door closed behind them Tarifa turned to Charles.

"Charles?" She asked.

"They are lying." He said instantly.

"I sense it too." Elaine echoed. "They are too smooth, too polished. They've been going back and forth between each other almost as if it was all rehearsed somehow. They have a counter offer for everything we have put forth."

"The fifth man is more than what he appears as well." Charles spoke. "I've read as much as what was available in the data banks about the Zaleisian Empire. They have never been a reliable ally of the Union, and some of their so called advances are tenuous at best. I don't trust them."

"Nor do I." Elaine spoke.

Tarifa looked at Aihola and Selene both. "The deal they are offering is more than fair." She said.

Charles looked at her. "I know you and Aihola have felt uneasy in there Tarifa." He said. "I may only be human, but I have been around you long enough to know when you are not comfortable with a person. And that mystery man disturbs you?"

Tarifa met Charles' eyes. "He... he has an untrustworthy smell." She said finally.

"They want something else." Charles said. "What is so special about this one area of the ocean? They have not veered from this one fourteen square kilometer area all morning. They are fixed on it for some reason, and they think because you are women and elves they can slip it past you."

“I don’t like the way that mystery man has been looking at any of you either. Especially Selene.” Elaine spoke. “Most of those we have dealt with show some aversion because Selene is a vampire. These men have not displayed any of those traits in the least. It’s almost as if they deal with vampires all the time.”

Selene moved closer to Tarifa. “And the only way to become comfortable with vampires is to be around them all the time.”

Charles nodded. “They are not here just for some rights to a patch of ocean water.” He said. “They are here for something else.”

Tarifa looked at Aihola with a puzzled expression on her face and she saw her smile in what could only be respect. She turned back to Charles. “Charles... where... how did you teach yourself these things?”

Selene nodded. “Yes... I would like to know as well.”

Charles Turner looked uncomfortable then. “It’s boring really.”

“Indulge me.” Tarifa said.

“We can’t do anything Tarifa.” He spoke. “Humans I mean.”

“I don’t understand.” Tarifa said.

“Throughout Earth’s history humans have managed to destroy or enslave whole races of people.”

Charles spoke. “We’ve committed genocide on those we feared or didn’t like. Your people, the King’s people, elves and Lycavorians, you are stronger, faster, you make better soldiers, better pilots.”

“Charles my father’s pilot is a human.” Tarifa said. “He can’t say enough good things about him.”

Charles nodded. “I know... and we are beginning to change that in everything we do. We’ve had to redefine ourselves in the great scheme of things Tarifa, as a species. Rediscover ourselves so to speak. Some of us older men and women decided to change that. We’ve opened a diplomatic school of sorts in New Richmond. Several different schools to be frank. We’re dedicating ourselves back to what made us great as a species to begin with. Our minds.”

“A diplomatic school?” Aihola asked.

“Yes a diplomatic school.” Elaine told them nodding her head. “We may not have been very good at stopping wars from taking place in our past, but many of the greatest leaders this planet has ever had were superior diplomats. They were masters at reading people, their faces, their body language, every little nuance, and then being able to bargain that information to get what they wanted. It wasn’t always good things, but for the most part they benefited mankind. Our school is teaching that, so we can truly help rebuild Earth.”

“And this school you have opened is teaching this?” Tarifa asked.

Charles looked at her. “Yes. I was... I was going to bring you to the first graduation next week to show you what we have accomplished. I didn’t think you would mind.”

“Mind?” Tarifa exclaimed. “Charles... I think that is a fantastic idea! You actually teach others how to do this? Read people? And they do not have to... they do not have to have unique skills such as an enhanced sense of smell?”

Charles nodded. “It’s not hard really. Some are better at it than others, like piloting our ships, but it is an excellent skill to have for men and women in our positions. There are many books we have found in regards to this.”

“They are here for one more day yes?” Tarifa asked turning to Selene.

Selene nodded. “They are not scheduled to leave until tomorrow evening as a matter of fact.”

“Good... we will tell them that we are going to review their proposal, get final approval from the full council, and we will finish our business tomorrow.” Tarifa spoke.

“I’ll tell them.” Selene spoke quickly. “If they seem to be so comfortable in dealing with vampires, then it will look less suspicious coming from me.”

Aihola stepped forward. “I would like to hear more about this school.” She said.

Tarifa nodded quickly. “As would I.”

RAPTOR 47

Isra gulped fresh air as his head broke the surface of the warm ocean water, his violet eyes wide as he took deep breaths. He was still inside the cockpit of the RAPTOR, but he could not see Tareif.

“Tareif!” He shouted.

His head snapped around to the sound of bubbles breaking the surface and he dove back under the water. His eyes went wide when he saw Tareif struggling to get the straps securing Steve to his pilot’s seat undone. The human pilot’s cheeks were bulging as he held his breath. Isra pushed off the side of the instrument panel and was next to Tareif in an instant. He was fighting with the straps, his Shakur fighting knife lost on the floor somewhere. Steve pushed him away, motioning for him to go to the surface. Tareif shook his head madly, even though he was almost out of air himself.

Isra shoved him out of the way and towards the surface. His Shi Viska flared to life under the water and Steve’s eyes were wide as the razor shield sliced through the straps like they weren’t there. Isra grabbed Steve’s chest and hauled him up, breaking the surface next to Tareif.

“He will drown!” Tareif yelled preparing to take another deep breath just as Steve’s head broke the surface gasping for air. “Steven!” He yelled, moving immediately to his opposite side to support the human pilot who had saved them both with his flying skill.

Steve coughed out water. “You should have left me!” He yelled.

“Not likely.” Isra spoke as his head looked around. “We aren’t sinking anymore!”

“The nose is buried in the sand.” Steve spoke. “And the rear of the ship has settled. Damn... I’m going to be in big trouble for sinking a RAPTOR.” He laughed until he tried to move his arm and that laugh turned into a groan of pain.

“Broken?” Tareif asked.

Steve nodded. “Got to be.” He said. “This air pocket ain’t going to last long. How deep are we?”

“No more than ten meters.” Isra replied. “The tail of the ship is most likely still above the surface and we need to get you out of the water quickly. You are still bleeding.”

“Oh man... crash a RAPTOR and get eaten by a damn shark all in the same day.” Steve spoke.

“Hold on.” Isra spoke diving beneath the surface. He stroked powerfully into the rear of the RAPTOR, which was completely underwater, and went to the side cabinet where he removed three emergency packs. He looped them around his arm and then pulled three portable air bottles from the locker and headed back to the cockpit. He broke the surface once more, seeing Tareif tearing strips of clothe to secure Steve’s arm in one spot so that it wouldn’t move.

“Here... emergency packs and air. We need to get out of this ship.”

“What is the hurry?” Steve asked. “I kind of like it down here.”

Isra touched his ear as he smiled. “There is another boat approaching fast. I can hear it through the water.”

“They’ll swim down here and see we are not inside.” Tareif spoke.

“That is a chance we will have to take.” Isra spoke. “Steven’s blood will have alerted any of these sharks that may be nearby. I do not desire to be eaten Tareif.”

“Nor do I.” Tareif said quickly.

“Let’s stop talking and start moving before I lose consciousness and then we’re all fucked.” Steve snapped as he put the mouth piece for the air bottle in his mouth. Isra and Tareif did the same and all three of them ducked beneath the surface.

Isra had been right, and the moment they exited the shattered cockpit glass they saw the first shark. Without human fishing nets and hunting, the shark population had grown to its prehistoric size, and the scent of blood in the water was like ringing the dinner bell. Steve knew this and using his good hand he pulled a bandage from his bulky flight suit thigh pocket and shoved it against the deepest wound in the meat of his arm, nearly biting through the air bottle mouthpiece in pain. Tareif watched the entire thing, and this young human pilot advanced quite a few more notches in his eye. He had hold of Steve’s collar, and Isra the shoulder of his flight suit and they were pulling him through the water as fast as they could swim away from the downed RAPTOR.

They swam for fifteen minutes, fighting the current the entire way until Isra stopped them among some of the green vegetation on the bottom of the ocean. The water looked to be only five meters deep here and he motioned them to stay put while he kicked slowly for the surface. He treaded water and allowed his head to break the surface slowly. Swimming against the current they had only made it some two hundred meters from the crash sight and Isra could just make out the small boat approaching on the horizon. He turned his head and saw the beach less than half a mile away and he dove back down.

EDEN CITY

Tarifa, Aihola and Selene sat at Gianna's café as the sun dipped lower against the horizon. Aelnala rested behind them, her head alertly moving back and forth to survey the crowd.

"I want to give them permanent positions on the Council with us." Tarifa was speaking to Aihola and Selene. "What they have begun... these schools?" She shook her head. "To have people who can read body language and mannerisms would be a powerful tool. Charles and the others seem to do it almost naturally."

Selene nodded. "I agree." She said quickly.

Aihola sipped her tea. "What positions though?"

"I have thought about this for some while, and now may be the best time to implement it." Tarifa said looking at them. "Let us change the format of the government."

"What do you mean?" Selene asked.

"I studied briefly how the Union is set up." Tarifa spoke. "Deia is Prime Minister but there is also a President and Vice President." She spoke. "And there is a Chief Administrator of the Senate. Martin left us in charge, and he gave us every mandate we needed to run things. We have done so for a year. Now I believe it's time to start bringing others into the overall scheme of how we want it to be. Selene you and I talked of this briefly last year before Aihola returned to me."

Selene nodded. "Yes I remember."

"We have run things for the last year, doing what we thought best for everyone." Tarifa said. "No one has voiced a dissenting opinion because I believe we have all been of the same mind up to this point. I had almost forgotten there were many others living on Earth that have no voice because they are not elf or Lycavorian. They need a voice as well."

"We need Earth to be united." Aihola spoke looking at Selene. "Tarifa's attack on New Miami may have been the roots of some sort of rebellion, but there is really no human on the ruling Council with the exception of Charles and Elaine. Up until today the three of us have made the final decisions without really talking with others about what they think."

Selene nodded. "I am not against this in the least." She spoke quickly. "I know first hand what power does to men and women. What do you want to do?"

"Hold elections." Tarifa said. "Set a date, say six months from now, and name the positions now that will be voted on. We will fill them on an interim basis until the election. We hold a conference announcing this information, naming Charles as interim President."

Selene looked at them, her steel blue eyes narrowing. "Wait a minute... you want me to be Prime Minister don't you?"

Aihola nodded. "Yes."

"Tarifa... you and Aihola have done more for..." Selene started.

Tarifa held up her hand. "No Selene. It is you that everyone relies upon and don't try and deny it. You hold the respect of both elf and human, not to mention the vampires that now call Earth home."

"What about you two?" Selene demanded. "Do you think to just fade away? You and Aihola are... everyone knows you. They respect you and your word is like iron."

"Perhaps..." Aihola said. "But we are also the most polarizing figures on Earth right now. For better and for worse."

"Humans are indigenous to Earth." Tarifa spoke. "We... we have not called this planet home for as long as they have. They have the right to have a say in who will lead them."

"But they are the first to admit they have only screwed things up throughout their entire history!" Selene said. "Charles and Elaine among them!"

Tarifa nodded. "That is why they need to know they have a voice in everything we do." She said. "The three of us have dragged Earth onto the path out of their history, many times kicking and screaming, but now we have to allow all those who live here to decide our future as a planet. What Charles and Elaine and the others have begun with these schools... it is exactly what we all need."

"And what is it that you need?" The male voice spoke.

All of them turned to see the feline like male from the Zaleisian delegation standing off to the side at a respectable distance, his hands folded behind his back, his yellow eyes gazing at where Aelnala was now staring at him intently.

"I'm sorry..." Selene spoke. "We are having a private conversation Minister...?"

"I am not a Minister." He replied turning his eyes to gaze upon Selene.

"You are a member of the Zaleisian delegation." Tarifa spoke. "If you are not a Minister what exactly are you?"

"My name is Talco." He answered, stepping closer to the table. "I am... I am an advisor of sorts for the Zaleisian Delegation. Nothing more. I'm not Zaleisian as you can see."

"Yes we picked up on that part." Aihola spoke almost arrogantly, not one to hide her dislike of this man. His yellow eyes drifted to her and narrowed slightly, but she didn't bat an eye. "What are you?"

"My species are almost extinct." He spoke evenly. "I am one of only a few that remains. We are advisors to different species in terms of trade and diplomatic negotiations."

"And what would your species be?" Selene asked the question directly. It appeared to be a question he did not want to answer.

"Does it matter?" Talco asked.

"If you wish this conversation to advance any further it does." Tarifa told him.

Talco smiled tightly. "I am a Kavalian." He replied. "We are a very old feline race as you can see. Some date our existence to even before Lycavorians."

"And what exactly is your position with the Zaleisian Delegation?" Selene asked.

"As I said... I'm simply an advisor of sorts." He replied. "The Zaleisian people do not have much contact with other species. They asked me to accompany them here to earth in case any issues came up."

"Issues?" Tarifa asked canting her head slightly as she looked at him.

Talco looked at Aelnala once more. "That is the Spartan's dragon isn't it? Is it a male or female? Is it dangerous?" He asked.

"*She* has a name!" Aihola spoke with a tone of voice that said she didn't like this man. As with Tarifa, since Isra had claimed her and made her his mate, her wolf senses had become nearly as strong as her vampire genes. And this Talco gave off a decidedly unfriendly scent that bothered her and Tarifa both. "And she is extremely dangerous, to those she doesn't like or those who threaten who she cares about."

"She is an animal and you speak of her as a sentient being." Talco spoke.

That comment got him a low growl from Aelnala that caused his eyes to go a little wider and his body to tense. Tarifa smiled. "She understands every word you are saying." She spoke. "Simply because she is not like us does not mean she is not intelligent. She's very intelligent, more so than others are making themselves out to be." She tossed out the barb. Aelnala's tail flicked in delight at Tarifa's words.

"This Spartan leaves her to guard you? That is interesting." Talco said turning back to look at Aihola and Tarifa now. "He must be nearby to be able to communicate with her. Aren't they able to talk with their dragons within their minds?"

"Is there something we can help you with Talco?" Selene asked.

"I'm only curious as to why you postponed the signing of the trade agreement until tomorrow." Talco answered. "I thought I might inquire of you myself, and perhaps partake in the attention and charms of three beautiful women in the process."

Aelnala turned her body slowly to fully face Talco, her tail rising into the air slightly, the bony hammer like end lifting several inches off the ground as if poised to strike, the low growl escaping her throat again. All four of her legs were pulled up under her now, ready to spring. Tarifa watched him take several steps back, his yellow eyes going a little wider, but all three of them noting that his heart only sped up a fraction, as if Aelnala didn't truly frighten him.

"Well since you are just an advisor with no real authority for the Zaleisian Delegation, why we postponed the meeting is not your concern." Tarifa spoke as she got to her feet. "As for our attentions and charms, Aihola and I do not share them with anyone but our mate Talco, something that you most definitely are not."

“And I reserve my attentions and charms for two others as well Talco.” Selene spoke sternly. “Neither of which you are. Do you make it a habit of propositioning the female leaders from other worlds who you neither know nor respect?”

“What gives you the impression I don’t respect you?” He asked.

Tarifa and Aihola chuckled. “You must think the three of us are ignorant fools. How you view us is evident in your words and your demeanor towards us Talco.” Aihola spoke. “You are not as poised as you believe yourself to be, and your pompous superiority reeks from your pores.”

“I’m curious... does the Spartan rider of that dragon realize the arrogance of those he left it to protect.” Talco asked his voice simmering now with anger. “I do hold diplomatic status and I am entitled to some small show of respect. I was under the impression these members of Mjolnir’s Hand were of impeccable character.”

Tarifa laughed as Aelnala moved even closer, her large head coming to rest just above hers and Aihola’s shoulders. “The rider of this dragon knows everything there is to know about Aihola and I.” She said with a smile, reaching up to stroke Aelnala under her chin. “The rider of this dragon *is* our mate.”

Talco’s eyes now showed genuine surprise and his head turned quickly to see Selene standing with a large smile on her face as well, since now Lynwe stood on one side of her, and Layna stood on the other.

Selene slipped her arm around Lynwe’s waist. “This is General Lynwe of the Drow Talco, Commander of Earth Security Forces and *my* mate. This is Commander Layna of the Fourth Spartan Infantry Regiment, and Captain of my Guard. She is our lover. So as you see... we have no interest in anything you believe you could offer. It will not begin to compare to what the three of us already have. Good day Talco, you’ll have our answer to the Zaleisian offer in the morning.”

Talco simply bowed his head slightly and turned to move quickly through the crowd. That he was obviously embarrassed and angry was very evident in his walk and his scent. Layna looked at Selene quickly.

“Selene... we are not... we are not lovers.” She said in a whisper that only Selene and Lynwe could hear.

Selene met her stunning blue/green eyes and smiled. “I believe that is something we need to rectify, don’t you Mistress?” She said just as softly leaning back against Lynwe’s taller body.

Layna looked up at Lynwe. “If the Commander would like to pursue it.” Lynwe said. “I believe Selene and I would like to give it a chance.”

They stopped talking as Tarifa and Aihola stepped closer.

“What was that all about?” Lynwe asked. “Who was that?”

“That was trouble.” Aihola spoke. “He is supposedly some sort of advisor to the Zaleisian delegation.”

Layna shook her head. “His species looks familiar.” She spoke.

“We should...”

Tarifa! Aihola! Aelnala’s voice echoed almost painfully in their heads and they turned to look at her.

Aelnala what is wrong?

Isra! Something is wrong with Isra!

ELEAR WAINN

Miai’s head dropped to the broad shoulder of the Drow elf she was currently straddling, her body on fire, and the nipples of her firm full breasts stabbing into his sweaty ebony skin. She felt the orgasm building deep in her belly, just as the other four this night had come, a wave of undeniable pleasure racing outward.

“Mas... Masters!” She cried out as she felt the strong hands tighten on her hips and pull her down on the thick, nine inch ebony Drow cock buried in her clutching pussy. She clenched her teeth and groaned delightfully as she felt the base of the Drow elf’s cock swell just inside her tight pussy and then his head went back and he opened his mouth to cry out as his boiling hot come erupted into her belly. Almost at the same time she felt the Drow elf behind her also grab her hips and fully bury his nine inch Drow cock deeply in her ass, the base of his cock swelling as well and sealing the connection between them as his searing hot come blasted deeply into her bowels. The combination of the two was too much for her, and her blue eyes flew open wide and she screamed; joining the chorus of rapture as her body convulsed in a mind blowing orgasm.

Their bodies were rigid and tense as the two Drow elves emptied into their slave, their lean muscular bodies glistening in sweat and exertion. Elves always had the capacity to come in far more generous amounts than normal, and the bulbs around the base of both their cocks insured none of their come escaped from inside their slave's openings. Miai's head dropped once more to the shoulder of the elf beneath her as the after effects of the pleasure she just had shooting through her began to subside. She smiled to herself as the head of the second Drow elf dropped to the back of her shoulder, all of them utterly spent and out of breath. They had been pleasuring each other for the last four hours, and this last eruption drained them all. Their spirits were still willing, but their bodies were spent.

Sweat dropped from her forehead, her strawberry blond hair plastered to her skin and the dark ebony skin of the Drow beneath her. His white hair was only shoulder length, but it too was sweat soaked and plastered to his skin. Miai smiled as she felt the soft white hair of her second Drow lover fall across her back. His hair was almost as long as hers, falling nearly to the middle of his back. She felt him drop a soft lingering kiss on the back of her shoulder with warm lips.

"Miai?" The Drow behind her spoke next to her right ear.

"Yes... yes Master Nymtran." She spoke softly, turning her head slightly to the side with a bright smile.

"Miai we have asked you to stop doing that." The male beneath her spoke now, opening his amber colored eyes and looking at her beautiful bright face.

Miai smiled and gazed at his eyes with her own dazzling blue eyes. "I know Master Sole'nar, but I like doing it."

"But why Miai? We have told you, that this..." Nymtran asked.

"Is not something we ask for...?" Sole'nar finished the sentence.

"I am your mate." She answered without any hesitation in her words. "You have claimed me in the Drow fashion, both of you, and I will honor your traditions because it gives me pleasure and makes me happy. More pleasure and happiness than I have ever imagined I would experience. And being your slave in our bed is part of your tradition and culture, and I do it happily, because I know it does not extend outside of the bed we share."

Miai smiled to herself, for that had to be the understatement of the century.

The events of her life and what had transpired in the last thirteen months she still did not truly believe had happened to her. What had brought her to this very moment was so outlandish that if it had not been her who had led this life she would never have believed it. The High Coven Lycavorian clone that had used her sexually for months without her knowledge had begun it all. His only intent so that he could relieve himself and protect the fact that he was a traitor. The discovery of that and the subsequent events that led to her position now still caused her head to spin at times.

She had been the one to discover the ancient text that gave the King his political safety net to take back his Queen from the animals who had taken her. That one action had earned her and her entire family undying love and support for the remainder of their years from everyone in the Royal family. Her education had been paid for and all expenses washed away for her and any of her older brothers who wished to go to school. She became the senior aide to Queen Dysea after graduating and subsequently, she quickly learned that she had a unique gift of a photographic memory. Anything that she read, she was able to retain inside her mind like a computer. It was a skill that only a few people in history had had, and Queen Dysea quickly recognized this and named Miai as the senior and most trusted aide to her and Isabella since the two of them were rarely ever apart now. She had spent the last eight months traveling the galaxy with Queen Dysea and Queen Isabella, learning languages and meeting species she would never had thought of before.

Miai knew that Dysea and Isabella were exceptionally protective of her after what had happened, and more often than not, they ended up chasing away potential mates for her. Of course after they were gone, Miai usually discovered they were correct in their assessments of the Lycavorian males that had showed that interest. All of them were interested more in her position than they were of her and this had disheartened her to a large extent. Miai thought for sure she would never find a mate because of her position, and as the weeks and months past, she began to accept that.

All that had changed only two months ago when Nymtran and Sole'nar had come into her life.

They were twin brothers, half vampire half Drow elf warriors that had been assigned to the elf General Vengal's command. When they were assigned to *NORMYA'S LIGHT* Miai had at first paid them no mind. She

always saw them in the library archives of the ship, at odd hours of the day and evening, most of the time with books stacked all around them and both of them reading voraciously. She made discrete inquiries about them, their amber colored eyes and chocolate colored skin fascinating to her in every way. She discovered they had been part of the battle on Ukwav when the King had shattered defenses that had been in place for thousands of years. She also discovered they had both been decorated twice for valor on Ukwav, but their actions were classified even higher than her security clearance allowed her to see.

She discovered they had fought with General Vengal and the King in the last battle for earth when the King killed Xerxes. The more she learned about them, the more she wanted to meet them and talk with them. They actually saved her that trouble one evening by bringing her a steaming mug of Drow tea as she was studying some treaty stipulations for Dysea. Miai discovered that they spoke with one mind, one of them usually finishing the sentence the other started. They were exceptionally intelligent, and as more nights passed, she found them more than willing to help her in memorizing items that Dysea or Isabella had wanted her to study and remember. Miai discovered they were now part of the small four person unit that the vampire Marci was in command of. They treated her with respect and actually made no overtures of wanting to bed her in the least, and at first Miai had thought it was because of her in some way. It had taken a transmission to Dysea's mother to discover the answer she sought.

Nymtran and Sole'nar were part of the new breed of Drow elf that Administrator Aihola and General Lynwe had begun. They were Drow yes, but the domination that the Drow of Earth had displayed before Aihola became their Queen was quickly being replaced with a sense of honor and respect. No longer were males or females taken against their will, and when she had spoken to Aihola herself in regards to this, Miai discovered that they would not act in such a way if they truly cared about her. Miai would have to make it known that she was interested in them. Aihola had warned her however not to get involved with them if she was not entirely serious of what she wanted. All of the Drow who followed her and now followed the King adhered to a strict rule that they would not take anyone into their beds unless they were serious about them.

Miai had no doubts that she was physically attracted to them, for even though they were elves, their chiseled ebony bodies were far more impressive than many of the young Spartans she had seen on the ship. They were incredibly handsome in an exotic sort of way, with their shimmering white hair and amber colored eyes. They were not as heavily muscled as most Spartans were, but lean and ripped in a way that belied incredible vampire and elf strength combined together. She knew they had been part of the original group of Drow elves that had escaped the High Coven experiments, though she wouldn't find out how until their first night together.

It had been Miai who initiated that part of their relationship, showing them affection by taking their hands in an affectionate way, and allowing them to reciprocate this with gentle caresses of her hair and hands. When they were with others, she assumed a more submissive role, allowing them to show they desired her by being possessive of her. This angered some of the Spartans on *NORMYA'S LIGHT* who had hoped to approach her, but it did not deter the twins in any way. Miai showed no interest in any of those who favored her, and it only made them bolder. They had faced and defeated far more frightening enemies than angry Spartans while serving with the King on Earth.

Their first night together had frightened her. They were Drow, and while they were not dominant outwardly, they were dominant in their bed. She discovered that they were identical twins in every respect, both of them equipped with nine beautiful and identical inches of ebony thickness. She had only had one lover, the Coven traitor and spy, and he was no where near as large as the twins in that respect. She also discovered what the High Coven experiments had done to them that night. The bases of their cocks would swell even larger than normal when they were about to come, and like some animals it effectively sealed them together until their passions died.

They had taken her in more ways than she could remember that first night, their lips and tongues exploring every centimeter of her flesh, bringing raging orgasms from her almost non-stop. It was almost as if they could not get enough of her and she basked in the attention they bestowed upon her. The first time they had taken her at the same time Miai had been worried. She never had a cock in her ass, she'd never even thought about it, but after the initial pain of Nymtran slowly burying his ebony Drow thickness in her ass, the pleasure that had followed as they stroked into her body was unlike anything she had ever experienced and it got better each time they did it. She had clutched at her belly the first time they had erupted together inside her, their

burning hot seed filling her to overflowing because of their elf genes, but the swollen bases of their cocks in her tight pussy and ass not allowing any of their cum to leak out of her. It had triggered an enormous orgasm of her own, and she had screamed out in delight as they erupted into her for nearly full two minutes, each blast of their cum setting her off again and again.

She was their slave that night, allowing them to have her in any way they wished. They dominated her, positioning her body for maximum pleasure, pulling on her hair gently. They directed her, and she found herself immerse in this submissive role to them and it was thrilling to say the least. She had memorized the texture and taste of their cocks and their come, having spent considerable time between their legs pleasuring them with her mouth, which they had never experienced before, and quickly wanted more of. She discovered that the backs of their elfin ears were extremely sensitive and she made it a point to tease their ears with her tongue, lips and fingers as often as possible. Yet for all she had done to them, they had revisited that pleasure back on her ten fold as she withered between them, under them and above them.

She was their slave in bed, but out of their bed they treated her as if she was a precious jewel, especially now that they had been tasked with protecting her. She willingly wore their Drow colors in her hair in the form of the silk fabric that braided her hair, knowing full well that they now considered her their mate. Miai could not be any happier about that than she was. She planned to be with these men for the rest of her life, for the connection between the three of them was positively endearing, and it was growing. Miai did not care in the least that they were elves, or that there were two of them. As far as Miai was concerned, they were the same man. Now the only obstacle left to her would be to break that news to her family.

“You wear our colors Miai.” Nymtran spoke nuzzling the back of her neck.

“I... I do Master.” She said lovingly.

“You will always be ours Miai.” Sole’nar said nuzzling her throat.

“And that makes me happiest of all.” She told them, the soft nuzzles they were bestowing upon her sending shivers of delight coursing through her.

Miai moved her hips back and forth, feeling their cocks still firmly anchored within her, the bulbs at the base not yet softening enough to allow them to withdraw from her. She had learned how to manipulate those cock bulbs with her pussy and ass muscles so as to keep them excited and firmly seated within her openings until every last shiver of pleasure left them. She felt Nymtran press more of his body against her back, his hands going to the wall above the head of their bed for support as they rested, content to revel in the sensations all of them were feeling.

These moments for the twins were what they cherished most. All they had experienced in their lives, the pain, the war and the fighting, Miai was their reward. This Lycavorian female, a wolf like their King, had shown them more affection and pleasure than all the women they had experienced before her combined. In only a few weeks she had learned how to drive them both wild to the point where they thought they would go crazy. Her body to them was like a temple, one they would willingly worship at for eternity. And she was now theirs, wrapping her soft, lustrous hair in Drow silk that bore their colors without even asking them. The morning they had met her to escort her to Elear with their Queens they saw the silk in her hair and that had been the ultimate sign that she cared for them just as much as they cared for her.

Miai always did this to them when they were done, using her incredibly skilled muscles to keep them excited enough where they could not remove their cocks from her. It didn’t matter to them as it usually ended up with them falling asleep buried inside her, their arms wrapped around her body.

That would not be the case this night.

Three heads came up quickly when they heard the door in the outer living area slid open and the grunt of a body hitting the floor.

“Miai!” Dysea’s voice echoed.

“The Queen!” Sole’nar exclaimed.

Miai was the only one who kept her head and with quick thinking and an amused smile she grabbed the sheet on the bed and pulled it over their naked bodies just as the door to the bedroom opened and Dysea came in.

“Miai? Are you alright?” Dysea demanded quickly as she stepped into further into the room and the smell of the Drow twins and sex hit her full in the face stopping he rin her tracks.

Miai looked at her Queen with a slightly embarrassed look on her face. "My Queen." She spoke as calmly as she could, considering that she had two Drow cocks still buried deeply in her body. "You have... you have caught us at a particularly bad time."

Dysea could picture exactly what it looked like under the sheets as first Sole'nar's head appeared, and then Nymtran's head, their white hair very hard to mistake. Dysea could not hold back the entire smile that split her face and she shook her head.

"Extract yourselves quickly and join us in the living area." She spoke evenly. "We have had a bit of trouble."

Dysea turned and exited the room quickly, leaving them alone and Nymtran and Sole'nar both looked at Miai who grinned sheepishly. "I'm sorry." She said. "I like the way you both fill me."

The Drow brothers could only shake their heads with smiles and nuzzle the Lycavorian female who they called their mate. It would take them several minutes of simply laying on top of one another before they could move.

"A bit of trouble?" Sole'nar asked as he looked at the Evolli assassin on the floor, the barrel of Lexi's 190 pressed to the side of his head.

Nymtran moved back into the room from the corridor his 190 held at the ready. "They are all dead my Queens." He spoke quickly.

"Irial burned two more that were climbing up the outside of the building." Dysea spoke. The twins nodded in appreciation at this news. They had seen Irial in action before.

"You have not alerted the city authorities my Queens." Sole'nar spoke.

Isabella shook her head. "And we aren't going too." She answered. "We learned some interesting things from this scum here."

Dysea looked at them as Miai came out of the bedroom, now fully dressed and at least presentable. "Something is wrong in this city and we are going to find out what it is." Dysea spoke. "First however, we need to deal with a little problem." Dysea held out the data pad to Miai. "Review this Miai, once you have committed it to memory we will end these assassination attempts tonight."

"Nymtran, you and Sole'nar use the shadows and find us an unobstructed route to this building." Isabella spoke handing them another pad. "Do not be seen, and do nothing until Dysea, Lexi and I arrive."

Sole'nar took the pad and nodded his head. He turned quickly to Miai. "*Hwuen udos phuul ul'naus qua'laen ussta ssin'urn quar'valsharess Miai.*" (Until we are together again my beautiful goddess Miai.) He said softly before kissing her full on the lips in front of everyone. A kiss that Miai leaned into and returned. When they parted Nymtran took her hand and also laid a blistering kiss on her and drew back.

"*Udossta rarr ph'dossta 'chev Miai.*" (Our hearts are yours beloved Miai.)

Miai's face was beaming. "*Ussta quortek zhah wun l'rahi d'dos tu'.*" She answered. (My soul is in the hands of you both.)

Nymtran and Sole'nar nodded together and then wrapped themselves in the shadows and disappeared. Dysea stepped up to Miai and gazed at her for a long moment, her blue eyes watching where her Drow Masters had vanished from sight. She turned finally and looked at Dysea.

"Dysea... I..." Miai always called them by their names when they were alone. It was the first thing they had told her.

"You have a brightness in your eyes that has not been there since I have known you Miai." Dysea spoke softly. "I take it Nymtran and Sole'nar are the reason?"

Miai nodded quickly with a smile. "Yes."

"They are Drow vampire warriors Miai. This relationship you have entered into, they will consider it sacred." Dysea spoke. "Are you sure?"

"I have never been surer of anything." Miai answered. "And it is just as sacred to me Dysea."

Dysea looked at Isabella for a moment and then back to Miai. "Then we will support all of you in any way we can." She said.

"Thank you."

"Right now... I grow tired of being hunted." Dysea said.

“As do I.” Isabella echoed. “It’s time we did our own hunting.”

“Lexi.” Dysea spoke. “Dispose of our guest.”

“You said I would live!” The Evolli screeched.

Dysea looked at him. “Did I?” She spoke. “I’m sorry. I lied.”

Lexi didn’t blink and pulled the trigger of her silenced 190, the projectile punching through the skull of the Evolli assassin. Miai didn’t bat an eye at this action and dropped herself into the chair to read the data pad.

Isabella stepped up close to Dysea, her hazel/green eyes filled with desire. *You are a very bad female elf Dysea. I will have to see about punishing you at a later time.*

Dysea grinned. *I look forward to that Bella.*

TERRAGEN FREIGHTER

HOPE’S QUEST

Danny stepped into the small converted lounge area of the freighter that was now the mess hall for the Spartans and others who were on this mission. His dark brown eyes searched the room quickly, finding who he was looking for. Martin stood alone by the four by four view window, watching as the stars moved by quickly. They had made the first three jumps without incident and were coming up on the first pirate gate in four hours.

Several heads turned as Dan passed them, the Spartans knowing that of the trillions of men and women and species among the Union, there were very few that would dare approach the King abruptly. Daniel Simpson was one of those.

Dan stepped up next to Martin, his six foot five height topping Martin’s own six foot two. Looking at them from the back, they were two of the most heavily muscled men that many had seen, but their fighting skill and incredible speed and agility was unequaled and talked about among the ranks of Spartans continuously.

“How you doing Marty?” Dan asked softly.

Martin turned and looked at him. Martin had four half brothers, yet this man next to him was who he considered to be his only one true brother even though there was no blood between them. They had grown together, fought together, suffered together. Everything they had experienced together had only forged the bond they now shared, and outside of their mates, no one knew them like they knew each other.

“It shows?” Martin asked.

“Maybe not to the others, not even to Anja, but I see it Marty.” Dan spoke softly. “You keep it better controlled now, barely beneath the surface, but it is there.”

“We’ve come a long way Danny, you and I.” Martin said.

Dan nodded. “That we have.” He agreed. “I still remember the day we graduated BUDs together.”

Martin smiled. “Like it was yesterday.”

“What’s bugging you Martin?” Dan asked.

“It’s a feeling. Nothing more.” Martin replied.

“Yeah... well I’d put more stock in your feelings than in most people’s facts.” Dan told him. “Spit it out man... it’s me you’re talking to now.”

“Plans within plans Danny.” Martin said softly. “Someone is probing us brother, testing us, and it ain’t Veldruk or the Coven. Not directly.”

“You think everything that is happening is tied together somehow don’t you?” Dan asked.

“We’ll never be rid of Veldruk and the Coven.” Martin said shaking his head. “They’ll always be a thorn in our side until it comes time to finally meet them. You know why they haven’t attacked yet, even though they outnumber us three to one?”

“Their clone soldiers aren’t ready yet if the intelligence is accurate.” Dan answered.

Martin nodded. “That’s part of it, but they want Lisisa for that. I won’t let them have her, but it’s what they want. Veldruk is waiting to see how things play out. He’s sticking his nose in when he thinks he can get away with it, but there is something else we haven’t discovered yet and he’s afraid of it too.”

Dan looked at him. “What do you mean?”

“Isabella has decided to officially take on the role and title of Queen.” Martin said looking at him. “They know that and they are trying to kill her because of it. They think it will spur others to see that Veldruk ain’t the chummy guy everyone makes him out to be.”

“You worried about them?” Danny asked.

Martin shook his head with a smile. “I’d be scared to go up against Dysea and Bella together.” He said. “Next to you, me and Aricia, they are the two deadliest individuals I know and I pity whoever Veldruk sends after them.”

“So who is probing us?” Dan asked.

“Something or someone we haven’t seen yet.” Martin said softly. “An old something or someone, and Veldruk fears it too. We need to stay on our toes Danny.”

Dan shook his head. “Damn... you can be down right scary at times you know that.”

Martin chuckled. “We’ll come through it brother. We always do.” He said. “When are you going to make Anuk your soulmate Danny?”

“It’s scary man.” Dan said.

“Do you love her Dan?”

Danny nodded without any thought. “So much it hurts. She is everything I ever imagined I would want in a woman. Never thought she’d be an elf...”

“That’s what’s holding you back?” Martin said a little surprised. “Shit... you are denser than me when it comes to women. She worships the ground you walk on Dan, and she is more Lycavorian in her manner and thinking than many of the pureblood women we’ve seen in the last year.”

“She is that.” Dan spoke. He looked at Martin. “What about Nayeca?”

“She loves you both.” Martin said. “That will not change regardless of whether you and Anuk become soulmates. And it won’t make you love her any less. Trust me... that I can tell you from experience. I will always favor Aricia... her scent, her taste and her blood calls to me in a way that Anja and Dysea never will. If they were all laid out naked before me on a bed, I would go for Aricia first. They know that... but they also know it does not make me love them any less. It’s why we have decided to have all our children born in Sparta... well they decided for me.” He said with a grin. “Don’t wait brother. She is what you want Danny, even your mother and father know that. Whenever they are in they same room with the two of you, they can smell your blood burning for her.”

Dan chuckled. “They are pushy.” He said.

“Do what I did.” Martin said. “Make Anuk your soulmate, and then the two of you show Nayeca just how much you mean to her. If that is what Anuk wants as well?”

Dan nodded quickly. “I think that might be holding her back too.”

“Then show Nayeca that no matter what, she is as much a part of your lives as For’mya is a part of Aricia’s and mine.” Martin spoke. “Besides... I want to see you chasing kids around. That will be hysterical.”

Dan laughed at that picture in his head. He looked at Martin after a moment. “Anja’s pregnant isn’t she?”

Martin nodded slowly. “A girl.” He said. “She doesn’t think I know yet. So you have some catching up to do.”

“And you let her come on this mission?” Dan asked.

“She would have cursed me to the moon if I hadn’t.” Martin answered. “And then she would have found her own way to follow us. She’s my mate and she’s carrying my daughter, but she is also the most powerful Healer we have in the Union, and we may need her skills.”

“You don’t think we are going to like what we find do you?” Dan said.

Martin looked at him, his dark brown eyes unreadable. “Brother... I think what we find will make Columbia look like a picnic in comparison.”

Danny’s eyes went a little wider at this. The mission to Columbia was something that gave all of them nightmares even to this day. The suffering, horror and death they had stumbled across unlike anything they had witnessed before.

“That’s why I can feel it in you.” Dan said softly. “That’s why it’s just beneath the surface again.”

Martin nodded slowly. “She is *my* daughter Danny, and I will slaughter anything that stands in my way of reaching her. Period.”

Dan just stared at him quietly as he felt the shiver of fear ripple through him. There had been times where Martin had released that side of himself in the years they had been together. Danny had witnessed all of those moments, and to say they were the most frightening things he had ever seen would not even come close to describing them.

He just hoped that he wouldn't have to witness it again, and if he did, then he hoped he was fast enough to get everyone out of the firing line before that happened, for it wouldn't be pretty.

CHAPTER TWELVE

EARTH EDEN CITY AIRFIELD

“No one needs to panic! We do not have enough information yet!” Lohana demanded as they crowded around the map chart in the rear of the *DT*.

The moment Aelnala had told them something was wrong with Isra they had jumped onto her back and she had lifted into the air, speeding back to the airfield without a second thought. Lynwe, Selene and Layna had barreled along behind them in a commandeered Lifter, reaching the airfield only minutes after Tarifa and Aihola.

“Lohana how can you be so calm and...” Selene began to speak.

“Listen to me all of you!” Lohana barked out silencing them. “Isra and Aelnala have trained for this in the past. We’ve done this drill before! Aelnala tell them what I am talking about please.”

Aelnala nodded her huge head, her honey colored eyes now calm. *Lohana is right.* She spoke as Tarifa, Aihola, Selene, Lynwe and Layna turned to look at her. *Forgive me, but it has never happened outside of our training and I panicked for a moment when I lost direct touch with him. We have trained for this and I should have been more prepared.*

Tarifa looked at her. “Aelnala what does it mean though? Aihola... *Nya Istel* and I can feel nothing from him, almost as if he is not there anymore.” She asked quickly.

There were times when Isra or I would cut ourselves off from the other. Aelnala began to explain. *We would only do it for training purposes and only for short periods of time. Because the bond we share is so deep, it would begin to affect the other member of the pair if we did this for long periods of time. The King and Aricia can hold this for the longest amount of time, but for other bonded pairs only a few hours at most. We were trained to only do it in times of great danger to the other, or if we were separated and trying to hide. You and Aihola are his mates yes, and the bond you share with him grows by leaps and bounds every day. The connection that we share as a bonded pair is much deeper right now however, because we have been together longer. You may feel nothing from him but he will still feel you, and I still am able to sense him, if only vaguely. That is why we must remain strong.*

“You see now.” Lohana spoke more sedately now. “It does not mean automatically that something bad has happened to him. Yes something has happened, but his actions only indicate he is in a situation that warrants he block himself from the three of you in this way. Perhaps he and Tareif have found an enemy base and are scouting. My point is we don’t know what has happened yet, and we must not assume the worst.”

They all looked at her. “You can hear Aelnala’s thoughts?” Aihola asked surprised.

Lohana shook her head. “No... our connection is only one way. I do not have the Mindvoice ability of you and the others, so I can not talk with Aelnala in my mind. She can project what she wants to say into my thoughts, she is strong enough to do that, but there is no connection otherwise.”

This is not normal Lohana! Aelnala spoke. *He would not do this unless he was in danger or trying to hide. He may be reckless and defiant, but one thing he is not is foolish. And he would not block Tarifa and Aihola completely without good reason, not after all he has gone through to finally be together with them.*

Selene nodded her head. “I agree with her on that Lohana. It is similar to having to sever yourself from contact with your husband and mate.”

Lohana nodded quickly. “Yes... I know. That is why the moment you alerted me that this happened, I began to have Eden City Command and Admiral Jamerl begin a sensor sweep of the area they were suppose to be in today.”

“My father’s pilot was trained by Benjamin himself.” Tarifa spoke quickly once more as she took a deep breath. “Steven is one of the best pilots in our air force, if not the best since Benjamin left earth.”

Lohana waved her hand over the expanse of ocean in the Florida Keys that was up on the map chart. “This is the course they were following.” Lohana told them as the blue line appeared on the monitor. “We can...” The beeping on the table interrupted her and her hand dropped to touch the panel. The small image of Admiral Jamerl appeared on the table monitor as well now. “Admiral...?”

“We are not detecting their *RAPTOR II* airborne anywhere in the area they were to be patrolling today Lohana.” Jamerl spoke.

“What does that mean Admiral?” Tarifa asked quickly.

“Admiral... Tarifa and Aihola are here with me, Selene, Lynwe and Layna as well.” Lohana spoke. “They just arrived from the main square.”

“It means simply that they are not airborne Tarifa.” Jamerl answered as his eyes fell on her from the monitor. “They have either set down somewhere within their patrol sector or they have crashed. The third possibility is that they have been...”

“Shot down.” Aihola finished the statement.

Jamerl nodded slowly. “Yes. Based on Aelnala’s reaction, I would say the latter, but it could very well mean they have gone to investigate something they have discovered. We just don’t know yet. But it also tells us Commander Isra is alive and obviously well enough to act as he has, though it does also tell us there is great danger near to him.”

Aihola reached out and gripped Tarifa’s hand. “He is a skilled Spartan my love.” She spoke softly, so that only Tarifa could hear her. “He would not want us to panic; we must remain strong and trust in his actions.”

Aihola is right Tarifa. Aelnala said looking at the two of them, and moving slightly closer to where they stood, as if her bulk would provide some measure of comfort. Please... please do not think of me as being protective. I know the love he carries for both of you, and you must never think I would do anything to injure or harm this love between you. Without him I am nothing, and without the two of you he is a shell of the man he could be.

Tarifa nodded and reached out with Aihola to place their hands on either side of her huge head, watching her eyes close. *I know Aelnala, and we would never think that.* She said confidently. *We both know that. It seems we are all tied together now, and we must remain strong for each other.*

Selene stepped forward. “Admiral... what do you recommend?” She asked in a very businesslike tone.

“We maintain calm and wait for a time.” Jamerl answered immediately. “If they were shot down and this is the reason Commander Isra has acted in such a way, by limiting his abilities, we should not barge in with guns blazing so to speak. He may very well be trying to mask his presence until he deems it safe enough to contact us.”

“I agree.” Lynwe echoed.

“Admiral... I want a six ship flight ready to launch at a moment’s notice.” Tarifa ordered confidently. “We will wait for a time as you have said, but we will not wait forever.”

“I already have them standing to their ships Lady Tarifa.” Jamerl answered. “This information has not gone any further than those on the ship there with you and two of my senior officers here. The flight crews on our cruisers believe it is simply a drill. I suggest we keep it that way for the time being. If this is a concerted effort, then we must not let our enemies know we are on to them in any way.”

Selene looked at the table monitor. “Many people saw Aelnala leave the square with Tarifa and Aihola in an extreme hurry Admiral.” She spoke skeptically. “Certainly that will imply we are onto something.”

Lohana nodded picking it up now. “Yes... but not what you might think.” Lohana spoke quickly. “Many of those people who saw them today also know that they are both now the elfin mates to a member of *Mjolnir’s Hand*.” She said looking at Tarifa and Aihola who had expressions of surprise n their faces at this knowledge. “I have been wandering Eden City these past few days and I have discovered that your story has been circulating through many of the markets and gathering places. You and Aihola are well known for your sexuality and your beauty as well as your unashamed actions with each other and now Isra in public. It has become a very popular

romantic story line from what I understand. A brave Spartan returns to Earth to claim the hearts of the women he thought he had lost so long ago in battle. It is second in popularity only to the King's actions in retrieving Aricia." Lohana smiled as Tarifa and Aihola blushed. "If needed, their departure can be explained by the fact that they were returning to greet their mate who was returning earlier than expected. In fact I recommend that is the story we release to any interested parties. The only ones who know it will not be true are those involved in what is happening."

Jamerl nodded. "That is an excellent cover story Lohana. It is something which should not raise too many questions." He said.

"Admiral there was two other ships involved in the search like Tareif and Isra." Aihola said looking at the screen now. "Are they accounted for?"

Jamerl nodded. "They are Lady Aihola. I have ordered them to return to the nearest base in their search areas just to be safe."

"They were flying below five hundred meters in a new *RAPTOR II*." Lynwe spoke again. "I have flown in these new ships Jamerl, as have you. This is no accident, and they would never have been detected unless someone leaked their flight information."

Jamerl nodded his head. "I tend to agree with you Lynwe." He spoke. "Who had access to their flight plans?" Jamerl asked.

"Perhaps a dozen people," Aihola replied. "No more than that. Tareif and Isra did not even share the flight plans with either Tarifa or me for safety purposes."

"I will have Cathy begin a discrete investigation. No one will blink that it is her asking the questions." Lynwe spoke her voice stern. She had friends out there that were now in danger, but the threat to Selene had just gone up way off the board as far as she was concerned and that made her blood boil. "Someone gave that information out and we need to find out who did it and why."

Layna stepped forward now. "Admiral... I'm sending you an image. There is a member of the Zaleisian Delegation that is not entirely what he makes himself out to be. He is not Zaleisian and we would like to know why he is helping them." She plugged the data pad into the slot. "His species looks familiar to me from somewhere Admiral, but I am unable to place it, but I do not care for the way he looked at the Administrators today, especially Selene."

They watched Jamerl's face turn to another screen as the image was instantly transmitted to him in orbit. They all saw his eyes go a little wider and he turned back to the screen quickly. "Layna... you saw this man today?" He asked.

Layna nodded. "Yes sir. Not an hour ago in the main market café. Do you recognize his species? He looks familiar as I said, but I am unable to place the species exactly. I want to say it is something I have read in books recently."

"I recognize his species, and there is a reason he looks familiar to you." Jamerl spoke looking at the screen, his eyes focused in Layna. "You were taught about his species in the academy during the weeks spent on the Hundred Year War of Retribution. He is a Kavalian."

Layna's blue/green eyes grew a little wider at that information. "A Kavalian? Admiral are you absolutely sure?" She gasped. "Why would a Kavalian be here, and why would one be advising the Zaleisian Delegation?"

Jamerl nodded slowly. "I graduated from the academy just months after that conflict ended Layna, and I still remember the stories many of the older Spartans told of these Kavalians and their viciousness. I remember well what occurred and what they looked like. Ceneu or Riall will have much more specific information, but that is most definitely one of them."

The others looked at her. "Layna... who is he?" Selene asked softly.

Layna looked at her. "Their people attacked the Union many centuries ago. They came out of no where, no one knows why, they just suddenly began attacking our outer posts and began to work their way core ward. They did essentially them same thing the Coven did; only this time we were not as helpless as we were when the High Coven conquered us. They had hundreds of ships and they were merciless, brutal and vicious, and they made it a point to take our woman whenever they got the chance. They didn't take into account just how lethal we had become." She explained. "According to the history pads, Admiral Riall and Admiral Ceneu ended up defeating them with superior tactics and more brutal actions overall and they drove them near into extinction."

“Less than a hundred years later they made the mistake of attacking the High Coven in much the same fashion.” Jamerl’s voice continued from the monitor. “The High Coven was ready for them after their battle with us and the Kavalian still gave them a run for their money. The Coven finally unleashed some of their most modern weaponry on them and destroyed them utterly. I was under the impression there were only several thousand left in the entire galaxy, scattered about.”

Layna shook her head. “This one is a member of the Zaleisian delegation as some sort of advisor Admiral. He also was not shy about making advances on the administrators as I said, even though he knows they are all mated.”

Jamerl nodded slowly. “I understand they were like that. Pompous and arrogant and they had very little regard for women, no matter their status or title. An Advisor of what sort Layna?” Jamerl asked.

“He has been advising them on the location of ocean territory they are trying to secure the rights too.” Tarifa spoke now, suddenly very interested.

Jamerl’s face wrinkled slightly. “That doesn’t make any sense; if our intelligence is accurate, and it was back then, the Kavalian hate water, any kind of water. There is no reason to believe that has changed. Why exactly would one advise the Zaleisian Delegation on what parts of the ocean to be mining?”

“Their request hasn’t changed more than a few square kilometers in either direction.” Selene said as she moved closer to Tarifa. “It remains centered on a five square kilometer portion of the Atlantic, ten miles off the coast of Florida.”

“Administrator Selene can you send me a copy of the coordinates they are so intent on if you would. I will look into it.” Jamerl spoke.

Selene nodded quickly. “I’ll have my staff send it up to you within the next hour.” She said.

They turned as the doors to the command center opened and Palina charged into the room with the younger version of Tarifa right on her heels. Tarifa’s mother and younger sister were almost identical matches to Tarifa in many regards, though only Tarifa had the sapphire colored eyes of her father. She turned to her mother and sister as they came in.

“Tarifa what is happening?” Palina exclaimed as she came up to her quickly. “We came as soon as we got your message.”

“All we know mother is that they have gone down.” Tarifa spoke. “Aihola and I can not contact Isra because he is blocking all of us right now, even Aelnala. That alone tells us he is alive, but we do not know his condition or what father’s condition is. We do not want to try and contact him via radio because it may compromise whatever position they are in.”

“What about... Tarifa what about his pilot? What about Steven?” Zaala asked softly, her dark eyes wide. She wore her hair very similar to Tarifa’s, and while she looked up to her older sister, Zaala was very different from her in many respects.

“We don’t know anything really,” Tarifa replied softly, meeting her sister’s questioning eyes. She was more than a little surprised that Zaala was asking about Steven’s condition. She had thought that Zaala was more romantically involved with the Spartan soldier that had shown quite a bit of interest in her of late. She had been caught in a rather revealing public situation with this soldier, and Zaala had always been one to see physical beauty before anything, and at times that had gotten her into trouble as it had that night. And yet the concern she saw in her sister’s eyes now was honest and genuine.

Tarifa had made it a point to inquire of several of her sources in regards to the Spartan troop that apparently had expressed an interest in Zaala. She had learned quite a bit about him in the previous months, but nothing that really stood out in her opinion. He was handsome and treated Zaala well enough, but part of that was because of who her sister and father were and to hurt Zaala in any way was the surest path to insignificance that any Spartan could make. And it was now well known that female elves on Earth did not subscribe to the more modest nature of their elf sisters on Elear. Tarifa was almost certain the Spartan soldier, young and handsome himself, wanted Zaala only as some sort of trophy.

Zaala was five years younger than Tarifa, and two inches shorter, but that they were sisters was easy to ascertain with the same facial features and long flowing black hair, not to mention the almost identical drop dead gorgeous figures. Zaala was single and tended to wear items that were more revealing than normal, an act to entice interest in her no doubt. Tarifa hadn’t seen her in several weeks, but she now wore an outfit similar to

one of Tarifa's wrap around jumpsuits. It fit her like a glove, accenting her delightful figure in all the right places, but it still was conservative enough to be more modest than Zaala was known to wear.

"The better question now is what we do." She answered. "We need to insure that security is not compromised in some way in Eden City." Tarifa began to speak. "We should activate a small unit alert that..."

Her eyes grew wide suddenly and she reached for Aihola just as Aihola reached out for her and Aelnala's head moved closer to both of them, three sets of eyes wide as the man they all loved opened himself to them once more.

"Isra!" They exclaimed.

LOGGERHEAD KEY ISLAND DRY TORTUGUAS ISLAND CHAIN FLORIDA KEYS

Isra held Steve's uninjured arm as he and Tareif lay beside him in the tall grass and dense foliage. All of them were still soaked from the ocean water, and his violet eyes watched the horizon as the dragon and rider moved away from their location now. Isra had detected them approaching when they were first exiting the water, and he raised his mental and psychic shields slamming them in place as he pulled Steve and Tareif back into the ocean water to hide their scents. It was only few minutes ago when Isra decided it was safe enough to exit the ocean, and now they were sitting in the thicket as Tareif treated Steve's injured arm. Tareif had cleaned the wound to the best of his ability with the equipment from the emergency pack while Isra kept one eye on their enemies and one eye on what he was doing. Despite what he had initially thought, the arm was not broken and Steven had begun flexing his fingers to get the numbness out of them. Tareif offered to make a sling but Steve shook his head.

"Do you want any pain medicine then Steven?" Tareif asked.

Steve shook his head. "No... we may need to move quickly. Just give me some chewable pills to take the edge off. It's not broken so it might just be strained."

Tareif nodded and searched through the emergency pack until he found what he was looking for. He shook three small orange pills into Steve's hand. "Chew them slowly so that the medicine works thoroughly." He looked at Isra's back. "Are they gone?"

Isra nodded. "They are moving away." He said settling back to the ground and turning to face them. "And the others are refusing to enter the water due to all the sharks."

"At least that went in our favor." Tareif spoke.

Steve chuckled. "We crashed into the ocean; have to sit in said ocean hiding for almost an hour, dodging sharks that want to eat us and still you say it went in our favor?"

Tareif looked at him with a lopsided grin. "We could have been eaten by those same sharks." He said.

Steve nodded. "Good point." He said checking the action on his K12 and chambering the first Teflon coated slug.

"You did an amazing thing getting us down in one piece Steven." Tareif spoke with more than a little respect in his voice. Tareif had flown with Ben enough times to come to truly respect and admire the skill it took to fly a RAPTOR or any ship for that matter. To do it with the skill first Ben and now Steven displayed was truly a gift. Tareif wished his daughter Zaala would pick a man like this over a Spartan. Steven may have been a human pilot, but he was sharp witted and in superior physical condition for a human, and as he had proven already, he had very big brass balls and boatloads of bravery. "There are not many who would have been able to do that. Thank you."

"I thank you as well." Isra spoke turning back to look at them.

"Ben had those new ships built tough." Steve spoke as if dismissing the compliment. "Anyone could have set us down with a little training."

Tareif nodded. "Yes... I will remember that you said that and make sure I mention it in my report." He spoke with a grin.

“We’re still down in enemy territory. I’m busted up a little, and all we have is our side arms. We’re not exactly in the best of situations you know. Of course we could all be very dead so our luck seems to be holding.”

“Yes... dead would not be good.” Tareif spoke.

“Dead does not sit well with me either.” Isra spoke. He turned back to face them fully. “They are moving off completely now. There appears to be another island in that direction.”

“Well at least we found all the mirrors hiding these islands.” Steve said pulling the canteen of emergency water from the pack. “Pretty sophisticated set up too.” He drained a gulp from the canteen and held it out to Tareif.

Isra nodded. “I would tend to agree.” He said. “It appears our enemies are more closely aligned than we initially thought.” He spoke as he too chambered a round into his K12 pistol before returning it to the holster under his left arm. He looked at Tareif. “Tareif do you know this island chain?”

Tareif shook his head. “Only from old maps and charts. If our position was accurate when we crashed it is called the Dry Tortugas Chain, but this island is bigger than any I remember being in this chain on the maps.”

“Seismic springboard.” Steve spoke looking at them. “The earth quakes of fifty or a hundred years ago that caused them to resurface must have caused more than the original landmass of the islands to rise up. It stands to reason if it happened to this one it happened to the others as well.”

Isra nodded as his violet eyes stretched down the length of the beach as far as possible. “The beach goes for at least two kilometers in either direction, and we don’t know how far across it is.”

“Use me as your point of reference.” Steve said. “The two of you can move faster than me. Use me as your point of reference to find out how big this puppy is.”

Isra nodded. “It is getting dark... so no more than thirty minutes out Tareif.”

Tareif nodded. “Done.” He spoke

He and Isra separated into different directions and within seconds both of them were gone from sight. Steve pulled the packs closer to him and began to take stock of what they had. He was only through the second pack when Isra and Tareif both returned within seconds of each other. They had been gone little less than an hour.

“That was quick.” Steve spoke.

Isra nodded. “We met on the beach on the other side of the island. Three kilometers by four kilometers in my direction, four by two in Tareif’s direction.”

“Fifteen square.” Steve spoke. “Not bad for size really.”

Tareif nodded. “We saw much in the way of fresh fruit, some lizards skittering about and a lighthouse.”

“Lighthouse?” Steve asked. “You’re kidding?”

Isra shook his head. “We should make our way there and set up. The fruit smells ripe and does not appear to have anything poisonous inside it. And it will taste much better than our rations. Then I will contact Tarifa, Aihola and Aelnala so that they do not do anything rash.”

“How do you know about the fruit?” Steve asked.

“I tasted it.” He answered with a smile. “There is very little in existence that would harm a Lycavorian immune system. If it does nothing to me, it stands to reason it is safe for you and the War Master.” He took one of the packs and slung it over his shoulders.

Steve nodded as he stood up slinging another. “I might be able to put together a small transmitter from what I have in these packs too. The salt water killed the ones that were in the packs but I might be able to piece something together combining the three.” He said.

Tareif slung the last pack. “And I will move to the top of this lighthouse and see what I can see before light is truly gone.”

The three men nodded and headed through the jungle towards the lighthouse, Isra leading the way.

We were shot down but we are safe for the moment. Steven was slightly injured, but he is fine. We'd be dead if not for his piloting skills. We lost his co-pilot however and our craft is underwater. Isra told them, his Mindvoice connection clear and powerful. I did not contact you immediately because the dragon and rider appeared and I did not want to risk him finding us. I believe we are close to their main base of operations.

They are gone now my bonded brother? Aelnala was the first to ask a question.

Yes... we did a little scouting of the island we are on and found a lighthouse where we are setting up now. Isra replied. Tarifa have Admiral Jamerl find every map chart he can that has the Dry Tortugas Island chain on it. There must be some in a museum somewhere.

I will make sure we find something, but you said the island you are on is considerably larger than what the charts would say. Tarifa spoke.

Yes... but we can extrapolate the size of the islands now, based on the dimensions I have given you. At least I hope so. Isra answered.

We will fly to you on Aelnala. Aihola spoke quickly.

No! Isra said quickly. There is nothing either of you can do here. We are safe for the moment. I would not lie to you about that. I need you where you are safest and where you can both use all of your skills.

Then I will come alone Isra. Aelnala said.

No Aelnala, I need you to remain with Tarifa and Aihola and protect them. Have you heard from Aricia?

Tarifa nodded to no one in particular, though everyone in the room knew they were carrying on a conversation with Isra. Selene and Layna were listening into the connection but remaining silent, while Lynwe had left to secure the field for Aricia's arrival. *She contacted Eden City Command moments ago. She will be landing with Isheeni in four hours. Tarifa answered.*

Divert her DT to Sparta Tarifa. Isra said evenly. Someone knew we were coming to have been able to shoot us down so easily, which means someone is watching the airfield. Her arrival in Eden City will only alert our enemies to her presence. Tell her to divert her DT to Sparta but execute a High Altitude Exit over Eden City. Her surface ceiling with Isheeni rivals that of the King and she can maintain a very high orbit until this dragon and rider appear. She will know what that means. If they have shot us down like this, I believe they are preparing to come after you both. Aelnala that is why you must remain with them for now.

I understand. I will insure they are safe. Aelnala replied. Then Isheeni and I will surprise this dragon and rider when they make their move.

They could feel Isra nod his head from where he was. *If they are bold enough to do this now then I believe they will be coming for you very soon. Have a pilot standing by at low altitude over the gulf with one of these RAPTOR IIs. As soon as this dragon and rider make their move, have them dash in and pick us up. We will try to learn what we can between now and then. As I said we are safe. And none of us is in any way interested in battling anyone with only the side arms we have. Your father is setting up inside the lighthouse to see if we can detect anything else in the immediate area. He said to tell your mother vanimle sila tiri. (Your beauty shines bright)*

Aihola smiled and looked at Palina who was watching them intently. "Tareif says *vanimle sila tiri*." She spoke reaching out and squeezing the hand of the woman who was the closest thing to a mother that Aihola had ever had. She smiled seeing Palina's worried face break into a smile of her own as relief passed over her features.

And Steven wanted me to pass on a message to your sister Tarifa. Isra spoke.

Zaala? Tarifa's brow furrowed and her head turned to gaze at her younger sister who sat in a corner of the transport on one of the chairs, her legs curled under her as she held the mug of tea.

Yes. It is an elfin phrase that I am familiar with. He spoke it quite fluently, apparently he's been practicing. Mela en' coiamin. (Love of my life)

Tarifa kept the small smile hidden as she looked at Aihola who matched that smile. *I will tell her Isra. We miss... we miss you our love.*

We will see each other soon enough. Isra spoke. Is Aihola there in the DT with you or did you separate for security reasons?

Tarifa nodded as Aihola stepped up close to her, pressing her body tightly against Tarifa's. *Yes she is here.*

Do you remember what I taught you our first night together, when we were just lying there with the moonlight on us and I was holding you both? Isra asked them.

Tarifa and Aihola smiled at those memories. They had been sprawled across his body completely spent, with only enough energy to cuddle against his warm flesh as the moon came into their room and bathed them in its soft white light.

Elly staliord'hna. The spoke together in the ancient Lycavorian language. It was the first phrase Isra had taught them, and they both knew over the years to come he would teach them many more. (Forever my faithful love)

Elly staliord'hna. Isra repeated. *Be mindful of events around you. We still have enemies among the masses it seems. Conduct yourselves as normal, but be prepared for this dragon and rider to attack.*

We will. Aihola told him.

Then I will see you as soon as possible. Isra spoke. *Your father is signaling for me to come up to his location. Pass on the information I have given you and design your plans around it. I will contact you with anything else that might be important.*

Tarifa and Aihola felt him break the connection and Aelnala nodded her huge head. *I will begin to take up an orbit of the airfield.* She spoke. *We should maintain a shielded connection between the five of us now.*

Should we deploy troops? Selene asked.

No... that will only signal something is not right. Layna replied. *Lynwe agrees with me and she has stopped making preparations for the Queen's arrival. She's returning to our location as we speak.*

We do everything now either within Mindvoice, and if that is not available to us, then secure voice transmission only. Tarifa spoke.

Aihola nodded. *I will take Lohana and change into armor first. Then you and Selene Tarifa, and finally Layna and Lynwe when she returns. We must be discrete in all that we do.*

Go Nya Istel. Tarifa spoke. *I need to pass this message to Zaala and then Selene and I will wait for you to return.*

Aihola took Lohana's hand and drew her away from the table. "Come with me." She spoke. "We will change in your quarters."

"Change? Change into what?"

"I will explain everything but come." Aihola spoke.

Selene looked at Tarifa. "Go tell Zaala." She said softly. "I will pass on some new coded orders to the Dragoon security detachment monitoring the Zaleisian Delegation. I don't want them going to the bathroom without us knowing how long they were in the commode."

Tarifa nodded with a smile and moved quietly to where Zaala sat on one of the larger couches on the other side of the DT from the map chart. The chair did not allow her to stretch out her legs as she wanted and she had just sat down from getting a fresh mug of tea and she looked up at her as Tarifa approached. Zaala's legs came out from under her as she leaned forward.

"Have you heard anything Tarifa?" She asked her voice hopeful.

Tarifa dropped to her knees in front of her sister. "Yes. We have spoken with Isra. He and father are fine. They are uninjured... but will remain where they are for now."

Zaala breathed a sigh of relief and nodded her head. "That is good. That is very good." She spoke with a smile. Zaala's dark eyes didn't leave Tarifa's face, as if she was waiting for Tarifa to say something else.

Tarifa nodded. "Yes it is." She said with a smile. She reached up and put her palm on Zaala's face. "Steven says you are *Mela en' coiamin*." She said watching as Zaala's head snapped up her dark eyes bright and alive.

"What?" She gasped with a smile.

"That is the message that Steven asked Isra to pass to me, to give to you." Tarifa said as she reached out and took Zaala's hands in her own. "Zaala how long have you and Steven been..."

Zaala smiled gently. "Three months now." She replied quickly, her face dazzling and relaxed now, all the tension and worry gone. It was the happiest face Tarifa had ever seen from Zaala. "He's the one Tarifa. I know it... he is the one for me."

"I thought that you were seeing that young Spartan." Tarifa asked confused. "I don't even remember his name."

“Rohr.” Zaala replied shaking her head quickly. “He thought the size of his cock made up for his lack of brains. You and a select few others seem to get the few Spartans who are blessed in both areas and know how to use both things.” She said with a genuine smile and bright eyes. “Though I’ve decided Steven is just right for me because he fills me just enough and he makes love to me with passion and intensity and doesn’t try to pound my guts through the bed.”

Tarifa burst out laughing at her sister’s comment and squeezed her hands. Zaala always had a knack for cutting right through the murkiness and getting to the heart of the matter. “Why... how did this... how did this happen Zaala?”

“It is my own fairytale Tarifa!” Zaala spoke. “Rohr wasn’t happy when I told him that he was a moron and I wanted nothing to do with him anymore. He was with his friends at the time and didn’t take kindly to being put down by me in front of them. He followed me back to the library afterwards and tried to make a scene. I was scared for a moment because Rohr was angry and intoxicated, and then Steven appeared.” Zaala told the story with love and desire in her dark eyes. “Rohr had hold of my wrist and wouldn’t let go so Steven stepped up to him and placed the barrel of his K12 against Rohr’s head. Rohr couldn’t believe a human would have the guts to stand up to him and just stared at him saying he didn’t have the guts to shoot a Spartan. Steven just laughed and pulls out another K12 and points it at Rohr’s chest and asks Rohr if he’s fast enough to beat two speeding bullets because that was something he would like to see. It was so dramatic Tarifa, you should have been there.”

“I never heard about this Zaala!” Tarifa spoke.

“Rohr was drunk Tarifa.” Zaala spoke dismissively. “There was no sense in making it an issue after it was over. Rohr backed down and Steven offered to walk me home. We began meeting at this small café near the University and he was very persistent. I thought to chase him away by wearing revealing clothes but no matter what I wore to meet him, he always was a perfect gentleman. I tortured him with what I wore Tarifa...” Zaala spoke with a small guilty smile as she remembered some of the very revealing outfits. “We began meeting more and more and since he would not make the first move I finally did. He turned me down Tarifa! He would not take me into his bed! No man has ever refused me! I couldn’t understand it! I ignored him for days I was so angry, but he never called me. I hounded him for days after that and still he never called me. I finally realized he was father’s pilot and had been trying to figure out some way to meet me for months. I talked with Cathy, Leland’s wife, because I have never had a human male chase me so diligently and I realized that he wanted me for me Tarifa. Not for whom you and father are... he already knew that. He already had father’s respect. When I demanded why he hadn’t told me to begin with he said he wasn’t out to just get me into bed and he wanted me to know that. He wanted something lasting and permanent and he wanted it with me.”

“Zaala you will... you will live so much longer than him though.” Tarifa said. “Are you sure that is what you want?”

“Tarifa... sister... he makes love to me like... what I feel within his arms is beyond glorious Tarifa. He feasts on me every time we are together, like I am the only woman left in the world, like I am some precious jewel that he can not get enough of. He is no Spartan, but he fits within me like the fingers of a glove Tarifa and the sensations are wondrous. He nibbles the backs of my ears in such a way that I tremble with desire when he holds me. I yearn for his very touch upon me sister! I’ve never trembled for anyone Tarifa... but Steven... I love him Tarifa with all that I am.”

Tarifa smiled. “I never thought I would see this day come.” Tarifa spoke. “My little sister has finally fallen in love.”

Zaala laughed softly. “And with a human no less.” She said.

“Why haven’t you told mother and father?” Tarifa asked.

“Steven is afraid father will not approve of him because he is human.” Zaala spoke honestly.

“Zaala you have to tell them.” Tarifa spoke with a smile. “They think you and this fool Spartan are still seeing each other. Father has been inquiring about him for weeks when the man who has stolen your heart flies him everywhere he goes!”

Zaala chuckled when she said that. “And many a pleasurable night we have had avoiding father discovering us together too.” Zaala spoke with a mischievous grin.

“We will tell them when they return Zaala.” Tarifa spoke. “You should not hide the love you have for each other. I won’t let you hide your love for each other.”

“I won’t give him up Tarifa. Not for father! Not for anyone!” Zaala spoke quickly and firmly.
“And you won’t have too.” Tarifa assured her. “That much I promise you.”

ELEAR WAINN

Vonis slammed his hips forward once more, driving his cock deeply into the squirming female elf beneath him as he reached for the pinnacle of the sex act. He had spotted her in the market the day earlier and decided he wanted her that night. It was a risk, but her beauty made it worth it as far as he was concerned. Her dark brown hair was long and shiny, and her figure was incredible for an elf female. He had followed her for several hours, discovering she lived alone with no children. Taking her had been ridiculously easy, and when she had awoken once more she was tied face down on his bed, naked and exposed for him to view. Tears had burst into her eyes instantly but Vonis dropped in front of her on the bed. He truly had no desire to kill her, he only wanted to fuck her senseless and he told her this. Do not fight him, do as she was told, and she would live. Fight him and she would die. The decision had been easy, and now some thirty odd hours later Vonis was taking her for the twentieth time, her warm, delightfully tight pussy spasming of its own accord now as she surrendered to the orgasms shooting through her lithe frame. Orgasms that she could no longer deny due to his size and skill at lovemaking. Vonis knew he was the largest she had ever had, simply by the expression on her face every time he slid deeply into her, as if he was touching places never visited before.

Vonis lowered his face once more to the lightly tanned flesh on her neck and sank his fangs deeply into her, using the exact same two holes he had been using for hours. Her dark blue eyes burst wide open and her arms flew around his back tightly as her legs locked around his hips. Her whole body stiffened in an even more intense orgasm, his cock ballooning larger within her and Vonis erupted into her depths, at the same time as her warm sweet blood rushed into his mouth. Her eyes were half closed in delirious pleasure, yet part of her was overcome with shame at that same desire and pleasure she felt ripping through her. Desire and pleasure she could not deny, desire and pleasure she did not want to deny.

Vonis withdrew his fangs slowly, sealing the two holes on her neck with a quick, tender lick of his tongue, and he allowed her to collapse fully on the bed, exhausted and spent. Vonis smiled to himself. Her blood was incredibly sweet, and the last half dozen times she had truly responded to him sexually, her sugary juices splashing across his cock as she quivered in the throes of her own powerful orgasms, meeting his powerful thrusts into her body with equal power and need. He had also discovered something he had never known about elves before. The backs of their ears were exceedingly sensitive when they were aroused, and the slightest graze or touch usually was enough to elicit a powerful reaction. The few times he had brushed aside her dark brown hair and used his nose to stroke the backs of her ears, her body had responded immediately, leaning back into him, the nipples on her firm breasts becoming harder and hotter, her belly clenching in delight and her hands gripping the sides of the bed more tightly.

The few elves he had seen within High Coven space were sex slaves to Immortals, their once keen minds usually destroyed beyond repair due to the addictive nature of Immortal’s semen. Their semen was a powerful drug to female elves, and it was used for interrogations as well as breaking female elves that were captured by the High Coven. This female beneath him though, she was strong and vibrant and sensual. Her mind was whole and complete, and she had been responding to his strokes and thrusts into her body for hours now, almost cooing out her delight into his ears. Her blood not only tasted sweeter than anything he had ever savored, it smelled sweeter than even the purest pureblood vampire females he had bedded.

He withdrew himself from within her tightness slowly then, his cobalt blue eyes gazing across her delicious body as he pulled his softening cock from within her depths. He had learned over the last few hours that withdrawing from her slowly drew out the pleasure for him, and also for her as he could see her full moist lips pursing in happiness at the sensations. As he got up and began to pull on his clothes he watched her lower herself in exhaustion to the bed, her heaving breaths deep and heavy as she curled into a ball on the soft sheets. Vonis stared at her for a long moment before something urged him to reach down with one hand and draw the simple soft sheet up over her naked flesh. He saw her dark blue eyes glance up at him as she pulled the sheet tighter around her just before sleep claimed her.

He exited the bedroom, leaving her still chained securely to the bed by one ankle bracelet, with barely the energy to lift her head let alone try to escape. His face saw the two senior assassins and the look on their faces as he allowed the door to slid shut behind him before speaking.

“Do not tell me what I think you are going to tell me.” Vonis spoke calmly.

The senior assassin nodded slowly. “They just hit the Evolli safe house sire.”

“Is there anything there that could possibly tie them to us?” Vonis asked as he moved to the small counter and poured himself a large glass of the dark yellow elfin juice that he had grown to like over the past few weeks.

The senior assassin shook his head quickly. “Impossible.” He answered. “We met at a predetermined location on the far side of the city away from their safe house. It was just the four of them and the dragon sire.”

Vonis looked at him. “Four?”

“It appears they have two of the Drow half vampire scouts from Earth working with them now as well.” The senior man spoke moving to the chair. “From what I could see they were quite skilled.”

Vonis took a seat on the couch across from him. “Your thoughts on why they have not sounded a general alarm planet wide Conrol?”

The senior assassin, a member of the Silent Death Division for the last three hundred years shrugged and leaned forward. “I can think of only two reasons.” He replied. “The first being that whatever it is that they are here in Wainn for, they consider that more important than a Kill Order against Isabella. And I sincerely doubt they haven’t already figured that out yet.”

“What could possibly be more important than a Kill Order against Isabella?” Vonis asked aloud. “And I agree with you that they must know there is one out on her. It is why our people have told us the spaceports are clamping down on offworld travelers.”

“Whatever it is,” Conrol spoke. “It has also kept King Leonidas from coming here.”

Vonis nodded. “Perhaps... but there are other factors where he is concerned that do not relate to us.”

“According to our contact at the hotel, they have planned to remain there for at least a week.” Conrol reported. “Attempting something inside the hotel now would be useless. We should draw some superior talent from off world sire, plan our next attack and then support directly that attack.”

Vonis nodded. “I agree.” He answered. “Have Haliur arrange for the off world talent. They must be impeccable and preferably from a member race of the Union so as to not draw as much attention as others. I want you to find out whatever you can about what they are doing here and what their intentions are. If Spartan and Elf security is not descending on this city by now, then whatever is happening is considerably more interesting than we first thought?”

“And you sire?”

“I’m going to find out as much information about these dragons as I can. Yuri and my father seem to be very interested in them.” Vonis spoke.

“And your elf female sire?” Conrol asked.

Vonis looked at him quickly. “Yes... what about her?”

“Do you intend to keep her here?”

“Is that a problem for you Conrol?” Vonis asked.

“She is a liability sire, surely you know that.” Conrol spoke.

“She was single, lived alone and her employment was miniscule in the scheme of things. She will not be missed.” Vonis said. “I intend to use her as company until such time as we succeed and depart this planet. At that time I will decide what to do with her, not you or Haliur. Is that understood?”

“As you command Prince Vonis.” Conrol spoke bowing his head.

“She is also not to be touched Conrol.” Vonis spoke once more; only this time there was a possessive tone to his voice that surprised even him. And a tone of what would happen if he was disobeyed.

“As you order sire.” Conrol spoke. He did not fear the young vampire Prince, for while Vonis was very skilled, he lacked the thousands of years of experience that Conrol possessed.

“Now you said there were two reasons Conrol. What is the second reason?” Vonis asked.

Conrol met his eyes. “It is all one large set up to capture you.”

Her name was Va'nimia.

And at the moment she did not know if she was going to live or die. She felt utterly exhausted, her body weak and sore, both from the sex and having the man feeding on her blood. She had experienced more shameless sex in the last few hours than she had ever experienced up to this point in her life. And she was mortified of the pleasure that had ripped through her for most of it.

She was still relatively young for an elf at only six hundred and twenty-four years old, but she still hoped to find love one day and have children. She heard the door to the room open and she watched as he entered once more. He wore the boots and pants but no shirt, and unlike what she thought vampires would be like, he was not deathly pale. His upper body was lean and muscular and completely hairless, yet it had the tint of bronze coloring to it associated with at least some time in the sun. He carried a tray of food and a large glass of yellow liquid. His legs were long and lean as well, and she had already experienced the sensations of his vampire cock driving into her, and the disgraceful feelings it had produced from her. He had the largest cock of any elf or man Va'nimia had ever had in her life, though she could count the number of her lovers on one hand. He stretched her in a way she found brazenly glorious, and she remembered how she had clutched at his powerful shoulders and back as her orgasms crashed upon each other in waves. His jet black hair was cut short and strong jaw was accented by the thin and neatly trimmed goatee and mustache. His obsidian colored eyes caught and held her like a magnet. She watched the door slide closed behind him and she heard it lock as he pulled the chair over to the edge of the bed with his foot and looked down upon her with those eyes.

He held out the large glass of yellowish liquid and she simply stared at him unmoving as he lowered the tray he carried with the other hand to the bed next to her. Va'nimia caught the smell of red meat and looked at the plate of cut up Kaltaon beef and the simple long stemmed green vegetables quickly before returning her eyes to his face.

Vonis smiled at this. "It is Torba juice. An elfin invention if I'm not mistaken. It is also the best means for your body to replace the nutrients in your blood that I have taken over the last few hours." He told her. "Take it she-elf, if I had wanted you dead, you would be dead by now."

Va'nimia reached up and took the glass, bringing it to her lips and drinking greedily, her dark blue eyes watching him warily as he settled into the chair. She had always loved Torba juice and it tasted even sweeter to her now as it slid down her throat. She glanced at the food once more, her mouth practically watering at the smell of cooked beef.

"Go ahead... I made it for you." Vonis told her. "You need to eat as well and the red beef and vegetables is the best I could find."

He watched as she set the glass of juice on the tray and picked up the plate of food, using her long fingers to snatch pieces of the cooked meat and vegetables and put them in her mouth. He had chosen foods easy for her to manipulate with her fingers because giving her utensils was too dangerous, but also for some reason he did not want to embarrass her by having her eat like some sort of animal. Vonis stared at her as she ate; not knowing what about her had stopped him from killing her after that first time. She was stunningly beautiful, as all elf females were he knew, but her lush figure was much shapelier than the elf females he was used to seeing. It was muscular in a certain way, but also very feminine as well. Her lips were full and soft, her skin flawless. Vonis was almost nine hundred years old and still a child among his people, yet he had bedded hundreds of young women in his life. Most of them were pompous pureblood vampire females looking only for a means to secure the support of the High Lord for their family, but there had been several elf females that had been captured and not used to the point of being mindless sex slaves to Immortals. They had been pleasant enough.

Yet there was something about this elf female.

"What is your name?" Vonis asked her.

Va'nimia's dark blue eyes darted to his face as she chewed the piece of steak, letting the juices flow across her tongue. She swallowed quickly, determined to do whatever he asked of her if it meant she stayed alive.

"Va'nimia." She answered quickly.

"Va'nimia." Vonis spoke the name, the vowels rolling off his tongue easily. "You are frightened of me Va'nimia?"

She nodded quickly. "I... I do not wish to die. I... I will do whatever you ask of me if it keeps me alive."

Vonis leaned forward in the chair and met her eyes. "I plan to keep you locked in this room Va'nimia. There is no way out of it except for that door, and it can not be broken. You may scream all you wish, no one will hear you, as the walls are soundproof. The toilet facilities are through that smaller door." Vonis spoke pointing. "I will provide you with food and drink to maintain your strength and health and all you need do is submit to me whenever I want you too. I do not partake in disgusting sexual practices and I will not hurt you in any way so you have no fears there, but I will expect you to keep yourself clean and ready for me. I believe you have already seen what pleasures being with me can give you, unless you are an extremely good actress and you faked everything. Don't fight me, and you will experience more of the same. In a few days we will be gone from your world and you can return to your life as you knew it. What was your occupation and will anyone miss you?"

"I was a teacher of the arts." Va'nimia answered quickly. "And my semester does not begin for another three weeks. I returned to Wainn early from an extended vacation."

"So no one expects you back yet?" Vonis asked.

Va'nimia shook her head. "Not for another week."

"Do you have family?"

"A mother who lives in the capital. A sister who resides on Apo Prime and works for the government." Va'nimia replied. "My father died many years ago from sickness."

"What does your sister do?" Vonis asked.

Va'nimia shook her head. "I don't know really." She answered honestly. "Something to do with the military communications. We are not close and I never truly cared for the military service or types."

"You said you were a teacher of the arts?" Vonis said sitting back in the chair. "You are not any longer?"

Va'nimia shook her head. "I still am... however the number of my students has dropped disproportionately over the last few months because of the group that has made the compound north of Wainn their home."

"Group? What do you mean?" Vonis asked.

"They are a cult of some sort, and they have seduced many of the younger students and some of the weaker minded adults into their fold." Va'nimia told him. "I was under the impression that is why Queen Dysea and Queen Isabella are here."

Vonis's jaw twitched at what she called Isabella, but he let it slide off him. She did not know what else to call her and Vonis did not want to strike her and mar her beauty in any way. That fact surprised him too. Yuri and his father had taught him to be ruthless, but he had learned by interaction that ruthlessness did not always get you what you desired. "Tell me about this group." Vonis said.

"I don't know much..." She looked at him suddenly with those dark blue eyes. "I... I don't know what to call you that will not offend or anger you." She spoke.

"Sire will do for now." Vonis answered.

"I have avoided them whenever they came into the city sire." Va'nimia answered. "They have an evil sense about them that made me uneasy. They size others up in a way that turns my skin."

"You called them a cult." Vonis spoke.

Va'nimia nodded. "I don't know what else to call them. They go to rallies and such within the city limits and to other cities as well. They try to gain converts to their way of thinking, but no one knows what their way of thinking is until they are already within the walls of the compound."

Vonis nodded. "And by then it is too late." He said softly. He got to his feet, his eyes falling to her half naked body as she looked at him. Though his face didn't show it, Vonis felt the powerful tug of sexual desire in his groin, something else that had not happened before with other females. "I truly do not wish to kill you Va'nimia, but if you give me any cause too, I will not hesitate." He reached down and deactivated the ankle bracelet on her slim leg and the cable fell to the floor. "You may move about the room freely, and when I return I will bring you some items from your home. I will be gone a few hours at most, and after you are done eating you should sleep to regain more of your strength. I intend to have you again several times when I return."

Vonis turned quickly and moved for the door, leaving a very startled female elf on the bed, wondering why his words about having her again had just sent shivers of expectation shooting through her.

“There was only the one Lady Dysea.” Nymtran came into the main room of the Evolli safehouse his P190 dangling from quick release straps, the short razor like sword gripped tightly in his hand and folded back across the length of his arm.

Dysea nodded from where she was kneeling next to the table going over papers and other items that had been tossed there. “The body?”

“I search it thoroughly Milady.” Nymtran replied as he moved up next to her and squatted next to the table. “He had nothing on him. All that was in this place is there. Elfin security is moving a team here to clean up and begin their forensic investigation. Lady Isabella is upstairs going through the papers and things we found up there.”

“I want everything taken from this place Nymtran.” Dysea spoke. “Make sure the team knows that everything goes to Elfin Intelligence, and insure they coordinate with Armetus and his people as well.”

“I will tell them my Queen.” Nymtran spoke. He looked at Dysea and opened his mouth to speak but no words came out. He closed his mouth quickly and then opened it again.

“Do not be afraid to say what is on your mind with me Nymtran.” Dysea spoke not even looking at him. “You should know by now, after the battles we fought on Earth and beyond, I am far from untouchable.”

“My Queen... Sole’nar and I... we... we fear you think we may have taken advantage of Miai in some way.” Nymtran spoke slowly watching as Dysea’s emerald eyes came to rest fully on him as he spoke. “What happened between the three of us has built over many weeks my Queen. It was not intended by us to grow this close to her, to feel what we feel for her. I don’t believe Miai entered into our relationship expecting it either. It just happened between us as the days and weeks passed.”

“What is Miai to you and Sole’nar? Tell me... what does she mean to you and your brother Nymtran?” Dysea asked.

“She is our most precious mate my Queen.” He answered immediately and without a hint of doubt in his voice. “She... is the only one to understand that my brother and I are tied to each other in the way we are. She knew this instinctively, almost immediately after meeting us my Queen. She did not see two; she saw one, which is what we are.”

“She is also your slave Nymtran.” Dysea said softly. “You forget Aihola and I are very close, and that too is part of your culture and history.”

His amber eyes flared briefly. “Never out of our bed my Queen!” He hissed. “We would never dishonor her in such a way. And we would never bring shame to Queen Aihola like that. She insists on playing that role to honor our culture even though it is not what we wish.”

“Yes I know. I asked her if she knew what she was getting into with you two.” Dysea spoke. “The commitment and devotion that Drow have towards each other and those they consider mates. It would be double with you and your brother. She didn’t even bat an eye you know.” Dysea smiled at him. “If you need anything Nymtran, no matter what it is, any of you, you come to Bella and me, is that understood.”

Nymtran nodded slowly. “Thank you my Queen.”

They turned as Isabella and Lexi came walking down the stairs from above, Isabella holding a data reader in her hand. Dysea and Nymtran got to their feet.

“You found something?” Dysea asked.

Isabella came up to her holding out the data reader. “Nothing glaring. Whoever my younger brother is, he appears to cover his tracks very well. At least he leaves no evidence of his involvement. I can’t believe I never knew he was born. He has to be at least a thousand years old.”

“You left the Coven before you reached that milestone Bella.” Dysea spoke. “You’ve been among the Union for over a thousand years.”

Isabella nodded. “A thousand and forty-two to be exact.” She said.

“Perhaps he was born shortly after you left.” Dysea said.

“Perhaps.”

Dysea looked up from the reader once more. “Well he can’t show direct involvement Bella, you know that.” She spoke. “*Nauta Melme* would go ballistic and launch an invasion of High Coven space for so blatant an act. And the support the High Coven receives from many of the neutral alliances and governments would disappear almost overnight. I have learned much about the policies and intricacies of diplomacy in this vast universe. I didn’t realize how many were outside the realm of the control or influence of the Coven or the Union. It is a constant balancing act we must walk.”

Isabella nodded. “I know. And with the exception of Deia and Gorgo, I have not seen anyone with the skill to balance that so well as you.”

“There is much I still need to learn.” Dysea spoke. “These fools came from within the Wilds eight days ago. It says they were contacted on a planet called Palto Three.”

Isabella nodded. “I know it. It is a smaller bastion of scum and mercenaries, but eight days ago we had not even reached Elear yet Dysea. How did they know to come here and wait for us?”

“That information could have been obtained through any number of intermediate sources and contacts.” Dysea spoke. “We can not encrypt all of our communications, as much as you and *Nauta Melme* would like too. It is disturbing however, that this Kill Order was taken out on you further back than we thought.”

“Kochab Bounty Hunters and Evolli assassins.” Isabella spoke. “All of them well trained and very expensive. Whoever my younger brother is, he is being very careful in who he chooses and when to come at us.”

“I would say based on these two attacks we have at least four days perhaps as many as six before he is able to pull in enough off world talent to attempt another assassination.” Dysea said. “Elfin security will be checking all off world species fully when they arrive.”

Isabella shook her head slowly. “He won’t use off world talent from the Wilds.” She said softly. “Not this time. He knows what we can do now *ussta* she-elf Dysea. He will contract with species from member worlds of the Union this time and he will directly support the attack as well. I estimate we have six days maximum before he strikes again.”

“How can you be so sure Bella?” Dysea asked stepping closer to her vampire lover.

Bella’s vampire cobalt blue eyes fell on her. “It’s exactly what I would do *ussta* she-elf Dysea. Exactly how I would run this type of operation.”

APO PRIME ISLAND PALACE

For’mya’s front paws stabbed into the dirt in front of her sending a shower of small pebbles and spraying across the courtyard several meters. The golden hair of her wolf coat was thick and lustrous, and Kmyla had been right, when she was in this form she gained nearly twenty kilos of muscle mass. She was nearly as large as Aricia when in wolf form, and Aricia was among the largest female wolves For’mya had ever seen. Her muzzle was long and elegant, the golden hair shiny with health, the razor sharp teeth filling her jaws capable of ripping flesh from bone in seconds. This is the freedom Aricia had told her of once as they lay in each others arms after a night of lovemaking. For’mya could feel the bands of steel muscle under her fur, coiled and ready to spring. Her awareness increased almost ten fold in wolf form, Gorgo and Dasha teaching her how to use her new tools of sight and smell and hearing. How to sense the ground beneath you, the texture of the dirt or grass, how much pressure to use or not use when she turned or braked. They taught her how to use her tail to make spine bending turns, or miniscule adjustments. They taught her how the pads in her paws were now her finest tool when in wolf form, always measuring and calculating.

To For’mya, it was freedom unrivaled.

For’mya’s dark brown eyes snapped quickly to the ground and gravel on the path and she saw the white chalk mark only centimeters in front of her unbroken.

“Yes!” Gorgo’s voice echoed in the morning air.

In a flash of silver/white light For’mya was back in her normal form, squatting on the path wearing the black and crimson body armor as her eyes studied the white chalk mark, her chest heaving in exertion from sprinting across the palace grounds. For the last two days she had been sprinting from one side of the palace to

the other, gaining all the speed four legs could give her and Gorgo's task was to stop herself before crossing the white chalk line. Thirteen times For'mya had attempted this and thirteen times she had failed, never able to stop in time and not break the chalk line.

Until now.

Gorgo walked quickly from inside the overhang of the palace entrance, Dasha beside her with Androcles in her arms, both of them beaming.

"You did it!" Gorgo exclaimed.

"That was a display of finesse and power I have not seen since Aricia first succeeded in this task as a child!" Dasha echoed as she came up smiling. "That is one of the oldest lessons taught to young wolves For'mya, and do you know how many actually succeed in completing that task?"

For'mya shook her head, her smile matching that of the older women. "No!" She gasped, her chest still heaving in happiness.

"Less than three percent actually succeed in braking in time and not losing their balance." Dasha answered. "Oh you have done well indeed child."

For'mya beamed as Martin's mother and Aricia's mother came up on either side of her and hugged her tightly. Androcles was perched on Dasha's hip so she was not able to squeeze her too hard, but the pride was there in her eyes.

"I think we will forgo anymore training for today and let you enjoy your success, and then we will build on beginning a new task for tomorrow." Gorgo spoke. "You have earned a respite For'mya and your mother will be arriving later this afternoon." She took For'mya's arm on one side and Dasha on the other as they started back into the palace. "Let's enjoy a good breakfast and then Dasha and I are going into the city for a few hours and were wondering if you would watch Androcles."

For'mya turned and took the small seven month old little boy into her arms. "That is something you will never have to ask me." She said, brushing her nose against Androcles and all of them laughing as his baby fists closed around her elfin ears.

For'mya sat on the comfortable couch in the small sitting room alcove off of the upstairs promenade. Two of these sitting rooms were built into the promenade upstairs with shelves of books and three comfortable couches in each alcove. There were five bedrooms upstairs in the palace, the main bedroom where Martin, Aricia and she stayed all the time, and where Anja, Dysea and Isabella now slept whenever they came to the palace and stayed. For'mya thought back briefly to that single night they had all been in the room together before Dysea and Isabella had left. It had been one of the most erotic evenings of her life, the tangle of six naked bodies intertwined to the point of rapture, all of them pleasing each other in some way, shape or form. All of them hoped it was a night that they could share again and again in the future for as far as they were concerned it brought them all closer together.

Androcles room was the next one down the circular corridor, and then the first sitting room where she was. There were two additional large guest rooms for family members, and then the second alcove room. The last medium sized bedroom then was next before descending the stairs on the other side of the palace and the grand hall beneath them, into the main floor of the island palace.

The sapphire scaled dragon hatchling burst over the railing from below causing For'mya to turn her head quickly from her data pad.

Aurith! For'mya called happily as she pulled her feet from the couch and turned to face the fast growing female dragon hatchling.

For'mya had showed the Mindvoice ability and power to bond with a dragon but she had refused initially when Arzoal had offered it to her. After the birth of Aurith and the bond that had been formed naturally when For'mya's dark brown eyes were the first thing Aurith had seen, that idea had been shot down. Aurith and For'mya were growing closer by the day and the bond they were forming was growing stronger over that same time period. For'mya watched then as the obsidian black dragon hatchling burst over the edge of the railing as well and land next to Aurith. *Elynth!*

Elynth was the last of Torma and Isheeni's eggs to have hatched and she was going to match her father in color if not size, but she was going to have her mother's azure colored eyes. Aurith and Elynth were

comparable in size to each other, strong and healthy and fast becoming powerful flyers. Their brother Jeth was growing larger by the day it seemed and everyone was sure he would meet his father's size. Aurith and Elynth were both easily a meter and a half tall now, their wingspans reaching almost two meters in spread, their bodies from the tips of their noses to the tips of their tails two meters long as well. They were lean with their mother's elegant musculature definition while Jeth took after his father in size and definition. They would stop growing for several months now before the next spurt hit them, and then they would quickly jump to over three meters tall and six meters in length, their wings growing in proportion to their bodies. All of them were hybrids like their father when it came to breathing flame. Jeth and Aurith had the same superheated breath of their father, while Elynth had a very unique combination of the two. Her breath was superheated yet also tinged with red flame and though she would not be able to sustain a concentrated blast for another few months, she had already been able to cut loose with several of these unique blasts in the last week. All of them sported the hard bony protrusion of their Heavyhorn heritage at the end of their muscular tails which even now could shatter bones if they connected hard enough.

For'mya! Aurith called.

For'mya's face became serious instantly at the tone of Aurith's words. *What is it? What's wrong?*

We can not find Jeth For'mya! Elynth blurted out. *We have searched the entire island! We thought perhaps he had gone to the other side of the island where he goes when father is gone, but he is not there. We don't know where he is!*

For'mya came to her feet quickly. *He is not in the dragon cave?*

Aurith shook her head. *That was the first place we looked. We... we did not want to get him in trouble so we searched for him ourselves, but we have covered the island twice now in three days and we can not find him. None of us can sustain our flight across the expanse of the lake yet For'mya. Somehow he has gotten off the island!*

Off the island! For'mya exclaimed. *How is that even possible! No one has been out here with the exception of Gorgo in nearly a week, and Gorgo would notice Jeth on her Water Lifter.*

He is not on the island For'mya, we swear to you. Aurith spoke.

How can you be so sure? For'mya asked kneeling in front of them.

He goes away for two or three days at a time when father is gone. Elynth told her. *He discovered a small cave on the other side of the island and he uses it as his personal retreat of sorts. We did not think anything of it when he did not return home to the dragon cave the first night after father left.*

We only began to worry after three days and he had not returned. Aurith spoke now. *We searched for three days For'mya, and we can not find him.*

For'mya thought quickly and then stood up to her feet and moved to the communication panel on the wall. The Spartan's face that appeared was that of an older man and his eyes showed his surprise.

"Lady For'mya!" He exclaimed.

"You are the officer on duty right now?" For'mya asked.

"Yes Lady For'mya! Commander Wistmus."

"Commander you will lock down every spaceport within a hundred kilometers of Tuya immediately." For'mya spoke. "I want a listing of all freight transports and their manifests for the last week collected and brought to the main palace estate within the hour, to include all security footage of the ports."

Wistmus's eyes looked bored and his expression showed the same thing. "Lady For'mya we locked down the ports ten days ago because of the assassination attempts and lost millions in riyal because we had to accommodate stranded ships and passengers." The man spoke. "I will have to clear this action with the Ministry of State and Travel this time Milady."

For'mya looked at the man with a stunned expression. "I just gave you a very clear order Commander." She spoke.

"I still have to clear it with the Ministry of State and Travel Lady For'mya." Wistmus answered nonchalantly. "And then I will need to inform the Spaceports Administrator before acting, and he is currently at a formal function. I will contact you and advise you of our action plan."

For'mya opened her mouth to speak but the man cut off his transmission from his end and the screen went blank. For'mya stared at the screen in shock, not believing the man had just dismissed her out of hand as he had. Shock quickly began to turn to anger as she stood there. She was eighth in line of power according to

the constitution of the Lycavorian Union. As far as Martin was concerned she was just as much a Queen as Aricia and any of his other Queens, and only politics held sway over her title. He had told her often enough that she spoke with his voice and that it just may take some time before many of the older Lycavorian politicians came to realize that.

Perhaps it was now time they did.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

HOPE'S QUEST

SIXTEEN HOURS UNTIL LAST PIRATE GATE

Martin held the data pad in his hand as he traced the star chart on the table in front of him with the index finger of his opposite hand. The mug of coffee was set on the table in the corner and had gone cold hours ago. The trip so far had gone off without a hitch. Yuriko and Filrian were acting as the faces and voices of *HOPE'S QUEST*, and so far the pirate forces in the area were none the wiser and they had passed through two of the three Jump Gates without incident. Komirri was constantly drilling the sixty Spartans in tactics and helm control so that if they had to fight they would at least have a decent chance. Helen had left the room only the hour before, after they had spent three hours going over details of how the memories of Canth that she had inherited remembered Lycavore. Those memories were clear and precise, as if they were her very own, and they would be helpful once they were down on the surface.

Martin's eyes flicked down as he felt the arms encircle his waist from the side and he stopped concentrating so hard on the chart that he finally smelled Anja next to him. He smiled and took a deep breath, letting her soft honey scent fill his nostrils. Aricia may have been the one his blood, heart and soul desired most of all the women in his life, but there was no denying the intense love and passion he felt wash over him whenever Anja was close and pressed up against him as she was now. It was the same for Dysea, Isabella and For'mya, all of them able to make him feel passion and love. He had witnessed the pleasure Aricia and For'mya gave to each other in bed next to him. They were not shy in their bed when it came to reaching for the pleasures of the flesh. Watching Dysea and Isabella share each other was no different, and while Anja and Seanna had only just become comfortable enough to occupy the bed with all of them, he knew it was no different for them. Martin had stopped trying to understand exactly how he could feel what he felt for five different women and feel it so strongly. He had stopped trying to fully understand how these beautiful women desired each other, and gave of themselves to each other without question when they were together. As far as he was concerned it was pointless to try and explain something that just was.

"You're getting better at sneaking up on me." Martin spoke, circling his arm around her slim waist as she pressed her petite figure against him, her Persian red hair pulled over one shoulder and her jade green eyes bright and alive.

"You are just concentrating so hard you didn't smell me." Anja spoke with a grin.

Martin nodded and shrugged. "I suppose so." He said.

"Marty you been over the plan four times. In every conceivable way." Anja spoke softly reaching up to grasp his jaw and make him look at her. "You are burning yourself out and we aren't even there yet."

"Exactly how long did you think you were actually going to be able to keep that you were pregnant from me Anja?" He asked with a grin.

Anja smiled at him, her eyes twinkling. "I was hoping maybe until we got back." She answered sheepishly. "Kind of silly of me to think *you* wouldn't be able to tell huh?"

"Anja why?" He asked.

"I didn't want it to affect how you treat me or how we proceed with this mission." Anja said matter of factly. "You have a tendency to be very over protective Marty, and you need me on this mission, especially since Little Wolf has gone to earth."

Martin picked her up gently under her arm pits and lifted her easily; turning and setting her very shapely butt on the chart table. Anja looked up at him with a loving smile, seductively wrapping her legs around his

waist as she wiggled her ass on the table. “Wow... you planning a little chart table seduction Marty?” She asked him with a grin.

Martin met her eyes and shook his head with a smile of his own. He reached up and caressed her cheek with his fingertips, releasing a tiny portion of his Alpha male aura upon her in the process. Anja’s eyes closed as she felt his aura wrapping around her just enough to allow his love and devotion to course through her completely. The changes that had made her a wolf like him were fully complete now, and they also made Anja one of the most powerful Alpha female wolves anywhere on Apo Prime. Aricia would always be the most powerful due to the pureness of the blood that ran through her veins, but Martin had turned her and Dysea. Martin’s blood coursed through her veins now, just as it did Dysea and that made the two of them second only to Aricia in terms of power and status.

This had been the very first mating phase for her, the time when she would be most fertile throughout the year. She could get pregnant at any time she knew, but this three week phase is when her body was most prepared to produce a child and she had desperately wanted to become pregnant. Their night together not so long ago had seen to that. It had been the most intense and erotic time they had shared since coming back into each other’s lives, Martin unleashing almost his complete aura upon her in a way that only Aricia had experienced so far. He had held back his complete aura she knew; only Aricia could tolerate that fully from him, but what she had felt was enough to make her practically melt in his arms and leave her in a state of constant arousal. Anja had known the moment he had filled her the first time that she would become pregnant and that knowledge had made her sing his name louder than ever before.

“Have you given any thought to names?” He asked softly.

“When did you figure it out?” She asked him curious now.

Martin leaned over and kissed her softly dropping his hand to her abdomen. “The moment she was conceived.” He replied with a grin. “I am strong enough to sense that, and she is going to be just as strong as Androcles.”

“Marty I...”

Martin put a finger to her lips silencing the words she was going to speak. “I love you Anja... and as an Alpha I want to protect you, especially now that you carry our daughter. I am also smart enough to know some things, and what I know is that you are the most powerful Hadarian Healer alive in the universe right now. Sivana might come close to you someday, but you are it baby.” He told her with a smile. “And while many would disagree with me, I consider you the second most lethal woman I know.”

“Me?” Anja said with a chuckle. “You must be joking. I mean it’s a given that Aricia is now the most dangerous, but Dysea and Isabella can fight circles around me Marty, and you know that.”

“Anja... you are the most methodic and downright lethal woman I have ever known.” Martin spoke calmly. “And that was even before we discovered all this about ourselves. Lexi was right when she said behind Aricia you are the deadliest. Dysea and Isabella may be... heck they are faster and in some respects stronger, but neither of them can match you when it comes to precision. In a fight, any fight, whatever you hit is going down and it ain’t getting back up.”

Anja’s smile was broad as she reached up and kissed him softly. “You know you say the most romantic things to me.” She said.

“Am I getting my point across to you?” He spoke with a smile. “You may be carrying our daughter Anja, but I trust in your skill enough to know that you are invaluable to me. In many more ways than you know. And unless we find ourselves in a situation that is hopeless or completely unacceptable risk wise, I will not coddle or shield you in any way because you will not let me. And I also know you will not place yourself at undo risk either.”

“I won’t act any differently Martin. I may not be as reckless or stubborn as I usually am, not while I carry our daughter, but I can’t force myself to be someone I’m not.”

“I don’t expect you to be. That is the biggest reason why I love you the way you are.” He replied.

“You are worried that she... that Lisisa will hate you isn’t that it?” Anja said softly, her face suddenly becoming serious.

“I don’t know what to expect.” Martin said in a whisper. “I am steeling myself to expect the worst, all the while hoping for the best. She has been a slave for so long, forced to endure things she should not have had to experience. Yuri took her childhood... Yuri took that away from her, and the more I think about that, the

more it makes my blood boil. I had her in my crosshairs 'Firecracker'. I could have removed Veldruk's two oldest children and possibly crippled him forever."

"Don't do that Martin." Anja scolded him feeling little shivers of delight course through her when he used his nickname for her. "You have no reason to second guess your decisions. You did what was right at the time and no one doubts that. You didn't even know Lisisa existed! There was nothing you could have done!"

"But..."

Anja shook her head. "No! You have been searching for her since the moment you knew of her existence, and now we are closer than we have ever been. You have to remain positive! Lisisa will need that confidence! Aricia, Dysea, Isabella, me, all of us know she is a member of our family. She is your daughter Martin Leonidas and that makes her our daughter now as well. We are not afraid of that anymore, regardless of her age."

"You want to name her Eliana don't you?" Martin asked suddenly.

Anja blinked a few times in rapid succession before catching up with him. He had a habit of jumping off in another direction during a conversation, and all of them had grown accustomed to it and were getting better at reacting to the changes.

"I was hoping too yes." Anja replied softly.

"Your Aunt and Uncle won't like it." Martin said.

"Fuck them!" Anja barked loudly her face scrunching up in disgust. "Let them go suck on a big tree stump somewhere!"

Martin laughed and shook his head. Anja had been trained as a United States Navy SEAL in their time on Earth, and she had learned how to curse just as well as any man, if not better. "Anja... it is language like this that only reinforces to your aunt and uncle that I am a bad influence on you." He told her.

Anja met his eyes and waggled her eyebrows, drawing him closer with her powerful legs and sliding her arms around his waist. "You just keep on influencing me with what you have dangling between your legs big boy! You let me worry about my Aunt and Uncle!"

Martin kissed her hard, crushing her lips with his own and pulling her tightly against him. After a long moment he pulled away and looked at her. "You are such a little vixen." He spoke with a grin. "As much as I would love to rip your clothes from you right here and take you... my body is telling me I need sleep more."

Anja smiled gently and rested her head against his chest. "Right now... sleeping next to you sounds like the most delightful thing in the universe." She spoke.

Martin curled his hand under her legs and lifted her into his arms. "Sleep it is then." He spoke.

Sivana heard the grunts of a serious workout coming from the cargo room adjacent to the landing bay and she went to the doorway slowly, not wanting to disturb whoever was in the room. It was late and she didn't think anyone was still going to be awake. She had taken to wandering the corridors of the freighter these last two nights trying to come to grips with what had happened in her life in the last few weeks and months.

Anja was her sister; there was no question in regards to that any longer. Sivana had seen the results of the numerous tests both Anja and several other Hadarians had conducted. The results had been the same no matter how they had tried to make the tests different or random. That knowledge alone had shaken Sivana right down to her boots. Never in her five hundred plus years of life had she ever entertained the thought that she might have family somewhere. Never had it crossed her mind, even in her wildest dreams, that she could have a twin sister. And never had it ever occurred to her that this sister would be not only the Queen of the Hadarian people, but the wife and mate, and therefore the Queen of the Lycavorian Union itself.

Anja was an enigma to her.

The Persian red haired female was exceptionally passionate about everything she did. She was straightforward and had no qualms about telling you something as she saw it. She was fiercely in love and devoted not only to King Leonidas, but also the dark haired Hadarian healer that never seemed to be far from her side. She had a famous temper as she had heard from others, yet she could be the most compassionate individual anyone had ever seen in action. She had a reckless nature as Sivana herself had witnessed on Gellen Station, and that reckless nature transferred over to the green scaled dragon that seemed to be her constant shadow. Anja was power, Sivana knew just by looking at her. Sivana had seen Anja's combat skills on Gellen

Station, and marveled at the speed and strength Anja had displayed, not to mention the ease with which she had used the Shi Viska and *Nehtes*.

Sivana had read the history of her sister as given to her by their grandfather Fuleos. Anja's life had been difficult, no where near as violent and humiliating as her own, and Anja would be the first to admit that to anyone, but she had not led a charmed life. The one constant had been her unrelenting love for Martin Leonidas after he had come into her life that first night. They may have been separated by events and decisions over the years, but Sivana could tell just by reading the history of her sister that Anja had never stopped loving him from that moment on. They had resisted their positions when Martin finally discovered who he truly was, and by virtue of that who Anja had become because of him. They had finally accepted those positions reluctantly, and had made it a concerted effort to not let their status change that which they were at their cores. None of them had from what Sivana could tell.

Anja had been protecting her from a world she didn't understand. A world that wanted to alter everything she knew, and Anja was protecting her from that. Sivana was beginning to see how others were treating her as knowledge of who she was began to leak out. Sivana had met her Aunt and Uncle and found them demanding and pompous, not to mention hostile when it came to Anja. Her Aunt and Uncle wanted her to return to Hadaria with them and told her that only Anja's authority as Queen kept that from happening, though they were attempting to get that changed. It was that one defining moment that Sivana had thanked who her sister was. Anja was allowing her to become accustomed to this new life at her own speed, where her Aunt and Uncle wanted her to be thrown into it head first so that they could control her. Sivana was smart enough to figure that out all by herself just from their actions when around her. Anja was shielding her, exposing her to little bits of this new world at different times, allowing her to acclimate in such a way that she was able to make her own decisions. Anja had already told her that she would like nothing better than to have Sivana sit beside her and rule Hadaria, but she wanted Sivana to be ready and able to make that commitment of her own accord, not at the whim of others. And she wanted Sivana to be able to reject it completely if that was her choice.

Her choice.

It was something else that Anja was giving her without even realizing it. It was also something that Sivana had never really had before now.

She stopped just inside the doorway when she saw the half dozen Spartans in the cargo room training with their *Nehtes*. And just as quickly, Sivana's eyes found Belen among the group. She watched intently as he and another Spartan went through some very intricate movements with their *Nehtes*, their tank tops quickly become soaked with sweat, their tanned skin glistening in the light of the cargo room. Sivana didn't want to tear her eyes away from the young Spartan. He was no where near as muscled and ripped as the King, of course she did not have the same musculature and endurance of her sister either. Belen was built lean and for endurance. His limbs were extremely well defined, yet in the way of a superior athlete, and they belied the enormous power they could produce. Sivana was not shy about expressing her feelings, especially when she wanted something. There had been more than one occasion where she had practically picked a man out of a crowd because she liked the way he looked and taken him to bed. More often than not it had not been worth it, but Sivana had learned long ago if you saw something you wanted to go after it.

Sivana wanted Belen, and she made no bones about it.

She had taken every opportunity she had to brush up against him, making sure her breasts touched his body, or her hips gently caressed his legs in some way. She was having an effect on him she knew, but he was the strongest man she had ever come across, and the first man that she had met who was not ruled by what he carried in his pants it seemed. Come to think of it, none of the men she had met since Gellen station were like that, to include Anja's man the King. He was a big bastard, and without a doubt could squash her like a bug, but he was also the most methodic man she had ever met. And he was the most well endowed of any man she'd ever seen if what she had seen the night they had saved her life was any indication. Sivana still wondered at times how her sister was able to accommodate his size in her small body.

"It will not be easy." The female voice spoke from behind her. Sivana turned quickly and saw the older woman they referred to as the Oracle standing behind her.

"I'm sorry... what did you say?" Sivana asked.

Helen stepped closer to her. "It will not be easy."

"What won't be easy?"

“Learning how to trust. Learning how to let those that care about you inside.” Helen spoke. “You have come a long way from just a few short days ago, and you have a long way to go.”

“I don’t need to be psychoanalyzed.” Sivana spoke quickly.

“You have a very large chip on your shoulder Sivana.” Helen spoke unfazed by her comment. “That is obvious even to the most unintelligent around you. You have had to rely on only yourself for so long that you trust no one but yourself. You are also arrogant and in many ways disrespectful to people who are your betters.”

“I’ve survived this long by being that way!” Sivana told her in a low voice that carried anger and distrust.

Helen nodded slowly. “Yes you have... but now you don’t have to be that way.” She said calmly. “You are among men and women who rely on each other every day, who trust each other every day. That you are Anja’s sister affords you some leniency but I want to tell you something that you should probably hear. I know you have made the decision to remain within the Union and learn about this new life Anja has offered to you. A life that is by birthright yours to experience and grasp hold of.” Helen stepped up to her with a smile. “They will do everything within their power to see to it that you have all that you desire Sivana, Martin and Anja will. His respect for you went up dramatically when you offered to come on this mission and you did not have to. You are at a point in your life now where you must let old habits fall to the wayside no matter how hard that may seem. These men and women you see here... all but one or two have fought directly with Martin Leonidas over the course of the last year, some like Daniel Simpson since they were small boys and they would cast themselves into the heart of a sun instantly and without regard if it saved his life or the life of his Queen. And all of them would, without hesitation or regret, eliminate anything that they saw as a threat to their King and Queen.”

Sivana’s eyes went wide. “They see me as a threat?” She gasped.

Helen shook her head quickly. “No... not a threat Sivana. An unknown. They don’t know if they should trust you or not because you will not let anyone inside that wall you have built. Trust me... this is King Leonidas’s personal Guard, they call themselves *Durcunusaan*.” Helen told her. “It means ‘Wolves of the Blood’ in our ancient language. You would not last a millisecond against one of them in combat let alone many. All of them have some of the purest Lycavorian bloodlines that have been measured in the last year. However, you could forge powerful friendships with these men and women Sivana. They are intelligent, loyal and devoted to all they see as a friend. They will not abandon you if you remain true to them.”

Sivana looked at Helen her face impassive and stoic, not revealing anything. “You ask quite a bit Oracle.” Sivana said finally meeting her steady gaze.

Helen nodded and reached out to squeeze her arm gently. “Yes we do. And we offer so much more in return.” She said softly. “Think about it Sivana.”

Sivana turned back slowly to let her eyes settle on Belen. He finished executing a training move and stepped back, his dark eyes falling on her as he did. He turned back at the shouted command, bringing his *Nehtes* up to face his opponent.

EARTH LOGGERHEADKEY ISLAND

“I knew I wasn’t going crazy.” Tareif exclaimed in a loud whisper. “Do you see it this time Isra?”

Isra nodded slowly, his eyes focused through the macrobinoculars glued to his eyes. The sky was cloudless and filled with stars and the night vision properties of the binoculars made it easy for them to see for several kilometers in any direction.

“Indeed I do.” Isra spoke softly as his violet eyes took in the long flashes of flame on the distant horizon.

They both lay on the concrete floor at the top of the centuries old lighthouse. The four foot thick walls at the top and six foot thick walls at the base had allowed the lighthouse to survive even to this day with rock solid construction. The metal lens room at the top was missing all the glass circling the tower as well as the actual lens, but the metal staircase was still anchored deeply into the concrete and brick inside the tower and the metal decking had long been burned dry and any sea life that had grown onto it during its time under water was also burned away by the sun.

“Any ideas on what it is?” Tareif asked.

Isra lowered his binoculars and turned to look at the elfin War Master. “Oh yes. Those lines of flame are the breath of dragons Tareif.” Isra said. “Seven different ones that I can distinguish for sure. Two adolescent and five older infant hatchlings it would appear.”

“Infant?” Tareif asked aghast.

Isra nodded. “The older a dragon gets, the longer they can sustain a flame, and the further they can project it. Isheeni for example can sustain her flame for the better portion of an hour and project it for almost a hundred and fifty meters. Iriral, Queen Dysea’s dragon, can sustain her flame for just over thirty minutes and has excellent distance. I have never seen Arzoal breath fire, but it is said she can sustain her flame for well over an hour and the distance she can project it is incredible. These dragons we see on the horizon are much younger than the one we are facing. The blasts of flame are erratic and brief. They are learning.”

“I’m guessing that isn’t a good thing.” Tareif said meeting his eyes.

“No... that’s a bad thing.” Isra answered.

“Maybe you’d better explain that Isra.” Steven’s voice echoed in their ears from the implants they all now wore. He was still at the base of the lighthouse. “Getting burned alive by a dragon doesn’t rank up there at the top of my lists of things to do.”

“I believe what we are facing are the descendants of two Firespitters that came here to Earth to escape the battle that was raging on my world between my people and dragons.” Isra told them looking at Tareif. “I believe it is our fault that dragons even came to this world.”

Tareif looked at him wide eyed for a moment in the darkness, but then shook his head. “Regardless of how they got here Isra,” He spoke. “You are not responsible for their actions once they got here. Remember that.”

“He’s right Isra.” Steven spoke from the base of the lighthouse.

“The King was able to speak at length with Arzoal, the dragon Elder Mother, and it was she who told him that almost five thousand years ago my people rode dragons before albeit very briefly. There were only eleven of them total, but they were ridden by Lycavorians that had worked for the High Coven and had no morals or values except self gain and power. They were defeated but two of them escaped, both of them Firespitters, one male and one female. The rider of the female was a male of my species. We are almost certain they came here to Earth. That is roughly about the same time that dragons became part of the legends and myth here on this planet.”

“So what you are saying is this dragon and rider... they are not the only one on Earth?” Steven asked.

“They are the only bonded pair on Earth yes, but I don’t believe she is the only dragon, and what we are seeing confirms that.” Isra answered calmly. “As you both know, having the Mindvoice ability to actually bond with a dragon is not something all of my people possess. We are all able to Mindvoice on a certain level, but the ability to bond with and ride a dragon is not common, and that is why there are only three hundred of us. The flames we are seeing now are more than likely the younger siblings of the dragon we are facing. There is no way to tell for sure, but if Martin and Arzoal are correct, there could be upwards of a hundred dragons here on Earth.”

“A hundred?” Tareif gasped.

Isra nodded. “Yes... but I don’t believe that is the case however. If it was, men and women across the planet would have seen sightings of dragons far more often than have been reported through the years. Firespitter eggs are notoriously fickle.” He explained. “Conditions must be exactly right for them to hatch. Heat, wind, temperature, moisture in the air, the surroundings, all of it together must be perfect for the eggs to hatch; otherwise they will remain dormant until the time is right.”

“So these eggs could sit for hundreds of years without hatching?” Steven asked.

Isra nodded. “Hundreds and even thousands of years.” He replied. “The events of Earth’s past, the last five hundred to a thousand years has been a state of flux, and I would not be surprised if there are several dozen eggs that have not hatch. A Firespitter pair can produce three eggs with each batch, and they are fiercely protective of their nests. They will kill anything to come remotely close to the nest without hesitation.”

“But you said this dragon is only a few thousand years old.” Tareif spoke.

Isra nodded. “I believe this dragon is one of the first eggs to have been produced by the original pair after they came to Earth. That also tells me the original female has either died or was killed or we have not seen

her yet. We don't know what happen to the male and he could very well be alive too, but this dragon and the ones we see on the horizon there are most definitely their offspring.”

Isra? Aricia's voice filled Isra's thoughts and he immediately felt a wave of strength and peace wash over him.

“My Queen.” He gasped softly with a smile. “It is very good to finally hear your voice.” He saw Tareif's eyes widen just a little. “I am here with War Master Tareif and our pilot Steven.”

Isra I am going to establish a link with all of us using Isheeni and Aelnala as conduits. Aricia told him. Let Tareif and this Steven know what I am doing so it does not take them by surprise.

“Tareif... Aricia is going to establish a mind link with you and Steven so that all of us can communicate together within Mindvoice. It will not be permanent, but it is advisable right now.” Isra told them. “Steven?”

“Let's do it.” Steve answered.

“I am ready.” Tareif spoke.

Now Aricia. Isra spoke. He watched as Tareif's body twitched slightly and his head dropped quickly, his eyes shutting tightly. It took a few seconds more and then his eyes opened again.

Isra I don't feel any different. Tareif spoke just as his eyes went wide as he realized he hadn't spoken a verbal word.

You will not feel any different War Master. Aricia spoke calmly.

My... my Queen?

It has been many months since we last talked Tareif. Aricia said her voice confident and strong. *I see that you are maintaining your reputation for finding trouble wherever you happen to go.*

He does that quite well. Tarifa's voice filled Tareif's mind.

Tarifa?

Hello Papa! Tarifa exclaimed.

This is amazing. Tareif said unable to keep the awe from his voice. *This... this is what you can do all the time daughters?*

Aihola's soft laughter filled the connection now. *We would not be able to include you without Aricia's added power and control Astalder Atar.* (Father of my Heart) She stated. *Selene, Lynwe and Layna are also within this connection.*

Steven are you alright? Tarifa asked the lone human within the mind connection.

Yeah... yes I think so. His voice replied. *I got a dull throbbing in my head but other than that I'm ok.*

It is quite a bit to take in at first Steven. Aricia's voice spoke. *Remain calm and do not force it. It will flow easily soon enough.*

Aricia where are you? Isra asked.

Lynwe had a large hanger prepared under cover of darkness. Isheeni flew directly into it after the sun went down. Aelnala, Tarifa and Aihola have moved here with Isheeni and I. Aricia replied. *My DT went directly to Sparta and landed under heavy guard. Any prying eyes would have seen and reported this by now.*

Isra's sigh of relief was almost a palpable thing within the connection and Tareif noticed this most of all as he could see the tension ease from his face. He had been so wrong about this young violet eyed Spartan. So wrong indeed. *We are safe for the moment Milady.* Isra reported. *The island we crashed near is deserted, and we have found our way to what is a very old lighthouse on this island. Our position is secure, but I thought for sure the dragon and rider would attack since they had shot us down.*

There is still that possibility. Aricia spoke. *If they believe you are down and it is only Aelnala protecting Tarifa and Aihola, it will make them much bolder.*

Aricia we are watching what appear to be at least two adolescent dragons and as many as five infant dragons on the horizon practicing with their flame. Isra spoke.

Adolescent? Isra are you sure? The female voice Tareif did not recognize spoke within the connection.

Positive Isheeni. Isra answered instantly recognizing the voice of Torma's mate. *I had the honor of watching Arzoal training several dozen adolescents on Elear and the flame stream and duration of the burn suggests that they are all less than five years of age.*

Five years? Aricia exclaimed.

There may be older ones, but so far we have not seen any. Isra spoke. *And it is not something I would dismiss Aricia. If what Martin and Arzoal believe happen here did indeed happen, these dragons have become very good at hiding themselves through the centuries.*

Yes... they told Isheeni and I what they thought before they left on their own mission. Aricia spoke. *You agree with this position then Isra?*

Isra nodded. *It is what I initially began to suspect but did not tell Lynwe because I thought I was crazy for even thinking it.*

It appears Isra that you are not so crazy after all. Lynwe's voice entered the connection.

How far is this island from your location? Selene asked now.

I would estimate no more than six kilometers. Tareif replied. *They detected us coming and we were flying at three hundred meters above the water.*

They were waiting for us. Steven interjected. *I filed our flight plan compartmentalized. Only someone with Level Seven Clearance could have accessed those files. The RAPTOR IIs are not as stealthy as the STRIKERS, but even still at three hundred meters there is no way they could have known we were in the area. They knew we were coming.*

That narrows it down quite a bit. Tarifa said evenly. *Lynwe will have Cathy focus her investigation more on those who have the actual clearance.*

We have a RAPTOR II on stand by right now to extract you and the others Isra. Aihola spoke. *You should be ready to depart at a moment's notice.*

If he has not attacked already Aricia, I believe he will do so sometime tomorrow. Isra told her. *They must know I was on the ship they shot down and they will undoubtedly think I was lost. If they believe Aelnala is without her rider, it will make them extremely bold.*

Yes... and hopefully very careless. We will be ready. Aricia spoke confidently, but Isra detected the maturity in her voice now. *Aelnala has passed to us all you and she were able to determine about this female and the rider from your earlier encounter. We believe we have developed a simple means of confronting her right now, at least until you are reunited with Aelnala and we can develop a more permanent course of action. We will maintain the normal routine for Tarifa and Aihola, at least into tomorrow. Isheeni and I will not expose ourselves until it is necessary, and then we will try to incapacitate this female if we are able.*

Be ready Isra. Tarifa spoke again. *The moment any attack comes, Jamerl is sending that RAPTOR in to get the three of you out.*

We will be ready Tarifa. Have no worries.

I don't believe they are strong enough to detect our connection, but we should not take any chances. Martin told me my uncle was fighting them in his mind, but for them to take command of his mind as they did means we should be careful. Aricia spoke wisely. *I can not sense anyone outside of Walter and Thr'won that is above a Tier Three Mindvoicer, but unless it is necessary we will close this connection for now. All of you stand ready Isra. When this happens, it will happen very quickly.*

Understood. Isra spoke.

EARTH EDEN CITY

They approached as they had since beginning to ride Aelnala to the building, coming in from the north over the Command Center and Aelnala looping around and then landing near the roof top entrance. The reunion with Aricia the previous evening had been muted to an extent as she and Isheeni had waited until full dark before coming and in and landing at the airfield. The hanger she had flown into was large, and everyone had shared embraces and welcoming kisses when she finally swept in from the east. They had spent the better part of the evening going over plans after speaking with Isra through Mindvoice. Surprising enough the unknown dragon and rider had not attacked right away after Isra and Tareif had been shot down. That only served to show them that whoever their enemies were, they were more established than anyone thought. Aricia had taken back into the sky with Isheeni well before dawn, at least to insure that this dragon and rider did not attack in the morning. The dragon and rider quickly left their minds when they entered the building and began the business

of conducting their duties as they always did. Tarifa and Aihola maintained an open connection between the two of them as they always did so that they could speak to one another, offer advice about something or just pass their love back and forth between each other.

They came together in the mid morning for the meeting with the Zaleisian Delegation, Charles and Elaine accompanying them into the meeting room armed with new information provided by Admiral Jamerl and his ship board sensors. Tarifa had asked Charles to take the lead in the meeting and even though he was surprised he nodded.

“Have you had the proper time to look over our proposal?” The Zaleisian Minister asked. “We are anxious to return to our world and have our crews to begin mining the raw minerals we need.”

Charles nodded politely as he adjusted the data pads on the table in front of him. Tarifa, Aihola and Selene sat quietly; Layna standing just behind Selene’s left shoulder, and as far as Selene was concerned that felt almost as good as having her Mistress behind her. Even after Selene’s comment to Layna that they should pursue whatever relationship might happen, there had been no time to explore that, though Selene could sense that Lynwe and Layna both wanted to pursue it almost as badly as she did.

“I’m sure you are.” Charles spoke evenly and calmly. He lifted his eyes to look at the men, his eyes finally coming to rest on Talco. “However before we conclude this trade agreement we do have some questions.”

The Zaleisian delegation leader nodded his head. “Of course.”

“We’d like to know where you received the information that this particular grid on the floor of the Atlantic Ocean was adjacent to the newly installed main pipelines coming from the rebuilt oil platform off the east coast.” Charles spoke quickly and confidently.

The looks on their faces showed all the surprise they needed to see. Only Talco’s face remained impassive. “I... I don’t understand... what do you mean?” The Zaleisian Delegation Leader spoke.

Charles continued on with a smile. “No matter what section of the ocean and ocean floor we have negotiated over the last four days Minister, this four square kilometer grid has remained the same. It just so happens to be where several of our engineering crews installed the main pipelines from the recently rebuilt offshore platform. That information was not available in the normal brochures we handed out to you when you first arrived. Nor was it on the tour we gave you of the area, either by air or sea. So how you obtained this information would be useful to us in making sure no other leaks occur.”

The Zaleisian leader glanced quickly at Talco and then back to where Tarifa was glaring at him. “What manner of actions do you now accuse us of Chief Administrator Tarifa?” He demanded. “And having your underling make these accusations is even more insulting!”

Tarifa smiled. “Then I suggest you do not sit there and insult our intelligence Minister and deny what we are telling you. And for your information, Charles Turner is the President of Earth, and has been for the last ten hours.”

Charles’ eyes went wide and he looked at Tarifa quickly, seeing her sapphire eyes fall on him with a smile. “Tarifa?”

“Times are changing.” Tarifa spoke. “And we will not be left behind. As of ten hours ago you are acting President of Earth, Selene is acting Prime Minister and Aihola and I are acting Vice President and acting Chief of the Senate. Elections will be held in six months for all of these positions and they will be open for all.” Tarifa turned back to the Zaleisian delegation. “Am I to understand that you are denying you are in possession of this information?”

The Zaleisian glared at her. “We do not have such information as you accuse us of, and I resent that you would even suggest it!”

“What you resent is bullshit!” Selene snapped. “These negotiations will not proceed further and you will be escorted back to your ship where you will then be escorted out of Earth and Union space.”

“You can not do this!” The Zaleisian demanded. “My people need those minerals in that water!”

“It is already done.” Aihola spoke. “Perhaps you should have thought about that before coming here and trying to spy on us and then trying to establish an espionage ring on our planet.”

“We have done no such thing!” The Zaleisian spat.

“Your face tells us you are a liar sir!” Charles spat right back.

“You do not want to do this.” Talco spoke softly, his eyes never leaving Selene.

Selene smiled. "It is already done." She spoke. "If you wish us to arrest you, we can do that as well. Be thankful we are only kicking you off our planet and not placing you under arrest. King Leonidas is not as forgiving as we are."

"You are making a mistake." Talco said again.

"No... it was you who made the mistake by coming here thinking that because we are women we would be stupid!" Selene growled as she got to her feet. This Kavalian was rubbing her the wrong way, and her steel blue eyes suddenly changed to the cobalt blue eyes of her vampire persona. "I understand it is something your people do quite often."

Talco reached into the folds of his robe and suddenly found himself staring down the barrel of Layna's P190 as she stepped in front of Selene without question. His eyes met the killing blue/green orbs of the female Spartan and he saw Tarifa and Aihola now holding black pistols, both of them leveled at him across the table. He smiled and withdrew his hand slowly, pulling out the data pad. "I was just going to make an entry into my personal log." He spoke softly.

"Do that when you are out of this room and on your way back to your ship Kavalian!" Layna hissed, her finger tensing on the trigger of her 190 as she reached across the table and snatched the pad from his hand. His eyes flashed with intense anger, but Layna had moved too quickly for him to react. "But we'll take this pad right now!"

They heard the door open to the side and half a dozen Spartans and Dragoons appeared in the room, Lynwe leading them with a grim look on her face. Selene knew immediately that something was wrong from the way her Mistress moved.

"Escort them to the spaceport and see that they go from here to their shuttle with no detours!" Lynwe ordered quickly. "Their belongings will be delivered to them after they have been searched."

"I protest this treatment!" The Zaleisian shouted.

"Protest all you want!" Tarifa barked. "You are not welcome on our planet Minister; do not forget that in the future." Tarifa watched them as they got to their feet.

"I will not forget this." Talco said softly.

"Talco?" Tarifa spoke waiting for him to turn to face her. "Do not set foot on our planet again Talco..."

"If you do you will be arrested immediately and we will make up charges against you if we have too." Aihola finished Tarifa's statement.

"And you will never see the light of the sun again." Selene finished.

He was silent as they were led out. Tarifa was smiling as she looked at Aihola and then turned to a very surprised Charles. "Well... that went well." She spoke attempting to put humor into her words.

Charles looked at them. "I don't understand Tarifa." He said his face showing his shock and befuddlement. "What is going on?"

"We are taking the first steps in realigning the government Charles." Tarifa spoke calmly. "It is past time that every race here on Earth had a voice, and you will be the voice of all the humans, at least until the elections are held in six months."

"We can discuss that later." Lynwe spoke sternly. "We have a bigger problem."

"Mistress... what is wrong?" Selene asked.

Lynwe went to the monitor and activated it. "This is the video feed from the courtyard and market café external cameras. We had them installed on the command center several months ago."

All of them grew silent as they saw the masses of people lining the main intersection of the command center. There looked to be several hundred at least.

"They started arriving three hours ago, and they haven't stopped." Lynwe spoke. "You can see the signs they are holding, and the large number of humans that are mixed in with the elves. Eden City's News Channels are beginning to set up all over to cover them. Tarifa... Anlain and the former governor of New Miami are leading the rally."

Tarifa's eyes were wide. "Anlain!" She gasped. "That pig dares to show his face!"

Selene stepped closer. "I thought the governor of New Miami was killed in Tarifa's attack?" She stated.

Lynwe shook her head. "Apparently not." She answered. "You can see some of the signs for yourselves."

WE DEMAND FREEDOM!

One sign proclaimed.

LET US GO!

Another announced.

END YOUR DICTATORSHIP

BUTCHER OF NEW MIAMI!

Another read.

BRING THE ELF WHORE TARIFA TO JUSTICE

“We can not allow this!” Aihola nearly shouted as she saw that sign.

Tarifa shook her head. “They have the right to express their opinions *Nya Istel*.” Tarifa spoke.

“Tarifa this goes too far.” Aihola exclaimed. “The governor of New Miami was aiding our enemy against us. He refused to surrender and you attacked. You warned him what the consequences would be!”

“We can not do what the High Coven did. What that man did.” Tarifa spoke calmly. “We can not be seen oppressing free speech and the right to gather!”

“No...” Charles spoke now. “But we damn well can meet it head on.” He spat.

“Charles... what do you mean?” Tarifa asked.

“You were going to announce this change, this realignment of the government anyway correct?” Charles spoke.

Selene nodded. “As soon as we had more of the details worked out as to when elections would be held and what positions would be open.” She answered. “We had hoped to announce it next week.”

“Let’s go down there right now and announce it.” Charles said. “All of us! A united front! Let’s beat this supposed rally into the ground before it ever gains any ground! They are trying to sell things that aren’t true, and the only way to defeat that is with the truth.”

Selene smiled. “Now that is a beautiful idea.” She said. “And those that are actually standing against us will be powerless to do anything about it.”

Charles nodded. “They may have started this rally as a means to their end, but we can turn it around to favor us. I will contact the Net Channels and let them know we will be making an announcement in thirty minutes from the steps of the main entrance.”

“The moment this happens... you realize that this dragon and rider may attack!” Layna spoke. “He won’t care about the civilians he has to kill or injure to get to you. All of you will be too exposed, too in the open.”

Tarifa looked at her. “Aricia and Isheeni will see him coming out of the sky and give us fair warning.” She spoke confidently.

“I don’t like it!” Aihola spoke. “We are needlessly exposing ourselves in a way that Isra and our father would never allow.”

“Nor do I.” Layna said.

“We must do this or we risk losing what we could gain.” Selene spoke. “Surround us with security if you must, but we are going down there and make this announcement. Charles, you and Elaine come with Tarifa and I so that we can go over the details to what we will say. Aihola we will leave our protection to you and Lynwe.”

Aihola looked at Lynwe and Layna as the four of them began to move off in another direction. “Why did I have to fall in love with the most pig headed and obstinate woman in the universe?” Aihola grunted.

Lynwe chuckled at her words. “I have been asking myself that very question for many months now Aihola.”

“Pull from the internal garrison if you have to, but I want every corner of this building secured five ways from the seventh day.” Aihola ordered. “It falls to the Drow and the Spartan to insure the safety of those we love it appears.”

Layna turned for the door. “I’m going to double the number of anti-air teams on the roof just in case. I will meet you both by the main entrance.”

Aihola watched her exit the room and then turned to Lynwe. “She is the one Lynwe?”

Lynwe nodded slowly. “Selene and I have decided to explore what we could have with her, if anything at all. She is strong willed however and may not be able to accept what we will ask of her.” She said.

Aihola stepped closer to her and squeezed her arm. “As I recall, both you and Selene are strong women as well. And you became stronger even after you came together. She seems intelligent and open Lynwe, do not dwell on the things that could go wrong. Think of what you can gain.”

“Is happiness worth the risk Aihola?” Lynwe asked.

Aihola smiled. “You took that risk without my guidance when you chose to protect Selene when no one else would. Use that same courage now.”

Lynwe smiled. “I believe I will.”

Aihola nodded. “I wish you the best then. Now let us go and see about the protection of the women we love.”

TWELVE THOUSAND FEET ABOVE EDEN CITY

Isheeni banked lazily above the clouds as the sun warmed both her and Aricia. She relished these moments when they could fly in silence and watch the sun rise on the horizon, stretching its hand across the land. The clouds below them were wispy thick, spots of ground clear, others slightly blocked from view. In was in these moments when Aricia’s hand would absently stroke the scales at the base of her neck where her shoulders met. It was a habit she had started on Enurrua after her very first ride, and it continued to this day. It was an unconscious show of affection and devotion Isheeni knew, and it warmed her heart. The last year had surely brought them closer together than either had ever dreamed.

Unlike her mother Arzoal, who was a massive eighteen meters long and eight meters tall, Isheeni was slightly above average in size for a Firespitter Dragon at just over ten meters in length and six meters tall. Her wings spanned an impressive eleven meters allowing her to execute many of the dazzling aerial maneuvers that she and Aricia were famous for. Isheeni was widely recognized as being the fastest and most maneuverable of all the known dragons even weighing in at three tons as she did. Once she became a mother however, Isheeni began to take on the wisdom of her own mother Arzoal in many respects, though her rebellious streak and reckless behavior was never very far from the surface. It was this rebellious nature that bonded her with Aricia so completely, for it was something they both had within them. Like Aricia, Isheeni’s mate dwarfed her in size. Torma rivaled her mother in physical proportions, at fifteen meters in length and seven meters tall, and as much as she kidded him about his size, Isheeni knew Torma was a muscular and lean four and a half tons. His wingspan was easily fourteen meters long and this also allowed him to remain aloft for much longer periods of time riding the thermal layers in the atmospheres of planets. When he had first claimed her as his mate she had been frightened of his size, but what had followed were endless nights of passion and pleasure that few female dragons experienced, at least as far as Isheeni was concerned. Torma had been very well regarded and desired by many females much older than Isheeni, but it had been his devotion to her that caused him to wait until she came of age. He hadn’t cared he would have to wait another three hundred years for children, for Isheeni would not be fully ready to carry eggs until that time. When they were plunging from the clouds, his massive wings wrapped around her body and his talons gripping her tightly to him, Isheeni would trumpet her pleasure to the stars as he drove into her deeply and she didn’t care who heard her. His organ was comparable to his size and Isheeni couldn’t imagine ever being so filled, or experiencing the pleasure she did. Many thought that dragons did not feel pleasure, and many of the bonded pairs were now discovering what Martin and Aricia already knew. Moments of extreme passion and desire could transfer to their dragon and Lycavorian brothers and sisters, and many had to be mindful of this since they were mated.

Torma was a Hybrid, the offspring of a Heavyhorn father and Firespitter mother, and behind her mother, one of the largest dragons living. His enormous size belied his great speed and maneuverability, his bond with Martin now allowing him to execute many aerial maneuvers he would not be able to do without him. His breathe was not pure flame, but more superheated vapor that could melt even the strongest metal known into slag in seconds. Their three children would be a combination of Torma and Isheeni both, Jeth no doubt rivaling his father one day in size, while Aurith and Elynth would take after their mother in many respects. Elynth appeared to be bonding incredibly early with Androcles, and this fact made both her and Aricia very happy. Aurith preferred For'mya it seemed, as it was their elf lover that had been the first person Aurith had seen upon opening her golden eyes. And then there was Jeth, their first son and the most daring of their three hatchlings. No matter what he did, Isheeni could not help but feel proud in his actions, no matter how crazy they seemed to drive everyone, including her and Torma.

We will see them again soon. Aricia's voice filled her thoughts and Isheeni smiled a dragon smile as they rode the wind currents.

I know. Isheeni answered. *In truth I am happy to be away for a time, as guilty as that makes me feel. Just to be able to fly with you is peaceful.*

Aricia's soft laughter was filled with knowing warmth. *I feel the same way.* She spoke. *I had begun to fear that Martin didn't... that perhaps he didn't trust me in some way.*

Aricia... you must never think that! Ever! Isheeni admonished her. *You are always first in his heart and soul. Torma told me one night what they talked of before he came to get you on Enurrua. He told me what Martin was prepared to do to get you back. To make you his again. It made me shiver just hearing it.*

I know. Aricia said as Isheeni banked gently towards the rising sun. *It is silly of me to think that way.*

Yes it is. If he did not trust you, do you think he would send you to where there are so many handsome Spartans? Isheeni spoke.

I have not seen any. Aricia spoke quickly with a small smile. *At least not more handsome than my Beloved.*

I have seen the way he looks at you when you do not see him watching. He may love For'mya and Anja and Dysea and even Isabella, but you Aricia blue eyes, you are the one his heart and soul beats for. Isheeni spoke warmly. *Over the last year you and he have discovered that you are strongest when you are together, that is why it seems like you are never apart. He knows what you are capable of, what we are capable of. Now that Mjolnir's Hand is beginning to reach out among the stars, he will call on us more.*

Yes he will. Aricia said. *And we will be ready.*

I wonder if... Isheeni stopped talking immediately upon feeling the faint tremor within Mindvoice. Aricia?

Yes... I felt it too. Aricia answered becoming more alert in the saddle, her helmeted head turning in all directions. *I can see nothing above the clouds Isheeni, not within the limits of my vision.*

Nor can I. Isheeni spoke. *It is getting stronger however so they must be coming in closer to the ground. And it... Aricia it feels...*

It feels evil. Aricia finished the statement for her. *It is the dragon and rider! It has to be! They are moving against Tarifa and Aihola, and they must be coming in low across the terrain. Now Isheeni! We must go now!*

Hold on! We will dive through the clouds and attempt to detect them as they approach the city.

Isheeni knew it was a pointless statement to make but she spoke it anyway as she rolled over and dove for the ground below them. Aricia would never fall from her saddle unless forcefully knocked out of it due to the dragon armor securing her legs completely, and her own considerable skill.

Tarifa was in the center, Aihola and Selene on either side of her, all of them holding hands as they approached the podium hastily set up in front of the barriers. Charles and Elaine walked briskly behind them, each of them holding data pads. Eden City's Net Channels were all present, and it would be they who beamed this event across the planet and into the stars. A heavy combination of Dragoons and Spartans encircled the area and saturated the front of the barriers that were set up, their alert eyes sweeping the crowds in front of them nervously for any sign of danger.

All of them could see that most of the people were humans, with elves dotted into the groups. Aelnala remained behind her charges, causing the front rank of men and women to draw back slightly as they approached, Aelnala's massive bulk intimidating to say the least. Her dirty yellow scales gleamed with healthiness, her fangs and spikes sharp and rigid. She was a fraction larger than Isheeni in size, and though she could not breathe fire, her command of her TK powers had grown to almost match that of her Firespitter friend. That power combined with her skill and precision in using her mace like tail made her an extremely formidable opponent on the ground and in the air.

Tarifa slowed as her sapphire eyes settled on the faces of two men who she recognized immediately. She would never forget the face of Telan's father. The man who had drugged and raped her for months under the guise of a false marriage. All so that his father could gain control of the rule of the High Elves and surrender them to the High Coven. His elfin features were impassive for the cameras, but Tarifa could detect the hate in those eyes. He had disappeared shortly before the Battle for Eden City after being wounded in an attack against his own people. This was the first time Tarifa had seen him in over a year. The second man she remembered well from the transmission on the day she ordered New Miami destroyed with FAE weapons. The former governor of New Miami was a pompous man then, saying elves were meant to be slaves to humans and that would not change. He refused to stop his support of the High Coven forces when ordered too and Tarifa had given him only one chance. He had wrongly assumed Tarifa would not order an attack against his city. The burn marks on his neck and lower jaw attested to how wrong he had been. Seeing them standing next to each other Tarifa wanted to laugh at the idiocy of this farce they were trying to perpetrate.

Tarifa what is wrong? Aelnala asked sensing Tarifa's heart racing.

Anlain! Tarifa replied. *That vile excuse for a man is still kicking around. I know he controlled Telan in his actions regardless if we never found proof of this. And the fool who called himself Governor of New Miami is standing next to him. They must hate each other, yet they stand together to bring us down.*

Mutual hatreds bring enemies together sometimes. Selene spoke. *Pay them no mind Tarifa. We will stand as we have always stood. Together.*

Stay strong my love. Aihola spoke. *They want you to see them. They want you to lose control.*

The men and women grew silent as they came right up to podium, which was set up only three meters from the barriers. They could still see the many signs throughout the crowd, but most of them were now dropped lower as the women they had been targeting had boldly come out to face them.

"Tell us why you are here carrying these signs?" Tarifa was the first to speak into the microphones. "What is it you seek with this demonstration?"

"Fair representation!" A male voice exclaimed from the crowd.

"Freedom!" A female voice echoed.

"You have freedom!" Tarifa spoke loudly. "You walk the streets of our city without fear of persecution or death! You can build whatever you desire, go to school, go to work, and raise your families! What more freedom do you require?"

"We want more!" A voice yelled from the crowd.

"No! You want everything given to you!" Aihola barked now moving up next to Tarifa. "Those days are gone! They will not return! We all must work for what we have and what we want! That is what we fought for last year! This is what we are building now across this land and the planet."

Tarifa and Selene saw the Eden City Net Channels beginning to broadcast all across the planet and inwardly Tarifa smiled.

"That is what *you* are building!" The male voice shouted and they turned to see the Anlain step away from the crowd in the front row. Tarifa's sapphire eyes narrowed considerably and she squeezed Aihola's and Selene's hands tightly.

Stay in control Tarifa. That is how we win. Selene spoke.

Tarifa took a deep breath and did just as Selene said; reaching out to feel the peace of her friends and the man she loved deeply.

"Anlain." Tarifa spoke evenly.

"That is what you are building!" Anlain declared again moving closer still. "How do you know that is what everyone wants?"

“And what else would they want Anlain?” Tarifa asked calmly, meeting his gaze. “A return to the oppression of the High Coven perhaps?”

“There are dozens of clans of elves and humans across this planet, millions that have no representative in your government Tarifa!” Anlain stated. “What about them? What about those that were happy with the way things were?”

“You mean those that welcomed slavery and rape of innocents.” Selene spoke. “Is that to whom you are referring too?”

“Ah... the former High Coven traitor speaks now!” The former governor of New Miami spoke stepping up next to Anlain.

Selene nodded. “It is well documented that I once worked for the High Coven.” She spoke calmly. “It is also well documented that my actions helped my parents to establish a well known underground network that helped elves and humans alike escape the oppression of the High Coven. What exactly is your point sir? And please grace us with your name.”

“My name is Roger Crescent! I am the governor of New Miami!” He barked.

“You are the former governor of New Miami Mister Crescent. The Governor appointed by the High Coven.” Tarifa corrected him. “We won the war sir, not you. You refused to surrender and you suffered the consequence of your actions.”

“You attacked my city with weapons that killed millions!” Crescent almost screamed.

“I gave you three chances to surrender and save your city!” Tarifa snapped right back. “Each time I explicitly warned you what would happen if you did not comply with our surrender demands! Do the men and women you have gathered here know that it is you who told me to go fuck myself when I told you could not win and you would not be allowed to continue to oppress elves or humans? Is it not you who told me elves were made to be the slaves of humans? I have a very good memory Mister Crescent, and I also have the tapes of our conversation, which I would be more than happy to give to the Net Channels that you have gathered here this day!”

“You are responsible for the deaths of over two million men, women and children!” Crescent barked.

“Yes I am.” Tarifa answered evenly. “A fact that I must live with every day sir. How many elves have you killed Mister Crescent? How many elves have died at your order? How many humans have suffered because of orders you have given?”

“You stand here among elves sir,” Selene stated. “And your hatred pours through in your manner. King Leonidas left us in charge of Earth! We fought the High Coven and expelled them from our planet!”

“And humans have no voice within your government!” Anlain declared.

“Why do you care about that Anlain?” Aihola snapped. “You have always hated humans, yet now you stand there among them as if they are your friends! There are many humans who we work with side by side. Do not attempt to make trouble where none exists.”

“Your government was established by a...”

“Be careful Anlain.” Selene declared now. “There will be no lies told this day. Our government was established by overwhelming consensus, human, elf and Lycavorian, within a week of the defeat of the High Coven, and we did it without the help of you or mister Crescent. Or do you wish to debate the wisdom of King Leonidas in his actions.”

“I wish to bring forth that the humans have not seen any profits from these new trade agreements!” Anlain declared. “Where is all of the Riyal from the many contracts that have been established going Tarifa? The humans have not seen any of it! Many of us have not seen any of it!”

Charles stepped forward now, unable to listen to any more of what was happening. He had worked with these three women for not only the last year, but the months before that. He was not about to let these men humiliate them for nefarious purposes of their own.

“The Riyal that has been collected from these contracts and trade agreements has gone directly back into the rebuilding of this planet!” He snapped loudly. “Every penny, because I am the one who Tarifa and Selene appointed to monitor the expenditure of these funds! Why do you think the cost of so many items has been so low, when in other places throughout the Union they are higher? The cost of our medical care is almost non-existent because we are pouring funds into the most modern facilities we can build, and we are paying for it with the profits we are making from the resources of this planet! These resource contracts and trade agreements

have brought profit to Earth. Profit and prosperity! And we are not depleting the planet in a way that humans of the past have done so.”

“Who are you?” Anlain snapped.

“This is Charles Turner. He is the one who has been supervising where all the money we have received goes. He and the woman you see next to him, Elaine, are two of the committee that dictates where all the funds go, as he has just told you.” Selene stated evenly. “He is also now Earth’s Interim President.”

This declaration caused quite a stir among the Net Channel people as well as the first few ranks of men and women when they heard it and Selene saw many of the signs dip even lower among the crowd. She smile and looked at Tarifa and Charles.

“We were going to make the announcement later this week after all the details were worked out, but revealing this decision now is as good a time as any.” Selene explained. “After discussions among the three of us and the King, it has been decided that we will be holding elections six months from now for several different positions. Among them will be Prime Minister and President along with Vice President and Chief of the Senate. Until that time I will be holding the position of Prime Minister, while Charles Turner will be holding the position of President. We will be acting in concert with each other until the elections and if we both don’t agree on an issue, it will be put forth before the full Earth Senate. Administrators Tarifa and Aihola have agreed to continue to serve in the capacity they currently do, as Vice President and Chief of the Senate and the main individuals who barter the trade agreements that have so benefited our planet. The elections will allow anyone who wishes to run to run, be it human, Lycavorian, or elf.”

Tarifa looked around at the gathered men and women, ignoring Anlain. “Earth is our planet! We should all have a say in how it is ruled! As long as we continue to go forward for the betterment of everyone, what else is there? Isn’t it the goal of every man and women, be it human, elf or Lycavorian to provide for their families, build their lives, have children and then watch those children grow?”

They could see heads nodding in the front rows, murmurs of approval filling the air.

“We are not acting dishonorably in any way!” Aihola declared. “No matter what others may say. We have acted and will to continue to act with the interests of everyone who calls Earth home first and foremost in our minds! And if for whatever reason any of us are not elected, and yes we will run, but if we are not elected, I can assure you none of us will be disappointed to be able to finally start our own families.”

Selene stepped forward. “I will make the new charter available for everyone to see it at their leisure.”

Tarifa glared at Anlain from where she stood, his dark eyes staring back at her with murder in them. She smiled cruelly. “You never were very smart Anlain.” She stated. “I may not be able to connect you to what your son did Anlain, but rest assured, no matter what you try to do I will always be there to insure you never play a role in the future of this planet. Ever! As for you Mister Crescent you...”

The screams began in the rear of the mass of people and suddenly men and women were scattering to either side, scrambling over Lifters and food stands to get away from the brownish tan dragon that walked casually down the middle of the street, the huge Lycavorian sitting on its back. Aelnala moved with the speed of a viper and scooped Tarifa, Aihola and Selene up with her TK power, depositing them behind her bulk as her psychic shield activated. They were trapped within the confines of the city streets and no matter where they tried to lift off to, the dragon and rider would be able to catch them.

“Run Charles! One of you must survive!” Tarifa screamed turning to him and Elaine. “Run now!”

Charles Turned didn’t hesitate, grabbed Elaine’s hand and broke into a run for the command center building as Dragoon elves and Spartans were running down the stairs towards them their weapons coming up instantly.

Tarifa and the others watched in horror as the rider of the dragon laughed horribly and then the brownish Firespitter unleashed a long stream of flame at the advancing troops, incinerating most of them in the space of three heartbeats. The smell of charred and cooked flesh filled the area and they stared at the rider and dragon wide eyed.

Whatever happens stay behind me! Aelnala ordered them maneuvering her bulk in such a way as to block the four female elves and single Spartan female from the Firespitter and her twisted rider. Lynwe had shoved Selene and Tarifa to the ground while Layna moved in front of Selene and Aihola, her P190 coming up into a firing position. Aelnala snapped her head around to stare at the dragon. *Why are you doing this?* She screamed out in Mindvoice.

Because I must. The female replied, her stunning crimson eyes wide as she took a deep breath and began to unleash another jet of flame that would have surely reached around Aelnala in several directions and burned her five charges. The stream of flame never reached her because of the azure blue scaled blur that appeared in front of her.

The roar was deafening as the azure blue dragon landed directly in front of Aelnala only ten meters from the enemy Firespitter. Isheeni flared her wings to the sides effectively covering any exposed area that Aelnala could not cover, blanketing Tarifa and the others easily. Aricia's Shi Viska flared into view and she held it in front of her helmeted head as the female Firespitter finally looked up, momentarily stunned at the arrival of this new dragon and rider, neither of them injured in the least by her blast of flame. The intense heat and fire had skipped across their psychic shield with little difficulty. They had been subjected to much hotter flame by Isheeni's mother and Torma's superheated breath during training.

The Lycavorian rider's eyes were wide as he stared at Aricia on the back of the smaller Firespitter. Isheeni was smaller than Syrilth, but like Aelnala, only by a meter or two either way. Maruad stared at the female rider's azure blue eyes behind the crested helmet as she lowered the Shi Viska slowly and stared back at him without fear. This was no ordinary female rider and no ordinary dragon Maruad thought quickly. Their shield was far too powerful for that, and they stood their defiantly as if daring him to do something. He could feel the power trembling from the female and the dragon, controlled and harnessed.

Syrilth? Maruad demanded.

I do not know. She replied quickly. *They are powerful! Their... their posture reflects confidence and courage. They...*

Isheeni drew back her head quickly and cut loose with a narrow stream of flame that was hotter and stronger than anything Syrilth had ever felt before. She backed up quickly, turning her head to the side as the force of the blast of flame caused her to stagger slightly, her crimson eyes wide.

Impossible! Syrilth exclaimed.

I will not allow you to injure my friends! Isheeni growled within Mindvoice. *You will not defeat us! I have better control of my flame and I can make it hotter than what you have just felt. You may be larger than me, but I will burn you while Aelnala pummels you both into the Earth!*

Maruad stared at this new dragon with wide eyes her words ringing in his head, noticing that the female had not spoken yet, only stared at him with those calm, cruel azure blue eyes. The Shi Viska was still visible humming on her left arm, her legs secured on the back of the blue scaled dragon by some sort of shimmering armor. The armor encased her entire leg on either side of the dragon, almost as if it was also holding her in place as well. Maruad watched as at least two dozen elves and Spartans quickly descended upon where Tarifa and the Drow whore huddled behind the yellow dragon. He watched as the three of them were dragged away from where Aelnala stood, thick fire blankets draped over their bodies and they were ushered inside, leaving him to face two dragons and one rider. A rider who obviously knew what she was about. Maruad chuckled. She was still a female Lycavorian however and Maruad unleashed his unshielded alpha male aura directly at her.

Aricia's azure blue eyes narrowed under her helmet as she felt Maruad's male aura reach out for her. *You must be joking!* Aricia exclaimed loudly within Mindvoice. Humor tinged her words. *What is that? My mate has a stronger aura than that when he is sleeping!*

Maruad's smile faded quickly at her words. He had hit her with his full unshielded aura, and she should have been his for the taking, instead she sat on that dragon mocking him. The only way that could be was if a stronger male had claimed her already, and if that was the case he must have been extremely powerful to have nullified his aura in such a way that it did not even elicit a response from this female.

Your mate is a fool to allow you to face me alone! Maruad spoke confidently.

My mate is the Lycavorian King you pitiful man! Aricia snapped with a smile. *And you are not worthy of facing him! He sent me instead!*

There is no King! Maruad barked. *There hasn't been a King for millennia!*

The grandson of King Resumar reigns now! Aricia declared.

Resumar? Maruad exclaimed his eyes wide. *The bloodline of Resumar was destroyed by the High Coven.*

Aricia grinned. *That shows just how foolish you truly are. Resumar's son Leonidas survived and became King here on Earth. Now the youngest son of Leonidas rules the Union. Enough with the history lesson fool...*

why do you attack Tarifa? Aricia demanded. *Why are you trying to kill them? You must know we will not let you succeed.*

You will stop me wench? Maruad laughed. *I think not!*

You can not defeat us both. Aricia spoke.

The Heavyhorn lacks a rider wench. Maruad said.

Aricia nodded. *Perhaps right now, but while you have failed in doing what you came here to do, we have not failed in retrieving our friends from where you shot them down.* Aricia smiled as she saw Maruad's face twist into a mask of rage. *You are not the intelligent man you thought you were.*

I will burn you! Maruad screamed. *Syrlth!*

I think not! Aricia lifted her right hand; the diamond shaped psychic bullet forming instantly at her fingertips as Syrlth breathed in to unleash a jet of flame. Aricia pushed her hand forward and fired the psychic projectile forward with lightning speed. Maruad ducked, but the projectile was not aimed at him and it slammed into Syrlth's front foreleg, smashing the leg backwards and causing her to stumble, her stream of flame passing harmlessly to the side of where Isheeni stood.

Syrlth was not so lucky.

Isheeni and Aricia had spent the entire last year training almost as intently as Martin and Torma. When they weren't caring for the hatchlings or Androcles they were out among the clouds with the males they both so loved. Over this past year Isheeni and Aricia had become so closely interwoven it was hard to tell where one stopped and the other began. It was the same for Martin and Torma, and that closeness; that deepness allowed them to do so many more things.

Isheeni, Aelnala now! Aricia barked.

Isheeni didn't hesitate and unleashed the hottest stream of flame she was able to sustain for any length of time. Her Mindvoice and TK powers, refined over the course of the last year, allowed her to be able to direct that stream of flame with incredible precision. That stream of flame smashed into the side of Syrlth's broad body with unerring accuracy. Though their psychic shield protected them from the majority of the blast, Syrlth cried out as she staggered against the heat and force of the blast, just as Aelnala used a powerful blast of her own TK power to smash into Syrlth's opposite foreleg.

Syrlth began to teeter over to the right, losing her balance and smashing into the building that she was closest too. She screamed out in anger and pain as glass and concrete rained down on her from where her bulk caused the building to shudder and pieces of it to break off. Maruad had no Shi Viska to guard against falling concrete and he ignored Syrlth to look up and dodge pieces of falling glass.

I will kill you! I will kill you! Syrlth screamed out and cut loose with a full power blast of flame directly at Aelnala.

Isheeni reacted a second later, unleashing a blast of her own flame which intersected Syrlth's stream, but not before the force of the blast sent Aelnala careening over to smash into the building she stood next to her.

Stop this! Isheeni screamed out. *Why do you fight us? We are not the enemy! We come from the same planet!*

I must! I must!

But why? Aricia demanded.

I must protect them! I must protect them!

Aricia lifted her left arm and launched her Shi Viska with barely a pause. Maruad saw the shield leave her arm, his eyes going wide at the incredible speed and he lifted his Nehtes a split second before the Shi Viska cleaved his head from his shoulders. The Nehtes snapped against the force of the launched Shield, but deflected it enough to skip off to the right, but not before several of the razors sliced into the flesh of his arm and shoulder. He screamed out in pain as the burning lanced through his arm and the Shi Viska slammed into the steel and concrete of the building and imbedded itself ten inches.

Syrlth! Take off you upaee! Take off! Maruad screamed out within Mindvoice. *Take off now!*

Letting out a roar of rage and frustration Syrlth leaped into the sky, her wings quickly pulling her away above the city to the south. Aricia looked over as Aelnala righted herself.

Aelnala!

Go! I am fine! Go!

Isheeni needed no further encouragement and leaped into the sky after the brownish tan dragon.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Aricia did you feel it?* Isheeni asked as she climbed rapidly into the sky.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Yes!*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *He called her a foul name! I will burn him to cinders for his words!* Isheeni was angry, and this translated into speed as her wings lifted them into the sky faster than normal.

There! Aricia called. *She is heading south!*

She is fast but I can catch her easily Aricia! Isheeni declared. *Do we follow?*

Aricia watched as Syrilth's wings moved with powerful strokes, propelling her along with amazing speed. They could catch her very easily, for while she was certainly faster than Aelnala, she was not even in the same league as Isheeni.

Aricia? Isheeni asked again.

No. Aricia replied quickly. *We don't know what we will face if we follow her Isheeni. We could end up outnumbered ourselves.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *She is... she is in pain my bonded sister!*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I know!* Aricia spoke. *She's protecting something. She's not... we must talk with Isra and then contact your mother.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *My mother? Why?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I will tell you soon enough. Let us return and make sure Aelnala is not injured.*

Isheeni banked sharply and they headed back to Eden City.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

HOPE'S QUEST

FOUR HOURS BEFORE LAST PIRATE GATE

This is what Anuk so loved about her husband and her Alpha mate, as his long powerful arms wrapped tightly around her svelte, muscular body and he drew her naked flesh close against him.

His chiseled ebony body was wrapped around her lightly tanned freckled one, her hips resting in his lap, her upper body stretched out on the bed in front of them. His immense twelve inch charcoal black cock was buried completely within her warm depths, stretching her as only he could. The last of his searing hot seed was leaking into the velvet heat of her tight, bald pussy and his large hands on her hips were keeping Anuk anchored and unmoving at the base of his shaft. As her thighs quivered in the remnants of their passion, and she felt his thick black cock twitching inside her, Anuk had absolutely no desire to move one millimeter. Her cerulean blue eyes glanced down quickly at the two small puncture marks in her left breast and then her eyes went to the two similar puncture marks in the muscle of his neck and shoulders. The wounds were now healed over but still visible, but they would disappear in a few hours. His head rested on her abdomen now, their breathing coming in great heaves, the sheen of sweat on his bald head shining in the soft light of their quarters. His entire body was covered in sweat, and his ebony skin glistened in the light in such a way that it only served to stir more desire in Anuk, prolonging the delicious sensations she was currently feeling. As her wide eyes looked around the room, her small hands slowly stroking Daniel's shoulders and head, the last eighteen months raced by in her head and Anuk knew one thing for certain.

Anuk knew her life had not truly started until Daniel had blasted his way into it and swept her off her feet.

Anuk had been a slave once. A Wood Elf Ranger under her father's command. A routine combat patrol on Earth had resulted in her being captured by slavers. Anuk did not know at the time that she had been the target of the raid because her father was considered a threat to the Coven and their take over plans. Almost an entire year she had spent enduring beatings and countless rapes by men with the same color skin as her husband and mate. During that time period if someone had told her she would be mated to a man with the same color skin as her captors, and she would be withering in delight beneath him, Anuk would have ripped their face off gladly. She had grown to savagely hate anyone with dark skin during that horrible time in her life. Yet now here she was, and every morning that she woke Anuk thanked the gods that Daniel Simpson was her husband and that he had come into her life and made her a wolf and *Ngauro* just like him.

It was a decision Daniel had agonized over for several moments she knew, not wanting her to hate him for turning her into an animal, but in the end it was the only thing that had save her life and kept her close to him. And no matter what occurred in the time since that day, Anuk never once considered what she had become as an animal. The four days they had spent in that tunnel escaping from New Las Vegas had been Anuk's true awakening, and she had fallen hopelessly and completely in love with the hulking black Spartan in those four days, that much Anuk knew without question. He had treated her as a delicate flower, protecting her and keeping her safe from harm even while his dark eyes smoldered with desire and passion for her. Never once had he acted incorrectly, yet Anuk could see the want and need for her in those eyes. She could feel the burning of his wolf blood for her even then, though she did not know what it was at the time.

Anuk was quite sure that even if those creatures had not attacked them and they had left the tunnels safe and uninjured, Anuk would have dismissed the man she was promised too by her father and remained with Daniel. He had become her purpose for living in the complete and selfless way he had watched over her. The few times she had slept in those powerful arms, wrapped within that blanket of warmth and security his huge body provided, Anuk had never felt safer. When she had woken in the hospital after he had bitten her and realized she had become wolf, only his powerful arms around her kept her from going insane. When she fully discovered what she could do it was the most glorious thing she could have ever imagined. Anuk relished the moments she and Daniel had spent running together, and being in their wolf forms as he taught her all she needed to know.

Anuk marveled many times at the way she fit within his arms like the fingers of a glove, and it was almost comical to others when they saw her wrapped within his embrace. His six foot five and two hundred sixty five pounds was enormous when compared to her form, and Anuk had been frightened at first to see that his cock was every bit as large. Larger than anything she had ever seen. Their first time together in the shower of Daniel's quarters had only initiated the craving for him that still burned in her elfin wolf blood. He had reached places with his cock that Anuk had not known she even had, and any doubts or fear she may have had at his size quickly vanished in the waves of pleasure that he made rip through her. The more they slept together and the more she grew accustomed to the enormous size of his cock, their pleasure had only increased and grown more passionate. It had been a precursor to pleasures that still never ceased to increase, and the pleasure that made her see stars no matter how many times her made love to her.

Anuk was not a petite female elf, having inherited some of her father's height and musculature. She stood roughly five foot eight inches tall and she was a hundred and thirty pounds of muscle and curves when not in her wolf form. Daniel's body was chiseled from steel and granite it seemed and Anuk learned to take care of her own body, honing it into the lithe weapon that it now was, for there was not an ounce of body fat on her. Her breasts were high and firm, topped by pert pink nipples, her waist narrow and elegant. Her legs were long and ended in perhaps her finest asset as Daniel had told her so often, and that was the perfect ass that he spent considerable energy exploring with his lips and tongue and hands every time they were naked together in bed, or the shower, or anywhere for that matter. He did this to Anuk's eternal delight.

This was a part of Daniel that only she and Nayeca would ever see. To others, Star Colonel Daniel Simpson of the United Lycavorian Union projected violence and death and the unnerving ability to do those things so very well. His persona and aura told others he had killed before, that he would kill again, and that he knew far more ways to eliminate you than anyone else you may have known. He was generally considered by most, even by Martin the King, to be the most lethal Spartan in skill behind only the king. He had jumped at the chance to become part of The *Durcunusaan*, the unit formed and led by her father and General Vistr. His loyalty and love of the King was something that was spoken of in whispers in taverns and eateries across Apo Prime. Their history together was the second most popular course in many of the Universities across Apo Prime and it reached even as far as the planet all of them still considered home. Earth would always be more than just a planet to them, it was the place they all came together, and all of them would consider Earth their true home until they left this life. No matter the outward projection of his aura to others, to Anuk and Nayeca however, Daniel was like a gentle giant, and he caressed their bodies with a grace and expertise no one saw from him on a regular basis. A grace and expertise that always had their bodies crying out for more.

Nayeca.

They had almost six months together before Nayeca had come into their lives and caused both of them to fall in love with her, completing their unlikely trio. Anuk liked nothing better than to be sandwiched between

Daniel and her Drow Mistress, the contrast in their skin colors never ceasing to incite burning desire in her. She like nothing better than to be laying between them, giving and receiving every ounce of pleasure she could receive and bestow. Anuk would do anything Nayeca wanted of her in their bed, and she had done just that on many occasions for her Drow Mistress. Anuk had known of the Drow growing up, and their history, but she had never imagined herself as the sexual slave of her very own Drow Mistress. Upon meeting Nayeca however, Anuk had soon discovered something else about herself that was new to her yet felt so very wonderful, and that was the desire to be submissive to Nayeca in whatever way she needed in their bed. Daniel would sometimes play the same role, though it was harder for him because of his Spartan nature. Nayeca dominated Anuk in their bed in every way, yet she loved Anuk just as intensely as Daniel did outside of their bed, and treated her as a cherished lover and mate. They were often seen in the markets of Tuya shopping and visiting friends they had made, while holding hands and sharing affectionate kisses in full view of everyone that could see them. And they did so without the slightest hint of shame or embarrassment. Most knew the unlikely pair of elfin females were the mates of Colonel Simpson, and no Lycavorian male, no male in general would approach them in any way except to exchange pleasantries. They had shared many nights of mind blowing pleasure, the three of them, and none of them wanted it to end. They would always be together they knew.

This night was different though.

Daniel had a strange look in his changed yellow eyes this night, a look of desire and want that Anuk had not yet seen. Much to her delight he had wasted no time in stripping Anuk out of her clothes and beginning what had only just ended after two staggeringly pleasurable hours. Daniel had been more demanding and intense, driving his pulsing ebony shaft into Anuk with increased fervor and passion, his huge cock sending her into a world she had not visited before this night. Their actions had quickly chased the exhausted Nayeca from the double bed with a chuckle so that she could sleep. Every touch of his fingers upon Anuk's skin set fire to her supple body in a way she had not experienced before and she could not explain it. Every driving stroke of his huge cock within her sent ripples of new found delight surging through her, until his pile driving strokes into her body caused the orgasms to pile upon her one after the other as if they would never stop.

"You are mine Anuk! You are my soulmate!" He had gasped just before sinking his fangs into the flesh of her breast and sending Anuk into a world of blissful abandon she was only just returning from. Two hours it had lasted until he had bitten her, and she had reacted out of her own instinct really, and had sunk her own wolf fangs into his neck as his searing hot come was blasting into her. The sensations this action caused had been incredible, as the flavor of his warm blood had splashed over her taste buds. They were not like vampires and didn't need to feed on each other's blood, and it took only a few drops of his warm blood to ignite a volcanic eruption of pleasure and seal them together forever, binding them as soulmates in much the same fashion as Martin and Aricia.

Now as they lay trying to catch their breaths and calm their racing hearts, Anuk's hands stroked his broad shoulders with love and tenderness, as his large hands did the same with her legs and hips.

"Daniel?" Anuk gasped softly, her eyes wide and filled with passion and love.

Danny lifted his head slowly from her taut abdomen and turned his face to look up into her cerulean colored eyes. "I have wanted to do that for a long time baby. I just... I just didn't know how." He said with a loving smile as he pulled her up easily in his lap, Anuk groaning as his still hard cock sank even further into her depths.

Danny gazed at her deeply and even now there were times when he could not believe she was his. He and Martin had lived and fought together since they were both small boys, and until recently they had not even known who and what they truly were. They were like brothers, as only the fires of combat could forge two men, and they would come to each other's aide without question or pause. When they had returned to earth after discovering they had come almost five hundred years into the future, they had taken it in stride as they had done with everything in their lives. Their true Spartan nature, unknown to them until only two years ago, had instilled a laconic bravery in their blood from birth and they took everything that happened to them through the years as if it was meant to be. They had fought together in some of the darkest and most violent places that ever existed on Earth, always coming out ahead of their enemies.

Danny had never known true love however, until the moment he had inhaled Anuk's scent on the *RAPTOR* as they were moving to rescue her. It was that moment when he knew that this woman, regardless of the fact that she was an elf, Danny knew she would be with him for all eternity. When they had returned to

Earth and discovered elves, most of them could not believe that something from myth and fantasy was now very prominent and alive on their planet. They had accepted it however, with the off handedness that had angered so many who did not know them through the years. Their first days together had been a test, but Daniel knew Anuk would ultimately be his. His father had explained it to him one night in Sparta after they had discovered who and what they were. A Lycavorian Alpha male will always recognize the female that would be his Soulmate his father had said, regardless of circumstances or events, and that female would always be his in the end, for once she felt the attraction and love for her, she would not be able to deny it either. Danny had spent four days in those tunnels trying to bury the burning in his blood for Anuk, and without even realizing it all he had done was make it all the more obvious to her, and cause her to feel the pulsing in his blood for her and her alone.

He had gone berserk when those creatures had attacked them and gravely injured Anuk, the three faded now almost non-existent scars that crossed her breathtaking face diagonally barely discernable. Daniel remembered when they were fresh and had laid open her face to the bone. He would have slaughtered hundreds of those creatures in his rage, until the last drop of blood had left his body. Anuk had been dying, their wounds on Anuk filled with a poison that was racing through her system. Anja had been helpless against it, and it was then that Martin had told him to bite her and make her like them. It had been the only way to save her and keep her in his life, and after only a few moments of indecision, Danny had done just that. The moment she had awakened in the hospital and cried out for him within Mindvoice Danny knew they would be together forever. Her cinnamon scent was like a drug he could not live without, and he had spent countless hours simply nuzzling and exploring every portion of her luscious elfin body, especially the most perfect ass he had ever seen on any female.

Little had changed when the Drow warrior Nayeca had come into their lives. His own mother had a female lover for the times when his father was away, and while he had been stunned and slightly irritated at the dominance over Anuk that Nayeca displayed in their bed, that had quickly faded away when he saw the loving way Nayeca treated Anuk outside of their bedroom. He had never expected anything to happen between him and Nayeca, but that first night on Earth had begun a never ending ride of pleasure and exploration. That first night discovering Nayeca astride Anuk's face as his mate pleased the Drow female had been something he had never seen before, and Danny was no stranger to two females being together. He had shared many nights in bed with Julie and Anja together until Anja's intense love of Martin and Julie's new found love of Tari had drawn them apart. Yet seeing Anuk acting so submissively to Nayeca had made his cock harder than it had ever been. Seeing them together, the contrast in their skin coloring, the way their lush bodies pressed against each other, it had nearly overwhelmed his senses. He had taken them both that night, and none of them had looked back since. Anuk was his Soulmate of that he was certain, and this action tonight sealed them together forever. Yet Danny knew, like Martin knew, Anuk was his Soulmate but Nayeca was someone neither of them could live without now. She had entwined herself within the fabric of their lives so completely that Danny loved her and her sweet apple scent almost as intensely as he loved Anuk.

Anuk wrapped her arms around his shoulders as her large breasts crushed against his steel hard chest. Her rust colored red hair splayed all around her shoulders, plastered to her skin due to sweat and she crushed her lips upon his, kissing him with heat and love and passion and desire. She kissed him until she had to breathe once more, and finally pulled her lips away and gazed into his eyes. "I... I know what this means Daniel. It is the same thing Martin and Aricia have shared." She spoke softly, still trying to calm the racing of her heart, now beating out of control once more because of the passion in their kiss.

Danny nodded slowly and kissed her lips gently, lowering his head to spread fluttering kisses along her shoulder and neck and then looking at her once more. "I truly hope that you aren't angry." He spoke softly. "I've never wanted to... I don't think I could go into the future without you in my life Anuk. I knew that the first moment I saw you. I've wanted to perform the *Gravinolfgrek* for a few months now. I didn't have the courage until now."

Anuk couldn't help but smile gently, her face alive and bright with love and happiness. "Daniel my love, I could not be any happier than what you have made me right now."

Danny was not an emotional man by his nature, but he reached up and brushed some rust colored hair from Anuk's bright face and gazed into her beautiful elfin eyes. "The day you entered into my world Anuk, that day you made my life have purpose. You made it mean something."

“And that day you gave me my life back.” Anuk spoke softly, brushing her full lips across Danny’s cheek. “I would be nothing without you Daniel.”

Nayeca watched from the shadows, her own heart racing as she heard them talking to each other. She may have been chased from the bed by their actions, but she had witnessed the entire episode, and now she felt fear grip her stomach and her heart. The most passionate nights of her young life had occurred in their arms and in their bed, and Nayeca did not want to lose that. Anuk’s body was a temple Nayeca would worship at every night if she was allowed, and Daniel made her feel things that she never thought possible. She had spent countless hours reading about Lycavorian culture, and she knew the significance of this ritual they had just performed. They would be bound to each other for all time now, eager to make children and begin a family. Where would that leave her? They were her life now... and she did not want to lose that. They...

“And you complete us Mistress.” Anuk’s soft voice echoed across the small room to where she stood.

Nayeca’s head snapped up, her amber eyes wide and she saw them both gazing at her, the sides of their heads resting against each other.

“Are you going to stand there hiding in the corner as if we don’t smell you or come over here where you belong?” Daniel asked with a grin.

Nayeca stepped from the shadows slowly, the simple tan shirt barely covering her lush Drow elfin body. She was the same height as Anuk, with the same perfectly shaped ass and full breasts. Her shimmering white hair hung down past her shoulders to the middle of her back, contrasting starkly with the light Bistre black color of her silky skin, her amber eyes bright and focused.

“Forgive me.” Nayeca spoke softly. “I only came in for a blanket to chase away the chill. I did not mean to....”

“Your heart pounds in your chest Mistress.” Anuk spoke almost submissively. “As if you are worried about something.”

The quarters on *HOPE’S QUEST* were not large, a semi spacious main room and the bedroom cabins. The bedroom cabins were tiny in comparison to what most of them were used too, but they were Spartans and the mates of Spartans, and complaining never crossed their minds. This allowed Daniel to reach out and grasp Nayeca’s hand quickly, pulling her to the side of the bed where she climbed slowly onto the soft mattress with them, the edges of the tan shirt lifting on her satiny thighs slightly.

“Nayeca... do you honestly believe that because we... because we have done this that we would abandon our love for you and what we share with you for any reason?” Daniel asked her in a calm even voice.

“I know what the significance of being Soulmates is for your people Daniel. I have spent much time studying the history and culture of your people. We both have.” Nayeca glanced quickly at Anuk. “And we all have experienced what it means, what the power of this ritual... what the significance of it means with the King and Aricia.” Nayeca said meeting his gaze with her amber eyes.

“Mistress... you can’t think we would just throw our love for you away.” Anuk spoke softly.

Danny reached up quickly and wrapped his fingers within the silky softness of Nayeca’s shimmering white hair. No matter what time of day it was, her hair always seemed to feel like fine silk against his skin.

“You are every bit my mate Nayeca of the Drow. Never doubt that for an instant.” He spoke firmly. “This does not make me love you or desire you any less, it does not make Anuk love you or desire any less. You are a sacred part of our lives Nayeca, a part of our lives that we could not go on without.”

“But I am not like you and Anuk.” Nayeca spoke softly meeting his eyes. “I am not wolf Daniel.”

“Do you think that matters to us Mistress?” Anuk asked her softly but urgently. “That has never mattered to us! It did not matter to me the first time I tasted you, nor has it mattered any time I have tasted you since Mistress. I am submissive to you in our bed because I choose to be, because it gives me pleasure! It has never mattered to Daniel as he made you cry out his name. We love you Nayeca, for who you are! And we would fight to the death against anyone who tried to take you from us!”

Nayeca stared at them for a long moment before lowering her head. “I... I do not believe I could go on if I lost either of you.” She said softly. “I am a Drow warrior yes and I am supposed to be strong, but the life I have found with you both is beyond anything I have ever imagined or hoped for. I would fight without hesitation for that... for that love to continue.”

Daniel looked at Anuk and motioned with his head. They both groaned softly as she extracted herself from his lap, his still semi erect cock slick with their combined juices as it slid from within her tight pussy.

There was no shyness, no embarrassment between the three of them. They had shared each other enough times in the last eighteen months that being naked was the most comfortable thing around each other. Daniel moved quickly when Anuk shifted herself from his lap and he pulled Nayeca into his arms before she knew what was happening, and in a moment she was sitting in his lap, her back pressed up against his chest tightly, and she could feel his huge cock between her thighs. Danny pulled the shirt over her head with one gentle tug, her white hair falling around her face and shoulders. Daniel made no move to seduce her however, wrapping his arms around her instead as Anuk shifted on the bed and stretched out in front of Nayeca, pressing her naked flesh against her Drow Mistress now. Nayeca's hands reached up and gripped Anuk's head as she gazed at her lovingly.

Daniel leaned forward and firmly nuzzled the back of Nayeca's four inch long elfin ear, causing her to gasp softly and her hands to tighten on Anuk's head as shivers of delight coursed through her.

"You are my mate... our mate Nayeca of the Drow, and you will always be our mate." Daniel whispered into her ear, his lips grazing the extremely sensitive ridges of her ear as he spoke. "You will have my children in the future if that is what you desire, just as Anuk will have my children. That is what I desire. I will never forsake you just as I would never forsake Anuk. I will make you like us... I will make you wolf if that is your wish Nayeca, but know that we love and cherish you as you are now, and that will not change whether you are elf or wolf."

Nayeca's breath was coming in short gasps now as her passion and desire rose quickly at his words. He could always turn her to putty by nuzzling her ears, just as he turned Anuk to putty by doing the same thing, and when combined with the words he was speaking to her now, it had begun a slow burn in her abdomen.

"You... you would... you would do this for me?" She gasped out, feeling his huge cock begin to thicken between her thighs, and then it was pressing firmly against her already soaked entrance. Her strong hands dropped to his thighs and squeezed. She may not have been wolf, and therefore could not feel the aura Anuk told her that Daniel could project, but there was no denying that in his arms he could turn her on instantly with just a simple caress. She pressed back against him, relishing in the feeling of being in his arms.

Anuk brought her lips close to Nayeca's, her cerulean wolf eyes wide and now filled with renewed desire of her own. Desire for her Drow Mistress. With the only exception being the times when Daniel was pile driving his beautiful cock into her, the most intense and pleasurable moments Anuk had ever experienced were when she was locked in a mutual embrace with her Drow Mistress and they were happily lapping away at each other's drenched pussies, something that Nayeca did very willingly and quite happily even though she was Drow. Nayeca could see the black outlining the cerulean blue color, and she could just detect the tips of Anuk's fangs protruding from beneath her luscious lips. "We love you Mistress." She drawled in an extremely seductive voice filled with want and need. "We will do whatever you ask of us."

Nayeca gasped as Danny's hands slid under her armpits and gripped her full breasts tightly as he nibbled the top of her four inch pointed ear. Her lush body was beginning to burn, becoming hotter than she had ever felt before. Nayeca could feel Daniel's steel hard cock now, pressed tightly against her pussy, poised to fill her completely. The shaft was burning with heat and need, its thickness pulsing as if it was alive. There had never been a man before Daniel, Nayeca able to avoid the old laws of her people for many years, and that she was able to take his incredible cock completely within her never ceased to amaze her, much the same as her slave Anuk. He had taken her more times than she could remember in the last year, each time causing her to scream out his name in wanton pleasure as he drove that enormous ebony pole into her deeply. There had been times when Anuk was not with them, as she was attending a medical conference with Anja or taking extra classes at the University on Apo Prime, and he had shown her the same devotion and love that he did when they were all together. Even those times with Daniel had been no different, all of his attention focused on her, his hands and lips doing what they always did even with Anuk not in their bed. As he nuzzled her ears, his hands gripping her breasts tightly, Nayeca knew then they meant every word of what they had just told her.

"Let us show you how much we love and cherish you." Daniel's voice was husky and deep in her ear. "Mistress!"

"Oh... oh yes!" Nayeca gasped hearing his strong voice so close to her ear. Nayeca surrendered to the exquisite sensations coursing through her already. This night she did not want to be Drow, she just wanted to be a woman.

Danny hissed into Nayeca's ear as Anuk's small hand skillfully encircled his steel hard twelve inch shaft, squeezing it lovingly and stroking it several times to bring it to full hardness once more. As she did this she lowered her lips to one of Nayeca's dark protruding nipples, teasing the bud with the tip of her pink tongue. She stroked his burning shaft several times, bringing him to full hardness before maneuvering the huge engorged head to the entrance of Nayeca's equally tight pussy. Nayeca gasped when she felt the engorged tip of his enormous cock pry apart her slippery labia and slid inside her only an inch, just as Anuk's lips descended to her eraser hard nipples. Danny's hands had dropped to her hips as he grit his teeth and held her in position to keep from plunging into her warm center, his hands immediately replaced on Nayeca's full breasts by Anuk's slender fingers, pulling and pinching her stiff nipples as she knew Nayeca loved.

Anuk burned for her Drow Mistress now, her body once more aflame with desire and need. She nibbled Nayeca's nipple once more before removing her lips and lowering them to Nayeca's abdomen. "We have wanted to show you what we learned Mistress." She spoke softly as her lips and tongue trailed a path down towards Nayeca's partially stuffed pussy. The single thin line of white hair above her pussy was already soaked with her juices, glistening in the dim light of their room.

Nayeca's amber eyes looked at Anuk as Daniel's hands once more replaced Anuk's lips and tongue on her breasts and kneaded her firm globes, rolling her hard nipples between his thumb and forefinger, drawing hisses of delight from Nayeca.

"And... and what... what will you... what will you show me slave?" Nayeca gasped, trying very hard to maintain her role as mistress, but knowing that it was a losing battle as they manipulated her so expertly, and not caring in the least.

"This and that." Anuk smiled up at her face.

Nayeca reached out quickly and wrapped her fingers in Anuk's satiny rust colored red hair. "Don't... don't tease me slave! I will... I will punish you... if you tease me!" She hissed out the words.

Anuk's eyes were smiling with love and desire, and she glanced at Daniel's own burning gaze as he continued to nuzzle Nayeca's ears and the back of her neck. "You taste so much sweeter when I tease you Mistress." She spoke in a husky voice.

Anuk could tell Daniel was near the edge already, his cock pulsing with need, the veins bulging outward along the thick shaft. He was holding himself still with just the head of his cock inside Nayeca, and it was testing the limits of his control. His eyes were wide in desire and lust as he watched his elfin soulmate kiss and lick and taste her way down the taut ebony body of their elfin Drow Mistress.

Their Drow Mistress Danny knew.

The contrast in the color of their skin alone was always enough to drive him insane, and this night was no different. Seeing what the two of them did to each other was amazing, and Danny never wanted it to end. All they needed to do was kiss each other as he watched and it caused him to be instantly ready to perform. He had witnessed them pleasure each other in ways that he had never imagined, their bodies withering against one another, as orgasm after orgasm made them shudder in each other's embrace. How many times had he seen Nayeca dominate Anuk, watching as Anuk happily did as her Mistress demanded of her, using her tongue to lick and taste that tight beautiful pussy in more ways than Dan had ever imagined. His rock hard cock was near bursting now, his large balls swollen with his come, just by having the head inside Nayeca's warm tight pussy, and he was holding back from plunging into her completely, waiting for Anuk to make the move.

"Please... please my slave!" Nayeca gasped, her belly contorting now as the orgasm began to build rapidly within her. As her belly contorted it only made her hips move, pushing more of Daniel's glorious cock into her. It was more powerful than anything she had yet shared with them, and there was nothing she could do but surrender to the sensations ripping through her. "No... no more!"

Anuk smiled as her eyes came level with Daniel's thick twelve inch cock, twitching and pulsing and begging to plunge into the tight pussy that the head had already found. "Take her now Daniel!" Anuk spoke almost casually.

Daniel's cry of relief was one of a wild animal as he gripped Nayeca's hips and thrust upward while falling back on the bed and pulling Nayeca back with him. She joined in his chorus of sexual pleasure as his twelve inch cock filled her in one mind blowing plunge, and she felt Anuk's lips wrap around her engorged clit and nibble hard. When she felt Daniel's huge come filled balls slam into her quivering ass cheeks Nayeca's orgasm erupted from her with such force her sweet passion squirted around the thick ebony shaft now

completely buried in her pussy. She could do nothing but shudder in their grasp as Anuk's lips and tongue lapped away at both her painfully hard clit and Daniel's large balls as they pulsed madly and he erupted deep inside Nayeca's belly.

As Daniel's powerful arms encircled her lithe Drow body tightly, his scorching hot come continuing to fill her, and with Anuk lapping away contently at her Drow Mistress's spasming pussy, Nayeca knew it could never be more beautiful than this. Her body sang for their touch as it would sing for no other, and they had professed their eternal love for her in the most profound manner they knew how. Whatever fears she may have had after witnessing their Soulmate ritual were quickly dashed aside as Daniel and Anuk gave her all that they were without hesitation or doubt. They poured themselves into her, their voices joining in rapturous cries of delight. Anuk's body pressed against hers then, their breasts crushing together, her own drenched pussy rubbing against Nayeca's powerful thigh and her long red hair caressing the skin of her face and shoulders. Nayeca's eyes opened slowly, dreamily, and then she was gazing into Anuk's angelic face as the last of Daniel's seed emptied into her.

"We will never give you up!" Anuk whispered softly, her lips grazing Nayeca's cheeks. Her cerulean blue eyes were alive with love and desire. "We will be together for all time."

"Always." Daniel's voice echoed in her ear, his lips pressing against Nayeca's pointed ear sending shivers of delight shooting through her.

Nayeca couldn't help but smile as the sounds of the strange bells sounded in her dazed mind as she swam in the ecstasy of their moment together, signaling her complete devotion to them and they to her.

It wasn't until several minutes later when they realized that those strange bells in her head were actually *HOPE'S QUEST* alarm claxon telling them trouble was coming.

Komirri turned to the door as first Martin and then Sivana burst onto the cramped bridge of the freighter. Yuriko and Filrian had been taking shifts on the bridge so that one of them was always either on the bridge or in the small ready room to the side at all times. Though he could not act as a face or voice on this mission, Martin would take the third shift himself, allowing Yuriko and Filrian to rest and get away from the bridge and ready room for a few hours. If he needed them they could be back on the bridge in minutes.

"What is wrong?" Martin demanded as he fastened his civilian shirt on the shoulder. He had dressed on the short sprint to the bridge.

"There is a Class Seven Rotarian Frigate approaching our location sire." Komirri reported calmly. It seemed nothing fazed him anymore whenever he accompanied his King somewhere.

"Rotarian?" Sivana asked. "Are you certain?"

Komirri nodded quickly. "We confirmed it with our passive sensors. And she is very heavily armed."

Sivana looked at Martin. "That is one of Cyngi's patrol frigates." She said immediately. "Are they on an intercept course?"

Komirri nodded. "Seventeen minutes until contact." He answered.

"Damn!" Sivana cursed. "They'll want to board us." She spoke. "Cyngi controls this last Gate, and he is notoriously famous for stopping ships and checking their cargo, and even more for blackmailing the captain and crews. He has four of these Rotarian Frigates and this is all they do. Their crews are well trained and exceedingly violent. They won't hesitate to open fire on any of us if we screw up."

"The hidden rooms will conceal Torma and Miath right?" Martin asked.

Sivana nodded quickly. "No one will find those rooms." She replied looking at him. "I've been doing this for three hundred years Martin and I couldn't find those rooms. Your dragons will be safe."

Martin nodded. "Then let's not screw up." He spoke. "Pass the word we are going to be boarded and everyone is to fall into their pirate roles."

"They are transmitting in the open!" Filrian declared. "Do we answer?"

Martin looked at him. "We have no choice."

Filrian nodded and stabbed the button on the control console to the right of where he sat. "This is freighter Gamma Alpha one four nine, *HOPE'S QUEST* responding to Rotarian Frigate approaching. What can we do for you sir?"

“Freighter *HOPE’S QUEST* this is Commander Togra, you will reduce speed and prepare to be boarded by an Overseer’s search team.” The gruff voice ordered them. “Failure to comply with this order will result in your ship being destroyed.”

Filrian looked at Komirri and Martin as Komirri snorted. “Destroyed? Not likely.” He growled. “We could send them into oblivion before they knew what hit them!”

“Then we would never make it through the Gate.” Sivana spoke. “I know Togra. He’s a Lycavorian with a mean streak and he won’t hesitate to blow us out of the stars. I’ve crossed paths with him on several occasions.”

Komirri looked at her, and then to Martin. “I can always hope.” He said with a grin.

Martin chuckled. “You’ll have your chance Komirri.” He said looking at Sivana. “This jerk knows you?”

Sivana nodded. “He’s seen me once or twice, but not in over a decade now. I’ve changed my appearance since then.” She answered.

“It won’t matter.” Martin said. “He’ll recognize your scent immediately. Get with Anja and have her whip up a scent masker ASAP! She’s good at that. I can’t afford to lose your knowledge of this fool by hiding you with Torma and Miath. The scent masker is the only way to protect you. We are running into more and more of these Lycavorian pirates and mercenaries and that really pisses me off.”

“They are some of the more violent of the pirates in the Wilds.” Sivana spoke honestly. “And all of them are short tempered.”

“Well... we have to deal with them now. Get going. Anja is already heading for the room she turned into a Medical Center.” Martin spoke.

Sivana nodded and headed out of the small bridge just as Daniel, Anuk and Nayeca were piling into the cramped space. Martin looked at them, detecting the heavy scent of sex mixed in with the scents of cinnamon and sweet apples. He looked at Danny and moved up in front of him, staring into his face.

“What?” Dan spoke defensively but without the slightest hint of embarrassment. “We were preoccupied, and you have the timing of a bad case of the runs! I’m going to have a talk with Aricia and Anja and Dysea when this is all over and have them give you lessons in etiquette. Your manners suck!”

Martin couldn’t help but laugh.

The others on the bridge could only smile at the interaction between the two of them. All of them knew that only Daniel Simpson could talk to the King in such a way and get away with it. He was the only man close enough to him to be considered a brother. Martin had three half brothers from Gorgo’s mating with Riall, and they got along famously, but everyone knew that while there was no blood connection between Danny and Martin, he was considered Martin’s only true brother. Years of combat and living together had forged a bond between them that nothing in this universe could ever break. There were others that were allowed to call him by his first name, but only Daniel Simpson acted and spoke as he did. And for those who witnessed these interactions, they were some of the funniest moments they would ever experience.

Martin looked at Anuk then who was blushing heavily and he leaned over between Anuk and Nayeca’s heads to inhale deeply next to their faces. He drew his head back slowly and looked at their faces with a knowing smile. He leaned over even more and kissed first Anuk’s cheek and then Nayeca’s cheek softly. “It’s about time he finally got his act together and properly claimed you two.” Martin whispered so that only they could hear.

Anuk met his eyes and smiled brightly, totally unashamed of the two scents wafting off of her. Daniel’s scent and Nayeca’s scent. “He *is* sometimes slow.” She whispered back.

Martin looked at Nayeca who looked more flustered now than he had ever seen her, the white hair she normally wore perfectly groomed still tossed wildly about her face. Yet her amber eyes were alive with love and devotion in them, and Martin knew instantly that while Danny had made Anuk his soulmate, they had made sure Nayeca knew that she would always be a part of their lives. He reached out and took Nayeca’s hand, squeezing tightly. The level of brightness in her amber eyes told him all he needed to know.

“They made you see what you will always mean to them Nayeca?” He asked her in a similar whisper.

Nayeca smiled brilliantly. “They... they did Martin.” She replied in that same soft whisper.

Though there were very few who called him by his first name, Anuk and Nayeca were among that group because of their relationship with Danny. All of them knew that family was one of the most important things to

Martin Leonidas, having his family and his childhood torn from him in the way it had been will do that to a person, and if Martin Leonidas considered you family, you were in very elite company.

“When we get back, we’ll have a proper celebration for this.” Martin spoke drawing his head back and looking at Anuk and Nayeca with smiling dark green eyes. The contacts he had been wearing for the last week changed his eye color to dark green, but they did nothing to hide the twinkle in them now. “You know of course that this bumbling buffoon’s parents love the hell out of you both.”

Anuk smiled and squeezed Nayeca’s hand. “Our Spartan mother Malaika has made that very clear.” She said with a grin looking at Nayeca with adoration.

“Yes she has. On more than one occasion.” Nayeca said with a similar gaze in her eyes.

“I can’t wait for that party.” Martin said looking back to Danny. “Your mother always throws the best damn parties.”

Danny chuckled. “Neither can I.”

Martin smiled and pounded Dan on the shoulder with a large hand. “I am very happy for you brother. Very happy.”

Dan gripped Martin’s arms quickly, his face becoming serious and he nodded his head slowly. “That means a lot to me Marty. More than you will ever know.” He spoke softly.

Martin nodded slowly. “Have everyone take up their positions and get ready to be searched by these *midaeus*.” He finally spoke. “Danny... you, Anuk and Nayeca will be in engineering as we discussed.” (Assholes)

Dan nodded quickly. “We’re there.”

“Filrian... inform them we will do as they ask us.” Martin spoke turning back to look at him as Danny, Anuk and Nayeca moved out of the bridge compartment. “Yuriko and I will greet them at the airlock. You and Komirri stay here on the bridge. If anything goes wrong... blow that ship into tiny pieces.”

Filrian and Komirri nodded quickly as Martin turned to leave the bridge.

Martin had changed his appearance drastically as far as he was concerned. He had cut his more than shoulder length black hair back to the Navy standards he had been raised with, and it was now well above his shoulders and trimmed very neatly. He had allowed the beard he now wore to come in fully during the last week and Anja had kept it trimmed neatly for him. He had been wearing green contact lenses for the last week to hide his dark brown orbs and had one of Armetus’s most experienced makeup artists add several jagged scars to his face that altered his features enough that he would not be easily recognizable. His face was not well known outside of his inner circle for the most part because he wore his crested helmet more often than not when in public. His practice of usually flying on Torma wherever he was going on Apo Prime, something that Aricia had started him doing, required he wear his helmet. His civilian clothes were clean but well worn, nothing to indicate he was anything other than a grizzled pirate or mercenary. Anja liked the changes he had taken on, and with the exception of the fake scars and had told him that he should leave his hair short and see if Aricia and the others liked it as well. They usually preferred to dress him, since he had no style in the least Anja laughed, and his four Queens and elf concubine surprisingly had very similar tastes when it came to clothes.

As he stood waiting by the airlock with Yuriko, Martin let his mind drift back over the course of the last few months as well as these last days. They were as prepared as they could be he knew, the sixty members of the *Durcunusaan* all chosen by Vistr and Vengal. There were three hundred of them total, the same number of Mjolnir’s Hand and the same number of Spartans Martin’s father had led to Thermopylae. It was a number that had great meaning to their King and both Vistr and Vengal knew it. Anuk’s father had become one of Martin’s most trusted Generals and friends in the last two years, even after the rocky start they had first begun with on Earth. He and Vistr had also forged an unbreakable friendship together in the fires of Ukwav and now the two of them and Tareif were as close as friends could be. Vistr held the two Elfin Generals in the highest of regards for their skill and courage. It had been their idea to form the *Durcunusaan*, and Vengal and Vistr had developed their entire training regime themselves. It included many facets of combat that the Spartans had not studied before, skills that the elves of Earth had adopted early on in their training, to include communications and piloting. All of them were cross trained in at least three skills; all of them were less than two thousand years old and in superb physical condition. There were two hundred pureblood Lycavorian Spartans and seventy-eight

elves that had been turned by pureblood Lycavorians at some point in their lives. The surprises were the twenty-two humans within their ranks. While all of them had been turned like the elves, human/Lycavorian combinations were historically not the most robust of turned species. The twenty-two who were now part of *Durcunusaan* were the crème de la crème of the crop, all of them superior in every way to other turned humans.

During the last year they had undergone some of the most intense training that any of them had ever been through. Tareif had even conducted several training courses via the interstellar communications hubs that had been established with Earth. Vistr and Vengal both had become task masters together, the Lycavorian and Elfin Generals two of the most respected and feared men on Apo Prime and throughout the Union due to their actions on Ukwav and Enurrua. What they had accomplished with only thirty thousand Spartans was still being talked about among the many taverns and military schools, and no doubt would be for centuries to come. They drove themselves as hard as they drove their troops and that alone had earned them even more respect.

The *Durcunusaan* would now accompany Martin whenever he left Apo Prime, and even though Torma was always with him, it was also their duty to protect their King. They were his personal guard, and would answer only to him. All of his Queens, and even For'mya now were assigned a detail of *Durcunusaan*, and they were making preparations to move to wherever their Queens were in order to assume their roles as protectors.

Martin still had trouble at times with the role he now found himself in. The knowledge of the last two years was still overwhelming at times, and for these times he would do the one thing that cleared his mind more than anything else. He would climb onto Torma's back and they would fly for hours, sometimes talking with Mindvoice, sometimes just enjoying the presence of each other. He and Torma had come a long way since they had first met on Ukwav. Over the following months they had bonded so deeply that sometimes they scared each other with how completely they could feel what the other was feeling. The more time they spent together, the more their powers and their bond grew. Torma had become Martin's best friend without question, and there were times when they would laugh together at the odd picture the two of them made. The massive obsidian colored dragon and the Lycavorian King walking on their Island Estate or on one of the airfields of Mjолnir Hand's main base. To think that dragons were only a myth and a legend to Martin up until a year ago, when he looked back now and thought about how far they had come he could only shake his head. Martin knew Aricia and Isheeni were much the same in the depth of their bond and the extent of their powers, and like he and Torma, is was still growing.

Aricia.

The youngest of the women in his life that he loved, and without question the one he desired more than any of them. Martin loved them all, but Aricia had a hold on him that the others never would, and it was not just because she was Lycavorian, or that her blood was nearly as pure as his own. The events of a year ago had shown him that Aricia truly was his Soulmate. The extent of their connection could not be explained even by Helen. Their powers had grown to such an extent that they could feed off of each other, and the love they had for one another went beyond just simple physical pleasure. They had joined their minds so completely that they could share pleasure just with their dreams and they could feel what the other was feeling. Aricia had long ago eclipsed Anja and Dysea in terms of Mindvoice powers by quite a margin, and now held the distinction of being almost as powerful as Martin in that regard. Her physical skills were also much more advanced now because of the connection she shared with him, and the endless hours of training she committed herself and For'mya too on a daily basis. This did not make Aricia arrogant or pompous in any way, if anything it made her love and appreciate Anja and Dysea and even Isabella even more. She was younger than all of them, yet more and more over the last months it was she who they all turned to. What she had endured over that six week period a year ago had changed her; making her stronger and wiser than anyone had thought possible. She still had her reckless nature, and Isheeni only enhanced that with her own rebellious personality, but that nature was now tempered with the wisdom of experiences she should not have had to endure. And when Androcles was born she took to motherhood like a fish to water, not only in the maturity of her physical body, but also in her actions and the way she thought.

What Aricia and For'mya shared together now was similar to what Dysea and Isabella shared; what Anja and Seanna shared. His stunning blond haired elf concubine was both his lover and Aricia's lover, and that was something that For'mya had long ago embraced with relish. Martin could watch them pleasure each other for hours, which they had done on many occasions in the last year, growing closer and closer to each other and to him. Together they could make him do anything they wanted in their bed, and he wouldn't question it in the

least. The combination of Aricia's lavender/coco scent and For'mya's sweet orchid scent could and did drive him mad, and watching them pleasure each other with their lips and tongues was usually more than he could take.

He had spent hours alone with her simply exploring Aricia's body with his own lips, tongue and hands, tasting and teasing her flesh in every way her mind could possibly think of. Since Enurrua where they had rediscovered their love for each other, her scent had become like an aphrodisiac to him in every way, and he was completely content to lie between her satiny thighs for hours and drink in her passion as he drove her over the edge again and again. He simply could not get enough of Aricia, and even now, though he had Anja's lush and beautiful body, he could still feel the call of Aricia's flesh and her soul. When For'mya joined with them, it was like a fantasy come true in every way. They enjoyed each other just as much as they enjoyed him, and the sight of their naked flesh pressed against each other and looking at him from their bed was usually all it took to bring Martin to full hardness, ready and willing to perform. The two of them were completely uninhibited with each other and with him, and that openness had drifted down to Anja and Dysea, making them the same way. Their bonds with their Dragon brothers and sister also had the added side effect of giving them much of the endurance of their bond mates, and that included in their bed.

Martin knew Isabella would be his soon, as they had grown so much closer over these last months. Isabella had finally opened up enough to share their bed with them and enjoy the pleasures that Aricia and Anja and For'mya had shown her. While Martin and Dysea were otherwise occupied, the three of them had tasted and tantalized every part of her supple vampire body. They showed her in the most intimate of ways that they did not care she was a vampire, and as his elfin Queen and he howled out their pleasure on the bed, Isabella had joined that symphony next to them as her three lovers brought her up to the edge and pushed her over many times. And while Martin found Seanna incredibly desirable, she was much more reserved, and had only just started to share their bed just to sleep. Anja had told him once that Seanna was still frightened of him in a small way, but Martin could also smell the desire wafting from her pores whenever she slept in their bed. He knew Seanna wanted to experience the pleasures of a man as her lover and Queen did, and he also knew that she would only choose him to have these experiences with. Just last night he had awakened to find Seanna's lush and very naked body pressed up against him tightly, one soft muscular thigh tossed over his legs, her large breasts pressed against his side, while Anja's naked flesh spooned her from behind. He had been too tired to become excited at that point, but it had also told him Seanna was rapidly growing more and more comfortable being in Anja's life and by extension his life, and the life of all those close to him.

Yet ultimately in the end, it was still Aricia all by herself, with her raven colored hair and azure blue eyes that could excite him just that little bit more.

He shook his head with a smile, knowing that having six breathtakingly beautiful women sharing his bed had never even been a fantasy of his before he discovered his true heritage and history, and now he could not imagine himself without any of them.

"You are smiling father." Yuriko's voice echoed in his ears and he turned to look at the vampire female who he considered his adopted daughter without thought.

Yuriko had been used by Yuri, just like Yuri did with everyone around her. Yuri had killed Yuriko's pureblood vampire parents and taken her when she was a small child to play a role while Yuri got close to him. Martin hadn't known it at the time, but Yuriko had rapidly accepted him as the father she had never known, and that feeling had remained and become even stronger in the five hundred years that had passed in the blink of an eye for him when the comet came. Martin also found himself rapidly falling into the role of father with Yuriko, for while she looked only a few years younger than him, Martin was in fact over three thousand years old to Yuriko's six hundred plus years. It had been Yuriko who revealed to him that he had a daughter of his blood out there, and that she had been searching for Lisisa for centuries, hoping to find her and free her from the life of slavery she had been sold into. A search that had quickly become so much easier as soon as Yuriko was able to fully use the complete scope of Martin's power and influence as King of the Lycavorian Union along with his intense desire to find his daughter.

Martin nodded slowly. "I was thinking about everything that has happened to me in the last two years." He told her with a warm smile. "It's pretty wild you have to admit."

Yuriko's dark eyes looked at him oddly. "Do... do you regret anything that has happened father?"

Martin shook his head without hesitation, reaching out to squeeze her arm. “Never.” He answered quickly. “Not a single damn thing.”

This caused Yuriko to smile and the questioning look in her eyes vanished just as quickly as it had appeared. “We are close to her now.” She said softly. Lisisa may not have been a sister to her by blood, but she had raised her for decades as a baby while Yuri ignored her. They became as close as any blood sister’s could be.

Martin nodded. “I’ve been having dreams Yuriko.” He said softly. “Aricia and I both. They are dreams of Lisisa. I haven’t told anyone but Helen, but you need to know now. She’s calling to us. She knows we are coming.” He saw Yuriko’s eyes widen just a bit and he saw her throat tighten as she choked up slightly. She knew the power that her adopted father could wield, and she had seen it in action. If he was saying this now, than it could only mean Lisisa was going to be almost as powerful as Martin and Aricia, and she did indeed sense they were getting close.

“How... how can you be so sure?” Yuriko finally asked.

Martin smiled. “I’m sure.” He said confidently. “She’s of my blood, and her Mindvoice power will begin to start manifesting itself soon. Helen has told me as much. The closer I get... the more she will begin to notice. She knows we are coming for her and she has been reaching out within her dreams without even knowing it. She knows you never gave up on her.”

Yuriko took a deep breath at hearing this and she smiled as well. “And I never will give up on her, not for as long as I have years left in this life.”

“Yuriko... I will do anything I have to do to get her back.” He said softly meeting her dark eyes. “I will not hold back, I will not hesitate. The others might not understand if they see what I might have to do. The place we are going... what I’ve seen in her dreams? It isn’t pretty. Danny understands... he knows me better than anyone alive. I hope you will understand as well.”

“You do not have to explain to me father.” She spoke softly. “Whatever you must do, I will be beside you doing it as well. She may not be of my blood, but Lisisa is as much a sister to me as is possible. And she is the only link I have to the childhood that Yuri stole from me. I intend to get that back, and I intend for us to be sisters once more.”

Martin smiled at her. “You are more a sister to her than you will ever know.” Martin said softly. “Never doubt that Yuriko. Only a sister would have spent all this time looking for her and never given up hope. Lisisa knows that.”

They heard the echo of the airlock hatch sealing and looked at the hatch. Martin nodded. “I just thought you should know.” He told her softly as the hatch slid open and they saw the two dozen faces glaring at them. All of them were armed in some way. There were half a dozen Kochab Hunters, two Evolli and the rest were Lycavorians. None of them looked in the least bit friendly and Martin suddenly had a sense that things were not going to turn out well during this little visit.

The twisted and scared faced of the burly Lycavorian directly in front of them stared at Martin with cruelty in his eyes.

“I’ve never seen you in this part of The Wilds before.” Togra growled as they walked slowly into the main cargo bay of *HOPE’S QUEST*. The Spartans they had seen were all wearing civilian clothes, a miss/mash of clothing that was well worn and not having the hint of newness to it. None of them appeared to be anything other than what they projected outwardly and that was free lance mercenaries. It was well known that pirate crews did not look upon their opponents in a friendly manner, and Martin’s people played that part to the hilt, sharing evil looks with the heavily armed men that had come with Togra.

Martin nodded his head casually. “I... we’ve operated mainly along the Paltian Nebula border.” He answered evenly. “It’s one of the few areas left on that side of Lycavorian space that they do not patrol and leave alone.”

Togra looked at the muscular Lycavorian keenly. He could smell no lies coming from the young man. His scent told Togra this pirate was over three thousand years old however, and the scars on his face spoke of battles won and lost. Togra was older by millennia, but he had not lived this long by being stupid. The Paltian Nebula side of Lycavorian Union territory was harsh, but if you knew how to play the game, smugglers and

pirates could become quite wealthy. This ship told Togra that these pirates had been very successful in the past. The ship may have appeared old, but it was in superb condition, no doubt due to the imposing presence of the obvious commander walking with him. Most of the crew was Lycavorian he saw, a smattering of hard faced elves and turned humans among them. Many of the female elves he saw were quite beautiful, and this only confirmed what he had heard over the years that elf females were delicious. He was very surprised to see the very attractive vampire female walking beside the young Lycavorian. She was young, but her dark eyes held years of wisdom she should not have had. It was not often that you saw Lycavorians and vampires working together, and usually when they did, it was because they were very skilled.

Togra studied this burly young Lycavorian quickly. He had been able to intimidate the vast majority of the captains of the ships he had boarded in the last ten years. There were very few who cared to have a Lycavorian angry at them, and he was able to come away with a great deal of bounty from these ships, from slaves and other females, to precious materials he was able to sell in The Wilds for great profit. He was not so sure with this young man however, there was something about him that did not bode well for him and his crew. He had not dealt with many Lycavorians in this sector of The Wilds because of the proximity to High Coven space as well as their ancient homeworld Lycavore. The Lycavorian mercenaries and pirates he knew avoided this area of space like the plague. He would have to move quickly and take what he wanted before this young Lycavorian challenged him.

“You carry a full load...” Togra looked at Martin. “I didn’t catch your name.”

“That’s because I didn’t give it.” Martin answered meeting Togra’s steady gaze without a hint of fear. “It’s Pulmian.”

“You carry a full load Pulmian.” Togra said again. “You know of course that I have the right as Overseer Cyngi’s enforcement officer to take whatever I want.”

Martin stopped walking and looked at Togra evenly, his hands crossing behind his back while Yuriko stood next to him quietly, acting the part of his executive officer. “What exactly did you have in mind Togra?” Martin asked. “My contact is paying a handsome price for us to deliver this merchandise to Lycavore.” He spoke. “Not to mention he is covering the added cost I charged him to go into High Coven space to this planet on the edges of the universe to begin with. I really have no desire to deal with the High Coven whatsoever.”

Togra chuckled. “Yes... many of us feel that way.” He spoke. “You will allow my men to inspect your cargo and your ship?”

Martin nodded slowly. “If I want to use the Overseer’s Gate I have no choice.” He spoke evenly.

“You have no choice in what I choose to take possession of.” Togra growled. “That is the way Cyngi has decreed these inspections will go. As long as I do not take your main cargo, I am authorized to take whatever other items we deem we want.”

Martin nodded. “Within reason of course, and as long as it does not put my ship or crew at risk, you are welcome to whatever we have. We have collected quite a bit of *bounty* so to speak, and you are more than welcome to inspect it and take whatever you like. As long as you understand that my crew is off limits.” Martin answered with a small smile.

Togra glared at Martin with evil eyes. “You can not dictate to me what I will take.” He spat.

“Let me be very clear Togra.” Martin spoke calmly. “You have a well known reputation of taking crew members from the ships you stop and *inspect*. Mainly the female crew members. Now I don’t care what you do with the females of your crew, but you will not take any of the females on my ship. They are part of my crew... and some of them are quite skilled. I would find it impossible to recruit females if I allowed you to take the ones I have. And my own men like the company they provide, and the females also know that is part of their position on this ship; to provide companionship to the men.”

“You realize of course I can refuse you access to the Gate if you do not adhere to my demands.” Togra spoke.

Martin nodded. “Yes I do. I also know that I would immediately contact Overseer Cyngi to inform him of your actions and ask him if he would like to lose the small fortune in credits I am paying him for access to this Gate. I will leave it to you to explain to him why he needs to pay it back to me and to my investors, because they are some powerful people who don’t like to be *barik wen!* That is something I’m entirely sure he would not appreciate in the least.” Martin told him.

“You are not in a position to threaten me Pulmian.” Togra spoke harshly. “My frigate could destroy your ship in seconds! And I would only have to report you refused to be boarded.”

“Are you so sure Togra?” Martin spoke casually. “I haven’t lived this many years by being stupid. How do you think I have survived in the Paltian Nebula Region for so long? Not to mention been very profitable for myself and my investors. And even if this was the case, you and those with you would be very dead. You wouldn’t make it off this ship alive, that much I guarantee you and your men.”

“Are you so sure of that?” Togra demanded.

Yuriko’s stepped forward slightly her eyes changing to vampire cobalt blue and she allowed her fangs to extend just enough to be seen protruding from her lips. “We are very sure.” She spoke confidently. “Are you?”

Togra gazed at her for a long moment before turning to look at Martin once more. There was no fear in those green eyes, no fear and no back down in them either. Overseer Cyngi would be incensed if he had to pay back credits he most likely had already spent in other endeavors. He held Martin’s unwavering gaze for another long moment hoping that he would back down before turning to look at his men.

“Begin your searches!” He barked out the order. The Lycavorians and Kochab Hunters nodded and quickly began to disperse down the corridor. He turned back to Martin. “You will take me to your medical center, for we require medicines and then I will inspect your personal quarters Pulmian. In my experience... the captains of ships like yours keep the best for themselves.” He spoke harshly.

Martin motioned down the corridor. “The medical center is down this way.” He spoke motioning with his hand.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Yuriko... stay with the Kochab fools. Danny and Atropos will cover the rest.*

Martin projected into Yuriko’s mind. She didn’t blink and simply turned around and headed down the corridor.

Togra watched as Yuriko turned and he had to admire the way she filled out her dark gray and black uniform as she walked away. She had elegant features that were very exotic to look at and for a brief moment he wondered what it would be like to have her in his bed. “There are very few mercenary captains that can command the loyalty of any vampire, let alone a female vampire. How is it that you have done so?”

Martin lifted his arm again down the corridor. “I have to share my cargo with you, but that does not mean I have to share anything else. This way Togra.” He said without the slightest hint of friendliness in his voice.

APO PRIME

TUYA

MAIN ROYAL PALACE COMPOUND ESTATE

The Main Palace Estate is what was meant originally as the home for Martin and his Queens to use. With the discovery of the dragons and the role they now played in the lives of the King and Queens, Martin had taken the Island Palace, which was originally meant as a vacation home, and turned it into their main residence. The Island Palace had been expanded in size to accommodate all of those considered to be family by the King and Queens. The dragon cavern had been built to exacting detail, and still the island itself was almost thirty square kilometers in size and was nothing but thick timber and vegetation and rocky hills. The Main Palace Estate was now the official offices for Martin and the Queens, as well as the comfortable residences for those Lycavorians who cared for the gardens and grounds, not to mention the huge staff. Martin insisted that these men and women were to occupy the many buildings on the four square kilometer Estate, for they had earned it with their service. There was a small plush retreat on the estate for visiting dignitaries, and a complete Mora of Spartans called the Main Estate their home. A large Water Lifter marina had been added for travel to the Island Palace, for the only way there now was by Water Lifter or dragon. No aircraft were allowed to over fly the Island Palace because of Torma and Isheeni and their hatchlings. Only they commanded the airspace around the Island Palace.

The Main Palace Estate was a beehive of activity now, the word having gone out among the King’s trusted employees that Jeth was missing. Elynth never left Dasha or Androcles’s presence now, all of them blanketed by an entire Lochi of Spartans no matter where they went. It was rapidly becoming common knowledge that Elynth and their Prince had begun bonding even though they were both still so very young.

Fully three Mora of Spartans were scouring the city and spaceports within a hundred kilometers of Tuya looking for the dragon hatchling.

For'mya sat behind Martin's desk now, listening as Deia gave her a briefing on what had been happening. Aurith rested on several soft pillows on the side of Martin's desk within reach of For'mya, her golden eyes always alert and right now fixed on Deia as she spoke.

"Armetus will be here later this evening to give you a full brief." Deia spoke to For'mya as she sat in the comfortable chair in front of Martin's desk in his official office in the Main Palace Building. "Two officers from *Mjolnir Hand's* main base will be arriving within the hour. One of their security cams picked up something just before the King's ship departed that they feel you should see."

For'mya looked at her. "What was that?" She asked. "I don't have time to view minor security footage with Jeth missing."

Deia shook her head. "I don't know, they wouldn't tell me. All they said was that it was important. They report only to Martin, for that is the way he set it up. When he is not on Apo Prime, the only other person he has authorized them to report to is you." Deia replied.

For'mya's dark brown eyes widen in stunned surprise. "Me?" She gasped.

Deia smiled and nodded her head. "Anything having to do with the dragons or Mjolnir's Hand falls to your purview when the King, Aricia and Dysea are off world. That is the way Martin set it up as I said." Deia explained. "I don't know the why of it, only that an elf must be the one making the decisions in regards to anything having to do with them. To be honest... I'm quite happy with that. I must spend more time with Arzoal before I am comfortable enough carrying on a conversation that concerns dragons."

Aurith turned her golden eyes on For'mya. She had grown now to two meters in length and height, her wing span almost three meters across. Dragon hatchlings grew extraordinarily fast in their first months of life, rapidly reaching their initial adult size within a year. They would continue to grow more slowly over their lifetimes to their complete size, but within that first year they grew unbelievably fast. In six more months Aurith would be large enough and strong enough to be ridden, and though For'mya had never wanted a dragon bound to her, Aurith was now considered her dragon. The bond the two of them had was growing in power and even Arzoal had commented on it when she had last been here, and secretly For'mya relished the time when they would be able to take to the skies.

It is because of the history we have For'mya. She spoke.

For'mya looked at Aurith. *History?*

Aurith nodded her large blue scaled head. *I will relate to you what that history is when we are alone again. It is time you knew of the history elves and dragons have. When mother told us we were fascinated, and given what is taking place, I don't believe she would be angry if you now knew what only a few others know. At least right now.*

For'mya nodded her head slowly. *I look forward to that Aurith.*

As do I. Aurith replied.

For'mya sat back in the large leather chair and took a deep breath. She inhaled deeply and Martin's powerful mint scent and Aricia's lavender/coco scent filled her nostrils and her being. She smiled inwardly suddenly realizing why their scents were so intermingled in the chair, and For'mya could only wonder what that must have felt like for them both, and why she wasn't present to participate.

A year ago such thoughts would not have even crossed her mind.

For'mya was the last female elf in the elfin royal line. The only female elf outside of her mother left with royal blood and of the two of them, only For'mya could have children now. Her mother had suffered an accident many years ago that had taken away that ability from her. The actions of her father pushing her to be concubine had driven a wedge between them and her, and it wasn't until the day she had seen Martin Leonidas obliterate a High Coven prison planet to rescue her alone that her views had changed. Her life had taken a very different and dramatic turn the day Martin had walked into it, and looking back on the last fourteen months For'mya had absolutely no regrets about how any of it had transpired since then.

For'mya was now quite willingly and quite happily, the Royal Elfin Concubine to the Lycavorian King and Queen. And that was by official title only. She was a great deal more to all those who knew her and the power she now wielded openly was greater than even Deia as Prime Minister. Martin and Aricia had made it very clear to her where she stood in the scheme of things, to include her position in their lives. They also made

it very clear to everyone around them that For'mya was far more than a concubine. She had the power and influence of one of Martin's Queens, absent only of the title, which suited her just fine. The last year everyone had seen her grow into the woman she now was. She was madly in love with both her King and her Queen and she slept in the same large bed with Martin and Aricia with very few exceptions. Martin Leonidas surpassed any lover she had known in her eleven hundred years of life by a very wide margin. He did things to her that she had never dreamed of, things that she could not live without now. While she had shared a brief liaison with a fellow female elf pilot many years ago, it did not burn anywhere near as brightly as the pleasure she shared with Aricia as often as the two of them could. Just the thought of being naked with them in bed, feeling their naked flesh wrapped around her was enough to induce warm sensations throughout her.

For'mya's world had opened so much when they had come into it, and not just in the realm of their bed. The pleasures she had experienced in their bed surpassed anything she had ever thought about, and when Anja, Dysea, and now Isabella were included in that coupling, it usually resulted in all of them pleasuring each other until they were exhausted. However, it was obvious to For'mya that her influence extended far outside of their bed. She was eighth in line of power, and while she would never be Queen, that did not stop Martin, Aricia or anyone else from showing her she did not need to be a Queen to be an indispensable part of their lives.

She was one of the two premier elfin pilots in the Union fleet, and while fourteen months ago she considered herself superior to everyone, the events of her life had shown her differently. She and Endith, the female elf pilot from Earth, were now held up as the finest flight crew to have ever lived, and when Tina was added into that mix, there was not much the three of them could not handle together. When the three of them were not flying Martin and Aricia around, they were teaching new pilots and crews. For'mya had accompanied Deia and Dysea to Elear and other planets on several occasions to participate in political meetings, and she was now considered a blossoming star in that field though she avoided it like the plague whenever she could.

She and Aricia were rarely ever seen apart, mainly because they loved each other almost as much as they both loved Martin. And up until ten days ago, For'mya had never thought she would have the courage to become the one thing that she desired most of all.

Martin had changed her into wolf in order to save her life.

There were times when she could still feel the bite of his fangs into her neck. The virus coming from Martin Leonidas was in its purest form entering into her blood stream. It changed her into what she had desired for so long, and now she relished the feel of power and freedom it gave her. The new smells and added abilities her transformation had given her were the things For'mya embraced as easily as pulling on her boots in the morning. She had finally become wolf; just like the man and woman she so loved.

"For'mya?" Deia's voice broke into her thoughts.

For'mya sat up quickly her face turning slightly red. "Oh I'm sorry." She said quickly. "I was thinking of..."

Deia smiled. "I know. I worry about them everyday as well." She said with a smile. "I was hoping perhaps you had heard from them?"

"I spoke with Aricia before coming to the Main Estate here. She faced off with this unknown Firespitter and got the upper hand very briefly. The dragon and rider escaped before being able to complete their goal of killing Tarifa and Aihola." For'mya told her. "They were able to pull Isra and Tarifa's father safely from the island where they had been shot down. Aricia has some ideas about this dragon, but she wanted to discuss them with Isra and Arzoal before going into more detail."

"Nothing from Martin?" Deia asked.

For'mya shook her head. "I don't expect to hear from him for at least another two days or so. I don't know how he intends to get a message to us, but he will figure something out I'm sure."

"You should know that Governor Vorilas and his daughter have requested a meeting with you." Deia spoke.

For'mya looked at her. "The woman from the party?" She asked.

Deia nodded. "That would be her. If the message I received was accurate... she wants to apologize for her words and actions that night."

"Deia can't this wait?" For'mya asked. "I have no desire to whittle away time with them when Jeth is missing."

"Armetus believes meeting with them is a good idea." Deia spoke.

“Why?” Deia shifted in her chair and For’mya took notice of this quickly. “Deia... what aren’t you telling me?”

“Sadie is on the list of potential suspects for the attack on you and Sivana.” Deia told her.

“*That pompous wench!?!?*” For’mya declared dismissing that knowledge. “She isn’t smart enough to be able to plan something like that by herself!”

Deia leaned forward in her chair. “Keep the meeting For’mya. If anything... it may work to our advantage to have Governor Vorilas in our corner whenever we need him.”

“I will not play political games when we do not have any idea where Jeth is Deia!” For’mya snapped getting to her feet. “If something has happened to him, I will have someone’s *mida!*”

“I’ve seen the information Armetus has gathered on her For’mya.” Deia spoke. “He presents a very convincing argument.”

“Why would this Sadie have a grudge against me?” For’mya asked. “I do not even know the woman.”

“You called her *Upaee* at the State Dinner in front of some very powerful people.” Deia said. “That all by itself was very embarrassing for her.”

“She deserved it!” For’mya snapped.

“I don’t disagree.” Deia spoke. “We have known for some time however, that while we may have rendered Veldruk’s major intelligence networks here on Apo Prime inert, the High Coven still has many assets to draw from. One of which was a very old program to turn young and attractive Lycavorian females into spies for the Coven. Armetus has some information that guides him in this direction with regards to the Governor’s daughter.”

For’mya met her gaze and nodded. “Very well. I will keep the meeting. Jeth is my first concern however, and I will never forgive myself if something bad has happened to him.”

“Nothing has happened to him Lady For’mya.” The male voice spoke from the doorway. “At least not yet, and definitely nothing that we have the ability to prevent given where he now is.”

For’mya and Deia turned and saw the two officers in the doorway to Martin’s office. They wore the shoulder boards of Mjolnir Hand’s Ground Support unit. One was a Colonel; the other was a senior Lieutenant.

“What do you mean?” Deia asked getting to her feet as well now.

“Yes!” For’mya exclaimed. “Where is he?” He demanded excitedly.

“May we?” The Colonel asked.

For’mya motioned them into the office. “Of course Colonel.” She spoke. “The Prime Minister told me you were coming to show me something. Security footage I believe. You are saying it shows where Jeth is?”

The Colonel motioned to the Lieutenant to set up what he was carrying on the table in the office and he nodded. “Yes Milady, it is security footage of the King’s Ship roughly one hour before they took off from the airfield. It’s all very mundane stuff until what I’m about to show you.”

For’mya and Deia moved over to stand beside the table as the Lieutenant set up the portable Holoimager and stepped back. He activated it and all of them could see the reasonably clear picture of *HOPE’S QUEST* on the airfield, the ramp down. Foot traffic was minimal because almost everything had been loaded already.

“It’s coming up here.” The Colonel said pointing to the side of the image. It happened quickly and then the large blue/black dragon hatchling burst into view and scampered up the ramp into the bowels of the freighter.

For’mya’s eyes were wide. “By all that is holy!” She gasped. “He... he got on the *anse* ship!”

Oh he is so dead when Father and King Martin find him! Aurith spoke as she fluttered to her feet quickly, moving to stand next to For’mya. Even now she dwarfed all of them in the room.

The Colonel nodded. “We crossed referenced the feed with three other cameras, and they all showed the same thing. He got on the ship forty-nine minutes before it lifted off.”

“But why would he do that?” Deia asked aloud to no one in particular.

“Jeth has always been the more rebellious of the hatchlings.” For’mya spoke turning slowly and looking at Aurith. “And he adores his father and Martin Leonidas to the point of being just crazy enough to do something like this.” For’mya turned to the Colonel. “Stop the searches of the surrounding Spaceports Colonel. Do it casually over a period of several hours so that it does not raise suspicion.”

The Colonel nodded. “I will see to it.” He answered quickly.

“Is there any way to get word to the King?” Deia asked.

For'mya shook her head. "No. We can not beam a transmission to them while they are moving within The Wilds. There is too much interference and too much risk of it being detected."

"How does he plan to send a message when he reaches Lycavore?" Deia asked.

The Colonel looked at the Lieutenant and nodded his head. The Lieutenant turned back to Deia.

"Captain Komirri and Admiral O'Connor developed a transmission unit that will allow them to piggy back a signal on the High Coven's own carrier waves. It is very low frequency, and unless it is being looked for specifically, we will be able to communicate with them on this frequency freely and without worry."

Deia couldn't help but smile. "This Admiral O'Connor is certainly turning out to be one of the finds of the universe with the equipment he is devising."

For'mya matched her smile and nodded. "The man is a genius." She said in agreement. "If everything is going as planned, they will break into Lycavore's system in eighteen hours. I expect them to contact us within the first few hours of arriving, and we will want to be together for that transmission Deia."

"I'll make sure my schedule is clear." She spoke. "I think..."

The commotion and shuffling in the corridor outside was followed by several loud shouts and grunts. Deia and For'mya rushed into the corridor to see four heavily armed Spartans with crimson shoulder boards on their uniforms holding two other Lycavorian males against the wall none too gently.

"What is going on?" For'mya demanded as Aurith appeared directly behind her.

All eyes turned to where she stood and the eyes of the pair of men being held against the wall grew slightly wider when they saw the dragon hatchling.

Aurith had questioned her mother endlessly about For'mya and why she felt as she did towards the female elf. Isheeni had explained to her that it was fate that made Aurith open her eyes and For'mya was the first one she had seen. Fate had determined that she was to be bonded to For'mya, and her mother's words were coming true as they grew closer together. That they could speak so easily together within Mindvoice, and shield their conversations from all but Martin and Aricia was the biggest sign that they were meant to be bonded. Her grandmother Arzoal had confirmed this when she was here just recently, putting them through half a dozen tests of their Mindvoice abilities as well as other physical abilities. Her mother had told her that it was fate that decided no other dragons but those born from her and her father would ever serve the King and Queen or those that they loved. It was why she was bonding so easily with For'mya, and why Elynth was bonding so easily and quickly with Androcles. Her mother felt that Jeth's bond mate would be the next child born from Martin and one of his Queens.

"Who are you?" For'mya barked as she glared at the strange Spartan officer she had never seen before.

The Spartan stepped away from the others and bowed his head quickly. "I am Senior Commander Kelia, Enomotarch of your *Durcunusaan* Detachment Lady For'mya. We are your *Hippeis Sedla*."

For'mya looked at Deia who had a stunned expression on her face. "Deia... I've..."

"Wolves of the Blood." Deia said softly with a little bit of awe in her voice, and she turned to look at her with wide eyes. "*Durcunusaan* means Wolves of the Blood in the ancient language."

"I know what it means." For'mya said gently. "Who are these men though?"

"They are just what the Commander has said they are." The deep voice spoke from the side. They turned and saw General Vengal stride into the room confidently. For'mya smiled and stepped up to the elfin General who was one of Martin's closest friends and who had befriended her almost from the start on Ukwav.

"Vengal..." For'mya spoke as she hugged him lightly and kissed his cheek. "How are you? It's been several weeks since we have seen you."

Vengal smiled at her and nodded. "Vistr and I have been busy putting the finishing touches on some things. I wanted to get here and tell you before they arrived, but it seems we may have trained them better than we thought if they got here before me." He spoke looking at the Spartan who had spoken. "Well done Commander."

Kelia nodded. "Thank you sir."

For'mya looked at him. "What is this Vengal? Who are these men and why are they here?" She asked.

As with the majority of elves, Vengal had no fear of dragons and he stepped right up to Aurith and reached out to scratch her thick neck, watching as her head canted towards him in delight. "You have grown Aurith." He said with a grin. "Pretty soon you will be as big as your father."

Aurith snorted and shook her dragon head. For'mya chuckled and came up next to him. "She says she truly hopes not."

Vengal laughed as well and turned back to face For'mya. "Mjolnir's Hand will not be fulfilling the role of Royal Guard." He explained to her. "They are the extension of the King's will and voice now, and that must be their only job. General Vistr and I have spent the last year putting together a true Royal Guard. The *Hippeis* I believe the ancient Spartan term is according to The First Oracle. *Hippeis Sedla*. We called them the *Durcunusaan*."

For'mya looked quickly at Kelia and back to Vengal. "You are assigning them to me?" She asked.

Vengal nodded. "Every member of the Royal Family to include Androcles, Gorgo, Dasha and all of the King's half brothers and sisters. The Guardian of the Line, The Oracle, Yuriko, and Lisisa when he finds her, as well as several others on Earth." He replied. "Deia I have already dispatched your detachment to your office. They will await your arrival back to the Parliament Buildings."

"I don't need a personal guard!" Deia snapped.

"Perhaps... but since Martin ordered it... you have one now." Vengal told her with a sly grin.

"Martin ordered this?" Deia asked.

"He wants those close to him protected." Vengal said. "He will not allow what happened with Aricia to happen again with anyone close to him. It was actually Aricia who brought it to me first when she still carried Androcles. We selected and trained three hundred, for you all know the meaning of that number to the King. Those not protecting actual individuals will be protecting anything having to do with the dragons that have become so much a part of their lives. Believe me... when Gorgo and Riall discovered they were to have personal guards they were not happy either. Martin and Aricia will not bend on this issue Deia, they are insisting on it. They will have only one mission and that is to safeguard whoever they are assigned to and they will answer only to the King or Queen Aricia. The members of *Durcunusaan* are spreading out now, even as we speak to establish security over their charges."

"Aricia? Dysea and Isabella?" For'mya asked quickly.

Vengal nodded and took her hand squeezing it. "Her detachment left this morning on the fastest *AUTUMN MOON* Frigate that was in orbit. As well as those assigned to Tareif and the others on Earth. Dysea and Isabella's detachments are moving for the spaceport now and will arrive on Elear in two days to join up with them. Kelia leads the four men who are assigned to you."

"Did you train them to rough up people coming to the Main Palace Estate Vengal?" Deia asked.

"Prime Minister... these two gentlemen barged their way past security at the entrance and were making their way back here into a secure area." Kelia spoke quickly. "This area of the Main Palace is off limits to guests."

For'mya looked at the two men pinned to the wall. "Indeed it is." She spoke as she moved closer to the two men, her dark brown eyes gazing upon them. "I know you." She spoke. "You are Commander Wistmus! I had you relieved of your post Commander. Why are you here?"

"You had no right to relieve me!" Wistmus snapped.

For'mya looked at the Spartan holding him pinned to the wall and nodded for him to release him. Wistmus yanked his arms back and straightened out his uniform as he turned to face For'mya. "You were saying." She said.

"I work for the Ministry of State and Travel Lady For'mya. The MST does not fall under the control of the military, nor the King. We work directly for the Union Senate." Wistmus spoke more calmly as he got his anger under control. "You do not have the authority to relieve me of my command of the Spaceports control. The only person who can do that is the senior Senate Chair. I am willing to take into account the newness of your position as Concubine to the King in this matter Lady For'mya, but I have come here for a formal apology and to have you instruct the military officers now swarming over my Spaceports to leave immediately."

Deia opened her mouth to bark out angrily but For'mya lifted her hand slightly and shook her head. She looked at the man, his arrogance now returning to him as he stood there casually. For'mya stepped up to him. "You wear the rank of Commander in the United Lycavorian Union military Wistmus, do you not?" For'mya spoke.

"I work for the MST." Wistmus said again. "It is they who appointed me to the position and it is only they who can relieve me of that position."

“That is not what I asked you.” For’mya said. “Do you wear the uniform of the ULU?”

“I think that is obvious.” Wistmus answered smugly.

“The last time I checked, once I assumed the position of Bound Concubine to the King, my rank was elevated to that of Admiral/Lieutenant.” For’mya said calmly. “And the last time I looked at rank structure... Admiral/Lieutenant is far above Commander in authority correct?”

“I don’t see your point in that.” Wistmus spoke.

For’mya’s eyes changed quickly and her fangs burst from her gums in a display of anger. “My point is you weasel of a male... I outrank you!” For’mya shouted into his face. “I spoke with the Senate Chair immediately after you so rudely cut me off. He signed your termination order five minutes after I told him what was going on!” For’mya took the small data pad from the belt pouch she was wearing and tossed it at Wistmus, watching as it bounced off his stunned chest. “When a request to close the spaceports comes from the Island Palace you fool, you don’t question it, you act on it! We wouldn’t order such an action unless it was necessary *Igor!* Now since you carried your *monsene benee mida* here, I will save you the trouble of any further embarrassment publicly for being such a *nubous piegn sibfla* and tell you myself your career is over! Done! *Nubous Vonin!*”

Deia and the others could only stand there and watch as For’mya let Commander Wistmus take the full fury of her anger. Deia was barely able to contain her smile as For’mya acted no different than Aricia when she got truly angry. Ancient Lycavorian words began to inter-space almost naturally within Aricia’s speech when she became angry and that habit was coming out right now in For’mya. There were very few, fewer than even Deia had first thought, who could still speak the Ancient Lycavorian language, and that number had grown smaller and smaller as the years had passed. Deia and Helen both hoped it would make a come back soon since it appeared that Martin and all of his Queens, as well as For’mya and several others who had been with him from the beginning were very fluent in the ancient language. She had asked Helen about it one day months ago, how Martin and the others could speak it so fluently when they had never been exposed to it from childhood. The Oracle had replied that it was somehow encoded into Martin’s sub-conscious mind, and the moment he had touched his father’s Spartan monument on Earth it had triggered the recognition patterns within his mind. When he turned Anja and Dysea and now For’mya, it carried over to them; and when he and Aricia became Soulmates, it triggered that part of her sub-conscious mind as well.

It was something else long forgotten by their people that Martin’s return had begun to revive, as well as the influx of men and women from Enurrua and other planets that were once under Chetak’s rule. It was an incredibly hard language to learn, and many who were not Lycavorian could not form the proper syllables to speak it properly.

Wistmus could do nothing but stare at For’mya as she finished and turned to Kelia. “*Gonaire allon geldusvan arbet aur jendrar!*” (Remove this piece of garbage from my sight!)

The *Durcunusaan* Commander nodded his head quickly. “*Aen forn rota Aur Ina!*” He answered. He snatched Wistmus’s arm in his hand and yanked the man toward the door with no gentleness in any way. (As you order my lady)

For’mya turned back to see Deia and Vengal looking at her with smirks. “What?” She blurted out.

Vengal laughed now. “I am still learning the ancient language of Martin’s people, but you just called him some very inventive names.”

Deia nodded and stepped up to her. “Yes you did.” She spoke.

For’mya grinned. “He made me angry with his pompous attitude.” She said.

Deia took her arm. “Come... we have more to cover before Armetus arrives.” She said with a smile.

HOPE’S QUEST

Togra stared at Anja hungrily as he maneuvered around the small medical bay she had set up. That she was Hadarian was easily noticeable to him, yet what was surprising was the fact that she was wolf. Her honey scent was very prominent, yet he could also detect that her blood burned for only one male, his mint scent saturating her body completely. This was the honey scent he had detected on Martin as they walked the corridors of the ship to the medical bay, and judging by the way his scent mingled with hers, they were mates.

He had never seen a Hadarian in The Wilds, let alone three. Anja was working on Sivana, doing a very good impression of treating her for something while Seanna sat at the small desk and made mindless entries into the computer there. Belen occupied one of the beds in the small bay, also pretending to be sick.

Togra had to admit this young Lycavorian had excellent taste in females. Even the two elf females and the single human female he had seen on their walk here were exquisite looking. All of them had been turned, but they were far better looking than the females currently slaved out on his ship. It only made Togra even more tempted to disregard what Martin had said, kill him and take the females, reporting back to Cyngi that they refused to be boarded.

Togra turned back to Martin. “You did not tell me you had Hadarians among your crew.” He spoke finally.

“I have four Hadarians among my crew.” Martin replied from where he stood. “And you didn’t ask. Not that it even matters one way or the other.”

“It matters to me!” Togra snapped. “Healers are very valuable in The Wilds, you must know that.”

“You have already been told my crew is off limits.” Martin said.

“You can keep the one you have claimed as a mate, and the one that is not here. I will take the other two and trouble you no more.” Togra offered quickly, knowing that the two females would be extremely valuable on his ship.

Anja turned to face him and motioned to the three large duffels by the door, her anger starting to get the better of her. “I have given you three quarters of all our medical supplies.” She popped. “Why don’t you take it and leave.”

Togra turned back to her and met her jade green gaze. “You allow your woman to speak out of turn?” He asked surprised. “Interesting.”

He held Anja’s defiant glare for several moments before finding he could not stare into those eyes for very long and he turned to face Sivana, who sat on the table. He studied her for a long moment as well, believing he should know her from somewhere.

“I know you.” He spoke.

Sivana shook her head. “I don’t think so.” She stated plainly.

Togra stepped forward and inhaled deeply, letting the pine scent of her fill his nostrils. Her sea green eyes were bright and focused and they held nothing but murder in them as they met his gaze. “I’m sure I know you.” He stated once more. “You are familiar to me somehow.”

“As I said... I don’t think so.” Sivana spoke calmly. “I’ve been a member of this crew for close to a hundred years, and I’ve never left the area of the Paltian Nebula.”

“Let me see your identification chip.” Togra demanded suddenly.

Martin pushed off of the wall. “For what purpose?” He asked.

“I wish to see her history!” Togra barked. “Show me your chip woman! Now!”

“I am not a member of your crew, nor am I a piece of meat from your ship!” Sivana growled at him. “You can not order me around!”

“Just show it to him Sivana.” Anja spoke quickly.

Sivana glared at her sister with real anger, not feigned and she snatched the green ID chip from her belt almost tossing it at Togra. Anja blinked rapidly as images flashed in her mind. They were images from Sivana, images of a brutal rape and pain. Anja’s jade green eyes went a little wider as she looked at her sister, and Helen’s words came back to her then.

“She is your twin sister Anja. You shared your mother’s womb, so it stands to reason you will have a sisterly connection with her that reaches beyond Mindvoice. When you discover it, cultivate it, for it will only serve to help you better understand your newfound sister. And it will bring you closer to her.”

Togra held the chip in his hand looking at her for a long moment before lowering his eyes to the chip as Sivana got off the bed and moved to stand further away from Togra. Anja glanced at Martin quickly and saw him shake his head.

Belen was watching everything from the bed where he sat quietly, his shirt off. He detected something from Sivana that the others did not, something dark and unforgiving. Belen took a slow deep breath to calm his nerves at Togra’s treatment of Sivana, lest he hear the racing of his heart and his eyes settled on Sivana. What he felt strongly for the Queen’s sister was not something he should feel. She was infuriating and reckless, with a

chip on her shoulder the size of a mountain. She needed to be put over someone's knee and spanked like a child for some of her antics. She had been teasing him endlessly for days, brushing up against him whenever she could, always sending coy looks his way. Belen was no fool and could tell by her scent that she wanted him.

