

Loose Id

my alien is a
SEX FIEND

Nicole L. Pierce

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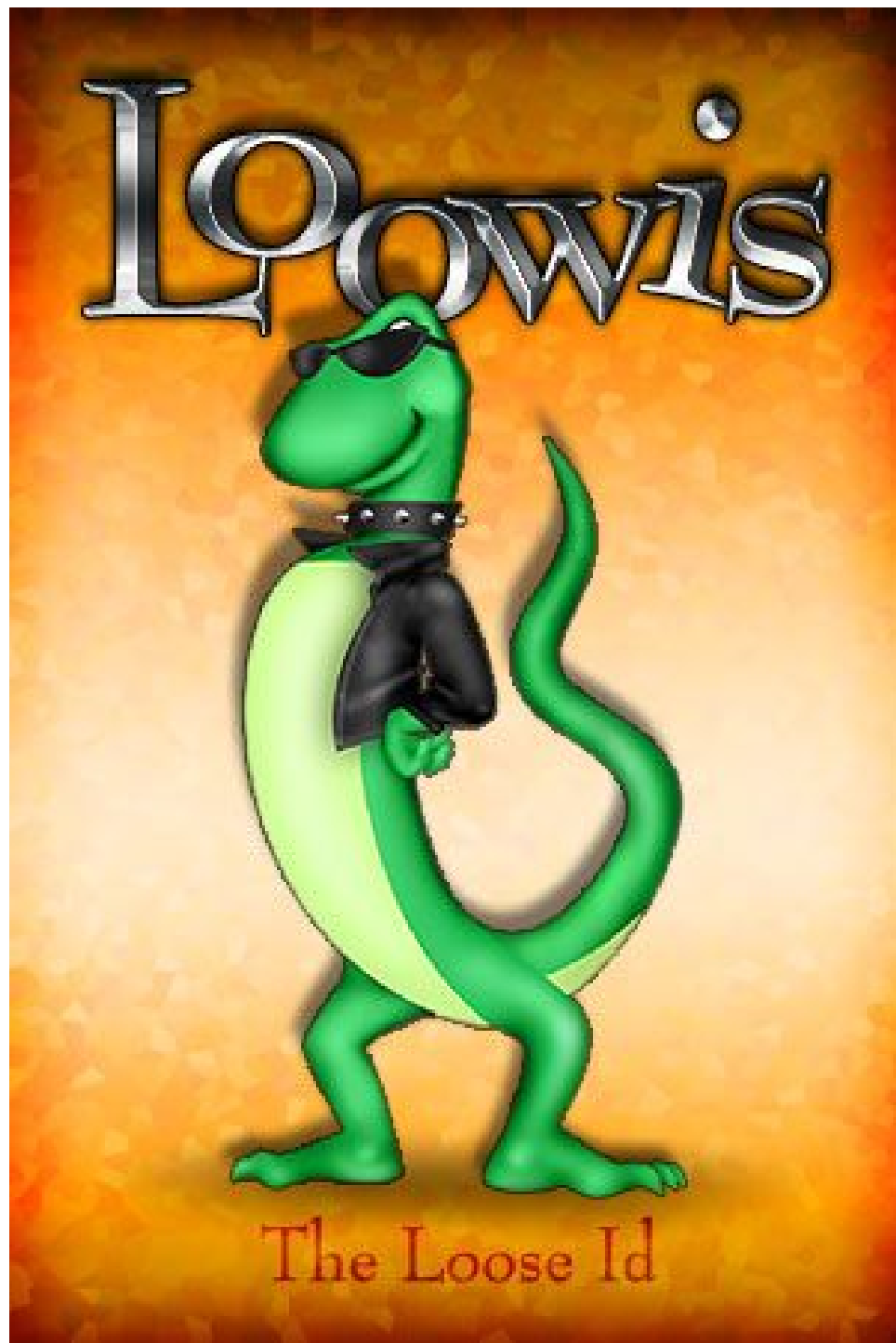
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Chapter One

Bree Delaney turned the corner from her beauty salon, breathing in fresh, cool air after inhaling chemicals all day. The sky was darkening on the deserted, tree-lined suburban street and she wanted to reach her small apartment a few blocks down before the world plunged into blackness. Her suede fringe jacket and matching fringe purse flapped in the wind, smacking against her bottom, reminding her of whips, her newest secret sexual interest since reading about them in an erotica novel. Her tastes were growing decidedly kinky, and it was all Draken's fault. Too bad she'd never see him again, much less experience her naughty fantasy.

Bree looked around nervously as she strode down the sidewalk. Her pumps made it hard to walk fast, and the wind was also blowing into her, brushing her auburn hair off her forehead. Suddenly, a strong, unearthly breeze blew her skirt up in back, baring her panty-clad bottom, and she let out a little cry as she felt a familiar presence. Whirling around, her heart slamming against her chest, she felt the world spinning around her.

"Draken Blade!" Her lungs burned as she gulped in a few breaths. It couldn't be; she'd given up on him long ago. "How...why... I can't believe you sneaked up on me like this!" Her muscles tensed as her head whirled. "You shouldn't be here, creep." She took a step backward, but her knees wouldn't have held her up if she'd tried to move any farther away.

He stared at her, grinning. Draken's dark skin stretched perfectly over nicely chiseled features, and his dreadlocks hung halfway down his massive chest. His power washed over her in a heated rush. As always, when she hadn't seen him for a long time, she was impressed by his size and strength. Not to mention his broad, dimpled smile and deep, dark eyes that pulled her in. It was so hard to resist that sexy Dreauxoid gaze, but she forced herself to break his seductive spell.

"Sorry I startled you -- and caused the gust of wind," Draken said with a chuckle, his voice low and threaded with silk. "I wanted to lift your skirt to get a look at your sexy ass. Why are you wearing that horrible underwear, babe? Thought I'd convinced you to stop wearing underwear long ago. For me."

He'd convinced her to do that and plenty more, she acknowledged, her face flaming. She blinked fast to clear her blurred vision. Shocked that her unreliable former lover was really here, she turned her head. It'd been two long years. She didn't want him back, did she? No, he'd only play with her and leave her again.

"I know your thoughts," Draken said. "Yes, I've been gone for too long, but I've come back for you. This time, it's for good." He took a few steps forward, lifted her hand to his lips kissing her knuckles. She could feel his hot breath as he said, "I just want to lie with you for eternity and never let you go."

She heard a laugh erupt from her throat, a bitter one. "You're just messing with me, Draken. I'm thirty-three and hardly glamorous like the women who chase you on Dreaux." She saw him open his mouth to speak, but she cut him off quickly, her voice loud and firm. "I've seen women much prettier and more sophisticated than me throwing themselves at you, and I don't feel like competing anymore -- I won't do it."

"Shut up, Bree. It's no contest." He roughly pulled her into his embrace, and her love for him almost made her cry, but she pulled away. Spitting at him, she tried to knee him in the groin, but he caught her thigh in his big hand and laughed before setting it down.

"You don't want to do that," he said. "Look into my eyes, beautiful. See my heart. And yours."

She boldly met his stare, then regretted it. His face grew intense and serious and she knew he was overriding her senses with his Dreauxoid powers. Damn it all, Bree felt herself helplessly drawn by the golden glow of his eyes. She wanted to resist him again, and tried, but this time her body wouldn't listen to her mind. She was his to command as he pulled her into the sanctuary of his comforting arms.

Hardly able to breathe, she found herself caressing the hard planes of his face while assessing him as if he were a rare jewel. His smooth features glistened with sweat as his never-ending witch-stare bore into her. He wore a diamond in one ear and a white T-shirt that hugged his broad-shouldered torso. Tight blue jeans outlined his long, muscular legs, and his formidable cock. God help her, she could feel her pussy pulsating and dripping nectar on her cotton underwear as she glanced down at his glorious emblem of masculinity.

As if reading her thoughts, he said, "I want you too."

She sucked in a shaky breath and actually found the temporary strength to pull out of his arms, a painful gesture as her body screamed out to him. "Then you're in for a disappointment."

"I don't think so. I promised that I'd come back, and here I am, ready to reclaim what's mine." His gaze never left hers. "I know about your newest fetish, too, and will be delighted to explore it with you."

Damn him! She was glad for the darkness as she felt her face heating along with her ass. He'd no doubt drive her wild with a whip if she gave him a chance. "I'm not going to let you humor me now, you bastard." Bree knew she was breathing fast. "No," she said, then moaned.

His lips spoke over hers. "Yes, indeed."

"Oh, help me, no. It's too late for us."

"Time isn't the same on Dreaux. You know that. I was on a mission and I didn't realize how long I'd been gone."

"You and your missions!" She heard her voice trembling as she backed up enough to take in his sensual male presence. As he lifted an eyebrow, looking amused, she felt her gut tightening up. "This isn't the least big amusing, Drake the Snake."

He laughed as he heard the nickname his friends had given him, and his mirth irritated her all the more.

With all her force, she shoved his chest and broke free of his grasp. On shaky legs, she turned away and strolled ahead of him, her chin held high. No way would Draken see how glad she was that he'd managed to triumph in his assignment and that he hadn't ended up in the Void of Hell. For two years, she'd felt him, yet he'd been galaxies away. Huffing and puffing, she mumbled, "How dare you make light of this, you worm."

"It's snake, remember?"

She could hear his shoes hitting the sidewalk behind her and wondered if he was using his magic to draw her to him. Damn him, anyway, but it felt as if his fingers were stroking her wet slit. She refused to acknowledge it, although she felt like sinking to the ground.

"I have some new toys," he said, teasing her.

"I don't want your sex toys." She blocked out the vision of Draken holding a whip over his head. "I want a human," she said, lengthening her strides. "You know humans -- the creatures that actually have *real* hearts and can love."

"I'm half-human."

She quickened her pace, knowing she could never get away from him unless he chose to let her go. Well, she'd have to make him want to release her. She'd loved him for so long, had given him so many chances, and each time they grew close to bonding, he took off on some foolhardy mission on another planet. He'd used up his chances.

"I want you for my lifemate," he said, a few steps behind her.

Her heart sped up. He'd never proposed before. "No, thanks. I'd rather marry a human, stay mortal, and not be abandoned all the time."

His large, warm hand closed around her arm and jerked her around, making her face him. His Dreauxoid eyes burned with his desire, and the breath left her lungs.

"You love me," he said, staring down at her. "Admit it."

Under the stars and one dim streetlight, the entire scene seemed surreal. She didn't say anything; she couldn't speak.

His sultry mouth curled up and his dimples flashed. "Who knows your body as well as I do? I love to satisfy all your kinkiest needs and desires." His stare seemed to vibrate straight through her as she felt herself turning to liquid. Would he dare talk about...? "Who else knows just the way you like to be spanked or pleased while chained? Who do you trust to fulfill your dreams without harming you? You know you can trust me completely. I've proven myself over and over again."

She felt her pulse racing fast, pictured his tall, strong body nude, glistening, dark and sweaty. Her throat worked hard, but she managed to say, "Sex isn't everything, except to a Dreauxoid. You think that your sexual prowess can make up for all the times you've left me? I need more than hot sex from you."

"We're best friends too."

Oh, God, he was right. She stood there, staring at his male beauty, the white streetlight illuminating his ebony skin and perfect features. Draken was back. Draken...

He jerked her into him and kissed her, and she melted at the touch of his demanding lips against hers. His tongue was on fire, sweeping through her entire mouth as she slid her own tongue against his. He pressed harder against her, so hard that their teeth scraped for a moment and her head bent backward as he held the small of her back. Most women couldn't kiss Draken without tiptoeing, but Bree stood six feet tall to his six feet six, and they fit together like a finished jigsaw puzzle. She was generously curved and full figured, but he towered over her, making her feel petite and feminine. In his arms, she knew she was right where she was supposed to be.

When he pulled back, she cried out and he grinned, his hands still gently gripping her arms.

"Lifemates, that's us," Draken said. "We should bond and make it official. Emotionally, we're already there, girl."

"Girl, my ass." She hated how her heart was softening against her will. "I'm thirty-three years old."

"Earth years. When we're in bed, you're my little girl, no?" In a voice only slightly above a whisper he said, "I know how to use a whip, my love, although I'll torment you until I allow you the pleasure of my skills."

Thinking of how he dominated her while making love, a naughty fantasy she'd always nursed, she felt her pussy spasm. It was a fantasy that Draken fulfilled perfectly. And if he'd whip her -- well, if she thought about that now, she'd rip his clothes off and lose all control.

On top of that, he hadn't seen her naked for a while. She'd gained five pounds since their last encounter and it felt like twenty. "Draken, I -- I'm fat and ugly."

"Stop!" Draken flinched and, for the first time, she could see his compassion. "Human brainwashing. You know I love every inch of your beautiful curves. I hate how human women are always trying to diet themselves into oblivion. Bree, you are the perfect woman for me."

Oh, God, he actually believed that. She couldn't give in. No, no, she *had* to give in. Just as she was about to let down her defenses and throw herself into his arms, she heard heavy footsteps approaching from behind. Quickly, she turned in that direction and let out an exasperated breath.

"Bree Delany!" her mother snapped, her face radiating both anger and alarm. "I was so worried about you!"

Draken and Bree both stared at the tall, robust woman with long auburn hair pulled back at her nape. Wire-rimmed glasses slid down her straight nose as she stopped before them. She wore a large black T-shirt and baggy blue jeans as if trying to hide her understated beauty and generous curves.

"Mother," Bree said, glancing at Draken...for what? Help? They exchanged a glance and he looked a little amused, having butted heads with her mother in the past. When Bree again locked gazes with Doreen Delaney, her mother was focused solely on her, ignoring the tall, handsome man at Bree's side.

"Bree, you didn't call me to let me know you were closing late. You know I worry."

"Yes, and I'm sorry." Bree felt a pang of guilt and tried to loosen things up. Waving her hand in Draken's direction, she said, falsely bright, "Um...look, who came to see me!" She took Draken's hand and smiled at her mother, hoping to soften her mother's stern expression. Although she was still upset with Draken, she realized now how much they needed to hash out their problems. Doreen's unexpected appearance frustrated Bree; she had interrupted her time with the man she both loved and wanted to throttle.

Draken sprung to action, sliding his arm around Bree's shoulders while humbly dropping his gaze.

"It's so nice to see you again, Ms. Delaney," he said, his voice low, smooth, almost seductive.

Doreen Delaney's mouth remained a disapproving straight line as her stare slid away from Bree and rested on Draken's bowed head. "When did you get into town?" she asked in a demanding voice. "I was so hoping to never see you again. You've broken my daughter's heart enough times and if I weren't a lady, I'd kick you in the groin."

"Bree already tried that," Draken said, lifting his head, and Bree could see his lips working hard not to twitch up into a smile. "She certainly inherited her spunk from you, ma'am. I admire that trait a lot."

Doreen's face, white under the streetlight, tightened. "I'll show you spunk," she snapped. "This is for all the times you made my baby cry!" She reached back and slapped Draken across the cheek with a loud, ringing *smack*.

"Mother!" Bree protested, although she felt he deserved it. She had to hide a smile of her own now.

Draken looked surprised for a moment, then grinned with amusement and took her mother's hand, bending over to kiss it. "You pack a good punch, Ms. Delaney, and I certainly had that coming."

Doreen sniffed and lifted her chin in defiance; Bree covered her face. Her mother could embarrass her like nobody else. *What would she say or do next?*

"May I ask you a question, ma'am?" Draken's voice was calm and respectful and Bree dared to peek through her fingers. Draken had cocked his head, appraising her mother in a way that was making her mother blush a little as she shifted her weight from one leg to the other and back again.

"Look, young man, I don't want you talking to me about anything --"

"How do you keep yourself looking so young? Before you came close, I thought another woman around Bree's age was coming toward us. I really don't know how you do it."

Bree had to choke back laughter as her mother's lips moved without words, her blush deepening to fuchsia. Finally, Doreen sputtered a little before finally blurting out, "You didn't see me, Draken. I came up from behind." Her blush deepened as he grinned and shrugged. "Besides, I don't look young at all. I had a heart attack; I'm older than my years."

"Nonsense! You look thirty-five at the most," Draken said, seriously, "and that's on the high side. No wonder your daughter is so attractive. She favors you so much. Would you mind if I walked you back to the apartment? I really don't like either Bree or you on the street after dark without a man --"

"Bosh!" Doreen said, but she didn't sound half as harsh as before. "Bree and I both know martial arts."

"I'm old-fashioned," Draken said. "Each of you lovely ladies can grab on to an arm and I'll be the envy of every man on -- Earth. But first, I have something I've been hanging on to -- something I want you to have."

"Don't you use your charm on me, you rogue."

"I got this while overseas on a rather dangerous business trip. It has you written all over it." Draken reached into his back pocket and pulled out a small box.

This time Doreen was too curious to lash out at him. As she took the box, Draken looked over at Bree and winked. She felt a wave of love toward him that she wanted to fight, but really, he was so good to her difficult mother. Doreen had come to live with Bree in her small apartment after having had a mild heart attack. Bree's father had left them when she

was small, and she was an only child. Bree wished that her mother would get a life of her own and leave hers alone.

Doreen gasped when she saw the four-carat diamond necklace set in a gold inlay.

"I can't accept that," she said, but her eyes twinkled.

"Sure you can, Mom," Bree said, with encouragement. "It'll look great on you."

"Let me put it around your pretty neck," Draken said, "and while we walk home, I'll tell you how I got it, all right?"

Doreen looked uncertainly at Bree who smiled. She watched as her mother slowly turned her gaze back to Draken, her lips turning upward slightly. "You always knew how to tear down my defenses, you shit. I can see why Bree fell in love with you, but you'll answer to me if you hurt her again."

As he fastened her necklace, Draken said smoothly, "That isn't in my plans this time, Ms. Delaney. I think I'm a better person than before. And I love your daughter with all my heart."

Draken and Bree dropped a blushing, giggling Doreen off at the apartment. "He's such a nice, handsome young man," she said to Bree just before she closed the door.

The two of them turned to one another and laughed softly. "I can't believe you got my mom eating out of your hand," Bree said, feeling considerably more relaxed and less angry. Watching Draken's kindness toward her impossible mother had reminded her of how special he was.

"It's my Dreaxoid charm."

"I'm sorry that she hit you," Bree said, touching his face gently.

"I've been hit harder. By you."

They both laughed again, and she started feeling at ease with him like she always did. Draken could relax her. She was herself around him, imperfections and all, and he still seemed to love her.

"It was a nice touch giving Mom that necklace," Bree said. "If she was still angry at you before that, the necklace dissolved any lingering ill will. Telling her you risked your life to get it for her was too much, but I think she wanted to believe you."

"I think so too. But she's not the only one I'm presenting with a gift." Draken snapped his fingers and another box appeared in his hand. He held it out.

Bree felt excited tingles go down her spine even though she told herself she wasn't going to be swayed by jewels. She opened the box, and gasped when she saw a beautiful necklace set with perfect pink diamonds and pearls. It was the most gorgeous item she'd ever laid eyes on. Before she could form her objections, he took the necklace out of the case and clasped it around her neck. The jewels seemed to glow, warming as they touched her skin. She gazed up at Draken stunned, the yellow light from the hallway making him seem like

the otherworldly creature that he was. And so deliciously sexy. “Do you still want me to go back?” He warmed both of her hands in his, his thumbs rubbing over her flesh.

No! She shivered inside, but thought again about all he’d put her through... She couldn’t afford to get distracted by his charm because it would hurt too much when he left her again. Pulling away, she reached behind her to take off the necklace.

“Don’t try to take it off. I put a spell on it, and trust me, it stays on you from now on.”

“Draken, let’s not do this again --”

“It’s dangerous for me to go back.”

“Dangerous?” Bree froze at his admission. He never talked to her about the danger he faced as a freedom fighter. She stared at him. Draken was the bravest man she’d ever met. Things must have become dire for Draken to claim it was too dangerous for him to go back. Her heart thumped in her chest. “What do you mean?”

He gave her a grim smile. “After the last mission, I know that I can’t go back for centuries, until the heat dies down. Half the rogue creatures on the planet want to get rid of me.”

Suddenly her anger turned to fear. “Oh! I don’t want that. Were you ever in any jeopardy? The Void --”

“There have been many attempts to throw me there.” He chuckled as if it were funny. “As you know, once a Dreaxoid is in the Void of Hell, his immortality doesn’t matter. He is living a death that never ends. I’d rather avoid the place, not exactly where I want to take a vacation.”

Although his words were lighthearted, she shivered. “What happened?”

“One of the Powers, a guy named Shadow, was corrupt. I busted him. No easy trick, I might add. The other good Powers sentenced him to the Void and wanted to name me as his successor, make me a Power.” He looked bemused.

Bree’s mouth dropped open. “A half-human, a Power? Wow.” She couldn’t help beaming with pride. “That’s quite an honor.”

“And quite a pain in the ass. I thanked them humbly and refused, so I gave up their special protection.”

“Oh, Draken, for their protection alone you should have accepted. I couldn’t bear to see you hurt in any way.”

“If I’d accepted a position like that, I could never leave Dreaux. I could never come back to you.” His hard gaze drilled into her until she shivered.

“Oh Lord, you gave it up for me,” she said, shocked and overwhelmed.

“I’ve no regrets.”

“But you’d really be able to make a difference in your world.”

“I still can work from the outside.”

“And you’d be safe,” she continued, undeterred. “You’re always in some sort of mess and I’m always afraid for you.” Against her will, she reached out to twist a dreadlock around her finger.

“I’m touched that you care.” He flashed a perfect set of white teeth and took her hand between the heat of both his large palms. “You know I’d be miserable both being stuck on Dreaux forever and having to play by the book. Darling, I work on my own terms. I could never follow the strict laws of the Dreauxoid gods. Some of the rules are terrible, meant to be broken.” He ran a thumb around the back of her hand, causing chills to climb down her back.

“Unfortunately,” he went on, “the Power I busted has a lot of supporters who still walk around free. I’m not even sure who they all are, but they’re forever trying to get at me -- in disguise, of course. I’m tired of living like a ghost to elude the bastards. It’s somebody else’s turn to fight the bad guys on Dreaux. I’ve done my centuries and I’m retired.”

Bree’s gut tightened as she locked on to his deep brown gaze. Sometimes his irises seemed to be spinning; they did now. “What did this Shadow do?”

“Aided the slave owners. Raven and I got rid of most of them, but some still remained. That made me think that somebody higher up was allowing them to exist, and I was right.”

She shut her eyes briefly. When she opened them again, Draken was still gazing at her, not giving anything away.

“Where have you been living?”

“I only left Dreaux two days ago, before I came here. I’ve visited Raven and Natalia in California.” He paused and flashed his dimples. “Watching them, so in love, made it impossible for me not to seek you out.”

Immediately, she thought about Draken’s best friend and his spunky wife. She liked them a lot. “They’re doing well then?” she asked, smiling as she thought of them.

“Quite. I felt like an intruder,” he said. “Of course, they welcomed me warmly, but I felt that my presence was intrusive. I have to find somewhere else to hide out. But first I needed to reclaim you.”

She tried to ignore his statement of claiming her even as her body heated in his arms. “What about the Safe House? You could go there.” He was really worrying her. Even if they couldn’t be lifemates, she wanted to know that somewhere Draken Blade was safe and well.

“I’m trying to hold off going to the Safe House. If you aren’t there with somebody you love, well, there isn’t much to do. That Safe House is nothing but a hotbed of sexual activity.”

“I remember,” she said, recalling their trysts there. She also remembered the women that felt free to hit on him, too. Tonya, the creator of the Safe House, had flirted outrageously with Draken, and he’d flirted back.

He shut his eyes, then opened them wide. “The atmosphere lends itself to sex. Actually, I visited the Safe House a while back and stayed a few weeks to touch base with my friends.”

"But you didn't come to see me." His words hurt.

"I was taking a short break from battle, love. I know how you hate when I fight."

She felt a stab in her gut and frowned at him, knowing he hadn't been celibate. He'd been alone on Sex Island with Tonya; just the thought irked her. The misfit creatures of the world hung their hats at the Safe House. Many beautiful female creatures of all species did, too. "So you found warmth and companionship between the legs of the sluts at the Safe House," she said sarcastically. His silence was an admission that pained her almost more than she could bear. "Damn you! You'll never really want to be with one woman, Draken!" She almost burst into tears, but wouldn't give him the satisfaction.

"Oh, babe, you are so wrong. I only want you from now on. I've had my flings, some of them were even part of my job, but they left me empty." He stared boldly at her, drawing her in with his hypnotic eyes. His hand stroked the underside of her chin, making her swallow hard and tingle all over. "You're the only woman who brings out the human side of me, the one who can make me feel love."

Her guard went up, but she felt herself melting.

"The Dreauxoid in me craves lust, but I'm too human to be satisfied with somebody who only sates my baser urges. I want someone who can love me. I need to belong somewhere for once, and to someone. I need you. If we mate, we can live on Earth, maybe near Raven and Natalia. Raven has become quite the domesticated man since he mated and had a child."

His tender words tempted her. "Please, stop." She hated how she ached for him. He gave nothing away in his expression, but she sensed his loneliness and feeling of alienation. His human mother had passed away centuries ago, and he had no siblings. His Dreauxoid relatives were scattered all over the universe. "You're tired," she said in a soft voice.

He let out a breath. "Very tired, dear. I have no further wish to be a warrior. I'd rather be -- as humans call them -- a husband." His eyes glittered with amusement. "But only to you."

Oh, damn, damn, damn! He was drawing her in again, in his Dreauxoid way. No, she had to set boundaries. Now. Crossing her arms, she said, "Why not blip yourself to a hotel with a huge bed and a silk mattress? You can sleep there."

"Why didn't *I* think of that?" He snapped his fingers and Bree found herself standing in a grand hotel room with red velvet walls, red carpet, a king-size luxurious bed with a circular wooden headboard, and a velvet red bedspread. Draken blinked and the bedspread folded back, exposing black satin sheets.

Chapter Two

Bree stared at the bed with the exposed black satin sheets, her jaw hanging open. "I told you to go somewhere to rest, not take me with you. I need to sort things out."

Draken slid a muscular arm around her shoulders and said, "We can sort things out together -- and have fun at the same time. Come on, Bree. I conjured up this room just to please you. It will be a place to heal our relationship because you won't get rid of me. We *are* going to make things better -- and I can't think of a better place to start than on top of a glorious bed -- together."

"Now you're fighting dirty," Bree said, bridling at his gall. At the same time, she felt like laughing.

"I'm prepared to use all the weapons in my arsenal," Draken said, his startling dark eyes parrying with hers. "All I ask is for one night with you, beautiful. It's not like we've never been intimate before. If you still want me to leave in the morning, I'll go. Forever."

She took a shaky breath. Hell, she couldn't stand the thought of Draken leaving forever. Yet, she knew she couldn't live this way. "Draken, you've taught me a lot about Dreauxoid ways. I know that if we make love, that means we're bonded...and I'll become part Dreauxoid -- immortal. If this is a trick --"

"It's not." He took two steps forward and rested his large hands on her shoulders. Her skin flamed at his touch. "I don't want you to bond with me unless that's your fervent desire." He lowered his voice. "And, love, I'm going to do all I can to make that what you desire."

Her pussy dripped as she stared at him, she felt hunger for his delicious taste, his special flavor.

"Come," he said, wrapping an arm around her shoulders and pulling her toward the bed.

She found herself going along with him, even as a little voice in her head warned her to resist.

He sat on the edge of the bed, then pulled her to his lap. His long dreadlocks tickled her cheek and she could feel his cock pulsing against her thigh. Her breath caught. *Damn!* He stroked her hair and she melded into his hard, hot body. How could she help herself? Shutting her eyes, she inhaled the faint smell of pine trees and leather.

"You...you've always had so much power over my body --"

"And you mine." He smiled, then fell back to the mattress, pulling her over him. She gasped at his rock-hard muscles and smooth skin.

"Too many clothes," he said and blinked. Both of them were naked.

"Draken, I gained some weight --"

"Shut up about that. You look great." He grabbed her hips and lifted her up above him; her breasts dangled to his lips. As he lapped at her nipples, she laughed, prickly sensations rushing through her body. Then she was lying on top of him again, skin touching skin, basking in his hot, slightly sweaty body, his cock bumping against her mound, causing it to grow wet.

She moved to go down on him, but he grabbed her arms and pulled her back up. "First I want to kiss my girl."

"Woman!"

"One who occasionally needs to be spanked."

Her thighs trembled. "Shit."

He slid his hand into her hair and lowered her head until their lips sealed into a flaming kiss, while his other hand slid lightly down her back to her butt. While they kissed, he suddenly gave her a tight smack against her right cheek. She lifted her head and cried out as her body shuddered. He laughed.

"Only *I* know your naughty secrets," he said, rolling her to her back as he rested on his elbow beside her, gazing at her in amusement.

Her face was still hot, her pussy spasming. "Damn you, Draken!"

He flashed his wicked, dimpled grin.

She gazed up at him, besotted. Running a hand through his dreads, she decided that she liked him with longer hair. "When did you grow dreadlocks?"

"Is that what they call them on Earth?"

"Uh-huh," she said with a smile, and tugged on them playfully.

"I grew my hair when I was in combat, no time to stay well groomed. Afterward, I had them dreads -- thinking of you. I wish it had been your hands in my hair, and next time it will be."

He wrapped his fingers around *her* long hair and tugged; making her gasp.

She could barely think this close to him with his hot breath bathing her face.

"I didn't return until I was good enough for you, until I knew I could stay with you and not leave on some foolhardy mission. After Raven bonded with Natalia and I saw and felt their happiness, I thought of nothing but quitting the damn fight and spending eternity in your arms. And now I'm in them."

Bree felt a little thrill inside. "Yes, you are," she said, intoxicated by this man, her love. "So tell me, big boy, what are you going to do now that you have me in your arms? I give up trying to fight you, Draken. Do your worst to me, love."

Draken swirled his finger inside her navel and everything within her trembled as she laughed.

"I have a special treat for you."

Her body shuddered. "A whip?"

"Not yet. You'll have to earn that pleasure. Until you do, I have other things to amuse you."

His words caused a naughty quivering in her belly.

Draken snapped his fingers, and a perfect clone of himself appeared, standing before the bed.. She stared at the other Draken, mouth agape, and then down at the real one. She couldn't hold her body still; her arousal was so acute, everything from her scalp to her toenails blazing with heat. "Wh-what the hell --" She couldn't continue.

"I brought a friend," he said, grinning. "Meet Troy, he's here to pleasure you. Troy is a beta clone of me."

"We want you, Bree," Troy said in Draken's voice.

She gasped. "He sounds just like you."

"He should. Troy feels everything I feel, and vice versa. When I summon him, he's my human half and I'm pure Dreauxoid. He's been invaluable in battle, and we've both been itching to get at you. We're going to give you a very hot time. He can...penetrate you without causing the normal power exchange that bonds a Dreauxoid and a human."

"And penetrate you I will," Troy said, slipping into bed on the other side of her. Sandwiched between Draken and his second self, she shivered, and knew they could tell she was turned on. "Twins," she said in a dry voice. "I thought twins were a male fantasy." She arched as their body heat burned her.

Draken laughed and kissed her forehead, while Troy smiled and ran a hand down her arm.

"Wow," Bree said, wiggling.

"Two of me are better than one," Draken said teasingly.

"Indeed," Troy said.

They both put their hands on her opposite arms.

She liquefied at the twin sensations. Troy stroked her just like Draken did, but of course, he was his other half. It was almost too much to comprehend.

"Arrogant as always, Draken," she managed to choke out.

"I can use four hands this way," he said, cupping her left breast while Troy cupped her right. "It's guaranteed satisfaction. This is the threesome of your fantasy without my sharing you with another, which I couldn't do."

She moaned as they both toyed with her breasts. When Draken slipped his hand down to touch her damp pussy, Troy leaned over to suck her sensitive breast and she whimpered. Troy licked her hard nipple and Draken played with her stiff clit while she caught fire.

"Oh Lord, help me!" She threw back her head, wagging it from side to side.

"Bree, control yourself and look at me," Draken commanded.

She did, trying to ignore the tickle racing up and down her torso.

Draken stared into her with Dreauxoid hot, glowing eyes. "You will do as I say."

Troy released her right nipple and kissed his way over to her left, saying, "Yes, our Bree, you must obey us."

"I...I will." The words rolled off her tongue, against her will, yet at the same time, with all her heart.

"You're our sex slave, aren't you?" Draken asked in a silken voice.

"I want to be. Oh, damn, I want to be."

"Good," Troy and Draken said in unison.

Bree's body hummed with pleasure, their low voices were like listening to delightful, sexy stereo.

Draken stopped touching her and leaned up on one elbow. "Play with yourself first. As a warm-up, stroke your pussy until you're nice and wet."

"Yes. We want to watch," Troy said, rising up on one elbow on the other side of her.

She felt overwhelmed and oh-so-sexy as the doubles watched her with unwavering stares. Tensing with need, she ran her fingers up and down her hot slit until her fingers were drenched.

Draken lifted her fingers to his mouth and sucked on them, licking each one separately as her heart pounded against her chest. Troy caressed her sex.

"Draken, this is making me want to suck your cock, both of your cocks," she said, shooting a fevered glance from Draken to Troy. They had the same sultry expression on their faces, mirror images.

"Then you shall. For now, we'll allow you to do as you desire."

"We're yours to command," Troy said, nodding. "The offer won't stand forever, love."

Needing no further encouragement, she pushed Draken flat on his back, hearing him laugh as she slid between his legs to take him. She felt the rippling muscles of his thighs,

smelled the heady scent of his aroused sex as she set her gaze on his powerful shaft. He was purported to have the longest, thickest cock in all of Planet Dreaux. Her mouth watered as she lifted him into her palm, guessing that he hung more than halfway down his thigh. One day she wanted to take him inside her pussy and feel all that heat as it sated her aching need of him, but that would bond her to him for eternity. Draken could mate with Dreauxoids, vampires, werewolves, and other unearthly creatures without bonding. With a human, however, unless he had already taken a lifemate and was committing adultery, they'd be bonded.

Dreaxoid laws were so complicated.

Troy snuggled between her legs and flicked his tongue over her anal crack as all rational thought fled from her mind. Bree moaned as her bones dissolved and she quickly lapped up Draken's cock, tasting his salty precum. She heard him hiss and swirled her tongue around the rest of him, including his large sac. He moaned and stiffened.

"That's the way, my girl. Nobody's mouth is as hot as yours." Draken's voice was forced and tight.

Breathing fast as Troy stroked her ass's entranceway with rough assaults of his tongue, she licked Draken faster, giving his balls a squeeze, her own body quickening as he grew rigid. His cock hardened even more, ramrod straight, as she eagerly took him into her mouth.

As her lips drew on him, her body blazed with prickly flames. Both his cocks belonged to her tonight, seeing that Troy was an extension of him, and she wanted to take full advantage. As she felt the throbbing in her mouth, she ran her teeth lightly across his shaft and then reached again to give his balls another squeeze, harder this time.

A primal sound erupted from his throat and he arched, his hot, salty fluid filling her mouth, bathing her throat as it slid down, coating her insides with a sense of warm fulfillment. And once he started, he didn't stop -- oh, God, he seemingly couldn't stop. Dreaxoids were sexual beings and she reaped the wonderful benefits. Milking him with her hungry mouth, she swallowed repeatedly, wishing he'd never empty. His seed was tasty, addictive. She heard kitten noises coming from her throat. And then Troy sucked her butt cheek into his mouth and ran his tongue over her heated sphere while her body seized over and over again.

Before she could compose herself, Troy lifted her under her arms, turned her around so that she caught his hot gaze, and then he easily pulled her atop him. "Draken has such good taste," he whispered into her ear as he arched and thrust his cock into her still-spasming pussy. She gasped, her hot pussy's walls grabbing on to him, showing her how bonding with Draken would feel, the ecstasy of it. And then Draken was behind her, pressing her flat into Troy's hard body, Troy's cock touching her womb, as Draken nipped the back of her nape. Tears spilled from her eyes as Draken's primal Dreax half asserted itself. Draken was hard as steel, his cock rubbing against her ass. And then she felt him applying cool lube to her anus

and she wept with excitement, knowing what was coming. He eased inside her and she cried out as cocks surged inside her, front and back. The two of them synchronized their thrusts as her body clamped down on both of their driving shafts. Her entire body constricted and she let out a guttural throat noise as they came inside her. The dual intensity set off the mother of all orgasms and she came with a loud scream. The last thing she remembered was seeing gold and silver stars dancing before her eyes. Then there was blackness.

When she awakened, she was alone with Draken in the bed and he was holding her tenderly. "Are you all right, Bree?"

"I think I'll live," she said with a laugh, still shaky. "Wh-where's Troy?" she managed to choke out as she breathed heavily, staring into his gorgeous, sweaty face. Moisture glistened over dark skin.

"Resting inside me for now. Tell me how much you liked that, my beautiful girl?"

"Are you kidding?" Her teeth were chattering.

"Tell me, dear."

"It was spectacular. I lost count of how many times I came."

"Twelve," he said with a smile.

"It was amazing. My ass is still shuddering and I can't...I can't stop the after-spasms." As she spoke, her newly aroused body racked against him. "Those two cocks seemed like one big one, never ending."

"I hate when you black out like that. Gives me a scare, but you always come out of it. You're quite easy to arouse."

She laughed. "What you two naughty boys did would have aroused a frigid nun."

He laughed heartily. "Ah, but you're the only one I want to arouse."

"And you do. Sex has always been good with us. Amazing."

He closed his arms more tightly around her. "I've missed you so much. During my worst times, I conjured up your image and I'd get an extra burst of energy. Even when I'd run my magic reserves down to nothing and had no power at all, the thought of you gave me strength."

Her belly lurched. Draken could sweet-talk her like none other. Not that many other men had tried so far. Earth men didn't favor bigger women as other creatures did. She was almost proud of her size 16 body in Draken's arms. He made her feel like the most desirable woman in the universe.

As she lightly ran her finger around his ear, she said, "Did you use up your magic reserves while we had sex, dear?"

He chuckled, the deep peals an aphrodisiac.

"I've no magic left," he said, stroking her hair with long, gentle fingers. "It will take a long nap for me to regenerate and be useful again. Right now, I'm as powerless as a human."

She grinned and hugged his neck, quickly. "Poor baby."

"If only I were always full Dreauxoid," he said, with a mock sigh, "I'd have double my powers. I'm only that way when Troy is out, and he can only be out for about an earth hour at a time or he fades away. The human in me makes me run out of magic more quickly than a full Dreauxoid."

"Draken, don't start that again." Pulling back to again gaze on his handsome face, she felt undiluted love and passion. "It's the human in you that makes you tolerable. Sometimes."

He flashed his dimples. "Even the Dreauxoids on my family tree are more tenderhearted than most." He tightened his lips for a moment. "Except for my father. I can't forgive him for not bonding with my mother." His good nature returned right away. "But he and my other Dreauxoid ancestors give me my sexual prowess."

Her pussy pulsed, dripping nectar, as she thought of his long, hot cock inside her. *Would it ever happen? Would she ever agree to bond with him?* At times, she wanted to, risks to her heart be damned. Right now, she cuddled into his hot skin and shut her eyes. "Take a nap," she said. "I want to sleep in your arms and have more of you once you rest and get your magic back."

Shortly afterward, she heard his quiet, steady breathing; then she joined him in slumber.

* * * * *

When Draken woke up, even before he could open his heavy lids, he knew he wasn't with Bree anymore. A dank odor assailed him and his skin was wet from a dampness that chilled him to his soul. He was in a dungeon, and as he tried to move, he found that his wrists and ankles were manacled to a wall. He pulled on them and heard chains rattle. He tried again to open his eyes but couldn't. Drugged. He'd been drugged.

