

Loose Id

KIDNAPPED+SPANKED

by an alien



Nicole L. Pierce

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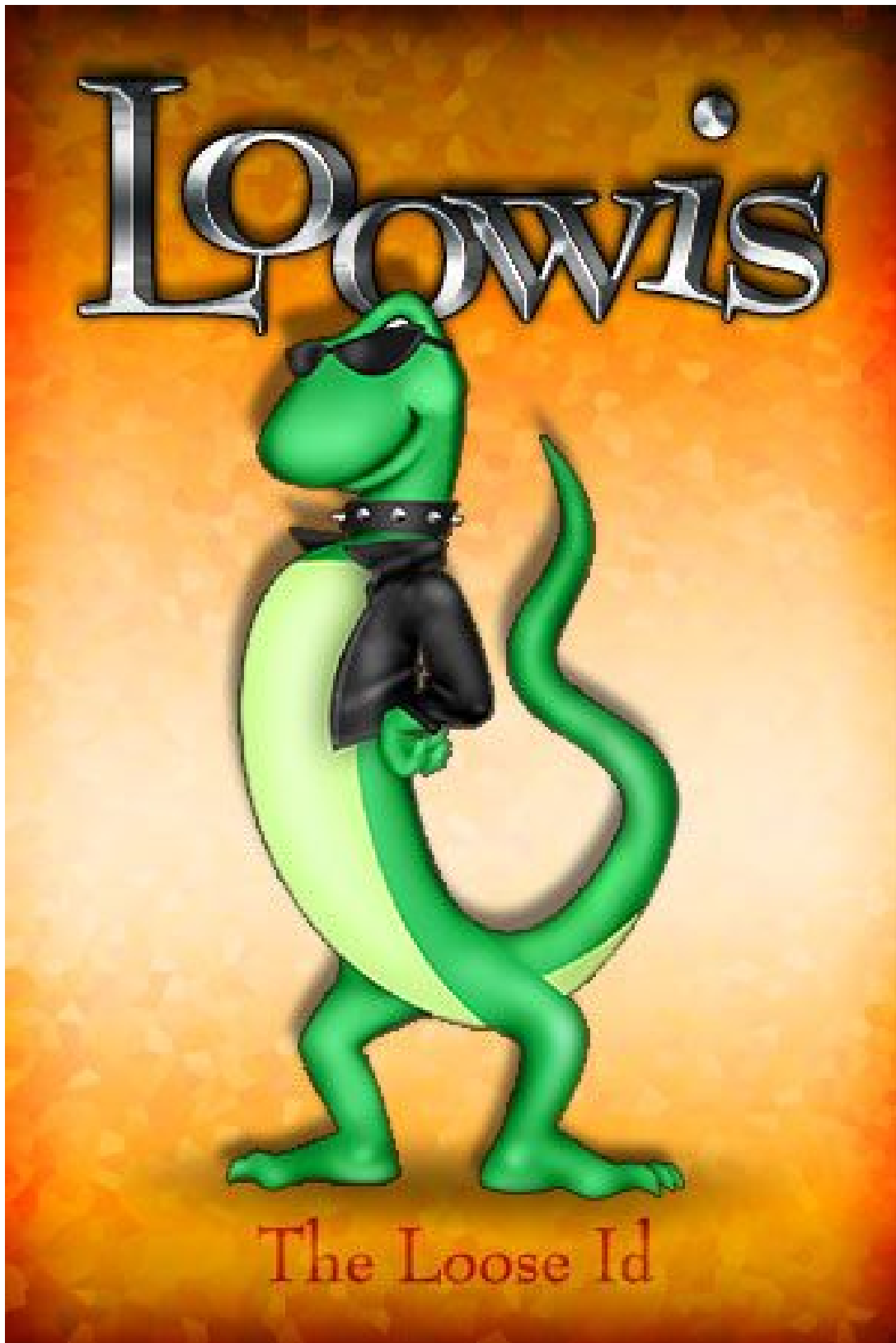
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Chapter One

When Natalia Ferguson stirred into consciousness, she knew right away that she was in trouble. Even before she could open her grainy eyes, she felt her arms and legs stretched in spread-eagle position and shackled. Struggling against her bonds, she only managed to sink deeper into a soft mattress, but this definitely wasn't her own bed.

"Sleeping Beauty awakens."

The smooth, calm, masculine voice was familiar, yet unfamiliar. She tried to answer, fighting a foggy mind, but her throat was dry and her eyes seemed glued shut. Where the hell was she? Natalia yanked harder against her restraints, clenching her teeth.

"I knew you were feisty," the man said, amusement in his voice, but it sounded kind, understanding. He didn't have the malicious tone one would expect from a kidnapper who tied his victims up, but, then again, didn't psychopaths come across as nice people? She felt her teeth chattering. Why the hell had this nut kidnapped her?

Natalia knew damn well why he'd kidnapped her, although she'd always pooh-poohed the risk to her worried parents and refused a bodyguard. Her father and mother were public figures, movie stars, known to be over-the-top wealthy. They had the means to pay her ransom. She'd refused to lead a tame life, living on the edge, a rebel, an exotic dancer, an actress in B-rated films, and just recently starred in her first role in a hit movie that had gotten rave reviews. Even though she'd never been a wild Hollywood party girl, she'd given that impression to her fans...now she would pay the price for that false image. Perhaps some demented fan felt she'd be thrilled to have sex with him. Only in his wet dreams. Oh, hell. This had to be a joke.

But, there was more to it than that. That voice sounded so familiar. She'd been at a party last night and had locked eyes with a man. It was a mystical connection she felt down to her toes.

She'd laughed at the two other men who were flirting shamelessly with her, and tried to ignore the mysterious man. Then suddenly, she had lifted her head and their eyes had locked and sealed.

She'd felt a warm tingling through her veins. Instinctively, she stood and started moving toward him. When she reached him, she wrapped her arms around him and stopped breathing for a moment. He felt every bit as good as he looked, and she felt like she'd known him for years. An ethereal feeling seemed to lift them both into the air, although she knew damn well he hadn't elevated either of them.

Her gaze fixed on his with an intensity that burned. "Who are you?" she whispered. "Why did I come to you? It seemed as if it were against my will."

He fisted his hands into her thick, luxuriant hair. "You know who I am," he said, in a low voice. "Think. On some level, you know. Tap into your subconscious."

Her eyes narrowed. "I'm so foggy."

"You're so drunk. Maybe when you're sober you'll be able to feel who I am. I've been a part of your life for a very long time."

"Why can't I look away?"

"I won't let you. It doesn't matter. Nobody can see us anymore."

"The party --"

"For us, it's over. Yes?"

She froze as the pools of his eyes deepened and filled with emotion.

"Speak your thoughts," he said. "Tell me what you're thinking, Natalia."

"How did you know my name?"

He smiled. "I just do."

"It doesn't matter. You're beautiful. I want to make love to you," she whispered, snuggling up against his chest as she continued to stare into his eyes.

"Not right now," he said, running his hand down her face. "Not yet. I need to somehow make you remember me first. We need to be alone -- do you mind if I take you away?"

"Kidnap me." Her pulsed raced. "I've always wanted a tall, handsome stud like you to kidnap me. It's a fantasy of mine."

He smiled again.

"Please," she said, her body heating. "Kidnap me, handsome. It will be my thirtieth birthday present from you."

"Let's leave together."

"I'd like to leave with you." She pressed the side of her head against his chest, her sex bumping against his swollen, throbbing cock. "You're the only man at this party who interests me -- are we still at the party?"

“Yes,” he said. “But nobody can see us anymore, and that could cause problems.” He bit his lip a moment, then said, “I’ll make them see us again. I don’t want any of these nervous humans to think some psycho took you. They need to see you leaving with me of your own free will.”

Her memories faded and she was back in the horror of the present. Angrily, she pulled against her bonds.

“If you promise to be good, I’ll let you out of your restraints,” the male voice said, in that same calm, engaging tone. “Can you open your eyes, or was it too strong?”

He admitted he’d drugged her. What a psycho. At least, she assumed he’d meant that. She took in an angry, ragged breath and grunted as she forced her eyes to open. She had to see her captor’s face so she could identify him to the cops, if she got out of this alive. Straining against her bonds, she managed to focus on the rectangular mirror on the wall across from her and winced as she saw herself. Her thick, auburn hair fell behind her slender shoulders, wild and uncombed. Large brooding dark eyes had red streaks in them, giving her a fevered appearance. Under smooth, tawny skin, she was pale. But the most appalling sight was the shackles holding her wide open for some pervert’s pleasure. Yet, he hadn’t stripped her. Why hadn’t he stripped her?

Where the hell was she? She trembled, scanning the room, looking everywhere except at the pervert who cast a dark shadow over her form. She was surprised to find that the room was actually nice, paneled in cherry wood with a large window, open to anyone who’d walk or drive by. Unfortunately, nobody could see or rescue her. As she gazed out the window she saw a vast expanse of lush grasses and palm trees leading down to a deserted beach. She took in the tranquil, but isolated, setting and screamed.

This doesn’t make sense. This can’t be a normal kidnapping.

Natalia felt a chilling wave of fear when she heard his growl. She took a quick intake of breath. Turning to set eyes on her kidnapper, she let out another scream. It was the man from last night.

“Crap, can you cut out the screaming? It won’t help you.”

She quieted to a whimper and stared at him through damp eyes. He didn’t look perverted at all, quite the opposite. He was so hot he could have starred in movies. She shuddered inside as she took in his darkly handsome face and powerful body, and felt barraged by his sheer sexual magnetism. In any other situation, she’d have found him devastating to her virtue, with his devil’s good looks. Wavy raven hair spilled above his hot, honey-tinged eyes that glowed with intensity. She felt pulled into them, in spite of her situation. Shit, he towered over her, standing at least six feet three, making her own five feet six feel small. How could she take out a gargantuan like him? Her lips tingled as she looked at his wide, sensual mouth. How sick was it that she felt drawn to her abductor?

There had to be a way to overcome him. After all, he was only human -- a large human, but all human beings had their vulnerabilities...

"I'm not going to hurt you," he said, in a calm voice, his alert stare focused on hers. Suddenly, his eerie honey-colored eyes twinkled. "Not unless you want me to." He looked off toward the shut door, then back at her. "Breakfast is being cooked right now. You slept a long time and must be hungry."

Her mouth felt dry. "H-how long --?"

"Since last night, Tigress. I made sure you'd have a good meal when you woke up." He paused and studied her carefully. "You'll need to keep up your strength to go toe-to-toe with me."

Like she could eat. Renewed fear pulsed through her as she gathered strength. Who was doing the cooking? Hired help or were others in on the abduction? That crack about "not unless you want me to" honed right in her deepest secrets. Well, her dreams had come true, only not quite the way she'd envisioned them. In her fantasies, she'd had some say-so in it...

He moved closer to her bed, and her body trembled with apprehension and...excitement?

OK, Nat, this isn't the time to feel turned on. This man kidnapped you.

He reached into his back pocket and brought out a key. Must be the one to the shackles. He'd taken long enough to decide to let her out of them, she thought.

"I'm sorry I had to do this," he said, as he released the restraint on her right wrist. "You fought so hard, I had no choice." He laughed. "Even your sleep was disruptive. I was afraid you'd injure yourself."

She'd slept restlessly, what a shock! Or was it just an excuse to hold her in bondage? Natalia's traitorous body tingled -- the drugged kidnapping had obviously robbed her of her sanity and screwed up her hormones.

"Do you have any memory of it?"

Natalia balled her free hand, her shoulder aching when she moved her arm. Her best chance of escape was a sneak attack and she looked around the room. "I don't remember anything." Her fuzzy dream couldn't have been real.

He unshackled her other wrist and she moaned, bringing her tingling arm to her side. Spotting a vase filled with flowers on the nightstand, her heart sped up. It would do as a blunt weapon.

"Don't consider trying to knock me out. You'll fail." He spoke in that same low, calm, almost soothing voice. Frowning, as if annoyed, he lifted the vase and set it on a desk on the other side of the room. As he strode back toward her, he said, still calm, but with an underlying hint of danger, "Don't mistake me for other men you've known, those who were weaker than you, Tigress. You've finally met your match. In time, you'll be glad you did."

She stared at him, stunned, shivering as his blunt stare threatened to seduce her. Gathering her wits, she said, "Unless you kill me, I'll get away." A bold statement, but she'd learned long ago that strength trumped weakness, and this situation demanded strength.

He narrowed his gaze. "You're all I knew you'd be. I have no desire to kill you, but you can't escape. You can try, but it's impossible."

As she lifted her quivering chin, she said, "Nothing is impossible." She knew she was pushing it, but, if he was going to hurt her, he'd do it whether or not she showed her normal spunk. She may as well go out fighting.

"Escaping from me is impossible." He pinned her back with his gaze.

She once again wanted to scream, but scowled up at him instead, refusing to appear scared anymore. "Let me guess. We're out in the middle of nowhere, on a desert island, and there's no place to run."

"Right. We're on a private island in the Bahamas that doesn't even have an airstrip. Still on Earth, for now."

"So...you brought me here by boat?"

"No."

His words rang in her head and she felt a queasiness in her gut. He may be a gorgeous hunk, but he was stark raving mad. Ignoring the "still on Earth for now" comment, she managed to ask, "How did you get me here?"

He paused. "I transported you from the party to this cabin using time travel. I don't expect you to believe that."

He walked to the foot of the bed and unlocked the chain binding one of her ankles. Instantly, she kicked at his groin, and was surprised to find her bare heel in his large hand. "I'll need to chain you again if you do that, and this time I won't let you out." He held up the key.

She needed to change tactics fast; she'd have no chance at all of escaping if he shackled her again. "I won't do it again," she said, trying to sound meek. She itched for another chance at his groin. From what she could see, it was a large target. *Why are you thinking about that now, Natty? Insanity isn't contagious.* Was it?

His eyes flashed a darker shade of brown. Clearly, he was nobody to mess with. "Anyone ever spank you?" he asked.

A blaze of heat rushed to her face and flashed to her sex. Spanking! How the hell had he guessed? Had he stolen her diary? No, he couldn't have found it; he'd never been to her house...besides, she'd hidden the key.

"I'm going to help you remember last night," he said, as he released her other ankle, seemingly certain that she wouldn't kick him again. "Keep watching me, Tigress." She did, wondering what he was up to now. He blinked hard and suddenly the entire previous evening came flooding back to her, in one flash. Damn, her vague waking memory was real!

He must have drugged her. Her jaw dropped, rendering her speechless for a moment. The spot between her thighs pulsed with need. Damn him!

"When you came to me," he said, in that seductive, silky voice of his, "I knew you felt me, and that it was time to take you. I waited until you had turned thirty Earth years, and would be mature enough to accept me and, ultimately, understand. You came to me because you realize we should spend eternity together."

He was talking crazy, and he had drugged her. She couldn't afford to get drawn in to his delusions. She remembered fighting him and seeing a tall African-American man coming to his aid. That was her last memory.

"You screwed up my plans," he said, but with good nature. "I didn't want to use up all my magic. Dreauxoids, which is partly what I am, have limited reserves of magic and, after it's used up, we need to regenerate, something like an Earth rechargeable battery. But you fought so hard that I had to put a strong spell on you to calm you down before I transported you here."

Right. A spell. A spell like a Valium shot. "Others must have seen me struggling."

"No, Tigress. You went outside with me willingly, and nobody else was there, except my partner. All anybody saw was that we left at the same time and you told everyone good-bye."

That memory returned to her with blunt clarity, suddenly hitting her hard. She remembered all her well-wishers yelling their happy birthdays at her as she departed with the hunk, some of the women staring at this man with lust, or at her with blatant jealousy.

He leveled his gaze on her and her breathing sped up. He must have noticed her reaction to him and his eyes gleamed. "Anyone could see that you wanted me. You made it obvious."

Natalia tried not to look scared, but the worst of her fears blurted out. "Are you going to rape me? Is that your idea of fun?"

He looked at her long and hard. "Only the lowest of creatures resort to that. I don't touch women against their will. I ask first." He slowly broke into a killer smile. "You'll be screaming for me, and then maybe, just maybe, I'll let you have me."

Her sex throbbed, wetting her thong. Shit, this was getting her nowhere. She searched her mind for another angle. Maybe appealing to his sense of decency, if he had any, would work. "My parents will have heart attacks once they realize I'm missing."

"It's all taken care of. I left a note on their dining room table in your handwriting. It said that you were taking an extended vacation in the Bahamas with your new boyfriend."

"You mailed it?"

"No, I brought it there myself. Invisibly, and while they were asleep, of course."

If he hadn't looked so serious and dangerous, she would have laughed.

"Um, how do you know they read it?"

"I transported back to their home early this morning, while you were still out cold. I swear, visiting your parent's house has drained me of so much magic." He shook his head. "I was concerned for them, too. In my invisible form, I listened to them as they talked excitedly about your letter, saying this was typical Natalia. They're not worried."

Her head pounded as she took on a sudden fear for her parents. Her father had high blood pressure. "Okay." She tried to talk in a reasoning voice. That kind of banter did sound like something her parents would say, but he couldn't have been there. "The problem is, there's no such thing as transporting, except in sci-fi movies --" She let out a heavy breath. Forget it. She didn't want to cause her parents any additional grief. "I'm sorry," she said, although she wasn't. "I don't remember your name..."

"Raven Steed," he said, and she felt a little thrill at the sound. It seemed strong and sexual, like the man himself.

"Well, Raven," she said, hoping her smile looked genuine, "Instead of letters to my folks, pretending it's from me, you'd get a lot more money if you'd just be straight with them --"

"I couldn't care less about money. This is about us."

"Us?"

"Us." His eyes glowed luminous and hot, seemed almost otherworldly...no. She refused to go there, to buy into his delusions.

"There is no us," she said, wondering why his words affected her in such a strange way. Yes, there was the bizarre sexual attraction, which she couldn't understand, considering he'd taken her against her will, but there was more, too. She couldn't define it, but somehow she knew he at least had some warm feelings toward her. It comforted her only a little.

"Excuse me. I'm going to see if that breakfast is ready."

"Oh, go ahead." She waved him along, hoping he'd leave the room so she could break the window with the vase. Yes, he'd hear her, but she had to make the attempt, even if she cut herself escaping.

Raven turned and strode to the door. She watched him, noticing, for the first time, that he wore a black muscle shirt, accentuating his powerful shoulders, and tight black jeans without shoes. His butt was enticing and his muscular thighs and calves strained the material of his pants. He walked with a confident, sexy swagger. She noticed he was almost inhuman in his perfect muscular form. But his glowing eyes set him apart, saying he was different from any man she'd ever met. They almost seemed to swirl at times, hypnotizing her.

Raven twisted the doorknob and stuck his head out. "Is breakfast ready for us, Lily?" he called, good-naturedly, then leaned against the doorjamb.

Damn! He wasn't going to leave her unattended. And who was Lily?

"There's a woman here, and she's allowing you to keep me?"

"She knows I have to do this." He turned his head, craning his neck far enough to watch her. His radiant smile once again caused her sex to pulse. Sick, sick, sick, she told herself. "Lily trusts me to do the right thing," he said.

She couldn't help laughing, bitterly. "You think this is the right thing?"

His brow furrowed in irritation. "I know it is." He flashed her a snarky grin. "I have a lot to offer you -- in many ways." He winked. "You'll be begging for it."

She bristled, afraid it could come true. He seemed to cast a seductive spell over her, making her want him against her will. The drugs. Must be the drugs. "You're very arrogant."

"Can't help it. That's another Dreauxoid trait."

And he looked damn sexy when he showed his arrogance. Her pussy creamed. She was officially insane. As he turned back toward the next room, she watched. He crossed his arms and his muscles tightened in a way that made her sex throb. In a minute, her thong would be wetter. Shit. Her breasts stiffened, rubbing against the flimsy material of her blouse. She should have worn a bra. Of course, he hadn't exactly given her a chance to change her clothes.

At that moment, a fiftyish woman, with glistening ebony skin, walked in with a tray that smelled of fresh eggs and bacon.

For the first time, Natalia sat up straight and felt a little soothed, but even more puzzled. The woman reminded her of her Aunt Florence, with kind, dark eyes and a fragile, petite stature. Why would a kind looking lady like this be a party to her abduction? The woman smiled at her and Natalia smiled back, hoping she'd have an ally when she tried to escape.

"Where do you want this, Raven, dear?" she asked the man in a gentle voice.

Natalia watched her beaming at Raven. Clearly, this woman loved him, but she was far too old to love him romantically. Natalia recognized an almost parental affection radiating from her. Her heart fell to her feet; this woman would never betray her abductor. Still, she seemed safer than the man himself.

"I'll take it, Grandma Lily," Raven said, and he relieved her of the tray. He walked back toward the bed and bent over to set it on the bed stand. Lily followed him, a contented smile on all face, as if all were right in the world. When Raven straightened, Lily only came up to his chest. Was she really his grandmother or did he just call her that? She was African-American; he had a sun-bronzed complexion, but appeared Caucasian...maybe he was both black and white, like her... Natalia shook her head to clear it. Why bother to analyze him?

The older woman looked at her with wisdom in her eyes and placed a surprisingly firm hand on her arm. "Natalia, I know this is puzzling and frightening to you, dear, but everything will be all right. I promise."

She didn't want the woman to take her warm glow away from her. "Will you stay here, in the room, then?"

She smiled. "I'm in the next room. This is my cabin. If Raven gets out of line, I'll know and I'll box his ears." She laughed and patted her hand, then turned and started walking away.

"She would, too," Raven said, chuckling as he stared off at Lily with the utmost affection.

"Don't go!" Natalia called after her, desperate not to lose her presence. "Please!"

When Lily reached the door, she turned back around. "You need to spend time alone with Raven. It's your destiny," she said, kindly, but firmly. "I know you don't believe this yet, but it's *both* of your destinies and I can't disturb the Fates." She left and quietly shut the door.

Natalia sank back to the pillow that she hadn't noticed he'd provided for her. Her strength leaving, she felt her eyes growing wet. She closed her eyes.

Raven picked up the tray and sat on the edge of the bed. He handed her a fork.

Her heart racing, she took the fork and reached back to stab him with it, but he caught her hand. "Don't make me take that from you," he said, quietly. "You'll eat with your hands if you try that again."

She dropped the fork, and glared at him. "Fuck off. I've had enough of you."

To her surprise, he laid a hand over her shoulder and her skin seemed to combust into flames. The jolt of heat coursed straight between her thighs, causing her sex to ripple, which shocked her anew.

"You're sexually responding to me, in spite of being angry and confused," he said, in an almost gentle voice.

"How do you know..."

"I felt you shudder."

"Fear causes..."

"That wasn't fear." He let go of her and she felt a strange emptiness. The skin he'd touched burned, and she found herself wanting his hand back on her. Whatever drug he'd given her must have been damn strong. She watched as he dug a fork into his eggs. "I hope you eat, Nat. I know you have a healthy appetite, in spite of staying slender." His gaze lifted. "Well, slender, except for those breasts."

Natalia trembled, her breasts swelling and her nipples tightening as he admired them. Why did his obvious appreciation excite her? It made no sense.

"Beings from my world have a strong erotic affect on humans," he said, as he stabbed at a piece of bacon.

"All right." She shut her eyes again. "Raven, tell me about, um, your world. After all, seems we'll be spending a lot of time together. We may as well get better acquainted." She'd

gotten her spunk back. He wouldn't release her and she didn't believe he'd kill her. At least she could listen to his hallucinations.

"Explaining this will be hard, but I'll try." He lifted his head and he fixed her with a witch-stare, his eyes a warm brown and hypnotic.

A little thrill raced through her body. His eyes definitely did something to her. She gave him her undivided attention, trying hard to ignore erotic sensations in her sensitive areas.

"I want you as my soul mate, somebody who will love me forever, and whom I can cherish tenfold. I've seen too many mismatched bondings, and since bondings are eternal for Dreauxoids, there are many unhappy pairings who step out on one another. I just want one woman forever."

Well, she'd asked for it. In a polite voice she asked, "So there is no divorce?"

"Not legally. No."

"But people can leave each other and live with others --"

"No." He drank her in and she broke out in a sweat. God, he made her hot. "It's against the law to move out on your lifemate, even if you don't get along," he said. "There are a lot of bastards, like me, due to affairs, but once you make that commitment to another on Dreaux, you're stuck."

"So leave...Drux."

"Dreaux," he corrected. "I plan to live on Earth with you. And, yes, then I'll have the legal right to a divorce, but I take bonding seriously. I would never leave or cheat on my soul mate." He meant what he said. For some reason, she could feel it. Now what? How would she get out of this, since he had these delusions of staying together forever?

"So, you psycho, will you hold me here until I die?"

His stare fixed on hers, sending heat to her groin. She wondered how wet her thong was. Pretty damn wet. Again, she tried to focus on his words, and not his alluring sexuality.

"If a Dreauxoid, even a hybrid like me, bonds with a human, he becomes more human in spirit, and his mate takes on his immortality."

"*You're immortal!*" She almost rolled her eyes. Raven had seen too many sci-fi flicks, obviously. His story must have been concocted from them.

"You don't believe me. I can feel it. *But*, I'll keep trying. Humans!" He sounded exasperated, as if *she* was being difficult. He continued, sounding harsh now. "Will I hold you your whole life, if you choose not to bond with me?" His smile wasn't pleasant this time and she felt the room temperature lowering slightly. "*I could* hold you against your will. Dreauxoids do that all the time. But if you don't fall in love with me within sixty Earth days, I'll release you and you'll never see me again. You have my word."

She couldn't understand why the idea of never seeing him again bothered her. Why would she want her abductor in her life? He was way too dangerous and had so much charm

she could almost believe his nonsense. Instead of feeling aroused by him, she should be terrified, not picturing him riding her in the ass...

She blinked fast to clear the image. "Have you thought of going back to Dreaux to think things over? Maybe that's better, and you can always come back for me later --"

"No." He set the food tray aside and rested his palms on his knees. She had to admit he looked gorgeous, sitting there before her in that pose, his muscles tightened. "I'll never live there again. I hate it. Dreaux is -- much smaller and darker than Earth. The inhabitants are greedy, me-oriented -- not big fans of love, only self-love. I knew I didn't fit in early on. Being a bastard, half earthling, I'm the worst sort of outcast."

"I know how that feels." That reaction came from her heart. She did know. She felt the same.

He glued his eyes on her and she felt him reading her. Her heart sped up. They had an eerie connection, one she didn't really want to explore. It made some things he'd said almost credible.

"You understand me, Tigress." He took her hand between his hot palms and she flamed from her scalp to her toenails. When he spoke, she was racked with emotions, his and her own. "I'm caught between two worlds. My father is Dreaux. My mother was of Earth. I don't really fit in either place, but I much prefer the human world."

She nodded. With her hand cradled in between his palms, she would have nodded at anything. Her sex pulsed again. Yet, she did know what he meant; she got it.

He removed one of his hands and reached out to touch her hair, taking a few strands between his fingers and rubbing them gently with his thumb and forefinger. She quivered inside.

"You -- have a strange effect on me," she mumbled, feeling uncomfortable by that strange effect, yet unable to stop it.

"I love your skin -- feels like satin, completely unblemished -- you're enough to make a man lose his mind." He lifted her arm in his hands and rubbed back and forth, slowly, soothingly. She had to bite back a whimper. He tenderly placed her arm back on the mattress and looked down at her, while she tried to figure out why she felt as aroused as though he'd plunged inside of her.

"You have two identities, like me," he said, his gaze raking her over.

She bristled; glad he'd said something to cool her off. "I have one identity. Myself. My dad is black and my mom is white. Big deal." She knew he was trying to give them another factor of compatibility.

"Easy, Tigress, I don't mean it's bad. You're different, like me, and so exotic-looking." She saw his eyes turn predatory and her heart sped up. "I'd love to taste you in every way. Pity I'm too honorable to touch a woman without her permission."

“How big of you.” She suddenly snapped, feeling more like her normal self, yanking her hand out of his grasp, although she immediately missed his touch. “There’s nothing honorable about you! Honorable men don’t take women against their will, then try to gaslight them.” Trembling, she stared him down.

He looked amused rather than angry. “You’ll be fun to tame.”

She gasped, sputtering as he laughed at her reaction. “I don’t want to be tamed!”

“Yes, you do.” He was still laughing. “You want that and so much more.”

How did he know? Her breasts tightened. It didn’t matter, he did. She fell silent, spent.

“I’m going to do everything in my power to make you fall in love with me, Tigress. I’ll enter The Void voluntarily, if I can’t.”

He’s spoken his last sentence with obvious self-mockery, piquing her curiosity. “I’ll bite. What’s The Void?”

His features tensed. “Oh, it’s a big space of nothingness. Dreauxoids don’t clinically die, but if we’re banished or if we no longer can handle life, there’s a place called The Void where the Dreauxoid, who need light for sustenance, slowly lose all brain function. It’s like living on terminal life support.”

She felt a chill and saw how his eyes had faded from her.

“I mean, if there really is a Void, don’t go there if I don’t fall in love with you.” She couldn’t believe she was not only partly buying it, but concerned for him. If there was a Void, she should want to be the one shoving him into it.

He laughed ruefully. “Don’t worry, I wouldn’t do anything harmful to myself. I have work on Dreaux, people to bring to justice...” His forehead wrinkled, then smoothed again quickly. “Besides, I’m confident you’ll fall in love with me.”

“You’ll put a love spell on me?” she asked, sarcastically.

“I can’t put spells on anyone’s emotions. Wish I could.” Her scalp flamed as he ran a hand down her hair. “I have to make you love me for myself, with no help of any sort, and I think that I will.”

She believed him, and it scared the shit out of her. What if he succeeded and sucked her into his insanity?

He slapped his hands over his thighs. “Anyways, enjoy your freedom today, princess. Once we start bedroom activities, I’m in charge.”

Her body trembled at the thought. She pictured him dressed all in leather, a breathtaking image. She tried to collect her wits.

His dangerous eyes seemed to surround her. “One day I hope we can fuck each other in every way,” he said, his voice silky and seductive.

She felt her heart speed up as Raven cast his dangerous web around her, chilling and heating her at the same time. She wanted to feel nothing, like she did around every other man, but she couldn't ignore the eroticism of this one.

Shit.

Natalia, you're in big trouble. This nutcase has a huge effect on you, enough to take your sanity along with his own. And in more ways than one.

"I'm going back to sleep," she muttered, shutting her eyes. Maybe if she did, she'd wake up in her own bed and this hot illusion would be gone.

"Yes, you still have my spell in your system. Sleep, Tigress. I think that's a good idea. Lay down."

She did, curling into a ball, very aware of the hot, magnetic, otherworldly presence of Raven Steed. As she came close to sleep, she felt him close and he whispered in her ear. "Dream about that rough bad boy you've always wanted in the bedroom, Natalia. Pretty soon he's going to become a reality. That bad boy will be me."

Natalia crammed her lids together tighter. She needed the sweet oblivion of nothingness.

Chapter Two

Raven watched Natalia as she slept, smiling as he looked down at her from his six feet three inch height. She'd been scared and skeptical, as he'd expected, and unfortunately it would be hard to make her believe in him. He'd known, when his mother had pointed her out to him, that he'd found the girl of his dreams. He knew her well now; knew it would be good strategy to have power over her by not giving her what she wanted from him. Not yet, anyways. Make her wait. Make her crazy to have him. He smiled at the thought. Once they got to that point, the rest would be bliss. He'd waited for her to hit her thirtieth Earth birthday before he'd gone to claim his mate in the typical Dreaux way. Now she was mature and ready for him.

She slept in seeming peace, lying on her back. Thick, wavy auburn hair fanned her golden face with its delicate features. Her breasts poked up at him, rising and falling with every breath, calling out to him. He wanted to rip off her silky blouse and taste her nipples. The urge grew so strong that he forced his gaze farther down where he could see the shape of her legs through skintight black slacks, the roundness of her calves and the slenderness of her ankles. He wanted to jerk her pants off, too. She looked good enough to devour, and the time would come when she'd beg for him. Or so he hoped.

He had her number and needed to play the right cards. If he showed any weakness around her, she wouldn't respect him. If she didn't respect him, she'd never fall in love with him. From following her, he knew almost everything about her and already loved her, but she couldn't know that.

Raven strode to the window and looked outside at the distant willow trees. As he watched, he thought about how peaceful it was here, although humans considered their world a violent one. They should live on Dreaux. For such a small planet, with no more creatures living there than in the Earth city of Chicago, the inhabitants were constantly at

war. Dreauxoids seem to like boosting their own egos by bullying others, and it was an ugly mess.

The green scenery before him seemed to recede as gloomy memories of past overtook him. He still felt the trauma of his stepmother transporting him to Demon Island, the most dangerous part of Dreaux. Some good creatures lived there, mostly exiles, but they only went out during the day. His stepmother, Ardella, had taken him there at night, when danger loomed everywhere. He hated her, but he'd begged her not to go, grasping desperately at her skirt. She'd shoved him into a large rock, and disappeared. He'd hidden behind that rock, sobbing, until a pair of warm arms had wrapped around him.

"It's late, darling," his rescuer had said, cradling the terrified child. "Don't cry. I live across the street. Hurry, let's get inside where it's safe." Had Lily not found him and taken him in, certainly a demon would have delighted in tossing him into The Void.

In Lily's hands, he'd received an education from a half-human tutor, and a strong sense of right and wrong. He'd learned to defend himself against full-blooded Dreauxoids, who had stronger powers than him, and had become a voice for minorities on the planet. Because of that, he had enemies, none more vicious than his stepmother. Ardella's hatred toward him poisoned her more each day. Raven let out a sigh. No point in thinking about that now, when he had another focus. He returned to Natalia's bedside and sat on the edge of the bed, his cock tightening. In the worst way, he wanted to cradle her and speak tender words in her ear. Of course, she needed rougher handling than that, and he'd deliver tenfold.

She stirred slightly, and mumbled in her sleep, but still looked content. How could that be? She'd been kidnapped -- did she subconsciously know he'd never harm her? She lay on her back with her hands cradling her head, looking sensuous and inviting.

He bent down and smoothed her face with the back of his hand. Her skin felt like velvet and she smelled of summer flowers. He could feel her warmth radiating around her, her goodness and her strength. He could watch her all day. She licked her lips and turned her head in his direction. Holy shit. His mind started racing as his cock throbbed. He felt like she wanted him to kiss her.

She wouldn't know if he stole one kiss from her. He sprawled out on the bed, leaning on his elbow so that he lay beside her. His heart raced as he got close to her pretty mouth and then, once there, swept his tongue over her lush, ruby lips. Gods, they tasted so sweet! He turned his head away from her to sate the raging in his shaft and he let out a shuddering breath, wanting all of her. Every bit. Holding back, as planned, would be torture. He felt his gaze pulled toward her lips again. Another signal?

His eyes fell to her breasts, and his balls tightened. Mighty fuck! He reached out his hand, but pulled back. He couldn't touch an intimate spot while she slept. A Dreauxoid would, but the human in him wouldn't allow it. Agitated, he ran a hand through his hair, watching her slightly parted lips again. Unable to resist, he pressed his mouth down hard

over hers, feeling a lightning bolt sear through his manhood. It had been too damn long since he'd had sex, if a kiss could undo him like this. He was on the brink to of coming.

It wasn't just the long stretch without getting any. Natalia affected him as though he were a young Dreauxoid boy again. And he couldn't get enough of her as he stared down at her form, still resting his long length on his elbow. He pictured himself stripping her slowly, kissing her, feeling her all over, licking her pussy, sticking his cock in her ass, introducing her to bondage and his sex toys -- all part of Dreauxoid mating. She'd love all of that, from what he knew of her. His groin swelled, straining the zipper of his jeans, making him groan. He had the urge to give into his Dreauxoid tendencies and just rip off her clothes.

Instead, he gently stroked back her soft hair, focused on her lips, shut his eyes, and stole another fast kiss. As he lifted his head, he saw her body shudder. He smiled, pleased that she'd responded to him.

And then her eyes flew open and she slapped him across the cheek, a loud, cracking sound accompanying the blow. His head snapped to one side, whipping his neck around. This time he rubbed the back of his neck where it hurt and watched her indignant face with wry amusement. He wasn't angry. He'd deserved that.

Natalia sat up and hugged her knees to her chest, her dark eyes as huge as saucers. "You told me you'd ask first."

He couldn't let her see him flustered so he composed himself. "I just kissed you. Laying there, asleep, you looked so beautiful -- I got carried away."

"I can't believe you! What a pig!"

Raven felt a wave of human guilt. "I shouldn't have kissed you while you were sleeping."

Her sharp eyes told him he'd better start explaining, and be honest about it. The trouble was, he didn't know why he'd kissed her, not really. He heard himself speaking words, and made sure his voice sounded far more confident than he felt. "On Dreaux -- men and women take what they want. It's a society where creatures get the pleasures that they can -- there aren't the same boundaries --"

"This isn't Dreaux!"

"I'll remember that from now on."

Dummy! She isn't going to fall in love with you if you act like the worst sort of Dreauxoid!

At the risk of sounding vulnerable, which he knew Natalia could and probably would, use against him, he mumbled, "I hope you can forgive me." He felt like a jerk, a big jerk. How could he explain to her that he'd felt her calling to him?

She stared at him as if shocked at his words. In fact, she looked flustered, and he held his breath. She wasn't giving off waves of derision; rather, he felt warmth exuding from her. He lifted an eyebrow.

"I forgive you." she snapped, and turned away from him. "I -- I was awake. Just hadn't opened my eyes yet. I *wanted* you to kiss me, damn you!" After Raven digested her words, he let out a breath. So, he'd been right. He'd felt her beckoning to him; she'd sent him silent signals. He wanted to devour her right then and there, but held back. "The outrage was an act?" He moved his hand slowly, but deliberately, down her arm.

"Yes and no." She reddened. "You thought I was asleep, so you were wrong to kiss me, even though I wanted you to."

He was still rubbing his sore neck. "That's true."

"I don't like being touched without my consent." She covered her eyes. "Well, I *did* like it, but I shouldn't have, and you shouldn't have, either."

"I shouldn't have liked it?"

"You shouldn't have done it!" She brought back her hand again, but he caught it, feeling her emotions big time. The little minx. He dropped her hand, and she deflated.

"Somehow, I knew you wanted me to kiss you." He settled his gaze on hers.

She looked puzzled, her brow furrowing. "When you look at me that way -- I can tell. I know. You did know it, and that freaks me out."

He shrugged. "That shows we're connected, Tigress."

"No!" She turned her head, but he grinned. They couldn't silently communicate if she wasn't starting to feel connected to him. Perhaps the Gods were smiling down on him and he'd get his greatest wish.

"I've just let an alien kiss me. Can't wait to tell the girls."

"I can't wait to tell the guys *I* kissed an alien," he shot back with a teasing glint in his eyes.

Taken aback by his comment, she laughed with surprise. He had a point there.

"I'm an alien to you, but you're an alien to *me*."

She laughed again, then stopped herself and met his gaze. Damn it, he drew her in once more. How did he do it to her? "You need professional help."

He watched her with thoughtful, honey-colored eyes and she felt his gaze to the bone.

"I'm going to prove that I'm what I say I am." He set his jaw, and his startling eyes glimmered. "I didn't want to use up more of my magic reserves, but I have no choice."

"Oh, please. Don't embarrass yourself."

