

SEX ME SWEET

Children of the Triad
Book 2



SEX ME SWEET

CHILDREN OF THE TRIAD – BOOK 2

BY

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Sex Me Sweet

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*To our husbands for understanding and to
Logan Whyte for his insight...*

SEX ME SWEET

An early evening breeze stirred the hair at Xymus's neck, cooling his sweat-slicked skin. He tossed his head back, shuddering in pleasure. Beneath him, Demit shifted his hips. "Please, Xy... I need this."

Xymus ran his hand down the long length of Demit's smooth back, trailing his fingers down his mate's spine. He loved to make Demit wait for his pleasure, make him beg for release. There was nothing like it. Nothing like it at all – not for either of them. The exquisite agony of delayed release only made their lovemaking that much more animalistic when they finally unleashed their control. "You will wait until I say otherwise, mate."

When Demit groaned in frustration, Xymus merely smiled. He did so love his mate, loved torturing him with the wait, but even though he wanted to delay their release, minutes, hours longer, he knew he couldn't. Not only was his own need for release building to unimaginable

heights, but they'd been away from their duties too long already. They both needed to return to their work. It meant so much to their people.

Gripping Demit's hip with one hand, Xymus slowly scissored the fingers he had lodged in Demit's ass, loosening the muscles to prepare him for their lovemaking. And it *was* lovemaking. Many *Hienial Halflings* took male lovers until they could find a female to mate with, but Demit and Xymus had always known that they were mates, that they were destined to be together. If at times it seemed that something was missing in their relationship, they turned to each other, more aggressive in their mating than usual. Today was one of those days.

Xymus and Demit both woke this morning, a feeling of impending change hanging heavy in the air and, instead of reporting to duty, they'd taken the day off to escape. They'd hiked several kilometers to the cave system they'd located with their friend and leader, Viktor, hoping a few hours of solitude would help them deal with the growing sense that something would soon happen to separate them.

Enough of that, Xymus admonished himself. He had Demit right where he wanted him—on his hands and knees waiting for his cock to tunnel into his ass. When Demit began to rock back against Xymus's fingers he knew the time had

come.

With one knee in the soft soil and the other leg bracketing Demit's hip, Xymus slowly withdrew his fingers, certain that he'd stretched Demit's back entrance enough that he'd feel only slight pain when Xymus entered him. He wanted just enough stimulation to drive him mad.

Picking up the bottle of lubricant they'd brought from their quarters, Xymus squirted a liberal amount on his hand then quickly worked the length of his cock with the gel-like substance. It would kill him if he'd hurt his mate, even accidentally. Unlike some of the *Hienial Halflings*, neither he nor Demit enjoyed much pain in their mating so they always made sure to have plenty of lubricant on hand.

"Dammit, Xymus! What are you waiting for?"

"I don't want to hurt you."

"You won't hurt me, Xy. But if you'd don't take my ass soon, I might beat the shit out of you."

Xymus chuckled. Taking his cock in hand, he placed it at Demit's back hole. "Relax," he whispered to his mate, feeling the tension running through Demit's body. "Push back."

As gently as he could, Xymus eased into Demit's ass, past his sphincter until the head of his cock was lodged inside his mate. He groaned as the tight ring of his lover's ass squeezed his cock like a fist. Ever so slowly, he entered Demit, inch

by inch, until fully seated. Only after he let Demit get used to his invasion did Xymus run his hand around Demit's waist and grip his cock.

"By the Goddess, Xy. I need you. Please..."

Their passions got the best of them. Both unable, or unwilling, to draw their mating out any further, Xymus used his hand to stroke Demit's cock as he slowly eased out of his ass. When only the head remained lodged in Demit's back entrance, he surged forward, tunneling his length into his mate with ever increasing force.

Within seconds, both men were groaning, quivering in pleasure and need. In and out, he thrust, up and down, he stroked. Both reaching toward completion. Moans and groans echoed against the cavern walls. Sighs and grunts bounced off the dirt floors and rocky ceiling. Faster and faster, he pounded into his mate's ass. Faster and faster, he stroked his mate's cock.

Beneath his hand, Demit's cock pulsed, growing harder and thicker as his need for release continued to mount. Their need rode them both as Demit rocked faster and faster, driving his ass toward Xymus's rigid cock. "By the Goddess, Demit... I am so close."

"Me too," his mate groaned.

"Together then, mate... Together."

Demit nodded, rocked back harder. Sweat pooled at the base of his spine. If they had more

time, he'd slow down, make Demit beg for release, but they didn't have more time. Already Xymus could feel the urge to come tightening his balls. He'd be lucky to make it another five seconds before reaching his release.

As Demit's cock thickened and began to spurt his come onto the cavern floor, Xymus let loose his control, giving himself over to his climax. Over and over, he spurted into his mate's ass, until the come began to drip out and onto the soil beneath them. The ever strengthening sensation of his lover's ass squeezing down on Xy's cock matching each jet of come from Demit's shaft nearly drove him to madness.

"Aghh..." Xymus groaned, before collapsing against Demit's back. "By the Goddess, any more pleasure and I'd keel over under the strain."

Beneath him, Demit chuckled. "Ahh...but what a way to go."

Xymus snorted. "True, so true." Knowing that their time alone grew short, Xymus eased out of his mate, sitting on his heels. "Are you okay, Demit? I didn't hurt you, did I?"

Demit turned his head toward Xymus, a sated smile on his face. His blue eyes flashed with humor. "And it hurt so good, too."

Slapping Demit's ass, Xymus made to stand. They should be getting back. It would be dark soon, and the nights grew chilly out here in the

desert. Before he could reach for his pants, Xymus's emergency alarm shrieked through the cave.

"Someone has entered the ship. We must get back before they attempt to access the console. I'm sure there are traps laid in the program for an unsuspecting novice."

Demit nodded, dressing quickly. Even if they left now, they wouldn't reach the ship for another two hours. They both knew it might be two hours too long. As he pulled his boots on, Xymus silently prayed to the Lady Goddess that their enemy hadn't returned or all would be lost.

* * * *

Demit frowned when they approached the coordinates of the downed ship. Someone had set up a camp almost a kilometer from the crash site. Knowing that stealth would serve them better than speed, he grabbed Xymus's shoulder and pointed to several large boulders nearby.

Once hidden from sight, Demit turned to his mate. *Perhaps it would be best if we shifted and traveled the rest of the way as wild hares. They romp in abundance here and no one would think the wiser when they see the pair of us pass by.*

Xymus nodded, his face drawn in grim lines. They were both aware that they could be walking

into a trap, but they promised their leader, Viktor, that they'd get into the encrypted *Hienial* databases, and they'd allow nothing to stop them.

Closing his eyes, Demit focused his mind on visualizing the wild hares native to this planet. Nearly a meter tall, they were ferocious beasts when they needed to be. When every detail of the smoke gray creature was set in his mind, he allowed the magic free. Burning heat zipped down his spine, spread across his chest and through his limbs. Within seconds, two hares crouched behind the boulders.

While the strangers continued to set up their camp, Demit and Xymus raced the remaining distance to the *Hienial* ship. A strange craft sat idle a few hundred paces from the downed vessel where they'd made their life's work. Several armed guards made camp beside it, talking and laughing amongst themselves. His blood began to boil. How dare they? How dare they come here and enter their salvaged vessel without so much as a by your leave?

Angry, he didn't think. He merely shifted back to his human form then strode forward, knowing Xy would follow him. It wouldn't matter if he led them straight into a blazing pit, Xy would follow him. Their bond was strong. It was so strong neither would want to continue without the other. He didn't bother with stealth. He was so pissed

that he felt he could take them all, though his common sense told him otherwise.

He'd almost made it aboard when a uniformed man covered in patches and medals seemingly came from nowhere and grabbed his arm. *Stupid, stupid!* He should have known there would be others guarding the ship. "What are you doing here? This is our ship."

"You're ship? This relic?" The guard laughed, giving him an assessing look, his great bushy eyebrow raised. "I don't think so, sonny. You're not old enough to have crashed this vessel."

Sonny? Who did he think he was, talking to him like he owned the damned world? "We didn't crash it, you morons. We found it. It crashed here years ago. I think I even remember it coming down. Fire fell from the sky, accompanied by a large explosion. I'm sure it was this."

Xymus shook free of his guard and stepped up beside him. "How old were we then, Demit?"

"Hell, no more than six or seven summers." He turned his attention back to the two men holding them. "Our friend Viktor and we found it last year. We knew something fell from the sky. It was only a matter of time before we found it."

Demit heard a slight sound before another, younger, guard poked his head out from inside the ship.

"She says to let them in." He made a face.

"She's being quite adamant about it. She mentioned something about Viktor and she thinks they can help by telling her what they've already tried."

The older, rounder, guard grunted a reply then pushed them toward the ship. "Shoot them if they touch her." He laughed. "We'll ask questions later."

The guard motioned for them to precede him onto the ship—so he could keep his phase pistol trained on them, no doubt. No matter. If the person in here had triggered any of the programmed traps, their reason to remain here would be short lived anyway. He hurried aboard, if only to keep them from ruining what little headway he and Xymus had already gained.

It wasn't until he saw her that her scent hit him. She smelled sweet, like Luna berries. Yet, it wasn't her scent that had him hardening at the sight of her. She was beautiful. Long wavy red hair curled around her waist. Huge blue eyes stared at them both, her mouth forming a small oh of surprise. Her full breasts rose and fell quickly in time to her breathing, their tips sharp points showing clearly through the thin material of her top.