"The mighty Draken awakens." An eerily familiar masculine voice rattled through him, filling him with dread. *Shadow?* "How unfortunate for you, old friend, that you used up all your magic on sex. With a *human* yet." He clicked his tongue as Draken once more struggled to pry open his lids. "It was lucky that I happened to have some work to do on Earth and that Desi was with me. She recognized your scent and was able to guide me straight to where you slept with your slut."

"Where's Bree?" His eyes shot open. A Shadowlike imposter stood there smirking at him. He couldn't believe his eyes. Did Shadow have another half like himself that hadn't been thrown in the Void? No, that was impossible, clones had to be near the host body to work, and they weren't really separate beings.

There was something ominous going on, an evil vibe coming off the clone. In the cool prison cell, the clone wore only bikini briefs, which repulsed Draken. Pulling against his restraints, he shouted, "What did you do with Bree, you phony bastard?"

"Your concern for the human is so touching --"

"Damn you, if you hurt her --"

"You'll do me great harm." He laughed, a malevolent yet oddly tinny sound. "Don't worry; I don't want her to die. Yet."

"You motherf --"

"You can't do shit to me, fool. Only my Master can hurt me and he likes his protégé." He paused, dramatically. "Well, he likes me as well as any demon can *like* another. Let's say he sees my great potential for evil."

"Who are you?" He couldn't get a read on the creature. It was as if his senses were blocked. Draken stared at the Shadow replica, a tall, well-built man with close-cropped black hair and cold, colorless blue eyes. He even had Shadow's sneer down pat. "Liar!" He tried to tap into his magic, but it was indeed low. "Whoever, *whatever* you are," Draken said, between clenched teeth, "I'd think you'd have more self-respect than to clone yourself as that loser Shadow."

The Shadow clone narrowed his icy gaze. "I *am* Shadow."

Draken groaned. "Yeah, right," he said. "I distinctly recall him yelling for his mommy as he tumbled into the Void, and nobody comes back from there."

"I did." The fake Shadow crossed his arms. "You'll pay for what you did to me, and so will your lover, Bree."

"I don't care about that insignificant humanoid, except...out of pity." He tried as hard as he could to fake disgust with his beloved. This clone couldn't know how he felt about her. "Why waste your time harming her? You are superior to a mortal." His mouth had dried.

"Bah! Yes, you care! Love for the insignificant human practically pours out of you; your father will be so bereaved that he set such a bad example and you followed it. At least he didn't *love* your mortal mother. But...it's different for you and your human. Desi and I watched your tender love scene together. You love her, Draken. Deny it all you like, but we know better."

Rage flowed through Draken's veins at this creature's derision of his mother and of the knowledge that this vile Shadow imposter had intruded on his and his love's intimate, loving moments. He felt his throat closing up but still had to keep his cool. *This freakin' nutcase, whatever he is, really thinks he's Shadow.* "Who the hell is this Desi you keep yammering on about?"

The man snapped his fingers and his briefs disappeared. A large but crooked cock sprang out at Draken, making him nauseated. Immediately afterward, a naked, young blonde woman strode out of the dark shadows behind him, candlelight glistening off her tanned skin. Her huge breasts bounced and her hips wiggled from side to side with her long strides. He remembered her the instant she came into sight. He should; he'd fucked her to get to

Shadow, only she'd gone by the name Tootsie then. She sauntered up to him and ran her hand down one of his dreadlocks. "Ooooooooo, I like the new 'do."

"Hey there, big, handsome boy," she said in a low, husky voice. "You saying you don't remember me?" She chuckled him under the chin and winked.

"I remember you," he said grudgingly. Draken was feeling more desperate and uneasy by the minute. Still, he kept his voice smooth, controlled. "You were Shadow's mistress, but you liked variety. Especially from me."

"But she prefers me," the Shadow-clone shot like a bullet.

Draken was about to remind him that Tootsie had betrayed Shadow but decided not to put the vile woman in danger. Still, he couldn't help baiting the Shadow clone a little more. "Maybe, but it wasn't hard for me to seduce her." He grinned as Shadow-clone scowled and opened his mouth to respond.

Before he could say anything, Tootsie cut in. "You're certainly luscious, Draken." She kept playfully tugging on his dreadlocks. "But my heart belongs to Shadow. I'm his lifemate now." She let go of him, stepping back toward the Shadow clone. He gave Draken a smug look and grabbed her around her shoulders, his hand squeezing her huge, round tit.

Draken remembered how Tootsie had spilled her guts about Shadow's secrets in the midst of an orgasm. "Your heart can't belong to anyone," Draken said, his tone chilly. "Dreauxoids don't love, and the real Shadow is in the Void."

She glared at him for a moment before breaking into condescending laughter. "Of course I don't love! What a primitive emotion!" She shot a lusty look at the man she thought was Shadow. "My big, strong macho man and I, however, are extremely sexually compatible. His cock is almost -- I mean -- as big...er...bigger than yours!" She reached down to rub the creature's bulging shaft to soothe his obviously ruffled feathers. Turning back to Draken she said, "Plus, we have the same goals and interests. We're perfect lifemates. Our purpose for existing is destruction." Her sweet smile sent a winter's wind throughout him, his teeth almost rattling.

"Shadow's in the Void. You settled for a cheap imitation." Draken could feel his magic starting to seep through him, like a warm liquid warming his chilled body. He had to stall his two opponents, giving himself more time to regenerate. He could feel Bree, and knew she was alive, but he needed to make sure she hadn't been harmed.

The imperious Shadow imitation watched him with a mocking smile on his face. Draken felt a slimy, sticky presence in the air; it seemed to be coming from the clone.

"I hope you're not too worried about lovely Bree," the creature said, flashing him a wicked smile.

His stomach contracted. The bastard seemed to be tapping into his emotions. Shit, he had to relax and hide his true feelings and find out all he could about this creature.

“Shadow,” he said, trying not to grimace from the pain that cut into his wrists and ankles, “tell me how you got out of the Void. It must be a hell of a story. You’re obviously very clever, as it’s never happened before.” He hoped he sounded genuinely impressed rather than filled with disdain. He sensed a new aura emitting from the man, something that bespoke endless vanity. “I always said you were the most intelligent of the Powers.”

The man flashed him a self-loving grin. “Kind words from the mighty Draken, how unexpected. I can explain, as you’ll not be in shape to tell the tale to anyone. I’m the most important being to leave the Void, but I’m not the only one.”

Draken was careful to nod and not lift his eyes to the heavens in disbelief. “How so?” he asked.

The Shadow clone dropped his lusty gaze to his lifemate, moisture coating his lips. He pinched her nipple hard and she squealed with delight.

Draken watched them, feeling even more sick to his stomach the longer the two of them carried on. “How do these Dreaxoids get out of the Void...um...Shadow? Are you afraid to tell me?”

“Me, afraid? Don’t make me laugh! It’s the Winter Demon’s doing,” the man said, as he nibbled on Desi’s neck. “Demons inhabit the Void.” He spun Desi around to face him and pushed her down to her knees.

“Do they? How interesting.” Draken watched as Desi licked the clone’s cock.

“I suppose you’ve heard rumors of mutated demons with twenty times the power of any creature in the universe.”

Draken wanted to groan. Not that tired tale again. “Sure, I’ve heard about it. Who hasn’t? A tabloid story, like a human giving birth to an alien.”

“It’s true. The demons wanted to make a more powerful breed so they trapped the most evil of demons behind a steel wall. Demons can’t penetrate steel. For centuries, they bred and grew stronger; then one day they burst out of the steel room, unleashing themselves on the weaker demons and the universe. Now, to increase their numbers, they inhabit places like the Void and offer to rescue the most evil beings if they agree to become Winter Demons. I, Shadow, didn’t breed with a demon. I was recruited by the Master Winter Demon, injected with serum created from the Master, and sent to boot camp to learn their ways and goals.” His breathing sped up as Desi sucked him. “That’s why I’m free.” His wicked laughter echoed off the prison walls.

He’s so full of shit. Draken tried to hide his scorn as the Shadow clone prattled on, getting lost in lust with his lifemate and his own self-boasting. Dreaxoids were fools for sex, but this imposter seemed to be even more so. Draken watched in disgust while the Shadow-clone groped his woman as she pumped her sex against his. The male creature made noises that reminded Draken of a wounded hound dog.

After a few minutes, the man creature said, his breathing heavy, "All right. Give it a rest, slut." Desi pouted as he held her at arm's length and again addressed Draken. "Winter Demons actually have the power to kill immortals, if the circumstances are right." The shadow-clone let her go and she dropped to her knees and kissed his cock.

"Yeah?" Draken tried not to laugh. "That's quite an oxymoron. Do tell."

"Well, we don't *kill* them, exactly. We incinerate them with a blink...so that they're just a part of the air. If the right circumstances exist, immortals cease to exist under our power, don't even cross over into the place where humans go after they die. It's worse than a human death." His breathing grew harder again as his woman made loud slurping noises while she milked his cock. "Desi, this isn't the time, I said!" he snapped, but then he moaned and allowed her to continue, his vile face flushed with heat.

Draken pulled on his restraints, to no avail. Shit, he needed to get back to Bree, take her to safety. Now was the time, while the clone was distracted by lust. "So you Winter Demons can kill immortals -- vampires, shape-shifters, Dreauxoids --" He wanted the creature to be almost ready to come before he took off. He was burning, his powers fully regenerated.

The clone convulsed and let out a long breath as he came in Desi's mouth.

Draken knew their defenses were down and his were up. He blinked, hoping to free himself. It didn't work.

Shadow shoved Desi away from him and laughed. "You don't understand, Draken. I know you have your magic back, but mine trumps yours. I'm not a Dreauxoid anymore so sex doesn't distract me, and you aren't going anywhere."

Draken stared into the man's cold blue eyes, shocked and horrified. Somehow, he still felt as if this man was a Dreauxoid, but sex *hadn't* distracted him. He couldn't let his frustration with the situation stop him from trying. Maybe sex didn't distract this creature, but there had to be another way to get him to lose his focus. Once he could get the man's guard down again, he'd try to blink himself away again. He wasn't likely to succeed, but he had to try; he would never stop trying.

Suddenly, a gigantic flash of lightning shook the building and Desi screamed, grabbing for her man. The building angled to the left and she slid away from him. The Shadow clone grabbed on to a metal pole, shouting every obscenity in every dialect. Draken, totally disoriented, lurched in the direction of the tilted floor but was held in place by his bonds.

And suddenly, he was free and on his magic carpet, speeding into the blackness, stars, and meteoroids of outer space. He braced himself as his carpet tilted from side to side, the wind thrashing at him and under him, whipping his hair ferociously behind his person.

"What the fuck?" Draken shouted out loud, his heart racing like a galloping horse. What had happened? How had he gotten out of there?

“You’re damn lucky I was vacationing on a nearby planet.” Draken heard a deep male voice talking in his head, telepathically. *“I know you’ve refused to see me for a few centuries, but we’re still connected. I happened to be at a meeting with some of the most powerful forces of good in the universe, and I saved your neck, punk.”*

Draken’s head whirled as his father’s voice echoed around and around in his head. His eyes snapped shut and his carpet seemed to disconnect from him as he tossed and turned in the nothingness of outer space.

The next thing he remembered was waking up with Bree in his arms, covered with sweat, his breathing hard. As he sat up, relief washed over him and he covered his eyes with his arm.

That had been one hell of a dream, the worst and most vivid dream that he could ever remember.

But thank the gods it had only been a dream.

Chapter Three

Bree sat up in bed, looking down at Draken's stricken face. He looked confused, completely unlike his usual self-assured self. The Draken she knew was always in control. "What's wrong?" she asked, running a hand over his bronzed cheek. "Bad dream?"

He blinked a few times, then sat up, his eyes still a little vague. "Yes, that's it. That has to be it," he muttered. Looking at her, he pulled her into him. "You're not hurt, are you?"

She felt her own head whirling a little and she trembled slightly, sensing that something was really worrying him. "Should I be?"

He shook his head, then frowned. "Of course not. Just that this damn dream seemed so real. I was taken by Shadow and he told me he'd been rescued by a super demon and...that he'd become one himself --"

"Dearest." She wrapped her arms around him and felt the dampness on his hot skin. "Shadow's in the Void."

"I know," he said, resting his cheek atop her soft head. "Of course he is."

Bree felt a vague uneasiness overcoming her; it was almost as if they were being watched. "Draken...I feel an energy... You know how I've picked up some of your psychic abilities through the years, and --"

She froze as a tall, handsome, dark-skinned man appeared before them, clad in a gold business suit, tie, and white shirt. Bree had never seen him before, a Dreauxoid, she guessed, who looked only forty human years. Yet he could be four thousand years old, as Dreauxoids didn't age much. She noticed a resemblance between him and Draken, except for his nose, which looked as if it had been broken a few times -- it was crooked. Suddenly, she remembered that she and Draken were naked. Horrified, she pulled the cover up to her chin.

The newcomer smiled at her and turned his head to the wall and trying to hide his smile said. "I swear I didn't see anything and I promise not to try."

Before Draken could recover and say a word, she found her voice. "I know you're Draken's father."

"I am indeed," he said to her in a polite voice. When his gaze turned toward Draken, his eyes hardened. "I'm also well aware that the boy isn't too happy to see me, but this is an emergency."

Bree shot a quick look at Draken. His eyes were round, but they narrowed quickly as his lips formed a straight line. The two men locked in a warring gaze and Bree literally felt the air temperature drop ten degrees.

"Well, well," Draken finally said in an unfriendly voice. "Long time, no see."

"Not really, we just spoke, or rather I spoke to you."

Draken shook his head, firmly. "No, that can't be true."

"You heard me, Draken."

"No." Draken raised his voice. "That's not possible. I was here with Bree, sleeping."

The older man just raised his eyebrows.

Bree was too frightened and shocked to say anything. She watched as Draken recovered from his shock and blinked clothes on him and her. "You could have knocked," he said, snapping.

"I apologize, but there wasn't time. Is this your lifemate?" He smiled at her with Draken's killer, dimpled grin. "I'm Tyrus, pretty lady."

Draken was out of bed, on his feet in a flash. "Don't you dare flirt with Bree, you lecherous bastard! She's mine! State your damn business and leave me. Do you really think I'll ever forgive you for allowing Mother to die?"

"She's in a better place, son. You know humans don't really die --"

"Well, she's not available to me all the time, is she?" Draken said in a cold voice. "Visiting hours only." His voice grew louder, echoing in the room. "If you'd bonded with her, you son of a bitch, I'd have her all the time and you wouldn't have broken her heart! If Bree weren't here, I'd throw you on a magic carpet and send you on your way, because I really have nothing to say to you."

Bree leaned back against the headboard of the bed. She'd rarely seen Draken this angry. He'd spoken about his mother to her, but seeing him confront his father about it was harsh and ugly and Bree found herself feeling sorry for Tyrus.

"Draken, please," she said in a quiet voice. "I want to know what he has to say."

Draken glanced over his shoulder at her, his scowl black, but he did turn back to his father and say, "For my lady's sake, state your business. But then I would ask you to leave."

"Of course." Tyrus smirked and stared at Draken, who had crossed his arms. "My comrades and I just rescued your sorry butt from a rather unpleasant situation. It's the truth,

and that was no dream you had. I'm here to warn you that I've heard you're a target of Shadow and his band of Winter Demons."

"Shadow's in the Void!" Draken clenched his fists and stiffened. "I know you don't like me much, but this is sick revenge. Tapping into my dream and exploiting that is low, even for you. Why are you trying to make me think it's real?"

"Face reality, boy!" Tyrus's dark eyes flashed bitterly. "You and I share DNA, but we're not close enough in spirit for me to tap into your dreams." His eyes saddened for a moment; then he stood tall and lifted his chin. "We put a spell on you so you'd sleep after the rescue, but everything that you remember really happened."

There was a long pause as the two men assessed each other. Bree could almost feel the tension between them.

"How did you even know where I was?" Draken finally asked, but his scorn was only halfhearted. Bree climbed out of bed and went to Draken, wrapping her arms around him, trying to soothe him. He pulled her to him, rubbing her arm as he watched his father.

"You wouldn't believe that I've kept tabs on you all these years because you're my son and I love you." Tyrus lifted a brow.

"Not hardly," Draken said.

"Blame it on fate then. I was at a meeting on the next planet over, felt your vibes, and knew you were in trouble. You were calling out telepathically. My business mates are very good creatures from all over -- we represent a peace movement to unite the universe. With all our collective goodness -- and, yes, I do have some of that -- we were able to throw our magic at Shadow and eliminate his power edge. But how many times are that many creatures with positive energy together in one place?"

Bree looked up at Draken's tense face. She saw a look of indecision in his eyes. "Go on," he finally said, skeptically.

"Scientists from our movement have been busily working on the excess of negative energy in the universe," Tyrus said, unwaveringly staring at his son. "It's been a secret project, but since they chose to involve you, I'm giving you a heads-up. I don't want you hurt. Or your lady."

"How kind. Why should I believe you?" Draken's anger made Bree shrink into him.

"Just give me a hearing." Tyrus did a commendable job of holding his temper. Bree saw his chest rising and falling quickly. "Apparently, demons inhabit the Void and pick out a few select black souls to bring back as a macrobiotic demons -- a new and very powerful breed."

Draken cursed to himself.

"Yes, it's true, son. I see your attempt to dismiss my words -- it's in your eyes. I can feel it in your soul, but deep down you know it's true." He paused and stared hard at Draken, who didn't move. "In fact, my group was talking about these mysterious, powerful demons when you fell into Shadow's custody. These Winter Demons stand for everything we don't.

They want to eliminate all other beings but themselves. Very dangerous breed, and they've taken Shadow's dark soul and reincarnated him into one of them. So it is -- and isn't -- Shadow."

Bree looked up at Draken and watched as his father's words had time to penetrate his mind. He finally nodded, the fight going out of his face. "I can feel the truth." He muttered his words with reluctance and blew out a breath. Staring at his father with a smoldering gaze, as if Tyrus were responsible for everything, he asked, "What can we do against these heinous creatures? I want to fight them with your group --"

"Draken!" Bree cried out in alarm, her blood racing. "You promised me -- *promised* -- no more dangerous missions."

Draken's Adam's apple bobbed up and down as they locked eyes, lots of tension, sexual and otherwise, passing between them. He patted her shoulder once, then turned back to Tyrus. "Bree's in danger, too, isn't she?"

"Very much so. Shadow and his boss, the two most powerful Winter Demons, both know what she means to you. I fear they've gotten to her already. Do you feel strange, sweetheart?" He looked at her again, his eyes so soft and loving. *How could Draken not see that his father was a good Dreauxoid?* Most Dreauxoids had cold, hard stares and were unreadable.

"I feel fine," she said, "I guess they haven't gotten to me yet. How would I feel if they had?"

"Well --" Tyrus scratched his chin, his gaze moving from her to Draken and back to her again. "Some say they completely take over other creatures, and of course, humans are the easiest to possess, since they have no magic to fight it off."

"Possess," Draken said, distastefully and with a little bit of fear. "How?" He pulled her closer.

"Our scientists surmise that they probably exchange body fluids with the creature they want to own. Maybe they draw their own blood and then inject it into their target. We don't know that for sure, but it's what we think they do. They'd act invisibly and put a victim in a deep sleep."

Draken's gaze shot down to her, his face tense.

"I don't feel any different," Bree repeated, firmly. "I dodged a bullet."

"Thank the gods." Draken wrapped both arms around her.

"I agree," Tyrus said. "I don't know you, Bree, since my son keeps me so far away from him. But the vibes I'm getting from you are...strength and kindness." He turned to his son and bellowed, "Get Bree and your own stubborn ass to a Safe House, boy. These Winter Demons seem repelled by goodness and shouldn't approach you at a Safe House, since the inhabitants there are good beings."

“Will do,” Draken said in a determined voice. “Nobody will harm Bree while she’s in my care.”

“Then I’ll visit you again with more information once you’re settled,” Tyrus said, looking relieved. “For now, duty calls. My group is in the middle of a conference and I have to go.” He lifted his arms and disappeared.

“Don’t let the door hit your ass on --”

“Draken, stop!” Bree took his hands and gazed into his eyes. They were sharp, full of hard determination. “Don’t talk to your father that way.”

“Well, I don’t like him, but I give him points for rescuing me -- and warning me about things that I’m sure are top secret.”

“Why don’t you --”

He covered her mouth gently. “Stop. We must go. Now. We can talk more about this at the Safe House.”

“I...I have to make some excuse to my mother as to why I’ll be gone for a while.”

“We’ll do that when we get there.” He snapped his fingers and his magic carpet appeared and then levitated. He snapped his fingers again and she was seated in front of him on the carpet, his legs hugging her torso in a very inviting way. He wrapped his arms around her neck and said, “Go now!” to his carpet.

The carpet took off with a jerk and flew out the window. Bree had no idea how she’d slipped past the window’s glass but figured Draken had used more of his magic.

They tilted upward, toward outer space as Bree turned her face to the wind, loving the refreshing breeze. Even under these dire circumstances, she loved magic carpet travel.

Chapter Four

Draken was shell-shocked as he held Bree's back against him, her sexy ass bumping his hardening cock. The lust that swept through him was almost enough to distract him from the danger they faced. He shut his eyes as the wind washed over him. Macrobiotic demons were after Bree because of him. Waves of guilt washed over him and he felt ashamed. He'd brought her danger because he selfishly couldn't live without her. It made him more determined than ever to protect her. He'd have to contact Raven as soon as they got to safety. If Shadow was after him, he probably wanted Raven's and Natalia's heads, too. They'd been his partners.

Bree's gentle hand took his big one in hers, bringing him out of his reverie. "It'll be all right, darling," she said in her sweet voice. "We'll be in the Safe House soon and I have complete faith in your ability to protect us. I know that your father's group will figure out how to beat a Winter Demon at his own game."

Draken knew he had to sate his restlessness so that he didn't leave Bree and run off on the mission. To distract himself, he focused on Bree, how lovely she looked with her hair flying back, tickling his chin. Her breasts rose and fell under her T-shirt with each breath, bouncing with the magic carpet's rocky ride. She had her legs straight in front of her, long and inviting but sheathed in jeans. His hormones pumping for many reasons, he blinked both their clothes away.

"Drake!" she protested with a giggle, hugging her body. "You know, outer space isn't the warmest place --"

"I'll keep you warm, babe. In fact, I'll make you hot."

He slid his hand over her shoulder and gently glided his fingers down her lush breast, rolling her nipple until it hardened. Sex would be a good outlet for both of them. He could already feel himself relaxing, and Bree responding as she sighed with pleasure. He smiled.

Even now, Bree could cheer him up when no one else could. As they rocketed through the air on his velvet carpet, he snapped his fingers and two clothespins appeared in his hands. He rested both elbows on Bree's shoulders and held the clothespins out for her to see, a wickedness overtaking him.

"You want me to take them? What are you up to, stud? You want me to hang up your laundry?" She reached for them, but he blinked and they left his hands and clamped over her stiff nipples. Bree laughed, tossing back her head.

"Oh, God, that feels good! Clothespins for nipple clamps! Creative."

"Keep them there for a while," Draken said as he slid his hands lightly down her abdomen, making her contract with pleasure. He leaned forward and nibbled on her neck. "I want you hot for me, ladylove." His cock was swelling with need.

Bree reached up and touched his lips, glancing behind her with an exasperated smile as her hair whipped around her face. "It's amazing that you can feel horny after just seeing your father after centuries, and after hearing what he had to say."

"Are you complaining?" His smile faded as he looked into her troubled blue eyes. He was such a jerk. What was he thinking? "I'm sorry, Bree. I'm being selfish -- wanted to think about something other than our problems -- but if you're not in the mood or too frightened --"

"Me, frightened?" She laughed, turning back around again, taking both of his hands in hers and rubbing them gently. "Don't you dare stop. I'm calm. We're going to the Safe House, and I know we'll be all right."

It was bad when she was the one calming *him*, but she definitely had that ability to tame his wild streak and quiet his soul. One of many reasons why he loved her. She was so brave. If she was afraid for her own welfare, she'd never tell him. "It won't be too far now," he said, hugging her around the belly. "Magic carpet travel isn't as fast as transporting, but it saves so much magic. If I feel any trouble, we'll transport, but I don't sense anything right now."

"Me either. I've had enough intimacy with you to have picked up a tad of your powers. I don't smell the scent of evil." She tugged on one of his hands. "Let's make love, sweetie. I'm certainly in the mood. I was only teasing you."

His cock pulsed as he blinked. Her clothespins fell to the carpet and she gasped, leaning over. "Oh, hot damn! Draken, hell, that felt so good!"

He perked up, aware that his brave girl was indeed taking this well and was much in the mood for him as he was for her. He craved her, could never get enough of her. And it really didn't matter where they were or their circumstances. Must be his Dreaxoid half. Smiling down at her, he snapped his fingers and she flipped over onto her back, facing him. Her legs were spread apart, just the way he wanted them.

He laughed at the surprise on her face and fingered her boobs, which were jiggling as the two of them continued their rocky ride through outer space. Draken fell over her, then pushed himself up on his arms so he didn't crush her hot, feminine body. Letting one arm hold him up, he used his other hand to gently run his fingers down her face and neck, then slid them to her breast. She shut her eyes and sighed as he lowered his head to kiss her cleavage. He continued south, his tongue and teeth working on her sensitive skin, getting aroused as she tightened, moaned, and whispered his name. Love overtook him as he buried his face into her pubic hair and kissed her close to her pussy, smelling the scent of her sex.

His lips moved to her inner thigh and she writhed and moaned; then he moved to her other thigh, licking her and nipping gently at her skin. She lifted her knees and spread wider for him as they zoomed through the air.

"Are you all right?" he asked, lifting his head, looking at her angelic face. Her long crescent lashes were like angel's wings against her pale cheeks.

She breathed deeply. "Oh, man, Draken, you know you rock my world. Keep it up, baby. I love what you do to me."

He couldn't help grinning, aware of how fast she'd come out of her relaxed state to tense arousal.

"I'm going to try out a new toy," he said, snapping his fingers. A metal cylinder with two slots cut into both sides appeared in his hand. It also had an adjustable ring that could slide down over the slots in the tubes. "It's the newest sensation on Dreaux." He couldn't hold back a grin and was glad her eyes were closed.

"Shit," she mumbled. "I can feel myself trembling already, and I don't even know what that thing does yet. You and your Dreaux toys! Each one is better than the next."

He ran a finger up her pussy and she was wetter than hell.

"This one is getting, um, good reviews from the ladies," he said. "Use your fingers to spread your pussy for me."

She eyed the cylinder. It looked so innocuous, but in his big, dark hand it almost seemed like an extension of him and she felt her breath quicken. "I am so dead."

"Open for me."

"You sound like my dentist."

She lifted her trembling knees even more, then reached down and exposed her throbbing pink skin, spreading it with her fingers, and his heart skipped a beat. Her clit was ready for him, stiff and protruding, seemingly begging for action. Well, his naughty toy was supposed to make her clit vibrate through the rush of air whooshing over the openings. His cock was throbbing and he knew he might come at any time.

"I hope you don't mean to put that cylinder inside me," she said. "That could hurt."

Draken shot her a warning look. "I wouldn't hurt you." His lips kicked up. "Not unless you asked me to. Close your eyes, dear. Enjoy." Before she had a chance to respond, he

blinked and the Vortex Vibrations Clitoral Stimulator whirled to life, making a loud sucking noise, as if attached to a vacuum cleaner. Humans *would* have had to attach it to a vacuum cleaner, but he used his magic to get the same effect without any of the possible hazards.

“What the fuck?” she cried out, lifting her head again.

He set the whirling, sucking vortex over her clit, and she immediately yelled out his name, arching off the carpet as her eyes seemed to bug out of her head. He watched her, his cock hard as a rock as she came again and then again, finally whimpering as tears slid down her cheeks. When he finally turned it off, she was spasming as if it were still there.

With the device turned off, he could hear her muttering his name. Blinking the device away, pleased with its effect, he returned to her as the magic carpet took a sharp turn to the right. “Bree? Bree, baby, are you all right? Sweetness?”

She was trying to catch her breath as her body convulsed. With quieting hands, he lifted her head and ran a hand down her body. “Bree, answer me.” He was getting alarmed. “Are you all right?”

She finally focused on him, her eyes aware again, her breathing fast and harsh. “That damn near did kill me with pleasure,” she managed, between pants. “I loved it. Thank you!”

He hugged her, his cock filled with his seed. “Give me a handjob, babe. Reach down and touch my cock, it’s waiting for you.”

She sat up then climbed over him, her face by his aching cock. He needed her more than wanted her and a primal growl erupted from his throat. Instead of a handjob, she took him in her mouth and ran her hot tongue over his head. He didn’t need any more encouragement. His hot liquid exploded inside her and she swallowed as he emptied himself at her throat. Groaning, he shuddered over and over again.

When they finally came back together, holding one another, Draken kissed her then said, “I’m much more relaxed now.”

“I know.” She tugged on his dreadlocks. “Just please promise me again that you won’t involve yourself in this Winter Demon mess.”

He hesitated for a moment, but when he looked into her gorgeous, love-filled face, his choice was clear. “I won’t. I’m going to be too involved with you. I hope we can bond soon. It will be for the best.”

She stared into his gaze, licked her lips, and let out a sigh. Then she smiled a little bit. “Once we’re at the Safe House, I won’t be in danger. I want to wait a little longer before we bond. I need to make certain you’ve gotten over your wild days.”

“Damn you, Bree!”

“Isn’t that the planet that the Safe House is on?” Bree asked, with a sweet smile, pointing toward a purple ball in the sky.

Draken had known they were getting close. “Yes, it is. We’ll be there in five Earth minutes.”

Bree kissed his forehead, then sat up. "Let's get ready then," she said, and his heart dropped to his feet as she prattled on to make sure he didn't bring up bonding again. "You'd better put clothes on us, because I don't want to arrive naked. I can't wait to see everyone," she was saying in an excited voice.

Draken gritted his teeth but dressed them in casual shirts and jeans, then put an arm around her. He'd have time alone with her at the Safe House. What better place to win her over to the point that she couldn't resist bonding with him? It was now dangerous for her to have no magic, but more than that, he loved her with everything he had.

When the magic carpet landed before the great, shimmering silver hotel that glimmered against a backdrop of lavender sky, he couldn't help feeling hopeful. It was said that this was the most romantic place in the universe.

Bree loved him. She couldn't resist him forever.

Chapter Five

Bree relaxed when Draken parked his magic carpet in the protectively shielded garage; they were finally safe. She smiled when he looped a possessive arm around her waist and guided her across the glowing red tarmac to the luminous silver motel.

She'd always found this sanctuary to be magical. Everything about the uncharted planet glowed. The lavender sky with its two red moons radiated light, making it almost daylight bright. Just before they stepped inside, Draken, leaning against the heavy oak door, turned to kiss her, and she melted against him as an unfamiliar aggressive feeling came over her. It was as if she had the urge to tear his clothes off and do him right there. Knowing it was a continuation of their incredible sex on the magic carpet, she told herself to get a grip. Her sex pulsed anyway; she knew that she and Draken would have plenty of time to enjoy one another. When he pulled away from her and winked, her body seemed to sizzle.

Once they stepped inside, Draken was instantly surrounded, like always, and many of the creatures also remembered her from other visits. This hadn't been the first time she and Draken had hidden out here; although the hiding out was getting old, Bree enjoyed seeing everybody again. A dog barked at her feet and she picked him up, letting him lick her face. Prince was a shape-shifter who'd turned himself into a small, shaggy mutt and had never been able to undo the trick. He was the Safe House pet. "I'm glad to see you again, too," she said with a laugh.

"Not half as glad as I am to see you," he said.

"You learned how to talk," she said with a gasp.

His tail wagged, while his head nodded. "I'm making progress in restoring myself."

While Draken worked the crowd, shaking hands, sharing laughs and small talk, Bree looked around. Spotting a tall, brown-haired man with angular features and a good build, she grinned. "Hey, Zak."

Zak bent over and took her hand, kissing the back of it. "Lovely as ever, I see," he said, straightening up.

"Thank you, kind sir," she said, accepting the compliment with a blush. He flirted outrageously with her, but he never crossed the line. "How are you doing?" Bree asked the sexy vampire who'd sought refuge to avoid being killed by his own kind. Vampires didn't take well to those who were blood phobic and afraid to draw blood. Poor Zak had to have people donate blood for him, and he drank from a cup. But he was sweet and beyond good-looking.

Zak looked at her with smiling chocolate brown eyes. "Great. Better now that you and Draken are here."

Bree smiled and set Prince at her feet. Draken took her elbow before she could straighten up. Whispering in her ear, he said, "Come on. We have to talk to Tonya about the situation."

She nodded and Draken promised his crowd of greeters he'd talk to them soon; then the two of them squeezed past the bodies until they reached the bar. The tall, skinny blonde woman behind the counter hadn't greeted them; she was busy with customers. Bree's blood ran cold. Tonya, the gorgeous female vampire. Bree turned to look at her man, wondering how he'd react to the woman's overt attempts to steal him away. Without a doubt, Tonya would try. Draken leaned lazily against the counter.

"Hey, there, Tonya," he said, beckoning her over. "Didn't you see me come in?"

"Of course," Tonya said, pouring a drink. "But I thought I'd wait for you to come over here rather than intrude on all your fans." She turned around, sliding the glass to a customer.

Tonya gave Bree an unfriendly, dismissive glance and smiled at Draken. She motioned for him to wait a moment, served a beer to a hairy customer, then came up to them, flashing her milky white smile, her fangs lowering a little bit. "So, darling," she said, her eyes on Draken, not Bree. "What brings you and your hot body back here?"

Bree bristled inside as the urge to deck the other woman rushed through her, shocked at her own aggressive thoughts. She forced herself to relax. Draken wasn't responding to Tonya's attempts to flirt. In the past, Draken had been quite playful with her, and it calmed her that he was reacting so low-key. Still, Bree had an uncharacteristic urge to hit her, which was so unlike herself that she was puzzled.

Dismissing her strange surge of miniviolence, Bree composed herself. Tonya ran the Safe House, going out of her way to do the dirty chores right alongside her staff. Bree admired Tonya for that. Still, she grabbed Draken's hand and clutched it tightly, glaring at the female vampire.

Draken glanced over at Bree and winked at her, warming her inside, soothing her. Then he turned back to Tonya and spoke in a businesslike voice. "I need to call a meeting of all creatures who are here. I've run into trouble --"

Tonya cut in, laughing. "Wow! That's a shock!"

"Tonya, it's not just trouble for me. It affects everyone here. The creatures who reside in this place are often those with weak powers. They need to know about this, even though...my *father* says it's top secret. It can't be anymore. We have to put our heads together to find a way to defeat this new enemy."

Bree felt a shiver going through her at his heartfelt words. She leaned into Draken and he put his arm around her, his grip tight, reassuring.

Tonya slanted an accusing look at Bree, then looked at Draken again, her expression back to normal. "It's because of her, isn't it?"

"No," Draken said flatly.

"Riiight," she said sarcastically. "When do you want to call a meeting?"

"Tomorrow morning. My lady and I" -- he smiled down at Bree -- "need to get some rest first. What rooms are available? Any on the top floor with those rollback roofs?"

Tonya's jaw had tensed as she shot another look at Bree. Bree smiled sweetly. It felt good to have Draken stand up for her and see him brush Tonya off. Maybe he'd changed and wanted to settle down with her after all.

"I never knew what you saw in this human," Tonya said to Draken, her voice harsh and loud enough for the patrons on bar stools to look over at them.

Bree felt Draken stiffen beside her. While she appreciated his protective attitude, she liked the Safe House and didn't want him to get them thrown out. "Jealous, Tonya?" Bree asked, trying to stem Draken's anger by tossing Tonya a mild challenge, one not bad enough to get them ejected.

"Bree, let me explain our situation to this lovely vampire," Draken said, and before Bree could utter a protest at his praise of her rival, he said, "Tonya, you can't speak that way to my lifemate. If you do, I'll take my business elsewhere and my friends with me."

Bree stared up at him, shocked. "Lifemate?"

Draken patted Bree's shoulder as he stared at Tonya with hard eyes. "Understand, dear?" he asked the vampire.

Tonya nodded. "Sorry, Bree," she said, with obvious reluctance.

"I understand," Bree said, with a saccharine smile. "He used to be a lot of fun, but I'm domesticating him."

Tonya handed him a passkey. "Room one two zero four zero five she said, and then turned away toward a customer.

On the way up the glass elevator, Bree asked, "Why did you call me your lifemate? I haven't agreed to that yet."

He tapped her on the nose and grinned. "You will. Besides, I don't need Tonya --or any other woman -- falling all over me. I have you."

The elevator landed and the doors opened to a wide hallway with plush gold rugs. Everything was flamboyant on this planet. Crystal decorations hung on the walls. But Bree barely noticed. Draken had been such a lady's man. She secretly felt a thrill inside to know he was curtailing his flirting for her sake. That made her all the more eager to make love to him, she thought as they strolled along, checking the numbers on the doors.

They stopped before the room and Draken swiped the key card in the door. Before he twisted the doorknob, he turned to her and put his big, hot hands on her shoulders, towering over her. "You're going to see how incredibly eager I am to be with just you," he said. "Are you ready to be loved like never before?" His soulful eyes bore down at her and she felt her panties dampening.

She nodded.

The suite was a gorgeous room, draped in purple, the official color of the Safe House. The enormous bed had a lavender velvet spread over it, along with two heart-shaped white satin pillows. The heavy purple drapes were pulled open and the lilac sky, with its two red moons, blended right in. "It's beautiful!" Bree clapped her hands together once and looked up at Draken's frowning face. "What's the matter?" Knowing the answer, she laughed. "I know. This one's too feminine for your taste, too."

"It's worse than the red velvet room we shared earlier, but if you like it..." His frown melted and his eyes sparkled gently.

She wrapped her arms around him. "I like it!"

He stroked her hair. "All right, I won't ask for a change."

She pulled back and they locked in a white hot stare.

Tyrus exploded into the room and Draken let out an exasperated breath.

Bree, her heart racing, froze as she stared at Draken's powerful-looking father, still dressed in his gold business suit.

"Do you mind?" Draken asked, tossing his dreadlocks behind his back. "For centuries, you stayed away --"

"At your request --"

"And now you keep dropping by just when my lady and I have time alone. Are you jealous?"

Bree moved closer to Draken as Tyrus's dark eyes appraised her, but he said, "Don't be silly, Draken. I said we'd talk more when you were settled and we will. I know you aren't going to be fighting with us, but I want to keep you in the loop anyways. I respect your abilities, and maybe we can use you in another capacity besides as a warrior."

Bree saw Draken trying to keep his lips from kicking into a smile. She felt good inside; she knew Draken was flattered and pleased that his father thought so highly of him. She didn't like the interruption but wouldn't do anything to stop a possible father/son bonding either.

“Will this take long?” Draken said, crossing his arms. He shot Bree a sultry look. “I’m sort of busy.”

Bree sighed to herself, watching his muscular shoulders and biceps. “Drake,” she said, “you two should talk. I’ll go downstairs again and mingle.”

Draken narrowed his eyes. “Don’t you want to hear what he has to say?”

She did, but she also didn’t want to get in the way. “You’ll tell me, right?” she asked.

“Sure, but --”

“Then get me when you’re done. I think you two should be alone.”

Draken’s face hardened and he slid a look at his father, then back to her. “This is strictly business. I know how you think, and there will be no mending of fences.”