Almost as much as he wanted her. Her musky rose scent drove his wolf senses wild and he did not know what to make of that.

She was the Queen's sister and it would be inappropriate to pursue such a relationship regardless of what he desired. His father would have his ass for participating in such an action, not to mention what the King would do. He did not know how to approach his father about it, or anyone for that matter, and he certainly could not go to the Queen. Sivana was her sister and undoubtedly would be very protective of her and not want her to enter into a relationship with a common Spartan. Sivana's normal musky rose scent was masked by the pine scented pads the Queen had inserted into the fabric of her clothes, but Belen had no trouble picking it up, no matter how faint it was, and that fact troubled him. Just as his rising anger over the pig Togra's treatment of her troubled him.

Togra looked up slowly and his eyes went directly to Sivana. "This ID chip does not appear to be in order." He said slowly.

"What are you talking about?" Sivana demanded crossing her arms over her chest.

Togra held up the green chip. "This chip is telling me your name is Sangria and you are an employee of Cyngi. Why is that do you think?"

Sivana's eyes went wide and she glanced quickly at the pouch on her belt just as Togra's hand snatched out and grabbed a handful of Anja's lush Persian red hair and he shoved the barrel of his rifle under her chin.

"I knew I recognized you Sangria!" Togra spoke as he turned quickly and looked at Martin. "I wouldn't do anything if I were you. One twitch from my finger and she dies." He stepped away from Martin, dragging Anja with him. "You are not who you seem to be Pulmian. Why does that not surprise me?"

Belen had come off the table but he stopped as Martin held up his hand.

Sivana's eyes were wide in horror and fear and anger. "I gave him the wrong chip!" She barked looking at Martin.

"Let me go!" Anja growled.

Togra yanked Anja's hair viciously causing her to gasp in pain. "Be silent wench! It seems I will have you as well as everything else on this ship!"

"I'd listen to her if I were you." Martin spoke evenly, his blood beginning to burn in anger. "She has quite a temper!"

"Rictar!" Togra barked canting his head to the side.

Martin smiled slowly. "Your internal communicator won't work." He spoke taking a step forward. "I asked you to let her go!"

"Don't move!" Togra barked. "I will ventilate the *upae*'s head if you take another step!"

"I am not a bitch! And you will never have me in any way, shape or form you *nubous piegn*!" Anja growled as she twisted her body away from Togra just as the single shot from the projectile weapon echoed in the room and Togra's head snapped back. His finger twitched on the trigger of his rifle and a burst of fire erupted from the barrel. Martin's eyes went wide as Anja's body was jerked away from Togra and slammed into the bulkhead wall before beginning to drop to the deck, blood leaking from her temple.

"NO!" Martin and Seanna screamed together, both of them moving towards Anja, Martin diving to catch her body before it collapsed fully on the deck.

Belen covered the distance to Sivana in three steps, ripping the hand weapon from her grasp as the report from the weapons fire echoed out of the room through the corridors of the ship.

"*Wen forn malda channe?*" He screamed out. "That was the *nubous piegn* thing you could have done! The others will hear the shots!" (Are you crazy woman?)

Sivana's eyes were wide as she gazed at where Martin cradled Anja's limp form in his arms.

Danny walked around the engineering compartment of *HOPE'S QUEST* with the four Lycavorians and two Kochab Hunters. The engineering section was the largest section of the ship, and separated into two levels. The LSD core was in the center and hummed along in idle power while Anuk and Nayeca stood on the higher

level pretending to study instruments. The six guards had noticed them both immediately upon entering engineering, and all their eyes kept going back to where they were standing, even as they made a show of looking around the section trying to find whatever they could. None of them had any engineering experience and were as clueless as Danny was when it came to what worked and how.

The Lycavorians could smell Danny heavily on the two female elves, and especially the red haired one who had been turned. Had they been smarter and more alert instead of ruled by their sexual urges, they would have asked why they could only smell Danny on them. And they would have asked why he had made both of them his mates if they were supposed to be playthings for the entire ship. One of the Lycavorians mercenaries, the one who appeared to be in charge, saw something out of the corner of his eye behind one of the large cooling tanks and he stopped.

“What was that?” He demanded.

Danny looked to where he was staring. “What do you mean?”

“I saw something move behind the tank. Something very large and black.” He declared. “Do you have animals running free on this ship?”

“Animals? What kind of animals?” Danny asked surprised. “We don’t have any animals on this ship.”

“I saw something!” He stated again moving to the tank and looking around the corner into the shadows.

“I’m telling you... we don’t have animals running around our ship!” Danny spoke as he watched the man reach his arm behind the tank slowly. “We...”

The Lycavorians eyes went wide, his face twisting into horrible pain and Danny heard the unmistakable crunching sound of bone just as the Lycavorian let out a blood curling scream and yanked his arm back, blood spurting from the stump. Danny’s eyes went wide as he saw the arm was gone from just above the elbow.

“What the fuck!” He screamed moving forward even as the two and a half meter tall, blue/black dragon hatchling moved from the shadows and cut loose with a short blast of superheated breath that caught the screaming Lycavorian full in the face.

At that instant the sounds of gunfire ripped through the interior of the ship causing heads to turn from whatever they were doing.

ROGUE STORM! ROGUE STORM!

The sound of Belen’s excited voice shouting the code word within Mindvoice spurred every member of *HOPE’S QUEST* into action in the blink of a single eye. It was a code word used for only one purpose.

It meant the King or one of the Queens was down.

Atropos was in the main cargo hold with Yuriko when he felt his son scream out in Mindvoice. His reaction was as predictable as it was efficient. His Shi Viska flared immediately to life and launched from his arm while his *Nehtes* appeared in his hand as if magically. The short metal spear extended in a single beat of his heart and ran through the mercenary that stood closest to him. His Shi Viska cleanly decapitated the next Lycavorian and he watched with grim satisfaction as his King’s adopted vampire daughter acted a micro fraction after he did, two wickedly sharp knives appearing in her hands as she quickly dispatched the Kochab Hunter that stood nearest to her. There was a massive banging sound and Atropos whirled toward the false metal wall as a dozen *Durcunusaan* descended upon the remaining ten mercenaries, their weapons out, and their faces showing they would not be kind in any way. The loud horrible wrenching sound caused all heads to turn as the false wall installed to hide the *STRIKER DT* came crashing down and the bodies of two enormous and fully grown dragons came rushing out while Endith and Tina looked on in stunned shock from the ramp of the *STRIKER*. The appearance of the massive obsidian black dragon and the smaller but still huge green scaled beast paralyzed the mercenaries on *HOPE’S QUEST*, making them quite easy to subdue quickly, which the *Durcunusaan* did without gentleness.

Torma made no effort to block his thoughts and when he screamed out within Mindvoice, everyone on the ship heard it. *JETH MY SON!*

On the heels of his one word was Miath’s cry for his Queen. *Anja I am coming!*

Atropos could only watch as the two dragons made directly for the corridors that would lead them where they wanted to go. The corridors on *HOPE’S QUEST* had been enlarged enough to accommodate the two

dragons, and they easily and quickly vanished from sight. He turned back to look at Yuriko, her hands stained with the blood of the Hunter she had killed.

“Tell Komirri to destroy the frigate!” Yuriko commanded quickly.

Atropos wasted no more time and sprinted to the communications panel on the bulkhead he was closest too, slamming his hand down on the controls. “Komirri! Rogue Storm! Rogue Storm! Destroy the frigate!”

Komirri turned from his chair, lowering his side arm the barrel smoking from where he had just shot one of the three mercenary Lycavorians on his bridge. As members of his bridge crew subdued the others, he snapped his head around to where Filrian sat at the weapons control station. “Extend the missile pods! Eight M15 Ship Killers! Full yield on all warheads! Gamma 41 spread! Fire now!”

Along the port side of *HOPE'S QUEST* a long, dark gray rectangular box rose from the superstructure of the ship and locked into place. The covers over eight of the sixteen recessed tubes slid back to expose the nose of missiles, just as they ignited and left their launch tubes in a spray of fire and sparks. The Rotarian Frigate really had no chance. The M15 Havoc Ship Killer missiles were designed to punch holes in much larger warships. The distance to the frigate was covered in the time it took for a man to blink rapidly twenty times. The missiles impacted along the starboard quarter of the frigate and burrowed into the superstructure before exploding in huge gouts of flame and explosive power. Massive sections of the frigate were blown into space instantly, creating explosive decompression along every deck of the frigate. The crew working the bridge had little time to react let alone contemplate their deaths before they were all sucked into the cold vacuum of space and killed instantly.

Filrian turned from his scope as the frigate began to disintegrate before his eyes and he looked at Komirri. “Direct hits all missiles! She is breaking up as we speak!”

Komirri nodded moving to his command chair. He looked at two of the *Durcunusaan* Spartans that were securing the two mercenaries with plastic hand bindings. “Get that scum off my bridge!” Komirri snarled as he settled back into the chair. “Tell me they didn’t get a transmission off!” He bellowed.

“Negative Captain!” The reply came almost before he finished speaking.

“Excellent! Helm, take us away from here quickly. Resume course to the pirate Gate! We’ll have to hope we figure something out before we get there!”

“Going to full power on the Sub-Lights!” The man called as his hands flew over the controls in front of him.

“Reload all the missiles tubes immediately!” Filrian ordered. “We may have to fight our way out of whatever we just stepped in!”

Daniel reacted instantly upon hearing Belen’s words in his head. His Shi Viska flared into existence as he lifted his left arm. He saw a similar flash from above and to the left where he knew Anuk to be standing and then two Shi Viskas were suddenly loose within the large engineering section. Jeth also did not waste time and snapped his now five foot long tail around, the bony protrusion on the end impacting the Kochab Hunter’s head with a sickening crunch, and dropping him to the deck just as Danny’s Nehtes appeared in his hand and prepared to impale another Lycavorian.

He needn’t have bothered as both his Shi Viska and Anuk’s struck the man in the same instant, effectively chopping his body into three parts. Danny didn’t pause and was already in motion when the bodies of the remaining three mercenaries jerked viciously backwards, and Danny saw small explosions of their flesh blossom from their chests. His dark eyes snapped around to see Nayeca standing above him with the K12 in her hand, the real Spartan engineer next to her with her P190 as they both emptied magazines into the remaining three men.

Daniel called his Shi Viska back as he whirled to look at the dragon hatchling with anger in his eyes. What are you doing here? Danny bellowed within Mindvoice, causing Jeth to back up a step. He may have been larger than Danny by a great deal, but he knew the sound of authority in someone’s voice and he shied backwards.

Yes my son! Torma's voice joined the conversation as his head and most of his neck stretched in to the engineering section. While they had enlarged the entrances into the corridors and the corridors themselves on *HOPE'S QUEST*, the actual doors to the rooms had not been made bigger, and Torma was only able to stuff his head and neck into the room. Like Danny however, he glared at his son with angry yellow/gold eyes.

Danny turned to Anuk and Nayeca. "Anuk... contact Komirri! Tell him we are secure! Nayeca find out who is down and how bad! Shit... we didn't need this now! Fuck, fuck, fuck!"

Anuk and Nayeca didn't question his words and immediately moved to respond. Whenever he swore like he just did, in rapid succession, their mate was extremely upset and worried.

Seanna held her hand to Anja's temple and Martin watched as the soft white light bathed her tanned skin. Seanna looked at his worried eyes. "It only grazed her head Martin." She spoke quickly.

"The baby?" Martin asked quickly.

Seanna dropped her hand to Anja's abdomen and placed her hand flat across her lover's mid-section. "The baby is..."

Seanna felt Anja's hands cover hers tightly and Seanna's dark green eyes darted up to her face. "The baby is fine." Anja said softly with a smile.

"Anja!" Seanna gasped leaning over and kissing her Queen and lover hard on the lips in joy.

Anja accepted Seanna's kiss with relish and squeezed her hands. "I'm ok." She spoke finally when Seanna's lips pulled away. "Really." She felt Martin's strong arms still holding her and she looked up in to his own worried face with a smile. "I knew you would catch me."

Martin leaned over now as well and kissed her even more intensely, Seanna watching with a smile. "I will always catch you!" Martin hissed out the words to her when they parted.

Anja smiled. "I want to put a request in to move that fucking wall!"

Martin chuckled and pulled her closer into his arms. "I'll get right on it." He said as his arms pulled her tighter and Anja snuggled deeper against him.

"Jeez! Anyone get the name of the spaceship that hit me?" Anja groaned as she reached for her head with one hand while squeezing Seanna's hand tightly with the other.

Seanna took her hand. "Don't do that." She spoke. "The projectile grazed your skull. I have repaired the damage my love, but you will still have a head ache for a few hours."

Anja forced a smile. "Yeah... I'm feeling that right now." Her jade green eyes grew wider. "Sivana? Where is..."

"I'm here." Sivana spoke as she settled onto the floor next to Anja, ignoring the looks of anger from Seanna and Martin both. "I'm... I'm sorry Sister. I'm so sorry!"

Anja took her hands quickly. "I... I saw... I saw what he did to you Sivana. I saw it in your mind." Anja said softly reaching up to stroke her sister's cheek. "Never... never apologize... not to me."

Sivana lowered her tear streaked face to Anja's chest and felt her sister pull her close. For the first time in her life Sivana felt acceptance and love from a person. Acceptance and love of who she was, and to her those sensations felt wondrous. Anja looked up and met Martin's eyes.

I saw what he did to her Martin. He... he raped her horribly. He... Anja began to tell him.

Martin shook his head. *It's done now. You are safe. We are all safe. I need to find out what is going on? It appears we have a stowaway on board.*

I heard... I heard Torma scream Jeth's name. Anja said. *Where is Miath?*

Here Anja. The male voice replied and Anja turned to see his head and neck sticking through the open doorway, his gray eyes filled with concern.

Anja couldn't help but chuckle at the picture that presented. *Miath do you realize how silly you look with just your head and neck in the door?*

As silly as you look lying on the floor in the King's arms perhaps. Miath answered.

His words caused all of them to chuckle with relief and Martin eased her into a sitting position against the wall. *Don't get up until Seanna says for you to get up.* He ordered her. *I need to find out what is happening.*

Anja nodded. *Go!*

Martin kissed her quickly and then looked at Seanna. *Watch out for her.*

Seanna nodded. *Always.*

Martin got to his feet and headed for the door. *Belen... you stay with Sivana.* He spoke as he allowed Miath to remove his head and neck to allow him out of the medical center. *No matter where she goes... you go with her.*

Yes Milord. Belen answered.

Martin moved into the corridor. *Atropos! Danny! Everyone meet me in the cargo hold. We need to figure out what to do now!*

What were you thinking Jeth? Martin exclaimed as he stood looking at Jeth in the cargo hold of *HOPE'S QUEST.*

Danny, Atropos, Komirri and Helen stood to one side while two dozen *Durcunusaan* stood in a loose circle around the surviving nine mercenaries. Torma stood behind Martin, his gaze on his son unwavering, Miath sitting quietly to the side. The dragon hatchling may have been larger than Martin in size, but he feared his King as much as he feared his father.

I... I wanted to help! Jeth replied submissively.

This mission is not for children! Torma exclaimed to his son. *You have put all of us in danger now! For'mya must be beside herself with grief because she can not find you! And you left your sisters? Jeth... this was completely irresponsible of you!*

I needed to come! Jeth spoke. *I... I wanted to help you and King Martin! I... something made me want to come!*

Martin looked at the dragon hatchling intensely, stepping up to Jeth and looking into his blue eyes deeply. *What do you mean something made you want to come with us Jeth?*

Jeth didn't drop his gaze from Martin's eyes. His father had once told him he should always look Martin in the eye when speaking to him. He may be King, but he liked to see a person's eyes when he spoke to them, and until this very moment Jeth didn't realize that he had never seen his father drop his eyes or look somewhere else when speaking with King Martin. They always held each other's gaze.

I... I can not explain it King Martin. Truly father I can not. Jeth spoke looking at his father before turning back to Martin. *Something said I needed to come with you. That my place was here with you now.*

Jeth you are still a hatchling! Torma complained. *Your mother will skin me with her talons when she discovers you stowed away on our ship! You have altered a mission that we have planned meticulously.*

I am a strong flyer father! Jeth defended himself. *I can spit my breath for longer than even Elynth. I can help!*

Martin turned to look at his dragon brother. [Mindvoice shielded] *Torma... could it be... could it be Lisisa?*

Everyone remained silent knowing that he was talking with Torma within Mindvoice. None of them with the exception of Queen Aricia had the ability to even attempt a breach of the King's or Torma's shields in Mindvoice when they shielded their conversations with each other. Whatever they were discussing, it was something that Martin and Torma both felt needed to be private.

Torma lowered his massive head to Martin's shoulder level and stared into Martin's eyes, his own golden orbs wide. [Mindvoice shielded] *If that is the case Martin...*

[Mindvoice shielded] *Let's say it is.* Martin said nodding his head. *It's not my daughter that Anja carries. While I can sense her aura within Anja's womb even now, it's no where near powerful enough to touch Jeth in this way. To call to him as he says.*

[Mindvoice shielded] *Martin that would indicate that Lisisa is far more powerful than we first thought. If she is calling to him sub-consciously and does not realize it... that speaks of power nearly equal to you and Aricia.*

Martin nodded. [Mindvoice shielded] *The same type of power that Androcles is showing with Elynth. I know you have felt the power of the bond between them. It rivals the bond that you and I share. That Aricia and Isheeni share.*

Torma lowered his massive body to the deck and shifted his bulk as he maintained eye contact with Martin. He nodded. [Mindvoice shielded] *Lisisa may be strong enough to call to Jeth in this way but she will*

never be as strong as Androcles. Torma spoke. He has your blood and Aricia's blood in him. He will be stronger than even you perhaps, as quickly as he has bonded with Elynth. He is only seven months old and my daughter rarely leaves his side. It is almost as if... if he is talking to her even now. She will not share that connection with me or even her mother. She keeps it for herself.

Martin looked at him oddly. [Mindvoice shielded] *Torma are you saying he's already aware of what is going on around him? At only seven months old?*

[Mindvoice shielded] *Sire... the Elder Mother Arzoal and even your First Oracle. They both believe you and Aricia have not yet reached the pinnacle of what your power could do. They believe that you and she will grow even stronger in other ways which have not yet manifested themselves. Anything is possible. There is so much that we have not experienced nor can we explain it.*

Martin was silent for a moment. [Mindvoice shielded] *Who told you these things Torma?*

[Mindvoice shielded] *Isheeni is my mate Martin. As with you and your mates, we share everything with each other. It is something that Arzoal said to Isheeni during her last visit when Jeth leaped into her side and Arzoal scolded him harshly. It angered Isheeni that her mother reacted in such a way... and when she talked with her mother about it afterwards, their conversation turned to you and Aricia. If what they say is true Martin my brother, the potential for all of your children, whether they be pureblood or not, is quite extraordinary. Helen says that even though they are turned, Anja and Dysea are the most powerful turned females she has ever seen, and she now has the memories and wisdom of the Lycavorian First Oracle within her, and that says quite a bit. Androcles will no doubt be the strongest, but all of your children will be gifted. I believe that is why you can feel the daughter Anja carries even now.*

[Mindvoice shielded] *So what you are saying is that even though Lisisa is half vampire, the part of her that is me is exerting itself more than her vampire side?* Martin asked.

Torma nodded his massive head. [Mindvoice shielded] *The Elder Mother and First Oracle thought this might happen. It is not something they wanted to discuss with you because they were not sure. Even though she has the blood of the vampire witch in her, your blood appears to be the more powerful.*

Martin turned slowly and leaned against Torma's tree trunk thick foreleg. [Mindvoice shielded] *That means the closer we get, the more in danger she becomes.* Martin spoke to him thoughtfully. *If her power continues to increase the way it has been increasing, sooner or later she will reach a point where Veldruk or Yuri can detect her if they concentrate hard enough. She's of their blood too.*

[Mindvoice shielded] *Miath and I will need to teach Jeth to shield all that he is able to do. It is not something that he would have learned so soon as young as he still is, but now we have no choice. If Lisisa is indeed reaching out for him in this way, his presence will be detected by the High Lord as well. I have to ask if you will allow me to draw from you so that we can establish a shield around his essence. At least until Lisisa is with us and they can truly bond together. Until that time it is all we can do to keep them both safe.*

Martin nodded without hesitation. [Mindvoice shielded] *Take from me what you need Torma, you don't even have to ask that my dragon brother. I'll have Komirri release a stealth buoy before we go through the gate. I'll have it set to transmit a message to For'mya letting her know we have found Jeth and will stay with our plan to establish communications once we reach Lycavore.*

Torma nodded. *Queen Anja will be alright?* He asked dropping their shield to talk normally now.

Martin nodded. *Her head is almost as hard as mine.*

I heard that! Anja's voice echoed within their link, causing them both to smile. Watching Torma smile was a sight in and of itself, for it showcased his massive razor sharp teeth as his lips pulled back. *You keep Jeth right there. I'll be down in a few minutes to examine him.*

He is not injured Milady. Torma spoke quickly.

I'm not coming to examine him for injuries Torma. I'm going to give him moral support for being so brave since you two didn't see the need for it. Anja snapped.

Martin looked at Torma and nodded. *She's fine. Back to her old self even.*

I'll deal with you later for being such a curmudgeon Martin Leonidas, bet on that. Anja said.

Martin turned back to look at Jeth. His chest had swelled out somewhat hearing Anja's words and he stood there proudly. If what he and Torma thought was happening was true, then Jeth was going to be a powerful force when he grew to adulthood. It was already a given that he would match his father in size, and even though Elynth was going to be large as well, she would not come close to her father or Jeth it seemed. If

Lisisa was actually touching Jeth within Mindvoice subconsciously now, the two of them if they were meant for each other would be a powerful bonded pair. Martin touched the COM unit built into the sleeve of his civilian shirt. "Komirri how soon before we get to the Gate?"

"Less than two hours present speed sire." Komirri answered. "Filrian has already made preliminary contact with them and surprisingly it appears as if our action has gone unnoticed for the moment."

"It won't stay that way for long." Martin said. "Bet on that."

"I'm not sire." Komirri answered.

Martin turned to Danny. "Danny, you, Yuriko and the others prep the ground packages. Make sure they are nice and tight."

"Sire... the wall?" Atropos asked.

Martin turned to look at the shattered wall that had once been a well concealed hiding spot for Torma and Miath as well as their *STRIKER DT*. The entire section attaching it to the outer bulkhead had been ripped away and bent outward from the force of two full grown dragons beating the metal into submission. He glanced at Torma who gave him what amounted to a dragon shrug. "Leave it. No one else is coming onto this ship. And we damn sure ain't coming back the same way."

Martin looked up at the high ceiling. [Mindvoice shielded] *Anja... how is your sister?*

[Mindvoice shielded] *I had Belen take her back to her quarters Marty. They just left. She's pretty shaken. This Togra asshole raped her pretty brutally about twenty years ago. It was the first time she's seen him since the incident.* Anja replied.

Martin shook his head. [Mindvoice shielded] *She should have told us Anja. We could have avoided all of this if she had told us.*

[Mindvoice shielded] *I know Marty. I told her as much.* Anja said. *Don't be angry with her Martin. She's come a long way, and for some reason she wants your trust more than anything.*

[Mindvoice shielded] *It's because you are my mate.* He told her. *She thinks by gaining my trust she will gain yours. Trusting her has never been an issue for me Anja, you know that. You need to impress upon her that she needs to tell us everything if we are going to survive this little trip and do it together.*

[Mindvoice shielded] *I will talk to her later, I promise.* Anja said.

[Mindvoice shielded] *Then I will not say anything again. You are sure that you are alright?*

[Mindvoice shielded] *I'm fine Martin. My head's a little sore... but that's it.* Anja spoke. *You and Seanna can rub my temples in bed tonight. Even if we get through the Gate we'll still have eighteen hours until we get to Lycavore. You guys can baby me until we get there.*

[Mindvoice shielded] *I don't have a problem with that.* Martin said with a smile as he headed for the corridor that would take him to the bridge. *I'll be on the bridge if you need me.*

Sivana entered her small quarters on *HOPE'S QUEST* and turned to look at Belen behind her. He hadn't said anything to her during the short walk here, nor had his face given away anything that he might be thinking.

"Say it." She finally spoke.

Belen stopped as he had been turning to continue down the corridor and return to the medical bay. He turned his head back and faced her. "Say what?"

"Say what you want to say." Sivana snapped. "I don't need to be Lycavorian to know that you got a lot you want to say to me."

"It does not matter." Belen spoke.

"It does matter! It matters to me." Sivana snapped.

Belen's eyes flared and he stepped into the small quarters, the door sliding shut behind him. "What you did back there was insane! You almost cost the Queen her life! Half an inch more and that dog would have spread her brains all over the bulkhead!" He almost screamed at her.

"I know that! She's my sister you know!" Sivana shouted back.

"If my father had been in there he would have shot you dead for your stupidity!" Belen snapped at her.

"We had... Togra was... I didn't think ok!" Sivana spoke.

"That is obvious! Start showing common sense and stop thinking of only yourself in your actions!" Belen barked. "You are not the only one who matters Sivana! There are others who are on this mission! The

King and one of the Queens of the Lycavorian Union are on this mission! It would be nothing short of disaster if one of them was killed before the mission even began because someone in our own crew did not think before they acted!”

Sivana glared at him. “You don’t know what he did!” She shouted.

“I don’t care what he did!” Belen screamed. “You need to stop thinking of only yourself *anse un* woman! Someone needs to put you over their knee and spank some common sense into you since you can’t do it yourself!” (Damn it)

Sivana’s eyes grew wider now and she glowered at him. “Well c’mon big man!” She snapped. “I ain’t afraid of you! You think you can spank me, go for it!”

Belen looked at her and shook his head. “You are *malda*.” He said. (Crazy)

“What’s the matter... aren’t you man enough to do it?” Sivana drawled sarcastically. “The big, bad Lycavorian Spartan can’t even handle a simple Hadarian female!”

“Don’t push me woman!” Belen growled. “Twice now your actions have resulted in danger for my Queen. You...”

“Oh shut up!” Sivana screamed. “Why don’t you just admit you can’t handle it?” Sivana stared at Belen and all the years of pent up emotions, all the times she had bedded men for everything but love and allowed them to slobber all over her, all those pent up emotions bubbled to the surface now. Their species had never mattered to her; Sivana thought she would have a normal life one day and they were only a means to an end. The faces of those she had to kill and the faces of those she had transported to their doom. All of these emotions released in the single action.

That was the slap that she hit Belen with.

The crack of flesh upon flesh sounded like a gunshot in the small quarters and Belen’s head snapped back more from surprise than the strength of the blow. Sivana glared at him with all those years of anger and hatred in her eyes as his head turned slowly back to look at her and she hit him again as hard as she could. Belen’s head snapped in the other direction, though not nearly as hard as he had prepared himself slightly. Slowly he turned back to look at her.

“Are you finished?” He asked in a low voice filled with menace.

Sivana continued to glare at him with her sea green eyes, wanting him to react in some way. Any way. Yet he stood there idly. “If you aren’t man enough to do what you threaten, then at least do me the favor of going to get someone who is.” Sivana growled at him, stepped up close to his chest and speaking the words.

Belen’s dark blue eyes grew wide at her words, and the last weeks of frustration of being so close to her, having to smell her desire and want and not being able to act, all of it released now. Never in his almost six hundred years of life had a woman affected him as Sivana did. Belen snatched Sivana’s arms within his grasp and glared at her. “I will show you man enough!” He almost shouted, spinning her around away from him before Sivana had time to react. With one powerful downward pull, Sivana’s pants and scanty undergarments tore away. She winced at the pull against her skin but then she was jerked forward as Belen settled onto the simple chair in the room and twisted her arm behind her back forcing her over his knee.

Sivana’s eyes were wide as she realized he was actually going to spank her. Her head snapped around and she looked at him with death in her eyes as he held her with his greater strength, not allowing her to move. “You wouldn’t dare!” She snarled like a caged predator.

Belen ignored her. “You need to understand that there are others beside yourself that matter!” He snarled right back. “If you wish to act like a child, I will treat you like one!”

Sivana’s eyes flew open when his rough palm came smashing down on her exposed ass cheeks with resounding power. The sting of the slap ripped outward from the point of contact and his large hand had connected four more times before her breath came back. He was not holding back with the strength of his blows, and her flesh began to burn with pain at each impact, tears coming from her eyes now. She struggled against his superior strength to no avail, her legs kicking this way and that, but he had a firm grip on her wrists. He had her arms pinned to the small of her back and was pushing her down on his lap. Sivana could feel the hard muscles of his thighs against her abdomen, and even in the midst of her tears of humiliation and pain she felt the hardening bulge between his thighs. That bulge of flesh caused incredible ripples of delight to surge through her at every slap of his hand now, and it took only three additional slaps against her naked flesh before Sivana felt her abdomen convulse and the very first orgasm of her life coursed through her.

Belen stopped spanking Sivana the instant her musky rose scent spiked and flooded out of her in huge waves. Belen felt the warm wetness on the outside of his thigh as her passion splashed onto his leg. Her body was rigid in the aftermath of the orgasm she was experiencing, lost to the sensations that rippled through her. Belen felt his own cock grow and thicken and become harder than he had ever felt. He was no stranger to the company of a woman's warmth in his bed, yet the power of Sivana's scent and the effect it was having on him was stronger than anything he had experienced before and Belen was reacting to it.

Sivana felt Belen still growing harder against her abdomen and the desire and need she had been holding back surfaced all at once. With a burst of strength she yanked her arms free of his grasp and slid off his lap to kneel in front of him. His dark blue eyes stared at her in wide surprise as she grasped frantically at the buttons and clasps for his pants. "I want you!" She hissed out, meeting his powerful gaze as she tugged at his pants. "I want you now!"

Belen surged out of the chair, flinging her away from him and pushing her against the bulkhead. Sivana was attempting to turn around when he pressed up against her from behind, his face nuzzling the back of her neck hard. She gasped in delight when his strong hands ripped away the shirt she wore and his hands roughly reached around and gripped her firm breasts.

"I will take you now woman!" Belen's deep voice growled next to her ear. "Like you have never been taken!"

Sivana felt his now swollen cock press against the opening to her slick pussy, the small tuft of hair above her clit already drenched in her sweet juices. Her eyes grew a little large when she felt the head of his flared cock bull aside the lips of her pussy, and then Sivana screamed out her delight as Belen plunged forward without regard and sank every thick inch of his cock into her in the most basic position that there was. Her body was pressed to the bulkhead now, her warm nipples pressing against the cold metal as Belen's hands had dropped to her hips and he was holding her as he slammed into her with long, powerful strokes. He was not as large as several of the men who she had allowed to bed her, but Sivana could not deny the kaleidoscope of pleasure that was tearing through her with each, almost savage stroke of his cock into her body. Belen was pummeling her, holding her against the bulkhead while his searing hot cock crashed into her with speed and power unlike anything Sivana had ever felt. His cock was extremely thick and was stretching her in a way she'd never felt. The pain of being smashed against the bulkhead, and the power of his thrusts was quickly fading away to be replaced by a staggering pleasure that was sweeping through her at light speed.

Belen for his part was very nearly out of control. The combination of Sivana's sweet and overwhelming musky rose scent, the proximity to her, the events that had led them up to this point, all of it had been too much. He held Sivana's smooth hips in his hands, his forehead pressed between her shoulder blades, as he pummeled the beautiful woman in his grasp. His eight inch cock was thick, thicker than most he knew, and he was driving his thickness into Sivana with all the power at his command, part of him not caring that she might be in pain from her position. The other part of him wanted to claim this woman as his own, to make her his so completely that she would never desire another. Belen felt the familiar surge in his groin signaling his impending explosion and he sped up his strokes into Sivana's tight, supple body. It was coming on him faster and stronger than ever before and his dark blue eyes opened wide as he felt his cock swell and the pleasure became too much.

Sivana's cries of released matched Belen's as she felt his thick cock swell within her and as soon as the first blast of his scorching hot come splashed deeply inside her, Sivana's walls came tumbling down and her own orgasm stole her breath from her lungs. Belen's arms wrapped around her, crushing her to him, holding her impaled on him as he filled her. Sivana's hands gripped his arms and held them tightly as she rode her own orgasm for all it was worth, rotating her hips upon his buried cock, and drawing out the pleasure for both of them. To Sivana's extreme delight, his cock was losing none of its hardness as she moved her hips in tight hard circles on it.

Belen opened his eyes as the realization of what had just taken place struck him hard. "Sivana?" He spoke in a whisper, his head pressed to the back of her shoulder.

"I want more of you!" Sivana gasped out loud.

"Sivana we can not!" Belen gasped as she flexed her pussy muscles on his still painfully hard shaft. Belen felt her lock her legs around the tops of his thighs and lift her body up, using the bulkhead for support. "What are... what are you doing?" He gasped as he felt her hand slip between their bodies and wrap around his thick pole.

“Taking... taking what I want!” Sivana gasped as she placed the head of his still hard cock at the entrance to her puckered ass.

“Sivana... Sivana no... I will not be able to...” Belen’s fangs burst from his gums as she shoved down on him and half of his thick cock sank into her bowels. The tightness and warmth was unbelievable, and all rational thought left him then. His hands dug into her hips and he pulled her down completely onto his shaft, Sivana crying out in ecstasy as every inch of him filled her tight ass in a single glorious stroke.

Sivana’s head came back to rest against his shoulder and her arms came up to grasp Belen’s head behind her. “Make... make me yours!” She gasped out the words.

Belen was beyond reasoning now, and hearing those words from the woman whose scent so filled his being, his hands tightened on Sivana’s hips and he began to pile drive her beautiful ass for everything he was worth. He no longer cared that she was his Queen’s sister. He no longer cared that she was a Princess of Hadaria and he was only a Spartan warrior. At this moment, they were coupled together, their flesh joined in the most intimate of ways, and she wanted every bit of him as much as he wanted her.

All that mattered now was to achieve the most pleasure they could from each other and that is what Belen devoted himself too when he slid his hand around her warm, muscular abdomen and his fingers found Sivana’s very hard and very exposed clit. He began to time his strokes into her tight ass with flicks of his thumb across her clit, and soon Sivana was withering against him in unabashed rapture. And even as her belly convulsed and her muscles clamped down on his deeply buried cock, and her come exploded from her once more, Belen only smiled and continued to possess this woman. He was going to make her feel things she had never felt before, and then when he was done, he would claim her as his mate.

LYCAVORE

LYCAVORE SYSTEM

FORMER HOME WORLD OF LYCAVORIAN PEOPLE

Her forest green eyes saw only one thing as she lay on her back on the soft grass staring at the stars in the night sky above her.

The three moons were full once more, signaling the equinox of the sun that would rise in the morning, and the completion of her four hundred and seventy-ninth year of life. The full moons also marked the three hundredth and seventy-eighth day of her life as a slave. A life of slavery that had seen nine different owners, from a Kochab hunter, to an Erogani Assassin, now to the pleasure slave of a ranking High Coven Planetary Regent. Three hundred and seventy-eight days of having to endure beatings and rapes at the hands of more men than she could even begin to count. Almost four centuries of being forced to live in squalor as a slave, never to hear a kind word or feel a gentle caress.

Her eyes saw a life that she knew was rapidly coming to an end, as the full alignment of the three moons of Lycavore grew closer.

She was not large, standing only five foot four inches tall and a hundred and twenty-one pounds, but her body was all lean and toned muscle. Her raven black hair fell to the middle of her back when she was standing, silky soft and satiny in its feel when touched. Her face was angular and her skin deeply tanned. Her lips were full and soft, her waist narrow and her breasts full and firm and proud. Her breasts and her ass were her finest assets, yet they were also her biggest curse, for they drew the most attention from the slobbering, gloating fools who raped her so often. The High Coven Immortals especially liked it when they raped her ass with their immense cocks, watching as even after so many times, she would still grimace in a mixture of pain and pleasure as they pummeled her tight body. Twenty-two years she had been here enduring here on this planet.

A planet with far more meaning to her than the High Coven would ever know.

Lycavore was a huge planet, with eleven different continents, massive mountain ranges and huge oceans. It was also a planet the High Coven and committed genocide on nearly ten thousand years ago, using poison missiles to saturate the planet and kill any Lycavorian that they had not been able to capture. The poison rendered the planet incapable of supporting life, or so they had first thought.

Three hundred and fifty years later they returned to the surface of the planet to discover that there were indeed survivors. The Lycavorian people were not so easily destroyed it seemed, and they were quickly

subjugated and made into slaves. Their numbers were kept under strict control with mass murders every few hundred years, leaving only enough to work the mines and fields, never more than a few thousand alive at any one time. She had been purchased by the Planetary Regent's wife as a caregiver to their daughter. The Regent's wife was just as pompous as her pureblood husband, and she did not want to be tied down with having to raise a child. They had purchased her from a Kochab Bounty Hunter who had brutalized her for over a hundred years, paying handsomely for her, much more than she had been worth. Her duties were two fold, including taking care of the vampire child. The second part of her duty was to submit to any of the senior Immortals when they demanded it of her. There were very few species that could survive mating with an Immortal and not be affected by the addictive nature of their semen. Lycavorians were one of those species, and for the last twenty years this is what she had to endure.

Most of them mistook her for a simple Lycavorian female, but she knew that the price paid for her was far more than any sane slaver would have paid. It also meant that the Planetary Regent either knew what she truly was, or someone was using him to accomplish their own goals. She didn't care either way, for she was far more than any of them thought.

She was the end result, the perfect combination of a pureblood vampire Princess, and the only surviving pureblood descendant of the line of Resumar. She was the daughter of the vampire Princess Yuri and the King of the Lycavorian Union, Martin Leonidas. A man whose blood was even more pure than that of his grandfather it was said. She knew who she was, and over the years she had gone to great lengths to hide this fact. She still remembered the day she and Yuriko had been caught, and the horrible screams her older sister had made as the Erogani Assassins had raped her endlessly. Those screams from Yuriko, screams for her to get away, were the last thing she had heard before one of the Assassins had struck her in the head and knocked her unconscious. She had never seen her older sister after that, but she had also never stopped loving her either, for Yuriko had never given up on finding her. Even then, she and Yuriko had known their father was not dead and that one day he would reappear. That single fact had driven her endlessly throughout all her years as a slave. She knew that once he discovered she existed he would come for her.

As her life progressed as a slave, through the beatings and the rapes, she had never lost hope. Half a dozen times throughout the years word had reached her that a single vampire female had been asking about a Lycavorian female that matched her description. The knowledge that her older sister, who was not even of her own blood, that Yuriko was looking for her gave her the strength to continue on.

Two years ago that had all changed.

It had been a wind swept day here on Lycavore when the staggering presence within her head had burst into existence. For days she had not been able to block it out, and then it receded into the background as if it had somehow become controlled. It wasn't until three weeks later the news reached them that the second son of King Leonidas and the blood grandson of King Resumar had been discovered alive and leading a great battle on earth. That day had been the day he had discovered who he truly was, and that day had begun the countdown to her freedom she knew.

The presence in the background was growing in power, and over the following months they received word that his name was Martin Leonidas and he had assumed his grandfather's place as King of the Lycavorian Union. There was a brief time when she had felt nothing but blackness from that presence in the back of her mind, but when it had reappeared it had taken her breath away with the renewed clarity and power it held. When word reached them here that Ukwav had been shattered by the grandson of Resumar she knew that he was coming. Three times now in the last year, traders from The Wilds had told her of that same vampire female asking in regards to someone who looked like her. Only this time she traveled with a hulking black Spartan and flame haired female elf who also wore the Shi Viska of a Spartan. All through this the presence in the back of her mind had grown in power and clarity, three more auras joining the first until what she felt was unlike anything she ever experienced before. The first presence was always the stronger but the others were now there as well and shining nearly as brightly.

Her name was Lisisa, and no matter what her blood, she had never considered herself anything more than a Lycavorian. The men, women and children still on Lycavore knew what she was, and had long ago accepted her, and even looked to her for leadership. They all knew of the deep abiding hatred she bore for the High Coven, especially the vampire Princess Yuri, and that made them trust her. She had not wanted that role, but over the years had come to accept it as part of what was in her blood. She was a leader just like the man who

was her father, and that fact she embraced completely. She had diligently conducted her duties while maintaining a low profile. She knew whoever had authorized her purchase knew what she was, and she also knew that they had not turned her in for a reason. The moment it became known to the Planetary Regent and the Immortal Commander on Lycavore who and what she was, she would be dead. She had her suspicions about who was involved in her purchase, but she kept it to herself and only observed. She was no fool, and had schooled herself ruthlessly over the years. She could speak five different languages fluently, and the son of the Erogani Assassin had trained her quite extensively in hand to hand combat and small weapons use. She paid for it by allowing him to have her whenever he wanted, but he kept his word and after she had learned all that he could teach her, Lisisa had arranged an accident for him. On a cloudy night, the moon from whatever planet she was on casting an eerie glow in the sky, Lisisa had gutted the son like a fish as he was exploding inside her, and then making it appear as if he had died in a Lifted accident.

Lisisa knew that once knowledge of her father being alive was known, that once their connection became common knowledge and she was discovered here on Lycavore, her days were numbered. He had defeated her mother and chased her back to the vampire capital, where Yuri had begun her own search for Lisisa. He had shattered the defenses on Ukwav, a planet that had withstood three separate attacks by the Lycavorians over the last two thousand years. He had destroyed the Lycavorian People's Republic and reunited millions upon millions of Lycavorians with the rest of their people on Apo Prime.

It was a race now she knew, who could discover and get to her first, but Lisisa also knew that her father was winning that race.

Her father.

Lisisa had dreamed on him her entire life, knowing exactly what he looked like without ever seeing a picture of him. She may have had pure vampire blood running through her veins, but Lisisa was more wolf than anything. She could shift into a raven haired female wolf, yet while she maintained her humanoid form she could use her vampire skills to include the speed and ability to fade into the shadows. She knew her Mindvoice powers were growing, and she knew that only her father could teach her to harness them. Lisisa had seen and experienced first hand what the High Coven could do, and she wanted no part of them in any way. She had some of Yuri's traits, mainly some of the exotic Asian features and skin, but she was by far much more like Martin Leonidas in appearance. The young female vampire child she had been bought to watch over was now a twenty-seven year old fully grown pureblood vampire, and quite surprisingly she was Lisisa's closest friend, and the only vampire on Lycavore who knew who and what she truly was.

Her forest green eyes came back into focus as the Immortal Lieutenant grunting above her moved his face next to her cheek and bit deeply into her supple neck with his fangs as his warm come blasted inside her. Lisisa grimaced slightly, the pain vanishing almost instantly, but the pleasure his bite should have caused was absent. Lisisa had learned long ago to respond only enough to make them pleased with themselves, thinking they had caused her to have orgasm after orgasm. She had trained herself to be able to release her juices whenever she wanted to simulate an orgasm, but she received no pleasure from it in the least. It was the same when they bit her and fed on her blood. The normal sexual sensations were extremely muted within her because of her hybrid blood and she found she could control it easy enough. She had narrowed it down to three different Immortal officers who might be the secret contact with whoever had authorized her purchase to begin with.

"Get away from her!" Lisisa heard the female voice scream out.

The Immortal's fangs withdrew from her neck and his gray skinned head turned to see the dirty blond hair of the Planetary Regent's daughter moving around the building. He grunted and smiled taking in the exotic figure of the Regent's daughter and wished he could have her instead of this Lycavorian wench. He pulled his sixteen inch cock out of Lisisa with little fanfare or concern, causing her to moan in pain that she was unprepared for and Lisisa rolled to her side to vomit.

The vampire female stepped up to him and lifted the small hand blaster, jamming it into his massive glistening genitals with perfunctory precision. His eyes went wide.

"If I were you Lieutenant... I would put that back in your pants quickly before I remove it from you permanently!" The Regent's daughter hissed in a deadly voice, her dark brown eyes changing to cobalt blue and her vampire fangs extending from her gums quickly.

"She... she is a slave Lady Melita!" He gasped.

“Yes she is a slave!” The young woman snarled back. “But she is not a piece of meat that you can *vith* at your whim! She is also my caretaker and she will be treated with a little more respect than a common slave girl! Is that clear!”

The Immortal bobbed his head up and down quickly while he reached for his uniform pants. He could see the others that had already taken their turn with the Lycavorian bitch moving away quickly and he followed them without pause.

Melita waited until the three Immortals were out of sight before tucking the hand blaster away and turning to look at Lisisa on the ground as she dry heaved.

“Lisisa!” She spoke her voice filled with despair and agony.

Melita was the pureblood vampire daughter of the Planetary Regent, his eighth child and the youngest of his three daughters. She had known only Lisisa her entire life, and though Lisisa was a slave and a prisoner, she never allowed her distaste and hatred of vampires to extend to the small child. As Melita grew and she saw this, she too came to hate what her own people did. She had seen her father and mother on so many occasions, pompous individuals that they were, and she held no love for them in the least. Lisisa on the other hand, Lisisa had protected her, and raised her, all the while hating what her people were.

The day Melita had discovered who Lisisa truly was would remain with her always as the day her own path to redemption had been revealed to her.

“Why Lisisa?” Melita asked softly as she pulled Lisisa’s body into her arms, heedless of the vomit that stained her lips. Melita quickly wiped that away and looked up, motioning frantically with her hand and seeing the two other female Lycavorians scamper from behind the building.

Lisisa coughed softly. “Relina is... she is too young!” Lisisa spoke. “They would have... they would have injured her even more.”

“So instead they injure you!” Melita spoke as she removed the cloth from her belt and wiped away the vomit from around Lisisa’s lips. She pulled her tighter into her arms and took something from the small pouch on her belt. It was a vial of dark red liquid and she opened the top as the two young females settled to the ground next to her. Melita looked at them. “Tell Narret I will bring her to my chambers. He can come there to retrieve her. Leave your water and medicines and go quickly.”

The two young females nodded and dropped several items to the ground next to her before darting off into the night, shifting into their wolf forms. Melita waited until they were gone before looking at Lisisa, and holding it up. “You must take it this time Lisisa.” She said knowing that she hated to have to take blood. “They have torn you inside and you are too weak to shift. I took it from myself this morning. Please.”

Lisisa nodded her head slowly and Melita held the vial to her lips, tipping it up and allowing the blood to pour into Lisisa’s mouth. As a hybrid of two exceptionally pure bloodlines, Lisisa had the ability to shift to heal wounds, and when she was not able to do that, she could take blood to heal her. Melita had begun carrying a small vial of her blood with her wherever they went when she discovered what Lisisa was a decade ago. She watched as Lisisa drank it down quickly and the color began to return to her face almost immediately as the influx of blood surged through her, healing the internal injuries the Immortals had inflicted on her.

Melita brushed some of Lisisa’s raven hair out of her face and looked at her. “You are becoming more reckless Lisisa.” She said. “You can not continue to protect all of them. As much as you hate it, you can not take the place of all your young females to protect them. It will kill you.”

“I have... I have to try Melita.” Lisisa spoke.

“What will they do when you are dead Lisisa?” Melita snapped. “If you slip away from them they will be lost without you to guide them.”

Lisisa smiled slowly. “He is close Melita. So very close.”

Melita looked at her. “Who is close?”

“My... my father.”

“Lisisa you have been saying that for years.” Melita said. “I know you wish for him to come here and take you away, but...”

“Take all of us away.” Lisisa said. “That... that includes you my friend.”

Melita met her forest green eyes and leaned over to kiss her hard on the lips. There was nothing sexual between them, only the love of two friends who would do anything for each other. “I truly wish that day would

come soon Lisisa. I do not know how much longer I can bear to watch you suffer under these Immortals as you try and protect your people.”

“It will come sooner than you think.” Lisisa said.

“We are so far Lisisa.” Melita said softly. “I know he is your father. But even he can not reach us here. Even he can not cross so much of High Coven space and come here undetected. And he would need a handful of his newest ships to take all thirty thousand of your people from here.”

Lisisa grasped her hand tightly. “Do you... do you trust me Melita?”

“Why do you ask me that Lisisa?” Melita spoke. “You know I trust you.”

Lisisa smiled and squeezed her hands tightly, bringing them to her lips and kissing her knuckles. “Then trust me now. He is close... and he will come. He is my father, and a Spartan.”

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

USU'OZEIB 7

CAPITAL CITY OF DWURI

Yuri sat up quickly in the bed, her face and neck laced with a fine sheen of sweat, the thin loose shirt she wore spotted with sweat stains in several places as well. The bedroom was dark except for the lights of the capital drifting in through the large floor to ceiling windows that open onto a balcony. Yuri turned her head quickly in the dim light of the room to see that his eyes were still closed and his naked chest rose and fell evenly. Robert's large and spacious apartment was in one of the more modern buildings within the city and the window balcony view from his bedroom was quite beautiful. Yuri gently extracted her body from under the sheet, the shirt she wore belonging to Robert and falling to just above her thighs. She moved to the balcony doors where she pulled them open slowly and felt the cool breeze caressing her skin and drying the sweat. It was a wonderful night really, the weather changing now on Usu'Ozeib 7 and becoming warmer in the days and evenings, actually allowing them to enjoy a dinner in one of the outdoor cafés within the city center. When they returned to Robert's home, the place she considered her home as well, her true husband had proceeded to fuck her senseless as he always did, leaving Yuri crying out his name and yearning for more of his touch. Though she was officially married to the son of one of her father's strongest supporters, Robert Moran was the only man to have ever fed on Yuri's blood, and the only man she considered her husband.

Yuri smiled as the soreness between her thighs vividly reminded her of what they had experienced together. It seemed that the more time they spent exploring each other in bed, the more their pleasure only increased. Yuri already knew without a doubt she would much rather meet Robert for lunch and be in public with him, showcasing the affection he openly showed for her, then be the arm Princess of the man who was her husband by name only. It was selfish of her she knew, but Robert never once treated her like she was a prize, probably because he already had her love and he was completely comfortable in that knowledge.

This may have been Moran's apartment but it was also her home as well really and that knowledge sent warm sensations through Yuri.

Yuri spent almost no time at the home she shared with her Pureblood vampire husband, preferring to come here and lounge about and sleep in this place even when Robert was not here. She had helped to decorate most of the large apartment, and while she was not Lycavorian and did not have their animalistic sense of smell, Yuri swore she could almost smell Robert within the walls of this apartment. While she would never admit how she felt to anyone for fear of appearing weak, Yuri took great comfort in what his presence gave her. She had grown to hate the pompous pureblood vampire bastard who played the part of her husband. She hated him even more than she hated Leonidas, and that was saying quite a bit. He was considerably younger than her, and unlike his father who was a well respected and renowned fleet officer, Vavant was an arrogant fool who preferred the halls of politics to serving in the High Coven fleet, and he only used the influence of his father when he wanted something. He treated Yuri as a possession, a trophy of sorts, and whenever she attended a High Level function with him as was their station, he always made sure to paw and manhandle her body in every way he could to make an impression for the others who attended.

Vavant hated the fact that she spent more time here than she did in their home, and it enraged him that it wasn't him who shared her bed on a regular basis, but the humanoid genome officer that she had turned. Her pompous husband also hated the fact that Veldruk had promoted Robert Moran to Senior Commander himself in a private ceremony, after Moran's actions in defeating Admiral Pontal so handily.

Yuri turned in the open doorway and looked back to the sleeping form of her only true husband. Yuri would never be able to explain what Moran did to her that so captivated her attention and her love. He was one of the most ruthless men she had ever met, and that was part of his appeal to her. When Yuri had turned him, his genome DNA and his vampire genes had come together and bonded in such a way that he became far more than a simple vampire soldier. He was stronger and faster, and in many respects superior to many pureblood vampires. He already had a cold and calculating mind, and when Yuri had turned him, she had given him the means to be perfect in every way. At least in his eyes.

Yuri remembered that night vividly. Robert had pummeled her tight body for three hours without pause, taking her in every position she could have imagined, making her scream out her pleasure and his name. When he had pulled her into his lap afterwards, his arms crushing her naked body to his as she sank her long fangs into his neck, he had known what she was. He had not drawn away in fear or surprise as she would have expected. His arms had pulled her closer, tighter against him, almost crushing her small frame against his hard body as she fed; willingly offering himself up to what she was making him. This fact and the fact that he could and did fuck her senseless caused Yuri to turn him completely that night, draining him entirely and then offering her own blood to him as he hung on the very abyss of death. Something within her told her this is what she wanted to do. As she sat with him during his rebirth, she had gazed long and hard at the only person she had ever turned in her life, and Yuri realized at that moment that he would play a major role in her future. How much a role he would play in her life Yuri would not discover for many years, but when it came to her eighteen months ago, she had embraced it completely, and now she belonged to him, as he belonged to her.

Robert surpassed Vavant so much in every regard that it was sometimes laughable. They were comparable in terms of physical proportions, though Robert's tanned body was much more defined and he outstripped Vavant by a good margin when it came to the size of his cock. Robert had won her father's respect on his own merits, never allowing Yuri to do anything for him. He had told her he would prove to her father he was worthy of her all by himself. And he had done just that over the last fourteen months by doing something no pureblood vampire fleet commander had ever done before. He had defeated the legendary Admiral Pontal in open fleet warfare, and done so with a flare that still had many officers talking in whispers at the academy and within the fleet. Vavant used his position to spend as much time near her father and try to influence him as much as he could.

This was the longest stretch of time they had been able to spend together in nearly a year, and Yuri cherished every moment of it. The last two nights in a row she had been awakened by something she could not explain, sweat rolling off her skin. She had said nothing to Robert, simply moving to the kitchen area and making herself some warm tea before returning to the bed and the warmth of his arms. This night was different, the dreams so much more vivid and real. And central to that dream was the face of Martin Leonidas and the young half breed daughter she had given birth to.

Yuri had waited for ten days to give their code technicians time to try and break the pirate code. When they were unsuccessful she had gone to her father and discussed what Vonis had brought up. Her father had agreed and Yuri had arranged a meeting with the weakest of the Overseers in The Wilds. He was a weasel of a man, rat like in more than just his appearance, and it had been a simple matter of offering him several million Ducat and a dozen of the new High Coven Runners when they came into full production. Yuri had been stunned to discover that Lisisa had been brought to a planet within High Coven space. As the Overseer and his people began to unwrap more and more of the encryption, he had told her just yesterday they would have the exact location within two days. The Hadarian witch he had told her, had added several layers of encryption to the files, but it would only add a few hours to the deciphering process. He had come through for Yuri so far, and she had no doubts he would get the location for her. She had an entire Strike Wing ready to depart and collect Lisisa from wherever she was, and she would command the Wing personally.

Yuri turned from the door and walked into the main room of their home and she padded across the huge living room. His position as her consort allowed him the entire floor of this building and he had certainly used every portion of the floor, knocking down some of the walls for the openness, and adding others. Robert Moran

did not like to be cold, much like Yuri and no matter where you walked there were thick plush carpets covering the floor, not to mention blankets neatly tossed as decorations across the numerous pieces of furniture in the main room. They were pieces of furniture that they had used on many mind blowing nights of sexual experiences, not to mention the soft rugs that dotted the main room. Yuri was sure not one of those rugs was untouched by their combined juices by even a small amount. When he was truly in a mood, Robert could go on for hours, much to Yuri's eternal delight.

She moved into the small kitchen and went immediately to the dispenser, entering the code for light Trellian Tea. It was a soft soothing blend from a race of beings that had willingly joined the High Coven thousands of years ago, and even to this day were steadfast allies. Yuri drew it out of the dispenser and brought it to her lips, savoring the tangy flavor as she moved to one of the smaller couches that sat facing the large wall length window and allowed the view and lights of the capital city of Dwuri to bath the main room. As her dark eyes fell on the cityscape before her, Yuri felt the powerful but almost imperceptible tremor within Mindvoice and she opened her awareness just enough to engulf that tremor.

It woke you as well Yuri. Her father's voice filled her mind.

It has for the last two nights. Yuri replied calmly, relishing in the power of her father's presence in her mind. *What do you think it is father?*

To have woken us up daughter, it is powerful and untrained. A strong presence... it is close... but still on the edges of perception. I reached out to touch it... and then it was ripped away from me, and that shock is what woke me up. Veldruk spoke.

Yuri nodded gently, picturing her father doing much the same thing as she was doing in the palace on the other side of the city. Yuri's mother Sanani was the only woman to have occupied Veldruk's bed in almost two thousand years now. She had given him four strong children, though Xerxes had allowed his arrogance to be his undoing, and even though her father had strayed and had a daughter with his royal concubine, Veldruk had always remained with her mother. When Isabella had betrayed them all and escaped off world to join the Union, Veldruk butchered Isabella's mother for helping her and even though many pureblood females had offered themselves to him since, he has steadfastly refused to take another concubine. Yuri knew after talking with her mother that he had rediscovered Sanani in ways that they had not explored before, and that discovery had resulted in the birth of her sister who was growing rapidly but was still less than a year old.

Father... it was almost as if someone very powerful erected shields to block this presence and hide its existence. Yuri spoke.

I had thought of that. Veldruk said. *The only ones powerful enough to erect shields we could not penetrate are that dog Leonidas and his whore Queens. And in order for him to do that for this presence we felt, he would have to be nearby.*

He would never risk coming into High Coven space father. Yuri spoke confidently. *He is many things, but foolish is not one of them.*

Yuri could almost feel her father nod in agreement. *I agree... which means it must be one of his Queens combined with the power of her dragon. We know that all of them except Isabella have bonded with dragons correct?*

Yes... and any of them could do this if it was augmented by their dragon. Yuri said. *All of them have grown far more than our intelligence people said they would. Especially that raven haired slut Aricia.*

Veldruk chuckled within their connection. *We can rule out the elf Queen, for she and her dragon are on Elear, which means it must be the flame haired Hadarian witch or this Aricia that you hate so much.*

I will send out a general inquiry to our people on Apo Prime, perhaps one of them knows where Leonidas's Queens have gotten too. Yuri said calmly. *It could take several days for one of them to get back to us, but I would put my money on Aricia.*

I would tend to agree. She is the more powerful of his whores, and according to what information we have been able to obtain, she has become just like Leonidas in many regards. Veldruk spoke.

I should hear something from that fool Overseer later today or tomorrow on the location where Lisisa was taken Father. Yuri said.

Once you have the location Yuri, bring the abomination back here, get what we need from her and then feed her to the Rock Spiders. Veldruk spoke distaste very evident in his voice. *At least then we will be free of that event in our lives. One which I regret ever having to put you through.*

We made that decision together father. Yuri spoke. I keep telling you that.

Perhaps...

Yuri turned and lifted her head when she felt Robert's fingertips caress her shoulder and then move to the softness of her neck. She smiled up at him. *I will talk with you later today father.*

She could have sworn she heard her father chuckling as she broke the connection to turn her full attention on her husband.

ELEAR

Dysea looked up as Isabella walked back into the main room of their suite carrying the small data scroll. Her bare feet padded softly on the cool polished tile floor and then the sound was gone as she stepped onto the thick rug. Neither of them had changed from their sleeping clothes yet, and for both of them, their sleeping clothes consisted of one of Martin's formal uniform shirts which dwarfed both of their bodies. Isabella waved the data scroll as she settled back onto the couch next to Dysea and lifted her tea with the other hand.

"The daily spaceport entries." Isabella said casually. "And Marci's daily intelligence report."

Dysea sipped her own tea as she lowered the data pad she had been reading to the table in front of the couch where they sat. "You are checking the daily spaceport entries?" She asked. "Bella why?"

Isabella nodded. "If my half brother is going to attempt another assassination he will bring in off world assistance. We knew this *ussta* she-elf. I simply had all the port entries of non-elves over the last three days condensed into one report and I am reviewing it."

"Deia would not approve of that action Bella." Dysea spoke with a small smile. "She would say it violates their right to privacy."

"Then Deia can come here and take not only my place as main target but yours as well." Isabella said.

"Having someone trying to kill you all the time is really becoming quite tiresome." Dysea said with a sigh leaning back on the couch.

Isabella smiled and leaned forward, brushing her lips against her elf lover's neck and the bottom of her ear lobe. Dysea grinned and tilted her head slightly towards Isabella's lips as she felt the tiny shudders of pleasure ripple through her at Bella's actions. "Be thankful you and I... we must be thankful we are not Martin." Isabella spoke softly. "He will always have a target painted on his chest, for as long as he lives now."

Dysea's head came up slightly and she stared at Isabella's hazel/green eyes with a shocked expression at her words. "Bella... I... I never once thought about that in regards to him. Not in those terms at least. You... you are so very right!"

Isabella nodded slowly. "It is why he dealt with Joric so brutally. So savagely." Isabella looked down as if she was deep in thought. "Many may accuse him of not being a diplomat and unintelligent, and they would be correct about the diplomat part, but Martin Leonidas is also the most perceptive man I have ever met in political terms. And he is also the most intelligent man I have ever known. He knew what he was doing even then. He was shaping the future Dysea. Our future."

Dysea leaned forward now. "What do you mean Bella? We all saw it happen. He dealt out Spartan justice, yet you speak as if it was something else."

Isabella lifted her face again and met her beautiful elf lover's emerald green eyes and shook her head slowly with a thin lipped smile. "It *was* something else *ussta* she-elf. What Martin did was not Spartan justice Dysea, he was sending a very specific message... a message to all who would do us harm." Isabella spoke softly. "He was telling them he is fair game... but that Aricia, you, Anja, For'mya and even me... we are off limits to personal attacks of any kind. How he killed Joric... that was his way of saying this is what will happen to anyone who crosses that line. He obliterated a sovereign government to get Aricia back. A government that had joined the Union and plotted against us yes, but you must see it in the way he did it. The precision and ruthlessness. He destroyed it completely Dysea, from the very foundations that Chetak had built. Not even my father is fool enough to tempt his wraith in regards to you and the others."

"But Aricia is his Soulmate." Dysea said evenly, as if that information did not faze her in the least, which in fact it didn't. "That is why he acted as he did. He loves us all yes, but she is his *Fea*. His purpose for going on."

Isabella smiled and set the data pad aside before moving closer to Dysea, pulling her lover into her lap, their bodies touching very intimately in all the right places, just as Isabella had planned. Isabella had finally discovered what love felt like with this elfin female, and not just the explosive nights they had spent making each other cry out in blissful abandon. She and Dysea had connected in an emotional way that went far deeper than just sex. The same way that she had connected with Martin. What they had was far beyond just physical pleasure, and Isabella was quickly learning that she meant more to Martin and the others than even she first thought. She remembered the night before they left Apo Prime to come here. Aricia, Anja and For'mya had shown her that they did not care in the least that she was a vampire. They had shown her pleasure until she was withering beneath their caresses, and she had eagerly returned the attention, feasting on all of them in those hours together. And then they had shown her love as the six of them ended up in a mass of flesh, their limbs entwined with each others until it was impossible to see where one of them ended and one of them began, all of them sleeping the sleep of the content.

Isabella kissed her softly and took her hands. "Aricia is his soulmate yes. His *Ano*. The one he could not live without according to Lycavorian legend." Isabella said using the ancient Lycavorian language. "But do not think for an instant that Martin Leonidas would not blaze a path across the stars for you. For me. For Anja or For'mya. We are each a part of him *ussta* she-elf, just as he is a part of us. He would never forsake us... never leave us. And he would utterly and completely destroy anyone or anything that attempted to take us from him, or hurt us in any way. He has formulated plans within plans Dysea, and even now he plans for the future of the Lycavorian Union should he be killed. That future is Aricia, Anja, you For'mya and I; and the children we will give him. It is why he dealt with Chetak and Joric as he did. But in doing that, in assuming that burden and it is not a burden to him, he knows that no matter where he goes he will be a target. And that does not trouble him in any way."

Dysea stared at her for a long moment. "How do you know this Bella?"

Isabella chuckled gently. "I may not have shared his bed yet Dysea, but I have picked his brain on many occasions." She smiled coyly. "He has also used my knowledge of the Coven in some instances. I believe I have come to represent Martin's darker nature Dysea."

Dysea looked at her like she was crazy. "Bella... you..."

"No... listen to me *ussta* she-elf." Isabella said softly. "I want you to know and I want you to understand more than anyone. We all have darkness in us Dysea."

"I know that Bella." Dysea said. "I..."

Isabella put a finger to Dysea's soft lips stopping her words. "Listen to me she-elf." She said more firmly, "Or I will bite you in a most delicious spot to silence you." Dysea huffed at her words, her face twisting into a feigned mask of confusion and anger, and she folded her arms across her ample chest.

"I am a vampire Dysea." Isabella spoke. "What you have shown me... what you show me every day, I cherish above everything I have ever known. I love you *ussta* she-elf, with every fiber of my existence, just as I have now come to love Martin. I just want you to understand that I am vampire, Martin is Lycavorian, and both of us have darker sides to us Dysea. Much darker than what others might believe." She took a deep breath. "I do not want to frighten you my love, but you must know this. If anything were to happen to you, if anyone were to hurt you in any way, take you from me; Dysea... I would not hesitate, I would not pause, and I would not question. I would become far more brutal than those I was facing and I would not stop until you were back in my arms. I pray you never see that part of me my love, for I don't know if you could love me if you did. I do know for certain that Martin... the darkness in Martin is not something that any of us wants to see unleashed. The day he breaks those chains and releases the darkness within him Dysea, that day many will die horrible deaths." Isabella lowered her head slightly. "I tell you this because only you know me as well as I know myself. I have never shared with anyone what you know of me Dysea, and I don't want to ever lose you."

Dysea grasped Isabella's face in her hands and glared at her with those emerald green eyes. She didn't hesitate in the least and she crushed her lips upon Isabella's, feeling Bella's arms wrap around her waist as the kiss they shared seared both their souls to the core and was a commitment of love and honor that neither of them wanted to let go of. Dysea pulled her head back, a thin strand of salvia connecting their lips for just a moment, and she reached up to caress Bella's soft pink lips with her fingers.

“As *Nauta Melme* will never forsake one of us Bella, I will never forsake my love for you.” Dysea spoke. “As fate and destiny brought us together Bella, only fate and destiny can tear us apart. With *Nauta Melme* in our lives all I need is you Isabella, if that is what you wish of me.”

Isabella shook her head quickly. “No. Fate has brought all of us together. It has entwined the fabric of our lives together so tightly we need to feel each other, physically as well as emotionally. We could no more deny their touch upon us then they could deny our touch upon them.” Isabella smiled shyly. “And... there is always Anja’s tongue to consider. She is so very skilled with that incredible appendage of hers.”

Dysea laughed and kissed her hard, her fingers tracing the contours of Isabella’s ears and jaw line. “*Melyanna* is certainly talented with her tongue.” Dysea said almost breathlessly after breaking their kiss. “However... I prefer the taste of sweet lilacs.”

Isabella smiled as she looked at Dysea, hazel/green eyes alive and bright. “You were reading the Wainn City calendar of events.”

Dysea nodded. “This cult... they call themselves The Order of Arte... they have to file the proper permits to gather and I had the schedule pulled as well. They usually gather at the city Amphitheater once a week, and are scheduled to do so tomorrow in the late afternoon and early evening.”

“I take it we will be going to this gathering.” Isabella said.

Dysea smiled. “I want to hear what they have to say before I let Arzoal know what we have discovered. They may be just fanatics using that name, or they could very well be part of what Arzoal fears. Iriral returned to the Dragon Island early this morning to try and obtain more information.”

Isabella nodded. “I was going to visit the Elfin Constable in the city center later this morning.” She said looking at Dysea with a twinkle in her eyes. “He has something that he says we might find interesting.”

“What time?” Dysea asked.

“I told him eleven hundred hours.” Isabella spoke. “I know how hard it is for you to get up and moving in the morning.”

“Bella... that’s still two hours from now.” Dysea said.

“Yes I know.” Isabella spoke.

Dysea’s eyes never left Isabella’s face as she lifted a hand and used her TK power to lightly tap the control panel by the main door, dropping the security locks back in place, as well as the voice and optical absorbing screens as well.

“We won’t be disturbed now.” She spoke seductively as Isabella’s hands came up and slowly undid the buttons of Dysea’s white shirt and pushed the two sides of the shirt apart, exposing Dysea’s firm full breasts to her hungry eyes. Dysea’s nipples were already eraser hard and standing out proudly, begging for attention.

Isabella’s eyes turned to vampire cobalt blue as she gazed up into Dysea’s gorgeous eyes. “Good... because I intend to have you screaming my name in minutes.”

“Ah... Bella... you misjudge my will power.” Dysea said with a smile. “You...”

Her emerald eyes flew open wide as Isabella’s warm lips and tongue engulfed her right nipple and suckled hard, her vampire fangs nibbling ever so deliciously on her stiff bud, but never causing pain. Isabella’s right hand slid behind Dysea’s back dropping lower over her buttocks at the same time, and her index finger buried itself within Dysea’s incredibly tight ass.

“No... that is not... not fair Bella!” Dysea complained in a gasp of fiery pleasure as her body ignited.

“I know.” Isabella growled.

HOPE’S QUEST

LYCAVORE SYSTEM

TWO HOURS FROM LYCAVORE

How does that feel Jeth? Martin asked the young dragon hatchling as he opened his eyes and looked at him.

They sat in the cargo hold of *HOPE’S QUEST*, Jeth settled on the deck in front of where Martin and Helen sat lotus style. Torma was to Martin’s immediate left, Miath to Helen’s right. All of their heads were

leaning towards each other, all of them touching in some manner. When Martin spoke to Jeth, their eyes opened as well and they began to lean back.

Jeth opened his Maya colored blue eyes slowly, his wings folded back along his sides in a comfortable sitting position. He focused them on Martin and blinked several times.

It... it feels strange King Martin. Jeth answered.

Martin nodded with a small smile and looked at Torma. *It worked my brother. We did it.* He said.

Then it was Lisisa? Torma asked softly.

Helen opened her eyes completely as well and looked at Torma. *Yes, and she is far stronger than we first thought. She just is not aware of it yet.* She replied slowly getting to her feet, and taking Martin's hand as she did. *You and Miath will need to show Jeth the first Levels of Shielding and Control Torma, before we reach Lycavore. I know it is years before he would learn them normally, but we have to improvise now and he is strong enough.* Helen turned and looked at Jeth. *And you need to start thinking before you act foolishly.*

First Oracle I...

Helen shook her head and lifted her hand, stepping closer to Jeth. *Your actions have put all of us at risk young dragon.* Helen's voice within their minds was sterner than Martin had ever heard it. *You are less than a year old Jeth, and now Martin, your father and Miath must teach you things that dragons do not learn unless they are part of Mjolnir's Hand! And most certainly not before they are at least ten years old!*

I needed to come on this mission First Oracle! Jeth spoke maintaining what he had been saying since they had discovered he stowed away.

Jeth you will... Torma's growl and words made his son cringe in fear.

No Torma. Helen spoke once more, her voice softer now as she looked up at the obsidian colored dragon. *He is correct in what he says. Somehow he knew... something told him Lisisa was to be his bonded sister. That alone says quite a bit. And just as Elynth is beginning to already bond with Androcles Torma, Jeth and Lisisa will now start. It seems that you and Isheeni were meant for this role. Just as your children are meant for theirs. We can no more deny destiny than we can deny ourselves. This is how it will be.* Helen looked at Martin quickly and then back to Torma. *You felt it... just like we all did?*

Torma nodded his massive head. *Yes I felt it. It was a dark presence that was reaching for them.*

Helen nodded. *That was Veldruk.* She said confidently. *He and his daughter have sensed the combined presence that Jeth and Lisisa now make within Mindvoice. As you and Martin and the others draw from each other and can reduce your auras to miniscule and undetectable portions, Lisisa and Jeth separately do not have that ability.* She turned back to Jeth. *The moment you touch her Jeth, do not hesitate for any reason! It must be you who initiates the shields, for she will not know how. Your father and Martin will support you, give you power, but only you can make the connection complete. You are strong Jeth and you should not fear, but now you must learn to act without pause.*

I will not hesitate for any reason First Oracle. Jeth answered confidently.

Helen nodded and looked at Martin. *I'm going to the lounge to prepare for my flight with Anja and Miath.*

Martin squeezed her hand stopping her. *What is wrong Helen?* He asked.

Helen turned to face him fully. She did not shield her reply, for she knew there were only five or perhaps six individuals with the Mindvoice power to hear her words and four of them were in this cargo hold with her.

You must have felt it by now Martin. Helen said. *You are far stronger than I, and I can feel it heavily.*

Martin met her eyes. *I... I thought only Torma and I could feel it.*

It is great power. Torma spoke softly. *It lies dormant now, waiting just beneath the edge of perceptions.*

Helen nodded. *If you have felt that, then you have felt what else is there with that power we feel.*

Martin nodded slowly. *Death.*

Helen squeezed his hand and arm tightly staring at him. *The Coven will discover we are here soon Martin Leonidas. If he does not come himself, Veldruk will undoubtedly send Yuri.*

Good... I have a message I want to give her. Martin popped.

Helen shook her head. *No... not good. We must find Lisisa quickly, and then leave this place Martin. She is like a beacon right now. We can shield her until Jeth can touch her, but we can not hide her completely. Only she and Jeth can do that once they are bonded. Once we have found her we need to move with all haste. This... this place is filled with death. The souls of millions of our people weigh down on me Martin. So many that were*

left behind, so many that suffered as the poison came to our planet. I can still see the memories as if they happened yesterday. Something is here... something evil. And it wants to be let free.

Martin gripped her shoulders and held her tightly, Torma moving closer, his massive bulk providing another additional pillar of support for her. *I don't care how evil it is Helen. I will not allow it to win.*

Helen looked at him and smiled slowly nodding her head. *I will be fine. I will find Anja. She always has a soothing effect on me. Perhaps because she is just as fiery as I was in my youth.*

Martin grinned. *We'll be fine Helen.*

Helen nodded. *Concentrate on Jeth. Only you and Torma can teach him what he needs to know now. And you must do it in two hours.*

“So where do we go from here?” Sivana asked softly.

She turned her head slowly, her reddish black hair wild and unkempt and falling across Belen's naked chest. The blanket on the bed covered their lower bodies, but Sivana had her upper body plastered against Belen's side, her firm breasts crushed against his ribs, his hand absently stroking the soft skin of her shoulder and tracing the scars that dotted her flesh.

As her eyes fell on his face, Sivana had to admit she did not want this to end. She had just experienced some of the most intense and passionate sex of her young life, and she wanted to keep experiencing it. As much as she could. Belen had shown her what it was like to be taken by a Lycavorian man. His hands had danced across her flesh like the instruments of a master musician, even as he took her gently at times or roughly at others. Never once did he inflict pain on her that she did not welcome. Their bodies had meshed perfectly, and he had done things to her that she had never thought a man could do to a woman. Things that had made her see stars, not to mention scream out in blissful abandon.

Belen dropped his dark blue eyes to her face and stared at her. She was the one, Belen knew that will no doubts as her musky rose scent now permeated his senses. Just looking at her caused his blood to surge, and more than anything he wanted to claim her properly in the tradition of his people.

“Sivana... you are a Princess of Hadaria.” He said finally.

“So everyone keeps reminding me.” Sivana said. “Well... everyone but Anja. At least she doesn't tell me that every hour.”

“I am a Spartan. A member of *The Durcunusaan*, I am tasked with...”

“What does that mean?” Sivana asked quickly cutting him off. “That word you just said.”

“*The Durcunusaan*?” Belen asked.

Sivana nodded. “Yes.”

“It means Wolves of the Blood.” Belen replied. “Three hundred of us. Three hundred purebloods, all of us with some of the purest Lycavorian blood there is. We are the King and Queen's Royal Guard.”

“And I am the Queen's sister, so that makes me royalty. So you can protect me.” Sivana said with a grin. “Problem solved.”

Belen chuckled. “I don't think Anja or my father would see it that way.” He said as his face became serious. “I acted inappropriately and I treated you badly. I...”

“No!” Sivana snapped. “Don't you dare apologize for something that we both had a hand in doing.”

“I should have known better.” Belen said.

Sivana sat up slowly, pulling the sheet up around her breasts and securing it tightly before tossing one end of the sheet back over Belen's lap. She drew her legs around in front of her and gazed at him with her sea green eyes.

“This is all so very new to me.” She said softly. “All of my life I've had to look over my shoulder for someone trying to kill me. I've never trusted anyone Belen, no one but myself. I thought I was alone in this universe. Then I discover that I am not only *not* alone, but I'm the sister to the Hadarian Queen, who also happens to be the mate to the King of the Lycavorian Union. Did you know she is protecting me?” Sivana asked looking at him as he sat up.

Belen nodded. “Yes.” He replied softly. “She knows some of the life you have had to lead. What you have experienced. I've seen her talking with Filrian and Yuriko, and the only thing they have in common is their knowledge of The Wilds and what your life could have been like. She does not presume to know

everything however, and she only wants you to be able to absorb all that you have been exposed to in the last month more easily.”

“I’ve never had anyone protecting me before Belen.” Sivana said meeting his eyes. “Part of me rebels against it, but the bigger part of me relishes it. I’m discovering things about myself that I never knew. Part of that discovery is... part of it is you. You are the second man to have shared my bed in nearly thirty years, and the other one was only to gain information for...”

Belen reached out and touched her cheek shaking his head. “You have not spent much time around my people have you?”

Sivana grinned. “I tried to avoid them whenever I could actually.” She replied.

Belen laughed and nodded his head. “True Lycavorians... true Spartans... we honor our women. There are always the bad apples of the bunch, but throughout our history, at least our history on Earth, our women have always been an important part of our lives. After learning about the darkness the King’s grandfather dragged our people out of it all became clear to me.” Belen took her hand within his. “I will brave the wrath of my father and your sister to pursue what exactly we have discovered here Sivana. As long as you are willing to do the same thing.”

“I want to explore it as well Belen... I do.” Sivana spoke softly. “I don’t know that I will ever be able to give you what it is you desire though.”

“And how do you know what it is that I desire?” He asked with a grin.

“All Lycavorians want mates that can give them children. It’s in your blood.” Sivana spoke meeting his steady gaze. “I have to discover who I am before I can even entertain the notion of having children. I don’t know how long that will take Belen.”

“And if I told you that I have already decided you are to be my mate,” Belen spoke. “And I am willing to wait forever if I have too. Until you are ready.”

“I would say you are crazy.” Sivana told him.

Belen laughed and pulled her in to his embrace, his eyes closing as she easily fit into his arms and she pushed against him. “My mother has told me since I was nine that I am the most insane man she has ever met. Outside of my father that is.”

Sivana closed her eyes as her cheek pressed to his bare skin and she felt his heart beating. “Crazy is good.” She said. “I like crazy.”

Belen watched the door to her quarters slide shut one hour later, and after a quick glance up and down the corridor he turned and headed for the cargo bay. He smelled her before he even turned the corner in the corridor, and his heart sank as he came face to face with his Queen. Anja stood leaning against the corridor wall, her eyes on the floor.

“My... my Queen?” Belen stammered.

Anja looked up at him, her jade green eyes intense and fiery. “I have only one question Belen.” She spoke calmly.

“Yes... yes my Queen?” Belen spoke.

“I have known your father and you for well over a year now Belen, and I know you would never act in a way that would bring dishonor to your family or to Sparta.” Anja spoke pushing off the wall. “So my question is this... Are you certain of this? Of Sivana?”

Belen took a deep breath and did not pause. “More certain than I have ever been of anything in my life.”

“You realize she may never... she may never be able to give you what it is you seek? Emotionally I mean, after all she has had to endure.” Anja said.

Belen nodded finally getting over his shock of seeing Anja and he detected his father’s scent further down the shadowy corridor. “I am willing to help her discover whatever she desires my Queen. Whether it includes me or not. And that is something you can tell my father as well.”

Anja nodded after a long moment. “Carry on with your duties Belen.” She said.

Belen nodded quickly and turned to head in the other direction. He did not see his father step from the shadows and come up behind Anja. Atropos towered over the Hadarian Queen he had served for over a year now, a position that he had decided he would not relinquish willingly for as long as he lived.

“I will reassign him immediately Milady.” Atropos spoke softly. “He is my son and his actions have...”

“Did you think of your honor when you continued to love Lilika with all that you were Atropos?” Anja asked softly. “Knowing that you broke Spartan law. That you continued to break Spartan law. Did you think of honor then when you loved Belen’s mother?”

“No Milady I did not.” He answered immediately.

“Did you detect some form of lie that I did not smell coming from your son?” Anja asked.

“No.” Atropos said.

“Then Belen remains where he is.” Anja spoke her eyes still staring down the now empty corridor. “Fight with our heads, lead with our hearts. Isn’t that what Martin lives by?”

Atropos smiled. “It is indeed Milady.”

“You should know by now that I am not one to follow protocol and tradition very well Atropos. I did that once in my life and it almost cost me Martin’s love. I will never adhere to that again when it comes to affairs of the heart.”

Atropos looked at her as she turned and met his eyes. “I... I did not know that Milady.” He said seriously.

Anja nodded. “It was a long time ago.” She said. “He loves my sister Atropos, and that much wafts from his pores more clearly than anything else.”

Atropos nodded. “Yes he does.”

“Then I will not take away a source of strength for her or him Atropos.” Anja said. “If Belen is willing to discover what they could have together, no matter how long it takes, who are we to take that from them?” She spoke looking up into his weathered face.

Atropos smiled gently as he looked at his petite but very fiery Queen. “And that is why I serve you Milady.” He spoke.

Anja laughed pounding her small fist against his armored chest. “Who are you kidding Atropos? You just like all the real fancy food you get to eat when we go to all these different places.”

Atropos laughed, his dark eyes twinkling as Anja headed in the other direction down the corridor. He looked once more the way his son had gone and a small smile creased his lips before he turned to follow his Queen.

His son had chosen well.

EARTH EDEN CITY AIRFIELD

Tareif stood on the top of the three story terminal building, the steaming mug of coffee in his hand as he looked out over the airfield, his eyes following as *RAPTOR IIs* and even half a dozen *STRIKER ATs* were beginning to warm up to begin their duties for the day. He had taken over Vengal’s old office for it provided better command and control abilities, and was close to the airfield. Lynwe’s main office was on the opposite side of the massive airfield, and though she was technically Chief of Earth Security, Lynwe had made it very clear to Tareif that their duties would not change in any way. No one attack would engulf them both, and when they did come together, they took great care in their security.

Tareif’s eyes took in the movement to his left and out on the tarmac and he watched as the dirty yellow scaled dragon moved into view around the two *STRIKER DTs* that were now parked with their ramps facing each other. He watched as Isra led Tarifa down the ramp by the hand, both of them turning to speak into the open rear portion of the *DT*. The winds carried Tarifa’s laugh to him and he smiled as he watched Aihola come walking quickly down the ramp adjusting her clothes in some manner. Tareif grinned for the first thing he heard upon coming in this morning were the whispers of the cries of passion coming from the *DT* the night before. Isra enveloped first Tarifa and then Aihola into his arms, kissing them both before helping them climb onto Aelnala’s back. He watched as Aelnala leaped into the cloudless sky as the sun began to make its climb into the horizon and she joined with the azure blue scaled dragon he now knew as Isheeni, already circling above the airfield. They both turned towards Eden City and sped away with powerful flaps of their wings, carrying one daughter of his blood and one who he was proud to call his adopted daughter.

Tareif could only shake his head in awe at what had transpired over the last two days since Isra, him and Steven had returned to Eden City. And as he sipped his mug of coffee he reflected on these events.

The plan had gone exactly as they had prepared it, and Tareif now knew that the moment the unknown dragon and rider attacked, Admiral Jamerl released the RAPTOR II to speed in and pull them off the island. They landed back here several hours later, and he had watched as Tarifa and Aihola practically mauled Isra, not to mention his dragon knocking him over twice in her own happiness. What had stunned Tareif was watching Steven limp down the ramp beside him and seeing his youngest daughter Zaala, her dark hair flailing in the wind, running to greet them. He had been smiling right up until she had leaped into Steven's arms with barely controlled happiness. All the months he had spent inquiring about some Spartan that he thought Zaala was involved with, and it had been Steven all along. As Palina embraced her husband tightly, he watched as Steven lifted Zaala off the ground easily and gave her a blistering kiss, heedless of who was watching. A kiss that his youngest daughter returned with equal zeal Tareif had noticed. Palina had laughed at his expression, and then quickly ushered all their daughters over to him to welcome him back as well.

Tareif had noticed the smiling raven haired Aricia hanging back from the group, leaning against the foreleg of the azure blue dragon standing beside her and Tareif was struck by how much more mature Aricia looked now than when he had last seen her in Sparta. Then the physical effects of giving birth to a child were still visible, the tired eyes and physical stress but not anymore. Aricia wore a new form of body armor similar to what he had seen Isra wearing, and it hugged her supple body like a glove. Upon seeing her, Tareif knew why his King had annihilated planets in his quest to retrieve her. Aricia's natural beauty was as exotic as it was breathtaking, and seeing her beside the blue scaled dragon the confidence brimming from her, Tareif knew why the King had allowed her to come here without him. She was as capable as she was beautiful, and the battle in Eden City as described to him by Tarifa and Aihola, not to mention several others, only proved that assertion to him.

Aricia had faced off against the unknown dragon and rider without fear even though both of them were larger than her and Isheeni, and considering the size of dragons on a whole that was saying quite a bit. In Tareif's eyes Isheeni was monstrous at ten meters long from the tip of her nose to the end of her whip like tail and six meters in height. Her whole body projected power and control and the muscles moved gracefully beneath her scales. And yet Tareif could not believe the softness of those scales when he ran his hand over them and saw Isheeni's wings twitch. This unknown dragon was larger than her, larger than even Aelnala who was a fraction bigger than Isheeni. Yet Aricia and Isheeni had stood face to face with this threat and come out the winners.

"They will be safe Tareif." Aricia's voice spoke from behind him.

Tareif turned slowly and saw her standing there with a smile, holding her own mug of coffee. The matte black body armor was securely fastened already and conformed to her like a second skin it seemed. "Reading my thoughts my Queen?" He asked with a grin.

Aricia stepped closer to him. "I don't have to be proficient in Mindvoicing to know that you are concerned for their safety Tareif." She replied. "And reading another person's thoughts is not something we would ever do without that person's permission. It is considered a serious crime among our people."

Tareif nodded. "I was only jesting, my Queen. I know you would not do that."

"War Master Tareif, we have been though far too much together for you to continue with this ridiculous notion of fealty to me." Aricia told him. "I demand you stop it."

Tareif looked at her. "You are a Queen Aricia." He said. "And you deserve to be treated as such."

"I will not be treated as such by those Martin and I consider our family." Aricia said sternly. "You, Tarifa, Aihola, all of you are our family, and no matter what the future brings, we will always rely on our family to keep us grounded."

"Then yes... I do worry for them." Tareif said softly. "But I also know that Aelnala and your Isheeni will keep them safe. And I know that Isra would die before allowing harm to come to them."

"They are his mates Tareif." Aricia spoke softly moving closer to him. "Do you still doubt his love for them?" Tareif looked at her wide eyed and Aricia smiled even more. "Who do you think gave Vengal the information he passed to you Tareif. My Beloved, Martin, he keeps nothing from me. From any of us. He has half sisters yes, but because of what they have experienced together; Tarifa and Aihola will always be the ones who he considers his true sisters. Just as Daniel is his only true brother. The moment Vengal contacted him

asking questions about Isra's history, his character, Martin knew what was happening. He knew how much you loved Dekton."

Tareif nodded. "I did not bury Dekton fully until Isra and I crashed together on that island Aricia. Isra and I... we did not sleep for three days... and he told me things about his life in that time. Things that you do not share with someone you don't trust. I will remember Dekton... but Tarifa is right... Isra is their future. And I must join them in that future or I will be left behind. And that is not something I want to happen especially after seeing the love he carries for them."

Aricia smiled and reached out to squeeze his arm, just as Isra appeared from the doorway, his body armor also in place, but unfastened at the throat. He carried the mug of tea in his hand and the datapad. He held up the pad.

"Arzoal's reply as written by her aide." He spoke.

"Why did she not wish to speak with us directly?" Aricia asked.

"Whatever Queen Dysea and Queen Isabella are involved in on Elear, it is taking much of her time." Isra spoke. He held the pad out to Tareif, knowing that Aricia did not need to see it, for she already felt what the answer would be, just as he had. "She agrees with our assessment Aricia, and she recommends we proceed with extreme caution for we don't know how many others there are."

"*Anse!*" Aricia swore in the ancient language. "*Pen tor marde mande lon tor ter vada jotu Isra.*" (I was truly hoping that was not the case)

Isra nodded. "*Aen Tor Pen.*" He spoke. (As was I)

Tareif looked up from the pad. "What do you mean your assessment? What aren't you telling us Aricia?"

Aricia looked at Tareif as she leaned against the waist high concrete wall that encircled the roof. She set her coffee down on the two foot thick wall and folded her arms across her firm chest. Tareif had tapped on the body armor that Isra wore and he had been impressed with the ability it had to conform to the wearer almost naturally, the center of the chest area and the back covered completely in the flexible composite armor that reminded him quite a bit of the Kevlar he and his Dragoons had worn so long ago. Aricia's armor was the same, but it also stretched around her full breasts and Tareif berated himself for admiring how she filled out her uniform.

"It is not something we aren't telling you Tareif." She replied. "It was a theory that I had after meeting this unknown dragon. A theory that Isra had after discovering the skin molt. I needed to speak with Isra and then we needed to bring it to Arzoal; she is Isheeni's mother and the oldest of their kind. We needed to speak with her before this idea we had could actually be acted on."

"What idea is that?" Tareif asked.

"Yes... I would like to hear it as well." Lynwe's voice spoke and they turned to see the tall Drow General Lynwe and the Spartan officer Layna exit from the door into the lower floors, both of them carrying mugs of strong coffee. This was something that Tareif and Vengal had done every morning before he had departed into the stars, meeting here on top of the roof to talk of things. Tareif had continued it with Lynwe and those like him, who were entrusted with the safety of so many. She had actually welcomed the time with Tareif when he suggested they do this, and while Lynwe knew she was a skilled warrior, she relished the time she spent with Tareif and learning all he could teach her.

Lynwe also had no compunctions about Aricia's position and she stepped right up to the Lycavorian Queen with barely a pause and gave Aricia a soft kiss on her cheek, which Aricia returned without question. Layna could only stare in awe at this display of familiarity, her hands wrapped around the mug. The more time Layna spent around Lynwe and Selene, the more irresistible she found them to be. Since all of this had begun, and with the exceptions of the nights she had remained with her daughter, Layna had never been apart from at least one of them. They were so comfortable with each other, so open with their affection, whether a gentle caress or kiss, or just the words they used and the tone of their voices when they spoke to one another. Even during these last two weeks they always inquired of her daughter, and her health and well being.

Lynwe turned to look at Isra. "So what have you discovered?"

"We needed to verify the information about this rider and dragon with Arzoal, as Aricia has stated." Isra told them. "Arzoal is almost positive that this rider is the same Lycavorian that escaped my planet during our war with the dragons over four thousand years ago."

Lynwe's amber eyes grew a little wider, for she had not heard this history yet. It was one of the things that Isra had spoken of with Tareif in their time on the island, so he had a working knowledge of that information. Lynwe looked at Aricia. "You are joking of course?" She stated finally turning back to Isra. "You actually fought dragons?"

Isra nodded. "It is not a part of our history that many of us are comfortable with." He stated. "It is another connection to the brutality that my father and those like him embraced."

Aricia shook her head. "No... unfortunately we aren't joking, as much as we both would prefer that." She said. "Arzoal believes, and Isra and I agree with her, that this rider and one other escaped Enurrua with their dragons and came here to Earth. The timetable fits almost perfectly with the time that dragons became part of Earth legend and lore."

"So these dragons have been here on Earth all of this time?" Tareif asked. "All the myth and legend and fantasy stories, they are all true?"

Aricia nodded. "It would appear so." She said evenly looking at them. "Our unknown dragon is a pure Firespitter. The dragons that left Enurrua all those years ago were pure Firespitters. Both of them. A male and a female."

"This is the crazy idea I told you about after I first arrived Lynwe." Isra spoke. "The one I did not want to elaborate on without more information."

Lynwe nodded slowly remembering that conversation. "Ok... I'm following you." She said.

"The skin molt Isra and Aelnala found is from a female dragon that is barely over three thousand years old." Aricia explained to them. "I had tests done with the equipment I brought on my *DT*, so we can be almost exact on her age. We believe that in order to insure the survival of their species, the male and female dragon that left Enurrua began to mate once they reached Earth. We don't know what happened to the other rider, but it appears this rider that we face is between five thousand three hundred and five thousand four hundred years old, which fits with the age Arzoal said most of the riders were back then."

"Wait... you can tell how old he is?" Tareif asked incredulously. "How?"

"His scent... as foul as it was. It told me all I needed to know." Aricia replied with a smile. Aricia saw Layna trying to hide her own grin because she alone knew what Aricia was speaking of because she was a Lycavorian female like her Queen. "Layna... would you care to explain it?"

Layna stared at her Queen for a moment, stunned to be included in their conversation in such a way. She looked quickly at Lynwe who only smiled, and it suddenly dawned on Layna that these men and women detested formality in any way it seemed.

She turned to Tareif. "When a male Lycavorian wants to draw attention from females or show them that he is interested in them, he uses what is called his aura. Essentially it is a combination of a psychic energy field and scent and the ability to project their scent. It is something that all the males of my species have. They can use it in many ways, sometimes even as a weapon. Females have an aura as well, but it is not as powerful as the males."

"They can use it as a weapon?" Lynwe asked clearly very surprised.

Layna nodded. "In times past, before King Resumar began to pull our people out of the *Iandali*, the abyss, males used their aura as a weapon really, mainly against females. A strong Alpha male can usually render a female helpless to resist him just by using his aura. It affects all the females of my species, some of us more strongly than others. We have learned how to resist the effects quite well over the millennia, but even now a male's aura has the ability to make females more... compliant I guess would be a good word. We've also discovered that emotion... such as a powerful love between mates nullifies the effect one male may have on a female if she is mated or in love with another."

Tareif looked at Aricia quickly his eyes wide in shock and horror. "This rider... he did this to you?"

Aricia nodded. "He tried too." She said with a smile. "It didn't work on me because I have already been claimed by an Alpha male much more powerful than this rider will ever be. An Alpha male who I can not begin to imagine not loving."

"Martin?" Lynwe asked.

Aricia nodded. "Yes." She said with a grin. "He wasn't happy about that I will tell you... but once he realized he could not use it as a weapon, he panicked and immediately began looking for exits out of the city streets." She said.

“Could Tarifa, Aihola or Selene be affected by this aura?” Lynwe asked.

Aricia shook her head quickly. “No. Tarifa and Aihola are completely in love with Isra, and the pureness of his blood, not to mention their own will power will prevent this male’s aura from affecting them. As for Selene, she is now a vampire, and Lycavorian auras do not work on vampires.” Aricia’s eyes twinkled when she looked at Lynwe. “Besides... she has you Lynwe. What could ever entice her to alter that?”

Lynwe’s amber eyes gazed at Aricia for a long moment. As close as Anja and Aricia were, it didn’t surprise her that Aricia knew about her ‘gift’, but it never ceased to amaze her at the acceptance that she almost always garnered. Even after all this time, the people that Martin Leonidas had chosen to pull close to him still managed to surprise her. Lynwe detected Layna’s head move between the two women almost imperceptibly and she knew the time was coming when she and Selene would have to accept Layna into their bed and hope she was as open minded as she seemed.

“Anyway... within that aura he projects is his own unique scent, which can tell us many things about him, to include being very close to his age. And his age probably makes him the original dragon’s rider.” Aricia finished speaking.

“The original dragon?” Layna asked softly, still not sure if she was actually included in the conversation.

Aricia and Isra nodded. “The dragon the rider commands now is not the original female. She’s too young.” Isra spoke looking at them and taking a deep breath before speaking again. “We believe she is one of the first eggs to have hatched here on Earth but... we also do not believe she serves the Lycavorian who rides her willingly.”

Tareif, Lynwe and even Layna looked at the two of them as if they were insane.

“Isra... she burned eleven Dragoons and Spartans to cinders before our eyes!” Lynwe gasped. “She would have killed far more if not for Aelnala, Aricia and her dragon!”

“She’s protecting her brothers and sisters.” Aricia said softly.

“What?” Tareif demanded.

Aricia looked at him. “When we were fighting them, her name is Syrilth by the way; when we were fighting them Isheeni asked her why she was doing this and she replied she must protect them.”

Tareif’s head snapped around and he looked at Isra. “The flame we saw during the night? It was them?”

Isra nodded slowly. “There are seven that we know of for sure, and Arzoal is certain there are more. Aricia and I agree. Syrilth is too old for there not to be more, and she has not been carrying this rider for very long based on their abilities and the power of their psychic shield. We estimate no more than three years together, and they have not had the guidance of Arzoal and the other Dragon Elders in their training as the members of Mjolnir’s Hand has. We may have been together less time in number of years, but our training together as a bonded pair will surpass whatever connection they may have developed naturally... at least right now.”

“Why is that significant?” Layna asked.

“Firespitters are savagely protective of their eggs and hatchlings.” Aricia spoke now. “And it’s quite possible there may be un-hatched eggs as well. Their eggs are very selective about conditions in which to hatch, everything must be perfect. Heat, humidity, wind, the nest and also temperature. It must all be perfect to induce the hatchling within to come out of the egg. If all these conditions are not met, the hatchling will remain in the egg, and wait for them to be perfect.”

“How long will they wait?” Layna asked.

“Isheeni waited seven years to hatch after Arzoal brought her egg into this world.” Aricia replied. “Arzoal has told us she has seen Firespitter eggs wait over two thousand years before hatching.”

“They are very particular.” Isra spoke with a small grin.

“This rider... he called Syrilth *upae* in our language Tareif. *Upae* in the ancient Lycavorian language means bitch.” The anger and distaste in Aricia’s words was very evident and they all heard it. “Any member of Mjolnir’s Hand that rides a female dragon knows you do not, under any circumstance, refer to your bonded dragon sister as a bitch. None of them would even think to do such a thing.”

Isra shook his head. “That is a singularly very bad thing to do.” He said in agreement. “We rely on each other to the extreme, and many of the female dragons that are bonded have become an active part in their rider’s lives and vice versa. Aelnala adores my mother, and we go to see her as often as we can on Apo Prime, and that is only one example.”

“Why is it like this?” Lynwe asked.

“We feel what our dragons feel.” Aricia told them. “They feel what we feel. Isheeni knows me almost as well as Martin does. Aelnala knows Isra almost as well as Tarifa and Aihola now know him. We in turn know them almost as well as we know our mates and that is why we are so strong. The bond we share with our dragons is a sacred thing to us. We would never call each other a vile name in the midst of a battle or at any time for that matter.” Aricia smiled wistfully. “I wish... I wish one day you could see Martin and Torma together. They are the perfect union of man and dragon, and what they can do together is sometimes outside the realm of believability. No...” Aricia looked at them shaking her head. “Syrilth does not carry this man by choice, we are sure of it.”

“So what do we do?” Lynwe asked. “It’s been three days now and we have heard nothing from this rider or those he works for. The base they were using in the islands is a wasteland now. Admiral Jamerl bombed it back to the dark ages. When we sent troops in, they found nothing but bodies, most of them human.”

Aricia looked at them. “We need to find where they are keeping the hatchlings and the eggs if there are any.” She spoke.

“How do we do that?” Tareif asked. “The better question to ask is why would we want too?”

“If I had to guess, I would say that he and these creatures have control of her siblings, perhaps even some eggs and that is why she does what she does.” Aricia told them evenly. “Arzoal believes and Isra and I agree with her, there that could be up to a hundred dragons. In any combination of hatchlings and eggs. Isra saw two adolescents, and that could mean there are more as well. I would bet in favor of that Tareif. We need to find where they are keeping them.” Aricia said. “If we can discover if this rider and these creatures are holding her siblings captive and rescue them, Syrilth will abandon this rider in a heartbeat.”

“You sound very sure of that Aricia.” Tareif spoke. “What if that is not the case?”

Aricia looked at Isra quickly and then back to Tareif. “If that is not the case Tareif, then we will kill her.”

“The humans are of no major consequence now.” Lynwe said quickly changing the subject. “What Tarifa, Aihola and Selene did by announcing elections, it has all but taken the human element out of the equation. Those that were involved for more nefarious purposes have already blended back into the shadows. Anlain and Crescent have disappeared once more, but we have an idea on where they are going. Admiral Wallace has released several of his more inventive technicians to show us what little toys they have designed, and we have three of those toys tracking Anlain at least.”

“This is the time that they are most dangerous Lynwe.” Isra said meeting her amber eyes. “They will become more desperate and bold. You and Layna must not relax on Selene’s security just yet.”

Layna shook her head. “That won’t happen.” She replied before Lynwe had a chance to. The Drow General smiled at Layna’s words.

“We need to keep the security on our most important officials at current levels until this entire situation is resolved. I’ve already spoken with Tarifa and Aihola about this, and while they don’t like it, they understand it needs to be this way. At least until Aricia and I find where these creatures and this rider are keeping Syrilth’s siblings.”

Tareif looked at him. “You truly believe that is the only reason she serves him?”

Aricia nodded. “Isheeni is a pure Firespitter Tareif. Believe me when I tell you old friend, if her children or siblings were in any way threatened, she would burn this entire city to the ground in order to protect them, and she would not think about it for more than a split second.”

“So let’s stop talking about it and get to finding where these dragons are!” Lynwe spoke. “I for one would find it fascinating to know they have existed for so long on Earth right under our noses.”

Aricia nodded. “There are some things we need Admiral Jamerl and Admiral Wallace to adjust in their daily sensor run Tareif.”

“Give them to me. I will fly up personally so that this does not go out on open channels, no matter how encrypted they are.” Tareif spoke. “It will give me time to quiz Steven about his intentions with my daughter.”

Lynwe laughed at him and squeezed his arm. “I can tell you what his intentions are Tareif.” She said with a smile. “He intends to marry her and give you grandchildren.”

Tareif grinned. “I know... but I want to hear him tell me that.”

Isra's internal Com unit on his armor buzzed and he reached up to touch it. "Go ahead Lohana." He spoke.

"I just received a transmission from Tarifa at the Eden City Council Building Isra." Lohana said.

Isra looked at Aricia. "They have not been there for more than a few minutes." He stated. "Why would she be contacting you?"

"She sounded extremely pissed off Isra. Something to do with the Kavalian ambassador not being accounted for when the Zaleisian Delegation returned to their ship." Lohana answered him. "She asked me to relay to you that Layna and Lynwe could fill you in, but she requested that you and Queen Aricia meet with her in an hour. She's calling for Admiral Jamerl to be there, and she wants Governor Panos and Admiral Wallace conferenced in on a secure network."

Isra turned to Layna his violet eyes wide. "I did not know about a Kavalian being on Earth! How long has he been here? What has he been doing?" He demanded.

Layna glanced at Lynwe quickly. "He was a member of the Zaleisian Delegation in their bid to purchase the rights to some coordinates off the Atlantic seaboard." She answered in a rush turning back to him.

"Yes... they turned out to be the coordinates adjacent to where we have just completed laying new piping and conduits to the repaired offshore fuel platforms." Lynwe said. "This Kavalian rubbed Charles the wrong way and Tarifa and Selene and Aihola postponed the signing of a trade agreement until they found out more. We discovered the information about the conduits that evening and when confronted with it the next day the Zaleisians balked. This Kavalian also did not have the right answers, so they were told no deal would be done and Selene ordered them escorted off Earth and out of the system."

Aricia stepped forward. "Isra what is wrong? You seem to know about quite a bit about Kavalians"

"Kavalians hate water!" Isra snapped. "They won't go near it, even if their lives are threatened! This ambassador is not here helping the Zaleisian Delegation! He's here scouting for his people! Scouting to see who and what they can take by force! I encountered them within The Wilds on several occasions. They are extremely ruthless and will not hesitate to do whatever it is they feel necessary to get what they want. If there is one on Earth, then you can rest assured there are more on the way."

Lynwe shook her head. "As if we didn't have enough problems already." She spoke.

LYCAVORE LYCAVORE SYSTEM HIGH COVEN SECTOR FORTY-THREE

"Beautiful isn't it?"

Martin turned his head slightly and looked at Helen as they stared at the massive greenish planet through the cargo bay view window of *HOPE'S QUEST*. The *STRIKER DT* was in the background, its engines idly smoothly while Endith, Tina and now Sivana were in the cockpit running last minute checks. The Shroud Generator on *HOPE'S QUEST* was operating at peak efficiency, and they were completely hidden to the High Coven defensive platforms in orbit, as well as the few *DARKBROOD*-Class frigates that dotted the area.

"I don't think I would use the term beautiful to describe it after what happened here Helen." Martin said.

"When the sun was rising in the morning you could see the reflection on the oceans from the emerald forests when you were in orbit. It was truly amazing." Helen said softly.

"Is that the way Canth remembers it Helen?" Martin asked in a similar tone.

Helen turned to look at him and she nodded. "He loved it here." She said. "Perhaps one day... when the High Coven is no more and we have peace, perhaps we can return him here and lay him to rest."

Martin took her hand in his and smiled. "That is something I would be honored to do." He spoke.

"We must do what we came here to do and leave quickly Martin." Helen spoke. "Veldruk is no fool, and neither is Yuri. This close to them, even we can not rely entirely on our psychic shielding for very long. Two... perhaps three days at most, and then even with the added power of Torma and Miath, we will not be able to shield our presence any longer. No one can sustain those types of shields longer than that."

Martin nodded. "I know." He spoke turning slightly as Anja walked up to them, taking up a spot on his right side and pressing her body up against his as she always did. It was almost an unconscious thing now; whenever one of his queens was near him, it was almost as if they had to be touching each other in some way.

Anja looked at him and then to Helen. "Endith and Sivana are finished with the pre-flight and are ready to go." She said. "Torma and Miath are already on board."

Martin smiled. "You ready?"

Anja met his eyes. "We've never come out this high up before Marty, but yes I think we're ready."

Martin nodded. "You are ready Anja. Once you clear *ANVIL* dive for a safer altitude for you and Miath. Don't hesitate. Even with Helene's added power to your shields, if you stay too high it won't last. They won't pick you up on sensors so don't worry about that."

Anja nodded and looked at Helen. "You ready for a twenty-three thousand foot dive Helen?" She asked with a grin.

Helen rolled her eyes and shook her head. "Oh yes... it will mark the highlight of this insane trip no doubt."

Anja laughed as the COM unit built into the new body armor suits they wore echoed clearly with Komirri's voice from the bridge. His voice was coming from Martin's COM unit, just below the shoulder in the front.

"Milord?" His voice sounded soft and hesitant which all of them picked up on right away. Komirri was never soft and hesitant.

"What's wrong Komirri?" Martin asked.

"Sire... perhaps you should come to the bridge." Komirri spoke.

"What? Why? We are just getting ready to depart." Martin said.

"Sire... I think you should come to the bridge." Komirri told him again.

Martin looked at Anja who shrugged and he nodded. "On my way." He looked at Helen as his hand slid into Anja's. "Ladies would you care to accompany me?"

Helen gave him a disgusted look and Martin grinned as they moved for the bridge. It did not take them long to move down the corridors of the ship to where Komirri stood in the center of the small bridge. He was staring at a Holo Image display in front of him, the view windows on either side of the bridge filled with views of Lycavore.

"Komirri... what do you have?" Martin asked.

The big Algolian turned to face him, his grayish reptilian skin healthy and clear for his species, indicating an excellent diet and plenty of exercise which his people needed or they would become immobile and die. Komirri had been with Martin since his father Admiral Ceneu had formed the 1st Spartan Attack Division, and placed him in command of the *LEONIDAS I* class cruiser at the time. It had been over a year now, Komirri carrying out his King's orders and wishes, and now with the *LEONIDAS II*-Class Strike Cruisers in production Komirri felt invincible. It had been Martin who saved him from being transferred, signing the order that made Komirri his permanent captain until such time as Komirri deemed he wanted to move on. Surprisingly Komirri did not see that happening. The days and weeks with the King and Queen were far too interesting.

"Milord... I was under the impression that this was now a High Coven planet." Komirri spoke. "Populated completely by vampires."

Martin nodded. "That was my impression as well."

"The Coven used poison missiles against Lycavore when they conquered us Komirri." Helen said stepping forward a little. "There were no survivors on the surface. They told us that. They told Canth that. They... they showed him!"

Komirri nodded. "I've always found the High Coven to be boastful First Oracle." He said. "In this instance they were boastful. Filrian bring it up please."

The Hadarian Healer who had traveled with Yuriko for so long and who now had found a niche as Komirri's senior aide, at least for this mission adjusted his consoles and the holo image shifted and changed until they were looking at a small portion of the planet with tiny blue dots crammed together into one medium sized area.

Martin stepped forward quickly. "Those are...?"

Komirri nodded. "Yes Milord. Lycavorians." He answered. "Filrian how many again?"

Filrian looked up from his console. “The number keeps changing due to some kind of interference on the surface near where they are, but I stopped counting at two thousand three hundred and fifty.”

Martin’s eyes were wide now, as were Helen’s. They were staring at the holo image in front of them, Helen moving closer to look at it.

“Survivors.” She gasped softly.

“Or their descendants.” Anja spoke from next to her.

“*Vada ared lon wen alleen.*” Martin whispered. (The Ones that are lost.)

Helen and Anja looked at him. “Who told you that?” Helen asked quickly.

Martin met her eyes. “It was something Canth told me on Ukwav.” He replied. “Before he passed on.”

“They are in the same general area as where Sivana said she landed.” Filrian spoke. “Western continent near the equator. There appears to be a relatively substantial size settlement nearby as well as several active mines in the area. I’m detecting High Coven communications and inter-command chatter also. I would say there is a large garrison in this area as well, a garrison that is hidden from passive scans.”

Martin looked at him. “What kind of mines are we talking?”

Filrian looked at to his screen. “It appears to be some type of Rubidium Ore sire.” He answered. “But it is in its raw form, before processing.”

“The High Coven uses Rubidium Ore for many things sire.” Komirri told him moving up to stand next to his King. “Mainly the crystals that help to power their LSD Cores.”

“Is there any sign of High Coven activity near the Lycavorian settlement?” Martin asked.

Filrian shook his head. “No Milord.”

Martin looked at Helen. “They... they wouldn’t actually be helping the Coven would they?” He asked.

Helen met his eyes. “I can not answer that and we should not assume.” She answered. “It is obvious they are either survivors or the descendants of survivors, but until we talk to them, we will know nothing.”

“Talk to them?” Martin declared. “We aren’t going anywhere near them!”

“We can’t just leave them Martin.” Helen snapped.

“We are here for Lisisa Helen, no one else!” Martin spoke. “And even if we had the room, which we don’t, we can’t fit an additional two thousand plus men, women and children on this ship!”

“They are your people!” Helen barked.

Martin turned to face her completely. “Helen... you need to listen to what you are saying.” He spoke. “This is primarily a covert operation and we do not have the means to help them. We’ll come back for them, I promise you.”

Helen met his eyes. *Swear to me on the life of your unborn daughter Martin Leonidas that you will return to free your people.*

Anja stepped up next to Martin and looked at Helen as Martin nodded his head. *I swear to you on the life of my unborn daughter and the name Eliani that she will carry First Oracle. I will return for my people.*

As do I. Anja spoke. *We will return Helen.*

Helen nodded then. *I will await you on the STRIKER.* She said before turning quickly and moving out of the bridge area. Anja squeezed Martin’s hand before following her.

He waited until they were gone before turning to Komirri. “I want to know everything there is to know about that area of this planet.” He barked. “And I want to know how many of my people are on the surface.”

ANVIL

77,000 FEET OVER THE WESTERN CONTINENT

Sivana sat back in the co-pilot’s seat and turned her helmeted head to Endith. “We’re in the pipe.” She spoke with a smile. “Exactly the glide path you plotted. That’s some serious flying Endith.”

Endith grinned. “Not bad assistance either. Tina preps the rear compartment for decompression and I keep us in the glide path.” She ordered. “Sivana keep an eye on the glide ratio. We need to stay exactly on the course and not vary more than three degrees until we release Torma and Miath.”

Sivana nodded as her hands moved confidently over the consoles. Endith and Tina had drilled her mercilessly for the last few days until she was completely comfortable working the operations panel. Endith turned her own helmeted head to face the rear of the DT.

“We’re ready Marty!” She shouted though her voice was muffled under the helmet. She saw Martin’s head turn to face her, the crested helmet nodding.

Martin turned back to look at where Jeth stood next to his father. *Jeth... if you leave this ship for any reason your mother won't have to skin you. I will do it for her.* Martin exclaimed walking up to the hatchling and putting his gloved hand on his thick neck.

Jeth nodded quickly. *I will remain here King Martin.*

Don't worry... once Endith lands; you will be doing your part by protecting them. Your senses are better than theirs and I will need you to watch over them while Atropos and the others secure the area. Martin told him.

Torma glanced at Martin, knowing that he was making his son feel important and needed so he would not do something that put them all in jeopardy. He nodded his head quickly. *That is your task my son. Nothing else. We will find Lisisa and you will be united with her, but now you also have a mission.*

Whether by fate or design Jeth, you are now a member of Mjolnir's Hand. Martin told him. *There are rules and purpose to all that we do. You must abide by them or it could cost others their lives. Remember what your father, Miath and I have taught you these last few hours, and do not hesitate to reach out to any one of us shielded.*

Jeth met his father’s golden eyes and nodded. *I will not fail you father. Or you King Martin.*

Martin nodded and turned to face Anja and Helen. They stood beside Miath, their helmets on, and the psychic shield they would share, at least for the twenty thousand foot dive through the atmosphere, already active and surrounding them. Miath was raring to go, his talons clicking on the floor, while Torma remained calm and control even though he too was busting to get off the ship.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Firecracker?* Martin spoke using his nickname for Anja.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Don't say it big boy.* Anja answered with a smile. *We'll be fine.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I was going to say I love you.*

Anja turned her head and looked at him smiling, her jade green eyes soft and filled with adoration.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *In that case, I love you too.*

We'll meet at the prearranged coordinates. Martin said turning to look at where Danny, Atropos, Belen and a dozen of *The Durcunusaan* occupied web seating, all of their eyes on where he and Anja were further back in the DT. *Danny you Atropos and Belen stand ready. Jeth's senses are almost as good as ours, use him wisely.*

Danny nodded. *I will brother; you just watch your skinny ass out there and don't hit any trees.*

Secure a perimeter around the DT as we planned and we will see you in four hours. Martin spoke with a smile nodding his head. He turned to look forward where Endith’s head was still turned back facing him. “Let it rip Endy!” He barked.

Endith immediately turned back forward and took a deep breath. “Here we go! Ramp opening!” She spoke as her fingers stabbed he console.

The roar of rushing air filled the back of the DT, and Jeth moved further back to stand beside Danny and Atropos as Martin climbed onto Torma’s back. Anja got onto Miath and then reached down to help Helen climb into the saddle behind her as Miath turned toward the rear portion of the DT as it continued to open. Martin got himself situated on Torma’s back and his eyes changed quickly, his fangs extending. These types of exits always made his blood rush through his veins and he could feel Torma’s excitement as well. He watched as the floor of the ramp extended out, the walls and top moving slowly back, leaving just the ramp protruding into nothingness.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *It has been too long my bonded brother.* Martin said as he stared into the blackness in front of him.

Torma could only nod his massive head. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Yes it has.*

Martin looked behind him to where Anja and Helen sat on Miath. He didn’t say anything, just met her beautiful eyes and smiled. Anja met that gaze and returned his beaming smile. He turned back around in his saddle and patted Torma on the side.

Let's do it brother

Torma moved forward slowly, keeping his wings folded tightly into his body as they moved out onto the long ramp, the pressure of the atmosphere and blistering wind pressing against them.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Krius reull tia reth duan gais stros aina jar.* Martin spoke softly within Mindvoice. (May those who rule our hearts watch over us.)

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Krius hnes cabor duan sidheyn for bavyn jar anzen.* Torma finished the short prayer that he and Martin always made before taking flight. (May they guide our journey and keep us safe.)

Torma turned slowly on the ramp until they were facing back into the rear of the DT and Martin gave Anja a lopsided grin.

NOW!

Torma snapped out his massive wings to either side and allowed the rushing wind to snag his body. Danny and the others watched as his huge obsidian form lifted off the ramp with barely a pause and as soon as the DT moved far enough ahead, Torma dove for the ground. They watched as Miath quickly followed Torma, moving out onto the ramp with a little more quickness since he was not as large as Torma and then turning slowly to look back into the rear. Anja turned her helmeted head to look over her shoulder at where Helen was gripping her waist tightly, her own helmet pressed against the back of Anja's armor, eyes tightly shut.

Ready Helen? She asked.

Why do I let him talk me into these crazy ideas of his? Helen complained her eyes tightly shut.

Anja laughed. *Because you love him. Miath... NOW!*

Miath snapped out his wings in the same fashion as Torma and the wind snagged him off the ramp just as easily as it had Torma. His gray eyes waited until they were clear of the end of the ramp and then he lowered his head and dove.

Danny shook his head and patted Atropos on the shoulder. "Better them than us!" He screamed against the raging wind as the ramp began to close.

Atropos nodded his head. "On that I will agree with you!" He yelled back with a grin.

They had exited four thousand meters higher than they had ever gone, but it didn't matter in the least. The moment Torma had folded his wings and dove, they accelerated to nearly four hundred kilometers per hour and he and Martin enjoyed the feel of the dive tearing at their psychic shield. The saddle armor adjusted immediately and tightened around Martin's legs as he kept his head tucked in behind Torma's shoulders, his gloved hands gripping the two shoulder spikes that protruded from his body. Their psychic shield could protect them from everything except perhaps the plasma cannons on a fighter, and the thrill of having the wind tearing at them but not able to do any damage was exhilarating. Their Mindvoice powers individually were incredible, yet when they joined their minds as they did now, both of them knew there was little they could not accomplish together.

Martin tilted his head back just a little and looked up, seeing the large green dot above them that was matching their plummet to the surface almost exactly.

You have been working with him Torma! Martin yelled out in Mindvoice. *His control and poise has increased ten fold.*

Their bond grows stronger my brother! Torma spoke back. *He has committed himself to her Martin, and they are a perfect union. Soon they will rival Isra and Aelnala in the strength of their connection. Dysea and Iriral as well.*

I agree. Their common natures bring them closer. Martin replied turning back to look down and see the dark surface of the planet Lycavore rushing up at them. *Angle towards this settlement Torma. I want to do a fast pass over it before we begin searching for Lisisa.*

Torma didn't reply and only twitched his tail ever so slightly adjusting their downward course. Martin turned back to see Miath matching their slight course change.

Anja... when you reach your ceiling break for the patrol grid we worked out! Martin yelled out. *We are going to pass over the settlement before moving to ours.*

We'll see you back at the DT Martin! Be safe Lover!

You too!

His yellow eyes watched as Miath altered course once more and they began to drift away from him and Torma in their dive for the surface.

Anja could feel her wolf blood rushing through her veins in joy as they plummeted towards the surface. Helen's arms were wrapped tightly around her waist, both of them leaning low over Miath's shoulders to cut down on drag. The longer they remained together, the stronger they became Anja knew. This was the epitome of adrenalin rushes as far as she was concerned. Helen's added Mindvoice power was more than enough to reinforce their psychic shield so they could exit the *DT* so much higher than they had trained for. Miath had barely skipped a beat in the added height, the excitement of plunging towards the planet below from so high up racing through his own blood, which Anja could feel just as easily as if it was her own. Helen's added weight was also not a factor as Miath had grown much stronger over the last few months and he could carry Anja and one other easily. Her gloved left hand rested flat on the spot between his shoulder spikes sending her power and affection for him through her hand into his conscious mind. Something that he returned to her without question.

Anja looked at the altimeter she wore on her wrist, though it was only secondary to Miath's keen senses. He sensed her movement.

Almost there. He shouted.

Helen... you still with us? Anja declared.

This is insane! Insane I tell you! Helen screamed out, causing both Anja and Miath to laugh softly.

We're going to level off quickly Helen! Anja exclaimed. *Hold on!*

Hold on? Child... I haven't let go! Helen barked out again.

Anja turned her head back forward and leaned in even closer to Miath's shoulders, feeling Helen press closer as well. *Whenever you're ready Miath!*

Now! He shouted and extended his wings straight out with a snap. They jerked suddenly as their four hundred kilometer an hour plunge came to an abrupt halt in less than one hundred meters, and then they were flying straight and level over the dark terrain twenty thousand feet below them, their speed bleeding off so quickly as Miath caught the thermal currents that Helen felt her stomach lurch somewhat. They also noticed the stars in the sky for the first time, as well as the half moon that cast a soft glow upon them.

We have about three hours before the sun comes up. Anja declared as her breathing calmed and the rush began to recede. *Let's cover as much ground as we can in that time Miath. We have a general idea where she might be, but let's stick with the grids Martin worked out and start there.*

Miath nodded his head and banked slightly to the right. *I will head for the first marker.*

Anja sat up straighter in the saddle and turned her head as Helen also sat up and opened her eyes for the first time. *May the Gods preserve me; I do not wish to ever do that again. I will never be able to eat a full meal again. I believe I left most of my stomach somewhere up in the clouds above us.*

Anja chuckled and squeezed her arms that remained locked around her waist. *We can't fall off Helen. The dragon armor keeps us securely in the saddle, and Miath will warn us of any sharp maneuvers he might do. Your stomach will catch up with us.*

Helen's helmeted head slowly looked around as they now moved at a more sedate speed through the sky, gliding on the winds really and her eyes were able to pick up features of the terrain below them. Her eyes went wide slowly at the majestic view their position on Miath's back afforded them.

Gods child...Anja is this how it always is? She asked.

Anja smiled and nodded her head. *Beautiful isn't it?*

Breathtaking. Helen spoke.

Someday I will take you up for the sunset on Hadaria. Anja spoke. *That is magnificent. And I promise to dives for the surface either.*

Helen smiled. *I would like that.* She said. Her head turned slightly. *I'm detecting several Mindvoicers below us.* Helen broadened the reach of her awareness and she squeezed Anja's waist. *Anja can you feel them?*

Anja nodded quickly. *Oh yes. None of them feel like vampires however.*

They aren't All of them are Lycavorian. Helen's words were excited. *None more powerful than a Tier Four, but they are all over. And they... they are speaking in Mindvoice freely.*

Marty... can you feel them? Anja reached out into the night sky.

Torma had halted their plunge a hundred meters off the ground, his wings extending and cranking them into a gut wrenching maneuver that had them racing over the top of the dark settlement at nearly two hundred and fifty kilometers per hour. As they passed the settlement below them Torma slowed even more and began to climb back into the night sky, using the wind currents to conduct a slow ascension.

Martin's yellow/gold eyes scanned the terrain below them intently. *I feel them. Do not lower your shields for any reason. Helen is right, there are none above a Tier Four, but we need to be careful. I did not expect so many of our people and their Mindvoice abilities are far more than normal.*

I agree. Helen's voice echoed in his head.

We're in our patrol grid. Anja spoke within their connection.

Most of the village is dark. Looks like they are just starting to wake up. Martin said. *They must go to these mines early.*

Martin you can't believe they are working for the Coven. Helen declared.

I don't believe anything Helen. He answered. *However history has proven that many of our people went over to help the High Coven. We have to consider that possibility as much as we both hate that to be the case.*

Helen was silent and Martin knew she was mulling over his words. *I hate it when you sound like me.* She finally spoke.

Martin smiled as Torma banked slightly in the darkness. *We will find out Helen. That I promise you.*

King Martin! Jeth's voice erupted into their connection with a shout. Martin and Torma winced but at least he had remembered to shield his words tightly, directing them only to his father and Martin.

Do not shout my son! Torma ordered.

Forgive me father! We... we have landed at our... at our coordinates King Martin. Jeth reported though they could hear the hesitation at how he used his words. *King Martin she is close to you!*

Martin's yellow/gold eyes grew a little wider. *Jeth are you sure?*

I can feel her King Martin. Jeth replied confidently.

He is sensing her subconsciously Martin. Just as Isheeni and I can sense you and Aricia when you are nearby. Torma broke in. *Jeth... can you pin point where she is from our current location.*

The village you passed. She is moving towards it. Jeth answered. *She is not alone.*

Martin slowly expanded his own awareness, being careful not to open himself too much. Given his, Anja's and Helen's level of Mindvoice power, and combined with their dragons, detecting them within Mindvoice would be child's play for Veldruk and possibly even Yuri if they weren't careful. Martin felt his mind surge when he detected the tremor and he quickly clamped it off.

Torma... come in over the settlement from the west! I can feel her now!

Martin be careful! Anja's voice echoed.

Don't worry Firecracker... I'm not going to snatch her and come running. Martin replied quickly. *I just want to see if I can see her.*

We're going to cover our patrol grid and mark everything we can before we head back to the DT. Anja spoke.

Martin nodded. *We will do the same. See you in less than three hours.*

Thud!

Lisisa stopped walking along the well used path to the settlement and looked up into the night sky. Melita held her hand tightly as they moved, and she looked at her friend.

"Lisisa?"

Thud!

Lisisa winced and turned back the way they had come and her forest green eyes stayed directed up into the sky.

Thud!

"Melita do you feel that?" Lisisa asked quickly.

“Feel what?”

“The pressure waves of air!” Lisisa replied. “It’s like a huge... a huge bird is nearby.”

Melita looked skyward, using her vampire vision to scan the cloudless sky. She had learned long ago to trust Lisisa’s senses more than her own at times. She may have been half vampire, but Lisisa’s wolf senses were far more acute.

“I don’t see anything.” Melita spoke.

Thud!

Melita spun around now as she felt the slam of air pressure that time. “Lisisa? I felt it that time! Lisisa what was that?”

“I don’t know!” She exclaimed softly. “I can’t smell any new scents.”

They both staggered slightly as a gust of air passed over them quickly, Lisisa’s eyes going skyward where she caught the briefest glimpses of the massive shadow as it swept over the top of them. The gust of air carried with it the scents from the surrounding area, but mixed in very faintly was the unmistakable and very new scent of mint.

Melita grabbed her hand and arm as they both ducked instinctively. “What was that?” Melita gasped.

Lisisa shook her head. “Whatever it was, it was huge. And it was moving fast.” She replied. “Hurry... let’s get to the settlement. Suddenly I don’t feel so comfortable out here anymore.”

Martin kept his head turned, his yellow/gold eyes gazing back at where his daughter stood in the middle of the worn path. The darkness had obscured most of what she looked like, but he saw the raven colored hair shining in the half moon light and he thought he could almost detect the color of her eyes. The wind had carried her scent to his keen nose and now Martin Leonidas had the smell of his daughter in his nostrils. The smell of Maple Trees and fresh wheat caressed his senses and he smiled.

Brother? Torma’s voice broke into his thoughts.

Martin turned back around slowly. *We have found her Torma.* He spoke softly.

Brother we must...

Don’t worry Torma. Martin said patting Torma’s thick neck as they sliced through the sky. *I have not spent two years searching for her only to destroy my chances now by being foolish.*

That... that is very good to hear.

Martin smiled and nodded. *Let’s continue with our patrol grid as planned and then meet the others back at the DT. The settlement appears bigger than we first thought and I want to do a ground reconnaissance as well.*

Do you think they are a threat? Torma asked turning his huge head around to glance at Martin.

Martin met his gaze. *I don’t know my friend. I will not risk lives needlessly in finding out though.* Martin turned his head back toward the settlement and smiled. *Soon daughter. Soon I will come for you. And I will bring you home.*

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

EARTH

ULU NIGHTMOON

LEONIDAS I-CLASS ATTACK CRUISER

COMMAND SHIP FOR EARTH SECTOR

ADMIRAL/COLONEL JAMERL COMMANDING

“I demand that I be allowed to contact my government immediately!” Cho’ta exclaimed. The Zaleisian Minister was not happy as he sat in the large conference room with the others of his delegation. Three heavily armed Spartans were in the room with them, posted at the three entrances. Selene sat on the other side of the table looking at them, Layna standing directly behind her, her right hand wrapped around the pistol grip of her

P190, her index finger gently resting on the trigger guard. She was taking no chances with Selene's life now that this Kavalian was loose somewhere and at the first threatening move from any of the idiots sitting across from her she would shoot them where they sat. This knowledge had pleased Lynwe to the point that she had kissed Layna full on the lips, a kiss that Layna had not backed away from and in fact returned with equal vigor.

"That's being arranged for Minister." Selene said evenly. "In the meantime perhaps you can tell me where Mister Talco has disappeared too. I would surely like to speak with him about a great many things."

Cho'ta looked at her. "What are you talking about?" He snapped.

Selene held up the data pad. "He departed Eden City's spaceport with you and your delegation Minister Cho'ta." Selene spoke calmly. "However he did not exit that same transport with you at the Transport Connection Hub to return to your ship. Are you going to sit there and tell me you know nothing about what I'm talking about? Please don't insult my intelligence Minister, I can show you the security footage if you wish?"

Cho'ta leaned across the table at glared at her, doing his level best to intimidate Selene as best he could. "I resent being accused of anything illegal and I resent being treated in this way. I wish to contact Prime Minister Deia herself and lodge a complaint! I was told that the elfin Administrators of Earth were civilized."

Selene leaned back in her chair and glanced quickly to where Layna stood and then at where she knew the small security cam was directed into the room. She turned back to Cho'ta. "Is there something you wish to tell me Minister? I will warn you however, my patience is not infinite? Right now I have the evidence to charge you and every member of your delegation with espionage against Earth and by virtue of that against the United Lycavorian Union, of which Earth *is* a member world." Selene leaned forward in her chair. "I abhor being lied too Minister Cho'ta, it tells me that you don't respect me. And considering the respect and friendliness with which we greeted you and your delegation from the moment they arrived on our world, not to mention the honesty with which we conducted our negotiations, your actions now do nothing more than to seriously make me very angry. You wouldn't like me when I am angry Minister. I'm a woman... an elf and a vampire, and that makes me very unpredictable."

Aricia stood next to Tarifa in the anti-room of the lounge watching on the large monitor, Admiral Jamerl with them and standing to Aricia's right side. Tarifa chuckled when she heard Selene's words.

"He's good Tarifa." Aricia spoke softly.

"Yes he is, but Selene's better." Tarifa said with a smile. "She has the uncanny ability to drive people crazy with her patience and calm. She's done it to me and *Nya Istel* on more than one occasion, and it's Lynwe's biggest complaint about her. She drives Lynwe mad with her patience. Cho'ta's getting nervous now."

Aricia nodded in agreement. "Yes he is. It appears he has much to hide, and I intend to find out what it is."

Jamerl leaned forward. "Every microsecond of the security footage has been gone over Milady. The Kavalian did not get off the transport at the hub; I've seen the footage myself three times. It returned to Eden City one hour later."

Aricia nodded. "This means he is long gone." She stated.

"How could he have gotten off the base?" Jamerl asked. "War Master Tareif is extremely security conscious and that base is practically his home. No one moves around that airfield or any of the surrounding facilities without the proper credentials. He has seen to that."

"Perhaps getting onto the base and moving around on it is difficult Admiral." Aricia spoke.

Tarifa turned to look at Jamerl. "But not getting off." She finished what Aricia started. "Talco must have gone directly to the nearest entrance and left the airfield. My father is going crazy as you say Admiral, more because he is upset with himself than with anyone else. The entire airfield is locked down while they review the security footage and question everyone near where the transport landed."

"This Minister Cho'ta knows why this man was here Tarifa." Aricia spoke softly. "What was this Kavalian's name?"

"Talco." Tarifa answered immediately. "We... Charles noticed it first, but Aihola and I did not like his scent. It was..."

"Untrustworthy?" Aricia said.

Tarifa looked at her. "Yes." She spoke. "Selene has always been able to pick up when something disturbs *Nya Istel* or I. We are very close in many ways and it gives us the ability to be able to read each other quite well."

Aricia nodded. "Cho'ta knows why this Talco is here." She said again. She looked at Jamerl. "I want new orders sent out to all Fleet Groups within range of Earth Admiral. They are to stop and search every ship that is bound for Earth no matter what flag they fly. Is that clear?"

Jamerl nodded. "I'll make it so my Queen."

Tarifa looked at her. "What are you thinking Aricia? Advanced scout for something?" She asked.

Aricia nodded slowly. "I believe so yes. Admiral... everything you have told us about this species. The Kavalians? It's all true correct?"

Jamerl nodded. "I can have the information made available to you in minutes Milady." He answered. "All I need is your order to declassify the intelligence chips and distribute them."

Aricia nodded. "I give you that order now. Arrange this intelligence and transmit it to Tareif and Isra on the surface. Aihola and Lynwe are reaching out to their Drow contacts." She smiled. "That is one advantage that we have that no one will ever think to question."

"What's that?" Tarifa asked.

"They will assume that the Drow are like any other elves." Aricia said looking at her. "No one knows that Aihola is half vampire because of the Coven experiments on her. No one knows she is half wolf because of Dekton and now that Isra has claimed the two of you and his blood runs in your veins, her abilities will be triple what they normally are. Much like yours."

Tarifa nodded at her words remembering the conversations she and Aihola had had with Isra while lying in his arms. "The purer the blood the stronger we are." She said softly. "Ever since he claimed me on Enurrua I have felt stronger and my perceptions broader. *Nya Istel* as well, since he claimed her." Tarifa's eyes grew wide in a look of horror. "Aricia... oh forgive me!"

Aricia took Tarifa's hand quickly and smiled. "Forgive you for what?" She asked her with those smiling azure colored eyes. "Enurrua is where Martin and I discovered the true depth of our love for each other Tarifa. It's where we discovered Torma and Isheeni and the roles they now play in the lives of us all. That is what I remember of Enurrua." She said. "I will never regret that as long as I live. You have nothing to be sorry for."

"And we can use the skills of the Drow in ways that no one is wise too." Tarifa spoke after a minute.

"I demand to speak with a representative of the Lycavorian Union so that I may file a formal complaint!" Cho'ta nearly shouted now drawing their attention back into the room.

Aricia grinned. "I believe that is my cue." She spoke.

Tarifa smiled and moved to the door, her hand activating the panel. Cho'ta and his aides turned as the hidden door slid open and Tarifa exited the dark room.

"What is the meaning of this?" He bellowed as he watched them enter the lounge. "I demand..." His words were caught in his throat when he saw Aricia step from the room. There were very few who did not now know what Aricia looked like after the events on Enurrua over a year ago. Many of the Net Channels had carried the story of what she had endured and how the Lycavorian King had brought down an entire government and Empire to get her back. And it was no secret that she was now a member of the dragon unit that the Lycavorian King had formed with the dragons that had called Enurrua home. "Queen... Queen Aricia." He was finally able to gasp out.

"Yes we heard you Minister." Aricia spoke as she came fully into the room. "So... here I am." She declared stepping up to stand between Tarifa and Selene as Selene got to her feet. "Lodge your formal complaint Minister. I will see to it that it is filed in the proper way, and then I will inform your government that you are being held on three counts of espionage within Union space. I will inform them you are responsible for transporting suspected terrorists into United Lycavorian Union territory and facilitating their actions on a member world." Aricia stepped closer to Cho'ta. "And I will tell them I will send them the remains of you and your fellow delegates after I have you executed. You have not done your homework Minister Cho'ta, or this Kavalian Talco did not give you all the information he should have."

"Milady... I don't know... I don't know what you mean." Cho'ta spoke as he tried to dig himself out of the problem he was in. Perhaps he could confuse the young Queen into thinking he and his aides were above espionage charges.

Aricia's next words laid that to rest quickly.

"Minister... when it comes to spies and those who would do harm to who we consider family, my mate and King Martin Leonidas, well we speak with one singular voice." Aricia said confidently. "I will give you one

hour to decide to tell us everything that you know and what you were told by this Talco. After that one hour, I will obtain the information in ways which, quite frankly, you have not even imagined. You and your aides will cease to exist, your government will be told you were executed for espionage, and I will send you to a very dark prison cell here on Earth to have the information extracted from you by other means. It is your decision. Make it quickly Minister, for I am a Spartan woman first and foremost and I am not known for having a whole lot of patience.”

Cho'ta's face became worried and he glanced at where Selene and Tarifa were standing side by side with small smiles on their faces.

Selene shrugged. “You had your chance to do it the easy way.” She spoke softly. “My way was the easy way.”

“One hour Minister.” Aricia spoke. “And do not for a moment think that I will not do exactly as I have said I will do. That would be an even larger mistake on your part. One that you most definitely would not survive.”

Aricia spun around and moved to the main door, walking through it as it slid open, Tarifa and Selene directly behind her, while Layna backed out of the door.

EDEN CITY AIRFIELD AIRFIELD COMMAND AND CONTROL CENTER

“There!” Tareif exclaimed his finger stabbing at the large monitor in front of where he stood in the air conditioned Command Center.

Steven sat around the small console to Tareif's left, his hands working the computer control station. The incidents were considered a high priority lock down and only those War Master Tareif trusted completely were privy to what was happening across the base. Steven happened to be one of those men, mainly in part to his status as Tareif's personal pilot, not to mention his keen mind and skills with computers, but also because of the deep and loving relationship he was involved in with Tareif's youngest daughter Zaala.

Tareif had been shocked to learn of their relationship at first, but his experiences with Tarifa and Isra had tempered his more protective instincts and he had spoken with his wife Palina before saying anything. Palina had known all about Steven, as he was sure she had from the start. He knew his youngest daughter was something of an upstart and very rebellious by nature. She was also what he deemed as a little loose with her affections, and not in the least bit shy about bedding with a man strictly for pleasure. Palina had told him this was not the case with Steven, and his wife and elfin mate of over three hundred years had been very surprised as well when Zaala had first come to her asking how she would know if she was in love with a man. Zaala had told her mother everything then, to include the fact that she did not care that Steven was human, and that she would outlive him by many centuries. Steven treated Zaala as if she was a Queen in her own right, and that she was an elf did not bother him in the least.

Most of the original elves created by the man they all now knew as The Guardian of the Line of Leonidas on Earth were long dead now, but their children lived on and would for centuries. Tareif and Palina were first generation descendants of the original elves Walter created, and Tareif knew that elves, female elves in particular were genetically engineered by Walter to be exceptionally desirable to men in every way. This purpose was passed down to the female children of elves, their daughters born just as breathtakingly beautiful as their mothers and grandmothers. Tareif also knew without question that Steven loved his youngest daughter not because she was an elf, but because of whom she was. He had seen the way he held Zaala in his arms, the way his eyes looked upon her, and it was the same way Isra looked at Tarifa.

Complete and utter devotion.

Tareif moved closer and stabbed his finger at the monitor again. “There Steven. Focus on this man and enhance the image. He is in a restricted area, and I see no pass at first glance.”

Steven did just that, his hands dancing across the computer console with practiced ease and they watched the grainy picture of the figure come into better focus. “He's definitely not wearing a Union uniform.” Steven spoke adjusting their view as Isra stepped closer. “And no flight suit either.”

Isra touched the screen. "Tareif is right; he's not wearing a security badge anywhere in the open. No one on this base would do that would they Tareif?"

Tareif shook his head. "Everyone knows to keep their security badges in full view. I've pounded that into their heads enough times over the last months. My people know this Isra."

"Steven..."

"This is the South East entrance." Steven spoke. "I can't get a better angle, but I can tell you he isn't human, Lycavorian or elf. The body temperature and genetic code scanners at all the entrances are all programmed with that information. You can see they are not registering."

"The South East entrance exits into the area of Eden City closest to the reservoir." Tareif stated. "And it is the closest route into the mountains."

"He's had sixteen hours." Isra spoke quickly. "It would be a waste of time to send out search teams into this area. He has either found his way out of the city or he has gone totally underground."

Steven played with the controls and his face wrinkled somewhat as he brought into focus the face of another figure. This person stood on the outside of the gate entrance. "Tareif... Tareif isn't this... isn't that the asshole that confronted Tarifa outside the Command building before that dragon attacked?"

Tareif and Isra moved closer to the monitor, gazing at it intently. "Steven can you clear it up anymore?" Tareif asked.

"Hold on... let me try it from the gate angle." Steven answered switching the feed he was getting to the one directly from the gate entrance that was looking out over the area outside the security fence. "There!" He exclaimed as he centered the clear shot of the male elf in the screen.

"Anlain!" Tareif snarled.

Isra's head snapped around and he looked at Tareif, his violet eyes opening a little wider, dilating to hard points of intense concentration. "The... the elf who forced Tarifa to..." He began to speak.

Tareif looked at him, detecting the barely controlled anger that was suddenly projecting from Isra. Isra knew about what Anlain had done. The crimes he committed against not only himself, but the heinous crime he perpetuated against his daughter Tarifa. Isra knew this, and there before his eyes Tareif saw the simmering anger and hatred that a Spartan would have for anyone who hurt their mate. And the pain that Anlain would suffer if he ever fell into Isra's hands.

Tareif nodded slowly. "Yes... that is him." He answered. "And the only reason I can think that he would be standing outside this particular gate is because he helped this Talco person get off the airfield, and he either helped him get out of the city, or he is hiding him."

"He disappeared after the attack." Steven spoke quickly. "Same with that idiot from New Miami."

Isra looked at Steven. "The idiot from New Miami is human Steven."

Steven's face twisted into a pained grimace. "That tells me he is a bigger idiot that I first thought. Apparently... nut jobs like these like each other's company."

Isra grinned as did Tareif. "So it appears." Isra spoke.

"There is also no way to track them once off this base." Tareif spoke.

Steven looked at him. "Well... that might not actually be true." He said. He watched as both men turned completely to look at him.

"What do you mean?" Tareif asked.

"I guess it doesn't really matter now that you know about Zaala and me." He spoke with a sheepish grin.

"What doesn't matter?" Isra said barely able to keep his own smile from showing.

"There are... there are two people in Eden City that... they basically get places for people who don't want to be found to stay discretely. When Zaala and I would meet and we wanted to make sure you wouldn't... that you wouldn't find out, it was usually at one of these locations." Steven spoke.

"These people are criminals?" Isra asked.

Steven shook his head quickly. "No. They are not involved in anything illegal. One of them is a woman in her seventies for Christ sakes! They... they control and run almost all of the brothels in Eden City."

"You took my daughter to brothels!" Tareif almost shouted his eyes wide.

"NO!" Steven declared. "They were who helped me to find some really nice apartments to take her where we could spend a weekend or two or three days together! I would never take her to a brothel! I had to do it that way because whether you want to admit it or not, you have eyes everywhere Tareif!"

“This... this practice is not illegal in Eden City. It is taxed and regulated and the females all take part in it willingly.” Isra spoke looking at Tareif.

Tareif looked at him quickly. “And how would you know this?” He demanded.

Isra chuckled. “You don’t think your daughters know about it?” He said. “They are the ones who made sure it was taxed and that certain guidelines were followed for those who chose to work in this business to keep them safe.”

Tareif looked at them. “The mate of two of my daughters knows about these places, and the man who wishes to be the mate of my youngest daughter has taken her to such places. What am I suppose to think?”

“I never took Zaala to a brothel!” Steven barked.

“Steven... you know these people?” Isra asked still smiling at Tareif’s stern expression.

“I know where to find them.” Steve replied. “If anyone has tried to get a place to stay and be discrete about it, they’ll know.”

“Then let us go visit them.” Tareif growled. “And you can explain to me again just why I should let you take my daughter as your wife.”

Isra laughed at the expression on Steven’s face as he got to his feet and they headed out of the airfield command center.

ELEAR WAINN CITY CONSTABLE CENTER

“I’m sorry my Queens, but the report turned out to be an overly concerned mother.” The older elf Constable spoke as he looked up from his desk at where Dysea and Isabella stood.

“Explain that to us.” Isabella spoke as she and Dysea settled into the two chairs across from the man’s desk.

The elfin Constable reached across his desk with two data pads. “Four days ago this female elf was reported missing by her mother. Apparently she returned early from a vacation that her mother discovered and she could not contact her. She tried for a full day before contacting the Constable’s office in the capital that referred it to me.”

Dysea looked up from the pad. “The mother waited only a day?” She asked.

The Constable nodded. “She was making quite the stir it seems, so I went to this young women’s home. Her name is Va’nimia and she is a teacher of the arts at Wainn University, quite an attractive young woman as well.”

“What did you find when you went to her home?” Isabella asked.

“Nothing. She wasn’t there.” The Constable answered. “Several of her neighbors last saw her in the local market three days before, and there were some items of clothing missing from her drawers and closet, but nothing to indicate anything had happened to her.”

“What types of clothing?” Isabella asked.

The Constable smiled. “The types I wish my mate would wear more often.” He spoke quickly, then his brain caught up with him and his face looked horrified. “OH... forgive me my Queens! I...”

Dysea held up her hand with a smile. “We do not take offense Constable.” She said quickly. “Have no fears. You are certain that was all that was taken?”

The man nodded quickly. “There were some lotions and scented water crystals from the bathroom that were gone.”

“How do you know that?” Dysea asked.

“They are similar to what my mate has at home my Queen.” He replied. “Not things that you would gather first if you were abducted.”

“I agree.” Isabella said looking at Dysea. “Was there anything else?”

“Well I put out a bulletin just to cover all my options.” The Constable told them. “I canceled it this morning.”

“Why?” Bella asked quickly.

“The young woman contacted my office this morning.” He answered. “She was quite embarrassed by the entire ruckus her mother caused and she wanted to let me know that she was indeed fine and staying a few days with someone she had met recently.”

“Someone?”

The Constable nodded. “From her tone of voice and the shyness with which she spoke, a male someone.”

“What makes you say that?” Dysea asked.

“I have been doing this for nearly seven hundred years my Queen. I have picked up some things over the years.” He replied.

“I wasn’t implying otherwise Constable.” Dysea told him with a smile. “And that is the reason I asked, because I do not have the experience you do.”

The man met her emerald eyes surprised that his Queen would admit such a thing and the rumors he had heard about Dysea being extremely open and easy to talk with seemed to be very true. He smiled and reached over to the left taking the second data pad.

“She gave me an address where she is so that her mother wasn’t concerned.” He spoke. “I looked into it and it is an estate on the outskirts of Wainn owned by Imperium Engineering Systems. I have sent two men to this estate to question her. That is your company isn’t it Milady Isabella?” He asked looking at her.

Isabella looked at him quickly. “Yes... yes it is. I wasn’t... I wasn’t aware we owned any property on Elear however.”

The Constable nodded. “It was purchased twenty-nine years ago.”

Dysea looked at her. “Bella...?” She asked.

“It is a company that I founded with those who defected with me after we came to the Union.” Isabella answered looking at her. “We own property on many planets, including Apo Prime. Most of the property is minor estates for our engineers to work. I haven’t been involved much with the day to day running of the company for almost a hundred years now. I let my people handle it.”

“IES has a corporate office here in Wainn Milady.” The Constable spoke. “It’s been open for two decades now. They are assisting in the developing of several of our commercial projects in the Northwest Hemisphere. A new one was started just last year.”

Isabella looked at him with a smile. “Perhaps I will visit them.” She said.

The Constable leaned back. “I was going to file the case Milady.” He spoke. “Do you wish me to keep it open?”

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Bella... what is it?* Dysea asked.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I don’t know ussta she-elf.* Isabella replied. *Something doesn’t seem right.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *It is a legitimate company isn’t it?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Oh yes.* Isabella replied quickly. *I began it myself with three men and a woman who were older than me, but who desperately wanted something more than what my father offered them. All of them brought their families out and we started this company as a means for the vampires who came with us to be able to support ourselves. It is very successful Dysea, particularly in the field of Bio-Agriculture.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Then why do you seem hesitant Bella.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *There were four planets that we said we would never purchase property on because of the horrors my father perpetrated on them. Elear is one of them.* Isabella spoke.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *You said you have not been part of the day to day activities for a hundred years though.* Dysea said.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Yes... but I find it odd that I was not informed of the decision to purchase property on Elear by the others.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Do you want to visit this corporate office?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *We have that cult rally to attend.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Lexi and I can go to that.* Dysea spoke. *This seems to be bothering you Bella...*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *It’s just odd that is all.*

Dysea turned to the Constable. “You may close the file Constable. We do thank you for letting us know about what happened however.”

The man nodded. "It was an honor to finally meet you my Queens. He spoke getting to his feet. "Whatever I can do for you during your stay here?"

"Isabella would like the address of the estate." Dysea spoke. "I would like to ask you some further questions in regards to this Order of Arte."

The Constable met Dysea's eyes. "So that is why you have come to my city Lady Dysea? To investigate them?"

Dysea glanced quickly at Isabella before looking back at him. "What do you mean?"

The Constable sat back down. "It is well known Lady Dysea that you and Queen Isabella are never far apart, and that you operate as..." He spoke looking at them. "You operate with one mind. If you both are here in Wainn it can only be because you are investigating this Order of Arte and their practices."

"Have they broken any laws?" Dysea asked quickly.

"That depends on what you consider law my Queen." He replied.

Dysea looked at Isabella once more before turning back to him. "Perhaps you should explain that?"

The man looked at Isabella and held out the data pad. "The address to the estate and the corporate offices of IES Lady Isabella."

Isabella took the pad and looked at Dysea.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Go my love.* Dysea spoke. *I will inform you of what I discover.*

Isabella nodded and got to her feet. She stepped up to her and squeezed Dysea's shoulder gently.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I will tell you what I discover as well ussta she-elf.*

Dysea smiled and nodded at her as she headed out. She turned to the Constable. "So tell me Constable. What information can you give me on this Order of Arte?"

Va'nimia gagged slightly as she felt his fingers entwine tightly within her long hair and gently push her head lower on his groin. Tears came to her soft blue eyes but she didn't fight him, she didn't want to fight him, as more of his thick cock pushed into her throat. Va'nimia knelt before him on the floor, his hips on the edge of the bed, her firm ass cheeks grinding into the heels of her feet as she shuddered continuously in passion. Her arms were extended up the length of his powerful abdomen and chest, her manicured nails gently digging into the skin of his chest, her large breasts pushed tightly against his pulsing hot balls. The insides of her thighs were soaked with her own sweet slickness and the remnants of his last explosion into her, and as her full lips anchored firmly around the base of his thick ten inch cock, Va'nimia felt the ripples of the small orgasm course through her. Her soft blue eyes glanced up, small tears rolling from the corners as she looked along the span of his rippled, washboard hard stomach and powerful chest, gazing up at his face. Va'nimia shuddered even more in orgasmic release when she saw the look on his face.

His very handsome face she had decided long ago.

Vonis's eyes had already changed, his fangs extended as he entwined his fingers even more in her soft thick hair. It was like satin wrapped around his fingers and gently caressing his lower abdomen and he heard her gag only slightly as her lips engulfed his entire organ to the base. He had taken her in the confines of the small shower only minutes ago, yet he was as hard as steel once more as she lavished his cock with attention. He had carried her to the bed after leaving the shower, his only intent to lay her on the sheets and then return to wash his body, but the last ebbs of her orgasm were shuddering through her as he walked, and before he knew what was happening she was on her knees before him lapping at his semi hard cock with barely contained need. Vonis had barely made it to the edge of the bed before the pleasure from her soft lips and talented tongue made his legs buckle and he all but fell onto the bed himself hissing as the pleasure seethed through him.

Vonis had directed her to do this very thing several times before now, having experienced it with other elf prisoners, but with Va'nimia it was different. She was not near comatose and unresponsive as those slaves had been, and she bathed his cock and balls liberally with her lips and tongue as if she had found a new toy. Each time had been more intense than the last, and this time she had managed to fit his entire length within the confines of her velvety throat. His cobalt blue eyes were wide then as he felt his abdomen clench in powerful contractions, his cock swelling and then he was erupting deeply into her throat. Her hands gripped his chest, her nails digging into his skin as she kept her lips secure around the base of his exploding cock and drank his juices as if they were a fine wine. He held his fingers within her hair as he convulsed half a dozen times before settling

back on the bed, his eyes wide as he realized his cock was still steel hard and ready for more. What was this she-elf Va'nimia doing to him? He had never been this willing and ready to perform so many times in a row before.

Va'nimia savored his taste as she swallowed him down; enjoying the power she had over his body in this way. Escaping or causing him injury, as vulnerable as he was in this position, had never even entered Va'nimia's mind. He had not hurt her as he had promised that first hour, and instead the days she had been with him had been the most sexually intense days she had ever experienced in her long life. He had done things to her, made her feel things that she had never imagined. He was by far the largest male who she had ever been with, his cock thick and veiny and powerful, and he most definitely knew how to use it. He had learned quickly that touching the backs of her ears in any way during sex was a sure way to turn her to putty in his hands, and this he did all the time now, and it thrilled Va'nimia to no end especially when he used his fangs to nibble gently on the upper ridges of her ears. She did not know how many times he had taken her in the last days, and she didn't care now. He did things to her that she never dreamed of, and Va'nimia didn't want that to end.

Nothing however was more intense and euphoric as when he bit her right at the moment they both peaked in orgasm. She had clutched at him in unadulterated bliss more times than she remembered as his hot seed spewed into her while he drank her blood. The sensations that ripped through her during her orgasms when he did that were nothing that she could put into words.

Va'nimia felt new delight wash over her as she realized he was not softening within the grip of her lips this time, and she wrapped one small hand around the base of his thick cock as she released several inches from the prison of her throat, milking him for every drop of his seed that she could get. She felt his hands tighten on her head as he sat up quickly and she gasped when he pulled her head from his groin. She had a momentary flash of fear when she saw his wide cobalt blue eyes and his fangs, but that quickly disappeared as he pulled her into his lap, his hands grasping her firm asscheeks, and Va'nimia cried out in pleasure as he speared her in one fluid, powerful thrust.

Va'nimia's eyes went wide as he stood up, her arms wrapping around his shoulders and her legs locking around his waist. He held her elfin body in his grip, quite easily her mind registered, her hundred and twenty pounds feathery to his vampire strength and Va'nimia could only hold on in staggering delight as he stroked into her with everything that he was. Va'nimia felt little flash orgasms zap through her whenever she bottomed out on his cock and felt his hot balls bang against her ass cheeks. She felt him press her against the wall closest to them and hold her there as he began to thrust deeply. The muscles in his shoulders and back contracted and flexed as his hips drove his beautiful cock into her faster and deeper. Va'nimia could feel her orgasm building deep in her abdomen, and the power of it was going to stagger her she knew. In the midst of her passion, her blue eyes clouded with intense desire and fervent need, Va'nimia grasped Vonis's face in her soft hands and kissed him with every bit of passion, desire and need that he made rip through her lithe young elfin body.

Vonis's cobalt blue eyes flew open when her lips came down on his, and instead of pushing her away and throwing her to the floor in savage anger for her actions, Vonis plunged his tongue between her silky lips with the same intensity and power that he was driving his cock into her searing hot tightness. He heard her whimper against his lips, and this only served to drive him to new heights. Her hairless pussy was tighter and hotter than anything he had ever experienced, and she used her inner muscles on him like a powerful vise, drawing out his pleasure almost painfully and increasing the intensity of their orgasms nearly ten fold.

Vonis should have stopped, he knew he should have stopped, but no matter how much his High Coven trained mind told him this was wrong, what was surging through his body because of this female elf could not possibly be wrong. He felt the grip of his own orgasm snatch him then, and the power of it caused the muscles in his neck and shoulders strain to near breaking. He tore his lips from hers, seeing her beautiful neck in front of him, the two small puncture wounds from earlier still visible. As his come began to boil out of him, Va'nimia pulled his lips to her neck without pause, and she screamed as his fangs sank into the softness of her flesh and her orgasm smashed aside everything she had ever known to be true. Vonis drank her sweet and intoxicating blood greedily as his come blasted into her depths with a force unlike anything he had experienced before. Her own sugary juices were erupting all around his fully buried cock, bathing his thickness and length with hot fluid as her inner muscles clamped down on his organ with a force that threatened to rip his cock from its roots.

Vonis continued to spill his essence into her for nearly a minute, but as the raging climax reached its peak and began to recede he withdrew his fangs from her neck, almost lovingly licking the small puncture

wounds until they sealed. He felt her strong elfin arms hold his head tightly to her heaving chest as they both shuddered in the aftermath of the most intense orgasm either of them had ever experienced. Vonis drew her away from the wall gently, slowly making his way back to the bed where he began to lower her onto the sheets. Va'nimia made no move to release her grip on him, both her arms and supple legs remaining locked around his powerful body. Vonis didn't care this time. Until this moment he had always drawn away from her, not wanting to stay within her embrace. This time Vonis made no move to extract his body from her embrace and he lowered himself on top of her on the bed, even drawing her body closer to his as their breathing began to return to normal.

Vonis lifted his head slightly and gazed into her blue eyes. She stared back at him with no fear in her eyes, and Vonis could not help but admire her. She had done what he directed her earlier this day, acting the part of the shy female lover when she had called the Constable after one of his men discovered that her mother had contacted the authorities. Va'nimia had spoken directly with her mother and promised to come and visit her in the capital when her friend departed in a few days. She also promised to tell her all about the handsome Youngman who she was spending her time with. Her eyes and the fact that she had offered to do without question, this caused Vonis to do what he did next. At least that is what he thought at first.

Vonis crushed his lips upon hers and kissed her as he had never kissed a woman in his life before this day.

“We do not have much in regards to your request Lady Isabella.” Armetus's face was on the small monitor in the Lifter Car that Isabella currently sat in.

Isabella glanced into the front of the Lifter Car and saw Nymtran and Sole'nar watching her intently from the front seat, Miai sitting next to her patiently and silently. Isabella had left Dysea with Lexi and the Constable and immediately returned to their suite apartment for Miai and her Drow lovers and guards.

“Tell me what you know Armetus, and transmit it to our computer here as well so that Miai has it please. We've entered our encryption codes.” Isabella answered.

Armetus nodded and they saw his hands work the console from his desk on Apo Prime. “Transmitting now. They have kept his identity well hidden Lady...”

“Armetus please...” Isabella interrupted him.

The senior Intelligence Chief for the Lycavorian Union looked at the monitor and he could not contain his smirk. He was five times Isabella's age and she had been trying for the last year to get him to stop referring to her as Lady Isabella.

“I'm getting better Isabella.” He spoke and Isabella could feel Miai grin from her seat next to her.

“Yes you are.” Bella answered with a smile of her own. “Now what do we have?”

“There are no accurate images of him on file.” Armetus began speaking again. “The ones we have are grainy and in no way useable. The times we have caught him in the open, he has been wearing a cloak and cowl hiding his face. It's almost as if he knew we would be there. He's been trained by some of the finest officers in your father's fleet Isabella, and that includes several of the best Intelligence people they have from their *Venorik Elghinn* Division.” Armetus shifted the data pad to his opposite hand. “He's tall... just over two meters if all accounts are accurate, in superb physical condition, and utterly ruthless.”

“He's seen action then?” Isabella asked.

Armetus nodded. “It is said he is responsible for planning and leading the attack on Attalon Six.”

Isabella nodded. “I remember hearing about that battle. We lost two garrisons before we were able to secure that spaceport.”

Armetus nodded. “The Coven forces conducted a masterful defense, and if not for our superior numbers they would have won. He is said to have led the defense, but as far as we can tell, he has been off the charts so to speak for the last two hundred or so years.”

Isabella nodded. “Well he's here on Elear right now. And he is doing his level best to make sure I end up dead.”

Armetus's eyes grew a little wider and he leaned forward. “This is not something that you told the King Isabella.” He spoke.

“Dysea and I deemed it unimportant to other concerns that Martin was dealing with. There have been two attempts, both of which failed miserably. I’m certain he will try again, but I have been presented with some knowledge today that I was not aware of concerning IES, the company I started when I first came to the Union with the other outcasts.” Isabella spoke.

Armetus nodded. “I pulled what I was able without drawing attention to myself.” He said. “The purchase of the estate was made one year after IES established a branch headquarters on Elear. The Elf High Minister approved the action, as well as the Union Senate. The Chairmen of IES wanted to expand into territories that they had not been involved in and the projects on Elear were deemed important.”

“So they were vetted by elfin authorities?” Isabella asked.

Armetus nodded slowly. “And our people as well.” He answered. “I’m having some discrete inquiries made since you know that my people can ask questions outside of the normal channels. How far do you wish me to pursue it?”

“What do you mean?” Isabella asked.

“Our Charter keeps us from operating within Union territory Isabella.” Armetus spoke. “You know this. The King made it clear what we were to concentrate on. Technically this could fall under that purview, but...”

“Better safe than sorry.” Isabella spoke.

Armetus nodded. “Essentially yes.”

“Who has the authority to issue directives to you Armetus?” Isabella asked. “Do I need to speak with Deia?”

“Actually... the only person outside of King Leonidas that can directly influence what we do is you Isabella.” Armetus told her.

Isabella sat back in her seat a look of shock on her face. “Me?”

Armetus nodded. “The King left directives hidden within the wording of our Charter that only you and he could directly dictate what my people do.” He answered. “He deemed that your experience and knowledge of the High Coven would be invaluable if needed and he did not want you hindered by politics if the need ever arose.”

“Why... why would he choose me?” Isabella asked.

Armetus smiled. “Regardless of what you think your status is among our people Isabella, Martin does consider you one of his Queens, as do many people within the corridors of power here.” He replied. “Soon you will need to accept that and embrace that role.”

“Who knows of this Armetus?” Isabella asked quickly.

“Aside from you and I now, whoever is in your Lifter with you.” Armetus replied. “Not even Deia knows about it, though I imagine he gave her some idea as to what he did. There is not much he does not share with her. They are closer than most people realize when it comes to what actions they would take. Deia is just better at hiding herself politically.” He said with a smile.

Isabella stared at the screen for a moment watching as Miai pulled the data pad from the small console and looked at it, nodding her head to Isabella. “Armetus... find out everything you can.” She finally said.

“Isabella I have to remind you of this fact, but this is a company you started.” Armetus said.

“Yes I know. I’m going to visit the corporate offices here on Elear as soon as we are done talking, but I haven’t been involved in the day to day dealings for close to a hundred years now Armetus.” Isabella answered. “One thing I do remember however, we all agreed that we would not ask for or take any work on four planets that we deemed too volatile because of what my father had done in the past. Elear is one of those planets.”

Armetus leaned forward more interested. “That is not common knowledge.” He said.

Isabella shook her head. “No it’s not. Yet I discover today that IES has substantial holdings here on Elear, not to mention some very lucrative contracts, including one that puts them very close to the one place Martin Leonidas considers sacred above all else.”

“Dragon Island.” Armetus spoke softly.

Isabella nodded. “Yes. I will send you written authorization as soon as we are done talking Armetus. This will not fall upon your head do not worry.”

Armetus chuckled. “As if the King would allow that to happen anyway.” He spoke. “I will start my people working on it Isabella and contact you with an initial report this evening.”

Isabella nodded. "Very well. I will speak with you tonight." She waited until the small monitor had gone black before looking at Miai. "Remain here in the Lifter with Nymtran Miai. Sole'nar will accompany me inside."

Miai looked at her keenly. "And if something happens?"

Isabella smiled. "Then I imagine Dysea will be here in a matter of moments thanks to your quick reaction."

Miai smiled. "Yes she will."

Isabella took her hand and squeezed gently. "I own this company. Nothing at all should happen."

Miai nodded. "Yes... that is very similar to what you said when you and Dysea descended into the atmosphere of Yalpin Five."

"That was not my fault!" Isabella exclaimed.

"No... it was Dysea's fault. And you didn't help matters when you struck the Precinct Commander breaking his jaw and cheek." Miai answered.

"The fool grabbed Dysea as if she was a piece of meat!" Isabella barked. "And she hit him first!"

Miai chuckled and squeezed Isabella's hand in return. "We will be ready should anything happen."

Isabella nodded and smiled. There were times when she still could not believe how far she had come in the last year due to Dysea and Martin's love and acceptance. She could joke and smile now without hesitation and that above all us made her feel wonderful. The veil of darkness that she had been living in had slowly lifted to reveal the happiness that she had denied herself for far too long. Happiness in the form of an Elfin Queen and a Lycavorian King who she would now share all that she was with.

She turned to Sole'nar. "Ready?"

"Always my Queen." He answered.

USU'OZEIB 7

DWURI

Veldruk looked up from his desk when the door slid open and Yuri strode in carrying the data pad in her hand. Her gait told him she had something important she wanted to share with him and Yuri never burst into his office without good reason. He turned to the three monitors to his right that bore the faces of two older men and a woman. "We will continue this later today my friends." He spoke quickly. "Something has come up."

Veldruk turned back and looked at his oldest child now as she moved across the expanse of his huge office. She was a vision of her mother in more ways than her physical appearance. Her mother had the same curves and large breasts, and the same incredible backside coupled with the most amazing dark eyes. Sanani had been his bride for the better part of eight thousand years now, and she was the only vampire that Veldruk trusted utterly. He felt a fleeting pang of regret for what he had ordered Xerxes to do to his own sister, raping her as he had, but the result of that action had made Yuri far stronger in the end. She was almost as utterly ruthless as he was, and she had proved beyond a doubt she was more than capable of leading the High Guard. Since her return from Earth, the readiness and capabilities of the High Guard Fleets had nearly doubled as they pushed themselves to show they were worthy of their Princess. Yuri's powerful Mindvoice abilities had grown more focused and stronger since she had been back, and she spent at least a full day each week studying intently with either him or one of the four Coven Matriarch Mages. They were the four most powerful Mindvoicers behind Veldruk himself, and the instructors to those he allowed to cultivate this gift. The Matriarch Mages had trained nearly all of the ten thousand male and female vampires that now were dispersed throughout the empire, their skills equally what the Lycavorian Oracle would call a Tier Four Mindvoicer.

Yuri was much stronger, not quite yet his equal, but gaining experience and power as time passed, and she would make a fine replacement to him when he finally passed from this life. Immortal they may have been called, but Veldruk knew he would not live forever. Veldruk got to his feet as she finished walking across the black marble floor and held up the data pad.

"You almost never come to see me unannounced Yuri." Veldruk spoke calmly as he went to the long credenza type bar and began pouring two crystal glasses with fresh rich blood. He turned back to his daughter

and held one out for her as he walked up to stand in front of her. “To what do I owe this visit daughter?” He asked holding out the glass.

Yuri took the glass from him with a smile. “She’s on Lycavore.” Yuri stated evenly.

There were not many things that could startle the High Lord of the Vampire High Coven, yet those three words caused Veldruk to blink rapidly and pause as he lifted the glass to his lips. He lowered the glass before even drinking a sip looking at his daughter, his dark eyes wide in shock.

“Lycavore?” He gasped.

Yuri nodded. “I received the final decoded logs from that fool Overseer this morning father. The Hadarian witch... Anja’s twin sister... she delivered her to Lycavore. It appears she was bought by the planetary Regent as a caretaker and nursemaid for his daughter. I thought Lycavore was a dead world father.”

Veldruk shook his head as he moved back to his massive desk and ushered Yuri to one of the plush black velvet like chairs. “No.” He spoke. “We had initially thought that after using the poison missiles but four hundred years later we discovered that several thousand Lycavorians had survived. We also discovered some extremely rich deposits of Rubidium Ore as well. We have a full mining operation going on there. Two complete garrisons and the Lycavorians do the mining for us.”

“Willingly?” Yuri asked.

Veldruk shook his head. “If I remember correctly we allow them to breed like the animals they are. They also have a sizeable settlement that they maintain. Many of their laws have not changed from the barbaric ways they used to practice, and every few centuries the Planetary Regent culls their numbers. They never know when the culling will come, and we never take their youngest females so that they can still reproduce.”

“You allowed this father?” Yuri asked surprised.

Veldruk nodded. “You know that Rubidium Ore in its unrefined state is lethal to us. The deposits that were discovered were enormous Yuri; it’s what we have been using for centuries.” He answered. “It was a far trade off.”

“Why not just force them to work the mines.” Yuri asked.

Veldruk shook his head. “They knew what it meant to us. They would have rather been executed than be slaves. At least now they have some semblance of normalcy, regardless of how fabricated it may be.” He looked up at her. “Surely the Regent knew what this child was when he saw her?”

It was Yuri’s turn to shake her head. “That is unlikely father. As I told you when she was first lost, the wolf genes in her were dominating her vampire genes, overriding them. When she began to be able to shift I knew that all we would be able to obtain from her were the DNA source codes for how her combination vampire and wolf DNA bonded at the molecular level. It would greatly enhance our cloned soldiers, but her blood would provide no other real scientific advantage.”

“Yes... I remember now. So her wolf DNA is the more dominant of the two?” Veldruk asked.

Yuri nodded. “Yes... but that is information that only you and I know father. I killed the doctors who were working on the project on Earth.”

Veldruk nodded. “A wise tactical move daughter. That information must not be for public consumption. The Lycavorian dogs could use it as a propaganda tool.” He leaned back in his chair now. “If I recall you predicted she would have the skills of both our species.”

Yuri nodded as she sipped her glass of blood without hesitation, watching her father’s dark eyes as he took this in. She thought she detected pride in those eyes at her show of trust in him. “That is why we decided to have me carry her father. To be able to use the natural strength and the incredible senses of Lycavorians combined with our own strength, speed and ability to blend into the shadows. She was showing these very signs when that bitch Yuriko kidnapped her and spirited her away from Earth.”

“And she can still provide these advantages to our cloned soldiers?” Veldruk asked.

Yuri nodded. “If our doctors are correct, using the mitochondria in her blood, we can transfer those same traits to our soldiers.”

“Your fleet is prepared to depart?” Veldruk asked.

“We’ll leave in the morning.” She answered.

“I assume your consort will be going with you Yuri?” Veldruk asked her, his eyes not revealing any emotion in them.

Yuri met his eyes. “Unless you order me otherwise, yes.” She replied. “You have not assigned him to any fleet father.”

“And how will you use him? Aside from the obvious.”

“I intend to give him command of my Strike Force.” Yuri said. “He is capable father, he has already proven that.”

Veldruk nodded. “Yes he has.” He spoke. “And that is why I promoted him Yuri. Giving him command of your personal Strike Group is not wise.”

“He deserves a fleet father and you know this.” Yuri said. “Any other officer that has shown his skill would have had a fleet of our finest ships by now. The men and officers of my Strike Group respect him father, they respect him and they will follow his orders, and it has nothing to do with the fact that he is my consort.”

“How do you think it would look if I gave your consort a fleet when your pureblood husband has none?” Veldruk asked her.

“Vavant wants nothing to do with the military father, you know that! He is a coward by his very nature.” Yuri said calmly.

“He is your husband Yuri.”

“Yes he is... and he would much rather spend his time walking the halls of the Ruling Council and pawing me like I am a slab of meat at official functions.” Yuri spoke. “Something which I have tolerated father because I know how important the support of his family is to us, to the Coven even though I believe his father holds him in as much regard as I do. I tolerate his slimy hands on my body father, and I even allow him to spill his disgusting seed into me so that I can bear his child and seal that bond.”

“Yuri...”

“No father... do you question my judgment now?” Yuri asked.

“I have never questioned your judgment Yuri and you know that.” Veldruk spoke. “I am not telling you what to do daughter. I’m only asking that you be sure of your decision.”

“I am sure father.” Yuri spoke.

Veldruk gazed at her for a long moment. “Then I will say no more about it.” He spoke getting to his feet. “Go to Lycavore and bring this abomination back here so that we can close that part of our history forever daughter.”

Yuri stood up and set her glass on the table. “I will do just that.” She spoke.

APO PRIME MAIN PALACE ESTATE

“Tell me again why I have to meet with them?” For’mya asked as she walked beside Armetus along the garden walkway.

“Lady For’mya I explained all this to you two days ago.” Armetus answered with a smile.

“Yes I know... and I postponed the meeting with them for that day because we received a transmission buoy signal from Martin just before they arrived.” For’mya spoke. “Now that I know Jeth is at least not out there somewhere by himself, I have had more time to reflect on the information you gave to me.” For’mya looked at him. “Which was pitifully little by the way.”

Armetus nodded and held out the pad to her. “Yes I know. However we were still in the early stages of gathering information. This will give you a much larger picture I’m sure. I will hit the high points for you and you can read this at your leisure.” He waited for For’mya to take it before continuing. “Her history is not as mundane as standard security checks will reveal. She is one hundred and twenty-five...”

For’mya looked at him. “That young?” She gasped. “She carries herself as if she is much older.”

Armetus nodded. “We are still trying to determine if that is the result of training she has received or the result of what has transpired in her short life.”

For’mya’s dark eyes blinked. “Go on.” She said.

“Her father is Governor Vorilas as you know, and he is the epitome of honorable and perhaps as honest a man as I have ever investigated.” He spoke with a smile. “A welcome change I can assure you.”

“I sense a ‘but’ coming.” For’mya spoke.

“Sadi is his youngest of three children.” Armetus spoke. “From his first mate. She has two older brothers who are both skilled engineers working for the Hadarian Ministry. They do not speak to their father, not since he took his second mate. Vorilas’s second mate is much younger than him, and has given him four children, all sons. All of those sons share the same trait as their mother.”

“Which is?”

“They are some of the most pompous and arrogant individuals I have ever had the displeasure of investigating in my life.” Armetus replied. “Vorilas’s second mate, a Fideia, is an exceptionally attractive woman from the far northern continent of Apo Prime. The city of Dolon. And she is so very spoiled it is surprising she can put her own clothes on. She became Vorilas’s mate because of his status and power and nothing more.”

“You sound very sure of that.” For’mya spoke.

Armetus nodded. “Once you read you will agree with me. Sadi worships her father and would do anything for him, to include whatever is necessary to protect him.”

“I don’t follow.” For’mya spoke.

“Thirty five years ago Fideia invested a substantial amount of the Governor’s assets in a venture within The Wilds.” Armetus told her. “Unfortunately for her, this venture turned out to be entirely managed by the *Venorik Elghinn*.”

For’mya’s eyes went a little wider. “The High Coven’s Silent Death Division.” She said.

Armetus nodded. “Yes... and the majority of their covert intelligence agents. Fideia was approached by these agents and told what exactly she had invested the Governor’s assets in. Mainly slaving rings and illicit smuggling. They demanded she become an agent for the *Venorik Elghinn*. Fideia knew it would have destroyed Vorilas here on Apo Prime if this became public knowledge. He would have lost everything and more than likely been exiled.”

“So she made a deal?” For’mya said.

Armetus shook his head. “Sadi made the deal.” He spoke. “Somehow she discovered what Fideia had done and confronted her about it. Fideia knew how Sadi felt about her father, so she demanded that Sadi fulfill what the *Venorik Elghinn* demanded. She has worked for them for nearly forty years now, feeding them mainly commercial information. Nothing important mind you, at least not that we can determine as of yet.”

“She became a traitor to protect her father.” For’mya said. “While her adoptive mother gets away with everything. If she is caught, Fideia can deny everything because so many years have passed.”

Armetus nodded. “She may very well feel trapped in her role now For’mya. You know me... I do not let traitors to our Union and to our King walk away free.” For’mya met his eyes and knew he spoke the truth. Armetus had been defending the Union from the shadows for centuries at the behest of Deia and even Martin within the last year. “My people have spoken to men and women who have known her all of her life and without fail, all of them detected the change in her the moment she began working for the Coven. She became withdrawn and arrogant, standoffish even.”

“They have trained her?” For’mya asked.

Armetus nodded. “I believe so. She has covered her trail far too well to be simply a novice at this game.”

“So you think when she came to the dinner she was attempting to insinuate herself into Martin’s inner circle? Perhaps even his bed?” For’mya asked. “To gain information?”

“That is one possibility...” He said slowly. “However I don’t believe it was the reason she acted as she did.”

“I’m listening Armetus.” For’mya said.

Armetus stopped and turned to face her. “Obviously she did not detect the auras of Aricia and Anja because they were shielding them, so she assumed she was a superior Alpha female. It is my understanding that she begged her father to bring her instead of Fideia and she even went so far as to have Fideia called away to a gathering of similar lady’s of her position and status.”

For’mya nodded. “I understand all this so far.” She spoke. “But why act in such a manner with Martin. She took a great risk in coming to the dinner and acting in this way when she spies for the Coven.”

“I believe the High Coven is the one who put her up to it.” Armetus spoke. “Unless I miss my guess, her presence at the dinner was a means for them to test the Kings relationship with Aricia.”

“What?” For’mya gasped.

Armetus nodded. “Picture for a moment you are a senior agent of the High Coven and have followed all the events that took place with Martin and Aricia. How often in the last year have they been apart for more than a few hours? Now we know we rolled up most of their major Intelligence networks, but they still have smaller ones that are very active on Apo Prime and other worlds. Just as we do. Imagine that this High Coven agent saw that Martin and Aricia were never apart and misunderstood the significance of that.”

“But... they were never apart because of what they feel for one another. Because they are Soulmates. And because they have been training that entire time, even when Aricia carried Androcles.” For’mya spoke.

Armetus nodded. “You know that and I know that. Anyone close to them knows that. There is not a person or event that could happen now that will ever come between them again, and all of us know that.” He said. “But if you are a foreign intelligence agent, that is not something you would consider. You would see it as if Martin does not trust her to be faithful to him, or he to her.”

“They misinterpreted what was actually happening.” For’mya said as understanding washed over her.

Armetus nodded. “I believe so. And they ordered Sadi to attempt to impose herself into the mix so to speak.” He said. “Only I believe... and I have no proof to back this up, only my instinct, I believe Sadi took it as an opportunity to try and come out from under the thumb of the High Coven.”

“She comes to the party, attempts to impress Martin enough that he will take an interest in her, they develop a relationship and then she can tell him what is going on and hope as King he can help her.” For’mya said.

Armetus nodded. “And in the process help her father. She was correct in regards to how protocol should have dictated the seating at the King’s table that night, and her first mention was not for herself but for her father’s station. That is the biggest thing that struck me For’mya. She mentioned her father before herself.”

For’mya met his eyes. “But why arrange to have Sivana and myself killed then? What purpose does that serve? It only makes her complacent in what happened, and it makes her a true traitor.”

“I believe what happened between the two of you is nothing more than female pride.” Armetus spoke.

“Female pride?” For’mya barked.

“In her eyes you took from her the one chance she had at getting out from underneath the Coven and protecting her father.” Armetus said. “In essence you pissed her off.”

“And Sivana?”

“Again I have no proof... but I believe the assassination attempt on Anja’s sister was already planned without her assistance, and she was only to bring the assassins to the island undetected. When she realized what was happening she became frightened and left the assassins on the island to fend for their own hides, especially when she saw both Torma and Miath diving from the skies above. That would explain why we found the Water Lifter where we did. As far as we can determine she has had no contact off world since the attempt. It’s almost as if she has been hiding.”

“This is all very hard to believe Armetus.” For’mya said finally.

Armetus nodded. “Yes it is... and most of what I have said is not supported by fact. If it is true, she is very good at covering her tracks, and if it isn’t true then she is far more of an agent for the *Venorik Elghinn* than I first realized and it is time for me to get out of this business.”

For’mya was silent for a long moment. “You know... until I met Martin Leonidas I was very rigid in my thinking and unwilling to accept what I could not see and touch.” She looked at him. “You truly believe she is not an enemy?”

“I do not.” He said. “However I have been around long enough not to take anything for granted. I want to begin a full fledged espionage investigation, but in order to do that and attempt to protect her if she is indeed doing what I believe; I have to hand this over to the new Royal Guard that General Vengal and Vistr have formed. The *Durcunusaan*. I can guide them in their actions, but only they can do the actual work that is required within Union space.”

“What do you need of me?” For’mya asked without hesitation.

“A directive from you to Vengal and Vistr authorizing this, and ordering them that none of this is to be revealed to anyone without mine or yours expressed permission.” Armetus spoke softly. “And your meeting with them could very well open the door that Sadi thought closed after the dinner.”

For'mya nodded. "You have it." She said. "I'll have the directive finished and in your hands within the hour. There can be no hint of your involvement in this Armetus. If she is as smart as you think then she will know what you are the moment she sees you. And I agree with you that if she has survived this long, in this role she is playing, she is not as stupid as the High Coven and her adoptive mother believe."

They turned when the sound of flapping wings reached their ears and Aurith and Elynth appeared from around the back of the palace and came to rest nearby. The two female dragon hatchlings, both now growing extremely fast and over two meters in height, folded their wings along their bodies and their talons clicked on the outdoor marble and granite walkway as they walked up to where For'mya stood. Aurith moved closest to For'mya, her neck extending out and allowing her head to brush against For'mya's shoulder affectionately. Armetus watched as For'mya reached up without hesitation and stroked the deep sapphire colored scales of her neck and then along her huge head. Aurith's golden eyes closed in joy and her wings twitched slightly at the contact.

Elynth stepped forward now, her azure blue eyes on Armetus. *For'mya...*

This is Armetus Elynth. Aurith. He is a good friend of Martin and Aricia's. For'mya said in reply making sure her response was not shielded so that Armetus could hear.

Armetus looked at the dragon hatchlings and bowed his head with a smile. *It is a pleasure to finally meet the daughters of Torma and Isheeni.*

Aurith and Elynth both looked surprised when he answered them in Mindvoice, at least that is what it appeared like to Armetus as their eyes grew slightly wider and the corners of their mouths tilted upward.

You are powerful enough in Mindvoice to hear us? Elynth asked as she moved closer to him.

Armetus nodded. *I would be rated as a Tier Five Mindvoicer by the First Oracle and the system she has brought to us from Sparta.* He replied.

You need hide nothing from Armetus. For'mya told them openly again. *He has the full trust of Martin Leonidas and your parents.*

Aurith stepped up next to her sister and stared at Armetus for a long moment. *There are few who hold the complete trust of King Martin and our father Armetus. To have this status with them is...*

It speaks of something special you share with them. Elynth finished.

Armetus nodded slowly with a warm smile. *It is a status I honor every day, and I believe it is our desire to see this Union succeed and be protected. And that includes all within it. It is my understanding that you and For'mya will soon be bonded.*

Aurith's head bobbed up and down. *That is our hope yes. The Elder Mother and King Martin must approve this, but we believe it is what they will do.*

Armetus looked at Elynth. *And you I understand have already chosen young Prince Androcles as your bond mate.*

You know much of my kind Armetus of the Lycavorians. Elynth said gently.

I have spent some very inspiring time with your grandmother and the King, and I have learned a great deal. Armetus said. *And I hope to learn more still.*

Elynth leaned closed to him; her obsidian scales near identical to Torma in color if only a little lighter. She was larger by half a meter over her sister, and while she would not match her brother or father in size, Elynth was certainly going to be larger than her mother by far. Her limbs were muscular and her scales rippled with the sheen of health. Her grandmother had commented on how all of them were growing much faster than normal and developing skills those dragons their age did not obtain for quite a number of years. It was because of the depth of the bond between their parents and Martin and Aricia all of them knew. Aurith's connection to For'mya was a sign of this, and the power of Elynth's bond with Androcles was staggering to behold even for her grandmother to witness.

I will allow him to come near Androcles For'mya. Elynth finally spoke turning her large head to look at For'mya. *Nothing more until I see what is in his heart.*

For'mya smiled as looked at the surprised expression on Armetus's face. *Elynth is extremely protective of Andi.*

He does not like that name For'mya, you know that. Elynth said. *He prefers his full name of Androcles and the honor that name gives him.*

Armetus looked at For'mya surprised. *The Prince is... the Prince is only seven months old. How would he know the details behind his naming and the honor the name he carries holds in the family of Leonidas and in Sparta?*

I have told him. Elynth answered as if it was the most natural thing in the world. *As his father told mine and then my father told me.*

You... you can talk to him even now?

Elynth turned back to him. *I have talked with him since the day I came into this world and he was still within Queen Aricia's womb. The depth of our bond will one day rival that of his father and mine.*

Aurith turned to For'mya. *Grandmother Dasha sent us to see if you will be returning to the island soon. She feels safer knowing you are there with all of us.*

For'mya looked at them, and then to Armetus as an idea formed in her head. *Yes... I will be returning right away.* She said finally. *Armetus... bring them to the island palace.*

Why? Armetus asked within Mindvoice sensing For'mya wanted the two female dragon hatchlings to hear his words.

You wish to find out if this Sadi is telling the truth? For'mya said. *If she lies in front of Aurith or Elynth they will sense it just as you would smell it. My sense of smell has not yet grown that keen, but yours is, as is their ability to sense emotion.*

You said yourself she could very well detect who I am by my manner.

For'mya nodded. *That is why you will remain with Dasha in the anti-room. It is psi-shielded and the wind comes from across the lake into the anti-room from the foyer at that hour. Your scent will not drift out to her, but hers will drift into the room to you.*

Armetus smiled quickly. *We should draft you into my organization For'mya.* He spoke. *That is brilliant. I will make the arrangements immediately.*

For'mya looked at the two dragons in front of her as Armetus moved towards the palace here on the main land. She stepped up closer to them. *Dasha told you Jeth is with your father and Martin?*

Elynth nodded. *We don't know why he would do such a thing.*

I think it has to do with Martin's daughter. They will keep him safe. For'mya spoke. *And I think you two just wanted to get out and test your flying abilities once more outside of the dragon cave, and that is why you volunteered to come here.*

Elynth's azure eyes twinkled in delight. *Well... there was that to consider.* She answered.

LYCAVORE ANVIL BASE CAMP

The area was as remote as they could find and still remain on the same continent as the Lycavorian settlement. They were some hundred and thirty-seven kilometers north of the settlement, but they did not skimp on their security. Working quickly and efficiently, Danny, Atropos and the dozen *Durcunusaan* that had deployed with them had chopped down huge branches from the surrounding trees and draped them over the top of *ANVIL* where Endith had set them down. They were near a smallish lake, and after several quick passes over the top of the *STRIKER DT*, Jeth had finally announced it hidden from view. Tina had quickly established communications with *HOPE'S QUEST* which had taken up residence in the intensely gaseous atmosphere of Lycavore's closest moon. The freighter was unshielded, but the gases of the moon made it invisible to anything in the system unless they were within a thousand meters of the ship.

A patrol of four *Durcunusaan* had set up sensors all around *ANVIL* to warn them of anything or anyone who might be approaching. They had detected no Lycavorian or vampire lifesigns in the area for several months based on previous scans, but Danny was taking no chances.

Anja and Miath had arrived back to *ANVIL* first, Martin and Torma only minutes later and they sat around the end of the lowered ramp now as the sun began its climb into the sky above.

"... no more than a half kilometer across." Martin was saying as they squatted around the small holo projector and the depiction of the settlement as he and Torma had seen it in their two flyovers. "It's densely

packed so we have to assume most of the people are living here. They appeared to be waking up pretty early, so I'm guessing they were heading out towards these mines that they work."

"Do we know if they are helping the Coven willingly sire?" Atropos asked.

Martin shook his head. "No... and that is one of the first things we need to find out." Martin pointed to a portion of the holoinage. "When Torma and I saw her she was heading in this direction towards the settlement and away from this collection of buildings. This looked like some sort of garrison, with barracks and a pretty well established fortress type structure. I'm guessing it's the headquarters."

"She was walking on this path Marty?" Anja asked looking at him.

Martin nodded. "Yes... coming from this garrison towards the settlement. Again... we have to assume they are free to come and go between the two locations based on what we saw. I doubt very much though that they would allow her to walk freely among them if they knew who and what she is. Yuriko do you agree?"

Yuriko nodded quickly. "It is very unlikely that they would allow this." She agreed. "Yuri has mobilized quite a large portion of the High Guard Intelligence and small fleet assets in order to find Lisisa. If those here knew who she was, we would not be here because she would not be here. Yuri has been looking for her just as long as we have... over a year. If she knew she was here, why continue to search The Wilds and why come after Sivana?"

"So you are saying whoever bought her knows what she is?" Sivana asked now.

"You can damn well bet that every Lycavorian on this planet knows what she is." Martin spoke.

"They'd be able to smell the vampire blood in her from ten kilometers away even in a strong wind. Why buy her from some Kochab Bounty Hunter for a huge amount of credits when they already have thousands of Lycavorians on this planet?"

Yuriko nodded. "The vampires that reside here obviously don't know what she is, even if the Lycavorians do. That means her wolf genes have become dominant over her vampire genes, and the Coven troops and the cursed Immortals on this planet can't tell?" She spoke looking at him. "The Lycavorians... haven't turned her in."

"That could be the largest sign that they are not serving the Coven willingly." Helen spoke now as she walked down the ramp. She had returned with Anja only to rush into the *DT* to vomit much of what she had eaten in the last twelve hours. While she felt better, now she was famished and munching on a protein bar.

"Martin if whoever bought her knows what she is, why is she still walking around?" Anja asked.

Danny looked at Martin, Anuk leaning against his side, Nayeca in front of him between his legs. "This stinks like *Bassoke sibfla* skipper." He spoke.

Martin nodded with a smile. "I couldn't agree more."

The others looked at them oddly, though only Anja knew what they meant. Atropos leaned forward slightly. "I'm still growing use to Daniel's colorful comments and using the ancient language Milord." He spoke. "What does Daniel mean? What is this *Bassoke sibfla*?"

Martin looked at him and chuckled. "*Bassoke sibfla*. Whale shit." He spoke after thinking for a moment. (Whale shit)

Atropos's eyes widened as realization struck him. "A trap?"

Martin looked at him. "Not necessarily a trap." He said quickly. "We're on a High Coven occupied world, deep in High Coven space. Whoever bought my daughter had to have known what she was, and they didn't tell anyone when they brought her here. They did that for two reasons. "

Yuriko looked at him now her own eyes wide. "They know what she is?" She gasped. "How is that possible? They would have turned her over to Coven authorities immediately had they known this."

"Unless whoever bought her from the Bounty Hunter doesn't want Yuri and her asshole father to know she is here." Martin spoke. "They are keeping her identity secret for a reason."

"Or it's a trap." Anja said.

Martin nodded. "Or it's a trap."

"I brought her here almost forty years ago Martin." Sivana said her gaze shifting between him and Yuriko and Anja. "The time table of your arrival in Union space does not fit. No one knew you were alive back then. And Yuri has been back for over a year. Why keep her identity secret? It makes no sense as a trap for you."

“Why indeed.” Helen said as she settled to the ground cross legged. “And Sivana is very correct. They did not know you were even alive Martin. No... they don’t know who she is for an entirely different reason.”

“Then we need to find out what that reason is.” Martin said.

Danny and Anja were nodding. “I agree.” Anja spoke first meeting Martin’s eyes. “Until we find out that information, anything we do will be stepping blindly and it could be fatal for all of us.”

“Ground recon.” Danny spoke.

Martin nodded. “Yep. Small team... four or five of us.” He spoke. “And we start leaving in four hours so we get to the settlement right about the time the sun starts to go down. Danny, me, Yuriko, Helen and Anuk.”

“Skipper... how we going to cover a hundred and thirty kilometers by sundown. We’re good... but we ain’t that good.” Dan spoke.

Martin smiled. “Your first ride on a dragon Danny. It should be fun.”

“Ah shit! I was afraid you were going to say that.” Dan grumbled as Anuk’s eyes grew wide and excited.

“What about us Milord?” Atropos asked. “We don’t sit still very well.”

“We’re going to check out one of these mines after everyone departs.” Anja spoke with a chuckle. “Atropos you will be with me. We’re taking Seanna, Tina and three others. Once Torma and Miath return they’ll shuttle us to the closest mine.”

Martin turned to Belen. “You’ll be in command once we leave Belen.” He spoke. “Have someone monitoring the COM at all times and if we call for help, you, Sivana and Endy bring on the cavalry.”

Belen nodded. “We will be ready Milord.” He spoke.

“Jeth... you...” Martin turned and looked behind him where Torma and the others rested behind them.

I know King Martin. I will stay here and not do anything stupid. Jeth replied from where he sat between his father and Miath and looked positively dwarfed in size by the two full grown dragons.

Martin grinned as he looked at the hatchling. “Actually Jeth, you are coming with us.” He spoke so everyone could hear them.

I am?

Martin’s gaze fell to Torma. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Are we sure about this Torma?*

Torma nodded his massive head without hesitation. [Mindvoice Shielded] *She is your daughter my bonded brother.* He answered. *The more time that passes, the stronger the bond between them will grow, even if they are apart. If we discover what you and I think we will, then the sooner they come together, the safer all of us will be.*

Martin nodded. *Yes Jeth you are coming with us. And you will do exactly as Helen and I tell you no matter what. Can you do that?*

Jeth was nearly four meters in length now, and just a tad over three meters in height. He was growing as fast as any dragon Arzoal or his father had seen, and as he grew, the more mature he became because of the influence of Martin, his father and Miath. He met Martin’s eyes with those dark blue orbs and he nodded his head slowly. *I will do nothing to endanger my bonded sister King Martin. Not unless she is at risk, then I will not hesitate in my actions no matter your orders to me.*

Martin nodded in approval and saw Torma’s chest puff out just a little at his son’s calm and reflective reply. “Ok... everyone get some rest. We start pulling out in four hours and I don’t want anyone getting stupid because they are tired. Those of us not going on recon will report to Belen for their security shifts. A two man roving patrol every three hours to maintain the sensors and get a feel for the terrain around us. I don’t want anyone sneaking up on us for any reason, so if one of the sensors goes down I want it repaired or replaced within thirty minutes.”

Belen nodded quickly and looked at his father for a moment. Atropos reached out and squeezed his son’s shoulder, nodding his head as well.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *You have chosen wisely my son.*

Belen looked surprised at his father’s words. [Mindvoice Shielded] *I... I believe so father. I will not... I did not intend for this to happen father. It was not my intent to bring the honor of our family into question... I...*

Atropos shook his head slightly. [Mindvoice Shielded] *As the Queen reminded me, I did not think about honor when I continued to love your mother. No... if she is who you desire and you honor her... then we lose nothing and we gain so much more.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I intend to honor her above all else father.* Belen spoke.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *That is all the Queen and I can ask.* He said. *Prepare your security my son.*

Belen nodded and he turned to see Martin's dark brown eyes boring into him. He saw his King nod in a show of support and encouragement and Belen knew he had made the right choice.

Lisisa stood next to the wall of the meeting hall, her forest green eyes turned up at the sky as the moons began to rise on the horizon. The Lycavorian settlement was huge now, though a good portion of it was empty after the culling of thirty-eight years ago. She had arrived during that time, and the horrible experiences of those first few days still gave her nightmares. The slaughtered men, women and children stacked ten high in piles by the Coven soldiers, even as the Lycavorians stood by stoically and did nothing. They didn't fight back when the Coven came for them, sometimes whole families. The stink of the burning bodies carried through the air for weeks after the heinous act had been finished, reminding all of what had happened.

In all her years as a slave, Lisisa had never witnessed such brutality on such a large scale. The Coven soldiers and Immortals laughed as they butchered hundreds upon hundreds of Lycavorians. She knew now why they had done nothing to fight back, but then she had reacted as any Lycavorian would, attempting by herself to stop the slaughter and save as many as she could. This only caused her to be raped and beaten endlessly for three straight days until she was near dead. It also did more to safeguard her life than anything else, for no High Coven soldier or Immortal even questioned what she was after that. They all assumed that no one but a Lycavorian would attempt to stop what had been going on for centuries. Lisisa came to realize that she had been brought her for a reason, and that one of three Immortal officers knew who she was, yet he did not give this information to her mother, whom Lisisa knew was looking for her even now.

Lisisa turned when she felt the soft hand on her shoulder, her eyes coming to rest on the much older woman with almost completely white hair.

"Renatia." Lisisa spoke softly with a smile.

The woman stepped up to her, closer than anyone but Melita would even dare approach her Lisisa knew. They feared her in many respects. What she was, what she could do, but they knew what she was and over the years Lisisa had earned their respect and their gratitude in her actions of protecting the young Lycavorian females who the Immortals would always try to entrap and rape. Lisisa did not know how many times she had taken the place of some young female who was just coming of age, more times than she ever wanted to remember. She did not agree with the way the females were forced to mate with the more powerful Alpha males that still lived in the settlement, but she also knew it was the only way to insure the survival of her people on this planet. Renatia had been there for her all of these years, claiming her as part of her family when no one else would, and teaching her more about the Lycavorian people than Lisisa had ever known. She had become like a mother to her, and Lisisa would always love her for that.

"*Forn sava maloste bode.*" The woman said. (You seem distracted child)

Lisisa smiled and shook her head. "*Pendebrolfrinna Medwaw.*" She answered. (I am fine mother)

The woman smiled. "I have known you better than anyone for too many years young lady." She spoke. "Do not try to hide from me."

Lisisa couldn't help but grin. She may have been eighty-three years old when she came here to Lycavore, but as far as she was concerned only the last thirty-nine years of her life now mattered. "Mami... have you ever seen anything flying in the night sky larger than a *Nordroc*?" She asked referring to the massive bird like creature that had begun to make a come back on Lycavore.

Renatia shook her head. "I saw a *Nordroc* that was two meters long when I was a small child, before the Coven came, but no nothing bigger. Why do you ask this Lisisa?"

"Early this morning as Melita and I were walking the path from the garrison both of us felt something fly over the top of us in the darkness. Something enormously big, so big that the air pressure altered and buffeted us even on the ground." Lisisa answered.

Renatia looked at her for a long moment. "Nothing that large could reach into the clouds Lisisa, you know that. Only the Coven ships."

Lisisa shook her head. "It was a ship." She said matter of factly. "The only sound was the passing of wind and the flap of wings."

“What do you think it was child?” Renatia asked softly.

Lisisa shook her head. “I don’t know. My... my father is said to ride a great black dragon that breathes fire.”

Renatia stepped up to her closer now and slowly wrapped her weathered but still strong arm around Lisisa’s waist. “Lisisa... I more than anyone know how long you have prayed for him to come.” She spoke softly. “And this hope... it only grew stronger when it was discovered he still lived. There is no way he could know about you child, and he has taken his birth right as King of the Union now, he would never... could never come here. We are too far inside High Coven territory and his handlers would never allow him to risk himself so. Nor would the four females he has taken as mates.”

Lisisa nodded her head slowly. “I know Mami.” She spoke softly. “But I can always dream can’t I?”

Renatia smiled and squeezed her arm around Lisisa’s waist. “Lisisa... what you have done these last years... how you have protected those around you. Take strength from the fact that you do him proud with every breath you take child. All that you have suffered and endured, and do not think I have not heard you weeping at night in your nightmares my child, one day you will have your reward and you will know what freedom is. And on that day you can go to him and be what your heart so desires to be.”

“Do you think so Mami?” Lisisa asked looking at her.

Renatia nodded. “It is why you are held in such regard among your people Lisisa.” She spoke softly. “They all know the blood of King Leonidas runs in your veins, and as long as you are among us, there is always hope.”

Lisisa smiled and leaned forward to kiss her weathered cheek. “*Cyn forn Mami.*” She spoke softly. (Thank you)

“Come... the others are gathering in the hall and we must discuss many things tonight.” Renatia spoke as she drew her towards the entrance to the large room.

Martin knelt next to Jeth, his blue/black body flattened as much as possible on the rooftop, as they watched the woman lead Lisisa into the large building. He wore a heavy cloak soaked in scent masker, as they all did. It was not hard to make their way here from where Torma and Miath had dropped them off twenty kilometers north. Jeth had flown just above the tree tops in the darkening sky and acted as their warning system as he rode the wind currents. He was learning much faster how to manipulate his body as he flew and Martin had no doubts he would be just as agile as his mother and father, and far sooner than most dragons his age.

He and Jeth resided on top of the one story empty building three hundred meters away, their wolf and dragon eyes easily able to spot Lisisa in the darkness.

King Martin... is it... is it this strong for you and my father? Jeth asked turning his blue eyes on Martin. Martin looked at him and nodded slowly. *It is Jeth. It is like we are one mind.*

I can sense her emotions sire. They are lonely and lost. She... she feels great sadness. Jeth spoke.

Jeth... we will remove that sadness from her. He spoke. *I promise you... but we need to be cautious.*

I know this King Martin. I... I have learned much from my father and Miath. And from you Milord. He replied. *I will not put us or what we must accomplish in jeopardy. I give you my word.*

Martin reached up and placed his hand on the side of Jeth’s head. *I want to rush to her just as much as you do Jeth. And when the time is right, we will.*

Martin! Anja’s voice burst into their minds easily from a hundred kilometers away.

I hear you Firecracker. He said.

I can sense what you and Jeth are feeling Martin. Anja spoke to them.

As I can. Helen’s voice now entered their connection. *I truly hope the two of you are not planning something foolish.*

Martin we will get her back. Anja said. *Let’s do it wisely though lover.*

Martin looked at Jeth and rolled his eyes in the darkness knowing Jeth could see him clearly enough. He saw Jeth’s front teeth become visible and he knew the young hatchling was giving his dragon smile. *We will Anja, don’t worry.*

And don’t you roll your eyes at me Martin Leonidas or I’ll tell Aricia about it. You know how she hates when you roll your eyes at us. Anja quipped.

Jeez! Don't I get any secrets?

No! Anja barked. Now be careful and don't do anything stupid.

Just watch your own tail! Martin said. As much as I enjoy the view, I can't watch it for you 24/7.

My King, please spare those of us who can hear you comments like that? Helen spoke now.

Martin grinned as he heard Anja mutter something unintelligibly at Helen's comment. He turned his head as Yuriko settled to the rooftop next to him. It had been easy enough to expand her own Mindvoice powers and the entire time she spent with Daniel, Anuk and Nayeca, she had practiced as much as time allowed. His adopted vampire daughter would be considered a Tier Five Mindvoicer on Helen's new scale.

The building below us and the ones around us have not seen use for many years. Yuriko reported.

Danny? Martin reached out to Danny his eyes going to the darkened building a hundred meters across the main thoroughfare that everyone appeared to use, where Danny and Anuk silently waited.

I got the same Skipper. Danny answered. The places are furnished, but it looks like they haven't been used in decades.

That's odd isn't it? Helen asked from her spot below them inside the safety of the building.

Martin nodded. Where did they go? He asked. That's the first question that comes to mind.

As dense as the buildings are packed together Marty, and the set up of the ones we've seen, they were made to hold a lot more people. Danny said.

Dan can you get closer to that building they went into. Maybe place a TAP camera and transmitter? Martin asked.

I think so. Danny answered. The streets are pretty quiet for this settlement being so large. We can do it.

Watch your six SEAL Two. Martin declared using their old call signs.

Same same boss. Danny answered. Talk to you when we are in position.

BLOOD JUSTICE

VHC REVERENCE-CLASS DREADNOUGHT

HIGH GUARD STRIKE GROUP FALCHION

COMMAND SHIP OF PRINCESS YURI

"I want the *DARKBROOD* Frigates on the flanks of the fleet as soon as we enter the system!" Moran spoke as he walked around the spacious bridge of the *BLOOD JUSTICE*. He wore the uniform of a High Coven Commander and since coming on board yesterday, no one had questioned his orders in the least. They responded well to his commands, for all of them knew that pureblood or not, this is the man who had defeated Admiral Pontal. "If it is not radiating a friendly signature I want it blown from the stars!" Moran didn't see Yuri come onto the bridge and stop just inside the door. "This is a High Guard Strike Group and I for one want everyone to know it the moment we enter any system we go in to!"

Moran stopped in the center of the bridge. "I know you all think I was chosen for this position because I'm the consort of Princess Yuri. I intend to show all of you that is not the case. Shift reports will remain due within an hour of completion and I want to know about anything that even remotely smells funny. You are all the best trained that we have, so I expect you to use those skills. If you see something that doesn't look right, as long as I command here, no one will be persecuted for bringing it to the attention of their superior or directly to me. If you don't, I'll rip out your throat and feed on your blood myself!"

The female officer turned from the console she sat at. "Commander we are receiving a transmission from Planetary Regent Tonlar."

"It's about damn time! We contacted him almost twelve hours ago! Have him stand by and send for the Princess to come to the bridge!" Moran directed.

"She is already here Commander!" Yuri spoke from behind him as she moved onto the bridge fully.

Moran turned to face her and as protocol dictated he bowed his head to her. "Princess... I can route the transmission to the ready room for you to take in private."

Yuri shook her head. "That won't be necessary Commander. Put it up on the main holo viewer and let us see what this pig regent has to say for himself." Yuri declared. "I do not like to be kept waiting when I call someone."

Moran turned and looked at his COM officer. "Do it Lieutenant."

"Transferring transmission." The woman spoke.

The face of the dark haired vampire man shimmered to life in the floor size holo transmission. He was a portly looking man, with slicked back hair and narrow blue eyes. His belly protruded over his belt more than it should have, but he looked impeccably groomed and quite arrogant. Though at the moment he looked quite nervous.

"Milady Princess Yuri it is a distinct honor to be speaking with you!" He spoke. "To what do I owe this incredible honor?"

"I contacted you twelve hours ago Regent Tonlar." Yuri spoke. "Why is it that you are only now just getting back to me? Do you consider yourself above a summons from a Princess of the High Coven?"

"Forgive me Princess... I was on the other side of the planet visiting several of our newer Rubidium mines." Tonlar answered. "I only just returned thirty minutes ago and was informed that you requested my presence."

"I requested nothing Regent." Yuri spat. "I contacted you to give you orders!"

"Of course Princess!" He answered quickly bowing his head. "I serve the High Coven and your father Milady."

"Regent you have a female in your stable of slaves." Yuri spoke. "A Lycavorian female that took care of your daughter it seems."

"Yes Milady... I have several of those vile females that I keep. They mind the property here and tend to the cleanliness of my home." Tonlar answered.

"I'm sure." Yuri said. "I'm interested in the one that took care of your daughter while you and your wife were throwing lavish parties every night Regent."

"Princess I assure you I..."

"Save your excuses little man!" Yuri barked. "Do you think my father does not have eyes everywhere? We know all about your little parties Regent, not to mention the perversions that take place at these parties. I do not care about them. I only want the female that took care of your daughter. Lisisa her name is."

"Of course Milady!" He spoke quickly. "I will have her sent to you on the next transport bound for Usu'Ozeib 7!"

"Don't bother fool! We'll be there in two days and take her ourselves." Moran growled from where he stood. He looked quickly at Yuri. "Forgive me Princess I spoke out of turn."

Yuri couldn't contain her smile and she nodded to Moran. "Understandable Commander, considering the level of intelligence we are dealing with. My Strike Group Commander is correct however Regent. We will be arriving in two days time to take this female from you. I strongly suggest you have her in chains waiting for us, for if she isn't, you will not be Regent of Lycavore any longer."

"As you order Milady!" Tonlar spoke his eyes now wide in fear.

"Two days Regent." Yuri snapped and then looked at the Lieutenant and motioned for her to end the transmission. She looked at Robert. "I trust we will arrive on time Commander Moran?"

"Without question Princess." Moran answered.

"Good. I will be in the port lounge if I am needed." Yuri said before spinning on her heels and walking off the bridge. She smiled to herself as her husband began to issue additional orders in the background.

LYCAVORE

REGENT TONLAR'S RESIDENCE

"Coming here?" The woman asked shocked.

"That is what she said Julesa!" Tonlar exclaimed as he looked at his wife.

"Why?"

"Something about collecting the Lycavorian bitch that has been Melita's nanny all these years!" Tonlar spoke as he moved to the bar and poured himself a large glass of alcohol spiked blood. "She's coming here with her entire Strike Group!"

"Why would she want Lisisa?" Julesa asked.

“I don’t know! I didn’t ask her Julesa!” Tonlar spoke as he downed the glass in one gulp.

“So give the bitch to her and she will be gone!” Julesa barked at her husband. “Then she will leave us alone.”

“That’s exactly what I intend to do!” He declared slamming his hand down on the control panel of his desk.

“Yes Regent?” The High Coven Captain appeared on the small screen. “I am yours to command.”

“The Lycavorian wench Lisisa! The one who seems to like getting fucked so much by my Immortals that she gives herself to them so often! Where is she?” Tonlar demanded.

“She has returned to the settlement Regent.” The Captain said. “As she does every night with the other slaves.”

“Captain I want you to take the Immortal officer on duty and a detachment of nine men and retrieve her immediately.” Tonlar ordered. “I want her back here and in chains before morning.”

“Yes Regent.” The man answered.

Tonlar didn’t see Melita leaning against the outside of his office door, nor did he see her turn quickly and break into a run down the corridor.

LYCAVORIAN SETTLEMENT

The building was used as a gathering hall for work assignments and meetings. Situated in the center of the settlement as it was, they would have substantial warning should a High Coven patrol wander into the settlement and head towards them. The four most experienced guards they had were standing watch outside with the small assortment of weapons they had managed to trade for through the years. Most of the twenty odd men and women sat in the rows of simple carved stone benches facing the four single chairs that appeared forged from some metal. All of them wore simple clothes, most of them with blackened fingertips from working the mines. The four men in front of the room were the strongest Alpha males and had been for centuries. They had been kept alive by the High Coven to maintain order among the slaves working the mines, and all of them had worked through the years at the ultimate goal of freeing their people. Three of them were looked upon with great respect while the fourth was viewed questionably by many because of the arrogance he displayed.

The man who appeared to be one of the two oldest of the Alphas was speaking from the data pad in his deeply tanned hand. “We have opened another tunnel in Mine 49. We were able to make four hundred meters in drilling before the close of the day. This tunnel will end a hundred meters into the cavern where the Relic is.”

“How many does that make Visam?” An older woman in the first row asked.

“Twenty-three.” He replied. “This tunnel will mark the Relic at one point two kilometers in length.”

Another of the Alphas shook his head in disbelief. “Eighteen years of digging and we are still uncovering this thing Visam.”

“You know we have to do it this way Garpa, otherwise the Coven would catch on to the fact that we are burning more Neutronium drill heads than needed for Rubidium recovery.” Visam replied.

“I know my friend, I know.” The man answered.

“Why do we continue to do this?” The youngest of the Alphas asked. His name was Donus, and he had taken the seat belonging to his father almost six hundred years ago. He fancied himself a superior Alpha, and even though he was a slave just as much as everyone else, he treated them as if they were beneath him.

“We continue to do this Donus because it is our only means of escaping this planet.” Visam replied.

“It has taken us eighteen years to uncover what we have.” Donus spoke quickly. “With no end in sight. How much longer do we stay at it?”

“As long as it takes.” The fourth man spoke now.

“To what end Noreu?” Donus asked.

“To the same end we saw when we first began this project. The same end that drove us to search for it to begin with.” The oldest of the Alpha males spoke. “This Relic is our means of escaping the life we live here!”

“How do we know that for sure?” Donus asked.

“That is what is written in the ancient scrolls that your own father found over a millennia ago when you were still a pup!” Noreu snapped.

“I still believe my idea is better!” Donus said. “Sell what we have found to the traders that come here. Use that profit to buy our way off Lycavore.”

“The Coven would never allow us to do that!” Lisisa spoke now from her seat next to Renatia. “Not to mention no trader is brave enough to pit himself against the Coven so deep in their territory! And the overriding fact that we can not trust any of them to fulfill their end of the deal!”

Donus looked at her, his face and eyes clearly showing his anger and distaste with her. “So now we hear from the half breed.” He looked at Visam. “Why do we allow her entry to these meetings? She is not even a pureblood!”

Renatia snatched Lisisa’s hand when she began to get up and pulled her back down as she leaned forward. “Lisisa has done more to protect our people in the time she has been here than any of us in this room!” Renatia snapped. “Only she has the metabolism and ability to survive these assaults by the Immortals on our females! How many times has she offered herself in their stead? How many?”

“Perhaps she enjoys it because she is half vampire.” Donus said with a smug look and smirk.

“Donus that is quite enough!” Visam hissed. “You are far out of line!”

“She protects our future with her actions!” Renatia snarled stepping forward. “The honor and dignity of our young female wolves, so that you and other Alphas may claim them and they are untainted by the touch of those vile beasts! And half the blood that runs through her veins is of the line of King Resumar, we can all smell it... and half of *that* bloodline is purer than you will ever be Donus! Remember that!” Lisisa couldn’t help but smile inwardly at the look on Donus’s face when her adoptive mother spoke those words. “You dishonor the memory of your father with your words! Never would he have conducted himself in such a manner!” Renatia hissed out the last words in anger and Lisisa reached up to take her hand now.

“Mami... stop.” Lisisa spoke softly.

“I am not my father.” Donus stated.

“That is obvious.” Renatia spoke allowing Lisisa to draw her back.

“Enough of this!” Visam barked. “We must not fight among ourselves! Donus you will hold your tongue from this moment on! You only speak with the anger of the shunned. It is well known Lisisa has denied your attentions on many occasions.”

“That has nothing to do with this!” Donus snapped.

“Doesn’t it?” Visam declared. “We will do things according to how we have laid them out for the past two decades! It is the only way! Lisisa is correct... we could never trust a trader or smuggler to hold their end of the bargain. Not against the High Coven!”

“I could force them too!” Donus said.

“And how would you do that Donus?” Garpa asked now. “We have few weapons and hardly any training in conflict. And we are bound to this settlement and the mines. How would you force a smuggler to honor what he is free to dismiss?”

Lisisa looked up at the ceiling of the room when she felt the slight tremors in her mind. This was a new sensation to her and her forest green eyes narrowed. The past months she had grown stronger within Mindvoice, able to hear men and women talking even when they were shielding their conversations. She had made mention of it to no one but Melita for fear they would shun her even more than they already did. She had also felt a presence of some sort deep in her conscious. It was a soothing presence of almost childlike nature that had made her almost laugh out loud several times at the giddiness that swept through her.

This was different though. This was powerful and controlled. She could just barely sense two minds that were focused and harnessed and they were shielding themselves with far greater skill than anyone in the room with her possessed.

And she sensed something far more powerful just on the very edge of perception.

Lisisa got to her feet slowly, her eyes still on the ceiling above her, drawing everyone’s attention to her. Renatia looked at the adopted daughter she had willingly taken under her wing.

“Lisisa?” She spoke. “*Lisisa atle coi un?*” (What is it?)

Lisisa held up her hand slowly, her eyes focused on one portion of the ceiling now. Visam slowly came to his feet his dark eyes focused on her as she turned to look at him. “*Visam... evell wen ter meroc.*” She spoke in barely a whisper. (We are not alone.)

Visam turned to Noreu. “Have the guards search the roof!” He hissed quietly. “Quickly!”

Anuk knelt on the ground next to the side of the long building, her P190 held ready, the cloak she wore hiding her body and her features. She and Daniel had been able to sneak up very close almost too easily, and though they both took notice of this they continued on. Upon reaching the side of the building Martin wanted them to place a camera and transmitter, Daniel had scampered up onto the roof to place the instruments. Anuk was a medic by trade and cross trained as a pilot and bio-scientist, but not as an electronics engineer, and she knew he Soulmate had far more experience with the equipment.

Hurry up Daniel! She spoke softly within Mindvoice knowing he could hear her easily within his mind. We have been here too long already.

I'm working on it baby. She heard his immediate reply and she smiled.

Anuk adjusted her position as the faint scraping of his body reached her sensitive ears and then he dropped almost soundlessly to the ground next to her. He flashed his brilliant white teeth at her.

Hey there beautiful. Let's blow this joint shall we.

Danny saw Anuk's eyes go wide and his head snapped around to see two large men come out of the shadows at them with raised weapons. He whipped his head back around and saw another two come up from behind them.

"Oh boy. We're so busted." Danny muttered.

"Fuck!" Martin hissed softly as he and Yuriko watched as Danny and Anuk were led into the building at the point of a gun. "How did anyone sense them? Those two can move like ghosts!"

Yuriko looked at him. "Lisisa." She said. "It has to be. Daniel and Anuk... they are Tier Six Mindvoicers father."

Martin nodded. "And there is no way anyone could break their shields."

"What if she is like you? What if she detected not their conversations, but the tremors within Mindvoice that their shields caused?" Yuriko spoke.

Helen?

Your adopted daughter is correct Martin. Helen answered from within the building below them where she waited alongside Jeth. Lisisa is far more powerful than even the strongest Tier Four within this settlement. They would not have detected Daniel's and Anuk's shields, but she most certainly could.

"Shit!" Martin swore again. "Yuriko you are with me."

Martin...

"Helen we have no choice now. I didn't want to do it this way believe me." Martin spoke.

I know that Martin. I was going to tell you to be careful to shield your aura. We may have to reveal ourselves sooner than we wanted, but they do not need to know who you are. At least not yet.

Martin nodded. "I understand. Jeth... remain with the Oracle unless I call for you."

Understood King Martin.

Martin looked at Yuriko. "Let's move."

"Their weapons and equipment." The guard spoke dumping the pile of gear onto the table in front of Visam and the others. "We found them placing listening devices on the roof." He held up the tiny TAP camera and transmitter.

Visam and the others looked at the towering black skinned giant and the diminutive female elf, both of them with their hands secured behind their backs. "Who are you?" He demanded. "Smugglers! Pirates!"

"I don't suppose you would believe me if I told you that we are from the Intergalactic Housing Authority, and we're just doing a yearly inspection." Danny answered.

Donus stepped up to Danny and slapped his face viciously, his head moving only slightly. "You dare mock us!" He barked.

Danny shook his head slightly. "I guess that's a no huh?"

“You are Lycavorian!” Visam spoke looking at Danny.

“So I’ve been told.” Danny answered. “Just like you.”

Donus slapped him again, this time harder. Dan’s eyes grew darker. “You are not like us! You are not from Lycavore!”

Danny glared at him. “You figure that out all by yourself *nubous nith!*” Danny growled at Donus. (Fuck nut)

This brought gasps from those in the room. “He speaks the ancient language!” Garpa hissed his eyes wide.

“*Evell wen ter vada sirand.*” Anuk said softly. (We are not the enemy)

Noreu stepped up to her, sniffing deeply and looking at her elfin ears. “You... you are an elf! A turned elf!” He spoke with some shock in his voice. Noreu glanced at Danny, easily detecting his nutmeg scent imbedded within Anuk’s blood, and her cinnamon scent entwined with his. “You... you are mated?”

“*Anomes.*” Anuk replied gently. “*Gravinolfgrek.*” (Soulmates. Consecrated in Blood)

“They are not smugglers or pirates.” Lisisa spoke stepping forward slowly to stand in front of Daniel, looking up into his dark eyes. “You are something much more aren’t you?”

“You tell me.” Danny said gazing back at her. “You are the ones with all the guns and bullets.”

“I... I can touch your thoughts stranger.” Lisisa said her voice carrying a tone of threat in it. “It is much easier that way I assure you.”

Danny grinned at her. “You can try sweetness, but even you aren’t that strong. Not yet anyway.”

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Daniel he would not want us to make the situation worse.* Anuk spoke within Mindvoice causing Lisisa to look at her quickly.

Danny looked at her and grinned. [Mindvoice Shielded] Have I ever told you how delicious you look dressed like that?

Anuk could not contain the blush in her cheeks even in their current situation. Lisisa’s eyes went back and forth between them. She had felt those tremors quite strongly, but she was unable to hear the words the she-elf had just spoken, or the words the giant black skinned man had replied with due to the strength of their shields. Lisisa took a step back quickly her eyes wide.

“Lisisa?” Renatia went to her. “What is wrong?”

“They... they know who I am.” She gasped looking at Daniel.

“Impossible!” Visam exclaimed. “No one outside of this settlement with the exception of Melita knows who you are Lisisa! How could...”

“They are *Armens!*” Lisisa barked.

Donus laughed out loud. “Are we back to that silly notion now?” He declared. “I am so tired of hearing about this... how you are the daughter of the King of the Union! We have nothing but your word of this and...”

“Silence!” Visam snarled. “Noreu...” He motioned with his head.

The older Lycavorian stepped up to Danny and pulled the cloak off his shoulders in one motion, pulling it down to his wrists and revealing the matte black body armor and crimson coloring of the shoulders, more gasps and wide eyes following that. He pulled Danny’s arms up, his hands being none to gentle and his eyes went wide when he saw the bridle of the Shi Viska crossing Danny’s palm.

“Shi Viska!” He hissed in horror.

Noreu turned quickly and did the same to Anuk, pulling her cloak aside to reveal the body armor and the bridle of her Shi Viska across her small palm. He looked at Visam. “The she-elf is the same Visam!”

Danny smiled. “Secret’s out!” He said.

Visam’s wide eyes looked at Danny. “Who are you? Why are you here?”

“You know... I’m not feeling the love here.” Danny said. “Why should I tell you anything?”

Donus stepped up and slapped Danny again, savagely this time, drawing blood from his lips. “If you do not answer our questions we will skin you while you live scum! Where did you get these uniforms? These weapons?”

Danny’s head snapped forward smashing into Donus’s face with enough force it crushed his nose and dropped him to the floor like a rock. His hands went to his face as blood spurting from between his fingers. “Step off motherfucker! You don’t scare me little man! We’ve killed more Immortals than you have living on this planet and your threats don’t mean *sibfla!*”

Donus scrambled to his feet quickly, blood leaking from his now broken nose and his eyes wide in murderous anger. "Take his woman!" He shouted. "Let him watch while we have our way with her! He will talk then!"

"Donus... how dare you suggest something as vile as that?" Visam nearly screamed. "That..."

They all whirled to the sound of the body of the guard by the door smashing through the air to sail past them and impact heavily against the wall. He grunted in pain and slumped to the floor unconscious. Eyes grew wide as two more cloaked figures appeared from the entrance, one nearly as tall as the black skinned man in front of them.

And he held the figure of the second guard in the grip of his right hand, his booted feet dangling six inches off the floor, and his hands trying in vain to remove the iron clad vise around his neck.

"*Hnes wen Durcunusaan.*" The male voice from under the hood spoke. (They are Wolves of the Blood) His face wasn't visible but the power of his voice was staggering. "*Vada Armen Hippies Sedla.*" (The Spartan Royal Guard)

The smaller of the two figures stepped forward now. "If you value your lives and the lives of your children release them immediately." The female voice spoke calmly.

Lisisa's eyes grew wide as she heard that voice. It was a voice from the past. A voice she had not heard in more years than she cared to recall. A voice that had lulled her to sleep as a child. A voice of love and caring. A voice she never thought she would hear again.

The tall figure's left arm came up and there was a silver/white flash as the Shi Viska exploded into existence. It launched almost immediately covering the distance between the cloaked figure and Visam in a single blink of an eye.

And stopped.

Visam's eyes were wide in terror as the razor like blades of the Shi Viska hung before his flesh by barely a few millimeters, so close that he could hear the low humming of the Shi Viska.

"*Pen gur gild rebe cova eddan.*" Martin growled.

"Wolves of the Blood!" Garpa panted his eyes wide. "The Royal Guard! Here!" He hesitated for all of two seconds before stepping forward and withdrawing the small blade from his belt. In two more seconds Anuk's bonds and then Daniel's were on the floor.

Danny rubbed his wrists together his dark eyes going to where Donus stood. His Shi Viska flared into existence now and he covered the three meters to where he stood in another blink, the Shi Viska lifting and leveling at Donus's wide eyed face.

"Want to take my mate now motherfucker!" Danny almost screamed.

"Daniel no!" Anuk barked stepping up to her mate and placing her hand on his chest. "This is not why we are here my love! And he could never do to me what you can." Anuk looked at Donus her cerulean colored eyes changing and her fangs bursting forth. "Not even on his best day."

Lisisa took another step closer to the cloaked figures her eyes wide. "It... it's you." She said. "It's you isn't it? Please..." Tears came to her eyes now. "Yuriko... please tell me it is you."

Yuriko lifted her hands and drew back the hood of the cloak without pause, letting her eyes fall on Lisisa. The Lycavorians in the room looked at the pureblooded female vampire they all could smell quite clearly. "It... it is me sister." She spoke in a soft halting voice. "I... I told you I would find you. I... I never stopped looking Lisisa. Our... our father would not let me stop looking."

Lisisa's forest green eyes burst into tears and she covered the distance to Yuriko in five steps, falling into her arms in an embrace. Yuriko crushed the one she called sister in her arms as tears of her own came to her eyes and they settled to the floor quickly as the strength left both of them in joy. Renatia's hands were in front of her mouth and she had tears in her eyes as she watched. She had never really believed what Lisisa had always told her and believed. Now... now it appeared that her adopted daughter had been right all along. They had come for her... as the King's daughter.

Martin lowered the guard he had been holding to the floor and the man scrambled back quickly, doing his best to get away from him in fear. Martin called his Shi Viska back and it responded with the speed of thought, zipping back to his arm and then in a silver/white flash it was gone.

"Wise choice." Martin said. "I hate violence. We..."

The door in the rear of the building burst open and the female vampire rushed in, directly into Danny bringing up his P190 as he snatched it from the table. He needn't have bothered as Anuk stepped up to the female from the side and was upon her in a blink, her smaller Kopsis pressing tightly to Melita's throat.

"Time to die Coven witch." Anuk snarled.

"No!" Lisisa screamed scrambling from Yuriko's arms and getting her feet moving to where Anuk held Melita. "No! She is a friend! My friend!"

Anuk's eyes darted to where Martin stood and everyone saw this. They watched the cloaked male shake his head almost imperceptibly and Anuk quickly drew the blade from Melita's throat. Her dark eyes were wide in fear as she stumbled back and moved quickly to where Lisisa hugged her.

"Melita! Why are you here?" Lisisa asked quickly. "Your... your father will be furious that you left the garrison at this hour!"

"Lisisa... Lisisa who are these people?" She asked looking at her.

"They are... Melita they are *Durcunusaan*." Lisisa told her with wide eyes filled with new light and hope. "Spartan Royal Guard. My... my father's personal guard."

Melita's eyes grew even wider if that was possible. "Your... your father's guard?" She gasped.

Lisisa nodded as Yuriko walked slowly up to where they stood. Lisisa reached out and took her hand drawing her close. "This is... this is Yuriko my sister."

Melita looked at Yuriko, taking in the fitness of her body and the elegant lines of her Asian features. She glanced at the others in the room, Danny and Anuk standing ready to pounce and the second fully cloaked man near the back of the room. "Lisisa... they... they came for you?" She said in disbelief.

The tears came again and Lisisa nodded. "Yes."

"I have never stopped looking for her." Yuriko spoke. "It became so much easier when our father took his place as King and I had the tools and assets to do it properly."

"King?" Melita shook her head. "Oh... Lisisa... she's coming! She's coming here! They are after you! A patrol is almost here to take you back to the garrison! You must go! Hide! Run away!"

"Melita what are you talking about?" Lisisa spoke.

"Yuri! Princess Yuri! I overheard a transmission she had with my father. She's coming here and she ordered him to take you into chains!" Melita told her. "You must go! Now!"

"Too late!" Visam spoke sniffing the air. "They are here! Damn! No one provoke them! They will not hurt us if we do not resist! Lisisa I'm..."

The main doors in the front of the building burst open and a dozen High Coven troops rushed in, followed by a Captain and an Immortal Lieutenant. Danny and Anuk slipped their weapons behind their backs covered by their cloaks while the other guards did the same.

"Visam!" The High Coven Captain spoke as he came to a halt, the Immortal to his right next to where Martin stood.

"Captain... what can I do for you?" Visam asked as calmly as he could.

The Immortal saw Melita standing next to Lisisa and his eyes narrowed. "The daughter of the Regent. Lady Melita why are you here? You are not allowed out of the garrison at this hour."

"I... I go where I please." Melita spoke bravely even though she was shaking.

"And who is this?" The Captain spoke looking at Yuriko hesitantly. "You are not part of our garrison here."

"I only just arrived two days ago." Yuriko spoke quickly.

"You are a liar." The Captain spoke. "There have been no new troops assigned here in months. Visam... what are you doing here?" He spoke with a smile, clasping his hands behind his back. "We seem to have discovered a plot of some sort. Wonderful! We can collect all of you at the same time! We have come for her, but we will take you all!"

"Excuse me." Martin spoke from beside the Immortal. "I can't let you do that."

The High Coven officer and Immortal turned to look at the tall cloaked figure. The vampire officer laughed. "Oh... and why is that slave?"

Martin reached up slowly and drew back the hood of the cloak revealing his black hair. He spoke the words as he looked up, his fangs bursting forth and his eyes changing to yellow/gold orbs filled with hate and rage.

“*You will never touch my daughter again motherfucker!*” Martin roared in a voice that was as close to death’s door as anyone in the room had ever been.

The Immortal’s eyes nearly burst from his head. “It... it is King Leonidas!” He screamed in abject horror. “He is here!”

Thirty odd pairs of eyes flew open in stunned shock.

It happened in all of six seconds, and it changed her life and everyone’s in the room for eternity.

Lisisa’s eyes flew open just as Martin’s *Nehtes* exploded out between the Immortal’s shoulder blades impaling him completely, blood splashing wetly on the wooden floor beneath his feet. She watched him in awestruck fascination as he lifted his hand and the shimmering psychic diamond appeared just above his fingertips and then flashed from his hand to plow into the High Coven Captain’s chest, blowing out halfway up his back carrying with it blood, bone and flesh which sprayed the High Coven troops behind him.

“BLOOD!” Danny roared.

And three others sprang into action without hesitation and with equal lethal precision as their King.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

LYCAVORE

TWENTY-TWO KILOMETERS WEST OF SETTLEMENT

Anja looked down the tunnel from where she squatted, the dimness of the work lighting in the tunnel not hindering her altered wolf eyes in any way. The tunnel was at least thirty meters wide and sixty meters high, the rock walls glistening with moisture in some spots. The entrance had been deserted when they arrived and it was a simple matter for her small team to move into the tunnel from the deep timber surrounding the entrance. They had moved slowly so that Tina could take as many readings as she was able with the small portable scanners she carried. Anja had not worked much with her in the past two years, but she admired the woman’s toughness. She never complained even though Anja could smell the tiredness coming from her after the first hour of moving. She was first and foremost a pilot and engineer and while she had been on the ground before, it was never for more than a few minutes. Anja and the Spartans had no trouble slipping through the terrain with barely any effort, but since Tina was human they had to move slower than they normally would have. Atropos had picked up on this as well and adjusted his pace within the tunnel so that it was not as bad as the movement they conducted from their landing point six kilometers away where Torma and Miath had left them.

They could see dozens of tools scattered throughout many portions of the tunnel, some of them advanced sets of drills and even ancient looking hand tools near where the veins of dark red and yellow Rubidium Ore within the rock itself resided. They had moved past half a dozen tunnels that connected to the main one they were now in, but their motion and sonic sensors told them they did not go for very far, always dead ending. The small amount of Rubidium radiation they were absorbing was nothing to be concerned with. The radiation did not affect them as it would the vampires, and any adverse effects could quickly be dispelled by either Anja or Seanna’s healing ability.

Anja Peterson.

Or just plain Anja she thought, since her people did not have surnames. She secretly preferred Anja Leonidas herself, and if they had never discovered what they had these last two years, Anja would proudly carry that name with no hesitation or regret. She knew it did not matter however and that suited her just fine too. Martin was in her blood more deeply than just a name, and everyone who could detect her scent knew that without question, just as she was in Martin’s blood.

Anja was a Queen to trillions of beings, some of them that looked no more like her than the rock she now looked at, that fact stilling mind boggling to her. Yet at this very moment as they rested within the tunnel, Anja’s only thoughts were on the sister she had never known. Sivana was back at *ANVIL* with the rest of their group waiting for them to return. They had talked briefly before she and Miath had leaped from near eighty thousand feet above the planet, but Anja had noticed the differences in her sister almost immediately. Though they had known each other less than a month now, the similarities between them were easy enough to detect. Their facial features were almost exactly the same, and while they were not identical twins it was easy enough

to see that they were fraternal twins. Anja shuddered inwardly to think of the life her sister had led up until they had discovered her. Anja knew she herself was strong willed, it was something the human man who she called father for so many years had always told her. Yet Anja did not believe she could ever have survived the life her sister had survived. Over a hundred years of slavery, having no say in your life and basically at the mercy of whoever claimed to be your owner. In more ways than Anja cared to contemplate.

Since discovering her real history and past, Anja had spent as much time as possible on Hadaria with her great grandfather Fuleos discovering all that she could do with her amazing healing ability, as well as working to make the art of medicine better for everyone. The equipment that existed was unlike anything Anja had ever seen or used, but surprisingly she learned like a sponge and it seemed as if she knew what each instrument was before even picking it up. These were the things she would have to teach her sister. Sivana was not going to be as easy to convert into a healer as she had been. Anja had already been a premier bio-research scientist and doctor, a field she had entered almost without thought growing up. The decision to join the Navy SEALs on Earth was completely hers however, and looking back it was something she realized she had done to impress the man she had called father for so many years. Now Sivana was discovering what it would be like. Their Aunt and Uncle had constantly badgered Anja about bringing Sivana to Hadaria and letting her stay with them. Anja knew all they wanted to do was fill her with their dogmatic view of things and how it was wrong for Anja to be part wolf and always spend more time off Hadaria than on. She was protecting Sivana and in the process protecting herself. Only their grandfather Fuleos cared nothing for that as long as he was near his granddaughters.

Sivana and Belen becoming a romantic item; that was not going to make her anymore friends among the older Hadarians either Anja thought with some humor. Not that she really cared since most of them were stuffy old men and women who complained about everything in regards to her. How she wore her hair, how she dressed far too sexily for a Queen, how she should not have a Mage Warrior as a lover, it drove her batty sometimes. Eurin was the only person who understood, and though she was among the oldest of their people, she was far more open in her thinking. It was Eurin who put Hadarian Healers back among the general military as had been their way in King Resumar's time. The results of that act were telling across the fleet and all the ground forces. The readiness of hundreds of ships and units nearly doubled, for every Spartan, every troop no matter their species; they all trusted Hadarian Healers without question. How was she going to explain Sivana and Belen to her Aunt and Uncle? They would be furious she knew, and more than likely blame her, but it would give Sivana an insight as to the type of people they truly were and hopefully cause her to stay on Apo Prime with Anja most of the time. It would also allow Anja to let Sivana see that the relationship she had entered into was not just flying by night. Belen was a very traditional Spartan like his father, he was also an Alpha and would protect her ruthlessly if need be, and fight for her without question against any other male, regardless of species. Anja was certain Sivana understood some of it, she was exceptionally intelligent, but she wanted to help her sister in any way she could. At least before she became too pregnant to do that.

Anja let her hand drop to her abdomen for a brief moment and amazingly she could feel the life stirring within her womb even though the baby was only a few days old. Anja had never once imagined herself as a mother, but shortly after re-discovering Martin Leonidas and falling shamelessly in love with him all over again, Anja had wanted nothing more than to have his child. Like Aricia, Dysea and now For'mya, as female wolves it was in their blood to want to have children, yet also like them, only Martin could stir their blood enough in that way. It was only Martin's children the four of them desired to carry, for they knew that once they gave him a child they would be bound to him for all eternity until death, and that prospect did not frighten them in the least. They had decided long ago that all of their children would be born in Sparta, for that city on Earth held so much significance for the man they all worshiped. They also knew that without exception theirs would be a communal family, where they would care for each others children as if they were their own. It was the way of the wolf pack in all of them anyway, and they had made this decision without Martin knowing, for they knew he would love each of them and all of his children equally, no matter what.

It was the reason that over the past year Aricia, Dysea, Isabella, herself and For'mya had pushed him to give Yuriko more and more of the resources she needed to find Lisisa. After their initial anger over discovering he had a child by their hated enemy, it did not take long for them to come to realize that it was not something they could hold against him. When he had shared Yuri's bed, he did not know what he was, or who he was for that matter, and he had not known about Lisisa's existence. Secretly they all cherished the fact that Martin had

not dismissed her existence and that he had given Yuriko all she had asked for in order to find her, to include the help of the man who he considered a brother above all others. The finely upgraded High Coven Runner, unlimited funds to spend what she needed to find Lisisa, all of these things that had led them here. They knew that Martin would act in this way with any of his children, no matter who had given birth to them, and that fact made all of them love him even more.

They did not know how he could love them all so completely, and they had talked of it often in the past as women and lovers themselves, but Martin did love them all. Even though they all knew Aricia would always have hold over him as they could not, none of them cared in the least. Aricia had shown them all on many occasions that she did not care that she was his favorite, for she loved all of them almost as intensely as she loved Martin, and it was Aricia who always made time for them to be together to be together and be able to share Martin and each other no matter what they were doing.

They did not know yet if Isabella would ever be able to have children with Martin as it appeared Yuri had been able too, but furtively all of them hoped this was the case. They could not explain the connection they all had, or the overwhelming desire to be so physically close to one another, yet Anja could not deny the power of that draw. While Aricia, For'mya and herself had been able to share in pleasures with Isabella the night before they left for Elear, Isabella had not yet been able to share in Martin with them. Anja shivered at the memory of Isabella's fangs biting into her flesh just above her clit, and experiencing the wave of enormous pleasure that produced, but Anja knew she wanted to share that with Seanna more than anything else.

Anja glanced at the dark haired Hadarian woman that captivated her life almost as much as Martin Leonidas. Anja would never deny her touch to the others or theirs upon her, but when all was said and done, it was only Martin and Seanna who could make her sing like no others. Seanna had opened up and changed so much in the last year and Anja knew she would soon join them willingly in their bed and in their arms. Seanna's sweet coconut scent wafted with the desire to explore with them and contribute to what they all shared together and only decades of old tradition and culture stopped her. Tradition and culture that Seanna was rapidly and quite willingly leaving behind her the longer she remained with Anja and shared in her life. They had come so far in the last two years and experienced so much that Anja sometimes wondered when she would wake from this dream. The fact that she was actually living it was far more than she had ever dreamed for and it made her perpetually happy.

Anja took another bite out of the protein bar she held just as Tina moved up next to her and squatted down. Her dirty blond hair was tied into a tight pony tail and she filled out her uniform quite nicely. Anja wasn't attracted to her in a sexual way but she could and did admire an attractive female when she saw one, something that this new life brought out in her. Anja also knew that Tina had been involved with Endith and Ben for the last two years and it was well known that their love affair was just as torrid now as it was when it had begun. Tina was one of the few handfuls of people who Martin considered being, if not family, the closest of friends, and all pretenses were dropped with them. There were no formalities within that small group of men and women, and Tina was among them. That suited Anja just fine.

"Anja... I'm getting some strange readings." Tina spoke.

Anja looked at her. "Strange how?"

Tina shook her head. "That's just it... I don't know." She answered. "The motion sensors seem to be working fine, but since we entered this portion of the main tunnel I haven't gotten a solid return from the sonic sensors on the right side. It's like the sonic waves are being absorbed by something."

Anja looked at her oddly. "Absorbed?"

Tina nodded. "Weird huh?"

"What would absorb sonic waves and give no signature back?" Anja asked.

"It would have to be some sort of bio material." Tina answered. "Nothing that I know of or have studied in the last year would do that I'm sure. And since Endy, Ben and I moved to Apo Prime we have studied every known metal to exist."

"Bio Material... down here?" Anja asked looking around now. "How far down are we anyway Tina?"

"The last depth scan I did put us at a hundred and two meters." She replied looking at Atropos as he settled to the tunnel floor beside his Queen. "It's been fluctuating between ninety and a hundred for about the last quarter of a kilometer that we have come."

Seanna leaned forward now as well. “The Rubidium deposits we have seen ran out a hundred meters back the way we have come.” She said taking the portion of protein bar Anja held out to her without thinking. “I have not seen any since, which is very strange to be honest.”

“Then why would they keep digging?” Atropos asked. “If there is none of this ore in this rock around us, why keep drilling down at such a gradual slope. Wouldn’t you want to find more of this ore and make dramatic changes in direction?”

“Why indeed.” Anja said. “Tina can you tell how much further this tunnel goes before stopping?”

“The deposits we have seen are very rich Anja.” Seanna spoke. “If the ore colors and concentration I have noticed are accurate, they should be harvesting Ore from those deposits for decades to come. It does not make any sense to continue to drill further when there is so much back there.”

Tina looked at the small box like sensor attached to her harness. “Another three hundred and twenty meters before we come to the end. And I’m not detecting any signs of Rubidium in that direction. But I am showing the same type of sonic disturbance from further down the tunnel that I’m picking up here only stronger.”

“Why do I get the feeling that there is something more happening down here than just drilling for this ore?” Anja spoke. “Atropos... five more minutes and then let’s keep moving. I want to see what is at the end of this tunnel if anything before we head back to the surface, and I want to link up with Nayeca and Jobel before they get too far ahead of us.”

Nayeca had volunteered to come with her and Anja had eagerly accepted knowing the skill the young Drow warrior possessed. She and the female Spartan had been moving ahead of their group silently and acting as scouts.

Atropos nodded and moved to where the other three *Durcunusaan* sat. Seanna looked at Anja as she gazed down the tunnel and she moved closer to her, pressing up against her side without pause, her large breasts pushing against Anja’s arm as her hand dropped to Anja’s slim muscular thigh. Anja was her Queen yes, but she was also her lover and best friend, and Anja had made it very clear to her on many occasions that if she acted in any other fashion it would make her very angry. She would not have them hiding their relationship or their love for each other from anyone.

Seanna had never expected to have this type of relationship with any female let alone her Queen. When she became a Mage Warrior she had resigned herself to remaining without male companionship for her entire life. Being lovers with a woman had never even made her pause in thought for it never crossed her mind that it would occur. Meeting Anja on Earth that first day had changed everything, and as far as Seanna was concerned, changed it for the better. They slept together, pleased each other without question, and recently Seanna had grown brave enough and comfortable enough with Martin to share their bed together with nothing but their flesh pressing to one another. Seanna knew that she desired her King, his body was chiseled from granite it appeared and he was extremely well endowed, Anja willingly sharing this information with her before Seanna had actually seen it for herself recently. Seanna knew all she had to do was ask, but she also wanted to make sure Anja was with her, for she had never been with a man and she wanted to make sure it was perfect when that day came. She had seen Martin without clothes and he was huge to say the least. There were nights when she heard Anja cry out in passion in his arms, and she always wondered what it could be like.

One day she would know and Seanna had no doubts she would relish it.

“What are you thinking my love?” She asked Anja softly. “Something is going through that head of yours.”

“Something is nearby *Erranyaenyla*.” Anja whispered turning to look at her. “Something that even I can sense in Mindvoice and it is very powerful.”

“Something dangerous?” Seanna asked.

Anja shook her head slowly. “I don’t think so. I can’t tell. One thing is for sure, if I can feel it, you can damn well bet Martin and Helen can feel it, not to mention Torma and Miath. They are stronger within Mindvoice than me.”

“Do not sell yourself short Anja.” Seanna spoke with a smile. “I have heard Martin and Helen talking about you. Helen believes you to be the strongest Mindvoicer behind Martin and Aricia, and she says your bond with Miath will only continue to grow. Dysea and Iriral will be powerful, but Helen believes you will come closest to Martin and Aricia.”

“They told you that?” Anja asked surprised.

Seanna smiled. “I actually was eavesdropping on them in the lounge of *HOPE’S QUEST*. I heard them there.”

