



Lust Bites  
DARK FALL  
*Gwendolyn Cease*

A Total-E-Bound Publication



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Dark Fall

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**Warning:** This book contains sexually explicit content which is only suitable for mature readers. This story has been rated *Total-e-burning*.

# **DARK FALL**

**Gwendolyn Cease**

## *Dedication*

Mom, thank you for always having faith in me no matter what.  
For our service men and women, the real heroes in our world today.

## Chapter One

Lorem Max Whitfield moved silently through the dawn's light. A breeze kicked up sand and he subtly motioned for his team to stop. They were finally in position. Max cradled his weapon close and went into a crouch waiting for the signal to go.

Max, as one of the senior officers with the longest time served, was patient in the extreme. He'd been a Marine for nearly fourteen years, joining as soon as he'd gotten out of high school at seventeen. He'd done two tours in Iraq and was now on his second in Afghanistan. And for the first time, he was bone deep tired. He planned to request a rotation home after this tour, but didn't think they'd give it to him. Someone with his combat experience wasn't easily let go. All he wanted, though, was to sleep for maybe a month. He'd be good to go again after the break. At least he hoped he would.

To stop the thoughts, he tapped his communication device, "Yo, O'Neal."

"Go ahead, M. I'm listening," a female voice answered.

Keira O'Neil, strangely enough, was one of his best friends in the unit. He couldn't care less that she was a woman. She was a damn fine Marine, and someone he wanted at his back. Her instincts were almost as good as his own, and his were telling him serious shit was heading their way.

"You got anything?" he asked, scanning the desolate landscape.

"Negative. Nothing moving out here, but the sand."

"But?"

"I got a gut feeling something's hinky. Don't know what though."

"Ditto."

He heard their commander give the order to move into the next set of caves. Max motioned to the two men behind him and began to advance. This was the most dangerous time, where they could be spotted at any moment. He worked his way forward, straining all his senses to ascertain what was eating at him. Though he couldn't see or hear anything strange, his gut told him to turn and run.

"O'Neal?" The commander's voice spoke softly in his ear. He must have missed some type of exchange, but he didn't miss the next part.

"We need to fall back. Immediately."

"What is it?"

Max didn't wait for her to answer. He gestured to the two men behind him to begin a retreat. If O'Neal's gut was talking like his, they were in serious danger.

"Pull back. We need to pull back."

Max heard the order being given, but before he could act the world exploded around them. A detonation more intense than anything he'd seen or felt before knocked him to the ground. He could hear screaming as waves of fire seemed to flood the area and he closed his eyes to darkness.

Max opened his eyes and rolled to his feet instantly awake. Two bits of information came to him immediately. One, he was naked. Two, he was trapped inside a cage with a few members of his unit, who were similarly undressed. Max squatted next to the demolitions expert, Dawson, and felt for a pulse. It was strong and steady, but the man was out cold. He moved to check on Hawkins and Colter, who were in similar straits. He glanced around to find the rest of his unit. They weren't with them.

He stood and slowly began to take stock of what type of situation they'd found themselves. The cage sat in a large cave and was one of ten, or at least that's what he could see. He ran a hand over his face, weary and disgusted. The whole situation was a cluster fuck if there ever was one. Sensing movement outside the bars, Max opened his mouth to speak, but nothing issued forth. What approached didn't begin to resemble human. It was mottled grey with a large barrel chest and long muscular arms. Two short little bandy legs with thick muscular thighs propelled the thing forward in an almost comical waddling gait. Two floppy ears topped the head as one large eye centred over what Max assumed was a nose, and two large impressive tusks, which jutted from a square lower jaw.

A series of grunts and squeaks issued from its distorted mouth as it gestured wildly at him. Not knowing what to do, Max shrugged and shook his head. This had to be a dream. It had to. Nothing like the thing before him existed on Earth. If it had, someone would have discovered it, right?

"He wants you to move away from the bars."

Max spun and his gaze dropped to view the small being who stood behind him. He couldn't have been more than five feet with sleek emerald-hued skin, large dark eyes, and cropped forest green hair. The little male cocked his head and studied Max as intently as Max was sure he was studying him.

"Why?" Max finally asked.

"Your size and bearing intimidate him. If there's one thing the Gorsh don't like it's someone meaner than they are."

Max stepped away from the bars without a backwards glance. "This isn't a dream is it?" he asked, though he already knew the answer.

"No." The male motioned him to sit. "I'm Gart of the Trall. I've rarely seen those of your species here."

"Max Whitfield. Where's here?"

Gart thought for a moment. "Currently, we reside in a Gorsh slave camp. Soon they'll move us to the town of Baarl, where they'll attempt to auction us off. The entire realm is Thorash and every inhabitant in it are called Daemons."

"You're joking right?" Max asked, without thinking.

Gart cocked his head again, in an almost bird-like gesture. "I'm sorry, but no."

Max opened his mouth, closed it, and finally settled for breathing deeply. What the fuck! If Gart was to be believed – and really why would he lie? – they were somehow no longer on Earth. How was that possible? How had they gone from Afghanistan to this place?

"I see you have many questions." Gart glanced around quickly. "I'll try to answer what I can, in the time we have. I'm sure you'd like to know how you got here. For that, I have no answer. Somehow, the Gorsh were able to open a portal between this dimension and yours. I don't know how, since opening portals isn't a gift the species possesses. All I know, is a number of beings resembling you were brought here and the Gorsh will auction them off. That's what they do."

"We need to get out of here." Max looked to discover his teammates were beginning to stir.

Gart touched him lightly on the arm. "Their strength lies in the number of beings in each band. Wait, if you wish to attempt an escape, and get to the auction area. It'll be open

and harder to keep track. But know that others have tried to get away before and the punishment was a slow lingering death filled with much pain."

Before Max could join his team, the door of the cage clanged open and three Gorsh waited by the open door. One had a large metal tipped stick, the other a whip, and the third some type of club with spikes.

Max motioned for Hawkins, Colter, and Dawson, who were still groggy, to join them. The three men moved forward and fell into place with Max. He quickly explained the situation as he kept an eye on the creatures currently grunting and squealing at them. In all, ten men were herded to the doorway and he wanted to be ready.

"What's the plan?" Hawkins asked.

"Stay lose and wait for an opening," Max whispered, unsure if the Gorsh could understand him.

"Where're the others?" Dawson asked.

"Don't know. We could be the only ones they captured."

"Or the only ones who survived," Colter mumbled.

Max didn't reply as he followed after Gart. His men eased in behind him and they moved to the doorway. The floor was dirt over rock and free of debris. Max figured they wouldn't want anything lying around someone could use as a weapon. Smart, but obviously they didn't realise if a person was trained right he didn't need a weapon. He *was* one.

The Gorsh herded them out the door and onto a black metal platform. A cage of lights formed around them as it rose slowly into the air. Max guessed the lights weren't there for decoration and stayed well away from them. Four slavers fell into step beside the platform as it moved down a corridor. All Max could see was rock to the sides and above them. He wondered if this was all there was to this strange world they found themselves.

Hawkins leaned in close and whispered, "Where're they taking us?"

"Slave market. Apparently, this is what this species does according to Gart." He nodded towards the smaller man.

Hawkins turned and spoke to the other two men as Max tried to take in as much information as he could. The four guards who walked on either side of them didn't seem in the least worried about some type of escape or rescue. Either it hadn't been attempted or they



all failed. Not much to bring a person hope, but Max and his men weren't just anyone. They were highly trained U.S. Marines and planned to fight.

They turned a corner to find a huge wall of pulsing blue light blocking the passage. It flowed and cracked as if made of liquid lightning, and he found it beautiful if not a little disturbing. The closer they got he could feel the hair rise on his body as if the air was charged with static electricity. Without hesitation, the platform and Gorsh crossed into the light. Max closed his eyes against the glare and felt hot air flow around his body.