Finally! A woman he was attracted to. Now he realized exactly what was missing from his relationship with Xy. This beautiful female was what they'd been missing. She was what they

needed to be complete. They weren't a couple. They were a triad.

He took a deep breath, thinking quickly. What could he say? What does a man say to the one woman meant for him? Would she agree to a triad relationship? He glanced at Xy and almost laughed with glee, glad he wasn't the only one feeling the pull of her allure. Xy felt it as well. He would bet his life on it. Just to confirm, he turned his thoughts to his mate.

So you feel it Xy? The connection she has to us?

By the Goddess, Demit...what if she turns away from us in disgust?

Demit shifted his shoulders slightly, before leaning against the doorway. *I don't know, mate. I just don't know.*

She straightened her spine and looked him in the eyes. His cock twitched. How he loved courage in anyone. It was doubly enjoyable in his mate.

"Are you the men who have been working on this computer?" She gestured to the console behind her.

"We are. What is your interest in it?" He remained a safe distance away from her though he wanted nothing better than to jump on her and make her his—theirs. "We have nothing. Even this ship is worth little. It's ancient."

She gave him a beautiful smile, her eyes alight

with excitement. "It's worth more than you know." Turning, she sat down at the console and pressed a few buttons.

Demit's mouth dropped open. She learned in a few short hours what had taken them days to discover! How much else could she find out, given help and time to work on the blasted computers on this ship? Perhaps she knew the language. If she could read the inscriptions it would make it so much easier to decipher the code they'd found.

"Perhaps you would like to tell us how it is worth so much to you." Xymus stepped a bit closer though it was obvious he kept his hands in full view of her protectors. They had nothing but time. Until they heard from Viktor again, there was no reason to believe there was any rush for them to complete their work.

"It says something about the other console." Her brow furrowed as she ran her fingers along the strange symbols they couldn't figure out.

"What other console?"

Looking up, she glanced around her surprised. "I don't know. I could have sworn that's what this said..." her words trailed off and she looked a bit troubled. She glanced down, running her fingers along the symbols etched into the shiny surface. "To release system codex please refer to console two." She shook her head. "I'm sure that's what this says." Biting her bottom lip, she glared at the

symbols as though her temper alone could cause them to make more sense. "Still, we're talking about *Hienials* here. Why would they say *please* to anyone for anything? They were cruel and inhuman taskmasters. I really don't think *please* was a word any of them used often." Brightening, she sat back, a look of satisfaction on her face. "It's a decoy. They want you to find another hidden console where you will set off a failsafe that will either destroy the ship, or the computers. It has to be."

"How can you read this language? You aren't *Hienial*. Enough women survived our crash here to tell us they never had female children."

"No. I'm not one of them." She shuddered as though the thought were distasteful. He couldn't blame her really. It was distasteful for him and he was half *Hienial*. He couldn't imagine what she felt about them. About him. He scowled. Their heritage was not of their doing. She couldn't hold that against them...could she?

* * * *

Several things hit Ariella at once. These men were the ones Viktor had spoken of—the ones that she'd be working with to hack into and decode the encrypted navigational files. They were *Hienial Halflings*. They had a mating bond with each other

according to the aura she could see surrounding them. And...they were her mates.

Goddess, what was she to do now? They were already mated and even though everything in her told her to charge over to them and lay her claim, she couldn't—wouldn't—do anything to interfere with bond the men already formed between them.

Her heart hurt. Her soul cried out in agony. Her dragoness trumpeted out its rage. Why would the Goddess bring her to this planet knowing that the men were already involved and in love with each other? Blinking back the tears, Ariella turned back toward the navigational console. She wouldn't let the others know of her pain...not her guards and certainly not the men who could have been her mates.

She stared down at the console, stifling the tears that threatened to come and forced herself to concentrate on her work. This was important—more important than thinking of living the rest of her life alone pining for her lost men.

"I'm glad you're here. I sorely need your help." She turned back, her emotions finally in check. "You two *are* the men who have been working on this computer system, are you not?" She looked between them, her eyebrow raised. It was the look Arabella called her stuck-up princess look. Well, if it got her what she wanted, she didn't care what they thought. Let them believe she was spoiled

and haughty. It's not like she could lose them. She'd never had them to begin with.

The two men stood stiff and unyielding before her. Goddess, she hoped they weren't going to remain so damned stubborn. She didn't need the aggravation. One look at them had her near panting with need. Why did they have to be so tall, so handsome? If they'd been ugly or even plain, perhaps her heart wouldn't beat so hard, longing for their possession.

Squeezing her legs tight together, she waited for a response. She didn't expect either of them to approach her or try to touch her. There were too many guards for that. Her protectors would kill anyone who tried to harm her. Still, they both moved closer. Whether it was from a lack of intelligence or a lack of fear, she'd never know.

Heart pounding in her chest, she threw herself against the closest guard as he drew and leveled his weapon at the taller man's chest. "You will not approach the Princess Ariella, Halfling." The man sneered. He tried to push her behind him, but she would have none of it.

"They're my mates, you moron," she hissed. "Don't kill them and sentence me to a half-life without them." She didn't tell him that was exactly what she expected anyway. How could she come between two men already so much in love with each other that their auras blended to the

same lovely hues? No. She would rather die herself. What was there left to live for with her mates already involved?

The taller man stepped closer and looked down into her eyes. "I'm glad you realize this. I am Xymus. Demit and I have been waiting for you for years."

How did he hear what I said? How could he possibly know I think they are my mates? Unless...are they telepathic like the Savari?

The two men smiled and she swallowed thickly. Goddess, they were handsome. They may not be the aged *Savari* warriors she'd hoped to take to mate, but they were handsome. Both of them had the look of a golden god. The smaller of the two had a tattoo of a dragon in flight peeking beneath the right shoulder of the worked leather vest he wore. Another tattoo, this one of entwined dragons, covered the majority of his left arm. Of all the animal totems he could have chosen, why had he picked dragons as his familiar? Did it mean something or was it just a coincidence?

We thank you, mate. It has long been our wish to please our mate's eyes as well as her body.

She swallowed thickly and tried not to react. The last thing she needed was for them to make another move and have her guards shoot them.

As they glanced at her guards, the weapons were snatched from their grip from an unseen

hand and she realized that they too had the telekinetic power the other two Halflings she knew possessed. Ryo and Viktor weren't alone in this. Could that power be why the *Banarts* took advantage of the *Hienial* people?

Maybe they'd find out the answer to that question, among others, once they were finally able to access the encrypted files. Knowing her guards would continue to view her mates as a threat to her, Ariella forced her way through the barrier their bodies created to separate her from the *Hienial Halflings*. All they needed was a fight to break out and someone's blood shed to top off this day.

"We would never harm your guards, love." Xymus's rumbling baritone stroked over her flesh like a lover's hand.

"It's not them I'm worried about," she muttered.

We won't allow them to harm us either. The three of us have too much to live for.

I don't want to interfere with the love you and Xymus share, Demit, no matter what the fates decided when they mated us. She looked between them, her heart breaking.

Nonsense, woman. We merely bided our time loving each other as we waited for you. Though our feelings for each other are strong and true, there is more than enough room in our hearts to love you as well. A man

to love is better than no mate at all when you are on a world with no available females.

She could understand that. And if she were truthful, the whole idea kind of turned her on.

Perhaps one day, when we have grown used to the feel of your flesh caressing ours, we will show you how we love each other.

The words he spoke nearly drove her over the edge. If she didn't get these two men alone—and soon—she may just go mad. Having them so near, their scent invading her system, was an aphrodisiac she never knew existed. She glanced back at the console, a disappointed frown on her face. They had work to do. The faster they did what she'd come to do, the faster they could be in her quarters on the ship making love.

* * * *

Xymus couldn't take his eyes off the woman. She was everything beautiful and feminine, not to mention courageous and intelligent—a dream come true to a man that didn't think he'd ever have a woman in his life.

He approached her slowly, not wanting to alarm her guards. Demit was less than a step behind him. He could feel Demit's anxiety, his fear that she would turn away from them in disgust because of both their heritage and their sexual

practices. Xymus couldn't help but worry that Demit had cause for concern, but he prayed to the Goddess that she would except them. Now that he met her, he couldn't imagine Ariella not being a part of their lives.

Maybe the best way to get her trust and ultimately her love would be to encourage her to delve into the *Hienial* computer systems. He wasn't too proud to admit that they hadn't had much luck in the year they'd been at work trying to hack into the navigational terminal. In fact, they hadn't been able to get into any of the computer files on the ship — though not for lack of trying.

With that in mind, he stopped right behind her chair to observe her actions. Perhaps, he could even learn something from her. His people, those on this planet, and those scattered across the galaxy, needed the information on these computers, and if he and Demit couldn't get to it, then hopefully their new mate could. "So, what exactly are you doing?" Xymus asked. Her fingers were flying over the keyboard at a dizzying pace.

"I'm rewriting the code. Instead of trying to discern the correct passcode, I'm writing a new program to get around it."

"You can do that?" Demit asked.

Ariella snorted, shrugging her shoulders. "I hope so anyway. This language isn't the easiest I've had to learn, that's for sure."

For several minutes, Xymus watched in awe, amazed at the skill his new mate exhibited. Hell, he was a *Hienial Halfling* and he could barely read the language. Before he could tell her how impressive her actions were an alarm shrieked through the cabin. Seconds later, a countdown began.

Ten...

"Dammit... It looks like some sort of chemical is about to be released from the ship's life support system."