His eyebrows came together, wrinkling his forehead. "All right, that does it. Watch this." He snapped his fingers, and a large screen television appeared on the wall.

Natalia froze, unable to breathe. "No. I am not seeing this. I refuse to believe that I see it."

He snapped his fingers again and the screen blazed with color and sound.

Natalia covered her eyes, not wanting to believe what she'd seen him do. Her favorite erotic movie, *Captive Women*, lit up the screen. It wasn't exactly a well-known movie. *How had he known?*

She heard a sob in her throat and shut her eyes and suddenly he took her hand, squeezing it gently. "Do you believe me now, Tigress?" He sounded kind, not self-righteous, but that didn't calm her down.

"It's freaky! Just get rid of it! I'm sick...I caught your psychosis."

"You're fine. This is just reality." A snap of the fingers pierced the air, over the movie sound, and suddenly there was silence.

She opened her eyes, and the television had vanished. "I can't believe it." She couldn't swallow. Raven rubbed his free hand over her back, in soothing circles. She leaned into him, and he put his arm around her, kissing her hair. "Well?" he asked in a quiet whisper, his breath tickling her ear.

Shit. Her body flamed as he engulfed her, and she let out a painful groan. What the hell was going on with her? This had to be a dream...but, oh, Lord, it wasn't. She dully accepted the fact that he'd told her the truth. This man wasn't really a man -- he was an alien. An alien sensual enough to set her sex on fire and touch her deepest naughty fantasies. There. She'd admitted it to herself.

"You believe me now." He spoke with certainty as he licked the inside of her ear.

She shuddered, both from the realization and from the heat from his clever lips and tongue.

"I believe you," she said, and burst into tears. "I'm nuts, but, hell, I believe you. I suppose you can control my emotions! That's why I feel like touching you."

"No. Magic can be used to travel or bring things to me or read minds, but it has limits. It can't change any creature's emotions." He moved his lips down the side of her face.

"What else can't your magic do?" She quivered, thinking that he didn't need magic to turn her on.

In between kisses and nips to her neck, he replied, "Can't bring a mortal to life again, once dead. Can't heal somebody who's sick or hurt. Can't use magic to throw somebody into The Void." He kept on nuzzling her.

She couldn't focus, couldn't concentrate.

He pulled back to stare at her, looking concerned.

She fell into his chest, her tears wetting his shirt. He lifted her and settled her over his lap, soothing her with words in a foreign language, maybe Dreux, and causing her sex to pulse and flame. His hard muscles, along with soft hair and rough stubble, created a safe, warm, erotic feeling. He smelled deliciously male. She could feel his huge cock bumping against her thigh and the hot spot between her thighs convulsed again, wetting her thong. She couldn't hate him anymore. She understood why he'd taken her. In his world, it was

standard operating procedure. Since he wouldn't release her right now, she might as well enjoy him. He'd soon learn that even he couldn't control her.

Sniffing, she reluctantly pulled her face out of his chest and wiped her eyes, not wanting him to see her so weak; nobody ever did. He bent down and kissed the tears off her face, and she gasped at how good even these innocent kisses felt.

His rough, calloused thumb brushed her face, making her ache for more. She instinctively pressed closer to him. What he was doing was sweet, but it just wasn't enough. She'd done more than this in middle school. She knew Raven was anything but naïve, that he could make her dreams come true, that he was holding back on purpose to drive her wild with desire, and it was working. She wanted him to take her, to slip his big hand up the inside of her thigh and find her wet, aching sex. As she thought about it, she could feel a ghostly preview of the tantalizing sensation. An image of him taking her over his knee and spanking her naked ass flashed before her. She blushed as her body heated, and she heard him chuckling.

"Yes, Tigress. We have many avenues to explore, don't we? You wouldn't watch that movie over and over again, if it didn't arouse you. Am I right?"

She felt her face heating. "Right," she whispered.

"We can do anything they do in that movie, sweetcakes."

Oh, God! His sensual promise made her tremble and cream. "Why didn't you take me last night?"

"Wrong time. Wrong place."

Damn him! "Why don't you take me now?"

"I can feel that you're wet, but I'm going to make you wait."

"I don't want to wait!"

"And who's in charge of the bedroom, my dear?"

The harsh question turned her on, rippled her sex. "You are."

"Then don't ask so many questions, or I'll punish you. The more you demand, the longer you'll wait."

She shuddered and shot him a look she knew was dark. But she didn't dare say anything because she didn't want to wait any longer than necessary.

"I love your spunk, but don't attempt a war of control with me, Tigress. You can't win."

She wanted to protest, but somehow she didn't. She knew he'd never let her lead him around by the nose, like other men had.

"Don't fight me," he said, his sultry tone warming her blood.

She couldn't have fought him if she'd tried. Her bones melted inside.

He rolled to his side to fix her with a predatory gaze from his luminous, honey-gold eyes. His witchlike stare intrigued her. She shivered to her toes.

“What?” he asked, and that one word caused her to ripple inside.

“N-nothing.” When had she started to stammer? Never before now! She wished he’d do something to her. He tantalized her with his sexy scent of leather, pine, and hot man. His warm breath tickled her cheek, stirring tendrils of her hair, and she shuddered.

Swallowing hard, trying not to trump his dominance, which would cause him to withdraw from her she said, “Why do you look human?”

“Dreauxoids share the same forms as humans. Some body parts, too, but things like our hearts are very well protected.” As an afterthought, he said, “We don’t get STDs, though, so sex is always safe.”

No condoms! Her nipples beaded.

“Our eyes can glow,” he offered.

“I noticed.” Another shudder racked her body, her wet folds rippling in tandem.

“That glow is known to attract humans.”

She watched him, unable to yank her gaze away from him. *So his eyes make the attraction even worse.* A lock of his hair fell forward. It looked dark and soft and she had the uncontrollable urge to touch it. Her hand actually trembled from holding back. Finally, she swallowed her pride and asked him, feeling humiliated that she needed permission, “May I touch your hair? Stroke it? Please?”

“Since you asked so nicely, you may.”

Even feeling humiliated, she brushed a few errant strands behind his ear, aroused by its silky feel. Her senses leaped to life and her breasts and nipples tightened.

His eyes lit up as if candles burned in them. *Just look away. You don’t have to fuel your attraction. He won’t do anything with you yet, so why torture yourself?* But she didn’t really want to look away. “Tell me about your Dreaux family.” She had to distract herself or she’d rip off his shirt and pull down his pants...she had the strongest urge to see the man’s cock. She gritted her teeth, then continued her line of conversation. “I mean, if I decide to be your soul mate, your family will be my in-laws.” She spoke as if she weren’t in a state of perilous arousal.

Raven tossed a lock of hair off his forehead and that one simple gesture oozed of white-hot sex. He didn’t say anything but finally broke eye contact, looking away.

A voice in her head cried out. She felt the loss of eye contact acutely, yet, even without it, he pulled at her, and she felt strangely connected to the Dreauxoid. A field, or aura, of penetration coming directly from him surrounded her. She couldn’t have described it in words; it had never happened to her before. She suddenly felt a sort of melancholy aura emitting from him. No, no. It had to be the bleak expression she’d seen in his eyes just before he’d turned away from her.

"My dad and brother are pure Dreaux. I'm an embarrassment to them both. I remind everyone of my father's infidelity with a human." His expression didn't change as he said, "My stepmother killed my mother. Strangled her, she brags."

"Oh, Raven. How horrible!" An overwhelming urge to take him in her arms and comfort him engulfed her. That melancholy aura grew stronger and dug inside of her, stirring her deep emotions. Could she actually be getting his vibes? Did they call it "vibes" on Dreaux?

"What happened to my mother isn't unusual on our planet." Raven shrugged, lowering his lashes. "Humans aren't worth much there and the authorities often overlook things like murder." His voice had taken on a monotone. Then, he inhaled deeply, then said, "The authorities found no proof that she did it, so they had to let her go. Ardella, my stepmother, burned her body." He shrugged. "Case dismissed."

Natalia gaped at him. "That's despicable...barbaric! I don't know what to say. I can't believe they didn't investigate further."

"Believe it," he said, in a grim voice.

Her breath caught as he locked eyes with her once more. This time there was a feeling of appreciation in his, and something deep inside of her stirred.

"Dreaux isn't Earth, Tigress. We have no elections. Only the Gods and Goddesses can replace the top law officials, and they haven't made changes in the past two centuries. It's been damn frustrating, since I work undercover on Dreaux."

"Centuries?" She wondered how old he was, but didn't ask. His world intrigued and repelled her. She blinked her mind clear. "So you're a spy?"

"Right. I'm my own boss. I bring down those who do harm to others, with some success. The problem is our laws are complex. There is no circumstantial evidence. If I can't bring incriminating proof to the authorities, they won't arrest anybody, even if they suspect he's broken the law. It's a black and white world, little gray."

"Are your authorities like our police?"

"Not as responsive. I'm on my own more than if I were a spy on Earth. I can't necessarily count on them to come to my aid."

Natalia shivered.

"So you have a busy, dangerous life on Dreaux." She felt a pang, and it shocked her that she'd worry for his welfare. She wasn't even sure yet that this wasn't all a dream.

He nodded. "I did live dangerously when I was there, anyway. Now -- it will be up to my friends -- I can't do anything if I'm here."

A pause permeated the air, and she watched him, fascinated, as his eyes seemed to fade, and then sharpen, this time with some zip in them. "I visit my mom in her alternate dimension."

"Alternate dimension?"

"Where humans go when they die. It's just another dimension -- my time with my mom is limited to visiting hours, so I can't see her more than once a week. I feel her always, though." He sobered and the room seemed to chill. She could feel his anguish. He missed easy access to his mother.

Without thinking, she reached out and took his hand, and he instantly curled strong fingers around her slender palm. The now familiar flames caused by his touch scorched her flesh. Mixed in with the sensual arousal, however, she felt sympathy for him.

He glanced down at the hand she held. When his gaze lifted again, he wore a faint smile and she felt something from within her that rendered her speechless. He was so beautiful.

"Humans are so kind," he said, and he actually sounded touched.

Natalia couldn't help smiling, but it quickly faded. "Not all humans are kind. We had slavery. Still do in some countries. My ancestors on my father's side were slaves."

"I do know that." He cocked his head and watched her, and her sex pulsed again. She drew in a quick breath, trying to calm her body, as he continued speaking. "My mother picked you out for me. She said we had a lot in common. One thing you and I share is mixed heritage. I'm Dreaux and human, and, sometimes, I'm not sure where I belong, if anywhere."

"Me, too." She felt closer to him, could feel her resistance to his charms weakening. "I've had blacks tell me I'm not black enough and whites think I'm black -- I don't know where I fit in either."

"I hang out with creatures from many worlds who accept everyone for who they are," Raven said. "I think you'll like my friends." He smiled at her again. Every time he did, sunshine lit her world and her insides turned to mush.

She still had her slender hand wrapped around his large one and she squeezed it, aware that hers trembled. Maybe he understood her in ways others didn't.

"Mom always knows best," Raven said, with warm affection that touched her core. "You'll have to meet her one day."

"I'm not Dreaux. I don't think I'm privy to this alternate dimension."

"I can transport you there. Visiting hours only." He stretched out, never taking his eyes off of her.

Natalia's head reeled. While he lay on his back, she could see the power in his shoulders and his wide, muscled chest and washboard abs. The black muscle shirt clung to his body and hid nothing. It had crept up, exposing his navel. Sneaking a look farther down, she caught her breath as her gaze fell on the impressive bulge of his crotch. She pictured him naked with his cock plunged deep inside her pussy, and forced herself back to reality. Tearing her gaze away from the tantalizing sight, she swept it down his long, powerful legs. He had big feet...

"You know what they say about men with big feet." She wanted to slap her hands over her mouth.

"I'm well-endowed. Does that turn you on?"

It did. "All men say that." Her gaze shifted back to his crotch and her breathing sped up. The bulge in his jeans seemed huge.

"Some men lie. Would you like to see?"

"Yes, I suppose. Let me see that monster you claim you have." Her heart thumped. She couldn't wait. Would he finally give her a taste of him?

"You can't yet."

She drew in a quick breath, even as her sex flamed. She remembered he'd rebuffed her at her birthday party, too. How long would he hold out on her? Her body felt tense enough to explode, yet...

"I know you'd like to try bondage, if you trusted the man," Raven said, with a pointed look right at her.

She could feel her face heating. "Bondage, um, can you really handle that sort of thing, big boy?"

"Save it. You can't shock me. I know your secret desires." He looked at her with that amused expression that made her melt. "Humans have too many sexual hang-ups. I also know you've fantasized about getting caught making love in public -- other men looking on -- maybe it's the actress in you needing an audience. Don't bother denying it. Dreaxoids do what they want and don't think it's weird. Earthlings are uptight and don't explore their deepest needs. When the time is right, I'll take you out in public and you'll get it in your ass and much more, Tigress."

She felt her sex and ass both quivering and, rather than denying anything, she said, "H-how soon?" Beads of sweat dripped down her body.

His grin widened and she noticed a sexy gleam in his eye. "I'll surprise you, Nat. Do you mind if I call you Nat?"

"No." He could call her anything he wanted as long as he fucked her. As soon as the thought popped into her head, she gasped, then covered her mouth with her hand. She'd never been promiscuous, no matter what the paparazzi wrote about her. She'd been more of an ice princess than a siren. By now she was convinced he'd cast a spell on her, making her body scream with need of him. She couldn't concentrate on anything but him, his scent, his eyes, his lips, his muscles, his voice...it had to be a spell, and right now, she really didn't care.

He placed two large, heated hands on her arms and pulled her on top of him. She gasped and arched, but he grabbed the back of her head and brought her face close to his. "What do you want from me, Natalia? Tell me, babe. I like to hear it."

"I...if I'm honest, I want to fuck you." She rubbed against his hard muscles, her breasts pillowed against his broad chest and the bulge of his cock pressing up into her needy, dampened sex. She found herself inches from his lips, wanting them and wanting all of him. Her words seemed to spill out against her will. "I want us to do each other, and afterward I want you to spank me -- maybe tie me up -- stick your cock in my ass -- I can't believe I'm talking this way!" Her words had just tumbled out. Now her body flamed, but she felt embarrassed by her bluntness. He didn't change expression, however.

"I know, I feel it," he said, his big hands slipping down her body to cup her ass. He tightened his grasp and watched her.

Instantly, her shuddering body burst into a raging inferno. The slight restraint was driving her crazy. If he tried bondage, she'd go nuts. Instead, she locked gazes with him. Her lips once again trembled. "Kiss me, please. I'm dying to taste you. I'm not like this. Are you sure you didn't put some spell on me?" Her body melded into him, fitting perfectly.

He laughed and his breath tickled her face in a tantalizing way. "I'm honored."

As she trembled in his arms, his words turned her on even more. A wildfire of need raged within her as she waited and waited. "Don't just be honored, damn it! You're teasing me, aren't you?"

"A little, but I've wanted to do this for many years," He slowly moved his face closer to hers. "I intend to savor your sweet surrender, bit by aching bit." He slowly moved his face closer toward hers.

Chapter Three

Natalia watched him and her breath caught as his eyes shut. He wrapped his arms around her and kissed her, arching his cock into her burning folds. She gasped into his mouth as she felt flames pulsing in her pussy and her ass. A wave of déjà vu rippled through her, as if they'd been together before. Weird!

Tentatively exploring the way he felt, she touched the silkiness of his hair with one hand and gripped his strong bicep with her other, discomfited by the way he undid her composure, yet rippling all over as she felt his muscles tightening under her body.

His touch was paradise.

He rolled her to his side, grabbing her tightly so her tingling breasts melted flush against his chest. His breathing increased and his tongue pushed past her teeth, into her mouth, lazy and smooth, like he had forever and a day to explore her, and wasn't in any rush. Finally, he pulled back a little, set his hypnotic gaze on hers, and smiled. She felt it to her core and waited as he moved toward her again.

Rather than the expected kiss, he sucked on her lower lip, and the intensity of her pleasure shocked her. His lips moved to her neck. She tipped her head back and gave him room to do as he pleased. Slowly, teasingly, he worked on her skin with his tongue and teeth. Goosebumps raced from her scalp to her toenails. She moaned as he moved his lips down farther.

"Oh, yes, yes!" She felt the softness of his hair as it brushed her cheek and the roughness of his stubbed chin against the exposed part of her chest, just above her breasts. His teeth gently rolled the skin of her neck, as his hand slid under her neckline and cupped her breast, giving it a sexy little squeeze. Her nipples beaded. "R-Raven?"

"You do like this, don't you?" He milked her breast again, then pulled back, his stare a magnet of sexuality.

She laughed, out of her mind with giddiness. Her sex was pouring cream; he didn't know how funny it was that she enjoyed him. "I don't normally care for a man's touch -- I usually just want the guy to hurry up, finish, and say good-bye."

"All two of them." He moved his hand to her other breast and teased her nipple until it shook.

As her body trembled under his touch, she shut her eyes, embarrassed. "H-how did you know -- I've only had two men?"

He moved his lips between her breasts, straining the neckline of her blouse, going slowly, driving her nuts and she just wanted to bust out of her clothes...

"I know all, see all. At least about you."

His low, sexy voice sent quivers through her.

"I gave up sex. I'm not normal. I'm frigid." Her tears surprised her. She wasn't one easily brought to them.

He laughed as he gently wiped her tears with a rough finger. "You're not frigid. Bet your panties are all wet."

She felt her face once again heat. "How -- how did you know?"

He reached down and felt the damp spot between her thighs. It had seeped through her pants and she knew her face had gone beet red. At the same time, she let out a little scream and arched against his hand.

"You're responsive to me," he said, and ran his hand up and down pussy. Even with her pants on, she could feel him acutely, and she moaned. He was right. He made her nuts. "More," she muttered. "Oh, yes, more."

He withdrew his hand and she lifted her head, shocked. Why had he stopped? Did he want to drive her nuts? Probably.

"I know what you like," he said, somehow forcing her, without words, to stare into his eyes. He smiled when she did. "You like it sweet and also kinky," he said. "I watched you making love." He reached for the button of her blouse and undid it.

"Y-you watched?" She swallowed hard and felt a little thrill.

"Not with your college frat boyfriend. I didn't know about you then. I saw the pathetic affair with the actor from *Kiss Me Again*. Yes, I watched. I masturbated while I watched, too. Does that turn you on?"

Her sex rippled and wet again. It more than turned her on. She quivered all over, thinking about his invisible presence in the room, watching her. If she'd known, that would have livened up the experience a lot.

"Yeah, you would have liked it, if you'd known I'd been there." He flashed her the devil's grin. "Would have taken your mind off of Bernie's awkwardness."

She laughed, unable to help it, then suddenly sobered. "Then you've already seen me naked." She quivered even more.

"No, I didn't. You forgot. Bernie insisted you do it under the covers."

She burst out laughing. He'd been there. He knew. She laughed harder. He ran a finger down her face. Then, he unbuttoned her second button. As her blouse opened farther, she felt his hot breath tickling her cleavage. "I never used my powers to see you naked, love, except for your affair with Bernie," he said, speaking quietly, "and that was only because I knew you'd fantasized that somebody watch you. Never saw you change your clothes or shower -- tempted me, but I didn't. This will be the first time I see you naked, and" -- another button plunked open -- "I'm very much looking forward to it."

She melted the sexy tone of his words and at the light touch of his fingers.

"I hope you like what you see." She felt herself breaking into a sweat as she stroked his hair with a trembling hand.

He smiled and unbuttoned the next one, gazing down at her, letting out a moan as her breasts spilled out. She was left staring at his head, the way his hair fell forward and shielded his face from view. Hair swept across her nose and mouth and she sucked on a few strands, loving the feel of the softness in her mouth.

He lay beside her, unbuttoning her blouse all the way. Then he sat on the bed, pulling her up with him. Her body flamed and chilled, a luscious contradiction.

"Slide out of that blouse," he said, staring at her breasts, his words a soft command. "I want to watch you do it."

Barely able to manipulate her shaking body, she shrugged out of her blouse and it slowly slid down her arms. She watched his eyes to see his reaction.

His eyes glowed with heat. One strong hand gripped her arm, holding her up, and his free hand grabbed a nipple between his fingers. He used his thumb to strum the tip of her bud, as if it were a guitar, and her nipples hardened like rocks. She whimpered, biting the back of her hand to stop herself from screaming.

"Man, you have nice tits," he said, his voice husky, his gaze hungry. "Lay down again for me, Tigress."

She didn't think to disobey him. The low command in his voice aroused her. Never before had she let a man make love to her their first time together, but need overtook sanity. Her senses leaped in anticipation. He had to be readying to take her. Her pussy convulsed as she flashed an image of him thrusting wildly inside of her...

He lowered himself to the mattress and braced a palm on the far side of her body. When he gathered her nipple between his teeth and rolled it, she heard kitten noises coming from her throat. Arching with a gasp, she pressed against him. He sucked hard on her nipple, drawing it deep into his mouth. Seeing stars, she groaned. "Oh, wow."

He continued his sweet assault.

She started weeping as his breath teased her with quick, heated pants.

"Take *your* shirt off, too," she managed, as the skin between her thighs tingled.

He paused, his gaze fixed on hers, his honeyed eyes glowing brighter and hotter. "What did you say?" he asked.

"I want to see how hot you look without a shirt." Her voice trembled.

"I tell you what to do, not the other way around." He retained a good nature, but didn't accommodate her. "I'll take my shirt off when you deserve it."

"Raven, it's a shirt! I'm not asking you to strip for me!" Although she would have welcomed that. As he lapped and milked her stiff bud, she shivered. "Raven, I-I don't like feeling out of control --"

"Yes, you do." His lips moved to her cleavage and his hot breath and lips worked her skin. He moved downward and licked her navel, and then sucked on it, sweeping it with his tongue. She struggled for breath as her sex spasmed. *How can I get him to fuck me?*

He slid his hand underneath her waistband and felt around, stroking her cream, making her wiggle and gasp, finally sticking first one and then two fingers into her wet pussy. She cried out, surprised and aroused as her sex rippled over him. He removed his hand, licking his fingers, his eyes bright. "Obviously you liked that. Nat, you taste like sugar."

"Please, please, do that again!" She arched to him, her body still sizzling, on fire.

"When you earn it, I'll do it again." He smiled as he settled beside her once more and wrapped his arm around her, pulling her flat against his hot muscles. When she quivered, he pulled back and gazed at her with his witch-stare. She felt frozen under his watchfulness.

"I can't take it anymore. I want you inside of me!" she demanded, aware she'd broken his bedroom rule again.

"That will have to wait." He rubbed his body back and forth against her, and her breasts shot with fire while her pussy blazed. She started to cry.

"I'm ready, I'm all ready for you -- down there -- it's throbbing -- you have to -- you must -- go inside of me or I'll die. Damn it, I need you now!" She not only knew she was babbling, she felt as if her words were out of her control, and that alarmed her.

He laughed, and rested his cheek on her bare abdomen. Again, his silky hair brushed her flesh. Small earthquakes ruptured in her belly and spread to her clit. His hand swept from her shoulder to the top of her pants in one light, skin-crawling brush. She arched and groaned. He did it again, this time squeezing her breasts. She felt tears streaming down her face. "I'll die if you don't take me."

Raven laughed over her skin, tickling it. Her sex pulsed. "Oh, please!" She realized she sounded pathetic and desperate, but that's how she felt. "Go inside of me! I want that large cock up in me, as far as it will go --"

"No can do, sweetcakes. I'm afraid you've gotten all I want to give you for now."

“Tease!” Her face lined with anger. “Why can’t I have as much a say so in the bedroom as you? I’m getting tired of you bossing me around! I want you to fuck me, and you will!” Her entire body shook. Damn, for once in her life she desired a man and he wouldn’t take her. She met his stare boldly.

He didn’t move, didn’t even blink. “Admit it, Nat. You may take charge in other situations, but that’s not what you want in here. My dominance turns you on.”

“It makes me want to slap you!”

She could see his lips twitching as he held in a grin. “Does it really? You like your adoring sissy-boys?”

And Natalia shut her mouth, abruptly. No, she didn’t like the men who were scared of her beauty, her movie star status, her parents, her own career, her confidence. They didn’t turn her on in the least.

“All right!” She jerked her head away from him, humbled, puzzled, and confused. “Yes, I’ve always fantasized a dominant man, one stronger than me.” She couldn’t help a nervous laugh. “The problem was the men I met weren’t as strong as me.”

“I am.”

“Yes.” She bit out the word, angry at her admission. “And I hate you for it.” Although she really didn’t. What she hated was that he wouldn’t let her take him.

“Don’t decide to turn your human heart against me just because I offer what you’ve never had, Tigress.” He stroked some errant hairs off her cheek and tucked them behind her ear with a seductive sweep of his hand.

She couldn’t help the way her skin heated at his sensual touch, and her temper deflated. Why be angry about the truth?

He ran his hand in back, holding her ass, squeezing it a little bit, and she lost control. “I’d like you to spank me. Please, spank me!”

“In due time,” he said, and his voice had softened. He placed his large, hot hand on her shoulder and she felt oh-my-god-off-the-charts-hot. His strange aura of tenderness, along with his roughness, struck her as a perfect combination. It confused her. She heard herself asking, “Will you hold me? Will you at least do that?”

He stood up, towering over her, his hair all rumbled and sexy and his petulant mouth twitching upward in amusement. “I’m hungry,” he said, not addressing the subject. “Be right back.”

Then he turned and strode out of the room with his confident swagger, leaving her staring after him, wondering where craziness started and reality ended, and not really caring anymore.

All the warm feelings she’d started having toward him imploded. Frustrated with her unfulfilled need, she stuck her own fingers inside of her pussy and her muscles grabbed at them. She found some relief, but she wanted Raven, had offered herself to him again, and

again, and, just like last night, he'd turned her down. He knew how she ached for him, knew exactly what he was doing to her. How long would he keep up this torture?

"Jerk!" she mumbled as she dropped her head and yanked her fingers out of her hungry opening. What the hell was happening to her? "Son of a bitch!" she shouted after him.

She got no satisfaction from it as she heard him burst into laughter.

Chapter Four

Raven entered the small living room of the cabin from the kitchen and found Lily rocking in her chair before the unlit hearth, her face turned toward the sunshine streaming in from the window. Dreauxoids thrived in the sun, partly received their powers and strength from it.

“It went well?” Lily asked, not looking over her shoulder.

“Strange.” He couldn’t stop the rushing through his veins, the intensity of his emotions, the hot pulsing of his cock. “Just kissing her seemed to change me.” Lily would set him straight. She’d always been able to do that.” No other woman has changed me with such innocence.”

“How do you feel strange?” She still didn’t turn around.

How? How indeed! He curled his hands, looking down at them. They felt warmer. All of him felt warmer. Dreauxoids were naturally cold. And he also felt...more loving? He wanted to put his hand on Lily’s shoulder and spill his guts to her about how grateful he was for all she’d done for him. He’d never expressed it before.

“I think even just kissing and touching her has made me more human. At least temporarily. Does this make sense?” He put his hands low on his hips and stared out the window at the ocean, waiting for her to respond, feeling vulnerable, which he hated.

“Well, it wasn’t a bonding,” Lily said, in a calm voice, “but when a Dreauxoid shares intimate contact with someone of another species, he certainly can soak up part of them. Just look at your father.”

Raven didn’t want to think about his father, but memories rained down on him. He could hear his stepmother deriding her mate for having “gone soft after taking that human whore.” Dreauxoids paired up for reasons other than love -- lust, procreation, greed -- but

Raven knew his father had cared for Ardella, in spite of the indiscretion that had created him.

He remembered hiding on the spiral staircase of their elegant yet lonely mansion -- full of pristine white furnishings and carpeting -- void of any positive aura. Stone cold. His parents had been arguing. "Since you took that whore, you are like her."

"I'm not."

"You are! You believe in love now. I think that witch's charms affected your intelligence."

He'd seen his handsome father, who looked like him, trying to take Ardella's hands, but she'd pulled them away and shown him her stiffened back. "Unless I desire you, there is no need to touch me, Bry. That's the human part of you, thinking you love me, feeling remorse for taking what you wanted." She'd whirled on him. "I'd not cared had you taken a Dreaux mistress. The insult was that you preferred a human to me!"

"I was drunk. We've gone over this."

"Bry, cut the crap! You were drunk the first time, not the twentieth!"

"You're right -- but I couldn't stay away from her. You certainly paid little attention to me. I have needs, like all men."

"And you'll never satisfy those needs with me again."

Raven had stared in shock as Ardella had pulled up her skirt, exposing most of her thigh. "I'll taunt you with what you're missing, and take a lover. A *Dreauxoid* lover. One not polluted by a human's touch." She'd dropped her skirt and walked up to him, in his face. "You disgust me."

Raven recalled his childish sadness, the tears rolling down his cheeks. He could feel the human love his father had for Ardella slipping away that night. At the time, he hadn't fully understood what the scene had meant, but he'd known it was an insult to his mother and, by proxy, to him.

Raven snapped back to the present. "If I become too human, it will make me vulnerable. I remember my father walking around with his head down, looking to Ardella to toss him a bone, and he wasn't part human to begin with. If I go through with this, what will a bonding with Natalia do to me?"

"Are you afraid?" She twisted her chair to face him, a slight smile on her face.

He stiffened. Lily was close enough to him to read his aura, but he hated admitting fear. "No. Concerned."

"Humans can control their emotions up to a point. It's how much you give in to your human side. If you bond with her, you can tap into it or repress it."

He nodded, understanding. He'd always been able to feel human emotions. But he'd maintained ironclad control over them. This love was hard to contain. It wasn't the same as his other feelings that he tightly held in check.

"There's time to back off," Lily said. "You can erase Natalia's memory of the whole experience and walk away."

"No. I can't do that. I just don't like the unexpected."

"And when you kissed her, you felt more human."

"Yes."

They shared a sympathetic look. He loved the softness in her eyes. It always made him feel warm and comforted. That was the human in both of them.

"If you love her, you'll take whatever comes with that love," Lily said. "That means you could get hurt."

"You chose never to get hurt." He watched the back of the petite woman who meant so much to him. "That's the only reason you're alone. You've always been beautiful --"

"The man I love already has a mate, unless she ends up in The Void. Which is unlikely, due to her cleverness." She laughed in a sad way. "Don't worry about me. I'm not as alone as you may think."

He felt an all-too-familiar distant voice calling out to him, but had no idea who, or if it was real or just a false aura. He shook his head to clear it. "Well, you have many friends." He felt unsettled. Something about what she'd just told him made him uncomfortable. She'd never mentioned being in love before, not in all their years together, but, again, it was the Dreaux way to keep things secret.

Lily paused just a second. "Yes. I have friends."

He sucked in a deep breath of air. It felt good and the flowery, grassy smell wafting in from the open window filled his lungs. "You could make new friends if you moved near us on Earth. I'll miss you if you return to Dreaux."

She rocked in rhythm. "I can't leave Dreaux. Don't worry about me. Go back to Natalia."

He had to accept her decision.

"I wish you luck, darling. I hate to feel your pain. I know you've carried an emptiness around with you since childhood." She turned to him. "But Natalia has that same emptiness. Even movie star status hasn't changed that."

"No, that's not what she really wants out of life. I know her deepest thoughts. She likes acting, but she really wants a family. When she's mine, she can go back to school and become whatever her heart desires." He winked at her. "Thanks for always being so good to me."

"Of course, I'm good to you. As far as I'm concerned, you're my son."

Raven turned and strode into the small kitchen attached to the living room. He'd laid out a bowl of purple grapes. Now he lifted it, still smiling, and walked back to the bedroom, annoyed that his heart fluttered like the lovesick human fools in the movies he watched.

Natalia sat on the bed, her knees cradled to her chest and her head down. He stood there watching her, as her thick, auburn hair cascaded over her breasts. His loins stirred anew. It had taken all his power not to come in his pants earlier. Now just looking at her caused an erection. It angered him. He so prided himself on his self-control.

"I brought us something to eat," he said, careful to keep his voice calm and not betray his human emotions.

She didn't move.

She was angry at him, he knew, but he had a purpose for everything he did. Striding toward her, he spoke in a light voice. "I know you love grapes. I've always wanted to share a grape-filled kiss with you." He sat on the edge of the bed, keeping a hand on the bowl as he set it on his thigh.

She laughed into her knees. "Is there anything about me you don't know?"

"Not much." He placed a hand on her slender shoulder, now covered by the thin material of her blouse.

"I'm not in the mood to share a kiss with you. You turned me away."

He felt a clenching in his belly and stroked her hair. His hand seemed to catch fire as he combed her thick strands with his fingers. "Natalia, you'll let me feed you grapes and share a kiss." His voice gained strength. She couldn't have her way.

"No."

He twisted his fingers around her hair in back and tugged on it, forcing her to look up at him.

"You'll eat them with me. If you refuse, you'll be punished." He focused his gaze on her rounded eyes.

"How?" If he thought a spanking would punish her, he was sadly mistaken. She relished the naughty thought...

"I won't let you touch me."

She looked shocked at first, then shook her head. "Is that a threat?"

"Yes."

They continued to lock on one another's eyes and he loved the depth of feeling inside her deep pools of darkness. "I'll feed you," he said, his voice gentler, and he put a grape to her lips.

She turned her head and he ended up smearing the squashed grape on her cheek.

Letting out a breath, his gaze hit the ceiling. He adored her gall, but he'd win this battle. Leaning over, he licked the juice from her flesh and could feel a muscle twitching in her jaw. When he pulled back, she was watching him, her lips quivering, her eyes glowing with lust. She couldn't resist him any more than he could resist her.

“Open,” he said, dangling a fresh grape above her, grinning now. “Come on, Natty. Be a good girl.”

“Girl?” She laughed, derisively. “I’m thirty years old.”

“I know, my girl.”

Her lips twitched until she broke into a grin and he stuffed the grape into her mouth. He watched her eyes soften. He tried to hold in a satisfied smile as he saw her munching on the grape, and he had the overwhelming urge to kiss, so he did. She wrapped her arms around his neck and their tongues snaked eagerly into one another’s mouths. He tasted her sweet flavor along with the grape, and felt her silky, juice-covered lips pressing hard against his. Her velvet tongue swept eagerly through his mouth, which turned up the flames of his arousal.

The reality of Natalia exceeded his ten years of fantasies.

She pulled back long enough to whisper, “You bastard,” right above his lips. She didn’t say it as if she meant it. He started to press her to the mattress, sliding one hand to her sexy ass, and pinching it playfully.

She gasped before hitting the mattress and he knew he could make her come just by sticking a finger up her tight portal. He was just about to use his magic to get a warming lubricant when there was a loud knock on the door.

“Trouble, Raven!” Lily shouted. The door slammed open and there was a thud.

Raven let go of Natalia and jumped to his feet, instantly in attack mode.

“Shit,” he said, as he stared at the tall, stout man across the room. At once, he shut his eyes to use every bit of magic he had, hoping it was enough to form a repelling forcefield around Natalia. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Lily, lying unconscious on the floor, but had no time to tend to her, not with Tre standing there.

“To what do I owe this misfortune?” Raven asked, every muscle in his body tensed.

Tre, who looked like an overblown version of himself, grinned, exposing three chins and a chipped front tooth. “That’s no way to greet your brother.”

He felt weaker from the human effect; feared his magic may not be as strong. With Lily down, he couldn’t combine his powers with hers either. What if the forcefield didn’t work?

“*You’re* Raven’s brother?” Natalia asked with real or fake shock, and Raven’s heart sank. She was baiting Tre, not understanding what he could do to her, not realizing that Tre was nothing like him.

“Natalia, let me handle him --”

“You got the looks in the family, Raven,” she cracked.

Shit! Concentrating hard, he zapped her voice, but could see that Tre had taken deep offense. His beady brown eyes flashed to two black ice cubes. A gun appeared in his hand

and he shot before Raven could even think. Whirling around in terror, Raven watched a rain of bullets careen off an invisible forcefield. It had worked: thank the Gods!

Tre looked shocked. "How did you manage that? I took out Lily's effect, and my magic trumps yours." He frowned. "I admit I've run my magic down a bit or I'd reload this gun."

"The forcefield is obviously strong enough." Raven's heart still raced and his body shook with anger and fear. "You're always low on magic, you foolish asshole. I use mine sparingly, but I was always the smart one in the family."

Tre put his gun behind his belt. It pressed into his protruding belly. "I can't get her now, but I will, unless we strike a bargain."

Raven didn't take the threat lightly. "What do you want? It can't be Natalia. You hate humans."

"Yes. Even pretty ones. So she's to be your soul mate?"

"Yes."

"If she'll have you." His eyes narrowed. "I don't want your woman, you half-breed bastard. I've no desire to contaminate myself with a human!" He turned his head and spat.

"Get to the point, then."

"I'm going to give you a choice. I didn't really come here to destroy you. Father doesn't want that and has threatened to withhold his fortune from me, if I do you harm, so, for now, I won't." He seemed to look past him. "That doesn't apply to your human toy --"

"Shut up! Out with it, Tre!"

"Pity that the corrupt authorities would banish me to The Void if I killed Father. Stupid rule that heirs can't rid themselves of their parents. I hate the hierarchy. Father doesn't act like a Dreaux anymore. Since I've no desire for The Void --"

"I don't want to have a conversation with you, Tre. What do you want from me?"

"Call off the dogs and I'll let you have your two-bit whore of a human."

Raven was at his throat in an instant, choking him. Dreauxoids were immortal, but they could hurt and experience pain for an eternity. It sounded good to Raven, at the moment. With his diminished powers, Tre couldn't fight back with magic and Raven was much stronger than his soft, round sibling. He kned him in his belly.

"Stop! Stop!" Tre begged, gasping for air.

Raven threw him into the wall and stared him down as he bent over, his hands on his thighs, gulping in any air he could get. "What dogs do you want me to call off? The investigation of your connections to the slavery ring on Dreaux?"

"Yes." He puffed out the word.

Raven clenched his fists. His brother, the damn purist! Raven had been busting the ring of Dreauxoid slave-owners for years. He knew Tre was one of them, but hadn't found the proof yet. Call off the dogs?

He didn't feel a need to be honest with anyone as vile as Tre.

"Fine," he said. "If you leave us alone, I won't investigate you anymore." He shook his head. "I thought you'd like my plan to take up residence on Earth. That would cut into my time exposing the slimebags who want only one pure race on Dreaux."

"I do like the idea of being rid of you," Tre said, in a cold voice. "But I also know you well. You'll visit Dreaux, and still try to bust those of us who don't want to hobnob with inferiors."

"You don't care about any purist but yourself. That's the Dreaux way!" He wanted to throttle him. If Natalia hadn't been here, and if he hadn't been sure how long the forcefield would work, he would have bloodied him and left him in an isolated spot with no medical help around. Let him suffer a long time to see how it felt.

"I don't care about others," Tre admitted. "I just want you to stop trying to bust *me*!"

It was an admission of guilt, but he'd known it, no surprise. "Let's call a truce then," Raven said. He had never been this insincere. Usually his word was his bond, but when dealing with purists, their word didn't matter nor could his.

Tre gave him a steady look. "If I hear anything about you snooping around my business -- and that includes your cohorts, too -- your lady will suffer for it!" He waved his hands, which should have transported him, but his powers had run out and he still stood there with his mouth hanging open. Raven laughed as Tre reddened.