A second later the glare was gone. Max opened his eyes to a huge open cavern echoing with what sounded like a million voices. He moved towards the bars of light as the platform began to rise higher in the air. Crowds of people came into view, as did buildings and streets. The only thing he could equate it to was a small city. Beings, since he wouldn't call them people, milled around as a large crowd began to gather around a raised rock stage.

The platform they were on came to rest at the edge of the stage as more Gorsh swarmed around it protectively. The lights disappeared and they were nudged and shoved to face the gathering audience. Max made sure he and his men stayed close to each other as they waited for an opportunity to escape. There was no way in hell he'd allow them to be separated. They didn't know anything about where they were so they were better off together.

One of the Gorsh stepped forward and began to speak to the assembled crowd. They quickly quieted as he began motioning towards the group of men and Max figured he was talking about what good slaves they'd make. Yeah, if you wanted to die. He watched as another one of the slavers stepped in and shoved Gart towards the male speaking. Max tensed, hating the way the small man was being treated. He forced himself to cool down though. This wasn't the time to lose focus.

A few people stepped up to look over the Trall and Max looked away sickened. A society that treated its members as belongings didn't deserve respect. He kept his head averted until raised voices drew his gaze back to where Gart stood. A misshapen being with clawed feet and an oblong head waved and shrieked at Gart while the Gorsh knocked the Trall to the ground. Without thinking, Max sprung forward and lashed his foot out to knock the Gorsh off the stage. He spun and placed himself between Gart and the other being. It fluttered its hands and backed away.

Slavers rushed forward to grab him, and he moved swiftly striking out with feet and hands. His men moved to help him and he ordered them to go, as he took three guards down. He lost sight of them as more Gorsh moved forward. Max could feel his blood pumping with adrenaline and rage. For the first time, he became what he was trained to be, a killing machine, and damn, it felt good.

Something dropped down on him from above and he felt a biting sting against his neck. He staggered as a multi-legged creature dropped to the floor and skittered away. A burn started in his neck and spread throughout his body between one breath and the next. He staggered and fell to one knee as the Gorsh backed away. Impossibly, he began to get aroused. His muscles shook as his cock grew hard and painful. What the fuck was happening?

A foot kicked him in the side and Max could do nothing but take the blow. He hit the ground, but didn't have the energy to get to his feet. The only thing he wanted was to fuck. Sweat broke out and rolled off his body as his temperature spiked. He shook the sweat from his eyes as someone forced him to his feet. The touch caused him to yell out as his hips jerked spasmodically. The crowd around him laughed as he staggered behind whoever had him.

A Gorsh male stepped in front of him and finally spoke so he could understand. "You have been stung with Zargat venom. We give it to our females, since it makes them long to be taken for hours. But for you it means death, unless you want me to fuck you."

Max lurched forward and drove a fist into the male's gut. The other being staggered back, and Max dropped to the ground once more. If he was going to die, he planned to take out as many of them as he could.

## Chapter Two

Darke moved through the streets of Baarl acting as if he was aimlessly wandering, in actuality, it was far from the truth. Most of the citizens moved quickly out of his path, since everyone gave Carthus Daemons a wide berth. The only thing higher up on the scare-o-metre than a Carthus was a Vorshak, and even he would think twice about taking one on, since they always came in pairs. He constantly scanned the crowd as he walked, looking for his contact, his flicking tail the only sign of his unease. He was one of a small group of enforcement agents for this part of Thorash and was currently on assignment. An informant had contacted the central office with information, and Darke had been dispatched to meet and gather the intel. He hoped he hadn't been sent on some crazy, wild fermart hunt.

Though he despised crowds, as did his race as a whole, he entered the throng to move close to the auction block. He hated his world's practice of selling beings, but, unfortunately, it was the law. Lately, though, someone had been breaking the dimensional portal to bring in beings from off world to sell. Doing so was illegal, and it was his job to find out who and how, and to stop it if possible.

As the slaves moved forward, his ears joined his tail in the uneasy twitching. Something was going to go down. He removed his gloves to ensure his claws and pads were exposed and allowed his hair to unravel from the braid in which he'd bound it. The mass flowed and shifted about as it began to gather information. He moved until he had a clear shot of the staging platform when all hell broke loose. A human male leapt forward and attacked the Gorsh who'd hit a small Trall. Naked, the man was all sinew, power, and grace. Stunned, Darke grew aroused watching him. Though Carthus usually didn't bed males, it wasn't unheard of since they weren't particularly choosy about their partners. However, this was the first time anyone had made Darke sit up and take notice, male or female.

Suddenly, one of the Gorsh tossed a Zargat into the mix and Darke exploded from the crowd to leap onto the stage. The bugs were deadly and could easily kill anyone. The male could help him in his investigation, he thought, though he knew it wasn't the only reason

he'd stepped in. He bared his fangs and roared loudly, tail lashing, as Gorsh fell into one another to escape him. Damn, it was good to inspire terror.

"Do you want to live?" he inquired of the man lying shivering on the ground.

The man opened his mouth, but all he could do was moan. Darke gathered him in his arms and stood. A Gorsh approached him cautiously. Even the tallest Gorsh wouldn't be close to his six-eight height. Darke flashed his canines, and his hair lashed out like a whip. The squat daemon backed away with a squealing cry. Laughing, Darke leapt agilely off the stage and began to work his way through the crowd. No one stopped him, but if he hesitated, someone might become stupidly brave and try. He didn't have time since the male would die.

He opened his senses and found a portal. Though his species couldn't create portals, they could find them. The nearest was two streets over so he wrapped the male tighter in his arms and ran. He'd seen humans before, but knew they were unusual in this realm. It was illegal to bring them through a portal to Thorash, but once they were here, it wasn't illegal to own one. He'd only seen females, never males, but if they were all like this one he imagined the Gorsh wouldn't want to mess with them again. The males were obviously too much trouble.

He turned a corner and a portal flashed like bright lightning before him. Without a moment's hesitation, he dove into it and disappeared.

Max shivered as heat crawled over his body like a million pin pricks. God, he hurt and not only his dick. Every part of his body felt as if he'd fallen off a cliff. He forced his eyes open to discover some type of cloth canopy hanging above where he lay. Turning his head, he found he was on a bed in a room he'd never seen before. Maybe everything had been a dream, and he was in some type of hospital.

The idea was shattered a moment later when a large naked male entered the room. He had to be close to seven feet tall, with long black hair that swirled and moved around him as if it were in a constantly shifting breeze. Slabs of solid muscle moved easily under darkly tanned skin and a thickly veined, heavy cock jutted arrogantly forward. Max tore his gaze away from the male's body as he put a tray of some type on a table next to the bed and turned to face him.

"My name is Darke."

He knelt on the bed and slowly crawled towards him. Eyes of molten gold caught and held his gaze and Max's heart began to pound harder. He opened his mouth, but nothing came out but a soft moan.

"You are dying. Do you understand?"

The voice, with its deep growling quality, sent a shaft of lightning through his gut and into his groin. He remembered this man from before. He'd saved him. For the life of him, he couldn't figure out why.

"Do you understand what I am telling you?"

Max tried to follow the conversation and nodded his head stiffly. If he was dying, why did the man save him? Unless he hadn't. Was he waiting for Max to die to eat him? God, he hoped not.

"The only way your body can process the Zargat venom is if you are penetrated during sex. Do you understand?"

Max gasped as a spasm shook his body and sweat poured off him to drench the bedding. His hips lunged at the air as he gripped the sheets. He tried to stop, but his body wouldn't follow his orders. A hoarse cry burst from his mouth when a large hand closed around his overly sensitive cock. He forced his gaze to where Darke lay beside him. When did he lie down? The male had his hand wrapped around Max's erection and pulled roughly, causing him to come up off the bed. Fuck, it hurt, but in a really good way. He'd always needed to be handled more forcefully, but most women couldn't or wouldn't. This man, on the other hand, knew what to do without being told.

