

ENRAPTURED



Viola Grace

Maura is the best pilot for experimental small craft that the Alliance has seen in decades. When a research treaty allows a representative from Nyal space to participate, she has a fight on her hands. Alzor is the best his species has to offer and that is saying something. When Maura's craft becomes stranded in a test flight, the giant kitty comes to get her. His craft has a difficulty and they are forced onto a hospitable world. Now that they are on equal footing, Alzor has only to defend himself against her viper tongue for two days when her engines will have recharged. His ways of keeping her mouth busy become quite inventive.

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ENRAPPED
A TERRAN TIME NOVELLA

BY

VIOLA GRACE

CHAPTER ONE

With the light of the stars flying past on either side of her small craft, Maura was in her element. The ship handled well under the stressful conditions. Each and every twist and turn through the obstacles of the course brought her time closer and closer to that of the current leader – Alzor. A pilot and ship from Nyal space didn't surprise Maura, but his attitude rubbed her the wrong way. He had a way about him that set her teeth on edge while it increased her heart rate.

She was conflicted. No other pilot even began to trigger her lust, but with him, she was always ready to punch him or kiss him senseless. It wasn't logical.

Fortunately, she had been able to keep out of his way when they were in the analytical portion of the experimental craft assessment. She lived in hope and dread of running into the tall shifter in the halls of the station. They were working for competing research teams and they were both pilots. Nothing else should get between them. Not

even clothing.

Damn. Why does my brain keep going to the bad place? She needed to keep her eyes out for the next buoy to circle and from there, it was a straight shot back to home base. Her little ship was currently on its best time through the obstacle course and she didn't want to wreck her record by screwing up.

The controls were a little soft on the hard banking. A slight shiver ran through the ship as she straightened out for the hard burn back to base. She made a note on the vocal recorder. It was her black box to mention all problems and her team's responsibility to fix them.

As she increased her speed, the shiver increased and a snap followed by lights flaring on her control board let her know that this was not a little problem. Part of her ship had broken off. "Shit! This is Pilot Maura in the Xeno One. I require immediate assistance. My ship has lost the left wing and I am losing oxygen."

She had safety levels and her little ship was moving toward the station, but she would probably miss it if she didn't get some help. Docking at a mobile station was iffy at the best of times. With the controls rapidly seizing under her hands, she fought the mental image of slamming into the side of the station and leaving a giant splat mark.

"This is research station Del. We acknowledge

your distress call and a rescue ship has been deployed. Hang tight, Maura. Help is on the way." The friendly tone was practiced, but Maura Aitcheson appreciated the sentiment. Survival was everything and keeping your mind on the possibility of it was something that would keep you alive.

"Acknowledged. Preparing for anything." Maura left the com open, but squirmed around to close the seals on her suit and buckle her helmet into place. She left the air circulation on, breathing the remaining air from the shuttle until she didn't have a choice. It was slowly bleeding out into space, but there was enough to keep her alive for a few minutes.

She fastened her gaze out the front port, watching a tiny speck leave the larger bulk of the station. Part of her relaxed. Help was indeed coming. She was hoping to get the ship hauled back to the station, but she would abandon it for retrieval by a follow-up crew if she had to.

She watched the speck grow larger and as the minutes passed, she shifted to suit breathing. Her shuttle was out of air, but her tanks would keep her alive for three hours if necessary.

Though the slow approach was frustrating, it was necessary. If the team came in too hot, it could blast past her, not stop in time or flip her around, none of which was an excellent option.

"Xeno One. This is the Reeva Nahrad. Prepare for magnetic linkage."

The voice made her run hot and cold at the same time. She pressed her com link on her suit. "Reeva Nahrad, ready for linkage."

Alzor's deep, calm voice asked, "What is your atmosphere status, Maura?"

"I am on suit breathing. I have two hours forty-five minutes of air." She kept her breathing even, though her heart was beating frantically in her chest. "Thanks for asking."

"I will try and make this quick."

There was a tone of concern in his voice, but it didn't stop her from saying, "I have heard you were quick."

The silence on the other end of the com made her wince. Her mouth had run away with her again. He brought out the worst in her—every snaky, snippy comment that floated through her head came out of her mouth when he was near. It was frustrating for her and embarrassing as well.

The bulk of his ship hovered over hers and she watched the magnetic couplings extend, fighting an erection joke. The sharp clang of the connection caused her to jump in her chair.

"There, that didn't hurt a bit. Hold tight and we will be on our way." The slight rocking as the magnets retracted and pulled her ship tight against the belly of his made her wince. It was

horrible for a pilot to have someone else in control of their craft.

"Ready when you are. Go as fast as you want to."

She raised her eyebrows when he retorted, "Promises, promises."

Surprised by the banter, she sat back in her chair as the Reeve Nahrad pulled her smaller ship along all the way back to the station. Pinned to him like a bug, she couldn't help but wonder what it would be like to have nothing between them. No metal, no suits, just skin and heat.

Her mind took her back to dangerous places where she tasted him from head to toe, learning his textures and if he was ticklish. The shape that he could shift into was also a mystery.

Coming into the Alliance from Earth had created a number of shocking discoveries for her. The creatures of legend were alien races—shapeshifters existed in a number of forms and telepathy and forms of empathy were prevalent among her people even though no one wanted to admit it. It was moments like this when she was alone in space that her mind thought about where she was and how amazing it was that she had made the cut.

Maura's reflexes had made her an ideal test pilot. Her enthusiasm for life made her suitable for experimental ships. She would not take chances

with her own life in order to save a piece of tech. That self-preservation was an instinct which enabled her to learn everything there was to know about the ship she was in, as well as safety protocols.

Her knowledge of the Xeno One made its failure one of two likely candidates. She was leaning toward the final fuel drop resulting in a partially closed vent. Since she had been in the cockpit when the go signal had been given, the fuelling bot had probably not sealed the vent, so when she put stress on it, it cracked.

She was hoping that that had been the problem. If it was genuine sabotage, she was in a whole new world of weirdness.

The heads-up display in her helmet gave her the reading that she had twenty minutes of air left. Fortunately, Alzor was lowering her into position for a mechanical docking.

“How are you doing, Maura?”

“Twenty minutes of air, Alzor, but otherwise perky.”

“You always are. Docking clamps are extended and I am releasing the magnetic connections... now.”

The slight drop into the waiting arms of the station made her blink. She had spent far too much time with her own thoughts. Her mind had scampered from sex to home and back again the

instant she heard his low, rumbling voice.

The Xeno One was lowered into the station and the seals closed over it. Maura waited until the lights showed a breathable atmosphere in the shuttle bay and popped the seal on her ship. She didn't shut off her suit's oxygen, it was a habit born of personal experience. She had no urge to suffocate if the seals on the station didn't hold.

The first time it happened, she had been near the doorway and was able to cling to some wiring until the exterior seals engaged. Her suit had kept her from freezing, but the memory of almost being blown out into space was something she didn't want to relive.

She walked to the air lock by the most direct route she could find, always keeping her hand on a rail or some grippable surface. When she was in the airlock, she still didn't blow her suit seals, even though she had less than five minutes left. *Safety first, kids.*

The moment she was in the hall outside the airlock, she opened her seals and removed her helmet. The stale air of the station was welcome, an unlimited source of breathable atmosphere. Another welcome sight was striding toward her with a determined glint in his silver eyes.

"Alzor. Thank you for the retrieval." She extended her hand.

When he gripped her by her shoulders and

lifted her up against a wall for a punishing kiss, surprised was the least of her emotional responses.

He ravaged her mouth, using lips, teeth and tongue to subdue her. Her choice was to fight or submit and damn he tasted good. Her blood pooled in her womb and she groaned as a pulse started between her thighs. She was reaching up to tangle her fingers in his hair when he abruptly pulled away.

He held her until she was standing on her own again, her legs straight and back stiff. With a jaunty grin, he turned and walked away. "You are welcome."

She may have stared after him slack-jawed, but not for long. A medical team was stampeding down the hall. It was time for the post-incident medical exam and there was no avoiding those hands, even if there was another set of hands that she would much rather have running over her body.

Damn it.

CHAPTER TWO

Drinking a glass of juice at the bar, Maura mulled over the events of the day. The investigation had shown that it had indeed been a fuel-valve issue. The setup was non-standard and the ground crew had simply chosen the closest match. The problem with that was that the match was inexact and therefore the bot didn't know what to do with the extra flaps and closures, so it had left them alone.

Her life had almost come to a screeching halt and all because someone on the flight deck thought that close counted.

She slugged back the juice and asked for another. There was no way she was going to get drunk, but the relaxing effect of drinking in a full establishment was helping.

"How are you doing, Maura?" The bartender was a female Ontex, Staal was her name. "I hear that you almost met the big freeze today."

"You heard right. Fortunately, I was close

enough to the station for retrieval before my air ran out."

Stoal was studiously cleaning the counter. She looked down and then up at Maura with her large black eyes. "I also hear that Alzor came to your rescue."

"That is true as well." Another glass of juice appeared in front of her and she took another slug. She shuddered. It really wasn't very good juice, but it was all that the station had available in the non-intoxicant beverages unless she drank water and the water wasn't that good either.

The Ontex whistled. It was odd coming from one of the classic grey aliens of Terran culture, but Stoal was very relaxed in her mannerisms. She matched her manner to her clients on an individual basis.

"Well, it's about time. He's been sniffing after you for weeks."

That caught Maura completely off guard. "What?"

"The whole station knows that he watches your runs and the instant you were in trouble, he hopped into his ship against the orders of his team leader." She was still cleaning the area that she had rendered spotless. The innocent look Stoal gave Maura was far too-knowing to be truly genuine.

Maura slugged back the rest of the juice and

made a face. She nodded to Staal and hopped off the barstool. The festivities on the stage were just getting underway. Teams were celebrating successful runs and others were consoling themselves with intoxicants. The music pounded and rolled through her as she walked to the door, dodging hands, claws and other appendages as they reached for a female form.