Nine...

"What can we do to stop it?" Demit asked, his gaze automatically shifting up toward the ventilation shaft above their heads.

Eight...

"I don't know if there is anything we can do," she muttered, typing furiously.

Seven...

Xymus wasn't about to leave the ship, not when they needed the records so bad, but he didn't want Demit or Ariella exposed to the likely hazardous chemicals about to be released. Still, even if he wanted them to run, there just wasn't enough time.

Six...

Xymus grimaced then turned toward the Dragon Guards. "You might want to get out of here, if you can."

Five...

"We will not leave the princess."

Four...

Xymus nodded, not expecting anything less. Knowing that within the next few seconds their lives could be over, he reached forward, placing one hand on Ariella's shoulder, and gripping Demit's in the other.

Three...

"Warn the others outside the ship. We don't know exactly what is going to happen," Demit demanded. Xymus watched his mate, witnessed her intense concentration as she tried to stop the countdown.

Two...

Both guards reached for their wrist communicators. Before they could even get a word out, a loud explosion rocked the ship.

"What the hell?" Demit shouted, "The countdown hasn't run down yet."

One...

Ariella looked up into his eyes, her fear and resignation evident in her gaze. If this is the way it was to end, at least they would leave this mortal plane together.

A thick noxious smelling gas filled the compartment and sent them to their knees coughing.

"Goddess, that reeks!" Xymus growled, his face

buried in Demit's neck as he pressed Ariella's face into his chest. He could only hope his uniform would filter out some of the toxins and protect her. He'd just found his mate. He was in no hurry to lose her.

They lay on the floor, coughing up the foul gas, until he was sure they would turn their lungs inside-out with the effort. When he was certain they were about to choke to death, the boarding ramp flopped open and fresh air circulated about them.

"What—" Ariella coughed into her sleeve. "What was that? Do either of you have any ideas?" She looked between them. Like him, her eyes watered from the burning the noxious gas caused. "Oh, look." She pointed to her guards. "They must have passed out. Lucky them. I wish I could have slept through that myself."

Demit reached over and checked their pulse. "No you don't, *mi zoyma*. They're dead."

Xymus paused. "Do you think...?"

"Go look."

Xymus nodded toward the ramp. "I have a horrible feeling all of your friends are dead, my mate." He wrapped his arm about her shoulders when she would have collapsed.

"Why—how?" She looked between them as Demit walked toward the entrance and disappeared down the ramp. Her confusion at the

reason behind it all showed on her face. "Why would it kill them and not us? It doesn't make sense."

"I suspect your answer is in that database." He pointed to the console. Xymus didn't want to make things harder on her, but they needed the information in the computer now more than ever. He must find a way to get her back to her work.

"Yes, of course. You're right." She nodded, taking the hint and sat back down in the seat. Tears slid silently down her face as she worked, pausing only a few times to wipe her eyes. It was the only indication that she'd lost men dear to her.

Xymus wanted to reach out, pull her into his arms and take her with him to the caves where he and Demit could love her and make her forget her pain, if only for a little while. But he knew how important this information was to his people. To everyone. An hour or a day could mean the difference between life and death for them. The Goddess had visited his dreams and told him as much. Something was in the database that could turn the tide of another war. He only hoped they found it in time to avert one altogether.

He spun around when Demit returned and frowned when the other man silently shook his head. *They are all dead, old friend. I have no idea about the others in the camp we passed on the way here. I only checked those close to us, guarding the ship.*

It's just as well. At least not knowing one way or another will give her something to hope for. As you know, even a little hope is better than none. How long do you think we have before her people decide to check on her?

Demit answered his question with a shrug and knelt down beside their mate, their gift from the Great Goddess. She was so beautiful and intelligent that Xymus nearly wept with joy. He never thought to see his two mates together. He never dared to hope he would ever have the luck to meet a female to bond with. Neither of them did. That was why they'd decided to bond with each other. The three of them would find a way to make a life together. He did love Demit and he didn't want to hurt him. He sighed. He didn't want to hurt either of them.

They both watched their mate with pride as her fingers flew over the console, unlocking various sections of the coded material.

"Knew that," she whispered to herself. "Grandmother already told us."

"You knew what?" He and Demit asked at the same time.

"That *Hienials* weren't inherently evil. It was the *Banarts* who made them that way. It had something to do with their DNA or genetic make up. Something they wanted or needed that your race possessed." She frowned and bit her lip.

"Your telekinetic abilities maybe?"

Xymus nodded his agreement. "Perhaps. We also have another power. One we don't usually tell others."

"You're telepathic. I knew that."

"No." He shook his head and paced to the ramp. "We can shift shape into anything."

Ariella stared at him, her eyes filled with shock. "You mean that you can become any animal you want, like the *Savari*?"

He shook his head and decided to give her a demonstration. He only hoped she didn't faint. He watched her eyes widen, then heard her gasp of surprise when he turned himself into an exact replica of the console where she worked.

"Oh, my Goddess," she breathed. "No wonder the *Banart* bastards wanted you all so bad. They tested your kind. They must have used *Hienial* DNA to mutate their own until they were able to do the same. That was how they infiltrated our ranks. They sent operatives in, taking the place of the people they'd captured and killed."

"How did you know this?" Demit asked, shocked.

"Grandmother told us." She said it as though the universe knew her grandmother and no one should question her wisdom.

"How did she know?"

Ariella smiled. Her face bloomed in a large grin

and it took his breath away. If only he could keep that expression on her face. "Grandmother is a force to be reckoned with. It is her job to know everything." She was almost laughing now, her blue eyes dancing with an inner light.

"Hmm..." Demit didn't comment and Xymus was afraid to. But ask he did. It was his responsibility to keep them all working toward the main goal and their feet on the ground. The last thing any of them needed were flights of fancy. He hated that he had to nip Ariella's in the bud.

"You don't know, do you?" She shook her head in disbelief. "I thought everyone in the whole galaxy knew. Your world must be one of only a handful of worlds that doesn't know."

He was becoming exasperated. The last thing he wanted was his first fight with his mate before they'd even had the chance to make love. "Knew what?" He tried to keep from gritting his teeth. He really did. But it was hard to keep his disbelief and ire from his voice.

Since you seem at a lack of words to tell him, I shall, before he begins to think you mad, Granddaughter.

Xy's eyes widened as an older version of Ariella appeared before them and he knew that voice. It was the same voice as in his dreams.

"I was just having a bit of fun with him, Grandmother."

There is a time for fun and a time for work, Ariella.

Which do you think this is?

"You've always taught us there is no time like the present. Two minutes ago, it was time for fun. Now it is a time for work." She folded her hands in her lap and looked down, contrite.

Xymus nearly swallowed his tongue. Ariella's grandmother was the Lady Goddess?

The woman looked over at him and smiled. "How do you think you all got here? It takes a male and a female to procreate." She sighed, her expression a strange mixture of impatience and humor. "No matter. What's important is that you finish your work here and get busy making babies."

"Just like a grandmother," Ariella muttered not quite under her breath. "Embarrassing, demanding..."

"Like you weren't thinking the same thing, Granddaughter."

Xymus watched her face pinken and felt his heart clench inside his chest. She had such a mixture of courage, and innocence. He couldn't wait to make her his — theirs.

* * * *

Demit watched the byplay between his mate and the Lady Goddess in awe, speechless at the thought that he and Xymus would be paired with

someone with such a divine ancestor. What had they done to deserve such a prize? He could think of nothing, no act they had participated in that would merit such an honorable, intelligent and beautiful woman as mate.

Are you questioning me, Demit d'Meir? Do you and Xymus not wish to mate with my granddaughter?

Of course I do – we do – it's just such an unexpected gift.

Ahh, but will you still think that when I tell you what I'd like the three of you to do for me?

We will do all that you ask. Nothing you ask of us will be enough to thank you for the gift of your granddaughter.

I hope you continue to feel that way, young one.

Demit watched as the Lady Goddess approached her granddaughter, placing her hands on Ariella's shoulders. A white glow spread from her hands to Ariella's shoulders before slowly encompassing them completely. Out of the corner of his eye, he watched as the bodies of Ariella's guards disappeared in a flash of light.

Xymus's eyes widened in disbelief, while Demit himself watched them warily. What was she doing to Ariella?

Relax, young Demit. I am but giving your mate the language skills and information she needs to access the records on this ship. Time is of the essence. Once you've accessed all the computer files the three of you must perform the mating ceremony. Only then, will I be able

to give you the next step in your mission.

Demit nodded, though he never dropped his gaze. *I understand. When must we be ready for the next part of our mission?*

You have until midday tomorrow. Any later than that and things will unfold that should not be. We cannot risk a delay. The fates of your people as well as many other species are dependant upon what happens next.

Then we shall not fail you. Not that mating with your granddaughter is any hardship, he thought to himself.

The Lady Goddess' throaty chuckle vibrated through his body. *I should think not. She is a beautiful woman, not only in looks, but in spirit.*

As you say. We are honored that you chose us to mate with your granddaughter. You shall not regret the decision.

Within seconds, the bright light surrounding the two women faded and Ariella swayed with the enormity of her gift. She raised a trembling hand to her head and groaned. "There are so many things running around inside my head."

"You will soon get used to it." Her grandmother said, running a hand through her hair. "There was a lot of information there."

Ariella nodded. "Yes. There is. Including the code I've been searching for."

A twinkle lit her grandmother's eyes. "Some

rules can be bent where a blood relative is concerned."