Max closed his eyes to block out the sight. He wasn't into men, but damn he needed so bad. He shuddered as a hot wet mouth replaced the hand and, through sweat-drenched eyes, he looked to find Darke licking him gently. Without thinking, Max grasped the other male's hair and began to drive his cock into the warm wet cavern of his mouth. He whimpered as the male swallowed him whole and forced his legs apart to pull on his balls.

The man's hair moved over him as if caught in some type of current. The thick mass curled around his arms and thighs and began to massage him. Max panted, as tears gathered in his eyes. Shit, he needed to come. The urge was so great he thought it would kill him whether he did or not. He drew his knees up and began to force his cock deeper into the

male's mouth. Though it felt amazing, he wasn't tipping over the edge. He needed more stimulation to gain the release he desperately sought.

"Do something," he yelled. Not sure what he wanted, but praying this male named Darke would deliver.

The male growled deep in his chest and painfully twisted Max's balls. Apparently, Darke had figured it out since Max finally went off, filling the other man's mouth with his cum. He whimpered as Darke sucked firmly pulling his mouth away from his aching cock. Max struggled for breath as his body shook like he was seizing. Painfully, he rolled onto his side and pulled his knees up to his chest. Even after the mind-blowing orgasm, his body ached and burned for more.

"What is your name?"

Max forced his eyes open to stare at the other man. He'd almost forgotten about him, but how, since his cock has been in his mouth? Fuck, he was messed up. "Max," he whispered. "Max Whitfield."

"Do you know how you came to Thorash?"

He shook his head. "My unit was in Afghanistan. Some kind of explosion. I don't know." Max watched the other male closely. High sharp cheekbones, a thin aquiline nose and those brilliant gold eyes created an arresting image he found he couldn't look away from. Slowly, he reached out a hand to touch Darke's face and the other man froze. Max wasn't sure what he was doing, but since he was dying, he didn't have anything to lose.

He moved his fingers gently over Darke's cheek and down his neck. Though it couldn't easily be seen, the man was covered in a thin layer of baby soft fur. Darke closed his eyes and allowed Max to explore down his chest where Darke finally ended it by grabbing him by a talon-tipped hand. Max knew he probably should be frightened or, at the very least, wary, but he felt none of those emotions. The only thing he was aware of was his body's need to fuck, and how soft Darke's body was.

"Do you want to live?" Darke opened his eyes and stared at him.

"Why do you care?" Max blinked, surprised the question popped out. No one cared about him. He had no family left at home to worry about him. The Corps was his family and had been since he'd entered right out of school.

"I do not know." The other man shook his head, not breaking eye contact. "But I cannot let you die. Let me save your life."

Max rolled away as intense pain shot from his chest and radiated throughout his body. His heart stuttered, and for a brief second he didn't think it would keep beating. Gasping for breath, his heart finally kicked into an uneven galloping pattern.

Roughly, Darke rolled Max to his chest and pushed a pillow under his hips. He yelled out at the touch of the fabric against his swollen dick. Unconsciously, he began to thrust his hips, knowing he'd get no satisfaction, but unable to stop. A hand pressed down in the centre of his back and the touch felt like a brand to his sensitive skin. He writhed and fought to pull away, but Darke easily held him in place.

"Wait until I get inside you, *khartag*, you will grip my cock like a fist." Darke whispered against his ear. Max shuddered, one part of him horrified, while the rest filled with a dark, secret joy. His mind grabbed onto the image of this strange male pushing his cock in his ass, and Max whimpered.

Darke kept one hand pressed against Max's back while he grabbed a bottle of oil with his tail. He uncorked the bottle and tipped it onto his fingers. Pushing Max's legs wider, he moved up and slid an oil soaked digit into Max's ass. Slowly, he began to ease it in and out. Max moaned as he began to work himself against Darke's hand. Pouring more oil, Darke forced two fingers into Max and scissored them open. Normally, he wouldn't rush an untried male, but Max didn't have the time. The longer Darke waited, the closer Max came to dying.

Darke coated his cock with oil, enjoying the feel of his rough pads. He knew, though, Max's ass would feel much better. Darke grabbed Max by the hips and pulled him up onto his knees. He struggled, but Darke was too strong to allow him to go anywhere. Leaning forward, Darke positioned his cock at the entrance of Max's ass and pushed. Max fought harder, but Darke leant forward and palmed his dick. He gripped it tightly and pulled as he pushed into Max's body.

Max whimpered and began to shove himself back into Darke's cock. He didn't want to hurt him, but Darke gritted his teeth as he sank farther into the tight hot opening. Taking his hand from Max's cock, he wrapped his arms around the straining male to control him. Darke

wanted this to feel good for Max, not cause him more pain. He replaced his hand with this tail and wrapped it firmly around Max's throbbing dick.

Max gripped the sheets under his body as Darke shoved his monster cock up his ass. The rational part of his mind screamed at him to run, fight, whatever it took to get away. Nevertheless, the majority wanted to stay and revel in the painful pleasure Darke gave him. No one had ever taken charge in bed before. He'd never allowed it. Now he was on the receiving end and could do nothing to stop it, even if he wanted to.

Max gasped as a tightly furred band gripped his dick. He spread his legs farther apart and began to work his cock back and forth in the fur. As he moved, he could feel Darke sink farther and farther into his body. As he did, he hit something deep inside Max causing him to jerk and moan. Whatever Darke hit, sent pleasure shooting through his body. He wanted it to happen again, had to have it again. He twisted and shoved until Darke's heavy balls slapped against his own.

"Please, please," he whispered.

"What, *khartag*, tell what you want of me?" Darke draped himself over Max's back and licked his ear.

"I need." Max couldn't think of exactly what he needed, but up until this point Darke had seemed to know. He hoped he still did.

Darke nipped him on the shoulder. "I know, let me give it to you."

Without waiting for an answer, Darke sat back and withdrew his cock from Max's body. Max fought him, not wanting him to leave. But Darke easily held him and shoved forward again to seat himself more fully into Max's body. Max began to frantically move with Darke, slapping himself harder and harder back against the large male as the soft, firm grip on his dick tightened.

Every time he shoved back, Darke ran across the place deep in his ass that sent bolts of lightning through his body. Sweat ran off him as his temperature soared, but he kept up the relentless pace wanting, needed the punishing rhythm. Max stiffened and gasped as Darke slammed home one last time. Hard jets of semen shot out of the other male's cock deep into his ass, and Max yelled as his own orgasm hit.



Impossibly, Darke remained hard after the orgasm, and he continued the impossible pace the two of them set. Max could do nothing but hang on as his cock again got hard. He slid down until his chest rested against the bed putting his ass higher in the air. The position gave Darke the opportunity to go deeper and Max bit the sheets to keep from yelling. The angle and the depth of entry made him wish this would never end, it felt so fucking right.

Whatever was around his cock tightened as Darke fell over his body and bit him on the shoulder. Max could contain himself no longer and screamed as another orgasm tore through him. He felt Darke go off right after him as another load of semen shot into his body. Max's legs gave out and he laid spread eagle on the bed with Darke still embedded in his ass. The large male turned them on their sides, and he cradled Max close as they both tried to catch their breath.

Max closed his eyes as the crushing pain dissipated. Sleep stole over him as Darke murmured words he could not understand. Finally, sleep claimed him and he surrendered, a very willing victim.

## Chapter Three

Max opened bleary eyes and blinked to clear his vision. He felt as if a tank had rolled over him since he hurt from head to toes. His brain moved sluggishly as he tried to remember what'd happened. Had he been in a fire fight? Bar fight? His mind refused to call up any memories and he didn't have the energy to look around at where he was. Obviously, he was on some type of bed since he could feel a soft blanket under his body, but beyond that, he didn't have a clue.