"I'll help you," Raven said. He snapped his fingers and transported Tre to Antarctica. Tre would be stuck there until he regenerated and could transport himself back home.

Lily started to rise and Raven ran to her, falling to the ground and taking her hand. "Are you all right?"

"A bump on the head." She smiled, wanly. "Go to Natalia."

But Natalia was running toward her. She tried to speak, but Raven hadn't removed her spell of silence yet, so he blinked it away.

"Nice, you can stop me from talking," she shot at Raven.

"It was to protect you."

Natalia had moved on to Lily. "You're sure you're all right?"

"I'll be fine." She smiled at Natalia. "What about you, young lady?"

Raven had one hand on Lily's thin shoulder. Now he set his other on Natalia's arm and felt her shaking. "I'm sorry he scared you with that gun."

"How did you make those bullets deflect before they hit me?" Her voice filled with awe and wonder.

"The forcefield surrounding you worked. Considering all the magic I've used getting you here, it's a miracle."

"It's not just that," Lily said. "When you kiss a human, you get a bit of her, but she temporarily gets a bit of your magic. Natalia probably contributed to the success of the forcefield."

Natalia flinched. "How? I didn't exactly think 'I need a forcefield to turn everything in the right direction --'"

"But you didn't want the bullet to hit you. That's enough. On top of that," her gaze slid to Raven's now, "Tre is foolish and uses his magic too often, which weakens him."

Raven flashed her a wry smile. "Were you awake to see Tre try to transport himself? He was completely out of magic and couldn't move. I sent him to a cold, dark place -- the worse sort of place for a Dreaux!"

Lily grinned. "Sorry I missed that. Where is he?"

"Antarctica."

Lily and Raven laughed together.

Natalia's voice cut in. "Raven, if you're still determined to hold me and try to make me fall in love with you, which *won't* happen --" she stared at him hard, but then her features sagged. "I don't think we should stay here. I don't want to see Tre again. He knows we're here."

"I agree," Raven said, feeling the stirrings of hope, at least regarding Natalia. For once she hadn't demanded he let her go. "I have to warn you, though, Dreauxoids can track down relatives or close friends by their scent. Still, that takes time. Lily, I think we should hang out at Creatures Palace. Do you agree?"

Lily nodded.

"What's that?" Natalia asked.

"A safe house for endangered creatures everywhere. We'd have allies there. All of us stick up for one another."

"All of us?"

He grinned at her. "Ex-slaves who escaped from all over the universe. Creatures of the night, who are different from their peers. Vampires who are afraid to draw blood -- we donate our blood so that they can drink willingly without feeding, shape-shifters who tend to have little control of their form -- anything and everything is there. A nice crowd, though."

Natalia's tawny skin paled.

Raven laughed. He couldn't help it. "You'll like it there," he said, with a grin. "We'll get a nice room, and Tre will have a formidable task, if he wants to attack us there. What do you say?"

"I have a choice?" She sounded sarcastic.

"No. I make the decisions. I was just being polite."

She broke into honest laughter for the first time. “I hate you.”

He could tell by the tone of her voice that she didn’t hate him at all, and his human emotions screamed with happiness.

Chapter Five

Natalia came to, aware that strong arms held her tightly. Raven! She felt a sense of comfort and warmth. She forced her heavy lids to open and saw his glowing brown eyes boring into her, his forehead wrinkled. "Are you all right?"

"What happened? Did I pass out?" She loved being this close to him.

"I put you to sleep. Hyperspeed can be rough -- it's best for humans not to experience it," Raven explained. "Some humans have bad effects after transporting."

"I see. Well, I'm fine."

Raven moved his face very close to hers and his lips begged for kissing. "Before you look around," he said, "I want you to remember that this is a safe house for castoffs. Don't be afraid of anybody. Most are my friends."

Natalia was in no hurry to look around. It was too mesmerizing to look at him.

A booming voice broke her spell, "My Gods, look who's here! Raven Steed!"

Shouts of discordant greetings broke out from all over.

Raven set her down, and her knees almost buckled. She grabbed him around the waist to steady herself and he quickly slid his arm around to hold her up. "Are you all right?" he asked again, glancing down at her, concern on his face.

"Yes!" She nestled into him, loving his strength, the way his muscles tightened against her body, how he towered over her. Suddenly, the room seemed warm, maybe because so many people had surrounded them, and maybe just because she found him so attractive.

Lily, beside her, whispered, "He's popular here. Rescued many of the inhabitants."

Natalia swept her gaze around the bodies starting to surround Raven. The safe house looked like an ordinary pub, with booths, tables and a bar and, at first glance, normal-looking people.

Or were they people? After the initial greetings, most of the greeters went back to their booths. One remained. She looked up at the tall man who'd been the first one to call out to Raven. He was nice-looking with dark brown hair and darker eyes, highlighting angular features.

Raven slapped him on the back. "It's been too long, Zak!" Immediately, he patted Natalia's arm. "This is Natalia Ferguson, my soul mate. You may know her from her Earth movie, *Summer Places*."

Natalia was about to rip into him for being presumptuous, but the other man's smile distracted her. He had fangs. That meant he was a vampire. She froze.

"Oh!" Raven rubbed his hand up and down her arm. "I should have warned you. Yes, Zak is a vamp."

"A wimpy vamp," Zak muttered, half to himself.

"A very kind vamp," Lily said, in an admonishing tone.

"He's here because he's squeamish, and won't feed."

"I blame my mother for overprotecting me."

"He came here for his safety. The other vamps were cruel to him, and he was also on the verge of death from lack of blood. We donate so he can drink from a cup."

Natalia was still reeling. "Th-that's nice of all of you."

"You're lovely," Zak said, with a twinkle in his eyes. "Why did you decide to make this loser your soul mate? That means eternity with this goof --"

Raven punched him in the shoulder. "Shut up."

"I'm not his soul mate." She finally regained her wits.

"We're working on it," Raven said. "But Tre found us and tried to kill her." As she watched the lines of his face, she realized how deeply that had affected him. "I'm keeping her here where Tre would have to fight all of us to get to her."

"That purist will certainly get a lot of resistance here," Zak said, and his fangs seemed to lower and sharpen. "Maybe he'll come with others, though. An army."

Raven laughed, derisively. "No chance. Full Dreaxoids are loners. You know that. He couldn't get anyone to stick a neck out for him."

"Strange planet you come from," Zak said, shaking his head.

"Luckily," Raven said.

"No purist will come here without a challenge," Lily said, and the older woman's eyes flashed. Suddenly, she looked past all of them and her expression lightened. "Ah, I see Grasha Miles! I haven't seen the old girl for a long time." Squeezing Raven's arm she said, "You don't mind if I spend time with her, do you?"

"No," Raven said, with an indulgent smile. "Why not see if you can share a room with her? You two can catch up."

Lily waved to her friend across the room. "I will," she said. "I'll let you know our room number." She hurried away.

Natalia watched her, bemused. She couldn't believe that she didn't mind Lily taking off. She'd come to trust Raven in a very short period of time. She looked up at him, admiring his strong profile.

"I hope Tonya has an extraordinary vacancy for me and my special woman," Raven said to Zak, and Natalia's nipples beaded with excitement. "Where is that Tonya, anyway?" He frowned and scanned the room.

"She went off with her boyfriend," Zak said. "You know how that is. She'll be down when they're finished." He winked.

Natalia felt a shudder go through her. Her knees weakened again.

Raven caressed her arm and she could feel his heat, even now, even while she was getting used to an environment that made no sense. "Tonya is in charge of the safe house. She has a human boyfriend that she rescued from another warring planet. They're soul mates now."

"Let me guess," Natalia said, swallowing hard. "Tonya is another vampire who won't feed."

"No, a shape-shifter who can't control her form. Sometimes she morphs into the most unusual creatures, and never knows when that will be. But she has a good heart, almost human, and this safe house is a godsend."

Something hairy brushed against Natalia's leg and she screamed, then covered her mouth when she saw a cute little dog of uncertain breed.

Raven laughed and bent down to pet the mutt, urging her to join him. She hesitated, then put her hands on her knees and looked on.

"Hi, Prince," Raven said, rubbing his neck. To Natalia he said, "This is Prince Avery from the planet Askew, home of all sorts of shape-shifters. Prince never mastered his craft and has been a dog for ten Earth years. He was rescued and brought here when his family tried to cage him forever. Been a spoiled pet of ours ever since."

Natalia swallowed hard. "Wow."

"Cute, isn't he?"

"Yeah, I guess so --"

Prince Avery jumped on her and started licking her face, and she laughed. It tickled.

"Down, boy," Raven said. He stood, pulling Natalia up with him. He and looked at Zak. "Since Tonya's not -- available -- right now, you want to join us for some food?"

Zak smiled. "Sure."

Natalia knew she'd lost her mind when she found the fanged creature fairly attractive.

"There's a booth over there," Zak said, looking to his right.

"Let's go," Raven said, firmly, taking her hand. She could tell he wouldn't take no for an answer.

Sitting in the cramped booth, Natalia's thigh pressed against Raven's. She felt him pressing harder, and knew it was on purpose. Although he didn't look at her, he played her, hooking his leg with hers under the table. While he spoke to Zak, she couldn't listen to their conversation. His proximity and touch unglued her. She felt as if everyone must know how much he turned her on, like the entire roomful of people -- make that creatures -- knew that her breasts, nipples, and clit begged for him. Could a woman have an orgasm just sitting next to an ungodly gorgeous man, one who teased her, but wouldn't fulfill her? Yet, his promises...her sex convulsed. God help her!

A young Asian girl in a miniskirt came up to their table, a writing tablet in her hand. "Ready to order, Rave?" Her gaze caressed him in a way that made Natalia --

Jealous? Okay, yes, jealous. She hated him for his embarrassing effect on her, but was getting used to it.

Raven flashed the waitress his a dazzling smile and winked. "The usual, Greta. Bring me a beer too. I need to wind down."

"Who's the human?" Greta asked, looking at her with unfettered hostility.

Natalia slid closer to Raven, staring at Greta with what she knew must be unfriendliness, as if she had some sort of possession of him. It didn't make any sense. He could call them soul mates, but they'd barely touched and she still didn't love him. Lust, no doubt about it, but she wasn't a fool who fell in love right away. Not even with a Dreauxoid.

"This is Natalia," Raven said. "From Earth. Give her the same as me. I know she'll like it."

That made Natalia simmer and she moved her gaze to him. "I don't want whatever you're having. Can I see a menu?" she asked Greta.

Raven put up a hand. "The same as I ordered, Greta," he repeated, firmly.

"I won't eat, then," she said, smarting.

"Then you'll go hungry, in more ways than one."

Zak laughed, and Natalia felt her face heating. What a control freak!

And you like it, Natty. You've always wanted to meet and fuck a strong, dominant man. Well, here he is. And your pussy is screaming for him.

"Maybe I will go hungry," she said, boldly, testing his metal, "in more ways than one."

He turned to her and his stern face was inches from hers. She couldn't breathe as his sexuality sucked her in. Her breasts, her pussy, her clit -- they quivered as her insides turned to mush.

"Behave," he said, and then looked up at Greta, smiling again.

Natalia bit her lip and tried to calm her aroused body. Yes, she wanted to be this overpowered, this dominated. And more.

Greta batted long eyelashes at Raven and flashed him her dimples. "Natasha," she said, not looking at her, "Raven doesn't take kindly to women not listening to him. I should know." Then, without trying to be subtle, she slipped her hand into the front of her black apron and slid something into Raven's hand. He didn't say anything, just slid it into his jeans pocket.

"I always behave for you," Greta said, and then turned her attention to Zak, who also ordered.

Natalia needed to know what the hell Greta had given Raven. As Raven and Zak spoke, mostly about things she didn't know anything about, she wanted to reach into his jeans and remove the object. The food came and she immediately took in the strong, spicy scent. It looked something like tacos, which she loved. She noticed she received no beer.

"Let me guess," she said, sarcastically. "I can't drink, you can."

"Bingo," he said, digging into his food, "at least for now. I don't want your senses dulled."

"I could use dulled senses after what I've been through."

He kept eating steadily. "We'll drink together sometime, but not today."

Zak shot her a sympathetic look. "He gets what he wants from his women."

His women. Did he have so many? Why was he putting on a big act about wanting her for his soul mate? She steamed as she thought about the object that Greta had given him. A key to her room? She wanted to rip off his pants to see what she'd given him. The idea of ripping off his pants made her think about his cock. How she'd love to see that cock. She had a feeling...she better stop thinking about that feeling. Her panties wet again. She needed to change them but didn't know where to get any clothes. How humiliating.

"Hey," Zak said, and Natalia only listened to him with half an ear. "Ever find out who you think is calling out to you?"

Raven shook his head. "No, very frustrating. I get the feeling it's a teenager -- in human terms."

"Sure you haven't fathered one?" Zak asked, with a wicked smile.

Raven grimaced. "Quite sure. I'm not as busy as you think. I've spent Earth years following Natalia around and haven't been with any women."

"Bullshit," Zak said, laughing.

"It's true."

Natalia didn't believe him. A man who looked like him certainly wouldn't be celibate. She blinked fast to clear her head.

Drinks came, only water for her. Irritated, yet intrigued, she took a sip and her gaze fell on Zak's drink, pure red. "What did you order? I wasn't listening."

Zak fingered his glass. "Blood," he said. "On the rocks."

"Of course. Silly me for asking." What kind of a world had she entered?

A cool breeze rushed through the room as the front door opened, and the buzz of conversation seemed to halt. Raven stood up. "Draken!"

The huge man, taller than Raven, took long, loping steps toward him, a grin from ear to ear, as conversation around them went back to normal.

Natalia stared at this Draken. This was the man who had helped Raven abduct her. She guessed him at six feet six with close-cut hair, clean features, and skin significantly darker than her own. His eyes radiated depths of knowledge and, as he pulled back from Raven, his gaze locked on hers.

"My, my," Draken said, striding up to the table and extending his hand. "You are as stunning as ever, Natalia. I couldn't really pay attention last night when we took you."

She wanted to scowl at him, but couldn't. His grin was infectious and she laughed, shaking his hand, firmly. "I'm never at my best when I'm straining to get free," she teased.

They held each other's gazes and Raven sat back down beside her, giving her a look that she could feel. It pulled her from Draken and she stared into his disapproving eyes. "Resist the charms of this rogue," he said, and he didn't seem to be teasing.

She felt a nugget of satisfaction. He'd just made her jealous with the waitress. Now he could get a taste of it. Draken, dressed in a soft leather jacket, looked cool and collected. Suddenly she wondered what it would be like to make love to Raven with Draken looking on. Maybe Zak too. She'd often thought of having an audience of hot men.

Sick, sick, sick. She lowered her gaze and dug into her meal, which, she grudgingly admitted, tasted tangy, cheesy, and delicious.

"Why are you here?" Raven asked.

Draken's huge eyes traveled to Natalia and he grinned. "Some Earthling woman gave me such a hard time last night I needed a rest."

Raven pressed her closer to him. "Eyes on me, Drake. Why are you really here?"

Draken turned back to Raven. "Bored. Just seeing who's here. Yourself?"

"Tre paid a visit."

Draken sucked in a fast breath. "Didn't take him long. Did you get a room yet?"

"If Tonya ever comes down from fucking her boyfriend, I'm asking for the penthouse," Raven said, rubbing her arm up and down, creating serious heat through all of her.

"Whoa." Draken reached across the table to pat her hand once. "You're in for one steamy night if he takes you there."

Natalia didn't tell him that he'd already made her hot. The idea of being in some special, erotic room with Raven...

"We'll see," Raven said, tossing Natalia a look that smoldered with fire.

She got wet, staring at his mouth, remembering the luscious taste of that mouth.

"There's Tonya," Zak said, as he set down his drained cup of blood.

Raven glanced over his shoulder, then looked back, a shit-eating grin on his face. "Excuse me," he said, again standing up.

Natalia looked over her shoulder to watch his progress and her heart fell to her stomach as Greta stopped him first, talking to him as she batted her eyes and tossed her long hair in a seductive manner. "Was she -- did she -- was she a girlfriend of Raven's?" Natalia asked either of the men, trying not to sound too interested.

"Man, that guy has as many women throwing themselves at him as I do," Draken said, with a laugh. "I don't really know who he's been with."

Natalia turned back, not wanting to see anymore.

"Are you jealous?" Draken asked.

She looked up and saw a wicked sparkle in his dark eyes.

"No, I don't even like Raven," she said, and she crossed her arms.

* * * * *

A half hour later, Natalia found herself in a room that, she had to admit, had an air of sexuality. Raven had left her there for a moment to talk to somebody -- he refused to say who-- so she sat on a large, heart-shaped bed with a red velvet spread and a pliable mattress, pissed off that he wouldn't tell her what was going on. Her ass eased into the mattress's softness and it cupped her seductively. The chandelier lights were soft. Mirrors were everywhere on the walls and ceiling, with an especially large, rectangular one right above the bed.

She could see a hot tub and shower in another room, glistening with white and black speckled tile. A wet bar stood on the other side of the room. She sat up straight and dug her bare toes into a deep, red rug, and let it tickle her feet as she swung them back and forth.

A faint, spicy fragrance permeated the room, as well as erotic instrumental music thumping in the background. She could feel herself trembling. Would she finally get to experience Raven, with all his promises? Restless and aroused, she stood and strode to a white dresser and pulled open the top drawer. May as well explore.

Wow. Her eyes widened; she could feel them. Undergarments, but hardly your everyday stuff.

Natalia swallowed hard as she touched latex and leatherette undergarments, some without crotches in front or back or both. Lord, the stuff her fantasies had been made of!

What would Raven do if he found her wearing one of these? Could he still control himself, the sexy bastard?

She shut the drawer, breathing hard. As much as she hated to admit it to herself, she would not defy him or do anything against his express wishes. Not in the bedroom, at least. That could prompt him to hold out on her, and she was getting desperate...*beyond* desperate. She strode back to the bed and lay down on her back, the velvet caressing any uncovered skin. How good it would feel if she just got naked and snuggled into it, letting her already throbbing clit rub against the material, back and forth, back and forth...

The door opened and she froze.

He shut the door hard and stood there, looking amused. "Textures can be highly erotic."

She could barely swallow. Barely breathe. He looked like a God come to life as he stood before her. No longer did he wear his black muscle shirt and jeans. Instead, he had on a black latex low-cut brief. And nothing else.

He crossed his arms and stared at her, maybe looking for a reaction, but she couldn't give one. His body was to die for. Wide, muscular shoulders, broad, shaved chest, washboard abs, long, powerful legs and calves. The large bulge under his...

Her mouth went dry as he lowered his head and his raven hair fell forward, over smoldering amber eyes and his carefully chiseled features. His swarthy skin had broken into a sweat. His sultry mouth looked ripe and ready for her.

"I gave Greta her key back." He finally spoke from across the room, his masculine features hard and stoic.

A key! So she'd guessed right, and he'd rebuffed her. She nodded, feeling warm inside. *You shouldn't care so much...*

"You're my soul mate, not her," he said, his gaze possessive and heated.

"No, not --" She couldn't finish. With him looking hot enough to burst into flames, she couldn't finish her denial.

He sauntered toward her, and she felt all the breath leave her lungs, but he stopped halfway across the room. "Draken is my best friend," he said, "but if you ever look at him that way again, I'll throw him into The Void. You're mine."

She felt her jaw dropping. Recovering she managed to say, "I don't belong to you or anyone."

His eyes iced over and she felt the chill. "We'll see about that."

His hot, controlling stare her made her cream inside. She needed to change the subject. "Where did you change?"

He snapped his fingers and changed into his jeans and muscle shirt again. "Like that." Another snap and he wore his hot, tight covering again. He took a few more steps toward her and, as he came closer, she could feel dampness between her thighs.

She was hopeless and becoming mindless.

"Take me, Raven. I don't care about anything else but having you. Right now. I can't stand it."

"Draken?"

"You!"

"I decide what we do and when we do it." He snapped his fingers and she suddenly felt a chill. Looking down, she gasped at her new outfit and quickly met his gaze. His eyes reflected satisfaction. "Stand."

She did. She'd do anything he said if that's what she had to do to have him.

He closed the distance between them and ran a caressing hand over her budding nipples. "You look perfect."

She leaned into his touch, mesmerized.

He leaned in to kiss her then stepped back. "Walk back and forth."

She did, swinging her hips on purpose. He'd dressed her in a leatherette outfit with cut outs for her breasts and ass. On her feet she wore high-heeled black shoes. She hoped she didn't turn an ankle and ruin the effect.

"Nice," he said, and she felt all fuzzy inside when his lips curled up. "Stay right there. Don't move." He strode to the edge of the velvet covered heart bed and sat on the edge of it. "Over my knee, girl."

She felt her heart speed up as she stared at him.

He patted his bare, muscular thigh. "Now."

He was going to spank her! She wanted to run to him, heels and all, but something held her back. This was new; nobody had offered her this gift before. Also, a fantasy was one thing...

"Why?" she stalled, even as she felt herself cream.

"I didn't give you permission to look in those drawers, but you did." He didn't sound angry, just looked at her with a masked expression.

She felt a jolt as well as a heated spasm. "How did you know?"

"I suspected. Felt something, guess I was right. Since you seemed so interested, I dressed you in my favorite outfit."

"Oh!"

"Now get the hell over my knee, babe."

She hesitated again, not sure why...

"Now or never!"

Never? No, she had to comply, ached to have him bring his large hand across her ass. This was no time to wimp out about something she'd dreamed of since age thirteen. Taking

her shoes off, she left them in the middle of the rug and her bare feet grazed the carpet as she neared him. Each step was harder and harder to take. Her knees seemed to have no bone or cartilage in them. When she fell across the hot flesh of his lap, her ribs brushing against his hardened cock, she felt close to tears. Her pussy spasmed again.

He placed one electric hand over the leatherette covering her back and his skin burned right through the material to her flesh. As his hand slid back and forth, never missing her exposed buttocks, she felt her sex flooding, responding to his touch. Her ass flamed.

"If you ever want me to stop doing something, Tigress, tell me and I will." Now he sounded soothing and kind. "I never force. I'm giving you instructions and you'd better follow them."

She nodded.

"Speak."

"Yes."

"And if you want me to do anything to you -- anything at all -- you tell me. I'll be the one who decides if I'll do it, but you have to let me know your desires. Is that also clear?"

"Yes." Was this her, Natalia Ferguson, obeying this man? She usually ate men up and spat them out afterward. Her body quivered on his lap.

"I want to see and feel your cock." Her voice had sounded hoarse, yearning.

"Not now."

"But --"

"Don't argue with me. Not in the bedroom."

"And if I do?"

"I'll just have to spank you." His voice was smooth as his hand came down on her bare ass, vibrating straight through to her clit. And he hadn't even hit her hard, more like a tap. She gasped and her body rocked against his thighs.

"Will -- can you please do that again?" She could barely choke out the words.

His hand came down again, harder this time. She arched and shuddered. The sensation bit right through to her most sensitive areas and shot through the rest of her.

She could feel his cock growing behind his latex briefs. It tickled her skin and she wanted to weep.

He slapped her once more, even harder, causing an earthquake to quiver from the inside of her ass to her ramrod straight clit. That undid her and she screamed loud and long.

"God help me," she muttered over and over again.

"This is just foreplay," he murmured and gave her a chance to simmer down.

As she tried to slow down her breathing, he reached under her garment and stroked her pussy with calloused fingers, causing her to jolt again.

"Wow. You're really wet."

"This surprises you? I thought you wanted me to calm down. Not that I want to calm down, but..."

"But?"

She glanced over her shoulder and saw him watching her, his stare intent, one eyebrow lifted.

She turned away. "It's up to you."

"Good girl. I'm going to reward you for your obedience."

Natalia took in a raspy breath. Now what? More spanking?

Shit! Something barely entered her ass, something that scratched the dryness of her skin, but also set her flesh on fire. She arched and moaned. His finger.

Her heart beat so fast she wondered if it could burst out of her chest. She gasped.

"I like that," she choked out. He moved his finger in and out.

"More, please. Deeper," she whispered.

"Not yet." He laughed and continued.

She quivered and shook, whimpering. "Are you going to stick your cock in my ass?" she asked, hoping, hoping...

"When the time is right."

"The time is right!"

"It's not." He laughed again and removed his finger. Her head and legs dropped to the blanket, while her breasts, abdomen, and pussy relaxed against the warmth of his flesh. The hairs on his thighs tickled her clit and she sighed. This man was never ending bliss...

"Stay here," he said, and slid out from beneath her, leaving her clawing the bedspread.

"Where are you going?" she asked.

He rubbed his palm over her ass. She gasped. "I have to make some plans for us. I'll be back soon."

"How soon?"

He shook his head. "So human, obsessing over time like that." He stood up, snapped his fingers, and his black outfit hugged his sexy form again.

"I'm coming with you." She rolled over and stood at once, placing a hand on his arm.

"I'll tell you if you are or aren't, and you're not." He shook her off, turning before she could cuss at him.

"Lie back down and rest until I return." He broke into a devastating grin that sent thrills of delight through all of her. "You're only human. You're going to need to rest for all the games I have planned for us."

She stared after him, her sex rippling, as he sauntered out of the room.

When he left, Natalia buried her head into her hands, still brimming with sensation. What was wrong with her? Her Women's Lib friends would be deprogramming her, if they knew how excited she'd been to have this man completely dominating her.

Screw them. They didn't understand. They'd never met Raven.

If she chose to be Raven's soul mate, she could look forward to this sort of sex every day. For eternity. It said a lot for him.

Chapter Six

Raven found Tonya quickly, and stopped to chat with Zak and few other friends he spotted. It felt good to be among friendly faces, after all the hostility he normally encountered. At the same time, he didn't want to stall. Natalia awaited him and he wanted to rush back to her, just as if he'd been a Dreauxoid schoolboy with his first crush.

When he finally shook off the men who'd greeted him warmly, and eluded Greta's batting eyelashes, he rode up the elevator alone, feeling a sense of anticipation. He thought of how much he needed Natalia as his soul mate. Damn, she couldn't turn him down, he wouldn't allow it. Without her, he may as well fling himself into The Void. Her touch had driven him beyond madness, and he couldn't live without her. When she'd set her eyes on Draken, flirting with him, he'd wanted to strangle the man with his bare hands. Draken was his brother-by-deed, yet he couldn't tolerate the way Natalia had looked at him.

The elevator landed and he strode into the hallway, an erection already stirring. When he stood before the door to their suite, he could smell her flowery scent and his balls tightened. With a snap of his fingers, he changed back into his latex briefs before unlocking the door.

Natalia looked up, her gaze finding his. She looked pleased to see him, which aroused him more. He shut the door and locked it, then turned to assess her from a distance.

She rested on an elbow, her long, thick, auburn hair spilling over delicate shoulders. The sexy outfit made her hotter than an Earthling's idea of Hell. The black leatherette straps and coverings, mixed with the cutouts of her breasts and ass, jolted his cock. He tried to breathe, couldn't, tried again, couldn't. Dizziness overtook him. She looked like a damned Cleopatra with those large eyes and sultry, pink lips.

He struck a stoic pose and slowly made his way to the bed, sitting on the edge of the mattress when he reached it. She took his hand and tried to pull him down. "You're gorgeous," she said, her voice husky.

"Don't call me that," he grumbled, secretly pleased.

"Handsome."

"Thank you. You are quite beautiful, Tigress." He twisted around on the bed, and stared at her as her breasts stared back at him. "Undress. I want to watch you."

She sat up and started quickly pulling down her straps, and he couldn't help laughing. Catching her hands, he said, "It's more erotic if you undress slowly."

"Are you going to undress?"

"Maybe"

She gave him the biggest grin, and he felt a huge connective wave from her to him, an intangible message; a strong communication. She wanted him like crazy, just as much as he wanted her. And he could actually feel warmth drifting toward her soul to his, but human emotions were often hard to gauge. Could just be that she liked the sex.

He watched her, his mouth watering, as she slowly slid her straps down her arms, which caused the entire suit to peel off of her. The sexy, almost striptease way she slid the outfit off her shapely legs stole his breath.

"Nice," he managed, swallowing hard. He grabbed the outfit and tossed it to the floor. "Spread your legs, Tigress."

She did, no problem. "Are you going to finally go inside of me?" Her voice quivered.

He set his shoulders between her thighs and smelled the sweet scent of sex. Shutting his eyes, he licked her folds, tasting the honey that dripped from her cunt. She stiffened and cried out, unprepared. "Damn!" she whispered.

"I'm going to eat you," he said. "And, if you behave, I'll let you see my cock and get a taste of me."

"That so?" Her throaty voice aroused him to the brink.

He looked up and saw that she'd lifted her head off the mattress to look at him.

"Really. Lay your head down now, unless you want to watch me. You're about to take the ride of your life. Has anyone ever done this to you before?"

"Believe it or not, no."

He lowered his head and her thighs bumped against his head. They trembled. He slid closer and saw her inviting pink opening throbbing and ready for him. At first he licked it like a lollipop and she shrieked and thrashed. He quickly lifted his head. "I may have to shackle you to keep you still."

She didn't say anything, but he saw the light in her eyes. He looked back at the slice between her folds and saw it twitching.

“Hurry!” she finally cried out. “Damn it, Raven, hurry!”

“Patience, Tigress.” He liked watching her vibrate and shake.

He could barely hold back himself. His body shook, his shaft throbbed and pulsed. It had crept out of his briefs and onto his abdomen, forcing pressure on it as he pushed into the velvety blanket. Shit! Feeling his tenacious grip slipping away, he sealed his mouth around her clit and suckled, as if he were a baby nursing at his mother’s breast. As he sucked her flesh, faster and harder, she screamed, thrashing her legs and barely missing his head.

“You’re dangerous,” he teased, and he did it again.

“No,” she managed, as she panted. “*You* are!”

He laughed over her sex, then caught her nub gently in his teeth, laving his tongue back and forth against it. Her body stiffened and she let out a bloodcurdling yell as his own body shook like an earthquake. Her scream inflamed him; he loved screamers.

Aroused and out of his mind, he set his teeth gently around her nub again and wiggled it back and forth. She screamed so loud that her voice gave out and her scream continued in a silent rasp, wafting through the air. He continued kneading her clit and she found her voice once more, the scream splitting the air, turning him on until he had to concentrate with all he had just to retain control.

He needed a break or he’d explode so he pulled away, turning his head, his breathing harsh and raspy. “Did I hurt you?” he managed to choke out.

“No!” She tugged at his hair, gently pulling him down. “Play it again, Sam.”

And so he lowered his head, found her clit, and again rolled and licked it, hearing her sobs and the sound of his name on her tongue. He kept doing it, she kept begging for more. Screaming for more.

His filled-to-the-brim cock desperately needed release. Hearing, feeling, and tasting her as she climaxed finally did him in. Hell, he couldn’t take it any more than she could, and he let out a feral growl as his warm liquid spilled all over the bedspread. He shuddered at the same time she did, as if they were in sync. He groaned, quivered, and swore while she did the same. He seemed to come endlessly. She seemed to have lost her mind. He knew he’d lost his. To Natalia and her wild wickedness.

He could see her after-spasms, as she forced herself up on shaky arms. He reached for her, but she put up her hand. “Wait,” she said, softly. Then she dipped her fingers into his juice and tasted it, her eyes lighting up. “Can I lick all of it off of you?” she asked. “Please?”

What was a man to say to that? He laughed as he had his own after-spasm. “Yes.”

She bent over and lapped up his cum with her eager tongue. He groaned and she swirled her tongue around the head of his cock. His breath came quick and tortured as she cleaned him off. When she couldn’t reach any more of him because of his briefs, she shot him a hot look. “May I pull off your briefs, see your cock, and lick the rest of you? Taste you? Please?”

The cock in question was stirring again. "I suppose you earned it."

She took in a sharp breath. "Good. Let me just relieve you of those briefs."

He shuddered as she grabbed his briefs and started yanking them off.

His hand stilled her. She gave him a puzzled look.

"Slow," he said, quietly.

He saw her hands shaking as she reached for his waistband again. Slowly. Her throat worked as she lowered her head to stare while she peeled off his skin-tight briefs.

When she exposed his cock, she left the briefs over his thighs and breathed over him, tickling his balls and shaft, her eyes radiating awe and admiration. He could feel her reaction; it was all good.

"I -- never saw one so big," she said in a husky voice.

He didn't respond, but his cock did -- it twitched and grew.

She sucked in a fast breath. "Is this -- unique to Dreaxoids? So long and thick and -- elegant?"

"No, I'm just big. What do you think, Tigress?" He stopped breathing. Her reaction mattered so much.

"It's gorgeous, turns me on. May I lick you now?"

He smiled as his entire groin stiffened. "Take it in your hand and stroke me. I like that."

"You -- you don't like when a woman licks your cock?"

She was killing him. His balls and ass both tightened. "Of course I do. Do this first, please."

She glanced at him, stuck out her tongue at him, which really turned him on, then lifted his throbbing, hot shaft into her palm. First, she stared hard and long at it, and then, with her free hand, rubbed her fingers and palm over his flaming skin. He took in a shuddering breath and groaned.

"Can I kiss it now?" she asked. "Please?"

"Oh, yeah, babe, kiss it all over."

Her mouth dipped to his shaft, kissing him as her lips traveled back and forth, over and under his throbbing, slick shaft. He tensed and muttered to himself. Lightning bolts shot through him and he saw stars.

She wiggled the head of his staff with her tongue, and he just about lost his senses. "I love your taste," she said, quietly. Her breath wafted over his cock.

She was killing him. He set his hand over her ass and stroked it. "Clean me up, Tigress. Every drop." He squeezed one side of her ass and felt her breath quickening over him, as she again lowered her head to lap up the cum around his balls and shaft. Every tongue stroke made him shudder and groan. Her eager mouth slid back and forth, sometimes kissing, sometimes licking, sometimes very lightly nipping the skin, sometimes sucking on the head.

Gods, she was going to make him come again before she cleaned him up! His hand moved to her pussy and he savored her wetness, then he a stuck finger inside.

She stopped licking him, gasped, and shuddered.

"Fuck my finger," he murmured. "Fuck it, Tigress."

"But...but..."

"Do it."

She did, tentatively at first, but soon he had three fingers inside her wet slit and she pumped her hips up and down over them, her body slamming downward as hard as she could. "Farther up, please!" she begged.

But he didn't. Not yet. She came anyway, her body pulsing and her cream pouring over his fingers. When he pulled them out she cried, "No!"

"Yes. We have to stop now. We have plans."

The look on her face registered such disappointment that he pulled her into his embrace and laughed against her ear. "If you fall in love with me, we'll have eternity to explore each other," he whispered.

"Are you trying to bribe me?" Her voice came out hoarse.

"Oh, yes!"

"I admit I can't wait for more."

"You'll get more, but we have to leave for now." He kissed her ear again, and felt her tremble. "I'd rather stay here." She sounded disappointed.

"We're going to dinner." He backed off of her and held her arms, staring at her, remembering the plans he'd made before they'd come to the suite. "Get your mind off sex for a moment."

"Oh, sure. I'm still shaking."

He felt complimented, but he had to make her hear him.

"You must have eyes only for me, Tigress."

"You do have some sexy friends."

The breath left him and it took him a few seconds to recover. No! "It won't be an issue at dinner, at least tonight, but I forbid you from looking at another man with lust. It will drive me insane." His hold strengthened.

"I won't." She sounded soft and teasing and -- pleased? "Can I ask a favor of you, Raven?" Almost as a tease again, she made big moony eyes at him and drawled out the word, "Pleeeeeeease?"

"You can ask." He held in the urge to laugh.

"Can you also not look at other women with lust?" She cocked her head in a sexy way, then laughed. "This is so *not* like me. Normally, I'd just say, 'Raven, you'd better not look at another woman or I'll kick your ass.'"

“I know. I’ve seen you do that for years.” He laughed, remembering. Then he sobered. “But I’m in control this time.”

She let out a breath. “I know.”

He took her in his embrace and told her the truth. “You don’t need to ask that of me. I can’t feel lust for a woman while I’m with you.”

She grinned, looking pleased. “Greta?”

He shook his head.

“But -- she’s so beautiful.”

His eyes fixed on her parted, pink lips and then he pulled her closer. “Let me show you who I desire.” He made a growling sound and forced her lips hard down on his and, as his tongue swept through her mouth, her arms swung around his neck and, for the moment, she was his.

Chapter Seven

Tre knew he was screwed as soon as he landed in the family mansion.

"Mother," he said, trying to smile. He took her hand and kissed it, but her hand felt as cold as her face had looked.

"Don't try to charm me, you loser! I watched it all from here."

He bridled, straightening up. "It was best I didn't kill her, anyway, Mother. She's an excellent bargaining tool to get Raven to stop looking into our activities. If he discovers our Puritan Spa, we'll lose more money than all of Father's fortune. That resort is really raking in the bucks."

"I agree. We need her as a bargaining chip. So why did you shoot at her?"

Damn! "I lost my temper. Bitch was laughing at me --"

"You screwed up twice, the way I see it, boy. You lost your temper, and tried to kill our only way to control Raven, and then you couldn't even penetrate the forcefield that Raven had set up. Sometimes I worry about our business association. You could ruin it with your impulsiveness!" Her words bit and snapped.

Tre's mother treated him like he was two years old. It was infuriating but he was forced to hold his tongue for now. His mother, only five feet tall, could diminish the strongest Dreux male. He stared at her, taking in puffy white hair, startling Dreux sapphire eyes, and delicate features. Dreuxoids never looked older than their prime. Although centuries old, his mother still had attractiveness and agility. Any minute, she'd be taking out his boyhood paddle to punish him.

"It surprised me that he'd put up such a strong forcefield," he muttered, looking away from her. "My magic needed rejuvenating or he couldn't have done it."

"Well, I'm glad he did. We need that human slut."

Tre nodded, eager to gain favor with his mother.

“And let’s talk about how you use your magic. Half the time it’s insufficient.”

He visualized choking his mother until she bled from the neck, then throwing her into The Void, where nobody could help her. She’d spend eternity in pain. No, no, he couldn’t think those evil thoughts about his mother. Others, yes, but not his mother. They couldn’t turn on one another or their resort venture would fold, and that couldn’t happen.

“If you didn’t use your powers for every little thing, you wouldn’t run out of magic so often!” She ranted in Dreaux and he seemed to shrink as she paced back and forth, throwing her arms up as she spoke. “You can get your own fork; you don’t need to use magic for that! You can walk from one room to another. You don’t need to always transport, but you’re lazy. No wonder you’re overweight!”

She’d struck a chord with him. That hurt. He knew he wasn’t attractive to females. *Certainly not like Raven!*

“I’ll go to the gym.” He hated the need of his mother’s approval.

She laughed. “Yes, and you’ll use magic to get the treadmill to fly. Look, we’ll talk about the sorry shape of your body another time. I want Raven so scared he leaves our slavery ring alone! Gods, I wish you could throw him into The Void.”

“You can’t.”

Both Tre and his mother froze and turned.

His father’s imposing presence stood there, arms crossed. He looked like an older Raven, his hair streaked with silver, his face unlined, looking fit and muscular in a white T-shirt and jeans. Tre hated his handsomeness, just as he hated Raven’s.

“Ardella, Tre, I’ve warned you that if you harm Raven, I will withdraw your privileges to use *my* family money. You’ll be the peasant you were on that sorry day I bonded with you, Ardella. And, Tre, you’ll have to actually get a job.”