Demit looked on, worried. He wanted to take their mate in his arms and hold her safe until the tremors stopped. The fact that he didn't know her well gave him pause. What if she didn't appreciate his interference?

The Lady Goddess turned her gaze on him and he swallowed. *Do you think I would mate you with my own flesh if she could not love you or trust you?*

It wasn't that. His mother brought him up to respect women. To revere women since they were so few. It was a testimony to her strength and courage that she and the ten other women raised one hundred and fifteen boys to maturity on a strange planet.

That is why you two are her mates. There is no one in this galaxy who will love her, protect her and see to her needs as you and Xymus will. Do not think yourself unworthy. There are no other males worthy of her love.

He swallowed again as a lump formed in his throat. *I thank you. Xymus thanks you.* He took a deep breath. *Our children thank you.*

She smiled. *Your children. I like the sound of that. The thought of great grandchildren is very nice.* Looking back to Ariella who now sat at the console, her fingers flying over the keys, she smiled. *I shall leave you to it. Hmmm... Great grandchildren? Hurry please. I would like to help you*

shape their lives. The Goddess gave Ariella one last loving look and disappeared with style in a flood of sparkling light.

As if he or Xymus would say no to that! He turned from the fading light to see Xymus looking at him, a knowing grin on his face. He wondered if he'd heard her decree. Now he had his answer. His lips curved in a knowing smile and he nodded as they both moved closer to their mate. As soon as she entered the code and they had their information they could take the time to properly welcome their mate to their arms.

"I don't believe this."

The sound of her astonishment snagged their attention and for a moment, Demit focused his gaze solely on the screen over her head. Intergalactic maps with star charts of *Hienial* known systems flashed across the screen.

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Do you see this? Do all these worlds have Halflings on them?

Xymus reached over Ariella's shoulder and thumped his finger on the screen. "What is the significance of the different colored planets? Do all of these star systems have Halflings?"

Ariella shook her head. "No." Pointing at the blue coded planets, she explained. "These are

humanoid or human planets. Those they didn't have the time to invade before the Triads wiped them out." She placed her index finger on a red coded planet. "These are those they found and conquered." Her expression was somber. "According to the notes, they killed or removed everyone from the red areas."

"And the gold?"

"The gold is what interests me. The gold planets are the ones they took the kidnapped women to. They could still be out there, alone, like you."

He could feel her sympathy through their matebond. He wanted nothing more than to comfort her, tell her that everything was fine. Their childhood wasn't as bad as the thoughts that ran through her head. They'd had a good upbringing. Their mothers had seen to that. "How many of the gold planets are there?" He watched, awed as her fingers flew across the console again.

"It looks like about ten."

"Ten? Ten worlds with Halflings?"

"We can hope." Her eyes were filled with compassion as she continued, each of her hands covering one of theirs. "I have a feeling that some of them didn't survive. Some women aren't as strong as others and some planets not as hospitable."

He nodded as a lump formed in his throat. So

many innocents fell to the cruelty of their fathers. So many innocents died...

"We need to find them. We should tell Viktor what we've found." Demit stepped forward and squeezed her shoulder. "What is this one? Why is it the only purple one? What does that signify?"

She frowned. "I don't know. There is nothing about that in the database. We'll have to study that a bit more. Perhaps once we travel to a few of the others, we'll discover the significance of that lone planet. I have a wrist computer back at the campsite. We can take all this information back if it's not too much for it to handle."

Xymus, anxious to get to the computer and download the information, almost ran from the ship. It wasn't until he thought of the other men that he paused. "Do you have a communications device?"

"The guards each had one. I did not need to carry a device." She shivered with distaste. "Perhaps the others are still alive. I wonder if I can reprogram the ship's communications to contact the others. *If they're still alive.*" Her fingers flew over the console once again as she initiated another protocol in the system. "There, I've established a link."

"Want to do the honors?" Demit asked. "I think the request would be better received if it came from you."

Ariella nodded her head and spoke into the sending unit. "Team two, is there anyone there?" She breathed a sigh of relief and relaxed visibly when a voice came over the line.

"Yes, Highness. Have you a need?"

"Yes, Argen, as a matter of fact I do. Can one of you bring my wrist-com to the ship?"

"Of course. I'll be right there, Princess."

"Oh, and Argen? Bring the others. My guard has been killed by a chemical contaminant triggered by a self destruct virus in the computer system. Only non-*Hienial* males died. There are only my mates and myself here."

It seemed like hours, but was only a few minutes before the others arrived. Argen handed Ariella the wrist-com and she immediately set the device to download while she contacted her ship.

"This is the *Lioni* ship, Pride. May I be of assistance?"

"Yes, thank you. This is Princess Ariella. I have managed to hack into the *Hienial* database. We need immediate transport for myself, my contingent and two *Halflings* at these coordinates." She snatched up her wrist-com as though she feared leaving it behind.

Xymus stepped forward. "I don't mean to interrupt, but perhaps it would be best if we went directly to your quarters and downloaded this into your personal computer. One not networked with

the ships devices. We don't want a repeat of the earlier incident."

"Good idea. Pride, please transport myself and the two Halflings to my quarters."

"One moment."

There was a slight pause before a shimmering light transported them to the unknown vessel. Ariella handed the wrist-com to Demit and shuddered. "Do you mind beginning the download? I have to shower. I need to bathe away the scent of death before I am sick. Those men have protected me as long as I can remember. Their deaths haunt me."

She turned and headed toward an adjoining room Xymus assumed was her bathing chamber.

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Anxious now that the time had arrived to take Demit and Xymus as mates, Ariella glanced into the mirror and tightened the sash of her silken robe. Leaving the bathroom, she slowed when she noticed the lights surrounding the bed were lowered, giving the illusion of seduction. Or, maybe they were trying to seduce her. Though why they would bother when getting her beneath them was as sure a thing as the suns rising over her world in the morning was beyond her understanding.

Wearing naught but a towel, Xymus entered the room carrying a tray loaded down with delicacies from her home world. After placing the tray on the bedside table, he returned to where Ariella stood. He tenderly took her hands in his and gave her a wry smile. "Just because we know that tonight will end in a mating bond, does not mean we cannot make this memorable for all of us, does it?"

Ariella could feel the blush heating her skin, her cheeks. Her skin warmed from her toes to the roots of her hair. Had she gotten so cynical in her young life that she looked for things to quibble over? Why could she not just go with the flow this evening—as her mother was known to say? She knew Xymus was right, this would be her only mating ceremony and she wanted to remember every moment of it. Dropping her gaze from his, she glanced around the bedchamber. "Where is Demit?"

"He is bathing, *mi zoyma*. He shall be along shortly."

"*Mi zoyma?*"

"I believe it translates to *my heart* in your language."

Ariella could feel a deeper blush warming her skin. Biting her lip to keep her embarrassment level to a minimum, she mumbled, "Okay." After looking everywhere but up at Xymus, for she

knew he'd see her confusion, she searched for something else to say, to do. What *was* she supposed to do now? She'd never been in this situation before. Should she strip? Get on the bed and wait for them to come to her? Hide beneath the covers?

Goddess, she was so unsure of herself. When had this strange feeling of inadequacy overcome her? Normally self-confident, she did not like feeling lost or unsure. Before she could fret even more, Xymus stepped closer, until only an inch separated them. Ever so gently, he pulled her body against his, until her body nestled snugly against his chest.

She could feel his cock flex against her belly and she gasped at the size. She couldn't help the reaction any more than she would have expected him to be hard already. With only a silken robe and a towel separating them, she could almost feel the veined ridges in his shaft.

Her heart stuttered in her chest, and a delicious shudder heated up her body. He was so stunningly gorgeous. All that muscle and sinew, moving in perfect rhythm as he wrapped his arms around her, could give a woman heart problems. She couldn't tear her gaze away from his perfect profile. In fact, she had no desire to do so. He was all hers and she intended to revel in it.

At the base of her throat, a pulse beat and

swelled as though her heart had risen from its usual place. She sank into him, compelled by her own passion. His sweetly intoxicating scent threatened to overwhelm her and she wondered if she had the same effect on him.

Gathering her into his arms, he held her tight against him. She buried her face against the large muscles of his chest, taking his scent deep into her lungs. She would know this man in the dark amongst a hundred men just by his scent alone. Not that she had any desire to be in such a situation.

His hands explored the hollows of her back then skimmed her hips, her bottom, before sliding back up and cupping her face in his hands. Warm lips pressed firmly against hers, gently covering her mouth. His kiss was slow and sweet, then it changed. His tongue traced the soft fullness of her lips then demanded entrance.

The kiss sent the pit of her stomach into a wild swirl, and her heart thudded in her ears. He lifted his mouth from hers and gazed into her eyes. As though unable to help himself, his lips and tongue seared a path down her neck, her shoulders, exploring her body with a thoroughness that astounded her.

"Xymus, if you don't make love to me soon, I'm going to die."

"I am making love to you. Can't you tell?" he

asked, as his lips trailed lower. "If not, I must be doing something very wrong." His tongue encircled her nipple with tantalizing possessiveness, while his fingers trailed slowly across the other, bringing them both to hard peaks. He lifted his head long enough to ask, "Do you know how sweet you taste?"

She just shook her head, mesmerized by the passion and honesty she heard in his voice. There was such love and devotion behind his words. It was impossible for him to hide his feelings from her and she felt blessed.

His hand left her nipple and trailed down her tummy. His touch was light and painfully teasing as he continued to slowly explore her body. His ardor was surprisingly, touchingly, restrained yet there was no doubt that he was keeping himself tightly leashed.