Max let his eyes close again, but his mind refused to shut off now it was awake. He'd always fought insomnia, but in recent years, it'd gotten worse. On a normal night, he probably slept no more than two or three hours. Though his body still refused to cooperate, his mind clicked into gear, beginning to gather what information it could. Though he ached everywhere, the pain centred mostly on his neck. He wondered if he had been shot, but didn't think so. The next painful areas were his shoulder and ass. There wasn't pain exactly but a deep ache in both areas. Why would his ass hurt? He couldn't think... His eyes flew open as the memories of last night returned in an avalanche. He'd had sex with a man. No, not a man, some type of daemon with claws, fangs, and fur. He distinctly remembered the hair. Impossibly, his cock stirred as he remembered how the soft pelt felt as he rubbed against the hard male body.

"You are awake."

The raspy voice from his dreams spoke from behind him and Max rolled quickly to his back. Golden eyes met his own hazel, and Max blushed remembering what this man had done to him last night. All night. The male sat up, unashamed in his nakedness, and quirked a brow.

"You have nothing to say, *khartag*?"

"What do you keep calling me?" The question popped out before Max could think.

The male pursed his lips. "It is a Carthus word, like an endearment."

"Where am I?" Max forced his body upright to sit against the headboard of the bed.

"I will feed you, and we will talk." The male rose from the bed and left the room, his tail swishing as he walked.

Tail? The man had a tail? Max drew his knees up to rest his face against them. Nothing made sense. One minute he was in Afghanistan, and the next he was begging to be fucked in the ass by some alien. Maybe he had lost his mind and was in the hospital. He looked up as the other man re-entered the room carrying a tray loaded with plates and cups. He set his burden on the bed and climbed back in to sit beside Max, as if they did this all the time.

"You are in Thorash. I am Darke." He poured thick black liquid into a cup and handed it to Max. "You were at the slave market."

Max sipped at the cup surprised to find a beverage very close to coffee, but a bit stronger. "I remember. They took us there to sell. What about my men?" Max looked up to meet Darke's eyes. "They were there too. Three of them from my unit."

"I only saw you. I am sorry." Darke cut and arranged the food on the tray and handed Max a plate. "Eat. It would please me to feed you."

Max hesitated, but took the plate. Darke nodded, but the agitated way his tail moved made Max think accepting food was more important than only eating. Max picked up a piece of what looked like bread and bit into it. A sweet honey texture flowed over his tongue and he hummed with pleasure. He hadn't realised how hungry he was until he'd begun to eat. Darke gave a small smile and nodded as he dug into his own plate.

As soon as Max finished, Darke piled more food on his plate and Max continued to eat. The longer he ate, the longer he was able to put off talking to this person he'd been intimate with. He'd woken up with women he didn't know, but never a man. The worst part was he remembered every single moment with this man. He clenched his asshole, remembering the feel of Darke filling him until he couldn't tell the difference between pleasure and pain. In the deepest part of his soul, he had enjoyed it, wanted it again, but he wasn't into men. Had never thought about being with a man until meeting the one sitting next to him. There hadn't been a conscious decision on his part to engage in sex. The venom had forced the issue. Do it or die. He'd choose to live any day. But the next time—*What the hell?* There wasn't going to be a next time. Right?

"You think too much," Darke growled softly.

Max looked up to find the other male watching him. He swallowed and swiped a tongue over his suddenly dry lips. Darke watched his every move, making a small rumbling noise deep in his throat. Max's cock stirred and he wanted to shove a pillow over it to make it stop. But he couldn't move, pinned in place by the mesmerising eyes watching every move he made. Never had another person looked at him the way this man did. As if he wanted to eat him up, savouring each bite as he did it.

"Look, I don't know what happened yesterday. But I don't sleep with men. I don't like men that way." Max finally spoke, forcing out each word. "Obviously, we did, but this isn't something I do."

Darke's face went blank, and he nodded. "You were stung by a Zargat. They hide deep within the rocks, but the Gorsh often keep them as pets. The venom is extremely potent and dangerous, but they use it to force unwilling females to yield. They use it on males as torture."

"You said I would die."

"If the person stung does not receive an ejaculate, he or she will die. The Gorsh have no use for men at all so they use it to torture especially hard to control slaves. Sets an example for the others." He rose and pulled the tray off the bed. "I will find you something to wear."

Max leant back watching Darke's abrupt departure. For some reason, Max's gut and chest hurt at the thought he may have upset the other male. Hell, he didn't even know him. Sure, they'd fucked, but other than his name, he was a complete stranger. He rolled his eyes. What the shit? It didn't matter whether he knew the guy or not. He didn't sleep with men willingly. Yeah, and if kept talking, he would maybe begin to believe it.

Darke washed and quickly dressed, unsure of why he felt the way he did. Angry. Hurt. Lonely. All of those feelings were foreign since Carthus were a very solitary race. He didn't need anyone around, didn't *want* anyone around. Why did Max's words and actions, which spoke of rejection, bother him so much?

He didn't have time for this. Someone was illegally bringing beings in from other dimensions, and he had to find out who it was. The male, Max, could help him in the investigation. And once it was over, Darke would find someone to transport him back to his home. It was the least he could do since Max hadn't asked to be brought here.

"Do you need to get cleaned up?" Darke spoke as he came back into the main room. There, he found Max sitting on the side of the bed, feet dangling off, looking pale and shaky. Instinctively, Darke moved forward and knelt by his side. "What is wrong?"

"I feel like shit." Max braced his arms on his legs and grimaced. "I guess that's what almost dying does for a guy."

"Let me help you shower and dress. The venom put your body through quite a bit. It will most probably take a while for you to recover." Darke waited, sure Max would not allow him to help. But the other male surprised him by nodding his head and placing a hand on Darke's shoulder.

The mere touch sent shocks of heat through Darke's body. Why? What made this male special above all others, male or female, he had been with? Standing, he placed an arm around Max's waist and helped him to the shower. The whole time, Darke tried to ignore the naked body pressed to his side. Max was probably tall for a human, over six feet, but was a head shorter than Darke. In fact, Max fit perfectly under his chin. His body was sleekly muscled with a small dusting of dark hair on his chest that matched the dark hair he wore tightly cropped on his head. Darke wanted nothing more than to lay him down on the bed and lick him starting at his chin and moving all the way down his body to his toes. Tendrils of Darke's hair began to stroke Max's naked back and he forced them back into the customary braid he wore. He didn't need to scare the male any more than he probably already was.

He led Max through an open archway where a cascade of water flowed freely down the rock walls to an open pool. He had picked these caves to set up house for the waterfall alone, not to mention the fact that if you didn't know where to look, it was nearly impossible to find.

"This is amazing," Max said a look of awe on his face.

Darke swelled with pride, knowing his home had pleased his...nothing. Max was nothing to him. The other male was a means to help him solve the case. He had already made it quite clear he wasn't interested, and Darke meant to respect the decision. Now he had to convince his body of the fact.

Darke helped Max over to where he could get to the water and let him go. Darke didn't think he could stand and watch the man get wet and wash himself without wanting to help him. Without a backwards glance, Darke walked from the room and left Max alone.

Max leaned against the rock wall and watched Darke leave. A hint of disappointment ran through his gut, but he ignored it. He'd told him he wasn't interested, and he meant it. Any lingering needs or wants had to be from the venom he'd been given and nothing else. Once he'd taken a shower and cleaned up, he'd be fine. No problem.

Max tentatively stepped into the spray and sighed as warm water cascaded down his body. Bracing his hands against the wall, he stood and let the water wash over him as he forced his mind to go blank. He needed a few moments of total quiet to regain his equilibrium. From the moment he'd awakened as a slave there hadn't been a chance to breathe. He'd been thrown from one situation to the next, forced to cope with each new challenge.

Opening his eyes, he found a bar of what he hoped was soap. Sniffing it carefully, his cock began to get hard. The soap smelled deep and musky, like Darke. Max huffed out a breath, pissed this kept happening. He lathered up and began to wash, all the while trying to ignore how hard he got just from bathing. Gritting his teeth, he washed his cock and balls and moved around to his ass. He brushed his asshole and gasped, damn it was sensitive. Closing his eyes, he teased a finger around his entrance and finally pushed it in. His cock pulsed and he leaned his shoulder against the wall and grasped his dick with his other hand.

