



Yule Tydisian

by Kate Hill

What happens when you combine great sex, an unreasonable mother-in-law, and a crew of alien crossbreeds who want to learn about the holiday season on Earth? Newlyweds Moonlight and Xenos are about to find out.

Note: Yule Tydisian is an adventure in the lives of Moonlight and Xenos from [Moonlight on Water](#).

Glossary

depth dragon: One of the largest predators on Tydepth.

Ilt Mari Po-et: The first sea serpent in one of the Tydisian creation myths.

seil fish: A particularly strong-tasting fish native of Jungphyre, the Searilla home planet.

wassda: Tydisian word for beloved (feminine)

wassdat: Tydisian word for beloved (masculine)

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Chapter One

Moonlight Santos Gama wasn't quite sure how to break the news to her husband, but she needed to do it quickly.

Her stomach tightened as she thought over possible ways to tell him. On her way down the corridor to the ship's gym she passed several crewmembers and exchanged greetings with them, wondering if she looked as nervous as she felt.

Inside the gym, she walked past a pilot and two members of security and headed straight to the oversized tank where her husband was swimming laps underwater.

Pausing near the tank, she stared at him. Her heartbeat fluttered, this time from arousal. Xenos was the most savagely gorgeous man she'd ever seen. She loved everything about her sexy Tydisian crossbreed from the top of his smooth, purplish-blue head to the tips of his webbed toes. His lean, sinewy body cut through the water with the speed and grace of his aquatic ancestors. His Tydisian qualities turned her on, but it was his very human soul that she loved, even if he didn't like to admit it existed.

She could have watched him swim all day, but there was no use putting off the inevitable. Sighing, she climbed partway up the ladder attached to the side of the tank, then tapped on the thick glass. The sound would probably be inaudible to a pure-blooded human or Laetez, but Xenos had ultra-sensitive hearing.

He paused and spun toward her. Moonlight signaled for him to surface then continued climbing the ladder. When she reached the top, Xenos awaited her. One of his slender hands clung to the edge of the tank, the ultra-thin webbing between his fingers looked almost delicate, but it helped propel him through the roughest waters in the galaxy. His smooth skin glistened and beads of moisture clung to his reddish-brown eyelashes, the only hair on his entire body. He blinked, the droplets disappearing from his lashes.

Moonlight smiled, feeling slightly intoxicated as she always did when staring into his eyes. At the moment his irises were concealed by protective membranes that lowered whenever he submerged in water. When the membranes retracted, the eyes beneath were beautiful blue. They weren't the

round, shark-like eyes of his Tydisian cousins, but human-Laetez eyes. Those eyes always seemed to reach inside her. It had been that way since the moment they met. She'd feared him then, but no longer. At least she didn't fear for her own life because she knew how much he loved her. His enemies on the other hand. . .

She didn't want to think about *that*, for his wrath was as powerful as his love. But there were no battles at the moment and they were between assignments, so it was time to enjoy life.

Or at least it had been. She wasn't sure how pleasant the next several days were going to be.

"You wanted something, *Wassda*?" he asked, a sexy glimmer in his eyes. That endearment always touched her because she knew she was the only woman he had ever called *Wassda*, the Tydisian word for beloved. Excellent. He was in a good mood, which was rather unusual. Regardless of how much she loved him, she was well aware that Xenos was the sort of man who looked for reasons *not* to smile.

"Remember how I told you that this time of year on Earth is the holiday season for many cultures?"

"Yes. I've already looked up Yule on the computer."

She smiled, warmth flooding her. "You did?"

He nodded, his expression stern as usual. "You told me that is what you celebrate during this time."

"That's true, but there are other winter holidays on Earth and some of the crewmembers with human blood would like to celebrate as a way of exploring their human side," she said. Except for Moonlight, every member of the crew was a product of ACT-alien conversion testing--which meant all were crossbred with various alien species. Some had family members aboard who were purebloods, but Moonlight was the only full human.

"That's their business," Xenos said.

"They want to have a party for anyone on the ship who'd like to join in and I told them I'd talk to you about it."

He curled his lip. "Who am I? King Tonga? This ship is home to everyone aboard. You know that and so do they."

Actually she did know that, but she was simply using the party as another way of procrastinating the *real* news.

"Good. Then we'll start planning," she said, then fell silent.

He stared at her for a moment and narrowed his eyes. "What is it you're not telling me?"

"Xenos." She forced a smile and placed a hand to his cheek, gazing deeply into his eyes. "*Wassdat*."

He cast her a suspicious look. "What crisis is about to befall us?"

"Crisis?" she asked innocently.

"And how much is it going to cost?"

She dropped her hand and raised her eyes to the heavens. "Money. Is that all you care about? You're starting to sound like your friend Steel."

Steel, one of the most feared bounty hunters in the known universe, had grown up with Xenos in a dreadful private lab called Aquavalley. Steel wasn't exactly cheap, but he sure knew how to get the most for his currency.

"Out with it, Moonlight."

"My mother and sister would like to come aboard for the holiday celebration," she said. "I actually thought it would deter them since they think religion is archaic and foolish. I know they aren't easy to get along with, but they are my family and I think we can have them aboard for a few days."

"That's fine."