Xymus took her hands and placed them against his chest, encouraging her to explore his body as he explored hers.

She couldn't have stopped herself from touching him if her life depended upon it. She wanted this – wanted him. She let her hands slide down his chest, as his body moved to partially cover hers. "What are you waiting for?" she asked, barely able to form a sentence, her mind was so passion laden. She merely needed to be in the same room with him and she wanted him with a

desperation that knew no bounds.

"I want our time together to last. And I want it to last a long, long time."

"Oh." Ariella didn't know what else to say. She could go on touching Xymus and be touched by him forever. Parting her lips, she raised herself to meet his kiss. His mouth covered hers hungrily, devouring her, as though he were trying to absorb her taste, her essence and draw it into himself.

She couldn't get enough of the feel of his skin beneath her hands. Her cheeks colored under the heat of his gaze as her fingers wrapped around his cock, stroked him from base to tip. She wanted her every touch to bring him immeasurable pleasure. This close to him, his emotions, his very thoughts seemed to echo in her mind. She could hear and feel everything he heard and experienced.

Her touch was driving him crazy. He didn't know how much longer he could last. The feel of her hand wrapped around his dick was killing him. He hoped to the Goddess she was as ready for him. He was more than ready for her. A sense of urgency drove him. He needed to be one with her now.

Xymus gently pushed her down onto the bed. She gazed up at him, her expression filled with desire. It was nearly his undoing. He lowered himself over her and slid between her open thighs. His hands caressed the smooth skin of her legs then explored the soft lines of her hips, her waist,

her back, and finally slid up her arms until he held her hands clasped in his. He slowly drew her hand to his cock and wrapped her fingers around his steely length. "Take me into your body and make me yours," he pleaded.

"I have always been yours. Don't you know that?"

Tears glittered in the corners of his eyes. "Wrap your legs around my waist, *mi zoyma*, and guide me home."

His lips brushed her nipples as he slowly filled her. Her body melted against his. His tormented groan was a heady invitation, so she lifted her hips, allowing him to sink into her fully. This time, she groaned. Just the feel of him inside her almost sent her over the edge and he had yet to move.

She caressed the strong tendons at the nape of his neck then let her hands slide down his back until she had the luscious cheeks of his ass in her hands. "Move, Xymus, before I really do hurt you."

Before she could finish her sentence, he slowly withdrew and thrust with such force he brought her to instant orgasm. Her eyes blurred, her heart pitched, and the room began to spin. "By the Lady Goddess, don't stop," she said when it appeared he was perfectly content to just sit there and watch her reaction.

"If I move now, it'll be all over. Your body

gripping mine is more than I can handle, it seems." He gritted his teeth in an obvious effort to control his reaction to her. "I've never felt anything like it—like you—before. I've never been with a woman. You're so wet, so tight. The way you squeeze my cock is good. So good." He groaned, resting his forehead against hers.

Taking the decision out of his hands, she tightened her legs around his waist and brought herself up, forcing him to thrust inside her. Her mate lost all semblance of control then, taking her body with a forcefulness that left her gasping. In. Out. In. Out. Over and over, he lunged into her, hitting her womb on every stroke until she was sure she would die with it.

"Oh, Goddess," she cried as she felt another orgasm begin to swell inside of her. As though he'd waited for just such a reaction, she felt his cock tighten and thicken inside her.

"Come for me, baby. Now," he demanded.

As if she could do anything but what he asked. Waves of ecstasy washed through her. She lay drowning in a floodtide of warmth and contentment—of bone deep satisfaction unlike anything she'd ever felt before and she savored it.

Xymus began to move away from her, but Ariella would have none of that. Not yet. "Don't move."

"But, I'm too heavy to lay atop you like this, my

mate."

"I want to feel your skin against mine for just a bit longer," she half whispered. "I want this moment to last."

Xymus sighed. "I know, *mi zoyma*. But Demit will arrive shortly and he deserves some time with you as well."

"There's no need to rush off," Demit whispered. Neither Ariella nor Xymus had heard him enter the room and yet he stood just a few feet away. She couldn't help but wonder how long he'd stood beside the bed watching them make love.

Scooting toward the edge of the bed with the sheet wrapped firmly around her, Ariella tried to stand so she could approach her other mate.

As soon as her feet hit the floor, Demit moved forward, swinging her into his arms, sheet and all. "You didn't think we'd let you walk, did you?" he asked.

His rough voice sent shards of pleasure piercing her core. The second she felt herself melt against him in surrender, she remembered exactly why she should fight their seduction. "Put me down, Demit. Please." When he only tightened his arms around her and sat on the bed, his back pressed against the headboard, Ariella's heart began to pound against her chest.

"Not until I tire of holding you," he growled.

She twisted in his lap. “But I want to touch you, taste you.”

Almost immediately, Demit’s mouth covered hers hungrily. It was a kiss of pure possession. She wasn’t even shocked at her own eager response to the touch of his lips against hers. She wanted—needed—to surrender to the desire she had for them. They were her mates. It was as it should be.

Demit’s lips seared a path down her neck, her shoulders, as he slowly unveiled her body to his gaze. She felt the heady sensation of his lips against her neck and arched her body in response. Her hands gripped his thighs to keep still for his questing mouth. His lips continued their exploration of her neck and shoulders, the hollow of her throat and collarbone, but she was having none of it. She wanted the taste of his lips against hers. She wanted to take control.

She thrust her fingers through his hair and pulled him to her. Her kiss was full of urgency and need, heat and passion, fire and ice. It only made their kiss that much hotter, that much more powerful.

It wasn’t long before kissing wasn’t enough for either of them. His lips slowly followed the path of his fingers as he lowered the sheet until her breasts lay bare and quivering in his hands. Unable to contain the fires burning deep within her, she arched her back, guiding his mouth to her

puckered nipples, desperate to feel his lips against their sensitive peaks.

Not to be left out of the action, Xymus moved in, taking her lips in a kiss so soft and tender it brought tears to her eyes. Demit and Xymus worshipped her with their mouths, caressed her with fleeting touches.

Ariella was lost in a whirlwind of passion. She tingled everywhere. Even her skin burned with desire. The hair at the nape of her neck stood on end as sensation wracked her quivering body and goose bumps rose on her skin. Never before had she experienced such overwhelming desire.

Her whole body literally ached with desire, in anticipation of making love with her men. Her pussy clenched in need, desperate to be filled.

Demit's fingers continued their upward trail toward her weeping slit while Xymus continued to nibble on her lips, her neck, in biting caresses before laving the pain away with his talented tongue. Demit ran his thumb over her clit, sending shards of pleasure pain coursing through her. She moaned in response, desperate for release. Dammit! How much more did they expect her to take?

Lost in a haze of passion, time slowed to a crawl, every second lasting a minute, every minute an hour. The flames within them burned higher and higher, brighter and brighter, until it

threatened to overcome her and still, the threesome rode the hot tide of passion as it raged on and on.

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Demit was mesmerized. His gaze raked boldly over her. Pale complexion and long strawberry blonde hair combined with her deep blue eyes made her an exotic beauty. Her jutting breasts were firm in his hands, and her hair was like strands of silk as they wrapped around his hands, his body.

He liked the way she looked in their bed. He couldn't wait until she could take them both at once, until they became a threesome in truth not just in words.

As though the previous minutes had never happened, Xymus began a slow exploration of Ariella's body, using lips, teeth and tongue, driving her to the edge, while Demit made his way down her body before settling himself between her thighs. He was a big man and he wanted her well prepared for him. The last thing he wanted to do was hurt her during their joining. Only after they'd made her come again and again, would he finally make love to her.

"Please," she begged.

"Your body is not ready to accept me as a lover

yet, but soon you will be. I promise."

"What do you mean I'm not ready?" She gasped as his finger pressed against her clit. When she instinctively began to move against his finger, he eased a second inside her and then finally a third, stretching her as much as he could so that when he entered her he wouldn't cause her unnecessary pain.

"I need you," she said in low voice, husky with unspent passion. "Now."

Demit glanced over at Xymus, caught his mate's urgent nod. Despite his desire to stay exactly where he was, Demit rolled away from her, now desperate to feel skin pressed against skin. To do that he needed to shed his towel.

"Don't stop. Please don't stop."

Xymus smiled. "You beg so beautifully, *mi zoyma*. We have no plans to stop, though. Not now and definitely not before morning."

Moving closer once more, they began to kiss her again. Demit worked his way down her body while Xymus worshipped her mouth and breasts. The mixed sensations had her tossing her head. Her hands fisted in the silken sheets as they continued to assault her senses.

Xymus nibbled lightly on her breast, his hand working her other nipple to a hardened peak. She groaned when Demit's tongue slid through her slit. His tongue lapped at her body's cream, the

warm, wet-velvet circling her clit before he suckled the hardened nub into his mouth. She whimpered. Her thighs clamped closed. Her hands reached down to fist in his hair. She'd heard of such a thing, even fantasized about it, but the fantasy was nothing compared to the reality.

Demit brought her to the edge again before inserting his finger into her vagina and pressing upward, massaging what she knew now to be her G-spot. Reading about it, fantasizing about it was nothing compared to living it. She screamed out another orgasm as Xymus continued to worship her breasts. When she lay on the bed gasping for air, they each moved away from her again. She wanted to cry, to beg them to stay with her, but the words wouldn't come.