Shaking her head, she wandered the halls of the station. Without willing it, she walked into the Nyal segment of the station. She froze when some of the other pilots saw her and watched her with speculative looks.

Maura took a deep breath, turned on her heel and went back to her quarters. Tomorrow was long-range jump practice with the Guardian Echo, a ship designed by one of the Sector Guard. It was more of a light shakedown than a test flight, but she was being paid to pilot it, so pilot it she would.

She fell asleep going through the schematics of the Guardian Echo. It looked like a tight and fast ship for long-range travel—one pilot and up to five passengers. The true test was the miniaturized jump engine. If it worked, then there would be a new boost in long-distance travel, at least for the Sector Guard.

Her alarm blared and she bolted upright. It was

her secondary alarm. She must have slept through her initial one. "Sonofabitch!"

She took the fastest gel shower of her life, waiting only until the gel hardened before using the sonics to shatter it. Maura pulled on her signature red flight suit and double-checked her braids. Having long hair in a helmet was a pain, but braiding it into a tight coil made it easier for maintenance. The inky black was tightly contained and she was ready for action.

Her flight boots fought her, but she got them on. As soon as she was ready, she was out the door and running to the flight deck. She hated being late.

The flight director was waiting for her. "You missed your window. You are now at the back of the line. Six-hour wait."

Cursing would get her banned from the deck. The Dhemon flight director was a stickler for propriety, especially when the speaker was female.

"Accepted. I will wait in the observation area." It was the most polite thing she could say, her mind seething with tension. Perhaps if she got some food and a coffee-equivalent, she would be able to put a few sentences together.

The observation area was almost empty, but Alzor's team was up and watching the in-flight cameras. He was currently piggy backing in a

jump ship, his smaller ship being taken out for weapons runs in an asteroid field.

“Aw. Looks like the Guardian Echo won’t make it out today. Too bad. They are only doing the one jump-run.” One of the techs for Alzor’s ship was sneering at her.

The jump ship was scheduled to return to base in a few hours. She was supposed to be on the outgoing launch and then jump back to space near the station. “He is staying out overnight?”

“Of course. It’s a complete test. They will retrieve him tomorrow.”

Alzor was not one to take unnecessary risks, but floating around blasting asteroids was not a risk-free task.

She bit one of her nails. It was a bad habit, but it let her know how upset she really was. “Is he alone out there?”

“There are a few other ships in the area, but they will return with the jump ship today.”

That worried her more. She pushed her worries aside as she grabbed food from the dispensers. The rations that were given were not flavourful, but they were filling and nutritious, like bland oatmeal. She could get better food at some of the kiosks on the mezzanine but that would mean leaving the observation area and she had a gut feeling that she needed to stay.

Hours passed, teams came and went to watch their projects and pilots strut their stuff. She had some meals, caffeine and a lot of water. Alzor was piloting with enough skill to make her envious.

The secondary weapons system that he was using was a rail-gun style using a magnetic field to propel the projectile. Everything was going well until a shattered piece of debris came hurtling off the target and back into the Reeve Nahrad.

Maura was on her feet, her green eyes wide as the signal was interrupted for endless seconds.

"Base, this is the Reeve Nahrad. Propulsion is down, air is intact, but I am floating dead out here." Alzor was incredibly calm, that dark, sexy voice of his making waves in her system that tried to override her panic.

He continued. "Please send a retrieval vehicle as soon as you can. I also seem to be having a slight medical difficulty that will require a stasis chamber at your convenience."

The cursing on the part of his team was violent and in a language that Maura hadn't heard before. The tone, however, was unmistakeable.

One of the techs fired up the base to ship com link. "You said you had weeks."

"I was mistaken. Send a stasis pod. Do it fast, it's a little crowded out here."

Maura watched, frozen, as the team members tried to get an ETA on the jump ship. The news

was not good. It was already in transit and would need some time to recharge. Time that Alzor was running out of.

Straightening her suit, she fired up a com unit and got in touch with her team. "I need authorization to take the Guardian Echo on a rescue mission."

"If you deem it necessary, take it." The voice of the Morganti base commander was calm and assured. "Fixer would love a reason to make another one, but don't give her one."

Relay Wyt was laughing and Maura was glad. She obviously had complete faith in the ship and that was saying something. The Guard was not known for recklessly using staff.

"Will do. Pilot Aitcheson out."

The techs for the Reeva Nahrads were staring at her.

"Looks like the Guardian Echo will get out after all. Can you have a stasis chamber delivered to the flight deck?"

"Medical has one standing by. It will be there by the time you have run your pre-flight checks." One of the less obnoxious of the bunch was calling in the orders and the instant she was sure that something was underway, she was out the door.

The chamber was installed and locked down. Communications were cleared, pre-flight checks

were done and a full diagnostic of the jump systems was clear. She fixed the halo onto her head for subliminal steering, gripped the main controls and waited.

The flight deck was cleared, the Guardian Echo was placed into launch position and as the lights flared in indication, she punched it.

Clearing the station was her primary concern. Once clear, she could find the signal, fix the closest empty point in space near the field and fly in to grab the Reeve Nahrad. *Easy peasy.*

"Reeve Nahrad, this is the Guardian Echo requesting location confirmation."

"Maura? What are you doing?"

She locked in on his signal. "Returning a favour. Now give me a minute, I need to jump."

"No don't—"

The computer mapped his location and the nearest planetoids. It found her a hopefully empty spot and gave her the indicator. Everything was green. Jump was a go. She hit the two buttons to unlock the jump and triggered the event with her mind. *Whoa.*

Being in two places at the same time was a physical impossibility, but jump tech ripped and repaired holes in space. It was nauseating, disorienting and completely fantastic as she came out into space near the rough and tumble mess of the asteroid field.

"Reeva Nahrad, please confirm your location."

"Guardian Echo, get your ass out of here and send another ship." The snarl was unmistakable.

She put him on ship-to-ship communications. "Alzor, what is your problem? I am here. I have the stasis unit you want. I will pick you up within the hour."

"If you are here, I won't need the unit."

"What?" That didn't make any sense.

"I am in rut and you smell like walking heat."

Oh. That would explain it. "So, what are our options?"

"Well, either you come in through that hatch and I fuck you until we both can't walk, or you suit up so that I can't smell you, purge the air in your shuttle and I pop into the stasis unit."

"Those are the options? Isn't there one where you just calmly put yourself in the unit without me going into full containment?"

"Not if you want this to work."

She sighed. "Why can't guys just keep it in their pants?"

"Why can't girls just give up without a fight? You know that we are meant for each other, why argue with me?"

She thought about it and her internal censor had a nap. "Foreplay?"

His surprised laugh made her smile until she realized what she had said. A heavy groan filled

her ship. *Why can't I just shut up? Why, why, why?*
She flipped the com back to the open, monitored channel. "Guardian Echo entering the field."

"Reeva Nahrad, standing by. Ready and waiting."

Oh lord.

CHAPTER THREE

Cruising through the tumbling rocks that could crush her at the lightest impact was more fun than it should have been. Her mind focussed on the location of the ship she was looking for and the Guardian Echo's computer plotted the course. The halo helped her manoeuvre through the masses of minerals spinning past. It was with relief that she saw the silver and blue speck that was the Reeve Nahrad.

"I have a visual confirmation. Be advised I will be grappling with you in under three minutes." She was all business.

It was hard to keep her voice controlled, but she managed...right until she heard, "Be gentle, it's my first time."

She had to shut the audio channels off to hide her hoots of laughter. Apparently, wit was not her sole purview.

The magnetic grapples extended and pulled his ship in tightly. The slight bump of the connecting ships was audible to her, though she had to

confine another laugh when Alzor mentioned, "And you didn't even buy me a drink first. Tacky."

"I am going to get into my suit. Stand by." Maura grabbed her helmet and sealed the suit. She did a quick pressure test and then strapped into her chair. "Preparing to vent atmosphere."

She shut off the air and vented the ambient oxygen into space. Her suit had a full charge and she could remain in it for hours if necessary. With the straps holding her in place, she sealed the ship, did a pressure test and filled the ship with breathable air again. It had better last—she wouldn't be able to pull that trick again.

"Venting complete. Evac tunnel is connecting... Feel free to come on board." She sat back in her seat, releasing the harness and standing to greet her guest.

The panel in the floor of the ship slid aside and the black hair of her hero heralded his presence. His silver gaze met hers and his lips twitched as he took in her suit.

"I can see which option you are going with. Pity, I would have preferred the other."

"I might have, too, but since we are both on crafts with complete surveillance, it would be unwise to have the encounter blasted across the Alliance or Nyal space."

He inclined his head. "You have a point."

"The stasis chamber is over there. Hop on in and we will get under way." She smiled and waved her hands like a game-show hostess.

Watching him strip to the waist was not for the faint of heart. The bands of muscle moved hypnotically as he attached the leads that would monitor him while he went under. The ship took up the audio link to the pod, registering his heartbeat so that she could hear it.

It was fast but strong. The beat got faster as he climbed into the unit, giving her one last, long look. "See you soon, Maura."

"If I can arrange it, the ugliest, hairiest med tech will be waking you, sleeping beauty. Now go to sleep so I can get out of this suit."

He smiled as the unit started to slow him down. "I bet I could get you out of that suit in no time."

When his eyes closed and his heartbeat slowed to a low, heavy beat, she breathed easier. As much as she enjoyed the sexual tension between them, it was a little heady. She also knew that when she took the helmet off, she would be faced with his pheromones. It was hard to ignore them on the station, but in the confined space of the ship, they would thicken the air with musk.

Maura checked her oxygen, verified that he was well and truly under, then removed her helmet.

The air was indeed thick with musk. She made a face, but couldn't deny her body's reaction. She

was getting wet and it was just from scent residue. She was pathetic.