Anja chuckled. “I’ve created a monster.” She exclaimed leaning over to kiss her warmly. Seanna took her face gently and slipped her four inch tongue between Anja’s lips, eliciting a soft moan of delight and an immediate response with Anja’s own four inch tongue. Another delight Anja had discovered when she and Seanna had become lovers. All of her people had exceptionally long tongues. The kiss was intense but short as they knew it had to be and Seanna rubbed her nose gently with Anja’s as she pulled back, her dark green eyes smoldering. Anja looked at her boldly. “You do realize *Erranyaenyla* that if we were alone I’d throw you to the ground and take you right here after that.”

Seanna chuckled now as well. “Only after I had you first.” She spoke.

The soft beeping caused both their heads to turn.

“Movement!” Tina hissed out bringing up her motion sensor as she got to her feet. “Three hundred sixty meters! Moving towards us! I got four! What the fuck... I’m reading them on the other side of where this tunnel ends!”

Anja looked at her. “Nayeca and Jobel?”

Tina shook her head quickly. “They are moving back to our location! A hundred meters in front of the contacts.”

Atropos looked at her his eyes wide and determined. “Do we extract?” He gasped out the question. “We aren’t supposed to have any contact!”

Anja made the decision quickly and all based on what her gut and her heart told her. “No! We wait and see who they are!”

“My Queen... we...” Atropos saw Anja tilt her head at him and give him that look she always did when she wasn’t going to listen to him. He stopped talking and shook his head. “Oh never mind.” He said.

LYCAVORIAN SETTLEMENT

“*BLOOD!*”

It was perhaps the most devastating use of controlled, precision violence that Visam and the others had ever seen. They had been raised seeing the High Coven demean and subjugate their people, beatings, rapes and even murders. They had never resisted, never given thought to resistance and watching Danny, Anuk and Yuriko spring smoothly into action at that one word shout was unlike anything they had ever witnessed.

The moment that one word left the black skinned Spartan’s lips, the three of them became a blizzard of lethal motion. Martin’s actions in killing the Immortal and their officer had frozen the dozen other High Coven troops. This ultimately turned out to be the main reason for their demise, but none of the High Coven soldiers was even in the same league skill wise as Martin and the others. All of them present saw the silver/white flash of three Shi Viskas and then the razor shields were in the air as Danny and Anuk both brought up their P190s and began tracking targets. The two of them alone had perfected the unique ability to launch their shields and lift their 190s in the same blink, allowing them to get off one and possibly two bursts from their rifles before having to reclaim their shields and then re-launch them. Martin’s Shi Viska simply slashed through the crowd of bodies with a mind of its own, for only Martin and Aricia had the Mindvoice ability and power to direct and guide their shields while in the midst of battle as they fought with other weapons. Danny, Anuk and Yuriko had spent the better part of the last year fighting and searching together, the three of them had, with Nayeca and Filrian by their side. They had trained almost daily in the hours of down time searching for Lisisa to think and act as a team, and that is what they did now with devastating results.

Yuriko’s dual blades appeared in her hands as if by some magical force and she shoved Lisisa to the ground as she used her vampire speed to blur in motion to the closest soldier. There was a soft gurgling sound and then a great fountain of blood erupted from his sliced open throat as his hands dropped his rifle to try and stem the flow of life giving blood. Lisisa didn’t see Yuriko blur in motion again as there was not often reason for the vampire soldiers on Lycavore to utilize this skill, and even those who could were no where near as proficient and skilled as it appeared Yuriko was. Lisisa didn’t hear the soft sound of the silenced P190s as

Danny and Anuk dealt out three round bursts of death with lethal accuracy, their movements almost faster than she could follow as they twisted and turned, reclaiming their Shi Viskas and then launching them once more in the blink of an eye. Lisisa's eyes saw none of this because they were focused entirely on the huge figure of the black haired Lycavorian who was her King.

And her father.

The moment Martin launched his Shi Viska he did the one thing that would utterly throw the vampire troops into chaos in such confined space. He knew from experience they did not like to fight in enclosed spaces while he and Spartans trained for it everyday. He shifted into his wolf form in a near blinding flash of white light and launched himself into an attack. Lisisa was among the others who could only stare in awe at the size of the raven black beast that fell upon two Coven troops without pause or regard. Massive paws of black razor like claws snapped out, shredding flesh and snapping bone. His three hundred plus pounds of tightly corded muscle smashed one trooper to the floor, the air leaving his lungs as the added weight of the enormous wolf crushed several ribs. The huge head lowered and there was the snapping sound of huge steel trap jaws as Martin's muzzle crunched closed on the vampire's neck and tore his throat free like paper machete. As blood fountained into the air, the black wolf moved with speed unlike anything any of them had ever seen from a wolf, one four inch wide paw whipping out and tearing into the second trooper's head, four long deep slashes tearing open his flesh, sending hair and bloody scalp flying and ripping one of his eyes from its socket. As he fell to his knees his weapon forgotten and his lips opening to scream in agony, Martin leaped again and hit him with his full weight, once more driving a Coven soldier to the floor. Blood spewed from between the soldier's lips as the three hundred plus pound wolf once more snapped ribs like dry timber, two ribs tearing into his lungs. Once more those large teeth and incredibly powerful jaws bit into flesh, and once more another Coven soldier died before he ever really had a chance.

Martin's huge head whipped around and he heard the gasps of not only Lisisa but her female vampire friend as they saw his blazing yellow/gold eyes fall of them. Melita had never seen a wolf of such size in her entire life and she had lived around Lycavorians since she was a small child. This black monstrosity was four foot at the shoulder if he was an inch, and she estimated he was easily twice the size of any wolf she had seen in her life. His black steel claws clicked on the floor of the hall as he leaped once more towards a Coven soldier that was raising his weapon on the red haired female elf. Melita's eyes flew open when those massive jaws clamped shut on the trooper's shoulder crunching through flesh, muscle and bone. She heard the snap and pop as his shoulder was torn from its socket and with a devastating shake of his massive head and shoulders, Martin ripped a huge chunk of flesh away bringing with it the soldier's arm in its entirety.

Then it was over as quickly as the violence had begun.

Danny and Anuk stood side by side, the smoke curling from the barrels of their P190s, their changed eyes sweeping the mass of dead bodies for any sign of movement. Yuriko stood to the other side of the hall, both of her blades stained red and held blade back against her arms defensively as she stood in a combat crouch, her cobalt blue vampire eyes also surveying the room, her lips curled back over her fangs.

Lisisa could not tear her eyes from Martin Leonidas. His presence was so imposing, his commanding aura blasting every wolf in the room including her, announcing who he was for all to feel. Visam and the others had dropped to their knees, their heads bowed in submission, only Donus being disrespectful enough to keep his head up and looking at Martin as he shifted back into human form in another flash. He was crouched then, his yellow/gold eyes not moving from where Lisisa sat on the floor where Yuriko had shoved her. Lisisa held Melita's arms tightly as she watched him, his eyes scouring the room and coming to rest on a toppled pitcher that was leaking water. He snatched it up quickly and rinsed the blood of the dead vampires from his mouth before lifting his left arm. Several people jumped back as his Shi Viska zipped from the corner of the room where it had been hovering and quickly settled to his arm. It too vanished as Danny and Anuk willed their Shi Viskas away.

Martin stood up and went to where his *Nehtes* was protruding from the chest of the dead Immortal and he grasped the shaft of the spear as Yuriko moved up next to Lisisa as quietly as a ghost.

Lisisa's head snapped around to look at her. "Yuriko... Yuriko... that... he..." She whispered softly, her words broken and stammering as she was shaking in a combination of fear and discovery.

Yuriko took her hands with a smile and nodded her head. "Go to him sister." She said softly pulling Lisisa up to her feet. "He is our father and we have searched long and hard for you. Go to him now, for he has longed for this moment since he discovered you existed."

Donus disregarded her and moved to step around Lisisa and speak but Danny's arm stopped him. "Don't even think about it pal." He spoke in a menacing tone.

They all heard the sound of the *Nehtes* being pulled from flesh and they watched Martin depress the small button on the shaft, collapsing the *Nehtes* to its smaller size. He turned as he replaced the spear in its thigh sheath, his yellow/gold eyes once more falling on Lisisa. He watched her take a deep breath and step away from Yuriko and Melita, her forest green eyes never leaving his face. Lisisa was shaking badly, all the years of wondering if he would even want her rushing back on her. She stopped moving towards him, unsure of what to do. She was a half breed, part vampire. How could he care for her? How could he see her as a daughter?

Martin decided everything for her by covering the distance to her in three steps. Lisisa inhaled sharply when his powerful mint scent filled her nostrils, and his aura poured forth to surround her. He reached out his hand and placed it against her cheek, Lisisa's eyes closing as she felt the warmth of his touch. Tears erupted from her eyes then, splashing across his skin and she lifted her hands to cover his as it held her cheek.

"Hello... hello Lisisa." Martin spoke softly, his eyes now returned to their normal dark brown. He had removed the contacts right after the confrontation with the mercenary frigate. He hated wearing contacts because they irritated his eyes. His other hand came up to take her other cheek and his lips parted in a smile. "Lisisa... Lisisa Leonidas."

The dam broke then and Lisisa could no longer contain herself as she fell into his embrace and wrapped her arms around his waist, burying her face into his chest heedless of the strange uniform and body armor and the splotches of blood. She inhaled deeper than she had ever taken a breath before and allowed his mint scent to wash over her like the new blossoms in a field. Her tears grew even stronger when she felt his powerful arms encircle her tightly, crushing her to him as his face lowered to her black hair.

"Forgive me." He whispered causing her eyes to widen as his arms crushed her even more against him. "Forgive me for not knowing about you. Forgive me for all you have had to endure in your life. Forgive me Lisisa for... for not being there for you when you needed me the most."

All the pain. All the humiliation. Lisisa felt it all washing away at this very moment. She felt as if the sun had suddenly risen in the darkness of her life and bathed her in its warm glow. She felt as if...

"Martin Leonidas you are a damn fool!" The female voice exclaimed.

Dozens of eyes turned to see Helen come scurrying into the half destroyed hall, Jeth right behind her. The sight of the four meter long dragon hatchling had the Lycavorians in the hall hyperventilating and scrambling to hide behind one another.

Martin turned to look at Helen. "They were going to take her Helen." He spoke quickly. "I was not going to allow that."

"Of course not you *aulved!* You are her father! If you had let them take her I would have served you up as *dondroch* for the *Riadbuku* on that dreary world the High Coven calls home!" Helen barked as she worked her way deftly over to where he stood. "Do you think next time however, you could be a little more subtle? I heard you scream from across the settlement and now dozens are filling the streets! *Forn piegn igord!*"

Danny and Anuk could not help the laughter that came out then as they looked at the expression on Martin's face as Helen ranted at him and called him some very choice words. The tension and rush of battle quickly bled away for all of them as they listened to one of only six who would dare speak to Martin in such a way.

"You should not... you should not speak to the Lycavorian King in such a manner!" Garpa exclaimed from where he stood next to Visam.

The men and women in the room were standing huddled together, partly in fear of Jeth who was savagely imposing in his own right, but because none of them could believe that the King... their King... none of them could believe he stood in front of them now. Many of them did not believe that Lisisa was the daughter of the new Lycavorian King, and many males and some females had teased her endlessly about it ever since she had arrived on Lycavore and they discovered she was a half breed. It appears that Lisisa had been telling them the truth all these years.

Helen's dark eyes turned on him. "As *Feravomir* I will *anse fon* speak to the Lycavorian King in whatever *nubous* manner I chose man!" She turned her eyes back on Martin and glared at him. "Especially when he acts like a *benee bode!*"

"Helen... you aren't angry with me are you?" Martin asked her with the most innocent voice he could muster.

"If not for Jeth and I shielding your little angry display here, everyone stronger than a tier three Mindvoicer in the entire system would have detected our presence and they would now know we are here!" Helen barked.

Martin looked at her sheepishly as her words struck home and he realized what he had done. "I'm sorry." He declared.

"*Sorgur!*" She exclaimed loudly. "*Sorgur!*" Helen stared at him for a long moment before shaking her head and waving her hand in disgust. "Aricia was right. You *are* uncontrollable at times!"

Visam and the others stared at the two of them as if they were insane. He stepped forward slowly. "How... how can you be the *Feravomir*?" He asked softly. "He... he was struck down by the High Coven on the *Brutujur*."

Helen didn't take her eyes from Martin. "He was not struck down! The High Lord took him prisoner and imprisoned him until this *aulved* set his mind free last year. Canth conducted the *Tuarvomir* and passed on his thoughts and essence to me. Sometimes I think I might have been better off staying in Sparta rather than having to nursemaid you!"

Martin grinned. "But think of all the excitement you would have missed."

"Bah! Now you must figure out what to do since you will have announced our presence to the entire planet as soon as the sun comes up with this little display. Have you forgotten your own words to everyone? We needed to be discrete!" Helen spoke looking around at the bodies of the High Coven troops. "This is not discrete Martin Leonidas!"

Lisisa had not released Martin's arm during the entire exchange, and she was just as shocked as the others to discover that the First Oracle stood before them as well. Her eyes moved quickly to the huge lizard like creature that stepped around Helen in a blink and settled its incredible blue eyes on her. She squeezed Martin's arm tightly as Jeth stepped closer to her, looking down into her face, his wings twitching ever so slightly. She tugged on Martin's arm.

"Father... father?" She questioned, her eyes never leaving Jeth.

Martin smiled as he saw her reaction to Jeth moving closer to her. "Lisisa this is Jeth." He said. "Don't worry... he's harmless. Well... to those that he considers friends anyway."

"Do I... do I... am I a friend to him father?" She asked quickly. "He won't... he won't try to eat me?"

"Lisisa you are far more than a friend to him." Martin said with a gentle smile. "Jeth?"

You are my bonded sister! Jeth's voice exploded into Lisisa's head causing her eyes to grow even wider as the immense dragon hatchling moved even closer to her. He brought his large head close to Lisisa's and stared into her eyes. *I am your dragon my bonded sister. Touch me!*

"What?" Lisisa gasped looking at Martin and taking a step back.

Jeth... be calm. Martin spoke reaching out to place his hand on Jeth's neck. He looked at Lisisa. *You do not have to fear him Lisisa. He is bound to you now, as you are bound to him.*

Lisisa looked at him her eyes remaining wide. *I... I can hear your thoughts.* She spoke quickly.

Martin smiled. *Yes. And you can hear Jeth's as well. Just as he can hear yours.*

Lisisa looked at Jeth's near glowing eyes. *He is... he is a dragon father?*

Martin nodded. *Yes.*

He will not... he will not eat me? Lisisa asked again.

No Lisisa he will not eat you. Martin answered with a chuckle. *Touch him... touch him and you will see.*

Lisisa looked back to Jeth and slowly reached out with her hand. Jeth lowered his head slowly so she could reach him and the moment her flesh touched his both their pairs of eyes grew wide as awareness and power swept over them in a rush. Jeth's tail twitched madly, and Lisisa's eyes grew even wider as images, thoughts and moments of their lives flashed through their minds.

Jeth! Helen's stern voice sounded within the connection. *Your shields Jeth. Quickly now!*

Jeth blinked several times and just as Martin and his father had taught him, he reached out with his mind, using an image of a huge blanket descending over him and Lisisa as he brought his Mindvoice Shields down around them. Lisisa trembled slightly and from the tips of her fingers where she was touching Jeth, the light blue psychic shield activated and spread out over both of them slowly, becoming invisible as it encompassed their bodies. Donus saw this and stepped around Danny reaching for Lisisa.

“What is he doing to her?” He snapped.

Jeth’s head snapped around to glare at Donus as Lisisa’s memories of how he had treated her in the past came rushing to the forefront in his mind. His long muscular whip like tail with the bony, hammer like protrusion portion at the tip customary to all Heavyhorn dragons came up quickly, poised to strike out at Donus and smash him helplessly into the floor. He stepped toward the Lycavorian male who had so abused his bonded sister, his sapphire colored eyes flaring and his lips curling back over long and lethal looking teeth. Donus came to a rather abrupt halt, his eyes wide in horror, Jeth’s growling head and teeth only inches from his bloody face where Daniel had broken his nose.

Jeth no! Martin barked out within Mindvoice.

He has hurt her King Martin! I can see what he has done to her. What he has said to her. The foul names he has called her because she would not submit to him. Jeth growled in savage anger. *I want to hurt him back.*

Martin shook his head. *No Jeth.* He spoke.

That is not the way of Mjolnir’s Hand Jeth. Helen spoke now reaching out her hand to place it on his long thick neck. *You know this young dragon. You protect your Bonded One, you go forward from the moment you are bonded; you do not seek revenge for past deeds.*

Then tell him First Oracle...King Martin... tell him if he comes near my bonded sister ever again I will burn him until he is nothing but ash. Jeth’s voice snarled but he stepped back slowly to stand beside Lisisa who could only stare at him wide eyed. She had easily heard every portion of the conversation that they had just had as clearly as if Jeth was speaking normally to her and everyone in the room.

Martin stepped forward and looked at Donus, his dark brown eyes boring into the young Alpha wolf. “He does not like you it seems.” Martin spoke evenly. “He is like his father in that he is an excellent judge of character. Jeth is also a hybrid dragon and will probably be as large as his father one day. They breathe superheated air. If you are caught in the path of this breath when he is angry, it is hot enough to turn your body to cinders in seconds, bones and all. Right now Jeth is angry for what you have supposedly done to my daughter in the past young Alpha. He wants to burn you. Step back from her young Donus, quickly. I can control Jeth... but if I discover any of what you have done to her, I guarantee I won’t control myself.”

Donus did just that scrambling back until he stood behind Visam and the other Alphas. He may have been nearly a thousand years old, but compared to Martin’s three thousand plus years that Donus could smell quite clearly, and the aura that Martin projected, Donus did not compare even a little.

Melita took Lisisa’s arm as she shook her head slightly and stared at the young dragon hatchling, her hand still touching his body, though it had slid down along his powerful side when he moved.

“Lisisa... are you... are you alright?” Melita asked.

Lisisa looked at her wide eyed and slowly a small smile crossed her beautiful face. “Oh Melita... oh if only you could see what he has shown me Melita.” She spoke turning back to look at Jeth and fearlessly reaching out to place both hands on his thick muscular blue/black body. She stepped closer to him now, pressing her lithe frame against his side as Jeth’s wings twitched once more in delight and he wrapped his head and neck around to place his muzzle against Lisisa’s right cheek as she leaned up against him closing her eyes reveling in the sense of peace and security she felt.

Martin watched this with a warm feeling in his chest and he felt Helen reach out and take his arm and squeeze it. He turned to meet her eyes and saw her smile. “Until this moment my King I had my doubts about coming here.” She spoke softly. “Seeing the look on her face, on your face. This was the right thing to do.”

The sound of excited voices caused them all to turn toward the entrance to the hall. Danny’s hands tightened on his P190 and he moved to impose himself between Martin and the door.

“Skipper... we got company.” Dan spoke.

They had come into the tunnel to retrieve something that one of them had left during the day. It was forbidden to enter the tunnels after sundown they knew, but one of the females had lost an heirloom that she feared her mother would discover. She had gathered her friends, and the lone male to accompany her. Husen was the sixth son of Donus, and similar to his father in manner and physique, though considerably more good looking. The promise of having the attentions of three females as reward if he accompanied them was too good an offer to pass up for a young Alpha and he had agreed to go with them. They were all still very young, barely out of their twenties, and they had done this before on many occasions and never gotten caught. The females were only a year or so away from Coming of Age, and while Husen may have been arrogant and pompous in many ways, he was also the finest looking Alpha among their age group, and at least they knew if he chose them, their children would be strong. They knew what they would have to do once they found the heirloom, but at least bedding with him was better than submitting to a far older Alpha male who was not as good looking.

The air in the tunnel was stale and unmoving as they walked towards the work sight a hundred meters away. The three females walked side by side looking back at Husen coyly as he admired their backsides from his position. He was looking forward to having them once they discovered this jewel, for he had been pursuing two of them already, knowing they were the closest to Coming of Age. His status as Donus's son granted him the right to claim up to three of them as soon as they came of age, and he was looking forward to sampling their treasures before claiming them.

"How much further Joxena? Where did Relina lose this item?" Husen asked from behind the trio of giggling females. "We have gone further than you said."

The dark haired female on the right turned back and looked at him. "We were working just up here Husen." She answered. "Don't worry... you will get your reward for keeping us safe." She smiled and batted her dark eyes at him. "We only need to..."

Joxena ran smack into the young female who had moved suddenly in front of her. Her eyes flashed in embarrassment and she pushed the girl in front. "Viarei! You clumsy wench... what are you...?"

Joxena's words died in her throat when she saw what the other two girls were staring at with horror in their eyes. Atropos stood in the center of the tunnel, his P190 leveled directly at Joxena's head. To his right and left were three other Spartans, all with their weapons out and leveled at the girls.

The moderate incline of the tunnel prevented Husen from seeing why the girls had stopped in front of him and he smiled. "So all of you have decided we will entertain each other here? In the center of the tunnel? Why don't we...?"

Husen stopped abruptly when he saw Atropos and the others and quite unlike an Alpha wolf he whirled around quickly intending to run. He froze when he found himself face to muzzle with the P190s held by Nayeca and Jobel.

"Do not move." Nayeca spoke softly, her amber eyes brilliant in the dim light of the tunnel. The matte black helmet did little to provide comfort to Husen as he stared into those strange eyes. "Kneel down slowly if you would."

Husen's chest expanded in indignation. "I will do no such thing! An Alpha does not kneel to a woman!" He exclaimed. "I am..."

Nayeca stepped forward quickly and pressed the barrel of her 190 to Husen's cheek. "I don't care if you are King of the alphas friend, if you don't kneel on the ground in the next two seconds I *will* make you kneel." She growled.

Jobel had a grin on her face and she saw the look of anger and hate on Husen's face as he slowly sank to his knees. "I don't think he likes you Nayeca." She spoke.

Nayeca didn't take her eyes from Husen. "He will get over it." She spoke.

"Who are you?" Husen demanded now.

"The better question is who are you?" Anja's voice carried from the side causing their heads to turn.

They saw the diminutive female walking towards them, the matte black helmet covering all but her dazzling jade green eyes and her lips. The helmet's protection covered her cheeks down past her jaw line with a long strip extending down over her nose. Anja moved easily from the side of the tunnel, her 190 dangling from quick release straps as she reached up to remove her helmet. The three females gasped as her Persian red hair fell well past her shoulders framing her beautiful face and her jade colored eyes fell on them. Now with the helmet gone her flawless and breathtaking facial features were visible to them. Regardless of what she wore, no

one would ever mistake Anja for a man. Her uniform, body armor and all conformed to her lithe figure like a glove. She and Aricia had spent many hours training with For'mya and Seanna, and she and Aricia loved to go running in the early morning. While Anja doubted she would ever be as muscular as Aricia had become, she considered her breasts far too large for that, her frame was solidly packed with muscle for her height, and the body armor could do nothing to hide her large breasts. She was most proud of her abdominal definition and the muscles that rippled there, Seanna and Martin and everyone else always taking their time when exploring her abdomen. Anja also had the distinction of having the largest breasts of all Martin's women, and the attention that he and the others lavished on them when they were naked together always made her wither in delight.

"And why are the four of you so far from the Lycavorian settlement at this hour of the night?" She spoke stopping in front of them holding her helmet under one arm.

Anja was what everyone knew as an Alpha female, and after Aricia, her female wolf aura was one of the strongest to be found in a female wolf on Apo Prime, with the possible exception of Dysea. Lycavorian Alpha females were always drawn to the strongest Alpha males and even though Anja was half Hadarian and Dysea half elf, because of Martin's blood within them and because it was he who turned them, the pureness of his blood within them would insure they would always be far more powerful than normal turned females as well as many pureblood females. This fact, when put together with their natural leadership and command authority, gave them extremely powerful auras and also Mindvoice abilities that exceeded even Helen in some respects.

The three females immediately felt the power Anja exuded and her aura instinctively cowed them, while Husen detected her powerful honey scent right off, dismissing her aura out of hand as his alpha male urges took over. The hormones in his Alpha blood surged and he quite stupidly dismissed the powerful mint scent that permeated Anja's blood or the fact that she was not completely Lycavorian.

"You are extremely pleasing on the eyes." He spoke as his eyes took in her body and her beauty, getting dirty glares from the three females kneeling behind him. Husen did not notice that Anja was several hundred years older than his thirty-six years, and the sexual urges her beauty elicited from him overpowered his own common sense. "Perhaps if you are receptive to me woman and please me, I will answer your questions." Husen spoke with all the arrogance born of being raised to think he was superior in every way to everyone around him. Thanks to his father's status, Husen was also elevated to a higher level of respect naturally among his people. He was used to getting what he wanted and as he released his psychic shields and blasted Anja with his male aura he assumed he would.

The three females gasped as they stared at Anja unmoving, standing in front of Husen a small smile on her face. She felt his aura sweep around her and as it always was, when placed next to Martin's aura and what that did to her, Husen was no where even close to comparing. She grinned at him now.

"What's that?" She asked Husen leaning over and completely unaffected by his male aura. "Do you think yourself so superior that you can't smell or sense that I am already mated to a wolf that is far more powerful than you could ever hope to become."

Husen's eyes went a little wider as he realized this female wasn't affected by his aura in the least and then suddenly Atropos was beside him, his wolf eyes changed and his fangs out. Atropos had dropped his P190 letting it dangle on the quick release clips and withdrew the High Elf R4 Hybrid fighting knife. It had been given to him by War Master Tareif as an honored gift at the birth of his daughter before he had left Earth. That had been long before they had gotten roaring drunk with Panos and several others in Sparta to celebrate that occasion. His hand filled with Husen's long hair and he yanked his head back viciously while placing the tip of one end of the curved blades to Husen's throat.

"You will respectfully answer the questions of an Alpha female young wolf!" Atropos growled savagely in his ear. "An Alpha female who is your superior in every way."

"Atropos..." Anja spoke softly placing her hand gently on the arm of her *Hippies Sedla* Captain. "*Pen arne niun un gweifallenni vada seye haro.*" (I don't want to frighten the poor boy.)

Husen's eyes grew wider and flashed with anger as he stared at her. "*Pen brol joa haro!*" He spat. (I am no boy!)

Anja looked at him and smiled as Atropos released the pressure he had on Husen's hair, but did not let go completely. "Well... it's nice to know the ancient language lives on." She said. She looked at where Tina stood. "Tina, check out the way they came. Take Thamo with you."

Tina nodded and looked at the tall male Spartan and they headed off down the tunnel.

“You... you speak the ancient language?” Joxena spoke submissively but with definite surprise and a little awe in her voice.

“As it appears you do as well.” Anja answered her eyes going from Husen to Joxena now. “We are not the enemy.” Anja spoke.

“You... you are not... you are not fully wolf.” Joxena spoke quietly.

“Quiet Joxena! Do not speak to them!” Husen hissed over his shoulder.

Atropos lifted the R4 once more tapping Husen’s exposed throat. “No one speaks to you... boy!” He snarled.

Anja smiled and shook her head. “No... I am not completely wolf. I am also Hadarian. My mate...” Anja looked at Husen with a twinkle in her jade colored eyes. “My *Alpha* mate... he turned me. What is your name?” She asked looking back to Joxena.

“Joxena.” She replied quickly ignoring the look Husen gave to her out of the corner of his eye. “Who... who are you? You are all wolf... except... except for her.” She motioned at Nayeca. “Though her blood burns with the scent of an Alpha. We have... we have never seen others like you.”

“We are not the enemy I can assure you of that.” Anja spoke softly.

“I do not recognize your uniforms or weapons.” Joxena spoke again. “You are not... you are not part of the High Coven? Who are you?”

“*Egila hel.*” Anja spoke looking up at those around her in her small team. (Show them)

Joxena and the others watched as everyone within Anja’s group reached up and removed their matte black helmets. Nayeca got the biggest gasp of surprise and the longest stare because of those incredible amber colored eyes and her long, elegantly pointed elfin ears.

“An elf... you are an elf!” One of the other girls exclaimed looking at Nayeca intently with wide eyes.

“I am a Drow elf young lady. There is a difference.” Nayeca corrected her.

“I’m thinking they don’t know that Nayeca.” Jobel spoke giving her a gentle nudge with her elbow and watching Nayeca smile in return.

“We are from the Lycavorian Union.” Anja told them as she smiled as well. “We are on a mission here.”

All of them, Husen included looked at Anja in disbelief. Husen finally shook his head. “Impossible!” He declared confidently. “The Lycavorian Union does not know we even exist here! We were abandoned by them after the *Brutujur!*”

Anja looked at him intently. “I don’t know who told you that lie but we are from the Union and we are here looking for a young woman by the name of Lisisa.” She said. She saw the light of recognition in one of the other female’s eyes and focused on her. “You know who I speak of?”

The young woman nodded, her dirty blond hair partially covering her eyes. “She... she saved me from the Immortals and their *cassir lison.*” She answered meekly. “She is... she says she has the blood of King Leonidas in her veins.” (Rape Squads)

“You know... you have heard of King Leonidas?” Anja asked gently.

The young girl nodded quickly. “We have heard many things from the traders and the smugglers that come here. It is said King Leonidas is nine feet tall! That he can kill you with but a look. They... they call him the *Kaelselbland*, and that he rides a great black *sinuova* into battle.” (Covenkiller. Dragon)

Husen snorted in disgust. “He is none of those things Relina, if he even exists at all. Why do you insist on believing them? These other things the traders speak of are only rumors as well and *sinuova* do not exist fool girl!” He declared angrily. “And Lisisa is nothing but a half breed wench who tells stories to garner sympathy from others! Do not speak to them any longer!”

Anja’s jade green eyes fell on Husen once more and flashed with anger but they returned to Relina. “Why are you in this tunnel and not at the settlement?” Anja asked finally.

“We do not live at the...” Joxena began to speak but caught herself just as Husen turned and glared at her.

“Silence woman!” Husen shouted.

Anja’s left hand snapped out with the speed of a striking pit viper and the back hand she hit him with carried enough power to rock Husen’s head back and bloody his lips. The blow also knocked him to the tunnel floor from his kneeling position. He brought his head back around quickly as he scrambled back up to his knees,

his eyes glaring at her in a mixture of embarrassment and anger. Anja pointed at him. "I don't like you... boy!" She spoke harshly. "You have an attitude problem and you are beginning to try my patience!"

Atropos smiled and looked at Husen. "You have no idea who you anger with your arrogance boy." He spoke with humor.

Anja looked at the girl who had spoken about Lisisa. "What is your name?"

"Relina." She answered quickly.

"Relina... why are you here in this tunnel?" Anja asked calmly. "We are not the enemy and we most certainly do not serve the High Coven. We know about the Rubidium Ore, but there are no veins for mining this far into the tunnel. You are continuing to drill for another reason and you use the radiation that the Ore projects to protect this knowledge from the Coven because they can not come into the mines. We figured this out all on our own."

"I lost an heirloom of my mother's today in the mines." Relina spoke ignoring Husen now. "We were coming here to retrieve it. It is forbidden to enter the mines after the work periods. I asked my friends to come with me and Husen to accompany us and... and protect us."

Anja looked at him with skepticism. "And I suppose you did this out of the goodness of your heart." She spoke.

"I will tell you nothing!" Husen barked.

"He came with us because we promised to service him after we found my heirloom." Relina spoke. "He is an Alpha... better to mate with him now and then again when I come of age... it saves us from the older Alphas who are shriveled old men."

Anja glared at Husen. "Oh... that is rich!" She said sarcastically. "So... brave and Alpha wolf of you."

The COM built into Anja's armor cackled softly.

"Anja... you might want to come down here." Tina's voice spoke.

Anja reached up and touched the small flat box like transmitter built into the flexible armor just below her shoulder. "What is it Tina?" She asked.

"My Queen... my Queen you should see this for yourself." Thamo's voice broke in now.

The eyes of the three females and Husen went wide when Thamo's voice announced who Anja was and Joxena's hands went to her mouth in a very audible gasp.

"Stand by at your location Thamo... we'll be right there." Anja answered as she looked at Husen's wide eyes. "*Anse... vada jochath coi dur!*" (Damn the secret is out!) She turned to look at Atropos after a moment. "Bind Alpha Boy here and help the ladies to their feet."

Atropos grinned as he reached behind his back to take a pair of plasti-cuffs from the canvas carrying pouch at the small of his back. He snatched Husen's hands and began to secure them and he leaned in close to Husen's ear as Anja stood up and faced where Tina and Thamo had moved to down the tunnel.

"The King *is* real fool!" Atropos spoke his voice carrying to where the girls were being helped to their feet. "He is called *Kaelselkland* by many who know him. And when you meet his *sinuova* Torma, I will laugh as you *sibfla* your pants." Atropos yanked Husen to his feet. "We are the *Durcunusaan* young Alpha, the *Hippies Sedla* of the King and his Queens. And I know he will not appreciate the fact you have been so disrespectful to one of his Queens. The Queen who even now carries his child. You can explain your actions to him personally, as soon as we join back with him." Atropos turned Husen around to face him and could only grin at the horrified look on his face. "He has gone to retrieve one who is his *Fenneenum*. His daughter. And her name *is* Lisisa."

Relina and her friends could only stare at Atropos in awe and they turned to look at the petite figure of a Queen they had only just met.

"Let's move people." Anja spoke with command in her voice.

It took them four minutes to move to where Tina and Thamo waited for them at what appeared to be the end of the tunnel. Tina moved right up to Anja and held out the sensor box she carried.

"There is something behind this rock wall." Tina spoke. "It's a huge cavern of some sort and whatever is reflecting back our sonic scans is behind there as well."

Anja looked at Husen. "I don't suppose you'll tell us how to get in there huh?" She spoke. Husen's jaw tightened and he remained silent. Anja grinned. "I didn't think so." She said. "Shi Viskas!"

Thamo, Jobel and two other Spartans stepped up next to her. All of them lifted their left arms and as Relina and the others watched with amazed expressions the five Shi Viskas appeared almost simultaneously with silver/white flashes. The unbreakable razors extended from the edges of all their shields clicking into places easily.

“Now!” Anja barked.

The wall of rock was only a meter thick and Anja determined if they wouldn't tell them where they had come through, they would make their own entrance. Five Shi Viskas launched within seconds of each other, the unbreakable shields slamming into the rock wall again and again. While the others had to keep retrieving their shields and launching them again, Anja's Mindvoice abilities had elevated to the point like Dysea where she could actually hold her shield off her arm and use it in much the same fashion as Martin, albeit not with as much precision or control. She did this now, sending her Shi Viska smashing into the rock wall over and over, chunks of rock falling away with every hit. When added to the power of the other four shields joining hers, forty-five seconds passed and then there was a one meter sized hole in the rock face, and the breeze that blew in from the adjoining tunnel was cool and smelled slightly of the pines that surrounded Sparta.

Anja recalled her Shi Viska and turned slowly to look at Husen and the females. “Would you care to tell me what we are going to find in there?” She asked as Thamo and Jobel moved forward their P190s leading their bodies as they peered into the chamber.

“My... My Queen... you'd better... you'd better see this for yourself.” Jobel could only stammer out as she pulled back from the entrance and looked at Anja.

Anja looked at her and then back to Husen and females. She turned and moved to the newly made entrance.

“Thamo! Jobel!” Atropos snapped motioning them forward in front of Anja.

They moved without question, plunging through the opening first, knowing the Queen they protected had a penchant for doing the unexpected. Anja was right behind them and the moment she entered the new cavern it was like entering a new world.

Her jade green eyes lifted slowly taking in the massive curved blue green wall that began ten meters off the floor of the cavern and extended down the tunnel as far as the eye could see within the confines of the tunnel. All around them were healthy and strong trees, a three meter wide stream rushing down the center of the tunnel directly underneath whatever it was that sat suspended above them. As Atropos led the others through the makeshift entrance he too became enthralled by the sights all around him. The tunnel itself was incredibly enormous, easily able to accommodate the width and height of a *LEONIDAS*-Class Strike Cruiser and possibly even two or three side by side. The breeze carried with it a myriad of scents and not just of vegetation either. All of them could detect the scents of dozens of Lycavorians, male, female and even children.

They could see the rock walls on the opposite side of the tunnel from where they stood climbing high into the air, meeting the ceiling some half a kilometer up, and they saw the dangling stalagmites.

Anja turned quickly and looked at Tina who was standing there just as stunned as the others. “Tina!” She hissed softly.

Tina snapped out of her state and looked at her instruments quickly. Her eyes grew even larger as she gazed at the small monitor. “This... this can't be right.” She said.

“What?” Anja asked moving closer to her.

Tina looked up at her. “The sensor only has a range of six kilometers Anja. If this is correct, then this cavern is much longer than six kilometers. It...”

“My Queen?” Atropos's guarded voice spoke.

Anja turned to look at him and he motioned with his head. Anja turned in the direction he was looking and saw what he did. Her own jade colored eyes grew wider as she saw the dozens of men, women and children moving towards them slowly. Atropos and the other Spartans moved closer to Anja for protective reasons, their hands gripping the P190s tighter.

“My Queen... some of them are armed.” Atropos spoke softly, and as if to emphasize this point almost a dozen of the males lifted weapons and pointed them at Anja and the others.

Relina stepped forward quickly. “They are our people! I will... I will speak with them.” She spoke rapidly.

Anja closed her eyes and reached out within Mindvoice.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Marty... I think... I think I may have gotten us into a situation here. I could sure use your help lover.*

The bodies of the High Coven troops and the Immortal were shoved to one side of the hall as the large gathering center was now filled with double the number of men and women, all of them gathered together in small groups talking rapidly among themselves and glancing to where Martin stood with Lisisa in his arms, Yuriko and Jeth standing very close to both of them. Renatia and Melita stood silently to the side watching their new found King hold the daughter he had not known he had up until two years ago.

Martin stood there inhaling deeply of her maple and wheat scent, feeling her strong arms wrapped around his waist as if not wanting to let go. He could feel the joy and utter relief pour off Lisisa in waves. Part of her had never hoped for this moment, and now that it was here she did not want to lose it for fear it was only a dream. Martin allowed his aura to wash over her as it would wash over Androcles when he held him, the aura of a loving father. His eyes opened and he saw Yuriko standing there with tears in her own eyes and Martin reached out to take her hand, pulling her into the embrace as well. Lisisa felt this and turned slightly, her left arm wrapping around Yuriko's waist.

"I... I have dreamed... I have dreamed of this day so many times Yuriko. For so many years." Lisisa said softly, her cheek pressed to Martin's chest.

"As I have sister." Yuriko spoke her hand coming up to caress Lisisa's head. "As I have sister."

"You... you never gave up hope?" Lisisa asked her.

Yuriko shook her head. "Not for a single moment." She answered happily as tears streaked her cheeks. "We... we have a brother Lisisa and he has the bluest eyes you could imagine. And we will have a sister soon as well!"

Lisisa's tear filled forest green eyes looked up slowly to gaze into Martin's face. Her father's face. She saw him nod slowly with a smile. "His name is Androcles. And your sister's name will be Eliani."

"I... I want to see them." She said softly.

"And you will." Martin told her softly. "You will."

Lisisa smiled as she wiped the tears from her eyes. She turned and saw Melita and her adoptive mother Renatia standing nearby. She pulled away from Martin slightly, taking their hands and pulling them closer. "This... this is Melita father. She has been my dearest friend since I came here. And this is Renatia... she adopted me as her own when I arrived. Protected me from harm."

Martin looked at them. "I thank you both." He said with a nod of his head.

"We... we never believed her." Renatia spoke softly. "None of us... we never believed what she told us could be true. No one did. Not even me." She looked at Martin intently, tears rolling down her cheeks. "And it is true Milord King Leonidas isn't it? All of it is true?"

Martin smiled gently. "Yes it is." He spoke. His eyes caught movement to the left and he saw Danny step up to Helen and Anuk. He squeezed Lisisa tightly. "Stay with Jeth and Yuriko no matter what." He spoke. "I'll be back in a moment."

Lisisa smiled as he kissed her forehead tenderly and then moved for where Danny and Helen stood. Jeth moved closer, his large head brushing up against her shoulder with extreme gentleness for his size.

Martin stepped up to Danny, Helen and Anuk. "Danny... what's up?" He asked.

Dan looked at him. "Skipper we got about four hours of darkness left. We need to be gone from here like real fast. The Coven will be all over this place come morning when they send another patrol and find our friends here." He motioned with his head to the pile of dead bodies.

Martin's eyes went to Helen. "Helen?"

She nodded slowly. "Daniel is right." She said softly. Martin turned his head and saw Visam and Garpa standing with half a dozen others watching them intently. Helen watched his eyes. "Martin there is nothing we can do." She told him softly.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *We have Lisisa. We must go.* Helen told him within Mindvoice seeing his head turn back to her. *You were right and I was wrong. We can not save them all Martin Leonidas.*

Martin turned to look once more where Visam stood. His eyes went back to where Lisisa stood with Yuriko and Jeth, Renatia and Melita with her as they stroked Jeth's skin with marvel and wonderment.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Torma my brother. I need your guidance now.*

Helen looked at Danny surprised as Martin stepped away from them a few steps. She could feel the tremors within Mindvoice, but not even she could penetrate the shields Martin erected when he truly wanted privacy. And that normally meant he was speaking with Torma or one of his Queens.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *We have found her Martin. That was our mission.* Torma's voice replied.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Does she... does her life mean more than all the others here Torma? They are my... they are my people.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Only you can answer that question Martin my brother. You have experienced much in your lifetime, and by virtue of the bond we share so deeply, so have I. Is not what your father said true now? Fight with your head but lead with your heart.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Yet it was Canth who told me to reach beyond what my instincts tell me. To see beyond what my eyes and senses tell me.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *What do those instincts and senses tell you my brother?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *They tell me I can't leave these people here Torma.* Martin answered. *The military officer in me... the King in me... they say I must. That there is nothing I can do and rescuing these people was not the mission.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *And there is your answer my Bonded Brother.* Torma replied. *I will follow you to whatever end our path takes us, because with you lies our best chance for the future. I will sacrifice my life and the life of my son if that is what it takes to secure our future.*

Martin nodded slowly. [Mindvoice Shielded] *As would I my Bonded Dragon brother.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Then the decision is easy.* Torma spoke.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *How soon can you be here?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I'm already waiting in the hills above the settlement. When I felt Jeth's joy in finding his bonded sister I moved closer to help augment his skills. He is excitable as you know. Miath is waiting near the entrance to the tunnel Anja entered.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Then we'll join you shortly.* Martin spoke turning back to look at Daniel and Helen.

"Martin Leonidas you have that look in your eye again." Helen spoke.

"We have to get them out of the settlement and into the mountains Helen." Martin spoke. "At least there they will have a chance."

Helen looked at Danny and Anuk and then back to him nodding her head in agreement. "You are right." She said.

Martin turned to Visam. "You are the senior Alpha here?" He asked.

Visam stepped away from the others. "I am known as Visam King Leonidas" He spoke quickly. "I... there are four of us who are considered the elders if you will."

"How many people in the settlement Visam?" Martin asked.

"Two thousand five hundred and nineteen." He replied easily. "Why?"

"Wake them all up and get them moving into the mountains." Martin said. "Take only what they can carry as wolves. We will live off the land."

Donus stepped forward now. "Why should we do what you say?" He declared.

Visam looked at him. "Mind your place Donus!" He exclaimed.

"I will not!" Donus barked. "The Coven will punish us for what he has done! We survive because we do not interfere in what the Coven wants or needs! And we mine the Ore for them! He has killed a dozen of their number, as well as an Immortal officer! They will punish us now! Not him! He will be gone!"

Martin stepped forward but another of the older Alphas beat him to the punch and stepped in front of Donus slapping him viciously across the face, staggering him back blood leaking from his lips.

"Enough!" Noreu bellowed. "I have listened to you for seven hundred years claim that we need to be submissive to the Coven! The King of the Lycavorian Union stands before us! Members of the *Durcunusaan* stand with their King and you just dismiss them? I grow tired of your voice Donus! The daughter of Leonidas has done more to protect our people in the thirty years she has been here than you have done in your lifetime of only a thousand years! It is she who has saved hundreds of our young females from the *cassir lison* by offering herself because only she could survive their assaults. What have you and your sons done but take those same

females when they come of age so that our people do not die? We made a mistake allowing you to join us on this council Donus. I do not care that he came here for his daughter! He is here now and as King he will not abandon us as was done so long ago!"

Donus glared at the man. "How do you know that?" He shouted back. "He brings only a handful of these *Durcunusaan*. Where are his grand armies? His massive fleets of ships? The daughter of the High Lord of the Coven comes here and I see only a handful of these Spartans. How will we fight?"

Martin stepped toward him. "You are right." He spoke softly. "I only came here for my daughter." Martin detected Lisisa's head turn towards him at those words. Every head in the room turned towards him. "I did not know there would be any Lycavorians on this planet. We only discovered that when we arrived in the system. All these years we thought it was a dead planet. My grandfather didn't know anyone lived. The First Oracle and he both were told any survivors were wiped out! They were shown footage from the surface of the planet that showed nothing but death."

Helen stepped forward. "He speaks the truth. I have Canth's memories. His essence. No one knew that you were here."

"Why should we believe you?" Donus snapped.

Martin's eyes darkened. "You should believe me because if I followed what my military training said I should do, you would all be dead!" He snapped. "The moment the Coven came here to this hall and compromised this mission, my training would have dictated I kill all of you and disappear before anyone knew what had happened." This brought looks of horror from everyone in the room. "I did not do that."

"So you say!" Donus said.

Martin's hand came up and everyone in the room saw the shimmering silver psychic power envelope his hand. Donus suddenly lifted into the air, his eyes wide as his arms stretched out to either side of him. They could see him struggling within the embrace of Martin's TK power, trying to break free and having no success his eyes getting wider as Martin squeezed his body with his mind.

"I don't care how old you are Donus, or what you have done in your thousand years of life." Martin snarled viciously. "I grow tired of your ranting little man and I think I will just kill you and save myself the aggravation!"

"Martin!" Helen barked.

"Father no!" Lisisa shouted moving towards him.

Martin looked at her and then released Donus from his TK grip, turning back to watch as his body crumpled to the floor with a rush of air leaving his lungs. He took four steps, the psychic knife exploding from his hand, men and women alike backpedaling quickly to get away from him as he towered over Donus. The psychic knife extended from his closed fist and Lisisa stood there wide eyed at what she saw.

"You have two choices the way I see it." Martin growled glaring at Donus. He lifted his hand allowing him to see the shimmering psychic knife. "I kill you here and get it over with, or you help me to gather the people in this settlement and get them into the mountains. At least there they have a chance."

It was Noreu and Visam who made that decision after looking at each other for only a moment. Visam turned to Renatia. "Renatia... take half a dozen and go the western portion of the settlement! Move quickly now! Only bring what they can carry as a wolf! Garpa take half a dozen and take the eastern portion. Gather everyone by the northern pathway! You have an hour! We must put as much distance as possible between us and the settlement!"

"I will gather the few guards and weapons we have and send out scouts!" Noreu spoke quickly.

Martin stood up slowly his anger bleeding off and the psychic knife disappearing from his fist. He looked at where Visam and Noreu stood.

"You are King of the Lycavorian Union! The descendant of Resumar here." Noreu spoke looking at Visam and the others and seeing them nod for him to continue. "You are the King of our people. Never did we dream this day would come. We never believed Lisisa Milord. We thought it was her way of coping with who she was and what she was. We will follow you Milord. We will follow you to the end no matter where that may be. I am tired of running and so are our people."

Martin saw the nods and murmurs of agreement sweep easily through the gathered men and women. Martin took a deep breath and nodded. "Then let's get the hell out of here."

Martin felt an intimately familiar tremor in Mindvoice and he looked up when he heard Anja's voice fill his mind.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Marty... I think... I think I may have gotten us into a situation here. I could sure use your help lover.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Anja are you in danger?* Martin's voice was full of worry now.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *No I don't think so. We've found something Martin, and we've found some more people. Lycavorians Marty... most of them younger. The tunnel we entered opened into a much larger cavern Martin. There is something in here that you really should see.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I have a situation of my own here Firecracker.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Miath is nearby if I need him then. Martin did you go and do something stupid?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *No.*

Anja laughed within their connection. [Mindvoice Shielded] *You did do something stupid didn't you Martin?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I did not!*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I'm going to have to make sure our daughter does not take after you.* Anja said with gentle humor and love in her voice.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Oh... and following in your footsteps is better I suppose? Your temper is shorter than mine.* Martin answered. *Anja... I can be to you in less than an hour if you need me. I have to get these people in the settlement started into the mountains.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *No.* She answered with a chuckle. *I will call Miath if it gets out of hand. Come as soon as you are able. And please keep a handle on your temper lover.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *You as well Firecracker. I will come to you as soon as I am able. Two hours... perhaps three. Keep that wonderful tail of yours intact Anja.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *As long as you promise suitable body worship at the very first opportunity that presents itself.* Anja told him.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *That I will promise happily.* He answered. Martin turned to Danny and Helen. "We need to move fast." He told them. "Anja has run into something as well at her location. Let's get these people moving Danny."

Dan nodded. "Will do Skipper."

Helen looked at him. "What is it Martin?"

Martin stepped up to her. "I'll tell you later, but there is more going on here than we think Helen."

APO PRIME ISLAND PALACE

"I once more beg forgiveness for Sadi's actions Lady For'mya." Governor Vorilas spoke from the comfortable couch where he sat. "She was not herself that night and..."

Sadi sat quietly next to her father listening to him speak and looking rather meekly For'mya thought; which was probably an act for her father's benefit no doubt. For'mya may have only been wolf for the last few days, but Dasha and Gorgo had taught her far more than most females who had been recently turned. For'mya could detect the calm demeanor behind Sadi's pale blue eyes, and whatever else she was For'mya thought; she was very brave for returning here knowing what her actions had resulted in.

For'mya waved her hand dismissively. "I hold no offense Governor, you need not fear that." She spoke. "And neither does the King."

"Is... is he here?" Sadi asked using that meek voice that matched the look. "I would like to express my apologies to him as well as you if at all possible."

For'mya shook her head. "No... I'm sorry. I will pass it on to him though." For'mya saw the look of depression flash across Sadi's eyes, and right then For'mya knew that Armetus was right. "Governor... when Deia told me you were coming I took the liberty of seeing if Admiral Riall was free. I understand you and he hit it off rather well at the State Dinner."

Vorilas nodded quickly his eyes getting brighter. “He was very interested in my ideas for expanding the production capabilities of the factory in my district.”

For'mya smiled. “I happen to know that he is right now in the west sitting room.” She spoke. “He and some of the more senior officers come here to the island estate to get work done where they know they will not be disturbed. Why don't you see if perhaps you can strike up a conversation with him?”

Vorilas looked at Sadi quickly. “Lady For'mya... I don't think that would be...”

For'mya got to her feet. “Truly... leave Sadi with me and I assure you we will be fast friends when you return.”

Sadi looked at this female elf for a long moment trying to read her face which was next to impossible considering that elves could put the most absent expressions on their faces when they wanted too.

Sadi was a hundred and twenty-five years old, a strong Alpha female in excellent health and exceptionally intelligent. She also loved her father completely, and when she discovered what Fideia had gotten her father involved in without his knowledge she had very nearly lost control and killed the woman. She had already driven her two older brothers away due to her pompous nature and how she had turned their father against them. She was unable to do this with Sadi because she was his only daughter and Vorilas viewed her as sacred above all else.

When she discovered Fideia had invested her father's money into a business venture that was backed and run completely by members of the High Coven Sadi had been incensed. She knew that her father would never survive a scandal such as what Fideia had gotten them into. Her father was an excellent businessman, but he trusted far too easily, and when Fideia had shown interest in him after their mother had died, Vorilas could not see past the obvious. Fideia fawned over him, and still did when she was in public. She had given him four sons, all of whom were no better than their mother, and all of whom had tried at some point to get her to sleep with them. One even went so far as to blackmail her into sleeping with him, and to keep him from revealing that she now was a High Coven agent Sadi had done just that, to her extreme shame and displeasure. Half a dozen times he had forced her to allow him to slobber over her like a rutting animal, until he tired of her and moved on to another conquest, laughing that he would have his mother turn her in if she said anything.

She had not wanted to become what she was now, a traitor to her people, yet to save her father from disgrace and most likely exile from the Union, Sadi had taken the role the Coven agents had demanded Fideia assume to protect her father's good name. She had hated her step mother since day one and what she had done then was almost more than she could bear. Fideia could claim that she was only following her father's instructions, and Vorilas was so trusting and in love with her, he would have allowed himself to be exiled to save her. Fideia did not deserve that devotion as far as Sadi was concerned.

So she had assumed her role as agent for the enemy and for the last thirty plus years she had been giving the Coven information from her job in the News Network. Whenever they wanted some information that regarded purchasing companies or arranging safe houses within the Union it was Sadi who took care of it. She had to admit she had gotten very good at this, always completing her assigned tasks quickly and efficiently. She told herself it was only a job, and that none of her tasks had any real vital meaning. That was until she was told to come between the King of the Union and his Queens in any manner she was able too. Sadi took this task as an opportunity to finally free herself and her father from the life she was leading. If she could get close to the King, perhaps find his favor, she might find herself in a position to come out from under the heel of the Coven. That was until the elf upae in front of her had made a fool of her at the State Dinner several weeks ago. Sadi had been enraged at this lost opportunity that could have benefited her father and herself. When the Coven asked her to transport some agents to the Island Palace to place surveillance equipment, Sadi had jumped at the chance to perhaps find some information on the she-elf that could hurt her. Instead... the men she had brought to the island had attempted to assassinate the sister of Queen Anja, and seriously wounded the woman who stood in front of her now.

Sadi could smell that she was now wolf, and the mint scent of the King wafted from her pores and her blood. Her injuries were obviously severe enough that King Leonidas had turned her. That had not been made public information and it had shocked her when she and her father had arrived. She had remained calm as For'mya had given them a short tour of the palace grounds and then led them into this room, but all she wanted to do now was get away. Her opportunity was lost once more, and this time it was due to her own stupidity and anger.

Then For'mya invited her father to visit with Admiral Riall, and Sadi's alarms began to go off quickly. Vorilas nodded quickly, thinking he had a golden opportunity to sell his ideas to the highest ranking officer within the Union and a man who was known to be very close to the King due to being mated to the King's mother.

"I would sincerely appreciate that opportunity Lady For'mya." Vorilas spoke.

"Excellent." For'mya said. "All you need do is to follow this corridor to the end and turn left. The sitting room is on the right."

Vorilas nodded and turned to Sadi. "Daughter?"

"I will be fine father." Sadi said with more confidence than she felt. "I am in the company of the King's Royal Concubine within his home. What could go wrong?"

Vorilas nodded and scurried out of the room. For'mya watched as he moved down the corridor for a few moments then she came back into the room and passed her hand over the control panel, the double doors sliding shut with a whoosh of air.

For'mya turned to look at Sadi. "Your father is a fine man Sadi." She spoke as she crossed to the small counter bar on the wall near the window.

Sadi nodded cautiously looking at her. "Yes he is." She said finally. "And I would do anything to protect him."

"Can I offer you a drink?" For'mya asked.

Sadi shook her head. "I don't like to indulge." She answered quickly trying to remain as calm as possible. "I... I understand there is a special blend of coffee that Queen Aricia makes. It is said that she makes it from four different kinds of beans and it is a recipe from Sparta. I've always wanted to try it if that is possible?"

For'mya smiled. "An excellent choice. Sweetener?" She said pulling two mugs from the side and pouring the coffee with practiced ease. She saw Sadi nod slowly to her simple question and added the sweetener before picking up the mugs and moving back to the couch where she sat across the small table from her. She held out the mug as she sat down and watched as Sadi took it from her slowly.

Sadi sipped it slowly, her pale blue eyes watching For'mya over the rim of the mug. The blend of coffee was as good as Sadi had heard it was and she smiled warmly as the liquid filled her. "It's very good." She said.

For'mya nodded. "Yes... Martin drinks it by the bucket." She replied.

"You sent my father away." Sadi spoke looking at For'mya's dark eyes. "Is this where you dress me down for acting as I did at the dinner?"

For'mya leaned forward. "Not at all Sadi. This is where I decide whether you are to live or whether you are to die." She said with a voice as emotionless as her face. For'mya was impressed with the young woman's inner strength. The only sign that she even knew what For'mya was talking about was the slight almost imperceptible twitch at the back of her jaw.

Sadi smiled finally. "I'm sorry... I'm not sure I understand."

For'mya reached under the small table between them and removed the data pad that had been put there before this meeting. She set it on top of the table in front of Sadi. "Perhaps this will help you." She said.

Sadi lifted the pad slowly a feeling of dread filling her and she began reading, feeling her blood go cold in her veins even as she outwardly projected a calm exterior. They knew! How could they have discovered what she was doing? She had covered her tracks so well, made her plans so carefully. Where had she gone wrong? What mistakes had she made? She lifted her eyes to look at For'mya, the she-elf with that same emotionless expression on her face. There were two other entrances into the room she was in, behind her to the right and left that opened into the large garden paths. She could...

"You will not make it Sadi." For'mya's voice interrupted her thoughts. She still sat there holding that mug of coffee in her hands, not moving, only looking at her.

"What... what do you mean?" Sadi asked in as calm a voice as she could produce.

"You were checking the exits from this room." For'mya said. "I'm not foolish Sadi. I have been a prisoner before remember."

"I... I don't know what you are referring too." Sadi said. "I..."

"You would be better served by telling us all we want to know." For'mya told her.

"Us?" Sadi asked curiously. She turned quickly as the two doors behind her that led into the room opened and she came to her feet, backpedaling quickly as the obsidian colored dragon hatchling walked calmly

into the room, her talons clicking softly on the floor. Elynth's azure blue eyes were focused intently on Sadi as she moved completely into the room while Armetus stood in the doorway of the second entrance silently staring at her.

For'mya was still sitting as Sadi backed up against the counter and froze. "Elynth here has a unique combination of her mother's fire breathing skill and her father's superheated breath. When her breath becomes superheated air, the stream is tinged with flame on the edges. It's really quite fascinating." For'mya sipped her coffee. "As you can see she is growing quite rapidly as well. She is also the Bonded Dragon sister to Androcles Leonidas Sadi. The King's first born son. A son that you put in extreme danger by facilitating the arrival of those assassins on this island. That made her very upset you see."

Sadi could see that very clearly for herself. Elynth was just less than four meters long now, not as large as her brother Jeth, but very close. She was not as tall as Jeth either, standing only two and a half meters high, but it was enough to impress Sadi to the extreme, especially considering that her teeth were quite visible pulled back in the half snarl as her lips were.

"What... what is going on here?" Sadi stammered. "Why are you doing this?"

"You have two choices Sadi." For'mya spoke calmly. "You can choose to cooperate with Armetus and I, or I will have you imprisoned until Martin returns. Then I will show him this data pad in regards to you. You can be assured that Martin Leonidas will not see what Armetus and I see. Martin Leonidas will see that you put his son in extreme danger, and that you helped the assassins who tried to kill the sister of his Queen."

Armetus stepped forward. "And he will see the individual who assisted those same assassins in severely injuring his Royal Concubine, who I know for a fact he considers just as Queen like as the women who hold that title."

For'mya stood up now. "You will die Sadi. You will be executed for treason against the United Lycavorian Union. You must remember... Martin Leonidas is a Spartan above all else, and throughout their history on Earth the one thing they have abhorred more than anything is a traitor. He will not be as forgiving as Armetus and I. If you are lucky... he will just order you shot... if you are unlucky he will give you to Elynth because he knows that Aurith, who is bonded to me now, Martin Leonidas knows Aurith and I will not act in such a way. It's not in our nature. Elynth however is not limited by that because she is the Bond Mate of Androcles. The son of a Spartan."

Sadi's pale blue eyes snapped to look at the dragon hatchling as For'mya talked as calmly as if she was in the garden enjoying open conversation with friends.

Armetus moved to stand next to For'mya now and Sadi looked at them. "For'mya and I believe that you were forced into the position you are now in. Forced into it by your step mother in order to save your father the embarrassment and shame of losing everything and being exiled because she is also a traitor."

Sadi's eyes grew even wider. "What?"

Armetus held up the pad in his hand. "We have found out some very interesting items in regards to your step mother and her actions since becoming mated to your father. Were you aware that she is having a rather torrid affair with a vampire officer in Queen Isabella's old military unit? Something Isabella will take great pleasure in taking care of when she returns to Apo Prime I am sure."

"An affair?" Sadi hissed venomously. "*Lon nubous upae!*"

[Mindvoice Shielded] *She does not speak a lie For'mya.* Elynth spoke from her spot by the door.

For'mya nodded almost casually. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Yes... it was one of the first things Gorgo and Dasha taught me. I can't detect a lie from her either. She is just as surprised as she seems.*

Armetus stepped toward Sadi completely oblivious to the words Elynth and For'mya were exchanging. "This officer we found, once we discovered him that is, he is a deep agent for the High Coven. We were unable to uncover any reason why your step mother would be bound to this man, and that leads us to the conclusion that she is also a High Coven agent. Part of the High Coven's old *Arryadyveluat* program. It appears they have started it up again, and your step mother is a member." (Traitors of the female flesh)

Sadi looked at him wide eyed. "She...?"

For'mya nodded her head slowly. "Yes. Her actions in regards to the investment she made were planned strictly to get you involved Sadi. She knew the love and protectiveness you have for your father. And who better to recruit than the daughter of a Governor on Apo Prime in excellent standing with the Prime Minister. A daughter who would do anything to protect her father."

Sadi's eyes became moist now... and she staggered against the counter. "All... all these years? All... all that I have done!" She shook her head back and forth as horror and shame swept over her in waves. Her life was over. Her father's life was over. This knowledge would kill him she was certain. Realization came to her almost immediately and Sadi reached under the dress she wore, tearing at the folds until her hand closed around the small hand blaster. She yanked it from its holster and brought it to her temple before For'mya and Armetus could take four steps.

"Stay back!" Sadi screamed as tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Sadi you do not have to do this!" For'mya spoke lifting her hand. "We can help... we can help you."

Sadi shook her head quickly never removing the small laser weapon from her temple. "You don't know what I have had to do!" She sobbed. "What they made me do! What she made me do!"

"Sadi... help us to help you!" Armetus spoke remaining still.

For'mya took another step closer to her. "Sadi... none of this will go beyond this room." She said softly. "Help us and I swear to you that nothing will happen to you. Nothing will happen to your father."

Sadi shook her head. "No! I can't... I can't believe you! The King... the King will gut me like... like some whore in the street for what I have done! Just... just as he brushed me aside that night! Like I wasn't there!"

"He will not know Sadi." For'mya spoke softly. "I swear to you he will never find out. We need your help to discover how far this goes Sadi. Those assassins couldn't have gotten onto Apo Prime without help. You may have brought them to the island that night, but someone hired them and got them onto the planet. You can help us capture them."

Sadi looked at her pale blue eyes shiny in tears. "They... they almost killed you! And I brought them there! They... they could have killed the King's son!"

[Mindvoice Shielded] *NO! The female voice exploded in Sadi's head and her eyes snapped to where Elynth took two steps closer to her. I would not have allowed that. My Bonded brother talks to me even now Sadi. He... he wishes for you to put the weapon down! He wishes for you to help his second elfin mother.*

Sadi stared at Elynth stunned that she could hear the dragon in her head. She had never been considered stronger than a Tier Three Mindvoicer, yet the power and clarity with which Elynth's voice filled her mind took her breath away. "I... I can hear you in my head!" Sadi gasped causing both For'mya and Armetus to look at Elynth.

Elynth nodded and stepped closer. [Mindvoice Shielded] *They can not hear us KertaGai. We have the power to block all but our parents.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Parents?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *We speak as one right now KertaGai, my Bonded Brother and I. Elynth said softly. We do not wish harm to come to you. You have a destiny to fulfill. A destiny you must be alive to fulfill. Put aside the weapon and take your vengeance on those who have done this to you. Not upon yourself.*

Sadi shook her head. [Mindvoice Shielded] *He is... he is only a child.* Sadi stammered unused to the connection.

Elynth tilted her large head to the side and looked at Sadi with those gorgeous azure eyes. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Is he? Androcles is far more than just a child. His mother and father know this, as do mine. He is the future. We will one day rival our fathers in what we can do KertaGai. What you do this day will affect that future. For'mya will not betray you, and nor will Armetus. Help them to help you recover what the Coven and others have taken from you. Then begin your life anew. In years to come we will find you once more.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *How can... how can this be?* Sadi asked still stunned. *I... I should not be able to do this! Dragons... dragons are considered... they... they rival the King in their Mindvoice power.*

Elynth nodded her head. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Yes in some respects we do. And you are correct in what you say... unless you have been chosen.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Chosen? Chosen for what?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *One day you will know.* Elynth spoke. *Now... for now you must regain your life and make a new one for yourself.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *My... my father... he....*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Your father will never have cause to discover what has happened this day KertaGai. Not while we live and breathe. This I swear to you by my sinuovasaan. And if you know anything of*

my kind you know we can not lie. And like his father, the son of Martin Leonidas will never break a promise, especially to the one he has chosen.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Chosen as what?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *One day you will know. Trust in For'mya. She will not betray you KertaGai.*

Sadi watched as Elynth lowered her body to the floor in the sitting room and turned to look at For'mya. *You must protect her For'mya. No matter what it takes... you must protect her. Swear this to me.*

For'mya looked at Sadi who still had a shocked expression on her face and then turned back to Elynth. She didn't hesitate. *I swear to you on my love for Martin Leonidas she will be protected.*

Sadi's hand came down slowly and she dropped to the floor in defeat, the weapon falling from her fingers. "What... what do you want me to do?"

For'mya came forward and held out her hand. Sadi met her eyes before taking the hand and allowing For'mya to help pull her up. For'mya bent down and retrieved the small blaster and held it out to Sadi. "Martin Leonidas once told me that not all evil is born from evil intent. You brought the assassins here yes, but in doing that you helped me to become what I have desired since Martin came into my life. Something I did not have the courage to ask of him myself. I thank you for that." For'mya held out the weapon. "Keep it... for you may need it in the future."

Elynth blinked her eyes and smiled a dragon smile as she watched Sadi take the weapon back. She felt the love and thanks from Androcles rush through her and she nodded her head.

LYCAVORE

"What do you mean gone?" Tonlar shouted from the small monitor.

The face of the High Coven Colonel of the Immortals remained impassive and unaffected by Tonlar's outburst. His dark eyes glared back at the screen, openly showing no emotion, but inwardly holding nothing but contempt. His grayish skin was drawn and weathered from years of exposure to the suns of countless worlds and battles, and he was one of the senior officers within the Immortal ranks anywhere.

"Just as I have reported regent." He spoke evenly. "The settlement is empty. There are no Lycavorians here. Only the bodies of thirteen of your men and my officer! They were killed by Spartans."

"Spartans!" Tonlar raged. "Are you a fool man? There are no Spartans on this planet! Only these scum sucking Lycavorian dogs!"

"Begging the Regent's pardon, my officer has a hole in his chest that could only have been made by a Spartan *Nehtes*." The Colonel spoke. "Five of the twelve troopers were decapitated by Shi Viskas, two were savaged by perhaps the largest Lycavorian wolf I have seen in my lifetime and the rest had their brains blow open by Spartan P190s. I have fought Spartans before Regent and I know what their weapons do. Your Commander's chest is now exposed to the atmosphere from a weapon I have never seen the likes of."

"Colonel... I am no pilot or ship captain, but even I know that it is impossible for Spartans to land on this planet without our knowing about it." Tonlar said.

"Unless they are using a ship equipped with Coven Shroud generators." The Immortal said. "Right now I can tell you that there are at least five Spartans loose on this planet. The Lycavorian settlement is deserted, the half breed they were sent here to collect is gone, and there are signs that your daughter is with them."

"Melita? Are you sure?" Tonlar gasped. "You must be mistaken!"

"There is no mistake Regent. What remains to be seen is whether she is a willing participant or a prisoner." The Colonel spoke.

"Colonel, are you suggesting my daughter is in some way involved in this?" Tonlar demanded.

"The half breed that Princess Yuri is on her way here for has raised your daughter Regent." The Colonel spoke. "Melita has shown her favor on many occasions. Just a few days ago she threatened one of my men with a weapon for taking the half breed scum as they have so many times in the past."

"Mind your words Colonel!" Tonlar spat viciously. "I will not have my daughter implicated by an Immortal officer who failed in his duties. I'm ordering you to find them Colonel. Find them and bring them back!"

"I will need to call out the garrison Regent. I..."

“Do what you must... but I want them found before Princess Yuri arrives! Is that clearly understood Colonel?”

The Immortal nodded. “Of course Regent.” He was silent as the screen went blank and then he picked up the monitor and tossed it across the gathering hall, watching as it smashed into dozens of pieces above the now covered bodies of his Lieutenant and the High Coven troopers. “He is a simplistic fool!”

The second Immortal stepped closer to him, unsure if he should interrupt his Colonel’s rage. “Colonel Pa’cour... by your leave!”

The Immortal Commander turned to face his subordinate quickly gaining control of his anger. “What is it Yi’zourte?”

“The men have finished sweeping the settlement Colonel. No one remains, and it appears as if they left quickly.” The young officer reported.

“Left quickly indeed.” Pa’cour spoke.

“Colonel... begging your forgiveness... but we have found footprints of the Regent’s daughter heading away from the settlement. Heading north. She was with another vampire Colonel. A female as well... and judging by her prints one experienced in combat. She moved lightly afoot, never stopping for very long in one spot. Our scouts tracked their prints until they began to blur and then they lost the trail.” The young Immortal reported.

Pa’cour nodded. “No one but a Lycavorian can track a pureblood that blurs Yi’zourte. Not even we can do that.” He moved over to where the bodies lay as he talked. When he got to the bodies of the two officers he pulled the dark plastic from on top of their bodies. “What do you see Yi’zourte?”

“I see a dead comrade Colonel.” Yi’zourte replied. “And a fool of a Coven officer for allowing this to happen.”

Pa’cour shook his head. “No. He followed protocol. That can be ascertained by where our technicians said they were killed. Combat spreading within the room... weapons at the ready. No... they followed protocol.”

“Then how were they taken so easily Colonel?” The young officer asked.

“You have never fought Spartans have you Yi’zourte?” Pa’cour asked looking at the officer.

“Regrettably no I have not Colonel.” He replied lowering his eyes away.

“Do not regret that fact Yi’zourte.” Pa’cour spoke softly. “The Lycavorian Spartan will be the finest opponent you will ever face. And if you are very lucky you might live. They are lethal with their 190s, and even more so with those damn Shi Viskas they wear.” He looked at the young officer. “I have seen many of our brethren fall to those shields, even the most experienced among us. I’ve seen a Spartan shot a dozen times and still manage to impale his attacker with his *Nehtes* before finally succumbing to darkness. In enclosed quarters and spaces they are more lethal than Rock Spiders.”

Yi’zourte watched as his commanded knelt next to the body of the Immortal Lieutenant. “You see the angle of the entrance wound?”

“Yes sir.”

“Whoever this Spartan was, and regardless of what that fool Tonlar says this was a Spartan, he was just over two meters tall.” Pa’cour spoke as he observed the wound. “Look at the cleanness of the cut upwards through the chest bone and the severed spinal column.” He spoke pointing to the gaping hole in the chest and the exit wound just below his neck between his shoulders. “This Spartan was strong. Very strong. There are not many of them who can wield a *Nehtes* with both the power and the skill needed to inflict this type of wound, and my advice to you if you come across one, turn and go in the other direction.” He looked up slowly, his dark eyes gazing across the covered remains. “The Shi Viska kills could not be avoided. Whenever they launch those shield weapons it will always kill or cripple its first target. The precision of the projectile wounds is what is interesting though. All of them were head shots, all instantly fatal. I suspect two shooters at least, both with incredible reflexes and speed and considering they were facing Coven troopers, it could only be Spartans. Only they would attack in such confined space. Look here.”

Yi’zourte followed his Colonel as he moved several meters towards the now destroyed doorway. He pointed at the huge bloody wolf print on the floor and squatted down next to it. “Tell me what you see here Lieutenant?”

“A wolf’s print larger than any I have seen on this planet sir.” Yi’zourte replied his eyes wide as he squatted next to the print as well.

Pa’cour nodded. “I estimate ten centimeters across. And based on the width and spread of the toes this wolf was one hundred forty-five to one hundred fifty kilos.”

Yi’zourte’s eyes went to his Colonel’s face. “I’ve... I’ve never even heard of a wolf that large Colonel.” He gasped.

Pa’cour nodded as he looked up. “Nor had I. Until eight months ago.” He spoke his eyes lifting to look at his officer. “It is said that the new Lycavorian King, when in wolf form, is a meter and a half at the shoulders Yi’zourte.” He saw his officer’s eyes grow even larger. “A wolf that large would weigh in the range I just gave you. He would also have paws this large.”

“Colonel... you... you believe the King of the Lycavorian Union is on this planet?” The Lieutenant gasped. “Now?”

Pa’cour returned to his full height of nearly seven feet tall. “No... I did not say that.” He spoke. “I said he would be in the size range of the wolf that killed these men. Maintain the security as it is Lieutenant and issue orders deploying the entire garrison. From the footprints of the Regent’s daughter, my guess is they are moving north for the deep timber. We will not catch them if that is the case, but we can make certain. I need to contact someone for additional information. You are in command here until I return.”

Yi’zourte nodded. “As you order Colonel.” He blurted as Pa’cour marched off without giving him a second glance.

Anja sat next to Atropos on the flat slab of rock near where they had exited the mining tunnel. Their hands were secured behind their backs by the same plastic cuffs that Atropos had used on Husen, and secured in such a way that if they called their Shi Viskas they would injure themselves severely. Their group was all together, almost two dozen armed Lycavorians standing guard around them, dozens of younger men, women and children standing about fifty meters away while Husen stood in a heated conversation with three much older men and a woman.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Perhaps this was not such a good idea my love.* Seanna spoke breaking into Anja’s thoughts as her jade eyes swept over the gathered Lycavorians.

Anja looked at her with a smile. [Mindvoice Shielded] *We’ll be fine Erranyaenyla. Miath is nearby and Martin will be here soon.* She spoke. *Atropos?*

Seanna could only smile inside with warmth when Anja used the name she had given her in the ancient Lycavorian language. *Love of my Spirit.*

Atropos did not turn to look at his Queen. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Aside from the two dozen that are guarding us, I can detect no others carrying weapons.* He replied calmly. *Their weapons appear old and ill maintained. I seriously doubt the projectiles would penetrate the new body armor we wear.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Do you think those are the men and women in charge?* Anja asked him.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I can tell you that the two men on the left are over eight thousand years old, the one on the far left near nine thousand years.* Atropos replied with a small degree of awe in his voice. *The third man and women roughly the same age as the King. This Alpha Husen is a child compared to them.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Then why does it seem like they are listening to him?* Anja asked.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Perhaps he has some status among them.* Seanna spoke now.

Atropos was never considered more than a Tier Four Mindvoicer until he became Anja’s Captain. He had started out on Earth by protecting his sister during the taking of the Drow city, but he was quickly moved to the service of the Persian red haired Queen, and it was a move that Atropos thanked the gods for everyday. Atropos would never admit this to anyone, but as far as he was concerned Anja was the perfect combination of reckless behavior and calm precision. She had a wicked temper he knew and in the last year alone that had gotten them into some sticky situations, but they had always come out on top, mainly because her sense of precision and confidence won out over her more reckless nature in the end. When Anja had refused to allow him to transfer his son Belen after they discovered him with her sister Sivana; that had sealed Atropos’s loyalty to her like nothing ever could. It told him Anja could sense the deep connection that Belen had for her sister, as well as the desire Sivana had to continue what she and Belen had discovered. Atropos would tell his mate Lilika

of Anja's actions when he returned to Apo Prime and he knew that would serve to garner her loyalty above all else as well.

The First Oracle had established a connection between them long ago that elevated his Mindvoice powers to that of a powerful Tier Six, and now Atropos could communicate easily with his Queen as well as her bonded dragon Miath and Seanna. He knew Miath was nearby, for whenever they got into tight situations, Anja always left the link between her and Miath open to Atropos so that he would know all she did.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Have you noticed that there are almost no Alphas among the males Anja?* Atropos asked. This was another of the reasons Atropos so adored his petite red haired queen. She had told him once that if he did not call her by her given name when they spoke privately she would kick his ass. Atropos had laughed at her and agreed, mainly because it showed she did not have an arrogant bone in her body, and secretly he did not know if he could beat his Queen.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Yes... I saw that as well. Many Betas and gammas but hardly any Alpha males. I can sense perhaps four Alpha females within the group around us however, including the one talking with Alpha boy there.*

Atropos fought to keep from smiling. [Mindvoice Shielded] *They appear to be some sort of Elders it would seem.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Yes and they keep looking back at you and Nayeca most of all.* Seanna said.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Well... I doubt they have seen very many elves in these parts... let alone Drow elves. And if they try anything with Nayeca, Danny will gut them when he gets here. He's just as protective of her as he is of Anuk.* Anja answered.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *And you do so much to not draw attention to yourself my Queen. It's a wonder anyone even knows you are nearby.* Atropos spoke sarcastically.

Anja chuckled within their connection. [Mindvoice Shielded] *What can I say; I'm a just bubbly person by nature.*

They watched as the three men and one woman turned back and walked up to them confidently. The two older men appeared to be made of much sterner stuff than the third man and the woman Anja noted, and Husen appeared rather confused, which didn't surprise Anja at all. He struck her as the type that thought with his cock before his brain.

"My name is Condar. I am the senior Elder and the Alpha of my people here." The man spoke. He motioned to the others. "This is Nanac, Sther and Onia. You have already met young Husen here."

"And a wonderful meeting it was." Anja replied.

"We want to know how you came to be on our planet." Condar asked now ignoring Anja and looking at Atropos.

"How do most visitors come to your planet?" Atropos asked.

The man Condar introduced as Nanac stepped forward and hit Atropos with a short right hand that snapped his head back and bloodied his lips. "You will answer our questions or you will endure more pain."

Atropos looked at the man his eyes unchanged. He spit blood and saliva onto the ground and laughed. "You must be joking. My mate hits harder than that."

Nanac drew back his fist once more but Condar put his hand on his arm stopping him.

"You are Lycavorian... as are some in your group." Condar spoke. "That much is obvious. You have a half breed female in your group however and three other females who are not Lycavorian. You wear strange uniforms and have weapons we have never seen and we want to know who you are, where you come from and how you got here."

"We also want to know if anyone will come looking for you now that we have taken you prisoner?" The female Onia spoke now.

"Taken us prisoner?" Anja said calmly. "If I remember correctly we surrendered our weapons to you. You didn't take anything. And we did that so that we may speak openly and show you we are not the enemy."

Condar looked at Atropos. "You allow this female to speak for you?" He barked.

"She is one of the four Queens of the Lycavorian Union!" Atropos snapped loudly. "She speaks whenever she chooses! Or are you too blind to see the aura that radiates from her?"

"You are a liar!" Nanac barked. "She is a half breed herself! And no Queen of the Union would come here! We are inside High Coven space! Do you think us as ignorant as that?"

“I told you... they say they are here for the half breed Lisisa.” Husen spoke now moving over to stand next to Anja’s kneeling form. “They say the Lycavorian King of the Union is here as well.”

“There is no King!” Condar spoke now. “The line of Resumar died with him.”

“What of the traders and smugglers that have come here as those females told us?” Seanna asked now. “Surely they have told you what is happening off this planet. That King Leonidas lives.”

“They can not be trusted!” Condar spoke evenly. “Nor can anything they say be trusted. Most of these traders and smugglers only wish to obtain a female Lycavorian as a pleasure slave. They will say anything to achieve that goal. Enough talk! Now you will tell us what we want to know!”

“Or what?” Anja snapped. “You’ll kill us?”

“It has already been decided! You are a half breed woman, but you are stronger than most somehow. The blood within you is virulent and powerful. Young Husen here has no mate yet and he will take you as his first mate wench!” This caused Husen to turn and look quickly at Condar and Nanac. “It will be his retribution for you striking him like a child when you should have knelt before him as a superior Alpha!” Nanac spoke. “The other females in your group will be given to those Alphas who want them. We will get the answers we want from all of you even if we have to beat it out of you.”

Seanna leaned forward quickly. “Anja carries the child of the Lycavorian King!” She barked. “The child alone proves she is mated to another! By your own Lycavorian law as written by the First Oracle another can not take her as a mate. That is considered a high crime of your people!”

The woman stepped closer and slapped her hard. Seanna however did not stumble over as Onia expected due to her training and exceptional skills. “Silence woman!”

“The First Oracle’s Law no longer applies here.” Condar spoke once more. “When we were abandoned we had to survive any way we could. That meant the strongest and most senior Alphas had to mate with our strongest women to produce strong children so that our people lived on. This half breed is strong... we all sense that. She will give Husen strong children who will help us to survive. The child she carries is of no concern. We have many who will adopt this child.”

“Are you so blind that you do not smell the pureness of the blood that runs within her?” Atropos barked. “The blood of the child within her! She is mated to King Leonidas! The grandson of King Resumar! The child in her womb is only days old, the blood within her that of King Leonidas himself! He is the one who turned her, claimed her as his mate. You will just dismiss that? Will you stand there and tell me any of you are superior to what you smell in her veins. As old as you are... will you tell me that?”

“Silence!” Nanac shouted. “We are not fools to think that the grandson of Resumar would come here! Even if he lived!”

“So you rape your females?” Anja snapped.

Husen reacted immediately and grabbed Anja’s shoulder pulling her closer to him. “I have never taken a woman against her will!”

Anja looked at him with her jade green eyes. “You have never had a woman fool boy! That much is obvious!” She popped. “What would you know of how to treat a woman?”

“Do not speak!” He barked out.

The woman stepped up to Anja now. “Our females do this willingly!” She snapped at her. “They all know it is the only way to keep our people strong.”

“There is no other word for it!” Anja snapped right back. “It is rape no matter how you want to sugarcoat it!”

Onia slapped Anja viciously across the face now, Anja’s head rocking back at the blow. Like Seanna however she did not fall over. “You know nothing!” She snarled.

“I know you seem to enjoy slapping other women who don’t agree with your pathetic views!” Anja growled. “Why don’t you take these bindings off and we’ll see who you slap then *upae!*”

Onia’s eyes widened and she lifted her hand once more. This time Anja was ready and she dropped to the ground, bringing her booted foot up in a vicious front kick while she was on her back. The boot hit Onia square in her chest, lifting the woman off her feet and tossing her back several meters.

Nanac stepped forward in a flash, his fist connecting with Anja’s cheek as she was rocking back forward. She grunted in pain as stars sprang into her eyes, the taste of blood splashing wetly in her mouth.

Atropos's eyes flew open and he screamed in anger, rising to his feet quickly and moving towards Husen with murderous intent. He didn't make it as one of the men guarding them stepped forward and smashed the old rifle down on the back of his head, dropping him to the ground unconscious. Onia was scrambling to her feet and she glared at Anja in undisguised rage.

"The child you carry will be adopted by others once it is born! And for your actions this day it will be marked as beneath all others of our people." Onia hissed at her as Anja shook her head to clear her thoughts. "Once the child is born Husen will take you as his mate and you will have his children! You will serve Husen in any manner he deems until then woman! Including in his bed!"

Husen glanced quickly back to where the others sat, his eyes eventually falling on where Relina sat glaring at him in what could only be anger. His head snapped back around. "I do not want this bitch!" He declared.

"You will take her and be done with it!" Nanac barked. "Use her as a plaything if you must, but that is the decision of the Elders!"

"I don't think so." Anja declared her voice menacingly low.

"You have no choice woman!" Nanac shouted.

Anja's eyes narrowed quickly in anger. *[Mindvoice Shielded] Marty... I think I may need your help after all lover. There are too many for Miath alone... and I don't want to hurt anyone Martin. You'd better hurry! Some nut job who fancies himself as being in charge is about to give me away to some puke Alpha male less than half my age. Anja spoke calmly and did not hesitate as she reached out for him. He's not even very good looking lover, and they are telling me they are going to give Eliani to someone else. Can you believe this? I truly don't want to have to kill him for trying to take our daughter or rape me, but I will if he lays a finger on me. And I won't be able to stop Miath and Atropos from going berserk and burning everyone.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] I'm on my way Red. I'm coming for you! Martin's voice filled her and she could sense the anger in him growing.

"There was another who thought like you. He thought to take one of the Queens of King Leonidas. He took her and raped her. He paid for that folly with his life! As did his father and the vile government they controlled. You do not want to do this." Nayeca barked out now.

Nanac laughed at her. "Perhaps he knew what we know. There is no King of the Union and therefore all of you are lying! We will discover who you are!"

"Chetak died for what you are about to do." Jobel picked it up from Nayeca now. "As did his foul son Joric."

Heads turned from all around when they heard her speak those names. "Chetak?" Nanac spoke moving closer. "That is a name known to me. How do you know that name?"

"He made the same mistake you are about to make." Anja spat now. "And when Martin gets here you will experience it for yourself."

Anja hoped Martin got here before Husen touched her or any of their people were severely hurt, for if she didn't kill Husen for putting his hands on her, Martin surely would.

Martin turned to look back at the long snake like line of men, women and children as they made their way through mountainous terrain north of the settlement. Noreu and Garpa had been true to their word and with Renatia's help the entire settlement had been ready to move in less than an hour. The smallest children were carried gently between the jaws of parent wolves as they had moved in wolf form for the first three hours. Now... all of them had changed back as the sun was rising and they were twenty odd kilometers north of the settlement and ready to hit the deep timber.

He allowed his eyes to gaze on the people, his people. They moved efficiently and no one complained. The vampire female Melita and Yuriko and ranged out in front of the long column acting as scouts of a sort since they could not alter their forms. And until this Melita proved she was a friend and not a spy, Yuriko would go with her everywhere. If she turned out to be something than what she said, Yuriko would kill her instantly. What they possessed that no Lycavorian with the exception of Lisisa possessed however, was the incredible speed of the pureblood vampire and their ability to blur in motion and cover distances in lightning time. Martin intended to use that to his advantage.

Lisisa never left his side, and Jeth moved deftly next to her without question. Martin had admired how she had changed into a black wolf similar to him and Aricia, though perhaps a shade or two lighter in coloring. What she knew as a wolf was not something you picked up as a slave without schooling and Martin knew the older woman Renatia must have been teaching Lisisa about her skills as a wolf for some time. He made a mental note to thank the older Lycavorian female as soon as he could.

Martin had counted exactly the number Visam had said were in the settlement, a mixture of young and old, ranging from a few weeks to several thousand years older than his own three thousand and twenty-seven years. As he squatted on the large rock outcropping he noticed that almost everyone looked upon him reverently as they passed beneath him on the slope of the ridge. Word had spread quickly among the people that the Lycavorian King, the descendant of King Resumar was among them and it seemed everyone wanted to get a glimpse of him.

Martin turned as Danny, Anuk, Visam and the asshole Donus moved up next to where he squatted. He noticed the look Donus gave Lisisa even though she squatted next to him but said nothing. Lisisa was breathtakingly beautiful with her raven colored locks and dark forest green eyes. He had no doubts that she would have many young males chasing her when they returned to Apo Prime and not one of them would care that she was half vampire. Martin did not know how he felt about that just yet, but he knew he probably needed to get used to it since he would have two daughters in less than a year. There was a history there it seemed, between Lisisa and Donus and he would have to find time to discover what that was.

“They’re crawling all over the settlement Skipper.” Danny spoke as he took a knee.

“Pursuit?”

Dan shook his head. “Nothing that we could see.” He answered. “Anuk swept around to the west and spotted what appeared to be a staging area of sorts. Looks like they are calling out the entire garrison.”

“Once we are fully in the deep timber we will be safe for the most part sire.” Visam spoke now. “They rarely go into the deep timber. They fear what they think lives there, and they know to follow us into the timber is death to them.”

“All the Coven troops looked like young vampires.” Martin spoke. “I’m guessing this is like a first posting for them once they finish their initial training.”

Visam looked at Donus quickly before turning back to Martin and nodding. “Yes. That is not something that is commonly known though. How did you...?”

“None of them tried to use their shadow ability in the hall during the fight.” Martin said.

Lisisa moved closer to him. “You know of their shadow ability father?”

Martin nodded. “Between Yuriko and Isabella there isn’t much we haven’t been able to figure out or learn. It’s one of the reasons they wanted you so badly Lisisa. Your mother wanted to use your DNA to enhance their cloned soldiers.”

“That witch is not my mother! She was never my mother! She...” Lisisa exclaimed viciously.

Be at peace my bonded sister. Jeth’s voice filled Lisisa’s head as he extended his neck out and brushed his head against her arm gently from where he sat next to her. *You are with us now!*

“Who is this Isabella?” Visam asked as Martin took Lisisa’s hand in his and squeezed bringing it to his lips and kissing her knuckles.

Martin turned and met his eyes. “She is the daughter of Veldruk’s consort. She defected to the Union some thousand years ago when Veldruk killed her mother. She is one of... she is one of my four Queens.”

“She is... she is Yuri’s sister.” Lisisa gasped.

“Half sister.” Martin corrected her. “And if they ever met on the street somewhere, Bella would take great pleasure in ripping Yuri’s heart out of her chest I can assure you.” He finished that statement with a grin.

“Milord... you have... you have four Queens?” Visam asked shocked.

Martin looked at him clearly embarrassed. “Yes...”

“He’s got a Royal Concubine too.” Danny spoke with a grin. “C’mon Skipper don’t be shy.”

“You are one to talk husband.” Anuk spoke elbowing Danny in the abdomen. “You have me and a Drow Mistress.”

Danny looked at her sheepishly but leaned over to nuzzle the back of her elfin ear. Anuk hissed softly in delight, leaning into his nuzzle. “Yes I do. And I can’t wait till I get both of you together again.”

Martin's head canted upward somewhat and everyone saw his brow furrow as if he was hearing something none of them could. Lisisa felt him grip her hand even tighter as she felt the powerful tremors in Mindvoice reaching out to him. Jeth felt it too as his head came around as if he heard what was being said.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Marty... I think I may need your help after all lover. There are too many for Miath alone... and I don't want to hurt anyone Martin. You'd better hurry! Some nut job who fancies himself as being in charge is about to give me away to some puke Alpha male less than half my age. Anja's voice spoke calmly but Martin could detect the concern in her words. He's not even very good looking lover, and they are telling me they are going to give Eliani to someone else. Can you believe this? I truly don't want to have to kill him for trying to take our daughter or rape me, but I will if he lays a finger on me. And I won't be able to stop Miath and Atropos from going berserk and burning everyone.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I'm on my way Red. I'm coming for you!* Martin answered her immediately as he got to his feet.

Danny and the others stood as well, seeing a cloud of anger drop over Martin's face. He glared at Visam. "Do you know someone that goes by the name Husen?" He barked.

Visam looked at Donus quickly then back to Martin. "Yes... yes Milord."

"Who is he?" Martin snapped again. "Torma... come to me now my dragon brother!" He shouted.

I heard Anja my brother! I will be there in seconds! Torma's voice answered unshielded causing Lisisa to look sharply at Martin. This was an entirely different male voice and one she had not heard before.

Donus stepped forward. "He is my son!" He answered. "Why does that matter?"

"And Condar. Nanac. Onia. The others?" Martin growled.

"The Alphas and Elders that remain at the secret site with the majority of our people." Visam answered quickly. "Milord... how do you know about them? We have not mentioned them... or the secret site."

Martin turned as Helen scrambled up the small incline to his location her face concerned. "Martin... you must go now!" She nearly shouted.

Thud!

Martin looked at Danny quickly. "Get them into the timber and change direction for this secret site Danny. Contact Belen at *ANVIL* and have him move our camp there as well." He ordered.

Dan nodded without hesitation. "What's going on Skipper?"

Thud!

Martin turned and looked at Donus his eyes blazing in anger now. "Your son thinks he is going to rape my Queen and take her as his mate!" Martin growled. "They think they will take my unborn daughter and give her to some others when my Queen conceives. Your alphas and elders are going to allow this. They seem to think my people are meat that they can just pass around and do with what they please! I do not know what you have happening here on this planet Visam... but I guarantee you it will not continue one minute more!"

Thud!

The air reverberating painfully all around them caused them to take notice now and the men, women and children in the column below them and to the side had stopped to begin searching the sky above them.

"Husen... Husen is an Alpha!" Donus exclaimed. "He is my son!"

Martin was suddenly in his face, his eyes changing to yellow orbs and his fangs bursting from his gums. "And Anja is my Queen and the mother to our daughter that she carries in her womb! If she is assaulted or touched in any way by your son Donus; I know every millimeter of my Queen's body, every single hair, and your shit sorry son will answer to me if he lays his hands upon her!"

The trumpeting roar caught all their attentions and eyes grew wide as men and women scattered, shouting in alarm as they ran from the wide field, running for whatever cover they could as the enormous black dragon descended from the sky above with an angry roar and landed lightly on his clawed hind legs. Jeth burst into a run towards his father, Lisisa watching with wide eyes unsure of what to do.

"Martin you must go...!" Helen barked out. "Do not allow them to do what Chetak did! Leave now. I will handle things here!"

Visam and Noreu, who had come running up to the small group, looked at Helen when she spoke that name.

Martin whirled and looked at Lisisa. "Lisisa..."

"I go with you father!" She spoke quickly and with no hesitation.

Martin nodded and took her hand moving quickly for where Torma waited. Lisisa's eyes grew even wider the closer they got to the massive and extremely dangerous looking obsidian colored dragon and she watched as Torma lowered his muscular bulk to the ground completely.

Torma my brother... this is Lisisa. Martin spoke as they walked right up to him. Lisisa was stunned at his size and could only gasp in awe as Torma turned his huge head and looked at her with golden colored eyes.

Lisisa almost didn't notice Martin let go of her hand and climb up into the saddle.

Hello Lisisa. Torma's voice echoed in her mind. *I am Jeth's father, but now is not the time for introductions. We must go.*

"Lisisa!" Martin barked from above, her head snapping around. Martin held out his hand leaning far over for her to join him in the saddle and she hesitated only a moment before taking his hand. She yelped in surprise when he pulled her up quickly and deposited her in the saddle in front of him.

"You aren't frightened of heights are you?" Martin asked her.

Lisisa shook her head quickly. "No. I don't think so."

"Good! Torma... Jeth... now!"

Torma came to his feet and with a powerful lunge he exploded into the air, Jeth following two seconds later.

Helen whirled on Visam, Noreu and Donus once they were out of sight, her own eyes now changed and her fangs extended in anger. "Is this what you have let our people become!" She hissed out viciously. "You allow this to happen! Rape! It is a crime of the vilest nature and you allow it to happen!"

"It is not rape *Feravomir!*" Visam exclaimed quickly. "It is the only way our people have survived this long! The females are not taken forcibly... they know what they do! And they accept it!"

"They accept it because they are not allowed another avenue!" Helen shouted. "That is not free will!"

"Feravomir please... our population is just under thirty thousand men, women and children now because of this practice. The High Coven comes every few hundred years and kills hundreds of our people to maintain a level they think they can control. We allow them to think this while secretly we build our numbers." Noreu told her seeing her eyes fly open as well as Danny and Anuk's. "The females are not forced into mating with a male if they truly do not want to participate!"

"Thirty... thirty thousand?" Helen gasped.

"What happens if they refuse?" Danny asked just as harshly as Martin had. "Do you kill them?"

"No!" Visam barked turning to meet his eyes. "They... if they refuse they are not allowed to mate with any male after their Coming of Age."

"So then they are punished!" Helen snapped.

"We don't consider it a punishment." Noreu said.

"What is it then?" Anuk spat out, unable to keep her tongue any longer. "A reward for not submitting to a man they do not want? That is rape!"

"You don't understand..." Visam began.

"No... you don't understand!" Helen snapped. "King Leonidas is a Lycavorian and a Spartan! He follows Spartan law in many respects as well as Lycavorian law. We... Spartans consider rape to be sacrilege of the highest form! It has been that way for four thousand years, if not more! Chetak thought he could get away with it! He paid for his sins!"

"Chetak?" Visam questioned now, his voice interested. "You spoke his name before. You know Chetak *Feravomir?*"

"Why?" Helen said.

"One of the..."

"Spit it out man!" Helen barked impatiently.

"Nanac... one of the Elders and senior Alphas... he is descended from Chetak's brother. He was born just before the High Coven attacked us." Visam answered quickly. "He has tried several times to find a way to leave Lycavore so that he could find his bloodline."

"Oh that's just fucking beautiful." Danny muttered looking at Anuk. "When it rains it fucking pours."

"Why?" Donus asked quickly now. "Where is Chetak? We had heard he built a great Empire."

Helen stepped up to them. "Yes he built a great empire." She spoke softly, her voice now carrying with it anger and hate. "He fermented distrust and hate among our people that followed him. He encouraged the

raping of our women by the strongest Alpha. Whatever Alpha reached a female first when she came of age, no matter whether she wanted to mate with him or not, she was taken against her will and forced, often times quite brutally, to submit to him. Chetak and his son promoted this vile action. Then they made the ultimate mistake.”

“What?” Donus asked softly.

“They made the mistake of taking Martin Leonidas’s youngest and most beautiful and favored Queen. His Queen of pure blood, the Queen he cherishes above all of them, to fulfill a twelve thousand year old blood feud against Resumar. Chetak’s son Joric raped Aricia as he and his father had done for millennia to our women.”

“What happened?” Noreu asked softly.

Helen’s dark eyes glowered at them and she stepped closer. “Martin Leonidas utterly destroyed their empire and swept all Chetak had built into oblivion. He used his Mindvoice powers to drive Chetak insane, and then he beat Joric to death with his bare hands for what he had done to his Queen. That is what happened.” Her eyes went to Donus. “If your son lays his hands upon Queen Anja Donus, neither the gods nor the might of the High Coven will keep your son from dying at Martin’s hands. That is Chetak’s legacy. His name is now used as a curse upon others for their actions.”

Donus’s eyes were wide and in a flash he had shifted into wolf form and burst into a run across the field heading for the mining tunnel. No one spoke... no one moved as they watched him until he was out of sight.

“He’ll never catch Torma.” Danny said softly.

Helen shook her head. “No... but we need to follow the King’s orders and get these people to the safety of this tunnel before he destroys them all.” She spoke softly.

Anja glared at Nanac with uncontrollable rage as he hit Atropos again, even more blood erupting from his now broken and bruised face. His lips were split in several locations, his nose broken and there was a vicious cut on his cheek bone just beneath his eye which had caused his left eye to become swollen shut. Seanna knelt next to her, the hands of a male digging deeply into her shoulders, for he had stepped forward to claim her. Husen stood behind Anja, his hands on her shoulders, holding her down on her knees as the others in their group were either pushed to the ground or had rifles jammed into their bodies in different locations to keep them from trying to interfere.

Nanac grabbed the front of Atropos’s body armor and dragged him to his feet, shoving him towards the burly male that was helping Nanac beat him. The male swung the straight wooden club he had in his hand as hard as he could, the club smashing into Atropos’s face blood spraying across the ground as his body flipped over in the air and he landed heavily on his stomach.

Anja’s eyes closed in agony and tears began to well in her eyes.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Anja my sister! Let me come in!* Miath’s voice screamed in her head. I can stop them!

[Mindvoice Shielded] *No Miath!* Anja replied lifting her head quickly. *There are too many children in the area! We can not risk hurting them!*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *They will kill Atropos!* Miath exclaimed.

Anja looked at her captain and saw Atropos lift his head slightly, his good eye falling on where she knelt. He could feel her speaking to Miath within Mindvoice she knew and Anja watched him shake his head slowly.

“Tell me how you came here?” Nanac screamed as he bent over Atropos’s limp, near unconscious form. “How did you defeat the High Coven sensor arrays? Where is your ship? Tell me what I want to know and this will stop!”

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Martin my love!* Anja cried out. *Hurry!*

Lisisa had to walk quickly to keep up with her father as he moved down the center of the tunnel. The short flight to the tunnel had thrilled her like nothing else, flying high and fast above the mountains and trees. She had turned her head during the flight and see Jeth matching his father in whatever maneuver he made, his

wings flapping furiously to maintain the speed with which Torma was flying. She felt her father's arms wrapped around her tightly, her legs secured by the strange armor over her thighs and calves, her forest green eyes wide as she saw the massive mountain ranges far off in the distance.

She was stunned at the quickness with which the dragon Torma moved as soon as they landed outside the entrance to the tunnel. Martin had leaped from the saddle almost the moment Torma's talons touched solid ground and he began walking into the tunnel at a brisk pace. She could feel the waves of anger rolling off of him as he walked. She had to practically run at times to keep up with him, and she stumbled twice as Torma's massive size made the air around them shudder in his wake. They moved with a single minded purpose she saw, nothing deterring them from their path.

Jeth! Lisisa declared looking at the dragon hatchling as he rushed along beside her.

My father and King Martin are bonded more deeply than most my sister. Just as we now are. They feel what each other is feeling. They think and act as one mind now. Jeth replied his own voice in her head raspy as he too attempted to keep up with them.

I... I will be able to feel what you feel? Lisisa asked as her legs carried her down the tunnel.

Yes! Just as I will feel what you feel! My mother is the same with Queen Aricia! My sisters as well with their bond mates! Jeth replied his wings flapping twice to maintain the pace his father and Martin were setting. *It is... it is as if our... our families are tied together in some deeper way!*

Lisisa turned as they began coming to the end of the tunnel, her eyes growing wider as she saw the large green scaled dragon in front of them near the end of the tunnel. He was standing before a meter wide hole in the rock face that opened into the massive Relic cavern she knew. That dragon wasn't close to the same size as Jeth's father, but he dwarfed Jeth in size easily by a factor of three. His green head whipped around to reveal large gray eyes that appeared to be very angry at the moment.

My King! Miath's voice swept into Lisisa's mind now as well. *They... they are beating Atropos! Anja will... she fears injuring children and will not allow me to enter!*

Martin stopped in front of the rock face, his dark eyes now changed into angry yellow orbs and his fangs fully extended. Lisisa watched him in awe as his eyes took in the entire area around the opening in the rock wall.

Torma left! Miath go right! Move right for Anja and Seanna! I will go to Atropos! Martin snapped out in Mindvoice. *The others will know what to do! No killing!*

Torma's massive obsidian head cranked around and looked at his son. *Jeth! Yours and Lisisa's shields! Now my son!*

Lisisa watched in amazement as the soft blue psychic shields enveloped Torma and her father in seconds. She lifted her hands and watched the same type of psychic shield extend from her fingers to surround her entire body and that of Jeth's as well. Her eyes saw the same shield begin to engulf the green scaled dragon and she looked at her father. Martin had lifted his hands and Lisisa could only watch as the large shimmering silver psychic projection formed in the palms of his hands.

Seanna's sea green eyes went wider when she saw the light blue psychic shield she knew so well begin to envelope her Queen and lover next to her.

"Anja!" She barked out.

Anja's head snapped around and looked at her and then she felt her shields activate. Miath would not disobey her and the only reason he would be activating their shields was if Martin was here. Anja turned to glare at Nanac as all eyes went to where she pulled herself to her feet.

"What... what is that?" Onia declared. "What is happening to her?"

"I warned you!" Anja screamed at them. "I warned you not to do this! Now you will pay for not listening to me!"

Nanac dismissed her and lifted his fist to pummel Atropos again. His eyes grew wider when he saw Atropos's good eye looking at him and a bloody smile crossed his face.

"The... the King is here fool!" Atropos croaked out. "And... and he is not happy."

As if on cue, the moment Atropos's words finished, the wall to the mining tunnel blew out with a great roaring cascade of power. Rock dust, slivers of stone and chunks of the wall blasted away from the tunnel entrance as if struck by the hand of an angry god.

The six Lycavorians closest to the entrance were blown across the cavern nearly thirty meters, their bodies flailing madly until they landed with loud grunts of pain. Anja smiled when she heard the trumpeting roar of two fully grown and pissed off dragons followed by the higher pitch roar of a hatchling. She saw the looks of utter horror from the men and women around her at that sound and from the deepest portion of the rock dust cloud came two withering streams of superheated breath directed to the sides of the cavern where no one was standing. There was a massive push of air pushing the dust cloud around and the screaming started as the huge black form appeared out of the dust, flowed quickly by the huge green form. Angry and very bright yellow/gold and gray eyes reached from the cloud as Torma cut to the left and unleashed another deafening roar of power directly into the face of Nanac, Condar and several others. They could only stagger back, tripping over each other to attempt to get out of the way. One Lycavorian lifted the rifle he held, trying to get a shot at Torma. Torma opened his maw and directed a narrow stream of superheated breath directly at the man. The Lycavorian's eyes nearly exploded from his head as the barrel and one third of the rifle he had been holding melted instantly. He dropped the remaining portion of the weapon as the heat surged through the stock and he gazed at Torma petrified in place by fear.

Husen had time to blink twice before Miath's hammer like tail slashed out from the dust and smashed into his chest. The blow carried enough power to knock him back several meters and he would be sore for days, but it broke no bones. Husen cried out in pain, his eyes wide as the green scaled beast appeared next to Anja. He scrambled to get away, ignoring the pain that was shooting through his body as the monstrosity stepped right up to the red haired female almost protectively. He watched as Anja reached up to touch the head of the beast and then he came to an abrupt halt when he slammed into something that should not be behind him. He spun around to look into the azure blue eyes of a much smaller but no less lethal beast and Lisisa was standing next to that beast. His eyes exploded open in terror as Jeth's head snapped out on his long neck and his razor like teeth clamped down on Husen's shoulder.

Husen's scream pierced the tunnel like a horn, Torma's head whipping around at the terrifying sound.

Jeth! He screamed out. *Martin said no killing my son!*

Jeth released Husen from the grip of his very young but still exceedingly deadly jaws and turned to meet his father's glare. *I only bit him a little father! He is not dead.* Jeth turned back to look at Husen, Lisisa's hand on his muscular shoulder, his azure eyes glaring at the young alpha male. *At least not yet!*

JOA COVA! The two words reached out within Mindvoice with such power and clarity that every adult in the cavern with the exception of Anja and her group staggered and reached for their heads. (No more!)

All heads turned toward the tunnel entrance and they saw the tall, heavily muscled male step through the cloud of dust, his yellow eyes almost glowing. The power of Martin's aura caused all of them to cringe and cower back as he moved confidently out of the dust cloud to stand in the center of the cavern. His eyes went immediately to where Nanac was on one knee shaking his head. Martin lifted his hand and drawing from his TK power he snatched Nanac up in the grip of that power. Nanac's body lifted into the sky as his eyes exploded open in surprise. He suddenly found himself staring into yellow eyes of death as Martin brought him over to hang in front of him.

"Aur Gelleenat!" Martin snarled viciously glaring into Nanac's terrified face. *"Aur Armens!"* (My Queen. My Spartans.)

Nanac struggled in the grip of the TK hold Martin had on him. *"Raeliphos lae!"* He shouted. (Release me)

"Forn Aellyn aur Gelleenat!" Martin jerked his hand down and everyone watched as Nanac slammed viciously into the ground beneath him. The air left his lungs in an audible whoosh and Martin stared down at him. (You threaten my Queen.)

Anja and Seanna didn't hesitate as soon as Lisisa slashed their bonds with a knife and both of them moved for where Atropos lay on the ground. Nayeca and the others quickly snatched weapons from stunned Lycavorians who were staring at the two massive beasts and the much smaller one. Tina ripped her instruments from the hands of a man with little fanfare reaching up to slap him in the face as hard as she could. The man's

eyes looked at her with a wide gaze, but he made no move to hit her back or even speak as Miath moved a little closer to him.

“That’s for feeling me up you fucking asshole pervert!” She popped.

Anja placed her hands on Atropos’s chest as he rolled over slowly. “Atropos! Don’t move!”

Seanna settled to the ground on the opposite side of him, extending her hands along his side and lower hips. “He has several broken ribs, but no internal bleeding.” She spoke.

Atropos laughed even with the pain and looked at Anja. “Lilika... Lilika hits... hits harder than... then that fool.” He spoke.

Anja placed her hands on either side of his head and sent healing soft white pulses of through her hands as Seanna did the same from his chest. “Be still you fool. If I told Lilika what you have done this day she *will* beat you.” Anja whispered with a smile.

Martin snatched Nanac off the ground with one hand, using his TK power to augment his natural strength, which was considerable even without the added TK power. “I smell the blood of Chetak in your veins *igord!*” Martin screamed. “Only one of Chetak’s bloodline is worth anything, and he has more honor in his finger than you have in your entire decrepit body! Will I never be rid of his cursed name?”

Martin heaved Nanac’s body away from him towards the tunnel entrance watching with satisfaction as he slammed into the unyielding rock wall that remained. Nanac dropped to the floor of the cavern, his right arm now hanging useless at his side as the impact had shattered his collarbone and several of his ribs. Martin marched right up to him once more, grabbing him by his crushed shoulder. Nanac’s head came up as he howled in agony. Martin leaned over and glared into his face.

“No more!” He screamed. “No more will my people suffer under you! No more will...”

“Martin Leonidas... you must stop it!” Anja’s voice rose above the shouts and screams in the cavern causing eyes to widen all around them.

Martin’s head snapped around and he looked to where Anja knelt next to Atropos. She got to her feet quickly letting Atropos’s hand fall from within hers. Atropos nodded at her quickly, knowing that only she could stop his King from killing Nanac.

Onia scrambled to her feet her eyes wide and she moved for Anja a cruel look on her face. “This is your fault!” She screamed. “This is...”

Anja stepped up to the woman in a single blink and hit her square in the face with the calloused heel of her palm. Onia’s head snapped back savagely, her eyes rolling into the back of her head and she fell unconscious to the floor of the cavern from Anja’s blow, her body flipping over because of the momentum of the heel strike. “Take our daughter from us will you, you *upae*? You and what fucking army will do that?” Anja barked viciously to her unconscious form.

Martin stood up straight now, shoving Nanac to the floor of the cavern as he stepped toward Anja.

Nearly four dozen pairs of eyes watched as the diminutive red haired female stepped up to the tall Lycavorian. Martin lifted her into his arms, pulling her easily eight inches off the floor as he held her suspended in his arms and kissed her hard. Anja wrapped her arms around his head and returned the kiss with equal passion and desire, her legs lifting to slide along his hips seductively. Anja gasped in delight when he broke the kiss quickly to nuzzle her throat and neck firmly, inhaling her scent deeply. Anja grabbed his face and stared into his eyes as they returned to their normal dark brown color.

“I take it you missed me huh.” Anja said with a smile.

Martin grinned. “What do you think?” He answered. “Atropos?”

“I will live Milord!” Atropos’s voice came from behind them. Martin set Anja down and they both turned to see Seanna helping him to his feet.

Martin turned once more and saw Anja’s team with their own weapons now, each of them in positions all around the large gathering of men and women. Torma was standing just to Martin’s right, his snout only centimeters from Condar’s face, while Miath was standing between Nayeca and Jobel, his gray eyes watching the men and women that stood with at least seven or eight children among them.

Lisisa walked hesitantly up to where her father stood holding the petite Persian red haired female tightly against him with one arm. Anja saw her first, mainly because Jeth’s bulk moved behind Lisisa, maintaining an almost evil glare on Husen. Martin turned and saw her then and he smiled.

“Anja... Anja this is...” Martin held out his hand for Lisisa to take, but Anja was moving long before that.

“This is Lisisa!” Anja said with a huge smile as she took her hands and pulled Lisisa into a strong embrace. “We’ve come a long way to find you Lisisa.” Anja spoke softly as she held her. “I’m so very glad to meet you.”

Lisisa’s eyes were wide in surprise for all of three beats of her heart before she willingly surrendered to the welcoming feeling of love and acceptance. Martin stepped away from them and looked at the gathered men and women.

“Who is in charge here?” Martin barked. He noticed that all eyes went to where Condar sat on the floor of the cavern, Torma continuing to stare at him. Martin couldn’t contain his chuckle as the last of his anger bled off. “Well... now that’s poetic.” He spoke moving over to squat next to where Torma’s head was. He reached up and wrapped his arm as far around Torma’s lower jaw as he could, which wasn’t very far at all. “I see you have met my brother.” He spoke looking at Condar.

Condar tore his eyes from Torma’s cruel glare and met Martin’s gaze. “It... it is... it is a...”

Martin nodded. “Yeah... he is a dragon.” He looked at the man. “You have a lot of explaining to do friend. And why don’t you start by telling me that thing is?” Martin’s hand motioned to the blue/green tubular object that was suspended ten meters off the cavern floor and stretched as far as the eye could see.

Tina turned from where she stood holding the portable sensor in her fist. “I’ll tell you what it is Marty.” She spoke moving closer to him.

Martin turned. “Hit me.”

Tina was only a few feet away from him now, her eyes wide. “It’s a ship Martin.” Tina spoke with awe in her voice as she smiled. “It’s a fucking ship!”

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

EARTH THE WASTES

“You told us you would succeed Maruad.” The albino white skin of the creature speaking pulled back over his lips to reveal needle sharp teeth. “You told us if we killed the rider, this dragon would not be able to act! Not only did you fail in killing the rider, you failed in killing the she-elves!”

This secret mountain base was the last of the True People’s strongholds on the northern continent and the most heavily defended. Hundreds of their people resided within the caves and tunnels, heavy weapons set up at nearly every juncture. They had modern communications and facilities that they had managed to build into the mountain long ago to augment what they had discovered was already there. It had once served as a redoubt for the government that had ruled this land before the Great Fire. The One had led them here after years of wandering the wastes and preying on the humans and elves fool enough to enter the wastes.

Maruad turned from the small window that was allowing the sunlight to enter the dimly lit room. This portion of the mountain facility was only a few meters beneath the surface of the mountaintop and it was the only room where sunlight actually made it into the entire facility.

“It was not my mission to kill the rider.” Maruad spoke calmly. “That was a mission you gave to the humans. They failed in that not me. They also failed in killing the elfin War Master who I recommended you assassinate many years ago. He was growing too close to you then, yet you ignored me and decided to use that fool elf Anlain’s plan. Now Tareif not only has the means to find you, he has the power to destroy this entire mountain with but a word from his daughter. And do not think for a moment she wouldn’t give that order if she knew you were here.”

“You did not kill the she-elves Maruad.” The One spoke now from the chair at the head of the table. “That was your mission and you failed in that.”

“I was unable to kill them because I was taken by surprise by this new dragon and rider and fighting for my own life.” Maruad said returning to sit down in one of the chairs. “I told you before that there was a

possibility once the Heavyhorn appeared that others would follow. It appears I was right.” He looked directly at The One no fear in his eyes. “Now the question is how do we proceed?”

“First... what can you tell us about this new dragon and its female rider?” The One asked leaning forward in his chair. “She is Lycavorian you said... like the male?”

Maruad nodded slowly measuring his words. “Yes. She is a Spartan for she wields a Shi Viska, however there is more to her than meets the eye. I... I believe this is one of the females that...” Maruad remained silent.

“What?” The One spoke.

Maruad shook his head. “It is nothing.” He replied quickly. “The dragon is also a female as well... a pure Firespitter like Syrilth but quite a bit younger. I’d estimate she is somewhere between four and six hundred years old. A child in relation to their life spans. The same with the Heavyhorn. That tells me there are at least some dragons that survived the purge Chetak was conducting. These females had parents... so it stands to reason there are others.”

“And yet these two defeated you.” The second creature spoke leaning forward. “And they did so quite easily... even without the male rider.”

Maruad turned to The One. “Hurcan... tell this fool to keep his lips shut or I will remove his head from his shoulders and you will have one less warrior.”

The creature leaned forward to retort but Hurcan... The One... lifted his hand. “That is enough Duirt.” He spoke calmly. He met Maruad’s eyes. “Duirt has a point Maruad. Syrilth is bigger than both of these dragons and you have been using her for some thousand years now if what you tell us is true. Yet they defeated you.”

Maruad nodded. “Yes.” He said. “Syrilth replaced her mother when Liraie became unruly after the death of her mate and I had to kill her. And they did not defeat me... I chose to leave the battle. They had the upper hand at the moment and I felt it better to conduct a withdrawal to gather more information.”

“So your control of her is not slipping?” Hurcan asked.

Maruad shook his head quickly. “As long as I have the eggs she will serve me. Syrilth knows if she defies me I will destroy those eggs. They contain her brothers and sisters, and she is not aware that I heard her swear to her mother she would do anything to protect them. I have told you that Firespitters are viciously protective of their eggs. Syrilth will serve me as she has for a thousand years if she wants her siblings to continue to live.”

“And this new dragon?” Hurcan asked.

“It’s true that Syrilth is bigger than the Heavyhorn and this new dragon, but only by a meter or two.” Maruad spoke. “And this new dragon is a pure Firespitter like Syrilth as I said, though considerably younger. That will be our advantage. I will separate them and defeat them one at a time. Once that is done you can move against the female elves.”

Hurcan nodded. “The human Crescent escaped Eden City after your failed attack.” He spoke. “As did this elf fool Anlain. Our elf agents within Eden City say there is now a search on for someone called Talco. He is... they called him a Kavalian.”

Maruad’s head came up quickly. “A Kavalian? Are you sure?”

Hurcan looked at him. “You know of these... this species?”

Maruad nodded slowly. “They are similar to my people... but covered in hair all over. They are feline in nature and exceptionally vicious. The few reports I was able to steal from the Coven while they were here on Earth indicated they had been almost wiped out by the High Coven. They apparently declared war on the High Coven and they paid for that folly with the complete destruction of their empire.”

“They are enemies of the Coven then?” Hurcan asked.

Maruad nodded his head. “And my people as well.” He replied. “They also tried invading the Lycavorian Union a hundred years or so before the High Coven. That didn’t succeed either.”

“They do not seem to be very lucky.” Duirt spoke.

Hurcan nodded. “No they do not.”

“This information was in these reports you stole?” Duirt asked.

Maruad nodded. “Yes.”

“Perhaps you could make these available to us?” Duirt asked.

“If you wish.” Maruad spoke. “Do you intend to reach out to this Kavalian dog Hurcan?” He asked.

None of the three men in the room saw the small cardinal red colored eyes of the dragon hatchling ease back from the grate along the bottom of the floor. Nor did they hear the whisper like brush of talons across the metal surface as the hatchling turned and faded into the darkness of the air duct once more.

Syrilth twisted her head quickly at the small lance of pain that shot up her left foreleg. Her sienna colored body rested on the cool floor of the massive hanger that occupied the top of the mountain hideout. It was the only place large enough to hold her and her seven siblings that had hatched over the last five years. Her ochre colored eyes watched intently as the dark red carmine colored dragon licked the burn path on her leg slowly and carefully. It was only a very minor burn where the new Firespitter had singed through her psychic shield, but it still stung as her brother licked it once more to speed the healing.

It will heal in a few more hours Roluth. Syrilth told her brother and she saw his bright rust colored eyes turn to look at her. *Be at ease brother.*

Roluth was nearly as large as she was now Syrilth noted proudly. He had been the first of the seven eggs Maruad and the albino creatures had forced to hatch with their falsely generated weather conditions and primitive lights and heaters. His carmine red scales were healthy, but all of them were underfed and lacked the comforts of a real cave and home, and it showed in the sheen of their scales.

She burned through your Mindvoice shield sister? Roluth spoke softly even though they both knew that none of the albino creatures or even Maruad could Mindvoice on the level they were using now. *How is that even possible?*

Syrilth met his eyes and shook her huge head. *I do not know. She was very young... no more than six hundred years... and the Heavyhorn female only slightly older, but their power was incredible. The Firespitter's control and the intensity of her flame is not something I have ever seen Roluth. Not even from our mother and father. And the Heavyhorn... it is the second time she has hit me with some invisible weapon. In the air over the big water I thought perhaps I had twisted my wing... but it was something she did. It has to be.*

And the female wolf?

What I felt from her was staggering. Never have I felt such Mindvoice power from her kind before. Syrilth answered. *Far more than even the male that rides the Heavyhorn, though his is considerable as well. They must have absolute control of those dragons. And I sensed something else as well... in her blood. Maruad...he thought to use his aura on her as he has done with other females of his kind. She laughed at him Roluth. She spoke of a King... a new King.*

A King?

They have had training. Intense training to be able to do what they did. Syrilth said softly. *It is the only explanation.*

What do you think she meant? Roluth asked as he settled his huge bulk beside his older sister.

Syrilth shook her head. *I don't know. I am larger than both of them, yet they faced me without fear. Without question. Their eyes burned with fierceness. We did not get near the she-elves that Maruad wishes to kill. And the Firespitter came after us when we ran. She is faster than me Roluth.*

If the she-elves still live, Hurcan will want him to try again. Roluth spoke.

Syrilth nodded. *Yes... but not for at least a few days while I heal and they formulate another plan. Maruad believes my injury to be more than it is. I need time to think about what has happened.*

And to rest sister. Roluth told her. *He has had you out for days since the last moon.*

I keep wondering how these dragons came to be here Roluth. Syrilth said as ideas and circumstances raced through her mind. *They can not be in service of the Vampire Coven, their riders are Lycavorian. Like Maruad.*

He once worked for the Coven sister, you said this yourself. Roluth corrected her.

Syrilth looked at him. *Mother once told me that there was hundreds of our kind Roluth. Thousands. She said they forced her and father to fight them, lied to them about things that had happened. Maruad and others forced them to fight our own kind! Mother said that they lost this war and that is why Maruad and father's rider left the planet with them. The other Lycavorians they were fighting... they were killing our kind and mother said it was unlikely any survived except us. What... what if she was wrong Roluth?*

What are you saying Syrilth?

What if these dragons are from that planet? What if we are not the only ones left of our kind brother? Sylrith spoke. *Even if only a few hundred.*

Roluth's rust colored eyes grew slightly wider. *There would be... there would be females I could mate with!*

You foolish male! Sylrith admonished him with a tinge of humor in her voice as was her way. *Do you think of nothing else!*

Tell me you have not thought of it sister? Roluth said canting his head to the side. *A mate of your own? Children of your own? It is in our blood, and while you are quite attractive Sylrith... you are my sister. What did the Firespitter look like Sylrith? Was she lean and muscular? Were her scales shiny and smooth or...*

Sylrith's eyes grew wider. Roluth! *You are a genius!*

His rust colored eyes narrowed in confusion. *I am.*

Yes! They must hunt! They are dragons after all! Sylrith spoke. *I can tell Maruad you need to hunt for us because of my injury. You can fly high near the elf city until the Firespitter reveals herself. Then plunge on her and take her as your mate as is our way. As father did mother! Once you have mated with her she will be bound to you and she can help us!*

Help us to do what sister? Roluth spoke though Sylrith could feel his excitement in their connection at finding a mate.

Think brother! You and she can make clutches of eggs. You can help her to kill her rider and once she is free of this wolf female that controls her, she can search for where Maruad has our brothers and sisters hidden away. Sylrith explained. *There are only so many places he can keep seventy-three of our mother's eggs.*

Roluth began to see what his sister was saying. *Once she finds this place she can burn the white skinned creatures there.*

Sylrith nodded. *And then we can finally rid ourselves of Maruad and the others here. Then we will be free!*

Sylrith! Sylrith!

They both turned quickly to see the dark green eight week old hatchling madly flapping its wings as it rushed over to them.

Majeir! Where have you been little one? Sylrith demanded.

They watched as the meter and a half long hatchling skidded to a halt between them. *I was watching vile Maruad from the secret place.*

Majeir I have told you it is dangerous! Sylrith exclaimed.

I heard them talking sister! They did not know I was there! I masked myself just as you taught us. The small hatchling spoke proudly.

The first thing Sylrith had taught her seven siblings was the ability to mask their strong Mindvoice presence just as her mother had shown her. It was what allowed them to speak with one another without Maruad or any of the white skins hearing them.

What did you hear little one? Sylrith asked.

The white skins are angry with vile Maruad because he did not kill the she-elves. Majeir spoke quickly. *He spoke of mother and our brothers and sisters and how he controls you. They spoke of someone else too... but I do not remember.*

Sylrith lowered her head and nuzzled her young sister. *You have done well Majeir! But no more doing that unless I tell you, do you understand?*

But Sylrith...

No Majeir... I know you wish to help... but only go to the secret place when I tell you little one. It is safer that way. Heed my words Majeir.

Yes Sylrith.

Good... now go with the others and rest. Sylrith ushered the hatchling towards the darkened wall where the other six hatchlings of varying ages and sizes slept. Three females and three males all less than five years old. All her brothers and sisters. She watched for a few moments until she saw Majeir curl up under the wing of her older brother and then looked back to Roluth who was the oldest of the seven at exactly five years old. Sylrith had no doubt he would grow to look like their father and perhaps be the same size. He was already fast growing on her and would match her in size in another year or two perhaps.

Can you do this brother? It will not be easy... the Lycavorian female was powerful and this female Firespitter is sure to be under her complete control. You will need to be quick brother, and claim her on the first plunge, before she has time to recover and call her master.

Roluth nodded quickly. *You know I can Syrilth.*

I will tell Maruad you need to go out tonight. I will tell him before he takes the elf female he captured as we returned here to his bed. He will be occupied with her for at least two days before he tires of her. Syrilth spoke. *Two days Roluth. You must find where they hunt tonight. Once you know take her on the second night and mate with her.*

What if she denies me sister? Roluth asked.

She can't deny you Roluth. Mother told me it is the way of our kind. This is how we choose our mates. Syrilth spoke. *The females fly high... like when we hunt. The males fly above them and choose whichever one strikes their interest the most. Then they plunge upon them and take them. Mother told me that... that has been our way for thousands of years, even before... before she and father had to leave. You will like her brother... she has azure scales and her lines are smooth and elegant. She will give you strong eggs.*

I won't fail Syrilth.

AUTUMN MOON-CLASS ATTACK FRIGATE HAMMER OF THE GODS 1.3 LIGHT YEARS FROM EARTH

The small bridge of the *HAMMER OF THE GODS* was quiet, just the way he liked it. The third section was made up of nine men and women and himself. He had served on this ship for nineteen years now, advancing to the rank of Senior Lieutenant/Major. His next promotion would come within a few years and then he would get his own ship to command and then perhaps begin to attempt to find a mate and continue his bloodline. His mother was always commenting how he was so handsome and yet still single whenever he returned to Apo Prime, and he wanted to see the look on her face when he finally brought home a mate. Senior Lieutenant/Major Imror was third in command of the *HAMMER OF THE GODS* and had already participated in several major campaigns against the High Coven. He had been decorated six times for superior tactics and once for bravery after leading a boarding party against a High Coven *BLOODRUNNER* Heavy Frigate. That battle had given him the scar that traveled from just below his left ear down his neck and across his shoulder. The piece of bulkhead had nearly cleaved his head off, yet he had refused to leave the High Coven ship until their mission was done, and he had succeeded. He was known as an easy going officer, one who would look after his people as long as when they were on duty he got their very best. His command style had led to many citations for he helped his junior crew members whenever he could, even going so far as to assist two new officers pass several batteries of tests to earn advanced degrees from the Apo Prime University.

Imror lowered the data pad he was reading when he heard the two men at the operations consoles laughing softly. He allowed his section quite a bit of leeway in their actions on duty for he knew at the first sign of anything out of the ordinary they became all business. His section was the only one that the Captain did not bother to follow up on in the middle of their shift.

The *HAMMER* was currently holding station near the moon of Bor-Heso and tasked with monitoring the travel corridor towards Earth for any unknown ships. They were under full shroud as they usually were when on patrol. Imror had heard none of the crew complaining about their posting to Earth, and he believed many secretly believed it to be an honor to guard the planet their King considered home. It also helped that the elves, vampires and humans who called Earth home were friendly and open, in far more ways than any they knew back on Apo Prime. Imror was sure that most of the crew had been to Thermopylae at least once to see the burial monument of the King's father and honor his deeds.

"What is so funny Senior Tech Preni?" Imror asked with a small grin.

The man at the sensor console turned in his chair. "Durcais and I were attempting to figure out which of the Queens will give the King better looking daughters Lieutenant/Major." The man answered quickly. All of them heard the chuckles come from the other bridge crew members, including the two Lycavorian and one elf female.

“That is so typical of men.” The elf female spoke turning from the three consoles that encircled her at Helm Control.

“Come on Kyria, are you going to tell us you have never thought about bedding with the King?” The second man spoke as he turned in his chair.

The dark haired elf female snorted. “Why would I think about something that will never happen?” She spat at them playfully. “He already has an elfin Queen and an elfin Royal Concubine. That should be all the answer you need.”

The two men laughed. “Do we detect a note of superiority in your voice Kyria?”

“Of course you do fool!” She answered.

“I’ll have to talk to Orys about that.” Durcais spoke referring to her Lycavorian mate. “Last time I heard the two of you together it seems you were doing most of the howling. Kept me up most of the night too.”

That brought a round of laughter from everyone on the bridge and Kyria took it in stride. “At least my husband can make me howl Durcais.” She stated adding to the laughter that even Imror couldn’t help. “The last time you made a woman howl was when your mother gave birth to you.”

Durcais’s smile was wide. “And that was without trying!” He declared. Kyria couldn’t contain her own laughter at that comment and she shook her head as she turned back to her controls.

“So what do you think Lieutenant/Major?” Preni asked once more turning back to Imror in the command chair. “Durcais believes it will be Queen Aricia. I say it will be Queen Dysea. How can you not want to run your fingers through hair that color or look into eyes like hers?”

Kyria snickered in amusement. “How do you know a daughter will look like Queen Dysea fool?” She barked playfully. “The King has the purest Lycavorian blood that has ever been recorded. All of his children will look like him.”

“Bah... what do you know of genetics!” Preni spat back just as playfully.

“About as much as you.” Kyria popped.

Durcais laughed. “He knows nothing!”

Preni waved his hand at both of them and looked back to Imror. “You are single sir. What do you think? Honestly speaking?”

Imror smiled. “While I believe any daughter of the King and Queens will be stunning, in my humble opinion the smallest of his queens will give him the most beautiful daughters.” Imror spoke.

Preni and the others looked surprised. “Queen Anja?”

Imror nodded. “Imagine a female who would be three quarters Lycavorian of the King’s blood and one quarter Hadarian of Queen Anja’s blood. She would have her mother’s long red hair and her soft green eyes. She will have green eyes without question because of her Hadarian blood, but even with black hair like the King... she would be a vision.”

Kyria turned in her seat and looked at him. “That was elegant Lieutenant/Major.” She said.

Imror nodded to her. “Thank you Kyria.”

“You are just saying that sir, because Queen Anja has the largest *goldur* of all the Queens.” Kyria spoke. (Breasts)

Imror shrugged. “Well... there is that to consider.” He spoke with a huge grin. “With genes like that how can you go wrong?”

Preni and Durcais roared in laughter as Kyria shook her head. “Lycavorian men! You’re all the same!”

The soft beeping on his console caused Preni to turn as he was laughing and he viewed his console. His smile disappeared immediately and he turned fully to face his controls.

“Unknown contact!” He barked.

Those two words silenced the laughter and the entire bridge crew became all business.

“Preni?” Imror spoke as he came to his feet.

“Bearing four one three! Range... six million kilometers! Just entering the system! Hold on! Two... three... four more joining the first!”

“Classify them!” Imror barked. “Status of Shroud?”

“Shroud is operating at peak efficiency sir!” The voice from the other side of the bridge snapped out.

“I now have seven unknown contacts! Same bearing... range closing slowly!” Preni spoke crisply.

“Durcais talk to me.” Imror spoke stepping up behind the man’s chair.

“Unknown classification sir! They aren’t High Coven.” Durcais replied. “Trying to match them now! Stand by!”

“Helm, bring us out of the moon’s shadow slowly. One quarter on the sub lights!” Imror barked. “Let’s not disturb the gas clouds Kyria.”

“One quarter aye! Moving to point seven nine from current location.” She answered as her hands adjusted her controls.

Imror felt the *HAMMER* shift ever so slightly and he smiled. His bridge shift were superior to all others he had no doubts. “Faria... get the Captain up here.”

“Aye sir.” The second female nodded from her communications station.

“Sir...” Durcais spoke again. “Five of the ships are Mizarian Mark Three transports being escorted by two Limian *QUASAR*-Class Cruisers.”

Imror looked at the back of his head. “Limian? Durcais are you sure?”

Durcais nodded quickly and looked at him over his shoulder. “Positive sir. Their profile and power signatures match perfectly.”

“Why would the Limians be out here escorting Mizarian transports?” Imror asked no one in particular.

“Lieutenant/Major... we did get those new orders from Admiral Joarl. By order of Queen Aricia we are to maintain surveillance of all unknown and unregistered ships. Something to do with Kavalians.” Faria spoke from her console.

“Get me a copy of that order now!” Imror spoke.

“Captain will be here in two minutes! He says to maintain contact!” She told him.

Imror nodded. “Understood.”

“They are moving very slow.” Preni spoke. “Their formation is tight and they are moving very slow.”

“They are trying to maintain as low a sensor profile as they can.” Imror said. “They are outside normal transit routes and not trying to draw attention to themselves.”

Preni looked at Imror. “Why come this way if they are going to Earth?”

“Durcais what is the complement of a Mizarian Mark Three?” Imror asked.

“Forty-seven crew and up to five million metric tons of cargo.” Durcais replied instantly.

“How many troops?” The new voice asked.

Imror turned and saw the weathered face of his captain come onto the bridge, still pulling on his uniform jacket. “Captain Daro.”

The tall Lycavorian, his dark hair almost white moved onto the bridge. “Senior Tech Durcais?” He asked.

Durcais turned in his chair and looked at his captain. “Sir... three thousand four hundred if fully loaded.”

Daro nodded as he fastened his jacket. “Three thousand four hundred.” He said.

Faria handed Imror the data pad. “That order you wanted sir.”

Daro looked at him. “That is the order from Admiral Joarl?”

“Yes sir, I was going to verify its contents.” Imror spoke.

Daro smiled and squeezed Imror’s shoulder. “You will make a fine commander Imror. And I am proud you have served under me.”

“Thank you sir.” Imror said in confusion.

“It appears that we have a Kavalian Intelligence agent loose on Earth ladies and gentlemen.” Daro spoke as he finished fastening his jacket. “Queen Aricia has ordered all ships in Earth command to be aware of any unknown contacts that might be trying to slip past our regular screening lines and make it to the planet.”

Imror looked at him. “An attack by Kavalians?” He asked. “They haven’t been heard from in nearly three centuries sir.”

Daro nodded. “Yes I know. We all are old enough to know the history behind the Kavalians and the Union. We are all also old enough to remember just how exceedingly brutal and violent they can be. If these ships are indeed carrying Kavalian troops and they get down to Earth’s surface...”

Imror’s eyes grew a little wider. “Helm... you will execute a turn to port and accelerate to one half on the sub light drive!” He barked. “Bring us to within preferred main sensor array range and hold!”

Kyria nodded without hesitation. “Aye sir!”

“Durcais prepare a full passive sensor sweep from the main array!”

“Yes sir!”

Daro nodded to him. “Bring all weapons and shields to stand by Imror. Faria get me a line to Admiral Joarl... I don’t care how many repeaters you have to use.”

“Understood sir!”

Daro met Imror’s eyes. “Queen Aricia is on Earth with her dragon Isheeni, as well as Commander Isra of *Mjolnir’s Hand* and his dragon. They will find the Kavalian scum there. It’s up to us to make sure they don’t have company they don’t want.”

EDEN CITY

Tarifa already had all the company she cared to entertain at the moment and that was in the form of Isra’s pile driving fifteen inch cock as he gripped her slim hips and drove himself into her, grinding his hugely thick organ inside her belly with expertise. Tarifa felt every single inch of his massive pole filling her, every wonderful vein that adorned his beautiful cock firmly pressed against the walls of her sopping pussy. Her hands clenched into fists on the bed, pulling the soft sheets with her long fingers as she ground her teeth together, trying in vain to hold off the staggering orgasm that was building deep in her belly.

“Isra... ohhhh... harder my... harder my mate! My husband! Please... don’t... don’t tease me...ohhhh!” She cried out.

Tarifa could concentrate on nothing else at the moment, as her wolf blood burned hotly for her mate and he increased the speed and power of his dominating thrusts into her depths. Tarifa shook her head back and forth, her raven hair flying in all directions as she fought the losing battle against the impending volcanic orgasm. Isra’s aura had long ago enveloped her within its warm embrace, driving her and Aihola into a frenzy as it always did. Neither of them could deny him, they didn’t want too. His aura was pure and wild and filled with so much passion and desire for them that it set both of them on fire no matter what they did. Even Aihola her Drow Mistress and perhaps the strongest willed woman Tarifa had ever met, even with her half vampire genes Aihola was putty in Isra’s all powerful embrace. Isra had taken each of them dozens of times in the last week, sometimes alone but more often than not together because it was they who had initiated the encounter, so happy that they finally had the man they craved so deeply over the last year. The one man that filled their beings even though he had been millions of kilometers away on a different planet.

The one man they could not chase from their dreams.

Tarifa’s worry that Isra might not be able to accept Aihola for who she was; half vampire and half elf, that worry had quickly been dashed aside that first night together. The first night he made them both scream his name to the moon. Something they had done several times that first night, and many more times since. They did not tire of him, exploring every single delicious millimeter of his Spartan hard body, and they had spent hours withering in delight under his own explorations. Dekton may have made Tarifa fully wolf, and imparted Aihola with the beginnings of wolf blood in her veins, but it had been Isra’s blood, so pure and powerful, that seared them to their cores. It was Isra’s huge veiny cock that they wanted filling them in every way; possessing them until they were exhausted and unable to move.

He had possessed them in such a way that no male Lycavorian would even come near them now without respect in his eyes. They all knew who had claimed these two elf females, for his wild timber scent permeated their essence. They were bound to him now in a way that they cherished every day they woke up in his arms, and that bond was just as deep as Tarifa shared with her Drow Mistress.

Tarifa gasped loudly then as Isra leaned over her back, his steel hard abdomen and chest slick with sweat as it pressed to her lava hot skin. His will breaking cock was firmly seated inside her, his huge, hot pulsing balls pressed against the engorged lips of her supremely excited pussy. His head lowered and she felt his dirty blond hair caressed her shoulders just before his lips and nose firmly nuzzled the back of her elfin ear.

“Isra... no... not... not fair!” Tarifa gasped out in delighted words as her entire body shuddered in rapturous pre-orgasmic enchantment from his caress. He knew the backs of hers and Aihola’s elfin ears were so very sensitive, and he used this to his advantage all the time.

“I... I think my slave... I think she wants to explode my love!” Aihola’s raspy out of breath voice filled Tarifa’s ears and her sapphire eyes flew open as she felt Aihola’s moist pink tongue trace the underside of her exposed throat.

“Mistress!” Tarifa cried out. “Please... you...no... too much! Ohhhh please...”

Isra lowered his face to the opposite side of Tarifa’s head slowly; his violet colored eyes, eyes that she and Aihola could not stop staring into, wide and fully changed now. His long wolf fangs had extended as well now and he nibbled her shoulder, rotating his powerful hips making sure Tarifa felt every glorious inch of his buried cock.

“Do... do you want... want to explode, my luscious she-elf wolf mate?” He gasped into her elfin ear. “Explode while... while our Mistress tastes your blood!”

Aihola felt her heart sing at those words as her pink lips caressed the silky soft skin of Tarifa’s throat. Isra may have been a Spartan, and by his very nature dominant, but he knew what his Drow mate was and he willingly let her play that role whenever she desired. He had already taken her twice this night, leaving her legs quivering in the aftereffects of his assiduous performance, his seed warming her belly and his aura filling her with his love. Aihola laid beneath Tarifa’s sexually besieged body, their breasts and nipples rubbing together with every deep calculating drive of Isra’s enormous cock into her beloved’s depths.

Tarifa’s sapphire eyes exploded open, now fully changed into her wolf eyes and her fangs bursting from her gums.

“Yes!” She squealed. “Take me... fill me... taste me!”

Isra smiled and bit down lightly on her shoulder, eliciting a gasp of extreme pleasure from one of the two women that possessed his soul. He grabbed her hips once more, knowing he was just as close as she was to exploding. As he began to stroke into her delicious body once more with power and longing, Isra could only thank the spirit of King Leonidas for guiding his actions over these last two years. First for allowing him to discover the sapphire eyed, raven haired elfin beauty in his hands before his brother had taken her virtue; second for allowing him to experience the velvet feel of her fertile, lithe body wrapped around his; thirdly for bringing the just as insanely sensuous and succulent female Drow into his life and lastly for giving him the strength the break away from the life his father had given him, to find something far more precious and endearing.

Two female elves that filled his very soul, one full wolf the other half wolf and half vampire, both of them more than he could have ever hoped for. And they were both his. Two women who would share in all that he was for eternity. Two women who loved him just as completely as he loved them and who would give him many fine and strong children so that he could raise them to be everything he was not.

These thoughts quickly left his head as he felt Tarifa’s pussy muscles clamp down like a vise on his plunging cock. His violet eyes burst open as her screams of orgasmic ecstasy split the air. Isra slammed himself into her scorching depths one last time, feeling her hands grasp his wrists as his cock swelled and he erupted inside her, his scorching hot balls filling her with his seed. His howl matched Tarifa’s in every way. Her body shuddered almost violently in her own orgasm and he fell forward onto her back just as Aihola pierced Tarifa’s neck with her vampire fangs and sent both of them into a land he did not want to return from.

EDEN CITY 5000 FEET

Aelnala shook her head quickly to shake off the effects of Isra’s passionate tryst with Tarifa and Aihola. Her heart was extremely happy that her bonded brother had found them once more, but she would have to learn to block out the times they spent giving pleasure to each other. She had not expected the effect they had on him and surprisingly the effect he had on them. Aelnala heard Isheeni chuckle within Mindvoice.

You will become used to it Aelnala, and learn how to shield your thoughts from the intensity of it. Isheeni spoke within their connection.

Is it always so... so powerful Isheeni? Aelnala asked.

As deeply bonded as you and Isra are... as Aricia and I are... yes. It is even worse for me when Aricia comes into phase. She and Martin mate like dragons then, and for a Lycavorian the King has superior stamina.

And when they bring For'mya to their bed... it drives Torma crazy with lust. Isheeni answered with a laugh. When we return from hunting I can teach you what I do to block the majority of it.

Aelnala turned her head as she glided along searching the ground below her with her keen eyes for a beast large enough to eat. The timber and fields here on Earth were filled to overflowing with prey of all kinds, and she never had to fly for more than an hour before she found something. Isheeni was above her a thousand meters enjoying the thermals produced by the warm night air and simply gliding along. Since she had been here they had been splitting the hunting duties so that one of them was always on guard against a surprise attack from the red dragon.

I'm sure you don't complain. Aelnala said with a soft laugh of her own.

Isheeni chuckled. *No... I don't. He may be a big brute... but he is my big brute and he leaves my wings shivering in delight every time he takes me because of his size.* Isheeni answered quickly. *Aelnala you should present yourself at the next Harmony of Two Hearts Ceremony.*

Isheeni you know I can not produce eggs. What would be the point? No male will choose to mate with me. Aelnala said casually.

You are young and beautiful Aelnala. Isheeni told her. *And I know for a fact that Miath favors you. Miath?*

Surely you have noticed the way he gazes at your tail when we are all together at the Island Palace. You may not be able to produce eggs Aelnala but you are an attractive female. Surely you can smell his desire for you. Isheeni spoke.

Miath is a young fool! And reckless!

Isheeni laughed once more. *He is not much younger than you or I. And his very nature matches that of Queen Anja. I do not believe any of the Queens is sedate. Martin would not be attracted to a sedate female. That is not in his nature. And who are you to talk about being reckless. Isn't it you and Isra who whipped through the Lifter traffic of Apo Prime merely to win a bet?*

Aelnala laughed. *That was fun! I can see where that would be true in regards to the King as well.* Aelnala spoke.

You have to admit... for a younger male... Miath is very tasty to look at. His scales are so green and healthy. Not like my Torma's... but I have always preferred his black scales. They are so powerful and smooth. Isheeni said.

He is... he is handsome. Aelnala said softly. *But... he would never commit to me. He deserves a female that can give him children. He... a stag Isheeni! A large one too!*

Go! I will drop and cover you!

Aelnala dipped her head, folded her wings and dove for the ground.

The huge mountain elk never saw its death descend silently from the skies above. Aelnala swooped above the large beast, snapping its neck instantly as she gathered it into her talons and bit down savagely on its head. As she climbed back into the clouds she saw Isheeni descending to join her. Her honey colored eyes blinked when she saw the large shadow far above Isheeni pass by in the clouds above her, but then Isheeni was beside her.

What is it? Isheeni asked.

Aelnala shook her large head as they climbed and headed back towards Eden City. *I don't know. I thought I saw a shadow in the clouds above you.*

Isheeni turned her head as well, searching the clouds above them as they pulled away from their hunting area. *I see nothing.*

Perhaps it was just my eyes.

They were keen enough to catch dinner. Isheeni joked. *And that is what matters. I will hunt tomorrow night.*

Roluth dipped from the clouds once more, his rust colored eyes gazing at Isheeni's sleek elegant dragon form as they flew back towards the elf city. He felt the desire surge within him as he watched the smooth motions of her wings and the delightful motions of her tail. Yes... she was beautiful as Syrilth said. Roluth had felt the tremors within Mindvoice of the two females speaking, and it surprised him that he could not discover the level they were on. It mattered not, once he plunged into her and she was his, the sapphire scaled dragon would talk with him. She would be his mate. She would have to talk with him.

Roluth tilted his wings minutely and he lifted back into the clouds.

Syrlith! I have found where they hunt! I will take her tomorrow night when they return! He projected to his sister.

Isra traced his finger down Tarifa's tanned shoulder slowly, his other hand slowly caressing the satin like ebony thigh of Aihola on his other side. They were stretched out and pressed up against either side of his body, Tarifa's face nestled into the crook of his shoulder, while Aihola's head rested on his broad and leanly muscular chest. Her delicate fingers absently traced the muscles of his abdomen, to include the scars. Their combined scents of peach and cherry blossoms filled his senses and he couldn't help but smile in contentment. He thought perhaps he felt like his King felt when lying with his Queens in his arms.

Tarifa's musical voice laughed softly within his head. *Is that what we are to you?* She asked.

Isra smiled and nuzzled her forehead. He no longer shielded himself from these two women and they had free reign within his mind.

"You are *my* Queens." He spoke softly and with great sincerity in his voice they noticed. "And you make me feel like a King... yes."

"I can't begin to describe what you make us feel." Aihola spoke turning her head over and staring up at his face along his flat rippled abdomen and chest.

"I don't think they make words for it *Nya Istel*." Tarifa agreed.

"Well... I would hope that is a good thing." Isra said with a grin.

Aihola kissed his abdomen softly. "Oh yes... a very good thing."

Tarifa chuckled. "We need a bigger bed however." She spoke as evenly as she could. "This one is just not up to the task."

Isra and Aihola laughed at her words. "I will make it a priority for wherever we end up." He said.

Tarifa pulled her face from the spot on his shoulder. "What do you mean? Wherever we end up?"

"It is nothing." He spoke quickly. "A minor slip of the tongue."

Aihola lifted her head up now and gazed at him with her amber eyes. "Your tongue does not slip Isra... and Tarifa and I should know as much as you have used it on us! Now what do you mean?"

"Speak Commander... or your Queens *will* make you speak!" Tarifa said.

Isra smiled. "That sounds inviting." He said.

Tarifa punched him lightly on the shoulder. "Isra stop! What did you mean?"

"Ok... ok..." He said. "I heard Martin and Deia talking a few weeks back. Before all this began. They were talking about two things actually. Deia was very impressed with what the three of you have managed to do here on Earth with almost no guidance from Apo Prime. To impress Deia I have learned is quite a feat. She wanted to inquire of Martin if he knew whether one of you would be willing to take a position on Apo Prime as Ambassador for Earth. She knows if will be either Selene, or you and Aihola together. She knows there is not one of you without the other. I assumed he was going to ask you when they came to Sparta again in two months."

"What does that have to do with you?" Aihola asked.

Isra looked at them. "General Vengal and General Vistr have formed and trained a new unit over the last year. Ever since the incident with my father. They are called *Durcunusaan*."

"Wolves of the Blood." Aihola said softly.

Isra nodded. "It is a group of Lycavorians known to have the purest of blood, and then elves and humans who have volunteered for the posting." He explained. "Their only mission will be to safeguard all those who Martin and the Queens deem family. Since Martin regards the two of you and Selene as sisters, you will have your own detachment."

"Isra... more security?" Tarifa exclaimed.

"It was not my doing *Sadormacah!*" He spoke quickly looking at Aihola. "Believe me *Ceiricah*. Truly." (Sapphire Eyes. Amber eyes.)

"But you did not protest it." Aihola said. "You know we have more than enough security as it is now Isra my love. We do not want more."

Isra nodded. “Yes... and all of that will go away once this crisis is resolved. Except for the *Durcunusaan*. Each of you will have two... your father Tarifa... your Drow Elder Aihola. Martin... and Aricia both are adamant that nothing happens to those they care about. Not like what happened to her. It was actually Aricia who commissioned Vengal and Vistr in the first place I believe.”

“So what is so special about these *Durcunusaan*?” Tarifa asked. “That they will replace all the security we have now.”

“They are all Tier Six Mindvoicers for one.” Isra told them. “And as well as their usual training they have been trained to fight dragons among other things.”

“Why would they be trained to fight dragons?” Aihola asked.

“Because the King and Dragon Elder Mother Arzoal are not foolish enough to believe that the High Coven will not someday or somehow attempt to steal dragon eggs for their own purpose and succeed.” Isra replied. “That is why Aricia and I are going to devote all our time to finding the clutches of dragon eggs here on Earth once the *Durcunusaan* arrive tomorrow. With them protecting you both, it will free us to find this fool Kavalian who thinks he will lead his disgusting race here for conquest. While your father and Lynwe does that... Aricia and I will deal with these white skinned creatures and the dragons.”

“Admiral Joarl is giving us a briefing tomorrow correct?” Tarifa asked.

Isra nodded. “And you will meet your guards.”

“So what does all this have to do with you and us?” Tarifa asked.

“If you decide to remain here, I will be the representative of *Mjolnir’s Hand* in this sector of Lycavorian Union territory.” Isra told them. “If you make the decision to come to Apo Prime as Earth’s Ambassadors, there is a new position that will fall under purview of *Mjolnir’s Hand*, as overall security for Ambassadors on Apo Prime. Either way... we will be together.”

Isra saw the glint in both their eyes as they realized they would not have to suffer through weeks or months of separation once all of this was over. “So... you would not travel if we stayed here or moved there?” Tarifa asked.

Isra shook his head. “I would not be gone longer than three or four days at a time if that.” He said. “I would be detailed to maintain an area to yet be built for members of *Mjolnir’s Hand* to stay and train while they travel nearby within the system. Andreus would be happy with coming here or remaining on Apo Prime. Neither he nor Kmyla have a preference. Only that I let them know as soon as possible so they can plan to move if you come to Apo Prime.”

Tarifa looked at Aihola who was as equally wide eyed as she was. “Isra we...”

Isra put a finger to her lips silencing her words. “No *Sadormacah*. No decisions tonight.” He spoke softly. “Tonight we just enjoy each other. I want to sleep with my mates in my arms.”

Aihola snuggled closer. “I like the sound of that.” She said.

Tarifa did the same and let her head fall back to Isra’s shoulder. “As do I.”

ELEAR WAINN

The streets were quiet as Dysea moved confidently along the walkway. The long cloak covered her entire body, the cowl drawn up over her head. Lexi moved along effortlessly next to her as the sun continued to drop below the towering buildings.

“Dysea?” Lexi asked as they walked. Dysea continued to walk, as if not hearing her Spartan Captain. Lexi reached out gently placing her hand on Dysea’s arm. “Milady Dysea?”

Dysea’s head snapped up and her emerald eyes turned to Lexi. “Huh?”

“Dysea are you alright?” Lexi asked.

She had been Dysea’s Captain for nearly two years now, since the first days she had come from Sparta and there was nothing she would not do for her Queen. Dysea treated her not as an underling, but as an equal. When her relationship with Isabella had become something serious, Lexi thought for sure she would be reassigned, but it was in fact Isabella who insisted she remain. She was as close to Dysea and Isabella as Andreus and Isra were with King Leonidas.

“Yes Lexi. I’m sorry.” Dysea spoke.

“Milady we must do something.” Lexi said. “What... what we just witnessed. It was not right.”

Dysea met her eyes. “I agree Lexi. I do.” She spoke. “The question is... what? They have broken no laws.”

“Milady... they...” Lexi started.

Dysea nodded. “Yes I know... but what exactly did we witness Lexi? I can not explain it. Can you?”

“You felt it didn’t you? What the others felt? What I smelled?” Lexi asked.

Dysea nodded quickly. “Yes. Quite strongly in fact. I am still half elf remember.” Dysea looked up at the sky, the towering skyline filled with buildings and Lifter traffic above them. “I smelled it as well. Amber and pine. And the music.”

They had sat in the amphitheater as far back as the seating would allow, and they had done nothing but listen as the man spoke. There were several hundred male and female elves in the crowd, most of them just sitting and using the theater as a means to do other work. Dysea and Lexi did the same thing until the time the schedule said this speaker for this group would arrive according to his permit. He was a large elf, larger than any that either of them had seen. He was easily Nauta Melme’s height but not as muscular. His blond hair was the color of wheat and he had dirty brown eyes from what they could see from their seats. He had begun speaking without regard that none of the men and women in the theater were actually listening. A soft score of music began to filter through the theater as he spoke of the intense corruption of the Lycavorian Union. The corruption and oppression of its officials including its King. He did not raise his voice, but spoke clearly and firmly, his tone almost never changing. As the music continued to play both Dysea and Lexi detected the faint scents of amber and pine as it began to filter into the arena as well. It was after this scent had linger for several minutes that men and women began to take notice of the man as he walked back and forth on the stage.

Dysea watched him as he talked... his words lost on her really... her eyes focused on his movements and his eyes. She felt an almost surreal sensation as she looked at him. She felt drawn to him in a way that no man had ever drawn her. The sound of his voice echoed in her elfin ears smoothly, like that of a beating heart, a rhythmic vibration that tickled her elfin senses. As she watched him intently, entranced now like the other elves, she could have sworn that she saw his eyes begin to glow with a soft white background light.

Unlike the other elves however, Dysea was also half Lycavorian now, Martin’s blood swirling in her veins. She was coming into cycle and the female wolf part of her was beginning to let her know that she wanted her wolf mate. Her blood was beginning to call out for Martin and it enhanced her wolf senses almost to the point of super sensitivity. It was these senses that detected the shadows of other cloaked figures moving among the many shadows of the arena, spraying something into the air all around the seated elves from hidden containers that expelled an almost hidden mist.

As quickly as it had begun it was over. Dysea and Lexi both had shaken their heads realizing that nearly two hours had passed since the man had entered. He was now gone, but dozens of the elves that were present were following him and the cloaked figures that retreated behind him. Dysea and Lexi had left quickly, Dysea feeling a sense of emptiness inside her she had never felt before.

Dysea it is just as For’mya’s father and the High Minister explained in their report. Iriral’s voice filled her conscious mind and Dysea breathed out as the strength and clarity of Iriral’s mind filled her. Just as the Elder Mother said.

I know Iriral. I felt it as well my bonded sister. The question I need to find an answer too... is what to do. Dysea spoke. *They broke no laws that we could see. He... this man... he talked. That is all he did... and disagreeing with the government is not a crime in the Union.*

Those that followed him. Iriral said. *They were brought to a building not far from you Dysea. They went in... they have not come out yet. I followed them from high up above the Lifter traffic.*

Dysea smiled and looked at Lexi. *Are you sure?*

Yes.

Lexi and I will move there now. Dysea spoke. “Iriral has discovered where some of those that followed this man went. We will go there and see what we can discover.” Dysea spoke as they began walking again. “Perhaps there is something...”

Dysea and Lexi stopped when they saw the three figures approaching. All of them wore long dark cloaks just like the ones in the theater and they had appeared out of the darkness of the alley.

Keep walking. Dysea spoke softly within Mindvoice.

They are elves. Lexi spoke as they began walking again. *There is something different about them though. Their scent isn't right.*

Yes... it smells bitter. All of them. Dysea agreed as they continued down the street.

Dysea... three more have appeared from the darkness in front of you! Iriral's excited voice broke in. *They will meet the main street just as you cross in front of the alley!*

Lexi? Dysea asked.

They must have followed us from the theater. Lexi spoke calmly.

Why pick us to follow? Dysea spoke. *There were dozens of others who did not follow this man when he left. I can detect nothing from them except their scent. Iriral?*

I sense nothing either. Iriral replied. *That is not possible my sister. Every sentient being has a Mindvoice signature, whether they can use this skill or not.*

Yes I know. And that means they are guarded against intrusion into their minds. Dysea spoke. *Elves do not have the ability to Mindvoice unless it is passed to them as Nauta Melme did with me and For'mya. If they are guarding against Mindvoice intrusion they know that they are following two Lycavorians.*

We did not reveal ourselves the entire time we were in the theater. Lexi spoke. *How could they know that Dysea?*

Martin's blood. Iriral replied quickly. *The King's blood within Dysea will mark her as Lycavorian unless she reveals herself. It is just naturally more powerful.*

The how is not important. Dysea said calmly. *Their intentions however seem to be to at least stop us.*

Then let's confront them. Lexi spoke quickly.

I do not think that wise. Iriral said again. *Something is not right with them sister. It does not feel right.*

I agree Iriral. Dysea spoke. *But we will know nothing more than what we know now unless we act.*

Use caution. Both of you. I will remain above you and make sure there are no surprises. Iriral said. *And I will not show myself unless necessary.*

Very well. Dysea said. *Lexi are you ready?*

Spartan's are always ready. Lexi answer as her fingers curled around the shaft of her *Nehtes* under the long cloak.

Remember... we want at least one alive. Dysea spoke.

Only one? Lexi asked.

If their intent is hostile... one left alive will suffice. Dysea answered. Her normally calm and friendly voice was flint hard. *Like Bella... I have developed a dislike for being hunted.*

Dysea and Lexi came to abrupt halts just before the alley; Dysea whirling to face the three cloaked figures behind them as Lexi remained facing the ones who appeared from the alley like silent ghosts. Their sudden movement caught the three figures trailing them by surprise and they came to abrupt halts themselves.

"Perhaps you would like to explain why you are following us?" Dysea asked, her voice carrying to the three figures. They were definitely elves Dysea determined, but their scents were altered somehow, and they appeared taller than most elves.

"Do... do not be alarmed." The male voice spoke as one of the three stepped forward. "I am called Unlec."

"Your name... and the names of your companions are of no concern of mine." Dysea spoke calmly. "I asked why you were following us."

"The leader of our Order noticed you sitting in the crowd just now." Unlec spoke evenly.

"The leader of your Order?" Dysea asked maintaining her illusion of ignorance.

"Yes... The Order of Artre. The First Elfin King." Unlec replied. "He is the one you heard speak today."

"I wasn't paying attention." Dysea said quickly.

"He would like to extend an invitation for you and your companion to attend a gathering. It is not far from here." Unlec spoke.

"We are not interested." Dysea said.

"I'm quite sure you will find him a gracious host." Unlec continued. "He was surprised to see two Lycavorian females within the crowd, but it made him very happy to see his message is being heard."

"His message?" Dysea asked. "What message is that?"

“His message of the corruption of the Union. His message of peace and tranquility.” Unlec told her. He lifted his arms and pulled back his hood revealing an angular elfin face, his ears very prominent. His dark eyes however were what made the alarm bells within Dysea began to go off. His eyes were wild and fanatical.

Dysea shook her head. “We are not interested as I said.”

“Master Artre wanted me to insist that you attend.” Unlec spoke. “He knows that you will be pleased by what you discover about him.”

“Thank you... but I do not wish to discover anything of your Master... Unlec is it?” Dysea spoke as her hand removed the *Nehtes* from its thigh holster under her cloak. The folds of her cloak hid her action easily.

Unlec nodded. “I am the Master’s Viceroy.”

“Yes well... I only wish to return home for the evening.” Dysea said. “Something you and your friends are preventing.”

Unlec motioned to the men on either side of him and in front of Lexi. “They are disciples of Master Artre. We willingly do his bidding.”

“We do our own bidding.” Lexi popped.

“Master Artre insisted that the two of you join him.” Unlec spoke his voice still smooth and calm. “He was quite adamant. He wishes to show you peace and happiness and pleasure. That is all he desires.”

“My desires are my own and not something your Master has any control over.” Dysea spoke sternly. “And we will find our pleasure of our own accord thank you. And both of us are quite happy with what we have.”

“Are you so sure?” Unlec said. “Master Artre said he felt a willingness to explore in you both. And there was sadness in your hearts.”

“Your Master was wrong.” Dysea spoke. “Please tell your friends to remove themselves from our path.”

Unlec smiled. “I’m afraid I can not do that.” He said just as calmly as if he was asking for the price of a piece of fruit in the market. “The Master insisted I return with you.”

“So this is where you force us to go with you?” Lexi asked as her body tensed for action.

“Master Artre was very specific.” Unlec replied.

“You do not want to do this.” Dysea spoke. “Trust me.”

“Oh... but I do.” Unlec replied. His face changed then and shifted into a vicious snarl. “Take them!”

The snik of two *Nehtes* extending was very loud on the street, and Unlec’s eyes grew wide in surprise. Dysea and Lexi were two dark blurs as both of them spun with eye popping speed in opposite directions, the long spears spinning effortlessly in motion.

Dysea slapped the flat side of her spearhead against Unlec’s jaw with a powerful flick of her wrist. Her emerald eyes went a little wider when all it did was snap his head around quickly and slice open his cheek. His head came back instantly to look at her, death in his dark eyes and Dysea knew then this was going to be a fight. No normal elf should have been still standing after that blow. When Martin took her and changed her, Dysea gained the strength, quickness and incredible endurance of a Lycavorian. While not on a scale as a full blooded Lycavorian, she was far superior to any normal elf.

“Lexi!” Dysea barked.

“I know!” Lexi snapped back as she ripped her *Nehtes* from the abdomen of one cloaked elf in front of her and he did nothing but glare at her as she jumped back.

“They are Spartans!” Unlec shouted. “Kill them now!”

Dysea rolled to her right just as she heard Iriral’s roar from above and a stream of flame shot by on her left side engulfing one of the cloaked figures as Iriral landed a few meters away. The screams of the elf were horrible to hear as he ran for perhaps ten meters before falling to the ground withering as he burned. Dysea lifted her left arm, throwing her cowl back as she called her Shi Viska and Iriral let loose with another trumpet of anger and slashed her thick tail forward. While her tail did not have the bony hammer like protrusion on its tip as the tails of Heavyhorns did, it was still a savage weapon that Iriral did not hesitate to use. The tip of her tail caught another of the cloaked figures, one who was lifting a weapon to fire on Lexi, directly in the chest. The sound of bones snapping was very audible in the night air and the figure was lifted into the air and went sailing.

Dysea rolled once more under Iriral’s slashing tail, complete faith in her bonded dragon sister not to crush her. She came up in a crouch and launched her Shi Viska at another cloaked attacker. He was in the

process of turning towards the dragon to lift the hand blaster when the silver shield, razor's extended along its edge in flight, bit deeply into his neck and continued on past his body. His finger flexed involuntarily on the trigger of his hand weapon, the thin beam striking Iriral's psychic shield and bouncing harmlessly into the air. His head however landed with a thud on the ground at his feet as Iriral's talons came down across his body and opened his chest cavity to the night air.

Dysea spun around as her Shi Viska returned, her emerald eyes seeking Unlec. She spotted him moving quickly across the street and lifted her Shi Viska to launch it when she heard the scream of pain.

She and Iriral spun towards the sound and saw Lexi staggering back, holding her hand to her chest, the large bladed weapon protruding from just above her breast.

"Lexi! No!" Dysea screamed lifting her *Nehtes* without thought and launching it with all of her combined elf and Lycavorian strength.

One of the cloaked figures was on the ground at her feet, Lexi's *Nehtes* protruding from his neck, blood pumping onto the ground from the wound. Dysea's *Nehtes* struck the cloaked figure dead center of his chest with enough force to lift him off his feet and impale him completely to the wall behind him just as Iriral's huge head leaned over like a lightning strike and her massive jaws clamped shut on the last of the cloaked figures still standing. His screams died within the grasp of her mouth as she bit him in half as easily as a twig, throwing the upper portion to the side as his legs and waist fell to the street.

Dysea scrambled to Lexi's side, pulling her into her arms. Blood was pouring from the wound explosively, and Dysea yanked the blade free, mashing her hand down over the wound. "Lexi can you shift?" She cried.

"Can't... I can't focus!" Lexi gasped as blood spilled from her lips. "You must get to... safety my Queen!"

"I'm not leaving you!" Dysea barked as she pulled Lexi closer into her arms. She slammed her hand down on the small transmitter at her belt setting off the emergency beacon that Martin made all of them wear now. She returned her hand to the wound on Lexi's chest, pushing down hard in an attempt to stop the bleeding. "I forbid you to die on me Captain! I forbid it!" Dysea screamed.

The last one escaped Dysea! Iriral exclaimed moving up protectively to stand near them. *He blended into the darkness of the surrounding buildings.*

"Lexi... four minutes! I've activated the beacon! Four minutes Captain! Stay with me!" Dysea cried pushing down on the wound. "They will be here in four minutes! You have to stay with me Spartan! Do you hear me? You are not allowed to die on me!"

Lexi's hand came up and grabbed Dysea's wrist tightly. She nodded her head slowly, her blue eyes unfocused, but very much open and Dysea saw the smile split her bloody lips. "I... I will not leave you... my Queen!"

EARTH EDEN CITY COMMAND CENTER

"I had everything we have on the Kavalians sent to you my Queen." Admiral Riall spoke from the huge monitor at the end of the room while Admiral Joarl handed out the data pads to everyone at the table. "It's not much... but it's more than what you have there I assume."

Aricia, Isra, Tarifa, Aihola and Selene sat at the large conference table, while Lynwe and Layna stood behind Selene leaning against the wall. Tareif and Steven stood to the opposite side of the room near the doors. Joarl moved to the end of the table and sat in the only remaining chair when he finished handing out the pads.

"I can tell you with absolute certainty that this Kavalian is still within the city limits somewhere." Joarl spoke.

"How can we be so sure?" Selene asked.

"General Lynwe, the Queen and I have reviewed the security footage from all eight Eden City entrances for the last thirty-six hours personally." Joarl spoke. "There is nothing to indicate he has left the city."

Isra's violet eyes went to where Aricia sat, her hands curled around the large mug of coffee. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Aricia... I...* He spoke quickly in Mindvoice. *You didn't tell me you had done this.*

Aricia's azure blue eyes fell on him quickly. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Do not even think about apologizing Isra! You have only just re-discovered them and it was nothing to look at the security footage while Isheeni and Aelnala were out hunting. Trust me... when Martin and I are reunited... we will not be attending any events I will tell you that.*

Isra smiled. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Thank you.*

"My Queen if this Kavalian is still within the city, he must be found." Riall spoke from the monitor.

Aricia turned back to the monitor now. "Riall do you see any Senators or politicians from Apo Prime in this room?" She asked.

"No." He answered puzzled at the question.

"If you call me My Queen one more time, I will have a talk with Gorgo when I return." Aricia said.

"And I will tell my mother to not make you Satée pastries for a month."

Riall couldn't help the grin on his face and everyone in the room smiled. All of them knew that Riall had a vicious sweet tooth and Aricia's mother made him the most delicious Satée pastries at least three times a month. Much to Gorgo's dismay. "Very well Aricia." He spoke.

Tareif stepped forward. "We have eliminated half a dozen contacts that cater to those who wish to acquire secret accommodations." He spoke turning to gaze at Steven with a stern look. "Steven and I will visit the last two this afternoon. If this dog has somehow gotten facilities in this city we will find him. I have discovered that my son in law to be has many contacts that he has not revealed to me."

"Papa you must stop it!" Tarifa exclaimed from her chair. "You are embarrassing Steven."

"Good!" Tareif spoke.

"I must press upon all of you," Riall spoke. "This man is not to be taken lightly. You can read the information I sent at your leisure, but the war we had with the Kavalians, while short, was exceptionally brutal. He will not come peacefully and he will do his best to take as many with him as he can before he falls."

Tareif's face hardened. "He is suicidal?"

Riall nodded. "If cornered... yes."

"Admiral why do you think he was part of the Zaleisian Delegation?" Selene asked.

Riall exhaled slowly. "Their war with the High Coven nearly destroyed them. We merely turned them aside and threw them back into their own space. While we could have gone in and hit them with a devastating attack, we did not. The High Coven on the other hand went so far as to bombard their worlds, killing billions of them."

"Why didn't we help them?" Lynwe asked. "The enemy of our enemy is our friend, isn't that how the saying goes?"

"The reason the High Coven was able to strike so hard Lynwe, is because during our conflict with them we used a series of very coordinated surgical strikes that wiped out their command and control networks as well as many of their top leaders." Joarl replied. "We are also responsible for killing their High Premier."

"So Lycavorians are not real high on their list of friends then I take it?" Steven asked.

Riall shook his head. "Far from it. In fact I would put us at or near the bottom. They blame us for what the Coven did to them. And by extension of that... elves and humans will not be held in high regard either, though any vampire will be a priority for them if it came to removing someone. As for why he was part of the Zaleisian Delegation? My guess is that this Talco person took this position to gather intelligence on both the Coven and the Union both. The Zaleisians are known to be very tight with the High Coven. Their area of space while not very populated is quite large. Veldruk would like nothing more than to be able to build several bases within Zaleisian space. It puts him closer to us. Earth is new to the Union and he probably thought an easy target if the Kavalians decided to make a resurgence."

"They attacked the Union though." Aihola said. "How can they blame you for what the Coven did to them? That doesn't make any sense?"

"I agree Aihola. I agree totally... however we have never really tried to understand the Kavalians. All those that we encountered were trying to kill us. We acted defensively to be honest." Riall answered.

"So there are more of them?" Tarifa asked.

Riall nodded. "Unfortunately Tarifa... many more."

Joarl leaned back in his chair. "We have never been able to get an accurate assessment. Not since their war with the Coven. Many of their planets are deserted... or at least they appear that way to our spy and sensor

drones.” He spoke. “But our intelligence has detected signs that they are still very active and in very large numbers.”

“That was an excellent move Aricia.” Riall spoke. “Putting our system ships on alert for any unknown transports or warships that might be sneaking about.”

“Do you really believe they will try to attack us here Riall?” Selene asked.

Riall shook his head. “I don’t know. They know Earth is part of the Union... they know that Martin considers it his true home. It would be in their nature to attack for just that purpose alone; in what they would see as atonement for past sins.”

“I have issued several orders with the Queen’s approval.” Joarl told them now. “All ships entering Earth’s system will be stopped and searched regardless of what they carry. If they do not stop, they will be given one warning. If they do not listen to that warning then they will be disabled.” Joarl looked at them. “If they try to fight... they will be destroyed.” There were no protests or objections he saw and he continued. “I have ordered two Attack Wings to return to Earth and take up overwatch... at least until we are able to determine what this Kavalian is after. And all planet wide restoration that involves Spartans will temporarily cease and the troops will return to their staging areas.”

Aricia looked at the three of them. “I apologize for not consulting the three of you first, but we needed to act quickly.”

Selene nodded. “We have worked too long and too hard to allow this scum to affect it.” She spoke softly seeing Tarifa and Aihola nod their heads in agreement. “And as Riall said... Earth is just as much yours and Martin’s home as it is ours... perhaps more. We will do what we need to do to defend it.”

Aricia got up from her chair. “Isra and I will concentrate on dealing with these white skinned creatures and the dragons. All of you are aware of what we believe is going on there, and just so you are kept in the loop, the dragon Elder Mother agrees with our assessment.” Aricia spoke evenly. “Tareif... I will entrust you and Lynwe with finding this Kavalian and his cohorts. That includes this elf Anlain and this human Crescent. I want them found and dealt with. I don’t care how.”

“And a pleasure it will be.” Tareif spoke.

“Indeed.” Lynwe added.

Tarifa looked at Aricia for a long moment. “Aricia...”

“You, Aihola and Selene are the Administrators of Earth Tarifa.” Aricia spoke softly. “But Earth is my home as well. Martin’s home. You are who he... who *we* consider family... we will allow nothing to harm that. I’m sorry... but I speak with my Beloved’s voice in this matter Tarifa.”

“So you will kill them without hesitation?” Tarifa asked softly.

“If they choose to fight us... to attempt to take this planet by force... to harm any of the inhabitants of Earth... yes I will destroy them.” Aricia replied coldly. “Without question... without pause and with extreme prejudice.”

Tarifa held Aricia’s eyes for a long moment and then nodded her head. “Good.” She said.

“There is one other thing.” Riall spoke from the monitor. He waited until they all turned towards him. “I went over the transcripts of the meetings you had with the Zaleisians... and I spoke with several officers who fought with me in our conflict with them. They now work in our Intelligence division... but based on our experience with the Kavalians... we all came to the same conclusion.”

“And that is?” Aricia asked.

“If he has not left the city it is for only one reason.” Riall spoke. “Based on the intense hatred all Kavalians have for the Coven... if this Talco has not left the city then we feel his only purpose will be to come after the one person who made him look quite the fool.”

“What do you mean?” Aihola asked. “Who is he going to come after? We all made him look the fool.”

“But only I am a vampire.” Selene’s voice sounded softly. Her steel blue eyes lifted to gaze at Riall. “He’s going to come after me because I am a vampire isn’t he? Because I insulted him and his people?”

Riall nodded slowly. “We believe that will be his intent... yes.” He spoke.

Selene felt Lynwe and Layna step up on either side of her and she smiled. Her eyes glittered and changed to vampire cobalt blue and she looked back to the screen. “Then let him come.” She said.

ELEAR

“She was there today sire. With one of her half vampire Drow. Asking questions.” Conrol spoke.

Vonis turned from where he sat on the couch looking over the data pad of the off world assassins that had already arrived on Elear. “Where?”

“The IES offices.” Conrol said.

Vonis smiled as he lowered the pad. “Yuri said she was resourceful.” He said. “She wasn’t wrong.”

“What do you wish to do?” Conrol asked.

Vonis looked at him. “Nothing.”

“Isabella was at the main offices here on Elear sire.” Conrol spoke as he settled to the chair across from Vonis. “You wish to do nothing?”

“It is her company Conrol.” Vonis spoke seeing the look of surprise on his face. “You didn’t know that?”

“No... no Milord.”

Vonis nodded. “Isabella started IES with three or four others that supposedly defected with her. One of them never really was part of her plot and has been working with us all this time.”

“A front company? Inside Union territory?” Conrol spoke still stunned. “That’s... that’s incredible.”

Vonis nodded. “She’ll get the locations of all IES properties here on Elear, and they own several. None of which is this location... or the locations of the other safe houses that we control.” He said. “You can rest easy Conrol. Where is Haliur?”

“Insuring that our guests are comfortable. And that they do not do anything stupid.” Conrol answered.

“How many more do we wait for?”

“The last three will arrive in thirty-six hours.” Conrol answered.

Vonis nodded. “Then in thirty-seven hours we will have a meeting here to finalize the details.” He said. He held out the pad. “The plan I have devised.”

Conrol took it slowly, his eyes lowering to the pad and reading while Vonis leaned forward and poured himself some juice from the pitcher.

Conrol looked up after a moment. “You intend to hit her outside IES headquarters sire?”

Vonis nodded with a smile. “She is doing our back story for us Conrol.” He got to his feet and moved to the doorway into Va’nimia’s room. He passed his hand over the controls and slowly opened the door a few centimeters, peering in and seeing her deliciously naked body still on the bed sleeping soundly. Her dark hair was splayed across the pillows, one lean and supple thigh exposed for his eyes to roam over from under the sheet that covered the rest of her body. A body that Vonis had explored quite thoroughly over the last few days, far more thoroughly than he had spent with any female, even the attractive purebloods he had been with.

“She is doing our work sire?” Conrol asked. “I don’t understand.”

Vonis closed the door when Conrol’s voice caused Va’nimia to stir quite seductively on the bed. He had taken her half a dozen times the previous night, each time more incredible than the last. It seemed that the more time they spent together, the more passionate their encounters became and the more addicted he became to her body. Now Vonis willingly adorned her with kisses, passionate kisses that Va’nimia eagerly returned without question. Since that night when he had first kissed her, Va’nimia had grown bolder in their bed, urging him to do things he had never thought of. She served him without question, doing whatever he wished but now she also would draw his lips to different portions of her lithe body when Vonis was stroking into her deeply. Now he would willingly suckle the hard buds of her nipples, nibbling them with his vampire fangs because it caused her to feel surges of pleasure. And more than anything else he would firmly nuzzle the backs of her elfin ears, slowly adding the tip of his tongue for emphasis and listen to her hiss in utter enchantment.

Vonis wanted her to feel pleasure he realized.

And last night was the first sign for him that something was happening he could not explain.

Vonis had done something he had never done before, settling between her muscular thighs and actually using his tongue to explore the folds of her hairless pussy, all at her insistent urging. He had never done this even with the purebloods at the palace, yet seeing her pussy open like a Usu’Ozeib Flower Moth under his ministrations was fascinating. Her smell was extremely pleasant and not at all what he had expected. His anger had flashed quickly when her quivering thighs had locked around his head, her fingers entwining in his dark

hair and she pressed his face tighter, flooding his mouth and tongue with her juices. In that flash of anger his fangs had pierced the flesh just above her erect and painfully hard clit sending her into a loud thrashing orgasm that caused her body to lift off the bed. Her sweet blood mixed with the even sweeter taste of her juices in orgasm and it had amazingly triggered an orgasm for him, and he had exploded all over his abdomen and thighs. He had been disgusted with himself when he rose, the aftermath of her incredible orgasm still making her shudder on the bed. Va'nimia hadn't allowed him to go to the sonic shower however, stopping him from leaving her and instead dropping to her quivering knees before him and using only her tongue to clean him as a Limian Venomshade Tiger mother would clean her kittens. When she was finished, Vonis had fallen back onto the bed staring at her wide eyed as she lowered herself onto his rock hard cock, already drenched with her salvia from her leisurely tongue bath.

Vonis tore his thoughts from Va'nimia and turned back to fully face Conrol. "My father believes our agent within IES has become corrupted by his status and wealth here in the Union. We have reason to believe he is conducting some rather illegal practices that if exposed will possibly implicate us. My father does not want that to happen. Information will be discovered by Isabella that will lead her to the conclusion that he is a traitor to the Union. Which he is anyway. We will assassinate her in front of the IES offices and make it appear as if this agent perpetrated all of it trying to hide what she will undoubtedly find."

"Won't we lose IES then Milord?" Conrol spoke.

"It is of little matter." Vonis answered. "We have other companies that belong to us. Several right here in the Union. And they are much larger than IES. We kill my half sister, the company she started will be ruined, and our agents and future projects will be safe. The added benefit will be that once this information comes to light... those who once called themselves members of the High Coven and defected will find it very hard to live and survive within the borders of the Union."

Conrol smiled as he absorbed everything. "Incredible." He said.

Vonis nodded with his own smile. "Yes. Even Yuri doesn't know the entire scope of this particular operation. My father can be very secretive when he wants to be."

"So it appears." Conrol said.

"I want you to go to the Wainn spaceport Conrol. Make sure our last three guests are on time and then purchase more supplies from the vendors there." Vonis tossed him the datapad. "Get what's on this list and whatever else you deem necessary."

Conrol looked at it as he got to his feet. His brow furrowed and he looked at his Prince. "Sire... this is..."

"Yes I know. I want to see how it looks on a woman." Vonis spoke.

"She is an elf sire." Conrol spoke sternly.

Vonis grinned and stepped forward. "The shape of her ears does not affect how it will look around the neck of the pureblood I have chosen to be my bride Conrol." He spoke softly. "She will be my model."

Conrol met the eyes of his Prince. "Then..."

"Do you honestly think I would desire this elf female over my own kind?" Vonis said in a whisper. "I am practicing my skill on her... nothing more."

Conrol couldn't help his smile. "Forgive me sire... I was beginning to think you might actually care for the elf whore."

"Better a willing slave than an unwilling one." Vonis spoke the lie. He reached up and patted the man's shoulder. "Now go. We don't want these fools we are hiring to do anything they are not supposed to. Get moving... I need to contact my father since Yuri has gone to Lycavore to find that abomination she so desires to kill."

Conrol nodded with an evil grin. "The markets will be opening soon, I will return in a few hours Milord."

Vonis nodded and watched him move for the door into their apartment. When it closed and locked Vonis let out a long breath and turned to the window where the blazing sun was just beginning to make its way above the towering buildings in the background.

What was happening to him he wondered.

NORMYA'S LIGHT

Isabella came up behind Dysea as she stood beside Lexi's bed in the medical bay. It had taken only three minutes for Admiral Visero to get the Spartan Ready Force to the surface once Dysea had hit the emergency beacon. Four *STRIKER ATs* had descended on Elear without pause and the medic in the SRF had Lexi stable enough to transport back in another six minutes. Now Dysea stood next to her bed on *NORMYA'S LIGHT* watching as she slept soundly.

Isabella took Dysea's hand and saw her emerald eyes turn to look at her. "Come *ussta* she-elf, Admiral Visero and the doctor wish to speak with us." She said softly.

Dysea nodded and allowed Isabella to pull her slowly from the room. They crossed the medical bay and into the corridor, Isabella feeling without question, the building anger in her lover. When they entered the large conference room Dysea erupted, much to the surprised looks of the Lycavorian Admiral and doctor. Her Shi Viska flared into existence, sensing her anger, and much like Martin had done over a year ago on Earth she brought it crashing down on one of the smaller tables near the door cleaving the steel table completely in half.

"I want the head of the scum who did this!" Dysea snarled. "I want his head in my hands so that I can gouge out his eyes with my fingers!"

Admiral Visero simply stood there in his uniform with his arms crossed over his burly chest silently and he watched with no small amount of pride. When the King had chosen him to command *NORMYA'S LIGHT* Visero had questioned his appointment. He would have preferred at the time to command Queen Anja's *LEONIDAS II*-Class Strike Cruiser. He had never spent much time around elves before and he considered them weaker than Lycavorians. Added to this fact that he did not particularly care for Isabella and he thought for sure it was not going to be a good mixture. He came very close to refusing the appointment, and now watching his Queen, he was so very glad he hadn't.

These last fourteen months had given him an insight into elves and Isabella that he had never stopped to consider. Dysea was perhaps the most decisive woman he had ever met. When she made a decision, she never questioned it or regretted it. She was exceptionally intelligent, absorbing information like a sponge. She and Isabella had spent so much time watching him, learning from him about operations, ship combat, everything. And they had done so in a way that only cemented that he and not they were the ones in command of *NORMYA'S LIGHT*. Dysea and Isabella both had insisted he refer to them by their names when they were together, and Visero had learned over the months that as with King Leonidas, there were precious few who had that honor and distinction. Visero had reached a point now where there was nothing he would not do for the slim platinum blond Queen, or for Isabella.

Visero had seen Dysea angry only one other time, her patience and control masterful in his opinion, in almost all circumstances. The Limian Ambassador however had rubbed her the wrong way from the start seven months ago, and when it became too much for her to tolerate, he had watched in stunned humor as Dysea told him where to go, how to get there and what to do when he got there in some of the most colorful and descriptive uses of the Lycavorian ancient language Visero had ever heard.

"I do not wish to have to replace all the tables on our ship Dysea!" He barked out now.

Dysea whirled on him with those emerald eyes and Visero smiled at the intensity of her glare. Now he knew what his King saw in the elf female, and Visero could only imagine the pleasures they shared in their bed, especially considering the intensity of those emerald orbs right now.

Dysea stared at him for a long moment, breathing deeply. Visero had been like a rock for her to lean on this last year and he had a way with words and tone of voice that could instantly make her anger bleed away. Dysea silently thanked her *Nauta Melme* for assigning this man to command her ship.

She took a deep breath. "Forgive me Visero." She spoke softly.

"There is nothing to forgive My Queen!" He answered. "I just do not wish to replace the furniture before its life expectancy is naturally up."

Dysea looked at Bella and saw her smiling sheepishly. She turned to the senior Medical Officer on *NORMYA'S LIGHT* and saw his wide eyes watching with surprise. She took a deep breath once more and willed her Shi Viska away seeing everyone in the room relaxed then in a silver/white flash. "I must learn to control my temper more." She said.

Visero chuckled. “Hardly. If you control it much more than you already do, no one but Isabella will be able to tell if you feel anything, or are merely acting. Please...” He motioned to the table.

Dysea looked at Isabella once more and smiled. While their relationship was well known within the Union, there were few who would comment on it as casually as Visero had just done. He was a man that had earned their respect and trust, and had gone out of his way in the past to insure they were not disturbed by anyone when he detected they needed to just be together with each other.

Dysea held out her hand and felt Isabella slip hers into it and she let out the last tension relieving breath. “Very well.” She said as they moved up to the table and took the chairs. “What do we know? Doctor Sustaca?”

“Captain Lexi will be fine first off Milady.” The man reported. “She will need a few days rest... at least a week to fully recover... but she will be as good as new.”

Dysea looked at him. “She couldn’t shift!” Dysea said quickly, knowing that Lycavorians relied on their ability to shift to heal wounds.

Sustaca nodded. “I’m not surprised... the blade she was stabbed with was coated with enough Oreznox to fell a Horned Goragg from Dunubis Nine.” He replied referring to the two ton herbivore behemoths that roamed the brown plains of that planet.

“Poison?” Isabella asked.

Sustaca nodded quickly sliding the pad across the table. “Poison specifically targeted to affect the Lycavorian ability to shift and heal wounds. It’s a fast acting and very powerful narcotic that causes loss of conscious ability.”

“Lexi said she couldn’t focus.” Dysea said looking at him.

Sustaca nodded. “The drug acts as an inhibitor of sorts and blocks the infected person from forming cohesive thoughts, thereby rendering us unable to concentrate enough to shift. You will also note that the blade was also dipped in Tilapim.”

Dysea looked up. “Wait... Tilapim? That’s an anticoagulant. I remember that from listening to *Melyanna* give a lecture for one of Gorgo’s classes at the university.”

Sustaca smiled. “You have an excellent memory Milady... and you are very correct.” He leaned forward. “Whoever these men were... they knew exactly what they were doing. The King’s blood within your veins overpowers your elfin blood to extent Milady. It is the very first thing we as Lycavorians smell. We however can quickly determine the differences. These fools could not. They assumed you were completely Lycavorian like Lexi. And they made the fatal mistake of underestimating your skill. They did not realize until it was too late that you were both Spartans and your skill was far superior to most. Their weapons indicate however that they were prepared to fight you.”

“They... they smelled like elves... but they weren’t completely elves.” Dysea said. “There was a bitter tang to their scent.”

Sustaca nodded and got up moving to the monitor and activating it. The screen lit up with the picture of the lone surviving attacker aside from Unlec who escaped. He was secured to the medical bed with force field restraints as well as metal straps cuffs. “This is the one who you pinned to the side of a building with your Nehtes My Queen.” He spoke. “An excellent throw by the way.”

Dysea and Isabella both looked at the man’s obviously elfin ears, but his face was much more savage in nature, his skin pulled back against his cheekbones and his eyes wide and feral. “What is that? That is no elf.” Isabella asked.

“That...” Sustaca spoke turning back to face them but pointing at the screen. “That is the result of some very sophisticated biogenic tampering.” He answered. “And the reason you found them so hard to kill.”

“Biogenic?” Isabella gasped causing Dysea to look at her quickly.

Sustaca nodded as he returned to his chair. “Yes I know. I was surprised as well.”

“What is this Biogenics?” She asked.

“It’s a form of genetic warfare. Something that the High Coven dabbled in roughly a thousand years ago. They abandoned their program due to unsatisfactory results if I’m not mistaken. It was the precursor to their cloning program, but exceedingly more lethal. They attempted to combine the genetics of different species together to create superior soldiers. They gave it up after many of their test subjects did not turn out as they had hoped and they moved all of their assets into the cloning process.” Sustaca answered.

“What do you mean did not turn out as they had hoped?” Dysea asked.

“They ended up being unable to control what they created.” Sustaca answered. “Our friend here appears to be such a creation. Not completely elf for sure, but we’ve detected signs of Lycavorian *and* Kavalian cells in his body and blood work.”

“Kavalian?” Visero spoke.

Sustaca nodded. “Yes... I was very surprised as well. Not much has been heard from the Kavalians since the Coven destroyed their planets.”

“We don’t know that their planets were destroyed.” Isabella spoke. “Our Intelligence drones detected no life signs... but drones are easy enough to defeat if you have the skills. And they had the skills.”

“The man... the man Lexi and I saw at the theater. The one who spoke.” Dysea spoke softly. Only Isabella detected the way her voice dropped in tone and her hazel green eyes gazed at her as she spoke. “He did not look like this. He looked completely elf, but he was the largest elf either of us had ever seen. Tall and muscular and deeply tanned. His skin was almost an umber color. And his scent was completely elf.”

Sustaca nodded quickly. “I would hazard a guess and say he is also a product of biogenic therapy. The body type of this man is not something that normal elves can obtain without some sort of massive dose of at the very least heavy stimulants.” He spoke. “I have a team moving to the theater now to test for what you said you and Lexi scented.”

“So what is he doing?” Dysea asked. “And what of these men and women that followed him when he left?”

“We searched the building that Iriral designated Dysea.” Visero said. “We found signs that they were there... but it was empty when we arrived.”

Dysea nodded. “This Unlec said his leader wanted Lexi and I. That his leader insisted on it. I want their compound watched Visero. And I want this leader brought in for questioning.”

“Here or on the surface?” Visero asked.

“In Wainn. Have elfin security pick him up immediately. Hold him for a few hours.” Dysea replied. “I will question him with L’tian about these followers of his that attacked us and why they have been the subjects of experiments.”

Sustaca nodded. “I concur. It’s obvious that someone... possibly this man you saw... is conducting illegal biogenic experiments here on Elear using elves as a template.”

“Why here on Elear? Why elves?” Dysea asked.

“That’s easy Milady.” Sustaca said. “Elf metabolism is much more adaptive to change. There are medical studies that have been done that indicate elfin cellular structure has already undergone two metabolic and evolutionary changes over the millennia. For instance the enzymes in Lycavorian blood react differently with elfin blood when mixed compared to Vampiric blood for instances. Your metabolisms and cells adapt and conform more easily at this stage in your evolutionary process to our blood. That is why a Lycavorian can turn an elf with a single bite, as the King did with you. Whereas a vampire would need to several. Your bodies are much more resistant to the enzymes in Vampiric blood than Lycavorian blood.”

Dysea looked at him. “How... how many of these changes have there been?” She asked.

“The studies were not conclusive... but I believe they said elves have gone through two stages of change to reach what you are now. Most experts agree that this is what your species was evolving towards. The forms you hold now. It is no different than Lycavorians. At one time we were simply wolves. We evolved as well.” Sustaca replied.

Isabella looked at him then. “Sustaca... is it possible to use this biogenic research to revive dead cells? Cells that have been dead for thousands of years?”

Sustaca nodded slowly. “Theoretically it’s possible. Whoever is conducting these experiments has been able to successfully combine the DNA and cells of at least three species, hence our guest here. If the dead cells are still viable... yes I suppose it would be possible. Theoretically of course. The question is who would want too.”

Dysea looked at her. “You don’t think...”

Isabella nodded. “It would explain quite a bit.” She said.

“You would need equipment for this process wouldn’t you? Medical personnel?” Dysea asked looking back to him.

Sustaca nodded. "Without question. The procedures needed for something like what we are discussing require some very advanced medical equipment."

"How many companies on Elear have this equipment?" Dysea asked.

"Three that I'm aware of. Including Queen Isabella's company IES." Sustaca answered.

Isabella's eyes snapped around to look at him. "IES?"

Sustaca nodded. "They have been involved in several breakthrough processes in the last two decades."

"IES was never involved in medical areas of engineering." Isabella spoke.

Sustaca nodded. "They have been for two decades now like I said."

"I was at their offices today and nothing was said to me." Isabella spoke. "Perhaps I will go back and discover why."

"The facilities needed for this type of research are not small Lady Isabella. You would need beds... labs... computers... quarantine facilities. And that is just to begin with." Sustaca spoke. "And they aren't legal either. At least not in the Union."

Isabella turned to Visero. "Admiral I want you to contact Armetus. I want a list of every purchase IES has made in the last fifty years. Every deal... no matter how small. Tell him I want it yesterday and it is to be done quietly."

"What do you suspect Isabella?" Visero asked getting to his feet.

"I don't know." Isabella replied softly. "But I will find out. I promise you."

Visero motioned with his head for Sustaca to follow him leaving Dysea and Isabella alone in the conference room.

"Bella?" Dysea spoke.

"I have a very bad feeling Dysea." She answered softly.

"About what my love?"

"Twice now... in as many days the company that I founded and helped to build has been mentioned in questionable circumstances and events. That is too much of a coincidence." Isabella spoke.

"You suspect something?" Dysea asked.

Isabella got to her feet pulling Dysea with her. "We are on our ship for the moment. Let us go to our quarters where I can enjoy you in more comfortable surroundings and then explain to you what I am thinking."

"Bella... are you thinking inappropriate thoughts?" Dysea asked with an innocent voice.

"Come *ussta* she-elf. Let me show you what inappropriate thoughts I am thinking. I believe you will enjoy them." Isabella said.

Dysea laughed. "I believe I will."

EARTH

EDEN CITY

"Steven my boy!" The older woman almost shouted as she came around the edge of the bar and embraced him. She pushed him to arms length and looked at him, her white hair cut short, but her blue eyes bright. "Where is that luscious little thing you have been sneaking around with all these months? She's such a sweet young lady."

Steven looked down quickly as he felt Tareif come up next to him. "You are referring to my daughter madam." He spoke sternly.

"Mary... this is War Master Tareif." Steven spoke. "He's Zaala's father."

The woman's eyes grew a little wider. "This beast is sweet little Zaala's father? Thank god she and her Tarifa sister take after her mother then."

Tareif's eyes went a little wider at her. She was human no doubt, but she was tall and plump, her breasts quite large for a human. She was not fat, not in any overt way, but she was voluptuous for sure. Tareif let his eyes scan the dimly lit inside of the establishment. There was a large bar from which this Mary had come from behind, but there were also a dozen tables and chairs set up in the center of the huge room and several long tables against the wall. He saw could see Lycavorian Spartans, humans, elves and even some of the alien species that had come to Earth to help in the rebuilding projects. The place was immaculately clean, the few

female waitresses, including two elf females were neatly dressed their hair tied into proper pony tails. The conversations were soft, no loud blaring music, though he detected the soft sounds of music being piped into the large room. There was also the distinct smell of home cooked food filtering through the large room.

“So when are the two of you coming for dinner again?” Mary asked looking at Steven once more. “You know old Frank loves when Zaala helps him in the kitchen.”

Tareif looked at Steven wide eyed. “You brought my daughter here?” He asked.

Mary’s blue eyes narrowed. “What’s wrong with my place buster?” She snapped. “I run the finest restaurant on the east side of Eden City!”

“This is... this is a brothel.” Tareif said.

“A brothel!” Mary hissed. “I do not run a brothel! Steven who is this fool to come in here and accuse me of that?”

Steven looked at Tareif. “I would never bring Zaala to a brothel Tareif!” He snapped. “I do have some class!” He stepped in front of him. “I’m sorry Mary! We need some information.”

The human woman slowly pulled her eyes from Tareif and turned to look at Steven. “What sort of information?”

“The kind you can’t get normally.” Steven said.

Mary stared at him for a long moment. “Follow me.” She said.

They turned to follow her and Tareif grabbed Steven’s arm. “You brought Zaala here?” He gasped again.

Steven glared at him. “War Master... I don’t pretend to know everything about elfin culture... Zaala is teaching me something new everyday. You however, you need to come down off that high horse you are on sir! Mary runs this place like you run the air base. You could eat off the fucking floors! And it has the best damn food you will find from here to the west coast! Zaala loves coming here! It’s her favorite place to meet! We’ve been coming here since we first started seeing each other, and that is not about to change!”

They followed Mary into a room that turned out to be an office. There were two couches and a large oak desk with a comfortable chair behind it. There were framed pictures of Mary and at least half a dozen very attractive females, elf and human alike, in a variety of poses that indicated a mother/daughter type relationship. They watched her settle into the large chair and look at them.

“Speak to me Steven.” She said finally.

“We should not be discussing matters of Security with her.” Tareif spoke.

“Tareif you said you would let me handle it!” Steven snapped.

“You see those pictures on the wall there big elf General?” Mary barked rising from the chair. “Those are my girls! Eight of them, six of them are elves as you can see! I got them out of New Richmond when the Coven assholes were in charge! I got them out and I protected them. Now... all eight of them are married, and three of them have children. Don’t you come into my place and talk to me about security!”

Steven shook his head. “Mary... you have contacts in the entire eastern section of the city. We’re looking for a man who doesn’t want to be found.”

“Lots of those Steven.” Mary said looking at him.

“This one doesn’t want to be found for two reasons.” Steven spoke. “We think he is an advanced scout for a group of some rather nasty individuals who want to come here and take what doesn’t belong to them.”

“They gonna take this fool?” Mary asked indicating Tareif.

Tareif opened his mouth to retort but Steven cut him off. “And we have reason to believe he wants to grab Administrator Selene.”

Mary’s eyes grew wide. “Little Selene?” She asked coming to her feet.

Steven nodded. “Yes.”

“How do you know Selene?” Tareif asked quickly.

Mary ignored him and kept eye contact with Steven. “I worked with Selene’s parents in New Memphis for a time. She’s in danger?”

Steven nodded. “Lynwe and Layna have doubled her security... but we are pretty sure this fellow will make some sort of attempt at her. She insulted him, and his species doesn’t take kindly to insults, especially from female vampires.”

“Well la di da for him!” Mary barked. “Tell him to grow thicker skin! Knowing Selene he probably pissed her off by saying something stupid. She should have let Lynwe kick his ass!”

Tareif stepped forward. “Wait a moment. You know about Selene and Lynwe?”

“Of course I know about Selene and Lynwe!” Mary declared. “They come here two three times a week to eat! Steven is you sure this is Zaala’s father? I mean... Zaala is sharp as a whip. He’s not real quick on the uptake if you get my meaning.”

“Mary... you have to trust me on this. It...”

The door opened and the young woman came in with a tray in her hand. She saw Steven and her eyes lit up. “Steven!” She said setting the tray down and coming over to embrace him tightly.

Tareif watched Steven return the embrace with a smile. “Sally... you are growing quicker than I can keep up.” He said.

The young woman looked around. “Where’s Zaala... is she with you? I have something I want to show her.”

Steven shook his head. “Not this time.” He answered. “I’m here on business. Why aren’t you in school?”

“Half day of classes.” Sally answered. “I decided to get some extra money so Mary let me work an extra shift. You’d better go say hello to old Frank. If he finds out you were here and didn’t say hello to him he’ll spike your next steak.”

Mary laughed. “Ain’t that the truth? Last time he did that Zaala said she was pumping your stomach for two days!” She exclaimed. “Go on! I’ll keep Mister War Master Chief here company.”

“Ok. Ok.” Steven spoke as he let Sally lead him out of the room.

Mary turned back to Tareif. “Now that is a good boy.” She said. “Zaala got real lucky with him, yes she did. They are good for each other.”

“I would think it was the other way around.” Tareif spoke. “And what do you know of them?”

Mary smiled and settled back into her chair. She pressed a button on the COM panel built into the top of her desk. “Tommy?”

“What’s up Mar?” The male voice echoed immediately.

“Tommy... find me those that don’t want to be found will you.” Mary said.

“How long I got?”

“Call it ten minutes! Steven will be back by then... And bring me the vid feed labeled nine six one too. It’s from five months ago.”

“Steven? He came for a visit? I’ll be there in seven!”

Mary smiled and looked at Tareif. “You don’t know your own pilot very well do you Tareif?” She asked.

Tareif looked at her detecting the change in her tone of voice as well as her attitude. “What do you mean?”

“Steven. You don’t know him very well do you?” Mary asked.

“He is my pilot. I see him every day.” Tareif answered.

“You know... once Tarifa, Selene and Aihola got the university open Zaala started coming here almost every day after to class to study. Steven came here too, to watch her.” Mary said.

“What? What do you mean? He stalked her?” Tareif said.

Mary chuckled. “He came here every day and watched her because he was too shy to talk with her. She’d come here with her friends and that fool of a Spartan that had his nose on her and Steven would sit at his table and just watch her. I knew the first moment I saw him that he was smitten. And I also knew that she had no interest in that idiot Spartan who flexed his muscles so much trying to impress her. He was nothing like Martin Leonidas. Now that man... he is a Spartan. The most unassuming man you’ll ever meet, and devoted to those ladies of his like I have never seen.”

“You... you know King Leonidas?” Tareif asked stunned.

“You don’t get out much do you?” Mary asked. “This is where they come to get away. All of them. If it wasn’t for me and my friend Gianna they would have starved long ago!” She laughed. “Your wife gave birth to two breathtaking young ladies War Master. I understand Tarifa and Aihola finally got their man.”

Tareif nodded slowly. “Isra... yes.”

“Good for them. They talked about him all the time when they came for dinner with Selene and Lynwe.” Mary spoke. “Steven’s got more balls than you give him credit for you know.”

Tareif looked at her. “I have seen him do things with a *RAPTOR* that only Admiral O’Conner has done.” Tareif said. “He is the reason I still stand here today.”

“And you don’t trust him with your daughter?” Mary asked.

“He saved our lives when...”

Mary smiled. “Yes... we heard about that little mishap with the anti-aircraft missile and getting shot down. Nasty business that is... but Steven is the best there is.”

“I don’t question his skill... only his commitment to my daughter. He is human like you... and I fear that...” Tareif said.

“You think he only wants her because she’s beautiful and an elf?” Mary asked but her voice carried to anger or malice in it.

“It is an old prejudice I know... but she is my youngest child and...” Tareif said.

The door opened one more time and the younger man walked in. “That was fast Tommy.” Mary said getting to her feet.

The man tossed her the small disc. “Not many of them out there right now, and if Steven’s the one asking it’s probably important.” He said. He looked at Tareif. “Who’s the Shooter?”

Mary grinned as he held up the second disc. “Zaala’s father.” She said taking the disc.

“No shit!” The young man looked at him. “Man she is the best! She helped me get through physics!”

Mary walked up to Tareif and held up the disc. “This is what you seek.” She asked. “Don’t ask questions... just take it.” She held up the second. “This one I want back. It’s a wonderful view. This will show you what Zaala means to Steven.”

Tareif took the discs. “Thank you.”

“Now let me take you and introduce you to old Frank.” Mary said. “Once you taste his food... I’ll be hard pressed to keep you out of here.”

CHAPTER NINETEEN

EARTH

It has to be someplace high Isheeni. Aricia spoke as she leaned back against Isheeni’s thick foreleg. *A cave of some sort like your mother had on Enurrua.*

It was an amazing sight really, an azure blue scaled dragon and a gamboge yellow scaled dragon resting comfortably on the tarmac of the airfield. Their hind legs were drawn up under their powerful bodies, ready to spring into the air if needed. And sitting casually next to them were a male and female Lycavorian, dwarfed in size by the dragons but both of them leaning up against their respective bond partners. They were speaking but no one’s lips moved which was rather disconcerting to those who could not Mindvoice. The buildings and hangers nearby had quite a bit of foot traffic in and around them, and no matter whom it was, heads always turned to look at where they sat. Many of them wanted to get a close up view of Isheeni and Aelnala since until just recently, dragons had been nothing more than a myth on Earth.

Isheeni nodded her large head. *Yes... I agree... but unlike Enurrua where the caves were all limited to one portion of the planet... Earth has many such places. And I have been told some of these caves are quite large. Easily as big as our dragon home at the Island.*

And many more have been formed since what they call the Great Fire occurred. Aelnala interjected. *The seismic shifts and shaking that struck this planet because of that comet caused many of the hot mountains to explode and reshape the surface.*

I think we all agree that this cave... or whatever it is... it has to be somewhere here on the Northern Continent. Isra spoke now. *The hatchlings I saw were not old enough for sustain flight over long distances. Based on the flame streams that I saw... I’d say none of them were over five years of age. Their flame streams will not become fully potent until they are almost ten. Isheeni is that correct?*

Isheeni nodded. *Yes. Our glands do not fully mature until we are at least a decade. I’m impressed Isra.*

I spent quite a bit of time with your Mother whenever she came to Apo Prime. Isra answered with a smile. What I learned from her is invaluable. I estimate they would be able to go no more than three or four hundred kilometers at most before they had to land, rest and eat.

Could there be more than the seven you saw my brother? Aelnala asked softly.

Anything is possible... but I only saw the seven distinct flame streams that night. He answered. This Syrilth... she could not have been one of the ones I saw based on the strength of her flame stream sister. These were definitely hatchlings... I estimate no more than three to five years, though one burst was very weak and close to the ground. A newly hatched dragon perhaps... just testing his or her ability. It was very hard to tell to be honest, we were probably several kilometers away and as you know water can alter your perceptions of things. We should proceed carefully... but finding the eggs is a priority.

Then you believe as strongly as we do? Isheeni asked softly. That Syrilth does not serve this rider willingly?

Isra nodded quickly. Oh yes. That goes without saying. Her actions are not indicative of something evil. And certainly nothing like what your mother described of the dragons they were fighting during that conflict. He answered. Isra looked at Isheeni intently. She seems... she seems to have affected you in a way Isheeni. Why is that?

Aricia and I could sense her pain Isra. Feel it almost as if it was a palpable thing. Isheeni answered quickly. She carries a burden of not only care but sorrow.

Aricia nodded. There is conflict within her. She said softly.

Isra nodded slowly as well. That's not surprising seeing how this rider treats her. One of the first things your mother taught us Isheeni was that our bonded mates might have thin skin and not to call them names.

Aelnala's tail flicked forward quickly, poised as it always was to strike, and she tapped him in the back of the shoulder with enough force to shove him forward slightly. He was laughing as she did this and Aricia and Isheeni joined in the laughter.

Be careful brother. I just might forget to warn you of the next bird fool enough to cross our path. Aelnala spoke.

Ouch! Aricia spoke with a grin while Isheeni's voice echoed in soft laughter. That would hurt.

We should make a search grid. Isheeni spoke now. One of us always here... one of us always searching. There are only so many mountain ranges on the northern hemisphere that are conducive to hatching eggs. And now... with the heat as it is... the conditions are very nearly perfect.

That will involve long hours in the saddle and then returning every night. Isra warned. Are we prepared for that?

There could be as many as a hundred eggs involved here Isra my brother. Aelnala spoke gently. I will endure. You and I have been the guardians of eggs before, and you did not pause then. We will endure.

Isra turned his head and reached up to place his hand on Aelnala's jaw. And I will not hesitate now.

I will endure as well. Isheeni said.

Aricia nodded. I am game for it.

Isra nodded as they all agreed. I will put together an overlapping search grid that will allow us to target areas of the furthest mountain ranges first and we can work our way closer with each pass. It shouldn't take more than a few hours to put this together and we can begin our searching tomorrow. Aelnala and I will go out first Aricia... so that you will have a full day to conduct any business as Queen.

Aricia nodded. We can carry small beacons that will allow Admiral Wallace to track us from EDEN while he is over this hemisphere and then cross deck it to a ship in orbit when they go to the dark side of the moon. Aricia spoke. I don't want anyone out of contact for more than a few minutes especially now that this Kavalian fool is loose in the city.

Tareif will find him Aricia. Isra spoke.

Oh... I don't doubt that. But limiting his opportunities until Tareif does find him is just good practice. Aricia replied. Martin would punish me if I did not follow that basic principle of combat.

[Mindvoice Shielded] Like that would trouble you Aricia. Martin's form of punishment with you is to lick you all over with his tongue. Isheeni echoed in her head. You are so easy sister. I've told you to make him work for it.

Aricia couldn't hold back the smile and Isra swore he could see her blush under her tan. He and Aelnala could also feel the tremors within Mindvoice as they spoke shielded.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Then you won't mind if I tell Torma of that little mishap you suffered as we left the DT the other day.* Aricia said turning to look at Isheeni's azure colored eyes.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *What... that little thing? I was just happy to be off the ship.* Isheeni spoke indignantly. *I slipped, nothing more.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *That's not what I saw Isheeni. And do not tell me that when Torma gazes at you with those beautiful golden eyes of his and caresses the top of your neck that you simply do not melt? I'm not entirely stupid sister.* Aricia said.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Well...* Isheeni gave her best 'I'm so innocent impression', which for a dragon was quite impressive, though somewhat terrifying to look at from the perspective of someone who had never been close to a dragon before.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Yes... I thought so. Now who is easy?* Aricia stated.

Are you two quite done comparing notes? Aelnala spoke sternly but with a touch of humor in her voice.

Aricia looked at Isra and then she did blush. *I'm sorry... it's an ongoing disagreement that we have.*

So I gathered. Isra spoke with a smile. *Anything I can help with?*

NO! Aricia and Isheeni stated together.

Are the four of you quite through? The new female voice spoke.

Two Lycavorian and two dragon heads turned and saw the blond haired female elf walk around the side of the DT, her pale blue eyes bright and clear. Slightly behind her walked a male Lycavorian and another female elf, but these two wore the black body armor and crimson colored shoulder markings and crimson waist sash of the *Durcunusaan*.

Aricia came to her feet with a smile. *Thr'won!*

Isra watched as the two women embraced warmly. He had heard of this particular she-elf. She had been the Chief Mage for Sparta for over two hundred years before the King returned. She was well respected and had grown quite powerful for an elf in her Mindvoice skills. It was said she had been the first to touch the King's mind after he discovered his true heritage and this had imparted to her a unique understanding of how his mind worked as well as enhanced her own abilities, much as the First Oracle now had. After a year of intense training with the First Oracle, she had returned to Earth with Aricia and the Guardian to take up her position once more. Outside of the Royal family and the First Oracle herself, the Chief Mage of Sparta was said to be the most powerful Mindvoicer in the entire Lycavorian Union.

Well... I wouldn't exactly go that far... but I do appreciate the compliment Commander Isra. Thr'won's voice echoed once more as she and Aricia parted and finished walking up to him and Aelnala. Isra realized then that she had picked up his unshielded surface thoughts.

Isra saw her brilliant smile and the brightness of her pale blue eyes and he lowered his head in reverence to her. *Chief Mage Thr'won... it is an honor to finally meet you.*

Aelnala also lowered her head on her long neck next to Isra. *For me as well Chief Mage Thr'won.*

Oh please! Thr'won exclaimed. *Stop it... both of you.* She stepped right up to Aelnala without fear and reached up to lay her soft hand on Aelnala's cheek. *It is I who should be saying what an honor it is. I have never met the Section Leaders of Mjolnir's Hand, Aelnala and Commander Isra.*

You know Andreus Chief Mage. Isra spoke confused. *He is a Section Leader as well.*

Bah! I've known him the majority of his life! He doesn't count. Thr'won stated with a smile. *You two however. Did you know that there is a plaque honoring the two of you in a very quaint elf eatery in the Western Merchant Quarter of Tuya? You are the ones who did that aren't you?*

It was Isra Chief Mage! Aelnala exclaimed quickly, her honey colored eyes full of mischief. *It was his fault! He struck the officer!*

Isra looked at her out of the corner of his eye. *Thank you bonded sister.*

Thr'won laughed heartily. *Oh... Helen told me you two were... slick I believe the word she used is. Yes that was it... slick!*

You have no idea Thr'won. Aricia said.

Thr'won chuckled and looked at Aricia. *Yes... and I am sure you and Isheeni are just as innocent as could be Aricia.*

Of course we are Chief Mage. Isheeni spoke.

As innocent as your two mates say they always are no doubt. Thr'won spoke shaking her head in feigned sternness.

Aricia and Isheeni couldn't answer that one and Aricia decided to change the subject quickly before she and Isheeni embarrassed themselves. "Did Uncle Dymas come with you from Sparta Thr'won?"

Thr'won nodded with a smile. "He's having a rather lively reunion with Tarifa and her father in his office right now. The *Durcunusaan* arrived in Sparta last night and we came over with them this morning. I needed to get out of Sparta. Panos was roaring to anyone who would listen how he did not need a bodyguard, and Dilios was skulking about as if someone had just stolen his favorite toy. You do realize Aricia that you and Martin have caused quite the stir with these *Durcunusaan*."

Aricia nodded slowly. "We suspected as much. You will grow used to it Thr'won. It is something we felt was need. There are advantages to being King and Queen you know."

Thr'won chuckled. "Yes I'm sure." She motioned to the two members of *Durcunusaan* who stood behind her. "This is Lieutenant Thomeo and Lieutenant Ionoia... the two that have been assigned to me." She spoke loudly now in a feigned voice of disapproval.

The two officers bowed their heads slightly. "Milady Aricia." Thomeo spoke formally. "Commander Isra. It is an honor for us to meet you."

"For I as well." Ionoia the female elf spoke.

Isheeni moved her bulk from where she sat on the tarmac and came over to stand in front of the two *Durcunusaan*. She lowered her head and gazed at them, the male's dark eyes and the female elf's eyes unchanged and gazing at her without fear.

Let me welcome you to Earth Durcunusaan. Isheeni spoke softly. *It is a privilege to stand with you.*

Thomeo and Ionoia looked at each other and then back to Isheeni. They had not expected this from Isheeni. It had been her mother who had instructed them how to fight dragons, how to fight dragons and win.

Ionoia let a small smile play across her thin lips. *And it is our privilege to stand with two members of Mjolnir's Hand.*

Isheeni saw Thomeo nod. *Without question.* He said.

Thr'won smiled and squeezed Aricia's hand. "Your uncle wanted me to come and pull you and Isra off the tarmac so that he could sit with you for a while. Since these white skinned creatures appear to be using this continent as their home, I decided to come here as well to lend whatever skill I could. And to keep a leash on your Uncle. He still holds great anger and hatred at these beings for killing his brother."

"As well he should." Aricia spoke.

Thr'won nodded. "He brought Spartan wine."

"Well... I can't refuse that!" Isra spoke quickly.

You never refuse wine brother! Do not let Sadormacah or Ceiricah see you intoxicated brother! Aelnala called. *They would not understand you!*

Thr'won smiled and stepped up to Aricia and Isheeni, watching as Isra headed across the tarmac, Aelnala's honey colored eyes watching him intently. "They are a stitch the two of them. And so very powerful together." She whispered.

Aricia nodded slowly. "Yes they are." Aricia caressed Isheeni's lower jaw. *Be safe while you hunt sister. Both of you.*

Isheeni nodded. *We will be.*

Aricia nodded and took Thr'won's arm as they began to walk towards the office building. "I didn't know you would be coming from Sparta Thr'won."

"I am the Chief Mage of Sparta Aricia!" Thr'won stated firmly. "I don't need to tell anyone where I'm going! Not even the youngest Queen of Sparta!"

Aricia chuckled. "I am glad you are here." She asked.

Thr'won laughed as well. "Dymas thought it would be good to have some added power in case these creatures turn out to be more than we thought. I understand you and Isra are going to concentrate on finding the clutches of eggs so that you can free this dragon."

Aricia nodded. "Yes."

"You don't believe she serves him of her own will then?" Thr'won asked.

Aricia shook her head. “No.”

“Fill me in as we walk Aricia.” Thr’won spoke. “I’ve been itching for something to do since I returned and this is the first chance I’ve had to do just that. Have you heard from Martin perhaps?”

Aricia shook her head. “I’ve been talking with For’mya almost nightly. I’m going to contact For’mya later this evening. He should have reported in to her by now.”

“You have felt nothing?” Thr’won asked looking at her.

Aricia shook her head slowly. “Brief flashes of great anger and great joy. Nothing more. I believe the enormous distance is all that allows for us right now.”

“It is amazing that you can still sense *that* Aricia. No one can explain it you know, the depth of the connection you and Martin have. Not even the most senior Mindvoice Mages on Apo Prime.” Thr’won said. “And they are some of the biggest windbags I have ever met. Far worse than the politicians in Sparta that I grew up with.”

“I’m not so sure we understand it half the time Thr’won.” Aricia spoke calmly as she gripped her arm tighter. “It is so much stronger than it was when we first discovered each other. We have lain in each other’s arms many a night and wondered about it.”

“And what have you discovered?” Thr’won asked softly.

“Part of it is our love for each other.” Aricia answered immediately.

“You do realize he would destroy entire planets for you.” Thr’won spoke. She waved her hand. “Listen to me... he’s done that already.”

“I would do no less Thr’won.” Aricia said soberly. “Without hesitation. I believe our mutual love for For’mya, Anja, Dysea and Isabella is also part of our strength. The love of Androcles... of the children we will have in the future. All of us.”

“You have no idea what your decision... the others decision... to have all your children born in Sparta... you have no idea what that has done Aricia. To have him there six months of every year. There is a new life within Sparta child. To know what we all are now... to know that the son of the King they all so loved is with them... that he considers Sparta his true home. The feelings are indescribable. The people there walk with their heads held just a litter higher than before.”

Aricia nodded. “I know. I have felt it too.” She said softly. “And our children will feel it as well Thr’won. All of them. Sparta will always be our home... no matter where we are.”

Thr’won smiled. “Anja carries a girl you know? He passed that to us before they were out of range.”

Aricia smiled brilliantly. “I know... and Dysea comes into phase very soon. And then For’mya. And hopefully... one day Isabella as well.”

Thr’won looked at her. “You no longer care that Lisisa is his child?”

Aricia met her eyes. “Gorgo showed us long ago that we were acting instinctively in regards to Lisisa. No... she is of his blood Thr’won. And she will be a daughter to us just as surely as if one of us had given birth to her. And there is much she will be able to teach the young ones as they grow. To have touched us as she did... I believe she will come very close to matching Androcles someday in terms of her abilities.”

Thr’won laughed. “Oh that one will be a handful I’m sure. Bonding with Elynth as he is now... she speaks as if he is already aware of what is going on around him.” Thr’won looked at Aricia when she did not say anything, and she saw her azure colored eyes gazing at her intently with keen intelligence and unparalleled clarity and power. Her own pale blue eyes grew a little wider. “Aricia you can’t be...”

Aricia smiled at her. “Would you like to know our son Thr’won?” She asked softly. “Let me show you what we have shown Helen in regards to our son. She did not believe us at first either. After we greet my uncle we will find a quiet place and I will show you just how aware Androcles is of what goes on around him.”

APO PRIME ISLAND PALACE

Sadi looked out over the surface of the lake from the balcony and sipped the steaming hot mug of coffee as she watched the Water Lifter docking in the small harbor by the water’s edge. It would be carrying Deia and Gorgo she knew for For’mya told her they would be coming. Gorgo to see her grandson and Dasha, and Deia to

meet with her. The previous day and night was still pretty much of a blur for her, but she felt lifted somehow. She had answered all they had asked of her, Armetus asking most of the questions. The man was thorough Sadi thought, and he knew what he was doing. For'mya had remained quiet for the most part, watching with those dark eyes. Sadi had held nothing back; everything she knew was now in the hands of United Lycavorian Intelligence. Safe houses, High Coven agents that she knew of... all of it. She had watched amazed as For'mya had laughed and joked with her father as he departed with Admiral Riall late in the afternoon yesterday. He was in high spirits and didn't question that Sadi was remaining behind to spend time with For'mya now that they had buried their past differences. They had finished only two hours before and For'mya had shown her to this room to rest. Sadi couldn't rest however. She felt free for the first time in nearly thirty years. What she had desired when she went to the dinner that night was hers, and now she didn't know what to do.

Sadi knew one thing without hesitation though.

They would come for her.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *That is why she asked you to remain here with us KertaGai.* The voice of the dragon hatchling Elynth filled her head clearly now, as if she was speaking to her normally. *You are safer here than any other place on the planet.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *And my father? My real brothers?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Even now Armetus is moving to insure they remain safe as well. They will have heavy security... but it will be security they can not see.*

Sadi sensed a presence behind her then and turned very quickly almost spilling her coffee and she saw the older woman in the doorway to the balcony she stood on, the small child in her arms and Elynth standing behind her. She had left the door to the room open she remembered, and the doorways and corridors in the Island Palace had been reconstructed to fit her father Torma, though he would never fit up the stairs now.

"Forgive me child... I didn't mean to startle you. I've learned to walk rather softly thanks to my sons and son-in-law. They are excellent teachers." Dasha spoke with a warm smile. "For'mya said that you might be hungry. The three of you were up all night and I came to see if you would like to join Androcles and I for breakfast before you go to sleep on an empty stomach."

"I'm sorry you... you are..." Sadi asked.

"I am Aricia's mother Dasha. And you are Sadi, Governor Vorilas's daughter." Dasha spoke her smile still in place. And it was a genuine smile of that Sadi had little doubt. She had learned to read people quite well over the years. "I understand you work for Armetus and will be staying with us until we get this distasteful business resolved."

Sadi's soft green eyes came to rest on Elynth. She had removed the blue contacts she wore sometime during the evening. Given what they had learned about her, it made no sense any longer to keep wearing them. *She doesn't know who I am?* Sadi asked looking at Elynth.

You might be surprised what the mother of the Queen knows. Dasha's voice broke into the connection causing Sadi's eyes to grow wide as she stared at her.

Elynth moved further into the room to stand next to Dasha now and she settled to the floor. *There is no need to fear KertaGai.* She spoke.

Dasha shifted Androcles further back on her hip and stepped forward and it was then that Sadi noticed the boy child's eyes. They caught and held her like a powerful magnet. They were the deepest and brightest azure blue eyes she had ever seen, and they stared at her with a level of understanding that Sadi had never seen from a child only eight months old let alone an adult.

"You and I have much in common child." Dasha spoke softly. "We know what it is like to be used by the High Coven for their nefarious purposes." Dasha reached out and took Sadi's shaking hand. "You have nothing to fear Sadi. You are now among friends."

"Friends?" Sadi gasped softly.

Dasha nodded slowly. "Child... if you were considered a threat in any way... and not a pawn of the High Coven and others that we know you have been forced to become... you would already be dead." Dasha spoke calmly and with conviction in her voice. There was no hostility, no malice, just truth. "If For'mya or Elynth here had not done this, the moment you came to this island, I would have ended your life in the blink of an eye. Martin Leonidas... he destroyed an empire because of the love he holds for my daughter and the crimes

they forced upon her. I would destroy an empire to safe guard his children. Any of them. Without question or pause.”

Sadi had no doubts she would do just that. She may have been nearing four thousand years of age, but as far as Dasha was concerned she was just entering her prime. Since coming to Apo Prime to start fresh after what had occurred in Sparta, Dasha had become a whirlwind of activity. She and Gorgo met at least three times a week to train and shop and study. She had become good friends with Helen the First Oracle and with her teachings and tutelage had increased her own Mindvoice powers to Tier Six levels. Her son Andreus had given her intensive training in personal combat and weapons. Dasha was no longer a demure female... she was just like her daughter and Gorgo.

She was a supremely confident Spartan Alpha female who was completely devoted to her grandchildren and the others that would follow from all of her children.

“You have been up all night with Armetus and For’mya telling them all you know.” Dasha spoke. “You are probably very hungry and still overwhelmed. You are not alone in this anymore child. Let us show you that there is such a thing as trust.”

“And... and the King and Queen... your daughter?” Sadi stammered softly. “Will they be... will they be as forgiving as you?”

“I believe For’mya already told that is not something you need be concerned with.” Dasha said.

“As powerful as they are... you expect me to believe that?” Sadi asked.

“Two of those my daughter and Martin consider to be sisters are half vampire and full vampire respectively.” Dasha told her. “The person he has left in charge of Earth’s security is a Drow vampire. Half vampire Drow scouts fill the ranks of the Union military everywhere. An entire division of cloned vampire soldiers now calls Earth home and works towards the same goals as us all. Isabella is the pureblood daughter of Veldruk the High Coven leader and one of Martin’s Queens.” Dasha smiled. “You will come to know that if you are a friend to Martin Leonidas... he will be a friend to you no matter your past.” Dasha waved her hand dismissively. “Besides... For’mya told Aricia everything before you ever came here Sadi; those two keep nothing from each other. And it was Aricia’s idea for you to remain here for your protection. Like you and I... she knows what it feels like to be used by others.”

“This is all... this is all very hard to absorb.” Sadi spoke shaking her head slowly. “It’s all happening so fast.”

Dasha looked at Androcles in her arm as the eight month old boy, raven black hair like his parents, reached out with the short pudgy arm leaning towards Sadi. Her green eyes opened wide as the small child took her finger in the grip of his tiny hand. Sadi gasped at the power of his small grip, and she watched as he drew her finger close to his face and he leaned back in Dasha’s arms, making Sadi step forward. As close as she was to him now, Sadi was very nearly overwhelmed with the heavy scent of wild pines mixed with lavender. His scent Sadi realized, and it did more to sooth her than any words anyone had spoken before now.

“He likes you.” Dasha spoke with a smile. “He doesn’t reach out to anyone like that... except those that live here on the Island that is.”

Sadi calmed her racing heart, the pine and lavender scent coursing through her veins and burning into her mind. She gently pried her finger from Androcles’s grasp and looked at Dasha. “I... I am hungry.” She spoke suddenly.

Dasha smiled. “Good. Come with us to the kitchen. We do all our own cooking here... but I make a mean Boureki.”

“Are you sure this is wise For’mya?” Deia asked as she settled into the comfortable chair in the small study.

For’mya nodded as she walked around and poured them both morning coffees. She knew how Deia liked it and added the proportions before turning and moving back handing it to her. She moved to the chair beside the desk and sat down.

“Deia you were the one who encouraged me to do this.” For’mya spoke.

“I know... but having her stay here on the Island with you?” Deia spoke as she lifted the coffee to her lips.

“That was Aricia’s idea... and I agreed with her.” For’mya answered. “This woman is not our enemy Deia... she has been used by the High Coven and that *upae* of a step mother for over thirty years.” For’mya shook her head. “What she has had to do... being forced to lay with her own half brother Deia? The thought of that makes my blood boil... and not just my wolf blood either.”

Deia’s eyes were calm. “I haven’t begun to read Armetus’s full report. I didn’t know that part.” She spoke.

“I want Sadi’s father and her real brothers under continuous protection until this is over.” For’mya spoke. “I don’t care about the cost... I will pay for the extra accommodations out of my own funds if I have too.”

Deia shook her head. “That won’t be necessary.” She spoke. “I have a private force of Spartans in mind. I will assign them and funding them will not be an issue.” She replied with a grin. “Martin started a private account last year with profits he made off that fool Chetak for just this sort of operation. He and I are the only ones with access. I will use that to get them proper accommodations while they are assigned to Vorilas and her brothers, do not worry.”

“Thank you.” For’mya spoke.

“The question now is how do we proceed with the information she has given us?” Deia spoke.

“According to Sadi there were three individuals who controlled getting the assassins here to Apo Prime, set them up within safe houses and then led them to her to bring them here, to include her step mother.” For’mya spoke. “Those are the three I want most of all.”

Deia nodded. “I agree.” She said. “Does she know if another attempt was scheduled or planned?”

For’mya shook her head. “Since the first attack failed she has remained at a summer house owned by one of her full older brothers and avoided any contact with her step mother.”

“So let’s start from the bottom and work our way up!” Deia said. “It will need to happen quickly... within twelve hours of each other to avoid tipping the others off but Armetus shouldn’t have a problem with that.”

“I want the step mother brought here.” For’mya spoke. “I want to tell her myself about what her future holds for her.”

Deia smiled. “I believe that won’t be a problem. We can...”

The COM panel on the desk chirped and For’mya leaned over and tapped it. “Yes?”

“Lady For’mya...” The voice of the communications officer at the Main Estate came over the transmission. “Gamma Priority Encrypted message for you Milady. Shall I re-direct?”

For’mya looked at Deia quickly. “It’s Martin...” She spoke getting to her feet. “Yes... thank you Star Commander. Re-direct and then delete all notifications of the message’s arrival and dissemination.”

“As you order. Stand by... re-directing now.”

For’mya and Deia turned as the large monitor came up along the wall covering almost the entire painting. The screen fluttered and blinked in and out and then Martin’s slightly blurred face appeared. There were some small spots of white static on the screen but his face came into focus almost perfectly and For’mya smiled warmly when she saw his dark eyes light up as he saw her.

“*Kinsoaurgai*.” Martin spoke softly. (Voice of my Heart)

Deia saw For’mya’s eyes close ever so briefly when he said that and she smiled. For’mya gripped the back of the chair tightly and looked once more at his face. “Martin Leonidas.” She spoke softly, longingly. “Anja? Helen? The others?”

“*Pendebrolfrinna*.” Anja’s voice echoed from the background. “And if this big oaf would move I could tell you that without yelling!”

They watched as Anja punched Martin in the shoulder and he laughed as he moved over. Anja’s red hair filled the screen and she smiled brilliantly. “We are all fine For’mya.” She spoke quickly. “Andro?”

For’mya nodded. “He is well. Growing as fast as the hatchlings grow!”

“Good... I will let Mister inconsiderate here back on. I love you For’mya. We all do. Stay safe!” Anja spoke.

“And you Anja. You carry Androcles sister... you must stay safe.” For’mya said.

“Well... I don’t have much choice with him here.” Anja said with a grin jerking her thumb at Martin. “We’ll see you soon.”

For'mya smiled as she dipped back out of the screen and Martin returned. "Martin... did you...?" Martin nodded. "We have her?" He spoke. "She's with Helen right now... she and Jeth. We had a bit of trouble but..."

Deia stood up now and moved within viewing area of the screen. "What kind of trouble Martin?"

"Deia! Good to see you." He spoke. "I didn't realize you were there."

"I'm sure... now what kind of trouble?" Deia asked quickly.

"*Jen'dturvadatheolChetak.*" Martin spoke causing Deia to hiss in anger. (Cursed be the name of Chetak)

"*Joa!*" She gasped.

"It is taken care of Deia. It was nothing like Enurrua." Martin said softly. "There is however another problem that we have to address."

"Why do I get the feeling I'm not going to like this?" Deia spoke.

"What do I do with the twenty-nine thousand four hundred and thirteen of our people that are still on this planet Deia?" Martin asked.

Deia and For'mya both were stunned into silence at this news and Deia moved back to the chair she was sitting in. For'mya adjusted the screen so Martin could see both of them and she sat down behind the desk. Martin's desk.

"Martin, please tell me you are joking." Deia said softly.

"I wish I was." Martin said. "They apparently survived the purge by the Coven Deia. Or at least their ancestors did. They have lived on Lycavore since five hundred years after the *Brutujur*. They have been forced to work the Rubidium mines for the Coven ever since."

Deia looked at him. "They... they told us the planet was dead *Mandri*. That nothing survived the poison missiles." She gasped. (Nephew)

Martin nodded slowly. "*Pen Pera Tenna.*" He spoke. "They showed Canth images of the planet after their attack. The dead bodies and smoking ruin. Helen has been going through his memories of the event... trying to make sense of it and she can't. She was just as stunned as we are." (I know Aunt)

There were not many that knew Martin and Deia were related in such a way. Eliani had been Deia's older sister, and it had been she who helped Resumar to take Eliani back using the *Lunmai*. There were not many who knew Eliani was Deia's sister, and there were fewer still that knew she was Martin's Great Aunt. For'mya was one of a handful that knew the connection they had ran much deeper than King and Prime Minister.

"Thirty-thousand Martin?" She gasped once more.

Martin nodded again. "There would be more *Tenna*, but the Coven has been killing off hundreds of them every few centuries to keep the numbers manageable."

Deia's face came up in her politician's mask and she got to her feet.

"Leave now *Mandri!*"

"Deia?" For'mya gasped turning to look at her aghast. "How can you suggest such a thing?"

"You have Lisisa. You... have what you came for *Mandri!* You must leave the planet now!" Deia nearly shouted. "As... as Prime Minister of the United Lycavorian Union... I order you to leave now *anse un!*"

Martin simply stared at her in the transmission.

EARTH

"...can you beat two speeding bullets big man Spartan?" Steven's voice played softly from the small monitor. "Cause if you can do that, man that would be something to see." Steven jacked back the hammers of both K12 automatic pistols in his hands. "The lady said to leave her alone and never come near her again. You know who I am right?"

The large Spartan lifted his hand and wiped the blood that was leaking from his mouth. "I know who you are human." He spat. "I will squash you like a bug little man and take her. Then what will you do? You know nothing of what I can do!"

"I know that unlike King Leonidas, who is a real Spartan, you have to lift your arm and aim your Shi Viska sport." Steven spoke. "Now you may be fast enough to get your arm up and call your shield... but one

of two things will happen.” Steven pressed the barrel of the K12 in his right hand to the young Spartan’s head. “Either I win or then you die. Or you win, kill me... but I blow your shriveled little cock off when my finger twitches.” Steven jammed the barrel of the second K12 none too gently into the Spartan’s groin. “It’s a win win scenario for me see... Zaala is mine... and you go away; or I die... but you’ll never fuck anything bigger than a gnat the rest of your life, in which case Zaala no longer has to tolerate you. It’s your choice there pal.”

“You would not dare shoot me.”

“You willing to bet your dick on that sport.” Steven spoke. “I’m a pilot you see... and we aren’t known for having all our marbles in the same basket if you get my drift.” Steven jacked back the hammer on both K12s. “What’s it going to be... because my arms are getting tired.”

The Spartan stared at Steven, thinking that his stern look would make the human back down. It bounced off Steven’s skin and he realized this human would do exactly as he said he would.

“You can have her fool!” He said finally. “She is not worth my attention.”

“Good... now I’m going to say this real slow in case your wolf ears are still full of shit.” Steven leaned forward slowly. “Come near Zaala again fuck nut... and wolf or no wolf... I’ll stuff your sorry ass and hang your balls on the nose of my RAPTOR. You copy that big boy? You don’t deserve her... you ain’t good enough for her! Now carry your sorry ass somewhere you’ll be welcome.”

Tareif lowered the hand held vid viewer, roaring in laughter even though it was the sixth time he had seen the security footage Mary had given him. He turned and looked at Walter and Isra who had been watching it with him.

Walter couldn’t help but smile and lift the short glass of Spartan wine he held in salute. “I do believe that has got to be the bravest or the stupidest human I have ever seen in my life.” He spoke.

Isra chuckled. “On that I have to agree.” He said. “Where did you get this Tareif? Tarifa told me Zaala said they met in the library.”

Tareif nodded. “The woman he took me too today to get the intelligence we needed? She gave it to me. Zaala has been going there since the University opened. After her classes she would go to this place. Steven would go there to watch her. He never approached her until this happened.” He tucked the vid viewer back onto the bookshelf he had taken it from and nodded taking a deep breath. “I could die tomorrow and be secure in the knowledge that my two daughters, and those I consider daughters have chosen well.” Tareif looked at Isra and lifted his own glass of wine.

“Well... you aren’t going to be lucky enough to die tomorrow.” Isra spoke. “Admiral Wallace sent back the surveillance photos of the sites this woman gave to you.”

Tareif perked up. “And?”

“Only one of the sites appears to have been active in the last few days.” Isra said. “And you’ll never guess where it is?”

Walter nodded. “The one closest to Selene’s residence.” He spoke.

Isra nodded with a grin. “You should buy Steven a very big house when he marries Zaala Tareif. This woman he knows just saved you and Lynwe a whole lot of work.” He spoke.

“I intend to do that.” He spoke. “So Riall was right? He will attempt to take Selene then?”

Isra nodded. “It appears that way.” He said.

“I’ve been reading the intelligence Riall sent on these Kavalians.” Walter spoke as they moved to the large table in Tareif’s office. “They are some nasty buggers.”

“Guardian... let me stop you there.” Isra spoke. “I need to get back to my DT and put this search grid together for the Queen and I.”

“Join us in the morning for breakfast Isra.” Tareif spoke.

Isra patted Tareif on his shoulder. “0730. I will be here.” He said.

Tareif watched Isra turn and leave his office before looking back to Walter. “It seems I have a habit of misjudging the men my daughters choose to spend their lives with my friend. Next to the King and a few others... Isra and Steven are some of the finest men I have ever served with. And they are as devoted to my daughters as I have ever seen men devoted to women. And I almost missed it on both of them.”

Walter grinned. "You are a father Tareif." He spoke. "We all make that mistake where our daughters are concerned."

Tareif nodded slowly. "Perhaps." He said. "You have done this as well?"

Walter nodded. "Tareif my friend... I have four daughters. I've done it four times now my friend! And Dia carries my fifth daughter in her womb! So I'll end up doing it five times I'm quite sure!"

"You old beast you!" Tareif laughed.

Walter grinned. "I'm only following the instructions of my old King Tareif."

Tareif laughed again and pounded his hand on Walter's shoulder. "Let's you and I put together a plan to catch this dog!"

The clouds were high this night, almost sixteen thousand meters, and they blocked out the light of the moon for the most part. It didn't matter to Isheeni and Aelnala as they cruised on the thermals at thirteen thousand meters roughly half a kilometer apart, with their keen dragon eyes they could see the ground as clearly as if they were only fifty feet off it. They could see the lights of Eden City far on the horizon casting a glow into the night sky and it looked quite spectacular.

When were you going to tell him Isheeni? Aelnala asked excitedly. *I could smell them clearly two days ago but I said nothing.*

I wasn't sure until after we had already left for Earth. Isheeni answered. *I didn't want to give the news to him through the King Aelnala. It is...*

They are bonded Isheeni. Telling the King is like telling your mate. You know that silly. Aelnala spoke. *I know... it is just not as personal.*

Aelnala laughed. *You just didn't want him celebrating without you.* She said and heard Isheeni chuckle. *Does Aricia know?*

Isheeni laughed once more. *She was almost as excited as I was. It is all she talked about for the first two days of our trip here.*

How many little ones this time? Aelnala asked.

He has given me three eggs in this clutch, just as before. Not only is he my big brute... he is very consistent it seems. Isheeni answered in a wistful voice.

Aelnala laughed as she drifted on the wind. *Isheeni that is wonderful news! Truly! You know... you should...*

Isheeni's azure eyes drifted above her to the clouds and she filtered out Aelnala's words as she saw the huge shadow pass quickly overhead. She tilted her wings slightly, adjusting her course by several degrees, but the shadow remained above her almost as if it was following her from above the clouds. Isheeni inhaled deeply through her nostrils, letting her head pass back and forth in front of her as she stretched her neck as far up as possible. She was searching for a certain scent... and as her sensitive nose searched for that scent Isheeni allowed her psychic shields to drop enough to detect other Mindvoicers in the area. Her azure eyes went just a little wider when she felt the excited tremor in Mindvoice. A strong tremor... but not the one that marked it as being Syrilth.

This one was male.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Aelnala!* Isheeni barked out.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Isheeni what is wrong?* It was her first question for she knew Isheeni would not have shielded the call without reason.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *We are being hunted Aelnala.* Isheeni spoke calmly.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *What? Where? Is it Syrilth?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Aelnala it's... it's a male.* Isheeni answered her voice carrying some surprise in it. *I can't pin point his position... but he is above the clouds and he is tracking me.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Isheeni are you sure?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Oh yes. I felt the tremors within Mindvoice. He is not shielding himself. He must not know how... or he doesn't realize we can sense him. Reach out yourself Aelnala.*

Aelnala did just that, turning slowly towards where she knew Isheeni was and lifting her body slowly towards the clouds. She felt the excited tremors now, just as Isheeni had said, and they were very close.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *He is young. Very young.* Aelnala spoke.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Yes he is. And I do believe he is preparing himself to plunge on me.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *What? Impossible! How could he not scent the clutch of eggs within you?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *If he is as young as we suspect, then we are the first females that he has seen that are not his sisters! He intends... he intends to make me his mate!* Isheeni said somewhat stunned at this revelation.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *It must be one of the hatchlings Isra saw! Isheeni it has to be!*

Isheeni was just as deeply bonded with Aricia as Torma was with Martin. She and Aricia shared something that was much deeper than others of Mjolnir's Hand. While they all could sense the emotions of their riders and dragons, Aricia and Isheeni actually could experience each other's emotions. Isheeni had felt Aricia's shame and anger and hurt at what Joric had done to her. She shared Aricia's almost cruel hatred of men who took what was not theirs. And above all else she shared Aricia's soul binding love of her mate.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Hatchling or not Aelnala! I will not allow him to touch me!* Isheeni hissed savagely. *Plunge on me will he? I'll gouge out his eyes and shred his maleness with my talons!*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Isheeni... change course for the airfield and speed up!* Aelnala announced. *Keep shifting directions but be casual about it so he can not plunge upon you! Activate your shields as well and alert Aricia! I will do the same! I have an idea!*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Knock him from the sky.* Isheeni spoke an almost cruel intent in her voice.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Yes... but we want him alive Isheeni! You must keep control of your anger for this to work my dragon sister. You must allow him to grab you so that I can approach undetected and hit him.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I will grab him alright!* Isheeni's voice had lost some of its edge, but Aelnala knew she would have to be accurate and fast on the first pass if the hatchling was to survive. If she missed, Aelnala had no doubts Isheeni would disembowel the male without hesitation regardless of his age.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I won't miss my dragon sister!* Aelnala spoke. *Trust in me.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Very well Aelnala. I'm heading back now!*

Isra smelled them easily before they reached the end of the ramp and began to walk into the back of his DT. He turned his head and watched as the four *Durcunusaan*, three men and one woman, stopped at the end of the ramp while Tarifa and Aihola continued up holding hands and walking close to one another.

"We wondered where you were." Tarifa's voice filled the back of the DT and he turned on the table bench he sat on as they walked up to him.

"I'm just finishing this search grid pattern for Aricia and I to begin searching for the dragon eggs." Isra said as they moved up on either side of the stool. He pulled Aihola to him with his left arm and Tarifa to him with his right and both of them leaned close and nuzzled his neck, inhaling deeply. He returned the action with both of them; planting a soft kiss on the lobes of both their ears and feeling them shiver slightly in happiness. "You should have gone to bed by now. It is late."

"We have gotten used to having you between us." Aihola told him within Mindvoice as she leaned up against his side.

Tarifa nodded as she did the same. "It is not the same anymore Isra. Before you came back into our lives... holding each other was enough." Tarifa spoke softly as she took Aihola's hand in hers. "When you are so close... that no longer is enough for us."

"There will be times when I will be gone for short periods, no matter where we decide to live." Isra spoke pulling them both close to him.

"We know that." Aihola said with a smile. "And for those times... we are enough for each other. But when you are within Lifter distance, both of us call out for you. We want to be near you. You are our mate after all. Our... our husband."

Tarifa and Isra both looked at her when her voice faltered. "Mistress... what is it?"

Aihola's amber eyes beamed in brilliance and she smiled. "I... I just never thought I would say that word with such conviction." She looked at Tarifa. "I never thought I would hear both of us speak it so easily."

Tarifa smiled now as well and squeezed her hand. "You see what you have done Isra. You've turned us both into babbling fools."