Instead of remaining with Demit and Ariella in the mating bed, Xymus moved to the settee in the corner to watch. A spark of something unknown, something naughty filtered through her mind at the thought of Xymus watching them. Her skin heated yet again, sending a fiery blush across her skin.

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Once Xymus moved to the couch, Demit rejoined his mate on the bed. She gasped when skin met skin for the first time. Not wanting to give her

time to think, he rolled over and drew her astride him as he leaned them back against the headboard. He'd let her set her own pace, get her used to the feel of how hard he was for her—of how large he could get. He could feel her slick wetness against his cock, and it about killed him to let her have free reign over his body.

Demit gasped as one hand wrapped around his shaft, lightly squeezing then releasing while the other softly stroked his heavy sac. He groaned, unable to help himself, he needed her so much. He held his position for a few moments, then rolled them both over until he was again on top and growled, "Roll over, my mate. Get on your hands and knees. This first time might be a little rough, but I'll be as gentle as I can."

She rolled onto her belly and Demit trailed a finger down her spine, sending shivers up and down her body. Even her toes quivered with anticipation. Then he studied her bottom, taking each cheek in his hands, squeezing and molding them. They too were a perfect fit, high and firm. His mouth watered. He couldn't wait any longer to mount her and he wasn't sure he wanted to try.

Ever so slowly, he entered her from behind, inching forward just a bit, and then stopping until her body could adjust. Inch by slow inch he sank into to her. She was so wet, so tight. Nothing had ever felt so exquisite, so absolutely right.

He kept his movements slow and steady until he was so deep inside of Ariella he could feel her womb pressed against his shaft. The only thing he could think of at that moment was that it was too bad she wasn't in heat, for then he—he shook his head, no *they*—could get her with child. That time would come soon enough.

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Ariella was stretched to the limits. He was so large she didn't think she could move and survive. He must have sensed her discomfort, or maybe she winced, because he stopped until the ache between her thighs eased. When the dull pain passed, he began moving in slow gentle strokes. In and out, until his long slow strokes became faster, sharper, harder.

Urgency gripped her. Something was building inside her. Something both painful and pleasant and, even though she wasn't virgin anymore, she didn't know what to do, how to explain that she needed something more.

He drew her to a height of passion and love she never could have imagined existed. Ever so slowly, in and out he moved until she was matching his rhythm, meeting his thrusts halfway, eager to feel his body filling hers. Their pace quickened and Demit bent over her, pinning her

shoulders with his teeth. Gently his hands outlined the circles of her breasts, then began teasing her nipples unmercifully as he continued to thrust into her tight channel.

"Please," she begged, "I need..." She didn't know how to go on, all she knew was that she was close to something unbelievable, that she couldn't take his teasing of her body anymore.

Trailing his hands down her waist and to her hips, Demit whispered into her ear, "What do you need?"

"More. I need more."

Demit gave her more, moving his fingers between her legs, and rubbing her clit until she bucked beneath him, screaming out her release. Waves of ecstasy throbbed through her. The pleasure he gave her was pure and explosive.

He rubbed the bare skin of her back, her shoulders, gripped her again with his teeth. He began thrusting harder, and deeper, faster than before until he too reached his climax, jetting his hot seed deep inside her. Demit collapsed on top of her, his body still joined with hers. They were flesh against flesh, man against woman, mate against mate.

Ariella sighed in utter satisfaction, not even caring that Demit's limp form still pinned her to the bed. She was too deliriously happy and sated to move.

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Demit took a few moments to gather his wits, then gently eased out of her and rolled to his back, gathering Ariella up into his arms. "I didn't hurt you, did I?" He wanted to be like this, have her spread all over him every night for the rest of their lives, connecting them even in sleep.

But even as he thought that, he knew he needed remember that it would be he and Xymus sharing her bed every night, not just the two of them. A wry smile tilted up the corner of his mouth. He couldn't wait.

Demit allowed himself a few more minutes of contentment while he waited for Ariella to drift off to sleep. Only once he was sure he wouldn't disturb her did he ease his way away from her side. He and Xymus needed to bathe her or she'd awaken feeling uncomfortable. She wasn't used to intimacy with a man and he didn't want her to feel awkward upon waking. Better to clean her up while she still slept.

When he glanced over at the couch, Xymus was already standing and making his way toward the bed. *Can you gather a few linen cloths from the linen dispenser, Xy, while I fill a basin with water and cleansers?*

Xy's lips twisted in amusement. *You look well*

and truly fucked, love.

Shaking his head, Demit smiled as he looked down at their new mate. *And the night isn't over yet.*

Nodding, Xymus turned and headed for the linen dispenser hidden in the wall to the left of the bathing chamber while Demit collected the basin full of warm water and perfumed cleansers.

We should let her rest for a while. The Lady Goddess said we had until noon tomorrow to complete the mating bond.

You're right, Xy. She's not used to lovemaking and we've asked much of her body already this day.

As Demit washed her nether parts, he winced. Her gate was swollen, red as a fire berry. It would do her good to rest and heal. They'd have to take more care when loving her. She was too precious to them to hurt her, even accidentally. Once he made sure he'd washed away all outward evidence of their lovemaking, he turned to Xymus. "Let's take a look at what has already been downloaded to her personal computer while she sleeps. I'm sure she's going to want to meet with Viktor and Ryo upon waking."

After quickly placing a chaste kiss against her forehead, Demit backed away, making room for Xymus to do the same. Demit watched Xymus pull the blankets over their mate and tuck her in. A Curious warmth and sense of completeness

swept over him. Shaking his head at his own foolishness, Demit turned away to wait for Xymus at the bedchamber door.

As they closed the door to the sleeping chamber, Ariella burrowed into the blankets, a blissful smile spread across her face.

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The first thing she noticed upon waking was the tenderness between her legs. The second was the absence of her mates in the bed beside her. A quick glance around the room confirmed that she was alone.

Stretching beneath the covers, Ariella smiled. *So, that's what lovemaking is all about.* No wonder her sister, Arabella always seemed to walk around with a blissful smile since mating with her men these six moons past. Knowing what she had to look forward to for the rest of her life, she couldn't wait to get started. But first, she had to speak with Ryo and his new second in command, Viktor.

No matter how much she'd prefer to entice her mates back to her bed, she'd be better off getting her meeting over with. Then she'd have the rest of her night to spend with Demit and Xymus.

With that in mind, Ariella threw back the covers and slid out of bed. She winced at the movement, knowing that until she grew

accustomed to lovemaking, the tenderness between her legs would be commonplace. Smiling, she couldn't regret that—not in the least. Mating with her men would probably rate up there as the most amazing thing she'd ever experience.

Gathering her robe from the end of the bed, Ariella wrapped it around herself and headed for the bathing chamber. After washing her face and using the facilities, she headed out, aware that even now the night was getting away from her.

As soon as she cracked her bedchamber door open, she spotted her mates. Sitting side-by-side, they were focused on her personal computer terminal. Hopefully the upload of the ship's data had been completed while she slept. If they were really lucky, one of her men would have discovered which planets seemed the likeliest to still have surviving *Hienial Halflings* on them.

With their heads pressed together and their shoulders touching, she almost hated interrupting the intimacy brewing between them, especially after they'd worked so hard to make her feel welcome in their relationship. But, time was growing critically short if they were to complete the mating and speak with Ryo before noon tomorrow.

"Xymus? Demit? Have you managed to pull anything else out of the database that we didn't know?" Both men turned at the sound of her

voice. Demit's gray eyes turned slumberous, and Xymus looked her up and down, his grin lecherous in the extreme. It didn't take a genius to figure out where their minds were. She could feel another blush spread across her cheeks, and knew if they had time, her new mates would be doing their best to get her right back in bed. She almost wished she didn't need to go anywhere, just to see to what extremes they'd go to make love to her again.

Demit seemed to snap out of his lusty thoughts first. After clearing his throat, he turned back to the computer console. "We have discovered that no one on the *Hienial* ship knew the whereabouts of the purple colored planet in the database, however the captain of the vessel was determined to locate it after dropping off his cargo. Rumor had it that the people of that particular planet had strange abilities and the person who could harness them would be all-powerful."

"All powerful," she asked as she closed the distance between them. Looking over Xymus's shoulder she focused on translating the text Demit was scrolling through. "Did he have any idea where to look?"

"No," Xymus answered, "but he'd heard another rumor that one of the women he'd impregnated had heard of this planet. He seemed sure that he'd be able to find it with ease."

"Hmmm...do you think he had an idea where to look, then?"

Demit grimaced. "If he did, he didn't put it in his personal logs or anywhere else in the database that I can find."

Ariella could hear the frustration in his voice. It would have been nice to find out where the purple planet was, but in the meantime, they had other planets to explore. "Has Ryo or Viktor tried to contact me?"

"No, but your sister did. When we told her you were resting, she said it would keep until you rose."

Nodding Ariella walked over to her communication console and punched the code for Ryo's quarters aboard his vessel. Before the call tone even finished ringing through to his quarters, Ryo's face filled her view screen.

Behind her, she heard the sounds of chairs scraping across her flooring and knew that her mates were heading her way. One hand—Demit's—settled on her right shoulder. Xymus stood to her left and wrapped his right arm around her waist. The three of them faced Ryo as a unit and she couldn't have felt more complete than she did at that moment.

Leaning back in his chair with his arms crossed behind his neck, Ryo gazed directly into the view screen. "Good evening, Cousin Ariella. You have

news from your trip to the surface?" Ryo asked.