"Listen, Xenos, I realize they are clueless about--" She paused and her eyes widened. "You said fine?"

"Yes."

"You're not upset?"

"Of course not. They're your family and this is your home."

Sometimes Moonlight still couldn't believe that she and Xenos were married and living aboard this magnificent ship called *Nameless*--a ship that he had helped design. Yet it was a fitting residence for a woman who had spent her life dreaming of intergalactic adventures. Of course before she met Xenos she had no idea exactly how adventurous her life would be. They'd had their share of pain and trouble, but also good times she treasured more than anything.

"When is this celebration going to take place?"

"The day after tomorrow. We need some time to shop, cook and arrange for decorations."

"And when can we expect your mother and sister?"

Moonlight repressed a smile. No one else would be able to tell that he was at all disturbed about his in-laws coming aboard, but she knew he was hoping for the briefest possible visit.

"Tomorrow. I'm meeting them on the planet. Mother wants me to have lunch with her and the aunts. If you didn't have the meeting with the director from Intergalactic Affairs you could come with me."

"I'd almost rather be going with you. That little purebred wimp the humans have put in charge of Intergalactic Affairs annoys the hell out of me."

"Remember your wife is a purebred."

"I don't hold that against you," he teased.

"You!" She placed her hands on the top of his smooth head and pushed him underwater.

He popped back up, cupped the back of her head and covered her mouth with a kiss deep enough to curl her toes. Xenos always knew just how to kiss and touch her. Even the very first time they'd made love, way back when she'd hated him, he'd aroused her to the boiling point.

When he released her, they held each other's gaze for a moment before he ducked below the surface to continue his workout.

Moonlight sighed, wishing they could slip away to their quarters for an hour or so, but they had too much to do. She was due to meet with some of her shipmates to plan the holiday party.

She left the gym and made her way to the lounge on the same deck. Halfway there, she saw a tall crossbreed with an ape-like face and silvery skin. He wore snug black pants, scuffed boots and a gray tank top that exposed powerfully-muscled arms with a tattoo on one shoulder and another on his forearm.

"Hey, Moonlight," he said. "Where's Mr. Blue?"

"Steel, good to see you again. Xenos is in the tank. How's the bounty hunting business?"

"Never slow, that's for sure."

"Are you going to be in the area for a while?"

He narrowed his jewel-like gray eyes. "Why?"

"We're having a holiday party the day after tomorrow."

"I'm not a party animal."

"Come on, Steel. It'll be fun," she pressed. Sometimes the bounty hunter could be as serious as Xenos. He liked to think of himself as a proverbial island, living and working alone. Yet during the rebellion, he had saved their asses many times by running supplies when *Nameless* was in hiding. Something told her that deep inside, Steel wanted to connect with people but, like Xenos and many other ACT products, he'd been scarred by a horrible past. "They'll be food."

"Pizza?"

She grinned. Steel was such a pizza addict that Moonlight had dubbed him an honorary human.

"It's not exactly traditional holiday food but, yeah, we can have pizza."

"All right. I'm there." He winked and continued toward the gym.

Moonlight stepped into the lounge where her celebration committee had already assembled. It included the ship's medic, Trissa, one of their best pilots, Dario, and Birch who shared the translator responsibilities with Moonlight.

"We don't have much time to plan," Moonlight said. "So I thought if everyone's duties allow, we can split up the supply list and shop when we have a chance. Birch, you'll be in charge of food."

"What should I get?" he asked.

"Since we want to learn about Earth holidays, why don't we figure out what to get on our own?" Trissa suggested. "Can I be in charge of music?"

"Oh sure. That's easy." Dario raised his eyes to the heavens. "You don't even have to leave the ship to order music."

"I was going to put you in charge of drinks," Moonlight said. "But if you don't want to leave the ship. . ."

"Drinks? I can handle that." Dario grinned.

"Good. I'll get the decorations," Moonlight told them. Tomorrow when she met with her mother and sister, they could do some shopping for lights, a tree, and candles. She smiled. This was going to be easier than she thought.

Chapter Two

"Her mother and her sister," Xenos said to Steel as they stood in the gym locker room on *Nameless*.

He'd been glad when Steel arrived about an hour ago for a visit between bounties. Steel was Xenos' oldest friend. They had been raised together in the dreaded lab called Aquavalley and shared similar characteristics due to their aquatic ancestry. Unlike Xenos, Steel was a cyborg. His enhancements included a powerful artificial heart and a reconstructed eye that contained a memory base linked to his brain.

"I know it can be a drag," Steel said. "But things like family ties are important to lots of people, Xenos."

At that moment, Xenos' second-in-command, Judson, stepped into the room and walked to his locker.

"I heard your in-laws are coming aboard," Judson said.

Xenos growled and cast him a sidelong glance.

"I remember holidays with my family," Judson continued. He sat on a bench and untied his shoes. "Relatives can be a pain sometimes, but they're nice to have."

"I wouldn't know," Xenos said, more to himself than to the others. "I was grown in an artificial womb."

"Well Moonlight wasn't," Judson said carefully.

Xenos' gaze darted in his direction. "I realize that, Judson, which is why I am welcoming them aboard."