Ardella turned on him and Tre admired her fire.

“Look, you human lover! You get worse and worse each day, more and more human! That half-breed boy of yours is nothing but trouble!”

“Enslaving and killing half-breeds and harmless Creatures of the Night is wrong,” Bry snapped, in a loud voice. “I won’t interfere with your activities. It’s my place to support my wife and son, at least for appearances. But I won’t allow you to interfere with Raven’s activities. If you harm him, you’ll both be destitute. You’ve already gone to the authorities to see if they’ll force me to share my family fortune with you. Yes, I know you went -- don’t try to look innocent. I do have some friends in power. I don’t have to give you anything. My family money isn’t yours, unless I let you have it.”

“Go jack off, Bry!” Ardella said, viciously. “I’m sure you need to, since you’ll never lay a hand on me again. I don’t want human contamination.”

Tre wanted to snicker, but he wanted the family fortune more than the satisfaction, so he remained stoic.

"I know your feelings." Bry didn't lose his cool. "I'm Dreaux, like you, and wish most hybrids and non-Dreaux creatures would leave the planet. But I disagree with harming them, since they're here and likely to stay. And nobody touches my firstborn, even if he's a hybrid."

"You love him," Ardella sneered at him. "Love! Such a human emotion that you picked up from that whore that you took to your bed!"

Bry suddenly looked tired, but kept his composure. "Yes, I admit the humanness rubbed off on me a little, and I love Raven more than either of you." He stared at her, then Tre. "Tre, I don't like what you've become." He gaze slid to Ardella. "So much ill has passed between us, much of it my fault, that our bond is an eternal curse. As head of the household, I forbid you or Tre from hurting Raven or you'll both end up broke."

Tre wanted to explode. "Does the same go for his human girlfriend?" He wanted to spit at his father; his hatred ran so deep.

Bry looked at him, his dark eyes thoughtful. "No, I don't care about the girl. I care about my own, not some stranger, even if Raven thinks she should be his soul mate. Do what you want with her, but, I'm warning both of you, leave Raven alone." After a sharp stare at Tre and then Ardella, Bry turned and headed up the winding staircase that led upstairs.

After they heard a door shut, Ardella chuckled softly. "He still has some Dreaux in him. He's not completely infected. You can still go after this human of Raven's and not risk losing your fortune."

"And I will." He stood straight, trying to suck his stomach in.

"But use her as a bargaining chip before you harm her. If he still investigates us, then you can slice off her leg and let her live her pathetic human life without one. Until she dies. Raven won't want an amputee."

Tre was glad the focus had gone from his incompetence to Raven's activities.

"I respectfully disagree, Mother. I think Raven would still want her. It's her soul he loves. I can feel it, being his half brother. But he won't want her to suffer, so he may back off to keep her healthy."

"If he bonds with her, and we haven't harmed her yet, it will be harder to use her as a threat to Raven."

"Yes, but then Raven will live on Earth and not be around as often. And there's always The Void for the woman."

"Yes," she said, with a laugh, and she lifted her gaze to meet his. "As long as Raven loves this humanoid, we can probably keep him from interfering in our lives. But he has to know we're serious and will harm her if he sticks his nose into Dreaux affairs."

Tre nodded, feeling great relief. His mother loved him again. At least in a Dreaux sort of way. "I'll make sure he knows that her safety depends upon his absence, Mother."

"Where is the dear boy now, Tre?"

"He moved. I'll have to pick up his scent and find him. But I will."

Her eyes glowed as she stared him down. "See that you do, Tre. You're my only child, and there will be no more. Stop disappointing me."

"I'll try to do better, Mother." If only the authorities didn't have such asinine laws. A child was not allowed to harm his parent. If he did, it was The Void, no hearing even given. The laws were clear -- parents could punish children, but not the other way around.

"Don't try. Do!" She turned and flounced out of the room, her billowy skirt brushing against her legs.

Tre glowered after her, his anger swelling inside of him. He'd have to show both his human-infested father and his doubting mother that he could be strong. His mother would praise him to the heavenly Dreaux universe if he actually succeeded in bringing Raven to his knees. Their slave hotel meant a lot to her, as it did to him.

He shut his eyes, trying to pick up Raven's scent, but he couldn't.

Well, it was only a matter of time. As he often did, when tense, Tre headed toward the kitchen to fix himself a triple decker Dreauxburger, a large bag of chips, and two liters of soda. If his parents didn't pour on the pressure, maybe he'd lose weight and become as trim as Raven. Until then, he couldn't help himself from piling on the food.

* * * * *

When Natalia and Raven stepped off the elevator that led to the Pub, Natalia froze. "Wow," she said, awed. The dimly lit room had one table set up, a table for two in the center of the room. A candle flickered in a glass jar in the middle of it, and champagne on ice sat neatly on the white lace tablecloth. She looked up at Raven, who wore the white suit he'd worn to her party, the one that said, "Do me." He was to die for. He'd dressed her in a frilly white blouse, denim miniskirt, and high heels.

She looked up at Raven's handsome profile. "Where's everyone else?"

"Tonya arranged for us to be alone. It's an hour before the normal dinner rush."

She felt a tremor of excitement. "Cool." She took his hand, not thinking about it. It seemed natural. She liked the feel of his hard palm against her soft one. She could smell something delicious wafting out from the lit kitchen.

"We have one Earth hour to ourselves." He squeezed her hand.

"Is this done often?" She looked around, intrigued with the shadows cast on the dark paneled walls by a single flickering candle. She and Raven's black outlines loomed as large as two giants, his towering over hers.

"This arrangement is done for special occasions," he said, and put his arm around her shoulder, gripping it. "Let's go."

Feeling giddy, her knees wobbled as he guided her to the table. When they got there, he said, "Don't sit yet."

He grabbed a wooden chair and placed it beside the other chair. "I'd rather sit next to you than across," he said. The two chairs barely fit, since the narrow table didn't allow much room.

Which meant she'd be forced to press against him. She smiled to herself.

"Now you can sit," he said, and pulled out the chair for her.

"A gentleman," she teased as she took a seat.

"Not always." He tickled her ribs and she laughed, then sat down.

He took a seat beside her and instantly pressed his right thigh and calf against her slender ones. His tight muscles scorched her bare flesh. She could feel the power in his leg clear through the material covering his skin, and she felt -- protected. Unusual for her. Normally, she fended for herself.

Greta came to take their order and this time, even though she batted her eyes and tossed her hair at Raven, he kept his arm around Natalia and didn't respond to her flirtations. After he ordered, Greta stomped away.

Natalia giggled. "She didn't like the lack of attention."

"I keep my promises." He reached for the champagne on the table, popped the cork, and poured glasses for both of them.

"Oh, I can drink now. How nice of you."

"But you can't get drunk," he said, staring hard into her eyes. "Anything I do to you -- I don't want the effect tainted by alcohol."

"Anything I do to you..." She liquefied inside, but tried to keep her composure.

"Then you better not get drunk. Are you going to watch your intake or not?" she asked, shocked anew at how much she liked this man being in charge of her. Her family and friends would have been beyond amused if they'd seen her respond to his orders.

"If I drink too much, I won't be at peak performance," he said lazily, rubbing the side of her neck to her arm.

Hot, hot, hot!

"Performance?" She leaned into his body. The collar of his suit jacket brushed her cheek, and he smelled like soap and pine. "Just what will you perform for me, Sir?"

He gazed at her with a languid stare, saying nothing.

"You're going to give me a heart attack."

"I know CPR."

She felt herself shivering even as she laughed again. He was amusing.

Raven lifted his glass of champagne. "To us," he said, his voice smooth.

She clinked glasses with him. "To us, for now," she said, not quite meeting his eyes.

The meals arrived, Greta ignoring them as she set the steaming hot plates before them. As before, when Natalia tasted the meat, potatoes, and tangy sauce, she liked its unfamiliar, but pleasant flavor. "What's the secret to this fine cuisine?"

"Tonya's sworn her cooks to secrecy. Just enjoy it."

She thought of him, not the meal. "Oh, I will. Completely."

Raven ate steadily and finished way before Natalia. He set down his fork, but kept glancing at her plate, until she put her fork down and asked, "Are you still hungry?"

"I can order more." He started to lift his hand to signal Greta, who watched them with glowering eyes, but Natalia caught his hand. "I can't possibly finish all this. Let's share." Without much thought, she scraped some meat and potatoes onto her fork, then turned toward him and lifted it to his lips.

He grinned and she forced the food into his mouth. After he swallowed, he picked up his fork, and scraped some food on it for her. They fed each other off of her plate, as they spoke and brushed shoulders and thighs. Her pussy squeezed with pleasure.

"Is Tre your only sibling?" she asked, wanting to know more about him. She felt close to him in this intimate environment. She found herself eager to learn all about him.

He chewed and swallowed, then wiped his mouth. "Tre's the only one." He seemed to freeze and stare at something only he could see.

"What?" she asked, surprised at her concern, placing a hand over his tensed arm. The skin-to-skin contact caused her breath to catch.

Raven snapped back to alertness and shook his head. "Sometimes...I get this feeling...this connection...seems like I'm being called, but I don't know who needs me."

"I heard you mention that," she said, trying to sound nonchalant, her heart skipping a beat.

"Haunts me, I can't figure out who it is. Has to be somebody close to me for the feelings to be so strong, but, well, maybe I'll figure it out someday."

"I hope so, if it bothers you." She felt a strange tenderness toward him.

"No point in dwelling on what I can't control." He patted the hand that rested on his arm and a thrill shot through her. This was dinner. She needed to cool down. Quickly, she withdrew her flaming hand, and he stared at her for a moment, then turned forward. "How does it feel to be an only child?" he asked her, and seemed alert and interested in her answer. *Nobody ever cares how I feel.*

"Lonely sometimes."

He reached for her hand and squeezed it. "Tell me about the years before I knew you existed, Tigress."

She looked at him, shocked at his focus. "Um, well, my parents...were good people...but caught up in the movie star bit, not home much. I amused myself; never had many friends. Guess I intimidated people. My nannies played with me."

"You liked games?"

"Sure. I was advanced for my age. Board games, the *Discovery Channel*, sports, reading -- watching movies, of course. I still love games." She grinned. "You care, don't you?"

"About you? Yes. Tell me more."

She continued on and he never looked bored, never interrupted her. It flattered her and moved her. Finally, fresh out of words, she said, "Tell me about your activities on Dreaux. Your family?"

He smiled. "Nobody ever asks about me. You're just so sweet." He lifted her hand and kissed it, and they shared a hot stare. "My stepmother hates me and I'm not sure what my dad thinks of me. Then there's Tre. If I were human, he'd try to kill me."

"Yeah, I didn't see a lot of brotherly love there."

Raven chuckled. "None. Damn purist. I suspect he's up to his ass in the slavery ring."

Natalia felt his anguish to the bone, as if she could feel his emotions. She leaned her head against his shoulder, a little hesitantly at first, but he put his arm around her, encouraging her to do it, and she shut her eyes. "Any suspicion of what Tre does with his slaves?"

Raven nodded, a few strands of silky hair grazing her cheek, warming her face and body. "Dreauxoids have come to me with stories about him and Ardella having a spa that employs slaves. They're abused by both Tre and my stepmother, and also the patrons. Poor creatures work for free and are beaten if they don't behave. It's a sex resort for Dreauxoids, and the slaves wait on them hand and foot until many have dropped from fatigue. The conditions are horrifying."

Natalia felt her stomach turn. "Oh, Raven, how sick!"

"Yes, it is." His voice took on a rough edge. "Fortunately, purist Dreauxoids would never mate with a hybrid, but that's the only positive. The slaves are treated like shit. Very prosperous place, because the visitors are treated like kings and queens."

"That's terrible," Natalia mumbled, an eerie, cold shudder climbing down her spine. "Who told you this?"

"People who've been there. It's invite only, so Tre and Ardella must trust those who've spilled the beans, but not everyone is all right with what they do, even if Tre and Ardella feel they're safe." He forked more food off of her plate and fed her, his features tight. She took the food from his fork and waited for him to continue while she chewed, watching him closely. "By the time I go to the location I'm told they're at, the spa has been transported. Things need to change on Dreaux. Word of mouth isn't enough to cause an arrest, so this spa is still around. Somewhere."

"I hope you can find them one day." She felt a pang of fear. "But you could get hurt doing that."

He took a sip of champagne. "I want justice. The Cause is bigger than I am. If I go down, my comrades will carry on, until the law does all it can to find and imprison those who rob others of their freedom."

Natalia sat back and stared at him. He looked very intense, very focused. She felt her throat working hard. Swallowing, she wondered the wisdom of the words she wanted to say. They seemed to blurt out against her will. "I don't want anything to happen to you."

They locked eyes and her heart sped up until she couldn't tell one beat from the next. His gaze seemed to soften and he ran a hand down his hand through her hair. She found herself very close to his inviting lips. He smiled and said, "*That* meant a lot to me."

"Will it stop you from putting yourself in danger?"

"I'm training people to take my place, but I can't retire yet. Up to now I haven't had a soul mate or children to worry about. It's just been me."

Was that a ploy to sway her? He looked sincere and she doubted it, but it hurt her to think of him in The Void. "Not that I'll change my mind, but, if I decide to become your soul mate, will you quit?"

"At the right time, not before. Certainly not before I bring down Tre and Ardella and help change the laws."

"So if I were your soul mate..." She didn't finish the thought, and wrapped her arms around him. She wanted to hold onto him and never let him go, as if she could protect him! What a laugh!

"As soon as I complete my mission, I'll stop the dangerous stuff and stick to busting petty offenders, but I can't allow purists to pollute my homeland."

"I'd like to help you," she said, her senses of fairness and adventure stirred. She felt pride in his convictions and strangely found herself wanting to share his struggle with him. *This is going too far, I'm feeling too much considering he kidnapped me and I barely know him...*

"No way!" He quickly looked down at her, his eyes round. "You will not. Do you understand?"

She felt his fear for her and it warmed her. It had been silly of her to volunteer her services. For what? She had no powers and never would. Desiring this man did not mean loving him. She hated slavery, but what could she do about it in his world? Probably just be another issue distracting him.

It doesn't matter, I'm going with him, but he doesn't need to know.

With her new resolve, she calmed. "Sorry. Dumb idea," she said.

"No, brave, but I won't allow it and you have to listen to me. Have another glass of champagne. Your last." He poured her one and one for himself.

She glanced up at his profile, the set firmness of his chin. He looked as if he were watching something that only he could see. To bring him back, she reached up and brushed back his unruly hair. He turned to her at once, eyes focused again. "What?" he asked.

"I don't know." She didn't. "You just looked...sad, brooding."

He swung his gaze from her and took another sip of champagne.

"You really don't seem that bad." She spoke in a teasing voice. "May I ask a question?"

"I don't seem bad?" He laughed long and hard, then slowly calmed down and sobered. "I'm bad. What do you want to know?"

"Why me? You've alluded to things, but never specifics."

He tapped his fingers against the table and she didn't think he'd answer her. She wouldn't push it either; he wouldn't appreciate that, and she liked him being in charge. All of her life she'd been the strong one, fighting everyone's battles, going it alone while her famous parents flew off to shoot movies. If she did choose Raven as her soul mate, those days would end. He'd lift some of that burden from her shoulders. All of it, if she wished, but he'd have to agree to let her retain some of her independence, at least outside the bedroom. Inside the bedroom, well, he could boss her around and dominate her all the time...

Great, Natalia. Now you're thinking like you may choose the kidnapper as your soul mate. In sixty days you can be free.

"After Mother pointed you out to me, I was hooked," Raven said, and he placed his hot hand over her bare thigh, and rubbed close to her sex, pushing her skirt up a little. She took in a quick breath, quivering, and tried to listen to the rest of what he said. "You were so brave and so strong, but I felt your emptiness, which matched my own. You felt discomfort in your world, as I did in mine, and you drew me in. I knew you were the one."

She gulped as he kneaded her skin with his fingers. "Go on," she urged, trying to sate her throbbing pussy.

"Dreauxoids can sense their soul mates. You wanted taming, and when you saw me, you sensed I was the one to do it. Worked out well."

"You wanted to *tame* me? Like a dog?" She slapped his hand, gently.

"More like a tigress." He twisted on his chair to face her, his lips turned up. He locked his legs around hers, grinning as if he knew she liked it.

She more than liked it. Prickles of heat burst from her belly to all of her extremities. She couldn't wait to get him alone again. She'd drive him so crazy he'd have to let go of his control and take her...

"H-how do you feel about me?" God, she had to change the subject. The muscles straining the material of his pants pressed against her bare legs. She had to concentrate on something else or she'd lose it, and all the kitchen help would hear. How embarrassing would that be? Plus, she really wanted to know the answer to her question. "You know me well if you've been following me for ten years."

“Not well enough.” His gaze turned hungry and predatory. “I want you. In every way, I desire you.”

Why did she feel disappointed that he didn’t love her? Her ego? So many men had said they’d loved her that the faces blurred together. She’d hated hurting them, and hadn’t wanted them to love her. Now she wanted to hear the words from Raven, even if she didn’t feel them back. After all, she hadn’t followed *him* for ten years. She barely knew him and didn’t believe in things like love at first sight.

Of course, she’d never believed in life on other planets either...

It wasn’t the same thing. Love took time to grow.

“If you don’t fall in love with me, I’ll never fall in love with you,” she said. “I’d need the love reciprocated.”

“I know.”

“Here.” She held the last piece of a roll before his lips and he grinned just before she shoved it into his mouth. She watched as he chewed and swallowed, his Adam’s apple bobbing up and down.

Greta came back, a look of hostility on her face that Raven didn’t respond to. She took their plates and glasses and set them on a tray. “Dessert?” she asked, in a snippy voice.

“One piece of that fudge cake,” he said, “and send a bowl of fruit to our suite.”

Greta nodded and stalked away.

“She likes you,” Natalia said, feeling that strange pang of jealousy again.

“I’m not interested.” He started stroking her bare arm, top to bottom, his fingers playing her like a harp. She shivered.

Greta came back with a huge piece of delicious looking chocolate cake with coconut on the frosting. She set down two forks and quickly walked away.

“You knew I love this kind of cake, of course.”

He smiled at her. “I’m going to feed you the first bite,” he said.

A thrill shot through her. They ended up feeding each other until she was too full to take any more. After she groaned about feeling like a stuffed turkey, Raven rose and took her hand, bending over to kiss it.

Charmed, she could feel herself heating in reaction.

“The other patrons will be here soon. We should go.”

She felt an even bigger thrill shuddering through her. Would he finally let her have him? She was his for the taking.

“Let’s go back to our room.” He said “our room” in a drawling, sexy hot, low voice that sounded erotic.

Her pussy quivered. “Sounds like a plan,” she said, in a cheery voice.

He escorted her to the elevator and pressed the “up” button. After that, he gathered her to him, pressing her back into his chest, covering her breasts and belly with his arms and hands. Her ass bumped against his cock, and suddenly she couldn’t stand it. She wished the elevator would hurry or he’d transport her. She could feel and hear his heartbeat and couldn’t wait to see what he’d planned for the evening’s festivities.

When the elevator landed and the doors parted, Raven lifted her into his arms and stepped inside the car.

“I can walk,” she said, but she snuggled against him, smelling the fresh scent of pine soap in his hair.

“I’m carrying you,” he said, and that was that.

The doors shut and he bent down to devour her lips.

Chapter Eight

As soon as Raven shut the door behind him, the atmosphere crackled with an almost tangible energy. The time had come to move on to a new phase in his relationship with Natalia. He turned to meet her gaze. She seemed to sense something by the hesitant look in her eyes so he rested his hands on her shoulders. "Do you need to rest?"

"No." She said it, quickly. "In fact, I don't want to rest. I'm having way too much fun."

Excellent! He tried to remain stoic as she seductively brushed back his hair. He could feel her lust so he blinked once, and their clothing dissolved. She winced, looking down, touching her bare chest. "You get to the point," she said, raising her gaze and flashing him a wicked grin that went straight to his groin.

"Our clothes are folded neatly at the foot of the bed." He winked, his fingers digging harder into her flesh.

She smiled as she seemed to appraise his naked form. No doubt about it, she liked what she saw, but that didn't matter. Looks were superficial and lasted forever in Dreaxoids. He needed to get her to love his soul. He slid both his hands down to her delicate wrists.

"Everything we've done so far was kindergarten," he said, in a low, husky voice. "It's time for the real thing, babe."

He could see her face flushing and she fell against him as her knees seemed to buckle. Drawing her into his embrace, he said, "No more games. When this night is through you're going to know what it's like to be with me, and you'll know if you like it."

"What --"

"No. Don't talk." He spun her around like a dancer, patted her back and urged her toward the bed. She seemed a little uncertain, no doubt because of his primal demeanor, but he had to let her see what he was. He'd teased her long enough and she was ready for him. Hell, he couldn't take it any longer, either. He needed relief.

When they reached the bed, he said, "Lie on your belly." He was surprised that she readily complied, spilling over the velvet bedspread. "Stick your ass up in the air for me, sweetcakes," he said, as he moved to the end of the bed.

She did, no problem. In fact, her butt seemed to quiver. He sank to the mattress, grabbed the two pillows on the bed, and stuffed them under her. "All right. Relax, Natty." She did and her ass now inclined upward right at him, seeming to call out to him. He could feel how much she wanted him to play with her ass.

Satisfied, he snapped his fingers and a jar of lube appeared in his hand. He climbed on the bed and lay on the mattress beside Natalia's sassy buttocks, then he opened the jar as she glanced over her shoulder, looking on. "Smell it," he said, holding it out.

She did and grinned. "Coconut. You know I like that."

"Yep."

He lubed his palms, then rubbed his hands over her buttocks, using massaging, circular motions, letting her get used to the oil's warming sensation. Her sigh told him she liked it. After he'd kneaded her skin for a short while, he dipped his fingers back into the jar to reload. She let out a sound that reminded him of a contented kitten, and he broke into a grin. The tigress purred.

Raven hungrily assessed her pretty ass, his breath catching. His balls and cock stirred at the appealing sight and he let out a hiss.

"Something wrong?" she asked, glancing over her shoulder again, brow furrowed.

He broke into a laugh. "No. Don't look at me. I'd like to surprise you."

She turned back around, resting her chin on the backs of her hands. He took in a sharp breath and patted her ass a few times, and then stuck two lubed fingers up her tight portal, working his way up higher to prepare her. She gasped first, then moaned and stiffened. He paused, not knowing if she liked it or if he'd hurt her. He stroked her pussy with his free hand, and cream poured over his fingers. Obviously, she liked it. He slid his fingers farther up her ass, and her flesh rippled over him. "Fuck my fingers, babe. Go ahead," he said, encouraging her.

Her flesh gripped his fingers and she pumped up and down, driving him wild, his cock twitching and bucking. He heard her whimpering as she continued to pump. If she got this turned on because of his fingers, he couldn't wait to see what she did when he upped the ante.

He withdrew his fingers and she cried out in protest, and he smiled as she stared at him over her shoulder, wide-eyed.

"Put your head back down, Natty." His voice commanded her, even as he knew she'd seen his grin.

She didn't resist, seeming to want to get down to business. He snapped his fingers and a thin, latex toy appeared in his hand. He'd go larger as her anus adjusted to being invaded.

Inspecting the butt plug, he rubbed it to make sure it was well lubricated. Natalia looked over her shoulder again and he quickly hid it behind his back. "Don't look," he repeated, then blinked. A blindfold covered her eyes. "There!"

He saw her grinning and he tapped her buttocks, then rolled his palms around her flesh, trying to get her ass to relax. She let out a sigh, then a gasp, then a whimper.

"Take it easy, Tigress," he said. "Hold still for a moment."

She stopped wiggling, seemed to stop breathing. Satisfied, he focused on her opening, the butt plug hot in his hand. Slowly, he inserted the smooth, latex minipenis into her butt and she cried out in shock. She tried hard to hold still, but her shuddering body betrayed her pleasure. He took in a stabilizing breath. The next part would be fun and erotic, and his cock buzzed in anticipation. He steadied his gaze on her sexy ass and blinked, then he watched her reaction as his quiet toy suddenly jerked alive, vibrating madly inside of her. She gasped, jolted forward, eyes huge, and let out a bloodcurdling yell that refused to quit. He watched her, masturbating, as she shuddered, clawed the bed and her hair, threw back her head and rolled to her side, then quickly to her belly again. The Dreaux toy wouldn't dislodge; it was made to stay. As she arched and climaxed, his white-hot cock filled quickly and urgently, and he knew he couldn't last long, not while she went nuts with one orgasm after another. With another blink, he rid her of the vibrating butt plug and her blindfold, and let her lay on the bed for a moment. Her breath came hard and fast and tears streamed down her face. He crawled to her face and kissed her tears away, collapsing beside her, his shoulders shaking with his laughter.

"That was mean, not funny," she said, still panting, her voice shaky, but she gave him a quivering smile.

"I'm brutal." He brushed back her hair, and leaned over to whisper in her ear. "I want you to place your belly on the pillows for me again, babe. I still need that pretty ass." He pushed up to his knees, playfully swatting her ass.

She groaned, but complied at once. Her butt flashed seductively up at him from just the right angle. Her body still shook with after-spasms. It surprised him that her experience hadn't made her sore. "You were more flexible than I expected," he said, placing a hand over one hot cheek and squeezing it. She wiggled and his groin twitched.

"You've been following me for ten years." Her voice trembled, but she sounded slightly amused. "You must know why I'm not tight."

"I wasn't with you all the time. Have you put stuff in your ass before?" He watched her face as it turned beet red. So he'd guessed. "Don't be embarrassed. Dreauxoid women take the pleasure they like and don't get embarrassed and, before you say it, I know you're human. All right, so you've done this often?"

She shut her eyes. "Often enough, but I never used anything like your toy."

But she'd done anal play, so he wouldn't have to break her in. He hadn't known about her naughty play. When he'd followed her, he'd deliberately screened her intimate activities

out of his sight, except for one odd occasion, when he'd watched her fucking Bernie. He focused back on the task at hand.

Her ass was twitching at him. She was still turned on and sensitive and that fueled his own fire. He dropped to his belly to lick a few delicious drops from her pussy and she wailed, sticking her ass back up for him, this time even higher, with her thighs spread apart. Before she could calm down, he pushed himself up to his knees and thrust the head of his cock past her rippling sphincter.

She let out a bloodcurdling scream and, before she could thrash, he pinned her legs and hands with his own, then he slid his cock back and forth, harder with each thrust. Tears fell from her eyes as she shouted out his name. He felt himself losing all control as her flesh milked his shaft. His need bubbled over and he let out a feral growl and fell over her, his shaking arms holding his weight off of her as he came inside her ass, grunting and moaning as he hit paradise. Clenching his teeth and throwing back his head, he came again, her name ripping from his throat in an endless mantra. He kept shooting cum into her hot ass, losing track of how many times he did it; he seemed to have an endless supply...

When he finally emptied, he crawled to her side and wrapped his arms around her shivering body, gripping her tightly. She buried her face into his neck and breathed over his skin. He stroked her damp hair, both of them after-spasming.

"I...never had anything in there...as big...as...your cock," she panted.

He smiled and his groin tightened. "But you liked it."

"You sure this isn't...some Dreauxoid thing? Big...huge...cocks?"

His grin broadened. "No. Not necessarily."

She pulled back and smiled softly at him. "That was fantastic. Thank you, Rave."

She'd called him Rave, his pet name! Before that endearing thought settled in his mind, she grabbed him and held him in a hard grip that warmed him to his soul. Their heartbeats thudded in tandem and he kissed the top of her head.

He didn't want to give her too much time to calm down. She needed to see what an eternity with him could mean. Dreauxoids had more staying power than humans. He rolled off of her and she cried out, her eyes round. "Don't go!"

"I'm not going anywhere. Not this time." With a snap of his fingers, the heart shaped bed turned rectangular and king sized, still sporting the same red velvet spread. Handcuffs decorated each of the four bedposts and Natalia gasped. "You shit!" she said, sounding appalled.

"Spread out on the mattress for me," he said, his gaze boring straight into her passion-dark eyes.

After the shock left her face, her features softened and she spread for him. As his gaze fell to her throbbing, pink pussy, he stopped breathing. Damnation! He got off the bed,

standing on shaky legs. His hands trembled as he started shackling her, one limb at a time. "You're under arrest," he muttered as he slammed a cuff around her slender ankle.

"What law did I break?" she teased, her body already quaking. Or maybe she'd never stopped; he hadn't.

"You've been a bad girl," he said as he shut the last handcuff around her wrist. Stepping back, he stared at her luscious body spread wide open for him, helpless to move once he touched her. He tried to swallow past a lump in his throat as his cock throbbed and pulsed. His gaze fell to her swollen slit, startling pink against tawny skin. "You're my prisoner," he said, his loins tightening.

"Have *no* mercy on me," she said, her fevered gaze stuck to his shaft.

"I don't intend to."

"And don't just stand there!" She sounded aggrieved. "You're making me crazy!"

"You'll get one hell of a spanking for telling me what to do," he said, moving toward the bed and climbing on the mattress.

Her eyes burned at him. "Just one? I've been so bad..."

"We'll see." He winked at her before settling his shoulders right before her pulsing sex, noticing her clit was as hard and stiff as a minicock. The Dreaux in him could feel her need to mate with him. He desperately wanted to plunge his cock to her cervix, shooting his seed into her, maybe creating their child, but he couldn't, and needed to explain. "I can't fuck you, Tigress. I can only do that if you decide to be my soul mate."

"Blackmailing me?" She sounded angry now, her body still shuddering, her cream falling to the mattress. "You'll withhold sex unless I become your soul mate?"

"Yes, but not because of blackmail. If we mate that way, and you decide not to stay with me, I'll never be able to get you out of my system. Part of you will be inside me and I'll miss you forever, won't be able to do anything useful at all. I've seen Dreaxoids throw themselves into The Void once they're rejected by a woman with whom they mate. It's not out of love -- more from pride for Dreaxoids, but for me...it would be...more than pride." Seeing the surprised look in her eyes, he stopped, wondering if he'd said too much.

"Does that mean you love me?" Her eyes were still wide.

Of course he loved her. Couldn't she feel it? Until she loved him back, he couldn't let her know. "I'm attached to you."

"Oh." He didn't know what to make out of the one word, couldn't get a good read on it. Humans drove him nuts. They thought that being with somebody for only one day was too soon to know if they were meant to be. They didn't believe in Fate. Well, eventually, Natalia wouldn't remember if she'd been with him for one hour or twenty years. It would cease to matter. That could hasten her love for him, if indeed she'd ever grant him that eternal gift.

"Do you understand?" he asked her, placing his hand on her thigh, near her sex. He felt her muscles twitch.

“Yes. I love you, then,” she said, laughing.

His heart skipped a beat. “You have to mean it, vixen. I’ll owe you another spanking for that.” He lowered his head, inhaling the sweet scent of sex just before licking her tight, pink slit, up and down, up and down. She arched and tried like crazy to thrash, but couldn’t, and a tortured cry emerged from her throat. His cock leaked pre-cum as he licked her again, tasting her sweet sugar. He loved her screams of pleasure. They turned up the heat in his cock and it was already cooking.

When he pulled back for a moment, he saw her stiff, engorged clit sticking out at him, inviting him. He could feel it, feel her inner wishes. The sight and scent of her arousal, her need of him, his ability to sate that need...he felt himself getting lost in the sensations burning in his shaft. Breathing heavily, he wiggled her twitching nub with his tongue, causing her to scream until his ears hurt. He kept it up until finally, his own heat driving him, he sealed his lips tightly around her clit and sucked as hard as he could, continuing to sweep his tongue over her weeping nub. He suckled on her until she’d grown hoarse from screaming, then he pulled back, his breathing ragged and harsh, his skin sweat-drenched, his cock filled to the brim, and bucking like a horse.

He watched through glazed eyes as she struggled against the shackles. She didn’t seem to realize he’d stopped suckling her clit, and she kept arching and screaming his name while tears and cream rained to the mattress. Finally, after one last shuddering cry, she stopped shrieking, her breathing as harsh as his own. “Why...did you...back off?” she asked, in between pants.

He managed a grin. “I’m not; just adding a treat.” He snapped his fingers, aware but uncaring, that he was using up his magic reserves. Natalia was worth it.

A plastic humming vibrator, ten inches long, appeared in his hand. He held it out for her to see and she laughed and cried at the same time. “I’ll die!”

“And go to heaven, in human terms.” He dropped to his belly, between her thighs, so he could get a good look at where to place his wicked Dreaux toy. He knew he didn’t have much time before he’d come himself.

He focused on her stiff clit. She screamed even before he pressed the side of the vibrator against her fiery slit, but, once he did, the screaming and arching reached a new level, as her cream covered the plastic toy. He pulled to one elbow and removed the vibrator from her reddened flesh. Slowly, carefully he slid it inside of her, watching her lose it completely, while his own mind went to mush. With a feral grunt and massive shudder, he climaxed, his cum spraying over her like a water fountain. Groaning, he fell over her, barely able to hold his body off of hers, since his arms shook so much. The vibrator, having magic of its own, didn’t slide out of her cunt. It vibrated inside of her as her scream pierced the air. The sound made him quiver inside and tickled his bones until she suddenly stopped yelling or even moving. Raven lifted his head and saw she’d passed out. Shit! She’d obviously had enough, and quickly he blinked the vibrator into thin air.

Natalia started to stir as he shot to her side, a protective hand gripping her shoulder. "Gods help me, are you all right, Natty?"

She seemed a little dazed. "What happened? Why did it stop?"

He let out a breath of relief, and then laughed. "You sure you're not part Dreauxoid?" He blinked and released her from her shackles, taking her into his arms and rolling them both to their sides as they meshed together almost as one. This had been good, better than actually making love with any other woman. Better than anything he'd ever felt before. His cock pressed against her pussy as they fused. She kissed his neck and shook her chest up and down, sliding her breasts against his nipples, and he moaned. "Vixen," he muttered. "I didn't say you could rub your tits against me like that. That's more punishment for you."

She stopped, smoothing the back of his hair, tilting her head as she grabbed his gaze. "It's your fault," she said, and stuck her tongue out at him. "I'm still turned on from that damned vibrator. Never had one like that before. Swear it had superpowers or something." Her jaw dropped, then she giggled. "So that's it."

"Dreaux toys are so much more fun than Earth toys."

"Figures." She stared at him with heat and lust. "Bring it back, Raven. Let's do that again." She batted her pretty eyes at him.

"Nooooooo!" He pried himself away from her, not without pain, and she cried out a protest.

"Did I do something wrong?" she asked, and he felt her crawling on the mattress behind him as he settled himself on the edge of the bed, sitting up. "Are you angry?" She tried again, and she sounded worried, which he took as a good sign. She cared how he felt.

"I'm furious," he said, with a mock anger. "You don't ask me questions in here, sweetcakes. That's my call." He twisted around and found her sitting right behind him. Grabbing her under her arms, he swung her across his lap, her hot sex blazing over his thighs. She let out a pleased gasp that went straight to his shaft.

He snapped his fingers and a leather paddle appeared in his hand. When she saw it, her eyes brightened. "My punishment!" She grinned.

"Turn around, Nat. Don't come until I say so."

"And how am I supposed to do that?" She sounded indignant.

"Learn self-control." He swatted her sharply on her ass with a tight little slap of the paddle.

She gasped, shuddered, and balled her fists.

"Good girl," he said, and spanked her again.

She bit her lip and whimpered, but he didn't feel her coming. Good. She'd love it once she did. He gave her another short, efficient smack and could feel her pussy quivering, but she didn't come.

Her eyes were tightly shut. "Please," she whispered.

He slapped her ass again and she quivered, but held it in. His own cock swelled as it brushed against her shuddering thigh. He lifted the paddle and whacked her ass again.

She whimpered and wiggled, and he could tell she was ready to explode. He blinked and added heat and slight vibrations to the paddle. Grinning, he swatted her again, holding it against her skin for a few breaths. She shrieked and thrashed. "Holy shit!" she yelled, and he couldn't help laughing. "What did you do to it?"

"You always accuse me of doing stuff," he said, faking hurt feelings. "Lie still. You can come after three more swats."

He felt her holding her breath, readying for the next slap, which he gladly administered. After the third slap, he held the paddle to her skin for a long time while she arched and creamed all over his thigh. As she lay, depleted, slumped over his lap, his cock swelled.

"I don't believe this. You can still perform?" she asked, shaking her head. "How many times can you come in one day?"

He didn't answer, didn't need to. She could feel him. The best was yet to come, no pun intended, he thought with wry humor. He pulled her up into his arms and she grabbed him around the neck, another good sign. Then he rolled them both to the mattress, and they hugged each other, side by side on the velvet bedspread. Silence prevailed as she occasionally shuddered from after spasms.

"You're so bad," she finally said, pulling back to look at him.

Was he imagining it or did she suddenly see him through new eyes.

"You said I *wasn't* so bad, remember?" he asked her, pressing her head to his chest and smelling her flower-scented hair. It was time to make her face her changing feelings. Or at least he hoped they were changing. "Admit it, Natty. You like me." He held his breath.

She lowered her gaze. "Is that another order? I have to say I like you?"

"Only if it's true. As if you'd say you liked me, if you didn't."

"I like how you make me feel, Raven."

He rolled her beneath him and powered up on straight arms so that she never forgot his dominance, and so *he* didn't forget it either. She made him feel so...human.

"I don't like everything about you," she said, still not meeting his gaze.

"Besides the kidnapping part."

She surprised him by laughing and he joined in.

"Tell me," he said.

"I like how you take control of our bedroom activities."

It was a start, but he'd known that. "Go on."

"Outside of the bedroom, I prefer equality. What do you think of that?"

"I'll always want to take care of you." He felt a sweep of protectiveness toward her. "You don't think you need anyone looking out for you, but I always would."

"I'd look out for you, too."

He couldn't breathe. Did she mean -- she'd bond with him? Be his soul mate under the right conditions? Other than the bedroom, he supposed he could relinquish control. He wasn't used to that; it wasn't like that on Dreaux. One person in the relationship took the dominant role, at least if the relationship was a good one. But he had to remember that she'd been brought up on Earth. As long as she allowed him control of the sexual activities, and she seemed to like it that way, he could learn to have an equal partner. However, she'd never have to fight alone again. Or sleep alone.

"I don't need a woman watching my back," he said.

"Well, you'd have to let me do it. I love being submissive in here, Raven, but I'm not that way anywhere else. I'd watch your back, like it or not."

Raven tried to read her, but her aura scrambled. That probably indicated confusion. He ran a finger down her face and stared at her adoringly. "Admit you like me, Tigress. You wouldn't worry about my back if you didn't at least like me a little."

She didn't say anything, just lay there.

"Natty?" He rolled to eye level with her. She tried to turn away, but he grabbed her shoulders, forcing her to face him. He caught her gaze and used his hypnotic stare to hold her eye contact. "Admit it."

"I admit it!" She sounded resentful, angry at herself, and exasperated, but she'd said it, and he could tell that she meant it. He wanted to laugh with delight, but didn't dare. Instead, he pulled her into him and roughly kissed her unyielding lips. As he pushed his tongue through her teeth, she softened and gave in, kissing him back, throwing a leg over his. After the delicious, tongue-sweeping kiss ended, they lay side by side, gazing into one another's eyes, touching souls. He tapped her nose with the edge of his finger and grinned, feeling mischievous. "I'm not done with you yet."