Isra laughed and pulled them even closer to him. "I find it hard to believe that either of you are capable of babbling." He spoke. "You are the most..."

Tarifa saw it first and then Aihola and both of them stepped away quickly as Isra's psychic shield began to activate and envelope his entire body. "Isra!" Tarifa exclaimed as he came to his feet.

Aelnala had begun adding Tarifa and Aihola both in all of her private conversations with her bonded dragon brother. They were his most cherished mates and Aelnala had taken it upon herself while Isra had been on the island with Tareif and Steven to enhance their Mindvoice abilities to levels they had not had before. It was easy enough considering that Tarifa was full wolf and because she and Aihola had shared blood their connection was extremely powerful to begin with. They both knew that they needed to refine their new skills and had already reached out to Thr'won when she arrived to help them learn to better control and focus it.

However right now, their new Mindvoice skill allowed them to hear Aelnala quite clearly even shielded as she was.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Isra my brother!*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Aelnala what is wrong?* Isra exclaimed as he came to his feet holding their hands.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Isra... Isheeni and I were hunting! A male hatchling appeared. A young one Isra! We think he is the brother to Syrilth! He is tracking and intends to plunge on Isheeni! We are drawing him towards the airfield my brother! We will knock him from the sky! You must be prepared!*

Isra's wide violet eyes turned to Tarifa. "*Sadormacah...* the rack against the wall. Grab the grappler!

"Isra!" The new voice shouted from the ramp and they saw Aricia there with Thr'won. Her psychic shields were shimmering slightly around her lithe body. "The cables!" She called. "We need the cables! They are almost above the field!"

Isra scrambled to another cabinet. "Aihola... the panel on the table. Left console! Kill the lights outside the DTs!"

Tarifa ripped the large assault rifle looking grappler from the rack as Isra turned carrying two large bundles of flexible cables. Aihola's fingers danced across the console she leaned over and suddenly the inside of the DT was plunged into darkness and the six spotlights on the outside were quickly diminished. Aricia's pilot had already done the same and the area around where the two DTs were parked was very quickly bathed in blackness.

Isra looked at them for a brief moment fighting his Alpha instinct to protect them at all costs. He knew however they were extremely capable women and his common sense won out. "Come with me... both of you! Do exactly as Aricia and I say!"

They looked at each other for an instant before they followed their mate and husband. Isra grabbed the nearest *Durcunusaan* as he got to the bottom of the ramp.

"Place yourself in the sniper turret on top!" He barked the order. "Load plasma rounds and if we do not subdue our guest I authorize you to kill him!"

The *Durcunusaan* nodded. "Yes sir!" He snapped before dashing up the ramp.

Isra moved quickly over to where Aricia and Thr'won were standing with five other *Durcunusaan*. One of them was already holding the grappler and it was loaded with the padded dart attached to the cable. Isra took the grappler from Tarifa and tossed it at one of the other *Durcunusaan* troops.

"Isheeni says this male is very young but almost as large as Syrilth." Aricia started to speak in the darkness. "When he attempts to mate with her she will grab him and Aelnala will hit him with her tail. If she connects hard it enough it will stun him and then they will drive him to the ground. We must move quickly when that happens! We must secure him before he recovers. He will be in a mating frenzy and unpredictable. If we don't get him secured within seconds he will go after Isheeni again! Then... then she will kill him!" Isra's head snapped around to look at Aricia.

"I thought Torma is Isheeni's mate!" Thr'won spoke.

"He is!" Isra snapped his eyes on Aricia. "Aricia she's carrying another clutch isn't she?" He gasped.

Aricia nodded. "We discovered it on the way here."

"Wait!" Aihola exclaimed. "What do you mean?"

"This is part of the dragon mating ritual." Aricia explained. "The females fly high and the males fly above them! When the males scent a willing female that stirs them, they plunge on them from above while the

female executes a roll and faces up towards him indicating she accepts his advances. They come together in mid air and make love while they plummet to the ground. It's actually a beautiful ritual to witness."

"So what is different now?" Tarifa asked.

"Aelnala can not produce eggs because of an injury she experienced many years ago. She will not produce the scent a male dragon tracks. Isheeni however, does produce this scent. That scent changes when she is fertilized and is carrying eggs as she is now. It lets other males know she is already mated and to avoid her at all costs. This hatchling obviously does not know the differences in scents and he intends to plunge on her anyway." Isra spoke now.

"That's not a good thing I take it." Thr'won spoke.

Aricia looked at her. "Plunging on a mated dragon is paramount to rape for us Thr'won." She hissed. "Isheeni will shred this hatchling to ribbons if we do not subdue him. It is instinct in the females Thr'won. They hold their unions even more sacred than we do."

"And you are so agitated because you and Isheeni are so deeply bound." Thr'won said softly. "You feel what she feels and vice versa. She knows everything you have experienced in your life."

Aricia nodded slowly. "It makes... it makes the anger within her even stronger."

"We don't want that to happen. We won't let that happen!" Isra spoke quickly reaching out to take Aricia's arm. She turned to look at him. "This male hatchling is obviously a brother to Syrilth. It could lead us right to her and the other eggs. We will succeed Aricia."

Aricia took a deep breath to calm her racing emotions and nodded. "Yes we will!" Aricia looked at the four member detachment of *Durcunusaan* assigned to her. "We must move with all speed the moment he hits the ground. Do not let him recover his footing and do your best to avoid causing serious harm to him. Is that understood?"

Isra's head canted up. "They're coming over the airfield."

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I am ready Aelnala!* Isheeni spoke. *We are over the airfield.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Isheeni...*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Aricia is helping me my dragon sister. I am in control.* Isheeni answered. *But don't miss Aelnala.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I don't intend too sister. I am ready as well.*

Isheeni took a deep breath and rolled over a hundred and eighty degrees exposing her underbody to the male above her but who she could not see. She cocked her legs and extended her talons.

I smell you male! She announced loudly in the most seductive voice she could. *Come to me and take me! It has been so long!*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Gods Isheeni... no wonder Torma will do anything you ask of him!* Aelnala exclaimed. *You are a vixen!*

Roluth was in full mating mode, his sense in overdrive. The azure female had flown a criss crossed pattern for the last thirty minutes, never allowing him to line up properly. So engrossed in watching her fly and the smooth elegant motions of her beautiful form Roluth did not notice that she had led him directly over the airfield. His rust colored eyes didn't noticed a large bright area on the ground suddenly become dark, and so engrossed with Isheeni's enchanting form he never noticed Aelnala as she slowly had worked her way above him.

I smell you male! Roluth heard the sweet soft and seductive voice announce to him and his eyes grew wide when he saw the azure dragon roll over and offer herself to him far below. *Come to me and take me! It has been so long!*

Roluth didn't hesitate and dipped his wings plunging downward. His male organ was fully engorged and prepared for this action. His rust colored eyes were wide as the seductive azure body of the female drew closer by the second. He let out a trumpeting roar of conquest and flared his wings slightly as he descended upon

Isheeni. His front talons gripped her upper thorax and he drove his hips down intending to spear her womanhood.

Roluth's eyes exploded open when her rear talons lifted and sank into his skin stopping his organ from slamming into her completely. He heard her trumpet loudly in undisguised rage and she wrenched his lower body away from her with greater strength than he anticipated her having. Roluth looked down quickly and saw her azure colored eyes filled not with passion and desire, but hatred and anger.

Boy! The new female voice echoed like a shout in his head.

Roluth's head snapped up and he saw a flash of gamboge coloring and then the mace like tail of the Heavyhorn was hurtling at him with electrifying speed. Aelnala's tail smashed into his head directly under his left eye with enough force to knock him completely off of Isheeni. Roluth felt a moment of excruciating pain and his rust colored eyes rolled back in his head as he plummeted to the ground four thousand meters below. Isheeni rolled back over instantly and dove.

Aelnala... you knocked him out sister! He won't be able to break his fall!

I am with you!

Isheeni turned her head and saw Aelnala directly beside her in the dive. *He had no shield Aelnala! He lowered it completely just before he tried to take me the fool!*

Isheeni he is no more than five years old! Aelnala spoke. He is still a child! He would not know these things!

Faster my sister! We must save him! Isheeni screamed out. Aricia and Isra wait on the ground, but we must stop his fall!

They closed on his falling body rapidly and one thousand meters above the ground both Isheeni and Aelnala got a talon on his unconscious body and flared their wings. Roluth's added weight still pulled them down but they were slowing considerably. Fifty meters above the earth they released him.

Aricia my sister! Here he comes! Isheeni cried out.

Aricia my sister! Here he comes!

Aricia looked up into the dark sky. "Get ready!" She screamed.

All of them felt and heard the massive rush of air and then two metric tons of very large unconscious dragon struck the ground a hundred meters away. They felt the vibrations of it even from where they were standing and it made them stagger slightly.

"Now!" Isra screamed breaking into a run after the skidding dragon hatchling.

The *Durcunusaan* had been trained by Arzoal herself in fighting and securing dragons. Her experience in the war with Chetak had given her insight into many ways to defeat her kind and like Martin she knew that someday, someone would succeed in stealing an egg or a clutch of eggs for their own purposes. They both knew that after seeing what *Mjolnir's Hand* could do, the Coven and others would do their best to get their hands on those of her kind. They had to be prepared for that day, and Arzoal had trained those of the *Durcunusaan* with just that intent.

The nine members of *Durcunusaan* immediately fell into the training she had provided. They carried the cables and spike guns that would secure this dragon and they raced up to the fallen body with no hesitation. They all knew the dragon could regain consciousness at any time and they needed to move quickly. The cables were made and forged from dragon armor, making them nearly unbreakable, and Isra was the first to reach Roluth. A male *Durcunusaan* fired a spike into the tarmac inches from Isra's foot and he quickly secured one end of the cable there, while two others began to unravel it as they scrambled over the huge bulk of Roluth's body.

Aricia and three others were doing the same with Roluth's tail and lower body, the sounds of the spikes being fired into the ground almost deafening in the quiet night air. Isheeni and Aelnala landed then, moving as fast as they could to help in securing the hatchling.

His legs! Isheeni barked out knowing the Durcunusaan could hear her easily. Secure each leg separately! We must keep him from getting his rear legs under him!

Three of the *Durcunusaan* responded instantly to her direction, while Aelnala moved towards where Isra stood holding another end of the cable.

Tarifa, Aihola and Thr'won could only watch in awe as this action was performed. Tarifa and Aihola stood pressed tightly together, their eyes on Isra as they watched him move with grace and confidence. They drew closer as more cables were extended and anchored around the hatchling. Aihola saw it first... the half blinking of the rust colored eyes and she gasped... grabbing Tarifa tighter.

"He's waking up!" She screamed. "He's waking up!" Her words seemed to spur the *Durcunusaan* to move even faster.

Tarifa gasped as she felt the surge of panic and fear in Mindvoice, her eyes going to where Isra was bending over a spike working methodically. It wasn't coming from their mate... it was different. Almost childlike in its fear.

"*Nya Istel?*" Tarifa spoke.

Aihola gripped her hands tightly. "Yes... I feel it too. It's not Isra my love! It's..."

I... I do not... I do not want to die! My... my brothers and sisters! Sylrith! The voice was like that of a young boy in their minds.

Tarifa's hands clamped down on Aihola's arms as they both saw the rust colored eyes fly open and what they saw caused both of them to shudder in its intensity. The extreme despair and desperation was unlike anything either of them had ever felt as it rampaged through their minds unchecked.

"Stop it." Tarifa spoke softly as she and Aihola stared at Roluth's pleading eyes.

They will die! Please... they are all... they are all I have. The childlike voice resounded in their heads like thunder.

Tarifa and Aihola had moved quite unknowingly to within touching distance of the large carmine red dragon head. Those rust colored eyes stared at them in hopelessness and fear, unable to comprehend what was happening.

Aricia and Isheeni felt it first. The massive wave of despair mixed with compassion. Aricia's head snapped around towards the front and her azure eyes flew open when she saw both Tarifa and Aihola reaching out to touch the huge head of the Firespitter.

"No!" She screamed.

Isra's head snapped around and saw his mates about to touch the dragon and his violet eyes flew open. "Tarifa... Aihola... no! Get away!" He echoed Aricia's scream as he came to his feet and began to run towards them just as Aricia did the same.

Roluth's rust colored eyes flew completely open when he felt the soft warm hands touch his skin. He heard the decidedly female gasps and then suddenly images and sensations were rippling through him like a tidal wave and the tingling vibration began growing stronger by the second. His rust eyes found the sapphire and amber colored eyes so close to his snout and in them Roluth saw all that he was. All that he could become. Tarifa and Aihola were frozen in their spots and the same images and sensations swept through them. They felt the horror and despair and fear. They felt the love of siblings and protectiveness of an older brother. In those rust colored eyes they saw all that they were. All that they could become. The trembling vibrations became constant and three pairs of eyes grew even wider as the light blue psychic shield activated and began to expand outward encompassing not only Roluth but Tarifa and Aihola as well.

Aricia and Isra skidded to stops within grabbing distance of the two elf females their eyes wide in disbelief. Isheeni and Aelnala saw and sensed it next, and two more sets of eyes grew wide.

Release him! Isheeni screamed out.

Release him now! Aelnala echoed.

Two Shi Viskas flared into existence and the *Durcunusaan* stumbled back in shock as both Aricia and Isra launched their shields down the line of where the cables were anchored into the ground even before Aelnala finished her sentence.

Isra! Tarifa called out.

Roluth felt the cables snapping along the length of his body and with slow measured movements he lifted himself from the ground, never breaking contact with the two elf females as their hands rested on his snout. His rust colored eyes were still wide and the psychic shield was fully active on him as well as the two female elves before him. He felt massive waves of compassion and love directed towards him as images and feelings swept across his mind without pause. Images of hundreds of dragons and their riders... images of a great battle. Feelings of great sorrow and unmatched joy. Joy that was centered on a single burning presence

within their minds. The presence of the tall Lycavorian male with strange eyes who stood behind them, beside the gamboge colored female.

It was no different for Tarifa and Aihola as they felt the pain and humiliation of what Roluth had endured in only five years of life, the unshakable love he had for his sisters and brothers, and the incredible will to live and live free. They felt his anger and rage at the white skinned creatures for the treatment of his siblings, and for the murder of two of his un-hatched sisters.

The senior *Durcunusaan* of Aricia's attachment stepped up to her, even as her azure blue eyes were smiling at what she could feel happening.

"My Queen we need to secure..."

"No!" Aricia snapped and she saw Roluth's head turn slowly to look at her as Tarifa and Aihola moved even closer to him. Their hands spread out, running further down his neck and chest and across his carmine red scales and feeling the surge of love and compassion. "This dragon is no threat to us!"

Roluth's eyes were wide as he felt the staggering presence of the female within his mind, twice as powerful as the male. He saw the azure colored dragon move up behind her, the Lycavorian female with no fear in the least at what was happening around her. Roluth turned away and lowered his bulk to the ground, his rust eyes coming to rest on the two female elves in front of him. Tarifa and Aihola moved closer to him without fear now.

Who... who are you? He asked softly. *What is... what is happening?*

My name is... my name is Tarifa. This is... this is Aihola. You are... you are Roluth. Tarifa's eyes were bright and full of life, Aihola's amber orbs matching hers in every way.

I... I don't understand.

Aricia stepped forward, Isheeni moving with her and a smile crossed her beautiful face. *We will help you to understand Roluth.* She said.

Isra also moved forward, Aelnala behind him, until all of them were in a very close half circle in front of Roluth now. *You are among friends now Roluth.* Isra spoke as his own heart was singing with happiness at what his mates had discovered. He could feel the same joy flowing through them that flowed through him because of his bond with Aelnala.

Aelnala nudged Isra in the shoulder in a show of affection and she looked at Roluth. *We will answer all your questions young one, for your life is about to change dramatically.*

Isheeni lowered her head to look at him, any anger for his actions long since gone as she understood what had just taken place. He had never had anyone to school him, to show him right from wrong. He and his siblings had been here on Earth away from their own kind for so many millennia that they did not even know of the others.

There are more of us? Roluth asked. *More like us?*

Isheeni nodded her head as she brushed affectionately against Aricia. *There are many young Roluth. Thousands of us.*

Thousands? He gasped out.

There is much we need to tell you. Isheeni spoke. *And then we must plan.*

Plan? Roluth asked.

Aricia nodded. *Yes. Now that we know you live young one, we have no intention of allowing any more harm come to you, Sylrith or your siblings.*

I don't understand.

We'll help you Roluth. Tarifa spoke softly. *Aihola and I will help you.*

We all will. Isheeni agreed.

BIG SNOWY MOUNTAINS FORMERLY STATE OF MONTANA TRUE PEOPLE'S MOUNTAIN BASE

"I believe he is lying to us One." Duilt spoke softly as he and Hurcan sat in the large and very comfortable conference room.

“You have said this for many years Durt.” Hurcan spoke as he chewed the food in his mouth. “You have not cared for Maruad since he came to us over a hundred years ago. Do you know something that you are not telling me? He has never betrayed us.”

“I know this... but... his actions have always left me puzzled and questioning. He disappears for months at a time while the Coven controls this planet and...” Durt spoke.

“We know he was in Sparta during these times.” Hurcan said. “Fulfilling his carnal needs so he tells us. That is why he must kidnap his females and bring them here now. He no longer can do these things in Sparta.”

“Do we know that is all he did Hurcan?” Durt asked. “That is what he told us... but we do not have the means to confirm this information. And to have these reports from the High Coven...” Durt held up the data pad. “These are extremely sensitive reports Hurcan yet he says he stole them. We both know the vampire witch Yuri was very careful with these types of reports that came from off world yet he stole them. How is that possible?”

Hurcan leaned back in his chair. “What are you saying Durt?”

“Forgive me Hurcan... I do not mean too...”

“Durt... you have been my most trusted advisor since we began our journey.” Hurcan spoke. “I have never questioned you or your loyalty and I never will. What troubles you so about Maruad?”

“I believe he is getting ready to... to sacrifice us so that he may escape this world alone Hurcan.” Durt spoke. “Without us. And I believe this... this Kavalian has something to do with it. As well as the dragon eggs we hold.”

“Tell me what you think is happening.” Hurcan spoke now very interested in what his advisor was saying.

EDEN CITY

“*Son vada carians!*” Layna cried out as her body arched off the ruffled sheets of the bed and her third orgasm of the night rippled through her sweaty heated body. Her fingers entwined tightly in the silky soft shimmering white hair as Lynwe’s tongue dragged gloriously over her painfully hard clit, lapping at her juices as they flooded from her, and feeding on her blood as her vampire fangs were sunk into the flesh just above her near bursting clit.

The night hadn’t begun like this. It had not even been planned. They had returned to Lynwe and Selene’s home with the intent of having dinner and then retiring so they could rise early in the morning and begin searching for the Kavalian who threatened the woman both of them loved. Layna admitted it freely now. The weeks and months she had been here, lived their lives with them, seen the way they treated her daughter. It had been so easy to fall in love with both of them. She denied it for as long as she could, but seeing Lynwe and Selene with her daughter together a few weeks ago had sealed what her heart was already telling her. Layna could not explain it... and after this night she would not attempt to try. She didn’t remember what had happened between them, a simple fiery look of desire perhaps, a simple kiss goodnight that became something more, but whatever it was Layna was so very happy it had occurred.

Selene’s sweet juices covered her face, her musky orange scent so clear and powerful to her. She had feasted on Selene’s beautiful pussy like a starved kitten, stabbing her tongue deeply into her depths as her nose was buried in the soft auburn colored hair just above her clit. Selene had ridden her face for nearly an hour, shrieking as each of her four orgasms made her spasm powerfully, Layna’s hands extended up and gripping her full breasts firmly and pinching her nipples almost painfully. Layna could not believe how easy it was to set off her new vampire lover, something she worked diligently at doing, even while Lynwe’s incredible tongue and fingers brought Layna to her own crushing orgasms. This one was the most powerful yet, the muscles in her arms straining as she was able to scream out her pleasure now that Selene was collapsed next to her on the bed, shuddering in the aftermath of her own orgasm.

Layna felt Lynwe’s fangs withdraw from her flesh slowly, and then her wonderfully talented tongue quickly licked the two small puncture wounds sealing them completely. She shuddered in small mini orgasms as Lynwe’s lips and tongue flicked back and forth over her clit and the still engorged lips of her swollen pussy. The simple line of blond hair above her clit was drenched in Lynwe’s salvia and her own juices. Twice Lynwe

had bitten her in the midst of her orgasm, feeding on her blood as well as her juices, triggering even more powerful waves of pleasure. Layna had never imagined it could be like this... the pleasure she had experienced to this point far outweighing anything she had experienced in her life before now.

“Do... do you care for us Layna?” Selene’s husky voice whispered into her ear. “Do... do you truly care for us?”

Layna turned her head to look into Selene’s steel blue eyes, her own soft green eyes filled with desire and love the likes of which she had never felt. “Oh... oh yes.” She gasped out.

She turned her head quickly to see Lynwe lifting her upper body from between her wide spread thighs, her ebony cheeks slick with her passion, her lips glistening in the light and her enormous breasts with streaks of Layna’s come running down them. Lynwe lowered her head once more and stretched out her tongue to lick long and slowly up Layna’s powerfully defined abdomen.

“I... I have... I have wanted this for so long.” She whispered in passion.

“Do you wish to learn why... why I desire no man Layna?” Selene asked softly. “Do you wish to know why my Mistress is all I crave? All I will ever need?”

Layna nodded. “Oh yes.”

“She will be all you will ever need or desire as well Layna.” Selene spoke softly nuzzling Layna’s cheek and ear. “We... we want to have you in our lives Layna of the Spartans. So very much. No one but Tarifa and Aihola know what you will know if you are willing and open. If you truly desire to know love with those that want you as a mate, a companion and most of all as part of our beings.”

“It is what I want Selene. So very much.” Layna spoke softly.

“Our... our Mistress has a gift Layna.” Selene spoke with a delicious smile. She leaned over and kissed Layna furiously, her tongue pushing forcefully between Layna’s soft lips and tangling with her own. Layna groaned in renewed passion and reached up to grasp Selene’s head holding her in place. Layna groaned as Selene pulled away a moment later, flicking her tongue across her lips. “It is a gift she so desires to share with you... as she shares it with me.”

“What... what do you mean?” Layna asked staring into her eyes and feeling Lynwe gently stroke the outsides of her tanned thighs.

Layna’s eyes flew open in unabashed, seething pleasure as something incredibly long and hot and pulsing with life dragged delightfully slow across her still erect clit. The muscles in her neck bulged as she fought the surge of delicious pleasure that careened through her limbs, and her soft green eyes looking down between her thighs and opening wider in indescribable shock. Lynwe held herself still between Layna’s taut thighs, the entire length of her thick thirteen inch Drow cock now resting on Layna’s abdomen and thoroughly soaked in her juices after being dragged along her erect clit the entire length. Layna gaped at the massive ebony shaft that was attached to Lynwe. It was incredibly thick and adorned with pulsing veins, ending in the large bulbous head. She saw the large heavy balls hanging free between Lynwe’s thighs, the thick shaft coated in her juices from previous orgasms and dragging across her raging clit as it just had.

Selene’s face lowered beside hers as Layna pushed herself up on her elbows staring at the pulsing ebony rod. “This is Lynwe’s gift Layna. This is why I will never leave my Mistress.” Selene spoke softly. “You... you have affected us in a way that not even Tarifa and Aihola have done... and we want you in our lives.” Selene nuzzled her lips against Layna’s ear once more.

Layna looked at Lynwe. “Lynwe... Lynwe... is that... it is so big!” Layna gasped.

“The result of the High Coven experiments on me!” Lynwe spoke now her voice a harsh whisper as she fought the desire to just plunge her thick cock into Layna’s pussy. “They... they thought it funny! I thought... I thought it a curse... until others showed me that I was still desirable.” Lynwe leaned over her hands going to either side of Layna’s body and her huge breasts pressing into Layna’s own firm globes. “We want you Layna. Tell me you want us and I will make you feel what you have never felt in your life Spartan.”

Layna could not resist the desire that was flaming her body. It was the most incredible thing she had experienced before, the heat from that massive cock pulsing along the length of skin where it rested. Her abdomen convulsed involuntarily but she looked into Lynwe’s amber eyes and realized now why this Drow so enticed her. Why this ebony skinned female Drow elf vampire so captivated her. Her eyes wide Layna nodded her head slowly.

That was all the encouragement Lynwe needed and she pushed herself back up, her hands caressing down Layna's legs until they gripped her ankles and she lifted those long tanned legs giving her better access. Lynwe looked down into Layna's wide eyed face.

"I will break you now Spartan." She spoke in her best Drow Mistress voice, just before dragging the entire length of her pulsing ebony shaft back down over Layna's ragingly hard and stimulated clit. She watched as Layna's head fell back on the bed, her back arching upwards and Lynwe smiled as it only provided better access to her sweet pussy.

With one practiced motion Lynwe gripped her thick cock in her hand, placed the huge head at the entrance to Layna's beautiful and soaked pussy, and then she thrust her hips forward as hard as she could.

"Ahhhhhhh... Lynwe... ohhhhhhhh!" Layna screamed.

Layna screamed in rapturous bliss for the entire thirteen inch, soul robbing plunge into her exceptionally tight pussy. When she felt Lynwe's huge come filled balls press against her upturned asscheeks her eyes flew open and she screamed even louder until Lynwe leaned forward, her huge breasts crushing against Layna's firm melons, and covered her lips with her own. Layna's arms flew around Lynwe's muscular back, her powerful legs lifting to curl upward along her hips, as she held on for dear life. No one... no male had ever penetrated her so completely before. Her own now dead mate had never come close to reaching the depths that Lynwe had found so completely.

Layna could feel every thick pulsing inch of Lynwe's Drow cock buried in her belly and it sent lancing sensations of utter satisfaction ripping through her at break neck speed. Lynwe's deep, tongue lashing kiss only served to increase the intensity of the feelings that shattered her Spartan will in a matter of seconds. Layna gasped for air when Lynwe pulled her lips away, her eyes wide. She sensed Selene's wonderful orange scent nearby and it mingled deliciously with Lynwe's raw spicy scent. She turned her head slowly; every single movement causing Lynwe's massive cock to twitch within her depths where no one had ever been and batter what little remained of her Spartan control. She felt Selene's soft hair caress her cheek and those ruby red lips brushed against her own. She noticed vaguely that Selene's steel blue eyes had changed to the cobalt blue of her vampire persona.

"Make her ours Mistress!" Selene gasped with uncontrollable desire fanning her own body as she watched Lynwe stroke painfully slow within Layna. "Make her ours forever!"

Lynwe crushed her lips over Selene's and Layna could only watch in rising passion as the two women kissed. Selene surrendered to her Mistress, as she always did, allowing Lynwe to dominate their kiss with her strong tongue. She could taste Layna on her mistress's lips and it only served to increase her own passion.

Lynwe pulled away and stared at the woman who so owned her very soul, Selene not breaking eye contact with her and smiling ever so beautifully. Layna's pussy was incredibly tight, just like Selene's, and it clung to her near bursting cock like a glove. She slowly turned her head to look into Layna's passion filled eyes and she smiled.

"Now... now I will... I will break you Layna! Now... I will..." Lynwe groaned loudly, clenching her teeth and closing her eyes.

Layna shook her head back and forth. "No!" She gasped. "I... so big Lynwe... I can't... I can't lose..."

"We shall see!" Lynwe said lowering her head to tuck it into the crook of Layna's shoulder and neck. Her shimmering white hair fell across Layna's face and shoulders and Layna's eyes rolled into the back of her head when Lynwe began to drive into her.

Layna could only hold on as tightly as her mind allowed her too as Lynwe began pile driving her with powerful thirteen inch strokes of her huge ebony Drow cock. Upon every devastating drive into her depths more of Layna's control slipped, and upon every exquisitely wonderful withdraw she would hum out her blissful delight. As Lynwe sped up her dominating thrusts, Layna knew she could not win. She didn't want to win, she wanted to surrender to the incredible feelings this Drow female was producing in her.

Lynwe sat back quickly, dragging Layna with her and holding her with four inches of her huge glistening cock outside her clutching pussy. Lynwe smiled into her eyes and Layna thought it was the most beautiful thing she had ever seen. Lynwe tightened her grip on Layna's hips and pulled her down with a powerful heave. As the beautiful blond Spartan dropped that last, four will breaking inches, she did surrender. She surrendered all that she was to these two women and she did it without hesitation. And then Lynwe was lifting her and pulling her back down, using her elf/vampire strength to totally dominate the female Spartan

wolf that she and Selene so desired. She couldn't last long, not with the spasming of Layna's pussy muscles as she was shuddering in one raging orgasm after another.

Layna couldn't believe what was happening to her as her abdomen clenched and then unclenched in continuous rapid fire orgasms that were rocking her entire being. She felt something warm and soft press up against her strong back, felt the brush of lips against the back of her neck as Selene leaned over her shoulder.

"Now... now Layna!" Selene gasped into her ear. "Now you belong to us!"

Layna howled as Selene's vampire fangs sank deeply into her supple neck and the fire erupted in her veins. Her howl increased another octave when she felt Lynwe's equally long fangs bite deeply into the flesh on the other side of her neck. The white flashes of light skipped across her eyes as pleasure unlike anything she had ever imagined could exist cleaved through her very soul. She felt Lynwe's immense Drow cock balloon nearly double in size so deeply buried in her belly, her huge balls pressed against the cheeks of her now red ass, and then the explosion came. When the first blast of Lynwe's lava hot come erupted from her cock and splashed madly within her clutching pussy, Layna's eyes rolled into the back of her head and nearly three hundred years of pent up emotions and desire came erupting out of her. Her orgasm was nearly triple in power because of the two sets of fangs buried in either side of her neck feeding off of her warm spicy blood, taking her up to that point and then leaping off with her without hesitation.

The Spartan warrior Layna had surrendered to her new vampire Drow Mistress and her red haired fellow vampire slave. They would serve their Drow Mistress together without question and with unabashed love.

And she only hoped the pleasure never ended.

Maruad killed our father's rider after our mother laid her last clutch of eggs nearly eleven hundred years ago. Roluth was speaking softly.

His rust colored eyes kept going to where Isra was evenly spreading an ointment of some kind on the edges of his wings, Tarifa helping him while Aihola was doing the same thing on his right front foreleg. All of these areas had been scraped considerably when he landed on the hard tarmac of the airfield. The ointment he soon discovered was cool to the touch and almost instantly the scrapes and cuts began to heal. The male Lycavorian and two female elves had moved almost immediately to do this, never questioning what they were doing. Roluth could not explain what had happened, but he felt like his mind had opened up a thousand fold as soon as the females had touched him. He felt filled with knowledge he did not have before and he noticed right away it had improved his knowledge of speech and the way he spoke the words. It was easy enough for him to determine the two females were the Lycavorian's mates by the way they acted around him. Yet the male didn't talk or act like Maruad in regards to them. He treated them with the utmost respect and Roluth could sense the deep abiding love they all had for each other, as well as the gamboge colored dragon Aelnala.

The azure blue female he had plunged upon had not spoken very much, yet Roluth could feel the depth of the bond she shared with the raven haired female. Roluth could feel the depth and the incredible untapped power within them both. It was harnessed and controlled, always lingering just beneath the surface.

Aricia sat directly in front of him, Isheeni sitting close to her on her right side, Aelnala on the left, as they listened to him in rapt attention. Thr'won sat near Aelnala's left foreleg, mixing more of the ointment in a large bowl that Isra had gotten from his DT. The eight Durcunusaan soldiers all knelt or stood within several meters, half their attention on protecting those they were assigned to, the other half of their attention on Roluth.

My father and his rider had grown close over the years here according to what our mother told Syrilth. He changed once they came here and Maruad stayed the same. When our father's rider refused to help Maruad kill someone who had anger him, Maruad struck down my father's rider. My father went insane then and even our mother could not console him. He disappeared for many years only to reappear and attack Maruad and my mother. He was able to burn Maruad badly, but was struck down. When he died my mother, Liraie was her name; she too went insane and attacked Maruad. He killed her as well and he forced Syrilth to serve him by taking all of our siblings and hiding them from us. Somewhere he has hidden seventy-three of our siblings, and unless Syrilth serves him in any way he demands, he will destroy the eggs.

Roluth stopped speaking and Aricia saw his large chest rise and fall in a heavy sigh. *You are here Roluth. How did this come to be?*

Roluth nodded. *Over the years Maruad and the white skinned creatures have forced seven of us to hatch. I was the first. Majeir is the youngest. She is only nine weeks old.*

Isra stood up in front of Roluth's massive head and tapped him on the snout. *Open your mouth. Why?*

Isra held up the large chunk of cooked and dried brown meat. *This is a medical kit for dragons. Isheeni's mother told us how to develop it. It has several different medications within it and it will help the ointment to heal your scales quicker. It will also give you proteins and vitamins that you are lacking and will help to build your body. You are thin for a dragon your age and size, and we need to fix that.* He explained. *Now open.*

Roluth did as Isra instructed and he tossed the large chunk of meat into the tooth filled maw without fear. He shook his head quickly in a grimace. *We will have to work on your breath my dragon brother.* He spoke.

Isra stop it! Tarifa snapped. *You will hurt his feelings!*

Why did you call me brother? Roluth asked. *We... we are enemies. Don't your dragons serve you?*

We are bonded brothers and sisters Roluth. Aelnala spoke softly. *We do not serve as your sister serves this Maruad. We have given of ourselves freely and become bound within Mindvoice to those that ride us. Just as you have now become bound to Tarifa and Aihola. Do you not feel it? The desire to protect and safeguard them?*

Roluth nodded. *It is very strong.*

Aelnala nodded. *That is what we are Roluth. We fight together as bonded brothers and sisters. We serve for the greater good. The Elder Mother trained all of us... and Isra would die for me just as willingly as I would die for him. Some of us are more powerful than others, but we all serve the same purpose. It is what the King and Dragon Elders have decided.*

Roluth's head turned to focus on Aricia and Isheeni. *Like them?* He asked.

Aricia is Queen Roluth. She and Isheeni have been bonded the longest. The King and Isheeni's mate Torma only a few days less. They are the most powerful of all the Bonded Pairs. Aelnala answered.

Her mate? Roluth spoke. *You have a mate already?*

Isheeni's azure eyes blinked as she nodded. *And I carry his second clutch of children boy!*

Roluth's eyes grew a little wider as Aricia reached up and placed her hand on Isheeni's lower jaw. *He does not know of your ways sister.* Aricia spoke softly, her voice a soothing balm to Isheeni. *That is not something we can blame on one so young.*

Isheeni turned her head and looked at Aricia for a long moment. *I... I am sorry Aricia my sister.*

Aricia stood up and leaned over to gently kiss Isheeni's snout just below her beautiful eye. She turned to look at Roluth.

The war your parents fled on Enurrua ended long ago. Aricia spoke. *Dragons won... but over the ensuing years they were still hunted by men like Isra and I. Lycavorians. That changed last year with...*

The COM unit built into Aricia's armor chimed and she reached up to tap it. "Yes."

"My Queen... we are receiving an encrypted long range transmission from one of our ships." Joarl's voice spoke. "I thought you might want to be present. I'm in with Tareif and the Guardian right now."

"Very well Admiral... I'll be right there." Aricia spoke. "It seems I am needed. Isra find out what we can and then we will discover what we need to do to help young Roluth and his siblings here."

Isra nodded. "Of course."

"Isheeni." Aricia spoke as she turned and headed for the terminal building. Isheeni glanced at Roluth once more before turning and following her.

Roluth watched them for a moment then looked at Aelnala. *What... what have I done? She is... she is beautiful and... I do not want her angry with me.*

Roluth... Isheeni is already mated and has been for nearly three hundred of her years. Aelnala explained. *Her mate is the Bonded Dragon Brother of King Leonidas... Aricia's mate. Torma is... Torma is a hybrid... a combination of Firespitter and Heavyhorn. And he is considerably larger than either you or your sister. If you think you feel power from Aricia and Isheeni... what you feel when you meet the King and Torma will stagger you. What you tried to do before... plunging on Isheeni to take her as your mate. That is our way yes... but you... you tried to take a mated female by force. All dragons consider that a vile crime of the highest*

magnitude. To make matters worse she is carrying her mate's eggs. If Torma discovers this... he will not be happy.

I am not afraid! Roluth boasted. *I would fight him for her!*

Isra tapped his snout again. *Open.* Roluth did so without question this time and Isra held out the bottle to Tarifa who reached up and poured a blue liquid into his mouth that he drank down quickly.

What was that? Roluth asked.

Isra looked at him. *That was something that will hopefully make you smarter. You are young Roluth... but do you wish to go on living?*

I must help Syrilth save our brothers and sisters. Roluth spoke.

The best thing you can do my young dragon brother is offer your deepest apologies for what you have done to Isheeni. She is wise and knows what happens here. You did not know... and you have had no one to teach you the differences in scents of the females of your kind. I understand that... and since you are now bound to my mates Aelnala and I will do all we can to help you. But if you wish to go on living my sincere suggestion would be do not wish to fight Torma. He outweighs you by a good metric ton, he is better trained than any of Mjolnir's Hand, his Mindvoice power is nearly equal to the King, and because they are bonded, he has the King's temper when it comes to others harming his mate. It's particularly vicious, and I guarantee you he will not be as forgiving as Isheeni.

You do not have to frighten him Isra my brother. Aelnala said.

Isra looked at her and then to Tarifa and Aihola who were glaring at him. He turned back to Roluth with a sigh. *Come with me.*

Roluth got to his feet immediately, Tarifa and Aihola with him.

"Isra... what are you going to do?" Tarifa demanded.

Isra leaned over and kissed her tenderly, an action which he repeated with Aihola. "It's a male thing." He spoke.

"Isra..."

Roluth... walk with me young one! Isra announced.

Tarifa and Aihola watched as the carmine colored dragon hatchling fell in beside Isra and they began to walk further away from the DTs into the still dark night. They turned as Aelnala came up behind them with Thr'won next to her.

Aelnala?

Do not fear... who better to teach young Roluth than the Spartan that swept you both away. Aelnala said with a hint of humor. *He can help us... and we can help him and his all of his siblings. Including Syrilth. There are some things he needs to learn however, and Isra can teach him those things.*

CHAPTER TWENTY

LYCAVORE

"The grandson of Resumar?" Condar spoke softly looking at where Martin sat on the floor of the cavern. The Persian red haired female sat casually between his legs, one of his arms wrapped around her waist protectively and quite possessively. Lisisa sat an arm's reach away on his right side with Melita next to her. The second dark haired Hadarian female sat very close to Martin's right leg, her arm leaning across his knee, her fingers touching Anja's shoulder. The massive black Spartan sat to his left with the two female elves leaning up against his sides. The monstrous obsidian dragon that had almost caused Condar to lose complete control of his bodily functions sat behind Lisisa, the small blue/black dragon situated between those hugely thick front forelegs that were equipped with wicked looking silver/black talons. He kept rubbing his snout against Lisisa's back and shoulder causing her to smile in contentment. The green scaled dragon beast sat just behind Martin and Anja, occasionally its head dipping close so that she could rub under its huge jaw. "Who... who would have ever possibly imagined this day would come?"

Helen followed where his eyes were looking and she smiled gently. "Who indeed?"

“Those... those are dragons?” Condar asked her with awe in his voice. “They are always... always with them?”

Helen nodded once more. “There are many wondrous things you will discover.” She spoke. “And many things that will alter your perceptions of the world around you. Torma and his kind are part of our lives now. Their Mindvoice powers surpass even that of the strongest Mages. Stronger than any of you or those here. They are bonded to Martin and the others in a way that is not easily explainable. It has something to do with the chemistry within each individual body we know that. Not anyone can bond with a dragon. In fact it is a very rare thing and there are less than three hundred and fifty within the entire Union. And it appears as if Torma’s son Jeth has now bonded with Lisisa as well.”

It had been an eventful last twelve hours. Danny and Visam had led the Lycavorians from the settlement to this cavernous maw unnaturally formed under the ground of Lycavore. Endith had flown the rest of their group aboard the *STRIKER DT*, and using the advanced sensors on the ship she and Sivana had found a natural entrance to this cave several kilometers away. With unmatched skill and precision she and Sivana had stopped quickly to pick up Melita and Yuriko since they could not be exposed to the Rubidium Ore radiation in the tunnel and survive, and then they flew the three kilometers from this new entrance into the cave to park the DT where it now rested a hundred meters further up the tunnel. The cavern itself was well over seven kilometers long and six hundred meters tall at its highest point. The strange vessel suspended above the ground, which they all now knew was a ship of some sort, provided the twenty-nine thousand plus Lycavorians shelter and many of them had established homes within the confines of the ship, while others preferred to build their homes along the length of the ship instead. There were dozens of ramshackle buildings set up on either side of the suspended ship, with at least a dozen cooking fires that could be seen just from where they were sitting.

Three entrances had been found over the years across the 1.2 kilometer long ship, two of them open now to the ground of the cavern to allow entry through the long two meter wide ramps. The moment Endith and Sivana had seen the enormous ship, all else was forgotten and along with Tina and several of the engineer trained *Durcunusaan* they plunged into the interior of the ship with half a dozen excited Lycavorians as their guides. The Lycavorian male who had first removed Tina’s equipment and used the opportunity to cop a quick feel of her lush body remained with them, doing his level best to apologize for his actions at every turn. Especially when he witnessed Endith walk boldly up to Tina after leaving the *STRIKER* and give her a blistering kiss full on the lips, pulling Tina’s body tightly against her own.

Many of the Lycavorian people within the tunnel had scrambled to come forward and see the man who was their King, as well as the three massive dragons that fought beside him without question. It was like a wonder to all of them and the word was quickly passing through the throngs of men, women and children that their King... the blood of Resumar was among them. Many were still filtering by where Martin and the others were sitting just to get a peek at him and the dragons.

Condar looked back to Helen where they sat in their small group. Garpa and Noreu sat with them as well as Nanac, Donus, Visam and Onia. The most senior Alphas and Elders of the Lycavorian people were once more reunited with the First Oracle of the Lycavorian people, something none of them had ever imagined. That it was a woman in front of them and not a man mattered not to them. All of them could sense the memories and wisdom of Canth within Helen, mixed perfectly with her own personality and temperament.

“Is... is he much like King Resumar *Feravomir*?” Condar asked her his voice full of interest.

“If the memories of Resumar that Canth passed to me are any indication... he is far too much like his grandfather.” Helen answered with a small smile. “There is much of his father in him though, and I knew his father very well. And then there is just Martin Leonidas. There are times when I believe he has taken the best from both Resumar and his own father and blended those traits into himself. Resumar’s wisdom and compassion, his strength of conviction and clarity of purpose, his father’s dedication and commitment, his incredible military genius and strength of body, Martin’s own devotion to his mates, especially Aricia, and those he considers family. He is the best of all three in one man.”

“His scent is over three thousand years old...” Noreu spoke. “Yet he does not act as a wolf with those years would.”

“He spent most of those years in suspended animation.” Helen replied with a nod. “While his scent and body are technically that old, he has only been truly alive for thirty-three years. And only aware of whom he really was for the last two.”

“How... how is that even possible?” Nanac asked.

“Much has changed in the time you have been here.” Helen told them. “There have been advances in science and technology that have made many things possible. You have seen some of it with the High Coven butchers here, but they have purposely limited your exposure in what you see to keep you docile.”

“Yet he mingles with vampire scum freely. The one calls him father...” Onia hissed softly. “Lisisa... who he claims is his own daughter... she has the blood of vampires in her if what you say is true *Feravomir*. The blood of the very High Coven Princess who is on her way here now!”

“How can you question what Lisisa says now Onia?” Noreu spoke up. “You can smell the King’s blood within her just as surely as I can. All she has told us these past years is true.”

“She is still half vampire!” Onia snapped. “Half of our hated enemies Noreu!”

Helen nodded slowly and looked at her. “Yes... that is true. There is a long story behind that however, and part of that story is Yuriko there and what grew between them. One of his four Queens is a pureblood vampire... though she has only just coming to see what she means to him. Isabella is the daughter of Veldruk and his pureblood consort.” Helen could see the look of horror in Onia’s eyes, as well as Nanac. “There is also a full division of highly trained, cloned vampire soldiers that call Earth home and follow Martin Leonidas without question. There are half vampire Drow elf scouts across the Union military, subjected to experiments and tortures by the High Coven that you can’t begin to imagine. They follow Martin Leonidas without question and they fought beside him with untold bravery in the Battle for Earth, and every day since. Nearly ten million vampires, purebloods and turned vampires, reside within Lycavorian Union space. They fight beside us, live beside us and we call them friend. As I said... much has changed. Resumar started our people on a course of change, acceptance and tolerance... and that course has come full circle with his grandson. If you are a true friend, an ally to Martin Leonidas, he will do everything within his power to help you. If you wish to be an enemy, well he can be that too. Many have discovered in the last year or so it is not wise to have him as an enemy for you will usually end up very dead.” Helen stated matter-of-factly.

“His aura... it is staggering in its power. So pure and... and wild.” Condar spoke softly. “His Mindvoice powers must be...”

“They can not be charted...” Helen finished the statement and saw their eyes go wide. “And we have tried to do just that in the last two years. The normal measuring apparatus we have used for millennia are not able to even read what his abilities are. Or the abilities of Aricia, his Lycavorian Queen of pure blood.”

“So it is true what the black skinned Spartan said.” Visam spoke. “He has four Queens, one of which is this pureblood vampire you speak of... Isabella?”

Helen nodded as her eyes looked over them. “Yes. Aricia is on the planet Earth at the moment with her dragon Isheeni. Earth is the planet that many you see around you call home. It is where they were raised... in the city of Sparta. The story behind that is long and arduous, and I encourage all of you to read the history of it. Aricia is Martin’s youngest, most beautiful and his most beloved Queen, at least in my opinion and that of many others. They claimed each other as *Anomes* before leaving Earth, conducting the ritual of *Gravinolfgreksaan* very much by instinct alone.” Helen smiled when she saw their looks of surprise at this information. “The pureness of his blood and that of Aricia, it is the highest level to have been measured since that practice began, and since we do not know how pure Resumar’s blood was there really is no way to gauge how powerful the two of them will become. Their power only increased when they became bonded with their dragons. Anja... Anja is Hadarian...” Helen motioned to the diminutive red haired female sitting between Martin’s legs. “...she and Martin’s elfin Queen Dysea, Martin turned them, claimed all of them under the *Assirina Cormunn* in fact; and while they are exceptionally powerful and also bound to different dragons, we can at least chart their power and abilities as we know it using the old ways. The drop in abilities from Aricia is quite large, but in terms of Mindvoice skills combined with physical skills, Anja is closest to Martin and Aricia in her abilities.

“She is also Hadarian as is the young woman next to her. Anja is the Hadarian Queen, fully recognized by her people and the entire Union. They are Healers... able to heal almost any minor or major wound and disease by virtue of their touch upon that person. The planet they come from is surrounded by a nebula that emits a unique radiation that bombards their planet and gives them this gift. His elfin Queen Dysea, while physically extremely lethal in her own right, her Mindvoice abilities have manifested themselves differently. It’s almost as if her latent talent in the political arena increased more than anything. Her ability to sense things, a person’s intent or emotions, has increased to incredible levels.” Helen looked at Visam. “And Isabella... his

pureblood vampire Queen... while her Mindvoice skills are not on the same level as the others, she is extremely capable and just as honored as the others. His elf concubine has only just been turned. Martin did this because assassins tried to kill her and turning her was the only way to save her life. We will not know what effect his blood will have on her for some time. His Queens and concubine... they love Martin and he loves them all in return, though only Aricia will have the distinction of being the one who he loves most of all. They share everything without question, including Martin and each other." Helen saw the look of surprise in their eyes once more and she smiled before slowly turning her dark eyes on Onia. "And you threatened to take Anja's child from her? The King's child?" Helen shook her head. "What were you thinking woman? You had to have felt the power radiating from her and still you threatened to do this?"

"We... we did not believe what she was telling us!" Onia protested. "Claiming to be a Queen... that the King himself was here on Lycavore! What were we suppose to believe?"

"Your instincts for one." Helen spoke sarcastically as if she was scolding her. "Or have you all forgotten how to do that. Anja's aura is more powerful than any of you sitting here now. That fact alone should have given you pause in your actions." Helen shook her head slowly and looked at her. "You are very lucky you still stand there able to speak." She told Onia. "She may be the smallest of his Queens in physical stature, but she has the most volatile *tophorh* of all of them. You are exceptionally lucky she did not kill you outright for even speaking such a threat, and make no mistake... she could have done it quite easily had she so desired." Helen looked around their small group letting that information sink into their heads and then she motioned with her hand to those Spartans she could see. (Temper)

"The other Spartans with him are the *Durcunusaan*. Wolves of the Blood. They are his *Hippies Sedla*... his Royal Guard in the ancient language once used in Sparta on Earth; all of them with some of the purest Lycavorian blood in the Union. They are the finest trained force in the galaxy. I should know... I helped to train all of them in their Mindvoice skills." Helen spoke with a proud smile. "I have instituted the same levels of Mindvoice abilities in the Union as I developed while in hiding on Earth. It is based on a six tier ascending level. The *Durcunusaan* you see around you, as well as those within the Union that protect others, they all have Mindvoice skills at Tier Six... the highest level. Condar... you and the other Elders would be considered a mid-level Tier Four on that same scale. The members of Mjolnir's Hand... the three hundred Lycavorians bonded to dragons as Martin and Anja are; they would be considered the highest echelon of Tier Six. The *Durcunusaan* would have swept through this cavern like *vada aeverbruth* had any harm come to Anja, and her dragon Miath would have quite possibly gone into a rage none of us would have been able to control. I won't begin to relate to you what Martin would have done." (The Plague)

"The same way... the same way he... and they destroyed my ancestor Chetak." Nanac snarled softly not looking at Helen.

Helen's eyes narrowed and she looked at him. "You should learn of your ancestors before you defend them Nanac. Chetak was one of the vilest men I have ever known in the over four thousand years of life I have and he was a disgrace to our race!" She growled back viciously. "I was there Nanac! I saw what he had built. Lycavorian women... our women used like animals! Brutalized and raped against their will by our very own kind! Chetak's very name has become a curse among our people now! He and his son took Martin's Queen of pure blood... they took Aricia... they took her and they raped her for days! When Resumar took power he made that practice outlaw! He made it a *Casilanjar*! It was one of the reasons Chetak was exiled you fool! When Resumar exiled Chetak and those that followed him, they continued that practice and swore a Blood Oath against Resumar for exiling them. Chetak thought to exact that Blood Oath against Resumar's blood... against Martin Leonidas. Your ancestor was committing genocide against Torma and Miath's kind! Against Dragons! Selling parts of their bodies for profit! I will not begin to relate to you what other atrocities he committed that we did not discover until *after* he was dead! Do not sit there and defend that man to me! You may be far older than me... all of you except Donus there... but I carry Canth's memories inside me. The memories of the First Oracle! I know what it was like in the beginning, and I know what happened between them! Martin Leonidas freed over three hundred and fifty million of our people from Chetak's vile oppression the day he butchered that fool and his son! And then he brought them all back to Apo Prime where our people have called home for over three millennia. He gave them homes... he gave them work... he gave them hope for the future. Not because he had too... he could have just taken Aricia back and left them there living under Chetak's heel. He did it because they were his people!" Helen shook her head and took a deep breath.

“You had better tread very carefully when you speak openly of your ancestor Nanac, for there are few who would want to be associated with that name. Even his youngest son Isra holds the name of his father in scorn. His own blood hates the very thought of his father. It was Martin Leonidas who cursed the name of Chetak in the ancient language, condemned him for all eternity because of his actions. If you defend that man Nanac and he hears you... you will see just how angry he can become. I have seen it with my own eyes! What you witnessed this day when he came for his Queen...” Helen waved her hand dismissively. “That was nothing compared to the true wrath he has unleashed in the past. I witnessed it the day he slaughtered Prince Xerxes without an ounce of mercy or pity for killing his father and brother, for taking his mother from him! What he did to Xerxes that day still makes many shudder in horror. I saw the full extent of the fury he commands the day he beat Chetak’s son Joric to death with his bare hands for violating his most beloved and cherished Queen. The power he used on you earlier... bah... that was child’s play for him now. He has... he is able to extend a psychic knife if that is what it can be called, from his fist. He can fling psychic bolts from his hands that do devastating damage. He drove... he stabbed that psychic knife into Chetak’s head and drove him mad by just touching his mind. No...you don’t want to open that door Nanac... what you will see in there will turn your blood cold with its ferocity.”

There was a long moment of silence before any of them could speak, their eyes moving to where Martin was sitting. Condar finally broke that silence. “*Feravomir*... we have... we have practiced this way of mating... to keep our people strong. To keep us alive.” Condar spoke softly looking at her. “Out of necessity... not out of any sick desire to do this.”

Helen nodded slowly and turned to look at him. “And that... *that* is the only reason any of you still live.” She spoke seeing their eyes go wide in shock. “You must understand... after Resumar’s death... the Lycavorian Union had not been formed yet. It wasn’t until Martin’s father was killed by Xerxes that we became united as a Union. When that happened they took the law that Martin’s father had forged and followed while on Earth as the King of Sparta and they made much of it their own. Spartan law is very different from anything you know. In some ways it was and it still is savage and brutal and unforgiving... but many of those parts have been discarded over the millennia until now all that remains is law that can still be very harsh at times but it is equal and fair to everyone. The laws in the Union are few my friends, but they are adhered to without question with no regard to one’s station or position. It is a different form of the Spartan law that Martin’s father followed, but the crime of rape is still foremost among those crimes considered taboo by all of us. It carries with it the most severe and unyielding of consequences. It is not tolerated in any sector of Union territory in any form or shape by any species of the Union.” Helen let her eyes linger on them. “What you have done here... it helped you to survive. To make our people strong here. I know that... Martin Leonidas knows that. What you must understand now... it is over. It will not happen anymore for any reason.”

“And what of those that are already mated?” Onia asked. “Those that are bound in union for eternity because of children that have been conceived? Will he just dismiss them out of hand?”

Helen looked at her. “As with the woman we rescued from Chetak’s empire, he will more than likely leave it up to them to make that decision. If they wish that union dissolved... it will be dissolved in the eyes of our people and our laws... instantly and without question. If they chose to remain in that union... it will be their decision alone, and no one else’s. As I said... many things have changed.”

“And us?” Garpa asked. “What of us?”

“What of you?” Helen spoke. “You will be treated with the respect and dignity due you... again without question. With the exception of perhaps several hundred men and women, you will be the oldest among our people, the very connection to our past that Martin is trying so hard to return to our people. You can give him that connection, and be honored among trillions for it. And you might be surprised at the wisdom the young ones within the Union come seeking from others like yourself. To include the King. Eliani’s sister Deia is Prime Minister of the Union my friends... and Martin spends hours with her learning of the old ways, of government, anything he can learn from her. As do his Queens. He will be the first to tell you that knowledge is the key to everything.”

“Deia? Deia still lives?” Noreu gasped.

“She survived... as did many like I said.” Helen spoke with a nod. “And she continues what Resumar started even now.”

“So he does not plan to leave us here then?” Condar asked innocently. “He will not take his daughter, you and the others and just go and leave us to our fates?”

Helen looked at them her eyes wide. “Is that what you fear? That Martin will leave you behind?”

“We were left behind once *Feravomir*.” Garpa spoke his voice neutral.

“That action was perpetrated by the High Coven. They told us the planet was dead. We saw what they missiles had done... and Resumar wept for weeks afterwards. He had no idea any survived hidden in the tunnels and caves.” Helen looked at them. “I have touched Martin Leonidas’s mind in a way that few outside of his Queens have touched him my friends.” Helen spoke softly. “There is one constant that has never changed in his life... not in the years before he discovered who he was, and not in the time since. One thing that has always been the same in his mind... in his heart.”

“What is that *Feravomir*?” Condar asked.

Helen stood up with a small smile on her face. “Martin Leonidas will never leave anyone behind! Ever. I would not be a bit surprised if he is right now devising some *malda igord* scheme to accomplish that goal. You can tell our people that as well... and insure they are ready to leave at a moment’s notice.” She bowed her head and began to walk away towards where the *ANVIL* was parked.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Atropos?* Helen reached out within Mindvoice as she walked with measured steps.

Atropos sat with Thomeo and Jobel a meter from his beloved Queen and the others. To his well trained credit he did not flinch or turn when the Oracle’s voice entered his thoughts heavily shielded.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Feravomir?* He spoke.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Atropos, detail someone to watch Onia and Nanac. I want whoever you choose to be discrete... but I do not trust those two, or their intentions. They have grown to like the authority they wield far too much and they are hiding something. They are far too accepting of the status quo. And we certainly do not need them fouling up whatever scheme the King is devising to get us all home.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Will we get home Feravomir?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *In the time you have been with him Atropos... when have you ever known Martin Leonidas to not succeed when he puts his mind to something?*

Atropos thought about that for only a moment. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Never.*

Helen chuckled within the connection. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Then you can be assured Atropos that he will do everything within his power to get us home. All of us. And he will not stop or rest until he succeeds. He trusts you with the life of one of his Queens and the child within her womb does he not?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I believe the King trusts only three completely Feravomir. Queen Aricia, Daniel and Torma. I believe only they truly know what goes on within his thoughts all of the time.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Do you now? Who do you think chose you to be Anja’s Captain Atropos?*

Atropos’s eyes grew a little wider at that. [Mindvoice Shielded] *I... I always thought... I was told Queen Anja chose me Feravomir.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *That is what he told Panos to tell you so it would not appear he was favoring your family because Aricia was his Anome.* Helen said. *When Panos first asked him who he wanted as Anja’s Captain, your name was the only one that escaped his lips. See to my instructions if you would Captain.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Consider it done Feravomir.* Atropos replied instantly, his eyes going to where his King sat, a new sense of loyalty blooming within him.

“...secure Milord.” Komirri spoke from the holoimager disc on the ground in the center of the small circle. “We are quite invisible in the shadows of this wonderful crater we have discovered on the moon. And we don’t even need to use our Shroud due to the ion particles in the moon’s atmosphere. We will appear as a very medium sized rock. I must say sire... I believe I’m developing quite a flare for these special missions of yours.”

Martin chuckled at Komirri’s calm demeanor. “Just make sure you let us know when Yuri shows up Komirri. I don’t know how many ships will be with her, but you have to believe quite a few. I figure we have eighteen hours until she arrives in system.”

Komirri nodded calmly. “As soon as we detect them entering the system I will contact you Milord. If they follow standard High Coven System Entry Protocols it will take those ships eleven point five hours from point of Gate Debarkation to reach us here. And our passive long range scans have shown only one Gate into

this system. We will move to drop you additional troops as you requested as soon as the moon peaks in two hours and then return here.”

“Very well... you have the coordinates. Silent drop Komirri, however many you can spare without shorting yourself. Let the others know. And keep me advised.” Martin spoke. “Leonidas out.”

Yuriko leaned forward as the holo image faded. “Father... if what Melita says is accurate, and it is Yuri coming here, she will come with her personal Strike Group at the very least, her entire Fleet Group at the most.”

Martin turned to the blond haired vampire female that had come with them. “You are sure about what was said?” He asked.

Melita nodded quickly. “Yes.” She answered. She saw Martin lower his head and she slowly got her knees under her. “Sir... Lisisa... Lisisa has protected me for over two decades. She has raised me when my own parents would not. She has been my friend... my... my sister through everything, no matter what was done to her. I have loved her since I was old enough to understand what she was doing for me.” Melita saw him look at her again. “I... I can not help *what* I am sir... but that does not make me *who* I am.”

“I know that.” Martin spoke meeting her dark brown eyes with his own. Anja’s jade green eyes also rested on her from her position between Martin’s legs. “I wasn’t questioning your motives Melita.”

“You... you weren’t?” Melita spoke confused.

Anja shook her head as well now. “No we weren’t.” She said softly.

Danny chortled from where he sat and Melita looked at him. Anuk was leaning against one side of him, Nayeca against the other. “Sister... if we questioned your motives... whether you were Lisisa’s friend or not... you would have been dead a long time ago.” Dan spoke casually biting off the piece of protein bar and handing it to Nayeca.

Melita glanced at Anuk quickly and remembered how easily the red haired female elf had subdued her in the settlement gathering hall. She saw those cerulean blue eyes settle on her and Anuk smiled.

“The question you have to answer now Melita...” Anja said leaning forward. “Do you go all the way with this, or do you turn back now? Lisisa considers you a friend... and the decision you have to make right now, is that friendship worth more to you than the life you have here?”

Melita looked at Lisisa, saw her forest green eyes come to rest on her and her decision was easy. “I will not leave her.” She spoke.

Martin nodded. “Then I will make a concerted attempt to keep you from having to kill anyone that you know.” He said.

Melita took Lisisa’s hand within hers at his words. “Lisisa is the only one I know or am concerned with on this world. Certainly no one else of my kind.”

“Not even your parents?” Seanna asked.

“My mother is a whore and my father is a weak fool.” Melita snapped. “I have no desire for conquest or power. I would rather find a man who will care for me for who I am inside. Not what I am.”

Yuriko smiled. “I’m quite sure that once we return there will be many young male wolves willing to prove themselves up to that task.” She said.

“Sort of like you have found.” Martin said with a grin.

Yuriko looked at him aghast. “You... you know?” She gasped.

“You didn’t think that as my daughter, adopted vampire or not, that you could hide that from me did you?” Martin spoke. “Bella found out within a week of you beginning to see him... and she told me the next day.”

“Father... you won’t...” Yuriko protested.

Anja laughed. “Don’t worry... Aricia and I already put the brakes on that.” She spoke. She looked at Lisisa. “See what Yuriko, you and your sister have to look forward too.” She spoke dropping her hand to her abdomen.

Lisisa beamed a smile at her and reached out to place her hand on Anja’s abdomen, able to sense the strong presence of life. “I believe I will look forward to perhaps not the actions, but the intent, for it is something I have never had.” She said softly.

“Ok... back to business. Let’s say she goes on the low end and comes with just her Strike Group Yuriko.” Martin spoke once more. “How many ships are we talking?”

“A *REVERENCE*-Class Dreadnought will be her flagship without question.” Yuriko answered immediately. “And a standard High Coven Strike Group is made up of twenty-nine ships, seven of which will be *ORIC*-Class Heavy Cruisers. The rest will be a mixture of medium cruisers and frigates.”

“No troop ships?” Danny asked surprised.

Yuriko shook her head. “The *REVERENCE*-Class has a standing complement of eight thousand troops and a thousand Immortals. The other ships have a complement of from three to eight hundred troops. They would come down in smaller troop transports from within the individual ships.”

“Lisisa how many troops and Immortals are stationed here on Lycavore?” Martin asked as he lowered his head and nuzzled the back of Anja’s neck inhaling her warm honey scent deeply.

“There is a standing garrison of a thousand, but only the officers have any real combat experience. Many of them are troops fresh from their training barracks as you noted before father.” She replied immediately, watching as Anja pushed back against him, drawing his arm into her hands and pulling it tightly to her chest as she eyes closed dreamily from his caress. “There is another... another force of perhaps a one hundred Immortals.” She finished.

“Why don’t we just load everyone into this thing and take off.” Danny asked jerking his thumb towards the end of the strange ship that hung ten meters off the floor of the cavern.

The mass of rock that the ship was sitting on did not begin on the floor for another five hundred meters further down the tunnel so it appeared as if the end was suspended in mid air. The halfway point of the strange vessel saw it stretching some two hundred meters into the air above them and it was safe to determine that the mountain above it was very hollow.

“We don’t know what that thing is.” Martin said. “And I’d rather not trust our lives to something that we don’t even know will work.”

“They’ve been living in it for a pretty long time now skipper.” Danny said. “Something on it has to work.”

The COM unit on Anja’s armor chirped and she reached up to touch it. “Go ahead.”

“My Queen... there are several people gathering here at the DT where you told them to bring their children for medical treatment.” Filrian’s voice spoke.

“Thank you Filrian. I’ll be right there.” Anja spoke as she sat forward and got to her feet. She turned and leaned over to give Martin a long, slow kiss with her four inch tongue dancing with his in concert. She pulled away after a long moment and saw him shudder slightly, his dark brown eyes gazing at her with desire and want. “Stay out of trouble ok.” She said.

“Me? Get in trouble?” Martin protested.

Anja chuckled. “Miath, Seanna, let’s get out of here before the shit gets so deep we have to put our boots on.” Anja spoke. She took Seanna’s hand in hers and they started moving for where the DT was, Miath’s body lifting off the ground with ease and following. Anja felt Martin’s eyes on her as she walked and she grinned, putting extra movement into the sway of her hips.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Watch it there woman! Keep walking like that and you’ll have all sorts of males watching that tail.* Martin exclaimed.

Anja laughed. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Let them look all they want! There’s only one male that gets this tail!*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *And a delicious tail it is!*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Pervert!*

“Tina said it was some sort of bio-degradable material.” Martin spoke with a smile as he was turning his head back from watching Anja walk away.

“What are you... deaf?” Tina’s voice came from behind Torma’s long mace like tail. They all turned and watched as she and Endith moved quickly around the tail and walked up to them. “I said bio-mechanical... not bio-degradable... you dope!”

Martin looked at her as she and Endith settled to the ground. Lisisa and Melita had surprised expressions on their faces at the way Tina talked to him. Tina was closest to Lisisa and she looked at the young woman. No doubt about it, she was Marty’s daughter without question. The facial features were nearly identical and if not for her stunning forest green eyes she could be his sister. She smiled at her surprised expression. “I hope you got the brains that seem to be lacking with him.” She spoke holding out her hand. “I’m Tina.”

Lisisa took the offered hand. "I am Lisisa." She spoke softly.

Endith leaned over and looked at her for a long moment. "Well... can we start flying her around Skipper?" Endith asked. "She's much better on the eyes than your ugly mug."

Martin and the others laughed and he threw the protein bar wrapper at Endith as she sat back down next to Tina. Very close to Tina Lisisa saw. "Don't mind these two." He said. "They have been corrupted by powers beyond my control."

"You got that right." Tina agreed.

Lisisa smiled at the banter between the men and women that followed her father. She watched as he leaned forward.

"So tell me what you got." Martin asked.

"We've only been to a couple of areas." Tina answered. "This thing is a kilometer long you know."

"Yeah... I got that part." Martin said. "Tell me something I don't know."

"The entire hull is essentially a big shell and much of the inside is made up of this bio-mechanical material Marty." Tina replied. "It's really something. We ran some minor tests... subjected it to hot and cold streams... it hardens when subjected to extremes of both. It's almost like dragon armor really. There is power inside... they are trying to find the source."

"Can it fly?" Martin asked.

"If I knew that I'd be a frigging genius!" Tina snapped. "We're trying... but so far we haven't even found what could be construed as the bridge or engineering. We did however find this." Tina held out the data pad.

"What's this?"

"It's a hologram of some sort." Endith spoke. "We discovered it in what appeared to be a lab; at least we think it was a lab. It came on when we entered, but apparently there either wasn't enough power for it to play fully or some sort of security protocol is needed. The guides that were with us said this has happened since they first started living inside. All we got was this recurring loop."

PLANETARY REGENT ESTATE LYCAVORE

"Why haven't you found my daughter Pa'cour?" Tonlar raged at the Immortal Colonel as he came into Pa'cour's small office in the anti-chamber of the estate's main entrance.

The experienced Immortal Colonel looked up from his desk with a blank expression. "We are searching Regent." He spoke calmly. "Things like this do take time."

"You've had nearly a full day!" Tonlar barked. "You've called out the entire garrison as well as your force of Immortals. Are you telling me you can not find one pureblood vampire female on this forsaken planet?"

"I'm telling you we are still searching Regent." Pa'cour answered. "I have troops spread out over a four hundred square kilometer area around the Lycavorian settlement. However, as you know Regent, there are areas of this planet that we can not go. We do not have enough protective equipment to send troops into the mines in force, and that is most likely where they have gone."

"They've taken my daughter into one of those mines?" Tonlar snapped his eyes going wide. "She would never survive!"

"It is only one option Regent." Pa'cour said calmly. "We have no evidence that this is the case. They could very well have gotten out of the area we are currently searching. If they have traveled in their wolf forms, they can cover thirty or forty kilometers an hour. And they had at least a fifteen hour head start judging from the condition of the bodies we found."

"So why are we not using the drones to search further away?" Tonlar roared.

"We are not using the drones Regent, because while they can detect lifesigns even in the deep timber, the wildlife on this planet has tripled in the last two decades alone." Pa'cour spoke. "They are mining drones, not the more advanced military drones and they can not determine what the lifesign is. I will not send my men on wild chases through the timber. Chases that will more than likely get them killed."

“Your men!” Tonlar roared. “They are my men you fool! I am the Regent here... which means I am in control of everything on this planet. To include your Immortals detachment! I don’t care what the drones pick up... you will send men to investigate! Is that clear Colonel?”

Pa’cour fought down the urge to rip out the man’s heart and nodded his head. “As you order Regent.”

“My wife is even now worried beyond measure over Melita’s safety!” Tonlar barked. “You will find my daughter and I don’t care what you have to do!”

“As you order Regent Tonlar.” Pa’cour spoke again.

“Princess Yuri will be here in less than twenty four hours and I want my daughter safely back within these walls before that!” Tonlar snapped. He took a deep breath as the second Immortal officer appeared in the doorway. “Now... I will leave you to your duties Colonel! Report back to me immediately when you have found my daughter.”

“Of course Regent.” Pa’cour spoke as Tonlar turned and left the small office. He waited a moment to regain control of his rising anger and turned to the officer. “His wife is more than likely lying under one of her aides getting her brains *vithus doeb* and allowing that aide to feed on her blood and acting as his come bucket. She no mores cares for her daughter than I do.” Pa’cour hissed. “She beds her aides because that *wael* is no larger than a Rik Worm and could not please a teenage *revi’n ssindossa!*” (Fucked out. Fool. Street Whore) Immortal Lieutenant Yi’zourte could only smile at his commander hearing him swear fluently in the ancient vampire language. “What do you have to report Yi’zourte?”

“Colonel... our outer perimeter teams are requesting permission to expand their searches another twenty kilometers.” He spoke. “And Senior *Rith’tar* T’lolt has found something he felt you should see if you have the time sir.” (Sentinel) He handed the pad to Pa’cour. “The Lifter is standing by Colonel.”

“Oh very well. Sitting in here waiting for that fool to rant more is bad enough.” Pa’cour spoke. “Soon I will just kill him and be done with it.”

Pa’cour followed his now senior Lieutenant to the estate’s landing pad where the Lifter waited. It took them twenty minutes to fly directly to the large field which was some twenty kilometers north of the settlement. As Pa’cour and Yi’zourte made their way from the Lifter across the large field they saw the Immortal Senior *Rith’tar* make his way towards his Colonel. He saluted smartly with his weapon as Pa’cour stopped in front of him.

“*Rith’tar* T’lolt...” Pa’cour spoke staring into the Immortal’s eyes. “You have something that I needed to see?”

“I felt you should see it before the fool Troop Commander was told Colonel... yes!” The battle hardened Immortal spoke.

“Why is that?” Pa’cour asked. “I am very busy *Rith’tar*.”

“My apologies Colonel... I have never seen this before! I thought perhaps you had and would know what it is.” T’lolt said quickly.

Pa’cour nodded. “None needed *Rith’tar* T’lolt... the Regent has succeeded in making me angry. You are doing your duty. Show me this... whatever it is.”

“This way sir. There are several large ones and a number of smaller ones.” T’lolt spoke as he turned and began walking.

“Smaller what T’lolt?” Pa’cour asked.

They had moved only several meters and stopped once more on the edge of the tree line. T’lolt looked at the ground. “Those Colonel.” He said.

Pa’cour looked down and his dark eyes grew wider as he saw the huge footprints in the dirt of the field. Huge clawed footprints nearly a hundred and twenty centimeters long and at least sixty centimeters wide. He squatted down and held out his hand over the print, seeing the identical opposite print almost a meter away. There were four digits facing the front and spread out evenly, with a fifth digit extending to the side.

“*Xal l’Obok Senger Dumo Uns’aa.*” Pa’cour muttered. (May the High Lord bless me) His eyes drifted up and he now saw several more of the prints nearby as well. “You say the troop Commander has not seen these?”

T’lolt shook his head. “No Colonel. He is lagging behind our patrol, always stopping to inspect this or that. I believe he is a coward who does not want to be near the front if something should happen.”

Pa’cour looked at the senior Sentinel. “That is a strong accusation *Rith’tar*.” He spoke to the Immortal.

“Yes sir... but I believe it to be true.” The Immortal replied.

Pa'cour looked at the print once more. "You said there were smaller ones as well?"

T'lolt nodded. "Just to your left Colonel."

Pa'cour turned and then he saw the smaller print. This was not as deep in the dirt and that is why he did not see it at first, but the pattern of the digits was the same. He turned back to the larger print. "Based on the depth of the imprint, whatever made this mark is easily four metric tons, if not more." He spoke. "The smaller one appears much less, perhaps several hundred kilos."

"That was my estimation as well Colonel." The *Rith'tar* spoke.

"*Rith'tar* T'lolt you have been on this forsaken rock of a planet longer than me." Pa'cour spoke. "To your knowledge is there any beast that you have seen that could have made these prints?"

The Immortal *Rith'tar* shook his head immediately. "None that I have ever seen Colonel. There are large beasts on the plains of the western continent... but nothing matching the size that this print foretells. Nor the size or shape of the print either Colonel. It almost appears reptilian in nature with the hooked talons and shape of the toes."

Pa'cour looked at the Immortal. "You are Tracker trained *Rith'tar*?" He asked surprised.

T'lolt nodded. "Nineteen years Colonel." He answered proudly. "*Szithuelar Elggs Dek'za* Colonel." (Fifteenth Destroyer Legion)

Pa'cour nodded slowly with respect it seemed to T'lolt. "*Lil vlos silinrai*." (The Blood Hunters) He quickly returned to a standing position. "I am impressed *Rith'tar*. I did not know I had a member of the *Lil vlos silinrai* in my command."

"There are actually three of us sir!" He spoke calmly. "Myself and my two oldest sons."

"Indeed." Pa'cour said. "Excellent... inform your sons that they have been promoted and to join you at the Regent's Estate in one hour. I have something I need for you to do."

T'lolt nodded quickly. "Of course Colonel!"

Pa'cour nodded. "Have your men scrape these prints over so the Troop Commander does not see them. Use the leaves to smooth out the dirt. Yi'zourte let's get back to the Estate. I must now let you in on what my earlier transmission was in regards too."

Yi'zourte hurried to keep up with his Colonel as he turned and headed back to the Lifter.

"...But how does it work Anja?" Sivana persisted.

Anja looked at the little girl sitting on the DT's map chart table. Filrian had thrown several blankets over the table so it could serve as a make shift examining table for the small children. Anja let her hands drop slowly down the side of the child's head, the soft white pulses from her palms bathing her skin for another few seconds before Anja smiled and pulled her hands away.

"All done." She said with a happy voice.

"Am... am I better?" The little girl asked.

Anja grinned. "You were never sick little one." She said helping her off the table. "Why don't you go down there and pet the big dragon. He won't hurt you. I promise."

Anja motioned the woman forward as the large man followed the small girl down to the bottom of the ramp with a distinct limp. She turned and got a small bottle from her medical pack and then turned back to the woman. The short dark haired female looked young, while the male looked much older.

"My... my Queen." She spoke softly with no small amount of awe in her voice.

Anja glanced at the man at the bottom of the ramp and saw him looking back up into the ramp worriedly. "Is that your mate?" Anja asked.

The young female turned back to look at him and looked back to Anja. "He is Milady." She replied. "Donory claimed me three decades ago Milady."

"You mean he took you." Anja said distastefully.

"Milady... word is spreading quickly that... it is said the King and yourself... you disapprove of what we have had to do to survive. The strongest Alphas claiming the females." The girl spoke.

Anja nodded. "Yes... that's very true. It is not something we practice in the Union. And when we all leave here it will no longer be practiced among those that come with us. What is your name?"

“Nares Milady.” She stepped closer to Anja. “Milady... I love Donory.” She whispered. “Yes... it took my several years to finally come to that realization... but he is strong and kind and he gives us strong children. He has four mates my Queen... I am the youngest... and we all share in his warmth and caring. He has been offered others but has refused since he claimed me. He is a fine man... and he loves all of his children. Asylima is his only daughter and he... he cherishes her like any father would. He did not want to bring her here because he fears you and the King will take her from him. I convinced him you would not do this.”

“What is wrong with his leg?” Anja asked.

“An Immortal soldier shot him when he would not allow them to have me last year.” Nares answered. “He waited too long to shift so that I could get away. It did not heal properly when he finally was able to shift.”

Anja saw him looking back up the ramp and she stepped to the side. “Donory!” She barked. “Come here please!”

“My Queen please... do not...” Nares pleaded.

Anja held up her hand to silence her as the large Lycavorian limped slowly up the ramp with a stern expression on his face. An expression of determination and intent. He walked up to where she stood and bowed his head.

“Majesty?” He spoke in a low voice.

“You have other children Donory?” Anja asked him. “How many are there?”

“I have seven boys!” He spoke firmly but Anja could detect the nervousness in his voice.

Anja nodded. “Do you get spots under your arms? They itch and break open causing yellow pus to come out? They come once or twice a year?”

He looked at her wide eyed. “How do you... yes.” He answered.

Anja nodded. “You have what is called Amuperic Syndrome. It’s a disorder of your blood that causes these welts to keep recurring.” Anja said. “It is a rare disease within the...”

“Disease?” Donory gasped. He looked quickly to Nares and then back to Anja. “I... I have passed this to my children?”

Anja nodded and held up the bottle. “This is a medicine. It’s called Fanatel. I want you and Nares to give one of these red pills to your children every day for two weeks. It will correct the imbalance in your blood so this does not happen again. Donory... you need to take two per day for a month. Your body will naturally resist the medication so you need to take a stronger dose for a longer period of time. There is enough in there for all of you. Start it today. Now get on the table.” She ordered him.

“Milady... there is nothing you can do. I was not able...”

“*Cery venn!*” Anja told him firmly motioning to the table. (Sit down) She looked over at where Seanna was examining a small boy. “*Erranyaenyla* help me for a moment will you?” Seanna looked up and nodded moving over to the makeshift table. Anja laid her hands along Donory’s thigh and knee area, the soft white light glowing from her hands. “The ligament damage is severe, and one of the tendons was severed and never became reattached when he shifted.”

Seanna nodded as she stretched out her own hands along his leg. “The tendon is more important at the moment.”

Anja nodded as the glow from both her hands and Seanna’s intensified slightly. “Donory... we are repairing the tendon and you will feel a slight...” She saw him jerk at the sudden pain. “A slight pull...” She said with a smile. “...as the two ends are reattached.”

Donory’s eyes grew wider as Seanna flexed his leg up and for the first time in months he did not feel any pain.

Anja drew her hands down over his kneecap and then the glow from both sets of their hands was gone. “That’s all we can do here.” She spoke. “You will need to see me when we return to Apo Prime so I can replace the ligament. Tell them who you are... I will remember you.”

Donory got up from the table slowly, the limp in his walk all but gone. He looked at Anja again and bowed his head deeply. “Thank you my Queen.”

“You can thank me by continuing to be the good father that Nares has told me you are.” Anja spoke.

Donory looked at his youngest mate with a gleam in his eye and he turned back to Anja. “That is not something I will fail in Milady. Nor in providing for my mates.”

“Then remember to take the medicine and give it to your children.” Anja said with a smile.

Donory turned as the small child ran up to him and he lifted her into his arms as Nares slipped her hand into his as they walked down the ramp and walked away.

Anja smiled and turned back to the table to see Sivana sitting on it. "Sivana!" She exclaimed.

"Will I be able to do that?" She asked softly.

"You can do it now." Anja spoke. "Just not to the extent that Seanna and I can. At least not until you return to Hadaria and Ascend."

"Can we... can we work as a team?" Sivana asked. "Once I do this?"

Anja smiled. "If that is what you would like."

"Anja... tell me how it works please?" Sivana asked.

"Do you want to know because of Belen?" Anja asked her seeing her eyes go a little wider.

"You... you know about Belen?" She asked.

Anja moved closer to her as Seanna smiled, kissed her softly and turned to head down the ramp of *ANVIL*. "Yes I know about Belen. Sivana... I'm wolf now. Did you think I wouldn't notice something like that?"

"I... I wasn't exactly thinking about that at the time." Sivana answered.

Anja chuckled and leaned up against the table next to her sister. "It's a chemical reaction for the most part." She said. "And it's controlled by the females with only two exceptions, and they only apply to pure blood Lycavorians. A chemical is released in our brain that reacts within our body when we know the man we are sleeping with is the one we want to stay with. It only applies to Lycavorians or females turned by Lycavorians. It's something we can sense based on emotions and physical reactions. That chemical basically absorbs the male's..."

Sivana saw the look on her face and rolled her eyes. "Anja I'm your sister. Aren't we supposed to talk about these things?"

Anja laughed and shoved her lightly. "The chemical absorbs the man's semen and carries it into our bloodstream. It saturates our blood with the scent of the male... basically saying this woman is taken, don't mess with her. It's a similar process in the males but it takes longer to saturate their blood."

"I'm not wolf though." Sivana said softly. "Anja... I've never... I've never felt anything like what Belen makes me feel. I don't want to mess that up like I have so many other things in my life. I don't want the attention from other men. I just want Belen."

Anja nodded. "You won't get the attention from others don't worry. The more you sleep with him, the more your body will change slightly. You'll begin to take on some of the more basic abilities of a wolf. The sense of smell, increased strength and reflexes, things like that. Belen is one of the stronger Alphas among wolves... just like his father. He has *Cadon Forn*. Scented you it's called. Marked you in a way. Sort of like a male perfume really. As your abilities grow you may detect it... but no male will come near you now... at least not any Lycavorian male... not if they have any sense, because they will smell Belen's scent all over you."

"But not in my blood?" Sivana asked.

Anja shook her head. "That will not happen unless he bites you and transfers the virus in his blood stream to yours. Then you will become just like me. You will become wolf." She explained. "And that is a step you need to be absolutely sure you want to make sister." She said softly. "Belen is a very traditional Lycavorian... a Spartan like his father. He will not do that unless you ask him to. If that is a decision you feel you want to make... then I will support it one hundred percent. Just make sure you make that decision for all the right reasons."

"What about our Aunt and Uncle?" Sivana asked. "And grandfather? Won't they be angry?"

"Grandfather won't care a wit. Not as long as he can still be part of our lives. His only concern is our happiness." Anja replied. "As for our Aunt and Uncle... fuck them!"

Sivana laughed and as Anja stepped closer and hugged her, Sivana wrapped her arms around her sister and hugged her back. Maybe this life with her sister would not be so bad after all. Any goodness in her life now is more than Sivana had ever had, and as far as she was concerned, Belen was all good.

In far more ways than her Aunt and Uncle would ever possibly understand or appreciate. Anja understood... and Sivana felt a warm sensation wash over her as she finally realized that Anja only wanted her to be happy. Anja only wanted to know her as a sister and not as some political tool.

That was the best part of all. Anja didn't want to use her.

APO PRIME

“They are already on the planet.” Armetus spoke causing For’mya and Deia to come forward in their chairs, while Sadi remained sitting on the couch quietly her green eyes going a little wider.

“You know this for sure Armetus?” Deia asked. “So quickly? How?”

Armetus smiled. “Deia... you know I can’t reveal all my sources.” He said placing the pad on the desk. He watched For’mya reach for it but Deia beat her to it and snatched it up. “There are only six this time... but it appears whoever hired them went only for the best. Four Bo’yak and two Unsaar. More could come, so I have increased surveillance at the spaceports.”

“Bo’yak... those pig dogs?” For’mya hissed.

Armetus nodded slowly. “Yes... that’s what I said as well. *Gaylne feddis coramma!*” Armetus took a deep breath to calm his anger. “Unfortunately... they happen to be some of the finest assassins in the galaxy’ far more skilled and vicious than Kochab or even Evolli scum. They are all using falsified credentials, superior pieces of work if I do say so myself.” (Disgusting vermin assassins.)

Deia looked at him. “I thought you picked up the first two pillars in the link that Sadi pointed out.”

Armetus nodded. “We did... quite easily.” He replied. “However... the second link did not know the identity of the third person. That is the person we want. That is the person that is controlling everything. Whoever this third person is... they are far more than a petty High Coven contact and control agent.”

“It’s not my step-mother?” Sadi asked leaning forward now.

Armetus looked at her from his seat and shook his head. “No... that is who we thought as well since she is a member of *Arryadyveluat*. She has the influence and access to large sums of credits... not to mention the training... but it is not her.”

“How can you be so sure?” For’mya asked.

“The man who manufactured their credentials is also someone we use as well.” Armetus spoke. “I would know his work anywhere. Their credentials are less than a week old, and Sadi’s step-mother has been otherwise involved with her vampire lover for the past five days. There have been no transmissions from the officer’s home for that time period, and none before from either your home Sadi, or anywhere on Apo Prime that we have control of, encrypted or otherwise. I checked. We have left her free for now in case she leads us to others.”

“Armetus... why hire more assassins?” Deia asked. “We released information publicly that Anja’s newly discovered sister had departed with her aboard *SPIRIT OF HADARIA*. There would be no reason to attempt another assault on the island. It would be suicide now. They wouldn’t get anywhere close to the island.”

Armetus nodded. “I concur... which can only mean that Sivana is not the intended target. At least not now.”

For’mya’s eyes went to Sadi instantly. “Sadi? But why? If she was only acting as a low level transport agent for all these years why risk sending these assassins after her?”

Armetus looked at Sadi. “She obviously knows something they do not want us to find out.” He said.

Sadi looked at him her green eyes going wide as she came to her feet. “I have told you everything I know! Everything I have ever done! I give you my word!”

Armetus nodded his head. “I believe you have child... you can rest easy. What I’m more interested in now is what you have in your subconscious, something that you may have seen in passing and did not realize what it was. Something that was not considered important. And you as well For’mya.” He spoke turning to look at her.

“Me?” For’mya declared.

Armetus nodded. “Sadi’s home with her father is not heavily guarded... and it would be a priority for them to take her there since it is secluded and quiet. Unfortunately... they were contacted within an hour of arriving and told Sadi was here on the island with you.”

“My father!” Sadi gasped.

Armetus lifted his hand. “I have already assured your father’s safety Sadi. He is currently under the protection of four of my finest operatives and staying in an undisclosed location with your real brothers. Your step-mother believes he has gone to the southern city of Suunna for the annual festivities there.”

“You should have gotten approval for that Armetus.” Deia spoke looking at him. “Your men are operating inside Union territory. That is against their charter.”

“They are there advising the six *Durcunusaan* that are currently involved in the operation Deia.” Armetus answered meeting her gaze.

“The *Durcunusaan* are involved as well?” She spoke seeing him nod. “Good... that covers us with the Senate if any of this should leak out. I’m sorry... you know what the King said about operations within Union territory. We just have to be careful.”

For’mya nodded. “Deia is right Armetus. Martin Leonidas was very specific.”

“I am remaining well within the boundaries that the King set for my organization trust me. And I insure that your father knows every step we take For’mya.” He told them. “I understand your hesitation... but these steps were necessary. L’tian agreed.”

For’mya got to her feet and walked slowly to where Sadi was still standing. She took her hands and stared at her for a long moment as if speaking within Mindvoice with her and then she turned and looked back to Armetus. “Why would the Coven want us dead Armetus? What are we to them? And why would they risk coming after us here on the island?”

Armetus stood up as well now and turned to fully face them. “My only reason is simple and straightforward. Sivana may have been the target of the original assassins and you because of Sadi’s desperation ploy... but now... something is different now.” He spoke softly as he got to his feet. “Somewhere we are getting too close to something the High Coven does not want us to know. Somewhere... somehow... one of you saw something you were not supposed to see. It is the only logical premise to formulate at this time.”

“But why now?” For’mya asked. “If we did... if we did see something... it is obviously not something we remember, nor has it taken place recently or else other attempts would have been made. I was only within their control for a month... and I can’t even remember most of what happened to me. Why come after us now?”

“I don’t know.” He spoke. “Sadi... did you ever meet contacts within The Wilds?”

Sadi shook her head. “No. My contacts always took place here or on Elear.” She replied quickly.

“Elear?” Armetus spoke looking at her.

Sadi nodded. “There was a safe house within the city of Wainn. I met my contact there... got whatever assignment they were giving me and then returned to Apo Prime the next day.”

Deia got to her feet as well now. “What are you thinking Armetus?”

“Isabella recently questioned me in regards to IES.” He said.

“The company she owns?” Deia asked. “Why?”

“Apparently whatever she and Queen Dysea are doing on Elear is somehow tied to the company she helped to found.” Armetus replied.

“In what way?” For’mya asked.

Armetus shook his head. “I’m not entirely sure.”

“Armetus if what you say is true, that would mean whoever is helping these assassins is a very high placed High Coven agent that does not want to be found. Someone within our inner circle, someone higher than even Aspon.”

Armetus nodded. “Yes... it does appear that way. And it makes our ease in rolling up the assets we did very clear now. They sacrificed them to keep their main agent hidden.”

“*Nubou!*” Deia barked viciously. “I thought we were through with this type of thing!” She growled.

“So did I.” Armetus spoke. “You know what this means don’t you Deia?”

She turned and looked at him. “All too well old friend. We are back to square one.”

“What... what does it mean?” Sadi asked looking at For’mya.

“It means everyone outside this room has now become suspect.” Armetus spoke softly. “And you two are the key. Whatever it is one of you hold in your head... it seems the Vampire Coven and the High Lord Veldruk has decided that it is worth the risk to kill you rather than let us discover what it is. And unfortunately for us... the only two who might be able to help us get this information are no longer on Apo Prime.”

“Yes... how convenient is that?” Deia snapped.

“That... that would mean open war!” For’mya gasped.

Sadi looked back and forth between them. “I... I thought we were already at war? I thought we’ve always been at war.”

Armetus nodded. “Technically that is true... but since the return of King Leonidas there has been an unofficial cease fire. His first order from Earth after discovering who he was; it pulled all of our forces back into staging areas, and aside from Ukwav and assorted small skirmishes we have not had a full fledged battle in over a year. We have not gone after them... they have not come after us. At least not blatantly.”

Deia moved closer. “But to attempt to kill For'mya? Here at the Island Palace? She is the recognized Concubine to the King Armetus. Just as loved as his Queens. Martin... he would let loose the hounds of hell if that were to happen.”

Armetus looked at her. “Yes I know. But have we stopped to consider that perhaps that is what Veldruk wishes him to do.”

BLOOD JUSTICE
VHC REVERENCE-CLASS DREADNOUGHT
HIGH GUARD STRIKE GROUP *FALCHION*
COMMAND SHIP OF PRINCESS YURI

This was the epitome of excellence.

VHC High Guard Commander Robert Moran. He had the hottest job, the hottest ship and for damn sure the hottest woman in the universe as far as he was concerned. He had never once imagined all this that night he let Yuri feed on him, draining him dry of all his genome blood and giving birth to the vampire he was now. Moran had never pictured himself in the chair he now sat in. He had worked hard to prove to everyone he was just as good as any of those pureblood fools and he had done just that. This ship was his reward... this ship and the long lithe legs and large breasts of the woman that now occupied his bed. The sheet barely covered her round muscular ass; her tanned legs stretched out and slightly parted. Her black hair was splayed across the pillows, the skin of her back and shoulders smooth and delicious looking. Moran grinned as he finished the tea in the mug he held. They had really gone at each other last night, fucking like possessed people until only two hours before, and for the first time in their relationship as vampire husband and wife, Moran tried to imagine what a child of theirs would look like.

He quickly dismissed these thoughts as he turned and headed for the door to their large quarters. He left the mug of tea on the table just inside the door as it slid open. He was fully dressed in his uniform as he exited the door and stepped into the corridor, feeling powerful and refreshed. He looked at the two Immortals that were Yuri's Guards.

“Make sure no one disturbs her for any reason.” Moran spoke.

The Immortal nearest him nodded. “*Zil dos quarth Malla Zil.*” He spoke. He looked at his fellow Immortal when the Commander turned away and the amused look passed between them. They had been on duty all night and they had heard every squealing sound the Princess had made. They surmised that the turned genome vampire commander had fucked their Princess to death. Something both of them had fantasies about. (As you order Honored Consort)

Moran turned when the third Immortal approached him. This was his own personal aide and bodyguard assigned to him by Cha'talla. He was walking quickly and fell in beside Moran as he too began to walk.

“*Vel'bol zhah ol Fash'ka?*” Moran asked as he didn't break stride. (What is it Fash'ka?)

“*Udos ph'pholor draeval lu'orn raq'tar wun szithla klew'kinnen.*” (We are on schedule and will arrive in thirteen hours.)

Moran smiled. “Precision.” He spoke. “That's what I love about this job. Precision.”

The six and a half foot tall Immortal smiled as well. He liked this genome vampire. He had questioned his father at first, but now he was happy he had taken the position. Moran was not one to screw around as other officers Fashka had known. He spoke calmly and evenly, and the tone of his voice could tell you if he was angry or satisfied.

“My father... my father asked if you would receive a transmission from him on a secure channel as soon as you are able.” Fashka spoke.

Moran stopped in the corridor quickly and turned to face his Immortal bodyguard. “Ok... now I know something is going on Fashka. Why would your father want to do that?”

“He has a favor to ask *Malla Zil*.” Fashka spoke softly.

“And I suppose this favor is not something that can be discussed on an unsecured channel?” Moran spoke.

Fashka shook his head slowly. “No.”

“Why do I get the feeling that even Yuri’s father doesn’t know what we are going to discuss?” Moran spoke.

“He does not. At least not yet.” Fashka spoke. “He is meeting with the High Lord within the hour and then he would like to speak with you. If... if he still lives.”

Moran’s eyes went wide. “Excuse me?”

“It is complicated Robert Moran.” Fashka spoke. “Events my father manipulated long ago are coming unraveled. We have served the High Coven for many millennia. The High Lord has given us all we desired. My father believes he may have violated that trust with his actions and that is why he will go before the High Lord himself. If he lives he will contact you... if he does not survive... a message will be transmitted to your personal account and he asks you view it as soon as you are able. We will know in a few hours which of these have occurred and I have already planned for either event. My father calls you a friend Robert Moran. That is a great honor to my people you know this? He hopes that your friendship will be enough.”

Moran stared into the much taller Immortal’s eyes and nodded. “Fashka... your father had faith in me when no one else did. Let me grab something to eat and I’ll wait for that transmission in my ready room.”

USU’OZEIB 7

Cha’talla moved down the corridor of the High Lord’s massive offices with dread filling his chest. He held the report from Colonel Pa’cour in his hand, his dark eyes giving no emotion away. His actions over the past years could now give away something the High Coven had worked very hard to obtain, and Cha’talla had no doubts that Veldruk would kill him at the very least if he was lucky. If he was unlucky, his entire family would be executed and his tribe branded traitors. The Immortals had served the High Coven for well past his six millennia of life, ever since Veldruk had conquered their world nearly thirteen thousand years ago. His actions had halted the ethnic cleansing among the different Akruixian tribes and brought peace to Cu’Akrux II. The Akruixian High Priest had sworn their people to eternal servitude to Veldruk, but that action had started his people on the road to a new beginning. The Akruixian were no longer a handful of backward tribes. They had cities on their world, schools for their young, every modern amenity they could desire just like all of the High Coven Empire worlds.

Cha’talla led one of the nine ruling tribes and was considered an honored statesman among his people. He had been part of the High Coven Royal Guard for four millennia now, the last thirteen hundred years as Veldruk’s personal Captain. He could not help but see all that coming apart because he alone had made a decision forty years ago to try and improve his people.

He entered the large office, nodding at the two Immortals who guarded the door. “We are not to be disturbed no matter what you hear. Is that understood?”

The two Immortals nodded without question though Cha’talla could see the confusion in their eyes. He continued into the office area, his dark eyes focused on where Veldruk sat. The High Lord looked up from the data scroll he was reading.

“Cha’talla... to what do I owe this visit from my Immortal Captain?” He asked as he sat back in the high backed chair.

Cha’talla moved to within a meter of Veldruk’s desk and dropped to one knee. “Milord... I... I must bring you information of my actions. Actions that... action that I began of my own accord without your knowledge and now those actions may have unfavorable results.”

Veldruk got to his feet slowly and moved around his desk. “Get on your feet Captain!” Veldruk barked as he moved to the counter bar and began pouring himself a glass of bright red blood.

“Milord... I am not worthy to stand before you after what I have done.” Cha’talla spoke.

Veldruk turned as he brought the glass to his lips and drank a long pull. He walked slowly to stand beside the kneeling Immortal. "I know all about your actions Cha'talla." Veldruk spoke. "Tal'nel was kind enough to inform me."

Cha'talla looked up quickly. "Tal'nel?" He spoke. "I..." His head turned and he saw the Immortal officer appear from the shadows along the wall wearing a cruel smug smile on his face.

"Good morning Cha'talla." Tal'nel spoke. "I will finally get my revenge now."

Cha'talla rose to his feet slowly as Tal'nel walked up and stood beside Veldruk.

"I reward loyalty Cha'talla." Veldruk continued. "Tal'nel has told me all about your plan with the abomination Yuri goes to capture even now. He has been watching you for some time it appears... waiting for the moment to bring this information to me so that I could act on it."

"Milord Veldruk... I only wished to... to better our people in your service." Cha'talla spoke. "I did not know... I did not suspect that this could possibly happen."

Veldruk nodded. "To better your people?" Veldruk asked. "By using genetic samples of the abomination to make your people more pleasing to the eye. So that in some wildly imagined future you would be accepted enough to perhaps breed with purebloods? Is that what you mean?"

"Yes Milord." Cha'talla spoke straightening to his full height.

"Why?" Veldruk asked.

"Milord?"

"Why Cha'talla? Why would you want this?"

"Milord... to be like you is what I aspire for all my tribe. All my people." Cha'talla answered. "It was you who ended the warring among the tribes. It was you who united our people, given us what we now have. Who would not want to be more like the Lord who saved us? If you consider it to be a crime to aspire to be more like you Milord, then I am guilty of it yes. As are millions of my people."

"Yet your actions now put at risk something that I worked very hard to put in place." Veldruk spoke calmly. "Something that will more than likely mean the loss of that asset within that dog Leonidas's inner circle."

"That is why I have come here Milord!" Cha'talla spoke. "Not to beg for forgiveness for myself... but to inform you of what I have done and to accept whatever punishment you deem necessary. I have served you faithfully for thirteen centuries Milord Veldruk; my actions... my decisions should not put shame upon my tribe or my people. That is what I beg of you. I offer you my own blood as proof of my loyalty to you."

Veldruk stared at him for a long moment and Cha'talla could feel his heart racing as he watched Tal'nel stand there with that cruel smile.

"Yes Cha'talla... you have served me for thirteen centuries." Veldruk finally spoke. "And now with my blessing... you will serve me even more, because with your death, my secrets will die with you."

Veldruk lifted his hand and Cha'talla's eyes bugged out of his head as he felt the constriction of his chest and the pain that was caused. He felt his body sail across the expanse of the High Lord's office crashing through the thick windows and then he was falling. The moment of his life flashed before his eyes as he plunged the thirty story drop to the black waters of the lake below. He closed his dark eyes as he hit the surface of the water, the pain unlike anything he had ever felt, and then the blackness took him into its dark embrace.

Veldruk leaned back from the smashed window sipping the crystal of blood. He felt remorse at what he had done, for Cha'talla had served him well. But this was an opportunity he could not pass up. Cha'talla had known more than any other Immortal Captain before him, and though he had never used this knowledge against him, Veldruk could not leave him alive with that opportunity. He turned slowly and looked at Tal'nel.

"I want his children singled out and butchered immediately, but nothing is to happen to the remainder of his tribe Tal'nel." Veldruk spoke.

"As you order Milord." Tal'nel spoke subserviently.

"Pass the word that any reprisals from this action will be dealt with extremely fast. He over stepped his bounds and allowed an important intelligence asset to be all but completely compromised because of personal desire." Veldruk spoke. "We will most likely lose that asset now... no matter how quickly we move." He turned from the shattered window and moved for his desk. "You have just been promoted Tal'nel. Inform my War Council I want a meeting in one hour! Right now get me a secure connection to my daughter!"

Tal'nel bowed his head and turned to execute his first instructions as the High Lord's new Captain.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

EARTH EDEN CITY

Lynwe *had* broken her.

She had crushed her will as surely as if a male wolf had unleashed his full aura upon her and made Layna his. It no longer matter how... to Layna it was as clear as the bright sun rising. Lynwe had dominated her utterly, turning Layna into a screeching bundle of orgasmic flesh withering beneath her, willingly filled with the wanton desire to do anything her Drow Mistress demanded of her. Lynwe's fingers had stroked her body, playing her like a musical concerto, sending her to places she had never imagined existed before this night. Five times Layna had had that monstrously beautiful Drow cock stuffing her belly, each time more will crushing than the last. It seemed as if the Drow vampire never tired. When she wasn't stroking into Layna's depths further than any man had ever been, she was plunging into Selene's equally tight and continuously exploding body, making her auburn haired slave cry out in unmitigated and sheer rapture.

Layna had lavished Lynwe's neck, shoulders and sweet lips with kisses and soft wanton expressions of love every second of Lynwe plundering her tight velvety depths with that wonderful 'gift'. When her lips were not bestowing these whispers upon Lynwe, her lips and tongue were sealed with Selene's or delving into the velvety depths of Selene's sweet pussy. The deep contrast in the color of Lynwe's skin and hers drove Layna mad with desire and passion. Passion for more. Lynwe had the largest cock she had ever seen on a man, any man. So long and thick and... beautiful. The fact that it was attached to one of the most beautiful women Layna had ever met was something her mind was still trying to grasp. Yes... she now knew why Selene never blinked at the men who showed interest in her. And many of them did. Why should Selene want or need more than what Lynwe gave her without question.

The love the two women shared for each other was easy enough to see in the depth and fierceness of their kisses, the gentleness of their caresses of each other, and the way their eyes gazed at one another. That was one of the first things Layna had noticed when she came to Earth. She had come here to start her life over with her daughter after the death of her cheating mate, and she was quickly assigned as Selene's Spartan Guard. That first day when she met Selene and Lynwe had put her on the road to this moment. She had seen it this night as well, with the intensity of Lynwe's soul breaking stroke's into Selene's body and the way Selene adorned her face and lips with unrestrained passion and desire and...

Love.

For four unbroken hours they had shared their love with her willingly and without pause or question. Selene had explored her body as intimately as any man, as intimately as Lynwe had done earlier in the evening, bringing her to three blissful orgasms just using her tongue. All the while Selene exploded atop Layna's lips and driving tongue. There had not been a moment when they both were not touching her in some way, the softness of their lips on her skin like the wings of a butterfly dancing across her flesh. And then... at the peak of it all... when Layna was exploding in delirious abandon, their vampire fangs would sink deeply into her body, feasting on her blood and sending all of them over the edge into bottomless pit of white bliss.

Layna reached up slowly to touch the faint puncture wounds on both sides of her neck. They would disappear completely in a few more hours, but the pleasure she had experienced when those fangs were feeding on her blood as they exploded in rapture was unlike anything she had ever felt. Pure passion and devotion, as if they were opening their very souls to her. Their scents now filled her nostrils and her soul, mingling as one so evenly and so completely. The musky orange aroma of Selene and Lynwe's spicy raw scent. Sweet scents that Layna now wanted to smell for the rest of her life. Her eyes went quickly to where she saw Lynwe's back sitting on the low couch in the room she and Lynwe had made into an office of sorts. They had combined their two apartments together, smashing down walls that separated them, and now their one huge apartment took up most of this floor of the building.

Lynwe was nodding her head and speaking to someone on the monitor. The white robe did little to hide her muscular back, and her shimmering white hair cascaded past her shoulders well down her back. Hair that Layna had delightfully run her fingers through many times over the course of the evening.

“She’s beautiful isn’t she?” Selene’s voice filled her ears and Layna turned as Selene settled to the couch beside her, steel blue eyes bright and alive and a loving smile on her face. The robe she wore, as with Lynwe, did little to hide her delicious body from Layna’s gaze, seemingly outlining every supple curve and swell. Layna had discovered first hand when she arrived on Earth that the elves, humans and Lycavorians that called Earth home had dispensed with the overblown modesty of their past long ago. While they dressed elegantly outside of their home, and some would say provocatively, when behind the walls of their home, they did not hide from each other. Layna had explored Selene’s body intimately this night, so what would be the point in hiding from her gaze now. Layna wore the oversized light blue shirt that buttoned in the front and was something Lynwe hadn’t worn in months according to Selene.

Layna turned back to look at Lynwe and she nodded. “Gods... yes she is.” She spoke the words softly.

“Take this Layna.” Selene spoke causing her to turn back and look at the glass Selene held in her hand.

Layna didn’t question it and took the glass. “What is it?” She asked.

“It’s a combination of juices that will replace the nutrients that Lynwe and I have taken from you.”

Selene spoke softly. “With a touch of apple flavoring. It is something that Tarifa came up with; an improvement on the juice Anja left for us when she departed Sparta a few months ago. It’s quite good actually. The best that we have had since Lynwe and I became what we are. Between Tarifa, Aihola and now Anja and Isabella, we could not ask for dearer friends who care for us.”

Layna brought the glass to her lips and sipped it, the liquid pulpy but delightfully tasty. She took two large gulps and savored them as they went down, feeling herself almost instantly becoming charged again. She looked at Selene, her blue/green eyes a little wider. “This is... this is excellent.” She said. She turned away slowly and took a deep breath. “Selene...”

“Now you know Layna.” Selene spoke interrupting her. “Only Tarifa and Aihola know what you now know.”

Layna looked at her. “They have...”

Selene smiled warmly and reached out to stroke Layna’s neck. “We’ve had some very memorable nights with them yes. However... none have been as intense and passionate as what we experienced with you this night.”

“No one else knows?” Layna asked.

Selene shrugged. “Only Anja knows for certain, though because of what they all share I’m quite sure Martin and his other Queens know. There are some others who might suspect.” She spoke. “Most of them are our friends or those who we consider family and would never question us about it. The others... one man made the mistake of bringing it up last year... he thought it was funny.”

“What happened?” Layna asked.

Selene looked at her. “I made him see the error of his ways. I described to him in exquisite detail why his pitiful little cock could not begin to compare.” She spoke firmly her eyes hard. “There is much I will tolerate Layna... even accept as natural... because there are many who are still unwilling to reach beyond what their feeble minds can grasp. Martin Leonidas taught us that, to never fear the unknown or what it could show us. When it comes to Lynwe however... no one will mock her in my presence or in any fashion I may hear about it. She is my life now... and if not for her, I would most likely be dead. I am very protective of her.”

“She is equally as protective of you.” Layna spoke softly.

“I love her Layna... more completely than I have ever loved anyone or anything in my life.” Selene spoke. “I act as I do with her... Lynwe is a Drow, you know this... and though she has never wanted me too, I act as I do with her because I want to. It gives me pleasure. There is a certain sexual thrill in being submissive to her. And I know without question that she would never carry this out of our bed. Not with me... and not with you. And she never has.”

“Yes... I feel that from her.” Layna spoke.

“Tarifa and Aihola are no different Layna.” Selene spoke softly. “Tarifa acts with Aihola as I do with Lynwe, and they have been together far longer than Lynwe and I. Have you ever seen them act this way in anything more than a playful manner?”

Layna shook her head. "Never."

"Do you know Daniel Simpson?"

Layna looked at her. "Colonel Simpson... the man who is considered by most to be the King's brother? I have never met him... only heard about him. They say he is just as dominating as the King." Layna asked.

Selene nodded with a smile. "His mate is an elfin female, Anuk is her name... a beautiful flame haired Wood Elf. She has a Drow Mistress... Nayeca is her name... and I understand that Daniel considers her his mate as well. They met here on Earth during the mission to bring all the remaining Drow to Eden City. The three of them have never been apart since. There are many such relationships Layna... and to my knowledge the Drow in these relationships are like Lynwe and Aihola and Nayeca. They do not desire their lovers to act in this way... it is something they do willingly to express their love."

"None are like Lynwe though?" Layna asked.

Selene shook her head. "None are equipped as Lynwe if that is what you mean. Lynwe is unique in that regard. And she is all ours."

"Ours?" Layna asked looking at her.

"What I told you earlier is very much the truth Layna. We want you in our lives. As a lover, a companion, a friend and a mate." Selene spoke. "I know it is what you want as well... for your actions in our bed were not those of someone resistant to this idea. Do you regret what happen between us Layna?"

Layna met her eyes. "No!" She answered without hesitation. "Never! It was the most... it was the most wonderful thing I have ever experienced Selene! That is why..."

Selene smiled. "That is why it is so hard to understand?"

"Yes... how did..."

"How do you think I felt when I first discovered it?" Selene asked with a smile. "I saw her in the shower one day. I had gone to thank her for helping me to reclaim what I lost and I saw her in the shower. It was a shock to me at first as well. Tarifa and Aihola are the ones who first helped Lynwe to rediscover herself, long before I came into the picture. She was full of hate and angry at what she perceived the High Coven had made her into. They are the ones who showed her not to think of herself as cursed... but gifted. They are the ones who taught her to love again. It just so happens I was the one who she ended up loving, and I have thanked the gods every day since that she came into my life. She is my strength... my purpose for living. What we shared with Tarifa and Aihola... it was beautiful and passionate... but once they discovered Isra it was different."

"So I am just a replacement for them?" Layna asked. "Now that Commander Isra has claimed them and made them his mates."

"Layna no!" Selene exclaimed reaching out and taking her hand. "You should know we are not that shallow."

Layna shook her head quickly. "Forgive me... I..."

Selene squeezed Layna's hand within hers and leaned closer to her on the couch. "We have desired you for months Layna. Ever since you first came to Earth." Selene spoke quickly. "Lynwe as well... I am just not as reserved as her when it comes to things like that." She said with a smile. "You are the only person to have shared our bed outside of Tarifa and Aihola. And you will be the only one, if what we wish to happen does indeed happen."

"What do you mean?" Layna asked.

"We want to share our lives with you Layna. We want you to share your life with us. We want your daughter to share in our lives, and we in hers." Selene spoke.

Layna looked at her surprise in her eyes. "Lynwe... Lynwe wants this as well?"

Selene nodded. "Oh yes!" She answered. "Layna she is a Drow... words do not come easily to her to express herself... her emotions. She took you tonight with the same passion and intensity as she takes me. Her kisses with you were as sensuous and deep as they are with me. Not even Tarifa and Aihola have experienced what she gave to us tonight. That is how she expresses herself... with her actions. I have never seen her 'gift' so throbbing with passion and life as it was when we were lavishing it with licks and kisses and taking her as deeply as we could in our throats." Selene saw Layna blush deeply and she laughed softly leaning over to plant a soft lingering kiss on her lips. "Do not be ashamed of the passion and desire you bring out in us Layna. That is how I know she wants you just as badly as I do."

"The future..."

“The future is what we make of it Layna of the Spartans.” Selene said. “You are as strong a woman as either of us has ever known, and that is what draws us to you. Your strength and passion and intelligence. Your beauty is secondary to that Layna. Do we make you happy Layna?”

Layna met her eyes. “Happier than I have ever been in my life.” She said immediately.

Selene smiled. “And you are much older than both of us Layna. What does that tell you?”

“That... that this was meant to be.” Layna answered. “But... what about children Selene. I want more children... do you and Lynwe...”

“Oh yes! And we will have children one day.” Selene spoke confidently. “There are many... possibilities for us to explore. Lynwe and I have discussed them before... Anja has told me I can still carry children... but because of what the High Coven did to her Lynwe can not produce the male sperm. She is sterile. That may change in the future... Anja and her people are geniuses in medical science, and we have not given up hope in that regard. That has not deterred us or our love. We can still adopt... or if perhaps we find a male that we both are drawn too... that is another option. It is very possible that Tarifa and Aihola may share Isra with us, for he is a very strong Alpha male, and it is not uncommon among your people for this to happen I understand.”

Layna nodded. “There are many men who have been injured in ways that they can not produce children any longer. Male wolves give of themselves to clinics on Apo Prime for this reason.”

Selene nodded. “I understand that this was a practice in Earth history long ago as well.” She gave a seductive smile. “Tarifa and Aihola have told us Isra is even larger than Lynwe and that prospect might prove very pleasurable in the process if you know what I mean. Imagine being sandwiched between him *and* our Mistress. Ohhhh...my!” Selene made a show of fanning herself and rolling her eyes.

“Selene!” Layna exclaimed in feigned shock.

Selene leaned over and kissed her softly, her lips warm and full of desire and passion; that was easy enough for Layna to feel even without her wolf senses. “It does not matter.” She said. “These are issues and questions we can address in the future. They are not insurmountable Layna. Not if we are together and we face them together. What we want to hear more than anything is that you wish to be a part of our lives. We would understand if it is not something you can accept... but it is a question only you can answer.”

“I will always be with you?” Layna asked softly.

Selene smiled brilliantly. “Always.”

Layna nodded. “Then that is what I wish as well.” She spoke confidently and without a moment’s hesitation for she had known the answer to that question a long time ago.

Selene’s face was animated now and she was about to speak when her eyes saw Lynwe come out of the office with a concerned expression on her face. Layna saw this and they both looked at her. “Mistress... what is wrong?”

Lynwe moved to the chair across from where they sat; the glass of juice in her hand. Layna noted her long legs and felt a surge of pleasure course through her at Lynwe’s powerful but still deliciously feminine abdomen just before she pulled the robe closed as she sat down.

“That was Tareif.” She spoke. “Apparently it has been a busy night for the others and ours is not the only action happening. Though ours is considerably much more pleasurable.” She stated with a smile looking at them both with desire and love.

“What do you mean?” Selene asked leaning forward now.

“Isheeni and Aelnala were out hunting earlier this evening and were set upon by a male dragon.” Lynwe explained seeing their eyes go wider. “He is apparently the brother to the female dragon who carries the rider. He is on the airfield now and incredibly it appears as though he has bonded quite strongly with Tarifa and Aihola.”

“Bonded?” Layna gasped. “Like Isra and Aelnala? The Queen and Isheeni?”

Lynwe nodded. “Very much so. According to what Aricia told Tareif, it is a unique bond. Tarifa and Aihola are so closely bound together as one it is hard to tell them apart at times in their manner and speech. Their love for each other and the fact they have shared blood has made their connection quite powerful. This dragon, Roluth is his name; he has become bound to both of them because of this fact. He is as we speak, on the airfield with them, and Isra is seeing to his physical condition. They are hoping to use him to discover where these caches of eggs are.” Lynwe sipped her juice. “Also Joarl has gotten a report from one of our frigates; it is

currently tracking seven ships on a heading for Earth. Their sensor scans have been mostly inconclusive, but five of the ships are transports that can carry up to three thousand troops each.”

“And they are heading here?” Layna asked as this information brought her forward.

Lynwe nodded. “They are still several days away... but yes. It is not a worry for either Joarl or Aricia at this time. We have an *AUTUMN MOON* Frigate tracking them and gaining information. If need be this ship can stop them.”

“What else Lynwe? I see it in your eyes Mistress.” Selene asked knowing that Lynwe had not yet told them everything.

Lynwe met her eyes. “Tareif believes that the information he and Steven obtained this afternoon has led them to where this Kavalian bastard is hiding.” She spoke quickly. “They will know more in a few hours and he will contact us.”

“They don’t need us?” Selene asked.

Lynwe shook her head with a shy smile. “Given my state of dress I believe Aricia deduced what it was we were doing rather quickly. Tareif is not as quick on the uptake in that regard.” She said with a grin. “Aricia said we would only get in the way... and to enjoy ourselves.”

Layna looked stunned. “The Queen said that?” She gasped clearly embarrassed.

Lynwe chuckled. “Aricia was born here on Earth Layna. In Sparta. She is not bound by many of the social restrictions we have seen from your people not born on Earth. Given whom her mate is and the fact that she, Anja and Dysea and now Isabella and For’mya share each other whenever they get the chance... it was rather easy for her to figure it out. Tareif is a man... he had no clue.”

“Tareif missed the fact that Zaala was in love with his very own pilot.” Selene stated with a grin. “Sometimes I wonder if perhaps he was hit too hard over the head at some point in his life.”

Lynwe laughed. “In Steven’s defense... he did a superb job of keeping that knowledge from him. Though it was a dead giveaway when Zaala practically undressed the poor boy when they returned from the island. And right in front of her father no less.”

“So they don’t need us tonight?” Selene asked with a sultry voice and twinkle in her eyes.

Lynwe shook her head as Selene slid off the couch and moved over quickly in front of Lynwe settling to her knees. “No... Aricia said we should check in... with her in the morning. What are you doing slave?”

Lynwe’s voice as well was dripping with passion now.

Selene smiled up at her and pulled one side of her robe aside. “If we have the rest of the night Mistress... I thought we might properly entertain you.”

“Selene... you don’t...”

“But we want too... Mistress.” Layna’s soft sultry voice caused Lynwe’s head to snap around and gaze at her with those amber colored orbs. Layna pulled open the other side of the robe, neatly exposing her ‘gift’.

Layna reached out without fear or question now and wrapped her hand around that pulsing black Drow cock, feeling the heat in her fist as it immediately began to thicken and grow to its dominant proportions. She looked up at Lynwe, her blue/green eyes alive with renewed desire.

Lynwe looked at Layna, her amber eyes wide. “Layna you...”

“I’ve never had... I’ve never had a Mistress before.” Layna spoke before lowering her head and engulfing that growing ebony shaft completely between her lips and sending Lynwe into heaven. Layna’s soft lips wrapped around that thick, pulsing shaft and in one smooth motion she had enveloped three quarters of that, as Selene steeled next to her and extended her warm, moist tongue and trailed it up Lynwe’s now throbbing balls. Lynwe gasped loudly, her glass of juice falling from her fingers quickly forgotten as she wrapped her hands within thick silky soft blond and red hair.

EDEN CITY AIRFIELD

Is this the only way Aricia? Isheeni asked. *We do not want to endanger the clutches of Roluth’s brothers and sisters.*

They were once more sitting between the ramps of the two DTs on the airfield. They had spent the last four hours going over this plan and all of them knew it was the only way to find the clutches of dragon eggs that this Maruad held.

What other options do we have? Isra asked now. He sat next to Tarifa and Aihola on the ground, Aelnala just behind him, her head positioned over his shoulder. The carmine colored Roluth sat listening intently, Tarifa and Aihola on either side of him absently stroking his smooth scales and causing his wings to twitch in delight.

Roluth remembered well the words of the violet eyed Spartan only a few hours ago as they walked to the edge of the airfield far from the strange ships. He had thrown up incredible Mindvoice shields so that they could talk privately.

You have entered into a new world Roluth. Isra had told him. The fashion with which this man treats your sister is not normal. You have felt it with Aelnala and me? With Aricia and with Isheeni. We are... friends... brothers... sisters. It is something we discovered a little over a year ago, the bond our kinds share. Can share. It is powerful... and we work to deepen that every day. Isra placed his hand on Roluth's neck without fear. *Aricia and Isheeni... the King and Torma... their bond goes much deeper... I know you can feel it. While we can sense the emotions of our Bonded Brother or Sister, what they feel... it is almost as if they feel it too. Aricia and Isheeni share a love of their mates that many do not have. I have that with Tarifa... with Aihola. You will feel it from them as well as you grow and learn. You are bonded with them now, nothing will ever change that. You have shared their thoughts, their experiences, just as they have shared yours.*

They... they have seen many terrible things Isra of the Spartans. Roluth spoke. *Yet... I see you within their minds more than anything. Laughter and desire.*

Isra nodded. *The same thing Aelnala sees in my mind when I think of them. Your kind is honored and treasured by King Leonidas Roluth. The Elder Mother, Isheeni's mother, and the King... they have worked long and hard to build what we have become. It has brought an understanding between our kinds that we have never had before. We would die for each other without question or hesitation. But there are rules young Roluth.*

Rules?

Isra nodded. *Rules you must follow. Rules that we must follow. Our two peoples are as instinctive as any species in the universe, perhaps more so than most. We have learned... thanks to the King... to harness that instinct. To not let it rule what we do... but to keep it close to our hearts. You are young... these are things you would have learned had your parents been alive... and not been isolated here on Earth for so long. Things that Syrilth could have taught you had she known of them. Among your kind it is taboo... a crime of the highest order to plunge on a mated female like Isheeni. The magnitude of that crime only increases because Isheeni carries Torma's clutch of eggs. Isheeni would have been well within her rights to kill you instantly. And make no mistake Roluth, you may be bigger than her, but size is not everything, and Isheeni would have made quick work of you.* Isra smiled and looked at him.

There are thousands of dragons... of your kind Roluth, and you are a handsome young dragon... no doubt you will find a mate very soon. The Elder Mother has relaxed many of the restrictions she placed on your kind during the war with my father, and many are allowed to mate much younger than before to rebuild your number. You will find a mate... a beautiful female no doubt... but you must be patient. You have a bond now with my mates... Aelnala and I will help you to learn as much as we can. You will find that you will take on some of the traits of your bonded sisters, and their temperament will also help you. They are as capable and as intelligent as they are beautiful Roluth... that is one of the reasons I love them so.

We are not here to fight you or your sister, any of your siblings. We are here to stop this Maruad and his white skinned friends. Now that we have discovered you and the others... that is now our primary goal. Saving you and your brothers and sisters will stop Maruad and the others; it will free you to explore what you have never known. And it will allow your brothers and sisters who are not yet hatched to join you and Syrilth in this new world.

I feel strong. Confident now... Isra of the Spartans. Is that because of what I share with Tarifa and Aihola?

Isra nodded. *They are strong and confident women as I have said. We will devise a plan to free your sister Syrilth... and all of your siblings. Trust is hard to learn Roluth... I know this better than most. Tarifa and*

Aihola know it better than most. Let us show you that you can trust us as well. It is better than the alternative I assure you.

Alternative? Roluth asked.

Isra looked at him evenly. *We must convince your sister that we are not the enemy. If we can not do that... the King will come here Roluth. What you have seen Isheeni and Aricia... Aelnala and I... what you have seen us do is pitiful in comparison to what he and Torma can do together my friend. Torma is almost eighteen meters long Roluth... and he weighs close to eight metric tons.* Isra saw Roluth's rust colored eyes grow large at this information.

So big? Roluth spoke in awe.

Isra nodded. Do not let that knowledge give you confidence. For all his size, I have witnessed Torma fly with the speed and maneuverability of an eagle. You know what that is?

The white and black birds... yes.

Isra nodded. *Torma and the King... if we can not convince your sister we are friends... and Maruad decides to fight the King and Torma, he will force Syrilth to serve him.* Isra shook his head slowly. *Roluth they will swat Maruad and your sister from the sky as if they were children. They will not hesitate, they will not pause, and they will kill them as quickly and efficiently as any machine. Their power as a Bonded Pair is greater than any among us. That is why we must make her see we are not her enemies. And we need you to help us do that.*

Roluth drew himself up straighter new purpose filling him. *Tell me what I must do.*

The first thing you must do... apologize to Isheeni. Isra spoke. *You are young and have never had the proper guidance. That is not your fault and it is not Syrilth's fault. It is Maruad's fault. Isheeni knows this. Apologize to Isheeni Roluth... befriend her and Aelnala and you will find the wealth of information and knowledge that they can teach you irreplaceable. Then we will plan how to free Syrilth and your other siblings.*

Roluth had done just that when the azure blue scaled dragon had returned with the female Spartan Queen Aricia. He had fallen over himself to apologize for his actions, never making excuses, only saying he would strive to redeem himself in her eyes. The words came to him easily... words he had never spoken before and now suddenly these words and their meaning filled him. This was the first sign to him that what Isra had told him was true. He could feel the emotions of love and support filtering to him from Tarifa and Aihola, the sense of honor and pride coming from the gamboge colored Aelnala.

Then Isheeni had stepped up to him, her azure eyes bright and clear. He had not flinched when she had inspected him... sniffed him and then looked at him once more. Her azure eyes softened somewhat and she nodded her large head. *Come Roluth... let Aelnala and I give you some instruction on how a proper dragon acts.*

That had proven to Roluth, young though he might have been, that had proven what Isra had told him.

Syrlth hates Maruad! Roluth spoke his voice angry. *We all do. He treats us as less than animals! Remember what Aelnala and I taught you young Roluth.* Isheeni spoke gently. *If this is what we have to do, you must control what you have learned.*

It is risky... Aricia spoke now. *Roluth are you sure about what Syrilth says?*

Roluth nodded. *She is almost certain that he is devising a plan to leave this planet. Syrilth believes he intends to use my un-hatched brothers and sisters for this purpose. That is why she was trying so intently to harm you my Bonded Sisters.* He spoke looking at Tarifa and Aihola. *She felt if this was accomplished, Maruad would lead her to where he has them hidden and she could stop him. She also believes the white skinned creatures do not trust Maruad and that they are beginning to suspect what he is doing as well.*

That's good and bad. Isra spoke. *They obviously have their own issues with Sadormacah and Ceiricah. How many of these True People as they call themselves... how many are in this mountain?* Isra asked.

Roluth shook his head. *I am not good with... with numbers.*

You are bonded now Roluth. Aelnala spoke softly. *Allow your Bonded Sisters to help you.*

Open your mind as we taught you Roluth. Isheeni spoke.

Tarifa and Aihola reached up and touched him on either side of his neck and with Isra's guidance and soft probing they found Roluth's thoughts and images. It took only a few seconds and for Tarifa and Aihola and their experience, that was all they needed.

“Nya Istel?” Tarifa asked.

Aihola nodded. “I concur.” She spoke.

Tarifa looked at Aricia. “The mountain has at least eight hundred of these creatures in it. It is the last stronghold they have here in the northern hemisphere.”

“They have more?” Aricia asked surprised.

Aihola nodded. “Two others... though not as large. One in what used to be known as Europe... Germany I believe... the other is in South America.”

“Maruad is here... so we need to target the mountain first.” Aricia spoke. “Aihola... I will need you to pinpoint as best you are able for Admiral Wallace so that he can deploy his sensor arrays. Ship movements in orbit will only alert them. We can not hit the mountain until we discover where Maruad has the eggs hidden.”

Aihola nodded. “As soon as we are done here.” She spoke.

Isheeni got to her feet. *Aelnala and I need to show Roluth how he will need to act.* She spoke. *And we must return to this mountain before night fall so that Maraud does not become suspicious. Aricia... we will need your blood my sister. It is the only way it will be convincing enough for this Maraud to believe.*

ELEAR IES HEADQUARTERS

“So you see my Queen... all of our medical research is approved and overseen by not only the Elfin Parliament here on Elear, but the Union Senate sends a representative every six months to inspect our facilities.” The older vampire explained as they walked along the outer window of the building, the sunlight dimmed by the tinted windows, but allowing the sights of Wainn to be fully seen.

Isabella looked at the man and nodded her head. “It’s most impressive Director Mateau.”

“I must apologize to you Milady... I wasn’t aware that the board had not informed you of our undertakings in the last two decades. We have made some amazing strides in the area of medical science Milady. Even the Hadarian Divine One Eurin has complimented us on our work.” He continued as they walked. “We have even improved on the nutritional composition of the formula for the Vampiric Juice that Queen Anja designed. That was a brilliant piece of work on her part if I do say so myself.” Mateau said as they walked. He was a portly vampire, some seven thousand years old and one of the original defectors that had come with Isabella when they left her father’s domain. “I understand Queen Anja is also working on the design for a reproductive gene stimulant that will allow those among our people who have since married Lycavorians to more easily have children. Ingenious really.”

That took Isabella by surprise as she wasn’t aware Anja was working on such a project. She would have to ask Dysea about that. “Well I haven’t been involved with the board closely for the last century so it’s not truly an issue.” Isabella explained as they came around a sharp corner and he began opening the door into his office. “Tell me Mateau... who else has access to your facilities outside of those who actually work here?”

The man led them into the large office and ushered them to seats around the large dark gray desk. “Aside from the actual researchers we employ Milady, only the security troops assigned to this building. I have access to everything... as well as my two Assistant Directors. Why?”

“You have two Assistants under you?” Isabella asked.

Mateau nodded quickly. “Yes Milady... Assistant Director Regar and Assistant Director Solomon. I believe it was Solomon you spoke to just the other day when you visited. I only just returned last evening from a conference on Hadaria as a matter of fact. My aide told me you had visited yesterday; that is why I wasn’t surprised when your aide Miai here contacted me this morning and told me you were coming. I was actually going to contact you myself and invite you and Queen Dysea for a complete tour and dinner.”

“What do these other men do?” Miai asked stepping forward to stand just behind Isabella as she settled into the chair.

“Assistant Director Regar is in charge of the Research labs here and Solomon has control of the actual testing of what we develop. Both of them are brilliant researchers.” Mateau told her in reply. “Why?”

“This Assistant Director Solomon made it seem as if he was in charge.” Isabella spoke.

Mateau chuckled softly. “Yes... that would be like him. You must understand both Regar and Solomon think they run this facility. They are brilliant as I said, but both of them tend to be overbearing.”

“Director Mateau is it possible to set up a Biogenics lab here on Elear with the equipment you have in this facility?” Isabella asked.

Mateau looked at her, his dark eyes boring into her. “Queen Isabella... you know as well as I do that Biogenics research is outlawed in the Lycavorian Union. And even if it wasn’t... you and the other founders of IES made it very clear we would not take part in any sort of genetic research due to what your father and his cronies were doing to innocent prisoners and slaves within the boundaries of the High Coven. I would never allow such a practice in my facility. Ever! It is one of the reasons I defected with you and the others.” He spoke vehemently.

Isabella nodded. “I know. However as we speak right now there is a prisoner in a detention cell on *NORMYA’S LIGHT* that was engineered with biogenic properties.” She told him seeing his eyes go wide and his face pale. “And Dysea is interrogating the leader of a supposed religious cult who shows these same signs. Six of these biogenic engineered men attacked Dysea and her Captain the other night, and now her Captain is seriously injured and in a medical bed on our ship. Needless to say Dysea is not happy... and when Dysea is not happy... I am not happy.”

Mateau moved to his desk, going around and settling into the chair. “I don’t understand what this has to do with IES?” He spoke.

“Miai?” Isabella spoke.

“This cult appeared out of no where two years ago.” Miai explained. “The Chief Medical Officer on *NORMYA’S LIGHT* confirms that the tissue samples taken from the prisoner and the dead bodies of those who attacked Queen Dysea and Lexi are no more than two years old.”

“So?” Mateau asked.

“Three years ago IES purchased four Vorticular Biochemical Adhesion Enhancers.” Miai spoke.

Mateau nodded. “Yes... three of them are used for the chemical compounds we use to test the medical cohesion aspects and ratios.” He answered.

“And the fourth?” Isabella asked.

“We keep it in storage in case one of the three main VBAEs malfunctions. Why?” Mateau spoke.

“The VBAE as you call it can also be used to combine the cells and compounds needed for biogenic research.” Isabella answered.

Mateau nodded. “You would need to remove the electromagnetic RNA compensator because it destroys the metabolic cohesion of the cells, but that is not easily done Milady. Only someone trained in biogenic use could perform this, let alone know what it could do. None of my people here have the necessary skills.”

“Are you sure?” Isabella asked.

“Positive... with the exception of my Assistant Directors... I chose all my people who work in this facility personally. I brought most of them from Apo Prime with me.” Mateau spoke.

“Your Assistant Directors? Who chose them?” Nymtran asked.

Mateau looked at the half vampire Drow soldier. “Milady Isabella... what is going on here?”

“Mateau... who told you to refer to me as Queen?” Isabella asked.

“I spoke with Solomon late last evening. I wanted to know why he had not contacted me while I was in transition back here Hadaria and let me know you had visited. He told me.” Mateau answered quickly.

“Mateau... I have not yet made public my decision to become Martin’s fourth Queen.” Isabella stated evenly. “I did not make that decision until Dysea and I arrived here on Elear to investigate this cult.”

“What are you saying?” Mateau asked.

Isabella got to her feet. “Mateau... Nymtran here is a Drow elf. He is also half vampire thanks to the insidious practices of my father’s scientists on Earth that he and his twin brother were subjected too.” Isabella moved around to stand between him and Miai. “He and Sole’nar have adapted quite well however, and they have even claimed Miai here as their mate and wife. They have started over rebuilding their lives after my father and sister nearly destroyed them. They have been trained by and fought beside Martin Leonidas himself, including during the Battle of Ukwav. They are exceptionally skilled, and they have a particular distaste for those who practice their vile skills on unwilling men and women.”

Mateau came to his feet now. “Milady... I can assure you that this facility is in no way...”

Isabella looked at him. "I will turn Nymtran and Sole'nar loose in this facility Mateau. When they are finished there will be nothing left of that I can assure you."

"I swear to you Isabella..." He spoke quickly. "I swear to you on the life of the child you and I attempted to save that day. I know nothing of what you say is happening here! Nothing! Isabella... you know me. I would never betray you or what we have built here."

Isabella stopped and looked at the man for a long moment. They had tried for three hours to save that small boy, both of them covered in his blood from his wounds. He had suffered so... and Mateau had not allowed anyone to touch his body when it was over. He and Isabella had reverently wrapped his lifeless form in satin sheets and watched as they released him into the stars.

"Mateau... who assigned these men to your facility here?" Isabella asked placing her hand on Nymtran's shoulder.

"The IES Board." He answered immediately.

"Which member sponsored them?"

"Roland." He replied. "He has sponsored all of the senior researchers for IES. At least in the last thirty years. Isabella... I..."

"No Mateau..." She spoke softly. "Rest easy old friend... I believe you. However it does seem that someone is using the company that we built as a conduit for far more sinister intents than we had ever intended."

"Isabella... not even your father is insane enough to sanction biogenic research." Mateau spoke moving closer to her.

"Someone is... and they are using elves gathered here under the guise of this cult on Elear for their purposes." Isabella said.

"But why?" Miai asked now.

"It is well known that elfin and even Hadarian metabolisms and cell structure allow for ease of transformations and combinations." Mateau spoke looking at her even as Isabella turned her eyes upon him. "It is why there are so many Lycavorian males that have claimed Elfin or Hadarian mates. Much like the King. Their bodies are much more adaptable to change."

"Roland has a background in genetics doesn't he?" Isabella asked.

Mateau looked at her and nodded. "An extensive background yes." He answered quickly. "Isabella... what is going on?"

"Mateau there is a Kill Order out on me." Isabella spoke seeing his eyes go wide. "Two attempts have already been made on my life right here on Elear. I believe there will be a third."

"Your father?" Mateau gasped. "But why? Why now? We... we left so long ago."

"He does not want me to be recognized officially as a Queen of the Lycavorian Union." Isabella spoke calmly. "He knows that will cause unrest within the Empire. To see that our two peoples can live beside each other in peace. To see what we have built here, the friendships and ... and the families. If I became a Queen he would no longer be able to hide this. He won't be able to hide any of it as he does now."

"But assassinating you would not change that?" Mateau spoke.

"No... not unless it was done in a way that somehow implicated IES as a source that the High Coven has been using to gather intelligence against the Union. That would destroy and gains we have made and quickly label me as a traitor to the Union. It would also cause havoc within the Senate who do not approve of my place in either Martin's life or his bed. They have already made that perfectly clear with regards to my relationship with Dysea. They are few in number but they do exist." Isabella stated as her eyes grew wide. She moved away from them a few steps. "That has to be it!" She said. "It has to be!"

"Milady..." Miai asked. "What do you mean?"

Isabella turned to face them once more. "My father hates that I have taken Dysea as a lover! A woman! He hates that I will become Martin's Queen. It's so utterly perfect! I am assassinated within an IES building. IES Officials are implicated in this action... IES comes under investigation and it is discovered that high ranking Board members are High Coven agents. All we have built will be destroyed! The vampires in the Union would suddenly become the enemy."

"Roland?" Mateau gasped.

“It has to be him.” Isabella spoke. “You are correct that my father is not stupid enough to sanction biogenic engineering. But if Roland is a Coven agent and he has gone rogue... what better way to eliminate two problems and cause a crisis even greater than that fool Chetak managed.”

“But who... who is fool enough to profit from this biogenic research?” Mateau spoke. “It would be murderously expensive to conduct this type of research and the results... well they would be unstable at best.”

Isabella nodded at his words. “Yes... and that is what we have already seen with the men who attacked Dysea and Lexi.” She told him quickly. “And my father risks his son to complete this mission.”

“His son?” Mateau spoke. “Xerxes is dead. The King butchered that sadistic fool!”

Isabella shook her head. “No. I have a half brother it seems Mateau. Not much is known of him other than the fact he is apparently here on Elear with instructions to kill me. It is he who has orchestrated the first two attacks without question. And he is undoubtedly planning a third as I said.”

“For your father to risk this... then...”

Isabella nodded. “Roland must be involved in something that my father did not approve of. Or that he fears.”

“What do you wish of me Isabella?” Mateau asked moving closer to her. “IES is your company. Name it and it is yours.”

“I want you to watch this Regar and Solomon closely. Say nothing. Do nothing out of the ordinary. Just watch them. It appears now that this Kill Order and Dysea’s situation with this cult is much more closely related than we first thought. And now I want to find my brother and ask him some questions. I believe he has many of the answers we are seeking.” Isabella said with a smile. “He obviously does not know of the relationship that you and I have which is to our advantage. I want to know every building IES owns on this planet, even if only by association. Specifically here in Wainn. He is here... and I intend to find out what he knows.”

Miai stepped forward. “Bella...” She spoke softly, Isabella turning to meet her eyes for Miai was never so informal unless in private. “That does not bring us any closer to who told your father that you were considering making public that you would be Queen. Who knew that you were thinking this?”

Va’nimia stared at the glittering Amaranth colored pendant in the mirror as Vonis slowly lowered it around her neck. It shone in the light of the room, the silver/diamond gems cascading with color in the reflection of the mirror. The light blue robe she wore was tied only loosely in the front, leaving a large portion of her ample cleavage and neck bare.

They had just come out of the soothing warm bath, Vonis having spent considerable time expertly washing her body while she cooed and leaned up against him. There had been nothing sexual about it, his hands using the large soft sponge to seductively traverse her skin. The two hours before the bath had been some of the wildest and most passionate sex that they had yet experienced together, and the memories of it still cause shivers to ripple within her belly.

“It’s truly beautiful sire.” Va’nimia whispered as she reached up to touch it, running her fingertips across the sooth stones as he lowered his lips to her shoulder and kissed her skin softly.

“The color makes your eyes brighter.” He said softly nuzzling the back of her ear and causing Va’nimia to shudder at the sensations.

Va’nimia took a deep breath and looked at him in the mirror. “Will it make her eyes brighter as well?” She asked softly.

Vonis stopped his explorations of her skin with his lips and looked at her in the mirror. “What... what do you mean?”

“Better a willing slave than an unwilling slave?” She spoke softly. “You are practicing your skill on me so that you can please your bride when you return.” Vonis stared at her face in the mirror and surprisingly seeing the pain in those captivating blue eyes. The pain and the betrayal. “You... you left the door open sire.” Va’nimia spoke softly. “I heard you speaking to... to your man.”

“Va’nimia...” He began.

“Why do you wish to kill your sister?” Va’nimia asked boldly not taking her eyes from his in the mirror.

“That is not something that concerns you!” He snapped.

“Why?”

Vonis turned her around quickly in his arms. "You... it is not your concern because you would not understand!"

"Because I am a slave to you?" She said.

"I did not say that!"

"That is what I am to you isn't it?" She spoke. "A slave to practice your lovemaking skills on. That's what you told that... your assassin! And you will discard me when your job is done. Will you kill me as well? Is that why you will not even tell me your name? So when I am crying out in passion I do not sing the name of the man who will kill me?" She hissed at him.

"I told you I would not hurt you!" Vonis barked.

"Then you will have one of your... henchmen do your work for you? Is that it?" She demanded.

"No one will harm you Va'nimia!" He told her. "I promise you."

"You have hurt me!" Va'nimia said. "You have made me feel things these last days that I never imagined could exist. Never! You have harmed me by making me fall in love with you."

Vonis's eyes went wide at this. "What? Va'nimia you don't know me."

"Don't I?" She asked.

"I should not be speaking to you of such things!" He said backing away from her.

"Why do you wish to kill your sister?" She asked again.

Vonis glared at her. "I must!"

"If Queen Isabella is your sister... then you must be a Prince." Va'nimia spoke. "A Prince... a son of the Vampire High Coven Lord Veldruk. Is that... is that who you are?"

"Stop this Va'nimia!" He barked now.

"Why?" Va'nimia asked. "I think I have a right to know something of the man who will order my death when he leaves this place."

Vonis looked at her. "Va'nimia... I swear to you... no one is going to hurt you. No one!"

"But you are a soldier?"

"Yes... I'm a soldier... but I gave you my word I would not harm you Va'nimia! I will keep my word to you!" He spoke.

"Why me? Why did you pick me?" She asked heatedly. "There are so many beautiful female elves in this city. Why did you have to pick me? I am just a teacher!"

"I have not hurt you!" Vonis nearly shouted. "I have treated you better than..."

"Better than what?" Va'nimia asked moving closer to him again. "A slave? A common whore?"

"You are no whore!" Vonis bellowed glaring at her.

Va'nimia reached up to touch the necklace. "Isn't this how you treat a whore? You shower her with gifts... so that she performs better for you in bed? Is that why you have given me this?"

Vonis stepped up to her, his eyes changing to vampire cobalt blue, and he gripped her arms tightly. "You are not a whore! Don't call yourself that!" He snarled.

"Then what am I?" Va'nimia asked softly tears coming to her eyes. "I no longer know... do you? You will leave me to return to your pureblood bride... that is what you called her. I will either be dead or heartbroken. What difference does it make now?" Va'nimia reached up and slowly unclasped the necklace bringing it into her hands. She held it out to him. "You should keep this for her. It is not mine."

"Va'nimia..." He spoke looking at the necklace in his hand.

"No... I will not try to escape. I will submit to you whenever you wish. You can have my blood whenever you wish." She said softly. "Just do not treat me as something more than what you consider me to be. A means to an end." She reached up and wiped the tears from her face. "I... I must wash my face and prepare myself for you." She turned quickly and moved for the small bathroom. She stopped at the doorway. "Prince... sire... whatever you may be... you... you did not need to practice your lovemaking skills on me. They were already exquisite."

Vonis watched her walk into the bathroom and then he looked at the necklace in his hands. He moved to the bed and slowly spread the necklace out on the edge before moving for the door and left the room.

Va'nimia stepped from the bathroom when the door closed and locked and she looked at the bed where he had placed the necklace, her blue eyes going back to the door he had walked out of.

**AUTUMN MOON-CLASS ATTACK FRIGATE
HAMMER OF THE GODS
TWO DAYS FROM EARTH
ALDEBARAB NEBULA**

Imror came onto the bridge of the *HAMMER* the mug of coffee in his hand. He watched as the captain rose to his feet.

“They haven’t deviated from their base course in over a day.” Daro spoke with a small amount of humor. “Very single minded these individuals. Makes me think that they are Kavalian.”

“You fought the Kavalians Captain? I didn’t know that.” Imror asked interested now.

Daro nodded. “I had a *MOONLANCER* then. The High Coven thinks we are brutes?” Daro laughed. “Kavalians are the brutes. They plod along into a battle with a single minded purpose and that is to destroy everything in their path. I’ve even seen them ram their ships into others when they exhausted their weapons load. They are hard to kill no doubt. Not very bright mind you, but very hard to kill.”

“You think these ships are crewed by Kavalians?” Imror asked.

Daro shrugged. “The Coven didn’t wipe all of them out in their war. Not by a long shot.” Daro answered. “I don’t care how much they like to boast that they did. Evil is what they were. Pure evil. They would mutilate our dead males on the battlefield. They would capture our female Spartans and force them to become their whores. Pump them full of drugs so that they wouldn’t resist. Only our women could withstand their mating sessions it seemed. Kavalians get quite violent when they mate... shred their females with their claws, break their bones. The females were no better really. Only Lycavorians could survive this... and they were prized for just that purpose.”

“Vampires could survive that.” Imror said.

“Not without blood to sustain them.” Daro spoke. “That’s how they treated their High Coven prisoners in their war. They would starve them of blood. Watch them go mad and then slaughter them in arena battles. They are the most barbaric species I have ever seen.”

Imror looked at several consoles as he stood next to the Captain. His eye caught some information and he turned to fully face the console. “Captain... they are coming up on the Aldebarab Nebula. If they don’t alter course they’ll pass right along the outskirts of the cloud.”

Daro nodded. “Yes.”

Imror turned to look at him. “Captain we could get a look on the inside of one of those transports as they pass along the edges of the nebula.”

“What? How?” Daro asked now very interested.

“We can calibrate our shields to adjust for the ionized particle emissions. The Shroud will not be affected by the Nebula. We can sneak in under this transport on the far edge; it has held this position, last in the formation since we made contact. We can do a soft dock with its aft latching ring.” Imror spoke. “We have the schematics for this type ships sir. A small team could get inside and get a look around.”

“We don’t even know who they are Imror.” Daro spoke.

“They are within Union space sir, creeping along at low speeds outside of normal approach corridors.” Imror spoke. “I think we can safely assume they are not hoping to stop in and allow us to buy them a drink.”

Daro looked at the man and couldn’t help but smile. “Well... Admiral Joarl and the Queen did say to monitor them. They didn’t give us directives from where did they?”

Imror matched his commander’s smile. “No sir they did not.”

“*Carian!*” Daro declared. “I love having this ship and being able to sneak around and do all sorts of nasty things! Make it so Imror.”

“Permission to lead the team sir?”

Daro nodded. “Granted. Only four Imror. The best we have.”

Imror nodded. “Aye sir.”

EDEN CITY COMMAND CENTER

“Then let’s give him what he wants.” Selene stated.

“I forbid it!” Lynwe shouted.

“As do I!” Layna announced almost before Lynwe finished.

“Never!” Tarifa and Aihola spoke together.

Aricia, Tareif, Isra and Joarl remained silent from their seats, Steven standing against the wall with his arms crossed over his chest, their eyes going to Selene. She sat calmly with her hands on the table.

Tarifa looked at Isra. “Isra tell her this is insane!” She spoke.

“It’s not insane! It’s very practical.” Selene spoke.

“Practical?” Lynwe demanded. “Exposing yourself to a man from a species that harbors a hatred of vampires that Admiral Joarl has said is fanatical? We have already determined this is why he has not left the city Selene! He wants to kill you! Why in all that is holy would we willingly expose you to him?”

“We need the information he can provide to us.” Selene stated.

“That is not worth your life Selene!” Layna spoke.

“My life won’t be in danger anymore than it is now.” Selene spoke. “Will it Isra?” She turned to look at him.

They all looked at him.

“What is she talking about?” Aihola spoke.

“I presented a plan to Selene when I first arrived in Sparta. After I left the two of you in the meeting hall that day. I contacted her in Eden City and presented a plan to her that was targeted toward protecting the two of you. The King actually thought it was a good idea.” Isra replied sheepishly.

“What plan? Why didn’t you tell us?” Tarifa asked.

“Once the Queen arrived and more information was revealed, the plan no longer became feasible.” Isra spoke.

“Why?” Aihola asked.

Isra shifted in his seat and looked at Tareif quickly. “That is not important right now.” He spoke.

“Yes it is!” Tarifa snapped. “What plan?”

“I was going... I was going to kidnap you both.” Isra told her. “I was going to kidnap you and take you to a place until you allowed me to claim you.”

Tareif threw up his hands in abject disgust. “Why me?” He exclaimed loudly. “Two of my daughters choose a crazy Spartan who was going to kidnap them and rides a dragon. My youngest daughter chooses a human pilot that flies like he is drunk and takes her to places I would never consider. What have I done to deserve this?”

Tarifa looked at Isra, her sapphire eyes wide, Aihola not able to keep the smile of adoration from her face. “You... you were going to kidnap us?” Tarifa asked.

Isra nodded. “That was the plan yes.”

“And then what?” Aihola asked.

“The King... Martin told me of a cave near the villa. He said I should take you there and...” Isra stopped talking.

“Take us there and what?” Tarifa asked.

“Using the King’s description... ‘Take those two pig headed women to the cave and wait until they allow you... and then make them both scream your name to the moon.’ He was very insistent about it actually.” Isra stated.

Aricia burst out laughing as did Admiral Joarl. “Tarifa... Martin has taken me there.” She spoke. “It is quite lovely how he made it into a very romantic hideaway.”

“And just what makes you think we would have screamed your name to the moon Commander.” Tarifa demanded.

“Or allowed you too?” Aihola spoke.

Isra leaned over quickly and nuzzled the back of her elfin ear, causing Aihola to hiss in delight. “I seemed to have done pretty well so far.” He spoke.

“Please!” Tareif bellowed. “You have my daughters! Must I endure more?”

Isra leaned forward quickly, Aihola still clutching his arm and Tarifa with her hands on his shoulder. He had a smile on his face and looked at Lynwe and Layna. "Selene is correct Lynwe. Layna. It is a sound plan."

"Isra I won't..." Lynwe began.

"Let me explain it to you." He spoke. "She will never be out of sight of us. You and Layna can cover her from above the market that is just around the corner from your building. It will be at dusk. Tareif and Steven have discovered that he is moving between buildings and watching the market. Probably because you are known to frequent it. I will be on Aelnala on the top of the building that connects your apartment. It is a straight line sight. Based on what we found within his quarters of the Zaleisian ship, Aricia and I have his scent. She will be on the ground, never more than fifty meters away. Once he moves for Selene, I snatch her with Aelnala's and my TK abilities and Aricia takes him down with Tareif."

"And if by chance you miss Isra?" Layna asked.

"I won't." He spoke.

"What if you do?" Lynwe demanded. "Anything could go wrong Isra!"

Aricia leaned forward and looked at the Drow General and female Spartan warrior. It was easy enough to detect Lynwe and Selene all over Layna. Her scent permeated their bodies, as theirs did hers. "Lynwe... Layna... I want you both armed with sniper rifles. If by some stroke of misshapen luck that Isra misses Selene, I authorize you to ventilate his brain cavity there in the square."

Joarl leaned forward. "My Queen that..."

Aricia held up her hand. "Isra will not miss." She said. "However... I will not risk harm to Selene for any information this man might hold in his head. I have read your reports on these Kavalians Joarl, and those sent by Riall. He will not just kill her... and you know this."

Joarl nodded slowly. "No." He spoke.

"I have faith in everyone's ability." Aricia spoke. "But Lynwe is correct... anything could happen. In that circumstance... the Kavalian dies."

Joarl nodded. "I concur."

Isra looked at Aricia. "You will have to be well covered Aricia. They are bound to have eyes within the city and if our story with regards to Isheeni is to hold up you can not be seen. Has Isheeni contacted you yet?"

Aricia nodded. "They will stop to take two stags to further our story that Roluth found her by chance while hunting. He says this Maruad is not entirely wise to the practices of dragon mating. He only knows what he experienced with Roluth's parents, which is not what is practiced now. With my blood on her saddle and hind quarters and the singe marks we added, he and Isheeni are confident they can fool this Maruad. His Mindvoice skills are not as advanced as Syrilth and the others and they regularly communicate with each other at levels Maruad and these creatures can not hear."

"Can we trust this dragon?" Joarl asked.

Tarifa and Aihola both whipped their heads around to glare at him. "Roluth will not betray us!" Tarifa snapped.

Isra placed his hands on their arms before they said anymore. "Admiral... Roluth is now bound to Tarifa and Aihola as Aelnala is to me. As Isheeni is to the Queen. He could no more betray us than they could."

"I was more concerned with Isheeni than us." Joarl spoke.

"Roluth will not betray his bonded mates." Aricia spoke softly. "However... should they not be able to convince Syrilth of our intentions Isheeni knows what to do."

"What do you mean?" Tarifa asked.

"Syrilth may be far older than Isheeni, but she lacks experience and in some respect she lacks common sense." Aricia spoke. "I believe Roluth when he says all she has done is in order to protect her siblings. It is instinct in a Firespitter to do this... but if they can't convince her... Isheeni will kill her."

"Aricia... what about Roluth?" Aihola asked her voice filled with worry.

"Roluth has seen what Isheeni and Aelnala have shown him. He knows what is outside of Maruad's control. The life he can have, as well as all his siblings. If it comes to that... he will do what he must." Aricia spoke softly.

"It won't come to that." Isra spoke gripping their hands tightly. "Roluth and Isheeni will convince her. You must have faith."

**BIG SNOWY MOUNTAINS
FORMERLY STATE OF MONTANA
TRUE PEOPLE'S MOUNTAIN BASE**

“Why hasn't he come back yet Syrilth?” Maruad demanded as he stood in the hanger portion of the mountain base.

He is on his way now Maruad! Syrilth spoke coming to her feet as he came into the massive hanger. *Something has happened however!* She said moving to him.

Maruad looked at her. “What?”

Roluth... Roluth has taken a mate! Syrilth spoke making her voice filled with disbelief. *He discovered the female Firespitter out hunting Maruad. He plunged on her and claimed her as his mate!*

Maruad's dark eyes were wide as he stared at her. “Is this a ploy of yours to...?”

Maruad I do not lie to you! He is returning with the dragon now. They killed her rider; Roluth burned her from her saddle and then bit her in half! I do not believe this myself Maruad! Roluth can tell tall tales! What if he is being truthful and she returns with him?

Maruad stared at the ochre colored eyes in front of him. Roluth always was the more adventurous of the hatchlings they had forced to hatch. Always getting into trouble and Maruad having to whip him.

Maruad... she carries his eggs! Syrilth announced. *He told me! She carries three eggs in her clutch within her womb! She is bound to him now!*

“So soon?” Maruad spoke suspiciously. “Even if she was fertile... and he impregnated her the first time, she would not show signs of this for at least a week.”

Maruad you know as well as I from your experiences with my mother, that if this is not her first clutch of eggs, she will know almost immediately that she carries eggs. Roluth is a fool yes... but he is also a male. If he scented her and went into a mating frenzy...

Maruad nodded. “Yes... I saw your father in a mating frenzy once. He tore through an entire village of primitives to get to your mother.”

Maruad... if Roluth and this female killed her rider... that only leaves the Heavyhorn and her rider. She is no match for us. We can complete our task of killing the elf females. Syrilth spoke.

Maruad looked at her. “And why should I believe this is what you want to do now?” He demanded. “I do not trust you Syrilth. You only serve me because I have your brothers and sisters under my knife.”

Syrilth nodded her head. *And you told me if we killed these elf females you would return them to me Maruad.* She stepped closer to him. *Or is this no longer our deal. Tell me Maruad... for if any harm has come to them; or you have no intentions of fulfilling your word to me, I will burn you where you stand and then I will destroy this entire mountain. Look me in the eye and tell me this is not the case.*

Maruad didn't back down and stared at her. “I told you that was our deal.” He spoke softly so that only they could hear each other. “My contact has informed me my transport off this rock is two days away. We will have two days, possibly three to kill the she-elves. Then you can have your siblings back and all of you can rot on this infernal planet for all I care.” He looked at her intently. “Why is this female so important?”

I have no desire to see my brothers mating with my sisters so that our kind does not die! Syrilth hissed. *This female... she could be our future. Killing her would condemn us to die here Maruad with no future. That would be paramount to killing my siblings yourself. That is something else I will not allow.*

“You demand much Syrilth!” Maruad hissed.

I have served you for a thousand years! Syrilth hissed. *My mother for longer than that. I watched your kill our mother and father! I have killed countless numbers for you. The only reason you still live is because you hold my siblings! You are leaving this world Maruad... I have no quarrel with that. In fact I will sing to the stars when you are gone. As long as you keep your word to me. This female is our future... and I will not allow you to take that from us. If you do not do this, I will make certain the vile white skinned creatures discover your plans.*

Maruad's eyes narrowed. “You think to blackmail me?” He snarled.

As you have done me Maruad. Syrilth spoke. Inspect her if you must when she arrives... you know what to look for... but no harm is to come to her. She is Roluth's mate now... and he will burn anyone who tries to hurt her. And I will stand with him, as she will. None of you would survive.

Maruad glared into Syrilth's eyes for a long moment but he knew she was right. At least for now. "Very well Syrilth... and I will inspect her when she arrives. If she attempts anything I will have Hurcan's people slaughter her and your brother. And then I will gather the eggs of all your siblings and force you to watch as I smash them on the rocks of the ocean.

Syrilth nodded her large head. *Agreed.*

Maruad walked slowly around the azure scaled female dragon while dozens of True People stood ready with weapons. She appeared slightly larger than when he had seen in her in the city... perhaps only half a meter under Syrilth's own fourteen meter length and four meter height. She had smooth elegant scales, muscular and well defined. Her talons were wickedly curved and could easily shred a man. Her azure eyes burned with hatred as they looked at him, her head following him as he walked around her. The saddle she wore was stained liberally with dried blood, and blackened singe marks touched the rear and sides.

Roluth stood beside her, his chest thrust out in pride and conquest.

Syrilth and her six other brothers and sisters stood to the side of the hanger excitedly as they gazed upon Isheeni's beauty.

Syrilth she is beautiful! Majeir announced bouncing up and down beside her. *Will she stay with us? Will she stay with us?*

Hush little one. The mahogany colored female spoke softly. She was almost as large as her older brother and sister, the second to be born after Roluth. Her name was Tharua, and like her older sister she was extremely intelligent. *Syrilth?*

Syrilth turned and looked into Tharua's copper colored eyes. Tharua looked so much like their father. *She is... she is Roluth's mate now Majeir.* Syrilth spoke turning to look at Majeir. *Yes... she will stay with us.*

Tharua moved up next to her sister. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Syrilth... this is the female that burned you.*

Syrilth nodded. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Yes.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *We should not trust her.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *We have no choice. She is Roluth's mate now.* Syrilth answered.

They both turned as Maruad came around on the side they could see him, still inspecting the azure blue female. He began to get down on one knee and Isheeni's head snapped out, her jaws clicking shut violently, the sound of her fangs coming together echoing in the hanger.

Back away man! Isheeni's voice carried to all of them with a snarl of hatred and disgust. No one but my mate inspects me like you.

Maruad looked at Roluth quickly. "Roluth... calm your new mate or I will have Hurcan's men dispose of her right now!"

They watched as Roluth moved closer to her, rubbing his head along the back of her neck and down over her wings. They all saw the flutter course through Isheeni's wing tips at this. *Peace Isheeni my mate.* Roluth spoke. *He only wishes to insure I am not lying to him about our children.*

Isheeni snorted. *Typical Lycavorian scum! He is no better than the wench who we killed.*

Maruad directed his eyes under Isheeni's belly and saw her still swollen sex. The indication were all there that she had just come out of her fertile phase, and the moistness he saw was definitely signs that she carried eggs. He got back up quickly and nodded.

"Incredible!" He spoke. "I must say Roluth... I would never have expected you to have the nerve to plunge on a female so fine as this."

Maruad turned as Hurcan came up to him, his eyes on Isheeni as well. "Maruad?" He asked.

"She carries eggs." Maruad spoke. "Roluth's eggs."

"This is the beast with the female rider!" Hurcan spoke.

Maruad nodded. "Yes."

"This female is dead?" Hurcan asked.

If you like... I can spit her upper body back up for you! Isheeni hissed out defiantly. *Your kind always tastes very foul anyway!*

Maruad laughed and looked at Hurcan. "She has offered to spit the female back out if you would like proof. At least the half that now resides in her stomach. It wouldn't be pretty, not from the inside of a dragon I can assure you."

"She is not a threat then?" Hurcan asked.

Maruad shook his head. "Not while I have Roluth's siblings."

Isheeni stepped toward Maruad, her azure eyes burning. *My mate has told me what you have done vile Maruad. Rest assured... you will not have our eggs in this way. You will die first.*

Maruad grinned. "She is spirited Roluth. I hope you are up to the task."

Isheeni leaned back and brushed intimately up against Roluth's side. *He has already proven that. Far more than my last mate.*

Maruad laughed and took Hurcan's arm. "She is no threat my friend. Come... with her rider dead it is only the Heavyhorn... Sylrith and I can make short work of her. We need to plan."

The dragons watched as Maruad and the other True People quickly left the massive hanger. None of them liked to remain in the hanger with the beasts anyway.

Isheeni silently thanked her bonded sister and that she carried Torma's eggs. As she was so deeply bonded with Aricia, just the thought of her mate plunging on her and within her could get her excited, just as it did with Aricia. These are the thoughts she had been thinking to make it appear as if she had just recently had sex and was now carrying eggs. Within the first week of discovering they carried eggs, their sexual openings became swollen yes, but very dry. Just a few minutes of thinking of Torma and his beautiful obsidian body was enough to allow her to make it seem like she had just recently conceived and now carried eggs.

Isheeni turned as the three smallest hatchlings rushed over to her and began bouncing around her gleefully.

I am Majeir! The boldest hatchling barked out.

Isheeni settled back to the hanger floor gracefully. *I am Isheeni Majeir.* She said in a gentle voice. *Who is this with you?*

This is my brother Poloa and my sister Vincia!

Hello Poloa and Vincia. I am Isheeni. Isheeni looked up as two adolescent dragons and a female about Roluth's age came over to her. One was a Persimmon colored female, and the other was a moss green colored male. They all surrounded her and began to sniff her in wonder. Isheeni couldn't help but smile a dragon smile.

The moss colored male bent his head low near Isheeni's whip like tail to sniff.

Darrath no! Roluth exclaimed far too late as Isheeni's tail snapped out and caught the male dragon in the head, knocking him sprawling.

Sylrith and Tharua snarled at Isheeni as the others backed away from her quickly.

Do not touch my siblings! Sylrith growled at her.

Perhaps if you taught them better manners I would not have too. Isheeni declared calmly as she got to her feet. *I had to teach Roluth a similar lesson. Sniffing at an area only my mate is allowed to go near is not the best way to make a friend of me.*

Roluth is your mate! Tharua snapped. *Darrath is his brother!*

Roluth is not my mate. Isheeni spoke. *My mate is far from here... but he will return soon enough.*

Roluth... Isheeni looked at him. *Roluth is becoming a good friend and a very good actor as well. Excellent work Roluth.*

Roluth nodded. *You were magnificent Isheeni.*

Isheeni chuckled. *We accomplished our first task.* She said finally.

Roluth... what is she talking about? Sylrith snapped turning to look at her brother.

Are there cameras in this place? Isheeni asked looking around the massive hanger.

Tharua shook her head quickly staring in awe at the gorgeous new dragon. She moved with such confidence and grace. Her limbs were powerfully built, her talons curved and sharp. Her scales were smooth and healthy. *We destroyed those years ago. They no longer watch us either.*

Silence Tharua! Sylrith barked. Roluth... brother tell me what is happening here? You were supposed to take her as your mate. Plunge on her and claim her. You told me you found them hunting.

Isheeni turned back to Sylrith. Oh... he found us hunting. She spoke. And he did plunge on me.

Sylrith looked at Roluth. Brother?

I am not your enemy Sylrith. Isheeni spoke softly. I am here to help you and your brothers and sisters.

Sylrith looked at Roluth. You fool! Her rider is not dead is she?

Isheeni snarled and moved closer to Roluth. They had talked much on the flight here, and Isheeni found the young male to be smart and willing. He listened to her intently, absorbing all that she told him... tried to teach him as they flew here. His bond with Tarifa and Aihola had given rise to better speech and more profound thoughts as he mulled over what they had shone him.

Your brother is no fool! And you will not refer to him in this way! Isheeni snapped. He could no more defeat Aricia and me than you could Sylrith! Sylrith's head snapped around and she growled at Isheeni. We let you escape that day Sylrith! We could have pursued you easily. Caught you easily. And we would have knocked you and Maruad from the sky as a giant knocks aside a child. I burned you with my flame... and I wasn't even trying. If not for Aelnala and my bonded sister Aricia your brother would be dead for plunging upon me. I am mated already and the eggs I carry are my mate's eggs. It is our second clutch of eggs for we have been together for almost two hundred and fifty years now. I am four hundred and twenty three years old... my mate seven hundred and two.

Roluth you brought her here? Sylrith nearly cried out. Why? They will come here now! They will come and all of us will be in danger! What have you done!

Your brother has saved you. Isheeni spoke more gently now. Saved you and all of your siblings, if only you will listen to me Sylrith. Listen to Roluth. I have no desire to injure my own kind. My bonded sister's only desire is to help you.

She commands you! Sylrith spat. As Maruad commands me!

Isheeni shook her head. No... not like Maruad. We are sisters... bonded together within Mindvoice by powers we can not explain. My mate to Aricia's mate. And now one of my first born daughters to her first born son. We exist together as family. As dear friends. I can show this to you... as Aelnala and I showed it to Roluth. As he now is bonded with the very elfin females you wish to kill.

Sylrith's head snapped to Roluth. What?

Roluth nodded. It is true. They... they touched me Sylrith. I saw so many things. I can hear them in my thoughts even now sister. Isheeni... Aricia... they are not our enemy. They can give back to us what vile Maruad has taken from us. They can help us retrieve our brothers and sisters! We can be free! Please Sylrith...

Silence! Sylrith demanded.

No! Roluth nearly shouted surprising his other brothers and sisters with the tone in his voice. I will not be silent! I have seen it. In my mind Sylrith. I have seen where Isheeni has been... the wonders and things she has done. Let us... let her show you what we could have... if only you will let go of the hate of Maruad that clouds your mind.

He killed our parents Roluth! Sylrith screamed. Two of our siblings!

And for that... you may have his blood. Isheeni spoke. When the time is right. First we must find your siblings and save them.

Why should I believe you? Sylrith snapped.

Believe what I can show you Sylrith. Isheeni spoke.

And if I choose not too? Sylrith demanded. Then what?

Isheeni took a deep breath and shook her head. You do not want to know.

Why don't you tell me Firespitter? Sylrith spat.

Isheeni's azure orbs settled on her evenly. You will die. She said. Your siblings will die. Your bloodline will die. And you will never experience what it is you so covet.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

LYCAVORE

“Any ideas?” Martin asked softly as he lowered the macrobinoculars from his eyes.

“Why only six of them?” Danny asked.

“Scouting party perhaps?” Anuk said softly passing the binos she had to Nayeca.

Martin turned his head. “Lisisa?”

Lisisa didn't lower the binoculars from her eyes. She and Melita were now fully clothed in the uniform and body armor of a Spartan, their long hair tied tightly into pony tails by Yuriko and Nayeca. “They look familiar.” She spoke softly. “I...”

Martin looked at her intently, leaning over to nuzzle her head as a father would his wolf cub. *That part of your life is over with Lisisa. You are my daughter and I will never allow that to happen to you again. Ever.* He whispered softly to her within Mindvoice.

Lisisa turned her face and looked at him in the falling dusk. Part of her was still in shock that he was actually here. That he had come for her. She had spoken with Anja for several hours, just the two of them, discovering that a day had not gone by from the time he discovered she existed when she was not in his thoughts. He hadn't known what she looked like, but that did not stop him from imagining what she would appear like. Anja had said his devotion to finding her had made him a better father, and that devotion would carry over to all his children. And Lisisa would be the big sister to all of them.

I... I have always dreamed that this would happen one day... I never held out much hope... but I dreamed it. When word reached... when the news that you had a son reached us here I almost gave up father. And now... to know you came for me... that Anja came for me even though she carries your daughter.

She carries your sister as well Lisisa. Martin spoke quickly. *Never forget that. Just as Androcles is your brother.*

I will never allow myself to give up again. Miracles do happen... you being here is proof of that. Lisisa said meeting his eyes.

“I recognize them.” Melita spoke softly. “Three of them are *Lil vlos silinrai*.” She said turning to look at Martin. “The Blood Hunters. The finest trackers and soldiers within the Immortal ranks. They have been here for four years. The one in the middle is the father... T'loft I believe his name is. The other two are his sons. They remain away from the others for the most part. They are from the tribe of the High Lord's Captain and consider themselves superior to the others. I believe T'loft is brother to the High Lord's Captain.”

“Well la di da for them.” Danny spoke.

“The other three are simple Immortal soldiers. Experienced and skilled but simple soldiers.” Melita spoke. “One of them... one of them was whipped for looking at me with inappropriate thoughts. He has approached me on more than one occasion with lustful intent. I have never said anything to the Immortal Commander, only rebuffed his advances. The last time he was seen doing this by a superior and whipped for his actions. I have been held to blame by most of the Immortals for that. I am not well liked by those three in particular.”

“Quaint name, The Blood Hunters?” Nayeca spoke softly.

“Well... whatever their name they are heading this way.” Anuk spoke. “Right for the entrance to the cave.”

“Noreu and Visam say this is one of the furthest mining tunnels from the settlement.” Martin spoke. “And one of the oldest. Our people haven't been here in force for eight years. Just small work details to make up any differences in production. Why not search the closer tunnel first?”

“You think they know something we don't Skipper?” Danny asked.

“I'm thinking we need to have a talk with them is what I'm thinking.” Martin answered meeting Danny's gaze.

“Take them alive?” Melita gasped. “Immortals?”

“Immortal is just a name. They die just like everyone.” Anuk spoke. “The history of the King's father taught us that.”

“We have become quite skilled in giving them the opportunity to meet whatever gods they pray to.” Nayeca agreed.

“We're not going to kill all of them.” Martin spoke quickly. “Which of the two has a fancy for you Melita?”

“The one on the right behind the father.” She replied instantly.

“Skipper... look at this. They stopped.” Danny spoke.

Martin lifted his binoculars and watched as the father and two sons came together to look at something while the other three simply stood watch. One of the other three lifted his hand to his head, tilting it upward.

“They must have some sort of communications implants like us.” Anuk whispered.

“It appears that way.” Martin answered. He watched as the one who was receiving orders turned to glare at the three Immortals in front of him. “Ok... why do I get the feeling this is not going to be pretty?” He said softly.

“Yeah... I’m thinking the same thing.” Danny answered softly.

As if to emphasize that point the three Immortal soldiers in the back lifted their weapons and without pause began firing into the backs of T’lolt and his two sons. It only took six shots to bring them down, but each Immortal fired an additional two shots into the father and sons while they were on the ground.

“Man... can we talk about overkill.” Danny spoke softly.

They continued to watch as the three Immortals were stripped of their weapons and the one who had taken the transmission barked out words. He pressed his finger to his ear once more and then nodded before looking at the others and shouting something. They turned quickly and began heading back the way they came.

Danny turned and looked at Martin. “What do you think that was all about?”

Martin shook his head turning to meet Danny’s eyes. “I don’t know... but they obviously weren’t concerned about who heard them.” He spoke. He motioned with his head quickly and Danny nodded.

Dan rolled to his right silently moving further down the ridge they were on, shifting into wolf form. *Nayeca... with me. Stay above me on the ridge.* Danny’s voice echoed in her head as he began to gallop through the trees.

Nayeca reached forward and squeezed Anuk’s thigh, a motion that Melita saw clearly and then she turned to sprint after Danny, and blending into the shadows as only a Drow could do. Anuk moved closer to Martin as he lay watching the clearing below.

“Do you want to inspect their bodies Martin?” Anuk asked softly. She was Daniel’s Soulmate now, and Anuk knew how closely Martin and Daniel regarded each other. Daniel had spoken to her on many occasions of what they had experienced together over the years, before *and* after learning who and what they really were. Though it was widely known that Daniel was considered like a brother to Martin, only Anuk, Nayeca and Martin’s Queens knew how truly deep that bond of brotherhood went. They would do anything for each other, of that Anuk had no doubt.

Martin nodded slowly and met her cerulean blue eyes. “We’ll give their friends a little more time to move out of the area though.” He said softly. “They were killed for a reason, and considering they have to know we are on the planet by now, I want to know why they have started whacking each other. They might have something on them that tells us.” Martin turned and looked at Melita and Lisisa. “This ever happen before?”

Lisisa and Melita both shook their heads quickly. “Never.” Lisisa spoke. “The Immortals have a strict rank structure and they follow orders explicitly. I have never seen them kill their own kind before however. Not in such a way.”

Melita shook her head again. “Nor have I.”

Martin turned back to the clearing. “Well something is happening.” He spoke.

Anuk looked at him for a long moment before moving closer to him. “Daniel... Daniel told me it was you who convinced him to make me his *Anome*.” She spoke softly. “To profess his love for both me and Nayeca.”

Martin looked at her and smiled. “He didn’t need me to *make* him do anything Anuk. He’s wanted to do that for months. I just gave him a kick in the ass and told him to stop farting around and just do it.”

“He... he loves you Martin.” Anuk spoke softly. “More deeply than he does his own brothers I believe.”

“I love him too.” Martin said. “We have been through a lot together. There’s nothing I wouldn’t do for him. Nothing.” Martin chuckled softly. “Just don’t tell him that. He’ll get all cocky and go on another ego trip.”

Anuk smiled and reached out to place her hand on Martin’s arm. “I... I carry his child Martin Leonidas. I found out for certain only today.” Anuk whispered.

“Yes I know.” Martin spoke with a grin looking at her. “I overheard you talking with Anja this morning. I told him when we left for this trip he had some catching up to do. I guess he’s getting started.” Martin leaned over and kissed her cheek. “I’m happy for you Anuk. Very happy.”

“Does nothing faze you Martin Leonidas? You and Daniel... you seem to take everything that happens in... in stride. No matter how severe or chaotic it may be. You never get excited or lose control.” Anuk asked.

Martin met her eyes intently. “Can you picture that?” He spoke grinning. “Me running around pulling my hair out because I’m out of control? Someone would shoot me for sure. As for getting excited and losing control, Aricia and Anja would probably disagree.”

Anuk chuckled and shook her head. “Anja is right when she says we should keep the two of you apart.” She said. “Trouble follows the two of you as surely as the sun rises and sets.”

“Yeah well, it must be our charming personalities.” Martin said. He lifted the binos and scanned the clearing with the bodies. “Wow... our boys are moving out of the area quick time. Let’s move down there and see if we can get any intelligence.”

Tina shook her head and leaned against what could only be a computer console of some sort. “I don’t know baby...” She spoke looking over to where Endith sat. “I can’t figure it out. There is power where Martin’s people are living, albeit not much, but there is power. I don’t get why we can get power moved up here.”

Endith turned from the seat she was sitting in. “We’re three decks above them Tina.” She spoke. “Maybe the power conduits were damaged between the lower deck and here.”

Tina nodded. “There are only five decks on this whole ship though.” She spoke moving over to stand beside her. “I thought we found all the power conduits where they ended on the lower deck.”

“Tina! Endith!” Anja’s voice called out.

“We’re down the corridor here Anja!” Tina shouted.

Anja came moving down the corridor quickly and burst into the room. “Hey... did you guys know there are lights and computers and things coming on all over this deck.”

Tina and Endith both came to their feet as the room suddenly became alive, consoles lighting up and the overhead lights illuminating the room brilliantly.

“Whoa!” Tina exclaimed as she looked around at all the equipment that was now very much active.

Endith tapped her COM unit. “Sivana! Have you got power to the deck you’re on?” She snapped.

“Yes! It surged powerfully for a moment when Anja passed through on her way to you, but settled back to a low setting perhaps. We have computer power to some consoles now... lighting to most of the deck but very dim.” Sivana answered. “What did you do up there?”

“The entire deck is now powered in some fashion!” They heard Belen’s voice in the background.

Endith’s head snapped around to look at Tina, and they both turned to gaze intently at Anja. Her jade green eyes grew wide as Seanna came into the room behind her.

“I didn’t touch anything!” Anja exclaimed. “Ask Seanna!”

“Power is coming on all over this deck.” Seanna spoke looking at Endith and Tina. “You did it!”

“Like hell we did!” Tina spoke. She tapped her COM unit as well. “Jobel... status?”

“The same as Sivana and Belen.” She answered. “The entire deck is now powered to some extent. Many of the consoles are still down, but quite a few more are now active! It happened right after Queen Anja passed through here.”

“I didn’t touch anything I’m telling you!” Anja declared. “I swear!”

Tina looked at Endith. “Do you think?” She asked.

Endith shrugged. “Shit! As long as we’ve known the Skipper? You more than me Tina. Anything is possible.”

“What do you mean?” Anja asked. “I’m telling you I didn’t touch anything!”

Tina and Endith moved for the doorway, Tina grabbing Anja’s hand as she passed by her. “Come with us!”

Anja looked at Seanna who shrugged her shoulders and followed. Anja allowed them to pull her along down the long corridor. “Where are we going?” She asked.

“To test a theory.” Tina replied as they reached a set of what appeared to be stairs. Tina looked at Endith quickly. “This was dark when we came up to this deck.” She spoke. “This whole deck was dark.”

“So... you must have done something.” Anja stated.

“We didn’t do anything.” Tina spoke pulling her up the stairs quickly. It was a quick two flights of stairs in a circular pattern and then they were on the last deck of the ship. The moment Anja stepped into the corridor; power began to come on, stretching out for as far as they could see.

“Wow!” Anja spoke stunned as her eyes watched everything that was suddenly easy to see even in the dimly lit corridors.

Tina looked at Endith. “It has to be!” She gasped. “It’s the only explanation!”

Anja looked at her. “What do you mean?”

“It’s... it’s a Mindvoice powered ship!” Endith exclaimed.

“A Mindvoice powered ship?” Seanna asked.

Tina nodded quickly. “The ship is sensitive to Mindvoice powers! It’s why the lower deck has power! All the Lycavorians living there! They are powering the ship! Where’s Helen?”

“On the DT with Atropos. Why?” Anja asked.

“Tell her to come here now!” Tina barked. “Right now! And tell Martin to carry his butt back here too! ASAP! I have a feeling... if I’m right the minute one or both of them sets foot in this baby, this ship is going to light up like a fucking Christmas tree!”

T’lolt grimaced against the pain savaging his body. He could have survived the first two shots into his back easily; neither of them struck anything vital. He could have regenerated with time. The second two shots while he was rolling over to his back, while he lay helpless, those shots killed him. The coward’s rounds had punched through his spinal column, severing the thick bone as easily as paper. The second one while he was on the ground, that one entered just below the thick bone of his rib cage and ricocheted upwards into his chest cavity, ripping and tearing until it punched its way through the bone plate of his back. His dark eyes blinked several times, the sun now beginning its journey over the horizon. Purplish red blood spilled from his lips and he could feel himself bleeding out all around him.

Without blood he would surely die.

The sun was blotted out suddenly by a large figure, and he felt the pressure of something poking deeply into his bloody chest. There was no pain, just pressure and he blinked several more times, trying to focus his eyes.

“You are hard hit Immortal.” The deep voice spoke.

T’lolt watched as the figure squatted next to him, allowing him to focus and his eyes grew wide. He tried to laugh... but all that came out was blood, some splashes catching on the head of the Nehtes pressed against his chest.

“It... it is you. King... the Spartan... King Leonidas.” T’lolt managed to croak out the words as he looked up into Martin’s face. “Where... where is your... your beast?”

Martin smiled. “He’s nearby.” He answered.

“I... I knew you were here! The tracks... too large for...” T’lolt looked at Martin’s emotionless dark brown orbs. “I fought... I fought at this place you call Thermopylae.” T’lolt gasped. He saw Martin’s jaw twitch slightly in anger. “You’re... your father...”

“What about my father?” Martin snapped.

“He... he fought... like a demon!” T’lolt spoke. “With... with savageness we... we had never seen before. He... he hated us... yet he... yet he fought with honor. He... he did not deserve the death... the death Xerxes gave him.” T’lolt coughed up more blood.

“Why did your own people do this?” Martin asked.

“Cha’talla... my brother... High Lord ordered his death. Our deaths.” T’lolt spasmed.

“Why?”

T’lolt saw Lisisa come into view now and squat next to her father. His eyes remained on her for several long moments and then they turned back to Martin. “Your... because of your daughter.”

Martin looked at Lisisa quickly. “Why would he have you killed because of Lisisa?”

“She... she brought you to your planet.” T’lolt gasped. “Afraid you would... that you would discover the truth.”

“Truth?” Martin asked looking at Lisisa. She shook her head quickly. He turned back to T’lolt. “What truth?”

T’lolt met Martin’s eyes. “Prisoner in cell block!” T’lolt croaked the words. “He feared you would discover prisoner in palace’s cell block.”

“What prisoner?” Martin said. “A Lycavorian?”

T’lolt nodded. “My... my sons?”

Martin looked over to Anuk who knelt next to the body of the second Immortal. She had already inspected the first son and she shook her head slowly. “I’m sorry... both of them are dead.” Martin replied.

“We... we are your enemy.” T’lolt said.

“I don’t like to see anyone get shot in the back.” Martin spoke quickly.

“There are traitors among you... Leonidas King.” T’lolt said. “They... they have worked with us in the past. The High Lord’s son... Vonis... sent to Elear to kill... to kill Isabella. Something else... something else is happening. I... I don’t know what. Princess... Yuri...”

“Yes I know... she’ll be here in a few hours.” Martin spoke.

T’lolt shook his head. “She... she will kill the prisoner! Take them tonight... if you... if you wish to discover the truth!” T’lolt spoke. “Map... scans in my pack.”

Martin looked at Lisisa who scrambled to quickly grab the pack and rifle through its contents. She looked back and nodded.

“Kill me.” T’lolt said. “I can not... I can not regenerate without blood. I don’t wish to be eaten by animals while I still live.” He looked at Martin. “Better to die... under the blade of a King.”

“Why should I give you that?” Martin asked. “How many of my people have you killed without blinking? How many have you tortured and left to die?”

“You... because you have honor, and would not want to die in this manner.” T’lolt spoke.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Lover... Tina needs you back at the STRIKER ASAP!* Anja’s voice broke into his head.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *What’s wrong?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I think she has figured out how this thing works. She wants you and Helen to meet us on the top deck.* Anja spoke.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I’ll be coming back shortly Firecracker.*

Martin looked at Lisisa. “Tell Anuk to leave her pack and you and Melita head back with her.” He spoke.

“Father... we should stay together.” Lisisa said.

“I’ll be a few minutes behind you, no more than that. I promise. Anja wants us back at the *STRIKER* anyway. Go Lisisa!” Martin said.

Martin watched for a long moment as Lisisa went to Melita and Anuk. Melita and Anuk looked at him but she lowered her medical bag to the ground and the three of them took off in a run. T’lolt laid there for several minutes, hearing movement all around him, his eyes blinking at the sun as his life slipped away slowly. He saw the background flash of soft silver/white light, heard scrapping on the ground combined with a low growling and then the silver/white flash once more. He closed his eyes and waited for death to take him, the sun warming his face. He felt the presence of someone else and opened his eyes once more and he saw the face of the Lycavorian King.

“What is your name?” Martin asked him.

“T’lolt... my name is T’lolt.”

“The bodies of your sons will be safe for a few hours T’lolt. It should be enough time.” Martin said softly.

“Time... time for what?” T’lolt asked.

Martin lifted the four white foil bags. “I don’t hate you T’lolt. I hate what you stand for.” Martin spoke softly. “This should be enough for you to heal yourself. It is Lycavorian blood but it will do for your purposes. I’ll have more hidden ten kilometers north of here on a sixty degree azimuth. Away from where I will be. You’ll find it. Heal yourself... bury your sons... and then find your way off this world if you can. Or take your revenge

I don't care. If we meet again T'loft... may it be on the field of battle and not like this." Martin lowered the foil bags to his chest.

"Why?" T'loft asked softly.

Martin looked at him. "Honor." He said. "*Bwael ap'zen Rinovdro.*" Martin spoke in the ancient Vampire language. (Good Luck Immortal.)

Helen waited for him by the ramp of the DT. She and Torma closed in around him as he approached.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *You let him live my Bonded Brother.* Torma spoke.

Martin nodded as he reached up to run his hand along Torma's neck scales. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Yes.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *We may one day meet him in battle my brother?*

Martin nodded. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Yes we may. It was not this day however.* He looked up into Torma's eyes. *Do you understand Torma?*

Torma's massive head moved closer to Martin, his eyes gazing intently at him. He reached inside the bond they shared... a bond that only he and Martin shared and nodded his head. [Mindvoice Shielded] *I believe I do my brother. I believe I do.*

Martin nodded and touched his forehead to Torma's cool snout scales before looking at Helen. "We have some things to talk about Helen." He spoke softly.

"So I understand." Helen spoke. "First however, they have established a new entrance onto this ship's upper deck, and if I have Anja scream for me one more time I will go insane. Your Queen does not know her own power within Mindvoice Martin Leonidas. Perhaps more schooling from you is needed."

Martin chuckled and nodded. "I'll see what I can do. The other thing you told me about?"

"Atropos has seen to it." She spoke.

Martin nodded as he turned back to Torma. [Mindvoice Shielded] *How long will it take you?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *An hour at most. I will be quick.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Exactly ten kilometers north Torma.*

Torma nodded his massive head. [Mindvoice Shielded] *I will see to it.*

Martin watched him begin to move towards where Anuk and Melita sat just as Lisisa came up to him.

"Father that Immortal; he had detailed scans of the interior of the Regent's palace. More so than I have ever seen." Lisisa spoke.

"We tackle one problem at a time." Martin said taking her arm in one hand and Helen's in the other. "Let's go see what Anja and Tina want shall we?"

All three of them were moving like frightened animals as they rounded the corner of the stairs and arrived on the upper deck of the strange ship. Immediately upon entering, the dimness of the lights vanished, and every single console erupted to life with strange symbols and readings. Lisisa clung tightly to her father's arm, Helen to the other as they walked, three sets of eyes staring at everything around them as it came to life.

"Jesus!" Martin gasped. "She got it working!"

"I didn't do squat!" Tina's voice carried to them as she stepped into the corridor with a childlike grin on her face. "Benjamin told me the first time I flew with him... it's not just a job... it's an adventure! Sure as shit he wasn't kidding!"

Martin watched as Endith followed her with Anja and Seanna and they came up to them in the corridor. "What happened?" He asked. "If you didn't do anything... it didn't just come on by itself!"

Endith grinned as she stopped next to Tina. "You did it boss." She said with that ever present smile. "You and Helen."

"Come again?" Martin asked.

"This ship is Mindvoice activated!" Tina exclaimed. "The Lycavorians in the lower deck... their Mindvoice powers allowed them to have what little energy there was down there. We put it together when Anja came on board. Things began lighting up all over as she went by... and the only thing Anja has that the rest of

us don't is the level of Mindvoice powers. As soon as you and Helen came on board... bang!!! Everything lit up like the fourth of July!"

"Belen and Sivana are reporting their entire deck is active and every console is humming right along." Endith spoke excitedly. "Jobel reports the same thing from her deck. Atropos is on what could be considered as the bridge. It's amazing skipper! We were heading up there right now. We need Komirri down here Marty."

"What? Why?" Martin asked.

"We need people who can crew this puppy!" Tina barked.

"What do you mean crew?" Helen asked.

"I'm assuming this is how we are getting out of here right?" Tina declared. "We need people to man consoles and instruments. As soon as we figure them out anyway."

"I don't..."

The COM units on their armor came alive. "Ah... I think I need some help up here." Atropos's voice was calm, but there was a sense of urgency to it.

Tina slapped her COM. "Atropos... what is it?"

"I... I don't exactly know." Atropos replied. "But it's here now."

"It?" Martin asked quickly.

"Milord... perhaps you and the others should come to the bridge. It is... It is moving to one of the consoles now!"

-Activating internal sensors. Twenty-three percent damage to internal sensor array. Initiating repair protocols.

-Detecting one Category Seven Pralor current location. Detecting one Category Five Pralor current location. Scanning ship wide for additional contacts.

-Detecting multiple Category three Pralors. Deck five aft sections sixteen through thirty-three. Multiply hull breaches on deck four and five. Activating repair drones.

The voice was mechanical in nature and Martin looked at Tina. "Tina?"

Tina shrugged. "We haven't seen anything since we came on board. It must have sensed your presence. Some sort of internal sensor array!" Tina motioned down the corridor. "This way!"

No one needed further urging and they all broke into a fast trot down the corridor.

Atropos stared at the hulking figure in front of the console. It was a machine, of that he was certain, but it was like nothing he had ever seen before. Atropos had spent much of his down time when with Anja investigating the different species within the Union and without so that he would be better able to protect his Queen. This was one that the data pads he had studied did not have in them. It was easily seven feet tall; it's facial features reptilian in nature but smoothly rounded and not at all hostile looking. As he held his arm in front of the female engineer and held her back out of the way they watched as the giant robot moved to another console.

-Be advised I am detecting one Category Fourteen Elder Pralor approaching Command Center. Accompanied by one Category Twelve Elder Pralor and one Category Ten Elder Pralor-

-Supposition? Bio-scans indicate transformation complete. Commencing synchronism of date/time continuum. Stand by-

Atropos turned as Martin and the others burst into the command center from a nearby door and came skidding to a halt at what they saw.

"Holy shit!" Martin exclaimed holding out his arms protectively as the huge machine turned to look at them with glowing red eyes sunk into its tan colored skin.

-Be advised... Elder Pralors have entered Command Center. Scanning-

The length of the machines legs allowed it to cross to stand in front of Martin in four strides.

-Be advised... Adjusting previous detection values. Elder Pralors are heavily shielded. Adjusting previous levels by point factor variance of six. Hypothesis? Descendant of Chief Elder Pralor and Descendant of Vizier Elder Pralor. Bio-scans indicate transmutation completed a total of two times. Vizier Elder Pralor and Category Ten Elder Pralor configuration indicates female by design-

The robot looked at Anja intently, its red eyes glowing.

-Detection of Category Three female embryo within Elder Pralor. Bio-scans indicate mutative radiation saturating Elder Pralor. Detecting massive healing properties. Supposition that female is of the Hadarian sub-species ninety-nine point seven percent, though cells have undergone change at molecular level with species known as Lycavorian. Abbreviation Lycan. Female embryo in superior developmental condition. I estimate she will be birthed at three point four kilograms-

Those red eyes returned to Martin.

-Embryo DNA and molecular bodies indicate Descendant of Chief Elder Pralor is one designer of embryo-

“Designer?” Anja barked. “You mean the father don’t you?”

Martin looked at the robot. “Who are you?” He asked.

-Be advised. Communications in verbal language capable-

-Initiating communication-

The robot bowed its reptilian head to Martin.

-I am Avatar 41, Descendant of Chief Elder Pralor-

“What are you?” Martin asked as Anja moved up close to him, pressing her body against his side.

-I am a completely autonomous Avatar of the Elders. My duty is to see to the operation of City Ship 41. This ship-

Helen stepped forward. “Your voice tone has changed. Become more normal.” She spoke.

-I have a Neuraltronic Processor Descendant of Vizier Elder Pralor. It allows me to learn at accelerated levels. I have done an intensive scan of your biological bodies and noted the inflection and tones of your voices as well as your brain patterns. It allows me to communicate more completely-

“*Allon coi fiodune.*” Anja spoke softly looking up into Martin’s face. (This is weird)

-Speech patterns reflect syllables and pronunciation of foreign language. Analyzing. Processing complete. Difficulty of pronunciation and placement of words indicate that this language was indigenous to this planet before the arrival of the Pralors and the City Ship. Processing... estimation that one in five has the capacity to learn this language fluently as the female has-

“Gee... thanks for the vote of confidence.” Anja stated.

“How... how did you get here?” Martin asked.

-City Ship 41 lost attitude controls within this system’s gravitational storm cluster and was forced to land on this planet after heavy damage to maneuvering and life support systems. Once scanned it was decided by the Chief Elder Pralor to remain here as the damage to City Ship 41 would not permit completion of our journey to the final destination-

“Where was the final destination?” Tina asked now.

-Scanning... sub species female human. 33.4 years old; in superior physical condition. Level of brain function thirty-two point seven percent higher than normal for this species. Estimate seven point two percent increase in reflex and processing speed of brain mass-

“She asked where you were going.” Endith spoke now moving up next to Tina possessively.

-Scanning... sub species elfin female. 124.3 years old; also in superior physical condition. Level of brain function forty-nine point one percent higher than normal for elfin female species. Estimate twelve point three percent increase in reflexive processes and speed of analysis-

-Detecting residual transformation particles in core cells. Estimation that elfin species has evolved from Cretvore Draconius species ninety-nine point nine three percent-

“What did he say?” Endith asked.

“You are descended from dragons Endith.” Martin spoke.

“Oh... is that a joke?” Endith asked him. She turned back to the avatar “Do I look like a dragon to you?”

Martin looked at her. “It’s the truth Endy.” He said softly Avatar 41’s head turning to look at him.

Endith and Tina both looked at him quickly. “What?” Endith gasped.

Martin nodded. “We discovered it over a year ago. Arzoal told me... and when Helen received Canth’s memories she knew it as well. There are only a handful of others who know. We have kept it secret until the dragons are able to get themselves back from the brink of extinction.”

“That is why elves do not fear dragons Endith.” Anja spoke looking at her. “Why none of you fear them.”

-Supposition that species Cretvore Draconius still exists one hundred percent. Expanding sensor scan. Confirmation received. Detecting two adult and one adolescent Cretvore Draconius within range of internal Avatar’s sensors. Theory? Data indicates Level Six Mindvoice link between the three Cretvore Draconius and Descendants of Elder Pralors that are present in Command Center. Information is confirmed. This data is previously uncharted-

Avatar 41 stepped closer to Lisisa staring down into her face as she clung to Martin’s arm.

-Scanning. Combination of sub-species confirmed. Sixty-eight point seven percent Lycavorian... thirty-one point three percent Vampiric. Level Six Mindvoice link with male adolescent Cretvore Draconius recently initiated. Estimate it will reach full potential in nine point seven years-

“Where was this ship going?” Helen asked.

-Destination of City Ship 41 was the Hopuun Cluster. Five hundred thousand seven hundred and fourteen light years from current location-

“That’s almost six hundred thousand light years!” Tina gasped. “Jesus Marty... that is over a thousand years away from here even with our LSD drives!”

“How many of these City Ships were there?” Martin asked.

-Nineteen City Ships began our journey. Five were caught in the same gravitational storm as City Ship 41. Probability that they were undamaged nineteen point two percent-

“So they crashed as well?” Martin asked.

-That is the likely result-

“Can you determine where?” Helen asked. “Did these Pralors look like you?”

-The Pralors had evolved to a natural state like the ones you maintain for ease of the journey. Probability that they interacted with the Lycan species after City Ship 41 landed is one hundred percent. You are the result. Detecting the beacons from the other damaged City Ships can not be achieved from the surface-

“How many were on this City Ship?” Martin asked.

-Standard complement for a City Ship is one million four hundred thousand. Three hundred and fourteen thousand died as City Ship 41 came through the atmosphere of this planet. The reentry shields in several sections of the ship had been damaged. Once the Chief Pralor was able to land the ship, repairs began immediately. It was determined that City Ship 41 would not be able to complete the journey to the Hopuun Cluster and repairs were halted. The Pralors decided to remain here among the Lycans and use their calming influence over the warring Lycans to repopulate this world. They underestimated the instinctual influence of the Lycan people and were themselves absorbed into the Lycan species willingly. However... the Pralors natural benevolent nature matched that of Cretvore Draconius and as generations were sired, many of the violent tendencies were being bred out of your people-

Helen looked at Martin. “How long ago did this ship crash on Lycavore?” She asked. She reached out and squeezed Martin’s arm. “Martin... this could be why your grandfather acted as he did. If what... if what this machine is saying is true... Resumar... me... we could very well be descended from the interaction of this species with our own.”

-Chronological circuits indicate City Ship 41 crashed thirty-five point three thousand years ago. Full assimilation of the Pralors occurred one thousand five hundred and nineteen years later. Chief Elder Pralor was the very last one to be absorbed into the Lycan species-

“So the Pralors were explorers?” Martin asked.

-Collectors. They would remove members of certain species from their worlds and use them to repopulate dead worlds in other galaxies. The Hopuun Cluster was rendered a dead system when its core sun went supernova one million four hundred thousand years ago. A new star was born at the same time... but was unable to support the nearby planets with heat and energy until forty thousand years ago. It was decided then the Pralors would repopulate the system. They spent four thousand years harvesting different species for transport to the Hopuun Cluster and then the nineteen City Ships departed-

“So there are other species somewhere on this ship?” Endith asked.

Avatar 41 shook his head.

-The containment and holding chambers were breached on City Ship 41 when it entered the upper layer atmosphere of this world. All life was lost-

“Skipper... some of the equipment on this ship is way beyond anything we have.” Tina said quickly. “It would take us years to figure it out.”

“Right now the only thing I’m concerned with is can it fly?” Martin asked. “Can this ship take off and transport these people to another planet?”

-Preliminary repairs were almost complete when the order was given to cease. I estimate another forty months in your calculation of time to fully complete them-

“Forty months!” Martin gasped. “We don’t have forty hours! Can’t... can’t you cut corners?”

-Processing definition of cut corners-

“Make enough repairs to get everyone off this planet and out of the system!” Martin exclaimed.

Avatar 41 shook his head.

-That is not the best course of action-

“Who did you take your orders from Avatar 41?” Helen asked.

-The Chief Elder Pralor-

“And would it not be accurate to follow the orders of his descendant?” Helen asked.

-That would be the likely course of action since I have been reactivated-

“So how long to fix this ship enough to get off this planet and out of the system?” Martin asked once more.

-Processing... repairs to core engine matrix... sensors and navigation... thirty-two hours would be enough to allow City Ship 41 to regain atmospheric and interstellar capabilities. However... the Phased Quantum Drive would only be operating at twenty-three percent... allowing for only two successful Quantum Jumps. If the rerouted power conduits do not melt that is-

“So it’s possible?” Martin asked.

-Yes. Though not advisable-

“Yeah... most of what I do is not advisable.” Martin spoke. “Direct your repair thingies to do what they need to do to make that happen.”

“Martin, are you sure that’s the best course of action?” Anja asked looking up at him. “We don’t know... we don’t know squat about this... this machine. Or the people who built him and this ship.”

“That’s where you and Helen come in.” Martin spoke. “Find out as much as you can about this ship and these Pralors Anja. Talk to... talk to Avatar 41 here. He looks like he can multi-task pretty well.”

“What are you going to do?” Anja asked.

“Find a way to get this Lycavorian prisoner out of the cell he or she is in at this Regent’s Palace.” Martin said.

Anja’s eyes narrowed. “You are going into the heart of enemy territory?” She scolded. “Yuri is only a few hours away Marty.”

Martin nodded. “That’s why we need to go now Anja. I told these people I would take them home. And that is what I intend to do. And I’m not leaving anyone behind. Now I don’t have to hijack a Coven Ship to do it though.”

“Why did I know that is what you were planning? Hijacking a High Coven warship?” Helen declared. “You are insane you know.”

“If you die on me you bastard I will kill you.” Anja growled up at him squeezing his waist in her arms.

“That sounds painful. I’ll avoid that part of it.” He spoke with a smile before kissing her softly. “You just take care of yourself and Eliani.” He said lowering his hand to her abdomen. “I’ll be back in a while. Lisisa... you’re with me.”

Helen stepped up to Anja and took her hand as he headed out of the Command Center. “He is a true Spartan Anja. With the exception of his father, never have I seen someone who faces danger laconically. Not even King Resumar was this bold. And Canth knew him for nearly ten thousand years.” She whispered. “You must have faith.”

Anja nodded and looked at her. “I do...” She answered. “It’s just sometimes he taxes that faith right to the very edge.”

Helen nodded. "I agree." She said with a small smile. "Come... let us find out what we can from this infernal machine."

BLOOD JUSTICE
VHC REVERENCE-CLASS DREADNOUGHT
HIGH GUARD STRIKE GROUP FALCHION
COMMAND SHIP OF PRINCESS YURI

Moran sat in his chair to Yuri's right in the conference room of the *BLOOD JUSTICE*, his dark eyes on the face of Veldruk in the holoimage as they listened to what the High Lord was telling them.

"Is there a reason you never felt the need to tell me this father?" Yuri asked finally. "I *am* the High Guard Commander."

"And I am the High Lord of the Vampire Coven!" Veldruk bellowed. "I do not need to tell you everything even if you are my daughter!" They watched as Veldruk took a deep breath and regained control of his famous temper. "These were only rumors until a few hours ago! There was no reason to suspect he would come this far into High Coven space! None! He is just as reckless and foolish as his grandfather it seems."

"So you do believe these reports from Colonel Pa'cour?" Moran asked.

Veldruk nodded and they watched him get up and begin to walk around his immense office. "The descriptions of the prints and the actions of the Lycavorian dogs in the last few days lead me to no other conclusion. Leonidas is on Lycavore without question and he has his damnable dragon with him. There were smaller prints which our scientists say is from an adolescent dragon no more than a year old. Probably less."

"How did you obtain this new information on these dragons father? Leonidas was keeping any information in regards to them under the highest state of security." Yuri asked.

Veldruk nodded. "He was until he released these *Mjolnir's Hand* individuals to different parts of the Union a few weeks ago. Our people on Elear were able to obtain some detailed information just from the brochures they were handing out to visitors to this Dragon Island where the main lair is. Our scientists have been studying it ever since, as well as the bones and other items we recovered from Enurrua."

"Why are you so concerned with the fact he is on Lycavore father?" Yuri asked. "I'm assuming that is why you have contacted us."

"Cha'talla is the one who purchased her all those years ago Yuri." Veldruk told her. "That is why she was so hard to find. He was hiding her in plain sight right under our noses."

Moran leaned forward. "Cha'talla?"

Veldruk nodded. "He apparently wanted to use the cells in her body to help breed the ugliness out of his people. Make them more pleasing to the eye or so he led me to believe before I killed him."

"You killed him?" Yuri asked.

Veldruk nodded. "He had become a liability."

Yuri returned to her chair now. "You are serious? About what he wanted her for?" She asked. "Is that even possible?"

Veldruk nodded. "According to our own genetic researchers yes. It would take decades... but it is possible, just as her gene code would improve our clone soldiers. Cha'talla felt hiding her on Lycavore would allow him the time to accomplish this goal. Who would think to look for her on a planet that many believe is dead anyway."

"So Leonidas discovers she is on Lycavore from the Hadarian witch's sister and he conducts a covert mission to get her back." Moran said. "He can't have that many soldiers with him. Even with their Shroud generators, he couldn't bring a *LEONIDAS II* Class-Strike Cruiser that far into our territory without being discovered."

"We have obtained information that indicates he is using a highly modified civilian transport." Veldruk said. "One of the overseers in The Wilds, an Unsaar by the name Cyngi has been screaming about a lost frigate for days now. We believe Leonidas and whoever is with him posed as mercenaries in a civilian transport to access the Pirate Gates. Three Gates and perhaps thirty hours of LSD operation would put them in the Lycavore system by cutting through The Wilds in Sector nine."

“So then he *is* limited in what he can do.” Moran said.

“The fact that he is on Lycavore is not the issue.” Veldruk spoke.

Yuri looked at the image of her father in surprise. “What? The King of the Lycavorian Union is on a High Coven occupied planet and that’s not the issue? What aren’t you telling us father?”

Veldruk looked at her in the image. “While you were gone on Earth we improved our cloning skills Yuri. What you were doing on Earth was only a secondary project, though no less important to the overall success of the program. We... we were able to insinuate a clone into the very highest levels of the Lycavorian government.” Veldruk watched as their eyes and faces registered their shock. “Yes... amazing isn’t it? This agent has been in place for fifteen years now, and has been feeding us information the entire time.”

Yuri looked at Moran quickly and then back to her father. “How have the wolf dogs not scented this agent out? Clones do not have a scent father, and it’s impossible to duplicate the individual scents of Lycavorians.”

Veldruk nodded. “All true... however it is possible to take parts of the scent glands from the original host and transfer them to the clone every few months to make them have the same scent as the host. They would need injections on a regular basis... but it has worked for fifteen years now. Quite well actually.”

Yuri shook her head. “Dead scent glands do not keep their viability for more than a few months father.” She spoke looking at the image. “There is no way to...” Yuri stopped talking as realization hit her. “The original host is still alive?”

Veldruk nodded. “Yes. We knew we could not do this without regular injections, and the only way to do that is to have the original host. Cha’talla had the right idea in hiding the abomination on Lycavore... the only problem was... we were hiding the original host in the prison center of the Regent’s Palace on Lycavore as well. This agent is very close to Leonidas Yuri...”

“How close father?” Yuri asked.

“Let’s just say it is someone he trusts implicitly.” Veldruk said. “This agent is also the reason we have been able to stay one step ahead of the Lycavorian scientists when it came to research and development. I would have liked to have had the plans for this Dragon Armor they now employ, but the risks involved for this agent to obtain the information and then get it to us were too great. And that fool Chetak underestimated the power Leonidas could bring to bear on him. I tried to warn him that the way he conducted himself was not the avenue to go. He didn’t listen and he kidnapped the child Queen anyway. He was also not as forthcoming in regards to the numbers of surviving dragons on his planet, nor the possibility of how they could be used. Once the Queen Aricia and Leonidas discovered this advantage and befriended those beasts, any attempts by us to change the outcome of that event would have been detected.”

“And you fear he will discover the original host?” Moran asked.

“As powerful as he has become... if he gets to within one or two kilometers of the Regent’s Palace he will detect the host within Mindvoice even with the psychic dampeners we have in place.” Veldruk spoke. “Especially now that he can draw off of the Mindvoice abilities of the beast he is bonded too.”

“Father this agent is that high up you fear losing their information?” Yuri asked him. “Surely we can get other agents into Lycavorian circles.”

Veldruk shook his head. “If he discovers the original host Yuri, I have no doubts he will order a purge of every asset they have. It will make the minor one they did after the debacle with Chetak pale in comparison. The man he has leading this new Intelligence Command, this *Krypteria* he has set up is utterly ruthless, and with the new protocols they have instituted, we can no longer predict what they will do. And this will not stop until every one of our assets is dead or have escaped. We risk losing far more than just one agent... no matter how high up they are placed. The actions of just one *STRIKER* pilot have doubled those risks, for now she is Leonidas’s concubine. She saw the clone meeting with a High Coven agent three years ago. It was an accident... a chance meeting... and it is very possible she doesn’t even recall it. We can not take that chance however. I’ve ordered her terminated with extreme prejudice. I have people moving to accomplish that task as we speak.”

“For’mya?” Yuri asked. “The elf whore we had as our prisoner just after we retreated from Earth?”

Veldruk nodded slowly. “Now you know why I was so happy when you told me you had captured her. It would have tied up a loose end very nicely.”

“Father... why can't we replace this agent?” Yuri asked. “When Vonis is finished on Elear have him go to Apo Prime and eliminate this agent. Have him make it appear as if it was another accident as he intends to do with that bitch Isabella.”

Veldruk met her eyes. “I have reason to believe your brother is wavering in his duties and that he will not accomplish his assigned mission.”

Yuri's eyes grew wide. “What?”

Veldruk nodded. “Twice now he has attempted to kill your half sister and failed. Conrol is reporting that he seems to be more interested in a female elf prisoner that he took than in accomplishing his mission. I fear you were right Yuri. Sending him on that assignment was not a good idea.”

“Father... we can kill Isabella whenever we feel like it.” Yuri spoke. “Order Vonis to return.”

Veldruk shook his head. “His mission was not just to kill that traitorous whore of a daughter.” He snapped. “Another of our senior agents within IES has apparently gone rogue as well.”

“IES?” Yuri asked. “Isabella's company within the Union?”

Veldruk nodded. “He's been in place since those with your sister defected. He has chosen to dabble in the field of Biogenics recently.”

“Biogenics!” Yuri hissed in revulsion.

Veldruk nodded. “And in doing so he has put our entire network of agents on Elear and five other worlds in danger. It seems that we are having problems everywhere at the same time. Convenient isn't it?”

“In danger how?” Moran asked.

“He has apparently been involved with some rather unsavory dealings with the Kavalian people. It has something to do with the Biogenics he has been working with... several of his creations were recently captured attempting to kill the elfin Queen. They did not succeed, but now they are aware of the connections.” Veldruk answered. “Those dealings are what brought your sister and the elfin Queen back to Elear in the first place. And as of Conrol's last report yesterday, they were very close to discovering our agent's true identity.” He spoke returning to his chair. “If they discover his identity... they will undoubtedly discover our intelligence network as well as revealing much more than I am willing to reveal.”

“Father you...”

“I have issued a Kill Order on your brother Yuri.” Veldruk spoke. “I sent the order to Conrol this morning just after the incident with Cha'talla.”

Yuri's eyes were wide in stunned shock as she came to her feet. “Father... father you... he is your son!”

“Yes he is.” Veldruk spoke. “That is why I gave instructions to Conrol to give him an opportunity to show me he has not betrayed me as well. I will know the answer in a few hours.”

“Father you...”

“It is already done Yuri.” Veldruk spoke firmly. “When you reach Lycavore you must find the original host and remove them from Lycavore. Do not let Leonidas find them. The abomination is now your secondary goal. We must safeguard our assets.”

“Father... we have an opportunity to kill... we can kill Leonidas!” Yuri announced.

Veldruk shook his head. “No! Let him have his abomination of a daughter. The standing garrison will resist him, perhaps even get lucky. I have issued orders to them to find and kill them no matter the cost. Your primary objective is now the retrieval of the original host.”

“But father...”

“Do not argue with me girl!” Veldruk roared stunning Yuri with the ferociousness of his voice and anger. “Do as I order you Yuri!”

Yuri's face hardened and she stood straighter. “And if Leonidas gets there first?” She snapped.

“Kill that fool Regent and his entire family! Then have the detachment of Immortals on Lycavore kill every dog slave they have and eradicate those vile animals for good! We have other slaves that can work the mines and I am already making arrangements for them to be brought there.” Veldruk barked. “Whatever the outcome... proceed to the coordinates I'm sending you now and wait for my instructions! Is that in any way unclear?”

Yuri shook her head slowly. “No father. It is very clear. Where exactly are we going once we leave Lycavore?”

“The Zaleisian border!” Veldruk snapped. “Do not fail me Yuri... for I will not hesitate to issue a Kill Order for you as well! Things are happening that you do not yet understand!”

“Then explain them to me father!” Yuri almost screamed.

Veldruk stared at her for a long moment. “You will understand soon enough. Cha’talla’s son is assigned to your ship. Commander Moran... you will execute him immediately and expel his body into space. I have ordered his brothers and their sons be executed as well. Contact me when you have the original host or the Regent is dead and you are on your way to the specified coordinates.”

“And Vonis?” Yuri asked.

“Vonis will either fulfill his mission or be dead. He is no longer your concern.” Veldruk replied. “You have your orders! Carry them out!”

Yuri began to speak but the transmission was terminated from her father’s end before the words came out. She stood there silently for several moments before turning to look at Moran as he got to his feet.

“Yuri?”

“I have never seen him like this Robert.” She spoke.

“He’s doing damage control Yuri.” Moran spoke softly reaching out to take her arms.

“He issued an order to kill his own son Robert! He threatened to have me killed!” Yuri gasped.

“Something else is happening! Cha’talla served him faithfully... he would never have just killed him unless he was...”

“What?”

“Unless Cha’talla knew things that he did not want revealed to anyone.” Yuri spoke. “My father is frightened of something Robert. My father has never been frightened of anything before in his life.”

“I will not allow anything to happen to you Yuri.” He spoke. “You know that.”

Yuri looked into his blue eyes. “Robert... I... I am pregnant.” She spoke softly in barely a whisper. “I...”

“It’s his isn’t it?” Moran asked not taking his hands from her arms.

Yuri nodded slowly. “I am so sorry my love! I did not...”

“No!” Moran spoke. “We knew this was the only way Yuri. It seals the support of that scum’s father! He can’t stand his own son Yuri... his own aides have told me that! When this child is born... I will take that prissy arrogant fool into an alley somewhere and I will drain every ounce of blood in his body before I feed him to the rats!”

“This... this does not change...” Yuri looked at him.

Moran shook his head quickly. “I told you that already Yuri. I will not let this come between us. I... I may be a violent half breed motherfucker... but I love you to death. My death if need be.”

Yuri shook her head quickly. “I won’t let you die Robert Moran!” She said quickly. “Never!”

Moran pulled her lush body into his arms and squeezed tightly. “We’ll take care of what we need to take care of Yuri. We’ll follow your father’s orders.”

“And Fash’ka?” Yuri asked. “Cha’talla was your friend?”

Moran nodded. “I’ll do what needs to be done.” He spoke. “I have several messages to reply to first... and then I will take care of Fash’ka.”

“There is something else going on here Robert.” Yuri spoke. “Something my father isn’t telling us.”

Moran nodded. “I agree. But right now we have to do what he says. I don’t particularly want a team of assassins coming after us in the middle of the night. I’d much rather worship your body then dodge plasma rounds or knives.”

Yuri chuckled and took a deep breath before folding herself into his strong arms once more. “Thank you my love.” She said softly.

Moran smiled and pulled her closer relishing in the feel of her body against his. His true thoughts however were on something else. Cha’talla was dead and Fash’ka said there would be a message from his father if this happened. Moran wondered what was in that message.

Husen laid on his back trying to calm his racing heart. Relina's lush naked body lay half on him and half off him, the nipples of her breasts burning points in his side. Husen had been with women before, four of them to be exact. All of them had been older than him, only wanting another opportunity to become pregnant. Relina however, she had never been with a man, and when she had come into phase the night before she had sought him out. That had led to the most incredible six hours Husen had ever experienced. They had taken each other in more ways than his young mind could remember, her tight young body wrapped in his arms as he exploded within her at least a dozen times. It may have been her first time, but Relina was anything but sedate and hesitant. She had clutched at him, squeezed his throbbing cock within her depths tightly, and taken him deeply into her mouth. It was almost as if she was in control and only using him for relief.

Now he lay on the soft animal skins of his quarters on the strange ship, his hand softly stroking her silky hair. She was half asleep, her head on his chest, her dark hair splayed over his shoulder. Husen realized for the first time that he did not want to get up and hurry off. He liked the feel of her lush young body pressed against him as their passions cooled. She had curves upon curves, and even though it had been her first time, all memories of previous encounters had quickly been washed away.

"Relina?" He spoke softly.

"Hmmm?" She cooed her breath warm against the skin of his chest.

"Relina... why did you come here?" He asked.

She lifted her face slowly and looked at him. "What do you mean?"

"You... with the King here among us now." Husen spoke. "You could have... you could have waited until we were gone from this place. Until we were among our people on Apo Prime and then you could have chosen a wolf to be with. You could have chosen from millions of wolves."

Relina smiled dreamily at him. "I did choose a wolf to be with." She answered.

"You... you knew I would have claimed you when you came of age before the King and Queen came here." Husen spoke. "Even after... even after what she did... what we now know... you still chose me. Why?"

"Did it ever occur to you Husen... did it ever occur to you that I might not want anyone but you to have me?" Relina asked. "That I choose you to be my mate."

"What are you saying?" He asked.

Relina smiled brilliantly. "I love you fool." She declared. "I have loved you since I was only a small girl. I have never wanted any man but you to have me Husen. And last night only proved to me I made the right choice. I will give you strong children Husen. As many as you like."

"Relina..."

She reached up to touch her finger to his lips. "No. Do not speak and ruin this moment for me." Relina laid her head back on his chest. "I wish to savor this moment a while longer."

"Relina I was going to say I think I may be..."

His words were cut off as the heavy canvas covering over the door to his quarters was thrust aside and two Spartan soldiers burst in. He sat up quickly, unconsciously pushing the thin blanket not over himself, but over Relina's nakedness.

"What is the meaning of this?" Husen demanded.

"You... come with us?" The Spartan ordered pointing to Husen.

"I came of my own free will!" Relina protested. "I love him! He did not force me!"

The Spartan looked at her, keeping his eyes on her face Husen noticed, and not allowing them to wander over her near nakedness. "That is good." He spoke. "The King wishes to speak with you. Get dressed and meet us outside in two minutes."

"I have done nothing wrong!" Husen stated.

"Just get dressed and meet us outside young Husen." The Spartan snapped.

Husen and Relina watched as they turned and exited the quarters. He turned to her. "I must get dressed." He said.

"I am going with you." Relina spoke. "I will defend my mate Husen."

Husen looked at her and he did something he hadn't done in the previous six hours with her. He leaned over and kissed her deeply drawing her face into his hands tenderly. He pulled away after a moment. "I was going to say that I believe I have... that I seem to be..."

Relina touched his lips again. "I know." She whispered. "I know."

Martin and Danny turned from the map chart table in the back of the DT when the two Spartans motioned for Husen and the young woman to go up the ramp. Lisisa and Yuriko stood with Melita, Anuk and Nayeca around the map chart table and all of them watched as Relina clung to Husen's arm as they entered the back of the ship. Atropos and Belen stood to the only open side of the table as well. Husen and Relina's eyes wandered over the interior of the DT in awed wonder. It took them several moments before they actually reached the table and Martin noticed Husen puff out his chest slightly.

Husen's scent was wafting from Relina's pores and Martin realized she had allowed him to scent her completely, claiming her as his mate. He stared at Husen's face for a long moment.

"You are Husen?" He asked.

"I am." Husen answered finding courage somewhere to stand before this imposing figure who was his King. "I have claimed Relina as my mate! I will not apologize for that! Nor do I regret my actions sire. I..." Husen looked at Relina quickly. "I... I have made a superior choice in choosing her... and she has allowed me to claim her."

Martin saw Relina's face beam at his words as she gripped his arm tightly. "I take it you didn't put him up to saying that huh?" He asked.

Relina shook her head quickly the smile on her face so bright nothing short of a large explosion could have removed it. "No Milord... but... but I am so very happy he did."

Martin chuckled softly. "I didn't send for you because of Relina Husen. It has come to my attention that you are one of only three who have actually been inside the Regent's Palace."

Husen nodded quickly. "Yes Milord. I was chosen to help rebuild a portion of the granite wall within the inner courtyard."

Martin nodded. "They are holding a prisoner in the prison of this palace. A Lycavorian prisoner. I need to know what you can remember of the interior. Take a look at these scans and tell me if they match what you remember."

Husen stepped up slowly to the table looking at the eyes of the experienced Spartans. Their eyes spoke of battles and wisdom that Husen had never experienced. With the exception of Lisisa, he didn't doubt that everyone around this table had fought countless battles and survived because of that skill. Husen finally brought his eyes to the holoimage of the scans, feeling Relina still gripping tightly to his arm. Her touch on his body felt comforting and welcome and for the first time in his young life he felt a sense of peace. His eyes narrowed as he looked at the chart.

"Milord... these scans are very detailed!" Husen spoke leaning forward. "Where did you get them?"

"That's not important." Martin spoke. "Are they accurate?"

Husen nodded quickly. "Very." He pointed to one part of the map. "This is the inner courtyard here. There are three entrances... one to the east... one south and one north. We were never allowed to go near the one to the north. It was always guarded by at least one Immortal... and the door has an electronic security measure on it."

Danny looked at Martin. "Skipper we can't afford to pull anyone off Tina's detail. Komirri won't be able to get down here with additional engineering people for another two hours."

"I'll go." The female voice spoke from behind them.

Belen's head snapped up quickly as Sivana walked up to them, moving to stand next to him. "Sivana you are a healer... not a commando." He spoke softly.

Sivana smiled and slipped her arm around his waist. "I know every High Coven security device like the back of my hand. And I spent three hundred years on my own surviving."

"You..." Belen started.

Sivana looked at Martin. "I can do this." She spoke. "I had your best people chasing me for almost a year before they caught up with me."

Yuriko nodded her head in a show of support and respect. "That she did father." She spoke. "Sivana more than likely knows more about the High Coven security devices than I do. I avoided the High Coven like the plague during my trips to seek Lisisa out."

"Melita?" Martin asked turning to the young woman.

Melita shook her head quickly. "I'm sorry... I... I am the Regent's only daughter. I was never allowed to move into secure areas of the Palace guarded by the Immortals, and I never questioned it. I was more interested in spending time with Lisisa... and keeping her out of trouble."

Lisisa grinned. "Something you did very well Melita. Thank you."

"Anja is staying behind with Filrian and Seanna." Sivana spoke. "They have taught me a little of my skills while we have been together. I will not be able to do what they do until I Ascend but I can help Anuk with the wounded Martin, if there are any. And I can get you past any security devices."

Martin looked at Belen and Atropos. "Belen?"

Belen glanced at his King and then to the woman who had stolen his being. He nodded slowly. "I trust in her abilities Milord." He spoke finally returning his gaze to Martin. "I will cover her back."

Sivana grinned. "You do that very well too... if I do say so myself wolf man."

Belen gave a crooked grin as she pressed up against him and everyone chuckled at the embarrassing look on Belen's face.

Martin nodded. "Ok... Melita gets us to the hidden entrance behind the ground sensors. Danny takes one half and goes for the control center with Anuk, Nayeca, Yuriko and Atropos. Husen... can you get him from the inner courtyard here where this secret entrance comes out to the control center?"

Husen nodded. "Easily." He replied. "It's only ninety meters from the inner courtyard. And at this hour... only one or two Immortals will be on duty."

"It helps that most of them are out looking for us too." Anuk said.

"Milord... I... I have never gone into battle before." Husen spoke. "I..."

Martin put his hand on his shoulder. "There's a first time for all of us. Just stick close to that big bastard there and shoot where he tells you." Martin said. "Lisisa, Melita, Sivana and Belen go with me into the prison and get this prisoner. We..."

"I will accompany you as well."

Martin turned and saw Donus walk slowly up the ramp. He moved confidently up to the table and stared at Martin. "That is not necessary." Martin spoke quickly.

"I can use an assault rifle." Donus spoke confidently. His eyes went to where Lisisa stood. "My status among my people, all the years under High Coven rules... it clouded my judgment as to what it meant to be an Alpha among our people sire." His eyes went to Lisisa. "Lisisa... I can only offer my sincere apologies for the way I treated you in the past. That is all I have at the moment. And I wish to regain my honor by going with you on this mission. Alphas are supposed to protect their pack... that is something I have failed in for many years now. It is time for me to rectify that."

Martin stared at him for a long moment before nodding his head. "Very well... Donus goes with my team." He said. He turned to the others. "Yuri and her people get here in just under three hours. Get your gear together... we leave in fifteen."

BLOOD JUSTICE
VHC REVERENCE-CLASS DREADNOUGHT
HIGH GUARD STRIKE GROUP FALCHION
COMMAND SHIP OF PRINCESS YURI

Moran stepped back from Fash'ka's body as the Immortal staggered and dropped to his knees, the blade protruding from the upper portion of his chest. His face was bloody from a cut cheek where Fash'ka had hit him several times, and he dropped to one knee as the door to the conference room sparked and then opened, Yuri leading High Coven troops into the room, their weapons raised. Two additional Immortals followed as well.

"Robert!" Yuri nearly shouted going to him immediately.

"I'm alright." He said. "I'm alright."

"The internal sensors picked him up moving here!" Yuri exclaimed.

Moran nodded. "He came in and sealed the door. He almost got me."

"He must have discovered his father was killed." Yuri spoke as a Coven soldier moved up to toe his boot against Fash'ka's inert form.

“I will expel his carcass into space through the trash lock!” The senior Coven soldier popped.

“Don’t touch him!” Moran barked out pushing his way to his feet. “His father was my friend and I will see to him! He fought well! Prepare a Class Four probe and configure it for travel.”

Yuri looked at him. “Why?”

Moran met her eyes. “I’m going to program the probe to take his body home. He deserves to be buried with his people.”

“He... he tried to kill you!” Yuri exclaimed.

Moran nodded. “At least he went down fighting.” He said. He turned to the soldier. “Do it!”

That had been an hour ago, and now Moran stood in the empty launch bay staring at Fash’ka’s body as it lay in the shell of the probe. The hilt of the knife still protruded from his chest and after a quick look around Moran stepped forward and yanked the blade out.

Fash’ka’s eyes burst open as Moran’s hand went to his chest.

“Don’t move Fash’ka.” He spoke in a hushed whisper. “You can talk... I disabled the audio sensors but they might be watching us on the monitor.” Moran saw the Immortal’s eyes dart to where he stood. “I’m sorry about the knife but I had to make it look convincing.”

“How?”

“An instant acting nerve toxin.” Moran replied. “It mimics death. I... I got your father’s message Fash’ka. Did you...”

“Yes... I viewed it already.” Fash’ka spoke.

“You are in a Class Four Probe. I’ve programmed it with coordinates to your home planet to make it appear I’m doing what I said. I’ve installed an over ride control however, and once you are clear of the system take control and make your way to Roltar Six. You should reach it easily within a day. I’ve set something up for you there. It was fast... but it will do for your purposes.” Moran lowered his head and placed his hand on Fash’ka’s shoulder as if in honor and reverence. Fash’ka felt him drop the chip into the probe. “All the information you need is on that chip, and enough credits to buy your way off Roltar Six. Your father’s body hasn’t been found if the reports I’m getting from the Coven garrison at home is accurate. It’s not much of a chance... but your father is a tough bastard and he’s hard to kill.”

“Yes he is Robert Moran.” Fash’ka spoke.

“Things are happening Fash’ka. Things that I don’t think we are going to like. Your father’s instructions were clear. Take the data you have obtained from the half breed bitch and gather as many members of your tribe as you can. Go into The Wilds and find someplace to hide and live and continue this research.” Moran told him. “If... if he lives... Cha’talla will make his way to you somehow. Do not go back and try and find him.”

“I will honor his instructions Robert Moran.” Fash’ka spoke softly. “You risk much my friend. If the High Lord...”

“He’s losing it.” Moran spoke. “I’ve seen it with others in power on Earth, before all this came to be. When I was still a Genome. Something very big is brewing and he’s trying to keep it from everyone either because he doesn’t know what to do... or because he is scared.”

“And the Princess... what will she do to you if she discovers you have done this? You are her consort... the one she loves.” Fash’ka spoke.

“When I tell her about the information your father gave to me... well...” Moran looked at him. “I think perhaps she will begin to see him in a different light. She senses something as well.”

“Robert Moran...” Fash’ka spoke. “You have earned... you have earned the loyalty of our tribe with your actions this day.”

“I may be a vampire now... but I do know the meaning of friendship and loyalty. If you... if your father lives... and you find him. Tell him... tell him I hope to see him sometime in the future.” Moran spoke softly. “Good luck Fash’ka my friend.”

“And you.” Fash’ka said.

Moran nodded and stepped back activating the hatch cover. Moran nodded to Fash’ka as the cover closed. He turned quickly as the probe began to move along the launch rails and he headed for the entrance. He came up short when he smelled her blood in the air. The smell of Yuri’s blood always got his pulse racing and he stopped just outside the shadows of the entrance.

“I take it you heard everything.” He spoke calmly.

Yuri stepped slowly from the shadows and looked at him. “Perhaps you can explain to me why you have gone against my father’s orders Robert. And what exactly you were talking about with Fash’ka.”

Moran looked at her. “Yuri do you love me?” He asked softly.

Yuri stepped closer to him and stared into his eyes. “You have never asked me that before Robert.” She said softly. “What is going on? And please do not act like my father and keep things from me.”

Moran’s eyes darkened. “I am nothing that that bastard you call father.” Moran hissed. “I would not order my son to rape my daughter to make her into my idea of a ruthless killing machine!”

Yuri’s eyes swept over his face quickly, memories and thoughts racing through her mind. “Robert... Robert what are you saying?”

“Answer my question Yuri.” He said.

“You know I love you Robert Moran.” She replied quickly.

Moran reached out and took her hand. “Come with me... there is something you need to see.”

APO PRIME ISLAND PALACE

Sadi stood on the balcony looking down on where Elynth relaxed on the ground below her, sitting very close to Androcles, her body almost wrapped around him. Dasha was sitting at the small table drinking a mug of coffee, Androcles’s hands resting on Elynth’s snout, his fingers opening and closing gently on her smooth scales. Elynth’s golden eyes were wide and Sadi could have sworn that they were filled with love and adoration.

“They have been like that since he was born.” For’mya’s voice carried to her.

Sadi turned and watched as For’mya came up behind her, two steaming mugs of coffee in her hands.

“Is that...?” Sadi asked.

For’mya smiled and held it out to her. “It seems it has done to you what it has done to everyone who tastes it.”

Sadi took the mug with a smile. “It’s the most delicious blend I have ever tasted.” She spoke.

For’mya came to stand next to her and she looked down at where Androcles and Elynth sat on the ground. “He is fully aware of everything going on around him Sadi.” For’mya spoke turning to look at her.

Sadi met her eyes as she sipped. “What do you mean?”

“You know the power that his parents wield within Mindvoice.” For’mya spoke softly. “Somehow... somehow it has extended to Androcles. No one knows how exactly, but he is fully conscious and understanding of all that is going on around him. Elynth has become his conduit to the outside world it seems. Arzoal... the Dragon Elder Mother... she seems to think that Elynth and Androcles have developed something similar to the bond between twins. And it grows stronger every day. It’s almost as if they are drawing from each other to be able to do what they do now.”

“He... he does seem much more coordinated for an eight month old infant than any I have seen before.” Sadi spoke.

For’mya nodded. “You are the first person outside of our family and Armetus who Elynth has spoken to for him. They like you Sadi.” She said. “And don’t doubt that when she speaks... she speaks with Androcles’s voice as well as her own. As with Martin Leonidas and Torma, and Aricia and Isheeni, it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish.”

“You... you are now bonded to Aurith though.” Sadi spoke. “Surely you know something of what they feel?”

“Yes... but not at the level to which the three of them have apparently achieved and risen too.” For’mya answered. “Have you...”

Sadi nodded quickly. “Just as Armetus asked. I’ve written down everything I have done, everywhere I have been, and everything concerning what I was doing for the Coven. I am unable to remember anything that stands out. And I have a very good memory.”

For’mya nodded. “Now that Elynth has touched you... you will find your Mindvoice abilities will grow. Part of that includes a very good increase in memory cells. I have done the same thing, and aside from a

conference on flight training protocols that I attended on Elear, I can think of nothing outside of my captivity that seems out of place.”

“Have you heard from Armetus?” Sadi asked.

For’mya nodded. “Earlier this morning.” She replied. “He is very busy it seems. Bella and Dysea have discovered some very disturbing things happening on Elear. Something to do with Bella’s old company IES, and Biogenics research.”

Sadi’s eyes grew a little wider. “Biogenics Research? I thought... Biogenics Research is outlawed within the Union. It has been for centuries.”

“Yes I know.” For’mya answered looking at her. “I have ordered *MJOLNIR’S HAND* to Elear. She will escort an additional three Mora of Spartans to assist them if they need it.”

Sadi looked at her. “For’mya... why are you telling me this?” She asked.

“Sadi... whether you realize it or not, you have become bound to this family because of events.” For’mya spoke. “And until these assassins are discovered and killed, you are safest here on the Island with us.”

“My father is safe though?” Sadi asked quickly.

“Your father and your real brothers are in a location that no one will ever discover them.” For’mya spoke. “You are in more danger than they are. Your step mother is still under constant surveillance and your step brothers as well. When the attack comes... they will be arrested. All of them.”

“So you and Armetus still think these assassins will come here?” Sadi asked.

For’mya nodded. “They are very serious about their mission it seems.” She said. “And they would not have come to Apo Prime without explicit directions to see you or I dead.”

“So you believe this was ordered by the Coven and is not some underling?” Sadi asked.

“Armetus believes so, and when it comes to matters like this, he has the most experience and knowledge. Martin Leonidas trusts him implicitly.” For’mya answered.

“Why do you... why do you refer to him by his full name even now?” Sadi asked. “You are his concubine... you...” Sadi blushed deeply even under her tan. “Forgive me.” She spoke quickly.

For’mya laughed and reached out to squeeze her arm. “Do not apologize for asking a question Sadi.” She asked.

Sadi shook her head. “It just seems I’m always asking you questions that are personal and none of my business.”

For’mya smiled. “It started when I woke up in his quarters on *MJOLNIR’S HAND*.” For’mya answered. “He was my King... and he told me to refer to him informally. That was as informally as I wanted to go at the time. As emotions grew between us... as time past... it became more my way of showing my love and affection for him I believe. Just as he has started to call me his *Kinsoaurgai*. The Voice of his Heart. Just as Aricia calls him Beloved and Dysea calls him *Nauta Melme*. It gives all of us a special part of him that is ours alone. I am not ashamed of our relationship in any way. The most pleasurable experiences of my life so far have come in his arms. And those experiences are even more passionate and intense when Aricia is with us. Or Anja. We share each other as well as Martin Leonidas, and none of us are ashamed of that.”

“I wish to find that type of love someday.” Sadi spoke softly.

For’mya smiled and looked at her with a glint in her dark brown eyes. Sadi did not know what that glint meant and she dismissed it. “You will have that one day Sadi. Do not be afraid to embrace it. Man or woman, or both.”

Sadi chuckled. “I’ll be lucky to have one.” She said.

For’mya smiled gently once more. “Come with me. I will need to show you the defensive set up of the Palace as well as the location of the Vault Rooms and weapons lockers. Armetus believes these assassins will attempt something within the next day or so. Gorgo and Deia will be arriving in a few hours and staying here with us.”

APO PRIME

TUYA

KRYPTERIA HEADQUARTERS

It was a very unassuming three story building of steel and granite nestled in the eastern section of Tuya, only four kilometers from the Main Palace Estate. At first glance it look very much like an offshoot of the main university, until you walk in the front doors of the building and discovered an entirely secretive world of *The Krypteria*.

Named after the Secret Police of ancient Sparta, but with a very different mission and task. They were now the front line warriors of intelligence gathering within the Union. Though monitored by the Elfin Delegation leader and For'mya's father L'tian, he made sure that Armetus and his people were given almost free reign to do what they do best. And in keeping with his word to the King, Armetus had provided details on almost everything he had his agents and operatives doing. Where before under Deia they were limited in what they could do, now Martin Leonidas had given them the means and the tools to accomplish their mission.

Armetus looked up from his desk as the door to his office on the second floor opened and the senior Analyst in the building walked in casually. He demanded the best from all his people, and he rewarded that by giving them as much leeway has possible and not looking over their shoulders. He looked at the six thousand year old Lycavorian female who waltzed into his office unannounced.

"Nesa?" He spoke.

"You wanted to see me Armetus?" The woman asked.

Armetus nodded and held out the two data pads to her as she settled into the chair in front of his desk. "These are the dictated reports from For'mya and Sadi." He said. "Everything they could possibly remember. Have your people go through them; try to discover something that looks in any way unusual, no matter how small it may be."

"You believe they are the key then?" Nesa asked.

"One of them is." Armetus answered. "It's the only reason to keep trying to kill them. And with the assassins brought in this time, that is most assuredly the goal."

"You don't believe either one of them is the leak do you?" She asked.

Armetus was quick to shake his head. "For'mya shares the bed of the King and Queens. If she was a traitor in any way... they would have detected that long before now. Sadi still remains a bit of a mystery, but her actions were generated completely for personal reasons and those reasons were to protect her father at all costs."

"So we're looking for someone else?" Nesa spoke.

Armetus nodded. "Leave no one out of your web. Not even the King." He spoke.

"I sent off the information to Queen Isabella that you requested." Nesa spoke. "Biogenics Armetus?"

"Yes... that was Isabella's first reaction as well as mine." He spoke.

"Do we send them additional help?" Nesa asked.

Armetus shook his head. "No. The two of them together are far more formidable a duo then most believes and they have Marci with them as well. They will not need our help. Let them handle what is happening on Elear. We need to find this traitor before more damage is done."

LYCAVORE

Martin lowered the binos from his eyes and surveyed the outside of the castle from a distance of half a kilometer now. Lisisa lay on one side of him, Melita on the other.

"The ditch in front of us," Melita spoke softly motioning with her hand. "It extends all the up to the side of the outer wall itself. I've heard the Immortals talking and there is an opening in the wall at ground level that allows for drainage of water from inside. It keeps the rooms where the Immortals stay dry. Their barracks are along the eastern wall and when it rains the water comes down off the mountains directly into their rooms. That is why they never blocked it and there is no security anywhere near it."

"There are no sensors in the ditch itself?" Martin asked.

Melita shook her head. "They tried that many years ago but the water kept shorting out the circuits or uncovering the sensors when it rained. They got tired of replacing them."

"How do you know so much about this ditch?" Donus asked from where he lay just behind her.

“I would use it all the time as a child to get out of the palace and spend time with Lisisa.” Melita answered quickly. “No one suspected I would slip in and out under the very noses of the Immortals.”

Martin’s head canted upwards slightly, Belen the only one detecting the movement. “Milord?” He asked. “What is it?”

Martin looked at him. “Something within Mindvoice.” He replied. “Faint... barely there as if it’s being blocked somehow. It’s... it is very familiar to me somehow.” Martin looked skyward into the darkening horizon. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Torma... do you...*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I sense it as well Martin. We have felt it before. It is very familiar yet it is being blocked. It feels like... psychic dampeners surrounding where this prison is suppose to be.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Yes I was thinking the same thing. Whoever this prisoner is, they are using some very powerful psychic dampeners.* Martin spoke. *What do you see brother?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Very little activity near where you currently are. Some mild activity near the front entrance... but nothing urgent. The place looks almost empty.* Torma answered.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Very well. We’re going in Torma. Let me know if you see anything out of the ordinary.*

Martin turned to look at Belen and Danny who was a little further back. “Whoever this prisoner is they have heavy psychic dampeners covering the prison area. Torma says it is quiet so we are going now. You all know what the drill is. Anything goes wrong you get out anyway you can, and meet at the coordinates in the mountain. We all good?” Martin saw the bobbing of heads. “Let’s do it then!”

“I told you we should have run that first night!” Onia declared to Nanac as they moved quickly down the tunnel towards the surface entrance.

“It’s too late for that now!” Nanac exclaimed. “Now we must salvage what we can. I have the plans for their assault on the palace. We find the nearest High Coven patrol and tell them the Lycavorian King is on this planet and we bargain for our information.”

“I hope the Immortals use that bitch over and over so I can hear her wail while they fuck her until she can’t stand any longer.” Onia growled as she rubbed her chin where Anja had hit her.

“If we get there in time you may still see that.” Nanac spoke.

“I doubt very much that will be taking place.” The voice from in front of them caused them to come up short.

Helen stood in the center of the tunnel, Miath just behind her to the left, his dark green head only a few inches from her shoulder, his eyes burning with hate. Jobel stood to her right, her P190 leveled at Nanac and Onia.

“*Feravomir!*” Nanac gasped.

Helen smiled. “Surprised to see me?” She asked.

“We thought you went with the King to free the prisoner.” Onia spoke trying to regain her composure.

“Yes... that’s what I wanted you to think.” Helen spoke calmly. “Tell me... how long have you been in the habit of selling out your own people?”

“What... what do you mean *Feravomir?*” Nanac asked.

Helen chortled. “I should have expected it from you Nanac. Chetak’s bloodline has never been very intelligent or loyal. Well... except for Isra that is. What exactly do you get for being traitors to your own people?”

“I don’t understand?” Onia spoke. “We were going to the tunnel entrance to await the King’s return from the mission.”

Helen’s eyes narrowed. “Do not insult my intelligence by attempting to talk your way out of the situation you are in.” Helen spoke. “Allow me to introduce two individuals. Jobel here was born in Sparta on Earth, and all she has ever desired to be is a Spartan Centurion. She is as loyal and skilled as any man you will ever meet, and that is why she was chosen to be a member of the Durcunusaan. Something which her Spartan mate was thrilled with I might add. He even threw her an acceptance party when she finished her training. Jobel is one of the original three hundred chosen to serve Martin Leonidas when we first discovered his true identity. She has made her way across many battlefields and many planets and reached this point.” Helen reached up and

allowed her hand to rest on Miath's thick neck. "You already know Miath here. He is Anja's bonded dragon brother. When they first discovered each other... none of us thought it would work for Anja is as fiery as the color of her hair, and Miath here had a reckless streak in him. It has only been seven months I believe, but what they have done for each other is something neither of you will ever understand let alone comprehend. Miath also has one trait which is particularly nasty it seems. He is viciously protective of Anja."

"*Feravomir* we..." Nanac spoke.

"Silence!" Helen shouted. "Do not speak to me traitors! It seems I have picked up many of the traits of my King and the people I chose to hide myself among! Spartans have always hated traitors! Even more so after a traitor cost them their beloved King... Martin Leonidas's father. I too have come to loath traitors... almost as much as my King." She spoke. "All of my time in Sparta and among Spartans has made me different. Your bloodlines will survive... I give you my word as the First Oracle on that... but they will be watched closely for the rest of their lives. As for you two..."

"He will bring death to us all with his actions!" Nanac barked. "We have... we have done what we have done to make our people stronger!"

"By consorting with the very enemy that kills you in mass numbers!" Helen snarled. "The enemy that will use any means, any tactic to slaughter our people at a whim! That is what you have done? Or is it simply to insure that no one in your families are taken or killed or forced to work in bondage? Do you think me a fool? Martin was right... you have grown hungry with power and you will sacrifice your own people to keep it."

"*Feravomir*... we." Onia began to speak stepping towards her.

"Miath!" Helen spoke the one word.

Miath reared his head back slightly and without pause he unleashed a long blast of searing hot superheated breath. The stream caught both Nanac and Onia full on, and Helen and Jobel watched without emotion as neither could scream since their lungs were seared away in the first millisecond. The skin peeled away until there was only bone, and then the bone turned to dust. When nothing but ash remained Miath relented, the air around his muzzle still sizzling in the dampness of the tunnel.

"Jobel... see to it that everyone in their bloodline is isolated until we leave this planet." Helen spoke softly. "This place is no longer our home... and it was never mine to begin with. I want no more distractions that lead me to traitors."

"Yes *Feravomir*." Jobel answered moving towards the entrance back into the Mindvoice cavern.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *It had to be done Feravomir.* Miath spoke. *They would have told the Coven about the King's attack and compromised the mission.*

Helen nodded. [Mindvoice Shielded] *I know. Inform Torma of what we have done here so that he may tell Martin. And have him remind that bull headed Spartan that he is King and not to get himself killed.*

Miath nodded his large head. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Yes Feravomir.*

The High Coven soldier made his way back to the control room, both of his hands filled with coffee and tea. The palace was quiet, most of the Immortals and troops out among the planet searching for the Lycavorian dogs. It was said that the Regent's daughter was among them and they she was helping them. The man hoped that was the case for he had always wanted to fuck that arrogant bitch and he had overheard the Immortal commander saying she would become a plaything for the troops if this was proven true.

So intent on his thoughts that he never saw the large hand that reached out of the Immortal barracks and grabbed his collar. His body was wrenched back, sizzling hot coffee spilling on his hands. As he opened his mouth to gasp at the pain, the silenced barrel of a large bore projectile handgun was pressed under his jaw and he was looking into the dangerous yellow eyes of a very large Lycavorian. He wore strange body armor and did not appear in any way to be afraid of him. His eyes darted back and forth and he saw others all around, including the daughter of the regent, as well as the bodies of two Immortals still in their beds, their throats sliced wide open.