"Good for you. Finally getting in touch with your human side." Steel punched Xenos in the shoulder, earning a particularly savage growl.

"If you like the idea of mingling so much, Steel, why don't you join us for the celebration Moonlight is planning?" One thing about Steel, he fancied himself the lone pilot. Though he'd done more than his share to help during the rebellion, he had refused to join Xenos' crew. His reply had always been the same. *I work alone, fly alone and live alone.*

To Xenos' surprise, Steel chuckled and said, "I already told Moonlight I'd come."

Xenos curled his lip. "How did that happen?"

"Easy. She bribed me with pizza. I hope she tops it with siel fish and Laetez peppers."

"I didn't know your stomach was reconstructed along with your eye," Xenos said.

"Hey, man cannot live on Tydisian sea salad alone. I have to get back to my ship. Thanks for the swim, Xenos." Steel glanced at Judson. "I'll see you guys at the party."

Xenos sighed and shook his head. Things had certainly changed. He never imagined he'd survive the rebellion let alone get married. Now here he was, for the most part on the right side of the law and with a wife he adored.

Unfortunately with her came her mother and sister. They didn't like Xenos any more than he liked them, but at least he made an effort to ignore their most annoying characteristics. He especially hated his mother-in-law's total focus on his crossbreed nature. Activists could be the worst, rallying for the rights of poor, mistreated ACT products, but perish the thought of a crossbreed marrying their purebred children.

Still she was Moonlight's mother and he would do nothing to make this visit unpleasant, for the sake of his *wassda*. Even if it killed him.

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That night Xenos worked late in his ready room. He and Judson spent most of the night pouring over issues they needed to discuss at the meeting on Earth the following day.

Moonlight ate dinner in the mess hall with Trissa and Birch, then had a workout in the gym and retired to her room where she lit candles and meditated for a while. She needed to calm her mind before seeing her mother and sister in the morning. Not that she didn't love them, but since marrying Xenos she'd noticed how narrow minded they could be. She found that strange, considering her mother was an activist against ACT and had raised her daughters to have an interest in politics and rally for various causes. It seemed taking a stand against ACT was one thing, but approving of her daughter's marriage to a crossbreed was another. Of course she and Xenos hadn't made it easy for her family to accept them. They'd started a rebellion and for months they'd been on the Intergalactic Most Wanted list.

Yet Moonlight wouldn't have traded a second of her life with Xenos for anything. With him, she'd learned the true meaning of love, sacrifice and breathtaking adventure.

Just thinking about him disturbed her meditation, but it was worth the interruption.

She stood and walked to the bathroom. After undressing, she stepped into the shower. As the warm water poured over her, she smiled, picturing Xenos' long, lean body and his savagely attractive face. At one time she'd thought him ugly

and frightening, but that was before she realized the depth of his sensuality. He could make her wet with a look and send her heart beating out of control with a touch. When he spoke close to her ear in his deep yet soft voice, her legs turned to water.

As if summoned by her desire, Xenos opened the shower door. Naked, he stood with his shoulder leaning against the wall and his intense blue gaze upon her.

Startled, Moonlight gasped then smiled and lifted a hand to his cheek. "Care to join me?"

"No. I'm just here to enjoy the view," he said in a husky voice then stepped beneath the water and drew her into his arms. "Of course I want to join you."

"Good. I was just thinking about you."

If possible his gaze became even more intense, then his warm, firm lips covered hers in a kiss that made her heartbeat quicken. He took her face in his hands and caressed her cheeks. Then he kissed her neck and shoulder. He ran his sexy, bestial fangs lightly over her flesh, never hard enough to hurt her but with just enough pressure to stir her desire.

Moonlight sighed with pleasure and held him tightly. She ran her hands over his back, loving the feel of his wet silken skin and the ripple of the powerful muscles beneath. She felt his hard cock pressing against her and the desire to taste him overcame her.

She kissed her way down his chest, her fingers trailing across his gorgeous pecs and brushing his nipples. Kneeling in front of him, she flicked her tongue along his sleek abs. Her hands roamed over his long, muscular legs and she gently raked her nails over his inner thighs. A low growl of desire escaped his throat, the sound of it arousing her even more. She grasped his shaft and stroked it, then rolled her tongue over the dark purple head. Closing her eyes, she savored his texture and taste. His hands tightened in her hair and she felt the tension in his body as he struggled not to thrust his hips too forcefully against her. Holding his thick, pulsing shaft steady, she trilled her tongue along the underside and he groaned with pleasure.

Finally he grasped a handful of her hair and tugged her away from him. Moonlight looked up at him, her pulse quickening even more at the lust smoldering in his eyes. His chest rose and fell with each excited breath and Moonlight knew he wanted her just as much as she wanted him. His hand still

tangled in her hair, he squatted and tugged a bit harder. Moonlight's neck arched and he kissed her throat. His fingers loosed on her hair and he caressed the back of her head before grasping her shoulders and guiding her to her feet. His gaze fixed on hers and he brushed the tip of his finger across her lips, then covered her mouth in a deep kiss.

He pressed her gently against the water-slicked wall, his tongue thrusting into her mouth. Growling softly, he slid one of his long, sleek legs between hers. Unable to resist, Moonlight thrust her pelvis against him, hoping to satisfy the desperate ache he'd aroused.