If he only knew. "Yes. Quite a bit actually. First, I'd like you to meet my mates. Xymus to my left, and Demit to my right. They both reported to Viktor and are the ones responsible for securing the data from the crashed vessel below."

"Had they made any headway?"

"Some, but an unexpected visit from grandmother today made breaking the encryption and deciphering the information within the files child's play."

Ryo looked to the right of the screen then straightened in his chair. Within moments, Viktor approached Ryo's desk from the left where the camera couldn't see. She didn't know how long he'd been in the room or even if there were others still hidden. It wasn't her place to know that though, just report what had transpired.

"Tell me everything," Ryo demanded, his interest now peaked.

Without hesitation, Ariella began to fill in the details of her day, with Demit and Xymus adding the details she'd glossed over. By the time she'd gotten to the part where her grandmother had lain her hands upon her and gifted her with the *Hienial* language, both Ryo and Viktor had both risen to face the communications terminal.

And when she finally started to wind her story down, telling them what Demit and Xymus had

learned while she slept, both men wore pained expressions. "With a rumor telling of that much power, there will be a race amongst the various species to find that one planet and acquire the power for themselves," Viktor muttered.

Ryo nodded. "Then we must do all we can to find it first, though we cannot and will not ignore the planets where we know the *Halflings* were abandoned. That is still our primary mission—at least unless the Lady Goddess deems otherwise."

"So, what would you like the three of us to do now, Ryo?"

Ryo's eyes glinted with laughter. "Follow your grandmother's directive of course. You have a mating to complete. We'll see the three of you aboard the command bridge of my vessel tomorrow at noon."

With that said, her communications terminal went black. Swallowing the lump that seemed to have lodged in her throat, Ariella turned to her mates and met their heated gazes. "Well, you heard the man..."

* * * *

Demit read her thoughts and realized it wasn't until they were in the bedroom that she even thought about what their true mating would entail. Her sister had once told her how her two

mates possessed her at the same time. He felt her fissure of fear as she recalled thinking it sounded painful. Now that she'd had *her* two men within her, she was sure it would be painful. She was also sure she'd never be able to take them both at the same time.

He swallowed thickly. They must do this. It was decreed by the Lady Goddess. They *must* triad mate before noon this day. His throat burned as he watched the indecision in her eyes. Neither of them would ever think to force her. Still, what would happen if they didn't complete the ritual in the allotted time?

Suddenly, she stood up straighter and looked each of them in the eye in turn. "We must do this. I only ask you to be as gentle as you can. I—I admit to being a bit frightened by the whole matter."

"It is as it should be. Last night you were still untried," Xymus added. "Please do not think us the unfeeling monsters our fathers were. We will make it as pleasurable for you as we can. Also, do not forget, we can shift—and we will, if need be, to see to your comfort."

Demit nodded in agreement. Hurting her was the last thing either of them wanted to do. "Perhaps we should just relax first and let nature take its course." He felt such pride and love for her when she nodded her agreement. She was so

brave—their bold mate who had come to their rescue and completed their lives.

Wrapping their arms about her waist, Demit in the front and Xymus in the back, they both kissed her long and slow. It was a measure of her courage that she didn't run screaming from the room, knowing how large Demit was. She had no idea what he could do—or would do—to make this a wonderful experience.

He thrust his tongue into her mouth, tasting her sweetness, reveling in the fact that now he and Xymus were forever complete. Xymus kissed her neck, his arms reaching around her, hands cupping her breasts.

Ariella squirmed when he reached beneath the hem of her robe and traveled up her thigh to the golden treasure between her legs. Warm cream washed over his fingers as he slid them between her plump lips. He almost groaned at the thought of sinking his cock into her tightness again. This time he wanted her ass. Xymus could take her pussy again while he tunneled his shaft up her tight little hole.

"Do you like that?" He wanted to hear her voice it, tell them what she wanted. It would make it so much easier. If she could get beyond her shyness and show them exactly how bold she was, it would be better for all of them. He was sure of it.

"Yes."

At least she answered. Though her face was red, it was still more than he'd hoped. "Tell me what you like. Ride my hand, my fingers and show me what feels good." She groaned into his mouth as he covered her lips with his own once again. His tongue thrust deep, claiming her, branding her. She was theirs and would belong to no other.

"Of course I won't, silly." She'd pulled back to look into his eyes. "I belong only to you and Xymus. Do you think I would hold to myself to this age, only to go wandering after I've found my mates?" She framed his face with her hands. "Shame on you for thinking such things." She turned her gaze to Xymus who had echoed his thoughts. "Shame on you both." She rose up on her toes and kissed him then. Her inexperienced lips slid over his, making him want her more and more. She was their innocent mate. Theirs to have, to hold and to teach the pleasures of the flesh.

"And what a good time we'll have, too. I suspect."

"Enough talk, Demit," Xymus growled. "I want to complete this before she changes her mind." He softened his words with a wink, his hands reaching around her to pluck at her nipples, causing her to close her eyes and groan.

"Yesss!"

Demit smiled with satisfaction. What a bright student their mate was.

She smiled up at him dryly. "What do you expect? I'm reading your mind." She threw her head back and moaned again when Xymus bent his head to her neck and suckled while Demit slid his fingers around the tight bud between her legs until she screamed her first release.

Tipping her head forward, she leaned toward Demit, her fingers sliding over the tattoo on his shoulder and down over his smooth chest. She kissed his ribs, his sternum and he sucked in a sharp breath when her nails bit into the hard buds of his nipples. He wanted nothing more at that moment, than to throw her down on the bed and shove his cock into her creaming pussy and hear her scream. But he had other plans for her this morning. Today, he would take her virgin ass and she would love it. Of that there was no doubt.

He wanted nothing better than to take the time to know her, to romance her and to love her—but time was of the essence. They must complete their mating before noon and they were running out of precious time.

Swinging her up into his arms, he carried her across the room and deposited her on the bed. Stripping the robe from her lithe body, he and Xymus took a few moments to stare at her female perfection. A lump formed in his throat when he

noticed she looked up at them both with an expression not unlike that of Xymus's which he was sure mirrored his own.

She crawled onto the bed and held out her arms. "Come to me my mates and show me how much you love me."

Her long hair tumbled over her shoulders in sweet disarray and Demit nearly lost all control. He wanted her more than he'd wanted anyone in his life. He glanced at Xymus at the thought, immediately sorry.

Xymus grinned. *It is fine, love. All is as it should be. Our love and caring for each other will never diminish, but we must procreate to rebuild our race and we cannot do it alone.*

Demit relaxed and raised his hands to remove Xy's clothes. He couldn't wait to get naked and into his mate's arms—both of them.

* * * *

Xymus watched her move onto the bed, his heart stuttering with desire. How could he not want such a beautiful woman? The Goddess surely knew what she was about, bringing them all together. She was the one woman he could love as much as he loved Demit. There was no doubt in his mind that the three of them would get on well together.

She looked up them, seductively licking her full lips. Her golden hair tumbled over her shoulders in an array of soft, silken curls. He wanted nothing more than to bury his face in the tangled mass and breathe in her scent, her very essence.

Deep blue eyes gazed into his and she smiled. If he didn't know better, he may have believed her sexy smile was just for him, but he knew she included them both in her invitation to join her on the bed.

After helping Demit undress, Xymus fondled his lover's cock. This time he wouldn't feel the hard member tunneling through his flesh. Before meeting their mate, he once thought it possible to resent any female mate if they found her. Now, he knew better. There was no way he could resent her receiving Demit's love. She deserved him. Deserved them. He needed her in a way he'd never thought possible before. Following Demit's lead, he lowered himself on the bed.

"On your back, if you please, Xymus. I would love our mate to crawl up on your lap and settle over your cock. I can't wait to see her lower herself onto you."

Xymus did as he was asked, needing to feel himself inside her again. The thought of his hard cock thrusting into her hot, wet channel had his shaft dripping with anticipation.

Ariella climbed atop him, straddling his hips.

Rocking back and forth, she spread her cream over the hard flesh of his cock and he groaned, wanting—needing—to sink within her silken depths.

Finally, when he was sure he'd had too much and would spill his seed on himself, she took him in her hand and guided him into her tight sheath. "That feels so good, *mi zoyma*," he panted.

She smiled down into his eyes, pushing the hair from his face with a gentle hand. "It is, isn't it? I could do this all day, Xymus, but something tells me Demit has other plans."

"Damn right I do," He growled. "Lay down on Xy's chest, love."

She did what she was told as Demit prepared her for what was to come. Xymus felt the telltale signs of Demit's preparations. Warm oil slid over his thighs as their third prepared her. The thought of them both coming while sheathed tight in their lover's body nearly thrust him over the edge. He didn't know what he would do when he could also feel the sensation of Demit's cock brushing his through the thin membrane that would separate them.

He kissed Ariella, fondling her breasts as he felt Demit working to relax the muscles of her ass. The last thing either of them wanted to do was hurt their treasure after waiting years to find her. Lifting his head, he suckled her nipples into his

mouth. One at a time, he licked and laved them, needing to give her as much pleasure as he could while Demit readied her for what was to follow.

Deep down, he knew Demit would never hurt her, but she couldn't know that. Still, she lay over him, allowing their lover to massage the slick oil into her ass while she waited for him to impale her virgin hole.

* * * *

Ariella stilled, her breathing brought to a standstill when Demit inserted a finger into her lubed ass. It felt good at first, when he'd only massaged the oil into the tight ring of her ass. She knew it was small, tight, if the mere insertion of his finger brought her to such unfailing attention.