His eyes darted back to the evil looking face in front of him.

"If you answer my questions... you just may live through this night." Martin growled. "Jerk me around... and I guarantee it will take you a long time to bleed out. And I do have some experience in bleeding

out vampires trust me.” Martin pressed the barrel of his silenced K12 harder under the troop’s chin. “How many in the control room?”

“You... you are... you are King Leonidas!” The man gasped. “The... the Spartan King!”

Martin’s smile was not pleasant as his lips curled back revealing his very wicked looking dual fangs. “Answer my question.”

“I will tell you nothing!” The troop hissed. His eyes darted to where Lisisa stood next to Melita and then back to Martin.

Martin turned quickly and looked at his daughter, her forest green eyes burning with hatred as she glared at the man. “Lisisa?”

“I know... I recognize this one father.” She snarled stepping closer. “He... he laughed... he laughed as I was taken by an Immortal. And then he... he thought it would be funny to take me in my ass like an animal!”

Martin’s yellow eyes grew savage as he glared at the High Coven soldier. He didn’t hesitate... didn’t pause. He lowered the barrel of the K12 two inches and fired point blank into the High Coven soldier’s throat. The hollowpoint Teflon coated projectile punched through the muscle and flesh tearing open both his arteries, Martin letting him fly from his grasp as the kinetic force of the bullet knocked him staggering back several meters against the wall. Loud gargling sounds filled the room as his blood pumped forcefully from his destroyed throat. Lisisa stepped closer to him, lifting the silenced K12 Anja had supplied to her.

“How does it feel dog!” Lisisa hissed at his wide eyed face. “How does it feel knowing you will now die like the pig you are!” She lifted the K12 and fired three rounds in quick succession, all three bullets punching into the vampire’s groin area and flinging him back against the wall once more, his eyes wide in agony and pain.

Donus and Husen could only watch in wide eyed shock, the faces of everyone else either with looks of completed justice on their faces or indifference to what had just taken place. Lisisa stared at the Coven soldier as his wheezing and gargling became less pronounced and his blood pooled thickly around his now sitting body. Nayeca was the one to step forward and take her hands pulling her away from the dying troop.

Martin turned to Husen. “The control room?”

Husen looked at him, eyes wide but he answered quickly. “Ten meters down this corridor. We turn right and then eighty meters to the end of the adjoining corridor. This entire section of the palace is nothing but storage rooms and such. It is a straight shot.”

Martin looked at Danny. “Bring it Danny.” He spoke.

Dan nodded. “My team with me. Husen... lead us out... I’ll be right behind you covering you. Yuriko you got our ass! Let’s roll!”

Martin waited as Husen opened the door and led Danny’s team out of the barracks room. He looked at Lisisa who now stood next to Melita her beautiful face calm. “Melita?”

She turned quickly and looked at him taking a deep breath. “We go left! Twenty-five meters to the intersection and then right. The door to the lower levels and the prison is recessed into the corridor and they won’t see us coming.”

Martin looked at Donus. “You with us?” Martin asked.

Donus nodded quickly hefting the assault rifle. “They have defiled my people long enough sire. I will no longer allow it to continue.”

“Good. Melita... lead us out.”

Melita hadn’t batted an eye when he had shot the soldier, or even when Lisisa had fired into his groin three times. It was something that did not go unnoticed by Belen, at least not for a self pronounced Regent’s daughter. “This way.” She spoke and headed out of the room.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Milord?* Belen spoke as they began to move.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Yes... I saw it too.* Martin answered as he pulled Lisisa along by the arm.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Do you think...?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Watch her. If she so much as twitches wrong Belen... take her out.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Done Milord.*

They moved quickly and very quietly until Melita brought them to a stop near the edge of the corridor as it turned a corner. She stopped and looked at Martin who was right behind her. “Ten meters down this corridor

is the recessed security door. There is usually only one Immortal, but since they have been looking for you, it may have changed.” Melita whispered to him.

Martin moved around in front of her, his wolf senses fully attuned to the area around him. He sniffed the air gently before going to one knee and sticking his head out just enough to expose his eyes. The top of his head was exposed for under a second and he pulled it back, standing back up. “No one in the hall.” He spoke. Martin looked at Donus and he nodded. “Donus with me. Your weapon is silenced so it won’t be heard. We move quickly and without hesitation. We hesitate we die. Shoot anything that is not with us.”

Donus nodded quickly. “I understand.”

Martin gripped his P190 and took a deep breath. “Let’s do it.”

It was the longest sprint that Donus had ever conducted in his life it felt like. Twenty meters long at a dead run, their rubber soled boots combined with the natural lightness of foot of the wolves in them making no sound on the metal floor. Donus’s eyes were wide as they came around the corner of the recessed portion of the wall and two Immortals came into view. Just as the Spartan Belen had shown him, Donus lifted the P190 and began squeezing the trigger a half second after his King. The two silenced 190s belched fire and death in quick succession, Martin’s two bursts deadly accurate and lethal, taking the Immortal on the left in the face and throat. Donus was less sure of his accuracy so he pumped four five round bursts into the Immortal on the right, shredding the Immortals chest abdomen and face as his bursts climbed higher until the last blew apart much of his skull.

Martin stepped up to his down Immortal and pumped another burst into his head to insure he wouldn’t get back up and he touched the COM on his armor activating the implant in his jaw and ear.

“We’re clear! Move now!” Martin barked in a harsh whisper.

Lisisa and Melita were first around the corner, followed by Sivana and Belen. She went immediately to the door, pulling out the small portable control bypass connected to a strip of wires. She skidded to a stop in front of the security panel took one look at it and nodded.

“I need twenty seconds!” She gasped out. “It’s an older system.”

“Do it!” Martin hissed as he re-grasped the P190 that dangled from quick release straps, he faced down the corridor from the direction they had come, while Belen and Lisisa covered the other direction.

The High Coven Lieutenant turned as the security door opened. He had two seconds to register seeing the large black Lycavorian enter the room followed quickly by the red haired elf female before three rounds from Danny’s P190 ended all thought as his head exploded like an overripe melon. Anuk tracked the second trooper, loosing a three round burst that entered the side of his head and neck as he turned. Nayeca was the third one into the room and her silenced 190 burped out a five round burst that struck the last High Coven trooper center mass, lifting his body slightly into the air, blood splashing across the consoles behind him, before dropping him to the cold floor.

Danny and Anuk moved as one into the room while Nayeca broke to her left. Yuriko was the next in and she lifted her 190 to put a three round burst into the head of the High Coven trooper on the floor, insuring he was dead as Anuk and Danny did the same. She moved quickly to the instrument panel and settled into the chair as Nayeca pulled Husen into the room and slapped the control panel for the door, closing it. Husen looked around the blood splattered room, fighting down the bile in his throat as Anuk stepped up to him.

“Deep breaths Husen.” She spoke softly, seeing his pale face and gripping his shoulders. “You will see far more death than this. Control it if you can... but use the corner if you can’t.”

“Yuriko?” Danny hissed.

“Shutting down all the perimeter sensors and motion grids.” Yuriko spoke quickly. “We...”

Dan looked at her. “What?”

“There is a High Coven Runner on approach to the landing pad!” Yuriko spoke quickly. She pushed her chair over to another console and jacked up the volume.

“...cleared to land Princess.” The voice spoke. “Regent Tonlar will greet you at the landing pad.”

Yuriko looked at Danny. “It’s Yuri.” She said.

“Fuck me!” Danny snapped. “How long before they get from the pad to here?”

Husen stepped forward. “Fifteen minutes! No more!”

Danny hated using Mindvoice because it gave him a headache, but he reached out now.

Marty... Yuri is landing her ass at the pad right now! You got about fifteen before they show up here and the shit hits the fan! Dan reached out.

Fuck! Can you delay them?

Let me work on it. Move fast brother! Danny replied.

I'm on it!

“We’re in!” Sivana exclaimed softly, yanking the twin cables she had used to bypass the system off the panel and stepping to the side.

Martin was ready and lifted his 190 as the door slid open.

The heat and scents nearly overwhelmed him as he moved into the room, Belen right behind him, followed by Lisisa, Melita and Sivana as Donus brought up the rear. He could smell the unwashed bodies, as they all could with the exception of Melita, the scent of blood and pain thick in the air.

Martin didn’t hesitate and moved down the short flight of stairs, turning the corridor and allowing his 190 to lead him. They could hear the moans of the wounded, and the wheezing of heavy breathing. There were only two corridors, shaped in a large letter ‘L’, both of them empty except for four cell doors on one end and four more on the other. Martin’s eyes grew wider as he detected a scent he had smelled before. Every Lycavorian scent was unique... and the one he smelled now he had smelled less than a month ago on Apo Prime. His 190 dropped from shaking hands now as he moved down the corridor Belen and the others watching him with stunned expressions.

“Milord!” Belen hissed. He spun and looked at Donus. “Donus... watch the door!”

Donus forced his eyes away from where Martin walked turning to face back up the short flight of stairs. Belen stepped up to Martin and grabbed his arm. “Milord... we do not...” Belen stopped talking when he detected the new scent as well. Only it was a scent that was not new. It was a scent that should not have been on this planet.

Martin stopped in front of the cell door, his eyes locked on it. “Belen?”

“It... it is... impossible Milord.” Belen spoke.

Martin looked at him. “You smell it?”

Belen nodded quickly. “What... sire this can not be!” He gasped.

Lisisa came up next to him. “Father... what is wrong?”

Martin looked at her now. “The scent... this... this person should not be here.”

Lisisa looked at him oddly. “What do you mean shouldn’t be here?”

Sivana moved to the control panel by the door and attached her cables. “Hold on... give me a second!” She spoke quickly. The security lock on the door was far easier than the one allowing entry into the prison cell area and Sivana had it unlocked in seconds.

Martin practically pushed her aside as he burst into the cell.

It was dark and filthy, almost no light reaching inside the cell except for that now finding its way in through the open door. The scent was overwhelming now and Martin realized that outside the cell door there must have been scent maskers planted all around. He looked against the far wall, seeing the figure huddled in a tiny ball. The pain and fear wafting from the figure’s body nearly overwhelmed him.

“No!” Martin gasped softly. “It... it can’t be!”

Belen and Sivana pushed into the cell, and even for Sivana the stink was overwhelming. “By the gods?” She gasped out as she staggered from the power of it.

Martin surged forward, ignoring the staggering smells and knelt next to the figure. He reached out with severely shaking hands as Sivana was pulling an insulated blanket from the small pack she carried and moving up next to him.

“We’re... we’re here to help you!” She spoke her voice soft and halting. She may not have been a wolf yet, something she desired now more than anything since Belen had come into her life, but she had known enough pain in her life to be able to smell it in the air.

She moved to the opposite side of the figure, who was now stirring as their own wolf senses began to come alive. The shadows kept the features hidden but Sivana could tell it was a female now. She lifted her hand

as Anja and Seanna had showed her and concentrated as hard as she could. She had not ascended yet and this part was the hardest of all that she had learned quickly.

“Severe malnutrition!” Sivana gasped. Her hand was a glimmering soft white in color and she passed it slowly over the female. “Signs of healed multiply fractures. A class three infection of her lungs. Lacerations and severe bruising and signs of...”

Martin’s head whipped around to look at her. “What?”

Sivana looked at him. “Signs of rape.”

Martin’s pulse was racing madly now and due to the psychic dampeners only Torma could feel the rage and hatred quickly overtaking his bonded brother.

Martin! Martin my brother! What is happening? Torma’s voice erupted into Martin’s head as if he was standing next to him.

Martin ignored Torma and leaned forward indifferent to the slime and dirt on the woman’s body and gently pulled her up into a sitting position.

Her body was shaking... her own heart racing as the powerful arms of this stranger lifted her. They were not Immortals or vampires; she retained enough of her senses to determine that quickly. They were Lycavorians and the young female was a Hadarian, though she had been scented recently by a strong Alpha. The one holding her... his scent was familiar to her somehow. A fresh and pungent mint scent mixed deeper in with a wild musky aroma, a scent she had not smelled in more years than she remembered. It wasn’t possible... it couldn’t be possible. It was a trick they were playing on her. Fifteen years she had been their prisoner. Fifteen years they had poked and prodded her with needles and beaten her. The rapes by both the Immortals and High Coven soldiers were too numerous to count, the injections of countless drugs. The excruciatingly painful extraction of small pieces of her scent glands all over her body. Then the introduction of the drug, forcing her to shift so that she would heal after all their horrible practices.

Her fingers dug into the arms of the young man holding her. His scent washed over her like a blanket, his aura so staggeringly powerful that for a moment she thought she was back in his arms.

“No!” She croaked out the words.

Sivana grasped her now as well. “Calm down! We are here to get you out!” She urged altering the composition of her minimal healing skills and touching the woman on her shoulders and abdomen. Sivana concentrated harder as Anja had shown her drawing from the smallest fractions of life all around her to focus and project the healing properties of the radiation within her body cells.

“No more! Please... please no more.” The woman stammered shaking her head back and forth. “This... this is not real! I will not bend to your actions! You don’t exist! You... you have not broken me... fifteen years! Never!”

Martin was holding back the tears of rage and betrayal. How was this possible? She should not, could not be here. Yet her scent was so pure and powerful and it washed over him in a way he had never felt before. So soothing and calming.

“Milord!” Belen gasped. When Martin ignored him he moved forward and gripped Martin’s shoulder. “King Leonidas! We must go!”

The woman’s head came up like a shot. “Leonidas!” She gasped.

“Sivana!” Martin barked. “Sedate her!”

“No!” She exclaimed. “No!”

She was far too weak to fight them and his hands and arms on her tightened as she felt the minute prick in the flesh of her neck. Her eyes immediately began to cloud over and with the last of her strength she reached up with filthy and bruised hands and took the face of the man holding her in her grasp. He didn’t pull away... didn’t flinch and allowed her to tilt his head so that the light from the corridor shown on his face.

Her eyes flew open in unadulterated shock.

“YOU!” She cried. “You... you are dead!”

Martin snatched the medical blanket from Sivana hands and wrapped her fragile body in it quickly before lifting her into his arms. Her emancipated form was lighter than it looked and he turned to look at Belen.

“Milord?” Belen asked as he helped Sivana to her feet.

“Pull it down over her head!” Martin snapped. “I don’t... I don’t want anyone to see her like this!”

“Sire... this is not... it’s not possible!” Belen insisted as he pulled the blanket over the woman’s head.

“You can smell her as well as I can Belen!” Martin barked. “What do you smell?”

“I... but... it can not be!” Belen gasped.

Lisisa stepped forward quickly. “Father... what is going on?” She asked. “Who... who is this woman? You... you look like you have seen a ghost or spirit of some sort. What is going on?”

Martin looked at Lisisa. “She... she is...”

Danny and Yuriko’s voices burst loud and clear through the COM units on all their armor. “Ah fuck me Skipper! I knew this was too easy! We got a whole shit pot full of Immortals heading our way! At least fifty! I think they know we crashed their house party! And that oriental bitch Yuri is screaming this way in a couple of lifters with about twenty more boyfriends!”

“Activate the palace defenses!” Melita exclaimed.

“What?”

“The palace defenses are... the sensors are calibrated for Lycavorians, not vampires! Can you recalibrate them for my people and the Immortals?” Melita gasped.

“That means you and Yuriko will be targeted as well!” Anuk’s voice echoed in the COM.

“Yes but we are only two!” Yuriko’s voice carried to them. “Father I am recalibrating the palace defenses! It will give us perhaps two minutes once they reach the grounds before they shut them down remotely!”

“We’re moving now!” Martin barked. “EVAC! Evac now!”

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

EARTH

EDEN CITY

Isra and Aelnala were positioned on the roof of the twenty story building looking down on the shopping square below them. The sun was beginning its journey downward over the horizon, and was at their backs as they gazed down into the square. It was full of men, women and children as they moved from shops to open aired cafés. Much of the fresh fruit and vegetables sold in Eden City and in Sparta, were sold in markets just like this. Eden City had four of them, though this one was by far the largest.

Isra reached up slowly and placed his hand on Aelnala’s neck. *Do you see her?*

Aelnala’s large head nodded slowly. *She just came into the market from the north. She’s moving quite easily, waving to others and acting as if she is only shopping.*

Ah... I see her now. Isra smiled and shook his head slowly. *The woman has ice water in her veins to be so calm.*

She has faith in her friends and those who love her. Aelnala spoke in agreement. *She has a Drow vampire and a Lycavorian wolf ready to shred all who intend her arm. That gives her much in the way of confidence. But she is naturally a strong woman Isra.*

Yes she is. To have experienced what she has and come out stronger for it. Isra nodded. *It is no wonder that Earth has prospered so under the care of the three of them. All of them have the backbone and laconic bravery of a Spartan. The King was wise in leaving them in charge.*

I believe Earth... more specifically Sparta... I believe in the years to come it will become the unofficial capital of the Union. Aelnala spoke her eyes never leaving Selene’s figure even as she walked among the crowd. *It is well known that the King and all of his Queens and his royal concubine prefer the much slower pace of Sparta. I believe that is why they continue to expand the villa.*

You may be right my sister. Isra said. *I hope Tarifa and Aihola decide to remain here. In the short time we have been here I have come to like it here.*

As have I. Aelnala spoke. *I...*

The COM unit in Isra’s armor crackled softly. “Target is moving. He’s spotted Selene.” Steven’s voice spoke softly. “Tareif is moving now. I will maintain overwatch.”

Isra nodded in approval. Steven knew where his skills were, and they did not extend to the realm of physical combat to the extent it would allow him to go up against a Kavalian. He would remain prepared while Tareif and Aricia, both with considerably more skill and strength to take down the Kavalian.

Isra reached up and tapped his COM unit, activating the implants in his jaw and ear. "Lynwe?"

"We are in position." Lynwe answered immediately. "Layna is a better shot and she is behind the scope." Her voice was calm and deadly. She didn't like doing this, but the military portion of her experience said it was an excellent option. She knew what Selene could do, and she knew what Aricia and Tareif could do. She also knew that if she gave the command, Layna would kill the Kavalian without a second's pause for they both loved Selene dearly. "Do not miss Isra my friend."

Isra nodded. "I don't intend too Lynwe." He replied confidently. "What is the target wearing?"

"Long cloak over his head." Aricia's voice replied instantly. "Dark blue. He's moving into the sun from under the indoor café on the northern edge of the market."

I see him. Aelnala spoke.

"Aelnala has him marked." Isra said.

"I'm trailing ten meters back." Tareif's voice broke in. "At the fruit stand with the yellow banner. Northwest corner."

He's moving quickly Isra. Aelnala spoke. *Too quickly.*

Isra focused his own wolf eyes and brought the square into clearer view. *What do you mean?*

"Aelnala's right!" Aricia broke in quickly. "He's making a straight line for Selene. No deviations."

"Steven sweep across the market again!" Tareif ordered into his implant. "If he is as skilled as we have been led to believe, he would not act in such a manner!"

Steven used his powerful binoculars from the third floor room he was in to start a sweep from one side of the market to the other. He moved as quickly as he could, not wanting to miss anything. "I have nothing!" He spoke haltingly. His binos swept over the south west corner of the square now and stopped as they settled on the lone figure standing under the overhang shelter of one of the outdoor cafés. "Hold on!"

"Steven...?" Aricia spoke.

"Selene... increase the width of your steps my love." Lynwe's voice broke into the implants now.

Steven centered in on the lone figure, focusing intently. The figure wasn't moving; simply standing with his arms crossed staring northward into the market. An older woman crossed in front of him and the figure turned his head slightly, revealing light colored fur on his face.

"He's in the southwest corner! Tan cloak and hood. I just saw part of his face when he turned." Steven directed excitedly. "It was like dirty blond hair."

"That's him." Selene's voice spoke for the first time even as she smiled at the fruit vender she stopped next to.

"Isra!" Aricia broke in. "Change of plans! You and Aelnala snag him, Tareif and I will cover Selene! Layna... if the Kavalian manages to get away... do not let him leave the square alive! Uncle Dymas... deploy the *Durcunusaan* to encircle the square!"

"Already done!" Walter's voice echoed in their ears.

"Layna?" Aricia spoke.

"I have him." Her voice spoke. "I won't let him get away my Queen." Layna finished.

Talco watched as the half elf vampire female moved closer to him. She must have sensed the fool thief he had paid to move on her from across the market. He would drive her towards him and then he would take her. He had not seen either dragon in over a day, the rumors floating out that the child Queen's dragon had gone rogue and killed her, then disappearing. The gamboge colored dragon must have been out looking for her, hunting her. That suited Talco just fine. He really only truly feared one thing; and that was facing one of those dragons. Both of them, regardless of his experience and those he had killed, those dragons frightened him right down to his core.

He would use this Selene for days, listen to her moan as he took her in every conceivable way and then he would watch as the craving for blood destroyed her mind and then killed her. He...

The trumpeting roar announced the violent shaking of the ground in front of him as the gamboge colored dragon landed not five meters from him, the male Lycavorian sitting tall on her back and glaring directly at him.

“Hello Kavalian!” Isra shouted. “Did you think we would not find you?”

Talco’s eyes went wide as Aelnala’s mace like tail whipped around faster than he could follow or react too. She was an expert in using her tail, knowing just when to use her full strength and when to adjust her power. The mace like tip slapped into Talco’s side like a hammer blow, sending him careening ten meters from under the café overhang. Isra was off Aelnala in a blink then, his *Nehtes* appearing in his hand almost instantly and extending to its full eight foot length. He moved quickly to where Talco lay withering in pain from the shattered ribs Aelnala’s tail had produced in him. The Kavalian’s eyes were wide in fear as Aelnala quickly followed her bonded brother, and Talco could see her just over his shoulder.

Selene meanwhile, threw back the cape she was wearing and whirled on the man coming up behind her. Her eyes changed quickly to vampire cobalt blue and she snarled, exposing her vampire fangs.

“I don’t like being followed!” Selene hissed as she stepped toward the mugger who Talco had hired.

The elf attacker staggered back as Selene stepped toward him, backing right up into Tareif’s broad chest. Tareif closed his hands around the elf tightly.

“You have some questions to answer.” Tareif growled.

Isra pressed the spearhead of his *Nehtes* into Talco’s chest applying enough pressure to pin him to the ground and make him hiss in pain as his broken ribs ground against one another. “You made a mistake remaining within the city to try and exact your revenge against Selene fool.” Isra spoke. “You did not honestly think we would allow you to harm her do you?”

“I will... I will tell you nothing!” Talco hissed as Aricia came up next to Isra, the hood covering her face completely.

Aricia pulled the hood back just enough to expose her face to Talco and she saw his eyes go wide.

“You... you are supposed to be dead!” Talco gasped. “They think...”

Aricia smiled. “Thank you for confirming your connection to Maruad Talco.” Aricia said pleasantly and seeing Talco’s eyes go even wider. “It will be very helpful in the future!”

“You... you will get nothing from me child Queen Bitch!” He snarled.

Aricia stepped closer to him a vicious smile splitting her face. “My mate has a saying Talco... and in this instance it applies to you quite well.” She spoke softly. “You will be singing like a bird in a short while, have no doubts of that.”

Talco’s eyes shifted as Selene walked up to them. She looked down on him with murder in her eyes.

“I told you we were not fools Talco.” She hissed. “It appears you were the fool for not listening to me! We will get every bit of information we want from you Talco... and then I will take great pleasure in having you executed for espionage on my planet.”

Aricia’s COM unit crackled. “Queen Aricia... Admiral Joarl needs you to meet him at the Command Center immediately.” The voice spoke.

Aricia touched her armor activating her unit. “I’m on my way.”

BIG SNOWY MOUNTAINS FORMERLY STATE OF MONTANA TRUE PEOPLE’S MOUNTAIN BASE

Syrilth stared up through the opening of the hanger into the star filled sky a thousand things running through her mind. Her mother had taught her much in the time she could, first among that was to never trust Lycavorians. Yet what Isheeni had shown her? It was beyond paradise. They had homes, family and friends. The bonds with their Lycavorian riders were stronger than any she and Maruad could develop together. Syrilth was no fool... and she now knew that Isheeni was correct. She and her rider would have swatted her and Maruad from the sky. They were far more powerful than the Heavyhorn and her rider, though even they had a stronger Mindvoice link than she and Maruad. They...

I had to learn what you are trying to comprehend as well Syrilth. Isheeni’s voice reached out to her. *Isheeni was unshielded but speaking on a level that Maruad and the white skins could never hope to reach.*

When Aricia first came to Enurrua. Our bond... it was a surprise to me. Your bond with Maruad is forced. It is not forged out of love and respect and friendship like mine with Aricia.

It is so... it is so hard to believe these things; that they actually do exist in this world Isheeni? Syrilth spoke.

Isheeni nodded as she settled to the floor of the hanger next to her. You will receive no argument from me in that regard. Even I did not believe it possible. My mate had left Enurrua to try and save the King. Chetak's men were closing in around where we were hiding. I thought the bond Aricia and I shared was the only one of its kind. Until that day when I looked up that mountain and saw the King astride Torma's back. And three hundred others lined up with him. The battle was glorious Syrilth. I saw Lycavorians stand and take weapons fire to protect their bonded brother or sister. I saw my kind do the same. Isheeni looked at her. That is what it was meant to be Syrilth. And that is what it is with the King and Torma, Aricia and I and all of Mjolnir's Hand.

Syrilth turned her ochre colored eyes on Isheeni. He would have done what you said wouldn't he?

The King is a Spartan Syrilth. As bonded pairs we do take on some of the traits of our sister or brother. Torma and Martin are no different. They balance each other perfectly actually. Just as Aricia and I do. Isheeni met her gaze evenly. I do not brag when I say if by some chance of fate you and Maruad fought and defeated Aricia and I... Martin and Torma would descend upon this planet and none of you would survive. They would not rest until every vile monster in this mountain was dead, and your un-hatched siblings would then be unprotected and uncared for and they would die.

Is that what I am to you? A monster?

Isheeni shook her head quickly. You are acting by instinct Syrilth. Everything you have done has been by instinct. That is something the King knows well. The elves... the females you are trying to kill? They are descended from our kind you know?

You jest! Syrilth exclaimed.

Isheeni shook her head quickly. No. Search among your deepest feelings. Do you not feel the draw to the elves of this planet? They do not fear our kind out of hand. Part of them knows they are part of us. As do we. Maruad is trying to make you help him kill a part of ourselves Syrilth.

This is why Roluth bonded so easily with these female elves? Syrilth asked.

Isheeni nodded. Not just anyone can bond with our kind... you know that. They must be strong within Mindvoice... and if you think what you feel with Aricia and I is powerful... when you meet my mate and the King, then you will feel power. Isheeni spoke proudly. They must be able to Mindvoice without our help at a level the Val'istar sets. Usually a Tier Six, which is the highest anyone can achieve... accept for Aricia and the King. They are at a level that can not be measured.

Syrilth nodded. She hit me with a psychic projection didn't she? She saw Isheeni nod. Maruad is a fool... he thought it some sort of invisible weapon.

There are only three hundred within Mjolnir's Hand. That number is significant to the King because of his father. Barely a dozen more outside of those three hundred, including my three children from our first clutch of eggs. Isheeni told her. My son has bonded to the King's daughter... my first born daughter to the King and Aricia's son. My second daughter to the King's Royal Elfin concubine. There will be more of his blood and that of his Queens... but none more than the three hundred of Mjolnir's Hand. Our bond is not to be used as a weapon, he and the Elder mother... my mother made that very clear. We have spread out among the Union that you saw in my thoughts, showing that we do exist and that we exist for justice.

How do I know I can trust what you say? Syrilth asked. Your Mindvoice powers are far beyond what I have obtained. How do I know this is not all some trick?

Do you truly believe you would still be here if it was? Isheeni asked softly. I have been here now how many hours Syrilth? If I was not telling you the truth, would not this mountain be under attack this very minute? Would I be trying to convince you otherwise? You are not stupid Syrilth.

My brothers and sisters? All I have done, I have done for them. To protect them. Syrilth said.

Isheeni nodded. As any Firespitter would Syrilth. There are many things that are different but there are many that remain the same for our kind. Chief among them is our desire... the inbred notion to protect our family at all costs. You might be surprised to know that notion... that desire is also among the Lycavorian Spartans of the King and Aricia.

Syrilth turned back to look once more at the stars. *What... what must I do?* She brought her head down and looked at Isheeni intently. *Tell me Isheeni of Mjolnir's Hand. Tell me what I must do to free my brothers and sisters and give them the freedom I was denied.*

Everything you know about Maruad, this mountain. Join with my mind and through me pass it to my bonded sister Aricia and to Isra and Aelnala. Their first priority above all else is to find your un-hatched siblings and bring them to safety. Then... then she will allow you to take your revenge upon Maruad in any way you wish. Isheeni spoke.

What must I do Isheeni? Syrilth asked.

Tell Maruad we need to hunt together. Tell him I need to learn how to hunt for more than myself and he will believe you. Isheeni spoke. *Let me take you to meet Aricia... talk with her and Isra and Aelnala. Let me prove to you what I say is the truth.*

How do you know you won't just kill me if I go with you? Syrilth asked.

Isheeni looked at her. *By my blood as a Firespitter... I will not allow that to happen. I did not kill Roluth when he plunged on me even though I would have been within my right to do so. My word is my bond to you Syrilth.*

Syrilth stared at her for a long moment. *Roluth?*

Isheeni nodded. *If Maruad will allow it... he can come as well. He needs more time with his bonded ones anyway. Can you convince him?*

Syrilth snorted. *I know of his secret plan to escape this planet. He will not refuse me or I will inform the white skinned creatures of his plans and they will carve the flesh from his bones while he screams in agony.*

Isheeni nodded. *Tonight. I will tell Aricia.*

ELEAR WAINN OFFICE OF THE WAINN CONSTABLE

L'tian stood next to Dysea in the small room watching on the monitor as two elfin male interrogators were questioning the supposed cult leader. Dysea's hip leaned against the table, her arms folded over the top of her firm breasts. She was fully wolf now, the changes long complete in her elfin body, and she had entered phase just yesterday. Her wolf blood was singing for Martin. She wanted to feel him within her, feel his huge cock filling her more completely than anything she had ever felt. She wanted to feel his powerful hands on her body, stroking, exploring. His lips and tongue dancing across her flesh as his powerful aura washed over her, permeating her being.

Their last night together at the palace as she had laid in his arms, the cries of rapture from Isabella filling the night air as Anja, Aricia and For'mya had their way with her next to them on their huge bed, Martin had pulled her close to him. He had wrapped her lithe body within his powerful embrace, pulling her tightly and nuzzling her elfin ears ever so gently. Dysea had shivered in enchantment when he had done this. Martin had told her that night they had not seen enough of each other and he wanted her to stay at the palace more. He wanted her to stay closer to him, her and Isabella both for he missed them. Dysea's mind and body had sung at his words, and she had pressed her face against his powerful chest breathing deeply of his wild mint scent. A tiny part of Dysea had thought perhaps that he was losing interest in her... that he no longer desired her as he had. Martin had proven her how wrong she was that night, and while Isabella was blissfully entertained by the others, Dysea had him all to herself for the entire evening. An evening that neither of them had wasted and an evening that left Dysea deliciously sore and her voice quite hoarse the next morning.

"Dysea?" L'tian's voice echoed gently in her head and brought Dysea out of her carnal thoughts.

"Huh? Oh... I'm sorry L'tian, I was distracted." Dysea spoke softly. "It's very hot in this room."

"Shall I open a window?" He asked.

Dysea shook her head. "No it's not that." She said. She pointed to the monitor. "It's... him?"

L'tian looked confused. "I don't follow?"

"The changes to my body are fully complete now L'tian." Dysea said turning to look at him. "I am coming into phase." She spoke without the least bit of shame.

They both turned when the door slid open and Isabella walked in followed by Nymtran. Dysea smiled and held out her hand which Isabella took without pause. They shared a soft lingering kiss and then Dysea turned back to L'tian.

“As I was saying... I'm coming into phase now.” Dysea spoke calmly and evenly. “It makes me...”

“*Iyavéa lumé.*” L'tian spoke in the elfin language. “Yes... my wife has told me For'mya will experience this as well in time.” (The fruitful time)

Dysea nodded. “It makes me more attuned to the aura of my mate. To *Nauta Melme*. My body calls out for *Nauta Melme*... my blood calls out for him. No other male is able to affect me as he does. In this state I can sense *Nauta Melme* within Mindvoice, albeit faintly. He is very disturbed... something is happening where he is.” Dysea shook her head. “I will contact Aricia when we are done and see if she knows anything... but back to him.” Dysea pointed to the monitor. “I can feel our guest.”

Isabella looked at her wide eyed. “*Ussta* she-elf? You...”

Dysea looked at her and smiled. “It is nothing.” She said shaking her head. “Not even enough to make me pause... *Nauta Melme* is by far stronger. But for me to detect it in my state... the Lycavorian used in the experiment that created him was powerful. He would have to be. This fool knows I am watching him, he can smell me. He can smell that I have come into phase. He is radiating his full unshielded aura in an attempt to influence me, yet he doesn't realize it has no affect on me. He must think I am withering on a bed somewhere and that all of you are keeping me from seeing him.” Dysea spoke with a grin. “What he is projecting however is not natural.” She looked at L'tian. “Have we gotten the results back from the lab?”

L'tian nodded. “He is like the others. A creation. Lycavorian, elfin and Kavalian.” He replied. “He did not resist when they took a blood sample after being brought here. According to your doctor on *NORMYA'S LIGHT*, the DNA and molecular absorption on this one is seventy percent higher than the one in your cell block.”

“He didn't resist?” Isabella spoke surprised.

L'tian shook his head. “I was surprised as well. It seemed as if he knew it was all part of some plan he is following.”

“Or he is protecting something much greater with his feigned cooperation.” Dysea said. “Something that he doesn't want us to find out.”

L'tian nodded. “Yes... that was my first thought as well.”

“Why is he so perfect?” Dysea asked looking at the monitor. “He does not act as the others that attacked Lexi and I did. They were crazed and near insane. This one is calm and reserved, completely in control. His aura is an unnatural thing... elves do not have an aura but by all accounts he could pass for an elf easily at first glance, and no Lycavorian has an aura like this. It doesn't even feel real.”

“Does Arzoal believe this still has to do with the first elfin King?” Isabella asked.

Dysea shook her head quickly and then moved to sit down at the small table. L'tian and Isabella joined her. “She has reviewed everything I have given to her. Everything that we have discovered. She realizes now that this man and his followers were using that only as a cover for this cult. He looks nothing like a Lycavorian or a Kavalian. I studied the history of that race the last few hours. They were savage and cruel.”

L'tian nodded. “They were indeed. But until now... nothing has been heard from them except in tiny amounts. The High Coven is said to have all but wiped them out.”

“The more I read the more I came to realize that the evil I feel comes from him.” Dysea said. “He is not like the outer demeanor that he projects. What he projects is death and decay.”

“We know he is using his gatherings to recruit followers.” L'tian said. “Those followers subsequently disappear for several days and then return fully converted. They sell all of their belongings and move to this compound where they live. We have spoken to the neighbors of some. They describe it as unnerving.”

Dysea nodded. “I'm not surprised. As I said he projects evil. The ones that attacked Lexi and I projected evil. Two days he has sat in that room now. He has never complained... never asked for a Defender. He has denied nothing and admitted to nothing.” Dysea spoke. She turned to her lover. “It is frightening. The wolf in me... the wolf in me wants to rend his flesh from his body, but the elf in me wants to run and hide. Bella has Mateau been able to provide you with any information?”

Isabella nodded. “He has been watching this Solomon. It appears he is the middle man so to speak. Mateau has informed me the fourth VBAE is missing, but that is no surprise really.” Isabella said. “Mateau has

found a work order buried with other requisitions requesting that it be replaced due to faulty circuitry. It shows the VBAE as being shipped back and they are waiting for a new one.”

“More than likely it is within this compound they have built.” L’tian spoke.

Isabella nodded. “That is my guess as well.”

“And this Roland signed the order I take it?” Dysea said.

Isabella nodded. “Indeed he did.” She replied. “In fact Roland has also been the one to approve every purchase in the last thirty-five years pertaining in any way to the field of research and development within the medical field.”

“Then he is a High Coven agent?” Dysea said.

Isabella nodded. “Undoubtedly. The only questions that remain are... who he is working for now... and what information he has?”

“You trust him Bella? This Mateau?” Dysea asked.

Isabella nodded. “We... I watched him try to save the life of a child for three hours. He wouldn’t give up. And when that child finally died, he refused to allow anyone to touch the body. We... we wrapped him in soft satin sheets and Mateau and I gave his body to the stars.” Isabella looked at her elf lover. “He is loyal my love.”

“And this Roland is on Apo Prime?” Dysea asked.

Isabella shook her head. “He’s conveniently on his way here to meet with Mateau. It is a meeting that was scheduled some weeks ago, but it only lends credence to my theory of what is going on. Armetus agrees with me as well.”

L’tian looked at her. “What theory is this?” He asked. “I thought this all had to do with this cult centered on the first elfin King.”

Dysea shook her head. “L’tian other things have occurred that lead Bella and I to think otherwise. Arzoal now agrees with us as well.”

L’tian looked at them. “I’m listening.”

Isabella nodded slowly. “Armetus is aware of what we are doing here and I’m sure he will give you a more detailed briefing at a later time.” She spoke quickly. “Everything that is happening is tied together somehow to something larger. I have maintained close contact with Armetus over the past week Dysea.”

Dysea nodded. “You told me as much Bella. What is going on?”

“There are assassins on Apo Prime as well as here on Elear, and from what little Armetus was able to tell me, For’mya or this young female Sadi is the target.”

“For’mya?” Dysea spoke. “Why?”

“This young Lycavorian female has apparently been used by the High Coven as a low level courier for many years.” Isabella explained. “It was she that got the first group of assassins to the island in the attempt on Anja’s sister. Armetus has been investigating her for some weeks and just a few days ago she confessed everything to them. They have placed her in protective custody on the island with For’mya. They believe she is merely a pawn and not a traitor, but they feel that either she or For’mya saw something they should not have seen. Six assassins have been contracted and appeared on Apo Prime. Four Bo’yak and two Unsaar. All of them very experienced and having papers that were forged by a man who does work for my father’s secret police.” Isabella moved to the small table.

L’tian looked shocked. “Bo’yak?” He said.

“Who are these Bo’yak?” Dysea demanded.

“They are far more skilled and expensive than the Kochab and Evolli who have come after us here.” Isabella spoke. “I have witnessed one Bo’yak assassin take out three Lycavorians Centurions by his self. They are not to be underestimated. And if they are now on Apo Prime... then their mission has been sanctioned by my father.”

“Your father?” L’tian gasped. “But that would be... that would only be a prelude to war.”

Isabella looked at him. “Or an act of desperation.” She said.

“What do you mean Bella?” Dysea asked.

“This young Lycavorian female had contacts within a safehouse here in Wainn. I sent Miai to retrieve that encrypted data from one of Armetus’s secure consoles at the palace. She will return shortly.”

“Bella what aren’t you telling us?” Dysea said.

“Armetus told me this morning before I came here. Armetus believes there is another High Coven agent within our inner circle Dysea.” She answered. “This one placed much higher than Aspon was.”

Dysea looked at L'tian and then back to her. “What leads him to this conclusion?”

“Small details more than anything?” Isabella spoke. “And how what we are dealing with here is tying back to what is happening on Apo Prime in small ways.”

“What details?” L'tian asked.

“Anja's sister Sivana for one.” Isabella spoke. “The only reason we got to her first was out of sheer luck. We had been following her longer yes, but we had Yuriko helping us. Her knowledge of The Wilds was invaluable. Yuri had not been back from Earth long enough to re-establish herself within the High Guard. Once she did however, things happened very quickly. They had orders to capture or kill Sivana... but the priority was keeping her from falling into our hands. They discovered her at the exact same time as we did.”

Dysea nodded. “Sivana knew the location of *Nauta Melme's* daughter. Of Lisisa.” She spoke. “She was the one who delivered her to Lycavore.”

Isabella nodded. “That is part of it yes... but Armetus seems to think there is another reason as well. Armetus is looking now into how the Coven found her so quickly with almost none of the intelligence we had. I also told Armetus of my half brother being here on Elear trying to kill me. It didn't come to me until I was speaking with Mateau and Miai mentioned it as we were leaving.”

“Mentioned what?”

“How did my father discover that I was seriously considering finally taking a more active role as Martin's Queen, as he has wanted me too? As all of you have wanted me too?” Isabella asked. “My father hates the fact that you and I are lovers Dysea. Not only lovers, but very much in love. With each other as well as Martin. Not to mention Aricia, Anja and For'mya. We have made no attempt to hide that and that alone is reason enough for him. But the men Roland assigned to Mateau as his assistant directors, at least one of them referred to me as Queen Isabella when he was talking with Mateau. Now how exactly would that information have gotten to Roland? I did not make that final decision until we were here, and we have talked of this before *ussta* she-elf. Yet within only a day or so of us arriving here to investigate this cult, the first attempt on my life was made. They knew before hand that I was considering it. And they had to already be here when we arrived.”

Dysea nodded quickly. “Yes... I remember. Bella... Armetus doesn't believe the traitor is one of us?”

Isabella shook her head quickly. “No. As closely bound as we have become... that would be impossible and Armetus knows that.” She answered. “But he also knows I have not seen or spoken to anyone within IES in almost a century, yet an assistant director on Elear knew that I was considering this.”

L'tian sat down at the table. “I'm not following you Isabella. What does that have to do with this cult?”

Dysea's emerald green eyes grew wide now. “Nothing.” She said softly. “Nothing at all.”

“Excuse me?” L'tian spoke.

“Veldruk did not sanction this Biogenics work.” Dysea spoke quickly. “This Roland has gone rogue on him hasn't he?” She asked looking at Isabella.

Isabella nodded. “That is what Armetus believes.” Isabella smiled. “The man... that man frightens me sometimes with the way his mind is such a puzzle twister. My father sent my brother here to eliminate evidence of any High Coven ties to Roland, and also eliminate me in the process of turning every vampire who calls the Union home back into an enemy.”

“What?” L'tian gasped. “How... how is that even possible?”

Isabella smiled. “Killing me was the secondary mission and the perfect cover for my brother. Kill me within IES headquarters while Roland is here, my father's small time agents planted within the Netnews divisions start rumors of the Biogenics program and then my ties to IES and ultimately Roland, who conveniently arrives tomorrow to speak with Mateau about funding. Roland dies with me... the biogenics leaks and stories are told that we were doing all this behind Martin's back?”

“It rapidly becomes a crisis for the King and every vampire within the Union becomes an enemy once more.” L'tian gasped as realization hit him.

Isabella smiled. “And my father achieves what he has been trying to achieve for centuries now. I would be dead and all that we have built here... it would be destroyed in a matter of days. Not to mention he would eliminate an agent that he no longer has control over.”

Dysea shook her head. “But if Roland is not working for your father...?”

“As much as I despise the man, as much as I would rejoice to bury a blade in his black heart, I agree with Armetus. He is not fool enough to sanction Biogenics research because he knows the results are very questionable at the least and very dangerous at the best.” Isabella spoke.

“Then we need to find out who Roland is working for.” Dysea said. “Before he discovers that his life is in danger. If he has not already figured that out.”

L’tian leaned forward. “What does all this have to do with another traitor within the King’s circle?” He asked.

Isabella looked at him her hazel/green eyes unreadable. “That is what Miai brought to my attention. Aside from Martin, you, Anja, Aricia and For’mya, I have told only five others that I was finally comfortable enough with myself... with my relationship with Dysea... that I was finally comfortable enough with myself to assume the role Martin wants me to assume. As his Queen and his mate.”

Dysea’s emerald eyes grew wide in horror and she sat back in the chair. “Bella... you...”

Isabella nodded. “Yes...”

L’tian’s eyes moved quickly back and forth between them. “What? What are you two saying?” He demanded.

Dysea turned slowly to look at him. “The traitor is...” The door to the small room burst open and Miai rushed in with Sole’nar right behind her.

“Milady Isabella!” Miai gasped. She looked like she had just run the two kilometers from the Wainn landing pad.

Isabella and Dysea came to their feet quickly. “Miai... what is it?”

“The property here in Wainn... the one that Armetus sent to us?” Miai gasped out.

Isabella took her hands. “Miai... take a deep breath child. Calm down!”

Miai shook her head quickly. “It is not... it is not one of the ones that Mateau listed for us!” She took a deep breath. “I contacted Marci as soon as I knew this and she headed for this location.”

“And?”

“She contacted me back just as we were landing.” Miai spoke. “You and Dysea have your COM units turned off!”

Isabella turned and looked at Dysea and they shared a sheepish look as they grinned. “Yes we do.” Isabella spoke.

“Marci told me that she has seen three Kochab enter this house in the last thirty minutes alone! And there is definitely a member of the *Venorik Elghinn* unit there as well.” Miai gasped.

Isabella’s eyes were wide at this. Her head snapped to Dysea. “*Ussta* she-elf!”

“Go!” Dysea barked. “I will find out what I can from our guest here.”

LYCAVORE

“EVAC! Evac now!” Martin’s voice screamed in their COM units.

Yuriko leaned back in the chair she was sitting in as the consoles in front of her began to flicker. “What...?” She began working the consoles once more. “Shit! Daniel... someone is rerouting control of the security measures! I’m...” Yuriko’s eyes grew wide as she gazed at the screen.

“What?” Danny screamed.

“It’s a fucking trap!” Yuriko barked. “The palace’s internal sensors are coming back online! Daniel... we got Immortals moving on us from the north stairwell! They knew we were coming!”

“Ah fuck me!” Danny barked. “You heard the boss! We’re out of here! Anuk... Nayeca, cover the corridor!” Danny slammed his hand down on his COM unit. “Marty... we got bad ju ju coming out of the woodwork! We’re pulling back to the barracks room!” Danny turned to Husen. “Watch the corridor! Yuriko... can you shut it down!”

“No!” Yuriko screamed back, her hands flying over the console. “They’ve got control from another location. It was rigged remotely!”

Danny reached into the small fanny pack he wore and slapped the box like device on the console next to her. “Blow the fucking thing then! Cut the power to the perimeter systems!”

Yuriko looked at him. “Daniel that...”

“Do it Yuriko... before they reprogrammed the palace defenses to target us again!” Danny barked just as Anuk let loose with a sustained burst down the corridor.

“We have company!” Nayeca screamed a second before she too pulled the trigger.

“Do it Yuriko!” Danny barked. “Marty... Marty are you moving! Man... we got Immortals coming out of the fucking walls boss! Marty... it was a trap!”

“Yes!” Martin’s voice in his implant was soft and filled with unbridled rage. “I know! Evac now Danny! All of you!”

“Martin I’m not going to leave you here to...!”

“Tell him to shut up!” Donus’s voice filled their ear implants. “Tell him to shut up or I will kill all of you right now!”

“What are you doing?” Sivana’s voice barked “You...!”

The single shot thundered in the confines of the prison corridor and Belen’s voice filled their COM in a piercing scream of agony.

Danny’s head snapped around even as he lifted his 190. As he stepped into the corridor and Anuk and Nayeca turned around Husen was already gone down the corridor.

“Fuck!” Danny swore. “All of you... with me now!”

Martin glared at Donus as he cradled the Lycavorian female prisoner in his arms, Lisisa and Melita frozen in their spots as Belen caught Sivana’s falling body lowered her gently to the filthy floor of the prison corridor. The single round had caught her directly in the chest just above her left breast. At such close range it had punched clean through her chest and exited just beneath her unprotected shoulder blade. Blood spilled from her lips as she gripped Belen’s arms tightly.

“Bel... Belen?” She gasped out her eyes wide as pain wracked her body.

Belen shook his head back and forth. “Sivana... you didn’t wear your body armor!” He almost screamed.

“Too... too heavy!” Sivana croaked out the words, her fingers clenching and unclenching trying to grab onto his armored shoulders. “Belen... I’m... I’m cold!”

“I... Sivana... I...” He pulled her body closer to his as if his presence alone could keep her from dying.

Donus glared at them, holding the P190 with a steady grip. “Did you think I was just going to let you leave and ruin all that we have here?” He shouted out the words. “You have ruined everything! Everything!”

“Father!” Husen’s voice carried to them as his son scrambled down the stairs and stopped just behind his father. “Father... what are you doing? The Immortals are here! We have to go!”

“Securing our future!” Donus exclaimed. “Get their weapons! We will give them the King of the Lycavorian Union. They’ll give us whatever we want Husen! Anything we desire!”

“He is our King!” Husen hissed out, his eyes wide in shock.

“He is not our King!” Donus shouted. “We will be Kings! We will have anything we want! Now do as I tell you!”

“Yuri will gut you like the dog you are!” Martin hissed stepping forward.

“Don’t move! I will kill the wench you came here for if you move!” Donus barked.

“You... you knew she was here?” Lisisa gasped out in shock.

“We have known she was here for years!” Donus snapped. “Nanac and Onia are the ones who showed the Coven how to extract her scent glands without killing her and they told them how to keep them viable!”

“Her scent glands?” Melita spoke. “Why would you need her scent glands?”

“Nanac and Onia are dead.” Martin stated flatly. “As you will be very shortly.”

Donus laughed. “Are you going to kill me? You may be fast King Leonidas... but you aren’t that fast. I will give the Coven witch you... and she will give me all I have ever wanted. And I will be free of this hated planet. Husen... take their weapons damn it!”

“Father... why are you doing this?” Husen gasped.

“We’ll have all that we ever wanted!” Donus shouted. “The Coven Princess will give us everything we ask of her for giving her Leonidas!”

“I already have what I want!” Husen exclaimed. “I have taken Relina as my mate! I want to leave this place and have a life!”

“Relina? That little wench! She will be your plaything Husen! You will have any female you want! Even vampire females! They...” Donus stopped talking when he felt the barrel of the K12 press to his forehead. “Husen... what are you doing? Put that away! You are my son and I lead our family!”

“I have discovered something you never bothered to feel father.” Husen spoke. “I will not allow you to take that from me! Not when we are so close to leaving this cursed planet!”

“Husen you will do...”

Husen caressed the trigger of the K12 and the single round took Donus just above his ear, blowing the majority of his brains over the wall and floor. “No father! I am done listening to you.” Husen spoke just before he turned and began vomiting.

Lisisa rushed forward and scooped up the fallen 190 as Danny and the others came rushing down the stairs. Martin glared at him.

“I told you to fucking evac!” Martin shouted.

“I did evac! I conducted an evac here you shit! Fucking court marital me later! The palace defenses are going to blow in about twenty seconds and there are Immortals flooding from the upper floors! This was a trap Skipper!” Danny shouted.

Martin moved forward and held out the prisoner’s limp form to him. “Take her.” He said.

Danny’s eyes went wide when he finally registered her scent and he looked at Martin, Anuk’s eyes growing wide now as well. “Martin...”

“Guard her brother! With your life!” Martin spoke.

Danny didn’t hesitate and nodded adjusting the fragile form in his arms. Martin turned to where Belen held Sivana in his arms, her blood pooling around her body, even as Anuk knelt next to her, tearing at her medial bag.

“Anuk!” Belen gasped. “You must save her! She is fading from me!”

Anuk’s hands were shaking as she held out the medical scanner and passed it quickly over Sivana’s body. “Gods...” She gasped. “Her lungs... her lungs are torn open; the round nicked her liver and heart! She’s got massive internal bleeding! I’m not Hadarian Belen... I can’t... I can’t do anything!”

“Bite... bit... bite me.” Sivana wheezed out the words, blood spilling from her lips. “Make... make... make me yours!”

“Belen!” Martin shouted causing Belen’s head to snap up. “She is your woman! Do as she asks you! Bite her!”

“She... she is the Queen’s sister Mi... Milord!” Belen gasped.

“Damn it man!” Martin barked loudly. “You have already scented her! She wants you and no one else. She told Anja this! Now bite her and let Anuk stabilize her!”

“Sire...”

“If you let her die Belen... Anja will kill you!” Martin snapped. “And if she doesn’t... your father will! Now turn her Belen, before I lose my fucking temper Spartan and I kill you!”

Lisisa and Melita shared a look of shock at this as they helped Husen regain his feet, spitting the foul taste of vomit from his mouth. Belen looked at Sivana... her green eyes focused on him.

“Sivana...” He whispered.

“I... I don’t... I want to stay with you Belen.” The words came out hoarse and barely audible, blood leaking from her lips as she grasped his arms tightly.

Belen pulled her tighter and didn’t hesitate, extending his fangs and biting deeply into her neck. Sivana convulsed several times as the virus in his saliva set her blood on fire, the pain unlike anything she had ever felt. The pain from her wounds was forgotten as her blood burned like acid for a few brief seconds and then became simply a painful throbbing. The gunshot wound became almost secondary to the heat she felt racing through her veins now. Her green eyes were wide and she gripped Belen so tightly, her nails left impressions in the body armor covering his shoulders.

The floor and walls suddenly shuddered as the massive explosion shook the entire building around them. Pieces of granite and dust fell from the ceiling as all of them staggered.

“That was the control room!” Yuriko exclaimed from the top of the stairs. “The defenses no longer have power... but now we are trapped here father! Immortals are swarming to the palace from two sides! And from the airfield!”

“All they have to do is throw plasma grenades down the stairs and we will all die!” Melita screamed.

“I ain’t gonna give them the chance!” Martin snapped. “Yuriko... Nayeca... down here!”

They didn’t hesitate and drew back down the stairs quickly as Martin stepped toward them. Melita, Lisisa, and Husen could only watch in awe as the shimmering silver psychic ball of power formed in Martin’s palms. He directed it up the stairs at the ceiling and shoved his arms forward; releasing the grapefruit sized psychic blast into the ceiling above the doorway at the top of the stairs just as the head of an Immortal looked into the room quickly.

It was as if an explosive charge went off in the ceiling, the room and floor all around them once more shuddering violently as huge chunks of granite and steel came crashing down, dust filling the entire corridor

“Ok... now I’m really fucking tired of this planet!” Martin screamed releasing another ball of silver psychic power almost immediately after the words came out of his mouth. Lisisa and Melita dragged a wide eyed Husen back from the bottom of the stairs.

“He’s trapped... he’s trapped us in here like animals!” Melita yelled out.

Martin spun around and looked at her. Melita eyes flew open further when she saw his eyes were now the yellow gold of his wolf persona like she had seen earlier. His fangs were also fully extended as well and he had a murderous smile on his face.

“Trapped?” Martin spoke. “Not even close Melita! Torma my brother!” He shouted.

All of them watched as the light blue psychic shield began to encompass Martin’s body instantly.

Torma cranked his massive eighteen and a half meter body into a gut wrenching turn and dove for the earth before his bonded brother’s voice had finished echoing in his mind. He felt another presence within Mindvoice and knew immediately who it was.

I am coming to you my brother! Torma screamed out in Mindvoice, his heart pumping pure and strong.

Torma! Miath’s voice broke in and Torma saw his green body appear next to his as he dove for the ground. *Anja sent me here! She said something was wrong?*

Father! Jeth’s younger voice squeaked out, his blue/black body behind them, his wings folded tightly as he tried to keep up with the two larger dragons in their dive.

Miath... the vampire witch Yuri makes her way from the landing pad! Destroy their vehicles quickly!

It will be done! Miath exclaimed before his large body peeled away.

Jeth my son... land with me near the south corner of the palace. Activate your shields Jeth! We have some Immortals to dispatch!

Father... I have never...

You are my son and a member of Mjolnir’s Hand now Jeth! Follow me in! Our bonded mates need our help!

Yuri was silent as she rode in the Lifter with the Regent and two Immortals. The High Coven driver was skillful as he maneuvered the Lifter easily along the road. Six other Y11 Transport Lifters carried the thirty member detachment of Immortals that had come down with her from *BLOOD JUSTICE*. Yuri’s rage had been building ever since Robert had taken her to his Ready Room. There he had played the transmission from a dead man to her.

“If you are viewing this Robert Moran, then I am dead.” Cha’talla’s face was calm and unreadable in the holoimager. “What I have done was only for the advancement of my people Robert. I was the one to purchase the half breed daughter of Leonidas. I have kept her hidden in the one place I did not think anyone would look. We have researchers among my people, and they have been trying to use her DNA and her cells to improve my people’s grim aesthetic appearance to others. I have not done

this for any other purpose Robert Moran. The High Lord freed my people, stopped our warring ways between the tribes. I am as loyal to him and the Vampire Coven in death as I was in my life. I had hoped he would... I had hoped he would see my actions for what they were. An attempt by me to improve my people and make them more like him. I fear my actions have only angered him greatly.

“Where I chose to hide this half breed is where the High Lord has imprisoned a very secret program. The prisoner in the Regent’s cell is a Lycavorian female. She is the original host of a clone agent that the High Lord was able to insinuate into the Union’s highest corridors of power. They have been using her to replenish the scent gland cells of their clone for fifteen years now. I knew of this... but I never thought Leonidas would venture so far from Union space in an attempt to rescue his half breed daughter and thereby jeopardize the location of this clone host. He will discover her there, of that there is little doubt. He has grown far more powerful than the High Lord imagined he would, especially since he has bonded with that huge beast. My son serves you Robert... and with my death the High Lord will undoubtedly order my immediate offspring and family executed. Fash’ka is my second oldest Robert Moran... and I ask you as a... as a friend... please attempt to see that he survives. I saw in you those first days on Earth what my people could become Robert Moran. You are not completely vampire, but know that you have the skills and power to become stronger than any pureblood I have ever seen outside of the High Lord’s own children. Yuri may be married to that pathetic pureblood out of convenience Robert, and she may even bear him a child sealing his support for her father, but do not dismiss her for this. Her vampire heart... her blood wishes only you. If such a child is born my friend... give him or her to the Immortals. We will train them to be true to the Coven. And then set about making your own children.

“Something is happening Robert Moran. It began just after Veldruk met with the Zaleisian Ambassador a few weeks ago. He detected something from the man, but would tell no one what it was. He began ordering secret sweeps with our sensor drones into Zaleisian space. He became... he became worried about something Robert. I have never seen him worried about anything. Something is happening that he has no control over and he is trying to hide it as he has hidden so much through the millennia. You should know Robert Moran... it was Veldruk who ordered Xerxes to rape the Princess Yuri. Your wife and the woman you love so much. He wanted to harden her to emotion... to feeling. He had Xerxes rape her repeatedly to accomplish this task and he ordered me to say nothing upon death of my family. I tell you now because I want you to know the man. His actions with Yuri... it succeeded until you came into her life. I noticed that in the first hour after I came to Earth.

“I do not know what is going on Robert Moran... but I fear it will shake the High Coven to its core. And it has nothing to do with the wolf dogs. Be ready for anything Robert Moran... for if King Leonidas discovers the prisoner on Lycavore he will unleash a purge within the Union that will seek out and destroy every asset we have there and leave us blind to what they are doing.” Cha’talla stopped and took several deep breaths as if mulling something over in his mind before he continued. “Robert... you should know... Veldruk is the High Lord of the Vampire High Coven and its Empire, but it is not he who began us on this path of that I am certain. He wields absolute power... but his power is not absolute. He answers to someone else. I do not know who it is... he has never given me a hint of that... but I know it to be true. And whatever is happening he is attempting to hide it from whom he answers too. He thinks my death has buried many of his sins... but I am not as foolish and ignorant as he believed. Help my son to survive Robert... in any way you can... and these secrets will be yours when he is safe. I am no traitor to the Coven... and I would die to protect it... even after I am already dead.

“Leave nothing to chance my friend... for the fate of the High Coven Empire may very well rest in your hands and the hands of Princess Yuri. It was an honor to know you Robert Moran...”

Yuri had controlled her rage then, and she was controlling it now, albeit tenuously. Her own father had ordered her brother Xerxes to rape her. Humiliate her. Crush her spirit and attempt to reshape her into something else. Now Yuri understood why he always relented with her, why he always finally gave in to her wishes. He did not want her to question him in any way. He did not want her to discover what he had done.

The very faint sounds of weapons fire made her look up just as the massive explosion on the horizon lit the night sky. The armored Lifters in front of and behind her own vehicle came to screeching stops on the path to the palace Immortals bailing from inside the vehicles to watch as the front windows of the palace, on every

floor, blew outward in a flame lit fury, chunks of the front of the palace itself breaking off and falling to the ground from the force of the explosion.

Yuri exited her lifter just as an Immortal from her security detachment ran back to her with the Immortal Colonel who had greeted her at the pad.

“Princess... the regent’s palace has been breached!” Her officer spoke. “At least a dozen Lycavorians are inside! Half of them Spartans!”

“Leonidas?” Yuri gasped out.

Pa’cour nodded. “Yes Milady! He came for the prisoner! I assumed he would attempt this after speaking with you just before you departed your ship and I left a small detachment hidden in the palace when we came to get you.” Pa’cour held up the small data scanner.

“What is your name?” Yuri demanded.

“Colonel Pa’cour Princess.” He answered immediately.

Secondary explosions shook the ground they were standing on causing Yuri to grab the side of the Lifter for support. “The beast?” She exclaimed. “His dragon! If Leonidas is here... that dragon will be here as well! Has anyone seen him?”

“No! My men inside are reporting that he has collapsed the ceiling around the entrance to the prison level with some sort of force field weapon!” Pa’cour barked out, canting his head to try and hear better. “They are attempting to dig through the rubble now!”

Yuri looked up into the night sky as she felt a large tremor within Mindvoice. A large unshielded tremor. “Get away from the vehicles now!” She screamed. “Everyone away from the vehicles!”

Yuri dove for the nearby ditch followed by her Immortal security detachment and Pa’cour without hesitation. The stream of superheated breath ripped from the sky above with no warning just as the Immortals and High Coven troops were reacting to her shouted warning.

Miath came in low and fired just as he came upon the first vehicle. His stream of superheated breath sizzled in the night sky as it melted four Immortals and the first vehicle in the first two seconds. As he swooped over the small convoy, his breath reached out for the next vehicles right down the line. Small explosions ripped the night air as the lifters exploded and tossed bodies to either side of the road, deadly superheated shrapnel whistling through the air and punching through flesh and metal alike. Yuri could barely suck in a breath at the weight of her Immortal Captain and Colonel Pa’cour, both of whom had thrown their bodies over the top of her to protect her. Screams of the dying filled the night air as with two powerful swipes of his wings Miath disappeared back into the night sky.

Yuri felt Pa’cour roll off her immediately; reaching for his leg as he screamed into the communications implant he wore. “I don’t care! The dog’s beast just attacked us!”

Yuri watched his eyes grow wide. “What is it?” She screamed.

“There... there is more than one dragon on the planet!” Pa’cour shouted. “The King’s monster is right now smashing at the rear corner of the palace with his tail. A smaller beast is burning my detachment if they come near. Their weapons are ineffective against the shields of either beast!”

“He’s not trapped!” Yuri screamed. “One of his whores must be with him! Probably that red haired bitch! It was her dragon that just attacked us! Move all your forces to that point! Move through the timber! Stay out of the open!” Yuri scrambled to her feet. “We need to overwhelm them before he uses his power to blast his way out of the lower level! That’s what the beast is doing! It’s trying to smash him an opening!”

Pa’cour began shouting orders even as he pulled the two of three large slivers of smoking metal from his leg with a grimace of pain. Yuri watched this for a moment before brushing his hand aside and kneeling next to Pa’cour and gripping the last piece herself. Pa’cour nodded and she yanked the sliver free of his flesh. The wounds were healing quickly and Pa’cour let two other Immortals assist him to his feet.

“The Princess says to attack in force!” Pa’cour screamed in rage. “I don’t care how many casualties you have suffered! Attack again!”

Yuri looked at Pa’cour. “Where is that scum Tonlar?” She barked.

“He dove for the other side of this roadway!” Her Commander barked in reply.

“Take me there now!” Yuri barked

“This way Princess!” Pa’cour spoke moving across the path between two burning Lifters and back into the high brush and thickets, leading her towards a small group on the edge of the nearby timber.

Yuri touched the small box on her belt and activated her own COM unit. It was a single secure communications line directly to Moran.

“Robert he is here!” Yuri spoke. “The Immortals are attacking, but there is a good chance he will escape. I believe the red haired Hadarian whore is with him. Her dragon just swept over our Lifters and destroyed them!”

“Yuri... if Leonidas has found that prisoner then we have to follow your father’s orders!” Moran’s voice carried to her.

“I am finding it very hard to follow or believe anything my father has told us in the last few hours Robert.” Yuri spoke as she walked her voice emotionless and cold.

“I know but...”

“I will contact you once we have the situation secure here.” Yuri snapped cutting off the transmission as she walked up on where she saw Tonlar huddled behind a large log that had been torn from the earth years ago. His face was ashen white, even in the darkness with only the flames from the burning Lifters lighting the surrounding area.

“Princess... you must take cover!” Tonlar gasped. “Did you see it? The beast came out of the sky breathing fire! It...”

“It wasn’t breathing fire you fool!” Yuri snapped. “It unleashed superheated air, not the flame from one of the fire breathers! The prisoner in the cell beneath your palace... who is it?” Yuri demanded.

Tonlar looked at her. “Prisoner?”

Yuri stepped closer and grabbed him by the front of his clothes, yanking him up and baring her fangs, her eyes changing to vampire cobalt blue. “The Lycavorian in your prison level?” Yuri screamed. “Who is it?”

“I... I don’t know!” Tonlar screamed back. “I was... I was never told!”

Yuri’s eyes flared and as quick as a striking viper her head snapped forward, her fangs biting deeply into Tonlar’s neck. His eyes grew wide for a moment, until Yuri bit deeper and pulled her head away tearing open his throat savagely. Blood fountained into the air as Tonlar withered on the ground, his hands trying to stem the flow of blood squirting from his neck. Yuri stepped back quickly, drawing her sleeve across her bloody lips before spitting on the ground.

“Foul tasting man!” She hissed. “Colonel Pa’cour...” She growled snatching the High Coven equivalent to the Spartan P190 from his grasp.

The VHC41 was the standard assault rifle for the High Coven, firing a 13mm projectile round that could penetrate most types of body armor. The Spartan body armor was made of sterner material and at longer ranges the rifle became less effective.

“Princess!” Pa’cour barked out as he drew the two swords that were secured across his back.

Yuri met his eyes. “We will take back this palace Immortal!” Yuri declared. “Do I make myself clear?”

Pa’cour smiled a vicious smile. “And the regent’s corpse Princess?”

Yuri spit on the cooling body once more. “Leave him for the insects. They must eat too.”

Torma’s massive whip like tail smashed into the corner of the building for a fifth time, granite and stone dislodging and falling all around him. His talons dug into the soft dirt, his head spinning around at the adolescent trumpet from Jeth. Three Immortals had gotten close to his son, and as Torma moved to intervene, Jeth trumpeted madly in anger. His own mace like tail whipped around and crushing one Immortal square in the face, sending his body flying thirty meters away to smash on the rocks. Small flashes rippled across Jeth’s psychic shield indicating where he was taking hits from the Immortal VHC41s. Jeth snatched another Immortal within his jaws and bit down savagely. As the Immortal began screaming in agony, Jeth lifted him from the ground and flung his body away, his arm and shoulder tearing away with a sickening sound. As the Immortal’s body cleared his snout Jeth turned and unleashed a short blast of superheated air directly into the face of the third Immortal.

The Immortal’s weapon fell from suddenly loose fingers as he reached up to scream and try to stop the melting of his skin and flesh. His decision was made for him as Jeth flicked up with his left talon and slashed open his upper body to the night air. Torma’s eyes beamed with pride at his sons actions, until he saw the large contingent of Immortals forming to their side.

Miath! To our east! There are... Torma needn't have bothered as within seconds, Miath had dropped out of the dark sky and landed directly within the group of Immortals. His breath and tail and razor like talons began rending flesh from bone, opening massive wounds, and burning entire pieces of bodies to ash.

Torma... are you clear! Martin's voice filled his head.

Torma turned back to the corner he had been smashing. *Do what you must Martin!*

Martin stepped around where Belen held Sivana's limp form in his arms.

"Everyone cover your faces and eyes!" He yelled.

Martin's yellow/gold eyes flared and he lifted his hands once more. Lisisa watched as the area in front of him shimmered with a silver/bluish color and then he shoved his hands forward. Lisisa watched in undisguised awe as that massive wave of power reached out from her father and struck the wall of the prison corridor. The ensuing roar was deafening as hundreds of tons of rock, granite and dirt were blown away from the corner of the palace, and suddenly Lisisa could see stars and smell fresh air.

Martin turned and moved up next to Anuk and Belen. He didn't hesitate and pulled Sivana into his arms. "Danny! Take her to Torma! Melita... go with him! Nayeca... with me!"

Belen stood up with Martin, confusion in his eyes. "Milord... what are...?"

Martin didn't pause and got back to his feet, plunging through the dust and dirt still hanging in the air.

Torma! He screamed out.

We are here! Torma's voice replied immediately.

Torma's massive eighteen and a half meter long body appeared in the dust cloud along with Miath's dark green body.

Miath! Down! Martin barked and watched as Miath immediately lowered his body to the ground.

"Melita... get in the saddle!" Martin barked.

Melita looked at him as if he was insane. "You are joking!" She gasped.

Melita had no opportunity to complain or protest as Belen came up behind her and physically lifted her up and directed her into the saddle. Melita had no choice but to allow her legs to slide down on either side of the saddle, just as Martin lowered Sivana's limp form in front of her. Her dark brown eyes were wide in fear as she looked at Martin. "I... I do not know what to do!" She yelled.

"You have to do nothing but hold Sivana!" Martin shouted. "Miath will do it all Melita. You can't shift... you must go with him. We can disappear into the hills and move where you can't. Yuriko has more experience than you moving with us in wolf form!" Martin watched as her arms slid tightly around Sivana's waist and then he grabbed her firm ass and pulled her closer to the front of the saddle, pushing her legs under the dragon armor shield guards. "Hold on to her Melita. Don't let go until Anja is taking her from you."

Melita nodded quickly. "I... I won't!"

Martin jumped back down and looked into Miath's deep gray eyes. *You carry the sister of your bonded mate Miath! She has been bitten. Get her back to Anja and tell her that.*

Miath nodded and scrambled to his feet. *I will!*

Now go!

Melita screamed out and locked her arms around Sivana tightly as Miath's powerful legs launched them into the air. Martin dashed to where Nayeca was settling quickly into Torma's saddle while Danny held the limp form of the prisoner. Torma lowered his massive head level with Martin.

My brother... she is...

Martin nodded. *Fly swiftly my brother. Helen must not leave her side for anything. Sivana will survive... Anja must treat her as quickly as she can.*

This can not be! We left her only a month ago! Torma declared.

This is happening Torma... and we must find out the truth quickly. Martin said. *Take Jeth with you... the rest of us will shift and work our way north and then west. We'll be back to you before morning!*

They will attempt to follow you Martin. Torma spoke as he scrambled to his feet.

Let them try! Danny and I will shred them one by one if we have too. Go my brother. Look for us from the west in the morning. Martin turned quickly and looked at Nayeca. *Nayeca...*

I will remain at her side until you return Martin Leonidas. You have my word as a Drow! Nayeca spoke.

Martin nodded. *Torma go!*

Torma flexed his thick legs and propelled himself into the sky. *Jeth my son! Come with me!*

Lisisa nodded and stroked Jeth's long neck. *Go Jeth. I will see you soon!*

Jeth nodded his large head and then flexed his own legs leaping into the night sky.

Martin turned to Danny, Anuk, Belen, Husen and Lisisa and Yuriko. "Yuriko... blur out of here!"

Martin growled. "Stop for nothing! We'll shift and follow you in support!"

Yuriko didn't pause and wrapped the shadows around her and blurred for the treeline. Martin turned to Belen and grabbed his shoulder. "Belen!"

Belen met his eyes, the fire back in them. "She lives Milord! That is all that matters! We must go before they recover! I have no desire to fight these scum Immortals this night!"

"Fucking 'A' Skipper!" Danny barked.

Martin nodded. "Let's get the fuck out of here then!" Martin snapped. "Danny... you and Anuk lead us out! Belen you got the rear. Husen you're with me."

Six flashes of soft white light briefly lit the night sky and then the shapes of six wolves bounding through the thickets and tall grass and vanishing into the night was all that remained of the smoking battlefield on the outside of the regent's palace.

Yuri's cobalt blue eyes gazed on this picture as she stood on the small ridge above the rear field of the palace grounds.

"Do we follow them Princess?" Pa'cour asked.

"That's what he wants you to do Colonel." Yuri answered. "No... he has Simpson with him. Leonidas and Simpson alone could delay and shred your Immortals in the timber for days. Recall your Immortals Colonel. We have a general idea where they are correct?"

Pa'cour nodded. "Yes Princess... but those beasts have mangled my detachment here. Not many remain that are not injured or burned in some way."

"I will have Commander Moran send down the remaining contingent of my Immortals and we will hunt them down and kill them all together." Yuri snarled with a nod. "Take your remaining forces here and secure the palace. The regent's wife... did you find her?"

"We are holding her inside Princess." Pa'cour spoke.

"Give her to your men Colonel." Yuri spoke. "She enjoys giving herself to other men... then she can give herself to those who are worthy of her attentions. Make sure everyone of your Immortals has their way with her. Fuck her until she goes insane. Then lock her in a dark room and let her die without nourishment." Yuri looked at him her dark eyes savagely cruel. "And Pa'cour, make sure that any Lycavorian, man, woman or child that you still have control over is dead before dawn."

Pa'cour nodded. "As you order Princess." He spoke.

**AUTUMN MOON-CLASS ATTACK FRIGATE
HAMMER OF THE GODS
TWENTY-EIGHT HOURS FROM EARTH
ALDEBARAB NEBULA**

Commander Imror eased the connecting hatch open a millimeter at a time. Captain Daro had taken them in with extreme caution, closing the distance to the Mizarian transport with double his usual vigilance. He was well known for his patient nature, and now Imror was thankful for that. With excruciating skill Daro had guided them up under the transport and established a docking lock as lightly as a feather. No one on the *HAMMER* had even felt the minute nudge as they docked with the extended ring on the transport's belly, and if no one of the warship felt it, no one of the much larger transport would have felt it.

It was dimly lit in the small anti-room of the transport's cavernous cargo hold, the only light coming from several overhead fixtures. Imror could see half a dozen large computers within his cone of vision, but no scents came to him that he could detect. He lifted the hatch slowly, until it was all of the way open, the silenced K12 automatic held tightly in his hand. When the King had returned to the Union, many of the unique weapons he and those on Earth had been using were discovered to have excellent usefulness, none more than the

powerful K12. They had never had a hand weapon that was accurate and powerful enough to drop a target in one shot, but with a little tinkering the Union's weapons masters had made the 10mm K12 into a lethal weapon out to fifty meters. It had become the standard sidearm for most of the fleet and many of the Spartan Centurions.

Imror moved with exacting precision, his head turning slowly in all directions and still not detecting any scents that could be construed as a living creature. He leaned back against the inner hatch and released his grip on the ladder, motioning with his empty left hand to the three Centurions that were beneath him. Imror took a deep breath and pulled himself out of the hatch quickly, the three Centurions following him in blinding speed, each of them pulling themselves from the hatch and breaking to the left and right around the hatch. Imror allowed his K12 to sweep the area in front of him, leading his wolf eyes as he took in everything around him, the Centurions doing the same. He looked at the senior Centurion, the man's wolf eyes meeting his as he shook his head indicating he smelled nothing either. Imror motioned to the door with his hand and held up one finger. The Centurion nodded and moved quickly and silently to the sealed door, one other Centurion following him. They had studied the specs of this type transport before coming over from the *HAMMER*, and directly outside this door opened into a short corridor that led to the massive cargo hold.

The two Centurions paused and then the senior one touched the door control. The door hissed open and the two of them paused before moving through the door. Imror and the fourth Centurion moved up to the door and followed the first pair out into the corridor and moved quickly to the first pair. The senior Centurion held his P190 in his right hand, leveled at the door into the massive cargo hold, his left hand holding a portable motion detector. He turned to look at Imror.

"No movement." He spoke softly.

Imror looked at him confused. "This class transport has a crew of forty-six." He stated. "There should be some movement."

"The sensor is working perfectly Commander." He replied. "I checked them before we came over. Three times."

Imror nodded. "Continue into the cargo hold then. Move slowly Senior *Lochagi*... we will cover your rear."

The Centurion nodded and motioned to the man moving with him. He touched the door control panel and it slid open into the massive cargo hold. The wave of heat hit them all at the same time as the *Lochagi* and his partner moved into the cavernous hold. It was also dimly lit, but not so that they couldn't see the three even rows in the center of the bay with what appeared to be chambers of some sort. They were raised a meter off the floor, all of them connected together with cables and conduits. There were control consoles every third chamber and there appeared to be four chambers per row for a total of fifteen. Imror moved up behind his senior *Lochagi* as they crept into the bay, the ten meter high ceiling trailing conduit that was not standard for the cargo hold of a transport.

"Commander!" The *Lochagi* hissed.

Imror moved up to him quickly near the front of the chambers.

"Two signs forward of us. Thirty-seven meters forward, five meters above. Judging by the heat signatures I'm thinking Mizarian." He spoke.

Imror nodded. "That would be the bridge. Normal complement for the bridge crew is seven however." He said.

"Those are the only signs we are detecting sir. Nothing else." He said.

Imror let his eyes wander over the strange looking chambers. "They have turned this hold into some sort of medical facility. These are incubation chambers I think."

"They aren't big enough for adults." The *Lochagi* spoke. "Children maybe?"

Imror shrugged. "Perhaps. But why would they need chambers for children?" He looked at the *Lochagi*. "Search the remainder of this deck. If there are only two on the bridge, then bring them to me here on your sweep back. I'm going to stay here and see if I can't figure out what these chambers are for by searching the rest of this hold and the rear section. Contact me immediately if you detect any additional life signals."

The *Lochagi* nodded and motioned with his head to his partner. Imror watched them move off and then he turned to his partner and he motioned to the rear portion of the transport behind the cargo hold. This section of the ship held engineering and crew quarters and as they moved to the door, Imror activated the motion sensor

he carried. He held it up to the door quickly, waited for the sensor to do three sweeps of the area in front of them and then he signaled his team member to open the door.

The door slid open and they moved smoothly as a pair. Imror had taken great pride in the fact that he had completed the standard Centurion ground training, and since each *AUTUMN MOON*-Class Frigate had a small *Enomotia* of Spartans with advanced commando training, he had studied and worked with them for months. It took them only three minutes to sweep the crew quarters and move into the engineering section and discover why there were only two Mizarian crewmen.

Imror studied the mass of consoles and cables in the engineering section, his experienced eyes knowing immediately what they had come upon.

“They are operating on remote.” Imror stated so his partner could hear him. “All of these controls are slaved to the bridge. Just like the chambers in the cargo hold.”

“Why would you remotely power a transport this size?” The second Spartan asked.

Imror shook his head as his internal COM crackled. “Commander... we have taken the bridge.” The Lochagi spoke. “Just the two Mizarian pilots! They are quite horrified that we just happened to appear. The entire ship is being controlled remotely from one of the cruisers Commander. They are only here to monitor for problems that might come up.”

“Bring them to the cargo hold Lochagi! I have some questions for them.”

“Yes sir!”

Imror stared at the two Mizarian pilots, their skin turning a dark shade of purple due to the fear they both felt. The Mizarian species were a type of chameleons; their skin color changing to suit their mood or whatever emotions they were feeling at the time. Their orange colored eyes were wide as they gazed at him. They had very thin lips and abnormally larger eyes with no nose. Their skulls were oval in shape with thin strands of hair growing down and then braided tightly. They were bipedal, but their limbs were weak and thin.

“Perhaps gentlemen... one of you would be as kind enough to tell me why your ships are outside the normal travel corridors and skulking about.” Imror asked. “Why a ship with a crew complement of forty-six has only two... and why it appears as if this ship is remotely being controlled.” Imror smiled at them, trying to get them to calm down. “Anyone?”

“We are only here to make sure no problems occur with the computer systems!” One of the Mizarian blurted.

“Shut up! They’ll kill us!” The second Mizarian declared harshly.

Imror smiled once more. “I’ll kill you if you don’t.” Imror spoke.

“Kavaliens!” The Mizarian almost shouted. “The two cruisers are all Kavalian! They contracted us to just sit here on our ships and make sure the remote connections remained stable and monitor the instruments! That’s all!”

Imror waved his hands around the cargo hold. “And the chambers?”

“All we know is that they are for eggs of some kind! Big ones! We were told not to ask questions and we’d be paid double for the trip!”

“The trip to where?”

“Earth!” The second Mizarian replied now. “We were told to time our entry into the system with the next influx of duty ships from Apo Prime. The ones bringing the replacement work crews! The Kavaliens have something set up with someone on Earth.”

Imror looked at them. “Why are there not any Kavaliens on the ship now?” He asked.

“Whatever we are picking up... these eggs... the Kavaliens are terrified of them!” The first Mizarian spoke. “They contracted for ten Elgion scientists to take care of whatever we were picking up for the return trip.”

“Where is the final destination?” Imror asked.

The Mizarian didn’t reply quickly enough and Imror lifted his K12 and placed the barrel of the silenced sidearm to the purple skinned forehead. “The final destination my friend... or you will not live another ten seconds.”

“Risú Garune! It’s Risú Garune!” The Mizarian nearly screamed.

Imror's eyes narrowed slightly and he withdrew the K12 slowly. The Lochagi looked at him oddly. "Commander... you know this planet?" He asked.

"You do not know your military history Lochagi?" Imror asked.

"I am only three hundred and nineteen Commander; my interests in the academy were more towards females and drinking. Not history." The Lochagi answered with a grin.

Imror chuckled. "Yes... well this part of our history is not something we want to relive." Imror told him. "Sir?"

"Risu Garune is the home world of the Kavalian people." Imror answered. "The center of their empire at one point. Before their misguided attempt at conquering us and the High Coven in the span of a hundred years." Imror shook his head. "Secure them tightly. I must contact Captain Daro. Touch nothing! We do not want to let those on the cruisers who are monitoring these ships to know we are here."

Imror turned quickly and tapped the COM unit in his armor. "Captain Daro?"

"Go Imror! What have you found boy?" Daro's voice was clear and crisp.

"Captain... the ship is empty except for two Mizarian pilots." Imror reported. "The cruisers however are crewed by Kavalians. They are heading for Earth sir, just as we thought. They were told to enter the system with the next influx of replacement crews from the various companies for the reconstruction that is going on."

Imror heard Daro issuing orders in a whisper and he waited while his Captain checked something. His voice returned in seconds. "Imror that is in twenty-eight hours almost exactly."

Imror nodded. "The same amount of time it will take these ships to reach Earth." He spoke. "The Mizarians say they are supposed to be picking up some kind of eggs. They have incubation chambers of some sort set up in the cargo hold of this transport. I can only assume it is the same in the rest of them."

"Eggs?" Daro's voice questioned. "What kind of eggs?"

"I don't know sir... but these pilots here are contracted through the return voyage it seems. They are to pick up these eggs and return them to the point of origin where these ships left from apparently." Imror spoke.

"Where is that?" Daro asked.

"Risu Garune Captain." Imror spoke. "The Kavalian home world."

"Anse!" Daro exclaimed. "Imror stand by at your location! I must contact Admiral Joarl with this information!"

EARTH EDEN CITY AIRFIELD

It had been easy enough to convince Maruad to let them all leave together. He held Syrilth's brothers and sisters and he knew she would do nothing to endanger them. He also thought it amusing that her brother Roluth had somehow managed to claim the azure blue scaled dragon as his mate when he was obviously much less intelligent than Syrilth. A situation that Roluth only made easier to believe by his actions, even though it was far from the truth. Syrilth had suppressed her fear at what she could be possibly walking into, certainly a trap perhaps, if what Isheeni was saying to her was a lie. It was so very hard to trust anyone but her siblings, and ultimately Roluth had been the one to convince her.

The flight to Eden City had been quiet and fast, the three of them tearing across the landscape at incredible speeds, ignoring the hundreds of animals that scurried beneath them in fear. It had been full dark when they arrived at the airfield and landed near the large hanger on the outskirts of the base. As they grew close to the hanger Syrilth could feel the anxiety increase, not knowing whether to believe or not. She truly had no choice. She had to trust Isheeni, for any misstep now would cost her the lives of her siblings.

These were the things that were racing through her mind now as she started at the azure eyes of the raven haired female in front of her. They had entered the darkened hanger, following Isheeni's lead. Syrilth's head had snapped around when she detected the two Lycavorians closing the large doors rapidly behind her. Her heart skipped several beats until that voice entered her mind as easily as a cool breeze, blowing past her Mindvoice shields as if they weren't even there.

You have no reason to be frightened Syrilth. No harm will come to you here. You are among friends.

The lights had blinded her for a moment as they came on all at once, illuminating the inside of the massive hanger. Standing without fear no more than three meters in front of her were the raven haired female and the violet eyed male. Both of them Lycavorian, and both of them brimming with power. Her ochre colored eyes saw the dozen black and crimson dressed members of the *Durcunusaan* moving about the hanger bringing crates and tables out of the small offices, and the two female elves that she had been trying to kill standing to the side. She watched her brother snorted excitedly and move quickly to where they stood beside the gamboge colored female, and Syrilth watched as the raven haired elf female stepped up to Roluth on one side her face bright and beaming as her hands touched him. It was no different when the white haired female elf did the same, and she saw her brother's wings twitch in happiness as he settled to the ground.

Syrlth felt Isheeni step up next to her. *Syrlth... Isheeni spoke looking at Aricia. May I present my Bonded Sister, Queen Aricia of the Lycavorian people. Bound Soulmate to the Spartan King and mother to his first born son Androcles.*

Aricia's smile was genuine and wide. Syrilth reached out within Mindvoice and found she had no shields up, her mind completely open.

You are free to see for yourself that we mean you no harm Syrilth. If you wish to explore my thoughts... I will not stop you. Aricia spoke.

Syrlth stared at her azure eyes, the power she felt within this small female almost staggering in its intensity. *But you could.* She spoke.

Aricia nodded. *If I chose to yes. But that is not our purpose here Syrilth. It is to show you that what Isheeni has told you is the truth.*

You... she told you? Syrilth asked.

Aricia walked up to Isheeni and lifted her hands as Isheeni lowered her head. Isheeni's eyes closed as her hands stroked her snout and Aricia kissed her scales gently. *Isheeni and I are bonded sisters Syrilth. We share everything with each other without exception. She knows all that I know and I know all she knows. The way it was meant to be. The way it is with my mate and Isheeni's mate. The way it is with Roluth and the females elves you see with him now. The way it is with every member of Mjolnir's Hand.*

What this Maruad has done with you is hideous. Isra spoke now stepping closer to her without fear. *It goes against everything we swore we would never do as Bonded Pairs. It violates the sacredness of the trust we hold with our bonded brother or sister.*

You... you are Isra? Syrilth asked.

Isra nodded. *Yes.*

You flew... you flew so high! Syrilth exclaimed.

That is only a small fraction of what our bonds allow us to do Syrilth. Aelnala spoke coming forward slowly now.

Isra lifted his right arm and Syrilth saw the small blinking green light of the strange glove like attachment he wore. *This is a medical scanner Syrilth. Isheeni's mother, the oldest of your kind, she helped Queen Anja develop it so that we can insure our bonded brothers and sisters remain healthy and strong. I would like to examine you.*

Do it sister. Roluth spoke now. Syrilth looked up and saw him approach the small group with the two elf females on his back. *Isra gave me medicine when I was here before. It has already made me stronger and more alert.*

Syrlth watched him settle to the ground next to Aelnala and Tarifa and Aihola slid easily from his broad back. She looked at Isra and nodded her head. *They... they smell of you.* She said as Isra lifted his hand and began to scan Syrilth.

Isra nodded. *They are my mates.* He replied.

I attempted to kill them. Kill you. And still you help me. Syrilth asked.

Your actions were not your own. Tarifa voice filled her thoughts and she watched as the sapphire eyed female elf came up to her without fear. The dark skinned female elf beside her.

We can no more blame you for these actions then we can blame a storm that claims the life of someone we know. Aihola told her.

They turned and looked at Isra as he walked back to where Syrilth could see him, his violet eyes filled with anger.

Isra? Tarifa asked.

Isra looked at Aricia. *She is seven hundred pounds lighter than she should be for her size and age! Her scales are forty-two percent drier than they should be! The burn Isheeni caused is nearly healed, but there are signs of broken wing joints as well as other fractures! When Martin sees this... if he is not already dead... he will shatter every bone in this Maruad's body for his treatment of her!*

Syrilth was taken aback by Isra's reaction at what his instruments had told him in regards to her health. *That... that machine told you all that?* She asked amazed.

Aricia chuckled softly and stepped over to Isra squeezing his arm. *As you can see Syrilth, Isra is very much like my mate. They are obsessed with the health and care of our bonded ones.*

Syrilth watched Isra as he walked to a large metal container and opened it. From inside he withdrew two huge portions of dried beef. She watched as he turned to Roluth.

Roluth! Second dose! Isra called launching it in the air towards him.

Syrilth watched her brother snatch the slab of beef from the air and gulp it down quickly without question. Her ochre colored eyes turned back to Isra as he stepped in front of her.

This is a slab of dried beef from wild boars on Apo Prime. It is also filled with several different types of medicine that we have found will increase your resistance to infections. It is packed with vitamins that will increase your appetite and digestion. It works quickly and we have brought six containers of stag meat, rich with the same medicine and vitamins that you can carry back to your brothers and sisters that have already hatched. Make sure they eat it all. We have left it in its natural state so as not to raise suspicion. Aelnala caught them all last night and this morning as soon as Isheeni told Aricia you were coming. Isra told her. *This Maruad has treated you and your siblings badly Syrilth, and we need to change that starting now.*

Syrilth looked at Maruad for a long moment as Isra held the slab of beef up for her. She turned back to the violet eyed Spartan and leaned forward to take the meat. It tasted delicious and her mouth watered as she chewed and swallowed it down.

Aricia reached out her hand and placed it on Syrilth's snout. Syrilth's eyes closed as Aricia's power coursed through her, a soothing wave of warmth and caring. She settled to the ground now, finally relaxing herself. This... what was happening now was more than she had ever dreamed. What she had desired for three thousand years was within her reach and now she would do anything to achieve that. She opened her eyes once more and looked at Aricia.

I will tell you whatever you want to know. She spoke softly. *Everything about Maruad. The white skinned creatures. Everything I know.*

Aricia smiled and shook her head. *I'm more interested in your un-hatched siblings at the moment.* Aricia spoke. *What Isheeni passed to me earlier is already being acted on Syrilth. Our main purpose now is to discover your siblings and where Maruad is keeping them.* Aricia turned and motioned to Thr'won who was walking over from the small offices area of the hanger. *Syrilth this is Thr'won. She is the Chief Mage of Sparta.*

Syrilth watched as the blond haired female elf walked up, her pale blue eyes bright and alert and completely without fear. Syrilth glanced at Aricia. *She is... she is strong.*

Thr'won's soft laughter filled Syrilth's mind as she came up to her. *Well thank you for the compliment Syrilth.*

Aricia smiled. *With your permission Syrilth... one of Thr'won's talents allows her to see everything you have seen. Everywhere you have been. I am hoping she will see something that will lead us to the eggs.*

Syrilth looked at Aricia. *Maruad will sense this Aricia!* She spoke quickly.

Thr'won chuckled. *Maruad is a child who thinks he is a powerful Mindvoicer.* She spoke. *He will no more detect what you and I do then he will detect the king before Martin Leonidas smashes him into oblivion. I intend to leave you stronger than you are now Syrilth, and you will be able to conceal your new clarity easily when I am through. And pass what I teach you to those of your siblings that have already hatched.*

You... you can do this? Syrilth asked surprised.

I only need you to allow me. Thr'won spoke. *The Elder Mother taught me a great deal in my time studying with the First Oracle and herself.*

Syrilth didn't hesitate for a second. *If it helps me to discover my siblings yes!*

Then we should begin right...

"My Queen!" Joarl's voice echoed through the hanger.

They turned to see him and Tareif sprinting across the hanger. Aricia turned to him as he came to a stop, and once more Sylrith was amazed that these men and women had no fear of her, or her kind. It was almost as if dragons were a commonplace sight to them.

“Admiral... what is it?” Aricia asked.

Joarl held out the data pad. “We just received this from Captain Daro! The *HAMMER OF THE GODS* has been trailing that small group of ships that I told you about.”

Aricia took the pad. “Yes... so?”

“They were able to execute a rather insane maneuver and dock with one of the transports. Daro’s third officer led a small team into the transport. They found two Mizarian pilots and they found that.” Joarl pointed to the pad.

Aricia began to read and as she scrolled down the page her eyes grew wider. “By the gods of ancient Greece.” She gasped.

“Aricia... what is it?” Isra asked moving up next to her.

Aricia handed him the pad and turned to Sylrith. “Sylrith... it appears Maraud has been lying to you all along. He has no intention of returning your siblings to you.”

WHAT?!

Aricia nodded. “One of our ships has been tracking a small flight of transports heading here to Earth. These transports are apparently configured with incubation chambers for eggs. And the only eggs that I know of that Maruad or anyone would be interested in are the eggs of your brother and sisters.” She stepped up to Sylrith and placed her hand on Sylrith’s snout.

I will peel the flesh from his bones with my talons! Sylrith screeched out in Mindvoice.

Aricia looked at Isra. “These ships must be his way off Earth Isra. That is why Talco is here. He is the contact Maruad has communicated with. He has to be. Is Lynwe interrogating him?” Aricia asked looking at Tareif.

Tareif nodded. “She just started.” He answered.

“I want to know everything that pig has in his head.” Aricia growled. “Every scrap of information he has I want.”

Tareif chuckled. “I’m sure Lynwe would like nothing better than to give him a taste of Drow justice.” He said.

“No!” Aricia spoke. “Torture will not work with him... his mind is too strong for that. Anything he tells us will be questionable. Tell Selene I want drugs used on him. Pump him so full of truth serum that he will tell us anything we want to know.” Sylrith looked at her.

“Milady... that could very well... his mind could be destroyed by that.” Joarl spoke.

“He should have that about that before he started on this path.” Aricia stated immediately. “See to it Admiral. I will join you when we are finished here.”

Joarl nodded. “As you order.”

Sylrith watched the Lycavorian turn and start moving across the hanger at a trot. The older male elf stepped up to Tarifa and Aihola and she watched as he reached out and stroked Roluth’s scales again without a hint of fear in his actions.

He is their father. Aricia’s voice entered her thoughts.

Sylrith turned her head to look at Aricia and Isra once more. *I did... I never believed... are there many of my kind left?*

Isra nodded. *Thousands... and more eggs hatch each month. The elves you will see... all of them are descended from your kind Sylrith. From dragons. That is why there is such an affinity between you and them.*

But what I have done in the past Isra... Aricia. I... I can never be forgiven for that. Sylrith spoke.

Aricia nodded. *I have already spoken with Isheeni’s mother Arzoal through a conduit. An elf that acts as her voice from these great distances. She knows full well what has taken place here on Earth, as well as your actions. She is a Firespitter like you. When we are done here, she has asked me to tell you that you will all be welcomed into a new world. Where you are safe and treated as the sentient beings that you are.*

Marauad is the last of a dead breed of Lycavorian Sylrith. Thr’won spoke now. And if he does not die by the hand of Aricia or Isra or some other Spartan, he will not live long once the King comes here.

Sylrith met Aricia’s eyes. *He will come?*

Aricia nodded. *He is finishing a task his grandfather left undone when he was killed. He will come. I... I wish to meet this King Aricia.* Sylrith looked at Isheeni. *And... and I wish to meet Isheeni's mate.* Aricia smiled as Isheeni butted Sylrith gently in the side. *Let us get started so that we can be ready to do what we must.* Aricia stated.

LYCAVORE

“Be still Sivana.” Anja’s voice filtered to her ears. “Don’t move quickly.”

Sivana opened her eyes slowly, the soft light of the DT filtering to her, but not bright enough to hurt her eyes. As her eyes came into focus she saw her sister’s tear streaked face only inches from her own.

“Anja?” She whispered.

Anja smiled as fresh tears flowed from her eyes. “You gave me... you scared the shit out of me sister.” She said grasping her hand tightly.

Sivana looked around, moving her head slowly, realizing she was back in the DT. “The ship? I’m back at the ship?”

Anja nodded. “Miath flew back with you and Melita.” She replied.

Sivana closed her eyes. “I hear voices!” She said squeezing her eyes shut tightly.

“You have become like us now Sivana.” Helen’s words came from the side and Sivana turned to see her walk up to the bed. Her hand went to Anja’s shoulder with a smile and she squeezed reassuringly. “The voices you hear are the surface thoughts of the others. Belen is a powerful alpha, and he is a Tier Six Mindvoicer.”

Sivana’s eyes grew wide. “Belen... he is!”

Anja squeezed her hand tighter. “He is fine.” Anja declared. “They are only a few kilometers away now, returning here. He will be with you shortly.”

Sivana looked at her sister, then to Helen. “He... he bit me.” She said.

Anja nodded. “Not exactly the way he had wanted to ultimately claim you... but yes.” She answered. “You will be very weak for a few days... but you will be fine.”

“I was... I was shot.” Sivana spoke. “He... he saved me. He saved me again.”

Helen took her other hand now. “I have erected Mindvoice shields around your mind to block out the majority of the surface thoughts around you. With so many Lycavorians who are a Tier Three and higher nearby, it could very well have driven you mad. Atropos will help you to realize what you are experiencing.”

Sivana looked at her. “Atropos?”

Atropos stepped from the side now and into view, his usually stern face relaxed and actually appearing friendly. He walked up to the side of the bed as Anja placed a hand on his shoulder ushering him forward. Atropos took the hand Anja released and looked at her with the first smile she had seen from the man since meeting him.

“Usually Lilika my mate would welcome you to our family.” He spoke. “However since she is not here... and under the current circumstances I will have to suffice for now.”

“Family?” Sivana asked.

Atropos nodded. “Belen scented you on the trip here Sivana. You knew this.” He said.

Sivana nodded. “Yes.”

“Belen was hoping to have more time with you before he asked if he could turn you, make you his.” Atropos said. “I believe that... that is what you wanted as well isn’t it?”

Sivana nodded quickly, all thoughts of doubts or fear gone from her now. “Yes.”

Atropos nodded and inched his body onto the edge of the medical bed. “Then let me help you to discover this new world you have entered. At least until Belen returns and can be by your side.”

Anja smiled and looked at Helen, motioning with her head. They stepped close to one another at the foot of the bed.

“Helen?” Anja asked in a soft whisper.

“I don’t know.” She answered. “It was as much a shock to me as it was to you. Her scent is pure, unblemished.”

“How?” Anja hissed.

“Again... I don’t know... but I suggest we find out as much as we are able before Martin returns.” Helen said. “I can feel the tremors he is putting off, and if I can feel them, they must be battering your shields.”

“I’ve never felt him so twisted and confused.” Anja said.

“Nayeca is with her?” Helen asked.

Anja nodded. “I have her in the small quarters we found on the Mindvoice ship near the bridge. It’s isolated and smaller than most... but it will at least keep her from being completely overwhelmed. The sedation will wear off by the time Martin returns.”

“Then let us discover what we can until then.” Helen spoke.

Her eyes opened slowly, fluttering in the dimly lit room. She was not lying on the cold filthy floor; instead she was on a soft bunk with cool sheets that covered her body. She could detect hundreds of scents, thousands of them. All Lycavorian with only a few exceptions. As she turned her head she saw that one of them sat next to the bed watching her keenly with eyes the color of amber. An elf female... but unlike any elf she had ever seen, with shimmering white hair and chocolate colored skin. The room was small, with only the bunk she was on and a floor to ceiling cabinet. She was on some sort of ship, but not one she recognized. The body armor that the female elf wore was black and crimson, similar to what she knew Spartans wore, but different in many ways as well. She could hear voices, her memories clouded and broken.

The plains of ancient Greece where she was born and raised. The whispering pines. The musky mint scent that wrapped around her then. She saw planets and gaseous clouds. Wonders that she had never imagined. She saw the ship, the smoke and fire so alive and real. The heavy damage to the ship, the fire around the room which held the chamber so thick, the smoke stinging her eyes. The strong arm pulling her back, screaming in her ear that they had to leave. Her painful soul wracking wail as she was pulled into the escape pod and the last remnants of the life she had coveted destroyed before her eyes. That life burning up and exploding in a single flash. She saw the handsome face of the man who had saved her, his dark eyes and warm rum like scent. The beginnings of her second life, one she had come to covet just as deeply. The feel of his arms around her, holding her. His deep strokes into her body, the love pouring from him as he wrapped her within his aura. The love she felt for him, the six children that love had produced. She could feel it all coming back to her again. Her mind was clearer now, clearer than it had been in years and she didn’t know why.

The strange female elf made no move to speak with her, simply watching her. It had to be some sort of trick. The Coven would never allow an elf to come near her. They had changed tactics... it had to be. They were torturing her mind now as well as her body. The memories of the rapes flashed back to her, the screams of pain and humiliation real and burned into her memory. She had never broken... never submitted to them willingly. They had never asked her questions about anything, only poked and stabbed her with needles and medical tools.

She had been on her way to a symposium of Lycavorian and elfin history on Elear. There was a flash of bright light, an explosion, and then she had woken up in that filthy vile cell. And the torture had begun. She could hear the laughter of the Immortals and High Coven soldiers as they raped her, she could still feel the bite of their fangs as they fed on her blood. She released an almost violent shudder involuntarily at the memories.

There were more voices now... a strange yet familiar scent filled her head now. The face... the eyes. She had felt the vibrations of explosions, heard the sounds of gunfire and the roars of something else. A huge black beast, speeding through the clouds, faces. So many faces. But one stood out above all the others. A face she knew intimately. A face she had long ago buried. The single word escaped her lips in a shout louder than any she had ever produced.

“*LEONIDAS!*” She screamed as she sat up in the small bed.

“Anja!” She heard the dark skinned elf shout as she gripped her arm tightly, trying to support her.

The diminutive red haired female rushed in, her jade green eyes wide as she moved to the bed. Her honey scent was mingled with that strange musky mint scent that was so familiar to her, and mingled deeply. She was Hadarian, of that she was sure, but this one had been changed. Turned by a male of astounding power, her senses were telling her. She felt the woman’s hands grasp her arms.

“You are safe!” Anja spoke quickly. “You are safe now!”

“Where am I? Who are you?” she gasped. “I will not... you will not trick me! You will not trick me into betraying my people! Never!”

“Listen to me!” Anja spoke. “This is real! All of it! The Coven no longer has you! You are free! You are among friends!”

She stared at those jade green eyes, so confident and caring. She saw the shadow appear in the doorway, and her eyes grew wide as the face of the woman became clear and she stepped into the small room.

“Dustha?” She gasped.

“It is me.” Helen spoke moving closer. “Anja speaks the truth. You are back among friends now. Among family.”

She looked at the red haired woman with wide dark eyes. “Who are you? You are... you are Hadarian but you have... you have been turned.”

Anja nodded. “Yes. I’m Hadarian... my name is Anja.” She tried to sit up more but the woman’s grasp was strong and she held her tightly. “No. You need to rest... you have been through so much. You need to remain in bed.”

“Who... who are you?” She asked. “Dustha... you are... you are dead! You can’t be here!”

“But I am.” Helen spoke. “And as you can see I am far from dead.”

“Tell me what is going on damn you!” She shouted. “Who... who are you people?”

“My name is Anja...” Anja spoke softly. And she added something that would continue into the future and came as naturally to her as breathing. “My name is Anja... Anja Leonidas. I am one of your son’s mates.”

Her eyes were wide now, her heart racing faster than anything she had ever experienced. She shook her head almost viciously. “I... I know all my son’s mates. You... you are not one of them!”

Helen stepped forward. “Reach past what your eyes tell you. You can sense it... I know you can. You smelled him in that prison. You smell him all over Anja. You have smelled that scent before. A mother never forgets the scent of her children.”

She shook her head again. “Impossible! I... I watched his chamber burn! I watched his ship as it was destroyed! No!”

“He did not die!” Helen shouted. “He was brought to me on Earth! I named him! I gave him the name of his father! Reach beyond the unknown and the impossible! Leonidas told you that once! Do so now!”

“No! It can’t... it can’t be! This is all a trick!” She snapped.

“This is no dream or trick Gorgo!” Helen spoke sternly. “What is happening is all very real.”

Anja reached up with her hand, the soft white glow flashing quickly, and Gorgo’s eyes rolled up into her head as blackness claimed her once more.

“Her heart was racing out of control.” Anja spoke. “She is still extremely weak Helen. She needs rest.”

Helen placed her hand on Anja’s shoulder. “She will discover the truth soon enough. And we need to figure out what to do with what we have learned.”

Anja stood back up and looked at her. “This is Gorgo!” She exclaimed her jade green eyes flaring. “This woman is Martin’s mother! I know it... I can feel it in my blood! You know it as well! And you can damn well be assured Martin knows it! His instincts must be screaming within him!”

Helen nodded slowly. “Yes... just as they are within us... telling us exactly what you and your instruments are telling us. Now we must tell him and decide what do to as I said.”

“How... how can you be so calm?” Anja exclaimed.

“We must remain calm Anja. You and I. For when Martin discovers what you and I will tell him... what his blood is undoubtedly already telling him... he will want to lay waste to this entire planet and every possible infection of High Coven personnel or equipment on it for what they have done to his mother.”

“And what is wrong with that?” Anja demanded.

“There are almost thirty thousand men; women and children on this planet that he has sworn to take home. That takes priority over any acts of vengeance he will want to exact. And then we must discover how we tell our friends.” Helen spoke. “They are still as yet unaware that they have a traitor in their midst. A traitor they would never suspect.”

Anja took a deep breath and nodded her head. “You are right.” She said.

“Come... Martin is entering the ship! And we are still almost a day from being able to leave this vile place.” Helen spoke taking her hand.

Martin breathed deeply of her honey scent, his face buried in her hair as he held her suspended off the deck of the Mindvoice ship. Anja's arms were wrapped around his broad shoulders, her legs curled along his hips, but this was an embrace of love not passion and Anja reveled in it.

Anja pulled back and looked at him, several scratches on his cheek and neck. She brought her hand across those scratches and the soft glowed flared gently, the scratches disappearing almost immediately.

"More thickets?" She asked with a soft grin.

Martin chuckled. "At least I wasn't chasing Dysea's tail this time." He spoke lowering her to the deck. "Anja... tell me how this is possible. Tell me that what my... tell me that what my blood... my instincts are telling me isn't true."

Anja leaned up on her tip toes and kissed him. "I can't tell you that." She said softly. "Because what you feel... what we all feel... it's the truth. The woman in that room... that is Gorgo. That is your mother."

Anja watched him closely, watching him as he turned slowly, his breathing deep and rumbling. She glanced at Helen who stood to the side and then back to Martin.

"How long has she been here?" Martin asked softly.

"Martin... we..."

He turned back to face her. "How long Anja?"

Anja took a deep breath. "Based on her physical condition..."

"Tell me Firecracker." Martin said. "You and Helen think I'm going to go flying off the handle and that is why you are hesitating. You underestimate the influence my bond with Torma has. I'm not going to go crazy and start killing people. Now how long has she been here?"

"At least a decade." Anja blurted. "Probably longer."

"You're sure?" Martin asked.

Anja nodded slowly. "Yes. Helen and I did as you asked while you were gone. We've been studying this ship and asking this Avatar 41 hundreds of questions."

"We discovered quite a bit Martin." Helen spoke moving closer to him.

"When Torma and Nayeca brought her back... I stabilized her immediately and then gave her a full examination." Anja said. "Helen and I knew... we knew right away who she was without question."

"Her scent was exactly as I remembered it from that last day in Sparta." Helen spoke. "Pure... and clear."

Martin shook his head. "Then how?" He asked. "If the woman here is my mother, as my instincts and my blood are screaming that she is... then who have I been calling mother for nearly the last two years? And why didn't any of us detect it. Why didn't Riall detect it?"

"She's a clone." Anja answered immediately.

Martin looked at her incredulously. "A clone! Impossible! Clones don't have a scent we know that now. It is why that Brean fool used so much cologne!"

Anja stepped closer to him. "It's not impossible lover. Not with what we discovered before you came back."

"What do you mean?" Martin asked.

"They've been extracting Gorgo's scent glands for the entire time." Anja said. "I've detected multiply puncture wounds. Hundreds of them actually. They've been extracting tiny bits of her scent glands from the dermis layer of her skin when in human form. The eccrine, apocrine and sebaceous glands all produce scent in human form. They've also been forcing her to shift using drugs and then extracting her scent glands from between her toes, at the base of her tail, from her genitalia and her eyes as well as her skin and other places."

"Why?" Martin asked.

"They are injecting her live scent glands into the clone." Anja answered. "It would have to be done at least once a month, or else the cells begin to lose their viability. I'm guessing that is why she is still alive. They've been using her all this time so they could protect their clone."

Martin sat down on the edge of the table. "That doesn't make any sense." He spoke. "If they had the technology to do what you say, why not do it with Brean or the clones they made from Dekton. We know that he was taken nearly three hundred years ago. And a clone would not have the Mindvoice ability of its host. My mother... this supposed clone is a Tier Six. You can't transfer something they never had to begin with."

"No. You can however give it to them." Anja said.

“What?”

“It is similar to what you did for Dysea and me when you turned us.” Anja said. “The Mindvoice ability was there... it was untapped and unused... but it was there. When you turned us your blood flowing through us activated that untapped potential.”

“But that ability would not have been there is she is a clone!” Martin snapped. “Even I know that.”

“You’re right.” Helen said. “Unless... as Anja is trying to tell you... unless someone gave it to them. Someone just as powerful as you... if not more so.”

Martin looked at her. “Veldruk?” He asked.

Helen nodded. “It’s the only explanation.” She said. Gorgo is Riall’s mate. Riall is the senior officer within the Union military. He has knowledge of everything we are doing. Every program. Every ship movement. Everything. Stop and think for a moment. He and Gorgo had been together over two millennia. Who better to make a clone of than the mate of your enemy’s most senior military officer?”

“And Riall did not know this?” Martin said. “He spends two thousand years with my mother and he does not know that he is sleeping with a clone? How is that even possible?”

“Veldruk... he tasted... he tasted my blood.” The hoarse female voice spoke from the side.

They all turned quickly and saw Nayeca supporting Gorgo’s fragile form in the doorway.

“Gorgo... you should be in bed!” Anja barked moving towards her.

Gorgo’s hands gripped Nayeca tighter. “No!” She snapped her eyes never leaving Martin’s face.

“I could not stop her Anja.” Nayeca spoke softly. “She would have hurt herself if I did not help her.”

Anja looked at Gorgo as she struggled to maintain her balance in Nayeca’s arms. She was sniffing the air deeply, drawing breaths into her nose, tasting all the scents in the room.

Gorgo stared at Martin intently, his musky mint scent stronger than the rest by a huge margin. It couldn’t be possible could it? She pushed Nayeca’s hands from around her waist and stepped away from her, towards where Martin was frozen in his spot. His own senses were ringing loud and clear, and far stronger than they had ever rang before in the presence of his mother. Every ounce of his blood was screaming out that this was his mother... yet his mind was holding him back from accepting that.

Gorgo stepped toward him slowly, haltingly. Gorgo’s senses were shouting out as well. Shouting out louder than she had ever felt them shout to her. The blood pulsing in her veins was shrieking within her. It was telling her what she had never once considered after so many years. He was the image of him. The image of the man she had loved so very long ago. The man and King who had given his life without ever knowing she was pregnant. It was as if she was looking into his face once more, marred only by the scar over his left eye. He was just as tall and heavily muscled as he had been. She could feel the power trembling within him; sense the Mindvoice abilities. He wasn’t shielding from her, and while it was so very familiar to her, it was also far more powerful than she remembered. His aura was definitely and without question that of his father. It was so dominating and fulfilling, so spectacularly commanding in its embrace.

As she took the next step her legs gave out and she started to fall. Gorgo gasped in captivation as his arms were there before she fell, and his hands grasped her tightly, holding her and pulling her to her feet against his broad chest. Her whole battered body was shuddering in astonishment and wonder at the sensations ripping through her. Her trembling hands moved up his chest, her fingertips touching the skin of his jaw and then his cheek.

“This... this is... this is a dream isn’t it?” She croaked out the words. “You... you are torturing me now. Making me see what... what my son would have looked like. The son... the son I watched torn from my grasp that day.”

Martin reached up quickly, engulfing her hand in his as she pressed it to his cheek. Gorgo gasped in surprise at the intensity of the touch. “Would a dream feel so real?” Martin asked softly.

“My... my son.” Gorgo spoke looking up into those dark brown pools of mystery.

Quite out of instinct Martin lowered his head and inhaled deeply of her soft vanilla scent, his head swirling as that scent rushed through his brain and his blood. His arms tightened on Gorgo, drawing her closer to him. He felt her shaking her head and she tried to pull away from him.

“This... this can not be.” She gasped.

“You can’t deny what is going through you Gorgo.” Helen spoke as she moved closer to them. “We can all sense it.”

Gorgo looked at her quickly and then back to look into Martin's eyes. "My son... my son died on that ship." Gorgo spoke softly.

"Your son is standing in front of you." Helen said. "The couple assigned to protect him... they got his chamber off the ship before it exploded. They brought him to me on Earth. I was able to protect him until he was given to the Guardian of the Line. Listen to what your own senses are telling you Gorgo."

Gorgo looked at her. "Why should I believe you? You are the one who sent Leonidas to his death!" She barked out in anger.

"You should believe me because the man holding you in his arms is the son you have dreamed about for more than two thousand years!" Helen snapped. "Do not deny it! The First Oracle passed his power and memories to me Gorgo... I can feel it within you as surely as you can feel him holding you."

Gorgo shook her head. "He had... my son had a birthmark!" She snapped. "Under his armpit! He..."

Martin's eyes grew wider as she said this and his mind registered this information and knew immediately. He pushed Gorgo away from him, Nayeca moving closer to hold her once more as he began pulling at the body armor protecting his chest and back. Gorgo could only watch in stunned surprise as he peeled off the body armor, letting it drop to the floor, and then he proceeded to tear at the fatigue top, not even bothering with the buttons. She watched as he exposed his chiseled upper body, every muscle excruciatingly defined in detail. Gorgo saw the scars that dotted his body and she watched as he lifted his right arm up.

"You mean this mark?" He spoke as his fingers touched the much darker half dollar sized patch of skin partially hidden in the hair of his armpit.

Gorgo's eyes went wide and her hands went to her mouth as she let out a wail not of sorrow or pain, but a wail of unadulterated joy. She gasped just as loudly as his arms swept her up once more, this time crushing her to him as he buried his face in her hair.

"Mother!" He wept into the crook of her shoulder and neck the shame of not knowing the truth washing over him. The shame of calling an imposter mother for so long. Of sharing with that imposter all that he should have shared with this woman.

"My... my son!" Gorgo cried as her arms flew around his broad shoulders and she too buried her face into his neck heedless of his damp sweaty hair.

Anja looked at Helen in surprise at the sudden and complete acceptance that Martin was now displaying. They could feel the joy rushing through him, as well as the shame and the total surrender pouring from him.

"Martin...?" Anja asked softly her eyes moist as she stepped closer. "What...?"

Gorgo pulled her face from his shoulder and both of them could see that much of the color had returned to her cheeks and her dark eyes were brighter than either of them had ever seen before. Gorgo glanced into his eyes which had now changed to yellow/gold orbs and she couldn't contain the laugh of elation that escaped her lips. "My... my son." She gasped again, as Martin pulled her head to his chest and looked at Anja.

"On the *LEONIDAS*... as we were coming to Apo Prime for the first time." Martin spoke as his large hand went to Gorgo's head and pulled her close to him. "The... she saw the mark when I was changing my shirt in Riall's office. She asked me where I had gotten it. She didn't know. She didn't know." Martin spoke as he rubbed his cheek against Gorgo's hair.

All eyes went to the doorway as Atropos burst into the room almost at a dead run from the connecting tunnel to the bridge. He saw Gorgo in Martin's arms, and he had smelled her when he had helped Anja bring her into this ship. He had learned long ago to expect the unexpected if he was to be Anja's Captain. And it didn't get anymore unexpected than this.

"My King?" He barked.

Gorgo turned quickly and looked at Atropos. Her eyes went back to Martin just as quickly. "King?" She gasped.

Martin nodded slowly. "Yeah... that is sort of one of my titles." He answered.

"Then Deia... the Union...?" Gorgo asked wiping her hand across her tear streaked face.

"Milord... the avatar of this ship has reported that he has repaired the ship's external sensors." Atropos spoke quickly. "We have company. Lots of company. And they are getting closer."

"*Sibfla!*" Martin swore seeing his mother's eyes go wide at his use of the ancient language. "Mother... I... I have to go."

Gorgo shook her head. “No! I... I have only just discovered you! No!” She barked gripping his arms tighter.

“Stay here with Anja and Helen.” Martin said gently. “I will be back soon. Anja is one of my mates. She’s a Healer. You need to stay with her. She and Helen can... they can answer any questions you have right now. I have to make sure we get off this *nubous* planet alive.”

Gorgo allowed him to gently push her into Anja’s arms and then he bent to scoop up his shredded shirt and body armor. He stepped up to her quickly and kissed her hard on her forehead.

Atropos fell in beside his King as they began walking down the corridor and Martin pulled on his torn shirt.

“Milord... she is your mother?” Atropos asked.

Martin nodded. “Yes. Without question.”

“Then who...”

Martin looked at him as he pulled the body armor over his head and began to fasten it. “She is a clone.” Martin growled viciously. “A *nubous* walking around dead clone when I finally talk with Armetus. That I can guarantee you.” He looked at Atropos. “Belen is with Sivana?”

Atropos nodded quickly. “He came there immediately upon returning.”

“Sivana made a superior choice when she picked your son Atropos.” Martin told him.

Atropos’s chest swelled with pride and he nodded. “She will give him many strong children. And they will drive him as insane as he and his brother have driven me in the last two years.”

Martin laughed. He laughed a genuine laugh for the first time in many days.

“Let’s go see if we can figure out what our guests want. I wouldn’t want them crashing our party.”

Martin spoke. “At least not before we kiss this sorry fucking planet good bye for good.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

ELEAR

Vonis moved deftly through the crowds in the market, carrying the small bag he had retrieved from Va’nimia’s home. He had stuffed several different sets of clothes in the bag, as well as more of the items she had in her bathing room. He spent more time in her home on this trip, noticing how neat and meticulous she was. There was nothing out of place, all of her items in a certain spot. His intelligence teachers had told him you could learn a lot about an individual just by seeing how they live. Standing in the center of Va’nimia’s home Vonis had learned much more than how sweet her blood tasted, or how pleasant her passion smelled as she clutched him tightly shivering in the aftermath of an orgasm. Vonis had learned she was extremely intelligent, something he already knew, but she was not just book smart. She was articulate because of how she displayed the holo images on her walls, and the neatness and order of the data pads and ancient books on her shelves told him she did not speak without knowing what she was saying. His mind was mulling over these things as he walked, practically oblivious to all that was happening around him.

That was until he reached the street where the safehouse was and he saw the cloaked figure move along the side and enter the safehouse through its side door.

Vonis had his own hood and cowl up over his head and face and suddenly all of his combat senses came alive. He wrapped the shadows around him in an instant and blurred to the edge of the safehouse, remaining within the shadows as he looked around the corner of the building. Nothing moved in the alley along the safehouse and Vonis dashed across the open area to the door. He slid his entry card through the slot and the door clicked open. As he stepped into the hallway within the house the first thing he smelled was blood.

Va’nimia’s blood.

Her scream of horror chilled his vampire blood and Vonis blurred to the end of the hallway, turning the corner to the secure door and seeing it ajar. He crossed the space in four steps and his eyes grew wide in savage anger.

Va’nimia was on the bed of her room, half her dress torn away exposing her supple elfin body for the eyes of the three Kochab and one Evolli in the room. One Kochab knelt on the bed over her, reaching for his

pants. Va'nimia had a jagged cut on her flawless cheek, no doubt from where the Kochab had hit her hard. It was obvious she had tried to fight them, the bed sheets torn away, and the small table in the room smashed to pieces in the corner. She lay on the bed now, clearly dazed from the blow to her face. Vonis felt a surge of anger within him unlike any he had ever felt before and he stepped toward the bed intent on ripping the Kochab mercenary and his cohorts to small pieces.

Vonis froze when the barrel of the sidearm pressed to his temple.

"I think not Prince Vonis." Conrol's voice sounded in his ear.

"What is the meaning of this?" Vonis demanded in a quiet hiss. "I gave instructions she was not to be touched!"

"Your father countermanded those orders Prince." Conrol spoke almost happily. "He was not happy when I told him you were faltering, and that you preferred to spend more time with your plaything than accomplishing our mission here."

Vonis turned to look at Conrol his eyes full of anger and hatred. "You spoke directly to my father?" He hissed again. "Without my knowledge?"

"You are smitten with this elf whore!" Conrol barked viciously. "When I told your father that he flew into a rage. He has issued a Kill Order on you Prince Vonis."

"You lie!" Vonis hissed.

"Do you think I would dare stand here with a weapon to your head if this was not true?" Conrol spoke. "He ordered me to fulfill that Kill Order unless you killed the elf whore yourself to prove your loyalty."

"Va'nimia is no whore you scum!" Vonis almost shouted.

"Then I will just pull the trigger of this weapon, and allow my men to have their way with her before I kill her myself." Conrol spoke. "I will earn great favor with your father if I do this."

"I think not!" The female voice spoke.

Conrol turned his head quickly to see the strange female figure unwrap the shadows and blur towards him. He recognized Isabella in that instant before she blurred towards him, her cobalt blue vampire eyes bright and burning with hate, her fangs extended and fully in view. He shifted the sidearm toward Isabella but his eyes went wide when he realized he would not be in time.

Isabella extended her right hand with the Wood Elf Shukur fighting knife in it. It was a knife that Dysea had had made especially for her and perfectly balanced and weighted. It had been a gift from Dysea, one that Isabella had learned the Wood Elves on Earth considered the ultimate act of devotion. To give a blade to another was a sign of complete trust and love. More than anything, this had long ago sealed Isabella's feelings for Dysea in a way little else could. The blade pierced Conrol just beneath his jaw, plunging deeply into his brain as the force of the blow lifted him clean off the floor. The sidearm dropped from suddenly limp fingers and Isabella stepped close to him, looking into his dying eyes, as Vonis blurred away from them into the room. Her cobalt blue vampire eyes flared and she bared her long fangs in a vicious smile.

"My father's henchmen are still far too slow to accomplish anything right the first time." She growled into Conrol's face, just as Marci and four *Durcumusaan* burst through the front door of the house.

Isabella shifted her eyes then and watched with a degree of approval as her half brother moved.

Vonis was fast... very fast and he blurred to the Kochab on the bed just as he began to lower his body onto Va'nimia's weeping form. Blood fountained from his throat as the small blade Vonis always carried flashed out unseen and severed the muscles and blood vessels in his neck as easily as a hot knife through butter. A savage kick snapped his body back away from Va'nimia, crashing into the mercenary directly behind him, her eyes wide as she realized it was Vonis above her. She watched in fascination as his hand snapped out, throwing the blade at the next closest Kochab mercenary, the blade piercing the mercenary's eye socket and passing through the majority of his brain before the hilt of the small knife jammed into the orbital lobe of his eye socket. Vonis continued the move even as his arm came back and he blurred to where the wide eyed Evolli stood, his hands grasping the amphibian like head and twisting with such strength the Evolli's head nearly tore off. The sound of ripping flesh was like a gunshot in the small room, the sound of his neck bones cracking and breaking even louder.

Vonis barely paused, once more turning to grab the remaining Kochab mercenary by his arm and shoulder as he tried to get to his feet. Vonis twisted his arm back savagely and the Kochab howled in agony. His body lifted back, trying to ease the twisting on his now mangled arm. This only served to increase Vonis's

strength in the maneuver and he yanked even harder, the Kochab's shoulder socket popping like a gunshot, bringing forth another wail of exquisite agony.

Vonis was not a small man, and he hauled the Kochab up into his arms with a savage scream of anger and holding the Kochab like a shield in front of him, he drove the mercenary's body forward into the steel frame corner of the room with all the strength he commanded. It was no contest as the mercenary's body bent nearly into the shape of the ninety degree angle corner, his spine shattered and broken in five places.

Vonis turned and blurred back to the bed, gathering Va'nimia into his arms as gently as a newborn.

"Va'nimia!" He gasped his hands pulling the torn sheet around her exposed body without even thinking.

Her deep blue eyes looked at him through the tears and she reached up slowly to touch his cheek. "I... I knew you would come." She spoke through her tears.

"I must get you out of here." Vonis spoke starting to gather her into his arms.

"I'm sorry brother... I can't allow that." Isabella's voice echoed.

Vonis turned from the bed, his eyes falling on Isabella as she entered the room, the four *Durcunusaan* Spartans following her into the room in precise formation, followed by the second vampire female who appeared to be wiping her long blade on a cloth.

Vonis felt Va'nimia squeeze his arms. "Go!" She hissed. "Leave me and go!"

Vonis blurred in motion once more, moving for the door. Va'nimia watched in horror as the beautiful vampire female who had called him brother blurred as well, far faster than Vonis had. Va'nimia saw a flash of silver/white light and heard the loud grunt of pain and Vonis came to an abrupt halt and was thrown back, staggering out of control, his arms flailing madly as he fought to keep his balance.

"No!" Va'nimia screamed scrambling to get off the bed. She never made it as the large *Durcunusaan* grabbed her arms pinning her to his thick body.

Vonis heard Va'nimia scream and his head snapped around seeing the Spartan holding her struggling form in his arms. "Don't touch her!" He screamed trying to get his legs under him. He turned his head at the shadow and his cobalt blue vampire eyes went wide when the edge of the shield impacted his chest, sending him sailing into the air and smashing into the far wall hard enough to knock granite and plaster to the ground all around him.

Vonis slumped to a sitting position momentarily stunned at the power with which Isabella had hit him. He was so much larger than her... yet her strength was nearly equal to his. He looked up as Isabella stepped up to him, the Shi Viska humming on her arm and his eyes went even wider when he saw that glimmering silver shield.

Isabella smiled at his expression. "Amazing weapons these Shi Viska... especially when you have had an entire year to train with them. Now I know why the Immortals hate them so." She spoke confidently, extending the edge of the shield out to within millimeters of his face. Vonis jumped slightly when with but a thought from Isabella the razors all along the edges of the shield extended and popped into place. "They almost seem to have a mind of their own." Isabella spoke calmly.

Vonis let his cobalt colored eyes drift up to her face. "How... how is it possible?" He gasped. "Every... every vampire that..."

Isabella nodded. "Yes... every vampire that has tried to wear one of these has died." She spoke as she squatted down in front of him slowly, the Shi Viska never wavering in its place. "Every one but me. There have... there have been many signs of the destiny that I was meant to fulfill brother." She spoke evenly. "This was but the first." Isabella drew back the shield and in a silver/white flash it was gone. "You... it appears you are another sign."

"I... I will not tell you anything!" Vonis hissed.

Isabella smiled. "Very well." Isabella said. "Then I will leave you to your fate. Our father has issued a Kill Order for you brother... and unfortunately for you it seems you do not have the protection I do. You see these Spartans around you... they are called the *Durcunusaan*. In the ancient Lycavorian language that translates to Wolves of the Blood. They are the strongest, the fastest and the most intelligent of the Spartans. And they are my Royal Guard. Dysea's Royal Guard. Our father can send as many assassins as he likes to kill me... none will get close to me or to Dysea. You do not have that luxury any longer it seems. Nor it seems does your elf lover."

Vonis glared at her. "She is not part of this! Let her go! I have held her hostage here against her will!"

“Our father will not care brother. He showed that when I took Dysea into my bed and he issued a Kill Order for me. Imagine how he will react now.” Isabella spoke with a smile. She stood back up and turned to look at Marci who stood with an amused expression on her face. “Take them both to the palace in Aetia.”

“Not the prison Milady?” Marci asked surprised as she stepped forward.

Isabella shook her head. “They will be safer at the palace. For now. Have the Admiral dispatch two Lochi from *NORMYA’S LIGHT* to provide additional security. We knew there were two from the *Venorik Elghinn* with him, and we have only killed one. That means the other is still on Elear somewhere. Until he is either killed or captured, my brother remains under heavy guard.”

Marci nodded and motioned to the *Durcunusaan*. “As you order.” She spoke turning to the Spartans in the room. “Take them.” She ordered.

Isabella turned to Marci. “I must return to the Constable’s holding cells. Something is not right with *ussta she-elf*.”

Marci nodded. “Go. I will see to these two.”

Dysea stared at the cult leader from across the small table as she had for the last several minutes. His dark eyes were completely unreadable, almost as if they were dead. No emotion slipped from those eyes and inwardly they made Dysea shudder deep in her belly. He was radiating his full aura within the small room and the small twitch in the corner of his lips told Dysea that he was confused because she was not affected.

Dysea held the data pad in her hands and she glanced quickly to it before beginning to speak. “So your name is Arete.” She spoke her words calm and even.

“And you are Queen Dysea.” He replied his voice deeply set and just as it sounded in the amphitheater. “I was wondering when you would arrive.”

Dysea’s emerald green eyes lifted. “You were expecting me?” She asked.

“I am here because of an attack on you by those who you allege are members of my Order.” Arete answered.

Dysea nodded. “That is true.” She said. “And I am alleging nothing. I am only presenting facts. They are members of your order... or they were until they were killed.” Dysea said with a smile. “They were woefully under skilled. We’ve been interrogating one of them that survived for several days now in fact.”

Arete smiled calmly his eyes still dead as he looked at her. “Apparently whoever they were, they were skilled enough to severely injure your... your Royal Captain wasn’t it? And please tell me, what have you discovered? I have done nothing wrong.”

Dysea set the pad on the table and pushed it across the table to him deliberately. “We’ve discovered quite a bit actually.” She spoke. “We’ve discovered that you and your cohorts have been created using illegal Biogenic experiments. We’ve discovered that you are recruiting elves into your Order somehow, under the ridiculous guise of this First Elfin King story. We know you are using cells gained from these elves to continue your experiments. And we know that one of the board members of IES, a vampire by the name of Roland if I’m not mistaken; he has approved all of this. We also know that he is a former High Coven agent who has gone rogue, and that is why Veldruk has people on Elear at this very moment waiting to kill him when he arrives. I would like to know where the facility you are using is, and who are your senior officers. Perhaps then we can talk of your continued existence.”

“My continued existence?” Arete asked his eyebrow lifting at one corner in interest. “Are you saying you intend to have me killed if I do not acquiesce to what you demand of me Lady Dysea?”

“You were created using Biogenic experiments Arete.” Dysea answered him calmly. “An illegal procedure within the borders of the Lycavorian Union. Something which you are very much aware of. You are not an elf, nor a Kavalian, nor a Lycavorian. All cells that you have within your body.” Dysea said. “All this we determined when you so generously donated your blood when arriving here. You are an abomination Arete.”

Arete’s jaw twitched slightly. “I am a sentient being!” He snapped. “I have broken no Union laws! Unless you consider preaching that this government... under the leadership of your mate... is corrupt and vile! My Order simply provides an alternative to your leadership. Yet we abide by all of your oppressive laws in doing so. You yourself were created were you not? Genetically engineered on the planet Earth if I’m not mistaken. We are not that different.”

Dysea chuckled. "Oh but we are." She spoke. "I don't need to use nefarious means to make people see my point of view. I use reason and definition. You force your will on others, as discovered by the type of invisible gas you use during your little shows in the amphitheater. We were able to discover residual traces of it on the points where you had the dispensers set up. An ingenious mixture really... Inavfar, Olorcol and Yalaxon. Three gases that individually are harmless and common... yet when combined they become a powerful mind altering gas. When used in the levels found in the amphitheater, it makes those without olfactory blockers very susceptible to suggestion. Since I am also part Lycavorian now, my olfactory glands are far more advanced than normal elves. And Lexi was completely immune. That is why you sent your men after us, because we did not pause when we got up and left after listening to your foolish drivel."

Arete smiled and reached out with his large hands, covering Dysea's delicate hands with his. "Come now Milady Dysea... you can not truly believe I am capable of such things." Dysea jerked in her chair when he touched her skin, her emerald orbs flying open as she stared into Arete's eyes. She felt his aura increase in strength and sweep over her in a very intimate way. A way no Lycavorian male would have ever considered knowing she was a mated female. He gripped her hands tightly as he stared at her, his dark eyes now alive with passion and lust. "You want to be my friend." Arete spoke softly. "You want to enjoy my company... the touch of my skin on yours. The touch..."

Dysea was frozen in her chair, but not for the reasons that Arete interpreted from her. Her emerald eyes were wide as the images flashed through her mind. Images of ships... thousands of ships. Burning planets. Dying men and women being engulfed in sheets of flame. Lycavorian men, women and children being incinerated before her eyes. Elfin people crushed under falling buildings from shattered cities. She saw smashed Lycavorian ships... hundreds and thousands of dead bodies stretching as far as the eye could see.

Aetia and Tuya burning and in flames, both capitals shattered and destroyed.

"The touch of my hands upon your body. You desire this Lady Dysea... you want me to make you feel things you have never felt before. You..."

Dysea blinked quickly her eyes refocusing. She stared at Arete with an almost lustful gaze. "You... you forget something..." She spoke in a soft whispering voice.

Arete smiled. "Tell me. What do you desire?"

Dysea's hands twisted and grabbed Arete's wrists tightly. His eyes grew wide and he glanced down quickly, then back to Dysea's face surprised at her strength. The lustful gaze was long gone and in its place was a look of absolute rage and hatred. Dysea yanked with all her considerable combined elfin and wolf strength, pulling Arete from his chair and across the table.

"You forget I am not affected by your pitiful aura!" Dysea snarled viciously. "The man who claimed me is more powerful than you could ever hope to aspire too!" Dysea released her right hand from his wrist and reached down to her firm thigh. She snatched her *Nehtes* from its place on the outside of her thigh and as she was bringing it up she depressed the recessed button on the shaft, extending the *Nehtes* to its full length of six and a half feet. *Nehtes*... the elfin Weapons Master who lived in Sparta had made this *Nehtes* especially for her. It was a foot and a half shorter than the standard size due to Dysea's height, strength and skill, and like her *Nauta Melme*, she had trained almost daily with her *Nehtes* and had unofficially become a Master of the weapon.

Dysea spun the *Nehtes* above her head gracefully and then drove it down through Arete's back. The spearhead sliced through his spinal column, through his stomach and liver and through his intestines before bursting from his abdomen and plunging completely through the table he was laying across. Arete's eyes burst open in sudden pain and agony, blood showering Dysea's chest and lower jaw as she twisted the *Nehtes* savagely and his mouth opened expelling saliva and blood.

The door to the small room slid open and two Spartans and three elves burst into the room their weapons ready and searching for targets. They were in time to watch Dysea scream out in fury and grab the table by the edge, lifting it easily even with Arete's body stretched across it and tossing it towards the wall.

Isabella was next into the room, shoving one of the elves aside gently as she darted right for where Dysea was standing, sucking in deep breathes of air.

"Dysea!" She barked.

Isabella's voice caused Dysea to turn quickly and the relief on her face was evident to everyone in the room. Dysea held out her hands and Isabella took them without question. Her hazel/green eyes went wide when

she felt how warm Dysea's skin was and the speed that her heart was beating. Dysea pulled Isabella close to her, inhaling her Lilac scent deeply. Her *Nauta Melme* was the only man she desired, the only man she would ever give herself to willingly, but Isabella filled her body and mind almost as much as he did.

"Bella." Dysea spoke softly.

"Dysea... what happened?" Isabella asked her. "They said one moment you were talking with him, and then he touched you! What did you see *ussta* she-elf? What did you see that caused you to react in such a way?"

Dysea looked at her. "Bella we need to return to the palace in Aetia! We need to speak with Riall and Armetus!"

Isabella nodded. "I have... I have a transport outside on the pad."

Dysea nodded and took a deep breath. *Iriral my bonded sister?* She reached out within Mindvoice for her bonded dragon sister.

Dysea I am coming! Iriral screamed in reply. *I was on the island speaking with the Elder Mother! What is wrong my sister?*

Iriral... return to the island immediately! Tell Arzoal I want her to take fifty Firespitters and fifty hybrids and go to the Order's compound. Burn it Iriral. Burn it right to the ground. I will have a detachment of Spartans sent down from NORMYA'S LIGHT. Sweep it my sister. Leave nothing alive.

Dysea... my sister what is wrong? Iriral exclaimed even as she executed an amazingly tight turn and headed back for the dragon island.

Once the compound is destroyed above ground, support the Spartans as they search under the compound. Dysea continued. *Whatever cloning facilities they have are hidden beneath that compound. I'm sure of it.* Dysea spoke. *When you have finished, you and Arzoal come to Aetia and I will tell you what I have seen.*

Dysea... my sister.

I have seen death Iriral. I have seen death on a scale I can not even begin to imagine. Hurry my bonded sister. Dysea spoke. She turned to Isabella. "You have your brother?"

Isabella nodded. "Yes."

"Then pick up this Roland as well." Dysea ordered. "This ends today Bella. This is no longer about biogenics. What I have seen... it makes me shudder."

APO PRIME UNITED LYCAVORIAN UNION FLEET HEADQUARTERS ADMIRAL OF THE FLEET RIALL'S OFFICE

"...finished their refits and are returning to their staging areas." Ceneu reported as he read from the pad.

Riall nodded as he sat in the high backed chair. "The 39th Fleet Group has also completed their refits and will depart for their patrol sector tomorrow morning."

"Three more *LEONIDAS II*-Class Strike Cruisers will be activated by the end of the month." Ceneu reported proudly. "And I'm very happy to report that the very first of the *ADMIRAL CENEU*-Class Heavy Attack Destroyers will be completed and ready for its test runs in six weeks."

Riall chuckled. "It is a well deserved honor my friend, and I'm happy Martin allowed it." He said. "You were the one that came up with the idea of the HAD."

Ceneu nodded and lowered his data pad. "His time with Komirri has groomed him well Riall." He spoke. "I knew he was a formidable Spartan on the ground, a tactician unequalled. I was worried that he might think he could do in the stars what he does on the ground. Time has proven me wrong."

Riall nodded his head. "I was at first as well." He said. "Komirri has been an excellent teacher for him. And the one thing I have learned since he returned to us, he is the most unassuming man I have ever met. If he does not know or understand something, he has no issues with asking questions of those who do. Even if he is King."

Ceneu nodded. "Now that we have the King and this elfin General Vengal, Simpson and Administrator Tarifa's father on Earth, all of them masterful tacticians. Now that we have them, Vistr has been able to turn his attention to turning out superior leaders among our ground forces. This has allowed you and I too focus our attention more on our fleets. Moral is up across the board Riall, missile reload times are nine seconds faster on

average, maintenance is at an all time low. Our crews are beginning to realize they are very good, and they are working at becoming even better.”

Riall nodded and lifted the mug of Aricia’s coffee just as the COM panel on his desk chimed. He shook his head and touched the panel. “I left instructions that I was not to be disturbed while Admiral Ceneu and I went over Fleet reports.”

“Admiral... we are receiving a Priority Alpha Secure Holo communication from Aetia on Elear.” The voice spoke. “It is from Queen Dysea and she will speak with no one but you.”

Riall leaned forward and looked at Ceneu. “Put it through immediately. And activate a Level Six security field around my office immediately.”

“Yes Admiral.”

Riall turned to the holo imager that was on his floor. “Priority Alpha Secure?” He asked looking at Ceneu. “Dysea is the calmest of all Martin’s Queens. What could possibly make her initiate a PAS?”

The holo imager activated and suddenly they were looking at the very clear image of Dysea as she was wiping what appeared to be blood from her face. Riall and Ceneu both came to their feet.

“Dysea?” Riall spoke.

It had taken some time, but continued badgering from Dysea and the others had culled Riall of his inbred need to refer to them as royalty. He was the mate to the mother of the man they all so loved and formality between them, even in public, was somewhat ridiculous. He had finally begun to refer to them in the same manner as his own daughters, which in many respects they were.

Dysea looked up and finished wiping her neck with the towel. “Riall... I need you to do something for me.” She spoke.

“Name it.” Riall said without hesitation.

“Activate every Union Border Fleet Group that we have Riall.” Dysea spoke calmly. “Bring them all to their highest state of alert. I want all of them out of their staging areas and patrolling every portion of our border. No matter how insignificant we may think it is. When that is complete, you will issue a Status Two alert through the remainder of the Union military. All Union Fleet Groups will immediately come to combat readiness, all ground units prepare for immediate deployment.”

“Dysea what is going on?” Riall asked.

“Riall... you know what my abilities are.” Dysea said. “The skills within Mindvoice that I have been showing signs of and have been working with the *Feravomir* on?”

Riall nodded. “Yes... some sort of Precognition. Seeing something before it happens. I don’t really understand it to tell...” Riall stopped and looked at her. “Dysea... of all Martin’s Queens you are the most in control of your emotions. You do not panic. What have you seen? Tell me!”

“Death Riall. I have seen death! I have seen Aetia and Tuya in flaming ruin.” Dysea spoke. “Hundreds... thousands of ships I don’t recognize. Our people screaming out in death. I... I have no proof Riall... no evidence that tells me what I have seen will happen. You know as well as I that this skill of mine is not Future Sight as some have called it. It is more feelings than anything else. I touched someone who was here on Elear and that is what I saw. I would much rather be safe than sorry Riall.”

Riall didn’t hesitate. “Yes I agree. Admiral Ceneu is here with me now. We will begin issuing the orders immediately Dysea.”

Dysea nodded. “For’mya was worried for us and sent *MJOLNIR’S HAND* here to Elear with an additional two Mora.” Dysea spoke. “They should arrive tomorrow. Ceneu once you are finished with getting the fleets called up I want you to take the rest of the 1st Spartan Attack Group and move to the coordinates I am sending you now. You will be my hammer if I need you Ceneu. From this position you can be to anywhere along the border of The Wilds in a matter of hours. Riall... I need you to remain on Apo Prime for the moment. I will need a senior officer there to direct things if anything happens to me or Isabella.”

“For’mya is here Dysea.” Riall spoke.

Dysea shook her head. “She does not hold the title of Queen, something that I will urge *Nauta Melme* to change as soon as he returns, for she is just as much a Queen as any of us. If anything were to happen... I need you to back Deia when she goes to the Senate. Until we can call her a Queen, For’mya will not have the political weight to move the Senate to action.” Dysea shook her head. “This is all... I don’t even know if what I have seen will come to fruition Riall... I...”

“The King would never question you Dysea. That much I do know.” Riall spoke quickly. “I will not presume to do otherwise. I’ll begin issuing the orders immediately when we are done talking.”

Dysea nodded. “Thank you Riall. I will contact you again in six hours. If at all possible insure Armetus is with you as well.” She spoke. “Isabella and I must question someone now and see to what is happening here. Good luck my friends and pray that whatever I have seen... pray it is wrong.”

LYCAVORE FORMER REGENT TONLAR’S PALACE

Yuri stood next to Pa’cour as they studied the holo image of terrain.

“This is where you think they are?” Yuri spoke.

Pa’cour nodded. “The last report of the traitors we had within their ranks came from this point.” He pointed on the map. “It is near one of the older mines, no one has worked it for eight years if the records kept are accurate. I have seven teams of four in this area now.”

“You have recalled your Immortals?” Yuri asked.

Pa’cour nodded once more. “They are refitting as we speak. How many can you spare from your detachment Princess?”

“Three hundred and twenty.” The voice answered from the door behind them.

They both turned as Moran walked into the large room that was once used as a gathering and entertaining lounge with half a dozen plush couches and several free standing bars.

“Commander Moran?” Yuri spoke quickly.

Moran nodded to her. “Princess Yuri.”

Yuri looked at Pa’cour. “Leave us Colonel, but insure your Immortals are prepared to move at first light. I will not start an attack against the Lycavorian animals in the timber at night. And have someone go back through all the security vids of the prison section dating back to when that prisoner was first brought here. I want to know who it was my father was keeping here.”

Pa’cour nodded and bowed his head. “As you order Princess.” He walked up to Moran and bowed his head as he passed and left the room.

Moran waited until the Immortal was out of the room, his eyes never leaving Yuri’s face. He watched her move to one of the free standing bars and pour two glasses of fresh blood that were chilled under the bar.

“You should not have come down here Robert.” Yuri spoke.

“What are *you* doing here Yuri?” Moran asked her.

“I’m doing my job.” Yuri replied.

“Tonlar is dead. Leonidas got the prisoner before we did. Tonlar’s wife is entertaining the Immortals, and if my understanding is correct, she’s is doing so without much enthusiasm.” Moran spoke as he moved closer to her. “Our orders were very clear. We were to leave here and proceed to the coordinates along the Zaleisian border.”

Yuri walked up to him and held out the crystal glass of blood. “I’m changing our orders.” She spoke.

Moran took the glass from her. “Why?”

Yuri sipped the sweet tasting blood. “What do you mean why?”

“Your father ordered us to the Zaleisian border Yuri.” Moran spoke. “If Leonidas got the prisoner first we were to kill Tonlar and every member of his family and then proceed to the border. Instead you assault this palace, a battle in which two hundred and nine Immortals were lost, and then you deplete the Strike Group of our detachment of Immortals so that you can go after Leonidas.”

“What is your point Robert?” Yuri asked as she turned and starting walking back across the large room.

“My point? My point is you are deliberately disobeying your father because of what he has done.”

Moran said as he set the glass down on the table. “You are allowing your anger over his acts to cloud your own judgment.”

Yuri looked at him eyes burning now. “Are you going to tell me you aren’t angry Robert? Is that what you are going to tell me?” She barked.

“Hell no! I’m fucking livid! I want to rip his fucking heart out for what he has done to you!” Moran screamed moving closer to her. “But I’m not allowing my anger to override my common sense Yuri!”

“Neither am I.” Yuri spoke.

“What do you think you are doing now?” Moran shouted. “Our orders were to proceed to the border, not stay here and chase Leonidas! You can damn sure bet he has a way off this planet Yuri! If he isn’t already gone!”

“He’s still here.” Yuri stated. “I can feel him within Mindvoice. Him and those damnable dragons that came with him.”

“Dragons?” Moran spoke. “There’s more than one?”

“It is the red haired Hadarian witch.” Yuri spoke. “Her dragon is here as well. And a smaller one as well.”

“More the reason to get out of here Yuri and leave this task to the Immortals as your father ordered.” Moran spoke.

“I’m done following my father’s orders Robert!” Yuri spat venomously. “All these years I thought he favored me... and it was only because he did not want me to find out what he had done.”

“Yuri... I’ve been having our ships run long range sensor sweeps of the border area your father wanted us to go to.” Moran told her calmly. “The sweeps are coming back negative Yuri. Nothing.”

Yuri turned to look at him. “Then we do not need to leave. If there is nothing there... we can remain here and destroy Leonidas.”

“That’s just it Yuri! There are sensor probes in that sector of space along the border. We are not getting any feedback from them. Not even a beacon! None of them are responding to remote orders.” Moran spoke.

“They are damaged.” Yuri shrugged.

Moran stepped closer to her. “All nine of them Yuri! Think damn it! Your father wants us there for a reason, and these sensors might be part of it!”

Yuri glared at him. “Do not raise your voice to me Robert!”

“Yuri... yes your father ordered Xerxes to rape you! Yes he is a conniving motherfucker who only cares about himself! Your father is not a coward however, and something has got him scared. Scared enough to start issuing Kill Orders for his own son, and killing his Immortal Captain to hide his sins. And he is sending us to the Zaleisian border after what appears to be a wild goose chase! But damn it... what if he is right?”

“How can you believe him now?” Yuri snapped. “After what he has done? How can you trust him? He could very well be sending us there to have us killed! He threatened this very thing against us not twelve hours ago!”

Moran shook his head viciously. “Fuck Yuri... you have to think about it for a minute!” He shouted. “Something has got your father as frightened as a scared dog! Look past your fucking hate of Leonidas and your anger at your father and see what I’m trying to tell you! I am your husband and the Coven... our future together comes first! You are acting like a spoiled child who has...!”

Yuri reared back her hand and slapped him as hard as she could, being careful to rake her nails across his face deeply. Moran’s head snapped back, four long red furrows appearing on his cheek and blood immediately beginning to seep from the cuts.

“You can run to the Zaleisian border like a sniveling bastard vampire dog if you want to Commander Moran!” She snarled at him. “I am going to remain here until that pig Leonidas and his whore Queen are dead. And I am going to find out who the prisoner was that my father was keeping here!”

Moran stared at her for a long moment saying nothing as her chest heaved in angry gasps and she glared at him.

“Go!” She screamed at him. “Leave me a ship and go since you are too much of a coward to stand with me here! I do not want a coward for a husband! A man who is afraid of my father! Go Robert!”

Moran took the data pad from his belt pouch and held it out to her. “The reports from the sensor sweeps Princess!” Yuri snatched the pad from his hand and flung it across the room, the pad skipping across the floor and landing by the entrance. Moran nodded slowly and bowed his head before turning and walking briskly out of the lounge area. The moment he was out of sight of the doorway he blurred into motion, speeding out of the palace itself.

Yuri stood in the middle of the room, her chest rising and falling with effort as her anger burned off. She didn't know how long she stood there, her words to Moran echoing in her head over and over. She hadn't meant a word of what she had told him. He had been like a rock for her all these years, totally devoted and committed to her. He hadn't blinked when she told him he carried another man's child. She turned and moved to the large view window that overlooked the mountains and timber in the distance and she could see the High Coven Runner just as it was lifting off from the landing pad. She watched until the ship was well out of sight, sipping the blood from the crystal glass in silence.

The minutes passed by slowly for her and finally Yuri turned at the sound, her eyes going to the doorway as Pa'cour stepped back in. He saw the data pad on the floor and bent to pick it up.

"Colonel Pa'cour, please send a transmission to Commander Moran and have him report back here to me." Yuri spoke.

Pa'cour looked at her oddly. "Princess... Commander Moran left almost forty minutes ago." He told her. "He returned immediately to the *BLOOD JUSTICE* Princess. An *ORIC*-Class Heavy cruiser was left behind, but the remainder of the Strike Group has departed."

"Forty minutes?" Yuri spoke with a gasp.

"Yes Princess."

"Contact the *BLOOD JUSTICE* then." She spoke quickly. "Have him return here and report back to me."

"Princess... they went dark just before departing the system." Pa'cour said. "They will not reply to any transmissions. That is standard operating procedure."

Yuri felt her heart lurch and she threw her glass of half drunk blood across the room now, watching as it impacted the far wall and shattered into a hundred smaller pieces, splashing the remaining blood on the wall and floor. "Fuck!" She swore. She took a deep breath and looked at Pa'cour. "What is it you need Pa'cour?"

Pa'cour stepped up to her slowly. He held out the data pad he had picked up from the floor and Yuri took it quickly. "We have discovered a ship Princess. A large civilian freighter ten kilometers from the tunnel my teams are converging on. It has been stripped bare, but it could be the ship they arrived on Lycavore in."

Yuri took a deep breath. "Let's go there then." She spoke quickly.

"He... he looks so much like... like his father." Gorgo spoke softly her eyes staring at where Martin stood next to Jeth wearing a strange glove on his right hand.

She had allowed Anja to treat her without question, her son's scent so deeply imbedded within her blood that she did exactly as Anja asked of her. She now wore a Spartan uniform that was two sizes too big for her, but her Lycavorian system was rapidly reasserting itself now with the induction of the medicines Anja had given her. Helen sat with her by the small fire on the floor of the cavern, two *Durcunusaan* standing a short distance away, their orders from Helen quite clear. No one but the King, Anja or Seanna was to come close to Gorgo.

They had tried to fill her in on everything that had happened in the last fifteen years, at least what they knew of it since they themselves had only been back for the last two years. Gorgo listened mostly, asking questions at different times as Helen did most of the talking. Gorgo only was interested in what her son had done for the most part, how he had survived and what his life had been like.

Gorgo finally looked at Helen. "Dustha... please... please tell me this is not all some cruel dream and I am not dead." She spoke softly.

Helen smiled gently and moved closer to her. "No Gorgo... this is no dream." She spoke. "I had a similar reaction when I first realized who he was when he arrived back in Sparta that first day."

Gorgo looked at her. "You remained in Sparta all this time?" She asked.

Helen nodded. "It was my place." She replied. "And I had come to love it there."

Gorgo's eyes grew a little wider. "Pleistarchus?" She gasped. "Is he...?"

Helen shook her head slowly. "He... he was killed under suspicious circumstances in 458. His remains were mangled and torn but we found the pendant you gave to him after Leonidas's death on his corpse. Pausanias ruled as Regent until he came of age, but he was a dog. There was evidence he helped the Persians

after their defeat, and once Pleistarchus took power he was suspected of instigating a revolt of the helots to try and gain power back. It failed and he was starved to death in the Temple of Athena. Pleistarchus's rule was..."

Gorgo looked at her. "What?"

"He did not appear to be interested in being King. He was more apt to be found cavorting with unmarried women." Helen replied. "In the aftermath of the earthquake of 464 Archidamus the Second was responsible for saving Sparta. The first King of the Eurypontid line I had any use for. Pleistarchus took a mate... I don't remember her name... and she gave him a son they named Pleistoanax. He took power after his father was killed, but his rule was tumultuous. He was exiled for taking bribes from Athens but later restored. Most of us believed he only wanted peace in Sparta after so much had happened in the last forty years. Pleistoanax had a son, also named Pausanias and he was exiled and condemned to death for refusing to fight alongside Lysander and taking a Persian as his bride. His children ruled for the next years but Sparta had begun her decline by then. I hoped that one day you would bring him back so that he could take power once more." Helen motioned to where Martin stood. "I had lost touch with what was happening with the rebellion, and Dymas and I were trying to keep the line of Leonidas alive even though they continued to do things that made that task extremely hard. I heard nothing from the Union until his Guardians brought him to me. I hid him for as long as I could but in the year 2036 an earthquake damaged his chamber enough where I had to revive him. That same year I instructed his Guardians to place him in the charge of Dymas."

Helen stopped for a long moment as she took a deep breath and then continued.

"We had thought him lost when the comet came... but two years ago he returned from the moon where he had been living. Almost five centuries had gone by for us on Earth, the details of what happened even I can not fathom or explain. Time, physics, quantum theories, bah... what stands before us now is the son of Leonidas. Your son. He killed Xerxes, in a rather brutal fashion, freed Earth and then returned to the Union. To his people. And he does not only look like his father, he is his father Gorgo, in almost every way. He has his father's memories, his grandfather's memories. His father's drive and Charisma. Men and women flock to him, to be near him. The loyalty he commands Gorgo... I dare say it rivals that of Leonidas himself."

Gorgo stared at Martin for a long moment. "His name... how...?"

"It was customary at the time Dymas took over his care to have a first and last name. I named him Martin after a famous television star of the time. He only took on Leonidas as his last name when he discovered who he really was. All those who came with him from Earth... many have taken on two names. I believe after hearing what Anja called herself earlier, even his Queens will start this now."

Gorgo looked at her once more. "Four Queens Dustha? And an elfin concubine?" She said. "And Isabella is one of them?"

Helen laughed softly. "He keeps all of them extremely happy I will tell you that." She said. "And yes... Isabella is one of them."

"She is a... a vampire?" Gorgo spoke.

"She came to Earth with Riall when I sent my transmission saying he was still alive. She has not been far from his side since. None of them have. Aricia... Aricia is his *Anome*... the one he favors most but he loves them all intensely, and they love him and each other in turn." Helen chuckled. "It was something of great talk among our people when he first returned, the group of them all sharing the same bed. Now... now it barely raises an eye among our people."

"The young girl there beside him? That is his half vampire daughter I take it?" Gorgo asked.

Helen nodded. "She is the reason we came here." She answered. "He only discovered her existence when we left Earth, and he's had people looking for her all this time. When we finally discovered her location he was going to come here on his own to get her. The men and women you see around him all volunteered for this insane mission. We... Gorgo we did not know you would... we had no idea we would discover you here. It came as quite a shock Gorgo. The clone... that abomination is perfect in every way. How is it possible that she can have your memories? That is not something that even I know how to do."

"Veldruk. He took my blood when he first left me here. Apparently he has the ability to see memories in someone's blood. All I had done in my life, when he tasted my blood, all that knowledge became his. Somehow he was able to use his Mindvoice powers to transfer that to the clone." Gorgo spoke softly. "It's the only explanation. They have kept me alive all these years to keep extracting my scent glands to transfer them to the

clone. I thought... I always thought I would die here Dustha. Never in my wildest imaginations did I ever foresee this. He is... he is beautiful to me.”

“He is ashamed you know?” Helen said softly.

Gorgo looked at her. “Ashamed?” She gasped. “Ashamed of what? If what you have told me is true... he has no reason to be ashamed!”

“His Mindvoice shields... they are higher now than I have ever felt them. I have seen him do things Gorgo... unbelievable things. He was formidable before he ever came in contact with Torma. He destroyed Ukwav Gorgo.”

Gorgo looked at her shocked. “The Planet of Hell’s Forgotten Souls?” She gasped. “He destroyed it? How?”

Helen nodded. “It was how he was able to free Canth’s Mindvoice presence so that he could pass them to me. Martin’s abilities only increased when he bonded with Torma.”

“That... that dragon?” Gorgo asked. “*Son Vada Carians*... never did I think I would ever say that word, let alone see them for my own eyes.” (By The Gods)

Helen nodded slowly. “He is so very ashamed because for all his vast power and skill, he has been calling someone else mother for two years now, and he did not know it. His sense of family is... it is beyond anything I have ever felt Gorgo. To him... finding you here, to finally feel the connection he thought he had with this clone... it shames him to think he could have betrayed you in such a way while you suffered on this rock.” Helen spoke softly. “I myself should be ashamed for not seeing it. Martin... he has an excuse... he was not old enough to remember your scent before he was placed in the chamber... I should have remembered. And I should have known when the clone never asked of Pleistarchus or his descendants.”

Gorgo pulled herself to her feet shaking her head. “No.” She spoke gently. “That... that is not something he will bear.”

Helen watched her surprised as she started for where Martin was. She got to her feet quickly motioning for the two *Durcunusaan* to follow.

“I’m not detecting anything wrong Jeth.” Martin spoke as he passed the dragon medical scanner over Jeth’s blue/black body.

Torma was resting on the ground close to his son, Miath a short distance away watching as Martin examined him. He and Isra had become quite the experts over the last year at insuring the dragons among them were well cared for and healthy.

Lisisa knelt on the ground next to Jeth, her hands stroking his scales gently. “Father... something has to be wrong.” Lisisa spoke. “I smelled it as well. It was foul and disgusting. Like decayed flesh.”

Martin looked at her. “Decayed flesh?” He asked. “And you are sure you didn’t eat one of those Immortals by accident?” He asked with a smile.

Torma and Miath snorted openly in a dragon laugh and they could hear the deep rumble of laughter within Mindvoice.

I did not! Jeth exclaimed. *I only bit that one! And when I flung his body away his arm and shoulder tore free. I spit it out immediately.*

Open up! Martin barked with a laugh.

I did not...

Open your mouth Jeth! Martin stated again. *Or I will have your father bite you on your tail and make you open your mouth.*

Father! Lisisa snapped. *That is so cruel!*

Martin looked into Jeth’s blue eyes intently and finally the hatchling relented and opened his mouth exposing flesh shredding jaws and razor sharp teeth. Martin leaned in closer and shook his head. *Holy shit Jeth! You weren’t kidding. It smells rancid!*

I told you King Martin! I don’t know what it is! Jeth exclaimed.

Martin reached down to the metal container and took out the small light. He flicked it on and pointed it down Jeth’s mouth and into his throat. *Hold still!* He spoke reaching fearlessly into that tooth filled maw while dozens of Spartans and Lycavorians alike watched in awe.

Jesus Jeth! Martin exclaimed apparently grasping something and pulling with a jerk. *Next time spit all of that Immortal out boy!* Martin pulled his hand back out of Jeth's mouth and between his two fingers he held a portion of the Immortal's hand and one finger. Miath couldn't contain his laughter within Mindvoice and soon several of the *Durcunusaan* were laughing as well.

Martin tossed the piece of hand against the far wall of the cavern shaking his head while even Torma began to laugh now. He peeled off the medical scanner glove and bent back over the container, pulling a large chunk of meat out. He shoved several dissolvable plastic capsules into the chunk of meat and turned back to Jeth. *Here... this will prevent you from getting sick with an infection and from spitting up your food. It will also help your breath!*

Jeth gulped the chunk of meat into his mouth, chewing and swallowing quickly to rid himself of the foul taste in his mouth. Martin smiled and reached out to stroke the top of his blue/black head. *You did well out there Jeth, you did real well. I'll have to talk...*

Martin my brother. Torma's voice interrupted him. Martin turned to face Torma and he motioned with his massive head.

Martin turned quickly and saw his mother standing behind him, Helen next to her. Gorgo's hands were over her mouth in stunned shock as she had heard every word that had been spoken in Mindvoice between her son and the dragons, not to mention the laughter.

Martin stepped towards her. "What are you doing up!" He exclaimed. "You should be resting!"

Gorgo stepped up to him, reaching out to take his face in her hands as she looked up into his handsome face. She smiled as she remembered this face as an infant, with chubby cheeks and glittering brown eyes. Eyes that looked upon her then as they did now. With love and adoration.

You... you bear the name of your father. She spoke in Mindvoice. She was not fully rested enough to erect shields around their thoughts, and even if she was Gorgo was sure she would have chosen not to.

Martin nodded slowly. *I... I do mother.*

Then know that your father was never ashamed of anything he had done in his life. Gorgo spoke. *Least of all events that he had no control over. I have... I have been here fifteen years... and never once did I believe I would ever leave this place alive. You came here... you came here for your daughter Martin Leonidas... and you will leave with your daughter and your mother. Dustha... Helen... she told me that the First Oracle... that Canth spoke to you of finding others who have been lost.*

He did. Martin said.

You have given me life again my son. As I once gave you life, you have returned that to me this day with your actions. I wish to go home. I wish to go home to my mate and my children. And I wish to re-discover what fate took from us on that day so long ago. Gorgo told him. *I wish to discover you... Martin Leonidas. My son.*

Martin engulfed her in his arms and crushed her to him as he had done earlier, only this time he felt no shame, no fear. This was his mother... this was the woman who had given him life. *Then I will take you home mother.* He told her with a smile. *I will take you home and we will have what we were meant to have.*

Gorgo's face beamed as she nodded her head, inhaling her son's scent deeply and reveling in the feelings that coursed through her now.

Martin set her down quickly, not releasing her hands. *Let me start by introducing you to someone.* He let go of one hand and reached over to pull Lisisa to him. *This is Lisisa. She is my...*

Daughter. Gorgo finished the statement. *Yes... that is quite obvious for any who look at her.*

Lisisa had small tears in her eyes as she looked at Gorgo with something akin to awe on her face. *It is... it is an honor to...*

Gorgo shook her head with a smile and embraced her quickly. *It is no honor to meet my granddaughter. It is spectacularly joyous to meet my granddaughter. And I will make it a point to be by your side when we both meet your brother.*

Lisisa laughed as Gorgo hugged her tightly, and she returned the embrace just as tightly, though being careful to not squeeze too hard on her still frail form.

Torma lifted his body from the floor and moved forward slowly, settling back to the ground only a meter from Martin's back. He lowered his head until it was just over Martin's right shoulder and he felt Martin reached up to stroke his scales on the underside of his jaw.

“Mother... this is Torma.” Martin spoke as Gorgo turned to gaze at the immense dragon and his yellow/gold eyes. “He is my bonded dragon brother.”

Gorgo stepped closer, still somewhat fearful of this beast, her eyes never leaving that huge head. *I... I understand I have you to thank for the unbelievably fast ride away from that vile place.*

Torma’s eyes closed and he nodded his massive head. *It is with the utmost honor that I finally greet my brother’s true mother. The mother of his soul.*

Gorgo couldn’t help but smile as she reached out her hand hesitantly.

“It’s ok.” Martin said with a smile. “He just looks big and mean.”

Gorgo gasped when her hand touched the smooth scales and she could feel the power trembling within the massive body. Her eyes were wide as she gazed at Torma. *You... you call each other brother?* Gorgo said softly.

Torma opened his eyes and looked at her. *And we are... in every sense of the word.*

Gorgo couldn’t help but shake her head. “This is all... it is all so amazing.” She spoke. “I could never...”

“King Leonidas!” Atropos’s voice shouted from the entrance to the Mindvoice ship. They turned to see him sprinting towards their group easily and he skidded to a halt in front of them. “Milord... the Immortals are moving closer! Daniel is near the entrance to this cavern and he reports scenting dozens of them getting closer! The... the avatar reports they are appearing on this ship’s external sensors from many directions! Komirri reports that they have discovered *HOPE’S QUEST* as well.”

“Shit!” Martin swore. “Helen... take my mother back inside!” Martin barked. He turned to Lisisa. “Lisisa... you and Melita start getting everyone onto the ship now! We’ve run out of time!”

Gorgo watched him bark orders rapid fire even as Helen and the two *Durcunusaan* began to guide her back to the massive city ship. She had tears in her eyes and a smile on her face as he was the vision of his father. Confident and sure.

He was Leonidas.

“Komirri!” Martin snapped as he entered the bridge of City Ship 41.

Komirri turned from the console he was standing at, looking over the shoulder of a female Spartan in the chair. He watched Helen lead Gorgo onto the bridge as well, his eyes widening only slightly.

“Milord... they are approaching from five different directions!” He reported moving up beside the King he would follow into the center of a burning sun. He looked at Martin, his reptilian features unreadable. “Sire... she is...”

“The woman I have called mother for two years is a clone Komirri.” Martin spoke. “And when we get back my friend... I am going to insure that every High Coven agent inside the Union has no where to run and hide. I am going to purge their existence just as brutally as I can and make it so any who survive will so terrified they will run from our borders as fast as their skinny vampire asses will go.”

Komirri chuckled. “Much like the fleet that was in orbit above us.” He spoke.

Martin looked at him. “What do you mean?”

Komirri nodded. “Three hours ago. One *ORIC*-Class Heavy remains, but the remainder of the *VHC* Strike Group has left the system.”

Martin looked confused. “Why would they leave? I would have thought Yuri would have landed every troop she had in an effort to kill us.”

“That is what I assumed as well. Especially once she realized you were here on the surface.” Komirri spoke. “At the very least deploy their Strike Group into position to bombard our position once they had it locked.”

“What’s the cruiser doing?” Martin asked.

“Simply holding position in a polar orbit.” Komirri spoke. “It’s not even in a position to bring its weapons to bear on us.”

“How many Immortals?” Martin asked.

Komirri turned as Avatar 41 moved up to their location.

-External sensors indicate eight hundred and thirty-five Vampiric species approaching from four different directions. Sensors indicate probability approaching contacts are of the Akruvian species ninety-nine point eight percent-

“Akruvian?” Martin asked.

“The Immortals sire.” Komirri spoke. “That is their official species designation.”

-Estimate they will discover the main entrance to this cavern in four point three hours at their current closure rate-

“And how much longer do you need to make repairs?” Martin asked.

-Sixteen point five hours-

“Wonderful... we only have to hold them off for twelve hours.” Martin muttered. “Can’t you work faster?”

-Twenty-nine percent of repair drones were destroyed upon entry into this planet’s atmosphere. The remaining seventy-one percent are operating at twelve percent above normal parameters-

“So we hold them off for twelve hours with forty odd *Durcunusaan*, three dragons and a shit pot full of luck.” Martin spoke. “Hey... what could be easier?”

“Milord?” Komirri spoke looking at him as if he was insane.

“We will fight.” The voice carried to them and they all turned to see Husen enter the bridge with Yuriko and Lisisa. “We have weapons. Visam and Noreu have asked that I assume my father’s status among our people sire. I can arm a hundred and fifty of our people with the weapons we have scrounged through the years.”

“Will the radiation in the tunnel affect the Immortals the same as normal vampires?” Martin asked.

“No.” Anja replied coming from the small room off to the side. “Their physical composition is different.”

“They’re bloodsuckers!” Martin exclaimed. “How much more similar can you get with a vampire than that?”

“Their cellular structure is different lover.” Anja spoke coming up to him. “The radiation will have no affect on them. Trust me.”

“Man... you’re just a bundle of good news.” Martin spoke. “Husen... take only the fastest of our people and a detachment of *Durcunusaan*. Atropos goes with him. Set up a linear defense line two hundred meters in.” Martin tapped the COM unit on his armor. “Danny you copy?”

“I hear you boss.” Dan’s voice replied.

“Danny... I’m sending Miath, Yuriko, Melita and the rest of the *Durcunusaan* to your location. Set up your defensive position as you see it brother.” Martin spoke.

“Already got it planned out Marty.” Danny replied. “Send me Jeth and Lisisa as well. I seen what that little guy can do, and with the two of them here with Miath, we’ll be stronger.”

Martin nodded. “Lisisa?” He spoke turning to look at her.

Lisisa nodded without hesitation. “I’ll leave right now.” She said as she turned and headed out of the bridge area.

Endith turned from where she sat at one of the consoles. “Skipper... I can adjust the *STRIKER*’s shield generators to project a force shield at the opening of the cavern.” She spoke. “It won’t be as strong as if it was protecting the *STRIKER*, but it could last a few hours if they decide to shell the opening.”

Martin nodded and waved his hand. “Get on it Endy! Tina... how big is this fucking ship anyway?”

-City Ship 41 will have a total length of 5.8 kilometers once we obtain orbit and deploy the Quantum Drive Modules and Auxiliary Nacelles-

Martin looked at him with wide eyes. “No shit!”

-Processing term shit. Processing complete. Negative... there are no signs of excrement anywhere on City Ship 41. All waste product equipment is functioning normally-

Tina laughed from her chair. “It’s a slang term Avi!”

Martin looked at her. “You named the robot?” He asked aghast.

-Avatar 41 is not a robot. I am a neuraltronic processing avatar of the Pralors. Superior in design and computation skills. The human commonly referred to as Tina insisted on altering my designation. I approved of this-

Martin looked at the reptilian looking avatar. “Well excuse the hell out of me!” Martin barked even as Helen and Anja chuckled. Gorgo couldn’t help but smile as well. Martin turned to Husen. “There are no other entrances?”

Husen shook his head quickly. “We sealed all but the main opening and the mining tunnel entrance.”

Martin nodded. “Good then we don’t have to worry about surprise guests.” He spoke.

Komirri held up the data pad. “We striped *HOPE’S QUEST* bare sire. I left a little surprise on her as well. She served us well... but once a non-Lycavorian enters her bridge, a failsafe will activate. Three minutes later the ship will explode and whatever Immortal dogs are on her will enter into that great beyond. The only problem is we will not be able to contact Apo Prime until we are back in orbit. The... Avi here says that we won’t be able to establish a solid connection from here in this ship until we reach orbit. Something to do with the bio-mechanical design of the hull.”

Martin nodded. “It will have to do.” He spoke. “But once we get into orbit... you get me a connection. Where did those ships head?”

“That’s the odd thing Milord.” Komirri answered. “They did not head deeper into Coven space. They set a course for the Zaleisian border and went dark just before leaving the system.”

“They went dark?” Martin asked with real interest. “They would only go dark for the same reasons we would Komirri.”

Komirri nodded. “Yes... if they were conducting a secret reconnaissance or that they might be entering into a hostile situation.”

“The Coven doesn’t strike me as the real secretive reconnaissance types you know.” Martin said.

Komirri nodded. “I would agree sire.”

“Who the hell would be hostile to the Coven along the Zaleisian border? I thought those ugly back stabbing bastards were in tight with the Coven?” Martin asked.

“I do not know Milord.” Komirri spoke thoughtfully. “But if the Coven is skulking about in their space... that can’t be good.”

Martin nodded. “No it isn’t.”

Gorgo turned her head to Helen as Anja moved up next to them. “He certainly inherited his father’s sense of diplomacy.” She spoke with a small smile.

Helen nodded. “Yes he did at that. None at all.” She said with a smile.

Anja chuckled. “That’s why he has Dysea and Deia.” She said softly.

“Dysea... she is...” Gorgo asked looking at Anja.

“Dysea is his elfin Queen.” Anja answered. “For’mya is his concubine... though as far as we are concerned she is just as much a Queen as we are.”

Gorgo looked at her curiously. “You don’t seem... you don’t seem bashful about...” She stammered.

Anja smiled and took her hand. “No we are not.” Anja spoke. “Nor are we bashful about our love for him.”

Gorgo smiled warmly. She liked this flame haired Hadarian wolf that her son had turned. As she held Anja’s hand she felt a surge of Mindvoice tremors and she gasped. Her dark eyes went to Anja’s jade green orbs. “You... you carry his child.”

Anja smiled brilliantly. “Yes I do.” She answered. Her free hand went to rest on her abdomen. “Eliani is going to be strong.”

Gorgo looked at her. “Eliani? After his... after his grandmother.”

Anja nodded. “His next son will carry the name Resumar.” Anja said proudly.

“And where did the name Androcles come from?” Gorgo asked.

“Androcles was Dymas’s brother.” Helen explained. “One of Aricia’s uncles. It was Androcles that was the final catalyst for Martin discovering who he truly was. It was he who put him on this road. When Androcles died Martin brought him home to Sparta and swore his first born son would bear his name for his deeds.” Helen spoke. “Panos... Dymas’s father has acted as Martin’s father in Leonidas’s stead.”

Gorgo looked at her. “Panos from the Spartan Senate? The one who supported me in my plea? He still lives as well?”

Helen nodded thoughtfully. “Another sign that no one recognized. The clone never went to Panos when she was in Sparta.” Helen shook her head. “There is much we have to do when we return... but Martin... he looks too many others for advice as well... but when it comes to the truly important things he always turns to Dymas or Panos. Martin has made Dymas Senior Polemarch of the entire Lycavorian Ground Army. Every Spartan... every warrior.”

Gorgo turned back to look at her son as he spoke with Komirri. “I see there is much I will need to rediscover when I return.” She said softly. “Including my mate.”

“Gorgo you...” Helen started.

Gorgo shook her head. “No Dustha... I am a Spartan woman. I have always been a Spartan woman. I lost myself for a time after I thought he had perished,” She motioned to Martin. “Riall helped me to get that back. When Leonidas left that day he told me to find a good man and have strong children. I found Riall and I found love again. What... what I will do is return to Apo Prime... and if the gods grant me... I will kill this clone myself for attempting to take what is mine!” Her words were delivered with confidence and more strength than they had yet heard from her.

Anja nodded. “As it should be.” She spoke softly.

ELEAR ROYAL PALACE IN AETIA

“...now learning the details as to what caused this massive show of force.” The female elf’s voice carried from the monitor. “As you can see behind me, what appears to be a full *Mora* from Queen Dysea’s task force in orbit is now entering the compound of the Order of Arete, the First Elfin King as the legends tell us. It has been two hours since over a hundred dragons led by The Elder Mother Arzoal and Queen Dysea’s bonded dragon sister Iriral descended upon this three square kilometer compound and began attacking it from the air. We are standing on a slightly elevated hilltop half a kilometer away from the compound and you can see that they left no building untouched no matter how small. We were given a short dispatch by Queen Dysea’s Secretary Director Miai in regards to this attack only moments ago.

“It seems that this Order of Arete was in fact not a religious cult, but a secret facility for the execution of Biogenics research. Biogenics research has been outlawed within Union space for nearly thirteen hundred years due to its brutal and hazardous nature. The leader of this cult, who called himself Arete, was killed by Queen Dysea herself when he attempted to attack her during interrogation. It seems that Queen Dysea and...” The reporter’s eyes went a little wider as she looked at the pad. “Queen Dysea *and* Queen Isabella came to Elear twelve days ago at the request of High Minister Alocgeid to begin an investigation of this supposed cult. This Arete attempted to have them killed twice within that twelve day period, both attempts failing but providing valuable information as to actions and intent of this Arete and his Order. It also now appears as if Queen Isabella has decided to fill the role that King Leonidas has wanted her to fill as his fourth Queen and mate. A statement released by her in conjunction with Queen Dysea indicates that individuals within IES have been implicated in this Biogenics research, and that she and Senior Director Mateau of IES are currently in the process of conducting a vast internal investigation that according to Secretary Director Miai, will shake the very

foundation of IES and should serve as a warning to all those who conduct illegal and harmful research within Union boundaries that it will not be allowed or tolerated in any way, shape or form.”

Dysea looked at Isabella as they stood side by side in front of the monitor, Alocgeid and L'tian slightly to the side.

“Thank Miai when you see her Dysea, for giving me advanced warning of this release.” Alocgeid spoke. “My office was prepared for the deluge of transmissions from across the Union and was able to prepare releases of our own.”

Dysea looked at him. “I apologize for not forewarning you of my acts Alocgeid.” She spoke softly. “I needed to act quickly.”

“No apologies are necessary.” He spoke. “You did not release that Roland is a High Coven agent. Or that your brother is involved Isabella. Why?”

“Roland *was* a High Coven agent.” Isabella replied. “My father would never have sanctioned this biogenics work. He is many things... but foolish is not one of them. Roland was doing this of his own accord. My brother was given the mission to come here and eliminate Roland and me, and make it appear as if this was all something IES did on their own. My father apparently learned what Roland was doing and decided to take action. If it had succeeded every vampire that now calls the Union home would have been singled out and become an enemy, including me. My father eliminates two problems with one action. That was my brother's task. This has grown into something else however.”

“What do you mean by that?” L'tian asked. “Dysea you mentioned something like that to me before I came here. What do you see?”

“Ships.” Dysea replied. “Thousands of them. I saw Aetia burning and in ruins. Tuya on Apo Prime as well. These ships were not High Coven ships L'tian. I've never seen them before. This Arete was tied to them somehow.”

“How?”

Dysea shook her head slowly. “That is what I'm hoping to find out from Roland. Marci is interrogating him now.”

“And what of your brother Isabella?” Alocgeid asked.

“That is what we are about to find out as well.” Isabella spoke quickly. “Have you kept them separate?”

L'tian nodded. “He is in the south end of the palace with four *Durcunusaan* guarding him. The female elf is in the north end with two of my security detachment.”

“They've said nothing?” Dysea asked.

L'tian shook his head. “This female elf... Va'nimia is her name. She clutches a very expensive necklace in her hands and won't let anyone touch it. I had my people scan it... and it appears your brother bought it two days ago in one of Wainn's markets.”

“He said he kidnapped her when he first arrived and has been holding her only for carnal pleasures.” Isabella spoke.

L'tian nodded. “Yes... that is the assumption we were going off of but she does not appear to be running to implicate him in anything. She is a teacher... very intelligent... but unremarkable. We searched her abode; she is single... nothing out of the ordinary. Some of the items we found in the Coven safehouse were from her apartment. Someone brought them there for her to use.”

Dysea looked at Isabella. “Bella are you thinking what I am thinking?”

Isabella's eyes were wide now. “As impossible as it seems... yes!”

“What?” L'tian asked.

They looked at him. “He cares about her.” Isabella spoke finally.

“I will talk with her. You speak with your brother.” Dysea said. “L'tian... if you would go to *NORMYA'S LIGHT* and assist Marci?”

L'tian nodded. “Of course.”

“We need to find out what is happening.” Dysea spoke. “And quickly. I can still feel Nauta Melme faintly... he has discovered something where he is. It caused his emotions and power to spike higher than I have ever felt it. I'm sure Aricia felt it as well on Earth.”

“What do you think it was?” Alocgeid asked.

“I don’t know... but it wasn’t because of Lisisa that much I can tell you.” Dysea told them. “He went there with the purpose of finding her and he would not have spiked as he did. This is something else.”

L’tian shook his head. “All these things happening at once are no coincidence.” He spoke. “The Kavalian on Earth... the King...”

“Kavalian on Earth?” Dysea spoke looking at him. “I have talked with Little Wolf twice and she has never spoken of a Kavalian on Earth.”

L’tian nodded quickly. “It was not confirmed until only a few days ago.” He said. “It appears that this unknown dragon and rider are not so unknown. He is a leftover from the war Arzoal’s kind had with Chetak’s people. The dragon he is riding is the daughter of the two Firespitters that escaped Enurrua. She is serving him only because he holds seventy-three of her mother’s eggs. She...”

Dysea! Arzoal’s voice filled her mind.

They all turned to see she and Irial settle to the ground outside the room they were in and Arzoal quickly shoved aside the doors into the sitting room.

What is this Dysea? Arzoal spoke. *Aricia and Isra did not tell me this!*

Dysea looked at L’tian. “It appears events are progressing on Earth rapidly and Isra has not been able to fill Arzoal in L’tian.”

L’tian looked at Arzoal’s massive head in the doorway. “Do not blame Isra for this Elder Mother.” He spoke. “This was our doing... Armetus and I. We felt it better to keep what was happening on Earth quiet for the time being.”

This dog is holding dragon eggs hostage! Arzoal demanded. *He is forcing one of my dragons to serve him? Aricia told me he was forcing this Syrilth to serve him, but that he was holding six of this Syrilth’s siblings’ hostage! Not over seventy eggs!*

L’tian nodded still somewhat unused to Arzoal’s ability to project her thoughts and words into his head. “She is apparently the oldest child of the two dragons that escaped Enurrua so long ago. This Lycavorian has formed a weak bond with her, but his power over her is mainly his control of her mother’s other eggs.

“And what of this Kavalian?” Isabella asked. “Where does he figure in all this?”

“We have an *AUTUMN MOON*-Class frigate tracking seven ships currently on their way to Earth.” L’tian spoke. “They are only a few hours away right now. Five of these ships are transports that have been configured to carry eggs.” L’tian looked at Arzoal. “Dragon eggs. This Lycavorian... Maraud is his name... apparently he is going to use these eggs as his ticket off Earth. The Kavalian made the mistake of remaining in Eden City in an effort to kill Selene. It is my understanding they have an inbred hatred of vampires, and Selene apparently insulted him in some manner.”

Isabella nodded. “That fits.” She spoke. “It is well known they hated vampires. During the war my father had with them, Kavalians were known for sealing vampires into rooms and watching them go insane without blood. It is a hideous and painful way to die.”

“Well... the last report I got yesterday from Armetus indicates they had captured this Kavalian and were going to interrogate him. Isheeni was able to somehow get inside their mountain hideaway and contact this dragon. Syrilth you say her name is. The last I knew they were preparing to go back and work on a plan to discover where this Maraud has the eggs hidden.” L’tian spoke. “Oh... and I understand Isheeni is carrying another clutch of eggs.”

Arzoal’s eyes went wide. *Another clutch of eggs! What is she doing! She screamed out. Is she losing her mind? Dysea... I must go to her!*

Dysea moved to the communications panel on the wall in the room. “Spaceport Control Officer?”

“This... this is Commander Ror’pal my Queen.” The male elfin voice sounded surprised to hear from her.

“Commander, please begin immediate prep and departure files for *Dragon Transport One* and her escort!” Dysea ordered. “I want priority flight status and use of Jump Gates!”

“Understood My Queen.” The officer replied. “Destination?”

“Earth!”

“I will have *Dragon Transport One* ready to depart in thirty minutes Queen Dysea.” The man answered. “Will the Elder Mother be traveling?”

“The Elder Mother and a full load.” Dysea spoke.

“We will be ready Milady!”

Dysea turned to Arzoal. *Go Arzoal! Take four hundred of your strongest and go!*

Thank you Dysea!

Arzoal’s head pulled back quickly, Iriral moving fully into the room now, and her enormous body lifted into the sky.

Dysea looked at L’tian and Alocgeid. “Gentlemen we have quite a bit to figure out.” She spoke. “L’tian I want you to prepare a transmission to Armetus. The moment we have any solid information I want you to beam it to him. He seems to be the only one right now that has a picture of what is happening everywhere.”

L’tian nodded. “I’ll see to it.”

“Bella... let’s give our guests a few hours before we go talk to them.” Dysea spoke. “The more worried they are the better. And it will give us additional time to find this second member of the *Venorik Elghinn* that has eluded us so far.”

EARTH

EDEN CITY AIRFIELD

Syrlth watched as Isra dragged the upper body of the large stag over to her. She had spent the last two hours in Isra’s care, and under the watchful eye of Aelnala he had given her different medicines and with Aelnala and Thr’won’s help had applied a soothing balm to her scales all over. It had soaked quickly into her scales, but almost immediately she felt energized and stronger. What the elf Thr’won had done was amazing really, reaching into her thoughts as she had and reinforcing her natural Mindvoice shields, as well as picking out certain memories that she thought might be useful. Thr’won had easily instructed her how to pass this reinforced Mindvoice shielding to her siblings that remained in the mountain. All of what she had ever hoped for was within her grasp now, and she looked at these elves and Lycavorians in a new light. Especially this Aricia and Isra.

Isra had shown her what they had learned during their training as members of Mjolnir’s Hand, and he had even passed to her an image of the King and Torma. These images left Syrlth with little doubt they could succeed. It would not be easy or without risk, but they could do it. The King was larger than Maruad, and Isheeni’s mate dwarfed even her by several meters in size. Her only wish since her mother and father had died was within reach, and Syrlth had every intention of seeing that it came true... if not for her, then for her unhatched brothers and sisters.

She settled to the floor of the hanger as Isra dropped the stag portion in front of her.

What is this Isra? We already have enough food for my siblings and I have eaten more in the last few hours than I have in many months. Syrlth spoke.

Isra smiled up at her. *This is something different Syrlth. This hunk of stag is filled with something different. Over the last year Queen Anja has learned how to treat your kind quite well, and with the Elder Mother’s help we have learned how you are able to produce your flame. This stag is filled with two different types of compounds. It has been tested many times before so it is completely safe. One of the compounds will enlarge the chemical glands in your throats that combine to give you your flame. In the hatchlings and adolescents they are not as developed as yours and Isheeni’s are. The second compound will protect the inner lining of your throats since they too are not developed enough to protect enough from sustained bursts.*

Syrlth nodded. *Yes... I understand.*

An hour before Isheeni and Roluth depart with Maraud; give this to your siblings. It will enable them to help you and the Spartans that will attack the mountain.

These compounds will last Isra? We will not be executing out plan for at least two days. Syrlth asked.

Isra nodded. *They have a shelf life of three years. Two days will not matter. You said this hanger is cool enough for the meat to not spoil?*

Syrlth nodded. *It is one of the things I have asked Maraud to fix and he does not out of spite.*

Then it will be fine. Isra spoke.

Isra... you and Aricia... you will... I never... I have never asked...

Isra shook his head. *You do not need to ask Syrilth. We will be there. It will take Admiral Wallace two days to fully direct his sensors from EDEN station. You saw all that we saw Syrilth. We held nothing back. We can't use the ships in orbit because it may very well be detected. Admiral Wallace is very thorough... and right now EDEN is the most secure facility outside of the King's villa in Sparta. No one but him will know what is happening. We are still getting information from this Kavalian pig... but we will discover what we want from him.*

And then he will answer for his crimes. Aricia's voice broke in as she walked over with Isheeni close behind her.

Isra looked at her, detecting something in her voice. *Aricia... what is wrong?*

Aricia shook her head. *Nothing with our plan... but Martin and Torma... Isheeni and I are feeling wild spikes within Mindvoice from them. We can't pinpoint it... but something has happened that has them both on edge.*

What else? Isra said turning to face her completely.

My mother left Elear six hours ago with four hundred of our strongest. She is coming here. Isheeni spoke with some humor. *She thinks Aricia and I are acting rashly.*

Yes well... they have discovered some things on Elear that seem to be tying back here to Earth. Aricia said. *If I understand correctly, these Kavalian... no one has heard from them in nearly four centuries. And suddenly one shows up on Earth; they have connections to what was happening on Elear and we discover they have a small fleet coming here to Earth as well. There are too many coincidences happening for it to not be related in some way.*

And we have almost no intelligence on them that is not hundreds of years old. Isra spoke softly.

These Kavalian... I take it they are not individuals we want to be associated with? Syrilth asked.

Aricia shook her head. *No they are not.* She stepped forward and placed her hand on Syrilth's muscular neck. *We however have other priorities right now. You and Isheeni and Roluth need to leave now. As soon as we find something I will contact Isheeni and we can put our plan into action Syrilth.*

Syrilth nodded her large head. *I am ready.*

Aricia turned to Isheeni and reached up placing both her hands on Isheeni's snout. *May the spirit of Martin's father watch over you sister.*

Isheeni's azure eyes closed and she nodded slowly. *And you my bonded one.*

Aricia kissed her cool scales softly and stepped back. *Roluth... time to go!* She called out.

Roluth turned from where he was on the ground with Tarifa and Aihola. He turned back to them quickly. *It is time.* He said even as their hands stroked his scales. *I will see you both soon.*

Be careful Roluth. Aihola spoke. *Do nothing stupid.*

Stupid? Me? Roluth said as he got to his feet.

Yes you... we hear that quite a bit from our mate thank you. Tarifa said even as Isra came up behind them and slipped his arms around them both.

Be ready Roluth. Isra said.

Roluth nodded. *I will be.* He said before turning and moving over to where Isheeni and Syrilth waited.

The lights inside the hanger were quickly darkened as the wide doors were pulled aside to reveal the first streaks of dawn on the horizon.

Aricia came up to the three of them as the three dragons moved outside and leaped into the sky. "Our plan is a good one my friends." She spoke softly.

Isra nodded. "Yes it is." He said.

Tarifa nodded and took Aihola's hand. "Now let's go figure out what to do with our new friend."

Aihola snorted as they all turned and headed for the much smaller doors. "Gut him and leave him to rot in the Wastes is what I say." Aihola spoke.

UNCLAIMED SPACE

.8 YEARS FROM LYCAVORIAN BORDER

“Ahhhhhhh... uhhhh... no... no more!” She cried out in sudden pain as his massive cock filled her bowels completely, bottoming out in her exceptionally well sculpted ass, his huge balls pressing tightly to her supple bronze tanned skin.

Her hands were flat on the bed, the knuckles on her long fingers turning white as she did her best to hold her body off the bed and not surrender to him. Her skin was slick with sweat, the nipples on her full breasts rigid and almost painfully hard as he began to stroke deeply into her clenching ass. Her golden blond hair was pulled over to one side of her flawless face, cascading down her shoulder to touch the sheets of the bed. Her cat like, hunter green colored eyes were wide, the vertical slits completely open in a mixture of pain and pleasure, her whole body pulsing with heated desire. His aura was like an aphrodisiac, urging her to passionate heights even if she did not want to be there.

“Sister... please, it... ohhhh!” She gasped as his enormous cock slammed down on her ass cheeks once more, driving her body completely to the bed now. She could feel every vein of his thick shaft pressing against her inner wall, and she hissed out her breath as he withdrew until only the bulbous head remained inside her, his pulsing shaft causing pleasure to rip through her lithe body.

“*Nubou* she’s... she’s tight! Almost as... almost as tight as you!” He exclaimed as he rammed his powerful hips down again, sending his throbbing ten inch cock deeply into her virgin ass once more. His six feet three, two hundred and twenty-five pound body was heavily ripped, each rippling muscle defined in excruciating detail on his sweaty skin as he pummeled the beautifully tight ass now under him. “Take... ahhhhhhh... take her hands Julersi! I want... I want to ride her hard!”

He watched as the delicate hands came from the side and gripped the wrists of the female under him allowing him to adjust his position. He watched her shimmering white blond hair, also matted with sweat as she tossed it back over her shoulder, her large breasts with eraser hard nipples poking into the air. Her ripe melon scent flooded his senses as she gripped her sister’s wrists to hold her in place. He smiled as he took hold of her slim hips, his fingers pressing into her satiny flesh and he began to pile drive his near bursting cock into the ass of the Kavalian female under him.

Her head whipped back and forth, her hands now clenching and unclenching as his aura set her off, driving any pain from her mind and setting her body afire. Her older sister held her wrists tightly, leaning her head forward to purr softly in her ear.

“He’s fucking your beautiful ass sister.” Julersi spoke. “Don’t you like it?”

The golden blond hair flew back and forth once more. “No... no... ahhhhhhh!” She gasped out. Her mind was screaming no, but her body was responding to Pusintin’s dominating thrusts with increased vigor. Her pussy was dripping her passion now, the clear sweet liquids pouring from her center, the lips of her pussy spread wide in anticipation of what she knew would not come. He couldn’t have her pussy, so he took her ass and mouth. Pusintin wasn’t gentle or patient. He demanded immediate satisfaction, jamming his thick cock between her lips until she was gagging almost uncontrollably on the thickness and length of his immense cock. Julersi had warned her about him and his needs, and while his come tasted rather good, he forced her to swallow when he exploded into her mouth, holding her head tightly to his groin with his exploding cock in the back of her throat.

He hadn’t softened in the warmth of her throat, appearing to only increase his passion and lust, and he had flipped her onto her belly only moments before now. His cock was still coated with her salvia and without any warning or attempt to prepare her; Pusintin had buried his cock into her bowels as she shrieked in both violation and extreme pleasure.

Her sister Julersi was Pusintin’s normal mate, and she had grown used to his demanding and dominating performances. She bragged of him all the time, and how he forced her to do such things as this, and how she would explode in passion while she performed these acts on him or he fucked her like some cheap dog in the street. It was how he was in bed Julersi told her, but at least he treated her as a near equal when not sharing his bed and not as some inferior female as many of their women were treated. That is why Julersi had told him to claim her for now, to keep her sister from enduring the sometimes savage mating with males of their own kind. Now she wasn’t so sure it was the right choice after all, as Pusintin’s thrusts began to speed up substantially, his thick shaft now thoroughly coated with the juices pouring from her pussy. She was trying to hold back the deep building ache in her belly, attempting to not release the wail of surrender to this Lycavorian who so treated her like an animal.

It was a losing battle she knew, and the ache was upon her then with staggering intensity and she did howl. She howled out in delight as her orgasm was wrenched from her by his pulsating shaft ravaging her ass. She heard him grunt heavily and then his cock swelled within her ass even larger. She felt him collapse onto her back and he growled savagely in her ear, biting down on her shoulder hard with his dual fangs just enough to hear her whimper as his hot come erupted and began filling her bowels to overflowing. His seed spraying inside her caused a smaller orgasm to make her groan and then Julersi released her wrists and she let her body sag completely onto the bed, his weight holding her down as he continued to pump his come deeply in her ass. She felt Julersi's wonderfully long hair caress the skin of her shoulder as she reached up and took hold of Pusintin's long dark blond locks and yanked his head back.

They shared a crushing, almost violent kiss, Julersi biting his bottom lip hard as she rubbed her bald soaked pussy against the edge of the bed, her sister's sweet melon aroma mingling with her own papaya scent as it filled the room. Pusintin's dominating evergreen scent wrapped around her and Julersi both and while it wasn't unpleasant, it did not tickle her nose as Julersi said it would.

She groaned loudly as Pusintin rolled off her body, his softening cock causing a small lance of pain as it left her ass. She heard him and Julersi roll together on the bed, locked in the brutal kiss, her groans as his strong hands bruised her hips very evident. She began to pull herself away from them, the slight soreness of her tortured ass causing her to grimace in painful pleasure. It would get easier she told herself. The more she gave herself to him, the more she would grow accustomed to his violent mating. At least he left no deep lacerations or claw marks on her otherwise flawless body as a Kavalian male would no doubt do.

Athani'Puat was her name, Athani for shortness and ease of speaking, and she was the second of her father's two daughters. A Kavalian by birth, though she and Julersi both had undergone biogenic engineering when very young to remove any sign of the soft downy hair that normally covered their Kavalian bodies. She still retained her cat like eyes and the ability to extend claws from her fingertips a good two inches. Claws that were like razors and could rend flesh quite easily when combined with her natural Kavalian strength and agility. It was what made their people so feared among the stars. Their natural violent tendencies and the natural abilities to back up that violence with action.

Athani pulled the single sheet around her body as the COM panel on the table by the bed began ringing. She heard Pusintin curse in his ancient language and he tossed aside her sister like a doll. She only laughed and landed cat like on the bed, extending her long tongue out and bringing her hands to cup her huge breasts. Pusintin... the Lycavorian who had made it possible for her people to return to their past glory. He had been raised by stern Kavalians for most of his three thousand years. Athani did not know exactly how old he was, and no one ever bothered to ask him. He was a cruel man... at least to all but her sister... quick to anger and violence, yet very contemplative in his actions. He was a masterful tactician, and he had been the one training their ground forces for the last hundred years as they hid themselves from prying eyes. Her father had only just returned from unclaimed space at the head of their massive four thousand ship fleet, and even now millions of her people were throwing off the cloak of secrecy on their home world. Athani had been given to Pusintin as a gift from her sister, since it was the females that decided who another female would mate with. The only condition to keeping her was that he could only have her ass and her mouth, for she must be pure for a male when one was proven worthy enough to have the youngest daughter of their leader.

Apparently having her ass and mouth was enough for Pusintin.

His large hand slammed down on the control panel in passion induced anger. "I told you I did not want to be disturbed!" He spat viciously.

"General Pusintin! A thousand pardons... but Admiral/Prefect Keleru'Puat has just arrived. He has asked that you join him in the forward lounge. He has some urgent information." The voice spoke.

Athani watched as Pusintin took a slow deep breath at the mention of her father's name. Pusintin owed his position to her father, and her father owed his life to Pusintin. They had worked together for a thousand years now and trusted each other implicitly.

"Very well!" Pusintin spoke in a calmer voice. "Make sure the Admiral/Prefect has plenty of fruit and wine and advise him I will join him as soon as I shower. Twenty minutes. No more."

"As you order general!"

Pusintin turned just as Julersi leaped from the bed at him. He caught her naked lithe body in his arms and pinned her against the cool bulkhead of the room. "You my little cat... I will have to punish you later!" He growled.

Julersi laughed and allowed her claws to extend and trail down his powerful back leaving white trails where she pressed hard. "If you must shower husband... then we both can shower, and you can punish me under the warm stream of water." She growled at him wrapping her long legs around his waist and grounding her dripping pussy against his semi erect cock.

"Your father might become angry if we are late." Pusintin spoke as he wrapped his hands around her waist, pressing her close.

"One look at my sated face and he will ask no questions." Julersi spoke opening her mouth and using her exceptionally long tongue to lick up Pusintin's cheek and tickle his ear. "Unless you feel you are not up to the task."

Pusintin growled at her, his fangs extending and biting down on her large breast hard. Julersi hissed in delight at the pain and delicious sensations that rippled through her and she held his head there as he lifted her in his arms and turned to walk into the shower.

"I will show you up to the task wench!" He snarled at her.

Admiral Keleru'Puat stood in the large conference room and stared into the vastness of space around him, his orange cat eyes detecting hundreds of their ships flanking Pusintin's flagship. He was large for a Kavalian, nearly six feet two inches, the dark blond hair covering his head and every portion of his body in a thin layer of fur. His features were considered handsome for a Kavalian and he had been sought after by many females before being chosen by his current mate of nearly seven hundred years. Like Lycavorians... Kavalians mated for life in most instances. The oldest females within the family, usually the mother and sister if there was an older one, decided upon the male that would mate with her daughter. Once mated to a male, their daughters were hardly ever spoken too again, and the males could do with them what they wished. His mate had chosen Pusintin for Julersi nearly thirty years ago, for reasons he did not understand, but accepted as their way. He could not complain about his mate's choice aside from the fact that he was Lycavorian by birth. He was however raised for the majority of his life as a Kavalian, and he surprisingly fit in well with their violent and sometimes deadly nature. His natural size, skill and strength had afforded him the opportunity to forge a niche in their society, and he was ecstatic about being selected to train the Kavalian ground forces. He had an intense hatred for his own people as well as the vampires, a hatred that almost matched that of every Kavalian.

It had taken them almost nine hundred years to rebuild their society in secret, using the new biogenic research they had purchased to make a formidable army of Kavalian bioclones. Stronger, faster and harder to kill, they would be a match for even the vaunted Spartans of the Lycavorian Union he had little doubt.

Keleru turned as the door to the conference lounge opened and Pusintin walked in at a measured pace. Unhurried and confident. He saw Julersi behind him and his sensitive nose detected he had interrupted them. His oldest daughter was a vision of beauty... the first to receive the biogenic compounds that removed the fine hair from the whole of her body except for the silk like strands on her head and also served to curb many of their wilder instincts to a milder state. He had seen Pusintin after a match with his daughter however, and Keleru was glad to know not all of her instincts had been engineered out of her.

And Julersi looked very satisfied if the sated look in her bright blue eyes was any indication.

"Keleru!" Pusintin spoke as he came up to him and grasped his arm tightly. He generally enjoyed this Kavalians presence. He was more refined than the more savage of their species, infinitely more intelligent and capable of sound decisions based on fact and data rather than instinctual responses. Keleru had worked long and hard to rebuild his people after the High Coven had nearly destroyed them, and Pusintin had been beside him for most of that effort. He despised the High Coven vampire scum almost as much as he hated his own people, and had gleefully agreed to train the Kavalians in ground combat. His size and strength and ability to shift into a wolf had always provided him respect and wary among the Kavalian people, most especially after two Kavalians who were vying for Julersi's mother to chose them were angered greatly after she picked Pusintin. He had had to watch his back for two years from those two fools before they finally made a move on him and he killed them both in the same night. "It's been a long time my friend."

Keleru nodded. "Indeed. Almost a year. You are looking well. I trust my daughters are serving you well?" Keleru knew of the arrangement his mate had made for Athani, and he trusted Pusintin enough to know he would honor that arrangement.

Pusintin nodded. "I have no complaints." He spoke with a knowing grin.

"And he should not have any complaints. I am more than he can handle most times." Julersi said as she came up to her father.

Keleru chuckled as Pusintin nodded in agreement with a smile. "That she is." He spoke.

Julersi rubbed her cheek against her father's cheek affectionately in the Kavalian show of respect and family. It was not often that a father was able to see his daughters once they were given away to males, it was part of their society's culture. Keleru however was changing all that now. He would never attempt to change his people from their core, but in order for them to survive as a species some of their ways had to be altered. Many males among his people were now taking a more vested interest in seeing that their daughters were properly cared for when given to mates. All of them wanted to see grandchildren grace their families. Some had even begun meeting as larger prides for celebratory events and allowing the children to play amongst themselves while the adults mingled. Females away from the males of course, that rule would never be changed in public, but in private it was different. "You are looking well father."

"You are looking sated daughter." Keleru said with a grin.

Julersi smiled now as well. "He does an adequate job of pleasing me." She spoke turning back to move next to Pusintin and rubbing up against his side in a show of affection. "He is a satisfactory mate."

Pusintin grinned and slapped her firm ass with his hand. "Just you remember that." He spoke as Julersi yelped in mock surprise. He turned back to Keleru. "What brings you here now Keleru... we were not supposed to link up for another week? You came quite a ways out of the way when you could have just sent a transmission."

Keleru held out the data pad. "This deemed a face to face meeting Pusintin. It has some of the Pride Leaders on edge." He spoke.

Pusintin took the pad as Julersi moved to pour all of them glasses of rich wine. He moved to the table and settled into the chair as he read, his eyes growing darker the more he took in. "When did you get this?" He finally asked.

"Eight hours ago. I attempted to confirm it... but all I was able to discover is that our facilities on Elear are destroyed and Arete is very dead. Killed by the Elfin Queen Dysea." Keleru spoke as he moved to the table and sat down.

"Keleru... this does not affect our plan." Pusintin spoke. "You and I knew that she might not turn out to be as weak as the other Pride leaders thought. It appears we were right. Roland is a loss that we knew would happen sooner or later... we were going to kill him ourselves when we began our attack. He is too much of a loose end. What's puzzling is why they haven't revealed he is or was a High Coven agent. And we never authorized Arete to attempt to kill her or this Isabella so that is strange as well."

"The last report from Roland was after this first attempt on the vampire witch. He had reason to believe her father was trying to have her killed." Keleru spoke. "He didn't know why but would try to find something out. He never sent another report after that."

"That's very interesting." Pusintin said. "What of these reports of activity near Lycavore?"

"Those are the newest." Keleru spoke. "All this is happening now... just before we set our plans in motion."

"None of these things will dramatically alter our plans in any way." Pusintin spoke.

Keleru nodded and took the glass of wine from Julersi. He watched as she handed the second to Pusintin and stroked his cheek with clawed fingers gently as she went to retrieve her own. Pusintin's eyes shimmered at the touch and Keleru knew his mate had made a good choice in this man.

"All these things I explained to the other Pride Leaders." He spoke. "They wish to know what you recommend after seeing them."

Pusintin sipped the wine. "Why? They have never cared for me Keleru... I'm smart enough to know that."

"It is true many are wary of you Pusintin." He said nodding his head. "However not for the reasons you might suspect. They fear you Pusintin. You have been raised as one of us for the majority of your life. You have

accepted our ways and even hold our culture up in ways some of our younger Pride Leaders do not. Your hatred of the blood eaters equals that of our own, and is even greater for those you once called your own. You are mated to my daughter, and I trust you enough to break my youngest daughter in without question. You wield far more influence than you might suspect. They... and do not tell them I have told you this..." He said with a smile, his fangs showing as his lips curled up and his cat like orange eyes glittered. "They trust your judgment."

Pusintin set the pad on the table. "I tried to tell them that once the elfin bitch and her vampire lover returned to Elear and began investigating the cult front that we set up it was only a matter of time before they discovered what it really was." He spoke calmly. "They appear to be smarter than we first thought, and if the elf wench was able to kill Arete by herself, they are also stronger. We have to remember who has claimed them. Leonidas is many things Keleru... but he would not take weak females as his mates. They are Queens for a reason; they are respected and feared for a reason; especially that pure blood whore of his. Their status only increased when those damn monsters became part of their lives."

Keleru nodded. "I agree." He spoke.

"This report that we have lost contact with Talco on Earth, and the reports of activity near Lycavore are the more troubling reports." Pusintin spoke evenly. "We needed those eggs to begin studying them and discover why our people have such a natural aversion to them."

"Aversion?" Julersi spoke as she sat down at the table. "Pusintin... our people positively fear them. They cower at even the thought of them. It sends shivers through me just speaking about them."

Pusintin nodded as he looked at her. "I know... that is why we needed those eggs. To try and determine why this is. Our doctors have told us it is something in the genes, and with the eggs we could have determined what it was and made attempts to remove it." He replied.

Keleru sipped his wine. It had taken him some time to grow accustomed to Pusintin's intent on having Julersi present at most of his meetings let alone allowing her to speak when not spoken to as was normally their way. As time past however, Keleru began to understand that she brought a different perspective to the table. A female's perspective, in some cases more tame, in some cases more savage. Whatever the perspective it was always well thought out as his daughter was no fool.

"It does not appear that will happen now." Keleru spoke. "Our liaison with the Zaleisian pigs has reported that the vampire elf in charge of Earth insulted Talco in some manner. When it was discovered they were attempting to purchase mining rights very close to their secure underwater transmission hubs, the elfin females reacted. The Zaleisian negotiating group is still being held in Earth orbit. The small fleet we sent to Earth will arrive in eight hours and Talco will not be there to direct them."

"Do you think they have captured him?" Pusintin asked.

"As you have just said my friend... none of those Leonidas chose as his Queens is a fool." Keleru spoke. "It is the only conclusion I can come to at this time. We know the mother of his son went to Earth with her beast some time ago to join the one already there. And she seems to be the most powerful of them all. They are very protective of these monsters for some reason."

Pusintin nodded. "They know the power one could wield with these beasts." He said. "Even more so if one is bound to them as it appears this unit he has formed is."

"Could you not do this Pusintin?" Julersi asked. "You have Mindvoice abilities that we do not husband."

Pusintin shook his head. "As with normal abilities they must be maintained. I was never very strong in Mindvoice to begin with and I have not nurtured that skill as much as they do. The only thing I have maintained is my shielding ability. I have leaned more towards using my aura since I was welcomed among our people."

Julersi snorted. "Yes... I know well your aura husband." She spoke looking at her father with a grin. "He turns me into a babbling fool father. Perhaps more so than what I have seen you do to mother while I was growing up."

Keleru laughed. "Good." He stated.

"If Talco has been captured and we must assume he has been... then I suggest we disregard that part of our plan until after we have completed Phase Two of our operations." Pusintin spoke. "It's too risky."

"And Maruad? Talco?" Keleru asked.

"Maruad be damned!" Pusintin spoke. "I'm more concerned with getting Talco back." He said. "Maruad can fend for himself... he is a fool in any regard. Leonidas will butcher him... if the child Queen doesn't do it first."

“Once we begin operations are you suggesting we open communications with Leonidas and demand him back?” Keleru spoke. “Do you think this will even work?”

“He is your nephew.” Pusintin spoke. “And he is a valuable leader.”

“He is also hot headed and stupid if he allowed this vampire elf to affect him so.” Keleru snapped. “I see now that your recommendation he not be told of our plan now was an excellent foresight on your part.”

Pusintin nodded as he got to his feet deep in thought. He moved to the large view window and stared out at the ships as Keleru and Julersi waited patiently. He did this often and they had grown accustomed to it over the years.

“Leonidas is on Lycavore.” Pusintin spoke finally.

Keleru looked stunned. “In High Coven space?” He gasped. “Even he is not that foolish Pusintin!”

Pusintin turned back to look at them his dark eyes alive. “The reports we were getting from The Wilds, Spartans chasing after a female Hadarian smuggler? The attack on the palace on Apo Prime that Roland told us about and we saw on the Netnews? Leonidas was supposedly looking for someone the Coven had taken from him. The child he fathered with the blood eater Yuri. Even the Netnews was reporting this after that debacle on Enurrua.”

“Yes... so.”

“Lycavore is very much a dead planet Keleru. The old home world of my people. There are a few mining sights there, Rubidium Ore mostly. Our initial intelligence estimates gave us all this information. No ships however... only a standard garrison and planetary defenses.” Pusintin spoke. “If there is increased activity now... after so many years of nothing, it can only be for one reason. Leonidas found this daughter of his on Lycavore, and the Coven knows he is there.”

“That is quite a reach my friend.” Keleru spoke. “Would he go that deeply into High Coven space to retrieve a child? Is he that reckless?”

“Reach out to our contacts within the High Coven military. Let them tell us.” Pusintin spoke now. “Let them begin to earn what we have promised them. In the mean time we issue orders telling our fleets to alter course and avoid Lycavorian space at all costs. Detour around it no matter how small.”

“But why?” Julersi asked now.

Keleru got to his feet. “You have interpreted the signs as well?” He asked.

Pusintin nodded. “They are subtle... but it is obvious what they are doing.”

“You think they know of our forces?” Keleru asked.

Pusintin shook his head. “No. If they were... they would not be so calm about it.”

“Calm about what Pusintin?” Julersi asked.

Her father turned back to her. “Starting roughly five hours ago we began getting signs the Lycavorian Fleet was mobilizing. Their entire fleet is making a mass movement from their staging areas and standing to along their borders. The few assets we do have within Lycavorian space are also reporting that their Inner Defense Fleets are also massing and many of their Elite Ground Based Legions are coming to a higher alert status.”

“They suspect something.” Pusintin spoke. “Whatever is happening on Elear and Apo Prime is causing them to react defensively for the time being. I have no desire to take on the whole of the Lycavorian Fleet. Not now. Since Leonidas’s return, their readiness has increased ten fold, and they are building new ships. Their soldiers are training harder. He has given them a boost of morale. If we were to fight them now... we would become bogged down horrifically against them. It would turn into a slugfest which we would not come out of the victor.”

Keleru nodded. “We have spoken of this with the other Pride Leaders. The Union will still be here when it comes time to take them down. For now we stick with our plans. I’ll begin issuing orders to the other Pride Leaders and let them know what we have decided.”

Pusintin nodded. “I will do the same with my forces.” He spoke.

Keleru stepped up to him and placed his clawed hairy hand on Pusintin’s shoulder. “I will see you again on Zaleisia Four then my friend.” He spoke. “And we will drink to our victory.”

Pusintin smiled savagely. “I look forward to it.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

NUWAROA HIGH COVEN SPACE

He remembered the pain.

The pain of the High Lord crushing his insides and the pain of dozens of lacerations as he was smashed through the window. He remembered the fall, thirty stories to think briefly of his life and what he had failed in accomplishing. The impact on the surface of the water had caused a momentary deluge of pain that pierced his entire being and then the pain overloaded even his rigidly trained mind and blackness took him.

He remembered the vivid dream, the feel of silky soft hair clenched in his fists, his entire body rigid with riveting pleasure as moist warmth engulfed his massive throbbing cock. Hot velvety warmth and soft lips anchored around the base of his pulsing, erupting shaft. He remembered the flawless tanned flesh in his dreams, crushing that firm flesh to his own in the grips of the dream, grinding his throbbing cock into the belly of the pureblood vampire female with no face. He heard her moans of unabashed delight as he slammed into her warm dripping depths with power and desire, her legs and arms wrapped tightly around his powerful back and waist urging him deeper. Then he tasted her blood, his fangs sinking deep into the flesh of her neck even as her own pierced his gray skin and they fed.

His body jerked and his mind came back to reality, the dream drifting away in the recesses of his mind.

He opened his dark eyes slowly, feeling the softness of the bed beneath him. The sheets covering his lower body, the pillows under his bald head. He lifted his right hand slowly, the deep lacerations on the back of his hand and forearm gone. He lifted his other hand and noticed the same thing. His hands went to his chest where a large piece of glass had been embedded in his flesh as he fell. His muscular chest was uninjured, his grayish skin unblemished. He was dead... and some how he had crossed over to his people's Land of the Eternal. He sat up in the bed quickly, his eyes darting to where the double doors to the immense room opened and two female pureblood vampires walked in quickly with small bundles in their hands. Their skin was perfect, one with shimmering black hair, the other with hair the color of golden silk. They came up to the bed unafraid, yet their eyes held fear in them. He watched them set the small bundles on the end of the massive bed and then step back. The dark haired female was a true vision and for the first time in his life he felt desire for a pureblood female vampire. The skimpy light wrap outfit she wore did nothing to hide the curves of her flesh, the high proud breasts with small pink nipples or the firmness of her tanned skin.

She was perfect.

This kind of perfection was what he had once aspired for his people to obtain. When he had discovered that the Princess's daughter still lived, he knew the perfect combination of her DNA from both vampire and wolf blood could change how his people looked. The Akruvian... his people... were not pleasant on the eyes he knew, even the females who were less fearsome than the males, could inspire fear in other species. How they looked to others only added to their fearsome visage and nature and it was one of the main reasons that the High Lord had come to their world so long ago. He wanted that fearsome visage and his people's natural strength and war like tendencies on his side, fighting for him and not against him. The High Lord had turned hundreds of his people, and they had in turn changed thousands until all of them conceived through the centuries were like the man who had halted their tribe warfare and united them.

"A uniform for you Milord Cha'talla." The dark haired female spoke haltingly in a soft whispering voice. It was like a voice caressing the morning reeds in the breeze with its elegance and accented lilt. "The Empress will greet you in the Western Garden."

"Empress?" Cha'talla asked hesitantly. "Where am I? Who are you?"

"Please Milord Cha'talla." The dark haired one spoke again her dark eyes never leaving his face. "She is waiting for you."

Cha'talla gripped the sheet. "I will not dress in front of you!" He spoke gruffly.

"Milord... it is I who has cared for you these last days." The dark haired female spoke again, this time almost shyly. "I have already seen all you have to offer Milord. We were ordered to watch you dress by the Empress. Renata will not watch you dress if it pleases you, but I must I'm sorry."

Cha'talla felt strong... stronger than he had at any time in his life. He didn't know what was happening but he was not in the Land of the Eternal that much he knew. He pulled the sheet aside and planted his feet on the cool floor and rose to his full height of six foot four. His two hundred and sixty pound body was dotted with old scars from hundreds of battles, the muscles well defined and sculpted. He saw the dark haired female vampire's eyes dart quickly to his thick flaccid cock as it was fully exposed for both of them to see. Fully eight inches long even when soft as it was now and extending down along his thigh. Her moist pink tongue slipped out and licked her lips quickly in that instant, her dark eyes going back to his face as he pulled the uniform from the bed. It was a standard jumpsuit, dark gray in color and it fit him perfectly. He dressed efficiently and quickly, pulling on the black boots that had already been sitting by the bed. He finally stood up and looked at them.

"Who is this Empress?" He demanded once more.

"This way Milord." The dark haired female spoke.

Cha'talla watched them for a moment as they turned and headed out of the huge bedroom into the long black marble hallway. He took a deep breath when they paused by the doorway and then he followed them. He had faced death once with honor, and if he was to be killed once more he would face it as an Immortal, without fear.

The two pureblood females led him down the corridor, passing through another set of immense doors into a courtyard that burned with the sunlight from above. He shielded his eyes quickly, watching as the two females began moving across the courtyard. He saw other females and several males look up and watch as he passed them slowly. He could smell that they were all pureblood vampires, and surprisingly they looked upon him with something akin to awe. Cha'talla had never been to this place... he did not recognize any of the vampires walking the halls or courtyard, and the sun was far too bright to be Usu'Ozeib 7. The palace... it had to be a palace simply by its size alone... it was massive, with towering pillar like structures all around it reaching into the clear blue sky. He was surprised that the vampires he had seen so far were unaffected by the bright sun. Purebloods could take a great deal of sunlight, but even they did not tempt fate very often, preferring to remain in the shadows most of the time.

The blond female opened a large vine covered gate into a much smaller courtyard and the dark haired one turned to look at him. "The Empress will greet you inside Milord." She spoke. "It has been a pleasure to serve you these last days. I hope... I hope you will allow me to serve you in the future."

Cha'talla watched them both bow to him and then they turned to walk back the way they had come. His eyes followed the dark haired female as she walked; watching as her light blue wrap outlined her shapely figure quite well, enhancing it to the point that even Cha'talla felt a twinge of attraction once more. He turned then and looked into the courtyard cautiously before moving through the opened gates slowly, his keen eyes darting from corner to corner. He saw flowers of every design and color arranged in neat rows and perfect circles. The soil was rich and the fountain in the center of the smaller courtyard had clear water running from it, and filtering into small conduits that fed it to the plants all around him.

"She is beautiful is she not Cha'talla?" The sultry rich tone of a female voice reached his ears from every direction and he spun around quickly seeing nothing. He had heard that voice before yet he could not place it.

"Who are you?" Cha'talla called out changing directions instantly his eyes searching.

"Her name is Esther Saira." The voice continued from all around him. "She is quite taken with you by the way. Immortal Captain Cha'talla, hero of Pueloas Four and Sephran. The most decorated Immortal in High Coven history and Royal Captain to the High Lord."

"No more!" Cha'talla declared. "I... I betrayed him! Who... who are you? Show yourself to me!"

Cha'talla gasped when the air in front of him shimmered as if a vampire was dropping from the shadows, instead this vampire unwrapped the light from around her body. His dark eyes went wide and he dropped to his knees. "Milady Aikiro! I beg... I beg your forgiveness."

Cha'talla lowered his bald head as the ravishing Asian beauty materialized directly in front of him. The blood red dress wrapped around long tanned legs and tied at the waist. There was a seductive cut up the center of the dress, revealing substantial cleavage from her large but exceptionally full and firm breasts. Her glistening black hair fell over her shoulders, coming to a rest just above the inhumanly perfect ass. Her porcelain like face was flawless in its beauty, with full lips coated with a light color of red. Her eyes were piercing orbs of black

darkness, the makeup she wore enhancing them ten fold. They were eyes that could easily pierce a soul. She was an older version of Princess Yuri. He could not move from his spot. He had seen her only twice before in his entire time as Captain to the High Lord, and both times it was as he was leaving the Royal palace on Usu'Ozeib 7. Her perfect beauty had caught him even then, and now kneeling so close to her, he realized where Princess Yuri got her features.

"Rise Immortal." She spoke easily, placing her small hand on his shoulder.

"I... I am not worthy to... to stand before you Milady." He spoke quickly.

"On the contrary Cha'talla of the Immortals... you are more than worthy to stand before me." Aikiro spoke. "Now get to your feet."

Cha'talla reacted quickly and did as she told him, but he did not look up into her face. He towered over her five foot six frame, but even Cha'talla could feel the staggering power within her. "Milady... my actions... the High Lord..."

"Esther found you Cha'talla." Aikiro spoke slowly. "Somehow you had drifted to the far beach and she was returning from an errand I sent her on. She knew who you were immediately and she brought you here four days ago. You have her to thank for your life. It was her blood that saved you."

"Milady I..." Cha'talla began speaking.

"Tell me Cha'talla... why would my fool of a husband attempt to kill his senior Immortal Captain? The Immortal Captain who has served him faithfully and honorably for far longer than any other?" Aikiro asked as she turned to the fountain in the center of the courtyard and dipped her hand into the cool water.

"Milady Aikiro... my actions resulted in the High Coven losing a precious asset within the Lycavorian Command structure." Cha'talla said. "My actions brought the Lycavorian King Leonidas into High Coven space after his abomination of a child and..."

Cha'talla never saw the blow coming, but it carried enough power to rock his head back and caused him to stagger backwards several steps, blood immediately seeping from the wound. Cha'talla's eyes were wide in shock as he saw Aikiro lower her hand slowly and the razor like psychic projection nails disappeared from her fingertips.

"No child of my daughter is an abomination!" Aikiro barked out angrily. "Even if she is half animal now!"

Cha'talla dropped to his knees once more. "Milady... I beg your forgiveness again!"

"Is this what my fool husband has turned you into Cha'talla?" Aikiro exclaimed. "A lap dog who begs for forgiveness at every turn! Get up Immortal... and stand with the pride I know you have and do not ask forgiveness from me again!"

Cha'talla got to his feet slowly lifting his eyes to look at her, not understanding what was happening. "Milady... Milady..."

"I know all about your actions Cha'talla." Aikiro spoke slowly as she took a deep breath. "And I also know the reasons behind your actions. Something which Veldruk never took the time to understand." She turned to face him. "Your mate is dead Cha'talla. All but one of your children is dead. Your brothers are dead... their sons as well." She told him watching as his dark eyes closed slowly. "You had not seen your mate for some time I understand."

Cha'talla opened his eyes and looked at her again. "The ways... the ways of my people are known to you Milady Aikiro. It was a joining of political necessity. She was strong and intelligent and I cared for her. She gave me strong children."

Aikiro nodded. "Yes... you planned well however Cha'talla... and your mate facilitated your entire tribe vanishing into thin air before she was killed. They vanished into The Wilds along with every single bit of research that you obtained from my daughter's child. You must have known this could happen and you prepared for it. I commend you."

Cha'talla looked at her. "Milady... I will not... I will not ask forgiveness for trying to improve my people. Only that I have hurt the Coven."

Aikiro snorted. "Your actions have not hurt the Coven Cha'talla. My fool husband has hurt the Coven. He has brought it almost to ruin and I will deal with him soon enough."

Cha'talla looked at her confused. "Milady... I don't... I don't understand."

“I gave Veldruk the power he now wields Cha’talla!” Aikiro snapped viciously. “Power he has wasted and abused for more than thirteen millennia. I was a fool to think he was capable. I started this Coven Cha’talla, not the High Lord. It was I who gave Veldruk the power to act in my name. I took him as my husband and granted him free reign to do as he wished. That was the largest mistake I have ever made.” Aikiro turned back to the fountain. “How do you think you came to be here Cha’talla? It is by my will alone that Esther continued to give you her blood. You were on the edge of the dark abyss when she discovered you.” Aikiro moved to a row of bright yellow flowers and began picking through the petals, removing ones that did not meet her approval.

“You are regarded as the strongest among your kind Cha’talla and for you to be so near death yet still have a spark within you... that speaks volumes. Because you were so close to death however and hers was the blood you first tasted, it forged a very strong Mindvoice link with her. Something your people are not normally capable of. Her blood was all that would save you once that connection was made, no one else’s. It was I who gave her permission to continue giving you her blood until your wounds healed enough for you to regenerate on your own with cloned blood.”

“You have... you have done this, saved my life only to... to kill me once more Milady?” Cha’talla asked.

Aikiro turned quickly to face him. “Kill you?” She spoke startled. “Is that why you think I had her save you? So that I could kill you myself?”

“What other purpose does my continued existence serve Milady? All I have ever known is now gone.” Cha’talla spoke. “My purpose for living is gone?”

Aikiro shook her head. “Your purpose for living is out there Cha’talla.” She spoke as she motioned with her hand into the sky above. “Your actions... while only meant to improve your people and make them more pleasing to one’s eye... has made you betray your oath to the High Coven. You can never be trusted again Cha’talla, not by my husband, not by me. It has made you an enemy... along with your entire tribe it seems, for when they escaped into The Wilds they proclaimed their loyalty not to the High Coven, but to you.”

Cha’talla stared at her for a long moment, meeting her gaze evenly. “Milady... I am not unintelligent... if this is the case... why am I here?”

“You are here Cha’talla because I wish it.” Aikiro spoke turning to move to another row of purple flowers and beginning to pluck their petals as well. “There have been many things that Veldruk has done without my knowledge because I chose not to know. I was very content to give him children and watch those children grow. I bore him two sons... both of which have turned out rather poorly it seems. He allowed that dog Leonidas to kill Xerxes without lifting a finger... and now he has issued a Kill Order on Vonis for taking an elf female into his bed. My sons have not turned out well it seems Cha’talla, but that is of no matter. I have no use for weak fools.” Aikiro turned to another bed of flowers and continued speaking. “My daughters on the other hand... Yuri is strong like me... she has much to learn but she is strong. And my youngest daughter will be just as strong. What Veldruk did to her, what you have hidden all these years, it placed a crack in her armor. A crack that you repaired when you stood behind this man who has claimed her heart and kept Veldruk from killing him. This Robert Moran. For that I thank you Cha’talla.”

Cha’talla took a deep breath, forcing himself to stand a little taller. If he was truly going to die this day, he would not cower. Lady Aikiro pulsed with power, power that the High Lord had never commanded.

“And he never will command it.” Aikiro spoke with a smile. Cha’talla’s eyes went a little wider at this. “My Mindvoice powers are far superior to anything my husband can bring to bear Cha’talla. I dare say that there is only one individual in this entire universe that could possibly compare to me, and he is far too young to realize his potential right now.”

“The... the son of Leonidas? The Lycavorian King?” Cha’talla asked.

Aikiro nodded her head. “The son of the son.” She spoke. “Martin Leonidas would bury Veldruk Cha’talla. That damnable Spartan heritage and training combined with his Lycavorian blood make him a formidable foe. When added to the pureness of his blood and now his bond with that beast... Veldruk would eventually lose. Leonidas will one day surpass his grandfather in his abilities, and Resumar never fully realized his potential. Moreover... Martin Leonidas’s own son is already showing signs of becoming just as powerful if not more so.”

Cha'talla looked surprised and his face showed it. Aikiro laughed. "What... did you think I did not know who the agent was?" She exclaimed with a snort. "I have let Veldruk command and rule, but I'm not entirely without my means Cha'talla. It was an excellent plan, one of the few that Veldruk has had over the years. However, the moment Leonidas returned to the Union he should have killed the original host and let the chips fall where they may. Now his actions endanger what we have worked so hard to cultivate over the centuries. His actions also have allowed Isabella to escape. He killed her whoring mother, but he allowed her to escape and now she will become a Queen of the Lycavorian Union." Aikiro shook her head. "Now I discover this Biogenics fiasco and the issue with Vonis? He is losing control of everything I began and started building. I can't allow that."

"Milady Aikiro... you say... you say I can no longer be trusted to serve the High Coven." Cha'talla spoke.

Aikiro looked at him. "Yes. Am I wrong Cha'talla? Could you ever feel loyalty to those who have tried to kill you? Who have taken the lives of your family? Answer me honestly if you will... I abhor liars."

Cha'talla shook his head slowly. "No Milady."

Aikiro nodded. "As well you should not."

"Why am I here then?" Cha'talla asked bluntly.

Aikiro chuckled and moved closer to him. "Ever the diplomat Cha'talla." She spoke with a grin. "You are here Immortal because I want what only you know." She said. "In return for this... I will give you a ship... and the means to go where you will as long as you leave High Coven space and never return. And I will give you the means to discover what it is you seek for your people that have disappeared from even my eyes."

"The means?" Cha'talla asked.

Aikiro nodded her head, dark orbs not moving from his face. "Esther Saira." She said.

Cha'talla shook his head. "I do not understand?"

"In your delirium while recovering, you bit my servant Cha'talla. You marked her and took her blood from her veins and not from a cup as she had been treating you." Aikiro spoke. "I had her whipped and almost put to death for being so foolish to allow this. However... she is smart that one, and quite promiscuous as well it seems. She knew what I had planned for you... and she offered to depart with you if I spared her life. As I said... she is supremely intelligent, with a full degree in bio-engineering which suits your purposes since she can help you attempt to achieve what it is you seek. She is also fascinated with you for some reason, perhaps because of the Mindvoice link that now exists between you two. She is an excellent pilot and will have all the clearances and codes to get you and her out of High Coven space alive. Keep her or kill her when you are past our borders I do not care, I do not need servants tainted by blood and body fluids that are not pure." Aikiro turned slowly and moved back to the fountain. "But know this and hear me well Immortal... if you or she or any of your people ever return to High Coven space you will be marked for immediate death for you will be traitors."

"Why... why would you do this?" Cha'talla asked.

Aikiro laughed. "You mean why should you believe me?" She spoke.

Cha'talla drew himself ready for any response or attack. "Yes." He replied.

"Unlike my fool husband Cha'talla... I have no secrets to keep hidden from others. That is why he tried to kill you." Aikiro spoke calmly. "I want those secrets... the ones I don't know of. I want them because the High Coven is in peril from something I know is out there but can't yet see. And because there are quite a few more traitors among our own people than just you Immortal. Traitors who unlike you... have allowed their desire for wealth and power to corrupt them enough to take arms against the High Coven. And Veldruk is trying to hide that from me. He is trying to hide the fact he is losing control of everything. Make no mistake, I will deal with my husband soon enough and I will attempt to rescue Vonis from himself, but in order to do that I need what you have in your head." Aikiro turned to walk slowly around Cha'talla, her fingers dragging along his broad chest and back with a gentle caress. "However, because of your specie's natural ability to block psychic intrusion and Veldruk's decision to increase your resistance to such power, I can't simply delve into your mind and take what I want or else I would have done so already. And then tossed your carcass to the insects. So I decided to do it this way... and rid myself of two foul beings in the process since you have tainted Esther with your disgusting blood and fluids." Aikiro smiled at him but it held no warmth. "So you see... I am not as unreasonable as you might suspect. You get your life... your freedom... and a High Coven Runner as

well as Esther in exchange for the information I want. Now... do we have a deal Immortal? Or should I just butcher you now and take my chances?"

Cha'talla met her dark gaze and spoke the words that sealed his future.
"What do you wish to know Milady?"

NORMYA'S LIGHT **ORBITING ELEAR**

"Why am I here?" Roland announced quite angrily. "And why is he here?" He asked motioning to where L'tian stood against the bulkhead calmly, his hands behind his back.

Marci smiled as she met Roland's eyes evenly. "Ambassador L'tian is Chairman of the *Krypteria* Roland." She answered sweetly. "The Intelligence Service for the Union. You are a citizen of the Union are you not?"

"Of course... of course I am!" He barked.

"Since I am a vampire and also a member of the *Krypteria* and I will be conducting this interview, Ambassador L'tian decided he would supervise my technique." Marci stated.

"The *Krypteria*?" Roland barked defiantly. "I have never heard of them! And you have not given an answer to my question! Why am I here?"

L'tian stepped forward. "The *Krypteria* was actually a secret police force in the ancient times of the King's father on Earth in Sparta. They were also quite the efficient intelligence gathering force I understand. They dealt with traitors and people deemed to be unfit. They were exceptionally brutal, but the King in his wisdom has since altered their practices to a degree. And you are here Roland to determine how much of a traitor to the Union you are... and in what manner you will be treated." L'tian's voice was firm and cold, and Marci was impressed at the undercurrent of violence his voice carried in it.

"I am no traitor!" Roland bellowed defensively.

Marci turned back to look at him. Marci held the distinction of being one of the first vampire purebloods born within the boundaries of the Lycavorian Union. Her parents were both respected members of the main university on Apo Prime, and part of the original group of men and women who had defected with Isabella just over a thousand years ago. Marci had known nothing but the freedom and acceptance the Union had shown her over the years, and while it had been hard at first to gain that acceptance, once it was given she found no greater loyalty than among her Lycavorian friends. Marci was also one of the few to actually be claimed by a pureblood Lycavorian Spartan. They had met while in one training class or another some three hundred years ago, and his blue eyes and wild blond hair had swept her away immediately. He had claimed her a year later and the most fantastic nights of her life had taken place in his bed. She may have been a pureblooded vampire, but she was also a woman, and her husband knew just what to do to turn her into orgasmic jelly.

The love of her husband was matched only by her love of the Lycavorian Union and what it represented. It was not perfect she knew, yet she also knew that its leaders acknowledged this fact and everything they did was to make it better. That mentality had only grown stronger with the return of the King and the women he had chosen as his Queens. Marci had always held great respect for Isabella, and when Dysea had come into her life she had seen the changes in Isabella that marked her future. King Leonidas had recognized this almost immediately, and that was the main reason he had assigned her to them both. She worked for Armetus and the *Krypteria*, but her main mission was to keep a protective eye on his two Queens and assist them in whatever they did.

"You are the lowest kind of traitor!" Marci hissed at him. "You are a greedy traitor." She spoke setting the data pad on the table in front of him. "We have discovered the two accounts you have set up in The Wilds Roland." She spoke evenly. "These accounts have balances of sixteen million Riyal each. Very impressive for one such as yourself. We have a complete list of your transactions, as well as the address in Tuya of your mistress. You weren't very inventive in regards to safeguarding her."

"This is preposterous!" He exclaimed. "I know of no such accounts!"

"No?" Marci spoke. "Perhaps you could explain why an agent in our employ has you on a security video on Megewa III making a deposit. It's actually very clear. Would you like to see it Roland?"

The older vampire's eyes began to dart back and forth in the room and between Marci and L'tian. She leaned back in her chair with a smile. "If you are thinking you could fight your way out of here, please... do try. If by some miracle you were able to defeat me as well as Ambassador L'tian, the Spartans outside this room would very much like to show you what they think of traitors to our Union. It appears the King's distaste for traitors is rapidly spreading among the men and women he commands."

Roland looked at her. "I demand to speak with Isabella." He blurted.

Marci reached across the table with blinding speed and slapped him with enough force to knock him from the chair and onto the floor of the room. L'tian stood there as she blurred suddenly and with a two handed grip appeared beside Roland and hauled him up by his expensive jacket. She slammed him viciously against the bulkhead, her eyes now changed to cobalt blue and her fangs fully extended.

"You demand nothing! Certainly not to speak with Queen Isabella!" She screamed in his face. "You are a traitor Roland! A traitor to the Union that the majority of our people have come to love! Your actions have put all we have built here at risk! You are a High Coven spy... and when giving our secrets to the High Coven did not make you enough credits, you chose to sell your skills to the highest bidder! Why do you think Queen Isabella's brother is here on Elear? He came to kill not only her... but your pathetic person as well!" Marci saw his eyes grow wider. "Did you think the Coven would not discover what you were doing Roland? The High Lord issued a Kill Order for you fool, and his son came to carry it out! You do not want to see Queen Isabella you sorry excuse for a vampire! She would simply lock you in this room until the effects of the Blood Fever destroyed your mind! And then she would laugh while all this happened!"

Whatever resistance Roland had left in him disappeared when Marci mentioned that. It was the ultimate fear of any pureblood vampire to be consumed by the Blood Fever. It was a horrible and painful way to die, and it was not something he wanted to experience.

"I will tell you what you want to know!" He screamed out.

Marci released his jacket immediately and stepped back taking a deep breath, her eyes and fangs remaining very visible. "Sit down Roland, before I shatter both your legs into small pieces and no matter how much blood you ingest it will not heal what I will do!" She ordered.

L'tian watched as he scrambled to pick up the chair and place it at the table before he settled into it quickly. "Who approached you about the Biogenics program?" He asked quickly as Marci moved back around to settle into her own chair.

"A Lycavorian!" He almost shouted.

Marci looked quickly to L'tian and then back to Roland. "Do you think we are fools?" She spat at him.

"It was a Lycavorian I tell you!" Roland gasped. "I met with him personally! He and two Kavalian females! Here on Elear two and a half years ago! They came to inspect the facilities you destroyed under the compound! I asked him why he was with two Kavalians and not his own people! He told me the Kavalians were his people! One of the females was his mate but they were different somehow."

"What do you mean different?" L'tian asked.

"They had no hair on their bodies except for what was on their heads." Roland spoke hurriedly. "They... they looked like Lycavorians. They... they underwent biogenic treatments when they were younger in order to remove their natural body hair! They needed my advanced research to combine with the Biogenics to make clones like Arete!"

"Clones!" L'tian spoke moving closer.

Roland nodded quickly. "They... they wanted to make soldiers bred for war. The High Coven cloning process I showed to them apparently takes too long and is not very cost effective in the short run. They needed many clones and biogenics was the way they wanted to do it! The two females I saw were perfect you see... the biogenics worked on them with incredible results. They were beautiful... and they were treated with small doses of the biogenic compound the Kavalians had developed on their own. They needed my enzyme and DNA work to add to the biogenic mix to create the clones! The elves that Arete took here as part of this cult, they were only used to gather more premium cells to use!"

"These clones..." Marci asked. "They are here on Elear?"

Roland shook his head quickly. "No. Only the preliminary stages were performed here. The main facilities are somewhere outside Union territory. I don't know where I swear to you."

“Why should we believe you about anything?” Marci spoke calmly and getting to her feet. “Ambassador I recommend we just execute him and be done with it.”

“No! Wait! I know things!” Roland exclaimed in fear. “I... I can tell you who the traitor is!”

L'tian perked up at this. “Traitor?” He said as Dysea's unfinished words the other day filled his head. “What traitor?”

“A clone within the King's inner circle!” Roland exclaimed.

“You think to lie to us now!” Marci screamed rising from her chair. “There is no way a clone could get close to the King! You are...”

L'tian placed his hand on Marci's arm. “Let him finish speaking Marci.” He spoke looking at Roland. “How did the High Coven get a clone close to the King?”

“She's has been here for years!” Roland declared.

“A clone would be detected immediately!” Marci snapped. “They do not have a natural scent. Lycavorians would recognize this immediately.”

Roland nodded quickly. “Unless the clone was given regular injections that contained the live scent glands of the host.” He said. “Then there would be no way to tell them apart.”

“Bah... you are lying to us.” Marci snapped.

“No! It's true! The Coven's clone program is far more advanced than you think! It is why Yuri was working so diligently on it when the Coven controlled Earth. They can turn out almost perfect clones... but the process takes years! Yuri was trying to shorten that time frame with her work on Earth!” Roland was almost hyperventilating as fast as he was talking.

L'tian squeezed Marci's arm once more. “Tell me Roland... and be mindful of your answer now. Who is this clone? And how do you know who it is?”

“I have been controlling the High Coven contact she meets to get her monthly injections of viable scent glands.” He answered quickly. “He informs me when the samples arrive and I give him the location to meet the clone. It is usually the same café in the eastern section of Tuya. It's small and out of the way, but close to the University so it does not appear as if the clone is going out of her way. He informs the clone and they meet for the transfer. He contacted me only yesterday to tell me the shipment had come in.”

“The clone is a female?” L'tian asked.

“Yes.”

“And your contact... is her name Sadi? Is this contact... your agent, is she a Lycavorian female?” L'tian asked.

Roland's brow furrowed. “Sadi... no. I don't know any Sadi... my agent is a professor in the Apo Prime University.”

L'tian leaned close to Roland across the table. “Names Roland. I want names... or you will experience first hand just what my elfin strength allows me to do!”

AETIA ROYAL PALACE ELEAR

Vonis looked up when the door to the room he was in slid open and he watched Isabella walk in carrying a data pad and a glass. He saw the two Spartans just behind her in the corridor, but they did not enter and the door slid shut immediately. His dark eyes watched as she set the glass on the small table near the door and then she moved to sit calmly across from him at the table. Vonis had never met Isabella, and part of him admired the beauty and grace with which she moved. She was confident and in control, and she did not have the cold demeanor that Yuri possessed. Her hair was more dark brown than black he noticed, yet her eyes were hazel/green, no doubt from her mother's side. He had read the profile on her given to him by his father, and what sat before him now was not the woman the profile had described. The profile had said she was stern and arrogant, thinking herself superior to many around her. The profile had said she was nowhere skilled as what Vonis had seen in the safehouse, and part of him knew what he had seen was just the tip of what this woman could do. He could sense the power within her, not as strong as it was within Yuri, but more focused and warmer.

Isabella smiled at him her hazel/green eyes glittering in the light of the room. “You must learn to guard your surface thoughts better brother.” She spoke gently. “I would imagine most of what you have read about me is false, or our father’s twisted view of whom I am.”

Vonis looked at her stunned. “You... you read my thoughts?” He gasped.

Isabella sat back in the chair. “My Mindvoice skills are not as advanced as Dysea’s or Yuri’s, but yes I am quite capable of detecting surface thoughts. Especially when the individual does not shield them as he has been trained.”

“How would you know how I was trained?” Vonis barked out.

“In much the same fashion as I was trained no doubt.” Isabella spoke. “We have much in common it seems; foremost among them is the undeniable fact that our father wants us both very dead. For the same reasons as well it seems.”

“You are a traitor to your people!” Vonis barked. “To the High Coven!”

Isabella shook her head. “A traitor because I chose to have a different life than what our father dictated to me I would have?” She asked. “A traitor because I chose after two years to not allow the pig man he had chosen as my husband to touch me anymore? A traitor because I wanted something more than the life he gave to me? He butchered my mother in front of me as she tried to protect me. He killed her in the street like an animal and left her to die. All because I did not want that slobbering fool violating my body any longer. If that makes me a traitor... then I embrace that label.”

“It was your station!” Vonis said with much less force in his voice now.

“Was it?” Isabella asked. “Tell me... you are my brother and...”

“Half brother!” He spat.

“Very well... my half brother.” Isabella stated. “Tell me your name.”

“Why?”

“I like addressing those I talk with by their name.” Isabella spoke.

Vonis stared at her form across the table. “My name... my name is Vonis.” He said.

Isabella nodded. “Vonis... thank you for sharing that.” She said.

“I will reveal nothing to you!” He snapped now. “I will tell you nothing of the Coven!”

“I’m not going to ask you anything about the Coven.” Isabella spoke. “There is nothing you can tell me that I do not already know Vonis. We do have our own Intelligence unit... and it is quite exceptional.” She slid the data pad across the table to him. “We captured Haliur, the second of the men that came with you Vonis. He gave us all the information we needed to know, before I gutted him. So tell me... did our father issue a Kill Order for you because you failed to kill me or because like me, you took an elf female into your bed, spoiling what he had planned for you?”