A deliciously wicked smile tugged at his lips and he used his knee to spread her legs. Moonlight's heart pounded with anticipation. Little thrills of delight rushed through her, especially when he began kneading her breasts. He trailed a hand down her belly and caressed her soft mound. Then he teased her clit, stroking in gentle circles that drove her crazy with desire. His long, slender fingers teased her to the brink, then paused. Panting, she leaned harder against the wall.

"Impatient tonight, aren't you?" he said, though the huskiness in his voice, not to mention the stiffness of his magnificent blue cock, revealed that he was just as aroused as she was.

"Not really," she lied. If he wanted to play, she could hold out just as long as he could.

"I see." He continued stroking her slowly, running his finger up her clit then down again. Over and over he teased her. Moonlight trembled, her breathing almost out of control. She should have known better than to challenge him sexually. Xenos knew just how to touch her. He seemed to know her body even better than she knew it herself. He kept up the wonderfully frustrating caresses, quickening and slowing his motions, until she was ready to scream with need. All the while his lips and tongue explored her neck and shoulders.

Just when she thought she couldn't stand another second of pleasure, he bent his knees and filled her with his thick, satin-skinned cock.

Her fingers bit into his shoulders and she arched against him, her eyes closed. He broke the kiss and spoke in her ear. She loved the sound of his deep, soft voice murmuring sexy things to her in Tydisian.

Over and over he thrust, driving her to a breath-stealing climax. Moonlight cried out with pleasure and clung to him tightly, relishing his crossbreed strength.

He came seconds later, his powerful body trembling and straining into hers and his ragged breath tickling her ear.

For several moments they stood beneath the stream of warm water, then he kissed her again. They gazed at each other and smiled.

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The following morning, Moonlight traveled to the planet's surface with Xenos and Judson.

"We'll probably be ready to leave before you're finished at the meeting," Moonlight told Xenos as they stood outside the shuttle. "So I'll call *Nameless* for someone to pick us up."

"Moonlight!" Her sister, Dawn, called from the waiting area a safe distance from the landing pad. Like Moonlight, she had dark hair and a curvy figure now partially concealed in her white lab tech uniform.

Turning to Xenos, Moonlight raised her eyes to the heavens. He offered her a reassuring smile, wrapped his arm around her waist and tugged her close for a lingering kiss. Moonlight knew part of his reason for such a passionate farewell was to irritate Dawn. Moonlight responded enthusiastically. Though she cared about her family, she still couldn't forgive them for not truly accepting Xenos.

While Xenos and Judson walked off, Moonlight approached her sister.

The women embraced briefly and Dawn held her at arm's length, a concerned look on her face. "Are you all right?"

"Why wouldn't I be?"

"Well you've been married for how long now and you still haven't found a home."

"Dawn, you know we live on the ship." Moonlight laughed, hoping that a cheerful response would silence Dawn faster than an argument. "Where's Mother?"

"She stayed at the Aunts' house to help them with lunch. Oh, Moonlight, I'm so glad to see you. It's been a long time."

"It's good to see you too, Dawn. And I'm happy you and Mother will be able to spend some time on *Nameless*."

Dawn forced a smile. "Let's go. They're expecting us."

About an hour later they arrived at Moonlight's aunts' house in New Portugal. Moonlight's mother and elderly Aunts Maria and Ana greeted her with firm embraces and even more concern than Dawn.

"How has that criminal been treating you?" her mother asked.

"You know neither of us have been criminals for months now," Moonlight replied, still smiling and trying to keep her temper. After all, she'd only been on Earth for a little over an hour.

"All right, then. How has that soldier been treating you?"

"And he's no longer a soldier. Why don't you try calling him Xenos? It might help once we're all together on the ship."

"What criminal?" Aunt Ana asked, her reaction delayed as usual.

"There's no criminal, Auntie," Dawn said. "They're talking about Moonlight's husband."

"Who?"

"Moonlight's husband," Aunt Maria shouted in Ana's ear, a disgusted look on her face.

"I can hear. My hearing implant is working fine," Ana snapped and turned to Moonlight with a smile. "When did you get married?"

"A few months ago," Moonlight replied.

"She married the man who's blue, remember?" Maria said.

"Why is he blue if he's married to our Moonlight? He should be happy."

Maria threw her hands in the air. "I give up. Moonlight, didn't your husband come with you?"

"No, he's on business."

"That's too bad."

"No it's not," Aunt Maria muttered under her breath. Moonlight knew that she didn't care for crossbreeds, particularly those with Laetez blood.

The women sat down to lunch and Moonlight was grateful for the distraction. At least now they could concentrate on food instead of her marriage. She began to feel guilty about having her family aboard *Nameless*. When she was away from them for so long, she could almost forget how much they disapproved of Xenos. Though she cared about her family, Xenos meant more to her than anyone.

Partway through the meal, Moonlight's mother asked, "Have you and Xenos found a house yet?"

"We live on *Nameless*."

"Darling, how can you make a home out of a warship? After all the values I instilled in you growing up, you still approve of violence."

"I don't approve of violence, mother, but sometimes it's necessary. And *Nameless* isn't a warship."