Bree shrugged, not so sure. “I’m going to leave you alone anyways.”

“You’re a good woman, Bree,” Tyrus said, and she heard his gratitude. “I was afraid my boy would hook up with a useless tart.”

“Tell me what you know, and stop looking at her,” Draken said harshly.

Bree decided it was best to depart quickly and leave them alone. She knew Draken well. He was half-human and had a heart as big as any full human. He’d work it out with his father if they spent time together. As she walked down the long corridor again, back to the elevator, she thought back to all the times that Draken had ranted about his father’s maltreatment of his mother. But he didn’t seem to know the whole story and he admitted that his mother wouldn’t talk about Tyrus. Maybe he had the story wrong. She hoped he did.

As Bree stepped into the elevator, she felt a sudden stab of pain between her eyes. Puzzled, she leaned against the elevator’s glass cylinder wall and shut her eyes. She wasn’t prone to headaches and this one had come on so fast. As the elevator shot down one hundred thousand floors, she had to shut her eyes against the dizziness. Strangely, she felt her sex tingle -- that didn’t make sense -- and half her body seemed numb. Frightened, she took her pulse, but it was normal. By the time the elevator landed, the symptoms were gone and Bree shrugged them off.

As she stood before the pub, she scanned the room, watching people eating, mingling, and even dancing. She had a strange urge to dance even if Draken wasn’t her partner. In fact, a man, sitting by himself with a pitcher of beer and staring at her from his table, stood up. He smiled at her. Bree was attracted to his luminous green eyes -- he must have been a Dreaxoid. Without a thought, she strode up to him. “Hi,” she said, with unusual boldness. “I’m Bree. Would you like to dance with me?” She brushed a hand over her breasts.

The young man’s lips kicked up. “You bet I do,” he said, taking her hand. “You seem like a wild one.”

“I am,” Bree said, not sure why she’d said that; it had never been true.

Quickly, she dismissed her reservations. While Draken was talking to his father, it couldn’t hurt to have a little fun...

Draken stared at his father, wrapping an invisible cocoon around himself. He could tell that his father was trying to win him over and he wouldn't let it work. Not now, not ever. "Why are you here?" he asked in a cold voice.

Tyrus gazed at him, making him uncomfortable. *What the hell is the old man doing?*

"Do I have dirt on my face?" Draken asked.

"Before I tell you more about the Winter Demons, can we talk about your mother?"

Shock filtered through him and he backed up a few steps. "No."

"It's not what you think. She refused to bond with me, boy."

Draken laughed. "Right. Don't you mean you were too busy chasing other skirts to want to be tied down? *You let her die!*"

"I wanted to bond with her and she wouldn't. She didn't trust me, said she'd rather die a human death than be with a man she couldn't trust. Gods help me, I'm guilty of having cheated on her, but she was the only one I loved and I wouldn't have cheated if she'd bonded with me. I promised her that, but she just laughed at me." He let out a tired sigh. "I don't blame her, but she was wrong about me at the end..." His voice trailed off and he looked haunted.

Draken swallowed hard, his fists balled, his body tensed. "Stop this! You broke her heart --"

"I know I did!"

Draken froze, surprised by the admission. "Why are we discussing this?"

"Maybe I don't want you to make the same mistake as I did."

Draken sucked in a deep breath and held it, waiting for more, ready to explode if his father said one thing to set him off.

"I lost the two people who meant the most to me -- my love, Henrietta, and my son."

"Yes, you did lose us." Draken, however, was shaken by his father's description of himself. And, Draken knew, that the description fit him too.

"I don't want you to lose Bree," Tyrus said, his voice louder, and his eyes so piercing that Draken swore he could read his thoughts. "Bond with her, Drake. Give her your mortality and part of your magic and let her bathe you in her humanness."

"Thanks for your fatherly advice," Draken said in a dry voice, "but what I do is my own business."

"Boy, I can feel the love you have for her. Make it an eternal match. Do it in a ceremony, before the Dreauxoid gods, to ensure that you exchange the best of both of you."

Draken was starting to feel that his father actually cared about him, and it made him uncomfortable. He found himself dropping his gaze. "Let's get off the subject of my love life."

Tell me what I need to know about these Winter Demons, and how I can help defeat them without going into combat.”

“Of course.” Tyrus reached inside his suit jacket and pulled out some papers. “This is the information our scientists have gathered on these super demons. I’d like you to read the data when you have time.”

Draken nodded and set the papers down on a dresser, which was a few steps over. He turned back toward his father again. “Are you working on ways to diminish their powers?”

“Diligently. For now, we only know that too much good surrounding them seems to repel and disable them for a while. The effect doesn’t last long, and when they regenerate it’s tenfold and they tend to go after those who’ve attacked them. They’re very dangerous.”

Draken mumbled to himself.

“Speak up, boy!”

“Nothing. I’m just upset that Shadow is after Bree.”

“Are you really sure that Bree is all right? Not tainted by Shadow?”

Draken thought of the hot sex on his magic carpet. “Yes.”

Suddenly, he looked and sounded grim. “If you have any doubts, you’ll have to hold off on bonding, even if she agrees to it.”

“Why?” Draken was alert now, focused on his father’s deep, hypnotic eyes.

Tyrus held his stare. “If she’s tainted, even a little, and you bond with her, it will be disastrous for both of you. The magic that you pass to her will be used for evil, not good. And you’ll get the darkness in her, not her human heart. Both of you would be vulnerable for recruitment as Winter Demons and the two of you would never be good souls again. Well, not until we find a way to reverse the effects. So watch her carefully.”

“I tell you, she’s fine!” Draken’s blood had run cold at his father’s words. He couldn’t tolerate the thought that maybe Shadow had infected her with his sick blackness.

Tyrus walked up to Draken, so quickly that he didn’t have a chance to back up. His father slapped a hand on his shoulder and Draken was too surprised to pull away.

“In spite of your doubts, I have your back. I always did, but you didn’t really need me until yesterday.”

“I still don’t.” He tensed, his father’s strong hand still on his shoulder, causing so many confusing feelings within him. He remembered his father teaching him magic when he was a little boy... No, he had to block out those memories. That happened eons ago and no longer mattered with all that had happened in between. “I’ve taken care of myself for all these centuries. We can work together to take down the Winter Demons, but then we’re through.” As the words came out, he wasn’t sure that he really wanted it that way, but anger and pride wouldn’t let him soften toward the man. Every time he thought of only seeing his mother once an Earth week, it set his teeth on edge. “I don’t need you. Please don’t touch me.”

His father removed his hand and stepped back, which is what Draken had asked him to do. Yet the almost human pain in his father's eyes...

Draken turned away. "Are we finished for now? I need to get my woman."

"Just don't bond with her until you're sure she's not infected. It may take a few days to know."

Draken wanted to explode because bonding with her was exactly what he wanted. It was Bree holding out, and his father's reminder, although unintentional, set him off. "You warned me, all right? Leave now!" If Tyrus didn't leave, he might give in and let himself feel more for his father than resentment, and he couldn't be disloyal to his mother by loving his father. Besides, he didn't.

"I'll come back to talk to you about the info I left you," Tyrus said, his voice quiet now.

Draken didn't look at him. "Knock first." *Why did he give his father that nugget of humor?*

Before Draken could muse over it, his father lifted his arms. With a wicked twinkle in his eye Tyrus disappeared in a cloud of smoke, leaving Draken angry and feeling alone.

He needed to get Bree right away and fuck the hell out of her. As he stalked down the hallway, annoyed with himself for going soft inside, he suddenly remembered something. "Dad," he messaged telepathically, *"if you really mean you'll help me out, I need a favor. Bree's mom has to hear some excuse as to why she'll be gone for an indefinite period of time."* He messaged him the location. *"Would you mind pretending to be human and delivering a message so she won't freak out?"* He pounded his hand against the elevator's Down button, not wanting to use any magic by transporting. *"Tell her who you are and think up some bullshit reason why you delivered the message instead of us. You're the king of bullshit."* Out loud, as the elevator arrived, he said, "Please, Father, just this one favor for me and I won't ask for any more. I'm not in the mood to deal with the woman by calling her and having her pump me for questions. Nor is Bree."

He stomped inside the elevator car, wondering if his father would help him out. Then, as the elevator whooshed downward, he tried to put his father out of his mind and look forward to the time he'd have with Bree. He couldn't wait to get her underneath him and make love to her until she screamed for mercy.

Chapter Six

Shadow was in a hell of a lot of trouble and he deserved it. He'd known his master wouldn't like that he wanted to drag out Draken's torture rather than getting rid of him fast, but he had such a grudge against Draken -- no way did he want the half-humanoid to go down quickly and painlessly. He wanted to milk it out like Chinese water torture. But when he'd tried to explain that to the Boss, he'd been dragged down to the Tunnel and had been hearing the Great One's anger ever since.

Sir Hamus Darkness, master of the Winter Demons, growled at Shadow, making him cringe inside. Hamus was a shape-shifter demon and liked to walk around in a lion's form, only on two legs. He did so now as he glowered at his stoop-shouldered protégé. Shadow hoped Hamus couldn't tell how frightened he was. But, of course, Hamus knew. Hamus could read all the Winter Demons.

"Idiot!" he yelled, and the cement walls of the gallows shook. "Damn idiot! How could you let Draken get away like that? You may as well still be a Dreauxoid if those morons for peace could so easily trump your powers. Were you concentrating?" He stalked up to Shadow, whom he towered over with his eight-foot frame, and got in his face. Shadow instinctively stepped backward to protect himself. Hamus then grabbed the collar of his black-buttoned shirt. "I rescued you to help me, not work against me!"

"I-I-I --" Shadow stammered, his throat closing up.

Hamus threw him to the ground and he groaned, but Hamus just turned his back on him. "You let your fucking lifemate get in the way of business! Yes, I injected you with my own blood, but I guess you need another injection! There is still Dreaux in you if sex could distract you --"

"It didn't." Shadow forced himself to a shaky stand and walked up to Hamus's furry back, trying not to sneeze from his cat allergy. "Look, Sir, even you said all creatures have

their weaknesses. One of ours is obviously being in the thoughts of those who would bring together the universe, rather than let us, the Great Ones, be sole survivors. How often are millions of those fools together at one time?"

Hamus whirled on him, his mane flying into his eyes.

Shadow again had to stifle a sneeze, trying not to let his teeth chatter.

"A lot," Hamus yelled, "since they now know they can trump us that way." He pushed Shadow down hard on his buttocks and grunted. Then Shadow watched as Hamus paced back and forth. "I suppose we Winter Demons can do the same -- hang around in large packs --"

"That's what I was going to suggest," Shadow said, eagerly, although it wasn't true.

Hamus stopped and stared at him. "My fuzzy ass!" he said, and Shadow shrunk back. "But we can't be together all the time. We don't like each other, for one -- that's a problem. Those peaceniks actually like one another so they can stand it. I'm afraid that if millions of our kind hang together, it will be the end of us all. Well, just don't -- no matter what -- let those peaceniks know of our *biggest* weakness or you'll be back in the Void faster than you can yell for mommy again!" He snapped his fingers as Shadow blinked his eyes to hide some womanly tears. "I want Draken, and I want him before me so I can incinerate him. Do you hear me? Use that worthless human of his, if necessary. You should have taken her instead of him."

Shadow knew what he should have done, but his idea had seemed like a good one at the time. "Sir, Draken Blade has done us so much harm. Especially to me. I really thought Your Highness would like him to suffer as much pain before you got rid of him."

Hamus gritted his teeth and stared at him with eyes that glinted like two knives. Hamus stepped up to Shadow and spit in his face. "There, you moron! You take your orders from *me*! You asked for Draken and I said you could have his head, but you do it *my* way or I'll take you off the assignment. Now he's at a Safe House. *You'll have to get to him there!*"

Shadow didn't dare step back, although Hamus's breath was in his face, smelling of garlic and onions. He didn't dare even flinch. *How the hell was he supposed to get to Draken at the Safe House?* All the creatures there were his enemies and their goodness, at worst, would weaken him.

"I injected Bree with my spores using a laser beam."

Hamus stood straight and looked at him, hard. "You did?"

He nodded, sensing a lull in Hamus's disfavor. "Yes, and he's going to know she's possessed. Or figure it out. Perhaps I can lure him out of hiding with the promise of an antidote."

"One that doesn't exist." Hamus's voice had quieted quickly as he half spoke to himself.

"We really don't know how possession works or how long it lasts." Shadow said, "The Dreaux human won't know either. If he believes me, I can tell you where he'll be and you

can seize him before the peaceniks know he'll need a rescue. And before anyone can get wind of it, maybe a bunch of us can be ready to inject him with our blood. That would make him a very powerful Winter Demon."

Hamus was considerably calmer. Shadow swallowed hard, wondering if that gleam in his master's eyes was respect. "A thousand of us injecting him with our blood at the same time would probably trump even the greatest soul," he admitted. "Not a bad idea." Then his face contorted and he jammed his fingers into Shadow's chest, causing Shadow to almost pass out. "You just saved your sorry ass with that idea. You have your plan, now do it. *And do it right this time!*"

"Y-y-yes, Sir." He saluted him.

Hamus knocked his hand down, keeping a crushing hold on his fingers. "Winter Demons don't act on their own. You are all my servants and you answer to me. I expected a lot of you, Shadow." He paused dramatically and Shadow felt as if he were about to be slapped across the face with an anvil. "Don't you ever break the rules again or I'll get the other Winter Demons to take you down. It won't be pretty." He snapped his fingers, and Shadow was back in the dark underground loft that he shared with Desi.

He sat on the floor, shaking, as Desi turned around from her place at the stove. "Darling!" she cried, rushing over to him with outstretched arms.

Before she could reach him, Shadow put his feet up and she bounced off the back of his heels to the floor. "Don't bother me, whore!" he roared; then he stood up, went to the bar, and poured himself a strong drink, ignoring his whimpering lifemate.

Tyrus knocked on the door, cursing to himself that he wouldn't have derailed himself from his mission for anyone but Draken. But he'd failed his son in so many ways, doing him this small favor wouldn't kill him. Maybe this was a new beginning between himself and his boy. As he waited for Bree's mother to answer the door, he thought about the day of Draken's birth. No Dreauxoid had ever been so proud. As fate had it, Draken was his only child. He had lots of nieces and nephews through the centuries but no more children of his own.

Waiting in the hallway, he frowned. It was a dingy, cramped hallway. How could anyone live in such a place? As a Dreauxoid, he could change his surroundings at will. *Humans really had it tough*, he thought, remembering Henrietta's humble house. The memory of Henrietta tugged at his heart just as the door opened up a crack.

"Yes?" He heard an unfriendly female voice.

Tyrus stepped into her view, watching her one blue eye and seeing shiny auburn hair. "I'm Draken's father --"

She screamed, swinging the door open. "Your son killed my daughter in a car accident! Right? Right?" She pulled on his shirt and grabbed his wrists, backing them both up as he cringed.

"No, everyone's all right. Please, ma'am. I just have a message from Bree. The two lovebirds asked me to assure you in person that they're fine --"

"Bree better be all right, or I'll sue the pants off your flirtatious charmer of a son --"

Tyrus suddenly looked at her face, amused. Humans were so emotional. "Really, they're both fine. Bree was afraid that if she delivered this message, you'd give her a hard time. I volunteered to come here and give it to you myself." He looked past her, into a small, but nicely decorated apartment.

"Where is Bree?" the woman demanded.

"With Draken. I'm not quite sure where. He's taking her on a vacation."

The woman glared at him and he took her in. She was hardly the most beautiful woman he'd ever seen. She was medium tall with her attractive hair pulled back severely, but he saw nice features and a nice body that she tried hard to cover up. Like so many humans, he figured she thought herself fat. Her eyes blazed at him.

"I like your necklace." He had to disarm her for his son's sake, and the necklace *was* pretty, very out of place with the rest of her clothes.

The woman looked surprised, then fingered the large diamond. Calming, she said, "Your son bought it for me. He's a thoughtful young man, I'll give you that." She stared at him, cocking her head. "You don't look old enough to be Draken's father. You don't look a day over forty."

Tyrus realized he'd screwed up. He should have made himself look like he was aging in a human way, but it was too late now. "I had him young," he ad-libbed, "and I'm fifty."

"You were a teenager when you had him?"

Tyrus flashed an apologetic smile. "I'm afraid so. By the way, I'm Tyrus. I didn't catch your name."

"I didn't tell you my name. I'm Doreen." She looked downcast. "I'm so afraid your son will break my daughter's heart again. I want you to know, straight up, that I don't approve of this match."

Tyrus took a step closer to her, standing in the doorway. To his surprise, she smelled nice, like lilacs. Yet he took issue with her words, remembering how silly humans were about skin color. "You don't approve of mixed relationships?"

"I don't care about that."

Tyrus smiled at her. "What then?"

"I don't like that he keeps leaving her." Her brow furrowed as she assessed him from close up. "Since Bree won't be home for dinner, and you're here, would you like to come in and eat? I hate to waste food."

Tyrus was surprised at the offer. His stomach growled at him, reminding him that he'd barely eaten today. "That's very kind," he said, and he suddenly did something impulsive. He reached out and pulled the ponytail holder out of Doreen's hair. Lush auburn locks spilled around her oval face, making her look ten years younger and lovely, a lot like Bree.

Doreen gaped at him. "Why did you do that?"

"Your hair looks nice down." He suddenly felt almost shy and boyish and, at the same time, annoyed that he did. "I know I shouldn't have taken the liberty, but...when that gorgeous hair is framing your face, your skin is the color of peaches and cream and your lips are so full and pink. I think I've discovered a swan who tries very hard to just be a duck. Why is that?" As the words flew out of his mouth, it amazed him that he wasn't just pouring on the charm. He meant everything he said; she was a rare, hidden gem. *Why hadn't Draken told him about her?* Well, of course he couldn't have... They hadn't been in touch --

He prepared for her to turn on him, but instead she blushed and stammered. "I...no...it's...that's kind of you to say." Her cheeks were pink and her eyes soft. "I guess...I really don't bother taking care of myself... Please, come in, don't just stand in the hallway. It's cold out there."

When he stepped inside, he tried to ground himself by looking around, seeing old couches and a blue shag rug and admiring the knickknacks and Hallmark paintings on the wall. It had been years since he'd stepped into such a cozy place; Dreauxoids mostly lived in cold, sterile homes, void of loving touches. "Nice," he said, his gaze resting on hers.

Her gaze seemed glued to his; his Dreauxoid magic was probably attracting her and it pleased him very much.

"Bree decorated it," Doreen finally said. "I...just added a few final touches...I knitted the afghans that are covering the sofas. I don't do much since my heart attack."

"Heart attack?" Tyrus remembered how careful humans had to be about their health.

"It wasn't a bad one, but Bree convinced me to take a few years off from work and relax. She's such a good daughter, invited me to live here, and trust me, I'm not the easiest person to live with." She flashed him a grin, exposing perfect white teeth and high cheekbones.

Tyrus smiled back. "You're lucky Bree loves you so much. I can't say that about Draken. Our relationship has always been very strained."

"I'm sorry." She looked truly empathetic. That human heart always got to him. A Dreauxoid would have just shrugged and told him to forget about his son.

Doreen looked toward the kitchen, which was just off the small living room. "We can talk more over dinner. Come on. I made stew, and I think it's done." She started walking and

Tyrus followed her, ogling her ass. Hers was just like he liked them -- round and plump. He wondered how many Earth years she was and guessed late forties.

After they were seated and Tyrus began eating the delicious, scrumptious-smelling stew, he said, "Is your husband working late?"

She dropped her beautiful blue eyes and he admired her long lashes. "No. I'm divorced."

Tyrus could feel the loneliness emitting from her. Shit, it almost matched his own. "Jerk," he said.

"Yes, very much a jerk." She looked up. "Are you married?"

A knife seemed to cut through his body as he pictured Henrietta. "No. Draken's mother and I never bond -- married."

"I see." She gave him a shy smile, blushing, and he loved the way her cheeks turned pink.

"Did you ever marry?"

"No. I have a...job that keeps me busy, and I'm quite sure no woman would tolerate my long absences."

Curiosity danced in her eyes.

"Without going into too much detail, I work as a government agent." He decided that this was as close to the truth as possible for him to give. He certainly wasn't ready to tell her he was a Dreaxoid; she wouldn't believe him, anyways. *Why am I thinking about telling her this at all? Guess I'm a lot lonelier than I let myself believe.*

"I was a beautician," Doreen said, her smile sad. "Like Bree. After my heart attack, Bree was frightened and urged me to rest. She takes good care of me, but doesn't want me to work. It gets boring just sitting around the apartment. I'm thinking of going back to work, even though Bree doesn't want me to."

"Definitely, you should go back to work." He couldn't believe how much Bree cared about her mother. Somehow, he had to mend fences with Draken, whom he loved more than his own life. "Doreen, sitting around the house day after day -- I know Bree means well -- but it's not really good for you."

"I try to tell her --"

"Would you like to see a movie after dinner?"

Doreen froze, her fork in midair, her face shocked.

Tyrus couldn't help his grin. "When was the last time you went out?"

She composed herself and looked down at her plate. "I've never dated since Lionel left me. I was too busy working and raising Bree --"

He reached across the table and clutched her free hand, and she raised her eyes to meet his, her cheeks pink again. "Come to the movies with me. You deserve to enjoy yourself." He wondered if she'd pull her hand away, but she didn't.

After an infinite amount of time in which they had locked gazes in an almost hypnotic stare, she finally said, "I...well...since Bree won't be home...I can't see how seeing a movie would hurt. Do you have any idea how long my daughter will be gone?"

"No, but she'll call you. In the meantime, while our kids are having a good time together --" He'd had to force himself to sound cheerful as he said that, but he couldn't tell Doreen that Bree was in grave danger. He cleared his throat. "You and I may as well enjoy ourselves, too. What movie would you like to see?"

Doreen suddenly laughed and Tyrus was shocked at how melodic and young she sounded. "I have no idea what's playing," she said. "You pick the movie."

"No." He felt a softness inside him, a vulnerability that he rarely tapped into. "Let's go see what's playing locally. We can look in the paper or on the Internet. *You* are going to pick the movie, not me."

Doreen's blue eyes lit up. "You're as charming as your son."

"Not close." He grinned, strangely happy about the date. "Let's finish eating so we can figure out what to do later on. I'm going to give you a really good time, you deserve it."

She stared at him, and he noticed again just how clear and blue her eyes were. "What should I wear?" she asked. "I haven't been on a date in a gazillion years."

Tyrus laughed, finding her innocence delightful. "What you're wearing is fine. It feels as if I haven't been on a date in a gazillion years, either, love. Trust me; the pleasure of your company will be enough for me."

He blinked to make sure he shut down his powers. He was looking strangely forward to his date with the human and didn't want anyone contacting him telepathically while he spent time with her. If anyone needed him, he would recover his messages when he turned his power back on.

"This is going to be most enjoyable," Tyrus said, flashing his best, most winning smile.

"You know, I think it will!" Doreen said, and her own smile made her entire pretty face light up...

Chapter Seven

As the elevator's car finally landed, Draken stepped out of it, his mind preoccupied with his father's words. To his surprise, he almost crashed into his friend Zak.

"Draken!" Zak looked wild-eyed, excited.

"What is it?" Draken glanced over at the pub, noticing a crowd of men standing near the bar counter, but the counter itself was blocked by a wall. "Let me out of the way, dude. I want to get my woman --"

"Don't go anywhere yet." He grabbed his arms and Draken froze. "Drake, something's wrong with Bree. I was just on the way up to warn you... She isn't herself --"

Draken tore away from him and burst into the dimly lit room, shocked when he viewed the outrageous scene. His modest, demure Bree was doing a striptease dance on the bar counter. He froze in shock as she tossed her bra into the crowd of men, seemingly delighting in the applause and hoots of approval. Holding her breasts out to the crowd, she called, "Would you like some? Would you like some?" Loud music thumped in the background as she pushed out her sex.

"Take your pants off, sexy!" someone yelled.

Draken shook his head to clear it and suddenly jumped to life, outraged. "Get the fuck away from her or I'll deal with you all!"

Draken's loud voice halted the men in their tracks and they quickly scattered back to their seats, but Bree kept on dancing, staring over at him now, no sign of recognition in her eyes. "Shit!" Draken muttered as took long strides toward her, ignoring Tonya's malicious laughter.

As he reached Bree and tried pulling her off the counter, she grinned, bent over, and ran her hands down his face. "Are you next, big boy? Oooooooooooooo, you're handsome. Do you want to fuck me?"

Tonya cracked up. "She's not who you thought she was, huh, Drake?" she asked.

Draken ignored her and grabbed Bree with one arm, lifting her and throwing her over his shoulder. He felt both frightened and appalled. When Bree squirmed, he spanked her soundly with his free hand. "Cut this out!" he said, trying to keep her from falling to the floor as she struggled. When she didn't stop, he spanked her again, harder.

"Oh, that felt great, big boy!" Bree said loudly, and she stopped trying to get away. "Can we go to your room for more, Romeo?"

"You can count on it."

As he hauled Bree away from the bar, where the smell of food and candles had been strong, he felt a vague sense of dread. Without a doubt, he could smell the faint scent of evil -- Shadow's mark emitting from Bree. A mixture of dirt and sweat -- demons were always hot... Holy hell, Draken moaned out loud, his father had been right. Shadow had contaminated the woman he loved. With a heavy heart, he stood before the elevator, banging on the Up button. *Now what was he supposed to do?* He felt Bree pulling the back of his belt and he tried to keep his head. Bree kept yanking on his belt, laughing in a strange, maniacal way. "Whip me, stud. I *love* rough sex."

When he got her upstairs, he rushed his grabby woman to their room and set her on the bed, and threw himself over her to hold her down. She wrapped her arms and legs around him and pumped her sex onto his cock. "Do me, big boy. You afraid to put it inside? Think I'm too much woman for you?" She kissed his neck, taking some skin between her teeth. "Flip us over, prince. I want your big fat cock inside me, all the way up. Want you to come in me! Make me yours."

"I can't."

"Up me, baby!" Bree pleaded. She tried to pull down his pants, but their bodies were fused together and she couldn't do it. "Please, please, please stick your cock up my cunt!"

"Shadow, you son of a bitch!" Draken cursed out loud. "You'll pay for this!"

"I did a man named Shadow?" Bree asked, still pumping against him. "I don't remember him. Or is that your name? Doesn't matter." She sucked on his neck, and he yanked his head back. "Let me give you a hickey! Hey, I'm so horny I'd like to fuck half the universe --"

"Shit." Draken could see that his attempt to calm her hadn't worked at all. Reluctantly, he used his magic to blink her into restraints. She howled in protest, cussing him out in every way possible. Climbing off the bed, he looked down at her as she struggled against the chains that bound her wrists and ankles to the bedposts. She was snarling now, sounding much like the demons he'd fought against during his warrior years...

Breathing hard, Draken shut his eyes, not sure what to do next. "Father?" he called.

Tyrus didn't appear, the bastard. For all his "I'll be there for you whenever you call," he knew his father too well to expect that. Screw him. "Raven!" he called out to his best friend and closest comrade, the only other person he felt safe talking to about Bree's possession.

Immediately, he received a telepathic message from his buddy. "*Can't come. Low on magic. So sorry, Draken.*"

Draken told him to come when he could, and, in desperation, climbed on the mattress between Bree's spread legs. He smelled her sweet nectar; it partly blocked the scent of the demon. "Bree, it's Draken, babe," he said in a honeyed voice. "I'm the man who loves you, the man who would do anything for you. Please listen to me and tap into the goodness that is buried inside your sweet soul. Then you'll remember who I am."

"Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhh, lick me, baby!" Bree squealed. "Don't you want a piece of my ass?"

Draken knew he needed to bring her back. He climbed over her leg and lay beside her spread-eagle form, ignoring her cries to him to lick, spank, or whip her. That wasn't what she needed now, she needed tender love. Gently, he slid his hand under her head and kissed her, his lips pressing down on hers with a desperate passion. His tongue drank up all her delicious juices, and she finally seemed to wake up as she reciprocated. His lips dropped to her neck as he murmured endearments that he felt from the bottom of his gut. She moaned and pulled on her restraints and he was encouraged that he'd stopped her from yelling.

As his hands gently rubbed her cheek, back, and chest, he tried to unleash his endless expanse of love onto her. "Bree," he said, between quick kisses, "I'm sorry I let you down so many times, so sorry I played around, tried to enjoy others, because there is only fulfillment with you. Only you. And I'm the one you need, remember?" He lifted his head and looked into her eyes. Her aqua gaze met his, tinged with confusion.

"Who *are* you?" she asked, but she seemed a little more alert.

Dear gods, was he reaching her? "I'm Draken, the man who loves you with everything I have."

"What's this word *love* mean? I...it makes me feel uneasy --"

Draken's heart sped up. He planted another hard, passionate kiss over her heart-shaped mouth and ran his hands up and down her face, pulling back long enough to say "I love you" as often as he could. Strangely, every time he said "love," she let out a groan. After kissing and loving her for about a half an hour, she suddenly stiffened. "*I hate this love!*" she screamed; then her entire body stiffened before suddenly convulsing into a frightening seizure.

"Shit!" Draken panicked and blinked her out of bondage. He lifted her into his arms and kissed her over and over again until she quieted, but she still didn't awaken. "Damn it, Bree! Open your eyes!" Then, "*Tonya, can you hear me? Send a doctor up here right away!*"

"*Fuck you,*" Tonya telepathically messaged back. "*I've got a hot man in my bed. Get your own doctor.*"

Draken lost it. Not knowing what else to do or who to call for help, he grabbed Bree under her arms and knees and ran toward the bathroom. She was deadweight, her head

lolling lifelessly against his shoulder, and he gritted his teeth. "Maybe water will revive you, love," he said out loud as he stepped into the shower with her, trying to ward off a debilitating sense of despair that could have disabled him. Blinking on the shower and taking off their clothes, he stepped under the cool, rainbow-colored stream, hugging her close to his body.

"Please, Bree," he said, almost near tears. "Wake up, baby. I couldn't bear to lose you. Honey, I'll find a way to remove the hideous spell that Shadow cast on you. I swear before every Dreauxoid god that if you just wake up, I'll restore you to health. And I'll take down that bastard Shadow, and he'll never hurt you -- or anyone -- again."

He watched helplessly as sparkly, colorful water slid off his dreads and onto her, but nothing changed; she was still unconscious. Draken watched her, shaking her, begging her to come to. Her hair was plastered to her small head, exposing all her lovely, lifeless face. "Bree, please. Don't leave me. I need you. Without you, I'm nothing. I may as well not even exist."

He stopped breathing and watched her as the water pelted hard against his back and her delicate facial features. He realized how much he meant his words. He *was* nothing without his love.

Her eyes fluttered, and he let out the breath he'd held, swallowing hard. "Bree?"

She finally opened her eyes, turning her head from the showerhead's prickly spray. Draken let out another shaky breath of relief and blinked the water hotter, since it had restored her to consciousness. "Oh, Bree --" He couldn't go on, he was too choked up as he said a silent prayer to the Dreauxoid gods, who must have heard his pleas.

"Hey!" Bree, alert now, spat out water and kicked her legs hard. "Draken, what are you doing? Trying to drown me? What happened, anyway? Why don't I remember you bringing me to the shower?"

Draken felt droplets falling off his lashes. He wasn't ready to tell her. Right then, he was just so relieved she'd come back to him. The scent of evil, which had been evident even in the shower, was now gone. He had no idea what was going on, but while she was still herself, he wanted to love her to pieces.

"Draken?" Her sweetness was back, but she sounded puzzled. "What happened? I feel a little fuzzy-headed."

Draken swallowed hard and tried hard to keep his expression calm. "You took a nap." He hoped his gamble worked.

"I don't remember getting into bed, either. Why not?"

He hated to lie to her, even a white lie, but right now he had to buy time until he could break the news to her in a gentle way. "What do you last remember, love?"

"I was in the elevator when...a headache came on. A terrible one." Her brow furrowed as she looked at him, seemingly asking for him to fill in the blanks. "Did I pass out? It was a pretty bad headache."

He jumped on it. "You did, and Zak was waiting at the elevator. When it landed, he found you and brought you back to me. I put a spell on you to help you rest well. You've passed out before after magic carpet travel." He covered her neck with kisses and nips, basking in her sweet lilac smell -- the scent of the real Bree Delaney, the woman he loved. "Humans just aren't made for space travel."

She wrapped her arms around him. "Guess not. This is the fourth time it's happened. Damn, I sure hate when I pass out. Makes me feel weak."

He shut his eyes as he feathered more kisses against her hot skin. "No," he said. "You could never be weak. Told you, that's a natural reaction to space travel for humans."

He pulled back and his gaze caught hers.

She smiled. "I don't seem able to *not* forgive you." Her eyes widened as she held out her hand, watching the multicolored water splashing. "One thing I love about this planet is how the water is all different colors. It's so beautiful."

"Yes, you are." He set her on her feet, careful to steady her, making sure she didn't wobble. Then, under a rainbow waterfall, he kissed her, their bodies merging together as they hugged. Teasingly, while their lips still locked, she rubbed her body up and down his, her boobs pressed against his abs and his cock began to stir.

"What you do to me, love," he said, breathing slow and deeply. "Turn around, babe."

She did, pressing her ass tightly against his throbbing cock. The water rained down on both of them fiercely, but he wanted more. Blinking, he created a double showerhead and its blinking lights of water covered both of them completely. He heard her sigh and pressed his chest against her back, rubbing her tits as he slid his cock up and down her anal slit. She bent forward with a gasp and he rubbed his rod faster and faster, up and down with more heat, as he continued to rub her tightened nipples.

"Draken!" she called out, her eyes shut, her head flung back.

"At your service." He moved his hands down her chest, reaching south.

She laughed. "I'm going to fall --"

"I would never let that happen." He used one arm to hold her up, the other to play with her pussy while his cock toyed with her ass. Her knees buckled, but he held her up, feeling his own surging arousal. He stuck a finger inside her sex and curved it into her sensitive G-spot while he also pushed the head of his cock inside her ass. She moaned and arched. He felt her nectar on his finger, mixed with the shower's water. Noticing her legs were trembling, he lifted her and set her on a ledge attached to the shower's marble wall. She lowered her head, her auburn hair matted to her skull and shoulders, and over her lush breasts.

"Hey." He kneeled before her, blinking water droplets out of his eyes. Stroking her hair behind her ears, he said, "Are you sure you're all right?"

She looked up, her face reflecting the multicolored water, but he could see she was flushed. "Are you kidding? You know how to get me off in three seconds!"

Draken grinned. "Good. We...it's good for us to enjoy each other now. I'm going to make this a great night for you."

She reached for his cock which was thick and long sticking up against his abdomen and her fingers drove him mad. With reluctance, he stood up and stepped back a little. "Let me pleasure you first, my love. You can do me later on." If he lasted. Something about her beauty, the rainbow sheen from the drops, her wetness -- something made her seem more erotic than ever.

Shadow can't have her. I won't let him.

He snapped his fingers and a back scrubber appeared in his hand.

"Oh, shit," she said.

He smiled as he ran his palm over the brush. The bristles were extremely soft, just as he'd conjured.

"Your pussy needs washing, babe."

She leaned against the beveled glass of the shower door and tensed. "Your cock needs washing, too, you know --"

"And I'll tell you when to wash it." He bent over, his hard-as-a-rock shaft bumping against his thigh, making him want to come, but he held back. As she watched him, he spread her legs, shooting her what he hoped was a shit-eating grin. Even with water in his eyes, he could see her turning pink. Mischief overcame him and he blinked again. Her arms were restrained from moving by handcuffs attached to the wall. Her ankles were chained to the base of the ledge.

They locked in a hot stare and he saw her diaphragm moving up and down quickly. "Clever," she mumbled, and he heard her breathing faster.

Draken twirled the brush in his hand, letting it spin on its blue handle.

He saw her throat working hard.

"Do it, Drake," she said.

His gaze fell to her throbbing pink slit, wide open for him. He saw her clit sticking out. She was hot and bothered at just the thought of what he was going to do. Good. They may not have this kind of sex for a long time to come. Who knew what would happen or when she'd snap back into evil again? Trying hard to banish the dark thoughts, he ran his fingers over the bristles, watching her as he did.

"Draken, you mean tease! Do it already!"

He laughed and blinked, and a small jar appeared in his hand. "This first."

Her eyes almost popped out of her head. "Draken, I'm telling you --"

"You don't tell me anything, little girl, not when it involves sex." He set the brush on a high ledge, and her gaze followed it as he undid the lid of the jar and stuck his fingers in it. The scent was cherry and the lube was waterproof. He got down on his knees and ran the gel up and down her pulsing slit as she tossed her head back and laughed and cried, trying to burst out of her bonds. As he moved his hands to her chest, he felt the speed of her heart and felt warmed. He knew how much she was getting off and he loved it. His cock was close to exploding; he felt precum on its head. Well, if he came, he came. Dreauxoids, even half Dreauxoids, were ready for sex minutes afterward. They didn't need to rest for an hour, like some humans.

He lathered her breasts and the nipples hardened; then he kissed her as he rubbed the rest of her. The gel tasted as cherry as it smelled, making her doubly delicious. "I love the way you feel, the way you taste, everything about you, baby," he mumbled, and he bent down to kiss her clit, moving it around with his tongue and she arched again, coming into his mouth. He swallowed her nectar and felt good inside. Although not much, she'd given him just a little of her humanness. Oh, if only they could bond! *If we make it out of this in one piece, I'll make her bond with me; I know she wants to. I'll prove myself worthy.*

The water kept raining down on them and he stood up, watching her glazed eyes.

"Take these bonds off me," she said, pulling on them.

He couldn't help grinning at her as he reached for the scrub brush. "No. You don't want me to, anyway."

"I'll go nuts if you don't."

"I love it when you go nuts." He kneeled down and licked the hell out of her cunt -- back and forth -- until she arched, throwing her head back once more. Then, while she was still flaming, he stroked her clit with the soft bristles of the brush and she arched again, many times, as tears mixed with the water. Each time he stroked her, she came. Finally, he let up and held her, the best he could while she was still in bondage. "Are you comfortable?" he finally asked into her ear. "Do you need me to let you out, love?"

He felt her trembling breath. "Do you have more plans for me? Going to finish me off?"

He kissed her forehead. "Of course. But should I take off the bonds?"

"No. Oh, Draken, I didn't really mean it, no!"

Her answer pleased him, they were so sexually compatible. It was so rare to find a human who liked to have outside-the-box sex. He stood and reached for one of the showerheads that sprayed them both with multicolored water.

"Draken, no!"

"I decide what we do, love." He knew she'd love it.

She squealed as he twisted the showerhead and narrowed the stream of water; then he aimed it at her flaming pink pussy, with its erect, reddened clitoris. At the water's touch, she cried out and yanked on her bonds, her head flying backward and her eyes shutting. She

called his name, but he barely heard it as he concentrated on hitting her right in the hot spot. He knew he was doing a good job because she arched over and over again and begged and pleaded for him both to stop and to never stop. Her pleas melted into sounds of pleasure as he at last removed the stream of water from her nub and hung the showerhead back on the wall, widening the water's scope.

She continued to have orgasms even afterward, and he blinked away her bonds, lifted her, and sat down, setting her on his lap. His lips feathered in her hair and his hands held her firmly, lovingly. Finally, when she'd stopped convulsing, he lifted her in his arms, her pussy spread wide against his chest. She made herself slide up and down, but he quickly set her down. He didn't think she could take much more without passing out and he definitely didn't want that to happen.

"More later," he said, hugging her to him. "Now, you wanted to satisfy me." His cock bucked and spilled more cum. He was shaking all over, wouldn't last another minute. "Do whatever you want, I don't care, but I have to come."