“You know nothing!” Vonis spat but with much less force this time.

“Is that so?” Isabella said. “I knew your name before coming in this room Vonis.” She spoke. “I know you came here with two parts to your plan. You were sanctioned by our father to kill me because I share Dysea’s bed and I was going to announce I was ready to assume the role Martin Leonidas wants me to fill as his wife and Queen. That would have made father look very bad Vonis... especially when it was discovered that not only do I share Dysea’s bed, but Martin’s bed, and Aricia, Anja and For’mya’s as well. In fact our bed on Apo Prime is massive enough to hold all of us at the same time! And we have had some glorious moments in that bed. And we will have many more have no doubts of that.”

Vonis stared at her his eyes wide and mouth agape in shock. He was unaware that Isabella had not yet had the pleasure of Martin’s touch upon her, but he didn’t need to know that. Nor did he need to know that she desired that touch just as much as Martin did. Isabella laughed at his expression. “I’m not who father told you I was, am I Vonis?” Isabella spoke with some humor in her voice. “The second part of your plan was to remove Roland... who it seems has gone rogue on our dear father and begun dabbling in biogenics research. He is in custody as well and being interrogated as we speak.” Isabella sat back. “So you see... I know quite a bit more than you think.”

“Then why are you here?” Vonis asked.

“I want to know if everything father has told you is true.” Isabella asked. “You obviously know your way around Elear which tells me you have been in the Union before. So... are we as decadent as he tells everyone we are?”

“You don’t know what you speak of?” Vonis snapped.

“Don’t I Vonis?” She spoke. “It seems our lives have some very similar turns in them.”

“I am nothing like you!” Vonis said.

“You don’t think?” Isabella got to her feet. “Has he not told you who you will marry?” She spoke as she went to the door. “Has he not told you for every day of your life what you will do? How you will do it? He has done to you exactly what he did to me Vonis. I thought long and hard before I chose my path Vonis. What the Union offered me and those that followed me was too good to pass up, and so we came here. We made lives for ourselves. We have family... we have friends. We are free!” Isabella turned to look at him. “The only real difference between us is it took me far longer to see that. I allowed him to rule my life even after I came here. I hated everyone, thought I was superior to everyone. Oh I fought beside them, I associated with them, but I never really knew them. Until one day a female elf came into my life Vonis. It was she who looked beyond the exterior I projected to all those around me. It was her love for me that changed me. And with her love came no conditions. She accepted me as I am... for what I am. Once I came to realize that... I was able to see the love that Martin Leonidas holds for me. All of them, to include three other women. Now that is freedom Vonis. When Dysea came into my life I shed everything of our father that I had carried with me for centuries. This is who I am.”

“Why... why do you tell me this?” Vonis asked.

“I’m telling you this for one reason Vonis. I’m going to give you the chance that our wonderful father never gave me!” Isabella spoke looking at him. “I’m going to let you make your own decision.”

“What do you mean?” Vonis looked at her.

“You may act however you want with others brother, but I share a bed with an elf female as well.” Isabella spoke softly. “And I know for a fact that Va’nimia is no more a plaything for you than Dysea is for me. You have fallen in love with her.”

“You are crazy!” He spat.

“Am I?” Isabella asked with a smile. “Dysea has spent the last two hours in that room with her trying to get Va’nimia to say you raped her. That you took her against her will.”

“I did!” Vonis exclaimed.

“Then you are already dead Vonis.” Isabella said. “Dead to Va’nimia anyway... for when Martin Leonidas returns to Union space he will surely order your execution for that crime. And that fact would crush her to say the least, for she happens to be very much in love with you.”

“Nonsense.” Vonis spoke. “I have held her for over a week! Using her on my whim! She no more loves me than you do.”

Isabella stepped forward and touched the data pad she had left on the table. The small holo projection popped up, and it was undoubtedly Va’nimia in the image along with Dysea.

“All you need do Va’nimia is tell me he raped you.” Dysea’s voice filled the room. “Tell me he took you against your will child, and he will cease to exist within an hour.”

“My Queen... how can I tell you something that is not true?” Va’nimia said calmly. Her voice was like music in his ears and he closed his eyes.

“Va’nimia... I must be very clear with you. He is a High Coven agent. He has tried to kill Isabella twice. He had planned to kill others. He killed four mercenaries that he hired in front of you less than twenty-four hours ago.”

“He was protecting me!” Va’nimia almost shouted.

“That will not matter. He has been caught inside Union territory. He will be executed Va’nimia. You know what my Nauta Melme considers traitors to be Va’nimia.” Dysea spoke. “He will not tolerate their existence. If you do not tell me he raped you Va’nimia... you will be executed for aiding and abetting a known foreign assassin within Union space.”

Va’nimia looked at Dysea, her blue eyes focused and clear. “I will not tell you something that is not true.” She spoke. “He did not rape me Queen Dysea. I’m sorry.”

Isabella stopped the holoimager then and looked at Vonis. “She’s protecting you Vonis.” Isabella spoke. “She is willing to die for you. And your actions yesterday in the safehouse told me exactly the same thing about

you. Four to one odds brother... only a very insane or pissed off vampire or Lycavorian would take on four to one odds. And only if the item they were protecting meant more to them than their own life.” Isabella leaned across the table. “Think about it brother. Va’nimia is not going to die no matter what happens. Dysea and I both know the truth. The same can not be said for you however. I’m offering you a chance to start over with her. Here in the Union. Reach out and take the life that our father has denied you. No one will question you. No one.”

“I remain and become a spy for you?” Vonis snapped.

Isabella shook her head. “No. You take Va’nimia and you live on Apo Prime, near the palace initially, for your own safety and hers. No one will question you, no one will interrogate you. You can have a normal life.”

“How do I know your King will honor this offer you make?” Vonis spoke. “Yuri can protect me if I return.”

Isabella leaned closer to him her hazel/green eyes bright, focused and clear. “There is one thing Martin Leonidas holds dearest to his heart. That is family. And you Vonis... you are my family. Martin will not execute you Vonis... once he discovers you are my brother he will ask what I want to do. I would like to be able to tell him you wish a life free of the Coven, Va’nimia at your side. Here at least you can live a long full life. I would rather not tell him you wish to return to our father... for you will be dead within a year of returning. Yuri will only be able to protect you for so long, if she protects you at all.”

“You expect me to believe all this?” Vonis asked. “Our father told me you were excellent at subterfuge and deceit!”

Isabella laughed then. “Yes I’m sure. This coming from a man who issued a Kill order on his only remaining son because he fell in love with a female elf.” Isabella noticed immediately that Vonis did not deny her statement and that more than anything confirmed what she already knew.

Isabella stood back up. “You believe what you know to be true. And follow what your heart tells you, not what that High Coven conditioned mind tells you. Nine times out of ten... your heart is the right choice.” She took the data pad off the table. “You will remain here for now. I will have food and blood brought in for you. It is a flavored clone blood that Anja has designed. It has all the nutrients of normal blood but it allows me to drink it openly and not hide the fact I need blood to survive. It’s quite good actually.” Isabella went to the door. “We will talk again Vonis.”

The door slid open and Isabella was gone before Vonis could reply. She stopped and waited just outside the door as it closed and lifted the pad to look at it. She glanced up quickly when she heard the commotion and saw L’tian and Marci moving directly for her in a manner that suggested something was very wrong.

“Marci? L’tian? What... what is wrong?” Isabella asked quickly as they came up to her.

L’tian took her arm and continued walking. “Where is Dysea?”

“Questioning this Va’nimia. Why?” Isabella replied. “What is wrong?”

“Bella... we know who the traitor is.” L’tian spoke quickly as they moved. “We need to tell Dysea... and then we need to contact Armetus! Now... right now!”

LYCAVORE

Anja passed her hand slowly over Sivana, the soft white glow pulsing in her palm. Belen stood next to the makeshift bed on the *STRIKER DT* watching as his Queen examined his mate and her sister.

Anja looked at her after a moment. “The injuries are all healed.” She spoke. “Blood flow is normal and your system seems to be accepting the change easily enough.”

Sivana gripped Belen’s hand in hers tightly and she smiled at her sister. Her sea green eyes were bright now, the color long since returned to her skin. Her long hair seemed shinier and healthier, and in actuality Sivana was now healthier than at any point in her long life. Belen had spent the last hours with her in the *STRIKER DT*, helping her to establish and maintain Mindvoice shields. Having three of the ten or twenty most powerful Mindvoicers within the Union among them was a bonus for Sivana really. She was able to learn how to shield from them; Helen working with her mostly, the woman Sivana now knew to be Martin’s mother Gorgo helping as well since it appeared she was also quite powerful within Mindvoice. Anja worked with her for

several hours with Seanna, allowing her sister to see the special connection they had established for the two of them. Seanna had remained busy while Anja dealt with the whole Gorgo thing, knowing that when her Queen, her lover and her dearest friend finally broke away she would find her. Anja had done just that, finding her inside the *STRIKER* and pulling her into the empty cockpit for a blistering kiss that held love and passion. It was all they were able to give to each other now, but those few moments had been worth it as they held each other.

“So I can get out of this damn bed then?” Sivana demanded.

Anja’s eyes flicked to Belen quickly and she smiled. “I hope you know what you have got on your hands Belen.” She spoke.

Belen nodded. “I do my Queen and I am ready. Almost two years of protecting you has prepared for me for almost anything.”

Anja rolled her eyes at him and looked back at Sivana. “Sivana you have not ascended yet and your body will need even more time to adjust to the changes in it. If you had ascended I would say nothing, but you need to be conscious of this. Do not strain yourself. You will feel weak at times for a few more hours, but as the virus spreads and bonds with your DNA you will notice small changes. Just don’t panic... and be mindful of everything that happens with your body. No matter how small. And no... no sex until after we are off this world and you are better. Is that clear?”

“Anja!” Sivana exclaimed loudly while Belen blushed under his dark tan.

“I mean it.” Anja spoke.

Sivana nodded with bright eyes. “I will not do anything foolish sister.” She spoke with a shy smile. “I promise you.”

“Our Aunt and Uncle are going to be livid because of this.” Anja spoke with a grin as she took Sivana’s face in her hands. “They are truly going to hate me now.”

Sivana placed her own hands over the top of Anja’s and closed her eyes, for the first time in her life reveling in the feelings of joy and new beginnings that were inside her. The hate and the pain was still there, but for every hour she spent with her sister and now with Belen it was slowly drifting into a dark memory that would forever remain buried.

“Then they will hate us both sister.” Sivana spoke opening her eyes and meeting her twin’s jade green orbs.

Anja smiled and leaned forward to kiss her softly on the cheek. “I know Endith was hoping you could go to the bridge and help her there.” Anja spoke.

Sivana nodded and slid off the bed. “Then I’ll go to the bridge.” She spoke turning to look at Belen. She wrapped her arms tightly around his waist and pressed her face into the body armor of his chest.

Belen squeezed her within his embrace his embrace tightly, his face nuzzling the top of her head. “I must go help with the defenses. I will see you shortly.”

Sivana nodded and they shared a deep kiss as Anja watched and then she turned and headed down the ramp of the *STRIKER*. Belen turned to look at Anja, stepping closer to her.

“My Queen... I...” He began speaking as Anja’s eyes turned to gaze at him.

“Do you love my sister Belen?” Anja asked.

“I do.” He answered without hesitation.

“Well then what are you worried about Spartan?” She asked. Anja took his hand in hers and squeezed it. “You saved her life and claimed her, something that she obviously wanted as well. You’ve given her hope for a future she never thought she would have. That is what matters most to me.” Anja reached up on her tip toes and planted a soft kiss on his cheek. “Now how bout we do what we have to do and get off this fucking rock of a planet before something else happens.”

Belen chuckled. “I think that is an excellent idea my Queen.”

Yuri walked slowly along the corridor of *HOPE’S QUEST*, Pa’cour just to her right and three other Immortals in front of and behind her.

“This is the ship that destroyed a Class Seven Rotarian Frigate?” Yuri spoke with a small degree of awe.

Pa'cour nodded slowly. "Yes Princess. An exterior examination revealed several very advanced modifications for missile pods as well as added plasma turrets. The pods are empty, and the plasma turrets have been drained of all power but they are there." He said. "It also appears they managed to get one of their *STRIKER DTs* into the cargo bay. That would explain how they got their dragons onto the surface undetected."

Yuri nodded. "It also means that ship is still somewhere on the surface too." She spoke. "It may not be as dangerous as their normal *STRIKERS*, but it is lethal. Make sure we have anti-air positions set up around our staging areas Pa'cour, I don't want to get caught unaware."

Pa'cour nodded. "I'll make it so." He spoke.

Yuri stopped and looked at the tall Immortal. "What do you think of my father's actions concerning Cha'talla Pa'cour?"

"Princess... I am not... I do not know enough to make decisions at that level." He spoke slowly suddenly feeling as if he was treading on very thin water. "Cha'talla... he was a hero among my people. Many of us, including myself held him in high regard. He was wise and strong."

"And will your people rise up against my father for what he has done?" Yuri asked.

"I do not know what Cha'talla did to provoke the High Lord in such a way Princess." Pa'cour said. "It must have been very great to have his sons and brothers executed for his actions... for his service to the High Lord to be dismissed in such a way. I'm sure the High Lord will make it known to the rest of us the reason for his actions when he feels the time is appropriate."

"Do you aspire to be more than you are now Pa'cour?" Yuri asked.

His dark eyes narrowed in confusion and he shook his head. "More Princess? I do not understand your definition of more. I am an Immortal Colonel in service to the High Coven. The next step for me would be to become Royal Captain to a member of your family. Do I aspire to this? That is a position all Immortals wish to achieve."

"Do you wish to improve your appearance Pa'cour? Your outer appearance. To make yourself and your people more pleasing to the eye?" Yuri asked.

"I believe that is a desire that all of my people wish deep inside Princess." Pa'cour spoke. "However it is not something obtainable for us, so we do not allow it to guide our actions."

Yuri gazed at him for a long moment. "Your Immortal Second... is he a good officer?" Yuri asked.

Pa'cour nodded quickly. "One of the best Milady. I trained him myself."

Yuri nodded. "Good. You say they stripped this ship bare?" She asked as she began walking again.

Pa'cour nodded. "The computer cores were downloaded, wiped and then destroyed. We could not even find a working scroll pad. The engineering section was completely destroyed, every console broken and shattered. The LSD core was removed and all the power conduits ripped out."

"Standard crew for this sized freighter?" Yuri asked.

"Eighty at most." Pa'cour replied. "I would estimate that at least that many were on this ship. They did quite a thorough job in cleansing their presence here."

Yuri stopped once more. "Cleansing." She spoke softly.

"Princess?"

"Pa'cour would you leave a ship like this, even as stripped has it appears it has been, for your enemy to find?" Yuri spoke.

"You are thinking it is a trap Princess." Pa'cour spoke. "I have had teams sweeping the ship corridor by corridor and section by section from the moment we entered. I thought the same thing. They have almost completed their sweeps. I believe only the bridge remains."

"Stop them immediately." Yuri declared.

"Princess... the bridge could tell us quite a bit even if it has been destroyed." Pa'cour spoke.

Yuri nodded. "Yes it could. It is also furthest from any exit on this ship and how many teams do you have on here now?"

"Seven teams of five Princess Yuri? Plus two teams of engineers." Pa'cour answered.

"Leonidas knows we will search this ship." Yuri spoke. "What better way to kill more of us than by drawing us deeper into this vessel, and then we unknowingly set off a timed device in our search." She looked around. "Your men have been to every portion of the ship?"

"Yes Princess."

Yuri nodded. "It's what I would do." She said. "Insure they do not enter the bridge Pa'cour. Contact them and..."

Pa'cour tilted his head and listened to his implant, his eyes widening. "No! Do not enter the bridge! Pull back!" He didn't hesitate and immediately grabbed Yuri's arm and started moving for the exit they had entered *HOPE'S QUEST* through. "Negative! You may have already activated a device! Pull back to any exit you can find! Get off this ship now!"

"What is it?" Yuri demanded. "They entered the bridge?"

Pa'cour nodded. "Yes! We must hurry Princess! If you are right... this ship could blow up at any moment."

It took them just over thirty-three seconds to get off the ship and another twenty-two seconds to sprint for the tree line. They were both out of breath when they dropped behind a rather large fallen tree trunk some three hundred meters away from *HOPE'S QUEST*. Yuri looked back over the top of the trunk.

"Perhaps I was wrong Pa'cour." She stated. "I thought for sure Leonidas would set a trap for us to..."

The brilliant flash caused her to yelp in surprise and then the concussive force and sound of the explosion hit as pieces of *HOPE'S QUEST* began to sizzle past above their heads with lethal whistles, flames reaching hundreds of feet into the sky and black smoke billowing from the interior of the ship. As soon as the vibration and roar of the earth beneath them ceased Yuri looked back over the log, her eyes wide in stunned shock. The huge freighter had caved in upon itself, gaping holes in what had once been a very sturdy bulkhead, flames reaching out from the inside of the now completely gutted ship in all directions.

Yuri dropped back to the ground and looked at the Immortal next to her. "Did they get out?" She asked.

Pa'cour shook his head. "Three teams were caught in the blast." He replied quickly. "The rest got out."

"*Vith nindo!*" Yuri barked loudly. (Fuck this!) "Pa'cour, order our plasma mortars to start shelling the front of the cavern and begin moving your forces into the tunnel on the west!" She exclaimed. "I am going to kill that dog if it is the last thing I ever do!"

Pa'cour began barking into his implant just as the junior Immortal Lieutenant rushed up to where they sat. "Princess Yuri... we are receiving a transmission on a Gamma encryption channel. It is directed for you!"

"I'm busy damn it!" Yuri shouted. "Tell my father I will contact him later!"

"Princess... the message doesn't come from your father!" The Lieutenant spoke. "The message comes from your mother!"

"Nice fireworks display. Too bad really... I was going to keep that ship. I made my first kid on that ship." Danny spoke with a smile as he lowered his macrobinos. "Yuri bailed real fast."

Martin nodded slowly. "Got to give her credit where it's due Danny." He spoke moving his binos over the terrain around the base of the mountain. "Yuri ain't stupid. They're setting up their plasma mortars. Getting ready to start shelling the mouth of the cavern."

Danny shifted his binos and focused in on the Immortal encampment two kilometers away from the western tunnel entrance. He could see quite a bit of movement. "Yeah... they're getting ready to attack. Looks like they're forming into two columns to come at the tunnel entrance from two different directions."

They had climbed to the top of the Mindvoice ship which was only a few meters from the top of the immense cavern. Torma and Miath had used their blasts of superheated breath to melt the rock and earth, forming a neat tunnel through the three meters of Earth above the cavern. Once they had melted a tunnel wide enough for a man to squeeze through, Martin and Danny had climbed through. They exited on the very top of the mountain the cavern was built into. The grass and soil around the edges of the newly melted tunnel were blackened and dead, but they were able to exit into a stand of trees on the very cusp of the mountain top, giving them an unobstructed view of the area all around them.

"Jesus Skipper... what did you do to piss Yuri off so much?" Danny asked. "She's got a bigger hard on towards you now than she ever did."

Martin chuckled. "Maybe it was something I didn't do?" He spoke. "Looking back on things... she always was a unique cookie. Even before we knew what she was."

"Maybe she's pissed because you dumped her. Your taste in women certainly improved when we got back to Earth." Danny spoke with a grin. "Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned boss."

Martin looked at him. “You ever think about back then Danny?” He asked.

“You mean the endless months in deserts we couldn’t pronounce; wars we didn’t really understand; and getting shot at three quarters of the time? Think about that stuff?” Dan asked.

Martin nodded with a smile. “Yeah.”

Dan shook his head. “I try not too. Gives me a headache.” He answered. “You lead I follow Marty.”

“That’s just it... I’ve traded one set of places and circumstances for another that are not much better.”

Martin spoke to him. “You and the others followed me... and we’ve entered into a world that is much larger than we ever imagined, and a hell of a lot more people want us dead it seems.”

“You always said it wouldn’t be dull around you.” Danny chuckled. “Stop thinking about this shit Martin. We follow you because we want to, because we believe in the same things you do man. We are Spartans Martin... that will always be in our blood now. The moment your father was born in Sparta... that became part of us. We’ll always need action... we’ll never turn from a fight. That doesn’t mean we don’t enjoy the finer things. We enjoy peace just as much as the next dude, we just know that peace needs to be defended sometimes. Shit... if all we had to do was sit at home and bang our women and make kids... I’d be in heaven.”

Martin smiled. “We have managed to find ourselves some hot women haven’t we?”

“Hot?” Danny shook his head. “Smoking is more like it? And you got three more than I do. I last longer!” He boasted.

Martin brought his binos up to his eyes and smiled. “Dysea should be in phase by now.” He spoke. “I intend to make that elf scream for days... and when she isn’t screaming, Bella will be. And when I get done with them... Aricia will be next.”

Danny chuckled. “Arrogant bastard.” He muttered.

“Hey... I can’t help it if I’m irresistible.” Martin spoke.

Danny shook his head. “I’m taking Anuk and Nayeca to Gytheio. My father told me the Spartan Senate reclaimed the city after the comet passed. It’s on the Laconian Gulf. We went there for a couple days just after Andro was born. We stayed at this Inn right on the gulf.” Dan shook his head. “Man Marty... it must have been the salt air because we screwed our brains out for two straight days! Nayeca fell in love with sea food! She was eating them clams like they were going out of style!”

Martin laughed softly as he swept his binos over the terrain below them. “This party is about to start Danny.”

“Yes it is.” Dan spoke.

Martin tapped the COM on his body armor. “Endith! Crank up that shield thingie you were talking about.” He spoke. “They’re setting up mortars and moving to begin their attacks on the tunnels. How long before that robot has the ship fixed?”

“Three more hours Martin!” Endith replied quickly. “If we make the repair drones work any faster Marty we risk not doing it right and never leaving this place. I for one don’t want to be stuck here.”

“Three hours is going to be tight Endith.” Martin spoke. “Will that shield hold for three hours against plasma mortars?”

“It will have too.” Endith exclaimed.

“Give everyone the signal. Danny and I are coming back down.” Martin spoke. “The shit is about to hit the fan!”

APO PRIME KRYPTERIA HEADQUARTERS

Nesa leaned back in her chair and rubbed her eyes. Almost four days she and her section had been at this. In that time span she doubted any of them had had more than three unbroken hours of sleep. There were cups scattered about the table in front of her, the six additional chairs empty as her section was at their own stations. She had worked for Armetus for nearly four thousand years now in one capacity or another, the longest of any member of the Krypteria. Her skills were beyond reproach, and she was one of only twenty-two men and women within the entire Union that held a Level Nine Security Clearance by order of the King himself. Nesa reached out and lifted the long cold cup of coffee and rose to refresh it at the small counter. As she poured a

steaming mug the door slid open and the youngest of her section walked in with two others. All of them held data pads and scrolls and had pensive looks on their faces. She turned to them as she lifted the mug of coffee.

“The three of you look like you just swallowed a Terialian Fever Beetle.” She spoke.

“Nesa... Nesa you need to see this.” The youngest one spoke.

“Then tell me Praylro. I have no desire to read anything at the moment.” Nesa spoke as she moved back to the chair.

“Do you remember the outbreak of Siplal Flu on Apo Prime nine years ago?” Praylro asked. “The Lartaz Ambassador infected almost the entire Senate, and they in turn gave it to thousands of others?”

“Praylro... what does the Siplal Flu have to do with anything we are working on right now?” Nesa asked.

“Admiral Riall caught it Nesa. And he gave it to Lady Gorgo and half his family.” The young man spoke.

“Yes I remember. He was sick as a gutter dog for a week. So was Lady Gorgo. What is your point?” Nesa said.

“Nesa... you told us Armetus said to leave no one out of our sweep.” The woman with Praylro spoke.

Nesa nodded. “Yes. Spit it out Gae! What are you leading up to?”

“Nesa... Lady Gorgo was inoculated against Siplal Flu one hundred and sixty-seven years ago.” Praylro told her. “She should not have caught it.”

Nesa looked at him a large pit in her stomach suddenly beginning to form. “Her medical records must be wrong.” She stated.

“That is what I thought as well Nesa, so I pulled her medical records.” Praylro said. He placed the data scroll on the table. “Her medical records indicate she was given the inoculation exactly one hundred and sixty-seven years ago. While searching that data base I came across something else. Something even more disturbing. She was given a full medical exam from that time nine years ago, since severe cases of Siplal Flu can impede the reproductive organs of a Lycavorian female. The exam given to her shows no signs that Lady Gorgo has ever given birth to any children.”

Nesa snatched the data scroll from the table. “Impossible.” She gasped. “She has had eight children if you include the King and his brother who was lost in Sparta.”

“I double checked the records myself Nesa.” Praylro spoke. “There is no mistake.”

Nesa looked at him. “What are you saying?”

Gae leaned over the table now. “Fifteen years ago Lady Gorgo’s transport was on its way to Elear for a History Symposium.” She spoke. “Contact was lost with her transport for three hours after it exited Gate One Three. It was not re-established until they were almost to Elear. The pilots reported they had an ion surge that knocked out their long range communications. It apparently surged through the entire ship and knocked everyone out with the exception of the flight crew. All twenty-two passengers showed signs of Ion molecules in their bodies high enough to cause temporary unconsciousness. It was filed as an unexplainable phenomenon. She went to the Symposium with the others and then returned to Apo Prime three days later.”

“And?” Nesa asked.

“Nesa... the flight crew of that transport was from IES.” Gae spoke evenly. “They were supposedly killed in a flight accident three weeks later and their bodies were never recovered.”

Nesa got to her feet. “Are you trying to tell me that the King’s mother is a High Coven agent? The King’s mother?” She stammered. “Gorgo has more reason to hate the Coven than anyone in this entire building. She would never... take part in something like what you are suggesting. I can’t take this to Armetus. He’ll laugh at me before he forces me to retire.” Nesa looked at them. “What else do you have? This can’t be it?”

“Show her Susel.” Praylro spoke to the third man.

“Show me what?” Nesa asked.

The third man set the holoimager on the table. “Praylro brought this to Gae and I Nesa.” The man said. “I ran data for everywhere Lady Gorgo has been in the last fifteen years. As a senior Professor she has to sign out during the day from the University if she goes anywhere.”

Nesa nodded. “Yes. That is standard practice for the senior Professors at the University. Most of them have reserve commissions in the military. Including Gorgo.”

Susel nodded and activated the holoimager, data and reports and spreadsheets appearing in thin air from the imager. "There is nothing out of the ordinary Nesa. Nothing except this. Every month for the last fifteen years, on the same day of every month she has gone to this café in the eastern section of Tuya near the University. She comes in... observes the entrées, orders a cup of coffee and then leaves. This is security footage from the café street monitor. You can see her going in... and several minutes later she comes back out. She goes directly back to the University."

"What is the significance of this?" Nesa asked.

"This man." Susel spoke stopping the security monitor footage and pointing to the image of the older man. "His name is Robare. He is a Vampire... a Junior Associate Professor of Medical Science at the University. You will see he enters just moments after Gorgo... and then departs moments after her."

"Well... if they are having an affair he must be very fast." Nesa spoke. "Susel..."

"Nesa... Robare began at the University exactly two days after Gorgo returned from the Symposium on Elear." Susel spoke. "He came from IES Nesa. Their medical division. I have spent the last day going over security footage from this monitor. On no other day does either of them come to this café. It is the same day of the month at the same time of the day."

"Can I take this to Armetus without getting shot?" She asked them. "I'm assuming you have reports and documents about this Robare fellow?"

Praylro held up the additional two data pads.

Nesa nodded slowly. "*Son vada carians...* I hope you are wrong." She spoke softly. "Let's go."

"Dysea... Dysea are you absolutely sure?" Armetus asked in a voice filled with disbelief his eyes wide.

Dysea stood in the monitor and nodded solemnly, Isabella next to her holding the mug of coffee. "There is no question Armetus." She answered. "L'tian and Marci are continuing to question Roland and Bella's brother Vonis. Roland was the Control officer it seems. Not only for the Gorgo clone but at least two dozen other High Coven agents. I had both Vonis and this Va'nimia brought aboard *NORMYA'S LIGHT* and we are currently enroute back to Apo Prime."

Armetus's mind was moving a thousand miles an hour as he moved around his office deep in thought. He looked up finally. "Dysea... does this have something to do with what you ordered from Riall and Ceneu?"

Dysea shook her head quickly. "Not as far as the clone is concerned. Roland says he was approached by a Lycavorian and two Kavalian females. The Lycavorian male told Roland he considers himself a Kavalian and that they are his people. He was paid for certain projects that Roland was working on to enhance a biogenics program that these Kavalians had apparently already established. Roland told L'tian they wanted to make soldiers... and they wanted to make them quickly. The only way to do that is with biogenics it seems. The orders I issued to Riall were before we found out about the clone."

"I'm meeting with Riall in an hour and we are going to the Island Palace. The little bit of information we have been getting leads me to believe that the assassins here in Tuya will strike soon." Armetus spoke.

"Armetus you must not tell Riall!" Isabella spoke urgently.

"Bella... he has been sharing a bed with a clone for..."

"Fifteen years." Nesa's voice came from behind them. Armetus turned quickly and saw her walk in with three of her section.

"Nesa?" Armetus asked.

"Praylro and the others just brought it to me." Nesa said. "They hesitated because it seemed too outrageous to believe." She set the scroll pad down on the table. "She's been here for fifteen years. An absolutely perfect duplicate of Gorgo."

Armetus shook his head. "They can not reproduce a scent!" He barked. "There is no way a clone could have survived this long with no scent. Riall and Gorgo have been mated for over two thousand years! He would know instantly it was not his mate."

Isabella shook her head. "Not if they were transferring scent glands from the original host to the clone for all this time."

Armetus and Nesa gasped and looked at her. "What?" Armetus almost shouted. "Bella... that would mean... that..."

“Yes... it would mean that the real Gorgo is still very much alive.” Isabella spoke. “We believe that is why Dysea has been sensing huge spikes of emotion within Mindvoice from Martin and even Torma. Somehow... he has discovered this. Nothing else makes sense.”

Nesa stepped forward. “Milady Dysea... you have come into phase?” She asked.

Dysea nodded. “Three days ago Nesa. And I’ve been feeling the spikes for those three days. Most especially the last two. I’m sure Aricia has felt them as well... she does not need to be in phase to sense *Nauta Melme*. Even from great distances.”

Nesa looked at Armetus. “As strong as the King is Armetus... this is very possible.” She spoke.

“Her memories!” Armetus exclaimed. “Her Mindvoice level... how is it possible this clone is able to retain all this?”

Dysea shook her head. “That I don’t know.” She spoke.

“Armetus... we have her medical records in front of us here.” Nesa spoke. “Gorgo was inoculated against Siplal Flu over a hundred and sixty years ago. Yet during the outbreak nine years ago she became just as dreadfully sick as Riall.” Nesa slid the pad across the table. “And according to a full medical exam given while she was being treated for Siplal Flu, she has never had children. A fact which we all know to be completely false.”

“It makes perfect sense.” Dysea spoke now. “As hard as they tried to stop us from finding and recovering Sivana? She knew where *Nauta Melme*’s daughter was and if I am right, it is the same place they are keeping his mother. His real mother. Someplace they never thought we would ever come.”

“Lycavore.” Armetus said softly.

Nesa looked at him. “Lycavore?” She spoke. “King Leonidas is on Lycavore?”

Armetus nodded. “That is where his daughter Lisisa is being held. At least that is the information we have.” He spoke.

Nesa moved to the wall and activated the star chart. “We received this yesterday from a Shrouded sensor probe put in position on the border of The Wilds and High Coven space in Sector Forty-seven. It picks up a High Coven Strike Group at the very edge of its long range sensors moving to the Lycavore System, which is highly unusual to begin with, and then six hours later it leaves the system heading for the Zaleisian border. It goes dark just before departing Lycavore’s system.”

“Goes dark?” Dysea asked. “What does this mean?”

“They engaged their Shroud Shields.” Isabella answered. “Something the High Coven does not do inside their space. Armetus how many agents do you have within the High Coven?”

“Six.” He answered immediately. “Only half of what I would like... but many of your people here in the Union have no desire to go back to a place they left for a reason Bella. The six I have there now are in various positions, but none above the rank of Colonel. I will not sacrifice them. It has taken them decades to get to the positions they now hold.”

“Can you get information from them?” Isabella asked.

Armetus nodded. “We have an elaborate system in place yes, but none of them have been able to work themselves into a position to gather sensitive intelligence as of yet. Two are getting close... the other four are maintaining their low level positions for a reason.”

“Are any of them in a position to get fleet information easily?” Bella asked.

“The most senior one. A Colonel. He has established himself as a communications officer in their Second Fleet Headquarters. He just received the posting six months ago.” Armetus said. “He might be able to find something out.”

“Turn him loose Armetus.” Dysea spoke now. “I want to know as much as possible. Anything he can give to us that does not expose himself to discovery. All of them Armetus. I can make it an order if you like.” She said. “Their deaths will be on my hands if anything happens.”

Armetus looked at her and shook his head. “No. They are my people... I’ll send the order.” He spoke quickly, his face hardening somewhat. “I am growing tired of finding Coven agents within our highest corridors of power. Dysea... Isabella... I want permission to begin instituting procedures to begin a purge of the government and military. Only the King can give me final approval... but I can set things in motion with your approval.”

“Do it.” Isabella replied immediately.

Dysea nodded. "You have my permission as well." She spoke.

"Where is the Clone now?" Isabella asked.

Armetus's eyes got a little bigger. "The Island Palace with For'mya and Deia." He spoke.

"Armetus I don't care how you do it... but you get her off that island and away from our family!"

Isabella snapped. "Do it right now!"

Armetus nodded. "Consider it done!"

"We will arrive in thirty-one hours." Dysea spoke. "We'll try to have more information for you at that time. *NORMYA'S LIGHT* out."

Armetus turned to Nesa. "Get me the *Durcunusaan* Commander at the Main Palace!" He barked.

"Not the Island Palace?" Nesa asked.

Armetus shook his head. "We have to do this right and keep the clone from finding out! Contact the *Durcunusaan* Commander at the Main Palace and tell him to very discretely bring his forces to full alert. Praylro you and Gae move to Admiral Riall's office and bring him here immediately. Do it without raising suspicion. Make sure Admiral Ceneu knows he is to be the one issuing orders to our fleets until we get this resolved. I can have Riall running off like a rabid wolf and killing the clone. Hurry!"

"Armetus what are you going to do?" Nesa asked.

"Try and contact our people within High Coven space and get some nubous answers to our questions!"

He snapped. "I'm about as angry right now as I have ever been in my life."

"Good!" Nesa declared. "Perhaps now we'll get some results that mean something."

NUWAROA HIGH COVEN SPACE

Cha'talla walked up the stairs into the rear portion of the High Coven Runner carrying the heavy shoulder bag and his usual assortment of weapons. He thought for sure Lady Aikiro would never allow him to leave alive once he had told her everything. It would be much easier to just kill him and be done with it. Five hours he had told her everything he could remember of what the High Lord had done over the course of the last near fourteen centuries. She had stopped him several times, asking pointed questions, all questions that he answered immediately and without hesitation. When he was done... she had stood up... walking in slow circles around the courtyard while he waited for death to come. Finally after several long minutes she had stopped in front of him.

"You have done me a great service Cha'talla of the Immortals. Far more than I had hoped for actually." Her voice had been calm and without a hint of anger. "I had toyed with the idea of just killing you once you had told me all I wanted to know, but I can not. You did what you were trained and bred for Cha'talla, and I can not hold you responsible for any actions of my fool husband. I will keep my word to you this day. You will find your normal weapons and uniform in the quarters you awoke in. Esther is already prepping the Runner. Remember my earlier words to you Cha'talla. Never return to High Coven space for I will not hesitate to have you executed immediately."

Cha'talla was no fool however, and he was methodic in checking his equipment. When he was done insuring everything would indeed work, he was escorted to this hanger. It was empty except for two lone security guards at the far end of the hanger.

Cha'talla dropped his bag on the bulkhead mounted bench in the rear of the Runner and turned quickly when the door to the next section opened and Esther stepped in her eyes on the data pad she was reading intently. She sensed him immediately and looked up coming to an abrupt stop.

This was the pureblood from his room this morning. She wore a tight fitting matte black commando style jumpsuit with added body armor in several places along her arms, legs and on her chest. The tight fitting body armor and uniform conformed perfectly to her high firm breasts and long legs. Her dark brown almost black hair was braided into a tight pony tail and fell over her right shoulder to just below her breasts. There was a small hand laser strapped to her waist, which Cha'talla stepped forward and snatched from the holster with

blazing speed for an Immortal his size. Far faster than Esther expected and therefore she was unable to stop him as his large hand closed around her throat and lifted her against the bulkhead pinning her to the wall. She dropped the data pad she had been reading as her hands went to his thick wrist and tried to pry his iron like grip from around her neck.

Esther Saira had been born and raised on this planet, her parents directly in the service of the Lady Aikiro. They had broken the first rule of service to the Lady Aikiro and shared blood and a bed, and Esther was the result. The day after her mother gave birth to her, Lady Aikiro had her parents killed in their sleep. Esther was raised by members of Lady Aikiro's court, and she was instructed in the history of the Coven, the arts and was widely recognized as a superior student. She excelled in combat training just as well as she did in the classroom, rapidly earning her degree in Bio-Engineering, as well as becoming quite lethal in hand-to-hand combat skills.

Esther had always had a fascination with the Immortals and their deeds throughout the Coven's history. She knew of almost every battle they ever took part in, and she knew who Cha'talla was the moment she discovered him on that beach. She had cut open her slim wrist, allowing her blood to drip onto his lips and into his mouth. When he was stable enough to move him, she had placed him in the Runner and returned here. She had tended him for two days, a Mindvoice link amazingly now established between them for he had tasted her blood. The Akruvian species was not known for being able to establish psychic abilities with others, though they had very powerful mental shields to begin with.

Cha'talla leaned close to her beautiful face, staring into her dark eyes deeply. "Tell me why I just don't kill you now?" He growled as Esther kept trying to pry his hand loose. "I am quite capable of flying this ship without you child."

Esther glared at him, her eyes changing to cobalt blue and her fangs extending. "I... I am no child!" She gasped out the words.

Cha'talla stared at her. "So you say... child."

"Then... then kill me!" She hissed still trying to pry his iron grip from around her throat.

"Why did you save me?" He demanded loosening his grip on her slim neck slightly.

Esther gulped in the much needed air, her chest heaving in exertion. "I knew... I knew who you were." She stammered out the words.

"That does not tell me why?" Cha'talla spoke calmly.

"I knew... I knew there had to be a reason the High Lord tossed you out the window of his office." Esther replied.

"Perhaps I was committing suicide." Cha'talla spoke.

"Not you." Esther spoke. "That is not something you would do."

"And how would you know what I would do child?" Cha'talla hissed.

"I served Lady Aikiro and I brought you here!" Esther said. "That was my duty!"

"If you serve her... why is she sending you with me?" Cha'talla demanded.

Esther looked at him, unable to meet his piercing gaze. "Surely... surely she told you."

"Maybe she did. Maybe she didn't. Why don't you tell me?" Cha'talla snapped.

Esther lifted her eyes now, glaring at him with cobalt blue orbs of anger. "Because you bit me and fed on my blood you Immortal oaf!" She screamed out smashing her small fists against his shoulders and chest. "Now release me!"

"You were feeding me your blood for two days." Cha'talla spoke. "Why would I bite you and do this? I was delirious... unconscious. How did I manage to bite you child? Do you think me a fool that I would believe what you and she tell me?" Cha'talla leaned closer, pulling aside the top of her uniform body armor exposing the flesh of her neck. "You bear no bite marks on your neck child vampire. Do you think me a fool?"

"That's because you didn't bite me on the neck!" Esther barked. She reached up with her free hands and viciously unzipped the front of her armor, detaching the fasteners and pulling it open exposing her firm right breast for Cha'talla's eyes. "You bit me here... while you were forcing yourself upon me in your delirium!"

Cha'talla's eyes grew wide when he saw the two very faint bite marks just above her now stiff nipple. They were faint, and would fade in perhaps another day, but they were right there for his eyes to see. He drew her away from the wall and pulled the back of her uniform and armor away from her shoulders and back. He

could just make out the tops of the marks from a whip lash tip on the backs of her shoulders. The wounds were still red and they appeared to be swollen and puffy.

Cha'talla pushed her back gently and released his hand from around her throat, his eyes staring at her as she shyly drew her uniform closed once more. "She... she had you whipped for something that was not your fault." He spoke.

Esther refastened her uniform and body armor. "The male who conducted the whipping took great pride in the damage he was doing. I had rebuked his attentions twice before and Lady Aikiro thought it humorous to allow him to be the one to delve out my punishment. She is not the kind and calm woman she projects. She was going to have me killed but I begged her to let me leave with you."

"Why?" Cha'talla asked.

"I... I don't want to die." Esther replied. "Isn't that reason enough?"

"Where... where I am going... you will not fit in." He spoke softly.

"I can fight!" Esther snapped. "I can fly this Runner better than you I'm wagering and I have a degree in Bio-engineering! Something that you need Cha'talla! Take me with you please. I truly do not want to remain here any longer."

Cha'talla stepped back from her slowly. "What were you doing?" He asked quickly as he bent to pick up the data pad she had dropped.

Esther took it from him as he held it out to her. "The internal scanners were acting fuzzy. They didn't show a small surge in the left engine nacelle that my portable scanner did. I was going back to adjust it."

Cha'talla looked at her. "A power surge?"

Esther nodded. "Yes."

"Come with me Esther Suira." He spoke quickly turning and moving back towards the small engineering section of the Runner.

She scampered to keep up with him as they entered the engineering section. She watched him move into the center of the room. "Where?" He asked.

She looked at her data pad and pointed to the right. "The port nacelle. Section three."

Cha'talla went to the interior nacelle port and touched the button, opening the panel and revealing the power conduit. Esther lifted the data pad scanner. "It's just to the..." She looked up when she heard the metallic like tearing sound and her eyes grew wider as Cha'talla pulled out the small explosives charge from where it had been placed.

"Here is your surge. An explosive package meant to cause the nacelle to overload once we engaged the LSD drive." He spoke turning the explosives charge over in his hand. He took the two wires that were exposed in his large hand and yanked. The front of the charge went completely blank, the blinking red lights going black. He tossed it to the deck angrily. "I will search the rest of the ship. You get us out of here now, before she decides to blow us out of the hanger with ground based turrets. And use evasive maneuvers as you exit the atmosphere and execute differing patterns until we leave the system! Go quickly!"

"Wait! Cha'talla!" Esther barked before she turned to exit the engineering section. She met Cha'talla's eyes. "Where are... where are we going?"

Cha'talla debated for all of three seconds on whether he should trust her or not. That decision it appeared had already been made. "Roltar Six." Cha'talla told her.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

EARTH

EDEN CITY

Aricia stood next to Thr'won and Selene as they watched Talco pace the secure room restlessly like a caged animal, which fit with his feline nature and that of his species. Admiral Joarl stood just behind them, his dark eyes watching Talco's every move through the reinforced one way glass.

“He has recovered far quicker than we had anticipated and the drugs had no real lasting effects on him. Unfortunately.” Selene spoke with a cruel grin as she looked at Aricia, her steel blue eyes bright. “Apparently they have something similar to the Lycavorian healing ability. He just doesn’t have to shape shift to use it.”

“You don’t like this man Selene.” Aricia spoke detecting the almost vile tone of her voice when Selene spoke of him. It was not something normally seen or heard from Selene and it had Aricia wondering.

“I’m usually very tolerant Aricia, you know that. For some reason however, this man... this Kavalian... I despise him with every ounce of my being.” Selene replied. She turned to Thr’won. “Is it possible I am experiencing some sort of residual effect of Deval’s influence Thr’won? His feelings towards these people? Because he is the one who actually turned me... is it possible I am feeling what he would feel? That Lynwe is feeling it as well? She does not show it as openly as I do, but she doesn’t like this man either. And I’m the one who made her a full vampire.”

Thr’won nodded slowly. “It’s possible. We do know that Deval was a Pureblood vampire and not someone turned. It stands to reason that those here got the reports from the High Coven when the Kavalians invaded their territory. Perhaps it is lingering affects for you both Selene, but I recommend not dwelling on it. You and Lynwe are far above and beyond anything we know of Deval and his actions. Do not bring yourself down to his level with doubt of your personality.”

Joarl nodded from behind them, his dark eyes alert. “I agree Selene.” He spoke. “They were formidable foes on the battlefield.” He spoke calmly. “Not very bright or well trained... but they were hard to bring down, and they were ruthlessly savage. We learned quickly that if we took out their officers, unit cohesion fell apart. It may be what you say... but perhaps you just don’t like this man. As I don’t like him. Don’t read more into it than is truly there.”

Selene turned and met his eyes with a soft smile. “Thank you Admiral Joarl.” She spoke. “Your words mean quite a bit to me.”

“What were you able to get from him?” Aricia asked.

“He is supposed to meet the group that’s on its way here just outside what used to be called Wichita, Kansas. It’s in the Wastes.” Selene answered turning back to her. “Maraud was supposed to meet him there with the eggs and the young dragons that had already hatched. Apparently they were going to be sedated. The meeting is supposed to take place in roughly twenty-one hours.”

Aricia looked at her. “Syrilth?”

Thr’won shook her head. “Everything we saw leads me to believe that Maraud was going to kill Syrilth before he left the planet, or at the very least injure her enough so that she would not be able to defend herself.”

Aricia’s eyes narrowed. “And make her watch as he left Earth with her siblings.” She said softly. “That would have driven her completely insane.”

Joarl stepped forward. “Milady... they can’t be planning to come to the surface with that many men.” He spoke. “The Limian cruisers that are escorting the transports do not have a large enough troop carrying capacity to land overwhelming forces. They could have perhaps a few hundred between the two ships.”

Aricia nodded. “Have Panos dispatch an additional *Mora* from Sparta to this Wichita immediately and secure the area around it.” She spoke. “Have them remain well hidden, for Maraud will no doubt search the area from the sky before landing.”

“The cruisers and transports?” Joarl asked.

Aricia looked at him. “Can the *NIGHTMOON* handle these two cruisers with *HAMMER OF THE GODS* assisting?” She asked.

Joarl looked almost insulted and he snorted openly in disgust as he looked at her. “Two Limian cruisers against the *NIGHTMOON* and the *HAMMER*? Please my Queen... you injure my feelings.” He replied.

Aricia chuckled and reached out to squeeze his shoulder. “My apologies Joarl.” She spoke. “I am not as proficient with ship classes and their abilities as Martin.”

Joarl nodded. “Something we will have to change in the future my Queen.” He spoke. “It will be no contest.”

“Good... then we don’t have to draw any other ships back to Earth.” Aricia said.

Selene nodded. “And combined with the defensive platforms and Admiral Wallace’s new detection grid, which is now online and working quite well according to him, we will have no trouble. I want them captured Aricia... not destroyed. Is that possible?” She looked from Aricia to Joarl.

“You wish to make an example of them?” Aricia asked.

Selene nodded. “Tarifa, Aihola and I have talked about this.” She spoke. “It would go a long way to letting others know that while we may be a new member to the Union, we are by no means stupid and incapable.”

Aricia nodded. “Admiral?”

Joarl nodded. “We can do this.” He said. “Just so long as I can tell my people if they attempt to do something insane like ram our ships or a platform, we can direct our full power against them?”

Selene nodded. “That is without question Joarl.” She said. “I will leave that in your hands and not try to tell you how to do it. If it can be done... fine... but our people are not to be put at risk.”

Joarl nodded in approval. He truly enjoyed working with Selene, Tarifa and Aihola. They always seemed to be of one mind, and they were decisive and blunt. He would make it a point to speak with the King about being assigned here permanently and moving his home here to Earth. She may have been a vampire now... but Selene intrigued him, as did Lynwe and now Layna and the relationship they all shared.

Aricia looked at Thr’won. “What you learned from Syrilth and then from this fool, can you determine anything of value?”

Thr’won nodded. “Wherever this Maraud is hiding the eggs it is near the ocean.” She answered. “The white skinned ones killed two of her siblings by smashing their eggs on rocks far below where they were being kept. I saw large waves and huge rocks. It was an image that Maraud passed to her when she defied him several years ago. She does not know where this location is however. He has never taken her there.”

“Well it has to be on this continent.” Aricia spoke. “Twenty-one hours from now puts us well into the evening local time. If he is keeping the eggs along the coast somewhere he would need a means to transport them to the meeting place.”

“And it would need to be done discretely.” Thr’won said. “So it did not look suspicious in any way.”

“How long would it take for a Transport Lifter to get from either coast to this location in Kansas?” Aricia asked.

Selene shrugged. “Many of the Lifter trails have been improved and expanded as part of the Reconstruction program.” She said. “A few hours from the east coast easily... perhaps a little longer from the west coast because of the mountainous terrain. Tarifa spent quite a bit of time in the northwest portion of this continent when she was growing up. Perhaps she or Tareif knows of a place similar to what Thr’won is describing. I don’t recall such places along the eastern seaboard from my time in the Coven Ministry, and I traveled extensively along the east coast.”

Thr’won nodded. “I will go ask them.” She said. She looked at Aricia taking her hand. “You have felt nothing?”

Aricia shook her head. “Not for the last few hours. Not since that last major spike.”

“Are you worried?” Thr’won asked.

Aricia smiled. “I would like to say no... but I think all of us are worried whenever he is not within our embrace.” She answered. “He does have a tendency to find trouble wherever he goes, especially when Daniel travels with him. The two of them have always been able to end up in the storm no matter how much they try to avoid it. Anja has told me of many things the two of them were involved in, some by choice... some not.”

Thr’won smiled. “Yes... I’ve heard Walter say that a number of times.”

“Well he would know.” Aricia answered with a soft laugh “He has known them longer than anyone.”

“What do you think it is?” Thr’won asked.

Aricia shook her head. “It wasn’t like the first spike. This second one was much more intense and focused. Almost as if he... almost as if he had discovered something horrible or something wondrous. It’s hard to tell really. He is so very good at shielding his mind from us when he really wants to... and at this great distance... even I can’t penetrate them. I know that if I felt it... Dysea must have felt it as well. She has come into phase now... and her developing abilities will make her more attuned to Martin within Mindvoice.”

“Perhaps you should contact her on Elear and talk with her or Isabella.” Thr’won spoke. “While Isabella will not have the same sensitivity to Martin, she is very much attuned to Dysea because of what they share. Their connection is strong because they have shared blood.”

Aricia nodded. “Bella has tasted the blood of us all Thr’won. Except for Martin of course.” She stated evenly and seeing that Thr’won did not blink an eye at this news.

“You are lovers and a family... if you think this surprises me you are mistaken Aricia.” Thr’won spoke taking her hand and squeezing it tightly. “It is one of the very things that make the six of you so powerful together. Never deny that.”

Aricia smiled and nodded at her words. “You are right.” She said with a smile. “Then again... it could be that this is the longest we have been apart from him and Torma and Isheeni and I are just missing them.”

Thr’won grinned. “Then when he returns, insure you make up for it.”

Aricia matched her smile. “I intend to.”

Joarl rolled his eyes and Selene laughed at his expression. “What do we do with our guest?” Joarl asked.

“Well... we can’t let him go because he has seen you Aricia.” Selene spoke. “The equipment we found where he was hiding was mainly communications gear he had somehow managed to either steal or purchase. We were able to discover two messages he was going to send already programmed into the transmitter.” She looked at Aricia when she said that.

Aricia met her eyes. “I assume you were able to read them?”

Selene smiled. “One was to this Maraud character... the other to the ships. Basically that everything was all set and the meeting was on.”

Aricia grinned. “Then let’s send those messages.” She spoke. “And have Lynwe join us Selene. I want to talk with Talco here, and he doesn’t seem to like Lynwe any more than he likes you. Thr’won if you are going to Tarifa’s home please ask Isra to send Aelnala here to me. It appears Talco was very frightened of her if what Isra said was true. Perhaps we can use that to our advantage in some way.”

Thr’won nodded. “I’ll head over right now.” She said kissing her cheek softly and then heading down the corridor.

“My Queen... I’m going to set up our plans on board the *NIGHTMOON*. I will advise you when we are ready.” Joarl spoke.

“Let slip that you are departing for the edge of the system because one of our freighters is experiencing some sort of problem and you are the only ship in the area.” Aricia spoke.

Joarl nodded and bowed his head. “I will speak with you both later.” He said before also turning and heading down the corridor.

Aricia waited for Joarl to be out of ear shot before turning back to Selene who was looking at her oddly.

“Aricia... I think I know you well enough to know you have something going through that beautiful head of yours.” Selene spoke softly.

Aricia nodded slowly. “I did not want to speak of it with anyone else. We have too much going on as it is right now. It is something you need to pass on to Tarifa and Aihola, as well as those that share your bed.”

Selene stepped closer to her. “What?” She asked detecting the seriousness of the tone in Aricia’s voice.

“I spoke with Armetus yesterday.” She said. “The man Martin chose to run the Krypteria. Our new Intelligence Organization?”

Selene nodded. “Yes... I’ve spoken with him once or twice. He seems a very capable man.” She said.

“He is far more than just capable. Selene there is a possibility of a very high level Coven agent within our inner circle on Apo Prime.” Aricia spoke. “Someone very close to us.”

“How close?” Selene asked.

Aricia met her steel blue eyes. “Too close. He wouldn’t give me much information... there wasn’t much to give really. He and his people were still gathering intelligence. He did pass on to me to let you know he would like to send several people here to Earth, with your permission of course. And he wants you, Tarifa and Aihola to begin a systematic review of everyone within your inner circle here and in Sparta.”

“Sparta?” Selene gasped. “Shouldn’t Panos...”

Aricia nodded. “He has already begun. He will contact you later this evening on a secure channel to better coordinate your efforts. I wanted to be the one to tell you what was happening. It is not something you should hear through a report.”

“Aricia... what’s going on?” Selene asked.

“It appears that wherever Martin has gone... he has succeeded in stirring up a hornet’s nest of trouble.” She said. “Lisisa... his... *our* daughter, she was being held on Lycavore. It is the old home world of my people so I understand.” Aricia saw her confusion and smiled. “Of the Lycavorians not born here in Sparta. Apo Prime is where our people settled when the rebellion against the High Coven began. It did not include those of us here

on Earth living in Sparta. This Lycavore... it is very deep in High Coven space..." She saw Selene's eyes grow wider. "Yes... that was my first reaction as well. Martin... he apparently has found Lisisa there, but he has found something else as well. Something far more important it seems and this is what is causing the spikes that Isheeni and I are feeling."

"Then these are the spikes you and Thr'won were talking about then? They are within Mindvoice?" Selene asked.

Aricia nodded. "Yes. Whatever he has found has caused him to react rather strongly, stronger than I have ever seen him react with the exception of on Enurrua. It also seems that the High Coven is beginning to shift forces around subtly. Whether it is because of Martin or something else, we do not know. Something is happening and we really do not have any idea what it is. Since we do not have any real well placed agents within the High Coven, Armetus believes it is better for us to be safe than sorry and I agree with him."

Selene looked at her evenly. "Lynwe, Layna and I can speak within Mindvoice with each other because we've shared blood. It brings us closer together really, but our ability there is limited. You, Martin, Thr'won even Tarifa and Aihola now that they are bound to Roluth, we can not hope to obtain that level or understand the significance it brings. This is not something I will ever question you on Aricia. Or Armetus. Tell me what you want us to do."

BIG SNOWY MOUNTAINS TRUE PEOPLE'S BASE OF OPERATION

Maruad and Hurcan burst through the thick steel to see Syrilth smash into the steel wall of the ancient helicopter hanger. They watched as the azure blue dragon moved forward towards where she was recovering her feet, the marks from the beating she had been getting by the slightly smaller female very evident.

Maruad lifted his rifle and fired several shots into the ceiling of the metal hanger, the clang of the bullet strikes causing Isheeni and Syrilth to snap their heads around and look at him.

"Enough!" He bellowed.

Stay out of this man! Isheeni snarled in Mindvoice. *She will not cause harm to the eggs I carry! I will kill her now!*

You will try! Syrilth exclaimed back with a similar snarl of anger and rage. *You will not turn my siblings against me! I won't let you put them at risk!*

Isheeni lifted her whip like tail for another strike at Syrilth but Maruad sent a single shot into the floor between them. He lifted the rifle and leveled it at Isheeni.

"One more step or twitch and you won't need to worry about eggs!" He growled at her, advancing almost fearlessly. "These rounds are specially made to penetrate your scales dragon! And they are laced with a unique poison that will render you incapacitated in seconds. Now back up quickly!"

Isheeni glared at him for several moments before doing as he ordered her. Maruad eyed Isheeni warily unsure of what to make of this obviously confident and fearless female. He knew carrying eggs made any dragon female touchy and exceedingly dangerous, and it only seemed more so with this azure blue scaled dragon. Maruad watched as Isheeni backed up and returned to where Roluth was resting on the floor of the hanger seemingly unconcerned. Isheeni was his mate and he apparently was going to remain out of any dispute she had with Syrilth. Maruad looked at Syrilth as her ochre colored eyes glared daggers at where Isheeni settled to the floor next to Roluth and he stroked her wings with his snout.

Syrilth? Maruad spoke sternly.

When are we departing for this meeting Maruad? She demanded. *I want this over with and my siblings back so that I do not have to remain with that smug arrogant female. She thinks because she carries my brother's eggs I will not burn her!*

Hah! Isheeni's voice exclaimed. *You could no more burn me than you could beat me! Your master is better off riding me and leaving you here to suffer with these annoying little ones you have coddled so!*

Silence! Syrilth screamed out.

Maruad looked at the small scrapes and injuries Syrilth had on her scales due to her confrontation with Isheeni. *She injured you.* He stated. *I need you healthy Syrilth, not torn up fighting this female.*

I am fine! Syrilth spat as she settled to the floor of the hanger.

Maruad turned and looked at Isheeni. *You have injured her!*

Isheeni snorted. *Not permanently! She is old and slow! I could take Roluth and be gone from here whenever I wish. And you could not stop me man!* Isheeni glared at him with azure eyes as if daring him to stop her.

Maruad looked at her. *You are either very confident or very stupid.* He spoke. *You think highly of your skills.*

I may have been forced to serve that Lycavorian wench... but I was smart enough to learn all I could. How do you think Roluth and I defeated her so easily? Isheeni proclaimed. *If she can not fly then I will take you where you need to go so that we can be done with you and your kind and start living as dragons should!*

Maruad looked at her. *You would carry me?* He asked surprised.

If it causes you to leave this place sooner so that Roluth and I can begin our lives free of your stench... yes. If the old bag is not up to it! Isheeni snapped.

Maruad turned back to see Syrilth moving her wing, trying to make it extend out fully. She gasped in pain and retracted it quickly. *You have damaged my wing! I...*

Syrilth... you will remain here tomorrow! Maruad declared.

Syrilth's ochre colored eyes glared menacingly at him. *You will not keep me from my siblings!* She hissed out. *Not this time Maruad!*

You can not carry me! He spoke.

I will not allow it!

Cease your ranting! Isheeni barked. *I will insure he returns your eggs to you Syrilth! If only so that it shuts you up! My first priority is to my own eggs, but if insuring this man keeps his word gets me away from you faster then so be it.*

No! I will not allow it! Syrilth exclaimed.

You have no choice Syrilth! Maruad snapped.

I will burn you now then! Syrilth howled out.

I will go with my mate and Maruad to insure he keeps his word Syrilth. Roluth declared off handedly. *I care only for my children now... but if it allows Isheeni and I to escape quicker then I will go.*

Maruad nodded. *I will accept that.*

Syrilth looked between Maruad and Roluth. *If you betray me Maruad I will find you wherever you may go!*

Yes I'm sure. He spoke. Maruad shook his head, Mindvoicing always gave him a headache and one was coming on now because they were speaking on a level of Mindvoice so that Hurcan and his people could not detect. "Enough!" He spoke openly now. "We have our plan!" He turned to Hurcan. "Tomorrow the blue scaled dragon and Roluth will go with me. We will kill the elf females and the male rider and then Hurcan you can begin your assault."

Hurcan looked between the dragons and Maruad. "My... my people are already in place." He spoke finally. "My mages are hiding their presence as they filter through the tunnels beneath Eden City."

Maruad nodded. "When I begin my attack on the elf females they should strike." He spoke moving up to stand beside Hurcan and then drawing him away where he thought the others would not hear him. "And you may kill Syrilth and the others at your leisure when we have departed." He hissed in a soft whisper that only Hurcan could hear.

Hurcan nodded. "Something I will take great pleasure in doing." He answered.

Maruad turned back to Isheeni. "Be ready to leave at first light dragon." He called out before turning and taking Hurcan's arm. "Let us put the finishing touches on our plans my friend."

Syrilth gingerly walked over to where Tharua and her other siblings sat away from Isheeni and Roluth. As she settled to the floor Tharua and Majeir nuzzled up against her in a show of inspecting her injuries.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Do you think he suspects Isheeni?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I don't believe so. He actually seemed rather anxious to leave.* Isheeni replied. *Syrilth I did not hurt you badly did I?*

Syrilth chuckled within the shielded connection. [Mindvoice Shielded] *I have felt far worse from him, and he is very anxious Isheeni. Perhaps these white skinned creatures are pressuring him.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *We are close sister. Isheeni spoke confidently. Be prepared for anything. I don't believe he will just leave you here.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *What do you mean?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *When we depart this place I believe the white skinned ones will attempt to kill you. Aricia and Isra felt this as well when we last saw them. You must be on guard Syrilth.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *We won't allow anything to happen to her Isheeni.* Tharua spoke now as she made it a point to nuzzle her sister and seem to lick her wounds.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *We must have faith in Isra and Aricia and my bonded ones, Tarifa and Aihola.* Roluth spoke now. *They will not allow harm to come to our siblings Syrilth. You have carried this burden yourself for too long. Now we will all help and we will succeed.*

Syrilth nodded her head slowly as she leaned her snout over to nudge Majeir. [Mindvoice Shielded] *I have spent so many years serving that vile man I have had my judgment clouded when it comes to others. I can not do this alone and I must allow others to help me.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *And we will Syrilth.* Isheeni spoke. *We will. Come... we must merge our thoughts and pass what we have learned to Aricia and Isra. They must prepare for this force that is infiltrating beneath the city.*

Esther did as she was told, executing standard defensive maneuvers to throw off ground based turrets as they left the atmosphere. As she did this, she was calculating the LSD jump to get them out of the system as quickly as possible, something she did immediately upon gaining orbit and limited distance from the gravitational well of the planet. Her sensors showed no signs of ships in the area, but if they found the explosive charge meant to kill them, they could very well have two or three shrouded ships waiting in orbit. She executed two quick defensive turns, as well as a complete course change before engaging the LSD drive. She jumped three times in quick succession, never remaining in one location for more than twenty seconds before jumping once more. There was no way anyone could track them once she exited from the last jump, not unless they were reading her mind and doing the calculations right beside her. She sat back in the seat after setting course for Roltar Six and let out a deep sigh.

She was free now.

Free of Lady Aikiro and her oppressive control and the woman who had killed her parents when she was only days old.

Now all she had to do was convince Cha'talla she was not the enemy. She looked at the stars out the cockpit view window as she finished plotting the course that would take them to Roltar Six. Yes she had fed him her blood for three days, the first two by order of Lady Aikiro because it was her blood that had pulled him back from the abyss of death, and only her blood could keep him alive until his system regenerated enough to take other blood. The morning of the third day however had opened a whole new world Esther had secretly wondered about but never dared voice to anyone.

Esther had seen many Immortals throughout her three hundred and seven years of life, yet Cha'talla was the most pleasing to her eyes. He may have looked like an Immortal, but his body was chiseled stone and he had strong, confident look to his face and jaw. Unlike other purebloods, Esther never thought of herself as superior to others simply by her blood, and this had always been a contention with her instructors in school. It had also earned her the respect of the few Immortals in the base, and they had secretly taught her many different types of fighting that she would not have normally learned. She hated Lady Aikiro for taking her parents from her, and she believed Lady Aikiro knew that. She held no illusions about being able to defeat her in battle, she had seen Lady Aikiro defeat three Immortals at one time in a training bout, so she played the part of the good student and servant, biding her time until she could escape into the unknown.

Cha'talla's presence had given that to her.

Esther had not intended for him to grab her as he had done. She had never intended for him to tear her clothes from her and force himself upon her in his delirium, and she had never intended on feeling what he had made her experience. It was true he had forced himself upon her the first time, bulling his massive cock into her with little fanfare. He had ignored her pleas and gasps of pain as his fifteen inch cock stretched her as no man ever had in her life. He had stroked into her deeper than any man who she had ever bedded, the thickness and

length of his will shattering cock causing indescribable pain at first. Pain that had quickly been tossed aside as he thrust into her and she began to respond to him as she never had to any man before. When he bit into her breast as his cock erupted into her depths, his fangs feeding on her blood, Esther had quivered in the most divinely powerful orgasm of her young life, her arms and legs locked around his powerful body, pinned beneath him as she was. She would not have been whipped if it had stopped there.

It hadn't stopped there however.

Esther was beside herself in the aftermath of her orgasm, and when he had finally rolled off her, she had pounced like a lioness, taking his drooping cock into her small hands and lavishing it with licks and kisses, tasting her own juices mixed with his tangy come. She had sucked his huge cock for what seemed like hours, taking him deeply into her throat, allowing his large hands to entwine in her hair as he forced his cock as deep as it would go. She drank his come like a thirsty kitten when he had erupted, holding her head tightly to his groin, her lips stretched and anchored around the base of his pulsing hot shaft. She drank his juices greedily, her small hands fondling his large balls for every drop, until finally she began to extract his glistening shaft from her within her throat. Amazingly, by the time she held only the bulbous head left in her mouth, he was hard again. Esther had climbed onto his hugely muscular body then and lowered her sore, bald pussy onto his dominating Immortal cock. She couldn't remember how many times he had made her come that day; for they had spent so many hours together the pleasure seemed to blend collectively. Esther had known she was his the moment he had kissed her. It was not something she had ever heard of Immortals doing and he was no expert at it since it was all new to him as well, but something in his delirious mind must have told him to kiss her, and she had responded to his kiss without question. It was strange at first for Immortals had very thin lips, but his thick tongue never seemed to tire, and with delighted moans from her telling him he was doing it just right, he had become very good at curling her toes with his kisses. Not to mention flexing his massive cock buried in her belly in ways that caused small orgasms to quake through her unchecked.

Cha'talla had fucked her senseless, and that is exactly how Lady Aikiro found her. She was passed out on his broad chest with his half erect cock still buried within her depths. Esther remembered a brief moment of pain as she was torn from Cha'talla's warm embrace and thrown across the room. The rest of it happened so quickly she barely had time to register what was happening. Lady Aikiro had hissed that she was a whore to have bed an Immortal willingly, and she would be treated like a whore. Esther didn't know how many men had raped her after that, dazed and confused as she was. The pain brought her mind out of it though, the pain of the lash and the laughing of the male vampire who was whipping her with glee.

Esther shook her head quickly, gaining control of her emotions as she had been taught. "No!" She gasped. "I am free... and I will not do this."

She got to her feet, grasping the back of the pilot's seat for a moment to steady herself as she took deep breaths. She was still not fully recovered from the rapes and beatings, and she suspected there was more to it than what she knew. She took a final deep breath and moved into the rear section of the Runner, heading for where she knew Cha'talla told her he would be.

Esther found him in the small cargo hold kneeling on the deck, several items spread out around him. His eyes were closed and his weapons were to one side of his figure. She stepped fully into the cargo hold never taking her eyes off him.

"Cha'talla?" She spoke softly.

His small dark eyes opened quickly and Esther felt a flutter in her lower belly as they were the same eyes that he had gazed at her with while making her scream out in rapture. "Sit in front of me." He ordered her.

Esther didn't move and only stared at him. "I only came to tell you that I executed three LSD jumps combined with some evasive maneuvers to throw off anyone who may have tried to track us. I have set course for Roltar Six and enabled the computer to warn us if any ships come within half a light year of our course. I won't bother you anymore."

"Sit down and face the door Pureblood." Cha'talla spoke again.

Esther felt a twinge of fear now as she looked at him. "Why?" She stammered.

"Do as I ask of you." Cha'talla spoke softly but firmly. "I am not going to hurt you little one."

It was the tone of his voice that convinced Esther of that, and slowly she moved in front of him and knelt down turning to face the door. "Cha'talla... what are you...?"

"Unfasten your uniform." Cha'talla spoke firmly. "Pull it down to your waist."

Esther turned her head and looked back at him, his fearsome features and eyes incredibly handsome to her. “What are you going to do?” She asked.

“You have been poisoned Esther Suira.” He spoke calmly. “Whoever gave this whipping to you coated the barbs of the whip with Tarcax. It is a lethal component of beta radiation that if left untreated will eventually kill you. Now pulled down your uniform.”

“How... how do you know that?” She asked quickly as she unfastened the front of her uniform and began to pull it off her shoulders, wincing at the pain that small motion caused. “I scanned myself with a medical sensor. Nothing came up.”

Cha’talla nodded as he gingerly helped her lower the leather and body armor. “In small doses like those on the whip barbs it would not be detected.” He told her.

“Then how did...”

“I have been alive for nearly seven thousand years little one.” He spoke evenly as he bent to take something from the small bag by his right leg. “I have learned some things in that time.” Cha’talla turned back as she pulled it down all the way, keeping her arms tightly to her side in a show of modesty. His dark eyes grew a little wider when he saw the swollen and puffy whip barb lacerations on her flawless flesh. He felt a surge of anger inside him, anger at anyone who would deface such perfection in this manner. He took a deep breath, calming his nerves. “If I ever happen to come across the man who did this to you Little One, I swear to you he will die a very long and painful death.”

Esther smiled at his words. “Hopefully we will never see him again.” She said. “He was a pompous fool.”

Cha’talla reached around the side of her body and showed her what he was holding. “This is an ointment the healers of my people developed many centuries ago. Every Immortal carries a small packet of it in their personal kit. The High Lord dismissed its use even after it saved the life of Xerxes his son. It will neutralize the radiation in your wounds and speed the healing. It will also sting slightly when I apply it.” Esther nodded slowly and he drew his hand back to begin applying the ointment. She winced initially when he began to apply the cool salve, the stinging barely registering after the pain of the whipping itself. His large hands caressed her flesh in a way that had goose bumps forming on her skin as he spread the salve carefully over each open welt. As he did this with one hand, he held out the two orange pills in his other palm to her front. “A dose of Cirled. We will get more when we arrive on Roltar Six.”

“I thought you said I would not fit in where you were going.” She spoke as she popped the two pills in to her mouth.

Cha’talla shook his head. “Esther... you are a pureblood. Why would she do this to you if I took you against your will?”

Esther chortled. “She had me raped too.” She spoke matter of factly.

Cha’talla’s hands stopped applying the ointment. “But why?”

Esther turned her head and looked at him over her bare shoulder. “You may have taken me against my will the first time Cha’talla.” She said softly. “But not the second, third, fourth or fifth time. I did that completely of my own free will. And it was the most divine experience of my life.”

Cha’talla’s eyes grew wide as his head snapped up to look at her. “What?”

Esther chuckled at the expression on his face, her dark eyes alluring and seductive. “She found me sprawled on your chest Cha’talla, your arms around me, your cock buried inside me and my face cradled against your neck.” She spoke evenly. “You literally fucked me senseless Cha’talla. And I adored every single second of it.”

“You jest.” He exclaimed. “You are... you are a pureblood! You are... you are the most beautiful...!” He stammered now unable to finish his words.

Esther chuckled once more. “A speechless Immortal.” She spoke with some small humor. “Now that is something I have never seen.” She commented. “Do you think so little of yourself Cha’talla that you don’t believe it is possible for a woman to love you for who you are inside and not out? Even a pureblood like myself.”

“You don’t know me Esther! My people are... we are not pleasant to the eye!” He spoke quickly.

“That depends on who is doing the looking.” Esther said evenly. “How many species are within the Lycavorian Union that looks different? They are all accepted and looked at no differently than those who appear as I do. It is one of the reasons they have prospered so when the High Coven has become stagnant.”

Cha’talla looked at her wide eyed. “You...”

Esther smiled. “I know many things Cha’talla... and I also know how to get very pirated communications and broadcasts from within Lycavorian space without being caught.”

“I betrayed the High Coven! I...”

“You betrayed nothing!” Esther spat out. “I knew who you were Cha’talla... on that lake beach. Your name is spoken with great honor among your people.”

“Not anymore.” He barked.

“Don’t fool yourself Cha’talla.” Esther said. “If your people didn’t look upon you in a different way, your tribe would never have left your home planet after they thought you were dead. If they did not think like you Cha’talla, they would have remained behind and continued to follow the High Coven. Even if it killed them in the end.”

“My actions brought all this upon my people!” Cha’talla exclaimed.

“Do you think that King Leonidas would not have discovered his mother on that planet even if the bitch Princess’s daughter was not there?” Esther said. “I’ve listened to broadcasts about him from those very same pirated transmissions Cha’talla. They say he is a warrior unequalled yes, but they also say he is extremely intelligent and very open minded.”

Cha’talla looked at her wide eyed. “His mother?”

Esther nodded. “You didn’t know?”

Cha’talla shook his head. “Only that she was someone very close to Admiral Riall and then the King himself. I assumed... I assumed it was the Prime Minister Deia.”

Esther shook her head. “It was Gorgo. His mother.” She spoke softly. “He would have eventually figured it out. King Leonidas is not the fool everyone in the High Coven corridors of power take him for as I said.” She spoke. “And when he did discover it, he would have come after her. And when Veldruk killed her to save his sorry skin, King Martin Leonidas of the Lycavorians would have gone completely off the deep end and invaded the High Coven with every ship and Spartan at his command. And though outnumbered they would have won.” Esther looked at Cha’talla. “And nothing you or the Immortals could have done would have stopped him. It would not have stopped until every member of the Coven and the High Lord’s family was but ashes. It is better this way Cha’talla.”

“Better?” Cha’talla asked. “How could it be better?”

“Because something else is happening now.” Esther spoke softly. “Why do you think she wanted to keep you alive? She wanted what only you knew Cha’talla. She told you as much. She knows something is happening. And it is not going to be good for the High Coven. That is why she is planning to take back the power she gave to that fool Veldruk. You want to improve your people Cha’talla... better that you don’t die fighting whatever is going to come. I... I would not like that very much. Especially not after we have shared blood.”

Cha’talla’s eyes grew even wider. “Shared blood?”

“Did you think in the midst of all that you made me feel I would not take your blood as well Immortal?” Esther spoke with a smile. “It is tangy you know. Your blood. I like the taste very much.”

Cha’talla reached down and picked up the towel, wiping his hands as Esther turned to face him more, watching as his eyes wandered over her bare flesh. She still kept her arms over her large breasts, retaining at least some of her modesty even though she wanted nothing more than to throw him to the deck of the Runner and ride him until she screamed his name once more.

“I... I should have requested to return to service.” He spoke finally, turning away from her gaze. “To fight. Even if only as a lowly warrior.”

“Why didn’t you?” Esther asked.

Cha’talla met her eyes. “I don’t know.”

“Yes you do.” She spoke. “For all your years of service to the High Coven, the High Lord tried to kill you with barely a thought. All for simply wanting to improve your people Cha’talla. He betrayed you... not the other way around. Lady Aikiro killed my parents when I was only days old because they made the mistake of

falling in love and conceiving me.” She saw his eyes meet hers. “She betrayed me... I didn’t betray her. I heard her talking before she met with you. She doesn’t know where your tribe escaped to. She was incensed by this... that they would dare stand up to the High Coven. It is another reason she did not leave you to die. She was hoping to discover where they had gone.”

“That is not something I would ever reveal.” He spoke quickly.

“She has discovered much these last few days, and that is why she has dismissed your tribe and let you leave. She is far more worried about what the High Lord has done.” Esther spoke. “You can start over Cha’talla.”

“Start over?” He gasped. “My sons... my brothers... my family is all dead! What would I have to gain?”

“Me.” Esther spoke noticing that he did not mention his mate.

“I am an Immortal!” He bellowed getting to his feet. “You are a pureblood!”

“Yes. I am also a woman and you are a man.” Esther spoke calmly. “A man who has made me experience and feel things I never thought possible. A man who has taken my blood... and a man whose blood I willingly took during a moment of passion. You know what that means to my people Cha’talla. If what has happened these last days did not change you from who you once were why are we even having this discussion? The Immortal Captain Cha’talla would have killed me the moment he set foot on this ship. You are different now because your eyes have been opened to what you could have, as opposed to what you once had. For yourself and your people.”

Esther pulled her uniform back up over her shoulders and refastened the straps as she got to her feet. She came up behind him slowly as he stared at the bulkhead. “Cha’talla?”

He turned to look at her. “I do not know...”

Esther turned him to face her and grasped his face in her hands and pulled his head down to hers, kissing him as deeply and passionately as she knew how. As they had kissed during those hours together, both of them experiencing it for the very first time. Cha’talla’s eyes went wide but he didn’t pull away. The sensations and feelings were something which he had never experienced before in his millennia old life, and he found himself not wanting to pull away. Esther ran her warm tongue over his thin lips slowly and enticingly before pulling away slowly and seeing him watching her.

“We will reach Roltar Six in eleven hours.” She spoke softly. “Know that I will do whatever it is you ask of me when we get there. Just think about what I said Cha’talla. I... I would much rather go into the future by your side as your wife than as opposed to by myself. Alone.”

Cha’talla watched as she smiled warmly and then turned to leave the small cargo hold leaving him there with his jumbled thoughts and divided loyalties.

Yuri heard the loud pop of the plasma mortars as they began to launch at the mouth of the cavern. She turned quickly to see two complete batteries set up and beginning to fire. Twenty-four plasma mortars would make short work of the shield protecting the cavern entrance, and her Immortals moving from the west into the actual mining tunnel would hit the Lycavorian digs unaware.

She looked at Pa’cour. “This is the heaviest weapon you have here Pa’cour?” She asked.

Pa’cour nodded. “I requested heavier cannons when I was first assigned Princess but I was refused.”

Yuri gripped the side of the mobile armored Lifter that was serving as the command post. “It will have to do.” She spoke. “Insure that a steady bombardment continues Colonel, and make contact with your detachment entering the tunnel.”

Pa’cour nodded. “As you order Princess.”

Yuri climbed into the command post and looked at the three High Coven officers from her ground division and the single Immortal. “Where is the communication?” She demanded.

The senior officer, a Major motioned to the small rear office. “We routed it to the office Princess. Lady Aikiro is standing by.”

“Inform me if anything out of the ordinary happens.” Yuri spoke as she moved back towards the office. “And erect a level six dampening field around the office Major.”

“Yes Princess.” He barked out as the door closed.

Yuri turned and moved around the cramped office to the front of the desk and settled into the chair as she activated the monitor. Her mother's beautiful face shimmered into existence on the monitor and Yuri smiled. She had not seen her enough since she had been back, and suddenly at this moment she wanted to embrace her.

"Mother... I am very busy." She spoke quickly.

"Yuri... where have you been? I've been waiting for you on this channel for nearly thirty minutes!" Aikiro demanded.

"I am the High Guard Commander mother." Yuri replied quickly, tired and frustrated over the occurrences of the last few hours. "I'm conducting my duties."

"You are on Lycavore yes?" Aikiro asked.

Yuri looked surprised and sat back in the chair. "Yes... mother how did you know that?"

"Listen to me very carefully daughter." Aikiro said. "I need you to leave your Immortals in charge and return to Usu'Ozeib 7 immediately."

Yuri chuckled. "Mother I am at this moment beginning an assault against a heavily armed and fortified enemy personally led by the King of the Lycavorian Union. I can't possibly leave right now."

"Yuri!" Aikiro snapped. "Daughter... do you trust me Yuri?"

Yuri did not need to think about that question. Right now the only two people she trusted completely were her mother and Robert. Unfortunately... she realized she may have lost Robert by her own actions and words and that was something she did not want to even contemplate at the moment. "Mother... I don't think that is something you need to ask me. Now more than ever I trust you."

"Yuri I know the Spartan animal Leonidas is on Lycavore." Aikiro spoke seeing Yuri's surprised expression. "I know he came there for his half breed daughter. The daughter you bore him in an agreement with your father. I know he has discovered a prisoner there as well."

Yuri nodded. "Yes... that is all true mother... how did you..."

"Yuri... does he have the prisoner?" Aikiro asked.

Yuri nodded without question. "Yes... he rescued her from the regent's palace almost two days ago. We have him trapped in a large cavern with her and those he brought with him. I was about to initiate an attack that will either capture or kill all of them when you contacted me."

"Yuri... that prisoner was his mother." Aikiro spoke as Yuri's eyes went wide in stunned shock.

Yuri stared at the monitor. "Are you telling me the agent father is trying to protect is a clone of Gorgo?" She gasped.

Aikiro nodded quickly. "I know what your father has done to you daughter. I recently had a very long talk with Cha'talla."

"Cha'talla!" Yuri gasped. "Father killed Cha'talla!"

Aikiro nodded. "He thought he did, but like most everything he has been doing these last years he failed to confirm that. I brought Cha'talla here... tended to his wounds and then I questioned him for five hours. I gave him his freedom for the information he provided to me. All of it about what your father has done these last centuries. To include what he had Xerxes do to you daughter."

"Mother... mother I do not wish to discuss what you have been told." Yuri spoke. "My anger over what he has done may have already cost me the reason for why I sit here today. I need to concentrate on what is happening here now, or I will lose myself."

"No... Yuri! What were your father's orders to you?" Aikiro demanded. "Tell me and hold nothing back!"

"To come here and take custody of the prisoner." Yuri gasped. "If we failed in that we were to execute the Regent and his family and then proceed to the Zaleisian border. He said there was something there that we needed to confirm. Robert... Robert has gone there alone."

"Again I hear about the Zaleisians." Aikiro spoke quickly. "Cha'talla told me Veldruk suspected something from them. He never revealed what it was... but your father was very concerned about it."

"Commander... Commander Moran left me a ship here and continued on to the Zaleisian border." Yuri said her mother detecting the pain in her words even through the transmission. "I was... I was very angry with him for wanting to do this after what father has done. I..."

“Yuri... you must leave your Immortals to conduct the attack. You must trust in the skills of your husband. You...”

“He is not my husband and that is part of the fucking problem!” Yuri shouted.

“Listen to me carefully Yuri. Our fates may depend on it. I have taken in everything while remaining in the shadows. I know your Robert Moran is as skilled as any pureblood vampire. Perhaps more skilled than most. Trust in his leadership and skills now. I am going to take back what I gave to your father, and your Robert Moran may be the catalyst to succeeding. I don’t care what your father has declared him Yuri... in my eyes and the eyes of many he is your husband. Trust in him now... you must take your ship and meet me back on Usu’Ozeib 7.” Aikiro spoke. “I beg you daughter.”

Yuri had never heard her mother plead for anything in her long life and she shook her head slowly. “Leonidas is here mother!” Yuri exclaimed vehemently. “I can kill him! Or capture him! I can...”

“You have never learned to respect that man Yuri, and that is your major flaw in all that took place on Earth.” Aikiro spoke calmly looking at her in the transmission. “An animal he may be Yuri, but he commands more power now than you could hope to wield now, almost as much as me.”

Yuri looked at her. “You?”

“Who do you think gave your father the power he manipulates like he is god?” Aikiro spoke harshly. “I gave him that power... and like your brother Xerxes it has caused him to think he is above things. I fear he has brought ruin to our Coven and I need to stop him before it is... before everything is lost.”

“Mother... mother I don’t understand.” Yuri said.

“Yes child... I know. I have not spent enough time with you Yuri. Not like I have with your sister. I have devoted all these last months to caring for Narice and neglecting you. I... I see now that allowing your father to raise you almost completely by himself was perhaps the biggest mistake I have made behind giving him his power to begin with and allowing him to rule in my stead.” Aikiro spoke softly. Yuri saw her look at her directly in the monitor. “Return to Usu’Ozeib 7 and I will explain it to you Yuri. Your brother Vonis is lost to us now... and though I will try and save him... you are the only one I can trust now. Tell no one you are returning.”

“And Leonidas?” Yuri asked.

“That man is just like his father and grandfather.” Aikiro said. “He will never surrender and he will die before he allows you to capture him or anyone with him. They all will. If you remain there Yuri he will succeed in killing you before he dies, of that I have no doubt. I need you here with me... at my side! You and I must attempt to stop what I fear is coming.”

“Mother... what... what is coming?” Yuri asked.

Aikiro shook her head slowly. “I don’t know exactly. But whatever it is... it comes from Zaleisian space.”

Martin staggered against the vibrations of the ground as another barrage of plasma mortars crashed into the mouth of the cavern. He saw the dust and falling chunks of rock ahead of him and he burst through it and fell on the ground next to Danny and Yuriko. Anuk and Nayeca lay on his other side, all of their weapons trained at the opening of the cavern. Lisisa and Jeth lay a short distance away, Melita and several *Durcunusaan* scattered around them. They had no intention of allowing harm to come to the reason they had come to this world whether she was now bonded to a dragon or not.

“Gee... I’m guessing they don’t like us much!” Martin barked above the loud noise of exploding mortars and falling rocks.

“What was your first clue boss?” Danny shouted back. Martin saw Anuk look at Nayeca and shake her head at the exchange of the two men. Just moments before Danny had nuzzled their elfin ears and was telling them what he intended to do to them when they got back to Earth.

Nothing ever fazed them.

“Will the cavern hold?” Martin asked.

Danny motioned to the ceiling of the immense cavern. “We’ve had to move back twice since they started shelling. Sivana is in the *STRIKER* modifying the shield as they chip away at the rock. She’s maintaining the power and always keeping it at least fifty meters in front of us.” Dan explained. “Sooner or later boss we are

going to run out of power or rock ceiling and they'll be all over us. They must be using like thirty or forty of those plasma mortars against the shield, and she keeps having to draw power away from the main LSD coils.”

Martin nodded. “One more hour Danny!” Martin barked. “We have to hold for one more hour and then the Mindvoice ship can lift off.”

“I don't know if we got an hour Marty.” Danny spoke honestly. “The further back they drive us... the thinner the top of the cavern becomes because of that ship!”

Martin let his eyes gaze at the cavern top far above and then back to where the tail end of the one and a half kilometer long Mindvoice ship started two hundred meters inside the cavern. His keen wolf ears picked up the sounds of muffled explosions in the adjoining tunnel, and he looked back to Danny.

“The minute you think it won't hold any more Danny, you pull them back to the ship.” Martin ordered. “Sivana can lay waste to anything coming down the tunnel with her weapons load on the *STRIKER*. Don't do anything stupid!”

Danny nodded. “Will do. Now go make sure that boy Husen doesn't get himself killed.” He barked. “He's got balls that one does!”

Martin laughed and pounded Danny on his back as he turned and moved off through the dust and falling pebbles from above.

“The mining shields won't hold against that kind of concentrated fire for long!” Husen screamed over across the tunnel to where Atropos and several others lay behind huge boulders and rocks. “They are not meant for that!”

Husen and the Lycavorians who had worked the mining tunnels had spread an even two dozen of the small, man portable mining shields across the tunnel, effectively protecting them from shrapnel and explosions, but they were meant to protect against rock cave ins and minor laser drills, not concentrated rocket and grenade fire.

Atropos nodded. “When they begin to fall, direct your fire in the locations they go down! With any luck we can take out many of the rocket bearers or any fool close enough to throw grenades!”

“And when they all go down?” Husen screamed.

Atropos smile was positively insane. “Then the fun begins!”

The Immortal Commander in charge of the attack on the tunnel stood near his mobile command post directing the two hundred Immortals under his command. They kept moving their rocket teams into the tunnel to unleash their payloads on the mining shields that had been set up. The others were lined up along either side of the opening to the tunnel waiting for the shields to be brought down so they could begin their assault. His mobile command post was actually an older heavily armored anti-air ground base turret mounted to a heavy transport Lifter. The quad barrels of the 90mm projectile chain turret were pointing skyward right now. Though they were fully loaded, he knew there was no need for the turret to be manned by any of his Immortals.

Just as he was lifting the communications holo disc to contact Colonel Pa'cour and tell him they were well on their way to bringing down the mining shields, he felt an excruciating pain lance through his back and saw the spearhead tip of the Spartan *Nehtes* burst from his chest nearly a meter.

“For my tribe!” The voice hissed in his small ear as the *Nehtes* was twisted savagely inside his chest cavity, and then ripped back out with incredible strength. The Major didn't feel anything at that moment for his spinal column had been severed. His dark eyes fluttered quickly and his brain couldn't understand why his body was now fighting a losing battle to heal his cleanly sliced heart and shredded lungs.

The tall hooded figure wore the cloak and cowl of a Spartan as he let the Immortal Commander's body fall to the cool ground and turned to go to the rear of the mobile command post. There were four targets inside the command post, and only one was an Immortal. The three technicians and Immortal turned with surprised looks on their faces as the cloaked figure launched the bloody *Nehtes* through the air with vicious power and unerring accuracy. The eight and a half foot spear impaled the Immortal through the chest cleanly, the force of the strike sending him across the inside of the interior of the command post, the *Nehtes* spearing through the

side of the vehicle easily. The Spartan P190 came out from under the cloak and the figure held the trigger back on the silenced weapon. The 10mm Teflon coated explosive tips rounds favored by the *Durcunusaan* made short work of the three vampire officers, chopping their bodies to bloody rags in mere seconds, their blood showering their instrument panels with bits of flesh and copious amounts of their blood.

The figure emptied the entire one hundred rounds from the magazine into the three men, until what was left of their bodies was barely discernible from shredded meat. He moved forward as he quickly and efficiently changed magazines and he stopped in front of the dying Immortal who was hopelessly pinned against the side of the vehicle. He drew back his hood and saw the dying Immortal's eyes grow wide.

"We... we killed you!" He gasped, blood spilling from between his thin lips.

T'lolt smiled a savage grin and gripped the *Nehtes* tightly. "You should have been more thorough in your duty fool!" He hissed as he twisted the *Nehtes* savagely once more and yanked it free of the side of the armored Lifter, allowing the Immortal's body to fall to the steel deck.

T'lolt held the bloody weapon up in front of his face, letting the blood from the two members of his people he had killed run down over his hand. Now he knew why his people feared this weapon in the hands of a skilled Spartan. It was near invulnerable to harm, and in the right hands, it was devastating.

He had found the small pack, hidden under less than twelve inches of loose dirt in exactly the location the Lycavorian King had told him it would be. He had also noticed the massive prints of the dragon, which told T'lolt that those beasts were far more intelligent than anyone had given them credit for. The blood in the kit he had expected... the weapons and rations he had not. T'lolt realized Leonidas had left him a small survival kit of sorts, with the weapons and enough Riyal credits to buy himself passage almost anywhere. Apparently the King had decided they no longer needed the Coven credits since the pouch contained a small fortune. T'lolt had taken three days to drink the blood and heal his wounds, all the while becoming intimately familiar with the weapons left to him. He had never considered using the Spartan weapon, though he had seen it kill and maim countless of his people. What the Lycavorian King had told him that day was still a bright light within his mind.

"What is your name?" Martin asked him.

"T'lolt... my name is T'lolt."

"The bodies of your sons will be safe for a few hours T'lolt. It should be enough time." Martin said softly.

"Time... time for what?" T'lolt asked.

Martin lifted the four white foil bags. "I don't hate you T'lolt. I hate what you stand for." Martin spoke softly. "This should be enough for you to heal yourself. It is Lycavorian blood but it will do for your purposes. I'll have more hidden ten kilometers north of here on a sixty degree azimuth. Away from where I will be. You'll find it. Heal yourself... bury your sons... and then find your way off this world if you can. Or take your revenge I don't care. If we meet again T'lolt... may it be on the field of battle and not like this." Martin lowered the foil bags to his chest.

"Why?" T'lolt asked softly.

Martin looked at him. "Honor." He said. "Bwael ap'zen Rinovdro." Martin spoke in the ancient Vampire language. (Good Luck Immortal.)

They were words T'lolt would remember for the rest of his days. His life had been saved by the King of the mortal enemies of his people. This King... their most vile and hated enemy, had placed the bodies of his sons reverently on the ground, their weapons still across their chests and then while in his wolf form he had sprayed a urine trail all around the bodies to keep other animals away. The small predators of Lycavore knew well the smell of a Lycavorian in wolf form, and by all accounts this King was the largest of his species when they shifted form, and they would go no where near the bodies of his sons. Based on the bloody prints he had seen in the settlement's gathering room among the bodies of the dead High Coven troops, T'lolt did not doubt his size. At first T'lolt had wondered why the man had done this, and it was only on the second day when he realized the answer to that. Like his father before him, this Lycavorian had honor. All those years ago fighting his father on that backwater planet Earth, they had fought viciously and without remorse. They had been fighting for a purpose... and that was the main reason they had almost won. Had not his own people betrayed them, T'lolt didn't doubt they would never have breached the Spartan defenses in that rocky pass.

His son fought with the same type of honor and loyalty of others T'lolt now saw. He left you alone unless you wanted to take from him what he had. This King did not judge on looks or mentality, only on actions, and that is why the United Lycavorian Union was so diverse and so wealthy. It was also the reason that T'lolt fully supported his brother's desire to improve their people. To allow them to be welcome anywhere and not strike fear into the hearts of others by just their appearance. The High Lord and some of his own people apparently did not desire this as well, and they had killed Cha'talla and T'lolt's own sons as well as attempted to kill him. He did not know who among his family survived... but he would travel to Roltar Six and try and discover this before moving to the secret location. This was a chance he would not waste.

A chance given to him by a man who was his enemy.

Or so he had been raised to believe all these years.

T'lolt looked around the inside of the command post and saw the small hatch just forward of where he stood. He stepped up to it and unsealed the hatch that allowed him to enter the chain turret. He turned back quickly and slammed his hand against the command panel on the console, bringing the rear ramp of the mobile vehicle up and locking himself in. He set his weapons on the bloody console and moved easily into the turret, securing himself into the shoulder mounts and activating the computer targeting. The entrance to the tunnel was barely two hundred meters away and well within the range of the weapon.

Now he would begin to pay back the debt of honor he could not pay back.

Martin stood next to Atropos as they listened to the chain gun sounds of a heavy weapon and the screams of dying Immortals on the opposite side of the mining shields. All fire directed against the mining shields had stopped, though an occasional stray burst or explosion rocked against the shields. Martin and Atropos knew well what the sounds were, they had heard heavy chain cannons at work before, but it appeared as if whoever was behind that weapon was making short work of the Immortals that had been assaulting their position.

The firing continued unabated for what seemed like minutes, when in reality it was only two and a half minutes. When the chain gun fell silent, Atropos looked at his King.

"I was not aware of any of our people outside those in the cavern Milord." He spoke.

Martin shook his head. "Neither am I." He turned to look at Husen who was watching them with wide eyes and amazed that they could be so calm in the midst of what was happening all around them.

Husen shook his head quickly. "All of our people were moved here." He spoke. "The only ones not living within the cavern here were those designated to stay in the settlement to maintain our illusion of numbers."

Martin hefted his P190. "Atropos... you and Husen with me. The rest stand ready to repel an attack, or haul ass back down the tunnel."

They moved quickly and efficiently up to the line of mining shields, all but two still humming with silver like glows. They had been placed along the floor and ceiling, anchored with heavy spikes and wires to keep from being blasted away. Martin and Atropos moved right up next to the shields while Husen hung back just a small distance. He had found bravery these last few days, yet he was not yet up to the casual disregard that he had seen his King and the others of the *Durcunusaan* display. It looked casual, but Husen had learned quickly it was anything but.

Martin reached out with his senses, trying to determine what was on the other side of the shields, and he turned to Husen. "The far right one." He spoke. "Turn it off."

Husen looked at him. "We are going on the other side?" He exclaimed.

"You have a better idea?" Atropos asked.

"That is... that is crazy." Husen almost shouted.

Martin grinned. "Well... no one has ever accused us of being normal." He spoke.

Atropos met his King's smile and checked the action of his P190. "The spirits of your father and grandfather go with us Milord." He spoke softly.

Martin met his gaze and nodded his head with a grin. "Either that... or they think we are some seriously stupid individuals."

Atropos laughed heartily as Husen shook his head and moved to lower the shield.

APO PRIME ISLAND PALACE

For'mya was next to Sadi as they walked the grounds of the palace estate with Dasha. Aurith and Elynth were scampering ahead of and all around them, the flapping of their wings very evident in the calm still air. Dasha held Androcles in her arms, the little eight month old very content to simply play with the small toy in his chubby hands. As they walked among the many paths and flower beds, Sadi thought for sure she could feel his eyes on her almost all the time now, and while it should be disconcerting to her it actually made her feel very comfortable and welcome. Walking next to Dasha, the small baby's wild pines and lavender scent was very clear to her, and she found the scent soothing.

"I have gone over in my head everything that I could possibly remember at least a dozen times." For'mya was speaking. "No matter what I remember, it does not warrant such a blatant attempt by the High Coven to kill me."

Sadi looked at her. "I honestly can think of nothing." She said calmly. "All of my contacts were very low level and nothing out of the ordinary happened during any of them."

"I wish Helen or Anja were here..." For'mya spoke. "One of them could probe gently enough and see my memories from an objective standpoint."

Dasha smiled as she grabbed her grandson's finger. "You are beating yourself up over this For'mya. Both of you are, and you need to stop." She spoke. "We were supposed to use this walk to clear our heads and senses and attempt to forget all that is going on. This fact alone could help you to remember something you would not think of."

For'mya looked at her with a gentle smile. "Were you always this way with Aricia?" She asked.

Dasha laughed. "I was worse with her." She answered. Her face sobered somewhat. "After what happened with Atropos I drove and pushed her all the time." She explained. "As if I was trying to insure it did not happen with any of my other children. Little did I know that Atropos had never done anything more wrong then love a she wolf that had not yet Come of Age. I was overbearing and allowed my mate to direct practically everything that happened. I only thought to be the good female wolf and Spartan, and it almost cost me my children." Dasha waved her free hand. "Bah! That is ancient history... and I have moved on. My daughter is happier than I have ever seen her in her life..." She looked at For'mya. "And part of that is due to what you and she share For'mya. She loves Martin with all that she is yes... but you have a piece of her that none of the others will have except for Martin."

For'mya smiled and nodded her head. "I assure you the feeling is very mutual." She spoke softly.

Sadi looked at For'mya. "Queen... Queen Anja can read memories?" She asked with a little surprise in her voice.

For'mya nodded. "Not on as large a scale as Helen... but her Mindvoice abilities have manifested themselves in a way where she can touch memories within you. Just as Dysea has developed a sort of Precognition skill. It is due to their connection with Martin Leonidas and his power, and it has naturally evolved within them from what he passed to them in making them wolf and loving them as he does."

"Will this happen for you now that he has changed you?" Sadi asked.

For'mya smiled and shrugged. "I do not know." She answered softly. "I do know my Mindvoice abilities have nearly doubled in the last week since he turned me. You will also begin to experience things as well Sadi."

"Me?" She asked. "I am only a Tier Two For'mya." She spoke. "I could never hope to obtain the level of power of you or the others."

For'mya chuckled. "That may have been the case before Elynth and Androcles touched you Sadi. It isn't the case anymore." She spoke.

"What do you mean?" Sadi asked.

"We can feel you easily now." For'mya spoke motioning to Dasha. "You have naturally strong shields, more so than average. Your ability is increasing and you don't even know it. Haven't you noticed the clarity and focus when you speak with Elynth?"

Sadi stopped suddenly and looked at her. "The pain in my temples is gone." She spoke quickly. "Whenever... whenever I tried before... I would get this pain in my temples. It is why I never tried to advance my skill past Tier Two! It is not there anymore. Not since I came here!"

For'mya nodded. "So you see... those of us who can speak with dragons would be considered upper echelon Tier Six Mindvoicers Sadi." She told her. "A group of maybe a million within the entire Union. You have joined elite company Sadi... and you will have to learn how to harness that ability."

"I understand Helen will be starting up her School of the Mages when she returns." Dasha said. "Perhaps you can enroll there."

"Study with the *Feravomir*?" Sadi gasped... her green eyes going wide and her hands going to her mouth as she uttered the word in the ancient Lycavorian language.

For'mya and Dasha laughed at the expression on her face. "You see... it is beginning already." For'mya stepped up to her and took her hands. "Elynth chose you for a reason Sadi. And we have tried to explain to you about Andro and how he was born..."

"Yes... born aware of everything around him." Sadi spoke softly. "Something that simply amazes me to no end. How is that even possible?"

For'mya shook her head. "We don't know... not even Helen has a clue... and she has Canth's memories and wisdom to draw from. She believes... and this is only her opinion as she constantly states... she believes it happened because of the duress that his parents had been under up until the point he was conceived. It made him almost immediately aware because for those three days in that cave, Martin and Aricia held nothing back from each other. Their minds were joined in such a way that it can not even be explained really. They passed that to him in a way. Their combined memories and knowledge. Elynth bonded with him while Aricia still carried him in her womb and she has not left his side since he was born. She has been his voice really... his projection into this realm until he can speak for himself."

Sadi smiled and looked at Androcles. "It's all so very mysterious." She spoke.

"And completely strange." Dasha exclaimed.

Sadi and For'mya laughed at this and Sadi nodded her head. "Yes... very strange." She reached up to grasp the chubby finger on the boy in Dasha's arms and she was once more surprised at the strength with which he squeezed her finger. And the almost complete focus and clarity with which those eyes gazed upon her. It almost made Said think... she shook her head completely. It couldn't be that.

Dasha nodded slowly as she looked at For'mya quickly. "Just remember you are now part of that strange for good or ill." Dasha spoke softly. "They chose you for a reason Sadi... and one day you'll know why."

They all turned when Aurith and Elynth snorted loudly and they saw Gorgo moving up the path from the Spartan barracks and Lifter dock.

"Gorgo!" For'mya spoke brightly. "We didn't know you were out here."

Gorgo looked just as surprised to see them and she stammered for a moment before smiling and walking right up to them. "Deia was going to lie down and I decided to go for a walk and clear my head." She spoke quickly. "I thought I was alone on the grounds."

"We just came out to do the same thing." Dasha said hoisting Androcles a little higher on her hip.

Gorgo smiled. "Then we should walk together." She spoke falling in next to Sadi. "And make our way back to the palace itself."

Sadi smiled and looked at her. "Tell me of Sparta when you were Queen Lady Gorgo." Sadi asked. "I have heard many things about it."

Gorgo took her arm. "Well... I should start with the cathedral." Gorgo spoke as she pulled Sadi along.

She didn't notice Dasha stop and look at Gorgo as she walked with Sadi. For'mya however did notice and she stepped up to Dasha. "Dasha what is wrong?" She asked. "You are suddenly very tense."

Dasha looked at her. "For'mya... the cathedral that Gorgo speaks of was not built until a thousand years ago." Dasha spoke. "It did not exist when she was Queen."

For'mya looked at her oddly. "Perhaps she misspoke Dasha." She said quickly. "Or perhaps she saw it at some point since we rediscovered Martin Leonidas?"

Dasha took a deep breath and let it out. "Yes... that must be it." She spoke. "She has been there several times."

For'mya took her free arm. "We are all stressed out Dasha. Perhaps a good night's sleep will do us all good."

Aricia's mother nodded her head and smiled. "You are right of course." She said. "I should take Andro here and get him to bed. Tomorrow I will make a breakfast fit for a King. Even though only we are here to enjoy it."

For'mya laughed. "That is Martin Leonidas's loss then I would imagine." She spoke softly.

EARTH

EDEN CITY

EDEN CITY COMMAND CENTER

"These are the only locations that are even remotely close to what Syrilth was able to describe." Tarifa spoke as she looked at the holo graphic map chart.

Thr'won had come to their home directly from the command center and found the three of them resting in the large apartment after what was obviously a very active first part of the evening. It had taken them all of three minutes to change into presentable clothes and return with her to the Command Center over her protests that it was not what Aricia had requested. It mattered not to them, their friends and bonded dragons could very well be going into harm's way and they did not feel right staying out of it.

Tarifa and Aihola were still feeling the effects of what Isra could do to them, yet he could also sense that they were concerned for Roluth. After they enjoyed a frantic session, all of them screaming out their passion, he had drawn them into his embrace and began to impart to them what it meant to be bonded to a dragon. What had occurred with the two of them and Roluth was not something that had ever occurred before according to Arzoal, and even though dragons had only been bonding with Lycavorians in the last year with the exception of Anja and Dysea, what had happened with Tarifa and Aihola was a sign that it could happen to anyone.

Isra handed her the large mug of coffee as he walked up and pointed to the map. "This location is out of the question." He spoke. "It is too far north to be of any use to Maruad. He would never be able to get the eggs to the rendezvous in enough time to meet the deadline. Carting around over seventy dragon eggs is no small task I assure you."

Aihola took the mug from Tarifa. "It can not be the point furthest south." She spoke now. "If what Syrilth was told is accurate and what Maraud allowed her to see is the truth, the climate on the southern point is not conducive to what we are looking for."

Isra nodded. "Then it has to be here... this location just south of the Puget Sound in what used to be Washington State." He spoke.

"Is there any way to be sure?" Thr'won asked.

Tarifa looked at the time piece over the huge monitor in the command center. "Yes there is." She spoke getting to her feet. She crossed to the communications console nearby and stabbed the button.

"EDEN Base Command. Colonel Wilson." The male voice spoke.

"Colonel it is Administrator Tarifa." She spoke. "I need to ask a favor."

"Name it Tarifa." Wilson replied instantly.

"The satellites that you have managed to put back up in orbit at least temporarily. Can you move them without anyone knowing about it?" Tarifa asked.

"Yes ma'am. The sensors on the fleet ships and station are not tuned for that frequency." Wilson answered.

"How soon can you have them looking down over southern Washington state all the way to the city of Wichita Kansas?" Tarifa asked.

"We'll burn up all the fuel we have left in them... but I can have them in position in thirty minutes." Wilson answered. "Is this related to the search for the dragon eggs Tarifa?"

"Yes... we are trying to determine if we can pinpoint how Maruad is transporting the eggs." Tarifa answered. "He must be using an abnormally large Lifter Transport, or several normal ones, all traveling together. We think we have the location where he was keeping them narrowed down pretty close, and the sweeps from the satellites might be able to actually spot the vehicles he is using."

Wilson didn't hesitate. "I'm moving them now. I'll maintain an open COM with the Command Center there and inform Admiral Wallace."

"Thank you Colonel." Tarifa turned to look at Isra, Aihola and Thr'won. "Now we wait." She spoke.

"Isra... what exactly did Aricia have in mind when she requested Aelnala accompany her?" Thr'won asked.

Isra looked at her, glancing quickly to his two mates once before moving his eyes back to Thr'won. "Do you really wish to know Thr'won?"

Thr'won caught the inflection in his voice and she paled just a little. "Perhaps not." She spoke. "Perhaps not."

LYCAVORE

They stepped gingerly among the numerous dead bodies strewn about the entrance to the mining tunnel. The bodies of the dead Immortals were piled and heaped upon one another and it was easy enough to see they had been caught completely unaware. Their bodies had been struck with heavy caliber projectile weapons, which explained the sound of the chain turret they had heard pounding away for nearly two minutes. Torma remained near the entrance to the mining tunnel as Martin, Atropos and Husen moved quickly among the bodies of the dead, their wolf senses alert for any scent or sound that would tell them others were coming.

Martin squatted next to the body of the Immortal Commander as Atropos moved up to him. He looked up at Anja's Captain as he too squatted next to the body.

"A *Nehtes*." Martin spoke motioning to the massive wound in the Immortal's chest and back.

Atropos looked at him. "Milord... I don't understand. How could that be?"

Martin turned his head quickly and settled his eyes on Torma. His bonded dragon brother was looking directly at him. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Are you thinking what I'm thinking Torma?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *What other explanation could there be?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I've never heard of something like this... let alone seen it Torma. Not among the Immortals. And I've read quite a bit on them since the Battle for Earth.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *This act was done out of rage Martin.* Torma answered. *He was taking revenge for what they did to his sons.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *And in the process he was helping us. Do you think he knew that?* Martin asked.

Torma nodded his massive head. [Mindvoice Shielded] *You know as well as I that the Immortals are not just brainless vampire soldiers my brother. They are bound by a strict code of conduct, even if it is not one that you or I would follow. I believe he knew exactly what he was doing when he did this.*

Martin nodded and turned back to gaze at the field of dead bodies. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Well I ain't one to look a gift horse in the mouth.* Martin said. He turned to Atropos. "Tell everyone to pull back to the main cavern Atropos. I'm going to seal this tunnel as we move back down."

Atropos looked at him. "If you seal it Milord... there will be no other way out for us if the Mindvoice ship is not able to lift off."

Martin met his eyes. "That's a chance we'll have to take."

The COM unit built into his armor cackled to life. "Marty... the roof of the cavern is starting to give way!" Dan's voice almost shouted. "We have to pull back now!"

Martin came to his feet. "Do it Danny! Tell Sivana anything that comes down that tunnel is free game for her! We're on our way back now! Meet us at the entrance to the Mindvoice ship!"

Atropos and Husen needed no further urging and both of them broke into fast trots back toward the mining tunnel.

Anja finished passing her hand over Gorgo's chest area, the soft glow of white light from her palm subsiding as she pulled her hand away. Gorgo watched her nod and look at her with those jade green eyes. They both could hear the low booming of the mortars slamming into the cavern mouth, sometimes sending vibrations

through the entire ship. Gorgo was impressed with how Anja seemed to not let the constant noise distract her from her duties. This was a strong woman, and unlike any Hadarian she had ever met. Most of those she knew were arrogant for the most part, considering themselves superior for what their skills allowed them to do.

“The infection is gone.” Anja spoke approvingly. “Your Lycavorian system is starting to reassert itself quickly now that the drugs they were using are finally filtering out of your body.” Anja looked at her. “Once we return... I recommend a protein rich diet for at least a week to start regaining the weight you have lost. Once we start to get the malnutrition out of you, your system will fully repair itself. I’m sorry... but the rations we have really don’t cut it... and the food our people have been eating here is not very conducive to restoring your system back to what it was before they took you.”

“You refer to them as our people.” Gorgo spoke. “You are Hadarian.”

Anja looked at her. “Yes... I’m Hadarian... however I consider myself more wolf than Hadarian. It is something that drives the Hadarian Parliament crazy actually. That and the fact that I won’t spend more time on Hadaria directing policy with Eurin.”

Gorgo looked at her oddly. “Directing policy?” She asked. “Why would the Hadarian Parliament want my son’s mate to assist in directing their policy?”

Anja looked at her surprised. “You don’t know?” She said softly.

“Know what?” Gorgo asked. “I haven’t actually been in the loop these last years if you remember.”

Gorgo said with a slight grin.

Anja berated herself and took Gorgo’s hands. “Forgive me...” She spoke. “My father... my father was King Yelu.”

Gorgo’s eyes went a little wider. “You are the daughter of Yelu?” She gasped. “That... that would mean you are the Queen of Hadaria!”

Anja nodded and chuckled. “Imagine that.” She said with a grin. “You can probably predict what the Hadarian Parliament’s reaction was when they discovered I was still alive and Martin had made me his mate... as well as a wolf. They weren’t real happy.”

“What...” Gorgo looked at her. “Prefect Zaniai must have been beside himself! There... there has never been a Lycavorian/Hadarian Healer. Especially not one so high up within their government.”

Anja smiled and nodded her head. “Beside himself is an understatement.” She said. “He about had a cow.”

Gorgo’s face crinkled in confusion. “Had a cow?” She asked.

Anja laughed. “It’s slang from Earth. It means basically gone crazy.”

“What... what did you do?” Gorgo asked.

“I told him and the Parliament that they could stick their Queen ship up their collective asses if they thought I was going to leave Martin.” Anja replied. “Martin... Martin is my life... he has always been my life. And I will never do anything that takes him away from me. I’d die first.” Anja said. “I told them they could deal with it or find someone else to be Queen.”

Gorgo chortled. “Oh my... that must have gone over well.” She said suddenly liking this young woman very much. She was blunt but well spoken, and her beauty more than matched her intelligence it seemed.

Anja laughed. “They got over it when Eurin told them to either change with the times or be left behind in the past.” She said. “They still don’t like that I spend more time with Martin and the others on Apo Prime and in Sparta than on Hadaria, but they’ve grown used to it. Once they discover that Sivana is now wolf... they’re really going to blow gaskets. I can’t wait to see that.”

“Sivana... that is the young woman who treated me in the cell?” Gorgo asked. “The one who was injured?”

Anja nodded. “She’s my fraternal twin sister it seems. Another fact that we discovered as we were searching for Lisisa.” She said. “It’s definitely been an eventful few weeks with all that we have found.” Anja grinned. “Of course... life around Martin is never dull.”

“He... he treats you well?” Gorgo asked softly meeting her eyes.

Anja nodded with a shy smile. “He treats all of us very well.” She replied knowingly. “Especially when he hits us with that damn aura of his. He turns us to putty.”

Gorgo squeezed her hands and smiled. “His father was... his father was no different. He was built like a bull... and he... I screamed his name to the heavens more times that I can remember.”

Anja nodded. "Well... Martin inherited that part of his father for sure. Aricia is teaching us how to use our female auras back at him though." She said with a grin. "It's hysterical to watch him fidget in his chair during a state dinner when one of us is teasing him." Anja spoke with a wide smile. "Sometimes I think he is just going to throw us on the table right there in front of everyone."

Gorgo felt the joy wash over her at Anja's words. To know these things... to see that her son's mates coveted his attentions as she once coveted Leonidas's touch upon her made Gorgo sing with happiness. "Our... our people... they..."

Anja's eyes twinkled in the light of the room. "They adore him Gorgo." She spoke with sincere warmth in her words. "He hates it... the attention and reverence they give to him. They would do anything he asked of them, especially since he broke Ukwav the way he did."

Gorgo's eyes went wide. "Ukwav? What do you mean?"

Anja looked at her. "He shattered the defenses of Ukwav with one Fleet Group and twenty thousand Spartans. That is how he freed Canth's mind so that he could pass on his knowledge and wisdom to Helen. He has done so much since assuming his role as King. And he continually drives his advisors insane with worry because he takes too many risks. Especially when he and Danny are together."

"Danny... that large black Spartan?"

Anja nodded. "They have been together since they were small boys... as close as brothers could be... and they would do anything for each other. It was Walter... who you know as Dymas who brought them together. Danny's father is the first born of one who fell with Leonidas at Thermopylae. He requested a pureblood Spartan to be with Martin almost from the time Marty came into his care. Danny was one of those chosen. There was a female... Julie who was with him also, but she died during the Battle for Earth." Anja stated.

"Does he... does he go to Sparta often?" Gorgo asked softly.

Anja smiled. "Andro was born in Sparta. All of his children will be born in Sparta. Aricia and I and the others have already decided that. We spend as much time there as we can. It has grown in to a beautiful city. We all love it there. There is a memorial to his father at Thermopylae. He goes there whenever he is on Earth. Sometimes for hours... just to sit and listen to the wind."

Gorgo felt warmth spread through her at Anja's words and the knowledge of what she was telling her. They felt the ground vibrate quite heavily this time and Anja chuckled.

"Unfortunately... it seems trouble follows them whenever they are together. Though they always seem to manage to get out of it somehow." Anja spoke.

The COM unit built into her armor cackled to life startling Gorgo as Danny's voice burst out loud and clear.

"Marty... the roof of the cavern is starting to give way!" Dan's voice almost shouted. "We have to pull back now!"

Martin's response was immediate. "Do it Danny! Tell Sivana anything that comes down that tunnel is free game for her! We're on our way back now! Meet us at the entrance to the Mindvoice ship!"

Anja squeezed her hands. "I think things are going to start to get very interesting now. Martin and Danny don't like to lose."

Gorgo came to her feet and nodded. "True Spartans never like to lose." She stated.

Anja smiled and tapped her COM unit. "Endy... Danny and the others are pulling back!" She barked. "I really think it's time for us to leave this damn place!"

"Avi says ten minutes!" Endith answered immediately. "Ten minutes Anja and we'll blow this joint!"

Anja nodded. "I'll start passing the word." Anja tapped the COM unit once more. "Seanna?"

"I've already begun moving those last men and women into the ship my love." Seanna answered immediately.

Seanna was ushering men, women and children up the huge ramp of the Mindvoice ship and Anja flinched when she heard the chain cannon on the *STRIKER DT* echoed with the cavern. "I can see Daniel's people coming now!" Seanna shouted. "They... no!"

Anja's eyes went wide and she looked at Gorgo. "Seanna! What is wrong?"

“Daniel is down!” Seanna shouted. “Daniel is down!”

Anja was moving before the first words were out of Seanna’s mouth and Gorgo was on her heels.

ROLTAR SIX

THE WILDS

2.7 LIGHT YEARS FROM HIGH COVEN BORDER

Cha’talla had been gone for a little over an hour now... and Esther was worried that he wouldn’t be coming back. Cha’talla hadn’t spoken much in the remaining hours of their journey here, and once they had landed his only instructions were to remain on the ship and wait for him. He may have been an Immortal... and a fearsome visage to others... but Esther was just beginning to realize how much she was in love with him. Yes... he made her feel things she’d never felt before for he was without a doubt the largest male who had ever had her, all others paling in comparison. Yet it wasn’t just that... for when they had shared blood, Esther had seen inside the man’s heart and mind. An Immortal he may have been... fiercely loyal and totally committed to his people and their future; far more than he was willing to admit to anyone Esther felt. He was also compassionate... though that emotion had been very deep within him, and Esther had felt that emotion for her. Compassion and a fierce desire for more of her. A desire that Esther felt just as equally for him.

These thoughts were going through her mind when the ramp activated. She jumped to her feet, her hands bringing up the assault rifle and pointing it at the entrance.

Cha’talla’s bulk filled the ramp as he walked up it confidently a small package under his arm. He reached out and activated the ramp, bringing it back up as he drew back the hood of the cloak he wore. His small eyes turned to look at her as he continued further into the Runner and saw her waiting for him.

Esther lowered the rifle slowly as she gazed at him. “I... I thought you had... I thought you had left me.” She spoke in a haunting voice.

Cha’talla moved up to stand in front of her, towering over her lean supple frame. His eyes were bright as Cha’talla heard the tone of worry in her voice. He shook his head slowly.

“I will not leave you Esther Saira.” He spoke softly. “Our fates... our fates are intimately intertwined now.”

“Where... where have you been?” She stammered.

“Scouting.” Cha’talla replied holding out the small package. “And buying this for you.”

Esther looked at the package and set aside the rifle to take it. She tore it open and took the shoulders of the exquisite dark green dress as it dropped almost all of the way to the deck. “You... you bought me a dress?” She gasped.

Cha’talla nodded. “I believe I have gotten the right size. You can not be seen walking about in a High Coven uniform Esther... and I doubt you have much in the way of normal clothing.”

Esther looked at him. “Only what we were allowed to wear at the temple ship.” She spoke.

Cha’talla nodded. “Yes... those transparent wraps will not do here.” He spoke. “We must use your beauty... but not flaunt it.”

Esther looked at him. “I... I don’t understand.” She spoke.

“Roltar Six is a haven for the misbegotten and slime of the galaxy.” Cha’talla spoke. “It is also where many purebloods come to exercise their... their more unusual physical desires. The ones not allowed within High Coven space.”

Esther met his eyes. “Such as?”

“You will see for yourself.” Cha’talla spoke. “I will need you to secure a room for us at the facility where those of my tribe who survived are supposed to meet.” He held out the data pad. “You will use this name and these riyal credits for the transaction. They are other code signs that we are here.”

“How... how long do we need to stay here?” Esther asked.

“Two days.” Cha’talla replied. “After that... they will need to find their own way to our final destination.”

“Where is our final destination Cha’talla?” Esther asked. “Or are you going to leave me here when it’s time for you to go.”

Cha'talla stared at her beautiful features for a long moment. He didn't understand what he felt for this pureblood vampire female and he certainly didn't understand how she could feel anything for him, but he had decided before they had landed that she was part of his life now. What part she would play was not something he had yet been able to figure out... but his Immortal heart beat for her in a way it never had for any other.

Cha'talla stepped closer to her. "We are bound together now Esther Saira." He spoke. "What the future holds for us I do not know... but we will face it together. On that I give you my word. Those of my tribe that survive have instructions to gather on Ebal Four. It is there where we will make new lives for ourselves." Cha'talla saw the surprise and the joy his words elicited in her eyes and it made his own heart begin to beat more rapidly.

Esther smiled. "I... I will go change." She spoke softly.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

LYCAVORE

He felt the pain lance through his lower back and right leg as they scampered along the dusty cavern floor, the sounds of the *STRIKER DT*'s huge chain cannon ripping above them down the cavern. Danny was a large man, standing six foot five and nearly two hundred and sixty pounds, and he had also been hit enough times to know when something was bad. He didn't see the two projectile rounds tear out the front of his body armor, cleanly snapping the large femur in his thigh, and punching through his lower abdomen. There wasn't much that could drop a man of his size and skill with a single bullet, but breaking his femur would do it easily. The others scrambled past him even as he began to fall, and only Anuk and Nayeca noticed he had gone down, most likely because his right hand involuntarily flinched on Anuk's shoulder and brought her down with him as if he was tackling her.

Her cerulean blue eyes and Nayeca's amber orbs were wide in horror as she and Nayeca scrambled back to him.

"Daniel!" Anuk screamed.

"Get out of here!" He yelled at them rolling onto his back and dragging his P190 back towards him.

"No! We won't leave you!" Nayeca screamed trying to get her arms under his muscular bulk and hoist him to his feet. "Anuk... help me my love!"

Danny paid them no heed as he lifted the P190 and let loose with a long sustained burst back through the dust cloud, his yellow wolf eyes now fully changed and seeing the advancing Immortals through the cloud of shattered rock and dust. "Leave me!" He screamed again as he began to change magazines.

Anuk shook her head viciously. "Never!" She snapped moving to where his injured leg was now pumping out blood at an alarming rate. She tore at her medical bag as Sivana let fly with half a dozen missiles over their heads, the explosions following seconds later further down the tunnel, to include the screams of Immortals who were tossed like rag dolls across the cavern. "I have to stop the bleeding!" Anuk shouted stabbing a syringe into his muscular leg near the exit wound and shoving down on the plunger. It was a fast acting coagulant and would rapidly move to the areas he had been hit and begin clotting. "Daniel you must get up! You..."

Anuk's body shuddered as two nearly spent rounds impacted against her body armor and sent her flying backwards.

"No!" Danny screamed lifting the P190 and mashing down on his trigger in the direction that the fire came from. He was rewarded with seeing the top portion of an Immortal's head and neck explode apart like a melon as his rounds walked up his body. "Anuk! Baby!"

Anuk rolled over with a groan of pain and crawled back to her Soulmate, her single most important purpose for going on. Stars and white spots were whirling in her head and she could not focus her eyes. The body armor had stopped the rounds from penetrating, but they had knocked her silly. "Daniel!"

"I'm busted up bad baby!" Danny shouted reaching for her even as he fired the 190 one handed. "My leg is broke! Leave me! Please!"

“No... we won’t!” Nayeca screamed still trying to pull his body up and not winning the battle even with her elfin strength. She had no leverage to try and get her feet under her, and Anuk was staggering dazed as she got back to her knees next to him.

“Leave me damn it!” Daniel screamed looking at her with those eyes. “Nubian you have to take Anuk and go! Don’t let my son die!”

“Daniel... no... we...”

“Go now Nubian!” He shouted feeling a tingle in his head. “Help is coming... but take Anuk now! Please! My son... my son is more important than me! Go!” Danny heard the inhuman scream over the roar of the *STRIKER’S* chain gun and without thinking he lifted his left arm, his Shi Viska flaring into existence and he launched his shield.

The Shi Viska’s razor edges extended before the shield was a meter away from him and they struck the Immortal forty meters away as he was screaming and climbing over the fallen mounds of dirt and rock. His head plopped to the dirty cavern floor even as dozens of other Immortals all around him dropped back to the floor of the cavern trying to avoid the deadly flying shield as it curled back around and began returning to its master.

Danny glared at Nayeca as he caught his shield on his arm. “Go Nubian! Go now damn you!” He screamed as he launched his shield again and brought the P190 up one handed once more and held back the trigger.

Nayeca was about to open her mouth to reply she would stay and die with him when the powerful force seemed to lift her off the floor of the cavern and yank her back along with Anuk. She let out a loud yelp of surprised pain as she landed a dozen meters from the rear of the huge Mindvoice ship where the din of battle was somewhat muted. She scrambled catlike to her feet reaching for Anuk and saw Anja standing beside Martin’s mother and Miath. Anja lowered her hand and Nayeca watched her open her eyes. It had been her Mindvoice power that had pulled her and Anuk away. Pulled them away nearly two hundred meters down the cavern from the man they both so loved and adored.

“What have you done?” Nayeca screamed at her as she moved to get Anuk’s dazed form close to her so she could help her move. “Daniel... Daniel will die! He is... he is alone now! Our mate will die!”

Anja moved closer to them quickly and shook her head as she went to Anuk’s other side and slid her arm around her waist. “Danny is never alone!” She spoke loudly. “Not while his brother Martin lives.”

As if on cue... the entrance to the mining tunnel blew apart even more so then it already was. Many of those gathered ducked and moved to cover their faces as thousands of shards of rock and dirt blew outward. Even Gorgo ducked behind Anja in an attempt to cover herself, even while Anja and Miath simply stood there. Those gathered near the ramp watched in stunned amazement as the collection of shards of rock and dust didn’t even come near them. They could only watch in unmitigated awe as the thousands of rock and dust shards made a sharp ninety degree turn and then screamed down the cavern tunnel directly at the advancing Immortals. Following that wave of natural death Martin Leonidas burst from the mining tunnel at a dead run, Torma’s massive bulk moving behind him with measured rumblings of his chest. Their psychic shield was activated and humming at the full extent of the power they could bring to bear, and Torma’s near eight metric tons made the ground beneath their feet tremble as he let out a trumpeting roar of anger.

Nayeca gripping Anuk to her tightly, her amber eyes open wide in disbelief as that first cloud of rock and dust shards hit the incoming tidal wave of Immortal troops that were almost upon Danny. She watched with wide amber orbs as their skin began to peel from their bodies, even as thousands of lethal shards became millions of lethal shards. Martin applied his unique and far from fully tested Mindvoice abilities in a different way now, pulverizing the shards into tiny missiles and darts. Nayeca and the others could only watch in terrified wonder as almost two hundred Immortals were being shredded alive as they came over the mounds of rock and granite that had been laid to hinder their path. They could easily see Danny lying on the floor of the cavern, his Shi Viska launching and returning, launching and returning even as the wave passed over his head and joined the chain cannon that Sivana was directly with unerring accuracy effectively encompassing the advancing Immortals in a thick cloud of dust and rock shards that they could not even see through.

Danny looked up from the floor of the cavern when he felt the staggering presence next to him and he saw Martin lift his left arm and the silver Shi Viska erupted into existence. It launched down the cavern at the

same moment Torma unleashed a blast of superheated breath in a widening arc that melted dozens of screaming Immortals in an instant.

Martin bent over and grabbed Danny's body armor, hauling him to his feet even as Danny caught his own Shi Viska on his arm and it vanished in an instant. The moment Martin touched him, the psychic shield he shared with Torma extended around Danny's entire body and he gripped Martin's shoulder tightly.

"I told you to haul ass! Not get shot you clumsy black bastard!" Martin yelled at him as he got his shoulder under Danny's right armpit effectively becoming his right leg.

"Bout fucking time you showed up!" Danny yelled back even as he grimaced in pain. "I thought I was going to have to kill them all myself!"

Martin grinned at him. "You know I would never let you have all the fun to yourself! You are too fucking ugly!" Martin shouted back.

Martin's right hand came up quickly, Danny moving with him in thoughtless concert. Martin's *Nehtes* appeared in his hand and extended in a single blink of an eye. With a heave of incredible power he launched the eight and a half foot spear down the tunnel even as Danny once more called his Shi Viska and it launched on another mission of death. The *Nehtes* was thrown with such power it impaled not one or two Immortals, but plunged completely through the thick upper bodies of three Immortals and ended up protruding from the body of a fourth.

"Ah... I think it's time to go brother!" Martin screamed.

"You'll get no argument from me on that!" Danny barked as projectiles were bouncing off the psychic shield that encompassed all of them now. "You got to give them credit though! They're persistent fuckers!"

Martin laughed as he turned and they began hobbling back towards the Mindvoice ship. *Torma... bring it down my bonded brother!*

It is a risk Martin!

Life is a risk brother! Martin answered even as he and Danny began to hobble as fast as they could back towards the Mindvoice ship.

Torma chuckled within their connection. *Ah... you are so right.*

Torma needed no further encouraging and he looked up at the ceiling far above them. He closed his golden eyes and drew from deep within himself, feeling both his own enormous power and control mingle easily with Martin's equally staggering Mindvoice command filtering through him. The deadly projectiles that bounced off his psychic shield caused him no pause and with a mighty heave of the combined power of Martin and himself he ripped a section of the cavern ceiling from its place hundreds of meters above them. There was a massive groan of protest and then a two hundred meter long, six meter thick slab of rock and dirt broke free and began its crushing plummet to the cavern floor below. Bright sunlight burst in from the now gaping hole in the top of the mountain they were inside, even as the massive chunk of death came hurtling down from above at devastating speeds as Torma turned without hesitation and began following his bonded brother back towards the Mindvoice ship. Dozens of Immortals looked up for only a moment and then they were crushed into oblivion as that slab of rock and dirt impacted the cavern floor effectively obliterating nearly two hundred more High Coven Immortals who had bunched together in a single instant.

Anja touched Nayeca's arm around Anuk's waist seeing those amber orbs turn to look at her. "Never doubt his love for his brother Nayeca. Martin will never leave him. He would die with him first." Anja spoke with a smile even as she pulled at Anuk. "Hurry... we must get inside the ship! It's time we got off this forsaken rock of a world and went home."

Nayeca turned once more and saw Martin and Danny hobbling toward them as quickly as they could move, Torma's huge bulk moving right behind them. Martin had Danny under his right armpit and they were running so easily in that position it was as if they had done this sort of thing before. She didn't pause and with Anuk between them, she and Anja headed for the large ramp.

-Activating main power nodes-
-Powering Quantum Nacelles-

Avi stood in front of the massive control console his expression blank while Endith and several other engineers sat in chairs in front of others.

-Detecting power surge in conduit three nine. Repair drones moving to compensate-
-Main power is coming online. Sixty-six percent and rising quickly-
-External sensors now operating at seventy-three percent efficiency. Detecting five hundred thirteen Akruxian species closing on our position-

“Those are the fucking bad guys!” Endith screamed out. “Doesn’t this damn crate have any weapons on it Avi?”

-City Ship is not designed with offensive weaponry female elf Endith-
-Activating navigational shields. Bringing main shields online. Routing power to Magnetic Accelerator Coils. Computer interface now operating at ninety-seven point six Protonic Nano Cells of power-

-Detecting minor fluctuation in starboard Accelerator Coil. Correcting power flow to coil. All decks now at full power. Quantum Spanner Nacelles powering to seventy-nine percent-
-Preparing to initiate atmospheric entry-
-Stand by. Activating maneuvering thrusters nineteen through thirty-five-

Endith whirled to face him. “Wait Avi! The mountain above us!”

-Scanning. Six point two meters of limestone and bedrock. This will not hinder City Ship 41 from obtaining orbit-
-Continuing with pre-orbital division-

Endith looked at him wide eyed. “Not hinder? That’s eighteen feet of rock and dirt up there!”

-Eighteen point six nine to be precise. City Ship 41 is designed to penetrate up to forty-nine point eight meters of similar combinations of material-

Endith looked at him stunned. “Oh.”

-Activating Spatial Navigational Systems. Activating Quantitative Thermodynamic Acceleration modules. Internal Sensors indicate all exterior approaches have been sealed. Preparing to initiate firing of Sequential Thrusters. Stand by-

“Wait!” Endith shouted. “You mean we’re going straight up?”

Avi’s dinosaur like features turned to look at her.

-Obtaining orbit is the directive of the descendant of the Chief Pralor. We can not do that by going down female elf Endith. Please secure your physical person so that I may initiate firing of the thrusters. Injury to your physical body would not be considered a successful launch completion-

“Shit!” Endith barked almost leaping back to her chair and scrambling to pull the straps over her shoulders.

-Attention in City Ship 41. We are initiating engine activation for atmospheric entry. In five... four... three...

Martin lay on the deck where he had tossed Danny as the massive ramp was closing behind them. Anuk was scrambling around Danny's legs; her cerulean eyes clear once more as she treated Danny, Nayeca holding his head in her lap rubbing his bald sweaty head. Anja was moving her hands over Danny's abdomen, the glow of soft white light very evident in the palm of her hand. Dozens of Lycavorians filled the corridor, as they had been the last to board the ship, and they huddled on the floor, holding weapons across their heaving chests, Husen among them. He turned quickly as Relina found him and threw herself into his arms even as he lay on the deck. He crushed her lithe frame to his body and buried his face in her thick dark hair as he realized they had made it. All their dreams and hopes of leaving this world one day were finally being achieved.

Gorgo pushed herself from the strange metal floor where Anja had gently tossed her upon entering the lower deck of the ship. She looked up to see Martin lying a meter away, the back of his head resting up against the massive talon equipped foot of his dragon. Gorgo saw the smaller blue/black dragon nuzzling close to his father as Lisisa dropped quickly to Martin's side, throwing her arms around his chest and hugging him tightly. Amazingly she saw her long lost son begin to laugh. Softly at first... then with more power. Her eyes grew wide as the black Spartan beside him began to laugh as well, his face grimacing against the pain of his wounds and the pain that his laughing was causing.

"Damn Martin... that's eleven I owe you now!" Danny almost shouted as he continued to laugh.

Martin pushed himself to his butt, his arm holding Lisisa tightly and he turned his face to look at her. He reached out quickly and snatched his mother's arm, pulling her to him and crushing her head to his chest even as Gorgo wrapped her arms around Martin's waist and fresh tears burst from her eyes.

Martin rubbed his cheek against his mother's dirty hair, heedless of the grime and dirt and he could feel her body wracked with sobs. He then did the same to Lisisa as they both clung to him tightly, their hands clasped tightly at the small of his back.

"No Danny..." He said softly turning to look at Danny's face as his dark brown eyes met his when he heard the tone of Martin's voice. "We're going to call it even brother. Now I owe you two."

Danny nodded his head slowly when he saw Martin holding his mother and daughter and he smiled. He cut his eyes to where Anja was treating him; her hands moving over his body where she had peeled the armor away from his skin. "So what's the verdict red? Everything still working?"

Anja looked up from where her hand was slowly moving over the wound in his abdomen, the flesh knotting back together even as she held her hand near his skin. "You know... between you and Martin... treating the two of you is starting to become a full time job!" She snapped at him.

Danny laughed. "We're too ugly and ornery to die!" He announced.

Nayeca squeezed his head. "You are a fool!" She nearly shouted. "You could have been killed!"

"And I told you to leave!" Danny said.

Anuk moved up quickly next to him and took his face in her hands. "We will never leave you Daniel Simpson!" She hissed at him. "Not while there is breathe in our bodies. We will never leave you alone! You could have died."

Danny breathed her sweet cinnamon scent and then inhaled Nayeca sweet apple scent and he smiled. "I was never alone." He said softly turning his head to look at Martin. He lifted his hand and arm and saw Martin release Lisisa to reach out and take his hand in a grip that no force of nature could have ever torn asunder. "How can you die looking at something that ugly with a side kick that has gold eyes?" Danny spoke with a grin motioning to Martin and Torma. "No god is that cruel."

Torma chuckled within Mindvoice and extended his massive head out on his long neck until Danny could reach up and touch his cool snout. *You are welcome Daniel Simpson.*

-Attention in City Ship 41. We are initiating engine activation for atmospheric entry. In five... four... three...

"Shit!" Martin barked suddenly realizing what was still happening around him. "He's taking off! Fuck!" Martin slammed his hand down on the COM unit built into his body armor. "Sivana... that robot thing is lifting off! He'll bring the entire cavern down on you! Get out!"

Martin heard Sivana chuckle and he turned his head quickly to see her standing in the corridor, Belen with his arm around her waist and holding her tightly against him. She held up the small control console. "I was

operating the *STRIKER* by remote.” She said. “A little trick that For’mya told me it was capable of. Right now it is slaved to Avi’s control and docked alongside the City Ship within its own shield grid.”

-Two... one. Initiating flight mode and engaging thrusters-

Yuri looked up quickly from the table she occupied. The hot tea had long gone cold in the mug and the small lounge was silent except for the dull din of the LSD coils operating. The chime on the table sounded and she looked up slowly. She slid her hand across the table.

“Captain I asked that I not be disturbed!” She barked. “What part of that did you not understand?”

“Princess! Long range sensors are detecting a ship of some sort lifting off the surface of Lycavore!” The ship’s captain declared sounding excited. “It matches no known ships in our database.”

“A ship?” Yuri asked stupefied. “How is that even possible? There were no ships on Lycavore!”

“We are receiving the images now Princess!”

“Very well I’ll be right there.” Yuri spoke coming to her feet. She moved quickly across the lounge floor and through two adjoining offices before she passed through the last door that opened into the bridge. She saw the nearly two dozen men and women staring at the holo screen and she followed their gaze.

Yuri’s dark eyes nearly erupted from her head as she saw what was lifting off the surface of the planet on the screen.

“It’s getting bigger as it rises through the atmosphere!” A Coven tech shouted from his console. “Now it’s reached two point six kilometers long Captain!”

“Record this!” The captain screamed. “Record this!”

Yuri stepped up to the man seeing Pa’cour move up just behind her. “What is it?”

The Coven Captain shook his head. “I have no idea Princess. I’ve never... I’ve never seen anything like it.”

“Three point four kilometers in length now!” The tech shouted. “It will achieve orbit in twenty-eight seconds!” He barked. “Lycavore planetary batteries are coming to bear! They will...”

Yuri and the others could only watch as what appeared to be thousands of small lasers began blasting from the unknown ship in concentrated and coordinated bursts. They could only stand and watch as all twenty-four of the planetary batteries around Lycavore were instantly obliterated from space.

“Captain... long range sensors are detecting massive Quantum particle surges!” The tech announced. “I’ve... I’ve never seen anything like it. It’s almost as if...”

“What?” The captain barked.

The tech looked at him. “Captain that ship is using some sort of Quantum Drive.” The man spoke.

Yuri whirled on the man. “Quantum Drives are only theoretical!” She barked. “They don’t exist!”

“Princess... I’m only speaking to what our sensors are telling us.” The man spoke quickly.

Yuri turned back to the holo transmission. “It’s Leonidas.” She said suddenly. “It has to be! Can you contact the Immortal detachment on the surface! The one that was attacking his position?”

“We have been able to raise no one on the surface Princess.” The captain stated quickly. “A High Coven Runner departed only moments before our sensors detected this ship rising from the surface. It was running dark and not broadcasting.”

“The ship is obtaining orbit of Lycavore! Five point three kilometers in length now Captain!” The Coven tech almost shouted out now.

“Captain we’re being scanned!” Another officer exclaimed.

“Go dark! Activate the Shroud! Initiate Evasive pattern Theta Three one!” He barked immediately.

-Long range sensors are detecting one heavy cruiser type ship one point six light year from current location-

-Quantum Drive Nacelles are locking into position. We have achieved optimal orbital rotation. All sections signal cruising transformation complete-

Endith began unbuckling her straps as the entire top section of the bridge compartment began to retract in a counterclockwise pattern. She watched with glee in her eyes as the stars became more and more exposed and her head turned as Komirri came darting in from where he had been monitoring the engineering section of the ship. He hadn't had much to do as the repair drones apparently acted as crew members also, and they dashed across the expanse of the engineering section faster than he or any of his crew members could.

"I never thought I would see them again." Endith spoke softly as Komirri came up next to her.

-Initiating long ranger sensor sweep of surrounding systems. Activating and receiving the tracking beacons of three additional City Ships-

Endith and Komirri turned as Martin strode into the bridge, Gorgo clinging to one hand, Anja the other. Lisisa was holding tightly to Anja's arm even as Tina moved quickly around them and dashed to where Endith stood.

"Look at that Tina." Endith spoke. "Isn't it the most wonderful thing you have ever seen in your life?"

-Detecting tracking beacon of City Ship 39, City Ship 27 and City Ship 19. Signals are weak. Damage to transmitting array eighty-four point two percent probable. Detecting no corresponding activation of tracking beacons. Ninety-one point seven percent chance that entire complement of sister City Ships have been terminated likely cause of negative response-

-Detecting no active Quantum signatures. This indicates complete shutdown of Quantum Drive or destruction of computer function to active drives-

"Can you tell where these ships are?" Martin asked moving up next to the avatar.

-Processing... scanning. Scanning complete. City Ship 39 beacons are transmitting from Cenolau Minor. Estimate two point three years before City Ship 39 loses all power and beacons discontinue-

-City Ship 27 transmitting from third moon of unknown planet thirty-five point four light years from current location. Detecting massive structural failure to City Ship 27 and beacons are transmitting on damaged alternate power cells. Estimate seven point six months before power cells are full exhausted-

-City Ship 19 beacons transmitting on solar cells from sixth planet of Rotarb System. Planet's designation is Nuwaroa. Detecting heavy structural damage to aft third of ship. No Quantum signatures detected. Hypothesis... Quantum Nacelles were not fully retracted before beginning control reentry. They were destroyed upon reentry into Nuwaroa's upper transition atmosphere. I estimate forty-three point one percent of City Ship 19 intact-

"All of these places are within High Coven territory boss." Endith spoke softly as she looked at the star chart on another console.

"What is the probability that any of these ships can be restored like you did this one?" Martin asked the avatar.

-Processing. Analysis complete. Probability of restoration nine point seven percent. City Ship 39 indicates overwhelming exposure to corrosive salt fluid. Only twenty-four percent of City Ship 27 remains intact. City Ship 19 would need one thousand four hundred and three years of refit before being able to fully function once more. No indication is detected that the knowledge and materials needed to conduct repairs to City Ship 19 are available within seventy thousand light years-

-Estimate City Ship 19 will lose all remaining power nodes within this decade and cease to operate even at the low levels it is using now-

"Wait... someone is using this ship?" Martin asked.

-Affirmative. Detailed sensor scans are not possible due to high levels of Tronic Gas between our location and City Ship 19. Preliminary scans indicate medical sections and part of bridge command module remain intact-

“What parts of the medical sections?” Anja asked.

-Sections forty-three through sixty nine. These sections contain bio and genetic research laboratories-

“Avi... is it possible that there were survivors from City Ship 19?” Endith asked.

-Processing. Analysis complete. Probability that there were survivors is eighty-eight point two percent. Remaining sections are the most heavily fortified-

Martin looked at Endith. “What’s going through your brain Endy?” He asked. “I know that look.”

Endith looked at him. “Skipper... based on what we know happened here... isn’t it safe to assume that the same thing could have happened with the High Coven?”

“Explain.” Martin barked out.

Anja’s eyes grew wide now. “I understand where she’s going lover.” She spoke. “These Pralors... they blended into the population on Nuwaroa the same as those that survived on this ship did with the men and women of Lycavore.”

“And... so...?” Martin spoke.

“If that is what happened... it might explain how the High Coven came to be like it is.” Anja spoke.

“What... you mean bloodsucking sonsofbitches?” Martin snapped. “Well... most of them anyway.”

“It’s obvious these Pralors used Mindvoice exclusively.” Helen spoke now coming into the large bridge. “How much do we know of the High Coven and its origins?”

“I’ll worry about their origins when I don’t have my ass hanging out in their space!” Martin said.

“It could go a long way to explain why Resumar... your father and now you are so attuned within Mindvoice.” Helen spoke. “Why you are so powerful. If one of these ships crashed within High Coven space it could explain how Veldruk came to power.”

“If their medical sections survived... it could also explain how the High Coven cloning techniques are so far advanced than anyone else.” Anja spoke.

Martin shook his head. “Ok... thinking about this shit really gives me a headache.” He spoke. “All I truly want to know is how long it will take us to get home. This deep stuff is for you guys to figure out and then explain to me in terms I can understand! Jeez!”

Anja looked at him and smiled gently. She pressed her body up against his, using her female aura to reach out to him and sooth his stormy emotions. “You are cranky lover.” She spoke. “Take a deep breath and listen to me.”

Martin met her jade green eyes and saw them twinkle. He couldn’t help the grin that split his face and he felt the adrenalin rush of combat bleeding off slowly as her female aura washed over him. Aricia must have been teaching them how to use their auras, because they were becoming quite good at using their auras to elicit responses from him. Martin slid his arm around her waist and pulled her tighter against him. He leaned over and kissed her deeply, inhaling her honey scent and feeling the press of her body against his. He reached out with his senses and found her heartbeat... smooth, calm and refined. He reached further and found Eliani’s faster heartbeat within Anja’s womb, strong and pure just like Androcles’s heartbeat had been while still within Aricia’s womb.

It was easy enough for everyone around them to see him relax, the tenseness leaving his face and his shoulders losing their stiffness. Gorgo felt a sense of peace fill him and she couldn’t help but smile at the effect Anja had on her son and this was not even his Soulmate Helen had told her. All of them could do this to him Helen had told her, so deeply in love were they.

“Ok...” Martin finally spoke. He looked at the avatar. “Av... A...”

“Avi.” Anja told him with a smile.

“Yeah... Avi. I have a date with a walking around dead clone. How many days will it take you to get us to Apo Prime?” Martin asked.

-Processing. I will need one point two hours to program the coordinates and reflective binary computations into the Quantum Drive Nacelles-

“How long to Apo Prime?” Martin asked again.

-Quantum Drive Nacelles have thirty-one point six Protonic Cells remaining. This will enable two uses of the Quantum Drive. Processing... distance to Apo Prime will require sixteen point three Protonic Cells. City Ship 41 will need eleven hours and nineteen minutes to make the journey-

Martin’s eyes grew wide. “Eleven... eleven hours?” He gasped. “That’s all?”

-My computations have no variance for error Descendant of Chief Elder Pralor-

“No variance for error.” Martin said with a grin. He looked at Endith. “I like your friend here Endy.” He spoke. “Komirri... you agree with him?”

Komirri chuckled. “Milord... my knowledge of the drive units on this ship is non-existent.” Komirri spoke.

Martin looked at him. “So you don’t know whether these Quantum thingies will kill us or not?”

Komirri smiled. “Sire... my best guess is no.”

Martin nodded slowly. “Ok... I trust your guesses. Endith... have your... your friend here do his thing.”

Endith stepped up to Avi and took his thick arm. “C’mon Avi... tell me what I can do to help you.”

Gorgo stepped up to her son. “Martin... you must... I need...”

Martin met his mother’s hard gaze with his dark brown eyes. “Don’t worry mother.” He spoke confidently. “She is yours.”

REVERENCE-CLASS DREADNOUGHT

POISON BLADE

COMMAND SHIP FOR HIGH LADY OF THE COVEN AIKIRO

Aikiro looked up when the Commander of her flagship entered the large, comfortable lounge area. His green eyes darted to where the year old Narice was sitting on the floor, her small hands filled with some sort of mind twister cube.

“Milady Aikiro...” He spoke looking at her exotic beauty. “Forgive me for interrupting.”

Aikiro detected the small show of intense desire in the man’s eyes and smiled as she came to her feet. The dress she wore exposed more skin than it covered it seemed, and Aikiro liked the reactions she got from the many purebloods that saw her. None of them would ever dare show any sort of interest in her eighteen thousand year old but still lush and supple body, and that sometimes angered her to some extent. The Commander of her personal ship however was not one of those purebloods, and it actually made Aikiro flush when she saw the flash of intense desire in his eyes before it was gone. She had never stepped outside her relationship with Veldruk, finding him quite satisfactory in their bed. It was not something he adhered to and the wench Isabella had been the result, but perhaps as things progressed Aikiro would have to start rethinking that. She was a woman after all, and she enjoyed the physical touch of a male just as much as the next. Perhaps she would begin with this man who had served her so loyally over the last centuries.

“It is alright Commander.” Aikiro spoke stepping towards the wet bar and pouring herself a crystal glass of fresh Blood Wine. She lifted a glass and looked at him. “Would you care for some Tesand?” She asked.

The man shook his head. “Thank you Milady... but I would be remiss in my duties to you if I accepted while I was on duty.”

Aikiro looked at him as she sipped the Blood Wine, impressed that he had refused. Yes... maybe there was more to this man than she had ever thought to consider. "What can I do for you them Commander?"

Tesand held up the data scroll. "You asked to be informed of the search for the Runner that left Nuwaroa with Cha'talla."

"Yes... I did." She spoke.

"We lost contact with the ship after the second of three LSD jumps it conducted Milady." He spoke. "We have not been able to reacquire it as of yet. I took it upon myself with your directives to have several detachments of our *Venorik Elghinn* Division scatter among the known gathering places for unwanted scum in The Wilds."

Aikiro nodded. "Esther Saira is proving to be more adept at hiding things from me than I first thought." She spoke with some amusement in her voice as she moved back to the table.

"Milady?" He asked.

"Yes?"

"Milady is it true that she willingly gave herself to... to the Immortal Cha'talla?" Tesand asked with some surprise.

Aikiro nodded slowly. "Indeed." She answered. "I see now that her diligence and false enthusiasm over the years was nothing more than an act. She has apparently hated me all these years for killing her parents if the journals we found in her private quarters are any indication."

"But... but to give herself freely to a... to an Immortal." Tesand said with obvious disgust in his voice.

Aikiro chuckled. "There is no guessing at some people's attractions Tesand." She spoke. "Her dubious infatuation with Cha'talla will not last. He will more than likely kill her if he has not done so already. He will undoubtedly think she is some sort of plant by me to discover where his tribe has escaped too. He will never trust her... and he will most certainly never find her as attractive as Esther's misguided beliefs seem to think." She looked at him. "What do you need from me Tesand?"

"A directive for our *Venorik Elghinn* when they find them. I have no doubts they will... but I thought it best to ask what you would like done with them." Tesand spoke.

"I do not particularly care for those who betray me." Aikiro spoke. "Especially after all the time and energy that went into training her ungrateful person. Let our *Venorik Elghinn* operatives know she is more than likely already dead, but if for some reason she is not, they should terminate her without pause. When they find Cha'talla they are only to follow him wherever he might go. I want him to lead us to where his tribe is so that I can make an example out of them for betraying and deceiving the High Coven."

Tesand nodded. "As you order Milady." He spoke.

"Any word from my daughter Tesand?" Aikiro asked.

"The captain of the *ORIC*-Class Heavy Cruiser that was bringing her to Usu'Ozeib 7 reported they will arrive on the far side of the third moon tomorrow morning as you instructed." Tesand answered.

Aikiro nodded. "Excellent."

"He also reported that a ship has escaped Lycavore Milady. A ship that grew to over five kilometers in length as it lifted off the surface and obtained orbit." Tesand spoke as Aikiro looked at him.

"What kind of ship?" Aikiro asked.

"It is a ship that is not in our database... or anyone's database for that matter." Tesand spoke.

Aikiro stood up once more. "It couldn't be?" She said softly.

"Milady?" Tesand asked.

"Tesand you know of the derelict ship on Nuwaroa don't you?" Aikiro asked.

Tesand nodded. "Of course Milady. It is where much of our cloning technology has been invented." He replied.

"Do we have images of this ship?" Aikiro asked.

Tesand nodded. "Yes Milady... the captain was going to have them available to us when we met with him."

"I must see these images first... but it's quite possible that Leonidas found an actual working Mindvoice ship Tesand." Aikiro said.

Tesand's eyes grew a little wider. "You mean similar to the one on Nuwaroa Milady?"

Aikiro nodded quickly. “What little information I was able to obtain outside of the cloning technology indicated that five of these ships were affected by the same storm and crashed somewhere within High Coven space.” She explained. “It would explain quite a bit if one of them crashed upon Lycavore Tesand. It would explain how those dogs became so powerful. The same thing that happened to our people happened to them.”

“I don’t follow Milady.” He answered.

Aikiro looked at him and suddenly she wanted this pureblood in her bed. She moved closer to him. “Tell me something Tesand?”

“Anything Milady.”

“Do you find me desirable?” Aikiro asked.

To his credit Aikiro noticed his eyes showed only a small amount of surprise in them. “Milady... Milady it would be highly inappropriate for me to answer that question.” He replied quickly. “The High Lord would...”

“Tesand... Veldruk will be dead in a matter of days by my own hand if I have my way.” Aikiro spoke firmly. “Now answer my question and think not of my foolish husband. Do you find me desirable?”

Tesand met her steely gaze. “May I answer that question without fear of reprisal Milady?” He spoke.

Aikiro smiled. “There will be no reprisal against you Tesand. You have commanded my ship for two millennia... I am not a fool.”

“Milady Aikiro... if ever given the opportunity I...” He took a deep breath. “Milady I would feast on your body for days and damned the consequences.”

Aikiro smiled when she found she liked the sound of that. “Indeed Tesand.” She said softly. “You may just get the opportunity to do just that one day soon.” She said.

“If that day ever came Milady... I would relish it for eternity.” He replied.

“Well... it is certainly nice to hear that I can illicit such a response in men who are confident enough with themselves to admit that to me.” Aikiro spoke with a smile as she lifted her hand and drew her long nails across Tesand’s neck. “Yes... I do believe I may give you that opportunity Tesand.”

Tesand bowed his head slightly. “I will leave you now to finish my duties Milady Aikiro. I will pass on your instructions to our *Venorik Elghinn* operatives as well.”

Aikiro nodded. “Thank you Commander.” She spoke sounding very pleased with herself. Aikiro watched as he turned and moved out of the conference lounge, standing a little taller than he had been when he entered Aikiro saw. It pleased her to no end that she could still make men do such things and perhaps the future without Veldruk would not be as lonely as she first thought.

RALOR SIX

The tavern was no less smoky and crowded than it was the day before Esther took notice. Their table was near the back away from the main entrance, and as they had for the previous four hours they sat quietly and simply watched the dozens of species coming and going from the tavern. Some Esther had seen before, heard about in reports, and others she had never seen before in her life. They had sat here for three hours after bringing some small cargo to the grand suite that Cha’talla had secured in the finest lodging in the large smuggler and pirate city. She hadn’t expected to find a facility with such modern and plush furnishings, and to say she had been surprised was an understatement. Today Esther wore an identical dress as she did the previous day, only this one was white and unblemished in any way. She didn’t know how, but Cha’talla had guessed her size almost exactly. The dress was nearly floor length, and wrapped around her supple body like a glove, accenting her large breasts and small waist. The material had felt wonderful against her skin, and today she had forgone any undergarments beneath the dress. It seemed silly... for Cha’talla had not even looked at her with anything like desire in his dark eyes since she had told them what had happened between them during his delirium. As the hours passed by, Esther had begun to wonder if perhaps he did not have something else planned for her. A huge part of her wanted him so very badly, for while he may have been an Immortal, and by most standards she was used to completely unacceptable to any pureblood vampire female, Esther found him almost overpoweringly handsome. While his skin was dark gray in color, it was pulled tightly over a hugely muscular body. A body she had quite willingly explored during those hours together. She had been thrilled with the power she had over his body, holding his enormous throbbing cock in her small hands and watching as his

face contorted in agonizing pleasure. His face was stern... the skin pocked by small scars from battles he had been fighting all of his life. The Akruvian people had almost no lips, just thin soft strips where their mouths were really. It had been unusual to kiss him at first, but the more she had done it and adjusted her own lips upon his, Esther found his lips warm and inviting. She knew almost any pureblood vampire would look at her as something from the streets had they known she was madly in love with the ancient Immortal Captain. That fact did not daze her in the least. She had always been one to follow her own set of guidelines, and her feelings for Cha'talla were completely her own. She had never felt more safe, secure and wanted than she had those few hours wrapped in his muscular arms. He may have not been fully aware of his actions due to the blood fever, but Esther knew what she felt. And she accepted it fully a long time ago.

Esther knew far more of Cha'talla than he did of her. She was correct when she said that he was considered the most honored Immortal among his people. His list of accomplishments and battles was longer than her arm, and his status only increased when he became the High Lord's Immortal Captain. He had never been defeated in single combat against any opponent. It was also rumored that he had once faced down two Unsaurs alone and killed one while crippling the other. She knew him to be exceptionally intelligent, for what he had put together in an attempt to improve the physical appearance of his people and make them more pleasing to the eye was not something done by an amateur or someone who had no clue what he was doing.

Esther let her eyes filter over the inside of the tavern.

There were perhaps three dozen tables set up within the tavern, loud music blaring in the background. The huge bar was being tended to by several Evolli, and the countless females would move back and forth between the bar and the tables easily and quickly. They were obviously slaves, several elfin females among them. Many of the species occupying the tables and chairs she knew were pirates and mercenaries and they would just as well kill you as befriend you. Roltar Six was well known within The Wilds as being a haven for the scum and murderous, and only the bravest would venture here on their own. It appeared also that sexual activity was common here among all the species, for she had witnessed half a dozen males and females of different species coupling rather heavily right out in the open. It was apparently accepted and allowed and she had watched an elfin female squirming and withering upon the glistening cock of a Kochab Bounty Hunter as he pounded her right in his chair. She had also noticed that there were many pureblood vampires in the tavern. The High Coven was not immune to the call of riches and glory, and many of the High Coven officers answered that call and deserted from their posts to become mercenaries and hunters. Many of them were exceedingly cruel and she had detected the looks of several of them as she walked next to Cha'talla to their table. Their looks had made her stomach turn in something akin to fear, though she knew that while his cloak and cowl covered his body and head, Cha'talla's sheer size alone would dissuade many from even attempting anything.

Esther lifted the small glass of Blood Wine to her lips and turned to look at Cha'talla in the dim light.

"How much longer will we wait Cha'talla?" She asked softly.

"Have you not noticed it Esther Saira?" He replied just as softly.

"Noticed what?"

Cha'talla's head turned to look at her from under the cloak, and Esther squirmed a little in her chair when those beautiful dark eyes fell on her. Well... they were beautiful to her.

"They know something is about to happen." Cha'talla spoke softly. "I have been here on nine different occasions in my lifetime, and I have never seen it so crowded. Roltar Six is the closest resort moon to the High Coven border. It usually has many active High Coven Fleet officers here for they come here to act out what they are not allowed to do inside High Coven space."

"Act out?" Esther asked. "How so?"

"Sexually Esther." Cha'talla answered. "They come here to fulfill their twisted desires. Whether it be coupling with members of the same sex, or different species it matters not. This is where they can come to fulfill those wants. The only vampires I have seen since arriving are scum and deserters."

Esther leaned closer to him, her own dark eyes alluring. "What do you desire Cha'talla?" She asked in a voice dripping with desire.

Cha'talla looked away slowly. "Esther we..."

The loud chime rang out within the tavern signifying that more patrons were entering, and they both turned to watch as four stern looking vampires entered, all of them wearing long cloaks, but their fleet uniforms

very evident under those cloaks. Esther stiffened slightly in her chair and this was something Cha'talla detected right away.

Cha'talla stared at her for a long moment.

Cha'talla had seen thousands of beautiful pureblood females in his time with the High Lord and among the citizens of Usu'Ozeib 7. He had often wondered what it might be like to bed one or many of them. These were thoughts that he had kept hidden behind his own very strong natural Mindvoice shields, for it was not something that he would ever admit to anyone. To do so might cost him his life.

Yet now... knowing that the dreams he had experienced over the last few days, mainly of Esther's supple and divine body in his arms, knowing that they had been real confused him. There was something far more than just a simple physical attraction to this pureblood vampire female. She was exquisitely intelligent and an exceptional pilot based on what he had already seen. Her hatred for the Coven in general and Lady Aikiro in particular seemed very genuine indeed, and the look in her dark eyes when she gazed at him caused his abdomen to contract and flutter as nothing in his life ever had. Cha'talla feared nothing in this life... yet this small petite pureblood female frightened him in a way nothing ever could. And it was a fear that he could not comprehend for she had professed a desire and depth of feeling for him that Cha'talla was not familiar with. When she looked at him it was not with eyes that spoke of the natural unpleasantness of his people's appearance. When Esther looked at him, it was with eyes of powerful craving and want. Cha'talla knew that look well... he had just never had that look directed at him in any way and certainly not by a pureblood vampire female as ravishingly striking as the one sitting next to him at the table.

"What is wrong?" He asked softly.

"*Venorik Elghinn!*" Esther hissed quietly. "The ones who just entered. They are *Venorik Elghinn.*"

Cha'talla turned his head back slowly to watch the four men as they moved slowly into the dim light of the tavern, their eyes searching. "How do you know?" He asked.

Esther's eyes never left the four men. "I have seen enough of those killers come to Nuwaroa to know what they are." She spoke. "They... they must be looking for us."

"They could not have tracked us here." Cha'talla spoke calmly. "Your maneuvers and coordinated jumps could not be tracked. They must have generic orders to search for and discover where we have gone."

"They will not recognize me." Esther spoke quickly. "But they will recognize you!"

"Esther... Immortals coming to Roltar Six are not uncommon." Cha'talla spoke.

Esther turned her head. "How many of them are the former Captain to the High Lord?" She demanded softly. "How many of them is Lady Aikiro looking for? Only one Cha'talla. Only you."

"Your concern is more than likely unwarranted Esther." Cha'talla spoke. "You..." He stopped talking when he turned back to the bar and saw one of the Kochab Bar patrons point in his general direction. Esther followed his eyes and her own eyes grew a little wider. "Perhaps I was mistaken." He said softly.

Esther's head darted around quickly searching the interior of the tavern. Her dark eyes came to rest on the Kochab female having her body rocked by two Evolli as they fucked her silly. Esther turned back to Cha'talla quickly. "Move your chair back a little." She spoke.

Cha'talla looked at her. "What?"

"Don't ask questions! Move your chair back." She spoke hurriedly.

Cha'talla did what she asked and his eyes grew wide when she rose from her own chair and moved to straddle his lap, lifting her dress and spreading it out over his lap as she settled into it. Esther looked at him with a teasing smile as her hands rapidly began working the fasteners of his pants under the dress. "What... what are you doing?" He gasped out softly.

"Saving our lives." She spoke in reply.

"This is insane woman!" Cha'talla hissed at her. "You are putting us at risk with such actions. Get off me now or I will..." His lips clamped shut and his teeth clenched as her extremely warm hands found his rapidly growing cock and she stroked its fifteen inch length delicately.

Esther's breath was now coming in short gasps as the combination of desire and danger was making her blood race. "I... I have no undergarments on Cha'talla." She said with a seductive smile.

That was a fact that Cha'talla found to be completely accurate as she lifted her hips slightly and her hands guided his now throbbing fifteen inch Immortal cock to between her thighs. Esther felt his hands close around her hips as she rubbed the throbbing head of his enormous cock against her now dripping pussy lips and

her lips parted in a soft moan of delight, her eyes closing as she lowered herself onto his scorching hot towering shaft. Cha'talla's body was rigid now, his hands digging almost painfully into her hips and his eyes wide.

"Es... Esther... this is... this is not wise." He moaned out between clenched teeth as searing pleasure raced through his veins.

Esther ignored him as she raised and lowered her hips on his immense cock several times, thoroughly coating the first six inches of his devastatingly thick shaft with her sweet juices which were pouring from her endlessly it seemed. Cha'talla was doing all he could to maintain his sanity even as he felt her velvety warmth engulf the head and first few inches of his cock. Her could feel her passion rolling down the remaining length of his throbbing pole making his cock slick and only making the throbbing that much more painfully obvious.

"Where... where are... where are they Cha'talla?" Esther gasped out as her hands went to either side of his hooded head and she leaned her face close to his, her breathe warm against his skin. This action and feeling her delicate breath on his skin caused his massive shaft to twitch inside her eliciting a blissful groan from soft sweet lips. Her lean taut thighs were quivering in enchantment as she used all of her willpower to hold herself above him with only six inches of his mammoth pole spreading her. Nine inches of his Immortal cock remained outside her stretched pussy, and it already felt as if she was utterly stuffed. It had only been a few days, but Esther had forgotten how colossal his cock truly was. She had him buried completely inside her for hours when he was in the grips of the Blood Fever, and her tight pussy had lovingly grown accustomed to his size during that time. She felt no pain now... only a riveting desire to have him pound himself into her completely and take her as hard as he could. The danger that they were in only heightened her sense of passion, and though a vampire she may have been, the desire for Cha'talla washed from her body in passionate waves. The nipples of her large breasts were crushed against his broad chest, but even through the fabric of her dress and his shirt Cha'talla could feel the rock hard nubs pressing into him. Her hands gripped his head tightly, as if she never wanted to let go, and she was staring at him with cobalt blue vampire eyes now as her passion was increasing as every second passed.

"Four... four..." Cha'talla's body tensed when he felt Esther push herself down on his painfully throbbing cock even more, accepting another three inches of his will crushing shaft inside her. "Four... meters!" He gasped out now... bringing his head forward and closing his eyes as he pressed his head to her breasts.

His hands were easy enough to see squeezing her hips on the outside of her dress, and there was no mistaking the small pointed bony protrusions that many Immortals sharpened even further to use as weapons. Esther's body was trembling in his grasp now, her long dark hair spilling all around his shoulders and head, effectively covering not only her face but his as well. Somewhere in his now sexually energized brain Cha'talla realized what she had done, and he could only be amazed at how quickly she had acted and with no hesitation at all. Cha'talla could smell her stimulation easily now, the aroma of her excitement causing his chest to heave in gratification he had never felt racing through him before. He did not need to be a Lycavorian with their enhanced sense of smell to know that Esther's level of sexual energy was not something she was having to force. Her juices were soaking his lap and cascading over his huge blistering hot balls on a plane he didn't think possible. It was at that very moment when Cha'talla fully came to realize everything she had told him in regards to her feelings for him was true.

Cha'talla pressed his forehead tighter to her breasts, feeling their fullness and heat through his skin. "Esther... Esther I..."

The four members of the *Venorik Elghinn* Division stood only three meters away and watched with disgusted looks on their faces as the pureblood female quivered in the grasp of the Immortal in the chair. They could not see either of their faces, her flowing dark hair hiding their expressions, but the four men did not need to see their faces any longer.

"The High Lord's former Captain would never put himself at risk by coupling in public like this." The most senior of the four men spoke softly.

"The reports said he more than likely killed the pureblood female too." Another spoke.

"I do not need to watch this any longer to know it is not him! It disgusts me to see this." The third man spoke. "We should kill them both and be done with it."

"We do not have that authority in The Wilds." The fourth spoke. "Even though I agree."

“Come... we have three more holes like this to visit before we return to the ship.” The first one spoke again. “I feel like I am going to be sick and I do not wish to see this any longer.”

The four men turned and began making their way towards the entrance.

“They... they are leaving!” Cha’talla gasped between clenched teeth, the nerves in his body only moments away from pleasure overload.

Esther gripped his head and pulled his face from her breasts. Her face was a mask of unabashed satisfaction, her cobalt blue vampire eyes wide in glittering passion. “Now... now Cha’talla!” She gasped out. “I... I am yours Immortal! Take me... take me and make me...”

Cha’talla did not let her finish her request and his powerful hands pulled her hips down, and in one soul stealing plunge he buried the remaining nine inches of his throbbing Immortal cock into the belly of *his* pureblood vampire female. As his eyes watched her face twist up in euphoric bliss, her entire body stiffened in his grasp and her orgasm slammed through her without warning. The powerful inner muscles of her tight pussy clamped down on his thick pulsing cock the moment her engorged pussy lips came to rest on his white hot balls, nearly tearing his cock from its roots. Two squeezes was all it took and Cha’talla stiffen as well, his lava hot come racing up the length of his cock causing it to swell even larger, and then he was erupting into her depths with what felt like the force of a High Coven Runner’s maneuvering thruster.

As if by instinct, two sets of vampire teeth flashed out and bit down. The rush of blood into mouths caused the pleasure to increase ten fold as they both fed with zealous glee on the blood of each other.

As her sweet juices flowed out of Esther and over his erupting cock and her deliciously sweet blood flooded his throat, Cha’talla made the decision that would alter his life and the life of his people from this day forward. It was a decision that came easily to him now, and it was a decision that came even easier to Esther as Cha’talla’s tangy blood filled her mouth and she fed with blissful abandon.

EARTH

BIG SNOWY MOUNTAINS

“Maruad has taken the blue scaled dragon and Roluth and left Hurcan.” The man reported as Hurcan looked up from the table.

“And what of Syrilth?” Hurcan asked.

“She seems much calmer now. She is content to make her siblings eat the meat they caught the other night.” He replied. “Perhaps she is calmer now because she thinks Maruad will return the eggs to her.”

Hurcan sat back in his chair. “Maruad thinks us fools Duirt.” He spoke. “He is planning to take those eggs and use them to make his way off this foul planet.”

Duirt stepped closer. “I don’t understand Hurcan. How could he make his way off the planet? The wolf dogs will not provide him a ship, and the elves would certainly hang him before helping him.”

Hurcan nodded. “He says he is going to kill the elf females... yet our people within the tunnels of Eden City report that their security has come down several levels since his last attack. In fact... it appears as if their troops are not even on a high state of alert considering what has happened in the last few weeks.”

“This troubles you Hurcan?” Duirt asked.

Hurcan nodded now as he got to his feet and moved to the window in the room. “Black hair is no fool Duirt. The elf females he left in charge for a reason when he left. They are loyal to him without question, and they are not as stupid as Maruad always tells us they are. He thinks any female is beneath him.”

“What do you believe is happening Hurcan?” Duirt asked.

“Do you remember when he advised us to not reach out to this one he calls a Kavalian?” Hurcan spoke.

“Yes.”

“This Kavalian came here aboard a ship Duirt.” Hurcan spoke. “I believe Maruad intends to use these eggs of his to barter with this Kavalian or whoever he represents to make his way off the planet.” Hurcan turned to Duirt. “Our people guarding the eggs? They are from the First Brigade?”

Duirt nodded. "Yes."

"When we are finished here Duirt, contact them and insure that those eggs do not leave the castle they are in." Hurcan spoke. "We will give Maruad a few more hours to make his attempt to kill the elf females as he promised. I may just be misjudging the man."

"He did leave Syrilth here with almost no question Hurcan." Duirt spoke.

"Yes... and ordinarily I would question that, except I know he had plans to kill her within a few months regardless of our successes. She was becoming bolder and resisting him more and more and he was growing tired of it." Hurcan spoke. "This is the reason we followed his instructions in how to force those additional eggs to hatch. So that he could replace her. He was hoping to begin with this Tharua as he was very pleased with her intelligence and physical proportions."

"Why not Roluth?" Duirt asked.

Hurcan shook his head. "He said Roluth was not intelligent enough." He answered. "He was sure he could get this Tharua to serve him willingly due to her wilder and unrestrained nature."

"We should have killed him when we had the opportunity Hurcan." Duirt spoke. "I have never trusted him... and that has only grown stronger since he told us he learned of these Kavalians from stolen High Coven reports while the vampire witch was in charge here on Earth."

Hurcan looked at him. "You don't believe him?"

Duirt shook his head. "I believe Maruad was working for her." He replied. "I did some checking on my own One... there are two instances where attacks against Black Hair and those he called friend coincided with times when Maruad was not among us."

"You think Maruad arranged these attacks against Black Hair?" Hurcan asked.

Duirt nodded. "I believe he did it while he was working for the vampire witch. The first attack was while she still ruled... and the second attack I believe she left orders for him to execute once they were thrown from power."

"That is interesting Duirt." Hurcan spoke. "An avenue even I did not consider."

"It would have come to you eventually Hurcan." Duirt spoke. "You are The One after all."

"It would explain why he has never fully confronted those of his own kind." Hurcan spoke. "If they were to discover who he truly is, and that he was working for the vampire witch, I doubt very much they would consider him a friend."

"I also think he knows who this female rider of the blue scaled dragon is... or was." Duirt said. "He brushed that question aside rather quickly... so I expanded my investigation to include that as well."

"And what did you discover?"

"Black hair took a mate of his people from the city we know as Sparta." Duirt said.

"Yes... that is well known." Hurcan said.

Duirt held out the data pad. "I was able to obtain this image of her from two years ago. Shortly before they departed off this planet." He watched as Hurcan studied the image on the pad.

"Her thighs look like they would be rather tasty don't you think?" Hurcan said with a chuckle.

Duirt didn't smile as he held out the second data pad. "This image was taken by one of our elf supporters they day he attacked the elf females in Eden City."

Hurcan looked at the picture and the smile on his face slowly melted away. He lifted the first pad and held them side by side. "They are the same woman." He spoke finally.

Duirt nodded. "Yes... this means that this female is the mate of Black Hair. She is also the same one that all the commotion was made about last year. You remember... a kidnapping and rape charged against others of Maruad's kind. Others that he worked for long before he came to Earth."

"Yes..." Hurcan spoke turning to face him fully. "I also remember it being said that she was almost as powerful as Black Hair. And that she too was very deeply connected with a blue scaled dragon that they discovered on this other planet."

Duirt nodded. "Yes. If this beast is the dragon of Black Hair's mate... are we to believe that her dragon simply killed her out of spite to become Roluth's mate Hurcan? If Roluth is as unintelligent as Maruad makes him out to be..."

Hurcan looked at Duirt. "It is a trap!" He hissed. "And Maruad is walking right into it blindly."

"That is my belief as well One." Duirt spoke.

Hurcan thought quickly before meeting Duirt's eyes. "Duirt... contact our guards over the eggs! Destroy them quickly! All of them! And order our forces in the sewers of Eden City to begin their attack immediately! If their attention is focused on Maraud we can act with near impunity!"

Duirt nodded quickly. "And Syrilth?"

Hurcan nodded. "As soon as you have insured my orders are being followed you may kill her and all the hatchlings with her. Leave none alive."

Syrlth of the Dragons and friend to Isheeni and Aelnala? The male voice erupted into her head as clearly as if the person was next to her.

Syrlth immediately sprang to her feet as this voice was speaking within Mindvoice on a level that only she could hear. Her large head snapped back and forth staring at all the entrances into the mountain hanger but seeing no one. Tharua came to her feet as well looking at her sister oddly

Who are you? Where are you? Syrilth demanded.

The male voice sounded amused but in no way hostile. *Rest easy Syrilth. My name is Walter... or Dymas... and I am referred to as the Guardian of the Line of Leonidas.*

Syrlth's ochre colored eyes grew a little wider. *I have heard of you! Isheeni has told me of you! I have seen you in her mind's eye.* She exclaimed. *You are Aricia's un...unc...*

I am Aricia's Uncle... yes. She is the daughter of my sister... and one of the finest Queens I have ever had the pleasure of knowing in my three thousand plus years of life. She told me to contact you when the time was near. Walter's voice spoke.

Are you within the Mountain Guardian? Syrilth asked.

I have a personal score to settle with these white skinned creatures Syrilth. They are responsible for the death of my brother and I intend to exact my vengeance on them for that. However I am also acting as Senior Polemarch of the entire Lycavorian army... and our first priority is to get you and your siblings out of the mountain unharmed so that you may be rejoined with your family.

My brothers and sisters! Syrilth nearly shouted. *They are free!*

Aricia has asked me to tell you that those who held your un-hatched siblings are now dead. Walter's voice spoke. Isra and Aelnala saw to this fact themselves. The transports that are carrying them to meet with Maraud are being allowed to continue on their journey, but they are being watched by a dozen pair of eyes Syrilth. In the sky and on the ground. Isheeni carries Maruad to his doom, for my niece will greet him in the proper Spartan fashion when he arrives in the city he thinks will be his exit. There your siblings will be freed and cared for. Even now Syrilth a ship is coming from the elf home world of Elear. The home world of your kind. On that ship are four hundred of the strongest of your kind, including the Elder Mother herself. They have broken many speed records it seems and they will arrive tomorrow evening.

Four hundred? Syrilth gasped out. *So many!*

Walter chuckled gently within the connection. *The moment the Elder Mother discovered what was happening here Syrilth... she dropped everything she was doing and departed within an hour of receiving word that you and your siblings existed. Aricia also discovered this morning from the connection she shares with her Soulmate the King that he will be here on Earth within days. So you see Syrilth... you are no longer alone.*

Syrlth did not reply immediately for she knew her words would be too choked up. *What do you require of me Guardian? My siblings and I have been eating the meat Isra gave us. Are you close by?*

I have eight hundred Spartans preparing to breach the entrances you told us about Syrilth. Our task will not be easy or without loss of life... but we will be victorious have no doubts. As I understand it... you and your siblings are in the hanger near the top of the mountain. Is that correct? Walter spoke.

Yes.

Thr'won has told me she has shown you how to increase your psychic abilities enough to shield yourselves from the weapons these creatures have. Walter spoke. You have passed this to your siblings with you?

I have. I will keep my youngest hatched sister Majeir with me for she is still not strong enough to generate a psychic shield but the others have the ability and I have shown them. Syrilth answered.

Excellent. Walter told her. I have two dozen what we call Tier Six Mindvoicers among my people Syrilth. They are among the strongest Mindvoicers within the Spartan ranks. They have been instructed to leave themselves open to you and your siblings should you need to draw any additional power from them. Tell your siblings this... and make sure they do not fear to do this.

I will do this Guardian! Syrilth answered. When are you coming Guardian? I do not know how long they will allow me to live. I believe they have figured out what Maruad's plan is and they will begin acting soon.

Then Syrilth I believe we should act right away. Walter's voice replied laconically. Are there any guards within the hanger with you?

There is usually only one or two watching over us... but five more entered a short time ago. There are seven now.

Then I will leave those seven for you and your siblings Syrilth. Walter told her. Burn anyone who attempts to come into your hanger Syrilth. We have ships in the air that will provide support, and my people will know to contact you before they attempt to enter the hanger.

Yes I understand! Syrilth exclaimed. When Guardian? When are you coming?

As my King is so fond of saying Syrilth, how bout we start this party right now?

Syrilth and Tharua bolted upward even further when the deafening explosions made the whole mountain shudder violently.

Tharua! The Guards! Syrilth screamed out.

For the first time in her three thousand years of life Syrilth reared her head back and let out a mighty roar of anger as she unleashed a stream of flame from her maw that was filled not with despair and frustration.

But hope and freedom.

Tharua paused for only a second before adding her own stream of lethal, searing flame next to her sister's and seven of the True people began screaming in unimaginable agony as the flesh peeled from their bones in barely ten seconds flat.

The battle for their freedom had begun.

APO PRIME MAIN PALACE ESTATE

Armetus entered the Main Palace Estate in almost a dead run. The alert had gone out quietly, and he could see the numerous *Durcunusaan* and other troops moving quickly about the Estate. Armetus watched as the *Durcunusaan* Commander moved up to him from the King's office.

"I am Commander Bren Director." The *Durcunusaan* reported. "We have secured the grounds of the Main Estate here Director."

Armetus nodded. "The Island Palace?"

"I spoke with the detachment commander there four hours ago. I revealed nothing to him but he reports the grounds were quiet." Bren answered.

"And... and Gorgo is there?" Armetus asked.

Bren nodded. "Yes. Director... may I ask why this alert has been called. The only individuals on the Island Palace are members of the King's family."

Armetus took the Commander's arm and pulled him into the King's office quickly. Armetus touched the panel and waited until the door had closed before turning fully back to him. "Commander... there is a High Coven agent on that Island. A High Coven agent posing as a member of the King's family. We have reason to believe it is Gorgo." He saw Bren's eyes widen.

"Gorgo... but... but how?" Bren gasped.

"We believe the woman posing as Gorgo is a clone." Armetus spoke. "How she has been able to survive this long without detection is something we will leave for another time to discover. Right now... we need to figure out a way to get her off that island. The assassins that came to Apo Prime two weeks ago have dropped off the grid... we can not find them. I believe this clone of Gorgo is now directing them."

"What... what is their purpose?" Bren asked.

“We believe that either For’mya or the young woman Sadi is the ultimate target, but for the High Coven to attempt something like this now, and so openly, it stands to reason they will kill anyone they come across.” Armetus spoke. “Including the King’s son... and Queen Aricia’s mother. We must prevent that... for if that happens no one will be able to stop the King from declaring total war against the High Coven. And I fear... I fear even the Senate would back him in such a course of action.”

“What... what do you require of me Director?” Bren asked. “My men stand ready.”

“We must...”

The COM unit built into Bren’s armor beeped and he reached up to touch it. “Go ahead.”

“Commander... we’ve lost contact with those on the island.” The voice spoke.

“Try another frequency!” Bren demanded.

“That’s just it Commander... the signal is there... but all channels are being jammed.” The voice replied.

“Jammed?” Bren demanded. “Who could jam our transmissions?”

“They are making their move!” Armetus declared. “We must get to...”

The night sky lit up in a flash of yellow orange and the echo of the massive explosion rolled across the lake until it hit the main palace and shattered every window in the building, including the large windows in the King’s office. Bren and Armetus both ducked and turned as glass pieces whizzed by their heads showering them with shards. Armetus and Bren recovered quickly and could only stare across the lake as the explosion shook even the ground they were standing on.

Armetus’s eyes were wide. “It’s begun!” He gasped.

ROLTAR SIX

Cha’talla squatted alongside the bed in the suite they had been staying in, his small dark eyes gazing upon Esther’s sleeping form. Her face was calm and at peace and her soft lips were slightly parted. Soft red lips that Cha’talla had kissed for hours the previous evening. The silk like sheet barely covered her lush figure, the remaining sheets and blankets on the bed tossed wildly about.

They had returned to the suite after their fierce coupling in the tavern, and incredibly Cha’talla found that Esther had not lost any of the lust they had shared in that dangerous moment. Almost immediately upon entering the suite, Esther had begun pulling at his clothes, and Cha’talla could only lean against the wall closest to the door as Esther enveloped him within her velvety throat. That had begun a full night of exploration and intense passion and desire. Desire that Cha’talla had never felt coursing through him. Esther was a pureblood vampire female, and her body was divine in every way as far as he was concerned, and this may have played some part in the excitement he had felt. However... he had done things with Esther that he had never considered before, even with his own mate who was now dead, and a female of his species that was more of an arranged mating than anything else.

Cha’talla had taken great relish in exploring her supple body, teasing the nipples of her large breasts with his own vampire fangs, even as his large hands stroked her flesh in places he had only ever dreamed about touching a pureblood female before. Esther had not been idle either. He had watched as she discovered his body in intimate detail, exploring his gray flesh with her lips and tongue in a way he never thought would happen, and making tingles of desire ripple through him wherever she placed her small delicate hands. He had taken her in more ways than he thought was possible, Esther not at all shy or reserved when it came to what she wanted. And what she wanted was him, her some whispers of love and devotion filling his small ears even as he stroked into her lush body. She had accepted him fully, all fifteen inches of his cock buried within her body. Even as Esther clutched wildly at his body, Cha’talla had lavished her flesh with kisses and nibbles of his own as he drove into her fertile depths. Her pussy had clutched at him constantly, driving him to heights of pleasure he had not known could exist, until he would finally swell within her and explode.

Nine times Cha’talla had erupted into her depths, twice more while buried with the velvety depths of her throat. They had shared blood on five of those occasions, until the last time had left them both broken and exhausted, and she had curled up on his chest, his arms wrapping around her protectively until they both drifted into a content sleep.

Now Cha'talla could only stare at her breathtaking face as she slept with a look of supreme satisfaction on her elegant features. He reached up slowly and used two of his fingers to caress her flawless skin. Esther's face crinkled up into a smile and her hands reached up to take his large hand in hers and bring his fingers to her lips where she kissed them softly. She held his hand then, bringing it to her chest and holding it tight.

"We... we must talk Esther." Cha'talla spoke softly.

"Are you going to tell me that after last night I will not be going with you?" She spoke. "That I would not fit in where you are going? Are you going to try and convince me I would be better off on my own?" Esther rolled onto her side, keeping his hand in its place on the skin of her breasts and met his eyes. "Is that what we need to talk about Cha'talla?"

"No... that is not what I was going to say." He spoke confidently now. "You will go with me Esther Saira. No matter where that might be. I just want you to know that things will not be easy."

"Most good things never are easy Immortal." Esther spoke softly. "If I am with you Cha'talla... I can face anything. I'm quite capable of taking care of myself."

Cha'talla couldn't help the grin that split his face. "Yes... I have seen that over these past days. I do not know what the... what the future holds for us Esther." He spoke. "But I am willing to go into that future with you at my side if you will have me."

Esther sat up slowly, holding the sheet around her body as she scooted to the edge of the bed and used her long legs to pull him closer to her. She allowed the sheet to fall as she pressed her chest to his upper body and took his face in her hands.

"You have no idea how your words make me sing Cha'talla." She spoke softly. "I will do whatever you ask of me. I will..."

Cha'talla shook his head. "No." He spoke quickly looking at her. "This... this will not be... I must be different Esther. I can not live my life in the old way. I must find a new path... and I believe I have found that with you."

Esther smiled brilliantly. "Then we will take that path together Cha'talla." She spoke. We..."

The chime on the door to the suite interrupted her and they both turned to look out into the living area of the suite. Esther saw Cha'talla tense immediately.

"Would they know... would they know what suite we are in?" Esther asked him. "Those of your people who would come here?"

Cha'talla nodded slowly. "They would not ring the chime however." He spoke coming to his feet. He watched Esther roll nimbly to the other side of the bed and drop the sheet, exposing her lush body to his eyes without regard as she began to pull on her High Coven uniform. He moved to the small table and picked up the assault rifle, turning to gently toss the hand blaster to Esther as she stuffed her feet into boots.

Esther checked the charge of the weapon and then looked at him. "I'm ready." She spoke.

"I will open the door... blur past whoever is there and knock their weapons aside if you see any. Do not stop in the doorway, and continue to the opposite side of the door." Cha'talla spoke.

"I can fight Cha'talla!" She hissed at him.

"Of that I have no doubts Esther." He replied. "But I will not lose you to something foolish so soon after discovering you. Do as I ask. It will be enough for me to act."

Esther took a deep breath and nodded.

"Are you sure this is the correct suite?" The cloaked figure asked.

The second cloaked figure nodded his head quickly. "This is the one the plan called for." He replied. "I confirmed it with the manager. They have been here for three days now."

"Why would he have a pureblood with him?" The second voice asked. "And a female no less."

"I do not know." The first one spoke as he lifted his hand to ring the door chime again.

He looked up suddenly when the door slid aside before he touched the panel. He saw a blur of motion which could only be a pureblood blurring in motion and he reached for his weapon. The female stopped in the doorway, and he had a flash of intense beauty before her booted foot snapped out and impacted the barrel of his weapon and sent it flying. As he reached for her, she blurred out of his reach and two very large hands clamped

onto his wrist and dragged him physically into the room, tossing him across the room as easily as if he was a ragdoll.

Cha'talla took two steps into the corridor as the second hooded Immortal assailant was reaching for his weapon and hit him with a straight right hand finger jab into the throat area. It wasn't enough to kill the attacker, but it was enough to bring him up short gasping for air and allowing Cha'talla to grasp his arm and launch him through the air into the suite. His keen eyes detected Esther blurring again even as the first Immortal scrambled to get to his feet. Cha'talla watched impressed as her blow struck his jaw and sent hi reeling around in a circle, dropping him to the floor once more.

Cha'talla drew his assault rifle and slammed his booted foot onto the chest of the second Immortal while jabbing the barrel of the weapon into the Immortal's throat.

"I have had enough of people trying to kill me." Cha'talla snapped. "Now... my own people resort to such treachery! Show me your face before I kill you Immortal!"

"Cha'talla... they... they said you were... they said you were dead!" The cloaked Immortal gasped out, reaching up to pull back the cloak.

Cha'talla's eyes grew a little wider. "T'lolt!" He spoke in a stunned voice.

The second Immortal dared not move for the pureblood vampire female was perched on his chest with her hand blaster tucked neatly against the side of his neck. He glared at her beautiful face and saw nothing but hatred and anger directed at him. Almost as if she was angry for what she thought they were going to do to his father.

"Father!" Fash'ka blurted out seeing the female's expression change only slightly.

Cha'talla would recognize that voice anywhere and he looked up quickly and saw Esther sitting on his son's chest, her weapon in a very uncomfortable spot. "Fash'ka?" He gasped out once more.

"Father!" Fash'ka spat. "Tell this pureblood to get off my chest before I hurt her!"

Esther smiled and jammed the hand blaster tighter into his throat. "Are you so sure you could accomplish that Immortal?" She asked.

Cha'talla stepped over to her quickly and placed his hand upon her shoulder. "He is my son Fash'ka Esther." He spoke gently. "And the other is my brother T'lolt."

Esther looked up at him quickly, and slowly withdrew the hand blaster. She got to her feet and immediately pressed her body close to Cha'talla, feeling his arm loop around her waist possessively. She watched as the two Immortals got to their feet gazing at her and Cha'talla with looks of stunned shock.

"Father is it..." Fash'ka asked.

"It is I son." Cha'talla spoke watching as T'lolt stepped over to stand close to them.

"They said... they said the High Lord killed you!" T'lolt spoke. "That he tossed you from his office Cha'talla. How is this possible?"

"It is possible because of Esther." He answered pulling her even closer to him and feeling her hand press to his chest in a show of affection. "They told me all of you were dead." He spoke. "Lady Aikiro said all of you were dead."

"Moran helped me to escape father." Fash'ka spoke. "Just as you asked him."

Cha'talla turned to T'lolt. "You were on Lycavore brother."

T'lolt nodded. "Three of our own people attacked me and my sons." He replied. "They killed my sons and left me for dead."

Cha'talla shook his head. "Then how?"

T'lolt reached under his cloak and withdrew the Spartan Nehtes slowly. He extended it completely causing Esther and Cha'talla to jump in surprise. "I owe my life and a debt to the Lycavorian King my brother. It is he who gave me the blood I needed to survive. He also gave me weapons and Riyal to make my way off Lycavore. I owe... I owe my continued existence to a man who was our enemy."

"Was?" Esther asked quickly.

T'lolt nodded. "I have had much time to reflect on what has occurred over the years. I believe our loyalties have been given to the wrong people these millennia brother, no matter what they may have done for us."

Fash'ka nodded. "I believe this as well father." He spoke. "Moran did as you asked him, but he is no friend to us. Not anymore."

Cha'talla nodded slowly. "I have come to this conclusion as well." He spoke.

Fash'ka looked at Esther. "Father why do you travel with a pureblood?" He asked. "They are the reason we have been... they..."

Cha'talla shook his head quickly. "Not Esther Fash'ka." He said quickly.

"How can you say that?" Fash'ka demanded.

Cha'talla met his son's eyes. "I can say that because Esther is the one who saved my life." He replied. "And I have taken her as my mate."

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

APO PRIME

ISLAND PALACE ESTATE

The attack had been meticulously timed and planned.

The High Coven agent had gotten them onto the island hidden deep in her personal Lifter. No one thought to search her Lifter when she had arrived because of who she was and they had slipped over the side of the water craft at full dark. The clone agent had set the dozen explosives charges in perfect unison and synchronicity while they remained hidden on the far side of the island inside an old cave. The clone agent had told them when to initiate the attack, and that they had to blow the barracks and then kill the elfin concubine For'mya first and foremost. Their plan had been utterly perfect and the results all but guaranteed. They had discussed it over and over, every detail down to the last second.

That was until the Unsaurs that were to blow the barracks and initiate the ambush did so exactly thirty seconds before the rest of them were in position. The water of the lake had seeped into his timepiece and altered the display enough he could not see it correctly in the night sky. The explosions had been perfect however, all but twelve of the one hundred and thirty of the sleeping Spartans that normally guarded the island caught within the confines of the barracks and command center when the bombs went off. The explosions brought the entire structure down on the Spartans within, effectively burying alive that were in the command center. The remaining twelve were eliminated easily as they were within the concussive wave that followed the explosions and rendered helpless almost from the start.

Ultimately it was those thirty seconds that would be most costly in the end, for it was the elfin concubine For'mya who was intended to die in those thirty seconds; as it was determined she would be the most dangerous.

It was a testament to For'mya's elfin speed and reflexes that she came out of the large bed even as the first shattering wave of the explosion blew out almost every window and door facing the barracks and Lifter Docks. The bedrooms were on the back side of the palace itself and therefore safe from the flying glass and debris of the explosion. Without Martin Leonidas or Aricia in the bed with her, and considering what was obviously going on, For'mya had taken to going to bed fully clothed.

This night it would save her life.

She was stuffing her feet into her boots when the balcony door smashed open and the bulk of the seven foot tall Unsaurs filled the doorway, bursting into the place where she, Martin Leonidas and Aricia found the most peace and happiness, his rifle sweeping across the expanse of the royal bedroom and spitting death as it moved. As an elf For'mya was fast, as an elf that was now wolf, she was even faster and considerably stronger. She leaped from the floor, allowing her new found wolf strength to propel her up and over the massive circular bed, and moving in front of the wave of projectile death tearing into the furniture and walls as the Unsaurs attempted to track her. She landed precisely where she intended and sprinted toward the Unsaurs from the side even as he tried to bring his weapon to bear on the speedy female elf that was his primary target. Their first mistake had been triggering the ambush too soon. Their second was that the clone agent never informed them the female elf was also now a wolf. His beady eyes grew wider as she closed on him and he realized what she had become. While she may have been newly turned, For'mya had been receiving instruction from Dasha, Deia and even the clone who called herself Gorgo.

No one would ever know why the clone failed to give this information to the assassins. No one ever cared long enough to find out. The Unsaar did the only thing he could think of.

“Wolf! She is a wolf!” He announced in his implanted communications unit.

Since she had been going to bed fully clothed, For'mya had also been going to bed with the gift she had received several months ago from Dysea. It had been For'mya's birthing day and after the thunderous party Martin, Aricia and the others had given her, it was also the first night that she found herself intimate with Martin's elfin Queen. While For'mya would never choose Dysea over Aricia, she most definitely relished the time she spent exploring Dysea's powerful and deliciously tattooed body and the time Dysea spent exploring hers. They had brought each other to several passionate orgasms while Martin Leonidas played with Aricia and Anja, and then they had cuddled in each other's arms talking of Isabella, many different things and the future as sleep took them. For'mya had changed in so many ways since surrendering to her feelings for Martin Leonidas, and her relationship with him had opened her dark brown eyes to pleasures she had only dreamed about. The most intense times were with Aricia and Anja without a doubt, but there was no denying the strong connection between her and Dysea. And now since that last night together in this very bedroom, the connection between her and Isabella as well.

The gift Dysea had given her now filled her hand, and six inches of perfectly weighted Shukur fighting knife, balanced for For'mya alone, slashed in the moonlight with every bit of elfin and wolf strength For'mya could bring to bear.

The Unsaar assassin felt For'mya flash behind him even as the excruciating pain lanced through his huge body starting at his neck. His eyes were wide as his hands dropped the rifle and reached up to his thick neck which was now spitting his dark green blood in huge fountains across the room. The moment his rifle hit the floor, the elfin female stepped in close and slashed out viciously again, her dark brown eyes now changed to that of a wolf and her long wolf fangs clearly visible in the light of the room. The Unsaar assassin didn't feel the bite of the blade this time, didn't feel the peeling of his thick skin as the blade sliced through it like paper, and he didn't feel the razor sharp blade sever the single large artery providing his smallish brain with much needed and vital blood. He did however see For'mya strike out with her empty hand in an open heel palm blow. Considering how much taller he was than For'mya's five foot seven frame, the blow normally would not have even affected him regardless of her elfin strength. Yet now, combined with the crushing power of the wolf within her, the blow struck just above the middle of his abdomen and fractured the thick bony plate that protected his internal organs. He may not have felt the actual blow, but he could not deny the lancing pain that rushed through his upper body internally as she hit him. His wide eyes grew even wider as his now trembling body went sailing backwards, even as he tried to stem the flow of blood from his neck. It wouldn't save him in the least as he impacted against the far wall and fell to a sitting position, his huge heart pumping the blood out of his body faster than he could attempt to stop it.

Aurith! For'mya screamed out in Mindvoice. *Where are you?*

I am coming from the Dragon Cave! Elynth is already with Androcles and Dasha! For'mya... what is happening? Where are you?

They are making their move Aurith! I am moving from our bed chambers! Meet me near the south entrance!

I will be there my bonded sister! Aurith exclaimed.

For'mya didn't pause and turned to the balcony which the Unsaar had entered through and using her new wolf abilities she leaped gracefully from the balcony in a single purpose.

Protect Androcles and Dasha.

The Unsaar would be found later in a thick pool of his own blood very much dead.

Sadi had a little more time to react.

Like For'mya, she had been sleeping with her clothes on, and as the first explosions were echoing across the palace grounds Sadi was out of the bed and pulling on her boots. Quite surprisingly to her mind, Sadi's first thoughts were not of herself or escape, they were of the boy Prince Androcles and the dragon hatchling that had so quickly and without question befriended her. Armetus had given her a smaller hand blaster that was considerably more powerful than it appeared. She had fired it twice on the island range to get a feel for the

weapon and discovered that it was a laser based weapon, and the single piercing beam was hideously powerful. The only downside to the weapon is that the power cell would give her only two or three shots before being depleted.

Sadi was not helpless. She was in excellent physical condition and had received combat training from some of the best High Coven trainers available in The Wilds once she had been forced into her role as courier and low level Coven agent. She had absorbed the training like a sponge, intent on using her skills to never be caught so that her actions would never harm her father. As she grabbed the small weapon from the table she could hear the firing on the second level where she was. The deep throated sound of the heavy weapon hammered in her head and she knew instantly it was coming from For'mya's room. As she moved to the door that opened onto the promenade of rooms in the palace she clutched the blaster tightly in her hands. Where were the Spartan guards she thought to herself? The explosions had come from that direction, but surely all of them could not be dead. The firing in the room she knew to be For'mya's ceased and it was deathly quiet now. The explosions had blown out the windows and doors on the northwest side of the palace, and as she reached up to manually slid the door open a crack, the scent of burning fabric reached her sensitive nose. Through the small crack she could see many of the satin drapes and some of the furniture in the main greeting room burning and casting off an eerie glow.

Sadi's head snapped around in the darkness as her wolf ears picked up the soft scraping on the balcony of her room. Her jungle green eyes changed now to her wolf persona and they focused on the balcony door. Sadi shifted her body slightly away from the inner doorway and further into the darkness just as the double doors smashed inward under the force of a booted foot. Sadi's eyes closed in gut wrenching fear as the Bo'yak assassin burst into the room, his assault rifle laying down a blazing trail of projectiles as he swept his weapon across the room. Sadi shuddered as she felt several rounds punch into the wall above her and she tried to push herself further into the shadows and hide.

The Bo'yak finished sweeping the room with his weapon and allowed his red eyes to cover the room quickly looking for the female that was his target. The bed was empty, the sheets rumped and now filled with half a dozen smoking holes. As he stepped fully into the room he stopped and made to change to a full magazine of lethal projectiles. The Bo'yak people were a violent species with pinkish colored skin and blunt facial features. Their noses were overly large and appeared pushed back into their skulls. Considering the size of their noses most seemed to think that they had a very good sense of smell. That was not the case at all because the shape and bluntness did not allow scent glands to be housed in their nasal cavities. Their eyes however were very clear and acute. Their species was not overly large in size, most of them living several hundred years naturally, and spread across three planets in The Wilds. Their sight and exceptional stealth skills were what made them perhaps the most dangerous assassins in the universe.

However... until this night they had never gone after targets within Lycavorian Union space. The wolf dogs were far too strong and hard to kill in their opinion, and you had to pay a Bo'yak four times his normal fee to accept a contract against a single Lycavorian. This assassin was receiving double that amount now for this attack against the King's island estate. None of them would have taken the contract knowing the big wolf bastard King was here. They had planned it perfectly and with the traitor's help were now easily sweeping through the royal grounds uncontested because they had wiped out the Spartan garrison. The Bo'yak's eyes darted to the side of the room as he detected the shadow huddled in the corner. He could hear soft whimpering from the shadow and he smiled as his victim cowered before him. Perhaps he had overestimated the courage and backbone of these Lycavorians. The attack had been triggered sooner than he had suspected and he was still making his way to his target's room when the explosions had shaken the ground. This only spurred him along faster and he had heard the firing from where he knew the main room was as he scrambled faster and got to his assigned balcony only seconds after the concussion wave of the explosions had passed by. His red eyes grew a little wider as he was seating the fresh magazine.

The whimpering had stopped and he heard a low growl escape from the shadow as it rose to a medium height. His hands worked faster as the shadow came into view and he saw the blond hair and the glowering green wolf eyes. He watched as if what happened was now in slow motion. He watched that female bring up her hand and in her hand was some type of hand weapon. His red eyes saw a bluish flash and the thin beam of blue light erupted from the barrel of the weapon. He could almost predict where that thin beam of light would strike even as it reached across the room and punched through his chest in a blink, burning a fist sized opening clean

through his body and fusing two of his three lungs permanently closed. His hands suddenly wouldn't work and his red eyes watched as the young female wolf step closer still, lifted the strange weapon a little higher and fired once more.

Sadi had stepped from the shadows swathed in fear as she lifted the hand blaster. She had practiced enough and knew enough of weapons to at least aim towards the thickest part of a target, and that is what she did when she fired the first time. The moment she saw the blue beam pierce the chest of the Bo'yak, her demeanor changed from one of fear to one of anger. Anger for what the High Coven had done to her, what they had forced her to become. What her step mother had forced her to do. Anger that these animals were here to kill a woman who had become a friend to her in her time of need and a boy child and dragon that had touched her in a way she never thought possible.

Sadi lifted the hand blaster a second time, her aim perfect and her finger convulsed on the trigger, sending another beam of bright blue laser fire burning through the Bo'yak's head just above his pig looking nose. His body went rigid, the rifle dropping from his hands and as Sadi watched his body slumped to the floor with a smoking hole where his face had once been. Sadi pulled the trigger again anger pulsing through her, but nothing happened. This fact snapped her out of her state and she looked at the weapon. The power cell had been depleted because of the power of her two shots. Sadi looked around the room quickly and tossed the hand blaster to the floor. She bent down and retrieved the assault rifle from the dead Bo'yak's hands before moving for the door into the eerily lit interior of the island palace.

"I don't care what you have to do!" Bren screamed out savagely. "You get me a line of communication to the Island Palace!" He tapped the COM unit on his armor. "Famus... what is your status?"

"We're loading the last of our detachment now!" The *Durcunusaan*'s voice echoed in reply. "We'll be moving across in three minutes!"

"You will be going in blindly Famus!" Bren snapped. "Our spotters report that the barracks building on the island is destroyed and burning! They must have taken out the secondary command post for we have no communications either!"

"Understood!" Famus shouted from where he was motioning frantically at *Durcunusaan* and normal Spartan troops.

"Come in on the west side! The explosions have decimated the north face of the palace. No window or door remains! There are sounds of weapons fire from within the palace!" Bren was beside himself as General Vengal burst into the main palace with Vistr hot on his heels. "The Generals are here! They will be assuming command! Get your men loaded and moving across Famus!"

"What of *Mjolnir's Hand* Bren!" Famus screamed out. "Why have they not responded?"

"The King dispatched them several weeks ago to begin to let people see them!" Bren replied moving to the shattered doorway of the balcony and looking across the lake. "We are on our own Famus... we..."

Thud!

Thud!

Bren winced from the concussive force so close to the ground and then the immense shadow blotted out the moonlight for a single moment. His eyes grew wide and a vicious smile crossed his face.

"Famus... the King's Captain Andreus is inbound to the island on his dragon Doranthe!" Bren screamed out. "Leave now Famus! Forget who is not loaded! Leave now man! With Andreus supporting you... hit them full on! Take no prisoners for the King would not!"

"As you order Commander!"

The explosions had shaken Andreus from his bed instantly. He was pulling himself from Kmyla's warmth before the echo of the explosions had faded. One look out the window of his home to the east and he knew what was happening. Kmyla was rolling her pregnant body from the bed even as Andreus reached for his uniform.

Doranthe my brother!

I will be there in thirty seconds Andreus! The reply was instantaneous.

Andreus had never moved so fast in his entire life. Martin had never removed the title that Andreus carried as the King's Captain of the Guard, even after Torma came into his life. He had given Andreus the choice to become a member of *Mjolnir's Hand*, and the day he had bonded with Doranthe was the finest of his still young life, second only to the birth of his first born son with his elfin mate. He owed all that he was to Martin Leonidas... including his very life and that of his mate. Andreus had sworn a private oath to himself that while he lived and breathed nothing bad would ever befall his beloved sister Aricia again. When she had given her Soulmate his first born son Androcles, that oath extended without question to the boy.

"Kmyla!" Andreus barked as he stuffed his feet into his boots. He looked up and saw her burst back into the bedroom carrying his Nehtes and his P190.

Andreus finished lacing up his boots and stood up looking at her. "My elfin beauty." He spoke softly moving to where she stood.

Kmyla smiled. "Go my husband." She spoke. "Your mother and nephew need you now! As does your King's concubine and his mother! Go! I will tend our son and contact General Vengal or whoever is monitoring from the main palace. Go!"

Andreus kissed her hard before turning and moving for the small patio at the back of his home. He watched as Doranthe's huge brownish red bulk settled to the patio just as he was coming out.

Andreus what is happening?

The cowards are attacking my family Doranthe! Andreus spat. *They are attacking my family when they think they are helpless! I will now teach them never to attack the family of a Spartan!*

Doranthe let out a trumpet of rage and nodded his head as Andreus climbed easily onto his back even without a saddle. *Then we go!* He bellowed as he flexed his thick legs and propelled them into the night sky.

"I don't care what Fleet Command says!" Armetus screamed. "You contact Admiral Ceneu Major and you tell him Armetus says to lock down the *nubous* planet! I don't want so much as an escape pod to leave this planet until I say it is clear!"

"Understood sir!"

"Activate every *anse* garrison we have! I want them blanketing every spaceport on this planet! If they do not have proper authorization and travel papers I want them arrested! Do it Major! Do it now! And where the hell is Admiral Riall? He was supposed to meet me an hour ago!"

"I don't know sir! He isn't answering his COM unit. We've been trying for the past two hours!"

Armetus's eyes went wide. "Send a detachment to his quarters! Now! Full load!" He cursed under his breath. "No one that even looks remotely like Lady Gorgo is allowed to leave the surface! Tell Ceneu I don't care what he has to do! Mobilize the entire *nubous* planet if he has too!"

"Lady Gorgo sir?" The man gasped.

"Just do it, Major! And have Admiral Ceneu contact me the moment Riall is found!" Armetus didn't let the man reply and cut off the transmission turning to Vengal and Vistr as they approached.

"She must have got to Riall somehow." Armetus spoke. "It's the only explanation."

"Bren has spotted Andreus flying with Doranthe and heading for the island!" Vistr barked. "Famus is leading eighty *Durcunusaan* and Spartans across in four Lifters! They will be there in eighteen minutes! Andreus in nine!"

Armetus's eyes glittered with savageness and helplessness both. "In nine minutes this will be over with. For'mya and the others will win, or they will be dead. If that is the case gentlemen you had better prepare the entire Union army, because I can guarantee you King Leonidas will take them all the way to the High Coven home world if they kill his son and concubine."

Vistr and Vengal looked at each other.

For'mya had her arm poised to strike out with the Shakur blade as she hugged the corner of the palace entrance into the main foyer. Her nose twitched and her new wolf ears detected the softest scrap of talons on the granite and she turned slowly.

Aurith?

For'mya felt an overwhelming sense of relief when she spotted the meter and a half tall hatchling appear from the large row of bushes to her right. Aurith's eyes were bright as she darted across the small opening to the wall and For'mya dropped to one knee. Aurith closed her soft yellow eyes as For'mya's hands found her snout and they both felt the light blue psychic shield activate suddenly.

Oh my sister... I am so happy you are safe. For'mya spoke.

Aurith nodded her head up and down, her wings twitching softly at For'mya's touch. There was no denying their bond to anyone now, not as the psychic shield finished extending around them both encasing them in the protective field. It would not be as strong as those who had been bonded for any length of time, but it would have to do.

And I you For'mya.

Dasha? Gorgo? Sadi?

Aurith opened her eyes. *Dasha has Androcles and Elynth with her in the armored room. I have not seen King Martin's mother or Sadi.*

I heard firing coming from her room above me. For'mya spoke. *By the gods I hope she is not hurt. She...*

For'mya! Sadi's voice screamed out with Mindvoice causing both Aurith and For'mya to cringe in pain and surprise.

Sadi? Do not shout child! For'mya barked out wincing slightly at Sadi's less than stellar control within Mindvoice. *Where are you? Are you hurt?*

No! A Bo'yak smashed his way into my room and tried to kill me but he was too slow and I was angry! Sadi answered firmly.

For'mya couldn't help but grin cruelly at the steel in Sadi's words and she pressed back against the wall trying to get her racing heart under control. *Where are you child?*

I don't know. I came down the west stairs and slipped into what appears to be an office. I'm hiding behind some furniture. I am frightened For'mya! Sadi spoke. *I have... I have never killed anyone before.*

Stay where you are child! For'mya spoke calmly. *Remain hidden... I will attempt to find you and we will make our way to the panic room. We will be safe there until help comes.*

Why isn't the garrison responding? Sadi asked.

The explosions must have killed or injured most of them. For'mya replied. *It is the only explanation, or else they would be swarming over the palace by now.*

For'mya! Elynth's voice burst into the conversation now, loud, clear and powerful. *I will bring Sadi to the room.*

Elynth no... you must stay with Androcles and Dasha! For'mya spoke. *They must be protected at all costs.*

It is Androcles who is telling me to find Sadi. Elynth answered. *She is not far... he can feel her only a few dozen meters from us. We have activated our shield and Dasha will guard the door and I will return with Sadi. I have not seen the King's mother!*

Elynth... Androcles is only eight months old! He can not possibly be able to extend a psychic shield. For'mya echoed in disbelief.

Would you like to come see it For'mya? Dasha's voice stated in stunned tones. *I'm looking at it clear as day.*

For'mya shook her head. *Elynth... there have to be more of them!* For'mya declared. *You must be careful!*

Androcles and I will not fail! Elynth declared. *Sadi... I am coming for you Kerta Gai.*

Elynth please be careful. Sadi spoke.

For'mya looked at Aurith. *We must find Gorgo!* She spoke.

I am ready sister!

Gorgo! Gorgo where are you? For'mya called out within Mindvoice.

The Clone/Gorgo stabbed down viciously with the long bladed knife into the chest of the wide eyed Spartan beneath her, his half burned body unwilling to respond to his commands and his brain asking why the King's mother was killing him.

The Clone/Gorgo turned quickly wrenching the knife free at the sounds of approaching feet and she saw the two Bo'yak dart from the cover of the trees to her position.

"Damn you!" She hissed at them. "You triggered the attack too soon! Not everyone was in position!"

"The Unsaar did that!" One of the Bo'yak exclaimed. "I can not reach our commander on the internal implants! He shouted something that she was a wolf now!" He leveled his weapon at Clone/Gorgo. "You have betrayed us!"

Clone/Gorgo knocked the barrel of the weapon away without fear. "I warned you this needed to be perfect!" Clone/Gorgo stated. "Your commander is most likely dead. He is the one who went after the elf bitch. Had you not triggered the attack early it would not matter that she is now wolf and he would not be dead!"

"What do we do? We can still complete the mission!"

"There is firing on the second floor of the palace where the sleeping rooms are, but not for several moments now." Clone/Gorgo spoke. "This is the last of the Spartans that survived the blasts. I have killed the others! Where is your other team?"

"Converging inside the palace!" The apparent leader of this two person team replied. "They believe they have cornered the blond Lycavorian in one of the lower offices!"

"If she is there then she killed the one sent to remove her!" Clone/Gorgo spoke. "You two move to the south and approach the palace from the dragon cave. We must kill them before they reach the panic room he installed when they first began living here. If they reach that room we will never complete this mission!"

"What will you do?"

Clone/Gorgo lifted the bloody knife. "I will play the part I have played for so many years. Loving mother to the King."

CITY SHIP 41

THREE POINT FOUR HOURS FROM APO PRIME

The *STRIKER DT* was securely attached to the side of City Ship 41, the enormous five plus kilometer monstrosity cutting through the stars smoothly even though the ship was easily thirty thousand years old if not more. Since this was Martin's personal DT, the equipment was state of the art, to include the medical equipment aboard which Anja was currently using to give Lisisa a full exam in the privacy of the partially converted rear section. While she had grown in power by leaps and bounds since discovering her abilities, there were some things she trusted to the advanced medical equipment they had more than her own skill. Yuriko stood next to the bed Lisisa sat on; holding her hand and staring at the young woman whom she had called sister and searched for so many years for.

"Where... where is my father?" Lisisa asked softly.

Anja looked at her and smiled as she lowered the powerful body scanner. "He's coming Lisisa. He went to get Gorgo."

Lisisa looked at Anja and then Yuriko. She let out a deep sigh and shook her head. "I am sorry. I think I am still trying to process that we are no longer on Lycavore. That I am... that I am actually free. That..."

Anja looked at her. "That your father has finally found you?" She asked.

Lisisa nodded with a small smile. "Yes." She looked at Anja. "How long have you... how long have you been his mate?"

Anja met her eyes. "Officially or unofficially?" She asked.

Lisisa looked confused. "What?"

"It's a very long story... not all of it good." Anja spoke in reply. "In my heart I believe I fell in the love with Martin the first time I saw him. It just took me a while to figure that out. If you mean together without hesitation or regret... two years now... with many more to come I'm sure."

Lisisa reached out to touch Anja's abdomen and stopped as she looked at her. "May... may I?"

Anja placed her hand over Lisisa's. "Of course Lisisa. She is your sister after all." Anja spoke.

Lisisa placed her hand gently on Anja's firm, muscular abdomen. Even through the fleet uniform that she now wore Lisisa could tell Anja was in superb physical condition. She smiled brightly as she felt the small sense of life within Anja's womb and she looked up. "It's almost as if I can... as if I can feel her." She said.

Anja nodded. "Your Mindvoice abilities were substantial before we found you Lisisa." Anja said. "Now that you have bonded with Jeth and have begun to fully realize your potential, they will only grow. We will help you to harness this. You will never be alone again Lisisa, I promise you that."

The small beeping caused Anja to turn her head and she moved to the medical monitor as Lisisa and Yuriko watched. She reached out to touch the screen gently and then looked at Lisisa. "Lisisa... did they ever do any kind of surgery on you while you were on Lycavore?" She asked.

Lisisa met her eyes. "Surgery? No... never. They took blood from me many times, not that I had much choice."

"What about before you came to be there?" Anja asked. "Nothing?"

"No... they always left me to heal on my own by shifting or taking blood they gave me. Most of it always very foul tasting to begin with." Lisisa answered. "Why?"

"Yes Firecracker... why?" Martin's voice came from behind them.

Anja turned and saw Martin standing there with Gorgo holding tightly to his hand. She turned back to the monitor and turned it slightly so that they could all see it. She pointed to the small dark object which appeared to be lodged between Lisisa's ribs. Martin's eyes narrowed as he looked at the monitor. He tilted his slightly.

"Ok... what exactly am I looking at?" He asked.

"What is that?" Lisisa asked. "Next to my fifth rib?" Anja looked at her surprise in her eyes. Lisisa smiled shyly and shrugged. "I... over the years I have learned quite a bit about my body. It has come in handy."

"It's metallic in nature." Anja spoke with a smile as she turned back to the monitor and adjusted the controls. "It appears to be fused directly to her fifth rib as she said. It's..."

"It's a Hyper Resonant Capsule." Yuriko's voice gasped out.

They all turned to look at her. "A Hyper who?" Martin asked.

Yuriko moved around the table Lisisa sat on. "The High Coven used them on Earth in the first batches of elf clones. They are... they are Hyper Resonant Capsules. When triggered they will release different items into the blood stream of their victims."

"Victims?" Anja asked.

Yuriko nodded. "They were used to execute clones that might have escaped the holding pens on Earth or gotten out of hand." Yuriko spoke. "With the elves they released a toxic poison into their bloodstream that killed them almost instantly. You must take it out Anja! Quickly! If it activates..."

Lisisa eyes were wide in fear now. "Take it out!" She barked. "Take it out!" Martin stepped over to her quickly, pulling her into his arms.

"Calm down Lisisa." He said softly. "Nothing is going to hurt you. I promise you."

"What a minute!" Anja said quickly. "Lisisa is part Lycavorian... and part vampire. Her Lycavorian DNA is by far the more dominant of the two. There isn't a known poison in the universe that their immune system will not defeat. This capsule appears to be fused directly into her bone. If we were on Apo Prime I could take it out easily... but the *STRIKER* isn't equipped with the advanced equipment needed for that lover."

"You can take it out though right?" Martin asked.

Anja nodded. "It's a simple procedure yes... but even with my healing properties it won't be painless."

"What do you mean?" Yuriko asked.

"I'll need to use a laser scalpel." Anja spoke. "A very small incision... but there will be some blood until I get this thing out. It won't be terribly painful... I can give you something for that... but you will feel it somewhat when I pull it off your bone."

Lisisa looked at her. "I have dealt with pain all of my life." She spoke. "A little more will not bother me. I have not survived this long in order to have my bitch mother take everything from me before I have a chance to live!" She spat. "Take it out... please."

Anja looked at Martin and saw him nod his head. "Then let's do it right now. It will only take a few moments. Lover, go around behind Lisisa and give her some support to lean back against. And keep your eyes closed."

"Blood doesn't exactly bother me Firecracker." Martin said.

"It's not blood I'm talking about you oaf! She has to remove her top and I don't want your daughter exposed to her father's eyes." Anja barked.

Martin grinned sheepishly and stepped around the table to lean against the back side so Lisisa could lean back.

"Anja... what can I do?" Gorgo asked stepping closer. She reached out and ran her hand across Lisisa's cheek. "She is... Lisisa is my granddaughter it seems. I want to help."

Anja looked at Lisisa. "Can she...?"

Lisisa nodded quickly as she unbuttoned the top and began pulling it off. "Yes... of course."

Anja nodded. "Gorgo... she'll hold her arms up and I need you to hold her breast out of the way."

Gorgo looked at Lisisa. "Child?"

"This is where... this is where I belong." She spoke softly. "Among... among my family. Who can I trust if not my family?"

Gorgo nodded and stepped closer. "Be strong child."

"Yuriko... come on this side of me and hand me the scalpel when I tell you. I'm going to try and deaden the area first." Anja spoke leaning over Lisisa's side as Gorgo gently reached out and lifted Lisisa's large breast out of the way. Anja's hand glowed softly as she ran her fingers over the area of Lisisa's ribcage. Her ribs were showing, which indicated a malnourished diet Anja mentally took notice, but that was nothing they couldn't fix in a few days. She circled the area over the capsule with her fingers several times and then held her hand out. "Scalpel Yuriko."

Martin leaned forward as Lisisa leaned back and with his eyes tightly shut her lean next to her ear. *You are free now Lisisa Leonidas. Now your life begins. Leave the past behind Lisisa and join me in the future. Never fear the unknown daughter... for often times it brings with it the most wonderful of treasures.*

His voice reached out within her mind and Gorgo saw her face relax even more. She could easily hear her son's voice in her own head, and she barely held in the gasp at the staggering power she felt within him.

Lisisa's face had become peaceful in repose and she tilted her head to the side reveling in the gentle nuzzle against her cheek of a father for his daughter. *Father.* Lisisa gasped softly even as a single tear rolled down her cheek.

"I'm in." Anja spoke. "A few more seconds."

Both Gorgo and Anja snapped their heads up when Martin let out a harsh raspy sound from his throat. His eyes were wide open as if staring into some hidden spot, completely changed and shining in their yellow brilliance. His lips curled back revealing his unique dual main incisor wolf fangs and their inch and a quarter lengths as he snarled almost madly. Lisisa's eyes burst open at the sound.

"Martin?" Anja asked with worry in her voice.

Martin's face changed instantly and he looked at her, his yellow eyes fading and his fangs receding. "Are you done?" He asked far more calmly than Anja expected after what they had just witnessed.

"Almost." She answered.

Anja looked at Gorgo quickly before returning to her task. Lisisa turned her head slowly. "Father?" She asked in an innocent voice, her forest green eyes looking at him.

Martin met her gaze reaching up to place a hand on Lisisa's chin, keeping her head turned to gaze at him. Gorgo watched as his face became peaceful once more and he smiled at her with those deep brown eyes. "Welcome Lisisa Leonidas." Martin said softly, almost whispering to her. "Welcome to the first day of the rest of your life." Martin spoke.

Gorgo looked quickly at Anja at this display, not able to understand what had just happened.

Gorgo walked slowly up to Martin as he stood in the corridor gazing out the large view window at the stars as they streaked by. "Martin Leonidas." She spoke softly as she reached up to touch his face.

Martin's eyes closed as her palm pressed to his cheek. "Lisisa?" He asked.

“She is resting.” Gorgo spoke. She held up the small capsule like container. “Anja... Anja scanned it thoroughly. It was not a poison... but you... you knew that didn't you? It is a very powerful mind controlling drug. If this... if this had been activated... she would have become a ticking time bomb Martin. Her only... her only purpose would have been to kill you undoubtedly.”

Martin nodded and took the capsule from her hand. “Yes. And with her combined skills... she may have been able to accomplish that.” A cruel grin split his face. “Another gift from one of the people who have been trying to kill me for so many years. It sounds like something Yuri would do in the event I ever found Lisisa. An insurance policy we used to call it in The Teams. I bet you she has been conditioned at the sub conscious level to attack me when and if this compound was released into her bloodstream. Very neat... very efficient.”

“Yet you didn't hesitate.” Gorgo spoke. “I have known only one man in my life with a sense of smell so acute that he could detect this is someone's blood.”

Martin turned to look at her. “My father?”

Gorgo nodded as she looked at him. “Yet what I saw in your eyes... what else did you smell that made you react so Martin?”

“That doesn't matter now.” Martin turned to face her fully and leaned over, inhaling as deeply as he could next to her neck and cheek. The sensations that coursed through him made his blood cry out in joy and he pulled back slowly even as Gorgo's hands came up to grasp his broad shoulders trembling as she squeezed him.

“I have called... I have called another... a monster... I have called her my mother for almost two years. While you wallowed in agony.” He spoke softly. “Everything that I have experienced since discovering who I am mother... everything that you should have experienced with me... she has taken from you. From me. How... how do I forgive myself for allowing that to happen? How can you forgive me?”

Gorgo shook her head quickly, her hands clenching into fists on his shoulders. “NO!” She gasped. “I should never have listened to them!” She grasped his face tightly in her hands. “I should never have put you in that infernal machine! I let them take you away from me my son! I let them take me away from you! They wanted to hide you! Protect you. I was... I missed your father so much! I was distraught... weak!”

“You did what my father asked you to do mother.” Martin spoke. “And you are not weak.”

“Only after abandoning you!” Gorgo almost screamed. “I left your brother to die on that planet! I let them put you in a machine my son!”

“You survived... that is what matters.” Martin said calmly at her words.

“This... none of this is your fault! You... you have done so much... Dustha has told me so much, allowed me to see into her mind and shown me what you have done!” Gorgo spoke. “You had no one Martin! No one to teach you! Yet you have come this far!” Gorgo gripped his uniform shirt. “I thought... I thought it was a dream when I first saw you! When you first touched me! You... you look so much like your father. I did not want to believe it! I have watched you these last days... it... it was like watching your father all over again. These... men and women that follow you... without question. Without regard. They would die for you my son... all you need do is ask them and they would die for you! You have done this! No one else! Because of whom you are!” Gorgo wrapped her arms around his shoulders and pressed her face to his long hair inhaling more deeply than she had ever breathed before.

“Fifteen years those monsters had me... and every day I wished for deaths touch and was not granted it.” She whispered next to his ear. “You are the reason why! The gods knew... the gods knew you still lived! They knew you would come for me one day!” Gorgo shook her head. “I... I bless every pain I have endured Martin. Every humiliation. I bless it because it has given me my son back! It has given me you back!” Gorgo felt his arms crush her body to him and the tears flowed freely from her eyes. She pulled her head back and he lowered her to the deck staring into her eyes, his own dark brown orbs moist.

Gorgo looked at him. “This monster that has taken from me what is mine Martin! Her blood belongs to me! Swear this to me!”

“I swear mother.” He spoke without hesitation.

“I will reclaim what she has taken... and I will revisit my pain upon her ten fold for what she has done.” Gorgo spoke firmly.

“I will allow no one to manipulate me any longer mother.” Martin spoke pulling her into his embrace once more and holding her head to his chest. “I will allow no one to manipulate you... harm you. I swear this to you with everything that I am.”

“You... you are more like him than you can even imagine my son.” Gorgo said softly. “And that... that is what makes my heart sing so loudly now.”

Martin chuckled pulling her tighter. “Well... I certainly have his taste in women. They are as strong and proud as they are beautiful. Like my mother.”

Gorgo’s eyes closed at his words and as her arms wrapped around his waist she knew her future had only just begun.

ROLTAR SIX

“How many of our tribe made it?” Cha’talla asked as they sat in the suite now. Esther was in the bed chambers gathering and packing what they brought from the Runner.

Fash’ka watched from the couch, watched as the pureblood vampire female moved quickly and efficiently in the large room meticulously returning items to the bags resting on the bed. A bed that had seen considerable use if the rumpled sheets and blankets were any indication.

“Most of them made it off Akruxia. Many should have already reached the agreed upon location. They will wait three weeks for the signal as agreed and then scatter to the winds if they hear nothing.” T’lolt answered. “Your mate died insuring this brother. I know it was a joining of political necessity only Cha’talla, but she died with pride and honor.”

“Honor?” Cha’talla spoke softly sitting back in his chair. “The purebloods of the Coven know not the meaning of that word.”

Fash’ka turned to look at his father now. “I came in little more than an escape pod father. T’lolt in a short range Runner. How will we reach the rendezvous?”

“Esther and I have a Long Range Runner.” Cha’talla spoke. “We will have no trouble reaching the rendezvous son.”

“Father... she is a pureblood.” Fash’ka spoke softly. “How... how do you know you can...?”

“Esther saved my life Fash’ka.” Cha’talla spoke quickly. “She...”

Esther came out of the bed chambers with the bags and set them by the door. “That is everything.” She said quickly. She had finished dressing while in the room, and her High Coven matte black uniform clung to her curves like a second skin. She also now wore the small hand blaster on her hip. Her long dark brown almost black hair was wrapped tightly with several strands of satin she had torn from the bed sheets. She looked at the three Immortals on the two couches and suddenly felt very uncomfortable. She had a moment of worry and fear ripple through her until Cha’talla held out his hand for her.

“Esther...” He spoke.

Esther moved quickly to where Cha’talla sat; his son and brother making her very uncomfortable and she settled to the wide arm of the chair, Cha’talla holding her small hand within his. He scooped her within his powerful arms and swept her around in front of him, pushing himself deeper into the chair and allowing her to settle between his legs. As he draped one arm over her shoulder and pulled her closer to him, Esther relished in those feelings and grasped his single arm with both her hands tightly.

“She did not have to save my life Fash’ka.” Cha’talla continued looking at his son. “She did not have to do anything. Lady Aikiro killed her mother and father when she was days old, and then tried to poison her slowly with radiation when we left Nuwaroa. You do not need to know the details of how things came to be between us, only that they are my son. I trust her with my life, as she trusts me with hers. You will find that Esther’s hatred of the Coven runs just as deep as ours now does. I will crush any who try to harm her, whether they are High Coven or our own people. Esther is part of my future... our future.”

“She is a pureblood father.” Fash’ka spoke. “A female. She is not... she is not trained as we are.”

“I’m trained well enough to put you down Immortal.” Esther stated confidently before thinking about it. She expected anger and hate to come out from Cha’talla’s son after her statement and it was silent for a long moment before she saw a smile break across his face and that of T’lolt’s.

“That is not something you can deny Fash’ka.” T’lolt spoke with a grin.

Fash’ka’s fangs were exposed as he smiled and nodded his head. “True enough.” He spoke.

“I have a degree in Bio-Engineering.” Esther said quickly. “I’m a rather good pilot; I speak eight languages, including the ancient Lycavorian tongue. There are only a few hundred within the entire Coven who can say that. I know what your father has been attempting to do... I can help.”

“As a female you...” Fash’ka started.

Esther leaned forward, unzipping her uniform several inches and exposing her neck where Cha’talla’s fang marks were still visible. They would fade into nothing over the next few hours and her skin would once more be flawless. “Do I need to *vith* your father in front of you to prove I am not the enemy? I will... I love the flavor of your father’s blood.”

“Esther!” Cha’talla gasped.

She saw the looks of stunned surprise from T’lolt and Fash’ka. “Show him Cha’talla. Show them what we mean to each other so that we can get past this distrust of me.” Esther spoke firmly. Cha’talla didn’t hesitate and pulled the tight shirt he wore aside so that they could see the puncture marks in three places from where Esther’s teeth had pierced his own skin along his shoulder and neck. “I... I have tasted your father’s blood... and I... I want no other.” She spoke pulling his arm tighter to her body as she sat back against him.

T’lolt and Fash’ka both knew that there was no greater show of affection and devotion among purebloods than to feed on each other’s blood. The visual evidence could not be denied now, no matter what their High Coven trained minds told them. It was T’lolt who finally broke the long silence.

“She is very spirited brother.” He spoke. “Are you sure you can handle her?”

That comment broke days of looking over their shoulders. Days of the pain of loss and devastation that had befallen them. Esther’s eyes were wide now as she looked at T’lolt. In all her years she had never seen an Immortal make a joke. She felt Cha’talla’s chest rumble in laughter and then all of them were laughing as they leaned back in chairs and allowed the momentary break in the pressure of what was happening all around them to slip away. Esther felt Cha’talla’s arm tighten around her and his cheek rubbed her dark hair.

“I believe I am up to the task.” He spoke finally feeling Esther’s hands clutch his arm tighter to her chest.

T’lolt nodded. “We must begin to make battle plans to...”

“No brother.” Cha’talla interrupted him softly. “We can no longer follow the old ways. The old ways are what brought us to this. We can not seek revenge or retribution. Our tribe was one of the largest... and now we need to look to protecting them. We must act differently now T’lolt. We must forge ahead in a new life for ourselves and our tribe.”

“They will hunt us always.” Fash’ka spoke softly.

Esther shook her head. “No... I don’t believe they will.” She said softly. “Something is happening within the High Coven. Those of us who served Lady Aikiro could sense it. She was not happy with how the High Lord was conducting himself. I think she intends to... I think she intends to take power from him.”

“Take power?” T’lolt gasped. “He is the High Lord!”

“Lady Aikiro is the one who gave him the power he wields.” Esther spoke. “If she wishes to take it back I doubt there will be anything he can do to stop her.”

“Esther speaks the truth brother.” Cha’talla spoke. “I have seen a small fraction of what she can do. And what I felt from her overshadowed what I ever felt from Veldruk.”

“Where will we go father?” Fash’ka asked.

“I know a planet.” T’lolt spoke quickly looking at them. “We can go to Kranek.”

Fash’ka’s eyes grew wide. “Kranek?” He gasped.

T’lolt nodded. “It is far from any High Coven border. Harsh and sparsely populated yes, but there are several mountain ranges where we can establish our tribe and begin again.”

“It is also only three light years from the Lycavorian border.” Fash’ka spoke. “Their King would never allow us to remain there even if it is in The Wilds.”

T’lolt reached to his leg where he carried the Nehtes and he withdrew it from the sheath there. He looked at the weapon, so perfect in its construction and simplicity.

“I remember this King’s words to me Fash’ka. I will remember them until I enter the next life. He told me... he told me he did not hate our people Fash’ka. He said he hated what we stood for. All these years we have stood for what the High Coven has told us to stand for. Not for what we ourselves believe.” T’lolt spoke.

He looked at Cha'talla. "We were there brother. We fought this man's father and those that followed him. It was and remains the most horrific battle I have ever experienced, even to this day."

Cha'talla nodded slowly. "For me as well."

"Had not he been betrayed by his own people, he would have destroyed us all. And that fool Xerxes's actions afterwards only condemned us to another three thousand years of servitude. He is like his father in many ways Cha'talla. And he is not." T'lolt shook his head. "He believes in honor brother... and if we live an honorable life... no matter where it may be... he will not interfere. And perhaps one day he... perhaps one day he will call us friend." T'lolt got to his feet. "I am willing to try Cha'talla. I am willing to try and hopefully succeed."

Fash'ka stood up as well now and nodded. "As am I father."

Cha'talla looked at all that remained of his family standing before him. Slowly he got to his feet, pulling Esther with him. His small dark eyes moved between his brother and his son and then settled on Esther. She gazed up at him with love and support, and Cha'talla saw the future in her eyes then.

He nodded and pulled her lithe body into his embrace. "Then our future begins now." He spoke.

BLOOD JUSTICE
VHC REVERENCE-CLASS DREADNOUGHT
HIGH GUARD STRIKE GROUP FALCHION
THIRD DAY ALONG ZALEISIAN BORDER

Moran looked up when the door to his Ready Room opened and his second in command walked in. He was the one man that would dare do such a thing on the entire ship for he had been one of the few that had stood behind Moran since the beginning. A pureblood he may have been, but he was one of the ones who did not consider himself above others just by his blood. He knew a superior officer when he saw one in action and he considered Moran to be superior to almost all he had ever seen in his near thousand years of life.

Moran watched him wait until the door was closed behind him before moving to the small counter and pouring himself a glass of Blood Wine. Moran waited patiently. He knew this officer and trusted him completely.

"I take it the sensor sweeps revealed nothing more than what they have for the last thirty-six hours Visar?" Moran asked as the officer finally took a deep breath and moved to the chair across from the desk.

"It is the most frustrating thing being out here and not knowing what we are looking for." Visar spoke.

Moran nodded. "Well... whatever it is, it destroyed all the probes along the border in a ten light year corridor." He said. "That is not the sign of a friendly neighbor."

"The Zaleisians are cowards Robert Moran." Visar spat. "They would never stand against us alone. We would destroy them."

Moran leaned back in his chair. "I've been studying the star charts of this sector. This Hyperion Particle Emission Nebula extends the entire length of our border with Zaleisia." He spoke. "It begins one light year after crossing the border and extends for another two light years across after that."

Visar nodded. "Yes."

"Visar... what if what we are looking for is on the other side of this nebula?" Moran asked.

Visar sat forward. "That is a big if." He spoke.

"Our long range sensors won't penetrate this nebula due to the reflective nature of the nebula cloud itself. It makes the signals bounce all around right?" Moran spoke.

Visar nodded. "That is correct. The high concentration of Hyperion particles makes only short range sensors possible. Anything else is lost within the nebula clouds themselves."

"Veldruk sent us out here for a reason." Moran spoke as he got to his feet. "He may be many things Visar... but he is not a fool. He was worried about something out here."

"I deduced that when you showed me his transmission to you and Princess Yuri." Visar spoke. "I have never seen him so agitated."

Moran nodded. "I know I've only been among you for little more than two years, but if there is one thing I have learned, it is that Veldruk never appears worried. He's worried about something. Big time."

“Are you suggesting we send a ship across the border and into the nebula?” Visar asked.

“I know it violates the border treaty we have with them.” Moran spoke. “But if they are involved in whatever Veldruk thinks they are involved in, they are going to come running to squash us like bugs.”

“I am following you.” Visar spoke.

“This is supposed to be one of the most well used transit corridors into High Coven space from Zaleisian space, yet we’ve been out here now three days and seen not one ship. Not one freighter or transport. What does that tell you?” Moran spoke.

“That they have a hand in whatever is coming.” Visar said softly. “Our Shroud generator will not work in the nebula Robert. We will be exposed.”

Moran nodded. “But invisible to the long range sensors of anyone hiding in the nebula or on the other side of it. How close would they have to be to see us on short range grids?”

Visar got to his feet as well. “The only ships capable of meeting our sensor technology are the Lycavorian *LEONIDAS II*-Class Strike Cruisers they have been building the last two years. If we were inside the nebula... they would need to be within forty thousand kilometers to detect us. At least.”

“You’re sure?” Moran asked.

“I can run the numbers again... but it will not vary much as long as we remain within the densest concentrations of the nebula.” Visar answered.

“Do it.” Moran ordered.

“What ship do we send Robert?” Visar asked. “A *BLOODLETTER* perhaps. They are the smallest we have in the Group.”

Moran shook his head. “This one is on us... if we get caught it will be my head, no one else’s. *BLOOD JUSTICE* goes.”

Visar smiled faintly. “I’ll begin preparations.” He spoke.

“Nothing from Lycavore?” Moran asked.

Visar shook his head. “No response from the garrison or the Regent’s Palace. Not since that monstrosity lifted off the surface and jumped to light speed. And no word from the ship we left behind other than the fact it left the system several hours before.”

Moran nodded. “Thank you Visar.”

“You... you have shared blood with her haven’t you. The Princess I mean.” Visar asked knowing he was taking a big risk in even approaching the subject.

“Is it that obvious?” Moran asked meeting his eyes.

Visar stepped forward. “We have been conditioned to show no emotion but loyalty to the High Coven.” He spoke softly. “That does not mean that those of us who have wives do not know what you are going through now. You will be back with her soon Robert Moran.”

Moran looked at him. “That remains to be seen.” He said softly. “Her anger at what her father has done to her is overriding her good sense. If she doesn’t get rid of that we will never have anything.”

“You must have...”

Moran looked at him and he nodded. “Thank you Visar. It’s in her hands now... and we have a job to do. Let’s get started shall we.”

Visar nodded. “I will advise you when the computations are perfect and we can start.”

**REVERENCE-CLASS DREADNOUGHT
POISON BLADE
COMMAND SHIP FOR HIGH LADY OF THE COVEN AIKIRO**

He had told her he would feast on her body. He had not lied to her.

Eighteen thousand five hundred and forty-three years. That was how long she had waited to feel what she was feeling now. Her face was pressed into the sheets of his bed, her raven hair splashed wildly about, and her cobalt blue eyes wide in unmitigated pleasure. Veldruk had been a satisfactory lover, but he had never made her feel what was ripping through her at this very moment.

She had come to his quarters intending to fulfill what she had told him. She had come to his quarters to allow him to take her to bed. She had come to his quarters intending all this and suddenly found her eyes open to something she had never experienced before. He hadn't feasted on her body, he had devoured it completely. Tesand was taller than Veldruk by several inches, and his life as a fleet officer, fighting in countless battles in space and on the ground had forged his body into something Aikiro rarely saw in a pureblood male of his age of eight thousand seven hundred years. She found a lean and muscularly defined pureblood vampire that actually took pride in how he appeared.

Tesand also had something that Veldruk had lost long ago. A lust for her flesh that drove her mad.

Aikiro had come to his quarters intending to dictate to him how he was to act with her, where to touch her, what to do. She quickly found that was not going to be the case. When he had grabbed her head forcefully and kissed her as if she was some sort of pureblood slut, Aikiro's famous temper had flared. She had lifted her hand to strike at him with her psychic power, only to stare in stunned shock as she could not call her power. Tesand apparently was far more intelligent than she had first contemplated. As he stared at her with lust in his cobalt eyes, Aikiro realized he had installed psychic dampeners in his quarters. Very powerful psychic dampeners and as he stepped closer to her, Aikiro realized this man was going to take her in the way he desired and no other. She had attempted to leave, turning to walk out of his quarters, for she had lost the advantage. Tesand had not let her.

Once more he had grabbed her hair and crushed her lips with his own, pulling her body against his as his tongue plunged into her mouth and took what he wanted. He plundered and tasted and dominated, and Aikiro found herself weakening in his embrace. His hands had pawed her supple body, tearing at her dress like she was some common tramp, tearing it from her body in pieces.

And Aikiro loved it.

He yanked her head back, small lances of pain shooting through her as her hair was twisted within the grasp of his fingers and she had gasped at something she had never felt before. Her body was igniting, a slow burn starting in her belly, and beginning to crawl outward from there. His strength matched his size and he had almost thrown her to the bed, tearing at his own clothes as he approached her. Tesand also had something that Veldruk did not.

A much larger and more dominating cock than Aikiro had ever seen. At least nine inches of hardness and as she watched him pull his clothes off she suddenly realized he was intending to put that in her. She ordered him to stop but still he came. She commanded him to stop and then he was on the bed with her. She attempted to scramble off, but he was faster, pinning her body beneath him. She tried to throw him off, but he was much larger and the burning in her belly was growing, making her weaker.

"Now I am going to feast on you Empress!" He had hissed in her ear.

The dominating way he said it had Aikiro immediately wet between her thighs, and she cursed how she was suddenly acting like some inferior female with no control. She was the Empress of the Coven... she was... all thought left her the moment Tesand shoved her thighs apart and impaled her with that thick shaft. Aikiro howled as she felt every hard, thick inch spear her completely until his large balls banged against her upturned ass cheeks. Explosions went off in her head as Tesand reached places Veldruk had never reached, stretched her in a way her fool husband never had. Her smooth pussy contracted mightily on his thick pole and the veins in her neck strained outward as the most powerful orgasm she had experienced in over eighteen thousand years of life ripped through her with power unlike any she had ever felt.

That had only begun the next four hours.

Now Tesand held her hips tightly in his strong hands, the whole of his nine inch cock buried within the bowels of her ass, stretching her in a way she had not yet felt this night. Aikiro had been helpless these past hours as he had controlled everything from that first moment. He had forced her to suck his massive cock, and when she refused, he had simply grabbed her head and forced half of his thick shaft into her gagging mouth. She had made ready to bite his disgusting cock clean off until she felt his lips fasten over her pussy and suck hard. He had already made her erupt more times than she could remember, filling her at least three times with his blistering hot come, yet the moment his lips and tongue danced across her spasming pussy she lost yet again. As she opened her mouth to scream around his shaft in blissful abandon, he simply buried the rest of his pulsing cock within her throat until her nose was crushed against his warm sack. Aikiro had gagged even more, her belly heaving and gasping for air, even as her arms wrapped around his powerful ass and held him there while

he brought her to another crushing orgasm. When the warmth and tightness of her throat became too much for him, Aikiro had gleefully drank his searing come into her belly, finding that it was very much to her liking.

His strokes into her now had lost none of their power, and his hands reached under her to grab her large breasts as he pulled her body against his. His hips were slapping away at her firm ass cheeks, and her eyes were delirious with pleasure, her mouth hanging open in glorious delight. She could feel every blistering inch of his cock within her ass, every throbbing vein, and every time he pummeled her deeper the head of his cock made her gasp. He pulled her body back tightly against his hard chest, one hand dropping to her dripping pussy and his other hand holding her to his chest by her enormous breasts, pinching the nipples hard. Aikiro's eyes flew open when he took her tender but exceedingly erect clit between his strong fingers and he stroked it back and forth. Her body bucked against his, her back arching and driving his huge cock even deeper into her ass.