"It has the most powerful shield and some of the most advanced weapons in the known universe. You tell me what it is, then."

"It's my home," Moonlight said coolly. "Which you have been cordially invited to by me and my husband."

Her mother's face stiffened. "I see. That's our cue to hold our tongues, Dawn."

Looking uncomfortable, Dawn said, "Mother, maybe we should just drop the discussion."

"Good idea. If Moonlight is happy living on a warship with that *man*, then it's her business."

"Whose at war?" Aunt Ana demanded.

Moonlight closed her eyes for a moment. Something told her this was going to be the longest two days of her life.

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Xenos had just left the meeting with the director of Intergalactic Affairs when Moonlight called. Glancing at her lovely face on the monitor of his wrist spec, he asked, "Are you ready to come home?"

"Xenos, I'm going to be late. After lunch we went for a walk and Aunt Maria tripped in a pothole and twisted her ankle. We're still waiting at the hospital for a medic to see her. It might take a while."

"I'm sorry to hear that," he said. "I'm still on Earth. Would you like me to keep you company?"

He didn't quite realize what he'd said until after the words were out of his mouth. Was he crazy *volunteering* to spend more time with her relatives? Yet when it came to Moonlight he sometimes didn't think straight. She was the only person who had ever been able to breach his emotional defenses.

"As much as I'd love to see you I have a huge favor to ask."

"What?" he asked warily. He didn't like that ultra-sweet tone she'd used.

"I was supposed to buy the decorations for our holiday party, but I'm not sure how long I'll be at the hospital. Will you--"

"Moonlight, don't ask me to go shopping."

"But, *wassdat*--"

"Don't *wassdat* me. It won't work. First of all, I scarcely know anything about human holidays."

"You read up on Yule."

Damn. Why had he admitted that to her?

"All you have to do is buy some lights, candles, ornaments and incense. A tree would be nice too."

"A tree? We have trees in the ship's garden."

"A *Christmas* tree. Just go to into a store and ask a clerk to help you. Buy whatever you think looks nice and festive. Please?" She looked almost desperate and he knew how much the party meant to her.

"All right. I'll do it."

"And try to get decorations for a variety of winter holidays, not just Christmas. Xenos?"

"Yes?" he asked, not bothering to keep the hard edge from his voice.

"Thank you." She gazed at him with those big, dark eyes that he'd never been able to resist.

"All right. I'll see you later."

Her face disappeared from the spec and he growled softly.

"Xenos, are you ready to board?" Judson called from the door of the shuttle.

"We're not leaving yet, Judson," he stated.

"Is there a problem?"

"Yes. I believe they call it Christmas shopping."

Chapter Three

After a long wait, Aunt Maria finally saw a medic. Unfortunately her ankle was broken, but with accelerated healing therapy, she should heal within a week. A cousin volunteered to look after her until she was back on her feet.

After seeing that Aunt Maria was settled in at home, Moonlight called *Nameless* for a ride. Xenos said he would pick them up. They arrived at the shuttleport shortly before his shuttle landed.

When they boarded, he exchanged polite yet cool greetings with Moonlight's mother and sister.

They said little on the ride back to the ship. Moonlight's stomach clenched the entire time.

"I prepared dinner," Xenos said to her.

"Tydisian sea salad?" she teased, hoping to relieve some tension. That was his favorite meal. He could eat Tydisian sea salad for breakfast, lunch and dinner and it was one of the few things he made well.

"What's in it?" Dawn asked. "Fish?"

"No. Moonlight informed me of your preferences. Tydisian sea salad is completely vegan."

"How thoughtful." Moonlight's mother forced a smile. "I admire a man who has learned how to empathize in spite of being raised in a private lab."

"Mother, why don't we drop the activist discussions for your visit? This is supposed to be purely social. It's the first time you've been aboard our ship and I'd like the experience to be as pleasant as possible."

Her mother's eyes widened in a falsely innocent look. "Have I said something offensive?"

"You know exactly what I'm talking about."

"I'm looking forward to seeing the ship," Dawn interrupted, glancing from her mother to Moonlight as if fearful of an argument breaking out. "I understand you designed it, Xenos?"

"I was one of several engineers who worked on it."

"That's interesting. Isn't that interesting, Mother?" Dawn pressed.

Moonlight at least credited her sister with trying to get along. If only some of that courtesy would rub off on their mother.

"If you consider the creation of warships interesting, I suppose so."

Glancing at Xenos, Moonlight noticed his face looked as hard as purplish-blue marble. She could only guess what he wanted to tell her mother, but for her sake he was holding his tongue.

When they arrived on *Nameless*, Moonlight showed her mother and sister to their quarters, then joined Xenos in theirs.

He had the table set and was putting the dressing on the Tydisian sea salad. Moonlight got some bread from the cabinet. Though it wasn't traditionally served with sea salad, she enjoyed it and she knew her family would too.

"Xenos, I appreciate the way you're putting up with my mother. I know she's not easy to get along with."

He tossed her a look that said he knew depth dragons who were less offensive.

"I don't really know what her problem is, except that maybe she still feels guilty because you and I met when I asked you to have her released from prison," Moonlight said.

"Maybe she thinks I don't treat you properly."

"Then she's wrong."