Maura put the halo back in place and started out of the asteroid field. It was far more difficult with the large ship attached to the belly of the Echo, but she managed to clear the field in only three times the time it had taken her to get in.

Muttering to herself, she tried to get jump coordinates. The ship didn't cooperate. She tried again, aiming for the area of space nearest to the station.

The computer refused to give her that jump locale and instead offered an option for a neighbouring system. The system had a habitable world and was markedly closer than the station, so Maura punched the jump.

The ship was not happy about the added weight, but they were soon on their way to the habitable world. The jump engine was depleted and would need a day to recharge, so she filed her location with the station.

"Do you have Alzor?"

"Confirmed."

"And the Reeve Nahrad?"

"Confirmed. Both in operating condition." That last was said with a wry twist of her lips.

It was only her prudishness that was keeping Alzor from *operating* right at that moment.

"Remain on the planet until your engines are

fully recharged and try a jump again. If you are unable to, we will send a ship for retrieval."

"Understood."

"Do you have sufficient rations?"

"Yes."

"Then check in tomorrow and keep us apprised of your condition."

"Understood. I will be turning off the internal monitors for the sake of privacy. I will turn them back on before leaving the surface."

"Acceptable. Good luck, Maura."

"Thank you." She was going to need all the luck she could get to land their piggybacked ships in one large piece.

The entry into the atmosphere was bone shaking. If the liftoff was anything like it, she was going to be in trouble.

The computer scanned for a likely landing spot, her mind filling in the desirable objects of fresh water and a place to land.

When it found something to meet her criteria, she followed the directions to a lovely glade with a brook running nearby. The tug of actual gravity made her smile. It had been a long time.

Her engines burned a circle while she daintily placed the weight of her ship on top of the Nyal craft.

When she settled, it was with a sigh of relief. Removing the halo, she turned to her passenger.

He was still sound asleep, but if they were stuck here for more than a day, it would be stupid for her to keep him unconscious. Besides, it was cruel to deny him the chance to breathe real air.

A quick run of her fingers over the controls and he stirred. "No ugly attendants, just a perfect woman staring down at me."

"Get up, pretty boy. We are on a planet until my jump engines are up and running again. I am estimating a day, but am not sure how long exactly. This is a prototype after all." After waking him and giving him the short explanation, she turned her back and grabbed the survival kit and several days' worth of rations. The Sector Guard knew how to pack.

"A planet? With animals, water, trees?" He was getting more and more enthusiastic with every word.

"Yes, yes and yes. Now let's go while I still have the urge to go camping."

Half-dressed with his ship suit open to expose the line of hair running from his navel to his...trousers, he made quite the figure, shrinking the size of the interior of the ship by a factor of ten.

"It will be less of a drop if we exit through my ship." He knelt to slide the hatch open and her mouth watered, watching his muscles bunch and contract. Alzor held out his hand and she accepted the assistance to drop down the twelve feet to the

floor of his shuttle.

She stepped aside and he dropped lithely next to her.

He didn't say another word as he wrestled open the hatch and breathed the fresh, unprocessed air.

Maura followed him out of the ship, walking slowly in his wake. He was moving faster and faster. The sudden skinning out of his suit caught her by surprise and watching him shift into a huge, white tiger made her stand still in shock.

Shifter. They weren't kidding. A giant cat was running through the meadow and jumping at the butterflies. She sat down heavily.

No wonder he was in rut. It was common in male mammals, even if they didn't want to admit it.

As he frolicked in the meadow, she set up camp. She wasn't hungry yet, so she wandered to the stream and ran some scans. It was close to freezing as it was thaw from the nearby mountains, but it was pure and had no inhabitants—suitable for consumption.

The collapsible bottle from the survival kit held five litres of water. She had just fastened the cover on the bottle when a rushing sound behind her alerted her to Alzor's presence.

She was just rising to confront him when two large paws shoved at her shoulders, sending her

headlong into the icy water. Sparks flew behind her eyes as she fought back to the surface, breaching it with the exclamation, "Sonofabitch!"

Maura scrambled to the bank and flopped onto the warm grass with an endless series of shudders. Her body was cold. Freezing. And the happy, goofy look in Alzor's feline eyes was more than she could take.

Standing, she circled her companion, pinning him between the irritated wall of female that was herself and the icy water. Under normal circumstances, she would not dream of engaging the activity she was planning, but today defied normal by every stretch of the imagination.

He was crouching playfully, ready to pounce, but she pounced first. Her determined rush pushed the surprised giant tiger into the water who took her with him.

She was already cold and wet, but his yowl of surprise satisfied her on several levels.

Kicking free of him as they hit the water, she pulled herself back to the bank in only a few strokes. Sitting on the edge of the stream while watching him flail in the liquid ice, brought a grim smile to her face.

Served him right.

Maybe the water would cool his heat. Either way, she was enjoying the large, wet rat look as he successfully left the stream.

CHAPTER FOUR

He was stalking her again. This time, a low growl emanated from him as he approached. He backed her away from the stream and toward her little campsite.

She knew better than to run, but all of her instincts were clamouring at her to do exactly that. Breathing deeply, she held her ground and watched him approach. She watched him get ready to act and when he did, she closed her eyes and winced. His rapid shaking had cold water flying in every direction, remoistening her suit from top to toe.

She was drawing breath to yell when he shifted back into bipedal form. Naked and aroused, he held her attention like no man before. He was still stalking her, but in a far more fundamental fashion.

Lust was in his gaze and that did what the four hundred pounds of cat couldn't do. She ran.

Three steps was all it took until he brought her

down like a baby deer. He grabbed her around the waist with one arm, slowing their fall with the other as he brought her to the soft grass under him.

He rubbed his face past hers and she inhaled the musk of his scent. Oh lord, she was sunk. Just one inhalation and her body was wet, hot and ready for him to take. He marked her again, driving her higher with the aphrodisiac of his pheromones.

"How are you doing that?" It was exhaled on a moan, he had barely touched her and her body was humming to have him inside her.

"Talent and genetics." His chuckle against her throat made her arch into the hard planes of his body.

"Not fair."

"Neither is you keeping your hair confined so I could not catch your scent. You cheated so I cheat." A slow lick against her neck with a tongue that was oh-so-slightly rough made her mewl. She dug her fingers through his hair and held him to her neck as he slowly lapped until she was out of her mind.

Wrapping her thighs around his pulled his cock against her, but with her suit between them, it was a frustrating contact. She groaned and rocked her hips to bring him into alignment with her sex, but still nothing entered her wet, aching core.

There was a snarl near her head and the sounds of tearing fabric. Maura's skin felt the caress of the air an instant before Alzor was on her and sliding against her wet and desperate folds.

His silver gaze pinned her to the spot as his cock did the same, moving against her until he slipped into her a little. She moaned and raised her hips to take him deeper and he was not slow in taking the invitation.

He moved into her with slow thrusts, each taking him deeper until his cock was as far in as it would go. With his depth assessed, he started to move in a steady pace—hard, punching thrusts that took him just far enough into her to make her gasp, but not enough to cause discomfort.

She mewled, clawed at his back and rocked against him. Their rhythms were just different enough to keep her on the fine edge of orgasm without going over. She dug her fingers into his buttocks and held him to her as she took over the beat of their bodies. Blindly, she used him to push her senses into overdrive and screamed as her body contracted hard around him.

He was right behind her, pressing her into the grass with his weight as his hips pulsed into her, jerking and shuddering as he came.

Maura's inner walls caressed him again, startling a hiss from him and an answering shove from his body.

Groaning, Alzor dropped onto her and she fought for breath. He was much heavier than he looked. Perhaps the laws regarding conservation of mass were in effect with his kind of shifter.

"Off. I need to breathe." She shoved at his shoulders, inhaling in relief as he rolled off her. "Well, Alzor. At least you have gotten that out of your system."

He blinked at her sleepily. "Gotten what out of my system?"

"Your rut. Isn't it over now?"

He rolled onto his back, howling his amusement to the sky.

She sat up and took stock of her body. She was a little sore, sticky and her breasts were still basically covered by shreds of her red suit, but the lower half of the jumpsuit was missing. So were her boots. "What's so funny?"

"My rut has just started. It will last for days."

Maura closed her eyes and leaned her head on her knees. "Isn't there a way to speed it up?"

"Only one." He sniffed the air. "You are not ovulating, so it will not stop when you get pregnant."

That appalled her. "Pregnancy? That is what would take to stop it?"

"That or the natural course of things. I am good with either one." His grin was oh-so-satisfied.

Her body was humming with the same

satisfaction, but she stood to find the remnants of the lower part of her suit. The claw marks on the shreds of fabric made her raise her eyebrows at him, but he merely gave her an innocent look with his silver eyes.

Some torn strips, a few knots later and she was wearing a skirt that covered her for the most part. The centre seam of her trousers split and the legs turned sideways so that the width of the fabric hung between her legs. It wouldn't slow Alzor down, but it gave her the illusion of clothing. She would happily settle for that illusion.

"Why don't you put some clothes on? I think you tossed your uniform halfway through the meadow. Fetch." She waved him off, but he didn't go.

"I like feeling wind on my skin. It seems forever since I was on a natural world." He stretched lazily and it was truly impressive. All that naked skin and muscle flexing, his body sliding happily around on the ground, his cock at half-mast in its nest of dark, silky hair. She wrenched her gaze away with more effort than she liked. "Why am I not surprised that there was a nudist lurking under your skin?" She muttered it to him quietly while she worked on getting the ration packs out.

She jumped when he whispered in her ear, "I don't know. I guess you have been picturing me naked."

"I have been doing no such thing. In fact, I am thinking that you should be a lot more dressed than you currently are. Why don't you shift back into your cat form and go chase some more butterflies?" She leaned away from him. The musk that intoxicated her was gaining in strength once again.