"You finished me off a long time ago, Rave." She tried to still sound angry, but he could tell she'd gotten over it. And she'd call him Rave again. God, he loved her. "Can I ask you a question?" she asked.

"Sure." He'd have given her the universe, if he could.

"Do you think women are weaker than men?"

He felt her judging him. She wanted to feel him out as maybe more than just a lover. His heart sped up, but he couldn't lie to her. "I think men should protect women."

"So you think women are weaker?" Her brow furrowed.

"Physically."

"I've kicked men's butts."

He grinned, remembering. "You do know martial arts. That helps. I believe men should take care of their women."

"Meaning you think they're weaker."

He could tell that didn't sit well with her, but he still needed to tell her exactly how he felt. It wasn't as one-sided as she thought. Natalia wasn't weak. Not her. "No. Some creatures, regardless of sex, are stronger than others. You're stronger than most. I like that about you. You know what else I like?"

"What?" She angled her head in a fetching way. His truth was acceptable to her and he felt a wave of relief.

"I like that even though you're a strong woman, I can control your body." *And you control mine.*

"I admit you can," she grudgingly said.

"I may be the only one who can." He kissed her forehead, then got off the bed and lifted her into his arms. She barely weighed anything. Clutching her to his chest, inhaling her sweet scent, he carried her toward a shut door. He'd closed it earlier so she couldn't get a good look inside the room. "Close your eyes."

"Why?"

"I don't answer questions. Not regarding the bedroom, Tigress."

She shut her eyes and he kissed her lips, quickly. Then, feeling a charge of excitement, he snuck her into the special room. Quickly, he rushed her to the beveled glass, double shower stall and whisked her inside of it. She still had her eyes shut when the water automatically switched on from both overhead sprays, and she let out a startled cry as it sprinkled on their heads and bodies.

The water smelled like flowers and glittered with many colors, much like a prism. When Natalia opened her eyes and saw, she gasped in shock.

He grinned.

"I...how do they do that to the water? Make it shine with colors of the rainbow?"

"It's just like that on this little planet. No magic."

They were both slippery when he set her down. As droplets of water fell into his eyes, he held out a soft looking green sponge and a bar of soap that he'd conjured up. "Wash me," he said, his eyes boring hard into hers. *This was going to be one yummy shower*, he thought, his cock already filling up again. He saw her nipples quivering with anticipation and her eyes were on fire.

Chapter Nine

Natalia tore her gaze away from Raven's too quickly take in her surroundings, awed by the splendor. The double shower had glistening, white marble walls and a mirror that hung above them on a high ceiling. She caught her breath as she stared up at the mirror and saw her and Raven's naked images. His elegant shaft stuck out, larger than life in the mirror, and a little shudder shot through her.

The water -- she stuck out her tongue to taste it. It didn't taste any different from Earth water, but it glittered, the colors disappearing when the droplets hit Raven's smooth skin. She smelled the elusive scent of spices.

As she looked up at Raven, she marveled at how delicious he looked while wet. Her pussy convulsed with desire. The water molded his dark hair flat to his head and his tanned skin glistened. Droplets coursed down his six-pack abs and magnificent cock, dripping seductively to the floor. He looked like a statue of a Greek god she'd once seen. All of her senses flamed, and the skin between her thighs throbbed with fire.

"Wash me, Tigress," he said again, handing her a sponge and soap.

She took them, her stare not wavering from his penetrating gaze. It felt as if she and Raven stood under a surreal, magical waterfall as slick liquid slid down her beaded nipples, quivering belly, and trembling legs. She hadn't recovered from his hot spankings or from his cock in her ass or from his tongue against her clit.

From the warm smile from his eyes and his lips. From Raven.

She'd never recover from Raven. His aura alone took her breath away, made her pussy and ass quiver with need. No other man could ever make her feel so good.

He smiled down at her. "Here, let me wash *you*, then," he said, seeming to understand that he'd mesmerized her. Damn! She hated his seductive power over her, but she held still as he reclaimed the soapy sponge. She watched his large hands as he lathered them, and a

tremor raced through her. He swept her hair off of her nape and gently lathered the hair that he'd piled on the top of her head. Her scalp flamed to her toes. "That's not shampoo, is it?" she asked, not really caring.

"It's whatever I want it to be."

She nodded and shivered, placing her hands against his chest, over his nipples, wiggling his buds with her thumbs.

"Shit, Nat!" He gasped and she grinned innocently at him while he flashed her a devastating grin. "Crap, that feels good."

As he rubbed her hair, she massaged his nipples, squeezing them lightly between her fingers, and he let out a groan. They hardened and, under the illusion of a gentle rain, he shuddered, still kneading her hair. Finally, he stopped and said, "Just let the water wash the soap out of your hair, Tigress." His voice was low and husky.

She shivered again, but not from the cold. "The soap's going to drip into my eyes."

"It won't hurt."

It didn't hurt. She stared at him, aware of just how big a man he was as they stood inches apart in the shower. Big in every way. His cock pulled up and her mouth watered as she thought of sucking him off again. She tried to banish the thought for now. "May I please have a bar of soap, too?" Her sex clenched. What fun it would be to soap him up.

He snapped his fingers and another sponge and soap bar appeared in her hands. "The soap is magic."

"What does that mean, exactly?" Her voice came out hoarse. Trying to look at him as the water pelted in and around her eyes, she squinted to view his magnificence. He smiled with closed lips and she felt a tingle. She wanted that seductive mouth.

"The soap will pick up your mood and adjust to it," he said.

Somehow she knew what he meant. The soap from her hair slid down her face and body, heating her more than the lubricant had, making her breasts and nipples stiffen as if Raven himself were caressing her flesh. Magic soap.

She lathered her sponge and tried to reach the top of his head. She couldn't reach so he bent forward and she rubbed the luxurious soap into his wet, silky hair, kneading it clean, feeling her hands shaking. Raven had never seemed as sexy as he did now, and she melted inside in reaction to his allure. As she let the soap wash out of his hair, she dropped the cloth, and ran her slippery, wet hands down his face and neck. As she soaped him up, she lathered his massive shoulders and chest, making sure she stuck a teasing finger into his navel, quivering as he moaned. He grabbed her shoulders and his fingers dug into her flesh, turning her to mush. His sexy growl seemed to penetrate through her, making her ache to sate his needs -- and her own.

She felt him tense as she slid her slippery hands around him, lathering his tight ribs and back. He reciprocated by sliding his hands to her breasts, watching them tighten as he

soaped them up. When he lowered his head and licked between her cleavage, she jumped, which made him chuckle. His hot breath swirled above her peak as he scooped up her breast, then slid it into his mouth to suck. God, that felt good! She let out a contented sigh and curled up inside.

He finally, slowly removed her heated breast from his mouth and lifted his head just long enough to smirk at her, looking to-die-for sexy when he did.

Natalia fought for air, but couldn't breathe and didn't care. Her knees were still jelly, but that didn't bother her either. She glided her palms south of his abdomen, cupping his balls, squeezing them a little. He took in a sharp breath. She shuddered inside and slid her wiggly fingers from his balls to his cock, turned on by his sexy, "Oh, yeah!" Taking his hot staff in her hands, she found it already large, hard, and throbbing. He sucked in sharp a breath when she slid her hand around it, then he kissed her, his fingers sliding down seductively to her flaming folds. He stuck his fingers inside of her, and she gasped several times while her pussy pulsed against them. As he continued to kiss and finger fuck her, she pumped and whimpered, sliding her hands back and forth against the hot skin of his soapy shaft. She came, and he pulled his fingers out, bringing them back to her breasts, stroking them with both hands now. Would he give her no rest? She'd get back at him for making her putty in his hands!

She fell to her knees to take him in her mouth, surprised, when she did, that his cock, and the soap covering it, tasted like fruit cocktail. Delicious! He swore and shuddered, and she slid more of him into her mouth until the head of his staff was poised at her throat. He gasped and cursed about how she'd be the end of him, and she made kitten sounds, her breasts stiffening, her pussy rippling, her ass spasming. She shut her eyes and felt her hands tremble as she pressed a subtle thumb against his balls.

With a primal snarl he threw back his head and convulsed, hot seed gushing from his cock into her mouth, quickly sliding down her throat. Her eyes teared as he filled her. She swallowed his warm, salty drink and her body bucked and convulsed. His juice soothed as it glided down inside of her, and, for the first time, she felt more than just his lust. She felt his possession, his caring, his affection, and gave him the same in return. Still wickedly aroused, she lapped up every drop he had to offer, her sex spasming out of control.

When she'd milked the last of him, she reluctantly let go, purring another contented sigh. He exhaled deeply, joining her on his knees, then wrapping his arms tightly around her, pressing her tingling breasts into his hard, wet chest. She nestled close to him and he rested his cheek on top of her head, both of them still underneath the prism rain of the shower. He pulled back, quirked an eyebrow, and slid a finger down her heated slit. She gasped and sank all the way to the tiled floor, her legs splayed almost spread-eagle.

"I have to take advantage of your position," he said, amused, and lifted her to his lap, his back against the wall, his own legs spread like a small "v." She found herself split open

and pulled against his rock hard cock -- *how could he harden so quickly after coming* -- and she threw her arms around his neck while her sex pulsed madly.

She could feel and hear his harsh breathing and strong heartbeat, and hugged him with all her strength as she shuddered against him. She'd never felt this way about anyone before, had never believed she could feel this way in a man's arms. It scared her. She didn't want to complete her kidnapper's plans, but, for once, she didn't feel in control of herself, and it bothered her. Yet, she enjoyed his sexual dominance. It made her feel feminine, relaxed, nurtured. Just the thought of him spanking her made her sex twitch. He didn't mind a little kink and didn't think worse of her for enjoying more unusual activities.

Raven nuzzled into her neck and his breath chilled her wet skin.

How many other women had felt his touch? Her stomach twisted at the thought. She shouldn't care, just as she shouldn't have been jealous of Greta, but she cared. A lot.

"You're mine," she whispered, running her hand through his soaking hair that had pulled straighter because of the water. It fell below his shoulders.

"I'm yours?" He threw it back as a question, and then feathered little kisses around her mouth. She thought he sounded...hopeful.

"For now."

"Oh." Did he sound disappointed? If so, he recovered fast. "I'll mark you then." He leaned into her neck and sucked on it, using both his lips and teeth, and she laughed, goose bumps shooting down her spine. He worked on her sensitive flesh while her sex seized with pleasure, but would she never get the total release she needed?

Not unless she loved him.

She felt him sucking her skin harder, and breathed a contented sigh.

He lifted his head and stared at her neck, breaking into a slow, shit-eating grin. "Nice piece of work, if I do say so myself. I've put my mark on you."

"Does it mean anything?" she asked, still stroking his hair, curling the ends around her fingers, feeling the heat in her fingertips.

He kissed her ear. "Nobody will touch you with my mark on you, unless I give them permission."

"And would you?" Her pussy throbbed madly. He was tapping into another fantasy she wanted to try.

He licked around and inside her ear, then said, "I know you've thought of being possessed by more than one man at a time." He slurped her ear like a Popsicle, and she giggled.

"Goofy," she told him.

"Tasty," he said, then he started to rise, taking her with him, cupping his big hands around the globes of her ass. She gasped and tightened her hold around him. "I dropped the

sponge and soap,” she said, absently and took his nipple between her teeth, playing with the bud.

“Holy shit!” he thundered, and groaned, his hands trembling now.

She savored the hardening of his nub, but lost it when he stuck a finger under her chin, making her stare at him, and licked her lips, nipping her bottom one just a little bit. She was the one shivering after that.

As he pressed his cheek to hers, she heard and felt him chuckling.

He knew every time she responded to him, and she hated that, but couldn’t stop herself. She must be feeding his ego in spades. Just looking at the hunk made her breathing speed up and her hot spots quiver. There was no point in trying to hide her attraction to him. She couldn’t. In fact, she wanted more...

As if reading her mind, he pulled back, gazing at her with his animalistic stare. “I think we’re clean enough,” he said. “Time to leave the shower.” He kissed her ear. “Close your eyes. I have another surprise for you.”

She felt a shiver of excitement. “I don’t know if I can take any more of your surprises.”

“You’ll like this one. I promise.”

A thrill shot through her and she shut her eyes. “Go for it.”

She heard the shower door opening and cool air assailed her flaming skin. Well, she needed the cooling treatment. He was taking her somewhere, moving with long, graceful strides that bounced her in his arms. The skin of her still red-hot ass rose and fell against his muscled arms. She let out a harsh breath, losing herself again. “Can I open my eyes yet?” she asked, her pulse racing.

“In an Earth second.”

She giggled and suddenly smelled blueberries. She felt him lowering himself, and her, to a chair or a bench and she wondered where the hell they’d gone.

“Open,” he said.

“O-open?” Did he mean --

“Your eyes, silly.” He laughed, each peal digging into the core of her being.

She recovered her wits and opened her eyes, then smiled with delight. He sat on a bench at the edge of a shallow whirlpool, his legs rooted in the blueberry colored water. She snuggled into his chest, enamored at the sight. Glancing over her shoulder she saw an overflowing fruit basket. She tried to block out the wicked ideas she got when she spotted the bananas. He’d obviously driven her out of her mind. Her breath caught as he shot her a knowing stare. “Naughty vixen,” he teased.

“Me?” She felt her face heating.

“Yeah, you.” He kissed her, quickly, then snapped his fingers. “Look straight up, look where the stars would be,” he said, in a crooning voice.

She did and gasped. Slowly, the ceiling parted in the center, opening to a deep purple, cloudless sky with two bright red moons, one with a ring around the middle. Silver and gold stars glittered so brightly that she had to shield her eyes with her hand. And suddenly, she wanted to cry because it was so beautiful, his world was so beautiful, he was so beautiful. She turned to Raven, their lips almost touching. "Thank you," she said. "I-I don't know what else to say."

"I thought you'd like it."

She would never have seen this, known about this, if he hadn't kidnapped her.

"I-It's wrong to take somebody against their will," she managed, trying to sort out her confusion. Was she grateful that he'd taken her? No, no...yet her flaming lips said otherwise.

"I'm wooing you the Dreaux way."

"But I'm not --"

"I know you're not. I still hope it works, and you may as well enjoy it while you're here."

"We'll leave?" She kept her gaze on the magical sky.

"If you decide you love me, we'll live on Earth. This is a refuge, a small planet for temporary protection." She watched his sexy mouth move as he spoke. "Some creatures have to stay forever, as they can never be safe off of it, but I'll make us safe in *your* world."

She admired his sensuous lips and slid her finger over them. "Earth will seem colorless after this." And men would seem boring...

"So does Dreaux. But we can visit here." His eyes seemed to twinkle with the stars.

"Really?" That perked her up.

"Sure. Why not? There are many beautiful worlds you've never seen and we'd have eternity to visit every single one of them." He set her on the bench beside him and she felt the angry water rushing against her legs, reminding her of a tornado. It was tepid and smelled so good. "Blueberry water," she said, placing her hand on his taut thigh. His skin tightened even more and he placed a hand on her shoulder, penetrating her soul. Wow. She shuddered and melted, or so it seemed...

"The water can change," he said, squeezing her shoulder.

She shook her head. "Change?"

He reached behind himself, and pulled a peach out of the fruit basket, holding it out for her. "Take one bite, see what happens." He pressed it to her parted lips.

She licked it first, wishing it were his lips, and then bit into the tangy juice...

And the water turned the color and scent of the peach she ate.

Her heart stopped and she froze. This was unbelievable; marvelous.

She finished chewing and swallowed, and her hand stroked his thigh, coming close to his cock, which had started enlarging on that same thigh...

He smiled down at her, a few drops of water slipping from his hair to her knees.

"Can we go in?" she asked, sliding in before he answered, aware she hadn't obeyed, hardly caring.

He slid in after her, a towering, sensual presence, dark, dangerous, sexy as all hell.

The peach scented water furiously whipped around them. "Wow. Just -- wow." She lifted the peach. "Have a bite yourself."

He took it from her and bit into it, juice lingering on his lips.

"Oh, wait. I have to help you clean that off --" She tiptoed and he bent his head, curling his arms around her as she did the same to him. Her hungry tongue licked his lips clean, and then slid into his mouth. He devoured her mouth, murmuring sounds of contentment. She swept through him -- completely -- tasting peach, mint, and Raven's own special flavor. Their wet bodies fused together and she pumped her pussy against his hardened cock. Did he ever get soft? No doubt he wasn't human. No doubt he had powers. She felt so happy, her eyes burned behind her shut lids.

They shared the peach, biting into it at the same time, and licking each other's lips, cheeks and chin. He gently nipped her lower lip and, every time he did, she felt a jolt of heat raging strait to her thumping sex.

"Nip me," he whispered as his lips traveled down the side of her face to her neck.

"Nip?"

He paused and lifted his head to look at her. "Nibble. Do what I did to you."

She kissed his lips, then took his lower lip into her teeth, putting subtle pressure on the tender meat before letting go and licking it.

He pulled back again, quickly, and let out a breath. "Oh, yeah," he said. "Just like that. Do that to me more often, Tigress." He put both hands on her shoulders, and they shared a long, intense stare, making her shudder as the water licked and slapped around her legs and her intimate spots. "In fact, next time -- nip me a little harder." His sexy voice slid over her, caressing her flesh, his eyes drinking her in with warmth and an almost déjà vu familiarity. What the hell was happening to her?

"Why do I feel so drawn to you? Every moment I'm with you, the...pull is stronger, yet I don't know you." Confusion spun inside her head as she watched him, his powerful presence continuing its seductive effect on her, even as she tried to stop it. Almost automatically, her arms wrapped around his neck, staying just far enough back to keep her gaze on his. She needed to figure him out -- and herself too. Could she read him, like he could read her? She began to think she could, at least a little.

"Earth time is so deceiving," Raven said, quietly. He bent to kiss her again, snaking his tongue through her teeth, sweeping it around to gather all of her juice. He teased her by tickling the roof of her mouth and she thrust her tongue against his until they competed in a playful, hot dual. When the kiss finally broke, he said, "You're getting a little bit of my soul

every time we touch in intimate ways. That's how it works when Dreaxoids and humans get together like this."

Her breathing came quickly. "And you're a high-quality guy." Her words shocked her. "I...can tell. It's weird...but I know this from...touching you." How strange. He'd abducted her, something she reviled, but somehow she could tell he was a good man with a kind heart and strong moral values. His aura made his assets clear.

"High-quality?" he looked at her with amusement, then kissed her forehead. "Sounds like something you buy at one of those Earth electronics stores."

Natalia loved the snarky smile he shot at her. He made her giddy. "You're worth more than money could buy," she heard herself say.

He winced and stared at her, not responding at first. Finally, he said, "So are you, Tigress. You're unique and priceless."

She shivered and laughed at the same time, the absurdity of the entire situation making her dizzy. "Crazy as it is, I feel safe with you, my *kidnapper!*"

His lips feathered down her chin to her neck, and then her breasts, his warm breath tickling her. "That's not crazy. You know I'd do anything to protect you." He nibbled on her screaming peak.

Her body alternately burned and chilled. "Well, yeah, I do know that -- but I'm not sure why I know that..." she said, trying to clear her head. She sucked in a shaky breath as she held him close. It was hard to talk with his mouth against her shuddering breast...

He continued to suck her bud, speaking in between. "Communication...is a little different...in my world. It's intangible...as well as tangible."

She pulled away from him to concentrate. The arousal she felt while he touched her made alertness impossible.

He pulled her into his embrace again, giving her raging hot body no relief from his potent sexuality. "What's wrong, Natty?"

"I don't understand myself anymore." She lowered her gaze. The silver and gold stars shimmered in the pool's peach water, and she suddenly felt like crying. "I just feel -- unsettled, weird..." Did she dare admit it? "Scared." Her feelings toward him terrified her.

"I'm here. Nothing to be scared of." He pulled her flat against his skin, and she found her lips against his neck, tempting her, even as she contemplated the strange changes within herself. Unable to resist teasing him, even now, she licked his flesh while stroking his cock at the same time. It throbbed and he groaned. "Bad girl."

Her breasts melded into his hard muscles, and they tingled and quivered. She never wanted to let him go.

"Are you ever scared, Raven?" Natalia asked, her words muffled as she spoke against his delicious, wet, peach scented skin. "You seem fearless."

"I'm fearless, you're right."

“Really!” She leaned away from him and looked up. Golden lights reflected in his honey tinged eyes; the eyes that sucked her in and drank her up. She did feel he had fear sometimes. Even her cool, collected, dominant Dreauxoid had fears -- she knew it.

Her Dreauxoid? She widened her eyes, hoping that would clear her mind.

He caressed her with a sweep of his lashes. “I’m scared you’ll leave me. Does that count?” He lowered his head and they kissed again.

His words touched her in a place never tapped before. All those childhood years of being raised by uncaring nannies, and then her college and young adult years fending for herself -- not knowing who truly liked her or who just wanted to get close to the movie star’s daughter -- the loneliness she’d denied -- all of it seemed to slip away. In the arms of her soul mate, she felt connected; complete.

Soul mate?

She couldn’t break the kiss, even if the words “soul mate” alarmed her, the very thought. His hands slid to her ass and he pressed it forward. Her sex pulsed against his cock, as water rushed around and between them. Prickles cascaded down her spine and she pumped against him hard.

He lifted her feet off the floor of the whirlpool and spun her around in the swirling tub. Their kiss broke as she laughed. The world suddenly seemed like a better place. Could he tell? She knew he could feel her moods, and her mood right then was red-hot with lust and...liking. If he felt any difference in her, he didn’t say anything. Instead, he boosted her onto his shoulders and she gripped his head, leaning her cheek against his wet hair. Her spread outer lips brushed against the back of his neck, and she trembled, as her open slit roared to a bonfire. “Don’t drop me, Raven.” Her bones seemed to have melted again. How could he make her feel as if she floated in the air?

He took water-delayed steps toward the bench. “Not a chance, but I know you can handle three feet of water.”

“You’re so tall.” She looked up at the purple sky, taking in the angry red moons. “I feel like I could touch the stars.”

“I’ll take you on a magic carpet ride one day.” They were at the ledge and he hoisted her off his shoulders. She noticed that her pussy still spasmed as he set her down. Her gaze fell to his cock as it bobbed on top of the water. It looked a foot long, and gorgeous. Inviting. His large hand cupped a breast, his thumb sweeping over her nipple, and she gasped and met his amused yet predatory look

She felt suddenly shy. He was looking at her in such a strange way. To deflect her discomfort she spoke the first words she could think of. “What did you do with the core of the peach?”

"Babe, I was so hot and bothered, I don't even know." A slow smile spread across his face. "But I'm still hungry." He reached behind him, into the basket, his body hiding what he was retrieving. He turned back toward her and dangled a strawberry above her head.

She giggled and he lowered it to her lips. As her gaze dropped, she gasped. "The water!" It had turned red and suddenly smelled of fresh strawberries and cream.

"The water picks up your aura and acts accordingly," he explained, as he pressed the strawberry against her lips and teeth. "Don't you like to eat...strawberries?" The seductive, double meaning of the word "strawberries," plus the hunger in his eyes distracted her from even the magic water.

"I love...strawberries. And yummy men with pecs to-die-for and washboard abs."

He placed a hand under her ass and dragged her off the bench into the water, pressing her clenching pussy into his shaft, then he kissed her, and they chewed the strawberry together, tasting the fruit in one another's mouths. After licking the juice off Raven's lips, Natalia could barely catch her breath. Her head reeled with overwhelming emotions that she couldn't sort out or define.

Raven moved to the side of the whirlpool and once again stuck his hand in the fruit basket. He lifted the entire box of strawberries and they took turns feeding each other, stealing juicy kisses and exchanging messy slurps of dripping juice as they did. By the time they had finished, Natalia felt even closer to him and wanted more. If he didn't take her...but he couldn't...

A finger angled her chin up, and she faced his steamy stare. "I wish we could make love too, Tigress. I guarantee we'll still have fun."

"How...how did you know my thoughts?"

He ignored the question. Didn't matter, she knew the answer.

"I'm going to change the scenery," he said, and, before she could cry out at the insult of losing his touch, he'd leaped out of the water and was heading toward the wall.

She stared after him, her mouth watering, as she watched his confident swagger. His superb form tempted her, as he walked across the tiles. Her heart pounded. He was so tall and handsome, built like a Greek god, and dripping wet.

"Rave!" she called out to him, playfully.

He stopped and turned, his wet hair dripping into his eyes; delicious.

"Why are you walking? Why didn't you just snap your fingers or blink?"

His gaze hit the ceiling. "I'm running out of magic. I can feel it. Thought I'd save a bit by walking so I have some left for our games. Any objections?"

"None!" She felt a thrill of excitement.

He shot her a killer grin, then turned around again and continued toward his destination. When he reached the wall, he flipped a switch. Suddenly the black and white

marble walls wept with sparkly prism water, just like in the shower. From built-in showerheads on the ceiling to random spouts all over the walls, prism water spurted like miniature waterfalls to the sparkly white floor. The minifalls reflected in the whirlpool's strawberry colored water. She took in a deep breath. "Amazing," she murmured to herself.

He flipped another switch. The water in the whirlpool stilled instantly and became a strawberry pool, about three feet high.

As Raven strode back to her, her heart leapt to her throat and her belly tightened. He didn't move fast enough to suit her aching needs. She wanted him to hurry up and jump in with her. She wanted...

He slid into the pool, taking her hand and spinning her halfway around. He pressed her back to his slippery chest, then wrapped his arm around her diaphragm. Leaning against her, he whispered into her ear. "Bend over."

Natalia's heart sped up. Trying to catch her breath, she disengaged herself from him and moved over slightly, bending over, her ass already pulsing. Before she could even think, a finger entered her tight portal. She gasped as he added two, then three. "Stretched for me and still lubed. Stuff is waterproof. Superb!" He withdrew his fingers and she frowned. Now what?

He snapped his fingers. *Damn him to hell!* She shuddered as her flesh rippled around a cock-sized object stuck high in her ass, making her weak in the knees. Gasping, glancing over her shoulder at him, she said, in a strangled voice "What are you up to?"

"It's a bigger one this time." He flashed a wicked smile that shone clear to his eyes.

As her skin clutched the damn ball, she groaned. "Rave, not again!"

He snapped his fingers and the ball went haywire, spasming and vibrating inside of her, causing an earthquake from her ass to clit to everywhere else, shooting her out of her body and onto the moons above. She threw back her head as he caught her in his arms before her legs gave out. He crushed her to his chest and held her arms so she couldn't thrash them. Her body tightened and shook as sexual tension exploded inside of her. She wrapped her shaking legs around his torso, and pumped her clit against his hard shaft. The wild round ball inside her offered no mercy, not for a second. Her body gyrated madly, as he laughed at her reaction to it, but he kept her safe, and she came over and over again as her piercing scream echoed against the walls. The vibrations stopped abruptly, leaving her to shudder with brutal after-spasms. He held her in his arms, still chuckling and kissing her all over her face as she tried to catch her breath.

"I love watching you go nuts," he said, and, if she'd had the strength, she'd have either slapped him or ravaged him, permission or no permission. Her body wouldn't settle down after that commotion.

"Nice gadget." A loud, deep voice spoke to them both from across the room.

"Isn't it?" Raven responded, glancing in that direction. "Got the idea from *Some Like It Hot*, the sex shop near my father's estate."

Natalia blinked fast to clear her vision. Through glazed eyes, still panting, she caught sight of another man standing in the room, naked, his back against the wall, minifalls raining over him. He was playing with his rock-hard cock as he looked on. Draken! He waved and grinned. "Hi, brown sugar."

She turned to Raven, her jaw dropping, and he grinned. "There's your audience, diva."

Her sex seized madly as she realized Draken had seen them. The big man moved forward with graceful strides, until he finally jumped in the pool. His dark skin glistened with water and his huge eyes took her in. She noticed that they had the same erotic pull that Raven's did, minus her feelings of...love? No, no. Her multiple orgasms had made her ditzy...more than just ditzy...insane.

"Turn," Raven said, commanding her gaze back from Draken's eyes to his own.

She recovered slightly and found his eyes, heating up all over again. "What do you want?" She still felt disoriented; befuddled.

"I want your ass again, Tigress."

"Oh!" She didn't argue. It felt a little raw, but one more time wouldn't kill her. Well, it may kill her, but not in a bad way. She'd played with enough anal toys to know her limits. Before she could take another breath, he said, "Bend over again, sweetcakes. Now."

She didn't argue. Her ass pulsed and throbbed, along with her sex. She waited breathlessly for his attention and, when he slowly entered her tight bottom, she moaned, her knees shaking, and her needy, already-overly-sensitive-sex convulsing violently. Seeing Draken jacking off while watching them turned her arousal to full blaze. If Raven hadn't been holding her under her arms, she may have thrashed away and disappeared underwater. She needed to cool off.

While Raven groaned as he slid his cock halfway up her ass, Draken moved in front of her to palm her breasts, squeezing them a little. She cried out, surging back to meet Raven's strokes, while Draken bent to lick her nipple. She cried out at the double assault, as Draken sucked hard on her tingling breast. His teeth grazed her budded nipples and she gasped. He sent her into spasms while Raven fucked her ass faster and harder, causing strong ripples to surge through her, milking at his hard rod. Her sex pulsed emptily, wishing for his sweet possession. He slammed her from behind, his balls pumping into her mound and Draken licked the nub of her hardened tit. Natalia exploded. The world seemed to whirl around her as she came, laughing with tears running down her cheeks as the men held her tight. Giggling like a crazy person, she savored the little slice of heaven, two men doing her at the same time, one of her biggest fantasies.

Raven let out a guttural moan and surged into her one more time, coming hard and high inside of her. Draken's large cock, almost the size of Raven's, was stiff and hard, pressing against her clit, dissolving her insides until she felt they no longer existed...

“Make him come,” Raven said, his voice raspy. She could feel his heavy breathing on her nape, as he grabbed her waist with both hands. “Do it for me, Tigress.”

“I’ll make it easier, brown sugar.” Draken quickly moved to the side of the pool and sat on the bench. His cock snaked up his abdomen. “Suck me, baby. Suck me off.” Draken winked at her. “Don’t be shy, girl.”

She glanced at Raven for permission, even in her highly aroused state.

Raven nodded. “Just this once,” he said, in a firm voice.

She sank down just enough to take Draken’s pulsing cock into her mouth. He groaned and gasped as she milked him, using her hand to stroke his balls. Almost immediately, he came, filling her mouth with his cum, her cheeks plumping out. Although it turned her on to think of giving him a blowjob with Raven looking on, she refused to swallow, and she let the liquid seep out of her mouth. His seed dripped down her face. She washed it away with the strawberry pool water.

When she looked up, Draken wore an amused grin, and a second later, Raven grabbed her and pulled her to the pool’s bench, dragging her over his lap with her legs splayed wide open. She quivered as her nub brushed his still hard cock. “Look at me, sweetcakes,” Raven commanded.

Natlalia obeyed, her skin still tingling. She scattered kisses over his face, unable to stop, even with both men laughing.

“She’s a live wire,” Draken said, indulgently.

“There’s much more to come,” Raven told her, turning his head so she could only kiss his cheek.

“Hey!” she protested.

She could feel his chest shaking with laughter.

“I just want to ask you a question, then we can play some more. You wouldn’t swallow for Draken. Why not?” Raven’s gaze focused on hers again and she sensed seriousness behind his amused expression.

“I don’t want his soul inside of me, Raven, I want yours.” She furrowed her brow after she said the words, not knowing where they’d come from. But she knew she meant them.

Draken reached out to pat her shoulder. “I totally get it, sugar. You’re his, not mine.”

Natalia snuggled against Raven, legs still splayed wide, pressing her white-hot sex intimately tight to his huge pulsing shaft. She loved the heat and power of it touching her. She did feel very possessive of him, but maybe her lust had overwhelmed her. No, that wasn’t just it.

The ringing of a phone interrupted her bliss. Or she thought it was a phone. She hoped Raven would ignore it, but he quickly stood up, gripping her under her butt to keep her in his arms. Draken also scrambled to his feet muttering, “Great timing.”

"No shit," Raven said, sounding harsh.

Natalia felt herself slipping out of Raven's grip so she wrapped her legs around him and held on tight, resting her head on his shoulder. She couldn't let go of him at the moment. "Do you have to answer that? That *is* a phone, right?" she asked, fretting over the intrusion.

"On Earth, they call them phones." Raven started striding toward the door, Draken at his side.

She nodded against his shoulder, her sex wet and throbbing against his abs. The phone stopped ringing as Raven carried her across the wet tiles, holding her close to his chest. As the three of them headed out of the strawberry-scented pool area, she pulled back in time to see Raven executing his magic blink.

Nothing happened.

"Crap," Raven said. He glanced at Draken as they walked side-by-side. "I'm out of magic. Can you put some clothes on us?"

Draken snapped his fingers and all three of them were dressed and dried. Draken had clothed Raven in his brown leather vest and black T-shirt. She indulged in a deep whiff of the mingled scents of leather and hot man, frowning when the barrier of her frilly blouse and denim miniskirt blocked her sex from his skin. His touch had become addicting. Hell, she almost felt as if she were falling in love with him. Could that actually be happening?

"The phone stopped ringing," she said, babbling, in her still-hot-as-all-hell state. "Can you wait so we can play a little bit more?"

"No. He'll call back and it's important that I know why he contacted me."

"Who's this *he*?"

He paused and when he spoke again, his voice sounded heavy with dislike. "My father."

"You can sense it." She sucked in a breath. And she could sense that he didn't want to hear from him.

"Our father/son connection is weaker since I've been gone from home for eons, but I can still tell when he contacts me. Unfortunately, he never makes social calls."

He sounded distressed, so she shrank silently against him, not pushing him to talk more about it.

When they reached the suite, Raven carried her to the bar, then wordlessly set her down on a barstool. Draken had nothing to say, either. Natalia's body still hummed from the magnificent sex, but felt a strange, unpleasant aura in the air. She sensed the fun was over; the men were deadly serious.

Raven bent over and retrieved a bottle of whisky, then turned around and pulled down two glasses from a shelf. He poured one drink for Draken, who took it with a nod, and one for himself. "Want some?" he asked her, to her surprise.

“Straight whiskey? No, thanks.” She watched him with foreboding.

“I’ll need this,” Raven said to Draken, sounding grim.

Draken took a sip and set his drink on the counter. “Strong stuff. We’ll need it. Your dad never brings pleasant news.”

“Never.” Raven took a sip as a luminous red oblong object on the wall started ringing, as if it was a regular Earth phone. Natalia watched Raven push its only button. There was muted noise from inside the odd contraption. She tensed, but could only hear a muted mumble. Raven seemed to hear the voice clearly and took a long drink, grimacing afterward. “Hi, Father. Things must be pretty bad for you to bother with me.” He slammed down his drink and some liquid spilled over the sides of the glass.

Natalia kept her gaze on his face, trying to read her lover’s thoughts. He could read hers so clearly, it ought to be mutual. And, in a way, she was starting to catch his vibes. Waves of anger and despair emanated from him. Her gaze remained fixed on his face as he turned to share a somber glance with Draken. Something was very wrong.

Raven’s brows shot skywards. “*What did you say?*” He put his hand over his eyes and let out some choice four-letter words. Natalia shot Draken a quick look. He’d turned his back, taking a deep swallow of his drink. She sucked in a quick breath and slid her eyes back to Raven. He was listening to the voice in the oblong phone, his hand still over his eyes, his back now pressing against the wall. He looked dazed, and listened for a long while, only grunting in response.

When he spoke again, he used an unfamiliar language, obviously not wanting her to understand his side of the conversation, but she understood his unmistakable anger, loud and clear. He shouted at the box and jabbed the button, hanging up. Natalia slid off the barstool, went to him, and wrapped her arms around his waist, clinging to his back. “Rave? Are you all right?”

He lifted his head and took her in his arms. “The news isn’t good.”

“Well?” Draken asked, crossing his arms.

“My dad drives me crazy, too, sometimes,” Natalia said, running her palms in soothing circles on his back, but she knew it was more than just an annoying father/son phone call.

“Natalia, look at me.” He gently lifted her chin with one finger. His light brown eyes pulled her in and held her. He had the most beautiful eyes in the galaxy, and she could see deep emotion radiating from them. “I have to leave, Tigress.”

“*What?*” She felt shock first, then a sense of dread took over. “You can’t mean that.”

“I knew it,” Draken grumbled. “I fuckin’ knew it.”

“You can go home,” Raven said to her, his honey witch-stare boring into her. “I’m releasing you.” His voice had lowered an octave and she didn’t miss the bite in his words.

Her head whirled. She couldn’t believe this; it had happened so fast and just when she was growing so fond of him... “Wait! I don’t want to leave anymore, Raven. I’ve been with

you so long -- how long? I want to get to know you better..." Her mind was playing tricks on her. "But I already know you -- don't I?"

His eyes flashed with a hint of irony. "This isn't the time for you to start thinking like a Dreauxoid," he said as he slid his gaze to one side. "I don't think the Dreauxoid effects are permanent yet. If we separate now, and you go back to Earth, your reasoning should become Earthlike again, and" -- his gaze swung back to hers, his face filled with apology -- "maybe you'll forget about me. I have business to tend to right now, and it can't wait."

She splayed her fingers across his heaving chest. No way in hell would she let him leave, unless he took her with him. She didn't want to think like a human, if it meant she wouldn't care about him anymore. "What business?" she demanded, her mind not accepting his words. "You kidnapped me to make me your soul mate, and now you're going to just quit and leave me behind? That's not fair, and I won't let you go."

He looked at her as if she'd struck him in the midsection. When he recovered, he ran one roughened hand up and down her arm, the other hand caressing her cheek. "I rushed into this relationship before I'd finished my work on Dreaux, and I shouldn't have hurried things. I'm sorry. Really, Natty, I am, but I've wanted you so badly."

"That helps!" she said, sarcastically, tears stinging her eyes. "I won't let you push me away. At least tell me what's going on."

"Don't cry." He ran his finger under her eyes. "I never meant to hurt you. I'll come back for you -- or, if you don't want me to, I'll erase your memory of me --"

"No!" She tried to blink in her tears. "I don't want to forget you, and I do want you to come back for me!"

"What's the story, Rave?" Draken broke in. "It has to be serious, if you'd cut this romance short."

His pained features tore from her gaze to Draken's. "Tre and that bitch Ardella are what's wrong."

"Shit," Draken said, spitting to one side. "So that's why the old man called you."

Natalia wiped her eyes and stared at him, waiting for more of an explanation. He caught her expression and she saw the torment flickering across his face. "Tigress, the situation on Dreaux is urgent." When she started to cry again, he shut his eyes and turned away from her, taking long, heavy strides to the bed. He took a seat on the edge of it, leaning back on his hands, kicking out his long legs, and crossing them at the ankles. He glowered, but not at anybody in the room.

She could feel his despair as she went to his side. "Don't cut me out. Tell me more," she said, stroking his hair back. "I'll try to understand."

Raven looked over at her with a lazy smile and soft eyes. "Don't ever lose your human heart, no matter what." He looked past her at Draken, and then back at her again. "I should have tried to concentrate more when I got the feeling that someone was calling to me."