"Is she?" He turned to her. "Since you met me you've pretended to be a prostitute, become an intergalactic fugitive and fought in a rebellion."

Sometimes Xenos was so cool and self-controlled that she forgot he had some very human traits hidden deep inside him. Before her, she doubted he had ever felt guilty about anything, but pain sometimes accompanied joy. For him, their love had awakened dormant emotions and she knew it was difficult for him to deal with them.

"Xenos." She slipped her arms around his neck and gazed into his eyes. "I pretended to be a prostitute to get to you. I became an intergalactic fugitive because I love you and I fought in a rebellion because I believed in the cause. You never forced me into anything. Before you, I had no idea what it meant to be truly in love."

A slight smile tugged at his mouth. "*Wassda*," he whispered against her lips and kissed her.

The buzzer on their door rang and they stepped apart. Their eyes met in a longing glance before Moonlight opened the door for her mother and sister.

Seated at the table, they began eating.

"Xenos, where did you put the decorations for the party?" Moonlight asked.

"In the mess hall. Trissa said that's where you're holding the celebration."

"Mother and Dawn, tomorrow I have to prepare for the holiday party. You can help if you like or you can explore the ship."

"We'll be glad to help," Dawn said.

"I still can't believe you celebrate these types of holidays." Her mother shook her head. "I didn't raise you to worship archaic deities."

"I worship nature, Mother," Moonlight said, weary of the same argument her mother had been raising for over twenty years, ever since she found out Moonlight had embraced what she considered a pagan religion.

"That's almost as bad as the people who believe that gods created the universe."

"I agree," Xenos said.

Moonlight shot a half-shocked, half-irritated look in his direction. He knew how she felt about religion and he accepted it.

For the first time since arriving her mother offered him a genuine smile. "Now that makes sense."

"Everyone knows *Ilt Mari Po-et* created the universe," he said, and Moonlight grinned both at his comment and the mischievous gleam in his eyes. She doubted her mother and sister would notice, but she had grown accustomed to judging her husband's moods.

"Who?" asked Dawn.

"The First Sea Serpent," he explained. "He created the universe with his breath, the planets with his scales and the waters with his tears."

Moonlight's mother looked horrified and said dryly, "You don't really believe that?"

He met Moonlight's gaze and they both chuckled.

"That is a creation myth from Tydepth," Xenos said. "One of many."

"Mother, if you don't want to help with the party, that's fine. But these people just want to experience some Earth cultures and they all have different religious

beliefs, so I'd appreciate it if you'd practice some of the tolerance you've taught us when we were growing up."

"Of course I'm tolerant," she said. " Everyone has the right to believe what he or she wants and to live as free individuals. Don't think that I don't understand and appreciate your rebellion, Xenos."

"But you would have appreciated it more if your daughter hadn't become involved," he stated.

"Not in the capacity that she did."

"Like Moonlight said, this is supposed to be a pleasant visit and a time to celebrate," Dawn said.

Moonlight smiled at her sister. "Thanks, Dawn."

"No, thank you for having us aboard. Both of you." Dawn glanced from Moonlight to Xenos.

"You're welcome," Xenos said, nodding at Dawn.

At least it seemed he and her sister could get along.

* * * * *

The next morning, while Xenos was on bridge duty, Moonlight gave her family a tour of the ship. Around noon, they ate lunch in the mess hall, then stayed there along with Birch and a couple of other crewmembers to prepare for the party that night.

"Dario sent this stuff," Birch said, lifting a large container onto the table.

Dawn reached inside, pulled out a bottle and read the label, "Bourbon."

"He said it's for hot potties."

Wrinkling her nose, Moonlight's mother said, "Excuse me?"

"Hot potties. It's some kind of traditional Christmas drink. I didn't have time to look it up, but Dario gave me the recipe." He picked up his handheld computer and pulled up the recipe. "Right here. Hot potties."

Glancing over his shoulder at the screen, Moonlight read the ingredients and said, "That's hot *toddies*. What kind of translator are you?"

"He wrote potties, didn't he? I told you I'm not familiar with that drink. Earth liquor makes me sick. I lean toward S'lankton whiskey."

"I'm almost afraid to see what else Dario came up with," Moonlight muttered.

"He sent the other ingredients directly to the kitchen because most of them are perishable," Birch told her. "He's making eggnog and hot chocolate."

"With the drinks he's chosen we won't need dessert," Dawn said.

"Speaking of dessert, how did the food shopping go, Birch?" Moonlight asked.

"I got frozen pizzas."

"That will make Steel happy. What about the rest of the food? Did you have any trouble finding traditional things to make?"

"No. I asked some of the crew members who have human relatives what to buy. Follow me." Birch led Moonlight and the others to the galley. He opened the oversized refrigeration unit. "I bought squash, green beans, potato pancakes, applesauce, gingerbread, chestnuts, and ham."

"Great." Moonlight smiled, searching through his purchases. Her brow furrowed. "Where's the ham?"

He opened a compartment and pulled out a bag of sliced ham. "Don't worry. I got pounds of it."

Moonlight's mother placed a hand on Birch's shoulder. "Dear, that's lunchmeat, not Christmas dinner."