"I think I may. This world is full of things to hunt and it has been a very long time for me. I will return before sundown." He bent her back with a possessive kiss that made her gasp in disappointment when it ended.

She bit her lip to stifle a moan as he walked a few feet away, his taut backside flexing as he moved. She was pathetic. Enraptured by a scent and a few muscles, it was embarrassing.

Relief washed over her when he shifted into the large white tiger and bounded off. At least he wouldn't be shoving her into any more streams for a while. With his semen drying on her thigh, Maura decided to take a quick dip in the icy water.

Standing on the bank, she released her hair. It dropped down her back in a series of narrow braids. It was fine to have it bound on her head if she was piloting, but wandering around with that weight pressing down on her neck got really uncomfortable after a few hours. It was time to loosen some of them while Alzor was gone. If he

was around, he would read something into her unbinding her locks.

Over half of her hair was unravelled, the braids near her face keeping the bulk of it in check. Time for a quick plunge.

“Sonofabitch!” It wasn’t any warmer the second time, but she knew it was coming and quickly scrubbed between her thighs, the hot flesh of her core almost scalding in comparison to the water.

She was cold but felt better when she wandered back to her campsite. The survival tent popped into life, the bottom inflating for a built-in mattress using chemical reaction for inflation creating a heavy foam that would not be affected by a puncture. Each wall was insulated and there was enough sleeping space for six.

Maura flipped a bedroll out and watched it inflate into a comfortable shape. The Sector Guard equipment was top-notch. Designed for comfort all the way. She stowed the ration packs in a small compartment designed for that purpose and lay down for a nap.

Between the flight and the sex, she was a little tired. Her body was tingling where he had touched her, her neck so sensitive that even lying against a pillow was arousing. She fought her body and forced it into a resting state. It took every ounce of willpower, but she was on her way to a nap.

Alzor could get his own accommodations. He was a big boy and his cat form was more suited for the great outdoors than she was.

The fuzzy pervert was on his own.

CHAPTER FIVE

The smell of wet fur close to her nose woke her. A familiar white tiger was taking up most of the remaining space in the tent, the patter of rain on the roof of her shelter cluing her in as to his presence.

He didn't like getting wet. She almost laughed out loud.

The light through the tent walls was dimming, so she sat up and fixed herself dinner. The thermal tab on the ration pack heated the meal while she dug around and found her eating implements. Sporks were standard and she had to admit a certain unwholesome love for the item that brought her mind back to Earth.

"Is there food for me?"

His voice caused a visceral reaction, but she kept her tone calm. "If you want one. I wasn't sure if you had hunted something or not." Silently, she popped the thermal tab on the next ration pack and fished out another spork. "Give it two

minutes to heat.”

“It seems it takes you less time than that.” He was too close and once again, his scent wrapped around her tightly, spurring her body into warm, pulsing awareness.

“A gentleman wouldn’t mention that.”

“I am no gentleman. I am an animal, or so I have been told.” He took the heating pack from her, the string of bitterness in his tone having the ring of a memorized accusation.

“Who told you that?”

He smiled, wariness in his eyes. “It doesn’t matter. It was a long time ago.”

“It matters to you or you wouldn’t have mentioned it.”

She tore into her pack carefully. The scent of chicken, rice and vegetables made her smile. It was a Terran meal and it was almost easy to imagine that she was camping in the woods on Earth with a new boyfriend and sharing a meal in the rain.

“My father did not disclose his shifter status to my mother. When I had my first shift at age fifteen, she was less than supportive. It was the last time I saw her.” He shrugged, a world of rejection in that one motion.

“How could she not know? If your father was anything like you, he would move with a peculiar grace that was unmistakable. Well, that and the

pheromones. Nice cheating there, by the way." Maura's food reminded her of home while the dim illumination gave her courage to pursue a line of questioning that she would have been too shy to do so in the light of day. A charming, cozy atmosphere in which to pick his brain and learn more about him.

"Well, she met my father during his rut and never looked beyond the sex. When she turned up pregnant with me, he married her and they lived together until the day I shifted. My father got his hunting and stalking out of his system with regular trips to the mountains and she accepted it as a standard male eccentricity."

"And the pheromones?"

He grinned. "She wasn't smart enough to pick up on that. My species has that particular ability for the sole purpose of luring and keeping a mate. It also helps to scent mark the female to avoid crossing into fight territory."

She finished with the chicken and was working her way through the apple cobbler. She loved a good dessert, but station rations were usually not nearly this tasty. She was going to have to find out where the Guard was getting these things and file an order. "Whoa. What is the likelihood that two shifters would want the same woman?"

"Well, in general the Kalorda tend to favour the same type of female—headstrong with a powerful

sex drive." His teeth shone whitely in the fading light, but the glow in his eyes told her what she wanted to know.

He knew about her sensitivity to him, how his body, manner and scent all affected her.

"Sex drives aren't all they are cracked up to be. I have been ignoring mine for years." The cobbler was disappearing far too quickly. She slowed her bites as much as she could, but all too soon, it was gone. A few gulps of water brought another need to her attention. "Damn it."

She tugged on her boots and looked out the flap of the tent. It was a light rain, but she would still be soaked by the time she made it to the shrubs and back.

"Where are you going?" Alzor paused with the spork halfway to his mouth. The food on his tray was almost gone.

"Call of nature. I will be back shortly. I have no urge to prolong my time in the rain. I don't like getting wet either."

His grin was evil, "But I like it when you are wet. It makes things so much easier."

"Shut up, jackass." She grabbed the convenience pack and sprinted out into the nearest patch of privacy-rendering bush.

Her needs were met in under a minute, the convenience pack helping her to tidy up as well. She was just getting ready to return to the tent

when she heard a hiss behind her. *No, no, no, no.*

Maura turned slowly, trying not to gasp at the sight of the monster approaching her. A furry scorpion was the only description that she could come up with as she dodged the first strike of its tail. The second stab came at her scant seconds later, accompanied by a strike with a pincer.

She dodged again, but it drew blood. Her arm burned where the claw had scraped the skin, she yelped at the pain, but wasn't thinking about calling for help until a growl sounded from behind her.

Seven feet of white and black muscle and fur flew over her head to take the monster down in a flurry of hissing and growls. The two combatants rolled to their feet, circling each other, looking for vulnerabilities.

Maura backed away, not wanting to get between them and also having no natural defences beyond her wit. She didn't think that insulting the new monster would cause him to change his mind about attacking.

Alzor circled, struck and then circled again. A green blood oozed from the punctures and slashes he left on the monster. The white of his fur was turning a sickly slimy green with the residue, but he kept going.

The bug got slower. Staggered and fell. It tried to rise, but was dying now and could not manage

to get back up.

Alzor administered a mercy strike to kill it, then limped back toward her.

She wanted to curl against him, but he was covered with that disgusting blood. "Maybe a bath before we go back to the tent?"

Instead of leading her to the icy stream, he trotted deeper into the brush. Less than a hundred feet in, she was confronted by the cutest pool with warm water steaming on the surface. It was barely big enough for Alzor, but he jumped in with no hesitation.

It would take him forever to get all the blood out of his fur, so she walked into the water to help.

Wow. The lapping of the water was almost blood hot. It relaxed every muscle in her body, simply from the surround of heat.

Her feet found footing and she braced herself as she set about scrubbing the seven-foot tiger from head to toe. When her fingers massaged his fur and muscle, a low and heavy purr started up. "Aw. That's so cute, you big pussy."

He didn't catch the Terran euphemism, so she merely smiled and kept scrubbing. The water continually cleared, so it was obvious that the pool had some form of circulation. When she rubbed around his eyes and ears, his eyes closed in happiness. She fought a giggle as she did something that had always pleased her cat back at

home—she rubbed her hands under his chin, lifting his jaw line.

The purr took on deafening bass tones and she smiled. His legs came clean easily, his back was tidy and once she finished his head, she was exhausted but satisfied.

“Okay, sport, you are clean and tidy. Feel free to hop out and shake at a suitable distance from me.” He gave her a look that showed a distinct urge to dunk her, but he got out of the pool gracefully.

She stayed in. Her tattered ship suit was stuck to her skin far too faithfully and she was tired. Bone tired. The heat of the pool was too tempting.

She heard the impact of the water drops as Alzor shook himself dry, but then his hands were pulling her from the water. “Out you go before you become a prune.”

“Spoilsport.”

“Yes, I am. Thanks for the rub down. That blood was nasty.” He shuddered. “Now, you are not safe in these woods at night, so you are going to have to ride me back to the campsite. The corpse of that bug should keep others away until morning, but I won’t leave you unprotected. So, I am going to shift and you are getting on my back. Are we clear?”

Her lips twisted as she thought of all the rude comments about riding him. “Clear.” She

managed to keep the comments inside and merely chuckled to herself as she climbed onto his warm, furry back.

Feeling the rock and glide of his body under hers started a whole new round of lust, this one based on the sensual feel of his fur against her mostly bared skin. *Damn. Damn, damn, damn. Why him? Why now? And why not one of the techs that was always mooning over me at the station?* Those guys were good looking, had steady jobs in the Alliance and were available. Not a shifter from God-knows-where in Nyal space from a breed that was more social class than species.

And he was a pilot for cripes sake. Just like she was. What was she going to do? Become his mate and meet him on weekends or, given her schedule, once a year? She sighed and rubbed her face in his fur. They were almost back to the tent and her doubts could wait for the morning. Now, she needed sleep.

Her eyelids were getting heavy. The steady pad of his feet rocked her until her hands loosened and she could feel herself slipping off him, but she wasn't alert enough to care.

"Oh no, you don't."

He was naked skin under her hands. She was loosely gripping his shoulders, but when he stood up, she slid limply to the ground.

"Maura, what is it? Your pupils are dilated."

"Sleepy."

"Maura, this is important, did it cut you?"

"Just a little." She waved at her left arm and he examined it. What he could see in the dark was beyond her, but whatever it was made him curse in his native tongue.