Tesand brought his sweaty face next to her ear, his breathing increasing as he felt his impending explosion building within him. Aikiro was a goddess to him, her body perfection in every sense of the word. He had known immediately what she was here for the moment she entered his quarters and Tesand vowed to make her feel what the High Lord never could. He had teased her, tasted her, drank her passion and fucked her in every way his mind could think to do. That he was fucking his Empress did more to keep him hard than anything else, and he had worshiped her body as it should have been worshiped.

He kept ramming his hips forward, driving his cock into her incredibly tight hot ass and he pulled her even closer to him.

"If... if I am... going to die for... my actions this night." He gasped into Aikiro's ear. "I will die after... after tasting the blood of my Empress!"

Aikiro's eyes grew wide at this statement just as she felt his fangs bite into her smooth flawless neck and Tesand began to feed. If she thought the orgasmic bliss she had felt this night was incredible, Aikiro was completely unprepared for what she had never shared with Veldruk in all their years together. Her body stiffened as her blood burned and the most delicious orgasm she had yet experienced this night smashed aside all that she had ever known, even as she clenched down with her ass muscles and felt Tesand blasting his scorching hot come deeply into her bowels.

Aikiro, Empress of the High Coven, howled like a Lycavorian in heat.

"Tell me Tesand..." Aikiro asked as she turned from the mirror in his quarters after gazing at the two small puncture marks in her skin. They would be gone in a few hours, but there was no denying what they had made her feel. She looked at him on the bed, the sheet covering his lower body but leaving his muscular chest and shoulders for her eyes. "Exactly how long have you planned this?"

"Before this night... it was only a dream." He spoke as he drank in her naked beauty. Her skin was pinkish in some spots where he had slapped her skin in a fit of passion, but the flare of her hips and the firmness of her large breasts he could not keep his gaze from. His eyes never left her face as she settled onto the edge of the bed.

"How long?" Aikiro asked.

"I have wanted you since I was first assigned to your command. Four thousand nine hundred and twenty-three years ago." He replied throwing aside the sheet and getting to his feet. Aikiro watched with intense desire in her dark eyes as he began to pull on his pants over his powerful legs and ass.

"This is why you have never taken a bride?" Aikiro asked.

"I will hand myself over to my second in command for execution." He spoke in a soft defeated tone of voice. "My actions were inexcusable."

"*An'yui ussta erg'les!*" Aikiro hissed out. (Answer my Question.)

"*Siyo.*" He said softly. (Yes)

"Never speak of this night to anyone Tesand. Allow others to comment and whisper all they want behind our backs." Aikiro said softly watching as he turned to face her. "Never speak of this night to anyone." Aikiro got up and moved around the side of the bed to stand in front of him. She looked up into his face. "Do that Tesand... do that and I will share your bed without hesitation. I have found something I have sought for many years, something that fool husband of mine could never give me and it has been right in front of me all this time. I am not as perceptive as I first thought I was."

“Milady Aikiro...”

Aikiro reached up and put a finger to his lips. “You will not die Tesand. I order you not to die no matter what happens. I intend for us to spend many more nights like this together. You have proven something to me.”

Tesand looked at her confused. “Milady...”

“No... when it is just us Tesand... to you I am Aikiro.” She spoke shaking her head. “I will not have the man I intend to share my future with refer to me as Milady. If Veldruk has not destroyed whatever future that could be.” She looked at him. “I am evil Tesand... I am cruel and I am what the Lycavorian dogs would call *upaee*. I will not hesitate to send others to their death, or to kill them myself. I am all of these things I know, but I am also a woman. I will never show you love Tesand, or caring or affection. It is not in my nature except for with my children. I will not hesitate to kill you if you fail me or betray me regardless of what we may share. Can you tolerate these things Tesand? Truly tolerate and accept them?”

Tesand stared at her for a long moment before replying. “And within these walls?” He asked softly.

Aikiro smiled seductively. “Within these walls Tesand... I am yours to do with as you wish.” She reached up to run a perfectly manicured fingernail across his chest. “I will be your whore within these walls, or whatever walls you sleep within. I will do whatever it is you desire Tesand, for I have found I like the way you make me feel. As long as what you have made me feel this night continues, no other will I take into my bed.”

Tesand stared at her and for a moment Aikiro thought he was going to refuse and she would have to kill him. “I accept.” He spoke softly.

Aikiro met his steely gaze and a small smile creased the corners of her soft lips. “Good... that pleases me.” She said in reply.

“Within these walls Aikiro... I will do more than please you.” Tesand spoke confidently. “I will possess you.” Aikiro felt a shiver of desire race through her at the tone of his voice and the way he spoke those words. She watched as he turned and retrieved his uniform shirt. “Princess Yuri is arriving and you will want to meet with her immediately.”

Aikiro nodded quickly. “Of course.”

“I will escort her to my private lounge and insure that your handmaidens have brought you proper attire.” Tesand spoke.

“And Tesand...” Aikiro met his eyes and gave him a seductive smile. “Remove the psychic dampeners Tesand. You will no longer need them. When I am here it will be quite willingly.”

“As you order.” He said with a bow of his head.

“You have unlocked a door within me Tesand. I hope you are up to the challenges that will bring.” Aikiro said.

“If it concerns you Mi... Aikiro... I will always be up to the challenge.” He spoke.

“Indeed. We shall see.” Aikiro spoke.

Aikiro held Yuri in her arms tightly thirty minutes later, actually relishing in the feelings this gave her. She pushed her back and held her at arms length and looked at her. Yuri’s face was drawn and she looked tired, but Aikiro could see the strength in her eyes and she smiled warmly.

“Thank you daughter.” She spoke sincerely.

“I will never dismiss you mother.” Yuri spoke. “It seems you have been the only one who has been honest with me with the exception of Robert. What is going on mother?”

Aikiro pulled her towards the table. “I will tell you what I know... but first... have you heard from your Robert Moran?”

Yuri glanced up and saw the tall High Coven Commander standing just inside the door. There were no Immortals... no High Coven security... just the man who had escorted her here and remained with her. Aikiro followed her eyes and turned back to her.

“You need not worry... Comman... *Admiral* Tesand serves only me.” Aikiro spoke.

Yuri shook her head as they sat at they table and Yuri saw the newly promoted Admiral move to the small counter and begin to pour two glasses of Blood Wine. “No. As I told you... I acted harshly with Robert when he wanted to continue with father’s orders. I all but dismissed him mother. I called him weak and...”

Aikiro put her hand on Yuri's cheek. "You must reign in your anger and hatred daughter. Your father will answer to me... I promise you... but Narice and I need you now more than ever."

"Where is Narice?" Yuri asked quickly.

"She is safe." Aikiro spoke. "Admiral Tesand has assigned an entire fleet group to her protection as well as a squad of Immortals. They will not fail him."

"Mother... what is happening?" Yuri asked. "I had Leonidas trapped! I could have killed him!"

Aikiro shook her head. "You would have died at the end of his spear daughter. I told you this. He is too powerful for you to face... at least right now. He has grown far faster in ability than I had first factored. No doubt due to his bond with this dragon beast and his actions on Ukwav that freed Canth. Once he realized it was Gorgo that your father held on Lycavore, if you had cornered him in any way he would have slaughtered every last one of you. As it is... he destroyed the Immortal Garrison there just before lifting off in the Mindvoice ship."

"Mindvoice ship?" Yuri asked.

"You must have detected it on your sensors... the ship that left Lycavore?" Aikiro spoke seeing Yuri nod. "It is a Mindvoice Ship. Similar to the derelict on Nuwaroa. He discovered one that appears to be completely intact however and that is what he used to escape your grasp on that foul planet." Aikiro squeezed her hands. "These Mindvoice ships crashed many thousands of years ago. From what I have been able to study and learn, the crews of these ships were explorers of a sort. They were also exceptionally powerful Mindvoicers. This is how we began to obtain this power. These people began to blend in with our people, being turned, having children."

"But there are so few among our people who can Mindvoice mother?" Yuri said.

"That is something I began when... when I took over the Coven my father started twenty-five thousand years ago."

"You?" Yuri gasped. "I thought... father said..."

Aikiro nodded. "Your father has told you many lies daughter. I however do not need lies to give you the information you desire. Yes... I took my father's place as leader of the Coven and then I took your father as my husband. I was young still and wanted nothing to do with ruling a Coven. Your father did not have the power he does now Yuri. I gave it to him when he became my husband so that he could rule for me. I continued the rule my father put in place about Mindvoicers and it is something your fool father continued and expanded on even more. We limited the exposure to those who could Mindvoice, keeping this power among only a handful that we controlled." Aikiro spoke. "I can tell you much more... but right now we need to discover what it is that has your father so frightened and why he sent your Robert Moran to the Zaleisian border. It has something to do with what your brother Vonis was doing on Elear doesn't it?"

Yuri looked at her oddly. "Why would killing Isabella have something to do with sending Robert to the Zaleisian border?" Yuri asked.

Aikiro glanced quickly at where Tesand stood holding the glasses of Blood Wine. She took the glasses from him and set one on the table in front of Yuri. "Yuri... Vonis's mission was two fold." Aikiro spoke. "Yes... killing that wench Isabella before she could become a queen of the Union was part of it, but the second and most important part was to eliminate a High Coven agent we have had in place in IES since Isabella defected. This agent apparently got greedy and began to dabble in Biogenics."

"Biogenics!" Yuri gasped.

Aikiro nodded. "Yes. And he began selling his work and his skills to the highest bidder. That bidder just happened to be a Lycavorian working with the Kavalians. Your father ordered this man terminated before he was exposed as a High Coven agent. He sent Vonis to Elear to accomplish this and at the same time kill Isabella. They were trying to make it appear as if she was working with this agent, so that he could destabilize the Union. Having it come out she was still an agent of ours even while becoming a Queen of the Union would have destroyed any creditability Leonidas had."

"Mother... where did... how do you know all this?" Yuri asked stunned.

"Cha'talla." Aikiro replied immediately. "He has given me every dirty little secret that your father has kept hidden for the last four thousand years." She spoke with venom in her voice. "Including what he had Xerxes do to you. It is why he tried to kill Cha'talla. Whatever his plans have been these last years have gone array and he is trying his hardest to keep things together. Cha'talla has escaped my eyes on him..."

“For now.” Tesand spoke confidently.

Aikiro looked at him and nodded her head. “For now. When Vonis failed to kill Isabella twice and then allowed himself to forget his training and become enraptured with this elf female your father flew into a rage and issued a Kill Order on him. Everything was falling apart on Elear and Isabella and her elf lover were getting too close to discovering what was actually happening and discovering your father’s rogue agent.” Aikiro spoke getting to her feet and moving around the table.

“In order to try and protect his Gorgo clone he issued a Kill Order on the elfin concubine of that animal; For’mya I believe her name is. The one you captured after leaving Earth... for she alone unknowingly had seen the Gorgo clone meeting with a lower level High Coven agent several years ago to receive her scent treatments. He was taking no chances. It is part of why he sent you to Lycavore and then to the Zaleisian border. It is all very much unraveling on him Yuri and he is attempting to keep it under a tight lid. His agent within IES knew of the Gorgo clone... and if he was captured she would be exposed and years of intelligence gathering would be lost. He was trying to wrap everything up at one time. He underestimated the skills of Isabella and her elf lover and overestimated the skills of your brother. Then when he discovered Leonidas was actually on Lycavore and had found Lisisa he attempted to kill Cha’talla for hiding her there.”

“He said... he said Cha’talla had been keeping her there.” Yuri spoke.

Aikiro nodded. “Cha’talla has had her all these years you know. Hiding her on Lycavore and hoping that he could use her DNA to devise some fool scheme to make his people more pleasing to the eye. When Leonidas arrived on Lycavore for her, somehow he discovered his mother was there as well. Naturally that would expose the clone of Gorgo that he put in place many years ago. They have been keeping the real Gorgo alive, using her scent glands to pass to the clone so she would not be discovered.

“Your father knew if Leonidas found his mother there everything would be lost. That is when he decided to send you and Robert Moran to Lycavore to remove the real Gorgo in the hopes you would succeed before she was found.”

“Vonis did not succeed I take it?” Yuri asked.

Aikiro shook her head. “He was captured according to my sources and the IES agent was also taken into custody. One day later Isabella and her elf lover tore from Elear like frightened animals.”

“They had discovered this Gorgo clone.” Yuri spoke looking at her. “And Vonis?”

Aikiro nodded. “That is what I believe as well. We will try to save your brother Yuri, but before I reach out to those animals in regards to him I need to find out fully what is happening.” She said. “My contacts on Apo Prime were able to get off one message not long ago before the planet went into some sort of lock down. An attack had begun on the island palace of Leonidas that much they knew. Then all transmissions were cut off.”

“But if they succeed mother...” Yuri spoke.

Aikiro shook her head. “It does not matter if they succeed Yuri. Leonidas we can handle unless there are surprises there your father has not revealed. I am much more concerned about why your father gave you orders to go to the Zaleisian border.” Aikiro said. “He gave you no idea as to why?”

Yuri shook her head. “No... none. Only to go there and patrol the border. Wait...” Yuri got to her feet. “On Lycavore... just before he left... Robert told me we had no contact with our sensor drones along the border. Nine of them in the sector we were to go to... and none of them were transmitting.”

“This is odd Tesand?” Aikiro asked looking now to where Tesand stood.

Tesand’s brow furrowed. “You plan to lose telemetry from one drone, perhaps two over an extended period of time... but not all nine along one border sector. And certainly not at the same time.” He spoke. “That is not an accident.”

“The Zaleisian are not fools enough to stage something against us. We would crush them like bugs.” Aikiro spoke quickly.

“Mother... you said this agent was selling his biogenic skills to the highest bidder?” Yuri spoke.

Aikiro nodded. “Yes. A Lycavorian in the company of two Kavalian females approached him according to what Cha’talla knew through your father. They wanted the fourth phase of the biogenics work he was conducting.”

Yuri looked at her. “Fourth Phase?” Yuri asked. “Are you certain?”

“Cha’talla seemed certain.” Aikiro spoke. “I promised him the means to continue living Yuri, he would not give me false information. Not after what I showed I could do to him at my whim. And we abandoned Biogenics millennia ago.” Aikiro spoke. “It was not at all reliable and the end results were crazed killers for the most part. Uncontrollable.”

“Mother... Fourth Phase Biogenics work is only used when putting the finishing touches on Biogenic clones.” Yuri said looking at her. “I do know something of making clones.” She said.

“What are you saying Yuri?” Aikiro asked her. “Are you saying the Lycavorians are making clones? Impossible... that goes against everything they hold so sacred, especially now with that man in charge of things. He follows so closely to the ideals of his precious father and grandfather it makes me sick.”

Yuri shook her head. “Not the Lycavorians mother. The Kavalians.”

“The Kavalians Princess?” Tesand gasped now. “We nearly wiped out their entire species in their misguided war against us.” He said.

Yuri looked at him. “Did we Admiral?” She asked obviously detecting that this man was more than just a simple fleet officer based on her mother’s actions with him. Or lack of actions really. “Or did we just sow the seeds for our own doom.”

“But they hate the wolf dogs almost as much as they hate us.” Tesand spoke continuing, his military mind already factoring and figuring, which is why Aikiro was giving him the opportunity to speak. She had read Tesand’s file many times over the years, and it was one of the reasons she had selected him to command her personal ship. His mind was like a trap... and he was supremely confident in his skills, which were many Aikiro had learned. As she watched him out of the corner of her eye Aikiro knew that they would have many more nights like the previous one. She rather liked acting as his pureblood slut. “Why would they be working together?”

Yuri nodded. “Why indeed.”

“But then why send you to the Zaleisian border?” Aikiro asked now. “What do they have to do with all this?”

Yuri met her eyes. “Only father could answer that.” She spoke.

Aikiro’s dark eyes narrowed and grew angry. “Then let us go ask your father before I gut him like the coward he is!”

NORMYA’S LIGHT **ORBITING APO PRIME**

“What do you mean you can’t find him?” Dysea screamed at the monitor.

General Vengal’s face didn’t flinch at the harshness of Dysea’s tone. They had far too much going on for him to be concerned with something he knew only stemmed from her worry about what was happening. Vengal had served Dysea for as long as he could remember her as Queen, dating back over a hundred years to when she was the recognized Wood Elf Queen on Earth.

“Director Armetus has locked down the planet Dysea!” He told her. “There is an attack currently underway on the island palace by half a dozen assassins, perhaps more!”

“An attack!” Isabella gasped stepping into the transmission’s view. “By assassins? Vengal... how is that even possible?”

Vengal nodded. “The barracks on the island as well as the command center have been destroyed. We do not know how many of the security force remain alive, if any.” He replied. “There has been some weapons fire detected from inside the palace itself. The King’s Captain Andreus was spotted headed for the island on his dragon only moments ago, and there are four *Lochi* deploying from the docks in Tuya. Admiral Riall has not been heard from since the attack began, and Director Armetus has ordered a detachment to his quarters to ascertain why. We believe... Director Armetus believes that Lady Gorgo is...”

“Gorgo is a clone!” Isabella almost screamed.

Vengal nodded quickly. “Yes Lady Isabella... we are now aware of that. Director Armetus believes she is behind thwarting most of our efforts to reach the island. Only she would stand to gain and only she has the knowledge of the island defenses that For’mya and Dasha have.”

“The panic room?” Dysea asked.

“It has been activated... but not sealed.” Vengal answered. “We suspect the Aricia’s mother has taken the Prince into the room but not sealed it as she is waiting for Lady For’mya and the young woman Sadi. Communications has not been reestablished yet so all of this is guess work on our part.”

“*MJOLNIR’S HAND* has returned with me.” Dysea spoke hurriedly. “We have two *Mora* ready to deploy Vengal. Tell me where!”

“My Queens...” Vengal was remaining far calmer than either of the women he was speaking too and they both knew it. Isabella even looked surprised at how he addressed her. “Yes... we know of your intentions Lady Isabella. Vistr and I are rather well informed. We have troops converging on the island from every direction Dysea... any more and they would only add to the confusion.”

“Bella and I will leave now then!” Dysea snapped.

Vengal shook his head. “NO!” He barked. “We do not need two additional Queens of our Union exposing themselves to danger in an unknown situation! I forbid it! I will issue orders that will not allow you to leave your ship if I need too Dysea! If you must return to the surface Dysea... come to the main estate. Stay away from the island palace! There could be far more assassins there than we are aware of, and it could very well be a trap to lure more of you there. Andreus is moving there now as I said... and what he can not handle the *Durcunusaan* and regular Spartans will. We have set up our command post here at the main estate! Please... please... Dysea... King Martin would not want more of those he loves exposed. As you listened to my council once... listen to me now.”

Dysea nodded slowly. “Very well Vengal.” Dysea spoke taking Isabella’s hand in hers. “We will see you at the main estate in fifteen minutes then. I expect a complete briefing as to what is happening and why Riall has suddenly disappeared.”

Vengal nodded. “As you order.”

Vengal turned to the *Durcunusaan* officer next to him as the transmission faded. “We have fifteen minutes to settle this.” He barked. “Tell Armetus I do not know how long I will be able to hold her back if she arrives and this is still going on!” Vengal barked.

“Yes sir!” The *Durcunusaan* officer spoke.

Vengal lifted his hand and tapped the COM unit on his body armor. “Vistr... we have fifteen minutes before Dysea and Isabella arrive! You, Andreus and Famus must secure the island palace!”

“Understood Vengal! We are nine hundred meters from the western beach now. Andreus and Doranthe are only seconds from landing.” Vistr’s voice echoed in the transmission. “What about Riall?”

“Nothing yet.” Vengal answered.

TUYA HOME OF GORGO AND RIALL

The explosion was small but deafening in the quiet night air and it managed to wake up those already standing on their roofs and in their yards staring into the night sky as military ships whipped backed and forth and Netnews channels were coming alive with news of the attack.

They were called Zero Squads.

Five teams of men and women, mainly Lycavorian with a handful of humans and elves in the mix, who would act when they had absolutely zero intelligence on a given situation. The very best of the *Durcunusaan* and the ones who would not hesitate to enter into a firestorm to provide information and intelligence.

The door to Gorgo and Riall’s home blew inward with barely a pause sending dozens of metal and wood slivers whistling through the air as the frame was cracked inward. In precise formation and moving with blinding speed three Lycavorians, two elves and two humans rushed into the home, their P190s at the ready and searching for targets. They were one of five teams among the *Durcunusaan* whose sole purpose was not the protection of the royal family, but the elimination of threats to the royal family. They would shoot first and ask

questions later, and with the news that assassins had already struck the island palace and killed their comrades, and were even now still hunting the King's concubine and son, these men and women were in no mood for games.

At exactly the same instant, the rear windows and doorway in what passed for Riall's office shattered into a hail of glass shards and an additional team of seven entered through the now ruined doorway. They wore the heaviest body armor Union Engineers could devise that still allowed for the most freedom of movement. This team consisted of four humans, two Lycavorians and one female elf.

The two Evolli in the room had their attention drawn to the first explosion and were completely unprepared for the second right behind them. The one closest to the explosion was shredded by shards of glass that sliced through his body like a hot knife through butter. The second was turning when the first two human men both fired their 190s from barely twenty feet away. Nine projectile rounds punched through the Evolli's chest, lifting him off the floor and sending his body dancing back to slam into the wall with half a dozen holo images shattering onto the floor as he struck the wall.

"Two down!" The voice called out within their implants. "First team moving to second floor!"

"Sweep left and up! Find the Admiral!" Another voice echoed. "Second team moving across main foyer! No prisoner order in effect people!"

The seven members of the second team moved with one purpose and mind, weapons tracking across rooms even as dozens of men and women were filling the area and streets all along the outside of the home.

"Bingo! Bingo!" The man's voice called out. "We have him! We have him!"

The Second team ceased their movement instantly and the human leader tapped his COM. "Condition report?"

"*Nubous!* They worked him over bad lead!"

"Condition report damn it!"

The voice of the female elf spoke now. "He's alive!" She announced. "Barely. They beat him pretty badly lead. Multiple fractures and lacerations! Get me an evac Lifter in here now! I'll stabilize him!"

"Understood! Leave two with the Admiral! Nothing gets close to him! The rest of you finish your sweep!" The man tapped his COM unit. "*Durcunusaan* Two from Zero One! We have the Admiral General Vengal! Request immediate Lifter extraction our location. He's hurt bad."

"Already on the way! Stay with him Zero One. Both your teams. You are not to leave him for any purpose!" Vengal's voice ordered.

"Zero One copies!" He turned to the others in his team. "Finish our sweep. Kill anything that moves."

ISLAND PALACE

Sadi huddled behind the massive wood and steel desk, clutching the Bo'yak assassin's discarded weapon in her hands. Sweat was pouring from her face, stinging her eyes and her heart was racing uncontrollably. No matter what she did she could not block out the paralyzing fear that was humming through her blood.

She was alive however. The now dead Bo'yak in her room was testimony to how much Sadi wanted to live. She had not thought about it when she fired the weapon and erased the assassin's life. He had been trying to hurt her; kill her for some perceived reason that was probably untrue anyway. The moment she had come to this island Sadi knew her life would be different. She knew that she would tell them everything, and all she had hoped for was to not involve her beloved father.

Sadi had been given so much more. A lease on a new life and a chance at a future she had thought gone astray. Her only goal now was to live out the night to see that future before her. A task that was not going exceedingly well at the moment. Dozens of things were racing through her thoughts; paramount among them were the words of a dragon hatchling that even now was over two meters tall and five hundred pounds. She was chosen. Sadi hoped that she wasn't chosen to die this night for within her jumble of thoughts was the overwhelming desire to see the azure blue eyes of the infant Androcles on the body of a man.

You will not die this night KertaGai. Elynth's voice burst into her head causing Sadi to jump slightly. *Elynth! Where are you? I thought you were coming to get me!*

And I have KertaGai. Elynth replied with some humor in her voice. Sadi found this to be outrageous considering the circumstances they were in. *Turn to your left Sadi.*

Sadi's head snapped around and she immediately found the golden eyes of Elynth not three meters away looking at her from behind an overturned couch. Sadi felt a rush of relief and quickly got her legs under her. *I will come to you.* She said quickly.

Elynth nodded and watched as Sadi executed a quick dash, covering the distance between them in two heartbeats. As she settled to the ground next to her, Elynth looked at her with warm smiling eyes. *Your heart races KertaGai.*

Sadi looked at her open mouthed. *Elynth they are trying to kill us!* She exclaimed.

They will not succeed KertaGai. Elynth replied. *Even now Androcles watches over us. And his uncle Andreus is almost here.*

Elynth... Androcles is a baby! Sadi retorted. *He can not...*

Elynth my sister! Return quickly... two of the assassins make their way towards you and KertaGai from the west. Grandmother grows worried.

Elynth's eyes were smiling as Sadi's eyes grew enormously wide. The voice that had just spoken within her mind was so deep and soothing and confident and most definitely not the voice of an eight month old infant. Sadi looked at Elynth, staring at the obsidian scaled snout of the fourteen month old dragon hatchling.

Elynth... Elynth was... was that...?

Elynth's golden eyes held some humor in them. *Come KertaGai! We must go!*

Sadi didn't hesitate and she got to her feet, hunched low to the ground as she followed Elynth's mace like tail. Sadi watched as Elynth deftly moved around several overturned pieces of furniture, moving cat like across the office. Sadi however was not as coordinated as the hatchling it appeared and she stumbled and fell on the piece of broken chair. The noise was like a beacon across the quiet night echoing loudly in the abandoned halls.

Elynth's head snapped around as the large window to her left shattered and the enormous body of the Unsaar assassin came smashing his way through the glass. Sadi screamed as the Unsaar lifted his weapon.

Burn him! Burn him now sister! The voice of her bonded brother erupted in Elynth's head like a shot from a ground based cannon. Elynth's head reared back, she inhaled deeply and then she let fly with a blistering stream of flame tinged breath.

Elynth was unique compared to her brother Jeth and sister Aurith. While they had their father's superheated breath, Elynth had a distinctive signature. Her breath was superheated to nearly four thousand degrees yes, but along the edges of that stream of molten air was a yellow orange tinge of flame. Though only slightly over a year in age, Elynth and her brother and sister were learning far faster how to use their unique skills. With constant training and instruction from their parents, they were light years ahead of normal dragons their age, and their Mindvoice abilities were exceptional.

The Unsaar had only three seconds to look out over the barrel of his weapon before his eyes detected the movement and his gaze shifted from where Sadi lay on the ground. Those eyes grew suddenly very wide as he saw the jet of molten, flame tinged breath leap from the maw of the small dragon. He could do nothing but die, for nothing he carried could protect him from four thousand degree heat and flame. The powerful jet of Elynth's breath engulfed him and his body ignited like a celebration sparkler. His screams filled the night air as the melting rifle fell from burning hands and he turned to become a flaming apparition as he ran from the palace through the very hole in the large window he had just made. His arms flayed madly as he tried to put out the flame that had engulfed and melted more than half his exposed flesh already. He could feel his uniform melting into his remaining skin, and no matter what he tried, the flames would not go out.

Elynth and Sadi watched with emotionless eyes as the Unsaar finally fell to the ground a hundred meters away and became still. His body would burn until only ash remained.

Elynth turned slowly as Sadi got back to her feet and they both turned to look at the doorway when they heard the metallic clicking sound. The face of the Bo'yak assassin was a savage smile as he held his rifle on them from the corridor.

"Time to die." He growled at them as his finger began to squeeze on the trigger.

You poor fool! Elynth's voice echoed in Sadi's head. *You made a mistake coming here this night.*

Sadi heard the loud snort and her jungle green eyes grew wide when the brownish red head of the fully grown dragon leaned in close to the Bo'yak assassin, almost touching his pig like face. The dragon's flame red eyes glowed in the night and they held no mirth in them, only the promise of death in a horrible way. The Bo'yak froze in his spot as he felt the warm breath on the side of his face, and then Sadi heard the male voice speak out loud.

"You have invaded the palace of the Spartan King scum! You have killed fellow Spartans this night. As the King's Captain I pass sentence on you now!" There was a momentary pause. "Doranthe my brother!"

Sadi blinked quickly when she heard the trumpeting roar of anger explode from the dragon and his tooth filled jaws parted and crunched down on the head and shoulder of the Bo'yak assassin. As the Bo'yak was dragged screaming from sight and lifted into the air the handsome Spartan appeared in the doorway and reached out to place his hand on Elynth's snout.

"Well done Elynth! Well done! You have made my nephew proud this night." Andreus spoke. He looked at Sadi and held out his hand. "Come... I will get you to the panic room while Doranthe deals with this problem. You will be safe there."

"I... I won't leave Elynth!" Sadi barked.

Andreus smiled. "My nephew has already made that clear to me young Sadi. Come... quickly. I do not know how many more of these assassins there are and I need to find For'mya and Gorgo."

Elynth stiffened quickly, snorting loudly as her eyes went wide and Andreus looked at her with worry. "Elynth... what is wrong?" He barked.

Elynth's golden eyes fell to Andreus. *Andro... he says...*

"What?" Andreus asked. "What does Andro say?"

He says our fathers have come home. And they are very angry. Elynth spoke with the closest thing to a smile that a dragon could make.

CHAPTER 29

LYCAVORIAN UNION FLEET HEADQUARTERS SPACE STATION *PROTECTORATE* ORBITING APO PRIME

"Don't know what the hell it is Admiral!" The Commander screamed. "It just appeared twenty seconds ago!"

"It's over five kilometers long and a kilometer wide Commander!" Another voice chimed in. "Sensors are not able to penetrate the outer hull. It seems to be reflecting our scans back on us somehow!"

"It appeared directly from some sort of LSD reversion *within* our ODP grid! Sensors are reading massive Quantum signatures across the board!" Another voice echoed.

"Stand by on all Orbital Defense Platforms!" The officer screamed. "ODPs to manual targeting! How did it just appear without any warning within the grid? Only seven people within the entire Fleet Forces know how to do that! Something that big we should have seen coming two light years from here!" He screamed moving to another console. "Lock all weapons and missiles and prepare to engage! And order Queen Dysea's ship out of the area now!"

"Commander... I'm... I'm detecting a *STRIKER DT* separating from the port side of the unknown ship!" The man yelled. "It's on a course for Tuya!"

"A *STRIKER DT*! From that? Confirm that information now!"

"Confirmed sir! It's transmitting recognition codes! Stand by!"

"C'mon man, give me the codes before I blow it out of the stars!" The Commander screamed.

"Sir... it's the King's *STRIKER*! It's King Leonidas! I'm confirming Commander Endith's operating codes along with King Leonidas's confirmation command code! Sir... it's broadcasting new orders!"

"New orders?"

“Commander... we are receiving a Priority Alpha Alert! All Fleet units are ordered to stand to and begin immediate deployment from their staging areas! All ground forces are ordered mobilized and prepare for immediate departure. It’s the same order as Admiral Riall gave!”

The Union Commander squeezed the railing he held with a smile. “Now we’ll start kicking some *mida*!” He spoke. “Send an ORC burst and then get me the status on all fleet and ground units! If the Admiral’s initial order didn’t get them moving... the King’s will kick their *mida* into gear!” (Order Received Confirmation)

MAIN PALACE ESTATE

“It is very good to hear your voice my King! Even better to actually see you!” Armetus spoke as he looked at the transmission.

Martin stood in the back of the *DT*, Armetus could tell that much for he saw Torma in the background saddled and ready for an exit out the back of the lethal flying ship. His King’s face looked drawn and tired, but he was alive and that was all that mattered.

“Give me a no shit status Armetus!” Martin ordered reverting back to his more coarse language before discovering his true history. “Straight from the hip and leave nothing out!”

“Andrus is on the island now Milord.” Armetus spoke quickly. “He Mindvoiced to me that he believes there are only two assassins remaining. He has secured the prince, Sadi and Dasha within the panic room and it is now sealed but For’mya and Aurith are still out there somewhere on the island. A force of eighty *Durcunusaan* and additional Spartans will land in roughly nine minutes. They are using an evasive route in case there might be any missile teams on the island waiting for us to do just what they are doing. Admiral Riall was severely injured in an attack on him within his own home, but he is now at the Tuya Medical facility and in stable condition.” Armetus saw Martin reach out with his hand and hold someone from entering the transmission signal. “Dysea and Isabella are approaching my location on their *DT* and...”

“No.” Martin interrupted him. “Torma and I will find For’mya and Aurith. I will contact Andrus myself and secure the rest of my family. Have Melda Min and Bella divert to the medical facility where Riall is.”

“Milord... Martin... there is something else you need to know.” Armetus spoke softly. “There is a very good chance that... that your mother is not...”

“Is not my mother?” Martin finished for him.

Armetus looked at him taken aback. “Milord we... we believe she is a High... a High Coven clone. Milord...?” He stammered. “How could you...”

Martin reached out to the side of the transmission now and Armetus watched as he pulled the cloaked and hooded figure that was standing next to him into view. Gorgo reached up and drew back the hood quickly and Armetus’s eyes went wide, Vengal and Vistr letting out audible gasps as well from where they stood.

“Armetus... you have never had the opportunity to meet my mother.” Martin spoke confidently. “Allow me to introduce you now.”

Gorgo stared confidently at the holo transmission. Her face was drawn and weathered as if she hadn’t seen the sun or eaten correctly in years, but there was no denying the burning brightness in her eyes. “My... Riall... my mate? You said he was injured! Where is he?” She asked immediately and without pause, her voice with a tone of command in it. A powerful woman expecting an answer.

“Admiral Riall was... he was injured in an assassination attempt as I said... but he is stable.” Armetus answered quickly seeing the look of relief pass over the real Gorgo’s face. He looked at Martin. “Sire, forgive me for... Milord the clone has fooled us for fifteen years. How do we know this is not another High Coven trick?”

“Armetus... I don’t have time to explain all that has happened right now. Rest assured my friend, we will share some stories over Spartan Wine when all is said and done, for you and I will be very busy.” Martin spoke. “Do you trust me Armetus?”

“Sire... that goes without saying.” Armetus answered instantly.

“Then believe me now when I tell you *this* is my mother.” Martin spoke firmly pulling her tighter to his side. Armetus saw something from the Gorgo in the transmission that he had not seen in the clone since the return of Martin Leonidas. He saw her face become animated yet relaxed in the knowledge that her once lost

son was indeed very much alive and she was next to him. “Not that *nubous* abomination walking through my home right now. I want to cross paths with her, but my main concern is my family right now. I will leave her for Andreus. I made a promise and I intend to keep it. I will touch Andreus and he will take her into custody alive Armetus... and that is how I want her kept.”

“I understand Milord.” He replied seeing the look that the real Gorgo gave him as he spoke.

“My Aunt... is Deia?” Martin asked and Armetus saw Gorgo’s head turn to look at Martin with wide eyes.

“I have Deia in protective custody.” Armetus replied instantly. He had been reading people for over two thousand years of his life, and the look Gorgo had just given Martin when he had replied told Armetus everything he needed to know in an instant. The clone had also been surprised when she discovered Deia was in fact the sister of Eliani, and this woman beside Martin, her face showed the stunned shock at this revelation. “She is running things from the bunker under Fleet Headquarters. This... this ship you arrived on gave everyone quite the start.”

Martin nodded. “I’m sure. Endith will take my mother to the medical facility where Riall is once Torma and I have exited. I want Riall ready to be transferred immediately to the City Ship.” He spoke. “Anja is still on board with my... with my daughter. She will take charge of his care. Have *NORMYA’S LIGHT* and *MJOLNIR’S HAND* depart for Earth immediately at their best possible speed. I don’t care how many LSD coils they burn out during the trip.” Martin saw Armetus’s eyes go wide.

“Aricia and Isra are about to become engaged as well Armetus. I need to move fast and hard while I am here.” Martin spoke. “Endith and Tina will bring my mother to the medical facility where Riall is located as I said. She is not to be taken from his side for any purpose or reason... is that clear?”

“Perfectly sire. I will have her blanketed by a *Lochi* of *Durcunusaan* ten seconds after she lands.” Armetus replied. “With Dysea and Isabella there no will question it. They... they do...”

Martin nodded. “I have touched them already. They are aware.” He answered. “Inform Deia that I have returned and have her prepare to move her entire staff to Earth when I give the word. She is not to argue this order from me Armetus. Make that clear to her.” Martin said. “The Senate goes as well. I want every governor and politician within the Union swarmed with security. Vengal?” Martin paused looking at the elfin General he had come to trust implicitly in the last two years.

Vengal stepped forward. “Milord?”

“I want you and Vistr see to that.” Martin spoke. “I want them covered for two reasons Vengal. Their protection and ours. I don’t care how much they scream.”

Vengal nodded. “Consider it done sire.”

“Tell Ceneu he is in temporary command of the military.” Martin spoke. “Any ship that has not already left its birth is to leave within six hours. I’ve already sent those orders via secure burst to the *PROTECTORATE*. They will reinforce Riall’s orders and give everyone a swift kick letting them know this is no drill.”

“Dysea has told you what she saw I take it?” Armetus asked.

Martin nodded slowly. “She passed to me what she saw in this vision, and it relates to what I have detected in High Coven space as well. The entire fleet is to go to full combat alert until further notice. If it is not one of our ships, or a ship belonging to one of our allies and they enter Union space they are to be given one warning to leave or they will be obliterated from the stars. Armetus?”

He stepped forward again. “Sire.”

“You will make ready to initiate an Omega Purge Armetus.” Martin spoke seeing his eyes go wide at this news. “I want it all purged. Every last bit of it. Flush them out Armetus! All of them. You find me every last one of those stinking bloodsucking spies in my Union no matter where they are hiding. Is that understood?”

Armetus looked at the transmission with an evil glint in his eyes. “Then I must ask the same question I did little more than a year ago sire. Rules... Milord?”

“None.” Martin answered immediately shaking his head. “None at all. Not this time. They have held my mother... tortured my mother for fifteen years Armetus. Now I want them to know how big a *nubous* mistake that really was!”

The transmission ended abruptly and Armetus looked at Vengal and Vistr. “I don’t believe I have ever seen him so... so obsessed.” He spoke.

Vengal shook his head slowly. "I have. The day he killed Xerxes. He has come far my friends and he will maintain the control he has learned since that day, but we must insure his orders are followed exactly. He will not be forgiving of mistakes in any manner."

ISLAND PALACE ESTATE

For'mya moved silently along the wall of the estate, staying as deeply in the shadows as she could. Her left hand clutched the Shukur, the blade extended back along her forearm in a defensive manner, her right hand never leaving the cool scales of Aurith who crept beside her.

Where could she be For'mya? Aurith declared. *We have searched the entire bottom floor.*

For'mya stopped with her back to the corner. She turned to gaze at the large head of her now Bonded Dragon Sister. *I don't know Aurith. I fear the worst. There would be no reason for her to be in the upper areas. Gorgo's apartment was on the lower level next to Dasha's and it was empty when we went there. As if she had not even slept in it.*

We have heard nothing from anyone since Andreus announced he was here. Aurith spoke. *No one will answer our calls.*

For'mya slid lower into a squat and Aurith moved closer, bringing her snout close to her shoulder. *Sadi said a Bo'yak attacked her.* For'mya spoke. *They are the most skilled assassins in the universe Aurith. They are also very patient. I fear they are waiting for us to make a move to return to the panic room or expose ourselves in the open.*

But more Durcunusaan are coming. Surely they would not remain.

They would if I was their target all along. For'mya spoke. *They will not leave until I am dead.*

I will not let that happen! Aurith announced. *I will burn them just as Elynth showed me.*

For'mya forced a smile and drew her hand across her face wiping away sweat and dirt. *I am so very happy you are here with me sister.*

Aurith nodded. *I as well For'mya.*

For'mya turned her head slightly as she thought she smelled something odd drift across her nostrils. *I do so wish Martin Leonidas was here.* She spoke. *Aricia has told me his sense of smell is beyond anything she has ever witnessed. All I can detect are faint scents of things that don't belong. I caught Andreus's scent briefly as we passed the offices... but now... now I can't determine what is what anymore. It's so overwhelming.*

We should make our way back to the panic room For'mya. Aurith spoke. *We don't even know if Gorgo still lives. She has not answered our calls within Mindvoice. We dare not continue to risk ourselves sister.*

She is Martin Leonidas's mother Aurith. For'mya spoke.

Aurith nodded. *And she has been wolf for far longer than you sister. I do not wish to stop looking for her, but what other choice do we have? We can not go out among the timber and hills. If these Bo'yak are as good as you say they are... they would find us easily. We should move to the panic room and wait for the Durcunusaan to tell us the island is clear.*

For'mya met her eyes and nodded slowly. *You are right. We should...*

Aurith blinked several times as For'mya stopped talking and looked past her. She turned her head slowly and saw the evil pig looking Bo'yak moving from inside the shattered doorway, his weapon leveled at both her and For'mya. The snapping sound caused Aurith to twist her head back and she saw the second assassin moving from around the corner warily, his weapon also trained on where they both were.

For'mya turned the blade over in her hand slowly. "You will not take us alive assassin scum!" She snarled... her wolf fangs fully extended and her eyes burning in anger.

"That is not the purpose of this mission." The first Bo'yak growled out. "The purpose of this mission was to kill you. You may now be wolf elf bitch... but even that dragon baby can not help you now. You can't beat both of us, and our weapons will shred your body before you take two steps."

For'mya's calculating brain had already told her that. They were too spread out... too far away and too alert. Aurith could burn one easily, but the other would open fire instantly killing them both. At this range their newly discovered psychic shield would not protect them. It just was not powerful enough to stop lethal projectile rounds at close distance. For'mya looked slowly into the night sky.

I have failed you Martin Leonidas. She whispered. I have...

The shattering sound from the center of the palace caused all of them to turn their heads as whatever windows remained in place throughout the lower level were blown outward. The ground shuddered violently as if something very heavy had just smashed its way through the very top of the palace. The burning of the inner palace flared brilliantly for several seconds, part of the upper floor collapsing down into the center of the main foyer, flames shooting in all directions. For'mya did what her mind roared for her to do.

Aurith run! She screamed out in Mindvoice.

To her credit Aurith didn't hesitate and they both broke for where they knew the dragon cave was while the two Bo'yak stared at the devastation of the palace in stunned shock.

"They're running!" One Bo'yak screamed out as he turned back and began to bring his weapon to bear on the fleeing figures.

For'mya what was that? Aurith screamed out as her talons dug into the dirt deeply, propelling her away from the palace just as fast as she could move.

For'mya was only steps behind her zigzagging as she ran so as not to provide a clear shot for the Bo'yak. *I don't know! Something must have collapsed from the top down! Run Aurith! Don't stop!*

The two Bo'yak were leveling their weapons at the fleeing figures when the sound of wrenching steel and crumbling concrete tore their attention away and brought For'mya and Aurith to skidding halts at the sound that reached out to them within Mindvoice.

YOU WILL NOT HURT MY DAUGHTER!

Aurith's golden eyes flew open. *Father?* Aurith gasped.

The Bo'yak assassin who had come out of the palace felt the shuddering in the ground once more and his eyes grew wider as he looked into what remained of the rear half of the palace. The massive head of a black dragon exploded from inside the smoldering wreckage that had once been part of the palace. Following that black head was a body that was encased in a shimmering psychic shield, the flames and falling debris licking at the edges and bouncing harmlessly off as the near eight metric ton body of Torma filled the Bo'yak's entire field of vision, smashing aside parts of the rear wall as if shaking of drops of water.

Torma's snout was a mask of unadulterated rage as he let out a trumpet of anger that turned the heads of many of the civilians three kilometers away that were crowding the docks in Tuya watching and listening as the battle raged on their King's island.

The Bo'yak's red eyes nearly bulged from his oval head as the blast of breath and sound made him stagger back several steps from the beast in front of him. His decision was simple. He tossed aside his rifle and turned to run.

Torma would not spare him.

In the little over a year since he had become bonded to Martin Leonidas many things had happened. Torma already held the distinction of being the largest dragon among their kind save only Arzoal who was all of half a meter larger. His strength was without question, his speed and maneuverability while flying almost unmatched by any hybrid dragon that lived. In truth, only his precious Isheeni could out fly him now. Torma was widely considered one of the most intelligent dragons among their kind and since becoming bonded to his Spartan brother, he was considered without question the most powerful dragon within Mindvoice, surpassing in many respects even the Elder Mother. His devotion and love of his mate Isheeni had been witnessed many times before and that had only increased when he became bonded to Martin Leonidas. As with all bonded pairs, they took on many of their bonded one's emotional traits and even some of their mannerisms. Due to the depth and power of the bond he shared with Martin that now included Martin's absolute and unquestioning love of his mates and his children. Any who would do them harm would die without remorse, question or hesitation.

Torma flicked his head forward almost casually and For'mya and Aurith could only watch in stunned silence as the Bo'yak was launched screaming into the night sky. His body collided viciously with the massive tree a few dozen meters away, the sounds of bones breaking easily heard even over the sound of the burning and collapsing palace. Torma yanked his head to the left and before the Bo'yak ever touched the ground his body was flipped screaming through the air once more. His screams stopped when he smashed face first into the two meter wide trunk of another tree over forty meters away. Once more Torma's head snapped back and the Bo'yak was yanked back to land in front of Torma, his body crashing to the ground with a thud. His arms and legs hung useless and twisted in odd directions, the bones splintered and broken, and his face shattered and

bloody. One of his eyes had been torn open by the thick bark of the tree and now dangled from its socket. His one good eye could only watch as Torma bared his terrible fangs in another trumpet of anger and he slapped his front leg down with controlled precision and devastating power.

Never threaten my daughter! His voice blared out within Mindvoice. *Never!*

Two of Torma's four massive talons impaled the Bo'yak completely, penetrating through his body to stick into the dirt beneath him. Yellow green blood fountained into the air splashing onto Torma's leg from the Bo'yak's mouth and the two wounds.

The second assassin had witnessed all this in horror, his red eyes wide and unable to tear away from the death of his fellow assassin. With a wail of fear driven rage he lifted the rifle he carried and pulled the trigger. His head turned when he felt the moist spray shower his face. His red eyes could only watch as his shoulder and arm exploded in a spray of blood, flesh and bone. He felt no pain so quickly did it happen, and his eyes were wide as he watched what remained of his arm fall to the ground before him, the index finger of his hand still attempting to pull the trigger on the weapon. He felt a moment of searing pain before his chest exploded outward and the spear head of the Spartan Nehtes erupted from his flesh followed quickly by nearly a full meter of the thin shaft. He staggered to the side, the near nine foot length of the spear embedded in his chest, throwing off his balance as he turned. His eyes fell upon an equally ferocious sight as Martin Leonidas stepped from the embers of the palace around him, his eyes the color of yellow gold, his vicious looking dual incisor fangs fully extended and displayed. The light blue psychic shield encompassed his body, his helmet and crested plume making him give off an almost nightmarish visage. His failing eyes saw Martin lift his hand into a closed fist. He saw the silver tinted psychic knife explode from his knuckles and the last thing he would see in this lifetime was that eight inch long psychic knife punching through his overdeveloped forehead.

He dropped to the ground, a one inch diameter hole in his head, his sightless eyes open in horrible death.

Kinsoaurgai! Martin screamed out within Mindvoice. (Voice of my heart)

Aurith! Torma's voice echoed an instant later as he lifted his massive foot and with barely any effort he flipped the body of the Bo'yak assassin off his talons to sail into the darkness around them.

Father! Aurith shouted as she sprinted forward.

Martin's head snapped around as For'mya slowly came to her feet from where she had been kneeling next to Aurith. *I am... We are here Martin Leonidas.* She spoke softly, gazing at him with a love and passion she had not felt before this night.

For'mya watched as he covered the distance to her in what seemed like a single blink and then she was swept up in his powerful arms and his handsome face was buried in her neck and hair. She gasped out as she wrapped her arms around his broad shoulders and using her new found wolf strength she squeezed him as hard as she was able. Tears clouded her eyes and his lips found hers before she could scream out in joy.

Clone/Gorgo hissed out her anger as she watched the scene from the treeline nearest the docks. He was here! How had he returned? She was told he would be dead! Clone/Gorgo blinked quickly as the brownish red snout of Doranthe appeared suddenly not ten meters in front of her, his eyes looking none too friendly.

"Not exactly what you wanted to see is it clone bitch!" Andreus's voice echoed from behind her.

Clone/Gorgo turned slowly, her face relaxing to a prose of relief and surprise. "Andreus!" She exclaimed. "Thank the gods." She spoke watching him. He stood loosely only five meters away but she sensed his damnable dragon creeping closer. "What has happened Andreus? I... I was out walking and the explosions knocked me into these tress. I..."

"Save your excuses for those who will believe them clone!" Andreus hissed. "My King has already told me who you are!"

"What do you mean? I was knocked unconscious for a few moments. I only awoke to... I ran for help! I was so frightened... I..." Clone/Gorgo pleaded.

There was a flash of silver white light, Andreus stepped in close to her and his Shi Viska slammed into her face with the power of a falling brick. Clone/Gorgo's head snapped around and her eyes rolled up into her head as she fell to the soft dirt, blackness washing over her.

Andreus stepped closer and stared down at her inert figure. "The mother of a Spartan would never run!" He hissed savagely. "The mother of the Spartan King would die beside her family!"

Doranthe snorted in approval. *Well done my brother!* He declared. *Well done!*

EARTH EDEN CITY

“Steady my friends! Steady!” Lynwe’s voice echoed softly across the fortified position she rested behind. She turned her amber eyes on the heavy machine gun and its Lycavorian Spartan gunner as the sun began to make its way into the clear sky. “Do not fire until there are at least a dozen that have cleared the entrance.”

The Lycavorian nodded confidently. “We want them bunched up under the others.” He spoke. “Yes General Lynwe... you have said this six times in the last hour alone.” He spoke with no malice in his voice, turning his dark eyes to her with a grin.

“I am micromanaging aren’t I Steffan?” Lynwe asked with a smile of her own.

The Lycavorian shook his head quickly. “You are acting as a leader shoulder General. You have put this plan together in two days, and a fine one it is. Now let us show you how well it will work.” He looked at Lynwe’s amber eyes. He had been with her during the Battle for Earth and every day since. She may have been a Drow elf and now a vampire, but damned if she wasn’t one of the most inventive officers he had ever served under. He was right of course and she knew it, and that is what made her a leader of men and women.

Her plan had been all too simple and brutally efficient. There were only so many places these white skinned monsters and their allies could exit the sewers beneath Eden City in any sort of numbers to be effective. Lynwe simply had the other sewer entrances welded shut and positioned her forces at these locations. Nearly three dozen across the city. Steffan may have been a Lycavorian, born and raised in Sparta, but he discovered very quickly that Lynwe, Selene, Tarifa and Aihola were seasoned and tough fighters in their own right, even if they were all elves.

Lynwe nodded her head in the dawn sky. “Let us hope it works.” She spoke. She tilted her head to the side quickly. “Layna?” She spoke into her implant.

“I am in position Lynwe.” Layna’s voice replied immediately.

“Layna... you must do nothing foolish. Selene and I do not wish to lose you so soon after discovering you.” Lynwe told her in a whisper voice full of feeling.

Layna chuckled in Lynwe’s ear implant. “Rest assured Mistress... I feel very much the same way.”

Lynwe looked up as one of Tareif’s elf Dragoons slid to a stop next to her. “General... Senior Polemarch Dymas has begun his attack on the mountain!”

“What of our attack against the ocean facility where they were hiding the eggs?” Lynwe asked.

“Commander Isra and Administrator Aihola left no one alive.” The Dragoon answered. “The three transport Lifters are being tracked even now moving for this city in Kansas. Steven has his *RAPTOR II* at sixty-four thousand feet in looping circles over the Lifters. Commander Isra and Aihola are following them from eighteen thousand feet.”

“The Kavalian dogs?” Lynwe asked.

“Admiral Joarl was correct. They landed only two hundred and twenty. They used the travel corridors of the reconstruction ships to blend into the normal flights and then broke only at the last moment.” The Dragoon answered. “Admiral Joarl reports he and the *HAMMER OF THE GODS* are five thousand kilometers from the Kavalian ships under full Shroud.”

“How were they able to enter the travel corridors?” Lynwe asked.

“Forged reconstruction documents and codes from one of the companies.” The Dragoon replied. “They are broadcasting that they are simply cargo vehicles and their escort from Dulban Nine.”

Lynwe’s amber eyes glinted in the morning light. “They think we are fools.” She said softly. “They think because we are elves and humans that we are fools. They think Martin left us in charge for some ridiculous political notion of equality.”

The Dragoon grinned at her. “Well... they will learn that is not the case at all.” He spoke. “Watching the interrogation of the Kavalian was informative. Perhaps these fools believe the King only left you in charge because he was sleeping with all of you.”

Lynwe met his eyes. “You are serious?” She asked.

The Dragoon shrugged. “I noticed this Talco did not have much use for females of any kind. His disdain for you and Administrator Selene is obvious, but he dislikes females as a whole it seems.” He answered. “It would not surprise me in the least. It is his loss really as it leaves more females for us to enjoy.”

Lynwe looked at him and chuckled. “I will remember you said that Toba, especially when I see your mate again.”

The Dragoon grinned. “War Master Tareif sends his regards and says he will attempt to restrain himself from killing all of these fools who appear on his air base.”

“Advise him restraint is not needed.” Lynwe spoke. “I suddenly am becoming very angry with these fools who think we are helpless.”

“Certainly not because of anything I have told you I hope General?” The dragoon asked with a false look of indignation.

Lynwe grinned showing her vampire fangs. “Of course not Toba.”

“Motion sensors are lighting off!” A voice hissed from the side. “They’re starting to move to the entrances. Motion sensors are off the chart. Can’t get an accurate count!”

Lynwe nodded. “It is almost time to start this dance as Anja is so fond of saying.” She spoke. “Prepare our breach teams and insure they have additional body armor. Let them come to their deaths. We have only just begun rebuilding our city and our world... not to mention our lives. I will not allow them to ruin any part of our future.”

BIG SNOWY MOUNTAINS BASE OF TRUE PEOPLE

Walter ducked his head back just as another burst of weapons fire sizzled by his helmet. He leaned up against the side of the metal wall and looked at the two *Durcunusaan* Spartans beside him, their weapons facing in different directions. He had almost told Martin to stick his *Durcunusaan* guards in his nose for he did not need protection. Now Walter was glad he didn’t. They were a lethal pair, and while it was their job to protect him, they also allowed him to fight his way to this location. They were turning out to be very useful and they looked upon him almost reverently.

They had breached the mountain in the two weakest points that Syrilth thought would matter most, hundreds of Spartans pouring in through each entry point and catching the white skinned devils almost flat footed. The entry explosions had shaken the entire mountain, jarring all the mountain defenders awake, even as a full Mora of Spartans began to swarm into the many corridors and tunnels of the mountain base. Pitched battles began to break out all over as small units of Spartans began meeting the True people in corridors and hallways. While the Spartans were far better trained and equipped, the narrow corridors provided the defenders at least a small advantage. That however did not last long when Shi Viska’s began launching down corridors and loping off heads and arms.

Walter turned when the female Spartan skidded to a stop next to his two *Durcunusaan*. “Senior Polemarch... Third and Fourth *Lochi* have moved to the level below the hanger securing everything as they move. They have established another triage center on that level and have begun receiving any casualties! They report only light resistance!”

Walter nodded with a grin. “That’s because they are all here fighting us!” He shouted pointing around the corner. “Casualties?”

“Three dead and nineteen wounded. All the wounded are refusing to be evacuated and they are holding a medical triage area near the second breach point.” The female replied. She tilted her head and reached up to touch the side of her helmet. “Senior Polemarch... Queen Aricia! Channel Ten!”

Walter tapped the COM unit on his armor. “Channel ten secure!” He spoke. “Aricia my favorite niece!” He bellowed. “How are you child?”

“I am fine Uncle.” Aricia’s voice answered and Walter smiled at the exasperation in her voice at his laconic tone. “It does not sound like you are the same however.”

Walter chuckled. "We are having a fine time here! The weather is excellent if a bit smoky... but all in all a glorious day!" He told her.

"What is your status Uncle?" Aricia's voice was clear and firm and Walter detected her "Queen" tone of voice now.

"We have secured half the mountain Aricia." Walter answered immediately becoming all business. "Syrilth and her siblings are keeping them from escaping through the hanger. I am leading two *Lochi* and we are about to begin our final assault on their last position."

The two *Durcunusaan* looked at him. "We are?" One asked.

"Isra, Aihola and Aelnala are trailing the Lifters with the dragon eggs Uncle. They will reach our location within the hour." Aricia spoke. "The Admiral has moved into position around the Kavalian ships. Isheeni, Roluth and Maruad have already arrived at the meeting place. I am holding ten kilometers away under a large stand of timber. We are expecting the Kavalians to arrive shortly. Everything is in place."

"They have not detected the *Mora* I sent then?" Walter asked.

"If they have... they have given no indication of this." Aricia answered. "They are hidden deep and well."

"Remember what Joarl told us Aricia." Walter spoke. "Hit them hard and fast and leave none alive. They are tough to kill."

"I will do this... don't worry Uncle. Just keep yourself alive. I do not want to explain to my Beloved that his Senior Polemarch was acting reckless and got himself killed." Aricia spoke.

"Perish the thought Aricia!" Walter said. A grenade going off just around the corner caused Walter to flinch and duck his head as smoke and debris came sailing past. "I must go now Aricia! I will contact you when we have secured this vile place."

"Very well." Aricia spoke.

Walter looked at his two *Durcunusaan*. "Let us find this creature Syrilth calls Hurcan! He fancies himself the leader... and I have words for him!"

EIGHTEEN THOUSAND FEET WESTERN KANSAS

It was the most incredible experience Aihola had ever taken part in. Even now, five hours into their flight, the sensations and euphoria was still coursing through her blood. Her new helmet fit snugly over her head, her shimmering white hair flowing out the back. The light weight black body armor conformed to her like a second skin. Her legs were nestled snugly under the Dragon Armor braces, Isra's thighs pressed tightly to the back of her legs, his chest against her back. Now she fully understood what her Spartan mate felt when he flew. She and Tarifa had only experienced a small portion of it on their trips upon Aelnala's back. This however was something entirely different. It was so free and unrestricted. Her fear at being so high had worn off in the first minutes and now the exhilaration caused her blood to pound in her veins.

So much had happened in the last few weeks and months and Aihola was still somewhat besieged by everything as she lowered the macrobinos from her amber eyes. Her blinding love for Tarifa, their staggering love for the man who sat behind her on Aelnala's back. The way he made them feel in and out of his arms. And now... she and Tarifa's newly discovered bond with Roluth. It was all so...

Overwhelming? Isra's deep warm voice announced within her mind.

Aihola turned slightly and looked over her shoulder. *Stop doing that.* She spoke with humor in Mindvoice.

It came almost naturally to her and Tarifa now. It had begun by Aihola tasting Tarifa's blood that day two years ago and now it had developed into this powerful bond of their minds, joining them in a way that they could not explain. A way that they had stopped trying to explain because it felt so very right. The amazing Mindvoice bond they now shared with Roluth had only strengthened the connection they had with each other and with Isra and it made both Aihola and Tarifa blissfully happy.

Isra chuckled. *I am not doing anything, only detecting the surface thoughts and emotions of my mate. I will need to instruct you in how to shield better I see.*

Aihola leaned back against him and felt his arm slip around her waist. *Was it like this for you Isra? When you and Aelnala first discovered your bond?*

Aelnala's feminine voice laughed softly within Mindvoice. *It was infinitely harder. He is a man after all.*

Isra joined in the soft laughter. *Yes... It was no different than when Aelnala and I discovered what we share Ceiricah. It was shortly before the last battle on Enurrua. She was defending three dragon eggs that were not even hers. Defending them as any mother would. I saw what men of my own kind were ready to do and I acted.* (Amber eyes)

You acted? Aihola asked never having heard the story of how Isra and Aelnala had become one of the most powerful bonded pairs.

He killed two of them himself. Aelnala replied quickly. *Helping me to protect the eggs. And then he carried two of them on my back because my talons did not allow me to carry all three.*

Our psychic shield activated as we flew with the eggs to where the Elder Mother was. It was quite the experience. Isra spoke. *The rush of memories and feeling and emotions that coursed through us. I believe we were both shaking quite badly when Aelnala finally landed in the cave.*

I can feel him Isra. Aihola spoke softly. *Tarifa and I both. He is nervous. He is nervous but he is determined.*

Isra nodded. *I knew when your bond activated it was going to be a strong one.* He spoke. *And Roluth is still very young. It will only grow in depth and power. I truly do not know what would have become of me if I had not come across Aelnala.*

We saved each other that day my brother. I would be dead if not for you. Aelnala replied easily. *Now we both have a future we can look forward too. As soon as we deal with these fools who think they can steal dragon eggs.*

Isra... Aihola spoke softly.

Aihola felt him shake his head. *No Ceiricah. Put such thoughts from your mind forever.*

How do you know what I was thinking? Aihola asked.

You have wondered about it for some time. He replied. *It has skipped across your surface thoughts more than once that I have detected. You wonder if I love you because of Tarifa. Because of what you share.* Isra shook his head. *This has never been the case Ceiricah. The two of you share a bond that nothing with ever sever. You are almost one mind... but you are still separate. You smell different. You taste different. The texture of your skin is different. When I first saw Tarifa, I could smell you upon her almost as strongly as her own scent. You are in her blood Aihola. My blood burns for you just as intensely as it burns for Tarifa, yet in a different way. I love you both for who you are separately. I could not love her more than you, anymore than she could love me anymore than she loves you.*

What we feel... what we feel for you is so much more powerful than what we shared with Dekton. Aihola spoke.

We are different people, but Dekton was no less a Spartan than I. Isra spoke softly. *And to be honest... I thank the Gods everyday that it was he who discovered you first and kept you safe.*

Aihola turned even more and let her amber eyes fall upon his violet orbs. *Why?*

His actions paved the path for me to discover you both. Isra replied. *If not for him and what he did... I would most likely be dead. I would never have discovered Tarifa on my brother's ship. I would never have discovered you. Every action in the universe has a purpose Ceiricah... and it has a result. I believe Dekton's actions led me to act as I did... and ultimately it brought us together.*

Isra... Isra we are pregnant. Aihola whispered the words. *Both of us.*

Aihola felt him lower his head closer to her and even though he could not nuzzle her elfin ear, just having him so close sent tingles through her. *Yes I know. I was wondering when the two of you were going to get around to telling me.*

You... you know! How is that...?

I'm an Alpha Ceiricah. I will detect these things in my mates you know. It was harder in you because of your vampire blood... but it was confirmed to me when the bond between the two of you and Roluth activated. Isra told her.

It was... it was a surprise for us. We... we have always wanted children, but we had begun to wonder if it was possible after everything that had happened to us through the years. Aihola spoke as her spirits began to fly as high as they were with Aelnala.

You have decided to remain on Earth haven't you? Isra said.

Aihola nodded. *No matter what happens... this is our home. This is where we belong. Tareif and Palina... they have become my parents now... just as much as they are parents to Tarifa and Zaala.*

Isra nodded his head. *Then I will accept the position here on Earth that the King has offered me. When we are done ridding ourselves of these fools and freeing Syrilth's siblings... then we will begin to look toward the future. Our future.*

Aihola sighed. *I like the sound of that.*

Isra. Aihola. The vehicles are slowing. Aelnala's voice announced.

The Lifters are almost to this city. Aihola spoke lifting the binos back to her amber eyes. *Perhaps another thirty kilometers... they must be planning to stop before entering the city to meet with Maraud.*

Tarifa will spring the trap when they are within ten kilometers of the city. Isra spoke. *When she does, Aricia, Isheeni and Roluth will act as well. The Mora of Spartans in hiding will reveal themselves and either take the Kavalians into custody or kill them if they choose to fight.*

Aihola nodded. *And Lynwe and Selene will take care of these white skinned creatures that have infiltrated our city.*

Isra nodded. *We are stretched thin but we have surprise on our side. With luck... our losses will be very minimal.*

And we are due large chunks of luck lately. Aelnala spoke bobbing her head up and down.

Yes sister we are. Isra agreed.

BIG SNOWY MOUNTAINS

TRUE PEOPLE'S BASE

Syrilth let fly with another withering blast of flame and heat down the now scorched corridor of the base that led into the main hanger. A small part of her relished the screams of the dying monsters as the tail end of her jet of flame engulfed three of the white skinned creatures completely, their flesh beginning to peel from their bodies before their screams died in their lungs.

Tharua snapped her head around from where she was watching the upper level catwalk into the unused hanger control center. Every few minutes she would unleash a blast of powerful flame that engulfed the control room and the adjoining corridor.

Syrilth! More keep coming! She screamed out.

The Guardian is pushing them towards us unwittingly! Syrilth cried out looking at her sister. *They are attempting to use the hanger to escape his attack!*

We must seal the main doors so that none escape! Tharua cried.

Syrilth trumpeted out a roar of anger as three of the True People burst through the scorched hallway door where they had been hiding. Her whip like tail slashed around and caught two of them in their chests, crushing their bodies as they were lifted from their feet and smashed against the unyielding metal of the hanger wall. The third stopped to lift his weapon and fire at her, his projectile rounds bouncing harmlessly away from Syrilth's psychic shield. Syrilth snapped out with her front foreleg and just one of her uniquely curved razor sharp talons disemboweled the man with barely a pause.

Tharua I do not know where the controls are. Syrilth barked out.

I do! I do! I will go sister! Majeir's voice interrupted them.

Syrilth whirled around to see the youngest and smallest of her siblings tucked into the corner of the hanger bay while her older brothers and sisters stood guard in a half circle around her ready to burn anything that got past Syrilth and Tharua.

Majeir no! Syrilth screamed out.

I can do it! I can do it! Majeir cried darting out from behind her siblings and making directly for the floor drain that she had used so many times before.

Majeir no! NO! Syrilth bellowed too late as Majeir's one meter long body vanished into the drain tunnel.

APO PRIME ISLAND PALACE

Martin held Elynth's large head in his hands as he rested his forehead to her cool snout, Torma's massive head gently nuzzling her wings. The still smoldering portion of the palace was being attacked by fire fighting foam and dozens of trained workers that the *Durcunusaan* had finally allowed onto the island after two hours of waiting. Famus had arrived within minutes of Andreus taking the clone/Gorgo into custody and leaving the island with her on Doranthe. Martin wanted to limit those who knew that a clone had played the part of his mother for so many years. Now with Dasha looking on holding a sleeping Androcles in her arms, and For'mya standing beside Sadi and Aurith, Martin and Torma gazed at her.

I will never forget what you and your sister have done here this night Elynth. Martin spoke softly in Mindvoice. *You saved the life of my son. My mate.*

Elynth's golden eyes met his and she shook her head slowly. *We saved each other King Martin.* She spoke calmly. *Without Andro's warning and direction to Sadi and me, we would have been injured or killed. We will never allow harm to come to each other. And through it all For'mya was calm in the storm.*

Martin nodded slowly as he looked at her. *You and my son will one day surpass your father and me Elynth.*

He is my bonded one. As you and my father protect and honor each other... Andro and I will do the same. That is all we aspire to King Martin. Elynth answered. *Of course... we will not attempt to land within a burning building in the middle of a battle.*

Martin chuckled and lifted his head to look at Torma who was still gently caressing her wings. *She is smarter than you and I my brother.* He said. *And she has her mother's sense of humor.*

Torma nodded his enormous head even as he licked the grime and soot from his first hatched daughter's wings. *It appears both of my daughters have my mate's disposition.* He spoke. *Something I thank the Elder Gods for every day.*

Martin stood back up and watched as Elynth lifted her head on her long neck, standing even with him in height now. He smiled and scratched her snout once more. *My son is lucky Elynth. Lucky to have you looking out for him.*

No luckier than I for having him watching over me. Elynth answered.

Martin turned and looked at Dasha as she stepped forward. Martin leaned over and kissed her cheek gently before nuzzling the dark hair on Andro's head. He looked at Dasha and opened his mouth to speak. Dasha shook her head quickly and put a finger to his lips.

"Do not dare thank me." She spoke warmly. "Not after what you have given my daughter with your love Martin Leonidas. I would die to protect your children..." She looked at For'mya and smiled. "It matters not to me who brings them into this world."

"We will see Aricia very soon." Martin told her.

Dasha nodded. "And we will remain in Sparta for a time I hope."

Martin nodded with a smile. "That goes without saying." He spoke.

"Good. That is our true home. Not this... not this island palace we have here. Though it is quite peaceful here. Until tonight." Dasha spoke.

For'mya squeezed her hand. "And it will be again in the future." She spoke.

Martin pulled For'mya into his embrace and squeezed her hard. "Endith is returning to take all of you to the City Ship. Torma and I have some things to finish here before we come up with my mother and Riall." He said. "Anja will get you settled and introduce you to Lisisa." He smiled. "You will like her I think."

For'mya looked at him. "Martin Leonidas... Sadi is..."

Martin looked at the stunning young woman, remembering her from that night weeks ago. She looked different now, covered in dirt and sweat, and he knew she was no longer the arrogant alpha female she had been that night.

“I will have the Durcunusaan take you to be with your father and brothers.” Martin spoke stepping up to her. “Whatever sins you may have committed in the past Sadi, are long forgotten after your actions here tonight. Anything you may wish or need in the future, you only need to ask for it and it is yours.”

Sadi looked at this towering man and couldn't help but shudder. How she ever thought she could entice him was beyond her. She shook her head slowly. “I have what I want Milord. I have my life back... and the life of my father and brothers.”

Martin nodded and leaned over to kiss her cheek. He drew back slowly staring at her for a long moment and then a smile slowly split his face as if he had just realized something. “We will see you in the future Sadi, daughter of Vorilas.”

“Perhaps... perhaps Milord.” She spoke puzzled by his words and smile.

Martin nodded the smile still on his face. “Oh... I think we will.” He said. He turned grasping For'mya's hand tightly and pulling her close before turning to walk toward the DT landing pad Dasha following on his opposite side.

Sadi watched him for a long moment before turning her head and seeing Elynth staring at her from the side. She smiled and reached up without fear to rest her hand on Elynth's head under the watchful eyes of her father's massive form.

“Thank you Elynth.” She spoke softly. “For everything.”

Elynth stepped closer to her, pressing her snout to Sadi's head. Sadi could feel her large tongue moving within her jaws and then her tooth filled maw opened and Sadi's eyes grew wide as she saw the glittering coral red pendant drop into view on the leather tie.

You have been chosen Sadi. He wants you to have this to remember him by. Take it. Elynth had told her.

Sadi stared at the pendant for a long moment. *Elynth it's... it's beautiful. I can't take this. It is...it must be worth...*

It is a Dragon's Heart Sadi. Androcles's pendant... given to him when he was born by his parents. It was cut from their pendants and forged back together by my mother. I have split it once more at his request to give you half. It is a great honor among my kind... among dragons... and it has been taken from one of my kind who has fallen, for that was their wish. So that they may live on in others. My grandmother says the process is long and arduous, but once polished like this it never loses its luster. This one has been cut in two and he wishes you to have one half. Elynth spoke to her.

Sadi met her golden colored eyes. *Elynth... he is only eight months old. He is a baby. He...*

Elynth stepped closer to Sadi, her golden eyes bright and clear. *Do you truly believe that Sadi? Or has what happened here these last few days... what you have seen and heard this very night not mattered to you at all? You can not deny it Sadi, for you have seen and heard for yourself.*

You know that is not true Elynth. I... I... She answered.

Take it Sadi. Elynth told her. If nothing else... let it remind you of what we have shared here these last days and what he feels for you. What he will always feel for you. He is a child now yes... but Androcles will be a man one day... and who knows what the future holds for all of us. One day... if you truly wish to discover the love you seek in your heart... you will... wear this pendant always Sadi. Never take it off and the love you seek will one day just walk into your life without you ever being aware of it.

You are... you are speaking of him. Sadi said softly.

You already know the answer to that KertaGai. You already know the answer to that. Elynth said.

Sadi looked at her. *You have called me that before Elynth. What does it mean?*

Elynth smiled a dragon smile and her golden eyes gleamed. *KertaGai means Eternal Heart in the ancient Lycavorian tongue. It is the name he has given you. The name that will never be lost from his lips.*

Sadi had looked at her and then leaned up slightly to kiss her cool snout scales as she took the pendant in her hand. *I will treasure it always.* She spoke softly as she draped the pendant around her neck. *I will wear it always.*

Elynth nodded and turned when Torma nudged her side. *You must go daughter. Endith is landing as we speak.*

Elynth nodded and turned back to Sadi. *Remember my words to you Sadi. One day... one day we will find you again.*

Sadi watched as she turned her large body and broke into a trot where Sadi could hear the engines of the DT whining as it came to rest on the landing pad nearby. She looked up and saw Torma's gargantuan body still next to her, his own golden eyes gazing at her. She saw him nod his massive head and then he too turned and moved for the landing pad.

TUYA CAPITAL MEDICAL CENTER

Riall's eyes opened slowly against the bright light of the medical room. He knew where he was immediately as the scents of a medical facility filled his nostrils. His whole body ached as it had never ached before. He remembered the beatings, the injections, not being able to shift. They had surprised him as he made ready to meet with Armetus at the Main Palace Estate. The first thing he had seen was the injector in the hand of the Evolli as it stabbed down into his shoulder. As blackness washed over him and his limbs refused to respond to his commands he heard the voices and orders given out and then the beatings began.

Riall felt the weight on his side and shifted his head seeing the long, naturally curly dark hair. Her scent hit him then, pure, powerful and clean. He lifted his hand as his eyes narrowed in confusion. There was something different... something not right about her scent. It was more pungent... more pronounced than he had smelled from her in many years. He rested his hand upon her head gently.

"Gorgo?" He croaked out the word with dry lips and mouth.

Her head came up instantly, her dark eyes like two gleaming beacons in the room and he saw burning love in them. "Riall?" She gasped.

Riall looked at her for a long moment. Her hair was longer than he remembered, not as shiny or healthy looking. Her face was drawn and it appeared as if she hadn't seen the sun in years.

Gorgo came out of her chair, her hands going to his face as tears came to her eyes. "Riall... my... my mate. My... my husband!" Gorgo wept. She gently caressed his battered face with her hands, her long fingers exploring the contours of his male features. A face she had long ago given up hope of ever seeing again.

"Gorgo... you... what is wrong?" He asked softly. "Are... are you sick? You... your hair... your face is..."

Gorgo shook her head quickly. "No my husband... I am not sick. I am... I am gloriously happy!" She cried out.

Gorgo had dreamed of many things while in that vile prison, but nothing more than this man's face in front of her. The dreams of his hands upon her body, how he made her feel and the love she felt for him foremost in her thoughts. Her love for Martin's father had run powerful and deep, yet what Gorgo felt now looking at this man who had stood beside her for over two millennia, she could not describe it. Even more tears came now as she realized he had given her life back to her those hundreds of years ago. He had been her rock... her anchor... and then her healing balm. She was nothing without this man. She lowered her head next to his and inhaled deeply of his rich spicy scent, allowing it to fill her senses and make her mind sing out in joy as it had for so many years. Her hands caressed his shoulders and arms as she drew back slightly and looked at him.

"Gorgo... what... what is going on?" Riall asked. "Why... why do you look different? I saw you only yesterday... what is...?"

Gorgo shook her head and placed a finger to his lips silencing his words. "There is... there is so much I have to tell you my husband. My... my mate. My... my son has returned with..."

Riall's eyes grew large. "The King... Martin has returned?" He spoke trying to push himself off the bed.

Gorgo placed her hands on his chest, gently pushing him down. "No Riall. You are still very weak." She spoke quickly. "They... they injected you with a drug so you could not shift. Your wounds will take time to heal. You must rest."

Riall shook his head. "Dysea... she saw something that... I must get the fleet prepared and deployed." He spoke. "Armetus is waiting to meet with me."

"No... Martin... Martin is taking care of all that." She spoke quickly. "We are leaving shortly... and..."

Riall looked at her. "Leaving? Leaving for where? What is going on? Why... why do you look different Gorgo my wife? Why..."

“I want to go home Riall.” Gorgo spoke.

“Home?” He spoke. “Then get me out of this damn bed! I will insure all is being prepared and we can go home.”

Gorgo shook her head as she took his face in her hands. “No... no my love.” She said softly. “I want to go home.”

Riall met her dark eyes. “To... to Sparta?” He asked.

Gorgo nodded with a glowing smile. “Yes.”

“You... you have not mentioned that since we returned with Martin here to Apo Prime Gorgo?” He spoke. “Even... even before we left there... you never wanted to... you did not want to stay. You... why is your scent different Gorgo? It is stronger... more pungent... like when we first...”

Gorgo leaned forward and kissed him. She had dreamed of this for fifteen years and as her soft lips melted upon his, Gorgo felt long forgotten sensations reignite and race through her. Whatever thoughts Riall may have been thinking were quickly wash away as Gorgo pushed him back on the bed and stretched her frame out on top of his, never breaking their kiss and pouring ever ounce of emotion she had within her into her actions. It was a kiss like when they had first become mates, zealous and filled with yearning and need and desire.

If not for the door opening and several people entering the room Gorgo would have been quite content to rediscover her mate, right there in the room no matter who was watching. Slowly she drew her lips from Riall’s with a burning need she could barely repress. Riall’s eyes were wide as he watched her draw away slowly.

“Gor... Gorgo?” He spoke softly.

Gorgo traced her fingers across his lips slowly. “They are here to take you to the ship.” She said softly. “I will be following you shortly.”

“Ship? What ship?” Riall demanded. “Where are we going?” He turned his head and saw Dysea and Isabella standing with two medics who stood beside the hover bed. They were smiling and their eyes moist. “Dysea... Isabella... what is happening?”

“*Nauta Melme* is here Riall. You have been injured badly and you need to rest.” Dysea spoke.

“Martin and Armetus are insuring everything will be taken care of Riall.” Isabella spoke. “You’ll know soon enough what is going on my friend.”

Gorgo slipped off the bed never releasing her grip of his hands and she stared at him longingly. “I will be along behind you my mate. There is something I must do first.”

Riall let his eyes flip between the three women. “What is going on?” Riall demanded.

Dysea looked at the two medics and nodded. “Admiral... I am giving you a direct order to go with these men. If you attempt to refuse them they have my permission to sedate you.” Dysea spoke firmly. “Is that understood?”

“No!” Riall demanded. “No it is not! We are in the middle of a crisis! We...”

“Have everything under control!” The deep male voice spoke from behind the medics. The two men parted quickly and Martin stepped fully into the room now.

“Milord... Martin... what is happening?” Riall spoke trying to sit up.

Martin stepped up to the side of the bed. “I need you to do this Riall.” Martin spoke. “I can’t have my top military commander injuring himself further. Ceneu can handle things until you are strong enough to resume your duties. Hopefully by the time we reach Earth.”

“Earth?” Riall gasped.

Martin nodded. “I will explain everything to you when we are underway Riall. Right now I need you to go with the medics. Anja is waiting for you in orbit. She will supervise your care... and Danny will be your roommate.”

“Sire... I...”

“Have I ever given you reason to doubt me Riall?” Martin asked.

Riall met his eyes. “Milord there was...”

“Ukwav doesn’t count.” Martin spoke quickly with a grin. “Do this for me. I will bring my mother up shortly and you will be together. We will all be together.”

“Please Riall.” Gorgo spoke softly.

Riall let his eyes play over those in the room slowly before settling back onto the bed squeezing Gorgo's hand tightly. He brought her knuckles to his lips and kissed them softly, drawing in her pungent vanilla scent. He nodded his head slowly.

"Very well Milord." He spoke.

Martin nodded and motioned to the medics who moved forward to begin transferring the bed. Isabella turned to Dysea and leaned over to nuzzle her cheek.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I will see you both on the ship.* She spoke.

Dysea gripped her hand. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Bella...*

Isabella smiled and shook her head. [Mindvoice Shielded] *We talked about this ussta she-elf. You need him now... you are in phase and only he can curb your desire enough to stop exhausting me.* Isabella spoke with a grin. *When we are alone I will tell him what I have decided and we will have our time then.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *He loves you just as much as any of us Bella.* Dysea spoke squeezing her hand. *You must feel that.*

Isabella nodded with a glowing smile and bright hazel/green eyes. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Yes... that much I do know now. I will return with Riall... be mindful of all around you Dysea my love. Both of you. There still might be danger here.*

Dysea nodded and kissed her softly. [Mindvoice Shielded] *We will see you soon.*

Isabella nodded with a loving smile and turned as the medics got Riall's bed ready to move and activated the hover lift. "Riall... I will fill you in on as much as I am able while we transit to this City Ship Martin has brought back with him."

"City Ship?" Riall asked looking back at Martin and Gorgo as the medics began to guide the bed out of the room.

Dysea was watching them intently until she felt the aura of the man she loved wrap around her, saturating her senses and she closed her eyes as Martin's face lowered next to her throat and he nuzzled her neck and the back of her elfin ear. Dysea gasped and spun around, gazing at him almost even with his dark eyes. She was the tallest of his Queens at five foot nine, and this enabled her to easily wrap her arms around his shoulders as her emerald green eyes sizzled in desire.

Hello Melda Min.

Nauta Melme!

Dysea gasped as his arms wrapped around her, lifting her up off the floor. Dysea curled her long legs up along his waist as she covered his lips with her own in a kiss that crackled in intensity. Her blood was on fire having him holding her now, his mint scent coursing through every fiber of her body, turning her on powerfully. Dysea thought she could never feel anything more powerful as when he had turned her. The intense pleasure she had experienced that night had practically short circuited her brain the moment he bit her and the virus began racing through her veins. Now however, having him crushing her body against him, feeling his huge cock pressing against her now very aroused pussy and clit, Dysea thought her brain was going to actually explode. Her nipples hardened and she felt moisture between her thighs as she practically dry humped him, his large, strong hands dropping to cup her perfect ass and pull her lush body tighter to his. Her body had fully completed its change and the wolf part of her was overriding whatever elfin self control she had. Their kiss deepened, becoming hungry and fervent. Martin could hardly contain himself as her wonderful wildflower scent permeated every corner of his body, igniting his own blood in a way he hadn't felt except with Aricia and Anja when she had first come into phase. Dysea tore their lips apart, a strand of salvia connecting them for a moment as she dug her fingernails in to his neck.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Nauta Melme... my... my blood burns for you!* She gasped as her emerald eyes changed, the thin black banding surrounding the emerald iris, her wolf fangs bursting from her gums.

Martin had no words as he simply stared at her face, his eyes now changed as well. He leaned over and nuzzled her throat firmly, causing Dysea to groan out as if experiencing an orgasm, her head dropping back as her eyes practically rolled into the back of her head. All that had happened over the course of the last weeks and Martin realized he had not experienced the attentions of any of the women he so loved.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I want you now Melda Min!* He growled out within Mindvoice.

Dysea's head snapped up, her eyes ready for just that, and almost as an afterthought she spied Gorgo watching them with a small grin on her face.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Nauta Melme... Martin... your mother!* Dysea gasped out.

Her words hit Martin like a large board and his eyes went wide. He turned quickly and saw his mother standing there as Dysea scrambled to extract herself from his arms, her hormones and her body screaming for her to not let him go. Dysea was very open, some would say even more adventurous ever since Bella came into her life, but having Martin take her in front of his mother was not something she wanted to experience.

Dysea straightened out her uniform as she used all of her will power to get her raging body and hormones under control. "Forgive... forgive us." She stammered even as Martin closed his eyes and tried to breathe as Dysea's sweet wildflower scent filtered into his nose. "It has been... I am..."

Gorgo smiled knowingly and stepped forward, quickly taking Dysea's hands into hers. "You have come into phase haven't you child? This is your first one since being turned isn't it?" She spoke softly.

Dysea nodded quickly. "It... I did not realize it would be so strong. I thought I could..." She spoke softly.

"Martin... you must leave us for a moment." Gorgo spoke looking at him.

"Moth... mother?" He opened his eyes and looked at her.

"Go my son. It is easier for you to tame your passions... you do not have the added difficulty of being a woman." Gorgo said smiling. "Allow me to act as your mother now and teach Dysea how to control hers until you can properly be together. And no touching her with your aura until you are alone with her! What I will teach her will only work as long as you do not surround her with your aura. Go!"

Gorgo gave her son a gentle nudge towards the door and watched as he slowly made his way into the corridor of the medical facility. Gorgo waited until the door closed before turning back to Dysea.

"I... I am sorry." Dysea spoke softly. "I did not wish... this is not how I envisioned meeting my *Nauta Melme*'s honored mother. Once he... once he touched Bella and I and told us what had happened I wanted to..."

Gorgo shook her head. "Nonsense child." Gorgo spoke gently. "He has his father's aura that much is easily discernible by your reaction to him. Leonidas... Leonidas could turn me to putty with his aura when I came into phase. I may be his mother... but I can still feel it pulsing all around him."

"I am... I am Dysea Lady Gorgo." She said looking at her with normal emerald eyes now as her breathing came under better control.

Gorgo smiled. "Yes... I know." She spoke. "You are the first he turned. Before he truly knew who he was. Anja has told me about all of you."

Dysea nodded. "He... he turned *Melyanna* and I only days before we discovered this." She said.

"I was very happy to meet Anja." Gorgo spoke. "She is a masterful doctor... and I must approve of my son's taste in mates. All of them."

Dysea looked at her with a small smile. "Even Bella?" She asked.

Gorgo nodded slowly. "I will admit I was surprised at first... but I have known Isabella far longer than most, and the woman who stood here just moments ago is not the woman I once knew. In part because of what you share with her that much is obvious, your scents are mingled deeply. The other part is because of what she feels for my son. You have felt it... I know you have... and as his mother I can feel it as well. She may not be wolf but..."

"...But her desire for him wafts from her pores as much as ours does." Dysea said with a smile. "I have tried to tell her all this but she thinks I am jesting with her. She doesn't believe she has a scent."

Gorgo looked at her surprised. "She smells of sweet lilacs." She said.

Dysea nodded. "We all love him intensely Gorgo. He is the center of our world." Dysea spoke. "He has been our lives for so long now. And he will be the center of our lives for many years to come."

Gorgo stared at her for a long moment, taking in the long silk like platinum blond hair and the incredible emerald color of her eyes. Her four inch long elfin ears were elegantly curved and if anything made her even more beautiful. Gorgo had to admit... Martin had superb taste in women. She already knew what Anja could do for she had seen it herself. If this elfin beauty, Isabella and For'mya turned out to be like Anja, her son was going to have his hands full. And she had not met the one that was his soulmate yet.

Gorgo smiled. "This is your first phase Dysea." Gorgo spoke. "It is not usually as strong as what I can sense within you, but I fear Martin's aura has an effect upon you that most males never will. Allow... allow me

to show you some things I have learned over the years to dampen the yearning until you can be together properly. Riall is not as powerful as Martin, but he is a very strong Alpha. It will at least allow you to function.”

Dysea nodded with an almost pleading look in her eyes. “Please!” She gasped.

Gorgo smiled and squeezed her hands. “It will not take long. Sit with me.”

BLOOD JUSTICE

VHC REVERENCE-CLASS DREADNOUGHT

HYPERION PARTICLE EMISSION NEBULA

ZALEISIAN BORDER

The yellowish color of the gaseous Hyperion Nebula swirled around the boundaries of the *BLOOD JUSTICE*'S sloped edges like the clouds of a dust storm. Visibility was almost nothing and they were operating on instruments alone. Their short range sensors were radiating at full power, no one outside the nebula would be able to pick up the scans due to the inference from the particles churning throughout the clouds. At times small flickers of light would dance across the hull of *BLOOD JUSTICE*, reaffirming that their Shroud Generator was not working and that they were essentially flying blindly.

Moran sat at his command chair, one hand gripping the mug of tea, the other holding a data pad that was receiving a constant stream of information from the sensor arrays dotting the length and breadth of the ship. The bridge was quiet, everyone keenly aware that something was going on. Even as superior as they thought of themselves, they had never crossed the border into space claimed by another species without direct orders from the High Lord himself. All of them could sense what they were doing was exceptionally dangerous, and perhaps not part of their orders.

“Time to the edge of the nebula?” Moran asked.

“Three minutes exactly current speed Commander.” The voice called out in reply.

“Long range sensors?”

“Still inoperative sir!”

“Anything on short range?”

Visar turned from where he stood by one of the sensor stations. “Nothing.” He spoke. “I do not like this. We are three minutes from the edge of the nebula and we have not picked up anything. Not even freighters in transit. That is not normal.”

“The short hairs on the neck of my neck are beginning to stand up Visar.” Moran spoke.

Visar looked at him oddly. “Sir?”

Moran turned to meet his gaze. “Something isn’t right.”

Visar nodded his head slowly. “Charge all plasma batteries and bring the missile tubes to full readiness.” He barked. “Port side torpedoes to five second standby! Starboard to ten second standby!”

“Ninety seconds to the edge of the nebula sir!” The voice called out.

“Sensors?”

The man shook his head. “Nothing definitive sir!”

Moran looked at him. “Definitive? What the hell does that mean? Are you picking anything up or not?”

“I’m... I’m detecting what appear to be echoes of some kind Commander.” The man replied.

“Echoes?” Moran asked.

The man nodded. “Yes sir. I can not pin point or lock them to get a clear signal due to the cloud interference.”

Moran came slowly to his feet and set his mug of coffee down on the small table next to the command chair. “I don’t like this one bit.” He spoke. “Helm, reduce your speed to one quarter on the sub light coils. Stand by on maneuvering thrusters.”

“Reducing speed. Thrusters standing by!”

“Sixty seconds to the edge of the field sir!”

The soft almost pinging sound drew Moran’s attention to the station that Visar stood next to. “Contact!” Visar barked softly. “Closing on our port quarter!”

“Identify!” Moran snapped.

“Range is still too far to confirm sir... but...!” Visar hissed.

“But what?” Moran spoke.

“Our sensor information is indicating LSD coil emissions and navigational pulses from what appears to be a Class Three Zaleisian Medium Cruiser Commander.” Visar answered turning to look at him again.

Moran met his eyes. “I was under the impression the treaty with the Zaleisians forbid them to have anything larger than frigate class this close to the border.”

Visar nodded. “Yes sir that is correct.”

“Commander... their course will intercept with ours in twenty-four seconds!” The operations officer barked.

“Shit!” Moran spat. “Helm... Z plus eight thousand meters! Twenty percent on the belly thrusters!”

“Z plus eight thousand and twenty percent on thrusters, executing!”

Moran felt the *BLOOD JUSTICE* jump quickly as they rose from their current position. He turned back to his chair just as the ship jumped violently and slew to the side before settling. He watched as his coffee mug smashed onto the deck and he whirled back to Visar.

“Report damn it!”

“Particle gas pocket!” Visar called out. “We lifted right into it!”

“The cruiser?” Moran asked.

“The cruiser is slowing... but still on an intercept course.”

“Damn!” Moran spat. “That ship ain’t out here just tooling around. It’s looking for something!”

Visar looked at him. “Or someone.” He said.

“Full stop!” Moran ordered as he settled back into his chair. “Long range sensors?”

“Still nothing definitive Commander. The interference is too much.”

Moran looked at Visar as he moved up next to the chair quickly. “Boost power to the sensor arrays?” Visar asked.

“Where’s that ship?” Moran called.

“Unknown cruiser has come to a complete halt sir! Bearing three four four! Range is ten thousand kilometers! I don’t believe they can see us sir.”

Moran looked at Visar. “Their sensors are that weak?” He asked.

Visar nodded. “If it is a Zaleisian ship.” He answered. “They are not known for having very capable sensor or LSD coils.”

“What if we boost power to the long range sensors by twenty percent?” Moran spoke. “That should cut through the rest of the interference right?”

Visar nodded. “It could very well reveal our position too.”

Moran nodded. “It’s a risk we’ll have to take.” He said getting to his feet. “Helm... on my mark, be prepared to come about one hundred and eighty degrees and go to full power on the sub lights! We may have to beat a very fast retreat.”

“Tactical!” Visar barked. “Twenty percent increase on long range sensor power! Bring it up gradually in two percent increments!”

“Affirmative!”

“Stand ready people!” Moran barked.

“Boosting power now! Twenty-two percent!” The sensor operator adjusted his controls while keeping his eyes glued to his console. “No contacts! Boosting to Twenty-four percent!”

Moran moved up next to Visar. “Stand by on the port plasma arrays. If that ship so much as twitches wrong hit it with every battery we have on that side.”

Visar met his eyes. “You suspect something don’t you?” Visar asked.

“Let’s just say I have a gut feeling we ain’t going to like what we are going to find.” Moran spoke.

Visar turned to the weapons officer. “Do it!” He hissed.

“Twenty-eight percent! Still no contacts!” Moran moved across the bridge slowly to come up behind the sensor operator. “Thirty percent! No... hold on! I’m... I’m getting something!”

Moran leaned over the man’s shoulder. “Talk to me Lieutenant.” He said.

The man shook his head. “It’s... odd sir.” He spoke softly adjusting his console. “Fuzzy power readings. Lots of them.”

“From the cruiser?” Moran asked.

“No sir. Half a light year from the edge of the nebula.” He answered. “Moving... moving closer. Almost as if...”

“As if what?”

The man turned. “Like they are in formation sir.”

Moran felt a cold pit begin forming in his stomach. “Keep going.” He spoke.

“Boosting to thirty-two percent!” The Lieutenant spoke. “Thirty-four... thirty-six... thirty... *Nindol shlu'ta naut thu!*” (This can not be!)

“Talk to me!” Moran barked.

“Commander... unknown warships! I... sir... there are hundreds of them!” The High Coven Lieutenant screamed out. “All bearings! I’m detecting massive power readings from the first diamond formation!”

“Commander! That cruiser is scanning us!” Visar shouted.

“How many ships?” Moran yelled. “How many ships?”

“This... this can’t be right!” The Lieutenant gasped.

“How many damn you!” Moran screamed out.

The Lieutenant turned to look at him, his eyes wide and all color draining from his already pale skinned face.

“Commander... sensors are detecting nearly three thousand warships of an unknown type on a heading for High Coven space!”

“Fuck me!” Moran hissed. “Full power scan of the first formation!” He screamed. “All portside plasma arrays target and fire on that cruiser! Helm... execute now!”

The *BLOOD JUSTICE* was one of the newest and best ships in the High Coven Fleet, and since it was Yuri’s personal ship, it was also crewed by the finest officers and men in the service. The massive dreadnought began a gut wrenching turn to starboard, just as every plasma battery on her port side began launching deadly lances of energy at the unknown cruiser.

“Full power on the sub lights!” The helm officer shouted out as his hands flew over his controls almost as an afterthought.

Moran could feel the *BLOOD JUSTICE* shuddering as her batteries unleashed a lethal barrage of directed fire that impacted the forward portion of the unknown cruiser just behind its bulbous nose. The cruiser began to disintegrate even as it too opened fire on the High Coven warship, the less powerful plasma beams skipping off of the powerful shields with barely a pause.

“Target missile tubes four through thirteen!” Visar shouted. “Fire at will!”

Ten flares of light blossomed along the *BLOOD JUSTICE*’S port quarter and ten of their newest and deadliest anti-ship missiles rippled away with barely a pause. The twelve foot long missiles took only seconds to cover the distance between them and the unknown cruiser, and then the massive warheads began to explode all along the side of the ship.

“Fuck!” Moran screamed. “It’s an invasion force! Sensors! Sensors!”

The Lieutenant turned in his chair. “Signatures indicate Zaleisian power coils on a quarter of the ships Commander! Many of them appear to be equal to our ORIC-Class heavy cruisers! The others... I don’t...” His eyes went wide as his console began beeping and he turned back to it.

“What are they?” Moran screamed.

“Commander... sensors indicate power signatures on the majority of the ships are of a TriCobal based power source!” He turned back to Moran.

“So!” Moran barked.

Visar’s eyes were wide now as well. “Robert Moran... there is only one species in the universe that uses a TriCobal based power source.” He met Moran’s eyes.

“Who?” Moran demanded.

Visar’s expression caused the pit in Moran’s stomach to open up into a cavernous hole, especially after the one word that came next.

“Kavalians!” Visar exclaimed.

“Kavalians?” Moran gasped. “That’s not possible! I thought you... the High Coven destroyed their Empire over two hundred years ago!”

“It would seem we did not do as well of a job as we thought.” Visar spoke with more clam than he felt. Moran could feel the *BLOOD JUSTICE* screaming through the nebula cloud, the helm officer directing her movements with exacting skill. “Visar... there’s almost three thousand ships out there!”

Visar nodded. “They did not like us very much Robert Moran.” He spoke. “It appears that has not changed. We...”

The *BLOOD JUSTICE* shuddered violently and slew to the right a small amount as men and women reached for hand holds to keep from falling.

“Commander! Two Heavy cruisers... unknown class! Bearing two seven eight! They are coming at us from the other side of the nebula where we came in!”

“Shit... it was a trap!” Moran barked. “All along it was a trap! They let us walk right into it and now they want to close it!”

“They are firing again!”

Once more *BLOOD JUSTICE* shuddered as powerful plasma beams pounded her shields, even as she made for the edge of the nebula so that she could engage her Shroud.

“Three more behind us! Bearing three four one!”

Moran looked at Visar. “Shields to full! Looks like we are going to have to fight our way out of here! As soon as we clear the nebula beam a transmission back to the Group! Let them know what we have discovered and tell them to get gone!”

“We are running Commander?” The tactical officer asked shocked.

“Three thousand ships bearing down on us?” Moran exclaimed loudly. “Hell yes we are running! We can’t stop them alone and we need to make sure the High Lord is warned! Prepare a full suppression barrage for those two ships bearing two seven eight! Hit them before they exit the cloud nebula! Helm... once we are clear of the nebula execute evasive pattern three nine! Take us right between the three ships coming from the side. Prepare to fire every torpedo and missile battery that we have! Target the closest two ships of the three that we will pass between!”

“Weapons officer confirms!”

“Helm, make ready to initiate a combat LSD jump! Short range back to Lycavore! Have the rest of the Group meet us there!”

“They’ll track us Robert!” Visar spoke.

Moran nodded. “But it will buy us time! A few minutes before they follow. It’s enough to let our people know what is happening!”

Visar nodded. “I will prepare the transmission grid for an emergency power burst. We will need to keep our shields up and I will need to pull power from the other systems so that we can reach that far.”

Moran looked at Visar. “Do it! Bypass all command structure and beam it right to the High Lord’s office! Visar... we have just opened Pandora’s Box my friend.” Moran spoke.

“What... what is this Pandora’s Box?” Visar asked.

“A whole lot of trouble.” Moran told him. “A whole lot of trouble!”

EARTH WITCHITA, KANSAS

Roluth and Isheeni were settled on the ground watching as Maruad paced back and forth in the deserted street. They were on the edge of the once sprawling human city, in what appeared to be some sort of park. From where they sat they could see the broken and rusted remains of towering skyscrapers and what appeared to be vehicles of some sort. They were still playing the part of mates and Roluth rested so that his scaled side rested against Isheeni’s hind quarter. He did it in a way that was respectful and that Maruad would never suspect.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *He is nervous Isheeni.* Roluth spoke.

Isheeni nodded her large head. [Mindvoice Shielded] *He believes he is close to his goal.* She spoke. *And these Kavalians are late in meeting him.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *My siblings are...*

Isheeni turned her head and touched her snout to his, surprising him to some extent. While they were playing the part of mates, Isheeni had never truly shown him affection of any kind. Roluth did not expect her too, especially not after seeing the images of her true mate Torma. Now however it was different. She nuzzled his snout in the fashion that his sister Syrilth had done when he was still a hatchling.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Isra and Aelnala and your bonded ones watch over your siblings Roluth. Isheeni spoke in a warm voice. They will not allow harm to come to them. Tarifa is waiting with her forces to spring their trap. It will be very fast and without mercy for that is how Spartans conduct themselves. Those operating the Lifters and guarding the eggs will die without question. We must wait until the Kavalians show themselves here before we can act however.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Yet they draw closer each passing minute.* Roluth said.

Isheeni nodded. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Closer to freedom Roluth. The Guardian of the Line has already begun his attack on the white skinned creatures at the mountain. Aricia has told me he will have things under control there soon.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Isheeni... I... Syrilth...*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I once felt as you do Roluth. I hated them. I never trusted them. It was not until my bond with Aricia came into being that I saw not all of them are like what we had seen. And when the King and Torma returned to our world that day and I saw how powerful they had become... I knew.*

Roluth met her azure eyes. [Mindvoice Shielded] *What did you know?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *This is our future Roluth my friend... our fate. This is what destiny has planned for us. This is our purpose. We will live and die with our bonded ones. We will share in the happy and sad times everything that we are. We will always be together. And we will always fight against injustice to those who can not defend themselves. That is the road we have chosen. And it is the road we travel down every day. You will see this when the King arrives. Isheeni chuckled within their connection. He may be a Lycavorian... but for his kind he is very handsome. And his presence is so very dominating to say the least. He... he exudes power and control. But that is tempered with a compassion and sincere feeling I have rarely seen in his species. You will see this for yourself.*

Roluth looked at her. [Mindvoice Shielded] *What will happen when this is over?* He asked.

Isheeni touched his snout once more. [Mindvoice Shielded] *The future will happen. A bright future for you and your siblings and your bonded ones. They carry children of their own you know.*

Roluth nodded. [Mindvoice Shielded] *I felt that within them.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Soon Roluth. Soon this will be over and you will be free and you will know happiness.* Isheeni told him. *You...*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Isheeni... to the west!* Roluth exclaimed.

Isheeni turned her head quickly and she saw the dozen or so figures slowly coming from the shadows of the broken and shattered buildings. The nearly two dozen soldiers she now saw all were dressed in similar green fatigue like uniforms and carrying what appeared to be a version of the rifles she had seen Aricia and the others using. They were of many different shades of color, all of them with feline like features and fine coats of hair covering their exposed bodies. She watched carefully as they approached where Maraud stood with his hands by his side in a very noon-threatening manner.

Maraud? Isheeni spoke. *Are these...?*

Yes. They are Kavalians, and they are not to be trifled with. They fear your kind for some reason, so do nothing to startle them! He answered quickly.

They are more foul looking than your kind. Isheeni hissed maintaining her act as a female dragon with eggs that did not care for Lycavorians.

They will have many more watching. Maruad snapped back turning to look at her. *Your siblings will be here soon Roluth. Then all this will be over with.*

Isheeni canted her head as she detected the slight inflection in his voice. Almost as if he was supremely proud of himself for something. She looked around where she and Roluth sat slowly, almost casually, allowing her abilities within Mindvoice to reach out to anything living that was near them. Her azure eyes remained neutral as she was able to detect many of the same type of humanoid all around her and Roluth.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *He is lying.* Isheeni spoke calmly.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *What? How do you know?* Roluth demanded.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I can sense the tremors within Mindvoice of these beings all around us. It is weak... they do not appear to be able to communicate as we do... but there are several dozen moving closer within the remains of these buildings.* Isheeni answered.

Roluth's eyes didn't change but his tone within Mindvoice did, becoming firmer and angrier.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *You were right. He never intended to release my siblings to us.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Once we heard what Syrilth told us in the hanger that was Aricia's thought as well.* Isheeni spoke. *The question remains, why would these creatures want the eggs of your siblings? I can almost smell their fear of us.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Isheeni I can feel them now.* Roluth spoke.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *A few more moments and then we will act Roluth. Make ready to tell your Bonded One Tarifa to start her attack. Concentrate and keep your focus and you will reach her easily.* Isheeni spoke.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I am ready.*

Isheeni canted her large head slightly, her azure eyes bright and intelligent. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Aricia my sister. It is almost time for us to act.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *We stand ready.* Aricia's voice replied instantly filling Isheeni with love and support within Mindvoice.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Aricia...*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I feel them too my sister. It is still very hard as shielded as they still are... but I feel them. Soon... very soon our mates will be with us. Hours... not days my sister.* Aricia spoke.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Aricia... what of Maruad?* Isheeni asked.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I have already passed the word Isheeni. He is not to be harmed. No my sister... for his deeds... for the horrors he has brought upon Syrilth and your kind... the elves and people of Earth... no... he will face Martin's judgment.*

Isheeni nodded her head. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Then I will ask no more... Maruad does not deserve death just yet. And the King's judgment will be far more terrible to contemplate than death. It will be fitting.*

Maruad looked at the Kavalian who appeared to be in charge as he moved closer. A seasoned soldier no doubt the way his eyes darted back and forth and he allowed his keen sense of smell to attempt to detect any who he might call enemy. While no where near as sensitive and refined as a Lycavorian's sense of smell, the Kavalians surprisingly were a feline cousin to the wolves of his people though no one, whether Lycavorian or Kavalian, would ever openly admit that.

"You are late!" Maruad barked.

"We are not fools! We were making sure the area was secure!" The Kavalian spoke in return.

"This place is a dead city!" Maruad said. "It has been for centuries. No one comes here but mutants and insects. You got to the surface I see."

The Kavalian nodded as he became less nervous. "Your plan was well thought out. We blended with the reconstruction crews just as you said we would. No one questioned us." He answered. "I have just over two hundred of my men spread out around this location. Your... your beasts... they..."

"They do as I tell them." Maruad told him as he moved closer. "They will not move or do anything to interfere. Where are your ships?"

"Nearby. Three kilometers from here." The Kavalian answered. "The eggs you were to supply to us?"

Maruad nodded. "They will be arriving in minutes by Lifter." He replied. "I have kept my end of the deal friend. The eggs will be yours just as I promised... and you will provide me a long range transport for my use?"

The Kavalian nodded. "It waits in the landing bay of our cruiser." He replied. His head turned to the side, looking around. "Where... where is Colonel Talco?"

Maruad's eyes narrowed. "Talco? I thought he was supposed to be with you?"

The Kavalian looked at him. "The last transmission he sent to us stated we would meet with him here. That he would be with you."

Maruad's senses suddenly began to light off. "The message he sent to me stated he would link up with you when you arrived and bring you here. He was... he was in Eden City when he sent his transmission to me.

His message stated that he was going to make an attempt to kill the vampire/elf wench who insulted him, and if he wasn't able to complete that he would leave and meet with you.”

The Kavalian met Maruad's gaze. “His transmission to us was that he would meet us here in your company.” He spoke. “He is the nephew of the Prefect! He must be found!”

Maruad heard the soft laughter within Mindvoice and spun around quickly. He saw the azure blue scaled female behind them a hundred meters, but no longer settled completely on the ground. She was gazing at him intently. Roluth was also on his feet and standing beside her but looking at the building to his right intently.

Why are you laughing? He screamed out in Mindvoice. *This has to do with your freedom and the eggs you carry for Roluth as well as the others!*

Do you really believe that Maruad? Isheeni spoke calmly and evenly. *You are a bigger fool than Aricia first envisioned you to be.*

Maruad's eyes grew a little wider as he stared at her. *Aricia?* He took a step towards her. *You killed your rider! You and Roluth when he mated with you!*

Roluth is not my mate you fool man! My mate carries the King of the Lycavorian Union! I carry one of his Queens! Roluth could no more defeat and kill Aricia Leonidas than you will be able too! Isheeni announced loudly. *My bonded sister is my life as I am hers! Something you will never know or experience.*

“Leonidas?” Maruad gasped out.

You will not take Sylrith's siblings from her Maruad! Isheeni snarled. *You will not harm another dragon from this day forward... and when the King arrives here on Earth Maruad... when the King arrives you will face his justice!*

Tarifa my bonded one.... now! Roluth screamed out within Mindvoice.

Maruad's head snapped around when the low echo of an explosion carried across the landscape and echoed between the shattered remains of the buildings that had once stood so high.

You see Maruad! Isheeni barked. *You will not have Sylrith's eggs! Your white skinned allies fall under the weapons and blades of true Spartan warriors as we speak! The facility you used to hide Sylrith's siblings from her is no more, crushed beneath Isra, Aelnala and Aihola's heel! They left no one standing Maruad!*

Maruad's head snapped back to look at her, his dark eyes burning with hatred and rage. “I will kill you dragon!” He bellowed out.

Isheeni laughed at him as the Kavalians all around stood nervously wondering what was happening.

Kill me? Isheeni growled out. *I think not.* Her huge head turned to look at Roluth and she smiled a dragon's smile. She turned back to gaze at Maruad. *Allow us to show you what true Bonded Pairs are capable of Maruad. Roluth now!*

Her command was followed by two trumpeting roars of anger, two deep inhalations of breath and then two angry pure Firespitter Dragons unleashed two unstoppable jets of searing flame upon the buildings to either side of them.

Maruad saw his plans begin to disintegrate with the horrified screams of the Kavalians that were being burned alive. He could only watch as the Kavalians all around him brought up their weapons in terrified reaction to what was happening and began to fire on the two dragons. It had no affect Maruad saw, the projectile rounds bouncing harmlessly away from the psychic shields of the two dragons. He knew there could only be one reason for that and his head began to snap back and forth searching.

He turned in place quickly searching and then his eyes came to rest on the figure standing atop the pile of twisted frame work and steel of an old vehicle. The wind caused the raven black crested plume to blow to the side and mix in with her night black hair, but there was no mistaking those azure blue eyes even from the several dozen meters that separated them.

“You!” He screamed.

Aricia smiled as she extended the Nehtes in her hand. *I told you once you were a fool Maruad. It seems I was not mistaken.*

“I will kill you!” Maruad bellowed as he withdrew his own Nehtes and began walking towards her, ignoring all else around him, even as Roluth and Isheeni continued to burn Kavalians by the score. “I will rip your heart from your chest and show it to your King!”

He even ignored the black armored Spartans that began appearing all around them like phantoms from the shadows of the buildings.

Aricia only smiled as she allowed the change to come over her. The thin black ring around her azure eyes expanded and her wolf fangs extended to their full length. *Then come Maruad... and allow me to show you how big a fool you truly are.*

CHAPTER THIRTY

EARTH FOUR KILOMETERS WEST OF WICHITA

The convoy of three large Heavy Lifters and half a dozen armored Lifters moved slowly along the transit path. This early in the morning and in this part of the country, other Lifter traffic was almost non-existent. Even though the reconstruction of Earth was proceeding better than anyone had expected, they had yet to reach out into the Wastes yet, mainly concentrating on rebuilding the many cities that had sprouted up, as well as building the defensive platforms and the main station in orbit. Two armored Lifters led the convoy, two more traveling between the three transport vehicles and then two more guarding the rear. The insignia on the sides of the Lifters designated them as belonging to Eden City's 3rd Transport Battalion. It was a unit that Martin had formed shortly after establishing Eden City and changing its old name from Junction City, Utah.

The men operating the vehicles were anything but part of that unit.

The armored Lifters carried two men in the front and a dozen in the rear, all of them armed and wearing long cloaks and hoods to protect against the blowing sand. The storms in The Wastes were famous for their power and ability to strip the flesh from bones and even from the air it would not look odd for the troops to be wearing protective cloaks. The passenger in the first armored Lifter allowed his red eyes to search the terrain that surrounded them. This section of Lifter path had been improved just a few months ago, natural obstacles removed from the transit path to allow ease of travel. The hills to his left were covered in dark green pine and oak trees and rested perhaps only fifty meters away. The area to his right was mostly plains and wide open with nothing but high grass. It allowed him to see for hundreds of meters across the landscape and that was why he kept looking towards the treeline. The path curved sharply up ahead and once past it, then they would have a straight shot into the dead city of Wichita only ten kilometers ahead.

His name was Talied.

He was Hurcan's oldest son and was the only one his father trusted enough for this mission. He had chosen his men carefully, all of them experienced in combat and keeping their true nature hidden from prying eyes. The normal elf drivers provided by Anlain they would kill upon reaching their destination and then they would feast on their flesh in celebration of their victory over the female elves and wolf dogs that had so tortured his father's existence. They would finally have their revenge on Black Hair and those that followed him for butchering his father's brother in the tunnel two years before, and they could begin to establish themselves as the rulers of this world. They would be able to...

"Talied?" The voice brought him out of his thoughts and he turned to his elf driver.

"What is it?" He hissed out.

"Up ahead. Look."

Talied turned his head quickly to look where the driver was motioning and his red eyes immediately narrowed. Stretched across the transit path haphazardly at the sharp turn in the path were the wrecked and broken remains of nearly two dozen rusted hulks of ancient wheeled cars and trucks.

"Stop!" He barked out.

The elf driver brought the armored Lifter smoothly to a halt, the vehicles behind them also slowing and stopping. Talied quickly extracted himself from the Lifter, his eyes searching all around them nervously. He looked at the elf driver.

"Was this here before?" He demanded.

The elf shook his head. "I don't know." He answered honestly. "I wasn't the one who scouted this route. The reconstruction teams are beginning to spread into The Wastes Talied. This is one of the first things they do... they drag these old vehicles out of the city streets and leave them on the edges for disposal at a later time."

Talied eyed the area in front of them. They could not go around to the left of the path; the Heavy Transport Lifters were too large to fit between the scattered hulks and the small gap between the last few and the line of timber. Going around to the right would require that they spread out across the high grass of the plains and pick their way around the wrecks which were much more spaced out. His eyes could detect the bend in the path that would lead them directly to their destination sitting on the far side of this pile. He lifted his hand and brought the communications set up.

“Have two men move up to the wreckage and check it!” He barked making his first mistake. “Now!”

He watched then as two cloaked figures jumped from the back of the second armored Lifter and began to bound quickly forward passing him as they made their way toward the pile of derelict vehicles. Talied was not a military commander and he had no formal training in tactics. Much of what he had done over the years had been against helpless men, women and children.

“Should we spread out the vehicles?” The elf driver asked.

Talied glared at him. “And delay ourselves more?” Talied barked. “Keep the men in their vehicles. Once this is checked we will move around it to the right across the plains!” He ordered, making his second, final and most fatal mistake.

The black ringed sapphire eyes watched intently the movements of the two men and the convoy from the darkness of the timber. The eyes held no emotion but cold death, and the fangs protruding from her gums were just the indication anyone needed.

Tarifa had insisted on only fast moving scouts for this mission. It had taken them only four hours to have three reconstruction crews bring as many of the burnt out vehicles to this location as they could. Once that was accomplished, dozens of engineers and scouts had gone through the wreckage insuring that no vehicle would pass through the piles of twisted metal, and making sure that no sign of being placed here purposely would be visible. She had forty Spartan scouts with her, as well as a dozen half vampire half Drow infiltrators from Lynwe’s command. Leland and his small team were hidden within the patchwork of twisted vehicles on the road waiting for the signal to begin their attack.

She wore the special lightweight dark gray fatigues that all their scouts wore. The fabric of the material was such that it blended to whatever background the person wearing the uniform was in. While not making them invisible, it went a long way to making them infinitely harder to detect. Especially in the darkness of the timber all around them. The Spartan P190 was resting in its holder diagonally across her back, her long midnight black hair pulled and tied into a long pony tail and secured with Drow silk in Aihola’s chosen colors. It signified to all that she was Aihola’s lover and Tarifa had worn such silk in her hair happily for two years now, and would do so many years into the future. They had a future to live out... together and with the man who had taken them both as his mates and cemented that future for them.

Tarifa had been worried at first that Isra would not accept her *Nya Istel* for who she was, a half elf half vampire Drow. That he would not be able to accept their love of each other and what that entailed. Those worries had been brushed aside when he had swept Aihola into his arms on his ship that first time. They had been swept aside every time since when he took her in their bed with as much passion and vigor that he showed to Tarifa. Their trysts could go on for hours she thought playfully, as they never seemed to tire of each other. And the one gift that both she and Aihola never thought would come about was now theirs Tarifa thought as her hand dropped slowly to her abdomen.

Doctor Olyne had told her because of Dekton’s diluted blood, the wolf change within her was taking far longer to complete. Though she had come into phase twice in the last year, the changes were still occurring inside her body at the molecular level. The moment Isra had bitten her that first night here on Earth, the pureness of his blood and the virus within that blood had raced through her like a firestorm, instantly completing all the changes within her and allowing her to have what she had always desired. Tarifa could almost feel the child growing within her womb now, and to know that her *Nya Istel* had also miraculously conceived was a sign they could not ignore. Isra was meant for them... whether ordained by some higher power or fate itself... they had the man that they would go into the future with.

“They are reaching the first line of wreckage Tarifa.” The voice whispered softly next to her.

Tarifa turned and looked at the single Durcunusaan Spartan that had been assigned to her. The Durcunusaan was a grizzled older man born and raised on Apo Prime with white just touching the edges of his dark hair; one of his fangs had the tip broken off, the black ring surrounding bright gray eyes. Tarifa had discovered from her father that he had requested from General Vengal to be assigned to her. He had lost a daughter when she was Tarifa's age who had looked amazingly very much like her, without the elven ears of course.

"How closely did Isra tell you to watch me Diantar?" Tarifa asked with a small smile.

Diantar matched her smile with a glint in his eyes. "He told me you were bull headed and as stubborn as a female Rektolian Jungle Cat. He said I would never be able to make you do something you didn't want to do. He also told me you are one of the most dedicated and fearless fighters he had ever known." Tarifa's eyes grew a little wider at this as Diantar continued. "And considering Isra has fought beside King Leonidas and Queen Aricia... that puts you in elite company."

"Isra said all that?" Tarifa asked just a little shocked.

Diantar grinned. "I had an opportunity to sit with him the night after we arrived here. I don't believe in all my six thousand four hundred years I have ever seen a man... an Alpha as powerful as Isra... go on so much about the skills and intelligence of his mates." He told her. "He worships you both Tarifa... in the same manner as the King worships the Queens. You carry his child... you should..."

Tarifa gasped. "How... how do you know that?"

Diantar chuckled softly and shifted on the ground next to her. "I am an old wolf and I have been around quite a long time. There are things I can detect that the younger ones can not. He knows that you and Aihola carry his children... yet his only words to me were to make sure you did nothing exceedingly reckless. He knows he will not change you Tarifa... and he has no intention of trying."

"I... I know why you requested to be assigned to me Diantar." Tarifa spoke softly. "I hope... I hope in the years to come that I give you reason to never regret that decision."

His gray eyes met hers. "You are so like my daughter that it is scary sometimes." He spoke softly. "And you already do her memory proud Tarifa. It is my honor to be able to serve you."

Tarifa turned back to the transit path. "I have not heard from Roluth yet." She said. "We can not hit them until..."

Tarifa my bonded one...now!

Tarifa's eyes widened fully and she winced at the power of the shouted command within her head from Roluth, but it sent every portion of her senses into overdrive and she reached back to pull the 190 from its scabbard. "Now!" She hissed reaching up and tapping her jaw where her implant was. "Missile Teams! Execute now! Steven... you are free to engage!" Tarifa looked into the sky through the trees.

Isra! Nya Istel! Act now!

Talied may not have been a military commander in any sense of the word but he was far from being a fool. His eyes were watching his two men carefully as they moved among the row of rusted hulks and they grew wide when from their side he saw three figures step from behind a paneled vehicle. He opened his mouth to scream out a warning but it was far too late as Leland and his two scouts open fire before they were fully in the open with unerring accuracy.

As his two men went down under a hail of rounds his eyes detected figures rising from within the high grass to his right. Many figures. And all of them held portable missile launchers on their shoulders.

"NO!" Talied screamed as he threw himself to the side of the transit path just as six two man missile teams fired their weapons.

The members of the True people species in the rear of the armored Lifters would never know what happened to them. Six 40mm rockets streaked across the ground toward the armored Lifters and all of them hit exactly where they had been aimed. The cockpit portions of the lifters were instantly shredded by the lethal shrapnel from the missiles as they struck. The elf drivers and the True People soldiers riding next to them were ripped apart as hundreds of small deadly pellets punched through their bodies before their minds had the time to register what the small smoke trails heading towards them were. As the occupants of the cockpits were slaughtered, many of the pellets pierced into the rear of the armored Lifters, punching through metal and flesh

as the handful of True People closest to the cockpits were also mangled. The small explosions lifted the front of the Lifters off the ground, suddenly filling the air with flame and smoke.

As the fronts of the armored lifters fell back to the ground, Talied looked up from where he had buried his face in the dirt. His eyes grew wide as he saw dozens of Spartans break from the timber fifty meters away moving almost faster than his eyes could follow. Many of them were firing as they ran; their controlled bursts of weapons fire as accurate and deadly as if they were standing still. Talied heard the deafening roar and rolled over to see the huge RAPTOR II flying craft dropping from the sky above as if it was about to crash. He watched as the ship stopped only six meters off the ground, its engines whining in protest, and the nose of the ship twisted around to face the two armored Lifters that were first in the convoy. As his eyes took all of this in, he saw the huge chain cannon under the nose of the ship twist around and lock into position on the first of his two armored Lifters in the front of the column. He winced as the buzzing sound pierced the sky and then the nose of the RAPTOR II belched a two meter long tongue of flame and the armored Lifter that he had been inside only moments before began to crumble and break apart. Five seconds was all it took for the huge 30mm cannon to turn his vehicle into a mass of burning junk and he could only watch as it then turned to the second Lifter in the Line and while still hovering, the cannon belched another lethal delivery of 30mm projectiles. Talied's eyes shifted and that is when he saw the night black hair of Tarifa as she sprinted toward the first heavy transport in the line.

Talied surged off the ground then and burst into a run towards the first transport.

Tarifa was roughly a hundred and twenty pounds lighter than Diantar and she was also part elf with their natural speed. She quickly sprinted across the few dozen meters between the timber and the transports and easily outdistanced him. As she skidded to a stop near the rear of the first heavy Lifter she brought her P190 up to her shoulder with a snap and burned half a magazine into the burning cockpit, silencing the screams of the dying elf and True People's soldier. She turned her head to look at the rear of the transport and was reaching for the rear locking mechanism when the white hand clamped down on her wrist and ripped her arm back.

"Elf bitch!" The voice screamed. "I will kill you for what you have done!"

Tarifa's wolf eyes turned on Talied and his own eyes grew wide as he saw her bare her fangs in a vicious snarl. All that she had found in the last two years, the love, the acceptance, and the future she had dreamed about as a little girl. A future with children and peace. Tarifa was not about to allow some pale, flesh eating creature keep her from saving her bonded one's siblings and insuring that future.

As Talied's movement yanked her right arm to the side, Tarifa snapped her left arm forward in the same motion. Her open palm heel strike struck his jaw with strength that Talied did not expect and his head snapped back. He staggered back a few steps and was reaching for his knife expecting her to continue to try and open the back of the Lifter. As his head shifted back, and his hand was bringing up the knife his eyes saw the stock of the P190 far too late.

Tarifa had swung her rifle with every ounce of elven and wolf strength she now commanded and she watched in sadistic satisfaction as the butt of her 190 shattered into half a dozen pieces on Talied's jaw. She welcomed the gunshot like pop of his breaking jaw and she watched his body propelled back as if struck by a moving vehicle.

"No more!" She screamed tossing aside the rifle and moving after Talied as he landed on the ground some ten feet away moaning in enormous pain and clutching his splintered jaw.

His eyes lifted as the shadow fell upon him and he gazed into her beautiful face, now twisted into an angry mask he had never before seen from anyone.

"No more will you hurt anyone on my planet!" Tarifa screamed bringing her arms up in a defensive posture and snapping out with one of her long legs. The toe of her combat boot smashed into Talied's chest and his eyes bugged out of his sockets as five of his ribs shattered under the impact, several splinters from his ribs slicing into his lungs. The pain was more agonizing than anything he'd felt before as he tried to draw in a breath and his shredded lungs would not work.

"I will kill you even as the Guardian kills the rest of your vile, disgusting species!" Tarifa bellowed. "Your days of horror are over! And you will not harm my bonded brother's siblings! Ever!"

Tarifa bent over and filled her hand with Talied's cloak, yanking it tight around his neck and using her anger fueled strength to lift his upper body off the ground and gaze into his pain filled eyes with sapphire orbs of hate. She lifted the R4 High Elf fighting knife so that he could see it and snarled like a wolf.

"How does it feel to know you are about to die?" She hissed out her fangs clearly visible and making her face appear like some demon from hell. "How does it feel to suffer the fate of so many who have stood before you in fear and helplessness? I will send you to hell now... for all the souls you have taken before their time! You will never hurt anyone again... and may you burn in the fires of Hades for eternity!"

Tarifa slammed the curved blade of the R4 into Talied's chest and watched his eyes bulge out in silent pain as she twisted the curved blade and yanked upwards with all her considerable strength, opening his chest cavity to the smoky and dust filled air all around them. She shoved his head back as the life faded quickly from his eyes, her chest heaving in anger and she stepped back, her feet planted in a combat stance. She stepped back quickly and took notice that the firing had stopped all around her and the whine of the RAPTOR'S engines was dying. She lifted her eyes from Talied's body and saw Aelnala's huge body not two meters away. She saw Aihola and Isra sitting in the saddle and gazing at her intently. Aelnala's eyes gazed on her evenly. Tarifa turned her head and saw Diantar first, his P190 resting in the crook of his arm, and then dozens more of her assault team all of them staring at her. She could hear the crackling of fires and the moans of the dying as her head turned back to where Isra and Aihola were gazing at her.

She saw Isra's face break into a smile and he shook his head. "Now I have finally seen why Martin considers you his beloved sister." Isra spoke with a small smile. "Your temper when incited is just as bad, if not more so than his."

Aihola slid from the saddle easily. "Tarifa my love?" She asked softly stepping towards her. "Are you..."

Tarifa met her amber eyes and slowly a smile crossed her face as she took a deep breath. "I am fine *Nya Istel*." She stated.

"So it is safe to get off Aelnala's back then *Sadormacah*?" Isra asked.

Tarifa tilted her head and gave Isra a scrunched face look as he smiled at her. "The eggs!" She gasped finally.

Tarifa turned and rushed to the back of the lifter, Aihola right on her heels. Isra jumped from Aelnala's back, pulling his Nehtes from the holster on his thigh as he approached the back of the Lifter.

Tarifa reached up and grabbed the recessed handle of the Lifter door, Aihola stepping up next to her and they both used their combined strength to lift the large door up and out of the way. They gasped and Aihola grasped Tarifa's arm as they gazed into the back and saw at least thirty eggs resting safely in cushioned compartments, the heat of the back of the Lifter set perfectly to keep the eggs from becoming too cold. Tarifa turned to Diantar.

"Diantar... the other Lifters! Hurry!" She ordered.

Diantar didn't pause and motioned with his hand for troops to comply with her directives as she and Aihola climbed into the back of the Lifter.

The eggs were of every size and color, all of them oval in shape and roughly eighteen inches long and twelve inches thick. Tarifa moved to one side of the Lifter, her hands caressing each egg as she went past them counting. Aihola did the same on the opposite side of the Lifter and they reached the end of the vehicle and turned back to look at Isra who had climbed into the back and stood in the doorway.

"Thirteen." Aihola spoke.

"Fourteen on this side." Tarifa said.

"Twenty-seven." Isra spoke nodding his head.

"Commander Isra?" The voice echoed in all of their helmets.

"Report!" Isra barked.

"Sir... I have twenty-five undamaged eggs in the second Lifter sir!"

"Commander... I have..." The second voice spoke.

Isra's brow furrowed as Tarifa and Aihola moved up next to him. "What? What do you have?" Isra demanded.

"Commander I have fifteen undamaged eggs... and a very small and very frightened baby dragon looking at me." The female voice replied happily.

Diantar shook his head quickly as he saw Aelnala move as if she had been shot from a gun, and then Isra, Tarifa and Aihola were following her in a single blink. He broke into a run in pursuit and they covered the distance down the column, passing the smoking vehicles and blackened bodies with barely a pause. Aelnala kicked up a massive amount of dust and soot as she rounded the corner and came to a screeching halt, her honey colored eyes wide.

Isra, Tarifa and Aihola almost ran into her as they came around the corner and saw the female Spartan cradling the light gray, newly hatched dragon in her arms as she slid from the back of the Lifter. The male Spartan was squatting in the open door with a huge grin on his face.

Aelnala reached out her head on her long neck and touched her snout to the baby dragon's head as the gray hatchling extended its own head out on its neck to touch her cool scales.

Welcome little one! Aelnala's voice echoed within Mindvoice as Tarifa and Aihola pressed up against Isra's lean muscular body with smiles on their faces. *Welcome to the very first day of your future.*

Roluth! Roluth our bonded one! Aihola shouted out within Mindvoice. *We have them Roluth! We have all of them and they are safe! Even the little one that has hatched! They are safe our brother!*

BIG SNOWY MOUNTAINS TRUE PEOPLE BASE

Hurcan turned as half a dozen of his men rushed into the control room and slammed the thick steel door closed behind them. Four of them were bleeding heavily from wounds sustained in the battle, the others mildly wounded as Hurcan himself. He lowered the rifle he held as his men turned towards him their red eyes wide.

"What is happening?" He screamed.

"They have taken over all of the levels beneath us and are moving on this section One!" The soldier replied moving over to him. "The north half of the base belongs to them as we had almost no personnel in those sections!"

"Why can't we reach the hanger and use the emergency exits!" Hurcan demanded. "We are only a hundred meters from freedom!"

"Syrilth and the other dragons are burning any of our people that make it that far One!" The man replied. "We can't even reach across through the upper tunnel because her sister burns anyone who attempts to cross."

"We must rush them!" Another soldier shouted.

The man whirled on him. "We have tried that!" He screamed. "We lost almost fifty men in that attack! Those that weren't burned they ripped to shreds with their claws and teeth! Our weapons are ineffective against them. They have some sort of shielding surrounding their bodies! Our bullets are bouncing harmlessly away!" He turned back to Hurcan. "They have found our food storage bunkers One! The weapons they launch from their arms are slaughtering our men! Even those behind barricades are falling. The flying shields rip right through the metal and wood!"

Hurcan nodded. "Just like in the tunnel!" He exclaimed. "They can direct them it seems! If they have found the food storage rooms they will not spare any of us! They will kill us like animals because of their damnable sensibilities!"

"What are your orders One?"

Hurcan looked at the man. "We will wait until they come through that door and then we will kill as many of them as we can before we die!" Hurcan hissed.

Walter staggered out of the room trying to hold the contents of his stomach inside and not purge them in the smoky corridor. He turned and his eyes took in the three Spartans that were not as lucky as him. They still squatted in the dimly lit corridor, their stomachs dry heaving. He had responded to the call of his second in command and come to this room on the fourth level of the base.

Now he wished he hadn't.

The bodies of hundreds of men, women and even children were hung from the ceilings and walls on hooks. Their blood stained the floor in buckets, telling Walter they had still been alive when impaled upon those cruel apparatuses. Many of them had pieces of their bodies missing, like they had been carved or sawed completely off. It was the most horrible sight Walter had ever seen in his life. He leaned against the steel wall of the corridor as two of his men came up to him slowly.

“Senior Polemarch?” The more senior of the men spoke softly.

Walter looked at the man. “Do we... do we have any of these foul creatures prisoners?” He asked immediately.

The two men looked at each other quickly. The senior one turned back to him. “Two dozen that were too wounded to fight Senior Polemarch. We separated them and are holding them in a room on the lower level.”

Walter looked at him. “Execute them immediately!” He barked out. “I don’t care what wounds they have!”

The Spartan nodded. “As you order Senior Polemarch!”

“Insure that we have three *Enomotia* sweep back through all the corridors and make sure all these vile creatures are dead! I want none of them to survive and leave this mountain this day! None!” Walter spat.

“It will be done Senior Polemarch!”

“The attack?” Walter asked.

“Second Lochi has trapped who they believe to be the leader of these... things... three levels up sir!” The man reported. “A hundred meters from the hanger bay. The dragons have kept them from escaping through the hanger entrance quite handily.”

Walter nodded. “They have more reason to hate them... they have suffered for far longer than us under these disgusting creatures.” He stood up straighter and clutched his Nehtes in his hand. “Very well... contact War Master Tareif and advise him and Administrator Selene of our status.”

“Not the Queen Senior Polemarch?” The man asked.

Walter shook his head. “I sense Aricia is fully engaged at the moment and we do not want to interrupt her. I detected Aihola’s call to Roluth within Mindvoice that the eggs are safe. Let us move up to this level and I will inform Syrilth of this fact. Then we can take down this scum Hurcan and I can watch the blood leak form his body at what I will do to him.”

EDEN CITY CROSSROADS CENTER

It was normally the place where hundreds and thousands of men, elves and Lycavorians came everyday. That number did not include the hundreds of alien species who were part of the reconstruction effort who rapidly realized once arriving on Earth that this was the place to come and enjoy the many different types of dining and cultures that Eden City encompassed.

It was called Crossroads Center.

Selene, Tarifa and Aihola had wanted a place directly in the center of Eden City that would belong to everyone. A place that everyone could come and mingle and shop at the hundreds of market stands and enjoy coffee and food in the outdoor cafes as well as the dozens of restaurants that dotted the area. It was the center of Eden City’s four main traffic hubs, and designed into a massive circular pattern almost ten square blocks. Inside that circular pattern was a beautiful flower garden with benches and refreshment stands. The Lifter traffic was limited to only around the outer portion of Crossroads Center, zipping along the outer portion of the huge ring with stops every few hundred feet.

This was where the citizens of Eden City came to mingle and shop and relax. Lifter traffic through Crossroads Center was limited to small two or three passenger Lifters and the speed laws were strictly enforced. The majority of the ten square block area was traversed on foot, hundreds of shops and stores lining the streets as well as food vendors and more indoor and outdoor cafes. During the warm months, every table set outside was full most of the day and night. In the cold months, the insides of the cafes and restaurants were full. It didn’t matter what species you were, and like the other market centers around Eden City, everyone was

welcome. It was also the only section of the city that allowed alcoholic beverages to be served since it was nothing to walk a block or two and wave down a Lifter service vehicle to take you to your home.

At the moment however, Crossroads Center was a war zone.

Steffan's face was blackened by blow back gases from his heavy machine gun as he held the trigger back and swept the huge barrel back and forth in front of their position, the barrel almost glowing red from the constant hammering of high velocity 40 caliber projectiles exiting from the weapon. Lynwe laid next to him with half a dozen other Spartans and Dragoons laying down a withering field of weapons fire directed solely at the water drainage tunnel. The white skinned bodies of what had to be close to a hundred True People soldiers were stacked to the sides and front of the tunnel like entrance. They had come charging out of the flood gate tunnel screaming out their rage and hatred and walked into a toxic hailstorm of Teflon coated steel hollowpoints, 8mm flechette rounds and the standard high velocity 10mm projectile rounds from dozens of P190s.

Lynwe had established three fortified positions around each entrance, supported by an entire platoon of Spartans and Dragoons. They had set up their positions in such a way that gave them the best line of fire to their targets. The outcome was never really in doubt considering the lack of military knowledge among the so called leaders of the True People. They rushed from the tunnels and entrances in droves.

And they died in droves.

Lynwe rolled onto her side as she scrambled to reload her 190. Her hands smoothly ejected the spent magazine and as she was seating the next she looked at Steffan who was changing the drum under his massive machine gun.

"They are insane!" She screamed.

"It makes them easier to kill!" He screamed back as he jammed the third drum into its slot and yanked back on the charging handle of the large tripod mounted weapon. He settled behind the gun and once more pulled the trigger. Lynwe winced against the heavy yammer of the weapon and she allowed her amber eyes to sweep across their positions. She saw male and female Spartans and elves side by side, mixed in with humans of the Eden City Militia. They stood together without question and without fear.

Lynwe felt a swell of pride fill her and she tapped her COM unit. "War Master!" She shouted. "What is your status?"

Lynwe heard her ear implant crackle and then Tareif's deep voice bellowed out. The sounds of heavy machine guns and distant explosions filled her implant. "We are slaughtering them by the hundreds! What were they thinking Lynwe?"

"I do not care what they were thinking!" Lynwe shouted back. "They will die for their mistakes now!"

"That suits me just fine!" Tareif shouted. "No... you there... direct your fire southeast toward the bridge!" Lynwe heard him scream out the order. "Lynwe... we must have several hundred that we've brought down already! How many more can they have within the tunnels?"

"It does not matter!" Lynwe spoke. "Selene! Permission to execute Phase Two!"

Selene's ever calm voice filled her implant from where she was safe and secure within the Eden City Command Center.

"Do it Lynwe!" Selene spoke. "Tarifa reports they have secured the eggs! The Guardian of the Line is moments from taking their mountain base! I will not allow these flesh eating creatures to exist one minute longer than necessary! Do it my love!"

Lynwe nodded. "Executing!" She rolled over and pushed herself to her knees, her amber eyes focusing on the slaughter that was taking place. "All positions this is General Lynwe! You are authorized to execute Phase Two! I repeat... Execute Phase Two! First Echelon in! Missile Teams weapons free! Second Echelon to Line of Departure! Start the pumps! All personnel into masks! Execute! Execute!"

The death of the True People began then.

Every single citizen had been pulled far back out of the ten block Crossroads Center, barricades going up to keep curious innocents out of the area. Upon Lynwe's order dozens of portable missile teams appeared from within buildings and armored vehicles. Soon the sounds of explosions began to echo through the tall buildings and streets as no less than eight 67mm rockets were fired at every opening the True People were using to exit the sewers beneath the city. Concrete and steel began crushing the bodies of those living and dead as across the city the entrance were sealed by tons of debris that no hands could remove. As the explosions rocked

the ten block radius, other small units of men and elves rushed to prearranged positions, mostly welded sewer entrances along streets and alleys.

This Second Echelon carried with them portable pumps and generators which were quickly assembled and placed nearby. Small red tanks were connected to the pumps and the generators started as everyone donned fearsome looking masks over their heads.

The small tanks had been in storage bunkers, leftover from the passing of the comet. They had been discovered in one of the sweeps for weapons that Martin's people had made when they initially established Eden City. Seventy-nine tanks in all.

Seventy-nine tanks of VOX21, the most lethal nerve agent known to exist before the passing of the comet. Derived from the old VX gas of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, VOX21 was a combination of three different gases. Two nerve agents and the chemical compound R78. The two nerve agents when combined together would cause airways to the lungs to seize immediately. The skin would blister as if boiling; welts would form instantly and begin to pop from over pressurization, and then the internal organs would begin to shut down immediately as they would practically become liquefied within the victim's body. The compound R78, spread with the gas, would activate within thirty seconds and when combined with the two nerve agents it would cause a firestorm of white phosphorous to sweep through the enclosed areas burning everything at nearly three thousand degrees. It was the R78 that destroyed the nerve agents and any sign of the lethal gas, along with any bodies it may have touched. It was essentially the purging element of the agent, though no one was taking any chances. The gas would die within minutes even without the R78, but Selene had determined that everyone would wear masks for protection no matter what.

There were still several thousand of the True People within the sewers of the city, many of them bunched near the entrances they were using. None of them were aware of the airtight doors closing all around them within the sewers, effectively sealing them in their tombs. None of them were aware of anything besides the dust and rocks that peppered their skin from shattered entrances and the shouted cries of what to do next. Even as True People leaders began to shout to move to other entrances, they began to die. Many reached immediately for their throats as their airways were burned shut as they breathed in the thick dust that had been stirred up. Their skin blistered, large boils forming and exploding in sprays of white and red fluid. The screams of the dying began to echo through the tunnels, even as the Spartans and Dragoons above them stood impassively on the streets above as their enemies died. Almost on cue the R78 chemical compound acted exactly as it was designed. The massive firestorm caused a huge pressure wave to build and unleash what was nothing more than a fire cloud of superheated air.

The Spartans and elves felt the pressure wave course through the sewers beneath their feet, in some areas even causing the actual pavement to heave upwards in locations.

Thirty seconds was all it took and ninety-six percent of those that called themselves True People, flesh eating abominations created and then discarded by the High Coven, died just as horribly as they had lived.

LIMIAN COMMAND CRUISER

MUNRARAN

HIGH EARTH ORBIT

“...What do you mean you've lost contact?” The Kavalian Commander shouted to his communications officer.

“I don't know sir... one moment we had an open narrow beam channel and Lieutenant Kaliar was speaking with the Lycavorian Maruad... the next it was gone!” The communications officer declared.

Captain Chao'Diat rose from his command chair and moved to the communications station on the bridge of his cruiser. He was an officer who had survived both the war with the Union and then the High Coven. He had been chosen for this mission because of his experience in ship combat and the Limian cruiser he now commanded was the most advanced ship he had ever served on. Though no where near as advanced and powerful as the newer ships they had set to begin their invasion of High Coven space, Chao was pleased with what they had been able to do with these Limian ships.

“Playback the last few seconds of the transmission.” He ordered.

The communications officer adjusted his controls and the internal bridge speakers came alive with the sounds of voices and background noise from the planet below.

“Leonidas?” The voice gasped out

There was a low booming noise on the speakers and then what sounded like a rush of air or something shooting flame. Just milliseconds before the connection was severed Chao thought he heard the beginnings of screams.

The communications officer turned to him. “That’s it sir!” He spoke. “I’ve been trying to re-establish the connection for the last ninety seconds... but I can’t break through the clutter.” He shook his head. “It’s almost as if...”

Chao looked at him. “What?”

“Captain... it’s almost as if our signal is being jammed somehow.” The communications tech replied.

“Jammed?” Chao spoke quickly.

“Yes sir.”

Chao turned quickly. “Sensors... any warships in the area?” He shouted out.

“Negative Captain!” The reply came immediately. “Sensors are showing only nine freighters and transports! Half a dozen smaller atmospheric transport moving back and forth between the station and the surface!”

Chao gripped the communications officer’s shoulder. “Get them back.” He hissed out softly. “Something is wrong.”

“Yes sir.”

Chao moved back to his command chair and settled into it slowly. He had volunteered for this mission to retrieve these eggs that this Lycavorian traitor had promised them. He shuddered inwardly at the thought of looking upon one of those fully grown dragon they had been briefed about. They were unlike any creature he had ever seen, and his feline blood had gone cold as he watched the reports of how they had been used by the Lycavorians on Enurrua. This mission was of great importance because their scientists wanted to study the eggs and discover what it was about these monsters that so frightened their people on such a basic level. That the Prefect’s own nephew had taken the role he had in this mission spoke volumes about the importance of it.

“Nothing from Talco’s personal frequency either?” He asked.

“No sir... not since the message we received just before our troops went to the surface.” The communications officer replied turning in his chair. “Just that ten second burst and then nothing. I’ve tried to re-establish the connection since, but all I get is the same cluttered noise.”

Chao felt the short hairs on the back of his neck bristle. The fine coat of light brown hair that covered his body ruffled slightly under his uniform and the base of his spine where his tail had once been itched. Like most adult Kavalian males, he had had his two meter long tail removed when he entered service as a soldier. Their tails were more a hindrance than anything else and during their war with the Lycavorian dogs many of the wolf soldiers had used their tails against them in combat. When that war ended the Prefect made the decision that every member of the armed forces would have their tails removed no matter how limber and skilled they were at their use.

“I don’t like this.” Chao spat. “Something is not right. Direct the port sensor array to this city where they were supposed to meet the Lycavorian.”

The Tactical Officer turned from his station. “Captain... our contact on Apo Prime told us scanning of the surface of this planet was strictly forbidden by ships not part of the Union Fleet or designated ships of the Reconstruction Force. We are not one of those ships according to our documents. If we scan the surface it will be detected by their station, as well as the base on the moon. They will respond.”

“I need to know what is happening!” Chao said. “We are sitting up here blind to what is going on down there! We have no contact with Talco and no contact with Kaliar or our ground forces!”

“Captain I’m just informing...”

“Captain we have an incoming transmission of unknown origin!” The communications officer shouted out.

“What? From where?”

The man shook his head. “I don’t know sir... but I can’t block it! The signal strength is too strong and...”

Chao's head snapped around when the holographic image of the tall Lycavorian filled the area in front of his command chair. He wore the uniform of an Admiral that much Chao knew and he appeared heavily muscled and deeply tanned. His face and eyes showed many years of wisdom and knowledge, and those eyes were focused directly on Chao.

"Kavalian Commander... my name is Fleet Admiral Joarl of the United Lycavorian Union Fleet. I am the Quadrant Commander, of which Earth Sector is part of. You and your ships are ordered to power down shields and weapons and prepare to be taken into custody." Joarl spoke confidently.

Chao came to his feet with practiced ease. He had been schooled in what to say if this event took place. "I am Captain Chao! My ships and crew are part of the Reconstruction Project for Earth! What right do you have to...?"

"Captain Chao... your ships are part of an espionage mission within the boundaries of Union space!" Joarl snapped. "As we speak... your ground forces on the surface are being detained. We already have Talco in custody. I repeat my order to power down your shields and weapons and prepare to be boarded."

"We have documents indicating that..." Chao began.

Joarl turned as an officer on his bridge walked up and handed him a data pad. "Captain your documents are forged copies." Joarl spoke calmly. "You and your ships are on a covert mission within Lycavorian Union space to steal dragon eggs from here on Earth. As I said... we have Talco in custody and he has given us all the information we need. In case you have not heard Captain... King Leonidas has granted sentient status to all breeds of dragons within Union space. They are just as much citizens of the Union as I am. Attempting to kidnap them or the eggs they produce is recognized as a High Crime. Add that to your forged documents and the landing of ground troops on Earth... and you my friend are in a situation. Administrator Selene has..."

Chao's eyes narrowed and he hissed in anger. "I do not recognize that foul vampire half breed or her twisted mutant Drow lover as..." Chao sat back in his chair quickly as he saw Joarl come out of his command chair with a look of utter hatred on his face. His eyes changed and his wolf fangs burst from his gums as he stared at Chao in the holo transmission.

"Speak one more word Kavalian scum and I will ventilate every deck of your ship and let you and your crew die from exposure to the cold of space!" Joarl roared vehemently. "Selene is the only thing keeping you alive right now you nubous fool and you will not disrespect her with your words! I will not allow you to insult her in any way! And Lynwe is far more honorable and intelligent than you could ever hope to obtain!" He moved closer in the transmission. "It is Selene's order... and her order alone that insures you still live Kavalian! I fought your people in our war... I alone have seen the brutal tactics and manner in which you conduct yourselves! Make no mistake Captain Chao, if it was up to me... I would have vaporized you and your ships already! Selene's order keeps you and your foul species alive right now but if you utter one more insult to her or Lynwe and their persons I will destroy you instantly!"

The tactical officer whirled in his chair. "Captain... a *LEONIDAS*-Class Attack Cruiser is de-shrouding off our starboard bow! An *AUTUMN MOON*-Class Attack Frigate is de-shrouding directly astern!"

Chao's eyes were wide as he stared at the holo image of the Lycavorian Joarl as he smiled viciously in the transmission.

"We have been following your cruisers and transports for three days now!" Joarl spoke. "We even were able to put a small team on one of your transports and discover the incubation chambers you have set up on them. You see Captain Chao... your mission is no longer secret. I will give you ten seconds to decide your fate and that of your crews. Then I will obliterate you and your ships without as much as a pause in my breathing. Your time starts now!"

"Wait!" Chao barked. "I will... I will claim Diplomatic Deference for myself and my men!" Chao exclaimed.

Joarl's head turned in the transmission.

EDEN CITY COMMAND CENTER

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Selene stood staring at the monitor with wide steel blue eyes even as several technicians and the senior Dragoon Commander who stood next to her looked at her with knowing glints in their eyes. They had been monitoring the transmissions from Joarl’s ship, listening to the conversation. Joarl’s vicious answer to the Kavalian’s remarks towards her took many of them by surprise as Joarl was usually very laconic and stoic in his emotions and actions as most Lycavorian Spartans were. At least until they were riled to a certain point.

Joarl had apparently reached that point and Selene and Lynwe were the reason why.

Selene had always looked on Joarl as a support figure for herself, Lynwe, Tarifa and Aihola. He was their military officer and he had always treated them as equals and with the utmost respect and honor. He never refused them council and was available to them even when they contacted him at odd hours of the early morning. Something Selene and Lynwe both had done on more than one occasion. She had never once considered the fact that perhaps there might be something else to his motives and actions. She and Lynwe had commented many months ago on how handsome they thought him to be, but they did not consider anything beyond that. They never considered that perhaps, while Lynwe may have been gifted with a male organ that most men would happily exchanged for their own, she was still a devastatingly beautiful woman.

The senior elf Dragoon officer leaned close to her. He was a senior aide to her... and one of perhaps a dozen people that knew Lynwe’s complete history and everything about her.

“I do believe that fate has just opened another door for you and Lynwe Selene.” He whispered with a small smile.

Selene turned to look at him shock still on her face. “I...”

“Administrator... Admiral Joarl is requesting your decision of the Kavalian’s request.” A Spartan tech called from the communications station in front of the huge monitor.

Selene looked back at the monitor and the picture of Joarl waiting patiently on the bridge of his ship. Selene looked at the man in the transmission. He was older than Lynwe, her and Layna combined by a good thousand years, his face weathered but still handsome. She had not looked upon a man in such a way since her love for Lynwe had blossomed and grown so powerful.

“Tell... tell the Admiral he is authorized to grant the Kavalian request as long as they power down their shields and weapons as he first instructed them. Then they will submit to boarding parties without interference and they will be taken into custody. If they do not comply with those instructions in any way... they will be destroyed five seconds after.” Selene spoke in reply, trying to hide her embarrassment at the moment.

The Dragoon stepped closer and squeezed her arm. He was one of War Master Tareif’s most experienced Dragoons and had nearly four hundred years of life behind him. He had been Selene’s aide since being assigned nearly two years by Tareif to watch her when they began first building Eden City. “Do not dismiss this Selene.” He spoke so only she could hear him. “This is a path to what you and Lynwe have desired

since you came together. This is someone who knows what Lynwe is... and apparently it does not concern him in the least based on his words and actions.”

Selene looked at him. “Al’lha... I...”

The Dragoon shook his head. “Talk with Lynwe and Layna... for she is now part of your lives as well. Perhaps this could be what all of you have wanted Selene. And of all the people I know... you and Lynwe deserve the happiness and love of children that we and others take for granted. Think about it.”

Selene’s steel blue eyes went back to the monitor as her reply was reaching Joarl.

Joarl stood on the *NIGHTMOON* as the reply from Selene was handed to him. He let his eyes flick over it briefly and he nodded in approval. He turned back to the Kavalian in the transmission.

“You are lucky Kavalian.” He stated. “Selene is in a forgiving mood. She will grant your request as long as you adhere to my orders earlier and allow unfettered boarding parties to access your ships immediately. Power down your shields and weapons and comply. She has given you only five seconds to decide. Starting now!”

“I will do as you say Lycavorian!” Chao declared angrily. “My men and I will reveal nothing to you however!”

Joarl grinned exposing his wolf fangs again. “We already know all we want to know.” He spoke. “However... if it is determined that you or one of your men can provide information we want... have no doubts we will get it. Lynwe can be very persuasive. Prepare to be boarded Kavalian!”

WICHITA

Aricia was no longer the naïve young woman she had been only two short years ago. What had occurred in that time period had surpassed what most young female wolves would ever experience in their entire lifetimes. Used as a political tool by a father who cared only for his honor and status, Aricia had been claimed by the most powerful alpha male within the entire Lycavorian Union in Martin Leonidas. She had experienced pleasures beyond her imagination in his arms and the arms of her fellow Queens, foremost among them the day her Beloved made her his Soulmate. She had been ripped from Martin’s life and the love of his aura by twisted and cruel forces bent on destroying him. Forced to submit to the sexual advances of another male in the midst of a hormonal fever that happened in only half a percent of the female Lycavorians in the universe. Even though forced upon her by Joric, Aricia was positive whatever love Martin had for her had died the moment he saw her screaming out Joric’s name to take her like some common tramp. Aricia thought her life and her future over with.

That was until the azure scaled dragon Isheeni had come into her life. It was Isheeni who was her last hold on her sanity. It was Isheeni who carried her, saved her and gave her the strength to take vengeance on those who had taken so much from her. In those weeks on Enurrua Aricia had transformed from the supple young naïve woman, to the lean muscular woman who stood this day. Her five feet seven, hundred and twenty body was sculpted much like Dysea’s exquisite tasting elven form, balanced perfectly between musculature and luscious feminine curves. Her breasts were high and firm, her skin deeply tanned. Her raven black hair was long and shone in health and beauty. It was Isheeni who had kept her alive those weeks so that she could witness the depth and power of Martin’s love for her that day. He had utterly shattered a formerly unconquerable world, freed the First Oracle of their people unexpectedly and then destroyed an Empire to reclaim what others had taken from him.

To reclaim her.

Those three days in that cave had shown Aricia just how powerful their love was. He had worshiped her for hours at a time, never tiring of her body or her mind. Martin had dropped all pretenses at shielding his mind from her. She was his *Anome*... his Soulmate... and Aricia had discovered wonders swimming through his infinite thoughts and memories. Memories that included those of his father and grandfather. Wonders that to this day filled Aricia with awe and unrequited love for him. While he loved all of them, his devotion to Aricia

was there for her to see, displayed in his mind as it was in a place that only she had the power to see. While he loved them all intensely, only Aricia commanded his soul and could see the part of him that the others could not. The part that she knew desired Dysea the most after herself. The part that would die for any of them in a single instant; fight any enemy no matter how terrifying; cross light years to be with; and destroy anyone who took any of them from him.

She had seen that part of him and she had sworn to never be naïve again. Even after they had begun their new life with their bond mates and even as she carried their child in her womb she had trained hard every day with her Shi Viska and her Nehtes. Never again would she fall victim to forces outside of her control. Never again would any male take her against her will without killing her first. As she trained almost daily with her Beloved their bond grew more powerful, as did their incredible abilities within Mindvoice, deepening their bonds with Torma and Isheeni to the extent that now it was extremely difficult to tell their conscious minds apart.

Aricia was confident now. Confident in her skills, confident in her sexuality, and above all confident in herself as a woman and a wolf. Martin's constant attention told her that, as well as his decision to allow her and Isheeni to come here to fight this battle without him. That was the ultimate sign of his devotion, confidence and love of her as far as Aricia was concerned. Aricia had no intention of letting this fool male who thought to steal dragon eggs come any where close to succeeding. Nearly a full year of studying with Martin, Andreus and her uncle Dymas had forged her into the most powerful and skilled female within the Lycavorian Union when wielding a Nehtes, and that was without her considerable Mindvoice abilities.

A fact that Maruad was about to find out.

The entirety of his life Maruad had considered himself superior to others. It was one of the reasons he had accepted Chetak's offer to come to Enurrua and use the dragons. He was confident and skilled and he knew it. He never once in his life considered females anything more than a warm body to spill his seed into and receive pleasure from, even if he had to force it out of them. The first blow he received from Aricia changed his perspective on that instantly.

He came to within one meter of her while she stood like a statue and he thrust with his Nehtes intending to impale her right through her abdomen. His dark eyes flew open when the spearhead of his Nehtes hit nothing as Aricia stepped to the side with a speed he had never witnessed before. The forward momentum of his thrust carried him off balance and he staggered forward several steps until the flat portion of Aricia's spearhead slapped against the unprotected portion of the back of his head. Maruad saw stars and felt pain unlike anything he had felt before this day shoot through his neck and spine as Aricia deftly moved to the side and spun her Nehtes gracefully ending up in a defensive posture.

"I will not kill you Maruad." Aricia spoke calmly as she looked at him with evil azure colored eyes. "That judgment will be made by my Beloved."

Maruad screamed out his rage and swung his Nehtes around wildly. The blow would have decapitated someone without Aricia's skill, but she simply ducked and snapped the blunt end of her own Nehtes up and smashed it into his jaw before rolling away nimbly, her crested plume barely touching the dusty ground before she was on her feet again. Maruad's head snapped back and two of his teeth were snapped off at his gum line sending fresh pain and blood splashing across the inside of his mouth as his lip ballooned in size from the wide cut that erupted.

"Tell me Maruad... how did it feel taking the lives of those who could not defend themselves?" Aricia asked with ice in her words as she stepped forward and spun her Nehtes to the side toward Maruad's head.

Maruad snapped up his own Nehtes and blocked the blow easily. "It will feel far better taking your life wench!" He barked. "Especially after I have tasted your delights!"

Aricia laughed as she held her Nehtes against his in a dual of strength. She stepped in even closer, released her Nehtes with her left hand and hit Maruad with stiffened fingers in his throat. His eyes bulged out of his head as he staggered back from the force of the unexpected blow, one hand going to his throat even as he swept his Nehtes in front of him defensively. Aricia laughed even louder as she did not press her attack and simply stepped back to look at him.

"Tasted my delights." She taunted him. "Oh... I have many delights Maruad... none of which you will ever experience. You are not man enough to give me pleasure. I doubt I would even be aware of it if you *were* able to put your cock inside me! You do have a cock don't you Maruad?"

Maruad screamed and rushed at her swinging his Nehtes in a classic Sweeping Attack Form. It was the basic of all instruction with the Nehtes and taught to the students in their first month of their Agoges. It was something Aricia had mastered in the first day. As the spearhead portion of his Nehtes whipped at her legs level with her knees, Aricia twisted her wrists and caught the spearhead of his weapon on her own, stopping the one handed move. Maruad's eyes went wide when he glanced up and saw her azure eyes glowering at him and the twisted smile that curved along her lips revealing her wolf fangs. She canted her head slightly.

"Maruad... you disappoint me. That is a child's maneuver." Aricia spoke. "I am not a child Maruad. Not anymore."

Her face changed instantly into a mask of anger and hate and Maruad never saw the blunt end of her Nehtes snap down and smash against his wrist. Maruad felt and heard the bones in his wrist snap and break as his Nehtes dropping from suddenly useless fingers. Aricia brought the spearhead portion of her Nehtes twirling around until it impacted his cheek where she yanked it back quickly, the razor like edge slicing open Maruad's cheek to the bone. He yelped in pain, his head turning as Aricia jammed the blunt end of her Nehtes into the ground and used it to launch herself into the air. Her combat boot encased right toe smashed into his opposite cheek with such force Maruad felt himself lift into the air and flail backwards until he landed on the hard packed ground atop several jagged edges of concrete. He groaned in pain as he rolled to his side, his eyes going to where Aricia was bending over to retrieve his Nehtes. She looked at him then and another cruel smile escaped her lips.

Maruad could see behind Aricia now, and what he saw sent whatever hopes he had of leaving this planet behind disappear. The Kavalians were giving up, dozens of them already dead and laying scattered about the ground while the buildings in the background burned and Isheeni and Roluth circled the groups of Kavalians warily, ready to unleash more blasts of their lethal flame. Spartans by the hundreds were appearing all around them, some moving into the surrounding buildings to insure their enemies were dead, others to surround the Kavalian troops who were going to their knees in twos and threes. His eyes went back to where Aricia squatted, her eyes having never left his face. He toyed briefly with the idea of shifting and escaping from this place in wolf form, but just as quickly dismissed that. He would be cut down like an animal if he attempted that.

"You see Maruad... you are finished. Syrilth's eggs are safe... the Guardian of the Line even now is moments from taking the mountain base of these vile creatures you have aligned yourself with." Aricia spoke softly. "Selene and Lynwe have annihilated those sent to attack Eden City. Your Kavalian friends have been defeated... their ships in orbit commandeered. You are alone Maruad. Syrilth and her siblings are free of you forever Maruad. You are now as you have been your entire life... a traitor to your own kind... and alone."

"You... you did this because of the dragons!" Maruad screamed out spraying the air and ground in front of him with blood. "They are animals!"

"You are the animal Maruad!" Aricia snapped. "And I intend to beat you like an animal!" Aricia launched herself through the air at him using her inconceivable control of hers and Isheeni's combined TK power. It happened far faster than Maruad was able to react too, and in a single blink Aricia was beside him, her azure blue eyes glowing in hatred and anger. She had collapsed her Nehtes and now brought it smashing down across his face; the twelve inch long two inch diameter staff opened the flesh of his opposite cheek to the bone shattering the thick bone as his head twisted savagely to the side from the force. Maruad's eyes clouded over as he felt the next blow smash down on his left shoulder and her heard the shoulder blade pop. Pain coursed through his body... pure... clear and excruciating pain. Something Maruad had not felt in his long years of life... and something a woman child was making him experience.

As Maruad's eyes fogged over and as blackness took him he realized something.

He realized that perhaps Aricia was not a child after all and he should have run when he had the chance.

BIG SNOWY MOUNTAINS TRUE PEOPLE BASE

Syrlth and Tharua could only watch as dozens of Spartans flooded into the hanger from the secondary entrance. Her remaining siblings gathered quickly around her as they saw the tall older looking man strode toward them removing his helmet to reveal sweat stained hair and bright eyes. Tharua and the others watched as

he walked right up to their sister who dwarfed him in size twenty to one. He held no fear within him as he stopped in front of her and bowed his head slightly.

Syrilth of the dragons. It is a distinct pleasure to meet you. Walter spoke evenly.

Syrilth gazed at this fearless man, stunned that he was so calm and in control. She was so used to men and women running from her in terror. In fact... none of them men and women that were pouring into the hanger right now was even fazed at the presence of dragons. Ancient creatures from their myths and legends that were often times made out to be uncontrollable monsters.

You... you are the Guardian of the Line? Syrilth asked quickly.

Walter nodded slowly. *I am. We have cleared the entire base Syrilth. All that remain are a handful that we have trapped on this level. Among them is this Hurcan, the leader of these vile creatures. I thought perhaps you would like to deal with him since it is he that murdered two of your siblings.*

Murdered. Not killed.

Syrilth noticed that he had used the word murdered. Her head canted slightly to the side at this information as she processed it. Perhaps... everything Isheeni had told her was coming to fruition.

My siblings? She asked.

Walter smiled warmly as he ran his hand across his forehead. *My niece Aricia has already touched me Syrilth. Your remaining siblings are safe and in our care now. Including the little one who apparently hatched while within the vehicles. Isra and Aelnala are seeing to their care now with Roluth. Maruad has been captured and...*

Captured? Syrilth growled out.

Walter met her eyes without the least bit of fear. *Maruad will face the King's judgment when he arrives tomorrow evening Syrilth. I assure you... it will not be pleasant.*

My siblings... they... they are safe? Syrilth gasped still trying to wrap her mind around this fact. This was a day she never thought could happen.

Tharua stepped up next to her older sister. *They... they are free?*

Walter nodded. *As free as you are now once we deal with the handful we have trapped. I have been informed that the Dragon Elder Mother's ship is only thirty minutes away. They apparently were able to move quite a bit faster than we first thought.*

Syrilth... Syrilth we are free! Tharua exclaimed. *We...*

Where are they? Syrilth demanded. *Where is Hurcan?*

Walter motioned down the corridor. *We have them trapped in the control room and...*

The control room! Syrilth shouted. *Majeir! My youngest sister went to the control room to use the controls with her tail and seal the outer doors her in the hanger! She was the only one small enough to use the air tunnels! She has not returned! She is only five weeks old!*

Walter was moving before Syrilth had even finished vaguely realizing that the four ton dragon was hot on his heels. He burst through the door into the corridor seconds before Syrilth's head and neck followed and her shoulders plowed into the steel frame of the door causing it to buckle inward considerably.

Majeir! Syrilth screamed out backing her body up and ramming in to the door frame again, but once more the steel held bending inward only a little bit more.

Walter looked at the three Spartans who were just outside the door, the fourth finishing applying some sort of black foam substance to the door. He looked at the one who held the small portable scanner.

"How many?" He asked.

"Looks like six Guardian." He answered holding out the sensor display. "And something almost as large that is definitely not humanoid. One of them is holding it in front of them."

Walter's face twisted into controlled rage now. "They have a five week old dragon hatchling they are using as a shield against any action we will take." He spoke handing the sensor back even as Syrilth's cries within Mindvoice went unanswered and she continued to batter the door frame with her huge body. "The one holding the hatchling will be the leader." Walter spoke. "He is mine. Dispatch the others. No harm is to come to the hatchling if she is still alive! They will undoubtedly begin firing at chest level once we blow the door. Execute Plan Berserker One. No weapons!"

The three men and one female Spartan nodded and returned their 190s to their scabbards on their backs. Walter returned his helmet to his head and turned to face the door. He looked at the man who had planted the explosive.

“Do it now!”

Majeir! Sylrith’s wail filled Walter’s mind and he said a silent prayer that the hatchling was still alive.

Majeir I am a friend! If you can hear me and understand little one. Bite whoever is holding you as hard as you possibly can as soon as the door blows inward.

Hurcan pressed the barrel of the rifle tighter to Majeir’s head and glared at her. Blood flowed from the deep gash in her head where one of his men had viciously struck her when they heard her sneaking from within the air shaft. The moment she exited the shaft he had smashed his rifle across her basketball sized head with all of his strength, nearly cracking her still hardening skull bone. The blow was enough to send her spinning out of control and knock her completely senseless and she could feel the blood pouring over her neck scales. Her vision was still blurred but she could hear Sylrith’s wails for her within Mindvoice. Majeir couldn’t focus enough to reach out to her however and her eyes kept fluttering.

“The moment they come into this room you will die beast!” Hurcan hissed out. “I may not be able to kill your sister... but considering how she feels about you and your brother and sisters... how do you think she will feel when I kill you and she knows she has failed?”

Majeir! Sylrith’s wail filled Majeir’s mind and then another voice. Clear, focused and powerful.

Majeir I am a friend! If you can hear me and understand little one. Bite whoever is holding you as hard as you possibly can as soon as the door blows inward.

Majeir blinked her eyes several times trying to focus as Sylrith had taught her. She must bite someone. But who? Who did the voice mean? Who was holding her? The white skinned creatures! Majeir saw the barrel of the weapon falling towards her face, the crashing pain when it connected. She saw the disgusting face of the white skinned leader. What was she supposed to do again? She remembered now the voice and its instructions.

There was a blinding flash of white light and then a shattering explosion.

Instantly Majeir did as the voice instructed her. She opened her jaws and clamped down with all the power in her five week old hatchling body.

Hurcan roared in horrible pain as Majeir’s teeth sank into the flesh of his arm and reached the bone of his forearm. He howled louder when Majeir bit completely through his bone and tore her jaws away, taking his arm with it. As Hurcan stumbled back and his men began firing at chest level into the smoke filled doorway, he heard the savage growls and snarling and then four large wolves burst through the smoke unharmed, jaws snapping shut on his men, black steel like claws ripping and shredding flesh. His men began to scream and Hurcan lifted his rifle one handed to blast the beast who had taken his arm. His red eyes grew impossibly wide when he saw the dark brown wolf, somewhat larger than the others, his fur coat dotted with gray hair but still healthy and shiny. The wolf was coming at him at chest level as if somehow flying through the smoke filled room. He saw those jaws open to reveal huge flesh shredding fangs and teeth. He saw large paws rise up to reveal claws of black steel razors. He saw all this and he heard the male voice burst into his head, shattering his miniscule mind shields as if they weren’t there.

For my nephew Androcles!!

Hurcan felt no pain when those jaws slammed shut on his throat and crunched through flesh and bone. He felt no pain as the two hundred pound body of the wolf drove him mercilessly to the floor of the room, its paws rising to rake ferociously down his chest and shoulders, blood fountaining from the wounds. He felt nothing until the large gray tinted eyes of the wolf looked into his dying red orbs and its muzzle ripped upwards, taking with it three quarters of his throat and neck.

Then Hurcan felt the pain and his body reacted as his mouth opened to scream but only the sounds of bubbling and blood splashing onto the cold floor reached his ears as his body began to thrash violently.

Walter spit the huge chunk of flesh and cartilage from between his jaws and turned his large head back to watch as the leader of the True People died beneath his bloody paws. Walter watched until there was no life left in those red orbs and then in a flash of white light he shifted back to his normal form.

“For Androcles!” He rasped out once more.

Walter turned and his eyes fell upon Majeir then and he responded instantly, moving to her inert body. He saw the blood staining her jaws and Hurcan’s arm lying next to her snout. He picked up the dead limb and tossed it on top of Hurcan’s body even as he looked at the other Spartans who were returning to normal form.

“Water!” He hissed. “Give me some water!”

Walter turned as more Spartans appeared in the doorway and took account of what was happening. A female squatted next to him holding out the cylinder of water to him. Walter took it and quickly splashed some into his mouth, washing away the foul taste of Hurcan’s flesh. He turned back to the hatchling and poured some of the cool water over her snout, seeing her tongue snake out to lick it.

Wash the taste from your mouth little one. He spoke softly. *You need not carry that creature’s essence within your mouth. Wash it out.* He cupped his hand under her snout and handed the cylinder to the female who began pouring the water over her snout and into her mouth now.

Majeir lifted her head slightly as she did what the male voice told her. Her eyes never left his affable face as she did this, and she watched him nod his head.

That is good little one. You have acted bravely and honored your sister’s faith in you young Majeir.

Walter spoke. He lifted his hands and motioned for the female to pour water over the wound on her head while he gently used his fingers to wash away the dried blood and filth from the wound.

You... you were the voice? Majeir spoke and she saw Walter’s eyes go a little wider at the childlike nature of Majeir’s words within Mindvoice.

He looked at her and nodded. *You heard me yes. I do not know much about dragons little one... but it appears as if the wound on your head... while deep... is already starting to heal.*

My head... my head hurts. Majeir spoke.

Of that I have no doubts! Walter spoke. *I’m going to pick you up now little one. Your sister cries out for you and she and the others can better assist you now. I believe you will be fine.*

Walter squatted further and got his arms under the hundred pound hatchling, using all his wolf strength to pick her up as gently as he could. He carried her as he used to carry his German Shepard, though Majeir was considerably larger even at only five weeks old. She should have weighed more at her age he knew... but that would change in time as she and her brothers and sisters finally got the care and concern they needed.

Walter looked at the female. “Do we have a Hadarian medic in the mountain who knows dragon anatomy?”

“Yes Senior Polemarch. Elisia finished her nine week course on dragons last month. She is working on the lower level.”

“Send for her now. I don’t think the wound is bad... but she is still very young and I want to make sure there is nothing else wrong with her.” Walter spoke.

The female Spartan nodded and moved out into the corridor. Walter looked once more at Majeir’s snout, her long neck and head focused completely on him.

You... you saved me. Majeir spoke softly.

Walter shook his head as he headed for the door and into the corridor. *No little one... your sister saved you!*

Majeir! Syrilth bellowed within Mindvoice as Walter carried the hatchling up to the doorway and into the hanger. He stopped several meters inside and gently lowered Majeir to the floor before standing back up as Syrilth and her other siblings crowded around her, nuzzling her snout and wings. *Majeir... you are never to disobey me again!* Syrilth reprimanded her, but Walter had to smile at the lack of firmness in Syrilth’s voice.

We almost lost you Majeir! Tharua declared.

Majeir turned her eyes on where Walter stood. *I... I was protected.* She stated softly.

Syrilth turned her huge head to look at Walter and she moved up to stand in front of him, settling her body to the cold floor of the hanger.

What... what you have given me... us... this day. She spoke. *It is... it is a debt I can never...*

Walter met her gaze. *There is no debt Syrilth. Your kind... dragons... they are honored members of my King's Union. Our Union. What we have done here this day is to eliminate a threat to our Union that has festered for centuries until it rose to the surface and we could destroy it. We did this together Syrilth. There is no debt to be repaid.*

And... and what of Maruad?

You have not met my King Syrilth. Right now... enjoy your siblings. Allow my Hadarian medic to examine all of you. She has been instructed by the Elder Mother in caring for your kind. Then take them to be with your siblings that have yet to be hatched. You have a new sister as I said. When the King arrives here you will be witness to what is in store for Maruad Syrilth. He will not go unpunished... of that you can be assured.

What will happen to him?

Walter shrugged. *That I can not say. I can tell you that Martin Leonidas will make Maruad pay for every crime he has committed upon you and your siblings. His bond with Torma is even more powerful than the one you have felt with Aricia and Isheeni.*

Syrilth's eyes grew a little wider. *More?* She gasped.

Walter smiled and nodded his head. He reached up slowly and laid his hand upon her snout. *Be at peace now Syrilth of the dragons. From this moment forth... you are free.*

HIGH COVEN/ZALEISIAN BORDER KAVALIAN FEDERATION IMPERIUM INVASION FLEET GREATSOUL-Class Kavalian Dreadnought JANGARR

Pusintin strode onto the bridge of his Command ship and turned towards his command platform as his First Officer looked up from his station.

The GREATSOUL-Class Dreadnoughts were entirely Kavalian built. The plans for the original LEONIDAS-Class Attack Cruiser had been procured through several of their contacts within the Union and the ship design was based off of those original plans, though equal in size to the LEONIDAS II-Class Strike Cruisers now in service. They were more bulky in design, and less streamlined, but they were almost every bit as deadly as the new Lycavorian Command Cruisers. The JANGARR had been Pusintin's ship since its completion nearly eight years ago and the sheer size and power of the ship gave him a further boost to his already large ego. The Kavalian crew did not care about this for he was an excellent commander and he followed their ways to the letter since he had been raised Kavalian for most of his life.

"Report!" Pusintin barked.

"Our forward screening ship detected a REVERENCE-Class Dreadnought hiding within the Nebula." The man reported. "It must have detected us on the edge of its sensors and it turned to run. We are pursuing it now!"

Pusintin settled into his chair on the raised platform. "Did we get identification on that ship?" He asked.

His First Officer nodded as he came up to him and handed him the data pad. "It is the vampire whore's ship. BLOOD JUSTICE."

Pusintin smiled. "Really? All the way out here?"

"Our spies within the High Coven... the traitors we have bought... their last report was twelve hours ago. Something to do with the Union King, his half breed daughter and an alien ship." The FO replied reaching up to stroke the long hair on the side of his face.

Pusintin's head turned quickly. "Alien ship?" He asked.

Paber nodded. "A very large alien ship lifted off from Lycavore just over twenty-seven hours ago. We detected it on the very edge of our long range sensors, and only then because of its size. It altered course away from Lycavore and made an LSD jump. Our contacts have reported nothing since, though given that they have sensed something coming that is not surprising."

Pusintin looked at the pad. "So there was a daughter. Now that is very interesting." He spoke softly.

"We were able to detect the remainder of the BLOOD JUSTICE'S Strike Group before entering the nebula. They were in the process of jumping away from this system. The BLOOD JUSTICE destroyed our

screening ship as well as two pursuing cruiser, and heavily damaged two others before making their own jump out of the system three minutes ago.” Paber reported.

Pusintin shook his head. “Not good. Did we hit them at all?”

Paber smiled. “The MIST DANCER hit them hard just before they jumped.”

“The MIST DANCER... that’s your son’s ship! A DIATAGA-Class attack Cruiser isn’t it?” Pusintin asked.

Paber bowed his head just a bit in reverence to his Commander. “You honor me that you remember this General.” He spoke.

“Your son is an excellent leader and ship Captain Paber. I remember good men.” Pusintin spoke. “How soon before we clear the nebula?”

“One minute present speed!” A voice called from the helm console.

Pusintin nodded. “Very well... have the 9th and 10th Diamonds break from the main fleet and proceed to Lycavore. Destroy this High Coven Strike Group and then they can rejoin with us.” Pusintin ordered. “Insure our Zaleisian allies are on the flanks and then execute the plan. Remind all commanders they are not to deviate from the established plan unless they contact either me or Keleru! I want...”

“General! We are receiving a secure data transmission from Prefect Keleru!” The communications officer barked out. “Five words only sir!”

Pusintin nodded. “Read it Lieutenant.”

“Sir... We have begun our attack!” The man answered.

Pusintin grinned widely. “Now we take back what the High Coven took from us so long ago.” He said. “Give the orders Paber. It’s time.”

Athani held the thick blanket around her shoulders as she stared out into the darkness of space, her keen eyes detecting hundreds of the ships assigned to their fleet begin breaking from the formation they had held for three weeks now. Her dark green eyes reminded you of a wild pine forest in their color, full of life and emotions. Her full lips were slightly parted as she held the mug of soothing hot tea in one hand, the effects of the searing hot shower she had just taken still evident on her lightly tanned flesh. Her skin was still somewhat pink in color as she had stood under the stream of water for nearly an hour after Pusintin had finished with her and moved on to Jalersi. Her ass was still sore from his huge cock and his lack of subtly and violent tendencies. At least this time he had taken her first, before fucking her sister until she exploded and then shoving his cock down Athani’s throat. She would taste her sister’s juices then, and while they were sweet and delicious, they belonged to her sister and it disgusted her knowing this. She did not mind swallowing Pusintin juices, and while they were somewhat bitter depending on what he had eaten recently, for the most part Athani found she liked the taste of his passion.

This time however Pusintin had been upset with her for not taking her daily injections of serum and he had fucked her longer and much harder this time, his fingers bruising her hips and shoulders as he pummeled her ass and yanked without regard on her re-growing tail.

While the biogenic treatments had been permanent in removing the hair from her body with the exception of her long golden blond mane, she had to take daily injections to keep her long, incredibly dexterous tail from re-growing. Unlike the males of her species, many of whom cut their tails off, Kavalian females rarely did this. The initial biogenic treatments that she and Jalersi had received along with several thousand other Kavalian females made their tails shorten and shrink until finally they receded completely into the base of their spines. Without the daily injections however, their tails would sprout and re-grow within a week’s time. Athani hadn’t taken her injections for two days now, as she hated giving herself shots, and her tail had already reached twelve inches in length. It did not affect the shape or firmness of her ass, but it kept Pusintin from pressing as hard as he could possibly go inside her. The last time he had done that Athani was sore for days. He hated tails on females, and he made her know this by yanking and twisting her tail as much as possible while ramming his cock into her ass. Athani had endured the pain, for while she had to surrender her body to him whenever he wanted, she did not have to surrender her mind. When fully grown her tail was thin and reached nearly two meters in length. It was covered in a soft layer of short fine hair that never shed or came out and she had become expert at manipulating her tail for all sorts of purposes. It was something she missed having and she had

discovered while very young that when fully grown, the base of her spine where her tail met her spinal cord was very sensitive to touch and could elicit sensuous ripples of pleasure through her if stroked properly.

Athani heard the door to her quarters open and she waited for several moments before turning. She could smell her sister's melon like scent and she turned slowly with a sisterly smile on her face.

Athani never saw the vicious slap coming until it was too late. The blow carried enough power to rock her head back, sending the mug of tea flying and her crashing to the floor as she caught the angry twisted face of her older sister glaring at her just before she fell.

"You little bitch!" Jalersi growled at her. "How dare you!"

Athani lay on the floor of her quarters glaring up at her sister as her own temper flared and she came off the floor with cat like reflexes. Jalersi was ready for her though and as Athani surged into a leap to attack, Jalersi lashed out again with her hand, only this time it was a heel strike blow. It caught Athani directly between her full breasts and took the air out of her lungs as she crashed to the floor once more, her arms clutching her chest as she gasped for breath. Jalersi didn't pause and stepped closer, slapping her hard again across her face a stinging pop that bloodied Athani's lips and slammed her head into the floor. Athani groaned and pulled her body into a tight ball as waves of pain from her blows rippled through her. Jalersi knelt down and snatched her long blond hair in her hand and yanked her head up.

"I am better than you Athani!" Jalersi hissed. "You can't beat me! You have tried for years and all you get is pain in return! When will you learn your lesson?"

"Jalersi I..." Athani started to speak.

"Shut up!" Jalersi snapped. "I have looked out for your future Athani and this is how you repay me? Pusintin told me you have not taken your injections! Why?" She demanded.

"I... I like my tail!" Athani nearly screamed as her sister yanked on her thick hair.

"Our father has given us a gift sister." Jalersi spoke. "We are the future of our people, me, you and the eight thousand other females who received the same treatments we did. In order to maintain this future you must take the injections! He does not like it when your tail keeps him from fucking you hard and deep!"

"What if I don't like it? Does that not matter?" Athani spat now, her eyes changing to vertical slits among the green.

Jalersi's blue eyes narrowed and changed to vertical slits as well. "What you like is irrelevant!" She spat back. "I got mother to agree to this arrangement so we did not have to see you scarred every time a male wanted to taste your flesh Athani! As long as you remain with Pusintin and I... you are free of the bonds of our people until mother and I decide which male is best for you! Part of that arrangement was that Pusintin be able to break you in at least in some manner to the pleasures of the flesh. He can not have your pussy, so he takes your ass and mouth! I thought you liked the taste of him and how he made you feel Athani?"

"I have no choice when he surrounds me with his aura!" Athani spat. "I can't help it! You are no different Jalersi! I have no choice whether I like the way he tastes or not!"

"Choice?" Jalersi spoke. "If you wish choice sister... then I will return you to our mother and you will endure the choice of whichever male suits her. I'm sure she will allow at least ten or twenty to sample your flesh before making a decision. By then you will have scars all over your body!"

"Father is... father is changing that!" Athani barked.

"Not fast enough to save you sister!" Jalersi hissed. She shoved Athani's head away and watched her fall back to the floor. "Pusintin will only remain in this arrangement as long as you please him sister. As it is... he comes to me for satisfaction even after having you. Only I can please him as he desires!"

"If I will never please him... then why?" Athani screamed out.

Jalersi glared at her. "I made our father a promise to protect you from the old mating rituals of our people and keep you safe. This was the only way. As long as he does not take your pureness from you, Pusintin can use you how he wishes until mother and I decide it is time for you to take a mate and we find the right male. Preferably one that won't carve up your body every time he fucks you!"

Athani slowly got to her feet glaring at her sister. "I will not take the injections!" She spat. "I like my tail... and the injections... they..."

"What?"

“They make me sick.” Athani quickly spoke the lie, her mind racing back to what they had been told as children by the doctors about the side effects of the injections. “It... it makes me vomit and I tremble for several minutes afterwards! I must... I must...”

Jalersi’s face changed suddenly and she stepped up to Athani and pulled her into her embrace. “Sister why did you not tell me?” She gasped pulling Athani’s head to her huge breasts and holding her tightly. “Athani... I am your sister... this is something you should tell me.”

“You did not... you did not appear to be sick.” Athani said as she wrapped her arms around Jalersi’s waist. “I wanted to be strong... I wanted too...”

Jalersi shook her head quickly. “No. I will tell Pusintin this is what happens.” She spoke. “I remember well what the doctors told us about these injections. I have heard of others who suffer the same thing sister. I... I do not have this issue and I wrongly assumed you did not as well. Forgive me Athani.”

Athani pulled back and looked at her. “I will... I will take them if you wish Jalersi. I do not want to return to mother and have to endure the ancient rituals.” She spoke quickly wiping tears from her eyes.

Jalersi shook her head. “No... I will explain it to Pusintin sister. He is a hard man... a cruel man... but he treats us both better than a male of our own kind would. He will understand if I explain it to him.”

“I will... I will become better Jalersi. I promise.” Athani spoke.

Jalersi nodded and pulled her into another embrace. “I know sister. You are still so young but I will teach you. You are safe with me Athani. You are safe.”

Athani did not close her eyes and Jalersi held her tightly against her breasts. Her pine green orbs held no emotion but anger and resentment. It was then that Athani made the decision to escape as soon as the first opportunity presented itself.

Escape into the unknown.

USU’OZEIB 7 HIGH COVEN COMMAND HEADQUARTERS

“Lost the signal from every sensor drone along the Zaleisian border from Sector Three to Sector Nineteen.” The High Coven Admiral spoke as he stood in front of the huge star chart built into the wall. “No drones along the Epeclion Border from Sector Sixteen through Sector Twenty-Two are answering our inquires! We are effectively blind along two of our three borders stretching for a total of eight point seven light years. We are wide open Milord.”

The men in this room were the most senior of the High Coven officers in the Empire. Men who had the connections and the support of very old and very influential Purebloods. Most of them had never really seen open combat since there had not been a large scale battle with the Lycavorian Union in over five hundred years. They were leaders of men and most never left the comfort of their offices or homes here on Usu’Ozeib 7. They had the best of everything, many with both wives and mistresses.

“Wide open to what?” Another Admiral leaned forward. “No one would dare cross our borders to attack us! Not even the Lycavorian King is that crazy!”

“We are wide open to an attack nevertheless!” The first officer spoke heatedly. “I have warned for years that this would be a problem if we relied solely on sensor drone data along our borders. Now we can’t talk to over half of them and our borders are exposed!”

“Were there any indications something was wrong before we lost the data from these drones?” Another officer asked.

The first Admiral shook his head slowly. “No. My main concern right now is why so many of these drones went down all at the same time! I have ships and crews dispatched to the Epeclion Border to begin repairs and find out what caused this.”

Veldruk looked at the man. “I have dispatched Commander Moran and my daughter Yuri to the Zaleisian border and we should be hearing from them shortly. The last report I received was that they would arrive within the hour, and that is four hours old.”

The second Admiral to speak snorted in disgust. “Milord... I do not know why you tolerate his presence. He is a half breed. A turned vampire, yet he commands a Strike Group. The Princess’s Strike Group. We have officers with far more seniority than he will ever be able to achieve.”

“He is also the only man to beat Admiral Pontal in open combat!” The first Admiral snapped. “Can any of your Pureblood officers say that? Even you failed that test Savin.”

“If I recall so did you Corana.” He replied.

“Something I am not dismissing.” Corana answered. “That is not something that is a priority at this moment. Our borders are un-monitored and undefended! That is the situation we must address!”

“Milord, are you worried about an attack from somewhere?” Another officer asked.

Veldruk leaned forward in his chair. “In recent months there have been very discrete rumors about an event that was coming. Nothing specific of course... but these rumors foretold of plans against the Coven. I have tried to gather more information with my own sources... however most of them have failed me. When the Zaleisian Ambassador was here many weeks ago he said something to me that was out of place. Something in regards to our defenses. He said he hoped our defenses had not fallen by the way side with our recent trade agreements with them and the others we have signed. I thought that an odd comment so I began digging deeper and discovered that an agent we have had in place within the Union had gone rogue on me. He was a senior person within IES.”

“IES?” Another officer spoke. “The company that Isabella formed?”

Veldruk nodded. “This man began using his skills to barter for wealth. Unfortunately his skills were in biogenics.”

“Biogenics!” Corana hissed. “Biogenics has been outlawed for centuries. Here and even within the Union.”

Veldruk nodded as he rose to his feet and moved around the table to the counter where he poured himself a glass of Blood Wine. “Yes... well he was approached by three individuals. A Lycavorian and two Kavalian females.” He continued. “They wanted his work on the last phase of Biogenic cloning. He gave it to them... they paid him handsomely... and he began working for them.”

“What... what did he know Milord?” Corana asked his eyes open in shock.

Veldruk turned back to the table. “If the information I have is accurate... he remotely gained access to High Coven databanks nine times in the last hundred years alone. The last time just two months ago... right after the Zaleisian ambassador’s comments to me. The information he has gained in that time reflects our military readiness across the board... as well as the transmission and access codes of every sensor drone we have operational. I can only assume he passed this information to these three individuals.”

“To what end?” Savin asked calmly. “The Lycavorians would not start a war with us and they would never take the side of the Kavalians. In some respects I believe they regard their distant cousins with more distain than we do. The best they could hope to accomplish is a stalemate... which is what we have had now for centuries.”

“Not the Lycavorians.” Veldruk spoke softly as he returned to the table standing behind Corana’s chair. “The Kavalians.”

“Kavalians!” Corana gasped.

“The Kavalians!” The female voice gasped from behind him now.

The heads of every man in the room turned and eyes went wide when they saw who stood behind Veldruk. His own dark eyes were wide as he saw Aikiro standing beside Yuri and her Fleet Commander Admiral Tesand. Three Immortals stood behind them, their weapons at the ready.

Aikiro glared at Veldruk with murder in her eyes. She had stood just inside the door for several moments behind the privacy shield listening until she could no longer bear it. All of it made sense now. He had become overconfident and careless thinking himself infallible because of the power she had given him. He was walking down the road of their son Xerxes and he didn’t seem to be fazed in the least.

“Aikiro...” Veldruk spoke evenly. “This is a private meeting. You will need to remove yourself from...”

“Or what husband!” Aikiro demanded. “You will have me removed?”

“I do not wish to resort to such measures. This is a secure meeting of my inner staff in regards to ...” Veldruk spoke.

“In regards to the future of the Coven your actions have put in dire straits!” Aikiro bellowed. “My Coven you miserable fool!” She screamed.

The men sitting at the table stared in open mouth shock at her words.

Almost fourteen thousand years he had ruled in her stead.

She had given him the power he now held, and he had shaped it and refined it to exacting proportions. He was more powerful than her now. She had spent most of the last fourteen centuries on that insidiously hot planet studying everything she could about that half destroyed ship. True she had brought about the birth of their cloning process and it’s near perfect results, but he had built the Coven into what it was today. Not her. He would no longer allow her to make the decisions that it was now his right to make.

Veldruk looked at Yuri. “You are supposed to be on the Zaleisian border with your half breed consort!” He snarled. “Have you betrayed me as well?”

“You betrayed me over three thousand years ago when you ordered Xerxes to rape me!” Yuri shouted. “You ordered your son to rape your daughter! You are a monster! I hate you!”

Veldruk smiled a cruel smile. “I always knew it would someday become known.” He said softly. “I did it to help you. To make you stronger Yuri!”

“Make me stronger?” She screamed.

Veldruk nodded. “And it has made you stronger. It has made you stronger than you will know. What lies has she told you?”

“Lies?” Yuri gasped. “If they were lies father ... why did you try and kill your Immortal Captain to hide them?”

“Cha’talla betrayed me!” Veldruk barked. “His actions caused the most important agent we had within the Union to be discovered. He...”

“He told me everything Veldruk.” Aikiro spoke softly but loud enough to be heard. “You thought to kill him but you never stopped to realize just how strong Cha’talla really was. He survived the fall from your office and one of my Handmaidens found him and brought him to me.”

Veldruk looked at her intensely before a smile played across his lips. “You expect me to believe that?” He spoke confidently.

Aikiro tossed the data pad at him. “You can listen to what he told me in exacting detail if you wish.” She snapped. “He told me about the agent in IES, about Yuri, how you have suspected this man of selling his skills for a decade now and done nothing because you had hoped to use his research! You only decided to kill him and sacrifice your son to accomplish this when you realized that he was selling these skills to the Kavalian animals and that they might use that against us!” Aikiro screamed. “Cha’talla told me so much Veldruk. He told me about your secret deals with the Overseers in The Wilds. Your secret negotiations with the Anglar people! With the Limians! With the Ommuek!” Aikiro began pacing in front of him now, her eyes never leaving his face.

“I should have seen it with your actions with those fool human men on Earth. Hitler! Stalin! Hussain! All men that you turned and controlled. They failed because you overestimated your skills Veldruk. You overestimated your abilities and intelligence! Your support of that rabid Lycavorian Chetak was simply unacceptable! How could you not know what his actions were going to be? How could you not know that the child Queen was that animal Leonidas’s Soulmate? The most sacred of all relationships those animals have and you missed it. Knowing the power he wielded, how could you not know he would eventually turn his sights on retrieving his whore! A potential ally in our struggle with them and Leonidas doesn’t just kill the man... he takes apart his entire pitiful empire! And he wins control of those dragon beasts. Beasts that would have been a huge advantage if they served us and not those dogs!”

“Aikiro you...” Veldruk started to say.

“Silence!” Aikiro roared. “I have remained silent for fourteen centuries and I will remain silent no more! Now you lose of control of our own agents and spies! Your entire rule has been one failure after another! And now this catastrophe?”

“Milady... we don’t...” Savin got confidently to his feet.

Tesand lifted his hand and everyone saw it was filled with the small but powerful hand weapon. The Type U High Coven Assassin Pistol or CAP was a small but very powerful projectile weapon. It fired a rubidium ore laced round that exploded on contact with its target doing massive damage and it was carried by

most High Coven deep cover agents. The sound of the weapon firing in the room was deafening and no one could move away as Savin's head exploded as if a bomb had gone off, showering the four closest men to him with brain matter, blood and bone fragments.

Aikiro didn't even bat an eye as she glared at Veldruk. "And now husband... now you can not even tell who among your own people is a traitor to the Coven. Admiral Savin has been dealing with the Kavalians for months! He has met with them in The Wilds on three separate occasions! I only began investigating him and many others several weeks ago and I was able to discover this information. I could not figure out why he would be meeting with our enemy... at least until this very moment."

"Tal'nel you will..." Veldruk began to speak.

"No father... I don't think so." Yuri spat.

It happened faster than the normal eye could follow. Yuri and the three Immortals that had arrived with them lifted their weapons and Tal'nel had no time to react. Three of the Immortal equivalent to the Spartan P190 and another Type U CAP flashed up and Tal'nel's body did a ghoulish dance backwards as his chest, head and abdomen suddenly began to explode and come apart before their eyes.

Veldruk's face twisted into a mask of rage and he lifted his hand to send his daughter smashing into the wall behind her with the three Immortals. Aikiro blurred in motion until she was in front of Yuri and the psychic blast of power that Veldruk unleashed she caught within the palm of her hand easily. She stood there with a smile on her face as she manipulated the silvery psychic ball, twisting it into different shapes and contours as Veldruk met her eyes.

"I am here to take back what I should never have given to you in the first place Veldruk." Aikiro hissed at him. "Damn the culture and tradition of centuries ago. I should never have listened to my father when he said to take you as my husband and give you the means to rule." Aikiro turned back to look at the psychic ball of energy in her hand and with hardly any effort and barely a wave she dissipated the ball of energy into thin air. "I gave you the power you wield Veldruk... and now I will take it back!"

Veldruk staggered back several steps. "Aikiro... I am... I am your husband! I am the father of our children!" He nearly yelled.

Yuri's eyes grew wider at this sound from the man in front of her. She also noticed that the men at the table had taken notice of this as well. Yuri had never seen her father like this. He had spoken with fear in his voice. Real, palpable fear. It was an emotion Yuri thought her father void of.

At least until this very moment.

Aikiro looked at Veldruk as she stepped closer to him. "I intend to rectify that situation right now... husband!" She spat viciously. "You remember Admiral Tesand don't you?" She spoke motioning to the tall pureblood Admiral standing to her side, the CAP pistol leveled at the other men at the table. Aikiro's words were like chips of ice flying through the air. "Of course you do... you were the one who promoted him and assigned him to me as my Fleet Commander. You failed once more in that regard Veldruk. You failed to see that he has wanted me for centuries." Aikiro grinned meanly as she stepped closer to Veldruk and lifted her hand, running her long nails across Veldruk's chest. "Oh... it was glorious Veldruk. Seven hours uninterrupted with a man who did nothing but worship me in ways you can not begin to imagine. He *vithus* me utterly senseless to be honest. Something you were never able to do. I thought my head was going to explode in pleasure... especially when he fed on my blood!"

Veldruk's eyes went wide and he glared at Tesand from across the room. Tesand stared back at him without fear and he simply shrugged his shoulders in dismissal of him. Aikiro laughed at Tesand's expression and actions and she turned back to Veldruk. "You see... he no longer fears you Veldruk. He knows there is nothing to fear from you while he shares my bed. While he is loyal to me. And he will share my bed for many centuries to come if I have anything to say about it."

"You break the very Coven Laws you are..." Veldruk began.

"*I AM THE COVEN!*" Aikiro screamed. "Dos *vithu* wael! This is my Coven! Left to me by my father! And because of your incompetence it stands on the brink of the abyss!" (You fucking fool)

"Aikiro you must..." Veldruk began talking but Aikiro lifted her hand and his words stopped. He felt a heat suddenly burst forth from his veins and it was growing hotter by the moment. He reached up and pulled at his collar as sweat began to form on his exposed skin. He brought his hand down, eyes wide as he saw the veins under his skin pulsing.

“There will be no more talk Veldruk!” Aikiro snapped. “You have failed in your duties to me as a husband and a leader.”

The men at the table watched as she walked around him and moved to the chair at the head of the table and settled into it gracefully. Tesand moved slowly to stand slightly behind her and to the right, his hand holding the CAP pistol never wavering from the seated men, some of whom were coming out of their chairs as they saw what was happening to the High Lord.

Veldruk groaned and began pulling at the thick robes he wore, tearing them from his body as Yuri moved to stand on the other side of her mother next to Tesand.

“I gave you the power you wield Veldruk... and now I will take it back as I extinguish your pathetic life.” Aikiro spoke in a low voice. “I never passed to you the full extent of my power Veldruk. I would have been a fool if I had done that. My father did not raise a fool! What I gave to you was a fraction of my power Veldruk. Given as fast as he is learning about his abilities and the untapped power within him... Leonidas could have squashed you like the insect you are within a decade.”

Veldruk staggered back as he tore the shirt from his chest exposing his flesh for everyone to see. What they saw frightened them right down to the pureblood toes. Every vein in Veldruk’s body was pulsing a deep blue color and rippling against the skin of his body, bulging outward. Veldruk clawed at his skin as the heat grew to proportions he had never felt. It was like liquid fire racing through his entire body and the pain was unlike anything he had ever experienced in his life.

The three Immortals moved along the table now, pushing the men back into their chairs. These Immortals had served only Lady Aikiro for their entire lives. They and the five hundred strong member unit they were part of had remained with her on Nuwaroa training endlessly for centuries. She had allowed them much leeway in their actions outside of their training rites, and while she treated them as servants, she had never gone out of her way to make them feel inferior as Veldruk had done. They had never wanted for anything, and while her anger was swift and her punishment equally as lethal, they respected her far more than Veldruk. She had given them schooling in subjects that would never have touched their minds off of Nuwaroa; they had the finest medical care of any Immortal within the High Coven. They were totally and without question loyal to her.

“I have spent ten thousand years refining my skills while I raised our children Veldruk.” Aikiro spoke slowly. “Narice will never know you as anything more than a fool. Yuri already hates you with every fiber of her being for what you have forced her to endure. What you had Xerxes do to her is vile even to our standards Veldruk. Now you will pay for that.”

Veldruk howled in agony as the front of his pants burst outward with a wet splashing sound. He crumbled to the floor in hideous pain, his eyes wide as the men in the room realized she had just caused his cock and balls to explode somehow.

“My abilities far exceed anything you have accomplished in your life Veldruk... as you are experiencing right now.” Aikiro spoke coldly as she looked at him. “Did you know that our blood begins to boil at a much higher temperature due to its resilience to most diseases and such. What you are now experiencing is the more advanced form of the Blood Fever Veldruk, only I am keeping your mind intact so that you may experience it first hand. The pain as your blood begins to boil within its veins without fresh blood to revive the cells in our body. And with such a massive wound as you so untimely just received, normally you would bleed out in minutes, but I thought I would extend that for a bit.”

Veldruk’s eyes were almost bulging from their sockets as the pain within his veins quickly began to override the searing pain from his destroyed groin. He rolled onto his back, arching off the floor by his heels and the back of his head as his veins began to burst open through his skin one at a time as the pressure became too much. The dark red blood sizzled as it hit the cool floor of the meeting room, his body now rigid in unimaginable agony, his skin and face crisscrossed by dozens of dark blue veins that had not yet exploded through his skin.

“You may very well have brought about the death of my Coven Veldruk... and for that I will...”

The internal COM unit built into the large table crackled and came to life interrupting Aikiro’s words.

“Milord... Milord Veldruk... I am the Watch Officer!” The obviously nervous voice stammered.

“Milord... we are receiving a Priority One Status Secure transmission from the BLOOD JUSTICE! Milord... he has initiated a Code Three Blood Runner... and is demanding to be put through directly to you!”

Aikiro saw the eyes of the men at the table go wide and she looked at Yuri, her own eyes just as wide. “Yuri?” She gasped.

“It’s a military code mother!” Yuri spoke. “It’s a military code indicating that High Coven forces are engaged with hostile enemies! Mother you must...”

Aikiro lifted her hand as she turned to look at the two consoles built into the table in front of Veldruk’s chair. Tesand stepped forward quickly and touched one panel twice.

“This is Fleet Admiral Tesand! The High Lord has been executed for crimes against the High Coven! Lady Aikiro has assumed her role as Empress of the Coven! You will report to her directly!” He barked.

“The High Lord is...” The voice spoke softly.

Aikiro leaned forward. “You may route the transmission here now Watch Officer and please stand by to receive new orders!”

“Yes... Yes Milady... rerouting the transmission!”

The large holodisk in the floor in front of the wall encompassing Star Chart burst into existence. The transmission crackled and popped and they could hear shouting voices and then the view came into focus. Except they were not looking at the face of Robert Moran... they were looking at his empty command chair, smoke filling the background of the transmission and the sounds of yelling filling the speakers.

“Hard to port!” The voice screamed and Yuri gasped as she recognized Moran’s distinct tone.

“Unmasked port side missile tubes! Reload starboard tubes! Give me a full spread on the plasma torpedoes!”

“Shields are down to eighty-three percent!” An unfamiliar voice echoed.

“Maintain your course!” Moran’s voice cut in once more. “Visar!”

They saw a vampire officer cut through the transmission’s field of view. “Sensors are detecting forty-nine ships! They tracked our jump here Robert Moran!”

“We knew that was coming!” Moran’s voice spoke. “Shit! Evasive pattern Moran five three! Full power on the sub lights! Get between the *EDGE OF THE WIND* and those three cruisers! I’m not going to sacrifice my people needlessly!”

They watched as Moran came back into view and Yuri saw the deep gash on the side of his head, blood soaking his cheek and the collar of his uniform. As he settled into the chair he noticed the transmission was open. His face twisted into a snarl.

“I said don’t fucking contact me unless it was the High Lord damn you!” Moran screamed.

Aikiro moved into the transmission field and looked at him. “Veldruk is dead Robert Moran. I have taken over!” She spoke matter of factly.

“Lady... Lady Aikiro?” He gasped.

“You are under attack Commander Moran?” Aikiro spoke.

The men and women in the room winced as they saw the bridge of the *BLOOD JUSTICE* shudder violently almost causing Moran to fall forward from the chair.

“Three ships astern! They look like Heavy Cruisers of some sort!”

“Fuck! They’re coming out of the woodwork!” Moran swore turning away. “Remodulate shield harmonics to keep from having one hit take them down! Weapons free! All batteries weapons free! Target our missiles on the largest ships!” Moran turned back to the transmission. “We’re in deep here Aikiro!” He barked.

Aikiro disregarded his lack of protocol considering the situation he was obviously in. “Commander... Robert... what is happening?” She asked.

“We came out to the Zaleisian border just as the High Lord ordered! And we walked into a fucking trap! They were waiting for us! They took down all the sensor drones so we wouldn’t see them coming and they’re pouring across the border like fucking ants now!”

“Who is pouring across the border?” Aikiro asked her face horrified.

“The power signatures on the indicate Kavalian warships! Thousands of them, with troop ships intermingled!” Moran replied seeing the faces of everyone register their stunned shock as half the men in the room with Aikiro came to their feet. “We jumped back to Lycavore to try and get a better idea on what was happening but they followed us! Sensors indicated over three thousand warships of unknown origin! An equal number of troop carriers that we didn’t pick up initially! They sprang the ambush on us in Zaleisian space! We were...”

“You entered Zaleisian space without permission?” A pureblood Admiral hissed out.

Moran’s face twisted in a mask of anger. “Fuck you Pureblood! If it was up to you and those of you in that room they would have caught us with no fucking warning at all! As it is the High Lord waited too long to send us out here! You wouldn’t know they invaded us until they were cutting you down! The Zaleisians are involved in this! They have ships taking part you fool!” Moran turned back to Aikiro. “They’re splitting up as they enter High Coven Space! I was able to detect at least three major invasion corridors they were using before we had to jump here!”

“We destroyed the Kavalians!” The same Admiral spoke again. “They could not have done this!”

The BLOOD JUSTICE shuddered once more under unseen enemy fire. Moran glared at the man. “I’ll let you fucking talk to them if you want... but I doubt they’ll answer my request! They’re here damn it! I’ve lost half my Strike Wing already! We’re more maneuverable but they are matching our firepower! I need help or we are history! I’m tangled with an entire Fleet Group damn it! This is no incursion! It’s a fucking invasion! We need to alert all Fleets and mobilize the entire Command Structure!”

“That’s... that’s not possible!” Corana spoke. “Only selected units have gone to a higher status. The High Lord... he did not want to invite questions. Most of our fleets are conducting training maneuvers or are patrolling their assigned sectors!”

Yuri stepped up next to her mother now. “Robert... an entire 3 light year section of drones has gone down along the Epeclion Border.” She barked seeing his eyes go wide.

“Ah fuck... they got us good!” He stated. “Yuri... you have to get ships out there now! The *Dire Brood* Fleet Group and *Bone Shatter* Fleet Group are closest to the Epeclion Border! They need to move there now! If they are coming across in two different locations we’re going to find ourselves holding our asses without a pot to shit in!”

“We can not send our forces out looking for forces we don’t know even exist!” The Admiral who had questioned Moran snapped. “We need to meet them head on where they are!”

“You stupid sonofabitch!” Moran screamed. “It won’t matter what we do if they hit us in the ass when we don’t expect it!”

“What do you know? You are a half breed! A turned vampire! You are nothing!”

“Pray I don’t get back there you arrogant pureblood fucker!” Moran shouted. “My men are dying while you sit there with your thumb up your ass! If I make it back there... pray I don’t find you... because I’ll cut you open and feed you to the rock spiders! You...”

“Enough!” Aikiro bellowed. She turned quickly to the one man who she knew would give her sound advice. “Tesand...”

“Moran is right.” He said instantly. “If we turn all of forces to meet them where he is and they are coming in behind us... all will be lost! We need to bring him home Milady.” Tesand spoke. “We do not know what is happening and we can not act like we are still in a cocoon as we have for so long.”

“If what the Commander says is true...” Corana spoke. “We will be leaving dozens of worlds undefended. We will be giving them three uncontested invasion corridors into High Coven space. The numbers Commander Moran have stated mean only one thing. They are here to conquer.”

“What choice do we have?” Tesand spoke. “We can not act blindly and throw everything we have at one point if they are pouring across our borders in other sectors.”

“Trade space for time!” Moran’s voice echoed. “We trade planets for time.”

Tesand nodded. “It is the only way.” He spoke.

Aikiro looked at Corana and saw him nod his head in agreement. “Militarily speaking it is the only course of action open to us. Politically Milady it could leave you very exposed when word spreads you have killed the High Lord and assumed power.”

“Fuck politically!” Aikiro snapped. “If I have to sacrifice some planets to save my Coven I will do so. And I will deal with any fool Pureblood who wishes to speak out against that decision! Tesand... you and Corana see to issuing the orders! He seems to be the only one in this room worthy of holding the rank he does! The rest of you are under arrest until I decide what to do with you!” Aikiro turned back to the transmission as the door burst open and more of the Immortals who followed her marched in. “Commander Moran, are you capable of escaping your current location?”

“I won’t leave my men!” He barked.

“Then all of you retreat!” Aikiro snapped. “I will not sacrifice you when it appears what we need now is men who will lead our forces to victory and not cower within the walls of power! Can you extract yourself?”

Yuri looked at the transmission. “Robert... Robert I was wrong! I was...”

“Protect yourself Yuri! No matter what happens... protect yourself and don’t worry about me.” He stated.

“Robert I...”

Moran opened his mouth to reply when the transmission went white and fuzzy, they saw a flash and then it was gone.

“Robert!” Yuri screamed.

Tesand gripped her arm. “The transmission was jammed Princess. Nothing more! The Kavalians must have discovered he was transmitting to us and they jammed him.”

Yuri nodded and looked at her mother. “Mother...”

Aikiro smiled at her with a genuine warm that only her daughters would know. “This man of yours has courage Yuri. He acts like a Pureblood.”

“He... he does have the tendency to resort to his baser language skills when he gets angry.” Yuri spoke with an embarrassing smile of worry. “I apologize for that mother.”

Yuri took her hands and shook her head. “I have caught a glimpse into why it is you feel for him as you do. Do not apologize for him acting as a leader should. Have faith in his abilities daughter. Be strong. I will need you more than ever now. And him when he returns. We must save our Coven.”

Yuri nodded quickly. “I know.” She spoke.

“Milady Aikiro...” The Immortal spoke from behind them. They turned and saw him standing next to Veldruk’s now cooling body. It looked as if someone had used a knife to carve long slits in his skin. Wherever a vein resided was now nothing but an open wound track where his vein used to be, exposing flesh and muscle underneath. A massive pool of blood surrounded his body, his eyes wide in death.

“Give his body to the waste dump.” Aikiro stated. “The insects need to feed as well.”

APO PRIME MJOLNIR’S HAND BASE

“This is accurate Armetus?” Martin asked holding up the data pad and looking at him with wide eyes.

The large office was void of anything except for the single table and four chairs. Armetus and Martin sat at two of the chairs while half a dozen Durcunusaan stood along the far wall.

Armetus nodded. “That is what they were able to send to me before all communications was shut down.” He answered.

Martin whistled. “Holy shit... that’s a lot of firepower.” He spoke. “Melda Min’s vision was right. At least part of it anyway.”

“It would appear so.” He said. “I would suggest we pay more attention to these visions that she has. At the very least we should not dismiss them.”

Martin nodded. “I’ll tell her.”

“Ceneu has all our Border Fleets at full alert and all Interior Defense Fleets are at full readiness.” Armetus reported. “I have ordered my people into deep holes Milord. We do not want to be caught in the cross fire between the Kavalians and the High Coven.”

“How did they do this without anyone knowing?” Martin asked.

Armetus shook his head. “The few remote drones we would send across into what we thought were the old Kavalian Empire corridors never gave a hint at what was happening.” He replied. “I surmise they somehow discovered the routine of our drones and planned for them. They haven’t changed in nearly a thousand years.”

Martin looked at him. “Stop them.” He ordered.

“Sire?” Armetus looked at him surprised.

“With the exception of those caught on Earth, they went out of their way to detour around Union space to get to their jump off points Armetus.” Martin spoke. “In some cases by tens of light years. That tells me they don’t want to tangle with us. They were after Syrilth’s eggs and that’s the only reason they are on Earth.”

Hopefully Aricia and Isra will be able to discover why. Joarl said they gave up rather quickly when their situation was explained to them. I don't want to provoke them in any way now. They just might come looking for these people of theirs and when we meet them... it will give us an idea into their leadership and intentions. We don't know what they have... what they want. Let them go after the High Coven... we'll just lay low and keep our eyes open."

Armetus nodded approvingly. "A wise move. It will also give me time to follow through on your order." He looked at Martin. "What about the clone?"

Martin met his gaze. "She can't hurt us anymore than she already has." He spoke softly. "Whatever she gave to them... they already have. Insure all Command Codes and Operational Plans are changed accordingly."

"And Riall?" Armetus asked.

Martin shook his head. "He's no clone. That is the first thing I had the doctors at the clinic determine. I'm going to keep Deia and the Senate in Sparta until I get word from you that you are reasonably sure we got all of them."

"Isabella's half brother Martin." Armetus spoke. "They may or may not wish to exchange him for something. I suggest we keep the communication lines open and if they do want him back... let us get something worth his position."

Martin nodded and leaned back in the chair. "Veldruk dead." He spoke softly. "Now that is something I didn't think I was going to hear for quite some time."

Armetus nodded. "Nor I." He said. "I have feelers out now to discover as much about this Empress Aikiro as we can. That is what they are calling her. I don't want to press too far just yet however. If what Anja sent down to me is accurate... she appears to be as old as Veldruk was if not older. As old as your grandfather would be right now... and like him... a direct descendant of these Pralor beings you spoke of."

Martin nodded. "This Sadi girl." He spoke. "I want her looked after Armetus. Her father doesn't..."

Armetus shook his head. "He does not know the full scope of her involvement or what her step mother forced her to do. I don't Sadi will tell him... and I certainly see no need to."

Martin nodded. "Her Mindvoice powers have increased expeditiously since Elynth and Andro touched her. I'll talk to Helen and see if she feels Sadi should enter the School of the Mages or whatever she is calling it."

"She has turned out to be a very strong young woman sire." Armetus spoke.

Martin nodded. "My son wouldn't have chose her if she wasn't." He spoke confidently. He held out the pad to Armetus. "You should be aware of this." He said. "As it stands right now only Anja and I know what you are about to read and right now that is how it will remain."

Armetus held Martin's gaze for a long moment questions in his eyes before dropping them to begin reading. His dark eyes grew wider the more he read and he looked up quickly. "Milord... Martin... this is not possible." He gasped. "It can't be possible... can it?"

Martin nodded slowly. "It's not only possible... it's fact." He spoke.

"Are... are you sure?" Armetus asked.

"My nose told me first... but Anja confirmed it." He spoke.

"How?" Armetus asked.

Martin shook his head. "I don't know... but that is what you are going to find out. You personally Armetus. I trust no one but you with this information. Find out how. Find out where. No one else is to know."

"Will you...?"

"No. That is not necessary right now... and something tells me it was done purposefully." Martin spoke. "Perhaps... perhaps one day... but not now."

They both turned as the door slid aside and Andreus walked in. They turned to look at him as he nodded and stepped to the side. Martin came to his feet as the two Durcunusaan pushed clone/Gorgo into the room. Her hands were secured behind her back and she looked defiant. Martin inhaled deeply and detected the differences immediately now that he had scented his real mother. His mother's vanilla scent was much more pungent and clear than the clone, and he felt a little better knowing that there was no way he would have ever been able to tell the difference. His mother had told him he was placed in the sleep chamber long before his ability to differentiate between scents had developed. There was no way he would have known the difference, and Anja

had already told him that it was easy for the clone to explain away the differences in her scent due to the massive Ion surge that had happened in the transport the day she took the real Gorgo's place.

The Durcunusaan escorted her to the chair. "Sit." One growled at her.

The clone glared at Martin and yanked her arms from the Durcunusaan's grasp. "I don't want to sit!" She barked.

The Durcunusaan placed his hand on her shoulder and forced her down until she was sitting in the chair. "You will sit clone scum!" He spat.

The clone yanked away from him again as he removed his hand and stepped to the side. She stared across the table at Martin and Armetus. "I will tell you nothing!" She hissed.

"I don't intend to ask you anything." Martin spoke softly.

"Veldruk himself trained me to resist all types of questioning and drugs!" She stated.

"For all the good it did him." Armetus spoke. "Veldruk is dead. Killed by his wife it seems. It appears as if the Kavalian Empire has made a resurgence and they are at this moment hitting the High Coven with thousands of troops and ships."

The clone's face softened then with this information and she sat back in the chair not noticing the cloaked figure enter the room and move slowly behind her. "Then I will be part of a prisoner exchange?" She demanded.

Martin shook his head. "No." He stated flatly. "There will be no prisoner exchange... at least none that you will be part of."

"Then why have you brought me here?" She barked. "Do you wish to look upon the face of your dead mother and wonder what she was truly like? She was weak you know! You should have heard her scream out when they raped her! She bellowed like a child I was told! She..."

The clone stopped talking when she sensed the cloaked figure come directly up behind her and lean close to her head as the pain lanced through her back. She inhaled sharply as the blade of the Shukur sliced through her spine with ease, passing through her lungs with ease, the eight inch long blade not stopping until the point of the bloody steel punctured the skin between her breasts, blood staining the front of the tan uniform she wore. The pain was horrible... as she tried to arch away from the source but the thin hand with slender fingers went to her shoulder and held her down with surprising strength.

"She is not dead however!" Gorgo's voice hissed next to the clone's ear as she drew back the hood exposing her wolf eyes and extended fangs. "She has returned from the abyss of death to reclaim all that was taken from her! To reclaim what is mine! What was always mine! What will be mine until I truly pass from this life! You have lived my life for too long abomination! I would like it back now!" Gorgo turned her face to look at the clone. "Your blood will insure that."

Gorgo twisted the blade inside the clone's body causing her to gasp as blood spilled from between her lips and the remainder of her lungs was shredded completely. Her dark eyes were fading fast and the last thing she saw before blackness washed over her were the yellow eyes of Martin Leonidas... his dual fangs exposed in a cruel snarl as he leaned across the table.

"You are here because I made a promise to my mother!" He growled at her. "And I will always keep my promises to my mother!"

Martin stared into her fading eyes as Gorgo used what strength she had in her body to rip the blade upwards, the point protruding under the clone's uniform as it rose and sliced through the fabric until it lodged against the bottom of her shoulder blade.

Gorgo let out a howl of rage and ripped the chair back, smashing it to the floor as she glared at the now very dead clone of herself. She spit on the body as Martin moved around the table to stand next to her.

"Now..." Gorgo gasped. "Now I am free!"

She spoke the words turning to look at her son. She stepped over the cooling body as blood pooled beneath her and slid into the embrace of her son. Martin buried his face into her hair as he crushed her to him and Gorgo relished in the sensations that coursed through her.

Armetus looked at the Durcunusaan. "Take this... thing... out of here. Burn it until there is nothing but ash and then dump the ash into the waste facility."

The two Durcunusaan moved to comply as he looked at Martin.

Martin lifted his face and met his eyes. “Armetus... you, Ceneu and Vistr are in charge until further notice. Vengal is going back with me. I’m taking my mother home.”

Armetus nodded. “I will contact you if I need to sire.”

Martin leaned over and lifted his mother into his arms and turned to look at Armetus. “Kmyla and your son are ready?”

Andreas nodded. “Waiting for us.”

“Then let’s get gone. We have a few more things to settle before this adventure is truly over.” Martin spoke as he headed out of the room.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

CITY SHIP 41

TEN HOURS TWENTY-TWO MINUTES FROM EARTH

“NO!”

Martin stepped into the corridor of the City ship as the door slid shut behind him, leaving Riall and his mother alone, the echo of Riall’s wail careening through Martin’s soul. He had truly only gotten to really know his mother’s mate in the last year, and was always amazed at the devotion he showed for her without question, even after nearly twenty-five hundred years together. Martin could feel the same feelings in his mother and he could feel her pain now as the man she loved just as intensely wept in her arms. He felt no anger from his mother at Riall for what had happened, only a powerful joy at being in his presence again. Riall was on his knees in front of her openly weeping and clutching her to him, his face buried in her abdomen, even while Gorgo tried to pull him closer to her than he already was and shaking her head. Her arms were wrapped around his head and she could barely see through her own tears as she lowered her face to his dark hair and Martin knew then it was time to leave them alone.

He turned part way, his own heart heavy for what the High Coven had done to his family through the years, as For’mya and Anja came up to him in the corridor holding hands. The smiles on their faces slowly went away when they saw the serious expression on his face.

“She has told him Martin Leonidas?” For’mya asked softly.

Martin nodded slowly looking at them. “He didn’t take it well.”

“Martin... it isn’t his fault.” Anja spoke as they moved closer. “The Coven can...”

Anja gasped in surprise as suddenly Martin swept both her and For’mya into his embrace and crushed them to his body. They both panted in delight when he hit them with a large dose of his aura and bent his head between theirs to firmly nuzzle For’mya’s elven ears and Anja’s neck. They heard him inhaling deeply, more deeply than either of them could remember him acting before and they knew what he was doing. Their eyes closed in bliss as they reveled in the sensations flowing through them and they knew then the horror of what Riall and Gorgo had experienced would never touch their lives in the same way. Anja and For’mya grasped him tightly; both of them filling their lungs with his soft mint scent until it touched every portion of their minds.

Martin loosened his grip on them after a long moment and pulled his head back slowly but didn’t release them. “They are strong and they are meant to be together. They’ll get through this as they have everything else in their lives.” He spoke softly. He looked at them fully and smiled. “Where are Bella and Dysea?”

Anja smiled warmly still feeling his aura pulsing through her. “They are with Lisisa and Jeth. Isabella hasn’t left her side since she came on board and met her.” She told him. “We need... we need to show you something.”

Martin looked at her and shook his head. “No more problems until we get to Earth. I’m tired of dealing with problems.”

For’mya grinned as she too could still feel his aura flowing all around her. It would take her some time to get used to him being able to do this to her. He had always been able to incite deep desire within her just by nuzzling her elven ears, but now that she was wolf as well and she could feel the aura he radiated it was almost overwhelming.

For'mya took hold of one of his arms tightly while Anja grasped the other and they began leading him down the corridor. "This is not a problem. It is information. This ship is wondrous Martin!" She spoke.

"Is this going to hurt?" He asked them with a grin as he leaned over and nuzzled both For'mya's elven ear and Anja's neck again.

For'mya shivered just as much as Anja did as the rush of love and desire coursed through them and she shook her head as she squeezed his arm tighter. "No... it will not hurt." She spoke with a gasp.

They led him into the smaller room on the same deck after walking for a hundred meters and he looked around at what appeared to be some sort of advanced library of sorts. He could see computer data cores lining the walls as well as some of the information pads that he had seen Endith and Komirri using recently while on this ship. Martin moved to the odd oval shaped chair and settled onto it. "Ok... what you got?" He asked even as his head turned when he caught the familiar scent. "Helen?"

"I am right here." Helen's voice carried as she appeared from between the two floors to ceiling racks. She looked at him as she carried three of the information pads in her hands and smiled at his astonished expression. She could see his face as he tried to find her within Mindvoice, and then he realized he could no longer sense his two mates and he looked at them. "These library rooms dampen our Mindvoice abilities so that they are almost undetectable." Helen spoke quickly. "It has something to do with the small globes in the corners of the ceiling. They act as dampeners... but they are more powerful than anything we are able to build right now. It is amazing."

Anja looked at him as she waved her hand in the air. "This is a data library." She spoke. "Avi told me about it. Marty... you aren't going to believe what we have found in just a few minutes of research. And Helen has been in here for hours."

"Hey... if it tells me how to get rid of the High Coven once and for all I'm all ears." Martin answered relaxing once more. "Otherwise... I might become distracted." He said wagging his eyebrows at For'mya and Anja.

Helen slapped him in his shoulder. "Stop that and listen to me." She snapped.

Anja leaned up against For'mya and smiled at the look on Martin's face. "Pervert." She said lovingly.

"Only for my ladies." Martin spoke with a grin. He turned and saw Helen glaring at him and he held up his hands in surrender as his mood began to lighten even more. "Ok! Ok! Hit me with it."

"The avatar of this ship pointed me to the correct entries." Helen began. "Each of these ships was a self contained entity. These Pralors were chosen from the most powerful of their people and if they made it onto these ships it was considered an honor. Each Pralor had a unique personality as well."

"Ok." Martin said. "So?"

"Martin they know we exist." Helen spoke. "And the avatar says there are more. Our species is listed in these data banks... as well as the High Coven... the Immortals... the Hadarians... all of them. They are a benevolent species and their only goal is to insure life does not die. That's what these ships are for. They were on their way to a system that was destroyed by its sun going supernova. The five ships that crashed... the survivors are who gave us our Mindvoice abilities. Your grandfather was a direct descendant of the Chief Pralor for this ship... that is why his Mindvoice abilities were so much more advanced than the rest of us. Canth was a direct descendant of their Chief Religious Pralor... hence why he is considered the First Oracle of our people."

"Ok... so let's ask Avi to contact them." Martin spoke. "Get them on our side. I like these ships. They grow on you after a while and they're faster than anything we got hands down."

Anja shook her head quickly at his statement. "They are a thousand years away even at the fastest possible speed our ships could generate Martin. That's Endith and Komirri's best guess. And Avi doesn't know the way back."

Martin looked at her. "What do you mean he doesn't know the way back? He's a machine. How could he not know the way back?"

"He wasn't programmed with that information." She spoke.

"Why would you send someone on a mission and not tell them the way back? Especially a robot that is supposed to be able to run this ship by himself." Martin asked turning back to Helen. He shook his head finally. "This is all very interesting stuff... really... but what does it have to do with anything now?"

"One of these ships crashed on Nuwaroa Martin." Helen spoke softly. "Nuwaroa is the birthplace of the High Coven... not Usu Ozeib 7 as we have always thought... at least if what I have been reading is accurate."

This woman who has taken over for Veldruk as the High Coven leader. *She* is the descendant of the Chief Pralor for that ship... not Veldruk.”

Martin looked at her now as his interest piqued. “Now you got my attention fully. How do you know that?”

Helen gave him the odd looking data pad. “Avi was able to access that ship’s data core before we left Lycavore’s system. It was at the very edge and limit of his connection range.” She spoke. “He was not able to download a whole lot of information because of the damage to its core but one thing he did discover was this.” She tapped the pad that Martin held. “It is a journal entry made sixteen thousand four hundred and ninety years ago by a vampire named Haleos. He was the leader of the vampire Coven that found the Mindvoice ship on Nuwaroa. In this journal he speaks of a daughter. A daughter that he named Aikiro. A daughter that had been studying the remains of the ship on Nuwaroa for five hundred years.”

“Whoa!” Martin spoke as he looked at the small screen and began to read.

“Yes indeed.” Helen spoke. “She would now be as old as your grandfather would be if he still lived, or within a few years at the very least.”

“Wait... if she is the descendant of this Chief Pralor for that ship... how did Veldruk’s skinny ass become so powerful?” Martin asked looking up.

“I can only surmise that somehow she transferred a small portion of her power to him.” Helen spoke. “If this is the Aikiro who has now assumed leadership of the High Coven... she would be infinitely more powerful than Veldruk ever was.”

“That really doesn’t give me warm fuzzy feelings Helen.” Martin said.

Helen smiled as she looked at him. “Nor should it.” She spoke. “However I will now tell you something that I have kept from you for quite a few months. And it is something I believe Veldruk knew in some manner based on what has happened these last months.”

“I’m listening.” Martin spoke.

“Canth did not want to tell you this when you spent those three days with his spirit form on Ukwav learning from him. He could feel it within you even then.” Helen spoke softly.

“He could feel what?” Martin asked.

“The power to destroy Veldruk.” Helen answered. “Your Mindvoice abilities and that of Aricia are untapped still Martin. There is so much more the two of you can learn. And by virtue of that, your other Queens as well. You have seen a glimpse of it with Dysea and her ability to see things that others can not in her visions. And with Anja in the strength of her healing ability when combined with the fact she can pull from life all around her.”

“Me?” Anja gasped.

Helen smiled and looked at her. “Did you think that having Martin’s blood flowing in your veins would not affect you Anja? It will affect For’mya as well though it will take time for it to manifest itself within her for she is newly turned. It has already affected Androcles. Eight months old Martin and he is fully aware of all around him and his bond with Elynth surpasses that of many of Mjолnir’s Hand. You and Aricia must have sensed this?”

Martin nodded. “Yes.”

“Canth feared if he told you of the power within yourself... he feared that you would run off and attempt to destroy the man who ordered the death of your father and grandfather. That power only increased when you bonded with Torma.” Helen spoke softly. “I believe Veldruk could sense that you had surpassed him with your abilities. I believe he knew that the day you struck him with a psychic bolt from hundreds of light years away. You are without question the most powerful Mindvoicer within the Lycavorian Union. Far stronger than I will ever be even as the First Oracle. By virtue of that alone... you queens will be as well. Aricia more so due to the pureness of her blood... but as I said... we have already seen it with Dysea and Anja. It augments their natural abilities to incredible levels.”

“We knew this already.” Martin spoke. “Why is that so important now?”

“This Aikiro woman Martin... she is a different story. If this is the same woman who this vampire Haleos speaks of then she has had sixteen centuries to refine and hone her power. And if she has now assumed power within the High Coven...”

Martin nodded as realization hit him and he got to his feet slowly deep in thought. “They just became infinitely more dangerous.”

“Yes... but to what extent they pose a threat to the Union is not something we can define now Martin Leonidas.” For’mya spoke evenly as she looked at him. “The reports we are getting from our drones and agents in The Wilds indicate an impossibly massive invasion force of ships and Kavalian troops pouring across their borders in two locations. Unlike anything we have ever seen in all our years at war with the Coven. Thousands of warships and troop ships alike. They have caught the Coven flat footed and unprepared.”

Helen nodded. “I believe that is because Veldruk has been so worried about Martin he neglected his duties as High Lord and allowed things to balloon out of his control.” She said. “Issuing a Kill Order on his own son for instance. And the High Coven agent who was working with the Kavalians and his plan to eliminate him *and* Bella. These are not the signs of a man working from rational thought. He was losing control and this Aikiro must have recognized that and acted.”

“Why now though?” Anja asked. “If she is who we think she is... why was she waiting until it was almost too late?”

Helen shook her head. “That I don’t know. Perhaps she allowed Veldruk to rule... perhaps she wanted no part of ruling and only acted when she realized the High Coven was in peril.”

“What can we do?” For’mya asked quickly. “As much as we hate the High Coven... the Kavalians are no better. They are worse in some respects. More violent and vicious.”

Helen looked at Martin. “I will learn all I am able from these records here... but... but for now all we can do is wait and watch.”

“Man I hate to wait and watch.” Martin said meeting her gaze. “With my luck it always seems to come around and bite me in my fat ass.”

“We have no other choice right now.” Helen spoke softly. “We certainly do not want to get caught up in this venture by the Kavalians. I have heard others speaking of them and I have read what little information we have. They are not nice individuals as For’mya has said. And you must be prepared to receive some sort of contact from them in regards to the ships and men Aricia has captured on Earth. Perhaps through an intermediary of some sort. They wanted those dragon eggs for a reason and even as vicious and unforgiving as they are said to be, I don’t see them just throwing away those men and ships because they failed to accomplish that goal, especially if there is a Lycavorian commanding them in some fashion.”

“Why would a Lycavorian help them?” Martin asked her. “They certainly are no friend to the Union. They initiated the hostilities between our people all those years ago.”

Helen shook her head. “I don’t know. I do suggest you gather as many officers as you possibly can who fought them and get as much information as you can. Something tells me these are not the same Kavalians that invaded the Union centuries ago. To have kept their plans and their forces secret for as long as they have implies they are much more organized than we have given them credit for.”

Martin nodded. “That’s what Armetus told me as well.” He said shaking his head. “You know... this King *sibfla* isn’t all it’s cracked up to be. Makes me want to just take my ladies and go hide in a hole somewhere and make babies.”

Helen smiled gently and reached out to his take his arm. “That is something your innate sense of honor will not allow you to do young Martin Leonidas.” She spoke.

Martin met her eyes. “Don’t remind me.” He said. “I can hope though.”

Helen tilted her head slightly. “Go find Dysea...” She spoke. “You have ten hours before we arrive on Earth. I could feel her blood burning for you the moment she came aboard. Leave Anja and For’mya with me... and we will try and discover as much as we can.”

Martin turned his head to look at Anja and For’mya. Anja grinned at him and held her hands up. “Don’t look at me big boy.” She stated. She dropped her hand to her abdomen and her eyes shone brilliantly. “You already put me in a situation.” For’mya chuckled and placed her hand over Anja’s on her stomach.

“She speaks the truth Martin Leonidas.” For’mya said.

“I didn’t exactly do that alone you know.” Martin spoke sheepishly.

“It’s still your fault!” Anja declared. “I was helpless!”

Martin opened his mouth to reply but Helen shoved him towards the door gently. “Go!” She stated. “She’s right. It’s the man’s fault. It’s always the man’s fault.”

Martin Leonidas was many things... but he was no fool. He was outnumbered three to one and he beat a hasty retreat out of the small room before he got his butt handed to him.

It must have been a small lounge of some sort for the officers of this ship Dysea thought to herself as she stood in front of the large view window as the stars were streaking by. She had discovered it as she explored the upper deck, far from where anyone was. There were small couches of some design and a few tables with similarly designed chairs. She had left Bella with Lisisa and Jeth, enraptured as Isabella was with Lisisa. The exercises Gorgo had showed her on Apo Prime were working enough to dampen the most powerful of her urges and desires for Martin, at least to the point where she could use her considerable will power to control them. Her body still called for him though, in a way more powerful than Dysea had ever felt. She knew a large part of it was because she was now fully wolf and had come into her first phase. The time when she would be most fertile.

Dysea thought back to their first time together in that underground cavern on Earth with Tarifa. The way his eyes had looked at her... devoured her... and consumed her very soul. Nothing had ever affected her in such a way and Dysea could not imagine life without the man who had so completely stolen her being. That day had opened so many wonderful doors for her to pass through. One of those doors had brought her Bella... and Dysea knew her love for Isabella burned almost as brightly as her love for Martin. The day she had asked him to turn her was the day Dysea's life began again and it had bound her to him in a way nothing would ever sever.

Dysea felt him enter the room and smiled to herself. She knew he would find her... if not through Mindvoice then with his uniquely powerful sense of smell. She didn't turn as he moved soundlessly across the room to stand behind her. She could feel his aura trembling behind his Mindvoice shields. He was holding himself tightly in check not wanting to overwhelm her and this only made Dysea love and want him more. She felt his body press against her from behind and she groaned softly as he lowered his head and ever so gently nuzzled the back of her elven ear sending delicious surges of pleasure shooting through her.

Carians she wanted him Dysea thought to herself. (Gods)

"*Melda Min.*" He spoke in a soft whisper like the fingers of a breeze across her skin in the summer.

"*Nauta... Nauta Melme.*" She answered as she leaned back against him, the warmth of his body burning her own flesh even through their uniforms where they pressed together. She shivered in delight as his powerful arms snaked around her small waist and pulled her gently back against him.

"Where... where is Bella?" He asked in that husky whisper, his lips so close to her sensitive ear.

"She... she is with Lisisa." Dysea answered. "They have... they have much to talk about. Lisisa is... she is fascinated with her."

"Then I have you all to myself?" Martin spoke as his hands slid upwards to cover her full, firm breasts.

"Oh... oh yes." She gasped out.

Dysea's nipple became instantly hard at his touch and she felt moisture seep into her loins just from his grip. He had not yet hit her with his aura and this confused her to some degree. "*Nauta... Nauta Melme... Bella... she...*"

"No!" Martin's voice rasped.

Dysea gasped loudly as he spun her around in his embrace, lifting her into his arms and pinning her against the large view window. Her long muscular legs wrapped around his waist almost instinctively and her arms went around his broad shoulders. His lips came down on hers with an intensity he had never shown with her before and her emerald green eyes closed blissfully as she met his urgent kiss. Their tongues danced a duet even as his arms crushed her to him until finally they had to pull apart or stop breathing.

Dysea's heart was pounding madly as she stared at him, her lips moist and tingling from the kiss. She could feel his desire for her... his want and passion, yet he was holding back. She brought her hand to his face and felt the soft hair from his mustache and goatee flutter across the palm of her hand. His eyes had changed and he gazed at her with those yellow/gold orbs. Eyes that had caused her to shiver in passion from the first moment he had gazed upon her with them.

"*Nauta Melme... what...?*"

Martin smiled gently as he gazed at her breathtaking beauty. Her long platinum blond hair and her dazzling emerald green eyes, now wide with excitement and lust. He could feel her breasts crushed against his

chest, the warmth of her long legs wrapped around his hips and he lowered his hands to cup her wonderfully firm and perfectly sculpted ass.

Martin leaned forward and nuzzled her chin with his nose and then lowered to her exposed throat and he nuzzled the satiny skin there. He heard her gasp in delight and her hands came to his head and pulled his lips from her skin.

“Tonight *Melda Min*... right now... it is only you.” Martin spoke as he gazed at her. “As Aricia is my soul Dysea of the Elves... you... you rule a part of me that no one else will ever have. I will never hurt you... never betray you... never forsake you and I will never stop loving you as I do this moment right now.”

Dysea felt powerful waves of unrequited love flowing from him to her and the intensity took her breath away. “*Nauta... Nauta Melme*... you have never said these things to me.” She gasped softly as small tears sparkled in her beautiful eyes.

Martin nodded slowly. “As of today... as of today that will change *Melda Min*. I have seen with my own eyes... Riall... he had no idea of what he was doing *Melda Min*... and to discover it as he has... it nearly destroyed him. I could see it in his eyes... the shame of what he considers the ultimate betrayal of my mother.”

“Martin...”

He shook his head quickly and kissed her softly silencing her words. “No.” He said. “I am going to make you mine *Melda Min*, utterly, completely.”

Dysea smiled as the tears fell. “I am already yours *Nauta Melme*.” She spoke. “I have been since that first day. We all have been yours from the moment you came into each of our lives.”

“You are strong *Melda Min*. Stronger than you let others see or know.” Martin spoke. “Almost as strong as Aricia. Strong enough I think.”

“Strong enough for what *Nauta Melme*?” Dysea asked with a puzzled smile of love. “You are speaking in riddles now and I burn for you as you burn for me. Why are you playing games with me?”

“Strong enough for this.” Martin spoke and closed his eyes.

Martin dropped the shields around his aura completely and the result was instantaneous.

Dysea’s emerald eyes flew open wide as every nerve in her body reacted. She groaned loudly as Martin’s fingers caressed the lips of her already exceptionally aroused pussy through her pants. The orgasm flooded through her immediately because she had already been so aroused, emptying her lungs from the intensity of it, her juices soaking her pants even as her hips humped against his groin. Dysea had known from speaking to Aricia that Martin’s aura when completely unshielded was unlike anything she had ever tasted or experienced. The power of it could set her blood on fire and cause her to explode in a breath stealing orgasm just with a simple caress of his hand. Dysea now knew what she meant as her body quivered in his arms and the orgasm rippled through her almost savagely. His unshielded aura should have turned her to warm butter in his arms, it should have made her totally unable to resist anything he did or suggested. She was not pure Lycavorian and she should not have been able to stand the full radiating power of his male aura. Yet even as her body reacted more powerfully than it ever had before, Dysea snapped her head back to glare at him with changed emerald wolf eyes that held nothing but the promise of pleasures to come.

Martin’s smile was part happiness and part arrogance really. “Now *Melda Min*! Now I will make you completely mine.” Martin began pulling at her uniform as he covered her lips with his own and Dysea’s hands began practically tearing his own uniform.

Dysea was on fire... her whole body alive with sensations she never dreamed she could feel. This is what only Aricia had ever felt. This was the ravenous part of her *Nauta Melme*’s aura... the animal within him that only Aricia could tolerate because of her pure blood. Yet Dysea was now feeling it fully and like Aricia, the only thing she wanted right now was to quench that fire within her and the only man who could do it was kissing her like he had never kissed her before.

It was glorious.

Isabella glanced out the small view port as she crossed through the small docking tunnel and into the *STRIKER DT*. It was empty of dragons since Miath, Iriral and Torma were all on the lower deck of the City Ship within the cavernous landing bay schooling Jeth and Lisisa as hundreds of newly liberated Lycavorians looked on. Helen had told her this is where Anja had come to study some of the new data logs they had

downloaded on medical treatments. Isabella knew she preferred to study in a quiet atmosphere with a large mug of coffee. She bypassed the main dragon pen and moved into the center of the DT which apparently had been made into a makeshift clinic back on Lycavore. Anja sat on the single couch that was pushed back against the bulkhead away from the star chart table.

Isabella was surprised when Anja looked up and a bright smile crossed her face as she saw her. Dysea had tried to tell her many times that she had her own distinct scent, and though Isabella had been raised believing vampires had no scent; she was beginning to believe that maybe her *ussta*-she elf was right. Anja had smelled her coming.

“Bella!” Anja spoke setting aside the data pad and getting to her feet.

Isabella smiled warmly as they came together and shared a sizzling kiss of feeling and love. Isabella may have been totally in love with Dysea and Martin but she could not deny her growing feelings for Anja, For’mya and Aricia. Just being around them when they were all together wrapped her within a blanket of passion and love Isabella had never felt. She also had to admit she simply adored Anja’s four inch long tongue and what it could do to her as Anja had showed her their last night together at the Island Palace.

Isabella suckled the tip of that wonderful tongue gently as they parted from their kiss and Anja held her hands tightly. “Where is Seanna?” Bella asked.

“She is on the second level conducting exams of the Lycavorians we rescued from the planet.” Anja replied pulling her towards the couch where she had a large thermos like container of coffee. Isabella detected something in Anja’s voice when she spoke of Seanna but she dismissed it.

“I understand you had quite the adventure on Lycavore.” Bella spoke as she settled next to Anja on the couch.

Anja chuckled and poured another mug of the coffee handing it to her as she pulled her legs back up under her. “No more than the adventure you and Dysea have had.” She spoke.

“I would think finding Gorgo there and discovering we have been treating a clone as her is just a tad bit more important. As well as finding Lisisa. She’s beautiful and stronger than I would have thought considering what she has been through. Her wolf genes are the more dominant within her I noticed.”

Anja nodded. “Yes they are. She still maintains the ability to do much of what you can do... and Martin was hoping you would take her under your wing so to speak and teach her what you can.” She answered.

Isabella nodded quickly. “That is without question.” She spoke.

“This Vonis... he is your brother?” Anja asked.

Isabella nodded. “Half brother.” She replied. “But the closest thing to real blood family I have ever met with the exception of Xerxes. He and the female elf Va’nimia who he was involved with are on *NORMYA’S LIGHT* on their way to Earth.” She said. “Martin... Martin will decide his fate.”

“Bella... you know he won’t do anything without talking with you first... you know that. And he will most likely do what you ask him.” Anja said.

Isabella nodded. “I know... but I don’t know what to do or think Anja. Part of me... part of me believes he is in love with this Va’nimia... yet my natural distrust of the High Coven makes me believe it is all still just an act on his part. He is important enough to initiate a prisoner exchange... but I don’t know what they could give us for him. We...”

Anja took her hand. “Bella... you are worrying about something that does not need to worry you.” She said.

Isabella looked at her. “What do you mean?”

“This isn’t about Vonis or Martin’s mother. This is about you Bella.” Anja said. “Trust me... I was in the exact same position as you a few years back. Don’t deny what you feel Bella.”

Isabella looked at her jade green eyes. “Have you never wondered why... how this all came to be?”

Anja nodded as she sipped her coffee. “Yes. Many times.”

“What answer did you come to?” Isabella asked.

“That we were all brought together for a reason.” Anja replied. “Martin, me, Aricia, Dysea, For’mya and now you. I never really believed in fate or destiny until we discovered who and what Martin really was. What I was. Then it was like a light came on in my head and it was all very clear. We all play a role in the larger scheme of things Bella. We all love Martin and we all love each other. It is not something we try to explain

now... we have accepted it because it feels so natural for us. All of us. Even you... but you are having trouble trying to grasp that.”

Isabella nodded slowly. “I know I love Dysea and Martin.” She spoke. “I know I have decided to take the position he wants me too as Queen. I know what I feel for you and Aricia and For’mya... it grows by the day. Are you saying that I should not try to explain it?”

“Does it feel right?” Anja asked. “Does it feel right in your heart? Don’t use your mind... our brains will always try to tell us something else. Does your heart tell you that what we have is what you want? What you desire?”

“Yes.” Isabella replied without hesitation.

Anja nodded. “Then don’t doubt it or what you feel. Your mind will eventually catch up to what your heart says and then it won’t trouble you anymore. Just as it doesn’t trouble me or the others.”

Isabella looked at her. “I heard... I heard from an associate of mine that knows you that you are... that you are working on a serum of sorts. A serum that will allow vampires and Lycavorians to conceive more easily together regardless of their blood pureness?”

Anja nodded without batting an eye. “Yes. Given Martin’s history though... I doubt it is something you need to be concerned with. As pure as his blood is... as pure as yours is...”

“Is it complete?” Isabella asked.

Anja nodded. “Almost. I have a few more tests to run. Perhaps a week once I can devote my full attention to it.”