Still, after a few moments, she found herself relaxing, even attempting to thrust back onto that lone finger as he wriggled it around in her ass. When she could no longer stand it, she thrust back more forcefully, wanting more. Needing more. She moaned when he inserted a second finger then groaned when he inserted the third. She felt so tight, so full. What would she do when he attempted to put his cock inside her? He was so big it would hurt her no matter how thoroughly he prepared her. She knew that and still she wanted this with everything within her.

She stiffened when he pressed the head of his cock to her hole. It would hurt, he could do no other than thrust into her. Still, she gritted her teeth, trying to relax, somehow knowing the more relaxed she was, the easier this first time would be.

Surprisingly enough, the head of his cock slid right in. She tried to turn and look. It felt like a cock and not a finger, but it was more slender than she remembered.

"Remember, *mi zoyma*, I told you we could shift our shape into anything." Demit smoothed a soothing hand over the small of her back. "I have merely shifted the shape of my cock to allow for your innocence. When you have grown more comfortable, I shall return to my full size. You merely need to tell me when you wish me to do so."

How could anyone be so thoughtful? She looked at Xymus who smoothed back her riot of hair from her face with a smile.

"He speaks the truth, love. You need only ask and you shall receive. Either of us would shift our shape to anything to please you." He followed his declaration with a kiss so tender it left tears in her eyes.

She'd been so fortunate to find them. They were quickly becoming her life.

"As it should be mate." Demit said from behind

her.

At a nod from Xymus, they both began to work a slow rhythm that had her rocking with pleasure. The amazing sensation of Xymus stroking in and out of her pussy and Demit thrusting in her ass was almost too much to bear. She rocked back, thrusting her ass up at they impaled her.

"Please," she whimpered. "More, Demit. I need more." Demit's cock grew longer and thicker almost immediately. His thrusts became a bit more forceful and her soft sighs became guttural groans. "More, Demit. I need you bigger, faster."

"If I move faster I'll lose control, love. I don't wish to hurt you."

She shook her head thrusting her ass back at him. "You won't hurt me. I swear. Please, Demit I need more!"

Grasping her hips, Demit thrust himself deeper into her ass and she screamed out her second orgasm of the night. It wasn't until he finally swelled to his full size that she was able to reach another. When he finally drove her over the edge a third time, she knew the time had come to complete the bond.

Leaning down, she licked at the sweat soaked skin of Xy's chest. Her canines grew longer, becoming that of the dragon that lived within her. She wanted this. She needed to take their blood. The meaning was clear. Three as one. The taking

of each other's blood would make them all stronger.

Xymus jerked and groaned when she sank her teeth into the thick muscles of his chest. His shaft became larger and thicker than before and she gurgled out her surprise around her teeth. Thick, rich blood seeped through the holes where she'd bitten him. She pulled her teeth free and lapped it up, needing to sooth.

Wanting to taste Demit, she pushed herself up, turned her head and latched onto his shoulder. He too, jerked and groaned, when her teeth sank deep, his cock growing impossibly larger in her ass.

She bit down on her bottom lip in an attempt to keep herself from screaming again when they both leaned into her and bit her neck. A bright light surrounded them for a split second as a myriad of feelings rushed through her. Her heart felt near to bursting with the amount of affection she felt for them, from them. Her next orgasm hit her hard and she screamed her delight to the four sound proof walls of her room and immediately succumbed to her exhaustion.

* * * *

With only a few minutes left before the Goddess' deadline, Xymus, Ariella and Demit prepared to

transport to Ryo's starship. Xymus could feel Ariella's nervousness and Demit's trepidation. None of them knew what to expect from the upcoming meeting with the Lady Goddess, or what she had yet to ask of them. It was enough to make a grown man tremble. "It is time," he announced, though they were all three aware of time keeper's constant ticking.

Ariella nodded then stepped forward, pressing the transport button on her computer terminal. Just before the transport began he reached for his mates' hands, gripping Demit's in his left and Ariella's hand in his left.

In less than a minute, the three found themselves aboard the *Pride*. The command bridge of the vessel was filled with personnel. Not only the normal regiment of crewmembers, but Ariella's sister Arabella sat in one of the observation chairs. Two men, one of which was Viktor, stood behind her, their hands resting on her shoulders. Obviously, the other man had to be her other mate, Merrick. Merrick's nephew, Michal, which he recognized from a family *vid-image* he'd seen in Ariella's quarters, sat in the navigator's seat. Ryo, the Lady Goddess's chosen leader of the *Hienial Halflings*, sat in the captain's chair, looking every inch the King he was.

Before they could even greet Ryo or make their way to Viktor's side, a flash of blinding white light

filled the command deck. Unable to stand the brilliance, Xymus and the others closed their eyes and turned their heads away. Only when the light began to dim behind their eyelids did they chance opening them again.

In front of Ryo, wearing a gown of shimmering gold and crystal, stood the Lady Goddess. Her deep red hair wrapped around her waist like a living cloak. Beauty and elegance personified, Ariella's grandmother looked like everything feminine and mysterious women the galaxy-wide were known for. It was obvious where Ariella received the majority of her DNA.

Ryo stood and bowed his head. "Good morrow to you, Mother Goddess," he whispered, his tone deferential and filled with love. After running her hand through Ryo's hair as she would a child's, she turned toward the three of them.

Xymus straightened his spine, noticing that both Demit and Ariella mimicked his movements.

A smile wreathed her face when she looked at Ariella. Her crystalline blue eyes glittered with happiness as she stopped in front of Ariella and placed her hand over his mate's belly. "I am so pleased you accomplished your first task, my children."

"What do you mean," Ariella asked, her tone wary and hesitant.

"You have given all the *Hienial Halflings* hope

this day by being the first to carry a female child."

A gasp escaped, how could he not be surprised by this news. "But how is that possible?" Xymus demanded.

"Ariella has the ability to heal the *Hienial Halflings*, as her mother did," she admitted.

From across the room, Arabella interrupted, "So what's my sister supposed to do? Go around healing whatever *Hienial Halfling* she comes across?"

Her grandmother snorted, a sound Xymus never imagined such a powerful being would ever make. "She is not the only one to inherit your mother's gifts, child. And no, only those who are meant to be healed will be healed."

"And how does she heal them?" Demit asked.

Xymus could hear the fear in his voice, feel his emotional pain through their mate-bond.

"She only has to be in their presence for it to happen. She need not even lay a hand on the males for them to be healed." She smiled. "So you needn't worry, jealous one."

Both men relaxed. Xymus and Demit had feared that she'd tell them Ariella would have to be intimate with the men in order to heal their seed. Even at the Goddess' demand, he would not have accepted that decree and neither would Demit. Thank the Goddess it hadn't come to that though.

Ryo cleared his throat, then voiced the question that had been in the back of Xymus mind since yesterday. "You said the first part of the mission...what is the second part?" Viktor's brows rose, obviously awaiting the answer as well.

"You must travel to the planets you have discovered. On one of those planets, you'll discover the means to find your home world. The world which gave birth to all *Hienial* females will once again be rich with girl children, *if* you follow my instruction. But first, you must find all your people. You cannot afford to lose even one."

"Which one?"

"That I can not tell you, my child. Have faith in me and in yourselves. I believe that you will find what you're looking for, in time." Before they could question her further, the Lady Goddess disappeared, this time with a lot less fanfare than her arrival.

"What now?" Xymus asked.

Ryo's gaze darted around the room, taking in each person in turn. "Now we do as she asks. We begin searching the planets the three of you discovered in the database."

"Which one would you like our fleet to head toward first?" Merrick questioned. "As always, the *Savari* vessels will follow where you lead."

Turning his attention to the Navigator's computer terminal, Ryo tilted his head in

concentration. "Which planet do you recommend, Michal Raden?"

Without hesitation, Michal pointed to one of the golden planets farthest from their current location. "This one."

"Why that one out of all the ones you could have chosen?" Ryo asks.

Michal shrugged but kept his gaze focused on the flashing golden planet on his computer screen. "Just a feeling I have."

* * * *

Jerineau Arden switched on the communications console and began transmitting the recorded message before she strapped herself into her stasis pod. Like the rest of the women, she could only stay in her pod and hope the ship set itself down on autopilot before something else failed.

They'd been lucky. This planet was the only one in the system capable of supporting life. There was a small community on the surface she hoped was friendly. Otherwise, they may as well have taken their chances attempting to get to another system.

Pausing, she waited to seal her tube until the message began to play in its loop. With luck they would land and their stasis pods would open after the ship vented, returning atmosphere to the

empty passageways.

"This is Jerineau Arden aboard the *Amazonian* research vessel, *Inquisitor*. We are losing life support quickly and are attempting to set down on an unknown planet. Coordinates are imbedded in a text file with this message. Any ships in the vicinity please respond."

She closed her pod after the message played a third time, confident that it would continue to repeat at least until the ship landed itself on the surface of the planet below. Closing herself in this pod hadn't been her first choice. In fact, it had been one of her last, ranking right above death. Still, she thought, the damnable pods were little better than coffins in which to bury people alive. She took a deep breath of the flowery-smelling tranquilizing agent as it misted into her tube and willed herself to sleep. Perhaps she would wake in the arms of a handsome man. She snorted as the agent affected her nervous system and began to shut her body down. *Yeah, like that will happen. A man of her own was nothing more than a dream. The last unmated man she'd had the pleasure to meet had been older than her grandsire. The rumors they'd heard of male dominated planets were all myths.*

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