He lifted her and sprinted to their stacked shuttles, the light rain dwindled to a hazy mist. "It's a good thing you can see in the dark. I wouldn't be able to find my butt with both hands in this mess." She was just talking to hear something. The roaring in her ears was a little disconcerting.

"Yes, it is a good thing I can see. I could also find your butt in the dark with my eyes blindfolded. Echo location is also one of my talents. Plus you have a fantastic ass. It would be a shame if it went missing."

She would have blushed, but everything he said was coming to her in a tunnel.

They entered his shuttle and he put her on the floor. Lights glowed enough to let her see. A medical kit was locked onto the wall and he ripped it from its moorings. Kneeling next to her, he fiddled with some hyposprays, finally pressing them in a series to her neck.

"Hey, why so serious? It's just a little scratch."

"You have no resistance to its bacteria and there was enough blood in the water to complete your

contamination. Lie still."

"The floor is hard. And cold. I feel hot."

He paused and looked down at her, concern in his face before he forced a smile. "Normally, I would say you are very hot, but somehow, now is not the time."

"What are you injecting me with?"

"Antibiotics, antivenin and this next one is a sedative. You will heal better if you rest." He pushed her down with a hand on her shoulder.

"I don't like sleeping on the floor. It isn't comfortable or good for my back. I think I should—" He silenced her with a kiss. The distraction of his lips against hers, the flick of his tongue into her mouth and the tug of his fingers against her hair did a wonderful job of disrupting her train of thought.

She tried to kiss him back, but the last thing she remembered was the spreading warmth in her limbs and heat pooling between her thighs.

"Ow, ow, ow. Fucking ow." Maura sat up slowly, her body aching in every joint.

"Slow down. The toxin almost killed you." Alzor was a wavy blur in her sight that eventually cleared when she blinked rapidly.

He sat next to her on the small bed and coaxed her into leaning against him. "You had me worried, Maura."

"Why was that?"

"I have only had my way with you once. It would have been a disaster for me to have to start again with someone else."

She punched his abdomen lightly and he *oofed* in reaction. "The monster scratched me."

"And then you bathed me, mixing his blood into the water. I have resistance, but you are from another system with a whole other set of monsters. You almost died." His arm pulled her tightly against him.

She squeaked in protest as he hugged her too tightly. "But I didn't, you saved me."

"Yes, I did."

"You know, in some cultures on my world that means that I owe you my life. You have the right to ask whatever you will of me."

He was quiet for a long moment. "Unbraid your hair. All of it."

"Will you help? I am a little weak and holding my arms above my head for that long won't be a good idea."

He didn't need to be asked twice. He started from the bottom and finger combed her locks free of their confinement. She worked on the other side.

When her hair was loose and covering her entire torso, she looked up at him with a smile. "There."

He lifted a hank of hair to his face and inhaled deeply. Alzor lifted it away from her neck and nuzzled against her, sniffing and occasionally licking as he went.

He leaned back and met her gaze with swirling heat in his eyes. "That's much better and for my next request..."

CHAPTER SIX

He held her by her hips as she rode him oh so slowly. Every few strokes, he leaned forward to give her a kiss, nip at her lips or lick sweat from her neck. He was seated on the foldaway bunk in his ship and she was astride his thighs, raising and lowering her body on him in a dreamy, slow motion. Her breath came in and out in heavy sighs as she moved, her muscles flexing and breasts shining with sweat.

Their slow tango made her wish it could go on forever, but already her body was giving her signals that it was ready to shatter. She moved faster, fighting his grip. His efforts to slow her did not have much effect. He threw his head back, growling as she took him with her over the edge and into pleasure. Her body locked on him, clamping down as it milked his cock, striving to reach the ultimate goal of taking his seed into her.

He roared as his body got its wish, his hips jerked up against hers while he pulled her tight to

his pelvis. He rocked against her three, four, five times and then relaxed.

She slumped against him, resting her head in the crook of his neck. Lazily, she licked at the side of his neck, tasting the sweat of their exertions. "I suppose that I should mention that you can't get me pregnant. Birth control is mandatory in my line of work."

He sighed and lifted his head. "If that is a challenge, you will be sorry."

"Not a challenge, but I was just wondering how long you stay in rut."

"Two more days if we keep coupling. Two weeks if we don't."

She leaned back, holding on to his shoulders for support, "Does your sperm have some kind of a schedule I should know about?"

He laughed, then pulled her back into his arms. "They filed a flight plan. I will give you a copy when we get back to the station."

Her snort was stifled by a yawn. "Great, but I don't know if Alliance equipment can handle it."

"Your equipment seems to be handling it just fine so far." A roll of his hips punctuated his lewd joke and Maura gasped as aftershocks shook her.

"Knock it off, Al. We need to check the jump engines and get back to the station."

"The station will keep. I don't want the medical staff taking you away from me the instant that we

dock.”

“Well, come with me and we won’t be separated.” She chuckled. “You can file a request for rutting privileges with me.”

“I think I may just do that.” He was back to nuzzling her neck and then he did the sexiest thing she could think of. He started to purr.

Joined as they were, the vibrations started something that she wanted him to finish. He was semi-hard inside her, so she twisted her hips slowly until his body responded.

Her instincts to move on him fought with her fatigue. “Oh, I want you right now, but I don’t think I can stay upright for another round.”

“That can be fixed.”

He lifted her off him, her body cooling in the areas that were still damp from their coupling. He turned her, laid her on her belly on the edge of the bunk and stepped up behind her.

“That’ll work.” It was the only quip that she could get out before he thrust into her and then he was moving. Alzor swept her hair away from her back and laid a string of kisses down her spine as he plunged into her. Her feet hung inches off the ground, she was helpless, but he did not exploit her vulnerability. Instead, he helped her raise her senses into high gear, wrapping her in the scent of their coupling and moving against her in the most delightful way.

His inner stroke hit her g-spot with every lunge, leaving her trembling and energized. She bit the blankets on the bunk in frustration, tears leaking from her eyes as pleasure so sharp it almost hurt ran through her. Alzor's kisses turned to nips and the nips to bites as he worked his way back up her spine. She was almost to the edge of release when he bit down sharply, throwing her into a sharp, bright light urging a scream from her lungs.

His roar of triumph echoed hers and she braced herself as he pumped into her again. That was it. She was done.

He dropped down against her, his chest to her back and then he stood with his arms wrapped around her. His cock slid free and she whimpered at the stimulus.

He tucked her back onto the bunk and smoothed her hair from her face. "I am sorry. You were not well enough for this kind of sport."

She gave him a weak grin. "If this is a sport, you win. I'll get you a trophy when we are back on the station."

"I am going to hold you to that. Sleep now. I will check the engines on your shuttle." He tucked her in and left through the upper hatch via a retractable ladder. She looked around and in the dim light, she could see the tent and the rest of the camp gear. He had collected it all while she was

out.

Efficient bugger.

She didn't sleep, but she dozed as Alzor moved the equipment back to the Guardian Echo. It was fun to watch him stride around naked, but she was far too tired now to act on it. When it was all stowed, he came back for her.

"Up you get. Stop staring at my ass and climb that ladder."

"Fine. But no peeking. Give me a ten count before you follow me." It was disconcerting to climb a ladder with semen snaking down her thigh, but it was worse when she looked down to see Alzor with a clear view between her thighs. He had her tattered clothing in her hand, and his erection was once again waving proudly. *Damn him and his quick recovery time.* The ten count didn't matter when he was looking right up the ladder. "Stop staring, pervert."

"I can look. But you are too tired for more touching." He stayed at the bottom of the ladder until she was clear and inside the Echo.

Her first instinct was to hit the lav. She used all of the facilities as quickly as she could and was still naked, but now clean when she emerged.

"Aw, I love my scent on you."

"I like it as well, but not running down my thighs. It is sticky and distracting." The benches on the Echo folded out into beds and she was

sorely tempted, but it was time to get back to the station. Less chance of a hairy insect attack there.

A sudden thought occurred to her and she flipped around storage devices until she found a spare ship suit. It was grey and when she closed it, it fought her breasts, but otherwise was a good fit. Alzor had used the lav himself, but he looked horribly disappointed to see her fully dressed.

"Sorry, but I had to put the toys away sometime, Al."

"Why do you call me Al?" He tugged his own ship suit back on, complete with boots.

She wiggled her bare toes. "It is common practice amongst mating Terrans to shorten the name of their partner."

He looked happy as she said that. "So that would make you..."

"Mo is the most common nickname for me."

He bowed formally. "Mo then. Are you capable of piloting?"

"We will find out. It is a good thing for me that I have you here to back me up if something happens." She stretched and put on the control halo.

"Is that..." Admiration for the ship was in his eyes.

"Yup. Experimental tech at its best." The locked ships shuddered as she powered up and lifted off.

"This is the Guardian Echo requesting jump

clearance." She broadcasted it on the station's frequency and waited.

"Guardian Echo, you are cleared for jump." The friendly voice was familiar and cheerful. "Hope to see you soon, Pilot Aitcheson."

Power levels were good, she and Al were both strapped in, the computer locked in the coordinates for the station and identified the clear area for jump. "Are you ready, Al?"

"I am. Punch it."

She punched it. Two fingers on the releases while her mind activated the jump. They were in two places at the same time and then they stabilized. It took less than a minute to locate the station and fifteen minutes to hover over the drop bay to release the Reeva Nahrad.

"I like this ship." Al's words were admiring.

"So do I. Too bad it was only for this shakedown. I would love to have this kind of tech at my disposal on a day-to-day basis." She sighed and steered toward the bay that was opening for the Guardian Echo. It was the end of a very exciting trip, but she didn't really believe that Alzor would pursue the relationship after they docked.

He had his choice of the ladies for hire on the station. Some wouldn't even charge him. She would be a fleeting memory or a story to tell his buddies over a glass of intoxicant.