"Mother!" Moonlight was aghast. "Since when are you of all people an expert on Christmas dinner?"

"My grandmother was religious," she admitted, lifting her chin as if challenging Moonlight to another argument.

"It looks like dinner will be fine," Moonlight said. "Let's see how Xenos did with the decorations. He left them in the mess hall. I saw the tree when we walked in and it looked nice. I wonder what kind of ornaments he bought?"

Chapter Four

Xenos was on the bridge checking the ship's fuel level when Moonlight called on his spec.

"How are the party plans coming along?" he asked.

"It's all blue. Everything," she said flatly. "No red, white, silver, green or gold. Just blue."

Sighing, he raised his eyes to the heavens. When he spoke it was in a deliberately cheerful voice. "I see you found the decorations."

"Xenos. Everything. Is. Blue. The lights. The dreidels. The candles. The stars. The little balls that hang on the tree."

"The incense isn't blue," he interjected.

"No." He could almost see her annoyed little smile. "No the incense isn't blue, but it is *blueberry*."

"You told me to buy decorations and that's exactly what I did. And if you look you'll notice some of the decorations are purple."

"Yeah. I saw the little painted seashells. Why do I get the feeling you're trying to make a statement?"

"Moonlight, when I want to make a statement I come out and say it. I don't sabotage my crew's holiday party. Your exact words were to buy whatever I thought looked nice and festive."

She fell silent for a moment and he knew she was mulling over his explanation. It was the absolute truth. The prettiest decorations just happened to be blue. That wasn't *his* fault.

"You're right," she said. "I did say that."

"There's still time to do some additional shopping if you want--"

"No. This stuff is nice. I'll see you tonight."

She disappeared from his spec and his brow furrowed. He truly hadn't intended to make a statement with blue decorations and purple seashells, no matter what she thought.

* * * * *

About an hour before the party was to start, Moonlight returned to her quarters to get ready. Now that her mother had started getting to know some of the crewmembers and lost much of her initial hostility, Moonlight actually enjoyed spending time with her and Dawn. Still it was nice to have some time alone.

She enjoyed a hot shower, then donned the slinky black dress Xenos liked on her. She was standing in the bathroom, applying makeup, when he stepped inside.

"You look beautiful," he said, wrapping his arms around her from behind and kissing the side of her neck.

Moonlight smiled and wiggled her ass against him. "You better get dressed, Sir. We don't want to be late."

"No. I'm starving."

"Well we've got lots of food."

"I know. Steel arrived a little while ago and he's already in the galley salivating over the pizza. However I'm salivating over something much more desirable."

"What?"

"You." He dipped the tip of his tongue into her ear then took the lobe between his teeth and tugged gently. One of his hands cupped her breast and the other slid between her legs.

"Xenos, not now," she scolded, though her heartbeat quickened and she writhed with pleasure.

"No?" he teased, pressing tender kisses along the side of her neck. His thumb rolled over her nipple, making it stiffen even through the barrier of clothes.

Closing her eyes, she thrust her pelvis against his rubbing hand and moaned softly, then tugged away, smoothing her dress.

"We can't. It's almost time for the party to start."

"All right, but it's cruel to leave a man like this."

"Like what?"

"This." Again he grasped her from behind and gently thrust his stiff cock against her backside.

She chuckled. "You're incorrigible."

He flashed a wicked grin, then stepped away from her and undressed.

She found it difficult to concentrate on applying her makeup with the big purplish-blue stud standing naked beside her, but a moment later he stepped into the shower.

Moonlight finished quickly then waited in the sitting room. Soon Xenos joined her. He wore black pants and a dark blue V-neck sweater that accentuated his lean, broad-shouldered body. Thin black gloves covered his hands. He seldom wore gloves aboard *Nameless*. Usually he reserved them for when he worked in engineering so his webbing wouldn't get snagged in the tools, or when he mingled with pure blooded humans or Laetez, those who might be disturbed by his webbed Tydisian hands. She noticed he'd been wearing the gloves since her family came aboard. He was proud of his Tydisian heritage, but apparently he was more concerned with making her family's visit pleasant. This touched her deeply.

"Xenos," she said, "about earlier when I sounded upset about all the blue decorations--"

"Don't worry about it. I *am* partial to blue."

"Everything looks really nice."

"I'm looking forward to seeing for myself." He offered her his hand. Smiling, she slipped hers into it and they left their quarters.

The party went well. The decorations were lovely and the food delicious. Dario's "hot potties" were a great success. Medic Trissa did a fine job supplying music, even if she did have a few unusual selections because one of the shops

had confused Earth Christmas carols with chants from the mating ritual on a planet called Eart.

Even Moonlight's mother seemed to enjoy the festivities.

About an hour into the party, Xenos and Moonlight, like most of the crew, were enjoying a slow dance among the flickering blue lights.

"Are you having a nice time?" he asked.

"Yes. It's a night I won't forget, that's for sure. Sliced ham. Pizza with seil fish and hot potties."

"And your family." He gazed into her eyes.

"It's nice having my mother and sister here, but as long as you're around, I'm with my family." She stood on tiptoe and kissed him.

He nodded, the faintest smile touching his solemn mouth, and tugged her closer. Moonlight rested her cheek on his shoulder and closed her eyes for a moment, loving the feel of him against her.