He didn't understand why he was doing this. He didn't like men, didn't want to have sex with them and yet he stood moving a finger in and out of his ass while he stroked his erection. It felt good, damn good, but not as good as Darke had. Max whimpered, as he forced two fingers in and tightened his hold around his cock. It was the venom, he thought. It was making him act this way.

Max jerked his hands away from himself and pressed his back against the wall. No more. He had to stop. Taking his cock in hand, he quickly went through the motions to force an orgasm. Though it came and felt good, it wasn't satisfying. Not the way it felt when you were entwined with another body, rubbing and thrusting against each other, working to give each other pleasure.

He pushed away from the water and stumbled to where Darke had left a towel. He rubbed his arms and legs roughly, not caring about being gentle. He needed to get out so he could escape his own thoughts. He wrapped the towel around his waist and made his way carefully back to the main room.

Darke stood with his back to him, and Max's gut clenched. The man was seriously ripped and looked damn good in the all black ensemble he was pulling on. Max must have made a noise since Darke turned around, and the two men stared at one another. A curl of heat stirred in Max's belly at the intense look in Darke's eyes.

"I will find you something to wear," Darke spoke quickly. He turned to a large wooden cupboard and began to rummage around.

Max slowly moved to watch him, but not close enough to touch. The need was too great, and he didn't trust himself.

"What's the plan?" Max pulled on the clothes the other male gave him. They were big, but fit okay once he rolled the legs and arms up.

"We are lucky I did not yet adjust the pants to fit my tail. But they will do. We will go and meet my contact. Obviously, it fell through yesterday, but he has given us a new meeting place." Darke handed Max a long knife and sheath for it to go in. "I am assuming you can use this and will not hesitate to do so if need be."

Max pulled the weapon from the sheath. The blade was intricately carved, with swirling characters, and shone oddly in the light. It was perfectly balanced and fit well in his hand. He smiled and nodded at Darke. "This is beautiful. I'll take good care of it."

He bowed slightly. "Thank you, I made it. Let us go."

Max followed his companion out of the room and into a gloomy corridor. He stayed close as they wound their way through the maze of passages. He was glad Darke knew where they were going since he had long ago lost any sense of direction. Obviously, the man had picked his home well since it was probably impossible to locate.

Darke stopped and turned to Max. "You must take my hand when we go through the portal. I know where we are going, and will direct it to take us there. Entering a portal without the knowledge of our realm is dangerous. Others have been lost within it."

"Let's do it," he said, and took the hand Darke extended towards him. The familiar shock of touching Darke bolted through his system. Max grew hard and wondered when it

would all stop. When would Darke stop affecting him the way he did? He chose the easiest method, ignoring it. If he ignored his jumble of feelings, they would go away. They had to, because the alternative was not something he could allow himself to contemplate.

Darke stood a moment enjoying the feel of Max's hand in his own. He breathed deeply, smelling the other male's arousal. At least, he wasn't the only one needing. Dragging his mind back to where they had to go and what they were to do, Darke tightened his hold on Max and walked into the lightning storm of a portal.

Within moments, they were stepping out onto a street. Reluctantly, he let go of Max's hand and motioned for him to follow as they began to move down a sidewalk. The village was smaller than Baarl, where he had found Max, but still bustling and busy. His height and species quickly cleared a path to their destination, as Max kept close.

Darke headed towards a dark tavern on a small back street. His contact had given the meet place, which was something Darke didn't normally allow. He preferred to choose his own meeting locations, but since this was on short notice, he took what he could get. He hoped it didn't get them killed.

He walked in the door and his hair gradually unfurled so he could more easily scan the surrounding room. Though a Carthus' hair was more readily recognised as a weapon, it was also very sensitive and could easily gather information. The occupants all kept their eyes averted except one person in the back who nodded briefly. Darke moved his way around tables as Max followed closely behind. The human's eyes never stopped moving tracking every being's movement in the place. Darke was glad Max had his back.

Darke straddled a bench across the table from his contact, while Max leaned against the wall facing the room. "What do you have?" Darke spoke.

The smaller being leant forward, revealing a Trall male. "It is good to see you, my friend."

Max did a double take and smiled. "Gart, it's good to see you."

Darke felt a crawl of jealousy at the easy way Max smiled at the other man. Darke had saved his life and yet Max had never bestowed a smile on him. Darke's tail lashed about showing his agitation. He had to stop this idiocy. Max would leave soon if Darke had



anything to say about it. The male was not interested so there was no point in feeling possessive. Max was not his nor would he ever be.

Darke clicked back into the conversation as Gart was speaking. "My place within the camp was a plant. I was there to gather intelligence. Unfortunately, things did not go as planned."

"Do they ever?" Darke tossed out.

Gart glanced at him. "Not lately, no. Another agent was supposed to purchase me, but instead, someone else stepped in and bid higher. If it weren't for you, Max Whitfield, I wouldn't be sitting here now. Most probably, I would be dead. I'm glad you are well."

Max smiled briefly, but did not respond, glancing at Darke instead. So many emotions danced in Max's hazel eyes, Darke wished to sit and look into them forever.

Max cleared his throat and Darke looked away to, once again, focus his attention on Gart. "Did you learn anything while you were there?"

Max tried to concentrate on the conversation, but kept losing track to watch Darke. For a large male, his movements were graceful and as he spoke, he used his hands to make a point. Max remembered the feel of those hands on him and in him. He looked down to compose himself and found Darke's tail moving softly against his pant leg. He clenched his hands to stop himself from reaching out to caress it.

He looked up to find Gart studying him with a small smile playing around his lips. "You've fared well in your time here. Let us hope your companions have been equally lucky."

"Do you know anything about them?"

"I know they escaped, but don't know more. I'll see if I can find word about them."

"Thank you," Max said.

"Who is helping the Gorsh?" Darke asked. "Do you know?"

"No, and it's quite disturbing, because in Thorash everything is for sale. However, this information is elusive. I do know where the portal the Gorsh use is located, though."

Darke smiled, bearing wicked fangs. "Good, that is all I need. I can send Max home and destroy it to ensure they cannot bring more slaves through. Once destroyed, my team will have time to gather more evidence without putting anyone at risk."

Gart pulled a wrinkled piece of paper from a bag at his side. "Here is a map I have drawn." The two of them leant forward to look over the drawings, but Max didn't hear them. Darke was sending him home? When had he made the decision? Shouldn't he be happy about the prospect? Max stared at his hands. Things were happening too fast. He hadn't had a chance to catch his breath and process everything.

Darke stood, startling Max out of his thoughts. "If you have anyone still in the area, get them out. Once the portal goes, it will take out everything around it. I'll give you today, but by tomorrow it will be gone."

Max rose to follow Darke as he began to head to the exit, but Gart caught his arm. "He's a loner. He's never allowed another to walk beside him the way he does you. Be sure you understand your wants and needs before you make the decision to leave this place. Once gone, you will not be able to return."

Max nodded. "Thank you." He turned and found Darke waiting for him by the door. Max moved to join him and the two of them left the tavern. As they walked the streets, Max looked up. The lights in the town illuminated the area and Max could see sheer rock walls disappearing into absolute darkness. He wondered if there was a way out to sunlight or was this it? There was no sense of walls closing in or the usual damp smell caves gave off, the air was clean with a crisp edge to it. Max liked it, the scent reminded him of a chilly autumn morning.

"My home is not what you are used to." Darke said.

Max gave a brief smile and shook his head. "No, it's not. Where I'm from we live aboveground and can see the sun."

"I am sorry you are not able to see a sun while you are here. All of Thorash is the same, surrounded by rock, but it has its own beauty."

Max touched him briefly on the arm. "Actually, on my time off, when I get any, I go caving. I like crawling through tunnels and rappelling deeper into the earth. I guess I like to explore where maybe no one has been before."

“I wish there was time for me to show you those places here. I too like to travel and have been many places none of my kind would think to go. That is how I found my home.”