Instantly, she sank to her knees and took him in her mouth, her tongue twirling around his head with hot strokes of passion. Unable to hold it in any longer, he exploded his offering at her throat and shuddered as she swallowed and licked for more. He came and came again. His body quaked and his knees almost collapsed, but he managed to hold himself up, bracing a hand against the glass, arching and climaxing until he was emptied. When he finished, he lifted her under her arms, sat on the ledge, and cuddled her on his lap, feeling she was a little bit safer. Although her swallowing his seed wasn't as complete as bonding, for a little while she'd have part of him inside her, some extra psychic powers, maybe a little magic. Lord, he couldn't wait to do a bonding ceremony with her before the gods, who would bless their union and give her his magic and immortality. Until that happened, he'd live in terror.

Hell, he was already terrified for her. It could already be too late...no. Since when was he a pessimist? He blinked twice. The shower shut off at the same time a large lavender towel wrapped them together. He rubbed her wet hair with the towel, stood up, and walked out of the shower. The cool air caused goose bumps on her skin and he blinked a second towel, this one lavender also. As they headed out of the bathroom toward the bed, he asked, "How do you feel?"

She laughed from under all the towels. "How do you think, after what we just did? It was glorious, Draken. Maybe the best ever, but I say that every time, don't I?" She kissed his cheek and he melted inside.

After he settled them both in bed under heavy blankets, both of them naked, they clung to one another until Bree fell asleep; this time without passing out. He kissed her forehead, ready to sleep a little and regenerate. He knew he'd used too much magic while making love to her. Sleeping brought a Dreauxoid's powers back more quickly. Just as he closed his eyes, he felt and smelled a familiar presence.

“Draken? Sorry to drop by at such a bad time, but it’s not like you never watched me make love to Natalia.”

Draken sat up, grumbling at his tall, dark-haired Dreauxoid friend, Raven.

Raven, almost as tall as Draken and just as well built and handsome, laughed at him. “It’s true, though. You’ve watched me and my lady, even participated, if I recall.”

Draken let out a heavy breath. “So you watched Bree and me in the shower, I suppose. Invisibly.”

“I did, and Natalia got me off while we looked.”

“Natalia?”

Natalia appeared, a big grin on her face. She was a beautiful, tall, lean woman with brown skin, auburn hair, and sparkling eyes. She hung on to Raven as she watched him.

“So you get off on watching others --” Draken still had some magic in him. For no good reason, he blinked blue jeans on himself and a shirt and jeans on Bree, even though she was still sleeping, hidden from sight. Pulling back his covers, he climbed out of bed. “Both of you are bad,” he said, but he was actually teasing. Dreauxoids watched each other having sex all the time. It was considered normal. And Natalia had bonded with Raven, so she was part Dreauxoid now.

“You taught me every bad thing I know,” Raven said, with a wry grin. “I came here as soon as I could. What’s going on?” He put an arm around Natalia, indicating that she would hear everything, too.

Draken grew serious, remembering his troubles. “Let’s talk in the community room,” he said, glancing over his shoulder at Bree. “I don’t want to wake her.”

“Sleeping spell?” Natalia asked. She looked disappointed. “I like Bree. I’d love to talk to her.”

Draken shook his head. “You can’t.”

“Can’t?”

“That’s right. Let’s go downstairs, but we’d better walk. I need to save my magic reserves.” He smirked. “If you saw our latest tryst, you know I used a lot of magic.”

“Yes,” they both said and laughed.

Draken shot them a dark look, then walked over to a desk on the far side of the room. Finding a scrap of paper and a pen, he jotted a note for Bree in case she woke up. “I’m in the community room with Raven and Natalia. I’ll be back soon. Message me telepathically if you need me. I love you. Drake.” He brought it to the bed and set it on her pillow. Then he put a sleep spell on her so she wouldn’t wake up -- the letter had been a precaution that probably wasn’t necessary.

At that moment, Tyrus appeared. “You called me, boy?”

Draken turned his back on him, feeling a stab of anger. “Over an hour ago, Earth time.”

"I'm sorry, son. I was on a movie date and I shut down my messaging abilities. I...was at a movie with a very nice lady --"

"Great!"

"A human. I didn't want her to know I wasn't one."

"I don't really give a shit."

He heard his father let out an exasperated breath. "Well, the short version of the story is I checked my messages when I went out for popcorn and got your message. As soon as I could take the lady home, telling her I had a family emergency, I popped right over. I sensed your urgency."

"It is urgent," Draken said, feeling cold toward his father but glad he was there.

"Well, what is it?" Tyrus asked.

Draken turned around and stared his father in the eyes, hating to tell him he was right. With each word clipped, he said, "Bree is possessed. Shadow got to her. You guessed correctly."

Chapter Eight

The community room was really a conference room, with a long brown table and many chairs. Natalia made coffee and found clean mugs in a cabinet under the table that the coffeemaker sat on. As the men sat around gloomily, not talking, she served them coffee.

Draken felt the empathy of his friends, and the concern emitting from his father. But they all held back waiting for him to speak. He was gathering his thoughts, trying to get his raging emotions in check. Nobody wanted to jump on the topic too quickly, he knew. They all needed to clear their heads, not just him. Draken sipped the strong, surprisingly good coffee from his cup and looked at the two men sitting across from him. Raven beckoned to Natalia to sit beside him, which she did, her own steaming coffee mug in hand. Tyrus stared into his cup as if looking for answers.

“All right, you all know what’s wrong.” Draken knew he sounded gruff, but he felt vulnerable. Bree meant everything to him, and he couldn’t bear to lose her. Although she was under a spell, she wouldn’t sleep forever; time was not on his side. He knew that he had to keep an eye on her once she was awake, lest the evil that was growing inside her break free and destroy her. “What the fuck am I supposed to do now? I’ve got to save Bree. I can’t let things remain this way.” The sorry look his father gave him made his gut tighten.

“Tyrus,” Natalia said. “What do you know of demonic possession?”

Tyrus lifted his head and cleared his throat. “Scientists of the highest caliber are working with quarantined creatures that have been possessed by Winter Demons. They’re working on an antidote but haven’t found one yet. In the meantime, we’re quarantining all infected creatures.”

Draken, afraid to ask, nonetheless heard himself saying, “What happens in the long run, without an antidote, when one is possessed by this evil?”

"The evil takes the victim over completely, suppressing the real them as the one who possessed them takes over." Tyrus looked Draken in the eye and Draken tried not to look as scared as he felt. "First, they have one short episode that they can be aroused from -- usually by being around positive energy. But as time goes on and they have longer and deeper fits of evil, it's harder to get them back from it. Some become so permeated with evil that they've taken on super demonic powers and escaped from our quarantine center, disappearing. We don't know their outcome, but we assume they join the Winter Demons in a secret place. I'm sorry, Drake. I know this isn't good news."

Draken almost laughed at the understatement. *Not good news? Devastating news is what it was.* "There's nothing to be done?" he asked in a harsh voice. "*Nothing?*"

"We don't know much about how to treat this yet, son. The Winter Demons are clever and have managed to elude capture. And the Winter Demons have killed the quarantined subjects we've been able to give the test antidotes to. It gives us hope that we're close to a cure, so close that the Winter Demons would rather kill their victims than let us win. We haven't captured any of the Winter Demons themselves. All we know for sure is that they are repelled by love and light but can remain around both for short periods. Unlike regular demons, they can stand being around goodness, which makes them tough opponents."

"They can only stand to be around light and love for short periods." Draken was busting his brain trying to think. He'd have to find that kind of place for Bree.

"That's what we've seen. However, their powers are stronger than many other creatures. They can literally incinerate other immortals if they outnumber them. That makes them hard to fight. We've tried and lost some valuable warriors. And none of us has found a way to destroy even one of them. This is top secret, but they're moving across the universe, infecting one planet, one moon at a time, taking over. And good fighters that we are, we haven't been able to save even one of those places. Morale is very low. Some are feeling hopeless."

Draken shot Raven a determined look, refusing to go down without a fight. His friend had his arm tightly wrapped around his lifemate, and he knew that Raven was worried about his own family. They would most likely be targets, too.

"There must be a way. I'll fight with you," Raven said boldly.

"No!" Natalia's voice was firm. "If we didn't have children, perhaps we could join the fight, but we do...so we can't. We can't go off on missions, Rave."

His tense face relaxed and he let out a breath. "She's right, Tyrus. I'm sorry."

"No need."

"I know how you feel. My natural inclination is to join the fight, too," Draken said, his gaze glancing from Raven and Natalia to his father. "But I can't now. Not only did I promise Bree I wouldn't, but I have to take care of her now. I know that I'm the only one who can save her. I swear I'll find a way to reverse this possession. Father, have your people tried irradiating the spores of good creatures inside the possessed one to neutralize the evil?"

Tyrus sat back and took a sip of coffee.

"Well?" Draken demanded.

"We did. It hasn't worked. The only thing that has worked is the antidote. But like I said, the minute we make progress the Winter Demons kill the one they've possessed. Their life forces literally cease and there's no bringing them back."

"Does anything slow down the progression of total possession?" Raven asked, watching Tyrus alertly.

Tyrus shrugged. "We've found that staying in a very bright place, where there is a lot of love, slows the progression. But it doesn't stop it."

His father's confirmation backed up his own thoughts that he needed to get Bree to such a place stat. "I need a place like that for Bree immediately," Draken said resolutely, noting his father's frown. *Why was his father against this?*

"No," Tyrus shot right back at him. "You must stay at this Safe House, son. These Winter Demons have you at the top of their list for possession. I doubt they even know this remote, nameless planet even exists. Not only do others seeking asylum surround you with goodness that repels the creatures, but also I don't think the Winter Demons will find you here. At least not for a very long time. By then, we may have found a way to destroy them and cure Bree."

He recognized a delaying tactic when he heard it, and even appreciated his father's attempt to protect him, but he was firm about this. "They'll get here eventually," Draken said, grimly. "I can't let Bree stay here and perish."

"You won't. I'll have to take her into isolation."

Draken glared at his father. "How can you even suggest..."

"I'm not suggesting, I'm ordering. It's my duty to take her into quarantine. It will be the best thing for her."

"I don't believe that. She needs me."

"She needs treatment more."

"I'm not buying that, you told me yourself the treatment kills."

"At least it will be a delaying tactic; give us time to plan, and keep her safe."

"For how long?"

"I can't say, but in the meantime you need to stay here and be safe." Tyrus's cheeks turned pink and he turned his head as he cleared his throat. "I don't want harm to come to you, my only son. Please, Draken, don't leave here. Eventually, we'll find a way to deal with these Winter Demons."

"But will it be in time for Bree?" He fought down the softness within him that had surfaced at his father's caring words. He could feel his father's sense of duty warring with his softer side. "I won't let you take her, and I won't save my own skin at the sacrifice of my

beloved. I think deep down you understand that, Father. After all, we have the same protective qualities.” He saw the light in his father’s eyes.

“She’s your lifemate, son.”

That startled him. “We haven’t bonded.”

“But she is your lifemate nevertheless, like your mother was mine. One day, if all goes well, I’m sure there will be a message to me, telepathic of course, that the two of you have bonded before the Dreauxoid gods. In the meantime, I promise to do all I can to rush our scientists into a cure, son.”

A chill rushed down Draken’s spine as his coffee cup turned to ice in his hands. The room temperature seemed to have plummeted in an instant. “Are any of you cold?” he asked.

“Yeah,” Natalia said, snuggling into Raven. “Happened suddenly, like somebody turned off the heat.”

Natalia stood up, heading to the coffee machine. “We could use hot refills,” she said. “This is strange. It’s usually nice and warm in here.” She grabbed the handle on the carafe and froze. “Wow, the handle is cold, too.” Puzzled, she felt the glass. “This is, too. And the coffee is frozen.” She glanced over at Raven. “Honey, something’s very wrong.”

Draken felt a pang of dread as he rose and strode to the door. By now, he could see his breath. Shit, this planet was tropical. Only one thing could cause such a chill factor -- Winter Demons. He opened the conference room door and saw creatures running around shivering.

“Demons must have invaded!” someone shouted. “How could they find us? We’re hidden so well!”

Draken took in a deep, cold breath of air, drew in the sharp scents of sweat and sulfur, and shot a look over his shoulder, meeting Tyrus’s eyes. “It didn’t take centuries, Father. They’re here. I’m going back to get Bree and --”

“It’s that woman!” a male creature shouted. “Over there! Everywhere she goes, it turns to ice! Tonya, there must be evil in her!”

Draken tore out into the hall and saw an angry mob staring down the hall at a terrified-looking Bree. When she saw him, she elbowed creatures out of her way and threw herself into Draken’s arms, and he instantly transported her to the conference room, locking the door behind them.

“Why am I so c-c-cold?” she moaned, her teeth chattering as she sat in the chair, her arms folded across her chest, her eyes shut as she rocked back and forth.

Draken knelt down and took her hands, trying to warm them although they felt like ice. “Bree, try to fight it,” he said, harshly. “Don’t give into this, Bree. Think warm!”

Tyrus and the others were behind him now as Bree kept rocking, her teeth chattering. The room temperature kept falling. “What’s wr-rong with me?” she asked, groaning. “I...I...my head...my head hurts...and I’m so c-c-cold --”

The door flew open, someone's magic obviously at work, and Tonya, with a large Wookiee bodyguard behind her, stormed into the room.

"What's going on?" Draken quickly asked, standing, shielding Bree, not wanting Tonya to see the obvious.

"You're asking *me*?"

Tyrus stood beside him, forming a wall before Bree, and said, "Tonya, the human is sick. We're trying to figure out the problem, and to fix it --"

"The human is possessed!" Tonya looked panicked. "She's brought darkness and cold to our Safe House! The water is frozen; you can't even get a glass of water. It's snowing outside." She caught Draken's gaze, which he knew must have been both bitter and frightened. "This is a place of warmth for creatures to find safety, Draken. Bree has to go. You can stay, but your woman can't."

Draken felt his stomach clench. "And this has nothing to do with jealousy?"

"No!" Tonya laughed without mirth. "Draken, I started this Safe House to shield creatures from evil. I'm a flirt, not an ogre. Good gods, I can't have any evil besmirching this planet. Draken, you're a good man. You know she can't stay here. She's not only destroying the hotel, she's a danger to every creature who calls this home."

"Drake!" Natalia said, sharply. "She's having a seizure."

"Get her out of here!" Tonya demanded. "I want her gone right away!"

Draken heard the door slam as he fell to the ground beside his love. Gently, he rolled her to her side as she convulsed, watching her carefully until she suddenly jerked and opened her eyes, which were wide, round, and distant.

"Shit," Raven mumbled from behind and above him.

Draken could barely swallow. "Bree?" he tried. "Bree, is it you?"

But he knew it wasn't her. Her lips were blue and she bore the mild stench of Shadow.

Bree smiled seductively and sat up, reaching for him, her eyes vacant. "Hey, big boy," she said, tearing at his shirt. "You're good-looking, stranger. I'd love to have your tool inside my cunt. I want you to come inside me until there's nothing left of you -- I want your seed, baby."

Draken scooped her into his arms and she stuck her hand down his shirt, tweaking his nipple.

"Stop!" he said, trying to keep his body from responding.

She giggled.

"We have to get her out of here," Tyrus said in a grim voice. "Tonya is right, Drake. She's a danger to the other creatures; it's not fair to keep her here. It's best to put her into quarantine."

“Never!” Draken cried out from the bottom of his soul, even as Bree reached down for his buckle and begged him to whip her.

“Boy, it’s for the best.”

“There has to be another place,” Raven said.

Draken, fighting off Bree’s advances, still held on to her tightly, and looked at his father. “If ever I needed your help, Father, it’s now,” he said, too frightened to worry about his admission.

Tyrus let out a quick breath. “I won Mercury in a poker match. Perhaps that would work for the time being.”

“I’m listening,” Draken said, breathing hard from the fatigue of keeping Bree from ripping off his clothes.

“It’s sunny and hot all the time, and hot demons hate sunlight and heat. If you bathe her in it, maybe it will help. Also, she’ll be with you, the man who loves her. It could stave off her total capitulation to evil and give us time while we think of options.”

“Sounds good,” Draken said. “What do you think, Raven?”

“I think you have no other choice; do it,” Raven said at once.

Tyrus blinked and a long magic carpet appeared in the room. It was fluorescent green and velvet.

“Everybody get on,” he said, taking the front seat.

Draken, aware that Raven and Natalia were with him, struggled to get to the carpet. Once he got to it, he sat, forcing Bree to sit in front of him while he held her tightly.

“Oh, good,” she shrieked with delight. “We can have sex on the magic carpet while people are *watching* us! I love an audience.” She tried to fit her hand between her back and Draken’s chest to reach his cock, but he held her tightly against him.

“No,” he said, his cock throbbing against her ass.

“Everyone hold on to your hats!” Tyrus called, and the magic carpet jerked into the air, flew out the window without causing anyone to get cut on the glass, and bolted into outer space.

Draken held Bree’s arms to her chest, but she struggled for freedom. “I want to see that scrumptious cock. I know you have a big one, sexy,” she said.

“Hurry, Father,” Draken said, heavily. “The evil is getting stronger. I can’t subdue her with my magic like I did the first time. Let’s get there as soon as we can.”

From behind him, Draken felt Raven’s hand on his shoulder.

“Easy, pal,” he said in a quiet voice.

“We can do this,” Natalia added.

It was going to be a very unpleasant ride to wherever his father was taking them. But Draken didn’t care.

He had to save the love of his life from destruction.

Chapter Nine

When Bree woke up, she was wet with perspiration, her nightgown stuck to her skin, and lying in a strange bed. Chilled, she curled up under a heavy quilt and silk sheets. She had no idea where she was, but she didn't care because a deliciously naked Draken lay beside her; she knew it, knew his scent and touch, the feel of his hot cock against her abdomen. His presence reassured her. With Draken around, nothing bad could happen to her.

"Babe?" he asked as he woke, his breath and hair tickling her face.

"Ummm." They were so attuned to one another it made her happy. She stretched on her back and opened her eyes, smiling at his intense gaze, wondering why he looked so worried. "Hey." She reached up and touched his cheek. "Where'd ya take me, hot stuff? Did we transfer to another room because the other one was too girly? It's awfully bright in here." She sat up and squinted at the ultrabright sunlight pouring into the room from ceiling-to-floor windows. She looked around the strange but charming bedroom, bemused. The last thing she remembered was waking up in the Safe House with a headache and her body ice cold. She ached a little, her limbs sore as if she'd been flailing around. Her heart contracted as a slight wave of fear rushed through her. Something was wrong. Even though she wasn't an otherworldly Dreaxoid, she could feel it. Trying to brush it off, she looked back at Draken, wishing he'd stop staring at her that way.

"We moved, didn't we? You transported us. Where's your magic carpet?"

Draken looked her up and down, his stare finally resting on hers. "It's still locked in the Safe House's garage." He sounded cautious.

Which meant they were somewhere else, and they'd gotten here by some other means. But where were they? She knew that Draken could have instantly transported them, but he didn't like to waste his magic that way. Something had happened while she was sleeping. She felt her stomach clench. "Where are we, babe?" Although she asked the question, she didn't

really want an answer. It would only bring her pain, she realized. Something awful had occurred. She only wanted to wrap her arms around her love and enjoy him. To the core of her soul, she knew she wouldn't like what she heard, because she felt strange. And she sensed that she'd lost time.

"Did I pass out again?"

He paused, then said, "Not exactly. As for where we are, this is my father's home. It's closer to the Earth's sun. That's why it's so bright and warm. We...can't have drapes, my love, because you need the light. A special filter makes it possible for both of us not to burn up, but we both need all the light we can get."

What wasn't he telling her? "Why do I need the light?" She stopped smiling, dropped her hand from his cheek, took his hand, and squeezed it. "I'm not a baby, Draken. What's going on? I'm not a Dreauxoid and I don't like the sun as much as you do. Is it ever night here? Does this planet revolve?" She knew she was babbling and made herself stop.

He let out a heavy sigh that tickled her nose, her lips.

"No, Bree, it's always light here." He only missed a beat. "Demons don't like the light, and Winter Demons can only tolerate this degree of light for short periods of time. Even if perchance we're found, no Winter Demon could stay here for too long, which will give us time to escape."

She searched his face and knew. God help her, she knew. "I remember getting really cold. So terribly cold. And I...I...I --" She wrapped herself in his embrace, and he held her, rocking her back and forth, his cheek resting on her head.

"Tonya made us leave, and my father came through for us for once." He held her tighter. "Bree, there's no way to sugarcoat this. Shadow infected you with his own vile spores. They do it with laser beams. You're showing early stages of demonic possession." As her head whirled, he rushed ahead. "I promise, I'll fix it. I swear I will."

She heard his heart thumping loud, and the fear in his voice. Trembling, she pulled back and stared him in the face. "I...is there a cure?"

He looked so tortured that she knew the answer. Before she could speak again, he said in a soothing voice, "The scientists are working on an antidote, sweet. All we have to do is hang on."

"But nothing to help now." Shutting her eyes, she let a wave of fear splash over her and then lifted her chin, refusing to go down in a cowardly fashion. She had to be brave for Draken. "So what will happen to me?"

She listened, refusing to let her stare waver from his, as he explained all he knew. "This place will buy us valuable time," he said at the end. "Meanwhile, like I said, the peacemakers' scientists are trying hard to find an antidote for those infected with --" He cut it off.

"Evil." She spoke the word, awed in a horrified way. "I'm evil. I have it deep inside me. I can feel it in the deep recesses of my soul, growing stronger, waiting to come out. Telling

me to do wicked things.” She grabbed Draken, her eyes tearing again. “Draken, help me hold on to the good. I’m suddenly sensing that this evil doesn’t like love, and you love me.”

“You have good instincts. Bree, we’re going to have a happy ending.”

Bree laughed through her tears. “I hope so, Drake. But just in case, I want you to do me a favor.”

“Anything, darling.” He stroked her hair.

She breathed in deeply, and then licked her lips.

“What?” he prompted, his hands so gentle, so calming.

“If I become completely possessed, I want you to kill me. I don’t want to endanger anyone, especially not you. We can never bond now. If I hadn’t been so stubborn, we could have avoided all this. It’s so sad.” Her body shook. But she meant her words.

“Even if we’d bonded, you could have still been infected, love. Besides, I’m the one who screwed up, not acting trustworthily to you and then letting Shadow get to you. Have faith, it won’t come to complete possession. I’d never kill you. Could never kill you. Are you mad to even ask me to?”

“If I turn into a Winter Demon, you’ll have no choice.”

“With the sunny conditions here, it won’t happen for eons.” He spoke crisply and harshly. “By then we’ll have a cure.”

She knew that if she turned completely evil, someone *would* kill her and she hoped it was Draken -- he’d be humane. However, there was no need to discuss it anymore. For now, she’d savor every moment in her right mind and take in the scent, touch, and feel of the man of her dreams. Content in her decision, she rested against him, and his strong, safe arms tightened around her body.

“My father is pushing the scientists to hurry,” Draken said, crooning in her ear. “He has lots of pull. I think the old coot isn’t half as bad as I’d thought. He’s really trying to help us and he’s accepted you as my lifemate even though we haven’t officially bonded. And he will help us. Raven and Natalia are on our side, too.”

She patted him on the back. “It’s good to know that we have them pulling for us.” In spite of the cards being stacked against her, she would not give up. She’d fight the evil with all she had and trust that Tyrus, knowing that Draken loved her, would try his damndest to bring them answers.

“That’s my girl,” Draken said, quietly. “You keep a positive attitude. That also repels the bad guys, and I’m going to make it my mission to keep you happy and sexually satisfied. They are drawn to darkness and negativity. We’ll beat them at their own game, you hear?”

She couldn’t help smiling; she loved him so. “Yes, darling, I hear.”

Draken took her shoulders and pulled back to look at her, his eyes twinkling a little now, a great sign. His good humor fueled her own. “We have a lot of playtime here, as much

as we would have had in the Safe House. And we won't be able to wear many clothes because of the heat."

She felt her breasts tightening, her pussy spasming, as he talked about keeping her naked. It was a wonderful time to get lost in the wonder of Draken -- her big, strong man with the most beautiful dark eyes in the universe and the most wickedly sweet dimpled grin. She ran her hands down his chest, feeling her hormones kick in. "Do me, Draken. Do me like it's the last time we'll ever be together."

His face looked pained and she froze.

"What?" she asked.

"It won't be the last time. Don't talk that way."

Bree shut her eyes, trying to tap into her higher self. "You're right. I shouldn't." She let her eyes flutter open and couldn't resist a smile as she brushed her long hair behind an ear.

His eyes were sad, brooding, but he forced a dimpled smile. "Hey, gorgeous, we'll make love like never before, but I still can't penetrate your sweet pussy -- that sucks especially now that I know how good it feels since Troy fucked you. I now know how it feels to be jealous of my other side," he said with a smile. "But eventually I'll have that pleasure, too." His dark eyes twinkled a little bit. "Should I summon my double?"

"Maybe later," she said, and leaned into him. "For now, all I want is you." She landed a kiss on his full, lush mouth, tasting him as she stuck her tongue inside. They fused together tightly, falling to the mattress. Bree pulled Draken over her and forgot all about her troubles. How could she think about anything else with Draken holding her? When he touched her, it was magic. If she never lived another day, it didn't matter. No other woman in existence was as lucky as her: Draken loved her. She felt it so strongly.

"I'm going to love all of you, slowly and completely," he said, adding a deliciously sexy growl, and her nightgown melted away, disappearing as he blinked it away.

Bree's body tingled, her nipples budding, and her sex growing wet and creamy. She wanted him so bad. "My turn afterward."

"I won't argue with that." He rolled her to his side and kissed her, savoring her mouth completely. As he slid his tongue inside her mouth with slow deliberation, she felt as if he were seducing her as he used his tongue to simulate sex -- thrusting it in and out, in and out of her mouth.

"Don't tease me," she mumbled, as he broke the kiss to nibble her nape, giving her a love bite. He was going to take his time and drive her crazy with lust before he was through. After he'd ravaged her throat, he licked down her body to her breasts. They shook with her ragged breathing, her nipples so hard and aching she thought they'd break. When his hot mouth captured one, she let out a pleased cry and arched out to him, begging for more. Shuddering as he suckled her, she felt her body tighten, her middle curling up inside. He drew hard on her nipple, and then nipped it, the small edge of pain driving her wild. She

thrashed against him, crying out, and he left that peak with a kiss and moved to the other, lapping at it with his rough tongue and then drawing it into his mouth. Her sex gushed honey as she pressed against him mindlessly, letting him take control. When he kissed down her abdomen to her sex, her whole body trembled. Draken slipped between her spread legs, his gaze darkly possessive as he locked eyes with her. She couldn't look away and she knew it wasn't Dreauxoid magic. She was his captive in more ways than one. She was breathing hard, panting hard for him, and he smiled with satisfaction at her reaction. Then he bent to taste her, and she cried out. His rough tongue stroked her pulsing slit over and over again, making her eyes roll back in her head and her toes curl as she quivered. All she could do was go wild as he drove her nuts with his teasing lips and tongue.

"Don't torment me," she said, her head thrashing back and forth.

He laughed and licked her labia, her clit. She arched, shuddering. His tongue thrust inside her quivering pussy, and he fucked her with it, teasing her in a new and ultrahot way until she moaned and saw stars. When he stopped his sweet torture and sucked her throbbing clit into his hot mouth, nipping at it, she screamed, going senseless as her nectar poured out. She tightened as she came again, her body spasming. "Draken!" she called in a breathy voice. "Draken, I love you so much!"

He spoke over her sex, his breath fanning it. "I'm glad; I love you too." He spread her pussy wide open with his hot fingers and licked again, and she screamed as she tensed and shuddered. His tongue snaked inside her again and she felt tears pooling in her eyes.

"Good job, ole boy," Troy said.

Through a mist of orgasmic tears, she looked to see that Draken's sensual, naked double had joined them.

"Troy," Draken said, rolling off her, "Let's take her at the same time, pal. Bree's pussy's on fire for us."

Bree's body trembled as Troy and Draken pinned her with identical sultry looks. They were going to drive her mad with lust.

Draken smiled. "You know what to do, Troy."

Bree felt her bones turn to jelly, wondering what they had planned. The naughty look in Troy's eyes fanned her fire.

Draken sat on one side of the bed while Troy lay beside her, his dreads falling against her cheeks. "I'll fuck you with no mercy," he said, his dark eyes blazing. "Get ready, baby, here I come." Before she could catch her breath, Troy climbed on top of her and thrust his hot, enormous cock inside her, filling her entire body with screaming sensations that made her mewl. While still deep inside her, he rolled to his back and clutched her to him, bringing her on top. She could hear Draken coming up from behind and felt tears rolling down her cheeks as he rubbed her ass with cherry scented lube. "Troy," Draken said, with playfulness, "turn on the power."

“What --” Bree could barely get the word out before she spasmed.

Troy pumped her up and held her there, his cock at her womb, and Draken entered her ass, his thick, hot cock sliding up her tight portal. The degree of sensation at the assault from both ends made her sob.

. “One...two...three,” Draken shouted, and suddenly both of their cocks vibrated with high-pitched hums. Bree’s limp body instantly pulled taut, as if it had been struck by lightning. She scratched her nails down Troy’s skin as a rush of icy-hot tingles coursed through every cell in her body. Calling out to Draken, she didn’t feel like she was still in bed. She wasn’t. They were levitating on Tyrus’s long, velvet magic carpet. Both Draken and his double thrust in tandem as she pumped her hips to their out-of-this-world, crazy, sizzling rhythm, wondering if her sanity would ever return. She shut her eyes, thrashed her head, bit her lip, again raked the clone’s back with her fingernails, and tried hard to kick but was restrained. The thrusting became faster and harder; at the same time, Troy sucked on her tit with vibrating lips, shooting her clear to paradise.

As the vibrations quickened, she called out for both of them to stop, but she never wanted them to stop, never wanted to come down again. Everything inside her rattled and she arched repeatedly, coming fast and hard, squirting her nectar, feeling it sliding down her thighs. “*I love you!*” she shouted, and her voice seemed to echo off the walls, hell, the universe.

When she finally came down, Troy rolled away from her and she saw Troy jump on Draken and disappear into his body as her Dreauxoid lover held her close. Shutting her eyes, breathing hard, basking in his warm love, she felt on top of the world. In his arms, she felt invincible, as immortal as himself. She wanted to give a taste of her love back to him. Pulling away a little, she said, “I want to be your sex slave today, love. Please, may I?”

“Ummmm.” His eyes were shut, his eyelashes long and curled, his features soft and perfect.

She stroked back his hair. “Tell me what you want me to do.”

He feathered her neck with gentle fingers and his eyes opened, dark and brooding, but he forced a little smile. “Dance for me, slave.”

He’d asked that of her before. It was a game he loved. “Fine.” She climbed out of bed and stood, flirtatiously tossing her hair behind her shoulders so that her hard, firm breasts stood out. She and Draken locked eyes and the air between them sizzled invisibly. Aroused, she batted her eyes at him, then turned and strode toward a tall hanging mirror. Glancing over her shoulder, she saw Draken sitting up, watching her, his eyes hot. She turned back and stood before the mirror, looking at herself, wondering why her lover found her attractive. Clearing her mind of human standards, she lifted her hands to caress her plump, round boobs. At least she had nice ones; even she knew that. She fingered her nipples until they were stiff.

Bree again glanced over her shoulder and saw Draken jacking off as he stared at her. Grinning, she broke into a sexy hum as she twirled around to face him, sticking out her pussy as she played with herself. After she came, she relaxed, then started swirling her hips with her fingers stroking her pussy, her knees weak. She walked up to him, her hands moving upward, brushing her nipples while she stuck her breasts out as an offering.

He sat naked, on the end of the bed, eagerly learning forward to suck her nubs, his arms curling around her back, pulling her between his legs, against his throbbing cock. She heard herself purring as her breathing became shaky. *God, he turned her on!* Suddenly, she found herself wearing a low-cut black leather halter with holes in the nipples, and leather bikini briefs with an open crotch. Her new outfit, smelling fresh, excited her. Draken licked the inside of her navel, paused briefly to blink himself on a pair of leather briefs with a hole for his long, throbbing penis. He pulled her over his knee and she started to tremble.

"You're so naughty," he said and blinked again.

Bree quickly glanced over her shoulder, goose bumps climbing down her spine as she saw the paddle in his upraised hand. She turned back, burying her face in his lap as she bumped her hip against his rock-hard shaft.

"You look like a slut," Draken said, faking anger, then gave her bottom a short, tight slap.

Bree came at once, her body shuddering. "Again, Draken. I'll be bad if you don't punish me."

He slapped her with tight, hard whacks, over and over, until she collapsed, soft as jelly. At one time she'd found it startling and disturbing that she enjoyed the spankings, but now she had no misgivings. Her sore ass was strangely arousing to her, sending ripples to her clit. Draken pulled her up and sat her on his lap, his heated gaze catching hers. "You look scrumptious," he said, his voice low, soothing. "You belong to me, don't you?"

"Y-yes." She couldn't think to disagree, not on his lap with his cock bumping her thigh, her ass still hot.

"Your body is mine." He sounded sharp, possessive.

"I...it always was. It was you...you who wouldn't be monogamous."

"Yes, but I want to be now. And you know I never break my word."

They locked gazes and she felt her eyes tearing. Draken never *did* break his word. She felt his love and knew she radiated her own love back at him.

He sucked in a deep breath, caressing her with his eyes. "Whatever happens, babe, we're in this together."

He lowered his head and kissed her, and she melted into his sensual hardness. If only he'd felt this way before this had happened. Letting go of her doubts and fears, she let him lay her on her back and lick her from head to toe.

Chapter Ten

Hamus paced like the lion he liked to portray, his paws hitting the dark cement floor of his throne room. Shadow had hoped for a better response from the Great One this time. After all, he'd brought him good news. Of course, the nature of a Winter Demon was foul; Shadow was still getting used to exactly *how* foul. As Hamus growled, Shadow felt resentment toward his master. What did Hamus want from him? He was still in training. Sure, he had potential to be the worst of the bad, but he needed time to learn how to reach his potential. He wondered if Hamus expressed such disappointment in all his trainees. He probably did. There was no compassion in Hamus's heart. Shadow knew how Hamus felt; he was the same way.

Hamus whirled on Shadow, a paw shooting out at him. "So you know for sure where Draken is?"

He nodded, eagerly. "I'm positive. When I irradiated Bree with my spores, I found I could smell her out. Now, she did disappear for a short time. I suspect Draken had taken her somewhere that had a shield that blocked my ability to sniff her, but I --"

"You lost your ability to sniff her out?" Hamus stared at him, his colorless eyes like two ice cubes. "You loser! There's no such shield so strong that a Winter Demon can't penetrate it!" Sneering, he yelled, "Aren't you practicing what I teach to improve your senses?"

"I-I am." He was trembling inside, and angry at his fear of the Great One.

"Well, then?" Hamus came closer, towering over him, flashing his fangs.

Shadow felt himself sweating more than a Winter Demon usually did. "I do practice and, although their current location also has a strong force field surrounding it, I broke through it and found her. That means Draken's there, too."

"And you want a medal?" Hamus took a step closer, his formidable presence intimidating Shadow. "Where are they?"

Shadow refused to step back, although he desperately wanted to. "I know she's near Mercury."

"And you're certain this is no mistake?" He leered at him.

"Yes, Sir. Her scent is most distinctive and much like my own."

Hamus finally seemed to relax a little, although his face twisted with displeasure. "Mercury." Hamus scratched his whiskers. "That's not good, it's near the sun. If you go there, you won't be able to stay long or you --"

"I know, I know."

"Don't interrupt me!"

Shadow wished he could kill him. It was getting old, having a master. But if he harmed the Great One, he'd harm himself because they were linked forever. *Damn!* Shadow really hated that, but there was nothing he could do about it. Well, he'd take his anger out on Draken. He stood in *his* spot, arms crossed, waiting for Hamus to speak again.

"I don't care where they are, or what risk you must take," Hamus said, sharply. "Bring Draken to me. Can you imagine what a powerful Winter Demon he would make?"

Shadow felt a wave of jealousy. "I don't know, Master. He has a lot of good in him."

Hamus roared and Shadow's hair blew back with the force of his garlic-laden breath. "If I get a million Winter Demons to irradiate him with their spores, even Draken's good will turn evil. I want him on our side. He's a powerful warrior and intelligent." He stared at Shadow.

Shadow wanted to shout at him that he was intelligent, too, but he didn't. His silent message to Hamus exploded inside him, but he held still.

"Bring him to me," the Great One said, so loud that the cement walls seemed to shake. "Bring him to me or you'll meet with the gravest of punishments. I'm getting tired of your coming here to talk to me. Don't talk. *Do!*" He lifted his arms and was gone in a foul, sulfuric cloud of smoke.

Shadow glowered at the spot his master had occupied. "Maybe the Void would --" He shut up. No, the Void would *not* have been better. He liked evil and would show the Great One just how good at it he was, how evil he could be.

It would please him greatly to use the dirtiest of tricks to bend Draken to his will.

Tyrus knocked on the door, knowing that he really shouldn't waste time on his love life at a time like this. But he'd sent messages to his friends and felt certain they'd do all they could for Bree. If he didn't relax a little, the entire mission would drive him insane. He'd never fought anything like the Winter Demons before.

Tyrus knocked again, louder. He could feel and smell her, but he had a sense that maybe he'd come by as she was getting her out of the shower. His cock bucked. Doreen had

no idea of her appeal. He only hoped that his love spell had lasted; he knew she had been puzzled and hurt when he'd dropped her off abruptly. He'd sensed she hadn't believed he had an emergency.

How could he ever tell her he was a Dreauxoid? He hated breaking the news to humans, remembered how Draken's mother had howled with laughter and not believed him. Driving his doubts from his mind, he straightened his Earth-bought navy shirt and jeans and waited, hoping Doreen was happy he'd come. *Should he have called first?*

The door opened a crack and his heart sped up as one bright emerald eye stared at him. A moment later, she opened the door, and he had to catch his breath. She'd obviously just showered; her auburn hair was still damp and fell to her shoulders. She looked like she'd dressed quickly being somewhat disheveled in a wrinkled black T-shirt and jeans that clung to her generous curves. In human years, she looked maybe thirty-five years old, although he knew she was older.

They locked eyes and he felt something, an encouraging sign. He stepped a little closer, inhaling the scent of flowers. "You look...lovely." She did. There was a glow to her cheeks.

"I knew it was you." She sounded puzzled, not backing up even though he stood only inches from her. "I... this is crazy, but I knew you'd come today." She searched his eyes and he nodded. "I planned for it all day, even at work --"

"Work? I thought Bree didn't want you to work." His words were inane, but he felt like a little kid.

She tilted her head and smirked. "Bree doesn't want me to work, *but* she took off with your son and left her clients needing their hair done. I went to her shop and did their hair myself."

"That's right, you do hair."

"For people who *have* hair."

They both laughed as Tyrus smoothed his bald head, feeling like an adolescent on his first date.

"Frankly," Doreen said, her smile wavering, "I'm worried about Bree. It's not like her to stand up her clients. Have you heard from her?"

Tyrus automatically reached out and gripped her shoulders, trying to offer her comfort; she felt damn good. "No, but, if I know my charming son, he's probably keeping her so busy that she lost her mind. Draken has that effect on even sensible women --"

She pulled away from him and he realized he'd said the wrong thing as she turned away. "Let's sit down."