"What are you thinking? A cloud passed over your face." Al was looking at her with concern on his handsome features.

"Just imagining those perverts in medical giving me the once over. Alliance requirement for any incident while travelling. This certainly counts as quite the incident." Maura didn't know why she didn't tell him the truth. She was a pilot, she knew the rules. What happened off station, stayed off station.

The Guardian Echo docked without any trouble, smooth as silk. With a relieved sigh, she powered it down and waited for the seals to glow on the air lock.

Alzor looked at her quizzically. "What are you waiting for?"

"I am waiting for the seals to be fixed and the docking area oxygenated. I have almost been blown into space before and have no urge to repeat the experience."

His face grew flat at the mention of her almost losing her life, but he waited until she nodded confirmation that the seals were in place. She opened the hatch and led the way quickly and maintaining her safety protocol. Her helmet wouldn't fit over her hair the way it was, so she prayed that her luck would not run out.

Al held her hand as they moved briskly through the dock and to the airlock. They waited

in silence for the seals to engage again and then walked into the station hall toward the approaching medical team.

"Well, Al. I believe this is where we part ways." Maura was fighting tears, but she kept her chin up.

"Pilot Aitcheson? Please come with me." The tech was polite but firm. If she didn't agree, he would tranq her and haul her off.

"Just a moment." She waved them off and turned to look Alzor in the eye. "Take care of yourself. I hope your folks aren't as invasive when you get to your section of the station." She leaned up and kissed him. A sweet kiss. A lifetime of goodbyes in that kiss.

He looked surprised and bemused when she backed away and turned to follow the med techs.

"You owe me two more days, Mo. I will come to collect."

Her smile said what she couldn't. He was saying it for effect and she knew it.

What man would want a woman who was more at home in the sky than on the ground?

CHAPTER SEVEN

They were thorough, they were invasive and they gave her an interesting bit of information. The blood of that bug had so altered her chemistry that she was no longer protected by her birth control. She wasn't pregnant, but if she didn't take precautions, it was a possibility.

They weren't even able to offer her a new option. Her body was still too unstable. Hopefully, it would also render her body inhospitable to the sperm still in her. If his physiology was near to that of Terrans, she would still have three days of worry. *Fantastic.*

Eventually, she was given a mostly clean bill of health and sent on her way. They hadn't questioned why she was wearing a non-standard suit or where her shoes were. There was still some discretion in the medical profession.

Her quarters had never looked so welcoming, but the incessant blinking of a priority message could not be ignored.

"Pilot Maura Aitcheson, this is a priority request for communication with the Terran Representative, Amy Tyrell. Please respond as soon as possible."

She keyed in the access codes and soon was looking into the eyes of the Empress of the Haldis Imperium. "Hello, Amy."

"Maura. Glad to see you are in one piece."

"Glad to be in one. You called?" It was not her first conversation with the ex-negotiator, nor would it be the last.

"Yes. I have just received a breeding request with your name on it."

Shock was too mild a term for what she was feeling. "From whom?"

"This is where it gets weird. A non-Alliance race called the Kalorda of Nyal space."

"Who sent the request?" Alzor wouldn't have had time yet. He must have called someone while she was sedated.

"High King Nrodin Aklra, on behalf of his son, Prince Alzor Nrodin."

Interesting naming system. "Wait. Prince? No way is he a fucking prince!"

Amy's eyebrows rose in surprise. "I take it you have met him."

Maura cleared her throat. "We have bumped into one another here and there."

"Well, you must have made an impression."

They are offering a treaty and a personnel exchange for you. As well as a hefty bride price."

"You are kidding."

"I am a Negotiator and this was their first offer. If you want, I can get you a small planet." Her lips twitched.

"That won't be necessary."

"Do you agree?" This was formal.

Maura had one chance and this was it. If she said no now, there would be no further discussion. But if she said yes, things were rapidly going to get out of her control. "I want to be able to keep my pilot standing. I have to be able to fly. But other than that. Yes. I will accept the terms as stated with that caveat."

"Excellent. I think I may be able to work something out for you. Is he a pilot as well?"

"He is."

"Fantastic. This may just work out then. Tyrell out."

For a woman who had a demanding husband, children and a thousand other demands for her time, Amy was very direct. It was refreshing.

Maura sat and waited for the inevitable call. Her earlier fatigue burned away by the negotiation for her reproductive rights or her hand in marriage, whatever came first.

She read a book, sorted her socks and waited. She ordered a new red ship suit from stores and

waited.

When the com finally indicated the call, she almost jumped out of her skin.

"It's a deal. Formal ceremonies to be concluded on his home world in front of witnesses. You will leave research station Del as soon as he claims you."

"Fantastic. This is going to be a hilarious wedding. All I have to wear is my jump suits." Maura put her face in her hands.

"Don't worry. I am sure his family will take care of it. If not, you will set a new trend." Amy was the Empress of looking on the bright side. If she hadn't, she never would have agreed to a union with Palden IV. He was a petulant jerk, but he valued friendship and in her Negotiator armour, Amy had been his staunchest and most honest friend. When she came out, it was almost poetic that he had knocked her up by accident and then forced her to marry him. Like a messed-up fairy tale.

"Thanks for your efforts on my behalf. Keep me posted on my flight options, would you?"

"Of course. I have the king's contact information, so keeping in touch with you should not be too difficult."

"I am glad. He didn't even mention his last name, let alone the name of his home world. I don't want to be stuck in the middle of nowhere

with no one to talk to."

"I will keep in touch, one way or another."

"Thank you, Amy. Pilot Aitcheson, out." She disconnected the call before she could succumb to nerves. If the negotiations had been settled, then Alzor would be getting the same kind of call. *Would he come to me or expect me to go to him?*

The answer came in a heavy knock at her door. Her bright-eyed suitor was on the other side and as the door opened, he stepped in, lifting her and pinning her against the wall. "You said yes."

"I did. You had your father put in a bid for me?"

"I did. You want to keep flying?"

"I do." She crossed her arms over her breasts, glaring at him.

"Then you will, but I will be with you the entire time." He placed a kiss on her nose.

She wrinkled her nose at him and looked up, not knowing what to do. "What happens now?"

"Well, I have to arrange transport to my home world and then we will be married." His dark brows waggled suggestively.

"How long until we leave for your home?"

"Six hours. My ship is being fuelled as we speak."

He leaned in to breathe her scent and she couldn't help but sigh happily as his mouth and nose caressed the sensitive skin of her neck. She

had always had a rather large erogenous zone there, which most partners had ignored in favour of her breasts. It was sad really. Although having someone caress her breasts warmed the fires, it could never create the same flaring heat as a delicate touch on her neck.

Alzor ran his fingers through her hair, tugging her head to give him better access. The purr that turned her on so much started up in his chest. She heard a tearing sound and moved her head just enough to see the fabric of her suit parting under his fingertips—make that his claws. He had shifted his hand to enable him to peel the fabric from her in strips.

She shoved him away with a gasp. “You could have just opened the closure.”

“This was more fun and I didn’t have to look.” He moved back to what he had been doing, this time stroking inside the shredded suit to caress her skin softly. He stroked down from her collarbone, over and under her breasts to trace her ribs and belly. When his fingers brushed under her navel, she almost came on the spot.

Between his stimulation of her neck and that delicate caress above her pubic bone, her pulse was pounding and an empty ache was echoing between her thighs. He had her pinned to the wall, pelvis to pelvis, so she rocked against him, desperate for further contact.

“More, please.”

He didn't waste any time—he peeled off her body suit and then turned to bounce her onto the bed. His suit hit the floor after a bit of tugging. His boots were caught in the fabric.

Naked, aroused and intent, he covered her. Nuzzling at her neck and then working his way down her torso until he was on his belly between her spread legs. He inserted two fingers and began to slide them in and out of her while he used his rough tongue to lick her clit. Her orgasm was immediate, but he kept going. The aftershocks rippled through her as her arousal climbed again. The irritation of her sensitized clit becoming lost as she twisted to take his fingers deeper.

“Fuck me, you fuzzy bastard!” She was surprised to hear her own voice, but the torture was not to be borne. She wanted him now.

He took the invitation with a long, slow pressure that had her body yielding to him in small increments. As his cock filled her, she moaned in relief. He had been driving her insane with the wait, sometimes she just wanted to *do it*.

He rocked into her, his hips and buttocks flexing as he thrust. Each withdrawal was torture and each forward slide sent blazes of pleasure through her. She could have spent forever like this, but eventually, even bliss had to end.

His roar shook the walls of her room and

probably echoed down the hall, but her scream when he reached down to rub her clit followed it closely. As she felt the spurt inside her, she remembered the medical diagnosis that she was unprotected. It wasn't likely that she had ovulated, but if anything was going to spur her into season, Alzor was it.

Finally, together on a bed, he separated their bodies and lay behind her, spooning. "Thank you."

"For what?" *He couldn't mean the sex, could he?*

"For agreeing to the breeding contract. My father has despaired that he will never be a grandfather. I hope to eventually prove him wrong."

She sighed and decided to keep him in the loop. "It may happen sooner than you think if we are compatible. That bug venom killed my birth control. I wasn't pregnant at the exam, but it could happen any time now."

His hand smoothed across her abdomen and rested on her belly. "Really? How often do you go into heat?"

This was the hard part. Most evolved species did not have the same type of system as Terrans did. "Every twenty-eight days. I am fertile for three of them in that twenty-eight-day period."

She could almost feel his shock. She turned to look at him and the blinding happiness that she

saw took her aback. "You are happy about that?"

"Hell yes. I was prepared to wait years before you were willing or able to bear my young. This will tell us almost immediately if medical intervention is required." He nuzzled her neck, but this time, it was just for the contact and her scent.

She didn't need to ask him if he was genuinely happy. He was purring.

CHAPTER EIGHT

He still wouldn't tell her where they were going and the flight plan she had taken off the station had been woefully inadequate. When she asked him about the secrecy, he muttered something about his species not really being appreciated for its finer qualities.