The two of them continued down the street, and Max also wished there was more time to see this world in which he had found himself. Though it was all, apparently, deep under the earth, everywhere he had gone was different. Obviously, he wouldn't get the chance since, according to Darke, he would be gone before tomorrow was over.

## Chapter Four

Darke moved quietly around his cooking area gathering ingredients to make dinner. He had left Max in the other room studying the map Gart had given them. Throughout the day, they had spoken of their lives. Max talked about joining the Marines and his life in the military. Darke spoke about his position as an enforcement agent within Thorash. Though they had discussed many subjects, Max's conversation never touched on going home. In fact, he never once mentioned Darke's pronouncement about sending him home the next day.

Darke enjoyed finding out about this man who had dropped into his life so unexpectedly. Nevertheless, the tension of everything unspoken between the two of them made his fur stand on end. What was there to say? Max had been kidnapped, drugged, and fucked by a male. He had made it more than plain his preferred sex partner was female. He was human and needed to go home. End of story. Once the human was gone, Darke would return to his solitary life. He preferred being alone, he told himself. He figured if he said it often enough, he would eventually believe it.

Max wearily rubbed his face. The whole day had been a blur of sights and sounds, most of them centred on his host. The longer he was around Darke, the more he wanted. Needed. His cock ached and mouth watered at the thought of what Darke had done to him the night before. He could no longer put his feelings down to the venom he'd been injected with. He hated a liar and he couldn't stand to lie to himself any longer. He wanted Darke with a ferocity he'd never before felt for anyone. Once before, he had thought he was in love, but those feelings were tame compared to what he experienced now.

If he was leaving tomorrow, he wanted to spend the night in Darke's bed. He wanted to be fully cognisant of what went on and be a full participant. Max shivered with anticipation at the thought of being completely aware while Darke took him. He rubbed his swollen cock imagining it was Darke's hand. He didn't think he could wait.

Darke chose that moment to enter the room, and Max turned to stare at him. He didn't know what his face showed, but Darke froze in his tracks. He closed his eyes and breathed

deeply, Max was sure he could smell his arousal. He wanted Darke to. Opening his gold eyes, he bared his fangs and growled as his tail lashed the air.

"What game are you playing at?" Darke spoke harshly.

"No game," Max said softly. He stood and walked slowly across the room to stand a hair's breadth away from him. "No one has ever made me feel the way you do. I don't want to leave without feeling that way again." He reached up to cradle Darke's face in his hands. The other male didn't move, either to leave or to touch him, so Max knew he had to make the first overture.

Max pulled Darke's face down while he shifted to stand on his toes. He kept his eyes locked on Darke's as he brushed their lips together. The other man shuddered, and Max pressed his lips to Darke's. They were surprisingly soft. He had assumed, since Darke was a huge male warrior, his lips would feel rough, instead of warm and welcoming.

Max nipped and sucked on Darke's lips, loving the little moans the other man made. Max opened his mouth and pressed his tongue to Darke's lips. Darke shuddered and instantly opened his mouth with a gasp. Max thrust his tongue in and stroked it gently around one long wicked canine and then the other. Darke pulled away, panting and shaking, but Max refused to let him go far.

"What's wrong?" Max nuzzled his throat.

"I do not understand what it is you do to me."

It was Max's turn to pull away to study Darke, confusion evident in his face. Didn't they kiss here? If so, had he never been kissed before? Either way, Max felt a gut level satisfaction. He was able to give Darke something he had never experienced with another person.

"I'm kissing you." Max nipped his chin. "You don't like it?"

"No one has ever done this to me before. Carthus do not touch mouths."

Max smiled. "Do you want me to continue?"

Darke leant forward and pressed his lips hesitantly against Max's own. "Yes, I very much like it. I want more."

Max pulled him over to a chair and forced him to sit. Straddling Darke's lap put them at the perfect height for Max to touch anywhere he wanted. Darke was hard beneath him and

Max shifted to rub their cocks together. Darke growled low and grasped Max's hips to hold him in place.

"Why did you stop me?" Max asked.

"I want more of the kissing you promised. Then I will fuck you."

If it was possible, Max got harder at the words Darke spoke and the memories of what he'd done to him the night before. This time though, Max would be an eager participant. But first, he wanted to give Darke pleasure, give him something he'd never had before. Leaning forward, he pressed their lips together again and thrust his tongue into Darke's mouth. Darke's unique flavour, warm spices with a hint of bite washed over his tongue and he moaned, deepening the kiss. Darke hesitantly touched his tongue to Max's and Max sunk his fingers into the other man's hair forcing their mouths closer. Max twined his tongue with Darke's as they moved together in an erotic dance. Unconsciously, he rocked his hips into Darke as the kiss became more intense and aggressive.

Max pulled his lips from his lover's as he kissed and nipped down his jaw to his neck. Max wanted there to be no doubt in Darke's mind he was fully involved in what they were doing. Darke ran his retractable talons gently up and down Max's back. Max shuddered at the sensation, wanting, needing more.

"Come, *kharesh*, let us move to the bed." Darke stood easily, holding Max in his arms. "I wish to feel your naked body against my own."

Darke dropped Max on the bed and began removing his clothes. Max lay, unable to move, while he watched Darke slowly reveal himself. He was the most beautiful thing Max had ever seen. Heavy sculpted muscles, dusted with a light layer of dark tawny fur, moved and shifted as he unbuttoned his pants and let them drop to the floor. His cock was large and engorged with thick veins running its length. Max's mouth watered at the sight, wanting to drop down and lick the weeping head.

"Do not look at me like that, or this will be over before we start." Darke kicked his pants off to the side and dropped to the bed to crawl to where Max laid waiting. "Why are you still dressed?"

"I was watching the show you put on." Max smiled. "I wouldn't be an appreciative audience if I didn't give you my full attention."

“Now you have appreciated, take your clothes off.” Darke sat back on his haunches — thighs spread wide, and began to masturbate slowly as Max started to undress. The sight of Darke running his hand up and down his cock left Max with his shirt hanging off one arm and his pants undone. He watched as pre-cum slid from the opening in the large plum shaped head and his mouth watered. Darke’s soft laugh shook him from his trance, and he quickly threw off the rest of his clothes. The sooner he was naked, the faster he could experience Darke again.

After Max tossed his pants to the floor, he leant forward and licked the weeping head of his lover’s cock. The flavour was spicy and a bit bitter on his tongue, but tasted damn good to his starving senses. Max looked up to catch Darke’s gaze as he again swirled his tongue over the head of his engorged cock. Max didn’t know what the hell he was doing, but Darke looked as if he were enjoying it. That was all Max cared about.

Darke pulled Max’s mouth away and pushed him back on the bed. Max squirmed as Darke began to lick and nip up his body starting at his toes. The large male easily held him down while he worked. Max closed his eyes, loving the sensation of Darke’s mouth and hair dragging on his naked flesh. No lover had ever taken such care or been so thorough before. He’d always been in the position of doing the majority of the seducing. Now, he could lay back and allow someone else control.

Darke inched his way up until he and Max were face to face. He didn’t know what had made the other man change his mind, but he wasn’t going to ask. Darke wanted to spend one more night with him before he was gone. Darke shoved the thought from his mind as he leaned down to feed his tongue into his lover’s mouth. He loved how Max tasted, rich and decadent, like his favourite dessert.

Max moaned and Darke could feel a spat of pre-cum ooze between them. Reluctantly, he sat up, not wanting Max to come before they had barely gotten started. He sat between Max’s legs and carefully memorised how the other male looked laid out on his bed. He wanted to be able to call this memory up whenever he needed it.

Max watched as he leaned over to pull a stoppered bottle from the bedside table. Darke carefully loosened the cork and tossed it on the bed. Grasping the bottle with his tail, he spread Max’s legs and settled his hips onto Darke’s thighs. Never breaking eye contact with

Max, he poured oil into his hand, making sure his fingers were saturated. His hair unfurled to sweep gently around Max's bobbing erection and the male reached a hand out to gently touch the strands. Darke sighed feeling the contact down to his toes.