He followed her into the small living room with a cushy blue sectional. She sat on one end; he sat on the other, not wanting to act too forward until she wanted it. And she would, if the spell was still working on her. He couldn't keep his eyes off her. She looked so scrubbed, so fresh, so...young and lovely. "I didn't word that well, Doreen. I'm so sorry."

Doreen's hard face softened and she waved a hand. "Oh, it's true. Bree can't keep her mind on anything when she's thinking about your son. I really wanted him to stay away because when he disappears, it hurts her so."

Tyrus let out a heavy breath. "I think he's more serious about her this time. I can feel -- I mean, I feel he's done playing around." Gods, he'd almost said, "I can feel his commitment to her," as if she'd understand a Dreauxoid reading the emotions of one close to him. If Doreen knew he and Draken were immortals from another world, and that her daughter was possessed by a Winter Demon... No, she'd think him nuts and not believe him. He hoped that Bree recovered for many reasons. As soon as he spent the night with Doreen, if she'd allow it, he would transport straight to Xenubu where the peacemakers were holding counsel. "I wasn't a very good father to Draken." The words had just popped out, but he didn't regret confiding in her. He felt close to her, thought she would understand.

Doreen slid about a foot closer to him and dropped her elbows to her knees. "I understand. I had to raise Bree alone. Her father ran off when she was little. And I know I made many mistakes myself. Don't beat yourself up over it. Draken turned out fine." She dropped her gaze. "Um, his mother...was she helpful?"

"She died when Drake was five." He felt an emptiness overtaking him.

"I'm sorry."

"Thank you." He shrugged. "He was a difficult boy to raise, always bucking my authority, taking off the minute he reached maturity."

Doreen's green eyes were kind. "He seems driven. Bree left for cosmetology school and never lived at home again after that. We've been struggling together since my heart attack. Now she wants me to keep living with her, but it's not easy. We're two adults, but when I'm here, I worry about her like she's still a little girl. It's not good for either of us."

"I know how that is. I still worry about my son, big and strong as he is. What do you say we spend some time together rather than worrying about our children?"

Doreen's eyes sparkled and she stood up. "I could make some soup --"

"No." He took her into his arms. She tensed and stared at him, startled. "Look into my eyes."

She did, and he made sure to turn on the Dreauxoid charm, the one that humans couldn't resist. He felt that he'd maybe...finally...found a replacement for Draken's mother. "Doreen," he said, his voice low and smooth, "I don't think you realize what a beautiful woman you are."

She kept her gaze on his eyes. "Beautiful? Me?"

"To me you are."

"I... I" -- she trembled in his arms but didn't pull away -- "I just want you to know...I'm not promiscuous."

He laughed. He couldn't help it. "I pretty much figured that out and I'm not here to rush you or to even have sex with you. I just want to spend time with you, get to know you better."

She seemed to tremble more. "I shouldn't have let you in."

"I promise not to push you, Doreen."

"Why...do I feel like I know you? It has to be from all these years knowing Draken --"

"Maybe." He didn't want to pull away from her, but didn't want to scare her either, so he did move back. Their gazes locked, however. "Would you like to go out to dinner and then come back here to talk? Truly, I mean just talk."

Doreen looked confused as her throat worked hard.

Tyrus waited.

"I'd like that," she finally said. Then, to his surprise, she stepped forward and wrapped her arms around his neck. Laughing as she blushed, she said, "I'm really not like this at all, but...can I kiss you? I have such an urge to kiss you. This is crazy; I haven't dated since Bree's father --"

He pressed his lips down on hers and she melted against him. The room seemed whirl around him and he basked in her alluring essence...

Draken woke up from a dream he couldn't remember, but he was drenched with sweat. Hand trembling, he shook off his fear and removed the dark sleeping mask from his eyes. Breathing hard, he sat up and leaned over Bree, who also wore a dark mask over her eyes, her lips parted in what looked like a peaceful sleep. He forced himself to relax and slipped off her mask. Rolling toward her, he scooped her into his arms, feeling the softness of her skin, relieved that he didn't smell Shadow's scent on her. He knew he'd been hypervigilant ever since they'd sought sanctuary, knew he couldn't let Shadow get to her.

Her eyes fluttered open and her baby blues were fuzzy with sleep. He smiled at her as he reached down and stroked her cheek. "Morning, love. At least I think it's morning; I've been keeping Earth time and it would be morning there. We've slept a long time, done us good."

She smiled and sat up, her plump breasts spilling out from under the covers. Draken eyed them, his mouth watering. With her hair falling around her strawberry peaks, he could almost forget their dire situation.

She reached up and cupped his chin. "It feels strange to be bathed in sunlight twenty-four-seven," she said. "I'm amazed I slept so well."

Draken felt super energized by the solar energy and pressed his stirring cock against her lush hip, feeling himself throb. "With me beside you, protecting you, you slept like a baby."

Her eyes crinkled. "I did, didn't I? A lovely, dreamless sleep." Suddenly, she frowned. "You were thrashing in your sleep. Are you all right?"

"Of course." He forced himself to smile again, focusing on her beautiful eyes.

Her face was all softness. "Good. I know you worry about me, but I worry about you, too."

Draken felt her stare acutely; it almost stabbed him, making his heart ache with longing. There were so many things he wanted for them, for their future together, but they were now on hold. He had to turn his head. "What do you want to do today?"

She stroked a soft, small hand down his body and said provocatively, "What do you think? Seeing that there's nothing much to do in the room, I think we should have sex all day."

His cock bucked as he sucked in some air. They were on the same wavelength there. "I think an adventure is in order."

Bree's face sobered. "Don't use all your magic up, Drake."

He grinned at her, feeling insatiable. "I can nap and regenerate, and this planet feeds my Dreaxoid power. Dad said that there's a shield around this planet, making it more difficult for anyone to detect our scents."

"Still, you don't have to use up your powers just to keep me entertained."

"This is for both of us, love. Think of it as a sneak peak at our honeymoon. I've many new things to teach you."

"If you're sure."

"I am." Draken felt strangely well protected. He wanted to make sure that Bree had a good time while literally being held hostage in his father's home. He just thanked his lucky stars that she wasn't foolish enough to try to run off. And he hoped that if he just loved Bree enough, maybe that would stave off the evil.

Bree looked out the window to her left. "Doesn't look like much except a sandy surface out there. I don't see any life."

"Tyros probably uses this place for his quiet weekend getaways. But there is a lush magical oasis. I can see farther than you and it's quite a distance from here but inviting."

"So, when do I get a peek?" She looked at him.

"I've got it all taken care of, love." He leaned in toward her ear and kissed it, circling his tongue around her lobe. He had to lift her spirits as high as he could. It would help her. If he had to use some of his magic, so be it. He snapped his fingers and a cylindrical glass tunnel appeared where the door had been.

"Does that take us to the oasis?" Her eyes were bright with enthusiasm, making him feel good.

"Yes, it does."

“What did you put in that tunnel?” She got out of bed, stark naked, and stood with her back to him. He admired her long auburn hair and plump ass as she stared at the cylinder.

Getting out of bed, completely naked himself, he walked over and took her hand. Looking down at her, he felt both powerful and protective as he towered above his woman. “Let’s see what’s in the tunnel, okay?”

She let go of his hand and strode with a bounce to the entrance.

“Don’t go in without me,” he called out, and she halted just before it, as did he.

She looked into the glass cylinder and gasped. “Draken, it’s so high, almost to the heavens... Oh, a rainbow with sparkles shimmering from each color. Draken, it’s so beautiful. Just like your soul. I love it.” She turned to him with tears in her eyes, and he took her in his arms, his staff bucking madly. “Are we going to walk under the rainbow?” she murmured against his cheek. “It seems to stretch out forever --”

“No.” He snapped his fingers behind her back and a red velvet magic carpet levitated in the air, two harnessed white unicorns standing before it, their hooves not touching the ground.

Her cheeks turned pink and she laughed. “Honestly, Drake. You must be the only Dreauxoid who always uses a magic carpet rather than teleporting. And I save a lot of magic that way,” he said, pulling back a little, smiling. He squeezed her hands, really wanting to squeeze her breasts, but that would happen later. “You know I like to make love on a magic carpet.”

“Me too.”

“Then we will. Who says I have to be like all the other boring Dreauxoids?”

She hugged him. “I love you just the way you are.”

“And I love you. They say there’s a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.”

She pulled back just a little and his heart stopped; her gaze had gone white-hot.

“I’ve never seen any gold at the end of a rainbow, Draken.” Her lips were close, speaking over his.

“You’ve never flown over the rainbow either,” Draken said, his hands busy in her silken hair. “It’s time.”

“Over the rainbow,” she murmured, throwing back her head, exposing her long, delicate neck. “I assume this tunnel has the right protection from the sun’s rays.”

“Of course.” His cock was rock hard.

“Kiss me, love. Kiss me all over, Drake. I can’t wait.”

He accepted the invitation and glided his lips to her neck, kissing her, licking her, nipping her skin gently while her breath sped up and became raspy.

“Oh, baby,” she said, gasping, “we don’t need a rainbow. We make our own rainbows.” Her hands wrapped around his neck.

"All the same," he said, between kisses, "I want to give you this memory." He paused, alarmed, for a second. *Had he sent her the wrong message, that this could be their last time?* He hoped not because he didn't believe this would end, that *they* would end. Bree would never become lost to him. Damn, he'd love her so much and so often that they'd live in clear bliss until Tyrus came back with an antidote...

She stepped back, dropping her hands to hold his, then she tossed her hair behind her like the sexy vixen she was. Her gaze teased his, then slid toward the floating carpet. "I like it, but I miss yours," she said.

He shook his head. "I know, but I can't get it from the Safe House. The garage, the entire planet, has such a strong shield that my magic can't penetrate it. We'll get it when this...setback...is resolved. Meanwhile, this one should do nicely. I custom made it just for you. Very soft -- for your ass after I slap it."

She took in a sharp breath, her cheeks turning pink.

His cock was hard as cement, precum dripping. He had to concentrate on Bree and control his urges the best he could -- at least until the time was right. Blinking again, he held out a long, black-handled flogger with seventy tiny, eight-inch suede tails. He was taking a chance; he had never done this to Bree.

Her eyes twinkled as she looked at the flogger in his hand. "What's that for?"

Trembling with arousal, Draken managed to say, "Um, I'm going to use it to make the unicorns move." Damn, his aching balls.

She batted her eyes flirtatiously. Good, she liked it. "I can't believe that you're going to waste that on the unicorns' asses and not mine?"

Gods help him; he almost came at her sexy words. "I guess you'll have to see exactly how I'm going to use it." He turned her around and pressed her into him, blinking the two of them to the carpet, his cock pressed into her naked buttocks. His arms pressed her tightly to him, one hand still wound tightly around the whip's handle. With mockery in his voice, he shouted, "On Comet, on Blitz, on Rudolph, on... Oh, hell, what are the names of the other reindeer?"

"These are unicorns."

"Yes, damn it, so who cares about the reindeer?" He lifted his arm from around her and slapped hard toward the unicorns' asses, the crackle igniting them into long, graceful strides.

Bree had her hand over her mouth as the carpet took off on an angle upward. "Drake, you didn't really hit those poor things, did you?" she asked.

"They don't feel pain, just pressure." He sucked in a breath as they raced toward the top of the cylinder's ceiling, which was much, much higher than it looked, almost as high as outer space. He spoke into her ear, blinking her flapping hair out of his eyes. "But you're excited about the possibility of being whipped by me, aren't you, love? The sting of a little

pain?” He thought he felt her body heat up and tremble against him but needed verbal confirmation before he’d really do it.

She shut her eyes, the cool, regulated air bathing both of their faces with a refreshing, clean breeze. “I’ll be so bad you’ll *have* to use that on me. My pussy is already dripping at the thought.”

He almost laughed; he knew her so well. Going into horseman mode, he whipped at the unicorns again as they galloped higher onto the glittering, multicolored rainbow. One of them whinnied. Draken felt high, like he always did riding a magic carpet. Playfully, he tweaked Bree’s hardened nipples and she leaned her back harder into him. Mewling with contentment, she reached back and wiggled his balls.

Suddenly, like an amusement park roller coaster, the magic carpet jerked to a fast halt, throwing them both forward, then back. Draken held on to her, now on his lap, over his shaft. The unicorns both whinnied and shot forward and the carpet jolted ahead, sliding magically, speedily, over the top of the rainbow, which was nothing like an Earth rainbow, but suddenly melting into every color in a prism with a beautiful oasis at the base.

“Draken!” Bree cried out, his name ending with a sigh that he could hear even over the passing wind.

“Bree, my love, I brought the oasis to us and it’s now below.” Damn, if he didn’t use his cock on her soon, he’d spill all over her sexy ass. Oh, well. Not like it had never happened before. As the carpet continued its wild and bumpy ride over the rainbow, he blinked to widen the carpet. Then he lifted her under her arms, placing her on her stomach over the carpet. She looked over her shoulder, trust in her eyes, a smile on her face.

“What, stud?” she asked as the wind suddenly whistled.

He bent over and lifted her ass and she turned her head back around, staring in front of herself, waiting for him. Her body trembled with arousal. The scent of her sex hung heady in the air, driving him crazy. Fighting the wind, he knelt down and snapped some of his cherry lube into his hand. In a moment she was lubed, and he entered her sphincter with a lunge, gasping as her skin closed over his cock like a tightfist. He thought he heard her moaning as her flesh tightened around him so hard that he wondered if he could have pulled out if he’d wanted to. But he didn’t want to. High up inside her, when she came, the seductive motions of her body milked the cum out of him making him explode his seed into her. “Gods!” he yelled as he came again. And again. And then again.

When he finally lay beside her, cradling her in his arms, they were still racing over the rainbow. Getting jarred, his sensitive cock and balls igniting again from the bumping and from her pussy so close to his staff. He held her as she continued to spasm. When they both calmed, she spoke into his ear so he could hear her. “Where’s the whip, dear?”

Draken felt electricity shoot through his body. Damn, she really did like the idea of that whip. “I set it down,” he said, close to her face. “Don’t worry. It won’t fly away. It’s magic.”

“Besides,” Troy said from behind them, “I’m guarding it with my very life.”

Bree felt a quiver in her stomach, her pussy starting to tremble. Damn, riding over a beautiful, sparkling rainbow on a soft, velvety magic carpet with Draken and Troy both ready to pleasure her made it hard to breathe. Draken flogged the unicorns with his whip, and they started flying above the colorful arch, a cloudless blue sky above it. Bree laughed with delight as hot hands grabbed her shoulders. She recognized Draken’s touch, Troy felt a tiny bit different to her.

Draken pulled her back until she was laying flat on her back looking into two sets chocolate brown, ultrahot eyes. Troy snapped his fingers, his gaze wicked. Instantly, a few strands of fringe from the carpet’s edge thickened and lengthened, twisting into long leather straps that slapped over her shoulders and legs and held her tight in bondage to the rug’s suddenly firm velvet floor. Bree lifted her head, stunned, as she caught Draken’s smoldering stare and shit-eating grin. She was his captive now, a thought that drove her wild. There would be no way for her to get out of her tight bonds, but she didn’t want to. Her entire body sizzled, especially her sex, and her bones turned to jelly. Troy twirled his fingers around the whip’s straps and she stopped breathing. “Ever fantasize about his?” Troy asked, and his gaze seemed to glow, his eyes almost spinning.

Draken took the whip from him and dangled it just out of reach of her breasts.

She felt the air leaving her lungs. “Y-you know I’ve thought of it. Drake, you can read me.”

“Not as well as I’d like.” He lowered the whip and ran the straps seductively across her breasts, tickling her peaks, and then suddenly flicked the straps against her hardening nubs with a sharp, tight snap. She gasped as heat flamed in them, and they swelled even more, making her struggle against her restraints. “Damn,” she whispered, staring at Draken while she tried to catch her breath.

Draken smiled and swept the suede straps down her body, wiggling them hotly just above her sex. She felt her mouth going dry.

“Spread for me, love,” he demanded, and to her shock, the bonds spread her legs for her but remained tight.

Draken winked at her and her heart skipped a beat. Then he lowered the flogger and brushed it lightly along her inner thighs. Heat burst out of her in its wake, making her quiver. Suddenly, he lifted his arm and rained tight slaps to her inner thighs until she jerked wildly, helplessly, against her bonds. Only then did he home in on her sex, striking her clit with a teasing blow that made her gasp. With sinful eyes, he did it again and again, making her enlarging nub burst into flames until she was crying out, her pussy rippling as she came.

“You have such nice tits, baby,” Troy said, and she felt him sucking one of them as he brought her other to a nipple to hardness. Two beautiful men, two Drakens, beautiful black men with wide shoulders and six-pack abs and large cocks pleasuring her... She felt like

she'd died and gone to heaven... Colored lights appeared before her eyes, which rolled back in her head with ecstasy.

Draken started slapping her sex with his flogger again, and she held her breath while Troy wiggled her peaks between his teeth. She heard contented sounds from her throat, her pussy screaming with need, dripping like a faucet. Draken lifted his arm and she watched him. The air released from her lungs quickly as he struck her open cunt with a slow, hot spank.

The brief pain always melted into hot prickles of pleasure that spread from her pussy to her ass and made her shudder. Stunned, she stared up into his eyes. "More."

He whipped her again, the immense spread of pleasure tingling throughout her. She moaned and arched, nectar dripping from her pussy. "More," she begged.

Troy suddenly slid beside her, his face near her thigh while Draken held the whip.

She tightened as she watched her twin lovers staring at her with teasing gazes.

"Help me," she managed to say, in a soft voice.

Troy reached to her weeping slit and slid his fingers down her pulsing entranceway, then lifted his index finger to his mouth, drinking the fruits of her sex. "Delicious," he said to Draken, who nodded at him.

She could barely swallow as they all bumped up and down while they rode over the rainbow, wind swirling around them. The rainbow glowing upward from under them, bathed her lovers with so many luminous colors.

Troy's eyes had many shades of red, blue, and green in them as they twinkled at her; then he bent down and licked her. The minute he lifted his head and moved away, she shivered as Draken sharply slapped the straps over her open pussy, her throbbing flesh, her engorged, stiff clit. As she felt a rush of white-hot sensations and arched, Troy bent down to lick her pulsing slit again and moved quickly out of the way. Draken then flogged her harder, stinging her into bonfires of heat. They tag-teamed her sex until she begged for mercy, sweat pouring down her face, her body trembling like an earthquake, her pussy on fire, her body as limp as a rag doll.

"Enough now, Troy," she barely heard Draken say as she tried to catch her breath and regain her wits. "You know what's next, right?"

"Of course, buddy." Troy scooted up to come face-to-face with her, smiled, and then took her in his strong arms. Instantly, surprisingly, sensually, her bonds slowly slinked off her and narrowed to strings again, retracting back to the edges of the carpet. Troy held her close and rolled her on top of him while she melted inside. He even smelled like Draken -- leather, musk, the scent of his cum. She trembled in his arms. Their faces were close; he was so lovely, so perfect, his skin so tawny and smooth, his lips so lush and inviting. She watched him through misty eyes. *Should she feel so much passion toward Troy?* "I...I want you, Troy,

but...Draken is...is my lifemate." Had she really said that? She was weak-minded, witless from the sex.

Troy reached up and caressed her cheek; his touch made her face tingle. "Love, you are not disloyal to Draken. I am part of him. When you bond with your love, I will be there. Don't try to understand, it's a Dreauxoid thing, but we don't want you to feel guilty for wanting me. Right, Draken?"

"Fuck him, Bree," Draken said, behind her. He lifted her ass and started rubbing it gently, lubing her quivering anus while Troy's cock rubbed against her pussy.

"Fuck him with all you have and I'll feel his every sensation. It's the best we can do right now. And I am touched that you finally called me your lifemate."

Bree tightened her grip around Troy, and just before he kissed her, he said, "You will ride me, Bree. You'll get me good and hard, then ride me like a horse."

"Draken --"

"-- has big plans. Enjoy me. Kiss me. Kiss me, beautiful. Then play with my dick until it turns to steel."

Bree stretched across his sweaty, taut, muscled body and kissed him, one arm cradling his head, her other hand reaching down to squeeze his balls and stroke his cock. As she swept her tongue through his mint-flavored mouth and teased his staff, she suddenly felt the taut, hard slap of straps against her ass and she swore to herself. Her pussy soaking, she kissed Troy harder and sped her hand's travels up and down his huge cock as he grew rock hard under her seductive ministrations. As the flogger struck her buttocks again and again, she arched and shivered, sobbing once before she kissed Troy again, well aware that Draken was smirking behind her as he again flogged her ass and made her whole body spasm.

God, but the sting of her ass vibrated into pure ecstasy straight through to her shaking, screaming clit. She felt herself dripping sexy honey all over Troy as Draken whipped her. Troy gently stroked back her hair, his tender gesture contrasting with the whipping, making her shudder. "You're ready to take me, Bree. My cock is aching for you. Put it inside you and ride me."

She wiped her eyes. "Draken, hit me again!"

"That," Draken said, with a low chuckle, "will definitely happen, but right now you need to fuck Troy so I can feel his orgasm." She felt his big hands squeezing her butt cheeks and that made her come, too. She was sensitive, ready for his every touch, ready to do both Troy and the love of her life. "You know me, Bree," Draken said as he then pinched her ass, "I like to vary what I do to you, but we always end up satisfied. Enjoy the wind of the magic carpet ride as Troy and I drive you mad. Ride him, baby. Do it for me."

Bree could barely lift herself to sit on Troy's hips so Draken pulled her up from behind and nuzzled her neck. Then, he took her hand and made her stroke Troy's twelve-inch cock until her hand was steady enough to do it herself. The feel of it, hot and smooth, excited her.

The sight of his shaft, throbbing, veins pulsing, head sparkling with the lights of the rainbow and his precum, aroused her until her pussy pumped madly, begging for it, for him. Teary-eyed, she said, "Man, this cock is fine...so fine."

With a little whimper, she took it and lifted herself, shoving his cock inside her, gasping as he filled her, as her flesh gripped tightly around him, as she slowly drove him so high up that she sat on his hips. Then she felt no choice but to ride him, to sate the mounting tension inside her, to bring them to the edge of paradise. And the magic carpet kept whipping wind around them as she rode on his magnificent cock, and he thrust his hips to reach higher inside her. As she felt herself floating far above the magic carpet in her ecstasy, Troy suddenly pumped her ass up high and held her there.

The flogging began again, and Bree wept as she and Troy remained joined, thrusting their hips together in rhythm. Every time her ass went upward, a tight slap whipped her ass and she shuddered and came. Only Troy's strong arms kept her from collapsing on top of him. When Troy finally spilled his seed high into her womb, she also came with a huge shudder and a groan; then she finally fell over him, his dick still high inside her. Draken suddenly lifted her ass again and massaged it tenderly now, erotically calming the heated, stinging flesh.

"Your ass is shaking, babe," he said.

She could barely speak, her breathing was so raspy, her body spasming. It was true; she was barely in control of her body. *Could she even handle what was surely coming?* Even as she thought it, Draken's hard cock was poised at her quivering anus.

"I don't know if I can do this, Draken. It just might kill me with pleasure."

"My passionate darling, you can take this and more." His huge, hot, hard cock entered her tight sphincter, filling her, making her spasm. She threw back her head with a cry of gladness, tears rolling off her cheeks. The sensation was immeasurable as it racked her body anew with bonfires. She seemed to have left her body. Nothing existed beyond the icy-hot prickles coursing through her; how Draken made her feel like a goddess of his love. When Draken and Troy's dicks both started vibrating, the low sound like hummingbirds a seductive call to her body, she lost all sense of time, place, or thought. Colored stars danced before her eyes, the colors of the rainbow only much brighter; then they all blurred together and she felt far, far away from anything real. As she spasmed and shook and almost seized, the world suddenly ceased to exist.

When Bree woke up, she was lying under an ultrabright, luminous rainbow sky on a bed of soft, warm sand. Draken lay beside her, propped on an elbow, his eyes deep and full of concern. "Bree!" he said, the one word snapped. "Bree, my love, is it you? Are you all right? Gods help me, I'm sorry for playing too hard...in your condition... I should have listened to you and stopped."

She blinked to clear her head. "It's me, Draken. I'm not possessed right now, and I feel great."

He hugged her to him and spoke into her ear. "Thank the gods for that. We just have to trust that this warm, sunny environment and our loving will slow things down." He kissed her.

"It will." She felt herself holding down the cold, and felt another presence near, moving closer to their hideaway. Somebody was closing in on them. No, she had to be imagining it. She wouldn't allow herself to believe the worst. And she certainly didn't want to voice her fears to Draken. Trying to ignore the unpleasant feeling, she concentrated harder on the man she adored. The light and love were keeping the evil inside her from emerging. She shut her eyes and focused on him. Inhaling his sweaty, musky scent, speaking into his neck, she made her voice carefree and asked, "So, this is the oasis?"

"Yes. We're still behind invisible, protective glass, but this is it." He pulled back and she sat up, looking around. Glistening water sparkled under the ultrabright rainbow sky, the colors dancing in the lake's gentle blue waves.

"It's gorgeous," she said, enchanted by the beautiful, serene, rainbow-bathed surroundings, the presence of another fading.

"Isn't it?" he asked. "Look at the palm trees."

She glanced around and smiled. The palm trees were the colors of the rainbow -- blue, red, green, purple, yellow. "It's magical," she said, breathlessly. "Kind of reminds me of the tropical Safe House planet."

"What's wrong?"

Shit. He was getting the uncomfortable vibes off her, she knew it. Well, she was feeling considerably better. She would fight her vague uneasiness until it disappeared. She couldn't help feeling guilty for having prompted their move from his safe haven. If anything happened to him, she'd feel responsible. "Nothing," she said, firmly. To distract him, she looked around and said, "This is magnificent, surreal."

Draken drew her cheek to his shoulder and he seemed to relax again. "I can see why my father wanted to own this planet. See the different colored flamingos?"

"Where?" She wrinkled her forehead, then heard him snap his fingers and flamingos appeared before them, one for each color of the rainbow. She snuggled into him. "Do I detect a theme here?"

"I want the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow," Draken said, taking her chin and gently lifting her face to stare into his spellbinding eyes.

"I...I didn't see a pot of gold." He was pulling her in with those almost-spinning, soul-searching eyes.

"The pot of gold is there, but you can't see it." He lowered his voice. "It's symbolic."

She searched his face, he looked so serious.

"You and I are the pot of gold. When this is over, Bree Delaney, we will seek a perfect bonding before the Dreauxoid gods. Once our powers are deep within one another, so that we will always be a part of each other, we will live eternity in bliss, never touching another."

She appreciated his optimism, but her stomach twisted a little. They had a long way to go to that perfect day when they'd be able to bond. Still, she felt the love emitting from him and cupped his stubbed jaw gently.

"Remember when we first met and I freaked out? You forced yourself into my dreams for years, making me think of you as real, giving me all sorts of wicked fantasies." She laughed, shortly. "I felt nuts, in love with a dream. When you walked into my hair salon pretending to want a haircut, my fantasy man come to life, I passed out from shock. I thought I was seeing things."

He grinned. "I caught you."

She nodded, going back in time, feeling the wonder of their beginning. "And we dated for months, but you barely touched me. I was so disappointed, not to mention sexually frustrated. I couldn't help wondering if you were gay."

He laughed. "I didn't know that."

Her smile widened. "I'd never dated much, and the men I'd known had been grabby. You weren't. Plus...straight men who look like you never gave me a second glance."

"Nonsense." He kissed her forehead.

"Well, Draken, size sixteens aren't exactly coveted by humans. Then there was you." She felt her heart contract.

The faint smile on his face caused her to melt inside. "Humans have no taste. I wanted you from the start. Not that we haven't spoken of this before, but it seems like a good time to rehash our relationship." He stared into her eyes, radiating Dreauxoid depth; often she felt he could see into her mind. Sometimes he could. "I couldn't touch you before --"

-- you explained you were a Dreauxoid," she cut in, grinning, laughing. "I admit I would have *really* been confused that we couldn't have regular intercourse, and that you couldn't come inside me. And when you first explained why we couldn't have conventional sex, I didn't believe."

"Actually, I recall you thought I was crazy until I proved it to you." Draken ran a finger down her nose, seductively. "Humans just don't believe in magic, but when we took that first ride on my magic carpet, you sat in my lap and almost strangled me. You screamed that *you* were going nuts."

They both laughed at that memory.

"You must admit it was a shocking experience for a woman who usually had her feet planted firmly on the ground. I believed you after that," she said, and quickly kissed his lips. Pulling back slightly, they locked in a stare, one she couldn't have broken free of had she tried. And she didn't want to try. "We fell in love fast, but you kept going off on missions."

He let out a heavy breath, pulling her into his chest, he stroked her hair. "I was so afraid of my feelings for you. Plus, I was young and idealistic -- committed to doing all I could for the cause, rescuing the enslaved people of Dreauxoid."

"You cheated on me so many times --"

"Yes. Gods, Bree, it's a miracle you even want a slimebag like me."

"Every time I tried to get you out of my head, you'd come back, making me fall in love with you all over again. It wasn't in my best interests, but I couldn't help it." Now she felt a little dark, which she knew was bad for her, so she quickly focused on the positive. "My love for you never wavered. I always knew you were a good man deep inside. A wonderful man that I couldn't help loving."

"I was a good man but not a very good boyfriend." He kissed her forehead again and pulled back, locking eyes with her. "I never forgot you, though. In the midst of my most perilous fights, you'd keep me strong. I'd think of you and find the strength I needed to overcome my enemies. You're in my blood, Bree. Although I grew up late, I'm ready to be what you deserve."

She blinked back tears.

Just in time, he grabbed her hand and stood, pulling her up with him.

She felt her heart racing as he slid his hands onto her shoulders and stared down at her nude body. "I want to undress you, so I need something to take off." He blinked her into a bright red string bikini. She looked down, seeing every bulge, and frowned.

He shook her shoulders. "Hey. Do you like this? Look up."

She did and smiled at his tight black leather swimsuit, the material outlining his huge cock. Her admiring gaze assessed him from bottom to top. He was perfect. "What a body," she said with a sigh, as she ran her hands up his hard chest.

"Same to you." He slid his fingers down her swimsuit top and tweaked her nipple, which budded instantly for him. Her knees weakened as she gasped.

"Love your tits," he murmured. "Love the way you look in that bikini, too."

"I don't." Sweating, staring at his amused face, she said, "Draken, I know this may sound silly, but I'd rather be nude than wear a string bikini."

"Why?" He wrapped a finger around her hair.

"Or...or...even the leather outfits aren't so..." He knew why, damn him, but she knew he wanted to make her say it. "Draken! Somehow bikinis show off my fat in the worst sort of way --"

He blinked and she stared at him.

"Look down."

She did and her jaw dropped open. He had made all her curves disappear and she had a stick-thin model's boyish figure. Before she could think much about it, he snapped his

fingers and a head-to-toe mirror stood before her, reflecting her, Bree Delaney, at maybe one hundred pounds. It made her feel a little sick and not at all sexy. She looked strangely drawn and sickly.

"That how you want to look?"

She glanced over at him. It actually had been her goal on all the crazy diets she'd followed over the years, but now that she had it she wasn't sure that she liked it. Draken stood there with crossed arms and legs spread apart a little as he watched her reaction. His face was stoic.

Bree felt her flat abs and ran her hands down her thighs, then straightened. Tossing her hair behind her, she noticed that her boobs had all but disappeared.

"Is this how you want to look?" Draken asked.

Bree didn't even recognize herself. "Well...I could get used to it, I suppose. It just doesn't look like me..."

"It is you? Do you like it?"

She turned to him, unsure of herself, ready to burst into laughter, although she wasn't sure why. "Do you?"

"I love you, Bree. It doesn't matter how you look. I would love you if you were ugly...like this --"

She felt her brow wrinkling. "Exactly what does that mean?" Suddenly, she wanted to kick him.

He looked down and she knew he would protect his groin, never allow her to strike him there. "It means, you look all right that skinny -- a bit sickly -- but I still love you. But I like you so much better with your curves."

She turned back toward the mirror and let out a sigh. "You can see my ribs."

"Yes."

She glanced over at him and suddenly burst out laughing. "You win. Make me myself again, all right?"

He snapped his fingers and her curves popped out as the mirror disappeared. Laughing, she stepped into his strong arms and he lifted her, turned her around in midair, and placed her astride his shoulders. "Let's go swimming," he said and headed toward the multicolored, sparkling, quiet lake.

Draken held on to Bree's arms, which were wrapped around his neck. He waded into the cool lake, not stopping until the water rippled under his nipples. They were sensitive, and the brush of the waves turned him on, as did Bree, who sat on his shoulders, the back of her shapely legs pressed to his chest. If only the bright rainbow could keep her like this, if only his love could keep her...he had to think positively. Lifting her over his head, he

dropped her into the water, laughing when she popped up, her auburn hair dark and plastered to her skull, face, and even the part of her red bikini top that barely covered her boobs. She was on fire in his bathing suit creation and he stepped forward to reach for her, but she dived under the waves, eluding him.

"Why, you!" he called out, then dived after her, keeping his eyes open under the sparkling water. He tried to catch up to her, but she was a good, fast swimmer and she kept a half stroke ahead of him, which annoyed and amused him. Finally, she couldn't hold her breath anymore and surfaced. Although Dreaxoids didn't really have to breathe and did it mostly from habit, he surfaced as well, shaking water droplets out of his eyes. As soon as his vision cleared, he grabbed his love and pulled her into his wet body. "Yo ho ho!" he said, his cock bucking, an idea forming. "I'm going to keep you on my ship and we'll sail together -- forever!" He snapped his fingers, knowing his magic was low, not caring. This was too much fun, too seductive; he would sleep it off.

Bree gasped when she saw the rickety pirate's ship with its grand sails flapping in the wind. She glanced back at him. "What the hell?"

He snapped his fingers, giving himself a black pirate's hat, shirt, sword, and eye patch. By the look in Bree's blazing blue eyes, he knew she approved. Still, in typical Bree style, she just had to tease him. "Pirates don't wear leather bikini bathing trunks that show off all their magnificent equipment." Her eyes were cast downward, although his bathing suit and male equipment were below the water's surface. She copped a feel and electricity shot through him.

He pulled her into his embrace, breathing hard. "And pirates don't usually capture women dressed in siren red bikini bathing suits. We can write our own story, unless you *want* me to cover myself up more. I can do that."

She grabbed his cock again, capturing him in a firm grasp that had him almost coming in the water. He knees weakened; he was at her mercy.

"I'd rather you not hide yourself," she said, and she gave his balls another squeeze.

"You realize you're about to be my captive."

"I just was your captive."

"Again. I'm going to take you on my ship and hold you captive once more."

"Twice in one day. How lucky can a girl get?"

He lifted her into his arms, her sex spread wide against his chest, and transported them to the deck of the ship. When they landed he laid her on the wooden floor. Realizing it was probably uncomfortable, he blinked his magic carpet under her, then fell on top of her, taking some of his weight off her body by leaning on his elbows. Their faces inches apart. "One day we'll sail around the universe."

She reached up and touched his cheek. "I'll go anywhere my master wants me to go. You make one hell of a sexy pirate, Draken. You really look the part."

"And you look the part of the kidnapped princess who falls for the pirate rogue. I'm very bad, you know. Evil, in fact. Fathers warn their daughters away from me; shoot at me if I'm near."

"I'd take a bullet for you just to be in your arms," Bree said quietly, and his heart sped up. How he loved and needed her. He felt her sincerity. *How could he have ever touched anyone but her?* The thought made him sick. To cover how vulnerable he felt, he blinked himself a rakish scar from his temple to his chin.

"Got that in a fight," he said, stroking her wet hair. "I'm very brave, you know."

"I do know, Draken." She ran a finger tenderly down his scar as love gleamed in her rainbow-tinged eyes. "You've always been my hero. When you were away on missions, I worried about you because I knew you'd never back down from a fight. If you believed in the cause, you were going to throw yourself into it. And you'd put yourself in danger for those you cared about." She let out a sigh and her breath tickled his face, smelling of honey. "I've never felt this close to you. I never want this to end. Can a Dreauxoid suspend time?"

He took in a deep breath and shut his eyes briefly. "That's one thing we can't do. But our lives can always be exciting, even if we aren't doing anything at all. As long as I'm with you, Bree, that's really all I need."

She wrapped her arms around his neck. "Kiss me, my sexy pirate. Kiss me forever and ever and ever --" She stopped speaking and Draken thought she was teasing. He peered into her face.

"Bree?" he asked, touching her cheek. "What's going on? Stop playing games."

She blinked at him, looking confused, and suddenly his stomach clenched with cold, tight fear. "Bree, knock it off," he said. He rolled off her, took her hand, and clenched it tightly with both of his. "Talk to me, Bree. I...if you want me to kiss you forever, your wish is my command."

Not breathing, he looked down at her, trying not to notice how chilly her hand felt in his. Her eyes continued blinking at him, and suddenly he felt a wave of relief as they came to life and she broke into her sexy, flirtatious smile. Lifting her head, she said, "Hey, you sexy pirate, how about making love to me? I'd love to have your big-ass cock way up my cunt, your seed shooting into my womb." She sat up and he froze as she ran her hand between his thighs. "Fine-looking man like you has to fuck me. I can't remember ever fucking such a hot-looking man before. Come to think of it, I can't remember who I fucked, but that hardly matters right now, gorgeous. I want you inside me."

Draken felt a wave of dread explode inside him. Clearly, pirate sex would have to be put on hold while he tried to steal her back from evil. "Bree," he said, kissing her now icy knuckles. "Snap out of this! Think warm thoughts, happy thoughts!" He swallowed his panic, ready for a seizure to take her over but trying to avert one. As he kissed her knuckles, he spoke. "Think about the sex we just shared, Troy and me, anal sex --" He took a deep breath,

looking into her puzzled eyes. "The whip. Darling, we're going on a romantic sail around the oasis on my pirate ship --"

"I never knew you cared." Bree's beautiful, feminine lips moved and her eyelashes fluttered, but the voice that he heard was deep, masculine, familiar.

Draken froze, too shocked to respond.

"If I had any gay inclinations, I'd certainly want a man like you," the voice continued.

"Shadow, you bastard!" He gently lowered Bree to the ground, then quickly jumped up and swung around, smelling Shadow's strong vile, sulfuric scent.

Soft hands slithered up his leg and he jumped as they squeezed his balls. It was Bree, but it wasn't Bree. He pulled her body up and her head fell back, male laughter emitting from her throat.

"Pervert!" he shouted, as he lifted Bree into his arms. She stirred and he quickly glanced down at her. Her eyes had come to life, horrified and frightened.

She knew! She knew what was happening and he couldn't stop it, didn't know how to stop it. If he kissed her, would she feel it or would the vile Shadow --

Draken swallowed the bile in his throat, bent his head, and kissed her. She felt like Bree and her tongue swept through his mouth as her hands clawed his back for dear life. He pulled back to watch her. "Are you all right, Bree?" he asked, forcing himself to sound calm.

"I'm part of her, Draken." The voice was Shadow's. "She's possessed by me; my spores are irradiated into her."

Draken smelled his scent even stronger. Shadow had to be near. Or was it just Bree? He really didn't know. "What do you want from me, Shadow?"

"Look up."

Cradling Bree to his chest, he looked up and saw the wavy, blurry figure of Shadow in armor, an evil grin on his face. Obviously, the sunshine and heat of the planet wasn't agreeing with the Winter Demon's form. Refusing to show his fear, Draken laughed at him. "Air-conditioned in that stupid-looking suit of armor, bastard?" he taunted.

"Actually, yes. Horrible place." Shadow sounded undaunted. At least the voice was coming from him, no longer from Bree. Draken stroked her hair as he stared at the wavering Winter Demon.