"Do you think she wants to dance?"

Moonlight's brow furrowed and a wave of jealousy broke over her. "Does who want to dance?" she demanded, meeting his gaze.

"Your mother."

Moonlight grinned at her own foolishness and glanced across the room to where her mother sat alone at a table.

"Maybe," she replied, not sure of how her mother would react to such an overture from her unusual son-in-law.

"There's one way to find out, if you don't mind sitting this one out?"

"Not at all." She stepped way from him. "And good luck."

"Yes. I'll need it," he muttered and walked toward her mother.

Again it struck her how much she loved Xenos. He was the proudest man she'd ever known and commanded respect from those around him, but for her sake

he'd welcomed someone into his home who never missed a chance to fling jibes in his direction.

At the table, Xenos exchanged a few words with his mother-in-law then extended his hand to her. She appeared thoroughly surprised, but accepted his offer and let him guide her to the dance floor.

Moonlight smiled as she watched them. It seemed that during this season, anything was possible.

* * * * *

Two days later, Moonlight's mother and sister left *Nameless*. She and Xenos told them to visit again and they promised they would and extended an invitation of their own. In the spring, Xenos and Moonlight planned to visit them on Earth for a few days and leave Judson in charge of *Nameless*.

That first night alone again, Moonlight prepared a traditional Tydisian meal in their quarters and waited for Xenos. She wanted this to be a special night for them--their own holiday celebration.

She wore a gold mesh nightgown and bright red heels.

When Xenos walked in, his gaze fixed on her and his lips parted, exposing the tips of his gleaming white fangs.

"Hello, *wassdat*," she said, walking toward him wearing her most seductive look. "I thought you'd never get home."

He continued staring at her and when she got close enough he placed his hands on her hips and stroked. His gaze dropped to her breasts and the pink nipples poking through the gold mesh fabric.

"Don't you have anything to say?" she asked.

"Yes. I'm starting to really appreciate colors besides blue."

"I made dinner and--"

He silenced her with a kiss so deep that for a moment she forgot about everything except the pressure of his firm, moist lips and the enticing thrusts of his tongue against hers.

When the kiss broke, she was breathless.

"I guess we'll eat later," she panted.

He growled softly in reply, swept her into his arms and carried her to their bed.

"Xenos," she murmured as he slid down the straps of her nightgown and kissed her shoulders.

He pulled her nightgown down to her waist, fully exposing her breasts. Moonlight's heart beat out of control. The heated look in his eyes made her weak with desire.

Xenos stretched out beside her and caressed her thighs. His hand dipped between her legs and gently massaged while his tongue swept over first one nipple then the other.

Closing her eyes, she caressed his smooth scalp, loving the feel of his satiny Tydisian flesh. She moaned and writhed, lost in sensation. He sucked her nipples and used the tips of his fangs to gently tease them.

After a moment, he rose and tugged her nightgown off then tossed it aside.

Moonlight watched him undress. She never got tired of staring at his gorgeous purplish-blue body. He was perfect. Broad shoulders. A powerful chest. Sleek abs. Muscular arms and long, steely legs.

She didn't have long to admire him before he rejoined her on the bed. He stretched out between her legs and guided them over his shoulders. His warm lips teased her soft, aching flesh, then he swept his tongue over it. He lapped her clit and if his strong hands hadn't been holding her bottom, she would have bucked off the bed from the pleasure. Xenos took his time, as if savoring her. Moonlight sighed with pleasure, her hands stroking his head and kneading his rock-hard shoulders. Then his tongue flicked her swollen flesh with relentless upward strokes that pushed her over the edge. Crying out in ecstasy, Moonlight trembled and writhed, but he continued holding her steady and his mouth never left her until she lay panting and satisfied.

He let her rest for a few moments while he caressed her thighs, then he lay beside her. Taking one of her breasts in his hand, he sucked and licked her nipple, rekindling her desire. Moonlight ran her hands over as much of his

gorgeous body as she could reach, loving the warmth and smoothness of his skin and the hardness of the muscles beneath.

Xenos slid his fingers into her drenched pussy. He explored gently, caressing her soft flesh. Then he withdrew his fingers and circled her clit until she once again teetered on the edge.

Moonlight's entire body tingled and she arched against him. "Xenos, please."

He kissed her, his tongue thrusting into her mouth and his fingers rubbing her clit in a fast, steady rhythm until she exploded. As she convulsed with pleasure, he covered her body with his. His thick, hard cock filled her and he pumped into her while his mouth plundered hers.

Another orgasm built inside her and she clung to him, her hands caressing the taut muscles of his back. This time when she came, he joined her seconds after, his lean, hard body surging into her.

"Moonlight," he whispered in her ear and settled beside her on the bed.

She cuddled close and he held her for several moments, then he reached into the drawer of his bedside table and withdrew a tiny white bag with a drawstring.

"Happy holidays," he said and handed it to her.

Moonlight opened the bag. Inside she found silver earrings, each with a pink stone.

"Thank you. They're beautiful." She kissed him and held his gaze. "And thank you for making this holiday season so wonderful."

He smiled and there was no missing the love in his eyes, love that she returned with all her heart.

The End

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