Darke opened his eyes and met Max's gaze as he trailed his oiled fingers down Max's cock, causing the other man to catch his breath and thrust his hips in the air. Darke placed his hand on the other male's stomach to hold him in place. Carefully, he eased oil-soaked fingers around Max's puckered opening. The other man jumped, but soon began pushing himself down on Darke's questing finger. Darke breached the opening and began to thrust gently. He didn't want to hurt Max, not the last time they would be together. As he allowed his finger to go deeper, his hair kept up the soft pressure on his lover's cock. Max gripped the sheets below him and worked himself on the finger and hair.

Darke easily pressed in two fingers, and Max pulled his legs up, giving Darke a clear view of his fingers moving in and out of Max's body. As he anticipated his cock being swallowed up by the tight ring of muscle, his canines dropped and he growled low.

"Darke, now. Fuck me now," Max grunted, as he began to thrust hard against Darke's hand.

"I do not want to hurt you."

"You won't. I need you to fuck me in my ass now."

Darke pulled his fingers from Max's body and poured more oil on his hand and quickly rubbed it on his own cock. Shaking with need, he grabbed Max's hips to hold him steady and pushed. The snug fit made Darke stop to catch his breath. Under him, Max thrashed as he tried to force Darke deeper. Darke held his hips tighter to control how fast he entered. The tight pressure on his erection made the urge to come nearly impossible to ignore. Darke thought of boring activities such as cleaning or laundry, anything to allow his body time to adjust.

"Now, Darke. Now."

"Patience, *kharesh*. I want to savour the feel of your ass hugging my cock so tightly."

"Savour later. Fuck me now." Max wrapped his legs around Darke's hips.

"As you wish," Darke snarled, pushing until his balls slapped loudly against Max's ass. He pulled almost all the way out and shoved in again, loving the way Max tightened around him. Darke pulled Max's hips up to change the angle and was able to penetrate deeper. Max



gasped and shuddered beneath him as Darke swept his tail up to join his hair in tormenting Max's erection.

"Hurry, *kharesh*, come. I do not know how much longer I can last." Darke spoke through gritted teeth as he continued to piston in and out of Max's body. "It feels too good. Your body grips me as if it does not want to let me go."

At Darke's words, Max shuddered as semen shot up to cover his stomach and Darke's hair and tail. Darke, his eyes never leaving Max's, pumped twice more and came deep into his body. Max reached up and pulled Darke down to press their lips together. Darke sank into the kiss, loving the feel of the other man beneath him. His cock, still hard, stayed buried deep in Max's body where he would prefer to remain forever. However, he knew it wasn't an option. On the morrow, the two of them would leave his home, but only he would return.

"You're still hard," Max said, interrupting his morbid thoughts.

"Carthus females require much ejaculate if they hope to conceive. Because of this, the male does not lose an erection."

Max pushed his hips up moving Darke in and out of his ass. "You can fuck me again?"

"Oh, *kharesh*, I can take you all night if you wish."

Max wrapped his legs around Darke's hips and quickly rolled to put Darke beneath him. Max moved up and down, forcing Darke's erection in and out of his body. Darke had never seen anything more sexy than the sight of this man riding his cock.

Max smiled down at him. "I wish. But I think I'll be on top this time." He placed his hands on Darke's chest and began to pump up and down. Darke grabbed his hips so he could steady the other man, deciding to ignore what tomorrow would bring and concentrate on the now.

Max opened his eyes and yawned. Damn, he was tired, but a good kind. The kind that came from having amazing sex all night long. Darke was an amazingly skilled lover who could keep it up for hours. Unbelievably, Max felt his cock stir. There should be no way since Darke had fucked him ten ways to Sunday. He couldn't remember how many orgasms he'd had. The man was utterly insatiable. Max loved it.

His shoulder once again ached, but this time Max realised it was due to Darke biting him. Max shivered remembering the feel of Darke's teeth sliding into his shoulder as Darke's

cock moved in and out of his ass. For a moment, Max had gone deaf and blind as he'd come so hard he thought his brains would be lying on the sheets beneath him. Shaking his head, he rolled out of bed as Darke entered the room already dressed.

The two of them stared at one another. Max could feel the distance Darke put between them and didn't like it one bit. They had spent the night together, and he'd be damned if he let Darke pretend otherwise. Without thinking twice, he stepped up and pulled Darke's head down to kiss him. The other male hesitated only a moment before wrapping his arms around Max and returning the kiss. Max sank into the kiss, wanting nothing more than to pull his lover back to bed for the rest of the day.

Darke finally broke the kiss and ran his hand gently over Max's hair. "If we had more time...but we do not. We must go."

"I know." Max nodded and gave him another brief kiss. He turned and hurried to the bathing area, feeling sick to his stomach. Today was his last day with Darke. But no matter what, they had a job to do. The portal had to be destroyed so no more humans could be brought through to be sold.

## Chapter Five

Max eased in behind Darke and peered over a small rock wall. The portal they were after flared and shimmered in bright red flashes as Gorsh swarmed around it. From his position, he counted fifteen, but couldn't see the whole area. For all they knew, Gorsh could be packed in somewhere like sardines. He wished like hell he had his M16, but beggars couldn't be choosers as his granny always said. He still had the knife Darke had given him, but the male had also added small throwing daggers to his arsenal. The plan was to arm Max so he could clear a path to the portal while Darke set the charges. Sounded easy, but Max knew from bitter experience it never went that way.

"When I give the signal, head to the portal." Darke spoke softly beside him. "Do not stop for any reason. You must make it through."

"On my way, I'll take out as many as I can." Max glanced over at him. "It'll make it easier for you."

"If you must, but do not engage unless you have to." Darke ran a hand down his cheek. "I want nothing to happen to you, *kharesh*."

Max felt his throat close up and he swallowed hard. "Same here. Do what you have to do, and get out."

Darke leaned in to kiss him hard on the lips. "Let us go."

Max took a deep breath to clear his mind and fell in behind his lover. He needed to stay sharp so they could get this done. Once it was over, he could let the reins off his emotions, but now was not the time to indulge. He couldn't allow it.

Darke adjusted the small bag he carried containing the charge he had gotten from a Sorvalla Daemon. Since the portals themselves were created from magical energy, he needed something equally potent to destroy one. Sorvalla, thankfully, were the only species that could manipulate magic in this manner and his friend, Abbon, had created charges in the

past for the enforcers. This bomb, though incredibly small, was more powerful since it was created to destroy an inter-dimensional portal.

He felt Max brush against him. Every part of his being yelled at him to gather Max close and run. Darke knew it would be this way. He had known it since he had sunk his teeth into Max's shoulder. His kind only bit during sex to claim a mate. He hadn't planned it, but his senses had shown him how important this man was to him. His *kharesh*, his heart, his soul, the reason he lived and breathed. He would protect Max with his life this day, which is what one did for his mate. He already knew he would die—if not by the Gorsh guarding the gate, it would be by the magical charge. It was made to be launched at a distance, but with Max heading to the gate, he couldn't chance it. He would have to wait until his mate made it into the gate and set it off. It was the only way.

He motioned Max forward as he peered around a small outcropping of rock. "I am going up this wall. When I drop into the largest group, you run towards the gate."

Max looked up in confusion. "How? You don't have anything to climb with."

Darke smiled. "Ah, *kharesh*, there is much we did not have time to learn about one other. I have micro fine hairs covering my fingers and toes, I am able to scale any surface quite easily." Saying this, he leapt up and easily clung to the wall above Max. He shook his head and his hair unfurled to flow and swirl about. He looked down at his mate's amazed face and smiled. "Remember, wait until I drop in, then run." He stared another moment at Max's face and climbed up the wall into the darkness.