"How did you find us?" Draken asked, stalling for time.

"It wasn't easy. Nice shield you have here. But the longer I possess your lady, the closer I feel to her, the easier it is for me to smell her scent. I don't think I'll have a problem finding her from now on, even if you go back to that place where I couldn't detect you at all."

The Safe House. It had the best shield in the universe, but Tonya had banished Bree from there and there was no going back.

"Where were you when I lost track of her?" Shadow asked. "May as well tell me. If you ever go there again, I'll be able to sniff her out. Like I said, our connection is growing. She is more mine every day."

Draken felt Bree trembling and knew he was trembling himself, but he stood tall and smirked at him. "You'll never get her, Shadow."

"I don't want her."

That didn't really surprise him. "You want me," he said.

"No!" Bree suddenly tightened and spoke in her own voice. "No, don't you dare make a deal for me! Draken, you can't!"

Shadow laughed loud and long. "I love it!" he said. "Your lady is trying to protect you; it's so touching. Problem is she's a useless human. I don't want her, nobody does. But I'll have her anyway, unless you surrender to my master."

Draken would have done it gladly to save Bree. He trusted himself to be able to get out of any scrape, even with the Winter Demon master. However, he didn't know for a fact that Shadow would actually leave Bree unharmed. "I'm not going anywhere with you. How do I know you won't hurt Bree? Winter Demons aren't trustworthy. *You* weren't trustworthy as a Dreauxoid. You betrayed the people who trusted you --"

"I have an antidote."

The air seemed to still. Draken stared at him as Bree cuddled into his body. Shadow's colorless eyes stared out at him from the helmet's clear plastic faceplate. "Liar," Draken finally said, his heart pounding.

Shadow lifted his hand, palm up, and a pill appeared. "She'd need to take them every day for a year, but they'd get rid of me being inside her. And, yes, a part of me is and she knows it."

"It's true," Bree said in a hollow voice.

Draken tried not to outwardly react, even as his gut twisted. "Shadow, you bastard, I wouldn't let her take anything you give her. Not before checking it out first with people I trust."

Bree stiffened in his arms.

A darkness seemed to pass over Shadow's face. "I don't have time for you to check things out, fool! My master wants you, Draken, and he wants you *now*!"

"No!" Bree shouted. "Draken, don't go with him! I don't trust him! I'd rather...rather have him possess me than do to you what he's done to me..."

Draken was staggered by her courage. "I won't sacrifice Bree for myself," he said, staring at Shadow's cold ice cube eyes.

Shadow shot him an ugly grin. "I sense something -- that you're low on magic."

Draken's gut twisted. *Shit*. He was so screwed, but he refused to react. "No, I'm not. You're imagining things."

"I can take you and just leave the human here to rot until she reaches human hell..."

Draken set her down and rushed at Shadow, his big hands going around Shadow's throat. But a moment later he found himself on the ground, chained and gagged. Shadow's triumphant laugh vibrated through him as he stared up at the Winter Demon.

"You *are* weak in magic!" Shadow said, and he chortled. "You aren't as bright as my master believes!"

Draken saw Bree leap at Shadow, jumping on his back, and wanted to warn her away, but he was Shadow's slave without his magic. His heart sped up as Shadow blinked her in chains and dropped her to the ground.

"You!" he said at Bree, drooling a little. "You're nothing but a pest in my way to the prize. For attacking me, you can stay there until you die. Draken has no powers -- he was too busy wasting them on sex. Yes, I was there with both of you and I felt it all. Pleasant!" He laughed as saliva slid to his chin. "I waited to come here until I felt Draken would no longer be a worthy adversary. Not that a Dreaxoid can trump a Winter Demon." He looked at Draken, his eyes as emotionless, yet evil, as ever. "Now you'll become one of us, as my master commands."

Suddenly there was a blinding flash of sunlight, making Shadow cuss loudly and try to cover himself with his arms. As the sunlight overtook them both, Tyrus, Raven, Natalia, and at least ten others stood there. Draken could feel them throwing their positive vibes at Shadow, and the Winter Demon screamed. A moment later, he was gone, disappearing in a foul gray sulfuric cloud.

Tyrus was beside him after blinking off his gag and chains an instant later.

"Bree!" Draken sat up, pushing his father out of the way, finally calming down when he saw that Raven and Natalia had released his love. He shot to his feet and ran to her, then pulled her up and into his arms. "Are you all right?" he asked, his breathing labored.

"Yes." She hugged him back with all her strength.

After his heart had slowed somewhat, he pulled back, still holding her hands, and finally addressed his rescuers. "Thank you." He felt a little embarrassed and looked into Bree's eyes rather than glancing at the others.

"I got your urgent message," Tyrus said, his voice harsh. "Draken, how stupid of you to use up your magic foolishly. You're lucky I was near, and with my friends. Seems that enough goodness and light does overwhelm a Winter Demon, so maybe verification means that something good did come out of this."

"I also got the call," Draken heard Raven saying. "Glad to be of help, but I agree with your father. What were you thinking?"

Draken gritted his teeth. He'd been thinking of his desires and of making Bree happy, of keeping Shadow away from them by their love. But it hadn't worked. He felt a hand on his shoulder and reluctantly turned around, still holding Bree's hand.

"You're still relatively young in Dreaxoid time," Tyrus said, his eyes deep and empathetic. "Even you can make a mistake. You meant well, but it didn't work. We weren't sure our solution would work either. Nobody knows much about Winter Demons."

Draken nodded, grateful for his father's understanding and help.

"Hey!" It was Natalia. "Look at this! I think Shadow dropped it."

In an instant, everyone was surrounding her and Tyrus had the pill in his hand, turning it over. Draken's heart slammed against his chest.

"Of course, Shadow isn't trustworthy," he said, squeezing Bree's hand, "but he claimed it was an antidote to Bree's possession. What do you think, Father?"

Tyrus shook his head. "I'll take it to the laboratory and present it to our top scientists. This should be very useful."

"He's...he's in a very dark place, like a dungeon." Bree's voice sounded perplexed and Draken quickly looked down into her face. She appeared confused, her brow wrinkled, her eyes vague. "I can feel him!" Bree said, horrified. "I can feel his humiliation and anger and the dank, foul atmosphere where he's hiding. *I can feel him!*"

Draken pulled her to him and stroked her hair, but he looked at Tyrus, hoping for answers.

"Don't worry," Tyrus said in a grim voice. "We already know she's in the early stages of possession --"

"No," Bree said, sobbing into his pirate's shirt. "No, I don't want to be evil like him."

"You're not." Tyrus was firm yet kind. "But there's just enough of him in you that you can track him. Draken and Bree, this is a good thing. We'll know where he is when we move in for the kill."

Draken could barely swallow, but he didn't want to frighten Bree even more. "Yes," he said in a confident voice. "This is really a very good thing, Bree. It will help us. Along with the pill, I'd say we're heading for a breakthrough."

Shadow lay on his stomach on the stone cold floor of his dark dungeon cell. His armor had disintegrated from the heat of goodness, and he was as naked as a baby. The damn peaceniks had beaten him and rage surged through him, pure and unfettered. He'd make them all sorry for humiliating him; he only had to think of a torturous enough way. An idea would certainly come to him soon enough. He practiced his evil lessons daily, although, he admitted to himself, not as studiously as Hamus instructed. Maybe he was experiencing failure because of his laziness. That would have to change. He'd need to attend to his classes

without falling asleep and do his homework with all his zeal. Obviously, just sliding by on his black heart wasn't working.

As he felt Desi's presence, he perked up a little, although he didn't move, couldn't move. When she knelt beside him, he grunted into his arms. Her warm hands slid between his thighs and, for some reason, her sexual aggression angered him. *He* was the one in charge! With his latest failure, he would make sure that Desi, at least, respected him. Lifting his head, scowling over his shoulder at her, he blinked with a large dose of evil magic. Instantly, she hung from the ceiling, a rope wrapped tightly around her ankles. Desi swung back and forth, her long blond hair dangling, laughing as her face turned crimson. "Oh, honey, hit me!" she pleaded. "Hit me, honey!"

He felt his strength returning, rolled to his feet, and picked a whip off the floor but was reluctant to give her what she wanted because he wasn't in a generous mood. But he had to take his frustrations out on her ass, even though she'd enjoy herself.

"Shadow! Shadow, hurry, babe, my ass is all yours!" she begged. "I don't know why you were feeling low, but I can make you come so many times, you'll forget your troubles."

His cock bucked and he slapped her hard, over and over again, across her butt, her back, her shoulders... Every time he hit her, she shuddered and cried out with pleasure. Gritting his teeth, he brought back his arm to really slam her good.

"No," Hamus said to him. "Stop that now. You haven't earned the right to have a sex slave."

Shadow dropped his whip and whirled around, finding himself eyeball to eyeball with Hamus in his lion's form, his stare so smoldering that he could feel the darkness in his empty soul. A tremble shot through his body as he involuntarily took a step backward.

Hamus snapped his fingers and Desi was at his side, looking up at him, a little perplexed but pleased. "The Winter Demon master!" she said, and she batted her lashes at him.

Shadow wanted to cuss them both out, but he valued his hide so he clenched his jaw shut.

Hamus glanced at Desi with mild annoyance. "You're mine now," he said. "A part of my harem."

"Wow!" Her cheeks were pink. "That's quite an honor, Master Hamus."

Hamus didn't blink. "I'm sending you to school to learn to serve me," he said. "You're never to see Shadow again. He's a loser. If I find you with him, it's the Void, do you understand?"

She nodded eagerly. "I will be honored to serve you, Master Hamus. I never dreamed I'd get the chance --"

He blinked and she disappeared in a puffy white cloud. "Damn blathering bitch," he muttered between his teeth as Shadow tried, with all he had, to hold in his fury. How dare

his master steal his woman, but he knew he had no choice. Hamus controlled him; that was part of the deal.

Hamus's dark gaze of hate struck his own. "Pathetic," he said in a low voice. "You are pathetic."

Shadow swallowed hard and didn't move a muscle. He knew he'd screwed up. Again.

"You blew it once again, fucktard." Hamus was so close that his garlic breath encased Shadow, but he didn't dare turn away. "I fear you aren't learning much from my teachings. Practicing one-upmanship to teach Draken a lesson was foolish. When his magic was low, you should have taken him, no gloating, no tormenting, no self-satisfaction. We want to conquer the world and we don't have time for that nonsense, you hear me? The need to show him up is a Dreauxoid trait." His eyes seemed to bulge out of his head. "Are you a Dreauxoid?" The growl that followed rattled the walls and the ceiling. It made Shadow shiver inside, wishing for his mother who had once been so kind to him before he'd turned evil.

"N-n-no, I'm n-not a Dreauxoid."

Hamus laughed in his face. "Winter Demons do as they're told. You have failed me twice, both times to torment Draken for wrongs done to you. Do you know what baseball is, Shadow?"

Shadow shook his head. "N-n-no, Sir."

Hamus slapped him across the face and he saw stars. He wanted to keel over, but didn't dare. On unsteady legs, he forced himself to look Hamus in the eyes, although he was seeing double.

"Stop the stammering," Hamus said, as an order. "It's irritating."

"I'll stop." He couldn't believe his voice had come out so smooth. Maybe he was too out of it to be as frightened as he should be. Hamus had so much power; he would someday own the world. The thought staggered him.

"Good. Listen up, you loser. Baseball is an earthly pastime. A pitcher throws the ball at a man who holds a bat. The batter then has three chances to hit the ball. If he can't do it after three attempts, he's out. Do you get my drift?"

Shadow got his drift and nodded quickly as his stomach twisted. "I do."

"You have one more chance to bring Draken to me. Within the next two Earth weeks, he will come to me because of your cleverness or I give up on you. Do you know what that means, Shadow?"

Since he knew he'd stammer if he answered, he just nodded vigorously.

"The Void," Hamus said, with a leer. "And nobody will rescue you this time. I'll strip you of all Winter Demon powers and you'll live eternity in the Void as a Dreauxoid does -- a chicken with its head cut off. Perhaps I made a mistake in thinking you were evil enough to do my bidding." His voice was harsh, grim.

“I can do it.” Gods help him. *Not the Void! Not again!*

“You’re on probation. No women. No pleasure at all. I want you to do nothing but study the lessons, and practice my ways -- to become more and more a part of me.” He snapped his fingers and an hourglass appeared in his hand, which gave Shadow a deep feeling of dread. “You have until the hourglass runs out to bring me my prize. And I know for a fact that once trapped and irradiated with the spores of Winter Demons, Draken Blade will never fail me like you have.”

Shadow could barely take a breath as he nodded, his anger overrun by his terror.

“I’m going to my lair now,” Hamus said, his gaze almost smoking at Shadow. “I want to see that Desi is settled in with the other women.”

Shadow knew that Hamus was staring at him to bring home the obvious point: Hamus owned him and everything he did was Hamus’s will.

A moment later, his master disappeared, leaving a gray sulfuric cloud, an empty space, and the fear of the devil in Shadow’s dark, angry soul.

Chapter Eleven

Draken and Bree lay naked in bed, entwined in each other's arms, having left the oasis right after the peacemakers departed. His thoughts troubled, Draken felt the weight of the universe on his shoulders. If only he could live his existence over again, being a true boyfriend to Bree so they'd have bonded before this mess. Although he'd never show Bree, he was frightened, more frightened than anytime in his life. Even fighting at the edge of the Void with enemies trying to throw him inside hadn't brought on this sort of sick terror. He'd felt confident he could save himself, but he didn't know if he could save Bree. He'd failed so far. It was up to Tyrus now, a man he'd not trusted and had outwardly loathed for centuries. They had largely lived separate lives, not connecting until recently. *Would his father really give this issue his all?*

Draken pulled Bree closer to him, smelling her sweet scent and feeling her soft skin. There was no evidence of possession there anymore. In spite of hugging her tightly, he felt depressed, demoralized. Although he tried to lift his spirits, knowing it was best for Bree, he couldn't. Shadow was privy to everything Bree experienced, and Bree knew what the Winter Demon did, too. Although he'd spun it to her as a positive, in truth it reminded him of just how chained to Shadow she was. She was closer to Shadow, the evil one, than she was to him. He felt as if he were losing her slowly, maybe a bitter bad karma for the way he'd treated her for so long. Maybe the gods of Dreaux were punishing him...

"Drake?" a soft female voice said.

Draken smelled a light, lemony scent he remembered from his youth and pulled his covers up high. He blinked on some shorts, his heart racing as he recognized her presence. "Mother?" He sat up, the cover falling below his waistband. Although the room was ultrabright, made for Dreauxoids, an even brighter golden star shimmered against the white-painted wall. Swallowing hard, he got out of bed, not sure what to do. His mother had never

come to him before. "How did you get out of your world?" he asked, wondering if this was a trick. Henrietta Adams, his mother...could he believe the illusion? Was it Shadow again?

"I'm really here, honey," she said, and he knew she'd read his doubtful thoughts. Shadow could never have read his thoughts. It was truly her. Instantly, he saw a flash of her -- a vision -- a tall, slender woman with caramel skin and the kindest chocolate eyes in the galaxy. How he missed her. "I believe you, Mother, but I didn't know you could ever leave the human's Other World..."

"Only in emergencies, so they gave me a pass," she said, her sweet voice lifting him up, bathing him in her love.

"Why did you come?" he asked, stepping toward the star, then halting, not sure if he would chase her away by coming to her and not wanting to take the chance.

"Drake, we never really spoke before about Tyrus, but now we need to do it. I fear I've done you a great disservice by keeping silent."

Draken's heart slammed against his chest. "You never would explain," he said. "I asked you what had happened to compare it to what Father said, but you never would tell me." He felt heaviness in his chest as he sensed his mother's pain, and his muscles tightened. "I know this hurts you, Mom. You don't really need to explain. It's drummed into a Dreauxoid's head, from early on, that Dreauxoids and humans aren't to mate unless they ask the gods to bond them, and not until after the bond is complete. Good heavens, Mother, most Dreauxoids don't *want* to mate with humans, as they find them inferior. But those who are so inclined know better, are told about human hearts and love -- and children. Like me."

"Yes." The one word sounded tired, burdened.

He wasn't sure he should go on, but something inside him wouldn't let him stop. "Hell, every Dreauxoid knows that their seed easily penetrates human birth control! Father should never have mated with you until you agreed to a bonding. Even if a child isn't born, there are so many other problems, but a child *was* born. Me!" His voice grew louder as he thought of his life. "Half humans are faced with such discrimination on Dreaux. And without the Dreauxoid gods regulating the exchanges of power between the species, a human doesn't become immortal and a Dreauxoid doesn't get enough of a human heart. *I know!*" He paused to catch his breath.

"Your father did get some of my human heart, even if I didn't become immortal," she said in a quiet voice. "That's unusual for a Dreauxoid, means he was an unusually good person to pick up my humanness, and keep it."

"Maybe, but that's not good enough." Draken thought back to the teasing of his childhood. He hadn't shown that he cared but, as a child, of course he had. The teasing, however, had made him feel he needed to grow stronger, be better. Prove himself. Still... "Most half humans are immortal, as Dreauxoid genes are dominant. That means we lose our human mothers. Tyrus had no business having a fully sexual relationship with you unless he

planned on bonding with you. Why the hell do you think I won't do that with Bree? It's wrong! It's damn wrong!"

"I'm so proud of you, Draken. You're very highly principled. However, you know that there are many half humans on Dreaux. Things happen."

"Yes." And he hated those who used their human lovers for casual sex regardless of the pain they caused. Most Dreauxoids didn't get enough human in them to care about their bastard, half-breed children. The offspring grew up confused, angry, and always on the defensive, like he'd once been. There was no way he'd conceive a child with Bree before the time was right. The thought roused his anger again. "Father shouldn't have seduced you, damn it! A part of me will never forgive him for that --"

"I seduced him, dear. And I knew all the dangers because he warned me and said he didn't want to take risks. If you want to be angry at somebody, be angry at me." Her voice had dropped so low that he'd barely heard her.

Shocked, he could only stand in place for a moment. When he could gather his thoughts, he stammered. "Why w-would you let him...if you knew?"

"I loved him, loved him terribly. I wanted him. I made it damn near impossible for him to say no when I pulled down his pants. You know the routine. Dreauxoids are so sexual, and he really couldn't help himself. But it wasn't rape. Nor did he make the first move. Or the second one."

Draken felt a headache starting in the back of his head. "You can't tell me this is all your fault. I won't believe it --"

"Of course not. Tyrus kept coming back because he craved me as much as I craved him. But the more we mated, the more of my humanness crept inside him, and he expressed regret. I told him not to worry, that I wanted this, and that I could even deal with our child, if it happened. And it did. Then -- and only then -- did I realize that I'd acted immaturely and selfishly."

Draken lifted his arm and rubbed his forehead. His headache had spread and now he felt dizzy. Somehow, his world had been turned upside down.

"I'm sorry, love. So sorry. It hurts me so much, even after all this time, even with all the spiritual growth I've experienced in this dimension."

Draken felt a sudden rush of anger at Tyrus. There was no way he could blame Henrietta. He remembered snuggling in her arms as a small boy. "I wish the two of you had bonded. I know why you wouldn't commit to Father. He was such a womanizer --"

"Don't take it out on him," she said, quickly. "We weren't meant to be lifemates."

"That's not true," Draken said, his voice sharp, surprising even him. "If you'd bonded in a ceremony with the Dreauxoid gods, they'd have made sure you exchanged just the right amount of powers, and we'd be a family. You'd have been immortal! You'd still be here with me and you'd be with the man you loved. I hate him for letting you die a human death --"

"It's not his fault, Drake. Please let me have my say, son."

Draken quieted and regulated his breathing, smarting from what he'd learned already, not sure he wanted to hear more. But then again, he had to know everything. After a pause, he said, "I'm sorry. Go ahead. I can tell you need to get this out of your system -- can feel your need."

"Yes." She paused before she began speaking once more. "Tyrus," she said, "was like you, son. Always off on missions, always with other women. When he came back for me, just before your birth, begging me to bond with him, swearing he'd be true, I didn't trust him."

"Well, I can hardly blame you. I'm amazed that Bree believes *me*."

"She believes you because she's your lifemate and she knows you won't want another. If I had been Tyrus's lifemate, I would have known his heart. But I could never get a read on him. We loved one another, but it wasn't meant to be. The Dreauxoids gods don't like Dreauxoid/human bondings and only allow them if they're convinced the match is eternal. They would have turned us down."

"Even though they knew that a child would eventually lose his mother?" Draken knew a lot about the Powers, but little about Dreauxoid gods. Nobody did. Nobody who lived in his dimension anyway...

"You know how the Dreauxoid gods feel about lifemates, Drake. That's why the Powers insist on no divorces. The gods command that bonded lifemates live together for eternity. To them, it is better for a child to lose a parent to death than to live in an unhappy home. And Dreauxoid/human homes can be very unhappy."

"That's so warped. Humans are smarter that way, believing in divorce."

"I agree, but it's not my call. It never was my call."

Draken felt a shudder go through him. "Most Dreauxoids are bonded for material wealth or status, not love. That's why there isn't as much strife --"

"Exactly. A human heart is hard to please for eternity. Dreauxoids are content if the money is good, if the sex is good. That's enough for them."

Draken digested her words and nervously rubbed his stubbled chin. He couldn't accept all he was hearing. "Tyrus could have pleaded his case. He's very good at that, very charming --"

Her laughter was gentle. "Dear boy, the Dreauxoid gods know when a match is meant to be, and they can't be swayed by charm."

Draken shut his eyes. Her words had the ring of truth to them, much as he'd like to deny it. "This is so insane. Even Tyrus believes you were his lifemate and he blew it."

"Well, living where I do," she said, "I can see things I never saw on the other side, and I can see more than Tyrus can, too. This is a very special place; we humans watch over the creatures that we love and we have knowledge that others don't. Humans who have passed

are very powerful, dear. I know that I was never meant to be with Tyrus or an immortal. That was not my path."

"It was your path to leave me when I was five years old." He hoped he hadn't sounded as bitter as he felt...or like a child. But he momentarily felt like one. Shaking it off, he stood tall, wanting to make his mother proud. "I'm sorry, Mother. That was unkind --"

"I didn't choose to leave you, Draken, although it was always my destiny to die a human death. I would have had to leave you one day, but I didn't want to go when you were only a child. But the car accident that took my life was meant to be, believe it or not. I had urgent work to do on the other side, so I was brought here. It had nothing to do with you or Tyrus. And nothing could have prevented it, since Tyrus would never have been allowed to bond with me."

She was selling him a bill of goods. He didn't and couldn't believe her. He had disliked his father most of his life because of what he'd felt Tyrus had done to his mother -- refused to bond with her, make her immortal.

"You doubt me, son. That's my fault. Just because a human passes to this side doesn't mean one's emotions change. I love Tyrus. It hurt me to arrive here and learn that I was never meant to be his. Hurt me so much that I couldn't even talk to you about it until now."

"Why now?" Draken could feel her sincerity. He wanted to doubt her, but...the more she spoke...he knew and felt that she was unleashing emotions she'd long kept inside her. Being her son, connected to her, he could tell.

"Two reasons," she said. "First of all, he has found his true lifemate and you need to tell him that. I want him to be happy, even if not with me."

Draken stared at the bright star, his brow wrinkled. "What are you talking about? Father is ready to settle down? With somebody other than *you*?"

"Draken, you won't listen to my words, dear. You're rejecting them."

He stilled. She was right; he didn't want to accept her explanation.

"Tyrus was *never* meant to be with me. And, yes, he has found the person he should bond with. Like I told you, we know these things where I live. Tell him that. If he wants, he can come visit me and I'll actually see him just to say it to his face. His guilt will hold him back; I know him well enough to predict that. If I don't let him know that he should go forward in his relationship, and convince him that this is the right thing for him to do, he'll never find happiness."

Draken had to find his voice before he said, "Who is she?"

"He'll tell you one day. I can't. It's another human, but the Dreaxoid gods will approve this match. They are destined for one another and I can feel how much they belong together. Will you pass the message along to your father? I will never be allowed to leave my home just to tell him that he's met his lifemate. That isn't considered an emergency."

"I'll tell him." Draken felt weird. "I, um, well, sure, I'll tell him, even though I... Yes, I will tell him."

"Good. Thank you, son."

Draken felt his eyes water and quickly blinked them dry, cleared his throat, and made himself speak again. He almost sounded too rough. "What's the other reason you came? The emergency. Is it Bree?"

"Indeed. What a horrible thing to happen to such a fine young woman. I've been watching over both of you, sending as much positive energy your way as I can."

"Thank you." He had a lump in his throat.

"Unfortunately, my world is far away and I'm of minimal assistance. Draken, trust your father. He loves you with everything he has."

Draken grunted, and nodded.

"Trust him to help you."

Draken almost laughed now, not sure why. The laughter that bubbled to his throat was more hysterical than mirthful. "Most of me trusts him, but I still can't help but have my doubts. Although, come to think of it, if he has a relationship going on now, that may bog him down more than my problems."

"Do you really believe that?"

He thought of the kindness in his father's eyes just a few minutes ago. "No. I guess not."

"You don't want to give him credit for being a good man, yet you are just like him. He wasn't ready to be a father when you were born, but he's matured. He wants to make up all those years of abandonment."

Guilt swelled inside him. "He didn't really abandon me. I cut him off."

"You cut him off because of your anger and misunderstanding, dear, but also because he couldn't show his affection toward you. You doubted he cared about you, so you protected your feelings by refusing to see him. Now that he's found an opening, he won't let you down."

She knew him to the core. "I hope you're right."

"Would you doubt your own mother, dear?" A little humor crept into her voice.

He smiled a little, and then suddenly felt himself trembling as a thought hit him. Did his mother foresee the future? Should he ask? He had to ask. "From where you live...do you know the outcome for Bree? Can you tell the future?"

"No, dear, I just get feelings. I'll be honest, Draken. This thing with Bree could go either way. Please don't try to do this alone, like you've handled problems on your own for most of your life. Now is the time to reach out for help and put your trust in someone. Trust your father to help you."

Draken was still reeling from “it could go either way.” Head spinning, he said, “I will, Mother. Thanks for giving me faith in him, more than I had. I can’t leave Bree, so I have to trust Tyrus to do the legwork for me. Damn, I hate being dependent on anyone, especially him!”

“I know you do, but this time you have no choice.”

He knew it was true so he nodded again.

“I have to go back now. They’re calling me.”

Draken felt a kiss on his cheek, his mother’s lemony scent stronger and sweeter, and a gentle squeeze of his arm. Then her presence seemed to slip away as the star grew smaller until it disappeared. It seemed forever before he could move to turn and walk back to bed and to Bree. As he snuggled under the covers, holding her in his arms, he felt peaceful about his father for the first time in his life.

When Bree awakened, she was sweaty and confused. Thank goodness Draken held her and was awake.

“Darling,” he said, staring her in the eyes, a worried look marring his handsome face. Then suddenly, like a pail of water dumped on her head, she remembered everything in one sweep of total recall. Shadow taking her over, speaking through her.

“Draken.” She swallowed hard, not sure of what to say, but she knew they had to talk.

“Can you feel him?” Draken asked quickly, gently, stroking back her hair. “I can’t smell any signs of him on you now.”

She concentrated hard and had to agree that Shadow seemed otherwise occupied. Although she felt his coldness in the distant recesses of her consciousness, for now it remained in check. “He’s there,” she said, grimly, “but not on the surface. I can’t read him at the moment, and I hope it’s a long time before I can again.”

Draken just stroked her hair, not saying anything, but demonstrating his love for her just by his look and the vibes she could feel from him. The more she felt them, the more the coldness receded.

“That pill,” she said, remembering, hoping. “Do you think there’s anything to it?”

Draken leaned forward to kiss her quickly, then pulled back. “Whatever it is, it could be a big clue as to how to deal with Winter Demons.” He didn’t miss a beat. “Mother visited me while you slept.”

“Henrietta was here?” She felt a little shock because suddenly she felt Henrietta’s warmth from her world. “She’s smiling at us now, Draken. What did she say?”

Draken told her quickly and she listened, then hugged him when he finished.

“I trust Tyrus,” she said, “and I think his lifemate is very lucky. I know you’ve had doubts about him, and so have I, but I’m learning he’s a very good man.”

“I guess I’m learning that myself.”

They locked eyes. She felt the powerful Dreauxoid pull of his stare. It reassured her that she could still have passion toward Draken, even in her condition. She knew she’d better take advantage of it because it wouldn’t last forever. Evil would grab her again, trying to own her. She felt tears spring to her eyes.

Draken wiped a falling tear. “We have the smartest, best people helping us. Let’s keep our chins up. Mother’s message was encouraging. Now, where were we when we were so rudely interrupted?”

Bree stared at him and his handsomeness overwhelmed her; her nipples started to bud. She was determined to live every good moment to fullest, trying not to fret over an uncertain future. “Where’s your pirate gear, love?”

His gaze seemed to brighten. “You’re in the mood?”

She laughed at his pleased expression. “You never need to ask that question.” Her pussy was already dampening. “My body is a slave to yours, Draken.”

He blinked and brought her back to the pirate ship, back in his costume with black hat, white pirate shirt, eye patch, and long scar. She lay on her back on the soft magic carpet with Draken half on top of her, his smile wicked.

Bree panicked as he ran his roughened finger down her nose. “Drake, you can’t use your magic up again. It’s too risky.”

He smiled and spoke in a low voice, over her lips. “I saved this scene so it didn’t take much magic. And I won’t be using any more. The magic will come from us, darling.”

She felt her sex pulsing as the lake’s waves rocked the boat and pushed her body into his. She had her bikini on again and somehow their costumes excited her as much as when they were naked together. In fact, her arms trembled as she wrapped them around his neck, all of her trembled.

“Captive lady,” he almost whispered. “You must do whatever I say.”

She nodded, her belly weakening. “I understand, Master.” Out of her peripheral vision, she saw handcuffs, rope, and a whip beside them. The thought of what he would do with them made her see stars. Her heart started racing.

Draken lowered his head to kiss her and his tongue snaked between her lips and teeth. She kissed him back and for a while they simulated sex with their tongues, in and out of each other’s mouths, licking one another’s lips. Finally, Draken pulled back and made her sit up before him, staring at her with smoking eyes. “Stand up,” he said.

She did and he looked up at her with a sinful smile.

“Turn for me,” he commanded.

She did a sexy little dance in a circle as his gaze gleamed with approval. Since he seemed to like what he’d seen, she imitated a go-go dancer, imitating what she’d seen in movies, and he stood and yanked her into his arms. “Mine,” he said, and he kissed her again,

unhooking the back of her bikini. He pulled back to watch as her skimpy red top tumbled to the deck, following its every move. Then he slowly took her in from her toes, up her body, until his heated stare rested on her hardened breasts and nipples.

"Your turn," he said. "Take off my shirt, slave girl."

"Yes, Master." She unbuttoned his tattered white shirt, aware of her shaking fingers, then stepped behind him to help him out of his sleeves. The stark contrast between the cloudy white of the shirt and the smooth ebony of his flawless skin stole her breath. He swung around to face her and she stroked her thumbs over his flat pink nipples. Unable to stop herself, she felt her breathing speed up. Reaching down, she could feel that his cock was growing, springing to life in her hand, thick and large and warm. She wrapped her hand around it, but her fingers couldn't touch. *Lord, he was fine!*

He gently removed her fingers from his magnificent shaft and, still holding both of her hands, said, "You can't have it yet, love. I'm going to take off your bikini bottoms. Half your ass is hanging out of them and I want to see the whole thing before I spank it."

She felt a flutter in her chest and giggled. "Yes, Master."

He knelt before her and pulled down her panties, then leaned forward to suck her pussy and clit as she tried to step out of her bottoms without falling from her wobbly knees. She heard herself laugh and sighed as he kept on sucking, harder and harder, his tongue sweeping her tight nub. As he continued his sweet torture, she had to wrap her arms around him to remain standing.

"Draken," she murmured. "Oh, my perfect master, my perfect pirate. My man!"

As he sucked and she almost swooned, she distantly heard him fishing for something but didn't pay much attention until he pulled back and sat on the floor. For a second, they shared a sizzling stare for a moment then she looked down to see him fingering a leather-strapped whip.

"Oh, shit," she heard herself saying.

Sitting Indian-style, he patted one powerful thigh. "On my lap, slave."

He didn't have to command it again as her knees were useless by now and she wanted him to spank her. She climbed over his lap and stuck her ass in the air.

Draken slapped the whip on the ground beside her and that alone almost made her come. "I want you to know your place. I'm going to let you see who's boss here. You can never get away from me; you are my captive. One thing, though. You can't come until I allow it."

"What?" This was new. Something was always new when they had sex, no matter how many times they had it. "I can't come? How can I stop it?" Her voice trembled with excitement at his new demand.

"You can't come. If you come before I allow it, I'll stop and we won't do this again, won't touch, for an hour."

An hour seemed like torture to her, she was so ready to have an orgasm. "I'll t-try, but --"

"Count. That will keep you focused. On the count of ten, you can come but not until then. And I'll know."

Shit, he would know. How the hell was she supposed to do that? Yet, if she did, she could only imagine the explosion. "Yes, Master," she said, knowing she couldn't stand it if he made her wait for sweet relief.

A whoosh of air told her he'd lifted the whip, and her butt shuddered in advance as she closed her eyes tight and waited. When he slapped her bare, quivering ass, she almost lost it, but she somehow kept herself from coming. "One," she choked out.

He hit her again, harder.

"T-two." Oh, God, this was not only hard, but her body was starting to fill with tons of sensations that she couldn't hold in...

Slap!

"F-f-four." Her eyes squeezed tighter, the inside of her body taut yet shivering with flames.

"Three," he corrected.

"Damn!" Her nipples were twitching.

Slap!

"F-four!" She screamed, but held herself in check enough to hold in her nectar. "Draken, this is torture --"

A stinging slap cracked against her ass and she felt the tears as she whimpered. "F-five. Five."

His low, wicked chuckle made it even harder for her to hold herself together. Every part of her seemed to be tingling, even her fingernails.

By the time she finally yelled, "Ten!" she exploded like dynamite, shuddering off his lap to the floor, on her back, her pussy convulsing as she came. An earthquake seemed to rage through her as her eyes rolled back in her head.

Draken was at her side in a second, holding her, kissing her face. "Baby, are you all right? Is this you, Bree?"

"Yes," she sobbed against his chest, nectar still dripping from her cunt. "Yes, darling, it's me! Whip me again! Whip my pussy!" She kept spasming, her body in flames as she pulsed against his hot body. In a moment of clarity through her orgasms, she laughed and said, "You never ever let me down. You know exactly what will turn me on."

"Of course I do," she heard him saying. "You're my lifemate so my instincts about you are right. Just as yours are about me." He bent over to kiss her again, then lifted his whip and

slapped her sensitive mound. She arched as she sobbed. "Again, all right?" he asked, and she vaguely realized he wanted to know if he'd gone too far.

"All right!" she shouted to the rainbows above. "Yes! Yes! Whip me forever, Draken! My pussy is dripping for you. Please, please, Master. Please, don't stop now!"

Tyrus stood in the laboratory next to his close friend and brilliant scientist Zell Razar. He was half-human and a cross between a fair-skinned Dreauxoid and a Middle Eastern earthling. All in all, he wasn't tall, but well built with raven hair and bright blue eyes that glimmered with his intelligence. Right now, Zell was looking at the contents of Shadow's pill under a microscope. His white lab jacket was almost too bright and unwrinkled as he peered through the eyepiece. Tyrus looked on, feeling anxious and restless. He hoped this helped Draken and their cause, but something else had his attention, too. Weirdly, he felt Henrietta from her place in human eternity. That didn't happen often. He wondered what she wanted him to know.

Zell stood erect and turned to look at him. Then he frowned. "Tyrus, you need to focus. This is important."

Chastened, Tyrus snapped to attention and nodded. "Can you help my son and his lifemate?"

"I'm not sure. There's nothing in this pill that I recognize, must be made of Winter Demon chemicals. But I have rooms full of possessed creatures who I know will volunteer to try this. They've already dedicated what's left of their lives to stopping the Winter Demons. I can clone this pill with my magic and give it to some, and let you know the results." He paused. "It could make them worse. We certainly can't trust Shadow."

Tyrus's heart fell; he'd so hoped that this would be the solution to their problems. Now he wasn't so sure. "I don't want to risk anyone's life on a gamble."

"It's not up to you. It's a risk they're prepared to take."

"You're right. I thought it was a sure cure if Shadow was willing to give it to Draken in exchange for turning himself in."

"And it may be, but there's no guarantee. It wouldn't be the first trick the Winter Demons have tried."

"I know," Tyrus said. Just the knowledge that Draken would hand himself over to save Bree frightened him. He didn't want to lose his son, even if the boy was more gallant and braver than he'd been at Draken's age. He couldn't have imagined giving up his identity for a woman, not even Henrietta. Being a Dreauxoid, his selfishness had been deeply entrenched within him...that is, until he started glomming some of Henrietta's goodness when they'd made love.

But Draken was already half-human. He would put himself ahead of Bree.

"I'll be honest," Tyrus said in a heavy voice. "This cure would be as much for me as for Draken and Bree. I don't want Draken in the clutches of those monsters. If he can get a cure from the good guys, instead of Shadow, he won't have to turn himself in. Please...do your best and hurry."

Zell smiled in his reserved way. "You know I will, Ty. You've saved me from the edge of the Void too often for me not to do all I can. The thing is, it will take a while to see if there is any improvement. This won't be a quick fix."

"How do you know?"

"Besides Shadow's words, which, of course, are subject to skepticism, as a scientist I don't believe there is a quick fix to curing one of possession. But if somebody offers to take a mega-dose, we might see an early trend."

Tyrus knew he was frowning.

"That's the best I can do for you, pal."

Tyrus's midsection tightened. He didn't know if Bree had that kind of time. But he knew that Zell would do his best. "So there's nothing to do but wait?"

"For now."

"Well, send me a message when you know something. Speaking of which, I'm getting a telepathic message from my son." And he was feeling Henrietta, but he couldn't get to her. He'd answer Draken right away.

"Take a few days off, Tyrus," Zell said, slapping a hand on his arm. The man came up to Tyrus's shoulder at most. "You know the peacekeepers are going to be in conference, no action. I'm sure you can be filled in when you return. You look and sound a bit distracted, even though you're trying to hide it, and that could hurt your son and his lifemate."

Tyrus looked at him and decided to confide in his friend. "I met a woman and, although I barely know her, I *know* her, if you understand what I mean. I feel closer to her already than I ever did Henrietta, which is odd since Henrietta was my lifemate."

"Or so you thought, old boy. I think you should spend some time with this lady. What part of Dreaux does she live on?"

Tyrus cleared his throat. "Earth."

Zell gave him a sad look. "Tyrus, that didn't work out so well the first time."

Tyrus felt a wave of nostalgia and sadness as he smelled the faint scent of lemon. It was a sign. He knew Henrietta couldn't visit him, and she'd refused to see him during visiting hours in her world...but sometimes he knew she was watching him because he could feel her. "I have to go," he told Zell.

"Take care of yourself, Tyrus."

Tyrus smiled, nodded, and then blinked himself to where his son's scent called out to him. He found himself in the bedroom suite where he'd often taken his women for weekend

retreats. Draken and Bree were holding each other in bed, under the covers; the room was comfortably air-conditioned, a bright rainbow sky bathing them all in replenishing light. When Draken saw him, his eyes lit up and he lifted his finger to his lips, then pointed at a sleeping Bree.