“I would like to test it Anja.” Isabella spoke. “Surprisingly... surprisingly I find myself wanting to give him a child Anja. I never thought I would say that... but it’s true. You are pregnant... after this night *ussta*-she elf will no doubt be with child. I want to be able to say that as well.”

“We do too Bella.” Anja said softly seeing her bright hazel/green eyes go wide. She laughed softly. “After that night on the island when you finally gave yourself to us... we all finally understood what Dysea cherishes most about you. You give of yourself completely... just as we do... not to mention that when you bite us... we’ll do practically anything you want knowing the pleasure that comes with that. Whether you realize it or not Isabella... we have loved you since that very first day on Earth.”

Isabella stared at her for a long moment as her words sunk in and Isabella realized she too had made her decision that day as well. It had just taken her this long to accept it.

Isabella gazed into those jade green eyes and felt a surge of desire within her. “Is... is the docking ring locked?” She asked softly.

Anja closed her eyes briefly and smiled as Isabella heard a soft beep from near the dragon pens. “It is now.” She answered as she set aside her coffee and moved closer to Isabella on the couch. She smiled as her own eyes filled with desire. “What did you have in mind Bella?”

Isabella smiled now herself, her eyes changing to cobalt blue as she pulled Anja closer to her, her hands sliding down Anja’s legs seductively. “I believe... I believe since *ussta*-she elf will be occupied for the next few hours...”

Anja moved her lips to within millimeters of Isabella’s soft red lips and she extended her incredible tongue, the tip running across Isabella’s. “Yes Bella. And she will be occupied. As you will be very soon.”

Isabella gripped Anja’s firm ass in her hands and she plunged her lips down on Anja’s firmly, kissing her hard. Anja groaned and met the kiss with equal passion molding her lithe body against the taller woman. Bella gripped Anja’s long Persian red hair in her hand and pulled her lips away gently, both of them breathing heavy in fervor.

“Anything I want Anja?” She asked huskily.

Anja smiled with half closed eyes as ardor rippled through her now. “Anything.” She answered.

“Perhaps... perhaps you should show me just how badly you want me to taste your sweet blood Anja.” Isabella spoke.

“I thought you would never ask.” Anja told her just before she lowered her lips to Bella’s and stole her breath away.

Just how badly Dysea wanted Martin she was showing him at the moment.

They had pulled at each other's clothing until both of them were naked. As Martin gazed hungrily at her sculpted curves and proud breasts, his eyes had taken in the new piercing she sported through her left nipple. It was a simple stud, but poking out as it did on her erect nipple and Martin couldn't help but engulf the pink nipple in his warm mouth. Dysea had gasped in delight but pushed him away quickly, guiding him to the floor beneath them as she seductively stepped over the top of him. His wolf eyes gazed up at her burning in need, his aura swarming around her and electrifying every single pleasure nerve in her body. Something she was going to return to him in spades.

Dysea pushed him to his back and quickly dropped to her knees between his legs taking his raging shaft in her hands. She gazed at it as a wolf would gaze at a meal, marveling at the size and thickness and the pulsing vein that adorned the entire underside. It looked so much bigger now that her *Nauta Melme* was so aroused and Dysea knew what she wanted.

Without so much as a prelude Dysea engulfed the bulbous head of his twelve inch cock and plunged her head down completely in one smooth motion. As her soft lips anchored firmly around the much thicker base Dysea gagged as his hands wrapped within her hair and his hips surged off the floor.

"Uhhhh... *Melda Min!*" He croaked out, the veins on his neck standing out as he fought to maintain his control.

Dysea looked up the long expanse of his rock hard abdomen and broad chest through tear filled eyes. She brought her hands up and pushed his hips down, determined to take what she wanted. The moment his ass settled back to the floor she dragged her lips back up the length of his throbbing pole until just the head remained within her warm mouth. Torturously she battered the sensitive head of his cock with her tongue, swirling it all around, teasing the tip and then plunging her head back down to the base. His hands left her head to slap against the floor and Dysea knew she had him then. Four more trips up the glorious length of his cock and four more plunges down that shaft and Dysea tasted him then. She loved the mint taste of his passion and that was what she wanted more than anything right now. Her bald and pierced pussy was dripping with her own excitement and she was using his muscular thigh to stimulate herself, timing her thrusts against his thigh with the downward motion of her lips on his cock, the emerald piercing through the hood of her now fully engorged clit driving her nearly mad with pleasure. The fire in her blood was lashing her senses and somewhere in her sexual fog she knew his thigh wasn't going to be enough.

In an instant she shifted her body around, never allowing his cock to escape the prison of her throat. She knew she only had to move far enough for him to reach her and she hummed out her glee around his cock buried in her throat as his hands grabbed her hips, lifted them and dropped her spasming pussy directly onto his waiting lips. Dysea's body shuddered in orgasmic bliss as he stabbed her pierced clit with his tongue causing her thighs to tighten and quiver and then he dragged his tongue up the entire breadth of her long slit, now fully open and spread like a butterfly's wings in dripping passion. His hands gripped her ass cheeks tightly and pulled her pussy even closer still as he drove his tongue as deeply into her clutching pussy as he could.

That was all it took.

Dysea's eyes flew open wide and she screamed around Martin's thick cock buried in her throat as her stomach muscles convulsed and her come erupted from within her like a tidal wave. She felt his throbbing shaft expand within the velvety confines of her throat and she locked her lips around the base as it swelled even larger and the head expanded. She tasted him only briefly before his searing hot come erupted from the swollen head and coated her throat as it blasted into her belly. Dysea wrapped her arms around his thighs and drank greedily even as her own body continued to respond to his lapping tongue and talented lips and give him what he wanted.

Six long powerful jets of her *Nauta Melme's* come flooded her belly, leaving her milking his shaft for all she could receive. She brought her head back up, her hand squeezing his still steel hard cock as she went, his mint tasting passion now fully coating her tongue and taste buds and causing another smaller shiver of orgasm to undulate through her. Even as she held just the large swollen head of his cock within her lips Dysea knew they were not done by any means. Her blood still burned for him within her, his aura never relenting as it swarmed all around her, penetrated her very being with passion and lust and want. She gripped his thick shaft in one hand, lifting her lips from the head and tore her seething pussy from his grasp as she turned her body once more and straddled his hips.

Now! Now... Nauta Melme... the fire burns my love. It burns for only you! It has always burned for only you! Her sweet musical voice filled Martin's head within Mindvoice. *Take me! Take me my love!*

Dysea position the head of his huge cock at the still sopping entrance to her pussy and she began to lower herself onto him. As she did this Martin sat up quickly and grasped her waist in his powerful hands and pulled her down onto him. Whether it was due to his aura sweeping through her, or her increased passion Dysea would never know. Nor would she ever care. It was the longest, most delicious impalement upon Martin's cock that she had ever known since being with him. It seemed to take forever before her pussy hungrily clamped down on the base of his cock where her lips had been only seconds before. As Dysea felt the head of his huge pole touch her where only his size and power could, her whole body went limp and only his strong hands kept her from falling too far backwards. She screamed in unadulterated enchantment as the most powerful and consuming orgasm of her young life shattered her sense of reality and drove her into the realm of blissful existence where a kaleidoscope of colors and incredible sensations flashed through her mind as well as her body.

He held her like that, allowing her to experience that magnificence for several moments as her body vibrated continuously with the seemingly unending orgasm. He lowered his lips to her breast, her nipples like small pebbles upon perfect mounds and he strummed his tongue across the silver stud piercing her left nipple. This caused her body to tremble even further and slowly he began to lift her back up, her satiny platinum colored hair damp with sweat. Her hands clutched his head once again and he stared at her now fully seated in his lap as her emerald eyes came back into focus. He flexed his massive cock within her belly and saw her face tense with electric jolts of pleasure and she finally looked at him.

Dysea brought her forehead to his, her breathing ragged and out of control, but the fire in her blood still burning. "By... by the gods... *Nauta Melme.*" She gasped out. "What... what is happening?"

"I have... waited so long for this *Melda Min.*" Martin spoke softly his own voice ragged as he fought against the tightness and heat of her pussy surrounding his throbbing cock.

"I... I should not be... able to feel like this." Dysea hissed softly. "It is... it is glorious... but... Aricia is... she is your Soulmate. Only... only she can tolerate... your aura unshielded. How... how can..."

"You are the first I turned *Melda Min.*" Martin spoke nuzzling her throat tenderly. "My blood runs thicker within you than it does Anja or For'mya. That is why I told you what I told you *Melda Min.* Only you and Aricia can feel this... and I can only feel like this with one of you. She is my soul *Melda Min.*... but you... you are my heart."

"*Nauta Melme...*"

"Now I'm going to make you mine *Melda Min.*" Martin growled as he rolled over swiftly and felt her lock her long legs behind the small of his back as he got to his feet. He grimaced as her tightness squeezed him even more. "I... I had hoped to do this on soft sheets in our bed *Melda Min.*, but you smell too good too wait that long."

Dysea's eyes were blazing as she stared at him now with full understanding of what was happening. She shook her head back and forth, her hair flying wildly about as he moved to the closest of the small couches. He stared into her eyes as he lowered her to the couch and knelt in front of her, keeping his throbbing pole buried in her completely. "No! No waiting! Now!" She growled. "Now!"

Dysea hissed as he withdrew his cock slowly until only the head remained inside her. His eyes had changed now and he barred his fangs in a smile. "I love you *Melda Min.*" He gasped just before he drove the entire length of his cock into her in one rapturous thrust. Dysea's head fell back onto the couch and she screamed as Martin slammed home within her depths, his large balls banging against her upturned ass cheeks. Her sweet juices were pouring from her now, his aura surrounding her even more tightly and it was then that she instinctively hit him back with every bit of her own female aura and sent him into a sexual frenzy.

Dysea's emerald wolf eyes were wide and her nails dug into the skin of Martin's thick powerful arms as his hips moved with speed and power that took her breath away. His huge cocked was stretching her in a way he never had before, reaching places within her that he had never touched. Dysea knew it was partly because of his aura and its delicious power over her, but he was taking her now with an intensity he had never showed her before in all their times together, and she was relishing in every will crushing thrust of his cock into her supple body. He was not holding back, his thighs and calves stretching and exerting to provide him support as he pummeled her sweet muscular form into the couch. Sweat quickly began to adorn his muscular frame and his

skin glistened in the dim light of the room. Dysea had to do nothing but allow him to claim her in this way as every pleasure receptor in her body was going off at once, causing white flashes in her brain as she began to come non-stop on the twelfth plunge into her spasming pussy. She cried out and wrapped her arms around his powerful shoulders, her wolf fangs bursting from her gums. She felt one of his large hands move to the back of her head and pull her face against his neck as his other hand moved to the small of her back providing him extra support to sink into her silky depths.

It happened slowly, the supremacy of her orgasm building from deep within her belly. It rolled slowly outwards, her eyes wide in glorious ecstasy, encompassing every iota of her body and her mind. It wasn't just a physical pleasure but an emotional one as well and then Martin pulled her head back and kissed her. Whatever slivers of control that remained were smashed aside then as his kiss was unlike anything she had felt in her lifetime. Dysea felt his cock expand within her and as he drove into her one final time he erupted and all thought dissolved into exquisite harmony as his scorching hot come reached into her depths. She tore her mouth away from his, her lips parted into a breathless scream, and Dysea felt the very first flickers of life burst forth within her womb. Martin settled on top of her on the couch as he buried his face into the damp platinum blond hair at the crook of her neck and held her orgasmic vibrating body in his embrace, his come still pumping into her. Dysea could not pull him close enough to her, their bodies melded together so completely it was hard to tell them apart.

It was many long moments before he lifted his head and gazed at her with his yellow/gold orbs. His face dripped in sweat and Dysea reached up slowly to wipe his brow a look of pure contentment decorating her radiant face.

"We... we will name him Resumar *Nauta Melme*." Dysea gasped softly as Martin lowered his head to nuzzle her cheek and the front of her elven ear. "I will give you... I will give you a strong son my *Nauta Melme*. Worthy... worthy of the name he will bear."

Martin only smiled and pulled her even tighter to him as he drew in her wildflower scent burning her very essence into his brain as he had done with Anja and For'mya. As he would do with his *Anome* when he saw her in a few hours.

What had happened to Riall and his mother would never happen to him.

This Martin Leonidas vowed to no one but himself.

EARTH

WICHITA

Syrlth could only gaze in wonder at what was taking place before her and what she had seen such a short time ago. She was only just arriving in this dead city with Tharua while little Majeir and the rest of her hatched siblings traveled in an armed and heavily guarded Heavy Lifter that the Guardian had requested. When they arrived the massive ship was already over the city five thousand feet above them and as they were landing next to where Isheeni, Aelnala and Roluth stood with Aricia and Isra near the vehicles that carried her unhatched sisters and brother it happened. They could hear the massive trumpeting from what had to be hundreds of dragons and as they watched in awe, the massive ship began gurgitating dragons of all colors and breeds. Their trumpets could be heard for kilometers all around as they leaped from the interior of the massive Type I transport as it remained rock steady in the sky.

Syrlth spotted the massive flame red body of Isheeni's mother the moment she left the ship. She was the largest dragon Syrlth had ever seen in her lifetime and her scales shone even from five thousand feet above them. She watched as Isheeni shifted on her talon equipped feet excitedly and Arzoal glided to the ground below in great looping circles like the dragon Elders of ancient times that her mother had once told her about. It was the most awe inspiring sight Syrlth and the others had ever seen. They had watched as four hundred fully grown dragons, male and females alike began to settle to the ground on the wide plain to the right of the vehicles with the eggs with graceful sweeps of their wings. Dragons of all colors and breeds, some that Syrlth's mother had not known existed. As she watched Arzoal settle to the ground last, Isheeni broke from where she

had been standing next to her and raced over to where her mother was. Several dozen dragons trumpeted their greetings to the dragon that carried one of their Queens and Isheeni happily replied.

Isheeni stopped in front of Arzoal as her mother's flame colored eyes settled on her and she bowed her head reverently in honor of her mother's position.

I extend greetings Elder Mother from Queen Aricia of Mjolnir's Hand. Welcome to the planet known as Earth. Isheeni spoke formally and without any shields in place so that everyone could hear her.

Arzoal stepped forward easily dwarfing her daughter and her flame colored eyes gleamed with pride and love.

On behalf of the Elder Council I return your greetings Isheeni of Mjolnir's Hand. Arzoal replied.

Isheeni couldn't help but chuckle within Mindvoice and then she was beside her mother and they were stroking each other's scales in affection as Sylrith, Roluth and Aelnala heard many of the other dragons chortle in approval.

Come mother I want you to meet Sylrith and the others. Without them... we would never have accomplished this.

Arzoal followed Isheeni to where Aricia stood with Isra and Aelnala. Tarifa and Aihola stood on either side of Roluth, their hands touching him while Sylrith and Tharua stood to Aihola's left. Aricia and Isra bowed their heads as Arzoal approached and the others did the same. Sylrith's eyes never left Arzoal even as she bowed her own head.

Aricia... what you and Isheeni... Arzoal turned and looked at Aricia, her eyes passing over all of them. Sylrith watched as every dragon in the mass of four hundred bowed their heads in a show of respect to Aricia's station as one of the Queens of the Union. *What all of you have done here.* Arzoal spoke. *It is beyond words.*

We did what honor demanded. Aricia spoke. *And we had quite a bit of help.*

Arzoal turned her massive head to gaze at Isra and Aelnala. *Isra of Mjolnir's Hand... once more you and Aelnala prove to me that the King and I made the right decision that day.*

Isra bowed his head to Arzoal and rested his hand on Aelnala's muscular side. *A day I... we will forever hold close to our hearts Elder Mother.*

Always. Aelnala spoke softly.

Mother, may I present Tarifa and Aihola of the elves and their Bonded Dragon brother Roluth. Isheeni spoke.

Arzoal moved closer to them, Roluth's heart pounding within his chest as he gazed at her proudly. *I have heard many speak of Tarifa and Aihola of the Elves. You are considered blessed sisters to the King and now you have done something no other has. You both have bonded with a single dragon. This strapping young Firespitter called Roluth. That is something that has never happened.*

I will protect them with my life! Roluth announced. No matter the danger!

Arzoal chuckled in Mindvoice. *You are a confident young Roluth. That is good. You will need that confidence when you meet the King and Torma. They frighten me at times.*

We will do what needs to be done Elder Mother. Tarifa spoke softly.

Whatever it may be. Aihola finished.

I sense the bond you have is strong. Arzoal spoke. *And it will only grow stronger. Who will sponsor him during his training?*

I will Elder Mother. Aelnala answered instantly.

As will I. Isra spoke.

Isra and I will be remaining here on Earth and we will instruct Roluth in all that he needs to know. Aelnala spoke.

Arzoal nodded her massive head. *Then let it be so.*

Mother... Isheeni spoke again as she moved up beside Sylrith. *Mother this is Sylrith.*

Sylrith felt fear for the first time in her life. This flame scaled dragon was the oldest of their kind. The Dragon Elder Mother. The Matriarch of her kind and from what she had seen and heard so far she wielded enormous power and influence. She lowered her head even more taking her eyes away from Arzoal's gaze.

I surrender... I surrender myself to your judgment Elder... Elder Mother. Sylrith spoke softly. *All I have done... all I have done through the many years was only to protect those that I love. I will...*

Lift your head Syrilth. Arzoal spoke firmly waiting until she was looking at her. You have been on this world for over three millennia Syrilth. Alone... with only a twisted man who has used you for his own gain. You have done only what your instincts have told you to do. The war that your parents fought in and fled Enurrua from. It will finally end with the judgment of this vile Maruad. I have already spoken with the King Syrilth. He will be here in just under six hours. It is our decision and that of the Dragon Elder Council that you are absolved of whatever crimes you may have been forced to commit over the centuries. Arzoal turned to look at Tarifa and Aihola. *As two of the three honored leaders of Earth... do you agree with this decision Tarifa and Aihola of the elves?*

We do. Tarifa and Aihola answered together without hesitation.

Arzoal nodded with a dragon smile. *Then what has happened in the past will remain in the past. The Dragon Elder Council has decided since you have been here all this time and protected your siblings as ferociously as any of our breed has ever done in our history, you should bear the continued responsibility of this and all of Earth. We ask that you take on the station of Dragon Elder of this planet Syrilth. I believe Earth will become a home to many of our kind in the future.*

Syrilth's eyes were wide in shock as she stared at Arzoal. *An Elder?* She gasped.

We can think of no one who knows this planet better. The King has already agreed... the decision is yours to make. Arzoal spoke. *You may think about it as long as you wish and give us a decision when you are ready.*

An Elder! Tharua exclaimed. *Sister you will be an elder!*

Syrilth hissed. *Tharua stop!* She spoke quickly as Arzoal's eyes fell on the mahogany colored female. *My sister Tharua Elder Mother.*

Arzoal looked at Tharua for a long moment and her flame colored eyes blinked several times. *I believe... I believe we may see more of you in the future Tharua.*

Tharua bowed her head reverently. *Elder Mother.*

It appears we will not need your comrades after all. Arzoal spoke as she turned to Isra now.

Isra and Aricia looked at her. *What do you mean?*

Arzoal's eyes glittered in the sun. *Martin gave me permission to call upon them if I felt the need while he was gone. I rallied them in one location when we thought the problems on Elear would involve the First Elven King. When I discovered what was happening here I dispatched them to Earth. They arrived an hour before I did and have been waiting for my word.*

Who has mother? Isheeni asked.

Arzoal turned and looked at the four hundred dragons that crowded the field behind her. *Dragons of the Blood! Trumpet the arrival of Mjolnir's Hand!* Arzoal screamed out within Mindvoice.

The noise was deafening even across the endless expanse of the surrounding plains as four hundred dragons lifted their heads to the sky and roared as one voice.

Almost on cue the *STRIKER DT's* began to appear overhead. They filled the blue sky as far as the eye could see and as each of them past overhead at a relatively sedate speed they began unloading Bonded Pairs until they filled the sky. Trumpeting roars answered from the sky as they responded to their brethren on the ground and Syrilth, Roluth and Tharua could only gaze in unabashed awe at what they saw. Three hundred Bonded Pairs began circling the city until all of them had unloaded and the last of the *STRIKERS* had left the area. Then they began gliding down to the ground a short distance away in perfect formation and harmony, the Spartan riders a mixture of Lycavorian and Elf, and sitting high and proud within the saddles. Syrilth and her brothers and sisters that were hatched could almost feel the power and sense of peace and trust between the Bonded Pairs.

Mother... you brought all of them? Isheeni gasped out.

Arzoal nodded her head. *I did not know what we would be encountering and the moment I heard the situation involved eggs I acted.* She answered with an almost embarrassed voice. *I may have overreacted somewhat.*

May have? Isheeni spoke with a dragon smile.

Aricia chuckled within Mindvoice and reached up to remove her helmet. *It is better this way.* She spoke. *Now Bonded Pairs will move and care for Syrilth's siblings until she decides where she will make her home for them. It is as it should be.*

Arzoal turned and looked at Aricia and her daughter. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Your mates will be here in a few hours. Martin told me they will go to Thermopylae first Aricia. Something to do with his mother. He asked that you meet them there while Anja brings the others here to insure the eggs are healthy and Syrilth's hatched siblings are given full medical exams.*

Isheeni's tail came around and gently tapped Aricia's shoulder. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Let us go quickly Aricia my sister. I burn for my mate as intensely as you do.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Thank you Arzoal.* Aricia spoke.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *No Aricia... your actions have given you a place of honor within our history now. I should be thanking you. Go! Both of you!*

Aricia jumped onto Isheeni's back without a second's pause and Isheeni cocked her powerful legs and propelled them into the air. Arzoal watched for a moment before allowing her eyes to drop to Syrilth who was still watching her.

The Bonded Pairs will move and care for your siblings Syrilth. Why don't we talk of things to come while we watch and stay out of their way?

Syrilth's eyes were still wide but she nodded her large head. *Of... of course Elder Mother.*

2.6 LIGHT YEARS WITHIN HIGH COVEN SPACE

KAVALIAN FEDERATION IMPERIUM INVASION FLEET

***GREATSOUL*-Class Kavalian Dreadnought**

PREFECT KELERU'S COMMAND SHIP

STORMKILLER

Keleru watched the star chart with a great deal of pride in his eyes as his bridge crew went about their duties with exacting precision. The invasion was only seventeen hours old and already they had captured four of the nine planets to establish their foothold within High Coven space. His troops and ships had destroyed nearly four High Coven Legions on the ground and three entire Fleet Groups. It helped that he had almost two thousand ships under his command and twice that number of troop ships with over ten million ground troops. His khaki colored eyes watched as the information from his five main invasion fleets was constantly updated. Three were moving to their next targets, while two were taking the fifth and sixth planets they needed to establish a firm anchor within their enemy's territory and begin moving their support units and supplies from Kavalian space.

Keleru turned slightly as his senior aide held out the data pad. "Another report from the *QURSAM* Prefect." He spoke. "They have begun their orbital bombardment of Kermefo and report little resistance."

Keleru let his eyes flick over the report and he nodded his head. "We have caught them totally unaware Cuatan." He spoke.

"It is a glorious day Prefect." His aide spoke.

"Indeed... however we have much to do." Keleru replied. "We must adhere to Pusintin's plan for it allows us to concentrate our forces where needed. Insure our commanders do not become overconfident and begin making mistakes. They are not to exceed their directives. We must secure our stronghold before we expand."

"I'll issue the orders Prefect." Cuatan spoke. "Several Commanders have asked about prisoners Prefect."

Keleru looked at him. "I do not require prisoners." He replied harshly. "Kill the men and boy children. The females the men may keep as their toys. Some of them may make good slaves after all."

Cuatan nodded and held out the second data pad. "We received this from the Zaleisian Minister of Defense. It is a message from the Ambassador that was sent to Earth with your nephew. Our forces failed and those that were not killed were captured and the ships we sent taken."

Keleru hissed in anger. "That idiot Talco!" He barked. "I will have words with my brother about his son. He allowed a half breed elf who is now a vampire to anger him to the point where he compromised their mission! I will have him whipped until he is near death for his actions!" He looked at Cuatan. "Can we reach Pusintin from here?"

Cuatan nodded and looked at the communications officer that was already standing by. He had been with the Prefect for eight decades now... and he knew that Keleru trusted Pusintin as not only the mate to his oldest daughter, but the guardian of his youngest and the architect of their invasion plans. Keleru turned as the holo disc shimmered and the transmission came alive. Pusintin was sitting on the bridge of the *JANGARR* doing much the same thing he was Keleru saw. His star chart had many more symbols on it as he had taken the majority of the invasion forces to hit the High Coven from out of Zaleisian territory.

“Keleru!” Pusintin’s face lit up when he turned and saw Jalersi’s father in the holo transmission. “We are brushing aside their defenses as if they weren’t there my friend. We have taken seven of our initial planets within the two invasion corridors!”

Keleru nodded. “We have secured four my friend.” He spoke. “We have begun our attack on Kermefo and are reaching out for the others! We have caught them completely by surprise Pusintin! Your plan is working masterfully!”

Pusintin nodded. “We must not get overconfident Keleru.” He spoke.

“I have already issued directives to that affect.” He spoke. “We must keep the momentum and not become careless.” He held up the data pad. “The mission to Earth has failed. The Zaleisian Minister of Defense has informed me that he has received a message from his Ambassador to Earth. Talco lives... but our ships were captured and roughly half the ground forces we sent have been destroyed.”

Keleru saw Pusintin’s jaw twitch in anger even within the transmission. “He should be whipped for allowing his personal issues to affect his judgment Keleru!” He spat.

“Something I will make sure takes place my friend.” Keleru answered with a nod of his head. “However in order to do that I must reach out through the Zaleisians and request that they return our men and ships. Is it worth it?”

“They will get no information from him even if they interrogate him, which I’m quite sure they have already done.” Pusintin answered. “Were there any of our biogenic soldiers in the group?”

“Nineteen General Pusintin.” Cuatan answered immediately.

“They are probably just as surprised as the High Coven at our attack Keleru.” Pusintin spoke. “We can use that to our advantage and negotiate to get our people back from a position of strength.”

“What do you suggest?” Keleru asked.

“Send a message through the Zaleisian Minister.” Pusintin spoke. “Have him demand that our men and ships be returned to us immediately.”

“They were caught on Earth conducting an espionage mission Pusintin.” Keleru said. “What makes you think Leonidas will not just kill them? According to this information here, there are already signs that they are beginning a massive Intelligence purge on Apo Prime. The Zaleisian Defense Minister’s contacts on the planet have reported dozens of high profile raids in just the last twelve hours alone. All of them targeted at suspected High Coven agents. The Prime Minister has been spirited away to an unknown location along with every member of their Senate. All provincial Governors have seen their security nearly triple in the last twelve hours.”

Pusintin nodded. “They are going to clean house.” He said. “It must have something to do with whatever he found on Lycavore. They would not do something of this magnitude without some purpose. And they will undoubtedly be just as interested in us and what we can do as we are in them.”

“They will refuse any demands.” Keleru said.

“I know. We demand first and then request.” He spoke. “It will keep them off balance. Can the Defense Minister make this happen in the way we want it?”

Keleru nodded. “He is one of the few that I have allowed to know most of our plans.” He replied. “He will accomplish what we ask of him.”

“We need three weeks at least to fully secure our initial goals.” Pusintin spoke. “Six would be better... but three weeks minimum. If he can draw it out that long... we will be in a better position.”

“That should not be a problem.” Keleru said. “When and where do we say we wish to recover our ships and men? And who do we send?”

“Well that’s easy Keleru.” Pusintin spoke with a smile. “You and I go. And we go to Sparta.”

“That is a very large risk on our part my friend.” Keleru spoke.

“Not as much as you might think.” Pusintin answered. “As I said they will undoubtedly want to learn as much as they think they can. We wait until we have secured our initial goals... and while our troops and ships

reconsolidate you and I go to collect our men. It will make it seem like Talco was more important than he really was if we go. And it will allow you and I to gauge Leonidas first hand.”

Keleru was silent for a long moment as he pondered this and finally he looked at the transmission. “An interesting plan.” He said nodding his head. “I like it. Very well... I will make the necessary arrangements.”

“We are moving to our next Jump Point Keleru.” Pusintin spoke. “I will contact you when we have secured the next Gate.”

Keleru nodded. “Until then.” He waited until the transmission ended before looking at Cuatan. “He can be very deceitful when he wants to be.” Keleru spoke with a smile. He saw the look in his aide’s eyes. “What thoughts swirl in your head Cuatan? Do you not trust him?”

Cuatan shook his head quickly. “Not at all Prefect.” He replied. “If anything... he is more Kavalian than many of our younger Pride Leaders.”

Keleru nodded. “Indeed... an observation I have made on many occasions.”

“Why does he hate his own people so Prefect?” Cuatan asked thoughtfully. “His history before coming to live among our people his clouded in mystery. Do you know what his story is?”

“Not all of it. The Pride Leader who adopted him is the only one who knows the entire story. He is an old Pride Leader and he will not reveal this information to just anyone for he considers Pusintin like a son.” Keleru spoke in a low voice. “I could get it if I so choose... Pusintin would tell me himself, but he has never betrayed our people, even when given the opportunity some six hundred years ago, and I have never felt the need to ask him about it. He was sent on an intelligence mission to Earth several months before the comet lay waste to the planet. His mission was to discover the extent of progress the High Coven had made in their new cloning procedures. I do not know all the details of the mission or what happened, but he returned with his team and a wealth of information that allowed us to arrive at this point in our plans. It was after this mission that his hatred for his people only grew. I knew he had forsaken everything Lycavorian within himself when he came to my mate asking for Jalersi’s hand. He has not looked back since.”

Cuatan nodded. “It must be a very interesting story Prefect.” He said.

Keleru nodded. “I’m sure it is. He is Kavalian now... if not by blood... then by his actions for the last three thousand plus years that have only served to benefit our people and make us able to take our revenge on the blood drinkers.”

“Of course Prefect.” Cuatan spoke. “Though you have to admit it would make an interesting story.”

Keleru handed the data pad back to him. “Inform the Zaleisian Defense Minister what we require and then have the Sixth Echelon break for their attack line.”

Cuatan nodded quickly and bowed his head before moving to conduct his orders. Keleru turned back to look at the Star Chart.

“An interesting story without a doubt.” He spoke softly.

CITY SHIP 41

Martin stood next to Torma in the rear of the DT, leaning casually up against his Bonded Brother’s front shoulder as his massive body was fully settled to the deck. They were watching as the others were mingling in the main portion of the ship as they prepared to enter Earth’s system and depart for the planet. His mother and Riall sat beside one another on one of the benches, Gorgo holding tightly to his arm as they watched Jeth shift excitedly on his legs in front of Lisisa. Her face was beaming as she watched him, while Elynth and Aurith rested sedately on the deck of the *STRIKER* close to where Dasha sat holding Androcles in her arms next to Isabella. Dysea sat between Anja and Isabella, the three women speaking in animate whispers and reaching out to caress Dysea’s abdomen constantly. Martin’s dark eyes watched as Bella held tightly to Dysea’s arm and kept nuzzling her cheek and ear. Miath and Iriral would remain on the City Ship as Komirri and Avi set the ship down in the prearranged location on Earth’s surface. The ship’s Quantum drive would be inoperable once they conducted their reversion from light speed and Martin had decided it was far too large and cumbersome to be an active part of the Union Fleet.

He had chosen a location on the island once known as Sardinia for Avi to land the ship, and that would become the permanent home to City Ship 41 on Earth. It was centrally located between Eden City and Sparta,

and after inquiring of the avatar, Martin had decided it would become the equivalent of the Dragon Island on Elear. It was massive enough to act as a nursery and home to hundreds of dragons while they grew and refined their skills, and due to its ability to shift into different configurations, it would allow the young hatchlings to learn to fly and hone their skills. Avi had told him that even without the Quantum Drive, the ship maintained enough power to be active indefinitely and allow them to begin studying all they could about it. Endith and Komirri already had many ideas they were going to bring to Ben's attention in regards to reverse engineering much of what the City Ship could do. While they would never be able to duplicate the Quantum Drive units or some of the more complex systems, Endith had told him they could quite possibly improve the technology they already had in regards to the Jump Gates and engines on all of their ships. The avatar Avi would remain with the ship of course, insuring that it was kept in tip top shape, and helping their scholars to learn as much as they could about the knowledge stored within the many library rooms on the ship.

Watching Isabella now Martin could not deny the intense attraction and desire for her. He had fought it for some months, but the more her relationship with Dysea changed her, the more attractive she became. Physically she was equally as beautiful as any of the women in his life, her five foot seven frame shapely and firm. Isabella and those pureblood and turned vampires that resided within the Union were not the same as Yuri and her cohorts. They had reached beyond the inbred hate and distrust to build enough fortitude to make the decision to defect and come to the Union where they knew they could build a bright future. His feelings for her showed Martin that he too could reach beyond the fact that it was her kind that ordered the death of his grandfather and father. Her kind that had held and tortured his mother for so many years. Even knowing all that... Martin still found himself wanting to make Isabella his just as completely as he had made his other Queens his.

"You ok Skipper?" The voice spoke from the side. "You got that look in your eye."

Martin turned and saw Danny step slowly up in front of him. He reached up without fear and placed his large hand on Torma's thick neck stroking his smooth obsidian scales and Torma lowered his head and butted him gently in thanks.

Martin looked at the six foot five giant that was his Spartan brother.

No other knew Martin as well as Daniel Simpson... and in some respects he knew Martin better than even the women who shared his life and his bed. Whether by design or fortune itself, Walter's actions in bringing them together at such a young age had created a bond that would never be broken and would stretch through the centuries to come.

Martin chuckled. "Just thinking about the past and the future." He spoke.

Dan smiled. "We're gonna have some stories to tell our kids when they grow up that's for sure." Danny spoke.

Though he chose to use it as little as possible... Danny was very capable of Mindvoicing to others, and his time with Martin had elevated his skills to a Tier Six level even though it was not his first choice of communication.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *We will all have stories to tell our young ones.* Torma's voice filled their heads.

"You ever consider where we would be if the comet hadn't changed our lives Danny?" Martin asked.

Danny nodded. "Sometimes... we'd still be fighting one battle or the other... that much I don't doubt." He answered. "How long it would have taken us to discover what we truly are is up for grabs... but it would have happened sooner or later." Danny chuckled. "It's kind of cool to know I'm just over five hundred years old actually. Of course... you're the old bastard here. Three thousand plus years? Man, do your bones do the snap crackle and pop when you get up in the morning?"

Martin laughed with him and they heard Torma chortle within Mindvoice. "Well... unless someone is lucky enough to take us out... I'll be saying that about you in about three thousand years."

Dan nodded his head. "More than likely. Of course by then... considering what Anuk and Nayeca look like I'll probably have like thirty kids and wrinkles and gray hair. I swear... one of them just has to shake their booty at me and I'll jump them right there. Their ears drive me nutty!"

Torma nodded his massive head with a glint in his golden eyes. [Mindvoice Shielded] *I do know the feeling Daniel my friend. Isheeni does the same thing for me. She only need waggle her tail a few centimeters and I am ready.*

Danny looked at him and a grin. "Glad to know we aren't the only oversexed species in the universe."

“Listen to you two!” Martin spoke with a laugh. “A couple of horny bastards are all you are!”

[Mindvoice Shielded] *As if you should talk my Bonded Brother. Torma spoke smugly. You forget... I have heard the cries from the Queens when you take them... there are times when it deafens even Isheeni's trumpets!*

Danny nodded. “He’s got a point.”

Martin grinned and looked at Dan seriously now. “What do you make of this Kavalian invasion Danny?”

Danny shook his head. “I think it’s hard to tell right now. One the one hand it’s scary that they were able to hide this from us for so long in one respect.” He answered. “On the other hand, I certainly ain’t gonna lose no sleep at night cause they are smoking those bloodsucking bastards. No matter what anyone says.”

Martin nodded. “I find myself agreeing with you on that point.” He said. “When we get everything settled with what’s happening now Danny... we need to sit down just you and I. Like we did before Iran.”

Danny met his eyes. “Are you thinking Omega Teams Marty?”

Martin nodded. “Only you, Armetus, Torma and I will know about them. Only you and I will control them.”

Danny stepped closer. “A lot of people will shit their pants if they ever find out about them Martin. Especially Deia.”

Martin looked up as Torma turned his head and looked at him fully. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Torma?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *We have discussed this before Bonded One. I have seen what you have seen Martin. Felt what you have felt. While Daniel is the brother of your heart... I am the brother of your mind. If you are asking me if I still agree... the answer is a resounding yes.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Me too.* Danny spoke.

Martin nodded. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Then when we have dealt with this egg stealing wannabe asshole and things have calmed somewhat we'll sit down and make our plans. I want to get them in place and training quickly.*

The DT’s internal COM system crackled to life and For’mya’s voice filled the rear of the *STRIKER*.

“We will be reverting back to normal space in two minutes Martin Leonidas.” Her voice carried.

Martin nodded and patted Torma’s side before moving closer to where everyone sat on the benches, Danny moving back to sit between Anuk and Nayeca.

“Drop the four of us at the designated site For’mya.” Martin spoke after tapping the COM unit on his body armor. “Then proceed to where Tarifa and Isra are to drop everyone else off. We’ll be done by the time you return. Aricia is already waiting for us.” Gorgo’s head came up as she looked at her son.

“Understood.” For’mya answered.

Martin nodded and his eyes fell upon his mother. “Where are you going Martin?” She asked.

“Where are we going you mean?” Martin spoke turning to fully face her. “You, me, Riall and Torma. We have a stop to make before we continue on to Eden City.” Martin saw Riall’s eyes look at him confused.

Gorgo shook her head. “But where?”

“Thermopylae.” Martin replied softly.

THERMOPYLAE

Gorgo had never been to the vile place that had claimed the life of the man she had loved so strongly. Helen had spirited her away only six weeks after Leonidas’s death... within a week of Dymas returning to Sparta and telling them of his King’s last order. The clone had never requested or asked of Riall to come here to Thermopylae during their few weeks here after the Battle for Earth. She clung tightly to his arm as the light cloud of dirt and dust from the ocean sediment that had gathered through the centuries kicked up all around them. She turned her head to look around, as the heady scent of fresh pines and flowers flowed into her nostrils. She saw the towering pine trees behind where they stood and she turned slightly to gaze at them. She hadn’t touched this ground in over thirty centuries, yet somehow Gorgo knew she was home. It was as if her mind and body knew she was back in Greece where she had been born. The pine trees looked out of place in the huge expanse of had once been a mountain pass only fourteen meters wide. There were two rows of pine trees, neatly

planet and growing in the shape of a large rectangle shape. She could see the ivory and tan concrete structure that the pine trees protected, as well as the mountains in the distance. As she turned toward the north she could see the Gulf of Corinth in the distance a kilometer away.

Gorgo's eyes lifted to Riall's face. They had spent the last ten hours doing nothing but holding each other and talking. He had spent the first three hours weeping in her arms for what he perceived as the ultimate betrayal of her by his actions with the clone. It had taken her to admit that in his position she was quite sure it would have been no different. It was the reason they had kept her alive she had told him. To insure that their clone was as perfect as they could make her by subjecting Gorgo to the monthly procedure of removing her scent glands. She had told him she could not love him anymore than she already did. He was her entire life now and she was only as strong as he was. Gorgo had seen the life come back into his eyes then, and over the last hours, the confident Alpha male who had stolen her being slowly began to return.

"Riall... this is..." She began to speak.

Riall nodded slowly as he drew her tighter to him. The more hours that passed by, the healthier she was looking. Her hair was returning to its normal radiant sheen and her face was rapidly regaining the color and brilliance that he had fallen so in love with more than two thousand years ago. As he stared at her now, Riall vowed that he would put every ounce of himself into his time with her. He would relish and cherish every waking moment for she was his entire life.

"Yes my love." He answered. "This is Thermopylae. This is where..."

The loud odd sounding trumpet pulled their attention away for it was a sound neither had heard before. Gorgo's eyes grew a little wider when she saw the azure blue scaled dragon lying on its side while her son's dragon Torma madly used his snout to caress the prone dragon along the top of its neck and under its snout. The dragon on the ground was almost whimpering, its huge wings twitching madly and its talon equipped feet pawing at the dirt making deep furrows in the sediment. She caught a glimpse of legs on the ground behind the prone dragon and she shifted her body and saw Martin lying on top of the female beside the pair of dragons. Aricia's arms were wrapped almost completely around Martin's shoulders, her long legs curled around his waist and locked at the small of his back. Gorgo felt it then and she gasped at the staggering power within Mindvoice that flooded the area around them. Two crested black helmets were casually tossed to the side as Martin and Aricia shared a kiss that electrified the air around them. Gorgo couldn't help but smile and she tightened her grip on Riall's arm.

"I... I take it this is his Anome. His Soulmate Aricia." She spoke.

The first smile she had seen from Riall since she had returned split his normally stoic features and Gorgo's heart soared.

"Yes." He answered. "The blue dragon is Isheeni. She is Torma's mate and Aricia's Bonded Sister."

Gorgo turned back to them quartet as their antics continued. "Their dragons are bound to each other just as they are?" She asked.

Riall nodded. "It is one of the reasons their bonds go so deeply." He answered. "I do not know all of it... even the Feravomir can not answer it completely. She says because of the emotional state of Martin and Aricia at the time they bonded with Torma and Isheeni, it caused a much deeper connection between them to unfold because Torma and Isheeni were already mated. It is all very much beyond my level of understanding." He spoke with a smile. "However it is now something I will delve into more now that you... now that the true Gorgo I claimed as my mate has returned to me."

Gorgo met his eyes and wrapped her arms around his waist tightly, burying her face into his broad chest and feeling his aura sweep around her.

Aricia's body was burning not in desire, though she knew that would come soon enough, but in joy. Her Beloved's arms wrapped around her and his soft lips crushing hers as his aura wrapped around her like a blanket made her realize just how much she had missed him. This was the longest they had been apart since Enurrua, and it only reaffirmed to Aricia just how much they meant to each other. His tongue danced a delicious tango with hers as they lay on the dusty ground not caring that the sediment from the centuries old ocean floor was coating their black body armor with a light film of dust. Their helmets had barely cleared their heads before they were falling to the ground next to their Bonded Dragons, his lips upon hers before she could utter a sound. The moment she felt his aura embrace her Aricia melted.

It was only when they needed to finally breath that Martin pulled his lips from hers and lowered his head to firmly nuzzle her exposed throat. Aricia's head lolled back and her eyes changed to black ringed azure orbs as her wolf fangs extended and her hands gripped his head. She could feel his unique dual fangs nibbling at her skin, tasting and teasing her and she could only smile in delight at the wonderful sensations that caused to ripple through her.

Oh... oh my Beloved! She gasped within Mindvoice. *It... it has been too long!*

I have wanted to taste you since the day you left me Saaurano! His deep voice filled her mind sending shivers coursing through her. *I have missed you so much!*

Aricia smiled as she pulled his head tighter to her chest and she felt him bury his face into the crook of her shoulder and neck and inhale as deeply as she had ever felt him do. The why of his actions did not matter to her... that she was once more back in his arms was what mattered. She would discover the why of it when they were alone in their bed and she was swimming in his mind discovering all he had seen these last weeks, and sharing everything she had experienced with him.

Aricia pulled his head gently from her neck and met his beautiful yellow/gold orbs. *Androcles? For'mya? My mother?*

Martin nodded. *They are unhurt Saaurano.* He answered. *They have gone on ahead with Anja, Dysea and Bella. They will meet us later.*

I could feel and hear Dysea's joy Beloved. Aricia spoke with a smile as she traced his lips with her finger. *She will give you a strong and proud son. You did as I told you I see?*

He smiled as he nodded again. *She was very surprised.* He answered.

Aricia smiled. *Yes... I'm sure. Why didn't you tell her before?*

Martin chuckled and his face reddened slightly in embarrassment. *I didn't know until you told me.*

Aricia laughed out loud and kissed him hard. *Oh Beloved... sometimes I wonder about you! How did you survive before you claimed all of us?*

Martin chuckled and nuzzled her silky skin again. *I ask myself that every morning.* He spoke.

The same way Torma survived before he claimed me Aricia! Isheeni's blissful voice chimed into their heads. They turned to see Torma still rubbing the scales under her snout, her wings trembling in delight. *By the seat of their pants as Anja has said so often.*

Torma growled deep in his chest and shifted his rubbing to the back of her neck just behind the two horns protruding from her head.

Aricia laughed as Martin lifted himself from atop her and pulled her to her feet. *You had better tell him Isheeni my sister.*

Torma's head came up quickly. *Tell me what?*

Isheeni looked up at his massive head and felt desire sweep through her as she gazed upon his muscular obsidian body. *You are a father once more my mate.* Isheeni spoke softly. *I... I carry another clutch Torma.*

Torma's golden eyes exploded open wide and he lifted his head to release a trumpet that nearly deafened them. His powerful legs propelled him into the air and with three sweeps of his enormous wings he was spinning straight up into the blue sky roaring the entire way. He rolled over and dove for the earth not pulling up until he was twenty meters from the ground, and then he was tearing over the top of them singing his joy to the clouds. They watched him roll over onto his back as he sped across the landscape.

Come back down here you fool! Isheeni barked out as her azure eyes watched him with love. *You will injure yourself with such maneuvers so close to the ground fat one.*

Her voice caused him to execute a blistering turn and roll upright once more tearing towards them before flaring his enormous wings and landing gently only a few meters from her. Isheeni didn't hesitate and moved up to him immediately, her snout rubbing his broad chest and the underside of his long neck as his wings came down and partially folded around her.

Martin was smiling as he watched this and then he turned as he saw Riall leading his mother over to them. Gorgo's eyes were wide as she had heard every word they had spoken unshielded as they had been. Martin squeezed Aricia and she turned from the sight of Isheeni and Torma to look at Gorgo as Riall and she stopped next to them.

Martin turned to face his mother completely and his yellow/gold eyes were as bright as Gorgo had every seen them. "Mother... mother this is Aricia. She is my *Anome*."

Aricia left Martin's embrace and moved up in front of Gorgo, bowing her head to her in a show of respect and reverence as she held out her hands. Gorgo didn't hesitate and placed her hands within Aricia's, feeling the incredible power radiating from this very young female Alpha wolf. "Milady Gorgo... it is truly an honor for me to be able to stand before my Beloved's true mother." She spoke softly.

"A... a Queen of the Lycavorian Union does not bow to anyone young Aricia." Gorgo spoke. "Certainly not... certainly not to me."

Aricia lifted her head and looked at Gorgo. "As Queen I bow to those I consider my betters. And whom one day I hope to emulate."

Gorgo couldn't help the tears that came to her eyes and she looked at Martin. "How is it you were able to convince five breathtakingly beautiful and extremely intelligent females to fall in love with you my son?" She asked with a small smile.

Martin grinned as Aricia laughed. "When I figure that out mother... I'll let you know. Personally I think they are all crazy."

Gorgo laughed as well and couldn't help but draw Aricia into her embrace and drink in her lavender scent. As Aricia pulled away she looked into those smiling azure orbs, now back to normal. Her eyes grew wider when the azure blue scaled dragon moved closer and stuck her huge head just above Aricia's shoulder and gazed at her with almost identical colored eyes.

As my Bonded Sister has so eloquently spoken Milady Gorgo... it is a true honor to be able to stand before the mother of our King's heart. Isheeni spoke. *I hope my brute of a mate did not injure you when you flew with him. He can be rather overbearing at times.*

Gorgo couldn't help but chuckle at the dragon's words within Mindvoice. The obvious intelligence of these wonderful beasts continued to amaze her. "You are Isheeni I assume?" Gorgo asked not yet trusting her strength within Mindvoice to do anything more than listen.

Isheeni nodded that huge head. *Yes. I am Aricia's bonded sister.*

Gorgo nodded her head slowly. "It is my honor to meet you Isheeni." Gorgo spoke softly. "Though... though I don't know why you have brought me here Martin." She asked turning to look at him. "This... this is where they took your father. Why... why have you brought me here?"

Martin stepped up to her slowly and took her hands. "I want to show you something." He said.

"I have no desire to see some petty monument erected by those who allowed your father to come to this place and die needlessly!" Gorgo snapped.

Martin reached up and stroked his mother's cheek. "You need to see this mother. You need to see what father's sacrifice has come to mean."

"Martin I..."

"Trust me." Martin said as he started to pull her towards the stand of pine trees behind them.

It did not take them long to move around the edge of the pine trees surrounding the monument. The effect on Gorgo was instantaneous and telling as her eyes flew open at what she saw.

The immaculately positioned thick pine trees hid the monument from the opposite side, but as they moved around it was entirely open except for the waste high row of dark green and finely trimmed shrubbery that ran down the length of the front of the monument. The bronze statue of her former husband and mate stood on a pillar of white marble and gleamed in the rising sunlight. He carried his shield in his left hand, his right arm drawn back as if to throw his spear as Gorgo had witnessed so many times in the past. Gorgo was so enthralled with the massive monument she did not notice as Martin motioned for everyone to remain back slightly and he continued after his mother as she kept walking, her eyes never leaving the statue. Tears clouded her eyes now as she moved to stand just under the towering bronze statue in front of the white marble and bronze trimmed elevated block.

The metope on either side of the pillar depicted terrible battle scenes and she could easily distinguish the Spartans from the Persians by their armor and crested helmets. She looked at the two white marble statues on either end of the monument her head turning to once more gaze at the statue. She saw the inscription and tilted her head slightly.

"Come and take them." Martin's voice filled her head. "Father's words to Xerxes military messenger when they were ordered to lay down their arms and surrender." Gorgo felt his hands take her shoulders as he stood behind her, the tears flowing like a river now. "The two marble statues on the ends are meant to represent

the river Evrotas and Mount Taygetos. The two most famous landmarks of our city Mother. His remains are interned here... along with the remains of my son's namesake and the one who set me on this path."

Martin felt his mother weeping softly and her hands came up to cover his and squeeze them tightly.

"This was all built many years ago." Martin spoke. "Even before the passing of the comet that brought me into the future. Our people come here every week and see to its condition and upkeep. The flowers were planted by children from Sparta and from Athens. The graduation ceremonies for our Spartans who complete their Agoge are held here." Martin squeezed her shoulders. "Look at this mother..." He said tugging her back to look at the smaller marble pillar behind them. He moved her around in front of it. "This was not part of the original monument. This was added six months ago mother. It was constructed by humans and elves after our true nature had been revealed. After it became known what my father really died fighting for that day."

Gorgo looked at the elevated bronze plaque and felt her tears come even harder now as Martin's voice filled her mind within Mindvoice.

***Wait. There's no mountain too great.
Hear these words and have faith.
Have faith.*

Aricia's soft musical tones now chimed in as she stepped up next to Martin, her arms wrapping around his waist.

He lives in you. He lives in me.

He watches over everything we see. Torma's deep voice echoed.

Into the future. Into the truth. Isheeni spoke now.

In your reflection he lives in you. Riall's voice finished close to her ear as he came up behind her and wrapped his arms around her shoulders and pulled her close.

Martin turned and looked at his mother as he held Aricia close to him, his own eyes moist. "My father did not die needlessly mother. Your mate did not die needlessly. You left Earth with Riall mother... but father's name has lived on for over three thousand years on this planet. Here on Earth. His deeds and those of our people next to him have never been forgotten. They have survived through the history of every civilization since he died here that day. His name is spoken with awe. Even more so now since it has been revealed what has been going on for thousands of years. Since it has become known what his actions here have done. He told you to find a good man and have good strong children mother. You have done that in Riall." Martin looked at the statue. "Whatever the High Coven has done to us is now in the past. We must never forget it... but we must leave it where it belongs. In the past. Riall..."

Riall turned to look at him as Gorgo pressed back against him even harder. "Milord?"

Martin turned his yellow/gold eyes on Riall. "Swear to me this day... under the eyes of my father. Swear to me that you will let go of whatever shame you may hold over what has happened. Swear to me that you will love my mother just as intensely as you have loved her all these years. Swear this to me... so that we can move into the future and continue the legacy my father left to us."

Riall held Martin's gaze for a few seconds and then turned his head to look at the statue of Leonidas. He drew himself up to his full height and squeezed Gorgo even tighter against him.

"I swear this to you King Leonidas. I swear this to you on the Spartan heart that pumps inside my chest!"

Gorgo broke down now and turned in Riall's arms so that she could wrap her arms around him and press her face to his chest. Martin nodded and his own arms tightened around Aricia as Torma and Isheeni trumpeted out their voices as well, their roars echoing across the landscape.

"So be it." Martin spoke softly. "It's time now."

Gorgo pulled her tear stained face from Riall's chest and looked at her son. She watched Aricia smile and released her grasp of Martin's waist and move quickly to where Isheeni settled to the ground. "Time... time for what my son?" Gorgo asked.

Martin looked at Riall. "Riall... you can ride with Aricia." He spoke as Torma settled to the ground next to him as well.

Riall didn't question him and began moving to where Aricia was settling into her saddle. Martin stepped up to his mother and picked her up easily, turning and depositing her in the saddle on Torma's back. He climbed up himself and settled behind her on the saddle as the dragon armor gripped their legs and held them in place. Gorgo turned and looked at him.

"Martin... what... what are you doing?" She asked whipping the tears from her eyes.

Martin smiled. "I have a few tasks to complete... but before I do that... I'm going to keep the promise I made to my father."

"What... what do you mean?"

"I'm going to take you home mother." Martin said.

"Home?"

Martin nodded. "Yes. I'm going to take you home to Sparta. Torma my brother! Go!"

Torma roared in approval and with a powerful push from his legs he propelled them into the sky.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

EARTH SPARTA

Gorgo remembered nothing from her ride on Torma as they spirited her away from that prison on Lycavore. This ride however she would remember for the rest of her life. The moment they had climbed into the sky, Martin had slipped his hand under hers as she held a death grip on the two eight inch long spikes protruding from his shoulders. Her eyes were tightly shut, and for the first few seconds she could feel the air whipping against her skin. The moment her son slid his hand under hers that stopped and Gorgo's eyes sprang open as she felt the tingle along her arms and legs. She watched amazed as the light blue psychic shield that encompassed Martin and Torma when they flew now stretched out to extend around her as well. Martin's arm slid around her waist and he brought his helmeted head next to her ear. Her hands dug into his arm as she noticed he had somehow retrieved his helmet and now the multicolored crested plume, the color of each of his Queen's hair Gorgo realized, moved only when he moved his head.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Do not fear mother. He spoke to her. You will not fall.*

Gorgo's head turned slightly when she saw the azure blue scaled dragon she now knew as Isheeni appear next to them. Riall clung to Aricia's waist his hands on her hips, but he sat high behind her, his eyes taking in all around them and a smile split his face as he glanced at her from across the distance. Aricia had also retrieved her helmet, and her hands simply rested on her thighs as they flew. The dragon armor had secured hers and Riall's legs completely and Aricia had no fear of flying or falling. She had begun flying on Isheeni's back long before they ever developed the saddles they now used.

Gorgo realized then that Martin was reinforcing her own Mindvoice abilities when he spoke to her because she was still weak, and she could feel the powerful tingling sensation in her head. She squeezed his arm tighter. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Riall... he has done this before I take it?*

Martin nodded his head as Torma and Isheeni leveled off at ten thousand feet above the ground and turned south. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Yes. He has ridden on Isheeni and Torma most of all, a few other dragons as well.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *My son...*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Do you love him mother?* Martin asked interrupting her.

Gorgo didn't hesitate and nodded her head. [Mindvoice Shielded] *As... as much as I once loved your father my son. Perhaps... perhaps even more.*

Gorgo didn't see Martin smile under his helmet. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Those are words that my father has waited a long time to hear mother. He will be very happy you honored his wishes for you. And now he can rest in eternal peace.* Martin spoke.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *You... you speak as if you have talked to him Martin.* Gorgo said turning her head slightly to look at the side of his helmeted head. *As if you continue to talk to him. Have you? Do you?*

Martin nodded slowly. [Mindvoice Shielded] *The night I discovered who and what I truly am he appeared to me there at Thermopylae. Melda Min was with me... and Dymas. A few others saw him as well. We don't speak of it much because it is a special moment that we don't want to share. I made him a silent promise that night, before his spirit drifted away. I told him I would bring you home to the city where you belonged. The clone... I tried to get her to come to Thermopylae... to do more within Sparta... but she refused. I thought it was because she felt shame at having a new mate, I should have known better. I will not make that mistake again and I'm going to keep my promise to my father now. As for continuing to talk to him? He is my father... and he will always talk to me in my dreams. We will arrive in Sparta as soon as we meet my friends.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Your friends?*

Martin nodded with a smile. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Three hundred friends to be exact. With one new addition to the ranks of Bonded Pairs. Though I should call them a Bonded Trio.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *What do you mean?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Look all around you mother. What do you see?*

Gorgo turned her head to gaze out across the expanse of the blue sky all around her. They had risen above the sparse cloud cover, the sun bright and beautiful. Gorgo couldn't help the smile that now curled on her face. It was truly amazing to have this much freedom and not be inside some sort of transport. [Mindvoice Shielded] *I see the dawning of a new day my son. Bright sunshine and blue skies.*

Martin nodded. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Now look closer mother. All around you.*

Gorgo did as he told her but this time she looked up as well as to the sides. She turned her eyes downward lastly. Her eyes narrowed when she saw shadows racing by along the ground far beneath them. Dozens of shadows. Hundreds of shadows. Her eyes grew wider as she realized these shadows were keeping pace with them somehow and they were getting larger.

Isra and Andreus were the first to break through the flimsy clouds beneath them, their matte black helmets adorned with crimson streaks in various sizes and designs. Andreus had sent for a *STRIKER* the moment they had established orbit over Earth. Lohana had picked him and Doranthe up within the hour and taken him to where the other members of Mjolnir's Hand had gathered in the valley next to Thermopylae. They had spent the last three hours securing and caring for the eggs as they were loaded into the Type I Dragon Transport, but as soon as word reached them that their King had entered the system in the strange but wondrous ship, they got the message from Andreus to gather. He knew what the King wanted for they had talked of it before leaving the City Ship.

As Aelnala and Doranthe broke the cloud cover completely Gorgo saw the carmine red scaled dragon rising next, staying very close to the dirty yellow dragon. This dragon carried two upon its back, and from the way their uniforms fit, they appeared to be female. Then Gorgo's eyes grew even wider as from all around her they raised above the clouds. Dragons of every color and size, though none close to the size of Torma. All of them carried a single rider, and all of them wore the body armor of a Lycavorian Spartan, their crimson capes whipping slightly in the wind. Gorgo swept her eyes from left to right, the blue sky now filled with dragons and riders in every direction.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Son vada carians!* Gorgo gasped out. (By the gods)

Martin chuckled within their connection. *Pretty amazing isn't it Mother?* He spoke now no longer shielding their conversation. *This is one of the things that father's sacrifice has led me too. It brought us together with them. Creatures from our legends... creatures that are not legends at all. What you see around you mother... they are Mjolnir's Hand. I formed them once Torma and Isheeni came into our lives. Three hundred of them. Never one more... never one less. There will be others in the future I'm sure... but this unit... this group... their number will never exceed three hundred.*

Gorgo turned her head. *Like the three hundred that...*

Martin nodded slowly. *To honor all those who fell at Thermopylae. Not just my father. They are the finest trained of all Spartans within the Union. We call them Bonded Pairs for their Mindvoice abilities allow them to see, feel and know all that their partner knows.*

Something my kind thanks our own gods for everyday. Torma's voice echoed softly.

Isra and Andreus drifted up effortlessly next to Martin and Torma, Aelnala and Doranthe keeping pace easily for Torma was not traveling at even half the speed he was capable of.

Milord... I contacted Panos and Dilios. They are standing ready and all is prepared. The city is turning out in droves sire. Andreus spoke with some humor. *They are releasing the children from schools and closing shops across the city even as we speak.*

Martin nodded. *Mother you haven't met Andreus. He is Aricia's brother, a section leader of Mjolnir's Hand and my Captain.*

Gorgo turned and saw the large man on her right nod in her direction from the back of his dragon. He rode as Aricia did, his hands resting on his thighs. As Gorgo looked around further she saw that many of the riders were almost casual as they flew along ten thousand feet above the ground, as if they had no fear.

It is an honor I will carry with me and pass to my children Lady Gorgo. Andreus spoke warmly drawing Gorgo's eyes back to his.

On my left is Isra. He is the other Section Leader and a very close friend. The mate of two that I call sister. That is them slightly lower than us on the red dragon. They are elves mother, and without them... it's quite possible we would not be here now. Martin spoke.

Gorgo turned and saw the man nod towards her and Gorgo swore he had violet colored eyes.

An honor it is Lady Gorgo. Isra spoke just as warmly as Andreus.

Gorgo turned slightly and looked at Martin. *Panos... Panos and Dilios still live Martin?* She asked. *After all these years?*

Martin nodded. *Dilios leads the Spartan Senate and I appointed Panos Governor of Sparta last year. We have remained mostly hidden from everyone's eyes as we trained in the last year. Many still do not believe Torma and his kind exist. Isra was able to dispel some of that when he came to Earth many weeks ago, but it is time I put that myth to rest forever. It is time our people know what is out there among the stars. They have seen some of it with those who are helping to rebuild Earth... but now I will show them that dragons do indeed exist. And I can think of no better day to reveal this then the day I bring the Queen of Sparta home.*

Martin... Martin I am not a Queen any longer. Gorgo stated. *I forfeited that title willingly when I left Earth with you in my womb. I do not deserve to be called a Queen of Sparta.*

Gorgo... Aricia's voice broke in and Gorgo turned to look at her on Isheeni's back. Riall still sat high in the saddle behind her, unafraid and proud and his eyes never leaving her face. In Sparta Gorgo... you will always be a Queen.

Roluth was gazing at Torma from slightly below him, marveling in the massive muscular body and the ease with which his wings propelled them along. Roluth was taking two sweeps of his wings for every one of the monstrous obsidian dragon. He allowed his rust colored eyes to traverse Torma's body, all the way back to the lethal looking mace like tail.

Roluth eased up next to Aelnala as she slipped back into position. She had told him to stay very close to her as he was not used to flying in the formations they would use, but Isra insisted that because of who Tarifa and Aihola were and how they were viewed like sisters by Martin, they should be present for this.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Aelnala?*

Roluth saw her honey colored eyes turn to him as he reached out within the shielded conversation.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Roluth... what is wrong?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Aelnala... that is... that is Isheeni's mate?*

Aelnala chuckled within the connection. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Yes Roluth... that is Torma. You need not be worried young one.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Aelnala... I... I plunged on his mate! He is... he is large enough to mash me like an insect.*

Aelnala laughed again. [Mindvoice Shielded] *You will be surprised at how Torma treats you young Roluth. You will have no fears after this day. Just stay close to me and do as Isra and I say.*

Martin turned his head to the side. *Dragons and Spartans of Mjolnir's Hand!* He shouted within Mindvoice. Gorgo couldn't help but shudder at the power she felt from within her son. *My comrades! Join with me and let us take my mother home!*

Three hundred plus trumpets and roars of approval echoed across the sky in agreement and all of them followed their King as he dove for the ground.

SPARTA

Panos and Dilios walked quickly down a crowded Paleologos Street, the main corridor through all of Sparta. The street still retained the two lanes of Lifter Traffic moving in either direction as well as the many towering pine tress and palm trees that lined the six meter wide median. The two *Durcunusaan* soldiers assigned to them walked behind them while a half dozen Spartans led them along the street. It was crowded now as Panos had been on the City Channel and reported that King Leonidas was returning to Sparta with a surprise for all the citizens. Schools and shops were closed early and people were flocking to the streets in the hopes of catching a glimpse of the son of the King they all so loved, who himself was now King of Sparta.

"This is incredible Panos!" Dilios spoke softly.

Panos nodded. "It must remain between us for now my friend." He spoke softly. "The King will tell the Senate when the time is right. Let them believe that Lady Gorgo has finally surrendered to her son's requests to return as a former Queen. Martin will explain to them how it is at a later time."

"And this... this request from Armetus?" Dilios asked as he handed the data pad back to him.

"I found it odd as well." Panos answered. "It will take some doing... but we have most of the history cubes he is asking for in storage. He will arrive in three days to review them. Martin has ordered a purge of all Intelligence assets on Apo Prime and within the entire breadth of the Union. Armetus said he will need to insure that is proceeding according to his plans before coming here."

Dilios nodded. "My second assistant is somewhat of a history professor. I will have her begin pulling all the necessary cubes once the King has arrived."

Panos nodded. "We are not alone anymore my friend. There is an entire galaxy out there."

Dilios looked at him. "Perhaps... but one day... I believe one day Sparta will be the center of it all. The King... Martin... you can see the love for this city that resides in his eyes whenever he is here. The Queens as well."

Panos matched his smile. "Yes... I feel that way as well. And now that Gorgo will return as a former beloved Queen..."

"That is why he went to Thermopylae first isn't it? To allow her to see what Leonidas rests?" Dilios asked.

Panos nodded. "Yes."

"Andrus didn't tell you how they would be arriving Panos?" Dilios asked.

Panos shook his head. "No. All Andrus said was look to the north. They would be coming from Thermopylae."

The two men stopped in the street and looked at each other. Panos had been too old to fight at Thermopylae and instead his son Dymas had gone as one of Leonidas's Captains. Upon his return and carrying the last orders from Leonidas, he had been named Guardian of the Line. Dilios was the son of a Spartan who fell at Thermopylae, and nothing was more enjoyable for him than to attend the graduation ceremonies at the monument there. It brought him closer to his father and his memories.

"What is it Panos?" Dilios asked.

"The only landing pads large enough for a *STRIKER DT* are on the southern edge of the city. The newer ones on the west are not yet finished." Panos spoke slowly. "Andrus told me to look to the North and have the amphitheater by the North Gate ready."

"Ready for what?" Dilios asked shaking his head. "The amphitheater holds nearly half the city if you include the grassy sections along the back of the acropolis." Dilios's eyes grew wide and he looked at Panos. "Panos... Panos my friend... he's not arriving on a *STRIKER!*"

Panos met Dilios's gaze. "No... he's arriving on Torma! That's why they are coming from the north instead of sweeping around to the south! They will come in over the mountains!"

Dilios grabbed his arm. "Hurry my friend! The Acropolis is the best place to view such an event!"

It took them nearly twenty minutes to run north to the ancient Northern Gate and the amphitheater that encompassed the area by the gate. It was near the gate of the old city and their love of history and their culture did not allow them to tear down the crumbling ruins. They were content to allow time to do that. The modern wall that had surrounded Sparta for so long was in the process of being torn down as the city expanded even further than it had over the last centuries. So many new men and women and even alien species were moving to Sparta, not only because it was the home of their King... but because it was a beautiful city and had not been touched by the ravages of war with the High Coven. The mountains were majestic, surrounding the city as they did, and there was plenty of room to expand the borders of the city. The Evrotas River now flowed within the city limits where it had once flowed alongside the city walls, and was used to feed the many hundreds of flower gardens that filled the parks and wide open areas within the city.

Thousands of men, women and children had already gathered, most of them parting for Panos and Dilios to slow to a sedate walk and move toward the amphitheater stage. The Northern end of the city was much more open; many of the buildings less than ten stories high and it retained much of the architecture from just before the passing of the comet, giving way to the name Old Sparta District. As they climbed onto the stage they could see that the streets and roads leading this way were crammed with people. Since the Lifter Traffic was limited now to the tremendous circle around the outskirts of the city, no one feared being run over by an overzealous operator. Sparta did not have the massive Lifter corridors like Tuya on Apo Prime and other major cities within the Union. Those Lifter corridors could extend upwards for hundreds of stories into the clouds, making it easier to move among the towering four and five hundred story glass and metal towers that decorated many of the modern cities off world. Here they wanted to keep the pace slow and sedate and the majority of the city interior was still only accessible by foot or small one and two person short range Lifters.

Everyone was looking to the sky hoping to see their King's *STRIKER* swoop over the city as he had done when he returned for the birth of his son. Panos and Dilios knew otherwise now and their eyes were glued to the top of the mountain range to the north, waiting to see the small black dot that would be Torma come soaring over the top of the mountains that had guarded their city for centuries.

Panos saw it first... and he pointed to the dot while nudging Dilios. "There!" He spoke.

Dilios turned and word began passing among the people nearest to them that had heard Panos. Yet as they watched... another dot appeared... and then another... and then two more. Three more. Four more... until the shapes of hundreds of dragons were filling the sky in the distance, speeding across the ground beneath them at only a hundred meters height.

"He... he has brought... he has brought all of *Mjolnir's Hand*!" Panos gasped out in disbelief.

"How... but how! We did not know they were here!" Dilios echoed.

"Our eyes do not play tricks on us my friend!" Panos barked. "What do you see filling the sky before us?"

"Dragons!" Dilios answered.

That one word began to filter back through the throngs of men and women who were gathered like a wave rippling across the surface of a lake. Father's lifted their smaller children onto their shoulders; children began to scream out in awe, some even scrambling to gain higher perches to see what they all thought they would never see. They could no longer deny the rumors and stories of the secret unit their King had formed. Flying directly at them, their trumpets and roars now filtering to the thousands gathered were hundreds of the creatures they thought could not possibly exist.

And then blasting over the northern gate with roars that shook their bodies and echoed among the valleys of buildings, so close to the ground that they were, the Bonded Pairs of *Mjolnir's Hand* announced their existence to their fellow Spartans. The cheers began far in the back and quickly rose to a crescendo of screams of wonder and joy as the Bonded Pairs of *Mjolnir's Hand* did spins and loops as they spread out all over the city beneath them waving to the gathered people below who looked up in awe. The roars of approval grew louder as first one, then a second and finally, all of the dragons began to sweep in low over the city, spreading out even more and landing among the throngs of citizens who scrambled back to allow room for the massive beasts that before this day lived only in their childhood stories.

Those closest to Panos and Dilios heard the deafening roar and were whirling around as Torma dropped from above like a rock only to flare his enormous wings and settle lightly to the ground. He bellowed out his greeting to the people of Sparta as loud as he could and his chest swelled with pride as not one single person ran for cover and they simply stood there and began screaming out their joy and clapping. Panos and Dilios moved quickly to where Martin was climbing from the saddle, just as Isheeni and Roluth touched down with Aelnala.

Martin turned and looked at his mother as Torma settled completely to the soft grass, her eyes wide as she gazed out over the people and city she had not seen in three thousand years. He smiled at her expression and held out his hands for her.

“Welcome home mother.” He said softly as he held her waist and set her down gently on the grass.

Gorgo turned as Panos and Dilios stepped up and her eyes grew wide as her name began to echo among the thousands gathered. “Panos! Dilios!” Gorgo gasped as she saw the men move quickly up to stand in front of her.

Panos was beaming as he held out his hands and took hers in his. “Lady Gorgo...” He spoke gently. “It is... it is our honor to finally welcome you home. Where you belong.”

Gorgo looked at Riall as he came to stand beside her, her eyes flooded with tears. Her face was beaming and then she was hugging both Panos and Dilios tightly, only serving to make the people cheer louder. Gorgo pulled back and looked at them, tears streaming down her face.

“I... I have always imagined this day.” She gasped as she looked at them.

Panos wouldn't release her hands and his eyes were moist as he looked at Martin and then back to Gorgo. “Then let us... let us make your imagination come true.” He looked at Martin quickly. “Milord... with your permission... Dilios and I would... we would be honored if you allowed us to escort your mother through the city.”

Martin nodded as he pulled Aricia close to him. “My mother doesn't need my permission to walk among the streets of the city she had a part in building.” He said. Gorgo turned quickly and looked at him with wide eyes. Martin smiled at her expression. “I have things I need to do mother. I'm learning quickly as my father no doubt did... there is more to being King than just giving orders.”

Aricia removed her helmet quickly and handed it to Martin. “You don't need me for what you have to do Beloved.” She spoke gazing at him with adoring eyes of her own. “With your mother's permission I would like to walk with her.”

Gorgo nodded her head quickly and Aricia moved up to her and took her hands as they turned and moved down towards the cheering crowd, Panos and Dilios with them. Martin turned as Isra walked up to him, Tarifa and Aihola on either side of him.

“Andreus?” Martin asked.

“He has gone on ahead to the villa to prepare the security arrangements.” Isra answered. “Kmyla and his son are already there with Dasha and Androcles.”

Martin nodded and looked at Tarifa and Aihola. He grinned as he stepped forward and swept both of them into his arms, squeezing them tightly. Tarifa and Aihola were beaming as they hugged him back and then he put them down.

“The eggs?” He asked.

Tarifa squeezed his hand. “They are safe Martin. All of them.” She answered. “One of them even hatched as they were bringing them to the city. We helped Mjolnir's Hand give all of them brief medical inspections and then they were loaded onto the ship to keep them safe and secure in the smaller pens until Anja arrived.”

“The three of you have done a wondrous thing.” Martin said. “Arzoal is beside herself with pride at what you have accomplished here.”

“Word is spreading quickly of this ship you arrived on.” Aihola spoke. “Will we get a chance to see it?”

Martin nodded. “The ship's Avatar and Komirri most likely already have it down on Sardinia. That will be its home from now on. As soon as we finish our tasks we can all go there.” Martin's nose wrinkled and he inhaled deeply close to Tarifa and then Aihola his eyes getting a little bigger. He stepped back a little his eyes wide.

“Both of you?” He exclaimed. Tarifa turned a bright shade of red while Aihola could not meet his eyes. He looked at Isra who wore a sheepish expression. “You don’t waste any time Isra my brother. What were you... shooting silver bullets?”

Tarifa and Aihola both punched him as hard as they could in the chest for they knew the meaning of that ancient Earth slang. “Stop it you brute!” Aihola spat unable to keep the smile from her face.

“You should talk Martin.” Isra said with a grin of a male wolf who knew he had done well. “Anja *and* Dysea?”

Tarifa and Aihola looked at Martin now. “Both of them?” They exclaimed together with huge smiles.

Martin couldn’t help but laugh and he pulled them into another embrace while reaching out to Isra, who took his forearm. “And this Maruad character?” He asked when he released them again.

“Lynwe is keeping him company in the Eden City detention center.” Tarifa replied with a smile. “Aricia certainly bested him. It took Doctor Olyne nearly two hours to repair the damage she did.”

Martin chuckled. “She does have a temper.”

“What... what will you do with him Martin?” Aihola asked.

“I haven’t decided yet.” Martin answered honestly. “I wanted to get my mother home and back among those who love her. So much has happened in the last few weeks and I need a day or so to wrap my hands around it again.”

“The High Coven?” Isra asked.

Martin nodded. “Last report I got from Armetus says they were getting their asses handed to them on a platter.” He answered. “The bigger question mark is these Kavalians. How many did we capture?”

“Just over a hundred.” Isra replied. “Mainly due in part to the fact they were petrified of Isheeni and Roluth. Many of them simply gave up.”

Martin tilted his head. “That’s interesting.” He spoke. He looked at Tarifa and Aihola. “And this Roluth is the one you have bonded too huh?”

“Martin... it is... it is utterly...” Tarifa spoke.

“Amazing.” Aihola finished.

Martin nodded. “Yes it is.” He replied. He turned to see Torma lying on the ground, Isheeni nestled beside him as dozens of men, women and children were crowded around them both, reaching out to touch them.

Torma... when you and Isheeni are done basking in the attention... I’ll meet you back at the villa. Martin spoke.

Torma turned his massive head and looked at him. *Martin... this is... this is inspiring.*

Martin nodded. *Enjoy it my brother. The walk will do me good.*

Thank you Martin. Isheeni’s voice broke in.

Torma’s head turned and gazed at the carmine red scales of the young dragon as Martin led Tarifa, Aihola and Isra down into the crowd heading for the villa.

Roluth had been watching Torma since they landed, marveling at how so completely graceful the mammoth dragon was. So majestic. He had not even settled to the ground fully. He turned away quickly however, when Torma’s golden eyes fell on him.

Young Roluth! Torma spoke firmly. Roluth’s rust colored eyes half lifted to gaze at him. He had no desire to anger this dragon, and he knew now how ridiculous his statement that he would fight him for Isheeni now was. It was completely obvious as Isheeni leaned up against him affectionately and Torma’s long tail absently stroked her own shorter one. *Do you intend to take to the skies without your bonded ones?*

Roluth heard Aelnala chuckle softly. *No.* He answered.

You fought beside my mate young Roluth. Torma spoke. *Fought bravely and without fear. Do not remain alone. Come sit and enjoy the attention beside us.*

Roluth watched as Aelnala moved around him and settled next to Isheeni on the soft grass. He saw Isheeni’s head extend over Torma’s back and rest above his wings. *Isheeni... you did not...?*

I told him young Roluth. I keep nothing from my mate. Isheeni answered. *As Aelnala and I have told you before Roluth... you are young and you have yet to learn the ways of our kind. You have learned much in your time with Isra... and you fought bravely. You need not worry Roluth. If my mate intended any harm... you would already be on the ground under his talons. You will always welcome with us Roluth. Come sit... you have flown*

more this day than at any other time in your life and I imagine you are tired. Come rest and bask in the attention.

Torma met his eyes again. *I have found it is best not to argue with her.* He spoke with humor in his voice. *You deserve this more than us. Come Roluth.*

If a dragon could smile, Roluth's would have stretched the length of the field before him. He moved deftly up beside Torma's huge bulk and settled to the ground next to him.

USU OZEIB 7

Yuri stood in the airlock tunnel on the orbiting station with her mother and could only gaze in disbelief at the condition of the *BLOOD JUSTICE* as repair crews began to swarm over her hull. There were huge chunks of hull missing, carbon scoring dotting the superstructure wherever she looked. The elegantly curved bow of the ship was caved in, open to space on one side, the sensor array fin and dome torn completely off. She could see the shimmer from force fields holding the void of space back and she glanced at her mother quickly, worry etched all over her face.

"Mother?" She gasped softly. "What... what if I have lost him? They were supposed to leave, not stay and fight!"

Aikiro reached out and took her hand. "Be strong Yuri." She spoke turning as Tesand approached from the opposite end of the tunnel. He walked quickly up to them with the pad in his hand.

The airlock hatch opened then and they both turned as three men came walking out. Yuri's hands went to her mouth as she saw him.

"I don't care what they have to do!" Moran spat. "You tell the dock engineer to get the hull fixed and reload the missile bays! We can do without the lateral sensor array until we can do a more complete repair on her at a proper shipyard! We need to be ready to move in..." Moran turned when he heard the intake of breath and he saw Yuri and her mother in front of him.

Yuri stared at him aghast. The wound on the side of his head was still oozing, the entire neck and shoulder of his uniform soaked in blood. His left arm was red and the uniform sleeve burned through to his skin. There were several smaller lacerations on his face that had stopped bleeding and there was a nasty gash above his left eye that had caused his eye to swell almost completely shut, turning his skin black and blue with bruising. Moran looked at Yuri and saw the horror in her eyes, as well as the surprise in Aikiro's eyes as well. She stepped forward.

"Commander Moran... what... what happened?" She asked softly.

"Another Fleet Group came out of reversion just after our transmission was jammed." Moran replied. "They hit us pretty hard. I tried to get as many of our ships out of there as I could... but there were too many of them. Only... only seven made it back with me."

Our ships.

Aikiro did not miss that statement and more than anything this convinced her of what she wanted to do. Perhaps not right now... but most definitely in the near future. "Do you feel up to giving us a full briefing? We need to know what is happening." Aikiro spoke.

Moran nodded immediately. "I need a few minutes to get cleaned up." He answered.

"You need to see a medical officer." Aikiro spoke firmly. "Why did you not heal yourself with the blood you have onboard?"

"I had men who needed it more than me." Moran answered.

Aikiro tilted her head slightly at this and stared at him. "See to your injuries Commander Moran. Then get yourself cleaned up and report to the Headquarters building in three hours." Aikiro said.

"As you order Lady Aikiro." He spoke.

Aikiro looked at Yuri. "I will not need your assistance until then as well daughter. Tesand and I have some things to discuss."

Yuri nodded slowly. "Yes mother."

Aikiro looked at Tesand. "Admiral Tesand, let us look over the reports you have brought from the Headquarters building."

Tesand nodded and motioned down the corridor with his hand, falling in behind and to Aikiro's right as she moved for the tunnel entrance.

Yuri looked at Moran, her eyes never leaving his face as he watched her mother and the Admiral walk down the corridor. She watched as his eyes returned to her, or at least what little of his injured eye he could see out of.

"I will report to the medical center and shower Princess." Moran spoke softly. "You do not need to wait for me. I know the way to the Headquarters building."

Yuri stared at him... almost feeling the pain in his words and suddenly realizing the pain was hers as well. This man had stood beside her for so long... loved her completely for so long... and her words to him must have been like a knife in his chest.

"I... I thought I had lost you Robert." Yuri spoke in a whisper meeting his good eye.

"I lost a lot of good men Princess." He spoke his voice still holding an edge of formality to it.

Yuri moved closer to him unsure of what to say or do. The emotions sweeping through her were not anything she had felt before. She looked up into his face, reaching up tentatively with her hand to caress his face, being careful not to touch the injuries. She saw his eyes close slowly as she touched his skin. "Robert... Robert I... my words to you were not... they were cruel and not true." She shook her head slowly. "I have never felt..."

Moran opened his eyes. "Yuri... do you love me?" He asked.

Yuri looked into his eyes. "Yes." She answered without hesitation.

Yuri gasped loudly when his arms wrapped around her and crushed her body to his. She hissed in pain when his fangs bit deeply into her neck, and then her arms were wrapping around his head tightly, holding him in that position as he fed on her blood. Her eyes glazed over and she smiled... her own fangs extending as the delicious sensations raced through her. He lifted her off the floor and pressed her back against the wall of the tunnel, Yuri pulling his head tighter to her neck with one hand as the other gripped his back through his uniform shirt and held him there, her legs wrapping around his waist.

Aikiro stopped at the entrance to the airlock tunnel ring and turned back, seeing Moran holding her daughter pressed against the interior of the docking ring, and obviously feeding on her blood as she tried to pull him closer her face a mask of bliss. She looked at Tesand as they stepped into the next section. "You were going to say something before the Commander exited Tesand?" She spoke.

Tesand held out the data pad. "I asked the Chief Engineer for a damage assessment." He answered evenly.

Aikiro looked at the pad briefly. "Tesand... I know nothing about this sort of thing." She spoke looking at him. "That is why I have you."

"Aikiro... he should not have been able to bring this ship back." Tesand spoke. "What he did... I have never seen anything like this. The LSD coils and power conduits are cross routed and rigged like nothing I have ever experienced. Allowing his men to use the onboard blood instead of himself. Did you see the way his men responded to him as they were exiting? No hesitation in his orders or even the hint of a question. They will do what he has asked them."

Aikiro smiled somewhat. "What are you saying Tesand?" She asked. "And you should know that you of all people are not allowed to hold back from me. Not now."

Tesand met her gaze. "This man might very well be our saving grace Aikiro."

"And your suggestion?"

"Give him a Fleet Command Group." Tesand spoke. "Something Veldruk would not do. Give him a Fleet Command Group and the rank to use it properly. And then turn him lose on these Kavalian scum."

"Your suggestion will anger many of the older Purebloods Tesand." Aikiro spoke.

"*Vith* them!" Tesand spat. "Our Coven... your Coven is at this very moment on the verge of collapse! Many of our officers are frightened! The reports are not good Aikiro... you have seen them yourself in the last few hours! We will learn more when he makes his report... but our men are fracturing. Many of them were loyal to Veldruk. Not to you."

Aikiro nodded slowly. "I sensed this?" She said softly. She met his eyes. "Tesand... are you loyal to me after what you have seen? What I have done?"

“That is a question you will never have to ask me!” He snapped softly. “What do you want me to do? I will take a Fleet Group and go into battle without hesitation. I will kill whoever you ask me to kill! My only loyalty is to you! To your safety and that of this Coven! I...”

Aikiro reached out quickly with her hand and touched a finger to his lips in a very uncharacteristic show of emotion for her. “No Tesand.” She spoke softly. “I know what you will do.” She said. “Forgive me... I only wanted to see if your loyalty to me extended out of your bed. I will never question that again.”

Tesand did not take offense at her motives. He had watched her and protected her for over four millennia, and his feelings for her had only grown stronger. He knew how she was... what she was like and he had long ago accepted that about her. He took a deep breath.

“You are Empress of the High Coven Aikiro.” He spoke evenly. “The only way for me to continue what we share... what I have always wanted to share with you... is for me to be loyal to you and the High Coven. Veldruk was a fool! He did not know what he had in you! I intend to explore that to its fullest extent and possibility... and I will kill every pureblood, turned or Kavalian scum who keeps me from that goal.”

Aikiro smiled at him. “I do believe you would Tesand.” She spoke. “I do believe you would.” She reached out quickly and squeezed his hand before pulling back. “And know that I want that as well.”

Tesand nodded. “Then let us set to the task of discovering who we can trust and killing those we can’t.”

USU OZEIB HIGH COVEN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

“They came across in two locations...” Moran spoke as he stood in front of the star chart. His injuries were healed, in part because he had taken Yuri’s blood and finished by ingesting nearly two additional pints of fresh blood. He had taken a steaming hot shower, Yuri washing his body. There had been nothing sexual between them even under the water. Too much was happening, and it was merely a way for Yuri to show her feelings for him. She had almost lost this man because of her own hate and fear and while she washed his lean muscular body, Yuri vowed to never make that mistake again, softly professing her love to him over and over as she washed his body. .

The secure room was filled with thirty of the most senior Pureblood officers in the High Coven Fleet and Military. There were aides sitting along the walls on both sides with Aikiro’s personal detachment of viciously loyal Immortals guarding both entrances and watching the men in the room with intense eyes. Tesand sat to Aikiro’s right, Yuri to her left as they listened to Moran.

“... We counted easily three thousand plus ships ranging from medium cruisers to these big boys that are easily a match for our *REVERENCE*-Class dreadnoughts.” Moran spoke confidently as he moved through the holo images and information. “They split into two separate corridors when they crossed the border... one headed for the outer defense line... the second corridor directly for our border planets.”

“They have done the same from the Epeclion Border as well.” Corana spoke from his chair. “Two separate corridors from their initial border crossing.”

“They’re trying to draw us out in small units.” Moran spoke. “I’ve seen this tactic before on Earth. They...”

“Tactics you learned on Earth have no place in this room Commander.” A senior Pureblood Admiral spoke now. He looked at Aikiro. “Empress we must send our forces out to engage them now. Engage them wherever they might be.”

“That’s suicide.” Moran spoke. “They’ll cut us to ribbons!”

“This is not some training exercise half breed!” The Admiral snapped loudly. “We are the High Coven!”

Yuri made to open her mouth but Aikiro reached out with her hand and placed it on her leg stopping her.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *No Yuri.* Aikiro spoke.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Mother they can not be allowed...*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Daughter do you have faith in this man who has claimed more than just your body from what I have seen?* Aikiro asked. *And know Yuri... know that I do approve.*

Yuri looked at her. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Yes.* She answered without hesitation.

Aikiro nodded. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Then let us see what he does. I have already seen the loyalty he commands among those on his ship. I want to see what else he commands. Trust me Yuri.*

“This half-breed as you called him...” The voice spoke from the side as the older, white haired Pureblood High Coven Admiral walked from the entrance past the four Immortals there. “This half-breed defeated me and I outnumbered his forces three to one. That is something no one in this room can say, least of all you Admiral Rdran!”

The Admiral stopped behind the empty chair and turned to Aikiro. “Empress Aikiro... I beg your forgiveness for being late to this meeting. I wanted to inspect the *BLOOD JUSTICE* myself before coming here. With Admiral Tesand’s permission I have been monitoring via communications implants.”

Aikiro nodded slowly. “Admiral Pontal...”

Pontal looked at Moran before settling into his chair at the table. “Please... continue with the discussion.”

Moran opened his mouth to continue but Rdran beat him to it. “As I was saying Empress... we must meet this attack head on. Send our forces out to destroy these Kavalian scum before a few minor victories they have achieved against inferior led forces gives them confidence.”

“Our own forces are only now coming to full alert status.” Corana spoke.

“Send them out as they become active!” Rdran spoke.

“And they will be destroyed piecemeal.” Moran spoke now. “That has got to be the stupidest thing I’ve ever heard.”

“You will remain silent half breed!” Rdran bellowed. “You do not make decisions in this room! What would you have us do? Cower before these animals like whimpering fools!”

“No. I expect us to act like military leaders and not a bunch of arrogant pompous assholes looking to make a name for themselves!” Moran spat. “If we send our forces out in bunches the Kavalians will chew them up and spit them out. Have any of you in this room even looked at the reports I submitted?” His eyes swept across the table growing angrier by the second as no one but Corana and Pontal would meet his gaze. Moran stepped up to his chair and lifted the stacks of data pads on the table. “I had my men make these reports when they could have been helping to repair my ship!” Moran tossed them onto the center of the table and watched as they scattered across the polished surface.

“It is not your ship Commander!” Rdran barked. “It is my ship! It is part of my command and now it will take three weeks before it can be fully functional again!”

Moran glared at Rdran. “These are not some half baked idiots pouring across our borders you fucking fool! They are well trained and well led! They are executing directives and orders exactly as they have been instructed. They have one purpose and that is to destroy us! If we send our forces against them in small groups they’ll be wiped out. That is what they want us to do! That is why they are hitting us in as many places as they can! The Kavalians have superior numbers! Their ships are equal to our own in firepower and maneuverability! We have the advantage in speed and shields... but that will only be a factor so long as we use it properly! They...”

“Commander Moran!” Aikiro roared coming to her feet. Moran stopped and turned to meet her eyes. “You will control your temper Commander!”

Robert stepped back quickly and took a deep breath. “My apologies Empress.” He spoke softly after a moment.

“I do not doubt your loyalty to this Coven Commander Moran. Not after that display.” Aikiro spoke. “What is it you recommend?”

“Empress!” Rdran spoke turning to face her. “He is a half breed! He has neither the rank the experience nor the Pureblood status to be making recommendations within this room, regardless of his status as the Princess’s consort! The High Lord would never have allowed this.”

Aikiro turned her dark eyes on Rdran. “I am not the High Lord Admiral Rdran!” Aikiro snarled in a low voice. “My pig husband is dead! Or have your eyes failed you so much that you can not see I am a woman and not a man!”

“Empress... I only...” Rdran started.

“I wish to hear what Commander Moran recommends Admiral.” Aikiro spoke. “Is that an issue with you?”

“No... no Empress.”

“Good. Now... Robert... what do you suggest we do?” Aikiro spoke.

“My view hasn’t changed.” Moran spoke immediately. “We trade space for time. They have us outnumbered right now. Our forces are too wildly dispersed to do anything but die. If we send them against the Kavalians piecemeal then we may as well throw our hands up and surrender right now. They are going after our border planets to establish a foothold within High Coven space.” He turned back to the Star Chart. “If the reports we have received so far are accurate... they’ve already captured Pharna, Maset, Gasar, Vorda and Esenio. As we speak they are hitting Sthani and Rulale. And this is only within the thirty-nine hours since they began coming across the borders. And from there they’ll be able to launch multiple attacks into five different sectors pushing further into High Coven space.”

Rdran snorted in disgust. “This is why we should hit them now... the Kavalians are no match for our forces! What you speak of is treason!”

“What I speak of is common sense you moron!” Moran barked. “Yes... we have equal numbers of ships, over half of which are not even combat ready! And most of which are not even fully crewed!”

“What?” Aikiro barked looking at the men at the table. Tesand’s head had come up at this, his eyes wide as well.

Moran looked at her. “As it stands right now... we can only field seven... perhaps eight fully crewed and combat ready Fleet Groups.” He spoke.

“That is a lie!” Rdran exclaimed.

Moran whirled on him. “Is it?” He barked. “I don’t know what you have been doing for the last year Admiral Rdran... but when I’m not playing my role as consort to the Princess as you so eloquently reminded all of us was my role... I’ve actually been working. I’ve haven’t been cavorting with the politicians and seeing who I could get on my side! I’ve been training and working with the men that I *was* given to lead. During that time frame I’ve also discovered that over half our entire fleet has got a bad case of the ‘I don’t give a fuck’! Including your precious little Fleet Group all safe and cozy by Halus Four!”

Rdran came to his feet. “How dare you accuse me of...?”

“I’m not accusing you of anything asshole. I’m only telling the truth!” Moran spat.

Aikiro looked at Corana and Pontal. “Is this true Pontal? You are the most senior Fleet Group Commander here. Do not lie to me!” She gasped.

Pontal slowly nodded his head. “Regrettably I must concur with Commander Moran.” He spoke. “The past few years the High Lord has not been as concerned with fleet status and condition. We have had to manage as best we could.” Pontal turned and glared at Rdran. “Some of us have done a better job than others.”

“Empress Aikiro... I assure you that nothing this half breed dog says is in any way...” Rdran began walking around the table towards Aikiro.

Robert Moran had heard enough. He was tired of playing games with these patsies. No one was able to stop him as he blurred in motion far faster than anyone thought was possible. Rdran’s words were cut off as Moran’s hand clamped around his throat and his body lifted into the air before slamming back down on top of the polished surface of the table with a thunderous crack. Moran leaned close to Rdran’s wide eyed face, stunned at the power and speed of the attack. Moran’s eyes had changed to vampire cobalt blue and his fangs burst from his gums as he glared at Rdran, his hand closing tighter around the pureblood’s throat.

“I did not come all the way from Earth after fighting Lycavorian and Elf scum for over five hundred years to have a pompous, no good shit for brains pureblood call me a liar!” Moran growled viciously as both Yuri and Tesand came to their feet next to Aikiro. “Go ahead Rdran... I guarantee you before anyone moves out of their chair or one of those Immortals lifts his weapon to shoot me you will be very much fish food, you sack of pureblood shit!” He squeezed tighter. “Twenty-three ships I lost! Twenty-three ships and over fifty thousand men! I don’t care how old you are fuck nuts... but if you disrespect the sacrifice they made for this Coven one more time, so help me I’ll drink your blood until you are nothing more than nasty shriveled shell!”

“Robert!” Yuri barked out. “Release him!”

Aikiro had a smile on her face as she looked at what was taking place. Yes... she had certainly found the man she was looking for. Now all she needed was time.

“ADMIRAL MORAN!” Aikiro bellowed. Robert looked up as Yuri and every set of eyes at the table went to her in shock. “Release him Admiral Moran! Now!”

Robert looked at her with confusion in his eyes as he removed his hand from Rdran's throat and stood up quickly. Rdran gasped for air and flipped off the table to his feet, his own eyes full of fear as he stared at Moran.

"Empress... Empress I demand this man be executed!" Rdran gasped out as he struggled to his feet.

Aikiro turned her head a look of utter disgust on her face. "Tha'zwn! Captain... deal with this pathetic man please."

The Immortal Commander in command of Aikiro's detachment stepped forward, lifted his rifle and fired without pause. Rdran's head erupted like an overripe melon, splattering blood all over the wall he was next to. As his body slumped to the floor Aikiro slammed the data pad down on the table startling almost everyone, but drawing their attention.

"I am not Veldruk gentlemen!" Aikiro snapped. "I will not tolerate laziness or pompous fools. You call Robert Moran a half breed because my daughter turned him, yet he has shown more loyalty to this Coven than most of you at this table. He speaks not from desire for personal gain, but from a stand point of how to save our Coven. If you will not treat him as an equal freely, than you will treat him as an equal in rank. He has just assumed command of Admiral Rdran's Fleet Command Group. Make no mistake... if he fails in his duties I will kill him just as quickly as I will kill any of you. Regardless of how much influence you have within the High Coven Pureblood ranks."

Aikiro settled into the chair as the door opened and the aide rushed up to where Tesand stood. "We are at a cross roads for the Coven and our people gentlemen. If you feel you can not take orders from me... this will be the only opportunity I will give you to depart High Coven space." Aikiro looked at the men sitting at the table. "When we leave this room... if you are not fully in support of seeing this Coven continue... I will end your miserable life without a second's pause. Do I make myself very clear?"

Aikiro saw the men at the table nod their heads quickly. She knew some of them would go against her... but until they revealed themselves she could not act.

Tesand turned slowly as he handed her the data pad. "We have lost the shipyards along the Epeclion border." He spoke. "The *Dire Brood* Fleet Group attempted to stop the attacks and they were destroyed to the last ship." He said softly.

Aikiro took a deep breath. "We will implement Admiral Moran's plan immediately gentlemen. I will not have our forces destroyed in small groups like insects. We can regain what we lose... but we need to be alive to do that. Tesand?"

"Empress?"

"Issue the orders telling our forces to stand by for new orders. They are not to engage the Kavalians in any way. We must save what we can now. Have all of our inner production planets go on full alert. I want ships. I want new clone soldiers. I want weapons. And when we are ready... I want to make these Kavalian pigs regret they ever set foot in High Coven space." Aikiro spoke.

Tesand nodded. "As you order Empress."

Aikiro nodded. "You have quite a bit of work to do gentlemen. I suggest you get to it."

The men at the table began to move quickly from the room. Moran glanced at Yuri quickly and then moved to follow the others.

"Robert... wait a moment." Aikiro spoke.

Moran stopped and turned just before he exited the door. As the last officer filed out he stepped back closer to her. Aikiro lifted her hand with a wave and the door sealed shut behind them. She got to her feet and turned to face him, glancing at Yuri quickly as well.

"That was quite a display Robert." She spoke.

Moran bowed his head. "Forgive me Empress. I..."

"No." She said. "Do not apologize for your actions. Yuri has told me how much you value the Coven... and I have seen it myself this day. Can we win Robert?"

Moran looked at her. "I don't know." He answered honestly. "But I'll be damned if I ever give up."

Aikiro smiled at his words and moved closer to him. "My daughter carries a child that is not yours Robert Moran... and yet you remain more true to her now than you were before."

"Mother..." Yuri spoke stepping forward.

“As much as it disgusts me to say...” Aikiro spoke. “The child... it is a girl you know.” She said seeing Moran’s eyes go to Yuri quickly and then back to her. “When the child is born we will send her to Nuwaroa to be raised. Then you have my blessing to begin a family of your own. I don’t know what the future holds either... but once this child is born Robert Moran... once this child seals the loyalty of Vavant’s family to me... Vavant is yours. Kill him. Feed on him! Burn him! I do not care. Just make sure you leave no trace.”

Moran’s eyes glittered with cruelty. “Of that you can be sure.”

Aikiro nodded. “There is another issue that I would like your advice on.”

“I serve the Coven and you Empress.”

Aikiro chuckled. “And you may dispense with that right now when it is just us.” She spoke. “Tesand only does this in front of others... and as with him... when we are alone, away from prying eyes and ears you may call me Aikiro.”

Moran glanced quickly at Yuri and then lifted his head up and he stood to his full height. “Thank you.” He spoke.

Aikiro nodded. “Good. Now... my other issue.” She said turning and moving to the counter and pouring three glasses of rich dark blood as Moran and Yuri moved up next to her. She held out the glasses to them and waited for them to take the glasses before lifting her own. “The Lycavorian dogs have begun a purge of every asset we have within their territory. They are leaving no stone unturned. They have my son Vonis. I want him back.”

“May I ask why?” Moran asked.

“Two reasons actually.” Aikiro spoke. “Yuri and I have already discussed them.”

“Vonis is privy to every intelligence operative and operation we have ongoing inside the Union.” Yuri told him. “Father gave him this knowledge so that he would not be left out to dry so to speak. He can withstand most interrogations without concern, however if the dogs ordered him to be interrogated with drugs or using methods that are extremely harmful to our species... he might reveal more than we are willing to reveal.”

“This concerns you?” Moran asked.

Aikiro nodded. “If he has allowed himself to be swayed by some female elf whore then he may not have the fortitude to resist the more vigorous means those animals could employ to interrogate him.”

“The second reason?” Moran asked.

Aikiro’s eyes hardened. “I wish to execute him myself for his fool actions.” She spat.

Moran didn’t bat an eye. “What can I do?”

“Yuri tells me that during your time spent with Cha’talla you had reason to meet with the Overseer we bribed.” Aikiro spoke. “I want you to reach out to him once more and arrange an exchange with Leonidas for Vonis’s return. Yuri will conduct the actual exchange.”

Moran watched Aikiro turn and move back to the table and sit down. He looked at Yuri and saw her nod her head. Moran moved to the table and took the seat Tesand had occupied only minutes before.

“It is possible he has already revealed this information to the Lycavorian dogs.” Aikiro spoke. “And if that is the case I want to kill him myself even more. I gave Veldruk two sons and he raised one to think he was a god... and the other to think he is above his mother’s judgment.”

“Leonidas will undoubtedly want something in return.” Moran spoke. “If he even agrees to an exchange at all. What do we have that he would want?”

“Safe passage for every agent he has within our borders back to Lycavorian space. No questions asked, and he will know I am not fool enough to think they do not have agents within our ranks.” Aikiro answered. “And the identity of the Overseer who arranged for the attack on the Hadarian witch’s sister after he had made a deal with them to not attempt anything further once they got her back across the border. He will like that information though that is not something you need to reveal to the man you meet.”

“Is it the same one?” Moran asked.

Aikiro shook her head. “No. But he does stand to gain from any action Leonidas conducts so I’m sure he won’t mind the results.”

Moran nodded. “I will contact him as soon as I greet my new command.” He said.

“Act quickly Robert.” Aikiro spoke. “I will need your full attention on the Kavalians once this is arranged. Our very future depends on it.”

Moran looked at Yuri and for the first time since returning a smile split his face. “Yes I know. And it is a future I want to enjoy.”

EARTH WICHITA

Syrlth rested on the deck of the Type I Dragon Transport watching intently as the red haired female moved from chamber to chamber checking instruments. She wore the strange looking glove over her right hand and as she passed it over each egg Syrlth would watch as the small green lights would flicker and then become solid. She had remained inside this ship with her siblings all night, never sleeping and watching as their eggs were handled by the many Lycavorians as if they were precious gems. Roluth had left with Aelnala and his new bonded sisters many hours ago while Tharua and the rest of her hatched brothers and sisters wandered among the hundreds of their kind that now filled the field all around the ship resting and waiting for something to happen. The green scaled dragon she now knew as Miath rested at the very bottom of the ship’s ramp. He was a Hybrid dragon, born from a Heavyhorn mother and Firespitter father, and he was the bonded brother to the diminutive female that now looked after her siblings. He was never far from her side Syrlth noticed, always with at least one of his gray eyes on her. She had met Isheeni’s children and the other Queens of the Union Arzoal had told her as well as the Firespitter who was bonded to the elven Queen who was now with child.

The last hours had been full of wondrous new events and things Syrlth never believed she would see. The exit of the three hundred Bonded Pairs, as she discovered they were called, from their ships overhead. The exit of four hundred of her own kind from this very ship as it hovered above the field and the hatching of her newest sister who she had named Talnara in honor of her mother. Talnara now slept curled into a ball on the soft hay only a few feet away. The Guardian of the Line had arrived with Majeir and the others, Majeir refusing to leave the Guardian’s side as he moved about the many dragons and Lycavorian troops that had arrived to provide protection.

And then there was Maruad.

He was under heavy guard within the bowels of one of the destroyed buildings of the ruined city they were on the outskirts of. She had seen him briefly and the injuries he had sustained at Aricia’s hands. Roluth had told her it was inspiring to watch as she beat him to within a heartbeat of his life, never once showing mercy or pity on him. As events around her were changing Syrlth had found the hatred slipping away with so many new discoveries over the past hours. The discovery that there were thousands more of her kind, and thousands upon thousands, even millions of Lycavorians and elves who viewed her kind as sacred icons. Arzoal had sat for hours with her here in this ship and told her of how they had come to this point in their lives. She had told her of Aricia’s and this King’s action on Enurrua in ending the war that had raged for thousands of years and freeing their kind. How he had returned them all home to the planet of their origin and how the elves now looked at them as their ancestors from which they had evolved.

Syrlth turned as she saw Anja step away from the last chamber and look at her with those jade colored eyes.

All of them are responding the vitamin and enzyme proteins Syrlth. Anja spoke with a smile. They are already beginning to grow more rapidly within their eggs as their bodies get what they have needed.

Tharua and the others? Syrlth asked.

I made sure they ate all of the meat we gave to them. It was the same as what you and Roluth got from Isra. Anja answered. Within three or four days, all of you will be the picture of health. You can now hunt freely and get what you need easily. With the correct diet and medicines we will give you, I do not doubt your brothers and sisters will become more than a handful for you.

Majeir?

Anja nodded slowly. She will be fine. I examined her thoroughly when Walter brought her here. Aside from a little pain in her head from where she was struck, she is also in excellent health. You did an amazing job raising them to this point Syrlth.

Will... will I lose them?

Lose them? Anja spoke. *Why in the world would you lose them?*

If I am to act as... as the Elder for this planet... I...

Anja stepped closer and reached up to stroke her smooth snout even as Miath walked up into the ship and settled to the deck next to her.

You will never lose your siblings Syrilth. Anja spoke. *They will remain here with you. The ship we arrived on... it has the ability to change its shape to some degree. The cybernetic avatar... we call him Avi... Martin left instructions for him to arrange the ship into the best possible configuration for dragons to grow and prosper. I believe it has already landed and soon you and the others can go there. It will be your home. You'll be able to teach them to fly; you'll be protected from the elements. You will not lose your siblings Syrilth.*

The Elder Mother has an aide Syrilth. Miath spoke now. *Two of them actually. An elven female and a Lycavorian Spartan. She communicates through them since not all of those that we come into contact with can communicate on a level such as Anja and the others you have met up to now. You will always be able to speak with Tarifa and Aihola... and I'm sure you will have your own aides, if that is what you want to call them. You will never be alone.*

They all turned as Tharua came trotting up the ramp and into the massive ship.

Syrilth! Syrilth!

Tharua... what is it? Syrilth spoke as she gathered her legs under her.

They... they are gathering to board this ship! Tharua exclaimed. *The others of our kind! They are leaving!*

Syrilth turned quickly to look at Anja who had her eyes closed and a smile on her face. *Anja! What is happening?*

Anja opened her eyes and looked at her. *Martin is coming.* She replied. *We are going to meet him. That is why they are coming to board. We are not leaving Syrilth.*

The King? Syrilth gasped.

Anja nodded. *He has sent word that we are to gather on mountains east of where Maruad was holding the eggs. Isheeni and Aricia are already there waiting for us with Arzoal. It seems Maruad was taken there very early this morning.*

This morning! Syrilth nearly shouted. *I saw no one leave the city.*

Nor did I. Tharua spoke.

Anja and Miath chuckled within Mindvoice. *Martin can be very secretive when he wants to be Syrilth. If he wanted Maruad removed without notice... believe me when I tell you no one would have noticed.* She removed the strange looking glove just as Iriral landed outside the ship and she saw Dysea and Isabella on her back. She watched as they leaped nimbly to the ground and began to walk up the ramp. Anja had to admit Dysea looked radiant, Isabella equally so. They were apparently so closely tied together now that what affected one of them affected the other. Anja felt warmth surge through her as she remembered her and Bella's tryst on the City Ship and she could not wait for it to happen again, this time with all of them.

Melyanna! Nauta Melme is moving. We must go! Dysea spoke within Mindvoice as she came up and took Anja's hand while laying a sizzling kiss upon her. Dysea looked at her with smoldering emerald eyes when she broke their kiss. *Bella told me of your encounter Melyanna. I sincerely hope you have enough energy left for the rest of us.*

Isabella shrugged sheepishly. *She tortured me for the information Anja. I couldn't resist her.*

Anja laughed and held Dysea close to her. *Well... you were preoccupied if I remember. But I think we can discover something to do while Bella and Martin have some time together.*

Martin and I? Isabella gasped. *I... I don't think I am ready for that just yet.* She spoke with smoldering hazel/green eyes of her own.

Dysea chuckled and pulled Isabella closer to them. *You are as ready as we were when the time came Bella my love. Don't fight it any longer.*

She's right Bella. Anja said.

Isabella looked at them for a long moment. *Perhaps... perhaps you may be right.*

Of course we are right. Dysea spoke nuzzling her neck.

Anja looked at Syrilth now. *You must come with us Syrilth. You are an Elder now and you will be expected to be there.*

I would not miss Maruad's judgment if my life depended on it. Syrilth spoke.

Anja nodded and moved to put the medical glove away. She looked up at Dysea and Isabella as Iriral led the procession of dragons into the cavernous ship, the first fingers of dawn beginning on the horizon.

Melyanna... where is Seanna? Dysea asked.

She has returned to Eden City. Anja replied as she ushered Miath into one of the adult pens. *There were some issues she wanted to take care of.*

Issues? Dysea asked.

Anja met her emerald eyes. *I did not understand them myself... but it is something she needs to resolve herself. I think she... I think she has discovered a male that caught her attention on Lycavore. I can not help her with that. She will be fine.*

Dysea smiled and nodded. *Very well... once our brothers and sisters are all onboard we can depart.*

Twenty minutes later the Type I's engines were whining in power as they propelled the ship off the ground into the sky. The massive transport rotated a hundred meters off the ground as it continued to climb and then it lit off its thrusters.

They headed west.

PACIFIC OCEAN HALF A MILE FROM THE OREGON COAST

Do you think we wore them out my brother? Torma's voice asked as he propelled them along the surface of the Pacific Ocean only fifty meters off the water. The sun was well into the sky now and the water was surprisingly calm.

Martin chuckled and shook his head. *Doubtful.*

I had almost forgotten how passionate Isheeni could be. Torma spoke. *And it is even more pronounced now that she carries eggs.* Torma turned his head after a few moments of silence from his bonded brother. *What troubles you Martin?*

A lot of things trouble me Torma. Martin answered. *The Coven... these Kavalian. What I have discovered recently. This Maruad fool. I wasn't kidding when I told Helen I would like nothing more than to take my Queens and go stick my head in the sand somewhere.*

But you will not. Torma said confidently. *It is not in your nature to run from a problem, no matter what it may be.*

Martin shook his head slowly as he reached up to scratch under the cheek protector of his helmet. *No I won't run. I still haven't decided what to do about this Maruad character Torma. He killed Syrilth's mother and father for his own gain when he could no longer control them. He has given the order to kill helpless eggs by smashing them onto the rocks. The larger part of me... the Bonded Pair part of me wants to send him into the dark abyss for what he has done. The part of me that is King knows I must act according to our laws and put aside my own personal feelings. That is very hard for me to do.*

Without the laws we follow Martin my brother, we become no better than this Maruad. Torma spoke evenly. *My kind knows this. They have known this since the day we became part of the Union. They trust in you and your judgment. You are the one who pulled us from the horror that we lived on Enurrua. As any of your Spartans would die for you... any of my kind would do the same.*

I know. Martin answered. *And that is part of why I don't want this job. Having so many lives hinge on my word. My decisions. I fight with this every day.*

You have done this all of your life Martin. Torma spoke as he banked lazily over the water. *It is something you have done with barely a thought. Just as your father did. Just as your grandfather did. It is in your blood. Though it may not seem like it to you... no one follows you because of the name you carry my brother. They follow you because of who you are. They know, just as I know, you are the best hope for the future. You lead with your heart Martin, just as your father before you. And again they know... just as I know... no matter what happens... you will not abandon them. And if it is within your power to succeed... we will succeed. Together.*

Martin was silent for a long time as the rush of the wind beat against their psychic shield and the sun glittered off the ocean below. The salt air filtered through his lungs and he breathed deeply.

He betrayed your people my brother. Torma's voice echoed in his mind. *No matter what your heart desires... you must never forget that.*

Martin's eyes hardened. *I don't intend too.*

You have decided to not speak of it haven't you? Torma said.

It will become known sooner or later. Martin answered. *Things like that always do. Until then... no. Four of us know the truth. I have no intention of taking back what has been accepted without question and caused so much happiness. For all those involved.*

Including you and your Queens?

Martin nodded. *Including me and my Queens brother.*

Good. Torma spoke. *Our path has been set before us Martin Leonidas my brother. Now all we need do is follow it. And when that path alters course... we can only make the best guess to remain on it.*

Torma my brother?

Yes.

Torma... let's go deal with this fool Maruad and get going on that path then.

Indeed!

With a bellowing roar Torma turned sharply and pointed them at the shore.

Heceta Head.

It had once been the tallest lighthouse on the Oregon coast. Now it was nothing more than a broken shell and crater in the ground. The sky fire from the passing of the comet had burned away the hundreds of thousands of trees that had once covered this majestic site. The bed and breakfast home half a mile across the small bay which had catered to the wealthy at the end was now shattered and decrepit. Isra and Aihola had attacked in force and they left almost nothing standing. It was now blackened by fires that had raged for hours and parts of it still had whispers of smoke rising from the ruins.

The eruption of Mount Saint Helens in the north so long ago had caused parts of the cliffs nearby and along the entire coast to fall into the ocean, flattening almost completely what had once been a towering mountain behind the lighthouse, and separating part of what had once been California completely from the mainland. Now that flat expanse of land and the remains of the lighthouse jutted out into the raging ocean only three hundred meters below. And spread out on the huge expanse of flat terrain and along the entire coastline on either side were seven hundred dragons and their riders. The Type I transport had landed only a kilometer away and it had been nothing to move here, a short hop on a dragon. Upon arriving, Anja and the others found Aricia and Isheeni waiting for them. Their reunion was passionate and eager and as hundreds of dragons looked on the five women had shared blistering kisses of love as well as embraces of devotion and joy at once more being together. Isheeni rested beside her mother and she smiled a dragon smile as Syrilth and Tharua walked up and settled to the ground next to her.

Isheeni... they are... Syrilth began to speak.

Isheeni nodded her head. *Yes. They share each other as well as the King.* Isheeni spoke.

Arzoal turned her head and looked at Syrilth. *That is their power and strength as a family.* She spoke.

Syrilth turned her head and her eyes grew wide as she saw Maruad standing on the ground that had once been the lighthouse.

Maruad! She hissed out.

He is truly a pitiful man. Arzoal spoke with some humor. *He has done nothing but sit or stand there whimpering like a baby or making odd threats.*

He is unguarded! Tharua exclaimed.

Where will he go Tharua? Isheeni spoke. *Seven hundred of our kind watches him with murder in our eyes. He waits for the one who he thinks will grant him a reprieve from justice for they are the same species. A reprieve he will never see.*

Syrilth turned as her sister Majeir scampered up her tail and came to rest on her shoulders between her wings. *The ocean is so beautiful Syrilth!* Majeir exclaimed.

Yes it is little one. Yes it is. Syrilth looked at Isheeni. *Your mate... will he be here soon?*

Isheeni met her eyes. *He will be here soon enough with the King. They are typically male and enjoy making grand entrances.*

Aricia nuzzled For'mya's elven ear firmly as she held her tightly in her embrace and she felt For'mya sigh in delight and passion. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Oh I have plans for you this night For'mya.* Aricia spoke including only her fellow Queens in the conversation.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I hope they include us as well.* Anja spoke brightly.

Aricia squeezed her hand with a seductive smile. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Oh they do. All of us in fact.*

The four Queens and one concubine to the King of the Union moved together, holding each other tightly as they walked to where Isheeni and Arzoal rested. They settled to the ground in front of their dragons, Isheeni stretching out with her head to gently butt Aricia in the back of her shoulder, as Iriral and Miath stretched out on the ground on the opposite side of Arzoal.

"This is what you call justice!" Maruad screamed out from where he stood. "Where is this King you wait for? Bring him to me so that I can..."

Isheeni's eyes clouded over with love as she, Aricia and her fellow Queens felt the overwhelming surge of power unleash around them.

They are here! Isheeni spoke calmly.

"This is what you call justice!" Maruad screamed out from where he stood. "Where is this King you wait for? Bring him to me so that I can..."

Thud

Thud

Maruad turned quickly, the words dying in his throat as the bright sun was blotted from the sky by the enormous shadow rising from below. As he completed his turn his dark eyes went wide in horror as he realized it wasn't a shadow at all, but the single largest dragon he had ever seen in his lifetime. Arzoal had not moved from her spot on the ground and he was unable to judge her size with any real accuracy. But this dragon... this dragon was not resting on the ground and he was enormous. A dragon with jet black obsidian scales and eyes the color of gold. He staggered back quickly, losing his balance and falling to the ground, even as the enormous beast flared its wings, and came to almost a complete stop in mid air. The wingspan on the monster before him had to be at least twelve meters across and Maruad scrambled backwards frantically, kicking at the ground with his feet to back up away from the creature. Torma settled his nearly eight tons of muscle and power to the ground and unleashed a roar that caused Maruad's clothes to ripple with the force of air that Torma expelled in that bellow directly into his face.

Syrilth and Tharua's eyes were wide as well and Majeir had stopped scampering along her back in excitement as they watched that colossal black dragon drop to the ground in front of Maruad. In front of the man that had caused them so much pain in their lives.

Isheeni... Isheeni... this is your mate? Syrilth gasped out still unable to grasp the enormity of Torma's size. He was equal to the Elder mother in sheer size, but his obsidian scales rippled with muscles that she did not have, and he appeared much heavier. His scales gleamed with heath, just as all the other dragons she had seen so far, his talons thick and brutally sharp she saw. His wingspan was larger than the Elder Mother by a good meter and a half, yet for all his size, his movements were confident and graceful and above all else, they were fluid. Syrilth thanked the dragon gods that events had transpired as they had, for looking at Isheeni's mate as he dropped to the earth in front of Maruad, she had no doubts this dragon would have swatted her and Maruad from the sky like insects. She could feel the breadth of power within Mindvoice that this dragon commanded and it made her shiver inwardly in fear and awe.

Isheeni's azure eyes were full of love and desire as she gazed at the obsidian scaled male dragon who had claimed her heart and soul so long ago. *He is beautiful isn't he?* She spoke wistfully even as her wings rippled slightly in delight.

He is... by the gods... he is so large. Syrilth stammered.

Syrilth... he is huge! Tharua exclaimed.

Isheeni chuckled and her azure eyes gleamed. *Oh you have no idea.* She spoke as she remembered their night together last night. They hadn't been away from each other for so long a period of time in their entire

lives, and they had certainly made up for that last night. Isheeni thought she would go hoarse from all the trumpeting in pleasure she had experienced last night. Of course it made matters worse because Aricia and Martin were experiencing the same thing.

In droves.

Now justice will be done. Arzoal spoke softly.

Martin glared at Maruad from Torma's back as he roared out his hatred for the man in front of him. He was a large man, nearly as large as Danny he saw, but judging from the look in his eyes right now he was nothing more than a coward.

Martin felt the dragon armor release his legs and he acted quickly. Drawing from the staggering TK power that he and Torma commanded as a pair he exploded out of the saddle, executing a forward flip just as Maruad was scrambling to his feet. The crested plume on his helmet, now released from within the psychic shield that surrounded them when they flew, whipped about in the warm ocean breeze as Maruad's eyes went wide. Martin's size eleven combat boots smashed into his chest like a sledgehammer and pain lanced through his chest as two of his ribs snapped completely in half within his body. Maruad felt his body lift into the air and he flailed wildly as he was tossed like a child's toy across the expanse of where the lighthouse had once stood, crashing painfully to the ground twenty meters from where he had been. He could hear the bellows and roars of approval from hundreds of dragons all around, their roars deafening and almost painful to his ears.

He saw the shadow above him as he rolled over and then Martin's yellow/gold eyes were glaring at him, his unique dual fangs fully extended and exposed.

You must be Maruad! Martin barked out loudly in Mindvoice, his voice carrying to every dragon and Lycavorian that was watching what was happening. *My name is Martin Leonidas. And it is certainly not a pleasure to make your stinking acquaintance! Let me introduce my Bonded Brother Torma!*

Maruad could only stare as Martin reached down, grabbed the front of his shirt and once more using his TK power he tossed Maruad through the air back towards a waiting Torma. Maruad impacted the ground even harder this time and he groaned loudly in pain as his broken ribs ground against each other and pain coursed through his chest once more. His dark eyes went wide once more as he saw the massive dragon's mace like tail hurtling down towards him. He had never seen a Heavyhorn dragon before Aelnala. Since he had not fought Aelnala directly he had no idea what they could do with their tails. The clubbed end of Torma's thick tail smashed into the ground next to his body with such force, Maruad bounced several inches off the ground as dirt and dust exploded up showering him.

Torma lowered his massive head to within inches of Maruad's face and bared his own extremely long and lethal fangs and teeth, his wings snapping out to their full extension with a loud popping noise.

Hello fool! Torma shouted out within Mindvoice.

Despite the pain racking his body from his older injuries at the hands of the female, and now his new broken ribs, Maruad kicked at the ground pushing away from Torma as he heard the immense beast laughing softly in his head mocking him.

Now you will see Syrilth. Arzoal spoke gently as she turned to look at her.

Elder Mother? Syrilth gasped.

Can you not feel it Syrilth? Arzoal said. *The utter commitment to each other that they share. Like Aricia and my daughter they are almost one mind, and the power they command is unlike anything I have seen in my lifetime.*

Far more than Aricia and I will ever achieve. Isheeni broke in.

It frightens me at times to imagine what they could do. And they grow more powerful as time passes. Aricia said.

This is what we now share Syrilth. This is what the King has given us. Little more than a year ago our kind was nearly extinct. We were losing Syrilth. Then he and Aricia blue eyes came into our lives. There is not a dragon within the Union who would not willingly sacrifice themselves for this man and what he had done. He

considers all of our kind his family Syrilth... and Martin Leonidas is extremely protective of those he considers family. Arzoal told her.

Isheeni nodded her head in agreement. *A fact that Maraud will discover soon enough. Quite painfully I'm sure.* Anja echoed.

“Get back!” Maruad screamed as he got to his feet glaring at Martin. “You are King! You... you can not act this way!”

Martin was standing in front of Torma now, his massive head looking over Martin’s right shoulder.

What is wrong Maruad? Martin taunted him. Are you upset because there are no weak ones around here you can dominate? Are you angry because you no longer hold the lives of Syrilth’s siblings over her head? That you can no longer force her to act how you want her to act for fear of you destroying the eggs of her brothers and sisters?

Martin began walking forward his anger growing. *Dragon eggs! Eggs that could not defend themselves! Eggs that you and your flesh eating monster friends killed! Let me show you how I feel about you Maruad!*

Martin lifted his hand and Maruad was seized in the grasp of some unknown force and hurtled forward, directly towards Martin. He could not stop his motion, he could not close his eyes, and he could not prepare for the pain.

Martin’s armored fist smashed into Maruad’s jaw with enough force to bring him to an immediate halt and the sound of his teeth smashing together was clear even across the large area. Maruad vaguely heard the sounds of joyful trumpets from the gathered dragons as he felt his body propelled backwards from the power of the blow, his mind not even registering the pain from his jaw or the fact he was now missing five teeth. A wheezing sound escaped his lips as he landed on his back, jolts of agony shooting through him like fingers of electricity.

I would at least respect you if you had fought honorably Maruad. Martin yelled out as he moved to stand above Maruad’s body. *You are a traitor to your own kind. A scum of the worse sort. Dragon eggs are precious! They are life! And one of them is worth more than ten of you, you nubous piece of shit!*

Martin held out his hand once more seizing Maruad’s body in his TK grip. This time however he simply lifted him straight up and rammed him back into the earth, eliciting an agonizing howl of pain from Maruad that sounded like that of a dying animal coming from his between ragged and bloody lips.

I should let my Queen finish beating you into raw meat! Martin growled. *She was doing such a wonderful job of it! It would have spared me from having to stand in your foul presence and smell your stink!*

Oh he is feeling his oats today! Anja laughed within Mindvoice. *Carians Little Wolf... what did you do to him last night?*

Dysea, For’mya and Isabella laughed softly as Aricia blushed under her tan. *I missed him. That is all.* She said with a smile.

You will need to show us your technique Aricia. For’mya spoke.

Yes indeed. As powerful as his aura is right now... he could go on for days. Imagine the pleasure in that. Dysea spoke.

Maruad skidded to a halt, slamming into Torma’s stone like tail as he was once more tossed through the air and landed painfully. Blood spilled from his lips this time as he rolled to the side. Clawing at the loose dirt he pulled himself away from Torma who did not move from his spot. With a heave of monumental will Maruad hauled himself to his feet. He staggered around almost drunkenly as Martin move to stand once more next to Torma’s front foreleg as he settled to the ground calmly.

“Just... just kill me you dog!” Maruad screamed as blood showered the area in front of him. “Kill me... and be done with it!”

Martin's eyes fell on where Aricia and the others sat watching events unfold. His women. One had already given him a beautiful son, and two more carried his children even now. His yellow/gold eyes fell on Isabella. Her long hair cascaded over one shoulder and she held not only Dysea's hand, but Aricia's as well. Anja leaned up against her on her other side, while For'mya leaned against Aricia. Looking at her in all her vampiric beauty Martin decided he would have her this night if she was ready. All of them sat proudly, their heads held high, their hair blowing in the slight breeze and he could not feel anything but love and warmth for them all. His eyes then caught the movement and they shifted to the small hatchling that was watching from atop Syrilth's back sitting on her hind legs and her small wings flapping every few seconds.

Martin knew his path then.

Martin turned back to Maruad as he staggered trying to maintain his balance. *No Maruad! I'm not going to kill you!* Martin exclaimed loudly within Mindvoice. *That would be too easy!* He stepped away from Torma's body and turned his eyes directly to Syrilth. *I'm going to let the youngest of those who you have tortured and dominated judge you Maruad.* He turned and looked directly at Syrilth.

Majeir!

Majeir! Martin's voice sprang out at them like a voice from the darkness.

Syrlth gasped within Mindvoice as dozens of heads turned to look at her young sister who had frozen in place on her back. She looked at Arzoal. *Elder Mother?*

Arzoal's eyes smiled as she gazed at Syrilth. *You have nothing to fear Syrilth. Now you see why we adore him so.*

Sister! Majeir exclaimed. *He called my name!*

Syrlth turned her head and looked at the spirited hatchling sister whom she had almost lost but for the actions of a man much like the King who stood before her now. She took a deep breath. *Go to him Majeir! He calls for you!*

Syrlth he is so big! And... the black one... he frightens me. Majeir announced loudly causing Isheeni to laugh and turn to look at her.

He is my mate little Majeir! Isheeni spoke. *My beloved husband. And the King is Aricia's mate. Do you think she or I would hurt you Majeir?*

The hatchling's head whipped back and forth. *Oh no Isheeni! You and Aricia blue eyes are good!*

Isheeni nodded. *And we would not take bad mates Majeir.* She spoke gently. *You have no fears little one.*

Syrlth nodded now... finally letting go of all she had experienced and understanding what the future held for her and all of her siblings. *Go Majeir! He is waiting. He will not hurt you.*

Do you promise?

Syrlth nodded her large head. *Oh yes Majeir my sister. I promise.*

Majeir leaped from Syrlth's back and landed nimbly on the ground and moving for where Martin stood.

Martin squatted down as the dark green hatchling came towards him. Her eyes were wide and focused on where Torma rested on the ground, but she bravely continued forward.

Martin smiled as he held out his hand. *Hello Little One.* He spoke.

Majeir stopped several feet from him and simply gazed at him. He was so much more powerful than Maruad Majeir could sense that right away, but his voice was warm and soothing to her mind. She looked at his extended hand and moved up to press the top of her head against that open palm. She felt the calm and peace flowing through her then and she moved even closer.

You... you are the King Martin that Isheeni has told us about. Majeir spoke as she looked at him.

Martin nodded with a smile. *That would be me yes.*

Majeir looked up as Torma's massive head extended over Martin's shoulder. She shrank away a little simply because of his size, but those golden eyes were kind and friendly.

You do not need to fear me little Majeir. Torma spoke evenly. *I have two daughters not much older than you.*

You do? Majeir exclaimed. Her eyes blinked. *Did you hurt my brother Roluth because of what he did?*

Torma chuckled within Mindvoice. *Your brother is right now in Sparta and I left him feasting on a very large stag that we caught last night hunting together.*

He hunted with you? Majeir asked shocked.

Torma nodded. *He will be a strong dragon one day. As you will be. Climb up on my back little one, so that everyone can see you.*

Really?

Torma nodded and both he and Martin watched with smiles as she flapped her wings madly to reach up and finally come to rest on Torma's back in the center of his saddle. He stood up and moved closer to Martin before settling back onto the ground.

Majeir? Martin asked.

She turned her small head to look at where Syrilth rested her eyes wide in wonderment. *Syrilth! Look at me! Look at me!*

Majeir? Majeir turned her head again and looked down at him. *Do you know who this... this man is?* Martin asked pointing to where Maruad stood.

Vile Maruad! Vile Maruad! He hurt my sister Syrilth! He hurt my brothers! Majeir exclaimed.

Majeir... what if I told you I want you to decide this man's fate. Martin spoke as he stepped up onto Torma's leg and his head came even with Majeir.

Me King Martin? She exclaimed with wide eyes.

We are not like... like vile Maruad Majeir. Martin spoke. *Torma is my brother. What he feels I feel and what I feel he feels.*

The Guardian? He saved me! Majeir spoke. *I like him.*

Martin smiled. *Yes I heard about that.* He said. *Should I kill this man Majeir?*

Syrilth says killing is not good. She says we only kill to protect ourselves. Vile Maruad made her kill so that he would not hurt my brothers and sisters. Majeir spat. *I hate him! I hate him!*

Your sister is wise Majeir... and she is right. Torma spoke now.

Why do you ask me these questions King Martin? Majeir asked in a softer voice now as she looked into his yellow/gold eyes.

I want to kill him Majeir. I want him to suffer for everything he has done to your sister. To you and your brothers and sisters. Martin told her. *I could... I could end his life easily for his actions. We have laws that we follow Majeir... and by those laws I would be right in killing him in punishment. Do you think I should do that?*

Majeir shook her head. *I don't like killing. I know... Syrilth has told me there are laws. And that sometimes killing is punishment. Especially for vile Maruad's crimes. The White skinned monsters killed a lot. I don't like killing.*

Martin reached out and gently stroked her neck scales and ran his hand down over her wings. *Then tell me what I should do with him Majeir.*

Send him away! Majeir said quickly. *Send him away where he can never hurt my sister again. Send him far away so he can never hurt my kind again! Send him away King Martin! Make him be alone as we have been for so long! Never to see the sun light and feel the wind along our wings! Send him away King Martin!*

Oh Majeir! Martin heard Syrilth sob within Mindvoice.

Martin stared at her for a long moment and then he leaned forward and softly kissed the top of her head. *I will do as you ask me Majeir. I promise you.* He smiled. *Would you like to fly with my brother Majeir?*

Her eyes flew open. *Really?*

Martin nodded. *Dig your talons in tightly to the saddle here Majeir. Hold on tightly and Torma will show you what it is to have the wind across your wings. You will be able to fly soon... but this will give you an idea of what it feels like.* Martin stepped down off of Torma's leg and watched him rise to his feet.

Torma looked at him with clear focused eyes. [Mindvoice Shielded] *The first step down that path brother.*

Martin met his eyes and smiled. [Mindvoice Shielded] *The first of many steps down that path Torma.*

Torma nodded his huge head and turned to look at Majeir as she dug her talons into the saddle tightly. *Ready little one?*

Oh yes!

Then let's fly! Torma shouted just before he flexed his powerful legs and propelled them into the sky.

Martin turned slowly to glare at Maruad. He reached up and removed his helmet, tucking it under his arm and moving to stand a meter from the man he so wanted to kill.

If it was up to me you sorry excuse for a Lycavorian, I would gut you where you stand and watch as your entrails spilled over the side of this cliff we stand on. Martin snarled within Mindvoice. *They are like family to me... and you have killed four of them. You are a coward Maruad. And you are not even a very good coward at that. Admiral Riall!* Martin bellowed out.

Every Lycavorian and dragon heard Riall's surprised voice echo within their heads from across the sea in Sparta. However no one saw Gorgo's naked arm fall from his bare chest as he sat up in their bed quickly. *Mi... Milord?*

Riall... I want a planet. I want a planet barren of all life. A planet that never sees the sun. I want the loneliest planet in the universe Riall. Where no one ever travels. Where no one visits. As harsh a planet that possibly exists. Is there such a place? Martin asked.

Milord... I would have said Ukwav before you destroyed it. Riall answered. *There is another such place sire. On the far reaches of our border with the Colarian people. It would take four months to reach it sire, so far from the nearest Jump Gate that it is. Perpetual blackness. Volcanic activity. I doubt very much could live on the surface.*

Martin smiled cruelly. *Perfect.* He said. *When you are awake enough and able to pull yourself from my mother's arms for a moment, contact Admiral Joarl. I want a frigate tasked with taking one passenger to this planet.*

Their mission sire? Riall's embarrassed voice asked.

The passenger will be given one month of rations and water and they are to leave him there Riall.

Martin answered.

Sire... Martin... the planet... I do not know if it can sustain life for any length of time. Riall spoke. *We have never done extensive sensor scans of the surface. It has no redeeming qualities. Nothing on it is useable for anything.*

So no one would have a need to go there? Martin asked.

No Milord.

Make it so Riall. Martin spoke.

As you order sire.

Martin looked at Maruad whose eyes were wide in horror. *The youngest of those you have tortured for so long has judged you Maruad. And that judgment will be followed. You will be alone Maruad. And you will die alone. No history of you will be kept and you will in effect cease to have ever existed. Stick that in your pipe and smoke it fool.*

Martin snapped out with his clenched fist and hit Maruad with a trip hammer like right cross that snapped his head around so forcefully his body carried with the momentum of the blow and slammed him into the ground. His eyes rolled up into his head and his last vision was of the sun in the background and then blackness washed over him and he fell unconscious.

It would be the last bit of sunlight he would ever see in his remaining lifetime.

SPARTA KING'S VILLA

“...Already have that information.” Martin spoke to the holo transmission of Armetus. “Though we can probably avoid telling them that.”

He sat on the couch in the main living area of the villa. The fire burned brightly, chasing away the cool chill of the night air. He wore only the loose black pants with crimson trim, several data pads spread out in front of him on the small knee high table, as well as a large urn of Aricia's coffee.

It had been an eventful day after dealing with Maruad. Martin and the others had watched as Syrilth accepted the position of Dragon Elder for Earth there on the wind swept cliff after Maruad had been dragged away. The four hundred dragons that had come to Earth expecting to have to fight to free the eggs of their kind had unanimously elected to remain on Earth with Syrilth and begin building another safe haven for dragons within the Union. Upon leaving that cliff they had flown to the City Ship that now resided on the island of Sardinia. Even Martin had been amazed at the configuration Avi had been able to obtain. He had landed the ship next to a dormant volcano and then used the City Ship's powerful thrusters to actually jam the ship into the rock at the base of the mountain. Though not as large as when they had been flying in it, the City Ship still retained three kilometers in length. Avi had transformed the top three decks into what amounted to a massive cave. It was completely open inside and would allow for even adult dragons to take flight. The bottom two decks had been enlarged enough to allow dragons to move freely, but it still retained the many separate rooms and such. Syrilth had fallen in love with it the moment she entered the cavernous open area. There were four entrances into the ship now, and as they spent several hours moving through the ship, Majeir and her siblings had taken off and were running freely through the many corridors and rooms.

They had returned to Sparta after that, Martin telling Syrilth she needed no invitation to come to the villa whenever she desired. It was now her home as well as his. Syrilth was still somewhat taken aback at his frankness and openness with her and Arzoal had only chuckled and told her 'Martin Leonidas will grow on you'. Then she and Syrilth began the task of arranging instruction for the young ones and the delivery of the eggs to the cave.

Upon returning to Sparta he had been in meetings all day, to include a military briefing that Riall attended with him in regards to what was happening in High Coven space. They had only returned from that briefing thirty minutes ago. Martin found his Queens all sleeping on their bed, their limbs entwined with Anja and Dysea occupying the center of the bed. He had changed quickly and returned to the living area to find Riall had also put something more comfortable on and then just as they sat down to talk Armetus contacted them.

"I assumed as much sire." Armetus spoke from within the transmission. He was on a *LEONIDAS II*-Class Strike Cruiser heading for Earth. "They have demanded we do not seek to interrogate Vonis anymore than we already have and they demand a representative of this Overseer be allowed to have regular visits with him until the exchange can be arranged."

"They think much of themselves to demand anything at all with what is currently happening." Riall spoke. "By all accounts they are getting their asses handed to them quite badly."

Armetus nodded. "Indeed."

"Tell this Overseer to set it up Armetus." Martin spoke as he sat back on the couch. "I'll agree to those terms on one condition. I want certifiable proof that Veldruk is in fact dead. His head would be nice, but I'll settle for a blood sample. We don't have enough information on these Kavalians to leave our people hanging out there in the wind. Bring them home."

"We will be depriving ourselves of the possibility of valuable intelligence in the future Martin." Riall spoke from the chair he sat in. The mug of coffee was situated in his hands and he was drinking slowly.

Martin nodded. "I know... but I'm not willing to risk our people should things hit the shitter for the High Coven. They'd be fighting both the Kavalians and the Coven in order to escape if things go south. None of them are worth losing over intelligence we can probably get in other ways."

"Well things do not appear to be going well for the Coven at the moment." Armetus spoke. "The Kavalians came across from opposite borders and split their forces. They've already taken twenty-three planets and their attack is barely three days old."

"How much of that is due to superior numbers and surprise more so than superior training Armetus?" Riall asked.

"I would say all of it is due to superior numbers and surprise." He replied. "I can't be completely sure... but my people in The Wilds are reporting the High Coven is not engaging the Kavalians head on. Only small skirmishes. It appears as if they are letting the Kavalians win. At least for now."

Martin leaned forward. "Veldruk is dead for certain? No doubts?" He asked.

Armetus nodded. "That much we do know for sure. Three of my agents were able to get that out to us before communications were frozen."

Martin nodded. "My condition still stands."

Armetus nodded. "They seem awful anxious about getting this Vonis back Milord. Should we just let him go? They are being attacked by a hostile force, they are losing planets almost hourly and they contact us through an Overseer for the return of one of their own. Perhaps this Vonis knows more than he is letting on."

None of them saw Isabella step close to the hallway entrance and simply begin to listen as she wrapped the shadows around herself, holding her Mindvoice shields at the highest possible level she could maintain. She had been working with Dysea for months on her shields and her own Mindvoice abilities had increased dramatically. She wore only the loose white shirt that fell to the middle of her thighs and she crossed her arms over her chest as she listened.

Martin nodded. "I'm sure he does." He spoke. "He is also Bella's brother and..."

"Half brother sire." Armetus spoke. "And he did try to have her killed twice. And he was plotting a third attempt when he was captured. Not to mention attempting to bring down IES and a good portion of the vampire community that calls the Union home. He was caught within Union space conducting espionage and assassination missions sire. We would be well within our rights to drain him for everything he knows and then execute him. It is nothing personal sire... I respect and honor Isabella... now more than ever... but while he may be her brother, he is also a spy."

"All good points Armetus... but my feelings for Bella overrule common sense in this case. I love her just as much as my other Queens. I will not resort to more direct means with Vonis until I know and understand what Bella wants to do." Martin spoke.

Armetus didn't question this and nodded his head. "Very well Milord. I certainly trust you and Isabella enough to not concern myself with that. It is your decision."

"The purge?" Martin asked.

"Proceeding better than I had hoped." He answered. "We've rounded up over twenty minor agents that we have suspected for sometime. No big fish so to speak... but the raids and investigations are ongoing. Word is spreading quickly through the Union what is happening and we are getting hundreds of offers of assistance from the vampire communities alone. On four different worlds. Many of them are incensed that the attacks on the palace and your family happened and they have sworn whatever help we may need." He smiled. "I have promoted Marci and left her in command while I transit to Earth. She deserves it Milord. And I never thought I would hear myself say that I am very happy she is on my team."

Martin smiled. "Well... I never thought I would hear myself say I'm in love with a female vampire. But damned if that ain't so." He spoke as he gulped his coffee. "I know it throws off the normal rotation... but we'll stay here in Sparta for at least six months until you are reasonably sure we got as many as we could. We'll come back so that Eliani and Resumar can be born, but we'll only stay for a few weeks so that we continue with a normal rotation."

"I should return Martin." Riall spoke. "Gorgo... Gorgo and I can not stay here forever. This is your home."

Martin shook his head. "No. This is your home as well." He held up his hand when Riall began to speak. "Dilios has told me that since Sparta has reclaimed Gytheio as our port city there are hundreds of villas that are newly built and lay vacant." Martin saw Riall's eyes light up.

"Truly?" He asked. "We have always wanted a home by the ocean." He spoke.

"Then take her there tomorrow and find one you like Riall." Martin spoke. "And get used to the fact that when we come to Sparta for our stays, you and my mother will be coming with us. And I'm going to try and convince Jora and the others to move here as well. This is where our history lies. Apo Prime will always be a haven for us... a second home... but my heart is here in Sparta. My mother's heart is here in Sparta."

Riall nodded slowly. "Yes... I saw that yesterday when she was walking the streets. It was as if she had never left."

"I would hope you will feel that way one day as well Riall." Martin said.

Riall met his eyes. "My heart resides with her. Wherever she considers home I will go." He spoke.

Martin tilted his head slightly and Riall saw a small smile pass across his face. "Armetus I will see you when you arrive and we can work out the details of what we have talked about. I am tired and now I want to get some sleep."

Riall stood up quickly. "As do I." He spoke.

Armetus nodded from the transmission. "I will see you when I arrive sire."

Martin nodded as the transmission ended and he looked at Riall. “We have a meeting with Dilios and Panos in the morning in regards to setting up a permanent command center in Sparta for when we are here. I’ll see you for breakfast.”

Riall nodded and moved for the front door to make the short walk to the small apartment he and Gorgo were using. Isabella kept the shadows wrapped around her, the tears falling freely down her cheeks as she watched Martin gulp the last of his coffee and straighten the data pads on the table in front of him. There had been a time when she dreaded to hear those words, and now they filled her with longing and warmth. She watched as he turned and headed for the bedroom, coming even with where she stood, and then he moved.

Isabella yelped in surprise when his arms engulfed her and the shadows spilled away from around her body. He lifted her from the floor and pinned her to the wall, his dark brown eyes gazing at her with a myriad of emotions.

“Hello Bella.” He spoke softly with a smile.

She gazed at him with wide eyes, unable to comprehend that he had detected her with the shadows wrapped so expertly around her. No one had ever detected her in nearly two thousand years of life.

“Martin... Martin... how...”

His face changed a fraction as he saw the tears on her cheeks and he reached up with one hand to wipe the trail from her skin. “Bella... why are you crying?” He asked. She lowered her head quickly, embarrassed that he had seen her like this, but his fingers went under her chin to lift her face back level with his and he gazed into her hazel/green orbs. “Bella?”

“You!” She declared softly. “You make me cry.”

Martin looked confused. “What did I do to make you cry?”

“Your... your words make me cry.” She spoke. “You... speak them with no hesitation. With no question. They are what you feel for me... and there is no doubt in your words.”

Martin canted his head slightly and looked at her. “You mean the words that I love you?” He spoke.

Isabella nodded. “I am frightened Martin Leonidas.” She spoke.

“Frightened of me? Why?”

Isabella shook her head. “I am not frightened of you Martin. I am frightened because of what I feel for you. I am frightened because when you look at me... I do not want you to see my sister and all the pain she has caused you. I am...”

Martin pressed a finger to her lips. “This is what has occupied your mind all these months?” He asked. “That I see Yuri when I look at you?” Isabella nodded. “Have you told *Melda Min* this?”

“No.” Isabella answered quickly. “Her love for you, Aricia’s, Anja’s and For’mya’s, their love for you is without question. Without thought. As is yours for them. I... I did not think you could feel the same for me and that is why I have fought for so long to not love you.”

Martin grinned. “Has it worked?”

Isabella met his eyes. “No.” She said.

“Bella... I do not see Yuri when I look at you.” Martin spoke tracing her cheek with his finger. “You are nothing like your sister Bella. Nothing!” Martin hissed. “And believe me when I say I knew her far better than you.”

Isabella reached up and stroked his cheek, running her fingers through the mustache and goatee that was so meticulously trimmed. “We have... we have caused you so much pain in the past Martin. How could you feel...?”

Martin shook his head. “No Bella. You have not caused me any pain. You’ve caused me some sleepless nights dreaming about your delicious body... but never any pain.” He said softly as he leaned over close to her and let his lips graze her cheek. “And I do not hold your people responsible for the actions of only a few. Least of all you.” He leaned back and gazed into her eyes. “Never doubt that Bella. Never doubt that.”

“Then make me feel what you make the others feel Martin.” She said softly. “I want to know why none of them will ever desire another man for the rest of their lives. I want to feel you inside me! I want to cry out your name as they do. I want to...”

Martin’s lips descending on hers ended her sentence. He lifted her into his arms and pulled her away from the wall as he kissed her. It was all Isabella could do just to wrap her arms around him as his kiss sent currents of uncontrollable desire swelling through her. He carried her to the couch and shoved aside the table

with his foot before dropping to his knees and placing her firm ass down on the edge of the couch. She gasped as his hand filled with her thick dark hair and he yanked her head back gently. Not enough to illicit pain, but enough to show her he was in charge. His lips went to her exposed throat then and she cooed as they danced across her satiny skin.

He held her head with his hand and reached up with the other, tearing away the shirt she wore in one smooth motion. Her fingers dug into his shoulders as she felt his hand glide across her exposed chest, her nipples already standing proudly erect and the studded piercings cool against the burning of her skin. Isabella had felt like this before with Dysea... her body hot and tingling with pleasure and passion, yet it had never been this powerful. This overwhelming. His presence before her was so dominating and powerful and she cried out as his lips encircled one of her nipples and pulled on the stud with his teeth as he suckled. Her hands went to his head as his burning lips descended lower, trailing down the deep valley between her large breasts, nibbling all the way. He released her head as he moved across her flat abdomen, his tongue tasting her flesh. She fell back on the couch, her eyes wide in wonderment at the sensations flooding through her. She never imagined it could be like this. Her times with Dysea and the others were incredible... but now she burned in a way she had never felt before.

Martin's tongue moved ever lower, a moist trail of liquid heat burning her skin as he went. She felt his warm breath on the insides of her thighs, the softness of his facial hair caressing her and then his finger touched her throbbing pussy causing her to gasp and arch her back slightly. His finger danced across the engorged lips, touching and teasing, caressing her sensitive flesh and she could feel her pussy opening like a butterfly opens its wings. He flicked the ruby piercing on the hood of her clit causing her belly to heave at the waves of staggering pleasure that caused to surge to the forefront.

"Mar... Martin... no... more..." She gasped. "Stop! I can't... I can't..."

If Martin heard her, Isabella was sure he ignored her, for his warm lips suddenly dropped to her pussy and his tongue began a long, slow torturous lick upwards until it stabbed her pierced clit and everything exploded into delicious flashes of light and waves of as yet unfelt pleasure ripped through her being. Her quivering thighs clamped down on his head, something he didn't seem to mind in the least as his hands cupped her firm ass cheeks and he held her suspended off the couch as he feasted on her juices. Isabella's fists clenched and she punched the cushions of the couch, her body rigid and her abdomen spasming in powerful swells, her come rushing from her clenching pussy as his tongue worked her into a frenzy and then beyond a second time in as many minutes. Her eyes changed to vampire cobalt blue and she released a silent scream exposing her fangs, even as her fingernails drew long furrows along his powerful shoulders and upper back nearly breaking the skin.

Isabella felt his lips leave her still clenching pussy and before the tremors of her orgasm had eased his lips came down on hers once more. She could taste herself on his lips as she had on Dysea's sweet lips so many times before, yet this was so much more. She tasted his need, his burning and his desire for her and she reached between their bodies for him. He caught her hand however and pushed it above her head holding it there.

"No." He growled.

Isabella looked into his eyes and saw they that too had changed to yellow/gold orbs. He took her other hand as well and pinned them both above her head. Isabella looked down and saw his cock then, realizing her had gotten his pants off somehow, and her cobalt colored eyes grew even wider. Dysea and the others had told her how large he was, and how he filled them, but until this moment she had never really believed them.

"Martin... you... wait... Ahhhhhhh!"

Isabella's eyes flew open and the muscles in her neck bulged outward as every will crushing inch of Martin's immense cock slid into her in one glorious twelve inch plunge. His hands dropped to her hips and he remained still inside her, their groins mashed together as Isabella attempted to regain her breath stuffed with so much pulsing hot cock as she was. She could feel every incredibly thick inch of him in her depths, stretching her in a way she never thought possible. No man had ever penetrated her so deeply, so completely and the moment he began to move within her, conscious thought dissolved into heavenly enchantment.

His powerful body thrust slowly at first, too slowly as she exploded around his cock in her third orgasm in a matter of minutes, and she felt every throbbing pulse of his cock. As her come bathed his cock and leaked out to coat his large, low hanging balls his thrusts increased in power and speed. She had to do nothing but lay there as his hands held her hips tightly. She placed her own hands flat against his now sweaty chest and she could feel the heat of his body and the hammering of his heart. The low rumbling of his breathing as he was

intent on making her his in every way possible as she withered beneath him. That single thought exploded into her mind and drove her mad with desire. She wanted to be his. She needed to be his.

Isabella clenched her teeth and pushed herself up, wrapping her arms around his broad shoulders and she began matching his strokes into her depths with her own hips, slamming into him as he reached places she never thought she had. Every powerful thrust into her body set off small explosions within her brain, the pleasure building and building to a crescendo she could not stop even if she wanted too.

And she did not want to.

She pressed her cheek to his, content to let him control her body, to meld their flesh together as she gasped out her delight. The friction of his rock hard abdomen against her pierced clit and his broad chests against her pierced nipples was too much for Isabella to stand for long. She gripped the back of his head, relishing in the feel of his long black hair and put her lips next to his ear.

“Martin... oh... oh god...” She panted.

Martin’s thrusts only seemed to increase in power and intensity at her words, his hands tightening on her hips. “Do... do it Bella!” His voice was ragged but unmistakable in its intent.

Isabella was far too gone to think about it. With glazed over cobalt blue eyes, the shudders of pleasure gripping her more tightly now than they ever had with Dysea, Isabella opened her mouth and sank her vampire fangs into Martin’s neck.

Her cobalt blue eyes flew open wide and she heard him howl out in utter pleasure. The moment his blood touched her tongue Isabella’s body shattered and exploded in otherworldly pleasure. Martin’s roar echoed across the silence, his cock swelling even larger within her and then his searing hot come was racing up his enormous length and erupting inside her with the force of an exploding volcano. The moment the first blast of his come hit her womb Isabella sank into an abyss of pleasure that she did not want to come out of. Her eyes closed dreamily as she fed hungrily on the spicy blood of the man who had claimed her heart so many months ago, and he filled her with his essence and held her body tightly to his own.

It was several moments before Isabella regained enough conscious thought to realize the pleasure was ebbing. She withdrew her fangs from Martin’s flesh, lovingly licking the small puncture marks and then drawing her warm lips across the now sealed holes. She clung tightly to him as he shifted slightly and found his way to his feet. She groaned as his still steel hard cock throbbed within her and she buried her face in his hair to try and chase away the tremors of another orgasm. Every step he took caused her to squeeze him more tightly as she fought back the waves of delirious bliss. She didn’t notice as the lighting changed and then her vampire hearing detected the four additional heartbeats around her. Her head came up quickly as soft skillful hands caressed her flesh as Martin lowered her to their massive bed. Dysea’s delicious lips claimed hers and she kissed her deeply, plunging her tongue into her mouth and tasting all that Bella had to offer.

Isabella nibbled her elf lover’s lips as she pulled away and saw their faces. All of them were naked and aroused, the musky aroma of sex thick in the air, and she did not need to be a wolf to detect that. Her cobalt blue eyes moved to Martin’s face as she felt his huge cock flex within her. She saw him smile at her in the dim light of the room.

“You belong to us now Bella.” Martin spoke softly lowering his head to her neck and dragging his tongue along her sweaty throat. “You will always belong to us.”

Isabella watched him lift back up and grab her hips tightly, withdrawing his huge cock almost completely causing her to gasp in delight.

“I... I thought we... we were done.” Bella rasped out.

“Done?” Anja spoke seductively as she lowered her face to brush her full lips across Isabella’s ear and neck.

For’mya leaned in close to Isabella as well and nuzzled her neck and ear. “Bella my love... we have only just begun.” For’mya whispered in a soft enchanting voice.

Isabella looked up at Martin through clouded; half closed eyes and saw Aricia and Dysea firmly nuzzling Martin’s face and neck, their tongues tracing his sweaty skin. His eyes were wide and his dual fangs fully exposed as he was awash in their combined female auras.

Isabella screamed as Martin rammed himself home inside her just as Anja and For’mya enveloped her burning nipples in their warm lips and she plummeted into a world of delicious pleasures and feelings that she would not come out of until many hours later.

And then only because she could stand no more.

SPARTA ONE MONTH LATER

Isabella walked into the Spartan Senate hall, three *Durcunusaan* bowing their heads to her as she passed. There were no more questions in regards to her status among their people. Two days after that first night with Martin and the others, when she had fully regained all of her senses she had met with Deia and made it official. There was little fanfare, as Isabella had long been considered a Queen of the Lycavorian Union regardless of her personal feelings in that regard. Her official acceptance was ratified unanimously by the Union Senate overnight and the announcement made on the Netnews Channels the next day. She had wanted it kept as low key as possible and it barely made frontline news since she had been considered a Queen already. The Netnews channels were far more interested in the ongoing war with the High Coven and what was now called the Kavalian Federation Imperium.

That suited Isabella just fine.

They may have been regulated to operating from Sparta and Earth while the Intelligence Purge continued, but that in no way limited the members of the Senate. Many had not been to Earth or Sparta ever before and within the first week it was all the members of the Senate could do to actually appear for work. Deia had to declare an entire week free so that over a thousand Senators could flock to every corner of the planet. Many chose to remain in Sparta itself, or the Port City of Gytheio, and simply enjoy the new cuisine and the much slower pace the men and women of Sparta chose to take in their daily lives.

As for Isabella... there was a new spring in her step and a twinkle in her eye. Many noticed that she had fully completed her transformation from dark brooding former vampire princess to outgoing and smiling Lycavorian Queen. It was common now to see her walking the markets with Dysea or any one of the Queens laughing and shopping. She spent her days working primarily with Dysea, Tarifa and Selene as they hammered out three large trade agreements and they were present for the very first Eden City Higher University as it opened its doors and saw thousands of students from every culture and species line up to enroll. She had finally discovered her destiny in this life and she had grabbed hold of it without fear. In the evening at the villa there was hardly a moment that did not go by when she was not touching one of those she loved in some fashion, most especially her *ussta* she-elf. While she would have been very content to make love to one or all of them every night, there were just times when all they wanted to do was cuddle with each other, touching each other in some fashion. She finally learned and came to understand that it was the wolf in them, wanting to be in physical contact with those they loved, needing to be. That had always included her, yet now Isabella relished those moments most of all.

She had been with Dysea at one of the Spartan elementary schools when Martin had Mindvoiced for her to come to the Senate building. She knew immediately what it was in regards to. She had spent the last two weeks meeting with Vonis almost daily and simply talking to him, trying to get him from wanting to go back. He was teetering she knew, and he always asked to see Va'nimia, if only to insure she was safe and doing well. That was something Isabella herself would not allow. Va'nimia was in Eden City under the watchful eyes of Aihola and Lynwe. She had taken a job working in one of the smaller schools, and she had a *Durcunusaan* guard with her all the time for her own protection. She too was always asking to see Vonis, and it was obvious to anyone who spoke with her that she was deeply in love with him no matter what he had done.

As she entered the Senate Hall Isabella smiled to herself for she didn't doubt she was perhaps the only pureblood vampire that was allowed to freely walk within these walls without an escort of some sort. As she entered the main meeting chamber she noticed immediately that it was almost empty. Her eyes fell on where Martin sat at the large table, Deia, Armetus, Riall, Panos and Dilios the only others in attendance. She glanced at Martin with worry in her eyes as he came up to her. They shared a very brief but sensuous kiss and he led her to the table.

"They have sent a response haven't they?" She asked as she settled into the chair next to Martin.

Armetus nodded and slid the data pad across the table. "One week from today. In The Wilds on Tamin Three."

Isabella picked up the pad and nodded her head. “Out of the way. Half way for both of us. Sparsely populated with only three major settlements. Did they pick this spot?”

“The Overseer they control.” Deia replied. “Yuri herself will be there for the exchange.”

Isabella looked up quickly. “You’re joking?”

“No.” Martin said.

“Then I am going as well.” Isabella answered.

“Bella...” Martin began.

Isabella shook her head. “No. With a little more time I could have convinced him to stay. Can’t we delay it somehow?”

“Bella... we have seven intelligence operatives that have turned themselves in because we said we would make this deal.” Martin spoke. “I can’t back out now Bella... I would forfeit their lives if I did. I’m not willing to do that.”

Isabella took a deep breath and shook her head quickly. She of all Martin’s Queens was the more militaristic, and knew well the consequences of renegeing on such a deal as this. “No... of course not. I would not allow that Martin you know that.” She spoke softly. With a hiss of anger she got to her feet and tossed the data pad across the room listening to it shatter against the far wall. “*Vith!*” She swore.

Deia and Riall couldn’t help but smile at her curse. Isabella rarely allowed her anger to show but when she did she reverted to the ancient vampire language to curse. If she was extremely angry, then she reverted to the ancient Lycavorian language and then everyone got out of the building she was in.

“You should see this as well.” Martin told her holding out the second data pad.

Isabella met his eyes and took it from him. Her hazel/green eyes grew a little wider as she read. She looked up quickly. “This is confirmed?”

Armetus nodded. “I don’t know how he discovered it, but the most senior of the agents we had in the High Coven military was able to pull this from a computer core before he turned himself in and the core was wiped.”

Isabella looked at Martin. “They want to kill him.” She said.

Martin nodded slowly. “Whatever he has in his head they want back or they want to execute him because they think we already have it.” He leaned forward at the table. “We are leaving in the morning. I’ve had Vengal and his Drow scouts standing by for a couple of weeks now. Lynwe is going with me... Danny and Nayeca. Lisisa and Yuriko and I assume you as well Bella. Or am I wrong?”

Isabella looked at this man she so loved and she smiled. “All men and women who have a reason to hate her intensely.” She spoke.

Martin shrugged with a grin. “Nothing like a family reunion to get your blood pumping.” He said. “Especially when half the family wants to kill you outright and the other half want you to die real slow. I don’t believe for a minute she will come alone... she hates me more now than she ever has, though for the life of me I can’t figure out why.”

Deia and the others laughed at that and Deia shook her head. “No... I can’t imagine why Martin.” She said. “You are such a gentle and understanding man.”

“She has no reason to like me either.” Isabella said as she grinned. “Most especially since I have taken the active role as Queen.”

Martin nodded with a smile. “I know... that is why you and I are going to walk right up to her and say hello.” He pointed to the data pad. “Use that. Talk to him Bella; try to get him to see staying with us is his best option right now. I may want to talk with him... but at least I’m not going to kill him.”

Isabella nodded her head and squeezed the data pad. “I will try.” She stepped up next to him and kissed him fully on the lips heedless of those in the room. “Thank you Martin.”

He smiled and watched as she turned quickly and left the Senate hall. He turned back to the others and looked directly at Riall.

“I’ll take *MJOLNIR’S HAND* and my Strike Wing.” He spoke. “Riall... since Ceneu is still handling things from Apo Prime you get to be back up. *MOON WHISPERER* is in orbit right?”

Riall nodded with a smile. His new personal *LEONIDAS II*-Class Strike Cruiser had arrived two weeks ago with his Strike Wing and he had since spent the last days since it had arrived onboard, learning all about his

new ship, and the nights were full of rediscovering his precious mate Gorgo. “We’ll be ready.” He spoke confidently.

“Remain Shrouded unless the *sibfla* hits the fan.” Martin spoke. “Once the transfer is complete Armetus will contact you. If everything goes smoothly take your Strike Wing back to Apo Prime, drop off Armetus and the others and then return to Earth.”

Armetus nodded. “I will return to Earth within a few days after I insure my people are fine and I debrief them.”

Deia looked at him. “Martin... many of the Senate would like to return as well.” She spoke. “I can leave the Deputy Prime Minister here on Earth, but there is still work we can’t do from here, as much as I would like to say we could. This is my first trip here and... well I find I like it here.”

Martin met her eyes. “I don’t know... with the Purge going on *Tenna*... you and the others could become targets of the High Coven.”

“*Mandri*...” Deia smiled. “You can not keep us hidden away here on Earth. We must be seen.”

Panos and Dilios sat in their chairs with looks of surprise on their faces at what Martin and Deia had called each other. The ancient language was making a remarkable comeback here in Sparta and in the last two years alone three different schools had opened that taught only the ancient language. It was not uncommon to hear the Lycavorian language being spoken freely on the streets of Sparta now, far more so than anywhere else in the Union. Panos, Dilios and those among the Spartan Senate were the first to have learned the language. Martin and Deia’s close relationship was not well known outside of their small circle and they had both chosen to keep it that way. Martin saw their expressions and he smiled.

“Yes... we are related.” He spoke. “Deia was Eliani’s sister. She is my Great Aunt using human terms.”

Deia looked at them. “It is not known outside of a small few... for many different reasons and that is how we have chosen to keep it.” She turned back to Martin. “There will only be a few hundred of us *Mandri*. You can have Vistr blanket us with security if that makes you feel better. The ones who have chosen to go back with me have already stated they do not mind. They know how important you view their security and they will not question the added security forces. Laustinos can be my conduit to you. Earth has become almost as fortified as Apo Prime and he will be safe here.”

“He doesn’t like me very much *Tenna*.” Martin said.

Deia laughed. “When has that ever bothered you before?” She exclaimed. “He has a cool head and he is exceptionally intelligent and well versed in the politics of things. That is why I chose him as my Deputy.”

Martin nodded slowly. “Very well. But understand that when we come to Sparta for our extended stays I want you here as well. Perhaps not for the full six months, but you are my family and I like having my family around.”

Deia smiled and reached out to squeeze his hand. “That I would enjoy immensely, if only to watch you chase your children around the villa. At the rate you are going now... I suspect you will be overrun with little ones within three or four years.”

Martin turned a slight shade of red under his tan and the others at the table laughed at his expression as he sat back and waved his hand dismissively. “Bah... it will never happen. One from each of them.”

Deia laughed. “Oh yes... I’m sure they will agree to that.” She spoke sarcastically.

“What of the Zaleisian Defense Minister’s request?” Panos spoke now. “Milord... how much longer will I need to house those foul beasts in my prison? I grow weary of the Prison Commander contacting me and giving me the litany of their demands.”

Martin looked at him. “We know most of them are clones right?” He asked.

Deia nodded. “Anja has confirmed it. Biogenic clones. They are more durable than the cloned vampire troops, but biogenics is unreliable and often times dangerous in its results. That is why it has been banned for hundreds of years. Even within the High Coven.”

“What time frame is he requesting?” Martin asked.

“Three months.” Panos answered. “Perhaps four. They demanded that we do not attempt to interrogate any of their men and that they are to be treated with the utmost respect.”

“They were caught on my planet conducting covert missions!” Martin barked out. “You tell the Zaleisian Minister he can stick it in his *nubous* ear. He’s lucky I don’t kill them outright.”

“You know they are only doing this to test us.” Deia spoke. “They know that we know we will not execute these men because we want to find out as much as we can about this Kavalian Federation. We should arrange the exchange and demand whatever intelligence about the High Coven they discover up until that point. At least then we gain something.”

“I agree.” Riall spoke. “The enemy of my enemy is my friend.”

“Yeah... but the question remains do we want these people for our friends?” Martin asked. “Set it up for three months from now. Here... in Sparta. They are allowed to bring one ship into Union space. We will escort them from the border here to Earth. If they deviate from the instructions we give them, I will order the ship destroyed and every one of the prisoners executed.”

Deia nodded. “I’ll make the notification.” She said.

Dilios leaned forward. “Sire...?” He saw Martin’s look at him and he held up his hand. “Martin... what of Dymas’s request?”

Martin crossed his arms over his chest. “What about it? He is Senior Polemarch of the Lycavorian Ground Forces. If that is what he wants to do, I am not going to question him on it. I like the idea.”

Deia looked between the two men. “What’s this?”

Martin looked at her. “Walter wants all training of our ground forces to happen here. Earth has the space and the different environmental regions, and he wants to reestablish the Agoge Program on a much larger scale.” Martin held up his hand at her expression for Deia knew the brutality of the Agoge. “It will not be as bad as that.” He spoke quickly. “No... even I won’t allow that. But it will be tough and hard and with Walter and Lander and some of the older Spartans from my father’s time in charge of it... we will definitely see an increase in morale, pride and skills. He says he can turn out Spartans in thirty-six months that will be the equal to or better than any cloned troops the High Coven or Kavalians can field.”

“What about the men that have already fulfilled this training course?” Riall asked. “Those that have been serving for decades if not centuries Martin. We can not ask them to do it over again.”

Panos leaned forward now. “I have spoken with many of the Spartans among Joarl’s forces over the last year.” He said thoughtfully. “This is not something that will be forced on anyone... most especially those who have been fighting for longer than many have been alive. It will be completely optional for anyone who has already passed their training requirements. I think however, after speaking with many of them, an opportunity to be named Spartans under the gaze of Martin’s father at Thermopylae is too great an honor for them to turn down.”

“You would hold the graduation ceremonies there?” Riall asked. He looked at Martin. “Does your mother know this?”

Martin nodded. “She was the first one that Walter and Panos went to with this idea. She agreed before they even finished telling her how they would implement it. I don’t much like my father or our name being put on such a pedestal... but Aricia and the others brought my mother in on it after she had talked to Panos and Walter and convinced me.”

Deia smiled. “Well... perhaps I will use your mother more often to get what I want if she was able to convince you of something so easily.”

Dilios nodded as the others chuckled. “Lady Gorgo was very insistent that we do this once we told her. We will conduct the graduation ceremonies in such a way as to not disturb King Leonidas’s monument or tomb. But to have the eyes and spirit of Martin’s father looking down on them as they are named Spartans... well...”

Riall nodded. “I know well the feelings of being there. It will require much construction and training. I would like to be involved with that Martin. If Dymas does not mind.”

Panos smiled and nodded. “He was hoping you would offer to help.” He spoke. “We will need the guidance of someone familiar with how things have gone these last centuries outside Sparta so we do not offend anyone.”

Deia nodded. “It will have my support as well.”

Martin nodded and got to his feet. “We can hash out the rest of it at a later time. None of it’s really important... and I have a date with a vampire *upaee* to prepare for.”

MAXIMUM SECURITY DETENTION CENTER KING'S ROW

It was perhaps the most heavily guarded portion of Sparta.

The main street was lined with the statues of past Kings of Sparta from the Agiad Line. Some were branded as traitors and killed, some as cowards and expelled, but their statues and history were forever cemented in the annals of Sparta. Bunkered positions lined the street on both sides and the ten meter high steel and concrete wall encompassed a four square block area that backed up to the old south gate of ancient Sparta. In the entire two thousand year history of the prison, no one had ever escaped. Some had tried, all had failed. If by some miracle you were able to break out of the lower levels and make it to the surface, the troops manning the bunkered positions and sniper towers along the wall would end your escape attempt instantly.

The large four story building at the end of the street was very unassuming, but underneath the ancient deco of Greece was the most advanced and secure detention center anywhere in the Union. Even more secure than all but one of the facilities on Apo Prime, and that was only because they had modeled it after this particular center. The four stories above ground held offices and one floor was a complete barracks. There were two hundred and fifty actual cells on nine levels below ground and they were guarded by a minimum of a hundred Spartans at any given time. Talco and all of the Kavalians captured in North America had been moved here and were under heavy guard.

Isabella stood in the room with the only vampire prisoner as he sat at the single bare table looking at the data pad. He wore a light blue jumpsuit which was the standard prison uniform. She turned from the clear glass viewing window as Vonis tossed the data pad onto the table. The room was soundproof, but the four Spartans that walked the corridor outside were clearly visible.

“Why show me this?” Vonis asked finally.

“Why?” Isabella spoke. “Vonis... they will kill you if you go back.”

“You don't know that.” Vonis said. “This could be wrong.”

“She killed Veldruk Vonis!” Isabella barked.

“Why would you care about that? You hated our father. You should be pleased he is dead.” Vonis spoke. “You should hate me for that matter. I have done some of the same things he has done.”

Isabella moved closer to the table her hazel/green eyes narrowing. “I hated him because he forced me to bed with a pureblood that was as vile and twisted as any man I have ever known. I hated him because he butchered my mother like a dog in the street for trying to protect me!”

“She was protecting you because you were defecting Isabella.” Vonis spoke. “You were about to betray your people.”

“I betrayed no one! And those who followed our father were not my people!” Isabella barked loudly. “They never asked me anything that was not already well known when I came to the Union! I wanted more than what our father offered me! I certainly did not want the blood and violence that he and Xerxes so thrived on Vonis. The senseless killing of conquered people whose only crime was not wanting to live under the heel of the High Coven! And I never wanted the attention of the brute Eclan! Did you know he wanted to share me with his sick perverted friends? Did father ever tell you that? How he forced me to endure the sick attentions of four men at once. Father knew all this and he did nothing!”

“And now you share the bed of the Lycavorian King and four other women Isabella.” Vonis said softly.

“And I do so willingly Vonis... I do so because I love them. All of them. I never thought I would ever feel that emotion after what our father did to me. What he forced me to endure. I have learned otherwise in all my years.” Isabella spoke. “And I would die for any of them in an instant! Just as you would die to protect Va'nimia.”

Vonis hissed loudly. “You do not know of what you speak.” He spat.

“Don't I?” Isabella spoke. “Then why have you asked to see her every day Vonis. Why did you enter such a rage when you saw that scum about to rape her? You killed them without thinking and you did so quite brutality in fact. Your only thought was to protect her and get her to safety. Why is that Vonis?”

“It... it does not matter now.” He spoke softly. “Why do you care so much about me?”

Isabella shook her head. “No Vonis... you are my brother. Why do you think no one has questioned you? Why do you think whatever you have requested has been given to you within reason?”

“It is a ploy... to earn my trust.” Vonis spoke.

Isabella slammed her hands down on the table with such force the metal bent inward and Vonis pushed back his eyes wide. He looked up and saw her eyes had changed and her fangs had extended.

“*Forn nubous igord!*” She screamed. “Do you know who is King here? Do you have any idea *bode!* Veldruk ordered his father butchered like a dog in the street Vonis! Xerxes had his body dismembered and put his head on a stake because Leonidas slaughtered his invincible army at will! If they had not been betrayed by one of their own, Leonidas would have won! Martin has more reason to hate you than anyone walking this planet... any planet! Father held his mother in a prison for fifteen years, enduring unimaginable tortures and rapes. Martin Leonidas could wipe away your very existence in a single blink! He would erase even the memory of you Vonis! You have not been questioned or treated as the Kavalian dogs who share this prison with you because *he* has ordered it Vonis, not me. And he has done this because he loves me! He *loves* me! A pureblood vampire... just like you! The same species that has caused him more agony in the last three millennia than you could possibly imagine! You are still alive by his will alone! Not mine! That alone should tell you he is different. That alone should tell you that you have a future here. In the Union! Or do you not wish to see your child born Vonis?” (You fucking fool! Child.)

Vonis’s head came up his eyes wide. “What?” He gasped.

“Vanimia carries your child Vonis!” Isabella spoke.

“You lie!” Vonis screamed bringing himself out of his chair and slamming his own hands down on the table, his eyes changing to cobalt blue and his fangs extending.

“Do I?” Isabella spoke. She stood up quickly as the door slid aside and two Spartans entered the room. She held her hand up to them.

“My Queen?” The senior Spartan asked.

Isabella turned to look at him and nodded her head. “I am fine.” She said. “I am not in danger. Return to your posts.”

The two Spartans glared at Vonis but they backed out of the room as she ordered and Isabella turned back to look at him. His cobalt eyes were wide as he stared at her. “They... they called you Queen.” He spoke.

Isabella nodded. “Yes... but you knew that Vonis. It was one of the reasons father sent you to kill me.”

Vonis returned slowly to her chair. “I... I did not...”

“You didn’t believe it would actually happen did you.” Isabella spoke.

Vonis met her eyes. “Father and Yuri... they said you would never be accepted.”

“Yes well... father is dead and Yuri and your mother are scrambling to save the High Coven.” Isabella spoke. “You have seen what I had delivered to you Vonis. Martin allowed me to show you what is happening within Coven space. To be brutally honest, they are getting their asses kicked at every turn. This...” Isabella reached out and lifted the pad. “This is only a means for them to tie up loose ends. They want you dead Vonis... for whatever you hold in your head they want you dead. Whether they believe you might give it to us... or that you already have... you will die if you return.”

“And you expect me to believe your King will not want this information if I remain?” Vonis said.

“Vonis... if Martin Leonidas wanted what you have in your head... believe me when I tell you he would have it already and you would be a vegetable or dead.” Isabella replied. “Do not throw away the future you could have here with us. With me. Do not throw it away over some misplaced sense of loyalty to those who are not loyal to you. You are my brother... and you are not like Yuri, your mother and most definitely not like our father. You are like me in that you want more. What I... what Martin offers you is the opportunity to explore that future. He wants nothing in return. He already has my love... and he does not want anything else.”

Isabella took a deep breath and moved to the door. “We are leaving in the morning. You will be transferred to *MJOLNIR’S HAND*... Martin’s ship, later this evening. You do not have much time to make a decision Vonis. It will be out of our hands once we arrive on Tamin Three. Martin will not risk a war or the lives of seven men and women because you can not make up your mind. Think about that... and know you will never see your child before Yuri or your mother bleeds you dry.”

Isabella motioned to the Spartan and he touched the panel sliding the door open. She stopped in the doorway and looked at the senior officer. “Make sure the Kavalians do not see him when he is transferred. And insure he is given decent clothes and not this prison garb. If he is going to his death... at least he can do so with

his dignity.” Isabella turned back. “Goodbye Vonis.” She spoke. “I have done all I can to convince you. I will trouble you no more. Your future is in your hands now.”

TIMAN THREE ONE WEEK LATER

It was a pretty disgusting planet as far as Martin was concerned. The three settlements, while large and modern were wretched gatherings of the scum of the universe. The streets were clogged with trash and in three different cases, rotting bodies tossed into the allies behind one of the many taverns. The scents that filled the air were horrible and disgusting and it was all he and the others could do to keep from vomiting so sensitive were their noses.

They had met the Overseer in the large hanger like structure on the edge of the largest settlement. He had brought two *STRIKER DTs* as their agreement limited each group to only thirty troops, and both of those ships now pointed outward through one end of the hanger, an elf Spartan in each of the sniper turrets on the top, one of them For'mya. The hanger was massive in size and the large table had been set up directly in the middle of the hanger. Martin stood ten meters from the table now, Isabella on his left, Aricia on his right. He was not prepared to risk Anja or Dysea on this mission because they carried the future of the Union in their wombs. Isabella was a superior warrior, and Aricia had already proven her skills, while For'mya resided in one of the sniper turrets ready to viciously protect all of them. Danny stood to Aricia's right, Anuk beside him. All of them wore the black Spartan body armor without their helmets however. The thick gold trimmed crimson capes scrapped along the floor of the hanger and connected to their armor at the shoulders with small silver disc shaped circles and inverted 'V's adorning them.

Behind them, standing an additional ten meters back was three *Durcunusaan* in a triangle, Vonis standing rigidly in the center.

Martin glanced back to look at his stoic face quickly and then turned to look at Isabella. [Mindvoice Shielded] *You weren't able to convince him Bella?* He asked softly making sure Aricia was included within their connection.

Isabella shook her head. [Mindvoice Shielded] *I tried as hard as I could.* She replied. *My father's training still rules his mind and I will not allow him to put our people at risk.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *There is still time Bella.* Aricia spoke hopefully.

The blast of engines drew their attention as two High Coven Runners lowered into view near the other end of the hanger. Isabella shook her head. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Not any longer.* She spoke.

They watched in silence as the Runners set down and their engines powered down to silence. The rear ramps opened and standing on the ramp as it lowered stood Yuri. She was flanked by half a dozen heavily armed troops and three Immortals. Behind them were five men and two female vampires. No one exited the second Runner and Isabella laughed softly within Mindvoice.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *She must think we are fools.* She stated her connection open to Daniel and Anuk now.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *How many?* Danny asked shifting on the balls of his feet.

Isabella sniffed the air gently, using her inbred ability to detect blood of any kind even if it pumped within a person's body. [Mindvoice Shielded] *At least twenty. Perhaps more.*

Aricia was watching Yuri as she walked confidently towards them. She glanced up at Martin.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *You took this woman into your bed Beloved?* She asked in an offended but humorous voice.

Martin chuckled. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Let's just say it was one of my weaker moments.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *That lasted for two years?* Danny piped in with a chortle.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Ok... one of my weaker periods. So sue me.* Martin stated with a laugh. *Let's do this. Her stench already makes me want to vomit.*

They five of them moved up closer to the table and stopped as Yuri moved up to the same distance. Her cobalt blue eyes glared at him.

“Martin... it has been a long time.” Yuri spoke easily.

“Not long enough to suit my tastes.” Martin answered. “You have to be my most favorite bitch in the universe.”

Yuri’s jaw twitched ever so slightly and her eyes moved to Aricia and then turned to look at Isabella. “And I see you have brought your pureblood whore and my traitorous bitch of a half sister.”

Aricia smiled. “I still don’t understand what you saw in this *pomai* Beloved.” Aricia spoke. “She smells like worn month old pussy. Do you not ever bath woman?”

Danny couldn’t contain himself and he laughed out loud.

“Your pet has a sharp tongue Martin.” Yuri spoke with a grin. “I wasn’t aware you were into children Martin. Really... you must learn how to control your playthings.”

Martin chuckled. “Ah... Yuri. I understand that you are upset because Aricia and Isabella and the others make me feel something you never could. I’m sorry... but when I found them... it was like going from Pre-K to college. They are just so much tastier and they smell so much better.” Martin leaned over to firmly nuzzle Aricia’s ear and then he did the same to Isabella before looking back to Yuri. “Sister... you ain’t even in the same category as what I got now. You are what they used to refer to as a dead fuck! Of course... I’ve already told you that haven’t I. You just got too much shit in your ears to understand that.” Martin’s words made both Aricia and Isabella’s heart sing inwardly in joy. “Let’s get this over with. I don’t want to keep you from your little war with the Kavalians. That would be downright unsportsmanlike, and they seem to be doing such a fine job of kicking your fat ass!”

“Do not be so sure of yourself Martin. You are not invulnerable.” Yuri snapped viciously. “I didn’t think you would actually keep the terms of the agreement.”

“Unlike you Yuri... I have honor.” Martin spat.

“I could kill you now and be done with it.” Yuri spoke. “You brought less than what we agreed on. And where is your beast? I was under the impression he was never far from your side.”

Martin shrugged. “I don’t need anymore than what I have.” He spoke confidently. “Unlike you. And if you are referring to Torma... he’s around somewhere. I think he was chasing one of the scrawny animals they have on this stinking planet to eat.”

“We shall see.” Yuri spoke. “Now!” She barked out.

Martin didn’t move as the shadows unwrapped all around them and cloned vampire troopers began appearing with their weapons trained on Martin. He crossed his arms over his chest with a bored look and shook his head as Aricia and Isabella simply smiled. Four cloned vampire troops had appeared within several feet of Martin, Aricia and Isabella, their eyes hard and their weapons unwavering. In all nearly fifty had appeared and were now spread out among them with cruel smiles on their faces.

Yuri smiled sadistically. “I could kill you now and eliminate an enemy of the High Coven in the blink of a single eye. Perhaps I will just kill all of you and leave this place with my brother so that I can return him to my mother.”

Isabella began laughing then and she shook her head. “You are even more arrogantly predictable that I thought sister. It is no wonder the Kavalian dogs are crushing High Coven forces wherever they meet.”

The smashing sound from above caused Yuri’s head to lift skyward, as well as all the other vampires in the hanger. They watched as the body of the cloned vampire soldier fell from above and smashed to the floor directly in front of Yuri. His body was missing an arm and a leg and appeared as if he had been ravaged by a monster of sometime.

Martin laughed and Yuri’s head snapped up to glare at him. “He must have tasted bad.” He spoke. “Torma never spits out his food!”

Yuri’s eyes went wide as a massive tidal wave of shadows moved from the far walls of the hanger with blinding speed and swirled all around them. And then suddenly white haired, half vampire Drow elves began to appear by the dozens as they unwrapped the shadows from around their bodies. Her eyes went back to where Martin stood but Isabella was no longer next to him, and she watched as Aricia simply lifted her hand and a shimmering psychic diamond appeared in her palm and she launched it at the nearest cloned trooper. Yuri watched his chest explode out his back as Martin launched a similar psychic diamond and a cloned trooper’s head vanished in a spray of blood and bone. An entire section of the wall to her right smashed inward and the immense body of the obsidian scaled dragon appeared, followed by the smaller azure blue scaled beast. Torma simply lifted his front foreleg and brought it crashing down on two cloned vampires, impaling them on his thick

talons. Isheeni let out a bellow and lifted another in her forelegs, her wickedly curved talons shredding his body into three bloody sections before she tossed the carcass to the side.

None of the Drow elves was more evident than Lynwe's nearly six foot tall body as she physically launched a cloned trooper through the air to smash against the hanger's wall while sticking her K12 into the face of another and pulling the trigger, her amber eyes hard points of gleefully savage light as she did what she had wanted to do for so many years.

Yuri stepped forward to move but felt the pressure of three weapons press against her flesh.

"Hello mother." Lisisa's voice was trembling with barely harnessed rage as she pressed the barrel of the K12 against Yuri's right temple, the shadows drifting away from her lithe frame. "It's so very nice to see you again."

"Hello mother." Yuriko's voice echoed the barrel of her K12 pressed to the back of Yuri's left ear, as the fingers of shadows melted away from her as well. "It has been so long."

Isabella unwrapped the shadows from around her body directly in front of Yuri and placed the Shukur fighting knife's point directly under her chin. Her cobalt blue eyes were filled with hate and rage.

"Moving would not be in your best interests at the moment Yuri. But I will not stop you if you tried." Isabella spoke.

In five seconds there were nearly two hundred half vampire Drow elves surrounding the much smaller group that Yuri had so arrogantly assumed would be enough. General Vengal was smiling brilliantly as he stepped from the back of the *STRIKER DT*, his P190 in his hands and he strode toward Martin quickly, waving his hand at the seven intelligence agents who had wisely dropped to the floor of the hanger.

Martin looked at Yuri as Torma and Isheeni moved towards them, Torma lifting his front leg and flicking an oversized Talon into a cloned trooper that stared at him in awe. The talon smashed into his midsection and sent him hurtling across the hanger, his arms flailing wildly.

We are not here to play with them husband. Isheeni admonished him playfully as she came up to stand behind Aricia.

He was in my way. Torma echoed as he too moved with confident grace and came up behind Martin.

Martin smiled as he stepped forward. "Never assumed you have outsmarted me Yuri." He spoke as he came to stand next to Isabella. "You will always be wrong." He looked over his shoulder and smiled as every one of the surviving cloned troopers was covered by at least four Drow elves. "You do remember the Drow don't you Yuri?" Martin spoke turning back to look at her. "You should... but don't worry, they do remember you. They remember you as the vile bitch who ordered that they all be experimented on by your twisted doctors. Another of your mistakes Yuri. You discarded them as weak and impotent. They weren't what you wanted. That mistake was my gain Yuri... because one word from me... and you die. All your little troopers here die."

"I wish that anyway father." Lisisa hissed as she jacked back the hammer of the K12 and pressed it tighter to Yuri's temple. "For all the pain I have suffered. All the humiliation. I want her blood on my hands!"

Martin moved over next to her and leaned close to her head, gently nuzzling her cheek. "No Lisisa... control your lust. Let it leave you. You are my daughter as well now... and this will not solve anything."

"You can not..." Yuri started.

Isabella pressed the point of the blade against Yuri's chin further. "Don't not speak bitch!" She hissed.

Lisisa felt her father's warming aura embrace her and she closed her eyes as it filled her with love and acceptance. She reveled in those sensations for a brief moment and then opened her eyes once more and took a deep breath. Martin smiled and kissed her cheek gently. "That's my girl. No matter what happens in the future Lisisa... always remember you have my love and the love of your mothers. Unconditionally." He stepped back and moved next to Aricia. "We came here to do a deal." Martin spoke. "I have my people..." He looked back as he saw Vengal and Armetus ushering his agents into the DT. "Where is my proof that your asshole father is dead?"

Yuri glared at him as Isabella applied more pressure. "Will... will you call her off?"

Martin smiled. "Bella?"

Isabella glared at Yuri for a moment and then took the Shukur away stepping closer Yuri and putting her face close. "Remember this day as a gift sister!" Isabella snarled. "And every day hence forth as a gift, a gift of continued life given to you by Martin Leonidas."

Isabella stepped back away from her and felt Martin's arm encircle her waist. He leaned forward and nuzzled her neck while kissing her cheek as he pulled her back to stand next to Aricia who quickly took her hand.

"Lisisa. Yuriko." Martin spoke. He waited while they slowly stepped back lowering their weapons and moving to stand behind him. His eyes fell on Yuri as she glared at him, reaching up to touch her chin. "My proof... or we walk with Vonis and you go back to getting your ass kicked by the Kavalians." Martin told her.

Yuri motioned with her hand and one of the Immortals stepped from between the three Drow elves that had their weapons leveled at him. He moved to the table and placed the medium sized box on the surface. He entered a code and the sides of the box slid open to reveal the shriveled head of the former High Lord Veldruk. The skin was ripped open as if someone had taken a hot knife to his face, his eyes wide in death and bulging veins across the corneas still visible.

"Damn!" Martin barked. "He was uglier when he was alive."

Isabella moved forward and lifted the portable scanner passing it over the remains twice as she watched the results. She turned to Martin. "This is no clone." She spoke. "It is him."

Martin nodded. "Couldn't have happened to a nicer guy." Martin spoke. He turned and motioned to the three Spartans who were still guarding Vonis.

Yuri glared at her brother as he was brought forward. He wore a simple cloak and cowl and his face was impassive as he was led up to stand next to Martin and Isabella. She stepped closer, mindful of the many weapons still directed at her, as well as the intensely fierce look of the two dragons.

Vonis lifted his eyes to meet Yuri's gaze. "Yuri... I am..." He spoke.

"Do not speak to me traitor!" Yuri snapped. "Our mother has already decided your fate Vonis. She wishes to speak with you about your future."

Yuri's eyes were cold he saw, without the warmth he had seen months before when she looked at him. Her face was a mask of anger and he could smell her blood pumping angrily, her humiliation at what had just happened enhancing that anger to boundless proportions.

"Vonis?" Martin's voice broke the silence and he waited until his eyes turned to look at him. Martin motioned with his head behind them and Vonis turned slowly. He heard Isabella gasp in surprise and Vonis's eyes grew wide as For'mya led Va'nimia down the ramp of the DT. He could see her stunning blue eyes even from where he stood and they were filled with tears.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *All you need do is turn and grasp the future Vonis. Martin's voice burst into his head and his wide eyes turned back to him in shock. He had brushed aside his Mindvoice Shields as if they weren't even there. I have lived my life by one primary rule Vonis. Never fear the unknown, for it could bring wonders you can not imagine. You took the first step when you discovered Va'nimia, now embrace the unknown and move forward. You will not be questioned or harassed in any way. On that you have my word as King. You can have a future with a woman who loves you Vonis. A woman you love as well if only you will allow what I can smell you feel for her to come out.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I will be hunted. I will never be at peace.* Vonis spoke tentatively.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *You let me worry about that. She carries your son you know.* Martin lifted his hand. *And she asked me to give you this.*

Vonis looked down and saw the necklace he had given to her those long weeks ago. He lifted it from Martin's hand as Yuri looked on in confusion. She could feel the tremors within Mindvoice, but the shields guarding that conversation were more powerful than any she had felt except for her mother.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Your decision right now will not affect just one life, but three lives. Do you love her enough to reach past what you fear? You are Isabella's sister... and she was right when she told me you are not like your father and Yuri. Prove to me Bella is right about that Vonis and I will protect you myself if I have too.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *And you will want nothing in return?*

Martin smiled at him. [Mindvoice Shielded] *I have Isabella's love. Whatever information you have in your head Vonis is not more important to me than that.*

"Let us go brother!" Yuri growled as she reached out to take his arm. "We have much to talk about."

Vonis felt her fingers close around his arm and he looked up as Va'nimia began to turn and walk back up into the DT, For'mya holding her weeping body, the sobs making her shudder with their power.

That sealed Vonis's decision.

"King Leonidas I request political asylum within the Lycavorian Union." He barked out.

Martin's Shi Viska flared into existence as did the Shi Viskas on the three Spartans that had escorted him her. He stepped in front of Vonis and the three other Spartans stepped up next to their King and closed ranks between Vonis and Yuri. He had told them this might occur and to be ready.

"Request granted!" Martin barked.

For'mya and Vanimia were half way up the ramp of the DT when the commotion from behind them caused them to turn as four Shi Viskas flared and appeared and Torma bellowed out a threatening roar. Va'nimia's eyes were wide as she watched Vonis's body blur in motion and then he was in front of her lifting her into his arms and crushing her to him.

Va'nimia's dam burst then and the last weeks of not seeing him and discovering she was pregnant and might never see him again dissolved into nothing as she felt his arms crush her to him. She cried out in joy when he buried his face into her long dark hair and then his lips were upon hers and he was kissing her with more passion and feeling than he ever had before. It was a kiss that Va'nimia surrendered to completely and responded to without hesitation.

Vonis tore his lips from hers and set her down on the deck of the ramp, his hands coming up to stroked her hair and gaze into her tear filled eyes. Blue eyes that had captured all that he was from the first moment he had laid his gaze upon them.

"My... my name..." He gasped out leaning forward and gently holding her face in his hands. "My name... is Vonis." He told her. "My name is Vonis, Va'nimia of the Elves. And I love you with every waking breath in my body. I will always love you. I... and I wish my future to be with you and whatever that may hold for us. If... if you will have me."

Va'nimia's face rivaled the brightness of any sun when she heard those words and she threw her arms around his broad shoulders as he lifted her off the deck. She was nodding her head as fast as she could, nuzzling his rough stubble of a beard with her soft skin and loving the way that made her feel.

"Yes!" She gasped. "Yes... I will have you Vonis. I will have you for eternity."

"I am... I am sorry for all the pain I have caused you Va'nimia." He spoke softly. "I can not begin to tell you how sorry I am. I hope one day... I hope one day you can forgive me."

Va'nimia shook her head quickly and brought her face close to his, her forehead resting against his lips. "The... the moment you returned to me I forgave you." She whispered to him. "The moment you returned to me." She lifted her head slowly. "I... I carry our child Vonis. It is a boy."

Vonis nodded. "A boy child that will grow up free beside his brothers and sisters. However many you desire my Va'nimia."

For'mya smiled as she watched Va'nimia bury her face into his chest and Vonis's arms pull her as tightly to his as his strength allowed.

Yuri glared at Martin. "You have broken our deal!" She shouted. "You will return him to me this instant!"

Martin shook his head. "No Yuri. I brought him... just like I said I would. He requested political asylum before being transferred into your custody. I granted it. Is that a problem?" His Shi Viska hummed on his arm and while it was not leveled in a threatening manner, Yuri knew full well that unlike normal Spartan warriors, Martin could launch his shield from any position his arm was in and not from just directly in front of him. He could control his Shi Viska as if it was a living thing.

"I will... I will not forget this Martin!" Yuri snarled.

Martin smiled. "And I won't forget your failed attempt at bringing more troops than you were suppose to and trying to kill me Yuri. I'm sure you won't forget... and neither will I." He tilted his head slightly to the side. "You know... he never told us anything Yuri." He spoke softly. "We questioned him for hours... and he never told us anything. You were going to kill him for nothing. You were going to kill him for falling in love

with a female elf. Tell me Yuri, how much of a hypocrite does that make you? You fell in love with a clone that you turned into a vampire.” Martin turned his head.

“You know nothing of what you speak!” Yuri barked.

“Don’t I?” Martin asked softly. “You love Moran don’t you? Or is that just a ploy for you as well?” Martin stepped closer to her, towering over her body. Yuri tried to back up but she really had no where to go and she glared up into his eyes.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Did you think I didn’t learn anything about you in the two years we were together Yuri? I’m not as stupid as you think I am. Isabella and Aricia were standing there watching, even Aricia unable to penetrate the shields her Beloved had thrown up. Tell your mother Yuri... tell her this for me. The Kavalians are coming to pick up the fools they sent to Earth to steal dragon eggs. Once they do... that will be the last contact we will have with them. If they enter Union space, no matter where it might be, I’ll obliterate them.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Why should I believe you?* She snapped.

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I hate traitors to their own people Yuri, even more than I hate you. They will receive no help from us in any way. Whatever is happening is between you and them.* Martin reached up and took the small data pad from the small pouch on his body armor. He held it out to her. *This is everything we have been able to discover about the ones that came to Earth. You probably haven’t had time to inspect them since they are kicking your asses all over the place.* He waited for Yuri to reach out and take the pad and smiled when she did. He knew then if she was taking it, they were losing badly. *The Intelligence Purge will continue Yuri, and whenever we find a High Coven agent they will be executed. I’m not fool enough to think we’ll get them all, but we’ll get most of them.* He spoke softly. *We will not attempt to come into High Coven space Yuri; we will remain within our own borders unless you and your mother do something stupid.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *Why?*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I told you... I hate traitors to their own people. Lisisa... my mother... my Queens... they are untouchable to you and Aikiro. If any harm befalls them Yuri and I discover you or the Coven were behind it... what the Kavalians are doing to you will look like a walk in the park compared to what I will do.*

“Beloved!” Aricia called. “We must go!”

Martin turned and looked at her quickly and nodded his head before looking back to Yuri. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Remember my words to you Yuri. I will not repeat them.* He started to turn and walk away but looked back at her. *Remember November 12th 2066 Yuri. You aren’t as smart as you think you are, and you should be more careful who you let rape you. Goodbye Yuri.*

[Mindvoice Shielded] *I will kill you!* Yuri growled savagely. *If it is the last thing I do in this life I will kill you Martin!*

Martin’s smiled once more. [Mindvoice Shielded] *Maybe one day Yuri. And then again... maybe not. No one knows what the future holds. I’d be more concerned about your future right now. It appears your precious High Coven is in deep trouble. So long Yuri. Give your mother a kiss for me... just to let her know how I feel about her.*

Martin turned and headed back for the DT. “We’re leaving! Lynwe... cover us!”

“I have it!” Lynwe announced.

Martin looked back to Yuri. “Tell Moran I said hello Yuri.” He barked over his shoulder.

Yuri could only stand there and watch as the man she hated most in this life slipped through her fingers once more.

Aricia and Isabella fell in beside him as he walked and slipped their hands into his. “Beloved... what were you saying to her? I could not penetrate your shields. You have never done that to me before Martin.”

“I was giving her a warning.” He answered looking at her.

“What warning?” Isabella asked.

“That if she or her mother ever attempts to harm any of you again... my mother or Lisisa... I will find her.” Martin spoke softly. “And when I do it will take her a very long time to die, and I will watch as the life bleeds out of her for that entire time.” Aricia and Isabella stopped walking and he turned to look at them.

“What?”

“You told her that?” Isabella gasped.

“In those words?” Aricia barked.

Martin nodded. "Yeah... pretty much! I did it politely though! I have learned to be more diplomatic in the last year thanks to you guys." He said with a smile.

Aricia and Isabella smiled at the same instant and both of them threw their arms around him. He laughed and picked them up in his arms and headed for the DT.

SPARTA KING'S VILLA FOUR MONTHS LATER

Anja and Dysea walked side by side down the corridor from their bedroom. They were both beginning to show the very first signs of the children they carried, their normally flat abdomens just beginning to bulge. The thin robes they wore were tied at the waist loosely, and it was easy enough to determine they were naked beneath the robes as they walked. Their tanned legs were exposed as they walked their skin tanned and still luxurious in its softness. They were talking softly as they came into the main living area and crossed the huge room and entered the huge kitchen. The smell of Helen's biscuits and Aricia's coffee filled the entire villa and as they entered they saw Aricia and For'mya leaning close together looking at a large data pad and giggling, while Isabella and Helen were standing by the counter speaking in soft whispers and smiling.

Helen turned as they came into the kitchen. "Well... the sleeping beauties finally awake." She spoke with a huge smile.

Anja held up her hands as she and Dysea settled into the bar stool like chairs. For'mya and Aricia both leaned over to receive kisses from Dysea. "Don't blame us." Anja spoke. "If two of our bedmates hadn't been making so much noise last night we would have got up much earlier." She said looking directly at Aricia and For'mya.

"*Melyanna* and I had to put pillows over our heads." Dysea said as Isabella walked over and gave them both a mug of coffee while exchanging soft kisses with them.

"That's not our fault!" For'mya exclaimed. "Blame Martin Leonidas and Bella!"

"Yeah!" Aricia echoed.

Helen held up her hand. "Stop! I don't want to hear anymore!" She declared with a huge smile.

"Where is *Nauta Melme*? He was the first to get up." Dysea asked.

For'mya motioned with her hand to the patio and both Anja and Dysea turned to see Martin walking slowly back and forth along the patio, Androcles in his arms, his small pudgy hands gripping his father's long black hair. They could just make out Torma's huge body on the side of the villa, Elynth resting beside her father on one side, her matching golden eyes gazing on their bonded ones. She was getting larger, growing nearly two more meters in length in the last four months and developing the elegant lines of her mother, but the muscular proportions of her father.

"Andro woke early." Aricia spoke. "Elynth's arrival woke Martin up and when Bella and I came out they were all there."

Anja and Dysea could feel the tremors within Mindvoice of Martin speaking, and they opened themselves just tad more to hear what he was saying.

...Eliani and Resumar come you will need to look out for them. They are your brother and sister. You will have many brothers and sisters, and you will need to watch over them always. Lisisa is reborn and she will look to you as well even though she is much older.

They heard Elynth chuckle within Mindvoice and then her soft voice filtered in as well. *He says he knows all this already King Martin. He wants you to tell him about his grandfather. And then how you and my father met and became one.*

They watched Martin's head turn to look at his son in his arms. *Your grandfather? Well what do you want to know boy?*

Yes... that could take several days to relate. Torma's deep voice boomed.

Anja and Dysea smiled when they saw Andro yank on his father's hair and a bubbling baby sound escaped his throat.

Andro says everything. Elynth answered.

Everything? That's quite a bit. Martin's voice spoke. *Ok... well we need to start with the building of Sparta. It was a great...*

Anja and Dysea turned back to the others their eyes glittering in love. "He has *Melyanna* and I lay on the bed next to each other with Andro between us and then he rests his head and talks to all of them. It's almost as if he knows they can hear him even within our wombs." Dysea said running her hand over her abdomen.

Isabella nuzzled her elven ear. "How do we know they can't?" She said softly.

"Indeed." Helen spoke and they all turned to look at her. "You have all heard me say your children will be different... because you are all different." She looked at Isabella. "All of your children. I know all of you can feel that because of what you share with Martin and each other. Embrace that... nourish that within them and within yourselves. That is your strength as a family."

The chime on the door broke their thoughts and Helen held up her hand. "I will answer it. Enjoy your coffee... and you two eat!" She spoke pointing to Anja and Dysea.

Helen may have been the First Oracle of their people, the Feravomir, but she was also a member of their family as far as any of them were concerned. She seemed just as happy here in her kitchen in the villa as she did working her days at setting up and accepting students to her School of the Mages.

Anja and Dysea reached for the plate of biscuits that was on the table as Aricia held up the data pad to them. "Which dress for For'mya?" She asked. "The blue one or the red?"

"Aricia stop!" For'mya spoke. "We don't even know if the Senate will approve such a thing. And it is not something I wanted anyway."

"It may not be something you wanted For'mya..." Isabella spoke softly settling into the chair between her and Dysea. "It is something we want however. And Martin as well."

"It will... it will change the constitution." She spoke. "There hasn't been a change in the constitution in nearly twelve hundred years."

"Deia supports it... and it was she who brought it up first because of what occurred on Apo Prime." Anja spoke as she buttered her biscuit. "All of the Senate members who remain here on Earth support it. Gorgo can be very persuasive it seems."

"That was an isolated incident." For'mya spoke. "I dealt with it."

Aricia chuckled. "Yes you did. Deia said quite explicitly too."

For'mya nudged her with an elbow and a smile. "He had it coming."

"No doubt." Dysea spoke as she pushed several crumbs from the biscuit into her mouth. "We have been..."

Dysea stopped talking when Helen led Admiral Joarl and Danny into the main living area. They all turned quickly, for while Danny, Anuk and Nayeca were frequent visitors to the villa, Joarl was not. Since Anuk was now also showing signs of her own pregnancy and they had just discovered last week that Nayeca was also with child, they were spending quite a bit of time here, though that had always been the case because of how close Martin and Danny really were.

Danny's smile was bright as he looked at them and smiled. "Top of the morning to you!" He bellowed.

"Daniel Simpson... you do not shout within these walls!" Helen barked slapping his shoulder as she walked by into the kitchen.

"What... is that a new rule or something?" Danny asked. "Marty and I have yelled a lot in here the last few weeks."

"Something that our ears are still recovering from Danny." Anja spoke with a smile as he stepped up to the table and kissed her cheek.

"Yeah... well that's the price you pay for being mated to a Spartan." He answered as he kissed Dysea's cheek as well. "How are the two most gorgeous pregnant women I know outside of my own mates of course?"

Dysea chuckled. "Let me get my ear plugs and I will tell you." She spoke as she squeezed his arm.

Danny moved around the table and gave kisses to them all as Martin walked into the living area, holding Andro in his arms. He looked over at him. "Skipper... when are you gonna get a smaller table? I keep telling you having to walk around this big sucker to say good morning to your mates will be the death of me." Danny finished with Isabella and then stepped over to the counter to pour himself a mug of coffee.

Martin smiled. "That's because you're getting fat!" Martin popped. "I'm gonna have Anuk and Nayeca put you on a diet." He turned back to Joarl as For'mya got up and reached for Andro. He reached out with

pudgy arms for her as she took him and returned to her chair next to Aricia. “Joarl... what’s up?” He asked as Helen came over and gave him a mug.

“Milord... we have heard from the Kavalians.” He spoke.

Martin sipped his coffee. “It’s about time.” He spoke.

“Sire... they have a ship already waiting at the Actar border. We did not know they were coming.” Joarl spoke evenly. “Initial sensor scans have put it equal in size and firepower to our *LEONIDAS II*-Class sire. They are requesting immediate approach vectors to Earth. They are exceptionally arrogant and insistent.”

Martin smiled. “Why doesn’t that surprise me?” He said. “They have a right to be it seems. They are kicking the shit out of the High Coven... that’s for sure.”

Danny nodded. “Fifty-three planets in four months is an ass whupping no matter how you slice it.”

“Beloved... you must watch your language!” Aricia snapped placing her hands over Andro’s ears.

“Sorry.” Martin spoke sheepishly.

“Both of you!” For’mya barked looking at Danny.

“Ok. Ok.” He answered trying to make himself smaller against the counter.

“Your orders Milord?” Joarl asked.

“What do we have on them?” Martin asked.

“Captain Iness and his Strike Wing sire.” Joarl answered immediately. “A *LEONIDAS I*, four *MOONLANCERS*, two *NOVA-Class*-Attack Cruisers and five *AUTUMN MOON-Class*.”

Martin nodded. “Very well. Inform them they are to power down their weapons and shields for the duration of their stay in Union space. We will maintain a constant sensor lock on them... and if there are any twitches from those systems we will destroy their ship and everyone on board and execute the prisoners we have.” He spoke.

Joarl nodded quickly and bowed his head. “As you order sire.”

“How long before they arrive?” Martin asked.

“The Actar border is only six hours from Earth sire.” Joarl answered.

Martin nodded. “That gives me enough time.” He said. “Once they are in orbit I want three PDPs on this ship the entire time. These folks are not our friends... no matter how much they want us to believe that.”

“I’ve already arranged for that Milord.” Joarl spoke.

“Good. Who are they sending?”

“A Kavalian by the name of Keleru. He is apparently what they call their Prefect.” Joarl replied.

“No one else?” Martin asked quickly.

Joarl shook his head quickly. “Not to my knowledge sire.” He didn’t understand Martin’s relieved sigh.

“Ok... we’ll meet with him in the Acropolis Senate Chamber. Outdoors. Have the area secured and make sure no one is within four blocks. Danny... you want to take care of that?”

Dan nodded. “Consider it done.” He replied.

“Inform me when he arrives, and have Laustinos greet him and keep him company until I get there.” Martin spoke.

Joarl nodded waited for a few seconds to see if anything else was coming and then turned and headed out of the villa. Helen saw the look on Martin’s face and she walked up to him slowly. “What is it Martin?” She asked softly.

Martin shook his head quickly. “Nothing...” He turned to look at Anja who barely nodded her head to him. “I’m going to get changed and then speak with Armetus before he leaves for Apo Prime.”

Isabella looked up. “Why has he been here all this time Martin?” She asked. “He keeps himself locked away within the Senate’s library?”

Martin met her eyes. “He’s working on something for me. Nothing major really. You know how he is when he gets something in his head.” He moved to the table and shared soft kisses with all of them before glancing at Anja once more and heading for the bedroom.

Martin moved into the large room and his eyes found Armetus almost immediately. He was sitting at the center table, data pads and books piled up all around him, many of them of the hand written variety. His head came up when he smelled his King enter and he came to his feet as Martin approached.

“They are arriving.” Armetus spoke. “Yes I heard.”

“You’ve had almost four months Armetus.” Martin spoke. “Is there anything you can tell me?”

Armetus took a deep breath and nodded. “As much as I am not happy about it sire... I’m afraid your suspicions and your nose were right. About everything.”

“Ah... fuck me!” Martin spoke dropping himself into the chair next to Armetus and his head going to his hands. “When you didn’t come to me before now I was hoping it somehow wasn’t true. Begging that it wasn’t true.”

Armetus lowered himself into his chair. “I did not want to come to you unless I knew for sure Milord. I made that determination four days ago, but I was going through all of my work before I came to you. I’m... I’m sorry. I... I truly wish it was not so Milord.”

Martin looked up now and for the first time since he had known this young King, Armetus saw moisture in his eyes. “Ok.” Martin said taking a deep breath. “Cut the Milord crap and tell me. I want to know it all Armetus. Leave nothing out.”

“It... it could take several hours Martin.” He spoke now using his King’s name.

Martin looked at him. “I got time.”

Armetus returned to his chair and reached across the stacks of books and paper collecting several hand written documents that appeared to be older than both of them put together. He turned in his chair and held them out to Martin. “These are the official records entered into the library here in Sparta three thousand and six years ago. Everything about it was suspicious from the outset, but back then they did not have what we do today as you know. They discovered...”

DRAGON CAVE

3.2 KILOMETERS FROM KING’S VILLA

It was nearly identical to their cave on the Island Palace Estate on Apo Prime though slightly larger. It had been built within the first three months of Androcles being born, and it was now their home when they came to Earth, even though they spent much of their time at the actually villa itself. It remained on the Villa’s Estate grounds, with a single winding path through the towering timber that led to the patio of the villa. Outside it appeared just like any other mountain in the area, albeit a little out of place. The Lycavorian engineers had told them it would eventually blend right into the timber and vegetation all around and appear as natural as anything. The interior of the cave was massive, easily two hundred meters high and then two hundred meters long so that their children could learn to fly in relative safety from the elements until they were strong enough to face them. There were half a dozen smaller indentations in the surrounding walls that were used for sleeping pens and food storage. Isheeni and Torma never slept apart, and like their bonded ones, they were always touching each other in some fashion when they slept.

There was a hidden tunnel at the rear of the cave that had been dug out of the earth and traveled for four kilometers underground until it came back up within the western mountains around Sparta. It was an emergency tunnel, and while they never expected to use it, Isheeni and Torma had taken Elynth, Jeth and Aurith through the entirety of the tunnel to the end so that they had their bearings when they came out the other end.

Isheeni saw Torma sitting by the opening of their cave and she tilted her large head as she gazed at his powerful body and obsidian scales. He was almost twice her size, yet he could be the gentlest creature in the universe when he took her and they mated here on the ground. When they flew... the instincts of their kind overruled all and it was heated and powerful as he would plunge on her over and over, wrapping his enormous wings around her as they plummeted to the earth coupled in the most intimate fashion of their kind. Isheeni moved up next to the dragon that held her soul and she rubbed her snout across the scales on his side while her tail caressed the soft underside of his much longer tail.

What troubles you husband? She asked.

Torma turned his golden eyes on her as she settled next to him on the soft earth. Martin. He said simply. Something is wrong.

What do you mean? He is in the city. Is he hurt?

Torma shook his head. It is inside. He told her. You know that our bond has grown so much stronger this last year.

Isheeni nodded. Yes... far more than my mother ever thought. More than mine with Aricia. Elynth is showing this as well with Andro. What is wrong my husband?

Torma nodded his massive head. Martin has shared many things with me that even his Queens do not know Isheeni. It is hard to keep them from me when I experience most of it with him.

It is no different than with Aricia and I husband. Isheeni said. What do you feel from him Torma? Tell me my love.

Torma turned his golden eyes on her. I feel betrayal Isheeni. Betrayal and rage. And it is growing.

GREATSOUL-CLASS KAVALIAN DREADNOUGHT STORMKILLER ORBITING EARTH

“Three of their Planetary Defense Platforms have realigned to monitor us Prefect.” The officer called out. “The Strike Wing that escorted us here is maintaining station only one million kilometers away.”

Keleru looked at Pusintin. “You expected this I presume?” He spoke calmly.

Pusintin nodded. “We were found on a Union planet conducting a covert operation Keleru. I would be surprised if we did not have this much attention.”

“They fear us then?” Keleru spoke.

Pusintin met his eyes. “No. We are an unknown to them. They know the history of our people and the conflict we had with them. They also know we are victorious at every turn against the High Coven. They are curious. But frightened of us...” Pusintin shook his head. “Now that a Leonidas sits once more on the throne... they will never fear any empire or person again. Be cautious and questioning perhaps... but no... fear is not something they will feel.”

“Then why the show of force?” Keleru asked.

“Make no mistake Keleru my friend... if we step one millimeter out of line they will vaporize this ship and everyone on it in a single blink regardless of the consequences. That includes you and me.” Pusintin spoke.

Keleru looked at this man that had been with him for so many years as one of their own. “You have never lied to me when I ask you a question Pusintin. Never once. It is one of the reasons I hold you in such high regard. I have never asked your Pride Leader about your past. I felt when you were ready you would tell me. I must ask you now my friend. What do I not know about you?”

Pusintin looked at him and nodded. “I will tell you what I can on the way down. The rest you will undoubtedly discover when we are on the surface.”

“And why have you not revealed this to me before now?” Keleru asked.

“I never thought I would come to this day Keleru.” Pusintin replied softly. “Never in all my life. You have treated me as a son and I consider you and the others my people now. Never doubt that Keleru. Never doubt that.”

Keleru nodded. “I never have Pusintin.” He answered. “Come... our transport is waiting and I wish to hear what you have to say to me. I get the feeling it will be enlightening.”

SPARTA ACROPOLIS OUTDOOR SENATE CHAMBER

Laustinos looked at Gorgo as they stood waiting inside the pillars that surrounded them. This was the original Senate gathering place and now it acted as the outdoor chamber for the warm spring and summer

months. It had been restored over the years to its original splendor and now Gorgo was letting her eyes drift over the chamber as memories of long ago filled her.

Laustinos had been chosen by Deia to be her Deputy only one year ago on Armetus's recommendation. He had spent the first years of his career as a political analyst for Armetus and knowing that he did not want to remain in the intelligence field he had jumped at the chance to become Deia's Deputy. He found working with her to be a wonder. She was shrewd and knowledgeable to the extreme. When Queen Dysea had come into the fold and began working with her, Laustinos had been slightly put out, but Queen Dysea had turned out to be quite down to earth and very open to learning many things from both Deia and him. He found her unique wildflower scent intoxicating and he always wondered what she saw in the King. She was beautiful beyond measure with her hair and eyes, and Laustinos did not particularly care for the King. He found him to be abrasive and inflexible. He shrugged to himself. He could do nothing for he was only a Beta wolf, and had he been an Alpha he doubted he could project an aura strong enough to override what he sensed from the King filtering through Dysea's blood.

The King's mother he found fascinating and when she had volunteered to greet their guests with him as he left the newly established University where he spent most of his time here in Sparta, he had jumped at the chance. She had helped to build this very city so long ago, and there were rumors spreading among the citizens even now that whatever Gorgo had asked of her son in the last four months had come forth.

"Does it bring back memories Lady Gorgo?" Laustinos asked with a smile.

Gorgo turned to look at him with a smile on her face. "Yes it does." She spoke with a knowing glint in her eyes. "You don't care for my son, do you Laustinos." She spoke.

Laustinos looked surprised at her statement and his eyes widened. "What... what makes you say that Lady Gorgo?" He asked quickly.

Gorgo chuckled and moved to stand in front of him. Gorgo had regained her full health and radiance in the last four months, and she didn't doubt for an instant it was because she was back in the home of her heart. Her hair once more shone with brilliance and her skin was flush with health. She was back at her normal weight and all of her strength had returned as well as her sharp mind. Riall had surprised her with a trip to Gytheio where he had presented her with their new home. A large villa only a hundred meters from the ocean water. That had led to four wonderful days and nights of rediscovering each other more passionately than Gorgo had ever remembered their times together as being and it made her sing out in joy inwardly whenever she looked at him now.

Gorgo had returned to Thermopylae five times in the last four months. She had laid flowers on Leonidas's tomb and prayed and finally let go of him after so many years. As that decision swept over her, Gorgo felt the strong breeze sweep over the top of the monument and caress her skin and that she knew, that was Leonidas's breath of love and happiness for her at what she had found with Riall. And it was his blessing upon her.

"He is like his father Laustinos." Gorgo said with a smile. "He can be bullheaded and stubborn as a mountain... but he will always absorb what you tell him and consider it. He values Deia's word as gospel, almost as much as his Queens. That means he values your words as well. Never doubt that."

Laustinos looked stunned and his face showed it. "I... I never... I always thought he disliked me."

Gorgo chuckled. "No... that is not the case." She said. "Just try not to let your attraction to Dysea show so much when they are together."

Laustinos looked at her with horror in his eyes. "Lady... Lady Gorgo... I..."

Gorgo reached out and squeezed his arm. "Calm down young Laustinos... Be at peace. You are not in any danger. Dysea finds your attentions flattering... but as with all of my son's Queens... no one will ever be able to separate them. Or their love for each other."

"That... that was never..." Laustinos stammered.

"Don't worry young man... I'm quite sure you are not the only young wolf who has found one of the Queens attractive." Gorgo said playfully. "You..." Gorgo sniffed the air suddenly and she turned as the half dozen *Durcumusaan* Spartans marched up with the two strangers. Gorgo stood there staring at the two men as Laustinos turned and saw them.

"Ah... finally." He spoke moving confidently up to where Pusintin and Keleru stood, the six Spartans warily watching them. "Prefect Keleru I presume." He said.

“Do you always treat visiting dignitaries in such a way?” Keleru demanded in a harsh voice.

Laustinos did not miss a beat. “Forgive me Prefect... but considering our history and your actions in recent months, precautions must be taken to insure not only your safety but ours as well. I’m sure you understand.”

Keleru looked around quickly. “Where is my nephew Talco? Where are my men?” He spoke. “Why does your King keep me waiting. I am not...”

Gorgo blocked out the Kavalians voice as her eyes settled on the second man. He was very tall and very heavily muscled and he was also a Lycavorian; that much was obvious and more than likely why the *Durcunusaan* looked at him so. His dark blond hair was short and his dark eyes were familiar some how. She stepped closer as his eyes came to settle on her and she inhaled deeply allowing his evergreen scent to filter through her. His scent was familiar to her somehow, but Gorgo was sure she had never seen him before.

Pusintin stepped around Keleru when he saw her, his dark eyes showing his surprise. This was almost too good to be true. She was just as he remembered from so long ago. The day she had left him. He detected the Spartans shift their position slightly, but not interfering as he moved closer to her around where Keleru stood. They had no real reason to be wary, they had searched them both for weapons upon arriving. He had told Keleru everything he could in the time allowed. He had not been angry as Pusintin first thought; Keleru had been amused to the extreme and it showed.

“I do not laugh at you my Pusintin my friend. I am laughing at the irony of it all.”

Pusintin had to agree.

Laustinos saw the large man moved from the Prefect’s side and he looked at the unknown Lycavorian. The questions as to why a Lycavorian would be traveling with a Kavalian were just starting to light off in his head when the Lycavorian spoke.

Seven words that Laustinos would not soon forget, nor the expression on Lady’s Gorgo’s face. That would be forever etched in his mind until he died.

“Hello mother. It’s been a long time.”

Martin exited the Senate Chamber so deep in thought, his feelings of rage and betrayal simmering just beneath the surface, he didn’t notice Danny standing by the entrance. He came up short and looked at the only man he had called brother through the years.

“What are you doing here?” He asked.

Danny pushed off the wall. “I don’t know. I was hoping you could tell me. In the last hour alone I’ve had Aricia, Anja, Dysea, For’mya, Isabella and Torma contact me and want to know why you aren’t answering them.” Dan spoke as he came to stand in front of him. “I get within three hundred meters of this building and then I can feel it as well. What’s going on Marty? I’ve felt you this hyped up only one time before... and the end results for that were not in the least bit pretty.”

“It’s complicated Dan.” Martin spoke.

“Yeah... I imagine it is.” Danny said. “Now why don’t you explain it to me.”

Martin took a deep breath and nodded. “I discovered it as we were coming back from Lycavore.” Martin spoke.

“Discovered what?”

Martin opened his mouth to reply when the COM unit on his belt chimed insistently. He reached down and slapped it hard. “What?!” He barked.

“King Leonidas... Admiral Joarl wanted me to contact you and inform you that the two Kavalian representatives have been escorted to the Acropolis Senate Chamber. They are meeting with Deputy Laustinos and Lady Gorgo right now.”

Martin’s face twisted into a snarl. “I thought there was only one coming!” He barked.

“The... the Kavalian Prefect informed us when they arrived in orbit that there would be two of them Milord.” The voice stammered obviously flustered at having the King so angry at him. “The second representative is a Lycavorian Milord.”

Martin’s eyes flew open in horror. Danny immediately came to alertness, his body tensing.

“Marty what’s wrong?” He barked. “What is it?”

TORMA! Martin screamed out within Mindvoice.

I am already above you my brother! Torma bellowed. I have been circling for an hour as your emotions have churned. I'm coming down!

Danny had time to look up and see Torma's massive body block out the sun and then he was being pulled up into the air by Torma's TK power along with Martin and deposited in the saddle behind him as they sped across the tops of Sparta faster than Danny had ever seen Torma fly.

The loud crashing on the patio brought Aricia and the others running from the bedroom where they were dressing. They saw Isheeni skidding to a stop on the patio tile, Irial skipping across the tile and almost falling into the wading pool.

Aricia looked at her oddly as she saw Miath set down as well.

Isheeni! What is it? What is wrong?

Come quickly Aricia! All of you! Something is happening with Martin! His scream for Torma nearly deafened me! Did you not feel it?

Aricia's eyes were wide now and she shook her head. No!

Anja stepped forward. He has been blocking us for several hours now! Isheeni what is happening?

I don't know! Come quickly! Whatever is happening has caused Torma to block me as well! He won't answer me any longer. All I know was that he was circling the building where Martin was and wouldn't return to the cave! Hurry!

They needed no further urging and soon three dragons lifted off the ground of the villa, throwing the *Durcunusaan* Spartans guarding the villa into a fit.

COM units came alive all over the city of Sparta then.

Gorgo staggered back quickly from the man in front of her wide eyes. "Who are you?" She gasped.

Pusintin smiled as he stepped closer his words throwing the Spartans around them off guard and making their actions tentative. "Don't you recognize me mother? It is me."

Gorgo shook her head. "You are dead!" She snapped. "You can not be alive!"

"But I'm not dead." Pusintin declared. "I'm standing right in front of you. You seem surprised that I am alive mother, understandably... since you left me to die!" He shouted.

Gorgo shook her head. "No! This is not possible!"

"Oh but it is mother." Pusintin looked all around. "Sparta has grown I see. It is almost as I remember. Do you remember when you saw me last mother? The night you gave me to Dymas's new bride until he returned from fighting Xerxes and his Coven. I cried for you for hours. Don't you remember mother?"

"No!" Gorgo gasped. "I had to leave! I had to leave!"

"You left me alone mother!" Pusintin shouted. "Father was dead! And then you left me! You abandoned me you bitch!"

Gorgo's eyes darkened. "I did what needed to be done!" She barked angrily. "I did what I needed to do to save the line of your father! I told you that!"

"I was seven years old mother!" Pusintin screamed. "I was seven years old and you left me!"

"Sparta needed a King!" Gorgo snapped.

"And I needed my mother!" Pusintin screamed again. "Can't you even call me by my name! The name you and father gave me! Do you even remember my name!" He snatched the four inch long tiger's claw he wore around his neck as a last resort weapon. It appeared as the end of the pendant that Pusintin wore around his neck and had for years. He has used it in the past to disembowel enemies and as he tore it from around his neck he intended to disembowel the woman who had brought him into this world.

PLEISTARCHUS! The scream echoed within the confines Mindvoice, and even though it was an outdoor venue the sound almost seemed to carry across the space. *I REMEMBER YOUR NAME!*

Pusintin winced from the enormity of the voice in his head. The power of the voice had swept aside his Mindvoice shields like they were a toy and he turned grabbing for his head just as Torma's massive body settled

to the ground only ten meters away. He saw the bodies launch from between the wings of that beast and he could do nothing to stop Martin from ramming into him with his shoulder and sending his body careening into the still concrete seats that filled the Acropolis Senate Chamber.

Keleru made to move and try to help defend his friend but suddenly he found himself buried under the weight and strength of the huge black Spartan who glared at him with yellow eyes and exposed fangs. He saw the six Spartans moving to encircle their King's mother even as the head of the monstrous black beast extended over the black Spartan's shoulder and glared at him with a snarl that exposed flesh shredding teeth. Keleru's eyes grew wide in unabashed fear as he came face to muzzle with one of the creatures his people so feared.

"You made a mistake coming here Kavalian!" Danny hissed in a voice that held all the rage and anger of his brother. It had taken Martin only ten seconds to pass to him within Mindvoice what he knew and now Danny was equally as enraged over what was happening.

Pleistarchus/Pusintin groaned in pain as he rolled over on the concrete bench. The impact of his body against the ancient stone benches had caused a huge section of the fourth row to break off and fall to the ground. He hadn't been hit like that in decades and the pain fueled his own rage. As he turned his head and eyes and saw Martin, his own eyes changed and the dual fangs that were so unique to Martin Leonidas burst from his gums as he leaped from his spot in the fourth row.

Consumed by his anger as he was Martin didn't expect the attack and his 'dead' brother smashed into his side tossing both of them between two of the thick pillars of the Acropolis and into clear space outside on the grass just as Isheeni, Iriral and Miath were landing on the open ground. They practically leaped from their bonded mates and rushed to where Gorgo was surrounded by *Durcunusaan* Spartans.

"Gorgo!" Aricia gasped as she skidded to a halt and pulling her into her embrace as Gorgo reached for her tears streaming from her eyes. Isabella reached her next and fell to the ground next to her, quickly positioning herself to protect Gorgo. "Gorgo... what is happening? Who is this man?"

Anja, Dysea and For'mya were beside them now, Anja looking over to where Danny was on top of the Kavalian looking more dangerous and poised to kill than at any time she had ever seen him.

"Gorgo?" For'mya asked softly reaching out to her tear stained face.

Gorgo shook her head and buried her face in Aricia's chest.

Martin rolled quickly to his feet, eyes changed and dual fangs extended and he watched Pleistarchus match his move. They stared at each other for a long moment.

"So you know!" Pleistarchus barked. "Good. It's nice to be remembered!"

"I know that you are a traitor to your people and a coward!" Martin screamed as they walked in a circle glaring at each other.

"You know nothing!" Pleistarchus bellowed. "You know nothing of those days after she left me! You were still safe within her womb! Out there among the stars! I was here... the High Coven hunting for me every day!"

"You had an entire city behind you!" Martin yelled. "Thousands of Spartans who would have died for you at your whim! You betrayed them! You betray the memory of our father with your very presence in his city after what you have done! You have killed hundreds of our people! You helped to kill thousands you sorry sack of shit!" Martin saw Pleistarchus's eyes go a little wider. "Did you think I would not find out what you have done! You helped those animals kill thousands of our people!" Martin's arm snapped out to point at Keleru as Danny yanked him out of the Acropolis and held him. "Our people! Men and women that would have followed you to hell and back! All you cared for was who you could get into bed next!"

"I was King!" Pleistarchus roared. "They were happy to share my bed!"

"How many of our people died in the earthquake while you were King Pleistarchus?" Martin barked out. "How many? Our city... half destroyed. You allowed that to happen!"

"They left me to die on that road!" Pleistarchus screamed.

"You fucking fool! They were Spartans! They would never have left their King! They sent a flanking force to hit the Coven forces from the rear! Your Kavalian friends ambushed them using modern weapons against spears and shields! That is why you were overwhelmed!"

“I know what happened that day!” Pleistarchus spoke. “They saved me that day! They brought me into their world and made me one of their own! They freed me from the bindings of this city and this fool planet!”

The moment the word had gone out from the Villa’s security force, three complete Mora of Spartans surged from their barracks. Word passed quickly and soon those three Mora were descending upon the Acropolis Senate Chamber like a wave.

Helen beat them there.

She had felt the incredible surge of anger and rage the moment Martin and Danny took to the skies above Sparta. As she rushed through the Acropolis her eyes were wide as she caught glimpses of Martin and the man in the open outside. As she came to the end where Aricia and Isabella were huddled holding Gorgo with the other Queens Helen’s eyes grew even wider as recognition washed over her.

“*Son vada carians... Joa!*” She gasped as she settled to the ground behind Dysea who was gripping Aricia tightly. “It... it can not be!”

Dysea snapped her head around. “Helen... Helen who is this man!” She barked. “*Nauta Melme* and he... they are talking as if they know one another.”

Helen shook her head. “Gorgo... Gorgo... can it be?”

Gorgo pulled her face up and looked at her. “Dustha... how... how can this be? You... you told me he was dead!”

“Who was dead?” Anja nearly shouted. “Who the fuck is this man?”

“He is... he is Martin’s brother!” Helen gasped as heads turned to look at her in stunned amazement.

None more so than Daniel Simpson.

“He is... he is Martin’s older brother Pleistarchus!” Helen gasped out.

It was almost surreal to watch as the two men, both larger than most, circled each other like predators. They both had yellow/gold eyes that blazed fiercely now, and the dual wolf fangs that were unique to only the line of Leonidas. Spartans warriors and civilians were swarming the area now, gathering around the acropolis, the Spartans unsure of what to do or how to act with their King so close to the second man.

“Why did you not return? Why didn’t you try to escape!” Martin gasped. “This was your home! These were your people! You left them! You were the first born of our father’s sons! You should have honored him and...”

“Our father was a fool!” Pleistarchus screamed. “Just as you are! I will do what he never could! I will do what he failed to do because he was weak! I will destroy the High Coven.”

They both turned as Gorgo surged off the ground from where Aricia held her. “Your father was not weak!” She screamed. “He was never weak! You are weak if you stand there speaking the words you speak! You are not the son I brought into this world! You are nothing more than a betrayer of your own kind!” Aricia and Isabella held her back, Gorgo’s eyes burning in unrequited rage now.

Pleistarchus laughed and turn backed to look at Martin. “You have something that belongs to me brother. Something I discovered just recently. I want it back!”

Martin shook his head. “Never. There has been enough pain and suffering there. You will cause no more... I will not allow it.”

“You won’t...”

“No!” Martin screamed. “I will act as you should have in that regard!”

“So be it!” Pleistarchus snarled. “Now... are we going to fight my dear brother or are you going to bore me to death.”

Martin’s eyes flared wide and he snarled at Pleistarchus. “You are not my brother!” He bellowed. “You were never my brother! I have only one brother... and he stands there!” Martin’s arm and hand extended out to where Danny stood and everyone saw his eyes go wide.

Danny heard the gasps from the side and his head swiveled as he saw Anuk and Nayeca standing only feet away from him, their hands across their mouths in stunned surprise at Martin’s words which had carried across the

field. "He is the only brother I have ever known! He will be the only brother I will ever know! The only brother I will ever need! You are a pathetic excuse for a Spartan! And a traitor to your kind! Father should have discarded you the day you were born!"

Pleistarchus face twisted into a snarl. "I will kill you for your words! I will kill you in front of the wench you call Queen and I will take the throne of Sparta once more! Then I will use them as my whores!"

Martin's smile was the most savage expression anyone had ever seen from him. "Sparta is my city! Earth is my planet!" Martin roared. "This is my Union! You no longer have any claim to it! You lost that when you took up arms against your own people! Come Pleistarchus you betraying, back stabbing motherfucker! Let's dance!"

The flash came quickly and then the massive raven black wolf was there. Three and a half feet at the shoulder and nearly three hundred pounds of muscle and teeth. Coiled steel like bands of muscle propelled the massive beast into the air straight at Pleistarchus. What met that wolf in midair was not a man, but a dark blond haired wolf equal in both size and height, with rippling muscles and jaws of razor like teeth. The titanic collision of over six hundred pounds of muscle, hair, flesh and teeth was unlike anything anyone had heard before.

Martin's hind legs reared up and he raked his talons down, wanting to open Pleistarchus's belly in the first moment. His brother brought his own hind legs up blocking that move and Martin's talons sliced open his legs instead. As Pleistarchus howled in pain he brought his jaws down and they snapped shut like a steel trap on Martin's left shoulder as the two massive bodies smashed into the ground.

"Martin!" Aricia screamed as she struggled to come to her feet.

"No! No!" Gorgo yelled grabbing her arms and Isabella's shirt as Helen reached for Dysea and Anja. "No! You mustn't interfere! They... this is no longer about right or wrong! Friend or foe!"

"Gorgo is right!" Helen gasped holding Dysea and Anja's hands tightly. "If you interfere one or both of them will turn on you!! This must play out!"

"What? Why? What is it about then?" Aricia gasped.

Gorgo looked at her. "This is blood against blood Aricia! This is about betrayal of that sacred trust that blood and family and honor has."

"He is Martin's brother!" Anja gasped. "He is... he is your son Gorgo."

Gorgo shook her head. "The day Pleistarchus took up arms against his own people he became a pariah. He is not my son's brother nor is he my son. Not any longer." Gorgo turned her head and looked at Danny whose own eyes were on her now as well.

The two wolves broke apart, both of them leaving splotches of blood on the bright green grass as they circled each other snarling and biting at the air. Resumar had been the largest of their kind ever recorded in history, the holovids of him from thousands of years ago some of the most popular data scrolls viewed in the many schools and universities. No actual data images of his son Leonidas existed because of the time period in which he lived in Sparta, but there were hundreds who had seen him when he had lived and all of them agreed he was equal in size, if not larger than his father.

The sons of Leonidas matched that size without equal.

Pleistarchus feinted to his right and drove inside to try and clamp his jaws on Martin's throat. His massive paws came up short and dug furrows in the ground when Martin didn't take the bait and the huge black paw flashed out in riposte. Four long bloody streaks appeared along Pleistarchus's head, partially ripping away his right ear and Martin leaped back. He howled out in pain and staggered away. Martin leaped in with the same intent, but Pleistarchus snapped his head around, ignoring the pain in his head and sprang upwards, driving his shoulder into Martin's side and raking his right paw down Martin's side as he shoved him away. Martin howled in pain and slammed into the ground rolling. Pleistarchus pressed his attack and leaped.

His brother's three hundred pounds drove him into the ground, his front paws folding under him with the unexpected weight and Martin's muzzle slammed into the ground with enough force to rattle his teeth and cause

him to bit his tongue savagely. This only served to save his life for he felt Pleistarchus's jaws snap shut just behind his ears intending to seize the back of his neck and crush his spine. With a painful heave he reared back on his hind legs lifting his entire body completely off the ground until he was standing like he was in human form. Pleistarchus didn't expect this move and he flailed madly, his talons raking along Martin's back and shoulders, tufts of black fur flying into the air as he fell back to land with a rush of air on his own back. Martin whirled faster than anyone had ever seen a wolf move and his massive jaws clamped down on Pleistarchus's right hind leg. He crunched his fangs down with all his incredible strength, biting through flesh and veins and cartilage until he met bone with nearly three thousand pounds of pressure per square inch. He was fueled by hate and rage and the betrayal of a brother he never knew. A brother he now hated with every fiber of his being.

Pleistarchus howled out his agony and ripped out with his front paws tearing the flesh of Martin's massive shoulders down to the bone, but unable to get him to release his leg. He lifted his huge body up off the ground once more time and slashed across Martin's right cheek with deadly sharp black steel talons, slicing open the flesh of Martin's cheek right down to his jaw line. His howl continued as Martin applied more pressure, unwilling to let go and finally his fangs snapped the bones in Pleistarchus's leg, the crunch and pop clearly audible in the now silent field of the hundreds who had gathered.

Martin's eyes watered and he released Pleistarchus's leg, letting the useless limb drop to the ground as he backed away slowly, his body dripping blood at every step. As Pleistarchus flailed madly on three legs, Martin waited for the right moment and then leaped in once more, raking his talons across his brother's broad back as he sank his fangs into Pleistarchus's flesh at the base of his neck. His brother went limp as Martin's fangs bit deeply and those glowering yellow orbs, filled with horrific savagery, lifted to stare directly into his mother's face.

Gorgo's eyes were puffy and red, her face streaked with tears, the faces of his Queens also shiny with liquid, unable to comprehend the terrible brutality he was resorting to and weeping for his injuries. His yellow eyes turned to where Danny stood, now down on one knee his head hanging low, his own changed eyes spilling tears as Anuk and Nayeca knelt beside him sobbing as well.

My Brother? Martin's voice reached out and he saw Danny's face lift.

You have won my son! You have won! Now you must show mercy! Now you must act as King! The deep voice within Mindvoice was loud and focused and so very clear and hundreds of heads came up as they all heard it as well. It was a voice Martin knew very well.

Father? Martin's eyes dropped to the back of his brother's dirty blond neck, his fangs soaked with Pleistarchus's blood hair and poised to crunch through his neck killing him instantly.

Now you must act as King Martin Leonidas! Now you are truly a King!

Martin opened his jaws and allowed Pleistarchus's body to slump to the ground. He staggered backwards and in a brilliant flash of silver white light he shifted back. His body was soaked in blood and the wounds were still flowing with blood as he slumped to his knees.

"No!" He gasped loudly as the wheezing from his brother reached his ears. "I will not... I will not kill you before the eyes of our mother!" He turned his head when Gorgo's wail filled the air. "That would be the ultimate betrayal."

Martin staggered to his feet, his shoulders shredded and torn, and his cheek open to the bone. His wide yellow eyes searched around and settled on Danny, who had come to his feet once more. "Brother! I... I need you to... catch me!"

Martin started to pitch forward and in the blink of an eye Danny was there. His powerful arms caught him as he fell but Martin's weight drove them both to the ground on their knees.

"I got you Marty!" Danny spoke. "I got you!"

Martin reached up quickly, his right hand grasping Danny by the back of his neck as his opposite hand slapped against his bald head. His yellow eyes flooded with tears.

"You... you Daniel... Mark... Simpson! You are my brother! You will always be my brother! I will never betray you... or our people! Never!" Martin gasped.

Danny's was nodding his head, and he pulled Martin's head to his face kissing him on his wounded cheek, heedless of the blood that stained his skin. "Jesus... Christ Marty... you look like fucking shit man!" He gasped out before

Martin felt the laughter come then and the pain that wracked his body only intensified as he laughed, but at no other time in his life had he welcomed the pain as he did now in laughter. He pulled Danny into his arms and squeezed him as hard as he could as Aricia and his Queens came rushing over to him, wrapping their arms around him wherever they could reach. Helen reached down and pulled Gorgo to her feet and helped her to her feet. Gorgo looked to where Pleistarchus lay, now back in his human form, blood soaking the ground around him. She saw Dymas break from the front rank of the gathered Spartans, his own eyes glistening in tears. Helen was moving them toward where Martin was, but Gorgo pulled away quickly and strode with purpose to stand above her son as he lay there.

Pleistarchus opened his eyes and saw her beautiful face above him like he had as a boy. “Mo... mother?” He croaked out the words.

Gorgo took a deep breath and spit, the warm glob of her saliva hitting his bloody cheek and sliding down his skin. “Your father curses your name from the tomb! I curse your name! You... you are no son of mine! Not after what you have done! Traitor!” Gorgo yanked her arms free of Helen and turned to rush to where Martin was being supported by Danny.

Walter glared down at him his eyes unfriendly to say the least. “The King may not kill you traitor!” He spat. “But I certainly do not have any qualms about it!”

“NO!” Martin’s voice carried over the field.

Walter looked up and saw Danny pulling Martin to his feet, his shoulder supporting him while Isabella and For’mya supported the other side. Anja’s hands were glowing as she tried to stem the blood flow from his body.

“Milord... he is a traitor! He has killed fellow Spartans while fighting with our enemies!” Walter spoke.

Martin shook his head slowly. “No Walter! He will not be killed in my city! In my mother’s city! I forbid it!” Martin groaned. His eyes shifted to Keleru who was standing in the grasp of two very large *Durcunusaan*. “It is over Kavalian. Take your people and leave the Union. Take him with you... whatever you call him. Know this... if he so much as spits across the borders of the Lycavorian Union I will hold you responsible. And I will come not for him... but for you!”

“You threaten me!” Keleru hissed.

“That isn’t a threat! That is a guarantee!” Martin snarled back. “Senior Polemarch, please get these pieces of shit out of my city, off my planet and out of my Union!”

Walter nodded his head. “As you order *King Leonidas!*” He barked loudly.

Danny looked at Martin. “You know asshole... this was a clean uniform until you started bleeding all over me.”

“Daniel shut up!” Anuk barked.

Martin chuckled and groaned in pain. “Send me the bill to clean it.” He looked down and saw his mother staring at him. Gorgo looked at him intensely. “Mother?”

“That... that was your father’s voice wasn’t it Martin?” She asked softly.

Martin looked at her stunned. “You... you heard it?” He gasped.

“We all heard it Beloved.” Aricia spoke. “We all heard it.”

A smile slowly crept across Martin’s face and he gazed at his mother’s beautiful face. “It’s time to go home mother.”

Gorgo shook her head slowly. “No my son. We are home.”

EPILOGUE

FOUR MONTHS LATER

“Tell me how Armetus.”

Gorgo spoke softly as she watched Martin through the doors of the villa that led onto the patio. There was soft music filtering in the background, dozens of family and friends moving and laughing as they mingled. The stories of Martin’s titanic battle with Pleistarchus were still filtering along on the Netnews channels, and being spoken about almost daily in the cafés and taverns throughout Sparta. No doubt throughout the entire

Union. Martin, she knew, he had already pushed it into the deepest recesses of his mind for only two days before his daughter Eliani had joined this world. As she watched him holding his two day old daughter, a tired but radiant Anja sitting next to him, she too could almost forget that day. Dysea sat in the chair next to Anja, Resumar only weeks from joining this world, while Aricia and Isabella sat on either side of Lisisa watching as For'mya stood behind them stroking Aurith's sapphire scales. Gorgo could see the flapping of wings as dragon hatchlings scampered all about, the fully grown dragons resting patiently on the other side of the wading pool, their eyes shining brightly. Daniel Simpson, the man now known throughout the Union as Martin's brother stood next to Martin while Anuk occupied the chair beside him. Nayeca knelt next to her, already showing in her fourth month of pregnancy. Anuk was due in only days.

Gorgo looked at Armetus. "You owe me that at least." She spoke softly.

"There is much more to it than just Pleistarchus Lady Gorgo." He answered. "I don't know how much he would want me to reveal."

"I'm only concerned with Pleistarchus Armetus." Gorgo spoke. "You and my son my keep the rest of your secrets. I do not wish to know what goes on in your heads or the decisions you have to make."

Armetus nodded finally. "You heard part of it that day. The Coven attacked the force he was with that day. They were in two files and the second file that wasn't engaged attempted to move around and surprise the High Coven forces. They were ambushed by Kavalian troops that had been sent to Earth for scouting purposes. They have done this several times through the years to gather intelligence on what Yuri was doing. The last time just months before the Comet destroyed this world."

"And Pleistarchus?" Gorgo asked.

"Once they eliminated the Spartan detachment they attacked the remaining Coven forces." Armetus told her. "They found Pleistarchus among the bodies of his Royal Guard. He had piled several on top of him to try and fool the Coven into thinking he was dead. He was wounded but not terribly so. They took him that day after mangling another body and switching armor with a dead Spartan. They left the pendant you had given him before he left to try and convince others it was him."

"Surely the Coven would have done a DNA scan?" Gorgo spoke softly. "They had such technology then. Helen says they declared him dead after that day... and their very own records that Martin captured from their island base off the California coast confirmed it."

Armetus nodded. "The records were altered by this Maruad character. He was here then and apparently he was working for both sides." He replied with some distaste. "An intelligence gatherer for the Kavalians and an assassin for the Coven."

Gorgo turned back to look out the door once more. "And he has been with them all this time?" She asked.

Armetus nodded. "It would appear so. He was a Pride Force leader during our war with them a millennia ago." He said. "The equivalent of our Polemarch. I've confirmed that he led this Pride Force into battle against our forces at least seven times. Each time the battle was difficult and many of our people were lost. We won... but the cost was high."

"And we know without question it was Pleistarchus?" Gorgo asked.

Armetus looked at her. "Are you questioning your words to him now Lady Gorgo." He asked.

Gorgo met his eyes. "No." She answered without hesitation. "His fate is his own. He chose his path. My son Pleistarchus died when this Pusintin was born. My only son from Leonidas stands there." Gorgo motioned out the door. "And I bless the day the gods brought him back to me Armetus."

"Then what troubles you?"

"I saw the hatred for me and Martin in his eyes." Gorgo spoke softly as she looked at him. "That kind of hatred does not die easily Armetus. If it dies at all." She looked out the door as Martin laughed loudly and she smiled when she saw that Eliani had spit up all over her father. She let out a small laugh and moved to go out the door. "We will see him again Armetus. We will see him again."

Armetus watched as Gorgo moved out onto the patio and walked up to her son to take her granddaughter.

"If only you knew what the King knows." Armetus spoke softly. "If only you knew what the King knows."