"So, your species is hiding in plain sight?"

He grinned and applied the rear thrusters to propel them away from the jump ship. "Something like that. When the males of a species have the ability to attract females from any other species, it makes for a rather tense relationship."

A dense field of tiny particles floated in front of them. Their sensor did not penetrate it and that was where Maura started to catch on.

"Okay. The males of other species want to kill you, so you have a planet somewhere that you can keep the women that you seduce into following you."

His lips twitched. "Something like that."

So, she was now in a long line of women who had followed a large cat back to his home. "How did your mother leave your father then?" It was a sensitive topic, but she wanted to understand the family dynamic before they landed.

"He had left our planet in search of a mate and when he found her, she was attached to her world and family. When she left, he took my brother and me and returned to his home with us."

His piloting was direct and he knew where they were going. The dust mist that they had flown into would block anyone tracking his ship and keep them from being followed.

"That was rough. Moved away from everything you knew."

"It wasn't too bad. I missed my mother, but the fellowship of other shifters made up for it to a certain extent."

"I guess it would be a comfort to be able to be yourself."

"Well, meeting my cousins was also nice."

An idea struck her. "Are any of your cousins female?"

"No. The Kalorda were a designed race. We simply do not manufacture sperm that isn't male."

"Designed, like cloned?" Her eyebrows almost made it to her hairline.

"Does it make me less attractive to you as a partner?"

"No. It is just interesting. Another Terran has been given over to the Seth-Ari. They are a clone race on their first generation of births. She had a baby girl."

He looked surprised at her enthusiasm. "Well, we have been breeding for centuries and there has not been a female born yet. It has been suggested that the gene that makes us shift creates the block. After all, a pregnant female would be unable to shift forms without harming her infants."

"I suppose. Still, having to fly off world to shop for your wives must be awkward."

"Well, my species is known for its pilots." His hands on the controls gave credence to his assertion. He knew how to handle a ship.

"Hmm. My species is only known for its adaptability. It seems that, with a little bit of tinkering, we can survive and thrive just about anywhere. A weird talent, but the only one we have." She shrugged.

They flew in silence for a while. "When we arrive, part of the tradition is for any unattached males in rut to try and seduce you. You may want to stay aware of that when we meet my father."

"What happens if one of them succeeds in hypnotizing me?"

"Then I will do battle for your hand. It will be vicious, bloody and a death may be involved. You will be the property of the winner. No marriage,

no contracts, just property."

"I will not be running into the arms of a relative of yours. I just wanted to know what the cause and effect was. There will probably be other females around and I want an idea of how they got there."

"Oh. You are probably right about that. There are a few women who get passed from male to male as they come into their season."

"Can someone battle for a wife?"

"No. It is forbidden to interfere with a mated pair bond."

"Then how can men pass women around?"

"The woman cannot stay with one male. Her impulses allow her to be seduced and enraptured by any male in rut. If she can't be faithful, she can't be a wife."

"Ah. Just a minute." Maura fiddled in her bags for a moment and then sat back in the co-pilots seat. As they moved along, she strapped knives to her forearms and calves.

"What are those for?"

"In case I am tempted to forget myself, I thought it would help to wear a reminder that I am here under contract." She flicked her wrists and the knives jumped into her hands.

"Effective. Can you use them?"

"Three months of knife duels while I was in pilot training. And I practice every chance I get. I

think it will probably be effective as a deterrent."

"Strap in. We are going through the maelstrom."

Before she had a chance to ask *the what*, the ship was shaking and Alzor's full attention was on the controls. She buckled her harness and held on to the arms of her chair, helpless to steer the ship through the swirling vortex in front of them.

Part of her would have loved the feel of controlling the vessel as the maelstrom tried to tear it apart and the rest of her was happy she wasn't driving. The wild bucking of the otherwise stable craft was testament to the skill of the pilot.

He was taking her home.

"Welcome, Daughter. I am Nrodin, High King to our species. You may call me father."

He looked a great deal like his son, Alzor, but more guarded, less open in his manner of greeting. His other son stood behind him, Zarl had greeted his brother and soon-to-be-wife with the charm and enthusiasm of a large kitten. He looked to be a few years younger than Alzor, but he had far more charm and a love of life that shone through in everything he said and did.

"Thank you, High King. I will save the familial term for after the ceremonies." She inclined her head and the breeze in the forecourt of the castle lifted and ruffled her loose hair.

Males had started to wander into the courtyard, scenting the breeze as they walked.

Maura stuck herself to Alzor's side and muttered, "It looks like they smell red meat."

"Just a new female that they are checking out. The dangerous ones are the ones positioning themselves upwind of you. They want you to scent them and fall under their spell." The males under discussion were indeed moving to put themselves upwind and Maura stifled a laugh. Not one of them was wearing a shirt. Tight trousers tucked into laced boots were the standard mode of dress. It was like being at a male-stripper convention.

The shades of skin ranged from chalky white, to deep mahogany brown and every shade of brown in between.

"I look forward to the day that you call me Father then." Nrodin smiled. He smelled similar to his eldest son, but the differences kept Maura from getting all giggly about it.

As far as the other scents she was being exposed to, she enjoyed them all but had no urge to fling herself into their arms.

"Be welcome on our world and in my home until Alzor provides one for you. Clothing for the ceremonies has been provided and you have been assigned a guestroom until they are completed."

"Thank you. It is most generous of you."

"Not at all if you are half the woman that my son thinks you are." Nrodin laughed. "If his assessments are accurate, we will soon be filing a number of requests for women of your species."

She knew that the expression she had was not what he had hoped for. "High King, there are only two thousand Terrans currently in the Alliance. Of those, sixty-five percent are female and of those, only twenty percent are still unmatched. We are a protected species and the Alliance is very carefully examining any and all offspring we produce. I don't know how successful a request would be."

"Understood, but be aware, my dear, that the Kalorda also have much to give. You may be surprised by how many women the Alliance is willing to provide."

He led her into the dark shade of the castle, passing any number of males who were flexing in an effort to get her attention. A hot blush rose to her cheeks as a few of them stroked hard ridges of flesh beneath their trousers to impress her with their length and girth.

She turned to Alzor and met his amused gaze. "You weren't exaggerating."

He laughed. "No, I was not. You are fortunate my father is here. Normally, they would try to do it naked."

She shuddered and not in a good way. The chances of a woman falling into the arms of a

random male were high with all of these guys around. She could see the perfection of the original in the current design. Whomever had created the clone race had really enjoyed hard musculature in the male physique.

The guestroom loomed in front of her and the guard that was placed at the door made her smile. There was a slow parade behind them.

"Your gown is on your bed. We will collect you in an hour." Nrodin nodded and then pulled Alzor away from her before they could kiss goodbye.

Muttering to herself, Maura entered the guestroom and was about to open her ship suit when a noise on the bed got her attention. "Okay. Get out."

The deep chuckle came from the expanse of the bed. "But, Lady. We have not even been properly introduced."

"I am guessing you are a horny pervert." She slid her knives from their sheaths and gripped them lightly.

"I am merely lonely and wishing to introduce myself." The golden man with the chocolate eyes rose from her bed with lust in his gaze.

"Fine, who are you and get out."

"Nadir, cousin to your Alzor." He ran the tips of his fingers up and down his chest in invitation, the musk he was exuding almost made her knees

buckle. "Wouldn't it be wonderful to have us *both* in your bed?"

He closed in on her, so she pressed the knives to his body. One to his chest, the other his groin.

"Guard! Get your ass in here!"

Nadir looked shocked. He looked down at the knives and backed away. She pressed forward until he was out the opened door. Her guard was standing there with a foolish grin on his face as she backed Nadir into the hallway.

She took a deep breath and made her next statement clear to any and all who were within earshot. "I came here to wed Alzor. I will not betray his trust or my own dignity with one of you. Get out and stay out!"

The surprised faces in the hall broke into grins. Her guard laughed out loud when two more males came out of her rooms and wandered causally down the hall as if they hadn't been lying in wait in her chambers.

"Weirdoes." She stomped back into her chamber and closed the door. She didn't trust the men here, so if her gown was concealing, she was going to include some steel.

She walked to the bed that had been previously occupied by Nadir and looked down. He hadn't been resting on her gown, but there wasn't much of a gown to lie on. A red bodice with a slit skirt was where Nrodin had stated her gown would be.

It was her signature colour, but it reminded her forcibly of the planetoid where she and Alzor had spent their first time together.

Gold strappy sandals were next to the bed and she put them on with glee. She loved sandals. Her toes wiggled happily. Her hair was still down as per Alzor's request, so she brushed it until the heavy black waves fell in a silky curtain.

The mirror in her room showed her pale green eyes framed by her dark hair, which was set off by the bright red bodice and skirt. Now...where to put the knives.

The ceremony was brief. Alzor was wearing tight trousers covered with bright red embroidery and tall black boots. It was enough to make her mouth water. That warm muscled body and he would soon be all hers.

Her gown fluttered, exposing her knives, causing a ripple of laughter through the witnesses. She had attached them to her inner thigh above the knee and the bands were clearly visible when the wind tugged the skirt aside.

Her groom wasn't deterred. He spoke his vows declaring his protection of her until death parted them and she followed suit. She swore her loyalty and her *mostly* obedience to him. She wasn't declaring complete obedience and he merely smiled and stroked her palm with his thumb.

Nrodin raised his hands over them, "I now pronounce them mated for the benefit of the Kalorda. We shall defend their union to the death."

The witnesses cheered and broke off into groups. As Maura watched with Alzor's hand holding hers, a festival sprang up around them. "What's going on?"

Nrodin came up behind them. "Your presence here has created quite a stir. The men are restless and knowing that Alzor will be enjoying your body tonight has made them a little eager to blow off steam. They will be competing for a night with the free females."