Tyrus nodded as Draken blinked, probably getting himself dressed, then slid out from under the covers. Draken, dressed only in dark blue boxers, strode up to him and stopping a few feet before him. "I have a message from Henrietta," Draken said, wasting no time, meeting his eyes.

Tyrus nodded again, not surprised. "What is it?"

"First, I need to tell you something." The boy looked embarrassed, his gaze falling.

"Yes, son?" Tyrus felt his heart speeding up. He felt something coming from his son, something he'd wanted to feel for a long time. To save Draken from saying it, he said, "I know. Henrietta told you something that made you think better of me. And we don't need to discuss it."

Draken looked up quickly, his dark eyes alert. "I understand you now, and I trust you. It needs to be said."

Tyrus felt all mushy inside but kept a stoic face, or so he hoped. "Thank you. You need to tell me how Henrietta managed to accomplish that."

"She explained things that you don't even know, and I'll tell you everything," Draken said, his gaze steady, his voice soft. "Not right now, though. Any news on the pill?"

Quickly, Tyrus filled him in, frustrated that Draken looked crestfallen.

"Chin up, boy," he said in a quiet but rough tone. "We'll know something soon and it could be the beginning of curing Bree."

Draken bucked up after that and smiled a little. "I appreciate that. I guess we'll all just have to wait."

"For a bit. Not long, I hope." Although he really wasn't sure...

"Can you stay awhile?"

Tyrus sucked in some air. Draken had invited him to stay. "I'd like to spend a lot more time with you," he said, placing a hand on his son's powerful shoulder. *When had his little boy grown so tall?* "I'll do that as soon as I attend to some other business --" He could see the disappointment in Draken's eyes. He couldn't desert him again without explaining. "If you want me to stay, son, I will." He meant it. He wouldn't go if Draken wanted him there, maybe for comfort.

Draken's eyes narrowed. "Wait. You want to visit somebody, a lady. I can feel it."

Tyrus felt his body tighten. "But I can wait. She can wait."

Draken's tense face broke into a grin. "No, you can't wait. Henrietta wanted me to tell you that your current lady is your lifemate." He quickly and eagerly told him the story that took the breath from his lungs. When Draken finished, Tyrus stammered, "A-are you sure?"

Draken nodded. "She'll even allow you to see her during visiting hours to tell you so. If you've got your lifemate to woo, I think you should do it. I'll be fine."

Tyrus suddenly couldn't wait to see Doreen, but he felt torn. "I don't want to leave you two alone when you're in so much turmoil."

"I can always call for Raven and Natalia if I need help. Please, Father, both Mother and I want you to romance this lady Dreaxoid-style. That means not wasting years just dating her. Go after her all out and let her know about you as soon as possible. I really want this for you."

Tyrus's head reeled. *What would he do when he found out who she was? How would Bree feel?* Then he regained his wits. With Bree, Doreen's child and Draken's lifemate, in so much danger, how could he worry about that? "I should stay with you."

"Please," Draken said, sounding much stronger now. "I have hope now and I'll pass that on to Bree. I'm still worried sick, but there really isn't anything you can do here but hold my hand. I'm a grown man and I don't need my father that way anymore."

"And when you did, I wasn't around."

Draken looked taken back, but he recovered smoothly. "But you wish to make up for it now and I'm going to allow it. I promise to call for you if I need you. Just don't shut down your powers so I can communicate with you."

Tyrus felt a wave of love toward his child, now a man, a better man than he had been at only a few centuries old. "I won't shut down," he promised with a smile, oddly wanting to hug him but refraining.

"If you hear anything, Father, let me know right away."

"I will."

Draken turned and moved back toward the bed and to Bree. "Now go." He sounded rough, as if to cover up the soft emotions that both of them were feeling. "When my lady awakens, I'll be busy." As he sat on the edge of the bed, he shot Tyrus a strange look.

"What?" Tyrus asked, taken back by Draken's dark stare.

"Father, you mustn't mate with this human. It was wrong of you to mate with Mother without being lifemates. I hope you learned that it's wrong." His stare penetrated through him.

He thought of his upcoming night with Doreen, holding her, introducing her gently to some of his ways but never considering mating with her. He couldn't resist a sort of sad little smile. "I would never do that. I learned my lesson. But things could have turned out worse. I have you." Then, before Draken could react, he gruffly added, "Now go to your lady! I'm out of here."

He quickly blinked himself away, feeling oddly comforted at a time of danger and turmoil. At least, no matter what happened, he and Draken had each other. That was something he had never dreamed would ever happen. Not in a million centuries.

Chapter Twelve

Shadow paced back and forth in his somber dwelling, ice forming on the walls as his darkness froze the dungeon. He had to keep his head, had to hold on to his sanity. He had two weeks, two weeks, two weeks. Certainly two weeks was long enough for him to practice Hamus's lessons, shore up his powers, and capture Draken Blade for Hamus. The Void, he couldn't end up back in the Void, his senses starved until he walked around for eternity without a functioning brain cell. This wasn't what he'd expected when he'd been recruited as a Winter Demon. He'd meant to succeed and one day become powerful enough to overtake Hamus. His goal had been to be king of the Winter Demons...

His laziness had been his flaw. He knew it. Hamus knew it. And now he was almost humanly vulnerable to his bully of a master, whom he hated but had to obey. As he paced, he held his head. "Two weeks, two weeks, two weeks," he muttered out loud. "Two fucking weeks to get my act together. Hamus is my master. I must obey him. Hamus will get rid of me if I fail again. I need to fill myself with all Hamus's evil and sink it so deep inside me that he'll feel he needs me for our universal takeover."

He stopped walking and dropped his arms, alarmed that he'd been babbling out loud to four empty walls. It was a sure sign that he was losing it. Shit, he missed Desi. The tart had always built him up, but now she belonged to Hamus, the bastard... No, he had no time to dwell on his Dreauxoid jealousy. He had to become an emotionless Winter Demon, not just halfway, but all the way. After all, he only had two weeks.

The pacing began again, as did the mumbling. "Two weeks...Hamus...two weeks...Hamus." His voice grew louder as tears sprang to his eyes. Fuck it if he spoke to himself. If he didn't hear his own words, he'd go mad and, if so, Hamus would get rid of him for sure, and way before two weeks was over.

"I can do this!" Shadow shouted to nobody. "Two weeks...two weeks...I will do Hamus's bidding...two weeks..."

As soon as Draken climbed back into bed and put his arms around Bree, he felt her body temperature dropping fast. "Shit," he mumbled, starting to panic. He pulled her close to him; she was sleeping. "No," he whispered into her now cool ear. "Please, Bree, don't leave me. Don't have another fit of possession -- *damn you, Shadow!*"

He almost expected to hear Shadow's vile, mocking voice from his love's mouth, but she didn't wake and no sounds emitted from her except rather harsh breathing. Her breath was cool, too. This wasn't good news. Draken shook her, trying to wake her up, needing to know her state of mind.

Her eyes snapped open, round and wide. "Draken!" It was her voice, but her teeth chattered and she couldn't stop shivering. "I'm c-c-cold. It's t-taking over."

"No." He took her into his arms and tried to warm her up with his body heat, but even as he did, he knew his attempt was useless. Still, he had to try to get through to her. "Think warm, dear. Please --"

"Two weeks."

"What?" Draken pulled back, puzzled. It had been her voice, not Shadow's, and that was good. *But what had she meant?* As she stared at him, her blue eyes blazed too bright, otherworldly... "What did you say, love?"

"Two weeks. Two more weeks." Her jaw dropped open and Draken felt a shiver of fear.

Keeping his voice calm, he kept her tightly wrapped in his arms, feeling her warming up just a bit in his desperate grip. It was like she was able to keep some of his reflective heat and he gloried in it. "Two weeks more of what, love? You're not Shadow now, are you?" He didn't think so because of the way she'd taken his heat and still smelled flowery fresh, signs that she was all right. Sort of. "Please, talk to me, sweetheart," he said in a crooning, low baritone.

"No. No, I'm Bree, but I can hear him talking to himself." She sounded perplexed. "It's like I'm tapped into his mind, but he's not physically near. Heck, he isn't even thinking about me. H-he's pacing in a frigid place saying two more weeks and mumbling about somebody named Hamus." She looked up at him, frightened. "This is serious. I can't explain it... There's kind of psychic connection between us. He's fearing this Hamus and obsessing about two weeks. Two weeks...and you. I don't get it, but -- oh, Draken, it's not a good thing." She buried her face into his chest, breathing into him, her breath warm now, but her words chilling him.

"Two weeks...and us." He mumbled her words to himself, keeping his tone steady, although he didn't feel calm. The fact that there was such a short deadline was ominous. *And*

who the hell was this Hamus? “Father!” he called, both out loud and telepathically. “Wherever you are, please come. You need to hear this.”

“Two weeks,” Bree mumbled as she continued snuggling into him. “Hamus. Two more weeks. Us. You. Draken, you!”

Draken let out a hiss. *Why the hell didn't Tyrus answer him? Was it another sign that he made empty promises? Could Henrietta have been so wrong about Tyrus, even from her place that should have given her a special perspective?*

He didn't want Bree to know his fear. Softly, he stroked her hair, which had been cool until he'd touched it. Then it warmed up. It was so strange, like she was trapped between him and Shadow. “Can you pick up anything else, Bree? What does two weeks mean? What's going to happen in two weeks? What about two weeks...and us?”

“I don't know...I can't figure it out yet, but I'm trying. I think it's something bad that Hamus will do to him if he doesn't succeed. He's terrified and going a little crazy.”

“That's good, love. So this Hamus must have power over Shadow. It could be significant --”

“Two more weeks. Hamus -- the bastard.”

“Father, damn you!” Draken lashed out as Bree's shaky words made him ache with his own torment and her suffering. *Where was his father?* “Damn you! Just when I was feeling good about our relationship --”

“I'm here!” Tyrus's loud voice boomed through the room, echoing off the walls.

Draken's heart sped up so fast he wondered if Bree could still feel the beat as she shuddered in his arms. “Father!” he said, looking around. It seemed like he was in the room with them. “Where are you?”

“Where do you think?” he said, sarcastically. “I'm on Earth, son. Did you not, only a while ago, tell me to pursue my lifemate? You have terrible timing and I had to duck into the bathroom at her house in order to hear you clearly. Lots of noise on this planet. Humans need to learn telepathy.”

Draken was amused to see Bree roll her eyes as Tyrus's voiced boomed down on them. It was a sign that the old Bree was returning.

“I can hear,” Bree said, a little of her spunk returning. “You could wake the dead with that voice, Tyrus!”

Draken closed his warm hands around hers, glad she seemed the same temperature as he. Still he knew he couldn't let down his guard, and watched her for any signs of an impending seizure. “Father, I need you to listen to Bree's words. She's got an important message to give you.”

“Hurry, and speak up, child!” Tyrus snapped impatiently. “I can't give you much time because I fear that I'm going to be interrupted soon.”

Draken felt the usual annoyance toward his father at his cavalier attitude. Obviously, he was busy wooing his human lifemate, and his Dreauxoid sex hormones had taken over.

"Then pipe down and listen to me," Bree snapped back.

Draken grinned at her, proud of his girl, glad to have her back, if only temporarily. Not many people could put down a Dreauxoid in full hunt mode.

"I'm listening, Bree," Tyrus said, with a wry chuckle. "What is it this time? Have you news to help us solve this problem?"

"I hear Shadow in my head," Bree said, no longer teasing, her voice a little shaky but calm as she stared into Draken's eyes, drawing him in.

"Oh, shit," Tyrus said grimly. "I was hoping he'd be purged from you for a while."

"I'm not possessed right now, but I'm not free either. It's like I'm tapped into him but he doesn't care about me anymore. Tyrus, he's pacing like a caged beast and muttering to himself."

"About what?"

"He's talking about two more weeks, and ranting about somebody named Hamus. He's scared to death of this Hamus and awed by him at the same time. And...his fear is connected to Draken. Do you know what's going on?"

"Shit," Tyrus said with force enough to rattle the glass shield.

Judging by his father's reaction, Draken knew that it wasn't good. "Who's Hamus and what does he mean to you, Father?" he asked, shortly.

"If it's who I think it is, I haven't heard his name uttered for eons. He was a Dreauxoid monster, so mad and brutal that he was unanimously voted by the gods to be thrown in the Void, but we never caught him. Bastard disappeared. He was so black-hearted, so destructive, that we felt he had demon in him from birth. This isn't good news." He let out a long sigh as Draken felt a bitter wind inside him.

"Can you do anything?" he asked his father, harshly.

"I'll send messages to all I trust to see if anyone knows anything about Hamus. How odd it is to hear that vile name again." His voice softened again as he asked, "Bree, what do you think he means by two weeks?"

"I'm not sure." She shut her eyes. "But I get the impression that Hamus has given him two weeks to carry out his mission or else. I do know that he doesn't care about me anymore; it's all about your son. Promise me you'll protect Draken no matter what happens to me."

"Don't talk like that!" Draken said, startled. "Bree, it's you who needs to be sheltered. Are you listening to me, Father?"

"It's kind of hard to miss," Tyrus said gently. Then there was the sound of someone pounding on a door.

Bree and Draken looked at one another.

A soft, feminine voice from Earth suddenly echoed in the room. "Are you okay, honey? Your eyes... They looked so -- far away. I thought I heard you talking to yourself and you sounded distressed." In a flirtatious voice, she said, "Come out and I'll make it all better, handsome!"

"Mother?" Bree mouthed the word in shock.

Draken couldn't answer. He was dumbfounded as he locked eyes with Bree.

Tyrus coughed. "I'll be with you soon, pixie," he called out to her. "I'm almost finished grilling the steaks. Why don't you go open the wine and put on something a little more comfortable?"

"I didn't see you come back in the house and go to the bathroom," she said, perplexed.

"Dear heart, I told you to rest on your bed and get your beauty rest, not that you need any. But I wanted you to let me do the cooking. Didn't you rest your pretty eyes for me?"

"Yes, that's what's so strange." She sounded confused again. "Even in the bedroom, I'd have heard you coming into the house with the way that back door slams. And I'd have seen you walk right past the bedroom entrance to get to the bathroom. I don't understand. When I'm with you, the strangest things happen --"

"Not strange at all. You must have fallen asleep, Doreen."

A soft sigh and then, "That must have been it. You're not talking on the phone in there?"

"Get the wine, sugar. I'm not on the phone." There was the sound of a creaking door opening up.

Bree cringed at Draken as there were kissing sounds from Tyrus and her mother, reverberating around the room.

Draken gave her an apologetic look. He'd had no idea that he'd sent the old fox out to Bree's prudish mother, that Doreen was his lifemate. If his own life hadn't been so perilous then, and Bree's situation so dark, he'd have wailed with laughter. The fates were definitely working overtime.

There was the sound of a door closing and then Tyrus said, "Son?"

"I'm here," Draken said wryly, relieved when he saw the twinkle in Bree's eyes. She was pleased for her mother and it seemed to bring her nearer to him. He pulled Bree into his body, and her arms wrapped tightly around his torso. It was like they were even more closely and symbiotically linked than he'd even guessed. Their oneness boggled his mind.

"It's okay," she mouthed.

He nodded at her, relieved, then addressed his father, out loud for Bree to hear. "Why didn't you tell me your lifemate was Bree's mother?"

"I wasn't sure how Bree would take it. Certainly, at a time like this, I didn't want to further upset either of you."

"I'm happy for you both, really," she said.

"I guess I am, too," Draken said, grudgingly. "But this is a hell of a time to carry on a romance."

"Tell me about it, son," Tyrus said dryly. "But you encouraged it. Don't forget that."

"Yeah, yeah," Draken said. "That's true."

"But don't worry, when I said I'd give Bree's situation my all, I meant it. I love you, Bree, and Doreen, so I have big stakes in a favorable outcome myself."

"I believe you...but you'd better do right by Bree's mother. No sex until you bond, you hear? Or you'll answer to me."

"That's my plan. I won't be reckless twice, son. I promise you." Tyrus's sincerity rippled through Draken. His father meant it. "Meanwhile," Tyrus said in a soft voice, "if Bree comes up with anything else, and I mean anything, no matter how insignificant it might seem, message me again."

Bree cut in. "Does my mom know --"

"I haven't even told her that I'm a Dreauxoid yet."

"I'm not so sure you should...her heart..."

"That will be healed when we bond. She'll be immortal."

"That's right, I forgot about that. I...well...I'm relieved to know that she'll be taken care of forever, if anything happens. I'm grateful. Thanks, Dad." She perked up and smiled at Draken, winking.

Draken felt Bree's thoughts; that an eternal bonding would never happen for them. That they would never have their happily ever after. He held her more tightly, never intending to let her go. "We'll talk to you later, Father, and thanks."

"Right, as soon as I hear any news, I'll message you immediately."

"Good. There's no time to waste," Draken said.

"I have to go now, but I'm on call."

Draken felt his father disconnect from them, and suddenly let the entire past few hours hit him hard. His mother...Bree's partial possession...Tyrus...Doreen...two weeks. He believed Shadow would be caught and dealt with, but he didn't know when. His gaze rested on the most beautiful person in his world, his fuel, his energy, the one who made him whole.

"We've got to make the most of the next two weeks," Bree said, kissing his jaw.

Draken fell to the mattress, exhausted, pulling Bree with him. They were both naked on top of the quilt, and they snuggled into one another. Draken knew he was sweating, his heart still racing, his insides trembling. "Damn it," he said. "I'm so tired of this...but..." His voice lifted. "I'm sure we'll kick Shadow's puny ass."

Bree lowered her eyelashes. "He's such a part of me, Draken. I can feel his evil."

"I know." He had to pause before he could speak confidently. "We'll purge you of him soon." He kissed her nape, and then moved his lips up to her ear. "If you feel him coming close, warn me. We'll chase him away, like we did before."

"I'll certainly tell you, Draken. But chasing him away didn't get him out of me. I want him gone."

What could he say? His heart broke. "I know, sweetie. It will happen."

"Two weeks. You and I have two weeks. That's what I feel." She lifted her head to stare into his eyes, and the intensity and heat in her stare really hit him deep in his soul.

"He can't win, darling. Maybe two weeks means that's all he has."

"That's true, but I also get the impression that two weeks is all *we* may have."

"Nonsense." But he didn't know for sure. It sickened him to think of what could lie ahead.

"Stop worrying." She stroked his dreadlocks behind his ear. "In between the times I'm forced to feel him, let's just live it up, dear."

"Yes! Until the day he's gone and you're cured." Draken refused to let her even think about their end. He also hated thinking about it, but she *couldn't*.

"Until the day he's gone." Her voice was bright, as if she believed it would happen, and he hoped she did. His own read of her made him think she was putting on an act for him, but he did feel lighter vibes from her. Her mood had lifted and that was a good thing.

He leaned close to her and whispered over her beautiful, ruby-colored, heart-shaped lips. "How would you like to be captured and whipped on a magic carpet?"

She took in a shaky breath, her face lighting up. "Would I ever... But your magic --"

"Magic carpet ride travel uses minimal magic reserves if I do it the old-fashioned way," he said, gently, playfully. "As soon as I start the magic carpet in flight, I'll command it to fly, and then I can concentrate on what I want to do to you. Don't try to stop me because I won't listen." He was desperate to make her happy again, desperate to take her mind off Shadow and please her more than ever before. Each encounter was a test to him to see if their sex could even be better than all the other times.

"Then I guess I'm at your mercy, sweetheart," she said with a smile. "Do what you will." Her body was already heating up in anticipation of the kinky delights he had in store for her. "You're right; I can't stop you and I don't want to. Just be smart, Draken."

"I will." He blinked and grinned as padded leather restraints circled her wrists and ankles holding her spread-eagle on the soft bed. He gazed at her perfect pink sex, his cock twitching.

Bree laughed in disbelief. "What the hell?" she asked.

"I told you you'd be my captive again. The third times the charm, you know. I may never let you go." He reached beneath the bed and brought up his leather whip, glad that he hadn't blinked it away.

Her eyes almost bulged out of her head. "I'm going to lose it if you use that on me while I'm bound like this."

He snapped his fingers and the long green magic carpet, with its fringe fluttering, floated above the bed. He kept his gaze on hers and her eyes brightened as she gazed at it. "Draken, you do a great job of making me forget my problems."

"And I always will." He snapped again and both of them were on the levitating carpet, Bree flat on her back and restrained. He stood before her, the whip in his hand. "No unicorns this time," he said, staring down at her tearing eyes. "They are draining on my power reserves. The magic carpet will take off on its own and fly over the rainbow on the count of three. Do you remember the last time I asked you to count?" he asked, flicking the whip at her creamy pussy.

"Oh, God," she cried out, quivering. "Do I ever!"

"On your count of three then," he said, aiming at her clit.

"One," she shrieked.

"Excellent," he said doing it again.

"T-two," she wailed.

"Good girl," he praised, and smacked her again.

"Three," she cried out, her pussy convulsing.

He laughed as the magic carpet took off with a jerk and rose quickly on an angle to the top of the glass ceiling, which grew higher as they climbed. They landed with a bump on the color purple, rushing through a comfortable, air-conditioned breeze. The different colored lights flickered over them.

Draken's cock was already rock hard as he gazed at his captive beauty. Bree was bound before him and awaiting his pleasure. His mouth watered as the scent of her arousal perfumed the air. She looked helpless, feminine, and oh-so-submissive this way, and her loveliness turned him on to no end. She was close to coming, her sex rippling, and he got harder just looking at her. At his will, Troy popped out of him and knelt beside him, a whip identical to his own gripped in his double's hand.

Troy gave Draken a silly grin. "The things you make me do!" he said, teasing.

"Complaining?" Draken asked his double, but his eyes were on Bree, who was biting her lip.

"Hell no. I'm itching to get at our girl, and I'm not a complainer," Troy said. "Let's ask Bree if she has any complaints."

Bree seemed to laugh and sob at the same time as her hair blew back in the wind from the force of magic carpet travel. "I have a complaint," she said, her voice high and excited. "You boys are all talk and no action!"

Bree stared into two sets of gorgeous deep brown eyes and melted. Her lovers were all she needed to force her worries behind her as they rocked madly on the sliding magic carpet. Her pussy dampening, she waited for them to touch her. A heartbeat later, she was suddenly hanging upside down, suspended slightly above the magic carpet, her hair falling down, her body surging with excitement. She let out a trill of startled laughter. "Now that was a trick I hadn't expected, boys," she teased, feeling Troy and Draken close in on either side of her.

"Honey, you ain't seen nothing yet," Draken said, and leaned over to lick her weeping slit.

She moaned as he teased her with rough, silken strokes of his tongue. Then Troy, standing at her rear, slapped the leather strap against her flaming ass. She let out a shriek at the double turn-on. Her body shuddered, and strangely she didn't feel any strain from being held upside down. *Another Dreauxoid trick*, she thought, smiling.

"Again," Draken said, quietly.

She gasped as her lifemates' warm breath tickled her clit. Then a moment later, Draken sucked her clit into his hot mouth and nibbled it, and Troy's whip struck her cheeks quickly, one at a time. She shuddered, her eyes rolling rolled back in her head at the pure bliss, as her pussy spasmed. Just when she thought it was over, Draken bit down on her clit, sending her over the edge with a scream, while Troy whipped her harder. Shock waves went through her, making her convulse as she came again. She laughed again, even as tears of pleasure filled her eyes.

As the magic carpet continued to slide over the rainbow, she looked at up at Draken's dark, grinning face from her upside-down position.

"I have something for you, beloved," he said, unzipping his pants.

She rippled through after spasms as his stiff cock sprang out at mouth level. With a groan, she hungrily took him in, as he bent down to stroke her with his tongue again. Then she was sucking on him, drawing hard on him as Troy kept whipping her. Draken's cock got harder in her mouth, his body stiffened, and she knew he was close to coming. He sucked on her clit and she came with a shudder. Sucking harder on him, she rejoiced when he came with a growl, shooting a huge load into her mouth. She greedily sucked down his cum, feeling like a part of him, and then licked him clean, leaving him with a kiss.

A breathless moment later, she fell onto the soft magic carpet, her bonds vanishing. Draken and Troy fell to the carpet on either side of her and laughed. "You didn't use too much magic, did you?" she asked, looking at Draken with loving eyes.

Draken rolled to his side and tapped her nose with a big finger, a tolerant, loving look on his face. "I'm hardly using any magic at all," he said. "Bree, you must trust me and enjoy. That's an order."

She melted under his sultry gaze and knew there was no way she could deny him anything.

"We want you," Draken and Troy said in unison as they moved her passion-limp body astride Troy.

She gasped as Troy's stiff cock slipped into her and he pulled her to lay flat on top of him.

"Spread for me, love," Draken said, rubbing lube against her quivering ass.

Bree whimpered with need as her backside shuddered against his teasing fingers; and then he was pressing his cock against her anus, slowly entering her. She gasped as they filled her and quivered between them suspended between pain and pleasure. She moaned with pleasure as they lay with him still inside her, her sex rippling, as her ass relaxed.

"You can't come until the sixth thrust of our cocks," Draken said, firmly.

She shuddered, sandwiched between them. She took in the twinkling expression in Troy's smoldering eyes and knew that Draken was getting off on driving her crazy with lust, too. She shuddered as she watched his intense gaze.

"Count out loud," Troy said. He wore a no-nonsense expression. "If you start to come, we'll stop until you show us better control."

Tears of frustration misted her eyes again. "But the whip...and I'm already so turned on, I don't know if I can hold back --"

"Oh, you're one tough cookie. I think you can," Troy said playfully, his hands stroking the sides of her breasts. "Of course, if you don't want us to do this --"

"I do!" She gasped, her body clinging to their pulsing cocks. "I promise...I won't come until six. I can do this..."

"Ready, Troy?" Draken asked his double.

Bree trembled as his Draken's breath tickled the fine hairs on her nape.

"Ready as I'll ever be," Troy said.

Bree went still as they exchanged signals, and then cried out with pleasure as they pulled out and surged back inside her simultaneously. "One, oh my God," she cried out, quivering.

"That was one," Draken said.

Bree had no breath to speak. She nodded, her lips moving uselessly, her mind going senseless, her body quivering around their pulsing, giant cocks.

"Good girl," they said.

She moaned helplessly as the tension built up inside her, stiffening her body, tightening around them. How would she keep herself from coming? She sobbed as they pulled halfway out of her, waited a moment, and then surged deep inside her again. Her body clutched at their driving cocks, tightening around them. "Two," she gasped out.

"Control it," Draken whispered in her ear.

She shuddered, whimpering as she shut her eyes. *I can't come, can't come, can't come...* And then they thrust into her again and she screamed, "Three," her body milking them as she tightened, starting to come.

They stopped cold, making her sob with frustration and need. "Please."

"Not until six," Troy said.

Draken said, "Shh," in her ear and stroked her back. "Ease it off a bit, love; you can take us."

She shuddered, her body settling down and she bit her lip, forcing herself to relax around them, feeling them throb inside her.

"Good girl, now count," Troy said.

Bree shuddered while holding her nectar. It was hard, brutal. "Four! Oh, God, help me...four!"

"Yes," Draken said.

She moaned as they surged back into her, convulsing a little as she cried out, "Five!"

And then they held back, making her wait as she sobbed, her whole body aglow as she felt every pulsing inch of them poised inside her. She braced for an earthquake orgasm and sobbed when they withdrew. Then they both surged deep inside her and she convulsed around them, letting out a scream as she came. They both came with growls, exploding inside her, making her come harder. No longer in control, she squirted her juice as her body raged and shuddered with sweet, explosive release.

Draken reached over, squeezed her clit with his fingers, and she was gone. Stars exploded before her eyes and she let go of everything inside her. Her body racked with endless waves of pure, unfettered ecstasy and she passed out. The next thing she knew, Draken rested beside her on one elbow, staring down at her. They were still riding on the magic carpet, the rainbow colors bathing them from all directions. She squinted to focus on Draken's dark eyes.

"You pass out easily," he said, sounding anxious. "Are you...yourself?"

Her heart was racing, her body still trembling, but Shadow seemed temporarily purged from her system. *Could such intense lovemaking drive him out of her?* She looked into Draken's eyes, hopefully. "I'm myself...and he's not there. Could it be?"

She saw his throat working as his dreads tossed carelessly behind him in the wind. Colors rippled over his strong, perfect features. "I know nothing of Winter Demons, Bree. I've never felt so helpless in my life. I feel as if I've let you down."

She pulled him halfway over her and held his cheeks. He was so endearing, so precious to her. “Darling, you’re here for me in a way you never were before --”

“I should be off finding answers myself, but I’m afraid to leave you --”

“You’re right to stay with me instead of running off, even now. I want you with me. Draken, all I’ve ever wanted is for you to stay with me. Others will find answers. Relax and enjoy us. That helps me to build up my will to fight him.”

Draken’s jaw hardened. “You should do more than fix hair after we bond. You’re such a brave soul.”

Bree appreciated his attempt to make it sound as if it would all work out. “I appreciate your faith in my abilities, but I’ll want to go back to my salon, Draken. I love being a stylist and all I want is a simple life with you and our children. On Earth.”

“And so it shall be, my dear.” He wrapped her in his arms and sealed her lips with his own, kissing her completely, making her feel like the most special woman in the galaxy.

Chapter Thirteen

Bree finished waxing the last of Draken's hair and he turned to grin at her. She laughed; he looked so big and masculine, yet sweet and silly, sitting on the closed toilet seat of their large bathroom. She loved having her hands on him. Dressed only in tight jeans, she saw that his hard torso glimmered from the reflected sunshine streaming in through the windows. Even the bathroom had ceiling-to-floor windows. It didn't matter. No one else was on the planet, so they could be nude. Her pussy spasmed as she admired him and she hugged his neck. "You look great. I did a wonderful job, if I say so myself, better than the blink job you always do to yourself."

He laughed back at her, kissing her nape. "Blinking myself a presentable hairstyle doesn't even come close to the pleasure I feel when your gentle hands weave through my hair."

"Charmer!"

He grabbed her and sat her on his lap. "Always. But only for you."

Bree sighed and cuddled into him, feeling content. For two weeks, she'd fought hard against the feeling that Shadow was waiting around the corner to pounce on them. But luckily, nothing had happened. Once a coconut had fallen off a palm tree in the oasis and hit Draken on the head, giving him a nasty bump, but that was inconsequential. She didn't know if Shadow still had something bad planned or if he had given up. For two weeks, she and Draken clung to one another, enhancing their already tight bond, breathing a sigh of relief at the end of every day. Although they hadn't officially bonded, she already felt like a part of him. And the last few days she'd felt a lessening of Shadow's hold on her, as if he was letting go or maybe weakening. In the deep recesses of her soul, she felt him despairing, trying to get at them and failing. Maybe their love had truly made him weak. That was her most fervent hope.

She'd already talked to Draken about her cautious optimism. At the end of two weeks, if nothing had happened, they'd decided to have a minicelebration, and tonight was the special night. Even so, neither was sure Shadow's influence on her wouldn't overtake her again.

Still, she hadn't had a fit of possession since Tyrus had been summoned to help two weeks ago, and both of them were feeling more optimistic by the day. Adding to that, Tyrus had assured them that top scientists were trying the pill out on volunteers inside the quarantine planet. He hadn't gotten back to them with any results yet, and she was starting to think that maybe Shadow would completely leave her and she wouldn't need the pill. Draken, for his part, had expressed irritation that his father wasn't answering him when he asked for updates. But Bree was more tolerant. She knew that Tyrus was with her mother, and she liked that. She wanted them both to be happy and find the kind of forever love that she and Draken had. Plus, she trusted Tyrus to get back to them if he heard anything positive. If it was bad news, she didn't want to hear it.

"Don't get negative on me," Draken mumbled, breaking into her thoughts. His lips were moving on her nape again, nipping at her skin.

Damn, he could read her like a book, even when she didn't want him to. "I'm not!" She gave him a smile to fake him out and before he could take up the issue again, she said, "Hey, love, let's get the champagne. This was to be a festive night, remember?"

"Yes." His hand slid down her blouse, and he tweaked her nipple.

Her breath caught at the simple pleasure, but, teasing him by playing hard to get, she stood up and pulled away. "Hands off, lover. Champagne and dinner, then sex."

Draken grumbled, but she saw amusement in his eyes. Reluctantly, he stood too, towering over her, making her weak in the knees as her adoring gaze lingered on him. "Who's in charge of our sex life?" he asked.

His sexy and teasing question made her melt. He ruled the bedroom with his sexy ways and he always would; she loved it that way. "You are, my big, strong, dominant lover," she said, walking up to brush her breasts against his arm, she nibbled his ear saying, "Let's party."

He chuckled and crossed his arms, hesitating. "How do you feel?"

She knew his lighthearted words had deeper meaning. Especially when she felt him probing her emotions trying to get at the truth. "Great. I feel great. Let's go to the kitchen. I can smell my roast."

He broke into a gentle smile. "I do too, and it smells great. I love your cooking."

She felt an odd contentment, a sense of what life with her love would be like if they got through this. A domestic life with Draken appealed to her in every way. Pressing his big hands in hers, she said, "Get the champagne, dear, and meet me in the kitchen. We'll pop the cork together."

They kissed, and then walked off in different directions. Bree smiled, trying to believe in a miracle cure. She entered the large, state-of-the-art, human-style kitchen with a sense of warmth and comfort encasing her. Savory meat and vegetable aromas surrounded her, reminding her of home, which she was starting to miss. Bless Draken for admiring her humanness, embracing how she liked to style his hair and cook without magic. She'd always been a homemaker at heart, even as she'd built her own career, and she didn't really plan on changing.

Humming, she went to the stove and lifted the kettle's top. The roast looked and smelled out of this world. *Where was Draken, anyway?* It shouldn't take him more than a moment to go to the bar and bring the champagne. "Darling!" she called out over her shoulder.

He didn't answer her and she found that odd.

A little alarm went off in her head. Bree dropped the kettle's top back on the roast and turned off the stove. "Draken?" she called, as she stepped out of the kitchen, a sudden coldness coming over her, a dark feeling she hadn't had for several days. Hastening, she crossed into the long living room/dining room area and relaxed for a moment when she saw Draken standing there, champagne in his hand. What a relief, she'd been scared for nothing.

"You frightened me..." she began, and then she froze when she saw the look of disbelief on his face.

Draken was staring oddly at his feet; those feet were starting to waver and fade, disintegrating into thin air. She could only gape at him for a moment, having never seen anything like that before in her life. It could be one of Shadow's tricks, but somehow she knew it was so much worse than that. She screamed and ran up to Draken as his jean-covered shins started to flicker and fade. He was looking at them, not at her, and didn't move.

"No!" she shouted as she grabbed for him, but her hands went right through his body like he was a ghost. She couldn't believe it as she watched the rest of his lower half waver, then become transparent. "Draken, what happened to you? What's going on?" she demanded, and he looked at her then and started to speak but no sound came out. "Tyrus!" she wailed, knowing that it was up to her to summon help. "Something's wrong! Help us!"

As her plea to Tyrus echoed through the house, a long glass tube, wavering like a hologram, fell from the rainbow sky, separating them, encasing the half of Draken that she could still see. Instinctively, she laid her hands on the ice-cold tube, and he reached a hand out to her but couldn't get past the barrier. He beat at it with his fists to no avail. The sad and loving look he gave her tore at her heart.

"I love you, Bree," he mouthed.

Bree watched in disbelief as, an instant later, he was sucked up the cylinder and both he and the trap disappeared. A sob tore out of her throat as her lifemate was ripped away

from her. Bree covered her mouth and stifled a scream. "Tyrus!" she called out, again hearing her cries echo off the walls. "Mother! Can you hear me? *Both of you, we need help!*"

Suddenly, a bolt of ice coming from deep inside her made her teeth chatter. *Shadow!* She could read his panic and his pain. He was being pummeled and chained to a dank wall, and he hardly had any power left. No wonder she'd felt him fading. He'd obviously paid the price of failure that he'd feared, but it seemed to be weakening her too. She couldn't have that, she needed to save Draken.

She also felt that Draken was near Shadow, but that someone else had captured him. *Hamus!* It had to be. It was like she could hear the muffled sounds of a celebration in her mind and Draken muttering that he was so tired. Even though they hadn't bonded, she felt like they were symbiotically linked. She knew it was her only hope to save him.

If Hamus had captured a man as powerful as Draken, he had to be incredibly strong, and incredibly evil, she thought with a shudder.

Desperately, she silently called out to Tyrus, knowing that he couldn't read her since she was merely human. Frightened, unsure of what was going on, she turned around, her fists clenched. "Tyrus, you bastard!" she screamed, although it was useless. "You promised to come if we asked for you! Give me some sort of sign that you're at least trying to rescue your son! He must have called to you!"

Her words echoed against the walls, but silence shouted back at her.

"Damn you!" she said, collapsing to the floor and banging her fists on the carpeting. "Damn you, Tyrus Blade!"

Draken stirred, unable to open his heavy eyelids. Even in his sleep-laden state, he knew he wasn't in his own bed -- the one he shared with his precious Bree. He felt hard concrete underneath him and smelled dank, rancid air. *Shit.* It reminded him of the time Shadow had captured him and thrown him in the dungeon. He gritted his teeth and clenched his body, willing himself fully awake.

Applause rang in his head. *Why the hell were people clapping?* What had happened? He and Bree had been about to celebrate but that couldn't be it. Bree...oh gods, Bree. His heart raced. *What the hell had happened to her?* He heard himself grunting.

"Wake him up fully," a strange but unpleasant voice demanded. It was low, grainy, like a human who'd smoked for a hundred years. "I'm eager to show him the benefits of willingly joining our forces."

"Yes, Master." It was a female, her voice low and purring as her breath, vile with a strong sulfuric odor mixed with garlic, wafted under his nose. At once, his eyes shot open and he found himself staring into the face of a jaded slut, her dark hair thick and curly, her eyes slanted enticingly, her skin tanned and smooth. She was naked.

“What the fuck --” he managed to say, as her hand squeezed his cock. Repulsed, he tried to look around her, but he was bound. Angrily, he shut his eyes, trying to use his magic to free himself, but it wouldn’t work. Draken knew he was in deep trouble.

“Enough, Jessa,” the gritty voice snapped. “You may have him later if he wants you. Good work, waking him up. Now step back so I can talk to my new second in command.”

She turned her back and strode away, leaving Draken stunned at the view. He could only lift his head as rope held him tightly pinned to the floor from his chest down. “Where is this?” he demanded, trying to get out of the rope, remembering, like a distant memory, how enticing Bree had been when he’d had her in bondage.

This wasn’t a capture game; it was real. The strange creature striding up to him, staring down at his prone form, looked like a giant lion on two feet. He smelled foul, like Shadow only stronger. *How the hell had anybody captured him*, he thought, his mind racing wildly. He’d been at full power and always strong enough to repel his enemies. *Stay calm*, he told himself. *Keep your head -- it’s the only way to get out of this mess and back to Bree*. When the creature standing before him let out a lion’s roar, Draken hardened his jaw, refusing to show any form of intimidation. “Shadow?” he asked in a heavy voice.

The two-legged, towering lion laughed, as did the people behind him, and suddenly Draken noticed a seemingly jubilant crowd. They were mostly deformed men in lab coats and beautiful women with no clothes on at all, toasting one another, slapping high fives, grinning at one another and at him. He saw Desi and she waved to him, but then she turned loving eyes toward the lion creature. The coldness of the cave couldn’t match the fear in his gut. “Where’s Bree?” That came first. “Shadow, what the fuck did you do with Bree?”

The crowd laughed louder.

“Where is she?”