Max watched Darke climb until he was swallowed by shadows. Once again, his gut was telling him this was a major cluster fuck waiting to happen. No matter how great of a fighter Darke was, he couldn't take down every Gorsh out there. Max locked down his feelings as he pulled a dagger and knife. He knew what he had to do, and he was fully capable of killing as many Gorsh as he could to make sure Darke walked away.

Not waiting for Darke, Max moved forward on silent feet. He eased around a corner and found a Gorsh standing facing the main chamber. Max studied the being closely, realising, though the head was bigger, the neck was the same size as a human man's. He smiled grimly as he moved up quietly and with a twist of his hands, broke the thing's neck. He caught the body as it dropped and dragged it out of sight.

He moved forward and took out three more Gorsh guards in the same manner. In his mind, he thanked Gart for getting the information he and Darke needed to pull this off. Obviously, wherever the information had come from, the Gorsh didn't know they had been compromised. He thought maybe he and Darke would pull this off after all, since no one had ever seen them coming.

A figure dropped from above into the middle of a group of Gorsh and exploded into action. Max stood in awe as Darke unleashed talons, fangs and hair in a deadly dance. Grey blood from the Gorsh sprayed the ground as Darke hit with lethal accuracy. A Gorsh moved up behind Darke and Max raced forward to help him, but he shouldn't have bothered since Darke's hair lashed out like a whip catching the Gorsh unaware. It hit the ground and did not move as Darke cut a swath through the gathered fighters.

Changing directions, Max ran towards the portal, which flashed and cracked with eerie red lightning. Gorsh rushed him, but he dispatched them easily using the knife and dagger he held. Too easy, his gut kept saying, but he moved steadily towards the portal. Out of the corner of his eye, he spied something falling from overhead, but couldn't pull his attention away from his opponent. Dying due to lack of concentration was something he didn't plan to do.

Lunging forward, he buried his knife into his adversary's stomach and pulled upwards. Grey blood and insides spilled out as the Gorsh gurgled and fell lifeless to the ground. Darke's loud, roaring cry drew his attention, and Max turned to find a small winged something digging talons into his lover's shoulders to lift him from the ground. Darke tried to lash at it with his claws, but he could not raise his arms high enough to reach it.

Darke looked over to meet Max's eyes. The two of them stared until Darke screamed at him, "*Run, kharesh, get to the portal.*"

The Gorsh gathered around a flailing Darke and began slashing at him with short blades. He kicked and caught a few of them in the face, but not enough before his legs were a mass of bleeding cuts. Max glanced at the portal and without another thought raced to Darke's aid. The Gorsh screamed as he waded into them with knife and dagger. This gave Darke the opportunity to bring his feet up and hook his claws into the thing holding him captive. It screamed, releasing Darke's shoulders, but the male still had his feet dug in deep.

The bag Darke wore slid off his shoulder and Max swept it up. As the winged daemon began to flail in the air, Darke released it and dropped to the ground. He staggered, and Max caught him. He looped Darke's arm around his neck and began to half drag half carry him out of the cavern.

"I'll get you away and come back to set the charges." Max told him.

"No, *kharesh*, no," Darke panted. "You cannot be near to the charges, or it will kill you."

"What the fuck?" Max screamed. "That was your plan. You planned to kill yourself?"

"It was the only way to get you home and destroy the portal. Now we have to go back, the mission must be completed. We cannot leave the portal open."

Max stopped and did an about face, not sure who he was more furious with. Darke, who was willing to die, or himself for thinking he could ever leave. "Okay, you say the portal can take us anywhere we have actually been."

"Yes," Darke nodded. He sagged more and Max tightened his grip. "This portal is special, though, since it can take you home. This portal is the only one."

"Okay, but it's a portal so it can also take us anywhere we can think of in Thorash."

"Yes, any portal within Thorash can allow you to travel all around the realm. "

Max gritted his teeth and began to drag Darke back towards the portal. He didn't know if what he had planned would work, but he'd be damned if he would leave the person he...fuck...he loved him. He didn't know how or when, but he loved this man, and he refused to allow him to die. If what he had planned didn't work, they would go together. Better to die with Darke than to be left on Earth without him.

The few Gorsh left tried to intercept them as Max half dragged, half carried Darke towards the rolling mass of red energy. Max reached into the bag he now wore and pulled out a small glowing rock, or at least that's what it looked like. The Gorsh immediately stopped in their tracks and began running towards the exits. Obviously, the thing was more powerful than it looked. He prayed it would do what he wished and not kill them in the bargain.

"Darke, babe, pay attention. Do I throw this thing or what?"

Darke muttered something Max couldn't catch and became dead weight. Max cursed, praying Darke had just passed out and not anything worse. Tears gathered and he swore he would destroy every Gorsh in this entire world if anything happened to his lover. He paused

long enough to check and discovered Darke still breathed, he had only passed out. Crouching, he let Darke flop over his shoulder and rose unsteadily to his feet. Fuck, he was heavy, but they were both getting out of here.

He moved slowly until he stood as close as he could to the portal. Taking a deep breath, he pictured where he wanted to go, and tossed the stone. Before it could hit the ground, he stepped into the writhing mass of energy. Red fire lashed around him as he kept his destination firmly fixed in his mind.

A moment later, a tremor raced through the energy around him. He staggered, falling forward, and he and Darke hit solid rock. Max looked around and almost wept when he realised they were at the entrance to Darke's home.

Darke opened his eyes. He was lying in his own bed. The last thing he remembered was Max dragging him to the portal. He quickly sat up as a wave of dizziness rolled over him. How did he get here? He shoved the sheet aside prepared to get up when Max's voice stopped him.

"What the hell do you think you're doing? Get back in bed."

Darke looked over to find his mate staring at him with a frown. He was the most beautiful sight Darke had ever seen. "How —"

"I dragged us through the portal," Max explained as he approached. "I pictured your home and this is where we ended up."

"The portal —"

"Is gone." Max sat beside him. "I tossed the charge as we stepped through. You can check with Gart, but I'm going to say we blew it up."

"You can no longer go home." Darke stared at his mate.

Max glanced away for a moment. "I think I am home." He turned to meet Darke's eyes. "I know we haven't known each other long, but you're...I...fuck." He rubbed his face and finally spoke. "I don't know how you feel, but I love you. You complete me. I know you didn't bargain for any of this, but —"

Darke cut him off when he pulled Max into his arms and kissed him. It only took his mate a moment before he was thrusting his tongue into Darke's mouth. Darke hummed in appreciation as he held the person he loved most in this world close.

Max pulled back to stare into this face. "I take it you're okay with me loving you?"

Darke laughed. "Oh, *kharesh*, I am happier than I can express."

"Is that word you said another Carthus endearment?" Max brushed his lips gently over Darke's.

"No, *kharesh*, it is the only endearment you will ever hear. It means mate of my heart and soul. That is what you are — my mate." He licked softly over the bite marks on Max's shoulder causing him to shiver.

"If you're feeling up to it, I'd like my mate to make love to me." Max ran his fingers through Darke's hair. The tendrils shivered as Darke's breathing picked up and his cock began to get hard.

"I think that can be arranged. You know, in my culture, most mated couples spend the first week in bed learning to please one another."

"I wouldn't want it being said I didn't appreciate my mate's culture. By all means, please away."

Darke laughed as he lay on the bed, his lover on top covering him like a warm loving blanket. He pulled Max down to engage in another kiss and knew he would never be alone again.



## About the Author

Gwendolyn Cease has been writing ever since she was old enough to pick up a pen. From the very beginning, her stories involved handsome heroes, tough heroines, and happily ever after. Even as she slogged through her undergraduate and finally master's in education, writing remained a top priority. Though she now teaches elementary school, she still makes time for her characters and their never-ending adventures.

Currently, Gwendolyn lives in Kentucky with her three incredibly spoiled cats: Fiona (the queen), Max (he's a lover not a fighter) and Warlock (way too fat for his own good). If you'd like to contact her she'd love to hear from you. She loves to hear from anyone who enjoys a good book, especially the ones she's written.

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