"Oh. Oooohhhh." Now she got it. A final check with medical before they left station Del had indicated that she would be ovulating in the next few days. Good for Alzor, bad for all of the unmated males who were smelling a female in heat.

Her new husband's body being pressed tightly to hers as they walked toward some form of competition reduced her embarrassment.

It was a wrestling match and the instant that Maura figured out what she was looking at, her hormones took a sudden jump from interested toward horny.

Two muscular, oiled shifters were trying to get the upper hand. Each seemed to be trying to pin

his opponent and Maura personally hoped that it took a long, long time.

"I am guessing you are enjoying the competition?" Alzor's amused voice barely penetrated her haze of lust. She finally figured out the cause. Every single male was gathered in the arena area and they were putting out enough pheromones to kill an asthmatic.

"Do they do this every time?"

"Not for the virgins. It is a little much for them to handle."

"Thoughts of handling are very much on my mind right now."

Their conversation was overheard and snickers spread through the crowd. A member of Nrodin's staff brought them a pair of chairs and they were seated at the front of the crowd.

The wrestling continued with pair after pair of oiled shifters taking centre stage. The air was so thick with lust that Maura was shaking with the effects.

"Fuck it." She stood up and then dropped herself onto Alzor's lap, kissing him with an intensity that started howls of approval in the crowd. His hands came to her hips and pressed her tightly against his erection, working her back and forth until she screamed her release to the crowd.

The answering roar deafened her, making her

blush and rethink the morality of public sex. It seemed like a perfectly normal thing to do here and judging by the applause, the watchers enjoyed their heavy petting session as well.

“And that is enough of the festivities.” Alzor swayed a bit as he stood, so she wrapped her legs around him, locking her ankles behind his back and let him wear her back to his rooms.

The applause followed them all the way inside.

The laces of her bodice were tight, constricted by the lust-induced swelling of her breasts. Alzor simply cut them and her torso was free to his hands and mouth.

She threaded her fingers in his hair and steered him where she wanted him. When his sharp teeth grazed her nipples, she flinched and moaned, sighing at the warm flare inside her as he lapped at the underside of her breasts with his rough tongue.

Her skirt hit the floor in a slithering puddle. Her knives joined it shortly after. The bows holding her sandals on were a non-event. She was on the bed in under a minute, naked and waiting.

His pants came off with some difficulty. The fabric was not designed to stretch over an erect cock. He forgot to take his boots off first and once again, she was reduced to giggles as he fought to free himself from his footwear, but then he was

gloriously naked and approaching her with determination to seduce in his eyes.

She drew him down to her and nuzzled his neck as he did hers. She stroked her cheekbone along his own. When he purred, she knew he liked it. He entered her with no further foreplay — her body had been running hot since the wedding ceremony and as he slid home, she sighed in relief.

“Mine.” The word had been running through her head and as he lifted his head to look down at her, she realized she had spoken out loud.

“And you are mine. Now, let me prove it.” He started to slide within her.

“I think you proved it at the wrestling match.”

“Oh, but I love to reiterate.” He used his teeth on her neck, making her moan in reaction.

Maura blanked her mind to everything but the feel of him inside her, against her and in her soul. She was well and truly hooked.

Their bodies gleamed with sweat as their dance took on a frenzied tone. They strove together and when he roared his reaction, her roar was with his.

Their heartbeats slowed until they were lying limply together in the tangle of sheets. The cheering and applause outside got Maura’s attention.

“That isn’t for us, is it?”

“Probably. You were very noisy.” He grinned and took the punch she slammed into his ribs.

"And your roar had a silencer on it." She sighed and nestled her head into the curve of his shoulder.

"So, where do you want to go first?"

"What do you mean?"

"You are a pilot and you have been given free run of the planet as well as the surrounding system until we get our first joint assignment. I thought you might like to pick out a spot for a family home."

"You are going to build one?"

"Of course. Anything for my little bird."

"Won't it be terribly expensive?"

"My father owns the mineral rights to nine moons. I am loaded." He laughed at her expression.

"Gee. I wish you had told me. I hate guys with money. Just give me a killer body and some heady pheromones and I am enraptured. Who needs money?"

She screamed as he flipped her over and tickled her while she was helpless. When she was gasping for air, he lifted her to her knees and slid inside her once again.

Ship or not, in his arms, she could fly.

EPILOGUE

“**S**eriously, Father. If a woman can’t decide between two men, but is loyal to them both, she should be allowed wife status between them. It isn’t common amongst humans, but many of the Kalorda have long-standing bonds that would be broken by one mating and the other no longer being allowed near the home while the female is in heat.”

She had been working on this since a pair of Kalordan’s had come home with a woman who loved them both, but was impervious to any outside males.

The males were devastated, because if they could not wed, she would not stay. Her culture did not allow her to remain unwed and bear a child.

“It doesn’t seem right.”

“Who cares? Paternity of any child can be determined, as the men are not brothers. There is no social risk and it may make life easier for the

women who are here unmated."

Nrodin rubbed his chin. He looked down at her abdomen and smiled for an instant, then back up at her face. "Do you think this would increase the happiness of the women here?"

"I do. A three-way marriage is a little unwieldy, but not as bad as losing citizens to the outer planets when they cannot find a mate here."

"Let me take this under advisement."

"I give you two days. She is unhappy being unwed and they will go with her if she leaves. There have also been three others who have found women, but have not returned in case she is unable to pass your *tests*. Now that I have my own planet, you can bring the women here and keep them separate until a match can be confirmed. You don't need to run the women through the streets to see if they are only looking at their own male. Frankly, Father, I have a hard time not looking at the other men, especially during the wrestling, but I take it home to Alzor and make him help me burn it off." She smiled and poured more tea.

After being married for close to a year, she was finally pregnant. She was six months along and the healers had pronounced her and her offspring fit. This was Nrodin's first visit to their new home and she had immediately pounced on points of concern.

"This is true and we all appreciate

your...enthusiasm at such events." His lips twitched in amusement.

She blushed and sipped at her tea. "I keep all of my clothes on, but just let Al have free reign. It works out well."

Public orgies had spiked dramatically once Al started taking her to the wrestling matches. Apparently, seeing a couple going nuts with clothes-on coitus was an aphrodisiac for some of the ladies and almost all of the men.

"Well, thank you your tireless efforts, nine women who were previously unmatched have found mates and I have allowed their weddings to proceed."

"Excellent. Social progress is always a wonderful thing. Well, mostly a wonderful thing. Sometimes it backfires."

"And sometimes offering a contract to a new species brings wonderful things." He winked and sipped his tea. "Have you given any thought to names?"

"A few. I am currently leaning toward Tishan Alzor."

He nodded and watched as she leaned her cup and saucer against her belly.

She loved watching the clattering of the cup when the baby moved. Having men touching her belly still weirded her out, so she used the cup instead.

Alzor returned from making some repairs to the fencing just in time to watch the teacup dance. "A frisky day?"

She grinned and leaned up for her kiss. "Apparently. The little bugger is starting to interfere with my sleep."

"Well, hells. That's my job."

She laughed and poured him a cup. "Sit and visit. We have just been discussing the possibility of plural marriage."

"Interesting, but I am not sharing you. I have already turned down offers." He grinned and gave her a wink.

Her blush could have lit the building on fire. As Alzor and his father laughed at her, she cast her mind forward to the assignment that was waiting for her as soon as her child was weaned. Nrodin was looking forward to babysitting his grandson, even if he didn't understand why she needed to get back in the sky.

As an Alliance Courier to the Nyal sector, she would be able to fly again whenever she wished it. Alzor would come with her and they would make a wonderful team.

She took his hand across the table and he squeezed her fingers. They already made a wonderful team and soon, they would be a wonderful trio.

He was looking forward to his son arriving and

already planning for next. He only spoke of the children as a set and she didn't have the heart to tell him that unless he was neutered, there would be as many kids as her body could produce.

There would be time to talk to the big cat about a trip to the vet, but not until she had all the little ones she wanted. If it cut into her flight time, she could live with that, as long as she could spend her time in the company of the Kalordans. One in particular.

"Tishan Alzor, you are just the cutest little thing." She nibbled at her son's fingers with her lips. Maura was feeling fine, having come through the birth just as her ancestors who had fourteen children had.

She had completed labour, been cleaned up and she and her husband had taken turns holding their new addition. Alzor was a wreck.

"I can't believe you did that."

Maura stroked the fuzzy little head and smiled. "Hey, you put him in there. I just had to get him out." Al looked at her for a long moment, then curled around her and their new arrival.

"I just hope he doesn't have your sense of humour."

She shifted the baby against her milk-laden breasts and sighed. "I just hope he doesn't have my boobs."

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Welcome to the first novel about the Kalorda. While, of course, every shifter male wants a human woman, there are only so many Terrans to go around. We will simply have to wait and see what happens next with the women who fall into their traps.

Thank you for flying Terran Times Air. We know you have a choice when reading light erotica and thank you for choosing us. Me. Whatever.

Viola Grace

<http://www.violgrace.com>

<http://www.extasybooks.com>

<http://www.devinedestinies.com>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Viola Grace was born in Manitoba, Canada where she still resides today. She really likes it there.

She has no pets and can barely keep sea monkeys alive for a reasonable amount of time. Her line of day job tends to be analytical which leaves her mind hopping to weave stories. No co-worker is safe from her character analysis.

In keeping with busy hands are happy hands, her hobbies have included cross-stitch, needlepoint, quilting, costuming, cake decorating, baking, cooking, metal work, beading, sculpting, painting, doll making, henna tattoos, chain mail, and a few others that have been forgotten. It is quite often that these hobbies make their way into her tales.

Viola's fetishes include boots and corsetry, and her greatest weakness is her uncontrollable blush.

Her writing actively pursues the Happily Ever After that so rarely occurs in nature. It is an admirable thing and something that we should all strive for. To find one that we truly like, as well as love.

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