His pain stabbed her and her anger melted. She placed a hand on his shoulder, gripping it tightly.

Raven sucked in a deep breath. "Ardella and Tre keep saying Father's becoming more and more human." He spoke softly, his words seeping through her skin, into her core, making her feel him to her bones. "My dad will never be as human as me, because it's not in his blood -- but if he mates with enough humans..."

"Ah, shit!" Draken spat again. "So he took another human lover."

Natalia didn't understand his great distress over the cheating. "Why would your father call about that?" She tried to read his aura. Shutting her eyes, she said, "I'm not feeling a close bond between you and your father and none between you and Ardella. You can't care if your father strayed."

"No, of course it's not that." He looked into her eyes. His own were seared raw, flashing with anger. "He had another child, one he never told anybody about, not even me."

She could feel his anger, his biting rage. Fuck his father. How could he have kept that from Raven? He already loved his newfound sibling. She knew that. "I'm sorry. I know that hurt you."

He lifted her hand off of his shoulder, and kissed the back of it, which touched her deeply. "I have a sister," he finally said. "She's part human, like me. Father paid great sums of money to have her raised by a Dreauxoid couple, so she wouldn't face the discrimination heaped on hybrids."

"Well, that wasn't a bad idea, was it?" She didn't get it, although she felt something ominous. "There has to be more to this story."

"It's bad because Dreauxoids don't love. If I'd known about her, I would have taken her and raised her myself, which is exactly why Father didn't tell me. In his twisted way, he meant well. Hybrids are treated horribly on Dreaux and are considered inferior."

"Raven, did something happen to her?" Natalia asked. She felt an eerie wave of doom in advance of his answer.

Raven glanced up at Draken, who stood next to her, and then his gaze slid back to hers. "Sari is missing -- and so are Ardella and Tre. Doesn't take a genius to conclude that they found out about her and took her. Father would never help me nail my precious stepmother and brother before, but he will now, since it's personal to him. That's just so Dreaux."

Natalia felt a wave of nausea. Tre had scared her shitless. His evil radiated from his pores. "Is your father sure?"

"Yes. Nothing else makes sense."

"Her adoptive parents --"

"Don't care. She's a business arrangement for them."

Natalia swallowed hard. "Raven -- how could she call out to you if she didn't even know about you? That she had a brother?"

"She must have known in her subconscious. It won't make sense to you --"

"It doesn't have to make sense to me," she interrupted. "What do you think they'd do to her?"

"No doubt, take her to the slave spa, so she can wait on rich Dreaxoids and suffer beatings at their hands, and at the hands of the other guests. Since Dreaxoids have sex out in the open, even though she's only fourteen Earth years, she'd see that, too."

"Oh, Raven." She wrapped her arms around him, feeling his rapid breathing. She hoped he could tell how much her soul bled for him, how much she supported him. When she pulled back, his honey eyes were vague; he seemed deep in thought. "Draken," he said, in a flat voice, "It's up to you to get us to Dreax. Damn, I'm usually smarter about conserving my magic."

He'd used up his magic pleasing her, making her dreams come true. "You didn't have to use so much on me," she whispered into his ear.

He snapped back to alertness, pulling back his legs and curling his arms around her. He sat her on his lap and kissed her ear, nose, cheeks and lips. "Yes, I did. I'll miss you while we're apart," he mumbled against her neck. Before she could cry out in protest, he stood up, setting her on her feet, making her heart drop. "I have to get ready to go."

He couldn't leave her behind. She felt empty, hollow. Trying to pretend she hadn't heard his good-bye, she grabbed him around the waist and snuggled into him. What if she never saw him again? Her gut clenched. "Raven, take me, too." She lifted her head to plead with her eyes. Then she realized she looked weak, and she felt her features harden. "I *will* go with you. You don't dominate out of the bedroom."

"Way too dangerous." He looked at her as if she'd lost her mind. "This isn't for amateurs without powers." His face softened and he wrapped his fingers around her hair. "This won't be the end of us."

She felt her belly knotting. He couldn't know that. "Raven, I can help you. I helped you with Tre and the forcefield. I probably have some untapped powers from being with you."

"Some, but not enough." He turned his head toward his tall friend. "I'll have Draken transport you home."

No, she couldn't let that happen. She had a bad feeling about him going to look for Sari without her. In a weird, sixth-sense way, she knew he needed her to be there or his rescue attempt would hurt him. Her heart sped up and she caught his gaze.

"Raven, is there a chance you could end up in The Void?" Her words shook. *She* shook.

"No." He put a finger over her lips. "No more talking, Tigress. Be brave. I have to leave the room for a moment." He gave her a humble, apologetic look then started to head toward the door, but she ran after him.

Draken called out, with some annoyance, "Where are you going now, Rave? We need to hurry."

Raven grabbed the doorknob, but she yanked his hand away and held it. He let out a breath as he faced her. She felt his deep regret.

"You could get hurt." She gripped his hand tighter.

He looked down at her, not saying a word for a few breaths. Finally, he said, "I can take care of myself. Once" -- he tried to look more upbeat -- "once I'm on Earth for good, I'll be safe. For now, I have to do this, but I've got find Lily before I leave the safe house." He opened the door.

"Please." She felt a new wave of fear for his welfare.

He shook his head and she could feel his angst. "No." His voice was firm. "Go home and see your folks, or stay here, and Lily will look out for you."

"I don't need anyone to look out for me. I'm a grown woman and I'm going with you."

"No!" He swung the door open wider and looked past her, at Draken. "Keep her safe, Drake. Take her home while I tell Lily about this turn of events."

Natalia threw her arms around him and held him with all the strength she had. "Don't go, damn you! I -- somehow -- if I'm not with you, I feel you'll be in danger." There. She'd said it and meant it.

He didn't pay attention, didn't even look at her. Not this time. She could see and feel that he'd made up his mind. Even if he bought it, he didn't care. He'd take that risk, and keep her safe. She had to make him change his mind...or maybe there was another way.

"Draken, can you transport Natalia to her house on Earth and meet me here when I get back?" He stared down at her again and she could see his Adam's apple bobbing up and down quickly, his eyes misting over. She could feel how much he wanted to stay with her, yet how strongly he felt he had to go. "I'm sorry," he continued, gripping her hands tightly in his. "I know you're feeling close to me, but I have to rescue my sister. She needs me more than you do right now. She's in danger; I won't put you in danger, too."

"I don't want *you* in danger, either." She shook him. "I'd never recover if anything happened to you!" The words just flowed from her mouth, but she meant them. "You mean a lot to me, and I want you in one piece!"

Raven froze, still looking down at her as she gripped his other hand. She saw his jaw tic; otherwise, he didn't even blink. He swallowed hard and finally said, "Nobody besides Lily -- and now you -- has ever expressed a care for my well being." He pulled her into his steamy embrace. His eyes flashed his agony and she wanted to wipe the sad look away -- so she tiptoed to kiss him. He instantly devoured her mouth, and she felt his heart, soul, and all of his pent up, warm feelings. As he pressed hard against her lips, she wondered if he actually loved her and, for some reason, just wouldn't tell her.

He squeezed her until she could barely take a breath and she drank him in, hoping to suck a piece of his soul inside of her, needing to hang onto as much of him as possible, but suddenly, he tore away from her, not meeting her gaze. “Draken, take her home -- before I beat the crap out of you!”

“Raven --”

“Damn it, Draken, transport her now. *Now!*” He left the room, slamming the door behind him. The windows rattled.

Natalia felt her heart slamming against her chest as she looked at Draken. He was her only chance. “Please don’t take me home.”

Draken sucked in a deep breath. “You want to stay at the safe house? That’s fine, too.” He took a few steps toward her, his eyebrows knitting together. “Look, sweet thing, I have to go with Raven, so tell me if you need a ride to Earth, or if you’re staying here.”

Tears spilled onto her cheeks. She would have thrown herself at his feet and begged him to take her if she’d felt it would have worked. But she knew it wouldn’t. Draken’s mind wasn’t on her at all, other than how fast he could get her out of the picture, so that he and Raven could leave.

“If he were my soul mate, would you bring me with him?”

Draken froze. “Soul mate? Earthlings usually take forever to make that decision.” His gaze sharpened. “You did seem...attached to him...when we were...” He cleared his throat. “Do you love him?”

Did she? She couldn’t tell anymore. “I know I have to be with him. I want his back.”

“I have his back.”

“I have a terrible feeling about this, like I’ll bring him good luck, or something totally weird, like that. I feel as if I have to go with him to protect him.”

Draken snickered. “If you ever tell him that, you’ll unman him.”

“I’m telling you that, not him. Look, I care for him, Draken. It will be torture for me to be left behind, not knowing what’s happening, unaware if he’ll even return for me.”

“He’s a man of his word.”

“I think I’m falling in love with him.” *Don’t say that just to influence Draken’s decision. Of course, that’s not why you’re saying it. It’s true.* “I’ll see if it’s really love after this is over, but if something happens to him...” She shut her eyes. “Please bring me with.” It was a whisper and a plea. “Maybe my good vibes will help protect him.”

“Vibes?”

“Aura.”

“Oh, aura. Well, I don’t think so. It doesn’t work that way, sweetie. You need magic. The little you may have gotten from being with him won’t be enough.”

“I’ll feel like I’m doing something, at least.”

“He’ll kill me.”

“You’re immortal.”

“He’ll throw me into The Void.”

“You look as if you can handle him.”

“We’ve never fought. I’d hate to see the outcome.”

“Me, too. I don’t want to cause a fight. I just want to be with the man I...have such strong feelings for.”

They stared at one another and she hoped she saw his hard eyes softening. “Can you stay out of trouble?” he asked, in a harsh voice.

“I think so.” In truth, she didn’t know.

He suddenly grinned, and she relaxed a little. Had she won him over? “You have a lot of fire.”

“I hope so.” She met his gaze, square on.

“You’re also hot.” He suddenly looked at her like he had in the pool, and she felt a ray of hope.

“So are you. But Raven...”

“Maybe he’ll share you again.”

“I just wanted to see what it was like. Once.” Living out her fantasy had been wonderful, but Raven would be all she ever needed.

Draken turned his head and let out a slew of four-letter words. “You’d better not let Raven know you’re with him.”

She felt her heart speeding up. She’d won! Careful not to look victorious, she asked, “Won’t he see me?”

“You’ll be invisible, like he was when he followed you around.”

“Oh!” She swallowed hard. “Of course. Great idea!”

“After the mission, I’ll make you visible to him and you two can take it from there. I want to see Rave bond. He’s had a lonely life up until now.” He shrugged. “Most half-Dreaux are lonely, especially if they’re part human. Humans crave love and Dreauxoids don’t understand it.”

She could feel Raven, although he’d left the room, could feel the goodness of his soul, and she wanted to be the one to give him that love he craved. Forever.

“I’ll be good to him.”

“I hate to deceive my friend. I’m not like that.” He muttered to himself for a moment, then suddenly snapped his fingers. Natalia couldn’t feel any difference, but she saw Draken smile, a big, beautiful dimpled grin. “My powers are still strong. You’re invisible.” He sobered. “Good thing I’ve stored up reserves. I’ll need all the magic I can get for both Raven and you. I want to warn you, if you speak, he won’t hear you. When you’re invisible, you

can't be heard or felt by anybody except the one who put the spell on you, and that's me. And if you bug me too much, I'll take your voice."

Natalia shut her eyes, the tension tight around her head and chest. She'd had a taste of Raven, and now she couldn't live without him. "I don't care what you do, as long as I'm with him, even if he doesn't know I'm there."

Draken cocked an eyebrow and widened his grin. "Then, in a few minutes, lady, you're going to visit the dismal planet of Dreaux, our homeland. Be prepared in advance, it's not pretty."

She didn't care. She wanted to see Raven's world. The hickey on her neck heated and throbbed, causing her to feel the way she had when he covered her hot clit with his lips and teeth. Strange! But she felt something else, too, a weird sense of power. While Draken sat down in a hardback chair, his eyes shut, she spotted a pencil on the bar counter and concentrated hard. It took all of her focus, but she saw it move just a little. It wasn't much, but she did have some powers, even if only temporarily. She wondered how long they'd last.

The door flung open and Raven stood there, breathing hard. "Lily's gone. Her friend said she's gone to Dreaux."

Draken's brow furrowed. Then he shrugged. "Perhaps she found out about Sari and transported herself there to help out."

"She doesn't know Sari exists."

Draken shrugged. "We're wasting time, Rave."

"I know. Let's go."

"*Ready?*" Draken asked Natalia telepathically.

She nodded at him.

Natalia didn't remember anything after she heard a loud whooshing sound in her ears.

Chapter Ten

Tre lay out on a poolside chair, soaking up the streaming sunlight and drinking a Dreauxita. His bastard younger sister knelt on the hard concrete by his side, close enough that he could reach out and slap her when the mood hit. The Third Moon of Dreaux was perfect for the resort. Pity he and his mother had to keep relocating it because of Raven and other do-gooders who wanted to bust their operation.

Business was brisk. The resort always had a capacity crowd. He and his mother could service the patrons lavishly, since the unpaid slaves did the labor, or were punished for slacking off. Today, Tre, never too cheerful, felt exceptionally ornery. It seemed like all the patrons were having wild, hot sex, except him. Hell, his mother was two chairs down from him, with one live man and three robots made to look exactly like his fuckin' human-loving father. She was still awfully attracted to the old coot, he thought, despite her denials. It was enough to make him laugh, but he knew enough to hold his tongue. She always dragged her Bry-look-alikes with her and had them programmed to fuck her senseless. He needed to get a few sex droids, too. No *real* women ever wanted him. He bridled, thinking of his handsome brother and father, and now, his feisty, cute, little hybrid sister. He was so much better than them, a purist; he should have been the handsome one. "Fan me, you mixed-breed bitch," Tre barked at Sari.

The defiant little hybrid was a pain in the ass, had been fighting him since he'd taken her. Pity he couldn't sell her to the Dreauxoid men for sex, but Dreauxoids didn't mate with humans. Except for freaks like his father. He turned his head and spat on the ground, thinking about Bry. The one thing that bothered him about his impulsive act of abducting Sari was that Bry would come after her. That was the bad news. The good news was that Bry, Raven, and everyone else who wanted to nab them never could. He was ever aware of familiar scents and he and his mother were spot on at transporting as soon as they smelled somebody coming after them. The patrons helped. They all wore panic buttons, and, if they

smelled anyone familiar and uninvited, they simply pressed the button and warned Ardella, who instantly moved the large hotel. So far the system had worked perfectly, No reason it shouldn't continue. So why did he feel so damned nervous?

Tre focused back on his loathed newly discovered half sister. Maybe he could ransom her back to his father for a laugh, or sell her to some other species who wouldn't feel tainted by human contact.

Sari wasn't responding to his order, which riled him up. He sat forward and grabbed the teenager's skinny arm. She stuck her stubborn little chin out at him and he slapped her across the face. The little bitch refused to scream, like a normal kid would. "When I give an order, you do it," he said, pulling her close to his face. "You know what happens to hybrids who don't obey?"

Sari's dark face paled and her eyes rounded. She knew. Tre grinned and threw her to the concrete. She'd seen the starving creatures who lingered in cages, packed together like sardines, hot, unfed, and dehydrated. He and Ardella kept them there, until they were so desperate that when they said, "Jump" the slaves would ask, "How high?" He loved to see the hybrids and other freaky creatures fall at his feet in abject submission. It made him feel powerful. Hell, it was the only pleasure he got these days. Sari would need a lot of training, but it would be worth it to have his hated sibling serving him.

"*Fan me, you hybrid bastard!*" he shouted. His testosterone surged, and he felt a small wave of self-esteem.

Seething at him, she picked up a fan from beside her, and stood, fanning him, her chin jutting out at him. "You'll get in trouble when my parents find out!" she shot at him.

He laughed. "I told you, they weren't really your parents. Can't you feel the truth in my words?"

Her eyes filled with tears. "Yes, I feel the truth."

Tre relaxed and sipped on his drink. "Look humble, sis. I don't like that rebelliousness on your face. Reminds me too much of your other brother, Raven. He's a disgusting hybrid, too. The two of you would have gotten along well had your real father not kept you two apart. Lucky for me, he did." Tre chortled.

Her features hardened, and he could see her lips trembling. Good. He wanted to put the fear of Gods in her. He'd always suspected that her mother, that half-pint Lily who had taken in Raven, had too much of an effect on Bry. Learning that Bry and Lily had mated, producing Sari, had kicked up his anger at his useless father. When Ardella told him Bry was straying again, she'd asked him to follow, to see if Bry was doing a hybrid.

Tre didn't want to bother following his father. He didn't really care if Bry stepped out on Ardella. What did she expect, since she wouldn't give him sex? Like all men, his father had needs. But the idea of him doing another hybrid rankled him. Too lazy to do the tracking himself, he'd hired a private investigator to check on his father's activities, and after an Earth year, he'd found out about both Lily's affair with his father, and Sari, their spawn.

Tre held out his empty glass. "Get me another Dreauxita, bitch. And make it snappy."

She took the glass, but stuck her tongue out at him.

Tre jumped off the chair and slapped her across the face again, and, to his utter shock, she slapped him back with a sharp, ringing crack. That did it.

He grabbed her wrists, twisting her hands, his teeth clenched. "You're so tough," he snapped. "You'll find out you can't best me! I think you need some discipline. A few days without food or water should make you more compliant."

"No, it won't. Nothing will!"

He gaped at her. Where had she gotten such gall?

"Whatever you do to me," she said, "I'd rather suffer than serve you. I hate you." She spat in his face, saliva hitting him on the nose.

Tre lost it. He knew his magic reserves were low, but he couldn't let the impertinent child treat him with such appalling disrespect. He blinked and grinned as he saw her bound and gagged to a chair right at poolside. A few disinterested patrons looked on, but most Dreauxoids didn't care about others, especially mixed breeds, and especially those who frequented the spa. Many were purists. They went back to their various sexual activities.

Sari struggled against her restraints and Tre stood before her, hoping to intimidate her with his height. "You'll show me respect," he said, "or you'll get far worse. This is just the beginning!" With those words, he strode boldly away, heading toward the concession stand. A double Dreauxburger, plate of French fries, and chocolate milkshake would hit the spot. His hybrid bitch sister had worn him out and he needed to eat.

* * * * *

After a rough landing on Dreaux, Raven got off his butt and pulled Draken up with him. "I haven't landed that badly in eons," he said, remembering that Draken could be sloppy with his magic. But he was a wonderful fighter, a great friend and ally.

Draken stood, brushing the soot off his ass. "Sorry. You weigh a lot, pal. I'm used to transporting solo. I hope you regenerate fast."

"Me, too." This mission would require all their combined magic.

Aren't you going to go in to see your father?"

"After I sniff around to see if I can pick up familiar scents. That's why I told you to land in the yard, rather than inside."

Draken sat on a large rock in front of the tall white pillars of Steed Mansion while Raven walked around the familiar gray concrete yard. He grimaced at its smattering of rocks and stones. Dreaux was as bland and colorless as ever, even more so, now that he'd been with Natalia at the safe house. He frowned as he looked around. Dreaux had a blazing sun that

nurtured the inhabitants of the planet. It never turned to night. However, bright or not, the planet was gloomy.

Raven sniffed around -- why did he still smell Natalia? Her flowery scent had clung to his skin and wouldn't let go. Obviously, it would take a while for the memory to fade, and he didn't really want it to. Another familiar scent puzzled him. Lily. Was she here? Whatever for? He turned to Draken, "Something's rotten on Dreaux. Let's go inside."

"Knock on the door, pal," Draken said. "I'm saving my magic. No more transporting."

"Yeah, yeah." Raven banged the metal doorknocker several times, as loud as he could.

The door opened and his father stood there, a grim expression on his face. "I'm sorry I had to call you away."

"No, you're not sorry." Raven had no illusions about his father, as he and Draken stepped inside. "You need me at your convenience, and I'm here." He bridled, still furious at his father for having withheld Sari's existence from him.

"I know you have a possible soul mate you were trying to romance, but lust must be put aside for certain things, and I felt this was one." Bry made no apologies as he shut the door and then turned to face him.

Raven stared at his father. They were eye level, his father the same height as him. He could feel the Dreauxoid logic and coldness emitting from him. Bry didn't understand him at all, could never comprehend what he felt for his soul mate. He loved Natalia.

"Yes, I feel your human love," his father said, surprising him. "I wish I knew the feeling -- Ardella claims I have acquired the ability to love from mating with humans. I'm not sure about romantic love. I do love you, Raven, although you may not believe it." He spoke the words in a monotone, typical of him, but Raven felt touched.

"I know. But you didn't trust me to know about my sister."

"I've learned to trust nobody. Sari was passing as a purebred. Her mother raised another hybrid, saw how hybrids are treated, and didn't want her daughter discriminated against. I arranged an adoption." He let out a tired breath.

"So how did your plan fall apart? Secrets usually do, you know." He wanted to strangle his father.

Bry frowned and dropped his gaze. "I'd hoped this secret would keep, but Ardella is so tuned into me. She obviously smelled another scent on me, and didn't care about the woman, until she sensed I was feeling too much for her. Then, somehow, Tre got involved and found out about her and they took her." He reached into the pocket of his black pants and pulled out a note, and shoved it at Raven, who read it.

Bry, I've had it with your hybrids. You'll never see me again, or your daughter.

Ardella.

He gave the letter back to Bry. "Keep it for the authorities. When we find them, and this time we must, you can show this to them as proof of malicious intent." He sucked in a breath, smelling Natalia, smelling Lily, feeling disoriented. "Where is Sari's mother?"

"Upstairs sleeping. I put a spell on her. She's beyond upset and needed rest."

"Do I know her?" He knew he did, and that he wouldn't like the answer, but this wasn't the time to dwell on it.

"Yes, you do, son."

So Lily had created a child with his father. Mind-boggling! "I don't want to discuss that right now." His body tightened as he put his feelings of betrayal aside. It didn't matter right now. His anger erupted at something else. "You never did anything to Ardella or Tre for running the damn purist spa. Never took your precious money away from them. No inducement at all for them to quit their activities." His accusation rang out loud and clear.

"I didn't think it would ever affect anyone I cared about, so why punish them?"

Raven couldn't make his father understand. That's how Dreauxoids thought. Me, me, me. If he tried to explain, he couldn't get through to him. "Did they run off with your money?"

Bry shifted his gaze and hunched his shoulders. "Some of it."

Raven laughed bitterly. "You need to hide your money. Did you inform the authorities? Not that they're much help."

"Why call them? So far nobody has brought proof of Ardella and Tre's spa to them, so they can't do anything. It technically doesn't exist."

Raven understood, but he hated it. "It's a stupid guideline. Ardella's threatening letter to you should be enough proof. Stupid government we have! In some Earth countries, people are found guilty on solid circumstantial evidence."

"But this isn't Earth and we need proof."

"Tre and Ardella keep moving the spa. I haven't been able to find it yet."

"Not for lack of trying," Draken said, breaking his silence. "Your son has done an admirable job, but Ardella is clever. That spa is raking in money equal to your entire fortune. That makes both of them doubly rich, richer than you, since they have access to your funds, as well."

"Not anymore." Bry's eyebrows came together. "Tre is a demon spawn. I wish he'd never been born."

Raven started pacing. "Look, we're wasting time with this banter. Father, have you any clues about the location of the spa right now?"

"I put out a reward in the newspapers. A few Dreauxoids have told me where they think it is. I'm afraid to transport on my own. Ardella senses every move I make, and

transports the damn spa before I can get there. Has to be Ardella doing it. Tre isn't the brightest light bulb on the family chandelier."

"No," Raven said, "but he's greedy. He can smell me, and I'm sure he's the one who outs me when I try to bust them. He's not as dull-witted as you think."

Bry grabbed his shoulder as he passed him, to stop his pacing. "Calm down, son. You're making me nervous."

Raven faced him and shot him an icy grin. What did he expect? He was nervous, too, ready to jump out of his skin. "Can you smell Sari, Father? I can sense her fear, but don't know where it's coming from."

"I feel her aura from the third moon. If I could go there without Ardella detecting me I'd have gone there at once, all by myself."

"I'd go too, if I couldn't be detected."

"I've tried going alone," Draken said, "or with buddies. They're always gone when I arrive."

"Yes," Bry said, heaving a disgusted breath. "That's our biggest problem. There are so many Dreauxoids vacationing there. It's such a damn small planet. The chances of a blood relative or soul mate being there are high, and, of course, then Ardella is informed that an unwelcome visitor is coming, and she makes her business disappear. I'm betting that most of the Dreauxoids on this planet go to that spa."

There was a silence, as the men seemed to all lapse into their own deep thoughts.

* * * * *

Natalia shook as she absorbed the scene. Lily, Sari's mother! That had shocked her. Knowing how much she loved Raven, she didn't understand how she could have kept his half sister's existence from him. Bry was one thing, but Lily? She tuned in to Raven's conflicted emotions and felt for him. She couldn't be silent anymore. She knew Draken could take her voice, but she had to try. "Draken, I have an idea; a way I can help all of you."

She could see him stiffen.

"If you transported me to the spa, in invisible form, would Tre and Ardella know I was there? I'm not blood related to anyone on Dreaux."

"*No, they couldn't smell you before you got there.*" He spoke to her with his thoughts only.

Her heart sped up. "Do you have camcorders here?"

She could feel his inner voice snickering. "*We have recording devices that can track activities in every room, all at once. Insta-recorders, they're called.*"

Her heart galloped now. "I can take pictures for the authorities while I'm invisible, then I can cause a distraction. I'm great at starting trouble." She grinned to herself, her hopes rising. "Would that help?"

"You're nuts, girl!" Draken's harsh condemnation filtered straight through her. *"Dreauxoids are very intuitive creatures and they'll feel a disturbance in the atmosphere once you're there. If they find you before we get there to protect you, you'll be human dead. No."*

She bit her lip. Now what? The way he'd transmitted it, he meant it. Permeating beyond Draken's aura, she could feel Raven's frustration, despair, and -- longing for her. Even with this going on, he wanted her. Her pussy spasmed in response.

"I'm your only hope, Draken. Don't you see the good sense in sending me ahead of you?"

Draken chuckled and his aura of sarcasm whirled around her, *"Wow, brown sugar, your plan is great. If you kicked up a ruckus, nobody'd be concentrating on scents. While they're all in an uproar, Raven and Bry can sniff them, take some Technical World Locators with us, and transport accurately and quickly. That would definitely give us a chance."*

"Technical World Locators?"

"While Raven and Bry try to locate by scent, they locate by science. They know exactly where the different planets and moons will be at any given time."

"So you'll invade as a team?"

"The TWLs only locate. They don't fight. We're on our own, so a distraction and movies of the activities would be helpful. There's only one thing. It's unsafe for you, and I won't send you there," he said. "Sorry, sugar."

"Sorry, sugar?" Raven's head shot up, his eyes rounded. "Who are you talking to?"

Natalia froze. Draken had erred and had spoken out loud. Now what? She prayed Draken didn't send her away.

"Myself," Draken said, recovering quickly. He wore a stoic expression, but she saw a tic in his jaw.

"No," Raven said, walking up to him. He took his arms and shook them. "You weren't calling yourself 'sugar'. I smell her. *Where is she? How dare you bring her here!*"

Natalia felt a shudder and looked down at herself. She could see her form, no longer invisible.

Raven ran to her and lifted her, crushing her to his chest, his arms brushing the bottom of her ass. "Gods! I should have known you'd try to get Draken to bring you!" He lowered his head and kissed her and she felt an explosion in the air, in her mouth, in her body, in her pussy, but the kiss was short-lived. Raven glanced over at Draken. "Take her home. I'm still regenerating." He slid a look to Bry. "Or you take her home. She can't stay here."

"Is this your soul mate?" Bry lifted an eyebrow, an interested look on his face.

"So far, she isn't sure she wants me, but I've loved her for eons and I don't want her involved in this." He held her closer to him and she inhaled the arousing scent of leather, spice, and Raven. It felt as if the smells had been with her since before her birth.

"She's pretty," Bry said, with too much appreciation, but she tried to remember that Dreaxoids were lustful creatures.

"I want her safe," Raven said, harshly. "Dreax isn't safe for her." He kissed her again and then pulled back, his lips inches from hers. "I told you, I'd be back for you. Didn't you trust my word?"

Her eyes filled with tears. "I have to help. I can't just be that pampered movie star in Beverly Hills while your existence is endangered."

"I'll be fine."

"Let Draken transport me to the spa. Nobody will be able to pick up my scent. I can take photos and cause a distraction while all of you transport to rescue your sister."

"That sounds like a solid idea," Bry said, his face brightening. "We can send her with a few proto-paks."

"Those are so hard to find," Draken scoffed. "Doubt you can get any."

"I have connections. If we could get our hands on some, she could throw them at Tre and Ardella and incapacitate them for a short while --"

"No!" Raven shouted. "No way!"

"Raven, please," Natalia said, hugging him tightly around the neck.

"It could work, for a change," Bry said, standing to meet his son's height, crossing his arms. "We've failed over and over again."

"I know, but I won't sacrifice Natalia for Sari. I want them both safe."

Bry's features tightened.

"You don't get it," Raven said, angrily. "She means as much to me as Sari does, maybe more, and I'm not going to use her as bait."

"I'll transport you, girl," Bry said, ignoring his son.

"No!" Raven shouted. "Don't you dare, Father!"

"It's a good plan. I can't worry about her when my daughter is at stake."

"I, I, I!" Raven set Natalia down, marched to his father, grabbed him by the shoulders and shook him. "There's more than you and what you want." He shoved him backward and turned around. "But you don't understand love."

"Love?" Natalia's heart raced. Wow! He didn't seem to realize what he'd said. Instead, he turned to her, his face stern.

"You can't go. I forbid it," Raven said, a finger shooting out at her.

"I have to do it, Raven. I'm --" She swallowed hard. "I'm not afraid." Bullshit. She'd never been so scared in her life, but Raven was in her blood and he loved her, and she had to help his sister. In her heart, she knew she could.

"We'll do our best to protect you," Bry said.

Raven suddenly fell to his knees before her, all anger wiped away in his agony. He grabbed her hands in his, squeezing them, and she ached for him.

"Please, tell him you won't go," he whispered. "He's a Dreauxoid, cold as they come, but he has enough human influence to keep you safe, if you ask him. He won't send you against your will." He pulled her into him.

Tears spilled from her eyes as she sank against his knees, pressing her cheek against his. Water slid from her face to his. She shut her eyes, thinking of Sari. "I have to try."

"It's not your problem." He pulled back and feathered kisses over her lips.

"I'll send you regardless of my sentimental son," Bry said, in a firm voice. "It can't be right away, because I need to consult with my World Locators. I don't want to go on a wild goose chase. Hopefully, we'll come soon enough to protect you, *and* one of us can transport the recorder to the authorities. Once they intervene, that's the end of the spa, and the end of Ardella and Tre. If all goes well, everyone will be safe from them."

"I won't be a part of this," Raven snapped, and she could feel him trembling. "You'll have to do this without me, if you use Natalia."

"You'll help," Bry said, without much emotion. "You'll help because of Sari, not me." He snapped his fingers and a young-looking, dark-haired lady, wearing a French maid's outfit stood in the room. "Yes, Mr. Steed?" she asked, batting her eyes at him.

Natalia looked on, fascinated.

"Michelle, take your flying carpet and go to the food shop. We have company." She nodded, smiling and bowing at his feet. What the hell? Bry turned his attention to the others. "Raven, you and your friend can stay in your old bedroom. Draken can stay in the room next to yours." His dark eyes rested on his son. "You need to regenerate. This is no time to tap into your human side."

Natalia lifted her head and looked into Raven's shut down face. He wouldn't look at or answer his father.

"Stop pouting, boy!" Bry said, in annoyance. "If she dies, there will always be another soul mate out there for you. It's not like the young lady doesn't want to go. She's begging us to send her."

Bry turned and walked away with the French maid, Michelle, fluttering after him with big eyes.

"You have young servants," she said, trying to lighten the mood. He couldn't stop her from going.

"Michelle is a droid. Dad programs them to flirt with him. It strokes his ego. Nat, don't change the subject."

"I'm going to help find Sari. I'll be fine. It's you I have a bad feeling about." As she spoke the words, her body chilled. She couldn't shake that aura of doom.

"I'm always fine." He frowned.

"What is the fastest way for you to regenerate?"

"Sleep," he mumbled, not meeting her gaze.

"For how long?"

He finally met her eyes, scowling. "An Earth hour of sleep should bring me almost to full strength."

"And when are we leaving to rescue your sister?"

She saw a pained shadow pass over his face. He shook his head. "I don't know. When Father is sure of their location. I almost hope he miscalculates to keep you out of harm's way."

"You don't want Sari abused. I know that. You're worried about her."

He hesitated, and then shook his head. "I don't want either of you hurt."

"Is it possible neither of us will be hurt?"

He shrugged. "It's frustrating that I just can't go right now, alone, and get her, but every time I've rushed, I haven't found the spa. Father is centuries older than I, and he has more skills."

"Ever think of trusting him? He knows you don't want me harmed."

"No, I don't trust him."

Draken cleared his throat. "Hey, I'm going to take a nap," he said, and they heard his footsteps as he walked away.

Natalia looked into Raven's tormented eyes. "How long have I known you, Raven? Not in Earth years."

"Centuries."

"It feels like that to me. Could you please take a nap for me? After that, we can maybe relax" -- she grinned -- "in ways that will make us both very alert and aware for our venture." She pulled down on the "V" where her blouse exposed her neck. "Isn't it true that the more intimate we are, the more powers I get from you?"

"Well, yes --"

"Then we should get very intimate." She flashed her best smile at him, trying to get him to loosen up.

He grabbed her hand that held down the neck of her blouse. "*Don't do that to me right now!*" He shot his gaze to the ceiling, then back to hers. "You're too damn brave for your own good. If I tell you not to do something, you're supposed to listen."

“In the bedroom, I’ll do anything you say. Out of the bedroom, I make my own decisions. And I love you too much not to help you with this.” She realized what she said, and that it was true, and her jaw dropped.

As she gazed at him, she saw his eyes dilate and his jaw tic. “You -- you love me? Are you sure?” He took her hands and squeezed them, staring into her soul. If she lied at all, he’d be able to tell.

Natalia bit her lip, then said, “I’ve never been in love to compare, Raven, but it feels like love to me.”

Without another word, he lifted her in his arms, strode to the winding stairwell, and carried her upstairs, his heart thudding hard against his chest.

Chapter Eleven

Raven's blood boiled as he entered his boyhood room, Natalia nestled in his arms. He looked around at his familiar dark brown wooden desk, dresser, brown leather recliner, bookcase, and ceiling-to-floor window.

"Anyone can see inside," Natalia said, obviously trying to pretend that everything was normal.

Nothing was normal, Raven thought, as he gently laid her on the bed and gazed down at her, his human soul brimming with emotions. She'd said she loved him, and she would put herself in danger for him too, even against his wishes. And he couldn't do a thing about it. Right now he had no magic and couldn't transport her to safety. Even after his powers regenerated, his father would feel it if he tried to transport her home, and Bry would stop him from doing it. His father's powers trumped his own, being full Dreaux, with far more centuries of honing his skills.

Not looking at Natalia, he tossed his leather vest. "Nobody can see in the house, Natty." His words sounded flat to his ears, but he couldn't help it. "Father owns the only home for Earth miles and nobody would think to trespass. Father has traps set up all over the grounds." He lifted his T-shirt and yanked it over his head, dropping it to the floor. After that, he stepped out of his shoes and headed toward the bed. When he got there, he dropped to the mattress, rolling to his belly. He felt Natalia's soft hand on his back, but didn't look at her. She loved him, but he could lose her because of it. It was the most wonderful, but terrifying, moment of his life. "I have to nap," he said.

"I know. But we should talk first. The way you reacted -- when I said I loved you -- now you're acting like you're mad."

"I'm furious." He was more scared than furious, but...

"I know. That's why we need to talk."

“Nothing to talk about, Tigress. You won’t obey my orders.”

“Not this time. I can’t.”

She started circling her palm over his back, and it felt so good, but he was too tense to give in to any sexual feelings; not now.

“We can do this,” she said.

“You’re so naïve.” He rolled to his back and finally turned his head to face her. She leaned on her elbow, with the hot glow of lust and love in her eyes. His heart melted he traced the lines of her determined face. “Dreauxoids show no mercy, and you’re defenseless. Compared to them, your small powers won’t help you.” He melted inside. He couldn’t lose her. Grabbing her arms, he pulled her over him and her arms immediately wrapped round his neck, her face buried into his neck.

“Can you give me some magic?” she asked, speaking into his flesh, her words digging into him, reminding him of how long he’d wanted her. She lifted her hand to the mark on her neck, where he’d sucked her.

“It doesn’t work that way, Tigress. I can give you all my magic, or none. I can’t just transfer a little bit. I’d happily transfer all my powers to you, except that you wouldn’t know how to use them as well as I can. I feel I can protect you more if I keep it.”

“I don’t want you to be without magic, anyway.” She ran gentle fingers down his abs, and he chilled. He shut his eyes and savored her essence, her flowery scent, the thick, rough texture of her hair, and the satin of her skin.

“What happens when we bond?”

His heart raced. He kept his eyes shut. “You’d get a good portion of my magic abilities, plus immortality, and I’d become more human -- in my heart and soul, but some of my powers would be diminished. And your powers would be erratic until you learn how to use them. I’m still learning.”

“Could we combine our powers to become more of a force?”

“Oh, yes. Draken and I do that.” He couldn’t swallow, could barely breathe. She’d said she’d loved him. Now she was asking about bonding. He’d feel so much safer if they bonded before she went on the mission with him, but he didn’t want her to do it, if she didn’t really want it. Eternity lasted a long time. He pulled back and stared into her lovely face. “Would you like to bond with me, Natalia? Be my soul mate forever? I want to feel your answer.”

“I want to help rescue Sari.”

He knew where this was going, and didn’t like it. Gently caressing her hair, he said, “You can’t bond with me just to help me on this mission. If you don’t really love me with all your heart, you won’t get as much of me. Your magic is only as strong as your love.” He shut his eyes again, unsure of what he’d hear, more scared than he’d been in his life, even during times when he’d faced The Void.

She brushed a hand across his cheek. "My magic will be strong, then, because I love you with all my heart. I didn't even realize how much I loved you, Raven. It crept up on me, yet I responded to your presence as soon as I saw you. The love was hidden, but it was there. Always." She lifted her head and smiled down at him, and he knew what human heaven felt like. He quietly thanked his mother, in her alternate universe, for pointing her out to him, and felt her soft response. "Does this make sense to you?" She dipped her head to brush her lips near the corner of his mouth and lifted her head again, staring into him with a sharp gaze.

"Yes." His heart galloped faster and his balls jerked tight. "Makes lots of sense to me."

"We were fated to be together. Don't ask me how I know that, I just do. May as well bond before we go on the rescue mission."

He exhaled all his air and held her tightly. "Are you certain you want this for eternity?"

"Yes," she said, without wavering. Her breath bathed his face and he opened his eyes to see her staring at him with more tenderness than he'd ever seen on any woman's face. He smoothed her hair off her cheek and stared into the pools of her eyes, trying to read her. "I'm sure," she said, firmly, lifting her chin.