“The human is still on your planet. She’s insignificant, of no use to me. And I’m not Shadow. I’m Hamus. I really should be furious that you’d even think I might be that loser. But I’m in too good a mood now that we’ve won.” With an elaborate wave of his arm, he said, “This is Shadow.”

Draken blinked, stunned. Hearing that this was Hamus, the man his father had warned him was so evil, made his blood race. Just a heartbeat after that, he noticed Shadow, and what should have been comforting felt ominous instead. He hadn’t seen Bree’s tormenter at first, since the dungeon was so dim and his eyes were still fuzzy. Now he stared at the scrawny, barely recognizable man tied to a thick gray pipe. He was unwashed and twenty pounds lighter than he’d been the last time Draken had seen him. His eyes were red as tears slid down his face. “This is all your fault!” he said to Draken, in a squeaky, unfamiliar voice. “Somehow...you’ll pay for this Draken. I have powerful friends --”

Hamus broke in and chortled, his pals joining in. “Hardly Draken’s fault, you loser,” Hamus said between his teeth. “I gave you two weeks. You failed me. You aren’t worthy of

being a great Winter Demon. If you say another word, I'll hasten your final punishment. Is that what you want, you fucking mama's boy?"

Shadow's face contorted and he dropped his gaze as tears splashed on the concrete ground. "I want you to have mercy," he said quietly.

Hamus spat at him, then turned to look down at Draken, who was still trying to use his magic to get out of his bonds. He couldn't and Hamus spoke again. "I zapped Shadow of his super-demonic powers and will soon throw him in the Void. Unless *you'd* rather do it, Draken. Since you'll be joining us, you can have the honor while we celebrate the demise of this pathetic soul."

Draken knew he'd have to use his wits to get out of this. Hamus was ultrapowerful, like no creature he'd ever faced. He could feel it. Shadow had been an amateur next to Hamus. At least Bree was still on the planet. He silently called out to Tyrus to go to her and sensed that his dad was already on the move. A sense of relief went through him but he was careful not to let it show. "All right -- Hamus. You must be clever. How did you manage to capture me while my powers were at full strength? Even now, my magic is useless. What did you do?"

Hamus shot a look at the short, stooped, bald man beside him and they shared a laugh. The man handed something to Hamus and Hamus held it up.

Draken's heart almost stopped. *The pill!* The damn pill that Shadow had wanted Bree to take to cure her. "What kind of pill is that?" he asked, faking only mild interest.

"My scientists invented a compound that nourishes the evil inside a Winter Demon," Hamus said, handing the pill back to his partner. "It took my men a long time to perfect it, but they did so just in time -- since Shadow let me down --" He frowned and Shadow whimpered. "Shut up!" Hamus yelled at him and Shadow silenced. He turned back to Draken. "I'm so strong now, you can't possibly overtake me. A thousand of you people -- with *humanlike hearts* can't weaken me. I could stand on the sun and still stay strong."

Draken felt a shiver going through him. He knew it was true. He felt like a powerless mortal with Hamus around. *Stall*, he told himself. *Stall and hope to hell you can get out of this*, although he had no idea how he'd do it with Hamus so powerful. "Are you going to give me one of those pills?" he asked casually, not showing any of the fear he felt.

"No, they won't work on you yet. You're too good." He spat after the word and his saliva fell a foot in front of Draken. "This is ineffective until a creature who is good is irradiated with evil spores. Draken, you have the power to be my right-hand man. You can't escape from me. I'm going to convince you to participate in your changeover without our having to use force."

"You want me to join you willingly," Draken said, still stalling. "Why would I ever do that?"

Hamus scratched his whiskers. "There are perks to doing it the easy way. We can negotiate. I want you badly enough to give you benefits that most Winter Demons only get after centuries of serving me."

"I'm not negotiating with you while you have me in bonds," Draken said, pleased that he still sounded calm and steady. The truth be told, he'd never been so frightened in his life, mostly for Bree. *What was happening to Bree?*

Hamus's eyes narrowed; then he nodded. "I understand. You can't get out of here anyway, even if I free you from those bonds. And don't think to rush at me. You'll suffer greatly if you do." He lifted his arms and Draken found himself on his feet, unhurt, standing before his rival. They were almost eye to eye.

"You need to first promise me not to harm Bree," Draken said, noticing the strange yellow in Hamus's evil gaze.

Hamus scoffed at him, waving a hand. "I don't know why she means so much to you, a human. Bah! Once you're a Winter Demon, you'll wonder why you ever gave that stupid mortal female a thought."

Draken felt his muscles tightening at the slur to Bree but forced himself to remain stoic. Or he hoped he appeared that way. "All the same, I won't negotiate with you unless you promise to leave her alone."

"Done."

Draken's heart quickened, but he didn't trust Hamus's instant agreement. The demon was too evil to just let her go. "And remove Shadow's possession of her."

Hamus let out a long sigh. "I can't do that, Draken. I don't know how. We have never had any interest or done any research on saving the possessed. I'd do it if I could. Sorry." He moved forward and put a paw on Draken's bare shoulder. Only then did Draken remember that he was only clad in jeans. It jolted him into his last memory -- leaving the bathroom after Bree's hairstyling, and going for champagne to cap off their celebration. He tried not to let the memory bog him down. He had just been told that Bree's possession couldn't be undone, so he telepathically relayed the information to his father, hoping Tyrus felt his desperation.

Draken's gaze moved toward Shadow. "He's weak now," he said. "Maybe his hold on Bree will dissipate."

"No. They're as connected as ever. He just isn't powerful any longer. She feels what he feels. In the end, he will overtake her. It doesn't matter, Draken. Buck up. The human is going to die early, but we'll find you the perfect sex slave to replace her." He glanced at Desi. "Would you like Desi? I hate to give her up, a finer set of tits I've never seen, but she's all yours if you say the word."

"Please, I love you!" Desi cried out to Hamus.

"No!" Draken blinked, desperate, trying to conjure a weapon to harm the heinous creature, but as before, his magic wouldn't work. The two of them stared at one another.

"I felt your futile attempts at magic. Until I grant you the power, you won't have any magic. And I won't give you any until I'm sure it will be used for evil." He roared with

laughter, his strong garlic breath hitting Draken in the face, making him turn his head. Behind Hamus, the others laughed with him. When the laughter died down, Hamus said in a low, evil voice, "Look at me."

Every bone in Draken's body wanted to disobey, but he couldn't with Bree so vulnerable. Hamus had said she'd die an early human death -- yet Hamus wanted him. Maybe he could bargain with the garlic-laden monster. "What do you mean," he asked, staying calm, sounding nonchalant, "by Bree dying an early human death? Are you going to kill her? You promised you wouldn't."

Hamus made a face, his whiskers twitching downward with his black nose. "I wouldn't waste time killing her, but she's tied in with Shadow. Shadow will shortly be thrown in the Void in a grand ceremony --"

Shadow burst into tears, but Hamus ignored him.

"Stripped of powers, Shadow is a Dreauxoid again. You know what happens after Dreauxoids spend a few days in the dark Void -- they lose their minds and walk around forever without their sensibilities. Unfortunately, once Shadow's mind goes, so will Bree's. She will probably end up in some insane asylum on Earth until she finally does die. I can't control that." He shrugged.

Shit, Draken thought, his heart pounding. He shot a look at the weeping Shadow. There was no way he could allow that to happen. His gaze slid back toward Hamus. "What if I wanted to keep Shadow as part of a deal?" he asked the Winter Demon.

"Why?" Hamus asked, his eyes rounding.

"For a pet. I'd like to own him, as my slave. He's such a pathetic creature, after all. He can do my bidding. I'm against slavery, you know, but if I'm to become one of you, I suppose I'll have to get used to it. What better way than having a creature I have disdain for being at my beck and call? I may even grow to be a slave advocate."

"Thank you," Shadow called out in a repulsive tenor. "I'll serve you well."

"Shut up!" Hamus snarled at him. To Draken, he said, "You'll tire of him. He's boring. But, until you do, he can serve you. He'll have to do everything by hand, like a mortal, because his power can never be restored."

"I understand," Draken said, with a nod. "I don't really care." He swallowed hard, then smiled as he spoke vile words. "If he's like a mortal it will be easier to torture him, and I just may do that."

Hamus's yellow eyes glittered. "It will make you evil faster if you give in to our ways on your own."

"Well, normally I couldn't," Draken said. Hamus was no fool. He had to sound credible. "It's just that Shadow has done me much harm and I hate him. He is probably the only creature in the galaxy that I could torture with a clear conscience."

"That conscience will have to go," Hamus said, his voice heavy.

Draken shrugged. "I can't make promises, Hamus. I'm not convinced it's right to join you. Yet --" He turned toward the crowd. Everyone was staring at him. "Can you get your audience to leave? I refuse to speak further with them around us."

Hamus turned to them and growled, loud and long. The hairs of their heads blew back as they recoiled in horror. Draken looked on, his heart pounding, his body tensed. He wanted to see if Hamus weakened without his legion of supporters surrounding him. Everyone fled into a tunnel, only the bound Shadow remained and he hardly felt that Shadow could give Hamus strength.

Hamus turned to face him. "I don't need them," was all he said.

Draken nodded, believing that he thought so, but hoping it wasn't true. The creature was cocky. It could be his undoing.

"Let's get down to business," Hamus said. "You're here with me and I'm more powerful than any creature on Earth. You can't escape, so you join me willingly or go through a long, painful, torturous regime of irradiation and indoctrination. You would be isolated behind a wall of the dungeon for your treatment."

Draken thought of Bree again and his stomach tightened. He'd be willing to fight against Hamus's "treatment" if not for her. "My heart isn't in it," he said, crossing his arms. "Even if I choose to submit willingly, it will take time."

Hamus nodded. "Of course. I would give you a series of lessons, each one so vile that it will rip your heart out -- the one that isn't *in it*. The amount of effort you're willing to put into ridding yourself of your conscience has a lot to do with your success."

Draken felt bile in the back of his throat. What an evil creature. Somehow, he'd have to find a way to destroy him. "What would you have me do?"

Hamus's eyes glittered at him. "Torture creatures. Cut off their limbs. Watch them bleed. Refuse to aid their discomfort. For Dreauxoids, we like to toss them in the Void despite their screams for mercy. After a while, you become immune to it and no longer feel anything. That's where we need to get you, Draken."

"I see." Draken wished he could kill him. Too bad Hamus was immortal. If only he could do to Hamus what he was doing to Bree. His conscience certainly wouldn't bother him then. He kept his cool. "I suppose I could try." His eyes slid to the left and a weeping Shadow. "Starting with him."

Hamus waved a paw. "Yes, yes. You want to own him. He's yours. He's of no significance to me anymore."

Draken hoped Hamus could see the relief that he felt. As long as he had control of Shadow, Bree had a chance. *If only he could do more...*

"You understand that now I own you?" Hamus asked, slanting yellow eyes at him, and Draken felt a chill encase him. "You will do my bidding. If you deviate at all, well, then you get the full indoctrination -- the hard way."

Draken nodded. "I understand...Master." He almost gagged but told himself he had done sillier tactics than calling this monster "Master" to triumph. His wits and good acting skills had gotten him through so far. He had to rely on them again. Being only half-Dreauxoid, he'd constantly been up against those with more magic than he had, yet nobody had beaten him yet. His brains and ability to think on his feet were his real powers -- what made others think he was untouchable. The human in him knew that intelligence and life skills usually trumped even the most powerful magic.

But Hamus *had* the most powerful magic. He'd never been up against this kind of power before. He knew it, felt it. "Can I start my training by seeing Bree?" He hoped he looked stoic. "I'd like to tell her I've turned on her. It would be wonderful practice."

Hamus's whiskers went downward. He cursed. "I need you to get your mind off of that silly human. I'll be right back, and don't even try to move. I'll know, and you and those you love will suffer greatly."

Draken felt something inside him, giving him an idea, even as he felt his stomach twist anew. "I have to get over this *love*," he said, hoping he'd sneered appropriately.

He must have because Hamus smiled. "You have good instincts. Nonetheless, you still do love and if you ever try to escape, you, as well as those you care for, will suffer. The human, your damn father... I have big plans for Tyrus, yes, I do..." He turned and disappeared behind Shadow, through a hole in the dungeon.

"Troy," Draken said telepathically to the double he'd created who only came to life when he wanted him to. "If you're able to hear me and obey me, please get the hell out of me and go to Bree. Apprise her of the situation." It was a desperate move. Troy was no more than a figment of his imagination and had no real powers other than to do the things that Draken asked of him. Troy couldn't help anyone out because he had no powers. And Draken wasn't sure if he even had the ability to tap into Troy anymore. Hamus had made it impossible for him to go on the attack. He held his breath.

"How should I get there, buddy?" Troy asked from inside his body.

Draken's heart sped up. "Can you still teleport? I have no idea what that bastard did to me."

"He neutralized your ability to escape and fight, but he still left you with your more harmless powers. He doesn't know about your twin who you invented as a distraction and as a sex pal. I can go to Bree, but I can't help her."

"Fine," Draken said. "Do whatever you can. Get there any way possible. And tell her I love her and always will."

As he felt Troy leaving him, he saw Shadow staring at him. "Who are you talking to?" he asked, with a scowl. "I'm telling Hamus you're talking to somebody."

Shit, he'd spoken out loud. Now what? "No, you won't," he said, his eyes on Shadow. "Hamus won't believe you. He'd love to throw you in the Void and so would I. Is that what you want?"

"N-n-no!" Tears started falling again, disgusting Draken.

"If you keep your mouth shut and stay on my side," Draken told him, in little more than a whisper, "I may find use for you after this. But if you turn on me, Hamus and I will kill you. You're not exactly on his Christmas list right now."

"Christmas?"

"A human holiday. A figure of speech. Are you with me or against me? I own you now, remember?"

Shadow's tears fell faster. "Y-y-yes. I'm so sorry I ever took the bad way."

Draken wanted to kick him in the face. After all the hell he'd caused, now he was sorry. No way. Shadow was sorry for himself, not anyone else. "Shut up," he said, between his teeth, "and I may let you go on, although you'll never be unleashed again. Do we have a deal?"

Shadow nodded quickly just as Hamus came out of the hole with Desi on his arm. She was naked and, as she ran up to him, her huge breasts bounced.

Shit, he thought, feeling nothing -- not a stir -- as she put her hands on his shoulders and looked up at him.

"My master knows we have a past," she said, batting her eyes flirtatiously, her garlic breath repelling him so that he turned his head. "It's my duty to be your sex slave, so you forget the silly human." Her hand slid to his soft cock and she squeezed it. "We had some hot times together, handsome. I don't fuck just anyone that Hamus commands of me."

Yes, you do, Draken thought to himself. *You're his, I can smell it, and you'll do anything he says*. Out loud, he said, "I appreciate this, Tootsie --"

"Desi! My Master calls me Desi, so that's who I am."

"Desi." He ran his hands through her icy blond hair and tried not to look repelled.

"Get naked, lover," she said, tossing her head.

Draken didn't want to betray Bree, even now. He looked over at Hamus.

"It's your first test," Hamus said in a rough voice. "It's most pressing to get you emotionally distanced from the human. Do what she says!"

Every bone in his body rebelled, but he knew he had to at least pretend he would fuck her. At the very worst, he may have to do it; Bree would understand when, or if, he got back to her. He stared into Desi's vacant eyes. They were as colorless as Shadow's used to be -- blank, robotic, empty. "You undress me," he said in a husky voice.

"I know you won't mind if I look on," Hamus said.

"No," Draken said, as the creature unzipped his jeans. "I welcome an audience."

Tyrus and Doreen held each other under a Dreauxoid moon, linked forever as lifemates. Tyrus pressed his forehead against hers. "The Dreauxoid gods really approved of this bonding, didn't they?"

She chuckled, her warm breath caressing his face. "Do they always make jokes during a bonding? *'We've been waiting for you to find her, Tyrus. You're lucky we have a lot of patience!'*"

Tyrus grinned. "Each bonding is unique, from what I'm told. Sometimes they don't say anything, but at other times, they are quite witty, especially when they're extremely happy about a bonding. Dreauxoids bond for lust and money, but a Dreauxoid and a human bond for love. The gods, although Dreauxoid to the core, also have a certain wisdom that creatures on the planet lack. They have insight." He kissed her, then pulled back. "Can you feel me inside you? I feel your human heart with all my being, my beautiful lifemate."

"Oh, yes!" she said, giggling. "I can't wait to try out my powers." She grew serious. "We can't waste any time, Ty. We have to help the kids."

Tyrus jolted back to reality. "I need to check my telepathic messages."

"You turned off your powers?"

"Just for the bonding. I didn't have a choice. I'll unblock them now." He blinked and was shocked at the desperate voice of his son.

"What?" Doreen asked, looking startled. "I can feel you, Tyrus. You're alarmed."

"We have to go to my planet," he said, taking her hand. "We have to go at once. Draken has been taken. Come." Before he blinked them to Bree, he messaged Zell to meet them at the same place, bringing any chemicals that may help the situation. Then they were gone. "We're far away," Tyrus said, holding Doreen as they spun through space. "It will take about five Earth minutes."

"Go as fast as you can," Doreen said, her voice shaky. "I feel Bree calling for me. There's no time to waste."

"Yes. I know. But we're at top speed. This is as fast as we can go. Hold on to me, love. And send the children our incredible love. That helps. Love always helps."

Bree tried to calm down and gather her wits. She had to do something. Obviously, for whatever reason, Tyrus and Doreen weren't coming. Maybe Draken couldn't message them. Maybe he was hurt...badly hurt...or in the Void. No, she couldn't think that way. If only she had telepathic abilities...

A puff of smoke appeared before her and Draken stepped out of it, an urgent look on his face.

“Draken!” She ran to him, but realized in a heartbeat that she was looking at Troy. They were identical, but Troy wore his earring in the left ear. He held her shoulders, looking into her eyes hard.

“It’s Troy,” he said.

Bree’s heart fell to her feet when she saw the fear in his eyes, but at the same time, she had hope. Draken had to be alive to send his mirror image. “Where’s Draken?”

“In a very evil place, but he’s holding his own. He’s messaged his father over and over again.”

“Draken was so right about his father!” She felt angry tears spring to her eyes. “He doesn’t care.”

“I do care!” A large puff of smoke appeared next to Troy, and Tyrus and Doreen stepped out of it. Bree ran to her mother and Doreen squeezed her tight.

“Draken?” Tyrus said, gasping when he caught sight of Troy. “Oh, I was so worried --”

“It’s not Draken,” Bree said from the shelter of her mother’s arms.

“What do you mean it’s not my son,” Tyrus said staring at Troy. “Is this another one of Shadow’s tricks?”

“No,” Bree said, separating from her mom and walking over to Tyrus. “This is Troy, Draken’s mirror image. He created him for, um...” She felt her face heating as Tyrus got a knowing look on his face. Of course, he was a Dreauxoid and a sexual being.

“Didn’t know the boy had it in him,” Tyrus said, his lips twitching. “But it’s highly irregular, not to mention against the law on Dreaux.”

“Well, we’re not on Dreaux,” Bree snapped back.

“People,” Troy said, interrupting them, “let’s not get bogged down in this argument. Draken sent me to warn you that Hamus is up to no good and to protect you.”

“Where is he?” Bree demanded and frowned when Troy clammed up.

“Bree, darling,” he said, cupping her cheek, “he wants you safe; we both do.”

“What the hell’s going on here?” Tyrus demanded.

“It’s complicated,” Bree said, gazing pleadingly at Troy’s stubborn face, knowing it mirrored Draken’s. Even from afar, her sexy hero was trying to manage her, but she’d have her way on this.

“Let them talk it out,” Doreen said, placing a hand on Tyrus’s arm to soothe him.

He looked at her and let out a frustrated sigh. “Kids.”

“I mean it, Troy,” Bree said. “I want to know where Draken is and I want to know now.”

He let out an exasperated grumble, murmuring, “I tried, buddy.” Then he looked at Bree. “You’d better sit down, honey. Hamus has him and it doesn’t look good. He’s trying to humor the demon by stringing him along until he can find a way to kill him.”

“Why doesn’t he use his powers to transport?” Tyrus demanded.

“Hamus took away most of his powers. Fortunately for us, he discounted his power of illusion and Draken was able to create a diversion and split me off.”

Tyrus shared a fighter’s smile with his son’s mirror image. “Let me know his location and I’ll send in troops...”

“It’s not that easy. Shadow is about to be thrown into the Void. And when he goes...” He looked at Bree.

“I go with him,” Bree said with a shudder.

“Mentally, yes. As he loses his faculties, so will you. That’s why Draken is trying to buy some time. If you go in like gangbusters, Bree’s finished. He won’t let that happen.”

“What do you mean *won’t*?” Tyrus asked.

“He’ll pretend to turn evil and keep Shadow as a pet rather than lose Bree.”

“He can’t do that,” Bree wailed.

“It’s already begun. Hamus is showing him the perks of being a Winter Demon.”

“How?” she asked, noting Troy’s sudden discomfort.

“Honey, you don’t want to know.”

“Women,” she said, her eyes narrowing. Draken had cheated on her in the past, but this was different. She couldn’t hold it against him, even though it rankled.

“Of a sort,” Troy said.

When he finished, Bree said, “Let Hamus throw every evil slut in the galaxy at him; I know they won’t mean a thing to him.”

Troy smiled. “You’re right. Thanks for having faith in him.”

“I can’t lose him,” she said firmly. “I have to do something. We all need to get him back safely.”

Doreen touched her arm. “We’re here to help, darling. I’m so sorry. Tyrus and I didn’t receive your telepathic message until after our bonding.”

“My telepathic message?” Bree asked, amazed.

“We heard you cussing me out loud and clear,” Tyrus said with a smile. “You must have gotten part of Draken even though you haven’t officially bonded.”

Bree also felt that she had a part of Draken and took heart in Tyrus’s words.

Just then, a third puff of smoke appeared and a short, bespeckled man in a lab coat stepped out, a bottle of pills in his hand. “Good news!” he said breathlessly to everyone in the room.

Tyrus scowled. “I don’t think the capture of my son by Hamus is good news!”

"No, of course not." Zell stepped back, then spoke in earnest as everyone stared at him. He held up the pills. "I can't help you with that, but I think we can undo Bree's possession. Unfortunately, it will take a few months."

Bree looked at the bottle of pills in his hand. Maybe they could help Draken. "I don't have a few months!"

Zell glanced at Bree regretfully.

"We need to proceed cautiously. We have tried these pills on ten subjects." He held up his bottle.

"Of the ten, seven are getting better. Slowly, they are losing their possession, but they have to take these pills every single day and they still aren't completely cured. We think it will happen, but it hasn't yet."

Bree felt her breathing speed up. She didn't have a year and there was something he wasn't telling her. "What else?" she asked.

Zell shook the bottle. "Two turned completely evil and had to be eradicated."

Bree felt a chill, but it passed quickly. "And the other?"

Zell appeared even more nervous. A tic appeared in his jaw. "We're not sure what happened to her."

"What do you mean?" Tyrus asked, in a menacing voice.

"Just that. She grabbed the bottle, took all the pills, started morphing into a thousand different forms right before our eyes, and then she disappeared before us and hasn't been heard from again. We don't know what happened."

Bree took in a shaky breath, watching the bottle of pills in his hand. *I have to take the chance and ingest all of them. I don't care if I die. The way I am now, possessed and human, I can't do squat for my loved one.*

"So she became a shape-shifter again, but more so?" Bree asked, carefully.

Zell shrugged. "We assume. However, whether she became good or evil or a combination of both, we don't know. It's odd that she didn't come back to tell us, which is worrisome."

"Yes," Doreen said, glancing at Tyrus.

"I don't have a year," Bree said, taking a step forward. "Zell, I want to take them all, too, and see what happens."

"No!" Doreen cried out. "No, baby! That's dangerous. Go on the regimen the others were on."

Damn! Doreen would try to stop her and she had powers now. Her only hope was to trick everybody and strike unexpectedly. Turning to Tyrus, she said, as a distraction, "Can you quietly get to Draken so that you don't tip off Hamus?"

"Maybe, I'll speak with an elite squad of commandos and go in stealth mode."

"Your biggest problem is going to be the force field surrounding the planet Hamus's lair is on. I barely made it out," Troy said.

"I have an invisibility potion," Zell said, turning to the men.

Bree took advantage of the situation, rushed up to Zell, snatched the bottle of pills out of his hand, and swallowed them all before anybody could react. It was her only hope to save Draken and she was taking it. She knew he'd risk everything for her and she felt the same way about him. Life wasn't worth a damn without Draken in it.

"Good grief!" Tyrus said, while Zell let out an angry cry beside him. "Doreen, you must have felt she was going to do that. Why did you let her?"

"Because it's something she has to do," Doreen said, her voice a little shaky as she held Bree. "Now we have to wait and see what's going to happen. Bree, I want you to know I love you with all my heart. You've always been the main focus of my life."

Bree felt a sudden eruption inside her, like a rifle going off in her brain. *The pills didn't take long to act*, she thought, and she surrendered herself to them, not sure if these were her last moments alive. "I love you too, Mother," she heard herself saying, and her words sounded faraway. "No matter what happens, concentrate on Tyrus now. Maybe you can have another child --"

"Don't be silly," Doreen said, holding her tighter.

The eruption spread through her, to her face, her shoulders, her arms, her fingers, down to her abdomen, her thighs, her knees, her shins, even her feet... *What the hell was happening?* The vertigo got worse.

"What the hell?" Doreen asked.

Bree felt herself popping within, as if bubbles were stretching her from the inside out. Each time she felt a bubble pop, she grew dizzier...but also felt strangely stronger.

"Good heavens!" Zell said, in awe and fascination. "She's turning bionic! Look at those muscles! I've never seen anything like it in all my research!"

Those were the last words Bree heard before passing out.

Chapter Fourteen

Bree awakened with a start, flying through a dark sky with multicolored sparkling stars. Her heart sped up as she tried to gain her wits while tumbling through the air, head over heels. *What had happened? What the hell was going on?*

She realized in awe that she was traveling and she felt like her skin was popping as she flew through outer space. The pills she'd taken had caused such strangeness inside her. As she zoomed through the atmosphere, her gaze fell to her arm and she gaped at it even as she tossed through the air. Muscles, like she'd only seen in movies, bulged from her. Quickly, she checked her legs as she again toppled head over heels. Sure enough, her thighs and calves were also huge with powerful-looking muscles. *Is this what the pills had done to her?* That had to be it.

"Help!" she called out, as if anyone could hear her. She had no idea where she was going; suddenly, she heard a familiar, evil, though weakened, voice in her head.

"Concentrate on the Winter Demon East Moon."

Bree caught her breath as she cartwheeled through the atmosphere. "Shadow?"

"Yes, Shadow! Draken saved my nuts and I'm paying him back." It was sent to her telepathically and she wondered how she could hear him but didn't ponder too long.

"Where's Draken?" she asked as she toppled aimlessly.

"I told you, stupid! Winter Demon East Moon. If you think of it, and of him, you'll find your way to him. There's barely any of me inside you anymore, and we may disconnect at any time. Somehow, I feel you've gained enormous powers, while mine have...well, never mind. If so, maybe you can help him. You may be the only one who can help him. Think Winter Demon East Moon, damn you, stupid human!"

Somehow she knew Shadow was telling her the truth. She could feel Draken, strongly now, more than ever before from a distance. But she had no time to waste because she felt

his danger and despair and fear for her. Shutting her eyes, she thought *Winter Demon East Moon* and suddenly her body veered off in the opposite direction, rushing her at a faster speed than any magic carpet ride. As she traveled, she smelled Draken's scent -- leather and musk -- and her heart cried out to him.

"I'm coming, darling," she said, but she knew he could have heard her even if she hadn't spoken out loud. She had powers now, and wasn't sure how to use them, but the pills had made her strong, allowed her to transport, and dwarfed Shadow's effect over her. So far it was all good. She would get Draken back and gods help anyone who tried to stop her.

Bree's eyes widened as she saw a desolate brown moon, and she felt a strong wind sucking her in from its surface. Before she could ready herself, she fell soundly onto a dungeon floor and looked up, seeing Draken standing there, shock on his face.

"Bree! My God, you're -- bionic!"

Before she could hug him with her newly muscled frame, a hand grabbed her shoulder and spun her around with too much force for her to resist. "Not so fast," he said in a gravelly voice. "You try to touch my second in command again and I'll destroy him, just like I destroyed Shadow." He glanced off to one side and she looked.

"Good heavens!" Shadow was small and weak, tears rolling down his red cheeks. At the idea that Draken could be reduced to that, she felt a power surge within her and stepped protectively in front of the startled man that she loved.

"Bree, no!" Draken called out. "This isn't your fight. I know you somehow acquired temporary strength, but I want you to go away. I can do this myself. I" -- he cleared his throat -- "I've decided to enter into training to be Hamus's second in command, as he wishes. And I have no use for you anymore. Desi will service my needs. She went off to change into something sexy, but she'll be back soon. I want her now, not you."

Bree could somehow feel him to his core. He was lying for Hamus, afraid that she'd get hurt, and she'd have to play along. Turning to him she said, "I won't allow you to dump me this way for that harlot!"

"I'm going to work on dissolving my emotions, Bree. You'd better go home and find someone else. I'm committed to Hamus now."

Bree glanced over at a smug-looking Hamus. With all the power surging through her veins, and the muscles that were still popping out of her, she felt confident that she could take him. Without thinking, she rushed him but bounced back at a powerful force field. Stunned, she stared at him.

He laughed heartily. "You also took the pills, I assume," he said.

Bree glanced at Draken, who looked shocked, then back at Hamus.

Hamus grinned, his lion's teeth shining in the dim room. "My ingestion of pills was carefully monitored by a top Winter Demon scientist. My power will last forever. Did anyone oversee you or did you just impetuously take an overdose, hoping to trump me?"

Bree's heart banged against her chest. She hadn't known what would happen to her by taking the pills. She'd thought she might purge Shadow from her. She'd thought she might die. It had never occurred to her that the pills would make her bionic. She could feel Hamus through and through, and he was afraid of her. An evil thrill shot through her, maybe the tail end of her possession, because, more than ever before, her goodness filled every recess of her being.

"You're glowing," Hamus said, puzzled, and he stepped back a little.

Bree looked at her hand and indeed it glowed like sunshine.

Hamus regained his composure and set his eyes past her. "I know you love Draken." He spat to one side. "Even though you're powerful, I can destroy him. I stole his Dreaxoid magic and he's as human as you used to be...and will be again." He let out an evil laugh and Bree's powers almost burst through the walls of her skin.

"Let him do what he will to me," Draken said behind her in an even voice. "Bree, he's right. Your power will wear off and he'll have it in for you. Go away and let me begin to train with my master."

He meant it. He'd destroy himself for her. Although he'd said so many times, she'd never seen him actually put himself in danger for her. It went straight to her overly sensitive human heart, which contracted wildly.

"You can't win," Hamus said, scowling at her. "I'm as powerful as you are. For now, we're at a checkmate. I can't do anything to you, but you can't do anything to me either. And once my troops are called back" -- he bellowed with laughter -- "all our evil will trump your goodness. Evil is a lot stronger than good --"

"Can't hold your own, Hamus?" Draken asked, baiting him, and Bree knew he was stalling for time, playing to the foolish lion's vanity. "I don't want to belong to a group of creatures that don't have a leader who can hold his own without reinforcements. I hope you understand my concern. You're afraid of her, aren't you?"

Bree held her breath when she realized that Draken was right. Hamus was a little bit afraid of her. It made her feel like smiling, but she wasn't celebrating yet. Hamus was still a formidable opponent and pure evil.

"Her powers will diminish quickly," Hamus said, crossing his arms. "I'm not afraid of her, and I can wait without my minions surrounding me. I understand your point, Draken, and I don't want to discourage you from joining forces with me. But you do understand that once she starts to lose her artificial power, I will have to kill her."

"What if the power lasts?" Bree asked, also stalling for time, unsure of what would happen to her. "You can't say for sure that I'll lose my power just because my overdose wasn't monitored. For all you know, I'll grow stronger every day until I can squash you like the bug you are!"

Hamus stared at her with squinting yellow eyes. "That," he said, "will never ever happen, you useless human. I give you an hour before your powers will start faltering. I'm an immortal; I started out way ahead of you. It's a fluke that you have powers now, and I'll never believe a human's powers can last, no matter how many pills you took to try to be one of us. Humans are the weakest link. Humans die!"

"I don't think she's human anymore," Draken said, casually.

Hamus scoffed. "Of course she is. That's all she'll ever be."

Draken stepped up to her, his face impassive. "Bree, turn to me. I want to see if you're still a useless human. Yes, I know I once had feelings for you, but I'm working on eradicating them. I don't want you to hurt my master." He shot a look at Hamus who smiled with smug self-satisfaction. "May I check her out, Master?"

"Be my guest. See if her flesh still feels human. I don't want to touch her. The thought of possibly touching human flesh turns my stomach. I'm far too good to lay my paw on a human."

"I understand." Draken looked at her and she stared into his penetrating, deeply soulful eyes, reading the feelings he had for her. He picked up her arm and ran his fingers over her muscles. "Feels like plastic," he mused, but they locked in a gaze.

"That could be a coating covering her human flesh --"

Suddenly, the room blared with incredibly bright sunlight and Hamus started to scream. Draken quickly grabbed Bree and kissed her, holding her tightly, as Tyrus, Doreen, Zell, Troy, Raven, and Natalia emerged from the blinding rays. While Draken kissed her, transferring all his love to her -- love that she could feel and taste and even see as she shut her eyes -- the others surrounded them, holding hands, throwing the two of them their unwavering love and goodness. Hamus started to scream.

"Keep kissing her," Tyrus whispered. "Concentrate on how much you love her, boy. Bree, think about how much you love him. I'm watching him and he's weakening in the face of all this love and goodness!"

"And let your power surge through you, Bree," Zell cried out. "Your goodness was intensified one-hundredfold by the pills. You can transfer it to us with your thoughts."

Bree drank up Draken, her love, her life, as she transferred the glowing goodness inside her to those surrounding her in their circle of love. Others started to arrive, joining their circle.

"Friends from the peace movement," Tyrus explained.

His words rang through Bree's head, but all she could focus on was Draken. Hamus wailed in the background, and Doreen joyfully cried out, "He's shrinking!"

But Bree could only focus on how much she loved Draken, ignoring the squeaking noises coming from Hamus's side of the room.

"Wow!" Zell said, in shock. "Look at that, guys! All the Winter Demons are coming out of the woodwork. They've turned into mice!"

"You were wrong, Hamus," Tyrus said in a loud voice. "Love and goodness trumps evil every time, and now you've learned a bitter lesson. The Winter Demon reign of terror is over. We did it, comrades! *We did it!*"

Draken finally pulled his tongue out of her mouth and backed up, his two big hands on her cheeks, his gaze filled with gentle, adoring love. "Bree did it. I can't wait for you to tell me how you got the pills that made you bionic, darling." He flashed his white dimpled smile.

Bree and Draken never broke their gaze, as the talking went on around them, barely touching them.

Draken stroked her hair, going sober. "You took a terrible risk."

"I had no choice. For you, I'd do anything."

He kissed her forehead, lips lingering on her flesh. "You proved that. And I hope you know I'd do anything for you."

She felt her eyes mist as she smiled up at him. "You proved that when you tried to get me to leave rather than save you from Hamus."

"Do you have any doubt that we are lifemates now? Made to be together forever?"

She shook her head. "None." Suddenly, she glanced at her muscled arms. "Wow, I look horrible. How can you stand kissing a muscle girl?"

Draken laughed. "I told you I'd love you no matter how you look. And I mean it."

"What if my body stays this way forever?"

He kissed her nose. "I still want you. Forever."

"It won't," Zell put in. "Slowly she will morph back to normal and be human again --"

"No." Draken pulled her into him. "She will never be human again. Bree and I are going to bond."

Bree's heart fluttered; she hadn't thought this would ever happen.

Draken stared down at her, holding her swollen hands. "Bree Delaney, will you be my lifemate and bond with me before the Dreauxoid gods?"

She felt a tear rolling down her cheek. She nodded, just a little. It was all that was needed.

"You two can go," Tyrus said in a rough voice.

Bree and Draken looked over at the tall, dark Dreauxoid, his eyes shining a little.

"There's a mess to clean up here," Draken said.

"Yes, we want to help," Bree said, catching her mother's smile in the corner of her eye.

“Goodness, no!” Tyrus said, bellowing his answer. “What’s there to do that the lot of us can’t manage without you two? We have a bunch of demon mice to catch. That shouldn’t be too hard once we conjure up traps. Hamus was their leader. He’s powerless now, so it’s safe to say that Winter Demons have been wiped from the galaxy, thanks to you and Bree.”

“Bree,” Draken said, the word a caress as he turned to her. “I did nothing.”

“You helped keep him from calling for reinforcements. You did a lot,” Bree said, smiling up at him, feeling his love. It made her shiver with happiness.

“Go to Dreaux and bond, dear,” Doreen said. “It’s such an...otherworldly experience, to say the least. The rest of us can handle these creatures now. Ty is right.”

“What about Shadow?” Tyrus asked, reaching out to put a hand on his son’s shoulder.

Draken glanced at Bree. “Shall we spare him?”

“He helped me,” Bree said to him. “He guided me here.”

Draken squeezed her hand, then let her go and walked up to the sniveling former Winter Demon. “I’m sparing you,” he said in a gruff voice.

“Thank you, I...I would like to see my parents again and repent --”

“Save it.” Draken’s chin tightened. “You will have no powers, not even Dreauxoid powers, but I’ll let you live on Dreaux, serving half humans as a paid servant to them. If all works out, I may locate your parents again, but you’re stripped of your powers forever.”

“Yes, sir.” Shadow’s gaze hit the ground.

Draken blinked and Shadow’s bonds fell off of him. He tried to stand but was weak and slid to the ground. “Raven!” he called to his friend. “Can you please transport this loser to the detention hall where your stepbrother Tre resides?”

“My pleasure,” Raven said, stepping up to them with Natalia at his side, holding her hand. “Shadow, these are going to be a hard few centuries for you,” he said. “You’re fortunate that Draken is a caring man. I would have tossed you in the Void. I’m still tempted.”

Shadow whimpered.

Draken turned and strode through the crowd back to Bree and as soon as they joined hands something magical seemed to happen. Bree felt the surge of goodness and light in her body, and Draken’s strong feelings for her seemed to flow from his warm hands.

“I think Draken and I are ready to go to Dreaux,” she said, swelled to the hilt with all sorts of wonderful feelings. “It’s long overdue and I’m ready to bond with Draken.”

“Teleporting or magic carpet?” Draken asked, his eyes lighting up.

“Oh, magic carpet!” Bree laughed, thrilled from her scalp to her toes. “It isn’t the same for me to teleport.”

“Here’s a surprise,” Tyrus said, and he snapped his fingers.

To Bree’s delight, Draken’s red magic carpet floated in the air, fringe wiggling up and down.

“You got it from the Safe House,” Draken said, sounding pleased. “Thank you, Father. When did you go there?”

Tyrus pulled Doreen into his side. “Right before we bonded. And we borrowed it for our own ride to Dreaux.” Tyrus winked at his son and Bree felt a little bit choked up as the two men stared at one another. “I knew you’d need it soon,” Tyrus said to Draken. Then he cleared his thought and roughly shouted, “Go already! You going to keep the lovely lady waiting forever?”

Draken blinked them onto the magic carpet, Bree in front of him as his strong arms wrapped around her. As the magic carpet took off, everyone called out their well wishes, but Bree focused on Tyrus’s words.

“I love you,” he called and Draken tightened his hold on her. She shut her eyes, knowing how much those words meant to the man who’d eternally make her dreams come true...

 THE END 

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