He swallowed a lump in his throat, and then lifted his head off the mattress, rolling her to his side to kiss her in a passionate, sweeping, possessive, bonding kiss, but he broke it off fast. If he didn't, he'd never regenerate.

"Hey."

He cupped her jaw in his hand. "After I sleep, we can do it. I need to get my magic back, and I want to be alert enough to remember everything about our bonding. It isn't going to feel like just making love, Tigress. You'll change and so will I."

She nodded and smiled gently.

He pulled her against him and kissed her, fireworks of love and lust exploding inside of him. If they all completed this mission safely, he'd remember this as the best moment of his life, although he knew they'd be perfect soul mates forever. After sweeping his tongue through her mouth until he'd left nothing untouched, he gently pulled away.

She seemed to understand him. "I know. Sleep." She pressed down on his chest, making him lay down, and he rolled to his stomach. "Close your eyes, and I'll cover you."

As much as he wanted to fight it, he shut his eyes and let her fuss over him. She pulled a soft blanket over him, then lay back beside him and threw her arm over his back and a leg over his. His loins jerked, something he didn't need right now, but he couldn't help it. He inhaled her scent as she lay against him, whispering all sorts of human endearments that touched his soul. "When I fall asleep..." he muttered, suddenly remembering, "the trunk in the hallway..."

"The big brown one that looks like a treasure trunk?"

“Check it out. You’ll like what’s in there. We can use some of what’s in there...later...” He could feel himself sliding into nothingness.

“I’ll go, but not until you’re sleeping, love.”

She’d called him “love.” He smiled and snuggled farther into her until he finally fell asleep.

* * * * *

Natalia felt restless. She couldn’t enjoy knowing she’d be Raven’s soul mate, not while so much turmoil swirled within her. She decided to look in the chest that Raven had told her about. It was something to do until he woke up. She reluctantly pulled away from him, kissing him on the forehead before she got off the bed. Then she strode into the hall, spotted the chest, and felt drawn to it. Weird. She walked over to it, and then got down on her knees. Swinging open the top, her eyes rounded as she saw a wide variety of hot-looking sex toys, everything from various types of vibrators, to nipple clamps, to restraints, to butt plugs, to sexy lingerie, to various flavors of warming lubricant. She reached inside to pick up a thong with a small vibrator attached to where her pussy would be. She quivered, picturing herself wearing it, having the naughty toy vibrate her clit until she sank into the sheets, screaming for mercy. But...

She’d do that later. Right now, her pussy twitched at the thought of bonding with Raven. She couldn’t wait to have that elegant, thick, long staff inside of her. It beat the hell out of any sort of toy...

“Hi, dear.”

Natalia dropped the strap, her heart racing. How embarrassing. She quickly slammed down the lid.

“Dreauxoids all have stash piles of sex toys, hon. Don’t be embarrassed.” Lily hugged her with all her petite strength, the front of her soft, blue robe rubbing Natalia’s skin.

“Lily!” Natalia rose to her knees and hugged her back. Then she pulled back, looked into the older woman’s knowing eyes, and said, quietly, “You’re Sari’s mother.”

“Yes.”

Natalia thought of Raven, love of her life. “Why didn’t you tell him about her?” She knew Lily knew the unnamed “him.”

“Nobody knows.” She wiped her eyes, and turned her head.

“But -- not telling *Raven*? I don’t understand.” She tried to sound gentle, feeling the woman’s agony over her missing daughter. Plus, she truly liked Lily. “Didn’t you trust him?”

“It’s not that simple.”

Natalia wondered if it was her business to pry. She was just about to back off, when Lily spoke again, her hand tightly gripping her arm.

"Child, I had a long-term affair with Bryant. Raven doesn't care much for Bry, he'd have been angry with me if he'd known about our affair. I didn't want to alienate him, but I realize now it was a mistake not to tell him." Lily pulled a handkerchief out of her robe pocket and dabbed at her eyes.

She nodded, feeling her pain. "You sent her away. Why? I feel how much you love her."

Lily gave her a wan smile. "I saw how Raven was treated, and I wanted a better life for Sari. Here that means pure Dreauxoid." She shook her head, sadly. "It didn't work, because her parents didn't love her in a real or meaningful way. She was a business arrangement to them, and Sari needed more..."

"Are they worried about her?"

"Concerned, in a distant way. They're more than willing to give her back to me for the right price, and Bry will pay it. I made so many mistakes." She sniffed and dabbed at her eyes again. "I hope I have a chance to right my wrongs."

Natalia didn't know what to say, so she put a hand on her shoulder and patted her, gently.

"I can feel my daughter's fear," Lily said, "but Bry is going about this in the right way.

Rushing out to try to locate her never works, even if the mother in me wants to do that."

Natalia shut her eyes. "It must be terrible."

"It is." She dabbed her eyes again.

"How long have you been -- with Bry?" she asked, quietly. "You don't have to tell me, but..."

"I don't mind telling you, considering how close you are to Raven. I've been with Bry since Raven was a tot. When Ardella took Raven to Demon Island, the night she abandoned him, Bry found him by his scent and came to me, asking me to please give his son a good home. He said he'd passed my house while tracking down his child, and felt warmth and caring emitting from it. That's when we first met." She smiled softly, her lips trembling. "He looked just like Raven, so handsome. I fell in love on the spot. How can anybody resist them?"

"I don't know. I couldn't." She felt a pang of love, then focused back on Lily, knowing, more than ever, that she had to do a good job in the rescue mission.

"I hope Raven doesn't hold this against me forever," Lily said, sadly. "I don't want to lose him."

"He'll forgive you," she said. "I'm starting to...sense things about him, and he's too kindhearted to withhold his love from anybody he cares for. Not for any reason." It amazed her that she knew that, but she did.

"You're sweet," Lily said, with teary eyes. "Thank you for sharing what you know of Raven with me. I know you're linked to him in a very powerful way." She kissed Natalia on the cheek, and then sat back on her heels, twisting her hands. Her face looked pale and distraught.

Natalia had to share her news; maybe it would soothe Lily a bit. "I'm going to help save Sari, and I'll have some powers when I do. I'm not sure how well they'll work, but...Raven and I...we plan to bond." Quickly, she told her the plot.

Lily listened with glistening eyes. "I'm so happy for the two of you. You're very brave to go there first, alone."

"I'd do anything for Raven," she said, and could feel a warmth drifting between the walls, from him to her. "I'll even defy him for his own good."

Lily's tears mixed with her reserved laughter. "He needs a woman like you," she said. "He deserves somebody wonderful." She wiped her eyes again. "And you deserve a man like him. He's giving and loyal to a fault."

"And Sari will be my little sister. I've always wanted one." She smiled, hoping to cheer the older woman.

Lily's chin quivered. "Well, if all turns out for the best..."

"It will. Are you coming with us?"

"You bet I am." Her face shut down a little. "I wanted to talk to you, and explain about Sari, but I'm still tired from Bry's spell and I'm going to rest a while. I need to regenerate as best I can. It will be quite a battle when we face Ardella and Tre."

Natalia's sensitive perception kicked in; a breeze of cold air blew over her from behind. She wrapped her arms around herself. "Just thinking of them chills me, Lily."

"That's evil you feel. It's cold and takes you from behind." She rose and Natalia rose with her, taking her hands to help pull her to her feet. "Thank you, dear." Lily turned to leave. Suddenly, she stopped and turned back around. "Enjoy your bonding."

Natalia felt a thrill shoot through her and smiled, nodding at her friend.

Lily padded down the hallway, and Natalia let out a breath. After Lily disappeared into a room far down the long hallway, Nat shut the treasure chest and just stood there, her mind whirling from all that had happened to her. Tears stung her eyes as love roared through her like a locomotive. Raven, the man of her dreams, would be hers forever. She loved him so much that it hurt. Her sex quivered at the thought of a bonding, of finally becoming one with him. She had no idea what to expect, but she knew it would be wonderful, and she couldn't wait to give herself to the man that had surpassed all of her fantasies...in spades.

Chapter Twelve

Raven woke up with a start and sat up, looking around for Natalia. She wasn't there, but he could feel her near, so he didn't worry. His heart raced as he jumped out of bed. His first thought was elation at the bonding to come, but it was tempered by fear for Sari and the fact that he couldn't give Natalia the romantic bonding she wanted; not since they'd be leaving soon. More than any other emotion, he felt desperation. To help save her, he needed to bond with her as soon as possible. The happiness of their eternity together would come later, when the mission had ended, successfully. He had big plans for a romantic Dreaux party, then a trip to Earth to slowly introduce himself, and who he was, to Natalia's family.

For now, he just wanted to hold his soul mate and plunge inside of her, giving her all of himself, and taking a part of her. It had been his dream for eons. Now, it would come true. He tested his powers by blinking a few sex toys into his hands. His magic worked. Thank Gods! He stuffed them under the mattress so he could surprise her. As he strode to the door, his knees felt weak. He smiled, bemused. Imagine! Raven Steed reduced to an Earthlike teenager's nerves because of a woman!

He opened the door and saw Natalia standing in front of the treasure chest. She looked up and went to him at once, throwing her arms around his neck with a fierce possession. Her breasts and sex pressed into his body, suggestively. "My love," she said, and kissed him.

He shared a long, passionate, soul-exchanging kiss with her, pumped his cock against her, and then pulled back. "I'm regenerated. We need to do the bonding now."

"So, what are we waiting for?" She didn't seem nervous, only eager.

Was he more nervous than her? He could never let her know.

Lifting her into her arms, he kissed her again while walking to his bed. When he set her on the mattress, he climbed over her slender frame, holding himself above, his arms taking his weight. Looking into her beautiful, sweet, loving face, he knew that, in the end,

everything would out fine. She was goodness through and through, fated to belong to him. “Quickly, tell me again, are you sure?”

She pulled his large body on top of her, lifting her pussy into his swelling shaft, rubbing her breasts against his chest. “Does that answer your question? Rave, you’re the only man I’ll ever love. You’re in my blood.”

“Not half as much as I’ll be after this is over.” His voice sounded husky, low, and it echoed in his head. “Hurry, Tigress, I need to transfer as much of my powers to you as I can. We’ll celebrate after all of this is over.”

“I’m ready.”

He saw her trembling and it aroused him. “I’ve longed to fuck you senseless. I’m sorry, but the first time has to be fast.” He poked her blouse’s top button through the buttonhole using his thumb. She seemed to catch his urgency and undid the button of his pants, also pulling down his zipper. “Can you zap our clothes off?” She spoke in a breathless voice.

“I can’t waste one iota of my magic. Let’s strip one another.”

He slid her out of her blouse, while she helped pull off his leather pants. Soon their clothing rested at the foot of the bed in a heap, hers on top of his.

“I’m wet for you already,” she said, with a moan, her breath coming fast.

Raven cradled her under him, then rolled them to their sides. He swiped a finger down her sex and his cock tightened as he felt her thick cream. Licking it from his finger, his balls yanked at him. “I’ll be able to taste you forever.” The idea drove him nuts.

She slid down the mattress, then took his staff in her mouth. After sucking his head, she pulled back and rested his cock against her cheek. “Same with me.”

“I have a present for you. Don’t have much time, but...” He leaned over the side of the bed, grimaced, and dug his fingers between his mattress and the foundation. He pulled out his prize and rolled back, holding up the two jeweled nipple clamps, a chain connecting them together. “Sit up, darling.”

She did, her face flaming as he fondled her breast, rolling the nipple between his fingers until it stiffened, and then tugging on the same bud to lengthen it. He opened the clasp and attached one clamp to her breast. She gasped, as it yanked on her aching peak, and it hardened even more. He smiled and stroked her other nipple, hardening that one, and snapped the other clamp on. She flinched and sighed. The chain hung down, pulling at her nipples. She threw her head back, her hair falling to one side, seducing him, and her kitten sounds of pleasure shot straight to his already-stiff cock.

“To you, my love,” he murmured, stroking around the clamps, feeling her response, her connection to him.

“Oh, God,” she breathed, and the chain shook, making her cry out with need. “I...didn’t realize...” She let out a few pants. “I don’t know if it hurts or I’m hotter than hell, but I’m going to come...” She arched.

He bent to lap at her nipple, laving the tortured peak and she shuddered. He did it again and she moaned. "Oh, shit! That's amazing!" Her face flushed. When he moved to take the clamps off, she let out a cry of protest, even while her breasts seem to pulse from the effects of the withdrawal. "Again!" she said.

"Sorry, love. I have many more presents for later on. Kiss me, Natalia, my love. Just...kiss me."

He gently shoved her to her back, her head lolling from side to side as she mumbled to herself. His body shuddered, as he saw her readiness, her arousal. He fell beside her and fondled her nipples, his heart slamming against his chest. He watched her face closely, pleased at her look of contentment. "Tigress...this is when we swear eternal love."

She stiffened under his hand and he could see her face heating. "I could never ever let another man touch me ever again," she whispered. "It's you, Raven. I crave you. I'm addicted to you."

"And I feel the same toward you. No more longings for two men doing you at the same time?"

"No more. No."

He smiled, feeling a wave of protectiveness and possession. "Good. I'd never allow it now. Not after we've bonded. This makes you mine, and me, yours."

"Yes." She glowed and her happiness radiated from her, touching him deep in his soul.

She wanted this; he knew it. And he wanted it more than anything in his entire life. He'd been celibate for ten Earth years while following Natalia around. His need for her was great, and his cock bucked as it swelled to full size. He was ready for her, ready to give her a part of his eternity. Gently, he embraced her and rolled himself back on top. "The first time, I take the dominant position. After that -- anything goes, dear. And I mean anything." He almost came just thinking about all the things they could do together. He had so much to teach her, so much they could enjoy forever and a day.

"Make us one," she said, her voice a hoarse rasp. "Make us one, Rave, please, love. We're so close; let's bond."

"A bonding is sacred to a Dreauxoid, and you'll feel that from me; my sincerity and my eternal devotion. The first time is always a magical experience."

Natalia pumped up at him, spreading her legs, giving him a welcoming entrance to her spasming sex. Raven groaned pleased that she was so ready to take him, so eager to finally have all of him.

The head of his cock entered her pussy, and he drank in her primal cry. He filled her completely, and pulled out to surge in deeper, letting her feel every inch of him. He took full possession of her body and soul. She gasped and held him so tightly, her nails digging into his back, as she met his feverish thrusts. Time ceased to exist as her body milked at his thrusting cock, and the waves of her climax drew him in. Raven's mouth sealed hers tightly, sucking in

her orgasmic cries. Through the seductive lure of her climax, he saw shimmering stars of every color and size, all dancing before them. Natalia was a part of him now -- her was scent, feel, taste, emotions, all imprinted on his mind forever, like a computer chip. He felt as if he were inside of her, more than just sexually, and he could also feel a part of his own soul slipping away, sliding inside of her. They were exchanging parts of one another.

He grunted and moaned as he plunged as high into her sex as he could, right near her cervix, and filled her completely. Her pussy rippled madly over his cock as he came inside of her, and colored lightning bolts flashed before their eyes.

"Hold on tight, Tigress," he mumbled, in between clenched teeth as he shuddered and spilled his seed again and again. "We're going to leave the room for a little while."

She shut her eyes and held onto him as they started spinning through the air, somehow breaking through the ceiling without feeling it. When she dared to peek, she saw that they were suspended in empty space, floating in the darkness, wrapped together by something that looked like a white cloud, but felt like yarn. It was out of this world -- literally. She arched in the thin air and rippled over his enormous sex and he came some more. Each time he came, she convulsed, and the colorful stars around her seemed to wink and smile at her through her tears.

Suddenly, a voice from out of nowhere boomed, "I pronounce you soul mates forever."

And they dropped quickly, him still inside of her, pumping, until they hit his mattress, kissing, her body still building to her final release. As she became numb with sensation, void of all feeling except for her pussy seized against his cock, and she felt her entire body flushed in white-hot flames, and his soul passed through her. She knew it did. With a final arch, she called out his name and started to cry.

She lay in his arms, tight against his hot skin, and they both breathed heavily. Natalia did feel new, different. She could feel him inside of her and knew her life would never be close to the same. Tears spilled out of her eyes and she held him tighter. His hold on her tightened as well. For the first time in her life, she was at total peace. "I love you," she whispered, watching his shut eyes and half-smile.

"I love you, too. I felt it when you passed through me. I didn't know it would be that good."

"Good doesn't come close to describing it."

"No."

Eons later, he kissed her again, gently this time. "We're a unit now," he said, in the most loving, soothing, caressing tone.

She couldn't stop her tears as she pulled back and looked into his gorgeous honey eyes. "Nothing can break us apart."

He almost crushed her to him. "Nothing."

"That voice -- that pronounced us soul mates. Who said that?"

He kissed her lips, pulled back, and stared at her, lovingly, adoringly. "That was a Dreauxoid God. One of them always puts a seal of approval on a successful bonding. Don't ask me this God's identity. We don't know any more about our Gods than you do on Earth. I just know that we're officially a unit, and I'm now a better man. I have the best woman in all the galaxies."

"As I have the greatest man -- oops, I almost said 'on Earth.'" Her body still rippled with little earthquakes. "You're the best man anywhere, on any galaxy." There was a long pause as they melded together, just holding one another close. "Now I can help you better," she whispered, hating to bring down the mood by hinting at the rescue attempt ahead of them, but feeling the need. "I'm part Dreauxoid now, aren't I?"

"You don't know how to control your magic. It takes time."

She didn't say anything, just felt him, his love, his caring, and his heat.

"I still don't want you to go," he murmured.

"You know I've made up my mind."

"Yes, vixen, I do know that."

Natalia stroked his head. "I saw Lily while you napped." She felt him stiffen. "Please, Rave, you will forgive her, won't you?"

He let out a breath that heated her skin. "I'll give her a hearing. I'm so ecstatic that you and I mated, I'm in a good frame of mind."

But Natalia wasn't. She feared for her soul mate. She didn't expect things to go smoothly at the spa. "Promise me you won't take risks on yourself when we go," she murmured.

"I can't promise that."

"Well, at least you can't die."

"There are things worse than death, Tigress, but I'm not planning on experiencing them. And I'm certainly not going to let *you* experience them."

A knock on the door interrupted them.

"Raven, Natalia!" Draken called. "Come out of there! Bry and his team have located the spa and are ready to go! Natalia, you have to go first."

He groaned and let go of her, and she saw the fear on his face. She took his hand and brought it to her lips. "Let's go downstairs and see what Bry has planned," she said, quietly. Sitting up, she tugged playfully on the same hand. "Come on, Raven. Let's hope for the best."

He didn't answer, but did sit up, keeping a lowered gaze.

Suddenly, she heard a telepathic voice. "*Help me.*" She shook her head to clear it. "Raven, somebody asked for my help."

"Telepathically?" He looked up, his face alert and tense.

“Yes! Wow. It was clear as a bell!”

“So Sari is feeling you, because of your bond with me.” He grabbed her shoulders and kissed her quickly. “You must love me a lot for her to feel you already, even to be sending you messages, although I suspect it’s her subconscious doing it.”

“Well, now, I feel a real need to go, even more than before.”

“Are you coming?” Draken yelled, with obvious impatience.

“Yes!” Natalia called out. She climbed off the bed, retrieved her clothes, and tossed Raven his clothing. “No point in wasting powers by using magic to dress ourselves, but let’s do it quickly.” She slid on her skirt.

He smiled at her, with a measure of sadness in his eyes. “You’re a quick learner. I would hate to lose you.”

“It won’t happen,” she said, feeling more afraid for him than for her. She tried to push her unpleasant premonition aside as they finished dressing and left the bedroom.

Chapter Thirteen

Raven led Natalia to the long table in the Steed's large glass and metal dining room, and helped her into a chair across from Bry. Natalia barely noticed the exotic surroundings as she glanced around the table at the assembled rescue party. Draken, Lily, and several studious looking men and women sat there, papers and unfamiliar contraptions in front of them. Everybody looked somber and determined, and Natalia felt her stomach knotting. This was it.

"I have the plans drawn up," Bry said, without introductions.

Natalia relaxed a little when Raven pulled her close, into his hard body. He was her strength, and she'd need plenty of that to get her nerve up.

Bry looked at Raven, then Lily. She noticed that his amber eyes softened when they found Lily's face, but only for a moment. Bry went stoic again. "After Natalia gives us a beacon, we'll invade as a united force, following the instructions of the scientists. We have an excellent idea of the location."

Raven nodded as he kept his arm around hers. She felt his fingers digging into her shoulder. "Dad, we always know," he mumbled. "What makes you think this time is going to be any different?"

"We've got your lovemate. Don't look so stunned, boy, I can sense that you've bonded."

Natalia felt him stiffen and take in a breath as if to speak, but Bry cut him off, his compelling eyes falling on her. She could feel Bry's intensity, and his attachment to Sari. "Are you ready to rescue your sister-in-law?" he asked, in a steely voice.

Natalia nodded as Raven held her even tighter, closer.

"I taught Raven all he knows, so he could use his magic for good. Girl, you don't have skills yet, but your instincts may guide you right. When we send you up there, it will take a

few Earth minutes before we can follow, which is why Ardella and Tre usually have time to transport. Your presence will be a homing beacon for us.”

Raven beat a fist on the table. “This is bullshit, risking her this way.”

Natalia suddenly felt a calming wave lap over her and she touched his hand. “It’s all right, Rave.” She turned back to her new father-in-law. “What else?”

Raven sucked in a deep breath.

Natalia smiled up at him, hoping to calm his anger and fear, certain he could feel her, although his frozen gaze rested on Bry. She looked back at Bry, too.

Bry cleared his throat and stood up, holding a cloth bag that had been hidden under the table. He set it down as Raven, Draken, and Lily looked on with great interest. Bry pulled a maroon, octagon-shaped, jellylike sack out of the bag and held it up. “Seani managed to smuggle in some of these proto-paks.”

“Wow,” Raven said, sounding stunned. “I didn’t think you’d really be able to get any. They’re so illegal here, toxic to Dreauxoids.” He sounded as if he were speaking to himself.

Natalia took the proto-pak that Bry held out to her. It felt squishy. “What are they?”

“They’re like tear gas to humans. If a Dreauxoid is hit with one, it explodes and disorients them. A pure Dreauxoid is completely befuddled when hit by a proto-pak bomb. You, dear, would be a little foggy from one, but not totally senseless, like Ardella or Tre.”

She stared at the squishy object in her hand. “How long do the effects last?”

“Differs for each Dreauxoid, but they can’t think clearly enough to use magic while they’re under the influence. When you take out Ardella, send a telepathic message to Raven.”

“I’m not sure how.”

“Just think the words, and he’ll hear you,” Bry said, quietly. “You’re linked. Once he gets the signal that Ardella is out of the picture, we’ll leave.”

“What about Tre?” she asked, feeling Raven’s emotions. Her lovemate was brimming with fear for her. “Won’t he smell you coming?”

“If you can take him out, too, that would be good. Otherwise, he’s not as bright as her. Cause a distraction, so he doesn’t concentrate on scents, and we’ll all hope for the best. He’s usually lazy and idle, with nothing to do but sniff who’s coming.”

“I’ll try to get rid of him, too.”

Bry smiled at her, and she saw a glimmer of respect from his eyes. “I see why Raven chose you. Good work, son. I don’t care that she’s part human.”

“I wouldn’t care if you did care,” Raven snapped at him, then spouted a bunch of four-letter words and Natalia hugged him. She could hear Sari calling out to her again.

“It’s all right, Raven.” She turned back to Bry. “Any other tips?” Natalia asked, steeling herself for the task ahead.

"You can only throw one at a time," Bry said, "so I'd target Ardella. If you take her out of the equation, even for a short time, Tre could make a mistake and you could trap him until we get there. But if you miss Ardella, the packet will explode when it hits the ground, alerting her that an unfriendly force is there. She's powerful and could find you, even invisibly. Although she won't recognize your scent and won't think of you as a threat at first, once you attack her, she'll know and her sensors are sharp. Tre isn't as sharp a tack, and never listened to me when I tried to teach him magic. It's possible you'd be able to throw a proto-pak at him and take both of them out of the equation."

"Unlikely to get both," Raven said, angrily. "He still has powers, Dad."

"Natalia does, too, now. She just doesn't know how to use them yet." Bry focused his hypnotic stare on her and she couldn't look away. He had Raven's witch-stare honey eyes. "I'll give you a crash course in magic."

"Like that will be adequate," Raven said, harshly.

"Trust me a little, boy." He looked back to Natalia, his gaze sharp, focused. "When you need your powers, think about what you want to do -- think hard -- then blink or snap. If it doesn't work, try again. Your love can make your magic more powerful, which puts you at an advantage over Tre. He can't love, is coldhearted even for a Dreauxoid. Your love for my son is great."

She touched Raven's arm. "Yes."

Raven wrapped his arm around her, massaging her shoulder. "Do think of me, love. Gods help me, if you must go, think of me."

"I will," she said, tears in her eyes. "How could I forget about you?"

Bry ran a hand through his hair. "So much of magic is instinctive, girl. Go with your gut. Learning to control your powers takes a lot of trial and error, and you don't have time to practice. I hope your intuition guides you well."

Natalia knew she'd be doing this on the fly.

"Go with the flow," Raven said, in a disgruntled mumble. "That's the best advice I can give you, if you insist on carrying out this insane plan."

"I sense her powers will be strong once she learns," Bry said.

"Me, too. Once she learns." Raven's voice bit.

"How are you going to transport me, Bry? I black out during transports." Natalia forged ahead, and suddenly heard the teenage voice again, begging her to help.

"We put spells on humans when they transport. Their equilibriums can't take it. You'll soon have to learn to transport without a spell, being part Dreauxoid now, but you're not ready for that yet." Bry sounded grim. "The spell will be short lived and you'll come to quickly." He handed her the bag of proto-paks. "You only have two, so use them wisely."

"Why only two?" Natalia asked, trying to plan ahead.

"In case Ardella and Tre manage to" -- he cleared his throat -- "somehow get them away from you, they won't have so much ammunition. They could use those proto-paks to take *me* out, and our group needs my full Dreaxoid powers."

"Insane," Raven muttered.

"Quiet, son," Bry snapped at Raven. He turned back to her. "If you manage to free Sari from wherever they're holding her, toss her a weapon. She's young, but athletic -- she'll have good aim."

She looked over at Lily. Her pinched face betrayed the harsh determination in her eyes. Natalia gave her what she hoped was an encouraging smile. Lily tried to smile back, but fell short.

Raven rested his cheek on top of her head and she could feel his tension. He desperately wished she wouldn't go, and she hated to frighten him, but this had to happen.

Bry's gaze turned to Draken. "As soon as we invade, assuming all goes well, Natalia will throw you the insta-recorder. The moment you have it in your hands, transport straight to the authorities. After they see proof of the abuse, they'll join you in the arrests of anyone involved with the spa, and they can help rescue Sari." His eyes slid back to Natalia. "Do you understand?"

"I-I understand." She swallowed hard. "I'll certainly have my hands full with the insta-recorder and the bag of proto-packets."

Raven shot to his feet. "I won't have this. I'm going at the same time as she is --"

"No!" Natalia stood and grabbed his arm. "Raven, they'll smell you, and you know it. I need to do this. I can feel Sari and, even more, I felt Tre's hatred toward you. He'll never leave you or me alone, until he's put away. Sari will be on my side!"

"If I know my daughter," Bry said, with a wry smile, "if she's capable of it, she'll be of great help to you, Natalia. A bigger hellion I've never met."

Natalia flashed him her prettiest grin. "That's because you don't know *me*."

Raven turned her around and kissed her, all of his emotions swirling inside of her. She didn't care that everyone looked on. When they pulled apart, she wiped her eyes and lifted her chin. "I'm ready."

Raven ran a hand through her hair. "We'll be there right after you."

She shrugged off a renewed feeling that Raven would be in danger at the spa. If so, she'd help him. They were soul mates now. "Do I have to stand in any special place in order to be transported?" she asked, her heart beating fast and hard.

"No," Bry said. "Just shut your eyes, you brave girl. You'll be transported and, if Sari is calling to you, likely you'll land somewhere near her. Ready...set..."

"Be careful," Raven cut in.

"Go!" Bry said, snapping his fingers.

Natalia felt herself being sucked into a tunnel, and she suddenly jolted through the air, hearing a whistling sound, but then she passed out and all went dark and still.

* * * * *

Natalia woke into instant alertness, her only bad effect being a throbbing headache. She still had the bag in her hand and, before she could even look around, she pulled out the Insta-Recorder and pressed the button several times. After she finished, she put it back and stood up, blinking into a large, blinding, yellow sun that Dreaxoids probably loved. It took her eyes a few seconds to adjust to the brightness as she jumped to her feet, waiting for her vision to clear. When it did, she wished it hadn't, as she stared at the Dreaxoids having sex on lounge chairs, on the ground, in the pool, everywhere. It was a mass of writhing naked bodies, an orgy, and everybody seemed just fine with it. Bile rose in her throat...

"You came to help me." The familiar telepathic voice snapped her out of her shock.

Amidst the disgusting display of blatant sex, she spotted a beautiful young girl with copper skin and hair, bound and gagged to a wooden chair across the room. She looked close to tears. Tre, the only adult Dreaxoid without a partner, rested on a lounge beside her, sipping on a drink, sweat pouring down his face, into the folds of his triple chin. Natalia felt sickened by the sight of him, especially since he wore nothing but low cut, black spandex trunks. He scowled, looking in her direction, and her heart slammed against her chest. But he didn't notice her. She was still invisible. Good. Sari stared right at her. *"You can see me,"* she thought.

"Yes. Who are you? Why do you care about me?"

"I'm Raven's soul mate, and I've come with proto-paks so that the rescue party has time to transport without the spa being moved."

"Thanks for coming." Sari transmitted her gratitude along with the message. *"You can blink me free, then I'll help you. This tub of lard next to me, and his crazy mother, are loose cannons."*

"I don't know if I can blink you free, but I'll try."

"You have the power. But watch out for Queen Bitch, Ardella, she's three times smarter than Tre." A tear rolled down her cheek. *"I don't want to watch this gross stuff going on. I'll focus on you and not look."*

"Good idea." Natalia felt a wave of revulsion. She hated Tre. Who would bring a teenager to a place like this? Her anger swelled. *"Where is this Queen Bitch?"*

Before Sari could answer, Tre stood up, his hairy gut sagging over his bathing suit. "Mother!" he called out, adding a snarl. He sniffed the air. "Mother, I smell something disturbing and foul. A bit like Raven, but it's not him."

Natalia snapped her head in the direction that Tre spoke.

"Can't you see I'm busy?" Ardella was nude, her legs spread far apart, four men surrounding her, their heads all bent as they licked and sucked her. "Look, I smell something, too," she said, between gasps, "but, since it's not Raven, Bry, or that small band of good-doers, it can wait a while. I'm otherwise occupied."

Natalia watched the tiny, white haired lady with her vivid blue eyes, and felt awe mixed with disgust. A squat, young redheaded man sucked Ardella's sex.

"Rest now, droids," Ardella suddenly barked, snapping her fingers. "Line up behind me, and let Leo pleasure me without you. I'll call you when I need you again." The three other men all lifted their heads at the same time, as if linked together, and Natalia gasped. All were stark naked, and had Bry's face and build.

"Sex droids, except for the redhead," Sari said, sniggering inside.

"I see." She still had her eyes on Ardella, who was spasming with orgasmic pleasure. The old girl was certainly enjoying herself.

"Mom!" Tre shouted, his fists balled. "Something's wrong. You're not paying attention, but I am!" He stamped a large foot and the ground seemed to shake.

Ardella giggled as she ran a finger down Leo's cock, then she kissed one of the Bry droid's hands. "Get lost, Tre!" she managed, as she arched. "Get a droid to amuse you! Nobody else senses a threatening force."

Natalia could see Tre's eyes turning stone cold. She felt a chill in the air from behind her. "If I don't hold down the fort," he shouted at her, "you won't notice anything. I'm the one who always tracks down Raven and Dad because you're always -- oh, forget it!" He snorted in disgust.

"Sari," Natalia said, telepathically, *"we need to team up while Granny is still busy."*

"I'm ready."

Natalia was impressed by the girl's aura of strength. She hoped they could continue conversing telepathically. *"Good. I'll need you."* She gazed over at the shrieking Ardella and suddenly noticed that her sex droids had wheels for feet. That gave her an idea. She started walking toward Sari, the proto-paks and recorder in her arms. She didn't rush; she had to plan. Speaking telepathically to Sari she said, *"I'm going after Queen Bitch. Can you take care of Tre? I'll toss you a proto-pak after I release you, if my magic works. Can you hit him with it?"*

Sari grinned from ear to ear. *"A proto-pak! Wow! Bry must have bribed somebody high up to get that! This should be a piece of cake. Trust me!"*

Somehow she did. It was Raven she worried about the most, and her uneasy feeling terrified her. It also fueled her determination to succeed in the mission. Concentrating hard on freeing Sari, she blinked, then cheered when Sari's chains dissolved into thin air. Her magic had worked!

Sari bolted to her feet, and, with athletic speed, kicked an astonished looking Tre in the groin. He let out a loud bloodcurdling yell and fell backward with a loud thud.

"Sari, catch!" Natalia called and she threw the proto-pak over a few chairs and into the teenager's waiting hands. Without delay, Sari whirled around and smacked it over Tre's large, hairy gut. Instantly, his head lolled to one side, his tongue hanging out of his mouth.

Natalia's jaw dropped, then she winked at Sari when she glanced her way for approval. "Watch him while I deal with Mama. Can't believe these Dreauxoids. Not one of them stopped their entertainment to even look at Tre. Not even Ardella."

"They won't," Sari said. "Dreauxoids don't care what happens to others. Hurry!"

Natalia's heart sped up as she turned and sprinted toward Ardella, who hadn't paid attention to her son's proto-pak incapacitation. When Natalia reached the tittering woman's lounge, she stepped behind a Bry droid that was giving her a shoulder massage. Leo's head ducked in between Ardella's parted legs, and the woman crowed with pleasure. Natalia shuddered, then focused on the task at hand.

One...two...three, she mentally counted to herself. She pushed the proto-pak past the droids, and smacked it triumphantly over Ardella's head, feeling relief when Ardella started wheezing. Natalia didn't savor her victory long. She kicked the droid's ass, propelling the robot forward. His wheels spun rapidly, shoving the lounge chair forward, with Ardella and her lover on it. Leo looked up and said, "Oh, shit!" The droid rolled them quickly down the sloping cement toward the pool, where they flipped over, tossed haphazardly in the air, and landed in the water with several loud splashes. Natalia grimaced, then shut her eyes to message Raven. It was time to send for help.

Natalia kept an uneasy watch on the pool. Leo surfaced first, pulling a stunned looking Ardella up with him. "What the hell?" he asked, looking around, then back at his lover. "Ardella, dear, can you transport with me? There's trouble. We can take refuge in my love nest."

Ardella spit water and held her head.

"Later, then." Leo snapped his fingers and disappeared.

Natalia didn't know how long the proto-pak's effects would last on either Dreauxoid. Still keeping an eye on Ardella, she ran to Sari, who took her hand, tossing their magic together. "*Two part-Dreauxoids are better than one*," Natalia said, trying to lighten a grim situation.

"*We're not out of the woods*," Sari said, and Natalia could no longer even pretend to joke.

"*You're right, but don't get scared*," Natalia, in spite of her attempt to transmit good feelings to Sari, sensed danger. A cool breeze whipped around her from behind, and she knew what had happened. "*Tre's getting up. He's no longer senseless*," she told Sari, hoping that the girl felt her inner strength, instead of her mingled terror. She shivered as Tre's

elongated shadow fell over them. Quickly, she whirled around, pulling Sari with her. Tre hadn't been out long. Would Ardella recover as fast? Tre was supposedly the weaker link.

"He's without power." Sari transported telepathically, squeezing her hand. *"That means he's lost his long-distance scent detection skills."*

Natalia felt a wave of relief. *"That's good because Raven and Bry are on their way."*

"In case Tre starts to regenerate, I'll try to distract him, so he's not paying attention," Sari said. Before Natalia could transmit caution to her, Sari tossed, "No magic, brother?"

He moved toward her with fists balled, but blazing gold lightning bolts shot from the teenager's eyes, repelling him. He yelped as his fingers smoked, then he blew on them while dancing on the pavement.

"Good move," Natalia said, slapping her on the back.

"I wish I knew more magic," Sari said. *"They teach us self-defense before offense."*

"Well, be thankful you at least have that." She could barely swallow as Tre took three giant steps forward, until practically standing on top of Sari. His rage crackled through the air, and Natalia squeezed Sari's hand, feeling her trembling.

Tre stuck a stubby finger out at her. "I know you're in cahoots with that damn humanoid of Raven's!" His breath came hard. "There's no way you can trump us, little sister." He lifted his head, looking beyond Sari, and called out loudly. "Mother! Will you focus on regenerating? I need your help!"

Natalia swept her gaze toward Ardella. She seemed completely confused, stumbling in the water, turning in circles, splashing with no purpose. "Gods, Mother!" Tre grunted. He glowered at Sari, then marched heavily toward the pool, jumping in when he got there. He grabbed his stunned mother by the wrists and pulled her to the side, his gaze now focused on her. "To all of you esteemed guests!" he yelled, his gruff holler ringing through the air. "There are a couple of hybrids in here, one still invisible! Come help me locate her and show these inferiors who has the better magic! Let's join together and torture them!"

"All your slimy guests transported!" Sari laughed. "They don't want your problems."

"Shit!" Tre lifted his head and looked around, then clenched his teeth as he dragged himself and his mother out of the pool. Ardella lay on her back, blinking. Tre kneeled beside her, slapping her cheeks. "Come to! You should have helped me keep intruders out, instead of having sex. And you call *me* inept!" He gazed over Sari, his eyes flashing angrily. "Mother will regenerate soon, and she'll be furious. I can't wait to see the spell she puts on you! And she'll find that slut who bonded with Raven. Yes, I suddenly realized he's mated! Where is she?"

"I don't know what you mean," Sari said, trying to sound innocent, squeezing Natalia's hand tighter.

"Bullshit!" he thundered at her as he snapped and blinked, trying to use his magic. It wasn't working yet.

"I'd be happy if the others would arrive." Natalia felt it in her bones and sent an urgent signal to Raven.

"Me, too, but it takes a few Earth minutes," Sari said, still speaking telepathically. *"Tre is already recovering -- once he and the bitch both get their magic back, we're toast."*

Ardella now stood on shaky legs, Tre holding her up under her arms, but she stumbled as if drunk. "Snap to, Mother!"

"Bry, is that you?" Ardella muttered, puckering her lips. "How could you choose a human over me? I lust for you so badly, my dear, my soul mate --"

"I'm not Bry, damn it!" Tre threw her down and she flopped down on the ground, still puckered up.

His gaze fixed on Sari. "Where is she, bitch?"

"Where is who?" Sari sounded innocent.

Tre's face turned beet red and he visibly shook. "I'm getting some of my powers back," he muttered and, before Natalia or Sari could react, he blinked, and a cage with black bars surrounded them. Tre let out a hyena's laugh. "Not bad. I'm halfway back to full strength! Well, you're right where you belong, hybrid sister!"

Sari panicked, grabbing the bars, pulling on them, but Natalia put a hand on her shoulder. "Let's focus together," she said, her heart speeding out of control.

"Is Natalia with you in there?" Tre asked. "Something smells a little like Raven, but it's not him!"

"What are you talking about?" Sari kept a brave front. "I don't know anyone named Nadine. Or Raven. And I wish I didn't know *you*!"

Tre snarled and his face turned fuchsia. He blinked, then slowly broke into a malevolent grin as a shiny black gun gleamed in his hand. Natalia's gut twisted as Tre cocked the trigger.

"Where is she, Sari?" Tre demanded, waving the weapon at his sister. "I hold all the cards now. I'd hate to hurt you and then put you in a place where you can't get medical care. That would be so much worse than The Void, right? Humanoids are lucky, precious. They die. I can shoot you and transport you to a planet where you'll hurt until eternity, where nobody will ever find you."

Natalia panicked, terrified for the girl. She tried blinking herself and Sari out of the cage, but Tre's half-strength powers trumped hers and she couldn't do it. "Think of a forcefield, Sari," she told the teenager, desperate to keep her young sister-in-law safe. "I'll help you." She grabbed her hand.

"Are you scared?" Tre's grin widened. "You should be." He glanced to his side and Natalia automatically looked in that direction too. Shit, she thought. Ardella. "Look who's back. Welcome, Mother."

Ardella pulled up next to her son, smiling the devil's grin. "Sari, dear. Tell me who hit me with the proto-pak and I'll ask Tre for leniency. Talk to me, girl. My powers aren't back yet, but I can feel them. They're close."

"I don't think we can do it," Sari messaged to her, and Natalia could feel her panicking.

"We have to try." Natalia didn't feel so brave herself. The gun paralyzed her; made it impossible for her to concentrate on her newfound magic.

"Bry will be here and he'll make you pay," Sari said in a trembling voice.

"I'll deal with him later, the human-loving fool! You first, sis." Tre aimed the gun in her direction and pressed on the trigger, just as a thick cloud of smoke shot down from the sky to the ground. Bry, Raven, Draken and Lily stepped out of it. And froze.

"Sari! *Natalia!*" Raven called out, his eyes round. He blinked, but nothing happened, except that Natalia felt an odd tingle.

"I knew she was here!" Ardella chirped. "I can see her now. Raven, you fool, you undid the spell by calling her name. Tre, *shoot them!*"

Tre squeezed the trigger and a fiery explosion blasted through the air.

Natalia suddenly felt the world slowing down, as if a CD had been set on the wrong speed. A sense of timelessness encased her along with a surge of crushing power. She felt calm, focused, and omnipotent. "Forcefield!" she heard herself yelling. "Forcefield!"

Another loud blast rocked the earth. The ground shook as the rain of bullets hit the invisible forcefield and ricocheted back toward Tre. He yelped and fell to the ground, saving him from being shot, but stunning himself. Ardella's eyes froze on hers for what felt like an hour. She lifted her palm just as a bullet struck it, but she suffered no harm. The bullet deflected from her hand and hit Raven in the center of his abdomen. Bry, seeing his son fall, ran to him, no longer focusing on his powers, and Natalia went stone cold. Raven lay on the hard ground, gushing bright red blood, his hands trying to hold his guts together.

"Noooooooooooo!" Natalia screamed. Without thinking twice, she blinked and the cage disappeared.

"Damn!" Ardella croaked. "I'm still not full strength yet or I'd get you! Tre, help me!"

Natalia barely heard her as she fell to Raven's side. Bry had already ripped off his shirt, ministering to Raven's wound.

"Bry, without you to fight with us, Raven hasn't got a chance," Lily called, desperately. "Let Raven's soul mate take care of him! Ardella will regenerate full strength soon! Tre is recovering!"

"When we once again have the power to trump you inferiors," Ardella said, heavily, "all of you will pay the final price!"

Raven stirred and Natalia choked on a sob, grabbing his hand. "I'm here, love."

Raven groaned in pain, but forced his eyes open a slit, focusing on her. She tried to send him her love, and he recovered a little strength. "You...have to...help them." Raven coughed, then gasped, his handsome face a mask of agony. "Go!" He coughed harder and groaned again. "Shit! Go...she's gaining...strength." His breath came in raspy pants. The shirt that Bry held to his stomach had already turned red. "Both of you...go."

"I'll get them for this!" Bry jumped to his feet and Natalia sobbed as she took over pressing Bry's shirt against the injury. "Why didn't you use your powers?" She stroked his pale face with her free hand.

"I...gave them to you...the gun...please...go fight with them."

He sounded so weak and looked like he was in so much pain. "I don't have any idea how to use your magic."

"You do. Go. Please go." His eyes shut and his head lolled to one side.

Natalia felt a chill from behind her again. Before she had a chance to react, she was suddenly jerked forward and sucked into a transport tunnel without any spell to blunt the ride. Screaming soundlessly, she tossed head over heels through the large plastic tube, heading downward at a dizzying speed. "*Ravennnnnnnnnnn!*" she called out, telepathically. She could feel him ahead of her, somewhere else in the tube. Other bodies passed her; maybe some were behind her. Nobody could speak against the force of the wind and the only sound was a loud whistle.

A final gust of wind shoved her out of the cylinder and she fell to the ground with a loud *splat*. She found herself sitting in a mucky soil, her head spinning, her breath coming in pants, her hands, buttocks, and legs glued to the sticky, mudlike substance below her. "Raven!" she cried out, sniffing him out. She gasped, seeing him facedown and motionless in the mud several yards before her.

Ardella's laugh rang out from above her and she looked up at a blood-red sky. Ardella and Tre floated on sparkly golden clouds, grinning down at her. The atmosphere looked eerie -- pink mixed with black. "Raven can't answer you when he's unconscious and drowning in mud, losing all his blood. You won't get out of that mess, slut, nor will he." She turned her slanted eyes at Bry. "You must know, my mate, that you three don't have enough magic to trump mine and Tre's. Half-breeds never have the power we do, and one is a mere child." She teetered with chilling laughter.

Tre blinked and a giant whip appeared in his hand. He swatted Raven's back with an ugly crack, then grinned in Natalia's direction. "And you," Tre said, with a mocking leer, "have no idea how to use Raven's magic to get yourself out of something as potent as the evil that binds you in its clutches! Regular magic won't work -- it takes a special force you haven't tapped into yet. Welcome to the darkest planet of the galaxy."

"Bitch and her devil's spawn!" Bry cried out, furious, his fist clenched. "I'll make you pay for this, I swear I will!"

"How?" Ardella asked, as Tre whipped at his father. Bry transported to another spot and Tre laughed, whipping at Sari. He missed her by an inch. Ardella grabbed the whip from him. "You have no accuracy, oaf!" she snapped at him.

"Don't make me turn on you," Tre said, his eyes narrowing as he glanced at his mother.

Natalia felt the conflict, anger, and pure hatred swirling around in the stale, hot air. Her friends couldn't trump Ardella and Tre if the two of them provided a united front. She heard Raven moan and saw him trying to pull his hand out of the muck, but he couldn't, and her heart jumped to her throat. "Please let him go," she said, knowing it was madness to ask for mercy from them.

"Join forces!" Bry yelled and Lily and Sari both grabbed one of his hands.

Ardella crossed her arms, as Natalia cried softly, watching, feeling helpless and useless.

"Attack us," Ardella said, in a challenging voice. "Try to put a spell on us. Go ahead. You'll lose."

Natalia could feel their effort, but nothing happened and Ardella and Tre were friends again, slapping high fives. Ardella slammed her whip at them and they all transported, separating. "I won't give you a chance to combine your magic again," she said. "This is sweet revenge. Bry, for all those eons that you desired your humanoids more than me, while I pined for you, you'll watch your precious firstborn meet a fate worse than human death."

Bry's throat worked hard, his stoic face betraying the deep emotions that Natalia could feel. "Don't, Ardella," he said, in a reasoning voice. "I'll do whatever you like, but please don't do that to Raven. Take me instead."

Ardella and Tre burst into laughter as the whip cracked at him and he had to transport again. "How human of you, Bryant!" Ardella said. "I think you've mated with Lily for too long. You get more human every day. To sacrifice yourself for another -- what silly, completely human foolishness."

Ardella and Tre gurgled with laughter.

"Nevertheless, I'm sincere," Bry said. "Don't leave him there, Ardella."

Natalia saw the white haired woman's blue eyes suddenly turn to sparkling sapphires, and a cold wind blew against her back. "I don't intend on leaving him there, Bry, although that would be fitting. Eternity in the mud. Yes, I'd like that, but you'd use your magic to release him once I'm gone. No, I have a more permanent solution for the boy."

"No!" Sari cried out.

Natalia couldn't speak. Shivers ran down her spine as she suddenly noticed a round hole with fountains of gray bubbling water surrounding it. Until then, it hadn't been there. How was that?

"The Void only appears when somebody fears it," Ardella said straight at her.

Natalia's heart leaped to her throat.

"Yes, dear. The Void. Somebody is worried about it or it would have stayed invisible. That would have made it harder for us to locate it, but now it's crystal clear." Her gaze slid toward Bry, Lily, and Sari. Lily had her arm around her weeping daughter. "Whoever brought The Void out of hiding, thank you. You guessed my intentions correctly. Bodies will disappear in there -- bodies with the last name of Steed."

Natalia knew she had to get to Raven and somehow figure out a way to either use the magic he'd given her or transfer it back to him. If not, they'd throw him in The Void -- she was surprised they hadn't blinked him there already. Tears spilled down her cheeks. Ardella was a drama queen. She was dragging it out to torture them all, but she'd do it.

"They can't use magic for The Void," Bry telepathically transmitted. *"You have to physically toss the person in it. Nobody knows why -- the Gods perhaps didn't want to make it too easy."*

Natalia could feel his rising panic.

"You're our only hope," Bry transmitted. *"You have to get out of there."*

"How?"

"I wish I could tell you. Use your instincts. There's nothing further I can do for my son."

Natalia felt a lump choking her. She watched Raven, unmoving, hurt, unconscious...he didn't have a chance. *But, ohmygod, I love him more than anyone has ever loved before, we were meant to be together, and I want to spend eternity with him! Raven, my darling, please tell me what to do!* As she sobbed, and Ardella and Tre laughed at her, love filled every corner of her being. She felt as if she'd burst from all her love. "Raven! Sweetheart!" she cried out. "Speak to me, even subconsciously!"

Ardella and Tre laughed harder, but she felt Bry, Lily, and Sari's small glimmers of hope.

"Raven," she cried out, her eyes shut tightly so she could focus, "you shouldn't have given me all of your magic! How can I give it back to you? Think about our bonding, darling, and try to touch me!"

Ardella snapped her whip at Natalia and struck her on the arm. She bit her lip, refusing to cry out.

"I'd knock you out, but I will so enjoy you watching your *husband*, as humanoids call them, tumble into The Void. Can't knock you out, until you've seen it. Maybe you can follow. What do you think, Tre?"

"No," Tre said. "Let her suffer eternally without him, Mother."

"I think so," she agreed.

"You bitter, sad woman!" Bry thundered.

"You look so cute when you're mad, Bry," Ardella said, batting her eyes at him.

Natalia shut her eyes again. Although it was hard to block out everything but her feelings, she tried. With her deepest concentration, she remembered the feeling of being one with Raven, the soaring to a place in outer space, his gentle touch, his words of love, her feelings for him... and suddenly one leg loosened from the mud's hold and then the other. She sucked in a sharp breath and thought more about her love for Raven. She had to get to him. As her hands loosened, she worried that Ardella or Tre would notice, but they were otherwise occupied, engaged in a shouting match with Bry.

"I'm going to distract them," Bry telepathically transmitted to her, as he yelled baiting words to his wife and son. *"Natalia, I know you're close to getting out of there. Once you release yourself, go to Raven and touch him. Your love will make you more powerful than all of us put together. Thank the gods you love him so much, or we'd have no chance at all."*

Natalia blinked her eyes dry. This was no time to cry. *Focus on loving Raven, focus on your love...*

"Should I throw Daddy in The Void?" Tre asked Ardella. "He's being so disrespectful to you."

"No!" Ardella slapped him across the face, then turned back to her mate. "I still desire him. With Raven, Lily, and Sari gone, perhaps he'll remember he's a Dreauxoid." She stood on her cloud and shouted at Bry, her face beet red. "I only denied you my affection because of your human hobbies."

"Liar!" Bry called out, laughing at her. "You stopped giving affection long before I met Raven's mother. You were busy with Zenneth. Don't look shocked. I knew. Well, I had needs, too. When he dumped you, I no longer cared to take you to bed."

Ardella's jaw dropped. "How dare you! Zen and I were just friends --"

"Shut it, bitch! I felt him on you."

"I want to throw him in The Void," Tre said. "Let me do it, Mother. He's being an ass."

"You can't, idiot," Ardella snapped at him. "You can't throw your sire in The Void. Are you so dense you don't remember? You'll get The Void yourself as a punishment for that, and I need you to help me run the spa. But" -- her eyes fell on Raven -- "you can get rid of your hybrid sibling. I was going to do it, but, if you like, be my guest. Not only will you be rid of the traitor, but the humanoid will grieve. It's a worthy cause. Go to it and make me proud. For the first time in your life, *make me glad you were born!*"

"I will, Mommy!" Tre did a cowboy whoop and jumped off the cloud, landing on his feet, not sinking into the mud. With a mighty sweep, he reached into the sludge, unaffected by its deadly powers. A loud suction noise accompanied Raven's removal from his prison. Tre grinned maliciously, eyes on her, as he started dragging her unconscious lover to the endless Pit of Hell.

Natalia suddenly experienced a surge of powers such that she'd never dreamed existed. They inflated inside of her, making her feel as if she'd swelled ten times her size.

“Nooooooooooooooooooooo!” she shouted so loudly that certainly the heavens on earth could hear her, and she busted free of her muddy captivity and snapped her fingers. She caught her breath as she realized, with a cry of relief, that her spell had worked. Tre bellowed in anger, flat on his back in the mud and unable to move.

Natalia transported herself to Raven’s side and cried out. He lay on his back, dirty, but no longer imbedded in the slime. Choking on her tears, she touched his arm. “Raven, wake up,” she pleaded and miraculously, he stirred, and turned his muddy face toward her, his honey-gold eyes shooting open. She kissed his face and pulled back, noticing, in the background, that Sari and Bry held hands, eyes shut. It didn’t surprise her when a rope wrapped tightly around Tre’s body and Ardella fell from her cloud, cussing, also wrapped in rope. Natalia wept with relief, brushing Raven’s hair back. With her powers working, along with Bry, Lily, and Sari’s, the other two couldn’t override their spells.

Bry ran up to Natalia and hugged her in a very human way. “I’ve communicated with the medics,” he said, as Lily and Sari joined her at Raven’s side. “How are you, boy?” he asked his son, blinking a towel over his bloody abdomen and pressing it down against his gaping wound.

“I’ll be okay. I took” -- he groaned in pain -- “I took my powers back...ah, shit! He’s...movin’...like a...damn...worm,” Raven muttered, then took in a shaky breath. To everyone’s shock, Raven let loose with a mighty kick, and the sound of cracked bones filled the air.

Tre yelled. “Momeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!”

“Oh, shut up!” the tied up Ardella screeched. “You never do anything right!”

“What happened?” Bry asked.

“He squirmed closer...I...kicked him...must’ve broken his leg.” Raven’s breathing was raspy.

“Raven, you’re in pain, I can see it!” Natalia cried out. “For heaven’s sake don’t fight right now! Save your strength! *Just lay still!*”

“That’s my boy,” Bry said, with pride. “This half human is worth a million useless, heartless Dreaxoids.”

At that moment, a gigantic smoke bomb exploded in the air and, from within its mist, about five hundred green-garbed men and women jumped to the ground, unaffected by the muck, Draken leading them. “*Just in time! Arrest them, for God’s sake, for all the times we told you about them, and you didn’t pay any attention. And have no mercy.*”

Natalia felt her face flush. “I forgot to give you the Insta-recorder. How did you --”

“I took it,” Draken said. “Great pictures. These two have had their fun and now it’s over.”

“How did you know we were here?” Natalia sobbed as she cradled Raven’s head and tried to soothe him as he groaned in pain.

“Easy,” Draken said, kneeling beside her to help with him, “I didn’t smell anyone at the spa, so I figured Bitch and her baby had taken you here. I knew I was right when I got close. Nobody has a scent like Tre. He smells like spoiled bologna!”

The medics came to Raven’s side as he groaned again and let out a string of four-letter words. Natalia let the medics take over, reluctantly pulling back to make room. She sniffed her hands to inhale his smell and felt a tug at her heart.

It was over and Raven would be all right. She could feel it.

* * * * *

Raven rested his head as close to the hospital bed railing as he could, smiling as Natalia stroked his hair and fussed over him, kissing him every chance she could. He was post-surgery and full of pain pills, but he’d never felt better in his life. If he’d ever doubted that Natalia loved him, he couldn’t anymore. It was miraculous how she’d managed to pull together the magic to save him from Tre, especially since she was such a newbie to powers. Only her great love for him had enabled her to do what she’d accomplished, and he’d never forget it.

Of course, she saw it the other way. She kept telling him how brave he was for transferring all his magic to her so that he was certain she had enough powers to save herself and Sari from Tre’s gun. All in all, he thought the incident had proven what perfect soul mates they would be. It had been both a frightening and bonding experience.

“Are you sure you’re not hurting too badly, my love?” Natalia asked, her beautiful face pinched with worry.

He hurt. Every breath hurt. But the meds made the pain halfway tolerable and he’d be as good as new in about six months. “How can I hurt with you here?”

She smiled softly at him and stroked his hair back again.

The door opened and Bry, Draken, Sari, and Lily stepped inside.

“The gang’s all here,” Raven mumbled as they strode to his bedside. This was the first day in three that he’d been lucid.

“Shouldn’t you only have two visitors?” Natalia asked, her eyes round. She looked over at the others. “No offense, but that’s how it is on Earth.”

Bry looked surprised. “No. On Dreaux, we feel that family and friends help the healing. None of us will hurt him.”

Natalia couldn’t argue with that and Raven’s eyes had brightened when he saw them. That couldn’t be a bad thing.

“You know what happened,” Bry said, more as a statement than a question. “Natalia must have told you.”

"Yes, I loved how they handled it, letting *you* to mete out the punishments," Raven said, trying not to wince as he spoke. He managed a little smile, thinking of how well things had worked out. "So you had Ardella thrown in The Void."

Bry's face tightened. "Terrible woman. Evil. I rid the world of her, and haven't had a regret."

Sari's eyes brightened. "Mom and Bry might become soul mates. I mean --" She shot Bry a sweet smile. "Mom and Dad."

Bry smiled indulgently at her and winked.

"That's terrific," Natalia said, smiling at Lily.

"Still don't know why you spared that loser, Tre," Raven said, again trying to hide his pain.

"He's my son," Bry said with a shrug. "As awful as he is, I wanted to give him a chance. He'll spend fifty Earth years in a reformatory and then be a servant to a hybrid for a century. If he's not reformed by then, I can no longer help him. The authorities will put him in The Void. He has no magic until then, can't hurt anybody."

"I understand." Lily took his hand.

Raven understood, too. His father had enough human influence to love his children and Lily. The more time he spent with Lily, the more human he'd become. There was hope for his father, even if the old man was pure Dreauxoid.

"I was offered a top job with the government of Dreaux," Draken said, breaking into his huge, dimpled grin. "I'm heading up a new council for rights of hybrids and other non-Dreaux creatures who live here. The laws are going to change. When the top dogs saw how bad the slave problem was, they felt they had to do something to change things."

"That's fantastic," Raven said, honestly thrilled for his friend and for the inhabitants of the planet. "I guess I won't be seeing you much, since I'm going to live on Earth with Natalia."

"You can't travel until your injuries have healed," Bry said, with a frown.

"They know how to take care of bullet wounds on Earth," Raven said, and he would have laughed if it wouldn't have hurt him. The Dreauxoids thought Earth was so primitive, because humans were mortal and didn't have magic. But Dreauxoids still had abundant slavery and most had little emotion in which to love and care. No, he preferred Earth. "In a few weeks, Nat and I are going to visit her folks. They think she's in the Bahamas with her newest boyfriend. I'm going to have to break them in easy."

"It'll take a while to convince them he's an alien." Natalia grinned. "Not to mention what bonding with him means to me. But I talked to them on the phone, told them he was shot, and they invited us to stay at their Beverly Hills mansion while he heals. I miss my folks. Even though they never gave me the attention I wanted, they're good people. Plus, I want to go back to work. I'm an actress."

“In movies?” Sari sounded excited. “I love Earth movies, but I never saw you in any.”

“I was only in one big movie so far, but I got good reviews. I’m sure I’ll be offered other parts. My dad and mom are both big movie stars. Ever see movies with Stony Ferguson or Michelle Lawson-Ferguson in them?”

Sari’s jaw dropped. “Oh, wow! Your dad is Stony Ferguson? He’s hot...for an old human.”

Raven forced himself to hold back his laughter, but the others chuckled.

“Can I meet them?” Sari asked.

“Sure,” Raven said, in an indulgent voice. “You’ll visit us. Often, I hope. That applies to all of you.”

“You need to stop talking,” Natalia said, squeezing his hand. “I know it hurts you. Stop acting tough, and rest. For the next six months, I’m going to take good care of you.”

In spite of his recent surgery, he was part Dreauxoid, and his cock twitched.

“Will you now?” He glanced over at her and shot her a smile. A hungry smile, he hoped. No wound would stop any Dreauxoid, especially him, from making love. Yes, for a while, they’d have to be careful not to get too rough -- a real pity -- but at least he’d be able to continue to enjoy her. A purebred human in his condition would make sex a very low priority. Times like this made him glad he wasn’t pure human.

“What are you going to do when Natalia has to kiss another man in a movie?” Sari asked, breaking into his thoughts.

He smiled slowly at Sari, then slid his eyes toward Natalia, who looked at him for the answer. He could feel that she’d give up her career for him, if he asked her to. She was smart; certainly she could go back to college and get another degree. She didn’t want to make him jealous and he appreciated that.

“Kissing a man for a movie means nothing,” he said. “I know that goes with the job. I trust my soul mate. Her heart is with me, only with me.”

Natalia rewarded him with a beautiful smile that lit up the room, the world. “Raven is the only man I’ll ever care about,” she said, talking to the others, but looking to him. “Acting is acting. Raven and I -- we’re the real deal. He’s the only man who will ever matter to me.”

Raven felt her sincerity to his inner soul. In spite of the pain, he felt warmed and extremely content. All was right in his world.

Chapter Fourteen

Raven and Natalia's stay with her parents had been pleasant so far. As she paced back and forth in the plush living room, she couldn't wait for Raven to return from the doctor's office. She had a good mind to transport herself over there, but tried to remain as human as possible while on Earth. Her parents were still adjusting to her new status as part Dreauxoid, and, if they happened to walk in while she suddenly vanished, she wasn't sure they could handle it. Too bad she'd had to be at the studio for work when Raven had gone, but her new job as an actress on a soap opera was demanding.

Bemused, Natalia thought about her decision not to pursue big screen acting any further. She wanted to be home when the baby was born, not gallivanting off to other countries for shoots. The soap allowed her to continue acting without the travel involved. It amazed her that she'd settled down so much and turned into a family gal.

The door opened and Raven walked in, looking as otherworldly gorgeous as he had the first day she'd seen him. Her body responded at once as her breasts and nipples beaded and her pussy and ass convulsed. In spite of his wound, they'd managed some extra hot sex, but tonight would be the delayed honeymoon that Raven had promised her. She felt her knees growing weak as she went to him. Dreauxoid sex toys enticed her; he'd held back on using them until he'd healed. She fell into his arms and they kissed, him thrusting his cock into her sex. She creamed and pulled back. "I take it the doctor had good news."

He lifted her into his arms, her legs sprawled out so that her skirt hitched up and her ass rubbed against his tightened arms. "He took off the last of the bandages and pronounced me fit."

She wrapped her arms around him and kissed him with all her love and passion, a cold shiver running down her spine. After she pulled back, just above his lips, she said, "This calls for a celebration."

“Absolutely. Let’s go upstairs and not waste time. I plan on driving you so senseless that you never come back to Earth.”

A thrill shot through her body as her sex trembled. He could do it, too. Only Raven could make her lose her mind in the bedroom. As he carried her upstairs, her ass shaking against his skin, he whispered, “Once we get upstairs, we won’t be on Earth anymore, so you really *won’t* come back to Earth. At least not until I transport us back.”

She felt her breathing speeding up as she nipped his neck. “Why bother carrying me up the stairs? Why not just zap us to this mysterious place?”

He lowered his head, pushing the neck of her blouse down and caught her nipple in his teeth and she gasped, pressing closer to him. “Because it’s more romantic this way,” he said, in between nibbles.

They reached the upper hallway, and Raven went to their room. He opened the door and Natalia gasped. They certainly weren’t in Beverly Hills anymore. She squinted into a bright, fiery red sun and looked around at the bright yellow sky.

Raven shut the door. “The sunlight feels so good -- it will add to my potent sexual powers.”

She swallowed hard. As if Raven needed any help.

Raven knelt down and set her on her back in a bed of flowers, as soft as a blanket. “Did you make it this comfortable?” she asked, breathing in the fresh smell of daisies, turning her head from the brightness.

He fell over her, then lifted his body off of hers, his arms stiff. Straddling her, she felt his maleness, his potency, his strong male dominance. At least regarding sex. His force, his presence, his leather, musky scent, his aura -- all of it made her shiver inside, already wet and waiting.

“I thought up this scene last night,” he said, in a low, silky voice, his honey-witch stare caressing her with a sweep of his eyelashes. “It won’t last beyond our use of it. But it’s also not in your parent’s house.” He dazzled her with a to-die-for grin. “As long as we stay with your parents, we can’t have sex there. You’re such a screamer.”

She laughed, shivering in anticipation. “You could zap my voice.”

His grin widened. “Not a chance, Tigress. I love it when you scream.” He lowered himself and she hugged him tightly, while he did the same and rolled her on top of him. She kissed him, and he pumped his hard cock into her already throbbing sex. The man could make her come in a minute and minute later and an hour after that...eternity with him would be bliss.

“Sit up and let me watch you undress,” he said, cradling his head under his hands.

She had her work clothes on and gladly stripped for him, first discarding her tight white camisole, then standing up and slowly removing her skirt, letting it drop to her ankles. He sat up. “Let me help you with the bra. Very nice black lace. Come here.”

She sat again and scooted back toward him, laughing. "Work. The only time I wear a bra."

"Ah, but I love to take it off," he said. He unhooked it, then said, "Turn around, vixen."

She did, batting her eyelashes at him and running a hand down her breast. His hot eyes took her in, then he reached over and grasped the skinny straps, slowly pulling them off her arms. She felt her tits tighten up as he breathed over them.

"I'll never get tired of your breasts, Natty." Cupping his hand around one, he lowered his head to suckle and she arched and moaned. He did the next one too, using his teeth a little, the subtle pressure causing her peaks to stand straight out at him. "Perfect," he whispered as his breath teased her cleavage. With a snap, he produced her jeweled nipple clamps.

She spasmed when she saw them. "Oh, yeah, Rave. Put them on."

He clasped one and then the other as she gasped and arched, her eyes shut.

"Lay down flat, Natty."

She knew by now to obey him in matters of sex. He'd never disappointed her. He snapped again and she lay in a golden bed with a soft, shimmering spread beneath her, her wrists and ankles bound to the posts. She bit her lips, tensing and whimpering. "You love this," he said, hissing on the last word. "Don't you, Tigress?"

"I love this, and I love you." She felt herself trembling all over. She greatly enjoyed feeling helpless when he lavished her with pleasure. She liked to imagine him in the role of pirate -- he certainly could pass for one.

He grinned at her. "I read that," he said, quietly and suddenly he was dressed in black pirate's gear, a patch over one eye, his hair pulled back in a ponytail. She laughed and shuddered. "Should I make myself look like Johnny Depp?"

"No." She found herself talking between pants, her pussy dropping cream on the bedspread. "No, Raven. He's not as handsome as you."

Raven smiled. "And Halle Barry has nothing on you, sweet."

Spread eagle, her sex wanted him; she wanted him. He snapped his fingers and held two toys in his hands. One looked exactly like a banana. She laughed.

"Yes, I thought of it, but this is more durable than a banana," he said, his honey eyes twinkling at her, beautiful and clear.

She smiled. "What else do you have?"

"You ask too many questions."

Natalia breathed in deeply, trying to keep herself from weeping. She knew what was coming.

Raven fell to his belly, before her sex and tested her. She sucked in a quick breath as she lifted her head to watch him licking her cream. "You're wet as hell." He stuck his fingers

inside of her and her flesh rippled over them, grabbing at them, her pussy blasting with sensation that had her convulsing as the chain on her nipple clamps rattled from her arching. Her sex and nipples pulsed at the same time as she whispered words of love toward her soul mate. "Do you want my cock?" he asked, his fingers still inside of her, her muscles still clamping over them.

"You know I do," she said, in a shaky voice.

"Not yet."

"Tease."

She looked up at him through blurry eyes.

"No teasing." He removed his fingers and she cried out at the withdrawal of his touch, but, no sooner had she missed him than he thrust a long, hard object way up her cunt, and she gasped and swore, her sex again grasping it as if it had fingers. She yanked against the restraints, but, of course, they didn't budge.

Raven rose to his knees. "I want to see this," he said, one hand on his long, thick, elegant staff. He blinked hard and the contraption inside of her started vibrating quickly, and within seconds she arched, yanked, cried, laughed and screamed. "Raven, Raven, I can't take it, Ravensssssssssssssssssssssss!" She tossed her head from side to side and felt herself floating on air as the vibrator took over her body and caused an earthquake and a Fourth of July explosion throughout her body. She couldn't stop shaking, convulsing, and coming. The damn Dreaxoid toy! As tears coursed down her face she experienced paradise over and over again, without a break in between.

Raven snapped his fingers and it shut off. As she whimpered and felt the last of her tears, she looked up to see he'd masturbated, coming over her sex and thighs. He conjured up a wet cloth and, when he washed her off, she arched, whimpered, and came all over again. He cleaned himself off with a different cloth -- she had no idea how he'd gotten it -- then he blinked and let her out of her shackles, coming back to her to hold her safely in his strong arms. One by one, he removed her nipple clamps. They tingled with painful pleasure and she gasped and arched again. "I love those things."

"Yes, I know, sweet. I know."

He wiped her tears with his fingers and kissed her trembling lips and she melted into him, still sensitive and hot and oh, so very much in love with this man. They lay together in the flower patch for a while, the red sun casting an eerie glow to Raven's swarthy face. Both of them were breathing heavily. When she could manage she asked, between pants, "You released me. I like being held that way."

He kissed her, pulled back, and then said, "When we fuck tonight, I don't want you in bonds. I want you to go crazy all over me. You can scratch me with your nails, Natty. I don't care. I just want you wild."

She loved him. She never knew, from one night to the next, what he'd do to do, but he never disappointed. With every mating, she loved him more, felt closer to him.

"We're going to take a trip," he whispered into her ear.

"I thought *this* was a trip."

"No. Look over there, by that tree and tell me what you see."

She sat on the bed, bemused that he'd settled a piece of furniture in a rose garden. Sometimes he could be so...so...*male*. "I see a rug," she said, with an exasperated look at him. "Really, rather. The bed and the rug belong in a house, not outside."

He looked amused. "The bed was to make it soft for you."

"Well, I know but --"

"The flower bed wasn't soft enough."

"Hmmmmmm."

"Not for you, my love."

She snuggled into him. "But a rug?"

"That's not a rug, dear. That's a magic carpet. We're going to make love as we go on a ride through the galaxy."

A shiver of delight and excitement raced through her. "The Earth galaxy?"

"The Raven Galaxy. I invented this; it's all part of my vivid imagination. Do you want to see what it's like to make love while flying through the stars?" His eyes were so soft, so full of love, with just the right tinge of mischief.

She grabbed the back of his head and made his lips press down on hers, and they swept tongues through one another's mouths. When she pulled back, she had tears in her eyes. "You're so good to me."

"And I always will be," he said. He jumped off the bed, then lifted her in his arms. "Let's take a ride," he said and he strode toward the long, narrow red carpet. It had gold trimming and looked soft. He got to his knees and set her down on it and she stretched out. It felt like a down-filled quilt, although very thin. He climbed on top of her and she liked his heavy body over hers, her breasts pressed against his hard chest, her sex pushed into his hard cock.

"Will we fall off?" she asked, breathlessly, staring up into his eyes.

"No, it's magic. It will hold us on." He kissed her and she felt the carpet lifting gently into the air on a roller coaster incline. They didn't break the kiss as it rose higher and higher. Natalia felt the thrill of adventure and the shiver of sex as it kept on climbing while they locked in a kiss. When the carpet leveled off, the kiss broke and Natalia looked beside her. Stars were huge, gold and silver ones, and they seemed to be nodding and winking at her. They moved along at a fast pace, causing her senses to come alive. "It's incredible," she whispered to Raven.

“No,” he said. “You are.” He rolled her over until she sat on top of him, and the carpet seemed to expand with the room that they needed. Her gaze settled on his cock and she admired it as they flew through a dark black sky. Lifting it, she bent over to give it kisses. “It never stays soft for long.”

He lifted his head to stare at her, his eyes hungry and seductive. “Bedroom eyes,” her mother called them. “How could I stay soft around you?” he asked, in a crooning, silky tone of voice. He grabbed her hands and pulled her over him and she licked his lips, then took his bottom lip in her teeth and nipped at it. She’d learned just the right pressure; exactly what turned him on. He moaned and pressed his lips into hers, his hands reaching under her to her stiffened breasts. The wind tossed their hair and the carpet sometimes deviated from its straight path, floating side to side. As she broke from him and sat up, the cool air struck her breasts, nipples, and pussy and she creamed inside. Looking down at him, she saw his nipples also hard and stiff, so she bent her head to suck hard on one.

He tightened underneath her body and laughed and gasped. “Sexy bitch.”

Natalia sex flamed for him. “Can I take you inside of me, Rave? I’m dying for you, babe. I need to have you.”

His eyes looked fevered. “Oh, yeah. Take me inside of you. Ride me, baby. Ride me while we fly through the air.”

As the magic carpet ricocheted from side to side, blowing Natalia’s hair back behind her, she grabbed his balls, and he groaned as she squeezed them, then she took his elegant shaft in her hand and lifted her ass in the air. When she came down right on top of his cock, it slid inside of her like a puzzle piece, and his manhood seemed to expand as her flesh clutched at him like a million desperate fingers. She shut her wet eyes and pumped him as his hips pushed up to meet hers. Both of them moaned and gasped and swore as his staff scraped her cervix and their hips touched. As the cool breeze whooshed around them, she rode him until he came high and deep inside of her, then he let out a feral growl and came again and again and again. She loved it when she pleased him, and it fueled her own ecstasy. Shuddering, clenching her teeth, finally screaming, the way he liked, her piercing yell echoed all through Raven’s imaginary universe -- she screamed until her throat burned.

When she finally fell into his arms, after he was spent, the carpet disappeared and they were on the bed in her bedroom in Beverly Hills, on top of her soft blue comforter, curled up into one another, holding onto one another for dear life, breathing harshly, sweating profusely, and feeling loved. She knew she had transferred her feelings to him and, likewise, he’d done the same to her.

After they caught their breaths and just held one another in each other’s arms, she felt it the perfect time to tell him her exciting news, something she’d held back for a few days, waiting for the right time. “That was amazing,” she told him, into his ear.

He brushed back the hair on her wet cheek and, still breathing heavily, mumbled, “I know.”

She felt a tingling in her belly. "I have something wonderful to tell you, Raven."

He pulled back to stare at her, his jaw dropping. "No." He tried to deny it.

She grinned at him and hugged him close. "It's a boy," she said, hanging onto him for dear life. "It's Raven Steed, the Second. I know it's a boy, Raven. I can feel it."

Raven took her lips, but not before muttering, with much emotion, "I thought the happiest day of my life was when we bonded. This day could possibly top that one. I had such a pathetic existence before you, and now I have the world."

He kissed her with all he had inside of him, and she felt it to her core and sent it back to him. In spades.

Epilogue

The sound of a baby crying caused both Raven and Natalia to moan. Raven had been deeply asleep and when he woke, Natalia in his arms, she also stirred. He kissed her on the forehead and said, "Let me get bring him to you so he can feed."

A gentle hand touched his face. "I can get him, Rave. You always get up."

"I love getting up with him. Be right back." Fighting sleep, he pushed back the covers and walked through the hallway of Steed Mansion to get RJ, as they called him, short for Raven Junior. At first Raven had hesitated to visit his family on Dreaux. He still had so many conflicts with his father and Lily, but coming home had been good for him. He'd talked to them both and realized that they both loved him, even if they hadn't been forthcoming with him about their affair and his delightful sister, Sari. He put the past where it belonged, behind him. Bry and Lily were lifemates now, and his father actually smiled these days.

Raven entered the nursery and stared down at his son, who stopped crying as soon as he saw him. He lifted his arms, and Raven's heart filled anew, as it did every time his child reached out to him, solidifying their special bond. "Up with you, son," he said, and his baby boy quieted and melded into him. With quick, long strides, he brought him to their bed where Natalia had already removed her sheer lace nightgown. Raven slid in bed beside her and handed RJ over to her. The soft look in her eyes when she took their son in her arms meant the world to him. He'd known she'd be a loving mother and she'd surpassed all of his expectations.

The tiny baby at her breast started nursing, and he leaned over, his arm around her, to stare at the child. "He's so beautiful," Raven said, in a quiet voice. "Dark hair, smooth, tan skin, perfect features."

Natalia stroked the baby's head. "He looks mostly like you."

"No, he's you."

They caught gazes and grinned at one another.

"I never dreamed that Mr. Dominant in the Bedroom would be so gentle with a child," Natalia said, in a teasing voice.

"There's a time to be gentle," Raven said, with a wicked grin, "and a time to be...rough. I try to meet the needs of those I love."

"And you do that very well." She laughed.

Raven's gaze fell back to his son, who continued to feed, and thought he'd never seen anything more beautiful than RJ sucking Natalia's breast. Mother and child. "I hope we have a lot of children," Raven murmured. "Dreauxoids are very fertile."

"We'd need to hire a nanny. I work, now you're on your way to getting your degree in law enforcement. Of course, Dad and Mom don't do films as much anymore, and are more than happy to help out with any children we have."

"We'll work it out, babe," Raven said, suddenly speaking into her hair. "I never had the type of family I craved, and I want to live out my dream."

She turned her head to kiss him, quickly. "I want you to live out your dream. It's my dream, too. I was a lonely child. I was actually lonely until I met you."

Raven looked on and saw that RJ's eyes were shutting. "He won't feed much longer," he said, his cock already beginning to stir.

Natalia batted her eyes at him, her long eyelashes caressing his face. "Is there something you have planned for when he falls asleep, Rave?"

Raven laughed softly and gave her what he hoped was his best and most wicked grin.

"Spit it out, big boy." She winked at him seductively. "What's on your evil mind?"

"Is your ass lubed for me or should I get the warming oil? I plan on fucking you senseless, driving you crazy, now and forever, Natty. You belong to me."

He could see a sheen covering her eyes as she turned her head to meet his lips. "We belong to each other."

"Yes."

As RJ fed with less vigor, Raven kissed her, and the world seemed just a little bit brighter as he wrapped his arm around his family.

Life was more than good.



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